

The background of the entire page is a close-up, slightly blurred image of the Ukrainian national flag, showing the blue and yellow horizontal stripes. The flag is draped and folds, creating a sense of movement and texture. The colors are vibrant, with the blue being a deep cerulean and the yellow being a bright, sunny yellow.

Halpin



Universities UK
International

Responding to International Humanitarian Crises

**Lessons From the UK Higher Education Sector
Response to the Invasion of Ukraine**

August 2023

Summary Report

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Published: August 2023

Contents

Foreword	4
Introduction	6
Key lessons learnt	7
Lessons learnt	8
A Step Change in the Sector’s Response to Humanitarian Situations	10
Twinning	10
Researchers at Risk Fellowship Programme	10
Scholarships and student support.....	11
Factors Supporting, Enabling or Inhibiting Responses	13
People	13
Government and policy	14
Funding and financial support.....	14
Digital capabilities.....	15
Local context	16
Conclusion	17
Higher Education Humanitarian Framework	19
Humanitarian frameworks	19
Higher education humanitarian framework.....	19

Foreword



This research has been both humbling and uplifting. The findings showcase both the remarkable and inspiring resilience of our Ukrainian colleagues and the incredible efforts of UK higher education colleagues and partners.

Of course, this has not always been easy – the sector has had to navigate a changing policy landscape and consider its own financial constraints. However, one element is consistent: that the UK sector is at its best when it is collaborative.

We are incredibly grateful for the contributions of all colleagues to this report, via interviews, case studies, and focus groups. The voices of those at the forefront of the response have driven our analysis. The inclusion of voices from the Ukrainian sector has been our priority and we thank our Ukrainian colleagues who have volunteered their insights so humbly and generously during what is an unimaginable time for many.

As we look to the future, we hope that the lessons learned from the sector's response to the war in Ukraine will ensure that the UK's higher education sector is best placed to respond to other crises in other contexts.

The research demonstrates that the sector's responses are most fruitful when they are coordinated, sustainable, and locally situated. We hope that this report stimulates a new conversation on how we build such factors into our future responses across the UK.

Susie Hills

Joint CEO and Co-Founder

Halpin Partnership



Universities can play an important role in responding to humanitarian crises, and response to the invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated what is possible when policy, funding and political interests align with the goodwill, creativity, and commitment of colleagues in the UK's higher education community. The broad spectrum of responses – which has drawn together funders, regulators, government agencies, universities, and both private sector and charitable organisations – has meant the UK's response to supporting the higher education community in Ukraine has been significant.

This is to be celebrated. However, the scale and impact of this response has – rightly – posed questions over how we, as a community can respond to, and support, other higher education systems experiencing humanitarian and other forms of crises.

The genesis of this project was, therefore, to take the opportunity to reflect on the work undertaken in the sector to support universities in Ukraine, through the twinning initiative and beyond, and draw lessons for the future.

Drawing on the experiences of those closely involved with the scheme, the report highlights how the UK sector was mobilised to support universities in Ukraine and sets out ways in which we might better respond to future crises, while recognising that there is no 'one size fits all' model. Importantly, it reflects on the policy, funding and political levers which have enabled a broad-based response and how these need to be taken into account when formulating a response to emerging crises at individual, institutional and sector levels.

Importantly, the report sets out a framework that institutions might employ to help develop and tailor such responses, providing a practical tool that can help maximise the effectiveness and impact of university action.

With global challenges accelerating and geopolitical relationships increasingly fraught and contested, the need for university systems across the world to benefit from partnership, support and expertise of their peers in countries such as the UK will continue to grow. It is incumbent on us, as a community, to think carefully about how we can best respond in a coordinated, strategic way.

I hope that this report can play an important role in stimulating discussion and debate as to the role of our universities in responding to humanitarian crises in the future.

Jamie Arrowsmith

Director

Universities UK International

Introduction

1. Following the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, there was an unprecedented response from the UK higher education sector, funders, and government to provide support for colleagues, students and institutions affected by the war.
2. Within weeks of the invasion, and coordinated through Universities UK (UUK), a group of sector leaders and sector partners had come together to respond in unity. This included the support of Cormack Consultancy Group (CCG) and the inception of the UK-Ukraine Twinning Initiative. CCG reached out to colleagues in Ukraine ensuring that, in so far as possible, the capacity and capability needs of the Ukrainian sector led these activities. Some initial cautious responses by universities were caused by underlying concerns over sector funding and the five-year financial partnership commitment, but these reactions served to demonstrate how seriously universities have taken their obligations and commitments to Ukrainian partners. Given this, the continued engagement in the scheme is an endorsement for twinning, with some who were originally cautious now looking to join. It is clear that this is the first coordinated, planned and resourced response to a humanitarian crisis from the higher education sector of its kind in the UK. The rich case studies included in the report show benefits to both Ukrainian and UK universities well beyond any financial considerations.
3. The response has been underpinned by a policy and regulatory environment that is largely supportive of the needs of institutions in Ukraine, through a range of both funded and unfunded initiatives.
4. Three factors: coordination, a favourable policy environment, and the availability of funding, differentiate this response.
5. This report was commissioned in April 2023, as a 'lessons learnt' exercise. Over a year into the ongoing war in Ukraine, it is intended to stimulate thinking and inform planning and decision-making for key communities, including university leaders, members of the academic community, higher education professionals, policymakers and funders, and other stakeholders, such as third sector organisations.
6. This study analyses the UK higher education sector response to the invasion of Ukraine to:
 - Provide a descriptive overview of the key features of the response, highlighting the perceived value and impact of different activities,
 - identify the factors that enable and facilitate different types of response, and those that limit the capacity and ability of institutions and other stakeholders to engage,
 - develop a framework of policy and practical options for institutions looking to respond to future international humanitarian crises, including conditions that need to be in place for effective and impactful deployment, and
 - make recommendations to universities, to funders, and to government to ensure that all stakeholders are better prepared to offer support for those affected by international humanitarian crises in the future.
7. It is not intended to be a formal evaluation of the impact of the disparate strands of activity that have been undertaken to date, many of which remain in process.
8. This research is intended to:
 - Provide insights that inform the practice and decision-making of policymakers, higher education representatives and third sector organisations in responding to international humanitarian crises.
 - Help ensure that all parties are better equipped to respond in the future by setting out the range of possible responses and the factors that must be in place to support their effective implementation.
 - Ultimately benefit those affected by international humanitarian crises by sharing learning and expertise and creating a framework for action for the UK higher education community.

