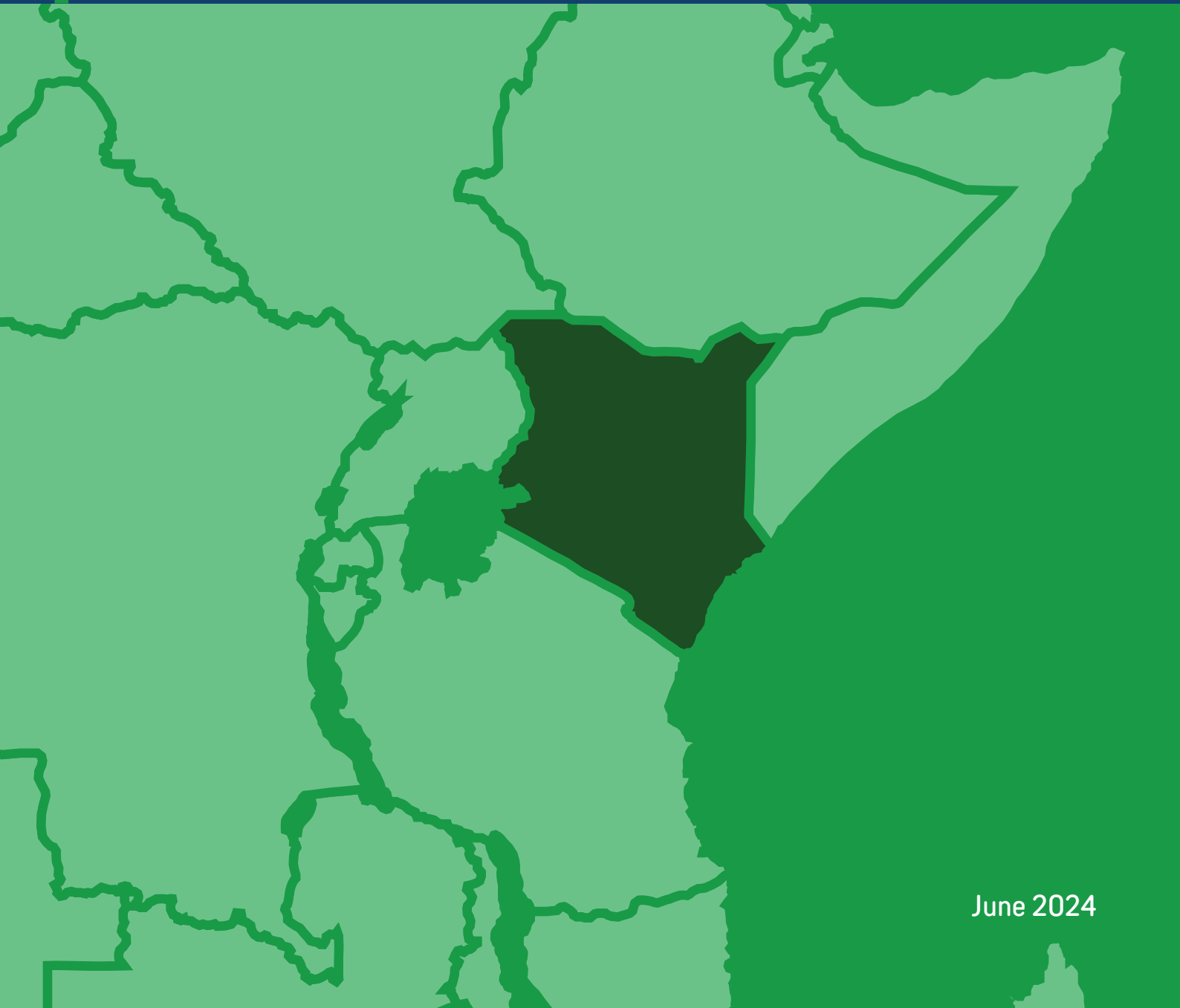


GLOBAL PRIORITISATION EXERCISE (GPE) FOR
HUMANITARIAN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
NATIONAL CONSULTATION:

Kenya



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ABBREVIATIONS

ASALs	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standards
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FMNR	Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMO	Genetically Modified Organisms
GPE	Global Prioritisation Exercise
KeNIA	Kenya National Innovation Agency
KIRA	Kenya Integrated Rapid Assessment
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRF	National Research Fund
R&I	Research and Innovation
UNSDGs	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
STI	Science, Technology, and Innovation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

FOREWORD

In a world with mounting and complex humanitarian challenges, research and innovation (R&I) can play a pivotal role in identifying, prioritising, and addressing humanitarian needs.

The role of R&I at multiple – global, regional, national, and local – levels is crucial to developing culturally and contextually appropriate responses to humanitarian crises.

Currently, Kenya is grappling with various humanitarian crises, including periodic disasters such as floods and severe drought, conflicts, poor preparedness, and the ongoing refugee response. Kenya demonstrates capacities and coordination mechanisms between government, civil society, and the international system that are unique, and from which invaluable learning can be gathered that should drive action in Kenya, but that can also shape the global conversation on how our global humanitarian R&I ecosystem can evolve.

Elrha's Global Prioritisation Exercise (GPE) is a global research and consultation effort that seeks to improve outcomes for people affected by crises by amplifying the impact of investments into humanitarian R&I. The process aims to build an improved understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the global R&I ecosystem and deepen our understanding of priorities at all levels.

As part of the GPE, we have gained invaluable insights through a series of stakeholder interviews conducted across six geographic regions and three national settings. These consultations share the perceptions of regional and national humanitarian actors, and shed light on priority topics and areas that need humanitarian R&I attention. This exercise extends further, delving into how the R&I ecosystem functions (and occasionally dysfunctions) in complex environments. It also explores how this ecosystem can be improved.

Humanitarian crises are varied and so are the landscapes they unfold in. The scale, type, magnitude, drivers, and impacts of these crises vary within and between geographic regions, and as such, so do the associated areas requiring R&I attention. The views of national actors are, therefore, important to improve the way the humanitarian ecosystem functions and how the system in turn responds. This consultation examines the differing perspectives of those international and national actors engaged within the Kenyan humanitarian R&I context.

This work is also fundamental to informing priority-setting processes to optimally guide R&I investment, improving coordination and donor-funding allocations. Key recommendations, based on the challenges and learning reported, to improve the regional R&I ecosystem are proposed at national, regional, global, and donor levels. By valuing national voices, these consultations aim to ensure that regional perspectives inform and influence the global humanitarian R&I agenda.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Global Prioritisation Exercise (GPE) Regional and National Consultations Consortium

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The GPE Regional and National Consultations Consortium is a multi-institutional collaboration led by the Alfred Deakin Institute, Deakin University, and Marian Abouzeid is the Project Director.

The Consortium is supported by Chaza Akik as Qualitative Research Lead. Shahram Akbarzadeh is Principal Investigator and Data Custodian. The Consortium acknowledges the contributions of the Faculty of Health Sciences, American University of Beirut, to the initial conceptualisation of this work.

Consortium partner organisations are: Deakin University (Australia), All India Disaster Mitigation Institute / AIDMI (India), Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network / EMPHNET (Jordan), Indika Foundation (Indonesia), Passion Africa (Kenya), University of São Paulo (Brazil) and World Vision International West and Central Africa Regional Office (Senegal).

GPE Kenya National Consultation

This national consultation for Kenya was undertaken by Passion Africa Ltd., and the Alfred Deakin Institute, Deakin University, and was led by Salome Bukachi. Joseph K. Kamara from the World Vision East Africa Regional Office provided the interface to the humanitarian networks and reviewed the study documents and reports to align them to the relevant humanitarian contexts. The practitioner partner was Dr. Joseph Kamara from the World Vision East Africa Regional Office who provided the interface to the humanitarian networks and reviewed the study documents and reports to align them to the relevant humanitarian contexts. Data collection was undertaken by Abel Simiyu, Nelson Ochieng, Tonny Onyango, and Salome Bukachi, data transcription was undertaken by Abel Simiyu, Nelson Ochieng, and Ann Muthiru, data analysis was undertaken by Nelson Ochieng, Tonny Onyango, Lillian Anyango, and Chaza Akik and this report was written by, Tonny Onyango, Nelson Ochieng, Salome Bukachi, Chaza Akik, and Marian Abouzeid. The report was edited by Yaseen Ayobi.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Periodic disasters, existing vulnerabilities, conflicts, and poor preparedness continue to create an unpredictably volatile humanitarian environment in Kenya. The country is currently grappling with various humanitarian crises including, heavy flooding in some regions, while others have paradoxically faced the most severe drought in decades resulting from consecutive rainy seasons with minimal rainfall, and the ongoing refugee response. These crises have engendered a multitude of humanitarian needs with the response being hampered by inadequate resources, with available funds often heavily earmarked for competing priorities. This underscores the urgent necessity for more effective, efficient, and equitable responses at the local, national, and international levels. There is a pressing need for robust research to delineate the most impactful intervention strategies that are not only cost-effective, but also instrumental in alleviating human suffering. However, a glaring gap persists between research, policy, and practice, presenting a significant obstacle to evidence-based decision-making among decision-makers in Kenya.

By examining the research and innovation (R&I) ecosystem in Kenya, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of how the system functions, its strengths, and areas for future investment. Through this examination, it seeks to challenge and assist humanitarian organisations and funding bodies in enhancing coordination and refining research priority-setting processes to ensure maximum return on investment.

Ultimately, the study endeavours to improve the humanitarian ecosystem's responsiveness to crises and its ability to support vulnerable populations in need.

METHODS

Key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with ten stakeholders from Kenya, representing a diverse range of organisations. Four participants were affiliated with an international non-governmental organisation (INGO); three with national / local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and one participant from each of a UN agency, government / intergovernmental organisation and an academic institution. Half of the participants reported that their organisations are involved in both humanitarian research and innovation, with the remainder focusing on either humanitarian research or humanitarian innovation. Despite variation in their tenure, half of the participants reported having more than ten years of experience in the sector.

The interviews were conducted remotely between November 2022 and February 2024, and were conducted in English, transcribed, and analysed thematically using NVivo software.

KEY FINDINGS

The role of R&I in humanitarian crises

- There were divergent perspectives among participants regarding **the role of R&I in humanitarian crises**. Some underscored R&I's pivotal role in enhancing the humanitarian sector's capacity to mitigate and respond to crises effectively, thereby serving populations in need more efficiently. Reported roles of R&I during humanitarian crises include identifying gaps and needs to inform humanitarian action, adapting responses to address immediate challenges, and influencing funding decisions, among others.
- It was reported that R&I **can enable better outcomes** when driven by needs rather than supply driven, when it aligns with an organisation's settings, when it involves local actors and communities, when it promotes gender equality, and when it adheres to ethical standards.
- Reported **barriers to production of R&I** included challenges in data collection challenges, limited human resources, funding constraints, and logistic hurdles such as physical access to study sites.
- **Barriers to the utilisation and uptake of R&I** were attributable to various factors, including an entrenched non-governmental organisation (NGO) culture that may resist novel approaches, R&I initiatives not being tailored or contextualised to specific populations or countries, political dynamics that impede the adoption of research findings into policy and practice, and a lack of resources to implement research outcomes.

Topics requiring humanitarian R&I attention

- A range **of topics were reported as requiring increased attention** within the realm of R&I. These included issues related to the humanitarian-development nexus, climate change, health, anticipatory actions, how the humanitarian sector functions, innovation and localisation. Participants highlighted certain topics as being priority areas requiring R&I attention. These included climate change, new models and tools for better forecasting, social innovation, mental health, disease prevention, poverty alleviation, and operationalising localisation. Several reasons were proposed to elucidate why these issues have not garnered adequate attention thus far. These include limitations in funding availability, any geopolitical complexities at play, humanitarian and academic sector limitations, donor fatigue, and lack of contextualised research.
- Furthermore, some respondents mentioned divergent perspectives on R&I needs across the country, attributing these differences to varying climatic conditions, hazards, and the different nature of crises across Kenya. Conversely, others argued that R&I needs remain consistent throughout the country, particularly within the arid and semi-arid land (ASAL) region where counties face similar crises, including armed conflicts, climate change, displacement, insecurity, food security, and even hunger.

Alignment of investments with topics requiring additional humanitarian R&I attention

- Participants had varying views on **whether investments into humanitarian R&I match the topics requiring attention**. Some reported that investments are aligned with humanitarian R&I focused on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) ensuring that efforts are directed to addressing the community's most pressing needs.
- However, others highlighted instances where investments in R&I did not correspond adequately with the identified needs. This discrepancy was largely attributed to limited research funding and investment opportunities.

