

Talking Reform, But Not Doing Reform? Investigating the International Dynamics of Reform in the Health Sector of Humanitarian Assistance.

Suzanne Gosling

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Bournemouth University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

The primary purpose of humanitarian aid is to save lives, reduce suffering and ensure respect for human dignity. Conducting humanitarian response has become a multi-billion-dollar operation and facilitated the creation of an elaborate health Cluster System, focused on responding to increasingly complex global emergencies.

This study examines the impact of such an expensive system, with a focus on health emergencies given the size, and function of the health Cluster System. The study analyses whether respective path dependencies and institutional dynamics of the humanitarian sector inhibits the system and unintentionally prevents reform. It identifies problems of fit and misfit of purpose that require resolution through institutional or financial reform. Importantly, the thesis offers a conceptual framework that seeks to illustrate and understand the importance and resonance of imbalances within humanitarian organisations that limit reform, and impact on the functioning of the health Cluster System more widely.

This thesis contributes to scholarly research, using a new institutional conceptual lens; which is a sociological approach that emphasises the role of institutions in shaping social life and how organisations interact with them.

The methodology for this thesis represents a qualitative inductive approach and draws upon 66 completed qualitative semi-structured interviews. Such a qualitative inductive approach is preferred since it more easily reveals the nuances in the operation of the health Cluster System in relation to international humanitarian health response. It can capture complex understanding of when and where health organisations may have issues towards reform due to often unintentional path dependencies that are created and shaped by prevailing institutional dynamics.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented is entirely my own.

CHAPTER 1

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Humanitarian assistance, and indeed, the humanitarian assistance system is often difficult to define, not least because the system has evolved over many years and become ever more complex. Nevertheless, Borton, (2009), states that “a striking feature of the humanitarian system is the continuing lack of clarity as to what the humanitarian system actually consists of and where its boundaries lie”. (p.4) The primary purpose of humanitarian assistance is to save lives, reduce suffering and respect to human dignity. It is characterised by an international approach that brings together multiple agencies, such as the UN, NGOs and INGOs. All whose principles are based on the internationally agreed standards, such as, the UN Resolutions 46/182 (1991) and 58/114 (2003), the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief (1994) or the Sphere Standards and the Humanitarian Charter (2000).

1.1 HUMANITARIAN DEFINITIONS

“Humanitarian Assistance is intended to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and after man-made crises and disasters caused by natural hazards, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for when such situations occur. Humanitarian assistance should be governed by the key humanitarian principles of: humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence”. (Global Humanitarian Assistance; Nov 2017, p.1).

Humanitarian assistance is governed by humanitarian principles. It is generally seen as the combination of humanitarian aid and humanitarian action, to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain and protect human dignity. In situations where humanitarian assistance is required,

the host state must consent to it. Humanitarian action is the delivery of aid and assistance to those in need. And it includes the protection of civilians and those no longer taking part in hostilities. They have established procedures and protocols for responding to emergencies.

“At the core of all humanitarian actions lie the fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. These principles, rooted in international humanitarian law, have been embraced by the United Nations through General Assembly Resolutions 46/182 and 58/114. Their widespread acceptance and significance are further emphasised by their incorporation into the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations in Disaster Relief and as well as the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability”. (UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency; 2001-2024, p.1).

And lastly, humanitarian aid is the services that are provided to address the needs of those who are suffering, for example, healthcare, water, food and so forth.

“Humanitarian aid is assistance that’s used to relieve suffering during emergency situations. This is different from development aid, which is assistance that goes to addressing ongoing issues that contribute to human suffering. Humanitarian aid directly benefits people. Humanitarian assistance is designed to address vulnerabilities that enhance risks: A clinic is set up to treat cases of malnutrition in women and children living in refugee camps....Everyone has the right to receive humanitarian aid if it is needed, regardless of their race, class, politics, ethnicity, gender, or any other identifying factors”. (Concern Worldwide US, 2022, p.1).

Without humanitarian assistance many families, communities and even entire countries may face extreme poverty that can last for generations. These definitions of humanitarian

assistance, all work together to complement a humanitarian response, under established procedures and protocols.

“Though much focus is currently on humanitarianism in response to recent events such as the conflict in Syria or the migrant crisis in Europe, humanitarian responses in times of conflict and war have been evolving since the 18th century”. (Hardy et al, 2016, p.1).

The history of humanitarianism began between 1793 and 1814, allowing soldiers to recover and return to the battle more quickly. A second strand of humanitarianism was in 1859 when Henri Dunant conceived the idea of the Red Cross, which soon became an international organisation. It again evolved through World War I - when the importance of non-combatant citizens became apparent.

“After World War I, the Treaty of Versailles established the League of Nations, which would become the United Nations (UN); the first permanent international organisation tasked with protecting vulnerable populations and maintaining peace”. (Davey et al, 2013, p.1).

In 1967 to 1970 the Nigerian Civil War led to a famine crisis and a humanitarian emergency. The relief programme was replaced by a new humanitarian, often politicised, yet non-governmental programme, which brought about the principles of humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian assistance has evolved throughout history from being run by charity workers with a Christian ethos, to governments being focused mainly on health and wellbeing, which led to further developments that extended assistance to protection and care for all citizens affected by conflict and natural disasters and having a political movement. Each new crisis drives changes to the way governments, charities and the general public view humanitarian efforts. (Hardy et al., 2016).

The UN has contributed to humanitarian assistance by coordinating relief efforts in areas which the national authorities have been unable to offer assistance. Their aim is to save lives and alleviate suffering through the upholding of human dignity, by facilitating access to basic services. They also support the prevention and preparation of crises and disasters. The UNs efforts are guided by the humanitarian principles, which are endorsed by two UN General Assembly resolutions. Humanitarian assistance is aid and support given to people affected by emergencies, such as natural disaster or armed conflict, whereas humanitarian intervention is the use of force by a state or group of states to end human rights violations in another country, which has not been given permission for the use of force. (Holzgrete, 2003).

1.2 CLUSTER SYSTEM

Following a review of international responses to humanitarian emergencies carried out in 2005, known as the Humanitarian Response Review, the cluster approach was introduced in an ambitious humanitarian reform agenda, in order to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response, through greater predictability, accountability, responsibility and partnership. It was during this review that there was a perception that humanitarian response does not always meet the basic requirements of affected populations in a timely fashion and that the response provided can vary considerably from crisis to crisis. It aimed to make a humanitarian response more predictable by introducing a system for organising sectoral coordination among humanitarian actors.

The Cluster System within UN OCHA, is a mechanism where coordination of each sector can take place in one forum, in order to assess, prioritise and respond to global emergencies. The humanitarian response has become a multi-billion-dollar institution, which is ready to

respond to complex global emergencies, with 274 million people in need, 183 million people being targeted and a need of \$41 billion, (United Nations, GHO, 2022, p.1).

The following diagram shows the cluster approach for coordinating non-refugee humanitarian responses. The approach aims to strengthen system-wide preparedness and focuses on increasing transparency and accountability.

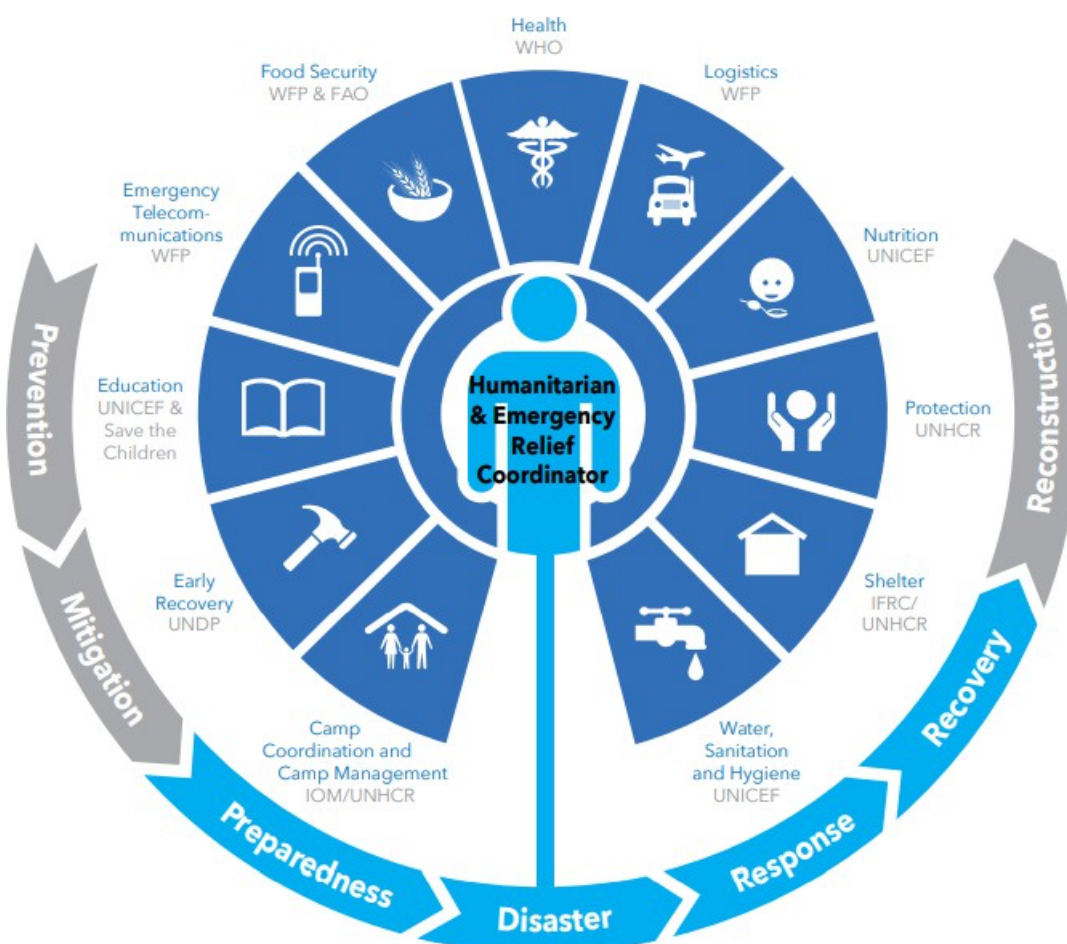


Fig 1.1. Global Cluster Lead Agencies, IASC.

Source: UNHCR Emergency Handbook. Cluster Approach, 2024.

1.3 CLUSTER APPROACH

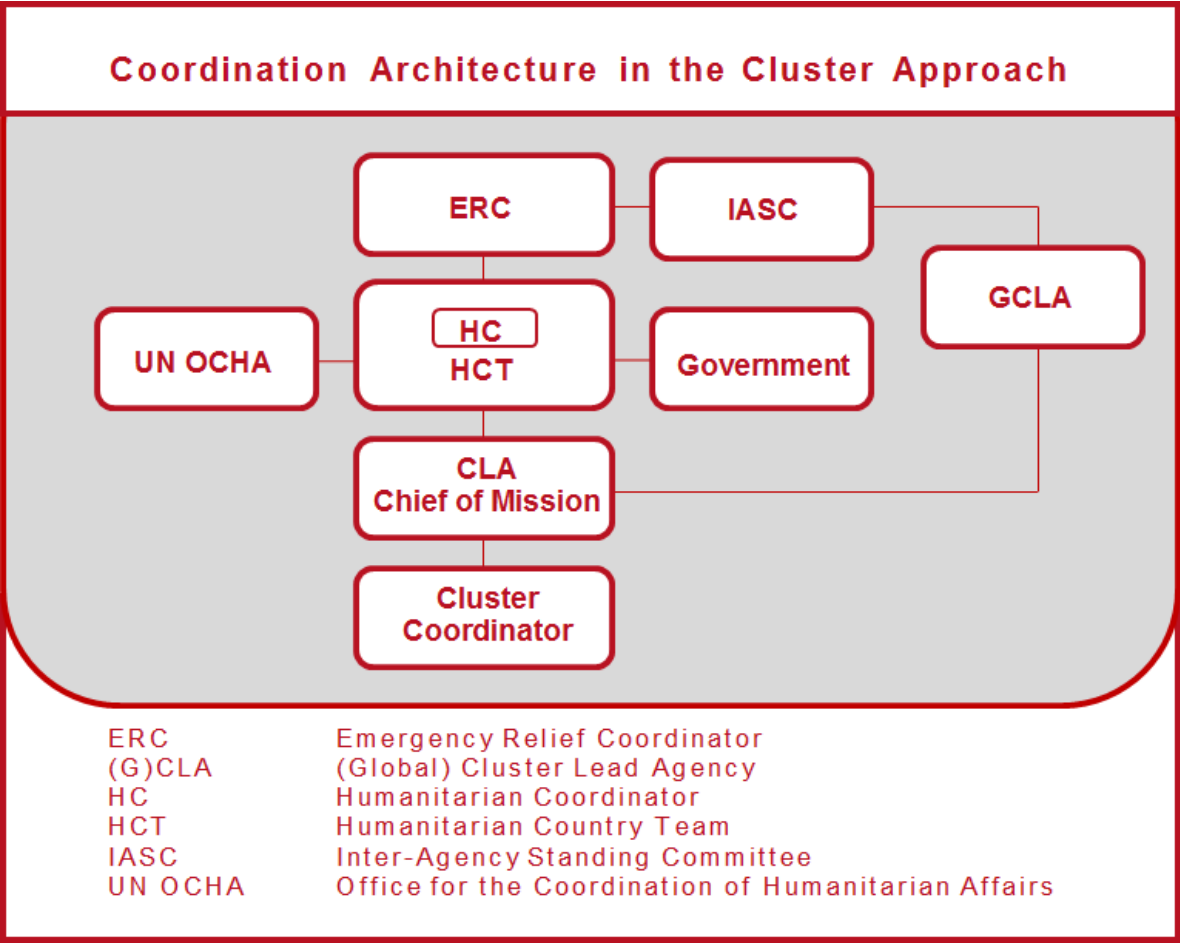


Fig 1.2 Coordination Architecture in the Cluster Approach.

Source: UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency. (2001-2024) Cluster Approach. Emergency Handbook.

This multi-agency approach has created a huge community of stakeholders, who coordinate together to achieve the main objective of protecting lives and dignity of vulnerable populations and communities affected by natural disasters and conflicts globally.

The Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) leads the cluster-based response, in support of the local government. The head of the cluster lead agency, in-country, represent the clusters. For example, World Health Organisation (WHO) leads the health cluster. Office for Coordinating

Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) will support the HCs role, by setting up inter-cluster coordination meetings, so that national cluster coordinators can participate. There are many roles in a cluster approach.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is a unique agency forum that provides coordination, policy development and decision making. Partners involved in this are key United Nations (UN) and non-UN partners. The IASC is led by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), and the forum sets boundaries of responsibility across the Cluster System, identifying gaps in the response and advocating for the humanitarian principles. Under the UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 (December 1991), the affected state, is responsible for initiating, organising, coordinating and implementing the response within its boundaries. The ERC is responsible for oversight of the assistance, and in some circumstances, they appoint a Humanitarian Coordinator (HC). All proposals to activate and appoint clusters and their leads is secured by the ERC at the IASC.

When a disaster occurs, the HC is responsible to assess whether an international response is warranted. And if so, they are responsible to ensure that it is well organised. They lead the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) to ensure the most appropriate response can be undertaken within the local setting. They also reached an agreement on the types of clusters that could be activated.

The HCT is a strategic and operational decision-making forum. This is overseen by the HC, with representations from the UN and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO). Agencies that have taken up the position as the cluster lead will also represent their clusters as well as their organisations. Cluster lead agencies are accountable to the HC and they ensure the coordination mechanisms are established. The cluster coordinators are responsible for ensuring respective

challenges within the cluster are managed and where they cannot be resolved they are brought to the attention of the HCT.

1.4 HEALTH CLUSTER SYSTEM

The health cluster is almost always initiated by OCHA as part of emergency responses due to the respective health needs of affected populations and is often also regarded as one the most expensive clusters (alongside logistics). The respective author has also worked extensively for the health cluster and draws upon significant experience, including notable numbers of field deployments, hence why there is a specific focus on this cluster within the thesis.

WHO is the cluster lead agency for health and provides secretariat support. There are currently over 900 partners at country level of which 60 partners engage strategically at global level. (Health Cluster, 2024, p.1). By the involvement of international and local partners the cluster can ensure that the response to a health emergency is timely, effective and predictable. The partners will include international organisations, UN agencies, NGOs, local governments, affected communities, academics and donor agencies. Health clusters have been set up to relieve suffering and save lives in humanitarian emergencies. They aim to advance the dignity and well-being of those affected by the disaster. There are currently 31 health clusters activate with 2 regional coordination mechanisms. (Health Cluster, 2024, p.1). The global health cluster aims to support the health clusters that are in country.

Coordination is key in any response. There is a need for all organisations to work together to respond to a crisis. The work of the health cluster is to guide their partners by its strategic framework and workplan, so that its vision, mission and strategic priorities are achieved.

“The work of the Health Cluster is designed around its 2020 - 2025 strategy and the corresponding workplan”. (Health Cluster, 2024, p.1).

Task teams are put in place to implement the key components of the health clusters workplan.

“Five strategic priorities guide the work of the Global Health Cluster and provide a structure in which to examine our accomplishments and challenges.

- Strengthen coordination for local, national, regional and global actors to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from public health and humanitarian emergencies.
- Strengthen inter-cluster and multi-sector collaboration to achieve better health outcomes.
- Strengthen our collective and respective health information management and use.
- Improve the quality of Health Cluster action.
- Strengthen Health Cluster advocacy at local, country, regional and global levels. “

(Health Cluster, 2024, p.1).

The health cluster works closely with WHO and other partners to strengthen multi-sectorial response and to improve the health outcomes in emergency responses.

Below is WHO’s grading system which is used in an emergency to determine the severity of the disaster and to ascertain the type of response that is required to meet the needs of those affected by the crisis.

WHO Grading System



A public health event or emergency that is being monitored by WHO but that does not require a WHO operational response.



A single country emergency requiring a limited response by WHO, but that still exceeds the usual country-level cooperation that the WHO Country Office (WCO) has with the Member State. Most of the WHO response can be managed with in-country assets. Organizational and/or external support required by the WCO is limited. The provision of support to the WCO is coordinated by an Emergency Coordinator in the Regional Office.



A single country or multiple country emergency, requiring a moderate response by WHO. The level of response required by WHO always exceeds the capacity of the WCO. Organizational and/or external support required by the WCO is moderate. The provision of support to the WCO is coordinated by an Emergency Coordinator in the Regional Office. An Emergency Officer is also appointed at headquarters to assist with the coordination of Organization-wide support.



A single country or multiple country emergency, requiring a major/maximal WHO response. Organizational and/or external support required by the WCO is major and requires the mobilization of Organization-wide assets. The provision of support to the WCO is coordinated by an Emergency Coordinator in the Regional Office(s). An Emergency Officer is also appointed at headquarters, to assist with the coordination of Organization wide inputs. On occasion, the WHE Executive Director and the Regional Director may agree to have the Emergency Coordinator based in headquarters. For events or emergencies involving multiple regions, an Incident Management Support Team at headquarters will coordinate the response across the regions.

Fig 1.3. WHO Grading System.

Source: World Health Organisation. (2024) WHO Levels for graded emergencies. WHO

Clusters can only be activated by the ERC, with endorsement of the IASC principles. The decision is based on recommendations from the UN resident coordinator or the HC in country. The initial discussions of cluster activation are high-level.

The core functions of the cluster at country level focus on providing a platform for agreeing the types of response as well as avoiding gaps and/or duplication of service delivery. They inform the strategic decision making of the HCT through their needs assessments, gap analysis and prioritisation. The clusters then aim to plan and develop a strategy that adheres to global minimum standards (also developed by the clusters), and which also considers the level of funding required and duly received. It is crucial that the clusters seek to address any concerns that the partners have raised. This work is then monitored, and reported on, within the cluster, so that any amendments can be made in an ever-evolving response. Lastly the cluster will be involved in preparedness and contingency planning to enhance the capacity-building of the respective countries. Clusters are deactivated when the gap no longer exists. UNHCR (2001-2024).

“Over 10 million women and young people received life-saving sexual and reproductive health care and services to address GBV. 2,412 health facilities in 52 countries provided emergency obstetric care. 2.5 million children treated for severe acute malnutrition. 3.4 million children vaccinated against measles and 6.3 million children vaccinated against polio. Over 8.5 million doses of cholera vaccine distributed in seven countries. Over 49 million people vaccinated against yellow fever in six African countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda)”. (United Nations, GHO, 2021, p.1).

This thesis focuses particularly on the health cluster and the context for reform. When looking specifically at humanitarian assistance, most, if not all, emergencies tend to have a health component, whether that be an epidemic or a natural disaster with trauma cases to manage.

Therefore, by understanding the health cluster, it helps us to comprehend and hopefully deal with humanitarian emergencies in their entirety, including core elements of preparedness, recovery and response.

1.5 COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

Any assessment should acknowledge that humanitarian assistance has become more complex and influenced by a growing array of shared challenges. This also applies to how we think about the nature of emergencies since humanitarian assistance should focus on dealing with emergencies in both spatial and temporal ways. Indeed, respective literature highlights the existence of what have been called 'complex emergencies' in particular.

“A complex emergency can be defined as a humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is a total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict, and which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency and/or the ongoing UN country programme”. (UNHCR, 2001, p.1).

Crises are becoming multi-faceted with natural disasters, conflict and politics being merged in a single response. Complex emergencies - according to Duffield (1994) – represent major humanitarian crises that require a system wide response. They usually involve a potent combination of managing politics, conflict and peacekeeping. A complex emergency though, may even be recognised as a natural disaster as these can include social and ecological phenomena (Kent 1987).

“The emergence of the so-called ‘complex humanitarian crises’ made it clear that traditional humanitarian responses based on the classical principles of impartiality and neutrality were

not sufficient nor the most appropriate to respond to such complex challenges". (Nascimento, 2015, p.1).

Such disasters have the propensity to erode or even destroy the cultural, civil, political and economic integrity of an established society. ALNAP (2022, p.55) estimates that there are over 5,000 NGOs worldwide undertaking ongoing humanitarian assistance - using an estimated 632,000 humanitarian workers worldwide. These NGOs – in themselves represent institutions – and therefore indeed matter. In addition, frameworks such as the Cluster System are required, as they will build in best practices, and integration of other sectors, but they can create their own path dependencies. The aim of the Cluster System is to strengthen a system wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to global emergencies, OCHA (2006). It provides clear leadership and accountability.

1.6 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND CHALLENGE: THE RISING AND UNACCOUNTABLE COSTS OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE/RESPONSE.

The context, in which humanitarian response is working in, has changed over the years. Indeed, the humanitarian sector has moved from a time when aid workers participated in humanitarian response efforts with the sole purpose of saving lives, to a time where aid work is a career with great benefits. Indeed, this raises an important research enquiry - namely are such benefits inhibiting the system and preventing reform from occurring? Given the need to recruit both technical specialists and general workers, the sector has changed and financial pressures are ever increasing. In any response, the number of employed workers remain limited.

Therefore, there is rivalry within the field to offer 'good deals' and competitive packages to ensure the recruitment of qualified staff. However, this may end up undermining the ability to

serve a larger population in an emergency response due to the need to finance such packages from finite funds available.

Are humanitarian organisations held to account to ensure their work is efficient and effective? Are there sufficient funds? Or are they being allocated primarily to fund the workers? Are the key players involved in reform benefiting from the packages? And on this basis, have they become resistant to necessary change? Has the structure of the humanitarian system, which was once effective, become highly cumbersome - creating bottlenecks that undermine the effectiveness of the system and thereby reducing impact?

There are endless discussions undertaken by UN agencies, NGOs, donors and governments about the lack of money available for a disaster. We have witnessed many actions over the years to address humanitarian reform, but they have not resulted in the major changes that are required. Several pieces of evidence have indicated failings in the humanitarian system which call for reform. Colombo and Pavignani (2017) discuss that mistakes and failures take place often, which despite having severe consequences are regularly repeated - calling for recognition of past mistakes and reform. Jarrett et al. (2021) recommend this be through better governance in emergencies, and Okoli et al. (2024) recommend this be done through more sustainable and responsible financing models.

1.7 THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE THESIS

- ▶ The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between institutional dynamics and decision making in the humanitarian sector, and how this may have an impact on reform.

1.8 OBJECTIVES

The objectives for this study seek to;

- ▶ Examine the role of vested institutional dynamics and institutions, and whether high and ever rising human resource costs affect the ability to reform.
- ▶ Investigate if the rising costs of human resources are affecting the impact of humanitarian emergency response.
- ▶ Critically evaluate whether the practical and systematic challenges hinder the implementation of substantial humanitarian reform.

1.9 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Three research questions will be critically evaluated;

- ▶ To what extent can (neo) institutional theories provide sufficient insights into the present-day functioning of Cluster Systems in international humanitarian health and medical assistance?
- ▶ To what extent can the present delivery challenges faced by the humanitarian health sector be explained as the unintentional consequences of the way the sector itself commits humanitarian resources?
- ▶ How can the challenges to substantial reform of humanitarian resources be managed now and in the future?

1.10 CONTRIBUTION

Path dependencies are a social theory that describes how past events and decisions influence future events and decisions; however, they can also hinder the implementation of alternative solutions. Such an understanding is crucial for this study, as when we understand the history of organisations, we can see that what has occurred in the past persists and continues to contribute towards a resistance of change.

“Path dependency occurs because it is often easier or more-cost effective to continue along an already set path than to create an entirely new one”. (Banton, 2021, p.1).

Institutions historically evolve over time with invested interests. Their aim is to ensure they achieve their own goal and this can cause conflicts with other groups. According to Hall & Taylor (1996), historical institutionalists are conditioned by the way they see an overall system as being made up of interacting parts. Institutionalism has not so far been extensively in health emergency management and humanitarian response; however, this concept offers an insight into why institutions matter, and the unintended consequences of path dependencies. In humanitarian responses, we see rival groups, such as UN agencies, NGOs, INGOs competing for the same resources and as a result, they have ended up structuring their policies so they can survive and compete.

“An additional significant problem of dependency upon international agenda-making for countries receiving aid is that globally recommended ‘best practice’ policies often lack appropriate contextualisation to cultural, religious, or social values”. (Stanford, 2015, p.1)

This also applies to the Cluster System, and as a result, it may inhibit future reform. Institutionalism supports the argument that the outcomes of humanitarian assistance are

constrained by an institutionalised culture of overpayment and the existence of specific invested interests that restrict the chances of, and may even not allow for, the system to be challenged.

Institutional structure is driven and shaped from within, and the prevailing aim is to structure distinctive outcomes. Institutions develop formal and informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions (Hall & Taylor, 1996) that become embedded in an institution/organisation; which is why the system is so difficult to reform. In some situations, this is necessary to provide sufficient credibility to withstand and survive competition, but it is also this system that has made them so expensive. Hall and Taylor (1996) go on to say that institutions provide a moral or cognitive template for interpretation and action. Individual actors are often deeply embedded in the respective institution, that in turn not only provide strategically useful information but they also impact upon the identities, self-images and preferences of the respective actors. Hence, humanitarian organisations are part of a system that is dominated by the UN. On this basis, they follow and adopt UN rules, as well as adapt their own procedures and processes so that they too can end up with the funding opportunities available from donors.

With an ever-increasing demand for support to emergency responses, with limited resources, and with humanitarian workers becoming more disillusioned within the industry, it is time to look at how an emergency response is undertaken and whether the resources are being used effectively and efficiently to help those in need.

This study seeks to critically evaluate whether and if substantial reform of humanitarian resources is difficult to undertake; and can be principally explained by the way humanitarian systems are run in practice, the role of vested institutional dynamics and institutions, and

ultimately, whether the high and ever rising human resource costs are crucially affecting the ability to reform. Does this then result in the impact in an emergency being reduced?

1.11 STRUCTURE OF THESIS

This thesis is organised into seven Chapters:

Chapter 1 - Research and Context Significance

This Chapter defines humanitarian assistance and aid as well as the humanitarian system. It outlines what constitutes the cluster approach and more specifically, Cluster Systems and focuses in more detail on the health Cluster System. It discusses complex emergencies and considers the prevailing research problem/challenge. It presents the aim and objectives of the thesis and the three primary research questions. It outlines the desired contributions of the thesis, specifically looking at how institutions have evolved over time and how they develop intended and unintended consequences.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The literature review presents an analytical assessment of the literature on the humanitarian system. It examines literature on formation and continuation of the humanitarian system, key UN resolutions and the humanitarian principles that have guided responses. It explores definitions of international organisations and relationships with the UN and NGO systems. The review discusses how global governance remains central to the UN system. It further addresses how humanitarian assistance is delivered, accountability issues, funding aspects and whether all this has become political. It links together the CDC, PHEM and the Cluster System and examines aspects of capacity building deployed to respective countries and how

human resources are utilised. Lastly, the literature review considers the ability to reform the system.

Chapter 3 – Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This Chapter defines new institutionalism and the three different approaches, historical, rational choice and sociological institutionalism. It critically evaluates whether institutional dynamics have created many path dependencies that have unintentionally become an issue to reform in the humanitarian arena. The conceptual framework adopted to explore how institutions matter, they bring formal rules and informal rules. These created intended and unintended consequences and may lead to concerns about a fit or misfit for purpose. It looks at eight key indicators to discuss if they need reform, partial reform or no reform within the humanitarian field. This conceptual framework is seeking to illustrate that health systems within humanitarian organisations have imbalances that limit reform.

Chapter 4 - Statement of Methodology

This Chapter outlines the chosen methodology that underpins the empirical exploration of the conceptual framework and the links between the questions and the methodology. This Chapter discusses the approach to data analysis. Ethical considerations are addressed. The Chapter also discusses the sample, and the respective sampling strategy, of the study underpinning the data collection.

Chapter 5 - Findings and Results

This Chapter presents main key findings from 66 interviews. It draws upon two phases of interviews that took place in late 2021. Dataset 1 has a sample size of 41 and Dataset 2 has a sample size of 25. This thesis examines the findings to consider if there is a need for the

international humanitarian sector to be reformed, and whether the international and institutional dynamics facilitate or hinder the process of reform. It focuses on the key indicators discussed in the conceptual framework. One of the clearest general findings from the data collection is that there is a strong consensus across both phases of interviews that the humanitarian system needs reforming. The Chapter looks at the eight key indicators previously discussed to understand if they are fit for purpose or if they need reforming. It draws on the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews.

Chapter 6 – Discussion

This Chapter discusses how the conceptual framework highlights that institutions matter as UN and NGOs need to have structure and rules and regulations to perform. Yet within these institutions, path dependencies have been created that have shaped vested interests and have led to blockages which clearly need reforming. It is these path dependencies that have led to unintended consequences that have complicated the institutional aims and missions and made it hard to achieve. This has ultimately led to problems of misfit for purpose that now require resolution through institutional or financial reform. This conceptual framework has sought to illustrate that health systems within humanitarian organisations have imbalances that limit reform.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion and Recommendations

This Chapter considers how the thesis contributes to scholarly research, highlighting how it addresses a knowledge gap in humanitarian responses, and offers a new institutional conceptual framework to understand the needs for reform and the obstacles met to reform. This Chapter proves that there is a relationship between institutional dynamics and decision making in the humanitarian sector. More specifically, these unintentional and intentional

consequences could influence the way the sector commits humanitarian resources and potentially hinders reform, specifically regarding (but not limited to) staff salaries, benefits and project rules. In addition, these inhibitors of reform can affect the impact of humanitarian emergency responses due to the rising cost of human resources.

CHAPTER 2

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is a mix of an academic literature review as well as a review of relevant policy documents. The literature review begins by looking at the history of humanitarian assistance leading to the current situation. Whilst the author is aware of the links between humanitarian aid and development aid, for the purpose of this thesis, the author has chosen to research data related to humanitarian aid only. This is due to the different approaches these institutions use. Humanitarian aid is short term, delivered in disaster settings and responds to an event, focusing on saving lives, whilst development assistance is long term, delivering support in developing countries and responds to systematic problems, focusing on economic, social and political development.

“Not only are the discursive segments of humanitarianism and development distinct to each other, but the segments themselves are characterised by great internal diversity—and these differences become amplified by the nexus itself”. (Lie, 2020, p.1).

It researches how disasters are currently managed and the frameworks in place, such as the Global Humanitarian Overview, the Humanitarian Needs Overview and the Humanitarian Program Cycle. (UNHCR, 2001-2024) The discussion then moves towards international organisations and how they address common problems and opportunities, looking at other key players such as member states, donors and NGOs. Literature is then used to show how these systems may be breaking down.

“Responding professionally to increasingly complex needs while retaining the humanitarian spirit that responds to unacceptable human suffering is a major challenge facing aid agencies.

This challenge will not be addressed simply by introducing more regulation, as proposed recently by schemes to credential aid agencies, but requires old-fashioned idealists willing to challenge the status quo while providing professional interventions appropriate to the context”. (MSF, 2014, p.1).

The UN is a hub of global governance. It is a complex system, with often complicated governance-related rules and mechanisms. At the same time, and given these complexities, there may be unrealistic expectations placed on the system. In 2016, the Grand Bargain brought about a unique agreement; however, selective literature highlights how bureaucratic and administrative impediments have restricted the workings and effectiveness of humanitarian actors. Key literature also raises concerns relating to accountability, funding and financial management. The Paris Agreement,(2015) for example, looked at making funding long-term, predictable and coordinated. They also looked at how disasters were funded by state donors, private donors, through the common humanitarian fund or the multi-year humanitarian funding methods.

There are foundational documents which bestow the United Nations with responsibilities for preparing the budget and approving budgets. These are the in the Charter of the United Nations, Chapter XV, Article 97 and Chapter IV, Article 17. Other key documents include;

- ST/SGB/2013/4 + Amend.1 : Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations
- ST/SGB/2015/4 + Amend.1: Supplement to the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations
- ST/SGB/2018/3 : Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation

- ST/SGB/2019/2 : Delegation of authority in the administration of the Staff

Regulations and Rules and the Financial Regulations and Rules

Other key players involved in a humanitarian response, related to health, were discussed and their impact, such as PHEM and CDC and how some of these organisations impact its efficiency and effectiveness.

2.1 HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM

Humanitarian assistance dates right back to the Christian Church and their core believes to love God and people, to care for the sick, to feed the poor, to help the widow and orphan and to comfort prisoners (James 1 v 27). Cahill (2003) discusses the impact of Christianity since its beginnings and how it has been a dynamo of humanitarian activity. Although these were individuals or small groups, who responded to global needs of poverty, this was still the beginnings of aid work. Initially aid is understood as being able to respond to natural and man-made disasters, but it can also be understood in a broader sense by aiming to achieve a respect for human dignity where wealth and opportunity are more equally distributed. However, it seems ultimately very difficult to define due to its constant evolution. The Red Crescent society was founded in 1868, as part of the Ottoman Turkish empire, since then it has grown around North Africa and the Middle East in Muslim Countries and forms part of the ICRC. Currently this sector has become a community of stakeholders and actors who interact, collaborate and coordinate to attempt to succeed on this main agreed objective, to protect lives and to protect the dignity of vulnerable populations affected by disasters. (Hurley, 1995).

International organisations can be defined as formal, continuous structures which have been established between members of two or more sovereign states, with the aim of pursuing a

common interest, and each state must have equal power. Archer (2001). According to Paulmann (2014), the rise of international governmental organisations, also known as international organisations, marks the beginning of a new phase. Although some origins can be traced back to the First World War, the number of intergovernmental humanitarian organisations grew rapidly after the Second World War, under the auspices of the United Nations. Many agencies were dissolved. New offices were established. From an organisations perspective, the proliferation of global NGOs for humanitarian aid began in the 1980s. Paulmann (2014) discusses that the characterisation was heightened by competition among agencies over funds and by intense media involvement.

By 1992, the UN had become the largest provider of humanitarian assistance worldwide. Recalling Resolution 2816 (14 Dec 1971), the international humanitarian coordination system was set by, the General Assembly Resolution 46/182 in December 1991. This was due to a deep concern for the suffering of those affected by natural disasters, whether this be the loss of life, materials or the displacement of people. They intended to strengthen the international community, and especially the UN system by providing humanitarian assistance. In this Resolution, there are 42 Guiding Principles, which discuss in detail the need to prevent and prepare for emergencies with clear leadership and sufficient funding, moving from relief to rehabilitation and development. It clearly states the need for humanitarian assistance for victims of emergencies, and to ensure this is provided in accordance with principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality.

“The humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence define the parameters of ‘classical humanitarianism’, exemplified by the policy and practice of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Humanitarians and

humanitarian action conforming to these principles are sometimes said to be apolitical”.
(Bradley, 2022, p.1).

In 1997, a group of NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement initiated the Sphere project where global humanitarian agencies aim to improve the quality of humanitarian assistance and the accountability of actors to the donors, organisations and affected populations. The Humanitarian Charter and minimum standards reflect the determination of agencies to improve both the effectiveness of their assistance and their accountability to their stakeholders, contributing to a practical framework for accountability. The Humanitarian Charter (1945) provides the ethical and legal backdrop to the Protection Principles, as well as to the Core Standards and Minimum Standards. (Sphere., 2018).

Some scholars now discuss a “new humanitarianism” as a product of the late 20th century.

“There is a ‘new humanitarianism’ for the new millennium. It is ‘principled’, ‘human rights based’, politically sensitive and geared to strengthening those forces that bring peace and stability to the developing world. It offers humanitarian relief agencies a new moral banner to march behind”. (Fox, 2001, p.275-289).

Fox’s (2001) report, for example, highlights how this new concept offered new solutions to overcome past failures.

“Above all new humanitarianism is political. It sees apolitical, neutral, humanitarian relief as both naive and morally questionable. Instead, new humanitarians argue for a more politically conscious aid which can assess the present and future impact of aid interventions on the politics of conflict and ensure that aid is linked to military and diplomatic tools in a coherent conflict-resolution strategy”. (Fox, 2001, p.275-289).

Furthermore, Bradley shows how ‘classical humanitarianism’ came to the fore in the 1990’s, building on widespread recognition that aid had often done more harm than good in relation to complex emergencies. Authors, such as Bradley, advocated for a more political form of humanitarianism, which should become the foundation for redefining humanitarian policy.

“Beyond the political position inherent in the principles of humanity and impartiality, there are at least four additional ways in which humanitarian action may be ‘political’: through its unintended consequences; in the pursuit of transformative goals; by speaking out about abuses of human rights and violations of IHL; and by compromising the sovereignty of affected states”. (Bradley, 2022, p.225-226).

Protection is a core part of humanitarian action. The Protection Principles (CHS Alliance, Groupe URD, & Sphere., 2018) point to the responsibility of all humanitarian agencies to ensure that their activities are concerned with the more severe threats that affected people commonly face in times of conflict or disaster. (IASC., 2016) The Core Standards and minimum standards are an articulation of what these principles and obligations mean in practice. They are the first set of minimum standards and inform all others. The minimum standards are evidence-based and represent sector-wide consensus on best practice in humanitarian response. They also describe conditions that must be achieved in any humanitarian response to enable disaster-affected populations to survive and recover in stable conditions and with dignity. (The State of Art., 1995).

In many previous humanitarian responses, there was a mix of some technical sectors, such as health and nutrition having UN lead agencies and others not having a lead, such as MHPSS, which led to unpredictable humanitarian responses and response gaps. Coordination and management issues have been a concern for the UN since the early 1990s. With the presence of many NGOs the task of coordination was often over complicated. (Karns & Mingst., 2010)

In 1991, donor countries pushed the General Assembly to appoint a humanitarian coordinator and a humanitarian affairs department to address the issues. But neither were given power over any agency, staff or resources. Typically, there were functional responsibilities, with World Health Organisation (WHO) handling the health sector.

By 1997, a further reorganisation created the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (Karns & Mingst., 2010) The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2005) agreed to global cluster leads. As part of a humanitarian reform, nine technical sectors were developed, now known as clusters, with a UN lead agency. (IASC., 2016). They also agreed that the cluster approach should be applied at country level. This mechanism, they agreed helped to address gaps in response and improve the quality of humanitarian actions. It was part of a wider reform aimed at improving the effectiveness of humanitarian response by strengthening partnerships between stakeholders as well as ensuring predictability and accountability. By June 2006 a Preliminary Guidance Note was issued by the IASC of this new approach. There are now 11 sectors that support the cluster approach globally, (Transformative Approach Model 2015. See Appendix 1) and these global cluster leads report to the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator.

OCHA is the coordinating body in any humanitarian response. (OCHA., 2021). They overarch all the sectors to ensure a coherent humanitarian response for all. For an effective response, coordination is vital. It ensures less gaps, a more coherent and complementary approach, which identifies ways of working together to achieve better results. A key aspect of the cluster approach is to be accountable to ensure the effectiveness and timeliness of the humanitarian response. WHO leads the health sector cluster. It has overall responsibility for the conduct of health humanitarian responses. (WHO., 2020). They are also a member of the nutrition, water/sanitation, emergency shelter and protection cluster, to ensure integration and

harmonisation. According to the World Health Organisation (2006), the system aims to improve the effectiveness, timeliness and predictability of the response as it works towards recovery. This system strengthens leadership and accountability in sectors, as well as enhancing partnerships among governments, UN agencies and NGOs.

During a response, clusters are established within a country for any major emergency (where humanitarian needs are of sufficient scale and complexity to justify a multi-sectorial response). (WHO, 2020). This will include a wide range of international partners. In this thesis, there is a primary focus on the health sector/response, although it is acknowledged that any/all sectors are integrated. According to World Health Organisation (2020), the role of the cluster lead is to provide a leadership role within the international community to ensure an adequate response that meets required (high) standards. The cluster lead is also there to ensure relevant activities are carried out, with appropriate technical expertise. It is key that they respect, use and build on local capacities and maintain appropriate links to the government, such as the Ministry of Health and key stakeholders.

“Humanitarian aid has long been dominated by a classical, Dunantist paradigm that was based on the ethics of the humanitarian principles and centred on international humanitarian United Nations agencies and non-governmental organisations. While in previous decades alternative paradigms and humanitarianisms evolved, this classical paradigm remained the central narrative of humanitarianism. In recent years, however, this paradigm has been paralleled by a resilience paradigm that is focused on local people and institutions as the first responders to crises”. (Hilhorst, 2018, p.1).

It is also essential that they keep the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in country, updated of respective current operations and the stakeholders involved. Some organisations aim to relieve the immediate suffering of those affected by disasters (and thus are largely response

oriented). Whilst others, their aim is to engage for a longer period; and incorporates risk reduction and recovery aspects that may transform the structural conditions that endanger populations, such as, post-conflict peace building, democracy promotion and linking disaster support with wider development.

Overall, the humanitarian system represents a network of organisations comprised of UN, NGOs, Governments, donors and local and national actors, who collectively aim is to uphold the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Hall & Taylor (1996) define institutions as the broader, shaping rules and norms, while organisations are the actors or structured systems that operate within those institutional frameworks.

While 1945 saw the introduction of the humanitarian charter that holds actors to account when dealing with affected populations. And by 1991, the need for a coordinating body had been further recognised; leading to the creation of what is now known as OCHA, and the eventual formation of 11 clusters globally to enhance and deliver coherent humanitarian response. (OCHA, 1991).

2.2 DISASTER CYCLE

The disaster management cycle, (Humanitarian Innovation Guide., 2024) is important because it helps communities prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. It also helps to reduce the impact of a disaster.

“Professionals utilise this cycle to work alongside communities, local and governments to develop the best strategies for reducing the damage and cost disaster cause. Managing and responding to disasters effectively requires paying careful attention to each stage. Despite being separated into different stages, each with its own goals, the cycle is designed to be

holistic, as each stage is interdependent and builds on the previous one to achieve better outcomes". (Tulane University, 2023, p.1).

There are several models of the disaster management cycle that can be used. However, for the purpose of this thesis a descriptive Chart (Humanitarian Innovation Guide., 2024), which covers all aspects of the cycle has been used. During a response, it is crucial that the international partners can articulate which of the stages their innovation is aimed at. This allows for clear program design and appropriate solutions. Trying to engage crisis-affected communities is also critical in the immediate response period. The early stages of a response are chaotic and responders. Both the affected communities as well as engaged international agencies are often stretched and even overwhelmed. This is why training; pre-planning and preparation is key to a better response.

"The first stage of the disaster management cycle is about preventing or mitigating the potential effects of a disaster before it happens. It aims to identify potential risks and hazards that could lead to a disaster...Preparedness refers to developing strategies, plans, and procedures to effectively deal with potential disasters... Response teams work to stabilise the situation and reduce the potential for further harm. The recovery stage focuses on restoring the affected community to a state of normalcy. Recovery efforts involve rebuilding infrastructure, providing medical assistance and social services, and helping individuals and families recover financially". (Tulane University, 2023, p.1)

Understanding the steps of a disaster is important for the health cluster so they can create plans that can help to reduce suffering and save lives. The humanitarian professionals are able to prepare for the response with appropriate funding and medical equipment and medicines.

7 PHASES OF THE DISASTER MANAGEMENT CYCLE

1. Prevention: Activities aimed at trying to prevent future disasters occurring, such as building dykes or a dam to control flooding.
2. Mitigation: Activities aimed at trying to mitigate the impact of a disaster if prevention is not possible, such as building schools to be more earthquake resistant.
3. Preparedness: Activities aimed at trying to prepare communities for a disaster, such as emergency drills or pre-stocking relief items in logistic hubs.
4. Disaster: An event that causes significant damage to people, property and infrastructure.
5. Response: Activities aimed at understanding needs and responding to them, including rapid assessments, provision of food and non-food items, provision of water, sanitation and hygiene services, and health and shelter interventions. In the immediate hours and days after a disaster, when search-and-rescue activities are critical, it is most often local actors who are first to respond. Information is often patchy and confused, there can be significant damage to infrastructure, and large movements of people.
6. Recovery: Activities aimed at trying to return communities to normal life, such as livelihoods development or formal education. Recovery activities can start when the disaster has stabilised, and the affected population has access to food and water and some form of transitional shelter. This stage is sometimes divided into two: early recovery and medium-term recovery.
7. Reconstruction: Activities aimed at rebuilding infrastructure and housing. This can often take years and many activities may also blend back into mitigation, such as retrofitting schools to make them more earthquake resistant.

Table 2.1. 7 Phases of the Disaster Management Cycle.

Source: Humanitarian Innovation Guide (2024) Disaster Management Cycle. Grey Dot Catalyst, Elhra.

Once the severity of the crisis has passed, WHO will remain on the ground to support health ministries to sustain their work. At the recovery stage the international community will aim to identify well-functioning agencies in the affected countries so they can be imitated or support those health facilities that are not operating well. They support national agencies to take on significant roles in the recovery process and thereby shift dependency on external sources to self-reliance. In addition to this they aim to accelerate capacity building and enable national agencies in the development process and in the rebuilding of the facilities and services. (IASC., 2008).

Humanitarian assistance helps to mitigate some of the problems faced by people affected by crisis. It supports people in extreme needs, by ensuring some of their needs are met in food, water, shelter, healthcare, education and protection to name a few. It helps to mitigate some of the problems faced by people affected by a crisis, but most people affected cannot live on humanitarian assistance alone. Where they have been conducted, household economy analyses or global vulnerability assessments demonstrate that often humanitarian assistance is rarely the only source.

The Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO) is the world's most comprehensive, authoritative and evidence-based assessment of humanitarian need. In 2022, with 274 million people in need, 183 million people being targeted and a need of \$41 billion, (United Nations, GHO., 2022, p.1). Through the development of plans that prioritise those most in need, they aim to eradicate diseases, diminish hunger and manage protection concerns in disasters. The Humanitarian country team (HCT) supports the humanitarian needs and response analysis which is a collective process where the needs of affected populations have been identified, and a plan is developed to mobilise resources to respond to those in most need. The Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) Inter-

Agency Standing Committee (2021) aims to improve the effectiveness and relevance of humanitarian assistance by ensuring the plan is holistic and covers an inter-sectoral analysis of the needs of those affected based on their vulnerabilities, risks, age, gender, disability and other relevant diversity characteristics. It strengthens the response through the application of, for example, needs analysis that combines and supports multi-sectoral and sectoral response. The plan also ensures that it is measurable, and attainable, with strategic objectives and specific indicators for regular monitoring throughout the response.

The Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC), (See Figure 2.1) is an operational framework developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) that shows the sequence of actions as organisations prepare for the planning, management, deliverance and monitoring phases of a response. Its successful implementation in non-refugee humanitarian emergency depends on the emergency preparedness and effective coordination between both national and local authorities and humanitarian actors.

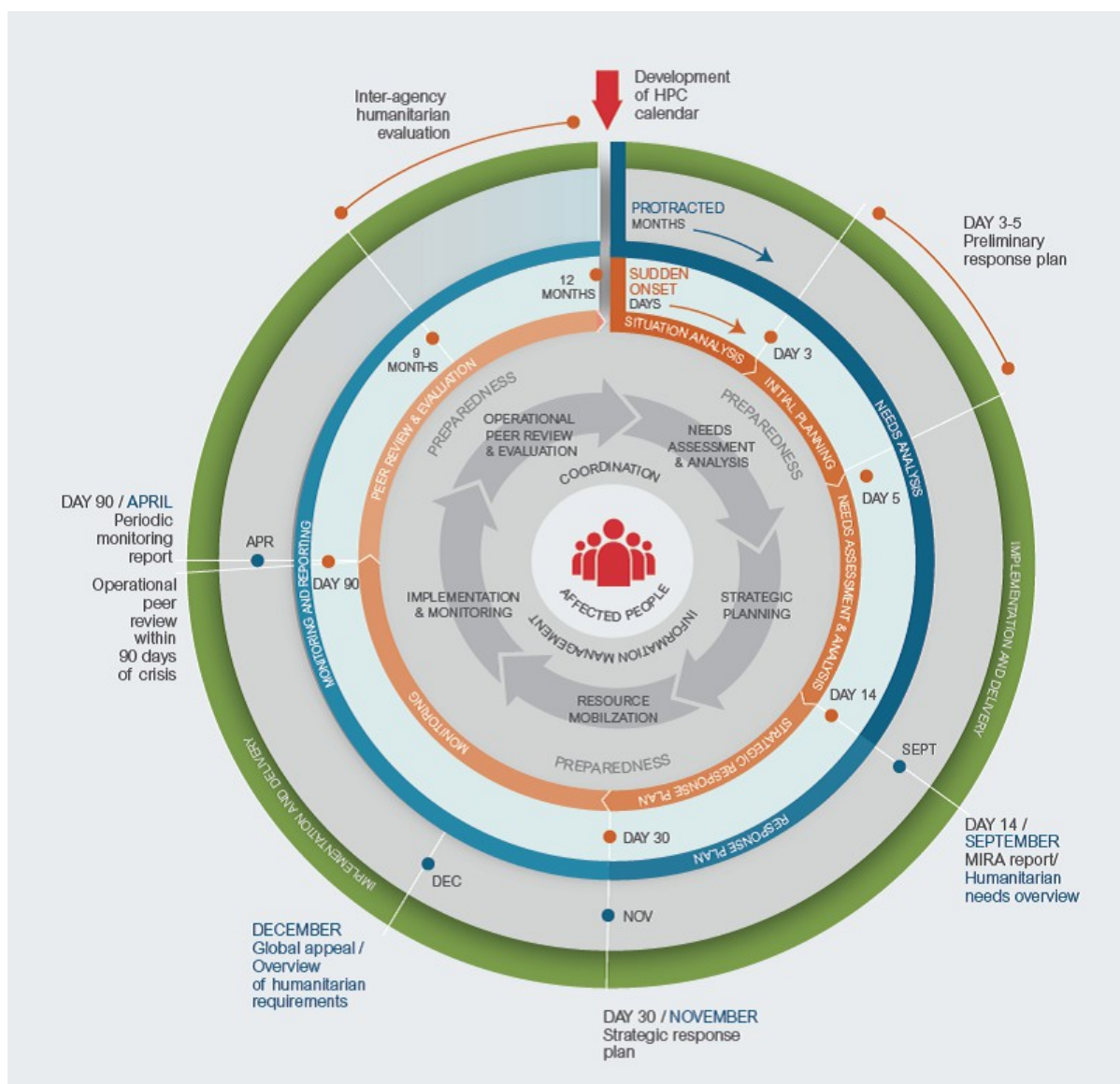


Fig. 2.1. Humanitarian Programme Cycle (IASC).

Source: UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency. (2001-2024) Emergency Handbook.

The model is driven using evidence-based plans which have been collectively gathered by partners and it is directed by the humanitarian country teams (HCTs) and led by the humanitarian coordinator (HC). This model allows for accountability to its partners for results.

2.3 INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Multilateralism is the practice of and principle of states committing to collective action to address common problems and opportunities, with reference to theories of international relations. (Newman., 2007) Multilateral organisations have made a valuable contribution to the regulation of international affairs. They bring stability, reciprocity in relationships and regularity in behaviour, supporting each state from being as vulnerable, alongside from benefitting from what the system has to offer. According to Newman (2007), the UN is one of the preeminent global multilateral organisations; yet there are also other organisations that contribute to the overall international system. There are also concerns that this system may be breaking down, especially in terms of support from participating nation-states that have faced growing challenges about reconciling participation with definable national interests. There is a need to be realistic about the roles for and prospects of multilateralism. Multilateralism is an organising principle for some states, while for others it is one tool amongst many for achieving foreign policy goals. (Newman., 2007).

