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# PROFESSIONALIZATION OF HUMANITARIAN WORK: THE NORWEGIAN CASE

CATHRINE BRUN AND CHAMILA ATTANAPOLA

Department of Geography,  
Norwegian University of Science and Technology  
Trondheim, Norway



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 professionalization 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, Norway was selected to be one of four cases. According to our Terms of Reference for the case study (see *Appendix 1*), the purpose is to provide a discussion at country level of questions related to professionalization of humanitarian work as seen from educators, government sector, managers and fieldworks in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Trends, specificities and potentialities will be highlighted and profiles of humanitarian workers developed in the project (see *Figure 1*) will be discussed by reflecting on the current practices of the country presented.

In order to understand the approaches to and challenges regarding professionalization in the humanitarian sector, we interviewed educators, managers, recruiting personnel, fieldworkers as well as policy makers. To some extent, the roles of the people interviewed overlapped so that we interviewed someone with longstanding field experience who is now in a more managerial position, or an educator with long term managerial and field-experience in the sector (see *Appendix 2 for list of interviewees*).

Based on the general questions provided for all the case studies of the project, we developed an interview guide for each of the groups of actors, but often the questions were similar and when an interviewee had more than one relevant experience, we asked questions relevant for all experiences gained throughout his or her career. Most interviews were conducted in the Norwegian language and hence interview guides were also formulated in Norwegian. We have attached an appendix with the general categories of questions as provided by the project (see *Appendix 1*). The questions asked revolved around issues of experiences, current practices, the meaning of professionalization, current gaps in knowledge, skills and competencies and future challenges.

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Some interviews were conducted over the phone or skype, email, and some interviews were meetings in Oslo, the capital of Norway. Interviews lasted from ca one hour till nearly three hours. To prepare for the interviews, we also used reports (annual reports, evaluation reports and information material) from NGOs and the Government of Norway and academic publications (mainly academic journal articles) some of which are also cited in this report. Finding the interviewees were based on existing networks as well as the survey of educators and humanitarian organizations conducted in early 2013 as part of the EUPRHA project (see <http://hamap.euprha.org/country-profiles/norway/>).

An important starting point for the report is the general impression gained during interviewing that there is a genuine interest in discussing processes of building competence in the sector. All people interviewed were interested in the profiles developed in the project, as presented in Figure 1 below. Interviewees found them relevant and interesting for their own organizations. The project was thus warmly welcomed by most of the interviewees.

The report is structured as follows. After this introduction, first, a brief literature review of the background of Norwegian Humanitarian Assistance and academic research on Norway's contribution in the sector are discussed. Second, a meaning of professionalization is established based on the interviews conducted and we present the competences that organizations look for. Third, we introduce the current practices, perspectives and experiences as expressed by the different actors interviewed. Fourth, and based on the interviews, we discuss the changing needs for competence and knowledge together with what is perceived as gaps in competence and knowledge. Finally some concluding reflections and recommendations are provided.

Being educators and researchers in the field of humanitarianism ourselves we found the interviews fruitful and inspiring conversations that helped to raise reflections on professionalization of humanitarian work, what competences are needed, how those competencies should be achieved, how knowledge about humanitarian work is disseminated and how different actors may have more in common and hold more common interests than we know simply because we do not know enough about each other. This short report cannot reflect all this richness, but we hope the report represent the beginning of a longer conversation.

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## A BACKGROUND

Norway has a long history of humanitarian work. In 1922, Fridtjov Nansen received the Nobel Peace Prize for his humanitarian work which helped to inspire Norwegian initiatives for refugees and humanitarian assistance in the years to come. A number of Non Governmental Organizations started their assistance to Europe in the 1930s and 40s, followed by expansion to Asia and Africa in the 1940s. During the WWII, Norway was herself subject to humanitarian crises and devastation, but managed to rebuild and recover with the assistance from the US Marshall Plan, creating the basis for Norway becoming one of the leading countries to provide development- and humanitarian assistance (Furre 1992).

Norway's Development Agency (later to be called NORAD) was established in 1952, and from then and up to 2004 conflict, peace and humanitarian assistance was the responsibility of the Foreign Ministry while development aid was the responsibility of the NORAD. With this division of labour started a long tradition of involvement in peace processes and humanitarian work. Humanitarian assistance during the first Gulf war represented a landmark for Norway's involvement.

Today, "The Government's goal is for Norway to be one of the leading political and financial partners in the field of international humanitarian assistance and to contribute to the international community being as well equipped as possible to meet future challenges" (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009, Stortingsmelding no. 40: 5).

Norway is a small country and its impact globally may be debated. However, with more than fifty years of experience in development and humanitarian activities, Norway is known as a central actor in peace and humanitarian work at a global scale. In recent years, disasters such as the Asian Tsunami, the earthquake in Haiti, the floods in Pakistan, and civil unrest in West Africa have seriously stretched the capacity of the Norwegian humanitarian and development organizations to respond in an adequate manner.

'The Norwegian model' may be described as close cooperation but clear division of roles between the Norwegian authorities and NGOs. Norwegian government's humanitarian funds are channelled through several governmental, non-governmental, and multi-lateral organizations. The Section for Humanitarian Affairs at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the offi-

cial department responsible for monitoring Norway's humanitarian politics and humanitarian assistance. Monitoring is carried out in close collaboration with UN organizations such as UNHCR, ICRC, IOM, and OCHA, Norwegian embassies and Norad. The country has allocated 3 150 million NOK (385 Million Euros) on humanitarian assistance<sup>1</sup> from the 2013 budget.

