

ELRHA Impact Strategy 2014-2016

1 Introduction

- i. This document is framed by a key vision: that all ELRHA activity has a measurable positive impact on humanitarian effectiveness.
- ii. This document is designed to complement other ELRHA Strategies – the *Partnership Strategy*, the *Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Strategy* and the *Uptake and Diffusion Strategy*, as well as the *Impact Frameworks* and *Impact Guidelines* of two ELRHA programmes – the R2HC (Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises) and the HIF (Humanitarian Innovation Fund).
- iii. The aims of this strategy are:
 - i. To describe what impact means to ELRHA (see section 2);
 - ii. To show how all ELRHA outcomes and strategic outputs contribute to the goal of positive impact (see section 3);
 - iii. To describe ELRHA secretariat level impact indicators (see section 4);
- iv. This document describes *what* ELRHA’s impacts and outcomes will be for 2014-2016. *How* ELRHA will achieve its impacts, outcomes and outputs is described in a series of rolling *Annual Operational Plans*.
- v. ELRHA operates four programmes: Effective Partnerships, the HIF, the R2HC and Humanitarian Professionalisation. Each of these programmes has distinct strategic aims; however, they all contribute to the overall vision of ELRHA, which is *to support partnerships between researchers and practitioners to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian action*.
- vi. In the context of this strategy, ELRHA aims to ensure that the outcomes of research, innovation, professionalisation processes and partnership building impact humanitarian action to improve humanitarian effectiveness. In this sense, ELRHA’s ultimate beneficiaries – the final audience for impact – are crisis affected communities, and particularly affected vulnerable groups, in least-developed and middle income countries.
- vii. In this sense, the impact which ELRHA as a whole strives to achieve is *improved effectiveness of humanitarian action*.
- viii. Despite this, ELRHA is not a ‘frontline’ agency and is not operational in the field. Additionally, it does not fund traditional humanitarian response or direct assistance in crises. Instead, to reach beneficiaries, ELRHA seeks to impact humanitarian policy, processes and practices by providing better evidence of ‘what works’ and influencing behaviour and structures within the humanitarian system.

2. Impact and ELRHA

- ix. “Impact” has different meanings for different actors in the development and humanitarian fields. It is used widely, but often without a clear definition of its meaning. This section will outline what impact and outcomes mean for ELRHA and how they will be addressed.
- x. Essentially, ELRHA believes that impact evaluation is relevant to all of its core functions and programmes. This is because there is an obligation for all humanitarian actors to understand the implications of their work; to be accountable to affected populations; and to strive to achieve better results based on evidence and analysis¹.
- xi. Following a DFID 2012 paper², ELRHA adopts the definitions of impact from the OECD-DAC Glossary (2002). However, the original OECD-DAC definition refers only to development, and as ELRHA is a humanitarian agency, the definition is adapted here. For many ELRHA programmes and funded projects, outcomes will be the key achievements sought over the short and medium term, so the OECD-DAC definition of outcome is also recognised and adopted at a strategic level. Similar again to DFID, ELRHA uses the definition of 3ie³ when referring to impact assessment or evaluation.
- Outcome
 - *The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention’s outputs.*
 - Impact
 - *Positive and negative, primary and secondary effects produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.*
 - Impact Assessment
 - *Analyses that measure the net change in outcomes for a particular group of people that can be attributed to a specific program using the best methodology available, feasible and appropriate to the question that is being investigated and to the specific context.*
- xii. However, as a ‘second tier’, non-operational organisation, ELRHA cannot measure impact in terms of an *intervention* in the same way that humanitarian agencies usually do. For ELRHA, an intervention may be progress towards a professionalisation standard, a HIF innovation pilot, or the bringing together of two organisations in partnership. This means that *what* is measured needs to be considered in context. For example, DFID write in their Research Uptake Guidance⁴ that in reality, it is generally not possible to measure significant impact within the timeframe of a research programme; and that the major effects of research may be felt years after results and evidence are released. The same could be said for the majority of ELRHA’s work.
- xiii. In this vein, it is useful to define and plan towards impacts, but where appropriate, ELRHA will define and measure outcomes.
- xiv. There is a further point arising from the definitions above- it is inevitably difficult to causally link ELRHA’s outcomes and evidence to specific humanitarian improvements. Overall, for ELRHA programmes, it is challenging to measure, demonstrate or attribute impact in the field, in humanitarian decision making or in policy development.

