

DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION DIRECTORATE
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE

HUMANITARIAN AID IN DAC PEER REVIEWS
A SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS AND EXPERIENCES 2004-05

This document is a revision of DCD/DAC(2006)3 - A synthesis of findings and experiences from six Peer Reviews 2004-05 where the assessment framework for coverage of humanitarian aid was applied.

This revised version contains amendments to the second bullet in para. 27, following the discussion in the DAC at its meeting on 17 January 2006.

Contact: Henrik Hammargren, Tel. 33 (0)1 45 24 99 15; Fax 33 (0)1 44 30 61 44; E-mail:
henrik.hammargren@oecd.org

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Humanitarian aid is a significant and growing dimension of Official Development Assistance (ODA). Meeting humanitarian needs caused by natural disasters or armed conflicts poses serious challenges for donors financing humanitarian action. Reforms to improve effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action are underway. *The Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship* (GHD), endorsed in 2003 by 16 DAC governments and the European Commission, provides an opportunity for harmonising donor practice in this field. The DAC has agreed to take an active role in promoting GHD and since 2004, a GHD assessment framework has been applied in six Peer Reviews (Australia, Belgium, Germany, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland). This document summarises the findings and experience with the aim of assessing the usefulness of this approach.

The overarching objective of Peer Reviews is the continuous improvement of member's ODA systems. Members' policies and actions are monitored through a periodic cycle of reviews where recommendations are followed up. Prior to the introduction of the GHD framework humanitarian aid was given limited and arbitrary attention and specific recommendations on humanitarian issues were seldom made. In the reviews where the GHD framework was applied, humanitarian aid was covered in a special annex resulting in over 30 specific recommendations in DAC main findings and recommendations.

The recommendations identify four distinct areas for improvements: policies; volume; budget systems; and management. All six reviews include recommendations regarding policy issues as few donors operate humanitarian aid under a comprehensive policy reflecting GHD. Continued under-funding and uneven response to emergencies led to recommendations to increase humanitarian allocations. The potential to scale-up humanitarian aid is placed in the broader context of increasing ODA volumes. Recommendations to optimise budget systems to further improve timeliness and flexibility of needs-based funding were made in four reviews. Management structures and procedures for administering humanitarian action are often complex and involve several parts of the ODA system reflecting increased political attention. Each of the six reviews demonstrated a different organisational set-up and consolidation of management was frequently recommended. Recommendations were also made on specific issues such as: civil-military relationship in delivering humanitarian aid; involvement of beneficiaries; and alignment to new humanitarian aid modalities (pooled funding and common humanitarian strategies at country level). The Peer Review process also proved useful in sharing experiences, approaches and addressing the relationship between humanitarian action and development co-operation (i.e. fragile states and transition situations). Four issues remain as outstanding challenges when monitoring donor humanitarian performance: lack of policy relevant data; lack of benchmarks and indicators; GHD endorsement by the DAC; and limited Secretariat resources.

Application of the framework has had limited impact on Peer Review methodology and logistics. A humanitarian adviser was included in Peer Review teams. Separate humanitarian sessions were organised during missions and the Peer Review meeting. The inclusion of humanitarian aid has contributed to a more inclusive overview of all dimensions of ODA without compromising the quality of the reviews. Findings and experiences suggest that the GHD assessment framework should continue to be applied in all DAC Peer Reviews and that present arrangements should be maintained. The Committee could consider bringing the *Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship* to the DAC for endorsement by all members at the DAC High Level Meeting 2006. Members are also encouraged to continue efforts to improve reporting on humanitarian aid.

SECTION I

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

1. This report presents an overview of the findings and experiences from the expanded coverage of humanitarian aid in the DAC Peer Reviews 2004-05 as requested by the Committee at its meeting 26 January 2005. It explores the usefulness of DAC Peer Reviews in promoting good humanitarian donorship and provides a basis for members' discussion on continuing this approach. The term humanitarian aid encompasses a broader spectrum of activities than the DAC's definition of emergency and distress relief. It includes prevention and preparedness, emergency response and support to reconstruction and recovery.

2. Developments in the field of humanitarian aid strengthen the case for joint donor approaches. Global humanitarian aid reached an all-time high of USD 7.8 billion in 2003, USD 2 billion more than in 2002.¹ Despite a positive increase in allocations, serious challenges to meeting humanitarian needs still exist. 2005 has been a year of extreme humanitarian emergencies. Natural disasters such as the Indian Ocean Tsunami, the Kashmir earthquake and hurricanes in North and Central America, food crises in the Sahel and southern Africa, and ongoing complex emergencies such as Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo challenge donors' humanitarian aid policies and practices. The response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami compared to the Kashmir earthquake demonstrates the uneven pattern of humanitarian aid distribution.² Slow onset emergencies such as Niger and southern Africa illustrate a disconnect between development- and humanitarian policy. Donors' uneven response to emergencies underlines the importance of flexible and timely funding based on valid needs assessments.

