
PROFESSIONALIZATION OF HUMANITARIAN WORK: THE CASE OF MALTA

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This report is part of the project *European Universities on Professionalization on Humanitarian Action (EUPRHA)* funded by the European Commission for Lifelong Learning program. The project seeks to contribute to the professionalisation of the Humanitarian Sector by promoting a competence-based framework for the education of humanitarian professionals (see <http://eurpha.org/>). As part of the project, Malta was selected to be one of four cases.

As the first exercise of this type focusing on the discussion of the professionalisation of the humanitarian sector in Malta, the particularities of the local context were taken into consideration, highlighting both the efforts undertaken in and outside the country. While the primary aim is to provide a cross-sectorial discussion on questions related to the professionalisation of humanitarian work as seen from educators, the government sector, managers and fieldworkers in Non-Governmental and Intergovernmental organisations (NGOs and IOs), general trends and specific issues of interest are also identified and highlighted.

The guiding questions in the terms of reference were used (see *appendix 1*) to guide the focus groups and interviews. Facilitation allowed for an open discussion, providing insight into the current state of affairs and feedback on the profile of humanitarian workers developed by EUPHRA (attached).

The report is divided into four sections. The first section expands on the short country profile for Malta with a more detailed account of the local context. The second section highlights the collected insights into elements that interlocutors identified as most important in the debate on professionalisation and the elements sought after by organisations. The third section deals with the a few particularities in current practices, perspectives and experiences of the different actors interviewed. The last section sheds light on the question of competences and current gaps in competence and knowledge. The report concludes with remarks and recommendations in view of further discussion on a debate which needs to delve deeper and to involve more actors.

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Of particular note is that the size of Malta and the collaborative nature of the relations between organisations in the humanitarian field facilitated the dissemination of the project's objectives thus creating sufficient interest with which to organise focus groups and interviews. It was thought that initiating discussion through focus groups as a preferred data collection method would provide interesting insight and allow for discussions to reveal trends and dissonances in the debate. Five additional interviews were also carried out to collect specific input from fieldworkers and representatives that did not attend the focus groups and could contribute further to the discussion. The Participants in the focus groups and interviewees were NGO directors, educators, government representatives and fieldworkers. Thanks to the size of organisations in Malta the perspectives of the specific individuals could contribute to all-round discussions touching upon both a more abstract level in relation to the attributes of the humanitarian professional, whilst also pragmatically discussing the need for professionalisation and the recruitment of operators. It is important to note that the overlap in existing practice whereby fieldworkers are, or may become managers or educators, is reflected in the research

A number of organisations were invited to attend the focus groups, and five interviews were originally planned. The organisations contacted were all included in the list of actors and educators compiled under the 2013 EUPRHA project which fed into the development of the Short Country Profiles now also available online. The response was positive and attendance of the focus groups was satisfactory, Participation was diverse and relatively representative of the Maltese scenario. Three focus groups were organised with the aim of fully representing the national context, and providing for a space for discussion between

- Humanitarian Educators (CAM Youth, UNHCR Malta)
- Humanitarian Actors involved in action locally Malta (UHNCR Malta, IOM Malta, the Red Cross, Organisation for Friendship in Diversity and Aditus Foundation)
- Humanitarian Actors involved in action overseas (Civil Protection department, SOS Malta and Right2Smile)

Interviews were then carried out with

- Maria Pisani - (University of Malta and Integra Foundation) - Humanitarian educator and representative of an NGO that operates in the field of forced migration in Malta
- David Castillo - Coordinator within the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers which falls under the Ministry of Home Affairs, National Security and Broadcasting.
- Kristina Zammit - Social worker and Assistant director at the Jesuit Refugee Service in Malta
- Glenn Cachia - Humanitarian Officer, Malta Red Cross
- Emmanuel Zammit - Emigrants' Commission a long-standing faith-based organisation operating in the migration field.

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A BACKGROUND

Historically one may date the concept of humanitarian aid and assistance in Malta back to the 16th century when Malta became home to the Sovereign Military Order of the Knights of Malta, considered by many to be among the world's first humanitarians, serving specifically to treat the wounded in the crusades. Whether this is a determining factor or not, the history of humanitarian actors in Malta is characterised by a strongly faith-based sector which works side by side with NGOs and more recently intergovernmental organisations, and to a lesser degree government/state actors.

