

Dissertation
Master of Advanced Studies in Humanitarian Action

Academic Year 2016-2017

From Implementers to Partners?
**Towards a better understanding of challenges facing UN-NGO field-based partnerships in
the humanitarian sector**

Submitted by
Mohamad El Amin

Examining Board:

Supervisor: Dr Nathalie Herlemont Zoritchak

President of the Board: Prof. Gilles Carbonnier

Expert: Dr Anne Golaz

June 2017

CERAH
a Joint Centre of

THE GRADUATE INSTITUTE | GENEVA
INSTITUT DE HAUTES ÉTUDES
INTERNATIONALES ET DU DÉVELOPPEMENT
GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL
AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES



UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE

Abstract

The study identifies key challenges facing field-based partnerships or implementing partnerships, between United Nations (UN) agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in humanitarian settings particularly in refugee contexts and situations of armed conflict. It finds that while the scale of collaboration between UN agencies and NGOs has increased substantially over the years, they face complex interrelated challenges that undermine their collaboration. State instrumentalization of humanitarian action, its growth, and a resulting culture of competition are challenges of nontechnical nature but have technical implications. On the one hand, they produce conditions unfavourable for efficiency, coverage and effectiveness of humanitarian projects implemented under this modality. On the other hand, they are responsible for exacerbating risks, contributing to burdensome reporting and administrative processes. In other words, the combination of politicisation, competition, and earmarking in the sector create significant financial and nonfinancial risks for UN agencies, which in turn transfer them to their IPs. UN agencies and NGOs, as a result, often collaborate in environments that are conducive for restricted contracting, but not principled, effective and efficient humanitarian partnerships.

Keywords: United Nations (UN), UN humanitarian agencies, Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), International NGOs (INGOs), humanitarian action, humanitarian partnerships, collaboration, cooperation, coordination, competition, instrumentalization, UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, implementing partners (IPs)

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my thanks and gratitude to the management, academic staff, and external speakers at the Geneva Centre for Education and Research in Humanitarian Action (CERAH) for their support throughout the MAS programme, of which this work is the final component. In particular, I am grateful to my supervisor Dr Nathalie Herlemont Zoritchak for her valuable and timely feedback.

Dedication

To my parents

Abbreviations and acronyms

Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM)

Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA)

Global War Against Terror (GWOT)

Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD)

High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing (HLP)

Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC)

Implementing partners (IPs)

International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)

International non-governmental organisations (INGOs)

International Organisations (IOs)

Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Principles of Partnership (PoP)

Private Military & Security Companies (PMSCs)

Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG)

United Nations (UN)

United Nations Protection Force for Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR)

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)

World Food Programme (WFP)

World Humanitarian Summit (WHS)

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Abbreviations and acronyms.....	v
1. Introduction and background	1
2. Methodology of research.....	4
2.1. Scope of study and limitations.....	4
3. External challenges to UN-NGO partnership.....	6
3.1. Main concepts.....	6
3.2. Challenges of politicisation and militarization.....	6
3.3. Challenges of growth.....	14
3.4. Challenges of marketization.....	17
4. Discussion and analysis	20
4.1. Analysis of <i>nontechnical (external)</i> challenges.....	20
4.2. Analysis of <i>technical (internal)</i> challenges.....	24
4.2.1. Challenges of risk management.....	25
4.2.2. Challenges of reporting.....	27
4.2.3. Challenges of administrative processes.....	29
5. Conclusions	32
6. Bibliography.....	33
7. Annexes.....	38
7.1. Annexe I: Definitions.....	38
7.2. Annexe II: Figures.....	40
7.3. Annexe III: Framework for analysis of external challenges.....	43

1. Introduction and background

Against a backdrop of growing needs and funding¹, scholars and practitioners have pursued different paths to improving humanitarian action as the sector grew considerably in size and importance but faced increasingly complex challenges and dilemmas. These efforts may be of more salience today than ever as the ‘humanitarian financing gap’² widened to record levels. In preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) held in May 2016, the UN High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing (HLP) estimated the gap to be \$15bn. Basing the estimate on an average of \$1.25 per affected person a day, i.e. the very “bottom line to survive”, the figure is likely an understated (Georgieva & Shah, 2016, p. 20). The Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) Report 2016 also pointed to an “unprecedented shortfall” of 45 per cent (US\$8.9bn) in the 2015 UN-coordinated humanitarian appeals³. The gap is unlikely to be narrower in 2017 as \$4.4bn was alone needed to respond to “the biggest humanitarian crisis since 1945” (BBC News, 2017). This particular appeal⁴ came not only atop of mounting needs globally but at the moment in time when the United States was mulling deep cuts into UN funding. The rather cynical conjuncture leaves little doubt that humanitarians will have to do more with less, as their resources may have to spread even thinner.

In addition to calling for stronger investment in disaster prevention, preparedness and other measures to curb the surge in needs, the HLP emphasised that bridging the gap required a ‘Grand Bargain’ among humanitarians. A ‘virtuous circle’ of greater efficiency, transparent collaboration and partnerships that attract more funding to the sector (Georgieva & Shah, 2016, p. 20).

“Above all, the Grand Bargain is about the need to work together efficiently, transparently and harmoniously with new and existing partners,” the document materialising the Great Bargain says (WHS, 2016, p. 2).