Stakeholder engagement

- **The importance of engaging local and national actors in R&I** was widely recognised as being pivotal for contextualising research by understanding grassroots needs, redefining the roles of national and international actors, and fostering local capacity building. Participants noted that engaging local and national actors has been facilitated through various strategies such as creating networks to encourage greater collaboration. However, participants reported several **barriers to the engagement of national actors in humanitarian R&I**, including bias towards existing partners and known entities, a tendency to overlook researchers from the Global South, limited local research capacity, funding constraints, lack of coordination, and a propensity to prioritise response efforts after a crisis over proactive planning prior to crisis onset.

Priority-setting processes

- Participants were invited to reflect on the R&I prioritisation methods and approaches used within their organisations. A range of approaches were described, including alignment with organisational strategy and goals, addressing identified gaps, and consideration of donor priorities, among others. Several **actors were reportedly involved in the prioritisation processes**, including national and county governments, regional INGOs and donors. However, it was noted that certain key actors, such as the beneficiary community, were reportedly missing from the process.

Factors influencing timely R&I responsiveness to emerging issues

- Factors reported as **enabling timely humanitarian R&I responsiveness** to emerging issues were identified, including leveraging existing partnerships, resource availability, the imperative for rapid R&I, government support, sociocultural considerations, and effective coordination.
- Conversely, factors hindering **timely responsiveness** were also highlighted, such as inadequate funding, lack of political will and interest, challenges in accessing crisis zones, insufficient human resources, poor or limited coordination, and the nature of the crisis.

RECOMMENDATIONS



More R&I is needed to address a suite of issues impacting Kenya

- Participants in this consultation reported a range of topics as requiring additional R&I attention in the Kenyan context. These included issues related to the humanitarian-development nexus, climate change, food insecurity, health, anticipatory actions, how the humanitarian sector functions, innovation, and localisation. Notably, these topics are illustrative, but do not represent an exhaustive list and they were not ranked. Further research with a broad range of diverse stakeholders is required to glean perspectives on R&I needs and inform development of a national humanitarian R&I agenda for Kenya. It is imperative that this exercise is inclusive and representative of the many diverse actor groups engaged with the humanitarian R&I space in Kenya. This should include participants with a donor function whose perspectives were not captured in this current report.
- Kenya has faced several internal conflicts in recent years, resulting in the displacement of many people. Therefore, R&I could be conducted to understand the causes of displacement and the needs of those affected to improve humanitarian response and support for these vulnerable populations.



Improved data collection and data-management practices

- Humanitarian institutions frequently view R&I as technical activities requiring specialised knowledge to complete. In some instances, data may be available, but not utilised effectively, therefore, it is necessary to improve technical teams' and humanitarian workers' capacities sufficiently enough to guarantee that the relevant data is captured and used appropriately.



Ensure that R&I is culturally sensitive and findings are contextually relevant

- Although few institutions in the nation have taken the initiative, contextualising findings is a crucial component of R&I. To aid in the adoption and application of R&I, it is necessary to guarantee that the solutions are current and appropriate for the context of the targeted populations.



Supporting information dissemination and implementation

- Numerous organisations are involved in research activities, although the findings are not appropriately implemented due to high staff turnover and inadequate resources. Therefore, there is a need for increased investment in R&I in piloting long-term projects.



Capacity building

- There are few research institutions or limited research dealing with crisis management and response due to lack of sufficient human resources in terms of experts who can handle emergencies. Therefore, there is a need for building the capacity of researchers working in the humanitarian sector to enable them to be grounded in a variety of research techniques to enable them to capture all the areas of research that are needed.
- Humanitarian professionals should possess a well-rounded and comprehensive understanding, extending beyond a singular context within the realm of humanitarianism. This is because of the complex nature of the crises that exist today due to myriad factors such as environmental, sociocultural, and political. Hence the need for humanitarian workers to be trained and well-grounded in a variety of fields.



Humanitarian R&I integration within government institutions

- There is a need to strengthen humanitarian R&I capabilities within the existing government units. This may entail embedding researchers within government departments. Such an initiative would require adequate financial resources and staffing the units with qualified individuals who can conduct humanitarian R&I and provide regular updates. This approach would enhance the government's capacity to gather and analyse data, leading to more informed decision-making and effective strategies.



Maximising the utilisation of existing data for R&I

- There is a need to further explore how existing data, primarily collected for the monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes, can be optimally utilised to bolster R&I within the humanitarian sector.

A stylized map of the African continent is shown in shades of green. A specific region in the north-central part of the continent is highlighted in a darker shade of green. The map includes outlines of major landmasses and some internal regional boundaries. A white horizontal line is positioned near the top left, and a dotted white line is in the top right corner.

SECTION 1 BACKGROUND

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

WHY A GLOBAL PRIORITISATION EXERCISE (GPE) FOR HUMANITARIAN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (R&I)?

Globally, in recent years the number of people affected by humanitarian crises and in need of humanitarian assistance and protection reached unprecedented levels: According to the Global Humanitarian Overview¹, almost 300 million people globally will require humanitarian aid in 2024, driven largely by increasing conflicts, impacts of the climate crisis, and economic issues. Displacement is at the highest level since the beginning of the century, with 1 in 73 people worldwide being forcibly displaced and this ratio has almost doubled in the last decade. Additionally, around one in five children is living in, or fleeing from, a conflict-affected setting.² Notably, the scale, type, magnitude, drivers, and impacts of humanitarian crises vary within and between geographic regions across the globe.

Research can help forecast and characterise humanitarian crises, understand the scale, distribution and types of needs arising, inform humanitarian response, and monitor progress. Research has a crucial role to play in helping improve the ways in which the humanitarian sector mitigates and responds to crises and serves populations in need.

Innovation can play a critical role in humanitarian crises by providing new and more effective solutions to the complex problems that arise during such emergencies. Strategic investments in R&I and the appropriate utilisation and uptake of R&I findings can help improve the way the humanitarian sector uses evidence, identifies and scales solutions and, in turn, contributes to improving the efficiency of the humanitarian response.

Despite the importance of R&I in the humanitarian space, the allocation of resources and the focus of humanitarian R&I are not equitable. Preliminary results from the 2021–22 Global Prioritisation Exercise Mapping Report³ which captured humanitarian literature published during the period January 2017 to June 2021, indicate that there has been a steady increase in the number of humanitarian R&I publications over the five-year period, but there are considerable issues of inequities of attention, with some crises, population subgroups, and geographic areas receiving disproportionately more attention than others. Additionally, humanitarian R&I actors and institutions remain heavily Global North-based and institutions in the Global North continue to receive the largest share of HRI funding.

Differential attention matters: What gets researched gets discussed, and what gets discussed gets addressed. Therefore, it is imperative to understand how the humanitarian R&I ecosystem is structured and functions, including understanding where and to whom funding is directed, how R&I priorities are set, who is involved in these decision-making processes and how, if at all, coordination mechanisms operate. Reflecting the variable nature and impact of crises across the globe, understanding how humanitarian R&I priorities and topics requiring attention vary by geographic region is also crucial to better inform investment decisions and, ultimately, help improve evidence-driven and efficient humanitarian action.

ABOUT THE GPE

The GPE for humanitarian R&I is a landmark, multi-pronged initiative that seeks to improve outcomes for people affected by humanitarian crises by characterising the existing R&I landscape (including thematic and crisis focus areas, funding, actor engagement, and impact of investments), and identifying priorities for future investment. Commissioned by Elrha, the GPE comprises two distinct research phases:

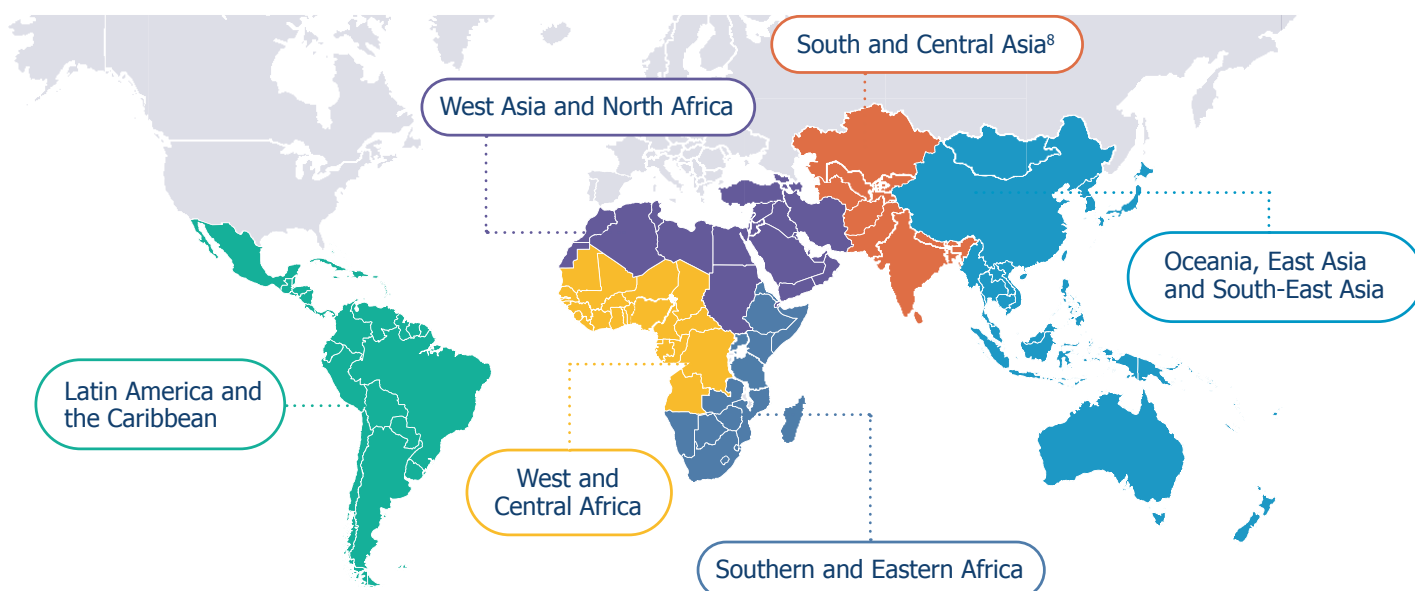


Global mapping of humanitarian R&I outputs and investments: Detailed mapping of humanitarian R&I actors, investments, and thematic and crisis focus areas over the period January 2017 to June 2021,⁴ and financial flow analysis tracking humanitarian R&I funding allocations from a range of donor types over this period.⁵ This builds upon the previous mapping of research, innovation, and outputs undertaken in 2017 for the period January 2016 to April 2017.⁶



Stakeholder consultations: A series of consultations with diverse stakeholder groups operating at each of the global, regional, national, and community levels exploring a range of issues regarding R&I investments, needs, and priority-setting and decision-making processes.

This report is one of a series for the regional and national consultations. Led by Deakin University (Australia) in collaboration with partners in each region, the regional consultations have explored stakeholder perspectives on the humanitarian R&I ecosystem in six geographic regions, demarcated according to the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) Regional Classifications:⁷



Three national consultations have also been conducted:

Indonesia

Kenya

Lebanon

The overarching aim of the regional and national consultations is to understand how the humanitarian R&I ecosystem functions, how decisions are made and who has a seat at the priority-setting table, and to explore perceptions of topics requiring humanitarian R&I attention for the region or national setting.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report presents key findings for the Kenya national consultation. This consultation was undertaken by Passion Africa Ltd and Deakin University.

THE HUMANITARIAN LANDSCAPE IN KENYA

Geography

Kenya is a lower-middle income country (LMIC) in East Africa bordering Tanzania to the south, Uganda to the west, South Sudan to the northwest, Ethiopia to the north, Somalia to the east, and the Indian Ocean to the southeast (see Fig. 1 below). It comprises 47 counties, with Nairobi being the capital city. Its diverse geography includes highlands, savannas, and coastal areas.



