



GLOBAL PRIORITISATION EXERCISE FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM • PHASE ONE MAPPING

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Prepared by Global Emergency Group Consortium

Kirsten Gelsdorf, Strategic Lead Langdon Greenhalgh, Project Manager Dr. Lezlie Morinière, Research Methods Expert Dr. Hannah Vaughan–Lee, Research Specialist Andrew Billo, Innovation Specialist Drew Souders, Project Support

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InfoGraphics by Sorcerers Layout design and typesetting by Girish Arora In 2016 the number of people in need of international humanitarian assistance reached over 164 million. While recent reports reveal that in the same year the total value of official humanitarian assistance grew by 6%, the global shortfall of unmet needs remained stubbornly at 40%¹. To make real progress in closing the gap we must recognise that our current system is failing to evolve at the pace and scale needed. Addressing this shortfall, however, is not simply a matter of money.

Major gaps exist in the evidence base and the innovative capacities underpinning humanitarian action. Realising a humanitarian system that is truly anticipatory and fit for purpose in responding to crises, requires us to urgently build more effective alliances within and between communities of science, research and innovation.

This is why Elrha has launched the Global Prioritisation Exercise for Humanitarian Research and Innovation (GPE) a new global effort to transform the impact of research and innovation in the humanitarian system. The GPE aims for the first time to provide public visibility of the range of global investments, capacity and activity in humanitarian research and innovation and to widely consult and identify shared priorities for further investment and action.

The global mapping presented here is the essential first step in this process. The report provides us with a detailed baseline of global humanitarian research and innovation activity as viewed through published outputs during 2016–2017. The data presented reveals not only the range of thematic, technical and geographic focus of activity during this period, but also maps the numerous Funders and Actors active in this space.

These early results raise important questions regarding how well current investments and activity align to recognised humanitarian priorities and needs, and reveal interesting differences between the focus of research and innovation communities. The data also shows a marked disparity between the geographical locations of funding recipients compared to the geographical focus of the research and innovation activities themselves; with the vast majority of research and innovation resources both provided and received by actors in the 'Global North'. This important finding suggests that more needs to be done to shift funding allocations to partners closer to where humanitarian needs are most directly experienced.

This baseline report represents Phase One of the GPE, and provides us with the foundation to develop the next two phases of our work. Guided in part by the results of this report, the second phase of the GPE will be a global consultation with key stakeholders in humanitarian research, evidence and innovation, to identify shared priorities for research and innovation action and investments.

1 Data from The Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2017: http://devinit.org/post/global-

humanitarian-assistance-2017/

It will consist of detailed conversations with a geographically diverse group of stakeholder actors, including:

- Governments, International Organisations and Humanitarian Actors
- Humanitarian research and innovation communities
- Communities affected by crises
- Private sector actors

In addition, the Phase Two consultation offers the potential to explore a more detailed financial analysis of funding volumes between donors, which was beyond the scope of this current report. The first two phases of the GPE will culminate in a new strategic framework for current and new funders of humanitarian innovation and research, to be presented in Phase Three of the initiative alongside a programme of dissemination, advocacy and outreach.

As part of our ambition to provide the GPE as a regularly-updated, sustainable, resource for the humanitarian community, the mapping methodology developed to enable this report provides us with a valuable tool for monitoring and track-ing progress and trends over time.

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Jess Camburn

Elrha Director

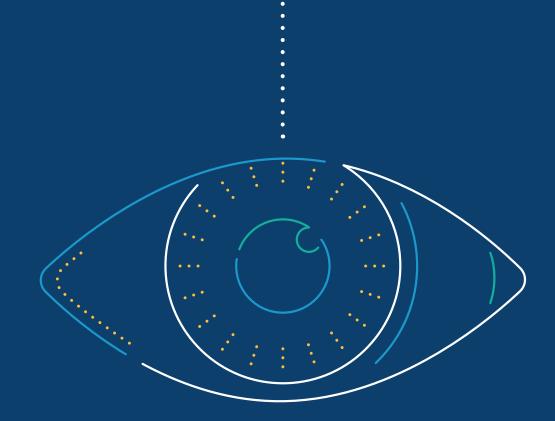
The following describes key terms as defined within this Report and throughout the mapping exercise.

