

GLOBAL PRIORITISATION EXERCISE (GPE) FOR HUMANITARIAN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION REGIONAL CONSULTATION:

# Latin America and the Caribbean



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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AP	Affected People
CVA	Cash and Voucher Assistance
ERP	Emergency Response Plan
GPE	Global Prioritisation Exercise
R&I	Research and Innovation
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IFI	International Financial Institution
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
KII	Key Informant Interview
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual Non-Governmental Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NGO NTCA	Non-Governmental Organisation  Northern Triangle of Central America
NGO NTCA ODA	Non-Governmental Organisation  Northern Triangle of Central America  Official Development Assistance
NGO NTCA ODA OSV	Non-Governmental Organisation  Northern Triangle of Central America  Official Development Assistance  Other Situations of Violence
NGO NTCA ODA OSV PWD	Non-Governmental Organisation  Northern Triangle of Central America  Official Development Assistance  Other Situations of Violence  People with Disabilities
NGO NTCA ODA OSV PWD R&I	Non-Governmental Organisation  Northern Triangle of Central America  Official Development Assistance  Other Situations of Violence  People with Disabilities  Research and Innovation
NGO NTCA ODA OSV PWD R&I SGBV	Non-Governmental Organisation  Northern Triangle of Central America  Official Development Assistance  Other Situations of Violence  People with Disabilities  Research and Innovation  Sexual and Gender-based Violence
NGO NTCA ODA OSV PWD R&I SGBV UN	Non-Governmental Organisation  Northern Triangle of Central America  Official Development Assistance  Other Situations of Violence  People with Disabilities  Research and Innovation  Sexual and Gender-based Violence  United Nations

#### **FOREWORD**

In a world with mounting and complex humanitarian challenges, research and innovation (R&I) can play a pivotal role in identifying, prioritising and addressing humanitarian needs.

The role of R&I at multiple – global, regional, national and local – levels is crucial to developing culturally and contextually appropriate responses to humanitarian crises.

The Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region is grappling with numerous humanitarian crises against a background of broader longstanding development challenges. The region demonstrates capacities and coordination mechanisms between government, civil society and the international system that are unique, and from which invaluable learning can be gathered that should drive action in the region but that can also shape the global conversation on how our global humanitarian research and innovation (HRI) ecosystem can evolve.

Elrha's Global Prioritisation Exercise (GPE) for HRI is a global research and consultation effort that seeks to improve outcomes for people affected by crises by amplifying the impact of investments into R&I. The process aims to build an improved understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the global HRI system and deepen our understanding of priorities at all levels.

As part of the GPE for HRI, we have gained invaluable insights through a series of stakeholder interviews conducted across six geographic regions and three national settings. These consultations share the perceptions of regional and national humanitarian actors, and shed light on priority topics and areas that need HRI attention. This exercise extends further, delving into how the HRI system functions (and occasionally dysfunctions) in complex environments. It also explores how the system can be improved.

Humanitarian crises are varied and so are the landscapes they unfold in. The scale, type, magnitude, drivers and impacts of these crises vary within and between geographic regions, and as such, so do the associated areas requiring HRI attention. The views of regional and national actors are, therefore, important to improve the way the humanitarian ecosystem functions and how the system in turn responds. This consultation examines the differing perspectives of those international and national actors engaged within LAC's HRI context.

This work is also fundamental to informing priority-setting processes to optimally guide R&I investment, improving coordination and donor funding allocations. Key recommendations, based on the challenges and learning reported, to improve the regional R&I ecosystem are proposed at national, regional, global and donor levels. By valuing regional voices, these consultations aim to ensure that regional perspectives inform and influence the global HRI agenda.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

#### Global Prioritisation Exercise (GPE) Regional and National Consultations Consortium

The Global Prioritisation Exercise (GPE) Regional and National Consultations Consortium is a multiinstitutional collaboration led by the Alfred Deakin Institute, Deakin University and Marian Abouzeid is the Project Director.

The Consortium is supported by Chaza Akik as Qualitative Research Lead. Shahram Akbarzadeh is Data Custodian. The Consortium acknowledges the contributions of the Faculty of Health Sciences, American University of Beirut, to the initial conceptualisation of this work.

Consortium partner organisations are: Deakin University (Australia), All India Disaster Mitigation Institute / AIDMI (India), Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network / EMPHNET (Jordan), Indika Foundation (Indonesia), Passion Africa (Kenya), University of São Paulo (Brazil) and World Vision International West and Central Africa Regional Office (Senegal).

The GPE is commissioned by Elrha and funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

#### **GPE Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Consultation**

This regional consultation for Latin America and the Caribbean was undertaken by the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of São Paulo, and the Alfred Deakin Institute, Deakin University, and was led by Camila Braga and Marian Abouzeid. Data collection was undertaken by Camila Braga and Gordon Finkbeiner, data transcription and translation were undertaken by Marina Bagatini, data analysis was undertaken by Chaza Akik, Camila Braga, Marian Abouzeid, Zeinab El Dirani, and Gordon Finkbeiner. This report was written by Camila Braga, Marian Abouzeid, Chaza Akik, and Gordon Finkbeiner. Background literature review was undertaken by Vanessa Matijascic, Marina Bagatini and Camila Braga.

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region is grappling with multiple humanitarian crises against a background of longstanding development challenges. Issues confronting the region include political instability, internal displacement and cross-border migration, armed conflict, frequent natural disasters, extreme poverty and food insecurity, widespread gang violence, fragile healthcare systems, and the impacts of climate change.

Regional cooperation is essential to address these challenges effectively. Research and innovation (R&I) can help forecast and characterise humanitarian crises, understand the scale, distribution and types of needs arising, inform humanitarian action and monitor progress. The ultimate objective of humanitarian R&I (HRI) is to help improve the ways in which the humanitarian sector mitigates and responds to crises and serves populations in need. In the LAC region, the humanitarian-development nexus is particularly relevant, as some of the main humanitarian challenges are chronic rather than emergent. Hence, by helping address both acute issues and the underlying social development issues, R&I in the region could also assist in improving resilience of populations, systems and infrastructures and help reduce the humanitarian burden generated by acute crisis events.

R&I capacities vary throughout the LAC region, with some countries such as Brazil, Mexico, and Chile having considerably more economic, technical and institutional resources to support R&I activity than others such as Peru, Ecuador, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. Many countries, particularly those in Central America and the Caribbean, and those deeply immersed in humanitarian emergencies such as Haiti, have lacked adequate resources to invest in R&I. Generally, R&I has been considerably marginalised in LAC's humanitarian sector, as regional structures are geared towards short-term operational activity and implementation of humanitarian response. The COVID-19 pandemic served to highlight and exacerbate structural inequalities within the region, as well as the difficulties in the adaptation of large entrenched bureaucracies within the health and humanitarian sectors.

This LAC regional consultation, one of a series for Elrha's landmark Global Prioritisation Exercise (GPE) for HRI, examines the perspectives of international and national actors engaged within the regional HRI space. It aims to understand how the HRI ecosystem functions in the region, how decisions are made, who has a seat at the priority-setting table, and to glean participant perspectives of topics requiring additional R&I attention.

#### **METHODS**

Key informant interviews were conducted with 17 stakeholders in the LAC region, the majority of whom had over ten years' experience in the sector. Participants were based at a range of organisation types, including international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) (n=8), national / local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (n=3), academic institutions (n=2), governmental / inter-governmental bodies (n=2), UN agencies (n=2), and multilateral institutions (n=1). One participant had dual affiliations. Participants were based in 11 countries in the region (Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela), and one participant was based outside LAC but has a focus on the region. Seven participants identified as having donor / funding functions. The majority of participants indicated that their organisations were involved in both HRI.

Interviews were offered in English, Spanish or Portuguese. All interviews were conducted remotely, 13 in English and four in Spanish. Interviews were transcribed, translated into English when required, and analysed thematically using NVivo software.

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

#### **Roles for R&I**

Several participants acknowledged the important role of R&I during humanitarian crises but indicated that it is **not feasible** to conduct research **during the acute phase of a humanitarian crisis**. Most participants agreed that operational response is the priority and R&I comes later in the form of monitoring and evaluation, or through lessons learnt. Participants also indicated that in LAC there has been little space for innovation.

The reported **roles for R&I during humanitarian crises** include: to inform disaster preparedness and prevention strategies, to inform humanitarian response and action by designing and implementing evidence-based interventions, adapting potential solutions to new contexts, understanding the situation, guaranteeing that response will meet changes in context, informing anticipatory action, and supporting project monitoring and evaluation. Other less cited roles include to inform advocacy and to document and bear witness to evolving humanitarian situations.

#### **Topics Requiring Additional R&I Attention**

Key **topics identified as requiring R&I attention** included how the humanitarian system operates, migration and displacement, protection, violence and organised crime, and climate change and planetary health. Other themes included the humanitarian-development nexus, the HRI system and a range of cluster-based thematic areas. Notably, participants reported on the need for a range of specific **innovations in how the humanitarian system operates**, including the need for new technologies for data collection and analysis, improved materials and approaches to reduce the sector's environmental and social impact, and better communication mechanisms or devices to assist beneficiaries, and to support information dissemination to relevant stakeholders.

#### **Investment into R&I**

Most participants perceived a **mismatch in where investments** into R&I are made and the topics reported as requiring additional attention, and this was attributed to different **donor priorities**, **funding constraints** (including insufficient funding and limitations of funding mechanisms), **visibility of an issue** and **political sensitivity** influencing willingness of R&I stakeholders to address them, and institutional **limitations in communicating gaps and needs to donors** so that they can allocate funding accordingly.

#### **Regional and National Engagement**

There were mixed views of the extent and adequacy of the **engagement of regional actors** with R&I, with responses evenly split between positive and limited. Most participants who reported on **national actor engagement** seemed to agree that national stakeholders are not well engaged, although engagement was reported to differ depending on the type of actor considered (state, NGO, academia, private sector, etc) and the national setting. Notably, it was reported that there is considerable variation in engagement of states within the region, with some such as Mexico and Brazil much more engaged in R&I than others.

Many participants reported that **regional engagement mechanisms were lacking**, citing the main **barriers** being the limited political interest and collaborations between state and regional actors, unclear role delineation, strained relationships with the states, vested interests, financing and timeliness of engagement, and perceptions of value add and usefulness of regional engagement, given different types of crises and needs at the national versus regional level. Two issues were most cited by participants as requiring additional collaboration and coordination between regional and national stakeholders, namely migration and forced displacement, and climate change.

#### **R&I Priority-setting Processes**

Participants were asked to describe R&I priority-setting processes within their organisation, and several reported that there is **no formal prioritisation exercise** when setting R&I priorities. Others described a **range of informal approaches and considerations**, including the extent to which topics meet a perceived need or gap; aligns with the priorities set by the institution's headquarters; is based on existing organisational strategy; if it is an emerging need in other countries in the region; aligns with previous work of the institution; meets implementing partners' predisposed ideologies; based on calls for proposals from field partners; based on the interests of senior personnel within the organisation; based on organisational assessment of likely cost, benefit, and impact of the work; or is based on researcher and organisational capacity to undertake the work.

**Stakeholders reported to be involved in determining R&I priorities** include governments at national and subnational levels; communities (including formal and informal leaderships); senior personnel within academic and humanitarian organisations, NGOs, donors and technical unities. **Groups reportedly missing from the priority-setting** included local communities and specific population groups, including ethnic groups, indigenous and populations of African

descent, people with special needs, women, the elderly, LGBTQIA+ communities, prisoners and detainees, youth and populations affected by violence, as well as universities, humanitarian organisation country offices, refugees and migrant-based organisations, and other local actors. Notably, as participants were reflecting on processes and practices within the diverse organisations they represent, some stakeholder groups such as academics and communities were reported to be involved with priority-setting by some participants but described as excluded from the process by others.

#### **Responsiveness of the R&I System to Emerging Issues**

Main factors reported as **enabling timely R&I responsiveness** were the availability of expertise and human resources; the recognition of value add and necessity of innovation to inform action / new approaches; funding availability for R&I; coordination between relevant stakeholders regarding information flows; government willingness to pilot new approaches; established institutional mechanisms and R&I teams embedded within operational teams to rapidly deploy; preparedness and the adoption of an anticipatory approach to pre-empt and facilitate rapid R&I engagement. Other factors, such as the presence of strong academic and private sectors were also considered.

Main factors reported as **impeding timely R&I responsiveness** include funding constraints; short funding cycles; short project cycles; and insufficient human resources and technical expertise; the prioritisation of life saving operational activity over R&I; a lack of will and interest of humanitarian organisations in R&I; national institutional bureaucracies; limited national capacities and data availability; poor coordination and collaboration to discuss emerging needs and communicate these needs with R&I personnel; no adoption of an anticipatory approach or lack of preparedness; and limited knowledge of the operational context.

