



## The 2030 Agenda

### and how the Humanitarian Encyclopedia can contribute to its achievement

#### SDGs AND THE HUMANITARIAN SECTOR

The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and its associated 17 goals (SDGs) are now three years into the implementation. Countries are translating this shared vision into national development plans and strategies. With just 12 years left to the 2030 deadline, there is a sense of urgency in implementation and in collective effort for its achievement, which is central to Goal 17, Partnership for the Goals.

The collaboration is particularly needed at a time when the number of people living in fragile and conflict-affected situations is projected to increase to nearly 50% of the global population by 2030, according to the World Bank. From this perspective, the commitment and cooperation of humanitarian and development actors is imperative to the achievement of the SDGs. The joint effort, therefore, is key to building resilience to and preventing complex emergencies.

Concerning the role of humanitarian actors in development, since the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016, there is an increasing focus on collaboration between humanitarian and development actors, governments, non-governmental organisations and the private sector. One of the WHS outcomes was the New Way of Working Initiative, which aims to remove unnecessary barriers to cooperation.

#### SUSTAINING HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM RESULTS FOR BETTER DEVELOPMENT

Yet, the increasing number and scale of emergencies and protracted crises across the world is testing the capacity of humanitarian sector to respond effectively and meet the needs of vulnerable populations. Today, an estimated 450'000 people working in some 4'500 organisations, plus the tens of thousands of individual and spontaneous initiatives, have been involved in the response. The diversity of geographical, cultural, organisational, linguistic, and professional profiles in the humanitarian field is simply unprecedented.

This diversity has generated a variety of definitions, understanding, use, and interpretations of concepts and created confusion and miscommunication at the operational level. As a case in point, no less than 63 different definitions of 'resilience' have been identified across the humanitarian sector. From a policy-making perspective, using the same word or concept to refer to different realities, including the implementation of SDGs, practitioners send blurred messages to decision makers and can hinder the effectiveness of relevant systems at all levels.

*“Humanitarian actors need to move beyond repeatedly carrying out short-term interventions year after year towards contributing to the achievement of longer-term development results.”*

*Report of the United Nations Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit*

## KNOWLEDGE AS PROGRAM RESULT ENHANCER

To improve common understanding and thus increase cooperation effectiveness, the CERAH (Geneva Centre for Education and Research in Humanitarian Action), a joint initiative of the University of Geneva and the Graduate Institute (IHEID), launched in 2017 the Humanitarian Encyclopedia project in close collaboration with experts from academia and humanitarian professionals.

The Humanitarian Encyclopedia project, with its goal “Enhancing Humanitarian Practice through Greater Knowledge and Understanding”, can promote common understandings, bridge humanitarian and development sectors, and contribute to accelerating actions to achieving SDGs. It will offer to an increasingly diverse humanitarian community and other relevant actors a clear and comprehensive reference framework. Being developed with a participatory approach, the Humanitarian Encyclopedia is expected to support its partners and users to:

- **Improve mutual understanding** of key issues and concepts among practitioners;
- Accompany the **localization of humanitarian knowledge**;
- **Make the sector more legible** to external stakeholders; and
- Contribute to the **training** of current and future generations of humanitarian practitioners

## KNOWLEDGE AS A BRIDGE - THROUGH AN INTERACTIVE AND INCLUSIVE ONLINE PLATFORM

In addition, a database of more than 2’500 humanitarian organisations has been created. Information on key humanitarian concepts, including different meanings and

operational stakes, will be available through an online platform. The platform, which serves as a digital and open access working space, will allow real-time interactions from anywhere in the world by relevant actors and facilitate partnerships (SDG 17). Blogs, case studies, a collaborative question/answer centre, archives, and a personal presentation space will be essential elements of the platform. As the humanitarian sector by nature functions in emergency settings, the platform will also provide long-term data storage and analysis, offering the sector a ‘living memory’ which will be useful reference for development and other interested actors, including governments of disaster affected countries and donors.

## A BETTER UNDERSTANDING FOR BETTER PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

A better-informed humanitarian community can deliver quality programmes with sustained results linking to development. Thanks to shared and localized analyses as well as improved dialogue and cooperation among stakeholders, the SDG 17 will become a reality at the national and sub-national levels and facilitate the achievement of other SDGs. In addition to the humanitarian and development sectors, other relevant actors, such as governments, media, academia and the private sector can also benefit from better understanding of concepts to improve policy implementation, communication, training, education and research.



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