(see, [http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/about\\_mfa/organisation/departments/department\\_un\\_peace\\_humanitarian/hum-seksj.html?id=448351](http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/about_mfa/organisation/departments/department_un_peace_humanitarian/hum-seksj.html?id=448351)).

### Norwegian humanitarian policy

Humanitarian aid, peace-building and human rights are defined as main pillars of the Government's foreign policy and development policy. The Norwegian Government's humanitarian efforts are based on the two Norwegian White Papers; namely the White papers *Norwegian policy on the prevention of humanitarian crises* (Stortingsmelding no. 9, 2007-2008) and the *Norwegian Humanitarian Policy* (Stortingsmelding No. 40 (2008-2009))

The Government of Norway aims to attain the following goals through its humanitarian policy:

- ensure that people in need are given the necessary protection and assistance
- fund humanitarian efforts on the basis of the international principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence
- equip the international community to meet future global humanitarian challenges
- prevent and respond to humanitarian crises and initiate reconstruction in their wake.

Then following priority areas have been identified in Norwegian Humanitarian Policy:

- Respect for humanitarian principles and a global humanitarian system
- Protection of civilians, refugees, IDPs as well as aid workers in complex conflict situations
- Gender adapted humanitarian efforts/need based assistance
- Distinguish the humanitarian space and military space
- More coherent assistance
- Humanitarian disarmament

Norway has been influential in shaping the humanitarian agenda. The country was actively involved in Humanitarian MineAction (HMA) and the *Convention on Cluster Munitions* (2008) is the result of a Norwegian initiative of November 2006 which ultimately led to ne-

<sup>1</sup> This includes Emergency assistance, humanitarian aid and human rights.

gotiations conducted in Dublin from 18-30 May 2008 between 111 states (Woudenberg & Wormgoor 2008). With the Syrian conflict, the focus is currently on chemical and nuclear arms. In March 2013, Norway held a conference on nuclear arms and humanitarian crises, while the Nobel peace prize for 2013 was awarded to Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

### Humanitarian education

There are a number of education providers relevant for humanitarian work in higher education as well as initiatives run by humanitarian organizations themselves. However, there is no university degree in humanitarian work in Norway. Generally, in higher education there are single courses on humanitarian work within degrees of development studies, peace- and conflict studies. The degrees in development studies are providing knowledge in the principles of humanitarianism, human rights, forced migration, linking of relief and recovery, reconstruction, peace and conflict, theories of change together with more traditional development themes.

### Research on humanitarian work by Norwegian actors

Norwegian humanitarian work is not scrutinized as thorough as its development activities in the Global South by academic research. The limited existing literature on Norwegian humanitarian work can be divided into following thematic areas.

1. Conceptualization: humanitarian activities vs. development activities, identifying humanitarian needs and recipients of assistance, policy vs. practice, -normative studies
2. Case studies: analysis of different aspects of humanitarian work
3. Norwegian initiatives in humanitarian practice
4. Educating humanitarian workers
5. Norwegian humanitarian policy: Norway as a peace nation

Studies attempt to identify the gaps in humanitarian needs of affected people, humanitarian politics, and assistance provided on the ground. Research defines categories such as forced migrant and forced migration (Barakat & Stand, 2000, Brekke, 2001, Brun 2003, Fadnes and Horst 2009), just war tradition and humanitarian intervention (Fixdal & Smith 1998), there is also research on different aspects of humanitarian work such as gaps in policy and practice (Lund et al 2011, Khasalamwa 2009), corruption and humanitarian work (Schultz & Søreide 2008), communication and knowledge transfer (Attanapola et al. 2012, Kruke & Olsen 2012, Palttala et al. 2012, Sandvik & Lemaitre 2013), recovery and development after war

and disaster (Azmi et al. 2013, Brun & Lund 2008, 2009, Skotte 2004). While some of the research has a policy orientation and an institutional approach, many publications come out of ethnographic approaches and emphasize the experience, strategies and importance of the affected populations in a humanitarian setting. Humanitarian insecurity and the effects on the humanitarian workers themselves are emerging research fields (Dandoy & Pérouse de Montclos 2013). However, our literature search gives only one study conducted on post-traumatic stress among Norwegian disaster workers and emergency personnel who worked during the Indian Ocean tsunami (Thoresen et al. 2009). Research conducted by Norwegian researchers does not always specify whether their empirical data concern Norwegian actors or not.

Another related theme in the academic literature is about Norway as a peace nation and peace mediator (Leira 2013), including the cases in Guatemala, Israel-Palestine, Sri Lanka and Sudan. A study conducted by Höglund & Svensson (2011), analyzes the role of Norway in the peace process in Sri Lanka and discusses the dilemmas the nation encountered when combining the role as a peace maker and how the country mediates peace through its humanitarian activities carried out by NGOs (Kelleher & Taulbee 2006). Research also focuses on the importance of humanitarian mine action as a prerequisite for building peace and development (Harpviken & Skåra 2003, Skåra 2003). Woudenberg & Wormgoor (2008) discuss the role of Norway in initiating the Convention on cluster munition in 2008.