Key lessons learnt

9. In times of crisis, education must remain a priority. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects the right to education and should be maintained in emergency situations. It is through collective efforts and humanitarian support that the UK has contributed to continuing access to both higher education and research in Ukraine. Not only is education important in continuing personal attainment, it also supports participation in rebuilding and reconstruction, as well as future economic activity.
10. Here we make recommendations for action that would ensure the higher education sector is better placed to respond to future international humanitarian crises. These are broad recommendations, explored further in the body of the report and intended for universities, policymakers, funders, and third sector organisations involved in humanitarian response.

Lessons Learnt

With the war in Ukraine still ongoing, the research pointed to some initial lessons learnt which could be built upon into the future as we learn more about our collective efforts.

L1 Locally led

Humanitarian response should be driven by the local context and by the capacity and capability needs of those requiring humanitarian support. It is imperative that responses to humanitarian crises are led by those who are impacted.

Universities UK International (UUKi) can play an important convening role in bringing stakeholders together to understand the scale and scope of challenges and help establish the parameters of possible action.

L2 Delivered in partnership

The sector and its partners – including bodies such as UUK – should ensure a coordinated and connected response. It is in this response that resources are maximised, and any duplication of effort mitigated. Cross-sector coordination is critical to an effective response.

The partnership approach also enables connection with those who bring local knowledge and broader charitable purpose, enabling a comprehensive structure of support.

The partnership response should be coordinated through a central body such as UUK, with appropriate, adaptive, relevant measurement and monitoring of performance being embedded at key stages of the response.

L3 Policy and regulation

UK HEIs and sector bodies should work collaboratively with government bodies to enable the most effective policy and regulatory environment for delivery. Establishing a mechanism for ongoing dialogue with the FCDO, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), UKRI and others directly in support of humanitarianism would ensure preparedness for future response, as well as a clear understanding of the policy and regulatory parameters of any intervention. A direct call to action from relevant ministers would no doubt also energise the sector to respond.

Identifying policy, regulatory and funding issues at an early stage would facilitate a high-impact response. A standing committee could be established of key government departments and sector stakeholders that could be mobilised as required. An early assessment of the potential barriers and the scope for addressing these can save considerable time and resources, and direct activity towards appropriate channels.

L4 Funding and financing

Sector-wide funding to support the continuation of higher education internationally, through humanitarian response, should be discussed with government bodies and other funding agencies. That discussion should include an upfront agreement of suitable performance measures of funding at each stage of humanitarian support: from preparedness to emergency response, through recovery and rehabilitation, to reconstruction and development.

Longer term, options for sustained financing should be explored as a priority by government bodies, including FCDO and DSIT and public bodies including UKRI and others in discussion with representatives of the sector and its partners. These discussions should include an upfront exploration of the deliverables, expected outcomes and restrictions of particular funding streams.

L5 Effective leadership and governance at an institutional level

Ownership at the institutional level is key to an effective response. There needs to be senior buy-in to ensure that advocates and champions have the support to develop an appropriate institutional response.

Individual institutional responses should be overseen by an appropriate committee with accountability to the senior team for ongoing resource allocation and monitoring. Governance mechanisms should be embedded into ongoing governance frameworks and stood up or down as needed. Responses should be supported by a business case, business plan and risk assessment within the institution's existing risk management processes.

A specific recommendation of the report is the need for UK HEIs to ensure, through their Board of Governors/Council, that any response is within the charitable objects of their university.

L6 Thorough environmental analysis

Analysis should be undertaken at institutional and sector level in order to understand the unique situations and complexities of each humanitarian situation. This analysis should include an understanding of the political, social, and cultural context, as well as an understanding of the higher education sector of the host country.

A transparent and open discussion of the conflicts and potential constraints of working within, or in support of, a specific population, geography or region should be included and should address challenges relating to, for example, differing perspectives on equalities and other human rights concerns, or the relative autonomy of the higher education sector in that country.

L7 Sector-wide competencies, expertise and resource mapping

UUK should hold a comprehensive record which maps sector knowledge and expertise in relation to humanitarian response and which can provide a frame of reference to be used in future humanitarian crises. That mapping exercise should include key research groups, education providers and other partners that are able to contribute to the full range of humanitarian situations. A key element of preparedness for future humanitarian need, UUK should coordinate an initial review of expertise and experience which should be maintained for use when the need arises.

Responses must be pragmatic and deliverable. Responses must be tailored to the capacity, capability, and resources of all parties. For the UK institution, this means a realistic assessment of the art of the possible – including an objective assessment of the operational, funding, and regulatory conditions that will shape any response.

L8 Framework response

The sector should adopt a framework approach to new humanitarian responses.

Section 7 of the report includes a descriptive framework to support universities, their partners and the sector in implementing these recommendations and in responding to future humanitarian events.

The framework poses a series of questions which collectively seek to respond to the emerging themes within the research, including capacity and capability assessment, environmental analysis, and effective planning for long term support. It supports a deliberate and considered response to humanitarian need through greater preparedness and greater coordination.

A Step Change in the Sector's Response to Humanitarian Situations

11. On 24 February 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine and has since conducted a full-scale military assault on the country. It is within this context that the higher education sector has come together with sector bodies to provide support for Ukrainian universities, staff and students. The UK Higher education sector response to Ukraine has been broad, with coordinated programmes ranging from the UK-Ukraine Twinning Initiative, to the Researchers at Risk Fellowships Programme, through to scholarships and student support. Those responses have been enabled by a shift in the government policy environment, which has removed many of the barriers of immigration, though only to an extent. Policy introductions including the Homes for Ukraine programme were agreed to make the visa process both faster and simpler in comparison to other crises.
12. The sector has always had a significant role in addressing global humanitarian crises. From research that contributes to a better understanding of the causes and consequences of humanitarian crisis and which contributes to policy development; to innovations in public health, disaster management and conflict resolution; and to education and training that prepares students for careers in humanitarian aid, universities actively collaborate with international organisations, NGOs, and others to support capacity-building initiatives, knowledge exchange and other programmes. These various responses have not always been coordinated and this brings the potential for duplication, omission, and lost impact in crisis scenarios where all resource matters and everyday counts. Efficiency and timeliness are key. The sector response to Ukraine indicates a step change in that response, both in the scale of the response but also in that it demonstrates greater coordination.