Two recent defining moments for the evolution of humanitarian action in Malta are the start of arrivals of forced migrants to Malta in the late 1990s (first from Eastern Europe and later from Africa) and the Libya crisis. Accession to the European Union, the transposition of numerous directives and the involvement of our local forces in European efforts may also be deemed relevant to the development of Malta's humanitarian face.

Whilst to date the country has no humanitarian policy, the 'humanitarian-development continuum' (though this label is not often used), is primarily connected at state level with the Overseas Development Assistance efforts, specifically mentioned under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Overseas Development Policy document, under point 8 dedicated to Humanitarian Assistance. The document remains superficial, making simple mention of the non-state actors involved. Making reference to their action frames them as the de facto main drivers of humanitarian assistance together with the Civil Protection Department and the MFA.

The second dimension of humanitarian activity in Malta, which has become a primary area of focus for the country, is the area of support to asylum seekers which although not enshrined in a specific policy in connection to a humanitarian ethos, has come to dominate the national scene. The trend in the recent decade towards work with asylum seekers is set to continue with the instability of Malta's southern borders, in particular Libya. This sector has progressively become larger and more professionalised with a focus on longer term work and with increased international (in particular EU) funding. 'Classical' (post-emergency) work has been overshadowed by this sector and the areas of activity include: advocacy, legal aid, housing, education, training and work with children, unaccompanied minors, women and other vulnerable groups.

The state will probably continue to take a back seat in humanitarian action in the coming years, because of a lack of human and financial capacity. It is presently revising its humanitarian aid policy, though funding by the Maltese government to humanitarian agencies in the aftermath of crises remains limited.

On a regional level Malta became a donor country with EU membership in 2004. It had been an aid recipient until then, though development rather than humanitarian assistance was sought since independence. During the Libya crisis, Malta was a crucial humanitarian hub both for evacuation and repatriation of expatriates, and for coordinating the shipping of humanitarian goods to affected groups in Libya.

The specificity of the Maltese Context

As one of the smallest countries in Europe and in the world, although a micro-state Malta presents a distinctively complex context. Policy and practice is driven by an emergency approach and characterised by ad hoc and often arbitrary measures. Governments tend to lament matters of size and capacity when falling short of fulfilling international legal and human rights obligations. Combining its size with the nature of island states, contributes to creating an interesting context to analyse and operate in.

A second dual characteristic is the stereotypically Mediterranean or southern characteristic of informality which permeates across society. Although this may often seem to mar professionalism due to a number of ad hoc practices being put in place it may also be deemed to be an asset in a small state where familiarity in the context of human relations can facilitate action. Policy is often unwritten, based on verbal agreements, Informal, driven by individuals and not necessarily transitioned/communicated to the broader stakeholders. On the one hand this can lead to a lack of coordination, understanding and arbitrary decisions, creating a lack of coherency. On the other hand given the small island nature of the Maltese context it can also facilitate speedy remedies without the burden of bureaucracy.

Related to this context and also characteristic of the local context is the difference between public and undisclosed information and statements, which highlights the limited development in concepts of accountability and transparency. The trend has two facets, at a public level the absence of statistics on funding, and disaggregated data across the board makes research, the operation, and ultimately the development of strategic forward looking and inclusive policy challenging. NGOs on the other hand seem to have accountability mechanisms in place and continue to grow and develop their

internal and mutual systems of information. This is not fully the case in relation to collaboration and sharing of information with the public sector and other involved entities in the field of humanitarian action, a manifestation of which may be identified in the limited number of Public Private partnerships, and the limited examples of outsourcing of services to local experts and NGOs. The present inability to create fully sustainable systems and devote public funding to non-corporate work also sees a strong predominance of voluntary and project work

Actors

Maltese civil society, and in particular Catholic Church-affiliated FBOs, has a much longer humanitarian tradition than the state. The arrival of asylum seekers led to the creation and/or growth of various NGOs focusing mainly on services to individuals living in open, and closed centres and the community and less focus on humanitarian emergencies in the countries of origin (e.g. Somalia, Eritrea). These NGOs in the refugee sector engage in informal multi-stakeholder dialogue processes with the government and all interested parties. A number of NGOs and FBOs also embark on activities overseas in immediate emergency relief and often in bridging the humanitarian-development continuum moving into more development oriented activity. The countries Malta most often operates in are connected through missionaries or are chosen on an ad hoc basis in relation to current emergency needs. Malta has a strong tradition of missionary work. Thus, most humanitarian work would normally take place in the context of a more long-standing presence of these religious groups in a country or community. According to a recent study, Maltese missionaries have in recent years been active in at least 70 countries globally, mostly but not only in developing countries. This is an area that has also attracted a growing number of Maltese volunteers travelling to the missions to provide assistance. Traditionally, there is hence a fusion of development and humanitarian work.