## B THE MEANING OF PROFESSIONALIZATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RECRUITING STAFF TO HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS

In this section, we introduce how interviewees reflected on the meaning of professionalization and how they defined what competences, skills and knowledge they look for when recruiting staff. During the interviews we discussed the model developed by the project or at least dimensions of the model (see Fig. 1) and its relationship to qualification frameworks and strategies developed by the organizations, institutions and actors interviewed. As we show below, organizations do to varying degree develop their own qualifications framework. Whether an organization has such a framework or not generally depends on the size of the organization and the organization's nature as independent or part of a transnational network of organizations.

### The meaning of professionalization

What does the different actors interviewed mean by professionalization? We found it useful to discuss this question with the interviewees. In fact, one of the most interesting moments in many of the interviews were when asking what professionalization meant for them. Most people did not have a clearcut answer to this question. However all interviewees came up with many different dimensions, while one key dimension mentioned by many interviewees in this discussion was the relationship between 'specialised' (or what could be termed 'technical') knowledge and more general knowledge about humanitarianism that is required for working in the sector. Another dimension was accountability. There is a strong sense among the staff interviewed in humanitarian organizations that if you know your skills and expertise you gain respect that may help to influence in other spheres than where you work. This is very much valid for those specialised organizations that work in fields such as medicine and demining where authority and respect are gained through expertise and formal training. Also emphasized under this theme is the knowledge of minimum standards in a particular field.

We summarize some of the standpoints here:

- Professionalization as relationship between technical expertise and knowledge about humanitarianism
- Professionalization as accountability
- Professionalization as humanitarian commitment - a strong individual motivation



Figure 1. EUPRHA Profile Dimensions: the different competencies in humanitarian work

- Professionalization represents a fixed core - that everyone in the field should know about - a common ground
- Decisions made in research-based knowledge
- Professionalization as technical expertise; to be very good in your profession
- Professionalization is more emphasis on formal qualifications

In humanitarian work, professionalization refers to a holistic understanding of the situation - and the ability to make interventions relevant for that situation; how are you able to respond in a crisis setting.

Based on the understanding among the interviewees presented above, in this report, we thus use a wide meaning of professionalization which may be captured by the definitions formulated by the network of the Enhancing learning & research for humanitarian assistance (ELRHA) :

*"possession of a specialised body of knowledge and commitment to service"* (Cruess and Cruess in Russ with Smith 2013: 13).

*"Professionalism or professionalisation in the sector is a term used to encapsulate the focusing of attention on the quality and rigor of capacity-building efforts. It is particularly important at a time of intense scrutiny from the public, the media and institutional donors and demand for greater accountability in all humanitarian activities"* (Russ with Smith 2013: 13)

### What competencies are the organizations looking for?

Because of the increasing call for professionalization from donors and other actors that the sector is accountable to, it is not anymore sufficient to want to do good. That 'do gooders' alone may ruin the sector, is a clear standpoint among interviewees. We find, however, that there are different views on type of competences needed. While this is to some extent based on organizations' different profiles, this alone does not fully explain the differences in what competencies organizations look for when recruiting staff. However, for all actors interviewed in the humanitarian sector, personality, personal ambitions in combination with particular competencies and skills are important. When hiring new staff, organizations look for dedication and commitment, practical skills and previous experience from the sector (for many jobs a requirement) or relevant work experience outside the sector (referring to a particular skill).

Organizations have different opportunities to conduct courses for their own staff and offer courses to external participants. The larger organizations have courses to offer to their staff and sometimes their international mother organization may provide courses for staff.

A number of different recruitment tools are being used, and sometimes such tools are developed internally with profiles resembling the ones developed in the EUPRHA-project (Fig 1). Some organizations use the 'HAY: Strategic workforce planning'; the People in Aid tools; work descriptions for different levels as developed by the UN; or a combination of those tools. In other organizations, mainly larger and more specialized organizations, they have developed their own profiles – often with similarities to the profiles developed by the EUPRHA project. Some organizations work with profiles that describe the specific technical expertise needed. Some organizations were not willing to share their profiles as they are used as tools in recruiting people and should not be publicly available to those they test for a job.

Regardless of offering courses or not, many organizations prefer to socialise their staff into the culture of the organization to shape their staff into the organizational mould. Particularly organizations with a more ideological history and stance apply this model for staff recruitment and staff development. For all organizations, personal suitability and attitude are very important, but interviewees emphasise that commitment is not enough. The prominence of personality shows the need for the ability to collaborate, work together in complex settings and well developed communication skills. Experience from working in crises is emphasised by nearly all organizations.

### Norwegian versus international/Norwegian and International

An important discussion in a country case study of Norway is to understand what may be specific for Norway. Here, one discussion that came up repeatedly was to what extent the organizations are *Norwegian*. Some organizations, such as MSF-Norway, are international in their mother organization, but mainly recruit staff (medical and non-medical) from Norway. Other organizations like the Norwegian Refugee Council, is a Norwegian based organization that recruit staff globally. However, to what extent should expertise come from within Norway and then by consequence, what education should be provided in Norway? Some managers say that they look for people in Scandinavian countries and the UK because it is found to be easier to socialise staff into the organizational culture. Others state that *where* staff originate from is not an issue. For member-based organizations with substantial support from Norwegian organizations and communities, however, it is crucial to have Norwegian staff. These questions are fundamentally important for how we discuss what kind of education humanitarian workers should access and where that education should be offered.

Several managers and fieldworkers also discussed the separation between local and international staff as a highly problematic separation, also when it comes to discussion of competence, skills and knowledge and how to provide courses for staff. Many interviewees state that they work to decrease the competence gap between the two categories. This again, requires education that is often based in regions outside Norway.