- Humanitarian Action is intended to "save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and after man-made crises and disasters caused by natural hazards, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for when such situations occur". Included systematically in 'humanitarian' are those situated in DRR/preparedness, response and recovery.²
- Research refers to investigations that are planned, organised and with a methodology; where the research is related to innovation, this is referred to as 'Combination'.
- Innovation represents an "iterative process that identifies, adjusts and diffuses ideas for improving humanitarian action" and refers to both products and processes. This draws together multiple elements that define problems or opportunities; doing something different; and/or seeking improvement.³
- Output refers to what was produced or created through Research and/or Innovation; though identified primarily through documents, the outputs mapped in this project can take various forms. The mapping identified outputs according to the following categories: documents, tangible products (excluding documents), concepts, workshops/conferences, consultations, campaigns or other forms.
- Funders are entities that have been explicitly identified as the source of the financial support of the Research and/or Innovation output(s). This excludes organisations that receive funding and then disperse it as part of their programming, with the exception of bodies that are explicitly set up as funds. The Mapping includes the following types of Funders: Donor agencies/governments (referred to as 'donors'), foundations, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), private sector, academic, UN, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and Red Cross Movement entities; those Funders that cannot be classified within these are referred to as 'other'.
- Actors are organisations, centres or other entities/stakeholders engaged in Research and/ or Innovation. This can include individual organisations and/or networks/alliances. Actor types have the same categorisation as Funders, with networks and interagency bodies captured under 'other'. It is possible for Actors to also be Funders if they engage in the projects in addition to funding them. Findings are systematically divided into Academic versus Practitioner actors. Practitioner refers to non-academic entities that are the dominant author or creator of an output while Academic refers to academic entities (universities and think tanks) that are the dominant author of an output.
- Current refers to the 2016 2017 period.

² Definition adapted from Development Initiatives, *Defining humanitarian assistance*, http://devinit.org/defining-humanitarianassistance. While it is recognised that humanitarian outcomes can be improved by research/innovation in the general development sector, long-term and sustainable development-related research/innovation is not included in the scoping **unless found per** chance, and determined to explicitly target a specific threat or hazard.

³ A. Obrecht and A. T. Warner, More than just luck: Innovation in humanitarian action, HIF/ ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI, 2016; A. Obrecht, with A. T. Warner and N. Dillon, Working paper: Evaluating humanitarian innovation, HIF/ALNAP Working Paper. London: ODI/ALNAP, 2017.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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"We can't sit here and innovate and research everything – we need to focus, so therefore what are the areas to focus on, particularly when talking about investments for research and innovation?

- Practitioner Informant interview⁴

"[In setting the future agenda] one of the challenges is around the details of what you finance...behind that there needs to be a gap analysis...There needs to be a view of what is going on worldwide."

- Funder Informant interview⁵

Background & Methodology

Worldwide funding for humanitarian activities is increasingly under pressure. As the humanitarian system faces both expansion, new and old challenges, research and innovation are increasingly central to ensuring the most effective humanitarian assistance possible. Yet where to best to allocate resources for research and innovation remains a critical question; moreover a lack of strategic coordination among key funders and the humanitarian community can limit the full impact of these investments. In response, Elrha is leading a new global effort to map research and innovation capacities and to consult and identify clear priorities for research and innovation for humanitarian action through a Global Prioritisation Exercise (GPE). The overall GPE consists of three phases spanning two years: Phase One - Global Mapping; Phase Two - Global Consultations; and Phase Three - Synthesis.

This report presents the findings from Phase One. The objective of the global mapping phase is to establish an understanding of:

- The current funding landscape for humanitarian research and innovation;
- Current actors (academic and practitioner) that contribute to the research and innovation space; and
- Current research and innovation-related outputs.

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To answer the key questions and meet these objectives it was necessary to map the current characteristics of humanitarian Research and Innovation across the globe - the Funders, Actors and outputs. To do this, a primary dataset was developed through a rigorous literature review (RLR), which systematically examined documents compiled by rule-based searches⁶ of scholastic and grey literature covering the period 2016-April 2017 for information relating to Funders⁷ and Actors as well as output coverage and characteristics, including geographic and sector/cluster coverage, humanitarian events and a range of topics. While the RLR examined documents to determine their focus, it is important to note that it did not evaluate the quality of the documents or evidence. After triangulating between Academic and Practitioner literature, this dataset was further triangulated with 30 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) to gain a better understanding of the funding landscape and do a 'sense-check' on areas of very low and/or very high coverage in the RLR. Additional document reviews were also completed in order to provide a 'backdrop' against which to check gaps and trends identified in the RLR. Terms used in this report are defined, simplified (given the scope

6 Rule-based searches of scholarly (Web of Knowledge and Google Scholar) and practitioner literature (Relief web) included any forms of the words 'humanitarian' AND

web) included any forms of the words 'humanitarian' AND ('research' OR 'innovation') in title, in topic or anywhere in the document (in the case of Reliefweb).

