

Study on the effectiveness of humanitarian partners and funding relations of the Netherlands

Case studies synthesis report

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CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Background to the study	1
1.2	Scope, approach and data collection methodologies	3
1.3	Research questions	6
1.4	Limitations	7
2	Overview of the effectiveness of support to humanitarian partners (RQ1)	8
2.1	Strengths, weaknesses and challenges of funded humanitarian actors	8
2.2	Timeliness and effectiveness of partner interventions	11
2.3	Localisation, innovation and nexus	13
3	Relationships with partners (RQ2)	16
3.1	Types of relations funding mechanisms generate	16
3.2	Monitoring and diplomatic activities	18
4	Conclusions and recommendations	20
4.1	Conclusions	20
4.2	Recommendations	22
	ANNEXES	23
Annex 1	Humanitarian Pathways	24
Annex 2	Strengths and Weaknesses	27
Annex 3	Underlying assumptions review	29
Annex 4	Organisations and Key Informant Interviews by country	35
Annex 5	Survey respondents: utility and significance of funding streams	36
Annex 6	Acronyms	37

1 Introduction

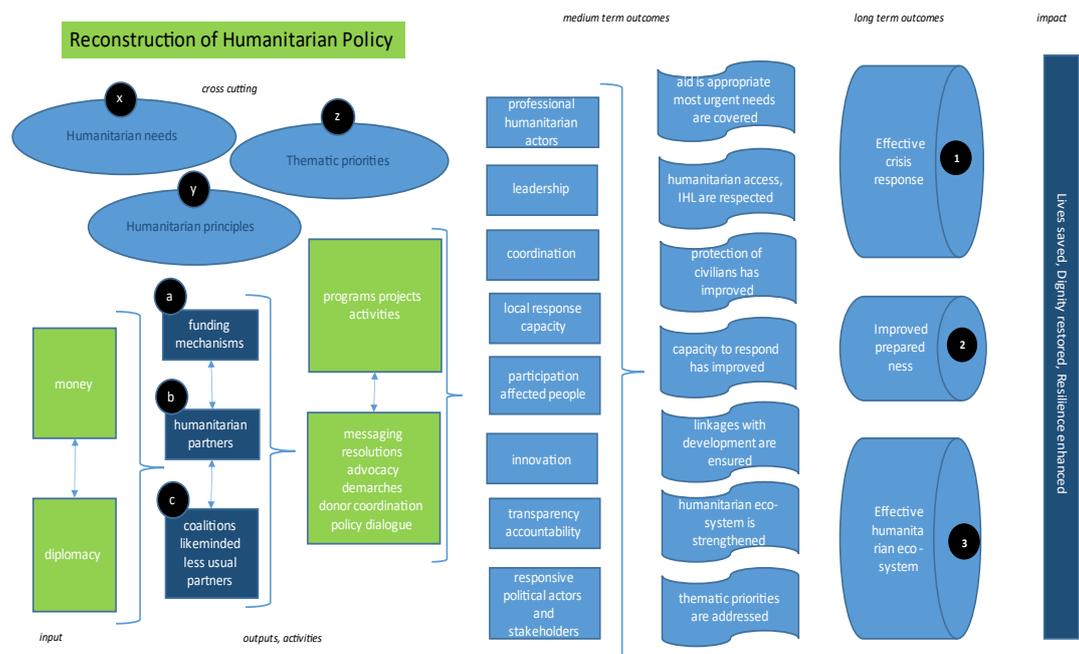
1.1 Background to the study

“The humanitarian objectives of the Netherlands are defined by the wish to save lives, restore dignity and enhance the resilience of people affected by humanitarian disasters and crises”.¹ To meet such objectives the Dutch government has provided financial support to a number of selected humanitarian partners and funding mechanisms, providing non-earmarked, semi earmarked, and earmarked funding with a global coverage. Furthermore, the support aims “to support an effective crises response, to improve preparedness, and to build an effective humanitarian eco-system”.² Such funding is supplemented by diplomatic and advocacy activities.

So as to evaluate the effectiveness of such activities, the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (IOB) has commissioned a number of evaluations and reviews, including three case studies on Yemen, Syria and South Sudan. This report provides the synthesis of these three case studies, while further consolidation of all evaluation activities will be undertaken by IOB themselves.

Figure 1 below reflects Dutch humanitarian policy between 2015-2020, indicating inputs, outputs, activities, cross cutting principles, medium-term and long-term expected outcomes, as well as intended impact. It also illustrates the three fundamental pathways adopted to reach the above-mentioned objectives: a) funding mechanisms, b) humanitarian partners, and c) humanitarian diplomacy. These are the key focal areas of the study. Each pathway is further elaborated in detail (see Annex 1) where the assumptions underpinning the expected outcomes are indicated.

Figure 1. Dutch Humanitarian Policy 2015-2020



¹ Terms of reference, Annex 1 Reconstruction of Humanitarian Policy.

² Terms of reference, page 1.

For pathways a and b, the Dutch government department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH) “allocates around 40-55% of the humanitarian budget as predictable, flexible, and unearmarked core funding to a limited number of “experienced humanitarian partners”, with whom there is a long-term relationship”.³ Partners include UN organisations such as the World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations’ Children’s Fund (UNICEF), UN organisation for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), plus Red Cross partners - the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), The Netherlands Red Cross (NLRC) - as well as the Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA). These organisations are trusted to spend such funding where it is needed most, whilst considering the Dutch government’s humanitarian objectives and priorities.

Unearmarked funding through DSH annual contributions to the “experienced humanitarian actors” for the period 2015-2020 are as follows:

Table 1. Annual €M allocation to experienced humanitarian partners by year

Year	WFP ⁴	UNICEF ⁵	OCHA	UNHCR	ICRC ⁶	IFRC	NLRC	DRA
2015	36.0	15.0	5.0	33.0	40.0	0	15.0	-
2016	36.0	19.0	5.0	42.0	40.0	0	16.5	-
2017	49.0	17.0	7.0	46.0	40.0	0	17.4	60.0
2018	36.0	17.0	5.0	33.0	40.0	0	17.2	60.0
2019	36.0	10.2	7.0	33.0	40.0	0.2	16.2	70.0
2020	36.0	10.2	7.0	33.0	45.0	0.9	24.9	70.0

Additionally, “softly (semi) earmarked funding is made available for ongoing chronic crises, in response to new developments, and acute crises during the year. On average 30-40% of the overall budget is allocated to partners for humanitarian assistance in specific crises”.⁷ For such specific crises DSH selects the most appropriate partner or funding mechanism that the partner manages, for example the UN Country Based Pool Fund (CBPF) or the DRA, setting aside approximately €15 million at the start of each year.⁸ DSH also contributes a significant sum annually to the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) fund often being the second highest donor each year. The balance of DSH’s humanitarian budget has consisted of direct earmarked contributions to experienced partners in specific countries. This method of funding has not been utilised in Yemen since 2017.

Annual allocations from 2015-2020 to the UN CERF fund and allocations from CERF to the case country countries were as follows:

³ IOB report: “Dutch decision-making on humanitarian assistance: Strengths and Weaknesses. September 2021

⁴ WFP was supported with €108M for 2019 through 2021.

⁵ UNICEF has received €51M for the period 2109-2023

⁶ The ICRC has been provided €120M to cover three years from 2019 onwards. This was supplemented with a €5M COVID top up in September 2020

⁷ IOB report: “Dutch decision-making on humanitarian assistance: Strengths and Weaknesses. September 2021.

⁸ Ibid.

Table 2. Annual CERF Contributions 2012-2020

Year	Netherlands annual contribution to the CERF ⁹ \$M	CERF allocation to Syria \$M ¹⁰	CERF allocation to Yemen \$M	CERF allocation to South Sudan \$M
2015	59.2	29.9	44.2	13.4
2016	60.5	-	15.0	20.8
2017	71.3	-	25.6	15.5
2018	67.9	-	49.9	-
2019	71.3	-	31.7	27.9
2020	98.0	54.9	65.0	26.6

Annual CERF allocations to specific experienced partners is available in each individual case country report.

DSH's allocations to case study county CBPFs is indicated as follows:

Table 3. Annual CBPF contributions 2015-2020

Year	DSH Allocation to Syria Emergency Response Fund \$M ¹¹	DSH Allocation to Syria Cross Border CBPF \$M	DSH allocation to Yemen CBPF \$M	DSH allocation to South Sudan Humanitarian Fund CBPF \$M
2015	10.2	-	13.5	5.3
2016	9.2	-	11.3	7.0
2017	5.3	-	8.2	-
2018	6.0	-	19.0	12.5
2019	5.4	8.6	12.9	7.8
2020	3.7	13.1	15.3	11.2

The pool funding is allocated in country by OCHA to a range of UN agencies, plus INGOs and NNGOs.

DSH aims to promote crosscutting thematic priorities such as localisation, innovation, and the triple nexus, as well as other specific focal areas. Currently there are eighteen thematic priorities and the ongoing assumption is that the above-mentioned core funding, together with flexible support to ongoing and new crises, will enable the Netherlands to gain influence and promote the adoption and inclusion of such thematic priorities within humanitarian sectoral responses. These assumptions were reviewed within the scope of this study, and noted as either valid, partially valid or invalid as per Annex 3.

1.2 Scope, approach and data collection methodologies

The case studies cover the period 2015 to 2020, albeit conversations did naturally focus on recent years and the current ongoing operational context, and countries were selected

⁹ Taken from individual CERF annual reports 2015 – 2020.

¹⁰ <https://cerf.un.org/what-we-do/allocation-by-country>

¹¹ Taken from individual CBPF reports.

due to the complexity of the ongoing humanitarian context, the presence in-country of the “experienced partners”, and the level of support provided to the CERF and CBPF.

The main objectives of the case study review, as stated in the ToR, are to:

1. Shed light on the effectiveness of Dutch supported partners in the delivery of humanitarian aid.
2. Provide insights into the conditions and circumstances under which the Netherlands as a donor enhances or hampers the effectiveness of these partners in the delivery of humanitarian aid. This includes an evaluation of the effectiveness of a number of funding mechanisms used by the Netherlands: core funding, pooled funds, country earmarking, and Dutch Relief Alliance.¹²

The case studies have examined “how different funding mechanisms and humanitarian partners have delivered results on three policy objectives of Dutch humanitarian assistance since 2015:

1. The ambition to deliver timely, needs-based, effective, principled and high-quality humanitarian assistance,
2. The ambition to be coherent with broader development approaches and crisis responses, and
3. The ambitions to innovate and localise.¹³

The studies also looked at the strengths and weaknesses of DSH’s humanitarian partners, briefly reviewing partners’ operational and programmatic performance, as well as the timeliness and functionality of the mechanisms supported.