3. The *Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship* (GHD), provides the basis for harmonising donor practices for effective humanitarian aid delivery (Annex A).³ GHD addresses the role of donors in meeting humanitarian needs, providing timely and flexible funding whilst respecting humanitarian principles. GHD does not cover operational aspects of humanitarian action, such as logistics or delivery efficiency, as this is a separate discipline, monitored and evaluated through specific methods and mechanisms. GHD is the only collective donor initiative focusing on the role and responsibilities of donors and it assists in making humanitarian donorship measurable by focussing on donors' policies and decision-making procedures.

4. The DAC agreed in January 2005 that it would take an "active role" in pursuing GHD and, since it is a donor initiated process, that implementation would be followed-up through existing systems of policy monitoring. Members recognised that humanitarian aid forms an important and distinct dimension of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and that inclusion of humanitarian action in the Peer Reviews

¹ Development Initiatives (2005), *Global Humanitarian Assistance Update 2004-05*. p 5-6

² *Tracking Tsunami Pledges* [DCD/DAC(2005)56]

³ The Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship was endorsed in Stockholm 2003 by Endorsed in Stockholm, 17 June 2003 by Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

would contribute to a more complete overview of all dimensions of ODA.⁴ To facilitate this task the Secretariat developed a GHD assessment framework, (Annex B), which was approved by the DAC and is to be used until further notice.⁵ To date six Peer Reviews have included GHD coverage: Australia, Belgium, Germany, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

5. This paper discusses the usefulness of this approach and outlines findings from the six reviews (Section 2) and highlights issues for future considerations (Section 3). Two annexes are included: The Principles and Good Practices of Humanitarian Donorship (Annex A); The Assessment Framework for Humanitarian Aid coverage in DAC Peer Reviews (Annex B).

⁴ See *Humanitarian Action Coverage in the DAC Peer Reviews - Summary of Recent Peer Review Experience and Recommendations for Future Work* [DCD/DAC (2005)1] and *DAC and Good Humanitarian Donorship - Options on Humanitarian Assistance in Peer Reviews* [(DCD/DAC(2004)5]

⁵ *Assessment Framework for Coverage of Humanitarian Action in DAC Peer Reviews* [DCD/DIR(2004)11]

SECTION 2

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND EXPERIENCES

6. DAC Peer Reviews support the following objectives: monitoring and assessment of members' policies and programmes to assess effectiveness and results; identification of best practice; and, mutual learning from shared experience and improved co-ordination. This section assesses the usefulness of Peer Reviews in promoting good humanitarian donorship. It is based on material from the following six Peer Reviews:⁶

Reviewed country	Date	Examiners	Field missions including humanitarian aid assessments
Norway	Nov. 2004	Spain – Japan	(n.a.)
Australia	Dec. 2004	Ireland - United Kingdom	Cambodia
Sweden	May 2005	Australia – Belgium	Burundi
Switzerland	June 2005	Norway – New Zealand	Bosnia-Herzegovina
Belgium	Oct. 2005	Austria – Portugal	Democratic Republic of Congo
Germany	Dec. 2005	France – Netherlands	Ethiopia

2.1 Promoting GHD through Peer Reviews

7. Will coverage of GHD in DAC Peer Reviews be useful to improve donor performance? To answer this, the assumption must first be made that DAC Peer Reviews are equally useful to addressing and promoting improvements in the field of humanitarian aid as for development co-operation. The Peer Review methodology is well established and its strength rests in its collective learning methodology and systematic approach. Secondly it is assumed that DAC recommendations are an effective instrument to promoting change. The role of the DAC and the Secretariat in conducting the review is recognised and appreciated by members. Recommendations made in the Peer Review reports have an impact on members' policies and actions taken by the reviewed member are monitored through the periodic cycle of the Peer Reviews. The delay between the Peer Review recommendations and the policy response by the examined country reflects the time frames for public policy shifts.

8. A 'Client Survey', conducted in 2002, asked members' their views on the strengths and weaknesses of the Peer Reviews.⁷ In the survey members advocated clearer, outcome oriented standards, benchmarks and checklists. The survey also concluded that recommendations should be more specific; follow-up intensified and that members have the responsibility to make use of the Peer Review to bring about adjustments in their aid programmes. Based on these positions, determining the usefulness of Peer Reviews in advancing GHD starts by assessing to what extent the GHD assessment framework has contributed to a more methodological approach and resulted in specific recommendations for humanitarian aid.

⁶ A compilation of the annexes on humanitarian aid in the six reviews is available as a separate document *Humanitarian Aid in DAC Peer Reviews - a Compilation of Coverage 2004-05* [DCD/DAC (2006)4]

⁷ *Client Survey Study of Peer Reviews* [DCD/DAC (2002)28]

9. Humanitarian aid has always been included in DAC Peer Reviews as it is a part of ODA. However, a reassessment of the ten Peer Reviews conducted before the introduction of the GHD framework shows that humanitarian aid was at best covered in a few short descriptive paragraphs. None of the reports included specific recommendations related to humanitarian aid, either in DAC's Main Findings and Recommendations, or in the Secretariat Report.⁸ While respecting that Peer Reviews are not designed for in-depth coverage of issues it was noted that humanitarian action was given very limited and arbitrary attention.

