ELRHA

GUIDE TO CONSTRUCTING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

elrha
enhancing learning & research for humanitarian assistance
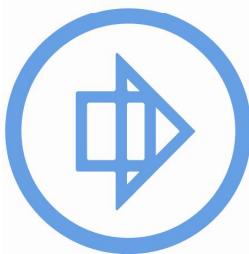
ELRHA is a collaborative network dedicated to supporting partnerships between higher education institutions and humanitarian organisations and partners around the world.

ELRHA aims to stimulate and support collaborative partnerships between academic and humanitarian communities to produce research and training that delivers measurable impact in the prevention of and response to global humanitarian crises.

We work to achieve two principle objectives:

Objective one: To bring together the research community and the international humanitarian community to create world-leading partnerships, which produce research that has measurable impact in the humanitarian field.

Objective two: To further enhance the professionalisation of the humanitarian sector by bringing together organisations, initiatives and universities from around the world with existing experience in training, capacity development and quality assurance for the humanitarian sector, in order to build an international system for professional development and recognition for the humanitarian sector.

ELRHA is an independent initiative that is hosted by Save the Children on behalf of the humanitarian and the higher education communities. The initiative is directed by and managed through the ELRHA stakeholder's network with oversight being provided by our independent project steering committee.

For more details about ELRHA please visit our website at: www.elrha.org.
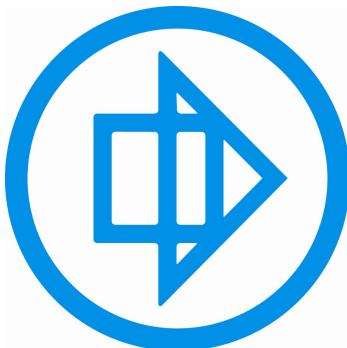
FOREWORD

This guide is an important contribution to our vision of a global humanitarian community where humanitarian actors actively collaborate with higher education institutes to develop highly professional responders, share expertise and carry out research that ensures that those suffering from the impact of disasters receive more timely, relevant and sustainable assistance.

In investigating the question of effective academic-humanitarian partnerships, the researchers consulted extensively with humanitarian workers and academics. Their findings revealed that while there are a numerous resources on how to develop partnerships in general, there is very little written about academic-humanitarian partnerships specifically. Given that there are some very distinct constraints and opportunities encountered by this type of collaboration; this guide has been developed to support collaboration between the two communities, and shares the experiences and lessons learned by people who have embarked upon such collaboration.

The guide could not come at a more opportune time for the sector. In 2011, the UK Government's Humanitarian Emergency Response Review (HERR) called for humanitarian action to be underpinned by evidence and highlighted the need for more systematic and rigorous applied research. However, in order to build this body of evidence and ensure that practitioners can access and apply it, humanitarians and academics need to become more skilled at working in partnership.

Collaboration between the two communities comes with its difficulties. But the research has demonstrated that humanitarian organisations gain from the input of academic expertise and that universities and research institutions benefit from direct access to the field.

There is clearly more work to be done to in this area; however we have in front of us the opportunity to build a community of practice of world-leading partnerships which produce research and training that has measurable impact in the humanitarian field. We hope that this resource will prove to be a useful asset to both communities as we collectively aim to meet the needs of those affected by disasters and humanitarian events today and in the future.

Frances Hill
Research Partnerships Manager, ELRHA

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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BACKGROUND

This guide aims to support collaboration between humanitarian and academic organisations. Based on the experiences and lessons learned by people in both communities, who have worked together, it is a practical guide to the opportunities and challenges specific to humanitarian-academic collaboration.

Benefits of collaboration are enormous, both for humanitarian practice and for academic work, to help tackle major humanitarian challenges. Humanitarian organisations gain from the input of academic expertise to ensure robust methodology for research, technical expertise for operational issues and a long-term perspective to build understanding and evidence of effectiveness and change. Universities benefit from direct access to the field, the ability to test theories and opportunity to engage in the application of research.

Challenges: Collaboration is not easy in practice. Obstacles include:

- Humanitarian and academic communities operate along different timelines; the academic drive for robust methodologies and rigour in gathering and analysing evidence can be slow, which can frustrate humanitarian organisations wanting clear operational recommendations to implement in their current humanitarian programmes.
- Humanitarian and academic communities have different ethical codes.
- Humanitarian and academic communities are assessed against different criteria.

This guide offers many ideas for overcoming these challenges, avoiding common pitfalls and building towards successful collaboration. This resource includes real-world examples and insights into the institutional realities of both humanitarian agencies and academic organisations to help build mutual understanding and establish strong foundations for collaborative working.

Key to success is a dialogue process to make explicit each partner's expectations of the collaboration sustained through the process; transparency throughout the process; flexibility and, maybe most importantly, a commitment to improving humanitarian operations. A key message from the experience of academic-humanitarian collaboration is that it can take place in many forms, joint research is only one. There is also a strong desire in both communities for more opportunities to meet and to share information about opportunities for collaboration, based on the priorities and work in each sector.

Rationale behind the Resource

"You do get different results using an academic approach. You find things you didn't expect to find, sometimes counter-intuitive findings that can be difficult to discuss with stakeholders unless you have the robustness. It enables you to go that further step."

Dr. Michael Dickmann, Cranfield School of Management

ELRHA was established in 2009 and works to achieve two principle objectives:

Objective one: To bring together the research community and the international humanitarian community to create world-leading partnerships, which produce research that has measurable impact in the humanitarian field

Objective two: To further enhance the professionalisation of the humanitarian sector by bringing together organisations, initiatives and universities from around the world with existing experience in training, capacity development and quality assurance for the humanitarian sector, in order to build an international system for professional development and recognition for the humanitarian sector

In 2011 the **Humanitarian Emergency Response Review (HERR)** called for humanitarian action to be underpinned by evidence and highlighted the need for more systematic and rigorous applied research. However, in order to build this body of evidence and ensure that practitioners can access and apply it, humanitarians and academics need to work in partnership.

But what are the key ingredients to an effective partnership between humanitarians and academics? What are the pitfalls and at what stage does it make sense to introduce certain activities or actors?

ELRHA commissioned a study in 2011 to answer this question. In addition to identifying the obstacles to partnership and how these can be overcome, the study report highlights a number of examples where effective partnerships between academics and practitioners have yielded results which have had a direct positive impact on vulnerable communities.

Aims of the resource

This online guide aims to be a practical resource to support collaboration between academic and humanitarian organisations. It shares the experiences and lessons learned by people who have embarked upon such collaboration. What was found was that while there is a large amount of documentation, toolkits and guidance on how to develop partnerships in general which are useful **(see Tools & Links pp. 36-39)**, there is very little written about academic-humanitarian partnerships specifically. Given that there are some very distinct constraints and opportunities encountered by this type of collaboration; these guidelines aim to focus on the specifics of humanitarian-academic collaboration.

Why collaborate?

Humanitarian operational contexts are increasingly challenging. Significant factors include restrictions on access to people affected by crises, urbanisation, climate change, 24-hour

media scrutiny as well as the opportunities of new communication and other technology. Humanitarian workers are under pressure to respond ever more rapidly and to demonstrate their effectiveness. At the same time, academics are under pressure to show their relevance to policy and practice. Collaboration between academia and humanitarian organisations can help to understanding of:

- the implications of global change
- effectiveness in humanitarian operations
- how new technology can be applied

Humanitarian organisations gain from the input of academic expertise to ensure robust methodology for research, technical expertise for operational issues and a long-term perspective to build understanding and evidence of effectiveness and change. Universities benefit from direct access to the field, the ability to test theories and opportunity to engage in the application of research.

Collaboration is not without its difficulties as two sectors with different cultures, timescales, priorities and institutional demands try to work together. But the research demonstrated how many of these constraints can be overcome for the benefit of humanitarian practice.

How the resource was developed

ELRHA commissioned a study to produce a report and web designers to translate this into the online guide. ELRHA is very grateful to Teresa Hanley and Isabel Vogel for carrying out the original research and compiling the report. We are also very grateful to Will Humphrey and Mark Bird of Carrick Design for their translation of complex situations into visual and graphic images as well as web functionality.

31 interviews were carried out across academic and humanitarian organisations from which a number of the case studies were then written up. The reflective section of the report identifies a number of cross cutting areas that arose within several of the interviews and provides the reader with considerations and learning that would prove useful when setting out to establish a partnership. An advisory group from ELRHA provided important guidance in the initial stages and a range of potential users fed back on the draft document on which the online guide is based.

TERMINOLOGY

ACAPS	Assessment Capacities Project
CAFOD	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
CENDEP	Centre for Development and Emergency Practice
CPE	Continuing Professional Education
DFID	UK Aid: Department for International Development
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECB	Emergency Capacity Building
ELRHA	Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
HERR	Humanitarian Emergency Response Review
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
LSHTM	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
MBA	Masters in Business Administration
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
REF	Research Excellence Framework (UK) 2014
TOR	Terms of Reference
UCL	University College London
UEA	University of East Anglia
UN	United Nations
VAT	Value Added Tax
WEDC	Water, Engineering and Development Centre

Definitions

Humanitarian crises and operations - a broad approach has been taken and material is drawn from experiences and examples across different types and stages of humanitarian responses. Operations include programmes in risk reduction and mitigation, response, recovery and initiatives engaged in setting standards and policy in humanitarian response. These are drawn from across sectors and disciplines.

Collaboration - is used to refer to cooperative initiatives between individuals and organisations. At times the term partnership has been used where it can mean a broad collaborative relationship rather than a formal partnership or any particular type of initiative. While many examples of collaboration are organised around research, discussion has not been confined to this activity.

Academic - is used to mean the professional group and mainly refers to UK university-based academics. However, most of the content is relevant also to academic research professionals in other organisations and internationally – private research institutes, think-tanks and in-house researchers.

Interviewees - are the people who shared their experiences of collaboration and cooperation across the sectors.
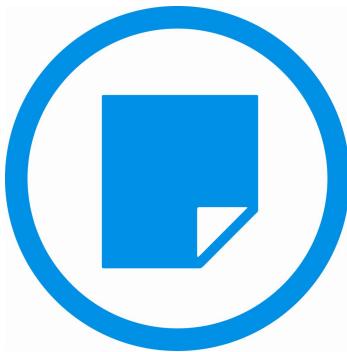
USING THIS GUIDE

The guide has been divided into 3 parts. Following this introductory section, there is:

The How

A 7-step section with key questions, examples, lessons and tips for developing effective collaboration, with a set of practical tools and links that are useful to support collaboration (p.12)

The Evidence

A set of case studies of collaboration detailing how they evolved, their results and lessons learned (p. 40)

The Learning

A set of reflections from the authors on the main themes recurring in our interviews and draws on the experiences of the interviewees (p. 54)

THE HOW

How to collaborate? This section provides key questions, examples, lessons and tips for developing effective collaboration through seven key steps. It draws on examples and experiences of the people we interviewed who have all been involved in collaborations between academics and humanitarian practice.

Step 1   Starting point - why collaborate

Step 2   Deciding on your approach to collaboration

Step 3   Finding the right partner

Step 4   Scoping collaboration

Step 5   Formalising collaboration

Step 6   Sustaining collaboration

Step 7   Rounding up - moving on

It also includes resource section with a set of practical tools and links that are useful to support collaboration. Please note: The resources identified are from the initial research conducted in 2011. The website pages will be updated more regularly, therefore we would encourage you to visit http://ep.elrha.org and follow the links to the Resources section for an up to date series of links.

STEP 1. Starting point - why collaborate?

"When I joined UCL over 4 years ago it already had an excellent working relationship with the insurance and reinsurance communities, particularly through the Aon Benfield UCL Hazard Centre. I thought that the collaborative model should have much wider application with other sectors that required knowledge of risk and hazard science, and that is why I started to work with humanitarian and development NGOs. With several NGO colleagues I began to explore the use of the natural sciences by NGOs and it became evident that there existed a huge opportunity to increase engagement between academics and NGO practitioners and policy makers in this area. It is clear that the natural sciences can have huge positive impacts, but for this to happen they have to be translated and communicated appropriately. CAFOD was very pro-active in wanting to engage with scientific research and in 2008 it signed a formal partnership with UCL to foster joint research and knowledge exchange on climate change and disaster risk reduction. The partnership represents a highly effective model for true collaboration in which all parties greatly benefit."

Dr Stephen Edwards, Aon Benfield UCL Hazard Centre

Key Questions

→ Why collaborate with a humanitarian or academic organisation?

→ What do you want to achieve through collaboration with a humanitarian or academic organisation?

→ What does your organisation prioritise and want to achieve through collaboration?

Why collaborate with a humanitarian or academic organisation?

At the macro-level, collaboration between academia and humanitarian organisations can help to build understanding about the implications of global change, humanitarian effectiveness and how new technology can be applied to humanitarian operations. At a more micro-level, collaboration is often stimulated by a need that an individual working in a humanitarian or academic organisation finds it difficult to address alone, or a belief that there can be a greater impact by joining forces.

Collaboration can take place at different stages in humanitarian crises and programmes including:

- risk reduction and mitigation activities
- in assessment, implementation and evaluations of responses
- in broader lesson learning, policy-making and standard setting

It can take place in different aspects of academic work including:

- developing and carrying out research programmes
- teaching and training at postgraduate level
- enabling and demonstrating the impact of academic work

Collaboration can involve research, technical advice and exchange, lesson sharing, capacity building or other activities. Developing macro-level scenarios, longitudinal studies and impact assessment were a few of the potential collaborative areas highlighted to us (see REFLECTION 5. Humanitarian collaborative research: gaps and opportunities p. 70).

What do you want to achieve through collaboration?