#### **Donors and Decision-making**

Among participants who identified as being donors or having some form of funding function, reported **barriers to investment in R&I** included a range of funding constraints (including limited availability of funding, short project cycles, bureaucracy and administrative barriers; and the need to prioritise resources for operational activity over R&I), and funding being influenced by political priorities, state interests and geopolitical considerations.

**Enablers for R&I investment** include the visibility of the R&I need due to media and international attention; the reputation of the recipient organisation; whether the donor properly communicates their expectations; good research capacity within organisations; sufficient and skilled workforce; as well as an easy of access, in term of logistics, considering the regional well-developed infrastructure that facilitates access to research sites.

**Formal coordination mechanisms for R&I** reportedly do not exist amongst regional donor stakeholders and, frequently, coordination happens through informal channels and mechanisms.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the key findings from this consultation, the following recommendations are proposed:



#### **Research and innovation**

- Concerted efforts are required to improve awareness among all relevant stakeholder groups
  of the potential contributions of R&I to informing and improving humanitarian action.
  Improved awareness of the role of R&I will also facilitate the routine integration of R&I into
  humanitarian activity and across all phases of a crisis.
- R&I priorities should be based on local needs and should be locally determined. An inclusive, transparent formal priority-setting exercise may help inform the development of a regional humanitarian R&I agenda.



#### **Funding**

- Funding for R&I should be flexible and allocated independent of operational funding.
- Donors should consider longer funding and project cycles.



#### **Improved collaboration and coordination**

- Break down silos and encourage collaborative engagement between operational organisations, government, academia, and the private sector, to both support production of meaningful R&I and facilitate knowledge translation into useful humanitarian policy and practice; and improve cross-border collaborations between regional actors.
- Coordination forums involving multi-sectoral stakeholders should be established in order to support R&I production, information dissemination, learning and improved collaboration.
- Ways to engage the private sector in HRI should be explored.
- Donor coordination should be supported through formalised platforms.

## SECTION 1 BACKGROUND

#### **SECTION 1: BACKGROUND**

## WHY A GLOBAL PRIORITISATION EXERCISE (GPE) FOR HUMANITARIAN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (HRI)?

Globally, the number of people affected by humanitarian crises and in need of humanitarian assistance and protection are at unprecedented levels: in 2021, there were an estimated 306 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, an increase of 90.4 million since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost 74% of those in need live in protracted crisis settings. Over 86.3 million people are forcibly displaced. A total of 160.4 million people are food insecure. Notably, the scale, type, magnitude, drivers and impacts of humanitarian crises vary within and between geographic regions across the globe.

Research can help forecast and characterise humanitarian crises, understand the scale, distribution and types of needs arising, inform humanitarian action and monitor progress. Research has a crucial role to play in helping improve the ways in which the humanitarian sector mitigates and responds to crises and serves populations in need.

Innovation can play a critical role in humanitarian crises by providing new and more effective solutions to the complex problems that arise during such emergencies. Strategic investments in research and innovation (R&I) and appropriate utilisation and uptake of R&I findings can help improve the way the humanitarian sector uses evidence and identifies and scales solutions and, in turn, contribute to improving the efficiency of the humanitarian response.

Despite the importance of R&I in the humanitarian space, the allocation of resources and the focus of HRI are not equitable. Preliminary results from the 2021/22 Global Prioritisation Exercise Mapping Report,<sup>2</sup> which captured humanitarian literature published during the period January 2017 to June 2021, indicate that there has been a steady increase in the number of HRI publications over the five-year period, but there are considerable issues of inequities of attention, with some crises, population subgroups and geographic areas receiving disproportionately more R&I attention than others. Additionally, R&I actors and institutions remain heavily Global North-based, and institutions in the Global North continue to receive the largest share of R&I funding.<sup>3</sup>

Differential attention matters: what gets measured gets discussed, and what gets discussed gets addressed. Therefore, it is imperative to understand how the humanitarian R&I ecosystem is structured and functions, including understanding where and to whom R&I funding is directed, how R&I priorities are set, who is involved in these decision-making processes and how, if at all, coordination mechanisms operate. Reflecting the variable nature and impact of crises across the globe, understanding how humanitarian R&I priorities and topics requiring attention vary by geographic region is also crucial to better inform investment decisions and, ultimately, help improve evidence-driven and efficient humanitarian action.

#### **ABOUT THE GPE**

The GPE for HRI is a landmark multi-pronged initiative that seeks to improve outcomes for people affected by humanitarian crises by characterising the existing HRI landscape (including thematic and crisis focus areas, funding, actor engagement, and impact of investments), and identifying priorities for future investment. Commissioned by Elrha, the GPE comprises two distinct research phases:

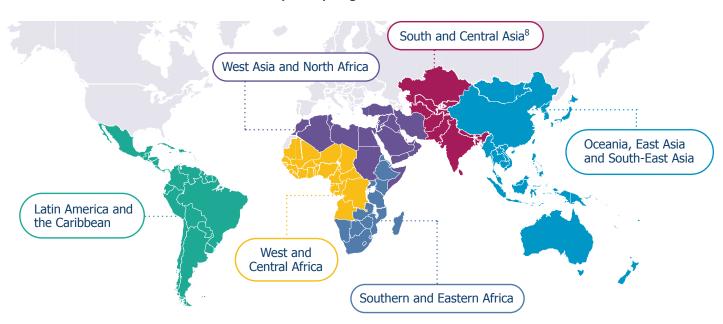


Global mapping of HRI outputs and investments: detailed mapping of HRI actors, investments and thematic and crisis focus areas over the period January 2017 to June 2021,<sup>4</sup> and financial flow analysis tracking HRI funding allocations from a range of donor types over this period.<sup>5</sup> This builds upon the previous mapping of research, innovation and outputs undertaken in 2017 for the period January 2016 to April 2017.<sup>6</sup>



Stakeholder consultations: a series of consultations with diverse stakeholder groups operating at each of the global, regional, national and community levels, and exploring a range of issues regarding R&I investments, needs and priority-setting, and decision-making processes.

This report is one of a series for the regional and national consultations. Led by Deakin University (Australia) in collaboration with partners in each region, the regional consultations have explored stakeholder perspectives on the HRI ecosystem's geographic regions, demarcated according to the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) Regional Classifications:<sup>7</sup>



Three national consultations have also been conducted:



The overarching aim of the regional and national consultations is to understand how the HRI ecosystem functions, how decisions are made and who has a seat at the priority-setting table, and to gauge perceptions of regional R&I needs.

#### **ABOUT THIS REPORT**

This report presents key findings for the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region. This regional consultation was led by the University of São Paulo in partnership with Deakin University.

#### THE HUMANITARIAN LANDSCAPE ACROSS LAC

The LAC region includes 38 countries, 20 in Latin America and 18 in the Caribbean (Figure 1). The region is characterised by marked diversity of political, economic and social conditions, with development status spanning seven high-income countries, twenty upper middle-income countries, five lower middle-income countries, and one low-income country (Haiti).<sup>9</sup>

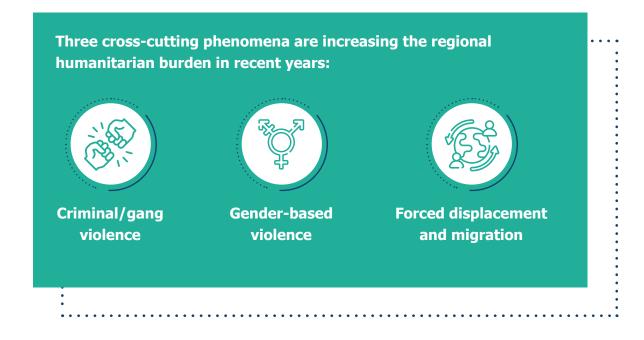
Figure 1: Map of the countries comprising LAC region



In 2022, there were a total of 660.3 million people living in the region, which accounts for 8.3% of the overall global population, 32.1% of whom live in poverty (around 201 million people) and 13.1% (82 million) of whom face extreme poverty. The incidence of poverty is greater in some population subgroups than others, including children and adolescents, socioeconomically marginalised women aged 20 to 59 years such as those lacking access to formal employment, social supports and education opportunities, and indigenous and populations of African descent. Poverty levels across the region have soared during the COVID-19 pandemic, with estimates that extreme poverty in the region has been set back by 25 years due to the events of 2020-2022.

The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance within the LAC region is estimated to be at least 29.2 million, with issues of food insecurity, recurring disasters compounded by climate change, displacement within and across borders and chronic violence continuing to exacerbate needs related to food access, nutrition, protection, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and health. Despite this heavy humanitarian caseload, the region has received disproportionally less attention than others in terms of response both from bilateral and multilateral donors and from the humanitarian sector. Regional funding between 2021 and 2023, considering seven countries (Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Venezuela), and two flash appeals and 15 humanitarian response plans (HRP), amounted to only 33.3% of the total requirements for the region<sup>12</sup> and around 3% of the humanitarian funds allocated for HRP around the world. From 2021 to 2023, considering the HRP around the world, total funding was equivalent to \$61.42 billion,<sup>13</sup> in turn, for Latin America and the Caribbean, the amount of humanitarian funds dispersed for the region has reached \$1.899 million in August 2023.<sup>14</sup>

The LAC region is vast and diverse, and the type and impact of humanitarian crises across the region also vary. The region is experiencing numerous humanitarian crises against the background of a complex development context. Crises impacting countries in the region span political instability, both internal displacement and cross-border migration, armed conflict, frequent natural disasters (LAC is the world's second-most disaster-prone region), is widespread gang violence and, in some areas, a baseline of extreme poverty and food insecurity.



Non-state armed violence (NSAV) and gang warfare is a major, long-standing but neglected issue across the region that generates profound protection risks and is a key driver of displacement and forced migration in the region. In the last decade, the region's homicide rate has increased by 3.7% a year to roughly 21.5 per 100,000 in 2018, three times the global average. Additionally, NSAV and general insecurity disrupts the lives of millions of Latin Americans on a daily basis. For example, extortion rackets force local businesses to pay for protection, sometimes leading to displacement and disruption of social ties. Shootings and forced confinement, imposed by criminal groups, impede people from going about their lives and children from going to school. At the same time, women face chronic forms of abuse, ranging from physical to psychological harm, social exclusion, and deprivation of basic services (hygiene, health and education, in particular). These issues have a profound impact on socio-economic development by hampering economic activities and human capital, but have also created direct or indirect humanitarian needs due to forced displacement<sup>17</sup> and migration and food insecurity.

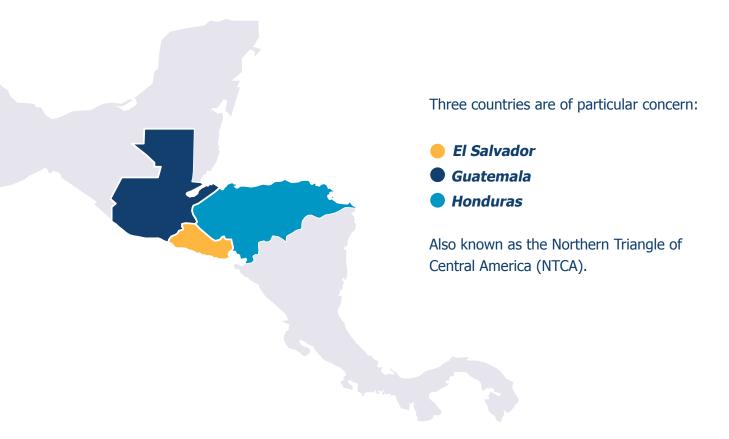
The situation has left states, civil society and humanitarian organisations grappling with how to deal with the emerging protection issues and the decline in access to basic services to meet population needs.