10. Humanitarian aid is recognised as a distinct system within ODA. An advantage of the GHD framework is that it makes performance in this field measurable as it identifies objectives and points of reference for donors' policies, budgets and management. Six Peer Reviews applied the GHD assessment framework, from which the Secretariat Reports presented over 60 specific considerations on humanitarian aid issues. Over 30 recommendations were brought forward from these Reports to the Main Findings and Recommendations of the Peer Review.

2.2 Assessment of donors humanitarian aid policies and programme

11. Peer Review recommendations have been made in four distinct areas; policies; humanitarian aid volume; budget systems and management. Specific issues related to delivery of humanitarian aid, such as civil-military relationship and involvement of beneficiaries, have also been recognised, as illustrated below:

Country under review:	Areas of recommendations – main categories in DAC main findings and recommendations				
	Policy	Volume	Budget systems	Management	Other
Norway	X			X	X
Australia	X	X			X
Sweden	X		X	X	
Switzerland	X	X	X	X	
Belgium	X	X	X	X	
Germany	X	X	X	X	X

12. Although the table provides an overview of recommendations it must be recognised that these are not directly comparable as each Peer Review is a different process. Furthermore, the classification of recommendations is broad, issues may overlap and vary in scope and detail. The main categories of recommendations are elaborated further below.

Humanitarian policy framework

13. GHD calls for a policy framework for humanitarian aid. Observations made in the Peer Reviews strengthen this point. All six reviews include recommendations regarding policy matters. Many donors operate their humanitarian aid based on experience and not under guidance of a comprehensive policy. Policies may exist for specific areas but seldom cover the whole of GHD. A general observation is that the introduction of GHD has alerted donors to update and broaden their policies on humanitarian aid. In Australia and Sweden, new comprehensive policies were introduced just before the Peer Review meetings and Belgium has initiated work on a GHD policy.

⁸ 2005 New Zealand. 2004; France, Italy, Austria, 2003; Luxembourg, Denmark, Ireland, Japan. 2002; Greece, Spain.

14. An objective of DAC Peer Reviews is to monitor members' policies and programmes, and to assess their effectiveness, inputs, outputs and results against the goals and policies agreed in the DAC as well as nationally established objectives and internationally agreed goals. Comments have been expressed that too much emphasis has been placed on policy frameworks documents and not enough on practice. Obviously it is donor performance and not policies that should be in focus. Donor effectiveness should be assessed on how it provides support that meets humanitarian needs. However, the value of solid policy frameworks to uphold humanitarian principles and ensuring transparency and accountability should not be underestimated. It should also be recognised that GHD does not primarily focus on the delivery of humanitarian action as this is a separate discipline, monitored and evaluated through other mechanisms.⁹ Operational issues where donor policies have a great impact (i.e. civil-military co-operation and involvement of beneficiaries) have been included in the assessments of donor performance.

15. The Peer Review process initiates engagement in GHD and dialogue on the relationship between humanitarian action and development co-operation by focusing on transition situations and linkages between relief, recovery and development. It highlights issues of relevance to other works streams of the DAC such as peace and security and donor engagement in fragile states. The work on fragile states underlines the reality that implementing the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness will be difficult in many partner countries due to armed conflict or limited government legitimacy.¹⁰ Humanitarian aid plays a significant role in prolonged armed conflicts providing protection and assistance to affected populations. It should be based on humanitarian principles which often imply that it will be provided outside the state system, per definition. Although peace building and conflict prevention are separate disciplines these topics were included in the humanitarian sections of reviews of Australia, Norway and Sweden, and presented as related but separate issues in the reviews of Belgium and Germany.

Humanitarian aid volumes

16. The DAC does not collect data on humanitarian aid as defined by GHD and figures are not comparable with those produced by UN agencies or studies on global humanitarian funding. DAC data do not distinguish between natural disasters and complex emergencies and it is not possible to break down disbursements into relevant sector allocations. Further comparability problems arise from the fact that the DAC total includes spending on refugees in donor countries for the first 12 months (although this is separately identifiable) and records only un-earmarked funds as multilateral, with earmarked funding delivered through the UN system, NGOs and the ICRC classified as "bilateral" aid. This distorts DAC average calculations and estimates of humanitarian aid in relation to ODA. Thus it is difficult to calculate the total humanitarian aid from the DAC data although these remain the basis for estimates on global humanitarian assistance updates.

17. Recommendations to maintain or increase allocations to humanitarian aid were made in four of six reviews. Recommendations regarding donors' allocations to humanitarian aid are made based on the collective obligation of striving to meet humanitarian needs (GHD-Principle 5). Continued severe underfunding and uneven allocations underline the need to scale-up humanitarian aid. Donors have provided indications of total scaling up of aid to 2010 and, for EU donors, to 2015.¹¹ In real terms aid can be expected to increase from nearly USD 80 billion in 2004 to nearly USD 130 billion in 2010. If the

⁹ Evaluation and Aid Effectiveness 1 1999 *Guidance for Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies*, DAC, OECD

¹⁰ *Chair's Summary: Senior Level Forum on Development Effectiveness in Fragile States* [DAC/CHAI(2005)3] or *DAC Fragile States Agenda: Progress and Issues* [DCD/DAC(2005)54]

¹¹ For a discussion on scaling up aid and ODA estimates see for example *Scaling up for results* [DCD(2005)18]

percentage allocated for emergency and distress relief, excluding expenditure for refugees in donor countries (2,7 % in 2004), would remain equal, contributions could increase from USD 7.8 billion 2003 to around USD 10 billion in 2006.

