

# Using Evidence in Humanitarian Resource Allocation

ALNAP webinar

The overarching goal of humanitarian assistance is to allocate funding according to need. But in order to make a good job of this, humanitarian donors need evidence on needs, context, and the cost, quality and effectiveness of different intervention types.

This webinar looked at how evidence is used in donor decision making and priority setting, and the approaches that some donors have taken to improve the use of evidence in their funding allocations.

What questions are donors seeking to answer when deciding how to allocate funds and set spending priorities? What tools are they using to do this in an evidence-driven way? Why is there such an interest in randomized control trials?

## Speakers:

**AO - Alice Obrecht,**

Research Fellow, ALNAP

**IP - Imogen Parsons**

Head of Humanitarian Innovation and Research, UK DFID

**JS - Julia Stewart-David**

Acting Head of Unit, Disaster Risk Reduction, EU Aid Volunteers European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

**CP - Chloe Parrish**

Policy and Engagement Advisor, Development Initiatives

**CL - Charlotte Lattimer**

Senior Policy and Engagement Advisor, Development Initiatives

### Webinar transcript

**AO** Good afternoon, and thank you to everyone joining us online. My name is Alice Obrecht, I'm a Research Fellow here at ALNAP, and it's my pleasure to welcome you to this second episode of Bridging the Evidence Gap. This is a new webinar series launched by ALNAP as part of our work streams on evidence and evaluation. The aim of this series is to explore a key humanitarian issue through the lens of evidence and data quality. Now, in each episode, we are discussing new, high quality research on an important humanitarian challenge, and highlighting emerging practices in using evidence for humanitarian policy in action. Our topic this afternoon, on a lovely Friday afternoon, is using evidence in humanitarian resource allocation. So this topic is quite a timely one, while the humanitarian sector has always cared about allocating resources efficiently and effectively, in recent years one might say that this task has become even more important, as we see the level of humanitarian need outpacing the amount of funding available. In order to allocate resources well, humanitarian actors need evidence on needs, on contexts, and on the cost, quality and effectiveness of different intervention types.

Now, of course these questions around resource allocation are faced by many actors in the humanitarian system, including NGOs, but today we're looking in particular at donor use of evidence, partly because donors face a unique set of opportunities and challenges in their resource allocation, and partly because there's been quite a bit of activity amongst donors in the past three to four years on this issue of evidence and data use. So today we are taking stock of this activity, learning about some of the ways that evidence is used in donor decision making and priority setting, and discussing the newer tools and approaches that donors have taken to improve the use of evidence. So, you should be seeing a poll pop up on your screens right now. We'd love to understand where you think the key gaps are in getting evidence used for resource allocation, so please have a go at filling that in as I go through a couple of quick housekeeping points.

The first housekeeping point is on submitting questions. We'd love to get questions from you for the Q&A discussion that's going to take up the last hour of the hour and a half that we have today. You can submit questions through two ways. On the right hand side of your screen you should see, in the kind of drop down box, two sections. One on questions and one on chat, and so you can use either of those, questions or chat, to submit your questions to any of the three presenters, and we will be selecting a few of those for our discussion in the last half hour. I also wanted to point out that the focus of our discussion here today is specifically on approaches to evidence and data that can aid better decision making and resource allocation. So if you're interested in humanitarian financing more generally, this is a very broad topic, and there's a wonderful webinar series being run by our friends at ICVA and PHAP on all the different aspects and channels of humanitarian financing and how it's structured, so please check that out

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

if you want a broader understanding of humanitarian financing, but here, today, we're really interested in the specific questions and issues around quality of evidence and data use for resource allocation. Also, because several people have asked, just to make it very clear that the audio and the visuals used in this webinar will be available within two weeks from today. So, with that, I'm just looking at the results from our poll, and it looks like evidence on the comparative effectiveness of different implementing actors is one of the key areas where more evidence is needed, so interesting. An interesting theme, also, in terms of the current trends of today around partnership and locally led humanitarian action, so it's a great topic that we'll be addressing with our presenters later today.

Great, so just to get to our wonderful, experienced panel. We have three, actually four presenters with us this afternoon. First we're going to be drawing on the humanitarian financing expertise of Development Initiatives, to understand how they have seen evidence and data playing a role in shaping donor preferences, as well as what role traceability initiatives can play in improving resource allocation decisions. We will then hear from Dr Imogen Parsons, who is the Head of Humanitarian Research and Innovation at the UK Department for International Development, also known as DFID. DFID, of course, has been a leading donor voice on evidence, with their Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence programme, which was started in 2012. Imogen will be sharing reflections on how they use evidence generated through this programme, which also has a short acronym, HIEP, known as 'hiep', Imogen will be talking about how DFID uses evidence generated through the HIEP to inform their own decision making, particularly in reference to identifying and supporting effective interventions. And then finally, we will be hearing from Julia Stewart-David, who is the acting Head of Unit for Disaster Risk Reduction and EU Aid Volunteers at the Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, also known as ECHO. Julia will be discussing the different tools that ECHO uses to understand risk and humanitarian need in order to shape their decision making, and Julia will also be touching on ECHO's learning from the recent work stream that they have led within the Good Humanitarian Donorship group, on improving the use of evidence in humanitarian donorship. So it's a great range of perspectives that we have here today, and a lot of different and very, kind of, recent activities and approaches that we're going to be learning about. So we're going to get things started now with Chloe Parish and Charlotte Latimer, from Development Initiatives. We all know Development Initiatives for their Global Humanitarian Assistance report, and if you're not familiar with the GHA and you're interested in humanitarian financing issues in general, please look them up right away. Development initiatives also leads a range of research on various topics connected to humanitarian financing in addition to the GHA report, and this is what they're going to be talking about today, so Chloe Parish leads DI's policy and engagement work to improve the availability and use of data and information on humanitarian assistance. This includes working closely with the International Aid Transparency Initiative, as well as with local and international partners, to establish greater transparency and traceability of humanitarian financing data.

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

Charlotte is the Senior Policy and Engagement Advisor at DI. Charlotte leads Development Initiatives' policy and engagement on humanitarian issues, she's been the lead author of this past year's GHA report, and was also involved quite extensively in the consultations around the World Humanitarian Summit process, particularly focused on the issue of effective humanitarian financing. So now over to Charlotte and Chloe to hear what they've been learning and seeing about the use of data and evidence for donor decision making.

CL Thanks very much, Alice, thanks for the introduction, and as Alice has said, Development Initiatives is one of the big producers of evidence on humanitarian financing, through the GHA report and other works that we do, but we're also very interested in how that evidence is used. So, what Chloe and I will do in the next few minutes is to provide an overview of what we've learned about how donors use evidence in decision making on resource allocation. So I'm going to focus first of all on a review that we undertook within development initiatives on donor resource allocation. So we were looking at the motivations and the preferences of donors, and what we did is we looked at DAC donors, we did a mix of looking at publicly available policy documents from DAC donors, to see what were the criteria that they stated in those documents for decision making, about what to fund, where, and how to get that funding to people in need, and then we also looked at, again, spending trends, to see what the correlation was. So some of the main findings from that, as you can see on the slide here, if you're looking at the top box on the left, what you can see is that assessment and information on people's humanitarian needs was identified as a really key factor, of course, in decision making, as we'll be happy to know, and approximately half of all the donors that we reviewed stated very clearly in policy documents that they allocated resources on the basis of a mixture between predefined geographical priorities and evidence of humanitarian needs. And then there were still other donors that stated that they allocated resources purely on the basis of needs alone.