To call for a virtuous circle alludes to a current unvirtuous, not to say vicious, circle of contrary qualities. Not unlike the outlook from the top of the humanitarian system, many aid workers in the field are very critical of how partnerships are conceived, administered and

¹ The Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2016 indicates that International humanitarian assistance reached a record high of US\$28.0 billion in 2015

² The figure representing the global unmet needs of populations affected by conflict and natural disasters

³ 2015 appeals asked donors for a total of US\$19.8bn in 2015 (GHA, 2016)

⁴ The appeal aims to counter famines threatening 20 million people in Somalia, Nigeria, Yemen and South Sudan. See the website of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)

<http://www.unocha.org/where-we-work/emergencies>

implemented. Encouraged by the prospects of the Great Bargain, major INGOs have become more outspoken about challenges. The International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), a major coalition of NGOs, launched a campaign with a clear motto: ‘Less Paper, More Aid’.

Indeed, numerous efforts and reform processes⁵ have examined humanitarian partnership and financing modalities over the years. However, one important modality rarely comes under scrutiny outside closed organisational circles, despite its importance for the delivery of humanitarian aid: the contracting of NGOs by UN agencies – referred to here as Implementing Partners (IPs) – for the implementation of assistance and protection projects. Aside from the dearth of academic studies on the subject, it is difficult to calculate how much funding circulates through this modality due to the lack of detailed reporting. The figure has been estimated to be between one-third and a half of UN humanitarian expenditures (Ferris, 2011) and (Bartsiotas & Prom-Jackson, 2013)⁶ with expenditures through IPs growing at a steady pace (**see section 3.3**).

On the bright side, calls for better partnership seem to have found particularly receptive ears inside UN humanitarian agencies that have embarked on significant efforts to improve their frameworks for partnership with NGOs. Not only most agencies dedicate entire sections to tackle the task, but efforts seem to run in parallel to systematic dialogue and consultation processes with partners⁷. The term “Implementing Partner” itself appears to have fallen out of favour and friendlier terminologies like “Partner” or “Cooperating Partner” have started to take root inside these agencies⁸. The change in phonetics does not seem merely aesthetic but reflects a strategic commitment to improving partnership with NGOs. This commitment is evident not just by browsing the partnership web pages of UN humanitarian agencies⁹, but in institutional strategies and increasingly in new processes at the field level. Nonetheless, one wonders why these efforts appear to yield little fruit as the flow of critical reports from NGOs persist and take note of challenges particular to partnership with the humanitarian UN.

⁵ Some examples including the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD), the Principles of Partnership (PoP) and the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) and the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC)

⁶ For example, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stated that in 2014 it channeled 40 percent of its expenditures through NGOs. See: <http://www.unhcr.org/publications/fundraising/564da0ea0/unhcr-global-appeal-2016-2017-working-partnership.html>

⁷ For example, UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) hold annual consultations with NGOs, see <http://www.unhcr.org/2016-annual-consultations-with-ngos.html> & <https://www.wfp.org/partners/non-governmental-organizations/annual-consultations>

⁸ For instance, UNHCR has stopped using the term ‘Implementing Partner’ and instead uses ‘Partner’ and WFP uses the term “Cooperating Partner”

⁹ For example, see: <https://www.wfp.org/partners/non-governmental-organizations>; <http://www.unhcr.org/non-governmental-organizations.html>; <https://www.unicef.org/about/partnerships/>

Some of the answers to this question may be in the academic literature on humanitarian action. As practitioners examined ways to improve its technicalities, many scholars reflected on how states structured and financed the humanitarian system. Notably, they warn that there are sometimes no ‘technical fixes’ to some challenges that have deep roots in how the humanitarian system functions. Furthermore, despite the fact that many scholars of humanitarian action are seasoned veteran practitioners, there seem to be still a lack of studies bridging the gap between the academic and organisational literature. While many academic studies have focused on political challenges, the organisational literature has mostly concerned itself with technical ones; presumably because they are of a less controversial nature. However, this raises a question over if (and if so how) the two sets of challenges are interconnected.

Amid this encouraging environment for critical research on the subject of humanitarian partnership, this study aims to advance an understanding of difficulties facing UN-NGO field-based collaboration. Thus it responds to the following research question: *what are the main consequences of technical and nontechnical challenges on UN-NGO implementing partnerships in humanitarian operations and how are the two sets of challenges connected?*

Following a brief note on the methodology, **Chapter 3** discusses UN-NGO collaboration and partnership at the macro level¹⁰, identifying key *external (nontechnical)*¹¹ challenges of contextual and global nature. **Chapter 4** of the paper presents an analytical discussion of the negative consequences of these challenges on UN-NGO implementing partnerships at the micro level¹². Additionally, it presents *internal (technical)*¹³ challenges and an analysis of their connections with the *external (nontechnical)* challenges. Lastly, the paper presents conclusions.

The overall aim of the study is to contribute to a growing body of critical research that seeks to improve humanitarian action and strengthen its honourable basic premises of saving lives and safeguarding human dignity. The hope is that it will be a relevant read for humanitarians as they pursue more robust partnerships that respond better to the needs and capacities of affected persons and communities.

¹⁰ Macro level is understood here as the large-scale trends affecting the humanitarian sector as a whole

¹¹ An external challenge is understood here as a challenge not stemming out of the partnership itself, but related to the environment it takes place in.

¹² Micro level is understood here as the small-scale trends affecting humanitarian partnerships

¹³ An internal challenge is understood here as a challenge stemming out of the partnership itself, related to the technical aspects including contracts, budgets, reporting requirements, etc.

2. Methodology of research

The research methodology has been designed to answer the research question in a feasible, yet thorough, way given limitations faced in time and resources. Firstly, the paper identifies key *external (nontechnical)* challenges and potential adverse consequences on UN-NGO implementing partnerships. Studies that employ political economy approaches to humanitarian action were found to be particularly suitable to identify external challenges to this type of collaboration. Some challenges are presented as ‘contextual’ as they are relevant to particular humanitarian contexts or operations, but do not affect all cooperation between the UN and NGOs. Other challenges are presented as ‘global’ since they are structural by nature and are thus relevant to all, or the majority, of partnerships, independent of the context.

