



WORLD
HUMANITARIAN
SUMMIT



PREPARATORY STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

World Humanitarian Summit Regional Consultation for the Middle East and North Africa

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Extensive stakeholder consultations were held across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)¹ region in preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) regional consultation, scheduled to take place in Jordan on 3-5 March 2015. The aim of these consultations was to identify priority humanitarian challenges and opportunities facing the MENA region in order to lay the foundation for further discussions in Jordan. The outcomes of the regional consultation will feed into the WHS thematic and global consultations and eventually the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, 2016.

Findings from an initial set of consultations with civil society organizations, governments and affected communities in the MENA region were set out in a scop-

ing paper², developed in late 2014. The paper identified twelve key humanitarian-related challenges faced by different constituencies and was used to inform successive consultations with a broader range of stakeholders. The findings outlined in the scoping paper are included and elaborated on in this report, in addition to outcomes from subsequent consultations in the region.

The report is divided in three parts: The first explains the process undertaken to collect and analyse stakeholder perspectives. The second outlines the findings of the preparatory stakeholder consultations and the third identifies the priority humanitarian issues and questions for discussion at the WHS regional consultation in Jordan.

¹ For the purposes of the World Humanitarian Summit, the MENA region includes: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

² Available on the World Humanitarian Summit website at <http://goo.gl/yUc1mJ>



PREPARATORY STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION PROCESS

Under the guidance of the WHS Regional Steering Group for the MENA region, a host of partners helped organize consultations with different constituencies between May 2014 and February 2015.³ A number of approaches were used to engage different stakeholders, including Member States, affected communities, civil society organizations, United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), national societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, youth and the media.

1,231 individuals from diverse backgrounds were consulted in the spirit of the summit’s multi-stakeholder approach, with particular effort made to engage civil society organizations and people affected by humanitarian crises. The latter included separate consultations with refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), migrants and other impacted populations and conducted separately for men, women, youth and community leaders, where appropriate. Civil society organizations were

consulted at the national level, followed by two regional meetings convened to first review emerging findings and then to consolidate civil society recommendations.

The stakeholder groups consulted and the format for each consultation are summarized in the table below.⁴

The final stakeholder analysis report is an attempt to capture the main findings and recommendations discussed during the preparatory stakeholder consultations. The report is not intended as a consensus document but rather represents a variety of opinions and positions of multiple stakeholders consulted with the aim of stimulating discussion and facilitating the development of recommendations at the WHS regional consultation for MENA. Additional consultations with the private sector and academia in the region are scheduled to take place after the WHS regional consultation in Jordan and will also feed into the global summit process.

CONSTITUENCY	CONSULTATION FORMAT	NUMBER
Civil society organizations	National consultations in Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya (held in Tunisia), Saudi Arabia, Palestine (West Bank and Gaza), Tunisia, Syria (held in Turkey), Qatar and Yemen. Regional consultation in Jordan to review emerging findings. Regional consultation in Morocco to consolidate final recommendations.	586 representatives consulted
People affected by humanitarian crises	Focus group discussions in Egypt, Jordan, Palestine (West Bank and Gaza), Syria and Yemen with refugees from within and outside the MENA region, internally displaced people, migrants, vulnerable groups and impacted host communities. Questionnaire completed by participants following the focus group discussions.	327 individuals consulted
Youth	Two online consultations. Online questionnaire.	119 individuals consulted
General public	Online consultation on the WHS web platform.	83 individuals consulted

³ See Annex and Acknowledgements for a list of organizations involved in convening preparatory stakeholder consultations.

⁴ See Annex for a timeline of preparatory stakeholder consultations.



CONSTITUENCY	CONSULTATION FORMAT	NUMBER
Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement	Meeting in Qatar with MENA Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of the Red Cross, and the Arab Red Crescent Organization.	44 representatives consulted
United Nations agencies, international NGOs and NGO networks	Roundtable discussion in Jordan on bridging humanitarian and development action.	39 representatives consulted
Member States and Regional Organizations	Meeting in Egypt convened by the League of Arab States for those Member States included in the WHS MENA regional consultation. ⁵ Roundtable discussion held in Kuwait on Gulf perspectives.	15 representatives consulted
Media	Roundtable discussion in Jordan.	16 individuals consulted
Financial institutions	Roundtable discussion in Kuwait on Gulf perspectives.	2 individuals consulted

⁵ A meeting in New York was held in February 2015 with the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations to initiate a bilateral consultation. This was due to their membership suspension at the League of Arab States, which did not allow them to participate in the abovementioned government consultation. The outcomes of the bilateral consultation were not finalized in time to feed into the final stakeholder analysis report for the MENA region, but will however, feed into the global WHS process.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: A CHANGING HUMANITARIAN LANDSCAPE

The Middle East and North Africa region has witnessed a substantial rise in humanitarian crises, as countries experience significant political, economic and social upheaval as well as the effects of natural disasters and rapid urbanization. The result is a region witnessing intolerable human suffering and unprecedented levels of vulnerability. In Syria, there are an estimated 12.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, including 7.6 million who are internally displaced. Over 3.8 million refugees have fled to neighbouring countries, with a significant impact on millions of vulnerable host communities in Jordan, Lebanon and to a lesser extent Egypt; in Iraq, an upsurge in violence led to the displacement of 1.8 million people last year, with an estimated 5.2 million people currently in need of humanitarian assistance.⁶

The ongoing occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip has created a protection crisis, with 1.9 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. There are over 15 million people in Yemen suffering from malnutrition, displacement and insecurity; in Libya, increasing violence has forced over 400,000 people to flee from their homes.⁷ The protracted nature of these crises, some having lasted for decades, has undermined development gains and challenged the ability of governments and communities to cope with shocks and address the impact of ongoing conflicts.

Individuals, civil society organizations, affected communities and government representatives consulted in the lead up to the WHS regional consultation for MENA consistently expressed outrage at the staggering level of human casualties and suffering in the region's current humanitarian landscape. They bemoaned an overall lack of accountability for violations and the failure to implement appropriate responses to current crises in the region. They further underscored the need for solutions that address the root cause of people's suffering, consistently stating that **humanitarian aid cannot**

continue to be a substitute for political action. This is a key message that needs to be at the forefront of the regional consultation.

In the absence of political solutions to these humanitarian crises, stakeholders called on governments and the humanitarian community to renew their efforts to provide people with much needed protection and assistance. There was a recognition that the continued provision of relief alone is not feasible and there is consensus on the need to find innovative ways of more sustainably meeting people's needs with dignity. Whilst recent efforts at promoting greater cooperation between humanitarian and development actors and strengthening people's resilience are to be applauded, more needs to be done to improve results in practice.

The current humanitarian system was cited as inadequate in the face of the changing humanitarian landscape in the region. There were consistent calls for real reform; change that better engages and promotes the efforts of numerous regional and national institutions and organizations. International assistance should work towards localizing humanitarian response, emphasizing national responsibility and accountability and strengthening local capacities to prevent, manage and respond to crises.

Putting people first by ensuring that the needs and capacities of affected people are at the heart of humanitarian action was also central to many of the discussions held during the preparatory consultation process. Yet, in practice, efforts are consistently falling short. This was the unanimous message from consultations with people affected by crises and is one of the main challenges facing the humanitarian community in the region. The WHS regional consultation for MENA is an opportunity to identify ways of addressing this failure, with many of the stakeholders consulted expressing the hope that it will not be missed.

⁶ *Syria Response Plan 2015 (OCHA); Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2015-2016 (UNDP; UNHCR); Iraq Strategic Response Plan 2014-2015 (OCHA).*

⁷ *Strategic Response Plan for occupied Palestinian territory 2015 (OCHA); Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan 2014-2015 (OCHA); Regional Humanitarian Snapshot: November - December 2014 (OCHA).*



Protection of Civilians

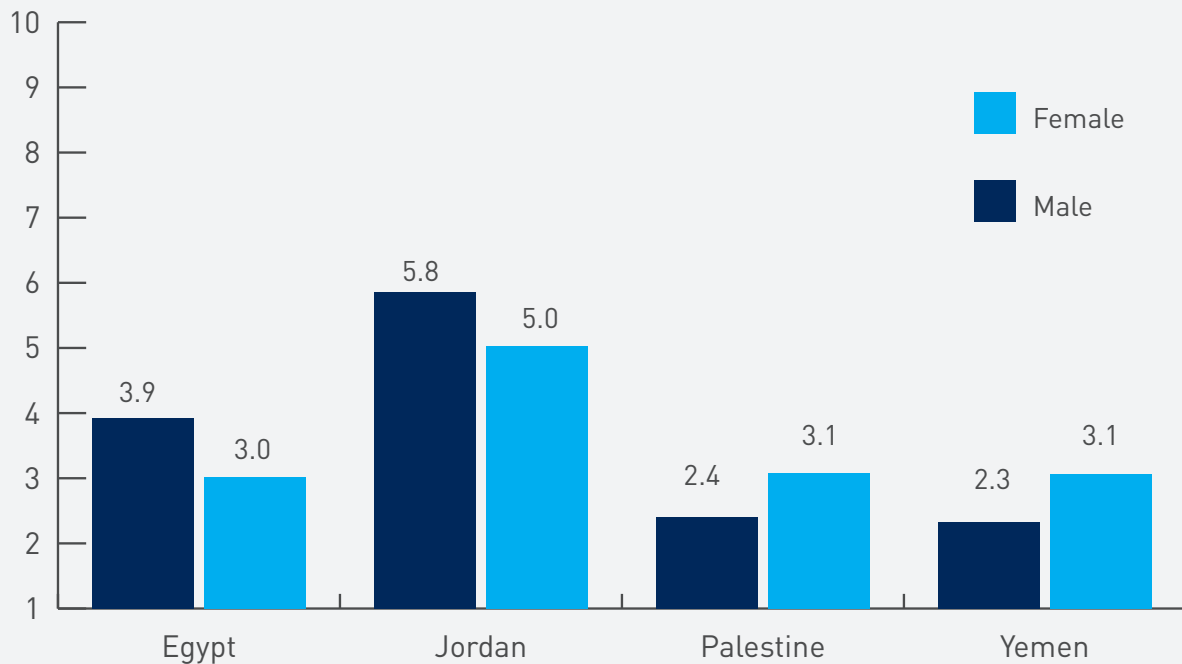
Protecting civilians is a central component of the principle of humanity, defined by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to include efforts to “prevent and alleviate human suffering” and “to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being”. Various legal instruments exist to promote the protection of civilians, grounded in International Humanitarian, Human Rights and Refugee Law. In addition, several religious and ethical frameworks emphasize the need to protect civilians from harm and violence.