Currently the closest one can get to a degree in humanitarian studies is development studies in Norway. However, a degree in development studies is not so enthusiastically sought after in the humanitarian sector. It is stated that the knowledge provided in development studies is too general. There has been public critique towards the university degrees in Norway and we have not studied how this critique represents the general attitudes coming into play among interviewees. However, as we show later, there may be a gap between what is believed to be taught in development studies among humanitarian actors and policy makers and what is actually being taught. At the same time, there is a need for educators to constantly review their study programmes for relevance.

### The former and former military: dream staff

During the interviews, it emerged that two profiles of occupations could often describe the competencies, skills and knowledges that organizations sought after: The MSF-representative stated that for them the

dream worker in their logistics department would be a farmer. "A farmer knows how to do everything"; she or he understands the context, can adapt to seasonal fluctuations, assess security and risks, take responsibility when needed, hire the needed staff, apply for support, report and manage the economy, and need a range of technical skills.

Another category of people mentioned by some of the organizations were people with military experience because of the exposure to crises and complex settings, being used to work under pressure and to know how to relate to military and armed actors.



## CURRENT PRACTICES AND PERSPECTIVES AS SEEN FROM THE DIFFERENT ACTORS INTERVIEWED

### Education providers

The education providers we have talked to are generally in higher education and they do not educate humanitarian workers as such as there is no single degree for humanitarian work in Norway. However, educators do think that their education is highly relevant for humanitarian organizations. Educators find that there is considerable insight to be gained on contextual knowledge, learning about particular regions and local contexts, but also learning how to understand a context. Analysing social change, knowledge about the link between relief and development are skills that students bring with them from the relevant studies in Norway. Writing skills are emphasised as important baggage that students bring with them from higher education.

Educators are concerned about the importance for future humanitarian workers to gain a theoretical insight into notions such ethics, power and change which current university degrees do offer. A further theme of concern is how to teach student to transform theory into practice.

An obstacle is the current structural conditions that prevent emphasis on practical skills in higher education. A movement towards two tracks in a study programme where one track is oriented towards academic research and one track is more oriented towards practice has been mentioned. However, so far a two-track system has not been implemented in the disciplines relevant for humanitarianism and development studies.

Another barrier to include a more practice-based education into university studies is the multiple challenges involved in facilitating internships. Finding relevant internships may be challenging because many humanitarian organizations do not welcome internship. Humanitarian organizations often consider internships too resource demanding. Additionally there are few possibilities as organizations see it, to send inexperienced staff into crises. There are also practical challenges identified for how internships are made to fit with students attending other courses. Currently the structure in most universities are for courses to stretch over a whole term which again makes internship challenging to integrate into existing programmes of study. Some educators have managed to adopt a more flexible structure where internship could be done as an alternative to traditional courses but this is not a common model.

As we show below, there is a mutual call for more collaboration between educators and humanitarian organizations for more practice orientation to take place and generally for the development of competencies.

One opinion in the education sector is that there are a number of courses relevant for the humanitarian sector. There is perhaps a tendency by educators to feel a bit misunderstood by the sector, that the sector does not quite acknowledge the value of university education and the skills, competencies and experiences that are available in higher education and research. However, this observation could perhaps also lead to an understanding that universities have not managed to inform the humanitarian sector about what they can contribute, more could be done to describe the courses in a relevant way. There are, however, examples of institutions that are in the process of developing courses, or opening existing courses, up to practitioners for continuing education.

Flexibility in teaching varies according to what space for manoeuvre the education provider has. Smaller institutions and courses may have greater possibilities to emphasise the more the role of commitment, the role of student project and relevance and flexibility to run student projects for smaller groups and hence focusing more on relevance in their teaching. It is important to emphasise that this focus is also down to personalities and dedication among staff and the nature of the students attending different types of courses.

Field courses are quite common in courses on development, peace and conflict studies – an extremely valuable part of an education, and this could be emphasized more in the description of skills that students gain from a degree.

In conclusion, educators think important skills to provide students with are: how to transfer theory to practice; writing skills; communication skills; methodologies in collecting data; making decisions based on data collected; analytical skills; how to understand a particular context; and analytical abilities in understanding change, politics and ethics.

### Fieldworkers

Humanitarian workers' motivations for entering the field is first and foremost commitment, they want to assist those most in need. In addition many report a certain element of adventurousness and interest in travelling. For many of the people involved in the sector, life changes (children growing up, want more interesting work, changes in marital status etc.) enable the entry into the humanitarian sector. Their first job is then

formative for what happens next. The pathway into the sector must therefore be understood not only for those who have a specific education, but it is a multitude of different reasons, motivations and competencies in combination that explain people's involvement in the sector.

People enter the sector with a range of different skills and experiences. One of the questions we asked was when meeting the field for the first time, what knowledge is felt missing:

"It was a shock to meet the field for the first time. Still with courses and preparations beforehand, I didn't know what would work and what wouldn't. Not much of the knowledge I had achieved beforehand worked." (quote translated from Norwegian by the authors)

Contextual knowledge and knowledge on how to analyse the context on the ground, are very often missing interviewees state. Many of those who have worked in complex crises emphasise that knowledge on how to deal with trauma and psychological consequences – ones own and colleagues – should have been part of the preparations before meeting the field. Additionally, leadership and communication skills for that particular setting were often missing. Interviewees also emphasize the challenges in understanding and dealing with power relations. Moreover, understanding the humanitarian system, how to analyse the different actors and their relationship on the ground and your own role as a fieldworker in that system was mentioned as a skill that was felt missing.