In terms of the sources of information, of evidence for those donors, there was a mix. So the external sources, one of the main external sources was the humanitarian needs overviews that you would find in UN coordinated appeals, as well as Red Cross appeals, and increasingly what we see is information, decision making based not just on humanitarian needs but on risks and vulnerabilities, and using such tools as Inform, for example. But it was an unclear picture, because some of the information, some of the evidence that donors use to make decisions is not publicly available, so there are some tools and analysis and indexes which donors use which are their own tools, some of which are published for general consumption, and others that are not. So as we know, instinctively, but as we certainly found out through doing the work, there are many other factors that influence donor decision making. These include things such as aligning humanitarian assistance with foreign policy objectives of a particular government, with maintaining ties and historical relationships that exist between countries, as well as, particularly in sudden

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

onset emergencies, big appeals for assistance that overwhelm the capacity at local and national level. So all in all, it's a very murky picture. There's many different factors at play, of course, driving decision making, and in terms of the sort of recommendations we were coming out with from this study was the need for more transparency, more transparency about the decision making processes and the evidence that informs those, as well as better coordination between donors.

So what we see is that currently at the global level, there is no active global forum for donors to coordinate their decision making. There are, of course, coordination groups for donors at country level, and those absolutely should continue, but at the global level there is no parallel. There are informal channels and-, but largely donors are making decisions individually and what we are recommending is that there are existing mechanisms which could be built on for a more coordinated decision making process. There's the Good Humanitarian Donorship group, there is now the Grand Bargain group of Sherpas, and others, that could become a more formal framework for donor decision making and greater transparency. What we also did is we've done another piece of work which is looking much more at country level, and there's just a few findings from that work that I would like to share. We did a piece of work which was commissioned by DFID which was researching and assessing the systems for collecting and using humanitarian evidence in Kenya and Uganda specifically, and there were a few findings from that. One was that there was a fairly major disconnect between the evidence being produced and the evidence that was actually needed and demanded by decision makers. So when asked, most donors and international implementing agencies stated that the greatest interest they had in evidence was situational analysis and analysis of best practice, but this wasn't matched with the evidence that's produced. So what we see is that over 70% of the evidence in-, humanitarian evidence being produced in Kenya and Uganda is randomised (? 12.59) and (? 13.01) and much of that is not publicly available, so not therefore meeting the need for that free analysis of best practice, and only very few studies on political economy, on the causes of crisis, and limited scope for-, there's often one off exercises, limited scope for longer term use.

We also had a look at the uptake of evidence output by decision makers, and found that there was very poor uptake, in fact, and we link that to-, we looked at 19 out of 33 of non evaluation related studies that we reviewed, where the use of research from the outset was really unclear. So it wasn't necessarily thought through, or if it was thought through, it wasn't articulated up front at the design stage of beginning on that research. So a couple of recommendations for strengthening the uptake of evidence, again we come back to the question of donor coordination, where there's currently limited coordination between donors on research activities in that region, leading to a duplication, and there was definitely a demand for more of a shared donor evidence agenda in the region, and another key factor was the need for much stronger local and national ownership of the research and evidence that's produced. So, still, it seems to be largely donor led, and partly-, in fact, very much to do with capacity constraints and with weak links and

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

relationships between governments and donors. So we saw that less than 10% of research grants in those countries for humanitarian research was going directly to local institutions, meaning that the focus of the research was still really predominantly driven by global agenda and not necessarily responding to local needs.

I'm going to hand over to Chloe now, who's going to focus much more closely on data on evidence of resource allocation and its use for filling financing gaps, so Chloe, over to you.

**CP** Thanks, Charlotte. So I'd like to start with a good practice example of how data and evidence are currently being used in a systematic way by a donor to inform funding decisions, and that's from Start Fund, which is a multi-donor pooled fund that's owned by its members. So when an alert is raised within the network for a crisis, a process is triggered to quickly collect evidence to inform an allocation decision, and this includes a needs analysis briefing which is produced by ACAPS, a field level survey of member agencies working in the place where funding's been requested for, and a financing briefing which is produced by DI, that includes analysis of existing funding and is complemented with more tailored data scraped from context specific sources. So this information is then collectively used by representatives from the network of member NGOs that make up the allocation committee for that particular crisis, to inform their decision on whether to allocate funding and if so, how much. So that's one example of where data and evidence are, kind of, actively collected and used to inform decisions, but in terms of the more systematic use of financing data to inform decision making, part of the problem is that detailed, reliable and useful data just isn't really widely available. I'm actually going to skip this slide for time, but hopefully I should express what's in it at a later point in the presentation.

So, to kind of explain why this is a problem, this lack of widely available data, I'd like to introduce you to the Nepal Earthquake Transparency Portal, if you're all not already aware of it. So, after the earthquake in Nepal, a Kathmandu based technology company called YoungInnovations set up the portal to track the progress of funding pledged by various donors in response to-, and they did this in response to locally led calls for better information on where and how all the funds that were being publicly promised by international donors were ultimately being used. So the portal was intended firstly to ensure donors and other international actors were held to account, but also as an information tool by all the actors involved in the response, to ensure it was coordinated and efficient, and that efforts weren't being duplicated. After setting up the portal though, it became very quickly apparent that it just wasn't possible to trace funding beyond what was being publicly committed by a donor and the first level recipient, so the, usually international, agency immediately receiving that funding, because there was no information that was systematically available on what was eventually provided on the ground, but this is the information that people wanted to know. So, YoungInnovations came to us and together, we undertook a traceability study, to establish a transaction chain for international funding, showing what was eventually delivered,

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

where, when, and by whom, with funding provided in response to the crisis by Irish Aid. So this funding was reported to the FTS, which is the UN OCHA's financial tracking service, as just one consolidated entry for each recipient NGO, for the total amount that they received, but our study showed which local agencies had been involved in the response, how much they'd received from the international NGO, and the financial values of each element of the activities delivered, allowing you to break down the total amount spent by management cost, staff cost, logistics cost and the goods and services that were provided, as well.

So, the slide up at the moment shows the transaction chain for Plan International, which was one of the international NGOs that received funding from Irish Aid, and you can see the green box is the local partner, in this case it was Plan International Nepal, but in other cases it was other, sort of, local organisations that kind of received funding to deliver work locally. So I guess what we were trying to demonstrate with this is how much better the information available would be if all humanitarian actors, so including donors, UN agencies and international NGOs, as well as their local partner agencies, published good quality, timely data, to the humanitarian elements of the IATI Standard, including really critical fields that allow funds to be traced through the system from donor to how it's used on the ground, and we think this would go a really long way to improving the availability and quality of data and information on humanitarian assistance, for informing allocation decisions, as well as improving coordination and efficiency, and ultimately, accountability towards affected people. Thank you.

AO Great, thank you so much, Charlotte and Chloe, for such a rich overview of current practice and where these kinds of cutting edges are. I think really the points around the role that transparency plays in improving decision making for resource allocation is so critical, and it was interesting how Chloe, in your presentation on traceability, that speaks exactly to the point raised in the poll that, you know, how can we understand and compare the effectiveness and efficiency of different implementing agencies when we don't even know the full ecosystem that's actually operating through these different funding flows. So it's really interesting to hear about, I'm sure there's going to be a few questions on that in the Q&A. But before we get to that, we have two further fantastic presentations. We're going to hear now from the first of two donor perspectives on this issue, beginning with Dr Imogen Parsons. As I mentioned, Imogen is the Head of Humanitarian Innovation and Research at UK DFID, which is a £60 million programme that covers areas as diverse as cash, social protection, health, nutrition, education in emergencies and protracted displacement. Imogen previously led DFID's Africa humanitarian unit, and has worked with NGOs and UN agencies across a range of countries in Africa and Asia, so quite a wealth of expertise and experience. So we're looking forward to hear from Imogen on how DFID is using some of this evidence internally to inform its decision making. Over to you, Imogen.