Twinning

13. Most notable in the context of the response to Ukraine has been the UK-Ukraine Twinning Initiative. There is no doubt that the twinning initiative has been an incredible facilitator of support, described as “transformative” by one interview participant. The twinning scheme, conceived and facilitated by CCG has been a new and unique response. Over 100 partnerships have been established between Ukrainian and UK universities. There are challenges, of course, in what has been a rapidly conceived and operationalised scheme, particularly given the limited existing connections between universities in the UK and Ukraine prior to the invasion. Some were circumstantial – language barriers, loss of power and connection, or the displacement of key individuals – and some systematic. Many of our conversations alluded to concerns about twinning arrangements appearing as a PR exercise, rather than meaningful and consistent ways to support education through crisis. Some raised partnerships which had seemed a good match at initial conversation, but which had later discovered values misalignment (investments in fossil fuels for example) or other challenges.
14. It is too early in the five-year twinning partnerships to understand fully the successes or failures. Partnerships themselves take time to evolve and connection has been difficult in an environment where travel is extremely challenging and where male researchers have been deployed to the front line. What was clear from the research was that the psychological impact of a programme of support of this scale was key to those Ukrainian participants we interviewed.
15. The twinning scheme has highlighted the need for partnerships with organisations that have a strong understanding of the host country, existing networks and relationships and the capacity/capability to deliver on complex multi-partner programmes of work.

Researchers at Risk Fellowship Programme

16. In partnership with Cara, The British Academy launched its Researchers at Risk Fellowships programme in direct response to the Ukraine crisis. The multiple benefits of the scheme include the provision of protection and safety, protection of academic freedom, continuity of academic research, collaboration and networking, access to professional development, advocacy and support, and increased visibility. The programme's impact extends beyond individual researchers in preserving knowledge, advancing science (particularly key to Ukraine's national strategies) and promoting human rights.

17. Drawing on existing alliances, the scheme is supported by the Academy of Medical Sciences, the Royal Academy of Engineering, and the Royal Society. The six core disciplines are covered by the scheme: natural sciences, medical sciences, engineering, humanities, social sciences, and the arts. Financial contributions to the running of the programme have been abundant, with £0.5m from The Nuffield Foundation, £50,000 from SAGE Publishing and £1m over five years from The Leverhulme Trust. The contribution of the UK government was also significant with the initial £3m package supplied upon the scheme's inception and a further £9.8m announced in June 2022. The £12.8 total was supplied via the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (now Department for Science, Innovation, and Technology)
18. Some concerns were raised in relation to brain drain and the need to ensure that researchers and research activities that have been temporarily housed in the UK were able to return to Ukraine post-conflict and contribute to rebuilding in peace. Other concerns related to the investment by UK universities in helping researchers to feel integrated and supported in the UK, particularly given the psychological stresses of war at home.
19. Exposure to different systems, skills sharing, collaboration, and protection of intellectual potential in-country are all demonstrated by schemes like Researchers at Risk. The ability of the sector to work together in coordinating mechanisms that best meet recipient needs should be celebrated. Although challenges in culture and capacity must be navigated, the insights of those in receipt of fellowships shows the power of the programme to reframe crisis experiences. Primarily, it allows those most at risk to pursue their academic goals and find some stability amongst displacement.

Scholarships and student support

20. Scholarship and student support were most evident at the individual university level. In hosting those displaced by conflict, a huge amount of wraparound resource is needed. This may include counselling services for those dealing with trauma, as well as the creation of bespoke safeguarding policies tailored to the needs of refugee experienced individuals. Where universities have been able to deploy resources rapidly and effectively, there has often been a pre-existing familiarity with navigating institutional crisis responses. This has been particularly evident in scholarship schemes and other support programmes. It was noted during our interviews that where pathways to UK refuge are safe and legal, they are often found in the labour market, or in education. There was evidence that universities had a central role in exercising autonomy, deploying resources, and facilitating packages of support where the UK government, for example, is constrained in its capacity. However, there is also recognition that some of the ad-hoc and urgent provisions made must be more robust to be needs-based and context-sensitive in the future. These responses must be formalised.
21. The adaptation of existing schemes, rather than the establishment of new ones, was evident in the research. The University of Leicester, for example, adapted its affiliation with the [Bright Path Futures](#) programme to support those arriving from Ukraine and King's College London has been a sector leader in coordinating the mass hosting of Ukrainian – and other – refugees. The University is the first to be accredited as a 'community sponsor' under the UK Refugee Community Sponsor Scheme and [creates](#) 'safe, legal, education-led pathways into Europe'. Importantly, it allows those people who are displaced but still have a desire to study, to arrive with their families – an opportunity that hadn't been available prior to this scheme. King's College London have coordinated the response with Citizens UK and a consortium of other universities, explored in Case Study 7 (see full report). The desire to help other universities to develop their own schemes is at the core of the sanctuary programme and the ability to offer a model which can be scaled up or down depending on the crisis is demonstrated by the current framework. In formalising some of the urgent responses made so far, it [hopes](#) to 'shift from humanitarian gesture to core structure', and asks for the same across the sector.

22. Local infrastructure and policy were seen as sometimes limiting the potential of scholarship schemes. Access to housing and other resettlement support, including school places for dependants, had sometimes been challenging. This is particularly evident in current structural issues in UK regions and emphasizes the importance of considering the local context of the host country in any given time of crisis. This includes current housing shortages which places further pressure on local authorities tasked with hosting refugee families and is particularly challenging when the university purpose is considered. In providing an educational route to refuge, the student may be hosted but with no extra capacity available to also host the student's family. This is exacerbated by the lack of policy support, such as the inability of universities to host larger groups of refugees under the proposed second phase of the Homes for Ukraine scheme.
23. Where scholarship schemes and hosting opportunities have been vast and abundant, recipient numbers are understandably low, and places oversubscribed. In some cases, academic standards have also been a challenge. It was noted during some interviews that there is a lack of alignment of academic abilities between UK and Ukrainian students undertaking equivalent programmes of learning. This creates difficulties in navigating curriculum content in the UK.