Interviewees emphasised that improved humanitarian practice must be the over-riding goal for effective collaboration. However, there are other motivations and potential benefits that may also drive collaboration. Being clear about what mix of motivations and aims is driving collaboration is vital to its success. Key motivations shared are outlined in the table 1 below.

"We have common aims but maybe different priorities at times. The NGO understandably wants research to inform its policy, advocacy, feed into better understanding of climate change and natural resource management. It wants it to help grassroots communities better manage water and be better able to lobby government. We need research to be "top notch" so it can be published in a peer review journal."

Academic

What does your organisation want to achieve through collaboration?

Individuals make collaboration happen, but institutions provide the mandates, contracts and administration that can make or break it. The institutional aims may not always be the same as those of individual staff members. Also other parts of the organisation may have different priorities. For humanitarian organisations, engaging field staff as well as head office is one of the keys to maintaining the operational relevance of the collaboration. For universities, getting the administration on board is key to providing flexibility in staff schedules and financial arrangements to support the collaboration. Senior management of both organisations are likely to be important to enable staff to have the time to explore potential collaboration that may or may not finally result in projects and funds.

"Support from senior people at the university was vital to make collaboration work especially to give time to staff and some resources to explore, for instance to hold the meeting with humanitarian workers. They gave us the chance to take risks. Our Pro Vice-Chancellor was very supportive because they could see it would at least cover costs and had potential to do more, would be good PR and fits with the Sussex agenda."

Alan Lester, University of Sussex

Table 1: Motivations & potential benefits of academic- humanitarian collaboration

What humanitarian workers might want from collaboration	What academics might want from collaboration
External, impartial assessment of programme effectiveness	Access to the field, to communities and to data for research
To move beyond 'tweaks' to existing practice, helping to break new ground, support innovation	Access to field test theories and concepts
To research complex issues of importance to the organisation and/or the wider sector (intractable issues, big questions)	Access to the realities of humanitarian organisations and the challenges facing them, to keep research relevant and influential and for inspiration
Expertise and knowledge for methodological rigour in their research	To justify applied research that is relevant to the sector, but that some research councils will not fund, as it is exploratory and action-oriented
To synthesise lessons and help 'translate' existing theories and frameworks into practice	A means to fulfil university aims including corporate social responsibilities
Expert knowledge to resolve a problem	To demonstrate relevance, be accountable and to be able to tell a better impact story
Academics' networks and access to research funding	To generate income
The weight and respect that particular academics or institutions bring with them to strengthen the humanitarians' research, policy work and advocacy	To build the reputation of the university/ department/course as a centre of excellence that links research and teaching to humanitarian sector, alongside industry links

Practical points to consider:

- **What do you hope to achieve with your partner?**

- **What do you bring to the collaboration?**

- **Are there other people in the organisation who need to be on board? What are their priorities?**

STEP 2. Deciding on your approach to collaboration

"If you want an answer you like in two weeks, get a consultant. If the problem merits a long-term, deeper engagement and there's something you want to learn, even if it turns out to be uncomfortable, then consider an academic collaboration".

Peter Walker, Feinstein Institute, Tufts University, USA

Key questions

→ What types of activity will your collaboration involve?

→ What sort of collaborative approach will suit you best - a partnership, consultancy or other?

What types of activities will your collaboration involve?

Organisational aims will affect the nature of partnership that is most appropriate, as will the extent and type of activities involved. Collaborative activities identified include:

- Academics as part of NGO discussions, providing external expertise and bringing another perspective at a workshop for learning or strategy development purposes.
- Joint seminars to share experience and learning.
- Humanitarian workers providing seminars at universities or helping to inform the research agenda of academics.
- Joint research projects.
- Capacity building for staff of humanitarian agencies.
- Cooperation in developing the next generation of humanitarian workers and researchers through support for Masters programmes and providing placements for short research pieces.

For more see **REFLECTION 4. Research is Not the Only Fruit p. 67**.

What sort of collaborative approach will suit you best - a partnership, consultancy or other?

Collaboration can be through informal interactions between individuals or through formalised long-term, large scale institutional partnerships (see STEP 5 for more on formalising partnership p. 25). Indeed, many of the examples of collaboration started with individual contacts and grew into something more institutional over time (see STEP 3 for more on finding the right partner p. 18

Collaboration may be for specific, pre-determined activities or around more open-ended processes. The clarity of what is needed, flexibility of both partners and available time, funds and other resources for establishing collaboration will influence the type of relationship that is feasible.

The main approaches to collaboration are:
- informal links often between individuals
- formal arrangements which can be sub-divided into :
  - consultancies which are based on a contract and pre-determined terms of reference specifying outputs and timing, or;
  - partnership arrangements - more open-ended collaboration in which both partners identify areas for joint work which maximise their individual strengths.

These may evolve differently but all collaboration involves dialogue to ensure joint understanding of aims, intended results and how to manage any difficulties (see STEP 4 on Scoping Collaboration and dialogue processes p. 22; also STEP 5 for a checklist for dialogue processes p. 25).

"Recently we wanted to complete some research and had a choice between a group of consultants who said yes, we can do what you want in x weeks; and another institution that said we are interested in this same question, lets meet and see how we can develop a shared research agenda. Given the time constraints we went with the consultants, but in the future we want to be in a position to say yes to that type of dialogue and partnership."

Daniel Stevens, World Vision UK

Practical points to consider:

- **How much time is available to produce the results you want from collaboration?**

- **How much time do you have to engage in building and managing the collaboration?**

- **How experienced is your organisation in managing partnerships or consultancies?**

- **What new skills might be needed?**
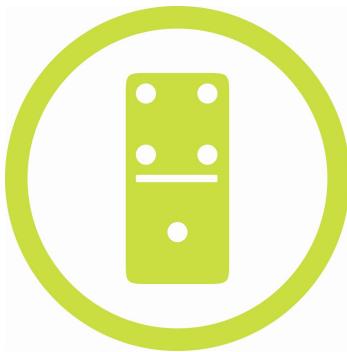
STEP 3. Finding the right partner

"Go to the conferences, network, get into the happy hours to find your chemistry with a potential partner."

Caetano Dorea, Civil and Water Engineering Department, Université Laval, Quebec

"Nobody is knocking down our door, we would love to achieve more studies in the sector, to give us the evidence base for what we do."

Lizzie Babister, Emergency Shelter, CARE

Key questions

→ What type of organisation has what you want from collaboration?

→ How can you find a partner?

→ What do you need to know before committing to collaboration?

What type of organisation has what you need for collaboration?

There is a range of potential partners from within both the humanitarian sector and also from academia and research.

In research and academia:

- Choices include universities, private research institutes, think tanks or consultancy groups.
- Key questions may be around the extent of an academic's operational experience and commitment to the application of research and knowledge. Many interviewees stated that the most successful partnerships from humanitarian organisations perspectives were with academics with substantial experience in humanitarian operations.

In humanitarian agencies:

- There is choice between UK-based and local NGOs, INGO and their local partners, UN agencies, government, UK professional bodies with international departments and private sector organisations.
- NGOs and INGOs will vary according to the nature of their humanitarian operations (for example: the phase of an emergency when they are operational, operations' scale, focus and duration), humanitarian programmes' linkage with longer term development work, the extent of their field network and whether that is through local partnerships or their own structures. Some but not all NGOs have their own policy or research departments, often useful linking units for universities.

"We tend to contract private consultants - they are more up to date, have recent experience in the field, are cheaper, quicker, nimble…. We're more likely to use consultants, though we do some work with independent research institutes."

Inter-agency humanitarian agency

How can you find a partner?

Many people who have had successful collaborative experiences stated that these collaborations often began almost by chance through individual connections, for example with former colleagues from humanitarian organisations who have now moved to university-based jobs and vice versa, friends and even relatives in relevant counterpart institutions. Also chance meetings and relations developed at events such as summer schools and conferences were important.

Some key steps when looking for a partner are below:

Where - should they be UK-based or local? Some NGOs have described having very successful relationships with local universities who understand the field reality of their operations very well. For example, Christian Aid and its partners in the Philippines worked with the University of the Philippines College of Social Work and Community Development to build the body of knowledge on Disaster Risk Reduction drawing on community knowledge (http://community.eldis.org/.59e99723). UK universities also may sometimes find making a link directly with a local organisation, NGO or government department most effective.

Who - Getting to know the sector is important. Conferences, reading past papers and publications, participating in forums and communities of practice are useful ways in. A key decision will be whether collaboration will be at the individual, departmental or institutional level.

Finding common ground - as a useful way to explore interests. Staff exchanges - spending one or two structured days in each other's setting - can be a relatively cheap way for staff to get to know each other and to begin to establish if they have common ground to collaborate on (CASE STUDY 6. Humanitarian Futures Programme Science Exchange as a tool for humanitarian-science dialogue p. 51).

Finding partners - tender and interview processes are useful though usually used for a pre-determined piece of work. Also, the ELRHA matching service helps NGOs and academic

organisations find partners **http://www.elrha.org/researchmatching** (see **CASE STUDY 1. UEA and Oxfam p. 41**).

What do you need to know before committing to collaboration?

Organisational dynamics - Each organisation is different in terms of how they are structured and where decisions are made. In humanitarian organisations relationships between the field and headquarters vary, as do those between research and policy units with operations. Universities vary in the extent of their flexibility for staff to travel at short notice and when and how decisions are made (see **REFLECTION 1. Creative Clashes of Culture p 55**).

Outlook and interests - Collaboration seems to be work best when academics are interested in the application of research and humanitarians are interested in robust evidence. Both need to be interested in improving humanitarian practice. The perspectives, approach and priorities of the potential partner are important to know. Scoping and establishing common ground is a vital foundation (see **STEP 4. Scoping collaboration p. 22; and CASE STUDY 3.** on a knowledge-sharing collaboration between CAFOD and UCL **p. 45**).

Capacity - Check that there is a genuine capacity and interest in the subject for collaboration. For example is it part of the school's or department's strategy? Do the researchers contribute to the right forums?

Ethics - What are the ethical considerations? Both universities and humanitarian organisation operate to ethical frameworks but they are likely to emphasise different means and ends. It is important to consider how different ethical frameworks will be applied and will interact to govern the collaboration (see **REFLECTION 1. Creative Clashes of Culture p 55**).

Security - What are the risks and security implications? What are the administrative constraints? For example, university staff and students will be restricted by travel policies and insurance requirements. How much experience of working in an emergency setting do the researchers have? Are there feasible ways of overcoming these constraints, for example, by hiring researchers on temporary agency contracts or providing security training?

Costs - Big names in academia are expensive. Universities usually apply full economic costings which may mean day rates of over £700 per day and even up to £2,000 plus VAT. NGOs may have policies which exclude such rates, although it is worth checking, as many universities have special considerations when working with charities, which most humanitarian agencies are.

Always clarify the VAT positions of each member of the partnership. Some may be registered for VAT but be VAT exempt as an educational establishment, others may not be registered for VAT. Additionally, certain activities are VAT exempt, others are not but the two can come together when costing out a Conference for example (catering is usually VAT chargeable, whereas venue hire can be exempt). Confusion over VAT within the UK has the potential to raise or lower costs by 20 per cent (in 2012) and is worth clarifying before devising the budget.

Attributes - Interviewees highlighted that key to collaboration are individuals' interpersonal skills, their ability to work as part of a team, tact, flexibility, creativity, openness and pragmatism.

Practical points to consider:

- **What are some of the current academic/humanitarian connections of your own organisation you may be able to build on?**

- **What level of decision-making power has your counterpart? Who else needs to be on board for collaboration to progress?**

- **Finding individuals and organisations to collaborate takes time and resources and is not guaranteed to result in success. Do you have the time and space for this?**

- **What are some of the potential obstacles to collaboration? How can these be overcome?**

- **To what extent is there common ground between both parties?**

- **Do you understand the VAT position of all parties?**

STEP 4. Scoping collaboration

"Find a project that inspires and energises both sides."

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**Caetano Dorea, Civil and Water Engineering Department,
Université Laval, Quebec**

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Key questions

→ How will you scope potential collaboration?

→ What makes a scoping process successful?

→ What are some of the concerns of each partner?

How will you scope potential collaboration?

Most successful partners have found that holding some form of dialogue process both before and during collaboration helps make it effective. This is also the case in contractual arrangements working to a pre-set terms of reference. In a dialogue process, it is important to:

- involve both organisations and maybe some stakeholders from outside to identify needs and priorities for work together
- "out" the motivations of each party early on

**"Be transparent about different agendas. I want some publications and info
for other work, they want to address a specific operational issue usually."**

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Academic

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Successful models for dialogue

- Hold a half-day event for academics and relevant agency staff to discuss research needs on an issue or to develop a jointly- owned concept note. For example, the University of Sussex held a successful meeting involving humanitarian agencies and academics to help develop a proposal for ESRC funding on humanitarian research; research institutes such as ODI often have shared their draft plans with potential users of the research to share, develop and further refine plans.

- Run a sustained process to bring together two groups over a period of time. Humanitarian Futures Programme is running a process as part of its approach to build scientist-policy maker dialogues (see CASE STUDY 6. p. 51).
- Make visits to the field and work with local communities to define the research questions they prioritise for investigation.
- Set up a steering committee made up of representatives from both organisations to guide the collaboration and identify and develop projects to work on. This has been the process that has guided the wider CAFOD-UCL institutional collaboration (see CASE STUDY 3. p. 45).

"I went with CAFOD to Bolivia to meet with its partners in order to discuss their needs and potential research projects. Bolivia was chosen because it's a priority country for CAFOD. Over three weeks I met with local partners and spent time in the field, which resulted in the formulation of a robust research project that will have real practical application and also inform development policy."