Budget systems

18. Four of the reviews called for a simplified budget structure. The nature of humanitarian action places special demands on budgetary systems and governments use different methods to ensure an appropriate response. These include annual allocations of ODA for multilateral, bilateral and NGO funding; reallocations of bilateral ODA; special institutional arrangements such as rapid response funds and special transition arrangements. Budget arrangements may impose restrictions in providing predictable, flexible and needs based funding. For instance, budget lines might be specifically targeted for tied contributions or designed to fit a divided management system rather than optimising humanitarian aid effectiveness. Funding through several budget lines may also impose additional reporting requirements for implementing organisations. Other limitations related to budget systems are legislation and accounting procedures that do not allow multi year funding, participation in pooled funding or common humanitarian funds. As new humanitarian aid modalities develop, such as pooled funding and emergency respond funds, donors will need to adjust their budget arrangements. An optimised budget system should be focused and ensure untied funding, flexible arrangements for rapid disbursements and reallocations and allow for pooled funding. Reporting requirements should be internally streamlined and harmonised.

Management issues

19. Management issues were raised in all of the reviews and a consolidation of management was recommended in all but one. The complexity of managing humanitarian aid is in part a result of increasing political attention to peace and security issues and engagement in fragile states. Management structures and procedures for administering humanitarian action are often complex and involve several parts of the ODA system; the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA); the Ministry of Defence (MOD); and aid agencies. Another part of the system is the national response unit, which may be an independent agency, or integrated in the MFA, the MOD or the aid agency.

20. There are significant variations in management approaches and each of the six reviews demonstrated a different organisational set-up. Some members manage all or parts of humanitarian aid within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through a special department or desk; others operate through a development agency. In several cases management was split between the MFA and an aid agency. But management may also be split in terms of responsibility between ministers (Foreign Minister and Development Co-operation Minister) or in terms of bilateral and multilateral responsibilities. In many cases specific issues such as mine action may be reflected in the organisational structure. But responsibilities for specific issues may also be difficult to locate, as is often the case of Disaster Risk Reduction. Although management of humanitarian takes on different forms it is often under direct influence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

21. Divided management places high demands on co-ordination and additional weight on organisational settings already operating with limited resources. Staffing levels for managing humanitarian aid is often critically low. Split management may contribute to ineffective systems with high transaction costs, risk of duplication and may also compromise the independence of humanitarian aid. It may also further complicate approaches to transition and reconstruction. Of the six countries under review, Switzerland demonstrated the most consolidated approach to management of humanitarian aid. Humanitarian action holds a distinct position in Swiss foreign policy and is enshrined in federal law. Humanitarian aid is managed in one department of the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC) within the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. The department has specialised divisions

covering technical support, geographic and thematic responsibilities and is responsible for co-ordinating, implementing and evaluating all Swiss humanitarian aid. It also has authority over the national response mechanism.

Other issues identified by recommendations

22. **Civil-military relationship:** Civil-military relationship in delivering humanitarian aid was a specific area for recommendations in three reviews. A related issue in this context is that of creating and maintaining “humanitarian space”. Civil-military relations in implementing humanitarian action raise a major dilemma regarding impartiality, effectiveness and security. On one hand it can be argued that merging humanitarian action with political/military roles is inevitable and constructive. On the other hand, there is danger in bringing political, military and humanitarian objectives within the same framework, and this could compromise humanitarian objectives and principles and reduce the capacity to deliver an effective humanitarian response. The recommendations in this area suggest that donors should affirm the primary position of civilian organisations in implementing humanitarian action, invest in civil capacities and carefully examine policies and practices in this field to ensure that international guidelines are respected.¹²

23. **Involvement of beneficiaries:** Findings from evaluations underline the importance of involving beneficiaries in humanitarian all aspects of humanitarian aid; in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The review found few examples or explicit policies on how this is encouraged, ensured and monitored. The extent to which and how DAC members ensure adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian activities is not clear.

24. **Promotion of agreed standards:** The reviews show a need for donors to further strengthen their efforts to ensure that implementing organisations, mainly national NGO’s, adhere to agreed standards.¹³ Criteria for funding should explicitly be based on common standards and performance evaluated from this perspective.

25. **New humanitarian aid modalities and alignment:** Donors have been encouraged to further investigate possibilities to participate and develop new humanitarian aid modalities such as the UN Expanded Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), common funding at country level in complex emergencies, and multi-year funding arrangements. All the reviews have emphasised strengthening development and alignment to Common Humanitarian Action Plans (UN-CHAP) and to develop approaches for contributions to the UN Consolidated Appeal Process (UN-CAP). While some donors have established directives and routines for funding the UN-CAPs, others operate on ad-hoc basis. Recommendations in this area have included developing directives for timely and needs-based disbursements of funds.