The UN is the hub of global governance where states have joined together to address raising issues. Davies and Woodward (2014) argue that the UN is an international organisation which is unique, broad, large and complex. For the UN to be able to deliver its mandate it is reliant on international politics, security and peace keeping. They argue that the UN is overly criticised due to unrealistic expectations of what the UN can achieve and by equally scant acknowledgement of where it has indeed had an impact.

Davies & Woodward (2014), for example, suggest that the UN had little or no impact to international peace and security and that it is merely a façade behind which power politics are pursued.

“What is becoming increasingly clear however is that there is an emerging type of aid-related dependency that does not refer to economic or financial factors, but political. Cases of corruption in recipient country governments have been met with the development of more complex modes of donation, including direct programme funding, conditionalities, tied aid, and grants, which give donors more control over the direction and ultimate use of their funds. This often means that those providing aid are increasingly entwined in political processes”. (Stanford, 2015, p.12).

They continue to state that they are puppets of the most powerful actors or the actors will disregard them. Those who review the relations with states indicate that the most powerful are China, Russia and the USA, with the USA being a staunch supporter and a fierce critic of the system. The USA has exerted a powerful influence over the UN and its history, evolution and effectiveness, including the influence over appointed positions. However, its greatest impact is the material influence.

Aspects of the UN may also be united by their semi-autonomous relationships within the UN. The difference is these are not part of international treaties. They originate from actions of the UN General Assembly, respect General Assembly resolutions and submit periodic reports. There are 17 UN specialised agencies, which are linked by special agreements under Article 63 of the 1945 UN Charter.

These agencies have greater freedom of action than the semi-autonomous agencies. WHO sits under this arena as a specialised agency providing members with both operational and programmatic support. Their operational activities centre around providing expertise and delivering technical programs. (WHO., 2020). Due to their extensive research, they have become authorities in their field of work. With an increase in global demands through war and natural disasters, the challenges facing the UN have grown, and with the need to increase their

capacity, specialised agencies have responded by drawing closer to working with NGOs and INGOs. Humanitarian intervention adds a more challenging dimension to multilateralism. Within the realms of the principle of protecting lives in humanitarian work lies a responsibility to respect human rights which it may fail to achieve. It can influence relationships and make them problematic. Archer (2001) The impact of these agencies is variable, but their knowledge has allowed them to speak with authority on global issues. However, over the past 30 years the UN's influence has dwindled due to politics, mandates and chronic funding shortfalls.

The International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) has only non-governmental members. According to Davis and Woodward (2014), INGOs are formed and constituted by non-governmental actors, operate independently of any government and are not for profit organisations. It brings together the representatives of like-minded groups from more than two countries. However, according to Archer (2001), some INGOs have a mix of membership, some governmental and some non-governmental representation, and are not the result of purely intergovernmental agreement. And still there are other NGOs which are fully governmental in their representation. The best way to classify organisations is to look at the aims and activities of what they actually do, and the structure and power of the institutions.

A broad spectrum of roles will be undertaken and completed by INGOs; however, it is important to recognise that there is limited evidence of the activities of what is achieved by these individual organisations, especially NGOs. And therefore, their overall effect has to be estimated or summarised through larger institutions. To function any system needs resources in order to transform the objectives into results, and often this is lacking both in the UN and in INGOs.

“This then perpetuates aid dependency because donors do not receive satisfactory project results and may consequently reduce funding without actually solving the problem, thus the poverty cycle continues and aid is required once again”. (Stanford, 2015, p.1).

In addition, for this to be effective it also important to consider the influence of wider surroundings. It is therefore assumed that international organisations play a role in international relations and the role and function of international organisations may be affected by the system. The current system has no accountability or authority in the sense it is without a government. If the current system is seen as a result of power politics, then the organisations will have a limited power as it manages unwanted relations between states. Archer, (2001) International systems rely upon such networks of regimes, international organisations and treaties. They can be seen as a set of rules, that shape expectations and restrict activity and develops roles. Regimes according to the UN in 2004, can be defined as sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations are covered in a given area of international relations. The number of international organisations has grown because they undertake roles that cannot be carried out by states, which in turn keeps the international political system working, but Archer, (2001) states that there are limitations to international institutions and organisations.

The United Nations is an international organisation which is unique and complex. There are 17 specialised UN agencies which are linked by special agreements under Article 63 of the UN Charter 1945. The World Health Organisation (WHO) is a specialised agency centred around providing expertise and delivering technical programs. The International Non-Governmental Organisations are formed and constituted by non-Governmental actors only and operate independently of any government. For these international organisations to function, they would need resources to ensure they get results and resources are lacking in both the UN and

INGOs. These organisations rely on regimes, treaties, norms, rules and decision making to complete their purposes.

2.4 GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

The UN is a complex system; yet, it has remained central to the functioning of the global governance system we have today. It has, for example, acted as an international regulatory body covering global issues, such as war, climate change, that require governance solutions, that cannot be effectively managed by one state alone and necessitate cooperation among states. Above all, it is important to highlight that global governance represents the multi-level collection of governance related activities, rules and mechanisms, formal and informal existing today. (Karns & Mingst., 2010). While 192 sovereign states are the major constituents of the international system, there are thousands of other global actors.

Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) are the most common type of non-state actors. They are the most visible actors and participate in coalitions and networks. NGOs are private voluntary organisations, whose members come together to achieve a common purpose. Some are advocates, while others provide services. NGOs are increasingly active today at all levels of society. NGOs may have members from more than one country and may have specific functions and/or be multifunctional. They often have an international dimension either in terms of their organisation's membership and/or in conducting activities across states. NGOs parallel many of the global governance functions and therefore seek to persuade individuals, and/or influence governments. They are key to global governance as they provide synergies and links that cross between local/community, national and even international levels and domains.

Understanding multilateral governance diplomacy is key to understanding how NGOs have become involved in governance processes, and how different kinds of outcomes occur. They

have gained access to forums and therefore have enhanced their influence. They are increasingly viewed by the UN as key partners and stakeholders in coalitions. Communication systems have been developed that link NGOs together with states to promote shared goals. NGOs often undertake multiple roles to promote those shared goals, such as, providing new ideas, offering better implementation and evidencing, and helping governments to understand the evidence behind issues they are trying to address. Although there are often mixed successes and track records of NGOs accommodating state actors, they can also facilitate and make things easier due to them often having distinctive presences on the ground.

Multilateral negotiations have also become key management tools for NGO-state relations and are a key variable affecting global governance outcomes. (Hampson., 1995). In the analysis of Hearn & Dallal (2019) into the Syrian response, they, for example, highlighted how political funding aspects are and how funding questions shape relationships between NGOs and donors.

“The final point we would like to raise is that Syrian revolutionaries should understand that the money provided by INGOs and donors was not purely for the sake of the Syrian people. There were always political objectives behind it”. (Hearn & Dallal, 2019, p.41).

Furthermore, actors in global governance such as NGOs have faced growing demands for greater accountability and transparency. Some of these demands originate from NGOs themselves, while others come from wider stakeholders and even governments. At the very least, the literature suggests widespread concerns that the global governance system may be dysfunctional, and many critiques relate to long-standing issues of accountability and transparency:

“The global governance system is especially dysfunctional in addressing lower-magnitude issues. Decades-old peace keeping operations are being questioned for having achieved too little ... But there is no alternative global forum to replace the current system. Although the current global governance system is dysfunctional, we still depend on it in crucial ways. So, one of the massive issues we face is how to create something new without tearing down the old, which we still need”. (Samarasinghe, 2023, p.1).

The Grand Bargain, launched in 2016, was a unique agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organisations that sought to ensure resources went to those in need, and that the work was effective and efficient. They foresaw the need for resources to get into the hands of those who needed it most, and to work towards common strategic objectives to enable humanitarian responses to become more effective. In a high-level panel to the secretary general in 2016, they discussed the need to invest in resilience building within fragile countries, dedicating funds for peacebuilding and conflict resolution, as well as strengthening the local capacity. There was a need for greater multi-year planning and funding. (IASC., 2020). In this high-level panel in 2016 to the secretary general, it was hoped that stakeholders would come together to implement short- and long- term reforms, to ensure by humanitarian financing became sustainable, effective and adequate. Yet, this also required committed political will to change at scale in order to maintain any success; and this has been lacking at times.

Further research reveals how a weak UN coordination system has contributed to overlapping responsibilities which have aggravated problems. A report, commissioned by the UN in 2005, found that there were many shortcomings in managerial capacities, with recruitment failing to provide human resources in a timely fashion and of quality. Staff quality and quantity has often been inconsistent and executive management has been poor. Senior managers across the humanitarian sector have been appointed largely on political grounds and motives rather

than as a reflection of skilled competencies, and this has limited effectiveness. Many organisations expressed concerns regarding recruitment and the training of qualified staff to enhance participation in, and management of, emergencies. A report by Adinolfi et al. in 2005, highlighted, for example, that there were simply not enough people with the relevant experience and competencies available to deliver effective humanitarian response globally, compounded by poor leadership training and rigid bureaucratic structures.

“In recent years this has been accelerated by the covid crisis as bureaucracy and administrative impediments have restricted and obstructed the operational capacity of humanitarian actors. Thus, reducing the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian responses”. (IASC., 2022, p.4).

A crucial function of the UN and NGOs in relation to global governance is the development of governance related rules and mechanisms, both formal and informal. It remains critical then for Global governance actors to address the growing demands for greater accountability and transparency as well as addressing over-rigid bureaucratic structures that have restricted and obstructed the practical operational capacity of a response.

2.5 ACCOUNTABILITY

Humanitarian funding needs to be more effective if we are to meet the needs of the beneficiaries and be accountable. Zaidi (1999) found that, whilst the influx of NGOs in the 1980s has rationalised and reformed the system, NGOs have failed in making a substantial impact upon the beneficiaries. The literature suggests that, although policies and standards have developed within all related humanitarian sectors via, for example, the humanitarian charter, the sphere standards and the sectoral cluster approach, it seems that lines of accountability for those undertaking humanitarian tasks has not followed suit in the field.

“The cluster approach evaluation noted that no significant (partnership) gains were seen for local NGO participants. Overall, this is an area of significant weakness”. (Luff, 2009, p.27).

Polman (2010) argues that, if a refugee camp was opening in the UK and/or USA, many questions would be posed about the needs, costs, where funding has come from, staff qualifications and the rights of the residents. Yet when it comes to respective aid agencies, they are automatically approved, and the general public displays little urgency in taking a critical look. It is crucial that humanitarian agencies are held accountable for their levels of capacity to ensure beneficiaries receive expected levels of support.

D'Harcourt, Ratnayake & Kim (2017) point to the devastating impact of conflict in countries and the need to ensure that interventions have a long-term impact and remain cost effective. They highlight how many short-term, rather expensive mechanisms used in disaster relief, often reach less people than expected, have only short-term impact and turn out to be more expensive than originally envisaged. They argue that interventions should be cost effective, with wide coverage in the field. Although the humanitarian network is often unable to change the politics that drive conflict, they can influence, advocate for high standards of effectiveness and seek to foster common sense among health actors to ensure strong coordination (D'Harcourt, Ratnayake & Kim, 2017). There are numerous ways and methods to increase the impact of resources, foster innovative approaches and new technologies, and support more reliable ways to collate and measure key statistics. We can also look at maximising the impact of funding channels to ensure they are more efficient.

In the Paris Agreement, countries agreed to provide more long term, predictable and coordinated funding. Other proposed solutions were to further examine how the existing funding was being spent when financing humanitarian response to some of the world's worst disasters. Further progress is possible especially if participating organisations are held to

account and carefully evaluate the cost effectiveness of the work undertaken globally. The fundamental goal is to move towards attaining the highest possible standards of health globally, given the resources available. It is crucial to evaluate if any vast expansion in spending does impact upon and represent the goal of reduced suffering. Put simply, where a community is in receipt of significant funds, then can success be observed in terms of the delivery of goods and services, implementation of minimum standards and enhancing capacity building? There are dedicated units and departments in humanitarian organisations focusing on auditing and compliance to ensure any work is being done effectively; yet is this sufficient? There is increasing scepticism about NGOs, with concerns that they are cutting corners to maximise efficiency as they start to fight for funding. (Cooley & Ron., 2002).

Worse still, NGOs have been accused by others of egregious misconduct, and may also follow procedures and policies that lead to unintended, in adverse and even harmful outcomes. In 2014-2016, WHO was heavily criticised for its perceived poor performance in the West African Ebola Outbreak. There was largely inept deployment of unvetted, untrained staff alongside ineffective management systems that did not protect the rights of victims of sexual abuse. Despite appalling reports of sexual exploitation and abuse by alleged humanitarians, follow-up investigations were often delayed, leading to victims being ignored and little eventual accountability for the perpetrators. Similar experiences were uncovered in Haiti and Chad to name just a couple. Whilst changes were made eventually, most perpetrators are often still not prosecuted, and due to non-disclosure exit agreements they are able to join another organisation and re-offend. (Kapila., 2021).

What humanitarians have above other actors is experience in this field, however, they still need to ensure they demand efficient, good quality performance from its organisation. They

must be established as a functionally specialised expertise. And the vulnerable should be able to put confidence in those that aim to protect them.

NGOs have created a market where globalisation has absorbed them, through the need to address those suffering, the sick and the dying. Terry (2002) discusses that if humanitarian action has been reduced to merely a logistical exercise, many would be better off getting a contract with a supermarket chain to deliver aid with protection and at least avoid the humanitarian pretence. Therefore, it needs to be acknowledged that humanitarianism requires a certain kind of motivation. Everything has a price and can be replaced by something else; so, this would suggest that NGO behaviour reflects some seeking in part to protect their relative monopoly, along with the UN on the provision of humanitarian assistance. The motivations of senior staff positions are not - in practice - serving some of the key causes of humanitarianism, such as, helping the sick, suffering and dying, but because they can increase an organisations profile, capacity and income while advancing their own careers, (Terry., 2002). Humanitarians are now accountable to the donors, the organisation and those they intend to help. However, are these dynamics equal? Beneficiaries have the right to a certain level of quality standards. Humanitarianism should not be just about providing basic needs, but about a holistic approach to the individual, and by ensuring global standards are met. A sound performance from aid workers is not necessarily just about getting the job done, but about ensuring all the correct practices are in place ensuring the individual has received a good experience and their needs have been met, otherwise we will provide a result but not a good performance. (Slim., 2002).

According to Urquhart and Warmesley, (2019), humanitarian actors have made significant progress towards transparency commitments since the 2016 Grand Bargain agreement. In 2016, the International Aid Transparency Initiative was agreed. It sought to bring together

governments, multilateral institutions, private sector and civil society organisations and others to improve transparency, as well as access to good quality information on the use of development and humanitarian resources, which are being used to address the humanitarian needs. The purpose of this initiative was a step towards improving coordination, accountability and effectiveness to maximise the impact on those most vulnerable. 47 out of 59 Grand Bargain signatories signed and have started publishing data on their spending through the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). Currently over 750 organisations are publishing their data using the IATI standard. Of these, some 90% incorporated relevant data relating to their humanitarian activities. However, it is voluntary and therefore cannot represent the complete picture. If accountability and transparency are to be improved, collected data needs to be accessible, useful and usable. It needs to be standardised if it is to have a meaningful impact. In 2023, The State of Open Humanitarian Data reported that the highest levels of data availability across humanitarian operations. These results showed the organisational willingness to share and maintain their data publicly.

“However, the challenge of responsible data use during a crisis is not novel. The humanitarian sector has more than a decade of experience to offer. International organisations and humanitarian actors have developed detailed guidelines on how to use data responsibly under extreme circumstances”. (Zwitter & Gstrein, 2020, p.39).

USAID & IRC, (2019) discussed the cost-efficient and cost-effective approaches of agencies, and concluded that finance and monitoring systems are not positioned to provide sufficient data to ensure value for money in practice. They highlighted that there were gaps in primary data and a lack of consistent methodology. This led to a concern regarding levels of transparency and more specifically, how cost-efficient and cost-effective was the collection and use of respective data.

“Accurate data is the lifeblood of good policy and decision-making. Obtaining it, and sharing it across hundreds of organisations, in the middle of a humanitarian emergency, is complicated and time-consuming – but it is absolutely crucial”. (Guterres, A, 2017).

Whilst there have been many policies and standards developed; accountability still lags behind. Humanitarian funding needs to be more effective to meet the needs of beneficiaries. It is crucial that interventions by humanitarian actors have a positive long-term impact.

Organisations need to be held to account to provide the highest possible standard of health with the resources available. The 2016 IATI agreement sought to improve transparency and produce accurate data. However, the data is yet to be standardised so that it is accessible and useful. Organisations are increasingly willing to share data; yet, it is also the case that data needs to show that the projects and activities of the organisations are delivering value for money.

2.6 POLITICAL FUNDING

Barnett & Weiss, (2008), states that many organisations define the very meaning of humanitarianism as the opposite of politics, although it is impossible to completely protect humanitarian work from political impacts. Key activities such as peace keeping and protecting human rights are - at their core - political undertakings precisely because they propose to treat causes and not symptoms. Therefore, they are often affected by politics of transformation.

“Of course, humanitarian aid cannot be divorced from politics. Warring sides, foreign governments and international agencies can manipulate relief for political ends. But the political manipulation of humanitarian aid is entirely different to the conscious use of

humanitarian aid by agencies to pursue political ends that is proposed in new humanitarianism. Fighting for the universal right to unconditional humanitarian relief in times of crisis seems a good place to start in defining a new set of humanitarian principles". (Fox, 2001, p.275-289).

The more aid workers steer away from neutrality, the more difficult it will be to provide aid. However, as previously discussed, questions and issues of funding impact upon aid agencies. This will inevitably steer organisations into political waters. Organisations have to reconcile political pressures from donors that will only fund certain groups, countries, types of work, which are in relation to, and often a reflection of, the political stance of their countries.

Where once aid workers were doing a thankless task with obscurity and minimal resources, now there is a substantial amount of money and financing, as well as involvement, from corporate firms and actors, interested and powerful states and a huge network of actors under constant review in the global media coverage.

In contrast, another opinion is that it is neither possible nor desirable to separate politics from humanitarianism. Actions of aid have political consequences and can be viewed by those on the ground as political. However, the need to be political is also driven by the desire to alter the consequences and mitigate the impacts of the intended suffering. This cannot and should not be avoided. When the core principles of humanitarian aid are examined closely, for example, the principles of independence demand that any humanitarian work is not connected to any political actors (or parties) directly involved in armed conflicts.

According to Barnett & Weiss, (2008) there is a general rule that agencies should either refuse or limit their reliance on government funding, especially if the donors have a stake in the outcome.

“Considering the substantial responsibilities that the UN will be tasked with under this vision of renewed global governance, the UN urgently needs a reformed source of funding. Under the current arrangement, the income of the UN is at the discretion of its contributing members, creating an inconsistent, opaque, and arbitrary distribution of funds. Members use funding as leverage to coerce the UN towards or away from specific reforms and proposals. As a result, UN funding has been vulnerable to domestic political debates, isolationist tendencies, and demagoguery”. (Global Governance Forum, 2024, p.1).

The core principles constitute humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. According to Barnett & Weiss, (2008), humanity looks at all people, impartiality requires that assistance is based on need, and neutrality demands that humanitarians remain impartial to hostilities and independence demands that any assistance is not connected to any of the parties involved in armed conflicts and/ or who have a stake in the outcomes. These principles also serve as functioning guidelines that, when adhered to, can help organisations to provide effective relief and protection.

“One principal worth reviving from the list of traditional humanitarian principles is universalism — the right of everyone to receive humanitarian relief in times of crisis. In a world where bilateral aid is increasingly restricted to those countries prepared to follow Western strictures on the economy, governance and so on, there is a need to keep one arena of aid free of political conditions. People dying without food, water and medicines should receive unconditional humanitarian aid whoever they are”. (Fox, 2001, p.275-289).

However, these principles were the prevailing standards until late 1980s, when agencies then began to further reflect and define their identity once again. Once relief was no longer a priority, they moved into other fields such as reconstruction and development activities, and

over time slowly the respective identity became somewhat murky. Humanitarian organisations may need to review these prevailing principles, focusing only on responding to those suffering regardless of race, saving lives and acting selflessly. The risk may involve a patron-client relationship being developed, which is a social and economic arrangement where a patron provides support in exchange for the client's loyalty and services, The patron usually has wealth, status and power whereas the client usually benefits from the patron's support.

Humanitarian needs have increased over the years, as has the amount of funding available. As a result, humanitarian action has grown into a multi-billion-dollar industry, able to cope with complex emergencies. The top ten largest donors (in terms of country) are from the west. (Top Ten Humanitarian Aid Donors 2009). (United Nations Multipolarity: The New Global Economy, Washington DC. World Bank). With the US being the top donor for the past 10 years and Sudan being the leading recipient from 2005-2010 pointing to the fact that humanitarian responses are often long term in nature. (The state of art of humanitarian action, 2013).

"The human rights approach, developmental relief and the rejection of neutrality amount to the politicisation of humanitarian aid. While Western governments are happy to seize on these developments to co-opt agencies on to their own political agenda, aid agencies themselves have been in the forefront of pushing for a more political role". (Fox, 2001, p.275-289).

Morris, (2005) stated that there were few phenomena in modern life as political as humanitarian aid. The world's major donors all make political choices on which humanitarian aid projects to fund. However, funding often covers no more than about two thirds of the needs. Cahill, (2012, p.36) discusses that humanitarian budgets have risen significantly, from \$2 billion in 2000, \$7 billion in 2007 to \$16.7 billion in 2012, with the UN, (2022, p.1) stating the need in 2022, rose to \$55 billion. Whilst higher standards can be achieved, it is important

to recognise that security costs increase when working in high security areas. Currently the international humanitarian community is complex with international organisations seeking to deliver assistance. Cahill, (2012). The challenge is to examine how investments and commitments have provided greater resources to target those who have the greatest needs and evaluate the results. However, this is often not undertaken.

Governments are now providing contracts with substantial funding possibilities for NGOs. It is worth noting that, whilst some NGOs are mainly funded by governments, others will not accept any government financing. However, a risk of this funding mechanism and approach is that NGOs are not only dependent on the funds provided by governments, but they also become identified with state policies. (Karns & Mingst., 2010). A huge percentage of these funds from governments that are being channelled through NGOs to target areas of direct interest to the state according to Barnett & Weiss, (2008). NGOs are more flexible than UN agencies, by being able to respond and perform.

Humanitarian emergencies have given rise to huge demands for NGOs and UN services. With the substantial funds provided through states, most NGOs have little choice but to comply with their demands. Donors are finding ways to maintain their level of influence and keep a degree of visibility. Zaidi, (1999) discussed how the NGOs growth in recent years has derived entirely from donor driven funding and the need to spend funds in a matter of a couple of years. This increase has begun to determine the agenda for the NGO sector, comprising and undermining many benefits. A patron-client relationship has developed between NGOs and donors, where donors assert financial control by seeking accountability for the large amount of funds provided, and these funds can also support a policy. Reinsberg, Michaelowa, Knack, (2017) mention how trust funds can also be a more attractive opportunity when burden sharing in high-risk areas. Yet, in circumstances where national interests tend to dominate, donors

prefer single donor trust funds. Their research also suggests that donors reap the benefits of aid harmonisation through trust funds only when their preferences align. Furthermore, Kilama, (2016) goes on to discuss how governments have and are continuing to restructure with the emergence of new donors like China, to better coordinate its assistance with economic interests. It is important that emerging donors are not ignored. They will have influence in policy domains and whose engagement may affect politics in a new way. Kilama, (2016) goes on to state that aid has usually followed political interest and with the rise of China it creates new independent variables.

“Coordinated efforts to more effectively monitor donor-recipient relationships, using a widely implemented human rights-based legal and moral framework for aid policy should be the ultimate, collective goal”. (Ooms & Hammonds, 2008, p.29-47).

In addition, NGOs also receive donations from private citizens, although this is comparatively small and the data from private funding is poor and cannot provide information on, for instance, accountability questions and meeting targets. Barnett & Weiss, (2008). Most humanitarian funding from governments is allocated to and spent by NGOs and multilateral agencies. However, the humanitarian field is now seeing governments offering these contracts to private sectors. US BHA (Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance), UK FCDO (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office) and EU ECHO (European Civil Protection & Humanitarian Aid Operations), Donors already open contracts to private and NGOs bidders. Almost 10% of WHO funding comes from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, making it the second largest donor. There are concerns that this leads to bias and an excessive ability to influence. Today, the UN may be run by member states, yet it relies heavily on private funding to finance UN functions, operations and activities.

Private contractors may be problematic for NGOs as they can add challenges to the NGOs on whether they are effective. Under such competition NGOs are more vulnerable because they cannot generate capital. Kilama, (2016) talks about the public pressure of finances in the humanitarian field and the need to do more with less money. As things progress it is important to keep watch as landscapes change. Donors are looking at linking aid with private sectors, and therefore it is key we also look at their influence. Although originally NGOs were viewed as advocates for and deliverers of a progressive social change, this is altering as they have become self- interested entities engaged in advancing their own agendas. They are often more concerned with their financial and publicly perceived longevity rather than their impact in any response. According to Volker Heins., (2008) and Zaidi, (1999), NGOs were perceived to be cost-effective when delivering aid to the poor and more able to develop capacity in community-based institutions than other agencies.

Goyder, (2011) evaluated the use of the common humanitarian fund (CHF), looking at three different country level evaluations. The CHFs are pools of un-earmarked funds made available for UN and NGOs at the country level. These were part of the humanitarian reform initiative, which aimed to support Cluster Systems and leadership. The author concluded that the CHF is most effective when it can be tracked through an operational agency. Yet, in relation to timeliness, there are delays of up to six months between submission of the project and receiving the funds resulting in regular no cost extensions. For the CHF to become more cost effective and efficient, there needs to be multi-year grants for agencies, supported by a higher level of monitoring. The lack of monitoring presently represents the major weakness of the CHF, and there is a major gap in data. However, it is important to note that reporting goes deeper than just data.

“It also provides fine-grained data on the recency, breadth, depth and accessibility of data provided, highlighting that transparency is about more than just availability of data”.
(Swedlun, 2023, p.1).

A report by Venton & Sida, (2017) went on to research the value of the multi-year humanitarian funding within protracted crisis in three countries. In 2014, the UK Department for International Development introduced multi-year humanitarian funding for protracted crisis. The report discovered that the multi-year funding had numerous advantages over short term funding. It could bring about administrative savings and operational solutions could be more cost effective. Saving as big as 29% were noted by being able to purchase at optimal times. It was also noted that while OCHA and UNHCR have access to multi-year funding, they are only able to offer grants for six months for OCHA and 12 months for UNHCR. Since this report was written however, multi-year funding has now become an increasingly mainstream part of protracted crisis funding. It is worth noting that systems have been developed with the UN and NGOs to deliver short term funding for global emergencies. And these cannot be changed overnight. Yet complex problems are not resolved quickly.

As previously discussed, the 2016 Grand Bargain acknowledged the importance of increased quality, predictable and multi-year humanitarian funding (MYHF). In Metcalfe-Hough, Fenton and Marji, (2023) report, it was clear that driving change within donors has been a challenge for many years. However, the Grand Bargain has and continues to have an impact on change. Discussions in the Quality Funding Caucus in 2022 helped to push the need to allocate more funding as multi-year. And data received also indicated an upward trend in this for the UN. However, respective data from International NGOs is very incomplete, and therefore it is not possible to identify any trends. There were increases in volume but data suggests that this may have come from private donors rather than institutional donors. Data also indicates,

although it is too incomplete to be indicate clearly whether respective funding passed down to local NGOs does not have the same multi-year funding. Whilst some may argue that the Grand Bargain has not transformed the system, it is fair to say that it has made progress slow.

Whilst humanitarianism should be the opposite of politics, funding does come from governments with demonstrable political agendas, that result in aid workers having to steer away from strict adherence to the principles of neutrality. There is now a substantial amount of money coming from powerful states and this shapes behaviour.

Based on the United Nations 2023 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals, of what the future should entail;

“It is clear that a renewed United Nations based on a Second UN Charter is critical to achieving such a future. Some might insist that revising the UN Charter is politically impossible in the face of the interests of the most powerful nations”. (Global Governance Forum, 2023/2024, p.1).

Humanitarian needs have increased substantially over the past 20 years and it has become a multi-billion-dollar industry (estimated at around \$55 billion), (United Nations, GHO. 2022, p.1). A risk of NGOs accepting money from states is that they will become identified with state policy. Donors are finding ways to maintain their level of influence and keep a degree of visibility. NGOs have become self-interested entities engaged in advancing their own agendas. Several funding mechanisms such as the CHF have shown a lack in reporting and data gaps. Whilst the MYHF may have shown data from the UN, it is incomplete from NGOs.

“Global economic disparities, poverty, and inequality remain persistent challenges that require concerted international effort. In a globalised financial system, only the UN can address a more equitable distribution of wealth across the planet to eliminate poverty.

Reformed financial institutions and a capacity to raise global taxes in support of universal basic services could enable a new social contract. A Second Charter could be structured to empower the organisation to hold member states accountable for meeting the Sustainable Development Goals, and coordinate aid where states are unable to achieve the goals on their own. In the 21st century, the global community has a responsibility to ensure access to basic needs such as nutrition, education, healthcare, and clean water for all humans". (Global Governance Forum, 2023/2024, p.1).

2.7 CENTRE FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION & PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FELLOWSHIP

Recent pandemics have highlighted the interconnectedness of the world and how crucial it is that the international community evolves to ensure it can respond effectively. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) build on lessons learnt from previous emergencies, international recognition and technical expertise, to support nations around the world to strengthen their public health emergency management (PHEM) capacity.

The health impacts of recent global diseases and other disasters have demonstrated the need to strengthen the public health systems by planning for an emergency using the disaster management cycle to protect communities better. (See Section 2.2). They use the management cycle to embed their knowledge, techniques and principles to manage complex health events effectively.

PHEM aligns with the core capacities of the 2005 International Health Regulations (IHR), namely, to coordinate and collaborate when responding to infectious disease outbreaks. CDC supports PHEM by aiding the development of plans and procedures and providing in-country technical assistance. CDC partners with US agencies, international partners and organisations

to reduce mortality and morbidity around nations of the world. The CDC emergency coordinators have provided technical knowledge in emergency preparedness, which has been highly valuable. They continue to grow as they provide PHEM with technical assistance.

The WHO led an effort in 2004 with CDC and other international organisations to update the IHR, which led to the obligation of “One of the most important provisions in the IHR is the obligation for all States Parties to establish core capacities to detect, assess, notify and report events, and to respond to public health risks and emergencies” DG, WHO (2005, p.1). Although many countries were able to manage small outbreaks there were concerns towards international travel and the increased spread of disease. Therefore, a more purposeful and streamlined approach to managing these emergencies was needed. CDC works with US agencies and international partners to reach the goals of IHR 2005.

CDC’s partnerships and technical assistance have extended to large international organisations and they participate in WHO-led initiatives and provide subject matter expertise. CDC also partners with the African Union, Public Health England and Public Health of Canada. By increasing the ability to rapidly and effectively respond to global health threats, they can ensure the broader global health of all people. PHEM preparedness plans, SOPs and EOCs contribute to a more efficient and effective response during an emergency, and in turn reducing global morbidity and mortality.

There are still many challenges that remain with PHEM global capacity. Although WHO provides guidelines for countries on how to build a PHEM program, each country faces its own challenges in implementation. High-level support must be provided if this is going to advance, as it is a new concept and there is limited financial and human resources. This still requires major commitment to ensuring major public health emergencies are managed. The ability to detect and respond to public health threats from across the globe relies on the capacity of

each country to comply with IHR 2005 as well as being able to rapidly detect, respond and control to the emergency. This has increased the demand for PHEM technical assistance in building countries' sustainable capacity. It is crucial that there is close collaboration across CDCs and international organisations regarding PHEM to ensure more is accomplished as public health emergencies are assisted by WHO. This will help to save lives and protect people. (Brencic et al., 2017).

“WHO’s Health Emergencies Programme works with all countries and partners to ensure the world is better prepared for all-hazards health emergencies that threaten global health security”. (WHO, 2024, p.1).

Their work is involved in research, prevention, and management of pandemics, they strengthen and develop systems that detect and assess potential public health threats, as well as responding to public health emergencies. In rare cases WHO will act as a health care provider as a last resort. WHO supports member states to evaluate, develop and strengthen core capacities in relation to the IHR (2005), so that public health risks are detected, assessed and responded to promptly and effectively. All countries need to be able to respond immediately to potential health threats and for this it is crucial they are prepared. WHO works with countries to ensure they have immediate and long-term preparedness plans that aim to build, improve and sustain the health-related operational capabilities of the country. WHO works to prevent and lessen the impacts of large-scale epidemics which cause widespread death and suffering and disproportionately affect the poorest and most vulnerable populations. They do this by consolidating scientific evidence from a variety of disciplines and use it to develop comprehensive and scalable interventions. Under the IHR (2005) WHO manages the Public Health Intelligence to detect, verify and assess all potential public health emergencies. They provide information on events and risks, showing authoritative evidence

and analysis for those making decisions and for health partners in the international community. A rapid, multi-sectoral public health response at country level, together with technical support from WHO and its partners, helps to save lives and reduce public health consequences.

2.8 HEALTH CLUSTER

The Health Cluster exists to relieve suffering and save lives in humanitarian emergencies, while advancing the well-being of populations. There are over 900 partners at country level of which 65 partners engage strategically at global level. These partners include international organisations and UN agencies, nongovernmental organisations, national authorities, specialised agencies, affected communities, academic and training institutions and donor agencies. Each partner has a role to play within the Health Cluster. Partners benefit from stronger collective advocacy as well as contributing to and benefit from shared knowledge and expertise, capacity building and surge personnel.

The United States advocated for WHO being the lead for providing technical assistance to those in need globally. This was approved at the Second World Health Assembly with funding being provided and a design was developed for technical health programs. The Cluster System was then formed with WHO being the lead for health in an emergency response. (Fee., 2016). Since then, the UN and NGOs have witnessed that the performance of these clusters has varied depending on the experience and competence of those on the ground. Cumming-Bruce (2009) Whilst the concept of the Cluster System is essential and it is crucial that there is strong coordination, these systems must be monitored and evaluated to ensure they are effective in every emergency.

D'Harcourt, Ratnayake & Kim, (2017) discuss how there has been a positive impact in having the Cluster System, to ensure strong communication and a reduction in gaps during a response. However, detailed assessments of such responses need to provide evidence-based data to show the positive impact and they need to continue to evaluate the work of the Cluster System to ensure a continued better communication and a reduction in the gaps during a response. Working closely with governments will also improve the public health responses, even though it can be a challenging task in a conflict setting. According to Cumming-Bruce, (2009) the health cluster has become accountable for health responses in an emergency and also to agree common strategies amongst partners. However, an independent evaluation was undertaken in 2007 by the UN inter-agency standing committee and it showed there was no discernible increase in levels of accountability of the health cluster.

The cluster approach which was first applied in 2005, has conducted two flagship evaluations. One in 2007 and another in 2010, where they examined the contribution clusters made to improving humanitarian assistance. Following this report, the cluster approach was refined into the transformative agenda. Olu et al, (2015) also looked at the lessons learnt from coordinating a health response. It acknowledged that health clusters are a welcomed contribution during a humanitarian crisis, but they can add a level of bureaucracy to the response which is a real concern. The evidence showed that they did improve the response in reducing morbidity and mortality. Yet, in order for them to be truly effective they need to be supported with sufficient funding, and strong coordination partnerships. They also need political commitment shared across government stakeholders.

“CGD acknowledges that the approach – launched as a result of the chaos and confusion in the response to the 2005 southeast Asian tsunami – brings order, predictability, and clarity to the way humanitarian response is organised. But, it says, it also increases fragmentation, both for funding and implementation”. (Alexander, 2021, p.1).

Whilst the health cluster may work very closely with its partners, it has very limited control and power to hold any agencies to account. In addition, whilst partners may provide data to the health cluster, there is no way of validating the data. Whilst there may also be inspections from donors, these are limited and it is easy to mislead a donor who has limited experience of international programs within these settings. Megersa and Kelbesa, (2020) studied the evidence surrounding the accountability to affected populations (AAP) and cost-effectiveness in the humanitarian outcomes, specifically looking at leadership and governance, transparency, feedback and complaints, participation and project design, monitoring and evaluation. They noted that whilst the IASC and other forums have made commitments to the AAP, there was little evidence of progress in project design and no progress in engaging local participation. Furthermore, they stated that much of the evidence that was available confirmed that the humanitarian sector has a poor record in fulfilling its pledges to use their positions to be accountable and transparent.

Significantly for this literature review, some articles (written anonymously by aid workers in 2018) examined the quality of programs in the field ;

“More shockingly, one senior member of staff, who is responsible for the quality of delivery of such programs, only seemed to take notice that the project was failing because the donor deadline for the completion of the project was fast approaching, and we had zero achievements to report back. More energy was then directed into saving the NGOs image in the eyes of the donor, and concocting unrealistic justifications for how we spent all the money

allotted to staff salaries and field trips. Yet we had no concrete results to justify these expenses". (Secret Aid Worker, March 2018a, p.1).

Hancock (1991) refers to how foreign aid has reached extreme proportions. The industry is quite lucrative for those who deliver its programs. He goes on to discuss how the benefits and salaries are extreme as an outcome.

"As a result, not only does base pay for U.N. officials exceed that for U.S. civil servants by an average of 25 percent, but the fringe benefits are also far more lucrative. Promotion comes twice as fast for U.N. employees than for U.S. civil servants. It takes a U.S. civil servant 14 years to accumulate as much sick pay as a U.N. staffer is entitled to on his very first day. U.N. pensions exceed those of the U.S. civil servant by 43 percent. And this is only the beginning. An increasingly large part of aid budgets is for travel (first class, of course). And most of the travel is not to poverty-stricken areas in the less-developed world, but to poverty seminars normally held at posh hotels in exotic and very attractive locations". (Hancock, 1991, p.226).

Factor & Kang, (2015) studied the impact of corruption on various health indicators within international health programs, and found that the higher the corruption, the poorer the outcomes and the lower the level of health expenditure.

Steets et al, (2010) completed a cluster approach evaluation and concluded that there needed to be significant financial investment to develop the Cluster System. In their report, the authors stated that coverage of humanitarian needs has improved in some of the sectors. The gaps are better identified with duplications reduced and the technical growth of actors has improved with the support of professional peers. They also found that those with coordination experience exert more predictable leadership, and the staff and leaders are better trained. The report looked at the partnerships between the UN and NGOs and found

that they have become significantly stronger. However, there were also some important challenges that the clusters still faced.

The report stated that they largely exclude national and local actors, failing to support local coordination mechanisms. This is due to a lack of understanding of what is locally available, as well as discernible exit criteria and associated strategy. In addition, the cluster can threaten the humanitarian principles, especially when they are dependent on funding from those involved in conflicts. Many clusters are process driven rather than action orientated due to poor management, with many coordinators not being trained well enough.

The report also stated that inter-cluster coordination is ineffective in most cases, with little integration of cross cutting issues. Barresi, (2018) undertook a qualitative analysis of the cluster approach. The analysis suggested that the cluster approach has improved and strengthened formal and functional relationships. Nevertheless, Abaya et al, (2019), concluded that a one size fixed approach to the Cluster System cannot be effective but must be adapted to local conditions. This ensures that the Cluster System fits with existing structures and frameworks both at national and local levels. In addition, this will improve coordination and the effectiveness of the response.

Kauffmann & Kruger, (2010) evaluated the cluster approach in Myanmar following Cyclone Nargis. They noted that the performance of the clusters and sub-clusters varied greatly. With the quality of staff varying. There was a different level of commitment and effectiveness with organisations. Whilst the coordination with cluster members was strong, at village level this was sometimes completely non-existent. They noted that the cluster approach strengthened accountability among cluster members yet had minimal impact on the health cluster itself. Globally, whilst the Cluster System had a positive impact on protection issues within the government, it focused all its resources on one area, neglecting other risks.

A similar report undertaken by Grunewald and Sokpoh, (2010) in Chad, found that the Cluster System created confusion and significantly increased the number of meetings in a complex and volatile context. However, whilst these concerns remained the coordination did show major improvements over time. With challenges remaining between clusters and national and local mechanisms. Clarke and Campbell, (2018) researched the theory of clusters versus the practice of them, and they concluded that the most successful coordination mechanisms have been within the humanitarian clusters. OCHA, (2007) evaluated the implementation of the global Cluster System. Whilst the cluster was funded by 65%, it was apparent that most clusters were also unable to fulfil their workplans due to late pledges and contributions and resulting in many clusters seeking no cost extensions. Nevertheless, clusters did enhance respective coherence and synergies among the different agencies. The work on standards as well as the harmonisation of tools, guidelines and training had led to a better pooling of knowledge and sharing of best practice. Many clusters reported that they had improved predictability and accountability. They felt that their efforts had led to significantly improved partnerships at field level, UN and non-UN actors.

Funding was of course a critical challenge to successful implementation of programs and capacity building. A study undertaken in Yemen by Al-Awlagi et al, (2022) examining the health clusters response found that while their objectives lined with local objectives, they did not translate into timely responses due to weak- decision-making powers within the health cluster. The results indicated mixed, and inconsistent outcomes, that performance was unsatisfactory and necessitated further improvement, yet others felt they had witnessed a compelling performance. Those who felt their performance was unsatisfactory, had also witnessed a lack of transparency in sharing work plans and budgets. They also stated that they were influenced by the politics of national authorities. For those who felt their performance was satisfactory, this was amongst the prevention of deaths and coordination with health

stakeholders. All informants stated that the health cluster response was not timely with lengthy bureaucratic procedures to get new and existing policies approved. Due to the lack of adequate financial data, respondents could not comment on budget allocations. However, they did state that the health cluster was unable to mobilise resources.

The health cluster is the technical lead for an emergency. The health cluster's performance has varied depending on the experience and competence of staff. Whilst there is no question that the Cluster System is essential for strong coordination and strong partnerships, they need to ensure they are effective in every emergency. There must be an increase in evidence-based data and standardised monitoring and evaluation for the health cluster to be held to account. It is also crucial that they are properly funded and transparent. They also need to support local coordination mechanisms.

2.9 CAPACITY BUILDING

Milen, (2001) clearly states that capacity building is strengthening the ability of individuals, organisations or systems to perform appropriate functions, effectively, efficiently and sustainably. One of the challenges that humanitarian agencies face is to ensure they build the capacity of human resources and the state. By developing such skills, countries will be able to move forward and aid agencies will be able to leave knowing they have supported the state until they are either back to where they were before the incident, in a best-case scenario or are in a better position. Wood & Sullivan, (2015) supports this, by discussing that the intentions of aid, amongst other things, are to build the states' capacity. However, Cahill, (2012) goes on to say, that there is a lack of skilled health workers, although solutions are being sought, with the improvement of skills, new technologies, improving motivation, deploying skilled staff and the shifting of services to free up more staff. Yet, even with these

new resources, he writes about the challenges faced for the world's most vulnerable and whether the resources for those countries are able to meet global targets, one of these being capacity building. More concerning is the long-term impact of not meeting these targets. Nascimento, D, (2015) looked at the complexity of a humanitarian crises, and discussed how the true nature and purpose of humanitarian action was becoming even more difficult. She went on to discuss how difficult the current situation is for humanitarians today.

“What can be concluded from this analysis is that policy makers, diplomats and aid workers are increasingly struggling to develop appropriate responses to humanitarian crisis and conflict in contexts characterised by state breakdowns and competing military and para-military structures. But what comes out very clearly from the humanitarian experience in the past three decades is that the international community does not know yet how to deal with such dysfunctional states, particularly those which have limited strategic interests and even less in complex human crisis contexts. ” (Nascimento, 2015, p.36).

Holzgrefe & Keohane, (2003) talk about how monitoring success through achieving specific goals will depend profoundly as to whether or not an international commitment exists to provide adequate resources. If the commitment is not there, then there is a strong probability that the mission will fail.

Of the data available in Cahills' report (2012) they found that they did not have sufficient staff to provide the required services. Without adequate resources, it will be impossible to capacity build staff in emergency responses, as the demands the humanitarian staff will face, will be overwhelming and they will have to prioritise saving lives. There was a clear linkage in those countries between the density of health workers and maternal and infant mortality. Cahill, (2007) refers specifically to the respective health situation globally and the need for urgent action. Basic standards are still not being met, such as, vaccinations, clean water and basic

medicine, which has seen the spread of diseases such as meningitis and malaria and yet again the efforts from the humanitarian agencies, is having little impact compared to the needs.

“Clearly, aid workers must not become automatons executing protocols and guidelines irrespective of the situation they find themselves in. Indeed, providing medical aid in a crisis requires an extraordinary ability to innovate and adapt to people’s needs. Even more, the humanitarian response must be based very simply on the human response to suffering, the refusal to accept the loss of life, human suffering and loss of dignity of those affected by conflicts, crises and natural disasters. This humanitarian impulse cannot be regulated, nor can it be taught in a classroom. And yet a commitment to help without the necessary professional experience and organisational infrastructure can lead to poor quality assistance, as has been seen most recently in the response to the Haiti earthquake”. (MSF, 2014, p.1).

Zaidi, (1999) argues in his research that there are too many high expectations placed on the humanitarian agencies to develop countries when the state needs to take responsibility. His paper does go on to say how humanitarians are able to provide a greater reach to beneficiaries and have results that enhance development sustainability. They can be locally rooted, flexible, low-cost, and honest. However, currently, there is not enough evidence to understand the impact of the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The public tends to believe that emergency organisations are prepared to respond effectively to a disaster, even if it may look chaotic and deviant. And ironically, the humanitarian response is often quite chaotic.

The effectiveness and efficiency of a response may depend of the amount of prior planning, and the degree of previous exposure to disasters.

“Providing aid to people in crisis is never enough — it must meet their most urgent needs and be grounded in sound science. Aid agencies have a responsibility to determine the effectiveness of their response and use evidence-based approaches”. (MSF, 2014, p.1).

In some cases, the organisations may have rehearsed emergency plans. In two case studies, Fisher, (2008) demonstrated that those communities that had been educated regarding the actual problems of disasters, before, during and after an emergency would be more likely to respond in an effective manner, which supports the need to focus on capacity building vulnerable states.

Holzgrefe & Keohane, (2003) discuss how the lessons learnt from disasters are just documented historical findings rather than seeking to influence change in applied outcomes. In addition, social structure perpetuates this outcome, with elites portraying inaccurate outcomes following a disaster. Often resources are directed towards restoring enterprises for the elite, instead of sustainability. Hannigan, (2012) describes the humanitarian system as a group of specialised agencies, that address humanitarian concerns, and these are held together loosely by some basic common goals. He continues to argue that the field is becoming more crowded and turbulent. Bertincello et al, (2015) found that there was a crucial gap in public health training in a variety of countries, and that these needs, need to be tailored per country. Lennquist, (2003) continues to discuss that the need for training in disaster medicine will lead to consequences through a delay or lack of proper treatment to the beneficiaries, if not addressed. He also adds that poor coordination will also lead to consequences. These concerns will put demands on training and capacity building.

Again, Yemen by Al-Awlagi et al, (2022) went on to discuss how some informants highlighted that the health cluster had no exit strategy in place, which meant that the transition to development was not a priority for the health cluster, thus reducing its ability to capacity build.

Yet, others stated that there was an exit strategy to some degree; but there were concerns that all exit strategies came with limitations and challenges, as there was insufficient funding to support them. Furthermore, some informants stated that there was underrepresentation, underfunding and poor capacity, hindering active participation of the national NGOs.

As emergency agencies respond to disasters and end up staying for many years after (some over 30 years), it is crucial to look at why they haven't withdrawn resources and handed the responsibility back to the government and national staff. This dependency encourages both the need for expat communities to respond to emergencies as well as expats needing to stay in the role. Cahill, (2007) supports how beneficiaries become dependent on aid and of means of support. It is therefore important to observe how organisations and their workers can incur and even encourage dependency. This stresses the importance of well-defined exit strategies for NGOs and UN agencies when entering a country for a response.

Whilst there is substantial data surrounding the need to capacity build during a response, and it is very clearly documented as a target for all aid agencies, the UN and NGOs, there is very limited research undertaken on the policies developed to capacity build, and its success or failures of using these policies. Bates, (2011) supported this by acknowledging that there is plenty of literature about the theory of evaluating capacity building, but limited published evidence about its effectiveness. He goes on to state that key indicators of sustainable capacity building are for projects to ensure early engagement of stakeholders, improved resources and secured funding. Guy, (2016) wrote how capacity building has been a cornerstone of development policy for 70 years, with 25% of aid expenditure spent on it annually. Let alone the reason for any success or failure. He goes on to say how there is no clear guidance for the professional, as many are self-taught or mentored, with few professional training courses available. He expands further, by noting that whilst improving

organisations performance is part of capacity building there is no accepted process to measure the impact of these capacity programs. Guy, (2016) continues stating, with the need for aid becoming ever increasing, due to conflict and natural disasters, inevitably, low-income nations are going to need to be more self-sufficient and dependent on their own resources to deal with the emergencies arising and poverty. External support should be directed towards building resilience and institutional capacity. The lack of published evaluations of the impact of capacity building hinders humanitarian aid and understanding, whether resources invested have been used effectively to achieve sustainability, and in turn to advocate for further funding to improve sustainability and increase capacity.

One of the objectives of the cluster is to build the capacity of the state and their human resources. Whilst the cluster needs to build this capacity through training, peer to peer discussions, strengthening coordination, relationships and resources, there is little research in understanding if respective capacity building projects are effective. In addition, many responses have little or no exit strategy in place, which limits aid workers' motivation to build capacity.

2.10 HUMAN RESOURCES

Thakur, (2006) states to be faithful to the nations and people of the world, the UN must persevere in its efforts to consolidate its strengths, fill in the gaps and eliminate wasteful habits and procedures. Nevertheless, without the UN system, the last decades would not have been as peaceful and would have been far more dangerous. However, over the next sixty years, the UN system is unlikely to have the same impact without reforming the structure, changing authorities and power. With the demands on humanitarian responses growing, it is crucial that the humanitarian sector addresses the cost of staffing, in particular expats and

the differences between local and international salaries and benefits. There is very little academic literature available on this issue and the only information sourced was from anonymous or secret aid workers who felt the costs of expats needed exposing. Nevertheless, it also seems that they were too uncomfortable to use their names. A series of anonymous articles were written by a tabloid, where aid workers had been interviewed and talked about how the sector is full of people with the wrong motivations and agendas. One article continues to discuss how the industry is worth over \$27 billion, and that deployments are incentivised by money.

“The more you can raise, the happier your colleagues in the region and in headquarters because some of that money goes into paying their salaries and office rents – and your performance in the country is linked to that, rather than the quality of the programs you are running”. (Secret Aid Worker, March 2018b, p.1).

Zaidi, (1999) comments that ‘the easy money syndrome has penetrated the NGO sector’, with reports published requiring highly inflated funding, and humanitarians are found smartly dressed in five-star lobbies. Zaidi, (1999) goes on to mention that there are very few success stories, especially for the number of agencies in the humanitarian industry, and many of them are continuously recited.

In another article written by the same tabloid, the Interviewee discusses how overpaid the humanitarians are, receiving salaries between, ‘\$3,000 to \$8,000 a month’. Secret Aid Worker, (2016a) discussed the contrast between local aid worker salaries, and expats, even if they have the same experience and qualifications. They went on to question if this happened in another industry, where people with the same experience and qualifications were paid vastly different salaries that there would be uproar. The article continues to discuss the expats high benefit packages on top of their salaries.

“A beautiful house in the safest, most privileged part of the city; a smooth 4-wheel drive, fuel for work trips paid for; and some organisations also pay for school fees up to college”. (Secret Aid Worker, 2016a, p.1).

Another anonymous humanitarian discussed how the industry is overrun with *“narrow-minded, power-hungry individuals”* whose goal is to lead an extravagant life, travelling to various war-torn cities around the world rather than actually upholding humanitarian principles for the sake of the beneficiaries, (Secret Aid Worker, March 2018c, p.1).

In the Humanitarian Insider blog (2022), again an anonymous article, they provided a summary of what can be expected as a salary for a career in humanitarian work based on numerous cross checking and anonymous conversations. This ranged from ‘\$1,200 - \$4,800 as an entry level to \$5,000 - \$17,000 per month’ for those late in career. The article went on to state that these salaries are for international workers only and that national staff salaries vary significantly. The variant on the salary depended on who you were working for, with low budget NGOs in safe countries and UN in high-risk areas.

They continue to discuss why salaries are not standardised and they stated that this comes down to the competitive bidding process for humanitarian funding. Their article went on to discuss in tiers who pays the most to least with the UN paying the highest salaries, followed closely by Scandinavian and American organisations (which can sometimes surpass the UN) ending with the third tier of NGOs such as ACTED, InterSOS etc. Their article went on to discuss how very few humanitarian NGOs will share their salary scales, with just DRC being transparent of this. However, the UNs salary scale is available online. Although there are many steps to understanding what a worker actually receives in monetary terms when taking into account all the adjustments. Amongst other statements, they also wanted to state that if you work for the UN, you will not pay tax, but NGO staff are required to pay taxes either in their

home country or the country they are working in. Most member states have granted United Nations staff exemption from national income taxation on their United Nations emoluments. However, a few member States do tax the emoluments of their national. In such cases, the organisations reimburse the income tax to the staff member. (UN Office of Human Resources Management's., 2012).