Beyond this, the country case studies have also reviewed the relationship between the Dutch government and its selected partners, if this relationship has influenced the effectiveness of partner aid delivery, and the extent to which such relations have led to the adoption of the Dutch government’s thematic priorities. Furthermore, diplomatic and advocacy initiatives, either individually or alongside other donors has been assessed. The assumptions underlying the diplomatic humanitarian pathways have also been reviewed. Please see Annex 3.

The overall approach of this study was consultative, through a mixture of methodologies, as follows:

Key informant interviews (KIIs) with:

- Recipients of non-earmarked funding (UNCHR, UNICEF, WFP, OCHA, ICRC, IFRC)
- Recipients of CERF funding and direct funding (UNCHR, UNICEF, WFP)
- Fund manager and recipient partners of CBPFs
- Recipients of DRA funding - consortium members
- Recipients of DRA funding - consortium member local partners
- Dutch embassy humanitarian staff
- Other donors and embassies
- Other relevant actors

¹² Terms of reference page 1

¹³ Terms of reference, page 2

The above list includes the recipients of each type of funding mechanism as well as their implementing partners. Interviews were agreed to be anonymous and confidential, and as such at times the names of some partners have been withheld within this report. Please see Annex 4 for details by country.

A number of interview guides were elaborated and utilised as relevant based on meeting the research questions, sub questions, and judgement criteria indicated in the research matrix elaborated in the inception report. The above list of interviewees was split between the Team Leader and the local consultants as appropriate, with the local consultants mostly interviewing the CBPF and DRA recipients and their local partners, while the Team Leader interviewed the experienced partners.

Field Trips:

Field trips to Jordan and South Sudan were undertaken by the Team Leader and a representative of the IOB department to undertake in-person interviews with embassies, experienced partners, and other donors.

Observation/Site visits:

Site visits were undertaken by the local consultants in Aden, Southern Yemen, Wau in South Sudan, and in rural Damascus, to meet with recipient partners and beneficiaries. The Team Leader and IOB representative also visited Bentiu in South Sudan.

Focus group discussions:

At a beneficiary level, focus group discussions were held with a number of beneficiaries in each country. A multi-sectoral interview guide for such meetings had been elaborated in preparation.

Desk research:

An analysis of partner project documentation has provided some guidance as to how well partner interventions have met their objectives.

Data analysis:

The information gathered using the methodologies indicated above were entered into an analysis matrix whereby all the feedback to each evaluation question and sub question were gathered on one Excel spreadsheet, thus enabling the consolidation of information and feedback in one location generating the initial findings and conclusions. This greatly facilitated the formulation of the debrief workshop presentations and subsequently the case study reports.

Debrief workshops:

Prior to writing up country case study reports, a debrief workshop has been conducted remotely so as to test initial findings and conclusions from the data gathered to date, to identify any gaps in the data gathered, and to answer any initial questions that arose. Attendees were predominantly from the MFA in the Hague and Dutch embassies and missions.

Partner Survey:

A partner survey has been undertaken the results of which have been sampled and included in this report. In total 49 partner representatives responded to the survey out of which nine were UN representatives, six were from INGOs, 18 from the DRA, and 11 local partners. The majority of respondents were project or programme managers or senior management (69%), or working in a donor relations role (18%).

Overall, the study has been both summative - in that it has reviewed how effectively funding to date has been utilised - and formative - in that it will look forward identifying any possible improvements and changes to ongoing practices.

Intended users of the report include:

- MFA staff in the Hague (IOB office, DSH, and other relevant technical departments).
- Embassy staff in Amman responsible for programme monitoring and donor relations.
- Embassy staff elsewhere, globally.
- DRA partners, both in country and at their global and regional headquarters.
- Other donors and interested stakeholders (UN Partners and the Red Cross Movement recipients).

1.3 Research questions

As per the ToR the research questions were as follows:

RQ 1 How effective are Dutch-funded actors in the humanitarian system (UN agencies, Red Cross family and NGOs) in achieving Dutch humanitarian goals?

- 1.1 What are relative strengths and weaknesses of various funded humanitarian actors, how can these be explained, and in what way have these delivered added value in the delivery of humanitarian assistance?
- 1.2 Have Dutch-funded actors in the humanitarian system delivered timely, needs-based and principled humanitarian action? What have been factors of success or failure?
- 1.3 What has been the contribution of Dutch-funded actors to the objective of innovation, localisation and the coordination with broader development goals? What best practices are identifiable and what has been the added value for the realisation of humanitarian goals?

RQ 2 What kind of funding relation does the MFA have with its various partners, and how does this relation enable or hamper their effectiveness in the delivery of humanitarian aid?

- 2.1 [How are funding decisions made within the MFA?]
- 2.2 What different types of relations between MFA and recipient organisations emerge from these funding decisions, and how do these relations enable or hamper the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance?
- 2.3 In what way have the priority themes innovation and localisation been promoted within these relations?

2.4 How have policy changes in response to the IOB Policy Review of 2015 been implemented, and to what extent have these changes contributed to achieving Dutch humanitarian goals?

N.B. Research question 2.1 will not to be addressed by this effectiveness study. This question has been taken up separately by IOB itself. Please note also that question 2.4 was reduced by IOB in as much as only the level of ongoing monitoring of Dutch government activities, together with the effect of diplomatic activities has been reviewed.

1.4 Limitations

The short time period in which to assess organisational functionality was the main limitation to the case studies. Normally an evaluation of one of the UN partner's effectiveness in-country would take a period of months utilising a large team of evaluators. In these studies perhaps only one interview per organisation have been undertaken, normally of one hour in length. This has been supplemented at times by field visits and secondary research, so as to give a reasonable impression of each funding recipient's effectiveness, together with an overview of how they have contributed towards meeting the objectives of the Dutch governments humanitarian policy objectives.

Similarly, this has not been a standard evaluation in that a donor has funded a specific project in one geographical location. The non-earmarked core funding is given at a HQ level and as such it cannot be associated with any particular project, moreover the reality is that the Dutch government funding has its "fingers in many pies". This, however, does not make the funding provided easy to evaluate, as recipient organisations struggle to identify programmes they feel the Dutch government have funded and as a consequence what they feel they should be presenting to the study team. This has led to delays in terms of how quickly some organisations have responded to the study's initial enquiries.

Access to the field due to security restrictions and the need for travel approvals from SCMCHA¹⁴ have restricted field visits in Northern Yemen, and the security situation in all three case study countries has meant that only certain areas of each country could be visited.

The breadth of questions the evaluation team has been looking into has been extensive. This has meant that not every topic has been raised with every interviewee. As such, although a clear attempt has been made to answer all of the questions set, some answers will be deeper and more evidence-based than others.

Finally, the early years of the study scope period have been difficult to discuss/assess due to staff having moved on and the natural focus of discussions on recent or ongoing contextual circumstances.

¹⁴ The Supreme Council for the Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

2 Overview of the effectiveness of support to humanitarian partners (RQ1)

2.1 Strengths, weaknesses and challenges of funded humanitarian actors

2.1.1 Strengths

As stated in each country case study, each of the “experienced partners” receiving non-earmarked funding bring their own traditional mandated sectoral expertise to each operating environment: OCHA manage co-ordination, the cluster system, the CERF and the CBPF; UNICEF work alongside the national health services providing vaccinations and nutrition programming (SAM),¹⁵ while also providing WASH, protection, and education support; WFP provide general food assistance, and cover the Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) caseload,¹⁶ while implementing livelihood and school feeding programmes, and providing logistical support to the whole humanitarian community; UNHCR are providing protection, camp management shelter and non-food items and covering refugee and returnee matters. The UN agencies, according to their mandate, complement each other to cover a broad spectrum of activities, co-ordinated within the cluster system which each of them lead according to their speciality.

Specific programmatic strengths or added values, as identified by the evaluation team, are, for example, the sheer volume and geographical extent of WFP’s food security coverage in each country, plus their invaluable logistical support provided in terms of the UNHAS flight schedules without which the humanitarian community would struggle to access various parts of each country. Furthermore, WFP have contributed to the data gathering and assessment processes, undertaking annual food security and livelihood assessments whenever possible and playing a significant role in the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) process in each country.

UNICEF have the difficult task of working alongside under-resourced governmental partners. However, they have still been able to undertake their role to generate some degree of sustainability, building the capacity of their health service counterparts and the institutions they work with.

Similarly UNHCR have to work with weakened-capacity governmental counterparts in terms of repatriation and refugee activities, but have still managed to attain some progress in both aspects. They have also utilised their vast experience in camp management activities to support displaced communities.

National level assessment processes, and the generation of country-specific annual Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) are undertaken by OCHA. This is the basis for each country’s humanitarian interventions. OCHA are also responsible for monitoring CERF and CBPF activities, the latter of which has generated some excellent insights into the operational context, especially in Yemen where undertaking such monitoring visits is a

¹⁵ Treatment of the severely acute malnourished caseload.

¹⁶ Moderately acutely malnourished

challenge in itself. OCHA's management of the CERF funds has been appreciated by its UN recipients in terms of the timeliness of the funding, and the ability of CERF funding to address operational gaps. It has also reached its target of dispersing 25% of its CBPF funding to local partners in two of the three countries (Yemen and South Sudan), and is very close in the third (Syria). CBPF recipients - both INGOs and NNGOs - have their own sectoral expertise and local knowledge and access that they have utilised to support their interventions.

In terms of OCHA's management of the cluster systems in each country, partner feedback has generally been positive, stating that knowledge sharing and field level co-ordination within each cluster is working well, although cross-sectoral co-ordination could be improved, and cluster meetings should perhaps be more accessible and welcoming to NNGO partners.