⁴ Interview with NGO, May 26, 2017.

⁵ Interview with Donor, May 11, 2017.

⁷ Funders are entities that have been explicitly identified as the source of the financial support of the Research and/or Innovation output(s). This excludes organisations that receive funding and then disperse it as part of their programming, with the exception of bodies that are explicitly set up as funds.

and time available to conduct this work) and – in some cases – developed specifically for this mapping.

Overall the RLR showed that in 2016–2017 there were:

- 219 Funders of humanitarian Research and/ or Innovation
- 825 Research and/or Innovation Actors
- 694 Outputs produced from Research and/ or Innovation activities.

It is important to note that this mapping does not consider uptake of Research and/or Innovation or coverage of topic areas in policy or advocacy and thus does not establish the priorities for future research (that will be done in Phases Two & Three of the GPE). The report does establish an evidence-base upon which to discuss priorities through consultation with Actors and Funders in Phase Two as well as a baseline mapping and understanding of the current state of humanitarian Research and Innovation using research methods that may be replicated again in future years.

Funding Landscape

219 funders of Research and/or Innovation outputs were identified during the 2016–2017 period of review. The mapping only considered the frequency (number of outputs funded) of Funder support, not the volume or amount of funding provided by individual Funders. As such, the funding landscape findings should be seen as only one piece of the current picture and would need to be complemented by other processes to generate a full understanding of the current landscape.

The first layer of the landscape focuses on **who is funding** humanitarian Research and Innovation. The RLR revealed that in terms of frequency:

- Governments and their donor agencies (hereafter referred to as 'donors') are the dominant type of funder (51%);
- Research is more dependent on donor funding;

- Innovation has a more diversified funder base (in particular from NGOs, UN agencies and the private sector) though, comparatively, Research has more support from academic entities and foundations; and
- International Financial Institutions (IFI) had very limited engagement in both Research and Innovation (making up only 1% overall). While there was some surprise that IFIs did not have a higher representation (the World Bank in particular), as one NGO acknowledged, while IFI's are "on our radar, we haven't done much with them in the past".⁸

The mapping also found that, while Funders may regularly fund Research and Innovation, they comprise a (very) small proportion of grants. Furthermore, Funders noted that:

- While it is possible that funding can be multiyear or 'longer-term' (e.g. 3-5 years), most Research is funded with grant timelines of 12-months or less. According to informants, on the select occasions three-year research grants from donors exist, year three is intended to focus on "capturing the learning and dissemination strategy" and, as such, the research itself would need to be completed within the first two years;⁹ and
- Funding can be a mixture of restricted and unrestricted funds, yet Practitioners¹⁰ at the global level reported relying more heavily on unrestricted funding.

From a geographic perspective and based on RLR frequency,¹¹ the vast majority of both Research and Innovation Funders and funding recipients (i.e. Actors) are currently headquartered in Europe and North America, with the primary Funder and Actor headquarters concentrated in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA). While Northern Funders expressed

- 8 Interview with NGO, 17 May 2017.
- 9 Interview with NGO, 19 May 2017.
- 10 Practitioner refers to non-academic entities that are the dominant author or creator of an output.
- 11 Frequency refers to the **number** of outputs supported by the identified funders as a proportion of total outputs in the current period (i.e. not funding volume).

interest in engaging with Actors from the Global South, as well as with the *localisation* agenda more broadly, this interest has not translated into identified outputs in the RLR.

Looking ahead, interviews also considered the strategic priorities of Funders moving forwards:

- For donors, much of the Research and Innovation focus for Funders centres on following-up the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and Grand Bargain¹² commitments, and for Innovation, centres on the addition of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Foundations were less specific and more broadly oriented towards potential increased engagement with humanitarian actors and/or looking at ways to transfer development gains to humanitarian settings.
- In terms of specific topics of interest to Funders for Research, refugees featured strongly for both Research and Innovation. Donor agencies also spoke with particular interest in engaging more with the private sector as part of ongoing and future strategies for Innovation in particular.

