Follow up questions

**Question 1, from Arno Batz**

From an academic perspective, which concrete methods should students enrolled in development-related programmes acquire in order to help shaping needs assessments and evaluations for better evidence-based decision making?

*Alice Obrecht, ALNAP*

You may want to check out the new ALNAP Evaluating Humanitarian Action Guide, as well as our other publications on evaluation, including the Evaluating Protection Guide that is currently being piloted.

*Julia Stewart-David, ECHO:*

There are plenty of online, publicly available resources where your students could learn more about different tools, methods and methodologies used for assessing the needs and risks as well as access online training modules.

For example, on needs and risk assessment methodology and processes, they could consult the following websites:

- Index for Risk management - INFORM
- Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre
- GDACS
- EU Emergency Response Coordination Centre
- ACAPS
- Humanitarian Programme Cycle:
  - Needs assessment
  - Humanitarian Kiosk
  - Kobo Toolbox:
  - OCHA INFORMATION Management TOOL BOX

- UNHCR's Emergency Information Management Guidance Toolkit
- MapAction
- Humanitarian Data Exchange – EDX
Here they could also find different, free online courses on the needs assessment and humanitarian response system in general. Such as:

- E-learning - coordinated needs assessment in emergencies (ACAPS). Covers the basics of coordinated needs assessment in emergencies: https://www.acaps.org/resources/elearning

- E-learning - STAIT webinars. The STAIT seeks to improve understanding and knowledge of the Transformative Agenda and its related toolbox of protocols at field level: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/topics/transformative-agenda

- E-learning - Building a Better Response (Harvard Humanitarian Initiative). Provides background information on the humanitarian architecture, as well as detailed information on the various aspects of the architecture, including the cluster system, humanitarian finance mechanisms, and underlying standards and principles. http://hhi.harvard.edu/education/bbr#intro


**Question 2, from Luke Caley**

I work with the Start Network managing an ECHO funded grant to enable anticipatory action for the UK, Irish and Dutch supported Start Fund. As part of this, we are building systems to deliver forecasting information to decision-makers and generating evidence on the value of early action. I would be interested to hear reflections from Imogen and/or Julia on emerging evidence around the return on investment for advanced preparedness and early action. I’m particularly interested in perspectives on the perception of risk of acting in vain. What do we need to build sufficient evidence so ‘acting in vain’ is seen less as crying wolf and more as evidence-informed risk management?

**Question 2a, from Kambiz Hamedanizadeh**
Do you have any indicator / tools / measure to preventable death due to delay of implementation?

**Imogen Parsons, DFID:**

First of all some links to the evidence we have and are generating. I am sure Luke will already be familiar with the Cabot Venton et al studies on Ethiopia/Kenya and Sahel from 2012. Luke might also be aware that Courtenay is working on another project with us, Building Resilience and Managing Risk in Fragile and Conflict Affected Environments. She recently presented findings from that work at a START meeting, so he may have seen those. We expect to start to publish full papers shortly- get in touch with me (Imogen) or with Courtenay. He will probably also know the UNICEF/WFP/Boston Consulting Group work, which is here: [http://www.humanitarian-preparedness.org/evidence.html](http://www.humanitarian-preparedness.org/evidence.html). And we are expecting a further report on preparedness to come out around January, so please get in touch with us/Fergus McBean then. Finally, I would also suggest speaking to the Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre as they are interested in forecast based financing and we have had some discussions with them on what evidence we might need.

In terms of wider reflections, I think the evidence is clear that substantial VfM gains can be made from preparedness and early action, in terms of both cost savings and avoided losses. What we are now doing is seeking to demonstrate those gains in practice in current responses (to show decision makers that their early decisions were the right thing to do), and to look at wider potential benefits in terms of supporting long-term development gains. I also think we need to develop a bit more specificity on what we mean by early- what interventions specifically we should implement at what time to optimise VfM – and what information, indicators or triggers we could use for decision making. This will be especially important with new types of financing like insurance, but also applies to donor funding, particularly if we are looking at activating funds even further in advance of current practice and when there will be even greater uncertainty. I am interesting in modelling of the risk/return of such very early decisions, as well as then demonstrating the outcomes in practice if and when we adopt such models. Finally, I think to the extent possible we should also look at what benefits do accrue from ‘acting in vain’ – as it’s unlikely that investment in the kinds of contexts we are talking about would have no benefit, even if the situation does not develop into a full blown crisis.

**Julia Stewart-David, ECHO:**

Whether insurance, contingency funds, or crisis modifiers, an early response requires predictable funding and indeed developing the evidence and cost benefit analysis tools to demonstrate and justify preparedness for early action. We need to work collectively on methodologies that identify
no-regrets responses to risk rather than (avoidable) need. We hope that Start Network’s experience through ECHO funded project will support this work.