In **South America**, poverty rates were declining before the COVID-19 pandemic, with humanitarian activity coordinated with state actors. However, the pandemic and economic crises worsened inequalities, pushing more people into poverty and deepening vulnerabilities in terms of food insecurity and displacement. Countries of South America, in particular Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador, also account for some of the higher levels of armed violence per capita worldwide.<sup>19</sup>

In *Colombia* (total population: 51,874,024<sup>20</sup>), although development and peacebuilding efforts have continued for more than a decade, internal armed violence has escalated along the Pacific Coast and border areas, due to the ongoing actions of non-state armed groups (NSAGs) in expanding their market-based territorial control, affecting mostly the rural areas.<sup>21</sup> In terms of protection risks, it is estimated that around 7.2 million people live in areas with an NSAG presence or under NSAG influence or control. The country is also impacted by natural hazards and subsequent disasters, aggravated by climate change, such as the La Niña phenomenon, generating floods and landslides. The most affected people are among the poorest and most vulnerable groups, especially the indigenous and Afro-Colombian people. Moreover, the arrival of 2.5 million refugees and immigrants from Venezuela, in mixed population movements, who continue to move onward to Central America, Mexico and the US has represented an additional burden for the already fragile host-communities within the national territory, with the border area with Panama being of particular concern (the Darién Gap).<sup>22</sup>

In turn, next-door Venezuela (total population: 28,301,696<sup>23</sup>), although showing signs of economic stabilisation, is still facing a number of socioeconomic challenges and limited fiscal capacity to address structural gaps in the provision of basic services.<sup>24</sup> For Venezuela, where 2019 estimates indicate 7 million people in need, the HRP 2022-2023 target 5.2 million and the main priority needs are related to food security and nutrition, and access to essential services (such as healthcare, clean water, education and energy supply).<sup>25,26</sup>

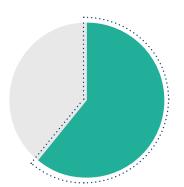
**Central America** has merited rising attention from the humanitarian sector, particularly due to the increase in migration flows originating from, or passing through, the region, becoming – from 2018 onwards – a major source of concern for the international community, including international and regional organisations, regional and non-regional states, national civil society organisations, as well as national and international humanitarian organisations.



Although their internal contexts are diverse in terms of political and economic stability, there are some shared concerns regarding humanitarian issues that are drivers for complex emergencies, including gang violence, poverty, natural disasters, socioeconomic crises, and food insecurity.<sup>27</sup>

The impact of the 2022 global economic crisis hit *El Salvador* (total population: 6,336,392) the hardest, with high inflation rates, growing fiscal pressure, and the impact of the rainy season pushing already vulnerable populations to the brink. In 2023, the country will have 1.1 million people in some sort of humanitarian need. In terms of protection, El Salvador's homicide rate has been declining for the last five years. However, in line with regional trends, the rate of violent deaths among women has increased, going from 3.4 per every 100,000 women in 2020 to 3.9 per 100,000 in 2021.<sup>28</sup> Since March 2022, when the government imposed an indefinite state of emergency and initiated a crackdown on gangs operating within the country, mobility restrictions and the militarisation of law enforcement has limited the humanitarian access of people living in places categorised as 'gang hotspots'.<sup>29</sup> As such, people living in gang-controlled neighbourhoods face several protection risks, including extortion, assaults, kidnappings, sexual violence, confinement, and crossfire. Additionally, gang violence and the subsequent crackdown have compounded the increase in the number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), as well as a subsequent rise in deportation from Mexico and the US, back to El Salvador, increasing the overall vulnerability of returnees.

**Guatemala** (total population: 17,357,886<sup>30</sup>) has experienced a worsening humanitarian situation, due to the impact of the global economic crisis and uncertainty generated by the conflict in Ukraine, compounded by an already fragile economy with only moderate signs of recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>31</sup> 61% of the population live in poverty and around 3.8 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, corresponding to more than 20% of the population.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, violence is on the rise, with an average of eight homicides per day associated mostly with the activities of common delinquency, national drug-trafficking groups, and the widespread operation of transnational criminal organisations (TCOs), such as Mexican narcotrafficking cartels and the presence of Mara Salvatrucha and Bario 18 gangs.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, Guatemala is highly vulnerable to natural disasters such as floods, landslides, hurricanes and earthquakes, and 40% of the population is exposed to the risk of five or more natural hazards.<sup>34</sup>



61% of the population in Guatemala live in poverty and around 3.8 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

In *Honduras* (total population: 10,432,860<sup>35</sup>), the humanitarian context mirrors what is seen in El Salvador and Guatemala, compounded by an even more limited national response capacity. Honduras' homicide rate makes it the world's fourth most dangerous country. In 2021, the annual homicide rate was 42 per 100,000 inhabitants. The presence of gangs in urban areas, especially the peripheries, restricts mobility and impedes humanitarian aid access. In rural areas, indigenous and Afro-Honduran people also face increased levels of violence and confinement by armed gangs and drug traffickers.<sup>36</sup> In general, social minorities such as women, the LGBTQIA+ community, children, adolescents and people with disabilities suffer a disproportionate impact from the country's criminal violence, and these are among the main reasons fuelling migration to Mexico and the US.

Similar to the other NTCA countries, Honduras is also vulnerable to the impacts of natural disasters, where flood-induced crop failures have also increased the number of people facing food insecurity and a decrease in livelihoods, with around 2.2 million people experiencing 'crisis' levels of food insecurity or worse.<sup>37</sup>



The *Caribbean* region, with which many Central American states share their maritime border, is prone to natural disasters, in particular during the Atlantic hurricane seasons which annually threaten to potentially impacting thousands, if not millions.<sup>38,39</sup> Small island developing states are particularly disaster-prone, being seven times more likely than larger states to experience a disaster and to incur six times more damage.<sup>40</sup> From 2020 to 2021, the Caribbean region experienced a number of humanitarian challenges: the Venezuelan migrant and refugee crisis impacting four countries (Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba and Curaçao); a volcano eruption in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; and the COVID-19 pandemic,<sup>41</sup> where already fragile health systems faced the possibility of collapse.<sup>42</sup>

*Haiti's* (total population: 11,584,996<sup>43</sup>) humanitarian situation has worsened considerably in recent years, owing to a "political deadlock, three consecutive years of economic recession and inflation reaching more than 30 per cent."<sup>44</sup> Gang-related violence reached unprecedented levels in 2022, as organised armed groups have continuously expanded their territorial control, imposing blockages that paralyse economic activity, restrict people's movement and limit access to basic needs and services, mainly food and clean water, but also sanitation services, promoting the spread of infectious diseases. As such, by November 2022, new cholera cases were registered in nine of Haiti's ten departments. In addition, almost half of the country's population now faces hunger, with around 19,000 people in 'catastrophic' levels of food insecurity.<sup>45</sup> Between June and July 2023, armed conflict between gangs lead to the displacement of 195,000 people and the country has an estimated 5.2 million people in need.<sup>46</sup>

Official estimates that in 2023 almost 30 million<sup>47</sup> people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance in the whole of the LAC region is perhaps an undercount, because official numbers only represent a portion of the true total.

SECTION 2
METHODS

#### **SECTION 2: METHODS**

#### **METHODS**

Detailed methodological information is provided online. Briefly, this study sought to include between 15 to 25 regional actors engaged in the HRI space in any of the following capacities:

- Researcher / innovator.
- · Donor.
- End-user of R&I findings and outputs (eg., humanitarian operational practitioner, policymaker).
- R&I commissioner / administrator.

Regional actors were defined as those with a portfolio, mandate or focus spanning two or more countries in the LAC region.

A standardised key informant interview (KII) guide, modified to ensure cultural sensitivity and local relevance, comprised seven modules covering:

- demographics
- the role of research and innovation in humanitarian crises
- HRI topics requiring attention in the LAC context and priority topics
- alignment of investments with HRI topics requiring attention
- regional and national stakeholder engagement with HRI
- donor decision-making and coordination processes
- responsiveness of the HRI system.

Interviews were offered in English, Spanish or Portuguese, and all were conducted remotely in English or Spanish. The final interview guide used in this LAC consultation is available in English and Spanish.

Interviews were transcribed, translated into English where required and analysed thematically. All analysis was undertaken in English, using a coding framework that was developed both inductively and deductively. Where participants had referred to issues outside LAC or referred predominantly to the humanitarian operational sector and not HRI, these excerpts were not used in the current analysis.

Ethics approval to conduct this study was obtained from the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (ref 2022-163).

#### **LIMITATIONS OF THIS WORK**

This report presents the perspectives of a small number of interviewees, who were purposively sampled. Whilst attempts were made to ensure broad sectoral and disciplinary engagement, and representation from diverse organisation types and across the region, this very small sample cannot be considered representative of the entire HRI sector in LAC. Whilst participants predominantly had a regional focus, there is marked socioeconomic, developmental, demographic and cultural diversity and heterogeneity within LAC, including within and between its subregions of Central America, South America and the Caribbean. The Caribbean region is under-represented, with only one participant having a focus on a Caribbean country (Haiti). Further work is required to specifically explore issues impacting the Caribbean.

This study is also subject to the limitations inherent in all qualitative analysis, namely that coding is subject to interpretation. This was minimised through an iterative coding process, including an initial validation exercise between the primary data analyst and the qualitative research lead, and followed by review as required by other team members and discussion amongst the full team to resolve any disagreements or review-specific transcripts or excerpts. In some instances, participants did not address the question as intended or the question as presented by the interviewer, or interviewer statements may have been considered leading. Any such excerpts were excluded from the analysis. Interviews were offered in a participant's preferred language (any of English, Spanish or Portuguese), conducted by an interviewer with multilingual proficiency who was able to probe and clarify statements when participants appeared to have difficulty with the language, and transcripts were transcribed, translated and checked by several bilingual team members. Despite these efforts, in some instances points being made by participants were unclear due to language, and such excerpts were excluded from analysis.

This study explored participant perspectives regarding how the HRI ecosystem functions and humanitarian topics requiring additional R&I attention in LAC, and this report presents summaries of key points raised by participants. Participant responses are summarised in this report regardless of whether the report authors perceived the responses to be accurate or a true reflection of the situation in the region. Additionally, not all humanitarian issues or R&I needs impacting LAC are necessarily covered in this report if they were not mentioned by participants.

Finally, the topics reported as requiring additional R&I attention reflect the views of participants in this small consultation – they are informative, but not necessarily exhaustive and were not ranked. As such, they do not represent a priority list of topics for the region, and further work (including gauging the views of a large and diverse number of stakeholders, including sufficient representation from the Caribbean) is required to validate the findings from this initial work and inform development of an agreed regional R&I agenda.

#### **CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS**

In total, 17 interviews were conducted, 13 in English and four in Spanish. All interviews were conducted remotely between December 2022 and February 2023 using a secure Teams platform.

Summary characteristics of participant and organisational details are presented in Table 1. Participants were based in 11 countries in the region, and one participant was based outside LAC but has a focus on the region.

Seven participants identified as having donor / funding functions. Notably, any organisation that provides R&I funding of any volume or form could be considered a donor, including, for example, large bilateral / multilateral donors, philanthropic organisations and institutions that provide small value funding such as seed grants or sub awards.

**Table 1**: Summary of participant and organisational characteristics

Participant and organisational characteristics	Number of participants
Organisational type*	
Academic	2
Government / intergovernmental	2
INGO	8
NGO	3
Multilateral institution	1
UN agency	2
Participant country base^	
Brazil	1
Mexico	3
Latin America	1
Central America and Mexico	2
Peru	1
Panama	1
Costa Rica	1
El Salvador	1
Guatemala	1
Honduras	1
Colombia	1
Venezuela	1
Haiti	1
Outside LAC	1

Participant years of experience in the sector		
Less than five years	0	
Between five and ten years	3	
More than ten years	14	
Participant years of experience in current role		
Less than five years	11	
Between five and ten years	4	
More than ten years	1	
Not reported	1	
Organisational involvement with R&I		
Humanitarian research only	0	
Humanitarian innovation only	0	
Both humanitarian R&I	15	
Not directly engaged in R&I production	2	

<sup>^</sup> this refers to the country where the participant is based and does not necessarily reflect the country where the institution is headquartered or the geographic focus of the organisation's or individual's work.

<sup>\*</sup> Total sums to more than the total number of participants, as one participant had dual affiliations.

**SECTION 3** 

## THE ROLE OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (R&I) IN HUMANITARIAN CRISES

## SECTION 3: THE ROLE OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (R&I) IN HUMANITARIAN CRISES



Several participants acknowledged the important role of R&I during humanitarian crises but indicated that it is **not feasible** to conduct research **during the acute phase of a humanitarian crisis**. Most participants agreed that operational response is the priority and R&I comes later in the form of monitoring and evaluation, or through lessons learnt. Participants also indicated that in LAC there has been little space for innovation.

A number of **roles for R&I during humanitarian crises** were noted, including to inform disaster preparedness and prevention strategies; to inform humanitarian response and action, designing and implementing evidence-based interventions, adapting potential solutions to new contexts, understanding the situation and guaranteeing that response will meet changes in context, informing anticipatory action (eg, through forecasting), and supporting project monitoring and evaluation. Other less cited roles include to inform advocacy and to document and bear witness of evolving humanitarian situations.

