

# Building resilience and improving our responses to humanitarian emergencies through innovation and better use of evidence

## Introduction

The predicted impact of climate change, rapid and unplanned urbanisation, and conflict mean that the frequency and severity of crises will increase and affect more people in the future. To prepare for this uncertain future we will need to find innovative ways of working and use the best science to help identify the most effective interventions.

But to date there has been relatively little investment to provide this evidence or to promote innovation in a humanitarian system that moves quickly from one disaster to the next.

## A new approach

Lord Ashdown's Humanitarian Emergency Response Review (HERR) made three specific recommendations to support investment in research, evidence and innovation to improve humanitarian action.

- We need to build a **better understanding of how the world is changing**. We need to know more about the combined effects of climate and environmental change, increased population and urbanisation and political instability – and which countries and communities will be most affected.
- We need to find **innovative** ways to build resilience, and reduce the human and economic costs of crises, using new technologies and new ways of working.
- **We need to have evidence about what works** in order to be accountable to beneficiaries and to tax payers, and be confident that we are working in the most effective ways.

## What we will do

In its response to the HERR, the British Government agreed to promote research and innovation in this area.

DFID is well positioned to catalyse innovation and promote more evidence-based approaches. By linking our roles as a funder of humanitarian action and a political champion for resilience and humanitarian reform with our capacity to commission world-class research, we are able to ensure that research and innovation steps out of the laboratory and reaches deep into policy and practice around the world.



### Innovation and evidence in action: Treating malnutrition at home

DFID covered around half the costs to develop a new approach to treating severe acute malnutrition. Community Therapeutic Care (CTC) challenged the conventional approach to treatment by distributing specially enriched foods, like plumpy nut, for people to use at home, rather than having to travel to a health clinic.

This innovative approach achieves higher recovery rates, can reach more people and can be 90% cheaper than clinic based treatment. And with clear evidence in place 55 countries have since taken on this approach - reaching more people, more effectively.

In 2009 alone over 1 million children benefitted from this treatment which proved critical in our response to the 2011 crisis in the Horn of Africa.

Our new strategy, 'Promoting innovative and evidence-based approaches to building resilience and responding to humanitarian crises' sets out how we will do this. Focussing on four key challenges it will:

- Give decision-makers access to good information about risk.
- Identify which approaches are most effective to reduce risk, working with the insurance industry and development partners to help save lives and rebuild livelihoods after a crisis – and support and promote innovative ways of tackling existing challenges.
- Find the best ways of helping communities living in the most vulnerable and fragile environments to build resilience to cope with disasters and emergencies.
- Make sure that decision-makers are able to access high quality evidence when they need it, and have the incentives to use it.

## What kind of results will we deliver?

Through this integrated approach we expect to **identify and support the testing of a range of innovations ready to deliver at scale**. The development of a new approach to treat acute malnutrition, illustrated overleaf, shows how a new approach can be developed, tested and shared. We will support promising new approaches such as the use of mobile phones to monitor delivery of aid in insecure environments, to track population movements and to support accountability to beneficiaries. We will further test the use cash-based responses, and the potential to develop insurance schemes to help poor people recover more quickly if disasters strike.

We will also create **a library of evidence about what works**. We expect that this would cover specific approaches to, for example, tackling health risks or ways of reaching populations in insecure and conflict affected environments. This will allow DFID and others to make more effective decisions, to ensure that money is not wasted, and that the right people get the best sort of help in a humanitarian crisis.

We will build a **body of evidence** to ensure that development programmes help build resilience at a community level, as well as identifying ways in which a national government's own capacity to response to disasters and emergencies can be supported. And we expect that the **improved use of higher quality data** will allow support to be targeted to reach those most in need, and to meet the different needs of men and women, young and old.

Our new approach is about finding ways to reach more people, more effectively, with the support that we know they need. It's about finding the best ways to help communities prepare to cope with disasters themselves, and finding new ways to tackle the humanitarian challenges of the future.

## More information

To support the UK Government's commitments we have published Strategy Paper setting out in detail our approach to promoting innovative and evidence-based approaches to building resilience and responding to humanitarian crises. The full paper is available online: [Humanitarian disasters and emergencies research](#).



### Innovation and evidence in action: Insuring against natural disasters

An innovative insurance scheme, established in the Caribbean with UKaid support, meant that the Government of Haiti was able to secure a payment of \$7.75 million (around 20 times their premium for earthquake coverage) within just 14 days of the 2010 earthquake.

The scheme allowed this quick payment to be made on estimated costs - and helped the Government avoid building up debt to fund urgent recovery work.

And through effective data collection and regional collaboration the initiative is helping boost Disaster Risk Reduction and climate change efforts.