Factors Supporting, Enabling or Inhibiting Responses

24. Over the course of the research, we conducted interviews with over 30 individuals, as well as a series of informal exploratory conversations. The full version of this report includes eight case studies which explore the breadth of the sector response, the successes and the challenges of delivery. These provide rich examples of the work of colleagues.
25. Here we consider some of the key factors which supported, enabled or inhibited that response. When discussing the various immediate responses to the crisis, interview participants most frequently referred to resources, whether they be people, physical or digital infrastructure and to policy.

People

26. As with many situations requiring universities to mobilise quickly, it is the creative efforts of individuals at the core of institutional responses. From individual fundraising to the rapid design of international programmes of support, HE colleagues have been the driving force behind the UK sector's response. What began as gestures of compassion and willingness to help in some cases resulted in fully seconded teams. Some institutions even appointed crisis response leads, in the form of Programme Managers and Senior Project Managers. The communication structure has also been distinct: where external agencies and NGOs had before communicated with Widening Participation teams for example, they were now able to speak directly to senior leadership teams, including Vice Chancellors. The crisis stage of response has highlighted new talent and has generated new knowledge and skills which can be deployed in future humanitarian response situations. It also highlighted the need for greater capacity building and preparedness in university leadership if the sector is to respond in a deliberate way to future humanitarian need. Some participants in the research questioned whether the very understandable human drive to support colleagues in Ukraine had led to responses which should have been more considered. There were fundamental questions regarding the role of the higher education sector in humanitarian response and concerns regarding the lack of clear assessment of the capability and capacity of individual universities and of the sector to support an ongoing, long term humanitarian response.
27. The sector perhaps has a newfound resilience to operational transition following the Covid-19 pandemic with repeatable processes for responding rapidly to change. Some also drew on their existing networks, such as Cara or Universities of Sanctuary, which had exposed them to crisis situations in other contexts. Familiarity with immigration terminology for example, or experience in navigating the crisis funding landscape, became a great enabler.
28. In other areas, key knowledge gaps have been exposed and these were evident in digital licensing regulations, intercultural competence, and the visas and immigration landscape. There were also gaps in knowledge of Ukraine and the Ukrainian higher education system. Some institutions sought to ask, "what can we do?" in the immediate phase of the crisis, rather than approaching Ukrainian institutions and asking, "what do you need?" Again, this perhaps pertains to the absence of an appropriate leadership structure in the early days of the crisis where some lack of coordination led to premature or misguided responses.
29. The huge success of many response projects has largely relied on the great unity and togetherness of the sector. Many have acted charitably and on a voluntary basis, but many have noted the challenges in sustaining this momentum, particularly when the initial shock of the conflict subsides, and close media attention trails off. In resourcing crisis responses with appropriate individuals, it was suggested throughout our interviews that a balance needs to be struck between the enthusiasm to support and the need to be 'lean', 'efficient', and 'expert'.

Government and policy

30. The response of the government has generally been received well by the sector and has enabled its greater engagement. The announcement that Ukrainian students would be eligible for domestic fees and funding, alongside new visa routes was welcomed, although many participants felt that visa systems were still difficult to navigate and the that reforms had not gone far enough. Differentiating the response of the higher education sector was perhaps the direct address to the sector by Ministers Michelle Donelan and George Freeman, equivalents of which were not seen in other industries.
31. The Homes for Ukraine scheme allows UK sponsors to commit to providing a minimum of six months of accommodation for a Ukrainian guest. The press release published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities explained that further participation of 'charities, community groups and businesses' would constitute what was perceived as a 'phase two' of the scheme. An anniversary briefing confirmed that there has still been no update to this and has caused many frustrations to UK universities, shared by colleagues during our interviews. Many were ready and willing to offer empty rooms in university halls, something that would have brought together education, the domestic setting, and civic communities for those arriving in the UK. One interviewee noted a constant tension between good intentions and the policy regimes being enacted. Slow policy decisions create a disparity between resources and their use. This lack of unity meant responses were often piecemeal, rather than existing as a complete response system. Where university autonomy can be a great enabler of responses, it also needs the support of policy to be able to deploy resources effectively.
32. Many of our conversations have acknowledged the overt difference in responses to this crisis, when compared to those in other geographies. Whilst the immigration routes were welcomed, it has been argued that the different treatment of individuals, depending on the country of crisis from which they are fleeing, has been brought to light. Country-specific packages of support have been noted as problematic in other contexts too. One factor may well be the 'consensus position' of the UK public in condemning the war, with 88% of Britons supporting the government sending humanitarian aid immediately after the invasion. The safe pathways created by the UK government in allowing Ukrainian students and academics to arrive in the UK has also accelerated the ability of universities to host these groups.

Funding and financial support

33. To support the response mobilised by the UK sector, various financial packages of support have been made available, including:
 - £5m from Research England in support of the UK-Ukraine Twinning Initiative, allowing universities to 'scale up and sustain' their partnerships and 'provide new cross-sector resources'.
 - £3m from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in support of the 'Researchers at Risk' scheme, followed by a further £9.8m and culminating in a total of £12.8m.
 - £4m distributed by the Office for Students in support of Ukrainian students studying at UK HEIs who may be experiencing financial hardship.
34. It was estimated in August 2022 that this funding had been matched by an estimated £50m in individual donations and resources by UK HEIs.
35. Such funding has been a core enabler of the sector's capacity to assist. Accountability and transparency associated with these funded initiatives has, quite naturally, led to a debate regarding the measurement of success of the various funded initiatives. And it is here that two of the most complex areas of the research have emerged. The first relates to the measurement of success in an ongoing conflict situation. Whilst performance measures relating to, for example, student hardship or the protection of individual researchers are simpler to measure, the impact of research investment during an ongoing invasion are less easy to determine. It is likely that the full impact of these initiatives will not be able to be measured until peace has been reached. The second relates particularly to the individual donations and the funding of resources by UK HEIs. Here, questions relate to the eligibility of donations and other support within the charitable objects of individual universities.