And, that the cost of living will be very low, with food and housing covered, and in reality, there is very little you can spend your money on in remote or conflict-affected areas. In many instances, this leaves humanitarians with the ability to put nearly all their monthly incomes into savings. Lastly, they also mentioned that regardless of your qualifications or specialism, your salary will be similar. The article goes on to state that in their opinion, a typical and fair and acceptable salary is somewhere in the middle range of what they showed previously.

UN and NGOs budgets can also see very high ICR rates removing more funds from the field, in addition to those costs of expats on the field from both salary and benefits. While it is crucial to have some of the resources at HQ to support the field responses, there are concerns that this is just providing the aid worker with a job when they have had their experience in the field, as they struggle to find work in their home countries as often, they do not have the qualifications to support the experience they have gained. Blyth, (2018), found that work on the field, is increasingly being conducted by local staff, rather than those in HQ who are the strategic planners and decision makers and are therefore becoming more removed. The study in Yemen by Al-Awlagi et al, (2022) discussed how using ministry staff for cluster work was having adverse effects on the health system, especially given they can receive huge incentives which in turn has a detrimental effect. Whilst this is a positive as the humanitarian field has advocated for local skills rather than bringing in expats, it is crucial that HQ does not become irrelevant and that there are no adverse effects of recruiting locally.

Overall, there is very limited existing research on the cost of staff salaries and the benefit packages received. Of the research sourced it was nearly all anonymous. Humanitarians are seemingly becoming increasingly concerned that the industry is becoming motivated by money. Some aid workers may be more focused on living an extravagant lifestyle, with beautiful houses, luxury cars and other luxurious benefits, rather than upholding declared humanitarian principles. Salaries can range from \$3,500 to \$25,000 per month. United Nations, (2022). In addition, ICR rates may also be too variable with staff in HQ becoming too removed from the realities of the field.

2.11 REFORM

Kapila, 2021 stated that the UN system, whilst commendable, is set up to fail. It has limited authority, and there is a reluctance to address issues due to a concern of offending its member states. He went on to state that some countries that were under developed, received the less qualified and trained staff during a response. The UN system experiences persistent problems with financing, coordination, management and structural weaknesses. It has grown to accommodate increasing mandates, yet ultimately still reflects the (design) realities of 1945, given the charter has only been amended three times, even though there have been many reforms advocated. (Davies & Woodward., 2014).

“It is imperative that member states come together to collectively reform the UN and ensure its continued effectiveness in addressing global issues and maintaining international peace and security. With the “Summit of the Future” on the horizon, the time is ripe for UN reform to make the organisation more responsive, representative, and accountable to the needs and aspirations of the global community in the 21st century”.(Global Governance, 2023/2024, p.1).

The need for reform stems from major changes in the international system since 1945 and the need for the UN's principles to reflect the new political and social realities. (Karns & Mingst., 2010). There is no dispute about the need to reform the UN, the disagreement is over what kind of reform is required. Reform is difficult due to the difference between states and the nature of UN decision making. Developed states tend to look at reforms to improve efficiency and effectiveness whilst developing states focus on the need for greater equity in decision making. It has been suggested that states resist a more effective secretariat in the UN system as they fear losing control of it.

Scandals have been exposed such as the 1990's Oil for food program which resulted in management taking bribes and corruption. There is also the challenge of assessing efficiency as success can be open to discussion. (Davis & Woodward., 2014). Whereas developing countries are more concerned about economic and political equity through distribution of resources and enhanced participation in key decision making. They want more power in the system and more programs towards development. NGOs want a more open and accountable system towards society, allowing them greater input and participation.

Aid has been profoundly influenced by the impact of the Rwanda crisis (1994) where policy recommendations were made to improve the future of humanitarian interventions. The humanitarian community learnt that early warning is not the problem but taking early action is to prevent future genocides. They found that debating terminology was just a distraction from action, and that mass atrocities do not require advanced killing technology. The UN needed to focus its efforts to strengthen the ability of UN peace keeping operations to protect civilians. Patrick, (2014). When the Syrian crisis occurred the trajectory of institutional reform of humanitarian aid shifted as it was recognised that international NGOs could partner with local actors to deliver aid, and primarily most of aid was delivered by local workers, who had

the knowledge, access and risk tolerance that was needed. “The Syrian conflict has demonstrated the need to increase support for local NGOs operating in complex humanitarian environments. The United States and other donors must do more to support local NGOs and aid workers in Syria and elsewhere”. Hall & Todman (2021). They realised that the protection of aid workers was crucial to ensure the work could be undertaken. Lastly it was clear that it takes time and funding to ensure these communities can recover from the disaster, but that people can recover from such trauma. The Gaza crisis presented further lessons learnt for humanitarians, namely the need to be agile and to be able to adapt during a response due to unprecedented attacks and restrictions whilst also balancing the need for long term planning/recovery.

Most reforms have hidden political agendas and policy goals reflecting competing national interests. Over the UNs history there have been many attempts at reform. But like many constitutions the UN charter is designed to be difficult to amend. Any amendments must be approved and ratified by two-thirds of the UN member states. However, changes can be accomplished without amending the UN Charter, which demonstrates its flexibility and adaptability, as well as innovativeness of various bodies in creating new entities to meet new demands. Holzgrefe & Keohane, (2003) discuss how there is a term called “UN based law” as international law and UN law are different. International law existed before the UN and may well exist once the UN ceases to exist. Therefore, to reform the UN system it should not be assumed that international law should be used but that the UN framework should be the focus. The key to meaningful reform is by developing leadership focus and working through governments. A former UN official (2008) notes,

“Real reforms will require major concessions from powerful and weak countries alike and a willingness to rise above their own current sense of entrenched rights and privileges and find a grand bargain”. (Brown, 2008, p.14).

From the 1990s the UN secretariat grew (peaking in 1994), and the expansion of UN bureaucracy and charges of political bias and administrative inefficiency surfaced. Urquhart, (1991) observed that there were too many top-level officials, political appointments and rotten boroughs and pointless programs had rendered the secretariat ‘fat and flabby’ (Karns & Mingst., 2010). The increasing involvement of NGOs and private businesses with UN programs and activities demonstrated another need for reform for integration of such actors into the UN system. Some of these initiatives were developed in the 1990s, with actors now playing a substantial role in the UN system. (Karns & Mingst., 2010) It also wasn’t until the 1990s did the UN implement management systems such as program reviews, internal audits, performance evaluations, and effective recruitment practices. (Karns & Mingst., 2010).

“The role of the Secretary-General and the Secretariat at large, have gradually evolved into an international civil service. The Secretariat should serve as a repository of lessons learned and expertise from which the community of nations may benefit. At the same time, the Secretary-General should embody the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity and demonstrate a firm commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. First, the Secretary-General appointment process requires an overhaul. The prominence of the Secretary-General’s role has increased over the last decades to include numerous new responsibilities, ranging from coordinating responses to war, famine and disease to developing new strategies on issues such as gender equality and management and appointment of staff within the UN system. While the selection of the Secretary-General has always been of vital importance, the increased visibility and responsibility held by the office

requires increased vigilance and accountability for both the selection process and the attributes, professional and personal, of the individual chosen". (Global Governance Forum 2023/2024, p.3).

The report on the United Nations 2023 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals goes on to discuss how to make the reforms that are necessary;

"A second innovation that could enhance the legitimacy of the Secretary-General would be to introduce a single seven-year, non-renewable term for the Secretary-General, thereby freeing them from the conflict that may otherwise result between the interests of those who hold the possibility of re-appointment in their hands, and the countries which it is their mission to serve. In this way, the Secretary-General would be relieved of a degree of pressure to place personal interest above the functions of the office". (Global Governance Forum 2023/2024, p.3).

According to Holzgrefe & Keohane, (2003) one of the most effective pathways towards reform is through creating a new customary norm. Instead of creating a new treaty law, which is outside the UN system, they suggest that the customary law route enjoys a comparative advantage. This would help if the new customary law, is supported by other states and not just those who will engage in the intervention. It is questionable if any reform of the law is needed due to the complexity of the UN system. However, to address major issues of today, customary norms could be created to manage concerns regarding current humanitarian practice.

This could then be expanded to international organisations. This idea could be challenged, as so many states are flawed that they do not necessarily represent the needs of those requiring support. In addition, it could be a very slow path towards progressions as it is so dependent on responses from states. One could suggest that donor funding could be reformed using this

idea, to address the impact of humanitarian work, the quality of practice and the payments of all personnel.

In 2016 the World Humanitarian Summit, sought to close the humanitarian funding gap and made recommendations in its report to 'shrink the needs, deepen and broaden the resource based and improve funding'. During the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 the Grand Bargain was launched. This is a unique agreement between the humanitarian actors and donors, with the aim to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian action. It is a deal between 25 member states, 25 NGOs, 12 UN agencies, 2 Red Cross/Red Crescent Movements and 2 inter-governmental organisations. The Grand Bargain has driven system wide shifts in policy making or practice in cash assistance programming, joint needs assessments, harmonised reporting and localisation. However not all commitments have been achieved due to unclear value or a lack of political will. The Grand Bargain report of 2016-2020 signed to bringing inclusive membership, integrated gender equality and women's empowerment of which it had made progress towards. However, it also signed up to bringing about participation revolution, and to address the duplication and management costs, which it did not achieve. To meet the funding gap, humanitarians need to become more transparent with how funds are spent.

Five years after the initial grand bargain agreement in 2016, the signatories undertook a review in 2021. The Grand Bargain report in 2022, prioritised the need for multi-year funding and investments with local actors. Whilst it has expanded the UN partner portal and had a greater investment in nexus funding, the gaps stated was that there was no quality funding, no participation revolution and no increase in direct funding to local actors.

"The critiques of aid's current financing model – short-term, restrictive, and reactive – are well-documented. A central ambition of the Grand Bargain package of aid reforms was to

bring more “quality funding” – longer term and less earmarked – into the sector, but the results so far have been patchy. While anticipatory financing and action – giving funding in advance of a known risk – has gained traction in recent years, the system remains largely reactive”. (Alexander, 2021, p.1).

The was stated that it was due to poor data and reporting. No connection to county level. A lack of incentives for change, no confidence in the ‘quid pro quo’ and that there was too much focus on the technical aspect and not the political. The report went on further to state that within the wider funding context, funding was not keeping up with the needs nor was it being equally distributed.

Farris, (2014) looked at how the humanitarian reform agenda in 2005 has impacted internally displaced populations. At the 2005 World Summit, the leaders committed to protecting lives, recognising their responsibility as state actors. The report went on to say how the overall response to an emergency has been strengthened and many IDP’s were better off in 2014 than in 2004. The response is more coordinated and more effective. However, it was also worth noting that some were better off due to changed politically conditions rather than reform. Later a UN benefits management framework was developed to further advance reform and to document the results.

“The framework is intended to help us know we are delivering the reforms we promised; (a) improving our ability to deliver mandates more effectively, and (b) demonstrating the UN is a more transparent, accountable, agile and flexible organisation. Furthermore, the framework is the stepping stone for the UN to transition to a continuous improvement system...Management reform was built on three foundation elements: decentralisation of decision-making authority, simplification and streamlining of policy and processes, and strengthened accountability and transparency”. (UN Benefits Management Framework, 2019, p.1).

Hough, Fenton & Marji, (2023), wrote that humanitarian reform has become more cumbersome, with actors demanding more consultation, and every change requires lengthy negotiations and strong leadership. They also stated that change is worrisome for some donors and organisations. It seems change can only occur when lifted to the highest executive levels, which takes time and repeated efforts. There is hope that now the Grand Bargain has been extended to 2026, that all signatories will remember their solemn signature and embrace further change.

“Preserving humanitarian space is imperative. This presents a formidable challenge, and only the education of a committed cadre of trained professionals will be able to preserve the traditions of neutrality, impartiality and independence that make international humanitarian work a noble undertaking”. (Cahill, 2012, p.89).

The need for reform in the humanitarian industry is clear; what is under dispute is what kind of reform is needed. The UN has made many attempts at reform, but changes have been slow and limited. It has been observed that there are too many top-level officials and political appointments to support a reform. Real reform requires major movement, with strong leadership from both donors and organisations.

“Many of the challenges point to problems of directive leadership from cluster lead agencies, illustrating that the benefits of a collaborative partnership between actors in humanitarian relief, including UN agencies, international, national, and local NGOs, are not being fully realised by the Cluster Approach. This suggests that despite the goal of strengthened partnerships, the Cluster Approach remains overly concentrated on promoting a centralised decision-making body”. (Humphries, 2013, p.1).

2.12 CONCLUSION

In summary, humanitarian needs have increased substantially over the past 20 years and it has become a multi-billion-dollar industry (\$54 billion). This thesis aims to look at the relationship between institutional dynamics and decision making in the humanitarian sector, and whether there has been a meaningful impact on propensities for UN reform. Humanitarian assistance brings about an international community that seeks to provide efficient, effective and timely responses to those in need. It is governed by a plethora of standards, policies, bodies and memberships. For these to function they require resourcing, which is limited presently and in turn affect institutional ability to reform. Humanitarian actors have faced growing demands for greater accountability and transparency, through global governance. One of the fundamental demands is for humanitarian funding to more effective and efficient in order to meet the needs of the beneficiaries. Whilst humanitarianism should be the opposite of politics, it is clear that as funding comes from governments with political agendas, aid workers will steer away from neutrality. This research aims to look at whether the role of vested institutional dynamics and institutions are also contributing to this ability to reform.

The health cluster is the WHO technical lead for a health emergency, which sits under OCHA. Health Clusters have varied in their performance during emergency responses, but there is no question that the Cluster System is essential for strong partnerships and coordination. There must be an increase in evidence-based data and monitoring and evaluation for the health clusters to be held to account. It is crucial that they are properly funded and are transparent. One of the objectives of the cluster is to build the capacity of the state and human resources. It is also evident that health clusters lack clear exit strategies. In turn this strategic deficiency reduces their ability to be focused on how they provide capacity building within a country

during a response (with constrained resources to support HR and other activities). There has been limited research undertaken on staff salaries within the humanitarian industry and are these rising costs of human resources affecting the impact of humanitarian emergency response? This literature review also reveals that there is some controversy. Interviewees were all anonymous with humanitarians becoming increasingly concerned with the motivations of aid workers. Aid workers seem able to live somewhat extravagant lifestyles with many benefits, rather than being focused on the beneficiaries they are there to serve. We need to explore even further whether these motivations and tendencies within the humanitarian community hinder the ability to make substantial reforms of the UN system?

CHAPTER 3

3.0 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

New institutionalism largely emerged in the 1970s when numerous scholars focused their attention on the importance of social relationships within organisations. Importantly, they began to embrace the theory that what was happening was little to do with objective tasks; but more to do with norms and mandates, such as laws and regulations, belief systems, cultural pressures and social comparisons. Palmer et al, (2008). New institutionalism is a highly influential approach in organisations studies today and represents one of the most complete theory applied. On this basis, it has been chosen as the theoretical foundation underpinning of this thesis. According to Palmer et al, (2008) it has developed notable and measurable concepts and offers accurate relationships that describe and explain organisations phenomena.

A wider variety of different perspectives within institutional theory emerged during 1980s, such as, in Powell & DiMaggio, (1991) analysis. The two main theories they considered of new institutionalism were institutional entrepreneurship and deinstitutionalisation. Oliver, (1992) developed deinstitutionalisation to explain the erosion and/or discontinuity of practice within an institution; and erosion of practice through complacency is a key theme in the literature calling for reform of the humanitarian sector, and as such will be explored in these thesis. Furthermore, Greenwood, (2008) and Oliver, (2008) complimented these theories with institutional logics, legitimacy and diffusion. DiMaggio & Powell, (1991) also discussed that cognitive psychology and ethnomethodology have generated two different directions and therefore have changed institutional theories, by in part recognising how the process of social

order of everyday action influence institutional theories. According to Palmer et al, (2008), new institutionalism is considered a mature theory in international relations. More specifically, for the purpose of this thesis, there will be a clear focus on new institutionalism (particularly historical and sociological). Rational choice institutionalism has not been used for this thesis as it has some limitations. It assumes that individuals have perfect information and that they always act in their own self-interest, when in reality they often have imperfect information and may not act in their own best interest.

3.2 DEFINITIONS

3.2.1 NEW INSTITUTIONALISM

Hall and Taylor, (1996) discuss the term new institutionalism and three different approaches associated with this term. Some of the ambiguities of this term can be removed if we recognise that it does not constitute a singular thought process. Rather instead there are three different analytical thought processes, historical institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism. These approaches seek to show the behavioural patterns that institutions play a role in determining, and what solutions or problems may arise from these different approaches.

“One reason institutionalism is important is because it highlights that structures endure while individuals come and go. Institutions change the behaviour of individuals who work within them (more so than individuals change the institutions). Because of this, policy decisions are more stable than they might otherwise be, and reform is more difficult than anticipated”.
(Hoefler, 2022, p.1).

Furthermore, Hall and Taylor, (1996) compare the different analytical strengths and weaknesses to understand the relationships between institutions and behaviour and how these explain the origins or changes in institutions.

“The foundations of new institutionalism through rational choice, sociological and historical institutionalism and their respective issues with explaining institutional change—with rational choice institutionalism focusing on optimisation problems, sociological institutionalism on the spread and resilience of norms and historical institutionalism on path dependence. These three approaches do deal with change, but it must mostly be understood as exogenous. In other words, these approaches could mostly explain the effects of change, but not when and why the institutional change occurs”. (Lucey, 2021, p.1).

As organisations are usually developed by different class groups, or cultures, this will ultimately lead to predictable differences in an organisation, such as Africans vs Americans, Tilly, (1978). Organisations provide a system for people to follow, with clear guidelines and procedures which become imbedded in workers both from a moral aspect as well as from a perspective of a set of rules of appropriate behaviour. Institutions have laws and bureaucracy according to Akerlof, (1980) which may affect accountability and reform.

For the purpose of this research, historical institutionalism and sociological institutionalism are more closely examined to critically evaluate whether the institutional dynamics have created a path dependency that in itself has unintentionally become an issue to reform in the humanitarian arena. New institutionalism is crucial in relation to this thesis, since it highlights that institutions matter and that there are path dependencies that can shape vested interests and lead to blockages. These path dependencies can also have unintended consequences that complicate institutional aims and missions and that can ultimately lead to problems of fit and misfit of purpose that require resolution through reform.

Critical institutionalism supports the idea that institutions are dynamic, context specific and evolving. “Critical institutionalism (CI) is a contemporary body of thought that explores how institutions dynamically mediate relationships between people, natural resources and society. It focuses on the complexity of institutions entwined in everyday social life, their historical formation, the interplay between formal and informal, traditional and modern arrangements, and the power relations that animate them”. Cleaver & De Koning, (2025). Similar to sociological institutionalism, critical institutionalism is shaped by local history and politics and it is made up of rules, norms and social structure. This relates to the study as it supports the idea that people shape institutions and are shaped by them.

3.2.2 HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM

Historical institutionalism emphasises that institutional rules, constraints and responses have many outcomes and these can have notable consequences that are hard to reverse because of issues related to path dependencies. Wolff, Wichmann & Gregory, (2009) discuss how the design of an institution in the early stages tend to then be followed throughout the institution’s development. The institutions will have an agenda based on the formal and informal patterns of development. This concept is a path dependency which in turn results in inevitable occurrences and even may be a self-perpetuating cycle.

“Historical institutionalism places great weight on the power of precedent within an institution. Ideas, rules, and processes are “baked-into” the organisation and make change difficult”. (Hoefer, 2022, p.1).

It is these pathways that shape the key path dependencies affecting any organisation and help to determine paths of development. These path dependencies in turn will lead to intended and

unintended consequences within an institution, that will require resolution through institutional or financial reform.

Chilcote, (1981) discusses the specific characteristics of politics within historical institutionalism. He focuses specifically on politics which we can understand in the humanitarian field through, donors and governments. These institutions can become corrupt and bureaucratic and have different agendas. There can also be difficulty in ensuring quality and accountability. Weaver and Rockman, (1993) looked more at rival groups within national politics, focusing upon issues of corruption and bureaucracy. They further highlighted that many institutions lack capacity and have different agendas which bring about road blocks. In addition, staff may have dual job roles, which makes leading more complex. Weaver and Bert, (1993) further expand this discussion as they focus on institutions being affected by national politics and political influences. Again, for this thesis, we can start to see connections between these discussions and the UN and NGOs relationships towards donors and each other.

There are also links between health clusters and institutionalism; and these too can be an institutional system at a macro level. Other researchers such as Ikenberry, (1988) delve into the formal and informal procedures, again influenced by politics. These formal and informal standards that develop as a result of path dependencies, have a notion of fit and misfit of purpose. Here we see that the creation of institutions may follow national legacies and procedures or international norms and practices about the way things are done that do not align globally and/or even nationally. This is where we can start to detect the impact of standards in organisations that affect staff packages, international norms create expectations of how expats should be treated and conduct themselves, that does not align with national norms. Ikenberry, (1988) also goes on to identify the norms within organisations which can be related to the benefits staff may receive whilst working for an organisation. Indeed,

Thelen and Steinrno, (1988) discuss how embedded formal and informal procedures can be within an organisations structure and how norms become very institutionalised. This can lead to an unintended path dependency which can hinder reform.

3.2.3 SOCIOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONALISM

According to Hall and Taylor, (1996) sociological institutionalism argues that the institutional procedures and forms are adopted due to cultural-specific practices, and that there has been a growing trend for organisations to recognise the importance of cultural dynamics that support and sometimes even replace formal practices. Meyer and Brian, (1977) argued that this new concept of sociological institutionalism was brought about by procedures being developed because they were rational rather than a formal procedure. They continued to discuss that formal actions, and even bureaucratic practices, were to be explained through cultural terms. Almond and Verba, (1986) discuss that the two concepts merge into each other, making it difficult to distinguish between institutional explanations and cultural explanations. They go on to discuss that institutional explanations are based on organisations structures whereas cultural explanations are based on an understanding of culture. The sociological concept tends to lead to a formulation that attitudes and values are closely linked towards a network of routines and symbols.

3.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

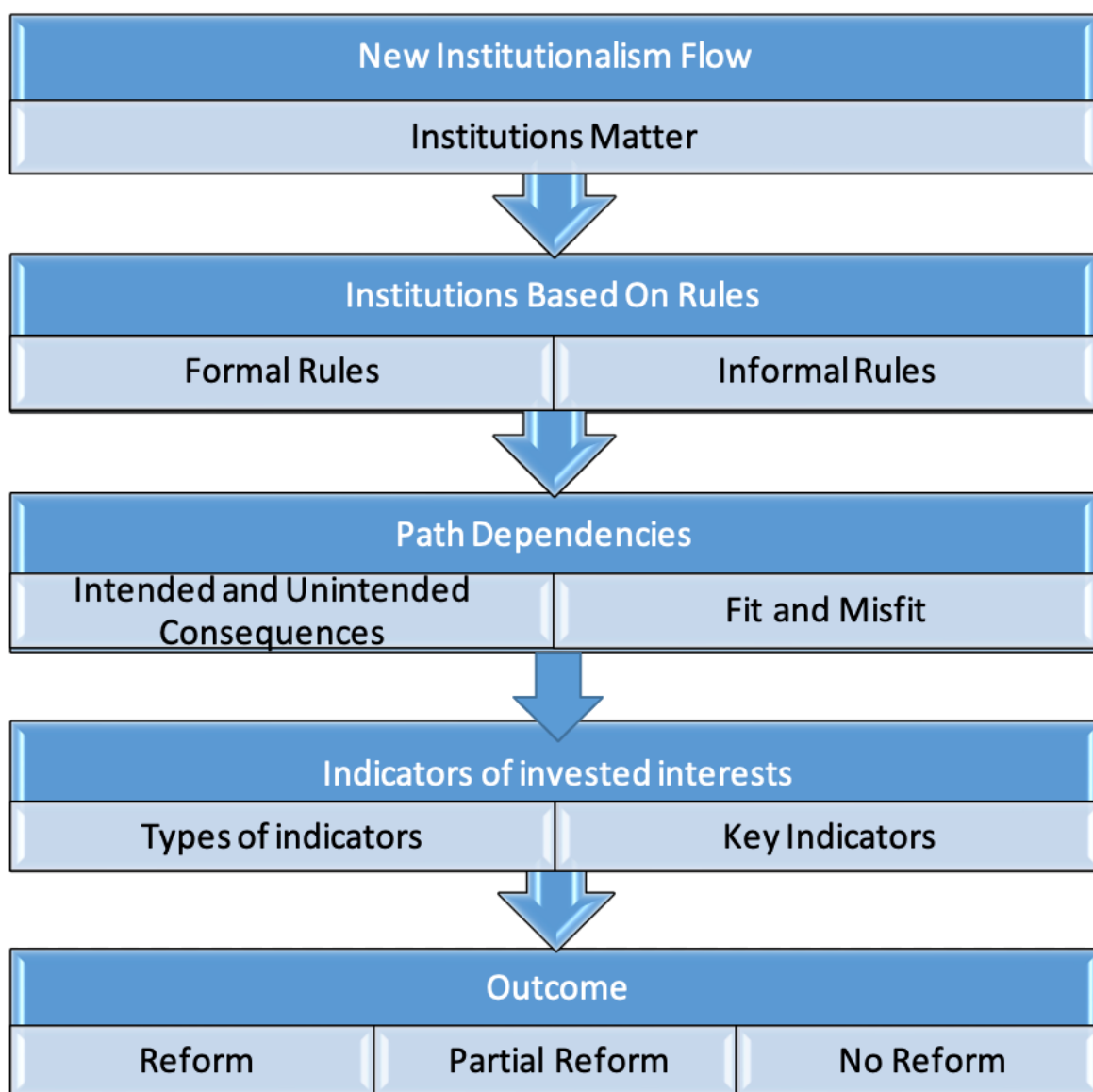


Fig 3.1. Conceptual Flow

Source: (Author 2024)

3.4 INSTITUTIONS MATTER

The definition of institutions is broad in new institutionalism; it is more than simply organisations. It can also be wider to include systems such as the Cluster System within humanitarian responses. Therefore, organisations are institutions but not all institutions are organisations. Historical institutions have many characteristics. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that 'institutions matter'. Hall & Taylor, (1996) discuss how formal political institutions matter. They form the platform for economic growth and other human development objectives. We can see the humanitarian system has been developing its platform, from 1991 through the Health Assembly, to 1997 with OCHA and then onto 2010 through the IASC to develop the Cluster System overtime. This in turn has helped to develop the humanitarian field to become a multi-billion-dollar industry. (State of Art Humanitarian Action., 2013). The humanitarian system was set up to work closely with governments to respond to the needs of their populations, pertaining to the practice of saving lives and alleviating suffering. WHO's Health Cluster has been working towards capacity-building and it is clearly stated as a goal in their strategic priorities 2020-2023. Cahill, (2012) discusses that there is a lack of skilled key workers to support meeting global targets, therefore the institution needs to address this capacity gap to respond effectively. WHO's aim is to strengthen the coordination, technical and operational capacity of all actors to be ready to respond to an emergency.

The Cluster System allows institutions to become important as they matter as much as the institution themselves. (See Chapter 2, Section 8). According to the World Health Organisation, (2006), the Cluster System aims to improve the effectiveness, timeliness and predictability of the response as it works towards recovery. This Cluster System strengthens leadership and accountability in sectors, as well as enhancing partnerships among

governments, UN agencies and NGOs. However, if a donor has limited expectations on indicators, reporting, data systems, evidenced based research and capacity building then the UN, NGOs and National Non-Government Organisations (NNGOs) will soon learn that these mechanisms are no longer necessary to receive funds. As a result, this opens the avenue for the UN, NGOs, and NNGOs to reduce these markers of success, ultimately risking the quality of care to beneficiaries and the impact of capacity building with national staff. Fischer, (2008) looks at when an institution is responsible for an emergency incident. He mentions that the institution will have a comprehensive disaster plan which will guide coordination and use specialised skills. However, he further highlights that these institutions are just organised chaos. Fischer (2008) states, for example, it is often challenging to obtain accurate information, communication between decision makers proved to be difficult, and any written plans are often ignored. Most international organisations have the technological capacity to communicate effectively, but they fail to as they tend to not share information freely. Often during the emergency, the pre-planned response leader may not be the leader and individual organisations carry out their own missions without coordination with other respective emergency organisations. Decisions can often be made based on inaccurate information, and turf battles often result in limited coordination

3.4.1. FORMAL RULES

Historical institutionalists relate to institutions and the rules promoted by formal organisations. Institutions offer transparency and accountability, due to the rules that are established. According to Hall & Taylor, (1996), institutions create 'formal or informal procedures, routines, norms & conventions embedded in the organisational structure of the polity or political economy'. These rules can, for instance, be an order or a standard operating procedure. Organisations have developed a set of rules to function more effectively and to

have processes, which staff often become dependent on. Whilst institutions are based on rules that may change behaviours, these may also bring limitations. Rules can hinder responses, especially if these rules are outdated. They can affect outcomes that an organisation can achieve. Fifty years ago, humanitarian organisations would not have spent much of their time considering the outputs and outcomes of their work. Today however, there are many mandates, principles and code of conducts against which aid agencies are held to account.

Recipient states within a humanitarian response, have declared a need for international support, due to an emergency which has overtaken their ability to respond solely as a country. Among humanitarian organisations, it was deemed necessary to work with governments to build their capacity 'in country' to prepare and empower them for emergencies. At the same time, many of the emergencies that humanitarians respond to also require the strengthening of their health care services, in country. In order to do this, they have required the support of health cluster partners and other stakeholders who are involved in every stage of a health response. As UN agencies and NGOs develop their strategies, which require funding from governments and private donors, rules are being established to ensure they target the needs of any given response.

Fischer, (2008) discusses what constitutes an emergency organisation; namely that being an organisation whose responsibility it is to respond to emergency and disaster incidents. He also mentions that the organisation should have a comprehensive disaster plan that will guide coordination. In addition, the organisation will respond by using the specialised skills of respective staff. Importantly, emergency organisations should convey the image that everything is under control, regardless of whether it is closer to the truth that there is in fact a form of 'organised disorganisation' in existence. Furthermore, Fischer, (2008) often

highlighted that lessons were not learnt following an emergency, with limited continuous improvement in evidence.

New institutionalism provides a way for understanding the importance of formal rules (like NGO Charters and constitutions); as well as implementation rules like financial rules, regulations, budgeting and HR rights. Organisations require funding to survive in humanitarian work; and with expats understanding these systems now for many years, they have been able to create systems to raise the funding. However, this system has increased the HQ staffing levels, and brought about bureaucratic systems and excessive senior salaries. With limited expectations from donors for evidence-based data, it is unclear how effective these responses are.

3.4.2. INFORMAL RULES

There are four key characteristics relating to Informal rules (and explained through the sociological new institutionalism perspective) that have resonance to this thesis. Namely: social practices and norms, cultural norms, shared values as well as attitudes and power. These are also complementary to, and cross over into, the historical institutionalism-centred analysis. Informal rules, cultural norms, shared values and attitudes/power are recognised as important detectable and influential variables. They can have positive impacts where informal practices provide de facto workarounds that offset the unintended consequences of formal rules. NGOs may use them to stress the importance of working in the spirit that they, or the respective overriding NGOs aims, were originally intended. Alternatively, they can have negative impacts in leading to bad practices that become embedded in NGOs such as exploitations in the field that are hard to address. This has particular importance since there are many informal expectations, cultural norms and shared attitudes when it comes to how aid workers should be financed; and have to transform staff privileges to those equitable with

simply being a respective job and/or vocation. Nonetheless, they remain a critical indicator to explain the timing and attitudes towards NGO reform of salaries and benefits.

3.4.3.SOCIAL PRACTICES AND NORMS

Since the rise of NGOs, the humanitarian realm growth has occurred most notably, with western donor states emphasising the role of NGOs in democratisation and service provision (See Wright, (2012)). Philips, (2013) discusses that, over the past 100 years, foreign aid structures that began with European colonialism have become tied to shifting economic and political interests, as well as a growing humanitarian movement. Phillips, (2013) investigates the competing motives behind foreign aid, and how emerging global powers are changing the game. The shift in global power relations that has occurred over the past 10 years has led to some former aid recipient countries now becoming important economic and political powers in their own right. These 'rising powers' have adopted a different approach to aid (which they describe as development cooperation on the basis of mutual self-interest). As a result, donors, the UN and respective NGOs have gained the power to set the agendas.

In humanitarian contexts, the overarching dominance of western organisations has impacted on the details and direction of response plans, agendas, policies, the size of respective funding, and what, where and funds have been distributed. One outcome has been clear institutional discrimination. Organisations have often failed to acknowledge the value and importance of the skills, and the size of contributions and added-value, offered by national (often non-western) staff (based in-country). Response agendas, plans and policies have often been created and developed by westerners with an underlying yet prevailing attitude of 'west is best'. Expected competencies (again often largely defined by westerners and/or western value-sets) has led to discrimination on employment, lower salaries and weaker financial support packages for national staff. Ultimately, since expectations of required skill sets have

often been shaped and accompanied by a western mind-set, this has often under-estimated, under-valued and even missed the respective and distinctive key skills-sets that national workers offer.

Humanitarian organisations are increasingly resorting to various types of working remotely to maintain aid, especially in insecure and fraught environments where international staff are no longer allowed to be present. This was further exacerbated during the Covid-19 pandemic. Organisations are now conducting remotely managed operations with aim of maintaining provision of services. Yet, published evidence on how to effectively carry out remote operations is limited. And rigorous documentation and evaluation of remotely managed operations are required to further build evidence. However, remote working can increase the divide between national and international humanitarian workers.

“In the case of Syria, the normalisation of remote practices and the dependency on local aid workers and organisations ultimately increases the distance between donors and beneficiaries inside Syria, although it reinforces the illusion of control among aid managers”. (Fradejas-Garcia, Ignacio, 2019, p.1).

In an emergency, when westerners are deployed, then it is by no means coincidental that the needs of staff are often defined by them. There is often limited understanding of the prevailing culture as well as the respective needs perceived by those they are intending to help. However, some of these practices are changing, satisfactory surveys are more commonly undertaken and there are systems in place for beneficiaries to make complaints. Nevertheless, whilst some of these concerns and even complaints are being addressed and actioned more often, there are very few legal systems or recourses available to help and support serious concerns. More surveys and needs assessments are also being undertaken where beneficiaries are consulted; yet the final decision is often based on the expat’s final decision rather than

the beneficiaries' feedback. Salama & Fleck, (2017) highlighted the potential lack of technical skills within any organisation and that there has been an issue in the past where there has been insufficient quality control and coordination. However, this may now be changing, ensuring greater human resources become available, alongside increased support to maintain and even expand national capacity building.

3.4.4.CULTURAL NORMS

The next sociological new institutionalism characteristic that this research has focused on, are the cultural norms within an institution. Over the years, a 'white man saviour' reflex - a term used to describe a white person who believes they have responsibility to help people of colour - has been created where there is a true belief that national staff cannot do the same role as expats.

"The research suggests that embedded under the contemporary professional structure of the liberal humanitarian space is a covert power hierarchy fuelled by perceptions of expertise and competency along racial lines—particularly around one's whiteness". (Bian, 2022, p.5-8).

Whilst the humanitarian field has moved away somewhat from white males, this still plays a dominant role and in particular the belief that expats know best.

"I came to understand how different the NGO world is in Africa from the west. Local staff are second class employees". (The Guardian; Anonymous, March 2016, p.1).

"Many times, however, I would be the only African in those meetings and my role would solely be to take minutes". (Secret Aid Worker, Jan 2016a, p.1).

The literature also reveals recruitment issues. Further into the paper, a respective national staff worker discusses the declared feedback given on her first 'respectable' job:

“I was told: ‘you speak African, we cannot understand what you say’. That was actual feedback I got from one capacity building initiative set up by an organisation specifically to raise the profile of its ‘native’ staff”. (Secret Aid Worker, Jan 2016b, p.1).

These cultural norms have created path dependencies in several aspects. Firstly, there remains a prevailing view that expats are always required in emergencies in order to do a job well and enhance the effectiveness of any humanitarian operation. Secondly the expats demands are quite shocking, which further demonstrates the prevailing view that assigns more value to the expat than the national. As we look at the salaries of expats verses nationals as well as the respective benefit packages, the difference is quite extraordinary.

“Even when no job posting description explicitly indicate that certain positions are reserved for professionals of particular racial identities, Western, white personnel occupy large numbers of higher-level advisory, leadership and consultancy expatriate positions. Meanwhile, the majority of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) professionals are seen serving in positions in “the field”, within the localities where they are born and raised, following the directory and supervision of their expatriate counterparts”. Shevchenko & Fox, (2008, p.109).

Project budgets can clearly show the differences between expats and nationals. National staff have not been given the same exposure as expats to the systems, policies and agenda and as a result are at a disadvantage when trying to compete for employment, and as a result often the jobs are advertised for expats only. Such exposure is even kept from nationals to retain the power and influence of expats. In addition, beneficiaries have developed in some settings a mind-set that westerners know best. This has had a more serious negative effect in some settings, such as South Sudan, where there is little enthusiasm for nationals to progress and develop their own countries as they expect the westerners to address these issues. This is

obviously broader than just the 'white man saviour' reflex, but nevertheless, it has had serious consequences. Looking at some clear indicators such as human resources, ratio of costs and staffing and budgets of salaries, there are clear differences between expats and nationals.

"Positions within international aid organisations are occupied by two distinct types of professionals. There are the expatriate staff—deployed by humanitarian and development aid organisations to unstable states for short periods of time, often from 3 months to a year, they are mostly seen in leadership, consultancy, advisory, and decision-making positions. They are well-compensated - much more than their local counterparts. They speak in technical jargon that outsiders to the humanitarian aid apparatus can rarely understand, mostly accumulated through higher education and years of experience traversing the global South during their prior deployments. Most of them have their own cliques—often inwardly socialising within their own expat bubble, traveling in "big sport utility vehicles (SUVs) marked with the logos of their organisations" (Autesserre, 2014). They also spend their after-work hours in restaurants, cafés, and entertainment venues that mostly foreigners can afford to frequent". (Bian, 2022, p.5).

"The expat bubble, although invisible, is often impenetrable for local staff, who are nationals of the host state where aid organisations operate. They possess specific knowledge regarding the socio-political dimensions of local communities, speak local languages, and have mostly never worked for their organisations' other programs abroad. Local staff members are found commonly facilitating ground-level, physical aid delivery, monitoring, and information retention positions. At the same time, it is uncommon to see local nationals occupying higher, country-level leadership posts and even more rarely as chiefs of party or country directors. They are paid according to local market salary standards, meaning that frequently their

compensations are significantly lower than those of their expat counterparts”. (Bian, 2022, p.6).

3.4.5.SHARED VALUES AND ATTITUDES

A commonly discussed cross cutting issue raised in humanitarian work streams is gender equality. This is focused primarily on the need to ensure women are reached in different cultural settings. And that responses seek to promote equal realisation of dignity and human rights, with the elimination of poverty and injustice for all genders and ages. However, what has been lacking is the attention to gender discrimination in the workforce.

“Beyond the horror stories and investigations into allegations of sexual abuse in the humanitarian field is the broader problem of workplace culture and the sexism and toxic masculinity at the heart of many NGOs operations. In the humanitarian sector there is a subset of aid workers – usually white male international staff – who remain blind to the way gender impacts on their work”. (The Guardian Secret Aid Worker, March 2016b, p.1).

Whilst a lot of the values and principles have been defined by westerners as discussed previously, it is also important to stress the discernible level of male dominance of senior management roles and posts in many NGOs and UN agencies. Most of the decision making has been down to men and it has been difficult to influence decisions as a woman. There have been limited opportunities for promotion. Numerous sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) cases in the workplace have often gone unreported and have not been addressed. Many staff who have been perpetrators have just been transferred to another position or location if a case has even been addressed.

“In my experience, this kind of workplace culture means that many young women working in the humanitarian space find themselves able to move ahead only through compromising on

their values. HR responds by listening sympathetically and taking no action, maintaining the status quo and pacifying whistle blowers. In many cases the male staff were retained, promoted and moved countries". (The Guardian Secret Aid Worker, March 2016c, p.1).

Recent literature has identified notable instances of sexual exploitation and abuse and there are growing concerns regarding accountability of staff when operating in the field for this behaviour. For many years, this behaviour has been unspoken about and/or largely ignored both towards staff in the workplace but also towards the perpetrators. If those staff without high values and principles are still in the decision-making positions, this will enhance vested interests that do not want to see change and affect reform agendas and trajectories.

"Development and humanitarian organisations are aware that a reckoning with the racism and coloniality that founds and continues to shape the sector is upon it. Organisations now openly discuss their decolonising intentions and aspirations". (Pardy & Alexeyeff 2022, p.76).

There becomes a clear division between the shared values and attitudes amongst both the institutional players and the expats and beneficiaries. This leads us into the final characteristic of sociological new institutionalism: namely power.

3.5 POWER

Humanitarians generally will not admit to how powerful they are, in the context of distributing large resources in an environment of scarcity and insecurity; and that humanitarians often exercise command and control. The concept of power under such circumstances sits uncomfortably against their core ethics. With power comes politics that shape humanitarian thinking and practice. Yet, humanitarian organisations regularly cite that they approach their work with a neutral space, and this has served them well. The conversation regarding

accountability is becoming more serious, discussing dynamics of power, political roles and responsibilities.

Western privileges have misled expats into believing that they are free to behave how they choose when away from their places of citizen. With few accountability forums, and limited employment checks on convictions, it has led expats into the false truth that they will not be held to account for their actions overseas.

“Aid is delivered in an unaccountable space – those who pay for aid in developed countries are too removed, those who receive it in developing countries too powerless”. (Naik, The Guardian, Feb 2018, p.1).

However, in many countries, there are no systems and certainly where beneficiaries are so vulnerable, there are no voices heard when exploitations occur. Whilst this is improving, it is just acknowledging this is happening but other than reduced funding there are still no direct accountability avenues for those committing the offences.

“Donor governments like ours play a critical role in holding aid agencies to account, which may mean (responsibly) withdrawing funding. There is no reason why an agency’s track record in safeguarding beneficiaries cannot be a key criterion in making grants”. (Naik., The Guardian, Feb 2018, p.1).

With many expats coming into humanitarian work now to maximise their material well-being, rather than to make a positive difference, and with the power dynamics being witnessed, reform in this area is very restricted. One of the core principles of humanitarian aid is to do no harm, but in some settings, this is exactly what aid workers are doing. As expats receive high salaries and huge benefit packages their status both nationally and internationally brings power that cannot be compared to those working as national workers. These huge salaries

give them an excessive voice and status, that also influences the next generation, with schools and universities being paid for, for their children, reinforcing the expat community potentially for generations to come. The high salaries and special conditions they receive in the field, being chauffeur driven, living in exclusive housing, dining in top end restaurants and staying in expensive hotels, gives them an extended voice and power and the limitations in the salaries and packages of national workers tends to reinforce the limitations in hearing their voice especially when it comes to reform.

Lenquist, (2003) states that to monitor and evaluate the response in a major disaster is a very delicate process and there is a reluctance to criticise people who have worked hard in very extreme situations. However, in doing this, results have shown that many things could and should have been done differently. Reporting medical concerns in the west has become a very common occurrence, so one can ask why we do not see this as a valid thing to do in major disasters. What is needed is a system that's main objective is to do this. This can then be accepted and deficiencies can be learnt from without shame, otherwise such issues will remain and be repeated. Edwards & Hulme, (1995) noted that given the work of NGOs is qualitative and contingent, it is very difficult to measure performance and impact and therefore concerningly difficult to be accountable. They go on to discuss how strategic accountability is more difficult to achieve than functional accountability for NGOs. This can lead NGOs to over account in some areas and under account in other respects.

3.6 PATH DEPENDENCIES

The concept of historical institutionalism, where institutions matter, leads to institutions creating path dependencies. According to Banton, (2021) path dependencies is when

decisions are dependent on a phenomenon whereby history matters. There is a resistance to change because of what has occurred in the past. Institutions change less than might be expected and they hinder advancement. This lack of change may be due to policy makers making assumptions, cautious decisions and fail to learn lessons from experience. Path dependencies may also occur due to an inability to change because of the cost implications. In major responses with a global presence the cost of change may be immense.

There are three types of path dependencies, political, economic and social. Peter, Pierre and King, (2005) describe political path dependencies as a means of initiating change in an institutionalist framework through political conflict. To motivate change, it is important that there is conflict over ideas and underlying assumptions. Economic path dependency is described by Martin and Sunley, (2006) as how seemingly insignificant choices and events can have tremendous consequences for the development of an economy or market. Previous decisions make no impact on the current decisions people are faced with making. Lastly, Ghezzi and Mingiore, (2007) discuss the social path dependencies, which explains the limitations one faces for any given circumstance due to a set of decisions made in the past or by the events that one has experienced even though the past experiences may no longer be relevant. In Pierre, (2000) research, he goes on to say that the social process of a path dependency can provide a framework of increasing returns, specifically, patterns of timing and sequence matter and that large consequences can derive from relatively small events, which may be almost impossible to reverse.

A fundamental aspect of historical institutionalism according to Bill and Hardgrave, (1981) is that historical institutions have accepted, that at the heart of politics lies conflict between rival groups striving for the scarce resources. Such explanations have meant that some organisations have economic structures and/or financial mechanisms that bolster the

privileges of certain interests, while downgrading others. In the humanitarian field, institutions such as the UN, NGOs, Donors, and Governments form the basis of a humanitarian response, working together to respond to an emergency. Non-government organisations have been developed around key norms of the UN system to be able to compete with the scarce resources available from donors. These donors are primarily governmental based structures such as USAID, OFDA, FCDO and ECHO, but there are also other key players such as World Bank, or private donors like Bill Gates Fund.

Loman, Pop, Reuben, (2011) found that most NGOs rely on a substantial diversity in terms of their funding, relying on both donor support and private fundraising, and thus drive their operations in different ways. As such they have had to ensure that they are structured in a way that guarantees that they have access to the funds available, and that they are a competitive agency if they desire to survive in the industry. These rules and constraints affect outcomes and they can have notable consequences that are hard to reverse because of issues related to path dependencies. NGOs and UN agencies progressed further following the development of the Cluster System and the norms this system brought, such as humanitarian principles, pooled funding, CERF funding & CAP funding and these have become institutional in themselves into the organisations. To be part of the humanitarian field and to receive funding, you need to follow the rules established and this in itself creates how flexible or rigid the organisation becomes.

NGOs have key operating principles and rules of how they do business, budgets and paperwork and it is this that allows them the access they need to survive. Between these governments, donors, allocations of funds and institutional systems there are very close comparisons, synergies about how things need to be delivered. This displays a competitive position between NGOs in the Cluster System, and as the health cluster has tried to manage

this by identifying certain NGOs as leaders in a particular role in humanitarian assistance, it potentially created a 'cartel' sub-arrangement within the Cluster System where NGOs try to ring fence parts of humanitarian assistance exclusively for themselves and their international partners.

If UN and NGOs do not strive towards developing countries' capacity, then organisations will not empower communities and exit the countries they are working in. This may lead to dependencies from both the respective countries in question to keep skilled staff in place as well as dependencies by the organisations/individuals. If these needs remain universal, then this will ultimately limit reform, even when it is not the best overall option in terms of capacity-building the of the country. Furthermore, Bebbington & Riddell, (1995) note that rather than capacity building, NGOs high salaries create an incentive for professionals to hinder capacity building to ensure they retain their jobs, which in turn means they leave the government, weakening and in fact doing a disservice. UN and NGO agencies need to be prepared to develop the capacity in the countries they are working in, ensuring they use an effective method for both the government and the communities.

3.6.1.INTENDED & UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Institutions create path dependencies, which can and often do have intended and unintended consequences. Many scholars argue that institutional choices taken in the past can characterise organisations creating longer-term effects. Merton, (1936) discussed the three types of unintended consequences, initially there is the unexpected benefit, where action brings about a positive unintended consequence. There is an unexpected drawback, where an action brings about detriment, occurring in addition to the desired effect, and lastly, there is the perverse result, where an action makes the problem worse than was originally intended. Hall & Taylor, (1996) discuss how institutional development emphasises path dependence and

unintended consequences. Hearn and Dallal (2019) discuss this further when they review the Syrian response and how populations become dependent on external funding, potentially reducing the effectiveness of their programs.

“Their complete dependence on external funding poses two fundamental questions: first, how autonomous these NGOs are, and second, how effective they were in their response. Surely NGOs working in this way in Syria are neither independent nor effective. Their dependence on external funding affects the sustainability of their projects’ outcomes. As soon as funding stops, services stop”. (Hearn & Dallal, 2019, p.1).

NGOs have rules based on how they operate as an institution with regards to financial regulations relating to donors. The conflict between rival groups striving for the scarce resources actually create a very strong invested institution where NGOs try to position themselves exclusively to receive funding from donors. However, this also sets the market for those organisations able to compete for funding. They have learnt the system, which is complex in itself, as well as being known to donors for a certain level of performance. This can therefore keep certain organisations out of the market, reducing competition because they are unable to even apply, due to a lack of capacity, not being known or even due to cultural differences. In addition, with the influence NGOs have over donors and the funding they receive, the consequence may result in establishing financial packages that are attractive for expats to ensure they can recruit skilled workers. However, the unintended consequences may result in expensive NGOs that have high overheads of administering projects and in turn impacts turnover of staff and project costs. (Pierson., 1994) discusses that as institutions develop these pathways, characteristics may appear even though preferences may change and that the long-term agreements and acquis negotiated by predecessors are left to inherit.

3.6.2. FIT & MISFIT

Another concept of institutionalism is the idea of fit and misfit for purpose. The creation of institutions may follow national legacies and procedures for how things should be done, but these may not align very well with international expectations and procedures, or vice versa. According to Stone, (2013) study of international organisations demonstrates the significance of informal governance in international organisations. One study which looked at a large number of international organisations including the United Nations, found it was possible to understand how informal governance provides the operating system that renders the behaviour of international organisations coherent. A common divisor of informal governance is the systematic influence of unwritten rules, shared expectations or norms within international organisations that substantially modify formal treaty provisions. Stone, (2013) goes on to argue that informal governance exists when unofficial influence takes precedence over formal legal processes, or when key rules are not written down.

As Governments provide funding for emergency responses there is an expectation that some humanitarian goals are attained. However, as NGOs and UN agencies have increased staffing costs to ensure they bring in skilled professionals to support the countries dealing with huge emergencies, these norms have in turn reduced substantially the funds that are available for beneficiaries, which ultimately undermines the overall aim with which an NGO was initially created for.

“Aid workers commonly bemoan that the experience of working in the field sits uneasily with the goals they've signed up to: visiting project sites in air-conditioned Land Cruisers while the intended beneficiaries walk barefoot through the heat, or checking emails from within gated compounds while surrounding communities have no running water”. (Smirl, 2015, p.75).

Costs for an emergency response can be extremely expensive with limited evidence of results, potentially making aspects of a humanitarian response and the Cluster System not fit for

purpose. However, in the same way, many of the consequences of rules established within the institutions, have ensured that aspects of the humanitarian response and the Cluster System may be fit for purpose.

Borzel, (2015) talks about three strategies in the conceptual framework, pace setting, which refers to actively pushing policies which reflect the members preference and minimise implementation costs. Foot dragging, which is about blocking or delaying costly policies to prevent them altogether or achieve at least some compensation for implementation costs and fence sitting, which is about neither pushing or blocking any policies but about building tactical coalitions with both pace setters and foot draggers. The paper goes on to talk about members shaping institutions according to their own interests and traditions. Whilst this is not to say the institutions are irrelevant, but that certain members hold key positions in both decision making and implementations of policies. In summary the paper concludes that there are two factors of importance for strategic choice, preferences and action capacity.

3.7 INVESTED INTERESTS — INDICATORS

A key indicator refers to a crucial metric or measure that provides significant insight into the performance or progress of a specific area, like a business objective or goal. They are measurable values that can be tracked over time to assess progress. They are chosen to reflect the most important aspects of achieving a desired outcome. And by analysing the key indicators, the organisation can make informed decisions about adjustments and improvements needed.

This research considers in detail three main indicators, although others have been reviewed. These being salaries, benefits and project rules, specifically ICR rates. As we know humanitarian organisations need to ensure they are held to account and where their systems

are no longer fit for purpose, they need to be able to reform the systems. (See Chapter 2, Section 2.11).

“Fundamentally, it is unclear to what degree humanitarian innovation has had a positive impact on humanitarian practices and whether it can achieve transformative change. Furthermore, the discussion around the subject is presently fragmented, lacks conceptual clarity, and fails to coherently identify the most potent levers for impact”. (Bruder & Baar, 2024, p.1).