Dr Stephen Edwards, Aon Benfield UCL Hazard Centre

What makes a scoping process successful?

Consistent messages on what makes dialogue processes work to scope potential collaboration were given.

- **Invest time and resources for scoping -** this can take months or even 1-2 years in some cases.
- **Get the right people round the table -** and think about having enough people to help with continuity and operational relevance later on.
- **Understand the partnership skills needed** to participate in scoping collaboration and whether these are available in-house or need an external facilitator or broker.
- **Use the dialogue process to build trust and relationships -** deliberately focus on dispelling the stereotypes, learn about each others' organisational processes and projects, look for complementary strengths and mutual understanding to foster goodwill (see REFLECTION 1. Creative Clashes of Culture p 55).
- **Map things out together -** what is wanted, the aim, the outputs, the process and the timeframe.
- **Consider security issues** and any training that might be needed in advance of collaboration.
- **Discuss ethical codes** of both partners and how these can be met.
- **Discuss costs and budgets** together - collaboration can be more effective if both sides commit with funds - though not necessarily equal amounts (see STEP 5 for more on formalising collaboration p. 25).
- **Negotiate outputs and ownership-** consider the needs of both partners and discuss tools, reports, frameworks, publications and how these will be used to achieve the shared outcome but also to meet any individual priorities too (see STEP 5. Formalising Collaboration p. 25).
- **Success -** what does this look like and what is non-negotiable. It is useful to discuss this early on to help with sustaining collaboration through any difficult times.

See the checklist in the Tools section for a summary of points to cover in a dialogue process (see p. 36).

What are some of the concerns of partners?

There are some common concerns which emerged in our interviews. Dialogue processes should address these.

Key concerns of humanitarian organisations

- Will the results of collaboration directly benefit communities now as well as policy agendas?
- Can the high costs of academics' time be covered and justified?
- Can outputs and research findings be used immediately in advocacy and other areas?
- Are academics going to evaluate the organisation?
- Will research find unflattering results about the NGO and its approach?
- Will academics get in the way of operations?
- Is an academic time schedule too slow?

Key concerns of academic organisations

- Will research be too demand-led and constrain academic freedom? How receptive will humanitarian partners be to new questions being raised?
- What will be the NGO's reaction to a full economic costing approach? How will development time be funded?
- How will profile be shared in the initiative?
- How will we ensure quality of training initiative or research to institutional standards
- The university restricts travel to conflict zones – how can this be managed?
- What ethical codes will apply to our collaboration? How can we combine research and humanitarian codes, especially on use of data?

Practical points to consider:

- **What are the individuals' and institutions' motivations for collaboration?**

- **How is the scoping phase going to be supported and funded?**

- **How flexible is each organisation in what it wants out of the collaboration and when?**

- **Who should be involved in defining the collaboration - field staff; headquarters; senior management; community; others?**

- **What does success look like – in minimum and ideal terms?**
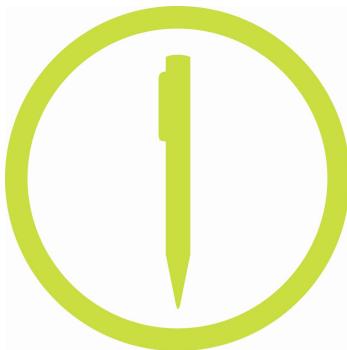
STEP 5. Formalising collaboration

Key questions

→ What are the benefits and costs of formalising the relationship through a written agreement?

→ What type of formal document is appropriate?

→ What does an agreement need to cover?

What are the benefits and costs of formalising the relationship through a written agreement?

Collaboration links together different people, skills, perspectives, organisational resources and funding to address an issue. Both sides bring agendas, motivations and expectations to the collaboration, sometimes explicit sometimes implicit. During collaboration, people, context and projects change with delays and new opportunities arising. Formalising collaboration can help to manage these events and has other benefits too.

Benefits of formalising collaboration include:

1. Providing a shared document which captures the objectives, scope and boundaries, and the expectations on each side.
2. Providing an agreed framework for resolving problems in case of difficulties to help to manage problems in a positive way without damaging the collaborative relationship.
3. A formal agreement brings in senior institutional stakeholders.
4. Helping to create an institutional commitment that transcends individual staff members.
5. A written agreement gives weight to a collaborative relationship by showing it has institutional support; this is useful for proposals and funding applications.
6. Providing a formal framework for managing funding, costs and other inputs.

7. Formalising an agreement can provide a good opportunity to publicise internally and externally and celebrate the collaboration.

Costs of formalising collaboration

Formalising is costly in terms of administrative and management time, and actual costs. Cost areas include:

- Negotiation time for staff involved in the collaboration.
- Administration time for meetings, communications and drafting agreements.
- Financial and accounting staff time for any financial negotiations; including budget-development, cost negotiation, issues such as VAT, overhead allowances, liabilities, insurances.
- Management time for approval of formal agreements.
- Legal costs in connection with ownership, intellectual property, data protection, specific issues if working internationally, such as licensing, sub-contracting, international regulations compliance.
- Elapsed time, as some agreements could take up to a year to finalise.

Collaborations which are light-touch or based on simple good faith agreements between individuals are unlikely to merit the investment in terms of costs and time.

What type of agreement is appropriate?

From the outset, there needs to be a shared understanding of the potential collaboration, initiative or project. This can be captured in a concept note, a short 1-3 page document which may be used as a basis for discussions with internal stakeholders and potential funders. Alternatively, a 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) can be used to capture the objectives, desired process and requirements for a collaborating partner, particularly for contracted partners.

For ongoing collaboration, there are two main types of agreement between collaborating organisations.

a. **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) -** more general statements of agreement or intent to collaborate. These may be in the form of a paper which outlines the duration of the organisations' commitment to collaborate, some of the mechanisms and main focus areas of cooperation.

b. **Project and Programme contracts -** these will be for specific pieces of work detailing costs, outputs, responsibilities and dispute mechanisms. Project and programme contracts deal with the generic aspects of collaboration. Usually the specifics of the project are captured in proposals, concept notes and/or a Terms of Reference which outlines specific requirements and deliverables.

What does an agreement need to cover?

Organisations have their own formats for contracts, but it is useful if aspects of managing the collaboration and the practical aspects of implementing activities collaboratively are agreed and documented.

Managing collaboration

Documents should include:
- agreed partnership principles and values
- clear roles for each organisation and the individuals, specifying what each will contribute and when
- ways of working, team coordination and connections between and within organisations
- what success will look like, outputs and outcomes of the collaboration
- institutional commitment and contributions to the collaboration
- agreement to adhere to each institution's ethical codes
- relationship with the funder and management of the head contract
- how the collaboration will be represented, who will be the spokespeople and where the collaboration will be showcased
- process for adapting to change including new opportunities and negotiating any difficulties

Implementing collaboration - practical issues to agree

Costs - academic time is expensive. UK universities operate Full Economic Cost (FEC) recovery on staff and charge high overheads, which can exceed £'000s a day. Sometimes charities can be exempt from university overheads and this should be explored in discussions.

Value-Added Tax - VAT is a complex area. Some university activities are exempt, while others are not. Funders also deal in different ways with VAT. It is worth putting the finance departments of each organisation in direct contact as they have the specialist knowledge. It is also worth having a basic knowledge of your own organisation's VAT status. Not dealing with VAT issues can have serious budgetary implications and have been known to almost bankrupt projects.

Named individuals - be clear if the collaboration is involving named individuals and in what role. Partners may be disappointed if the bulk of collaboration is with more junior staff, so expectations need to be managed.

Ownership of the research and intellectual property - discuss and agree up-front copyright and future academic and/or NGO publications. Specify the types of outputs – usually at least two types of outputs should be considered, reports and technical briefings for humanitarian staff and academic publications. Include the approval processes and timing for publication and dissemination.

Security risks and appropriate behaviours in the field - consider what training and orientation is needed to ensure that non-humanitarians understand the appropriate behaviours. Consider security risks of involving local researchers – what information and discussions will they be privy to and how will that affect their own situation, particularly in insecure circumstances? Agree responsibilities regarding insurance and any liabilities. Some humanitarian organisations employ academics on temporary contracts in order to deal more easily with insurance and other logistics.

Data and future use - researchers may be given access to data from within the humanitarian organisation. The collaborative project itself may also generate data. Negotiate in advance issues of confidentiality and specify what can and cannot be done with data and research outputs in the future.

EXAMPLE: Establishing continuing professional education courses - International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute, University of Manchester

Drawing up the agreement took considerable time and involved lawyers from both organisations. It was time consuming because the arrangement was a different type of engagement from the usual partnerships for both organisations so standard templates did not exist. Legal departments tended to prefer their own standardised templates but these are different for each organisation. Both partners negotiated hard and from their perspective compromised on cost. Now the agreement shows that both organisations are gaining from the collaboration. The university is at least covering its costs, is contributing to its social aims and very importantly will be given access to the IFRC data for the university's research purposes. IFRC gains accredited, and to some extent tailored, CPE (Continuing Professional Education) accessible for the staff and volunteers of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies around the world.

Tony Redmond, Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute, University of Manchester

Practical points to consider:

- **How well-defined is the collaboration or project? Are there existing partnership models you could work from (maybe from other sectors or other organisations)?**

- **Is external funding involved?**

- **Who needs to be involved in drawing up agreements and when - consider finance and legal departments and senior management?**

- **What decision-making processes will the collaboration require?**

- **How will changes in staff, direction of collaboration and context be handled?**

STEP 6. Sustaining collaboration

"It can sometimes be easier for a university to sustain a long term partnership - we can put things on a back burner and pick them up again. NGOs have constraints of staff role changes, one year plans - implementing or not. Their key people are more prone to moving to another field position."

Andrew Collins, Disaster and Development Centre, Northumbria University

Key questions

→ What are common challenges?

→ What do you need to sustain collaboration?

→ How to deal with changing contexts?

What are common challenges?

The challenges that people spoke to us about included:

Rapid turnover of humanitarian staff - many are on one year contracts and can be deployed to emergencies at any time and at very short notice.

Limited experience of working in and managing partnerships rather than consultancies - humanitarian agency workers commented on the difference, and challenge for some to manage partnerships rather than consultancies. While staff were used to drawing up terms of reference and managing a consultant to produce what is needed for specific operational issues, they were less used to working collaboratively with very different types of organisations with different timelines, organisational cultures and expectations.

Limited operational experience - some academics were unused to humanitarian organisations and their work in the field so needed to take time to get to know the agency and how it works.

External change - there are often major changes in operational environments; for example governments change, donor priorities change, the crisis evolves rapidly, research funding can be delayed. Keeping collaboration going when the programme is not evolving as anticipated is hard but having a really clear sense of what success looks like is important to

maintain commitment. One agency talked about the tendency that when things got tough, and deadlines were looming, each partner would revert to their comfort area - NGOs would focus on squeezing all possible positive benefits at community level, whilst the academics focused on what published materials and other outputs could be achieved despite the lack of progress. These priorities may not be shared.

Stereotyping and hostility - One humanitarian worker with academic experience summed up the mutual stereotypes that can get in the way:

"Academics should expect some hostility, scepticism, not assume a humanitarian organisation is interested in the academic theory behind their work or think their research is relevant. Humanitarian workers will always want to simplify things and want tools. Answers. They will think you are being over-analytical and naïve. That you don't understand reality.

Humanitarians should be aware academics often come with a critique head. They may have stereotypes of humanitarians - well meaning missionaries who don't understand theory of the bigger picture."

International Humanitarian Agency

With these stereotypes widespread between the two sectors it is not surprising that collaboration can run into difficulties at times (see **REFLECTION 1. Creative Clashes of Culture p 55**).

What do you need to sustain collaboration?

Principles and attitudes for sustained collaboration

Experienced collaborators highlighted the following characteristics for successful collaboration:

- Clarity of purpose – a project with a clearly defined focus
- Resources - an initiative that is well resourced
- Respect - people involved have experience, knowledge and expertise – both operational and academic and respect each others' specialisms
- Commitment - all participants, including academics, are willing to "go do", not just analyse
- Flexibility - partners, academics in particular, are willing to adapt approach to suit programming realities

Collaboration to improve humanitarian practice is by definition taking place in unstable and uncertain contexts. Sustaining collaboration through changing political operational contexts as well as organisational, internal changes can be difficult. Some key elements can help sustain collaboration:

Commitment to team-working and learning - Humanitarians told us that academic collaboration worked when academics were committed to getting involved, to take risks and "get their hands dirty" so that reality informs the evolution of the joint work. Most

successful collaborations seem to take place when academics are very much part of the operational team, albeit with a distinct role.

"This is all about learning. You can't stand around with a clipboard, you learn by doing. By operational engagement, you learn."

Lars Peter Nissen, ACAPS Director

Institutional internal advocacy - Collaboration takes a lot of communication, both within the immediate team and internally within the organisations. We were told how important personal commitment was.

"It only really worked because of very committed people within both organisations, who were passionate and determined to make it happen. You need internal ambassadors to make it happen."

Andrew Collins, Disaster and Development Centre, Northumbria University

Ability to compromise - Perhaps the most important factor that interviewees highlighted was the ability to compromise on both sides. Academics need to understand what is" good enough" research under the circumstances and be prepared to extract operational implications from it. Humanitarians need to understand some of the principles of methodological rigour required for robust research that will be respected and thus carry weight.

It was stated:

- Academics need to commitment to improving humanitarian practice. They need to work with tact, understanding, flexibility, self-awareness and try to understand the realities of operational settings.
- Humanitarian workers need to understand what is entailed in producing rigorous research and understand research ethics. They should see academics as partners, and facilitate time and space for reflection and learning amongst field teams. They need to share knowledge and experience with academics.

