

Engaging in Emergency Preparedness in a Shifting Humanitarian Landscape: OCHA's Advantages & Challenges

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Abstract

The humanitarian landscape experiences shifts towards local ownership of operations, increasing attention on the humanitarian-development nexus and the resilience paradigm in a New Way of Working, rising importance of regional and private actors, and pushes for changes in the landscape's financial architecture. Emergency preparedness is a bridging element in these trends. The purpose of the thesis is to provide OCHA with recommendations in times of organisational transition through 22 interviews with OCHA internal and external informants at regional and headquarter level. It complements other approaches of the organisation, such as a cost-benefit analysis. To meet its purpose, the following research question is asked: What are the challenges OCHA faces regarding its comparative advantages in emergency preparedness in the light of a shifting humanitarian landscape? OCHA's advantages of having strong coordination expertise, skilled people and a bird's eye view enable a stronger role in emergency preparedness. The organisation's existing tools and capacities are beneficial, too. However, the organisation's focus on its internal and the international system's preparedness does not extend to improving governments' emergency preparedness capacities. A lack of identity challenges OCHA, which results from internal conflicts, unclear understanding of preparedness, and insufficient leadership commitment. Resources and structural issues are rather a matter of prioritisation. Recommendations to OCHA range from prioritisation of developing governments' preparedness capacities to synergising the humanitarian and development arenas in a New Way of Working.

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List of acronyms

ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CADRI	Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative
CBA	Cost-benefit analysis
CFP	Common Framework for Preparedness
CMCoord	Civil-Military Coordination
DRM	Disaster risk management
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
ERP	Emergency Response Preparedness
GPP	Global Preparedness Partnership
HQ	Headquarter
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
INSARAG	International Search and Rescue Advisory Group
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NWOW	New Way of Working
OCHA	(United Nations) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
RO	Regional office
UN	United Nations
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit 2016

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1 Introduction

Today, we are facing an increasing number of disasters related to climate change leading to the loss of lives, livelihoods and development gains, which pushes the most vulnerable people back into poverty (CRED, 2016; UNISDR, 2015a; OCHA, 2014a). One major challenge to improve this situation is the fact that our world is complex, dynamic and influenced by various human and environmental factors (Becker, 2014; Steigenberger, 2016). With this complexity and the inability to predict the future (Simon, 1990; Quarantelli, 1991; Carpenter & Grünewald, 2016), we need to manage uncertainty by understanding and managing risks. Thus, it is a prerequisite to understand which hazards and to what extent they could influence our human-environment systems. When a hazard materialises, the consequences for the system are determined by its vulnerability. This means that hazards are not automatically turning into disasters. The hazards' impact depends on the interaction of a system's physical, social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities (Becker, 2014; Clarke & Dercon, 2016).

Practitioners at all levels in our human-environment systems have the ability to avoid that hazards turn into disasters. When likelihood and consequences cannot be reduced by mitigation and prevention, being well prepared for effective response and recovery evades disastrous outcomes of emergency situations. Pro- and re-actively managing disaster risks requires a joint, coordinated and holistic approach (UN, 2016). However, as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (2014a, p.44) states, today's international humanitarian system is "failing to go beyond response". Emergency preparedness needs to be viewed in the holistic context to fully understand its value as a bridging element in disaster risk management (DRM) (IASC, 2012; OCHA, 2014a; Carpenter & Grünewald, 2016). This becomes increasingly acknowledged as part of a shifting humanitarian landscape (Roeth, 2016; Nakhooda, et al., 2016).

With the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit 2016 (WHS), essential shifts in the humanitarian landscape have been pushed further. Such on-going shifts included power transformations towards local ownership as well as regional and private actor inclusion, the humanitarian-development nexus, applying a holistic resilience perspective to humanitarian, development and climate change work,

as well as an increasing push for changing the financial architecture in these fields (Roeth, 2016; Nakhooda, et al. 2016; HPG, 2013). Dealing with these shifts requires more than fine-tuning and rather “a profound change in the way humanitarian organisations understand their role, the places where they work and their links with other aid actors and governments” (OCHA, 2014a, p.13).

In the last years, OCHA had started to be acknowledged as a good example for an organisation taking steps in the direction of bridging preparedness and response (Kellett & Peters, 2014). The organisation’s policy instruction on its emergency preparedness role was revised in 2015 and it considers some essential shifts in the humanitarian landscape, such as developing capacities of governments to prepare for response (OCHA, 2015). This revised document indicates a clear understanding of OCHA concerning its role in emergency preparedness. However, this role model function of adjusting its preparedness role as a humanitarian actor has recently become affected by OCHA’s current lack of funding. Despite humanitarian landscape shifts and OCHA’s call for profound change, the organisation itself struggles to identify its role in it. OCHA is cutting back and prioritises activities that lead to direct benefits for affected people over medium-term investments such as preparedness and partnerships (OCHA, 2016a). By intending to separate its response and preparedness activities again, OCHA is contradicting its own policy instructions on preparedness, the commitments made in the past, and the future direction of the humanitarian landscape. It seems no convergence within OCHA regarding its position towards preparedness exists and the current future outlook bears the risk of OCHA stepping back from its preparedness activities. This leads to the question, what are OCHA’s challenges in relation to its preparedness role that make the organisation’s position change repeatedly?

In 2017, OCHA will decide for the future whether to maintain, enhance or discontinue activities such as doing preparedness to build response capacities or developing long-term partnerships looking at the organisation’s comparative advantages (OCHA, 2016a). The method for evaluation will be a cost-benefit analysis (CBA), which is a quantitative tool to demonstrate an economic value of activities to decision makers (Shreve & Kelman, 2014). The method has some key limitations when being used for disaster risk reduction measures such as preparedness, including the insufficient consideration of long-term benefits or the question if preparedness measures are

worth the investment in case of a materialising hazard (Venton & Venton, 2004; Shreve & Kelman, 2014). As exemplified in the “Return on Investment for Emergency Preparedness Study” looking at UNICEF and WFP (Meerkatt, et al., 2015), qualitative aspects exist that need to be considered in addition to outcomes of such quantitative tools. Thus, it can be doubted whether a sole cost-benefit analysis can fully measure OCHA’s comparative advantages in engaging in emergency preparedness.

On that account, this thesis has the purpose of providing OCHA with recommendations on how to handle the transition facing current shifts and challenges in the humanitarian landscape. To achieve this, the research needs to answer the question “What are the challenges OCHA faces regarding its comparative advantages in emergency preparedness in the light of a shifting humanitarian landscape?”

2 Conceptual background

First, it is essential to establish how emergency preparedness is defined in this research, subsequently investigating OCHA's relationship with emergency preparedness in the past as well as the organisation's mandate, commitments and frameworks. Moreover, shifts in the humanitarian landscape will be identified.

2.1 Emergency preparedness

2.1.1 Defining the key term

When studying the definition of the term emergency preparedness, the main challenge is to overcome the ambiguity that the various definitions of both words bring along (Eriksson, 2010). This typical multitude of perceptions and the lack of agreement on key terms in the field of DRM (Alexander, 2013) could be resulting from the various individuals and organisations involved, a challenge that has been called "a Babelonian(sic) confusion" (Hagelsteen & Becker, 2014, p.298).

Reviewing the literature on definitions of emergency preparedness or disaster preparedness - terms frequently used interchangeably - it became evident that most definitions vary in the perspective they take on preparedness (McEntire, 2007 cited in Eriksson, 2010). Coppola (2011, p. 251) defines disaster preparedness "as actions taken in advance of a disaster to ensure adequate response to its impacts, and the relief and recovery from its consequences" and it "is performed to eliminate the need for any last-minute action". This definition focuses on activities to prepare before an emergency, which is a seemingly common approach taken by many researchers (Rodríguez-Espíndola, et al., 2017; He & Zhuang, 2016).

Hermann (2007) as well as Perry and Lindell (2003) take another perspective by referring to preparedness as a "state of readiness" to respond to threats. Both mention that this state results from a process of risk, vulnerability and capability analysis. Perry and Lindell (2003, p.338) additionally mention that "preparedness is dynamic and contingent upon on-going processes" because "vulnerability, resources and organisational structures change over time". Without this additional explanation, the wording "state of" would rather suggest the opposite meaning that emergency preparedness is a result with a clear end rather than a process.

Another perspective is taken by Kellett & Peters (2014) and UNISDR (2009) who place the process of developing capacities at the core of emergency preparedness instead of a static condition as implied by “state of readiness”. UNISDR (2009, p.21) states that “Preparedness is knowledge and capacities developed by governments, professional response and recovery organisations, communities and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to, and recover from, the impacts of likely, imminent or current hazard events or conditions”. Although not explicitly mentioning a broader concept, the UNISDR definition adds anticipation to response and recovery, which spans preparedness from the proactive to the reactive side. Kellett and Peters (2014) define emergency preparedness in relation to resilience and further connect it with other humanitarian landscape shifts, such as focusing on the humanitarian-development nexus (see section 2.3.2). They state that “emergency preparedness aims to build the resilience of states and societies by strengthening the local, national and global capacity to minimise loss of life and livelihoods, to ensure effective response to crises” and that this requires activities spanning “responsibilities of both development and humanitarian actors” (Kellett & Peters, 2014, p.27). Harris (2013) adds that such capacity strengthening increases resilience to all hazards.

Merging the different definitions of emergency preparedness and combining the complementing elements of each perspective, this thesis defines emergency preparedness as follows:

Emergency preparedness is the capacity of interrelated systems, such as governments, societies, organisations, communities, and individuals on all levels to keep the system as ready as possible to efficiently anticipate, respond to and recover from likely, imminent or current emergencies. It is developed and maintained through a continuous process of activities spanning from development to humanitarian action.

2.1.2 Operationalising emergency preparedness

In the sense of the definition above, to become and remain ready requires a portfolio of preparedness activities spanning from development to humanitarian actions (Kellett & Peters, 2014; Medina, 2015), with preparedness and mitigation activities being informed by lessons learnt from response and recovery (Medina, 2015; Becker, 2014, Herrmann, 2007). When attempting to describe what preparedness means and how it is specifically done, one needs to realise that this is not limited to a specific country, sector or crisis context is considered (Kellett

& Peters, 2014). As Rodríguez-Espíndola, et al. (2017) explain, preparedness can enhance response and other operations if the context is adequately taken into account. Depending on the emergency and context, different preparedness efforts are necessary (De Leeuw, et al., 2012; Steigenberger, 2016). At the same time, there are preparedness activities and considerations that can address general needs in any type of emergency (Abrahamsson, et al., 2007). For instance, the affected population needs clean drinking water, independent of being affected by a storm, drought, contamination or terror attack (Becker, 2014). Coordination among various responders to reach higher response efficiency is another example of a preparedness outcome that is generally useful.

