

Reporting by Session Note-takers at the 2019 Annual Consultations with NGOs

Date:	4.7.2019
Session Title:	Informed Decision-making in Crisis – Can area-based data make a difference
Moderator:	Vincent Annoni (IMPACT Initiatives)
UNHCR focal point:	Shelley Gornall
NGO focal point:	
Major points arising from speakers and discussions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid urbanization is placing both cities and humanitarian actors face-to-face with new challenges in regards to maintaining and building resilience to crises. This challenge takes the shape of e.g. building a service network that addresses the needs of all inhabitants also in times of crises as well as gathering information in order to guide decision-making. An approach gaining traction is the area-based approach, through which the assessed area and all its inhabitants are placed in the center of assessments and information gathering. • Municipal authorities are key in creating sustainable response and development plans. Yet, the bridge between the two actors does not always come naturally. In order to create interventions with positive long-term impact international actors need to have a granular understanding of the area they operate in – including its dynamics and governance structures. Local actors need to be brought to the decision-making table when designing and planning response. • Information and data in itself does not solve the issue of having an understanding a context. The method of creating information, meaning the actual questions asked, and the act of making information available is key. In order to create information with actual value, collaboration across sectors and actors is vital. 	
Recommendations/Conclusions/Decisions on the way forward	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of area-based assessments in information gathering should be elevated in order to ensure that humanitarian decision-making is guided by information that best speaks of the needs of affected populations. • Working in collaboration when it comes to the creation and sharing of information should become the norm. The value of information is defined by its ability to shape decision-making into an informed, fact-based and sustainable direction. The needs of vulnerable populations cannot be addressed unless information on vulnerabilities exists. • Urbanization and the needs and vulnerabilities of urban centers should be mainstreamed in all response and development planning. Urbanization is a global, irreversible change that is defining both humanitarian response as well as humanitarian crises in growing terms. A reactive approach to this change is needed. 	
Top two quotes from the session	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Area-based approaches are cheaper than doing several assessments that would give the same result, and save lives much quicker.” • “We often forget the significance of the unit of measurement. If the unit of measurement is off, our data will be off.” 	
Any general points regarding UNHCR-NGO partnerships	