Managing through change

Internal and external changes are the major challenges to sustaining collaboration. Experienced collaborators shared their lessons on how to sustain collaboration through change:

- Have regular reviews of the collaboration's aims and direction, priorities can move apart as collaboration evolves. The conversation needs to be held more than once. Even with plans and agreements in place, different interpretations emerge, so there is a need to check alignment regularly.
- Make time to bring new people into the partnership when roles change. Documentation of what has taken place so far can help too.
- At times the only choice is to salvage what can be gained from the collaboration, for instance when changes in the operational context can put pressure on, or even end, collaboration.
- Ensure field staff and communities are involved in developing the collaboration.

- Ensure that field teams and communities get something out of the collaboration. For example: training, talks, presentations, updates. Make it an exchange not extractive process .
- Review planning processes, as projects and operational contexts change over time. Flexibility and good planning can help. But some interviewees felt that collaboration can be stifled by planning - "…you can plan yourself to death….collaboration is killed by log frames. They result in too much planning, rigidity, bureaucracy." Others felt the opposite, that long-term time planning and project management helped to manage schedule disruptions and keep goodwill going.

**EXAMPLE: Research halted by new government - Northumbria University with the Mozambique Ministry of Health**

 "The programme was establishing health risk committees to stop epidemics, based on social and ecological research we organised in Mozambique and Bangladesh. The Ministry of Health got increasingly motivated and collaborated together with DfID. There was also support from WHO and UNICEF, and various other organisations including the EU and USAID, additional universities and, most importantly, amongst local planning departments and communities. Then there were elections in Mozambique, a new minister of health was appointed and all projects which deviated from the ministry's new priorities were stopped. This included us. It was a blunt decision to deal with trying to focus work. It was frustrating because everyone was already lined up for long term investment in the next phase with funds on offer. We had six risk committees up and running. But that was the end of the project. We did find that some committees continued running for years to follow regardless, but the expansion of risk reduction much wider was halted. We then developed a link with the Catholic University of Mozambique which is more sustainable and maintained aspects of the programme and some papers from it were produced so not all was lost."

Andrew Collins, Disaster and Development Centre, Northumbria University

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Practical points to consider:

- **How will new participants/staff members be brought into the collaboration?**

- **What are the potential obstacles the collaboration may face?**

- **Who needs to be kept in touch with the collaboration within your organisation?**

- **What are some key milestones to celebrate?**

- **How will the community benefit from the institutional collaboration?**
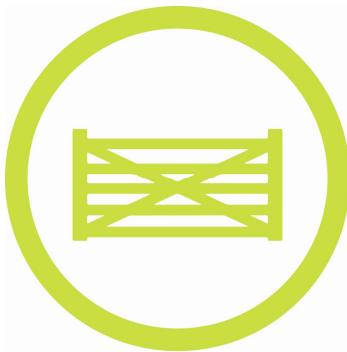
STEP 7. Rounding up collaboration - Moving on

"It is clear that equal care and attention should also be paid to the moving-on aspects of a partnership: these are rarely planned in advance and are all too often undertaken in a random way, leaving partners, beneficiaries and other key stakeholders feeling (rightly or wrongly) abandoned or betrayed. ....an 'exit' can itself be a trigger for an interesting 'entry' or an opening up to a range of new possibilities."

The Partnering Initiative

Key questions

→ Are there lessons about collaboration useful for others?

→ How will you evaluate the collaboration?

→ Will collaboration continue at institutional, departmental or individual levels?

Are there lessons about collaboration useful for others?

Capturing and sharing the experience of humanitarian-academic collaboration can be beneficial for:

- Sector-wide learning on how to get value from this type of collaboration.
- Raising awareness amongst non-traditional academic disciplines that could have potential contributions to make to the humanitarian effort.
- Demonstrating universities' contributions to social corporate responsibility.
- Celebrating success - collaboration can be hard, so encouraging examples are helpful.
- Future collaboration - while each partnership is different, it is useful to have some documented approaches to learn from and build on.
- Support with internal advocacy - highlight the range of benefits including less obvious ones; for instance professional development of staff, as well as the benefits to the wider humanitarian effort.

How will you evaluate the collaboration?

It is useful to review together some of the key learning points and the effectiveness in meeting the overall objective. It can help others inside and outside of the organisation in future partnerships. It is also a means of accountability to those who have been involved in the collaborative activities within and outside of the participating organisations.

Ideally there will be an understanding from the outset that collaboration is designed to be temporary so that documentation, evaluation and moving on can be **planned for from the start**. This should be budgeted for as an integral part of the process, particularly for activities such as reporting back to communities and local partners.

Evaluation approaches include:

- A simple wrap-up meeting at the end of the collaboration. Stakeholders from within the partner organisations can discuss the benefits and learning for all parties, the extent to which objectives were met and conclusions.
- A more formal evaluation process involving external stakeholders and possibly external evaluators to identify the planned and unplanned benefits and costs of the collaboration, as well as lessons learned, including perspectives from outside of the collaborating organisations.

Will collaboration continue at institutional, departmental or individual levels?

Review processes are useful to identify possibilities for future collaboration. Options include maintaining links at individual, departmental or institutional levels, for example through staff exchanges, joint seminar series or new projects. For instance, a 5-year Christian Aid DRR project bringing together communities, local government, scientists and regional and international institutions led on to further collaboration with Plan International and IDS. Crucial to its success and growth in collaboration was that funding enabled Christian Aid to recruit an in-house researcher who was then able to develop links with a range of institutes.

Interviewees commented on the need for reflection on the process of humanitarian-academic collaboration in order to improve it and widen the pool of potential collaborators. There is little documented about the specific rewards and challenges of collaboration between humanitarians and academics, but given the potential benefits, there should be more.

Practical points to consider:

- **How will you manage any relevant future external communication requests?**

- **Have you made a record of everyone who has contributed to the initiative including communities?**

- **How will you handle reflections on the collaborative process from communities, local partners, senior institutional stakeholders and others?**

- **What will happen to data, personal data, images and other copyrighted or protected material generated by the collaboration?**

- **How will you celebrate success?**

TOOLS

Experienced collaborators highlight the importance of having an open and honest dialogue as you consider collaboration. Discussing each side's motivations and objectives builds a shared understanding and trust between the potential collaborators and is viewed as a key success factor for collaboration (see **STEP 4.Scoping collaboration p. 22**).

Documenting the key points of the dialogue process clarifies and captures the intentions and expectations so that these can be referred to and revised as the collaboration evolves. The scoping dialogue can help to highlight if the collaboration needs to be formalised.

Step 1: Checklist for a scoping and dialogue process

The purpose of the scoping and dialogue process is to map out together what the aim of the collaboration is, what each side hopes to gain, what the outputs are, what the process will be and who will be involved (see **STEP 4.Scoping collaboration p. 22**).

Audience and use
This stage is not necessarily documented. But if it is, the relevant audience is primarily the individuals involved in the collaboration. The scoping document can also be useful to share with managers, other staff in the organisation that will be affected, for example in field offices, and other stakeholders such as communities.

Step 2: Checklist for developing the idea for collaboration

Interviewees highlighted that a lot of collaboration does not need to be formalised in order for it to be effective (see **STEP 5. Formalising collaboration p. 25**). Where there are a number of different activities the collaborating partners might do together, it can help to develop the idea in more depth by using a concept note process. This can help to develop an idea by summarising what activities the partners would like to do, why they should be done and what the expected results might be.

Audience and use
A concept note is useful for communicating the idea to senior management to help make the case for the collaboration. It is also useful for communicating with potential funders if funding is required.

Step 3: Checklist for formalising collaboration

Where collaboration requires institutional support, involves transactions in funds or in kind, then formalisation is likely to be required (see STEP 5. Formalising collaboration p. 25). This will be through some form of legal agreement, a Memorandum of Understanding or a contract.

Audience and use
Formal documents are for the use of senior management, funders and the managers of the collaborative initiative. An MOU or contract means that there are institutional obligations to the collaboration that need to be met, even if individuals move on.

Dialogue process	Developing ideas	Formalising collaboration
What are the aims of collaboration?	Description of the collaboration?	What are the high-level partnership principles and collaborative intentions of the partners?
What are the motivations on each side?	What is the context – consider security issues here?	
What are the partnership principles and values that inform the approach?	What is the rationale?	What is the scope and boundaries of the collaboration?
What does success look like?	What are the aims and objectives?	What are the strategies for working together?
What does each side bring to the collaboration?	What are the expected results?	What are the key project areas?
Does it need to be formatted?	What is the organisational background of both partners?	What are the commitments from each organisation in funding, staff resources, and in-kind contributions?
What will be the outputs?	What is the estimated budget?	What are the key outputs and how will attribution be handled?
What are the cost and funding implications?		What are the contractual details, terms of reference schedule, budget, etc.?
		What are the practical issues? E.g. VAT implications, compliance requirements, international licenses, insurance, etc.?

LINKS

Below are links to some useful tools and resources developed by organisations involved in humanitarian and development work to support partnership work. They are not specific to humanitarian-academic collaboration but include a number of lessons and tools which are useful for this type of partnership.

The Emergency Capacity Building Project
www.ecbproject.org/resources

The Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) Project aim is to improve the speed, quality, and effectiveness of the humanitarian community in saving lives, improving welfare, and protecting the rights of people in emergency situations. It has developed a number of tools useful to humanitarian organisations developing partnerships and collaboration with other including tools for building trust in diverse teams, on accountability in humanitarian crises (the Good Enough Guide) and examples of joint assessments and evaluations. http://www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/44-the-good-enough-guide-to-impact-measurement-and-accountability-in-emergencies

Research matching
http://ep.elrha.org

The ELRHA Research Matching Facility offers humanitarian agencies and higher education institutions the opportunity to search or advertise for research and project partners. The service is completely free and forms an integral part of the Guide to Effective Partnerships.

If you are working for a humanitarian agency and have identified an issue that you would like to investigate with an academic research partner, you can either: search the list of academic partners **(http://www.elrha.org/courses-and-centres)** or fill out an Academic Partner Request Form, and ELRHA will take this forward. ELRHA can offer support in formulating research questions and presenting the request for an academic audience.

If you are working for an academic institution and are carrying out research relevant to the humanitarian field and would like to identify an agency partner to further develop your research you can fill out a Humanitarian Partner Request Form. ELRHA will use this to

create an advert for your request on our site. ELRHA can offer support in formulating your research proposition in an appropriate format for a humanitarian audience.

The Partnering Initiative – The Partnering Toolbook
http://thepartneringinitiative.org/publications/Toolbooks/The_Partnering_Toolbook.jsp

The Partnering Initiative works with individuals, organisations and systems to promote and develop partnerships for sustainable development - between business, government and civil society. It has developed a number of resources to support the development of partnerships. It also runs training courses in partnership brokering. In particular the Partnering Toolkit is a useful resource with cross-sector case studies from development and advice and tools for all stages of developing and implementing partnerships. Tools include agreements, assessing risks and reviewing progress.

Partnership Brokering Project
http://partnershipbrokers.org

Partnerships between humanitarians, academics and people from other sectors can be hard to scope, develop, manage and maintain without some specialist expertise. Partnership brokers (also known as process managers / change leaders / partnership intermediaries in different contexts) can bring vital skills to maximise the potential of partnerships.

The Partnership Brokering Project comprises a comprehensive training programme, action research, review and evaluation of partnership brokering impacts and a communications campaign.

WWF- Partnerships Toolkit
http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/wwf_parthershiptoolboxartweb.pdf

A toolkit developed by WWF (World Wildlife Foundation) based on its experience of developing partnerships. It has advice and tools for developing, formalising and monitoring partnerships.

Development in Practice: Achieving successful academic-NGO collaboration
www.developmentinpractice.org/journals/achieving-successful-academic-practitioner-research-collaborations

This paper looks at common factors that derail academic-practitioner collaborations. It then identifies five different models of collaboration and makes recommendations that, if observed, should eliminate some of the tensions in collaborative efforts, while at the same time providing a foundation for ongoing learning.

THE EVIDENCE

During the research a number of people were approached who have been working on collaborative activities involving academics and humanitarians. We wanted to capture and demonstrate a number of these successful partnerships to extract what it was that the members of the partnership felt contributed to the success. There were also some examples of how, with hindsight, they might have undertaken some elements differently.

In this section we share in more detail six examples of collaboration:

Case Study 1   University of East Anglia (UEA) and Oxfam (on behalf of the Emergency Capacity Building Project) collaboration on measuring impact

Case Study 2   CARE and CENDEP on shelter case studies and capacity building of students: ELRHA-supported Collaboration

Case Study 3   A research and knowledge sharing partnership between University College London (UCL) and the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)

Case Study 4   Collaboration through academic consultancy: WEDC and UN WASH cluster, Haiti earthquake response 2010

Case Study 5   Establishing continuing professional education course: Institute for Humanitarian and Conflict Response, University of Manchester and the International Federation for Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Case Study 6   Humanitarian Futures Programme: Exchange as a tool for humanitarian-science dialogue. Lessons from a pilot between climate scientists and humanitarian policy makers.

CASE STUDY 1. University of East Anglia (UEA) and Oxfam (on behalf of the Emergency Capacity Building Project) collaboration on measuring impact

Origins and evolution

Disasters and humanitarian emergencies are increasing in magnitude and complexity. This presents a major challenge to NGOs that respond to these emergencies. In response to this challenge, emergency directors from 7 agencies - CARE International, Catholic Relief Services, International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, Oxfam GB, Save the Children and World Vision International - established an Inter-Agency Working Group (IWG) on Emergency Capacity.

As part of the Emergency Capacity Building Project Phase II (2009-2013), a project to develop an evidence-based methodology and practical guidance on impact assessment for field staff across the sector was planned, coordinated by Oxfam GB on behalf of the ECB agencies.