Leadership skills are quite different in the field compared to working in a non-humanitarian context in Norway. Many felt that they were not prepared for this challenging context when they started their work. Others stated that one may have a repertoire of techniques to use in a given setting, but at the same time, time is needed to understand the context in which one will be working. Fieldworkers emphasize the need for coaching, for having people in the vicinity from where they can seek advice. In this context, having ways of seeking support among colleagues is emphasized as crucial in what can often be a lonely job. Learning how to deal with ones own fear and fear among colleagues has not been addressed sufficiently we were also told. The organizations do to a very varied extent have psychosocial programmes for their staff. Fieldworkers also often miss writing skills for different purposes and different audiences.

Some people interviewed came from development studies and felt their educational background was useful for

obtaining general knowledge, but that they missed being equipped with more practical tools for understanding a context such as writing log frames and analysing the needs in a community.

#### *Courses needed and the courses that work*

Most of the interviewees have achieved skills through courses, some courses attended through organization, some courses attended by self-interest and people's own initiatives. We asked what courses they would need in addition to the ones they had been offered. As one interviewee said; "Disaster management is about preparing for the unexpected, how can you do that?" The quote refers to a general dilemma stated by many of those interviewed, there is a dilemma in how much you can learn before you work in the field for the first time and how much you need to learn by "being in the field".

By far most commonly mentioned is that leadership is the most needed skill missing in the sector today. Today it is very difficult to find a course that is appropriate for developing leadership skills in the humanitarian sector and which is not an online course to which most people interviewed express a negative attitude. Generally, interviewees in the humanitarian sector are critical to online courses because such courses do not provide the level of reflection needed to develop tools to engage with dilemmas emerging in a complex humanitarian field.

Contrary to online courses, field-based courses and simulation exercises are emphasised as very valuable because they contribute to gain experience. Courses in ethics, and discussions around solutions to dilemmas that people face in the field are mentioned as needed by some of those we interviewed. In this context, the status and reputation of the course is differently emphasized by different interviewees. While some are concerned about taking courses that are accredited, others do not think so much about the status of a course, but more what is the individual need to get insight into a particular area and how the course potentially can assist in that.

Finally, a main conclusion among the fieldworkers is that not all knowledge needed can be achieved through courses. Personality, personal abilities and experience are perhaps the most important starting point in order to become a professional humanitarian worker.

#### **Managers**

Managers interviewed often search for people with several years of experience before they recruit them to their organisation. The point of view of managers re-

garding the needs for knowledge in the sector may be understood as a combination of their own backgrounds and their own skills as well as the specificity of their organizations. Again, the larger organizations are open for a wide range of skills and competencies because they employ people in a wider range of job descriptions.

A common challenge in referring to courses for humanitarian workers is to make courses that may be of common interest across different professions. Different vocational educations, for example, should be able to adopt modules that are relevant for humanitarian work. So that if you are a nurse, an engineer or planner, you get your general education and then you can specialise in humanitarianism on top of that. According to all we interviewed, there are not enough courses in the sector. It is also regarded relatively expensive to develop courses and to send people from the organization to attend external courses. While some organizations do help their staff to participate in courses as part of their career development, not all organizations has the economy to encourage such activities for their staff. Generally there are not enough resources to increase skills and competencies and to develop relevant courses in the sector.

A common practice is internal ad hoc courses when needed. However such courses may not be very systematic, they are not accredited courses, and often work as a way of transferring skills embedded in the organization from more experienced staff to new staff.

Managers miss educators in higher education with experience from the field. Some say they feel that the trend is almost less field-based experience because of the academic orientation and the requirements in the academic sectors for publishing. Some organizations are looking for more collaboration with educators, but they find it very difficult to get an overview of the education sector. There are often not compatible systems between higher education institutions and humanitarian organizations. Again there are very few resources – financial and time – to make such contacts and develop courses together. The managers interviewed find it interesting with new education programmes in refugee camps/crisis settings, but are generally very critical to online courses because of the lack of critical thinking and reflection that is possible through online courses.

Referring back to the meaning of professionalization as a common core of understanding humanitarianism, interviewees mentioned that some of the general principles of humanitarianism such as having tools to deal with ethical dilemmas are core competencies that education providers could potentially assist in providing to the humanitarian sector.

As mentioned above, some of the interviewees who are fieldworkers are also managers or leaders in that field context. The issue of tackling fear among your staff, psychosocial support and manoeuvring the political landscape are considered crucial skills in the context of leadership in country offices and field offices and mentioned as a skill where competencies are missing.

Managers mention the dilemmas in how to teach staff at different levels in the organization and the problematic distinction between national and international staff. International and national staff in a field-office or country office are often not the most relevant separation operating between staff. Sometimes, for example, the distinctions go between local (rural, field-office) and national staff in the main country office, or between different types of occupations and tasks, or between NGO staff and government employees. The challenge is that organizations are often not able to offer different courses and capacity building to different types of staff. More discussions on where education and capacity building takes place are therefore very important in the humanitarian sector. At the same time, interviewees emphasise that national and regional alternatives to education and courses are crucial because education cannot always be globalised.