ICRC have good acceptance amongst the warring factions and are providing medical services in conflict areas and working in prisons, and together with the IFRC are supporting each country's National Red Cross/Crescent Society (RC/RC) in terms of their capacity building specifically focusing on disaster response, camp management, and tracing activities. The ICRC and each national RC/RC society function on both sides of the conflict, and have access to areas that other UN agencies and INGOs do not have. All of the experienced partners are important actors within each humanitarian context.

Likewise, DRA members bring both national, sectoral and global experience with them. For example, OXFAM focus on WASH and food security and livelihoods; SAVE have multi-sectoral expertise including child protection and education expertise; Cordaid focuses on supporting health facilities and providing psychological support; Help a Child provide psychological support to children, and work on SGBV and domestic violence cases; DORCAS have expertise in food security and livelihoods and WASH; while Tearfund are experienced providers of emergency relief; Terre Des Homme's experience in disability inclusion was shared through training and technical advice to other NGOs; CARE have led the consortium in Yemen and North-West Syria, while Zoa lead in government-controlled Syria and SAVE in South Sudan. DRA members have been complementary about the in-country leadership in each location.

The specific added value of the DRA is the flexibility and consistency of its funding, enabling members to react to changes in the ongoing operational context occurring during approval delays, while being able to ensure continued programming as necessary. DRA partners themselves believe their strengths lie in the fact that they have focused on a limited number of sectors and areas where they have the most expertise, they tend to use development-based approaches to deliver emergency programmes to ensure some sustainability, that they have utilised innovative ways of sharing learnings, for example, peer-to-peer evaluations,¹⁷ and they have maintained strong connections with authorities and local communities. The evaluation team would agree with this.

DRA local partner added value is that they have access to hard-to-reach and insecure areas, stronger coordination with local authorities, and a better understanding of

¹⁷ I.e. In Yemen, they chose a theme like accountability or effectiveness and then conduct joint field visits to projects activities and produce a report highlighting strengths, weaknesses and recommendations.

community needs and their culture, have the relevant language skills, and therefore acceptance. The CBPF and the DRA consortium members have a similar approach in that they tend to implement integrated activities, or at least coordinate with other actors in same areas.

Overall, a broad range of sectoral activities have been implemented by the targeted partners and Dutch government funding has contributed to this.

2.1.2 Challenges and Weaknesses

Each case country operational context is difficult, being one of the worst ongoing humanitarian crises globally, and is therefore not without challenges that can have a detrimental effect on the effectiveness and timeliness of programme interventions.

Obviously, ongoing conflict is an issue in all three countries, meaning access to some geographic locations is difficult in terms of security. However, access is more than just a security issue. The need to acquire governmental travel permissions for site visits and assessments in Yemen, plus the need for government programme approvals in Yemen and in Syria, is a clear hindrance that has led to delays. This is particularly relevant for INGOs who don't have the working relations that NNGOs have, or the leverage of some UN agencies.

This has led to the complete reliance on NNGOs in some locations, for example North-West Syria, where funding agencies are reliant on third-party monitors (TPMs) to remain updated on programmatic progress. This is far from ideal as such TPMs can be lacking in capacity and experience. Furthermore, this creates additional pressure on the NNGOs from local authorities. Partners have reported attempts from the government to influence or interfere in compiling beneficiary lists and the choice of programme implementation sites. Again this is more apparent in Yemen and Syria. All this has to be negotiated by the agencies before implementation can begin, again creating delays.

In each country there is a lack of state structures and services that could facilitate aid delivery. A lack of a working legal system makes it difficult to process protection cases, and a lack of functional health and education services in each country is an issue. Similarly, a lack of electricity and weak internet provision make managing operations a challenge. Beneficiary IDs are a problem, making beneficiary lists hard to manage and control. There are numerous forms of ID in Yemen, and fake documentation issues are particularly troublesome in Syria. Beyond this, agencies also have to deal with sanctions, currency fluctuations, economic downturns, inflation, and in Syria, an exodus of the educated workforce. An area of particular concern is the issue of donor "red lines" in Syria, where some donors refuse to fund activities that may be seen as beneficial to the Syrian government.

The review has not had sufficient time to assess with confidence the weaknesses of the experienced partners in each country. General areas of concern, as triangulated during key informant interviews, are that the CBPFs seem to be somewhat over-bureaucratic and can be somewhat inflexible. They also have an issue of late arrival of donor funding affecting their allocation cycles, and there appears to be a need for their funding recipients to have a more standardised approach in terms of field assessments.

Overall, although accepted that core funding is inherently difficult to monitor, there is a desire for more detailed reporting in particular from the ICRC, who although willing to discuss matters in person are somewhat minimalist in their reporting. In each country there needs to be a stronger link between humanitarian and developmental interventions (nexus).

Within the DRA consortiums, there is still the issue that local partners lack capacity in specific areas, such as programmatic and financial management, plus reporting. NNGOs also universally report that they still face difficulties attracting funding, with donors and UN partners preferring to support the UN agencies and INGOs who they trust to manage and monitor local partners, not wishing, or perhaps not having the capacity to do this themselves. The trend to treat NNGOs as implementors on short-term contracts remains. Local partners have at times reported trouble retaining staff who are recruited by the INGOs and the UN. Please see Annex 2 for a further summary of the above.

2.2 Timeliness and effectiveness of partner interventions

2.2.1 Timeliness

The review has not talked to a sufficient number of partner beneficiaries so as to gather first-hand data as to whether or not support provided by each individual funding recipient has been delivered on a timely basis. However, discussions with partners have highlighted some concerns, for example, as mentioned above, the slow approval of partner activities by government departments has had an impact on the timeliness of interventions. It also increases the risk of the community-level situation having changed from the time the proposal has been written to when implementation can start. Having to wait 3-6 months before implementation can start is far from ideal. The need for flexible funding based on beneficiary feedback is therefore paramount. In this respect DRA members have stated that the DRA funding mechanism works well, and that funds are easily adaptable and released on a timely basis.

Similarly, the non-earmarked core funding is said to be quickly available on an individual agency basis, released through each agency's own in-house mechanism as required, for example by WFP and UNICEF to fill pipeline gaps. Such core funding is generally released or pledged to the experienced partners at the start of the year, or given as multi-year funding, so that partners are aware that funding will be available to kick off activities for that year, while other funding streams fall into place. This is reported by the UN recipient organisations as being extremely important so delays in implementation can be avoided. More than once has such funding been referred to as "gold".

CERF funding is also said to be released relatively quickly, although the pool funding takes more time, albeit such interventions are based upon sectoral cluster lead analysis of gaps and shortfall such funding can address. The IFRC DREF system, which Dutch funding supports, is known to release funds within 48/72 hours of a request.

As per the timeliness and quality of funding recipient assessments, the general consensus from key informant interviews is that the larger, more experienced UN and INGO agencies have sufficient capacity to organise and undertake quality large field assessments. For example, OCHA organises the nationwide Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and the

HRP, while WFP undertake large-scale food security and livelihood assessments (FSLA) and play a major role in the IPC classification process; UNICEF assess child and maternal health and acute malnutrition levels. In contrast, NNGOs are somewhat short of capacity in this respect, as their expertise lies in their local knowledge, acceptance, and cultural awareness, not in their ability to implement at scale. As mentioned above, there is also a lack of standardisation within the CBPF and DRA consortiums on assessment protocols. One positive factor, however, is that NNGOs are reported to have better localised access and community engagement.

2.2.2 Effectiveness

In terms of the programmatic effectiveness, again, there has not been sufficient time for the review team to fully evaluate each experienced partner, CERF, CBPF and DRA recipients' interventions. However, based on partner feedback, site observations, and interviews with partners and beneficiaries, it would appear that there has been and continues to be a lot of effective programming ongoing, providing support across a broad spectrum of sectors and activities.

In terms of meeting the Dutch government objectives of saving lives, restoring dignity and enhancing resilience, it could be said there has been partial effectiveness. Clearly lives are being saved, predominantly in terms of the large-scale broad coverage food security activities of WFP, while both WFP and UNICEF have implemented the MAM/SAM interventions respectively, saving the lives of acutely malnourished children.

In terms of enhancing resilience, partners have informed of how resilience-improving activities have been included within their emergency interventions. However, as mentioned below with respect to the nexus, a longer-term perspective is missing. Some community-based resilience improvements have occurred with those activities related to supporting government services. For example, in terms of the UNICEF and health service partner, interventions at health centres where national services are reinforced and healthcare staff are trained. The same can be said for WFP and SAVE interventions that work alongside the education service. Similarly, cash for work linkage roads and community asset reparations will have a similar resilience-building effect. As would interventions that have provided locally managed WASH solutions. Trainings on agronomical best practices and the provision of livelihood support will also have been beneficial.

Restoring dignity is another question, however. Living in a camp or an IDP settlement site for a number of years with no apparent end date is difficult to accept. This is the situation in all three countries. Furthermore, the lives of women and children in particular remains a concern due to the inherent protection issues ongoing and the constraints faced when working with governments, particularly Syria and Yemen, who do not see gender issues as a problem and will not facilitate programming on such subjects. The fact that the SCMCHA¹⁸ authority in Yemen have established a Mahram protocol that restricts female staff access to the field, and will not approve any interventions that include gender-specific protection or activities addressing sexual and gender-based violence, means that those interventions are not implemented at the scale required, having to be hidden

¹⁸ Supreme Council for the Management and Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

somewhat in other activities. Similarly, the refusal of the Syrian government to provide work visas for PSEA¹⁹ programme staff restricts any progress that can be made.

2.3 Localisation, innovation and nexus

2.3.1 Localisation

“The Dutch government has a progressive role in the humanitarian sector and is very keen in promoting and implementing the commitments made in the Grand Bargain, such as predictable and flexible funding, the Nexus and localisation.”

Survey respondent

The Dutch government are currently promoting 18 thematic humanitarian priorities of which the three mentioned above have been prioritised within this case studies review. Of those three, the thematic priority most prominent within discussions was that of the Grand Bargain pledge of localisation, which is also very much a priority of the UN organisations, the Red Cross Movement, and the DRA consortium participants. This is the thematic priority that has seen the most success across the three case study countries.