¹ O’Flynn, 2010, ‘Impact Assessment: Understanding and assessing our contributions to change’, M&E Paper 7, Intrac - <http://www.intrac.org/data/files/resources/695/Impact-Assessment-Understanding-and-Assessing-our-Contributions-to-Change.pdf>

² Stern, E. 2012, ‘Broadening the Range of Designs and Methods for Impact Evaluations’- Report of a study commissioned by the Department for International Development, Working Paper 38

³ 3ie, 2008, ‘Founding Document for Establishing the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation’ at http://www.3ieimpact.org/media/filer_public/2012/05/17/3iefoundingdocument30june2008.pdf

⁴ DFID, 2013, ‘Research Uptake - A guide for DFID-funded research programmes’

- xv. In this vein, ELRHA will, where appropriate, refer to contribution, not attribution, when discussing impact. Although there are many definitions of each, ELRHA will reference a simple definition: that *attribution* means that causality can be proven and that an intervention caused the observed changes and humanitarian impact; and that *contribution* means that the intervention helped to cause the observed impact, but direct causality is not proven.
- xvi. This distinction reflects the fact that the humanitarian arena is complex, spans the globe, and covers many language and cultural groups as well as many countries with markedly different risk profiles. It then also recognises that evidence, knowledge and advancements engineered by and through ELRHA do significantly benefit humanitarian practice, policy and decision-making. ELRHA is able to achieve this by utilising multiple pathways of influence and engaging multiple stakeholder groups, which are further described here in section 4 and in the *ELRHA Uptake and Diffusion Strategy*.
- xvii. Impact and outcomes can be described at an ELRHA-wide, programme and project level. Programme level impacts are defined and managed with reference to the *Impact Frameworks* of the R2HC and the HIF. The indicators, outcomes and targets of the HIF and the R2HC also describe log frames which have been developed with donors and are attached to each Impact Framework document. Project level impacts are also defined and will be managed with reference to each programme's *Impact Framework* document.
- xviii. The core functions of ELRHA - programme management, fund management, communication, research and dissemination – are all expected to have cumulative and cohesive outcomes. These are detailed in the next section.

3. Considerations

- xix. ELRHA supports partnerships between researchers and practitioners to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian action. ELRHA's theory of change emphasises partnerships, and that working through partnerships will allow ELRHA and ELRHA-funded projects to deliver better outcomes for evidence-based response than each group would be able to deliver alone.
- xx. To support this assumption, ELRHA has and will continue to undertake evaluations of impacts and outcomes at Secretariat and programme levels. For example, the most recent evaluation of ELRHA as a whole covered January 2009 to April 2012 and was conducted by SMCI Associates.
- xxi. Different theories of change support different approaches to impact evaluation. Many guidelines are available that discuss the merits of each approach. For ELRHA, two broad approaches⁵ may be utilised in different contexts and at different times.
- xxii. **Retrospective evaluation**
 - Retrospective evaluations will be harnessed strategically at Secretariat, programme and project levels.
 - An output or outcome that was planned and is being managed and monitored using a linear approach to change may be suited to a retrospective impact evaluation. This approach is often used when an output or outcome has been planned through a logical framework, as is the case of ELRHA.
 - This approach commonly utilises an external evaluator(s) who conduct the evaluation at a fixed point after the completion of a programme cycle or the delivery of all outcomes. This

⁵ O'Flynn, 2010, 'Impact Assessment: Understanding and assessing our contributions to change', M&E Paper 7, Intrac

approach is often linked to the analysis of attribution, which needs to be harnessed with caution in complex contexts where attribution can be difficult to prove.