36. A number of interview participants also talked about the changing nature of support required of their twin, noting how support had changed over time and in response to increasing destruction of infrastructure. Recent support was closer to direct aid, than to educational purpose.
37. There are key questions in relation to the charitable purpose of universities and to whether aid provided by way of donation (cash or other resources) is within the charitable objects of the institution. Charities Commission 2022 advice in relation to support to Ukraine states:
“Naturally, lots of charities are considering whether they can provide support at this time. You should first consider whether your charity’s existing charitable objects allow you to help. These are set out in your charity’s governing document.”
38. It is a legal responsibility of governors to act within the charitable objects of their university whether they are an exempt or non-exempt charity. Section 12 of the Office for Students¹, ‘Regulatory advice 5: Exempt Charities’ draws the attention of universities in England to obligations in relation to assets and funds, as follows:
“The attention of providers that are exempt charities is drawn in particular to the legal obligation to apply their assets and funds only in the furtherance of their charitable purposes. This means that a charity must not use its assets (including land and buildings) and funds to give someone or a group of people a personal or private benefit, unless this is incidental. It must consider carefully how it spends its money so that it can explain how its decisions are, for example, advancing education. These responsibilities apply to all the funds and assets of providers that are exempt charities, and not just to the public funding or grant that a provider may receive.”
- The Scottish Funding Council conditions of grant can be viewed at Annex D of the SFC [University Final Funding Allocations for Academic Year 2023/24](#). The [Scottish Code of Good HE Governance](#) also refers to the responsibilities of Court or equivalents to observe Scottish Charity Laws. Universities in Wales are also registered charities subject to Charity Commission laws.
39. Longer term, the need to move from funding to financing becomes more critical. Partnering effectively with those specialising in development financing would provide longer-term options and sustained support, particularly as Ukraine comes out of conflict and looks to rebuild its higher education sector. The research evidenced a lack of financing options. Transnational Education initiatives also offer a potential model through which UK and Ukrainian Universities could partner to generate revenues for reinvestment. Those partnerships would need to continue to be developed on an equal footing and to be driven by Ukrainian knowledge and capability needs.

Digital capabilities

40. A key enabler in the sector’s capacity to respond to crisis has been the facilitative role of UK universities. One area noted to exemplify this has been digital enablement. IT has underpinned the success of many responses – from online content sharing to virtual summer schools, and even the provision of [‘anatomy.tv’](#) for medical students. Many resources had already been developed throughout the pivot to online learning during the pandemic.
41. JISC have played a key role in developing resilience within Ukraine. Prior to the conflict, Ukrainian institutions were largely relying on local servers to store research data and educational content. By supplying cloud provision, by means of concessions and vouchers, institutions have been able to undertake emergency data back-up of these materials. Providers holding EU-funded OCRE contracts, including Microsoft, have led this initiative. JISC’s connectivity with other National Research and Education Networks (NRENs), including GÉANT and URAN, has allowed this response to be needs-led and collaborative. The network may also prove invaluable in navigating longer-term needs, such as funding cloud provision in years to come.
42. The [Displaced Student Opportunities UK](#) portal, in association with Student Action for Refugees (STAR), Refugee Education UK and Universities of Sanctuary, was also developed to offer a portfolio of opportunities available at UK universities for refugees and people seeking asylum. Users can filter their search by immigration status, level of study, opportunity type, and location. It is hoped this will be an evolving framework, adapted to other crises in the future.

¹ At the time of writing the report we had not identified similar publicly available data from HEFCW or DfENI.

43. Online models of learning may also be vital to education continuity during crisis. The Open University, a sector leader in the remote HE offering, delivered a [webinar](#) on online learning to over 800 participants from Ukrainian HEIs, demonstrating great interest in the online approach. At a basic level, a similar model may also be adapted as a future crisis-based learning model.
44. However, there may be lost opportunities within digital responses, with the lack of virtual mobility grants, that would have allowed greater flexibility in supporting displaced academics, being noted as a limitation. Some, including those in a third country such as Poland, have been unable to benefit from digital interventions.
45. Digital infrastructure has been the catalyst for many institutional responses to date. At its most basic, facilitating the communication between UK and Ukrainian HEIs to assess real needs, again emphasises the bottom-up approach to partnerships. At its most complex, it may even underpin the sharing of UK learning models internationally to support the continuation of learning during conflict. Where universities have been most facilitative, digital capacity has been central.

Local context

46. In the coordination of any response, the local context of the impacted country and its associated education structures must be considered. This may take place through thorough environmental analysis.
47. A key request of the Ukrainian HE sector was that any UK responses should aim to prevent brain drain. Instead, intellectual potential should be developed within the citizens engaging with the UK sector to become capacity builders upon their return to Ukraine. The role of universities in producing graduates who will in the future contribute to Ukraine's economy is strongly recognised, and UK influences may even accelerate the move to reconstruction. The UK's own ambition to transition into a research and innovation-led knowledge economy may well indicate its partnership potential in meeting Ukraine's ambition to develop 'science and technologies in synergy with economy'. This may be channelled via bilateral university relationships. The UK's blueprint for regional development, which focuses on local economies, heritage, and capacities, may also be transferrable.
48. The perceived attractiveness of the UK's HE sector, as praised by those connected most closely to UK institutions, does pose risks. Academics and researchers currently hosted by UK institutions may be recognised for their talent and recruited or decide to remain in the UK to take advantage of its research landscape and funding offering. Organisations like . and Cara have taken measures to mitigate this, including the turning down of scholarships or job offers to remain in the UK and the shortening of fellowship contracts to encourage the return to Ukraine when safe to do so.
49. Instead, the role of UK universities can be facilitative. In line with its levelling up agenda for example, the UK has strong capabilities and unwavering ambition for regional development – much of which relies on universities as the vehicle. The UK is therefore in a strong policy position to support the redevelopment of communities and local economies post-war. In skills planning, UK influences may also be valuable. Ukraine recognises a current disparity between the competencies of its graduates and those demanded by its economy. In reconstruction, the country will require more specialist skills in the areas of health, wellbeing, and psychological trauma. This demonstrates the potential of UK universities to transition their existing partnerships across a longer timeframe, where resources allow. This may also apply to the development of university leadership skills via capacity-building education.