The first part of the analytical chapter, which looks in depth at of the consequences of these challenges for implementing partnerships, is guided by the following standard criteria for evaluating humanitarian projects: *efficiency, effectiveness, appropriateness, impact, and coverage*¹⁴. This set of criteria was considered suitable for the analysis since it is widely recognised, well defined and appropriate to look consequences at the micro, or project, level. A spreadsheet was created to facilitate analysis (see **Annexe III**).

Unlike *external challenges, internal (technical)* – presented in the second part of the analytical chapter – are identified from organisational, or grey, literature. These challenges are analysed primarily regarding their association with *external (nontechnical)* challenges, based on evidence collected from reports drafted by UN agencies, NGOs, and humanitarian donors.

2.1. Scope of study and limitations

The extent of the study is limited to implementing partnerships between UN humanitarian agencies and NGOs, with secondary funding from the former to the latter aiming to deliver time-bound and specific humanitarian projects. These partnerships are usually administered through a formal contract, or a project agreement, between the contracting UN agency and contracted NGO stipulating all implementation details including budgetary contributions. In most cases, these projects are negotiated, planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated jointly by UN and NGO staff at the country operation level, with guidance and review from their respective headquarters.

¹⁴ For a definition of the used criteria, see ALNAP’s guide on evaluating humanitarian action using the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) - Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD) criteria (ALNAP, 2013). One evaluation criteria, *coherence*, was excluded from the analysis due to its potential conflict with principled humanitarian action.

The research primarily focuses on humanitarian response in refugee contexts and situations of armed conflict, under a research assumption that they present a more complex set of challenges to collaboration, as well as to narrow the scope of the paper.

The main limitation of this study is that it does not look at the benefits of implementing partnerships. The study assumes that a research focusing exclusively on challenges would have more of an added value and relevance. Additionally, the study does not look at global partnerships and coordination¹⁵, issues that are unique to direct (bilateral) funding from donors to NGOs, and frameworks used by INGOs to contract, or subcontract, projects to their local or national counterparts. All these issues may be closely related to the study and may share similar challenges, but are each worth on an independent study in its own right. Moreover, the paper primarily focuses on INGO IPs and does not examine closely UN agency partnership with local and national NGOs, governments and first responders; even though some findings here may also be relevant to this type of engagement. This is clearly an area of growing importance¹⁶ that demands an accelerated research effort that is tailored to its specificities.

Furthermore, methods employed by this study are limited. While it would have been beneficial to supplement the study with field-based research and interviews with frontline humanitarian workers, who arguably bear the brunt of challenges, this was not feasible due to limitations stated above. This particular constraint was acceptable since the research focuses on trends affecting the theme of UN-NGO implementing partnerships, rather than particular operational contexts that may be particularly favourable or unfavourable for this type of collaboration based on numerous factors. Thus, findings presented here ought to be gauged and contextualised against the multitude of complexities that face partnerships on the ground, if considered further by the reader.

¹⁵ For more information on global partnerships, please see <https://www.icvanetwork.org/global-humanitarian-platform-ghp-overview>

¹⁶ The Great Bargain pledged dedicating 25 percent of humanitarian funding to these actors by 2020. For a study on implementing partnerships with local actors in Syria, see (Els, Mansour, & Carstensen, 2016)

3. External challenges to UN-NGO partnership

3.1. Main concepts

As mentioned previously, this chapter primarily examines academic works in the field of humanitarian action focusing on identifying key challenges that affect UN agency implementing partnerships with NGOs. Within political economy approaches to humanitarian response, the concept of *instrumentalization* of aid was identified as a critical model that has explanatory power, and was deemed to be an appropriate framework to explore challenges at the macro level. The study, therefore, follows the footsteps of Dijkzeul and Hilhorst who recently suggested – in their study on challenges of cooperation in humanitarian action – that researchers make instrumentalization a “central research theme” (2016, p. 68). The main definitions, included in **Annexe I** of the paper, serve to explain the conceptual framework of instrumentalization and how it is applied here. In particular, the study adopts a suggestion by Weiss to look at instrumentalization of aid through three broad themes: politicisation, militarization, and marketization. Also, a better understanding of instrumentalization is not only necessary to better understand problems facing the sector, but is a prerequisite to improving its workings:

“Militarisation, politicisation, and marketisation are not the whole truth of the humanitarian project, but they are essential components. It is crucial to understand how the international humanitarian system functions if one hopes to improve its operations and attenuate,” (Weiss T. G., 2016, p. 34)

Firstly, the paper presents arguments from several scholars on instrumentalization of humanitarian aid in different humanitarian contexts with a focus on identifying potential challenges related to its first two components: *‘politicisation’* and *‘militarization’* and their main negative consequences. Secondly, the study shifts to humanitarian economics, exploring the growth in humanitarian budgets and its implications for UN-NGO partnership. The discussion sets the stage for the final section of this chapter which serves to identify *external (nontechnical)* challenges that are by their virtue side-effects of growth, i.e. related to the third form of instrumentalization: *‘marketization’*.

3.2. Challenges of politicisation and militarization

In this section, the focus is on identifying the main relevant challenges presented by politicisation and militarization of humanitarian aid on UN-NGO partnership taking the late

1960s – when the international humanitarian system took its contemporary shape (Walker & Maxwell, 2009) – as a starting point, but bringing in relevant modern-day examples.