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

IP Great, thank you. Okay, I'm going to talk a bit more about the effectiveness side of evidence, although I will also talk a little bit about the more rapid generation and use of evidence, as well. So I'm really pleased that effectiveness has come out strongly in the poll, because that's where a lot of our effort has gone in recent years. Just as background, I've put up here four problems that were identified in the Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Strategy, which we will give you a link to later. This is from the refresh in 2014. The original version of the strategy was published in 2012, and was one of our responses to the HERR, the Humanitarian Emergency Response Review. Part of our response was to make a commitment to increase the use of evidence in humanitarian, and so the strategy came from that and then from that came the programme that I'll come to in a minute. Just to run through those problems, the first one about not having access to good information about risk, that's a really key one for us, so actually how can we make good decisions if we don't really understand what the risks are and what the potential implications are? So we've put quite a lot of work into that area. The second one, which interventions are most effective? This is really, really central, as well, and I think it's partly having the evidence around what works. There's also an innovation question, as well. The problem refers to a reluctance to try new ways of working and I think that's very understandable in these contexts. It's not that easy, I don't think anyone is saying for a moment that it's very easy to try new things in the middle of a response. So we've been trying to look at ways in which we can create the space for new ways of working to be tried, so that we can get better at achieving the results and the outcomes that we want. The third one, then, is about capacity to design and deliver assistance. So that's about, you know, the system's capacity to deliver the aid. Recognition there that actually things are getting very stretched, and I think since 2014 we have seen that become even more the case. So from that has come some work around local capacity building, for instance, and around bringing in development actors into this space, so that we can try and collectively deliver more. The last one, then, is about incentives to use evidence, and this one I think is very difficult in humanitarian, partly because of the speed, and I'll come back to some of these issues a bit more a bit later, but how can we help the system to be able to use uptake evidence more effectively? It came out of the last presentation, as well, that it's not something that we are always the best at, but we are trying to look at how we can do that better.

So the programme that came from that, then, the Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme, otherwise known as HIEP, is now worth around £50 million. Alice said £60, we do have-, that's because there is £50 million in the HIEP and another £10 million in another programme. So both figures are right. The HIEP itself is-, (? 23.53) about 25 projects, some of those have already finished, some are still running. The current end date is around 2019, although some are windows that may well be sustained beyond that. There are three main goals set out in the HIEP. The first one, then, around disaster risk management, through better risk analysis and better use of national capacity. So that speaks to some of-, the first problem, and one of the later ones. The second one, about how we can increase our use of



Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

evidence and innovation, there's a generation point in that, of course, as well, which is then the next one: how do we improve the evidence base? The programme is very ambitious. It tries to bring about a change in the sector which isn't just about producing more evidence reports, it's really about changing systems, changing culture, both to generate more evidence routinely through responses and programmes, and to use it much more quickly and more effectively. It's multidisciplinary, multi-sectoral, it cuts across the whole of humanitarian, and as I said, into the development space in some questions, as well.

Some examples, then, of how we use evidence. On this, I've gone slightly wider than HIEP, but I thought it was relevant. So the first one, both to anticipate and during crises. So this is partly needs assessment, but it's also risk assessment before crises strike, so we have a better sense of where we should be focusing our attention, where we might need to look at things like preparedness, prepositioning and resilience activities, and it's about early warning and forecasts, as well, which is a growing area of interest. How can we get much better at pre-empting crises, rather than waiting until there is a big appeal to need to respond? How do we actually see which things are going to get worse, and try and get assistance in there earlier? The second one, in DFID, every business case is a document we have to produce to get approval of funding, and every approval is expected to show evidence. It's a very strong part of decision making within DFID, there's evidence of needs but also of the effectiveness or cost effectiveness of interventions. The bigger the investment, obviously the higher the bar in terms of the standard of evidence that's expected, and for things that are very large, we have a specific quality assurance unit, which will review the business case in order to look at the evidence and often suggest improvements and changes. So that's quite a big part of how we make decisions.

We have quite a wide network for sharing, discussing evidence as it emerges. That can be emerging findings from projects as they're going on, it can also be finished products like systematic reviews, which we then often try and turn into guidance notes for advisors. So it's our way of trying to make it easier for people to access and use the evidence. Policies, I would then expect to reflect the evidence that we have, but policy teams will often also flag to us where there are gaps, and then we try and build that into our future research programme. And the final one, we do also try, where we can do, to promote and make it easier to access evidence across the system more widely. So just one example of this is that one of our programmes, Research on Health and Humanitarian Crises, is doing some work to support the Sphere revision, having recognised that previously a relatively low proportion of the guidelines were based on evidence. Obviously, this will depend on us having the evidence, or being able to generate it, but trying to-, to try and link it to the evidence we have a bit more. I would expect that since the last version of the Sphere guidelines were produced, that we have got quite a lot more evidence, so I'm looking forward to seeing that.

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

The next one, then, this is-, I thought this might just be useful, just to show a model. This isn't necessarily our model, although it is in our strategy, about how, what evidence based decision making looks like. This is one model, so the bottom-, the building blocks of evidence, agreement on the nature of evidence. This is-, sometimes this is one of the harder bits, trying to generate actual agreement on what the evidence says, because often evidence is contradictory, it takes some time to generate a really solid evidence base that's good enough to use for big decision making. Going up, then, synthesising, this is a point where we really, sort of, solidify, 'Okay, this is what the evidence tells us.' We then try and build that into training and guidance materials, as I said, and those can then be used in decisions. The one area where we would differ from this would be in something like a rapid response, or in some of the early warning and forecasting, where there is a lot more uncertainty, and we recognise that. So it's another area we're working on now, is actually now do we work with much more uncertain evidence, and still make good decisions, or the best decisions we can do?

A few examples, then, of some of the evidence we've generated. Most of the HIEP projects are still running, so it's a little bit early to give a huge number of results, we're still waiting on findings from a number, but one of our projects, Building Resilience, it has another year or so to run, but it's already starting to show us some of the savings and the benefits of early response, which is a really important part of informing how we make decisions, and it's both savings in terms of the cost of the response to us, which then frees up our funds to go into other responses, or into resilience activities, as well as avoided losses to the populations themselves. Refarming (ph 29.07) is a project running randomised control trials on cash and food assistance, looking at their impact on nutrition, and that's already starting to show us some positive impacts in Pakistan. Again, it's very early, but that's looking really positive. Research on Health in Humanitarian Crises, I mentioned, one of the projects under that was to support the anthropology platform in Sierra Leone during the Ebola response. I haven't actually put Ebola on the slide, but that should be Ebola response. It won the ESSE (ph 29.36) prize for that, I think, showing actually how significant it was, it was very directly involved in the response itself. I think that's a really good example of how we can move much more quickly than perhaps research normally does, and actually be relevant in the middle of a response. The Humanitarian Innovation Fund, HIF, many of you will know, has supported a number of projects that are now being scaled up. They've managed to produce enough evidence in the piloting phase to show they do work, they do produce savings, they are more effective. EMVAM, mobile food security assessments is one example, but there are lots of others. One I thought was quite interesting, just to flag, the Fiscal Disaster Risk Assessment in Pakistan, which was able to generate enough evidence of the cost savings that can be made by investing ahead of a crisis, disaster risk management and prevention, that the government has now taken this on board, and it's requested a major amount of money from the World Bank to invest in this. And the final one, Sheer (ph 30.36), this is an example, I think, of the more, another one feeding directly into responses, was producing live

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

updates on El Niño from about mid-2015, up until very recently, to support our teams to make the decisions, or like I say, the best decisions they could do, given the information and the uncertainty that they had at the time.

Finally, then, just some challenges in terms of doing this, because it's not easy. Getting the balance between breadth and depth in our portfolio, we can't cover everything at once, so how do we balance the need for very solid, very rigorous research, with the very wide range of questions we really want to address? How do we do it quickly? How do we do research quickly enough to be able to feed into a response? The two move at very different speeds, so there's quite an interesting challenge in trying to match those. Complex science and evidence, some of the forecasting information can be very complex, and very uncertain. So there's an element of translation needed to get that into a form that it's simple enough to make decisions. Ethics, of course, we're working in some very insecure environments, we're working with very high stakes, so this is another area we really need to think through very, very carefully in conducting research. Feasibility in the most insecure context, access can be very difficult. Of course, the ethics question comes up there, there are risks to researchers and to people who take part in the research, so we think very carefully about that, and then the final, too, around how we synthesise and make the research usable, so it's very simple to take up by decision makers who are often very busy and have a lot of other things to focus on. I haven't counted exactly how many studies we'll generate, but I guess it's over 100, and that's obviously a lot for a relatively small team on our side to really think through and promote, so we're going to have to do some thinking about how we can make that easy, as well. And how do we get the incentives right for decision makers? We've got a few examples of where things have been taken up and used, so some positive examples there, but I think as the last presentation showed, not easy.