Conclusion

Over the course of the research, we have observed the incredible power of the sector in uniting, collaborating, and generously sharing reflections and insights. As we look to the future of humanitarian crises responses, we hope that the lessons presented throughout the report will become valuable considerations.

Ukraine is still under invasion and so as a sector we remain in a crisis response phase, and it should be noted that the reflections and evaluations emerging in the long term will happen beyond this commission. We also note that there is now a need for ongoing coordination that is inclusive and draws fully upon the range of experience, expertise, partnerships, and networks available. Notably, the response itself continues to generate a new group of sector leaders who have emerged with their own experiences and expertise in the humanitarian landscape. There is also a need to introduce elements of longer-term responses that ensure preparedness for reconstruction and rebuilding the Ukrainian higher education sector post-invasion. To aid this, we also suggest the continuation of a repository of case studies which showcase ongoing work and outcomes as the response continues, partnerships mature, and we hopefully see a transition into peacetime.

We understand that there have been limitations to this research. Particularly, the lack of capacity for Ukrainian colleagues to fully engage in the research at this time, as well as the inability to be fully reflective of the impact of interventions, whether positive or negative. This, again, will outlive the research project.

Our ambition for the framework is that it becomes an adaptive tool for the wider UK higher education sector and that it eventually supports a deliberate and considered response to humanitarian need, with an emphasis on greater preparedness underpinned by sector coordination.



Higher Education Humanitarian Framework

Humanitarian frameworks

In developing our framework, we have considered the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Sustainable Development Goal 4, Quality Education. We have also drawn upon several historic frameworks and approaches, including: the Sphere Standards, the Core Humanitarian Standard, the work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Do No Harm Framework, the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Agenda for Humanity.

Collectively these frameworks present a range of concepts that relate particularly to the research findings:

- **Power imbalance:** the potential for those providing humanitarian response to make decisions and take actions that do not fully reflect the needs of those impacted. This leads to a lack of investment in building local capacity and preparedness for future or sustained crisis. The need to reinforce local systems and to invest in local capacities is of particular relevance to this research, as is the involvement of those impacted to be driving decision-making.
- **Over emphasis on short-term relief:** an over emphasis on short term, immediate crisis response at the expense of longer-term development and resilience-building.
- **Lack of coordination:** as humanitarian responses involve multiple actors, there is a risk that uncoordinated or fragmented response can lead to gaps or to duplication in support.
- **Access and security:** access constraints imposed by conflict or other constraint which hamper the impact of humanitarian response.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** the need for clear governance, accountability, and transparency in the management of funds and other resources.

Higher Education Humanitarian Framework

In line with the findings of our research, the framework positions those needing humanitarian support as the guiding force in the sector response to humanitarian need, ensuring that **accountability is to those affected people**. It acknowledges **the pivotal role of the policy and regulatory environment** as underpinning the strength and scale of any response and centres networks and **partnerships as being absolutely core to a coordinated response**.

The framework acknowledges the sector's commitment to ongoing humanitarian support through teaching, research and knowledge activities whilst proposing a cycle of response through which institutions, partnerships and the sector can consider their position and effectiveness to a specific humanitarian occurrence (whether crisis or ongoing humanitarian need). Given the outcomes of the research, there is a clear bias towards a response with draws on the collective strengths that come through a partnership approach.

That said, the framework has been developed to ensure that institutions, partnerships, and the sector consider the full cycle of engagement in any humanitarian response. The framework is supported by a series of guiding questions and has been designed to have relevance and applicability at the university, partnership, and sector level and to promote a deliberate and considered response to humanitarian need through greater preparedness and greater coordination.