Similar to previous WHS regional consultations⁸, stakeholders consulted in the MENA region identified **protection of civilians as a priority concern in the region** and pointed to the increasing scale and severity of attacks against civilians. They stated that conflicts in countries such as Iraq, Libya, Palestine, Syria and Yemen disproportionately affect civilians and actors fail to adhere to international legal obligations. Crisis-affected people consulted in the region rated their sense of safety and protection poorly, as seen in the graph below. Women and men in Jordan reported the highest levels of safety and feeling protected. The two countries where re-

spondents reported the lowest levels, Palestine and Yemen, were also where men reported feeling less safe than women. When asked for affected people’s priority needs during an emergency, safety ranked in the top three in all countries alongside food and shelter. On average, safety ranked as the top priority for women consulted across the region and third for men.

Emphasis was placed on the **need to address specific protection needs among affected populations**. Refugees in Jordan and Egypt and IDPs in Syria noted that women and girls are at greater risk of gender-based and sexual violence as well as forced and early marriages during times of conflict and displacement. Government representatives consulted also called for better consideration of the impact of conflicts on women, children and people with disabilities. They, as well as affected people consulted in Palestine, placed emphasis on the provision of psychosocial support in addition to physical protection. Refugees and stateless people noted how they are particularly marginalized and vulnerable to protection abuses such as physical violence, and displaced people in Yemen mentioned the lack of protection for individuals with disabilities and HIV-AIDS. The online consultations shed light on the importance of affording all migrants, including victims of human

Average degree to which affected people feel safe and protected from violence in their current situation (on a 10-point scale where 10=high and 1=low)



Source: Survey among affected people consulted in the region

⁸ West and Central Africa, North and South-East Asia and Eastern and Southern Africa in 2014, and Europe and Others group in 2015.

trafficking and unaccompanied minors, the same protection rights as all other affected groups.

There is widespread concern and frustration at the lack of accountability in the region for violations of the legal frameworks that protect civilians. Most stakeholders – from government representatives and civil society to UN agencies and affected people – emphasized the need to bring perpetrators to justice, calling for **greater enforcement, in an objective and universal manner, of International Humanitarian, Human Rights and Refugee Law**. Some consultations also raised the issue of perceived double standards in bringing governments and parties to account, with Israel cited as an example of a country that is not held to the same stringent standards as others.

There was also emphasis, particularly by Libyan and Palestinian civil society organizations and crisis-affected people across the region, on **the primary responsibility of governments in ensuring the protection of their citizens and facilitating humanitarian action**. Many regretted the fact that several Member States in the region have not signed up to key legal frameworks such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and 2009 Arab League cooperation agreement in organizing and facilitating relief operations. Where international legal frameworks have been endorsed, there were calls to ensure they are adequately reflected in domestic laws and are effectively applied in practice.

Stakeholders called on Regional Organizations, such as the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), to play a greater role in speaking out against those that violate laws that protect civilians and to demand that their Member States better uphold their obligation to protect civilians. The role of **the UN Security Council** was repeatedly discussed, with broad consensus among stakeholders that it **has failed to uphold its mandated responsibility to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure the protection of civilians**. The UN Security Council was accused of politicizing humanitarian action; with some participants in the Kuwait roundtable discussion putting forward a suggestion that the use of the veto in Security Council decisions on issues related to humanitarian action be banned.

Some stakeholders, including government representatives and civil society organizations, discussed the **Responsibility to Protect (R2P)** in the region. This included a call by many civil society organizations and some governments for the establishment of humanitarian corridors and possibly safe havens in conflict zones, in which affected people could receive protection and

assistance. This raised questions, however, of how this could be done in practice without militarizing and politicizing humanitarian action. Some government representatives rejected such appeals, emphasizing respect for state sovereignty. Others stressed the importance of not associating R2P primarily with military intervention and that greater efforts should be placed on political solutions to the many conflicts in the region.

Civil society organization often argued that humanitarian organizations in the region are largely focusing their efforts on providing material assistance rather than **fulfilling their role in addressing protection concerns**. Crisis-affected people in various locations identified the same imbalance and in most cases stated that they did not know how to seek protection from humanitarian actors, which was also seen as a result of weaknesses in communication between aid organizations and affected people. A number of humanitarian organizations, however, declared their commitment to protection, with one UN agency advocating for “putting protection at the forefront of humanitarian action” and another emphasizing how its programmes encourage community-based protection approaches. Several civil society organizations highlighted the important role they could play in protection, for example through advocating for other actors to bear their duty or through programmes that ensure people’s well-being and prevent forced displacement. Many called for these efforts to go beyond the misleading assumption that their mere presence ensures protection and suggested a need for wider sharing of practices that have proven to be effective, including innovative ways of contributing to affected people’s security. Increasing humanitarian organizations’ role in protection should not detract, however, from recognizing their limitations in what is ultimately a security and political issue, the main responsibility of which lies with governments.

Humanitarian Access

Stakeholders noted that barriers to humanitarian access have become one of the most pervasive challenges to effective humanitarian action in the region. This includes both affected people’s access to humanitarian assistance and protection as well as humanitarian organizations’ access to people in need.

Stakeholders felt strongly that **people’s movement must not be restricted** as it impedes their safe, timely and sustained access to assistance and protection. For example, parties to conflict may restrict communities’ movements as part of their political or military strategies, such as in besieged areas of Syria and in the occupied Palestinian

territory. This prevents civilians from seeking assistance beyond their immediate surroundings. Stakeholders also discussed how some governments close their borders with conflict-affected neighbours and thereby prevent people from seeking safety and asylum in their territories. Syrian refugees also expressed concern over deportations by neighbouring states, in violation of the principle of *non-refoulement*.⁹ Some government representatives recognized the consequences of closing their borders to refugees but pointed to their need to maintain stability in the context of a growing and unsustainable movement of displaced people in the region. They called for **greater burden sharing among the international community in terms of providing affected people with access to safety and assistance**.

Red tape and bureaucratic obstacles reduced humanitarian organizations' access to affected populations. Humanitarian organizations in the region discussed how delays in gaining security clearances and visas for staff slow down the delivery of assistance, consume limited staff time and resources and promote biases toward areas in which access is less restricted, thereby breaching the principle of impartiality. Stakeholders therefore called for the **easing of bureaucratic obstacles** that impede humanitarian action.

Civil society organizations and international humanitarian organizations alike argued that **measures taken by some donor and national governments and financial institutions, such as banks, to counter terrorism must be reviewed, as they are imposing undue restrictions on the ability of humanitarian organizations to operate** according to agreed standards and principles in areas in which there are proscribed groups. For example, Syrian and Iraqi humanitarian organizations stated that they are unable or unwilling to operate in parts of their countries controlled by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) due to funding restrictions or fears that they could be accused of providing material support to terrorism. Palestinian and Libyan organizations also expressed concern over restrictions that have been placed on the transfer of funds to Islamic charitable organizations and democratically elected governments. While recognizing the need for governments to combat terrorism, civil society groups called on them to ensure counter-terrorism legislation does not undermine the humanitarian imperative, or lead to relief operations being determined on criteria other than humanitarian needs.

Attacks on humanitarian workers have become commonplace, with the year 2014 witnessing 35 attacks in Lebanon, Libya, Palestine, Syria and Yemen. The majority of attacks impact local staff or organizations, and national societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement noted with alarm the particular vulnerability of local volunteers to attacks as they serve as frontline responders. This was echoed in the online youth consultation, where participants called for enhanced security measures to enable volunteerism in humanitarian work. General insecurity is creating restrictive operational environments, with humanitarian organizations unable to properly assess the level of humanitarian needs. For example, in Iraq, Libya and Syria, most humanitarian actors noted their inability to carry out adequate needs assessments or provide assistance and protection to those most affected across the country. Government representatives, humanitarian organizations, youth volunteers and participants in the online discussions all condemned violence against humanitarian workers and called for **better protection of aid workers and adherence to International Humanitarian Law**. Civil society organizations gathered in the regional meeting in Morocco advocated for the establishment of an international association that provides training and capacity development to humanitarian workers and their families and advocates for their safety and security.