xxiii. **Participatory evaluation**

- Participatory evaluations could be harnessed at Secretariat, programme and project levels.
- In this approach, stakeholders are involved in validating ELRHA's outcomes and impacts. At a Secretariat level, stakeholders are involved in governance and management – for example, Steering Group members are voted in by a group of voluntary stakeholders from around the world. ELRHA's stakeholders in the broadest sense may affect impacts and outcomes through multiple pathways and using a range of capacities and expertise. In a participatory evaluation, ELRHA stakeholders would have the ability to value or verify inputs and activities, and discuss whether they have contributed to or caused changes and impacts that are perceptible from their perspective.

xxii. **Long term evaluation** is also a common approach to impact assessment. This approach takes place some time - often years - after the completion of the project or programme. It seeks to identify longer term changes that have taken place. ELRHA is now seeking to build a capacity to improve long term evaluations at Secretariat, programme and project level. For example, ELRHA will define mechanisms through which the R2HC Programme can improve monitoring of the impact of research after a research project has been completed and funding has ceased. Increasing resourcing of long term evaluations would require adjustments to the way resourcing is structured and in the way in which ELRHA funds partnerships, professionalisation, research and innovations.

4. ELRHA Secretariat Indicators

- xxiv. Secretariat level stakeholders, based on the stakeholders defined in the *ELRHA Strategy 2011-2013*, are mapped and attached in Annexe 2.
- xxv. Based on these stakeholder groups, ELRHA has defined strategic indicators that will, with ongoing monitoring and evaluation, indicate if ELRHA is impacting each of them. These outcomes and outcome indicators are shown in Table 1. Table 1 fits within the overall impact statement of *improved effectiveness of humanitarian action*.
- xxvi. The outcome indicators in Table 1 reinforce the description of ELRHA's work described in section 1 – that ELRHA seeks to reach beneficiaries and to impact humanitarian policy, processes and practices through providing better evidence of 'what works' and influencing behaviour and structures within its areas of interest and expertise.
- xxvii. The ELRHA Strategy 2011-2013 also describes three Strategic Objectives. These have been folded into the outcomes and outcome indicators shown in Table 1.
- xxviii. As paragraph *iv.* states, exactly how the outcomes in Table 1 are undertaken is described in the ELRHA Annual Operational Plan for 2014; and the Impact Framework of each of four programmes – R2HC for research, Enhanced Partnerships for partnerships, the HIF for innovation and Humanitarian Professionalisation for professionalisation.

Table 1: ELRHA Strategic Level Outcomes and Targets

Outcome theme	Outcome	Outcome Indicator	Outcome Target
Financial stability	ELRHA has in place stable long-term funding that is aligned to its mission and is able to maintain core staff and deliver core services which are not aligned to programmatic grants.	Stable and sustained funding in place	Minimum £5 million annual budget across programmes
		Adequate funding for core staff and functions (Communications, F&G, Governance etc.)	100% funding secured two years up front
		Increased donor diversity	A minimum of four donors contributing to ELRHA's core funding base and programmes
		Adequate unrestricted funding in place for ELRHA's core service programmes (partnerships, methodologies, professional development advice)	A minimum of 15% total ELRHA income is unrestricted by end 2016
Relevance and reputation	ELRHA is recognised by our stakeholder communities and donors as a leading actor in humanitarian research, innovation and professional development.	ELRHA's strategy addresses current and future humanitarian priorities and reflects stakeholder needs	A comprehensive framework of strategic documents are written or renewed by December 2014
		All ELRHA governance and management structures are effective, ensure continuity and corporate memory, demonstrate diversity, and contain the key skills needed within the membership to successfully perform	All governance groups are fully resourced and functioning effectively by start of 2015
		Research and innovations supported by ELRHA can be seen contributing to policy/ decision-making and strategies of operational humanitarian actors (eg. NGOs, UN, multilaterals, humanitarian donors)	A minimum of three documented cases where ELRHA research directly informs new policy at multilateral level
		ELRHA supported research is routinely published in relevant peer-reviewed journals	At least 5 articles are published and 3 are accepted for publication in respected journals by the end of 2018
Reach	There is continued growth and regional balance in the numbers of stakeholders accessing and using ELRHA's services	Accelerating growth of ELRHA's online stakeholder community	There is 15% annual growth - as documented by website, mailing list and network statistics – between 2014 and 2016.
		There is regional balance in the stakeholders accessing and using ELRHA's online services	By end of 2016, visit and utility reporting shows ranges of: 20-25% Europe 20-25% Africa 20-25% Asia 20- 25% North America 10-15% South America 10-15% Oceania
		There is diversity of organisation type and location that receive funding through ELRHA's grant-making programmes	At least 45% of grants include southern actors and 10% are led by southern actors by end of 2018
CORE PROGRAMMES			
Partnerships	These outcomes and indicators are detailed in their respective programme Impact Frameworks		
Innovation			
Research			
Professionalisation			