While several participants reflected that R&I does not always enable better outcomes, as R&I remains very limited and findings are not always translated into practice, most indicated that **R&I enables better outcomes** when integrated into the humanitarian response, particularly when undertaken early in a crisis.

Most participants observed that the region does not offer a favourable environment for R&I. Reported **barriers to production of R&I** include limited interest from humanitarian organisations, donors, and governments; competing operational priorities; access constraints to populations affected by crises and poor security conditions; limited capacities available for R&I; limited funding; institutional resistance to change and operational teams preferring to function in traditional ways; donordriven approaches and lack of interest from donors; political instability; challenges with data collection and data quality; and lack of recognition of the role of qualitative research methods.

Reported **barriers to utilisation and uptake of R&I** include the disconnect between academia and the humanitarian operational sector; political sensitivity; challenges in disseminating knowledge; timeliness of R&I; technological illiteracy; and difficulties in upscaling innovative ideas.

Factors identified by participants on **how should R&I be conducted in acute crises** include to integrate R&I into initial phases; to have dedicated personnel to undertake R&I; adopt a more structured approach to research and analysis; training of R&I personnel to avoid harm to the community; and collaborations in joint needs assessments, drawing on the expertise of a range of responding actors.

Among other **factors that the HRI system needs to function effectively** were better stakeholder engagement; improved awareness of the role of R&I and the integration of R&I into humanitarian activities; improving research methodologies; better dissemination of research findings; better planning and closer engagement with governments; cross-border sharing of information; and improved financing, both public and private.

## IS THERE A ROLE FOR R&I DURING HUMANITARIAN CRISES?



...research and innovation go hand in hand. There can't be any innovation if you don't research, if you don't understand what is going on, if you don't quantify it, if you don't put it into context.

Several participants indicated that it is **not feasible** to conduct research **during the acute phase of a humanitarian crisis**. Most participants from humanitarian agencies reported that the priority is the operational response and provision of time-sensitive humanitarian support to populations affected by crises, and as such, funding is typically directed towards operations. Additionally, it was reported that in a context of limited resources, the focus of humanitarian personnel needs to be the response, and populations affected by crises also have limited interest in R&I, being primarily focused on seeking immediate relief. R&I during a crisis may also be limited due to resistance to innovation and new ways of doing things, particularly amongst senior humanitarian personnel with decades of experience functioning in a particular way.

Several participants acknowledged that **R&I** is **important** during humanitarian crises, and a range of roles for R&I during crises were reported. These included:

- To inform disaster preparedness and prevention strategies.
- To inform the humanitarian response and action,
  - Designing and implementing evidence-based interventions to improve efficiency so that aid reaches populations in need in an effective way, producing the expected impact, and avoiding harm to beneficiary communities.
  - **⋄** To adapt potential solutions to new contexts.
  - **To inform anticipatory action including through forecasting.**

- **To evaluate humanitarian activity through project monitoring and evaluation.**
- ♦ **To understand the situation**, identifying the most vulnerable population subgroups and how crises evolve in time and space.
- ♦ To guarantee that the response will meet the changes and the transitions that people / beneficiaries have across the different stages of a crisis. Indicating that needs differ across time and the response must be able to identify when they happen.
- To *inform advocacy*, producing evidence-based information to raise awareness among both decision-makers and the general public.
- To document and bear witness.

## WHAT ROLE DOES R&I PLAY THROUGHOUT THE VARIOUS PHASES OF HUMANITARIAN CRISES?

A number of roles for R&I were reported across each phase of the humanitarian response, spanning preparedness, response and recovery phases (see Table 2). Notably, it was reported that LAC is not necessarily dealing with all these phases, as the region is experiencing little in terms of recovery, but instead is plagued by protracted problems linked to violence.

**Table 2:** Reported roles of R&I by phases of a humanitarian crisis

	Roles of R&I	Examples
PREPAREDNESS	Anticipate and predict events to mitigate impact or prevent future occurrences	Forecast-based financing and data analysis for anticipation of events.
PREPA	Inform preparedness	Research focused on pre-crisis humanitarian assistance; preventive approach.
	Allow quick and efficient response to acute crises	Evidence-based response, with an efficient use of limited resources.
	Adaptation to the context	Adaptative transformations in the way of working, considering different contexts.
ISE	Inform and regulate needs- driven response	Provides quality data for rapid decision-making processes in delivering aid. People-centred approach, shaping the response.
RESPONSE	Glean lessons learnt	Documenting response, by generating data, provides learning opportunities.  Avoid making the same mistakes.
	Inform policy making and advocacy	Use findings for influencing policy change, eg, in the area of migration and displacement.
	Inform accountability	Documenting events. Strong data and strong evidence-based narratives increase accountability.

RECOVERY	Inform policy and advocacy efforts	To ensure that what is done in advocacy, design or adjustment in terms of legal frameworks or public policies is evidence informed.
	Identify lessons learnt and innovative approaches	Identify what happened and what could have been done better to prepare for the next crisis and improve response.  Consider lessons learnt about how best to design improved responses and any required innovations.
	Inform long-term community initiatives	Enhance social resilience by helping communities to improve on existing local capacities.
	Inform exit strategy for humanitarian actors	Support efforts to ensure the sustainability of the humanitarian response and action on the nexus with development.

## IS HUMANITARIAN R&I ENABLING BETTER OUTCOMES, AND IF SO, HOW?

R&I reportedly enable improved humanitarian outcomes by:

- Supporting development of new products and interventions. R&I not only helps
  inform action to provide better assistance or better distribution of resources, but also informs
  sustainability.
- **Informing needs-driven responses**, where new forms of context assessment or monitoring have made interventions more efficient.
- **Collecting relevant data and gleaning from lessons learnt**: identification of best practices and lessons learnt is a reflective action that requires appropriate data be collected, organised and stored throughout the response cycle.
- Informing evidence-based decision-making in a more updated, adequate and accurate way, mindful of the people affected by the decision-making.
- **Informing relevant stakeholders in a timely manner** when information is produced and communicated to relevant stakeholders in a timely manner to activate response.
- **Strengthening emergency and surveillance systems**, in particular, for locations that are difficult to access and have been marked by extreme violence.
- **Influencing the political agenda through advocacy** towards a more prevention-based approach.

It was also reported that sometimes R&I does not enable better outcomes, due to reasons including:

- Very limited financial resources for R&I.
- R&I is disconnected from operational systems and not successfully integrated in the project
  cycle and incorporated into decision-making. Instead, R&I has been mostly ad hoc or
  limited to individual level practices and not incorporated into organisational practice. One of the
  most negative impacts is felt when needing to design or adapt humanitarian responses to context
  changes, as there is not enough data to inform operational strategies.
- There is **limited uptake and utilisation:** 
  - Research outputs fail to reach decision makers, are not translated into operational responses, or innovative practices and approaches are not taken up locally or are transferred to other regions.
  - ♦ Focus on business as usual and resistance to adopting innovation.
- R&I is not integrated into the early phases of the crises: emergency relief comes first,
  and R&I comes at later stages (for example, through lessons-learnt exercises). However, as one
  participant mentioned, when the response is not informed by research, it is not evidence-based
  or needs driven, and the gap between what humanitarian response has to offer and what people
  need will keep increasing.

## WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO THE PRODUCTION, UPTAKE AND UTILISATION OF R&I?

#### **BARRIERS TO THE PRODUCTION OF R&I**

#### Limited interest in R&I

#### From organisations

- » Research disconnected from what is needed in the field.
- » Priority goes to providing relief (avoid people suffering).
- » R&I considered non-essential.
- » R&I does not produce immediate results.
- » Lack of flexibility to change within the large bureaucratic machines of humanitarian organisations.
- » Lack of readily available information when designing needs-driven responses.
- » Limited appreciation of what constitutes innovation and its potential impact.

#### From donors

- » Lack of public and private funding directed towards R&I.
- » LAC region receives only a small portion of the global humanitarian funds.

#### From governments

- » R&I lacks visibility.
- » Political sensitivity of some issues.
- » Lack of political interest.

#### Competing operational priorities

- Limited timeframes during emerging crises.
- ⋄ Focus goes to saving lives / emergencies needs.
- ♦ In short cycles, R&I is not a priority.
- The people responding are overworked.
- ♦ Timely responsiveness (it is not the time to try new things).
- ♦ Lack of available resources to be directed from the start towards R&I.
- Organisations with a broad response mandate find it difficult to focus on R&I.
- **Difficulties accessing populations and poor security conditions**: for example, forced displacement is described as a 'silent phenomenon' whereby most displaced people prefer to avoid attention and, therefore, are not readily accessible for R&I. In other situations, insecure conditions hinder physical access, such as to areas controlled by armed actors, eg, urban gangs or drug traffickers with whom there is no potential for negotiation of access.

#### Limited funding

- Available resources are directed towards implementation.
- ♦ Economic resources have been constantly directed elsewhere, particularly after the Ukraine crisis started.
- Amount of funding allocated to research is very low.

#### Limited R&I capacity

#### ⋄ For research

- » Capable people but they lack time and material resources for research.
- » Need to look outside of the organisation for workforce.
- » Dependent on an individual's experience with research.
- » Human resources not well-equipped to research certain population groups.

#### ⋄ For innovation

- » Time-consuming processes of trial and error.
- » Difficulties in introducing and incorporating new technologies.
- » No time to innovate, so people revert back to what they did before.

#### Donor-driven approach

- Donors determine the methodologies applied in research.
- Institutional resistance to change and operational teams' preference to do things the traditional way, resulting in no demand for research.

**Table 3:** Reported determinants of resistance to change

	Fear of losing control over the status quo, with the introduction of new players.
	Very tech-centred conversations (innovation).
Institutional resistance to change	Traditional models are rigid.
	Political interest of donors.
	'Copy & paste' models, transferred from other regions.
	Internal barriers because of the heavy structure of organisations.
	Organisations' lack of will and resources.
Operational teams' preference to do things the traditional way	Seasoned humanitarians tend to follow long-held working patterns adopted in the past.
	Depends on the person (some will be concerned about doing something that is not traditional).
	After the COVID-19 pandemic, many changes introduced in the humanitarian sector were not taken up, as some organisations went back to working in the same way but with different methods.

- Lack of interest from donors: the LAC humanitarian response depends on the funding
  available from donor organisations and countries, and these funds are expected to be
  used in a certain way, leaving little scope to introduce new things, such as new research
  practices or innovation systems. On the upside, the present demand for more evidence-based
  interventions, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, may have opened a window of
  opportunity for change.
- Challenges with data collection and data quality
  - ♦ The information already available is not considered reliable, is not based on evidence or is not up to date.
  - In LAC, there is also the challenge of compiling information about internal displacement due to violence, as it is extremely difficult to come up with numbers on these more 'silent' flows.

- **Political instability** leading to ever-changing interlocutors at state institutions, with varying political agendas.
- Resistance to change: fear that using innovative research approaches or tools will not attract funding.
- Lack of recognition of the role of qualitative research methods: within academia, qualitative studies do not have the same credibility as quantitative research and, therefore, attract less funding.

#### BARRIERS TO THE UPTAKE AND UTILISATION OF R&I

- Disconnect between academia and the humanitarian operational sector.
- Political sensitivity may hinder or stop altogether the publication of research findings, even
  more so when findings shed light on corruption or may influence the political stability within a
  country or region.
- **Challenge in disseminating knowledge** produced by research during a humanitarian response, particularly to those actors at community and national levels that are directly influenced or impacted by them.
- **Timeliness of R&I** becomes central when an emergency challenges the traditional humanitarian action mechanisms and capacities.
- **Difficulties in upscaling innovative ideas** due to institutional constraints.
- **Technological illiteracy**: inability to implement innovations, as some subpopulations and groups have limited skills or capacity to engage with new technologies.

#### **HOW SHOULD R&I BE CONDUCTED DURING ACUTE CRISES?**

Several participants suggested ways in which R&I should be undertaken during acute humanitarian crises. These included:

- Integrate R&I into initial phases, including the pre-crisis preparedness plans that should also be reviewed before crises to save time.
- **Dedicated personnel to undertake R&I**: R&I and operational work should not be done by the same people or teams, rather these should be distinct functions. Within organisations, specific people with the time and relevant expertise should have roles dedicated to R&I, while others focus on responding. Having dedicated external organisations conduct R&I was also suggested.
- **Adopt a more structured approach to research and analysis**: R&I should be more structured within the response, be part of the programming planning, implementation and evaluation, linking it to humanitarian work.
- Training of R&I personnel to avoid harm to communities, particularly indigenous communities.
- **Collaboration in joint needs assessments**: the early stages of a crisis present the opportunity to draw on the expertise of a range of responding actors.