Typical elements of emergency preparedness (Twigg, 2015) are displayed in figure 1. For a more detailed description of the elements, see appendix 1. These preparedness activities vary in their timeframe and are often allocated to different areas of responsibilities. Kellett and Peters (2014, p.30) provide an illustration (see appendix 2) with almost similar elements, which are placed on an emergency preparedness continuum in order to show how preparedness activities span both the development and humanitarian arena. The authors elucidate that viewing preparedness on a continuum emphasises the need for combining long-term action (e.g. appropriate legislations) and “near term” action (e.g. building capacities to respond to imminent crises). When engaging in emergency preparedness it is important not to see the activities individually, but to invest in the whole package of activities and engage in preparedness with a holistic approach (Kellett & Peters, 2014). Such holistic approach is also articulated by the Inter Agency Standing Committee

1) Vulnerability, hazard & risk assessment	2) Planning	3) Institutional Framework
4) Information systems	5) Resource base	6) Warning systems
7) Response mechanisms	8) Education and training	9) Rehearsals

Figure 1 - Elements of the Disaster Preparedness Framework (adapted from Twigg, 2015, p.302)

(IASC), which identifies preparedness as one of four core areas to develop resilient societies (Harris, 2013). The IASC strongly connects with OCHA, as it is the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance and has the same leadership. Whether OCHA's approach in this regard aligns with the above may be clarified by looking at its policies, commitments and publications.

2.2 OCHA's role in emergency preparedness

Global dialogues and commitments like the Sendai Framework and the WHS Agenda for Humanity are strongly influencing internal reforms in the UN system (UN, 2016). The role of UN agencies in the Sendai Framework is stated to be the support of national governments in their implementation of the framework (UNISDR, 2015b). To fulfil this function successfully, the "United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience" (UN, 2016) has been revised and based on it, each UN system entity is supposed to identify its role in the Sendai Framework implementation support, including OCHA.

In the past, OCHA has continuously experienced tension between strictly fulfilling its mandate and taking on additional roles that relate to it (Stoddard, et. al, 2013). The General Assembly Resolution 46/182 on "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations", adopted in December 1991 (UN, 1991), forms the basis for OCHA's mandate, which has been adjusted during the 1997 United Nations reform (OCHA, 2012). Since then OCHA's mandate focuses on three core areas: (1) "policy development and coordination", (2) "advocacy of humanitarian issues with political organs" and (3) "coordination of humanitarian emergency response by ensuring that an appropriate response mechanism is established" (UN, 1997). To the latter, OCHA (2012, p.2) adds that it "aims to support Member States and national and international humanitarian stakeholders to ensure effective emergency preparedness, and coordinated and timely emergency response". The organisation articulates that it fulfils its mandate by performing coordination, advocacy, information management, humanitarian financing, and policy guidance (OCHA, 2016b). With an increasing focus on disaster risk management encouraged by the Sendai Framework, OCHA identifies itself as having a natural focus on priority 4 of the Sendai framework, which is "enhancing disaster preparedness for

effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction”, because it relates to OCHA’s work on national, regional, and global level (OCHA, 2015).

OCHA commissioned an external evaluation in 2012 to assess how its role in preparedness at all levels is defined and executed (Stoddard, et al., 2013). The evaluation results showed that OCHA’s work in preparedness is driven at the regional level while also beginning systematic approaches to build preparedness at the national level. However, problems were identified concerning a lack of leadership, weak accountability, high staff turnover and unpredictable donor funding. The headquarter level was missing a clear strategic vision on preparedness. Additionally, Stoddard, et al. (2013) identified that OCHA’s first policy instruction on preparedness (OCHA, 2010) was created during a time with few financial resources available. It was evaluated to reflect a narrow preparedness mind set and scope for this reason. Subsequently, OCHA redefined the policy instruction on its role in emergency preparedness (OCHA, 2015). The new document states that “OCHA’s role in preparedness builds on its mandate and its knowledge and experience on how to coordinate a principled, effective and efficient response to meet the humanitarian needs of affected people” (OCHA, 2015, p.3). This role is to be fulfilled by three interlinked tiers: (1) the own internal organisational preparedness to coordinate response, (2) the support of organisations in the multilateral humanitarian system and (3) the support of Member States and regional organisations preparedness, which shall contribute to the IASC Common Framework for Preparedness (CFP) (OCHA, 2015). Other references to OCHA’s present role in emergency preparedness include OCHA’s mission in which one of the four pillars is to promote preparedness and prevention (OCHA, n.d.). Furthermore, the seventh objective of OCHA’s 2014-2017 Strategic Plan is emergency response preparedness (OCHA, 2014b). The multitude of frameworks and commitments indicate the relevance of preparedness for OCHA’s work. Kellett & Peters (2014, p.21) refer to OCHA as a notable example in “assessing (and changing) their roles and responsibilities in relation to preparedness”.

However, this example function of OCHA adjusting its preparedness role has recently become affected by the organisation’s announced lack of funding (Oakford, 2017), again. As mentioned in the introduction, the renewed revision of OCHA’s preparedness functions after experiencing financial constraints indicates that challenges have not been overcome since the last review

(OCHA, 2015). In 2016, an overall functional review was undertaken by the Boston Consultancy Group to increase efficiency and effectiveness of OCHA's work, but the UN staff council criticises that the 2017 budget cuts are not in line with the review (Richards cited in Oakford, 2017). It is suspected that the cuts are less about finances and more related to internal conflicts (Oakford, 2017), which underlines the need for carefully analysing the value of the activities to be cut, such as preparedness. In addition, the context of humanitarian action has changed in the last decade and international organisations with mandates that are often much older need to reconsider their role and contribution in this changing environment, in the best case jointly (UN, 2016). Before restructuring an organisation or considering such reforms of out-dated mandates, it is important to consider common strategic issues and inevitable shifts in the humanitarian landscape as the following.

2.3 A shifting humanitarian landscape

The Sendai Framework, the World Humanitarian Summit 2016 and other commitments relating to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development mark on-going shifts in the humanitarian landscape. As Nakhoda, et al. (2016, p.14) point out "the WHS was a forum to establish future parameters and directions of humanitarian action, leaving the determination of any systemic or structural change to a time when such new directions had been set". Thus, it is necessary to identify what these key trends in the humanitarian landscape are in relation to emergency preparedness and OCHA's role.

2.3.1 Power shifts: developing government capacities & local ownership

The first shift majorly influencing the humanitarian landscape is the changing power relations between organisations in the international system and national governments as well as the increased role of regional actors (HPG, 2013; Roeth, 2016). Traditionally, emergency response and recovery support was provided by the international humanitarian system when local or national resources were overwhelmed (Venton & Venton, 2004). Also today, governments request international assistance when they cannot cope with an emergency on their own. The difference is that they are or should be in the driver seat for the emergency operations (CADRI, 2011). As stipulated in the UN resolution 46/182 of 1991, "the affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organisation, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian assistance

within its territory” (UN, 1991). This leading role of states has too often been ignored by the international system, according to Harvey (2009). Local capacities have frequently been ignored, side-lined or actively undermined in the past with neutrality and independence “taken as a shorthand for disengagement from state structures, rather than as necessitating principled engagement with them” (Harvey, 2009, p.1). The role of affected states receives renewed attention nowadays and the humanitarian landscape is marked by an increasing consensus that the humanitarian system needs to develop national and local capacities instead of bringing outside capacities into the countries (Harvey, 2009; IFRC, 2015). Playing a supportive role in the development of a government’s DRM capacities with the responsibilities and ownership on the local side will augment humanitarian effectiveness (Roeth, 2016). Especially countries that are reaching middle-income status reduce humanitarian assistance requests (Rohwerder, 2016). Governments are increasingly willing and able to respond to emergencies without external help (Harvey, 2009; Nakhooda, et al., 2016), changing the way in which international agencies are needed.

After the GA resolution 46/182, the Sendai Framework and the WHS emphasised again that national and local non-governmental organisations are “proactive and vocal responders in their own right rather than as sub-contractors of large international relief organisations” (Nakhooda, et al., 2016, p.12). Actors in the humanitarian landscape need to accept this shift towards more diverse actors and developing capacities of others (Daccord, 2012; Clarke & Dercon, 2016). Daccord (2012) adds that for these shifts, a rethinking of the coordination model is required. Initiatives such as the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI) try to do so by bringing humanitarian and development organisations together with the aim of supporting governments (OCHA, 2014a), which leads to the second shift.

2.3.2 The humanitarian-development nexus

The second shift in the humanitarian landscape is the enhanced demand to bridge the arenas of humanitarians and development work to reach a more coherent international support system and a so-called “New Way of Working” (NWOW) (Redvers, 2017, Roth, 2016). The renewed attention for the nexus results, among other factors, from the remaining tension between keeping humanitarian principles while bridging humanitarian and development disciplines - a key

challenge in today's humanitarian landscape (Nakhoda, et al., 2016; Redvers, 2017). Developing preparedness capacities of governments is a major element in closing the humanitarian-development gap, because humanitarian actors are supposed to have the expertise in response needed to develop a fully functioning national and local DRM system (Kellett & Peters, 2014). This is rather straightforward when it comes to natural hazards, sudden- or slow-onset, but in conflict situation an increased interrelation and engagement of humanitarian actors with governments and local NGOs possibly lead to conflicts of interest when needing to keep the humanitarian principles up (Nakhoda, et al., 2016).

The overall reason for bridging the humanitarian-development nexus is the increased recognition that effective reaction to hazards requires strong proactive work (Kellett & Peters, 2014). In the past, dealing with disasters was, at least in practice, significantly imbalanced towards focussing on response (Venton & Venton, 2004; Stoddard, et al., 2013). Especially the Sendai Framework emphasises again the need for being proactive by managing and reducing risk instead of managing disasters when they are already happening (UN, 2016). Preparedness becomes particularly important in such holistic approach when understanding that it is impossible to prevent every threat from materialising or mitigate all negative consequences (Boin & McConnell, 2007; Kellett & Peters, 2014). For this reason, preparedness needs to be jointly performed on the humanitarian and development side of the emergency preparedness continuum so that lives and livelihoods can be saved by pre-emergency actions that improve response (OCHA, 2014a; Kellett & Peters, 2014; Musani & Shaikh, 2006). "There is growing consensus among countries – whether they receive or provide assistance – that humanitarian, recovery and development actions need to better complement and reinforce each other" (IASC, 2012, p.1).

However, the humanitarian-development divide remains, due to challenges ranging from funding competition to institutional gaps including cognitive biases that impede people from overcoming their organisational silos (Suhrke & Ofstad, 2005). This is where the New Way of Working is supposed to reach improvements, as delegates from UN agencies, NGOs, donor countries, and multilateral institutions discussed in March 2017 in Copenhagen (Redvers, 2017). This NWOW aims at improving collaboration through three pillars. First, collective targets to reduce the need instead of only providing aid to meet the need. Second, decide who is the most adequate

responder based on comparative advantages related to skills, funding and capacity. And third, multi-year timeframes for funding and capacity to have long-term response connected to development leading to substantial change (Redvers, 2017; Swithern, 2017). These efforts should strengthen national and local capacities and the increased collaboration between the development and humanitarian arena should contribute to a holistic approach aiming to build resilience of countries towards hazards (OCHA, 2017).