**AO** Great, thank you so much, Imogen, for a whirlwind tour through, as you called it, the kind of changing systems and culture that are needed to use evidence for decision making within donor institutions. So there's a lot of things you touched on there which I know we're going to go into in more detail in the Q&A, particularly around this issue of speed, dealing with uncertainty, and incentive. So that's fantastic. We're now going to hear from our final presenter, this is Ms Julia Stewart-David, who as I mentioned before is the acting Head of Unit for DRR and EU Aid Volunteers at ECHO. This is a recent appointment, and prior to this, Julia has been working in ECHO for ten years, since 2006, and for much of that time she has focused on the international humanitarian system and good donorship, including on issues around strengthening the evidence base for informing decision making, and Julia has just recently returned to ECHO from a sabbatical as a visiting EU fellow at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, where she spent time researching good practice and organisational learning in the humanitarian sector. So I can't think of a more perfect topic to come from in order to speak at this webinar. So thank you so much for joining us, Julia, and over to you.

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

JS Thank you very much, and thank you ALNAP, for organising this occasion. I have the benefit, or not, of being the fourth speaker. So those of you who are multitasking, please stop, please listen, and listen for what sounds good enough when it comes to the use of evidence by one of the biggest humanitarian donors in the international sphere. I'm going to talk about a few of ECHO's tools, and I'm going to talk about its work-, I've been asked to talk about its work with other donors. But I'd like to make an opening remark, and this is it: producing evidence is a science. Using evidence is an art, or a mindset. And to do this, and to do this effectively, you have to make it part of your organisational culture, and you have to build it into your processes and your partnerships at all levels. So why do we bother? Well, we bother because of our mandate, our humanitarian mandate, which is to help the most vulnerable in need of assistance, facing crises. We help, and we focus on evidence because of its support to the humanitarian principles, and principle of aid, and last, but certainly not least, in my current role, we need evidence to keep making the case for investment in disaster risk reduction. So, first slide please.

So ECHO is-, I think we're probably familiar to a lot of the listeners, but we're commonly known as a field-based donor, and this is important to the way that we use our evidence. So I will be talking about two things. Quantitative and Qualitative evidence. And the people, the experts, technical experts and our national staff that we have on the ground, throughout the world, are key as ears and eyes in the way we use our evidence. And then, we triangulate this with global, science-based disaster, risk-informed data systems, which I will talk about briefly. Our assessment and analysis, to pick up on some points made earlier by Development Initiatives, is relatively transparent. I will happily come, in the questions, to which bits we share and which bits we don't, and why, but our funding prioritisation process I think is very clearly transparent at a global level, and I would like to mention, without going into the detail of how ECHO makes all of its decisions, that one of the key parts of the year, we're actually just at it, is where we start prioritising our initial allocations on a budget of humanitarian aid, which is currently at 1.5 billion a year, for the following year. Emergency aid, as we know, in many situations, goes year after year after year, and this is why we-, I'd like to particularly mention the Index for Risk Management, INFORM. I really invite those of you who have never looked at INFORM to do so. There was a lot of interest in this while I was over in the USA, it's still not well enough know, but this, I think, is one of the most powerful open and shared tools that exist, and that we've been working on, with DFID and others, for a number of years. I'd particularly like to mention this one because of the transparency involved both in what's there and in the process and in the methodology, and the fact that the process itself is quite a participative one, so those of you who are data experts, please take a look and please get involved.

So I've also been asked to mention briefly evaluation. Evaluation we'll come on to, but ECHO has a very systematic way of evaluating both its overall programme and a number of the themes that underpin it, and I will come back to that later, and then finally I'd like to mention research. Now, unlike the

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

programme we've just heard from, in DFID, what we try to do here at ECHO is we try to leverage the research that's there, and we try to leverage the research to apply and target it to our constituency and our needs on disaster risk management and humanitarian, and I mention this because those of you who are not so familiar with the European Union may not be aware that this is where the seriously big bucks are. Or, to forgive the Americanism, the seriously big Euros, meaning roughly 1 billion a year-, 1 billion on secure societies, 3 billion on climate change action, over a seven-year period, and this is where a lot of the research related to disasters and humanitarian is coming from. However, where there are disasters, we have collapse, one of our roles is to build the bridges, and building the bridges means building the bridges between communities. So we focus a lot of effort on science into policy, and to do that we have set up something called the Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre, precisely to address this gap, if you like, between those who are working long term on research projects and the needs of those who are responding and planning for disaster. Now, moving to the external side, we can't do this alone. International Humanitarian System, you referred to earlier, is very much a partnership-based approach. We have been investing for years in improving global tools and methodologies, and I should have mentioned, I'm speaking to you here in a relatively calm room, but in the middle of the hub of the European Union's Emergency Response Centre, and Coordination Centre, and at the moment we've obviously got colleagues frenetically looking at what's happening in-, with Hurricane Matthew, and how it's landing and how it's impacting, and what kind of needs we need to bring on in Haiti, and we are, again, in a known situation where there are a number of teams going in on the ground, trying to find out what the needs are. So lots of known problems about how you assess needs. What we've done about it over the years is we've invested a huge amount of money into both global tools and into methodologies. We have funded-, interestingly enough, for an evidence-informed organisation, we find it a little bit difficult to give you an exact amount of funding on how much needs capacity we do, because we often do this in-country, or also under a coordination brand of some kind, but we've estimated in an evaluation that we spent up to about 30 million Euros on capacity in the system to do needs assessment and to do coordinated needs assessment over the years, over the past decade. So I think ECHO is seen as a champion of needs-based approach in humanitarian aid, and that leads me to something we'll come back to, which is our role in the World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain, and good donorship.

That takes me on to the next slide then, please. So during the last period of chairmanship of the Good Humanitarian Donorship, between the US and Canada, we led a so-called work stream around needs and risk assessment analysis, with the other donors, to understand, between us, how we all use, in different ways, the evidence that is there or not, as the case may be. What we did is we did a study, which I think we can refer to-, refer you to later, where we mapped out the elements of some of the major humanitarian donors' decision making processes, and we looked at three levels of decision making. The global level, the strategic level, and if you like, the operational decisions that are made month by month, day by day, and

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

we can come onto that in the discussion. From the recommendations that came out of this study, there are a couple that are now feeding forward into the international and donor reflections on how to do this better, and some of these, we each have to apply for ourselves as donors, and some of them we can work on together. Let me just highlight a couple, because I've only got a short time left.

Next slide, please. So, in terms of best practices-, so, sorry, I should have said that from the study, we then came to a public document where we have, collectively, as donors, fed into the World Humanitarian Summit, what we consider the best practices to strengthen the use of quality evidence in decision making, and amongst those best practices highlighted I've picked out four for today, for the time available.