In response to security concerns and other access constraints, many humanitarian organizations in the region have resorted to alternative methods of aid delivery. This includes 'remote management', where international agencies work from outside of the country or from capitals through local implementing partners. However, stakeholders consulted both online and in the region noted with concern that this creates additional challenges with regards to monitoring and accountability. It also transfers security risk to local partners, many of which do not have the capacity or resources to develop appropriate security protocols or acquire adequate insurance schemes. More broadly, it is compromising humanitarian organizations' proximity to affected populations, impacting accountability, preventing an adequate understanding of their needs or the ability to foster acceptance between organizations and the communities they aim to serve. Criticism was particularly directed at UN agencies, as their low **acceptance of risk** and subsequent security measures mean that one of the main institutions tasked to respond to humanitarian crises is often either the first to leave or unable to operate effectively where people are most affected.

⁹ *Non-refoulement is a principle of international law which forbids returning a victim of persecution to their persecutor. It was officially enshrined in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, article 33: "No Contracting State shall expel or return ("refouler") a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion."*

Cross-border operations were discussed by stakeholders as a potential way to better access hard-to-reach communities in Syria. Yet several humanitarian organizations noted that the UN Security Council resolutions that authorized UN agencies and their partners to use border crossings and routes across conflict lines have not been effective in practice and called for states, together with humanitarian partners, to better facilitate the provision of humanitarian relief, including across frontiers when this is the most effective way of providing life-saving assistance. Some government representatives in the region called for further exploration of the legality of cross-border operations, placing emphasis on respect for state sovereignty.

“Humanitarian organizations are often unable to protect themselves, and consequently cannot protect us.”

Palestinian woman in Gaza

Stakeholders consulted in the region and online widely recognized that reaching people in need of assistance and advocating for their protection requires humanitarian organizations to **engage and negotiate with all parties to a conflict**, including militaries and non-state armed groups. In practice, however, humanitarian or-

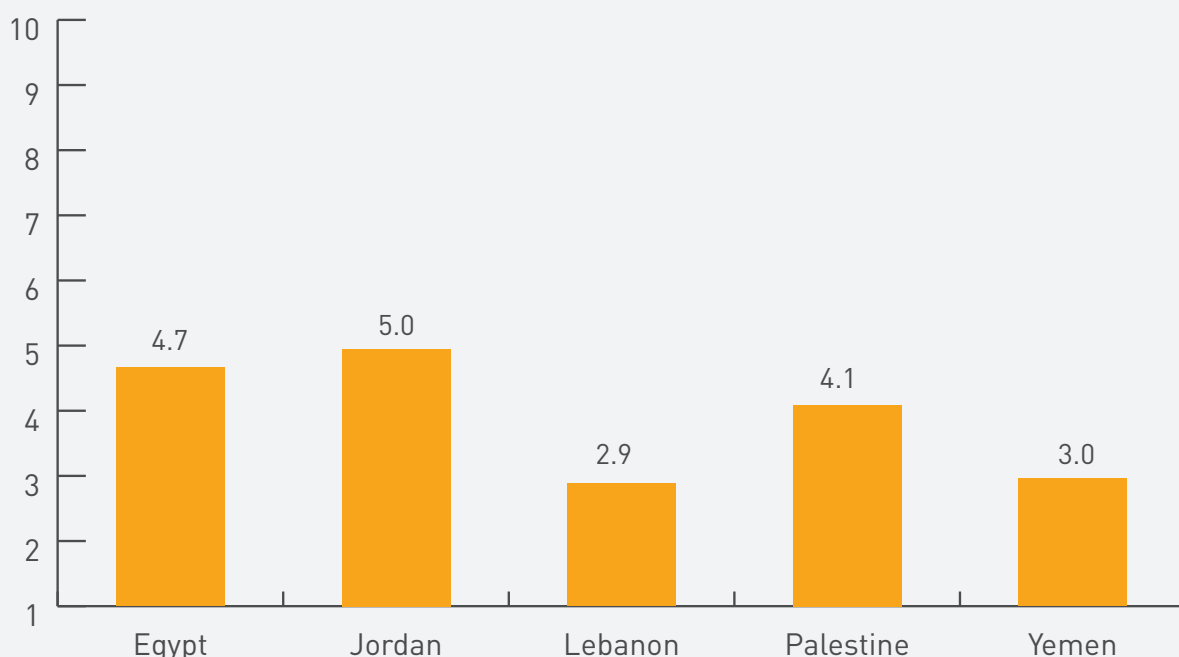
ganizations often feel they lack the necessary guidance and capacity to effectively engage with these actors. Counter-terrorism legislation and donor funding restrictions also make humanitarian organizations reluctant to engage with some actors for fear of criminal prosecution. Civil society organizations across the region, particularly in Egypt, Libya and at the regional civil society meeting in Morocco, called for recognition of the need for this dialogue and adequate capacity building and sharing of best practices.

Emphasis was placed on identifying ways to ensure humanitarian access, with stakeholders seeing the potential of **harnessing context-specific and culturally accepted frameworks** to help people meet their needs. As an example, participants in the Kuwait roundtable suggested capitalizing on Islamic principles and traditions, such as *Al Ash-hor Al Haram*, which calls for pauses in fighting during holy months of the year, thus creating the space for people to receive assistance and protection.

Principles of Humanitarian Action

The core principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence reflect longstanding humanitarian experience and are widely accepted by states and humanitarian actors as those that should guide humanitarian

Average degree to which affected people think aid groups are neutral and impartial (on a 10-point scale where 10=high and 1=low)



Source: Survey among affected people consulted in the region

action. Yet, stakeholders across the region discussed the reality of there often being a lack of respect – or perception thereof – for the principles of humanitarian action by some aid organizations and donors. The views of affected people on the subject were particularly damning: they critically discussed aid groups’ neutrality and impartiality in consultations and evaluated these qualities poorly in the survey, as shown in the graph on page 10.

Their experiences reflected a lack of respect for some of the principles of humanitarian action by some aid agencies. In Lebanon, several Syrian refugees reported that they felt that they had not received humanitarian assistance from some local organizations due to their political or religious affiliations. Syrian refugees, currently residing in Egypt, recounted how they had not received assistance in some parts of Syria as warring parties denied relief services to individuals that belong to particular political factions or religious sects. Eritrean refugees in Yemen recounted experiences of feeling humiliated and lacking dignity due to humanitarian organizations’ perceived preferential treatment of the Somali refugees compared to other refugees from Arab countries. Similar observations of discrimination were made by displaced ethnic Yemeni minority. These differences may be the result of some governments developing different policies in terms of entitlements for refugees’ on the basis of nationality.

“A lot of humanitarian actors do not provide aid based on needs alone. Many look at appearance, faith or political affiliation before assessing actual needs.”

Young female refugee in Egypt

Stakeholders pointed to the politicization of humanitarian action. Civil society and international humanitarian organizations as well as affected people all detailed examples of political prerogatives taking precedence over humanitarian action by states, donors and the UN Security Council, noting the negative effect this had, for example, on meeting the needs of Syrian and Palestinian civilian populations. This included the perceived stalling of the UN Security Council in calling for cross-border humanitarian assistance into Syria and the use of aid as a substitute for political action, such as in the case of Gaza. Stakeholders called for **better accountability mechanisms to counter the political influence on humanitarian action** in the region and for advocacy on clarifying the difference between humanitarian and political arms of organizations like the United Nations. While stakeholders frequently advocated for better

bridging humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities, as is discussed below, they cautioned humanitarians to **be mindful of potential partners’ more politically oriented mandates and ideologies** and to manage the risk of compromising or being perceived to compromise principled humanitarian action.

“When you decide to help someone you have to remove all their affiliations and simply treat them as humans.”

Female youth leader from Palestine

Stakeholders did not explicitly rank the principles of humanitarian action by importance. Yet there seemed to be **consensus on the principle of impartiality**, with affected people, humanitarian organizations, governments and participants in the online consultation emphasizing the importance of responding solely on the basis of need and without discrimination. Neutrality was equally advocated for, but stakeholders expressed a level of pessimism regarding the level to which it could be implemented in practice, including UN agencies and international NGOs, but especially local actors operating in politically polarized contexts such as Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen.

Additionally, the awareness and **operationalization of the principles of humanitarian action** differed among humanitarian actors, with a call for common understandings and sharing of best practices on how they can be implemented in practice. To complement the core humanitarian principles, civil society organizations and youth actors emphasized the importance of principles from religious traditions or worldviews, such as religious duty, solidarity or social justice. They argued that framing the core principles differently, for example by using Islamic terminology, could help to gain acceptance or facilitate access in certain contexts in the region.

Responding to Protracted Crises and Displacement

Stakeholders were unified in stating that the **increase in protracted armed conflicts and long-term displacement** in the region was pushing the humanitarian system far beyond the boundaries of what it was designed to manage. With the Syria crisis in its fifth year and the Palestinian and Sahrawi refugee crises stretching for decades, it is evident that in the absence of **political solutions**, humanitarian relief is required for increas-

ingly long periods of time. Thus, efforts are rightly being directed to more sustainably respond to people's needs. In Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen governments and the aid community are seeking to implement harmonized approaches that bring together humanitarian and development action, for example through the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) in response to the Syria Crisis, targeting both the displaced and impacted host communities. These efforts should not however, undermine the importance and urgency of finding solutions to protracted crises and displacement, which should remain a priority.

Despite efforts to develop more sustainable approaches, stakeholders from civil society, governments and humanitarian organizations recognized the gap between existing strategies that bring humanitarian and development actors together and their effective implementation in practice. More effective implementation requires a better understanding of how to **overcome the current divide between humanitarian and development programming** and their funding structures. This would lead to smoother transitions from short- to long-term relief as well as for joint planning and financing between governments, humanitarian and development actors, financial institutions and the private sector. These approaches also require an adequate policy environment, in which donors and national governments are working towards the same objectives and humanitarian principles.