The academic literature suggests the Cold War had a significant impact on the relationship between the UN and NGOs. Many scholars highlight that the international political climate of the era rendered the UN as a whole, and its humanitarian agencies in particular, unable to initiate effective action inside countries affected by the major conflicts from the 1960s to the 1980s (Minear, 2012). Walker and Maxwell highlight the absence of UN humanitarian agencies during some defining moments. For example, UN agencies could not respond to the Biafra conflict (1968–1970) and only had a limited response in Cambodia (1979–1980):

“The NGOs expressly rejected the Cold War ideological terms in which the humanitarian crisis had been cast. But the UN agencies were somewhat more hamstrung, falling victim to superpower vetoes in the Security Council, thus having to respect the sovereignty of member states...” (Walker & Maxwell, 2009, p. 50)

While absence, as much as a presence, in a particular humanitarian context can be a result of, or in itself constitute a form of politicisation of humanitarian action by states¹⁷, it also exposes tensions, around the organisational culture and principles, between UN agencies and NGOs. Often the lack of response of the UN humanitarian system in armed conflict situations has been linked to issues around the respect of state sovereignty. In fact, the UN considers national sovereignty and non-interference as fundamental principles of international order (Barnett, 2015, p. 216). Thus, only when authorised otherwise by the UN Security Council, through a resolution, that the UN humanitarian system responds without the affected state’s approval and consent (Natsios, 1995, p. 414). Unlike UN agencies, many INGOs in the Cold War era chose to endorse a culture of humanitarian activism and mobilised private funding that seemed to allow them a higher degree of flexibility and independence in their humanitarian response (Walker & Maxwell, 2009). In essence, the argument here is that since the political and security branches of the UN blocked its humanitarian wing, UN agencies were restricted and INGOs seemed to be abler and more willing to “cut through” the political stalemate of the Cold War (Walker & Maxwell, 2009).

The distinction between the UN and NGO approaches seems to continue to have a strong resonance with many current and recent dilemmas. For example, during the on-going Syrian conflict, UN humanitarian agencies refrained for several years from delivering aid across borders

¹⁷ Ian Smillie argues the absence of the UN during Biafra was a result of pressure by the Nigerian government on donors and tying the United Nations “in legalistic knots” (Smillie, 2012, p. 30)

into rebel-held territory, despite clear needs, due to the vetoes preventing Security Council resolutions authorising such actions. In contrast, many INGOs conducted cross-border operations without a green light from the Syrian government or the Council. Furthermore, UN humanitarian agencies have chosen to operate primarily from the regime-held capital Damascus, in contrast to many INGOs who either decided or were compelled to, due lack of authorization or bans, operate from the opposition-held territory or neighbouring countries. This complicated collaboration and partnership between UN agencies and NGOs. For instance, media reports claimed the Syria 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan was drafted by UN humanitarian agencies and the Syrian government “without input from NGOs that deliver cross-border aid to areas of the country the UN can’t reach” (Hopkins & Beals, 2016).

In line with the discussed example, Andrew Natsios argues that UN-NGO collaboration in complex humanitarian operations are governed by a “traditional paradigm” with the UN agencies often focusing on working closely and maintaining strong relations with national governments and NGOs focusing on the grassroots level. More relevant to this study, he suggests that the difference in organisational cultures has some critical implications for implementing partnerships:

“This has caused the resentment by UN agencies of nongovernmental organisations when they do not act in the way expected and by NGOs when they are treated as contractors rather than equal partners,” (Natsios, 1995, p. 414)

Some scholars suggest that as major INGOs grow in size and professionalise, they become increasingly similar to UN agencies, regarding their structures and even organisational cultures. For instance, Ferris argues that the major INGOs now have more in common with UN Agencies regarding bureaucracy and scale, raising concerns over efficiency and flexibility of their humanitarian action even by some UN officials (2011, p. 99). Nevertheless, even Ferris suggests that the differences between the UN and the NGO identities and approaches remain substantial and do not exclude, for example, the definition and interpretation of main humanitarian concepts including protection (Ferris, 2011, p. 119). Slim pointed recently to the persistence and importance of this dissimilarity:

“There is always a tension between a government and UN culture that would like to run international humanitarian action as an effective international civil service, and an NGO culture that sees humanitarian action as a more informal manifestation of civic activism.” (Slim, 2015, p. 14).

The paper presents the first external challenge and its consequences as follows:

Challenge 1 (different organisational and operational cultures) -- Global

UN agencies and many NGOs have a different organisational culture and understanding of humanitarian action (international civil service/state sovereignty respecting/bureaucratic *versus* civic activism/humanitarian imperative/flexible)

Some potential negative consequences on UN-NGO field-based partnerships:

- Could damage working relations between partners
- Could lead to low quality of implementation
- Could limit access to affected populations
- Could restrict implementing partnership in some contexts
- Could restrict or break off implementing partnership in some contexts

While absent from many immediate conflict zones during the Cold War, UN humanitarian agencies were indeed active in the proximity of several armed conflicts and civil wars, primarily responding to refugee crises. The academic literature suggests that this type of presence saw, on the one hand, a heightened political instrumentalization of aid by Western/Northern donors to counter Soviet influence. On the other hand, UN humanitarian agencies significantly increased their reliance on Western INGO IPs instead of direct implementation (Janmyr, 2014). One widely-cited example is the humanitarian operation in Pakistan in the 1980s, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the exodus of millions of Afghan refugees to the country and other neighbouring states. An academic paper, commissioned by the UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service in 2008, decries a challenging situation:

“It has become evident that the refugee population was instrumentalized for the pursuit of political agendas, which included the US-American objectives of strengthening their own foothold in the region while weakening the USSR,” (Schöch, 2008, p. 14)