Intergovernmental organisations

Intergovernmental organisations in Malta present a blurred line of activity. While the UNHCR has a significant presence on the island, the work it carries out is primarily in the field of protection. However it is also engaged in humanitarian efforts and is involved in a dialogue on the topic. The shift from an emergency approach to the field of development sees UNHCR push for an improvement in rescue and reception systems and standards which are of primary humanitarian concern, before touching upon issues of legal status and refugee status determination. The International Organisation for Migration is also involved in the local scene with regards to the forced migration issue but it is not strictly a humanitarian actor. The National Red Cross in

Malta is primarily a humanitarian organisation, it was born from the British Red Cross in Malta and apart from running an ambulance service and First Aid courses, takes care of logistical support for evacuations on an ad hoc basis (e.g. Evacuation from Libya in 2011). It also carries out family tracing activities on a regular basis for refugees and asylum seekers in and out of detention centres and they employ a humanitarian officer specifically for the job.

Ministries and State agencies involved

The Maltese government has played an intermittent role: it was very active during the Libya crisis and provides ad hoc contributions to UNHCR during particular emergencies, but has no regular humanitarian aid programme. ODA after 2004 has focused on development rather than humanitarian action (unless the detention of asylum seekers and irregular migrants in Malta – as per DAC rules accounted for as ODA – is classified as humanitarian action). According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2012 report the government of Malta's Development Policy recognises the *importance of humanitarian assistance and provides assistance in the event of natural disasters, armed conflict and other events on a scale that the affected area or country cannot cope with*¹.

The Armed Forces of Malta has also taken part in humanitarian and peacekeeping missions (e.g. in the Balkans, Georgia, Lebanon). They are also responsible for Search and Rescue Operations at sea which is the most humanitarian aspect of their national remit. The AFM hosts the Detention centres in which forced migrants are placed, which together with the open centres managed by AWAS are where a portion of humanitarian activity takes place. The Civil Protection Act of 1999 established the Civil Protection Department and its Assistance and Rescue Force. Under the act the department is tasked with disaster and emergency preparedness, nationally and regionally. Within it the Assistance and Rescue Force are the primary respondents for intervention in emergency or disaster. Staff are trained internationally through a series of DG ECHO courses and may be deployed overseas primarily to support actions initiated by other states and international organisations. CPD in Malta is also responsible for national collections from the public, that may be used in case of national emergencies or for the sending of food, water and other aid to emergencies overseas.

¹ Annual Report 2012, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; <https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/Publications/Documents/Annual%20Reports/MFA.pdf>

Budget

Whilst the budget for Humanitarian Action overseas stems mainly from the ODA budget (0.23% of GNI in 2012) the budget for Humanitarian Action locally is unclear and not fully elucidated. The 2013 Report of the MFA stated that the government contributed

- €25,000 through UNICEF in aid of children in Mali who were affected by the crisis in the Sahel region.
- €25,000 through UNHCR as humanitarian relief to Syrian displaced refugees in Jordan.
- €25,000 to displaced Syrian refugees in Lebanon.
- €150,000 to Somalia
- €40,000 through UN OCHA to relief for the population affected by the typhoon Haiyan²

Funds allocated by the European Union may be tracked whilst the actual overall amount spent locally is unclear and unrecorded. EU funds used by the state seem to focus on issues of securitisation and are directed towards the development of reception systems rather than to needs related to primary assistance and the well-being of these migrants. Whilst the national budget as yet has no mention of migration as a budget heading, it is evident that a sum can be estimated, but although repeatedly requested little has been done to give a full breakdown of expenditure. Collecting the overall budgets of NGO activities would involve a broad research activity in itself. A recent research study carried out by Calleja, Khakee and Pisani published in the *Mediterranean Quarterly* details the amount of money invested in overseas action by the Catholic Church, but this would also need to be broken down in detail to examine the figures devoted specifically to humanitarian action.