80% of Kenya's landmass is classified as arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) based on its very low rainfall patterns.⁹ These ASALs are home to approximately 30% of Kenya's total population – a large proportion of which is marginalised – and there are high rates of poverty and food insecurity.¹⁰

The country has experienced various types of hazards and humanitarian crises, including drought and famine that have mostly affected the country's northern parts, political instability, as well as conflict and violence resulting in population displacement. Kenya also hosts a large number of refugees from neighbouring countries with the majority having been displaced from Somalia and South Sudan. Kenya is also prone to natural hazards such as floods, landslides, and earthquakes, and is also vulnerable to other climate-related risks such as desertification and wildfires which can have significant environmental and economic impacts. The Kenyan government has implemented various measures to address these risks, including early warning systems (EWSs), disaster preparedness plans, and community-based programmes to promote sustainable land-use practices.

Hazards and risks vary across the country. Garissa, Mandera, Wajir, and Isiolo counties in north-eastern Kenya; Samburu, Turkana, Baringo, Trans Nzoia counties, and Kipini in Tana River are the conflict-prone areas of the country. Baringo, Laikipia, Turkana, Samburu, Narok, Kajiado, Marsabit, and Isiolo are the counties severely affected by disasters due to natural hazards. These ASALs have also been prone to destructive intercommunal conflicts. This is attributed to many factors, including the availability and misuse of small arms, inaccessible terrain, ungoverned spaces, struggle for scarce natural resources, intercommunal raiding, revenge and retaliatory attacks, harsh climatic conditions, and political incitements, among others.¹¹

Humanitarian Assistance Needs

Over 4 million Kenyans across the country are in need of humanitarian assistance, however, only 2 million people are targeted for interventions with a large shortfall in funding required from donors.



An overview of the drought response in 2022 showed that out of the total population of 47.6m people, 6.4m were in need of humanitarian support while 2.8m were food insecure.

At the peak of the 2023 drought, over 4.4 million people in the ASALs were acutely food insecure due to five consecutive poor rain seasons and increasing food prices.¹² In 2022, in addition to severe drought, Kenya faced a combination of other shocks related to the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, floods, disease outbreaks (yellow fever, measles, and cholera), as well as the ongoing refugee response. Kenya also faced two additional potential risks – election-related violence and an Ebola outbreak – requiring intensified multi-agency preparedness.¹³

The drought situation at the end of 2022 led to an increase in the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance to 4.5 million people (up from 2.1 million in September 2021), of which approximately 2.14 million are children.¹⁴

Fig. 1: Map showing the different counties of Kenya



Current Crises

Kenya is currently experiencing two large-scale humanitarian crises arising due to drought and the refugee situation. The Greater Horn of Africa, which includes Kenya, experienced five consecutive seasons of markedly below average rainfall over the period 2019–2023, resulting in severe drought which is regarded as the worst in decades.

Malnutrition rates, including severe acute malnutrition, have soared to 222,720 children aged between 6–59 months suffering from severe acute malnutrition and 115,725 pregnant and lactating women acutely malnourished and in need of treatment.¹⁵



Water security is also a major issue, with 15 million people believed to lack access to safe water supplies and 22 million lacking access to sufficient sanitation.¹⁶ It has been reported that in the 2023 dry season, some had to walk over 30km to access water,¹⁷ with attendant protection risks.

Around 466,000 people are believed to have been internally displaced in Kenya due to drought.¹⁸ Live]p-stock conditions have also deteriorated as a result of the drought – with widespread livestock deaths reported – this has had pronounced implications both for food and milk supply and also income, particularly for those communities who are dependent on livestock for their livelihoods. Drought situations also increase conflicts due to competition for the limited water sources in the ASALs among pastoralists themselves and also between pastoralists and agropastoralists. Conflicts are being exacerbated by the effects of climate change.¹⁹

Against this background, Kenya is now experiencing severe flooding, particularly in some of the eastern counties: The El Niño effect is seeing increased risk of flash floods, heavy rains, and landslides. As of November 2023, severe floods had resulted in over 120 deaths²⁰ as well as widespread displacement, damage to critical infrastructure including roads, livestock deaths, and a pronounced worsening of the cholera and measles outbreaks across the country.

Kenya hosts nearly 700,000 refugees and asylum seekers who are dependent on humanitarian assistance even for their most basic needs.

The majority of these are from Somalia and South Sudan, with a smaller proportion from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, Ethiopia, and elsewhere.²¹ Most live in the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps, with 15% living in urban areas.²² Women and children account for 76% of all registered refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya, and over half of all documented refugees and asylum seekers are children under the age of 18 years.²³

Periodic disasters, existing vulnerabilities, conflicts, and poor preparedness continue to create an unpredictably volatile humanitarian environment in the country. As humanitarian needs grow, more resources for response are required, yet available funds remain insufficient and are often heavily earmarked. The foregoing reinforces the need for more effective, efficient, and humane responses at the local, national, and international levels. Unfortunately, the absence of a common and shared research agenda for humanitarian research in the country remains an important feature in repeated humanitarian crises. Robust research is still needed to define the most impactful elements of intervention that would not only be cost effective, but also helpful in reducing human suffering.

R&I in Kenya

Kenya is considered to be among the strongest of the East African countries in terms of R&I. Kenya has made tremendous efforts in strengthening its science, technology, and innovation (STI) system, which is based on a strong historical foundation spanning over one hundred years, and has become one of the most innovative countries in the sub-Saharan region and is also a regional leader in innovation.²⁴ It consists of three institutions, namely: The National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) – a regulatory and quality assurance body in STI; the National Research Fund (NRF) – a resource mobiliser for the Kenya National Innovation System; and the Kenya National Innovation Agency (KeNIA) – the developer and manager of the National Innovation System. These are all relatively new and have not yet built adequate human and financial resources to deliver on their mandates. Furthermore, collaboration with other STI agencies remains inadequate.²⁵

Given Kenya’s relative political stability, comparatively good infrastructure, geographic centrality, and ease of connection to the other countries in the region, Kenya has become home to numerous international and regional humanitarian and development organisations such as the United Nations which have their headquarters in its capital city – Nairobi.

Kenya also has the most tech hubs in Central and East Africa, therefore, making it a regional hub.²⁶ Therefore, numerous such organisations play a significant role in gathering knowledge and sharing insights on issues relevant to Kenya.

Considering Kenya’s overall R&I infrastructure and capacity, a recent review²⁷ of R&I systems in Kenya and other selected East African nations reported that Kenya has a higher number of researchers per capita, although fewer are qualified to doctoral level. It was also reported that the number of universities in Kenya has nearly tripled since 2012 and there are many entities producing quality research, even though gender dimensions show women researchers lagging behind in attracting research funding. According to Kenya’s draft STI Policy 2020–2030, the number of full-time equivalents was 9,305, indicating that researchers, especially in the universities, were not fully engaged in research and development (R&D) while the latest available data for Kenya’s GDP expenditure on R&D stood at 0.8% which is the highest in the Eastern Africa region.²⁸ A number of key systemic challenges²⁸ were also reported, including a funding

approach that focuses on research rather than innovation and commercialisation, and the lack of a comprehensive and coordinated financing framework to support the STI sector leading to inadequate mobilisation and utilisation of resources in the sector. As a result, the uptake of research outputs is low. To address these and other related challenges, numerous research capacity-strengthening initiatives have also been conducted in Kenya.²⁹

Progress is being made. According to the NRF, the GDP expenditure on R&D increased from 0.69% in 2010 to 0.8% in 2018 which is the highest in the East Africa region.³⁰ The policy and legal frameworks as well as a number of policy instruments such as the recently drafted Kenya STI Policy 2020–2030 and Kenya STI for SDGs Roadmap are important enablers for STI. These help to build a foundation for evidence-based policymaking that will help decision-makers understand complex challenges and assist them in making informed choices that reconcile the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.³¹

The Global Competitiveness Index 2019 ranked Kenya as the sixth most competitive country in the sub-Saharan region in terms of its set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity.³²



It was also reported that the number of universities in Kenya has nearly tripled since 2012 and there are many entities producing quality research, even though gender dimensions show women researchers lagging behind in attracting research funding.



SECTION 2
METHODS

SECTION 2: METHODS

STUDY OVERVIEW

Detailed methodological information is [available online](#).

Study participants and recruitment

This study sought to include between six and ten national actors engaged with the humanitarian research and innovation (R&I) space in any of the following capacities:

- Researcher, innovator.
- Donor.
- End-user of R&I findings and outputs (eg, humanitarian operational practitioner, policymaker).
- R&I commissioner / administrator.

National actors were defined as those with a portfolio, mandate, or focus in, or on, Kenya.

Data collection

A standardised key informant interview (KII) guide was developed for use across all regional and national consultations and modified as required by regional partners to ensure cultural sensitivity and local relevance. The interview guide covered perceptions of:

- Demographics.
- The role of R&I in humanitarian crises.
- Humanitarian R&I topics requiring attention in Kenya and priority topics.
- Alignment of investments with humanitarian R&I topics requiring attention.
- Regional and national stakeholder engagement with humanitarian R&I.
- Decision-making and coordination process.
- Responsiveness of the humanitarian R&I system.

The final interview guide is [available online](#) in English.

All interviews were conducted online in English using a secure Zoom platform and the audio / video recorded. Interviews were auto-transcribed, manually reviewed, cleaned, and de-identified before analysis.

Data Management and Analysis

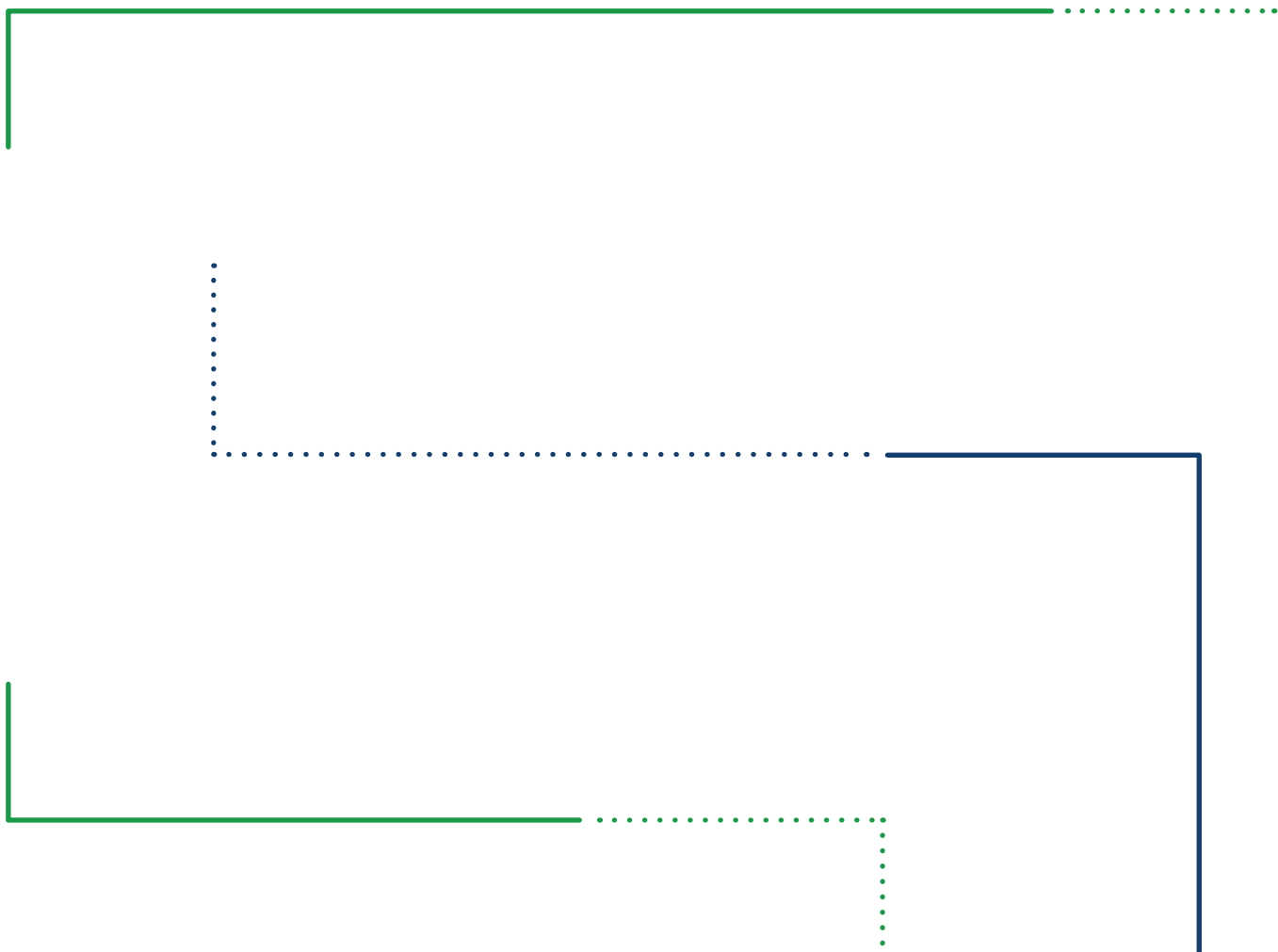
An initial coding framework was developed for use across all consultations. Coding was conducted inductively and deductively using NVivo software, and transcripts were analysed thematically. Coding was reviewed and iteratively modified by several team members.