- xxix. Additionally, the Operational Plan outlines a series of outputs that will be produced in 2014-2015:
- A baseline for monitoring the outcomes of ELRHA;
 - A comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of potential options for the status of ELRHA;
 - A governance/management structure and process to ensure continuity i.e. retention of organisational memory;
 - A review of ELRHA's global vision and strategic objectives in the light of the very small core funding resource;
 - The promotion of donor diversity;
 - New ELRHA branding and a website upgrade.

5. Summary

- xxx. This document is framed by a key vision: that all ELRHA activity has a measurable positive impact on humanitarian effectiveness.
- xxxi. It has described what impact means to ELRHA; discussed how ELRHA outcomes and strategic outputs contribute to the goal of positive impact; and presented ELRHA secretariat level impact indicators.
- xxxii. For more detail on related ELRHA issues, please see ELRHA documents at www.ELRHA.org.

Annexe 2: Stakeholders of ERLHA

ELRHA's central stakeholders are listed in Table A2.1. Each of these stakeholders are relevant to different outcome themes, as shown in the table.

Table A2.1: ELRHA Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Description	Themes
Academic and research institutions	Humanitarian - Academic	Relevance and reputation; Reach; Partnerships; Innovation; Research
Humanitarian organisations including NGOs, Red Cross/Red Crescent societies and UN	Humanitarian - Practitioner	Relevance and reputation; Reach; Partnerships; Innovation; Professionalisation; Research
Humanitarian staff and volunteers	Humanitarian - Practitioner	Relevance and reputation; Reach; Partnerships; Innovation; Professionalisation; Research
Partner Agencies - ELRHA	Humanitarian - Other	Relevance and reputation; Partnerships; Innovation; Research
Students and aspiring humanitarians	Humanitarian - Academic	Professionalisation; Innovation
Humanitarian training providers	Humanitarian - Training	Relevance and reputation; Professionalisation; Innovation; Research
Professional humanitarian networks and associations	Network/Collaboration	Relevance and reputation; Partnerships; Professionalisation
Communities affected by crises	Affected Population	
Research Councils	Humanitarian - Academic	Relevance and reputation; Reach; Research
Donors- ELRHA	Donor	Financial stability; Relevance and reputation; Reach
Donors- other	Donor	Relevance and reputation
Private sector	Private	Financial stability; Relevance and reputation; Partnerships
Regional Government Groups	Government	Relevance and reputation ; Reach; Partnerships
National Governments	Government	Relevance and reputation ; Reach; Partnerships
Local Governments	Government	Relevance and reputation ; Partnerships; Innovation; Research
Donor Governments	Government	Relevance and reputation; Reach
Academic media	Media	Relevance and reputation; Research
Humanitarian media	Media	Relevance and reputation; Reach

Each stakeholder is linked to impact outcomes as an audience, a partner or an influence. Which category of these they may fall into is described in Figure A2.1.

Figure A2.1: Stakeholder Mapping

