The HRI 2009 Technical Annex

The HRI Process and Methodology

This technical annex explains some of the key elements in the HRI research process and methodology used to generate the annual rankings of government donors. The annex begins with a summary of the main refinements made to the HRI methodology this year, followed by an overview of the HRI’s conceptual foundation. This is followed by a summary of the HRI data collection and analysis process, and detailed information on the statistical model used to create the index.

Summary of the refinements to the HRI this year

Each edition of the HRI is an opportunity to continue to refine and improve the methodology and process, based on feedback and lessons learned from the previous year. While the framework and general scheme of indicators for the HRI 2009 remains the same as in the previous two editions, DARA has made several minor adjustments and improvements to help strengthen the quality of the index and ensure that the HRI findings are based on a solid methodological basis. The main refinements made this year include:

- Expanding the number of crises studied (from 10 to 13), increasing the number of survey responses for GHD donors (from 1400 to 1600)
- Improving the survey design and expanding the statistical analysis to increase survey reliability and validity
- Expanding the survey to assess non-GHD “donors” such as governmental INGOs, UN and Pooled Fund mechanisms, and private foundations. With over 500 survey responses this is a good foundation to explore how these actors perform as donors
- Improving the reliability of several quantitative data sources, and
- Improving the statistical formulations and analysis on many indicators
Aims and purposes of the HRI

The HRI is a collaborative research process that examines the role of donors in supporting more effective responses to humanitarian crises. One of the reasons DARA developed the HRI was to provide the humanitarian sector with an empirical evidence base to assess donor performance. Government donors are still the main funders of humanitarian assistance, and understanding how donors are contributing to meeting humanitarian objectives is key to achieving reforms and improvements in the humanitarian system as a whole.

As explained in previous editions of the HRI report, DARA selected an index and a ranking system as the most appropriate means of tracking government donors’ progress in applying recognised good practice in the way they fund and support humanitarian action around the world. The HRI is similar to other annual ranking assessments such as the UNDP’s Human Development Index, the Center for Global Development’s Commitment to Development Index, or even the OECD’s annual PISA assessment, which annually compares and ranks the performance of member states’ educational systems. Each of these other indices has become an entry point for a more informed and balanced debate on these issues.

The HRI aims to do the same for the vital issue of how to ensure governments’ humanitarian assistance actually contributes to meeting the needs of the millions of people affected by crisis, conflict and disaster each year. Through a comprehensive review of donor performance and accountability, the HRI highlights areas where government donors, humanitarian actors and civil society organisations can work together to improve the quality, effectiveness and impact of humanitarian assistance.

The underlying assumption of the HRI is that tracking and benchmarking donor performance and level of commitment against key indicators of good practice will stimulate improved donor policies and practice, which will be reflected in the way donors support and fund humanitarian organisations. This in turn will help maximise the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian action, which will contribute to reducing the loss of life, decreasing human suffering and preserving human dignity in situations of crisis, and preventing and minimising the impact of future crises.

Figure 1: HRI Logical Framework