The requirements were to produce a rigorous methodology, based on data collection that was flexible enough to be applied at field level and adapted to different contexts.

Finding the partner

Oxfam were seeking an academic institutional partner, as the best partner for developing a new methodology for the sector that was rigorous and credible.

ELRHA (Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance) had just launched their **Research Matching Facility (http://ep.elrha.org)** and Oxfam put an announcement on it, describing the project and seeking expressions of interest.

Daniel McAvoy, a lecturer at the University of East Anglia (DEV) with a background in humanitarian work and an interest in collaborative approaches with humanitarian NGOs, had been following ELRHA and saw the announcement. After identifying that there was also interest from colleagues, Dr Roger Few and Dr Marcela Tarazona, the researchers at UEA contacted Oxfam to express interest in working together.

Results

Meetings between Dr. Vivien Walden of Oxfam and UEA resulted in a joint concept note in late 2009 and early 2010. Initial attempts to identify funding for the project were unfruitful

and so Oxfam continued to seek funds on behalf of UEA and the ECB Project. They found success through their Partnership Programme Agreement (core funding) with DFID in December 2010. Oxfam got back in touch with the UEA team and re-launched the partnership, including a start-up meeting in early 2011 to agree the project plans.

The project will run for two years. The methodological development was completed in 2011 and preparations for field-testing are underway.

Both sides of the collaboration are pleased with progress. They have enjoyed an open-ended and reflective way of working brought by a research-based approach. The hands-on collaboration and joint development of the project has meant considerable learning on both sides. Both Daniel McAvoy of UEA and Catherine Gould of Oxfam agreed that the collaborative approach has yielded more benefits than a contract approach would have.

Lessons learned

- Early establishment of trust amongst the five people in the group (two Oxfam and three UEA) and a partnership ethos was important, helped by enthusiasm in the project.
- Investing in the time to develop the concept note has led to a strong shared understanding of the project, creating continuity within the group, even if different individuals take the lead at different times.
- Mixed operational-academic backgrounds of everyone involved has fostered mutual understanding of humanitarian, institutional and real-world requirements
- Each side has brought more than the obvious, so it was good to talk about this upfront:
  - o Oxfam and the ECB partners have brought access to communities and field staff as well as a joint NGO perspective of what will and won't work in the field.
  - o UEA have brought access to local research groups, such as Oxford Policy Management (OPM) in India, and logistical support that has made the field-testing phase feasible and straightforward.
- Managing timelines has required mutual understanding; a commitment to proactive communication and long-term time planning has helped.
- The School of International Development's institutional interest in enhancing its impact has facilitated the flexibility needed for the collaboration.

CASE STUDY 2. CARE and CENDEP on shelter case studies and capacity building of students: ELRHA-supported Collaboration

Origins and evolution

The collaboration was triggered by a shared interest in the timely question of how to do emergency shelter well. David Sanderson from CENDEP and Lizzie Babister from CARE knew each other from working together at CARE.

CARE had already commenced planning work to gather examples of emergency shelter to go into their Emergency Toolkit. Through the personal connection, the interest in collaborating had already been established. CENDEP was looking for opportunities for students to gain practical experience in the emergency shelter sector and CARE was interested in developing capacities and experience for potential future staff in the shelter sector. Both were keen to test out what sort of collaboration might work.

A funding application was made to ELRHA and the success in obtaining the funding meant that something more in-depth, involving the students and university staff, could be done. The collaboration was formalised through an MOU, as funding, contributions in-kind and deliverables were involved. Teams of one tutor and one student made field trip visits to CARE country offices to document the shelter case studies. Trips included:

- Bangladesh to look at post-cyclone reconstruction
- Peru to look at earthquake resistant adobe construction
- Gujarat to look at CARE permanent housing ten years after the 2001 earthquake

Results

The objectives were met and the outputs produced. The success factors included:

- a straightforward project that was operationally relevant with a tangible output for operations staff
- an existing relationship between individuals which meant there was a shared perspective
- ELRHA funding

Both David (CENDEP) and Lizzie (CARE) agreed that, beyond achieving the project objectives, the collaboration was rewarding and encouraging.

Lessons learned

- Flexible approaches are needed when working collaboratively on student placements, such as giving time and support for students to develop skills for doing field-work or writing for operational audiences, as they all have different experience and backgrounds.
- Clarify and agree formats for outputs in advance, and share examples, as agencies can vary in style, depth and level of analysis they require.
- Learning about the field office and building dialogue and rapport with field staff over email in advance of a field visit helps make a placement as productive as possible.

CASE STUDY 3. A research and knowledge sharing partnership between University College London (UCL) and the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)

Origins and management

In 2008, UCL and CAFOD signed a Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate on a research and knowledge exchange relating to disaster risk reduction (DRR) and adaptation to climate change. The partnership was developed by CAFOD's former DRR Advisor (Dr Jessica Mercer) and Climate Change Advisor (Dr Michael Edwards), and the Research and Education Development Manager at the Aon Benfield UCL Hazard Centre (Dr Stephen Edwards). It is now managed through the UCL–CAFOD Steering Group and each project has a specific management team. The founders of the partnership recognised the need and opportunity for rigorous analysis and research, particularly in the natural and environmental sciences, to underpin humanitarian and development policy and practice.

For CAFOD the partnership is important as it provides access to some of the world's leading experts in natural hazards, natural resource management, climate change and DRR.

For UCL, partnering with a non-government organisation (NGO) means research and teaching both benefit from practitioner expertise and, importantly, research can make real impact by informing CAFOD's work on the ground.

The results

The partnership between CAFOD and UCL has:

- Generated new research and knowledge exchange activities in the Philippines (see below), Bolivia, Kenya and the Czech Republic.
- Shaped CAFOD's new Humanitarian Strategy, which states 'collaboration with universities' as a core objective.
- Informed the successful proposal for the creation of the UCL Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction in 2010.
- Supported the 2009 UCL Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction for Natural Hazards: Putting Research into Practice.
- Contributed to the UCL-led Volcanoscope project on 'Increasing the Resilience to Volcanic Hazards by Enhancing the Capability and Delivery of Eruption Forecasts', which was funded through the Natural Environment Research Council and the Economic and Social Research Council programme on Increasing Resilience to Natural Hazards.

The most notable research project that has arisen from the partnership to date examines multi-hazard assessments for building sustainable and resilient communities in the Philippines. A doctoral student (Melanie Duncan) was appointed to this four-year project in 2009 through the UCL Doctoral Training Centre in Urban Sustainability and Resilience, which is supported by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council. The project is co-funded by CAFOD and the Training Centre. Collaboration and joint funding benefit the student greatly, as she has access to expertise, training and resources at both UCL and CAFOD, receives excellent logistical support in the field, and engages with CAFOD's partners and other NGOs in the Philippines.

Lessons learned

- Meaningful and effective partnerships take time to build, necessitating the allocation of staff time by all organisations involved, and there is a period of sympathetic learning and understanding required before projects can be developed.
- Collaboration between universities and NGOs has to take into account their significant differences, which include ways of working, types and timescales of deliverables, depths of analysis required in projects, and expectations of donors and funding bodies.
- However, the UCL–CAFOD partnership has demonstrated that clear and regular communication of ideas and expectations by both parties ensures that these problems can be overcome to open up exciting new opportunities for research and knowledge exchange.

The partnership is very timely, since such mechanisms of engagement are increasingly advocated nationally and internationally, as exemplified by the 2011 Humanitarian Emergency Response Review and the subsequent response from the Department for International Development.

CASE STUDY 4. Collaboration through academic consultancy: WEDC and UN WASH cluster, Haiti earthquake response 2010

Origins and evolution

On 12th January 2010 in Haiti, an earthquake and subsequent aftershocks caused the loss of more than 220,000 lives, more than 310,000 were injured as well as extensive damage to buildings and infrastructure in Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas. The damage affected over 3 million people, of whom an estimated 1.5 million were made homeless and many of whom resettled in spontaneous camps in areas directly affected by the earthquake. A major humanitarian operation was mounted involving the UN agencies, large international NGOs, new organisations and community groups particularly in Haiti and the US, as well as private sector and military players.

Water and sanitation was a major issue with many organisations facing new challenges in this dense, urban environment. It quickly became clear that existing guidelines, such as those from SPEHRE, were not sufficient to support both experienced and new players desperately trying to meet the sanitation needs of the affected population. The agencies needed to agree their collective priorities and approaches and many needed technical advice and support.

Participants in the inter-agency coordination mechanism for water, sanitation and hygiene - the WASH cluster - agreed that a technical, external expert should be called to assist in this process. They agreed that WEDC and, in particular Bob Reed, would be the most appropriate to help. Bob Reed currently leads WEDC's learning and teaching programmes and specialises in public health engineering. He has long-term experience in humanitarian situations with particular interest in low-cost sanitation and vulnerable people's access to public services.

Results

Bob was contacted to come out to Haiti, funded by DFID, to provide consultant expertise. He was able to leave within a week and spent three weeks in Haiti to produce:

- a consensus between agencies on achievable objectives
- a set of technical options which provided a realistic choice for implementing agencies, including exit strategies
- advice and support for individuals and organisations developing their plans and approaches
- WEDC team provided technical support and back-up to the project
- The university gained publicity with updates on its website and press engagement

Lessons learned

- Bob was able to leave at short notice because the university has developed a culture and working style to enable its staff to respond in emergencies. A team approach meant that teaching and other responsibilities could be handed over or rescheduled.
- Rapid response to humanitarian crises helps build the university reputation as an expert in emergency sanitation as well as to support humanitarian efforts.
- Bob was successful in this role because of the respect the key humanitarian agency players had for him due to their contact with WEDC for training, conferences and learning as well as Bob's role in producing many of the main reference books in the field.
- Bob's own long term experience in humanitarian operations meant he was confident to take on an operational role.
- This consultancy approach, however, means that there is limited follow up. The approach taken in Haiti to revise the technical guidelines maybe very useful to other emergency contexts and clusters. It is not clear if this is being built on by any of those involved.

CASE STUDY 5. Establishing continuing professional education course: Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute (HCRI), University of Manchester and the International Federation for Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Origins and development

The collaboration was set up and driven by individuals in each institution - Mukesh Kapila, the Under-Secretary General for National Society and Knowledge Development in IFRC and Prof. Tony Redmond, Director of HCRI in Manchester. Vital to starting out was the trust between these two individuals who had known each other for over 15 years since working alongside each other in Bosnia. Also vital, was getting their institutions behind the collaboration which, in the university, meant presenting a business plan to the Vice Chancellor and getting senior management support.

Results

HCRI University of Manchester is developing 15 credit modules in Global Health for Red Cross and Red Crescent students to follow - a collaboration between the university and IFRC. The courses will be accredited by the university and under-taken through online learning. Currently in the development stage, the courses will be open to application from early 2012 and teaching will begin later that year.

The university will have access to the Red Cross data, expected to be extremely valuable to research on disaster medicine and HCRI research on the historical development of humanitarianism.

The cost of the course has been set at a level which should cover the basis costs of the university but aims to be affordable for Red Cross participants from around the world, mainly in low-income countries. Any profit generated will be divided between the two organisations.

Lessons learned

- Drawing up of contracts takes time as lawyers from both organisations tried to fit the project within their current working procedures and documentation.
- Individuals enthusiasm needs to be sustained while getting the more dispassionate organisations on board.

- Compromise if often necessary, for example in negotiating costs.
- The scoping and formalisation of such an initiative takes time, about one year in this case.
- Collaboration with humanitarian organisations can be a means for university to fulfil its aims and corporate social responsibilities.

CASE STUDY 6. Humanitarian Futures Programme Exchange as a tool for science-humanitarian policy dialogue: Lessons from a pilot between climate scientists and humanitarian policy makers

Origins and evolution

Humanitarian Futures Programme held an initial seminar on the 16th January 2009 to consider how humanitarian organisations can effectively engage with climate science. The seminar sought to heighten understanding of the climate information required for effective humanitarian planning.

The discussion made clear that, in order to maximise the benefits of climate information and meet the information requirements of users, climate scientists need to know what humanitarian organisations know about existing sources of climate information, what humanitarian organisations want to know, and how they need it conveyed to them. This, in turn, requires that humanitarian organisations understand enough about climate science to be able to ask appropriate questions.

Seminar participants agreed on the need to strengthen the dialogue. There was considerable enthusiasm to pursue the dialogue through a series of pilot exchanges. Five of the climate science bodies – the UK Met Office Hadley Centre, the UCL Environment Institute and the Aon Benfield UCL Hazard Centre, plus Oxford, Exeter and Liverpool Universities - as well as four humanitarian organisations – CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam GB and Save the Children UK - expressed their willingness to participate in the exchange.

The exchanges

In initiating the pilot exchanges, HFP was keen to further its understanding of how humanitarian organisations take on scientific uncertainty, explore how useful a form of dialogue exchange is for strengthening effective engagement between scientists and humanitarian policy makers, and consider the level of scientific expertise required to take on evolving scientific understanding of issues of future vulnerability.

The exchanges were hosted for one to two days in turn, with the host responsible for establishing the agenda for the visit and bringing in colleagues from across relevant departments. Representatives of HFP "shadowed" each of the exchanges in order that the programme could maximise learning from the exchanges and ensure appropriate focusing of HFP follow-up activities.