Education

There is a discernible 'old school' of self-trained volunteers and a new more professionalized cohort entering the field with a specialised MA degree (from Malta or overseas). The number of educators is on the rise and there are also more international training opportunities, not least because of Malta's status as a new EU member state. The new MA in Humanitarian Action of the Department of International Relations of the University of Malta is the first of its kind in Malta. It is offered both part and full time in order to cater to the needs of various types of humanitarian workers. In addition, selected courses from the MA can be followed as "stand-alone" study units for persons wishing to upgrade their skills. A final novelty, apart from the MA in Humanitarian Action of the University of Malta is online education (on humanitarian diplomacy) based in Malta, run by the DIPLO Foundation. On the other hand skills and competences have often been acquired through field/professional experiences, although short (often in-house) courses are also given. Training of volunteers and missionaries

of Church-affiliated FBOs tends to be separate from training provided by secular organisations, mirroring a certain "bifurcation" of Maltese actors generally. Short, ad hoc courses tend to dominate because of the size of the country and lack of material and human resources. The majority of courses focus on either preparation of Maltese volunteers going to work with missionaries in the global south or training for front-liners working with asylum seekers and irregular migrants in Malta.

² Ministry of Foreign Affairs Annual Report 2013 <https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/Publications/Documents/Annual%20Reports/2013/MFA.pdf>

B THE MEANING OF PROFESSIONALISATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RECRUITING STAFF TO HUMANITARIAN ORGANISATIONS

This section, will elaborate on the meaning of professionalisation and what competences, skills and knowledge participants look for when recruiting staff. The model developed by the EUPRHA project was looked at in terms of what areas were of interest, the needs specified, and whether the overall profile included all the attributes and training areas that would be expected of such a profile. It was also discussed in relation to the qualities and skills looked for in the recruitment of staff.

The meaning of professionalisation

This question was one of the most challenging and it is significant that it is unlikely that such a debate has arisen in Malta before. The focus group setting allowed for the pooling of ideas which, in certain cases were completely aligned (Local Humanitarian Action) or in total contraposition (Humanitarian Action Overseas). One of the great sticking points, was understanding whether the meaning of professionalisation was to be understood in connection with being a *professional* vs. *being professional*. Many associations supported the use of both definitions, and separating meaning was often difficult and the line between the two definitions often became blurred.

A number of interesting themes were identified:

The concept of a full-time professional vs. a volunteer

One challenge particularly in Malta is that many organisations are very dependent on voluntary work and an unpaid workforce. This is a particular challenge in the sense of professionalization: “there is a high turnover and people make very valuable contributions, but it is difficult to predict how the workforce is going to evolve and how long certain resources will be available and that impacts the situation, and the operational reality in Malta”. (Jon Hoisaeter, UNHCR Head of Office). Despite various factors, including funding, the primary reason behind NGOs expansion and contraction in capacity is human resource retention.

Humanitarian professionals vs. specific technical professionals

Discussing matters of professionalism gave rise to the importance of specific technical profiles in contrast to that of a humanitarian professional.

Many questioned whether technical professionals required preparedness training to be considered as humanitarian professionals. Furthermore A significant

number of participants expressed the need to employ a multidisciplinary approach; this is both at an individual level in the need to acquire a broad spectrum of skills and also at the level of team-work, where bringing together the right combination of profiles contributes to the enhancement of practice and ensures a holistic approach. This raises the question “does the term humanitarian professional imply an umbrella term for the different profiles therein, or does it refer to a specific profession within the humanitarian field?”

Professionalisation and accountability

Professionalisation is seen as key to, and a support mechanism for, enhancing the degree of accountability at the individual and organisational level. This point also raised issues related to boundaries, personal accountability, rules, guidelines, ethics and codes of conduct. Matters of transparency and responsibility also emerged. It was particularly interesting to see how responsibility towards their clients was considered paramount in discussions. Respondents also highlighted the need to recognise the scope and limits of one’s remit, which is also related to the issue of referral and recognising the roles and capacities of other stakeholders.

Whilst a separate issue in its own right, another dimension of accountability was the importance of reflective practice and the professional’s self-awareness aspect at all levels so as to achieve a “balance of ... involvement and detachment” and reach an understanding of “how they all work together.” (Glen Cachia, Malta Red Cross)

Professionalisation and Leadership

An issue given importance was that of leadership and the need of individuals to have ‘personal leadership’ so as to be able to work with vision and strategy. How this is an attribute of individuals and organisations alike was also raised. One person strongly pushed the importance of decision-making particularly in relation to crisis work but this may also be applied broadly. The need for decisions to be taken and implemented is vital for effective work to achieve change. Professionalisation was therefore seen as a broader dissemination of decision-making and analytical abilities across the field

Professional Qualifications

An interesting dimension that emerged was the debate on whether professionalisation is a result of formal qualifications, experience, or through the formal recognition of experience. The relationship between specialised (technical) knowledge and knowledge about humanitarianism presented divergent opinions. Experience still permeated all discussions as the most vital means of knowledge acquisition. The actual knowledge of the context and what needs to be done may vary depending on the situation but theory was deemed futile

without practical experience. Effective practice is informed by a combination of both generic humanitarian knowledge with specific technical skills and knowledge, this however must be complemented by a genuine humanitarian commitment. Humanitarianism and preparedness were seen by many as elements of training that are attainable a posteriori and not prior to hiring provided that the specific skills were available in combination with the right behavioural attributes.