The extent to which Dutch-funded actors have contributed to the objectives of localisation depends intrinsically on the actual relationship between international and local partners and the funding mechanism utilised. Both UN agencies and the international DRA partners work closely with local NNGO and government partners to raise their programmatic and administrative capacity, and increase compliance with humanitarian best practices, while improving their ability to monitor and report on programmes that they implement, both in terms of reaching targets, as well as with respect to narrative and financial reporting. The extent that local partners are integrated into the programme cycle correlates to the amount of learning and experience gained.

Partner feedback would suggest that this has increasingly happened within the DRA consortium where capacity strengthening is seen as a core activity,²⁰ and interviewed partners have repeatedly mentioned capacity building trainings, for example MEAL, PSEA, complaints mechanisms, human resources, and finance, that have occurred.

Over time, the DRA consortium has reached out to increasing numbers of local partners in each case study country. For example, in South Sudan there are now nine NNGOs active with the joint humanitarian response programme, and in Yemen the number of local partners involved in the consortium has grown from one in 2019 to 10 as of 2022. Furthermore, DRA in Yemen informs that 39 NNGOs have been enrolled into their humanitarian leadership academy capacity building training course over the last two years, six of which are consortium members.

¹⁹ Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

²⁰ DRA Strategy 2018-2021, priority 4.

Such partners find the DRA framework more successful in integrating NNGOs as full partners than the SSHF, which is often seen amongst the humanitarian community as the main mechanism to promote localisation, a role it is not always so willing to take. That said, the CBPFs have reached its target of allocating 25% of its funding to local actors in two out the three countries. One concern with this is that the top-down target of giving 25% of all funding to local partners may lead to a local NNGO being supported at the expense of a more capable INGO, although “We are here for the people, whoever is the best positioned to assist them, receives the money” is an approach quoted by OCHA to mitigate such a possibility.

“The Dutch government is actively providing support in terms of resources, building local capacity and advocacy on access challenges were possible.”

Survey respondent

In all three countries DRA and CBPF recipients have said there is space for improvement in terms of treating local partners as equals, moving towards partnerships and not sub-agreements. UN partners have reported that they sometimes do treat NNGOs more as implementors, i.e. given a task to do rather than participating in programme design or decision-making process. Although international partners appreciate the fact that NNGOs have a greater understanding of the local context, better relations with local authorities and the communities themselves - and therefore better access - they rarely treat them as equals or with full confidence. Nevertheless, CBPFs automatically treat NNGOs as higher risk and as such they are allocated a lower funding ceiling. The notion that NNGOs are cheaper than INGOs is also questioned as although NGOs have invariable lower overheads and salary costs, they do not reach the economies of scale that INGO or UN partners can achieve.

The capacity building of the national RC/RC societies by the IFRC/ICRC is a good example of institutional capacity building that will have a durable localised impact. The national society will continue to operate in each country responding to localised disasters, tracing family members, and working in conflict zones. Each RC/RC society has grown substantially during the case study period, having a significant role in ongoing nationwide operations through their branch networks and volunteers.

2.3.2 Innovation

Innovation across the three case study countries has produced inconsistent results. South Sudan and Syrian experienced partners have facilitated programme effectiveness through modernising programme implementation approaches utilising technologies developed elsewhere globally, for example, the WFP SCOPE system, OCHA electronic data collection tools, or new methods of cash disbursements, or the introduction of cash or vouchers as a mode of support. Similarly, solar power has been used to take advantage of the natural sunlight available and to mitigate the lack of standard electricity supplies.

On the other hand, there seems to have been little in the way of newly designed innovative practices amongst the DRA consortium members who, in two countries, have

mentioned a shortage of funding, and lack of clarity as to how any identified new practices would be expanded upon.

“Funding streams that allow for innovation, not just the first phase/proof of concept but also the second phase/scaling, would help a lot in reaching more impact efficiently.”

Survey respondent

At times, the INGOs generally do not seem to feel motivated to apply for such small funds as they are preoccupied with other large-scale interventions. Furthermore, innovation can be perceived as risky, with no guaranteed output, an experiment that could fail and cause harm to people who are in urgent need for help. As one Yemen partner said: *“As we are in an emergency, there is no space for innovation.”*

2.3.3 Nexus

Within all three case study countries, UN and DRA partners have mentioned a need to move towards more resilience-based sustainable interventions, especially in areas where there is no ongoing conflict. This has been mirrored in feedback from beneficiaries, who do not wish to be aid dependent but more self-sustainable.

Each country is at a pivotal moment in its humanitarian response, and in as much as emergency response activities are still required, there is a stronger need to initiate more longer-term development projects so that beneficiaries, as they are requesting, have a source of income beyond that provided by the humanitarian agencies.

Although partners report that resilience building and capacity building activities are being included in partner programming, there are seemingly no links, or limited links, between humanitarian and developmental actors.

What diplomatic or advocacy role the Dutch government is playing in pursuing this thematic objective in any of the countries is not clear. There is also a lack of an exit strategy for any of the countries within the overall diplomatic and humanitarian community. Furthermore, there does not seem to be adequate engagement with the relevant governments to start initiating the process, let alone to decide what form such an exit strategy would take.

3 Relationships with partners (RQ2)

3.1 Types of relations funding mechanisms generate

“I meet with someone from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs on a monthly basis. We have a positive relationship which consists of regular updates and meetings related to field context and also decisions in the Dutch government.”

Survey respondent

Across all three case study countries there is a clear appreciation for all types of Dutch government funding. 80% of survey respondents stated that such funding was either extremely significant or significant for the organisation’s operational budget, and between 53 - 68% of respondents stated the Dutch funding stream they received was either highly valuable or valuable to their organisation. Please see Annex 4 for further such details depicted graphically.

“Unearmarked funding allows the organisation to respond quickly to the most urgent needs and reprogramme quickly, while earmarked funds are much more tedious to reprogramme, thus their effectiveness to address pressing humanitarian needs is diminished.”

Survey respondent

“The preference is for unearmarked contributions as it allows to use the funds to respond to the most critical needs. Pooled funds are appreciated as it is a source of funding for specific projects or crises which are somehow forgotten.”

Survey respondent

As can be seen in the online survey, support was especially vocal for the “gold” funding that is the non-earmarked core annual HQ level donations that provide flexible funding for sudden onset disasters and gap filling for ongoing interventions. Such support was reported by partners as reliable, timely, and easy to access through each organisation’s individual systems. This was quoted by OCHA in Yemen as following “good humanitarian donorship principles”.²¹ Similarly, CERF Funding - which predominantly goes to the UN experienced partners - was also said to be timely and useful in terms of programmatic gap filling. That said, although relations are reported by partners everywhere as generally good, there was no clear indication of a close relationship between the country-level “experienced partners” and the Dutch government, especially when there is no local level daily interaction, as there is, for example, with the embassy-based humanitarian advisor in South Sudan. For Yemen and Syria - for a variety of reasons, including COVID-19, insecurity, and a lack of government relations - there has not been enough field level

²¹ <https://www.ghdinitiative.org/ghd/gns/principles-good-practice-of-ghd/principles-good-practice-ghd.html>

interaction in recent years. In this regard the Dutch government will be less aware of the ongoing situation in a given country, and will be missing out on information shared at “unofficial” meetings that may not always make it into agency reports. Although the Amman regional advisor is on the CBPF advisory board in both Yemen and Syria (Damascus and Gaziantep), again relations between funding recipients and the Dutch government are not described by partners as being close. As mentioned by one Syrian partner “Funding loses its identity once it is in the pot”.

ICRC and IFRC report directly to their respective HQs in Geneva and via the Netherlands Red Cross to the Dutch government, having little direct contact, although they do report they have made good use of the DREF funds which the Dutch government contributes, are aware of the Dutch government support, and appreciate the manner in which it is provided, i.e. non-earmarked and not requesting publicity.

A clearer link is evident between the DRA members and the Dutch government based on the direct funding relationship. Most communication occurs through the DRA in-country lead agency, and DRA HQ in The Hague, however, members are clear as to who their sponsor is. Members have reported that the flexibility of the funding has created a strong level of trust within the consortium.

“DRA funding is not earmarked and very helpful in responding to emergencies with flexibility where necessary, the nature of the funding is critical in determining our capacity to respond to humanitarian crisis. The more unearmarked or pooled funds the more flexible we are, and the better we intervene in humanitarian crisis.”

Survey respondent

Overall, the Dutch government has a good reputation in all three case study country humanitarian communities. Increased field presence in all countries can only improve such relations. The non-earmarked nature of such funding makes it difficult to report against in terms of identifying actual programmes and projects supported, however, a reporting mechanism that goes beyond HQ annual reports has at yet not been identified.

“It is an open relationship where we share challenges, successes and plans. It is also a platform where we push for sharing of risks that are related to working in the Syrian context, such as compliance to sanctions and adherence to humanitarian principles.”

Survey respondent

Promotion of thematic priorities

An indication that relations between the experienced partners and the Dutch government are not close at a field level, is evident with respect to the Dutch government’s push for the prioritisation and inclusion of their 18 cross-cutting thematic priorities. Promotion of such priorities may be happening at a HQ level between The Hague and the various HQs

as core funding is dispersed,²² but, according to experienced partners interviews, in all three case study countries the partners have found themselves adopting such thematic priorities within their field level programming, but not as a result of any initiative from the Dutch government, nor were they aware, for the most part, that the Dutch government was prioritising such issues.

The prioritised themes are considered standard good humanitarian practices that any serious humanitarian actor would adopt.

Some influence may have been possible within the CBPFs as a result of having the regional humanitarian officer on board with work plan objectives that include the promotion of selected themes. However, this was not readily apparent in any interviews undertaken.

Local DRA partner feedback has indicated that the NNGOs have benefited from working with their international partners in terms of adopting international humanitarian principles. Only perhaps within these partnerships have such thematic priorities been adopted that might not have been otherwise.

One area of concern is that, with respect to somewhat sensitive thematic priorities, such as PSEA or any gender or protection-related themes, governments in Yemen and Syria have put barriers in the way of implementing such activities, making it difficult to give such issues the attention they need.

3.2 Monitoring and diplomatic activities

This evaluation question has been much reduced by IOB since the ToR was issued, and is now only addressing a) the capacity for and the extent of monitoring ongoing, and if this has improved since 2015, and b) what diplomatic or advocacy initiatives have the Dutch government undertaken and with what outcome.