We also need to support the strengthening of local response systems, strengthening monitoring and developing triggers and distribution mechanisms for pre-emptive early action; contribute to the design and functioning of adequate crisis modifiers and contingency plans as part of development programmes and social protection systems in fragile and hazard prone contexts; and developing funding mechanisms to allow a local, early response.

Early action and preparedness for response are our priorities, and ECHO has already supported them at a number of levels, by advocating for early warning and response systems at a policy level (Sendai Framework, Agenda 2013, WHS); integrating monitoring and mechanisms into humanitarian assistance programmes; and supporting capacity building through the disaster preparedness budget line, EU Aid Volunteers and Enhanced Response Capacity funding channels. Some of these have resulted in, for example, provisions for early action through a number of built "Emergency Response Mechanisms" (e.g. in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, CAR); or the EU El Nino 2015/2016 response, focused on preparedness to allow early action in response to drought. ECHO funding modalities also allow considerable flexibility and increasingly include crisis modifiers.

Addressing question 2a:

There is not, to my knowledge, a standard tool or indicator in use for doing this, although attempts have been made to estimate excess mortality due to a crisis. There has been one fairly recent example, on Somalia 2011/12, which was influential in changing policies (it was one of several studies that informed the “no regrets” approach) although as it was retrospective it was published only after the crisis. There is interest in doing this kind of work of this kind much earlier in a developing crisis, using predictive models, but we are some way from being able to do this routinely and well. See:


Question 3, from Rebecca Chestnutt

Question to any of the presenters - for those of us who work with national governments on disaster preparedness to prepare them to work better with international stakeholders during a humanitarian crisis, are there specific steps you would recommend that we take to create a better foundation for these governments to begin working with evidence-based data? My ideal would be to help governments become
informed consumers, resulting in a much better dialogue between host nation governments and international humanitarian actors during a disaster.

**Chloe Lattimer, Development Initiatives:**

One of the most effective ways to improve the quality of data published by international actors, and by extension the quality of evidence available to inform better decisions, is for those actors to be made aware of demand for their data. National actors should therefore be encouraged and supported to actively request better data from their international partners. This will involve identifying what information they’d ideally like to have access to, to enable them to make better and more informed decisions; considering what data and information from their partners might help to fill that gap; and, once identified, requesting the data from their partners. Identifying existing data that isn’t of sufficient quality to be used effectively, as well as highlighting good practice, are both arguably equally as important for improving overall data quality. However, both the will and the capacity to use data and evidence effectively and appropriately also need to be in place for any organisation to make good and effective use of data, which may require training and/or recruiting staff with specific skills and experience.

**Imogen Parsons, DFID:**

I think it would be worth looking at the work the World Bank/GFDRR has done on modelling the costs of disasters that I mentioned. Although this is now well progressed as a partnership it started from first steps of working closely with government counterparts and engaging them throughout the research, and understanding what was of concern to them.

https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/21920

We could also point here to the work DI did for us on East Africa, that was mentioned in the presentation as that has useful recommendations: http://devinit.org/#/post/humanitarian-evidence-systems-mapping-in-east-africa

**Julia Stewart-David, ECHO:**

The enhanced dialogue with governments that you are proposing could for example be supported through establishing a common understanding of situation before a disaster/crisis strike or during across different stakeholders, so having strong baselines of evidence and relevant data that can then be linked in to efforts to improve disaster management governance. One example is the use of the Index for Risk management - INFORM provides a common evidence base for everyone to work together better to manage the risk of crises and disasters, build resilience and prepare better for when they do happen - governments, local and international humanitarian and development actors, and donors. Developing an INFORM Subnational model is a locally owned and managed
process that is supported by the global INFORM initiative - a collaboration of humanitarian, development, government and technical partners. An INFORM Subnational risk model could show a detailed picture of risk and its components to be used for a dialogue on understanding and analysing the risk by all relevant actors, and supporting their common decision-making or other actions.

You can find more what INFORM Subnational is and read examples of the Subnational models that the INFORM partners have developed in the Sahel region, Greater Horn of Africa region, Lebanon and Colombia.

**Question 4, Francesca Bastinti**

From just a comment: there are quasi-experimental design that can deliver robust evidence and can be more ethical. What is DFID’s position in this regard?

**Imogen Parsons, DFID**

I do not think we can take a position that one methodology will always be the right one. Where quasi-experimental methods are the most appropriate for a particular question and context we would likely not disagree with that approach. We should not though assume that RCTs are not ethical or that other methodologies will automatically be more ethical – we would expect the research design to look very carefully at ethics alongside other questions in each case. And for some questions we may specify that we want RCT type evidence (assuming it can be produced in an ethical way), to give us greater depth of certainty around choice of interventions for instance.