Stakeholders, including civil society organizations in nearly every country consulted in the region, called for **building the capacity of local governments and civil society organizations** to manage the majority of relief efforts in protracted crises and for **international organizations designing an exit strategy into their programmes from the outset**. While several civil society organizations called for capacity support from international organizations, many were also vocal in highlighting the role of local organizations. As exemplified by a Lebanese civil society representative: "We should be the main force in responding to needs. We should not wait for others to act."

Consultations addressed the **role of humanitarians in tackling root causes of conflict and displacement**, with stakeholders recognizing that crises often become protracted in the region due to the lack of political solutions. Stakeholders consulted were divided, however, with many calling on humanitarian organizations to only focus on the consequences of humanitarian crises and not its causes, as otherwise, it would be difficult for them to preserve their neutrality and impartiality and such activities could open the door to the politicization of assistance. Rather, they suggest-

ed that conflict mediation and peacebuilding efforts should operate in parallel with humanitarian efforts and complement the work by facilitating better humanitarian access and opportunities for more sustainable programming.

Governments and humanitarian organizations applauded the generosity and continued commitment of the countries in the region to protect and assist displaced people. They pointed, however, to the imbalance in the response to the Syrian refugee situation and how the burden was being shouldered by a small number of neighbouring countries. This is not deemed sustainable, since growing numbers of refugees in such a small number of countries could lead to further instability in the region. They therefore advocated for **increased burden-sharing among the international community**. Acknowledging that many of the crises in the region are likely to have humanitarian implications for years, stakeholders called for durable solutions for displaced populations, including third country resettlement. Proposals included the adoption of temporary stay in countries that are dependent on labour migration taking advantage of the skills and experiences of refugees. This would provide them with livelihood support and, at the same time, benefit the economies of refugee hosting countries.

The protracted nature of displacement and the fact that the overwhelming majority of refugees in the region have settled in host communities in urban areas rather than camps highlights the importance of **addressing challenges with regards to social cohesion and tolerance for diversity**. Whilst many Syrian refugees consulted in several countries praised the warm welcome they received by host communities, they also discussed how over time tensions have emerged between them with instances of physical violence and psychological abuse, including towards children. Jordanian civil society organizations observed tensions in the country between Syrian and Palestinian refugees and host communities and noted how these tensions often arose from competition over employment opportunities in the informal market.

In response to tensions between displaced people and host communities, as well as to demands for preserving dignity, affected people routinely asked for **income-generating activities** as opposed to food and vouchers that leave them reliant on host governments and aid organizations. This was in line with the online consultation outcomes and the discussions with government representatives, who highlighted the importance of supporting refugees' self-reliance. Affected people in Jordan and Lebanon highlighted the impor-



tance of allowing refugees to work, which is not currently the case in several countries in the region. The private sector was also deemed to have a core business interest in building communities' self-sufficiency in protracted crises, and involving them in employment creation was encouraged.

Engagement with Affected Communities

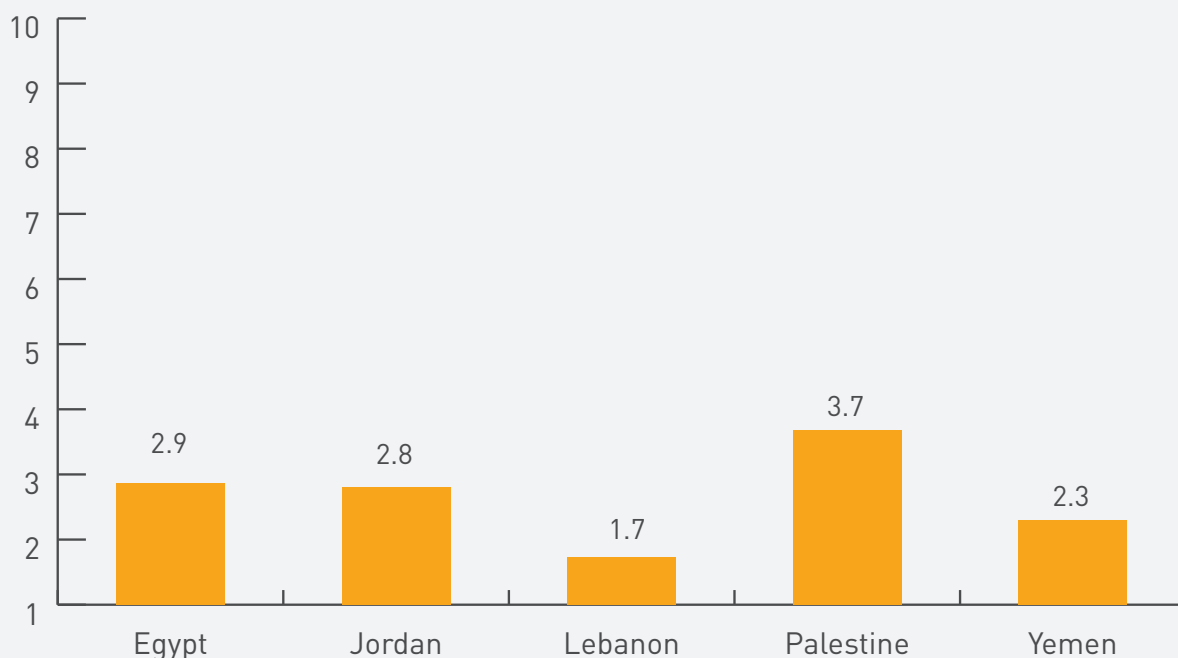
Orienting humanitarian efforts around the needs, rights, capacities and views of affected people has long been recognized as a critical way to improve humanitarian action and it has been one of the most frequent recommendations emerging from previous WHS regional consultations. Policies and guidance have been developed by different actors and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee which has endorsed five commitments towards promoting accountability to affected populations¹⁰, which is an important aspect of engagement with affected communities.

Stakeholders across the region underscored the importance of **meaningfully involving affected commu-**

nities in humanitarian preparedness and response. Communities are at the forefront of meeting their own needs and their efforts should be supported and built upon by humanitarian organizations. In addition, consultations across the region suggested that such partnerships would improve the understanding of humanitarian needs, build trust between aid organizations and communities and promote demand-driven humanitarian action.

Consultations held with affected communities revealed that people did not feel that aid organizations adequately consider their opinions when planning and delivering humanitarian relief, as seen in the graph below. Despite numerous humanitarian organizations already conducting comprehensive participatory assessments to inform their programme planning, affected people stated that **more needs to be done to ensure that affected communities are consulted meaningfully and a level of decision making power and influence is devolved to them.** Civil society participants in the Morocco regional meeting amplified this call and advocated for affected people's involvement in humanitarian programme planning and implementation particularly in protracted sit-

Average degree to which affected people think that aid groups consider their opinions (on a 10-point scale where 10=high and 1=low)



Source: Survey among affected people consulted in the region

¹⁰ The five commitments address improving organizational governance and leadership on integrating feedback and accountability mechanisms in all aspects of humanitarian programs; ensuring transparency in operations; actively seeking and integrating affected peoples' feedback and complaints to improve policy and practice; enabling participation in decision making processes; and improving design, monitoring, and evaluation of programs. For more information, see: <http://goo.gl/quLyAO>.

uations. Youth consulted in the region expressed strong interest in being involved in humanitarian programme design as well as monitoring and evaluation.

“Humanitarian organizations need to provide information about their services because it is not humane to respond to refugee information needs with ‘I don’t know’.”

Female refugee in Yemen

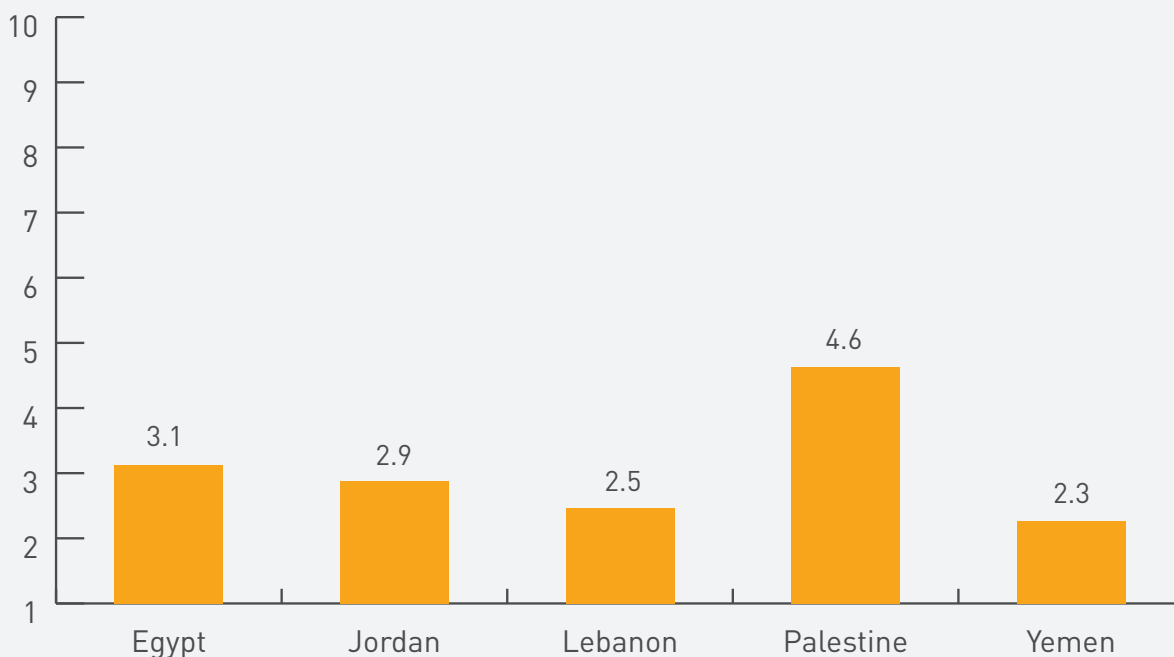
Better engagement with affected people includes **reaching all segments of the affected population and catering for their specific needs, vulnerabilities and capacities** – for example those for women, girls, boys and men. Civil society organizations in Iraq cautioned that women had to be engaged in a culturally sensitive manner, for example by having female humanitarian workers from the region engage with them and by holding separate meetings from those conducted with men. They also suggested that religious leaders could support engagement with communities, with current cooperation limited between humanitarian organizations and religious institutions involved in humanitarian work. Some stakeholders placed importance on finding

innovative ways to engage with the increasing number of affected people living in urban areas, given that they are often difficult to identify in large settlements.