## WHAT ELSE DOES THE R&I SYSTEM NEED TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY?

#### Better stakeholder engagement

- Locally-driven research and innovation.
- ♦ Improved collaboration between academia and other sectors.
- Strengthened coordination mechanisms between regional organisations and regional states.
- Close engagement with governments at national and subnational levels.

#### Improved awareness of the role of R&I and the integration of R&I into humanitarian activities

- ♦ R&I integrated into all activities and integrated with field operational teams.
- Promoting a positive attitude towards research.

#### Improving research methodologies

- ♦ Collecting and reporting gender- and age-segregated data.
- Improving data analysis methods.

#### Better dissemination of research findings

- Better planning, in the absence of humanitarian response plans and clusters. In some LAC countries, where the humanitarian response does not follow the traditional path, there are considerable challenges regarding coordination and planning and, therefore, a need for better planning and preparedness.
- **Cross-border sharing of information** to make response more efficient and facilitate policy regulation, for example considering transnational crime activities and the associated protection risks for vulnerable people in different situations of mobility.
- **Improved financing**, both public and private.

It was also reported that there is marked variation in R&I capacity across the region, and as such, the factors required to improve the R&I system vary and cannot be considered at a regional level, but on a subnational or, even, national level. For example, it was reported that Mexico has very solid capacity in innovation, but this is currently not applied in the humanitarian space. Brazil is considered a research powerhouse in the region, and Venezuela previously was also a research leader. Some countries such as Argentina reportedly have enormous potential but this is underutilised, and other countries (particularly in Central and South America) have very limited capacity.

**SECTION 4** 

## HUMANITARIAN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (HRI) TOPICS AND PRIORITY ISSUES REQUIRING ATTENTION

# SECTION 4: HUMANITARIAN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (HRI) TOPICS AND PRIORITY ISSUES REQUIRING ATTENTION



A range of topics were reported as requiring **additional research and innovation** (**R&I**) **attention**. The most commonly reported themes included issues regarding how the humanitarian system operates; migration and displacement; protection; violence and organised crime; and climate change and planetary health. Other themes included the humanitarian-development nexus; food security; cash and voucher assistance (CVA), non-food items; WASH; shelter; livelihood; health; and the humanitarian research and innovation system.

Amongst these thematic areas, the need for a range of specific **innovations** was reported, including innovations in how the humanitarian system operates, involving new technologies for data collection and analysis, improved materials and approaches to reduce the sector's environmental and social impact, and better communication mechanisms or devices to assist beneficiaries, and inform relevant stakeholders.

The **reasons why some of these issues have received insufficient attention** to date, as informed by the participants, include political and geopolitical considerations; limited visibility and failure to recognise a need; donors' reluctance to fund topics where R&I projects have previously failed, or where the humanitarian sector was reported to be corrupt and/or inefficient; a lack of alignment with organisational objectives; and conditions of insecurity, due to the reported presence of armed actors controlling certain areas of the regional space.

## WHAT ARE THE HUMANITARIAN TOPICS AND PRIORITY ISSUES REQUIRING R&I ATTENTION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN?

Table 4 presents a summary of key thematic areas and topics reported by participants as requiring additional R&I attention in the region. Notably, some cross-cutting topics could fit under multiple themes, however, they have been reported under the main theme only.

**Table 4**: Humanitarian topics reported as requiring additional R&I attention in the Latin America and Caribbean region

<ul> <li>Improving the humanitarian architecture:</li> <li>Innovation to reconceptualise the humanitarian architecture, including consideration of the role of the private sector.</li> <li>Humanitarian logistics in response:</li> <li>Innovations to improve inventory tracking.*</li> </ul>	Humanitarian R&I thematic area (Number of participants who reported this tonic)	Specific R&I topics needing attention
<ul> <li>How to improve supply chains and minimise environmental impact, including minimising waste and reducing the carbon footprint.*</li> <li>Humanitarian logistics in preparedness:</li> <li>Identifying safe areas that are less likely to be impacted during a crisis and that can serve as go-to areas when a crisis does hit.*</li> <li>Accurate calculations of supplies required in the event of a crisis.*</li> <li>Planning of access routes to be used in the event of a crisis in order to make the response* (eg, in Peru, where road access is difficult due to topography / geography and landslides are frequent due to rains).</li> <li>Lessons learnt:</li> <li>Innovations to improve response to natural hazards and learning from past events (eg, learnings from the 2010 Haitian earthquake to do better next time, such as</li> </ul>	system operates	<ul> <li>♦ Innovation to reconceptualise the humanitarian architecture, including consideration of the role of the private sector.</li> <li>• Humanitarian logistics in response:</li> <li>♦ Innovations to improve inventory tracking.*</li> <li>♦ How to improve supply chains and minimise environmental impact, including minimising waste and reducing the carbon footprint.*</li> <li>• Humanitarian logistics in preparedness:</li> <li>♦ Identifying safe areas that are less likely to be impacted during a crisis and that can serve as go-to areas when a crisis does hit.*</li> <li>♦ Accurate calculations of supplies required in the event of a crisis.*</li> <li>♦ Planning of access routes to be used in the event of a crisis in order to make the response* (eg, in Peru, where road access is difficult due to topography / geography and landslides are frequent due to rains).</li> <li>• Lessons learnt:</li> <li>♦ Innovations to improve response to natural hazards and learning from past events (eg, learnings from the</li> </ul>

- Humanitarian needs:
  - Innovations to improve access to humanitarian aid, given political contexts, eg, if a government, such as in Venezuela does not allow cash transfers, what other tools can be used to improve livelihoods?
- Improving how the sector functions:
  - How to address inefficiencies in the humanitarian sector (eg, corruption).
- 'Greening' the humanitarian response:
  - How to reduce the environmental impact and carbon footprint of humanitarian interventions including medical interventions.\*

 Innovations regarding the use of data and digital systems, and information technologies and communications to improve the humanitarian response:

- Capitalising on widespread mobile phone access; consider what services could be provided to a person with a phone in a humanitarian crisis.\*
- How to deliver direct assistance in rural areas where access is poor and infrastructure such as internet access is lacking.\*
- Improved communications to allow people to communicate during a crisis and reconnect families.\*
- Innovation around protection and how to improve communication and build trust (for example, with migrants and refugees so that they engage with, and trust, the humanitarian sector, rather than be lured by communications and promises from smugglers).
- Innovation to improve information sharing, including on human rights, access to services, etc.\*
- Innovation to improve communication about the rights of displaced populations.
- Innovations in the use of existing data and data linkage / triangulation to improve preparedness and response (eg, emergency preparedness monitoring, context monitoring).\*
- Digitilisation of humanitarian action, including what it means for enhancing the agency of populations served and issues of data protection, safeguarding.\*

How the humanitarian system operates (n=11)

Migration and displacement (n=9)	<ul> <li>Migration (as a cross-cutting issue).*</li> </ul>
	Role of humanitarian assistance in migration:
	<ul> <li>How to improve financial inclusion in countries such as Peru, Colombia, and Ecuador.</li> <li>Delineating roles: where is the line between humanitarian assistance vs social and economic integration of migrants?</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>What is needed for migrants and refugees to integrate into settlement countries (for example, persons displaced from Venezuela to the US)? What policies and legal frameworks are required to ensure human rights?</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Holistic vulnerability analysis and assessment of needs among refugees and displaced populations, rather than current focus on where they came from and migration journey.*</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Mapping migration trends and patterns, including demographics and other characteristics of displaced populations in order to forecast needs.</li> </ul>
Climate change and planetary health (n=5)	Preparedness:
	<ul> <li>Enhancing tools and methods for data analysis related to preparedness for climate-related hazards.*</li> <li>Forecast-based financing and early warning systems, both for acute and slow-onset crises (eg, drought in Haiti that contributes to acute food and security crises).*</li> <li>Anticipatory approach: anticipating potential impact of climate change on the region, including patterns and types of hazards and their impact (including on the humanitarian sector, socioeconomic impacts, displacement, etc).*</li> <li>Response or preparedness for natural disasters.*</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Mitigating and addressing the impacts of climate change:</li> <li>New ways to respond to, and address, the emergence and resurgence of diseases (eg, arboviruses) secondary to climate change.</li> </ul>

Protection (n=6)	<ul> <li>Quantifying and researching the disproportionate protection risks faced by some population subgroups (eg, plight of unaccompanied or orphaned children; risks to sex workers in Venezuela; eviction threats to indigenous populations from Venezuela who are living in informal settings).</li> <li>How to adjust protection mechanisms and services, and offer advocacy.</li> <li>Protection in migration and displacement         <ul> <li>Protection of migrants and displaced populations (protecting their human rights, privacy and dignity).*</li> <li>How to improve the humanitarian response and protection of populations on the move and not harm resident communities (eg, indigenous communities in Panama who are being negatively impacted by population movement through the area).</li> </ul> </li> <li>Sexual and gender-based violence (GBV)</li> <li>Rising GBV due to both COVID-19 response and displacement.*</li> </ul>
Organised crime and violence (n=5)	<ul> <li>◇ GBV in general.</li> <li>Violence and protection.*</li> <li>Research to accurately quantify the number of people displaced (particularly internally displaced) due to violence.</li> <li>Prevention approach to gang violence at the community level (eg, in Honduras and El Salvador).</li> <li>Sociological studies of violence: what does it mean for societies to be subjected to this level of violence and the consequences thereof?</li> <li>Research on specific types of organised crime and violence:</li> <li>◇ Urban violence (a cross-cutting regional issue).</li> <li>◇ Internal armed conflicts (eg, Colombia).</li> <li>Emergent protection risks across the region due to consolidation of gang violence and organised crime across LAC during the pandemic. Understand protection risks, impact on population and specific emergent needs.*</li> </ul>

Humanitarian - development nexus (n=3)	The role of the humanitarian sector in LAC, given the development background:
	<ul> <li>Identifying and addressing the underlying causes of chronic issues in the region, and role of the humanitarian sector in this development context: much of the LAC region is middle income and / or has internal capacity, but the region is subject to severe (often short-lived) crises, such as natural hazards that can have a prolonged impact (ie, different type of issues and response required compared with less developed settings such as the Sahel, Afghanistan, etc.)</li> <li>Identifying best practice to improve the humanitarian-development nexus in LAC and inform the role of humanitarian actors in the region, given that unlike some other crisis settings that occur in contexts of weak governance and failed states, LAC has a strong state presence and institutions.</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Understanding the nexus and roles, remit and interplay of humanitarian and development sectors (eg, issues often considered development, such as land property and adequate housing, are also humanitarian because adequate and safe housing is required to guarantee protection). For example, forced evictions during the COVID-19 pandemic.</li> </ul>
Food security* (n=3)	<ul> <li>Food security, including but not exclusively due to, climate-induced crises.*</li> <li>How to address food security in the region, which is likely to</li> </ul>
	worsen given events in the Ukraine.*
CVA, non-food items (n=2)	<ul> <li>Research on market-based interventions and localisation, including for example, cost analysis, prepositioning stocks versus local sourcing after an emergency, innovations on how to improve the quality and distribution of non-food items (NFIs).*</li> <li>R&amp;I to improve financial inclusion, financial rights, access to financial services and have a regional rather than country-specific approach to CVA (eg, people arriving in Colombia who cannot open a bank account are given a debit card; should be able to also do this across the region).</li> </ul>

WASH (n=1)	WASH innovation: improved purification methods, newer filters, improved accessibility to filters.
Shelter (n=1)	<ul> <li>Innovations to improve construction, including, identifying better and more resistant materials, improved building techniques.</li> </ul>
Livelihoods (n=1)	<ul> <li>New models to support displaced persons who want to integrate into work, including in transit countries, and improved ways to connect them to the private sector and to other opportunities.</li> </ul>
Health* (n=1)	<ul> <li>Indigenous humanitarian health and how best to adapt responses from a colonialist and traditional Western scientific approach, to improve and manage indigenous health interventions.*</li> </ul>
The HRI system (n=1)	<ul> <li>Innovation in R&amp;I methodologies towards a more people-centric approach.*</li> </ul>

<sup>\*</sup> Participants were asked to identify topics requiring additional R&I attention for LAC, and then to name the top three priority topics for the region. Topics marked with an asterisk \* were reported as a priority by at least one participant.

### DO HRI NEEDS DIFFER ACROSS THE REGION?

Some participants reported that **R&I topics needing attention do not differ across LAC** (n=4), as cross-cutting phenomena such as migration, criminal violence, climate change and food security have produced similar R&I needs across the region.