26. **Proliferation of humanitarian actors:** Although data are not readily available, findings indicate the donors allocate substantial contributions to national NGOs for delivery of humanitarian aid. Donors support on average between 10-20 national NGOs. Multiplying these figures with DAC members gives an

¹² The 1994 *Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief* and the 2003 *Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies*. These guidelines have been agreed by the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the UN humanitarian agencies. Implementing and operational partners are encouraged to follow their guidance. They are not binding on Member States.

¹³ i.e. *The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief* (www.icrc.org); and the *SPERE Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response* (www.sphereproject.org)

indication of the difficulties of harmonising and coordinating implementation. To tackle the issues of NGO proliferation and increasing bilateralisation of humanitarian aid, donors should consider concentrating support to a smaller number of national NGOs and to a larger extent support local capacities. Australia provides an interesting example on how strict criteria for selection were introduced to promote standards and concentration.

2.3 Identification of good practices and mutual learning

27. The DAC Peer Reviews identify good practices, share experience, and foster co-ordination. While the main purpose of applying a GHD perspective in DAC Peer Reviews was to monitor donor policies and practices, only limited attention has been given to identification of good practices. However, the Peer Review process may also be a useful way of **sharing experiences** and approaches and the compilation of reviews can make such assessments possible. All reviews covered issues of how the donor approached enhanced implementation. Three examples are provided below:

- **Managing transition:** In the review of Norway, experiences were shared on how to address problems related to shortfalls and the possible vacuum of funds during transitions from conflict to peace. While rejecting linear approaches to phases of complex emergencies, Norway has developed a system to better ensure the return to sustainable livelihoods and transition from humanitarian relief to development by introducing a special budget line for transitional support.
- **Cash contributions and disaster risk reduction:** The review of Switzerland showed how cash contributions were used as a complementary method to traditional humanitarian assistance in emergency situations, notably in Mongolia. Beneficiaries were offered unconditional financial contributions linked to their specific situations *e.g.* giving temporary shelter to victims of natural disasters or conflicts. The review of Switzerland also underlined the necessity to better integrate disaster risk reduction in development co-operation planning.
- **Tackling food insecurity:** Donor approaches to chronic food insecurity were addressed in the Peer Review of Germany following a field visit to Ethiopia. It was recommended that humanitarian aid and development co-operation should be better synchronised by making food security a specific objective of poverty reduction, as suggested by the MDGs. Strategies should include explicit measures to strengthen government and local civil society's capacity and build national response mechanisms able to manage national and regional shock. Donors should shift from ad-hoc appeals, improve the quality and flexibility of food aid programming by moving to cash-based programs and support monitoring and early warning systems with specific food security indicators.

28. Each review has encouraged donors to use their own experiences and comparative advantages to **address emerging policy issues**. The Peer Reviews have suggested emerging issues of special relevance to promote GHD where the country under review could get further involved in policy and enhancing implementation. The following issues were suggested:

Reviewed country	Emerging issues suggested for further exploration
Norway	- Civil and military co-operation - Transition from humanitarian action to development programming
Australia	- Regional humanitarian programmes
Sweden	- Reporting issues, - Outreach to non DAC donors
Switzerland	- Civil-military co operation
Belgium	n.a.
Germany	- Untying of humanitarian aid

2.4 Impact on DAC Peer Review methodology and logistics

29. Since GHD was introduced into the DAC Peer Reviews concerns have been voiced as to whether an expanded coverage of humanitarian aid would have a negative effect on methodology and compromise the overall quality of the assessment of development co-operation. The GHD framework does not appear to have had a negative effect on the Peer Review quality, nor has it displaced or crowded out other areas when covered in an annex. It has had impact on the management of the review procedures, most notably during missions but as separate sessions can be arranged for humanitarian aid it is viewed as manageable. One concern however, relates to the level of knowledge and engagement of DAC delegates when conducting the review and discussing the outcomes. Experiences from the six reviews are summarised under the five headings below:

- I. **The Peer Review team:** To facilitate coverage of GHD in the Peer Reviews, a humanitarian advisor has been integrated into Peer Review teams with responsibility for the assessment of humanitarian action. In four of the Reviews the humanitarian advisor also covered issues of peace, security and fragile states. This approach provided necessary expertise, ensured coverage of humanitarian issues and reduced the work load of the Peer Review administrators. However, this makes the team larger which is a concern.
- II. **Missions to the capital:** The visit to the donor capital constitutes the main fact finding mission of the Review team and specific sessions on humanitarian aid have been organised as well as separate break-out sessions for in-depth discussions. Three observations were made in the context of missions to the capital: i) GHD coverage contribute to a more complete assessment of the ODA system as a whole; ii) a whole of government approach, including Ministry of Defence, national emergency response units etc. is needed to cover GHD. Meetings are needed that might not be relevant for the rest of the Review Team and to ensure coverage of relevant arms of government and implementing agencies the team will need to be divided; iii) splitting the team may have the negative effect that examiners are not fully engaged in fact-finding or discussions regarding humanitarian issues.
- III. **Field missions:** Field missions including humanitarian assessment have been included in five of the six reviews. All missions were conducted in so called fragile states; four focused on issues related to complex emergencies and transition arrangements; and one mission on food insecurity. Observations made regarding missions to capitals also apply in the field missions. Covering humanitarian aid has impact on the selection of countries for field visits. In one case, (Sweden) an additional field mission was organised to cover humanitarian issues.
- IV. **Documentation:** In the first two Peer Reviews covering GHD (Norway and Australia), humanitarian issues were integrated throughout the Secretariat report. Subsequently, humanitarian aid was covered in an annex. Using an annex simplifies division of labour and improves accessibility and comparability. The annexes have been structured as the chapters of the main Peer Review report covering six areas: (1) policies and principles; (2) volume and distribution; (3) crosscutting and emerging issues; (4) policy coherence; (5) organisation and management; (6) country operations and (7) future considerations. In both approaches humanitarian aid was included as a separate item in the DAC's Main Findings and Recommendations.
- V. **Peer Review meeting procedures:** The DAC Peer Review meetings last one day and consist of comprehensive discussions on the draft Peer Review documents. Including humanitarian action in this context brings attention to GHD at top management level of donors' ODA systems and addresses the relationship between humanitarian action and development co-operation. Humanitarian aid has been allocated a 30-45 minute discussion period. DAC delegates are not yet

fully engaged in issues related to humanitarian action and since representation does not include humanitarian actors, discussions have been narrow.

2.5 Challenges in monitoring GHD performance

30. Four main issues remain as outstanding challenges when monitoring donor humanitarian performance:

- **Lack of policy relevant data:** The present reporting directives make it difficult to monitor donor performance and validate observations, measure trends and make comparisons among donors. DAC statistics on “Emergency and Distress Relief” are not comparable with other data collection on humanitarian action and does not provide useful information on sectoral allocations or distinguish natural disasters from complex emergencies. Vague reporting definitions and formats constitute a challenge for harmonised donor practices and improved efficiency among DAC members.
- **Lack of benchmarks and indicators:** In order to measure impact of GHD implementation, appropriate benchmarks and indicators need to be developed and agreed upon. Such benchmarks and indicators could focus on: timely and flexible funding; funding allocated on the basis of needs assessments; strengthened and recognised co-ordination; promotion and respect of standards. Benchmarking should be discussed as part of the GHD implementation agenda.
- **Status of GHD in DAC:** GHD is not formally DAC reference and not endorsed by all members. In 2003 16 governments and the European Commission endorsed the principles and good practice for humanitarian donorship. Since then 6 other donor governments have signalled interest to sign on to these principles. DAC members could consider formally endorsing GHD thereby acknowledging its status.
- **Secretariat Resources:** Humanitarian action places special demands on the Secretariat and support to the DAC is entirely financed through voluntary contributions. The budget to cover the Secretariat’s involvement in advancing the GHD agenda presented to the Committee totals € 215,000 per year. As of December 2005 the total amount of VC received for this purpose stand at EUR 368,090. Grants received to date include: Canada, Ireland, Switzerland, USA. A contribution by the Netherlands is being finalised and discussions underway with the United Kingdom regarding a possible grant. Not included is a contribution from Sweden that was the first DAC member to support this work via a secondment.

SECTION 3

CONCLUSIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Conclusions

31. The magnitude of humanitarian response calls for harmonised donor practices and improved efficiency of humanitarian action. *The Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship* (GHD) is the only collective donor initiative focusing on the role and responsibilities of donors. It assists in making humanitarian donorship measurable by focussing on donors' policies and decision making procedures. GHD addresses the role of donors in meeting humanitarian needs, providing timely and flexible funding whilst respecting humanitarian principles.

32. The DAC agreed in 2003 to take an active role to promoting GHD and a GHD assessment framework have been applied in six DAC Peer Reviews since 2004. Humanitarian aid has been covered in an Annex and in DAC main findings and recommendations. Based on these reviews this synthesis report supports the view that the inclusion of GHD meets the objectives of Peer Reviews. The advantage of using an assessment framework is three-fold; it ensures coverage of all GHD principles; it provides an equal instrument and thus avoids arbitrary approaches and it provides consistent guidance for the Peer Review Team. The systematic coverage of GHD in the reviews has resulted in specific recommendations in DAC main findings and recommendations and a large number of considerations in the Secretariat report. Recommendations focus on developing comprehensive policies, increasing humanitarian aid allocations, consolidating management and adapt to new humanitarian aid modalities. The application of the assessment framework has not had a negative impact on Peer Review methodology.

33. Humanitarian action constitutes a distinct dimension of ODA and the inclusion of humanitarian action in the Peer Reviews contributes to a complete overview of all dimensions of a DAC member's ODA. A comprehensive and co-ordinated approach is required to humanitarian action which encompasses prevention and preparedness, emergency response, recovery and reconstruction. Such an approach, synchronised with development assistance, would not only improve collective emergency response but also approaches to disaster risk reduction, reconstruction efforts and transition assistance. It would also improve identification and action towards slow onset emergencies such as Niger.