Schöch concludes that the United States, a major donor of UNHCR historically, was particularly well positioned to pressurise it to maintain its operation in Pakistan despite what he described as “adverse circumstances” (Ibid.) While Schöch does not refer specifically to the impact of the situation on NGO IPs, he makes it evident that IPs equally implemented politicised donor conditions by highlighting that a refugee’s membership in one of the Afghan anti-Soviet parties was a precondition for assistance. Furthermore, Donini suggests that both UNHCR and WFP IPs had a problematic role during that episode, deeming the situation as a “cottage industry of INGOs”¹⁸ financed by the UN agencies and Western donors (Donini, 2012, p. 71). Pointing that politically-instrumentalized funding was a cause for low-quality implementation of projects

¹⁸ Janmyr estimated that the UN contracted over 100 INGOs as IPs in Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan (2014).

by IPs; Donini suggests that aid diversion to the “Afghan Mujahedeen”, who were fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan, was widespread and accepted as a key part of the set of conditionality with local authorities enforcing it on the ground. Minear argues that not only UN humanitarian aid in Pakistan was deeply politicised, but donors made it difficult for the UN to maintain humanitarian programmes on the opposing side in Kabul, Afghanistan where, under Soviet occupation, aid levels became disproportionately lower than in Pakistan (Minear, 2012).

While the situation indeed was an extreme form of instrumentalization, the examples from Afghanistan/Pakistan are not isolated cases and continues to resonate today, argues Smillie. “They did it before the Cold War, during the Cold War, and they do it today,” (2012, p. 39).

Indeed, several decades later, Afghanistan and then Iraq saw a similar context as part of the Global War Against Terror (GWOT). In these situations, Western donors placed UN agencies and NGO IPs at the heart of “hearts and minds” strategies, with arguably harmful consequences for both the credibility and the security of aid workers, as numerous scholars suggest:

“In places such as Afghanistan and Iraq, there has been much obfuscation about the extent to which ‘humanitarian’ activities were embedded into the military interventions, with deleterious consequences for both the credibility of the humanitarian discourse and the security of aid agency staff,” (Donini, 2016, p. 80)

Political and military instrumentalization of UN humanitarian aid is not a domain exclusive to Western donors. For instance, **Challenge 1** can interact with the politicisation of aid, producing unfavourable contexts for partnership due to the influence of local governments. For example, in September 2016, media reports suggest that a coalition of 70 NGOs suspended cooperation with the UN in Syria demanding investigation into the influence of the Syrian regime on their humanitarian operations in the country (Beals & Hopkins, 2016).

While there is a near-consensus among scholars on the negative impact of politicisation on UN humanitarian aid and partnership with NGOs; Schwartz (2016) makes a case that these agencies act as barriers from a deeper form of instrumentalization, if NGOs were to turn directly to donor governments for funding. The resulting influence, however, seems to expose a form of strategic instrumentalization of UN humanitarian action by major donor states who contribute voluntarily. In the case of the United States, Schwartz, a former head of the US Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM), makes a revealing observation:

“While ongoing dialogue between US officials and all of these organisations (UN humanitarian agencies) ensures that US policy perspectives influence their activities, the bulk of this support is not project-based, but rather is programme support for what are usefully described as core operations less susceptible to political micro-management,” (Schwartz, 2016, p. 46)

The paper presents the second external challenge and its consequences as follows:

Challenge 2 (active politicization) -- Contextual

Donor states may use UN agencies to advance partisan agendas, political or military objectives

Some potential negative consequences on UN-NGO field-based partnerships:

- Could damage partnership reputation and credibility
- Could damage working relations between partners
- Could increase security risks for UN and partners
- Could lead to doing harm to affected population
- Could lead to the exclusion of some affected groups/populations from assistance/protection
- Could limit access to affected populations
- Could limit collaboration including sharing of information and resources
- Could restrict or break off implementing partnership in some contexts
- Could weaken coordination with other actors

Instead of receding due to the end of the global rivalry, Barnett argues that the instrumentalization of UN humanitarian action took a different form after the end of the Cold War and the global conflict between the Eastern and Western blocks:

“During the Cold War the U.S. and the Soviet Union played their war games in the Third World, but once the superpowers settled their differences they asked the United Nations to clean up their mess.” (Barnett, 2010, p. 4)

The three major humanitarian operations of the 1990s – Bosnia, the famine in Somalia and the response following the Rwandan Genocide – demonstrate a new type of instrumentalization of UN humanitarian aid. Contrary to many of the conflicts during the Cold War, Ferris (2011) suggests the new form of instrumentalization was rooted in the newly-gained ability of UN humanitarian agencies to be present in these countries, as conflicts unfolded. For instance, the breakup of Yugoslavia culminating in the Bosnia conflict in 1992 is crucial to understand how this change took place. Bosnia, Ferris argues, was the first context in which major powers used humanitarian assistance by the UN as an alternative to effective political action that addresses the root causes of a conflict. In Bosnia, UNHCR – the agency asked by the UN to lead the humanitarian response to the crisis – faced a situation where the victims did not cross any international borders and thus did not legally qualify for international protection under refugee

law (Walker & Maxwell, 2009). In the absence of mechanisms to protect civilians in war and the internally displaced, which were not yet developed, the primary task of UNHCR was limited to the provision of assistance mostly funded by the European Union and implemented through INGO IPs (Ibid.). In sum, scholars suggest major powers had asked UNHCR to provide aid to relieve pressure for military intervention (Weiss T. G., 2016). The High Commissioner at the time Sadako Ogata would become a long-time critic to this type of instrumentalization, famously stating that “there are no humanitarian solutions to humanitarian problems,” (UNHCR, 2005). Seybolt notes that while the UNHCR-run airlift during the siege of Sarajevo was vital and a humanitarian success, it could have helped stalemate the conflict by reducing the incentives for actions needed to end the war by foreign governments (2008). Dirk Salomons (2015) concurs that states ‘with the capacity to protect’ often hide behind funding to humanitarian operations, highlighting an ethical dilemma that continues to face UN agencies and NGO partners operating in such a context:

“...this raises the question whether humanitarian organisations should time and again accept their role in serving as the figleaf covering their donors’ pudenda – those parts of the body politic that they should be most ashamed of. Impartiality and neutrality then become embarrassing slogans...” (Salomons, 2015, p. 50)

It is important, however, to note that not all scholars subscribe to this particular critique of humanitarian action. Dubbing it as “critique of omission”, Slim argues that it is simplistic to reduce humanitarian response to a mere ‘fig leaf’ especially in highly complex situations:

“The same is true in Syria today where political unanimity and effective international strategy are genuinely difficult to find... it would be wrong to degrade humanitarian action as some immoral cop-out and a lesser good. It is instead a vital good and often the only good that international politics can help to enable,” (Slim, 2015, p. 22).

The paper presents the third external challenge and its consequences as follows:

Challenge 3 (passive politicisation) -- Contextual

Donor states may use funding to UN agencies as substitute for effective political action to end the crisis (“fig leaf” argument)

Some potential negative consequences on UN-NGO field-based partnerships:

- Could damage partnership reputation and credibility
- Could damage working relations between partners
- Could lead to doing harm to affected population
- Could lead to low quality of implementation

Another aspect of the Post-Cold War crises was that they were early examples of the “militarization” of humanitarian aid; what became a ‘routine involvement’ of military forces in the humanitarian effort (Weiss T. G., 2016, p. 19). The UN Protection Force for Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR, for instance, was created with a mandate “to create the conditions of peace and security” (United Nations, 1996). However – unable to deliver on its mandate – its actions became centred at the protection of the humanitarian operation (Ferris, 2011). Despite being one of the largest peacekeeping forces at the time, it was unable to create those conditions most visibly shattered during the massacre of Srebrenica (Ibid.) In that sense, Bosnia triggered two crucial changes in the way the UN addressed protection of civilians that will, in turn, have a significant impact on the partnership between its humanitarian agencies and NGOs in the field. On the one hand, according to Barnette, Bosnia and Somalia caused the UN to return “to first principles” entailing that protection of civilians during times of war meant considering the use of or close coordination with military force. The change materialised through closer cooperation with peacekeepers, international forces or a combination of both (Barnett, 2010, p. 7). On the other hand, it led to a surge in interest in human rights and advocacy; i.e. a form of politicisation of humanitarian action itself as Walker and Maxwell suggested (p. 62).

As the war in Bosnia raged, famine took a grip of Somalia in 1991-1992, and the humanitarian crisis became a “syndrome”, Walker & Maxwell argue, symbolising well-meaning attempts of foreigners to intervene in a crisis but then getting entangled in it (Ibid.). Like Bosnia, Somalia was another case where peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance were tied together from the beginning, but with a different role of peacekeepers – who have become more involved than their UNPROFOR counterparts in the conflict itself – argues Ferris (2011). For instance, Taylor Seybolt suggests that as long as UN peacekeepers in Somalia provided protection for humanitarian operations, they played mostly a constructive role. However, when the blue helmets took sides in the war engulfing the country, they compromised the security and access of humanitarian actors (Seybolt, 2008). Also, Ferris argues that “humanitarians’ nervousness” at integrated missions stemmed from the Somalia experience, where political and military considerations started to take over humanitarian needs, due to efforts to increase integration between the political and humanitarian branches of the UN. The change began in Somalia in 1992 with increasing the authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) to include humanitarian action (Ferris, 2011).

Indeed, scholars point the impact of integrating humanitarian action with political and peacekeeping, or peace-building, missions would become more evident in the following decade. As part of the GWOT starting in 2001, Afghanistan would witness a new form instrumentalization of humanitarian aid embodied by the concept of UN coherence. Donini argues UN Coherence, was “the code word” for the incorporation of humanitarian action in political designs and agendas of donors, the political UN, and of UN-mandated military coalitions (2012, p. 67). Comparing the context in Afghanistan before the war, when major powers were largely disinterested in the country, to the situation after its invasion by the US and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces in 2001, Donini suggests a clear correlation between politicised UN humanitarian funding and weak collaboration with NGOs. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), he argues, created conditions that were highly problematic to basic coordination, let alone partnerships between the UN and other humanitarian actors. In particular, NGOs dissociated themselves from the UN because they mistrusted the UNAMA and had other access to alternative funding (Donini, 2012). Indeed, NGOs have raised the alarm over the impact of integrated missions on collaboration. For example, a discussion paper by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) puts it as follows:

“UN integration and the perceived politicisation of the UN family have strained the UN-NGO working relationship – threatening effective coordination between the humanitarian UN and NGOs. There is growing hesitancy...to engage with the UN - including sharing of information, joint assessments and joint field visits,” (Glad, 2012, p. 2).