### Policy makers

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in Norway is responsible for developing the humanitarian policy. As mentioned above, the Norwegian Model makes a relatively clear division of labour between the policy makers and the implementers. The MFA-staff are generally oriented towards diplomacy and what could be termed 'the macro processes' of the sector as well as a focus on building institutions that are responsible for humanitarian work. The MFA concentrates on humanitarian fields where Norwegian engagement has traditionally been strong. The need for staff follows the traditional academic disciplines, and humanitarian experience is not a must. The Ministry is also to a lesser extent concerned with humanitarian competence or development studies. The attitude seems to be that development studies is too general and this is not the competencies and skills that the Foreign Ministry is looking for among their staff.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is concerned with strengthening research on humanitarian work, and work for increasing the body of research on humanitarian work that is undertaken in Norwegian research institutions and has funded research through a research Programme in the Research Council of Norway. Currently, the Ministry collaborates more with foreign knowledge providers such as Tufts University (US) and

the Overseas Development Institute (the Humanitarian Policy Group, UK) than with Norwegian institutions.

What governs Norwegian competence and skills in humanitarian policy seems thus to be Norwegian traditions and Norwegian policies, more than the specific thematic interests and humanitarianism as a discipline. The long tradition of humanitarian work through Norwegian NGOs has accumulated knowledge that is applied when implementing Norwegian humanitarian policies.

We asked what knowledge, skills and competencies they miss in the sector. Here, the humanitarian principles and humanitarian law are mentioned as key dimensions. Also there is need for more people who can represent the sector in the media and public debate to promote and raise consciousness about humanitarian issues and the various challenges involved.

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

Organizations with a long history of operations in humanitarian crises have built competence, skills and experience over many years. Still, the continuously changing situations on the ground make it challenging to keep up. Also for some organizations which are expanding, recruiting staff with needed skills may be a challenge. In this concluding section, we discuss, based on the interviewees' statements, first, what changing conditions the interviewees identify and, second, what are the major gaps in competence and knowledge in the humanitarian sector.

### **Changing conditions**

The following changing conditions were identified by the interviewees:

#### *Professionalization*

The traditional idealism is clearly not any longer enough to work in this field. Donors formulate requirements and conditionalities which implies that organizations must deliver more and in different ways than before. The value for money is emphasised as a much more prominent demand from the donors. Managers are clear on the fact that their organizations must be better in technical skills and in understanding humanitarianism as a field. Formal knowledge is more sought after in the sector as an increasing focus on professionalization is taking hold. Increasing organizational size and more projects, also require the need for more knowledge and capacity.

#### *Bureaucratization*

Bureaucratization of humanitarian assistance requires new skills and competencies in reporting, documentation and the establishment of administrative routines.

#### *Complexity*

Many interviewees identify more complexity on the ground as a key change. Humanitarian crises often include both conflict and natural disasters, and there are many actors with conflicting interests. This changing and increasing complexity has implications for security and require new skills at all levels in an organization.

#### *Time scales*

Crises are never-ending, humanitarian organizations are present in locations for 5, ten, twenty years and longer. The durability of organizations' presence means changing responsibilities for staff. A longer time perspective also requires an understanding of the relationship between relief and development. Humanitarian

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

### **Gaps**

Some of the main gaps in competencies identified during the interviews were thus the following:

#### *Understanding my place*

Understanding power relations in relation to security, but also in relation to implementation possibilities, organizational hierarchies, coordination and how not to overlap and take other actors' responsibilities and being able to translate the cultural context are all crucial for analyzing the security situation.

#### *Coordination*

Coordination may be understood at two levels here: within an international organisation with staff in many different countries; and coordination among humanitarian organizations and other actors and stakeholders during a crisis (including military and business communities).

#### *Analysis and communication*

More knowledge is needed to provide high quality methodologies for documentation for needs assessments, baseline surveys and evaluations. In addition skills in monitoring and distant-monitoring and writing skills for different audiences and purposes are mentioned.

#### *Disaster risk management*

Several interviewees mentioned the lack of competencies in disaster risk management. Again, this also shows how humanitarian work is moving into other spheres than the traditional relief, including mitigation and development.

#### *New technical skills*

New technical skills are needed to utilize the possibilities of computer, mobile devices and other advanced technology in crises

#### *Leadership and management skills*

With professionalization changing needs for leadership and management skills have been identified, and this is perhaps the most unifying answer across all types of actors interviewed.

#### *Strategic economical thinking*

Closely connected with leadership and management skills are the need for skills in strategic economical thinking in the organizations and in relation to other processes in the context where one works such as anti-corruption. In this context, the need in global organizations for better workforce planning is also mentioned.

### *Psychosocial work/colleague support*

Some actors are not concerned about this at all and think that such support comes through a healthy organizational culture. However others, and perhaps particularly fieldworkers, and people working or having worked in a country office are more concerned with this dimension and find there is a great need to develop competencies and knowledge in the field of psychosocial work.

### *Transfer of knowledge*

Knowledge about how to transfer knowledge from one part in the organization to another is needed to understand how to work with capacity building. Transfer of knowledge is also related to how build capacity at different levels of an organization, globally, nationally and "in the field".

### *Understanding change, linking relief and development*

At all levels there is also mention of the need to understand change, the ways in which relief and development are interconnected and how economic development is crucial even at the relief stage. In this discussion is also mentioned the need to understand the role of different sectors of the economy, such as agriculture or even the role of education in a crisis setting. There is a need for more holistic understandings of communities and how to understand and analyse the impact of the projects implemented; how to plan projects that make a change. Additionally, there is a need, related to this aspect of knowledge on from relief to development on how an organization should phase out and to understand what happens next – after the organization has left.