Importance was given to the fact that almost every situation dealt with would require a broad set of competencies and therefore the need for a multidisciplinary approach at an individual level: *“you could be an expert in your area but you need be aware of the psychological aspect, recognise that someone is stressed or traumatised, the social element.”* (Carla Camilleri - Aditus Foundation)

Professionalisation: will and skill

As a final and vital point, the respondents made a clear distinction between an individual who may demonstrate strong commitment, but lack appropriate skills, and the individual who combines both commitment with a solid knowledge and skill base. This recognition implies the need to move away from a ‘charity approach’ (the notion of ‘doing good’) towards doing ‘good work with commitment, in a professional manner’. This extends the notion of humanitarian professionalisation beyond commitment to include the dimension of responsibility.

What competencies or backgrounds are the organisations looking for?

While on a global scale there is an increased call and demand for the professionalisation of the humanitarian sector, Malta may still be seen to adopt more of a traditional approach to humanitarian work; a trend that may be seen in the slow diversification of the job market when compared to the global arena. While the opinions shared in this study were interesting, there was a stark difference between the NGO sector and the IO and governmental sector. While the latter two are locked into standardisation and being guided by frameworks, NGOs tend to look more for a combination of competencies needed that combined particular with personal skills. While reference again needs to be made to the high percentage of volunteers in the sector, and the recognition of humanitarian expertise or experience (in the field) as a positive complement to an individual’s profile, much needs to be said for the fact that many of the interviewees discussed the value and importance of training and professionalisation of individuals in the specific practical aspect of work. While the charity approach, and the dichotomous attitude of the typical Maltese ‘*miskin*’ or disempowered pitiable individual,

drives much of voluntary efforts, there is widespread agreement that the will to do good without the skill to do it well, may cause more harm than good.

While the organisations we interviewed all sought competencies specific to niches or projects - very much due to the strong project-based nature of humanitarian work in Malta- openness permeated through the NGO approach. A restrictive behavior however characterized IGOs to their dismay. Of utmost significance was agreement across the board that personal characteristics are deciding factors in combination with particular skills or competencies when recruiting personal. Almost every single interview placed importance on the issue of commitment, to the work, to the overall objective of the organisations or the humanitarian sector at large.

In the sector Most importance was given to qualifications (with particular focus on government, IGOs and niche NGOs) that offer specific legal, health or medical expertise. (Not surprisingly, this goes hand in hand with experience in the field). Many raised the important element of “learning by doing” both on an individual and organisational level. This characteristic is potentially connected to the relative infancy of humanitarian efforts within the Maltese territory compared with those carried out overseas, where preparation and training prior to deployment is underscored repeatedly.

All organisations interviewed carry out different levels of training. Whilst most focus on training following recruitment, mandatory training takes different forms. Whether through courses delivered locally, internationally or accessible online, shadowing, seminars and CPD, or learning by doing, the ongoing training component was evident and noticeably connected to the size and remit of the organisations. The latter impacts the type of recruitment and inter alia whether this is carried out in connection to formal frameworks, ad hoc job description definition and hiring, involvement of volunteers and interns etc. The UN and IOM both have standardised job descriptions, job families and generally a high degree of standardization. Government entities also adopted a policy defining specific profiles that are needed for specific tasks in the field for example when it comes to care staff. This was noted to a lesser degree when it related to hiring management staff. The Civil protection department is specific in its requirements that include military training, and a series of formalised steps need to be followed for individuals to join the Emergency corps. While the profiles developed may not fully reflect the full profile developed by EUPRHA the different elements identified in the latter are all important points in the determination of an individual’s technical expertise and personal characteristics in the interviewing stage.

In the recruitment process and the staff's personal development, for all organizations, personal suitability and attitude are very important, but interviewees emphasised that commitment is not enough! Importance was given to character and personality that included the ability to communicate, collaborate, work together in complex settings. Experience of working in crises situations was also emphasised by nearly all organizations.

