



Online Consultation Report: North and South-East Asia

This report summarizes the online comments and contributions received as part of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) preliminary Online Consultations for North and South-East Asia which took place from 19 May – 20 June 2014. This report will be posted online at www.whsummit.org and is to be presented and discussed at the WHS Regional Consultation in Tokyo on 23-24-July 2014.

The online, moderated¹ discussions provided an open, public forum to discuss questions in the region around the [four themes](#) of the WHS in addition to providing a space for additional ideas. Participation in the forum was open to anyone who registered, from any origin or location. The majority of participants were from countries in North and South-East Asia; however, contributions were received from Pakistan, Switzerland, the UK and the United States of America.

A total of eight questions were discussed, with lively debate around the four themes of the World Humanitarian Summit, in addition to questions that dealt with broader, general recommendations. The discussion questions were developed by the WHS Secretariat in consultation with the Discussion Chair, the Moderators and the WHS Regional Steering Group.

The online consultations were publicized through a number of channels including humanitarian and development media and networks such as ReliefWeb, IRIN, United Nations (UN) agencies and NGOs, through UN Member States, regional humanitarian networks and social media, and via emails to various humanitarian groups such as the Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection (PHAP) network, who provided support for the online consultations.

The discussion forum was visited by about 1500 people. Within the region, the top participants were from Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Participants from nine countries in the region posted comments in English. Contributions were received from individuals from international NGOs, regional institutions, community-based organizations, research organizations, and independent consultants.

Key Recommendations from Discussions

1. Increase **cooperation with local governments** and local civil society organizations.
2. Increase investment in **local, national, and regional humanitarian capacity** (governments, communities, CSOs, local leaders and national NGOs) and map these local actors in the region.
3. Increase **collaboration between humanitarian actors in the region through ASEAN** to manage and mitigate risks and coordinate response.
4. Further **explore use of technologies** such as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs or 'drones') for use in humanitarian contexts.
5. Explore **partnerships with private sector, faith-based groups, and others** in places where access may be limited due to conflicts.

¹ The discussions took place at: www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/whs_NSE_asia and were chaired by Ms. Yukie Osa, President, Association for Aid and Relief, Japan, and moderated by Ms. Sharon Low, an experienced public health professional from Singapore working in Thailand, and Ms. Kyoung-hwa Ha, an experienced humanitarian specialist from Korea.

Discussion Questions

The discussions revolved around eight questions related to the four themes, and included one question which asked for broader ideas and input.

1. Humanitarian Effectiveness:

- We need to make sure that humanitarian action meets the needs of people who have been affected by disasters and crises. What can we do to make that happen more effectively and efficiently?
- What improvements are needed for better communication between affected people and emergency management authorities in N/SE Asia when there is an emergency?

2. Reducing Vulnerability and Managing Risk:

- Humanitarians often prioritise to save lives of people affected by disaster or conflict. But could the need to respond be less urgent if more attention is given to strengthen people's resilience? How do we change the way we work?
- How can we strengthen the ability of the international humanitarian system to stop undermining spontaneity and creativity from existing smaller, grassroots efforts in N/SE Asia?

3. Transformation through Innovation:

- Innovation is the new buzz-word. But what does it mean in the context of humanitarian action? Where can innovations help improve humanitarian action?
- Can you share your ideas and/or experience of involving the private sector to accelerate innovations in humanitarian assistance in N/SE Asia?

4. Serving the Needs of People in Conflict:

- Operating in conflict environments is often challenging – access to people is often blocked or controlled by conflicting parties. How can humanitarians do better at meeting the needs of people who are difficult to reach?

5. Broader Cross-cutting Question

- In 2034 the world will have changed: climate change, mass migration, food price instability, technology influence, resource shortages, etc. How will these changes influence humanitarian work?

Summary of the Discussions

The contributions were rich in diversity – highlighting different considerations and viewpoints. However, there is emerging consensus around a number of issues including the need for local ownership of disaster preparedness and response on the local, national and regional levels. In addition, the importance of coordination with the government and local organizations was highlighted as an area that needs to be strengthened.

This section provides summaries of the discussions around each of the four themes.

Theme 1: Humanitarian Effectiveness

The questions related to this theme received the most comments (49) and there was broad consensus from discussion participants regarding the need to transfer humanitarian response to local, national and regional actors. Two other strong currents that emerged from the discussions were the need for better communication with affected communities and coordination among various humanitarian actors. With regards to improving communication, community radio was offered as an excellent method, supported by web-based information where internet access is high.

One contributor suggested the need for sub-level coordination mechanisms within the existing cluster system that can better engage local NGOs. However, others suggested that international humanitarian actors need to work with

pre-existing local networks such as Red Cross/Red Crescent societies, faith-based communities, and Community Based Organizations (CBOs). Also, it was suggested that physical spaces could be established in communities to facilitate face-to-face information and knowledge sharing.

Another participant suggested the need for systematic mapping of formal and informal mechanisms to help international actors understand the local contexts and avoid duplication or undermining existing structures.

Theme 2: Managing Risk and Reducing Vulnerability

Discussion participants supported the need for risk management strategies, improving the relationship between humanitarian actors, development actors, disaster managers, and governments. The need for community-based resilience programmes that involve local people and government agencies was offered as an effective approach to managing risk and reducing vulnerability. Other suggestions include: strengthening national safety net systems (such as insurance schemes), and strengthening support to ASEAN with respect to preparedness and overall disaster management.

Theme 3: Transformation through Innovation

A vibrant discussion over the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs or 'drones') took place. It was noted that there is existing research being conducted by UN OCHA on this issue as well as a Humanitarian UAV network that are developing Code of Conduct for the humanitarian use of UAVs.

A suggestion was proposed for a regional innovation incubator, which could be housed within ASEAN. Additional recommendations included use of Google Glass or other technologies to amplify and facilitate data collection during humanitarian response.

Theme 4: Serving the Needs of People in Conflict

The discussion over improving service to people in conflict situations was discussed as a highly contextual issue. While one person suggested that agencies should work through governments, another commenter countered that humanitarian actors should diversify their partnerships with private sector, faith-based organizations, and other civil society groups in order to reach more people, especially when the government is part of the conflict, and may explicitly or inadvertently hinder the flow of aid. It was also suggested that humanitarian actors should engage in conflict resolution work and peace building efforts.

Other: How will future challenges influence humanitarian work

One contributor suggested that mechanisms need to be put in place now by governments in the region to promote food security and conservation of resources to avoid major crises.

To read the full summaries of contributions on above questions, please click on Discussion Summary of [Weeks 1-2](#) and [Weeks 3-4](#), or go to the WHS North and South-East Asia online consultation website http://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/whs_NSE_asia.

Comments on this report are welcomed. Please post online at:

http://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/whs_NSE_asia or email to: nsea@whsummit.org

Disclaimer: the findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this discussion summary report are those of the participants and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of the World Humanitarian Summit, UNOCHA, the United Nations or the participants' organizations.