

Humanitarian Evidence and Discourse Summary

April 2023
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Monthly Humanitarian Evidence and Discourse Summaries aim to signpost FCDO and others to the latest relevant evidence and discourse on humanitarian action. It is structured around [FCDO humanitarian framework](#) themes:









- **Protect:** Protect civilians, IDPs, refugees, marginalised groups including women and girls, and humanitarian access.
- **Prioritise:** Prioritise effective humanitarian assistance to people in greatest need
- **Prevent:** Prevent and anticipate future shocks and rebuild resilience in protracted and recurring crises





Further detail on methodology and scope at the end. Click on the hyperlinks to bring you to the relevant literature.

We hope this is a useful resource and you can read all the articles produced by brilliant authors and organisations(!), but each month we also invite a guest to identify their five “star reads” from the wider HCRI list. This does not represent an organisational position or assessment of rigour, but rather a personal choice of published evidence, guidance or discourse that are of special interest or impact. This month Dan Maxwell (Professor in Food Security at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, and Research Director of the Feinstein Intl. Center at Tufts University) lists his five star reads.




Protect









Publication date	Title/URL	Author(s)/publication/publication type (evidence, discourse or policy/guidance)	Summary	Top reads
March 2023	Global Risk Analysis	ACAPS Evidence 	Update of ACAPS' global risk analysis, with country profiles and a global overview.	
March 2023	Snapshot from the Protection Indicators Dataset	ACAPS Evidence 	Briefly highlights protection concerns from the Protection Indicators Dataset.	
March 2023	Syria after the earthquakes: challenges to post-disaster recovery following the catastrophic humanitarian response	Leen Fouad; Overseas Development Institute Discourse 	Blog on the difficulties of carrying out relief work in Syria after the earthquake and beyond because of regime tactics to control aid.	







March 2023	Engaging with Armed Groups	In and Around Law Discourse 	Podcast discussing experiences of engaging with armed groups on international humanitarian law.	<i>"Very timely topic in an era of increasingly difficult humanitarian access."</i> Professor Dan Maxwell 
April 2023	Reducing civilian harm in urban warfare: a handbook for armed groups	ICRC Policy/guidance 	Blog and podcast on soon to be launched guide aimed to assist Non State Armed Groups in their efforts to respect IHL and reduce civilian harm	
March 2023	Considerations and guidance for the humanitarian engagement with religious leaders	Ioana Cismas et al.; University of York Evidence 	Research finds that religious leaders influence state and non-state armed groups on humanitarian norms. Based on interviews and case studies of Colombia, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, northern Yemen, and north-western Syria.	
March 2023	Water has long been used as a tactical weapon in warfare – the world now has a chance to end this	Mark Zeitoun; The Conversation Discourse 	Argues that the use of water as a weapon on war should be unacceptable, and notes recent efforts to develop legal instruments and security council resolutions to stop it.	<i>"A very important additional component to the discussion of "objects indispensable to survival" which often focuses mainly on food or means of livelihood"</i> Professor Dan Maxwell 
March 2023	Protection Advocacy Toolkit	Global Protection Cluster Policy/guidance 	Toolkit offering guidance on different stages of the protection advocacy cycle.	
March 2023	Toolkit: evidence that protects health care	Center for Public Health and Human Rights at Johns Hopkins University, Insecurity Insight, the International Rescue Committee and Physicians for Human Rights Policy/guidance 	Website collating guidance on collecting, analysing and disseminating data on violence against healthcare. Produced as part of an ECHO-funded research project.	



March 2023	Protecting the innocent, the land, and the body: traditional sources of restraint on landmine use	Henrique Garbino and Matthew Breay Bolton; ICRC Law & Policy Discourse 	Discusses how 'traditional cultural norms' can lead to restraint in landmine use, with examples from Cambodia and Afghanistan.	
March 2023	It's all relative: the humanitarian principles in historical and legal perspective	Marina Sharp; ICRC Law & Policy Discourse 	Examines the origins of the humanitarian principles in the Red Cross movement, the UN and NGOs, arguing that while they have different sources, they agree on many things.	
March 2023	Towards common understandings: the application of established IHL principles to cyber operations	Kubo Mačák and Tilman Rodenhäuser; ICRC Law & Policy Discourse 	Summarises the ICRC position on the applicability of IHL to cyber operations, with links to papers on the issue.	
March 2023	Trumanitarian Podcast	Trumanitarian Podcast Discourse 	Three episodes on the Ukraine war: on the relative roles of Ukrainian and foreign humanitarians , the relationship of Ukrainian civil society to the wartime state , and a summary of discussions on Ukraine .	