The indicators, salaries, benefits and project rules, are clearly no longer fit for purpose. It confirms that there are structural issues to salaries and benefit packages, and project rules, specifically ICR rates, which ultimately distorts the outcomes of projects. A lack of consensus, and coordination from all donors, as well as clear expectations and guidance from the Cluster System, has left this process unfit for purpose. Furthermore, the mandate of HQ offices, as well as the roles required for those offices are arbitrary. If indirect costs and recruitment were reformed, this could lead to additional funding going direct to the beneficiaries, and less bureaucracy as CEOs and senior management would have the necessary, defined skills for the job, ensuring the support they provided to the field was more focused and effective.

“The case for an upgraded humanitarian system is by now all too familiar: needs are at an all-time high, humanitarian funding is not at pace with the rising humanitarian need, the system struggles to keep up with the demands. At the same time, the lack of meaningful inclusion with people on the receiving end of aid threatens its legitimacy and relevance”. (Alexander, 2021, p.1).

This indicator enables us to conclude whether the system as it has evolved is lacking clarity as to where its boundaries lie and what its true purpose is. This leads to intended and unintended

consequences, (See Chapter 3, Section 3.6.1), leading to obstacles of reform for these indicators.

3.7.1. HUMAN RESOURCES

Human Resources (HR) is a department that manages the employee life cycle of a company. They are responsible for recruitment; (finding and hiring new employees) training; (developing employees skills and knowledge) benefits; (managing employee benefits, such as health insurance, vacation time and sick leave) employee relations; (building positive work environment, addressing employee concerns and handling conflicts) performance evaluations; (assessing employee performance and providing feedback) compliance; (ensuring compliance with employment laws and regulations) and safety; (ensuring a safe work environment for employees). In addition, they deal with the payroll, where they process employees' pay checks and onboarding where they help new employees integrate into the company. HR acts as a link between a respective organisation's management and its employees.

3.7.2.FUNDING

Core funding is usually defined as financial support that covers basic core organisational and administrative costs of an NGO or UN, including salaries, rent, equipment, utilities and communications. Funds for NGOs. (2025).

The UN is largely funded by governments. Almost three-quarters of total UN revenue comes directly from direct government contributions. Funding for the UN system remains

concentrated among a limited number of donors, with ten member states providing more than 50% of the UNs funding. The United States is the largest contributor by volume but, relatively to the size of their respective economies. China has emerged as a significant UN contributor and is now among the top five Member State contributors. UNDP, (2025).

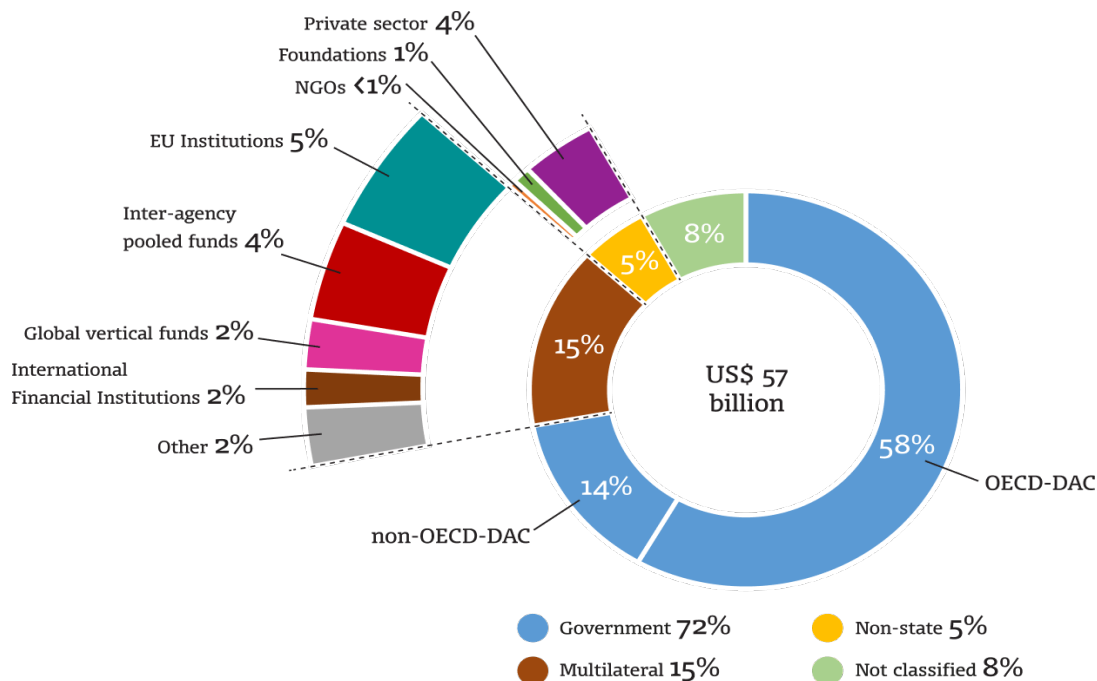


Fig 3.2

Funding Sources for the UN system, 2019.

NGOs rely on funding from a variety of sources, including individual donors, foundations, corporations and governments. Often what an NGO can and cannot do is tied to their funding, which affects the effectiveness and neutrality of NGOs. Some NGOs depend on governments funding which has become particularly challenging following the economic crisis. Global Policy Forum, (2021).

3.7.3. DONORS

A donor in general is a person, organisation or government which donates something voluntarily. Wikipedia, (2025). In the humanitarian world these donors can come from the maybe public sector, private sector and/or even individuals. Private donors usually consist of companies that contribute to a response, or foundations as well as individuals who desire to contribute to a response. Government donors are either individual governments such as USAID or FCDO and intergovernmental organisations are United Nations or the European Union.

3.7.4. BUDGETS

A budget is a way of tracking the money the organisation receives and the money the organisation spends, to ensure that expenses can be covered from month to month. A budget may include anticipated revenues, costs and expenses. Preparing a budget allows organisations to establish priorities and evaluate the achievement of their objectives. Wikipedia, (2025).

3.7.5. PROJECT RULES (ICR)

As in any business indirect costs are essential to ensure the business has support functions to help complete the projects granted. What is essential to understand is what percentage is deemed acceptable in any given project when supporting a humanitarian response.

“The failure of donors and intermediaries to provide funding that covers their partners overhead costs ultimately undermine the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian response”.
(Development Initiatives, 2022, p.1).

NGOs are often set up by westerners, who have a certain understanding of types of processes used in the western world by organisations. Whilst these can be very helpful to ensure projects are designed, developed and implemented in accordance with donors’ regulations so that they receive the necessary documentation, feedback and reports, they also prevent nationals from understanding the necessary requirement if they have not been trained in these requirements. The rules developed within projects will influence the types of reform that is possible. Staff should be driving the humanitarian agenda such as capacity building the countries that they are working in. By not improving national staffs’ capacity, expats will continue to help support disasters and therefore reform will be limited. This will lead to the expat being able to state they have a specialised skill set and setting their own fees, especially if it is related to bringing in donor funds. Having such influence that also affects their personal circumstances and even reputation, expats will become resistant to change as the impact will be to themselves. Cumming-Bruce, (2009), discussed how the UN inter-agency standing committee undertook an independent evaluation in 2007 which found that the results of the global cluster capacity- building effort had not materialised in major ways in field operations. In addition, Craine, Andia Biraro, Bourn & Bangsberg, (2018) found that structures which were in place to build capacity not only failed but actually drained the systems in place in the host countries. Zaidi, (1999) found that NGOs were not delivering their work in the way expected, but that they are top down and non-participatory, and that the staff end up thinking for the community and often overruling popular decisions. Most programmes did not have community-based approaches and that many have become contractors for donors and governments.

3.7.6. SALARIES & BENEFITS

HR departments usually have policies in place governing staff benefit packages and a range for staff salaries; these are usually negotiable. These will vary between institutions. Outside the institution there has not been a standardisation of the salary scales between agencies and therefore the all agencies have been able to create their own pay level, which, within the UN and USA, are often excessive and extremely high leading to expensive responses. This formal aspect of historical institutionalism has led to a misfit within NGOs and UN agencies. Indicators that can be studied to see how this impacts emergency responses are the HR rules, packages and benefits policies, and/or the budgets within an organisation. In some NGOs there are salary scale ranges for staff based on how senior or junior the position is, whilst others have a starting point of where the Interviewee can negotiate their salary. This is particularly common in US organisations. In addition, there will usually be benefits and packages listed based on where the Interviewee is working and this may alter based on seniority, again this may be negotiable. The budget will be able to provide more detail into how much is spent in comparison to the cost of a project.

3.8 OUTCOME

We can conclude that outcomes will be affected by the nature of staff salaries, benefits packages and project rules, specifically ICR rates, HQ offices and staffing need to be reformed (See Chapter 3, Section 3.0 and Chapter 6, conceptual framework, Table 6.1). Whilst the salaries and benefits need a complete reform, the project rules specific ICR rates, requires partial reform to define the specific rate that should be used by all donors when providing funds, as well having a clear definition of what the ICR funding should be used for. A staffing salary scale needs defining, based on the needs of expats, as well as the need to acquire the

right technical expertise. Clear skills and qualifications need defining, alongside the roles required for a response. This thesis does not underestimate the scale and complexity of this work that would need a significant amount of time and resources to ensure it is done justice. The benefit packages need a complete review, with justifications to each benefit provided and transparency. A thorough assessment into all the benefits needs to be undertaken, alongside the conditions staff are living and working in. Donors need to be in support of the necessary benefits, but not supportive of those which are more extravagant, in order to prevent misuse of funds. Again, this is incredibly complex, as we know the conditions some of the expats are exposed to affect mental health & well-being, physical health and ability to work long-term in the field. Some clearly would be compulsory in order to recruit, keep staff safe and keep an organisations reputation.

There is an opportunity to research into Human Resources, specifically the recruitment process, within humanitarian work in more depth, using the conceptual framework as a basis to understand the needs for reform and the obstacles met to reform. Specifically, the researcher needs to understand, what policies are in place to recruit humanitarians to ensure that the staff employed are not only qualified to undertake the role, but that the role requires someone with specific qualifications. This may lead to understanding if this role should be fulfilled by an expat or a national to keep costs managed appropriately and to ensure the humanitarian system does not contribute to a resistance to capacity build. A formal guiding document needs to be developed and shared with all partners. It is obvious that each country has different capacity levels, but these need to be formally understood and documented by the cluster for the use of all UN agencies and NGOs, rather than being undertaken by individual organisations. This will help to understand some of the barriers found in capacity building. In addition to this, and where possible there needs to be clear, documented steps

that can be taken by each UN and NGO in order to build the capacity of local staff so that the countries capacity is always a priority in order to build resilience.

3.9 SUMMARY

So, in summary, new institutionalism is enlightening as it highlights that institutions matter as NGOs need to have structure and rules and regulations to perform. As these have evolved, the Cluster System was developed to address the need for NGOs to have a coordinating body for emergency responses. Yet within these institutions path dependencies have been created that have shaped vested interests and have led to blockages which clearly need reforming. It is these path dependencies that have also had unintended consequences that have complicated the institutional aims and missions and made it hard to achieve. This has ultimately led to problems of fit and misfit of purpose that now require resolution through institutional or financial reform. This conceptual framework is seeking to illustrate that health systems within humanitarian organisations have imbalances that limit reform. Therefore, the thesis will look at how theory of new institutionalism can help us to comprehend how, institutions are created that are no longer fit for purpose and require reform in specific areas, such as staff salaries, benefits, ICR rates and reform. There are clear gaps in the literature of specifically how staff salaries, benefits and ICR rates are developed, and how the system needs to be reformed to ensure a humanitarian response is efficient and accountable to its beneficiaries. Polman, (2010) discusses that there is no quick solution to an intervention and any solutions will vary from case to case. Hence this is why new-institutional approaches that provide key indicators of why institutions matter provides value-added.

CHAPTER 4

4.0 METHODOLOGY APPROACH

This Chapter explores the guiding research methodology and related key research methods undertaken in this thesis. A qualitative inductive methodological approach is preferred since this enables the researcher to gather information, and, according to Craswell, (2003) ‘to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds ... It employs strategies of inquiry that involve collecting data either simultaneously or sequentially to best understand research problems’. Furthermore, qualitative research is often exploratory, which makes it better suited for relatively under-explored areas such as those undertaken in this thesis. Ndukwu, D. (2020) & Adam, R. (2023)

This is not to say that this researcher does not recognise the value of alternative quantitative research methodologies. Quantitative research is principally designed to capture numerical data. It also helps to identify and verify the key roots of certain behaviours although quantitative research does not need to be directly observed. It can be collected passively. In addition, if quantitative research is undertaken in a careful and exact way, it is often possible for other researchers to more readily duplicate the methodology and results and test common hypotheses. Nevertheless, for this respective study, quantitative research is less suitable since the thesis is dealing with issues that often require substantial interpretation and understanding of nuanced perspectives.

In contrast, a qualitative research methodological approach is preferred since qualitative research can accommodate more complex reflections and handle a deep understanding of behaviours and attitudes of target group of in this case, namely senior policymakers and stakeholders. It also allows evaluation and the gaining of insights from smaller sample sizes

which in turn allows for detailed analysis of the data inputs to get a better understanding of the overall situation. This is not to say that qualitative research is without its critiques. Researchers need to be aware that the data collected can be subjective since it is drawn from the experiences and biases of the respondents. It is also often very time-consuming to evaluate effectively and are not always easily replicated following the scientific method.

A qualitative methodological approach is appropriate since the focus of the thesis is on investigating the nuances of understanding the challenges of reform and thus places notable emphasis on data collection from senior policymakers that will help to understand the deeper meaning of the topic. It can help to decipher the motivations, thought processes and opinions of people who are involved in the situation. Its application extends beyond the conventional fields offering valuable insights into specific areas.

The author has spent a considerable amount of time working as a humanitarian aid worker in various emergency responses globally, including as a health cluster coordinator, regional coordinator, and technical director for a large NGO; and in various settings including Sudan, the Philippines, South Sudan, and Jordan. The author has seen first-hand the number of resources received from donors, witnessed the struggles to fund programs, the expansive nature of staff benefits being offered by respective NGOs and how respective funds and packages have been used. Thus, there is a need to be aware of dangers of confirmation bias and positionality. Therefore, the respective research has been undertaken with this knowledge. The choice of semi-structured interviews alongside several verification questions being included to ensure that any preconceptions are challenged and it was possible for interviewees to pursue different avenues of discussion. The research and document analysis have been shaped by this understanding.

“Positionality refers to where one is located in relation to their various social identities (gender, race, class, ethnicity, ability, geographical location etc).; the combination of these identities and their intersections shape how we understand and engage with the world, including our knowledges, perspectives, and teaching practices. As individuals and as instructors, we occupy multiple identities that are fluid and dialogical in nature, contextually situated, and continuously amended and reproduced”. (Alcoff, 1988, p.1).

4.1 RESEARCH METHODS

The qualitative, inductive methodology is supported through the application of two research methods: (i) selective, continuous document survey/analysis and (ii) qualitative, open, semi-structured interviews with policymakers and stakeholders.

For clarity, ongoing document analysis has been chosen since it is a valuable research method and;

“Consists of analysing various types of documents including books, newspaper articles, academic journal articles, and institutional reports. Any document containing text is a potential source for qualitative analysis”. (Patton, 2015, p.7).

The Figure below displays the process of the research methodology applied to this thesis.

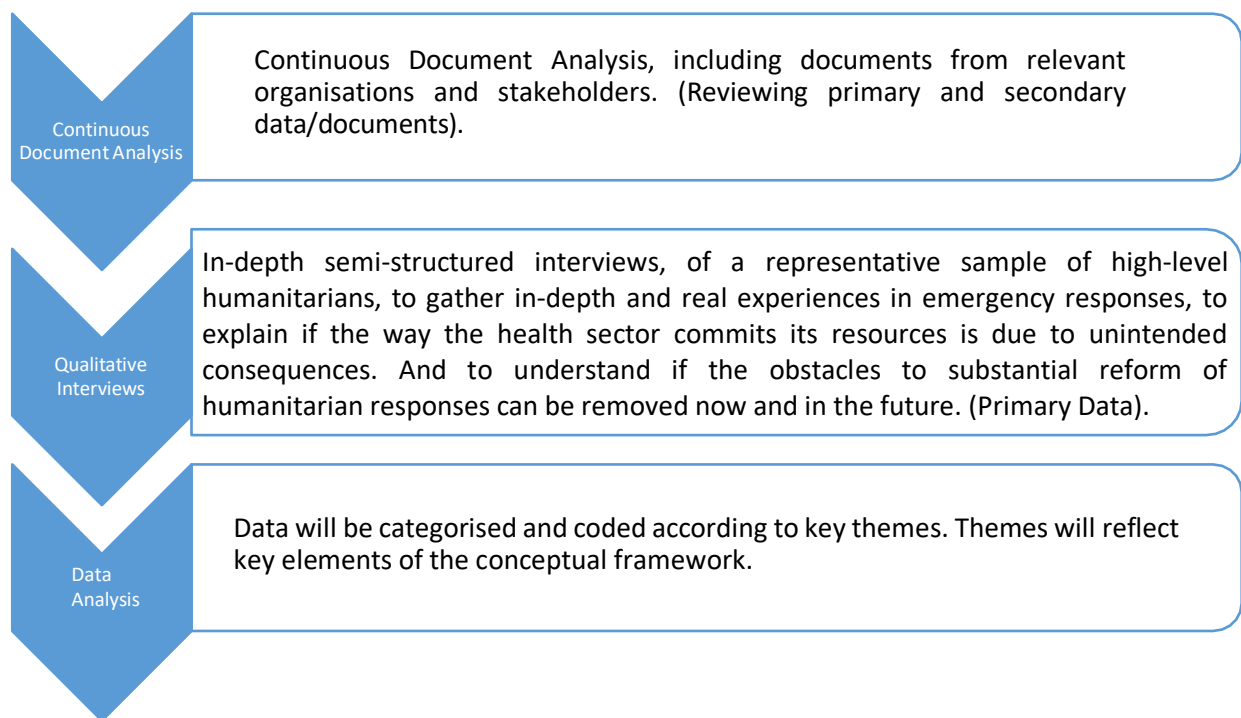


Figure 4.1: Research Objectives and How They will be Produced Through the Methodology.

Source: (Author 2024)

The researcher also conducted 66 detailed, semi-structured interviews (Strauss & Corbin., 1998). This research method facilitates an inductive methodological approach to identify links between findings, alongside allowing for the implementation of study's research objectives that ensure validity and reliability. (Strauss & Corbin., 1998). Allowing open and explorative research questions as part of the semi-structured interview represents a core feature of the inductive approach, which guides principles in numerous research studies. Hays & Singh, (2012) argue that individual interviews are the most widely used qualitative data collection method and continue to be a preferred and proven research method. Using this technique, whilst it may have an interview protocol, allows for the sequence and pace of the interview

questions to change, and additional questions can be included to create unique interviews, catered to the participants experience.

The interviews collected qualitative data to provide more detailed and comprehensive information to capture the research question, as part of the analysis, we will triangulate the evidence from the semi structured interviews, document search, and literature review to support key themes which emerge to support humanitarian reform.

Research Question	Data Collection Method	Research Method	Analysis Method
To what extent can (neo) institutional theories provide sufficient insights into the present- day functioning of Cluster Systems in international humanitarian health and medical assistance?	Primary and Secondary	Semi-structured interviews Documentary evidence	Thematic analysis Documentary analysis
To what extent can the present delivery challenges faced by the humanitarian health sector be explained as the unintentional consequences of the way the sector itself commits humanitarian resources?	Primary	Semi-structured interviews	Thematic analysis
How can the challenges to substantial reform of humanitarian resources be managed now and in the future?	Primary	Semi-structured interviews	Thematic analysis

Table 4.2: Techniques for Each Question

Source: (Author 2024).

4.2 CONTINUOUS DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Reviewing documents and archived records relating to humanitarian systems and responses allowed the researcher to provide a more comprehensive set of findings, this provides a historic overview of the humanitarian system, which can be combined from a variety of sources. Continuous document analysis is a reliable method when there are a high number of resources, as is the case in this study. UN policies and NGO documents were researched specifically focusing on reform and the key indicators used for this thesis, ICR rates, salaries and benefits and HR over a five-year period, using 35 documents.

“Analysing documents has frequently been an underused approach to qualitative research”.
(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.238).

Over the years, having worked in dynamically changing situations, the author was able to know where to search to find new policies from the UN that had been developed, where the reports would be kept to review any reforms taking place, and also the relevant papers that were written by humanitarians, NGOs and/or UN agencies. These were reviewed constantly to ensure that they were representative of the changes in the humanitarian sphere. The continuous document analysis comprised a review of primary documents from relevant actors and stakeholders, and any documents suggested during the interview process. A thematic analysis, which grouped evidence from the documents into five thematic areas (costs, capacity building, accountability, competencies and the Cluster System in humanitarian aid) that was then cross referenced against the interview findings. These themes were chosen as they are prevalent themes in the humanitarian sector. There is limited data relating to expat costs specifically in staff salaries and benefits. In comparison, there is a wealth of research available within tangential fields of study, such as the Cluster System and humanitarian

funding. The rationale for continuous document review in this study was mainly to seek corroboration and reduce the effects of bias on the findings.

“Conducting a document analysis can also reduce some of the ethical concerns associated with other qualitative methods. Since document analysis is a valuable research method, one would expect to a wide variety of literature on this topic”. (Morgan, 2022, p.64-7).

Thus, qualitative researchers view documents produced, shared and accepted in communities as credible sources of social facts, (Bowen., 2009) in this instance the researcher has been able to use documents that humanitarians refer to when responding to an emergency. For this study, the respective documents evaluated included global conferences, press releases, organisations and sector reports, emergency respond records, project proposals, guidelines and plans. Reviewing documents was essential to this thesis as it provided, a clear understanding of what studies had currently been undertaken and the gaps that were evident in this field of work.

“Analysing documents, such as books and journal articles, can be beneficial also because of the stability of the data”. (Morgan, 2022, p.66).

It was essential in advancing our understanding of the research topic, looking at the strengths and weaknesses of existing studies, demonstrating any new understandings of the institutional theories, as well as the subject matter of the humanitarian system and how they have been applied to a humanitarian response, reforming the system and potentially how these have been developed within the system to work towards reform. This research focused on institutional theories, capacity building, the use of funding within a humanitarian response, power dynamics, human resource systems, accountability, competencies, the Cluster System and reform, to provide evidence, data and indicative quotations. This data was organised into

themes which helped to strengthen each indicator or show the gaps in current research, themes of data were, costs, capacity building, accountability, competencies and the Cluster System in humanitarian aid.

The challenges experienced by the researcher in searching for documents include that there have been insufficient formal details, specifically around staff salaries and benefits. This partly reflects the 'pathfinding' nature of the research in that little detail is kept in the public domain. Yet, it also illustrates the unwillingness of organisations and institutions to make documents available for review and issues of 'biased selectivity'. There is strong evidence of institutional sensitivities and concerns that the documents are likely to only fall in line with the formal rules of the institution and that there may be considerable gaps between formal rules and informal behaviour in practice. This confirms the conceptual approach of the thesis and the need to also focus on informal rules and behaviour that have been developed within an institution. This may not always be evidence from the continuous document analysis on missing informal rules and this supplemented with evidence from the semi-structured interviews. However, the documents selected for this study have provided rich and valuable data for the research.

"Although conducting a document analysis can reduce some of the concerns qualitative researchers frequently encounter, this approach is by no means free of issues researchers typically face. Like interviews and observations, documents by themselves will likely not include important information other methods may uncover. For example, when allowing outsiders to examine its documents, an organisation can provide access only to content aligning with the values of its chief executives. Conducting research with documents as the sole source therefore raises questions about biased selectivity". (Bowen, 2009, p.30-31).

4.3 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The main interpretive method adopted is the semi-structured interviews, where coding was used to analyse the interviews, complimented with document reviews.

“The interview is one of the most common ways and recognised forms of qualitative research methods”. (Ruslin, Mashuri, Rasak, Alhabsyi, & Sya, 2022, p.1).

The semi-structured interviews were sufficiently in-depth to collect data on people’s experiences, perspectives and personal histories. Generally, interviews can be structured or semi-structured. Structured interviews often feature closed questions and are commonly used in quantitative studies, whereas semi-structured interviews are more flexible.

“The first account elucidates that the semi-structured interview is perceived to have more potential than other types of interviews because it allows researchers to acquire in- depth information and evidence from Interviewees while seriously considering the focus of the study. The second account concerns its flexibility and adaptability. For many qualitative researchers, the semi-structured interview is perceived to enable researchers to track their studies while being flexible and adaptable to ask questions to their Interviewees. The sense of flexibility and adaptability in the semi-structured interview, however, is particularly distinctive from the looseness of an unstructured interview because its direction is fully controlled”. (Ruslin, Mashuri, Rasak, Alhabsyi, & Sya, 2022, p.22).

Qualitative interviewing is often used in qualitative studies to refer to semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are designed to place an emphasis on depth, nuance and complexity. (Adams., 2015). Semi-structured interviews help to facilitate the externalisation of the Interviewee’s inner thoughts and feelings. Therefore, it is consistent

that knowledge can be constructed from Interviewee's perceptions. Furthermore, they are open-ended, and do not come with a pre-determined hypothesis, theme or topic. Instead, these things emerge naturally during the semi-structured interview. (Kallio et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2015). This chosen method, known as the Open Semi-Structured Interviews, is appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to explore the opinions and perceptions of those interviewed.

“Conducting a qualitative interview requires a set of skills. With good skills, the interviewer is likely trouble-free to organise what to ask, how to ask the Interviewee, and at the same time, how to encounter the information delivered by the Interviewee by understanding verbal and non-verbal information, remembering, and absorbing what has been covered while keeping watching points to probe and follow up and taking notes whenever possible. Although such skills are required, it is not necessary to have all the skills when conducting an interview”. (Drever, 2003, p.7). See also, Mason, (2002) and Hermanns, (2004).

It allows the researcher to gain clarification and allows for a free-flowing discussion. Please see Appendix 2 and 3 for the questions asked in this study.

“While bias could not easily be avoided in any interview, it is better for researchers to hold certain epistemological assumptions about their interactions. This would allow them to effectively choose the semi- structured instead of the structured interview. This premise implies that bias can be controlled, or even at a certain point, eradicated”. (Ruslin, Mashuri, Rasak, Alhabsyi, & Sya, 2022, p.22).

4.4 ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF CHOSEN METHOD

The interpretive research approach has significant benefits and disadvantages that this study acknowledges. The benefits of the interpretative approach are that it offers the opportunity for reformulating the researchers past knowledge and understanding within the research process. In addition, it seeks to advance knowledge and understanding. Lastly it also seeks to weave both historical context and theoretical underpinnings into a cogent narrative, using the analysis of data at both surface and deeper levels.

The disadvantage of using the interpretative research approach is that the process is time consuming and resource intensive.

“The study found some strengths of using qualitative methods for language “assessment and testing” research—such as, eliciting deeper insights into designing, administering, and interpreting assessment and testing; and exploring test-takers’ behaviour, perceptions, feelings, and understanding. Some weaknesses are, for instance, smaller sample size and time consuming”. (Rahman, 2020, p.102).

The researcher conducted all interviews. This was important due to the institutional sensitivity of the data, and that the interview content benefitted from being able to conduct interviews in a trusting environment given the researchers’ respective years of working in the humanitarian field. Due to coronavirus pandemic, the interviews have been conducted with the additional burden of mandatory safety precautions, such as social distancing and therefore most interviews, were conducted online. Volpe and Bloomberg, (2012) stated that limitations of research arise from restricted sample size, sample selection, reliance on certain techniques for gathering data, issues of researcher bias, among other things. The data was rich due to the researcher being able to use the contacts made professionally to ensure there

was a strong sample size, although this may have brought about different motives for participating in the study. The Interviewees were chosen from a variety of organisations and job positions and there was a very high response rate due to this. Despite these methodological challenges, the researcher believes that the benefits far outweigh the disadvantages, as the issues can be addressed by using reliable and valid research techniques to support the claims.

4.5 INTERVIEW PROCESS

The data collected was derived from open, semi-structured interviews, where participants demonstrated direct experiences of working in irrespective humanitarian responses. The research draws upon two phases of interviews that took place in late 2021 and early 2022. (Dataset 1, n=41 and Dataset 2, n=25). Dataset 1 has a sample size of 41 and Dataset 2 has a sample size of 25.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews provided the best way of teasing out nuances of responses from elite policy makers and humanitarian assistance managers. Walliman, (2010) states that 'in depth semi-structured interview can provide the perception, knowledge and experience of individual expand the research topic and develop information of certain area with a free talk style compared with other methods'. Kvale (1996) regards a qualitative research interview as an attempt to understand the world from the point of view of research subjects.

"The conversation is aimed to unfold the meaning of their experiences and to uncover their lived world". (Sewell, 2009, p.1).

They proved to generate a free-flowing discussion about the topic where participants were able to speak freely and in detail which was crucial for this sensitive thesis topic (Kallio et al., 2016). It also allowed the Interviewee to gain clarification or more information on any of the questions. The aim of this interview was to create a safe space for people to share their experiences from working in humanitarian work, knowing that the interviews developed could be slightly unnerving for some.

“Through conversations, we know other people, learn about their experiences, feelings and hopes and understand the worlds in which they live”. (Ruslin, Mashuri, Rasak, Alhabsyi, & Sya, 2022, p.22).

Therefore, the questions were not rigid to allow the Interviewees to articulate and contribute as much as they felt was required to share their experiences and knowledge of this topic. In addition, the open semi-structured interviews allowed for the discovery of new information that may not have been thought of by the Interviewee, increasing the chance of gathering more information. (Taylor et al., 2015). Magaldi and Berler (2020) define the semi-structured interview as an exploratory interview. They further explain that the semi-structured interview is generally based on a guide and that it is typically focused on the main topic that provides a general pattern. In addition, Magaldi and Berler (2020) argue that the semi-structured interview, despite its topical trajectories provided prior to the interview, enables a researcher to go deep for a discovery.

The first interview was general fact finding, consisting of nine general open questions, and the second interview used this information to gather further information of the topic with five open, in-depth questions. The questions were descriptive and explanatory. With descriptive questions being concerned with the ‘who, what where and how’ (Clark & Creswell., 2010) and the explanatory questions allowed for answers to open questions that start with

‘why’. (Saunders & Lewis., 2012). To allow for verification and falsification, a variety of approaches were taken to ensure the data produced was as credible as possible. For example, probing was used to enable participants to elaborate on answers. Issues could then be raised or discussed arising from the participants and as discussion points for the future participants. This helped validate many arguments this thesis has already brought forward. Nonetheless, all data was evaluated with the same objectivity irrespective of whether the data supported the hypothesis.

4.6 SAMPLE

Purposive (selective) sampling technique was used for the open semi-structured interviews, based on the researcher’s own judgement of members of the humanitarian population to participate in the study. (Bloomberg & Volpe., 2012). For this research, the researcher had specific access to higher level echelons of health and humanitarian/disaster managers which were utilised to maximise response rate from interviews. The sample was representative of those high-level echelons, therefore, staff positions, from vice presidents, directors, technical advisors, professors and human resource directors, working for various organisations, such as the UN, donors, government establishments, universities with a humanitarian affiliation, international and national non-government organisations were interviewed.

4.7 SAMPLING CRITERIA & PROCESS

According to Rai & Thapa, (2015), purposive sampling is a deliberate attempt by the researcher to ensure that the participants identified have specific qualities and characteristics, although this is timely and expensive. Purposive (selective) sampling was suitable because the participants have directly experienced emergency responses. In addition, they also have had experience in the salaries and benefits that come with

deployments. This would ensure the participants had knowledge about the subject area under discussion, which ultimately enhances the quality of the research; random participants were regarded as not suitable.

The sample was representative of the humanitarian field. The 66 participants were either senior ranking or high-level technical advisors, who held their positions for a minimum of five years. The sample has been inclusive of males and females. Some Interviewees had experience as both a national and an expat, and some were doing two jobs at the time of interview, allowing them to state they had two levels of seniority. Table 5.3 reveals the range of participants, whilst maintaining their anonymity as requested. All Interviewees were able to confirm their roles and experience, although Interviewees did state that these are their own opinions and not that of the organisation they work for. The first sample consisted initially of 45 high-level humanitarians with sufficient experience and of these 41 responded and were interviewed. For the second sample, 30 high-level humanitarians with sufficient experience were approached and 25 were interviewed (See Appendix 4 for Interview Criteria).

4.8 SAMPLE SIZE & LOCATIONS

There were two stages to the semi-structured interviews. The initial stage interviewed 41 high level professionals in either health or humanitarian leadership positions, who had experienced or led, a vast array of emergency responses over the past 30 years, but primarily over more recent years and of whom were still currently in high profile leadership roles. In the second stage of interviews, 25 in-depth, semi structured interviews were undertaken, taking the interview content into greater detail and also expanding the number of professionals involved in this study. The sample interviewed people from all over the world.

They worked in NGOs and UN agencies. They were both nationals and expats and they held a variety of positions from experts to vice presidents.

4.9 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

According to Miller & Rasco, (2004) inductive research methods allow participants to articulate their own thoughts without any restrictions affected by the researcher's assumptions of what matters to them most. Holloway & Brown, (2012) suggest that qualitative research may be exploratory and descriptive. According to Thomas, (2006) there are numerous methods to analyse qualitative data obtained through interviews. Creswell, (2007) discusses how qualitative inquiry develops through arranging the categories and themes into sections of information. By empowering individuals to share their stories from their own perspective it allows us to see this deeper understanding. Thematic analysis is an effective way to find, examine and communicate patterns or themes in datasets. Braun and Clarke (2006) discuss how thematic analysis is especially effective when it is necessary to find repeating ideas, concepts or there is a need for methodically arranging and analysing text.

"A method for developing, analysing and interpreting patterns across a qualitative dataset, which involves systematic processes of data analysis rather than a methodology". (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.4).

This research pattern allows for interview transcripts to become useful data sources. There are two effective approaches to thematic analysis that can be used, inductive and deductive. The inductive approach allows the data to determine the theme, whereas in a deductive approach, themes are preconceived based on existing knowledge. (See Braun & Clarke, (2006)). This thesis followed the process of conducting thematic analysis.

The analysis of the documents and interviews was conducted as follows;

- The interviews using the themes identified in the concept Chapter were analysed:
 - Historical Institutionalism
 - Institutions Matter
 - Path Dependencies
 - Types of Indicators (Key Indicators, Project Rules, HR, Funding, Donors, Budgets, Salaries, Benefits, National Staff HR and Outcomes and Scenarios)
- Further themes were introduced:
 - Capacity building
 - Accountability
 - Competencies
 - Cluster System in humanitarian aid.
 - Costs

The transcription of each interview took place immediately after each interview had finished.

The aims of these transcriptions were to ensure all the information was accurate and that the data was arranged into a manageable format. The audios were then relistened to and the transcripts were read again to be aware of all its nuances and overall context.

Next there was a reading and re-reading of the transcribed data to identify any themes and sub-themes, which are valuable to the research questions and objectives. The participants were then contacted to review the transcripts for verification. This also allows the researcher to acquire any new ideas and reflections.

The next step in the process was coding. Esterberg, (2002) points out that coding is the process of ensuring that data is understandable. It involves categorising data, assigning

numbers to the relevant categories, and creating themes that capture participants' key responses related to the research questions. While there were no codes developed during this analysis there were potential themes noted. Each theme was given a descriptive name that reflected its content and significance. Themes were reviewed to ensure they have been done to reflect accurately the information obtained. The data analysis process involved making sense of the collected data. Categorising data was crucial for the research so that main headings and subheadings were developed. The themes were then supported with documents, surveys and data which was added to the findings.

Lastly, the thematic analysis of the research data was to write a description that provided a comprehensive account of the various themes, that can be used to explain the research objectives. According to Silver & Lewins, (2014), the rationale for this process is to obtain information from the findings based on the participants' experiences aided by using narratives. In addition, it can also validate the findings from surveys and documents. The thematic analysis is flexible and widely used in qualitative research methods, allowing for rich insights into the Interviewees' perspectives, experiences and opinions.

4.10 PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

The researcher has been a humanitarian for ten years, having deployed to several countries in a variety of settings. In addition, they have worked for a variety of organisations ranging from the UN to NGOs. Currently they hold a high-level position as a director managing technical aspects of emergency programs, which includes the health aspect. They have notable experience working for the Cluster System in a health capacity. Given the nature of their work, and the deployments taken, this has allowed the researcher to build professional relationships with health experts within the UN and NGOs as well as the Cluster System. This

clearly facilitated a high response to invitations to interviews and the securing of 66 interviews. This level of trust, alongside a commitment that the interviews are anonymous, allowed the researcher to gather information from Interviewees, which would not usually be shared.

4.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This thesis has acquired ethical approval as part of Bournemouth University's research ethics procedures and processes for collecting qualitative data. The interviewer took notes during the interview and shared the document with the Interviewee to ensure it was an accurate account of the interview. According to Cao & McHugh (2005) small margins of variability can be tolerated in findings. To ensure Interviewees were more willing to share information, they did not want their recorded voices shared. Direct quotes could be obtained from the interviews and Interviewees gave consent for these to be used, so long as they were anonymous, Cresswell, (2014). According to Capps & Hazen (2002), this was an essential component of thematic analysis. Due to the nature of the questions asked, the aim of the interview was to ensure the process was as comfortable and as secure as possible, Cresswell, (2014).

This thesis is aware of ethical restrictions; therefore, an information sheet was provided to participants, which included information regarding consent and their right to withdraw. Participants were provided with the information sheet which summarised the key aspects of the project and explained the purpose of the thesis. Participants were able to get in touch if there were any queries, concerns or need to withdraw. The participants were also given a Participant Agreement Form to consent to the requirements of the interviews. These forms were discussed and signed to obtain consent from the participants. As open semi-structured interviews were used, it was important to have informed consent from participants before

interviews commenced so quotes or references to Interviewees' responses could be included in the thesis. It was crucial that all necessary information was provided, such as the purpose of the study, who was involved and how the data would be used to ensure informed consent was provided. Participants were given time to ask questions about the research to ensure they were fully informed before giving consent. They were informed that the interview was completely voluntary and at any point they could draw the interview to a close and the data would not be used. There was no forceful or coercive nature to the interviews. The aim of this interview was to be transparent for all the participants. Any uncertainties during the process were clarified at the time of interview by the participants and once the interview text was complete the participants were asked to approve the transcripts. All participants strongly expressed that their interviews were solely based on their experiences and opinions and did not reflect the official views of any respective organisation that they have worked for. All participants preferred to remain anonymous. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 1.30 hours and during this time there was a considerable breadth of knowledge shared reflecting the success of accessing senior humanitarians.

4.12 SUMMARY

All Interviewees chose to be anonymous as discussed and there will be no details of their job titles or roles. Any information they have shared is on behalf of their own views and opinions and not on behalf of their organisation, government, and/or university. This Chapter explored the guiding research methodology and related key research methods undertaken in this thesis. It looked at the research methods used and included a detailed discussion acknowledging the author's respective positionality. Details on the method of analysis used were also provided.

CHAPTER 5

5.0 FINDINGS & RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter presents the key findings from all 66 interviews, with a variety of stakeholders, including NGOs, donors, beneficiaries, and UN organisations. The Chapter draws upon two phases of interviews that took place in late 2021 and late 2022. Dataset 1 has a sample size of 41 and Dataset 2 has a sample size of 25. (Dataset 1, n=41 and Dataset 2, n=25). Major themes presented in these interviews are presented in Table 1. The most notable finding was that the international humanitarian sector needs reforming; however, there are major barriers including a lack of interest. Many respondents also reported that funding needs to be reformed; and there remains a lack of reform initiatives aimed at the Cluster System and leadership. There are in total 54 findings drawn from the interviews that are presented and discussed in this respective Chapter. More specifically, the Chapter starts with a discussion of the three most notable general findings from the interviews, before moving into addressing specific findings throughout the Chapter (and which relate to the conceptual framework). In each respective Section, specific findings are presented that relate to the sub- heading. For the institutions matter sub-heading, then three findings are discussed. On formal rules, four findings are noteworthy, and for informal rules the discussion focuses on two findings. This Chapter then proceeds to consider social practices and norms (highlighting one key finding), cultural norms (outlining one finding) and shared values (with three findings). The Chapter then moves into path dependencies (five findings), project rules (three findings), Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) (four findings), Human Resources (five findings), funding issues (with three findings), salaries (five findings) and benefit packages

(four findings). Finally, the Chapter concludes with consideration of the key overall outcome findings (of six findings).

5.2 GENERAL FINDINGS

Main Findings		
1.	International humanitarian sector needs reforming, but there are major barriers to reform. Lack of interest in pursuing concrete reform agendas.	86% of participants.
2.	Funding mechanisms are under humanitarian reform initiatives. However, use of funding, how it is sourced and provided needs reforming.	Supported by the Grand Bargain 2016.
3.	Lacks initiatives aimed at the Cluster System and leadership.	42% leadership is crucial.

Table 5.1: Main Findings

Source: (Author 2024)

This thesis examines the findings to discuss whether there is a need for the international humanitarian sector to be reformed, and if the international and institutional dynamics facilitate or hinder the process of reform. One of the clearest general findings from the data collection is that there is a strong consensus across both phases of interviews that the humanitarian system needs reforming; and whilst this is specific to the health cluster there is enough research to further claim that this is also for the general humanitarian sector. Whilst the health cluster is a technical specialty, the functions of other cluster are sufficiently comparable to argue that if this cluster needs reform, then it is likely they all will. This is supported by the literature review (Chapter 2, Section 2.11), where there are many authors that also assert that reform is needed. Whilst there have been several reforms over the years, starting specifically with a high-level panel in 2016 during the World Humanitarian Summit to implement short and long-term reforms, there is still a long way to go to reform the system

further. Some donors continue to advocate reform and the track record on reform outcomes remains decidedly mixed.

“DFID has a strong strategy for using its funding and influence to strengthen UN humanitarian agencies and global humanitarian practice, but its record to date in promoting practical reforms is mixed”. (Independent Commission for Aid Impact, 2018, p.3).

Cumulative data drawn from the two Datasets, covering a total of 66 participants highlighted that there is strong evidence to suggest that the humanitarian field needs reforming. Across the entire data set, 86% of participants strongly agreed that the humanitarian field required reform. More specifically, 88% of Interviewees in Dataset 1 and 84% of Interviewees interviewed in Dataset 2 strongly felt that the system needed reforming, even if many also acknowledged that there were - in some cases - major barriers to reform.

Whilst notable work has been undertaken to reform, there were also initiatives aimed at reforming the Cluster System and leaderships:

“A revised Charter could address this issue by exploring alternative financing mechanisms, ensuring adequate and predictable funding and promoting a fair and equitable sharing of financial burdens among member states”. (Global Governance, 2023/2024, p.12).

This was also supported in the literature review (Chapter 2, Section 2.1). Overall, it seems clear that there is still a continuing need to advocate and seek the reform.

Interviewee 12 (Dataset 1) for example, stated: “Aid work was run like a cartel and difficult to reform, perhaps even impossible! Lots of companies and organisations need money. Breaking these rings will ensure those who make money out of aid will lose it. It needs to come under an umbrella with clear direction for reform with norms and standards”. Interviewee 11

(Dataset 1) was equally illustrative, highlighting that the humanitarian sector is often not interested in pursuing reform, stating: “The aid world in total is organised to self-perpetuate, there is little effort invested in finding solutions to problems we address in this industry. Excessive for senior executives prevent turnover at this level, resulting in stale decision-making. Lavish lifestyles in the field result in less-effective staff remaining in positions just to maintain their lifestyle”.

For change to happen there needs to be a strong commitment from leadership, donors and governments. As supported in Chapter 2, Section 2.11, real reform will require strong leadership from donors and organisations, as well as major commitment from powerful and weak countries. But with the benefits that are available, this will inevitably make reform more difficult. In addition, it is clear that these organisations must support the idea of reform rather than hinder the process when plans have been developed to undergo this type of work. In Dataset 2 Interviewee 13 stated “I have been ongoing for a decade now and I haven’t seen any changes seen we have been reforming the system. Standards need developing. People need to have a better incentive to make the changes”.

“The reform of the Secretariat is another area that could be addressed in a Second Charter. The Secretariat’s structure, management, and working methods need to be modernised to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and accountability. Notably, the term length and election methods for Secretary-General must empower the General Assembly, rather than be selected by the Security Council. This would help ensure a more accountable Secretariat that can better respond to the needs and demands of member states and the global community”.(Global Governance, 2023/2024, p.15).

Another general finding is that the data collection also reveals that the lack of reform, alongside the lack of interest, has resulted in a general slowness in pursuing concrete reform

agendas. (See also Chapter 2, Section 2.11). The literature supports the need for full reform as quoted below.

“The Secretary General has promised that, “Over time, full implementation of the reforms is expected to yield a range of benefits, including improved effectiveness of mandate delivery, improved transparency and accountability and enhanced confidence in the ability of the United Nations to deliver on the mandates entrusted to it by Member States”. Shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations: Implementing a new management architecture for improved effectiveness and strengthened accountability (A/72/492/Add.2. Paragraph 10).

This may also be related to levels of remuneration and benefits presently available and that the perception that present systems offer notable personal benefits to some kinds of humanitarian workers. As Interviewee 11 noted: “People come because the package is good, they can have a good life, they see people as numbers and they have no empathy. They never go to the field and will stay depending on the package. They will never build capacity as otherwise they will have to go back home. They live in beautiful apartments, make more money than in their home countries. So why build capacity? We also don’t do enough to provide our national staff with opportunities to be deployed to emergencies. We don’t build their capacity to do this”.

This Chapter highlights key areas that need reform, however, there is need for further research to understand additional areas of a humanitarian response to conclude if further reform is required. The most crucial areas for reform, highlighted from this research showed that the project rules need to be clear, concise and formal, to guide humanitarian responses, as mentioned in Chapter 2, Section 2.4, which is supported by the UN in 2005, as well as a reform. It is also clear that although data Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) is collected in abundance in emergencies, this data is not standardised within the

industry and it is not used to inform responses, and this can undermine whether a respective response activity response is effective. This was also evident in the literature review (See Chapter 2, Section 2.5) where it discusses the concerns on the accuracy of data were raised by the UN Secretary General in 2017. The interview data also suggests that respective human resource departments (that specifically manage recruitment), also require reforming. More specifically, reform to ensure qualified staff are recruited appropriately, including thorough checks on criminal backgrounds and medical histories and practice. The use of funding and how funding is both sourced and provided, needs reviewing from the donors' perspective and lastly salaries and benefit packages need to be fair, transparent and reflective of the work being undertaken.

Further research is also advocated, particularly to understand the value and use of donor reports, the expectations of the donors and how that impacts on effective humanitarian response. There also needs to be additional evaluations of how organisational budgets are spent, who is accountable for them, and how effective and efficient the use of these budgets are.

5.3 INSTITUTIONS MATTER

Main Findings		
4.	Institutions matter to provide a platform for staff to focus on the mandate of humanitarianism, which is to save lives and alleviate suffering.	91% of Interviewees.
5.	Sectors that provided direct services were crucial.	78% of Interviewees.
6.	Technical expertise was essential to ensure a response was effective.	48% of Interviewees.
7.	Capacity building was crucial in an emergency response.	30% of Interviewees.
8.	Governments should lead a response.	92% of Interviewees.

Table 5.2: Main Findings

Source: (Author 2024)

A further specific finding is that there is broad agreement that the role of key institutions is critical to the functioning of the existing Cluster System that organises humanitarian assistance. As discussed in the literature review (See Chapter 2, Section 2.4), institutions can be defined as more than just simply individual organisations and can also represent institutional systems, such as the Cluster System. The findings suggest that Interviewees also agree that ‘institutions matter’ and that they remain crucial to the delivery platforms handling international emergency response. The findings also suggest that the role of institutions remains paramount since it is perpetuated in the Cluster System by the need for strong coordination and clear direction, and by a general emphasis on pursuing efficient use of funding and resourcing that underpins response. As Interviewee 19 (Dataset 1) denoted, the existing humanitarian system is configured to work closely with governments to enhance any response to the needs of the local populations, to reduce suffering and to save lives and this supported by the creation of strong sets of formal regulations. Interviewee 19 (Dataset 1) further stated the Cluster System was there, “To support, when present or functional, the local government (this includes the health ministry) in accordance with UN Resolution 46/182. If

the State is not able or unwilling to care for those affected by natural or man-made disasters, it is the role of the humanitarian assistance community to do so within the framework of this resolution until this role can be assumed by the government”. This is supported by Chapter 1, Section 1.2 where the humanitarian principles are discussed and are also supported by the UN General Assembly Resolutions 46/182 and 58/114.

“A Second Charter could also address the long-overdue need for UN funding reform. Today, the organisation relies heavily on voluntary contributions from member states, which often results in funding gaps and imbalances”. (Global Governance 2023/2024, p.12).

Moreover, the findings suggest that there was a strong consensus that institutions matter precisely because of the focus on delivering key humanitarian objectives. In the Research Approach and Concepts of Chapter 3 (See Section 3.2.1), it discusses how crucial new institutionalism is to this thesis, as it highlights that institutions matter. 91% of Interviewees (Dataset 1) stated that institutions matter to provide a platform for staff to focus on the mandate of humanitarianism, which is to save lives and alleviate suffering. Some 33% (Dataset 1) also emphasised that there was a specific focus on ensuring these organisations and employees do no harm and 42% (Dataset 1) stated that the institutions are to focus on reducing death rates. Interviewee 4 (Dataset 1) further explained how the Cluster System was there to; “Deliver assistance, either directly or through oversight of local partners/channels, to populations affected by natural or man-made disasters and crisis. To ensure that the assistance is appropriate to the needs of the affected populations and delivered efficiently (without fraud, waste or abuse). To further ensure that the provision of assistance does not cause harm (unintended negative consequences)”. Similarly, D'Harcourt, Ratnayake & Kim., 2017, p157-158) also support how crucial it is for aid agencies to be held to account, so that their interventions have a long-term impact and are cost effective.

The findings also reveal that this linkage between institutions matter and the importance of key humanitarian objectives was also reinforced by the fact that many humanitarian cluster platforms were originally designed to enhance disaster/emergency response and provide technical assistance. One of the key legacies arising from the emergence of the Cluster System in 2010 (after OCHA was created) was that the humanitarian platform was largely defined and developed to represent key sectors required and critical to any emergency response (and has since been further developed). The health cluster under WHO was similarly created at this time (See Chapter 2, Section 2.9 of the literature review). 78% of Interviewees (Dataset 1) felt that the sectors that provided direct services, such as medications, treatments, and diagnostic services were regarded as crucial; and of the staff providing these services, 48% felt that their technical expertise was essential to ensure a response was effective. As noted, (Interviewee 7, Dataset 1): “Technical competencies in terms of health are pretty universal; a doctor should be able to diagnose and treat diseases within a given context”.

Another key aspect was the focus on capacity building. It is widely recognised (See Chapter 2, Section 2.9) that the WHO’s Health Cluster has been working towards enhancing capacity development (outlined in their strategic priorities 2020-2023). The WHO’s mid-term review report of the strategy also indicated that one of the main challenges from the responses continued to be concerns over capacity and funding constraints. (Health Cluster, 2022).

Moreover, 30% of those interviewed in Dataset 1 felt that capacity building was crucial in an emergency response, with Interviewee 15 (Dataset 1) stating, “The main aim should always be to do ourselves out of a job. Local people should always take the lead”. Another Interviewee reflected that “I am very close to thinking that there should be no international staff unless they have the ability to pass over knowledge”. (Interviewee 22; Dataset 1). Nevertheless, the findings also confirm that there are widespread concerns among

Interviewees about the lack of capacity building undertaken during emergency responses, and further efforts need to be made by key institutions to address any capacity gaps to ensure that the responses meet targets.

“Donors, UN agencies and NGOs that endorsed the Grand Bargain committed to increase efforts on capacity-strengthening as part of wider action on localisation. Yet progress has been slow. While multi-year humanitarian funding has increased somewhat, this has not translated into, or been matched by, increases in support for multi-year local capacity-strengthening”. (Mollet & Donkin, 2021, p.1).

Interestingly, the findings also show that Interviewees highlight how the Cluster System also enhances the value placed on organisations. In effect, the Cluster System has allowed organisations to matter as much as the institutional system, which also helps us to understand why there may be vested organisations interests that do not want the institutional system to be seriously reformed (See later Sections on reform).

Alongside this focus on the value of organisations, the findings also show how Interviewees placed a strong emphasis on the importance of leadership and accountability of sectors (See Chapter 2, Section 2.6). D'Harcourt, Ratnayake & Kim, (2017), for example, highlight the devastating impact in interventions are not long-term or cost effective. Whilst it needs to be effective in delivering better response capacity, the Interviewees highlighted how the Cluster System also needs to support and strengthen the leadership and accountability in the sectors, as well as enhancing relationships with governments, UN and NGOs. 42% of Interviewees (Dataset 1) believed that leadership was crucial, with 24% also emphasising the need for increased accountability to ensure an effective response. The results also confirm and expand upon key observations in the literature for example:

“One of the first criticisms local partners raise regarding the capacity-strengthening efforts of many international agencies is their tendency to provide top-down, externally defined training ‘packages’, instead of embracing and modelling leadership by local actors themselves”. (Mollet & Donkin, 2021, p.1).