Diagram 1: Partnership Cycle

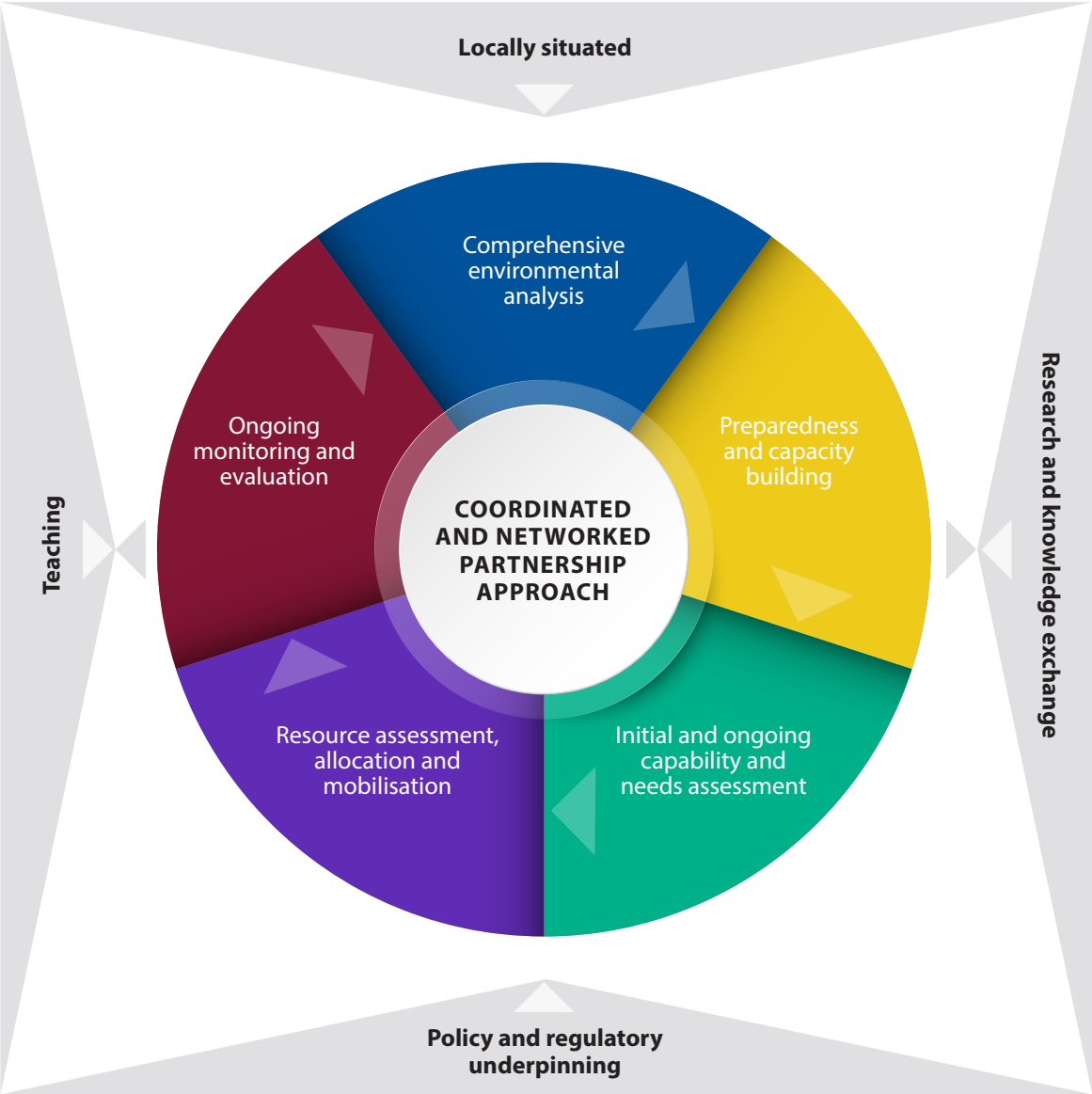


Table 1: Higher Education Humanitarian Framework

Guiding questions:

Comprehensive environment analysis	Preparedness and capacity building	Initial and ongoing capability and needs assessment	Resource assessment, allocation, and mobilisation	Ongoing monitoring and evaluation
What is the political environment in which we are delivering, the constraints and enablers of all countries involved in the response?	What is the purpose of our intervention? What are our collective objectives and how will we measure the impact or success of delivery?	What expertise and knowledge are required to deliver?	What are the physical resources that will enable us to effectively deliver?	What is the ongoing purpose of our intervention? Is it still valid?
What are the economic resources and constraints?	What response are we intending to deliver and for how long?	What partnerships and networks would strengthen our response?	What partnerships and networks would strengthen our response?	What are our ongoing collective objectives and how will we measure the impact or success of delivery?
What are the social and cultural environments in which we are delivering? Do these present any values based or other conflicts?	How does the response differ from the ongoing research, education, and policy work through which we already deliver?	Are we adapting our people resources (knowledge, expertise, and experience) to reflect the changing nature of disaster, conflict, and other humanitarian need over time?	Are we adapting our physical resources and infrastructure to reflect the changing nature of disaster, conflict, and other humanitarian need over time?	What critical friends and/ or evaluation partners could support impact evaluation?
What technological enablers or challenges are there to delivery, including infrastructure, connectivity, cyber and other challenge?	What type of response are we best placed to deliver?	How do we optimise our collective capabilities through effective partnerships both in and out of country?	How do we optimise the efficiency and effectiveness of physical resources and infrastructure through effective partnerships both in and out of country?	Are we deploying the correct evaluation frameworks at differing stages of intervention?
What is the legal and regulatory environment in which we are delivering, the constraints and enablers of all countries involved in the response?	What is our capacity and what expertise do we bring?			Are we ensuring that our response remains accountable to impacted communities?
What are the environmental considerations of engagement?	What existing partnerships and networks will we engage in our response to ensure we have the skills, knowledge, and experience to deliver?			
What is the education system/s with which we will be interacting? How do these support or limit our response?	What is our ongoing commitment to developing the skills, knowledge, experience, policies, and process to effectively deploy during times of crisis or ongoing humanitarian need?			

The framework poses a series of questions which are intended to guide the user in five distinct phases of a cyclical response.

Whilst much of the tool is analytical, delivering on the need for a reflective, considered, and meaningful response, the framework is also designed to answer the 'so what?', or perhaps the 'should we?' by posing questions regarding when, if and how individual universities, the sector and its partners should respond, and what capacity and capability can support at various stages of the delivery. In doing this it points directly to the findings of the report:

- The need to understand humanitarian response through those who are impacted.
- The need to work in partnership to deliver greater effectiveness and efficiency.
- The need for any response to be within the legal and regulatory capacities of the institution and geography.

The framework intentionally poses a significant number of questions which are intended to be answered at the institutional and then sector level. It is a self-reflective, self-analysis tool where responses in relation to capability and capacity can be consolidated to give a comprehensive understanding of the aggregate resources and skills available to be deployed in any given situation.