2.3.3 A resilience revolution

The third shift relates to the resilience paradigm. The shift is called “the resilience revolution” by Roeth (2016). Resilience is not a new concept and has been operationalised in various disciplines in the past (Pendall, et al., 2010; Alexander, 2013; Becker, 2014). However, it has been newly discovered and further researched in recent years as an overarching concept in a shifting humanitarian landscape linking climate change, sustainable development and humanitarian assistance agendas (IASC, 2012; Kindra, 2013; Roeth, 2016). A resilience vision forms the broader context in which DRM functions, such as preparedness, need to be seen to understand their value. It is out of the scope of this thesis to discuss the various definitions, origins, and concepts of resilience (see for instance Alexander, 2013), but one conceptualisation of resilience by Becker (2014) that exemplifies the bridging nature between the various DRM functions can be found in appendix 3. Connecting to the previous shift, the idea of resilience as a guiding concept and goal for both humanitarian and development actions can create a necessary interface (Kindra, 2013) between both to “increase the impact and cost effectiveness of humanitarian assistance, and to protect development gains to better ensure sustainability and growth” (IASC, 2012). Harris (2013, p.1) summarises this shift as “resilience has become the zeitgeist – a way to move current practice forward, to address risks holistically and, in doing so, challenge age-old questions about the humanitarian/development divide.” The resilience shift has received considerable attention at the high-profile summits in 2015 and 2016 in combination with other necessary shifts in the humanitarian landscape (Nakhouda, et al., 2016). Eventually, the “resilience revolution” (Roeth, 2016, p.2) is also a vision for “overcoming entrenched institutional sovereignty”, which is at the same time its biggest challenge (Kindra, 2013, p.4).

2.3.4 More power shifts: regional actors & the private sector

The fourth identified shift is the “prominent role of regional actors” and importance of the private sector in the humanitarian landscape nowadays (HPG, 2013, pp.7-8; Roeth, 2016). Regional organisations, such as the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) or the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), are becoming increasingly capable of performing humanitarian actions and well-developed capacities are available in the private sector (Tiller, 2014). This is in line with the augmented government role discussed above as the first shift. Recognising the importance of regional and private actors is essential, because they have the abilities to sustainably develop national capacities with governments. The latter are not necessarily equipped and sufficiently resourced yet and long-term relationships with regional intergovernmental organisations and private actors can reduce the countries’ dependency on the international system (Tiller, 2014; Nakhooda, et al., 2016). Another characteristic of this humanitarian landscape shift is that the overburdened UN system can be relieved by cooperation and task sharing with regional organisations, who can especially address tensions and disruptions (HPG, 2013), which leads to the last identified shift.

2.3.5 An increasing push for a changing financial architecture

The fifth shift in the humanitarian landscape is the increasingly overwhelmed aid system in the sense of a growing global deficit of operational and financial capacities to respond in humanitarian organisations (OCHA, 2014a; Nakhooda, et al., 2016). It is not a new facet that the humanitarian system in its current set-up is overstrained by the extensive need for humanitarian assistance. Looking at the future however, it cannot be further neglected, because “the number of people facing humanitarian crises is rising and the international system cannot keep up” (OCHA, 2014a, p.73). In the last decade, humanitarian assistance has doubled and funding requirements have more than tripled (OCHA, 2014a). Kellet and Peters (2014, p.7) point out how emergency preparedness could be the transformative element in a future emergency approach and that investing in it would “reduce the cost of response over the long term and the ever-increasing burden on the humanitarian system – a burden that stretches it beyond its means and, in some cases, its mandate”. When it comes to preparedness on the humanitarian side of the continuum, it is problematic that funding for preparedness is usually allocated after the hazard materialised and then the money is taken from the response budget (Kellett & Peters, 2014).

Overall, less than 5% of all international aid was spent on proactive measures (OCHA, 2014a), leaving necessary emergency preparedness measures on the humanitarian end of the continuum with few possibilities or overwhelming the response budget.

Making the financial architecture around this problem more efficient and effective as well as decreasing the competition between different disciplines, especially along the humanitarian-development continuum, is one of the core messages flowing from the WHS and its Grand Bargain commitment (Swithern, 2017; Nakhooda, et al., 2016). However, a changing financial architecture needs to be complemented by solving other tensions in the heavily fragmented and sometimes poorly coordinated UN system (Roeth, 2016). Initiatives, such as the Global Preparedness Partnership (GPP) intending to overcome silos and competition, are paramount and more innovative approaches need to be found. This call for innovation requires leadership to drive such change (Roeth, 2016). In line with the call for government-owned operations, also the financial architecture should target affected government. Although the role of governments is recognised, funds stay coordinated and implemented by international agencies through NGO's, as highlighted in the World Disaster Report 2015 (IFRC, 2015). Therefore, the applied financial tools in the humanitarian landscape need to be reconsidered and placed into a bigger picture, as Swithern (2017) explains. She adds that humanitarian grants are important but “[...] not the right tool to tackle the underlying risks, causes and long-term consequences of crisis [...]” (Swithern, 2017). A more holistic approach includes diverse tools ranging from insurances and contingency funding to long-term concessional loans (Swithern, 2017).

In the light of these shifts in the humanitarian landscape, OCHA's role in emergency preparedness is analysed in consideration of its comparative advantages and challenges. The respective methodological approach is elucidated in the following.

3 Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology applied to this research. A description of the research philosophy and design is followed by the techniques of data collection and analysis. Furthermore, the research quality and its limitations are discussed.

3.1 Research philosophy and design

Looking at the nature of this research, it is rather difficult to determine a clear philosophical position since the research problem is rooted in Social Sciences while at the same time having a component of Applied Science when seeking recommendations for a specific organisational problem (Saunders, et al., 2009). In addition, conducting research on risk management, resilience and sustainable development is intrinsically trans disciplinary (Becker, 2014) with academic research in the field making a gradual shift from pure basic research to applied, implementation oriented research (Springer, n.d.). According to Saunders, et al. (2009), no philosophical position must be exclusively chosen in practical, applied research. However, the foundation of this thesis lies within social constructivism, as it has human opinions and their interpretation at its core. From social constructivism perspective, people are guided by their beliefs and values leading to complex and changing social dynamics (Halperin & Heath, 2012). During interviews, the researcher studies the beliefs and actions of people while at the same time also being subject to subjectivism because of every human being's cognitive biases and context dependency.

After perceiving significant challenges and some irregularities in OCHA's role in emergency preparedness, the question was raised what the organisation's specific challenges are in this matter. Based on a preliminary secondary research including a review of documents and academic literature, the research question and purpose were established, all together forming a conceptual framework on which the further research was based. Thus, a deductive approach is taken, however with the problem having been identified beforehand in a rather inductive manner (Saunders, et al., 2009). The research purpose of providing OCHA with recommendations on how to handle the transition facing current shifts and challenges in the humanitarian landscape, determined that an exploratory research strategy is used. An exploratory study aims at determining "what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light" (Robson, 2002 cited in Saunders, et al., 2009, p.139). Such strategy is often related

with the collection of qualitative data and its triangulation via the use of more than one data collection technique (Saunders, et al., 2009), which led to the following choices.

3.2 Techniques and procedures

Based on the strategic choices above, it was decided to answer the question what challenges OCHA faces regarding its comparative advantages in emergency preparedness in the light of a shifting humanitarian landscape by using two data collection techniques: internal and external semi-structured interviews and a secondary research.

3.2.1 Data collection

i. Secondary research

A secondary research including academic literature and organisational documents was undertaken to set up the conceptual background for the empirical data collection. The secondary research clarified the meaning of emergency preparedness. OCHA's position to preparedness, its mandate and other influential factors were identified through academic papers and internal documents. Furthermore, trends in a shifting humanitarian landscape were researched to investigate the frame for making recommendations on OCHA's future role in emergency preparedness. Two different search engines were used, the Lund University Libraries search engine "LUBsearch" as well as "Google scholar" and "Google". The research included literature dating back to 1991 (with one exception), which relates to the year of OCHA's foundation as the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Nonetheless, the focus was set on recent publications and documents. Through the Boolean operators "AND" and "OR" (Flowerdew & Martin, 2005), various combinations of search terms were used to overcome the challenge of a multitude of perceptions and the lack of agreement on the meaning of key terms in the field of Disaster Risk Management (Alexander, 2013).

ii. Interviews

The data collection technique for the primary research was twenty-two qualitative semi-structured interviews with OCHA internal and external informants at regional and headquarters level. The technique was chosen, because it enables a wider discussion than, for example, questionnaires would (Flowerdew and Martin, 2005), allowing exploring the core of OCHA's

challenges in emergency preparedness. Using semi-structured interviews appeared to be the most suitable technique considering the scope of the research. In addition, semi-structured interviews facilitate the communication of issues raised, which the researcher did not anticipate (Flowerdew and Martin, 2005). Considering the informants' long-term experiences in the emergency preparedness field and the work at or with OCHA, such unexpected insights were likely to be revealed.

The choice of informants was focused on two informant groups: internal OCHA professionals and external informants. Considering OCHA's role as a coordinating body, other international actors gained experiences by working with OCHA in the past, which is why external informants from OCHA's IASC partners have been chosen as informants for the external perspective. These experiences are anticipated to offer additional perspectives on OCHA's issue in finding its role in emergency preparedness. In addition, external expectations in this regard might be relevant for OCHA's decision makers when being urged to find a more sustainable position to emergency preparedness than in the past. Through the applied snowball sampling technique, as described below, the external informant group was extended to some partners working with OCHA in the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams. Both internal and external informant groups were approached on two levels, as the headquarter level could give valuable insight to the lack of vision, while the regional level was identified as the main driver of OCHA's preparedness activities by Stoddard, et al. (2013) Due to limitations of scope and feasibility, national and field perspectives were excluded, as explained in section 3.3.2.

The data collection process started by approaching selected informants via an OCHA contact, followed by applying the snowball sampling technique to each interview. This technique refers to the use of one contact to establish another contact with a purposeful interviewee leading to various layers of contacts (Flowerdew and Martin, 2005). Snowballing is particularly helpful when trying to reach out to groups that are difficult to access, which were in this case the external informants working with OCHA at a regional level. A downside of the technique is that informants tend to identify other possible informants who are similar to them leading to homogenous information (Saunders, et al., 2009). The initial contact suggested twenty possible informants of which eventually fifteen were interviewed. The snowball sampling technique enabled to reach

out to ten additional informants, of which seven agreed to an interview. The potential informants that denied an interview were mainly too occupied or did not respond to the request at all. Eventually, a total of twenty-two interviews were conducted, of which thirteen were interviews with internal informants and nine with external. The original plan was to interview representatives from each of OCHA's eight Regional Offices, but due to availability five offices were eventually covered. Six face-to-face interviews were conducted while sixteen were done via telephone or Skype calls. All interviews were in English. The interviews lasted approximately thirty minutes, which conforms to the planned timeframe. After obtaining approval from the informants, the interviews were audio recorded to facilitate data analysis.

iii. Interview guide

Each interview included seven questions with additional possibilities for probing. The interviews were based on an interview guide (see table 1). It was discussed and pre-tested resulting in some reformulation of questions. The informants in the test interviews asked for clarification of the previous questions two and four, which lead to changes in wording and eventually to the final questions displayed in table 1. Several days before the interviews, the informants were notified about the general topics to be discussed.