Prioritise




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March 2023	From insight to action: examining mortality in Somalia	Oliver Watson and Francesco Checchi; WHO and UNICEF Evidence 	Summary of LSHTM, UCL and AFYA on new research on retrospective estimates and scenario-based forecasting of mortality in Somalia. It attributes 43,000 excess deaths to the current drought crisis and with potential for excess deaths to far exceed the 2017-18 drought. It concludes that the crisis is far from over and a multi sector response is required to avoid a further catastrophe. Full report here .	"I nearly always put  Francesco's reports at the top of my reading list. There is so little information out there on mortality—yet saving human life is what we all claim to be about. Francesco's work helps us understand whether we are doing that or not." Professor Dan Maxwell
March 2023	15 lessons for humanitarians responding to the Somalia crisis	Zainab Moallin and Aaron Acuda Opeto; ALNAP Evidence 	Blog summarising lessons for humanitarians in Somalia based on previous drought responses.	








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March 2023	UNHCR Evaluation Office Annual Report 2022	UNHCR Evidence 	Summary of UNHCR's 19 evaluations in 2022.	
2022	Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the COVID-19 humanitarian response	Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Evidence 	Evaluation of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, based on interviews, focus group discussions and case studies.	
March 2023	Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Learning Paper: Localisation in the COVID-19 response	Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Evidence 	Evaluation on the role of local and national actors during the Covid-19 response, showing mechanisms for localisation and barriers.	
March 2023	Donor approaches to overheads for local and national partners	Fran Girling-Morris; Development Initiatives Evidence 	Discussion paper on the issue of lack of provision of overheads to local actors in humanitarian response. Outlines current donor approaches, and options for change.	
March 2023	Metrics matter: how USAID counts "local" will have a big impact on funding for local partners	Publish What You Fund Evidence 	Analysis of how USAID defines a local organisation with respect to its target of giving 25% of its spending to local organisations. Finds that its focus on lack of incorporation, physical address, and place of contract activity may lead to INGOs being counted as local; and leaves out funds channelled through UN organisations.	<i>"Localization is on everyone's lips, but how we define it and how we measure it matters a great deal—as this report poignantly points out"</i> Professor Daniel G. Maxwell 
March 2023	Promoting Equitable Partnerships with Local Responders in Humanitarian Settings	DG ECHO Guidance note Policy/Guidance 	ECHO's commitments and expectations considered under five main headings: 1. recognising the value, resources and skills of local/national actors, and supporting (institutional) capacities; 2. establishing more equitable partnerships; 3. ensuring the participation of local/national actors throughout the humanitarian response cycle; 4. strengthening the participation and leadership of local/national actors in humanitarian	

			coordination; 5. facilitating access to localised financing models.	
March 2023	Sex, age (and more) still matter: Data collection, analysis, and use in humanitarian practice	Dyan Mazurana, Anastasia Marshak, Kinsey Spears; CARE International Evidence 	Report on the use of data on gender, age, disability, and sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) in humanitarian response. Identifies data collection practices, and uses of this data, in humanitarian organisations.	
March 2023	Funding for gender-relevant humanitarian response	Development Initiatives Evidence 	The report finds that funding for gender equality in humanitarian response is not meeting needs, despite having increased. Focused on the effect of Covid-19, and provides data on the sources and recipients of gender-related funding.	
March 2023	Targeting hunger or votes? The political economy of humanitarian transfers in Malawi	Jan Duchoslav et al.; World Development Evidence 	Finds that humanitarian cash and food transfers, partly funded by international donors, following a poor harvest in 2015-6, were disproportionately targeted at marginal voting constituencies.	
March 2023	Turkiye and Syria Earthquake Response: Advice and resources for cash practitioners	Rana Nassar; CaLP Evidence 	A short compilation of lessons on cash transfers derived from similar disasters.	
March 2023	Between efficiency and do no harm: Blockchain-based innovation in cash and voucher assistance	Jamile Teles Hamideh; Hanken School of Economics Evidence 	Identifies risks of using blockchain technology in cash and voucher assistance. Based on findings from the World Food Programme's Building Blocks, Oxfam's UnBlocked Cash, and Finn Church Aid's Kenya Feasibility Study.	
March 2023	Cash Transfers: Forced Displacement Literature Review	Joint Data Centre Evidence 	Eight new summaries of studies on cash based assistance, including on the impact of cash transfers for Syrian refugees; and on the impact of psychological well-being of displaced in DRC.	