### **Recommendations**

When interviewing different stakeholders one does get a sense that the humanitarian field could be strengthened by the humanitarian actors and educators learning to know each other better. With some more dialogue, more relevant courses may be offered in higher education. At the same time, the relevance of existing education could be more appreciated by the humanitarian actors. Some of the gaps identified in competencies may be possible to bridge simply by making certain parts of current education more known, more accessible, or by slight redirections in some courses, possibly in collaboration between educators and humanitarian actors. Courses already offered are for example on from relief to development; understanding change; understanding a context; Writing skills; and baseline surveys and other information generating techniques.

In other areas such as with leadership, psychosocial support, coaching – there needs to be more emphasis on developing new initiatives that combine skills and

knowledge from different parts of the education sector and the humanitarian sector.

The classic question of how to transform theoretical knowledge into practice could perhaps also be emphasised more in university education and in collaboration between universities and humanitarian organizations particularly through internship possibilities. It is our general impression that there is more agreement between the stakeholders about what is needed. A main achievement would be to establish more communication between actors. However, resources (time and money) for making such communication working are currently scarce.

Interviews clearly show that there is willingness on behalf of both humanitarian actors and educators to collaborate to increase competencies and knowledge on humanitarian work. Some organization, have also established collaboration with research institutes and knowledge institutions to develop their frameworks. There is thus a promising trend towards more collaboration between organizations and knowledge providers and the recommendations that follow may hopefully contribute to this trend:

1. Establish better communication channels between the sector and education providers, which may help to identify the possibilities of internship and the need for courses in the sectors. The mapping exercise started in the EUPRHA project should be continued to make matching profiles of educators and humanitarian organizations.
2. More emphasis on continuing education: In Norway, there is currently an emphasis on continuing education, and there should be possibilities for universities to offer courses that are relevant for humanitarian actors, to enable the humanitarian core to be taught to humanitarian workers of varying professions. Universities should in this context make more sophisticated the information about what courses they can offer, and what knowledge they can convey. At the same time, there is scope for more collaboration between humanitarian actors and educators in developing relevant courses. It seems from our interviews that there is much more practice based teaching in the university sector than what the humanitarian actors may expect. A major question, however, is funding – how can humanitarian organizations fund courses for their staff?
3. Linking theory and practice: The possibilities of more practical insight during higher education are dependent on the humanitarian organizations tak-

ing their responsibility for providing internships seriously. At the same time, institutions providing higher education may need to make courses more relevant for practical work – or consider offering a two track system where one track is more practically oriented while another track is more academically oriented.

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## APPENDIX 1 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHODOLOGY FOR LONG COUNTRY PROFILES

### **Purpose**

The purpose is to provide a more detailed country profile (related specifically to the issue of professionalization) of a chosen country. This will highlight some of the issues covered in the short country profile, mainly of trends, specificities and potentialities and will be closely linked to the humanitarian profile developed in work page 3. It is about reflecting on the current practices of your country. The detailed country profile should be about 12 to 15 pages (roughly 5000 – 7500 words).

### **Timeline**

The detailed country profile should be completed by mid April 2014.

### **Stakeholders**

Various stakeholders should be involved in the preparation of the country profile. These can be government organisations, non-governmental organizations, humanitarian agencies, education providers, humanitarian workers, educators (individuals), researchers, or any other relevant stakeholders.

### **Methodology**

- The partner in the selected country is expected to lead the process of producing the country profile.
- The methodology should be common in the four detailed cases (in order to allow comparison).
- It should include a review of relevant literature, (related specifically to your country) interview with key informants and potentially group discussion (or skype group discussion) with a variety of stakeholders in order to have them confronting their views and position. (this point will be depending on logistics and time allocated to the data collection and analysis)
- The partner could be assisted in this task by researchers from the UK partner and by the project coordinator.
- A structure of the report for each Long Country profile should be approved by each partner and used in order to increase comparability and coherence.

#### *Role of the partner:*

- Identify the stakeholders and suggest ways of engaging with them (e.g.: informal meeting; focus group discussion by sector/type of stakeholders/ theme; individual interviews, etc.). We suggest

interviewing five staff in a managerial position in five different organisations. Five humanitarian workers representing different humanitarian institutions, and five educators. In addition to one government representative.

- Facilitate the interviews, group discussion or any other methods selected for collecting data;
- Analyse the data collected and potentially go back to some stakeholders for clarification or further comments
- Write the detailed country profile, based on a structured agreed by all those conducted the long country profile.

#### *Role of the UK partner:*

- Refine the methodology;
- Participate if needed in the realisation of the data collection and the analysis;
- Organise end of March a joined skype/blackboard meeting to evaluate progress and difficulties and to agree on the final report
- Support with the design and write-up of the country profile.

### **Guidelines for detailed country profile**

The following highlights some issues that be covered by each partner for data collection. This will be based on the humanitarian profile defined by WP3. Specific questions can be added by each partner if some key specificities are not mentioned.

