



Summary of the online consultation for Eastern and Southern Africa

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Discussion Chair Chris Nikoi
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This forum has enabled important discussions on our capacity to respond to protracted political crises, climate change, the need to transition from ad hoc emergency relief assistance to building resilient communities, and more. Your ideas have brought to our attention gaps within the sector, provided invaluable lessons informed by individual experiences, and have laid an important foundation for building potential solutions. With such diverse backgrounds and devotion to think critically about our actions, I do not doubt that we will be able to enhance our ability to respond effectively, ethically, and collaboratively as humanitarian

actors in eastern and southern Africa.

Foremost, this discussion emphasized that we must work to create space and platforms for local populations to voice their needs and build mutual confidence in such contributions. Affected populations' wealth of knowledge can guide humanitarian actors on how to effectively serve their needs, and should be integrated into every stage of our actions. From the design phase, to implementation, to monitoring and evaluation, such inclusion encourages resiliency and retains our central focus on long-term sustainability. Community participation is instrumental in drafting Disaster Risk Management (DRM) policies and to increase local knowledge and preparedness to respond to crises. This must also include practical and local initiatives, such as investing in early warning systems. Another example provided is to map/document and incorporate local/traditional solutions with modern disaster response mechanisms. We must take heed of factors that can perpetuate local communities' exclusion. Amongst these are high-level meetings that reinforce a growing disconnect between humanitarian architects and the needs/reality of beneficiaries; and dilapidated infrastructure that inhibits physical



access to communities. As the humanitarian sector is increasingly pressed to find solutions for remote management to keep staff safe, new challenges arise. This again, highlights the need for integrating beneficiary populations to strengthen local partnerships, capacity, and infrastructure.

As humanitarian crises become more and more interrelated, partnerships will play a bigger role in the way in which the humanitarian sector addresses complex issues. In addition to local/community partnerships, collaborating with governments at the national, provincial, and municipal level is crucial. National policies show powerful potential to enact change and increase local ownership of humanitarian actions. Legal frameworks enforce transparency and accountability in the humanitarian sector. While premature exit strategies and funding-driven projects can lead to harmful effects, coupling the humanitarian sector with national policies will ensure that efforts retain a lasting and contemporary impact, and help to construct systems that *proactively* reduce vulnerability.

We have been discussing the need to incentivize organizations to share lessons learned, encourage innovative exchange, and hold each other accountable for our actions.

We recognized as a community that while this is an expressed goal, it oftentimes does not happen in practice. Monitoring and evaluation can be shortchanged when disasters necessitate impromptu missions. Platforms that aim to share “lessons learned” become information “dumping sites” and the competitive funding architecture can cause organizations to be hesitant to share “failures” regardless of how beneficial the information might be. We must find a way to reward organizations for collaborating/sharing new and inventive solutions. Additionally, we must work towards more flexible funding structures that allow us to invest in projects which reduce communities’ need for humanitarian assistance and develop local capacity to manage risks.

While innovative ideas should seek to increase efficiency, as humanitarian actors we must hold ourselves accountable to our commitment to serve our communities first. The discussion proposed innovative ways to increase accountability and data analysis mechanisms; ranging from peer reviews and academic third party observers to meaningful live-systems that reap quality data on “failed” and successful projects. This has opened the question as to what role the private sector can play in enhancing humanitarian effectiveness. Holding ourselves accountable and transparent will



also pave realistic ways to implement proven and innovative interventions.

There is an African saying that “if you want to walk fast, you walk alone. If you want to walk far, you walk with others.” The work ahead of us will be a challenge, not least in the process of putting into practice recommendations and lessons learnt from this online forum. I look forward to seeing how this conversation will continue at the Regional World Humanitarian Summit, and to seeing your ideas translate into tangible impact.

The chair and moderators extend their deepest thanks to all the participants in the online discussions for their high level of engagement and valuable contributions to improving humanitarian action in the region. The chair and moderators would also like to recognize the outstanding contribution of **Priscilla Amiri** of Kenya, who received the online consultation nomination to attend the regional summit in Pretoria.

The World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat would like to extend its thanks to the Eastern and Southern Africa discussion moderators:

Transformation through Innovation:
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Humanitarian Effectiveness:
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Reducing Vulnerability and Managing Risk: **Bongi Baker**, Director, Lutheran Development Service

Serving the Needs of People in Conflict: **Shamsia Ramadhan**, Peace practitioner based in Kenya and working in the Africa region