With respect to the former, there has not been an increase in recent years of embassy-led monitoring at a field level due to COVID-19, visa and security and access restrictions that the regional humanitarian officers based in Amman and at the Juba embassy have faced. 75% of survey respondents stated that they had interactions with DSH no more than once a year, if at all. Similarly, 65% of the survey respondents stated they had interaction with the local embassy or regional humanitarian advisor no more than once a year, if at all, and 62% of respondents stated that monitoring activities had not increased in the last 5 years.

In as much that it is clear that non-earmarked and pool-based funding does not lend itself easily to programme-based monitoring, it is hoped that such officers will be able to spend more time visiting field level counterparts and improving relations and operational awareness in the coming months and years. This would certainly appear to be their plan. Beyond this, there needs to be some clarification as to what is the expected outcome of such field visits.

²² The review did not have discussions with partners at this level.

“We have frequent visits to the field with the embassy team, they have the capacity and knowledge however by structural design, the embassy in country does not have any legal framework to monitor organisations performance hence the visits even if done they can only advise but cannot cause for any changes or amendments as they are updated as representative but not a requirement.”

Survey respondent

In terms of diplomatic initiatives, the Dutch government have been involved in various initiatives within the three countries, for example, the “benchmark” process in Yemen, and the security council resolution extension into North-West Syria. Such work is much appreciated by the experienced humanitarian partners and other donors. Similarly, the Dutch ambassador in South Sudan is very much engaged with diplomatic initiatives at a local level, however, the current government seemingly shows little engagement with the ongoing humanitarian crisis there. Given the level of humanitarian crisis in each country a clear need remains for the Dutch government to stay engaged and to utilise what influence it may have to promote effective humanitarian interventions in the years to come. Not everyone, however, is aware of Dutch diplomatic efforts, 51% of the survey respondents were not aware of such endeavours.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

The following conclusions are drawn from the findings indicated above as per the research questions set out in section 1.3

RQ 1 How effective are Dutch-funded actors in the humanitarian system (UN agencies, Red Cross family and NGOs) in achieving Dutch humanitarian goals?

Dutch government funding mechanisms in each of the three case study countries support a broad spectrum of key UN, Red Cross, INGO, and NNGO organisations who are providing a variety of mandated integrated complementary sectoral programmes based on national and localised field assessments, that meet existing beneficiary needs, and contribute towards the Dutch government objectives of saving lives, restoring dignity and enhancing resilience.

CBPF recipients, DRA members and local partners are providing their own sectoral expertise as well as local knowledge, access to insecure locations, and better working relations with local authorities. DRA consortiums have reported that the consistency and flexibility of their funding, and their ability to adapt to changing operating environments as a key advantage alongside their focus on a limited number of sectors where they have the most expertise.

To a certain extent, resilience building and capacity strengthening activities have been incorporated into programmatic interventions that will support communities after the programmes have ended. However, what is not yet occurring in any of the contexts is the longer-term developmental nexus support that should be linked to the humanitarian activities. Beneficiaries are asking for more livelihood and income generation activities that will reduce their dependence on humanitarian aid. This will go some way to restoring the dignity of the affected communities. However, in all countries, with so many people still displaced and living in camp situations, and with no signs of a resolution in any of the conflict scenarios, restoring dignity and normality to beneficiary lives is currently barely imaginable. There is no evident exit strategy available in any of the three case study countries.

The relative strengths and weaknesses of the various recipient partners and funding mechanisms, as well as their effectiveness with respect to priority themes, are presented in Annex 2, in as much as the study was able to assess them given the time restraints and limitations faced. Overall, it would appear that all partners endeavour to operate with strong humanitarian principles - although these are continually challenged - and utilise a needs-based approach, albeit there is a need for more standardisation and capacity building with respect to needs assessments. Also, there are gaps in terms of encouraging innovation, where there needs to be clarity as to how any successful ideas will be expanded upon and supported financially.

There are a number of ongoing challenges inherent within the three crises that make implementing humanitarian programmes, especially on a timely basis, difficult to do. Most of these, such as ongoing insecurity, weak state and physical infrastructures, and the timeliness of governmental approvals, are beyond the control of the agencies involved, while generating the overall common issue of access. This has led to the complete reliance on NNGOs in some locations, increasing the risk of aid deviation and potential corruption, and making agencies overly reliant on third-party monitors. Beyond this, agencies also have to deal with sanctions, currency fluctuations, economic downturns, inflation, short-term funding, donor red lines, fake documentation, and in Syria, an exodus of the educated workforce.

The integration of the thematic priority of localisation within operations seems to progress well, as this a priority area of not only the Dutch government but also the UN, the Red Cross movement and the INGO/NNGO communities. The CBPF target of allocating 25% of its funding to local organisations has been met in two out of the three countries, and is very close in the third. NNGOs are still, however, reported to be in need of capacity building and such activities have received an accentuated focus within the DRA consortiums with the number of local partners included in the consortiums having grown significantly during the review period. That said, partnerships between UN agencies/INGOs and NNGOs are rarely seen as a partnership between equals. NNGOs are also automatically treated as a higher risk in the CBPFs, and NNGOs face greater difficulty than INGOs in terms of acquiring funding and having the capacity to respond. Donors don't normally fund NNGOs directly: they prefer to pass on the risk, monitoring and management to the UN/INGOs, who they believe have more capacity and experience to undertake that role.

RQ 2 What kind of funding relation does the MFA have with its various partners, and how does this relation enable or hamper their effectiveness in the delivery of humanitarian aid?

The Dutch government has a good reputation as a donor that follows good humanitarian donor practices, and relations between recipient partners and the Dutch government representatives are consistently reported as good in all three case study countries. Recipients of the various funding mechanisms supported by the Dutch government are very appreciative of the funding provided, particularly the “gold” that is non-earmarked core funding, believing that through its predictability, flexibility and its timeliness, it improves the effectiveness of their humanitarian programming.

Despite this, however, there is little evidence to show that the relationship between recipient partners at the field level and the Dutch representatives is particularly close. This is evident in the feedback consistently received in each country that although the Dutch thematic priorities have been generally adopted, this is not as a result of any influence from the Dutch, more that such priorities are now standard operational practices. The closest linkages with the Dutch government are with the DRA consortium members.

With respect to levels of programmatic monitoring, overall there has been no indication that this has increased in recent years as COVID-19 and the security situations have made

travelling somewhat difficult. Without such a field presence it is hard to be fully aware and up-to-date with ongoing contextual changes and operational challenges. Diplomatic efforts to date are much appreciated by those aware of such activities, and will continue to be needed, notably in terms of supporting humanitarian access and the utilisation at a government level of good humanitarian principles.

Finally, while many of the underlying pathway assumptions remain valid, a substantial number are only partially valid or not at all. The Dutch government seems to overestimate how much influence its funding has over the timing, scale and content of country-level interventions. There would appear also to be too much confidence placed in local organisations either to organise national-level assessments or to ensure connections with development actors. It is also difficult to know whether or not some assumptions are referring to INGOs or NNGOs.