Results

There were a number of immediate benefits that participants in the exchanges identified from their experience. These included:

- Identification of existing climate products and tools of relevance to humanitarian policy makers.
- Development of a proto-type website pooling climate information and tools useful for humanitarian and development policy makers.
- Increased understanding amongst partner humanitarian organisations of the difficulties and potential of effectively using weather and climate information.
- Increased awareness amongst partner organisations of the different forms of weather and climate information available, and the skills required to use these appropriately.
- Awareness of complementary ongoing climate-related work and tools under development by other humanitarian and development organisations.
- Heightened awareness amongst partner scientists of the level of climate science understanding within partner humanitarian organisations and of the climate science required within humanitarian planning processes.
- Significant interest in undertaking more extended exchange both within Britain and within partner countries.
- Development of joint proposals including support for undertaking two pilot demonstration studies in Kenya and Senegal to assess how climate science can better support humanitarian, disaster risk reduction and development planning both at national level and within flood and drought prone communities. The Climate and Development Knowledge Network finalised support for these demonstration studies in July 2011 and exchange activities have demonstrated fast results in terms of strengthening links at a number of key points within the multi-level dialogue process.

Lessons learned on two-way science exchanges - some practical points

Coordination when people's time and funding is limited - it is difficult to coordinate exchanges between extremely busy people
This difficulty was complicated by the frequent travel demands under which humanitarian policy makers operate, as well as the heavy teaching and research commitments of partnering scientists, who are required to 'account' for time given to each project or client. The financial time constraints under which the pilot was operating added further difficulties, and indeed excluded the opportunity to undertake an initial pilot outside the UK.

Two days is more than enough for initial exchanges
Not only is two days a lot to ask of busy scientists and humanitarian policy makers, it also provides more than enough time for initial presentation and discussion. Time is then required for reflection on learning for each partner, prior to meeting for subsequent discussion and identification of how the exchange might be further developed.

The number of exchange partners multiplies the complexity of identifying appropriate dates
In an effort to promote a multi-disciplinary approach to the dialogue, one pilot sought to engage two humanitarian organisations, a meteorological institution and a number of

university departments and bodies. While engaging a broad spectrum of expertise highlighted the complexity of issues to be considered in taking on climate science, the number of partners constrained the possibility of identifying how best to initiate a longer-term exchange.

THE LEARNING

This section presents reflections from the authors on key themes which emerged from the background work to this guide, offering 'food for thought' for current and future collaboration between academics and humanitarians.

Reflection 1   Creative clashes of culture: Institutional differences and their implications

Reflection 2   Getting in sync: Academic and humanitarian working cycles

Reflection 3   More happy hours please! Creating opportunities for interaction and engagement

Reflection 4   Research is not the only fruit: Multiple roles for academics in humanitarian practice

Reflection 5   Humanitarian collaborative research: Gaps and opportunities

Reflection 6   Enhancing the skills of humanitarians

Institutional differences are real and can make collaboration difficult, but understanding the drivers in each community can help. Combining the strengths of each community; including academics' longer term perspective, macro-level knowledge, theoretical and conceptual frameworks with humanitarian agencies' short-term operational time spans but direct access to communities, real-time experience and realism of what is feasible and needed, can generate real improvements in humanitarian practice, as reflections 1 and 2 demonstrate.

A plea heard time and again in interviews was for more opportunities to interact between academics and humanitarians to help reduce the divide between the sectors and deepen engagement. Looking at a broader range of interactions between practitioners and academics could help support a more exploratory approach to building relationships, trust and innovation over time.

Interviewees also highlighted two major areas with strong collaborative potential. The first are key research and development areas that would benefit from a combined humanitarian –academic approach for 'rigour with realism'. The second is humanitarian education, through both continuing professional education of humanitarian staff, and the academic and practical teaching of future humanitarian practitioners and professionals.
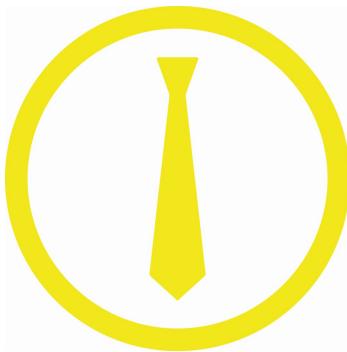
Reflection 1. Creative clashes of culture: Institutional cultures and their implications

"Academics are good because they challenge our conclusions and how we reach them – we need to get more rigorous. But they need to get less perfectionist."

Jeremy Loveless, Deputy Humanitarian Director, Oxfam

Stereotypically, humanitarian and academic communities are presented as two separate worlds, caricatured as the ivory-towered, theoretical and remote academic contrasting with the go-getting, well-intentioned humanitarian worker, variously described as a missionary or a cowboy!

The reality is that many different types of humanitarian and research organisation exist. Lines are blurred between academics, consultants, research practitioners and policy researchers. In background work for this resource, it was found that examples of effective collaboration tended to involve people who had experience in both sectors.

What is different?

Internal diversity
No single culture epitomises all humanitarian agencies. They range from INGOs to UN agencies, and thematic interagency bodies. Many agencies have policy and research units developing methodologies in-house. Differences in perspective between head office and field office, local staff, international staff within the same agency also needed to be taken into account.

Universities and academic departments are equally diverse. Some departments place greater emphasis on applied research while others value theoretical research. Some operate consulting arms that are more like think-tanks. The level of flexibility given to academics to pursue humanitarian research reflects these institutional priorities.

Pace
Humanitarian organisations work at a fast pace. They are organised to respond to fast-moving events. Emergency responses involve rapid context analysis and programming decisions that take days, not months and years. Funding often has to be committed within 72 hours of initiating an emergency response (see REFLECTION 2. Getting in Synch p. 59).

Academic institutions work to longer schedules, including long-term teaching commitments, and so can appear less flexible. Some institutions such as WEDC, CENDEP and LSHTM have been able to establish a culture and mechanisms to enable rapid deployment of their staff to humanitarian crises (see CASE STUDIES 2. p. 43 and 4. p. 47).

Priorities and realities
Humanitarian workers have a deep personal commitment to their work. They are brought together at short notice for intense operations, often facing personal risk in complex situations, in physically and emotionally gruelling settings.

Academics are equally committed to their work, but their priorities are more geared towards ensuring the quality and rigour of analysis before putting it forward as a basis for decision-making. This can clash with the speedy decision-making and operational applicability of knowledge that humanitarian workers need.

Ethical frameworks
Collaboration can be affected by different ethical codes and guidelines which emphasise different priorities.

Humanitarian workers are guided by a range of codes including:
- Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in disaster relief:
  [http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/publication/p1067.htm]
- SPHERE Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response:
  [http://www.sphereproject.org/]
- People in Aid Code: [http://www.peopleinaid.org/code/],

as well as various sector specific guides and organisation's own values and approaches.

Academics are guided by overall codes such as the ESRC framework for ethics [http://www.esrc.ac.uk/_images/Framework_for_Research_Ethics_tcm8-4586.pdf], as well as their own universities' guidelines.

While both are ethical and seek improvements to the well-being of people, they emphasise different routes to different ends, contrasting human rights or people-centred approaches with ethics in research methodologies. How these codes interact should be a key discussion for potential collaborators.

Results and how they are valued
Humanitarian workers are assessed in relation to their immediate results in operations, reviewed through internal and external evaluation processes. The extent to which they delivered a planned programme to schedule and in line with the principles and approach of the organisation will be part of this process, as might their programme's cost effectiveness, team management and community feedback.

Academics are assessed according to departmental criteria framed by the Higher Education Funding Councils' national Research Excellence Framework (REF); the five-yearly assessment on which basis core funding is allocated. University departments' research record is assessed against mostly academic criteria, including publications in academic journals. They will not usually receive points for technical briefings which may be the preference of humanitarian organisations to help in the application of research. However, the recently-introduced impact criterion into the REF 2014 process provides a new impetus for academic/humanitarian collaboration, as academics will be keen to demonstrate the impact of their research as well as produce standard research outputs such as journal

articles and books. The humanitarian sector, with its need for quick results, will be a good demonstration ground for academics within this context.

Common constraints

Time to engage
There is very little time or space in an emergency to engage with a research process. Staff have a great deal of first-hand operational knowledge and are busy applying it. Academics who have had successful collaborations stated that researchers should expect scepticism, even hostility, to initiatives or to their knowledge which may be considered irrelevant to the emergency.

Funding issues
Humanitarian agencies face legal constraints on the uses of their funding. It is committed to specific frontline activities, tied into delivering emergency relief objectives for local communities which have been agreed with funders. There is very little budget for research - only small budgets for consultancy-style studies, needs assessments, evaluations and case studies.

Working to strengths

Despite these constraints, interviewees repeatedly emphasised their perception of the openness of the humanitarian community to learning from theory and frameworks, if they can be 'translated' for practice. Networking and interagency collaboration in the humanitarian system creates opportunities for improving practice through advocacy and new policy and practice development.

Engagement with field offices and operational staff
Collaborative initiatives need to involve field offices to be operationally relevant. It was stated repeatedly that getting to know how humanitarian organisations work and how decisions are made in an emergency is key to effective collaboration. The message from academics with successful collaborations was that there was no substitute for the in-person learning from being involved in a humanitarian emergency effort.

Make bureaucracy an opportunity for leveraging broader support
Universities can be very bureaucratic and senior management support is needed to allow the risk-taking and flexibility to engage in collaborations with humanitarians.

The internal advocacy this requires can be a good opportunity to raise the profile of the collaboration and get institutional buy-in to help to sustain the collaboration or seed future initiatives. In some cases vice-chancellors championed humanitarian collaboration as part of their universities' social corporate responsibility.

Universities often have weak internal coordination. Mapping existing links with humanitarian agencies can generate a support network amongst other academics working on humanitarian issues within the same university.

Compromises to avoid destructive clashes

'Good enough' research

A strong message coming through from humanitarian agencies keen to work with academics is that they be open to consider what type of research is "good enough" to be the basis for operational decisions and that humanitarian and emergency situations might not be suited to very high standards of testing and rigour. Flexible, pragmatic methodologies that are 'good enough' to achieve the objective are more suitable.

Communicate the relevance to operational staff

Academics should expect humanitarian practitioners to want to simplify, pin down specifics and ask for tools, not analysis. Theories and frameworks are useful, but their relevance and how they could be applied needs to be drawn out for field staff. Short, clear reports with no jargon can help take research right into the humanitarian programming cycle, but need to be produced in a matter of months not years.

Reflection 2. Getting in sync: Academic and humanitarian working cycles

'Timeframes can be highly problematic. Research programmes are often designed for 3-5 years and academics normally operate on that timescale. NGOs usually want more immediate outputs. The donor cycle is also short and outcomes need to be seen quickly. For effective collaborative working, these timeframes and funder expectations will have to harmonise, and that presents a huge challenge on both sides that requires some serious strategic action.'

Dr Stephen Edwards, Aon Benfield UCL Hazard Centre

Academic and humanitarian work schedules are markedly different. On the whole, academics work to much longer-term and more fixed work plans, while humanitarian agencies by their nature will have to respond quickly to emergencies and new developments. At least part of their work is determined by a much shorter and less predictable time schedule. Working with the different rhythms and cycles in each type of institution, we were told, is a success factor in effective collaboration.

What is different?

Impact of teaching
University academics are usually committed to teaching specific courses at set times, often set up to 5 years in advance. These timetables have very little flexibility as students are recruited to courses on the basis of modules being taught by specific individuals. Exam timetables and dissertation deadlines are all preset in advance.

Long lead-in times of the academic research cycle
Research studies can take time to develop. There are a number of steps in the process. Figure 1 below presents the academic research cycle as an iterative process. This has both internal and external stages. While it offers many opportunities for collaboration with research and practice partners, the development of a research agenda or study can take weeks, months or even two years or more, depending on the complexity, numbers and geographical location of partners involved. Within the university or research institute, getting managerial approval for the research and complying with ethical procedures are also likely to take time, as they involve formal committees with timetabled meetings. Peer review and academic validation of results can also take time, depending on the selected approach.