During the interviews, at first information of the informants' background and position was requested to better relate to their experience. Thereafter, the interviews were separated in three phases: general understanding, OCHA and emergency preparedness, and a final wrap up. The questions of phase one had the purpose of stimulating the beginning of the conversation and to identify the informants' understanding of and experiences with emergency preparedness. The second phase intended to clarify perspectives on OCHA in relation to emergency preparedness. Similarly asking about advantages and challenges of preparedness in general and for OCHA in particular, allowed comparisons and the identifications of inconsistencies to probe further. Especially question six aimed at identifying the coherence of the previous answers. The third phase included a rather open question with the purpose to become informed about unexpected aspects that was not specifically asked for.

Phase 1 – General understanding

1. To begin with, can you tell me something about your work and how it relates to OCHA and emergency preparedness?
2. Based on your experiences, what is emergency preparedness for you?
3. What have you experienced are benefits and challenges of emergency preparedness?

Phase 2 – OCHA & emergency preparedness

4. Considering OCHA’s mandate, commitments and the organisation’s abilities, what do you think are OCHA’s advantages that can positively contribute to emergency preparedness? (How?)
5. What do you perceive as OCHA’s main challenges in engaging in emergency preparedness? (Why?)
6. Considering all this, how would you change OCHA’s present role to a possible future role in emergency preparedness? (Why?)

Phase 3 – Wrap up

7. Finally, is there anything that we have not talked about, but that you would like to add?

Probing questions

Could you please describe this in more detail?	How would you evaluate the success of...?
How did it contribute to your work?	Why did you choose ...?
Can you give me an example?	What do you mean by “...”?
You said earlier that..., why is that?	What is the relationship between the ___ you
Why don’t you think that...?	referred to and ___?

Table 1 – Interview guide

3.2.2 Data analysis

After the data collection, the interviews were transcribed by use of the software “NCH expressscribe”. The interview transcripts were organised and coded by use of an excel spreadsheet. For this process, an inductive open-coding approach was used, meaning that the transcripts were thoroughly read through and each interview answer was interpreted (Flowerdew & Martin, 2005). During this process, overall themes emerged, which are naturally related to the themes in the interview guide, and thus a first layer of categories was created. These main

categories of general preparedness understanding, OCHA's current role, advantages, challenges and a possible future role (see appendix 4) also became the overall structure for the presentation and discussion of results in chapter 4. In a second round of the open coding process, these categories were divided into sub-categories based on their frequency and logical connections. The sub-categories enabled to structure the data in the excel sheet with use of filtering options and formed the sub-headings and topics discussed in chapter 4. An excerpt of the excel sheet is displayed in appendix 4. Following this process, the primary data was compared as well as complemented by the secondary research findings as suggested by Flowerdew and Martin (2005) to put the empirical data into context and to triangulate the research process and results.

3.3 Research quality

3.3.1 Reliability & validity

Data reliability is seeking to identify whether other researchers would reveal comparable results in different settings (Saunders, et al., 2009), which is more challenging in social constructivism studies than in experiments on natural laws, for instance. However, the triangulation of the empirical study data with secondary data enables identifying the degree of consistency in the results (Flowerdew & Martin, 2005). In addition, coding and standardisation of the interview data will partly overcome this challenge. Furthermore, higher reliability will be reached by using two types of triangulation. First, the application of more than one data collection technique (triangulation by method) and by gathering information from several sources (triangulation by data sources) to substantiate the findings (Saunders, et al., 2009).

Research validity refers to the accuracy with which the empirical findings represent the conceptual framework that is meant to be represented (Becker, 2014), relating to the question whether the chosen instruments and procedures can measure what is meant to be measured (Jonker and Pennink, 2010). As the research question was searching for OCHA's challenges regarding its comparative advantages in preparedness with the additional intention to look at qualitative factors, the qualitative instrument of interviews could measure what it was supposed to measure. Moreover, Jonker and Pennink (2010, p.103) explain that with the purpose of enhancing internal assessment validity, the consideration of existing findings is necessary to support the reasoning. Therefore, the data collected in interviews was compared with the

secondary findings. Due to the nature of this study looking at a specific organisation, generalisability, also called external validity (Saunders, et al., 2009), is not necessarily given and it is also not claimed. The research is meant to create a deeper understanding of OCHA's challenges and advantages in emergency preparedness and how a shifting humanitarian landscape is influencing it. Finally, it is highly important to remember that this field including topics like resilience and DRM is highly contextual and any generalisation needs to be carefully considered.

3.3.2 Limitations

Initial research limitations are the boundaries drawn when collecting and analysing secondary data. The field of emergency preparedness is very broad and despite the attempt to identify all relevant information, the possibility of insufficiently covering certain aspects and shifts always remains. In addition, the research is a study of interpretations and uses interviews as a tool. Both pose subjectivity biases on the findings, ultimately also because of the inherent subjectivity of the researcher. The interview set-up could lead to biases, because of the different timing, location and environment of the phone, Skype and face-to-face interviews. Some biases were meant to be reduced by transcribing, coding and categorising the empirical data. Furthermore, the limited number of informants as well as the selection technique reduces the generalisability of the findings. More informants could be interviewed in the future and the country and field level could be added to provide more insights. However, the scope of the thesis required to draw these boundaries. As aforementioned, the snowballing technique entails the risk of receiving similar information from similar people. These limitations were accepted for this thesis, as it is not claiming to be generalisable. It rather intends to create a deeper understanding of OCHA's preparedness role and the problems in a changing humanitarian arena.

4 Results & Discussion

This chapter investigates and discusses how the informants understand emergency preparedness, OCHA's role in preparedness followed by its advantages and challenges as well as future expectations in relation to the shifts in the humanitarian landscape. These topics derived from the open coding process with the interview transcripts, as described in section 3.2.2.

4.1 General understanding of emergency preparedness

When it comes to a general understanding of what emergency preparedness means, all informants referred to it as activities, mechanisms or capacities to respond to an emergency. Half of the informants used the terminology of *“being ready to respond”*. In addition, a third of the informants, mainly external, emphasised that anticipation and early warning is equally part of preparedness as early action is. Seven informants included preparing for recovery in their definition. Further describing their understanding of emergency preparedness, most informants clarified that preparedness and response are not separable, especially when a high quality and effectiveness are intended. A visualising example was given by one internal informant:

“If you are a musician, you need to practice. You need to play your instruments a hundred times, before you can give a concert. That is the same for us. If we are called to respond in an emergency, we need to train a hundred times before so that we are ready to do that properly in an emergency”.

Two-thirds of the informants stressed that emergency preparedness cannot be defined in isolation of its overall position and value in disaster risk management. They recognised that emergency preparedness is the *“middle of a continuum”* or *“the interface”* between disaster risk reduction functions, such as prevention or mitigation and reactive disaster management. Due to this gradual continuum, the informants noted that preparedness can require different activities, which affiliate with the development or humanitarian work field. Although recognising these differences in preparedness, half of the informants emphasised that the activities should not be placed in silos of development and humanitarian action. They should rather be considered in a broader resilience perspective. For instance, one internal informant explained the need for post-disaster development strategies, as these can avoid further losses of development gains caused by unprepared response and recovery. This requires preparedness with a *“resilience vision”*.

Having this vision, the informant hopes that no difference between development and humanitarian strategies exists anymore in twenty years.

Additional characteristics of preparedness were described in relation to costs and relationship building. Five informants explained that investments in preparedness can reduce the costs of response, as *“a dollar invested could save five to ten times more on response”* and *“filling the funding gaps on the pre-emergency side will be less costly than the very expensive response”*. Two-thirds of the informants put attention towards the importance of emergency preparedness for establishing relationships, networks and partnerships in times without imminent emergencies or deteriorating emergency situations. According to the informants, working with governments and other partners on preparedness leads to *“relationships that you cannot expect to have unless you invest in them and you build them ahead of a disaster during the preparedness phase”*. Eighteen informants stressed partnership and trust as relevant prerequisites of effective response, because humanitarian operations are increasingly owned and led by governments whereas the international community solely supports. They emphasised how significant the efforts, also in terms of monetary input, of many governments and regional intergovernmental bodies have been in recent years and how substantial the capacities of governments and local NGOs in some regions are. The increasing government leadership and a reduced role of UN agencies in humanitarian operations were called *“fantastic news”* by the informants. They underlined what this means for UN agencies in today’s humanitarian landscape: governments have the ownership and are only inviting or accepting actors to support their response when the trust was built up in the preparedness phase. Otherwise international organisations such as OCHA cannot expect to be considered in the response, as the informants pointed out.

Taking these findings into account, a strong focus on preparedness for response can be identified. Although being part of the theoretical definitions of emergency preparedness (e.g. UNISDR, 2009), anticipation and recovery gain less attention. Especially the internal informants seem to place more attention on preparedness for response. However, it could be observed that this initial emphasis on *“being ready to respond”* was gradually moving towards a more long-term focus when the informants explained the usefulness of emergency preparedness. By arguing for the resilience paradigm and establishing relationships with governments, the preparedness aspects

to be developed in the long-term were recognised. The changing perception throughout the interviews indicates that establishing a clear, collective understanding of preparedness might be relevant in the future.

Most informants highlighted the bridging position of preparedness on the continuum, referred to as the humanitarian-development nexus in the secondary research findings (Kellett & Peters, 2014). The broad attention of the informants on it confirms the second shift towards renewed focus on bridging the development and humanitarian arenas identified by Roeth (2016) and Nakhooda, et al. (2016). The same applies to the third shift of an advancing resilience paradigm (Kellett & Peters, 2014). The majority of the informants is aware of and stresses the importance of both shifts. It seems that the value of engaging in preparedness has been internalised. Despite the awareness of the individuals, OCHA as an organisation is diverting from such engagement with its intended transformation (Oakford, 2017), moving in reverse direction of the humanitarian landscape shifts. This discrepancy hints to some structural constraints and matters of prioritisation that perhaps challenge the organisation in its preparedness role.

Moreover, the empirical findings also confirm the first and fourth shifts in the humanitarian landscape, the increasing local ownership and other power shifts as discussed by Harvey (2009) and Roeth (2016). This intensifies the doubt whether reducing OCHA's preparedness functions in terms of partnership building (OCHA, 2016a) is a sustainable transformation, especially seeing the emphasis that the informants placed on developing relationship with governments, regional actors and the private sector. Partnerships with regional bodies and private actors can reduce the financial burden for international humanitarian organisations (HPG, 2016) and governments invest substantial amounts of resources in preparedness actions, as the informants explained. Thus, strengthening such shifts has a strong potential to reduce OCHA's costs, when the preparedness capacities of Member States and regional actors are growing. Therefore, it seems contradicting the purpose of cutting costs in the long-term, when building partnerships and developing preparedness capacities of countries are removed from OCHA's functions. In this way, the first and fourth shift also seem to provide possibilities to improve the financial burden of the humanitarian system and are thus essential to be considered in the fifth shift, the changing financial architecture.

