

# World Humanitarian Summit 2016

## Recommendations by Somali, Sierra Leonean and Syrian diaspora-based humanitarian organisations

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### Introduction

As part of the preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), **38 participants from Somali, Sierra Leonean and Syrian diaspora-based aid and relief organisations** currently living in Denmark, Germany, Turkey and the United Kingdom took part in three consultations on 3, 4 and 10 July 2015 in London, Copenhagen and Berlin. The consultations had a particular focus on **humanitarian effectiveness** and were facilitated by the African Foundation for Development, the Danish Refugee Council and the Berghof Foundation under the framework of the *Diaspora Emergency Action & Coordination* project (DEMAC), funded by the European Union's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO).

The objective of this paper is to **ensure that the voices and perspectives of diaspora organisations will be reflected widely at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016.**

### Background

- **Recalling** the wide range of competencies, skills and qualifications that members of diasporas have, including but not limited to those of relief providers, development actors, entrepreneurs, investors, technical experts, volunteers, policy advocates and philanthropists;
- **Emphasising** the unique role of diasporas as catalysts, connectors and facilitators between countries of origin and destination, and for enhancing relief outcomes<sup>1</sup>;
- **Acknowledging** that diaspora communities are key actors in disaster and man-made crisis response<sup>2</sup>;
- **Convinced** that a more inclusive humanitarian system must be built on terms developed by, adhered to and represented by all stakeholders in humanitarian action, including diaspora networks and organisations<sup>3</sup>;
- **Stressing** the need to remove barriers that hinder diasporas' engagement in humanitarian action by facilitating access to donor funding, acquiring needed technical

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<sup>1</sup> Ref: "Diaspora engagement in humanitarian response" IOM, May 2015

<sup>2</sup> King & Grullon, *Diaspora communities as aid providers*, IOM Migration Policy Practice Vol. III, Number 4, Aug-Sep 2013

<sup>3</sup> *Global Humanitarian Policy Forum, Analytical summary transforming for the future*, OCHA, December 2013

*skills and knowledge, promoting qualifications and capacities, and allowing for increased diaspora participation in an inclusive humanitarian system,*

**the Somali, Sierra Leonean and Syrian diaspora-based humanitarian organisations put forth the following recommendations:**

**1. Recognise the role of diaspora as aid providers**

- **The role of diaspora** as emergency aid providers **should be duly and widely recognised** by the international humanitarian community.
- The humanitarian community, including all actors involved in the World Humanitarian Summit, should **advocate for policies facilitating diaspora relief activities, encourage genuine partnerships and enable technical and material support to diaspora.**

**2. Strengthen partnerships and cooperation**

- **States and intergovernmental bodies should engage in genuine, equal partnerships with diaspora-based relief providers** by including them in decision making processes and partnering with them in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response at international, national and local levels. To this end, every state and intergovernmental body should **assign a focal point** easily accessible to diaspora organisations.
- Concrete cooperation between diasporas and the wider humanitarian community is best facilitated by **establishing platforms for and by the diasporas** which are supported by and **act in partnership with key stakeholders at international, national and local levels. Governments and intergovernmental bodies should support** the establishment of such joint platforms which could provide tailor-made, adequate trainings in accountability, monitoring & evaluation, project management, policy engagement and advocacy, fundraising, financial management or human resources, management skills and strategy planning to volunteers and diaspora organisations. In addition, the platforms could provide information, training and comprehensive mappings of existing funding mechanisms to diaspora organisations.
- Donors and international organisations should strengthen the creation of **umbrella organisations for diaspora aid providers** to serve as hubs for local organisations and networks. These umbrella organisations should seek to allocate funding, collectively approach donors and identify potential partnerships with intergovernmental or nongovernmental organisations. These platforms of exchange increase trust, coordination and communication among diaspora actors and render their aid interventions more sustainable.
- Governments should contribute to **strengthening diaspora relief providers through joint advocacy and lobbying.**

- **A mapping of the skills and expertise of diaspora-based humanitarian aid providers** should be carried out for integration into national, regional and international relief strategies.

### 3. Reinforce capacity building and knowledge-sharing

- Governments, INGOs and NGOs should **increase their consultations with diaspora aid providers in order to improve the sharing of knowledge** with regard to different modes of interventions, as well as benefit from diasporas' local knowledge and information, personal ties, and access in their home countries. **Dialogue forums and common spaces should be established to enhance cooperation between diaspora relief actors and the conventional humanitarian system** in countries of origin and destination and reduce the lack of trust which can prevent the sharing of information.
- Capacity building should be offered to **diaspora organisations** to enable them to meaningfully contribute to relief responses.
- Donors and international organisations should be encouraged to **allocate a certain percentage of their humanitarian funding** to diaspora organisations **with the objective to empower and build their capacities**. This should include long-term, core funding and programmatic funding.
- Diaspora aid providers should be **trained in counter-terrorism legislation** and on the potential impacts these legislations might have on their humanitarian work. International organisations and donors should prompt legislators to consider when sanctions imposed to counter terrorism adversely impact on humanitarian action.

### 4. Improve effectiveness in humanitarian action and funding mechanisms

- Donors and international organisations should be encouraged to be **sufficiently flexible in adapting administrative and funding requirements to particular circumstances and contexts** while still upholding transparency and accountability.
- **Pool funding mechanisms, joint funding mechanisms and consortia** of INGOs and NGOs with diaspora organisations should be encouraged by donors to facilitate contractual funding relationships and enable donors to increase the portions of funds directed to diasporas.
- Donors and international organisations should facilitate **cash transfers** that are logistically easy to manage and enhance flexibility to rapid changes on the ground in humanitarian crises. Donors, states, INGOs and NGOs should advocate for the provision of special rates or even the total removal of transactions fees with banks and transfers companies in times of crisis.
- The **role of women and youth in diaspora-based relief efforts** should be strengthened in order to achieve higher participation, representativeness and effectiveness in humanitarian action among diasporas.

- The international community should seek to prevent or meaningfully **reduce the politicisation of humanitarian aid**. States should **adopt safeguards to separate humanitarian action and funding as much as possible from politics**.

## 5. Enhance greater visibility of diaspora contributions

- **Greater visibility** needs to be given to diaspora contributions through **dedicated media outlets** that feed into mainstream national and transnational media. This should not be limited to the country of destination, but also in the countries of origin.
- There is an urgent need for diaspora organisations' closer engagement with news media to both publish more stories about their daily challenges of providing humanitarian aid in their heritage countries and share their successes.
- The World Humanitarian Summit should provide sufficient space for **diaspora relief organisations** to meet key stakeholders and relay their experiences to foster cooperation and raise visibility.

## Conclusion

As humanitarian challenges continue to grow in scale and complexity, the concerted efforts of all actors will be required to address the escalating needs. In order to improve humanitarian effectiveness the international humanitarian system needs to **better support inter-operability among all actors engaged in humanitarian action**.

Actors from diaspora-based organisations are providing new opportunities, expertise and resources, some of which challenge the established modalities of the humanitarian system. Rather than having a fragmented humanitarian system or multiple systems, **the international humanitarian community must cooperate with diaspora groups** in order to improve effectiveness in humanitarian response to emergencies and crises.

*Disclaimer: the views, recommendations and conclusions expressed in this position paper are those of the consultation participants and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of the partners of the DEMAC consortium, the European Union's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department or the participants' organisations.*

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