#### *Interview/discussion with NGOs (minimum 5 NGOs)*

- Based on your different activities and programmes, what specific workforce do you need? Is it different according to areas of operations, crises and field of operations?
- How is staff selected, on which criteria.
- Based on the humanitarian worker profile developed in WP3, how are the different elements valued, weighted and developed in the organisation? Is this representing an ideal profile of a humanitarian worker?
- What kind of qualification your staff typically have for entry level?
- Do you provide specific training for new staff?
- How important are the professional/technical qualifications of your staff? (do they need qualifications or can they learn on the spot?)
- How does the staff get the qualifications, at entry level and during their career?
- In your NGO, how are issues of skills and competences development and enhancement linked to the debate on professionalization (and largely on quality and accountability)?
- In your NGO, have all efforts on professionalization

had (positive and negative) impacts on the constitution of your workforce and on weight put on different skills and competences?

- Is your NGO specific in terms of constitution of workforce or representative of the main trends in your country?
- Do you foresee new trends and evolution in the humanitarian profile or the humanitarian demand?
- What are the main skills that you miss in your organization? How can they be gained/acquired?
- Who should provide training for humanitarian workers (organisation, an assigned body - like a separate organisation, university)? What are the roles of professional educators in developing the humanitarian workforce (universities, specialised NGOs, personal development within NGO)?
- What are the main gaps in staff's expertise today for you? Can this change in the future?

*Interview/discussion with selected humanitarian workers (with at least 5 to 10 years of experience to be able to talk about the evolution of the sector)*

- How long have you been working in humanitarian sector?
- What tasks are you undertaking for the moment? Is it the same as at the start of your career? What has been the evolution? Why do you think, there has been an evolution?
- What type of qualifications do you have? Which qualification did you had when you started in the sector? Was it corresponding to your needs and the needs of your employers? Which qualifications did you acquired over the years? How did you acquire these qualifications? Why did you feel the need to acquire these qualifications?
- Do you still feel the need to develop new competencies? Do you feel that the humanitarian sector has been evolving and therefore that you need other competencies? Do you feel that humanitarian crises have been evolving and therefore that you need new or different competencies?
- Based on the humanitarian worker profile developed in WP3, how are the different elements valued, weighted and developed for you? Is this representing an ideal profile of a humanitarian worker? Is it what you think organisations are looking for? What are the relationships between technical skills, knowledge of the humanitarian system and personal competencies (culture sensitivity, personal motivations, values ...)?
- Is this corresponding to the competencies available in your working environment?
- What does it mean to be a professional in the humanitarian sector?

- Have you felt that there has been an evolution on the care given in the development of the humanitarian workforce and the expectations since we are talking about professionalization of the humanitarian sector? Are impacts positive or negative in your personal case?
- Are competencies varying according to crises or field of operations?

*Interview/discussion with education providers (from universities and from specialised institute or NGO)*

- What type of "humanitarian related" programme is provided are you providing? Why have you made this choice (based on an existing expertise, on request of stakeholders, on need in the field)
- Why educating in the humanitarian field?
- What kind of humanitarian actors are you targeting with your programmes?
- Based on the humanitarian worker profile developed in WP3, how are the different elements valued, weighted and developed in the organisation? Is this representing an ideal profile of a humanitarian worker? Is it corresponding to the profile of your graduates? Are you weighting, developing some elements more than others (if so, why?)
- Have you noticed an evolution in the demand and the needs?
- Are you planning to develop new programmes based on new trends?
- What does it mean to be a professional in the humanitarian sector?
- Have you felt that there has been an evolution on the care given in the development of the humanitarian workforce and the expectations since we are talking about professionalization of the humanitarian sector? Are impacts positive or negative in the case of your learners or graduates?

*Interview/discussion with government agencies*

- What are the priorities for the country in terms of humanitarian action and humanitarian workforce?
- Based on the humanitarian worker profile developed in WP3, how are the different elements valued, weighted and developed in the organisation? Is this representing an ideal profile of a humanitarian worker? Are you weighting, developing some elements more than others (if so, why?)

## APPENDIX 2

## LIST OF INTERVIEWEES, APRIL-MAY 2014

**24<sup>th</sup> April**

Eva Tamber, fieldworker/manager on various humanitarian assignments, interview over phone

**29<sup>th</sup> April in Oslo, face to face interviews**

Anne Hertzberg, Head of Board and long term fieldworker in multiple contexts, The Norwegian Afghanistan Committee

Dr. Christopher White and Torstein Dale Åkerlund (lecturers), Bjørknes Høyskole (College)

Katharina Sandberg, HR teamleader, Norwegian Refugee Council

**30<sup>th</sup> April in Oslo, face to face interviews**

Øistein Lyngroth, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department for UN, Peace and Humanitarian Affairs.

Emma Jackson, NORCAP and other recruitment, at the Norwegian Refugee Council

**2<sup>nd</sup> May**

Liv Stenmoeggen, Norwegian Church Aid, Kabul (Norwegian Church Aid), interview over skype.

**6<sup>th</sup> May**

Solveig Halvorsen, Leger uten grenser (MSF, Norway), interview over phone

**Between 1<sup>st</sup> May and 14<sup>th</sup> May**

Ransi Liyanarachi, MSF, fieldworker in Afghanistan, interview as email correspondence

**14<sup>th</sup> May**

Steinar Essén, Norsk Folkehjelp (Norwegian People's Aid), interview over skype.

**14<sup>th</sup> May**

Dr. Gry Synnevåg, Associate Professor, NORAGRIC, Norwegian University of Life Sciences (and with long term experience in the field), interview over skype