Inquiring the informant's general understanding of preparedness, all humanitarian landscape shifts identified in the secondary research were mentioned and confirmed by the empirical data. This hints at two implications. First, the humanitarian landscape is indeed transforming in the way that the secondary data suggested. This means in turn that OCHA and other organisations cannot disregard these trends when transforming, if the organisational changes are meant to be sustainable. Second, the fact that these shifts were recognised when answering questions regarding a general preparedness understanding, underlines that preparedness is an essential element in these trends. Preparedness can form a bridge between different fields as well as between governments and the international system, leading to the question how OCHA is currently approaching it.

4.2 OCHA's role in emergency preparedness

4.2.1 OCHA's current approach

When talking about OCHA's current role in emergency preparedness, most informants focussed on discussing whose preparedness capacities are within which actor's areas of responsibility. OCHA's current guidance on its emergency preparedness role is a policy instruction with an approach of three interlinked tiers (OCHA, 2015). One-third of the internal informants specifically named the three-tier approach as the underlying concept to OCHA's preparedness activities. In total, two-thirds of the informants discussed the three levels, but not all specifically referred to the policy instructions.

According to the informants, the first tier - OCHA's internal preparedness - is concerned with the organisation's own business continuity and internal preparedness for response. Such internal preparedness was stated to be a necessity for every agency. Two informants specified that joint trainings with internal mechanism, such as UNDAC, INSARAG and CMCoord are activities in this tier. No disagreement with this need for internal readiness was expressed, but one person highlighted that the first tier is not clearly addressed in the form of strong internal guidance on preparedness like other agencies do.

Concerning the second tier – the multilateral humanitarian system preparedness – nearly all informants explained that OCHA has a responsibility in preparing “*the international system to be*

in a position to more effectively respond to immediate needs” or “having the interagency system better prepared to work in a coordinated manner”. The informants explained that the IASC Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) approach, rolled out by OCHA, is a significant contribution to this. Besides the criticism of three people that it is too normative and theoretical until now, most informants think the ERP is positive for the progress in preparing the international system. Other current activities that informants identified in the second tier are the endorsement of dialogues in the IASC to improve coordination and ensuring that the international system *“follows some mechanisms and principles”*. However, while half of the informants think that building preparedness capacities in the second tier is OCHA’s key role, the other half considers OCHA’s role more in supporting country preparedness capacities. One informant explained:

“I would have thought that the interest of the UN system to become more effective in response, would lead to an agreement that OCHA should put greater emphasis on preparedness. This is because response to an acute event and trying to build capacity in protracted crisis depends nowadays on the capacities within the countries and not only on the capacities between the agencies themselves.”

This leads to OCHA’s preparedness role in the third tier - the Member State’s and regional organisation’s preparedness. More than half of the informants agree that preparedness is the primary role of countries and the international system’s attention should be on how to support their efforts. The informants from OCHA Regional Offices agree that the organisation has a role in developing preparedness capacities of Member States. One informant summarises: *“Our job as OCHA is to make sure that governments and societies are ready to respond”*. The need for putting emphasis on the third tier derives from the trend that governments want to lead the response, because in the past *“some large-scale emergencies have shown, if the international cooperation is not well channelled or not well coordinated, it overtakes and it does not sufficiently respect national coordination”*. Informants from four different regions explained that many governments are capable of responding on their own and are taking preparedness seriously, while they can still use the expertise of the international community to improve these functions. The opinion in headquarters is more divided, with only half of the informants placing the focus on Member States and the rest on the international system’s preparedness. Regarding Member

State's preparedness, the informants broadly acknowledged that making governments ready to request, receive and coordinate international assistance is OCHA's role. However, when it comes to supporting them in lifting the level of capacity to do it themselves, fewer opinions align. One informant explains that *"this is the most crunchy, the most delicate bit for OCHA. OCHA has never managed to make a clear statement on whether this is [OCHA's] role or not"*. Currently, the functions that OCHA is performing in the third tier are, according to the internal informants, training and sharing lessons learnt with National Disaster Management Authorities, supporting the set-up of contingency planning and simulations, facilitating agreements between national and international actors on working together in a country specific approach, and ensuring countries know about possible assistance and how to request it. The majority of external informants acknowledge that OCHA is in some regions future-oriented by closely working with the regional intergovernmental bodies. Nonetheless, two-thirds of all informants eventually stated that the current role of OCHA in this tier is insufficient.

Analysing these findings, it becomes clear that the first tier is a necessity. Any agency in the humanitarian arena needs to prepare for its own business continuity. Thus, it is important for OCHA but it cannot be the tier to use as a showcase when discussing its role in preparedness. Moreover, a strong focus on the second tier can be identified. However, the informants seem divided whether this is or should be OCHA's exclusive key role. Although the third tier is part of the preparedness policy instruction (OCHA, 2015), the broad agreement that OCHA's work in this tier is insufficient hints to structural and prioritisation challenges.

The conceptual and empirical findings on the shifting humanitarian landscape show a clear need for a focus on supporting Member State preparedness capacity development while at the same time tier one and two need to be functional as well. If these power shifts continue, meaning that governments will lead and own humanitarian actions (Harvey, 2009; Nakhooda, et al., 2016), OCHA needs to face its challenges and expand its contribution to developing Member State preparedness capacities. If one considers the need identified by OCHA's regional informants that many governments could use support with expertise in preparedness and response, a clear gap exists. Such gap should be closed when OCHA aims at *"bringing together people, tools and experiences to save lives"* (OCHA, 2016b). For instance, the positive feedback on the ERP shows

that it is a tool with high potential. In light of the power shifts, it could be argued that the ERP should not solely be done for country teams, but especially for governments. Further research including interviews on the country and field level could provide deeper insights to this. The findings suggest that such insights from regional and country level appear to need higher attention and clearer articulation on HQ level. It could lead to an alignment of OCHA's perspectives on whose preparedness and what type of preparedness capacities it should develop. Overall the individuals at OCHA seem to be aware of the shifts and the need to strengthen its work in the third tier, but are not reflected in the organisation as a whole. The activities mentioned by the informants to be undertaken in some regions, such as simulations and exchange of lessons learnt with the governments, indicate to the organisation that it is already engaging in preparedness capacity development to some extent. Expanding these functions and increasing cooperation with other organisations that have high expertise in such activities could be a sustainable path considering the shifting humanitarian landscape. Enhanced engagement in developing preparedness capacities entails the identification of OCHA's advantages, which enable the organisation's contribution to it.

4.2.2 OCHA's advantages

i. Coordination expertise

According to half of the informants, a main advantage of OCHA is its expertise to strengthen *"the government's ability of multi-sector emergency preparedness and coordination"*. This expertise was explained to be a result of the preparedness activities and coordination functions that OCHA is already fulfilling. One internal informant highlighted that *"eighty, ninety per cent of our work is preparedness and the rest is response, because whenever we are not involved in a direct response operation, our work is preparing"*. It was added that the lessons learnt from the response are providing part of the knowledge needed for emergency preparedness. Four informants also mentioned that OCHA is strong in bringing people together. It was stated that OCHA has the *"convening power"* to bring *"eclectic groups of people"* together around a common goal in preparedness. This ability was articulated to be advantageous in bridging the humanitarian-developing divide. From an external perspective, OCHA has performed best in the past when it was *"working in teams to push certain things forward and sort of facilitate rather than lead or co-*

lead". A positive example of OCHA's coordination expertise and connecting abilities was highlighted by three external informants when referring to the recent El Niño events and the related Blueprint for Action. Several informants summarised that one could see coordination as OCHA's sector, just as food and health are the sectors of WFP and WHO.

In relation to OCHA's preparedness tiers, a third of the informants expressed that if the international system needs to be prepared to respond, a coordinator of that system is needed very much. *"If you want to make preparedness effective across the board, you need some entity making sure that no bits of it are lagging behind"*. Three external informants used almost the same wording when stating, *"... if you did not have OCHA, you would need to develop something like OCHA"*. More than a third of the informants explained how OCHA's coordination expertise can add value in developing government capacities. Supporting Member States in the set-up of simulation exercises, the handling of coordination tools and other technical support, in partnering with the private sector as well as the improvement of preparedness and response coordination were specifically named. One informant added that OCHA is also the right entity to assess national emergency response structures and if applicable help the government to reach the conclusion that they are able to prepare and respond themselves.

ii. People are the strength

Another advantage highlighted by a third of the informants, also external, is OCHA's well-trained and committed people. It was explained that joint preparedness activities with other organisations and governments requires partnerships and trust, which builds upon individuals and their abilities. Especially regional informants pointed out that the success of OCHA's activities is highly dependent on staff and individuals' commitment. According to the informants, the necessary expertise and commitment exists in OCHA, but it is currently challenged by staff cuts, reduced job satisfaction, and lacking backup by the leadership.

iii. A bird's eye view

Being a *"neutral body"* that builds networks and resolves tensions between partners was mentioned by a third of the informants as another advantage of OCHA in preparedness. The informants articulated that OCHA is *"quite neutral in many countries, which is good to be the interface between humanitarian and national authorities."* They added that not being

implementing or operational is helpful insofar as OCHA has the potential to neutrally build synergies between parties. This advantage was called the “*bird’s eye view*” of OCHA when it comes to ensuring an inclusive, participatory process for all stakeholders. However, it was also doubted by three informants whether OCHA has been using this advantage to its best potential so far.

Three informants related the overview and coordinative position of OCHA to early warning and information management. While the informants were mainly satisfied with OCHA’s work in information management, they would hope for a stronger contribution of OCHA in early warning processes. It was explained that successful early warning depends on information and contribution from various actors, not only in the international system, but also from national actors. It was pointed out that: “... *one of the issues with the international community is that we just do not know how to act together on early warning.*” OCHA could synergise early warning approaches and be the actor “*who calls the ultimate shots on things as important as early warning, which is the Achilles heel of the system.*”

Examining these findings, it becomes evident that OCHA’s coordination expertise is the prevailing advantage from the informants’ perspectives. They consider a coordination body as OCHA to be highly relevant for preparing efficient response of the international system. This is surprising as it seems paradoxical that OCHA is facing such severe underfunding in recent years, while evidently being so crucially needed in the overall system. One explanation could be that donors are not satisfied with the way in which OCHA puts its advantages to use or that the budget cuts are indeed more about internal conflicts than about finances, as Oakford (2017) described. Considering that the informants identified OCHA’s preparedness in the third tier as insufficient, which contradicts the direction in which the humanitarian environment is shifting, donors may expect increased contribution of OCHA’s coordination expertise to developing government preparedness and response capacities. But can the blame only be laid on the donors or is monetary mismanagement also an issue to consider? And if it is a lack of funding, why does it exist? Taking into account that all informants are aware of the need for developing capacities for governments to prepare and respond, it is likely that also the donors know it and want to see government ownership. In the

future, it seems relevant to systematically investigate the donor perspective on OCHA's work in its third preparedness tier.