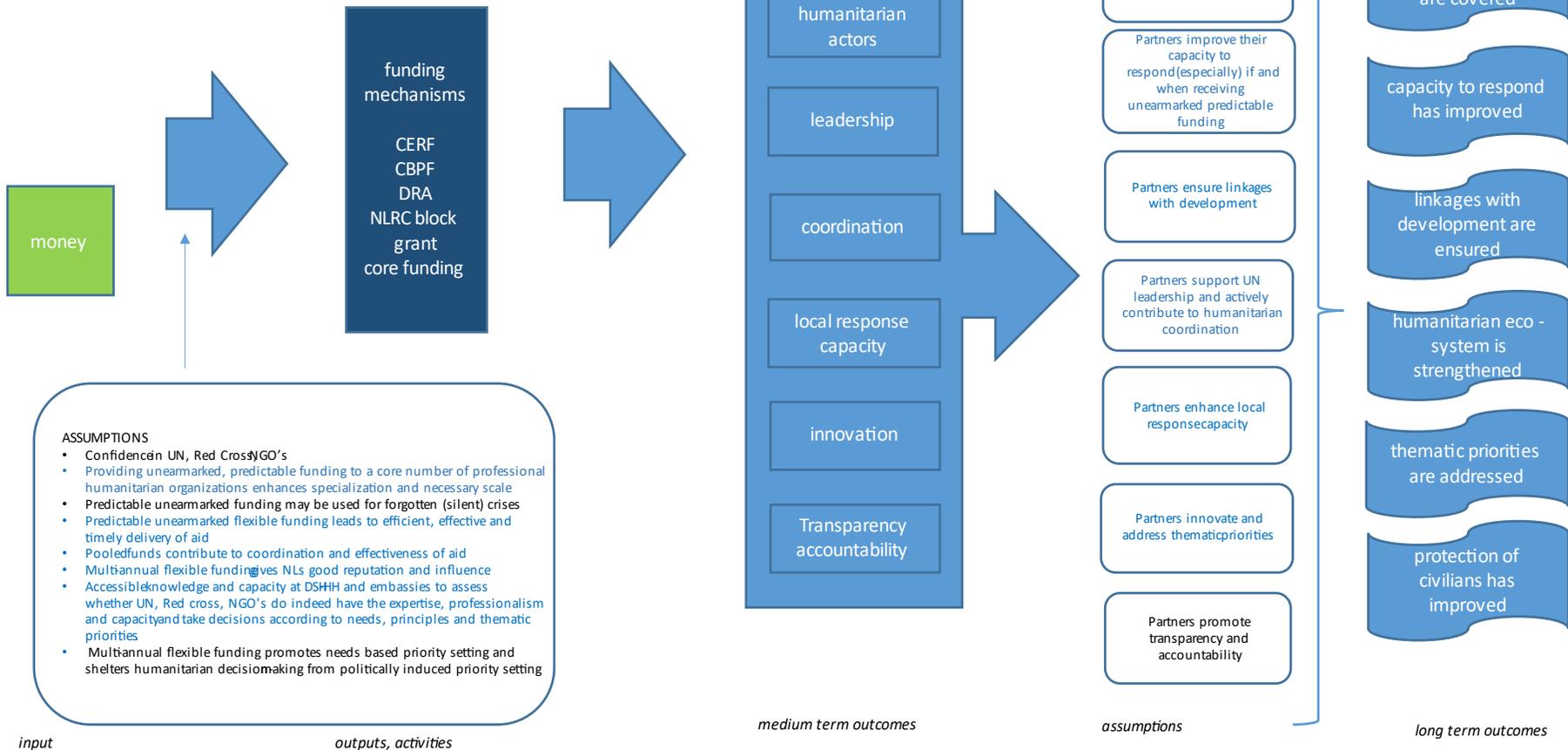
4.2 Recommendations

1. The Dutch government should continue to support the diverse range of HQ based funding mechanisms. Increased amounts of funding for specific thematic priorities, such as innovation and capacity building within localisation would be beneficial.
2. Increasing the field presence of the Amman and Juba-based Humanitarian Advisers would be beneficial in terms of improved relations with partners, an increased awareness of the operational context, and participation in informal discussions to gather information not openly shared in reports. Within this, levels of monitoring need to be increased and expectations standardised.
3. Multi-annual funding streams should be adopted wherever possible, and efforts need to be made to ensure that funding arrives consistently on time.
4. There is a need for an advocacy initiative at the senior levels of the UN re closing the gap between the humanitarian resilience building activities and the initiatives of the development actors, moving towards a more developmental phase in all three case study countries.
5. Diplomatic efforts in Syria need to be increased in line with efforts required to ensure the extension of the cross-border resolution into NWS, and to encourage the utilisation of good humanitarian practices at a government level.
6. How to increase innovation efforts within the DRA consortium, as well as with other funding recipients, needs to be reviewed and elaborated. Furthermore, some clarity is required within the DRA consortium as to how successful innovation practices will be funded and rolled out.
7. There is a need to work with OCHA to standardise and improve DRA and CBPF partner capacities to undertake localised field assessments.
8. UN and DRA INGO consortium members should be encouraged to establish partnerships with their local counterparts that are more collaborative as opposed to transactional sub agreement arrangements.
9. There is a need to review the underlying policy pathway assumptions, for example, with respect to the level of influence Dutch funding generates and the capacity of NGOs. Similarly, there is a need to clarify as to whether or not assumptions are referring to INGOs or NNGOs.

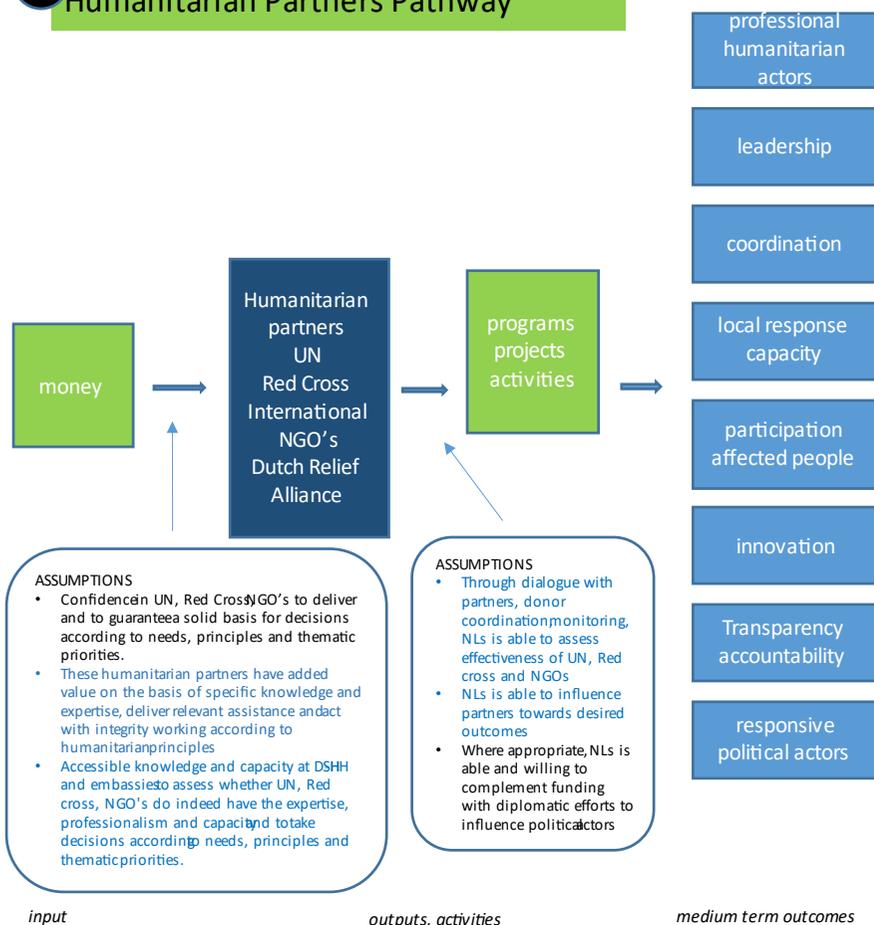
Annexes

Annex 1 Humanitarian Pathways

a Funding Mechanisms Pathway



b Humanitarian Partners Pathway



ASSUMPTIONS

- Confidence in UN, Red Cross/NGO's to deliver and to guarantee a solid basis for decisions according to needs, principles and thematic priorities.
- These humanitarian partners have added value on the basis of specific knowledge and expertise, deliver relevant assistance and act with integrity working according to humanitarian principles
- Accessible knowledge and capacity at DSHH and embassies to assess whether UN, Red cross, NGO's do indeed have the expertise, professionalism and capacity to take decisions according to needs, principles and thematic priorities.

ASSUMPTIONS

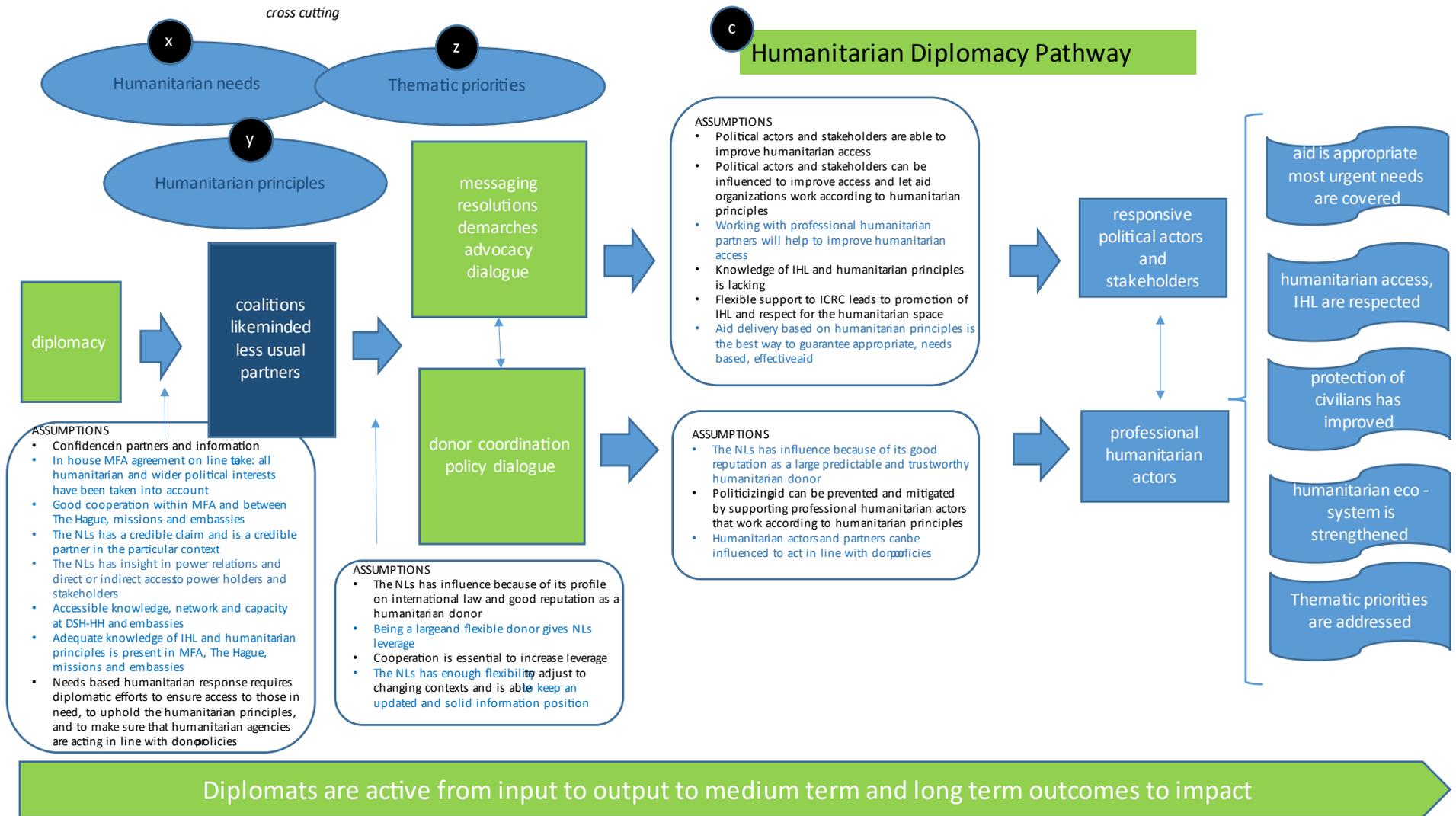
- Through dialogue with partners, donor coordination/monitoring, NLs is able to assess effectiveness of UN, Red cross and NGOs
- NLs is able to influence partners towards desired outcomes
- Where appropriate, NLs is able and willing to complement funding with diplomatic efforts to influence political actors

ASSUMPTIONS

- Principled aid leads to coverage of most urgent needs
- UN, Red Cross, NGOs are able to make an independent and impartial assessment of humanitarian needs
- UN, Red Cross, NGOs work according to humanitarian principles and will target assistance accordingly
- UN, Red Cross, NGOs may address Dutch thematic priorities
- UN is the best to lead and coordinate international humanitarian action
- Coordination leads to flexible, rapid and effective response
- Cooperation with local partners is key to good access and security of aid workers
- If local organizations are in the driver seat this will lead to better needs assessments and lower costs of aid delivery
- Investing in local preparedness will lead to an effective efficient and a timely response. It will also increase the dignity of affected people
- NGO's bring added value to innovation
- Big Data enables rapid realtime mapping of most urgent needs
- Increased accountability towards the affected population leads to better coverage of needs, more efficiency and lower costs
- Strong political engagement is indispensable to the success of humanitarian aid. This asks for