Not all participants answered or responded to all questions addressing the issues they intended to cover. Where participants referred to issues outside Kenya or which were beyond the scope of this consultation, such as referring to the humanitarian operational system / response and not R&I, or where the question was not addressed as intended, these excerpts were not used in the current analysis.

Ethics and Project Oversight

Ethics approval to conduct this study was obtained from the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (ref 2022-163) and approval to conduct the Southern and Eastern Africa (SEA) regional consultation and this Kenya national consultation was also obtained from the Strathmore University Institutional Ethics Review Committee (SU-ISERC1445/22).

Additionally, a research licence and clearance from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (Kenya) was obtained.



LIMITATIONS OF THIS WORK

This report presents perspectives of a small, purposively sampled cohort of actors engaged with the humanitarian R&I space. Every attempt was made to ensure broad sectoral and disciplinary engagement and representation from diverse organisation types and from across the country, and participants provided diverse perspectives and rich insights. No participants identified as having a donor or funding function, and so donor perspectives are not captured in this report. Future work should seek to build on the findings from this initial exercise, including canvassing views from a large and diverse stakeholder group.

This study is also subject to the limitations inherent in all qualitative analysis, including that coding is subject to interpretation. This was minimised through an iterative coding process, including an initial validation exercise between the primary data analysts and the qualitative research lead and followed by re-analysis and recording as required by team members and discussion to resolve any disagreements or review specific transcripts.

This study explored participant perspectives regarding how the humanitarian R&I ecosystem functions and humanitarian topics requiring additional R&I attention in Kenya, and this report presents summaries of key points raised by participants. Not all issues impacting Kenya are necessarily covered in this report if they were not mentioned by participants. The topics reported as requiring additional humanitarian R&I attention are informative, but not necessarily exhaustive and were not ranked. Further work (including gauging the views of a large and diverse number of stakeholders) is required to validate the findings from this initial work and inform development of an agreed national humanitarian R&I agenda for Kenya.

CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS

Summary information regarding participant and organisational characteristics are presented in Table 1 below. In total, ten interviews were conducted between December 2022 and February 2024. All participants were based in Kenya and more than half were senior personnel, reporting more than ten years of experience in the sector. Participants were affiliated with a range of organisation types. No participants reported having a donor or funding function.

Table 1: Summary of participant and organisational characteristics

Participant and organisational characteristics	Number of participants
Organisation type:	
Academic institution	3
Government / intergovernmental organisation	4
International NGO	1
National / local NGO	1
UN agency	1
Participant years of experience in the sector:	
Less than five years	1
Between five and ten years	3
More than ten years	5
Not reported	1
Participant years of experience in current role:	
Less than five years	1
Between five and ten years	3
More than ten years	5
Not reported	1
Organisational involvement with R&I:	
Humanitarian research only	4
Humanitarian innovation only	0
Both humanitarian research and innovation	6



SECTION 3

**THE ROLE OF RESEARCH
AND INNOVATION (R&I) IN
HUMANITARIAN CRISES**

SECTION 3: THE ROLE OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (R&I) IN HUMANITARIAN CRISES



KEY MESSAGES

Participants held differing views on the role and appropriateness of R&I during humanitarian crises. Some indicated that R&I may not be feasible in the acute phase of an emergency and could potentially distract from operational activity if not adequately planned and resourced. Conversely, others outlined a range of **roles of R&I during humanitarian crises**, including identifying gaps and needs to inform humanitarian action and timely responses, improving the way the sector functions, informing future programmes or responses, understanding the context, and guiding funding decisions. It was noted that roles for R&I were reported across all phases of the disaster-management cycle. It was reported that **R&I can enable better outcomes** when engaging local actors and communities, driven by needs rather than supply, when it aligns with an organisation's settings, when it is culturally sensitive, when it aligns with national and county government, when driven by evidence-based and technologically-sound solutions, when its focus is long term, when in line with gender equality, and when it meets ethical standards. Reported **barriers to the production of R&I** included data collection challenges, limited human resources, funding constraints, limited financial resources, and logistic constraints, including physical access to study sites.

Reported **barriers to the utilisation and uptake of R&I** include NGO culture, R&I that is not contextualised to a specific population or country, limited demand for HRI, lack of resources to implement findings, political factors and policy / political timeframes, sociocultural practices leading to unwillingness to participate in interventions and disciplinary imbalances. Reported ways that **R&I can be better used includes** involving affected people or key stakeholders, navigating political dynamics, accounting for end user-specific needs, providing a contextually-relevant, sufficiently-resourced dissemination or implementation strategy, improving collaboration within and between various sectors, prioritising reliability throughout the process, enhancing knowledge management, and ensuring sufficient documentation of crisis factors and pre-crisis research instead of post-crisis research. Participants offered several suggestions for improving the effectiveness of the system. These included: The establishment of an R&I arm within governmental units with adequate financial support and resources, enhancing dissemination and sharing of results to inform actions, greater funding, lobbying efforts and advocacy campaigns, and cultivating a sustainable and skilled workforce.



IS THERE A ROLE FOR R&I DURING HUMANITARIAN CRISES?

There were differing views among participants regarding whether there is a role for R&I in a humanitarian crisis. Some participants noted the importance of R&I, highlighting its potential to play a crucial role in addressing challenges during humanitarian crises. However, others expressed concerns that R&I might not be feasible and could potentially divert attention from life-saving operational interventions. It was reported that the potential for humanitarian R&I to be disruptive depends on how the R&I is done – R&I can distract if not well planned or if contextual factors and considerations such as risk, human resourcing, and funding issues are not taken into account.

Some participants suggested that humanitarian R&I activities should be conducted before or after a crisis rather than during the acute phase of the response. This approach aims to prevent confusion, turmoil, and competition from numerous immediate concerns, including safety issues which typically arise during a crisis. Instead, R&I should proceed seamlessly and in parallel with operational interventions so that research findings and data can inform and refine humanitarian action.

Many participants described a range of roles for R&I during a humanitarian crisis (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Reported roles of R&I during humanitarian crises

Role of R&I	Reported Examples
Identify gaps and needs to inform humanitarian action and timely responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assist in developing strategies to enable better targeting for delivering support to intended recipients. • To inform and adjust interventions to ensure that they align with the needs of the beneficiaries and that the safety and security of the affected beneficiaries are assured. • To inform sustainable programming. • To help align support to the existing context. • To improve the timeliness of response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ shorten the response time by helping operational personnel understand the needs of vulnerable communities and define better ways of understanding the risks they are exposed to. • To enhance early warning and preparedness to weather-related crises by delivering forecasts of adverse conditions.

<p>Improve the way the sector functions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the efficiency of the technologies used to collect information about the crisis to quickly respond to the beneficiaries' issues and provide feedback. • To help create linkages among actors at both the national and community level. • To help in shaping policies for better deliveries within government institutions. • To help solve collaboration issues during cross-cutting research and prioritise the community. • To identify how to make the humanitarian response environment a better place to help make response better and more impactful. • To monitor activities done in humanitarian settings to help provide evidence of the successes. • To ensure that interventions are effective, ethical, and address humanitarian needs where decisions are made based on proven evidence.
<p>Understand the context</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To broadly understand the crisis and the factors surrounding it to help make informed decisions and develop effective crisis strategies. • To enable understanding of communities' priority needs, contexts, and dynamics. • To identify the root causes of the problem and develop effective solutions.
<p>Inform future programmes or responses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate the pre-planning and development of action plans which inform programming implementation. • To provide evidence of previous lessons learnt to inform responses and ensure their effectiveness. • To provide valuable insights for addressing various issues to shape the future of humanity by looking at both history and the future.
<p>Inform funding decisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help minimise wastage by pinpointing especially to donors where they need to review the resources they are putting in place.



WHAT ROLE CAN R&I PLAY DURING THE VARIOUS PHASES OF A HUMANITARIAN CRISIS?

Some participants described roles of humanitarian R&I during specific phases of the disaster-management cycle and humanitarian response.

PREPAREDNESS PHASE AND ANTICIPATORY ACTION

- **Anticipate and predict events and prevent them / mitigate effects:** Humanitarian R&I generates knowledge to predict future events, support preparedness planning, or inform what needs to be done to prevent crises, including the groups to target, actors to involve, and where to source both human and financial resources.
- **Identify lessons from past research / experiences:** Past research findings can inform preparedness action.

RESPONSE PHASE

- **Better understand community needs and behaviours to inform response:** Humanitarian R&I informs improved targeting during emergencies.
- **Better understand context and stay relevant:** Humanitarian R&I allows the formulation of long-term sustainable solutions aimed at building community resilience where aspects such as costs and the value of the response to the community are evaluated.
- **Identify better ways of working / better programming:** Identifying efficient working and programming mechanisms to help align response goals to the activities done during this phase. Such mechanisms can only be attained through humanitarian R&I and responders can develop the appropriate service delivery, nature of support, and the means to channel it. R&I ensures that components like resource mobilisation and relevant solutions are incorporated into an organisation's plans to ensure that the affected community extends the impacts of programmes to other areas. Humanitarian R&I can also be used to create proper channels for effective response mobilisation in emergency periods.
- **Support evidence-based decisions:** Humanitarian R&I enables evidence-based decisions, allowing responders to use data and generate reasonable and unbiased choices. This may be in service provision to the affected community and the nature of assistance to offer.
- **Training and upskilling:** The use of humanitarian R&I during the crisis response phase has been vital to numerous institutions which reported that R&I has been helpful in the skill enhancement of local health workers and other responders in managing crises and the dynamics of the phase.
- **Understand and adapt to new trends and technologies.** Many participants noted that organisations can rely on R&I to inform the programmes implemented and allow them to be on par with emerging trends in the humanitarian world.

RECOVERY PHASE

Participatory research supports the co-creation of resilience where the populations affected by crisis are given a chance to share their knowledge, skills, and co-design solutions.



IS R&I ENABLING BETTER OUTCOMES, AND IF SO, HOW?

Five participants reported that R&I enables better outcomes due to a range of factors and in a range of ways while other participants did not address this issue.

WHEN IT IS ENGAGING LOCAL ACTORS AND COMMUNITIES AND DRIVEN BY NEEDS RATHER THAN SUPPLY

R&I enables better outcomes when the voices of populations affected by crisis are considered by ensuring that the community gets value and the required interventions. Additionally, involving all these different stakeholders on a constant and continuous basis from the early stages of the project cycle increases their ownership of the project.

It was reported that less rejection from the community indicates that the services provided by a humanitarian organisation are enjoyed by the beneficiaries and, therefore, a sign of better outcomes.

Putting the community as a core component in humanitarian R&I interventions also leads to better outcomes by adding more value, ensuring the programmes become more sustainable and that communities become even more resilient. This happens when beneficiaries – the people that the research is supporting – are involved. For example, humanitarian R&I has revealed that achieving integration and effective humanitarian assistance requires fostering harmony between refugees and host communities. Some organisations have implemented a strategy where 70% of projects benefit refugees and 30% benefit host communities to enhance resilience. Emerging needs, such as digital platforms have led to innovations like food ATMs which streamline food distribution by dispensing items such as cooking oil.

WHEN IT IS IN LINE WITH GENDER EQUALITY

For better R&I outcomes, principles of gender equality must be put into play. Humanitarian organisations implement interventions with a focus on women, while striving to maintain gender balance and ensure equal opportunities for all genders, as gender equality is a crucial consideration within their areas of focus. Lastly, through humanitarian R&I, operational actors are able to understand the context in which different gender-transformative approaches are needed to respond to, or recover from, the crises during the humanitarian response.