A lack of clarity in OCHA about its own preparedness engagement might play a role in this as well. It was mentioned though that eighty to ninety per cent of its activities are preparedness, which is likely to be in the second tier if the third-tier preparedness work is still insufficient. However, such existing preparedness activities could facilitate enhancing the development of government preparedness capacities, because the knowledge and expertise is available. The informants' opinion that the coordination expertise allows OCHA to bridge the humanitarian-development nexus appears logical, but it does seem to require a clear understanding from OCHA's side about development actors and their work. Is the organisation as a whole understanding this, so that it can make use of its comparative advantage?

Reflecting on the advantage of OCHA's qualified staff, it might be reasonable to say that many organisations are likely to claim that their people are their comparative advantage. Nonetheless, it seems to have particularly high relevance in an organisation responsible for functions such as coordination and advocacy, because the quality of performance in these functions does not depend on a product or technology but on people's abilities. It seems essential to keep people with expertise, contacts and trust relationships in the organisation, especially considering a humanitarian landscape shifting towards government-owned operation that require trust relationships (Harvey, 2009; Roeth, 2016). Thus, the undertaken staff cuts, especially on national and field levels (Oakford, 2017) are even more alarming.

The informants' use of the word "*neutrality*" in describing OCHA's advantages hinting towards OCHA implementing fewer projects than other agencies. In terms of preparedness engagement, it seems questionable if such "*neutrality*" is truly an advantage. If a future role of OCHA entails enhanced emergency preparedness capacity development to enable government-led response, OCHA will focus more on implementation. This confirms the possible conflict of interests pointed out by Nakhoda, et al. (2016), when an organisation as OCHA is engaging in development and humanitarian work. To solve this, it may be necessary to review OCHA's mandate that was established more than two decades ago (OCHA, 2012) as well as to reconsider whether OCHA should be purely humanitarian.

Comparing the advantages of OCHA with Twigg's nine elements of preparedness (2015), OCHA could contribute with its coordination expertise to the aspects response mechanisms, education and training, and rehearsals or simulation exercises. Although other agencies might have more expertise in setting-up simulations, the coordination aspects inherent to such exercises could benefit from OCHA's input. The same applies to the elements of planning, information management, and early warning in the way the informants explained. The other elements of vulnerability-risk assessment and institutional frameworks fall rather in the field of development actors (Kellett & Peters, 2014), but it seems essential that these activities are informed by and aligned with the needs of the humanitarian field.

4.2.3 OCHA's challenges

i. Missing organisational identity & unclear structure

More than half of the informants related OCHA's challenges in making use of its comparative advantages to a "lost identity" and "internal politics" being divisive. Internal informants explained that definitional understanding of preparedness varies among colleagues resulting in internal conflicts. One informant stated that "OCHA has become so schizophrenic" because of it. Especially the external informants advised OCHA to redefine its vision, as clarity on its role and involvement in preparedness will be key, and to close the gaps in commitment and understanding that they perceive between OCHA's workforce and leadership. Significant inconsistency in OCHA's preparedness efforts was related by ten informants to this internal lack of understanding of the relationship between preparedness and response. Internal informants explained that these aspects are often put in silos and communication of the connection between preparedness and response lacks. Several informants doubted the functional review, which questions the added value of emergency preparedness. The review claims that OCHA would spend too much on preparedness, which puts the response quality at risk. According to one informant, such explanation is "a total contradiction in itself". The lack of a clear understanding in this regard was also mentioned to negatively affect the coherence of communicating the value of preparedness to governments and the international community. Three external perspectives revealed that OCHA is perceived as frequently changing its position towards preparedness, which was described as "the accordion effect". The informants strengthened that this position should not be

alternating. This lack of understanding around response and preparedness is according to five informants one reason for an unclear internal structure. They add that *“inside OCHA, those responsible for preparedness should be linked structurally to those that are managing the overall response”*, but the opposite is the case. It is not clear who is responsible between New York and Geneva as well as inside both headquarters, according to the informants. One external informant explained that it is unclear whom to contact within OCHA about emergency preparedness. Due to this, the informant is concerned that opportunities to improve collaboration on preparedness are regularly missed.

Nine informants related these structural issues and missing identity to the leadership. According to the informants, OCHA’s role in preparedness should be much stronger than currently supported by the management. Four internal informants stressed the importance that OCHA’s leadership understands how the three tiers of preparedness fit together. When it comes to the capacity development of countries, it was explained that it is done in many occasions, but that it is not necessarily backed up by management. External informants also observed that: *“... somehow the leadership of OCHA does not reinforce the key message about preparedness”*. The current management guidelines on *“doing more with less people”* show to the informants that the leadership does not fully understand how important preparedness is for response. According to two informants, the cuts in the workforce further divided OCHA and aggravated the identity loss. Job satisfaction was described by the informants to be very low due to internal management issues and job insecurity.

ii. Visibility causing a lack of resources

More than half of the informants identified the visibility and measurability of preparedness efforts as a challenge for OCHA. They explained that it is difficult to show the benefits of preparedness in terms of costs and return on investment because linking preparedness actions to measurable outcomes is problematic. The informants elaborated *“you do not know how badly it would have gone if you had not prepared in advance”* or *“you are often caught in the situation where you think ‘well, if we had not done any of this, maybe we could have managed anyway’.”* According to the informants, this is one of the main reasons why it is hard to “politically sell” preparedness activities to decision makers on national and international level as well as to donors.

Although emergency preparedness was claimed by several informants to be less costly than response, they explain that more funding is provided for response, often because of politics and media attention. Compared to long-term programmes, *“having first responders coming in[to an emergency] looks sexy”* in the media. Based on the informants’ perspectives, the attention of donors is often set on large, complex, political crises leading to OCHA’s focus being set on these emergencies instead of on preparedness in other countries. They mentioned that financing of preparedness has generally been a big issue for several years. Nearly all informants mentioned that financial resources are a significant challenge for OCHA’s preparedness work and half of the informants related the lack of funding to these visibility issues. Six informants contrasted that it is not only about a lack of money, but it is also a question of leadership how much money, staff and time is allocated to preparedness. One informant pointed out that: *“... the current capacity devoted to preparedness is minimal compared to the need for a stronger role of OCHA in preparedness.”*

iii. Diverse contexts & collaboration challenges

When supporting governments in their emergency preparedness efforts, one challenge is that OCHA is not present in every country, as one-third of the informants explained. The organisation is often working on preparedness in countries with high emergency risks, but next to the annual emergencies often no additional major disaster happens. One informant explained that it is difficult to identify if the preparedness work with the government has led to less hazards turning into disasters or if the absence of disasters means OCHA has no justification of remaining in the country. The informants articulated that this is a result of OCHA not having a *“dual mandate”* in humanitarian and development work like WFP and UNICEF. It means, once an emergency is over or is not materialising, it becomes unclear whether OCHA should remain in the country. In the past, this created inconsistencies in opening, closing, and reopening OCHA offices. It was added that having an element of a dual mandate would allow OCHA to strengthen a government’s capacity after an emergency. Seven informants also emphasised the diverse contexts of the emergencies in which OCHA is present. According to the informants, it is challenging for OCHA to define its role in preparedness, because preparedness activities are highly context specific. The informants added that collaboration and unclear roles between different organisations in the international support system make the diverse emergency contexts and varying country presence

of OCHA even more problematic. Half of the informants named lack of collaboration between agencies as a challenge for OCHA's preparedness efforts. Especially the collaboration and clarity of roles in preparedness between OCHA and UNDP was highlighted. An internal informant described:

"We do not do our preparedness planning jointly nor, I have to say, are we particularly effective in sitting down with the UN Development Programme concerning the development part and ask: if there is a large-scale disaster in this country, what roles are we both going to play immediately post disaster and later on."

However, three informants pointed out that this is not only about the humanitarian-development divide, but also about the competitive structure of the UN system. The latter was described to be *"diluted by the self-interest of agencies"* competing for resources, which results in insufficient collaboration and *"difficulties in putting ourselves in the shoes of member states or communities."* The collaboration challenge was explained to require a solution because many humanitarian aspects have roots in unresolved development issues and need to be informed by DRR and climate change topics. The informants strengthened the importance of humanitarian, development and climate change actors joining hands, also concerning finances.

Analysing these challenges, it seems that OCHA is divided by personalities, especially in *"the most delicate bit"* of helping countries lift their own capacities. The findings on OCHA's current approach have already indicated that a core issue for OCHA is whom it should be doing preparedness for. This is strongly connected to the lost identity and a lacking understanding about preparedness-response dependencies, as Kellett & Peters (2014) described them. If such understanding is insufficient and is reflected in an unclear organisational structure, as the informants explained, it seems to fall within the responsibility of the leadership to improve this situation. However, as the informants mentioned, the lacking leadership back up for engaging in preparedness seems to be part of the problem. Although the three-tier approach (OCHA, 2015) exists and the people at OCHA are aware of the need for enhanced preparedness efforts, decisions are continuously made against it. This is surprising because if the internal politics related to the preparedness discussion are dividing the organisation, there should be an interest of the leadership to create a common commitment to preparedness, which could have a unifying effect.

This applies especially to the cases in which OCHA is already doing preparedness work of the third tier. OCHA's leadership may need to catch up in this regard.

As the informants explained, the recent functional review claimed spending more money on preparedness would put response quality at risk. Agreeing with the informant who called this a "*contradiction in itself*", the conceptual background findings are consulted, in which it was established that emergency preparedness "ensures adequate response" (Coppola, 2011, p.251) and increases effectiveness (UNISDR, 2009). Preparedness is rather improving response quality than putting it at risk. Such contradiction raises the question if OCHA's choice of having a management consultancy company analysing functions and structures of a humanitarian sector entity was beneficial. These doubts are underlined by the use of a cost-benefit analysis to establish the value of preparedness activities. It seems to be a very reductionist approach to grasp the added value of preparedness for saving lives and livelihoods. Before restructuring the organisation in the future based on this paradoxical explanation, it might be advisable that OCHA carefully considers the actual benefits resulting from preparedness and goes beyond return on investment and cost aspects.

Furthermore, the overall argumentation that OCHA is challenged by an unclear "*return on investment*" is questionable. Visibility and measurability of preparedness are indeed more difficult than measuring response results, but preparedness is still more visible than prevention or mitigation efforts. Also, is it hard to measure preparedness outcomes? Preparedness activities can be defined quite clearly (e.g. Twigg, 2015), so that their performance can be measured. For instance, performance of activities that were trained prior to a dangerous situation can be measured and evaluated during and after the emergency. Thus, the visibility and measurability aspects seem to be solvable. In the end, even if preparedness visibility is a problem, would it not be OCHA who should advocate for it and could then support governments in politically selling it? However, for this OCHA needs to move beyond its own return on investment thinking first. It seems questionable if difficulties in measuring financial return of preparedness justify not attempting to save lives and livelihoods by preparing for it. It is paradoxical that the return on investment thinking is still used as an argument while the empirical findings have shown that nearly all informants highlight the importance of preparedness. It makes the return on investment

argument look like an excuse while it actually seems to be about OCHA's prioritisation and commitment. If nothing else, reducing its preparedness role is not only contradicting the humanitarian landscape shifts, but it also seems to send a false message about the value of preparedness to governments and other actors. Considering OCHA's advocacy responsibilities, this might be criticised in the future.