34. Linking relief rehabilitation and development remain another major challenge for donors and implementing agencies. Despite a decade-long debate there is little consensus on approaches. Humanitarian aid in the context of fragile states and rehabilitation in the aftermath of natural disasters draws attention to the dilemma of promoting and defending humanitarian principles while erasing artificial distinctions in programme approaches, clearly illustrated by the recovery activities following the Indian Ocean Tsunami. Although humanitarian aid does not share the objectives of development co-operation, GHD could be used together with the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness to further harmonise humanitarian aid.

3.2 Issues for consideration

- **Peer Reviews:** The assessment framework for humanitarian aid should continue to be applied in all DAC Peer Reviews and present arrangements should be maintained. Annual compilations and

syntheses should be produced by the Secretariat. To maintain the level of coverage the secretariat will have to be provided with sufficient funds covering a humanitarian aid advisor, and costs for participation in Peer Review missions.

- **GHD endorsement by the DAC:** The Committee could discuss whether it would be useful to bring the Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship to the DAC for endorsement by all members. The possibility of including this in the agenda for the DAC High Level Meeting 2006 could be considered for this purpose.
- **Improving data collection on humanitarian aid:** Members are encouraged to continue efforts to improve collective and individual reporting on humanitarian aid. The Secretariat has prepared a proposal for improved reporting directives on humanitarian aid including the introduction of a common definition. Transparency and accountability would improve if members agreed to this approach at the next meeting of the Working Party on Statistics scheduled for February 2006.

ANNEX A

PRINCIPLES AND GOOD PRACTICE OF HUMANITARIAN DONORSHIP

Objectives and definition of humanitarian action

1. The objectives of humanitarian action are to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations.
2. Humanitarian action should be guided by the humanitarian principles of *humanity*, meaning the centrality of saving human lives and alleviating suffering wherever it is found; *impartiality*, meaning the implementation of actions solely on the basis of need, without discrimination between or within affected populations; *neutrality*, meaning that humanitarian action must not favour any side in an armed conflict or other dispute where such action is carried out; and *independence*, meaning the autonomy of humanitarian objectives from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.
3. Humanitarian action includes the protection of civilians and those no longer taking part in hostilities, and the provision of food, water and sanitation, shelter, health services and other items of assistance, undertaken for the benefit of affected people and to facilitate the return to normal lives and livelihoods.

General principles

4. Respect and promote the implementation of international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights.
5. While reaffirming the primary responsibility of states for the victims of humanitarian emergencies within their own borders, strive to ensure flexible and timely funding, on the basis of the collective obligation of striving to meet humanitarian needs.
6. Allocate humanitarian funding in proportion to needs and on the basis of needs assessments.
7. Request implementing humanitarian organisations to ensure, to the greatest possible extent, adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response.
8. Strengthen the capacity of affected countries and local communities to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises, with the goal of ensuring that governments and local communities are better able to meet their responsibilities and co-ordinate effectively with humanitarian partners.
9. Provide humanitarian assistance in ways that are supportive of recovery and long-term development, striving to ensure support, where appropriate, to the maintenance and return of sustainable livelihoods and transitions from humanitarian relief to recovery and development activities.
10. Support and promote the central and unique role of the United Nations in providing leadership and co-ordination of international humanitarian action, the special role of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the vital role of the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organisations in implementing humanitarian action.

Good practices in donor financing, management and accountability

(a) Funding

11. Strive to ensure that funding of humanitarian action in new crises does not adversely affect the meeting of needs in ongoing crises.
12. Recognising the necessity of dynamic and flexible response to changing needs in humanitarian crises, strive to ensure predictability and flexibility in funding to United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and to other key humanitarian organisations.
13. While stressing the importance of transparent and strategic priority-setting and financial planning by implementing organisations, explore the possibility of reducing, or enhancing the flexibility of, earmarking, and of introducing longer-term funding arrangements.
14. Contribute responsibly, and on the basis of burden-sharing, to United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals and to International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement appeals, and actively support the formulation of Common Humanitarian Action Plans (CHAP) as the primary instrument for strategic planning, prioritisation and co-ordination in complex emergencies.

(b) Promoting standards and enhancing implementation

15. Request that implementing humanitarian organisations fully adhere to good practice and are committed to promoting accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in implementing humanitarian action.
16. Promote the use of Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines and principles on humanitarian activities, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the 1994 Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief.
17. Maintain readiness to offer support to the implementation of humanitarian action, including the facilitation of safe humanitarian access.
18. Support mechanisms for contingency planning by humanitarian organisations, including, as appropriate, allocation of funding, to strengthen capacities for response.
19. Affirm the primary position of civilian organisations in implementing humanitarian action, particularly in areas affected by armed conflict. In situations where military capacity and assets are used to support the implementation of humanitarian action, ensure that such use is in conformity with international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, and recognises the leading role of humanitarian organisations.
20. Support the implementation of the 1994 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief and the 2003 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies.

(c) Learning and accountability

21. Support learning and accountability initiatives for the effective and efficient implementation of humanitarian action.
22. Encourage regular evaluations of international responses to humanitarian crises, including assessments of donor performance.
23. Ensure a high degree of accuracy, timeliness, and transparency in donor reporting on official humanitarian assistance spending, and encourage the development of standardised formats for such reporting.