And;

“One of the most disturbing aspects of the lack of coordination was that, although local community-based organisations were providing accurate information about remote areas where aid had not been received, this information was not being transmitted to the clusters. Had the appropriate cluster been informed, this information could have been disseminated to those members with the resources to help”. (Tipper, 2015, p.1).

Interestingly, the findings also revealed that there were concerns that the Cluster System needs to support the role of governments and governmental actors more, with 39% believing that the governments must be supported to enhance national and local continuity of provision and resourcing. As Interviewee 6 (Dataset 1) stated, it was important that any disaster response should also, “Build the capacity of national staff for sustainability. Be accountable to beneficiaries, donors and other stakeholders”. In Dataset 2, 92% felt that governments should lead the humanitarian response, although this had less resonance when specifics were explored; some 58% further into the interview when asked a question in relation to the governments capacity to lead a response. It has been clearly discussed in the literature review, Chapter 2, Section 2.10, that one of the challenges humanitarian agencies face, is to ensure they build the capacity of the state, supported by Wood & Sullivan, (2015). Whilst it is clear that respective governments are responsible for their country’s welfare, and it is also their responsibility to take care of the citizens, this is not always possible or in some cases they are more likely to be detrimental to the country. An indicative example below

relates to Nigeria, but has wider resonance, and is embodied a challenge often seen by humanitarians:

“Although federal and state ministries and agencies are meant to have a complementary relationship, everyday governance is marked by weak and limited inter-governmental coordination. Both federal and state governments enjoy constitutional powers to create, merge, separate and rename ministries under their control at will. This means that structures vary between state and federal levels, and state agencies do not always directly correspond to or interact with federal counterparts. Combined with political tensions between the two levels of government, these governance weaknesses had a significant impact on the government’s ability to respond to the Boko Haram crisis unfolding in north-east Nigeria”.
(Murtala & Abubakar, 2017, p.1).

There was a sizeable majority of Interviewees that also highlighted, that if the government was involved during a national emergency, there would be a stronger sense of national leadership within the country. This was likely to be perpetuated since government involvement would also increase the chances of successful transitions from response to recovery as they would be able to take over eventually, continuing their roles from both before and after the emergency. Furthermore, 63% of Interviewees (Dataset 2) acknowledged that governments were encouraged to exercise responsibility for an emergency response from the most senior of levels, including the involvement of the Head of State, leaving around a third (33%) stating that Heads of State were not encouraged to be involved in a response. Interviewees holding this latter view clearly regarded that the involvement of Heads of State often translated into them becoming too controlling, exercising micro-management and wanting to be involved in everything. In some circumstances where Heads of State have been involved in the conflict, this may also be a conflict of interest for the safety of the citizens and

therefore, it may be seen as necessary for the Head of State to be involved as minimal as possible.

“The State Emergency Management Agencies were in most cases an office under the State Ministry of Special Duties, whose dozen or so staff were drawn from the ordinary civil service pool, without the relevant experience or specialised training necessary for humanitarian coordination. Staff had no knowledge of humanitarian principles or international standards relating to camp coordination and management, food distribution or protection monitoring, and were not familiar with the operating procedures of international humanitarian organisations. Participation or information-sharing with UN agencies and NGOs was very limited”. (Murtala & Abubakar, 2017, p.1).

Nevertheless, the role and presence of government officials was noted in most disaster management responses, when it came to their involvement in meetings. 79% of Interviewees (Dataset 2) said that government officials were present, although this was also with the caveat that they often believed this to be because the respective officials were paid per diem by donors to attend meetings. 54% of Interviewees (Dataset 2) believed that governments and their officials were pro-active; with a further 21% (Dataset 2) highlighting that this was especially likely if there was a perceived, potential or real financial gain. Furthermore, the findings reveal that governmental participation did not always equate with or translate into capacity commitments. Only 33% of Interviewees (Dataset 2) viewed that participating governments had the necessary capacity for emergency management. In addition, whilst 63% of Interviewees (Dataset 2) regarded that the views of government officials were heard by international institutions and NGOs, they would often meet resistance since their demands were often regarded as overinflated, huge and/or excessive. Sadly, only 38% of Interviewees

thought that the views of national governments were respected and suggests that some institutions still matter more than others.

A government is responsible for calling a state of emergency within its own country (See. Chapter 4, Section 4.3). However, if the respective country is not sufficiently supported following a call for support, then this can indeed result in a weakened government. Moreover, given that the state may still have to respond quickly to meet the needs of the population, then calls for additional support nationally or internationally may be required. The Cluster System recognises, and even expects, that governments will lead the coordination of any respective emergency; yet it is often unclear how often this happens in practice. The interviews data showed that 57% confirmed that the respective governments were present in meetings; yet only 45% of Interviewees believed that the governments were encouraged to be present. Whilst there may be some risks involving the government if the Head of State has been involved in the conflict (such as, the Syrian conflict), the research reveals that less than half of governments are encouraged to exercise their leadership in an emergency.

The UN has clearly stated - through its Sustainable Development Goal 17 (SDG 17) - that one of its priorities is to build the capacity in a country, so that the government and leaders are able to take over the response once capacity has been rebuilt. Nevertheless, without their presence, involvement and action, it is unclear how capacity is going to be rebuilt. Only 39% of Interviewees viewed that governmental representatives at meetings were in any way proactive. Just under a quarter (24%) of Interviewees further stated that governments had sufficient capacity to support the respective emergency response. These results suggest capacity building of a country is unlikely to be rebuilt effectively when governments may judge that their views have not been respected. This may lead to unintended consequences by

potentially further reducing governmental involvement as they will not see sufficient value in being present if their opinions are not respected.

Nevertheless, there was a notable consensus (42%) among Interviewees who stated that governments should not be the lead when institutional capacity was missing or deficient (which is supported by the UN Resolution 46/182). In their experience, they lacked capacity, representation and many of the governments were involved with corruption. They felt that often they were unwilling to protect the people. And depending on the political situation, they may also be part of the conflict. Interviewee 3 (Dataset 2) stated that “This left a void for the international community to fill or take the lead in”. Furthermore, all Interviewees were concerned that governments should not be the lead if, “that lead is not abiding by the humanitarian principles”. Interviewee 17 (Dataset 2). They go on to express concerns when the government did not have capacity, especially since they continued to be regarded as the key actor that was essential to deliver effective disaster response. Interviewee 17 (Dataset 2) goes on to state, “the capacity is a major concern because what the government claims and what exists on the ground usually have discrepancies. Then ensuring quality and accountability is difficult with the government”. Or worse still, there are major concerns about a government’s involvement if they were involved in the conflict. As commented by Interviewee 10 (Dataset 2). “Do they have people’s best interest at heart? They are usually biased. Governments are involved with the wrong people”.

Numerous Interviewees highlighted that governments often need to pay greater attention to, and adherence towards, humanitarian principles. Therefore, there should be discernible role for the Cluster Systems and participating international organisations to provide supportive and complementary activities to cover any gaps in existing governmental capacity and provision.

Overall, these specific findings support the neo-institutional perspective articulated in the conceptual framework. Namely, that, while institutions matter, it is crucial that they uphold certain values and principles based on why the institution was established and what the goals are intended to achieve. In addition, there can be unintended consequences that arise from these values and principles, which can weaken respective governmental leadership and make it more difficult for the international community to leave any given response.

5.4 FORMAL RULES

Main Findings		
9.	Standards and rules need to be more concise and clearer.	24% of Interviewees.
10.	Formal rules have been defined from and refined by a prevailing western view.	70% of Interviewees.
11.	Dominance of western views and influences was also a reflection of politics.	21% of Interviewees.
12.	Donor countries use aid to secure and safeguard their interests.	

Table 5.3: Main Findings

Source: (Author 2024)

As discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2 historical institutionalists emphasise the legacies and roles of institutions and the rules promoted by formal organisations. It is these rules that offer transparency and accountability.

“In order to achieve this, any programme – whether it’s business as usual or the development of a new innovation – must adhere to the principles and standards that govern humanitarian action. ... These are the main ‘rules’ that have been agreed across the humanitarian sector, and that are fundamental to consider when innovating, and experimenting in any humanitarian situation”. (Humanitarian Innovation Fund, 2024, p.1).

The report goes on to discuss the importance of the shared beliefs to ensure protection principles are met.

“The Humanitarian Charter outlines a set of shared beliefs, the role of humanitarian actors, common principles, rights and duties, and commitments, and provides the ethical and legal foundations for four Protection Principles, six Core Standards and four sets of minimum standards”. (Humanitarian Innovation Fund, 2024, p.1).

They can create formal or informal rules, which may change respective behaviour; yet these rules also may incur limitations (See, Thelen & Steinmo, 1988). Within the humanitarian sector, an organisation may bring about limitations if these formal or informal rules do not incorporate international standards. One of the Main Findings in relation to the existence and importance of informal rules is that the interviews widely confirmed that the conventions of humanitarian assistance and indeed, the workings of the international cluster are based on wider commitments to international standards through traditions about the role of humanitarianism. This translates not only into informal codes of conduct but also into wider and formal interpretations of the role and functioning of international institutions. (See also Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2; Ikenberry, 1988).

As Interviewee 3 (Dataset 1) discussed there are notable conceptual underpinnings that permeate humanitarian action today: “Many of the underpinnings of our current approach to humanitarian action including the Geneva Conventions come from the tradition of post Enlightenment Europe. In its purest form humanitarianism is the work of helping those beset by catastrophe without expecting anything in return”. The findings also show that most Interviewees also regard the present international Cluster System and prevailing formal and informal rules as being western-based and influenced. This is further supported in Chapter

4, Section 4.1.3 where Philips, (2013) discusses the influences of the west and the rise of NGOs.

Findings from Dataset 1 illustrate how many humanitarians believe that the humanitarian system, including the Cluster System has been mainly influenced by western perspectives and remains a western-orientated Cluster System (See also Chapter 4). As Interviewee 7 (Dataset 1) stated: “Humanitarianism is or should be universal but given the disparity between well-off countries mostly in the west and resource-challenged countries mostly in the southern hemisphere, most humanitarian actions have been dominated by western countries as the donors and providers of ‘humanitarian workers’ and therefore most of the values and processes within humanitarian responses are based on or driven by western values”. Moreover, the findings indicate that western influences affect both formal and informal rules. For instance, 70% of Interviewees (Dataset 1) felt that the formal rules have been defined from and refined by a prevailing western view of humanitarianism. Strikingly, only 6% of Interviewees were opposed to this idea.

Of those expressing that a western view was predominant, 30% indicated that the institutional based and development policies had been formulated and implemented based on western values, views and principles. In addition, 21% also noted that the dominance of western views and influences was also a reflection of real politics of the Cluster System, expressing the view that this was also because a significant majority of donors were western in origin and operation. However, there has been a shift over the past 10 years which has led to some former aid recipient countries now becoming key economic and political powers in their own right. Such powers have a different approach to aid. Importantly, from a reformist perspective, 33% of Interviewees (Dataset 1) viewed that there had been some change over

time, 24% of Interviewees also suggested that the majority of institutional rules of the Cluster System were no longer explicitly seen as 'western formal rules'.

A small number of Interviewees believed that all agencies and organisations were now sufficiently diverse and were now guided resoundingly by principles and policies identified by the global community. Formal rules were more western based than global based. In some instances, Interviewees (9%) also stated that they believed the formal rules had been developed by and ultimately influenced by (more locally determined) politics (See also Chapter 4, Section 4.1.6 that highlights that politics have often shaped humanitarian thinking. As Interviewee 12 (Dataset 1) claimed; "The West determines the how, the when, the what – everything based on their standards. It is important to underline that there are probably more standards that are commonly expected and understood to be the basic tenets of a humanitarian response". Nevertheless, the prevailing view was that the existence of formal and informal rules that are strongly associated with western values and approaches could be akin to a double-edged sword. Formal rules developed with a western mindset can hinder international responses, especially if they are out of date or biased and whilst these rules may have changed overtime and become more international, there will be unintended consequences remaining.

Numerous Interviewees expressed that there are concerns amongst aid workers that, although the standards may have been developed with a universal perspective, they are still being led by a western mindset. These challenges with perceptions of formal (and informal) rules could be countered with stronger debates and attachments to global principles and identifications by institutional actors within the cluster-based system. As Interviewee 16 (Dataset 1) highlighted: "This question rapidly reaches the much broader debates about whether 'universal values' are really 'universal' or not, critical theory versus problem-solving

theory, etc. ... although it could be argued that a western view of humanitarianism has been predominant”. (See also Chapter 2, Section 2.1 and discussion on where rules in an institution may change behaviour). Yet, these may also introduce limitations, which can constrain levels of organisations success. Over the years, mandates, principles, codes of conduct have been developed to keep aid agencies to account. Formal rules, formed fifty years ago, may not produce the results expected in today’s climate.

As part of the focus on meeting formal rules, it is often the case that recipient states may call formally for or declare for international support due to disasters going beyond the national capacity and ability to cope and/or successfully respond. As part of formal rules, it is often expected and required that the international community must work closely with governments. International communities need to support governments to build and empower capacities; and it is often the case that UN agencies and NGOs develop strategies that require cooperation and even funding from cooperating governments. In Chapter 4, Section 4.3 the research also shows how rules have constraints, and many have huge consequences related to path dependencies (See also Loman, Pop, & Reuben, (2011)). The findings reveal that many Interviewees viewed that it was often the case that despite commitments to building national and local capacity, there was often a contradictory reluctance on the part of UN agencies and NGOs to allow governments to take control of the response and lead the emergency. More specifically, Interviewee 23 (Dataset 2) denoted that: “Donors seem unwilling to relinquish their power and control over to them”. Interviewee 13 (Dataset 2) also confirmed that: “We see governments staying in countries to fund their disasters long term as they have created International dependency for governments to have a foot hold in the country”. This will influence capacity building and donors can be reluctant to exit from countries.

Donors also implement strategies to ensure this is the case, such as using funding programmes and governmental access to NGOs to keep control. Hough, Fenton & Marji, (2023) (See also Chapter 2, Section 2.11) explain how change is worrisome for donors and organisations and that change requires lengthy negotiation and strong leadership. Over the years, funding has become more political, with western donors in particular, funding disaster response and activity in countries that they have particular political interest in and to further their own interests (See Barnett and Weiss (2008)) as a way to target their own interests. Therefore, for donors to give funding directly, this will disempower donor states that use funding for their own interests. Whilst this may be the best use of funding, it is not something that could be achieved in the current status quo. Interviewee 23 (Dataset 2), stated that, “Donors won’t give funds direct to countries for geopolitical reasons. Donor countries use aid to secure and safeguard their interests in these countries and it is not in their interest if such a tool, like aid is removed”.

These findings corroborate the view that new institutionalism can help us to understand formal rules especially related to budgets. Chapter 4, Section 4.3.1 discusses how rules have intended and unintended consequences regarding financial regulations relating to doors. Expats have worked in these systems now for many years and therefore they understand how to receive funding and how to manipulate western based formal rules. However, the findings also reveal how one of the notable consequences for organisations is that those organisations with less experienced staff will encounter more problems. As Interviewee 1 (Dataset 1) observed: “Small organisations versus big organisations will have more problems getting funds and therefore getting aid workers”. Therefore, we often see the same large NGOs and UN agencies receiving the bulk of funding (See also Chapter 3, Section 3.4.1).

It is in these same respective organisations that they have come to understand the interests of donors and therefore they work within these interests to provide aid to the countries they have been funded to support. With larger organisations being able to secure better funding opportunities, they will also require stronger commitments to western-style institutional structures and conventions. Hall and Taylor (1996) - in Chapter 3, Section 3.4.1 - confirm this in the research showing that rival groups strive for the scarce resources, creating very strong invested institutions. This, in turn, blocks more 'neutral' organisations from expanding and influencing the system as they are less willing or able to understand the politics behind funds. In addition, because they are less funded, the salaries and packages that they offer expats remains limited, resulting in them being unable to hire the more experienced professionals.

Such attributes and requirements have also meant that, with more funding, comes higher HQ staffing levels, bringing about complicated bureaucratic systems and excessive senior salaries (See also Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1). This is due to the need to have more staff in HQ positions working closely with the governments to ensure funding is also being used to meet the political needs of the donor.

"Most international humanitarian organisations also develop cultures which tend to favour a particular kind of person who shares a dominant political opinion and lifestyle that is the organisational norm. The pathway to senior humanitarian positions is almost universally restricted by the entry bar of a master's degree from a Western university, which does not come cheap. In this way, international humanitarian organisations also operate like a clan or clique and seem to use a system of patronage for people in their wider social group". (Mollet & Donkin, 2021, p.1).

Regular meetings with western governments take place as they discuss the programs and funding amongst other issues. "Those in HQ making decisions; All I have experienced is people

who manage politics rather than humanitarian needs. Or they are more focused on keeping their jobs rather than actually doing the work”. (Interviewee 38, Dataset 1). This re-enforces the frustrations of those working in the field, experiencing relationships with HQ, being irrelevant to the work on the field, as they have other agendas and motives. With limitations from donors, on reporting, documentation and so forth, it is unclear how effective responses are, as their goals are geopolitical rather than saving lives and reducing suffering.

5.5 INFORMAL RULES

Main Findings		
13.	Flexibility: it's the unwritten value of every aid agency.	Interviewees 16, Dataset 1.
14.	Staff salaries and benefits require reform.	Chapter 3

Table 5.4: Main Findings

Source: (Author 2024)

Informal rules are often explained through a sociological new institutionalism perspective (See discussion in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2), with key discernible characteristics, such as social practices and norms, cultural norms, shared values and attitudes and power. These are complimentary to historical institutionalism. They can have positive influences as a way to counter any unintended consequences of formal rules. NGOs may use them to bend the rules, which can have a positive or negative impact. It is clear that, within humanitarian responses there are many informal rules that have ensured the system has adapted and survived the changes over the past 70 years. “Flexibility: it’s the unwritten value of every aid agency...” (Interviewee 16, Dataset 1).

One of the major areas for reform seen within this thesis are the staff salaries and benefits that are received whilst working within the humanitarian field.

“A very significant part of international aid goes into expatriate salaries. These can be big. They largely stay in Western bank accounts and are reinvested in countries thousands of miles away from the wars and disasters against which the money is budgeted and reported in agency accounts”. (Mollet & Donkin, 2021, p.1).

Informal rules, leading to potentially unintended consequences, reflect attitudes towards the reform of salaries and benefits for NGOs and UN staff. “The salary of humanitarian aid workers is the subject of a lot of debate”. (Interviewee 3, Dataset 1). Another Interviewee strongly highlighted the need for standards within the salary and benefit systems. “The aim should be a global standard, with additional ‘hardship’ and/or ‘per diem’ for those travelling outside of their home country for work”. (Interviewee 8, Dataset 1). Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2 also spotlighted how a critical indicator of NGO and UN reform pertains to salaries and benefits and Chapter 2, Section 2.11 also discussed concerns in differences between expats and local staff.

5.6 NORMS AND VALUES

Main Findings		
15.	Biase against the local expertise. Recruitment of people outside the country rather than local staff.	Interviewees 38, Dataset 1.

Table 5.5: Main Findings

Source: (Author 2024)

In humanitarian contexts, western dominance has affected response plans, agendas, policies and funding (Wright, (2012)). There has been discernible institutional discrimination and organisations have often been unable to see the skills and contributions offered by national staff (See Chapter 3, Section 3.2.3). Interviewee 38 (Dataset 1) also stated that within

humanitarians there should be, “No bias when working. This should be the people in the field. And they are biased against the local expertise. They tend to want to recruit people outside the country rather than local staff and I don’t know why”.

“Focusing on fostering more equity in the humanitarian sector starts with the understanding that manifestations of oppression, such as racism, are rooted in power hierarchies that often do not operate alone. They intersect with gender, religion, socio-economic status, geography, sexual orientation and numerous other social markers, creating layers of oppression that are inextricably intertwined. (Rejali, 2020, p.1).

From the interviews that discussed western influences in the humanitarian field, it is clear that there is an understanding amongst aid workers that this influence is huge, with donors becoming a rising power (See Chapter 3, Section 3.2.3). Yet, this is not necessary; aid workers want a neutral platform. “The majority of INGO and UN agencies are based in the west. If you look at grand bargain 2016 humanitarian summit, there is an emphasis on ensuring localisation and promoting it”. (Interviewee 1, Dataset 1). Response plans are being defined by westerners with the attitude west is best. This attitude continues when it comes to funding, leading to discrimination on who handles funds, decision making, as well as salaries and packages. “Providing a ‘trusted link’ with foreign donors: it is somewhat unfortunate, but often donors (whether institutional or private) will prefer to deal with an international staff member, when it comes to handling funds”. (Interviewee 16). Practice may be changing, but it is too slow and too little.

Main Findings		
16.	Different compensations and treatment, between expats and nationals.	Interviewee 12, Dataset 1.

Table 5.6: Main Findings

Source: (Author 2024)

Lastly, cultural norms; there is a belief that national staff cannot do the same role as expats. Where there are gaps, this is where expats should be building capacity (See Chapter 3, Section 3.2.4). In addition, expats should also be looking to ensure those they serve also experience the principles of saving lives and doing no harm. Furthermore, prevailing characteristics were mentioned by all Interviewees interviewed, such as humility, kindness, wisdom, compassion, empathy, diversity, tolerance, pragmatism, integrity, justice, respect, transparency, accountability, courage, generosity, patience and fairness. Sadly, it is all too often that expats come with the white man saviour mentality.

“They should have empathy with the people they serve and understand that they will be able to fend for themselves and stand on their own feet if the conditions are right. We have seen humanitarian workers treat locals like dirt, loath over their predicament and come with the “I-know-all-attitude” and do not take the time to learn from the locals and understand how best to serve them”. (Interviewee 12, Dataset 1).

Project budgets clearly show the difference between expats and nationals (as discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.4). National staff are often not given the same exposure as expats within the Cluster System and as a result will always be at a disadvantage. A lack of exposure keeps the power sitting with expats. “Although, they may be expected to be equal, or may have even higher competencies, national workers are usually treated to a much lower compensation just because they are nationals”. (Interviewee 12, Dataset 1).

Main Findings		
17.	A fair salary that is equal between men and women for the same job	Interviewee 23, Dataset 1.
18.	Better standardisation of pay levels	Interviewee 25, Dataset 1.
19.	Discrimination, male dominance and undiscovered SEA cases.	Chapter 3, Section 3.2.5.

Table 5.7: Main Findings

Source: (Author 2024)

Another commonly discussed cross cutting issue is gender equality as is clearly discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.5. This cuts across both a response and ensuring women are reached in different cultural settings, as well employment. Responses need to ensure that they promote equal realisation of dignity and human rights, with the elimination of poverty and injustice for all genders and ages.

A broadened understanding of the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence in humanitarian action (NIIHA) can guide humanitarians in the drive for dignity in the treatment of all people, ‘those whom we serve and those who serve with us’. (Rejali, 2020, p.1).

One of the issues raised in the research was how women and men were not getting the same salaries, both national and international staff. One Interviewee expressed a desire for “A fair salary that is equal between men and women for the same job”. (Interviewee 23, Dataset 1). Interviewee 25 (Dataset 1) further commented: “I think there could be better standardisation of pay levels (based on position, country and conditions) to reduce inequalities in pay between say UN organisations and small NGOs”. Sadly, this goes deeper and we see discrimination, male dominance and an undiscovered number of SEA cases that often go unreported (See Chapter 2, Section 2.5). Kapila, (2021) also reported on the poor recruitment of staff which lead to systems which did not protect victims of sexual abuse. Many expats

have been involved in reported accounts of sexual abuse exploiting their positions, and this compounds reluctance to advocate reform when they currently experience minimal (if any) consequences for their actions.

5.7 PATH DEPENDENCIES

Main Findings		
20.	International dependency created.	50% of Interviewees.
21.	Insufficient data available to show if an emergency response in any given country have been effective.	Interviewee 23, Dataset 2.
22.	Funding was political and strategic.	13% of Interviewees.
23.	Competition within the sectors for funding.	Interviewee 30, Dataset 1.
24.	The level of funding put in is unsustainable for a government to take over.	Interviewee 1 & 9, Dataset 2.

Table 5.8: Main Findings

Source: (Author 2024)

Historical institutionalism highlights institutions creating path dependencies, and as such historical decisions matter (See Banton, 2021). Often there can be resistance to change due to decisions made in the past and therefore change may be less frequent than expected. Often those making decisions will learn from historical decision making or be very cautious, failing to learn from experience (See Chapter 3, Section 3.3). Seemingly insignificant choices can have tremendous consequences to the work, which ultimately impacts the emergency response. When asked how to measure the impact of humanitarian work, 50% of Interviewees believed there should be a reduction in death rates. 46% believed countries should be able to show improvements in their capacity. 38% believed there should be the existence of sustainable programs. And 25% felt that the international services/ presence should be reduced.

When discussing more deeply into the impact of a humanitarian response, 8% felt there had been no impact made, with 25% stating that no capacity had been developed. Similarly,

Interviewee 5 (Dataset 2) commented that: “We develop our capacity in our organisations rather than in the communities”. A further 50% felt that they had created an international dependency. This in turn can have the opposite impact regarding capacity building.

Interviewee 23 (Dataset 2), went on to discuss how, “It is extremely difficult to measure the impact of emergency responses by the very nature of what an emergency project is”. Yet, it is very clear for a response to be effective, there is a need to reduce mortality and suffering, and to build local and national capacities that are sustainable. There remains a consensus amongst Interviewees, sharing a common view that there is insufficient data available to show whether an emergency response in any given country have been effective.

The findings from the interviews also reveal that 13% felt that funding was actually political and strategic, with donors wanting positions in specific countries for their own politic gain.

*“The traditional pattern of humanitarian funding places UN agencies in competition with each other, sometimes at the expense of the efficiency of the humanitarian system as a whole”.
(Independent Commission for Aid Impact, 2018, p.1).*

Interviewee 14 (Dataset 2) stated, “There is an interest from the donor. If that wasn’t there, we would just leave the country, regardless of capacity or sustainability”. An additional comment was made by Interviewee 13 (Dataset 2) that: “Donors want a foot hold in countries”. Aid workers often feel that donors have an ulterior motive when providing funding. Interviewee 30 (Dataset 1) also highlighted that there was “competition within the (health) sector” for funding and larger NGOs and/or UN agencies often received funding more easily than the local NGOs.

With a clear focus on receiving funding, organisations can end up making decisions based on their propensity to receive large funds rather than on the needs of those they were intending

to serve (See also Loman, Pop & Reuben, (2011)). This leads to these decisions being difficult to change as organisations can be so dependent and focused on the funding. Without funding organisations would cease to exist. However, it is also crucial that organisations have the capacity to manage large funds effectively. Otherwise, they would not possess sufficient capacity to respond effectively during a humanitarian emergency.

As regards funding aspects, many Interviewees expressed the view that governments should have some control over how the funds are used. Interviewee 16 (Dataset 2) stated that “Governments should have a degree of humanitarian sovereignty. So, they can control their own funds and who raises them in their name. Otherwise, organisations can, and do, push their preferred solutions that may have negative impacts, including increased tensions, environmental harm as well as projects that cannot easily be handed over to the government. Interviewees regularly suggested that huge amounts of funds from the international governments funded activities that were sustainable for governments, setting them up for failure within their country (See also Chapter 3, Section 3.3). There needs to be a balance in how funds are managed, transferred and used for the benefits of those suffering.

“At its 92nd session (March 2000: ACC/2000/5, para. 8) CCAQ confirmed the importance it attached to the overhaul of the pay and benefits system and the underlying job classification system as a key area in human resources management reform”. UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (2000).

Another balance must be struck between ensuring governmental involvement where possible and limiting the impact of political agendas. As Interviewee 9 (Dataset 2) observed: “We have enabled governments to not provide services. We have made local governments dependent on us. We provide things governments wont”. These constraints can have huge consequences that can be difficult to reverse due to related path dependencies.

If the international community does not develop capacity, then we will not see the communities empowered with the international presence Interviewee 8 (Dataset 2) highlighted in particular that there is a “Poor man syndrome, delivering more than building capacity”. Furthermore, international staff will also become dependent and organisations in order to keep their employment and funding, which will ultimately limit reform. This is compounded by supplementary issues (See Riddell, (1995)). As Interviewee 21 (Dataset 2) stressed, ‘root causes’ were not being addressed especially in relation to sustainability issues and leading to cyclical problems. This Interviewee further extrapolated how the system perpetuates itself with a lack of reformist pressure and priorities, resulting in similar projects being conducted time and time again and involving the same expats where the primary focus was on employment retention. Most organisations are chasing the funding”. (Interviewee 21, Dataset 2). In addition, Interviewee 13 (Dataset 2), stated that “Expats want the ‘buzz feeling’, which is why we do not develop capacity. Most expats can’t get the jobs like this back home, so they are less motivated to develop capacity”. This in turns weakens the government and does a disservice.

5.8 KEY INDICATORS

The UN, NGOs and the Cluster System need to ensure that they are accountable and that their systems are fit for purpose (as discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.4.1). Where necessary they need to ensure they have systems in place to be able to action reform areas that are no longer fit for purpose. The indicators previously discussed have been researched for this thesis to understand if they are fit for purpose or if they need reforming.

5.9 PROJECT RULES

Main Findings		
25.	ICR varies from 7% to 23.5%, needs standardisation.	23% of Interviewees.
26.	ICR was an essential use of funding.	58% of Interviewees.
27.	Too many HQ staff.	50% of Interviewees.

Table 5.9: Main Findings

Source: (Author 2024)

Projects have been designed, developed and implemented by NGOs, in accordance with donor regulations, so that they can provide the necessary feedback (See Chapter 3, Section 3.4.3). All proposals contain a percentage of indirect costs for any program (See Chapter 3, Section 3.6). According to the data, Interviewees stated that the provisional indirect cost rate vary for different donors, from 7% to 23.5% and that this budget line covers the international headquarter costs, (supporting functions only) that do not lend to direct allocation, e.g. rent, utilities. 58% believed this was a good use of indirect funding.

Importantly, all Interviewees indicated that whilst indirect costs were ‘essential’, they were often unclear as to how this money was spent and that they believed it could easily be misused. Some Interviewees felt that the guidance was confusing and therefore needed standardising, with concerns that some senior staff had no idea how the funds were used, nor who made those decisions. Whilst there was a need for some unrestricted funding, Interviewees stated that it needed a high level of oversight. It was clear that a response could not be run without indirect costs according to the Interviewees.

“It is important to note the differences around the provision of overheads between UN agencies and INGOs...Practice around providing overheads to NNGOs is inconsistent and indirect costs are often not provided....Despite a lack of standardised organisational approach

or guidance, some organisations still provide overheads in practice, normally led by negotiation and advocacy at country level”. (Development Initiatives, 2022, p.1).

Interviewee 9 (Dataset 2) stated, “100% funding to help beneficiaries is not realistic”. The ICR rate is needed for service delivery and can also to meet the demands of donors, which can be high. And a response cannot be run without any ICR costs. What comes into question is what constitutes an appropriate amount and what level of accountability should be held with the use of the funds. Some Interviewees felt that those working in HQ needed to be good at their jobs, and that the jobs needed to be essential to justify the costs (See also Chapter 3, Section 3.3). As Interviewee 25 (Dataset 2) commented: “There needs to be effective people at HQ who can do the jobs to improve the work”.

There were concerns that HQ was only interested in how much money the field were bringing in. As Interviewee 3 (Dataset 2) commented: “Senior Management Meetings (SMT) meetings only discuss how much new revenue have we brought in. Not how many people have we reached, or what are the needs. We need to refocus the work to the beneficiaries”. There were also concerns that the ICR percentage was too high, with 23.5% specifically quoted on numerous occasions by Interviewees, questioning why the percentages could vary so much between donors. There were also concerns that demands of donors increased the costs unnecessarily. Some concerns regarding misuse of funding were also prevalent. According to Interviewee 9 (Dataset 2). “It goes to pay huge salaries to CEO”. Interviewee 18 Dataset 2) also stressed that: “The question is where we have seen HQ take disproportionate amounts of funds, and jobs are placed in HQ”. It is clear that, whilst aid workers believe that there is a need for ICR funding, it needs to be used appropriately and monitored. And in some cases, humanitarian aid workers have seen NGOs abuse the funding. According to Interviewee 7 (Dataset 2), “some NGOs may use that to buy a new house”.

There were also some constructive suggestions that HQ offices could be relocated to cheaper areas, nearer to the responses and projects, such as in Asia or Africa. Such rules, whether formal or informal, influence how reform occurs. And if the benefits to those in power outweigh the cost of reform, it will become more difficult to reform a system. Only when there is clear guidance that can be expected to be adhered to, with agencies being held to account, will we be able to see the reforms that are necessary.

When Interviewees were questioned on ICR rates and HQ staffing levels, 50% believed there were too many people sitting in HQ with 21% unclear as to how many people are in HQ offices. In addition, 58% felt you could not justify the HQ staffing levels. For those who felt the HQ presence was justified, most explanations largely focused on recognition of the needs for donors. Other cited concerns noted that there were too many staff based in the HQ and comparatively there were not enough personnel operating in the field. As Interviewee 3 (Dataset 2) noted: "There should be fewer functions sitting at HQ". There were also concerns that the HQ staff were not skilled sufficiently for the jobs given, even those some positions discussed represented very important roles.

The findings also suggested that increased monitoring of HQ activities should take place. As Interviewee 18 (Dataset 2) highlighted: "There is a need to define the role and responsibility of officers". The data from the interviews suggests there may be insufficient enough emphasis on technical staff and a corresponding too large focus on generalists. As Interviewee 29 (data set 2) commented: "They create jobs for people who want to leave the field, move to the region and then to HQ. The more VPs you have the more money you get, hence why it is top heavy". Furthermore, as Interviewee 20 (data set 2) observes: "The HQ just expands and it is not accountable to anyone to reduce its numbers".

One example offered by an aid worker, when asking for HQ support, is illustrative. “In Iraq, they are doing a payroll system, the country had to pay for it. They asked for IT support, and they got an email, saying they were happy to support but at a cost of \$81k. This keeps happening. Mandatory training provision is also chargeable to host countries. So, who precisely decides when they should be mandatory and why are those trained coming from HQ countries? There were 32 expats in the mission when they said they needed this training”. (Interviewee 13, Dataset 2). Interviewees also felt there were often too many offices, leading to significant wastage, and that hubs were not necessary. 29% of those interviewed stated that their respective organisation maintained 1 HQ office; with 63% of those interviewed commented that their organisation had more than 2 offices and 4% had over 19 HQ offices.

ICR rates do matter. Whilst they may pay for the rentals on buildings in HQ, they also support strong partnerships with donors and other stakeholders. It can also reduce staff turnover, whilst projects are waiting for the next grant to come in. This helps to retain staff that have been invested in through training. And looking towards those settings that are politically charged, it can help to support aid to being more neutral and impartial. Again, if the ICR funding is used appropriately it may also help to invest in sustainability as it invests in staff in learning and capacity strengthening. What is crucial is that the funding has clear guidance on the usage, to ensure accountability of such funds. It seemed there was very little research around ICR funding with humanitarian agencies and the use of such funding.

5.10 MONITORING EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEAL)

Main Findings		
28.	Results were recorded	88% of Interviewees.
29.	Results were analysed	75% of Interviewees.
30.	Results were published	54% of Interviewees.
31.	Concerns on accuracy of the data.	Interviewee 10 & 7, Dataset 2.

Table 5.10: Main Findings

Source: (Author 2024)

Humanitarian organisations should be able to, and often do collect vast amounts of data. There is growing pressures to ensure that such data collection and retention is standardised, relevant, accurate and access to data is timely and appropriate.

“Monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) are part of everyday programme management and are critical to the success of most programs, projects, initiatives, interventions and even organisations as a whole”. (Humanitarian Global, 2024, p.1).

Data collection should preferably involve locals, and designed to gather information on trends and also to predict responses moving forward. Chapter 2, Section 2.5 discusses how the humanitarian community is willing to share data. However, since data collection was often not standardised, this can make it difficult to detect and understand trends or impacts (See the State of Open Humanitarian Data, 2023). Interviewees were asked about their MEAL systems and how data was collected in country. The data collected reveals that respective knowledge of this topic was extremely limited, which in some cases is to be expected. They could quote some of the data collected, and systems used, but most viewed that the data was not accessible or used appropriately. “A lot pay lip service to data analyses. Most collect data but don’t use the data. Data is so you get more money in the future. You have to prove to the donor you are good value for money. So, you collect data knowing the more people you reach

the more likely you will have more money. The data is usually superficial. Numbers. Not analyses of whether you are effective or not". As Interviewee 10 (Dataset 2) said, they were "Not sure where some of the numbers come from. Not sure if the figures were accurate". This was supported with reference to various reports from USAID and IRC in 2019, where there are serious concerns about the accuracy of data (See Chapter 2, Section 2.5). Furthermore, Interviewee 7 (Dataset 2) highlighted: "Data is made up in some NGOs".

Interviewees were also asked about how data is validated, with 63% stating that they did not know. Indeed, 13% of Interviewees stated that data was neither validated and/or analysed. Whilst there may be a considerable number of reports completed each year that do provide data to donors, many Interviewees were also unclear of what was done with the work. It was clear that the data was rarely used to guide responses, and/or to improve how effective organisations were working. This is supported by Holzgrefe & Keohane (2003) and is discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.10. When discussing organisations success during a response, many Interviewees considered that irrespective of whether the information was collected, it often seemed to be rarely used to evidence rationales for reform. 88% believed results were recorded. 75% believed they were duly analysed and 54% stated they were published. There were many methods/formats used to record responses, such as tracking sheets, reports, evaluations and surveys. Whilst there may be vast amounts of data available, many Interviewees also supported the view that data collection and presentations needed to be standardised across all agencies so that data can be used more effectively.

5.11 HUMAN RESOURCES

Main Findings		
32.	Staff should have technical skills.	100% of Interviewees.
33.	Technical skills should be greater than local to build local capacity.	55% of Interviewees.
34.	Standards should be harmonised.	61% of Interviewees.
35.	Expats are needed for an emergency.	71% of Interviewees.
36.	Expats brought in training and capacity building.	88% of Interviewees.

Table 5.11: Main Findings

Source: (Author 2024)

International organisations need to have employment policies and rules in place to prevent corruption and nepotism. Recruitment has a major impact on any organisation. A report, commissioned by the UN in 2005, (See Chapter 2, Section 2.4) argued that recruitment was failing to provide high quality staff. It was also argued that staff should be driving the humanitarian agenda, such as capacity building. However, the report also asserted that this needs strengthening (See Chapter 2, Section 2.4). If this is not undertaken, expats will continue to have significant presence during the onset of emergencies and further reform will be limited. In addition, Korff et al (2015) discusses how high employee turnover in aid provision constitutes a major challenge. This in turn impacts training and the ability to recruit skilled workers. It increases the time human resources spend recruiting for an emergency, affecting a timely response, as they work to onboard new employees. In Dataset 1, all Interviewees stated that humanitarian workers should possess appropriate technical skills, especially for those working in a specific sector. Management, leadership and communication skills were also commonly listed as highly desirable. Other required skills for working at these

organisations include compliance and project management, and collaborative skills working with governments and donors.

55% (Dataset 1) of Interviewees also felt that international staff should have technical skills, which are more advanced compared to local staff so that they can lead the building up of a respective country's capacity (See Chapter 2, Section 2.10; also See Wood & Sullivan, 2015). Yet Interviewees were also concerned that this was failing to happen. In Dataset 2, 88% of Interviewees stated that they thought international staff brought training and capacity building. 75% of Interviewees indicated that technical skills were deemed as the most important skill; with 38% of Interviewees denoting relevant experience as being important and 29% believing capacity building as being important. Other skills were not rated as highly.

"In recent years, developing national capacity and building effective partnerships with national and local actors have moved up the humanitarian policy agenda. Yet the rhetoric around sustainability and local ownership rarely reflects operational practice on the ground, making it difficult to identify not only the obstacles to such initiatives, but also the factors that enable their progress". (Martin, 2010, p.1).

70% of Interviewees (Dataset 1) felt that the competencies have been defined largely from a western perspective; confirming wider observations (See Chapter 3, Section 3.2.3). However, 33% of Interviewees stated that these had altered over time. To some extent, some would argue that these competencies are no longer regarded as western. 18% felt that they had been defined by politics. The remaining Interviewees stipulated that all respective agencies and organisations were diverse; and they were guided by principles and policies identified by the global community. They also felt it was difficult to argue that these had been defined solely by westerners, but that they are universal.

On one hand, Interviewees felt that international and national aid workers should have the same competencies. However, at the same time there were 55% of Interviewees (Dataset 1) who stated that if international staff did not possess the same/similar competencies, then the development of key competencies should be achieved that would also eventually enhance a country's capacity (See Chapter 3, Section 3.2.3). People were concerned that this was not being pursued effectively. 61% (Dataset 1) of Interviewees expressed that there should be a global standard to promote harmonisation. However, some concerns regarding effectiveness were expressed; for example, in some countries they did not have the qualified staff and/or staff with direct experience of handling an emergency. 18% of Interviewees (Dataset 1) felt that national staff will naturally have other skills as they will know and understand the context. 6% of Interviewees (Dataset 1) stated that international staff should indeed have appropriate, additional skills in organisations leadership. Data was also collected mapping which competencies that an international aid worker should have, especially when compared to a national worker. Of those asked, 42% stated they should have technical competencies, 21% should have leadership and management skills, with 15% believing they should have capacity building skills, and project cycle management. Other skills discussed were diplomatic skills.

In addition, a high employee turnover can also lead to a decrease in employee morale. 71% of Interviewees believed that expats are needed for an emergency. Yet there was also a strong financial imperative for using expats since, as Interviewee 1 (Dataset 2) commented: "money comes from rich countries so donors will not contribute money if their people are not present". Also, it is worth noting, (taken from Interviewee 5, (Dataset 2)) as to why expats are required; namely: "To have a level of responsibility to alleviate national staff and to take on the blame rather than national staff. Expats after all can leave the country". One further comment of note is that due to the complexities of the UN and the respective Cluster Systems,

it was regularly argued in the interviews that expats are required since locals would not understand how to use the system. Furthermore, it was observed that expats often had not trained up locals; thereby highlighting how the system had a major unintended consequences (See Chapter 2, Section 2.9). According to Interviewee 15 (Dataset 2), "Entire aid systems are expansive and bureaucratic... Systems have been set up for years and have become ever more complex which makes them too difficult for nationals to navigate". Similarly, Steets et al (2010) also showed that there needed to be significant financial investment to develop and enhance the effectiveness of current Cluster System.

When discussing national staff, in interview 2, 100% of Interviewees stated that nationals are needed in an emergency. This is because they know the context, language and they have the trust of communities. (See Chapter 3, Section 3.4). In addition, they can liaise with government in a different way to an expat. Lastly, they are recognised as being the first responders and will stay after and emergency. They are the majority of the workforce.

When asked in their experience of emergencies, if the ratio between expats and national staff is appropriate, 85% said yes and 33% said no. Some Interviewees felt that the expats still have the mindset that national staff need them. "We think nationals don't know how to do things themselves and yet they have been doing their jobs for 20 years". Interview 1, Dataset 2. They went on to say that it wasn't even the number of expats but the high turnover that was a concern. "This doesn't help for trust, relationships, structures, country development". Interview 1, Dataset 2. There were concerns that processes were used because of history, rather than relevance. (See Chapter 3, Section 3.4).

"People have always brought in expats so it does seem to be the default. Sometimes expats are brought in even if there is capacity in country". Interviewee 9, Dataset 2. This was supported by Interviewee 15, who went on to say, that, "There seems to be a lack of

momentum to nationalise positions”. With some concerns of it being difficult to hire nationals because they are affected by the emergency, taking it longer to recruit. Again, each situation is different, with some governments requesting permits for work, or with donor requirements. Or, in conflict, locals have sometimes fled. Regardless, it was clear that too many expats can flood the system, and can raise challenges for government in terms of coordination and handling the impact of so many expats.

When asked to consider what extra skills do expats offer when compared to national staff, then 54% (of Dataset 2 Interviewees) thought they brought appropriate knowledge through qualifications. This compares to 83% (Dataset 2) that believed they brought and offered technical speciality; and 79% (of Dataset 2 Interviewees) that viewed that they contributed through relevant experience.

When asked what extra skills nationals offer when compared to expats, 100% (of Dataset 2 Interviewees) stated they offered cultural understanding, with 54% stating they contributed direct experience. 50% (of Dataset 2 Interviewees) suggested that they offered risk management skills. In contrast, 33% (of Dataset 2 Interviewees) brought technical speciality and 16% believed they brought appropriate knowledge through qualifications; while 71% believed that cultural understanding was most important.

There was also strong evidence across Dataset 2 commentaries that it was viewed that both nationals and expats are required to be part of an effective response to any emergency. What is important, however, is the ratio of expats to nationals, the length of time expats are present, and that the work should be as a team without one having power over the other. It is also crucial that the recruitment process is completed effectively ensuring that the right checks have taken place before expats are deployed.

5.12 FUNDING

Main Findings		
37.	Most funding comes from international donors.	Chapter 2, Section 2.6.
38.	UN should hold the funds.	25% of Interviewees.
39.	In country government should hold the funding.	17% of Interviewees.

Table 5.12: Main Findings

Source: (Author 2024)

Most funding comes from international governments (See Chapter 2, Section 2.6), with 70-80% of donations coming from donors with instructions about where to distribute. As regards the findings from the interviews then several Main Findings can be drawn. When asked who should hold the funds for a humanitarian response, most Interviewees deemed this too complex an issue to answer clearly. 25% of Interviewees felt the UN should, with 17% of Interviewees believed that the respective in-country (host) government should, hold the funds (if it was already in place and functional). Nevertheless, 13% of Interviewees viewed that INGOs would be more effective in holding these funds under the same circumstances. As Interviewee 16 (Dataset 2) stated: “You do need to have staff who can handle the huge amounts of money coming in so as to prevent fraud There were very mixed opinions on who should hold the funds. Indeed, some suggested that - in a perfect world - it should be the government, while others suggested that it should be operated through joint partnerships. Others thought it would be good to sit with OCHA if they had capacity, although most felt that currently it did not have the respective capacity. However, in some settings funds are pooled and are managed by OCHA to support humanitarian responses. They do allow governments and private donors to pool contributions to deliver lifesaving assistance to those in need.

“There has been a long history of efforts to reform the system – including most recently a ‘Grand Bargain’ of reforms to humanitarian practice agreed at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 (Independent Commission for Aid Impact, 2018, p.1).

Overall, the respective findings demonstrate that there is a strong view on the need to continue to reform the funding system. It also supports the prior evidencing from the literature review that this has become increasingly popular since the Global World Summit 2016 (See Chapter 2, Section 2.4). The interview findings do however suggest continuing and often prevailing concerns in relation to the funding of humanitarian response.

There were concerns in the current climate that it may be too problematic for many governments to hold and administer respective funds (See also Chapter 2, Section 2.6; and Kanck, (2017)). The distribution of funding is subject to politicisation by donors and the granting of aid to the wrong party can, in turn, direct resources to adversarial groups, especially in conflict areas. Another concern was that as money passes through organisations, so much is redirected to internal organisational uses, when it could have been used directly to support beneficiaries. What was clear from the interviews was that vast majority of Interviewees felt that there needed to be greater accountability to donors and taxpayers, with a clear mandate and potentially effective oversight arrangements, such as the usage of appropriate advisory committees. Funding arrangements need to be more extensively evaluated to see how the funding is being spent so that organisations are held to account.

5.13 SALARIES

Main Findings		
40.	Expats should be paid the same as in their home country.	67% of Interviewees.
41.	Salary should cover all outgoing costs.	33% of Interviewees.
42.	Salaries and packages should be agreed by a global standard.	21% of Interviewees.
43.	Job salary should be based on position and not whether Interviewee is an expat or national.	55% of Interviewees.
44.	Salaries were too high for expats.	21% of Interviewees.

Table 5.13: Main Findings

Source: (Author 2024)

Humanitarians are no longer volunteers and if the system was run by volunteers, it would very quickly crumble. Like everyone else, they have bills to pay, families to support and eventually retirements to plan for. Managing multi-million-dollar aid arrangements, especially in conflict settings, requires an extraordinary array of technical skills (See Chapter 2, Section 2.11). Interviewees were asked how much they felt international aid workers should be paid. 67% of Interviewees (Dataset 1) viewed that they should be paid the same as their home country as a base salary so that it would be enough to live off. In addition, 33% of Interviewees (Dataset 1) felt that the money should cover costs to maintain their property at home; with a further 30% stating that it should also cover enough for a pension and savings. 36% of Interviewees (Dataset 1) stated they needed benefits to cover housing in the respective country they were deployed to. Indeed, 9% of Interviewees (Dataset 1) mentioned the need for additional funding to cover for hardship and specific deployment to dangerous areas. 9% of Interviewees at this point did want to mention that these packages should not be obscenely high, and associated commentaries in the interviews also considered these packages were already

prevalent, especially in relation to UN packages and with offerings from US NGO companies.

As Interviewee 16 (Dataset 1), stated;

“The political economist in me would say that salary scales should be defined by the labour market. i.e.: aid workers should be paid the amount needed to be able to recruit the right number of people, with the right skillsets, at the right time. For international staff, factors affecting the labour market rate will include:

- *Scarcity: there is generally a shortage of people with the required skillsets, especially for more senior positions.*
- *Living conditions: especially for insecure or unaccompanied postings, there is even more of a shortage of staff, and so salaries need to increase to attract people. Even in more settled environments, the very nature of being an international position brings additional costs (flights, accommodation, etc). that need to be covered.*
- *Risk and uncertainty: aid workers (both national and international) tend to work on relatively short-term contracts.*
- *Similarly, it is hard for an individual to plan to spend their entire career in the aid sector (due to uncertainty around health issues, stress, family situation, employment opportunities, etc) and so they need to allow for the fact they may need to shift to a different sector in future. Both these factors drive up salary rates (compared to a sector which offers long-term employment with a steady career path).*
- *Competition within the sector: as some agencies (e.g.: UN and some big NGOs) have high (or steadily increasing) salary scales, this puts pressure on other agencies to do the same, if they wish to be able to continue to recruit sufficient staff. Competition with other sectors: international positions in non-humanitarian sectors (e.g.: business) tend to pay very well, and so the humanitarian sector needs to compete with that, to some*

extent. Intrinsic motivation: on the flip side, humanitarian workers tend to be motivated not only by financial reward, but a desire to help other people, and this means they are willing to work for less money (and even 'volunteer' in some cases).

- *Duration of roles: for relatively short-term roles, it may still be possible to find volunteers. However, the longer people are expected to commit for (or the more experience they are required to have), the less realistic it is to expect them to volunteer, and hence the more they need to receive a reasonable salary”.*

Other points raised were that the salaries and packages should be bound by a global standard (21% of Interviewees in Dataset 1). And this is also supported by respective literature:

“The Committee recalled that in a needs analysis, the organisations had referred to the need for a competitive pay system which would ensure that: (a) organisations could attract and retain high quality staff; (b) they could achieve greater flexibility in rewarding job assignments; (c) teams of staff could be formed and dismantled quickly; (d) staff would be motivated by financial rewards which recognised their performance and merit, i.e. the system should take greater account of individual performance, skills and competencies and reduce the weight given to seniority; and (e) the best performing staff would have the prospect of growth and career development.” (UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, 2000).

The findings from the interviews that there also needed to better structuring of support for staff. As Interviewee 14 (Dataset 1) mentioned, “There should be a band though so that salaries don’t get stupidly high like they do now. Now people want to work for an organisation purely for what they pay and not the quality of their response, which is wrong Although there needs to be competition, they should not be able to obtain wages as high as UN salaries. Interviewee 4 from Dataset 1, stated, “higher salaries make the market more competitive and enables the sector to attract “the best of the best”. I think this is part of the philosophy of

“professionalising aid work” as opposed to the previous “charity-based” profile of perhaps the 1960-1980s. However, once you add in incentives, benefits (housing, R&R, etc.), I think the amount of funding going to the staff is in opposition to the spirit of the assistance being provided.

Interestingly, 18% of Interviewees (in Dataset 1) also viewed that it was crucial that staff were qualified for the jobs, and that the industry should be seen as a profession. This finding also supports analysis presented in the literature review that there continues to be rather limited, openly available data on staff salaries and benefits packages within the humanitarian sector (See Chapter 2, Section 2.11).

When enquiring about national staff circumstances, 55% of Interviewees (from Dataset 1) highlighted that it depended on the position of the job and not the nationality. As Interviewee 14 (Dataset 1) nicely puts it: “I don’t think it should be dependent on the nationality of the person but the responsibility and requirements of the role. Therefore, there should not be different salaries for expats and nationals. However, there were concerns that paying them both the same would distort the economy, so there needed to be a local structure in place to prevent this and to also ensure staff poaching did not occur from local governments. According to Interviewee 6 (Dataset 1): “National aid workers should be paid based on local salary structures so as not to encourage poaching or brain-drain from other NGOs or sectors. Yet, 18% of Interviewees (Dataset 1) felt there should also be a global standard for nationals although they were also aware that this would be very complicated to implement in practice. Interviewee 22, Dataset 1 stated, “I think there should be equal pay for equal job, and that it should have some reflection of local living standard. Allowances can vary according to relocation etc., but base pay should be the same. This is not the case today. We managed to use this principle in the trainee pilot last year, where we recruited trainees nationally and

internationally Yet another Interviewee (4, from Dataset 1), stated that, “In an ideal world, they would be paid the same. But paying locals as much as internationals would distort the local economy in almost every case, and that would be an unintended negative effect. Yet, only 4% of Interviewees in Dataset 1 stated that they should be paid the same as their home country, but that there should be benefits packages for those living abroad.