Production of evidence, I'm sure we'll come to this, and INFORM, I would like to mention again is an excellent example of this. It's how you share the evidence that you have. ECHO has a long tradition of making its global indexes available to everybody, open and free, and what changed with INFORM is that we brought on the partners and the data providers to make sure that we could work together on the quality of what was being produced, because quality in means quality out. At least that's our hope. So that's been endorsed, and if we can go to my very last slide, thank you-,

To support decision making is an enormously difficult task, when it comes to-, particularly to sudden onset situations. I think the scope for doing better on this between the main humanitarian donors is perhaps on the protracted situations, but to support it well we need to strengthen coordinated, objective and transparent needs assessment, and we need it to be multi-sector, and this is where it comes to our work that we will get on to later with the humanitarian partners and the main international players in delivering aid. You know, what donors need is a humanitarian needs overview and a humanitarian response plan which is sufficiently clear and coordinated and prioritised, not based on implementing mandates but based on the actual outcomes and-, outcomes that we would like to achieve, and the needs on the ground that have been evidenced, so that we can try to take a coordinated approach to saying, 'Who is best placed to respond to what kind of needs through which kind of aid, and through which kind of partners?' It's a tremendously difficult job, we've been trying to do it for years. Plenty of scope to improve, and with that, I think I will close on my introductory remarks and come back with great joy to the discussion and the questions, thank you.

**AO** Great, thank you so much, Julia, for a fantastic presentation really showing all of the different ways in which ECHO is walking the walk on this issue of making data analysis and data sources widely available, to address this coordination issue. It's really interesting, and I love the characterisation that you started with about production of evidence is a science, and using evidence is an art, so maybe what we need to do is work on bringing the scientists and the artists together a bit more, and you've outline a few concrete ways that ECHO has been working on doing that. So great, we're going to jump right into Q&A, and as a first question, for ECHO and for DFID, I wanted to ask about two different types of

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

evidence. Evaluations and then randomised control trials. So the question on evaluation goes to you, Julia. You already mentioned this in your presentation, we'd love to hear a bit more detail from you on how ECHO has seen evaluations and similar forms of evidence bringing about change. How do you see these influencing your policies and your approaches to humanitarian funding?

**JS** Thank you very much, and thank you for coming straight back to me. I-, actually this was one of my big personal learnings from the time out back in academia and working with Feinstein Centre and others, that how the donors, and how organisations as large as the European Union, are making use of their evaluations is not coming out clearly, I think, to those who are producing evidence and evaluating. It's an old discussion, and I'm just going to keep it very brief. We focus a lot, and have focused a lot over the last few years, on our planning processes and our quality focus for the evaluations. So those of you who have been following ECHO evaluations over the years will have seen a decrease in numbers over the years, but an increase in our attention to the purpose, and we think, as I'm sure all the evaluators listening to me are thinking, that evaluations need to be useful and they need to be used. So we've done some fairly interesting work at the European Union level here, and I'm pleased to say that with all transparency, we publish all of our evaluations, and we publish most of our studies, where they are of sufficient quality, and our colleagues over in the development sector have done a very brave study of the uptake of evaluations in development, and we have learnt and reflected very much on the findings from that, and we have discussed these with our framework contractors, so the people-, our pool of regular independent evaluators, and a few issues have been highlighted. How the uptake chain is organised, the evaluation ownership deficit in a large global actor, with many players involved in an evaluation, and then this one I think will be very common to people, disconnect between evaluation and key internal processes, and the key role, of course, of evaluation in promoting a learning and evaluation culture.

So one of the key things that we need to do is to align with programme cycles. Again, this was from our development colleagues, and we recognise the challenges, and we hope that if we had done the same thing, we wouldn't have-, we would have had some very positive results on this, because what we do is we frame our evaluations around the scale of operations and programmes, so we try and do global coverage over a five-year period, so that we're taking quality lessons into the programming. There is often a lag in the use of evaluations, and I think this is something that is very difficult for people to see, and this is particularly the case when it comes to the evidence from evaluations for changing policy. We often commission an evaluation based on a change in orientation in policy, and the most clear example of this over the years has been the move to cash, which we-, if you look into our evaluation database, you'll see some very early evaluations on cash and vouchers, going to our most recent evaluation on multi-sectoral transfers and different modalities of transfers. You know, is cash really best, in which circumstances? So we've had a very close link there between policy development and evaluation. And just for the sake of

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

time, I'd like to mention another issue, which is that we are the European Union, we spend European taxpayers' money, so we do have an accountability element to our evaluations, and that's particularly true of our legislative work, so we have, in our main pieces of legislation, the obligation to evaluate the entire direction and purpose, and implementation of the legislation, and the half year-, at the halfway point in the seven-year cycle of financial management. So here are the key things that I'd like to take away: we need, from the donor side, recommendations to be feasible, and we need, I think, to offer with our evaluators, and those using our evaluation, both clarity on purpose and a dialogue on how these are being used. Thank you.

**AO** Great, thank you so much, Julia, really fascinating, a lot to pick up on, and hopefully we can get some links around the evaluation you mentioned there. The issue around purpose is huge, as Imogen was talking about, there are real human beings trying to use these evaluations, trying to use this evidence, and so it's about decreasing the kind of quantity and really improving the quality and use, so it's fantastic, thank you so much. Moving to Imogen, to a completely, kind of, different form of evidence that's really picked up attention in recent years in the humanitarian sector, the kind of randomised control trial, or RCTs. RCTs have become very popular in impact evaluations of development assistance. There have been some early applications of randomised control trials to understand the effectiveness of different interventions in humanitarian assistance, but there are also some concerns over its use. Some people, kind of, shudder in response to the mention of an RCT. So I wanted to ask you, Imogen, because it came up in your presentation, and DFID has done some work around this, can you talk about your views on RCTs as a form of humanitarian evidence? What is it telling you? What can it tell you about the interventions that you fund, and how important do you think RCTs are, relative to other forms of evidence such as evaluations, as Julia was just talking about?

**IP** Yes, okay, thanks. I mean, as head of a research programme, you might expect me to say that yes, I think they're very important. We have got a few in our portfolio, (? 53.11), as I said, includes randomised control trials. The R2HC Programme I think also includes some randomised control trials. It's relatively early in terms of their findings, but as I said, with (? 53.22), it's starting to show some really positive results. So I think there is a lot of promise for using them. I think what's different about them to some other forms of evaluation or evidence generation is that they are able to really, really test and demonstrate what works, and I think that is a difference, because they're able to compare different interventions, or they can do an intervention with no intervention, but I'll come back to that in a minute, on the ethics, but they can actually give us a really solid evidence of whether or not something does work. We often think we know that something works, but sometimes, unfortunately, we're wrong, so I think this is a good way for us to be able to really show that, you know, we're doing the right things with our money and we're doing the right things for the people that are receiving the assistance, and I think that's



Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

the really important part. I think people sometimes, sort of-, people sometimes ask me: is it worth doing them because they're very expensive, as well. You know, should we spend less money and generate other kinds of evidence? And I think on the money question, I would just say that the stakes are really high in humanitarian response, so I think people deserve for us to be doing everything we can do to generate really high quality evidence. They give us a certainty that others don't. That doesn't mean that they're always necessary or appropriate. There may be some questions where other forms of evidence can give us enough information, and I think some of the examples around very rapid decision making, there may not be time to do an RCT, so you know, we're not going to wait until there's an RCT to make that decision. It's not easy to do them, and I think probably it is more difficult in many humanitarian settings than it is in development settings, so we're learning as we're going, as well, in terms of how we do that, and that's partly around the speed of programming, it's partly around the access, it's partly around the ethics, but there has been a lot of work that's gone into looking at how we do them. So we don't have to withhold the assistance, for example, it's not necessary to deny people assistance to take part in an RCT. There are other ways of constructing the RCT, and of course we would expect them to respect the do no harm principle. So I think it's relatively early for us, but I think we're learning about how they can work, and we're showing that they can produce really good evidence, so I think, yes, the experience for us is positive at the moment, at least.

