



## FLEXIBILITY



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A lack of flexibility within humanitarian agencies is producing inadequate responses to conflicts and crises that are increasingly complex, dynamic and protracted. ALNAP's two-year research programme 'Creating a More Flexible Humanitarian Response' considered approaches to help agencies respond more effectively and adaptively to crisis settings.

As part of ALNAP's strategic focus on addressing key evidential gaps, the aim of this project was to undertake exploratory research on enablers and barriers to flexibility and adaptation in contemporary humanitarian action.

Outputs from the programme – which ended this year – ranged from a flagship report and case studies to audio features. Events and workshops to showcase the research have gathered Members over the past 12 months at locations in Europe and Africa. Feedback suggests some agencies are already making changes to approaches in light of our findings.

**When World Vision first began designing our approach to programming in fragile contexts, we turned to ALNAP to ensure we had the best analysis on what has worked for other agencies and what learning we needed to consider. [...] Over the course of two years, ALNAP became our invaluable partner in designing, implementing and learning about our programming approach in the field.**

**Staff member, World Vision International**

### Key achievements

Many crises now unfolding – prolonged conflicts, climate change, population movements – are creating humanitarian demands that outpace the approaches of organisations. Central to ALNAP's research was recognition that a more nimble response is needed – beyond reaction to the shorter, rapid-onset situations that first shaped the humanitarian system.

Reflecting the theme of the project, ALNAP created a user-friendly, flexible set of learning papers and products – the culmination of two years spent with Members to understand the operational challenges they face.

Chief among these is '[Shifting Mindsets: Creating a more flexible humanitarian response](#)', the flagship report and companion for humanitarian leaders seeking to make their organisations more fit-for-purpose. Accompanying short audio features and expert interviews offered alternative channels to access this research.

Other papers probed different aspects of flexibility. [A country study examined its role and effectiveness in the response to Kenya's 2016–2017 drought](#) while two 'spotlight' case studies investigated user-centred design, and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

Various events explored the findings as part of ALNAP's wider engagement with Members to strengthen organisational capacities for flexibility. These included a roundtable with senior leadership at MSF OCB in Amsterdam; a week-long workshop in Istanbul for logistics and procurement professionals from the UN, the International Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and INGOs; a learning workshop with World Vision country teams in Kigali, Rwanda; and a presentation to the Irish humanitarian community in Dublin, hosted by Christian Aid Ireland.

ALNAP also prepared a dissemination slide-deck and survey to present tailored findings for staff in large humanitarian agencies, including the Humanitarian Financing and Resource Mobilization Division of UN OCHA, IRC, and Oxfam's global MEAL team. World Vision International has used the framework and key concepts to inform adaptive management approaches in fragile settings.

All sessions were very well received, with organisations appreciating the opportunity to pause and reflect.

**ALNAP's flexibility research served as a key input into the development of World Vision's Fragile Contexts Programming Approach.**

**From the initial case study in the DRC to the final organisational case studies completed this year, we incorporated ongoing learning from the research into our programming in practical ways.**

**This included elements of anticipatory and adaptive flexibility, identifying and highlighting specific areas where we needed to 'plan to be flexible' and ensuring that we also addressed the enabling elements which would allow programme flexibility.**

**Staff member, World Vision International**