WHEN IT ALIGNS WITH AN ORGANISATION'S SETTINGS

To fully leverage the advantages of humanitarian R&I, organisations need to align their endeavours with their overarching goals and strategies. This entails hiring personnel with expertise in relevant fields who can effectively execute these initiatives, thereby establishing a robust network. For instance, implementing various intervention programmes that address disasters such as landslides or conflicts, all of which are guided by strategic plans.

WHEN IT IS CULTURALLY SENSITIVE

R&I leads to improved outcomes when it acknowledges the diversity of cultures in different regions and recognises that some are still indigenous, while some of the communities have advanced and, therefore, become easier to integrate, and can even discuss and forge a way forward together. It was reported that this happens through being very sensitive to the way humanitarian workers operate, but at the same time, ensuring equality and fairness in how the humanitarian work is delivered.

WHEN IT ALIGNS WITH NATIONAL AND COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Most of the government supports humanitarian work and is even willing to initiate the process and fund certain interventions as they align with their policies. Additionally, humanitarian organisations share research findings with either learning institutions or stakeholders, and more so with local and national government to help in shaping policies for better delivery within government institutions.

WHEN IT MEETS ETHICAL STANDARDS

R&I leads to better outcomes when conducted according to the principles of doing research and adhering to the ethical standards for engaging participants. Also, when the research findings have been used to inform programming. Ethical standards regarding environmental policies must also be met to enhance any outcomes.

WHEN DRIVEN BY EVIDENCE-BASED AND TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS

Humanitarian R&I provides evidence of past experience and helps identify best practices that have been put in place, for instance, to handle different crises like survivors of sexual violence or persons who are displaced. Additionally, humanitarian R&I provides a significant platform by bringing on board very specific, accessible, and simple technology for survivors of different crises like drought or famine to build back better.

LONG-TERM TIMEFRAMES / FOCUS

Researchers and innovators must be able to strategically plan for the future by empowering the affected community for long-term sustainable solutions. For example, a respondent reported that they empower the affected community economically by providing items that will serve them in the long term.



WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO THE PRODUCTION, UPTAKE, AND UTILISATION OF R&I?

A range of barriers to the **production of R&I** were reported:

- **Data collection challenges:**
 - ◇ insufficient data due to the inadequate skills of researchers and innovators to gather the right data
 - ◇ cultural and religious beliefs that do not align with a certain project poses a barrier to accessing information as researchers are unable to collect data due to certain cultural beliefs.
- **Limited human resources:**
 - ◇ insufficient skilled personnel to undertake the work.
- **Funding constraints and limited financial resources.**
- **Little investments channelled to research at national level and in universities.**
- **Limited funding to do research in areas that are not easily accessible.**
- **Logistic constraints and physical access:**
 - ◇ geographical barriers where some areas are physically inaccessible present a barrier to accessing data. Internet and electricity supplies as well as access roads (due to bad weather conditions) are also challenges in these areas
 - ◇ security concerns where humanitarian staff are abducted and even lose their lives while implementing project activities in insecure areas.

BARRIERS TO THE UPTAKE AND UTILISATION OF R&I

A range of barriers to humanitarian R&I uptake and utilisation were described (see Table 3 below).

Table 3: Reported barriers to the uptake and utilisation of humanitarian R&I

Barriers to the uptake and utilisation of R&I	Reported Examples
NGO culture: Limited capacity to absorb and use data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisations view R&I as technical activities that cannot be conducted without sophisticated skills. Yet, they contribute to R&I unknowingly through their daily activities. Some organisations cannot conduct R&I or make evidence-based decisions in the country due to limited capacity. Lack of capacity or goodwill to implement research findings. Limited capacity to absorb and utilise data is exacerbated by a lack of coordination, often stemming from individualised research efforts.
R&I not tailored or contextualised to a specific population or country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisations use outdated data that may not reflect the current needs of a given community. Lack of goodwill to work with different target groups to assist them to inform their interventions leading to zero uptake.
Little demand for humanitarian R&I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humanitarian R&I often lacks prioritisation. Those involved tend to believe they possess adequate knowledge and experience to execute their tasks effectively, even if they are repeating previous programmes or implementing strategies unsuitable for the current context.
Lack of financial resources to implement findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisations deem research an expensive venture and cannot afford to do standard research that ends with implementation.
Political factors and policy / political timeframes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The government has not fully owned or attempted to design programmes around particular research gaps. Government unwillingness to support research conducted by previous regimes, especially during changes of government administrations, leading to a lack of support for certain types of research.

Sociocultural practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicting values between project interventions and community values may make communities feel like they do not want to participate in interventions or deem them to be interfering with their beliefs.
Disciplinary imbalances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplines presumed as being 'inferior' may face challenges in having their work fully accepted. At the same time, some agencies might want to undermine the research work of others.



HOW R&I CAN BE BETTER USED

A range of ways in which humanitarian R&I can be better used as described by participants are presented in this section:

- **Involve affected people or key stakeholders:**
 - ◇ humanitarian R&I can be better used within an emergency setting by providing key information and collecting feedback from beneficiaries which is very critical as it addresses one of the humanitarian standards and paradigms where people who were involved in the disaster must also be involved in all the decisions being made and must also be able to collect and give feedback. Through this, the community will be more informed of the research findings and understand the responses that will work for them.
- **Navigate political dynamics:**
 - ◇ humanitarian actors effectively navigate political realms by engaging in areas without discriminating based on an individual's political affiliations, while also maintaining a separation between politics and their work. This balance ensures they can avoid potential issues related to political interference, particularly those instances where government support for such research may be lacking.
- **Account for end user-specific needs:**
 - ◇ R&I can be better used when it accounts for end user-specific needs. Through this, it must be able to see where the gaps are, find better ways of addressing them, or adopt other technologies that help address them better. By so doing, the needs and preferences of end users are placed at the centre of the R&I process. Hence, it is essential to ensure that R&I efforts result in meaningful and sustainable outcomes that benefit the intended end users.
- **Provide contextually-relevant information:**
 - ◇ R&I needs to look at contextually-relevant interventions during humanitarian crises. This can be achieved by looking at the country's context at that particular time and the mechanisms in place to ensure that prioritised interventions will be effective during the humanitarian process

- ◇ also, humanitarian R&I should ensure that all the activities being implemented comply with the social context in which they are being implemented to avoid rejection.
- **Guide sufficiently-resourced dissemination or implementation strategies:**
 - ◇ R&I findings and results must be effectively disseminated and implemented for better use. These are realised through a well-designed dissemination or implementation strategy where R&I is part and parcel of programming. They are then subjected to different pilots to see if they are being better carried out.
- **Improve collaboration within and between various sectors:**
 - ◇ collaboration and coordination between the humanitarian sector, governments, and researchers are crucial to leveraging R&I to better address humanitarian challenges and also have positive impacts when responding. Researchers must ensure that they work in partnership with local organisations, so as to have the collective knowledge and expertise to develop more effective interventions and improve outcomes for the humanitarian sector. Lastly, developing a broader research inquiry encompassing diverse target demographics will enable the generated findings to inform tailored interventions for specific groups.
- **Focus on the process for reliability:**
 - ◇ in most humanitarian crises, deploying R&I ideas with reliable outcomes is crucial. It is essential that humanitarian R&I activities are robust and conducted properly to inform appropriate action.
- **Better knowledge management:**
 - ◇ effective knowledge management is critical for the better use of R&I. With effective capture, storage, and knowledge sharing, the humanitarian sector is better positioned to develop new ideas and improve crisis-response processes by relying on prior research to use information already tested and found to work reasonably well. For example, it was reported that in the case of Budalangi, findings from prior research were used to understand why people are still attached to their ancestral lands despite the many flooding issues they face.
- **Provide sufficient documentation of crisis factors:**
 - ◇ R&I is better used when it ensures that the data collected is inclusive and aware of all the human factors, environmental factors, financial considerations, and all other factors surrounding a crisis. It must not stop with data collection, but also ensure documentation of all the issues surrounding the crisis.
- **Provide pre-crisis instead of post-crisis research:**
 - ◇ for better use, humanitarian R&I should be conducted before a crisis to help with informing better preventive measures instead of response mechanisms that address the aftermath. It is, therefore, essential to prioritise anticipatory planning and proactive measures aimed at minimising the impact of potential crises.



WHAT ELSE THE R&I ECOSYSTEM NEEDS TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY

Some participants provided additional suggestions for what else the R&I system in Kenya requires to function effectively. These included:

- Establishment of a robust humanitarian R&I arm within governmental units with adequate financial support and resources to enhance its efficacy.
- Improved dissemination and sharing of results to inform action: Regular updates akin to those furnished by the National Drought Management Authority, offering valuable insights into potential disaster scenarios and proposing actionable solutions. Such updates are imperative for proactive planning and response strategies, facilitating the effective mitigation and management of imminent disasters.
- Funding:
 - ◊ increased investment in research
 - ◊ the absence of legislative bodies and a policy framework directing the allocation of finances to the humanitarian sector is evident. Therefore, there is a critical need to invest in scaling up solutions to address the interests of the community beyond pilot projects ensuring sustained and comprehensive support.
- Support to improve the production of reliable national-level data. This data is pivotal in informing the actions of humanitarian organisations and driving their efforts towards more impactful outcomes.
- Establishment of a comprehensive humanitarian bill in Kenya to create specific institutions tasked with addressing both current and future humanitarian crises. However, the realisation of this bill hinges upon the necessity of political goodwill and advocating for lobbying efforts and advocacy campaigns to ensure its enactment and effective functioning.
- Building a sustainable and skilled workforce: Recognising the versatility of humanitarian workers is paramount. There is a growing need for individuals who are knowledgeable not only about the specific contexts of humanitarianism, but also possessing a diverse skill set. Such all-rounders are better equipped to navigate the multifaceted challenges inherent in humanitarian work, thereby enhancing the sector's overall effectiveness and impact.



SECTION 4

**HUMANITARIAN RESEARCH
AND INNOVATION (R&I)
TOPICS AND PRIORITY TOPICS
REQUIRING ATTENTION**

SECTION 4: HUMANITARIAN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (R&I) TOPICS AND PRIORITY TOPICS REQUIRING ATTENTION



KEY MESSAGES

A variety of **topics were reported as requiring additional R&I attention**. These included issues related to the humanitarian-development nexus, climate change, health, anticipatory actions, how the humanitarian sector functions, innovation, and localisation.

Priority R&I topics included climate change impacts, new models, better forecasting tools or technology, the creation of new data and tools to enhance targeting in humanitarian R&I, mental health, disease prevention, research on post-election violence, and operationalising localisation.

Reported **reasons why these issues have not received sufficient attention to date** encompassed: Funding constraints, any geopolitical factors at play, humanitarian sector limitations, constraints within the academic sector, donor fatigue, and lack of contextualised research.

Participants highlighted several **problems that R&I on these topics could address**. These included inadequate evidence for action, a lack of tools for decision-making by local actors, insufficient information on how to prioritise support and know where, when, and how to target the intended populations, food insecurity, reliance on aid, and the need for culturally-appropriate and sustainable solutions. Some respondents mentioned that **R&I needs vary across the country** due to the difference in modes of production and climatic conditions, as well as the distinct nature of crises across Kenya.

Others argued that **R&I needs do not differ** across the country because all the counties within the arid and semi-arid land (ASAL) region face similar crises, including armed conflicts, climate change, displacement, insecurity, food security, and even hunger.

TOPICS REQUIRING R&I ATTENTION

A range of thematic areas and specific topics were reported as requiring additional R&I attention in Kenya (see Tables 4 to 10 below). These broadly covered issues of the humanitarian-development nexus, climate change, health, anticipatory action, how the humanitarian sector functions, innovations, and localisation.

THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

Topics related to the humanitarian-development nexus were most frequently reported by participants as requiring additional R&I attention (with such issues mentioned in nearly all interviews).

Table 4: Topics reported as requiring additional R&I attention in Kenya: Humanitarian-development nexus

Topic	Reasons for listing it as requiring attention	Why these topics have not received sufficient attention to date
Food insecurity:* The need to focus on innovative ways of addressing food insecurity / nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The numerous losses incurred due to the locust invasion in many parts of Kenya. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most of the solutions implemented result from tests conducted in different countries, such as genetically modified organisms (GMOs).
Gender-transformative approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The need to design interventions that empower women during emergencies using locally-available initiatives such as village savings and loan associations. 	
Poverty alleviation:* Develop innovative ways to improve livelihoods and living standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The high cost of living coupled with multiple factors affecting an individual's livelihood. 	