**AO** Great, thank you so much. I think a very clear and non-technical explanation of how RCTs are useful as evidence, and addressing some of those key concerns that have come up. So that's really interesting, and for people who are interested in getting much more in depth on this issue, you can look at some of the links that we're going to provide afterwards about DFID's work in this area. I want to go back now to Chloe, from Development Initiatives, who had a fantastic presentation talking about traceability and transparency of funding. I think we all recall that the lack of transparency in how funding was spent in the Typhoon Haiyan response was a huge issue there and it was a major criticism raised by the Philippine government, regarding the international response, that they had so much funding coming in, the Philippine government had committed itself to a transparent spending initiative domestically, and yet they were not seeing a similar level of transparency with international actors. So one of the real advantages of having transparency of humanitarian action within a particular country context, such as Nepal, which you were discussing, is that it links accountability to donors with accountability to the affected people within that country. Everyone can access the same information. So I was wondering, Chloe, if you could tell us a little bit more about whether you've seen portals like the Nepal portal you were discussing, used both by donors, but also by affected people, kind of closing that long-held gap between accountability to donors and accountability to affected populations, and what you might be looking to do in the future to encourage greater use of this portal, by both of these stakeholder groups.

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

CP Yes, thanks Alice. So basically, after Haiyan, it's true that, yes, the government in the Philippines was quite critical of the lack of transparently available information on the resources coming into the country, and they did set up the Foreign Aid Transparency Hub, which was called FAITH, as part of their efforts to try and make information on the assistance coming into the country, sort of, trackable and more transparent, but I think at the time they actually looked at using IATI data for the hub, and part of the criticism was because when they looked to do that, they realised there just wasn't anywhere near enough humanitarian data being published to IATI to provide any useful information, for the purposes of what they wanted it to achieve. So I think FAITH gave a really good example of how the demand is increasing, within crisis affected countries, by both governments and citizens, as well, for better information on the international resources and actors that are, kind of, making their way into the country after a disaster, and how those resources are being used, and we've also seen similar local efforts to the Foreign Aid Transparency Hub in the Philippines arise in other crises. So there was a programme called Aid Watch Palestine, established in 2014, to track funding after the war with Israel, into Palestine, but I don't think any of them have really successfully managed to, kind of, systematically provide information on the resources available for a whole crisis response, or on how those resources were used, and I think that's probably because, as YoungInnovations found with the Portal, it's because of the lack of, kind of, timely and reliable, systematically published data on humanitarian financing available and on how it's used. So the traceability study that we carried out as part of our work on the portal was the first time, really, that this was kind of attempted in any kind of systematic way, and it gives a bit of a test case for the level of information that could be made available, systematically, if there was, sort of, better reporting across the system. So, globally, the Portal and the traceability study were used as part of the World Humanitarian Summit, actually, to demonstrate the need for better reporting and for more widely available information after a crisis hits, on resources, and I think it's fair to say that it actually ended up playing quite a critical role in convincing a number of donors and agencies at the Summit of the benefits of this extra level of reporting, which then went on to become one of the key requirements of the Grand Bargain. At the country level, the portal's been used by journalists in a number of local and national media reports, to highlight the issue of local accountability, and to sort of raise and illustrate questions around whether aid is being used for the most vulnerable people, as well as the role and the impartiality and the effectiveness of the local government in its coordination of the response. In-country, it's also been used by NGOs wanting to see where and how different agencies were active, to coordinate their own activities and avoid duplication, as well as for accountability purposes towards the people of Nepal, as well.

In future, we're working on developing outreach activities in the country to raise awareness of the Portal among more people, and more groups, and we'd also, in the long term, like to come up with a, kind of, replicable model using open software, so that similarly, locally based systems can easily be set up in other

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

situations after a major crisis. So YoungInnovations are hoping to, kind of, put together almost a, sort of, how to guide to replicate something along the lines of the Portal in other places, and they really do see the Portal as quite a long-term kind of, I was talking to (? 01.01.36) from YoungInnovations yesterday, and he described it as a five or ten-year project for them. So they'd really like it to become the go to place for information on where and how often things have been used, long into the, kind of, longer term rebuilding process, as opposed to just while there's, kind of, immediate focus and attention on the resources. They want to keep that spotlight on it for the long term.

**AO** Great, thank you so much, Chloe. Really interesting to hear how that's also going to be used to, kind of, close this humanitarian development gap and help with that, kind of, transition work, and it would be great to pick up more on how this is linking in to the post-WHS activities, such as Grand Bargain, so thank you so much for that. I want to go back to Julia, from ECHO. I think ECHO is known for a number of things, one of which is being a major champion of funding the so called 'forgotten crises' and perhaps this ties in a bit with some of the tools that you were talking about earlier. It would be great to hear how you have generated and used data to inform your understanding of what is a forgotten crisis, and identifying which crises are forgotten crises, and just maybe your reflections on, you know, why does ECHO care about forgotten crises? Is it because it's more cost effective to fund these, or is it for reasons of principle, or both?

**JS** Thank you, and thank you for really putting this one onto the agenda for us. Three things I want people to remember from my (? 01.03.13) today: the index risk management, INFORM, which we mentioned before, the Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre, which is where you link up to the science on particularly the natural disasters, and this, the Forgotten Crisis Assessment. You invited me to look at-, to mention purpose and how we use this. So this Forgotten Crisis Assessment that we work on, by the way, with our colleagues who are in the Joint Research Centre, who are our in house science service, if you like, and we've been working on that since 2004, and it's primarily a-, it's part of an allocation process, but it's also part of a humanitarian advocacy, or diplomacy, process. So one of the elements that we heard from the study that we did-, we were talking about earlier with the other donors, was to be clear about how rigorous and how transparent we are on our evidence, and this one has a lot of qualitative judgement in it. It's built into our annual process of allocation, and the trigger for applying the methodology is a field assessment from our own staff, who are out there, eyes and ears, day in, day out. The reason we need to do this is we simply do not have enough resources ourselves, as do none of the traditional humanitarian donors, to ensure all the needs that are there. So indeed, one of the purposes is principle, it's to make sure that, you know, when we have a new, (? 01.04.56), sudden onset situation, or when we have a terrible new conflict which is becoming protracted, such as over the last five years, with Syria, we don't forget existing, often small caseloads, of humanitarian suffering in other parts of the

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

world. And so just very briefly, the actual process involved in this, internally, in our annual budgeting process, we set aside 15% of the humanitarian aid operational budget for forgotten crises. Once we have recommendations in, we then run this against a-, well, we link it up to the index for risk management, so we link it up to the situation of crisis, and it's a sum of four indicators. The risk index, so the risk of crisis. An index on media coverage of crisis, and a run against public aid per capita, and obviously the latter two are proxies. Media coverage is a proxy for political attention, and for, perhaps, private and individuals' attention, sometimes, and the public aid per capita is really one of our reflections on forgotten crises. It's that what we really would like to do is to make sure these aren't forgotten, but often ECHO is the donor of last resort in these situations, and so one of the things that we've been thinking about internally is how we link more strongly the forgotten crisis assessment to a strategy for diplomacy, to make sure that these crises aren't forgotten in the future, and just to give you-, we run this every year, it's just coming out shortly, I mean, this year we-, unfortunately we have a lot of stability in the crises that are forgotten, and this year, new into the Forgotten Crises Index is northern Mali, but if you take a look back, it won't surprise the humanitarians listening that, for example, we've had the Rohingya people on the Forgotten Crisis now for, I think, at least ten years, and there are several other cases like that. Thank you.

**AO** Great, thank you so much, Julia. I want to pick up on something that you were talking about earlier in your presentation, about, kind of, quality in, quality out, when it comes to the relationship between quality of evidence and quality of decision making. There's this premise, or assumption, that sits behind a lot of work on evidence driven, or evidence informed policy, which is that if you have better quality and more relevant information, you're going to get better and more timely decisions, but there have been a number of people who have questioned this assumption, because they can point to different areas of humanitarian decision making that seem to have undermined this belief, and one of those areas is early warning, early response, where up until even very recently with the 2011 Horn of Africa response, it seemed that improvements in data on drought were not leading to earlier action by humanitarian actors, including donors. So it would be great to hear from both Imogen, so first from Imogen and then from Julia, how have you seen your internal systems try to adapt to allow for faster decision making and funding allocation for early response? This is something both of you mentioned in your presentations, and are there particular tools that you've developed or found useful for doing this?