ANNEX B

ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR COVERAGE OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION IN DAC
PEER REVIEWS

The text below is an extract of the document DIR(2004)11. The DAC has agreed that the framework will be used until further notice. The framework groups the GHD principles under four headings:

- I. **Humanitarian Policies**, embracing definitions, objectives, general principles and relation to development strategies.¹⁴
- II. **Funding**, including priority setting, financial planning, predictability, flexibility and issues of increased un-earmarking of financial contributions.¹⁵
- III. **Promotion of Standards and enhanced implementation**, focusing on the promotion of international guidelines and principles on humanitarian action, ensuring conformity with International Humanitarian Law and humanitarian guidelines and principles.¹⁶
- IV. **Learning and Accountability**, covering transparency in reporting and systems for evaluation and learning.¹⁷

These four headings are presented in separate sections below with questions relevant to the GHD principles:

Section One - Humanitarian Policies

- a) How and by what instance are the objectives of humanitarian action defined by the government under review? What type of actions can be covered by the definition?
- b) To what extent do the policy/policies reflect a commitment to respect the following:
 - i) Legal commitments under International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and other relevant bodies of law.¹⁸
 - ii) the core humanitarian principles of humanity and impartiality.
 - iii) the requirement of humanitarian organisations to maintain a position of neutrality in relation to a given conflict or political dispute; and more generally the requirement to maintain the independence of humanitarian action from other policy agendas?
- c) Do the existing policy/policies ensure a system that encourages flexible funding in relation to humanitarian needs?
- d) Do the existing policy/policies ensure a system that promotes timely funding?

¹⁴ “The principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship”, Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

¹⁵ “The principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship”, Paragraphs 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 14

¹⁶ “The principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship”, Paragraphs 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20

¹⁷ “The principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship”, Paragraphs 7, 21, 22, 23

¹⁸ International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is the body of rules which, in wartime, protects people who are not or are no longer participating in hostilities. Its central purpose is to limit and prevent human suffering in times of armed conflict. The four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their two Additional Protocols of 1977 constitutes the principal instruments of humanitarian law.

- e) Do the humanitarian policy/policies take into consideration the need for strengthening of the capacity of affected countries and local communities to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to emergencies?
- f) How are issues of recovery, return of sustainable livelihoods and transitions from humanitarian relief to recovery and development activities addressed?
- g) To what extent do policies recognise and support coordination? How is the role of the United Nations in providing leadership and co-ordination of international humanitarian action, and the special mandate conferred upon the International Committee of the Red Cross in situations of crisis and conflict recognised and respected?
- h) Are there mechanisms to ensure adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response?

Section Two - Principles on Funding Humanitarian Action

- i) In relation to a given context, and more generally, how does the donor:
 - Arrive at decisions about allocating resources in a way that respects the principle of responding in proportion to needs?
 - Strive to ensure that funding of humanitarian action in high profile crises does not adversely affect the meeting of needs in ongoing crises?
 - Ensure predictable, flexible and timely funding?
 - Make choices between earmarking and non-earmarking of funds?
 - Make choices between multilateral and bilateral channels?
 - Make choices between implementing agencies, between northern NGOs and southern civil society organisations?
 - Contribute, on the basis of burden-sharing, to United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals and to International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement appeals?
 - Support the formulation of Common Humanitarian Action Plans (CHAP) as the primary instrument for strategic planning, prioritisation and co-ordination in complex emergencies?

Section Three - Promoting standards and enhancing implementation

- j) How does the donor ensure that implementing humanitarian organisations adhere to good practice and commit themselves to promoting accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in implementing humanitarian action? How are the use of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee relevant guidelines and principles on Humanitarian Activities, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the 1994 Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief respected and promoted?
- k) How does the donor offer support to the implementation of humanitarian action, including the facilitation of safe humanitarian access?
- l) Are mechanisms for contingency planning by humanitarian organisations to strengthen capacities for response at local, national, regional and global levels being supported?

- m) How does the donor affirm the primary position of civilian organisations in implementing humanitarian action, particularly in areas affected by armed conflict and where peace keeping and/or military intervention is taking place?
- n) In situations where military capacity and assets are used to support the implementation of humanitarian action, how does the donor ensure that such use conforms with IHL and humanitarian principles, and recognises the leading role of humanitarian organisations?
- o) How are the 1994 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief and the 2003 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies being implemented and supported?

Section Four - Learning and Accountability

- p) What is the current scope of evaluations of humanitarian action, what activities have recently been evaluated and how are the findings and recommendations being used to shape policy and programming decisions?
- q) Are there systems in place to support learning and accountability for the effective and efficient implementation of humanitarian action? How is learning across departments and agencies ensured when several arms of government are involved?
- r) To what extent does the donor encourage, support and participate in joint evaluations of international responses to humanitarian crises, including assessments of donor performance?
- s) To what extent is the involvement of beneficiaries in monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response ensured?
- t) Do existing report systems ensure a high degree of accuracy, timeliness, and transparency in donor reporting on official Humanitarian Action spending, and encourage the development of standardised formats?