Figure 1: Academic research cycle

Identification of research topic

Assesment;
literature, evidence, field visits

Publishing results

Refining research questions

Evaluating & Validating results

Designing & Planning research

Analysing research

Compliance with internal
research governance

Conducting research

Fund raising and managing
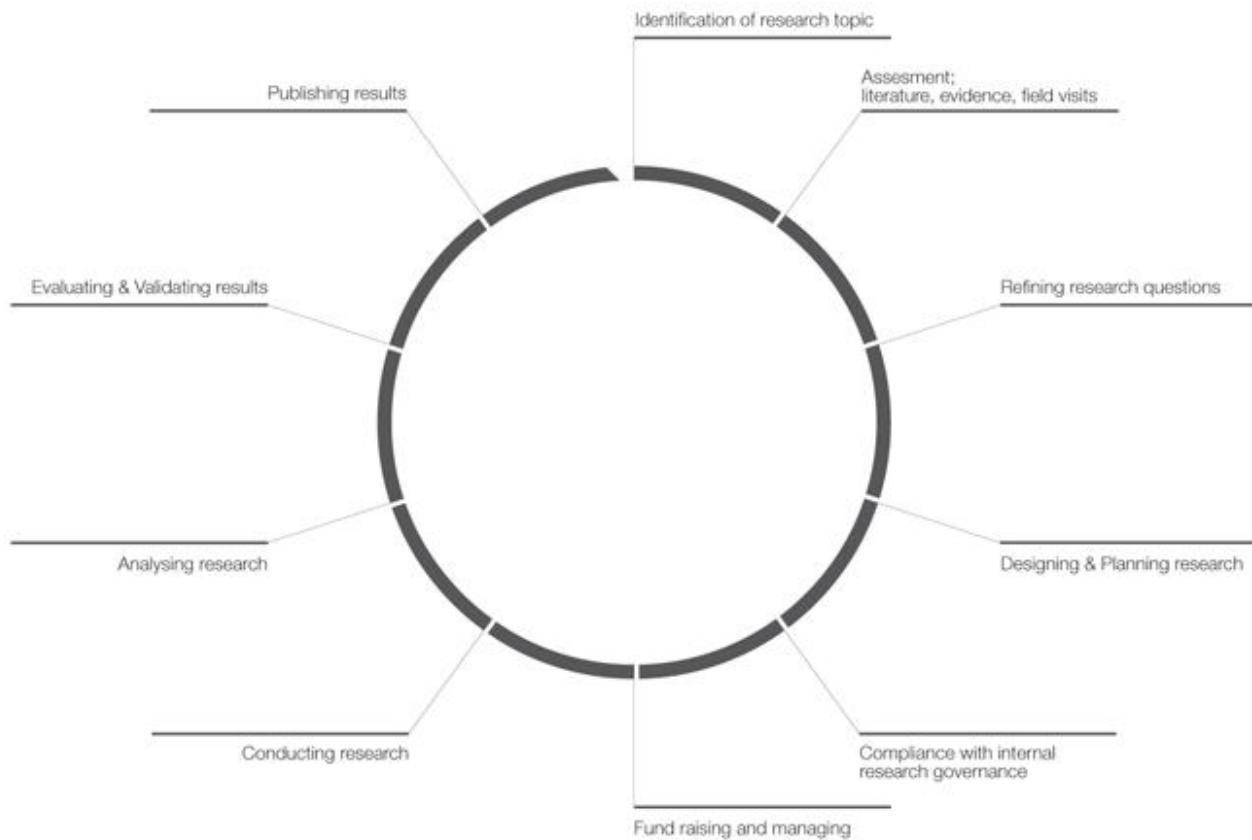
Time to get robust findings
Academic research requires an average of two or more years of data to get a result. Academic researchers can feel uncomfortable drawing conclusions from less. Some may even prefer to wait until research has been published in academic journals. This can take a further two years. These issues are part of why research is sometimes perceived as lagging behind field practice, always analysing 'yesterday's story' rather than today's most pressing issues.

Humanitarian crisis cycle
Each humanitarian crisis is unique but they can be categorised in various ways including:

- their speed - often divided between slow onset and rapid onset disasters
- their primary causes (these are often debated) - for example natural disaster, conflict, climate change or other
- by environment - complex emergencies, urban, rural, local/national/regional, other

Humanitarian programmes and stages of a crisis
Humanitarian operations can also be presented in the form of a cycle with, before a crisis, potential preparedness and mitigation stages, through response to recovery and longer-term

development as part of the post-crisis response. These cycles can be over a decade long or more.

Figure 2: The Crisis cycle
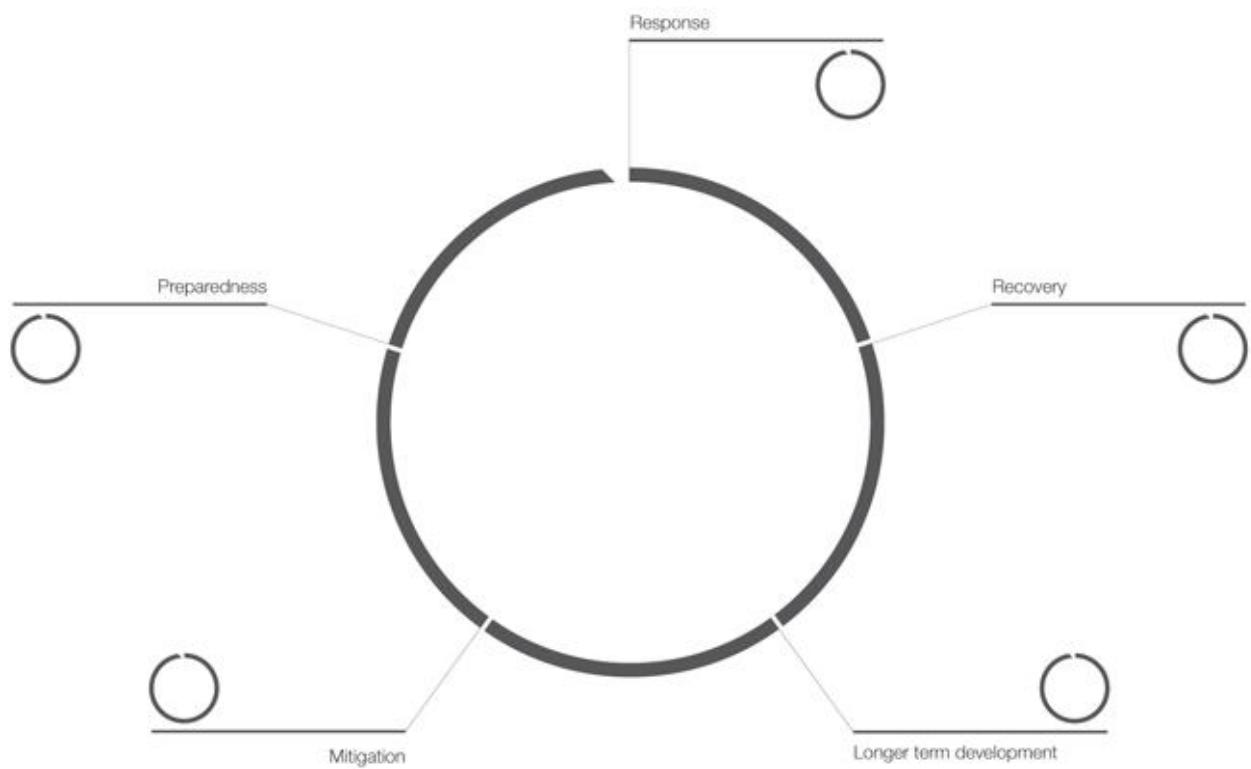
Steps in a humanitarian programme
There can be humanitarian programmes at all these stages of a crisis. Programmes can be very local and relatively small-scale and short-term, or a long-term, multi-country and multi-agency operation.

Each programme also has its own cycle usually involving stages for assessment, programme design, implementation and review. They will also be guided by, and feed into, larger scale processes for sectoral learning, advocacy, policy and standard setting.

Figure 3: Humanitarian programme cycle

Need for response

Within section of Crisis Cycle

Programme design

Regulation, Standard Setting, Quality Assurance, Policy Development

Programme Implementation

Advocacy

Learning at sectoral level

Monitoring, review, & evaluation
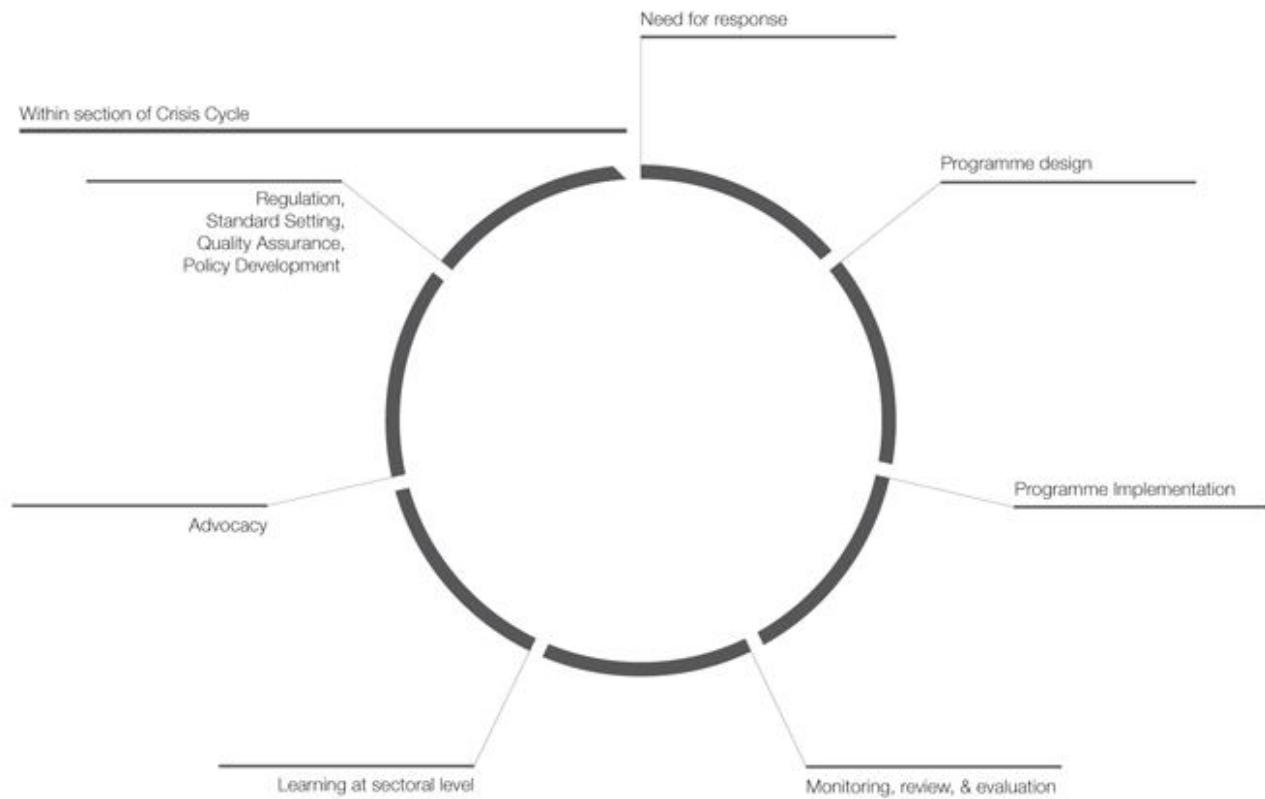
Common constraints

Patterns of employment

Different aims and focus within each community has resulted in different patterns of employment and staff turnover. In humanitarian agencies, many people in the field in operations will be on short-term contracts, maybe drawn from a roster with varying levels of experience. Even among permanent staff there seems to be a much higher turnover rate in humanitarian agencies than in academic institutions, with people moving from one agency to another. This can impact on collaboration with academics needing to build relationships afresh with new staff.

Research approval

University research programmes encompass masters' students' dissertations to large-scale research being carried out by inter-departmental programmes. All research, including collaborative humanitarian research, requires approval from the internal academic quality assurance and ethics committees. These committees usually have a fixed schedule of meetings each year, and require long lead-in times for papers to be circulated and read.

Securing funding
Once research proposals have been approved it can take a year or longer to secure funding. Sometimes there may be a tender or research call that provides a vehicle for collaborative research, but six months can easily elapse between winning the tender and concluding the contractual negotiations.

If funding needs to be raised outside of set calls, then the timing cannot be predicted. For the UEA collaboration with Oxfam, a year went by before funding was secured (see).

Working to strengths

Across all stages of humanitarian crises and programmes there are opportunities for collaboration. Each stage also presents different challenges, partly due to different paces – for example, the rapid decision-making required in assessments and immediate response, compared to the much slower processes building regulation, standards and humanitarian policy.

Collaboration for longer-term learning, standard setting and preparedness is often more easily planned and maybe a better, or at least an easier, fit with academic cycles. To be involved in responses, academics need to be able to respond rapidly and leave responsibilities. Their departments need to be set up to enable this (see when Bob Reed from WEDC was able to leave for Haiti within a week for a three-week academic consultancy on water and sanitation in the earthquake response).

Reflection 3. More happy hours please! Creating opportunities for interaction and engagement

'You need more happy hours at the margins of events where people can find their chemistry. You can help these happen, but it needs to be natural.'

Caetano Dorea, Civil and Water Engineering Department, Universite Laval, Quebec

Interviewees stated the need for more opportunities to have open-ended, exploratory conversations and uncover shared interests that would foster collaboration. People felt that there were few events that brought together groups on an informal basis. Connecting with field staff rather than head office was also highlighted as particularly difficult.

The case for more contact

The 'hard' disciplines of engineering and health seem to benefit from contact, with structured platforms where academics and field staff meet regularly. Platforms such as these include the annual WEDC conference, the University of Carolina (USA) Water Institute yearly conferences [http://waterinstitute.unc.edu/] and the International Water Association Development Conference [http://www.iwahq.org/c2/events.html]. These events and platforms help maintain informal contact between individuals who know each other and meet up to discuss new ideas and trends in the sector regularly. Also, in these disciplines, people move fluidly in the job market between academic and operational agencies; as a result research and development (R&D) for improved humanitarian practice is reasonably integrated. These connections are reflected in a large number of successful examples of collaboration on research, teaching and operations in water and sanitation, engineering and health.

Building connections and networks
The challenges that emerged are: first, to get new people to widen well-established networks; and second, to get new networks going in those academic disciplines and areas of humanitarian practice where connections are limited and knowledge exchange activities struggle to find funding.

A wide range of academic disciplines have the potential to contribute to the humanitarian effort, but opportunities to explore and draw out the connections are just not there. Potential areas highlighted for developing further networks with humanitarian practice and where more interaction with academics would be welcome were:

- Management
- Social care and psychology
- Emergency shelter

Ways to engage and interact

Most of the collaborations researched came about through chance individual connections, conversations where people found they had 'chemistry' and complementary interests. But there were many suggestions for how these moments can be made more frequent and more common; how interactions can be encouraged between diverse groups of people who do not normally get together. These included:

In-house researchers in humanitarian agencies - These posts can be effective bridges and catalysts to collaboration. For example, Christian Aid welcomed the funding from DFID for a collaborative project on building disaster resilient communities that enabled the recruitment of such an in-house academic researcher. This led to further collaboration on the topic with Plan International and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). Communication departments and others with networking responsibilities can also help to extend engagement and uptake of research within agencies and universities.