**IP** Okay, yes, I mentioned this briefly because I do think it's really, really important, and it's an area we've put a lot of work into, particularly since 2011. I think we have come a long way since then. I think that it's been partly driven by the experience of 2011, but we've also invested, since then, in producing research that shows the benefits that can come from early response. So we have a much more solid platform now for saying to our ministers, that actually it is the right thing to do to respond early, it costs less for the response, and it's a lot better for the people who are receiving the assistance. That's part of it,

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

so justifying the fact that early response is the right thing to do. The question then is, is how do you decide when and where to respond? What is early? So we've invested more in risk assessment and monitoring, including the forecasts that I mentioned, so we use those at the moment, systematically, to monitor trends, try and anticipate where a crisis might worsen, to what extent, instead of waiting until it does. We're also doing some research now to look at how well those forecasts have been used, not just by us but by others, as well. I think it'll be really useful in giving us a much more solid picture of how well we really have done since 2011, but anecdotally, and from my own personal experience, I do think we have got a lot better.

I do have one more slide that we, if we can put that up, that we didn't have time to include earlier. So this is, from El Niño. It's a quote from an early warning piece, and I thought part of what was interesting about this was the fact it shows quite how much uncertainty there was at the time, and quite how complex the advice was. It's not very easy to jump from that to a decision to respond, and yet with the support of our-, some of our research teams and scientists, we were able to translate that into advice to ministers that meant that by the middle of 2015, actually, the entire office was aware of what was happening, there were weekly updates going out, country officers were preparing contingency plans, and the first funds were released on our side, approved on our side, by the middle of the year, with quite a lot more to follow later in that year, which is significantly before the peak of the crisis, unlike in 2011. So I do feel that we've come quite a long way with that. There are a few other things we've done that I'll mention quickly. We've put in place multi-year humanitarian programmes which generally have contingency funds built into them, which means that there is contingency funding available that can be released much more quickly than having to go through a new decision making cycle, and we're looking at other forms of finance, as well. Things like the (? 01.11.19) risk capacity, which releases-, so a sovereign insurance programme that releases funds based on rainfall information without waiting for the food security information that follows that, and then forecast-based financing is newer, we're exploring that, but has the potential to bring the funding situation even further forward, so you're not actually waiting even until the rain has fallen, but able to make predictions based on what's going to happen. We need to do some more work to test this, it's an area I know some other donors are interested in, but I think we're investing a lot in trying to get this as good as we can do, and invest as early as it's possible to do, based on the information that we have.

**AO** Great, thank you, and just passing back over to you, Julia.

**JS** Thank you, and I'll try and keep this relatively short, for the sake of the time for discussion. I share Imogen's impression that there have been some lessons drawn on the need to also start acting on the early warning evidence that we have. I'd maybe like to just make a distinction here on-, because in some ways this takes us well into a whole other webinar about how the humanitarian financing itself is done,

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

but basically, to give you the short version of that, ECHO keeps an operational reserve for every month, that we know roughly the draw on that every year, it's quite predictable when it comes to natural disasters, and we have access to something at European Union level called the Emergency Aid Reserve, which is for big decisions, and so when something sudden happens, or a sudden deterioration happens, keeping in mind that 80% of our aid is to complex situations, we trigger a light version of our internal analysis, and our internal analysis builds on all of the data sets and tools that I've been talking about that are publicly available, and it adds some of those other decision making factors, such as who else is present, how much capacity is there available locally? How much willingness is there available locally to respond? And so on and so forth. That's where we get into the art. But to do that, we very consciously trigger that analysis, again, if we're shifting money over 5 million Euros, to reinforce the response to one crisis over another, and again, we do that to make sure that we're reaching the most vulnerable. Very briefly, then, turning to the more classic-, the kind of, weather related disasters, if I can put it this way, here's something which I think is organisationally interesting in terms of the culture. In bringing together, in ECHO, the disasters within Europe, and the humanitarian assistance that we offer outside of Europe, we've also brought together a very strong focus on risk, and indeed one of the elements that has changed over the years is that we used to look, related to our mandate, at vulnerability and coping capacity, and now we look at vulnerability, coping capacity and risk, and we have a lot of specific tools, again, run with our science service, the JRC, such as (? 01.14.37) and flood warning systems, mapping, which we bring in to play when it comes to early warning for sudden onset weather-related disasters. Thank you.

**AO** Great, thank you so much, Julia, and just for Imogen and Julia to be aware, there are a lot of great questions flowing in related to this topic, so we can indicate to people where to follow up on some of these questions afterwards, and perhaps looking at some of the work that you've been talking about will help address some of those queries. So clearly a lot of interest around this particular issue. Just tossing over to Chloe really quick, as someone from the outside, how have you, at Development Initiatives, been seeing donor behaviour shift on early warning, early response, since 2011? It seems like there is a lot of change that's been underway, you know, what have you been seeing from the outside?

**CP** Yes, so I think after the drought in 2011, the idea of no regrets early action emerged, and this was adopted by a number of donors. So the no regrets approach basically refers to proactive mobilisation of resources in response to identified risks in order to prevent a disaster from occurring. So it's largely associated with the mobilisation of flexible financing mechanisms like pooled and risk funding mechanisms, which include a window for early action, or emergency preparedness, and it's basically based on the theory that investing on the basis of risk and a certain level of uncertainty will result in net positive effects in the long term, and will be cost effective. Certain donors have established individual financing mechanisms that respond to triggers, so crisis modifiers and risk financing mechanisms, I think US AID

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

introduced a crisis modifier mechanism after the Horn of Africa crisis, which was kind of intended to speed up the pace of a response, and it links project activities with triggers to alert decision makers to a worsening food security or nutrition situation, and that then prompts a simplified and accelerated funding approval process. But I think despite the momentum that was kind of built around this approach for early action, following the drought, that the focus on these no regrets investments has lost momentum a little bit since 2011, and hasn't really gained wide recognition within broader frameworks on resilience and emergency preparedness that have taken place. So this is likely also to be due, partly, to the challenges associated with incentivising early action. So there's obviously reputational and financial risks associated with acting on uncertainty, and the limited visibility that comes with successful prevention and preparedness, that can also undermine incentives, as well. I understand there are calls to, kind of, revive the no regrets approach at the moment, because it can add value by-, it can sort of generate political buy in for early action and restore consensus around the need for decision makers to take risks and act earlier in response to triggers, and evidence of an escalation in a crisis. One suggestion I think has been to set up a common, sort of, global system among donors for agreeing and responding to early warning triggers, and this would then kind of recognise the role of national governments and-, as well as strengthening communities' capacity to cope. I think that the UN Secretary General actually recognised the importance of incentivising early action and taking a no regrets approach in his report for the Summit. So that probably provides quite a timely opportunity for those who want to, sort of, revive this approach to no regrets investment on the back of that.

**AO** Great, thank you so much, Chloe. We have a question coming in for Imogen. So we wanted to ask you, Imogen, broadly about what you've been learning from the four years of the HIEP, and in particular comparing between lessons learned from humanitarian development work on evidence driven aid, but we also have a really specific and interesting question that falls within this around cost efficiency. So one of the participants has asked: what, if any, cost efficiency analysis is conducted when considering specific project proposals, especially as it relates to modality selection? And there I think modality means, you know, intervention selection.