Despite calls to better engage affected communities in needs analysis, vulnerability mapping and aid distribution, many refugees consulted across the region expressed concerns over the power given to some community leaders in such activities. Examples were given that recounted suspicions of aid diversion and corruption. In fact, concerns over preferential treatment of certain people by community leaders were raised in nearly all affected community consultations. In response to such concerns, affected people called for **stronger accountability and transparency measures at the local level to ensure appropriate targeting**.

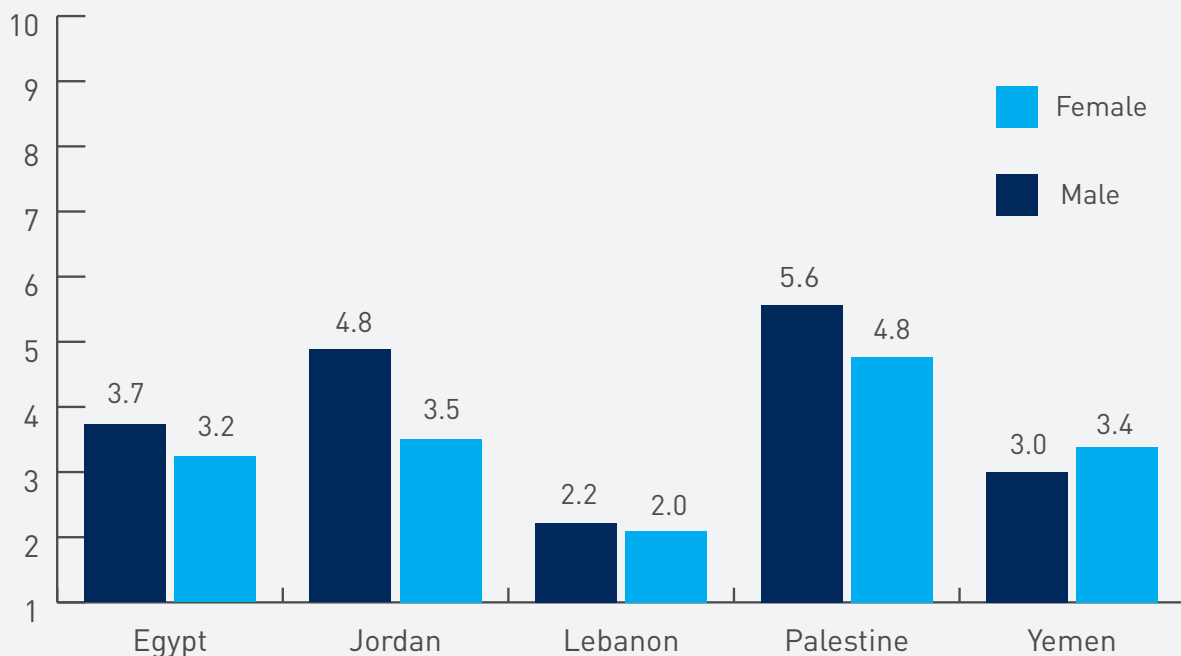
Affected people consulted in the region seldom felt that their priority needs were met, as shown in the graph below. This finding was supported by stakeholders who highlighted how affected people at times sell the in-kind assistance they received and use the funds to purchase other goods or services. To truly put people’s needs at the heart of humanitarian action, stakeholders argued that **people need to be given a choice** over what kind of humanitarian assistance they receive. **Cash-based approaches** were an often-mentioned example

Average degree to which affected people think their priority needs are being met by aid groups (on a 10-point scale where 10=high and 1=low)



Source: Survey among affected people consulted in the region

Average degree to which affected people feel that they and their community are treated with respect and dignity by aid groups (on a 10-point scale where 10=high and 1=low)



Source: Survey among affected people consulted in the region

of how such choice could be provided, particularly in urban contexts and where markets are functioning well. In fact, stakeholders noted how the use of unconditional cash assistance is already increasing significantly across the region to improve affected people’s choice in how they prioritize their household needs. The call for giving people a choice was resounding in consultations with affected communities, who frequently emphasized how giving them a choice in the type of assistance they need helped ensure their dignity, which they felt was often lacking. As visualized above, men and women respondents in Palestine reported feeling treated with the highest levels of respect and dignity, whereas men and women in Lebanon reported the lowest levels.

“We should consider affected communities as potential investors and not just subjects of receiving charity. This will help uphold their dignity and lead to more sustainable approaches to meeting their needs.”

Participant in the regional civil society consultation in Morocco

Affected people in Egypt, Jordan and Yemen in particular highlighted their lack of knowledge of the humanitarian response system, including the roles of different organizations in humanitarian action in the region, what kind of goods and services affected people are entitled to and what relief organizations’ selection criteria are for targeting beneficiaries. This highlights the **importance of basic information as a primary need for affected communities** and supports the current discourse of Communicating with Communities, also discussed in the online consultation. It also places emphasis on communication that is conducted in local languages and in a culturally appropriate manner. To complement existing efforts to inform affected people of their rights and entitlements, stakeholders called, stakeholders called for innovative ways through which aid agencies could better transfer knowledge to affected people even in hard-to-reach and besieged areas. Some affected people noted, however, that mobile phone technologies can dehumanize interaction with communities and underscored the need for in-person dialogue where information can also be passed on from affected people to humanitarian organizations in a two-way relationship.

The significance of two-way communication was also highlighted with reference to **accountability to affected people**. Crisis-affected individuals across the region



expressed dissatisfaction with the provision of humanitarian relief and noted how they lack the means to hold humanitarian organizations to account for not fulfilling their rights or not abiding by appropriate standards. Refugees consulted in Lebanon and Yemen, for example, stated that they are not aware of any existing feedback mechanisms to voice their opinions and complaints about local organizations or UN agencies. Several civil society organizations in the regional consultation in Morocco suggested that affected populations' feedback could be included in the performance evaluation of humanitarian organizations. Others went much further and suggested that affected people should be able to take legal action against governments and humanitarian organizations for not upholding their rights to assistance.

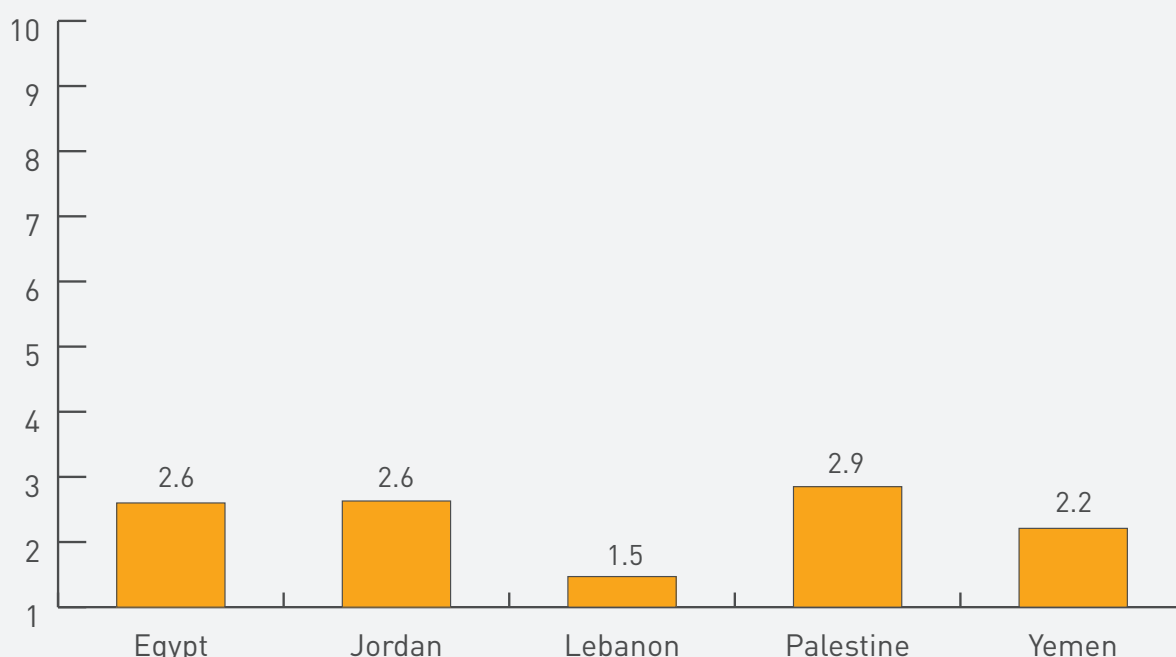
Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Risk Reduction

The frequency and severity of natural disasters in the MENA region has increased significantly, with the average number of disasters tripling over the last 30 years, affecting more than 40 million people and costing an es-

timated US\$20 billion.¹¹ Risks are particularly high in cities as a result of rapid urbanization and poor urban planning, population growth, elevated water demand in arid environments and the contamination of water resources. These risks are expected to increase in the years to come due to the effects of global climate change. In addition, vulnerability has become a dominant social feature in the region and is driven by changing social, political, ethnic and cultural dynamics. A consensus is emerging that greater investment in building resilience and disaster preparedness will help to ensure that when a crisis hits, lives and livelihoods are not immediately destroyed and development gains lost.