When asking Interviewees from Dataset 1, to expand further on the high salaries’ aspect, then 21% of Interviewees (Dataset 1) noted that such salaries were not justifiable as they were too high, with 24% of the Interviewees (Dataset 1) focusing specifically on UN paid staff. As Interviewee 24 (Dataset 1) stated, “I don’t think there is any way to justify some of the salaries aid workers are making. For example, some of the UN workers were being paid \$30,000/month (if I recall correctly) is just outrageous However, there were a further 21% of Interviewees who felt aid workers were not paid enough. Again Interviewee 24 (Dataset 1) stated, “I think they should be paid more for multiple reasons. The real question, I think, is how much more? I think an organisation has to take into account the contextual challenges (heat, quality of food, vulnerability to illness and how serious those illnesses are) as well as the likelihood of being a victim to violence. These realities, however unfortunate, are often the everyday realities of national aid workers, whereas international aid workers are leaving a life that is likely much easier, more comfortable and provides greater opportunities for a higher quality of life in order to be an aid worker and provide assistance. International aid workers are likely sacrificing more – including time with family and friends and their most important relationships – as well as needing to travel internationally to spend time with them. They also are sacrificing their health, in many cases, and their overall emotional and psychological wellbeing.

From the interviews, there are clear statements that there are huge differences between US NGOs and UN agencies versus other aid organisations. In Dataset 1, 21% of Interviewees raised concerns that the high costs of expats came from the hardship duty stations. Some Interviewees wanted to highlight that expats physical and mental wellbeing are affected during deployments and that whilst benefits do not necessarily need to be so high, the living conditions should be sufficient. 48% of Interviewees (Dataset 1) felt the salary needed to be sufficient, with 21% noting hardship and danger pay. 9% also highlighted that to get experts then you have to pay for them. As Interviewee 1 (Dataset 1), stated, “We had a reform in 2005, as we wanted it to become more professional. More expertise etc. Therefore, we need to be ready to pay for more expertise. From Dataset 2, 92% of Interviewees cited that they had witnessed expats receiving a higher salary than nationals, with only 8% witnessing equal salaries based on skills. No one had ever seen nationals receiving a higher salary. It is clear from the research that staff expect to be paid a fair and acceptable salary as a skilled worker (especially those that are living in difficult conditions where there be insecurity or poverty). Whilst this work many now constitute a business and/or a career, it is imperative that the salaries are not excessive, but fair. Yet the findings from interviews suggest that there is a vast difference in the market, not only between nationals and expats, but also between respective agencies. What is evident is that there needs to be a reform to tackle this issue, so that the competition is reduced, that the salaries are capped and that the needs of beneficiaries are taken into account when funding expats.

5.14 BENEFIT PACKAGES

Main Findings		
45.	Benefits packages are different for expats and nationals.	100% of Interviewees.
46.	Expats witnessed to received benefits.	100% of Interviewees.
47.	Nationals witnessed to received benefits.	13% of Interviewees.
48.	Nationals took greater security risks than expats.	58% of Interviewees.

Table 5.14: Main Findings

Source: (Author 2024)

Being a humanitarian worker can be very difficult and dangerous. Sometimes staff work in very hostile environments, and they frequently have to make hard decisions in challenging situations. Due to the type of work aid workers are involved in, it is strongly recommended that all workers obtain a comprehensive insurance package, that covers evacuation and repatriation benefits. It is crucial that expats and national staff are protected as much as possible whilst doing this crucial work. However, what comes under discussion is what other benefits are deemed as necessary and what benefits are seen as excessive.

“Then there are the perks in many international humanitarian agencies which set the tone of the ‘expatocracy’ that is so widely observed by national organisations. There are expensive fees for private schooling, generous housing allowances, danger money and business class travel for many humanitarian workers and their families on long-haul flights over 9 hours (Mollet & Donkin, 2021, p.1)

The findings suggest that benefits packages were different depending on your position or whether you are a national or expat. All (100%) of Interviewees (from Dataset 2), stated that benefit package contracts are different for nationals and expats. According to Interviewee 25,

(Dataset 1), "Aid workers aren't homogeneous, belonging to different organisations that have different pay scales, salary bands and benefits associated with their roles. I believe that some aid workers are paid too much. UN organisations, for example, are renowned for their high salaries and multiple benefits while other organisations pay their staff \$100 a month. I think there could be better standardisation of pay levels (based on position, country and conditions) to reduce inequalities in pay / the pay gap within and between humanitarian organisations. Pay ratios/pay dispersion has been looked at in other sectors with some organisations committing to their top executives not earning more than 10 times their lowest paid employee (1:10 pay ratio).

Expats do often have to move country which incurs expenses, whether this be renting new accommodation, flights, and general set up costs. They also have other commitments at home such as a family, mortgages, sick family members and so forth, which they have to consider when being deployed. In addition, expats tend to work very long hours and into the weekends, where nationals are only expecting generally to work their 8 hours a day, five days a week. This is supported by Interviewee 16 (Dataset 1) who stated: "There is also the issue of 'purchasing parity': international aid workers tend to come from countries where the cost of living is high, and so their salaries need to reflect that; while national staff come from countries where the cost of living is low. Generally speaking, international staff will be paid more than national staff. That said, there can be some exceptions to this; A lack of education and a general 'brain drain' may mean that well-qualified and experienced national staff are in very short supply in some countries, and an influx of aid agencies, UN, businesses, etc. (especially post-crisis) may create a high demand for such skills. So, the labour market for well-qualified national staff may actually be quite tight Again this further supports wider contentions from key authors, such as:

“Too many people in international humanitarian bureaucracies, these perks are simple necessities for high value executives operating at a fast pace across an international context. To others, such perks are extraordinary hypocrisy and a clear misuse of funds when working to save the lives of desperate people. Fridtjof Nansen, the first ever High Commissioner for Refugees, always insisted on travelling second or third class because he could save more lives by doing so. Eglantyne Jebb, the founder of Save the Children, did the same (Mollet & Donkin, 2021, p.1)

Expats have to make decisions that are risky, as well as get used to a more difficult life than at home. As Interviewee 8 (Dataset 1) comments: “aid workers take unfathomable risks and should be appropriately compensated Therefore, Interviewees highlighted that the benefits attract people with the right skills and retained them. According to Interviewee 14 (Dataset 1): “I think salaries and the general package (hardship, per diem, holiday allowance) should be agreed across organisations for specific roles and then can be incremental within the role for years of service or qualifications This was also supported by Interviewee 6 (Dataset 1) who commented: “salaries, incentives, etc. should be provided equally to staff based on performance, not personalities or personal relationships Importantly, all (100%) of Interviewees (from Dataset 2), witnessed expats received per diem for all deployments, with only 13% witnessing per diem for national staff if they travelled.

Strikingly, all (100%) of Interviewees (from Dataset 2) witnessed expats receiving hardship if deployed to a hardship duty station with 25% of Interviewees (Dataset 2) were aware of nationals receiving hardship funding. However, 8% of the Interviewees (Dataset 2) also mentioned that hardship allocations were only in rare circumstances. According to the interviews (in Dataset 2), then hardship differential pay commonly takes for form of additional compensation ranging from 5% to 35% over basic pay when travelling to a hardship post. The

rates vary by country and will depend on donor funding and approval. The rate of pay is normally preceded by a document stating the rate and the period of the hardship. There is now also a pollution allowance, although the percentage of this is unknown.

Significantly, all (100%) of Interviewees (from Dataset 2) witnessed expats receiving danger money if deployed to a hardship duty station with 25% of Interviewees (Dataset 2) suggesting that nationals were receiving danger money (although again, only 8% of Interviewees (Dataset 2) deemed that this was only in rare circumstances. According to Interviewees in Dataset 2, this applies to all employees travelling to 'dangerous' countries on temporary assignments. It is the policy to establish danger pay while on the field on official business within countries where civil insurrection, terrorism, or war conditions threaten physical harm or imminent danger. Danger pay is additional compensation ranging from 15% to 35% over basic compensation when travelling to particular posts. Danger pay is considered an "incentive" allowance rather than a "reimbursement". And yet when questioned about who takes more risks in an emergency, 58% of Interviewees (Dataset 2) stated that they were mainly nationals and 42% of Interviewees (Dataset 2) suggested that both nationals and expats took the same risks.

National staff go to high-risk areas precisely because they can speak the language, can better liaise with local populations, and have stronger awareness of the local culture and environment. They are also the first responders. In addition to their own risk, they also put their families at risk and/or can be at risk from governmental intervention and restrictions. Nationals do have more to lose. In very insecure situations, it is often the case that an expat can be evacuated whereas nationals will have to remain. Sadly, Interviewee 9 (Dataset 2) noted, "Nationals are also seen as less valuable by organisations Discussions relating to the salaries and benefits of expats were characterised by the assertion of very strong opinions

during the interviews. As Interviewee 14 (Dataset 1), stated: “I think its sinful. Especially UN staff who often are very ineffective from what I have seen as they are mired in red tape which is their excuse for inaction. The packages they are on are plain criminal at times. When people work in extreme locations like Yemen or South Sudan then I can see why it would be justified to get a “hardship” allowance on top of their basic salary, but there is no justification for some of the crazy packages some INGO’s offer Interviewee 22 (from Dataset 1), for example, asserted: “I am against it. I have been advocating a change in this for more than 10 years but the change is slow”. Again, Interviewee 15 (Dataset 1) stated, “it would be hypocritical of me to criticise too much, the worst are of course UN staff – paid extremely highly and with huge benefits, per diems, danger money etc yet so many times without the necessary skills, often seems that quotas have to be met, that said I have met some very skilled UN staff. Definitely cannot justify the extraordinary salaries paid to high level HQ staff” And yet another, this time Interviewee 35 (Dataset 1) argued: “What is more disheartening is the clearly unnecessarily high salaries paid to CEOs of NGOs; and their cronies”.

The findings from the interviews also highlighted the specifics of the benefits, and what staff were receiving in the field. It is apparent that there are a wide range of benefits that staff were receiving, yet no-one could explain where or how these came about. As Interviewee 28 (Dataset 1) nicely commented: “There is such a wide range in salary and benefit levels across agencies – it is not benchmarked or controlled by regulatory bodies in any given country”.

All (100%) Interviewees in Dataset 2, cited that expats often had access to a car, while less than a third (29%) of Interviewees thought that national staff received access to a car. 25% of Interviewees in Dataset 2, were aware of staff receiving bonuses of anything between \$5-\$25k or they will receive an additional amount of 10- 30% of their respective salary. Only one Interviewee witnessed national staff receiving a bonus of 4-5% of their salary. 54% of

Interviewees witnessed expats receiving private school allowances of up to \$50k per year, with 8% of Interviewees also inferring that this applied to national staff based in the UN only, receiving these funds. 63% of Interviewees witnessed expats receiving a 5-10% partners allowance, with one Interviewee witnessing a second salary cash in hand for a partner. Only one Interviewee had witnessed a partner's allowance for a national staff based on their position.

All Interviewees (100%) suggested that all (100%) of expats received rest and recuperation (R&R) allowance where only 8% of Interviewees believed nationals received this type of allowance and it was also much more conditional, covering for example, travel only to the capital. Other benefits cited in the interviews as being witnessed for 'expats only' were; global health insurance, medivac insurance, pension, life insurance, post differential allowance of up to 100% of their salary. Setting up and close out funds for relocation. Per diem on arrival into a country between \$35-\$500 per day, with a \$10 - \$13k lump sum. Travel containers for shipping personal belonging, flights, security home improvements, 80% of Interviewees also highlighted the covering of educational fees if the expat was based in New York City, USA or Geneva, Switzerland, training budgets, university fees for dependents, cooks, cleaners and drivers, redundancy pay, tax exemption, recreational facilities, pool, tennis courts and gym. In addition, the findings from the interviews suggested that some expats also received market supplement fees of up to 20% of their salary to retain staff in roles where the market rate exceeds the internal pay structure. Expats also benefitted from being paid in either USD or euros (as a hard currency). Lastly, findings from the interviews also covered string awareness of specific benefit measures, such as up to 75% contributions towards first class flights (if travelling over 9 hours). As Interviewee 10 (from Dataset 1), stated: "I am against the crazy packages being offered to aid workers with certain organisations (mainly UN); yet I do acknowledge that aid workers should be compensated for putting themselves in risky situations and compromising on their 9-5 jobs Interviewee 38 (Dataset 1) further highlighted:

“They are not really doing a humanitarian response anymore. They apply for a job and try to get more money. It’s not about making a difference in people’s lives now. When it started it was more noble. They paid people due to the circumstance. Now after 30-40 years it has become a business.

When discussing with Interviewees, which benefits they felt were more important, all Interviewees brought up different ones, however, no one felt schooling and partners allowance was appropriate.

What was also highlighted many times was the need for nationals to be able to apply for the same positions and get the same salary, if not the package. Most felt nationals should have at minimum a high salary, health insurance, per diem, sick leave and maternity leave. It was also worth noting that if you are on a consultancy as an expat or national the benefit package is removed. Another important point was to mention that for those working in the field for many years, they do end up losing the benefits from their home countries such as pension or health insurance, so they felt this needed compensating for.

It seems, that if respective organisations want to pay the same salaries or benefits for both nationals and expats, then it would now be just too expensive to cover and indeed, donors would not pay for it. Yet, it does not seem fair on nationals as they in many cases do the same work. What is clear, is that presently all organisations are able to develop their own benefits packages based on the funding they have access to. Some donors will fund more benefits than others. While some benefits are clearly needed, some seem excessive based on a lack of accountability. Yet, almost none of the benefits received are exposed to general public scrutiny or even to evaluation by other aid workers. Health insurance is well documented, but others are less transparent. As Interviewee 23 (from Dataset 2) stated: "It stems from the myth that international staff are better qualified, more experienced, know better, can be trusted

and are making a 'sacrifice' from being away from home Furthermore, Interviewee 1, (Dataset 2) went on to say that: “We think nationals don’t know how to do things themselves and yet they have been doing their jobs for 20 years”.

5.15 OUTCOME

Main Findings		
49.	True reform required donors’ investment and willingness for it to be successful.	39% of Interviewees.
50.	Staff benefits and salaries needed reforming	63% of Interviewees.
51.	Funding needed reforming.	75% of Interviewees.
52.	HQ needed reforming.	79% of Interviewees.
53.	Cluster system needed strengthening	54% of Interviewees.
54.	Staff competencies needed reforming	50% of Interviewees.

Table 5.15: Outcome Findings

Source: (Author 2024)

39% of Interviewees interviewed in Dataset 1 felt that for true reform donors needed to be invested and willing to pay for it to be successful. (See Chapter 2, Section 2.11). It was very clear from the questions that donors have a greater influence than they are potentially using, even though the idea of reform is an incredibly complex initiative to start with. 61% of those from Dataset 1 felt that the UN & NGOs were overly bureaucratic, complex, & unable to ensure organisational culture that mirrors the needed changes and that these were therefore hindering any form of reform. (See Brown, (2008) in Chapter 2, Section 2.11). They went on to discuss how since reform has become a priority, they have yet to witness any change.

“Ultimately, reforms of the UN system must toe the line between being ambitious—and therefore meaningful—and being politically feasible. (Samarasinghe, 2023, p.1).

Furthermore 15% of Interviewees (from Dataset 1), stated that senior executives' excessive salaries prevented a turnover in leadership, resulting in 'stale decision making' and less effective staff. Several Interviewees asserted that many of these senior executives remain in post precisely because they wished to enjoy and fund their 'lavish lifestyles' in the field. Furthermore, some 18% of Interviewees (from Dataset 1) argued that there was the need for reform to be linked to standards and accountability. With the ongoing lack of effective capacity building, many Interviewees continued to voice their concerns that this was being used as an 'excuse' supporting the contention that the organisations when operating in many developing countries could not attract or actually employ sufficient in-house skilled workers. Therefore, according to this line of argument, there remains a clear ongoing demand for largely western ex-pat leaders to stay longer, taking more resources which could otherwise go directly to beneficiaries (See Wood & Sullivan, (2015) and Cahill, (2012) in Chapter 2, Section 2.10). Interviewees felt that the poor leadership reduced the ability to make good decisions.

A further 15% of Dataset 1, also felt that politics were preventing reform. This finding supports the contentions discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.1, Moreover, Davies and Woodward, (2014) also discuss how the UN is largely reliant on international politics. As Interviewee 24 (Dataset 1) stated, "In terms of NGOs, I think there is a lot of room for reform because they are - for the most part - not impacted by politics. However, when we consider the UN, I think the entire system is flawed, corrupt and needs massive reform, Similar views are also apparent in Cooley & Ron, (2002) as well as in Chapter 2, Section 2.5. It is important to recognise that governments are not inherently altruistic - neither to their own citizens nor to foreigners needing their help. According to Interviewee 24 (Dataset 1), governments (and the UN by default) often display tendencies and attitudes that can corrupt the ability to have a fair and impartial structure that facilitates how aid workers are organised, distributed, and compensated (See Chapter 2, Section 2.9). Furthermore, governmental funding varies in

terms of scope and size, and even UN agencies may use aid as a political tool. In many ways, this should be regarded as hardly surprising. It would be ignorant to think that aid funded by governments could ever exist without diplomatic rationale and indeed support. In most cases, it can be argued that this is nothing sinister; it is much more focused on generating goodwill between governments is often the basis for peaceful co-existence. However, when aid is used as a political tool, the overall dynamics alter, and these changing dynamics can really influence the respective structure. Nevertheless, when the findings are taken together there are sufficient observations to suggest that UN aid workers are often 'in it' for the right reasons and do their best to uphold humanitarian values, including impartiality. In many ways, aid workers care little where the funding comes from; their goal is to deliver aid to those who most need it.

6% of the Interviewees from both Datasets expressed direct concerns that the system is simply too reactive to complex situations, rather than proactive. Many Interviewees also commented very strongly that it would be highly beneficial to reform the system and that so many workers were supportive of reform. As Interviewee 13 (from Dataset 1) stated, “reforming the system would be a great contribution to this field”. Similarly, there were numerous Interviewees (from Dataset 2) that commented that any reform would require continual review and adjustment to secure and then maintain successful outcomes. Yet, the findings also suggest that accountability should also accompany any prospective monitoring and/or assessment of any respective changes put in place. This was regarded as essential to ensure that appropriate intended consequences occurred from any reformist interventions (See Chapter 2, Section 2.1). Indeed, any reform of this scale would also require substantial resourcing and funding, political and donor support as well as focused reform action plans that could then be monitored effectively and reviewed regularly. This is also supported by the continuous document analysis since:

“The new management paradigm was put forward to enable the Secretariat to more effectively and accountably deliver on its mandates, and therefore better positions the United Nations to confront global challenges”. (United Nations, 2023, p.1).

Strikingly, some 88% of Interviewees (in Dataset 2) believed that the humanitarian system required reform (with only 12% of interviews stating that reform was not required). On many occasions, Interviewees mentioned that the system was no longer efficient and operated with too many employed staff. There were regular commentaries on how individual clusters are struggling and over more recent years, humanitarian responses have been more chaotic. Of those interviewed in Dataset 2, for example, 20% of Interviewees suggested that the System needed to re-focus back on the beneficiaries and be less concerned about maximising the financial returns from working and collaborating with them. These findings also support the views of Thakur, (2006) and discussions in Chapter 2, Section 2.11. The interview findings also confirm that whilst most Interviewees felt the idea of the was good, there was a minority (12% of Interviewees from Dataset 2) that did state that it needed substantial refreshing, with a particular focus on coordination. According to Interviewee 11 (from Dataset 2), for example, the did not respect other agencies and there was a need to ensure that respective sectors are integrated. Indeed, issues of integration of sectors also featured in the literature review with, for example, Martin (2010, p. 1) arguing:

“Humanitarian agencies often forget the essential role that local organisations play in reconciliation, peace-building and reconstruction, and are happy to leave the responsibility for capacity-building in these areas. In contexts of long-standing humanitarian engagement in particular, greater attention needs to be paid to how humanitarian agencies can support or undermine such efforts, issues that go beyond strengthening local capacity for humanitarian response”.

The findings from the Interviews also highlight issues of poor leadership. Many of the interviews, especially in Dataset 2, made reference to leadership issues and how the UN (both in NYC and Geneva) was increasingly obsolete and suffered from suffering rigid ‘top heavy’ leadership structures. In addition, 24% of Interviewees (from Dataset 2) commented that the UN should be more responsible in terms of spending on leadership structures and processes, with numerous references to excessive numbers of meetings, leadership positions that were largely superfluous and concerns about substantial expenditures to support them. As Interviewee 9 (from Dataset 1) stated: “I think aid workers are often organised through UN and NGO structures that are often overly bureaucratic, complex and unable to ensure an organisational culture that mirrors the values and principles the organisations stand for. This likely inhibits the ease with which reforms can be implemented across the wider international aid architecture and systems”. These findings also confirm discussion in Chapter 2, Section 2.11, and particularly the observations of Karns and Mingst (2010) that highlight issues with UN bureaucracy and weaknesses in effective leadership.

Furthermore, 75% of Interviewees (in Dataset 2) stipulated that funding arrangements needed reforming. There were many observations cited in the interviews where Interviewees had witnessed first-hand instances where some respective humanitarian response had been overfunded; yet others were largely under-funded or even neglected. One Interviewee, for example, referred to witnessing ‘fancy’, well-financed Middle Eastern refugee camps while also seeing comparable African camps being dilapidated, and functioning with very limited resources. Importantly, there was a discernible consensus among Interviewees that funding issues would and/or should be addressed when wider reform would be undertaken. As Interviewee 8 (from Dataset 1), stated: “Reform is complex, specifically because a tremendous amount of funding is filtered through aid agencies during an emergency. I believe donors can play a tremendous role here by linking reform standards to funding”.

One of the issues highlighted (especially in interviews in Dataset 2) - with regards to reforming the system – related to the point that people would need to have better incentives to make and support any changes. This was understandable since a prevailing concern limiting the popularity of reform agendas relates to accompanying fears that people will be out of a job if there is widescale reform in practice. They are comfortable in their positions and therefore they will seek to protect their jobs (See also Chapter 3, Section 3.3) As Interviewee 13 (from Dataset 2) comments: “They felt expats enjoyed where they lived. The package is good, life is good, they see numbers and have no empathy. They never go to the field and will stay depending on the package. They will never build capacity as otherwise they will have to go back home. They live in beautiful apartments, make more money than in their home countries. So why build capacity?” Indeed, Interview 22 (from Dataset 1) explores this further: “To a certain degree I think people who have chosen international aid work as their career path, and who travels from location to location, are not necessarily interested in changing anything. I think they try to, perhaps unconsciously, keep things as is. Probably also because capacity building is not happening; and is also sometimes a hard and bumpy process. It makes many feel that there is no capacity nationally, and they keep advocating for recruiting international competence. This way there is a sense of building two communities of expertise, and along goes the feeling of needing better pay etc. It also stops change happening, because if you do not believe in capacity building very few will grow into senior positions. The few that grow against all odds will use the first opportunity to go international to be better paid”.

Interviewees discussed how exuberant CEOs salaries were, with salaries ranging between \$500-\$700k. They felt that leaner salaries would show better results. As Interviewee 11 (from Dataset 1), stated: “The aid world in total is organised to self-perpetuate, there is little effort invested in finding solutions to problems we address in this industry (short term funding, vertical programming, emphasis on stop-gap measures rather than sustainable solutions ...).

Excessive salaries for senior executives prevent turnover at this level, resulting in stale decision-making; lavish lifestyles in the field result in less-effective staff remaining in positions just to maintain lifestyle”.

In addition, 79% of Interviewees (from Dataset 2) also felt that their respective headquarters (HQ) also needed reforming. They felt there were too many staff, and that the staff in HQ should be technical, offering support to the field (See also Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1. and Chapter 2, Section 2.9). Indeed, these findings also support the observations of Blyth (2018) who already highlighted that the prevailing trend is for work in the field to be increasingly undertaken by local staff rather than from the HQ and this was already leading to detachment from issues among HQ staff. Numerous comments were made in the interviews about how the HQ now rarely focuses on how many people have been reached, and what the needs are. There were also numerous references to there being too many offices and for those that exists and remain, there was an overwhelming demand for HQ operations to be more efficient and cost-effective. Considerable amounts of money were apparently being spent on HQ with ‘high level’ staff on \$400,000 salaries. In addition, there were constant references to funding being allocated to activities that have little or no impact, that consequently then restrict levels of funding available for other more important needs. The findings also showed that as regards HQ offices, they should have or urgently develop clear guidelines relating to the number of staffing positions.

The findings also present some key themes on where reform is needed. 75% of Interviewees (in Dataset 2), for example, thought the funding structure needs reforming and a corresponding 54% thought the needed strengthening, and a corresponding 33% stating the humanitarian objectives required reform. 63% of Interviewees (in Dataset 2) suggested that there should be reform of staff salaries and benefits, especially with regards to standardisation. As

Interviewee 7 (from Dataset 1) stated: “Reform is inhibited, partly due to the variety of organisations involved and the economic situation in their countries of origin. There is a discussion to be had on whether it could be reformed and standardised along the lines of the UN payment structure where there is a clear payment methodology based on established competency frameworks, although their level of payments is obscene (too high). So humanitarian organisations should rather adopt and adapt the payment structure, not the levels”.

Importantly, 50% of Interviewees (In Dataset 2) referred to staff competencies requiring (urgent) reform. Other issues raised were the need to tackle corruption, fraud and nepotism, along with transparency, compliance and accountability. Indeed, issues relating to corruption were also widely apparent in the continuous document review:

“Corruption in humanitarian action remains an under-researched issue. Humanitarian aid agencies devote significant time, energy and resources to internal efforts to combat corruption but remain reluctant to openly discuss and share learning due to fears that talking about corruption could undermine public support for aid in donor countries, as well as impact local aid relations and increase tensions within societies”. (CHS Alliance, 2015, p.1).

Numerous Interviewees (especially in Dataset 2) stressed the importance of providing clear leadership during humanitarian emergencies, and this supported the findings that people have a clear idea of their job role. This was also deemed important due to the distinctive nature of humanitarian response activities, and it was highlighted that many felt that UN workers would struggle to get a job elsewhere; in effect, that this was their career and life. And it was this that hindered reform significantly. As Interviewee 5 (from Dataset 2) stated: “Institutions cannot afford to put themselves out of a job. And now everyone is competing, as we don’t want to think about exiting. So, the industry is seen as a business and we want the

work. Very highly paid staff won't want the changes as they will be the first out". Furthermore, Interviewee 14, (Dataset 1) elaborated: "Organisations are still quite territorial and flag planting in emergencies is still happening even if organisations know others are better positioned to respond. Therefore, that "them and us" mindset in the biggest organisations is still alive and well, and so agreeing on standards around Aid Workers would be a big challenge. Every organisation has their "go to guys" for certain roles who are recycled again and again even though it might be known they have their weaknesses. These misplaced loyalties to "just get the job done" puts quality and reputation at risk. We all know who these people are and the excuses made for them".

Another Interviewee (Interviewee 5, from Dataset 2) further argued: "Think of the resources even for compliance, going towards doing these jobs, it's a beast. Maybe there isn't a need to get people to do the work efficiently if you can get donors to pay for the work regardless. Not much of a push to get a leaner budget if the donor will pay".

Findings from Interviewees (particularly from Dataset 2) also shed valuable light on why many thought the system needed reforming. Alongside assertions that the UN is too expensive to operate and lacks transparency and accountability (See also Chapter 3, Section 3.2.6), there was a discernible commentary that reform could facilitate the development of a new administration that could further enhance positive impact. As Interviewee 25 (from Dataset 1) stated: "I think there are different types of reforms required for different parts of the humanitarian community". Interviewee 25 (from Dataset 1) goes on to discuss how reform may be paying aid workers the equivalent to what they contribute to a crisis, noting many are not contributing as they should be. Interviewee 25 (Dataset 1) went on to state, "reforms are needed to protect their staff better so that their safety comes first (better security protocol), so that they don't burn out as easily or providing better wellbeing services and support". Burn-

out is a concern for many humanitarians given the intense experiences they are exposed to whilst working.

Other areas for reform, come at a donor level and a systematic level. According to Interviewee 25 (Dataset 1), “Donor level, reforms are needed for donors to understand that low overheads don’t equal effectiveness and to provide multi-year humanitarian financing”. Whereas at a systematic level Interviewee 25 (Dataset 1) stated, “Reforms are needed to stamp out corruption”. Interviewee 25 went on to discuss the need to understand the roles that humanitarian actors play, specifically in politics, so as to make fully informed reform decisions. In addition, they discussed the need to also ensure beneficiary participation on decision making throughout an emergency response and to then ensure protracted crises have exit strategies that involve building local capabilities.

Lastly Interviewee 25 (Dataset 1) went on to discuss the humanitarian system at a global level and the need for reform; “The UN Security Council is structured and governs so that one country can’t veto humanitarian access to a crisis. Individual aid workers, aid organisations, UN organisations and donors have little influence over enabling this level of reform”.

It is clear that multiple stakeholders are involved when it comes to reform, but also reform within communities and local governments is required at multiple levels for any change to be effective. National systems and governments need empowering, with a focus on resilience, planning and preparation before emergencies. And where possible to work towards prevention, especially in conflict settings. Contexts are forever changing, but the system does not change with the needs. This raises a concern on whether reform is ineffective due to the need to reform at many levels of the system.

“The most evident issue is its lack of effectiveness. While the global governance system is essential and is tasked with significant responsibilities, it is not delivering results. It’s dysfunctional and fails to respond to the biggest challenges we face”. (Samarasinghe, 2023, p.1).

There have been many attempts to reform through the Grand Bargain and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, yet their effectiveness so far has proven difficult to prove. They may have hindered interagency sector working, and the system needs evaluating. (See Chapter 2, Section 2.9). Interviewee 20 from Dataset 1 stated, “I think the UN/donor dominated system makes reform very difficult. In particular, I’ve seen the desire for quick results and high beneficiary numbers result in situations where inappropriate aid is forced on people”. Interviewees felt that it was crucial to deliver aid with the highest standards and ensuring they were accountable. Interviewees discussed that it was crucial that a band aid wasn’t stuck on problems, but that the focus was on finding solutions, moving from a protracted crisis to development. An effective exit strategy needs developing but also rolling out, ensuring that its effectiveness is monitored. Reform needs to be more formalised, professional and conscious of national stakeholders. (See Chapter 1, Section 1.7).

When asked if aid workers have done enough to hand over the work back to countries and exit, 75% of Interviewees from Dataset 2 said no. They felt that leadership was crucial to attain this. In addition, they stated that donors refuse to fund exit strategies and that they add additional bureaucracy that require expats. Interviewee 12, from Dataset 1, stated “Aid work is currently run like a cartel and difficult to reform – perhaps even impossible – because of the large amount of support works required that cover lots of different technical and administrative needs from multiples companies and organisations. Breaking these rings will make these companies who make money out of humanitarian work lose money. Reforms can

only be done if international humanitarian organisations come under an umbrella group that is determined to do things differently, prescribe norms, adhere to standards and award recognitions for stellar performances, as well as shame those who are siphoning humanitarian assistance funds elsewhere. I believe there are some groups that do that but their works are little or have no effects so far". Generally, there wasn't any push to leave countries, unless funding ran out. Yet in some cases, it was a foothold for governments. Some donors seem to believe that sometimes it was better to stay for political reasons. Interviewee 6, from Dataset 1 stated, "If we are looking for real reform, we need more buy in from the donors and the larger humanitarian community. The discussions about reform seem to be a bit scattered, led by a small group of people and although focused on accountability, doesn't really flesh out what accountability is and who is responsible".

The other concern was that due to the type of services provided, the government was unable to take over the services. They felt it would be more likely if there was a clear exit strategy and then aid workers would have something to work towards. Chapter 2, Section 2.10, Al-Awlagi et al, (2022), discuss, how some informants stated the health cluster had no exit strategy in place. However, they felt that the level of funding put in was not sustainable, and our expectations were too high.

"Like many other post-conflict contexts, the recovery process has been hampered by the prevailing assumption, particularly among donors, that transition is linear. Relief is rapidly being phased out and replaced by development funding, which has been slow to materialise". (Martin, 2010, p.1).

Governments could never match the aid, and would not be willing to either. There were concerns that the countries were also so corrupt it would be too difficult to hand the work over. And as mentioned previously dependency also contributed. However, it was clear that

handing over wasn't really the goal as much as people discuss it. If you can keep getting funds then agencies will stay. "Reform requires buy in from organisations and their staff as well as a unified system of accountability. In the current state of humanitarian affairs this is particularly challenging". Interviewee 3, Dataset 1. This is the way the industry works, which may be a reason for looking to make them dual mandated with development.

"Aid is not intrinsically linked to dependency; studies have shown that dependency is influenced by many factors, mostly length and intensity of the donation period, and 15-20% has been identified as the tipping point where aid begins to have negative effects". (Clemens et al., 2012, p.590-617).

Interviewees felt that aid agencies perspective is to deliver for today, not planning or building for the future. The system is built around taking the money, so as long as the money is there, aid workers will remain. Interviewee from Dataset 2, stated "Our NGO went to Lebanon in 1959 and we are still there! We make a good living and have a good life". Interviewees stated that there is a 'tremendous buzz' out of doing the work. How then can reform occur if the motivations and incentives are not strong for those involved?

5.16 CONCLUSION

In summary from the 54 findings, there is strong evidence for support that the humanitarian sector requires substantive reform; and the evidence is also notable in outlining that there remain major barriers to reform, with specific reference to organisational culture, bureaucracy and leadership. The findings also show a strong resonance with aspects important to new institutionalism. In particular, showing awareness that institutions do matter and widespread observations that institutions do provide a vital platform to focus on the mandate of humanitarianism, which is to save lives and alleviate suffering. The findings

also demonstrate that formal rules do exist, and that these have been largely defined from a western viewpoint. In addition, aspects associated with new institutionalism, namely the importance of political influence, standards and rules are also strongly evidenced as having resonance in the findings. More specifically, standards and rules need to be clearer and more concise.

The findings also show that the clusters are crucial to existing humanitarian response approaches as they provide direct services. However, to be effective, it is essential that there are expat technical experts present, with these skills being greater than local expertise.

“The cluster approach nonetheless has had an important role to play in coordinating the transition from relief to recovery, particularly through the involvement of local organisations and district authorities”. (Martin, 2010, p.1).

In addition, the findings also demonstrate that capacity building is still regarded as a key and crucial aspect in any humanitarian response; and that presently there are key weaknesses in the delivery of capacity building in practice. Staff salaries and benefits require reform and there is different treatment between expats and nationals. The findings also show that there are major concerns about issues of fairness in salaries and benefits and the need for a standardisation of approach on pay. ICR rates varied and also should be standardised. There were also striking findings in relation to the operation of headquarters and staffing of those headquarters. In short, there are often too many HQ staff with inappropriate skillsets and competencies that drive up costs and divert expenditure from field-related activities.

The findings also showed that for effective reform to take place, then a central role must be played by donors including active support for, commitments to donor investment and willingness to drive reform agendas. Only by addressing the majority of these issues and

having the support of influential donors and actors, will key questions relating to staff salaries and benefits, HQ and staff competencies be effectively addressed and thereby reform will lead to the strengthening of the itself. Whilst discussions and progress on reform may continue, supported since the days of 2016 Grand Bargain, the findings suggest there is still some way to go to meet the targets agreed.

CHAPTER 6

6.0 DISCUSSION

As we have learnt, the humanitarian system - which was developed from the 1950s onwards - has evolved over the years and become ever more complex. The primary purpose was to save lives, reduce suffering and respect human dignity. However, are we able to conclude that the system as it has evolved is lacking clarity as to where its boundaries lie and what its true purpose is? Some scholars, for example, discuss how a new world clearly needs an accompanying new humanitarianism (See Chapter 2, Section 2.1). Or put another way:

“The traditional principles forged throughout the last century need to be adapted to new wars, collapsed states and an international human rights culture where Western leaders wage ‘humanitarian wars’”. (Fox, 2001, p.275-289).

Whilst we know institutions matter, (as we discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.4), it is important to understand whether the respective cluster frameworks and best practices are creating path dependencies, which in turn, are creating unintended consequences. Does the Cluster System in fact strengthen the system wide preparedness or does it need reforming? With over 5,000 NGOs and 630,000 humanitarian aid workers globally today, (ALNAP, 2022, p.55) do these individuals possess the technical capacity to respond to emergencies? With the system changing over the years, does it provide clear leadership and accountability during a humanitarian response or does the impact of such an expensive system fail to meet expectations?

6.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK REVISITED

The Humanitarian System including the Cluster System Matter.

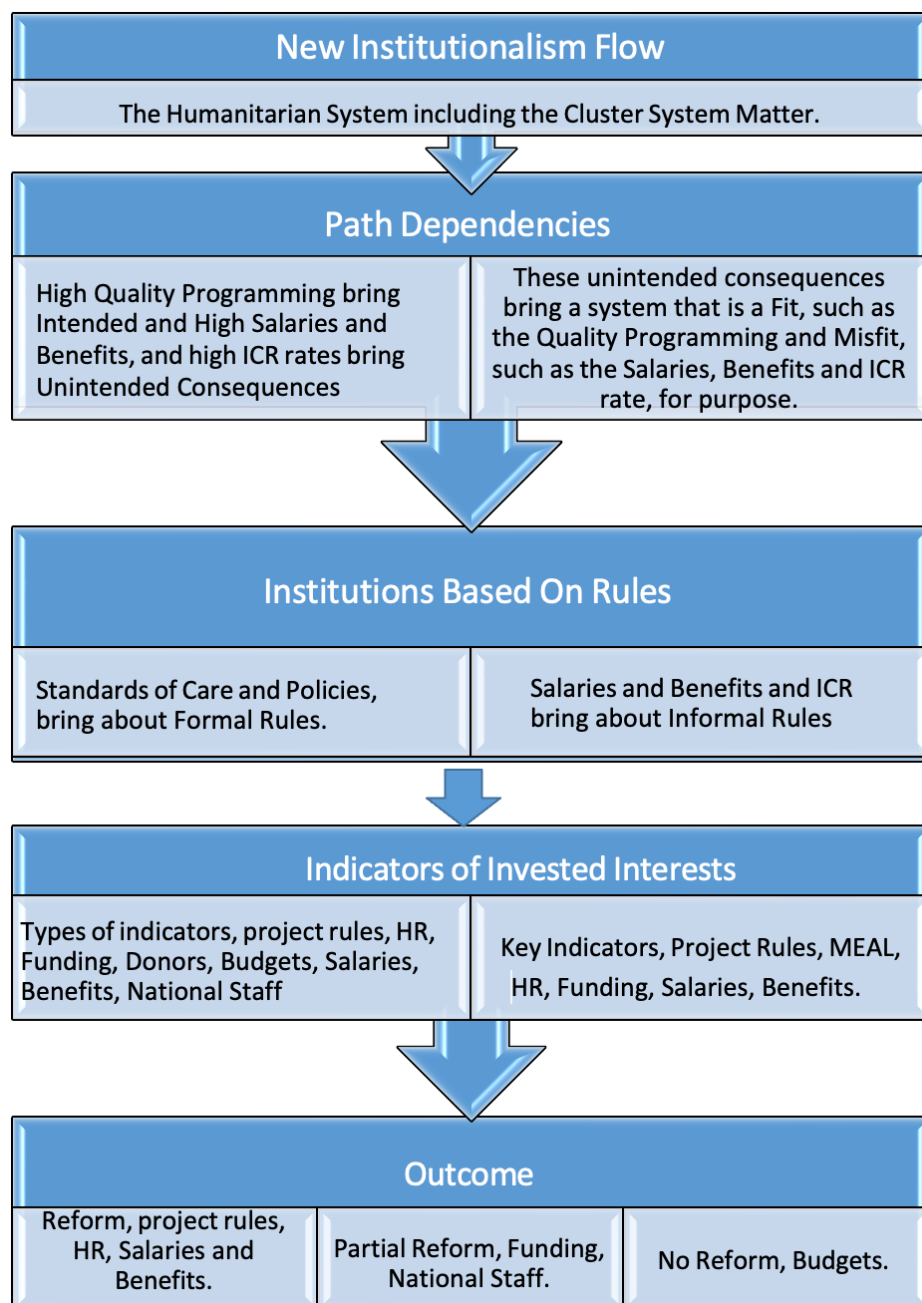


Fig 6.1: Conceptual Flow Revisited

Source: (Author 2024)

The findings illustrate clearly how key institutions are critical to the functioning of a Cluster System that organises humanitarian assistance (See Chapter 3, Section 3.6). Chapter 6, for

example, showed that 91% of interviewees support how institutions matter as they are crucial to the delivery of an international emergency response (See Table 5.2, Main Finding 4). This also corroborates aspects of the literature review and documentary analysis:

“The Cluster Approach has increased the effectiveness of humanitarian action and is a positive change in humanitarian relief coordination. It has been repeatedly cited as having “benefits that outweigh the costs” and although it has been criticised, it is currently the most appropriate structure for relief coordination”. (Humphries, 2013, p.1).

They also demonstrate, as discussed in Chapter 2, how emergency responses need strong coordination and clear direction which is supported by the Cluster System. The current humanitarian system has been configured to encourage close coordination with, and among, governments, so that during a response, humanitarians have access to local populations, and have appropriate support to understand a national system. Ultimately, humanitarians are supporting the government to respond through building and/or enhancement of overall capacity rather than leading a response (See Table 5.2 Main Finding 7 and Chapter 3, Section 3.6). This contributes to supporting the humanitarian principles of saving lives and alleviating suffering. The findings, for example, highlighted that 42% of interviewees supported this approach (See Chapter 2, Section 2.4 and Chapter 5, Section 5.3). Whilst there is a need to improve these relationships, the respective findings demonstrate how crucial institutions are when seeking to deliver key humanitarian objectives. The findings have also shown clearly that the Cluster System has also enhanced the value of organisations, ensuring that the latter are deemed to matter as much as the institutional system itself. It has also been shown in the findings that the Cluster System needs to strengthen the respective leadership (42% of interviewees) and accountability (24% of interviewees) within the sectors (See Table 5.1, Main

Finding 3). Nevertheless, leadership also requires accompanying improvements in enforcement measures:

“Enforcement of formal accountabilities, often linked to financial resources, is a powerful management tool in delivering change. Yet accountabilities within the cluster approach are limited, and there is little evidence that they are being monitored, let alone enforced”. (Luff, 2009, p.27).

Moreover, the 2013 Humphries report highlighted how there are many leadership deficiencies within, and leadership gaps emanating from the clusters, and the findings from the thesis further confirm the need for further collaborative partnership between actors in delivering humanitarian relief:

“First, there are large gaps in predictable leadership. This is primarily due to the high turnover rates of cluster coordinators, lack of impartiality of cluster lead agencies, and insufficient training and experience of cluster coordinators. Second, there are barriers to inclusive partnership in the Cluster Approach. Cluster coordination is not only labour intensive, requiring a significant amount of time and resources for effective participation, but it has largely failed to create a sense of NGO ownership and involvement. Third, the Cluster Approach does not have sufficient mechanisms in place to enhance accountability to affected populations”. (Humphries, 2013, p.1).

Nevertheless, over the years, institutional leaderships have learnt to understand the evolving funding mechanisms available to support humanitarianism operations (Hall & Taylor 1996). This has enabled them to ensure that they have sufficient funds, including ICR funding, to be able to respond to an emergency. Finance departments, for instance, have developed guidance to support the attainment and the use of such funds, that have ultimately ensured

that respective organisations can maintain business continuity and survive. However, such guidance is far from currently perfect. Although it may have been updated, further and often more clearer protocols are required that can enhance accountability within organisations, and to the beneficiaries they in turn will support (See Chapter 2, Section 2.5). There also needs to be further efforts to establish a clearer vision on the requirements pertaining to headquarters (HQ), especially with regards to better guidance on the number of offices, the types and competencies of staff employed and/or deployed there, as well as the types of skills required of staff to ensure that any response with HQ participation is of high quality and effective. The findings also suggest that guidance needs to be developed that will also facilitate - where possible - that substantial numbers of staff are deployed in the field and reduce the ICR rates being funded by donors. (See Chapter 2, Section 2.10).

The findings and documentary analysis also confirm the widespread view that over the many years that these organisations have been in operation, they have also changed and adapted to present external and indeed, market conditions (See Chapter 2, Section 2.6):

“Humanitarian aid has transformed from its ad-hoc volunteer-led origins to become the preserve of large professional organisations. Over the past few decades, the humanitarian sector has attempted to create global standards and codes of conduct and to explore the idea of an international system of professional development and accreditation”. (MSF, 2014, p.1).

In the past, staff were largely volunteers, wanting to help those in need due to a desire to help humanity. However, humanitarian operations have also changed into a multi-billion-dollar business where there are expectations of salaries and packages, as well as an expectation that staff working in the field are qualified to undertake the role. Standards and policies have been developed to support HR with the recruitment of staff and to provide benefits. Nevertheless, the standards and policies have been open to wide-ranging interpretations and even become

subject to negotiations and changes as the field has changed (See Table 5.3, Main Finding 9 and 10. The findings have also shown that these have salaries and packages have now become excessive and potentially could be viewed as a misuse of the funds that are available (See Table 5.4, Main Finding 13 and 14), especially when there is often notable demands on funding to help those affected by disastrous situations.

Whilst organisations do manage the use of funding, there needs to be more transparency and further accountability regarding the use of funds during an emergency response. Indeed, such discussions highlight how a current theme of increased transparency:

“Transparency regarding how foreign aid is spent is widely seen as a key aspect of ‘good donorship’. Without information on how foreign aid is distributed, stakeholders cannot hold judgement on how and to whom donors provide foreign aid”. (Swedlum, 2023, p.2177-2212).

Hence, this thesis highlights that, whilst it is very clear that institutions matter, due to the systems they put in place, then this needs also to be coupled to debates on improving transparency. It is not just about improving standards and policies relating to ICR funding, staff salaries and benefit packages, but also how they are presented and articulated within most humanitarian institutions. These findings illustrate that institutions matter as articulated in the conceptual framework especially if they uphold certain values, such as transparency:

“By allowing principals to monitor the behaviour of their agents, aid transparency is theorised to reduce mismanagement, foster participation by critical audiences and ultimately boost best practice”. (Swedlum, 2023, p.2177-2212).

Furthermore, the findings also confirm – and as we historical new institutionalism illustrates – the importance of formal rules (See Chapter 5, Section 5.4, and Table 5.3). In particular, the findings show how approaches towards, and management of, funding can have positive

intended consequences as well as negative unintended consequences. The findings also provide clear evidencing to support aspects of the literature review that highlight the resonance of new institutionalism:

“The new institutionalism helped to explain why organisations often looked alike, even if they were engaged in quite different activities in varied contexts, and why managers would adopt administrative practices developed in dissimilar industries. It recognised that organising is not only about reaching for technical efficiency in getting the job done, but also about presenting one’s organisation and management as ‘informed’, ‘up-to-date’, and ‘compliant’”. (Palmer, Biggart & Dick, 2008 p.739).

Through the way expats have worked for many years now under guidance and rules governing how to receive and use funding from donors, it is possible to detect and see how the formal and informal rules impact on the behaviour of those working for the institutions. Equally, the findings also show that there is a widespread view that such behaviour will need to change further. This will be critical to ensure the future effectiveness of how they receive, and are able to use, funding for ICR, salaries and benefits (See Table 5.5, Main Finding 15; Table 5.6, Main Finding 16; and Table 5.7, Main Finding 17 and 18).

The findings also show that institutions do promote formal rules as well as, in some cases, informal rules, (See Chapter 3, 3.4.1 and 3.4.2), to ensure they are awarded sufficient funds to keep their businesses running. Moreover, and to some extent, it is these rules that help to maintain organisational transparency and accountability. However, as the findings also show, when there are deficiencies and omissions, especially as regards levels of transparency, this can also bring about limitations, especially for smaller organisations. Staff in these organisations, that may also have more limited experience and exposure to the pressures of transparency, will often have greater challenges in securing funding. This is especially the case

when compared to those in larger organisations that may have also participated and have familiarity with the Cluster System for many years:

“In spite of considerable economic reforms, the introduction of political changes, and widespread NGOs activities, many post-colonial countries have been struggling with governance mechanisms. Magnifying the emergent global–local trade-offs and tensions invites theoretical insights into governance and particularly to conceptualise and re-conceptualise new institutionalism and governance amid globalising socio-political post-colonial changes”. (Immergutv, 1998, p.19).

The findings also confirm the view that the Cluster System needs to support organisations when pursuing and seeking gain funding (See Chapter 2, Section 2.8). This is especially important in terms of devising and implementing commonly agreed, and preferably standardised, guidance and policies. Until this achieved there will continue to be notable distortions and inequalities between organisations as recipients of funding. As it stands, we will continue to see that large organisations will likely have the expertise and will end up getting proportionately more funds than those organisations that are smaller and potentially have less experienced staff (See Chapter 2, Section 2.6). The former can more effectively manipulate any loopholes and deficiencies in standards and policies. This can reduce competition for funding, and thereby not maximise efficiencies which will increase the cost of a response. Put simply, larger organisations know they can request larger funds to cover their larger outgoings and expenditures (See Table 5.8, Main Finding 22 and 23). Overall, it is crucial that there are more effective standards and policies to enhance competition for funding.

The concern then sits around how these funds are used, to provide relief to those suffering. If substantial amounts of funding are being used and spent at HQ level, for ICR rates, salaries and benefits, it significantly reduces the funding available in the field (See Table 5.9, Main

Finding 25, 26, 27; and See Chapter 3, Section 3.7.4). These have become unintended consequences which are result in organisations becoming unfit for purpose within the humanitarian sector. Hence, the findings of this thesis reinforce the urgency of focusing on operational and financial deficits since:

“There is a rising operational and financial deficit in the capacity of governments and humanitarian organisations to respond to humanitarian needs, as challenges facing international humanitarian action are growing in scale, scope, and complexity. While absolute funding for humanitarian relief has been continuously increasing, it is not able to keep up with the growing requirements, as assessed by Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) for different regions and countries (OCHA 2022)”. (Bruder & Baar, 2024, p.1).

Yet, what this thesis adds is the prevailing need for a robust focus on salaries, benefits and packages as part of addressing those deficits. What we also see from the findings is that often the same funds are then used to pay for expats in the field, especially to provide the benefits and cover salaries, reducing even further the funds available for the beneficiaries (See Chapter 3, 3.7.6 and 3.7.7). The findings show that there is a strong consensus and prevailing need to have ICR rates standardised. There is a need to balance acknowledgement that such funding is necessary for aid agencies to function, with the requirements to develop clearer protocols, global standards and/or national standards as well as to provide transparent evidencing on how funds are spent (See Table 5.9). There is also the need to have standardised salaries for humanitarian staff within organisations and across within the humanitarian sector. At the same time, while potentially varied benefits packages can exist to recruit the best staff, there also need to be some regulation so that the benefit packages are not excessive (See Chapter 2, Section 2.10). “With such a huge bias from western influences” (Interviewee 1, Dataset 1),

it is important that the need for expats is revisited (Interviewee 38, Dataset 1), and that “decision makers are independent from the salaries and benefits being agreed”.

As we know from the literature review and in Chapter 3 Section 3.4, then according to a sociological new institutional perspective, informal rules which can have positive influences. They are especially useful for actors when seeking a way to counter the unintended consequences of formal rules. However, the findings also suggest that in the case of the humanitarian organisations and as Interviewee 16 (Dataset 1) nicely put it: “NGOs are immensely flexible and this can have a positive or negative impact”. Hence, for this discussion it is also important to highlight that transparency towards and attention to salaries may not translate into rising salaries. Salaries do not need to always have a top scale. Therefore, there can sometimes be no limit to what some senior staff are receiving, and on top of this, there may be some notable and generous packages in place, whether it relates to hardship or security funding or other benefits, such as accommodation, food allowance or a car (See Table 5.4, Main Finding 14 and Chapter 3). What does remain fundamentally important is that there is greater transparency around when and what types of salaries and packages are being offered and are in existence.

The findings of this thesis show that there is greater transparency around salaries than benefit packages at the moment, although in most cases, both need improved transparency. Whilst salary scales can be found in the public domain for certain organisations, it is far more difficult to obtain details on the benefits packages offered to, and existence, from organisations. The research in this thesis shows, and especially some HR staff interviewed have stated, that the salary scales are not followed for some staff and other offers are provided and accepted (See Table 5.11 Main Finding 34 and Chapter 2, Section 2.10). There are also far from standard

approaches in relation to benefits packages even within the same organisation, let alone across the sector.