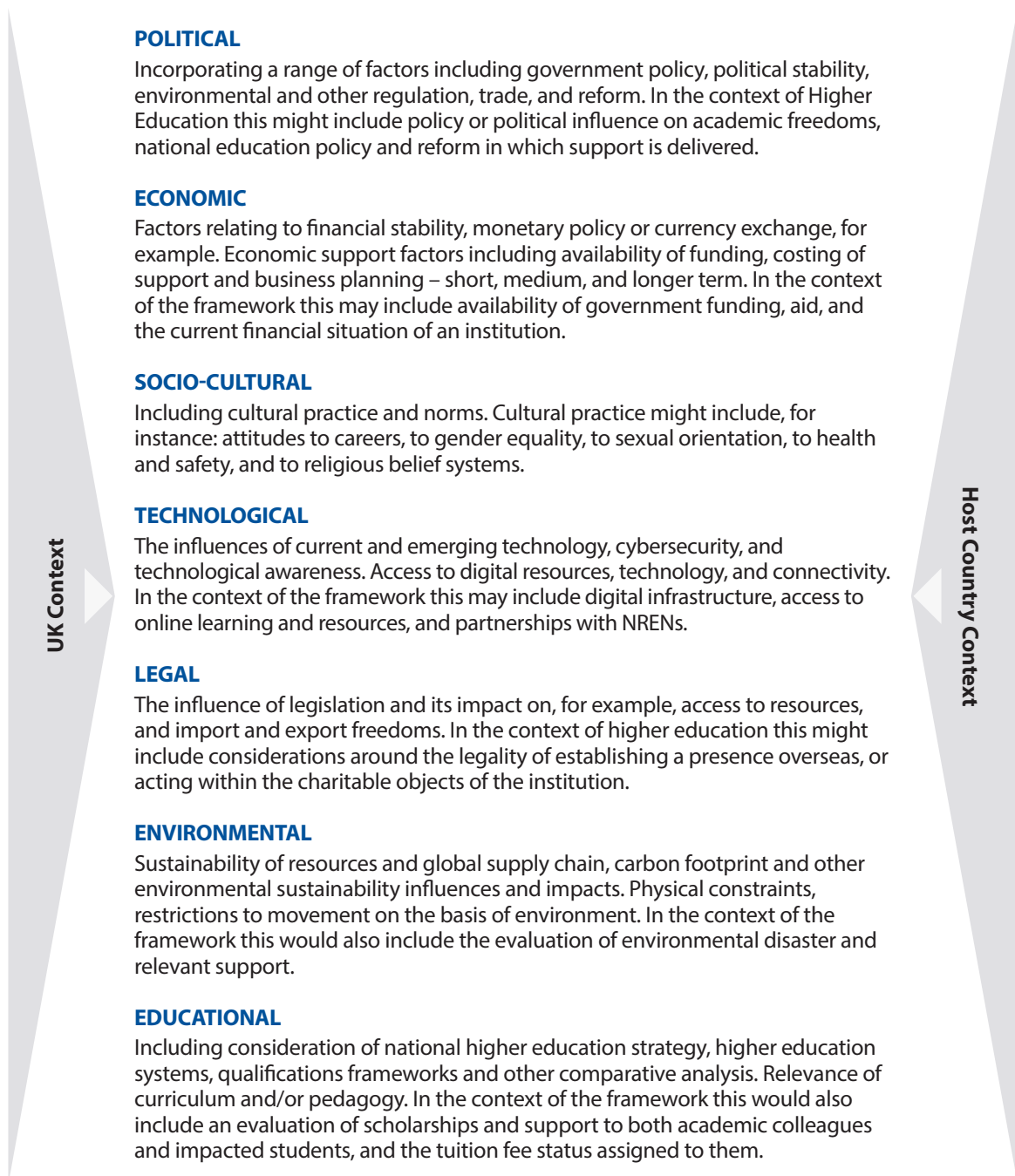
Phase 1:

Comprehensive environmental analysis

The inclusion of an environmental analysis draws on the existing PESTLE tool in considering the political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, legal, and environmental context in both the impacted region and the region providing support. The tool is extended to specifically include an assessment of the education system in the impacted geography, its academic frameworks, pedagogical norms, and other educational factors that might impact response.

The environmental analysis is intended to be undertaken at both an institutional, partner and sector level. The primary purpose of the environmental analysis is to ensure a well-developed understanding of the environment in which humanitarian need is to be delivered, however, the analysis is intended to be used in both the home and humanitarian context.

Diagram 2: Environmental analysis



Phase 2:

Preparedness and capacity building

The framework advocates for considerable time and resource being engaged in preparedness and capacity building.

It is an area in which the sector already delivers through teaching, research, and knowledge exchange. Research groups play a particularly critical role in preparedness, and a recommendation of the main body of the report is to develop a comprehensive map of research expertise that could be reviewed and engaged dependent upon the particular humanitarian situation and local needs assessment.

It is at an institutional level that universities should consider whether engagement is or is not the right thing to do prior to response to a crisis. This may be achieved through a series of questions, including:

- Do you have a comprehensive understanding of the needs of those seeking humanitarian support?
- Do you bring the right knowledge and skills to deliver support? What are these?
- Do you have adequate and ongoing financial and other infrastructure resources to sustain your efforts? What are those infrastructure resources and how could they be deployed?
- Have you ensured that you are not duplicating existing programmes or the work of existing partners that are better placed to deliver?
- Is there anything in your policy or regulatory environment that would prevent or hamper engagement?

The analysis also leads itself to the potential heatmapping of collaborate responses. Brought together, individual responses could be used to develop a partnership or even sector ecosystem through which accountabilities be allocated to individual university or partner contributors.

Phase 3:

Initial and ongoing needs and capability assessment*

This is about the skills, expertise and experience required to deliver effective solutions at an institutional and sector/partnership level and should be revisited throughout humanitarian response to ensure that capabilities are appropriate at every stage of engagement.

Given the complexities of humanitarian need, it is difficult to provide a comprehensive view of the skills, expertise and experience required of any specific humanitarian situation, however, we propose that capability needs be assessed under the following headings:

- **Human Resources**
Appropriately skilled and experienced workforce to plan, coordinate and deliver humanitarian interventions.
- **Coordination Mechanisms**
Identification of existing and new networks to facilitate an effective response through collaboration, information sharing, and efficient resource allocation across actors. It is here that there is the maximum opportunity for a joint needs assessment, reducing duplication of effort, identifying gaps and agreeing priorities.
- **Community Engagement**
To facilitate an ongoing understanding of need, ensuring relevance, strengthening local coordination, and supporting local decision-making.

Phase 4:

Resource assessment, allocation, and mobilisation*

- **Financial Resources**
To support various aspects of humanitarian response, including emergency aid, medical supplies, food and water, shelter, and long-term recovery efforts in the short, medium and longer term should be assessed and planned.
- **Logistical Resources**
Including transportation, storage and distribution networks, procurement and supply chain management.
- **Infrastructure and Facilities**
Access to infrastructure and resources including availability for deployment in a range of humanitarian situations.
- **Information and Communication Systems**
These are increasingly key, ensuring accurate and timely information in relation to needs, resources, ongoing activities, and any gaps in response. They include digital capabilities and infrastructure to support and enhance data sharing and improved coordination.

Phase 5:

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation

Recognising that resource requirements and capabilities needs are likely to evolve through the phases of humanitarian response, the framework advocates for ongoing review of the mechanisms and interventions being deployed. Flexibility, adaptability, and coordination being essential to meet the changing needs of humanitarian crisis.

It is in this phase of the framework that there is also the potential, over time, to introduce performance indicators that are appropriate to the stage of humanitarian response.

* The creation and periodic refresh of shared capability and capacity assessments through effective and coordinated partnerships are a key recommendation of the report which advocates for the creation of a sector-wide competencies, expertise, and resource mapping exercise.

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