Actors

In total, 825 Actors were identified in the mapping exercise, encompassing organisations or other entities engaged in Research and/ or Innovation. Outputs were assigned to one, predominate Actor identified as either Academic¹³ (N=278) or Practitioner (N=416), so that the mapping could compare outputs

- 12 The Grand Bargain is one of the initiatives stemming from the Agenda for Humanity at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (see <u>http://www.agendaforhumanity.org/</u>): "an agreement between more than 30 of the biggest donors and aid providers... The Grand Bargain includes a series of changes in the working practices of donors and aid organisations that would deliver an extra billion dollars over five years [from 2016] for people in need of humanitarian aid. These changes include gearing up cash programming, greater funding for national and local responders and cutting bureaucracy through harmonised reporting requirements... among other commitments".
- 13 Academic includes ODI, Brookings and other similar types of think tank institutions.

between two profiles that often work in silos.14

When looking at Actors during the current period, the RLR found that the vast **majority of outputs produced by Academics are Research outputs** (77%). Conversely, only a third of Practitioner outputs are Research (33%) with slightly more outputs than Academics in Innovation (55%).

Adding more detail on **Actor type**, while Research is dominated by Academics and, to a lesser extent, NGOs, Innovation outputs are more widely distributed with UN agencies in the lead but closely followed by 'other' (i.e. entities not captured by other types), NGOs and the Private Sector. International Financial Institutions were the least represented category among Actor type.

The vast majority of Actors are headquartered in Europe and North America (81% combined). The remaining Actors mostly come from Asia/Pacific and Africa (7% and 6% respectively), with the lowest representation from Eurasia (1%), LAC (2%) and MENA (3%). In addition:

- Africa features more prominently in Innovation compared to Research (9% to 5%);
- Kenya appears among the more frequent Research Actors from the Global South (and is the leader for the Africa region) along with Colombia.
- While Eurasia makes up 3% of Actors producing Research they have no Innovation outputs.

While there are exceptions, including those mentioned above, for the most part actors from the Global South did not emerge as prominent Actors during the current period based on output frequency. This mapping could not explore this experience or potential constraints to southern actors in the humanitarian

14 These identified through the RLR; only those Actors with outputs identified through the RLR are included in the quantitative analysis. Those selected additions from the GEG team (n=37) are excluded from this total. Actor data from the PLR is also not included owing to the different sampling approach. Research and Innovation space. Rather, it demonstrates that current knowledge production pathways in the international humanitarian system (i.e. ReliefWeb and Web of Knowledge) may be biased towards Northern sites of publication and dissemination. There may also be other constraints. As one 2016 study stated, "In practice the governance and coordination of research and evaluation in the humanitarian sector in East Africa is almost non-existent, with multiple, ad hoc, small, short-term initiatives performed by multiple actors". Moreover, "Much [of the research] is self-published, based on small samples and short timeframes, with limited methodological diversity or rigour".¹⁵

Research and Innovation Coverage: What do outputs focus on?

There were 694 outputs identified during the 2016–2017 period.¹⁶ The presentation of the findings reflects a snapshot of outputs with the following themes: geographic coverage; context (urban or rural); humanitarian event type; integrated disaster risk management (IDRM) phase; sectors and Clusters; and 32 different 'topic areas'. High and low-coverage is determined by the relative focus across the 694 outputs examined.

Geographic Coverage

In terms of overall geographic coverage, more than one third (36%) of all outputs focus on global systemic challenges or did not specify what countries they were focusing on. Where a specific country focus was identified, a quarter of both Research and Innovation outputs focus on Africa (25%).

At the country-level, Kenya, Jordan, Syria, Haiti and Philippines are the most frequent sites where outputs are focused, but geographic coverage looks quite different between Research and Innovation.

15 Development Initiatives, 'Humanitarian evidence systems mapping in East Africa', *Development Initiatives*, January, 2016, pp. 10 – 11.

- For Innovation outputs, Kenya and Haiti are top countries of focus (4% each), though they are *not* among the top focus countries for Research (1% each).
- For Research outputs, **Syria and Colombia** are the strongest countries of focus (3% each).
- In terms of actor type, Academics and Practitioners, both had a strong focus on Kenya and Jordan (3% and 2% respectively). Academics also focused outputs on the USA, Colombia and the Philippines, while Practitioners targeted Syria, Haiti and Lebanon.