There is an increasing **political commitment** to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), emphasized during consultations with government representatives, but also evident through LAS' leading role in supporting and promoting the integration of DRR measures in regional policies and the Gulf Cooperation Council calling for strong regional commitment to strengthen resilience to natural hazards. Yet, stakeholders noted how **funding for emergency preparedness and DRR** remained limited and was not in line with these political commitments. They suggested that governments and other donors could commit **a certain**

Average degree to which affected people think aid groups help them, their family and their community prepare for future crises (on a 10-point scale where 10=high and 1=low)



Source: Survey among affected people consulted in the region

¹¹ *Natural Disasters in the Middle East and North Africa: A Regional Overview (World Bank, 2014).*

percentage of their humanitarian or development funding to such activities. In addition, stakeholders noted that local governments and communities are often not sufficiently informed or involved in the implementation of these political commitments and regional initiatives, thus failing to take their needs and capacities into account.

Government representatives, civil society organizations and participants in the online consultation called for **fast-er response to early warning signs** in the region, both for natural and man-made disasters. They advocated for closing the gap between early warning and response and placed emphasis on the importance of countries and communities recovering rapidly when shocks and stresses occurred. Stakeholders across the region also identified a lack of updated risk information and risk analysis as an obstacle to early action and noted the academia's and particularly sciences' potential in addressing this. Some government representatives emphasised the importance, in the interests of national security, of maintaining control over what information is shared and how it is used.

Affected people consulted across the region are concerned over their limited **knowledge and capacity to prepare and respond** to disasters. Refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Yemen, for example, noted how they have not received any training or capacity building and are not familiar with any preparedness measures, and are thus unaware of how to respond when the crisis occurs. As highlighted by a community leader in Gaza, "we have been in three wars already and each time we act surprised and do not know how to respond." The graph on page 18 shows how affected people do not think that aid groups adequately help them prepare for future crises. In response to this reality, civil society organizations advocated for creating deployable volunteer groups before crises occur – a recommendation endorsed in youth consultations – as well as developing contingency plans and organizing emergency drills in communities.

In line with previous WHS regional consultations' recommendation to **localize humanitarian preparedness and response**, stakeholders in the MENA region highlighted the importance of strengthening local actors' ability to reduce disaster risks and prepare for future crises. Civil society organizations in Tunisia placed emphasis on ensuring local ownership of disaster preparedness through involving them in decision-making and aligning international support with existing national plans and frameworks. Some government representatives encouraged countries in the region to cooperate in local capacity building; however, they also emphasized the importance

of international support, given the global nature of many of the risks and threats they face and the differing level of experience and capacity at the local level in the region. In the context of rapid urbanization, some stakeholders advocated for capacity development to also take place at the level of municipalities and mayors.

Humanitarian Coordination and Collaboration between International, Regional and Domestic Institutions

A key principle of effective humanitarian action is adequate coordination and collaboration between humanitarian actors in order to ensure that responses build on each other, avoid duplication and address the most pressing needs and gaps in assistance. Systems have thus been developed to promote humanitarian coordination, such as common needs assessments, strategic planning and coordination forums such as Humanitarian Country Teams and clusters or sectors. There have also been attempts to strengthen these with the agreement by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) on a Transformative Agenda in 2011.¹²

Despite these efforts, stakeholders argued that the existing **coordination mechanisms need to become more inclusive and representative** of the breadth of humanitarian responders in the region. Civil society organizations and government representatives in particular discussed how the IASC and mechanisms such as the cluster system are not effective and do not reflect the current constellation of humanitarian stakeholders in the region, often bypassing willing governments, businesses, civil society organizations and representatives of affected communities. The current humanitarian system was criticized for representing unequal power relations between Northern and Southern organizations and civil society organizations from various countries also noted that they often find it difficult to understand all the different mandates, structures, strategies and appeals, which hinder efforts to coordinate activities with them.

Affected people's experiences of humanitarian coordination are largely bleak, particularly in relation to targeting and aid distribution. Refugees in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon argued that poor coordination among humanitarian organizations had led to gaps in aid provision as well as duplications in response. They noted how refugees often had to proactively approach

¹² The IASC is an inter-agency forum for coordination, policy development and decision-making involving the key UN and non-UN humanitarian partners. In 2011, the IASC agreed on the Transformative Agenda, a set of actions to substantively improve the current humanitarian response model.

a number of different organizations as there were limited referral systems between aid groups. Affected people in Syria similarly called for improvements in coordination, particularly between local and international actors and recommended that international humanitarian actors and donors support and fund local coordination initiatives.

Some civil society organizations advocated for a shift in focus **from the international humanitarian system's inward-looking coordination to an emphasis on shared ownership of humanitarian response between international, regional and domestic institutions**. Emphasis was placed on supporting local capacity to respond, given governments' and civil society organizations' knowledge of local contexts, including languages, cultures and governance structures. While consultations highlighted the need to support government leadership of humanitarian coordination, with government representatives themselves discussing the importance of effective multi-sector coordination within countries and the need to strengthen regional coordination mechanisms and crisis management rooms, some civil society stakeholders questioned the impartiality of governments who are party to a conflict in coordinating or delivering humanitarian relief.

“The main obstacle to coordination is a lack of trust. To overcome this, we need transparency, dialogue and a unified vision.”

Tunisian civil society representative

Despite the calls for localized response and true collaboration, international humanitarian organizations pointed out that some regional and local humanitarian actors are often reluctant to share information or promote coordination with international counterparts, impacting the overall effectiveness of response. Civil society organizations in Egypt, Libya and Morocco explained that this is due to a lack of trust between local organizations, governments and international organizations, often stemming from lack of transparency, perceived power imbalances and suspicions of corruption. Civil society organizations also admitted that the lack of coordination structures among themselves hinder cooperation with international partners and expressed an interest in **creating regional civil society networks**.

Humanitarian Financing

Despite involvement by a large array of donors from within and outside of the Middle East and North Africa, available humanitarian financing failed to meet the current scale of demand in the region. In addition to **utilizing existing humanitarian resources better**, there was a need to **mobilize additional sources** of funding, including through financial institutions and the private sector. In fact, Arab governments have called for the creation of a regional bank for reconstruction and development to help address crises such as Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Palestine and Syria.

Several government representatives questioned the current discourse on humanitarian funding in the region. They rejected the terms “emerging” or “non-traditional” donors and appealed for **greater recognition of the culture and traditions of giving in the region**. In line with acknowledging regional specificities in funding, civil society organizations in their regional meeting in Morocco suggested to better leverage Islamic finance mechanisms – such as *saddaqa and waqf*¹³ – to support humanitarian work in a sustainable manner. Stakeholders called, however, for a sound analysis of the implications of encouraging such mechanisms' use for humanitarian purposes, given their other social functions in support of non-humanitarian needs.

There was some concern by UN agencies, international NGOs and civil society organizations that large amounts of humanitarian funding from the region are not being **reported in shared databases**, such as the Financial Tracking Service. This limits the ability to gain a comprehensive understanding of humanitarian financing flows and hinders current response and prioritization efforts. There has been some progress towards addressing this gap, with a Top Donors Group established for the Syria response. The League of Arab States also passed a resolution to establish an Arab humanitarian coordination mechanism, which would capture aid flows from Arab states in the region.

Stakeholders also called for **donors to fulfil financial pledges** to humanitarian assistance, such as at the Syria pledging conferences held in Kuwait. They further called for better compliance with the **Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles**, which emphasize impartiality, timeliness, predictability and flexibility with regards to humanitarian financing. Furthermore, members of the

¹³ *Saddaqa is an Islamic term for “voluntary charity”. Under the concept of saddaqa, a waqf is a religious endowment in Islamic law, usually donating a building, land or cash for Muslim charitable purposes.*

Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement placed importance on finding innovative solutions to **donor fatigue in protracted crises and in the context of a region with numerous crises**. This was echoed by Eritrean refugees in Yemen, who argued that the humanitarian community has forgotten about their longstanding humanitarian situation, with other more high-profile crises in the region attracting attention. Stakeholders called for the need to **de-politicize humanitarian funding and ensure** funding decisions are based on needs and not on the political and strategic importance of countries to donors.

The disproportionate allocation of direct funding between international organizations and local actors in favour of the former was identified as a key obstacle to the much demanded localization of humanitarian response. Local organizations were concerned at their disadvantage in brokering direct partnerships with international donors, often forced to go through UN agencies or international NGOs. Whilst this can be an important first step in building trust and capacity, local organizations complained that subsequent opportunities for bilateral engagement with donors are rarely forthcoming. This was deemed to be spurred by donors' unwillingness to take risks with local organizations, especially in contexts where counter-terrorism activities are taking place, and also due to organizational self-interest in which UN agencies and international NGOs act as "middle men", maintaining their role and presence in what has become a competitive industry. Civil society organizations in Lebanon described the scene as "a humanitarian marketplace". Stakeholders suggested a need to **enable direct funding for local organizations**, including the creation of additional country-based pooled funds for local actors.