Concerning the contextual differences and country presence challenging OCHA's preparedness efforts, it might be difficult to overcome but it is also a matter of prioritisation and finding sustainable, collaborative solutions. The diverse types of emergencies will continue to be challenging for the agencies. However, part of a solution might be found in the development of national preparedness capacities with the aim of having governments respond effectively on their own. There is benefit in having government-owned response and thus less countries request international emergency support because more attention can be diverted to complex emergencies. Yet, as long as this is not the case, countries with less complex and less media intensive crises or risks cannot be left behind.

OCHA's challenge of having to justify staying in a country when there is no imminent emergency shows the need for reconsidering the organisation's mandate. It was clearly established that high-quality response requires preparedness on the whole continuum, which means that there is a need for developing preparedness capacities in countries with disaster risks. As Kellett and Peters (2014) explain, preparedness is a joint matter of humanitarian and development work, because their functions and inputs are complementary. Even if OCHA sees itself as a humanitarian organisation responsible for response, the collected evidence shows that it also requires engagement in emergency preparedness capacity development in today's humanitarian landscape. The discussion if OCHA's non-operational neutrality is really an advantage for preparedness has already insinuated that OCHA's mandate might not be sufficient for today's work anymore. Thus, it seems worth to consider the informants' suggestions that an element of a dual mandate would enable OCHA's holistic approach to emergency preparedness.

4.3 Expectations of OCHA's future role

Resulting from the discussion of OCHA's advantages and challenges, the informants expressed their expectations concerning opportunities and responsibilities for OCHA's preparedness role in the future.

Although generally agreeing with OCHA's work in preparing the international system, almost half of the informants think that OCHA could improve. It was expressed that OCHA should be more selfless in the future and increase its focus on synergising and enabling the system. Three external informants would especially like to see OCHA galvanising collective action in early warning. Moreover, nine informants expect improved collaboration and communication of responsibilities between OCHA and UNDP. Their joint efforts could be essential for the humanitarian-development nexus. The organisation could also push the resilience vision forward, according to the informants. Particularly internal informants would like to see that the silos are broken down in the future to improve the quality and efficiency of work.

More than half of the informants see part of OCHA's future role in *"connecting with new, non-traditional partners."* The informants explained that improved preparedness could be reached by being visionary in partnering with academia, regional and national NGOs, communities and the private sectors. According to three informants, OCHA could mobilise resources for preparedness by engaging the private sector in preparedness partnerships such as the GPP. One internal informant stated:

"The corporate world is out there waiting for the UN to provide them the interface, and the plug. So, we really need to sort of open up, knock on the doors of non-traditional partners and make alliances."

Concerning the third tier, ten informants emphasised that OCHA should play a stronger role in preparedness capacity development for governments. Four informants advised that OCHA should bring governments together in intergovernmental bodies to lift capacity levels. They added that OCHA should approach its preparedness activities in a bottom-up way in the future, *"by listening to countries, overall response could be improved."* In

addition, one third of the informants also want OCHA to advocate more on behalf of governments to international agencies and donors.

Analysing these findings, it becomes evident that OCHA is expected to change its role in preparedness. In general, internal and external views on OCHA's future role in preparedness align, especially when it comes to developing preparedness capacities of government to allow independent response. Strong agreement between both informant groups also exists concerning the need for clarifying the roles and collaboration between OCHA and UNDP. Additionally, internal informants feel the need to break down organisational silos, which emphasises the importance for OCHA to create a holistic approach to emergency preparedness with its connections to other DRM functions, as Kellett and Peters (2014) explain. Finally, governments need to be enabled by developing their emergency preparedness capacities. In this way, lives and livelihoods can be saved in a sustainable, local approach. Advocating, supporting and implementing such an approach is a clear role for OCHA to play in the future.

5 Conclusions

Summing up, what are the challenges OCHA faces regarding its comparative advantages in emergency preparedness in the light of a shifting humanitarian landscape? Interviewing twenty-two informants is a small scope for understanding the complete situational picture of OCHA. However, the study brings out factors to be considered by OCHA in its organisational transformation to take a sustainable, future-oriented path. Five shifts could be identified in the literature and were confirmed by the empirical data. They include the shifting powers towards government ownership of preparedness and response operations, the increased focus on the humanitarian-development nexus, and a push for considering holistic approaches of humanitarian action under the resilience paradigm. In addition, regional and private actors are gaining importance in the humanitarian landscape, because of their high capacities and thus, the possibility to contribute to the final shift of a changing financial architecture.

OCHA's people and the organisation's partners are aware of these shifts as well as of the relevance for engaging in emergency preparedness to sustain in this landscape. Despite such individual awareness, OCHA as an organisation is not using its potential and advantages in emergency preparedness. OCHA's prevailing comparative advantage is its coordination expertise and ability to synergise eclectic groups. Additionally, OCHA's people and its bird's eye view are advantageous; leading to the conclusion that OCHA could positively contribute to a shifting humanitarian landscape if committing to enhanced emergency preparedness materialises.

The current emergency preparedness approach at OCHA is based on three interlinked tiers: internal preparedness, preparedness of the multilateral humanitarian system, and support of Member States' and regional organisations' preparedness. While OCHA is engaging in preparedness on the first and second tier, the study reveals evidence that the organisation should expand its contribution to developing government capacities to prepare for response, i.e. the third tier. The existing support of OCHA's people for improved emergency preparedness as well as available capacities and tools, like the Emergency Response Preparedness approach, could contribute to the third tier. Future research including national and field perspectives can deepen this understanding and lead to a consistent path in emergency preparedness.

Consistency was criticised as OCHA has been frequently changing its position to preparedness, which was described as the accordion effect. The causes for this effect are OCHA'S challenges. OCHA is missing a clear organisational identity and vision, which results from internal conflicts, a lack of holistically understanding preparedness and response, and insufficient leadership commitment. Personalities are dividing OCHA in deciding on emergency preparedness engagement in general as to which preparedness tiers to focus on. Supporting countries in lifting their own capacities is the most delicate part for OCHA in this regard. In the end, commitment to and prioritisation of emergency preparedness are at the core of OCHA's accordion effect. Other challenges such as difficulties in measuring preparedness outcomes or resource constraints seem to be excuses for not fully committing.

The conclusion can be drawn that OCHA has the potential to overcome its challenges and make use of its advantages in emergency preparedness to become a driver of change and a positive example of an organisation adapting to a shifting humanitarian landscape. The following recommendation should be considered to reach this aim.

6 Recommendations

The following recommendations to handle the transition facing current shifts and challenges in the humanitarian landscape are mainly targeted at OCHA's decision makers but also the staff is advised to consider the recommendations and potentially urge decision makers to follow them.

6.1 Understanding and prioritising emergency preparedness

The first recommendation to OCHA is to initiate a process to clarify the internal understanding of preparedness. This means that the whole organisations should learn how emergency preparedness improves response and recovery as well as how preparedness can bridge different fields and actors.

If such a collective understanding of preparedness is reached in OCHA, preparedness should become a priority for OCHA, which applies especially to the leadership's full commitment to reinforce the key message about preparedness. OCHA's leadership is not only advised to enhance the organisation's preparedness role because it leads to higher efficiency in saving lives and livelihoods, but also because it can have a unifying effect inside OCHA. A harmonised approach to preparedness within OCHA will avoid confusion, internal conflict and resource competition. In line with such prioritisation of emergency preparedness, OCHA's advantage of its experienced staff should be used and sufficient workforce be allocated to preparedness activities. This also means the inclusion of preparedness in the staff's terms of reference.

6.2 Lifting emergency capacities of governments

Secondly, OCHA is advised to clearly define and communicate whose emergency preparedness capacities and what type of capacities it wants to develop. To do so, it is recommended to re-examine the evaluation of OCHA's preparedness activities initiated in 2012. The extensive study included 179 interviews and various field visits, which means that a solid rationale for the recommendations existed and thus also the following policy instruction with the three-tier approach was based on compelling evidence. Such evidence does not change with the availability of funding. So, also in years with less financial resources such as 2016 and 2017, OCHA should not reject this previous evidence for why to engage in preparedness in the third tier. It is key to support governments in developing their own capacities as intended by the Sendai Framework and the WHS.

When deciding on the future in 2017, OCHA is recommended to consider the above and combine it with the knowledge gained in this study. A reduction of OCHA's preparedness and partnership engagement contradicts trends in the humanitarian landscape, commitments made by OCHA in the past, expectations of its IASC partners, and the internal awareness of needing enhanced emergency preparedness in OCHA to fulfil its role. Due to this evidence, it can only be advised that OCHA takes a role in lifting emergency preparedness capacities of governments in the future. Instead of hesitantly adjusting bits and pieces of its work in its transformation year, OCHA could use this chance to become a driver of local ownership in humanitarian action and enforce the shifts. Particularly approaches to bring governments together in intergovernmental bodies and advocating more on behalf of governments to international agencies and donors should be found. Developing and implementing such approaches as part of OCHA's preparedness activities should be done in a bottom-up way. For instance, it is recommended to engage in dialogue with governments on what and how they can learn from OCHA's coordination expertise instead of OCHA deciding how to transfer such knowledge.

6.3 Synergising actors in a shifting humanitarian landscape

On account of being the coordinator for humanitarian affairs, it is advised that OCHA takes a selfless role of synergising and enabling the international system in itself as well as with other actors.

OCHA is recommended to bring its advantage of being an entity with a bird's eye view that can ensure inclusive, participatory processes to its best potential. For instance, increased efforts in galvanising collective action in early warning are advisable. As OCHA's synergising work on the El Niño Blueprint for Action was highlighted positive, it recommended to evaluate together with the external partners on this process and establish what made OCHA's work successful. This will further clarify OCHA's own understanding of its role and contributions in such preparedness processes. Moreover, OCHA should ensure that preparedness such as early warning becomes a joint effort between humanitarians, development actors, climate change entities, regional organisations and governments to improve joint action. Improved collaboration and communication with the development field, in particular with UNDP, is generally recommended

because it forms part of the humanitarian-development nexus, as promoted in the WHS Agenda for Humanity and aligns with the New Way of Working.

The same enhanced collaboration is also recommended with the private sector and other non-traditional partners such as academia, regional and national NGOs, and civil society organisations. OCHA is advised to engage private actors in preparedness partnerships such as the Global Preparedness Partnership to mobilise resources. Increased efforts in the GPP are recommended, as it provides a new funding scheme for collaborating between humanitarian, development and possibly private partners to support preparedness for response and recovery.