Humanitarian Event & Context Coverage

Where outputs identified a specific humanitarian event as its primary focus, **Research strongly favours conflict** and **Innovation focused more on natural hazards**. Both had a very limited focus on human-induced, non-conflict events such as technological disasters, urban fires or economic crises. Practitioners focus on both conflict and natural hazards more than Academics. Of those outputs focusing on one context, Innovation has a greater focus on Rural while Research places greater focus on Urban contexts. Academics (23% of their outputs) are also much more inclined to focus on urban contexts than Practitioners (9%).

Phase of Management Coverage

Among those outputs focusing on a specific integrated disaster risk management (IDRM¹⁷) phase, the main attention for both Research and Innovation was on humanitarian response followed by recovery (with Academics more focused on recovery than Practitioners); Innovation emphasised preparedness nearly three times more than Research.

17 Phases of emergency or integrated disaster risk management (IDRM) typically include prevention, preparedness, humanitarian response and recovery (the later typically expanded to recovery/reconstruction).

¹⁶ The number of Actors is higher than the number of outputs as many outputs have more than one author/producer.

Sector/Cluster Coverage

- For both Research and Innovation outputs and all Actor sets, Health is the sector/ Cluster most frequently focused on.
- For Research outputs, the second and third most-frequent sectors of focus are Protection and Logistics (in contrast, for Innovation outputs, Protection is at 10th place and Logistics is at 6th place).
- For Innovation outputs the second and third most frequent sectors focused on are Food Security and Early Recovery.
- In differences between actors, particularly striking is the greater emphasis that Academics put on Logistics, in contrast to Practitioners.

Topic Area Coverage

The RLR considered coverage of 32 different topic areas¹⁸ (see Section 3.3.6 for full list) identified by canvasing key words among stakeholders and recent salient documents in the sector.

- For Research outputs, the most frequent topics focused on include: 'policy' (44%), 'evidence' (44%).
 - 'Policy' as a topic area refers to outputs that focus on any policy targeting governments, system-wide policies and/or other inter-agency or single agency organisational policies (e.g. data protection), etc.
 - 'Evidence' as topic area refers to outputs that focus on discussions or consideration of 'evidence-based research' and 'improving' both the quality of evidence in humanitarian research and how evidence is used in humanitarian decision-making.
- For Research outputs, the next most frequent topics focused on include: displacement (39%), access (30%), gender (29%), coordination (28%) and partnership and livelihood (26% each).
- For Innovation outputs, the most

18 There were no set limits on the number of foci an output can have; double-counting is not an issue. frequent topics focused on include: telecommunications & technology (tech, 72%), information management (49%) and partnerships (36%).

- Though Practitioners dominate Academics in terms of their focus on all of the topics mentioned above (except for coordination), the largest difference between the two sets of Actors is for tech and partnership. In the low coverage areas, the difference between Academics and Practitioners is slight.
- For both Research and Innovation, the outputs with the lowest coverage include environment, disability, older persons, and financial inclusion.

The coverage findings do not necessarily equate to sufficiency/gaps in levels of engagement from Research and/or Innovation but generate a series of questions that need to be explored in the Phase Two – Global Consultations, including:

- Does low coverage point to gaps that require further attention, or does it reflect relevance within the humanitarian system at that point in time?
- Conversely, are high-coverage areas receiving this attention because Research/ Innovation is an expressed need in the sector, or are there other drivers beyond the scope of this mapping (such as funding, politics or other dynamics)?

Research and Innovation Characteristics

As part of the RLR, there was also a specific consideration of characteristics of researchrelated outputs and innovation-related outputs respectively.

For **Research** the RLR considered the research purpose, type of methodologies used and whether the output had been peer reviewed. Key findings include:

• Nearly one third of all qualitative studies (the primary research method of choice among current outputs overall) did <u>not</u> indicate what type of qualitative approach they were using. While the mapping did not evaluate an output's quality of evidence this finding serves as a proxy for without a clear explanation of the methodology, it is not possible to determine how strong the evidence-base is and whether the findings should influence practice or policy.