Others reported that R&I needs do differ, based on:



Geographic location and the frequency and intensity of hazards (n=1): for example, the seasonal occurrence of natural hazards such as tropical storms and hurricanes in the Caribbean islands.



**Differential research capacity across the region (n=1)**: some countries such as Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Colombia (and previously Venezuela) are regional leaders in terms of research. Other countries, particularly in South and Central America, have very low or no capacities at all, and so, there is a limited existing R&I evidence base and, therefore, greater R&I needs.

## WHY HAVE THESE ISSUES RECEIVED INSUFFICIENT ATTENTION TO DATE?

- Political considerations (n=3)
  - Political sensitivities: some topics affect political interests, thus barring them from being addressed as needs or even considered as an issue. For example, Honduras and El Salvador have only recently started to discuss the problem of internal displacement, and Guatemala does not even recognise it as an issue.
  - Minimal impact of LAC issues on large economies: it was reported that despite humanitarian issues, such as the migration phenomenon, being used for political purposes, they receive little R&I attention as they have minimal impact on large economies, namely the US, and consequently these topics do not attract funding or attention.
  - Politicisation of an issue: it was reported that climate change has received less than adequate attention because it is a 'political coin' and a divisive factor between regional governments and the humanitarian sector in LAC. While in other regions, both governments and humanitarian organisations have aligned to open the space for R&I and address the impact of climate change and the need for climate adaptation and financing. In LAC, this 'natural alliance' is only partial and lacks the strength to drive the agenda forward.

- Geopolitics (n=1)
  - ◆ Unstable political structures and the tense relationship between regional countries (n=1) were also mentioned as factors influencing the drive for R&I in a negative way. Some policies are considered and implemented unilaterally by the regional states, in the exercise of their sovereignty, but they also have transnational and regional impacts. For example, it was reported that US government policies regarding migration have changed the direction of migrant flows within the region, resulting in the arrival of thousands of migrants in the Darién region (Colombia-Panama border), and the burden of dealing with new migration flows falls to the countries of transit, as each elaborates their own response and the burden is passed to the next.
- Visibility and failure to recognise need (n=1): for example, criminal violence is not recognised by all stakeholders as being a driver of displacement. There is a protection crisis that has been ongoing in the NTCA (such as forced migration due to criminal violence, threats and extorsions by gangs), but this does not attract attention as it is invisible and has become normalised.
- Donor reluctance to fund 1) crises in countries where the humanitarian sector
  was reported to be corrupt or inefficient or 2) topics that have been the focus of
  unsuccessful past R&I efforts (n=2): funding is affected by failed prior R&I attempts to
  tackle a given issue since R&I projects are time-consuming, trial-and-error processes, and it is
  difficult to demonstrate their relevance to donors after one or more failed attempts.
- Lack of alignment with organisational objectives (n=1): some R&I needs are beyond the scope of an organisation's work.
- **Insecurity** (n=1) related to "other situations of violence" (that have consequences similar to wars and armed conflicts) impedes access to and information on certain regions of Latin America. For example, Mexican regions known for the presence of drug traffickers, and gang-controlled territories in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

# SECTION 5 (MIS)ALIGNMENT OF R&I INVESTMENTS WITH NEEDS

## SECTION 5: (MIS)ALIGNMENT OF R&I INVESTMENTS WITH NEEDS



Almost all participants perceived a mismatch in investments for R&I with topics and issues requiring attention. This mismatch was attributed to a range of factors, including different *donor priorities*, *funding constraints*, including insufficient funding and limitations of funding mechanisms, *visibility of an issue* influencing the level of R&I attention (with less visible issues or settings attracting less funding), *political sensitivity* of some issues influencing the willingness of R&I stakeholders to address them, and *limitations in communicating gaps and needs to donors*, so that they can allocate funding accordingly.

Notably, one participant reported that investments into R&I are being made and these sometimes, but not always, match needs.

Fifteen participants addressed the issue of whether investments into R&I match the topics and issues requiring attention, with most indicating that they do not match and two others not knowing. One participant reported that sometimes investments match "at some level", but not "across the table", reporting a lack of attention to emerging needs, such as recently identified protection risks. Those who perceived a mismatch suggested a range of possible reasons, including:

## Donor priorities (n=6)

- R&I is not a priority, especially to traditional humanitarian donors such as states and aid agencies.
- Donor priorities are not aligned with topics requiring attention.
- ♦ The region is not a priority: LAC humanitarian issues do not have a strong impact on large economies or the global political system and so are not of interest to donors.

### Funding constraints (n=5)

- Limited budget / insufficient funding allocated for R&I: R&I is not considered a priority for funding in the region, the region only receives a small proportion of global humanitarian funds which leaves little for R&I, and because governments do not have resources for research.
- Funding mechanisms: short funding cycles are not sufficient to address longer-term issues, such as migration and climate change.

### Limited visibility (n=3)

- Some issues, such as humanitarian emergency logistics, migration and social violence have no visibility until a crisis happens and have to compete for funds with projects on other issues that are more visible to the public.
- ♦ LAC issues are less visible and attract less attention than those in other regions.

### Political sensitivity of certain topics (n=2)

- Some issues and some population subgroups are considered politically sensitive (eg, the presence of IDPs, organised crime, indigenous people, migrants and refugees, sex workers, or police violence) and are, therefore, avoided.
- Concerns that working on politically sensitive topics will result in blacklisting or compromise relationships with governments.
- Limitations in communicating needs to donors (n=1).



One participant reported that sometimes investments match "at some level", but not "across the table", reporting a lack of attention to emerging needs, such as recently identified protection risks.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

## **SECTION 6: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**



Perceptions of **regional actor engagement** were evenly split between positive and limited. Most participants who reported on **national actor engagement** indicated that national stakeholders are not well engaged, but engagement differs depending on the type of actor (eg, state, NGO, academia, private sector). Notably, there is a significant variation in engagement by states within the region, with some much more engaged in R&I than others.

Many participants agreed that **regional engagement mechanisms** were lacking, citing also limited political interests and collaborations between state and regional actors, as well as organisational constraints, unclear role delineation, strained relationships with the states, vested interests, financing and timeliness of engagement, and perceptions of value add and usefulness of regional engagement, given different types of crises and needs at the national versus regional level.

The main existing strategies reported to promote greater regional and national stakeholder engagement included: communication and active outreach by international actors to local / national stakeholders; exchange or international collaboration projects between academic institutions; collaboration between actors and organisations with differing expertise to fill technical gaps in addressing emerging problems; collaborative platforms; national organisation interest / institutional support; and regional strategies becoming more long term. Suggested strategies include the need for better planning; improving the states and private sector engagement; and ensuring a 'big picture perspective' so that stakeholders recognise common interests and the need to work together.

## HOW WELL ARE REGIONAL AND NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED?

Participants were asked a series of questions to reflect on the extent to which the various actors in Latin America's HRI sector interact and engage with each other. Regional actors were considered as those whose work or operations encompass two or more countries in the region. National actors are those whose operational activities or focus are centred within a country's national borders.

### **REGIONAL ACTORS**

Nine participants addressed the extent to which regional actors are engaged in R&I, with responses divided into 'limited' and 'good' engagement.

- Limited engagement: regional engagement was reported to be limited in time and geographic reach. Some countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Chile and Columbia reportedly do engage well with regional / international initiatives but most others do not. Haiti, for example, does not have a strong presence in LAC regional platforms, but has been part of a number of initiatives within the Caribbean subregion.
- **Good engagement**: several participants perceived more engagement from governments, academia and INGOs at the regional level. The private sector's presence was considered marginal. It was also reported that there has been a shift in the nature of engagement of many of the large INGOs operating in the region, who now engage much more in research.

It was also reported that **regional engagement improved during the COVID-19 pandemic** (n=1), due to the shift to online communications.

## **NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT**

National actors were generally seen as not well engaged, but the extent of engagement was reported to vary depending on the type of actor and by the country setting:

- Academia: perceptions of academic engagement varied.
  - ♦ Limited engagement of academia (n=2): research on humanitarian issues in LAC is recent and not well developed, so it does not attract much funding and is often conducted unilaterally.
  - ♦ Research is mainly generated by academic centres (n=2) who have the allocated budget and experience, while humanitarians in the field focus on operational response.
  - ♦ Preference to engage with European versus local research centres (n=1), in particular for those organisations whose headquarters are located outside of the region.
- NGOs: National NGOs are active and play a key role within the region, particularly those who
  have an advocacy mandate and act as drivers for policy change.
- National / state actors: a strong drive for R&I in Latin America comes from government

investments in the sector, from national research foundations, and public health institutions, such as Fiocruz in Brazil or the National Institute of Public Health of Mexico, as well as the ministries or secretariat of health in these countries.

**Political context and constraints also influence stakeholder engagement (n=2)**: several participants reported that national actors were not well engaged in R&I, to varying degrees between countries, due to political constraints (El Salvador) or the country's social and political marginalisation (Haiti).

## BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT OF REGIONAL AND NATIONAL ACTORS IN R&I

Of the nine participants who reported on barriers to the engagement of regional and national actors in humanitarian R&I, many agreed that engagement mechanisms were lacking, and several cited political interests and issues as the main barriers. The following factors were mentioned as barriers to engagement:

- **Engagement mechanisms are lacking**: lack of platforms, forums or spaces for dialogue among relevant stakeholders in the regional humanitarian sector. There are some regional networks / initiatives / platforms for coordination, but these have limited, if any, R&I activity. Regional and national actors do not know or understand how to engage with each other, particularly when involving state parties.
- Limited political interest and collaboration between political actors: lack of collaboration between regional and national actors over common issues, such as migration.

  Although there are regional agreements to establish cooperation between states, often they will not cooperate due to geopolitical considerations or because government priorities lie elsewhere.
- **Organisational constraints**: limited capacity and limited flexibility within organisations to engage with R&I.
- **Vested interests** (n=2): political and economic interests affect humanitarian response when imposing different agendas (mostly, by governments), facilitating contradictory aims or when some actors with vested political and economic interests benefit from crises (for example, banks on the US side of the border benefiting from drug trafficking and money laundering).
- **Unclear role delineation**: humanitarian actors not feeling responsible to act upon the problem, as they see it as a function for government.
- **Strained relationships with the state**: not wanting to work with the government as the humanitarian sector traditionally does not engage with states. However, for the regional context, the role of the state reportedly needs to be reconceptualised.

- Perceptions of value add and usefulness of regional engagement, given different
  types of crises and needs at the national versus regional level: It was also reported
  that there is no incentive to participate in regional activities when the R&I issues and needs
  confronting a country are very different from those at the regional level. Haiti, for example, is
  not well engaged with regional / international initiatives, because the issues impacting Haiti
  are very different to those of surrounding countries, so they have limited interest in regional
  engagement.
- **Financing and timeliness of engagement**, particularly when considering innovation processes, by challenging organisations in terms of funds acquisition and timeframes, as research is usually time consuming, thus affecting their levels of engagement in R&I processes.

## EXISTING STRATEGIES USED TO PROMOTE GREATER REGIONAL AND NATIONAL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

When participants were asked about the existing strategies to promote greater regional and national stakeholder engagement, participants reported the following approaches:

- Communication and active outreach by international actors to local / national stakeholders.
- Exchange or international collaboration projects between academic institutions
   (n=1), in order to access research funding. For example, collaborations between South
   American academic institutions in Brazil and Peru.
- Collaboration between actors and organisations with differing expertise to fill
  technical gaps in addressing emerging problems. There is an added value in doing it in
  a coordinated manner, when response is guided by those who know best about the issue and
  other organisations will have the opportunity to learn by working with them.
- Collaborative platforms for joint work / reaching consensus (although these are reportedly not always effective).
- National organisation interest / institutional support.
- Regional strategies becoming more long term. For example, the response plans and
  approaches to issues, such as migration and climate change were previously based on one
  year cycles, but there is now a shift to multi-year initiatives. However, for other issues, such as
  humanitarian assistance, it was reported that a longer-term vision has not yet been adopted.

## SUGGESTED STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE REGIONAL AND NATIONAL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Although the existing strategies have not generated 'strong' engagement in R&I from regional and national humanitarian actors, several participants identified strategies that may promote greater engagement including:



**Engaging the state**: important to reconceptualise relationships between government actors and the humanitarian sector in LAC and increase state engagement.



**Engaging the private sector in a humanitarian response**: the humanitarian supply chain / logistics was identified as an area with huge room for innovation by the private sector. There is a strong private sector presence in R&I in settings such as Mexico, Brazil, Colombia and Chile. However, it was reported that they are not well engaged with the humanitarian space and the need to bridge this gap was flagged.