- continuous interaction between diplomacy and the political arena
- Large scale crises ask for deployment of big multilateral agencies
- NGOs have large implementing capacities and can often work in places where the UN has no access
- Dutch Relief Alliance will improve effectiveness of aid and prevent fragmentation
- ICRC's neutrality provides for the best humanitarian access in conflict areas
- UN led coordination prevents gaps and overlap and determines which actor is best suited to deliver aid on the basis of quality, capacity, presence, access and speed
- Investing in local preparedness will lower humanitarian risks and needs and lower costs for the humanitarian system
- Capacity building of aid organizations in affected countries is crucial for sustainable aid
- If you give humanitarian aid where it is needed and focus on development aid where possible, others will have to step up to link between the two
- Innovation will increase effectiveness and efficiency of aid
- Increased accountability increases cooperation, understanding, learning, control and promotes change
- The NLs has influence because of its good reputation as a large predictable and trustworthy humanitarian donor

- aid is appropriate most urgent needs are covered
- humanitarian access, IHL are respected
- protection of civilians has improved
- capacity to respond has improved
- linkages with development are ensured
- humanitarian eco-system is strengthened
- Thematic priorities are addressed



Annex 2 Strengths and Weaknesses

	Principled approach	Timely intervention	Needs based	Localisation	Innovation	Nexus	Main strengths	Main weaknesses	Main challenges
OCHA	++	++	++	++	+	-	Annual CBPF monitoring reports Manage co-ordination, the cluster system, and the CERF and Country Based Pooled Funds	Needs Assessments are not standardised across CBPF partners	Arrival of funding late in the Year (Oct/Nov).
WFP	++	++	++	+	+	-	Timely intervention within rapid response mechanism, response within 72 hours. Logistical Support Food security programme coverage	0	Access to some areas and acceptance with warring factions
UNICEF	++	++	++	++	0	+	Timely intervention within rapid response mechanism, response within 72 hours. Multi sectoral approach	Implementing partner capacity (govt and local partners)	Assessment data
UNHCR	++	+	+	+	0	0	Management of refugee/returnee process	Protection needs still to be addressed	Working within government structures
ICRC	++	+	+	++	0	0	Acceptance by warring factions	Access can always be better Lack of written reporting	Working within government structures
CBPF	++	+	++	++	0	0	Detailed annual monitoring reports Increased percentage of funding for local organization each year Allocations based on cluster lead identified needs.	Needs Assessments are not standardised across partners Slow approval and lack of flexibility affects timeliness	Timing of funding
CERF	++	++	++	0	0	0	Timely distribution of funding Gap filling potential	Only open for UN partners	0

Core/Non - earmarked	++	++	++	++	-	-	Flexible timely predictable funding	Not conducive to monitoring Not utilised to support developmental/ nexus approach	Minimal partner reporting Improving the innovation approach
DRA	++	++	++	++	+	+	Focused on a limited number of sectors where they have the most expertise Capacity building of local partners - localisation Usage of development-based approaches to deliver emergency programmes Comprehensive and innovative ways of sharing learnings Strong connections with authorities and local communities Joint assessments Flexibility of funding In country leadership Connection with DSH	Local partner capacity	Improving the innovation approach

Key:

The more triangulation the darker shade of pink, i.e. 1 to 4 of the following sources

- Mentioned by stakeholders/key informants
- Found in secondary research
- Finding/observation on a field visit
- Finding one/more focus groups

Rating per priority:

- n/a no findings or not relevant
- 0 information insufficient to assess properly
- not OK,
- + OK – some activities/progress
- ++ on the right track
- +++ very good channel to fund for this priority

Annex 3 Underlying assumptions review

Support to Humanitarian Partners

Assumption	Comment	Validity
<i>Humanitarian partners have added value on the basis of specific knowledge and expertise, deliver relevant assistance, and act with integrity, working according to humanitarian principles.</i>	The consensus in all case study countries is that the core funded experienced partners, together with the DRA international and local partners, plus the CBPF recipients, bring a wealth of experience across a broad spectrum of sectoral expertise each with their own added value. NNGOs have access, increased acceptance and cultural knowledge and awareness that their international partner might lack. Assistance is generally considered relevant. All humanitarian partners work according to humanitarian principles.	Agreed
<i>UN, Red Cross, and NGOs are able to make an independent and impartial assessment of humanitarian needs. Partners address most urgent needs.</i>	Partners have varying levels of experience and capacity in terms of undertaking assessments, and there is a need for standardisation at each country level. Most partners, especially the larger scale UN agencies and INGOs, have the necessary experience however, and although there are some issues in Yemen and Syria with respect to the governments trying to influence beneficiary selection, for the most part this is understood to be mitigated. Access to remote and /or insecure regions can also be an issue. That said, the most urgent needs are being addressed, albeit with a strong focus on food security, what is lacking is support to the medium/longer term needs in all three countries.	Partially Agreed
<i>If local organisations are in the driving seat this will lead to better needs assessments and lower cost of aid delivery.</i>	Some NNGOs lack capacity, protocols, and experience in terms of undertaking assessments, however, they are better in dealing with local authorities, often have improved access, and have a better understanding and stronger relations with the beneficiary communities. Overall, however, international organizations have stronger capacities in terms of finances, assessments tools, experience and reporting. As for lower cost, local partners are reported as having lower operational costs, particularly in terms of salaries, however, they lack the capacity and experience to work at scale.	Invalid

Assumption	Comment	Validity
<i>NGOs bring added value to innovation/Partners innovate and address thematic priorities/ Innovation will increase effectiveness and efficiency of aid.</i>	There has been no evidence in any of the three countries that NGOs (either NNGOS or INGOs) are generating more innovation practices than UN agencies. In fact levels of innovation have been generally perceived as low, especially in Yemen. Furthermore, there seems to be an overall lack of clarity as to how any successful innovations might be scaled up. The assumption needs to be reworded so to clarify if it is referring to INGOs or NNGOs.	Invalid.
<i>Partners enhance local response capacity.</i>	The studies have witnessed two levels of improving local capacity: firstly building the capacity of local organizations by international organizations, and secondly the capacity building of individuals within local communities through CFW schemes. DRA partners, for example, have helped to enhance capacities of its local partners through different ways including mentoring, coaching and sharing tools, procedures and systems, concentrating on MEAL, HR, and financial and narrative reporting. NNGOs have built their capacity exponentially over a short period of time in order to cope with the growing needs of the communities. This is also happening under the UN, Red Cross, and within CBPF programmes, specifically with respect to those organisations working alongside national level service providers.	Agreed
<i>NGOs have large implementing capacities and can often work in places there the UN has no access.</i>	There are clearly some areas in all countries where the National Red Cross and local NGOs have better access than the UN and INGOs, particularly in Syria where North West Syria is dominated by NNGOs. Few local NGOs, however, are reported to have a large implementation capacity. Again, there is a need for the assumption to clarify whether they are referring to INGOs or NNGOs.	Partially Agreed
<i>DRA will improve the effectiveness of aid and prevent fragmentation.</i>	The DRA consortium in each country is working well enabling INGOs and NNGOs to coordinate, cooperate, integrate and learn from each other. In doing so this will have improved the quality of the support provided to beneficiaries. Utilising a lead agency in each country as a conduit for the funding has generated a less fragmented approach for the Dutch government than having to go through each INGO directly.	Agreed
<i>Large scale crises ask for deployment of big multi-lateral agencies.</i>	The economies of scale and experience of the large UN agencies means they are invariable required to support large scale crises, especially in a complex conflict scenario with multiple actors and stakeholders and where the government lacks capacity.	Agreed

Assumption	Comment	Validity
<p><i>UN led co-ordination prevents gaps and overlaps and determines which actor is best suited to deliver aid on the basis of quality, capacity, presence, access and speed/ Partners support UN leadership and actively contribute to humanitarian co-ordination.</i></p>	<p>There is a need for a central co-ordinating body and OCHA is well experienced in delivering this role. Partners are generally active members of the clusters and contribute positively to humanitarian co-ordination. OCHA leads the process in terms of who should be the recipients of the CERF and CBPFs. Such decisions are taken in co-ordination with cluster leads who provide an analysis of the gaps they have identified by sector and location.</p> <p>In terms of selecting the best actor to provide the support this is generally based on who has the best capacity in a specific geographical area. The concern is that in meeting the 25% CBPF target of NNGO funding introduces a criterion not based on capacity, that may lead to a less than optimal decision.</p> <p>Furthermore, in each country there have been concerns about the flexibility of the CBPF, the levels of bureaucracy involved, and a lack of clarity as to how decisions are made.</p>	Agreed
<p><i>Aid delivery based on humanitarian principles is the best way to guarantee appropriate needs based effective aid.</i></p>	<p>Neutrality and impartiality of aid is the most effective way to earn the respect on both sides of any conflict. Such humanitarian principles support the acceptance of the humanitarian actors and therefore improve access, whereby actual needs can be ascertained and addressed.</p>	Agreed
<p><i>Partners ensure linkages with development.</i></p>	<p>Although there are some resilience building activities integrated into funding recipients' programmatic activities there is no clear link between the humanitarian partners and the development agencies. A clear exit strategy is missing in all three countries.</p>	Not Agreed

Relationships with partners:

Assumption	Comment	Validity
<i>Providing non-earmarked, predictable funding to a core number of professional organisations enhances specialisation and necessary scale</i>	Experienced partners have reported that the predictable non-earmarked funding has enabled them to fill gaps in programmes that have faced funding shortfalls and enabled specialisation to occur. The amounts concerned, however, are not so significant so as to be able to ensure necessary scale.	Partially Agreed
<i>Predictable unearmarked funding leads to efficient effective and timely delivery of aid</i>	DRA partners have stated their appreciation regarding the predictability and the regularity of their funding mechanisms. This they believe has contributed to the effectiveness of their programming. Similarly, the UN agencies have stated that they appreciate the consistency of the core funding, especially if multiyear funding, in that they been able to utilise such funds to kick start their operations whilst other funding arrived. As above, the flexibility of the core funding also reportedly allows such agencies to fill gaps were there are funding shortfalls. Both of these positives will go some way to ensuring the timeliness of aid. However, overall, it is not the timing of the funding that dictates the timeliness of the interventions as other factors, such as the need for the government approval of an intervention, can lead to delays.	Partially Agreed
<i>Partners improve their capacity to respond (especially) if and when receiving unearmarked predictable funding.</i>	As mentioned above, the flexibility of the funding enables recipient agencies to fill gaps. This is not restricted to supplies, and can also be utilised for staffing or whatever other capacity constraint that organisation may be facing. The further assumption is of course that the recipient agencies will use any funds wisely and economically.	Agreed
<i>Through dialogue with partners donor co-ordination and monitoring, NL is able to assess the effectiveness of UN, Red Cross and NGOs</i>	Dialogue with and monitoring of partner activities should provide sufficient information so as to enable the Dutch government to assess the effectiveness of their recipient partners reasonably well, if only to a certain extent. To establish the true effectiveness of a particular agency in any country a full scale multi sectoral evaluation would need to take place. Were the regional and local humanitarian advisors be able to spend more time in country, in the field, dialogue levels would increase, as would awareness of partner interventions.	Partially Agreed

Assumption	Comment	Validity
<i>Accessible knowledge and capacity at DSH and embassies to assess whether UN, RC NGOs do indeed have the expertise, professionalism and capacity to take decisions according to needs, principles, and thematic priorities. /Adequate knowledge of IHL and humanitarian principles at an embassy level</i>	Such assumptions are reasonable and one would further assume to be verified during any recruitment interview process. However, what is missing from the assumption is the necessity for such individuals to be able to access field level interventions on a regular basis. This is applicable not only to in country or regional staff but DSH staff from the Hague. With respect to the experience and expertise and capacity of the humanitarian staff members interviewed, this would appear to good and more than enough to fulfil the role.	Partially Agreed
<i>The NLS has enough flexibility to adjust to changing contexts and is able to keep updated and solid information position</i>	With respect to DRA funding there is clear feedback that the funding is flexible enough to adapt to the changing context. The same has been said to apply to the non-earmarked and pooled funding, albeit it has been reported by CBPF recipients that procedures can be quite cumbersome. In-country recipients and embassy staff will surely be aware of ongoing contextual changes. This would be more difficult for the remote embassy staff in Amman. Also, without in-country presence, the Dutch government will be missing out on the informal discussions on topics that may not make it into official reports.	Agreed
<i>The NLS has insight into power relations and direct or indirect access to power holders and stakeholders</i>	Through the in-country and regional humanitarian advisors' contacts with partners, and the activities of the relevant Ambassadors, the Dutch government will, for the most part, have direct or indirect access to those in positions of power. The exception is in Syria where there are no diplomatic relations between the Dutch and Syrian governments and no presence in country.	Partially Agreed
<i>Multi annual funding gives the NLS a good reputation and influence. /The NLS has influence because of its good reputation as a large predictable and trustworthy humanitarian donor. /Being a large and flexible donor gives NLS leverage</i>	The Dutch government has a good reputation based on the flexibility and diversity of its funding. What is not evident is what leverage or influence the Dutch government is achieving. In terms of the thematic priorities, at a field level, organisations are reporting that they follow such policies irrespective of whether or not the Dutch government is pushing for them. Perhaps such leverage happens to a certain extent at a HQ level.	Partially Agreed

Assumption	Comment	Validity
<i>NLs is able to influence partners towards desired outcomes. /Humanitarian actors and partners can be influenced to act in line with donor policies.</i>	As above, there is little evidence of Dutch government influence on policy adoption except perhaps for the influence of international DRA partners over their local counterparts.	Invalid
<i>Strong political engagement is indispensable to the success of humanitarian aid. This asks for continuous interaction between diplomacy and the political arena</i>	In as much as the assumption is reasonable, in practice is it not always easily achievable. Diplomatic efforts in Yemen have not seen much success to date, the South Sudan government lacks ownership of the humanitarian crisis in its country, and there are no relations between the Dutch and Syrian Government.	Agreed
<i>Working with professional humanitarian partners will help to improve humanitarian access</i>	There is a clear need to work with partners who have experience in implementing large scale operations. Invariably these are UN agencies or INGOs. However, these organisations have their access constraints in all three contexts, and as such it is also important to work with local partners, who may be perhaps less experienced, or “professional” in terms of their policies and procedures, but can provide access and knowledge that the international partners may not have.	Agreed
<i>The NL has a credible claim and is a credible partner in a particular context</i>	The consistent annual funding provided by the Dutch government makes them a credible partner within all three case country contexts. However, the lack of in-country presence in Syria, and access to those in positions of power, as mentioned above, reduces their status.	Partially Agreed

Annex 4 Organisations and Key Informant Interviews by country

Please note some organisations have been interviewed on more than one occasion in each country, for example in Gaziantep and in Damascus for Syria, and in Juba, Bentiu and Wau in South Sudan.

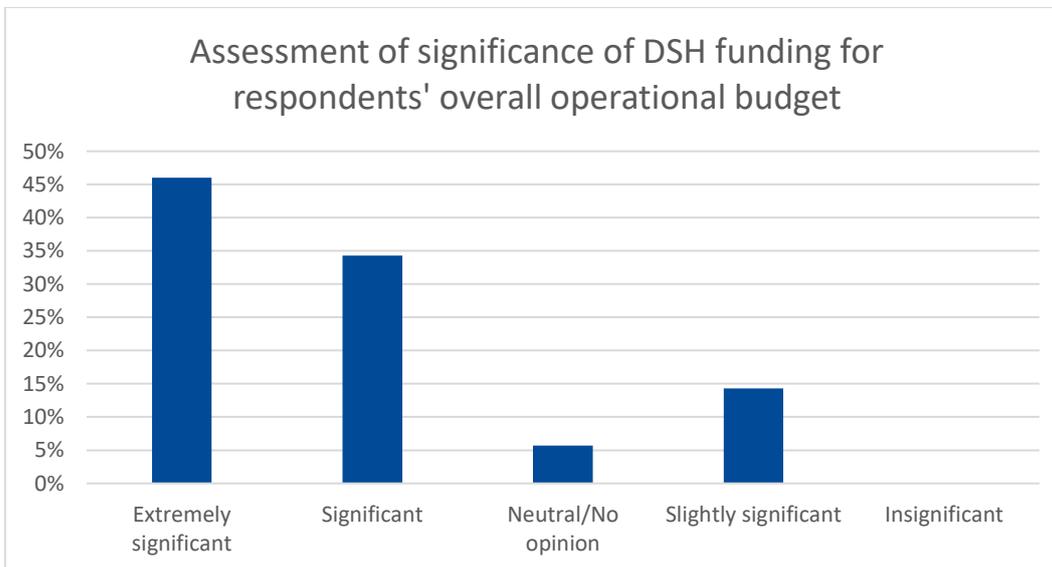
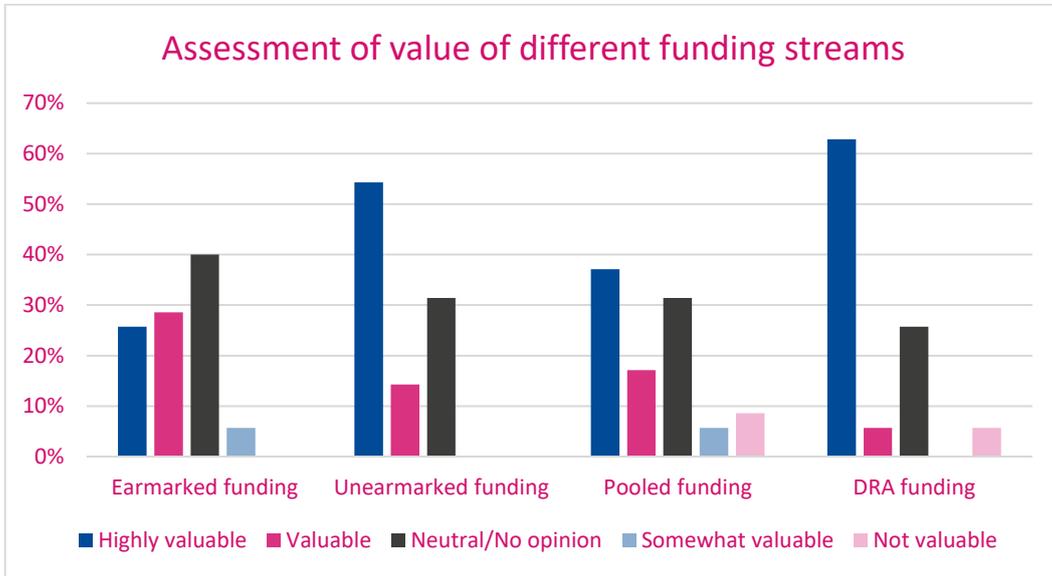
Organisations / recipients	South Sudan	Yemen	Syria
Recipients of non-earmarked funding ²³	6	6	6 ²⁴
Recipients of CERF funding and direct ²⁵	3	3	3
Fund manager and recipient partners of CBPFs	5	7	11
Recipients of DRA funding - consortium members	5	5	6
Recipients of DRA funding - consortium member local partners	3	1	1
Dutch embassy humanitarian staff	2	1	1
Other donors and embassies	3	2	2
Other relevant actors	2	1	0

²³ UNCHR, UNICEF, WFP, OCHA, ICRC, IFRC.

²⁴ Experienced partners were interviewed in both Gaziantep (NWS) and Damascus. A total of 14 interviews were held.

²⁵ UNCHR, UNICEF, WFP.

Annex 5 Survey respondents: utility and significance of funding streams



Annex 6 Acronyms

CBPF	Country Based Pool Fund
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CFW	Cash for Work
DRA	Dutch Relief Alliance
DSH	The Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INGO	International Non-governmental organisation
IOB	Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs
KII	Key informant interview
MAM	Moderate Acute Malnutrition
NNGO	National non-governmental organisation
NLRC	Netherlands Red Cross
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SCMCHA	Supreme Council for the Management and Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs
TL	Team Leader
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

