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Humanitarian Transparency - From the Ground Up: Taking a needs based approach to humanitarian transparency

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In 2016, major global humanitarian actors came together and committed to improve transparency. Three years on, significant gains have been made. However, certain transparency targets are still lagging and the full potential of more transparent humanitarian information is yet to be realised. This can only be done if the information made available is actively used and benefits local and national humanitarian responders. Without this important perspective, transparency risks becoming nothing more than a tool for financial compliance. With it, we might be able to better understand whether improved transparency can unlock new methods of communication and inclusiveness, and ultimately support relief efforts.

This project will focus on understanding the user needs of local and national humanitarian actors. We will seek to understand what challenges humanitarian actors face, and whether and how improved transparency and greater information sharing can help. From this, we will provide insights as to whether open data standards, platforms and tools need to change to make this information more useful and accessible to those on the front lines.

Our objectives

- To increase understanding of the information needs and challenges of humanitarian actors on-the-ground, in particular local and national responders.

- To identify existing open data standards, platforms and tools, and assess their accessibility and usefulness in relation to meeting the needs and addressing the challenges identified.

- To identify possible improvements to open data standards, platforms and tools to better provide the information needed and in a way that makes it accessible to these actors.

Activities

Following a desk review and online survey, we will conduct two in-country field visits. We feel that a case study approach will give us the greatest opportunity to understand complex humanitarian environments, and therefore better enable us to develop insightful conclusions and recommendations. Following a robust selection process which reviewed different contexts against a variety of factors, such as geographical location, type of crisis, national and local civil society capacity, we chose Iraq and Bangladesh. In Iraq, we will be focusing on urban displacement within the Iraqi Kurdistan region. In Bangladesh, we will be looking into the refugee camps surrounding Cox's Bazaar and aspects of the natural disasters which afflict the country.

The research will involve interviews with relevant local and national actors in countries which have had protracted humanitarian crises. We will then produce and promote a research report containing recommendations on how to most effectively improve information sharing with on-the-ground humanitarian actors. This research will feed into the second phase of the Grand Bargain's transparency work stream.

Our full methodology is available here.

All activities will be completed between January 2019 and February 2020.

This work will be conducted by Publish What You Fund and Ground Truth Solutions, in partnership with Development Initiatives and with funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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