- Many of the systematic literature and evidence reviews included in the RLR also critiqued the standard of evidence available.
- The strong emphasis on qualitative methods, and subsequent limited use of quantitative approaches, especially among Practitioners, also raises questions as to the comfort of Practitioners with quantitative methodologies, operational compatibility, timeframes, ethics and other considerations for quantitative approaches. If the questions posed require quantitative methods, lack of comfort or other impediments can constrain research and analysis.

The RLR also looked at whether an output 'consulted' the affected population during the development of the output. Of those outputs with data on this issue, 57% of all outputs consulted affected populations. Within this, Research was the lead with 51%, compared to 33% for Innovation. Practitioners consulted affected populations more frequently than Academics (55% to 38%). However, the methodology critique raises questions as to how these 'consultations' may have been conducted, including consideration of demographics and ethics (e.g. do no harm). Furthermore, based only on the 100 outputs that visibly focused on one or multiple 'communities', no more than 44 of them named the community, camp or neighbourhood unit. Many others provided a town or district name. While naming may be equated with giving voice and credit to at-risk and affected populations, it is also important to consider whether naming would betray their trust or publically implicate them, thereby potentially causing harm (depending on the theme of the document/output).

Overall, findings reinforce questions raised about current capacity to promote an evidencebased agenda in practice and the need to reconsider how to make it most attractive and compatible with the realities of humanitarian research in practice. For Innovation, outputs were examined for whether they were products or processes, prototypes or being scaled-up, and the innovation phase they represented:

- The majority (69%) of Innovation-related outputs are tangible products (nondocument outputs). This result is consistent with Innovation's higher coverage of product innovations (47%) in contrast to process innovations (29%).
- Innovation-related outputs focus on prototyping or 'both' prototyping and scaling to a similar degree (44 and 41% respectively) with scaling receiving the lowest focus at 12%.
- For phase, with the majority concentrated in 'all phases' (39%) and implementation (30%).

These innovation-related findings raise a series of questions for Phase Two – Global Consultations and beyond:

- Do innovators largely see Innovation as something tangible and, if so, does this view limit the potential of Innovation?
- Does the focus on products suggest that the drivers of innovation (by innovators and their supporters) push it to favour product over equally important process or more social forms of innovations?

More generally, in recognising that evaluations (a form of Research) can provide evidence on the success and/or scaling potential of Innovation, do concerns regarding the *quality* of evidence pose limitations for scaling?

Moving Forwards

To prepare for the global consultation planned for GPE Phase Two, the mapping went one step further to reflect on the findings in relation to gaps previously identified in system-side studies. The mapping examined gaps highlighted by five recent periodic humanitarian action reports and compared the convergence of expressed gaps therein with findings from the RLR. Recognised humanitarian gaps that appear most lacking from the Research and Innovation mapping include:

- Within Research outputs: information management, private sector engagement, localisation, the humanitarian-development nexus, cash as a modality and elderly and disabled target groups.
- Within Innovation outputs: partnership, displacement, coordination, accountability, humanitarian financing, focus outside the 'response' phases, logistics cluster, elderly and disabled target groups, IDP programming, urban programming, environment and climate.

There is an understanding across the humanitarian system that choices need to be made on where to focus Research and Innovation efforts. Making these choices, however, is no simple task. As planned, the findings unveil as many questions as answers; in fact, the main conclusion of Phase One is a prioritised set of questions synthesised as follows:

- How best to qualify the findings indicated by this snapshot-in-time/baseline?
- How to be certain the findings are inclusive?
- If the current snapshot does reflect wider, confirmed patterns, what impactful actions do the findings point to?

This report and the mapping it presents have provided a snapshot of the current humanitarian Research and Innovation space, providing an initial evidence base and raising questions to inform this discussion and prioritisation process. The greatest fruits of this baseline mapping will only be born when it is replicated, thereby allowing a comparison of coverage and the tracking of trends across the humanitarian space. The mapping has also produced a rich database of Research and Innovation during the current period that offers untapped potential for further research (un-addressed to date, due to time). Finally, the effort has established a methodology to map Research and Innovation outputs - one that merits enhancement and replication. Above all, the GPE Phase One has charted new territory in cataloguing humanitarian action and establishes an exciting list of opportunities for meaningful research and innovation in the humanitarian sphere.

elrha

Together, we can reveal the bigger picture of humanitarian research and innovation.

#JoinTheDots

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Elrha 8 Cathedral Road Cardiff, UK CF11 9LJ

elrha.org @Elrha info@elrha.org