CURRENT PRACTICES AND PERSPECTIVES

The Maltese context presents a great overlap between the actors: not in terms of scope but in terms of individuals wearing many hats. This resulted in aligned points of view amongst the majority of fieldworkers, managers and education providers, with slightly divergent issues identified by the government actors. As such the following breakdown of actors may fail to capture the multidisciplinary roles of the individuals and the complexities on the ground, which are noted above.

Education providers

Whilst this was the group of professionals that was hardest to involve, the actors we spoke to were among the listed actors from the EUPRHA survey and represented involvement in higher education, the NGO and IGO sectors and individually all provided some degree of humanitarian education. An interesting point is that a number of the organisations that attended the other focus groups also provide in-house training and may be additionally considered as educators. Given that the formal humanitarian education channel is very new in Malta it is difficult to measure whether there it has impacted on the local scene. Whilst education may be considered relevant, it emerged from every entity interviewed, that contextual knowledge is of primary importance within the education package.

The importance of specific training was also recognized and, unsurprisingly, the nature of the entity impacted greatly on the type of educational package offered, particularly in relation to standard training vs. ad hoc training, content and methodologies of delivery. Interviewees highlighted the importance of a theoretical background to inform practice. It also must be stated that the theoretical insights included not only academic matters but issues of codes of conduct, ethics, and issues of role, responsibility and accountability which are in turn closely connected with power issues and the absence of accountability towards service users.

The education providers involved in the study were also all actors and this was important since it assisted them in the identification of the pitfalls of the current formal education provided. They were thus able to reflect on the need and availability and accessibility of formal professional courses in terms of time and duration and structured so as to recognise individuals' experience and past qualifications. Thus a desirable element that need to be enhanced was that of a richer variety in modules offered for Continuous Professional Development.

Almost all organisations involve a large number of vol-

unteers and interns. The practical placement of individuals in organisations is significant at a Human Resources level but is also extremely important from a learning perspective in terms of individuals and their personal growth. Of note is that a number of these interns (possibly more than half) are foreign.

One opinion in relation to the formal professionalisation of the humanitarian worker bridging the gap between formal education and work saw the utility of looking at the process from different angles in order to understand how education, specifically professional education, can help the individual to recognize his/her preferred niche in terms of a future career. This gives the individual the benefit of operating under a clearly defined label. The creation of a specific work categories under the banner of humanitarian work and its professionalisation can facilitate the process as to what it is and contributes to improved recognition at university level and society in general.

While almost all of the participants in the research conducted organise internal or network based trainings, these may be ad hoc, not credited and are used primarily in relation to transfer of skills and competencies to new staff. In connection to the previous point on the challenge of developing organisational capacity, this highlights the potential need for a more shared information banks or accessible courses.

Fieldworkers

A large proportion of humanitarian workers' in Malta operate primarily in the local field. Overseas humanitarian action involves a small number of NGO operatives and Civil Protection officials who are highly involved specifically in emergency relief through the Assistance and Rescue Force or to a lesser degree in combination with Armed Forces operations. The profiles of the individuals involved present an immense wealth of diversity yet within similar sectors; these would include social workers, psychologists, human rights, legal, and medical professionals and civil protection officials. Their involvement in the sector was evidently driven by commitment and dedication to the field, rather than specifically humanitarian education or backgrounds.

On an individual level the fieldworkers interviewed shared input on the personal dimension of professional humanitarian work. Many of the respondents expressed frustration in finding the time to reflect on problems and shortcoming in order to act accordingly. They added that this becomes more problematic with time, wherein the priorities of getting the job 'done' did not allow the opportunity for reflection, and continued education. Important points in the fieldworkers' experience are the

focus on the team, the need for mutual support and how the sharing of experiences both for support counseling and debriefing is vital. These contribute to the professionalisation of the individual through improved analytical skills, personal understanding and improved communication skills resulting in better teamwork.

Another important element outlined by fieldworkers is the importance of collected professionalism and the multidisciplinary nature of teams working closely in discussing cases and situations so as to work towards the best outcome. The importance of multidisciplinary teamwork for fieldworkers seemed to be evident both within an organisation but also in collaboration between numerous organisations.

Managers

The managers interviewed gave diverse answers, which were very much connected to the nature of the organisation's operation. While experience, and specifically experience in the humanitarian field, was universally important, the search for people with experience depended on the specific job since in Malta, interns are also hired and their immediate immersion into the humanitarian fieldwork which is easier in a small country context meant that they accrued experience on the job.