**'Big picture' perspective**: need for all relevant stakeholders, including international actors, to understand the potential implications of crises (eg, migration) and work together through improved agreements and platforms.



**Need for better planning**: need to prepare and develop national and regional plans before a crisis happens, and, at the same time, ensure closer proximity with governments.

SECTION 7
PRIORITY-SETTING AND
DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

## SECTION 7: PRIORITY-SETTING AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES



When asked to reflect on R&I priority-setting processes within their organisations, several participants reported that while R&I takes place, priorities are not determined through a structured or formal process within the organisation. Others described **a range of approaches and considerations**, including the extent to which priorities meet a perceived need or gap; meet a donor priority or interest; align with the priorities set by the institution's headquarters; is based on existing organisational strategy; if it is an emerging need in other countries in the region; aligns with previous work of the institution; meets implementing partners' predisposed ideologies; based on calls for proposals from field partners; based on the interests of senior personnel within the organisation; based on organisational assessment of likely cost, benefit and impact of the work; or is based on researcher and organisational capacity to undertake the work.

Participants reported that **evidence taken into account when prioritising R&I topics** is mainly based on primary and secondary data; measurement mechanisms developed by the organisation; simulations of the likely impact of the work; information from multiple settings indicating an emerging need, and the assessment of return on investment (eq., number of potential publications).

**Stakeholders involved in determining R&I priorities** include governments at national and subnational levels; communities (including formal and informal leaderships); senior personnel within academic and humanitarian organisations, non-governmental organisations, donors and technical unities. **Groups reported as missing from the priority-setting table** included local communities and specific population groups, including ethnic groups, indigenous and populations of African descent, people with special needs, women, the elderly, LGBTQIA+ communities, prisoners and detainees, youth and populations affected by violence, universities, humanitarian organisation country offices, refugees and migrant-based organisations, and other local actors.

## **HOW DO ORGANISATIONS IDENTIFY AND PRIORITISE R&I TOPICS?**

Participants in 14 interviews reported factors taken into account when identifying and prioritising R&I topics, including:

### Meets a need or gap

- ♦ Defined according to the needs of local stakeholders, mainly the communities who are the beneficiares in a humanitarian response.
- Based on needs assessment of economic vulnerability.
- Considering the identified gaps in the humanitarian response, for example, the need to adapt information systems and intervention models to the changing realities.
- **Meets a donor priority or interest**: ie, driven by donor interests and agendas, making R&I focus areas less flexible to changing dynamics at a regional level.
- **Aligns with the priorities of headquarters**: priorities are set at an organisational headquarter level, which, in turn, provides the channels and structures through which regional projects (within the determined priorities) may apply.
- **Based on existing organisational strategy**: the organisation has an innovation unit that sets the priorities for regional operations, but they are not based on country-level needs. Mandate is top-down.
- If a **need is emerging in other countries in the region,** it may receive greater attention and be prioritised.
- Aligns with previous work of the institution and they expand from there.
- Meets implementing partners' predisposed ideologies.
- Based on calls for proposals from field partners.
- Based on the interests of senior personnel within the organisation.
- Based on organisational assessment of likely cost, benefit, impact of the work.
- Based on researcher and organisational capacity to undertake the work.

## WHAT EVIDENCE IS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT?

When considering the type of evidence used for prioritisation, most participants indicated that evidence for prioritisation is based on studies (ie, primary and secondary data) conducted by the humanitarian organisations, with their own methodologies and technical metrics; or organised by donors with experts and stakeholders, such as NGOs, state agencies, the private sector, and academic institutions.



**Data** (for example, programmatic data; interviews and focus groups; data from neighbouring countries, data on economic status of vulnerable population subgroups).



**Measurement mechanisms developed by the organisation** based on impact indicators, process indicators, and quality indicators).



Simulations of the likely impact of the work.



Information from multiple settings indicating an emerging need.



**Assessment of return on investment** (including, for example, likely number of publications).

## TO WHAT EXTENT ARE REGIONAL, NATIONAL, AND LOCAL ACTORS INVOLVED IN THE PRIORITY-SETTING PROCESS?

There was a general acknowledgement among practitioners from the humanitarian sector that prioritisation processes in humanitarian R&I for LAC remain *very much centralised and vertical (top-down)*, and there is *limited engagement* from regional and national actors in the priority-setting process. On the other hand, academics mentioned the *missing link between academia and practitioners* operating in the field, and highlighted the *importance of strengthening collaborative processes*. The answers were detailed in Table 5.

**Table 5**: Extent and type of engagement in priority setting by regional and national actors

Extent and type of Engagement	Factors affecting engagement
Top-down approach; formal and informal consultations (n=5)	<ul> <li>Centralised decision-making processes, based outside the region, especially in innovation.</li> <li>Country offices are not involved in the priority setting.</li> <li>Country level organisations focus more on operational research and development initiatives.</li> </ul>
Limited engagement (n=4)	Focus on themes of development and human rights, rather than humanitarian issues.
Collaborative approach (n=2)	<ul> <li>Research impact predicted as a result of the R&amp;I project.</li> <li>Priority given to R&amp;I projects with an international partnership component.</li> </ul>
NGOs-academia collaboration gap (n=1)	<ul> <li>Lack of coordination and a reluctance from academics and NGOs to collaborate. Whilst there is increasing discussion of the need for more academic engagement, how this is actioned remains unclear.</li> </ul>

## WHO IS INVOLVED IN DETERMINING THE PRIORITIES FOR R&I AND WHO IS MISSING FROM THE DECISION-MAKING TABLE?

Participants were asked to reflect on who is involved in R&I priority setting within their organisation and who is missing from the priority-setting table, with 12 participants addressing this issue and many providing multiple responses. As participants were drawn from a range of different organisational types, some stakeholder groups (eg, academics, communities) were considered involved in decision-making by some participants but reported by others as being excluded from these processes.

Groups reported as being involved in decision-making processes include:

- **Community**, including formal and informal leadership (eg, local authorities, informal community leaders, municipal leaders, asylum population, refugees, migrants or people with disabilities).
- National government and institutions at national and subnational levels.
- Senior personnel within the organisation, such as senior professors, research
  coordination boards, coordinators of departments, or country directors in field operations.
- Academia.
- NGOs.
- Donors.
- International organisations headquarters, in particular, for large organisations.
- Hospitals for health-related work.
- Technical units within operational organisations on a project basis.

Groups reported as missing from the priority-setting table include:

### • Specific population groups:

- Migrants and refugees.
- ♦ Some ethnic groups and native populations (eg, indigenous groups in Central America and Brazil, populations of African descent along the Caribbean coast of Central America).
- Women.
- Young adults aged 19-23 years.
- ♦ LGBTQIA+ communities.
- Patients and their communities (for health research).
- People living with disability, people with children with special needs.
- The elderly.
- Displaced populations and those affected by violence.
- Prisoners and detainees.
- · Communities.
- · Academia.
- Local actors.
- Country offices.
- Refugee and migrant-based organisations.

It was also reported that donors and academics should be more involved with the decision-making processes of humanitarian organisations, in order to better facilitate knowledge transfer, and bridge communication and collaboration gaps.

**SECTION 8** 

# RESPONSIVENESS OF THE HUMANITARIAN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (HRI) SYSTEM TO EMERGING ISSUES

# SECTION 8: RESPONSIVENESS OF THE HUMANITARIAN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (HRI) SYSTEM TO EMERGING ISSUES



Factors reported as **enabling timely R&I responsiveness** to emerging crises include the availability of expertise and human resources; the recognition of value add and necessity of innovation to inform action / new approaches; funding availability for R&I; coordination between relevant stakeholders regarding information flows; government willingness to pilot new approaches; established institutional mechanisms and R&I teams embedded within operational teams to rapidly deploy; preparedness and the adoption of an anticipatory approach to pre-empt and facilitate rapid R&I engagement. Other factors, such as the presence of strong academic and private sectors, were also considered.

Factors reported as **impeding timely R&I responsiveness** include funding constraints, such as limited funding availability; a lack of flexible funding; and short funding cycles; short project cycles and insufficient human resources and technical expertise. Other participants cited the prioritisation of life saving operational activity over R&I; a lack of will and interest of humanitarian organisations in R&I; national institutional bureaucracies; limited national capacities and data availability; poor coordination and collaboration to discuss emerging needs and communicate these needs with R&I personnel; no adoption of an anticipatory approach for the identification of emerging issues or lack of preparedness; and the limited knowledge of the operational context from international humanitarian organisations.

Participants were asked to consider factors that may support and those that may impede the timely responsiveness of the R&I system to emerging humanitarian issues.<sup>48</sup>

## FACTORS THAT ENABLE THE TIMELY RESPONSIVENESS OF THE R&I SYSTEM

- Recognition of value add and necessity of R&I to inform action / new approaches
  - People will be more willing to engage in R&I processes if they understand their impact on the actual response, ie, 'the added value of research.'
  - And having conducted prior research in similar humanitarian crises, given that many natural hazards are recurrent, such as the hurricane season in Central America, would facilitate engagement in new R&I to emerging issues.
- Availability of expertise and human resources: associated with the technical capacity
  of the people involved in the response; their adaptation capacity to the diverse regional
  space; the teams on the ground to rapidly identify R&I needs; and the presence of sufficient
  expertise and people with the necessary R&I capacity. Participants emphasise that, considering
  LAC's reality of fewer resources and many limitations, professionals in the humanitarian sector
  tend to develop added capacities ('be creative all the time') for adaptation and innovation in
  operationalising the response: 'Necessity is the mother of innovation.'
- **Funding availability:** for example, a dedicated unit, which has dedicated resources from unrestricted funding (considered essential for R&I processes) or when operational teams have a line of funding dedicated for R&I from the start.
- **Coordination between relevant stakeholders:** including information flows between regional field offices and headquarters, and between national and regional stakeholders.
- Government willingness to pilot new approaches and recognise the need to try 'new things.'
- **Established institutional mechanisms and teams to rapidly deploy:** R&I teams integrated with operational teams, from the start, to mobilise in acute response.
- Presence of a strong private sector: to attract support of external actors in capacity development, mentioned for both Mexico and Central America regional space, but particularly Mexico.
- **Presence of a strong academic sector:** related to the presence of high-quality universities with a regional and global reach. For example, Brazil and Mexico.
- **Preparedness and an anticipatory approach:** being able to anticipate emerging issues and needs to facilitate rapid R&I engagement.

## FACTORS THAT IMPEDE R&I RESPONSIVENESS TO NEW ISSUES

- Funding constraints: Limited funding availability, short funding cycles and a lack
  of flexible funding: funding is generally not available directly for R&I, or when available, it
  is conditioned by the donors to be used in a certain way, or within a certain amount of time,
  lacking the flexibility needed to support such processes. Several participants reported short
  funding cycles a factor impeding factor.
- **Short project cycles** or year-to-year project cycles that create challenges to the implementation of R&I processes, which are usually time-consuming, long-term endeavours.



...sometimes the problem is either you don't have the money now or when you have the money cycle, which basically is the next year and then the next year maybe you're leaving to somewhere else. So that really is a blocking factor for projects. Either should be a no money project or should be a long-term project.

- Insufficient human resources and technical expertise: lack of trained personnel /
  organisations with research expertise in the humanitarian sector, for example, to analyse the
  data collected by rapid assessment tools; and limited capacities that are allocated according
  to the crises, leaving no one with the specific function of "generating knowledge out of the
  crisis."
- **Prioritise lifesaving operational activity and R&I is not a priority** when the dilemma of delivering timely, life saving aid is set over the people themselves who have something to say, but "they are not asked the question."
- Lack of will and interest among humanitarian organisations in R&I: humanitarian organisations' lack interest to implement changes.
- Bureaucracy.
- **Not adopting an anticipatory approach / lack of preparedness**: not identifying priorities at the time they emerge or anticipating emerging issues.
- **Limited data availability**: existing available data may be unreliable, insufficient or not available in real time, and so requires a budget, equipment and personnel to collect the required data.
- **Poor coordination and collaboration**: there are no coordination forum or platforms to discuss emerging needs and communicate these needs with R&I personnel.
- Limited national capacity for HRI in comparison with research on human rights issues.
- **Limited knowledge of the context** regarding the perceived lack of knowledge humanitarians have of the operational context.