*Participants were asked to name topics requiring R&I attention in Kenya, and then to name their top three priority topics. Topics marked with an *asterisk denote that they were identified as a priority by at least one participant.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Various climate change-related topics were reported by participants as requiring humanitarian R&I attention (see Table 5 below).

Table 5: Topics reported as requiring additional R&I attention in Kenya: Climate change

Topic	Reasons for listing it as requiring attention	Why these topics have not received sufficient attention to date
Climate change impacts:* Address perennial famine and tackle the water crisis, particularly the drying up of rivers in Central Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many communities have been impacted by droughts caused by climate change. • Climate change impacts have resulted in disease outbreaks and malnourishment among populations due to hunger, drought, and limited available water for domestic and livestock use. • Increased frequency of droughts and floods. 	
Climate change adaptation: How to build community resilience around the effects associated with climate change, flash floods, and drought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased displacement of communities during adverse climate issues. • Current agricultural practices are not adapted to the global crisis surrounding climate change. 	
Climate change mitigation: Pay attention to the intersectionality of climate change impacts, specifically focusing on how ethnic minorities and women are disproportionately affected by droughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate data on the impacts of climate change on minority groups, including women. 	

Understand and prepare: Research on climate change patterns to help with adequate preparations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous responses to climate-related challenges may have overlooked crucial aspects of community governance, resilience mechanisms, and demographic compositions. • Lack of contextualisation to climate change issues in Kenya since people are affected differently, given their different contexts. 	
New models, tools, or technology for improved forecasting*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased disasters related to climate change issues. 	

*Participants were asked to name topics requiring R&I attention in Kenya, and then to name their top three priority topics. Topics marked with an *asterisk denote that they were identified as a priority by at least one participant.

LOCALISATION

Table 6: Topics reported as requiring additional R&I attention in Kenya: Localisation

Topic	Reasons for listing it as requiring attention	Why these topics have not received sufficient attention to date
Operationalising localisation*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate collaborations at the local level and a high dependency on international organisations. • Existence of solutions and approaches that are not localised and created by local designers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donors get exhausted from supporting R&I due to other pressing economic issues. • Donor conditions and perspectives when funding humanitarian projects are barriers to designing interventions for local humanitarian problems.

*Participants were asked to name topics requiring R&I attention in Kenya, and then to name their top three priority topics. Topics marked with an *asterisk denote that they were identified as a priority by at least one participant.

ANTICIPATORY ACTION

Some respondents highlighted anticipatory action as being a humanitarian topic in the country indicating that many humanitarian researchers and innovators have neglected historical data on the impacts of the disasters that the country has been exposed to.

Table 7: Topics reported as requiring additional R&I attention in Kenya: Anticipatory action

Topic	Reasons for listing it as requiring attention	Why these topics have not received sufficient attention to date
Data to inform anticipatory action*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient data to understand climate risk exposures. Inadequate data on preparedness interventions and decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of anticipatory actions for timely humanitarian R&I.

*Participants were asked to name topics requiring R&I attention in Kenya, and then to name their top three priority topics. Topics marked with an *asterisk denote that they were identified as a priority by at least one participant.

HOW THE HUMANITARIAN SECTOR FUNCTIONS

Table 8: Topics reported as requiring additional R&I attention in Kenya: How the humanitarian section functions

Topic	Reasons for listing it as requiring attention	Why these topics have not received sufficient attention to date
Logistics and supply chain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The need to improve the whole logistics and supply chain: Providing shelters and ensuring food distribution. 	
Institutional learning and research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contextual issues have been overlooked and research not adapted to the specific context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No dedicated research institutions working with development partners to respond to the needs. Kenya views humanitarian crises as external factors and there is a slow understanding of these factors. Research institutions only working in areas of humanitarian response and not humanitarian R&I.

INNOVATION

Table 9: Topics reported as requiring additional R&I attention in Kenya: Innovation

Topic	Reasons for listing it as requiring attention	Why these topics have not received sufficient attention to date
New data and tools to improve targeting in humanitarian R&I*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrong targeting of beneficiaries. • Rise in remote working, global collaboration, and synergy. • Need for the right technologies, such as drones and computerised systems in bandit-prone areas to control cattle rustling and track the movement of stolen livestock. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an overreliance on manual research methods. • Lack of awareness of how to respond to needs since only a few universities focus on humanitarian R&I.
Sustainable innovative approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to study future needs and understand their root causes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kenya has been struggling with a slow onset of disasters compared to other countries severely affected by rapid crisis onset.

HEALTH

Table 10: Topics reported as requiring additional R&I attention in Kenya: Health

Topic	Reasons for listing it as requiring attention	Why these topics have not received sufficient attention to date
Research on emerging diseases and outbreaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outbreaks of emerging and re-emerging diseases, including zoonotic diseases. 	
Sexual reproductive health rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex challenges surrounding sexual and reproductive health, and rights in emergency situations in Kenya. 	

Disease prevention*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased incidences of emerging and re-emerging diseases. 	
Mental health*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychosocial issues and related matters like gender-based violence (GBV). 	

*Participants were asked to name topics requiring R&I attention in Kenya, and then to name their top three priority topics. Topics marked with an *asterisk denote that they were identified as a priority by at least one participant.

POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE

Table 10: Topics reported as requiring additional R&I attention in Kenya: Post-election violence

Topic	Reasons for listing it as requiring attention	Why these topics have not received sufficient attention to date
Research on post-election violence*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Election tensions are common in the country since the violence seen after the 2007 election. The cycle has since continued every five years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The political class always aims at exploiting the masses for their interests and stops them from getting informed.

*Participants were asked to name topics requiring R&I attention in Kenya, and then to name their top three priority topics. Topics marked with an *asterisk denote that they were identified as a priority by at least one participant.

DO TOPICS REQUIRING R&I ATTENTION DIFFER ACROSS THE COUNTRY?

Participants were asked to consider whether topics requiring additional humanitarian R&I attention in the Kenyan context differ across the country.

Some indicated that topics do differ, due to different climatic conditions and propensity for natural hazards. For example, it was reported that of Kenya's 47 counties, the 23 ASAL counties have particular R&I needs related to floods, food security, and animal pasture. These counties experience droughts and have four major river basins that also flood, including the Nzoia, Budalangi, Ewaso Nyiro, and Tana River basins. Additionally, particular counties such as Narok, Kwale, Siaya, and Makueni, are impacted by riverine floods.

The need for additional R&I related to animal and human diseases, especially zoonotic diseases, also reportedly varies across the country. There is a particular need for such work in counties in the Rift Valley where various communities are either purely pastoralists or agropastoralists

and are likely to suffer from zoonotic disease outbreaks leading to the loss of livelihoods and widespread hunger for both animals and humans.

It was also indicated that humanitarian R&I needs differ across the country due to differences in the nature and magnitude of hazards. For example, areas of the North Rift Valley and central parts of Kenya experience landslides, while the northern and coastal regions experience flash floods and the northern frontier faces drought.

Other participants indicated that the topics requiring humanitarian R&I attention do not differ because Kenya is an agrarian society and the impacts of climate change are being felt right across the country, and consequently, many agropastoralists, pastoralists, and pure farmers are all grappling with food losses and reduced harvests regardless of their location.

PROBLEMS THAT R&I ON THESE NEEDS / AREAS COULD SOLVE

This section explores participant perspectives on the problems that R&I for the aforementioned topics could solve.

Table 11: Problems that R&I could solve

Problems that R&I could solve	Reported Examples
Competing priorities and challenges in targeting intended populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the targeting of beneficiaries in humanitarian intervention because a lot of wastage is realised when the wrong people are targeted. • Humanitarian R&I can create awareness of how to utilise the available resources and inform the best intervention measures to take, for example, the introduction of farming practices that best fit a particular area. • Humanitarian R&I will continue to generate knowledge to inform humanitarian response. • Solve collaboration issues during cross-cutting research while prioritising the community.
Evidence-based planning: Makes research funding quantifiable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist in making research funding quantifiable since the country will have an evidence-based body of work where one can appropriately use the available resources to conduct advocacy on the humanitarian front. • Help save costs to improve the findings' efficiency and accuracy.

<p>Tackling reliance on aid and need for culturally-appropriate and sustainable solutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable communities to understand their problems and what they need to do, and thus, continue with their normal lives and livelihoods. • Bring in new systems, livelihood modes, and areas where sustainable means of livelihood can be implemented. • The reliance on external actors, including international aid organisations to address various needs in Kenya, such as food and water shortages. The issues would be effectively solved by incorporating more research-based evidence into national planning.
<p>Provide useful tools for decision-making by local actors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide humanitarian workers with the right research systems. • Help inform the right interventions to prevent crises like hunger and disease.
<p>Food security</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solve increasing food production costs and malnutrition among communities and reduce food wastage. • Solve the issues of food security and distribution making the country more food and water secure.
<p>Mitigation of resource-driven conflicts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigate conflicts arising from competition over shared resources like water and grazing land which give rise to social issues like early / child marriages and rural-urban migration.



SECTION 5

**(MIS)ALIGNMENT OF
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
(R&I) INVESTMENTS AND
NEEDS**

SECTION 5: (MIS)ALIGNMENT OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (R&I) INVESTMENTS AND NEEDS



KEY MESSAGES

There were differing views among participants regarding **whether research and innovation (R&I) investments match the topics requiring attention**. Several participants indicated that investments match the needs because it is a priority to ensure that any investments align with the current research needs. Aligning R&I to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) ensure that efforts are focused on addressing a community's most pressing needs. Therefore, it is imperative that before any research is undertaken, the strategic direction is explained so that the R&I is based on current needs.

However, other participants reported **a mismatch of the investments made** to address a community's needs. It was mentioned that there is little investment channeled into research at national level and in universities. The funding allocated to R&I in Kenya is insufficient relative to the substantial scale and impact of the crises confronting the country.

Participants were asked to consider whether investments directed into R&I align with the topics reported as requiring additional humanitarian R&I attention.

Several participants indicated that the investment matches the needs because it is a priority to ensure that any investment aligns with current research needs and that before the research is undertaken, the strategic direction has to be both explained and justifiable. It was also reported that the investment matches the needs due to a strategic alignment of humanitarian work with the UNSDGs, while leveraging existing efforts in the humanitarian sector and innovating to address documented gaps and influence unaddressed needs.

No participants reported that the limited available funding was not being allocated to topics requiring attention. However, it was reported that there is insufficient funding to prioritise humanitarian needs. Additionally, there was a general perception that overall investment into R&I is insufficient, and this was attributed to:

- Investment into R&I not being a priority for government and other donors, and the limited availability of funding.
- Government entities have been established at both national and county levels, but these still lack sufficient resources, including human resources and financing.



Several participants indicated that the investment matches the needs because it is a priority to ensure that any investment aligns with current research needs and that before the research is undertaken, the strategic direction has to be both explained and justifiable.



SECTION 6

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

SECTION 6: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT



KEY MESSAGES

The **importance of local and national actor engagement in research and innovation (R&I)** was well recognised, highlighting the value of contextual insights and grassroots information accessible through such actors.

Both **national and international actors are engaged in R&I** with clearly defined roles based on their fields of operation.

A range of strategies are reportedly used to **encourage the engagement of national and regional actors over international actors**. These strategies include establishing networks to foster greater engagement, forming partnerships with academic institutions, building local capacity, adopting participatory approaches tailored to the local context, and partnerships with local and national governments. Many organisations enhance local research capacity by involving students and research fellows in projects' research topics and establishing partnerships to facilitate information sharing.

Some engagements are reported to be guided by sector-specific policies while others involve creating synergy through signed memoranda of understanding (MoU) with different universities in Kenya and tasking them with research responsibilities.

Reported barriers to the engagement of national actors included **biases towards existing partners and entities**. Some entities do not want to collaborate or initiate R&I activities with organisations from the Global South. There is also a limited local research capacity and a lack of coordination among actors. The challenge of getting the participation of specialised experts in specific research fields also acts as a barrier to engagement.

EXTENT AND NATURE OF THE ENGAGEMENT OF NATIONAL ACTORS IN R&I

The importance of national actor engagement in humanitarian R&I was well recognised. For example, it was reported that national actors rather than international collaborators are best placed to conduct research due to their understanding of the dynamics of the local context and ability to access information from grassroots sources.