The paper presents the fourth external challenge and its consequences as follows:

Challenge 4 (UN Coherence) -- Contextual

The integration of UN humanitarian action into wider political or military objectives by the UN

Some potential negative consequences on UN-NGO field-based partnerships:

- Could damage partnership reputation and credibility
- Could damage working relations between partners
- Could increase security risks for UN and partners
- Could lead to the exclusion of some affected groups/populations from assistance/protection
- Could limit access to affected populations
- Could limit collaboration including sharing of information and resources
- Could restrict or break off implementing partnership in some contexts
- Could weaken coordination with other actors

3.3. Challenges of growth

There is no doubt that the humanitarian sector has seen a spectacular growth since the end of the Cold War, “the humanitarian market has been booming for over two decades” argues

Carbonnier (2015, p. 37). **Graph 1** (see Annexe 2) provided in his book on humanitarian economics, illustrates how substantial the growth is, even at constant prices (adjusted for inflation). In nominal figures, the sector saw a five-fold increase in the first decade after the Cold War growing from merely US\$800mn in 1989 to US\$4.4bn in 1999, only to quadruple to US\$16.7bn by 2010 (Weiss T. G., 2015). The latest available data show that trend is persisting and funding climbed to US\$28.0bn by the end of 2015; the highest level of humanitarian aid ever recorded following three years of consecutive increases (GHA, 2016). The latest GHA report also highlights that state donors have been the primary drivers for growth and, despite a growing role, private funding remains minuscule in comparison. In fact, state donors broke their records for a third consecutive year contributing US\$21.8bn in 2015, an 11 percent increase over the year before. Around two-thirds of funding from these donors was channelled through the six UN agencies that have a humanitarian or a humanitarian-related mandate, the report shows¹⁹.

In the previous section, the paper argued that political instrumentalization of aid has largely shaped humanitarian action in the past decades, raising questions on whether the growth in the sector explained partly or even entirely by the surge of political stakes in it. Carbonnier, who studied the reasons for the boom in the sector, concludes that there is little evidence that the surge in funding was a result of a comparable increase in needs:

“Ultimately, the humanitarian market boom of the 1990s and 2000s reflects the more prominent role of humanitarianism in global governance, next to a post-Cold War rise in peacekeeping operations. Humanitarian responses gained prominence as a foreign policy instrument, often used by default to compensate for the lack of political resolve and capacity to put an end to war crimes and crimes against humanity...” (Carbonnier, 2015, p. 65)

While we know that NGOs end up receiving a substantial portion of funding allocated to UN agencies primarily through the IP modality, it is impossible to determine the exact figure or comment on how much the total figure fluctuated over the years. “Totals to second-level recipients not captured in international reporting platforms,” (GHA, 2016, p. 67). However, as mentioned earlier, available estimates range between one-third and a half of total UN humanitarian agencies’ budgets are implemented by IPs (Ferris, 2011) and (Bartsiotas & Prom-Jackson, 2013), pointing to an amount between 17 to 26 percent of total international

¹⁹ WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN OCHA, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)

humanitarian assistance. The estimates could mean that humanitarian UN IPs implemented between US\$4.329bn to US\$ 6.5bn worth of projects in 2014, but such figures should be taken with a grain of salt, and are included here only to illustrate the magnitude of collaboration. However, more precisely, a review of financial reports and audited financial statements of UNHCR and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) indicates that their allocations to IPs have increased consistently in the last few years²⁰. For instance, between 2010 and 2014²¹, UNHCR funding to IPs nearly doubled rising from \$677mn to \$1.348bn and, during the same period, UNICEF increased its contributions to IPs by 45 per cent to reach \$1.5bn (see Graph 2 in **Annexe II**).

In contrast to the bright picture of greater collaboration offered by of these figures, which indeed indicate an impressive growth in the scale and scope of partnerships between UN agencies and NGOs, a closer look at UN agency funding reveal a more sobering trend. Unearmarked contributions to UN agencies from donors has decreased sharply to merely 16 percent in 2014 from 24 percent in 2012, while total earmarked funding for NGOs now represents over 92 percent of their total funding (GHA, 2016). In fact, growth in UN humanitarian budgets has been coupled with a “dramatic shift” to earmarked bilateral aid, with multilateral unearmarked contributions to UN agencies falling from 45 per cent in 1988 to an average of 25 percent in the mid-1990s (Barnett, 2010) before reaching their current record low. For instance, by 2002 nearly half of funding given by states to UN appeals were unsurprisingly earmarked to Afghanistan, in striking contrast to need-based allocation which would have made Sudan, Congo, Uganda, and Angola jump to the top of the list (Ibid.)

According to Barnett, earmarking in effect means the decision making power on where and how assistance takes place is stripped away from humanitarian actors not just at the global, or the organisational level, but all the way down to the project level. Donors can, in fact, influence or even dictate to the multilateral organisation if funds should be subcontracted to local or international NGOs (Weiss T. G., 2016, p. 21). Also, Weiss suggests that humanitarian projects under tightly earmarked funding inherently discourage risk-taking and experimentation by humanitarian actors due to its restricted nature. Nevertheless, the most devastating impact of

²⁰ The WFP financial statements did not contain information on the allocations provided by the agency to implementing partners.

²¹ 2014 is the last year when financial statements are available as of April 2017.

earmarking on projects is its ability to trigger donor preference-based programming in the field, reflecting donor interests and priorities rather than local needs:

“Far too often, donors specify that their money may only be used for one specific type of beneficiaries – be it in a region such as Darfur (at the expense of the needs registered in Blue Nile), be it for a specific activity such as water and sanitation (while leaving huge funding gaps for shelter), be it for a certain group such as women and children (at the expense of programmes to demobilise former combatants, for whom assistance is rare),”
(Salomons, 2015, p. 43)

The paper presents the fifth external challenge and its consequences as follows:

Challenge 5 (earmarking) -- Global

Increasing donor earmarking of UN humanitarian funding and bilateralisation of aid

Some potential negative consequences on UN-NGO field-based partnerships:

- Could damage working relations between partners
- Could lead to programming based on donor priorities rather than humanitarian needs
- Could lead to unfit partner selection
- Could limit access to affected populations
- Could limit innovation and experimentation

3.4. Challenges of marketization

While the growth of the sector has certainly allowed humanitarians to reach millions of people in need, it has also massively changed the way the sector is run; presenting unique challenges relevant to the partnership between UN humanitarian agencies and NGOs. Thus, the last section of this chapter explores the side effects of growth in line with the third form of instrumentalization, the *marketization* of humanitarian aid.