**SECTION 9** 

DONOR PERSPECTIVES ON HUMANITARIAN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (HRI) PROCESSES

# SECTION 9: DONOR PERSPECTIVES ON HUMANITARIAN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (HRI) PROCESSES



Reported **barriers to investment in R&I** included *funding constraints* (in terms of limited financial resources, short project cycles, bureaucracy and administrative barriers; a lack of resources as funding for R&I competes with operational response priorities); and *funding influenced by political priorities*. Less cited factors include the visibility of R&I compared with operational work, limited availability of qualified expertise / human resources to undertake the R&I, and donor constraints (namely a lack of dedicated staff to administer R&I funding within donor organisations).

**Enablers for investment in R&I** include the visibility of the R&I need through media and international attention; the reputation of the recipient organisation; clear donor communication about expectations and requirements; sufficient and skilled workforce, logistics as well as easy to access, well-developed infrastructure facilitating access to research sites; good research capacity within organisations; research that demonstrates the added value of an organisation's functions in a humanitarian response; and a strong institutional commitment in donor organisations to the need for R&I in humanitarian action.

Formal coordination mechanisms reportedly do not exist amongst regional donor stakeholders and, frequently, coordination happens through informal channels and mechanisms. Other **coordination challenges** cited by participants included donor priorities and agendas which are pre-set and are not necessarily related to need; funding being politically motivated and directed to further a particular political agenda; donors competing for the humanitarian space resulting in duplication of funding; and an organisational culture regarding the level of transparency / sharing of information about who is funding what.

Seven participants identified as having donor / funding functions and answered this set of questions. Notably, any organisation that provides any kind or volume of funding could identify as a donor, from organisations providing large amounts of funding and aid to entities offering small seed grants or subawards.

Not all seven participants who completed this module responded to each question.

## **BARRIERS TO INVESTMENT IN R&I**

### Funding constraints:

- Short funding cycles: lengthy administrative processes to access funds, such that by the time the project is completed, there is little time for implementation, which impacts the type and quality of research that is conducted and funded.
- Access to funding: bureaucratic processes around organisation registration, tax requirements, etc, mean that some types of organisations are ineligible for funding.
- Insufficient funding.
- R&I funding tied to operational funding, with R&I not considered to be the funding priority.

### Funding influenced by political priorities:

- Political considerations mean that some crises receive more funding than others, and this resource allocation is not needs based (for example, increased funding to the Ukraine and a reduction in funding to other crisis contexts).
- Difficult to fund R&I for areas that governments are not interested in, or do not perceive as, a priority.
- **Type and nature of existing partnerships**: some donors have existing partnerships and, therefore, fund predominantly operational organisations, rather than R&I entities.
- Workforce: limited availability of required expertise.
- **Donor constraints**: availability of dedicated personnel within donor organisations to administer R&I (eg, develop and assess calls for proposals, oversee project administration, etc).
- Perceptions of humanitarian needs and the visibility of a crisis: although some crises generate pronounced humanitarian needs, there is a tendency to focus on the number of people impacted, rather than the types and severity of needs. For example, it was reported that there are profound humanitarian needs in Honduras, but the number of people impacted is comparatively fewer than in crises of lesser severity / magnitude in other countries, and there is a preference for funding crises that impact the greatest number of people.

### **ENABLERS OF INVESTMENT IN R&I**

- **Reputation of the recipient organisation**: well-known NGOs are more likely to be trusted by donors and receive funding than some local organisations.
- Clear donor communication about expectations and requirements.
- **Sufficient and skilled workforce**: some organisations have highly-developed research capacities and there is confidence that they can deliver the work.
- **Logistics and ease of access**: improved physical infrastructure, such as roads, ports, networks and airports in a region facilitates movement and enables R&I.
- **Visibility of an issue and level of media exposure**: issues receiving greater media exposure are perceived as important and are consequently considered for R&I funding.
- Research that demonstrates the added value of an organisation's functions in a humanitarian response.
- Strong institutional commitment in donor organisations to the need for R&I in humanitarian action. This includes having sufficient human resources to manage grant and funding processes.

## **COORDINATION AMONG FUNDERS OF R&I IN THE REGION**

Most participants with a donor / funding role reported that **formal R&I coordination mechanisms among donors do not exist** within the region. While some participants indicated that coordination is not conducted well for either operational or R&I work, another indicated that donor coordination bodies in the region exist, but are not focused on R&I. One participant suggested that because the total volume of funding in LAC is very small compared with other settings, such as parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, donors have the space to work independently without influencing the work or priorities of others, suggesting that coordination is not necessarily required given the reportedly comparatively small amount of funding – very little is getting funded, therefore, the likelihood of overlap is limited.

#### A range of *informal coordination mechanisms* reportedly exist:

- Reliance on informal contacts and connections to know what is being funded by others.
- Reliance on the UN OCHA financial tracking service (FTS) database to understand humanitarian funding, but much of the information is reportedly not sufficiently detailed and may not be up to date or accurate.
- Ad hoc informal communications between small funders who may look to pool resources and work together.

Coordination is driven by potential recipient organisations and not by donors: organisations working in the same thematic space often coordinate amongst each other, both meeting regularly and coordinating in response to a given funding call (for example, using the same template and proforma). Major donors then engage with these coordinating organisations simultaneously – this facilitates the process by which a given donor funds a specific issue. However, there are some limitations, including a need for improved communication between organisations so that they do not all undertake the same type of project, the need for innovation to come up with new ideas and avoid duplication, and the fact that some organisations, including grassroots entities, are less visible in these platforms.

Lack of formal coordination amongst donors results in a *duplication of funds* allocated to particular issues or groups, while others are left with little or no funding.

A range of **challenges to coordination** among donors were reported:

- **Each donor has their own priorities**, and often, agendas which are pre-set and cannot be changed, and are not necessarily related to local R&I needs.
- Funding may be politically motivated and directed to further a particular political agenda, rendering coordination difficult (for example, US funding for Mexico tends to be concentrated on containing the migrant population within Mexico, rather than focusing on those who have crossed the border into the US).
- Donors may compete for the humanitarian space, resulting in multiple donors funding the same issue.
- Culture of the organisation and *level of transparency / sharing of information* about who is funding what.

Suggestions for how **donor coordination can be improved** included:

- Coordination and information about who is funding what should be done through humanitarian coordination forums and this is dependent on *organisational openness and transparency*.
- Coordination can be effective when the 'right people' are around the table, with a focus on collaboration, addressing needs and avoiding duplication.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

## SECTION 10: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This consultation has highlighted a number of topics that participants believe require additional R&I attention in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), and provided a detailed overview of the strengths and weaknesses within the regional R&I ecosystem and ways of working.

Notably, marked variation in R&I capacity, investment and political interest was reported across the region.

Overall, the key findings of this consultation suggest that there is limited HRI funding allocated to the region, and that the funding that is allocated does not necessarily match with the issues and topics requiring R&I attention. This mismatch was attributed to a range of factors, including different donor priorities, limited funding available for donors to allocate, poor communication of needs to donors, and the political sensitivity of some topics influencing the willingness of R&I stakeholders to address them and donors to fund such work. Participants also reported a marked inequality in resource distribution for R&I throughout the region and conveyed that some countries offer a more conducive environment for R&I in terms of funds, infrastructure, political interest and capacities (eg, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico), while others are comparatively less developed (eg, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, and Peru).

Donor participants reported a number of impediments to investing in R&I in the region, including funding constraints such as limited buckets of funding, short project cycles, bureaucracy and administrative barriers, the need to prioritise resources for operational activity over R&I, and funding being influenced by political priorities, state interests, and geopolitical considerations.

There were mixed views about the extent and adequacy of levels of engagement of regional actors with R&I, with some participants reporting good engagement and others indicating that engagement is limited. Regional engagement platforms are reportedly also lacking. Generally, there was agreement among participants that national actor engagement is poor, although some stakeholder groups and national actors in some countries are more engaged than others. These findings suggest a need for targeted action to improve collaboration and engagement, and amplify the voices and roles of regional and national players in R&I.

Some groups also have more of a say in determining R&I priorities than others. Stakeholders reportedly actively involved in determining R&I priorities include governments at national and subnational levels, some community groups, and senior personnel within organisations, amongst others. Groups reportedly missing from the priority-setting table included local communities, a range of minority population groups (including ethnic groups, indigenous and populations of African descent, people with special needs, women, the elderly, LGBTQIA+ communities, prisoners and detainees, youth and populations affected by crises), universities, humanitarian organisation country offices, and other local actors.

The approaches to priority setting also vary. Several participants reported that there is no formal prioritisation exercise when setting R&I priorities. Others described a range of informal approaches and considerations, including the extent to which priorities meet a perceived need or gap, alignment with the work of their organisation or with an institution's headquarters. Or that priorities are set based on donor agendas or the interests of senior personnel within an organisation. These findings suggest the need for inclusive, transparent and rigorous priority-setting processes that follow an established methodology and give a voice to all relevant stakeholder groups.

A range of topics were reported as requiring additional R&I attention, including issues related to how the humanitarian system operates, migration and displacement, violence and organised crime, climate change and planetary health, the humanitarian-development nexus, the humanitarian R&I system and a range of cluster-based thematic areas. Participants also reported on the need for a range of specific innovations in how the humanitarian system operates, including the need for new technologies for data collection and analysis, improved materials and approaches to reduce the sector's environmental and social impact, and better communication mechanisms or devices to assist beneficiaries and to support information dissemination with relevant stakeholders. Notably, these topics and themes reflect the views of the participants in this small consultation and whilst informative, they do not represent a list of priority topics for the region. Further work with a large and representative sample is required to validate and build on the findings from this initial exercise.

For most participants, innovation was associated with improving methods, tools and materials used in humanitarian response. For humanitarian practitioners, there was some confusion as to what actually constitutes innovation. Some asked if adopting different approaches during operations was considered innovation. It was reported that innovation happens spontaneously (and often is unrecognised as such) as individuals seek to improve their responses or correct emerging problems. A diverse group of participants affiliated with a range of different organisation types reported that there was little space for innovation in the humanitarian sector in LAC and recognised the need to improve understanding of innovation and intersectoral collaborations in order to create an environment conducive to innovation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the key findings from this consultation, the following recommendations are proposed:



#### **Research and innovation**

- While both humanitarian research and humanitarian innovation generally have limited visibility and attention in the region, this is particularly true for humanitarian innovation. It is important to ensure that all relevant stakeholder groups have an understanding of the potential contributions of R&I to informing and improving humanitarian action. Improved awareness of the role of R&I will also facilitate the integration of R&I into humanitarian activity and across all phases of a crisis.
- R&I priorities should be based on local needs and should be locally determined, with
  meaningful, equitable and inclusive representation of a range of local, national and regional
  bodies at decision-making tables. Multisectoral and multistakeholder input into priority setting
  will help ensure that the perspectives of all relevant groups are considered.
- An inclusive, transparent, formal priority-setting exercise may help inform development of a regional HRI agenda.



### **Funding**

- Funding for R&I should be sufficiently flexible to allow teams to pivot as new R&I needs arise.
- Funding for R&I should be allocated independently from operational funding.
- Donors should consider longer funding and project cycles. This is important both for research, particularly those investigating longer-term issues, such as migration and climate change, and for innovation, which is an iterative process involving testing and learning and, thus, a timeconsuming process, not easily implemented in short-term cycles.
- Funding lines should be earmarked for innovation and initiatives that straddle the humanitarian-development nexus.



### **Improved collaboration and coordination**

- Break down silos and encourage collaborative engagement between operational organisations, government, academia, and the private sector to support the production of meaningful R&I and facilitate knowledge translation into useful humanitarian policy and practice; and improve cross-border collaborations between regional actors.
- Coordination forums involving multisectoral stakeholders should be established to support R&I production, information dissemination, as well as learning and improved collaboration. For example, a regional humanitarian data-sharing platform for best practices and innovation schemes could be developed, including both academic and operational R&I outputs.
- Ways to engage the private sector in HRI should be explored.
- Donor coordination mechanisms should be developed into formalised platforms, strengthening the existing (and more informal) mechanisms, to circulate information on who funds what and avoid duplication of funds and the unequal distribution of resources.



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## **ABOUT ELRHA**

We are Elrha. A global organisation that finds solutions to complex humanitarian problems through research and innovation. We are an established actor in the humanitarian community, working in partnership with humanitarian organisations, researchers, innovators, and the private sector to tackle some of the most difficult challenges facing people all over the world.

Through our globally recognised programmes, we have supported more than 200 world-class research studies and innovation projects, championing new ideas and different approaches to evidence what works in humanitarian response.

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The GPE for humanitarian research and innovation aims to improve outcomes for people affected by crisis by amplifying the impact of investments in research and innovation through understanding the priorities at all levels. It will provide an overview of the progress and performance of the humanitarian research and innovation ecosystem with a clear set of priorities for research and innovation funding and attention.

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