Cross sector invitations - Academics invited into agency processes can bring external perspectives, updates on new developments in the sector and summaries of key debates. Examples of academic inputs to NGOs planning and strategy processes, and also university departments and research institutes involving humanitarian practitioners in developing their research agendas, were highlighted.

Joint seminar series - Seminar-type events and shared series have been useful for enabling more informal contact, especially the 'margins' at receptions and other social events.

Seminar series can range from the informal, such as MSF pub-based discussion evenings in London which have panels involving academics, humanitarian workers and others to discuss, debate and reflect on current issues, to more formal events on specific themes.

These can be jointly run. For instance, ESRC funding enabled IDS, Practical Action and others to run a series on risk reduction and sustainable livelihoods. The co-organisers reported it as being useful both for their academic and operational learning, but also for the cross-sectoral relationships it sparked.

Despite little financial benefit, events are worth doing, co-organisers say, because they provide a focus for learning and create connections. Some seminar series will involve 4-5 seminars in different parts of the country, or even the world. These create a forum for partnership at the sectoral level and also spaces from which operational partnerships and collaboration may evolve.

Staff exchanges, short courses and summer schools - These events provide a good space for exploratory conversations, if they are financially accessible for humanitarian staff and are also aimed at academics. For example, World Vision's Summer School was the venue where Ben Emmens (People in Aid) and Michael Dickmann (Cranfield School of Management) met by chance and found a common interest in leadership in the humanitarian sector. This led to a funded collaborative project.

Another example is from the Humanitarian Futures Programme, which piloted a series of exchanges between climate scientists and humanitarian workers from key agencies. This pilot has now been extended and demonstration studies of the approach are now being undertaken in Kenya and Senegal.

Email lists and online forums - many online forums on technical issues in the humanitarian sector where field staff exchange knowledge and information, for example http://watersanitationhygiene.org/.

Incentives for collaboration - Drawing on ideas from industry-academic collaboration, there were suggestions for funding to stimulate collaboration. Seed funding could cover 'first date" type of development interaction, with small grants of £1000 for travel and meetings. This could then be leveraged into funding for a bigger project proposal. A key lesson from industry partnerships is the need to provide funding for the implementation or commercialisation of the new operational approach.

Brokering and networking initiatives – There are a number of humanitarian membership and network initiatives that offer platforms for interaction and collaborative learning for their members and stakeholders. Some examples include:

- People in Aid focuses on generating learning on leadership, management and other human resource issues in the humanitarian sector: http://www.peopleinaid.org/
- Emergency Capacity Building Project, focusing on key issues for improving humanitarian response: http://www.ecbproject.org/
- Humanitarian Practice Network supports knowledge and experience-sharing amongst practitioners: http://www.odihpn.org/
- ELRHA: www.elrha.org

Reflection 4. Research is not the only fruit: Multiple roles for academics in humanitarian practice

"We need to understand how to create an innovative environment... how to generate an environment in which people trust and say what they think, to develop a better understanding of what the problem is, combined with a focus on wanting better decision-making in the field."

Lars Peter Nissen, Director, ACAPS

Academics' potential contribution to humanitarian practice often hinges on their role as researchers. While research is obviously a clear area for collaboration, a fully-fledged collaborative research project is not the only option for involving an academic. Interviewees and background research suggested other opportunities.

What are the roles?

Roper (Roper, L. (2002), *Achieving successful academic-practitioner research collaborations* in Development in Practice, Volume 12) outlines five models for researcher engagement with practice which can be applied to academics' relationship with humanitarian practice.[1]

Expert consultant model - the academic is contracted to fulfil specific terms of reference and create a solution to a particular problem as outlined by the humanitarian agency. Academics can be "external experts" to bring in another perspective at a workshop, planning or strategy process for humanitarian agencies. A number of NGOs reported inviting in relevant academics to contribute to their strategic planning processes.

Some staff in humanitarian agencies suggested that bringing in academics with a grounding in field reality can be helpful at the beginning of an emergency to provide a more objective, impartial viewpoint and expertise for assessments, programme design and in decision-making.

Expert trainer model - the academic is contracted to provide specific training in either operational or research approaches to field staff.

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[1] Roper, L. (2002), *Achieving successful academic-practitioner research collaborations in Development in Practice*, Volume 12 http://www.developmentinpractice.org/journals/achieving-successful-academic-practitioner-research-collaborations

Joint learning model - the academic joins humanitarian agencies to share learning and/or to learn together through processes including, but not confined to, research. Joint seminars, staff exchanges and collaborative research with universities and agencies as equal partners are examples of this.

Best practice model - the academic carries out research to help establish best or good practice in certain approaches and develop guidelines for humanitarian practitioners.

Theory development model - the academic seeks collaboration with humanitarian agencies as part of their process to develop new theories and frameworks and to field test these.

In addition to these models, humanitarian agencies suggested a number of other roles for academics:

Influence - Humanitarian agencies recommended that academics capitalise on their long term view and take on more of a role in influencing policy. While practitioners finish their contracts and move onto a new job, academics have time (and a job) to be able to write up lessons, engage with global policy circles and take forward, together with agencies, learning from field experiences.

Self-evaluation - Humanitarian workers recommended that for academics to be useful they need to experience the reality of how decisions are made. Academics should use the experience to evaluate if and why their papers, tools, resources are used or not. They should use a field experience to **"evaluate themselves not us" (humanitarian agency worker).**

Support the application of knowledge - Academics can play a role in translating their knowledge into operational guidance and accessible briefings. They need to provide support to humanitarian staff to draw out the implications of their research for operations. Humanitarian agency workers emphasised time and again their limited time, and for some appetite, to read outputs from academic institutions. They often find them too wordy, abstract and therefore irrelevant.

Making use of the roles for humanitarian practice

Interviewees offered many examples of how humanitarian agencies and academics had made use of these roles. Additional benefits were the opportunity to explore working with a potential partner, and bringing weight and credibility to agency practice.

- **Expert consultant** Bob Reed from WEDC was brought in to help develop new water, sanitation and hygiene standards in Haiti (see **CASE STUDY 4. p. 47**).
- **Expert trainer:** WEDC provides regular water and sanitation courses for MSF.
- **Joint learning:** the Humanitarian Futures programme piloted two-way staff exchanges between scientific research organisations and NGOs, which later developed into a series of demonstration studies to develop dialogue approaches which enable climate science to better support humanitarian planning (see **CASE STUDY 6. p. 51**).
- **Best practice model:** Helpage International has contracted an expert to help with its work to develop nutrition guidelines for older people in humanitarian emergencies.

- **Theory and framework development:** ECB - OXFAM/UEA collaboration on impact assessment providing an opportunity to test a people-centred approach (see).

Reflection 5. Humanitarian collaborative research: gaps and opportunities

"The shelter sector offers many opportunities for collaboration; there is not as much R&D as there is in other humanitarian areas. Nobody is knocking down our door, but we would love to see more studies in the sector, more PhDs, more academic knowledge that would give the evidence-base for what we are doing."

Lizzie Babister, Senior Specialist, Emergency Shelter and Reconstruction, CARE

In interviews, academics and humanitarian agency workers suggested a number of areas that might be fruitful for collaborative research in the future. While the background work for this resource was not intended to produce a research agenda these suggestions are a useful input to discussion on humanitarian research collaboration.

 Suggestions came from humanitarian agencies in particular and reflect:

- areas that humanitarian agencies themselves find difficult to research
- perceived current and future needs for humanitarian operations and agencies
- questions which would benefit from blending the approaches and resources of both humanitarian and academic communities

The suggestions fall into five groups:

Sector specific - Appropriate shelter options and working in urban environments and recovery were raised in interviews as areas where the coming together of the experiences, skills and expertise of both groups could make progress in dealing with the challenges humanitarian operations are facing now and in the future.

Scenario-building and macro-level picture - Research and collaborative work to consider the implications for humanitarian work of major global changes, such as the shift in power to the east or the rise of global Islamic relief agencies and associated values. Activities, such as scenario modelling, could take advantage of some in academia's skills looking at long-term trends and evidence, developing and applying frameworks, and looking at the big picture rather than fixing a micro-problem.

Effectiveness in humanitarian work - Interviewees highlighted a number of issues around impact assessment, value for money and measuring success that would benefit from research-practice collaboration.

Longitudinal studies - This came up often as a key perceived expertise of the academic world. Linked often to the effectiveness debates, suggestions were for rigorous studies to assess the impact of various humanitarian responses by taking into account more effectively, long term positive and negative results. These were highlighted as a basis for:

- building the knowledge of what is an appropriate response to humanitarian crises
- informing the value-for-money debates that are currently prominent but based on limited information

Management and effectiveness in humanitarian organisations - There is growing interest in what is appropriate and effective decision making, leadership and management in humanitarian organisations. There has been limited research into what works in terms of managing humanitarian organisations and their particular characteristics for maximum impact.

There are particular features in humanitarian organisations and their operations that require focused, tailored research. These include a workforce which maybe principally voluntary and/or motivated by a complex set of values, working in challenging situations and developing organisational and operational relationships across sectors to include military, political, humanitarian and technical groups.

In the past, humanitarian managers may have followed MBAs and other courses not often tailored specifically to the sector. Those coming from private sector backgrounds, notably into senior management roles, have brought expertise and experience and looked at ways to adapt that to humanitarian agencies. But interviewees said that humanitarian-specific management research would make a direct contribution to the effectiveness of humanitarian responses, learning and innovation.
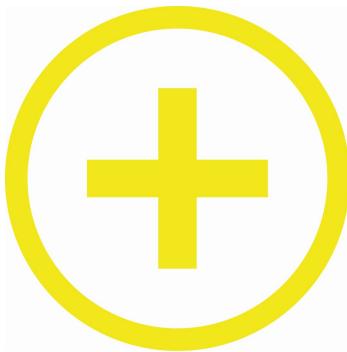
Reflection 6. Enhancing the skills of humanitarians today and tomorrow

"NGOs need to take a more institutional approach to building the next generation of humanitarian workers and see universities and themselves as partners in that process."

Professor Kevin Davies, Course Director, MSc Disaster Healthcare, University of Glamorgan

Training and education is an area where many interviewees highlighted the potential for collaboration between academic and humanitarian organisations. There are many examples of successful collaboration in this area:

- Loughborough University's WEDC provides continuing education courses for MSF employees who work on water and sanitation.
- The University of Manchester, Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute and IFRC are collaborating to develop continuing education in Global Health for Red Cross and Red Crescent Society healthcare workers around the world.
- A number of post-graduate courses run by institutions such as UCL, Cranfield, the University of Glamorgan and other universities from which MSc students gain valuable field experience and opportunities for research in collaboration with humanitarian agencies.
- Oxfam collaborates with WEDC, LSHTM, University of Surrey, Université Laval and Cranfield on MSc student placements in public health.
- CENDEP collaboration with CARE on MSc student case studies in emergency shelter, supported by ELRHA.

Growing collaboration in humanitarian education and continuing professional education (CPE)

Many of the collaborations on humanitarian education are based on personal links. They have been difficult to institutionalise, not due to a lack of willingness, but due to turnover of staff in agencies and the lack of time to plan for small studies to make them useful to the agency.

Nevertheless, the examples that people shared highlighted a lot of gains from hosting

student placements which suggest a potential for growth in this area. These included:

- Practical experience of working in the field or in an agency enhances students' professional as well as academic humanitarian education.
- Practical experience for post-graduate students enhances their value to the humanitarian sector as future employees.
- Agencies get a small project completed for free on a topic that is of relevance to their operations.
- Students can bring potentially valuable insights of immediate applicability. For example, a Glamorgan student was at a feeding station with Concern in West Africa and conducted a small project on calorific values per day for adolescents, taking into account additional factors, such as the distance walked to the feeding station and pregnancy. The findings were taken up and influenced Concern's practice.
- In CPE, summer schools can provide a neutral place to meet and learn from field personnel from other sectors, such as NGOs and the military.

Challenges

Collaboration in education is not without its challenges. These include:

- Staff turnover in NGOs means that when there is a change, collaborative arrangements can be dropped
- Agreeing a cost for CPE courses that is affordable for agencies but covers university costs
- MSc dissertations can be unpredictable and may not be geared to NGO audiences, requiring additional editorial input or budget
- Successful placements hinge a lot on personalities and individuals' attitudes

Approaches to getting the most out of humanitarian education collaboration

Experiences that were shared, from both universities and agencies, suggested a number of approaches that can help to maximise the benefits. These include:

Written expectations - These should capture the expectations of both the host NGO and the student. Many tutors, as some from UCL and Glamorgan confirmed, consider it part of their responsibility to be involved in this process.

There should be clarity about what the NGO is offering the student in terms of staff time, access to data, internet access, logistics, accommodation, and others. An outline of the project and agreement on what is feasible in time is also helpful.

Practical arrangements - Responsibilities for insurance, costs, authority to cover, etc., should be documented.

Buy-in from senior management - Both parties should ensure that there is support from the academic institution's senior management, including being clear that the university cannot charge for student placements or academic supervision for students' field projects.

Realism about the usefulness to operations - While there is potential for student projects to be extremely useful to operations, NGOs should provide broad themes but not specific

questions to the student. Universities and internal advocates in NGOs should avoid over-selling the value of internship research to the NGO to their staff, as the quality may vary.

Selection interviews - due to the importance of compatibility with field teams for a successful student placement, it is useful for the NGO to consider a selection interview. Looking for attributes of resilience, self-motivation, ability to overcome obstacles, etc. can help both the student and the NGO.

Field preparation - Even with a selection interview, the university has a responsibility to prepare inexperienced students for the reality of the field (if field-based) and try to ensure their willingness to adapt to reality. Agencies should bear in mind many of the students will have limited experience, high ideals but maybe unrealistic expectations of the field.