

INTRODUCTION

The goal of The State of the Humanitarian System (SOHS) study is to gather and synthesise evidence to form an overall picture of the system, and indicate how well it is serving the needs of people affected by conflict and crisis.

System? What system?

This study uses the term 'system' in an organic rather than mechanistic sense, as a complex whole formed of interacting and interrelated elements. The humanitarian system is thus defined as **the network of interconnected institutional and operational entities through which humanitarian assistance is provided when local and national resources are insufficient to meet the needs of the affected population.**

Analytical framework

The study evaluated the humanitarian system on its performance and progress between 2012–2014, using the OECD-DAC evaluative criteria as modified for humanitarian action (OECD-DAC, 1991; Beck, 2006): coverage/sufficiency, relevance/appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, connectedness, coherence and impact.

This year's report differs from earlier editions, as performance has been assessed through the lens of four core functions of the humanitarian system. The humanitarian system can be seen as having two principal functions:

- Providing rapid relief in response to major sudden-onset disasters
- Meeting the basic humanitarian needs of populations undergoing chronic crisis conditions caused by conflict, repeated natural disasters, failures of development or governance, or some combination thereof.

The SOHS 2015 also identifies two auxiliary functions:

- Building capacity for local disaster preparedness, recovery and general resilience
- Advocating for humanitarian action and access on behalf of crisis-affected people.

The four functions described above do not make up an exhaustive list of humanitarian activities and are not equally important in every case. Rather, elements of each are usually at work to some degree in any given humanitarian context.