Affected people's perceptions of humanitarian financing were in line with civil society organizations' demand for greater transparency. Palestine refugees, for example, called for clearer **communication on funding decisions** and were concerned about corruption. Across the region, affected people expressed frustration over some crises being more funded than others and asked for less opaque communication on funding decisions. Syrian refugees in Jordan argued that humanitarian organizations prioritized promoting themselves to donors over meeting community needs.

In an effort to identify **additional sources of funding**, stakeholders highlighted the potential role of the private sector, financial institutions and the diaspora. Civil society organizations suggested that tax breaks could be used to incentivize individuals and organizations to fund humanitarian action, while youth volunteers advocated for businesses committing a certain percentage of their

revenue to relief activities. Youth themselves were seen as an untapped resource, given the significant wealth in parts of the region – notably the Gulf countries – and the potential of engaging them in humanitarian fundraising through youth-friendly social media campaigns.

Enhancing the Role of Media

The media has proven a powerful force in **shaping the perceptions and response** of individuals, organizations and governments to humanitarian crises in the region. Various consultations raised the need to engage the media in a conversation about their pivotal role and impact in humanitarian affairs.

Stakeholders across constituencies **highlighted the media's often politicized coverage** in the Middle East and North Africa and called for objective reporting of humanitarian crises. Many refugees and migrants in the region, such as those in Egypt and Lebanon, believed that the media promulgates a negative image of their communities, affecting social cohesion and their safety and well-being. Media representatives, while recognizing political influence in certain news outlets, also highlighted the need for humanitarian organizations to go beyond giving them statistics on money spent or goods provided but rather facilitate engagement with affected people and access to operations so the media can better understand and report on humanitarian situations. As highlighted by one journalist consulted in the region, "humanitarian organizations do not see the media as a partner, but rather a medium to publicize their work".

"Change starts with individual mindsets and the media are a powerful tool to influence that mindset."

Tunisian civil society representative

Media representatives also called on **the need to train journalists so as to better understand humanitarian issues**, which are complex and require specific expertise. However, even with well-trained journalists, it is not always easy to get editors interested in humanitarian stories, particularly in protracted crises where stories may be deemed repetitive or no longer in the public interest. Citizen journalism and the use of social media platforms were deemed as alternative ways to improve coverage and address the lack of reporting in mainstream media. Some felt that greater coverage could be used as a way to promote an understanding of humanitarian values and principles among the general public, which was deemed currently lacking.

Media representatives also spoke about their role in advancing transparency and accountability in the humanitarian sector. One of the main barriers, in addition to a lack of in-depth understanding of the sector, is **reluctance by humanitarian organizations to be scrutinized**. Information requests are often not provided in a timely or comprehensive manner and as mentioned, journalists are rarely provided with access to affected people or operations. Some felt that this was also due to the lack of proximity that many humanitarian organizations have, particularly the UN, to affected populations. A proposal was made for **journalists to be embedded with humanitarian organizations**, which would serve to improve their understanding of the sector and their ability to report in a way that can promote more accountability. This would also require professionalism and integrity by the journalists so as to build trust in the relationship. Consultations also addressed the influence that distorted media coverage can have on humanitarian funding and programming. Stakeholders were concerned about the media being able to draw attention to certain humanitarian crises and not cover others and suspected that donors and humanitarian organizations react to media triggers more than to where needs are greatest. For example, Palestinians consulted in Gaza mentioned that aid was distributed in specific areas depending on the presence of media coverage. Other stakeholders felt that the scale of needs in Yemen has largely been forgotten, or as one stakeholder questioned, “perhaps never known in the first place.”

Empowering Youth in Humanitarian Action

The Middle East and North Africa region is experiencing an unprecedented “youth bulge”, with nearly 30 per cent of its population between the ages of 15 and 29.¹⁴ Consultations frequently highlighted the importance of better engaging youth in humanitarian response and strengthening volunteer networks, which many stakeholders consulted, including government representatives and civil society organizations, recognized as a key component of humanitarian action.

“Youth are not the problem, they are the solution.”

Tunisian male youth respondent to online survey

Youth are already closely involved in humanitarian action, as consultations in the region confirmed. 87 per cent of respondents to a youth survey in the region stated that they contributed in some manner to assisting affected people in humanitarian situations. Given the often *ad hoc* nature of their involvement in humanitarian relief, young people called for **more institutionalized forms of youth engagement**, for example through creating youth branches in civil society organizations and relevant government departments, establishing an international youth coalition on humanitarian action and expanding existing youth policies and codes of conduct. Stakeholders appreciated the involvement of youth in the work of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and noted the potential of other organizations drawing on their lessons learned. Emphasis was placed on encouraging girls’ and young women’s involvement, as most youth involvement in humanitarian action was perceived to be for boys and young men.

Volunteerism has a long tradition in the region, with many established organizations tracing their roots back to volunteer initiatives. As a Gazan civil society representative noted “Volunteerism is the foundation of our institutionalized humanitarian efforts and its strength will determine the future of humanitarianism in the region.” Many civil society organizations and youth groups noted the emphasis placed on volunteerism in Islam and Arab culture, with those in Iraq suggesting that religious leaders could play a greater role in **encouraging young people to volunteer for humanitarian causes**. Government representatives and Syrian refugees in Jordan similarly called for better encouraging of volunteerism in the region. Young IDPs consulted in Syria also stated their commitment to volunteering in humanitarian action, many already engaged in aid delivery in Damascus, but highlighted the need for greater **training and capacity support** to improve their effectiveness and enhance opportunities.

To maximize young people’s awareness of and ability to respond to crises, civil society organizations in Kuwait and Tunisia advocated for **including humanitarian issues in education curricula**. Participants to the virtual youth consultation suggested using religious education classes in schools to increase awareness of the principles of humanitarian action and to use after-school activities for capacity building and emergency drills. Civil society organizations and youth groups in Palestine called for training on disaster preparedness in schools from an early age, recognizing that youth were often the

¹⁴ Brookings Institution: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/topics/middle-east-youth>.

first responders to humanitarian crises. Governments in the region also discussed the possibility of training youth on disaster response in cooperation with student unions and higher education institutes.

Migration

The MENA region continues to see large and complex migration flows. Most migrants are from Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, making their way towards the Gulf, North Africa and the Mediterranean region. In September 2014 alone, over 12,700 people reached Yemen from the Horn of Africa, and over 200,000 refugees and migrants crossed the Mediterranean to Europe in 2014, with a large majority of boats departing from Egypt, Libya and Turkey.¹⁵

“If you want to protect us from the sea, ensure that our dignity is protected on the ground.”

Young male refugee in Lebanon

There is a general absence of national asylum systems in the region, as well as inadequate implementation of international human rights framework as it applies to migrants. Migrants’ journeys are fraught with risks and vulnerabilities, including discrimination, violence, and sexual, social and economic exploitation, as well as lack of respect of basic rights, decent living conditions, access to health care and a poor working environment.

An often overlooked issue is the impact of crises on international migrants, who can get stranded in conflicts as has happened recently in Libya. Migrants are also vulnerable to human trafficking, particularly women and unaccompanied minors, and become increasingly at risk as they undertake onward movement from their first country of refuge to the next. In consultations in the region and online, government representatives, civil society organizations and other stakeholders advocated for **greater awareness-raising and mitigation of the risks of migration** and human trafficking, as well as for a discussion aimed at finding solutions to migration, even if temporary in nature.

Travelling in unsafe vessels and often at the mercy of smugglers and harsh weather conditions, it is estimated that over 3,000 people perished at sea in 2014 while attempting to reach Europe. Despite the dangers of the journey, several young people consulted in the MENA region still considered attempting to cross the Mediterranean by boat, citing poor living conditions and limited employment opportunities as key push factors. The complexity and importance of addressing migration across the Mediterranean was acknowledged at the 2014 annual Protection Dialogue organized by UNHCR, where the need for coastal nations and regional blocs to revise their immigration and security policies to better protect migrants was underscored. There was concern in the region that migration was primarily addressed by governments as a security issue, but as was argued at the High Commissioner’s Protection Dialogue, **ensuring national security should not contradict respecting international law, tolerance and the imperative to save lives.**

¹⁵ So Close Yet So Far from Safety (UNHCR, 2014). Available at <http://www.unhcr.org/542c07e39.html>.



CONCLUSIONS AND WAYS FORWARD

This report has outlined the diverse opinions and positions on the main priority humanitarian issues that have emerged from the preparatory stakeholder consultations. Many of these issues are in line with priorities identified in previous WHS regional consultations. This signals a sobering reality of globally shared humanitarian concerns. Yet, it is also a source of optimism, as actors across regions are facing similar challenges and appear united in wanting to find ways to more effectively meet pressing humanitarian needs.

In the absence of much-needed political solutions to the region's humanitarian crises, stakeholders called on the humanitarian community to renew their efforts to provide people with protection and assistance. While it is widely acknowledged that people's needs and rights should guide all humanitarian action, efforts to achieve this continuously fall short. Protection violations persist with little accountability, humanitarian access remains limited and humanitarian crises are becoming increasingly protracted. The global humanitarian architecture struggles to remain fit for purpose and has much room for improvement when it comes to fostering true collaboration between international, regional and local actors. There are also strong calls to strengthen regional and local humanitarian response, but the concrete steps on how to arrive at locally owned humanitarianism have not been clearly mapped out in the region.

The WHS regional consultation for MENA provides a platform to tackle some of these challenges and suggest concrete ways forward. It will not be possible to adequately address all the issues outlined in this report; thus, the regional consultation meeting will focus on developing conclusions and recommendations on the six topics that have been most prominently discussed during preparatory consultations and are considered to be some of the main priorities in the region. Based on the findings related to these topics, the Regional Steering Group has put forward the following questions to stimulate participants' preparation for the regional consultation. More concise discussion questions will be developed and shared with the participants for discussion at the regional consultation.