Participants reported a range of ways in which national stakeholders are engaged with R&I at different levels. Some organisations are community-based and most of the work that they carry out is within the communities where they work finding solutions to the problems they face. For example, the issue of bill-making where local citizens and organisations – who are key stakeholders – are called upon to provide their views to help in terms of understanding the context and issues affecting them. Another respondent reported being guided by the policies of the specific sectors where engagements are harnessed based on the sector.

Additionally, community and local stakeholders are key to research. A respondent highlighted the localisation of solutions by working very closely on a constant and continuous basis with them through pilots to understand what will and will not work. However, another participant indicated that there are no engagements with national stakeholders as it is neither very purposeful nor deliberately sought from the humanitarian sector in Kenya.

REDEFINE THE ROLE OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

The involvement of both national and international entities with clear roles in R&I is pivotal to advancing humanitarian efforts. This is highlighted by one respondent’s observation that organisations collaborate with various other entities focused on enhancing either the capacity or resources they offer, depending on their field of operation or the specific areas a particular humanitarian organisation aims to assist. Lastly, both national and international actors are reported to be engaged in research with equal opportunities unhindered by any discrimination.



It was reported that national actors rather than international collaborators are best placed to conduct research due to their understanding of the dynamics of the local context and ability to access information from grassroots sources.

STRATEGIES USED TO PROMOTE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTOR ENGAGEMENT

A range of strategies are reportedly being used to promote the engagement of national and regional actors in R&I (see Table 12 below).

Table 12: Reported strategies used to promote greater national and regional stakeholder engagement in R&I

Reported strategies	Explanation / Examples
Creating networks to foster greater engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of more communication channels to share information with a wider network for greater visibility of the work done. • Creating synergy between organisations to work together by complementing each other instead of competing. • Subscribing to international organisation codes such as the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) on Quality and Accountability to which almost all humanitarian organisations belong. • Having coordination groups to be able to drive research. • Engaging with donors including through the use of research findings to justify approaches to intervention so that research is able to better inform the design of the intervention. • Networking and benchmarking with national and international organisations to improve the response. • Collaborations to work with evidence-driving organisations. • Pool of partners to form a basis of information sharing.
Partnerships with academic institutions and building local capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed MoU with different universities in Kenya tasking them with research responsibilities. • Working with local university students through offering them positions at innovation centres and also providing them with PhD scholarships to study humanitarian crisis management. • Appreciating and partnering with local learning institutions to add more value to programmes to become more sustainable and for communities to become even more resilient. • Engagement of research fellows through scholarships and employment.

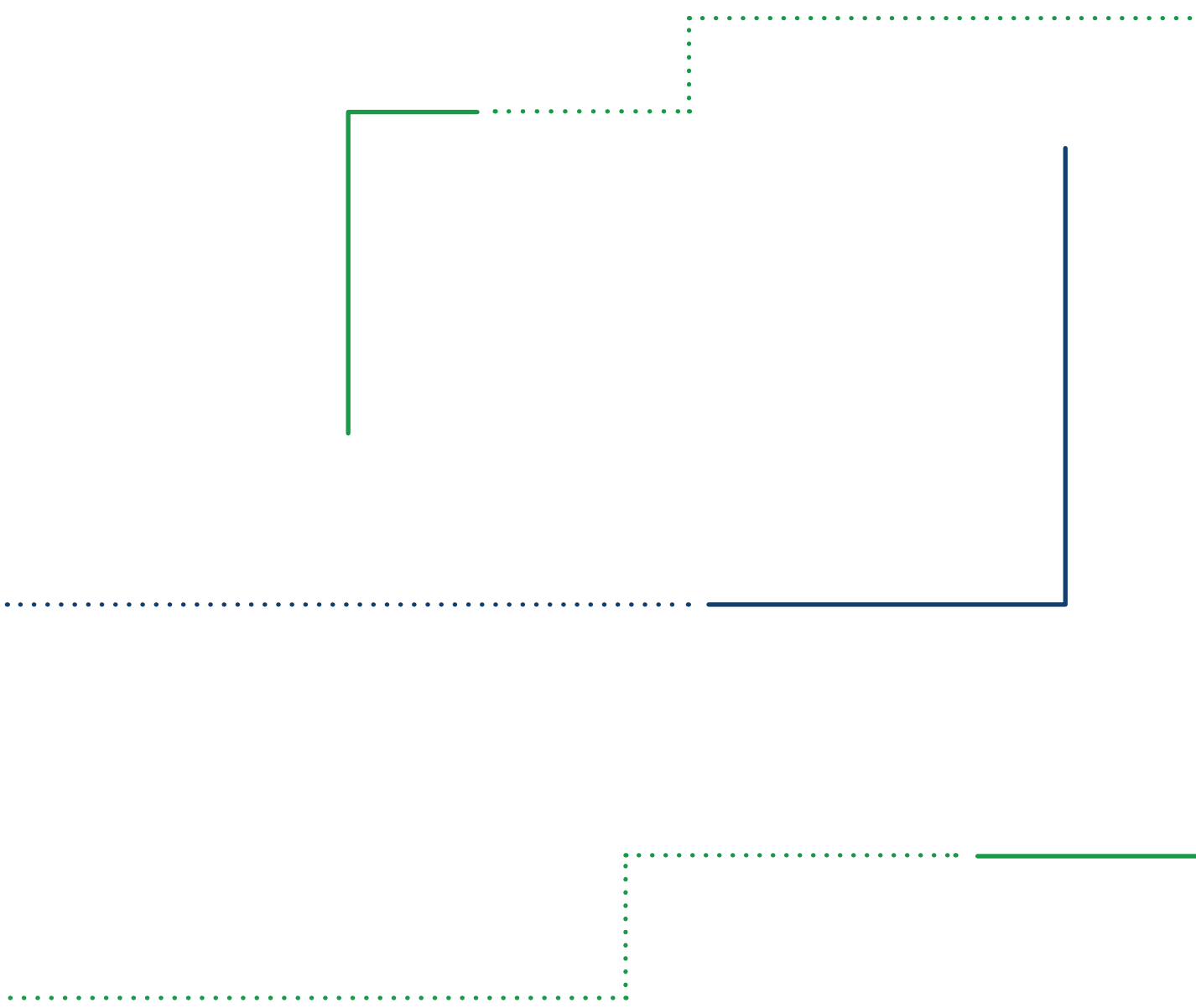
Adopting participatory approaches to the local context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing opportunities for local and national actors to engage in order to increase impact locally. • Working with national and local stakeholders to identify priority areas. • Localisation of solutions through piloting with communities and working closely with them to get their views. • Dissemination of research, for example, through knowledge, attitudes, and practice (KAP) surveys with communities to affirm and share more insights.
Partnership with local and national governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination with either county or national government through signed MoU. • Working with national partners through access to the different agencies and county and national government bodies of Kenya. • Aligned strategic direction with national and county governments. • Growing emphasis on ownership and localisation of disaster-management efforts in Kenya where county governments are being trained by international actors in emergency responses, but also trying to align their disaster-management units to what is offered by the national government.

BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT WITH NATIONAL RESEARCHERS AND INNOVATORS

Table 13: Barriers to the engagement of regional and national actors

Reported strategies	Explanation / Examples
Bias towards existing partners and known entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corruption evident through handouts to favour certain individual's research. • Political interest being a barrier to certain groups evidenced by portraying a lack of interest.
Tendency to overlook researchers in the Global South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception that <i>"anything good (research) must come from the West or even now from the East."</i> • The historical reliance on the international community for addressing humanitarian crises driven by sporadic government intervention and perceived political disincentives has left a gap in proactive disaster preparation and response.

<p>Limited local research capacity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The challenge of getting qualified, competent researchers to engage for the long term. • The challenge of getting specialised experts working in specific research fields. • Limited community of scholars who are able to undertake humanitarian research in Kenya.
<p>Lack of coordination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The gap between practitioners and scholars getting together to structure research talks before funding. • Humanitarian crisis committees formed by government are not housed under one roof, hence working in silos leading to a lack of cross-cooperation.





SECTION 7

**PRIORITY-SETTING AND
DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES**

SECTION 7: PRIORITY-SETTING AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES



KEY MESSAGES

Participants recognised that **alignment with organisational strategy and goals was essential** in determining research and innovation (R&I) needs and priorities and that, to this end, baseline surveys are typically carried out to inform needs.

It was reported that the **national and county governments are essential** while determining the type of humanitarian R&I needed. It was seen as necessary to align strategic direction with the national and county governments in order to serve the same community that the government is focusing on. The likelihood of humanitarian R&I improving the impact at community level was viewed as being essential.

Funding availability and donor need / priority is crucial as some donors demand certain innovative skills before issuing resources to humanitarian organisations.

Participants from a range of organisation types described **the stakeholders involved in priority setting** in their organisations and those who are absent. Actors reportedly involved in priority setting include national governments, donors, regional INGOs, UN agencies, the beneficiary community and county governments. Groups reportedly absent include beneficiary communities, and local government.

The **involvement of national actors** in priority setting mainly adopted a top-down approach from the national to county level.

Both top-down and bottom-up approaches reported as the engagement style of national and local actors in priority setting.

HOW ORGANISATIONS IDENTIFY AND PRIORITISE THE FOCUS OF HUMANITARIAN R&I WORK

Participants were asked to reflect on the processes used by their organisations to set priorities and determine the focus of their humanitarian R&I work. A range of approaches and factors considered were reported (see Table 14 below).

Table 14: Reported approaches and factors considered in determining organisational R&I priorities

Factors Considered	Reported Examples
Alignment with organisational strategy and goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows organisations to better focus their resources and target the beneficiaries, while improving engagement with other stakeholders and enhance information sharing. Strategic plans align with the different programmes and particular aspects of departmental committees.
Extent to which the R&I meets a need or gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs identified by organisations must meet a gap within the community. The population affected dictates the priorities to be set by humanitarian workers to help in understanding the context and its dynamics. Use available data to highlight the need / gap. This can be done through surveys which generate evidence about the types of needs.
Alignment with national and county government priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It means that humanitarian institutions are auxiliary and affiliated with local, national, and county governments. The government is part of the process and any needs prioritised correlate with the government's needs and policies before research is rolled out. Involving numerous stakeholders, including ministries and departments. Coordination with county or national government through signed MoU. Align strategic direction with national and county governments as both serving the same community.
Likelihood of improving effectiveness or impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a relationship with the community to improve impact.

Scale and location of the need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To evaluate where a given population is situated and how crucial the need is to them, including the exact number of beneficiaries to be targeted.
Funding availability and donor need / priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that donor priorities correlate with community needs. Numerous organisations are founded on the donors' key considerations and must consult with them. Donors demanding innovative skills before giving resources to humanitarian organisations.
Community attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A mutual relationship between organisations and communities must exist in order to enhance community participation levels within the project.
Input of technical coordination groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of technical coordination groups to identify key gaps that require research attention.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN DETERMINING R&I PRIORITIES AND WHO IS MISSING FROM THE DECISION-MAKING TABLE?

Participants were asked to consider which stakeholders are involved in humanitarian R&I priority-setting processes within their organisations, and those who are not. Notably, participants represented a range of different organisation types and a range of different entities within the same organisation type (for example, a diverse range of INGOs). As such, some stakeholder groups such as county governments were reported as being involved in decision-making by some participants, but were noted as being absent by others.

Actors reported as being **involved with humanitarian R&I priority setting** included:

- National government and institutions**
 Some participants noted that they get support from the government and work with stakeholders from learning institutions.
- Donors**
 It was reported that a range of large international donors invest in humanitarian R&I in Kenya and they are actively involved in determining priorities.
- Regional INGOs / UN staff**
 Humanitarian organisations work together with other organisations of goodwill, INGOs, and UN agencies during the humanitarian R&I priority-setting process. They have the upper hand in determining priorities as they provide considerable support through their funding.

- **County government**

County governments are involved in priority setting as they host the refugees in Kenya and create the laws that govern activities. Therefore, they must be informed.

- **Beneficiary community**

A respondent reported that the community is also taken seriously and involved in the priority-setting process as the gatekeepers of these particular communities, hence giving them not only a sense of ownership, but also of sustainability. This includes working with representatives of the beneficiary communities.