Organisations that presented standardised frameworks such as UNHCR, IOM, and the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum seekers sought professionals specifically in connection to the pre-defined profiles, combining, background, skill and organisational specificity in formalised HR systems. This may also be true of NGOs that do have a different approach to hiring professionals; the majority of them hiring specific professionals in relation to niche work or specific knowledge required. However, this is done under the defining of ToRs and JDs which are at the discretion of the organisation rather than centralised.

Deployment overseas through one of the only NGOs that works in Emergency response would take place on the basis of specific in-depth knowledge which would be utilized immediately. For example where WASH services were a priority, the engineer hired would simply be an expert in the project needed. The approach where entry for operation and exit upon delivery was the process used was criticised by some of the participants, primarily because the worker may not be given the time to develop within the humanitarian-development continuum.

The predominant hiring trend in Malta was described as being project based and goal oriented, where the most weighting is given to experience in combination with personal characteristics, attitude and values that all participants prioritise.

Policy makers - Government officials

While the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Malta is responsible for the drafting of the Overseas Development Policy which included the field of humanitarian assistance, in practical terms the organisations involved are those dealing with forced migration matters in Malta and the arm of the Civil Protection involved in Emergency and Rescue locally and overseas. The latter two were involved in the study. Although it was notably challenging to receive direct answers from state actors, a number of common points emerged. Within the department that deals with the humanitarian care provided to Asylum seekers/refugees/migrants the concept of professionalisation and the need of humanitarian professionals was included within the current framework for recruitment. The latter defines the qualifications required for the specific job roles created. However whilst experience in the humanitarian field was regarded as an additional asset, there was little importance given to the attainment of humanitarian competences. Rather the focus was mainly on social studies as the jobs available were created within this niche despite the fact that working within systems of reception and accommodation also involved the need for humanitarian expertise. Emphasis was placed on the need for specific technical knowledge i.e. namely psychologists, social workers, and care workers, the latter of which are incidentally and disappointingly also the least qualified of the care system and are tasked with carrying the humanitarian flag for the office in question.

D CHANGING COMPETENCE AND KNOWLEDGE NEEDS; CURRENT COMPETENCE AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS

In an ever-changing context the needs and particularities of humanitarian actors are in constant flux. Malta presents a scenario in which the NGOs are the holders of a large degree of expertise and a history of working in operations in humanitarian crises or endeavours. Having operated for numerous years, the internal composition of these entities exhibit noticeable advanced competences, skills and experience. However, newer organisations struggle in maintaining resources and building a professional body of individuals. While the duality of operating in ongoing changing situations and attempting to continue training proves to be challenging, Malta is an example where specialisation is vital, and flexibility, adaptability and multidisciplinary skills are essential.

Changing conditions

The changing conditions identified through this study are few yet poignant:

Professionalisation

There was general agreement amongst the respondents that traditional idealism is clearly no longer enough to work in this field. Donors and grants formulate requirements and conditions which require organisations to deliver more and prioritise funding criteria alongside population and project needs. Managers are in disagreement as to whether their organisations must improve both in technical skills and in understanding humanitarianism or whether the onus should be to simply deliver results. Specific scientific and technical knowledge is more sought after in the sectors as they increase organizational scope that requires the need for increased knowledge and capacity. One of the main impediments to the professionalisation of the field however continues to be that of limited resources

Complexity of relationships

Many interviewees identified more complexity on the ground as a key change. The need for ongoing search for collaboration and building webs of action rather than overlap is vital in terms of effectiveness of action. The need to be involved in the education and professionalisation of the sector was recognised by the actors with their continued focus on the need to know the local context in detail.

Moving from Emergency vs. Crisis vs. Development

There is increased importance in understanding the relationship between relief and development. Humanitarian

tarian work has become more difficult to separate from development and processes of change.

Additional observation

The Bureaucratization of humanitarian assistance requires new skills and competencies particularly in relation to inter alia project cycle management, fund management and reporting etc.

Gaps

In analysing the profile presented by EUPRHA the essential elements required for humanitarian actors in Malta emerged through the understanding of what organisations and individuals focus on. Whilst the questionnaire didn't specifically ask to identify the gaps in the current approach, interpretative and analytical work allowed the transposition of what organisations put more emphasis on in discussion, and eventually emerged as lacking in the local scene.