The issues surrounding the lack of guidance for salaries and benefits packages are deep-rooted in many humanitarian organisations. There need to be better standards promoting transparency of approach and application. They need to enshrine fairness and gender equality between men and women (See Chapter 3, Section 3.2.3). Importantly, they need to address the vast contrast in approaches to salaries and benefits between expats and nationals, as well as, to some extent, standardise policy approaches across organisations (See Table 5.7, Main Finding 17 and 18). However, for this to happen, and rather paradoxically, it also requires buy-in and support from senior leaders and employees who may have vested interests and benefit presently from the existing status quo. Ultimately, there must be notable leadership from staff in senior positions to support the need to reform salaries, benefits and ICR rates then reform will be slow, if not impossible.

Historical institutionalism can be used as a lens to show how institutions create path dependencies (See Chapter 3.2). This is where we can see there is a resistance to change (See Table 5.1, Main Finding 1). Decisions that have been made in the past create path dependencies. This may make people cautious about revisiting or changing their decisions that may later alter these path dependencies. Yet some decisions, which may have been relevant in the past, may have tremendous consequences for the future if they are not changed (See Chapter 3, Section 3.6). When this proposition was discussed as part of the interviews, then 50% of those interviewed believed that their respective institution had created an international dependency on the career, lifestyle and salaries (See Table 5.8, Main Finding 20; See Chapter 3 Section 3.7.6).

The findings also showed that such a widely acknowledged path dependency that had also clearly been developed in the humanitarian sector did indeed have a discernible impact on the rationales and need for reform. Most notably, it was acknowledged that expats and HQ staff have become accustomed to high salaries and even 'extravagant' lifestyles that was not attainable back in their home countries. Therefore, the view was widely shared that those making the decision to reform the system would most likely not support reformist changes since it was, in all likelihood, going to lead to a negative impact on their own respective existing salaries and the benefits. There are in essence discernible vested interests with actors having become very accustomed to receiving generous salaries and benefits (See Chapter 5, Section 5.16 and Table 5.13, Main Findings 40-44).

Hence, this thesis identifies a resoundingly important path dependency that has, in turn, led to an equally significant unintended consequence, which is no longer fit for purpose. Furthermore, from the research (Dataset 2), the international community has developed their own capacities rather than those locally, and as a result they have not met the agreed objectives to build capacity build the countries who have been exposed to the disaster (See Chapter 2, Section 2.9). In short, the funding streams secured by many organisations to undertake capacity building have become as important as the principle and prospect of capacity building itself. On this basis, a further path dependency has been created where humanitarian organisations have sought to pursue consistent streams of funding, and for its employees to secure consistent salaries and benefit packages to undertake recurrent work within the same nation or region. The unintended consequence has been that those organisations and staff have not wished to see the indigenous capacity fully built in the respective country/region since this would remove the rationale and revenue supporting a recurrent presence of their own organisation and generous salaries and benefits for expats and HQs. The existing status quo thus sustains a powerful unintended consequence; where

capacity building funding can lead to vested interests in the humanitarian sector; and actions where international communities do not develop the capacities of the local communities that would ultimately lead to their own respective presence being reduced over time (See Table 5.8, Main Finding 21).

Another relevant key path dependency that has evolved over time relates to the political motivations of the donor (See literature review Chapter 2, Section 2.6). In short, this builds also reinforces the learnings and behaviour of respective humanitarian organisations/institutions in relation to a focus on building a comparative advantage of expertise and organisational presence in specific countries to ensure consistent funding for their own organisational political gain (See Table 5.8, Main Finding 24). Put simply, key donor have specific interests in regions and even nations, which humanitarian organisations are readily aware of, highly responsive to and seek to cultivate. Indeed, without the donor's interest in a specific region/country, significant revenue streams and funds would cease for specific humanitarian organisations/institutions, and lead to a retrenchment in the income, activities, reputations and profile of particular NGOs.

Equipped with the knowledge that donors want to be present in some countries, regardless of humanitarian needs, NGOs often focus their activities there. And following on from this, the findings suggested that they often design and stipulate salaries and benefits packages based on their comparative advantage and organisational presence in a country that may have otherwise been rejected if the donors' motivations were different. This was confirmed in the research for this thesis, with interviewees often citing specific country and case examples relating to staff salaries and benefits that were based on not where they were due to respond or the needs of the suffering in country, but rather on the nature of the funds available from

the donor and what could be claimed for. According to the literature, this has also led to a focus on quoting new innovations as a way to attract donors:

“Consequently, over the past decade, the humanitarian sector has begun investing more heavily in innovation, seeking new and more efficient solutions to address humanitarian crises and narrow the funding gap in the sector. Yet, while ‘innovation’ has become a prominent concept in the humanitarian sector, a counternarrative has formed that decries innovation’s seeming inability to bring about transformational change in the sector”. (Bruder & Baar, 2024, p.1).

However, one of the distinctive findings from this thesis is that this focus on donors’ political motivations and a stress on dialogues of innovation, may have led to highly manipulative behaviour on the parts of organisations and an unintended consequence of this path dependency. More specifically, regular evidencing in the interviews where we see the same project profiles and even the continuation of the same project for years in the same countries, directed and delivered by the same expats, who benefit from generous salaries and benefits packages that keeps them in the lifestyles they have become accustomed to (See Table 5.8, Main Finding 23). The research also found that this characteristic was prevalent among larger humanitarian organisations that obtain sizable amounts of funding, sustain higher HQ staffing levels, higher ICR rates and often ‘excessive’ senior salaries (See Chapter 3, Section 3.7). This unintended consequence contributes aspects of the humanitarian sector a misfit for purpose and a powerful case for further reform.

The thesis also provides luminary insights into the key indicators that shape salaries and benefit packages and how significant path dependencies have now developed in relation to their specific content across the humanitarian sector. While full transparency on the actual measures might not be there yet, the literature and interviews do already show that

approaches to ICR rates, staff salaries and the benefits packages do contribute to misfits for purpose and further reform is required. (See Chapter 2, Section 2.12).

The research clearly shows that there is a strong consensus that expats salaries and benefit packages need to be reformed substantially. Currently they receive extremely high salaries with a wide range of benefits from housing and per diem to university fees and cars. Turning to the expat salaries, then a salary scale must be provided by the cluster or another institution, for expats, so that there are limitations to what they can be paid. In this respect, we can detect some transparency. However, what is less transparent is the informal contextual considerations that have considerable bearing when talking about the employment of expats. Whilst these are done in some settings, and in the UN particularly, then often expat salary scales and salaries are not based on any comparable measure of what the interviewee can earn normally. Whilst this is very difficult to undertake as expats come from a variety of settings, humanitarians must hold onto the need to ensure that salaries and packages are fair for all.

Turning to the benefits packages for expats, then there is even less transparency. Benefits are usually very substantial, with an endless list of what can be received. They are also not very directly tied to theatre of country of operation in which they working. From this perspective, the packages could be relatively low level, based on needs within a country. However, if this was the case and not based on other factors, then they cannot provide extremely luxurious lifestyles. Again, there needs to be extensive rules with a focus on relevant (often more low level) benefits that would be effective to allow working in the country of operation and would also be cost-effective for organisations to provide. Yet this requires reform, and for reform to occur this requires expats to change their expectations. Otherwise, if allegiance to sustaining few standards and rules, limited transparency, and high-level benefits continues, there will be no significant reform since attitudinal change is also required. Moreover, the findings in the

interviews also suggested that there was a widespread view that changes to expats' salaries and packages should in turn increase the amount of funding available for beneficiaries and in turn increase the numbers reached (See Chapter 5, 5.15 and 5.16).

As regards the context of staff salaries and benefit packages of national aid workers, then the position is a more complex area to address. The findings suggest a prevailing view that international organisations must be careful not to impact negatively upon the national economy by overpaying national staff (See Table 5.14 and Chapter 3, Section 3.7.7). The findings also detected concerns that employment of national should detract or undermine other parts of a country's capacity; for example, humanitarian organisations should not inadvertently contribute to the undermining and/or breakdown of national health systems through the employment of staff leaving to work for the international organisations because they offered significantly higher salaries. However, there is a risk that the same position is being paid differently dependent on whether the staff member is an expat or a national. Again, there needs to be reform to develop focused rules regarding the salaries and benefits packages of nationals that consider the aforementioned considerations (See Chapter 5, Section 5.17).

The findings also demonstrate the prevailing view that not only reform was necessary, but that there would be a need to incorporate the principle of regular review and future updating. This would be necessary to ensure that assessments of whether available funding was being used appropriately and that humanitarian responses remain effective, and timely in delivery (See Chapter 3, Section 3.7.4). Given that the Cluster System has not experienced major reforms for many years, ongoing reform must be dynamic and monitored to ensure the system remains continually fit for purpose (See Table 5.15, Main Findings 49-54).

Significantly, the research findings also reveal a strong emphasis on human capital and thus why issues of human resources, salaries and benefit packages remain so important. As the

interviews illustrated, reform should ensure that the humanitarian agencies are more focused on people and delivering high quality services (See Table 5.15, Main Finding 54). Moreover, this supports those that advocate for continual that a continual test of reform for humanitarian organisations should be measured in terms of benefitting the lives of those we serve.

“Given the increasing needs, and the pressure on the scarce resources available to address them, there has been a recognition within the humanitarian sector of the necessity for radical change to deliver better aid”. (Bruder & Baar, 2024, p.1).

The research findings also revealed that there were strong views on what types of reforms could be considered when it comes to salaries and benefit packages since organisations must be held to account for the use of funding within their responses. (See Table 5.15, Main Finding 51). First, there should be policies addressing how and when staff salaries and benefit rates should be transparent, with detailed information provided. (See Table 5.15, Main Finding 50). Second, there should be standards on how rates are devised, implemented and adjusted. For example, ICR rates should be limited. There was also some illustrative discussion of the development of key dashboards, outlining, for instance, the guidance and practical ratio between salaries and expenditure directly on beneficiaries should be devised and publicised; and the percentage directly spent by an organisation each year on beneficiaries should always be provided to show that the organisations provide cost efficient, cost effective and timely responses. These proposals outlined by interviews go some way to improving accountability since:

“Accountability to affected people, community engagement, the participation revolution – the aid sector brims with buzzwords about putting people at the centre of humanitarian decision-making. Despite a proliferation of not only terms, but of complaints and feedback mechanisms

on the ground, the system is still far from being inclusive of the voices of people it aims to serve". (Alexander, 2021, p.1).

Nevertheless, it is also important to highlight that the research findings also showed some reluctance that while significant reform was essential, there should be limitations as regards its ambitions. As MSF undertook a survey of nearly 1500 aid workers and whilst they were in favour of professionalism and standardisation there were concerns.

"Clearly, aid workers must not become automatons executing protocols and guidelines irrespective of the situation they find themselves in. Indeed, providing medical aid in a crisis requires an extraordinary ability to innovate and adapt to people's needs. Even more, the humanitarian response must be based very simply on the human response to suffering, the refusal to accept the loss of life, human suffering and loss of dignity of those affected by conflicts, crises and natural disasters. It is this human and moral response to suffering that compels humanitarians to speak out and loudly challenge the status quo when conditions are unacceptable for individuals needing assistance. This humanitarian impulse cannot be regulated, nor can it be taught in a classroom. And yet a commitment to help without the necessary professional experience and organisational infrastructure can lead to poor quality assistance, as has been seen most recently in the response to the Haiti earthquake". (MSF, 2014, p.1).

So, in summary, the conceptual framework is enlightening and the findings support many aspects that have resonance for this study of the humanitarian Cluster System. First, the conceptual framework highlights that institutions matter as NGOs need to have structure and rules and regulations to perform. As these have evolved, the Cluster System was developed to address the need for NGOs to have a coordinating body for emergency responses. Second, the conceptual framework highlights the importance of path dependencies. The findings in

this thesis show that there is a prevailing view that, within these institutions of the Cluster System, path dependencies have been created that have shaped vested interests and have led to blockages which clearly need reforming. (See Table 5.1, Main Finding 1). It is these path dependencies that have led to unintended consequences that have complicated the institutional aims and missions and made it hard to achieve. This has ultimately led to problems of misfit for purpose that now require resolution through institutional or financial reform. Finally, the findings show how formal and informal rules on salaries and benefits packages of humanitarian workers can have an influential bearing on the effectiveness of humanitarian responses and on attitudes towards essential future reform. This next Section will explore those aspects in detail in relation to this discussion Chapter.

6.2 INSTITUTIONS MATTER

The research presented in this thesis demonstrates resoundingly that in the context of humanitarian response, that ‘institutions matter’ and that they form the basis for growth and development objectives see, for instance, Chapter 3, Section 3.4). The thesis also corroborates the resonance of new institutional approaches especially since:

“New institutionalism has developed a multitude of measurable concepts and empirically verifiable relationships to describe and explain organisational phenomena. The new institutionalism also appears to be one of the most general and comprehensive theories applied by organisational scholars today”; (Palmer, Biggart & Dick, 2008, p.739).

The research also shows that ‘institutions matter’ in practical terms; most notably in the way that the Cluster System incorporates aims to strengthen leadership, transparency and accountability across the humanitarian sectors. Furthermore, the research findings also show that there is prevailing view today that there is still a need to improve leadership and

accountability to ensure an effective response. Nevertheless, whilst the Cluster System aims to enhance partnerships among governments, UN agencies and NGOs, the Cluster System is seemingly failing at supporting the governments sufficiently; most notably by not building the capacity of the respective government. Hence, while institutions matter, the research findings also suggest that it remains crucial that participating organisations remain committed to upholding reformist values and principles and remember the institutional mandates on why they were established and what they intend to achieve. Yet at the same time, prospects for future reform remain in the balance. Institutions also matter because they act as vassals for actors that pursue vested interests that may become institutionally embedded and act as obstacles to significant reform.

6.3 FORMAL RULES

Institutions offer transparency and accountability according to the rules that are established (See Chapter 3, Section 3.4.1 and 3.4.2). Formal or informal rules have been embedded in organisational structures and they may become key processes that staff depend upon. Whilst rules may change, these also may bring limitations. UN and NGOs have developed formal and informal policies for staff salaries and benefit packages. These have become embedded within the organisation and there is now an expectation that staff will receive these when they are working for the institution. Staff both at a junior level and at very senior levels have these expectations. Furthermore, the devising of these rules is heavily influenced by western values, views and principles (See Chapter 3, Section 3.4.3 to 3.4.5). In addition, the majority of donors are also western in origin and operation. Whilst this research in this thesis has limitations in terms of the depth it seeks to explore influential western perspectives specifically; the findings show evidence in terms of gaps in knowledge that require further examination to see if there are further associated implications that limit reform. Another aspect of informal and

formal rules that are particularly influential in relation to the humanitarian sector relates to the organisational embedding of project rules, specifically ICR rates. (See Chapter 3, Section 3.7.1). Nevertheless, there is more to be done. Donors, for example, have not provided joint advice on the percentages that agencies can request, so they therefore range from 0% to 25%. In addition, donors do not provide clear guidelines for the use of such funds. Therefore, agencies have a tendency to submit bids that are as high as possible in terms of securing ICR funding rather than being explicit on the respective needs. A lack of consensual, and clear policy in this area has resulted in organisations being able to define and dictate their needs based on their own ideas and requirements, rather than meeting wider institutional norms. Whilst some of these rates are unacceptably low and do not allow for an organisation to survive entirely on any secured income from them, others are too high and allow for potential misuse of funding.

6.4 PATH DEPENDENCIES

(Expat) staff have become reliant on these substantial salaries and benefit packages, some of whom would not have had this same earning power in their homes of origin. (See Chapter 3, Section 3.6 and 3.7.6). They have become used to living lives that could be deemed as extravagant by some and potentially have led them away from the original motive of undertaking humanitarian work. Their families too are being provided for, with private schooling and university fees being covered as part of generous benefits packages. They have sufficient salaries to pay for mortgages in their homes of origin. They often take home notable amounts of cash from per diem and sums from housing benefits not being spent. These generous salaries and benefit packages create path dependencies of vested interests that become significant obstacles to reform. As an unintended consequence of original efforts and organisational rules aimed at supporting their staff, senior decision makers themselves

become resistant to reform since any decision supporting significant change will have a substantial negative impact on them individually. Hence, these organisational rules have become unfit for purpose since they lead to disproportionate levels of funding being spent on staff that can restrict other funding allocations for humanitarian response.

In addition, the research findings highlight that humanitarian organisations will often prioritise developing relationships with, and targeting funding from, donors that are willing to pay high ICR rates. Put simply, organisations aim to apply for funding from those donors. This tends to consolidate the power and influence of some respective donors who may not advocate for wider reform since they are already willing to support the existing status quo. (See Chapter 2, Section 2.11).

6.5 TYPES OF INDICATORS

The UN, NGOs and the Cluster System need to ensure there is a system within itself to hold organisations to account and to ensure they are met. And if these systems are not fit for purpose, then they need reforming. To understand how resources are being used within these organisations, indicators could be developed to understand where further reform may be required. In particular, the research findings suggest a notable focus on project rules, project norms, informal or formal budgets, organisational outcomes, MEAL, strategies and donors' reports; and these indicators could offer insight into whether respective organisations are fit for purpose.

However, many of the required documents are inaccessible and unavailable; and this complicates any existing assessments, prevailing evidence of success or indeed, the need to reform. Bebbington & Riddell, (1995), for example, highlighted that in the face of poor data, any conclusion that NGOs are cost effective is tentative. There is possibly even less evidence

to suggest they are a cheap alternative. Rather they may be costly, yet potentially able to show benefits to justify the cost. Indeed, the research findings in this thesis offer insights into those indicators that may be appropriate to understand the effectiveness of respective organisations. The research suggests that a focus on project rules and norms, and how associated technical standards are developed and implemented, may be beneficial. A further emphasis on data handling is also welcome, as this provides means to understand how data is used and collected. This is pertinent to further assessments of capacity building within humanitarian response. Here indicators focusing on establishing the ratio between, and role descriptions of, expats and national staff would be useful; and also, whether this is balanced.

There is also a need to highlight the importance of clarifications on the development of country specific budgets. These organisational budgetary arrangements (covering a respective emergency in a specific country), often provide critical details on how funding is actually used, specifically looking into the costs of national staff and expats, associated costs of benefit packages and the medical consumables, donor reports on how organisations report their data, levels of health provisions. The budgetary reports also shed light on how organisations measure their impact and what accurate evidencing they possess in practice.

6.5.1.KEY INDICATORS:

The Table below will provide details of the historical institutional indicators that can be used to discuss the need for reform within the humanitarian field.

Indicators	Key Variables
Project Rules	Projects should be driving the humanitarian agenda, such as capacity building. Other rules should uphold the humanitarian principles, such as neutrality and partiality. To provide minimum standard healthcare, without striving towards comprehensive. Collection of MEAL yet this data is not used.
Human Resources	Policies can prevent nepotism, and corruption. However, if the policies are not updated, they can hinder reform. Policies need to ensure staff are qualified for the roles. However, they should not stipulate if they are to held by an expat or national. International qualifications need to be recognized in recruitment. In addition, all senior positions should have some expectations of qualifications to justify recruitment and salaries. Staff in employment should be encouraged to develop qualifications related to their role; no funding is provided for this.
Funding	Money given to states holds power over states. It can also have political agendas rather than funding being provided based on needs within a disaster. Funding does however, provide HR and services during an emergency.
Donors	Donors hold NGOs and UN organisations to account. However, if the expectations of the report are limited, then often UN and NGOs will not collect in depth MEAL information. Donor reports should be in more detail, expecting detailed qualitative and quantitative data.
Budgets	Accountability of UN & NGO budgets is crucial; however, this is not happening in all aspects of a program. Although budgets have to be justified, certain aspects of budgets such as expat salaries and benefits are not monitored in sufficient detail.
Salaries	High salaries hinder movement of staff. In some circumstances, such as extreme deployments, they may ensure that they recruit skilled staff.
Benefit Packages	High benefits, such as high housing costs covered and high per diem will create a lifestyle that expats will not want to lose. Whilst these are necessary to recruit, staff cannot be living extremely luxurious lifestyles.
National Staff HR & Salary & Benefits	This is more complex as international organisations must be careful not to impact the national economy by overpaying national staff. Nor can they support the breakdown of health systems with staff leaving to work for the international organisations. However, there is a risk of similar positions being paid differently depending if a staff member is an expat or a national.
Funding	Money given to states holds power over states. It can also have political agendas rather than funding being provided based on needs within a disaster. Funding does however, provide HR and services during an emergency.

Table 6.1 Indicators and Key Variables.

Source: (Author 2024)

6.5.2.PROJECT RULES

Organisations must be held to account when providing high quality services to beneficiaries. Otherwise, there is a risk that organisations will only meet minimum standards, thus reducing the cost of services and increasing the funding for other aspects of the work. Whilst NGOs and UN agencies may collect vast amounts of data, the data used and shared is incredibly limited in comparison to what is collected. If it is an expectation that agencies just provide data to meet donors requirements, which is limited and does not evidence any qualitative data, then there will be limited evidence of the achievements and how effective they truly are. However, Cahill, (2007) discusses how the acceleration of disasters resulting in high demand for action has led to improved performance on the part of the international humanitarian community. The need for close collaboration has contributed to the identification of best practices and the establishment of stronger inter-organisational relationships.

From the research gathered in Chapter 5, Section 5.11, the percentage for ICR rates range from anything between 0% - 23.5% based on the donor or organisation (See Table 5.9, Main Finding 25). From those interviewed, many felt that the ICR rates in UN and USA organisations were too high. (See in Chapter 5, Section 5.11). 21% were unable to explain what the funds were used for. In addition, there were concerns that there is a lack of guidance, standardisation and accountability over these funds (See Chapter 5, Section 5.14 and Chapter 2, Section 2.6). With up to 23.5% of the initial budget being allocated to support a HQ office (usually where senior management will be based), it raises questions as to why there is a lack of clarity as to how funds were spent. Is this due to poor communication, or more concerningly, to a lack of transparency and accountability? As in any organisation, key players

involved in reform start with the CEO and filtrate down to senior management and this is especially important since:

“The bodies that govern large humanitarian organisations tend to be exclusive groups made up of the most powerful players in the system”. (Alexander, 2021, p.1).

However, if there are already concerns of transparency and accountability at the HQ level of how the funding is being used, are there vested interests which are restricting the reform of the use of funding, especially if this will have a direct impact on those in HQ? The research findings so suggest some evidence that this may be the case (See Chapter 5, Section 5.11 and Chapter 2, Section 2.5). Furthermore, research showed that there was a vast difference in the number of HQ offices, with 63% of interviewees noting they had more than two HQ offices, and with 4% stating they had over 19 HQ offices. The research for this thesis showed that many felt there were too many HQ offices. Again, we should ask if there is a real need for 19 HQ offices, or indeed for even more than one, to provide the necessary support functions to the field. There are certainly questions to be answered over any ethical use of funding when the money from donors is expected to be supporting global disasters. The research findings from the interviews seemed to also to suggest that there were clearly articulated views that if indirect costs were reformed, this could lead to additional funding going direct to the beneficiaries. Several interviewees, for instance, suggested that attention could focus on facilitating less bureaucracy, the roles of CEOs and senior management could be reviewed and the competence requirements of staff could be looked at.

The research findings, for example, revealed that some of the HQ staff did not have the skills and qualifications for the positions they held. (See Chapter 3, Section 3.7.2 and 3.7.3; Chapter 5, Section 5.11). There were too many generalists rather than the technical staff required to support the role out of projects. 50% of those interviewed stated that there were too many

staff, with 58% stating that the staffing was not justified. (See Table 5.9, Main Finding 27). Additional concerns raised during the interviews were that there were many unessential jobs, with some positions being created for staff who wanted to leave the field rather than due to a need to support the projects. (See Chapter 5, Section 5.11). The research went on to show that many argued for the HQ office to be defined with staff based there having clearer roles and responsibilities and even being monitored for the work that they are undertaking. The research findings also showed that there was much to do in this regard since this is not happening at present. As the interviews revealed, many HQ staff had the motivation to secure funding to simply maintain business continuity, rather than ensuring the services provided to the field were aimed at ensuring the high quality of programs. This could be interpreted as evidence of prevailing vested interests; that have moved away from a primary focus on delivering humanitarian responses to save lives, reduce suffering and respect human dignity towards a stronger business focus centred on raising funds and/or at worst to sustain revenue to cover their own salaries and benefit packages. There are questions to be asked about how a project with 0% indirect costs can deliver comparable impact as another project with 23.5% indirect costs (See Chapter 3, Section 3.7.2). For any organisation to function and meet the expectations of donors and politics, there is a need for ICR funds (See Table 5.9, Main Finding 26), where 58% of interviewees were in support of ICR rates.

But the question remains, which project has the best outcomes and what is a suitable ICR rate? Are the indirect funds shared between all projects, or is 23.5% more than necessary to provide the necessary support functions? How can a project function with 0% support costs?

Whilst the research findings suggest there is a need for indirect costs, what is unclear is what percentage this should be. The research findings also suggest that it is also unclear as regards what happens to the indirect funds. Given humanitarian responses are notoriously known for

a lack of impact indicators, it is difficult to provide clarity and clear statements of the impact of projects in any given response, and what impact the ICR funding has.

6.5.3. HUMAN RESOURCES

All international organisations need to have employment policies and rules in place to prevent corruption and nepotism. Often however, recruitment is led by the recruiter in their own department rather than by HR. Whilst there are expectations of what is required by the expat, a lack of policy may result in national staff not being able to advance in the system above a certain level. Often jobs are specified for expats only, unless they face pressure from the national government to nationalise positions or from donors.

In addition, without nationals being trained and their capacity being developed, NGOs and the UN will be able to dictate high indirect costs and expat fees, resulting in a significantly reduced remaining budget as they will be able to evidence that there are not trained staff in country to recruit. This will lead to emergency responses becoming managed predominantly by expats, resulting in a top-heavy expat architecture.

Rules on employment have mainly been developed by western leaders and officials which has prompted accusations of institutional discrimination. With such a strong dominance of westerners whereby organisational values and principles have largely been defined by them, organisations may have undervalued and/or even neglected the contributions made, and the skills offered, by nationals. Westerners have also stipulated what competencies are required for positions and sadly as a result there is a belief that national staff cannot do the roles to the same level as an international staff member. In many ways, national staff are not getting sufficient exposure to the UN and donor systems to bring them on in terms of humanitarian

career trajectories. There needs to be changes to rules of employment that promote inclusivity and positions should be based on skill sets rather than on nationality.

Following the major events occurring in Oxfam with regards to sexual exploitation, it has been publicised that these behaviours and practices are not exclusive to Oxfam but are in fact a major and common concern across the humanitarian sector. Yet, there are further questions as to whether this is just the tip of the iceberg. Publications have already raised serious concerns about the existing behaviour of expats in emergency responses. There should be further assessments of how staff are recruited and the respective checks undertaken need to be reviewed. Are there any safety checks in place to ensure, for example, sex offenders are not recruited? Are there checks to ensure that the recruitment process is diverse, culturally sensitive and offers equality? There is a notable white male dominance in senior management within existing humanitarian organisations and it is crucial that the recruitment processes are reviewed.

Whilst technical jobs, such as nurses and doctors, have very clear expectations of what qualifications are required for the position, non-technical jobs, such as logisticians and project managers, have very limited guidance. This has led to employment of substantial numbers of international aid workers in positions where they have limited experience and qualifications in. Once in the field, as an aid worker, jobs are created for those who want to leave the field yet stay in the system and often there is an over promotion of expat staff. However, the research findings also indicate that there is often an under promotion of national staff. Key indicators to further understand this, would be to review job descriptions within NGOs. Where HR has requested qualifications and experience, it would also be crucial to review those who have been offered such positions to assess whether they match their requirements, and whether this needs to be an expat or could be filled by a national staff member.

Lastly ratios of international staff to national staff needs to be studied to understand if this is appropriately balanced. Perhaps at one time when the humanitarian organisations were first created there were few national staff who had been exposed to the UN systems and training on how to respond to emergencies was very limited. These days however, one cannot assume that expats are the only ones qualified for positions, when often they have very limited experience and qualifications. Again, for the more technical roles, skilled doctors and nurses are found in all countries. Sometimes these numbers are too low, such as in Syria where they have been targeted by extremists, and other times their skills are limited such as in South Sudan where the education system is very limited. The pool for qualified staff in most settings has increased significantly, and with a global response to emergencies now being in place for a significant time period, the need to bring in expats is no longer such a necessity. Also, it is worth noting that often staff are recruited into the wrong role or are expected to cover dual roles.

It is crucial to ensure that qualified staff are being recruited into the right positions to justify any salaries, both national and international, the recruitment process needs reforming as the humanitarian industry has evolved. Fischer, (2008) undertook several case studies, looking specifically at the demographic characteristics of those working in emergency responses. He found that of those directors involved in the emergencies, approximately one third had graduated from high school, 41% completed at least one college course, but that 71% of emergency directors did not graduate from college. In relation to experience, 50% worked less than 12 years in the field, 30% had served less than two years as a director, with 22% being new to the job. On average these directors responded to an emergency once every seven years. And 57% reported that they had participated in no more than two major emergencies during their career. 20% had never being involved in such an emergency. Fischer, (2008) went on to demonstrate the value of developing a professional, educated workforce of emergency

managers. Those who were college educated were found to be more likely to implement effective emergency responses.

Lenquist, (2003) discusses how it is crucial for all staff involved in international emergencies to be prepared through effective and accurate education and training. He goes on to state that without training, obtaining a high standard of outcome will be severely reduced in a major disaster. Cahill, (2007) states that the single most important variable in effectiveness of a response is the quality and experience of its staff. Those on the ground, with their capabilities, dedication, experience and knowledge, make all the difference. In the absence of such experience and commitment, all other capacities of an organisation will not suffice to bring significant results on the ground. Experience demonstrates that capable staff cannot be assembled from scratch at the beginning of every crisis. There needs to be a pool of staff for a large emergency response who understand the policies, procedures, and systems of the humanitarian sector. While such experience is critical, the most challenging requirements are to recruit a leadership team to bring about successful programs. It is demanding work and difficult under the conditions that exist in a response situation, particularly those with security concerns. The pool must contain both national and international workers, based on where we often expect emergencies to occur, due to known conflict settings or climate concerns. Yet these staff must be vetted, to understand the experience and skills needed. In addition, work needs to be evidenced and results scrutinised after an emergency to ensure the responses are what is needed for the local community. All these aspects are important since:

“Discrepancies in compensation and benefits reflect the difference in value assigned not only to needs, but to the capabilities of local versus expat staff. Foreign “experts” are assumed to know more about how to improve local lives than the locals themselves. This assumption

comes at a very high cost, reducing what funds are available for the beneficiaries in country”.
(The Guardian, Secret Aid Worker, March 2016c, p.1).

6.5.4. FUNDING

Most funding comes from international governments. Indeed, according to Barnett and Weiss, (2008), agencies should limit their reliance on government funding, especially if donors have a stake in the outcome, as this influences the outcomes that humanitarians are working towards. Polman, (2010) argues that 70-80% of donations from donors come with precise instructions about where to distribute in accordance to their political interests or in places thought of as high profile that offer positive publicity. She goes on to discuss the balance between the positive effects of aid due to need and the exploitation by warring parties and whether there is a point that humanitarian principles cease to be ethical. Humanitarian crises are almost always a political crisis, or where a political solution only exists. There seems to be an increasing pattern that NGOs make decisions about where to work based on the availability of donor contracts and not on ethical considerations. If there is no solid evidence that funding is being used to meet the global humanitarian priorities, how are organisations held to account. Zaidi, (1999) found that due to the funding system through donors, it is often the case that NGOs tended to overstate their impact and the number of people they benefit. In addition, Zaidi, (1999) found that it was common for NGOs to fudge data to receive more funds. This raises huge concerns about the accountability and legitimacy of NGOs. He stated that the dependence on donor funding had changed the NGOs accountability to be shifted up to senior management and donors rather than with the beneficiaries.

“Success inside international organisations is typically determined by who you know and who you agree with. So too is funding. The senior leaders of the big agencies can easily pick up the phone to government ministers and senior diplomats in charge of government aid budgets, or

meet them in the VIP Section of a conference, and get the nod for some extra millions after a quick chat". (Mollet & Donkin, 2021, p.1).

A key role in a humanitarian response are the donors, primarily because they have the power to hugely influence aspects of any humanitarian response since they hold the funds and the organisations need the funding to survive. In Harris and Contech's (2020) paper, they looked at the involvement of western donors since the ending of conflict in 2002 in Sierra Leone. Relationships have been described as strong and positive but also as having influence and playing a big role. The structural imbalances seen between the West and Africa of finance, capacity and power give the west a serious upper hand and Africans have a restrictive area in which to work tactically in. The paper goes on to discuss how African nations dependency was developed at the mercy of the international system. And that Africans have a pressure to follow donor lines and obligations. On the African government side, they employed an approach to attract western aid in exchange for unsustainable levels of reform and limited returns of aid programs. This is where politics can get very entwined into a response. This may lead to the weaker party adhering to a certain behaviour, to ensure they are not negatively impacted.

Reinsberg, Michaelowa and Knack, (2017) highlight that for a state to influence another state it faces a choice through which it can do so. One of these is through being a donor where it can make an influence in the country's interests. Some states may use multi-donor opportunities, especially if sovereign donors with larger funds are involved, as they can assert their preferences more effectively. This will also give organisations and states a lack of choice and ability to reform or transform a system/response. In the end, it will lead to actors with competing interests receiving funding, and not who is best to serve the community, but who is able to fight for the funds. An international presence within a country, with sizable funding

opportunities, will have an influence over states. And given funding is received from countries with their political agendas, often the funding will be to align their needs, holding power of overheads during a vulnerable time. Kilama, (2016) found significant evidence that donors' decisions to provide foreign aid is directly linked to strategic motives, regardless of the country's needs. However, given the complexity of politics, donors may also find that governments will make it very difficult for them to have access into their respective countries or regions, and/or may make a response very complicated once funding has been raised globally. There are often serious concerns about funding being driven and influenced by politics, rather than the needs within a country. Those involved in the funding mechanism report to very powerful networks, with those involved in high profile positions.

According to Cahill, (2007) the first reports that analysed the uses of funding showed that the money failed to reach those it was intended for. Such businesses fail their stakeholders and shareholders. Therefore, it is essential to face up to the reality that there needs to be some significant changes, looking at the overall effort to deliver more effective and efficient responses. Various agencies cannot avoid the need to become more professional and accountable.

Also, worth noting with regards to funding, is that if it is a norm to receive funding from the 'US for Syria' which has political influence but funding from 'Saudi for Yemen' is classed as political then any reform will be limited to, for example, US influences. Humanitarian organisations core principles are to be neutral, yet funding has in itself blurred this neutrality. The way funding is provided, received and used needs to be studied further to understand how it needs reforming to reduce any political influences and to ensure the agendas are in line with the needs of the country.

Funding can provide a very detailed account of how money has been spent in a project within an organisation. Each line can be scrutinised. Yet, in some cases budgets can be very vague and open to interpretation, whilst in other cases they can be quite detailed. It is in these budgets that the expat and national salaries can be detected and/or determined and where the benefits packages can potentially be seen. In addition, the cost of consumable medical equipment can be highlighted. Funding however within these organisations are very difficult to study as they are rarely shared with people inside organisations let alone outside.

Funding needs to be analysed to see how the funding is being spent in an emergency. What are the indirect costs, what is this percentage and how are the funds used? Is there flexibility within budgets? How much is spent on expats versus nationals, as well as looking at how much is spent directly on beneficiaries. The budgets will be able to show a range of costs such as the cost of consumables and non-consumables for a health project. These indicators will be able to show whether the budgets will need reforming to ensure an emergency response is effective.

6.5.5.DONORS

Donors have a huge influence in shaping the response of any emergency. In 2022, the three largest donors together accounted for 64% of total international humanitarian assistance from public donors, with these being, US, Germany and EU institutions, with the US alone providing 39%. (Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2023, p.14.)

“Donors are faced with a complex set of choices in how and where to allocate their funding”.
(Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2023, p.14).

Given that their funding guidance will often stipulate what work is required, it is paramount that there is clear direction as to how funds are spent and what reporting measures are

expected. In Caccavale et al, (2016) research, they found that reporting requirements are onerous for non- governmental organisations. This is because donors do not play a role in the governance of NGOs and hence do not help shape their internal accountability mechanisms. NGO funding is more frequently connected to specific projects and therefore is seen to require detailed, project-specific reporting to ensure accountability. Caccavale et al, (2016) goes on to say how financial reporting varies slightly more between donors; a handful have stepped up their oversight systems in the last five years, while one donor (ECHO) has recently taken steps to simplify its financial reporting requirements.

Donors could be the avenue to ensure that through funding certain impacts and outcomes are met, if the donors require evidence of capacity building, appropriate use of funds, measures for quality care and quantitative data. The humanitarian field could be driven to ensure the emergency responses reach a very high standard. However, donors too will have a mandate and there will be pressure to ensure the government has allocated funds for political reasons to a variety of locations. However, given the funds will need to be spent by UN and NGOs, the UN, NGOs and to some degree NNGOS will have an influence on what is required from a donor.

6.5.6.SALARIES & BENEFITS

The research findings on the base salary of expats and nationals for this thesis are highly illustrative (See chapters 2 Section 2.10 and Chapter 3, Section 3.7.6). 67% of those interviewed in both datasets stated that they should be paid the same as their home countries, which is to be expected, given the majority of humanitarian workers coming from countries where the cost of living is higher than where they are deploying to. (See Table 5.13, Main Finding 40 and 41). Salaries ranged from voluntary positions up to at least \$30k per month for those in the most senior positions. (See Chapter 5, Section 5.11). The higher salaries

raise notable concerns ethically given that global funding is supposed to be, for the most part, for those who have been exposed to the most serious sufferings from war to natural disasters. This view is also corroborated by the literature review and documentary analysis:

“The first point is about the aid reaching those, and doing what, it was intended for. Any aid that is corruptly diverted is not reaching the vulnerable people who need it most”. (CHS Alliance, 2015, p.1).

Since humanitarian work has been previously known as and closely associated with charity work, and indeed, many people and donors still donate money on this premise (See Chapter 2, Section 2.1), there needs to be a clear understanding of the profile of this work. Whilst staff should be paid sufficient salaries to cover their costs, (See Table 5.13, Main Finding 41), it is also important to understand what is deemed sufficient. (See Chapter 3, Section 3.7.6). In the research findings, essentials ranged from home of origin costs, pensions, insurances as the basics, with 36% stating that they need to receive additional benefits. (See Chapter 5, Section 5.15). One of the concerns with the salaries is that there is no global standard or humanitarian standard, and therefore it was open to the employee to negotiate the salary upon interview. 21% felt that there should be a global standard for those working in humanitarian work, although it is clear this would be a very complicated process to achieve, (See Table 5.13, Main Finding 42 and Chapter 3, Section 3.7). Whilst some organisations have some standards, these are not transparent or easily accessible to those outside of HR or management positions within the organisation (See Chapter 2, Section 2.5). International salaries are clearly too high in some NGOs and UN agencies and as such this impacts the beneficiaries of whom they were meant to serve. Yet it is also clear that there are two extremes of this work. More specifically, the high-end salaries and the voluntary or very low paid (\$100 per month) positions (See Chapter 5, Section 5.15). What is becoming more evident is that the UN and US

based organisations are primarily the better paid organisations. However, it does not always stop with these (See Chapter 2, Section 2.10). Senior staff within an organisation who would be involved in reform are benefiting from the salaries and therefore would likely resist change as the impact would be directly towards and felt by themselves.

Other concerns raised were that there were many expats who were not qualified to undertake the role, with 18% raising this as a concern (See Chapter 2, Section 2.9 and Chapter 5, Section 5.13). And yet as stated by interviewee 4, they believed that high salaries made the market more competitive and enabled the sector to attract the best. A prior reform in 2005 meant that humanitarian work needed to be more professional resulting in paying more money for expats (See Chapter 2, Section 2.11). Given the high salaries that can be earned by expats, with often the main justification being that for your organisation to acquire the necessary expertise in humanitarian work then you need to pay higher wages, it is very concerning that many are highly paid yet do not have the skills and qualifications to undertake the role (See Chapter 5, Section 5.13). How can it be justified to pay high salaries, taking away funds from beneficiaries when many senior filled positions are not even qualified to undertake the role. Are there concerns from senior staff that this is the pinnacle of their career? The research findings suggest that one rationale relates to circumstances around exit from this career path. More specifically, if they left humanitarian work, whether that they would be unable to obtain such high salaries as they have not got relevant qualifications and therefore there may be a significant resistance - and unintended consequence - to reform. (See Chapter 2, 2.5 and 2.11).

So, we have to ask the question, if expats are paid such vast amounts of money, and national staff will be kept at the market rate of the country of their residence, in particular to prevent economic distortion and staff poaching, are expats really needed for humanitarian responses,

or can nationals do the job? Or are the expats just required at the beginning of an emergency, (See Table 5.11, Main Finding 35) when the capacity in country has been impacted (See Table 5.11, Main Finding 36) and whilst they are reassessing their new current situation? This would significantly increase the amount of funds that would become available in an ongoing emergency after the first phase of the response.

It is unclear why in some countries, such as Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Kenya, there is such a huge expat presence. It could be driven by their own individual needs, such as, being used to live such an extravagant life or expats enjoying the location of the work, and this may act as a further explanation for subsequent resistance to reforming this system. Or is it centred around political grounds? One rationale could be in this regard that donor states want to retain their sponsored work profiles and stay in specific countries to keep a presence there. Nevertheless, regardless of the rationale it is apparent that a further institutional path dependency for expats may have been created, when there may actually be very little need for them. Moreover, the research findings in relation to HQs can be factored into this discussion as well. With many NGOs coming from the west, decisions on recruitment would start at HQ (See Chapter 5, Section 5.11).

We also must ask the question as to why expats – despite their sizable presence – have not been that successful in term of building sufficient capacity in these countries? Over 20 years ago, humanitarians decided that they needed to start looking at ensuring their programs had an impact in the development of in-country capacity. The UN and NGO organisations have adopted an agenda to tackle capacity building now for decades. Yet when we examine programs in countries where they have been working for over 30 years, we can also detect the ongoing residual presence of many expats. So, have the capacity building projects had any impact, so that there can be a significant reduction in expats? Have they built up national staff

to be able to deliver the work that has been set up by the humanitarian community? (See Table 5.11, Main Finding 33 and 36).

The research findings from this dissertation suggest that the jury is still out on this question. Yet, even after some 60 years of project and program interventions, people are still working in South Sudan, claiming there is not sufficient capacity to withdraw. The research findings do suggest that more work needs to be undertaken to assess the impact of these projects, particularly in terms of more transparent assessment and monitoring, with lessons learnt so that the system can be reformed accordingly (See Chapter 5, Section 5.12 and Table 5.8, Main Finding 21). Similarly, why after 10 years are we still working in middle-income countries (MICs), such as Jordan and Lebanon, where they have a strong education system and sufficient professionals to manage the remainder of the Syrian response emergency. It is apparent that more questions need to be asked as to why donors cannot simply provide funds directly to these countries to manage the refugees or IDPs, and focus efforts on developing and using a strong accountability system, rather than sending out international human resources which seems to be very costly. Again, the research findings may point to a further institutional path dependency, which may have resulted in institutional discrimination against national staff, and which has unintended consequences that lead to a resistance to reform (See Table 5.8, Main Finding 20).

Expats who have been in this system for many years have become used to high living conditions and lifestyles and as a result are keen to protect these packages and jobs, which ultimately can limit reform. The research findings and documentary analysis are in alignment on this point, for example:

“...while I encountered some expats who had really tried to integrate into their host communities and have an impact that they had been employed to make, most of the rest lived

completely detached lives from the country they were working in. They have a fancy house with a cook and guards, earn twice as much as the yearly local GDP in a single month, and sneak off to parties at the UN compound during curfew hours". (Secret Aid Worker, 2016d, p.1).

Due to the stresses of isolation, lack of recreational activities, and the need to work 24/7, maintaining one's health can also be a challenge. An astute leader must be sensitive to these dangers and challenges to ensure support mechanisms are in place and staff well-being is maintained. However, the extent of this supportive provision cannot be obscene, nor come at a cost to the wellbeing of those humanitarians that were deployed to help. Fee, (2016) discusses that when hiring international public health workers to work for WHO, staff experienced higher salaries than they received in their home countries and were reluctant to return home, which made it difficult to enforce a three year turn over regulation. They became used to the lifestyle of having cooks, cleaners, drivers and security whilst on the field and therefore expect to be compensated when returning to their home countries. With such high expectations, it is difficult to reduce the international staff pool, and if anything, they are ultimately just transferred to HQ settings, which continues to increase the cost of an emergency response, through ICR rates. Realistically donors and UN/NGOs should be looking to ensure they have improved the health situation within the countries they are deployed to, when the common complaint from UN/NGOs is that they need more funding, potentially to fund their lifestyle.

Throughout this discussion, it is apparent that new institutional perspectives have bearing and utility. From the prism of historical institutionalism, expats have enjoyed the benefits of institutional path dependencies that have supported them receiving high salaries and benefits in comparison to national staff. Drawing on sociological institutionalism, cultural dynamics

have been embedded and influential. Westerners have been predominant in the decision-making circles when it comes to deciding expats' benefits. Values, principles and competencies have been defined by westerners which has led to a huge bias in the packages. Studying the salaries and packages given to expats and national staff also help understanding the need for, and the obstacles to reform by using them as indicators.

"International NGOs have extensive code of conducts that encourage cultural diversity and equity, but when it comes to compensating staff, they disregard those values. Clearly, we are not equal to national staff". (The Guardian, Anonymous Aid Worker, April 2016, p.1).

These high salaries and packages have become social norms and practices and now there is an expectation that these will be met if they are to work for certain agencies.

Lastly, a key finding from the research was the extensive nature of the generous benefits package that are offered to expats. In addition, it was noted that there were discernible differences in the various benefits packages offered to expats compared to those given to nationals. Indeed, all (100%) of those interviewed stated that nationals and expats received different packages (See Chapter 3, Section 3.7.6 and 3.7.7, and Table 5.14, Main Finding 45). Nationals often had very limited, and certainly much less generous, benefits in comparison to expats. Some interviewees commented that this was largely based on assumptions that humanitarians take unfathomable risks and should be compensated for this, with benefits aimed at attracting the right skills and retaining staff. (See Chapter 5, Section 5.16). One interviewee 25 (from Dataset 1) suggested that benefits packages should be agreed across organisations, and then could be incremental based on years of service, qualifications and/or performance. Others felt all benefits should be more transparent (See Chapter 2, Section 2.5), so staff knew what benefits were commonly available, and which staff were in receipt of them. There were many different opinions as to what people classed as essential. Yet, it was

apparent from the research findings that the general view among interviewees was that currently there are too many types of benefits and they needed to be streamlined. Nevertheless, given that it is often the senior decision makers receive the most lucrative packages, there are discernible conflicts of interest at stake and vested interests at play, so how can this system of salaries and benefits packages be reformed?

Firstly, based on location, expats received Rest and Restoration (R&R) to protect their health and mental well-being, with more leave being offered based on the most difficult situations that expats were expected to live in. (See Chapter 3, Section 3.7.6 and 3.7.7 and Chapter 5, Section 5.16). This varied from a week off every four weeks to a week off every three months, with flights provided or a sum provided so that the expat could leave the field. In some cases, no R&R is provided, as the location was deemed to meet a suitable standard of living. The research findings, (See Chapter 3, Section 3.7.6 and Section 3.7.7 and Chapter 5, Section 5.16), showed that expat staff were receiving benefits for hardship and danger pay. This additional hardship and danger pay ranged from 5-35% each based on their base salary, so this could provide in some locations up to 70% additional to their basic pay. This means that, for example, those earning \$30,000 per month, they could have an additional benefit of \$21,000 per month on top of their salary, leaving a senior expat earning, \$51,000 per month! Just 9% felt that hardship and dangerous pay was needed. Furthermore, it was unclear why both should be paid, even though they have clear definitions, as it is seen as excessive (See Chapter 5, Section 5.16). In addition to these payments, expat staff also received benefits known as per diem for deployments, for food, drink, newspapers or incidentals. These ranged from a *daily* allowance of \$35 - \$500 depending on the location and organisation. A housing allowance, or hotel costs are also provided, and this varies based on location, but again these have been known to be as high as 100% of the expat's basic salary. Lastly, expats also had access to a car during working hours, at a minimum, with some having a car for their own

personal and work use. The research findings confirm that these were the most common benefits received by expats for most deployments.

These research findings raise notable wider questions for this thesis. In the first place, there is a need to question why they are needed at all given that support for them is far from widespread and seem to benefit specific categories/types of aid workers (See Chapter 3, Section 7.6). Second, the research findings raise questions as to whether expats should particularly receive both hardship and danger allowances, or could these not be combined into one? Certainly, some of the assumptions on which these allowances are based should be understood more clearly. Surely a salary is expected to pay for an expat's food and drink per day, with the exception of the need to eat out due to staying a hotel, but more often than not an expat is renting a property with cooking facilities. Yet, how can they possibly need up to \$500 per day to cover these costs? In addition, do expats really need potentially up to 100% of their salary to find somewhere to stay, or has this forced the local housing market to increase due to the high benefits being offered. This could, in turn, push out the local staff out of their homes because the rental price is too high, bringing about an unintended consequence to this benefit. An illustrative example was what happened in South Sudan (See Chapter 5, Section 5.16). Here, very basic properties were rented out at over \$15,000 per month and locals were forced to leave the capital because rents were no longer affordable. Is this not a misuse of the funding being donated to primarily aid those beneficiaries who have been exposed to a disaster? If these figures were totalled up, albeit as an extreme case, this could end up costing for one expat, \$96,000 per month, with a week off every 4 weeks. The ethical and financial rationales for these kinds of behaviour and outcomes seem highly questionable. While this may represent an extreme case, it is not an entirely unreasonable assumption and/or calculation, that an expat could easily earn \$10,000 per month including benefits. In addition, they are more than likely to receive health insurance, medivac insurance, life insurance and a

pension on top. This existing case further demonstrates the complexities involved. It also signals how difficult it may be to reform a system with strong path dependencies and where the unintended consequences produce institutional dynamics that incorporate discernible conflicts of interest and identifiable vested interests.

Furthermore, these were only the most common benefits received by humanitarian workers. The research showed that expats witnessed other benefits too, such as private school allowances of up to \$50,000 per year, bonuses of \$5,000 – \$25,000 or 10-30% of their salary, partners allowances, security home improvements, university fees for dependents, setting up and close out funds, cooks, drivers, cleaners, redundancy pay, tax exemptions, and flights. This leads to an underlying question about whether the motives of senior staff to advocate for funds is really to make a difference to those exposed to war and disasters, or rather does simply reflect that they are unintentionally exploiting a system where the primary focus should be on those who are suffering? This multi-billion activity surely cannot justify these benefits. It is likely to lead to some diversion of funding to cover their costs and away from allocations to support those suffering in a national or international disaster.

6.5.7. NATIONAL STAFF HR & SALARIES/BENEFITS

When we examine the characteristics within an organisation/institution, it is crucial to also look at the wider employment situation and conditions of local national aid workers. These are most likely reflected as indicators shaping budget lines, staffing plans, HR rules and recruitment opportunities and costs. These can, and should be studied in more detail. Many of these local policies have been developed by expats who have at best researched the local salaries to obtain a baseline, or at worst, developed a rough guidance based on how much funds they have available from donors, knowing the costs of the expats needed to employ. Either way, the research findings for this thesis suggest that these salaries are incredibly low

in comparison to expats, even when both interviewees are equally qualified. This is also confirmed in wider, if limited, studies:

“Dual salaries are the common practice of paying skilled local/national employees less than expatriate/international counterparts, by using different pay scales and benefits packages.... there are big disparities between the salaries and benefits packages for colleagues who were similarly skilled and educated, but who came from different countries”. (McWha-Hermann, 2021, p.4).

Whilst there are many arguments as to why expats and national staff cannot be paid the same, it may be beneficial to examine why so many expats are also needed and subsequently, are present in the field. And if expat positions are opened up for national staff to apply for (as is happening slowly in the field) then HR costs are likely to be reduced, enabling any response operation to be more cost effective. In turn, this should relinquish more funds, and increase amounts available for the beneficiaries if national staff are prioritised. This view is also supported in key documentary studies since:

“A review of the dual-salary system will lead to more accountability and transparency and signify that aid agencies are drivers of positive change not just externally, but also internally”. (Miceli, 2023, p.4).

In addition, it is crucial to ensure that expats are not less qualified than the national staff. National salaries and benefit policies (especially if developed from research encompassing assessments of local standards), should take into account the expat situation. It is apparent that there is often an under promotion of highly skilled national staff, as well as often limited awareness of the skills that they do offer in many emergency settings. Indeed, this may not even be actively encouraged at present since:

“Wage disparities are often a taboo topic, especially when power relations are involved. With the aid program already under pressure, the negative effects of pay disparities may be making it even more difficult for programs to achieve their goals”. (Carr, & McWha-Hermann, 2016, p.4).