March 2023	Undernourished and overlooked a global nutrition crisis in adolescent girls and women	Harriet Torlesse et al.; UNICEF Evidence 	Report on women and girls' nutrition across the world, highlighting key trends, causes, and recommendations.	
March 2023	Coping with compounding challenges in conflict crises evidence from North-east Nigeria	Wolfgang Stojez and Tilman Brück; World Bank working paper Evidence 	Finds that coping strategies in conflict are shaped by the intersection of gender, forced displacement, and collective violence. This focus on compounding challenges can help to identify particularly vulnerable households or individuals.	

Prevent

Publication date	Title/URL	Author(s)/Publication/Publication type (evidence, discourse or policy/guidance)	Summary	Top reads
February 2023	Famine prevention: a landscape report	Daniel Maxwell, Paul Howe, Merry Fitzpatrick; Feinstein International Center Evidence 	Reviews existing policies and interventions on famine prevention. Focuses on technical understandings of famine dynamics, causes, and thus ways to anticipate; as well as the politics of famine and accountability. Offers recommendations to change approaches to anticipation and prevention of famine.	
March 2023	Global Displacement Forecast	Danish Refugee Council Evidence 	The DRC's AI-driven forecast for displacement figures in 2023, with analysis of key trends, drivers, and case studies of countries of concern.	
March 2023	Women & girls on the move: a snapshot of available evidence	International Organisation for Migration Evidence 	Overview of data on female migrants across the world, including specific risks faced.	

March 2023	Humanitarian action is the answer to fewer and fewer of today's humanitarian crises	Damian Lilly; Overseas Development Institute Humanitarian Policy Group Discourse 	Argues that we should rethink whether humanitarian assistance is appropriate for many of today's crises, and that more collaboration with other actors, through a nexus approach, will be needed to address large political and economic problems holistically.	
March 2023	Leadership and humanitarian change: why collaboration and transformation is needed	Global Leadership Initiative (GELI) and the Centre for Humanitarian Action (CHA) Discourse 	A collection of articles on humanitarian leadership issues, including local leadership, protection advocacy, and lessons from science.	
March 2023	Understanding the role of narratives in humanitarian policy change	Patrick Saez and John Bryant; Overseas Development Institute Evidence 	Research into humanitarian policy narratives frame humanitarian action through the idea of exceptionalism, and that this frame excludes non-Western actors.	<i>"We all believe in evidence and many of us claim to be 'data driven,' but this report warns us that how evidence and data are assembled and explained is perhaps more important than the data itself. For anyone interested in the "humanitarian evidence conundrum," this is must reading."</i> Professor Dan Maxwell 
March 2023	Disaster risk reduction in West Africa and the Sahelian region: a review of progress	Katie Peters et al.; Overseas Development Institute Evidence 	Assessment of progress on disaster risk reduction, measured by the Sendai framework, in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.	
March 2023	Quantifying climate change risk in humanitarian response	UN OCHA Discourse 	Discusses findings from INFORM's Climate Change Risk Index on the humanitarian risks arising from climate change.	
March 2023	Four ways ChatGPT could help level the humanitarian playing field	Aanjali Roane; The New Humanitarian Discourse 	Suggests that ChatGPT software can help humanitarian organisations by writing communications, find information on funding, help with administration, and help to find local NGOs.	

Methodology

Given the wide range of topics covered, this monthly summary includes guidelines, blogs, news articles, dashboards, data, and editorials, in addition to policy and academic literature. Resources are selected based on their relevance to the themes of protect, prioritise and prevent. Entries are categorised as **evidence** (academic peer-reviewed articles or reports that have gone through a quality assurance process); **discourse** (opinion and discussion of key issues in the humanitarian sector); and **policies and guidelines** (newly published policies and guidelines on humanitarian response).

The sources included are found through searches of academic literature, humanitarian think tanks, resource hubs and NGO websites. The searches are restricted to articles published in the previous month, in English. This is complemented by email recommendations from FCDO advisors and leading experts. It is the result of 1 day of work per month and is not intended to be a comprehensive summary of available evidence on humanitarian action but aims to make original documents easily accessible to decision-makers. This is trial and error approach, which will be refined over time. If you have literature to include in the weekly summary, please email – luke.kelly@manchester.ac.uk

About this report

The monthly humanitarian evidence and discourse summaries (HEDS) are produced by the Humanitarianism and Conflict Response Institute (HCRI) at the University of Manchester. They are a continuation of a series published by the Knowledge for Development (K4D) consortium from 2020 to 2022. The monthly HEDS are not intended to replace professional advice and the researcher or HCRI cannot be held responsible for any decisions made on the basis of the summaries alone.



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The Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute (HCRI) is a leading global centre that is part of the University of Manchester. HCRI combines multiple disciplines from medicine to the humanities for the study and research of humanitarianism and conflict response, global health, international disaster management and peacebuilding.

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