Accountability

The focus on this point in the discussion on the meaning of professionalisation can also be connected to the country's dire need to improve systems of accountability on an individual, organisational and national level. Moral accountability through more codes of conduct is also vital. Accountability to the individuals worked with is of primary importance and it was observed how not all actors take on a participatory approach. The importance of this is connected with professionalisation as it guides intervention which is needs based and sustainable.

Deeper cross-sectoral collaboration

Collaboration in Malta admittedly functions well on a local level in the forced migration field where coordinated action limits overlap. However this is not the case with respect to other actors, particularly the government, business sector, the Army or Civil protection and to a lesser extent faith based organizations.

Deeper understanding of what is Not a complex emergency although somewhat self-evident - is important and, on a national level, Malta and local actors need to transition away from the crisis mentality towards systematic approaches.

More investment in full-time resources

Problems remain with regards to the absence, or lack of dissemination of information, the void in disaggregated data, and the limited number of assessments, research and reports as a result of limited human and financial resources made available for these activities.

E CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is evident that the local context exhibits the availability of; contextualised skills, specific technical knowledge and a multitude of trained professionals. While those in employment continue to be outnumbered by volunteers, the presence of the latter results in a number of advantages and disadvantages, including the difficulty of moving wholly from a tradition of "doing good" to "doing a good job". Whilst professionals are aware that the movement towards professionalisation is the way to go, disagreement over the need for specific humanitarian professionals versus that of technical professionals is one of strongest points of view identified. It is also worth noting how leadership is deemed as a defining quality in the field regardless of the nature of the actor. NGO collaboration in the humanitarian field in Malta is noteworthy; this collaboration lends itself to the sharing of knowledge, a coordinated approach and element of specialisation that is encouraging for the future development of professionalisation in the humanitarian field.

This exercise provided the first opportunity to explore and reflect on the local humanitarian context and the development of professionalism in Malta. Certainly this report highlights the need for further research.

To conclude briefly, some recommendations need to be outlined:

- The research process and emergent findings highlighted the need for ongoing and increased communication between the public and private sector. Certainly, the results demonstrate evidence of effective dialogue, and indeed agreement on the needs and gaps within the field between NGOs. Such communication and debate - which would ideally be ongoing - needs to be extended to other entities ensuring a multi-stakeholder approach.
- In the education field more effort needs to be placed on promoting the current Masters in Humanitarian Action. This should be done following adaptation of as many modules as possible as certifiable continuous professional development opportunities. It is also important to formally recognize and accrediting experience and training delivered/acquired in-house.

While ongoing training takes place within NGOs the pace at which their professionalisation develops surpasses that of the public sector staff. This may be due to the availability of resources, bureaucratic processes or indeed the willingness of NGOs to take on training in

a voluntary manner. In this regard the findings suggest a noticeable gap between the two sectors that needs to be bridged.

→ Interestingly whilst not necessarily trained in humanitarian action, the local context hosts a number of professionals with diverse and extensive experience in the field who may give a valuable contribution to the further development of the Masters in Humanitarian Action and hence the professionalisation of other individuals through the formal education path.

→ This research clearly shows that there is a strong need to support organisations in the transition from volunteer to professional. However this must be achieved without a shift towards too much professionalism and structure so as to not result in forgetting the individual and his or her needs. For even in big projects, where you have to be professional, the success of the project is always dependent on the people and the needs of the people you are going to serve." (Kristina Zammit - Jesuit Refugee Service)

With regards to the mapping exercise initiated by the EUPRHA project, it is problematic in its representation of actors within the Maltese context. The findings highlight that whilst a number of organisations provide an educational role, specific professional humanitarian education is almost exclusively limited to the formal education setting, namely the Masters in Humanitarian Action.

The following passage highlights the very particular nature of humanitarian practice in Malta.

The interviewee, an individual with field experience both internationally and locally, provides some interesting insights in to whether or not locally Malta needs to "box in" the skills under the heading of a humanitarian worker, *"I'm not entirely convinced that is needed, but if you look broader at the region and globally - knowing that if someone wants to work in complex emergencies there is so much more to that beyond the very skills that you actually need to know the specificities of international cooperation around these operations and I think that there is definitely value in having specific expertise not only on logistics or law, or medical work but that you know, that you are trained on the collaboration in such operations. That would also be valuable here obviously but given that Malta isn't a big humanitarian hub, it's not a complex emergency, ...it's not essential"*.

Malta falls into a niche-like character, but on a global level the participant added that *"certainly over time, people lose interest in your background, what have you*

done, what is your role and your views, the longer you stay the less focus there is on what was your training. It's natural, you pick up skills as you go along but its a mix of both".

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