The difference between expats and nationals’ salaries and benefits can be very significant and what once may have worked, now represent a misfit. What is also concerning is that the national staff are often sorting out the salaries and benefits and are the ones paying cash out in hand for many benefits. Ironically, they are being widely aware of, and exposed to, the funds being given to, in many cases, very junior and under qualified staff, whilst witnessing harrowing needs in the field:

“Some might think the answer would be to only hire national staff, but the added value of a multicultural work environment is great and should continue to be leveraged, even if it costs more. The pay disparity between national and international staff is vast and it should be more equal, but please do not forget that international staff often have many additional expenses”. (The Guardian, Anonymous, April 2016, p.1).

Using the project budgets, we will be able to see how the distribution of funding is allocated in relation to national staff and expats and what the funding pays for. In insecure settings or corrupt settings, nationals can take very high risks for themselves and even for their families. Alongside this, they may also receive poor(er) salaries with very few and/or limited benefits compared to those expats receive.

“Local staff are paid far less and receive fewer benefits than their expatriate colleagues, even when they do similar work and have similar qualifications. Expatriates are often quick to dismiss dual salary systems as a non-issue. But local workers told us a different story. They

said disparities created significant feelings of workplace injustice. They felt less valued than their expatriate colleagues”. (Carr, & McWha-Hermann, 2016, p.4).

It is crucial that the distinctive skill sets and indigenous knowledge that the employment of national staff brings to humanitarian organisations and their response operations is fully recognised by organisations and indeed the Cluster System more widely. Nationals possess highly valuable and fluent local language skills. They are more familiar with local contexts and ‘ground truth’ and therefore can deal - in many cases - more effectively with local political, social and community nuances that help liaison and dialogue with local populations. All of which are crucial components that aid the effectiveness of any emergency response. Whilst there may be a need for expats, it is essential that they are qualified for the respective position, that they are not replacing national staff who can undertake the same work more effectively and cost-effectively, and that the salaries and benefits of expats in the field are monitored constantly.

However, at least at the moment, there are issues with data. since “Any rigorous analysis of local employment practices is hampered by the poor quality of available data (Guha-Sapir et al., 2011). Also, there are issues with accessibility of data. Often labour costs are redacted from freedom of information requests because NGO project budgets are considered as ‘privileged or confidential’ information (Bruckner, 2010). Other initiatives, such as Inside NGO Expat, NGO Global Pay, NGO Local Pay, and the TCN (Third-Country National) salary and allowance surveys, are not readily accessible to researchers. As a starting point, though, it is known that the UN and many other IOs use the Noblemaire and Flemming Principles to set salary scales. According to the Noblemaire Principle, salaries for international staff (international civil service) should be aligned with the highest-paying national civil service salary scale (in this case, that of the US). The Flemming Principle stipulates that the conditions

of service for locally recruited staff should reflect the best prevailing conditions found locally for similar work. The salary scale for locally recruited staff varies from country to country, and in determining local pay figures, employers have been allowed some discretion regarding methods of calculation (International Labour Organisation, 1998, p. 38). It is worth noting that the UN's Senior Advisory Group has recommended that the General Assembly review the wage principles applicable for locally recruited UN staff as those standards, 'developed in 1949, were not designed to nurture national capacities in conflict-affected States'" (United Nations, 2011, p.13).

6.6 OUTCOMES & SCENARIOS

Indicators	Key Variables	No Reform	Partial Reform	Full Reform
Project Rules	Projects can be driving the humanitarian agenda, such as capacity building. Other rules can uphold the humanitarian principles, such as neutrality and partiality. There can be various levels of healthcare standards, from minimum to comprehensive. MEAL data can be used to improve responses. Agencies can be held to account.	Limited accountability of project rules.	Moderate Accountability of project rules.	Extensive accountability of project rules.

Human Resources	Policies can prevent nepotism, and corruption. If the policies are not updated, they can hinder reform. Policies can ensure staff are qualified for the roles. Job description cannot stipulate if they are to be held by an expat or national. International qualifications can be recognized in recruitment. In addition, all senior positions can have some expectations of qualifications to justify recruitment and salaries. Staff in employment can be encouraged to develop qualifications related to their role; funding may not be provided for this. Recruitment checks can be undertaken. There can be rules on employment.	Weak recruitment checks. Flexible rules on qualifications for job positions.	Moderate recruitment checks. Moderate rules on qualifications for job positions.	Strong recruitment checks. Rigid rules on qualifications for job positions.
Funding	Money given to states can hold power over states. Money from states can also have political agendas, rather than being provided based on needs. Funding may, provide HR and services during an emergency. There can be rules for funding.	Limited rules on funding.	Moderate rules on funding	Extensive rules on funding
Donors	Donors can hold NGOs and UN organisations to account. If expectations of donor requirements are limited, then UN and NGOs may not collect in depth MEAL information. Donor reports can expect detailed qualitative and quantitative data.	Limited quantitative data collection and reporting.	Mixed data collection of qualitative and quantitative data collection and reporting.	Extensive qualitative and quantitative data collection and reporting.
Budgets	Accountability of UN & NGO budgets is crucial, but may not happen in all aspects of a program. There can be rules on the use of funding.	Limited rules on the use of funding.	Moderate rules the use of funding.	Extensive rules on the use of funding.

Salaries	Rising salaries can hinder movement of staff. In some circumstances, such as extreme deployments, they may ensure that they recruit skilled staff. Salary scales may be developed for UN and NGO agencies.	Limited rules on salary scales for expats in UN and NGOs.	Moderate rules on salary scales for expats in UN and NGOs.	Extensive rules on salary scales for expats in UN and NGOs.
Benefit Packages	High benefits, such as high housing costs covered and high per diem may create a lifestyle that expats may not want to lose. These may be necessary to recruit.	High level benefits per country.	Moderate level benefits per country.	Low level benefits per country.
National Staff HR & Salary & Benefits	National staff may be paid low wages and may have very limited benefit packages. Some may not have access to health insurance or life insurance, yet the risks they take themselves may be high. Salary scales may be developed for national staff. Benefit scales may be developed for national staff.	Limited rules on salary scales and benefit rules for national staff per country.	Moderate rules on salary scales and benefit rules for national staff per country.	Rigid rules on salary scales and benefit rules for national staff per country.

Table 6.2 Indicators Requiring no Reform, Partial or Full Reform.

Source: (Author 2024)

Reform should ensure that the humanitarian agencies are more focused on people and delivering high quality services. A test of reform will also be measured in the lives of those we serve.

“Following the fragmented response to the Syria crisis and the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, a fresh set of reforms was launched via the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit—notably a package of comprehensive commitments between donors and aid agencies to efficiency and effectiveness, known as the Grand Bargain”. (Saez et al, 2021, p.1).

Of course, there is a firm basis to work from in this regard. The UN Secretary General's (1997) reform report outlined a programme of reform that envisaged new leadership and management structures, streamlined coordination, and strengthening of cohesion, strategic coherence and direction. There have been several other reforms since 1999, 2002, 2005, 2007 and 2016 (See literature review). Ongoing efforts to emphasise reform are reflected in numerous reviews, initiatives and developments. However, in overall terms, the response to successive UN reform initiatives has not been prompt, effective or uniform:

"It is appropriate at the outset to recognise that, although the Charter has been amended a number of times in largely cosmetic ways, the UN itself has evolved organically in some ways. Beyond such areas where the UN has changed and adapted in various ways, there are reforms which do not require Charter amendment. However, "organic evolution", such as has taken place in recent decades, is insufficient to confront the myriad global challenges we face today". (Global Governance, 2023/2024, p.17).

The gap between promise and performance remains unacceptably large. The research findings suggest that few interviewees were or are confident that critical reformist decisions will be made quickly. In addition, the literature review and document analysis showed that even the onset of major global events has not led to major reform successes:

"The COVID-19 pandemic should have been a watershed moment for putting those commitments into practice. But in the face of COVID-19 challenges, donor governments and international aid organisations didn't lean into their reform commitments around financing and localisation, but rather leaned away from them, at least initially". (Saez et al, 2021, p.1-2).

In the context of this thesis, it is also fair to say that wider dynamics and debates relating to general UN accountability mechanisms have not facilitated movement on reform of organisations. More specifically, the weak accountability mechanisms constitute a fundamental structural weakness of the UN system. This in turn impacts how willing NGOs are to reform their own systems since:

“Past reform agendas have avoided meaningfully challenging that architecture. They have sought to make the humanitarian sector more cohesive and responsive to affected people without altering the fact that the sector’s power structures, bureaucratic incentives, and core business model all tilt toward donors and aid providers rather than aid recipients. The result has been wave after wave of normative commitments and technical guidance, but power, incentives, and resource flows have been left fundamentally unchanged”. (Saez et al, 2021, p.1-2).

If the process of reform is to be successful, then this thesis argues that it must also address some of the key organisational issues discussed in this Chapter.

First, there needs to be extensive and significant enhancements in promoting the accountability of organisational project rules. The humanitarian agenda must be upheld, ensuring beneficiaries have safe access to health care services ensuring that the services provided meet at least minimum standards, but more often than not reach comprehensive standards. Humanitarians have to ensure this is undertaken and they must be extensively held to account.

Second, through the Cluster System organisations should be focused on building the capacity of national staff, local services, ministries and governments, ensuring they remain neutral and partial. This can be measured by looking at the health systems to see if they have been

strengthened, by a reduction in death rates, and that the mortality and morbidity rates of relevant diseases have stabilised. Proxy indicators must be improved and beneficiaries should have enhanced access to health services.

Third, and within the project rules, extensive data should be collected to evidence the progress of these responses and to allow for any opportunities of lessons learnt. Data from a variety of sources should be driving the responses with comprehensive assessments of the data to detect key, impactful, trends. If the project rules only have a limited amount of accountability, then we will not see the reform that is required within these organisations and institutions.

Fourth, human resources entities in organisations need to develop stringent rules and guidance to prevent and reduce nepotism and corruption. This also applies to recruitment processes, where recruitment interviews must follow and comply with the stringent rules to ensure they are transparent and fair, with best qualified staff being short listed for the positions. It is also essential that the positions are open to all. This will ensure that nationals can apply for the senior positions if they have the required skill set. Once an interviewee is selected, they must go through strong recruitment checks to ensure they do have the stated qualifications and that there is no pending criminal or disciplinary actions taken against them, nor that they have any criminal records which would be detrimental to the role, for example, a sex offender. Recruitment screening should take place for all international and national positions to help prevent any safeguarding and/or rights violation breaches and/or issues. With regards to the international presence, this should be reduced with national staff taking over the roles successfully in their home countries. If these checks are weak or the rules are flexible then this will not support reform and will weaken a humanitarian response, even endangering beneficiaries in some circumstances.

The funding system operated by respective humanitarian organisations and institutions must be governed by extensive formal rules and effective informal guidance to facilitate fuller reform. Such reform must ensure that funding is not provided directly to states or organisations from the donor, but that there is a form of pooling of the funds to ensure that both respective power dynamics are not abused and also that the countries supported are based on needs rather than on wider state agendas. This will not be easy to achieve. Not least since this thesis shows that often preferences for more limited formal rules on funding create path dependencies and unintended consequences that inadvertently produce obstacles to, and block, any further reform from taking place.

Donor reports from UN agencies, NGOs and NNGOs need to be held to account, with regular checks taking place to ensure the information provided is true and accurate. Extensive data collection must be expected with detailed MEAL information based on both qualitative and quantitative data. The reporting must be extensive so that the information can be used to improve further responses 'in country'. And the data collection systems must be standardised so that there can be a comparison between agencies. Limited reporting and MEAL information will hinder reform.

UN, NGOs and NNGOs budgets also should be shaped by and require the development of extensive formal rules from the donor. Whilst there needs to be flexibility, this can be provided on a case-by-case basis by writing to the donor to obtain approval and transparency. Organisations must be held to account for the use of funding within their responses. Staff salaries and benefit rates should be transparent, with detailed information provided. ICR rates should be limited and standardised and the percentage directly spent on beneficiaries should always be provided to show that the respective organisations can deliver and fund cost effective and timely responses. These can then be used, alongside the minimum standards

upheld and the MEAL data provided, to justify organisational response and further funding requirements within an emergency. To ensure there is full reform the budget must have extensive rules otherwise if the rules are limited then there will be limited data and information provided and this will hinder reform.

Expats salaries and benefit packages need to be reformed. Currently there is a wide range of salaries and packages being received, some even working as volunteers. Whilst others are receiving extremely high salaries with a wide range of benefits from housing and per diem to university fees and cars. A salary scale must be provided by the cluster or another institution, for expats, so that there are limitations to what they can be paid, whilst these are done in some settings, and in the UN in particular, they need to be based on what the interviewee can earn in home countries. Whilst this is very difficult to undertake as expats come from a variety of settings, humanitarians must hold onto the need to ensure that salaries and packages are fair for all. Benefits are also high with an endless list of what can be received. Any benefits need to be provided on the basis of being 'essential', based on needs within a country, and should not encourage nor provide for extremely luxurious lifestyles. Again, there needs to be extensive formal rules that encourage a portfolio of lower-level benefits as part of any future reform. Otherwise with continuation of limited formal rules and the maintenance of high-level benefits, then ever present institutional obstacles to major reform will persist. This in turn should increase the amount of funding available for the beneficiaries and in turn increase the numbers reached.

National staffs' salaries and benefit packages remain a more complex area to address. International organisations must be careful not to impact upon the national economy by overpaying national staff. Nor can they support the breakdown of health systems with staff leaving to work for the international organisations because they have significantly higher

salaries. Again, there needs to be rigid rules for a full reform to take place, otherwise if the rules are limited then there will be no reform.

“For those who have lived through past reform efforts, there is a bit of déjà vu here. The Grand Bargain has ended up on a similar path to processes that preceded it: dissipating political engagement despite the best efforts of skilled leaders, mired in technocratic committees, and producing modest progress but nowhere near the intended degree of tangible change”. (Saez et al, 2021, p.7).

Following international presence, the affected country should have returned to a higher preparedness state should another major incident occur. The funding available should be used wisely, and effectively and the responses should be efficient and timely. Each response should impact the next, to improve future responses, but for this to happen there needs to be a full reform of the current system with the ability to continue reforming. Whilst there are some incredible responses and agencies globally, it is crucial that this system which has not had any *major* reforms for many years, is still fit for purpose.

6.7 CONCLUSION

The findings of this thesis broadly show that institutions matter, and are the basis for growth and development objectives; the rules dictate and transparency and accountability of interventions; and that staff are reliant on huge salaries and benefit packages. These point towards necessary reforms around rules, Human Resources, funding, budgets, and salaries. In conclusion, the sheer weight of key research findings points towards one clear direction of travel; namely that the prevailing view is that the humanitarian system requires significant and urgent reform. And that this reform is vital if the humanitarian and Cluster System is to remain relevant and effective in the 21st century. We need to move away from ‘the

implementation of incremental improvements, rather than transformative change throughout the sector”. (Bruder & Baar, 2024, p.1). However, the discussion in this Chapter also points to some nuances that will need to underpin a successful reformist approach, especially if “future generations do not continue to suffer from the institutional shortcomings already made clear.” (Global Governance, 2023/2024, p.15). More specifically, reform of project rules, specifically ICR rates, human resources, staff salaries and benefits need to lie at the core of any full reform in order that the organisations and institutions that underpin the humanitarian Cluster Systems are to become more ‘fit for purpose’. In addition, from the research findings, we can also see a strong case that the funding mechanisms and the national staff packages require at least partial reform (although budgeting arrangements may not need to be so reformed so extensively).

CHAPTER 7

7.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Chapter returns to the research questions (outlined in Chapter 1, Section 1.9) focusing specifically on the main research and discussion findings relating to ICR rates, staff salaries and benefits, with further reflections on human resources. This Chapter culminates with a series of thesis-informed recommendations for further academic research, before drawing the thesis to a close with accompanying recommendations for professional practice.

7.1 RETURNING TO AND REFLECTING ON THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- To what extent can (neo) institutional theories provide sufficient insights into the present-day functioning of Cluster Systems in international humanitarian health and medical assistance?

Institutional theories and concepts have been applied throughout this thesis (See for example Chapter 3, 3.1.2 and 3.1.3) and that have provided notable insight into understanding the present functioning of Cluster Systems in humanitarian health and medical assistance. As the research findings have indicated, and the discussion Chapter considered, there is a broad agreement that the role of institutions remains critical to the functioning of the existing Cluster System that supports humanitarian assistance (See Chapter 3, Section 3.1). In essence, institutions do matter! Moreover, the research findings do suggest that interviewees also overwhelmingly agree that institutions matter; and support the view that they are vital to the delivery of international aid (See Chapter 5, Section 5.3 and Table 5.2, Main Finding 4). It is also apparent from the research findings that current participating organisations provide strong coordination and clear direction underpinning contemporary emergency responses (See

Table 5.2, Main Finding 5). Such organisations also provide the main actors that undertake successful and extensive pursuit of funds and resources, (See Chapter 5, Section 5.2). Hence, the humanitarian system is a key platform promoting close cooperation with governments and even with local populations to reduce suffering and save lives. In many instances, the research also supports the view that there has been the creation of formal standards, rules and norms in line with a new institutionalist perspective, (See Chapter 5, Section 5.3).

The research for this thesis also confirms that the health Cluster System constitutes a vital part of this wider global institutional framework and has supported responses with a focus on the health needs of populations. Indeed, the health Cluster System was designed to enhance an emergency response and provide technical assistance, (See Table 5.2, Main Finding 5). The results show that this health Cluster System represents a dedicated institutional system that provides and coordinates direct services, such as medications, treatment and diagnostics. In recognition of its ongoing value, the WHO has supported significant investment into working towards the enhancement of the Cluster Systems' ongoing technical capacity, leadership and accountability (See Figure 1.2) as well as enhancing stakeholders' relationships (See Figure 1.1). However, as new institutionalism also shows, institutions often historically evolve over time with vested interests (See Chapter 3, Section 3.2). In the case of humanitarian assistance, the development of such institutional vested interests has meant that humanitarian assistance has become progressively difficult to define, with, as Borton, (2009) argues: "lack of clarity as to what the humanitarian system actually consists of and where its boundaries lie".

Nevertheless, the research for this thesis also shows that it is often these key investments, leadership or stakeholder relationships, that have led to path dependencies with unintended consequences which now seem to complicate institutional aims and missions, leading to areas

of misfit of purpose (See Chapter 3, Section 3.4.1). A quarter of interviewees, for example, stated there was a need for increased accountability from a system wide perspective, especially given the huge community of stakeholders and multi-billion-dollar budgets being commonplace (See Table 5.15, Main Findings 49-50). The research findings also confirm that – at least from a new institutional perspective – there is an overwhelming contemporary need for institutions need to support the governments they are serving, and enhance their capacity (See Chapter 5, Section 5.1). The research findings also demonstrated that there was a strong desire for reform across the humanitarian system with many interviewees commonly stating that there were major barriers to reform (See Table 5.1, Main Finding 1). In essence, there are now many institutionally embedded vested interests that originally facilitated strong, leadership that drove effective humanitarian response’ However, today they were now becoming a growing barrier to future reform. (See also Luff, 2009, p 27).

Rather worryingly, the interviews were littered with concerning statements from participants, highlighting, for example, that humanitarian and Cluster System is “run like a cartel”, “difficult to reform, perhaps even impossible” “driven by money” and “has little investment in finding solutions”. These statements were supported by rationales that were often highly compatible with new institutional assumptions, that emphasised that organisational structures were largely driven from within, even if institutional aims sought to structure distinctive outcomes. In large, interviewees commented regularly on the importance and merits of developing formal and informal rules and procedures that become embedded in an organisation. And that approaches of embedded senior leaders of organisations towards the development of formal and informal rules often influenced possibilities to undertake wider reform of their organisations and even the humanitarian and Cluster Systems more generally. Overall, new institutional approaches offer significant value in explaining the dynamics of the health Cluster System and organisational attitudes towards major reform.

- To what extent can the present delivery challenges faced by the humanitarian health sector be explained as the unintentional consequences of the way the sector itself commits humanitarian resources?

Historical institutionalism emphasises that institutional rules, constraints and responses have many outcomes. However, these rules, constraints and responses can have notable consequences that are hard to reverse because of the creation of path dependencies (See Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2). Wolff, Wichmann & Gregory, (2009), for example, discusses how institutions have an agenda based on the formal and informal patterns of development. It is these pathways that shape the key path dependencies as to where the respective organisation will be or go (See Chapter 3, Section 3.6). These path dependencies in turn will lead to intended and unintended consequences within an organisation/institution, that will require resolution through institutional or financial reform. (See Chapter 3, and Table 5.8, Main Finding 20).

Since the World Humanitarian Summit, (2016) there have been multiple discussions on reform, and there have been some reformist initiatives, there is still a long way to go. Importantly, most reform initiatives have focused on the funding structures, in particular investing in long-term funding (See Chapter 2, Section 2.4). Indeed, “significantly more work remains to be accomplished, especially at country level. Since the last revision of the Grand Bargain in 2021, humanitarian needs have grown further”. (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2023, p.1).

Nevertheless, this thesis contends that to fully understand the impact of unintended consequences, there is a need to appreciate the impact of previously made formal and informal rules. Moreover, the research for this thesis suggests that there is rather limited evidence that leaderships completely understand the impacts of previously made formal and

informal rules, to the current consequences, even if there is an awareness that the system was set up at a time when humanitarian work had a different connotation. However, what the thesis does illustrate is that there is awareness of some unintended consequences and that these do relate to issues of salaries and benefits.

7.2 SALARIES & BENEFITS

New Institutionalism perspectives support the argument of this thesis that the outcomes of humanitarian assistance are being undermined by an institutional culture supporting of embedded high salaries for senior staff and expats and other particular vested interests, such as benefit packages. This institutional culture has created a strong path dependency of retention that does not allow for the system to be challenged. (See Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1). The humanitarian system needs to find and recruit technical specialists, and sometimes just manpower, who are willing to make sacrifices to support a response, and as a result this has provided some with a career with high salaries and great benefits. This has resulted in a self-perpetuating cycle, where excessive salaries for those making policy changing decisions, has resulted in low turnover at a senior level, stale decisions and a barrier to reform (See Chapter 1, Section 1.7). A prevailing line of reasoning supporting the perpetuation of such path dependency is that, in any humanitarian response, the numbers of paid workers are limited. Therefore, there is competition within the humanitarian field to offer good deals and competitive packages to ensure the recruitment of qualified or the best staff. However, the unintended consequence of this line of action is that it may have end up undermining the ability to serve a larger population in an emergency response with the funds available. This is because of the huge costs associated with paying and funding these generous expat salaries and benefits rather than going directly to those in need. Whilst it is apparent that there is a need for expats and technical staff within humanitarian responses, it remains equally unclear

who and how many of these are necessary and if the high salaries and benefits are essential to ensure the recruitment of these personnel, and their relationship to delivering high-quality responses on a consistent basis.

Furthermore, these senior staff that enjoy such generous salaries and benefits packages have notable conflicts of interest at stake and vested interests at play. Yet, they remain key decision-makers critical to successful reformist implementation agendas. Hence, the paradoxical challenge remains as to how incentivise such staff whose support is vital to reform decisions. They will need, rather ironically, to have further incentives to make the necessary changes, given that they themselves will incur a personal loss if changes to salaries and benefit packages were implemented or that a completely new team of staff be brought in to reform the system. (See Chapter 3, Section 3.2).

Humanitarian actors spend many years working in difficult situations in the field. There often comes a time when these experts desire to return to a 'home' environment. The research findings also suggest that, to retain specific staff, whether this is based on skillset or personal relationships, HQ jobs are created to give them a way out of field life (See Chapter 5, Section 5.11). In many circumstances, these experts do not have a skillset that is easily transferrable to their home environment (See Chapter 5, Section 5.13). Therefore, these circumstances also fuel further untended consequences since this is largely a sub-optimal measure and/or option to keep them in high salaried jobs, sometimes with the benefits or a percentage adjustment to their salaries to compensate for the move to a more expensive country (See Chapter 3, Section 3.7.2). In some circumstances, the staff can be very experienced in supporting the field and can be a real asset to the projects; other times staff may not be skilled to undertake the job they have been offered. Whilst donors' demands do inflate the need for higher ICR costs, it is unclear if these high percentages are really necessary, or if in fact they are needed

to provide expats with potentially unessential jobs, so they can return to home life (See Table 5.9, Main Finding 27). In addition, with high staffing levels at HQ, this, in turn, requires more office space, potentially in a variety of locations to accommodate staffing (See Chapter 5, Section 5.11). The research findings do highlight that respective humanitarian organisations cannot run without ICR costs being covered and they are indeed essential costs. Yet, as interviewee 9 (Dataset 2) comments, it is unclear if there needs to be a standardised mapping of what is essential staffing to meet the demands of the organisation: “Donor’s demand so much that it makes them so high”. Interviewee 7 (Dataset 2) also commented on how organisational formal rules have been shaped to ensure that all projects incorporate assumptions about, and provide, an ICR percentage within the budget costs. However, if this was to be streamlined and mapped out to show what truly is essential, those based in HQ would not necessarily be willing to push for reform once again because the impact is personal. Throughout the interviews for this thesis, it is widely apparent that there is a lack of transparency governing ICR rates, salaries and benefits packages, and people are very unsure of what actually happens to the ICR funds (See Chapter 5, Section 5.11). Until these issues and institutional dynamics are addressed openly and in a transparent way, then powerful unintended consequences will continue to appear that will ultimately complicate roads to reform.

- How can the challenges to substantial reform of humanitarian resources be managed now and in the future?

Research for this thesis confirms the view that one of the keys to further reform lies with donors. The latter constitute a highly influential force shaping humanitarian and Cluster Systems. And with donors being mainly governments, it often proves very difficult to obtain funding to resources any future reform if those respective donors do not support reform (See

Table 5.3, Main Finding 12 and Table 5.1, Main Finding 2). It seems that “Many of the challenges we face today in the humanitarian sector can only be addressed through multi-stakeholder collaboration” (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2023, p.1)

With very little funding provided for reform, and little accountability to reform, reforming the Cluster System and the humanitarian system becomes almost an impossible task (See Chapter 2, 2.5 and 2.11, and Table 5.1, Main Finding 3). In humanitarian responses, we can detect rival groups, such as UN agencies, NGOs, INGOs, that compete for the same resources. Indeed, to manage such rivalries, the Cluster System has ended up creating formal rules and structuring activity so they can compete and survive (See Table 5.8, Main Finding 23). In exchange, participating organisations of sought to work within the Cluster System and appropriate formal rules so that they too can secure any funding opportunities available from donors (See Table 5.8, Main Finding 22).

The research in this thesis has clearly shown that, internally, organisations sometimes suffer from a number of issues that inhibit reform (See Chapter 2, Section 2,11 & Chapter 5, Section 5.1). As interviewee 18 (from Dataset 1) nicely commented these were firstly, ‘mono-cultures’ developed largely at the HQ level (and driven by visa issues - something the UN does not suffer from due to its special visa status); and secondly, a form of ‘founders complex’ (where an NGO was formed in a particular time, location and culture) that ensures that respective organisational attitudes and practice are often rooted too deeply in the culture of origin. Many organisations also struggle significantly with impartiality, neutrality and independence. There are concerns that the UN regards as the biggest inhibitor to reform.

Greater reform is needed at the State level as a donor, especially when compared to NGO contexts, (See Table 5.15, Main Finding 49 and 51) as interviewee 18 from Dataset 1 states: “Humanitarian Assistance that cannot be used as an arm of Foreign Policy has been

significantly eroded”. Nations continue to blur those lines”. As interviewee 24 (from Dataset 1) goes on to state how “governments funding various UN agencies are using aid as a political tool. No one should be surprised by this - it's ignorant to think aid that is funded by governments could ever exist without a diplomatic angle. In most cases, I would argue this isn't sinister - after all, generating goodwill between governments is often the basis for a peaceful co-existence; however, when aid is used as a political tool, the entire dynamic is changed. I speak specifically of the structure here - the apparatus”. Funding needs to be less influential, more neutral and specific for reform with clear objectives and actions that will be held to account (See also Chapter 5, Section 5.17).

With executive leadership, and those with influence within these systems also receiving the high salaries and large benefits packages, several interviewees highlighted that there needs to be a neutral team to lead the reform agenda (See Table 5.13, Main Finding 44). Whether this is an external taskforce or internal is something to be considered. However, as the research results indicate: “it is important to obtain different views and opinions, the process cannot afford to be too heavy” (Interviewee 1, from Dataset 1). The same interviewee also commented that, for any reform to be impactful, a clear process needs to be undertaken, including: “a needs assessment, evaluation, people, committee, reform, and taskforce”. Yet in addition the research findings also reveal that reform also needs ‘buy in’ from organisations and their staff, as well as a unified system of accountability. It is also crucial that for any internal reform to take place, adequate funding and resourcing must be made available (See Table 5.15, Main Finding 49). To address the excessive salaries, there are various suggestions of how this can be managed, but it may take time to evaluate which approach may be most effective. For example, there needs to be a clear payment methodology based on established competency frameworks. There were concerns that there is often little investment attributed to finding solutions to the problems learnt in the humanitarian field. In

many instances, humanitarian work is governed by short-term funding, and vertical programming does not advocate for sustainable solutions. In addition, the senior executives may need to be replaced if their performance towards, and support for reform is not evidenced. Any reform needs to 'come under an umbrella' and according to the research (Interviewee 12 from Dataset 1), such reformism must be determined to 'do things differently, prescribe norms, adhere to standards and award recognitions for stellar performances, as well as shame those who are siphoning humanitarian assistance funds elsewhere'. The research findings, and especially the interviews also highlighted significant data challenges, such as, the lack of adequate data checks and monitoring, with no real international standards to govern them, and no international vetting systems to work with. Donors can add to this array of reform challenges by linking the reform standards to funding, (See Chapter 5, Section 5.17).

Whilst the research shows there has been some reform of the humanitarian system (See Chapter 2, Section 2.11), this has either been incomplete, such as providing standards but not ensuring compliance, or it has been reactive to international press releases. As Interviewee 30 (from Dataset) stressed: "The humanitarian system is rigid and slow to change, while the humanitarian processes are, to some extent, at odds with reform. Funding mechanisms do not seek to accommodate this. While leaders from the humanitarian system may lead the reform, the underpinning system is rigid. Organisational competition and rivalries further hinder reform". Interviewee 35 (from Dataset 1) , goes on to state that "The sector in general is not very proactive or forward thinking. This comes from, in many cases, the quality of leadership".

Reforming the system will be an immense task. It is also very clear from the research findings, that many interviewees viewed such reform as constituting a great contribution to the

humanitarian field. Indeed, many humanitarian workers are adaptable and creative, of whom strongly desire to improve and reform the system. (See Chapter 5, Section 5.2 & 5.17). However, it was also worth noting that the system needs to be continually reformed and adjusted as contexts and requirements change. Systems need to be more formal, professional and accountable and this suggests from a new institutional perspective, a stronger focus of revisionist formal rules and impactful informal guidance.

7.3 NEED FOR REFORM

This thesis contributes to scholarly research by addressing a discernible knowledge gap in the study of humanitarian responses. The thesis has developed and applied a new institutionalist informed conceptual framework to aid understanding of the needs for reform and the obstacles to reform. This thesis identifies the existence of a complex relationship between institutional dynamics and decision making in the humanitarian sector. It highlights that it is often the case that unintentional and intentional consequences, especially as regards the way the sector itself commits to humanitarian resources, can hinder reform. It also shows that key aspects, specifically in relation to staff salaries, benefits and project rules, complicate and undermine commitments to and abilities to deliver reform, which ultimately then affects the delivery and impact of effective humanitarian emergency responses due to the ever-rising cost of human resources.

7.4 FUTURE PATHWAYS FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Future Pathways	Comments
1. Others sectors	Use conceptual framework on the other 10 sectors.
2. Donor's influences	Political influences and funding expectations.
3. HQ	Staffing and skillsets.
4. Recruitment Process	Procedures and skillsets.
5. Standards of care	Policies and guidelines.

Table 7.1 Recommendations for Academic Research

Source: Author, 2024.

There are five recommendations for future pathways for academic research that can be drawn from the thesis. The first recommendation is, the need to study other sectors within the Cluster System (See Chapter 2, Section 2.8); such as the WASH cluster, Nutrition Cluster, Logistics Cluster. Indeed, there are currently eleven main clusters that are active within a humanitarian response. This provides fertile ground for further applications of the conceptual framework developed in this thesis, to understand if each cluster needs reforming and strengthening.

The second recommendation looks at the need to understand how donors politically influence humanitarian responses (See Chapter 2, Section 2.6), and whether their influences in a response can be used to bring about a more transparent, effective and efficient outcomes for those they were intended to serve. Donors play an integral role in an emergency, with their funds, expectations, required reports and expected data collection. There is a future opportunity to look at how funding is provided for emergencies and what power that holds over a state. What are the political agendas and is there a form of reform that can protect

funds from having political influences? A humanitarian response is always underpinned by humanitarian principles, one of these being neutrality. However, with funds coming from donors with potential political agendas, does this go against the humanitarian principles?

The third recommendation would be to look at the use of Headquarters in the humanitarian system in further detail since little academic studies exist in this regard (See Chapter 3, Section 3.7.2) A more deep-seated application of new institutionalist approaches may also be useful; helping to discover whether they are an effective use of resources, or should they be streamlined to reduce costs, with specific guidelines for expectations of the department. The skillsets of staff working in HQ could also be investigated further to discover what benefits they offer to an emergency. Such research could also be extended, alongside more detailed research investigations on what are the needs from the field's perspective, as well as the global demands of the organisation.

The fourth recommendation would be to study the recruitment processes prevalent within humanitarian organisations from a new institutional perspective (See Chapter 2, Section 2.10). Further research could assess how to understand when recruitment occurs, what systems are in place, what checks are undertaken, and what qualification staff require for the roles. There is a need to undertake an in-depth look into the circumstances of nepotism and corruption. Does this occur, if so where and why? Have staff been screened for a criminal background, covering fraud, theft, child abuse, violence, rape and so forth? If not why not? This could contribute to helping to reduce the risks we are seeing increasingly regarding hostility towards, and violence against, beneficiaries, as well as the misuse of funding. Indeed, this is also supported by the literature and document analysis of this thesis:

“Humanitarian action generally takes place in difficult and insecure contexts where corruption is often deeply embedded in societal norms. At the same time, there is also recognition that

whatever is done to tackle corruption needs to be done in a way that continues to enable humanitarian actors to channel aid to reach difficult-to-access vulnerable populations. Solutions need to be balanced with a view to maintain assistance to those in need and to enhance its integrity". (CHS Alliance, 2015, p.1).

Lastly, the fifth recommendation which be to undertake further research focused on a deep dive into understanding the policies and guidelines for healthcare within an emergency (See Chapter 2, Section 2.5, Chapter 3, Section 3.4.1 and 3.4.2). More specifically, to investigate what represents and is classed as a minimum standard and what is a comprehensive standard and does the cluster advocate for the use of the same guidance? What regulatory bodies are there, ensuring that practices are done safely? What are the barriers to providing comprehensive health care, is it based on funding, capacity and security, or are there other areas that prevent humanitarians from providing this service? Are they just providing minimum standards or do they strive, where possible to provide comprehensive standards to all beneficiaries? What are the skills of the staff, and how are they monitored or assessed? What are the impacts of ensuring all beneficiaries have comprehensive services? What are the funding implications? What is the impact upon the surrounding communities?

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICES

From this thesis and accompanying the recommendations on further research, there are two main recommendations for professional practice. The first recommendation is that it is clear that there needs to be a major reform of the staff salaries and benefits (See Chapter 3, Section 3.7.6; Chapter 5, Section 5.15; and Chapter 6, Section 6.7).

The salaries this can be split into several areas; expat verses national, technical verses non-technical and those deployed verses non deployed staff. It is apparent, that, in order to not distort the local economy, national staff salaries need to fall in line with government positions.

It is also important to ensure that staff are not leaving positions in government, ultimately depleting their capacity, to take up 'well paid' jobs within the humanitarian system. Governments cannot match the current salaries that humanitarian agencies are providing. So, when the work is handed back to the government, they are currently faced with a task that is beyond their ability.

Expat salaries need to be within an agreed salary scale that is fair and competitive for both the expat and the situation they are working in. The Cluster System needs to lead this in coordination with all agencies and a joint agreement to the final policy must be sought, so that all agencies agree with, and support, the process. The policy needs to have salary scales that cannot be negotiated, unless undertaken by the task force, and that has already considered appropriate skillsets and qualifications.

When developing this policy, it is important to consider what work is being undertaken, both from an impact to the expat (poor and dangerous living conditions), but also given the needs on the ground (lack of funding). The salary must be justified given the limited funds available for a disaster and the potential impact to those who have been affected by the disaster.

Technical positions vs non-technical staff also must have a salary scale which reflects the skillset of the individual, whether they are an expat or national and this needs to be developed in coordination with leads from UN agencies and NGOs to be used by all agencies (See Chapter 2, Section 2.5; Chapter 3, Section, 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 and Section 3.7.2). It is important that someone who has spent time and money obtaining a degree, masters and potentially a PhD

is acknowledged for the specific skillset that they can bring to the response. In addition, it is also worth noting that experience in a disaster setting should also bring about monetary value. Once again, this salary scale needs to be justified and developed in reflection of the situation they are working in.

Lastly, deployed staff and non-deployed staff. These should either be compensation through benefits for those deployed or through the salary scale for those deployed so there is a fair reflection that these staff have left families and friends at home, as well as entering a potentially unsafe situation or difficult environment.

Whilst there may be scope to provide a scale to show some flexibility per salary line so that organisations can have an element of competitiveness, it cannot be to such an extreme. This policy can then be provided to donors to encourage their support through funding projects appropriately and also to justify how funds have been used within an emergency.

From this research, it seems that the benefits were the most extreme and variable (See Chapter 3 Section 3.7.6). Whilst there is certainly a need for some benefits if it is not compensated for in terms of the salaries. Yet, this needs to be significantly reformed. It was clear the thesis' findings that both nationals and expats found this to be extreme and varied.

Interviewees for this thesis also offered some key benefits that should be provided for those deployed. An essential package would contain; health insurance, including medivac insurance, pension and life insurance. For the safety and wellbeing of staff, all staff should be provided with health insurance, including medivac insurance, pension and life insurance. It may be plausible to consider that they should be made mandatory for all organisations to be part of the Cluster System. Holiday and R&R leave was also deemed as a high need given the extreme circumstances that staff worked in and the need for staff to see their families. For staff's

mental health and well-being holiday is an essential provision and R&R is essential in some locations. The Cluster System in coordination with leads from all agencies should decide the frequency and duration of these based on the locations. Guidance can then be provided once again to all agencies and donors. Hardship and danger pay was classed as also essential, but many felt both were not necessary and that there should be an overall package for this, especially as the percentage was varied in each location anyway.

Lastly, as regards the benefits, there were mixed opinions on respective needs, covering housing, per diem and household services, such as cooks, cleaners and drivers. The ones with strikingly mixed opinions could be at the agency's discretion, such as allocations for housing, per diem and household services, such as cooks, cleaners and drivers. After all, respective contexts may dictate key services, such as, there may also be a specific need for drivers, especially in insecure situations. There were some concerns that some of these were given in extreme, especially by the UN such as per diem which went as high as \$500 per day, which is to provide for food, drink and a newspaper. Others felt that basic housing should be provided, given many have houses to pay for in their countries of origin. This could be a justification for a basic housing allowance to cover the costs of living in country.

Other benefits that were discussed were not strongly supported by any interviewees. Indeed, in some cases, they were described as 'criminal'. Such benefits described in this way included, amongst others: bonuses, cars, private school for dependents, set up and close out funds, and post differential allowance(s). These were sometimes regarded as representing a potential misuse of the funds being provided to support those who have been affected by a disaster. Nevertheless, there seems to be a resounding view from this thesis that the humanitarian system needs a major reform and this especially applied to benefits packages. An agreed

benefits package policy with scope for limited flexibility should be developed, agreed and used by all agencies, with donors being provided and supportive of this policy.

The second recommendation for professional practice is for the enhancement and agreement of improved formal project rules (See Chapter 3 Section 3.7.2 and Chapter 5 Section 5.11), and especially ICR rates. It is very difficult to state how many HQ offices an organisation needs and how many staff should be present in them. This is a gap in the data. However, as humanitarian workers, the funding that is provided should be strongly directed towards those who need it most. Everything possible should be done to ensure this happens. Given the demands on HQ from donors, and those on the field, there needs to be a place where the work that is not directly involved in a response, is undertaken. The bigger the organisation the more work will be expected. Nevertheless, the interviews revealed that some organisations do possess substantial private funding, such as MSF, who will not require support for ICR, and others may not have any private funding. What needs to be discussed, understood and agreed by the Cluster System and its partners, is how many offices are needed, and what types of staff are required to man it effectively. Some organisations may need regional offices set up as well as HQ offices to coordinate with other agencies in Geneva, Washington DC or London. But each office must have clear TOR, with a breakdown of the staff required to undertake the necessary work. And the percentage of ICR must be agreed within the Cluster System, again, in coordination with all agencies and this should be the percentage donors need to be providing. It is suggested that they could be incorporated as a formal requirement to fund a project. It is not to say that the ICR rate should be low, but that the work undertaken must be regarded as essential. This would ensure any crucial work that needs to be undertaken, but the rates cannot vary so immensely, and all donors should be willing to pay sufficient costs. There is a huge difference between USA, EU and UK as well as research donors.

It is essential that the humanitarian system, and in particular the health cluster, puts in place some new policies and code of conducts to ensure the use of funding is appropriate and rebalanced. But it also needs to look more deeply into ensuring that the work that is undertaken is effective, efficient and is looking to build up the capacity of the countries that are most vulnerable to disasters. This could also be reconciled with compliance with UNSDGs since:

“The new round of global development goals – the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – has highlighted the importance of decent work, reducing inequality and enabling sustainable livelihoods for the eradication of poverty everywhere. If the SDGs are to avoid the criticisms of their predecessors, the Millennium Development Goals, we will need to vertically integrate global goals with local, everyday workplace practices”. (Carr, & McWha-Hermann, 2016, p.4).

Overall, this thesis suggests that moving to further reform is the only viable option to make the humanitarian system and the health clusters system ready for the challenges of the 21st century. Systems cannot be retained that are no longer fit for purpose or be content with arguments that propagate that reform is not possible in current circumstances. If changes are required such as bringing in new leadership that is not dependent on the current system, then it needs to be done, for the sake of those suffering from the unimaginable impacts of disasters and humanitarian emergencies.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS DATASET 1

Interview Guide 1

Interview Guide Humanitarian Reform

Date:

Title:

Company:

1. What is the role of international humanitarian assistance workers?
2. What kind of competencies do you think humanitarian workers should have?

Leadership, Technical Expertise

3. Do you think these competencies have been defined by a western view of humanitarianism?

4. Should international aid workers have the same competencies to national workers?
5. What kind of competencies do you think international aid workers should have in addition to national workers and are they complimentary?
6. How much do you think an international aid worker should be paid?
7. Do you think they should be paid more or less than national aid workers?
8. How do you justify aid workers being paid as much as they are?
9. Do you think that the way aid workers are organised, inhibits reform or makes it easier?

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS DATASET 2

Interview Guide 2

Organisation:

Title:

Age:

21-30

31-

41-50

Years of Experience in Humanitarian Work:

1-5

5-10

10-15

15-20

20+

Years of Experience Working on the Field:

0 1-5 5-10 10-15 15-20 20+

Level of Seniority:

None Junior Middle Senior Specialist

Expat

National

☐

Which countries have you worked:

Date:

Investigating salaries and conditions:

1) Have you witnessed either whilst on the field or working in HQ, a difference between expats and nationals' salaries and benefits packages?

Yes

☐

No

☐

1a) If yes, what kind of benefits do expats and nationals receive?

	Expatriate	National
Higher Salary	☒	☒
Per Diem	☒	☒
Housing	☒	☒
Bonus	☒	☒
Hardship Allowance	☒	☒
Danger Allowance	☒	☒
Access to Car	☒	☒
Private Schooling	☒	☒
Partners Allowance	☒	☒
R&R Allowance	☒	☒
Other: Please state:		

1b) What are the most important benefits for the role?

1c) Who takes more personal risks during an emergency response, national staff or expats?

National



Expats



Same



1d) Why is that?

1e) What do contracts state hardship and danger pay is for?

Hardship:

Danger:

Why is that?

1g) Are the benefits contracts different for expats and nationals?

Yes



No



How and why are they different?

1h) Are national staff needed in an emergency?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Why?

Are expats needed in an emergency?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Why?

Do you think in your experience of emergencies, the ratio between expats and national staff is appropriate?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Why?

1i) What extra skills do expats offer when compared to national staff?

Training/Capacity Building ☐

Qualifications ☐

Experience ☐

☐

Cultural Understanding

Risk Management



Technical Specialty



Other. Please state:

Which of these do you consider the most important?

What extra skills do national staff offer when compared to expats?

Training/Capacity Building



Qualifications



Experience



Cultural Understanding



Risk Management



Technical Specialty



Other. Please state:

Which of these do you consider the most important?

1j) Does an emergency need the skills an expat or national staff offer?

Expatriate

Yes ☒ No ☐

National

Yes ☒ No ☐

Why have you provided this answer?

Impact of Humanitarian Work:

2a) From your experience of working in humanitarian work, what do you regard as being the best way to measure the impact of relief in a country?

Country Capacity Improved ☒

Less International Services Required ☐

Existence of Sustainable Programs ☐

Evidence Reduced Death Rates ☐

Reduced International Funding Required ☐

Not Measurable/ No Impact ☐

Other. Please state:

Why have you chosen these?

2b) How does your organisations collect, validate, analyse data? Collect

Validate

Analyse

Not undertaken

2c) What evidence is there of the success your organisation has in a humanitarian response?

Documentation



Research



Evidence Based Research



Country Feedback



Improvements in emergency situation



Other.

Please give examples:

2d) Are these results being recorded, analysed, published?

Recorded

Yes ☒ No ☒

Analysed

Yes ☒ No ☒

Published

Yes ☒ No ☒

Please give me an example:

2e) Why do you think we are still in some countries after many years? No

Impact Made ☒

Needs Keep Increasing ☒

No Capacity Developed ☒

Created an International Dependency ☒

Emergency Work Destroyed ☒

Other. Please state:

Please explain why you choose the above.

2f) Why do you think we are in countries that are so developed?

No Impact Made ☐

Needs Keep Increasing ☐

No Capacity Developed ☐

Created an International Dependency ☐

Emergency Work Destroyed ☐

Other. Please state:

Please explain why you choose the above.

2g) What are the measures you are using to assess your success?

Checklists ☐

Risk Assessments ☐

Objectives ☐

KPIs

Lessons learnt

☐

Meeting with local/national government

☐

Interviewing beneficiaries

☐

Other. Please state:

None of these:

2h) Have aid workers done enough to hand over the work back to countries and exit?

Yes

☐

No

☐

Why?

Why not?

Government Involvement:

3a) Governments are the head of any response for their country. In your experience of working with governments, were they encouraged to exercise this responsibility?

Yes ☒ No ☒

Government were present in meetings ☒

Governments were proactive ☒

Governments had capacity ☒

Governments opinions were heard ☒

Governments were respected ☒

Why have you chosen this response?

3b) Should governments in country be the leader of the humanitarian response?

Yes ☒ No ☒

If yes, why?

If not, why not?

3c) In your opinion do you think the leadership of any humanitarian response should be through government allocated personnel?

Yes

No

☐

If yes, why?

If not, why not?

3c) Who should hold the funds for a humanitarian response? Government

UN

☐☐

INGO

☐

NNGO

☐

Other. Please state:

Program Dynamics:

4a) All proposals contain a percentage of indirect costs for any program. What is the definition of the use of indirect costs for your organisation?

Is this definition effective?

Is this a good use of indirect funding?

Yes

☐

No

☐

Any other comments?

4b) How many HQ offices do you have?

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

4c) How many staff are present in those offices?

	Office 1	Office 2	Office 3	Office 4	Office 5
0-50	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
51-100	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
101-150	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
151-200	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
201-250	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4c) Is this the right balance between offices and staffing?

Offices

Yes

☐

No

☐

Staffing Yes ☒ No ☒

4d) Do you think these are justified?

Yes ☒ No ☒

If so, why?

If not, why not?

Any other comments

Does it need reforming?

Yes ☒ No ☒

If so, why?

If not, why not?

Any other comments

Humanitarian Reform:

5a) Does the structure of the Humanitarian Response System Need Reforming?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, why?

If not, why not?

5b) If so, where is the reform needed?

Competency of staff ☐

Staff salaries and benefits ☐

Humanitarian Objectives ☐

Funding structure ☐

☐

Cluster System

Other. Please state

Why?

APPENDIX 3: ABBREVIATIONS

	Code	Details
1	AAH	Action Against Hunger
2	AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
3	CAP	Consolidated Appeals Process
4	CDC	Centres for Disease Control & Prevention
5	CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
6	CEO	Chief Operating Officer
7	CHF	Common Humanitarian Fund
8	Dfid	Department for International Development
9	DG	Director General
10	DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
11	ECHO	European Civil Protection Operations & Humanitarian Aid
12	EOC	Emergency Operations Centre
13	ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
14	EU	European Union
15	FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
16	GBV	Gender Based Violence
17	GDP	Gross Domestic Product
18	GHO	Global Humanitarian Overview
19	HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
20	HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
21	HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
22	HPC	Humanitarian Programme Cycle
23	HQ	Head Quarters
24	HR	Human Resources
25	HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
26	IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
27	IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
28	ICR	Indirect Cost Recovery
29	IDPs	Internally Displaced Populations
30	IHR	International Health Regulations
31	IJM	International Justice Mission
32	IMC	International Medical Corps
33	INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
34	IRC	International Rescue Committee
35	MEAL	Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning
36	MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
37	MSF	Medecins Sans Frontieres
38	MYHF	Multi-Year Humanitarian Fund
39	NGO	Non-Government Organisation
40	NNGOs	National Non-Government Organisations
41	NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council

42	OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
43	PHEM	Public Health Emergency Management
44	PP	Per Person
45	RI	Relief International
46	R&R	Rest & Recreation
47	SEA	Sexual Exploitation & Abuse
48	SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
49	TB	Tuberculosis
50	UK	United Kingdom
51	UN	United Nations
52	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
53	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
54	UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
55	US	United States
56	USA	United States of America
57	USAID	US Agency for International Development
58	USD	United States Dollar
59	VP	Vice President
60	VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas
61	WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
62	WFP	World Food Programme
63	WHO	World Health Organisation

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW CRITERIA

Criteria	Range
Years of experience in humanitarian work	Above 5
Years of experience in the field	At least 1 year
Level of seniority	Middle management or above
Expat or national	Must include a variety
Age or sex	Must include a variety

Table 4.3 The Criteria for Interview Selection

Source: (Author 2024)

Organisational Experience.	Save the Children. Medical Group, Private. IMC, UNICEF. IJM. Jhpiego. Oxfam. International Aid. Medair. Academic University. OCHA. NRC. US State Department. International Defence & Security. IRC. ThinkWell. AAH. Tearfund. WHO.
Current Title	Co-Coordinator of Alliance. Physician. Senior Director, Senior Health Advisor, Consultant. Senior Program Manager. Senior WASH Advisor. Senior Nutrition Advisor. Deputy Chief of Party. Country Director. Senior Advisor. Regional Representative for Middle East. Vice President. Chief. Humanitarian Affairs Officer. HR. Foreign Affairs Officer. Operations Manager. Senior Media Advisor. Emergency Health Responder. Regional Operations Director. WASH Manager. Polio Public Health Officer. Communications Officer.
Age	
21-30	0
31-40	9
41-50	17
50+	7

Sex	
Male	14
Female	19
Years of Experience in Humanitarian Work	
(1-5)	0
(5-10)	8
(10-15)	9

15-20	10
20+	6
Years of Experience Working on the Field	
0	0
(1-5)	7
(5-10)	9
(10-15)	9
15-20	4
20+	4
Level of Seniority	
None	0
Junior	0
Middle	6
Senior	13
Specialist	14
Expat	29
National	4

Country Experience	Unknown
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Table 4.4 : The criteria of the Interviewees interviewed in the first interviews.

Source: (Author 2024)

Organisational Experience.	UN, UNICEF, IMC, OFDA, Oxfam, RI, FHI360, USAID, UNHCR, World Bank, MSF, Save the Children, American Red Cross, OCHA, NRC, GOAL, Australian Government, Handicap International, VSO, Mercy Corps, WHO, IRC, Médecins du Monde, Dfid, WFP
Current Title	VP, Specialists, Managers, Advisors, HR, Directors, Chief and Coordinators.
Age	
21-30	
31-40	8
41-50	11
50+	6
Sex	

Male	9
Female	16
Years of Experience in Humanitarian Work	
(1-5)	0
(5-10)	3
(10-15)	7

15-20	11
20+	4
Years of Experience Working on the Field	
0	0
(1-5)	6
(5-10)	6
(10-15)	9
15-20	3
20+	1
Level of Seniority	
None	0
Junior	0
Middle	6
Senior	9
Specialist	11
Expat	24
National	6
Country Experience	73 country locations, (emergencies) and 7 HQ countries

Table 4.5: The Criteria of the Interviewees Interviewed in the Second Interviews.

Author: (Source 2024)