**IP** Okay, so I think-, I might take a slight liberty and just talk about cost efficiency and cost effectiveness, if that's alright. The decision on specific project proposals obviously lies within DFID with the team who are managing that particular response, so the country team or the regional team. Ideally the proposal would include information on both cost efficiency and cost effectiveness, which the advisors who are then leading the response on our side would then set against the evidence that we have more generally, in order to be able to, sort of, benchmark and say, 'Actually, does this make sense? Does this match what we think is the most cost efficient and cost effective way to meet the needs that are put forward in the proposal?' The only thing I would say, though, is that we do need a lot more evidence on this to be able

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

to really make those decisions, make them-, really make them well. We've just commissioned a set of systematic reviews as part of our programme, and a very common theme in them is that we have a set of information about effectiveness, but not very much on cost effectiveness. Cost efficiency is probably a little bit easier to address, but even then there's a lot of difference between contexts, between agencies, and actually we don't have a very solid underpinning to be able to look across the sector and really analyse those. So I think it is something we would always look at. It's something we would always expect proposals to include, it's something that the decisions that then go to our ministers, they would then need to cover, but I think there is a need for a stronger evidence base, and I know there are some agencies, IRC, for instance, has been doing some work around this, that's quite interesting and useful, if you don't know about it, please do get in touch with them. Some of our research will also look particularly at cost effectiveness. Cash is an area where the evidence around cost efficiency is quite good, and we're now trying to build on that to look more at effectiveness and outcomes, so there are areas where the evidence is relatively stronger than others, but I think generally across the board it's something we need to work on more.

**AO** Great, thank you so much. I realise we're coming up on time here, with so many interesting things to discuss. I want to just throw back to each of the presenters, just a one or two-minute reflection, on a very big question, so it's a big ask, but we can't really talk about humanitarian funding and resource allocation these days without mentioning the Grand Bargain. Grand Bargain, one of the main outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit, which is trying to address a variety of different issues, but mainly to try and make humanitarian financing more efficient, and have a better, more efficient use of those funds. Recognising that the Grand Bargain is handled, actually, in different parts of DFID and ECHO than the parts that you work in, Julia and Imogen, we'd still like to get your views on the Grand Bargain as it relates specifically to these issues around evidence and data, so this is a question for Charlotte, from Development Initiatives, and then we'll go to Imogen and then finally conclude with Julia. Can you talk about which of the commitments under the Grand Bargain will require improvements to how humanitarian actors collect and use data and evidence, and where does it look most promising for you in achieving those improvements? So first to you, Charlotte.

**CL** Okay, thanks Alice. The commitment area where Development Initiatives has been most closely involved has been around the commitment on transparency within the Grand Bargain, and particularly the angle of transparency on commitments to the International Aid Transparency Initiative, that's IATI, so reporting to the IATI Standard, and if-, I mean, it looks promising, definitely, this-, if that was achieved, if, you know, a good quantity and quality of reporting to IATI, we would definitely have a much better picture of how much funding is available, where it's going, we would be able to see, where are the gaps, and to see-, what we'd critically be able to see, which we can't currently, is how much



Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

funding is used alongside development funding to address chronic needs and reduce risk, and ultimately, if the reporting was good enough, we'd be able to assess-, Chloe was talking about, we'd be able to trace funding through the system, so we'd be able to know not just how much funding is going in to this to respond to humanitarian needs and prevent crises, but we'd actually be able to see how much is ultimately delivered on the ground. That is still a long way from being a reality, but it certainly would be a major improvement in the availability of data on funding. We haven't been so involved in the commitment around improving needs assessment, and analysis, but it is something we're really interested in, because there has to be that link, of course, between what the needs are on the ground, and what resources are available to respond to them. I think it certainly provides, you know, it's promising overall in terms of, you know, continuing this drive to professionalise needs assessment. I think there are some gaps in that commitment, still. I think for us, you know, its focus is very much on what we see as, sort of, the current international humanitarian system, very much driven by the UN, and I think we'd like to see more of a collective responsibility, so that, including independent actors, as well as non-humanitarian actors, and I think that's something where the emphasis on development and on longer term risk and vulnerability is fairly weak in that commitment so far, in the Grand Bargain. It's sort of a bit of an afterthought that risk and vulnerability analysis should be done with development partners and local authorities, and that seems to us that something that should be really up front and central to the way that humanitarian actors operate now, and we should be making sure that humanitarian needs assessment is informed by ongoing risk and vulnerability analysis, and vice versa, and not staying as separate processes for different sets of actors. And I think one of the other things we would-, you know, I think is hopefully a natural progression from the commitment on assessment is the actual-, the use of the assessment data and the analysis, that's not articulated yet, in the commitment, that understanding of the data and making that link between the collection of data, the analysis, and ultimately its use to inform programming and resource allocation, decisions to make sure that data isn't just collected for the sake of it, but actually it feeds into an evidence base that governments affected by crises, that international donors and all humanitarian agencies ultimately can agree on and use to inform the decisions that they're making.

**AO** Great, thanks so much, Charlotte, and on the risk and needs issue, I think that sounds like something that both DFID and ECHO are already, you know, addressing and on board with, so that's, it's really interesting to hear where that's going to move. Imogen, just some brief thoughts to conclude, on Grand Bargain.

**IP** Yes, so I'll pick up a couple of different areas, so I'm not duplicating. I mentioned cash briefly, I think that's an area where, as I said, I mean, we think there is a reasonable evidence base, we've funded a few studies and a systematic review already, but we will be continuing to build on that, looking particularly at things like outcomes, cost effectiveness, benefits and risks, including around protection,

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

which is one that's been coming up recently, to continue to justify that. I think we have enough to start that process of scaling, but part of our commitment to increase cash usage is also a commitment to increase the evidence base to inform decisions on whether, where, and how to use cash, or another kind of modality. Multi-year humanitarian funding and planning is another area, so I mentioned before, we have a study that will underpin that, and is looking at a number of case studies of DFID multi-year humanitarian funding, looking at how effective it is, looking at how we use contingency funds, looking at the value for money, benefits, and at how it can support resilience, and then we hope will then give us more concrete lessons on how we and other agencies can do better. I think in others it might be a question of, even to ensure there's much better data to be able to track whether or not we are actually realising the commitments, needs assessment transparency, have come up, and we'll be looking at how the monitoring of the commitments is done, as well. I think having a solid monitoring system that's built on evidence generated around progress will be really important, as well.

**AO** Great, thank you. And Julia, just brief final thoughts.

**JS** Thank you, for our last two minutes on a Friday afternoon in Brussels, let me just make a couple of comments. Very briefly, you've hit it right on the head. Of course, ECHO's key interest, as you might have gathered from the rest of my interventions, is around the need assessment work of the Grand Bargain. We clearly have to do our homework in lots of other areas too, but the point here, I think, is that we can't make the leap forward on this on our own. This is really for everybody who's acting in the traditional humanitarian sphere, and I quite take the point that was made earlier by Development Initiatives that we also need to link up very clearly to, for example, post-disaster needs assessment, development actors, all sorts of others who are there in the field, increasingly those who are investing in insurance-based solutions, and looking at loss data, and we'll do all of that, but what we really want to do, out of the Grand Bargain, we're co-champions, so called, of the needs assessment stream, with OCHA, and what, I think, we would be most looking to achieve here is not necessarily more evidence, but more evidence use, and for more evidence use, I say it again, we need to collectively agree what we can use, how, and when, in the response to humanitarian crises and most importantly I think we need to look how the needs assessment information that exists links to collective outcomes that we're hoping to achieve. Thank you.

**AO** Great, thank you so much Julia, very succinct and a great end point, that it's not about more evidence, it's about more use, exactly what we like to hear. So it just leaves me to thank our presenters, as well as all of the people who've been sending in questions ahead of time and during the session. I'm so sorry if we haven't been able to get to your question, we will provide your questions to the presenters afterwards, in case there is potential for follow up, and you, of course, can reach out to us to pass those on, as well. There have been a lot of tools discussed on the webinar today, you can follow up with

Find out more about ALNAP's work at [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

individuals afterwards for more, there's also some links that we will be providing to you in an email after the webinar. So thank you again to our wonderful presenters for a fantastic discussion on a Friday afternoon. We hope everyone has a wonderful, evidence-driven weekend, and look forward to seeing you again, or listening to you again on our next webinar in November. Thank you very much.