6.4 Future research on donor perspectives

It is recommended to systematically and transparently undertake research on the donors' views if OCHA should engage in long-term emergency preparedness activities with governments. It is essential to establish whether donors are willing to fund OCHA's engagement in preparedness as well as whose preparedness capacities they consider to be the main future focus of OCHA. New initiatives such as the recent innovative approach of the World Bank funding preparedness for response projects for the first time are advised to be followed.

In this way, OCHA could take first steps and use its 2017 transition year as an opportunity to overcome its reoccurring challenges, modernise its approach to a more than twenty-five-year-old mandate, and become a future-oriented driver in a shifting humanitarian landscape.

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8 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Nine elements of disaster preparedness description

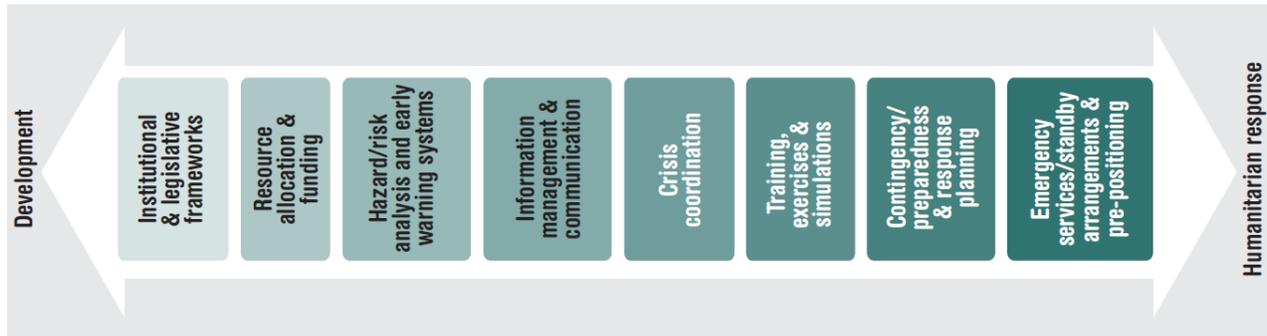
In the figure below, the Nine Elements of Disaster Preparedness by Twigg (2015) are described in their relation to preparedness. These are the essential components when preparing for emergency, which aims at helping “people avoid impending disaster threats, and to put plans, resources and mechanisms in place to provide adequate assistance.” (Twigg, 2015, p.301).

<p>1. Vulnerability, hazard and risk assessment Starting point for planning and preparation, linked to longer-term mitigation and development interventions as well as disaster preparedness</p>	<p>2. Planning Disaster preparedness plans agreed and in place, which are achievable and for which commitment and resources are assured</p>	<p>3. Institutional framework Well-coordinated disaster preparedness and response system at all levels, with commitment from relevant stakeholders. Roles and responsibilities clearly defined</p>
<p>4. Information systems Efficient and reliable systems for gathering and sharing information between stakeholders (e.g. forecasts and warnings, information on relevant capacities, role allocation and resources)</p>	<p>5. Resource base Goods (e.g. stockpiles of food, emergency shelter and other materials), services (e.g. search and rescue, medical, engineering, nutrition specialists) and disaster relief funding (e.g. for items not easily stockpiled or not anticipated) available and accessible</p>	<p>6. Warning systems Robust communications systems (technologies, infrastructure, people) capable of transmitting warnings effectively to people at risk</p>
<p>7. Response mechanisms Established and familiar to disaster response agencies and disaster victims (may include evacuation procedures and shelters, search and rescue teams, needs assessment teams, activation of emergency lifeline facilities, reception centres and shelters)</p>	<p>8. Education and training Training courses, workshops and extension programmes for at-risk groups and disaster responders. Knowledge of risk and appropriate response shared through public information and education systems</p>	<p>9. Rehearsals Evacuation and response procedures practised, evaluated and improved</p>

Appendix figure 1 – More detailed description of Twigg’s Nine Elements of Disaster Preparedness

Appendix 2 – Emergency preparedness continuum

As an additional illustration on how preparedness activities fall in the responsibility areas of development and humanitarian work, the figure below show the Emergency Preparedness Continuum of Kellett and Peters (2014). The activities were identified by donors, practitioners and decision-makers in five country case studies.

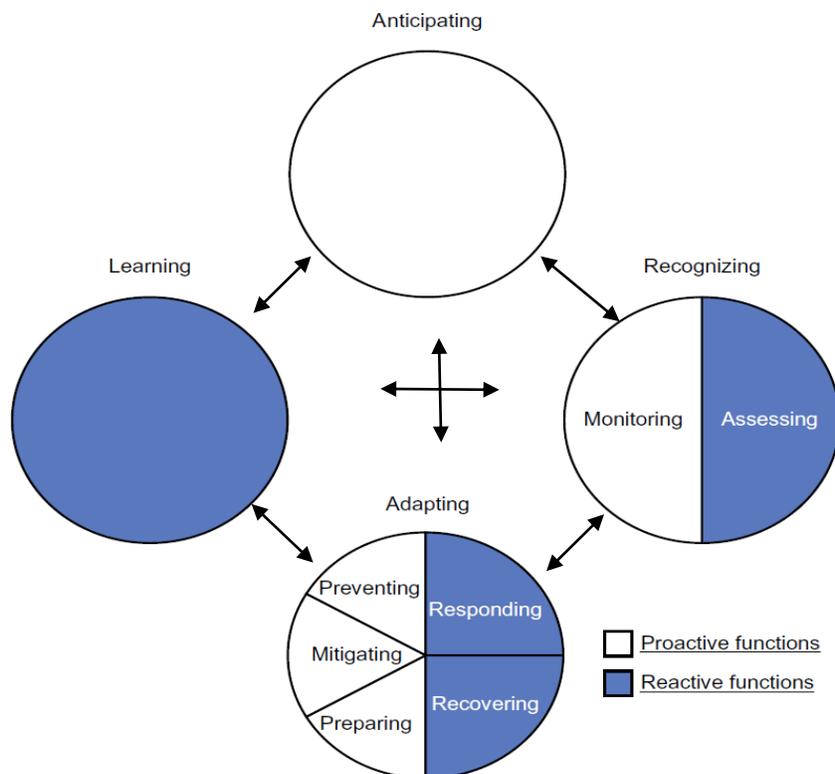


Appendix figure 2 – Emergency preparedness continuum illustration

According to the authors, these preparedness activities require creating “a strong preparedness system (Kellett& Peters; 2014; p.30). When the activities of the continuum are attempted to be allocated in the “bifurcated humanitarian/development institutional and financing architecture”, it becomes incoherent.

Appendix 3 – Resilience conceptualisation example

Various definitions and conceptualisations of resilience exist (Alexander, 2013) and one that exemplifies the bridging nature and value of emergency preparedness is from Becker (2014). Becker’s notion of resilience states that “resilience is the capacity of a human-environment system to continuously develop along a preferred expected trajectory, while remaining within human and environmental boundaries” and he specifies that “such resilience is an emergent property determined by the ability of the human-environment system to anticipate, recognise, adapt to and learn from variations, changes, disturbances, disruptions and disasters that may cause harm to what human beings value” (Becker, 2014, p.150). The four resilience functions, as displayed above, are interdependent to each other and continuously as well as simultaneously operating (Becker, 2014). The resilience notion also puts human agency at its core, again underlining our ability to avoid that hazards turn into disasters through purposeful proactive and reactive activities. While all four functions and their sub-functions are equally important to reach a resilient system, researching emergency preparedness requires special attention to the adaptation function.



Appendix figure 3 - Resilience emerging functions & their correlations (Becker, 2014, p.147 & 154 combined)

Appendix 4 - Data analysis excel workbook excerpt

The following figure is an excerpt of the excel workbook created to code and categorise the data. After using open-coding on the interview transcripts, categories were developed and the quotes were connected to the categories. The categories can be seen at the bottom of the Excel sheet, as they form the different worksheets. Currently, the category OCHA's challenges is selected. To facilitate the work with the data, the key messages of the quotes identified to be relevant were noted and sub-categories were allocated. This enabled the use of a filter function, when analysing the findings in a category. Information on informants was erased in the figure below, but were included in the worksheets to be able to refer to the transcripts.

Category: OCHA's challenges					
No.	Quote	Source	Name	Message, quote summary	Sub-category
1	Now in terms of emergency preparedness in particular, again I would see this ideal cycle, not seeing emergency preparedness in isolation but really as part of the overall work that we do and no necessarily placing things in silos	Internal HQ		not place things in silos	Lack of understanding response & preparedness
2	I think, one of the challenges, and again here we are at a change time in the organisation with the change management process where we would like to refine our role and look at our vision, especially these days, so here it is about reaffirming our contribution as the UN secretariat when it comes to emergency response and preparedness.	Internal HQ		need to refine our visions and reaffirm our contribution as the UN secretariat in emergency response and preparedness	Identity, Vision & Agreement
3	Maybe it is about presenting them or the whole advertisement around these preparedness activities, which is maybe less visible than the response dimension. And again, I think, from the member states' perspective or if you look at the regional office, which I think are playing maybe a greater role working together with the member states on preparedness, I think their work is badly visible within OCHA.	Internal HQ		presentation and advertisement of preparedness needed, its less visible than response. Especially regional office work on preparedness badly visible in OCHA	Visibility, awareness, communication
5	I think the lack of the workforce. It needs to be everyone's business but at the same time we do not have enough investment in the workforce to be able to do emergency preparedness.	External HQ		lack of workforce	Resources
6	One of the disadvantages of OCHA is that it is not in all countries.	External HQ		disadvantage OCHA not in every country	Presence & coverage
7	That in itself becomes a deficit, because they are not base there where the other agencies are. And then that makes it a little bit unclear as to who has what role in respect to UNDP.	External HQ		UNDP and OCHA roles unclear, especially with different country presence	Collaboration
9	... another problem is that somehow the leadership of OCHA does not reinforce the key message about preparedness . It just does not seem to have the same relevance in OCHA as response and therefore it does not have that profile. Therefore I do not think the balance is there, which makes it harder to do preparedness when do not have this high profile attached to the area of work.	External HQ		"somehow the leadership of OCHA does not reinforce the key message about preparedness" , not same relevance as response and hard to do preparedness if no high level backup	Leadership
10	I can also say it is a big, touch job and it needs a lot of people and so forth, so there will also be an issue with respect to capacity.	External RO		preparedness is a extensive, tough job requiring people	Resources
11	I mean some of them are systemic challenges within the UN system. [...] I think sometimes the UN system's actions are diluted by the self-interest of agencies .	External RO		" UN system's actions are diluted by the self-interest of agencies."	UN system
12	...I mean apart from the emergency response preparedness and how that has been rolled out, it is not clear that OCHA is taking a leading role in how that common framework of preparedness is to	External RO		not clear that OCHA is taking lead role in common framework of	Collaboration

Appendix figure 4 - Excerpt of data analysis Excel workbook