Several stakeholder groups were also described as being **absent from humanitarian R&I priority-setting processes** by some participants. These groups included:

- **Beneficiary communities**

Participants from a range of organisation types reported that beneficiary populations are missing from humanitarian R&I priority setting at the stage of response because humanitarian affairs are top-bottom-led, where at this point, there are limited structures in place for engagement. Various vulnerable populations including children, indigenous people, people living with disabilities, mature minors, single male parents, and women are not included in priority-setting processes. Most of the humanitarian R&I needs are not scaled down to the community and the people are often left to absorb interventions instead of co-creating them as these beneficiary communities are not homogeneous.

- **Local governments**

In the INGO world, county and local governments were also reported as being missing from priority-setting processes, despite their key role in supporting humanitarian responses, especially when conducting research.

EXTENT TO WHICH NATIONAL AND LOCAL ACTORS ARE INVOLVED WITH PRIORITY SETTING

Top-down Approach

Six respondents indicated that, in most cases, humanitarian affairs follow a top-down approach as the humanitarian workers come in with a mindset of bringing help. The government has set up several committees that specifically focus on disasters through the office of the president and the same is cascaded down to the county level from the national level. The community is engaged, but ideas are generated from the community level up. They are only involved once a lot has already been planned and integrated. Again, international actors also come in as donors and supporters with clearly defined roles in this whole process.

In the case of Baringo, the beneficiaries are rarely given an opportunity to air their views, but are only expected to receive and follow orders, and then get help.

Lastly, baseline surveys are also done to identify existing needs. The needs come from the community, and then through the research, intervention strategies are developed to be used even before implementation starts. Kick-off meetings are conducted whereby after the proposal and getting everything ready, information is disseminated back to the community and they then get involved in the priority-setting process, thus, it trickles down from the top, but through both formal and informal consultations.

On the other hand, two respondents reported a bottom-up approach that other organisations have adopted working closely with the community and beneficiaries by consulting and collecting data from them. One respondent indicated that the beneficiaries dictate the priority of questions that are to be focused on to help inform a better understanding of the context and its dynamics.



In most cases, humanitarian affairs follow a top-down approach as the humanitarian workers come in with a mindset of bringing help. The government has set up several committees that specifically focus on disasters through the office of the president and the same is cascaded down to the county level from the national level.

The community is engaged, but ideas are generated from the community level up. They are only involved once a lot has already been planned and integrated. Again, international actors also come in as donors and supporters with clearly defined roles in this whole process.



SECTION 8

**RESPONSIVENESS OF THE
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
(R&I) SYSTEM TO EMERGING
HUMANITARIAN NEEDS**

SECTION 8: RESPONSIVENESS OF THE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (R&I) SYSTEM TO EMERGING HUMANITARIAN NEEDS



KEY MESSAGES

Factors reported as **enabling timely R&I responsiveness** to emerging issues included utilising existing partnerships, resource availability and prepositioning of both human and financial resources, the existence of early warning systems (EWSs), the need for rapid R&I, government support, contextual factors such as the location of the crisis event, cultural acceptability of the R&I, and adequate coordination.

Factors reported as **impeding timely R&I responsiveness** included: Lack of funding and flexible funding, lack of political will and interest, insufficient human resources, poor or limited coordination, and issues regarding the nature of the crisis.

Participants were asked to consider the factors that may support and those that may impede the timely responsiveness of the humanitarian R&I ecosystem to emerging humanitarian issues.ⁱ

A number of factors were reported by respondents as supporting timely humanitarian R&I responsiveness to new and critical issues, including:

- **Utilising existing partnerships:** Through coordinated response. It was reported that in Kenya, humanitarian INGOs have an integrated needs assessment used by various stakeholders and eight humanitarian hubs that bring together the government and all other stakeholders. Additionally, partnerships are maximised through steering groups with various government departments, for instance, the government's task force formed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

i. Notably, the question stem provided some examples in order to clearly illustrate what was meant by the question – Many factors may impact the ability of the research and innovation sector to respond to priorities as they emerge (for example, these may include national capacity, funding availability, short project cycles etc.). What factors support and what factors impede the timely responsiveness to emerging priorities in the region?

- **Resource availability:** This involves setting aside sufficient resources and the prepositioning of resources (both human and financial) in anticipation of future crises as many organisations depend on goodwill donations from others and external countries. Therefore, timely response will significantly depend on the availability and flexibility of funds.
- **Having EWSs and an anticipatory approach:** Mainly done through concerned government institutions to provide early warning actions and information.
- **Need for the rapid R&I:** The urgency and need to respond to a given humanitarian R&I issue is a factor that many organisations consider. For example, the country has a team – the Kenya Integrated Rapid Assessment (KIRA) team that conducts multi-sectoral assessments of humanitarian needs which are crucial in identifying the humanitarian situation at that particular time when rapid response is required.
- **Sociocultural factors:** The social and economic perspectives of a disaster play a crucial role in determining the timeliness and effectiveness of humanitarian R&I efforts. Disasters occurring in urban areas with higher economic investments often receive immediate attention due to their economic significance. Additionally, cultural factors such as community beliefs, norms, and values can influence the urgency and appropriateness of response interventions, highlighting the importance of aligning humanitarian R&I with the specific needs and context of the populations affected. Therefore, comprehensive responses to crises must consider and integrate these contextual issues to ensure relevance and effectiveness in addressing needs.
- **Proper coordination:** Level of coordination was also reported as a factor, because good coordination leads to timely response.

Several factors that impede timely humanitarian R&I responsiveness were also reported, including:

- **Limited funding availability and lack of flexible funding:** Dependence on goodwill donations from good samaritans and other countries, inability to mobilise resources, and the lack of a national disaster response (emergency) fund which could support research grants / expenses in the country. Lastly, less priority has always been given to the research community than intervention programming.
- **Lack of political will and interest:** Unwillingness of the government to respond to a crisis, corruption and conflict of interest among government officials, political divides, and a lack of appreciation of research because it is from a different side of the political divide.
- **Insufficient human resources:** Few research institutions or limited research dealing with crisis management and response due to a lack of sufficient human resources and experts to handle emergencies.
- **Coordination:** Poor / lack of coordination.
- **Nature of crisis:** The nature of the calamity or disaster can hinder progress, for instance, humanitarian R&I in regards to health issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic or HIV often receives more attention compared to other needs.



SECTION 9

**RECOMMENDATIONS
AND CONCLUSIONS**

SECTION 9: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Kenya is a country that has experienced a range of humanitarian crises, including natural hazards, conflicts, and displacement. The findings of this consultation with actors engaged with the humanitarian research and innovation (R&I) space suggest that it has played an important role in helping address some of these issues. The need for humanitarian R&I is likely to continue to grow in the coming years as the country faces ongoing challenges related to food security, climate change, conflict, and displacement. Humanitarian organisations have strived to adapt participatory methodologies to the local context since it has proved to be an effective strategy for engaging all actors in the sector. These methodologies have promoted active participation and the engagement of local communities in decision-making and ensuring that any intended needs are met.

Overall, the key findings from this consultation suggest that:

- R&I stands as a pillar that fortifies the potential within humanitarian settings in Kenya and the data indicated that it plays a pivotal role. To some, humanitarian R&I assists in developing strategies that enable better targeting for delivering support to intended recipients and improve the way the humanitarian sector functions, while to others, it highlights contextual issues, including the factors surrounding crises and, thus, helps practitioners make informed decisions and develop effective crisis strategies.
- The findings further established that Kenya has various pressing areas demanding extensive humanitarian R&I. Among them are gender-transformative approaches, poverty alleviation, climate change impacts, adaptation and mitigation, improved forecasting models, research on health and disease prevention, data to inform anticipatory action, how the humanitarian sector functions, innovations, and operationalising localisation.
- Therefore, efforts to foster a robust ecosystem supporting R&I is vital to addressing the country's evolving needs and driving sustainable development. Participants reported that there is insufficient funding prioritising humanitarian R&I needs and there was a general perception that overall investment into such was insufficient.
- Additionally, participants underscored the importance of stakeholder engagement in humanitarian R&I and stated that they were best placed to conduct such activities due to their understanding of the dynamics of the local context. Among the strategies used to engage these stakeholders are creating networks, partnerships, and adopting participatory approaches. However, there were barriers to such engagements, including limited research capacity, a tendency to overlook researchers in the Global South, and a lack of coordination.
- Organisations identified and prioritised the type of humanitarian R&I they focused on depending on their alignment with organisational strategy and goals, ability to meet a need, availability of funding, and alignment with national and county government priorities. This

priority-setting process includes actors such as regional INGOs or UN staff, donors, national and county government and institutions, and beneficiary communities, among others. It was further stated that factors, such as utilising existing partnerships, resource availability, the need for rapid humanitarian R&I, and proper coordination are all essential in supporting timely R&I responsiveness to new and critical issues. While others, including limited funding availability, lack of political will, insufficient human resources, and a lack of coordination impeded timely humanitarian R&I responsiveness.



The need for humanitarian R&I is likely to continue to grow in the coming years as the country faces ongoing challenges related to food security, climate change, conflict, and displacement. Humanitarian organisations have strived to adapt participatory methodologies to the local context since it has proved to be an effective strategy for engaging all actors in the sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from this national consultation, the following recommendations are proposed:



More R&I is needed to address a suite of issues impacting Kenya

Participants in this consultation reported a range of topics as requiring additional R&I attention in the Kenyan context. These included issues related to the humanitarian-development nexus, climate change, food insecurity, health, anticipatory actions, how the humanitarian sector functions, innovation, and localisation. Notably, these topics are illustrative, but do not represent an exhaustive list and they were not ranked. Further research with a broad range of diverse stakeholders is required to glean perspectives on R&I needs and inform the development of a national humanitarian R&I agenda for Kenya. It is imperative that this exercise is inclusive and representative of the many diverse actor groups engaged with the humanitarian R&I space in Kenya. This should include participants with a donor function, whose perspectives were not captured in this current report.



Improved data-collection and data-management practices

Humanitarian institutions frequently view R&I as technical activities requiring specialised knowledge to complete. In some instances, data may be available, but not utilised effectively, therefore, it is necessary to improve technical teams' and humanitarian workers' capacities sufficiently to guarantee that the relevant data is captured and used appropriately.



Ensure that R&I is culturally sensitive and findings are contextually relevant

Although a few institutions in the nation have taken the initiative, contextualising findings is a crucial component of R&I. To aid in the adoption and application of R&I, it is necessary to guarantee that the solutions are current and appropriate for the context of the targeted populations.



Supporting information implementation

Numerous organisations are involved in research activities, although the findings are not appropriately implemented due to high staff turnover and inadequate resources. Therefore, there is a need for improved investment to ensure that sufficient personnel and resources are allocated to long-term projects to maximise the findings of any R&I undertaken.



Capacity building

There are few research institutions or limited research dealing with crisis management and response due to the lack of sufficient human resources in terms of experts who can handle emergencies. Therefore, there is a need for building the capacity of researchers working in the humanitarian sector to enable them to be grounded in a variety of research techniques allowing them to capture all the areas of research that are needed.

Humanitarian professionals should possess a well-rounded and comprehensive understanding, extending beyond a singular context within the realm of humanitarianism. This is because of the complex nature of the crises that exist today, being the outcome of myriad environmental, sociocultural, and political factors, hence the need for humanitarian workers to be comprehensively trained and versed in a variety of fields.



Humanitarian R&I integration within government institutions

There is a need to strengthen humanitarian R&I capabilities within existing government units. This may entail embedding researchers within government departments. Such an initiative would require adequate financial resources and staffing the units with qualified individuals who can conduct humanitarian R&I and provide regular updates. This approach would enhance the government's capacity to gather and analyse data, leading to more informed decision-making and effective strategies.



Maximising the utilisation of existing data for R&I

There is a need to further explore how existing data, primarily collected for the monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes, can be optimally utilised to bolster R&I within the humanitarian sector.



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ABOUT ELRHA

We are Elrha. A global organisation that finds solutions to complex humanitarian problems through research and innovation. We are an established actor in the humanitarian community, working in partnership with humanitarian organisations, researchers, innovators, and the private sector to tackle some of the most difficult challenges facing people all over the world.

Through our globally recognised programmes, we have supported more than 200 world-class research studies and innovation projects, championing new ideas and different approaches to evidence what works in humanitarian response.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL PRIORITISATION EXERCISE (GPE)

The GPE for humanitarian research and innovation aims to improve outcomes for people affected by crisis by amplifying the impact of investments in research and innovation through understanding the priorities at all levels. It will provide an overview of the progress and performance of the humanitarian research and innovation ecosystem with a clear set of priorities for research and innovation funding and attention.

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