Protection of Civilians

- How can Governments, Regional Organizations and non-state actors better meet their responsibilities in supporting and advocating for the protection of civilians, including by ensuring greater respect for International Humanitarian, Human Rights and Refugee Law?

- How can greater accountability by states and parties to conflict be achieved in the face of clear violations of the law?
- How can humanitarian actors, including the UN and non-governmental organizations, contribute to better protecting civilians and supporting affected communities' own protection mechanisms?
- How can the diverse and specific protection needs of affected communities be best addressed?
- What other protection frameworks or principles exist, such as local customary law and practice, that could be harnessed for better protecting civilians?

Protracted Crises and Displacement

- How can humanitarian organizations more sustainably contribute to meeting people's needs and increase their resilience and self-sufficiency in protracted crises?
- What are the core building blocks that are required to enhance coherence between humanitarian and development actors so as to more sustainably respond to people's needs in protracted crises?
- How can the trend and impact of increasing and protracted displacement in the region be mitigated?
- What is the role of humanitarian actors in addressing the 'underlying causes' of conflict or crises in order to prevent them from re-occurring?
- How can a more coherent approach be developed between Governments, their development partners and the humanitarian community to support the hosting of displaced people, including the impact on host communities? How can greater burden sharing be fostered in terms of hosting the displaced in the region?
- How can the private sector be better mobilized to engage and support humanitarian action in protracted crises?
- What adjustments need to be made to the tools, approaches, coordination mechanisms and partnerships in the region to more effectively respond to crises in urban areas?

Humanitarian Access

- How can Governments and non-state actors better facilitate access for humanitarian organizations and enhance the ability for people under threat to seek protection and assistance, including across borders?

- How can humanitarian organizations enhance the security of their staff and their partners without jeopardising their proximity to affected people and transferring risk to local partners?
- How can the negative impact of international and national counter-terrorism measures on humanitarian access be mitigated?
- How can appropriate humanitarian dialogue between humanitarian actors and parties to a conflict and other actors of influence be enhanced in a principled manner?
- What innovative practices in improving humanitarian access in the region can be shared and scaled up?
- How can affected people be given a greater choice in the kind of assistance and protection they receive? What lessons can be learned from the use of cash based approaches in the region?
- How can national responsibility and accountability for humanitarian action be strengthened?
- How can humanitarian funding more directly reach the actors that are best placed to deliver humanitarian services, and where appropriate, be increasingly channelled to national and local actors?
- How can international humanitarian actors ensure that their efforts are building national and local capacity to better prepare and respond to crises in the short, medium and long term?
- How can international, regional and national co-ordination mechanisms be made more inclusive so as to cater for the needs of the breadth of humanitarian responders?
- How can trust be built among local, national and international actors to facilitate cooperation and information-sharing?

Emergency Preparedness

- What incentives and support is required for Governments to better manage risk and reduce vulnerability, and to make appropriate budget allocations and actions for building resilience and responding to crises?
- How can the role of Regional Organizations be strengthened to promote emergency preparedness and risk management?
- How can community resilience be strengthened to better cope with shocks and crises? What lessons can be learned from current efforts?
- How can it be better ensured that early warning signs result in early and appropriate response?
- What is required to scale up Government and donor investment in emergency preparedness?
- What is required, including partnerships with science and the private sector, to better anticipate natural hazards and crises and their impacts, and ensure that humanitarian action is fit for purpose in preparing for and responding to such events?

Localizing Humanitarian Response

- How can affected communities be meaningfully consulted and a level of decision making power and influence devolved to them?
- How can community responders, including youth and volunteers, be better supported in humanitarian preparedness, response and recovery?

Humanitarian Financing

- How can Governments and Regional Organizations work better with the international community to improve donor coordination and ensure that there is a common picture of humanitarian financing?
- How can the culture and traditions of charitable giving in the region be better recognized and harnessed to meet humanitarian needs?
- How can financial institutions and the private sector be better mobilised to engage and support humanitarian action in the region?
- How can Good Humanitarian Donorship principles or similar frameworks be taken up or adapted for donors from the region?
- How can the impact of counter-terrorism legislation be mitigated so as not to undermine the transfer of funds for relief operations?
- What is required to reduce the gap between increasing needs and available resources within the region?

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Cooperation and Development (MICAD) of United Arab Emirates, Palestinian Non-Governmental Organization Network (PNGO), Qatar Charity, Qatar Red Crescent Society, Royal Charity Organization, Sharek Youth Forum, Syrian NGO Alliance, Syrian Women's League, Tunisia Charity, Tunisian Red Crescent, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and United Nations Population Fund.

A special mention is required for The Humanitarian Forum for their leadership and commitment in mobilizing individuals and organizations across the region to organize preparatory consultations and raise awareness and support for the World Humanitarian Summit process.

Finally, the Regional Steering Group would like to thank Al Walid Bin Talal Foundation, the Government of Netherlands and the League of Arab States for sponsoring the WHS regional consultation for MENA.



ANNEX: TIMELINE OF PREPARATORY STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

DATE	COUNTRY	EVENT	CONSTITUENCIES CONSULTED	HOST ORGANIZATIONS
MAY 2014	Bahrain	National civil society consultation	Civil society organizations	Royal Charity Organisation and The Humanitarian Forum
	Qatar	National civil society consultation	Civil society organizations	Qatar Charity, Qatar Red Crescent Society and The Humanitarian Forum
JUNE 2014	Kuwait	National civil society consultation	Civil society organizations	International Islamic Charitable Organization and The Humanitarian Forum
	Yemen	National civil society consultation	Civil society organizations	The Humanitarian Forum Yemen and the Humanitarian Forum
	Jordan	National civil society consultation	Civil society organizations	Jordan Hashemite Charitable Organization and The Humanitarian Forum
	United Arab Emirates	National civil society and government consultation	Civil society organizations and government representatives	Ministry of International Cooperation and Development of UAE
AUGUST 2014	Tunisia	National civil society consultation	Civil society organizations	Tunisia Charity, Tunisian Red Crescent, Islamic Relief and The Humanitarian Forum
SEPTEMBER 2014	Tunisia	National civil society consultation for Libyan NGOs	Civil society organizations	Al-Taher Azzawi Charitable Organization and The Humanitarian Forum
	Saudi Arabia	National civil society consultation	Civil society organizations	Al Walid Bin Talal Foundation and The Humanitarian Forum
	Jordan	Regional civil society consultation I	Civil society organizations	The Humanitarian Forum and Jordan Hashemite Charitable Organization
OCTOBER 2014	Kuwait	High-level roundtable on the World Humanitarian Summit: Perspectives from the Gulf Region	Governments, civil society organizations, financial institutions and UN agencies	International Islamic Charitable Organization, The Humanitarian Forum and UNOCHA
NOVEMBER 2014	Lebanon	National civil society consultation	Civil society organizations	Amel Association, ICVA and The Humanitarian Forum
	Lebanon	Focus group discussions with affected people	Refugees from Palestine and Syria	Lebanese Organization for Studies and Training, Amel Association, ICVA and UNOCHA
	Egypt	National civil society consultation	Civil society organizations	League of Arab States and The Humanitarian Forum
	Iraq	National civil society consultation	Civil society organizations	Iraqi Red Crescent and the Humanitarian Forum
	Turkey	National civil society consultation for Syrian NGOs	Civil society organizations	Syrian NGO Alliance, Qatar Charity, The Humanitarian Forum and UNOCHA

DECEMBER 2014	Palestine	National civil society consultation	Civil society organizations	Qatar Charity, PNGO, The Humanitarian Forum and UNOCHA
	Egypt	Focus group discussion with affected people	Refugees from Syria	Arab Organization for Human Rights and the Syrian Women League and UNOCHA
JANUARY 2015	Qatar	The MENA Red Cross and Red Crescent Consultative Meeting	MENA Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of the Red Cross, and the Arab Red Crescent Organization	Qatar Red Crescent Society
	Morocco	Regional civil society consultation II	Civil society organizations	The Humanitarian Forum, ISESCO, Qatar Charity and Al Waleed Bin Talal Foundation
	Egypt	Focus group discussions with affected people	Refugees and migrants from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Syria	International Organization of Migration
	Yemen	Focus group discussions with affected people	Internally displaced persons; refugees from Eritrea, Somalia, Yemen and Syria	The Humanitarian Forum Yemen and ICVA
FEBRUARY 2015	Jordan	Roundtable for United Nations Agencies and International NGOs	United Nations agencies, international NGOs and NGO networks	UNHCR
	Egypt	Government consultation	LAS Member States included in the WHS MENA regional consultation	League of Arab States
	Syria	Focus group discussions with affected people	Internally displaced persons	UNFPA
	Palestine	Focus group discussions with affected people	Palestine refugees	ICVA and Sharek Youth Forum
	Jordan	Focus group discussions with affected people	Refugees from Syria	UNFPA
	Jordan	Focus group discussions with affected people	Refugees from Iraq, Palestine Somalia, Sudan and Syria	ICVA, Care International and UNOCHA
	Online	Regional youth consultation I	Youth	Sharek Youth Forum and UNOCHA

FEBRUARY 2015	Egypt	IFMSA youth consultation	Youth (medical students from the region)	IFMSA and UNOCHA
	Online	Regional youth consultation II	Youth	Sharek Youth Forum and UNOCHA
	Jordan	Media roundtable	Media	IRIN and UNOCHA





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