Humanitarianism is not only “steeped in politics”, argues Weiss, but it “operates in a marketplace” and despite funding becoming more available, resources are still “scarce” in comparison to needs (2016) and arguably to the number of suppliers. One remarkable impact of this, he adds, has been a radical shift in from a culture of cooperation to a culture of competition that resembles the business sector. Indeed, evidence from the literature supports Weiss’s conclusions, especially when applied to the implementing partnership modality.

The first manifestation of growth has been a sharp increase in the number of humanitarian actors globally: “on the supply side, the number and variety of actors providing emergency relief has exploded”, argues Carbonnier (2015, p. 37). For instance, the number of operational aid organisations has reached 4,480 with at least 450,000 aid workers among their ranks (ALNAP, 2015, p. 10). In fact, there could be up to 37,000 NGOs that have some relevance to humanitarian

action (Weiss T. G., 2016, p. 25) and Private Military & Security Companies (PMSCs), multinational corporations play an increasingly important role (Joachim & Schneiker, 2016).

Many scholars have even concluded that there is already a “partner proliferation problem” facing the sector. Kent & Evans (2015), for instance, highlight that the multiplying of actors creates many dilemmas for humanitarian organisations including, for example, forcing them to pay increasingly competitive salaries and underlining their dependency on funding from state donors. Hasani, El-Haddadeh, & Aktas (2016) focus on the influence of proliferation of actors on disaster response in the field, concluding it has “serious counterproductive effects” including uncoordinated efforts and duplication of projects (2016, p. 111).

Based on an in-depth field research, Alexander Cooley and James Ron conclude that implementing partnerships between International Organizations (IOs) and NGOs are affected by three main problems all leading to “destructive competition”. They firstly discuss principal-agent problems stemming from the very nature of the relations between humanitarian funders and IPs; i.e. contracting. As such, funders (e.g. UN agencies) are “principals”, and contractors (e.g. IP-NGOs) are “agents”. The problem innately creates multiple problems for UN agencies and IPs. For instance, if they chose to completely transparent about implementation issues facing a project, they would effectively damage their chances of contract renewal and thereby would be behaving against their organisational survival and growth. In other words, if a project is failing or not going according to UN plans, the implementing partner may conceal, withhold, or distort such information that is directly harmful to their interest in renewing contracts (2002, p. 15).

Cooley & Ron add the prevalence of a form of competitive bidding, whereby the contract length norm is between 6 months and 12 months and is renewed based on partner performance, further exacerbates competition. The competitive nature of contracting is also further complicated by the fact that NGOs incur high start-up costs not covered by project agreements.

“Because alternative contractors threaten to appropriate projects, INGOs are under constant pressure to renew, extend, or win new contracts, regardless of the project’s overall utility,” (Cooley & Ron, 2002, p. 16)

Finally, Cooley & Ron discuss the multiple-principals problem arising from competition among humanitarian actors for the same funding sources and thus limiting their incentive to pool resources, coordinate and even share information. The greater the numbers of humanitarian players, the more insecure organisations feel and may even seek to undermine competitors by

hiding information or merely acting individualistically to safeguard interests. These incentives also damage synergies between projects implemented by different IPs, diluting their contribution towards programme goals and strategies (2002, p. 16).

Further evidence, from the academic literature, support Cooley & Ron’s analysis. In fact, the combination of competition and earmarking exposes partnerships to politicisation:

“With rising numbers of organisations competing for funding and governments earmarking increasing amounts of monies for humanitarian window-dressing or active engagement in conflict areas based on political interest, many organisations have ended up being financially and strategically encapsulated by governmental donors,” (Herman, 2015, p. 26).

One need not agree with all Cooley & Ron and Herman’s conclusions to appreciate how hard collaboration can be. Funding “depends on visibility and branding” (Ferris, 2011, p. 100) and leads to “competition and turf battles” between agencies eager to demonstrate their relevance to the UN and donors (p. 99). The complex and diverse mandates of humanitarian organisations can generate competition that “leads to a massive waste of resources”, argues Sandvik (2016, p. 101).

The paper presents the sixth external challenge and its consequences as follows:

Challenge 6 (competition culture) -- Global

A culture of competition resulting from increasing budgets, diversity of mandates and number of humanitarian actors

Some potential negative consequences on UN-NGO field-based partnerships:

- Could damage partnership reputation and credibility
- Could damage working relations between partners
- Could decrease transparency between partners
- Could lead to duplicated projects
- Could lead to low quality of implementation
- Could limit collaboration including sharing of information and resources
- Could weaken coordination with other actors

4. Discussion and analysis

4.1. Analysis of *nontechnical (external)* challenges

The last chapter began with a quote by Weiss highlighting the importance of understanding the impact of instrumentalization on humanitarian action to improve its operations. As such, it is pertinent that this study further explores the identified external challenges, which are of a broad nature, regarding their micro-level consequences on projects implemented through the implementing partnership modality. Guided by standard criteria used for evaluating humanitarian projects: *efficiency, effectiveness, appropriateness, impact and coverage*; the section presents findings of an analysis conducted on the potential negative consequences of these challenges for implementing partnerships. Indeed, individual projects are affected differently, and the aim here is not to present definite ways external challenges interact with or affect project implementation, but to demonstrate their potential negative impact on the studied criteria.

Challenge 2 (active politicisation), **4** (UN coherence) and **6** (competition culture) appear to be particularly concerning to UN and NGO implementing partnerships. *Effectiveness* seems to be a key affected category, harmed by negative consequences stemming from all the identified external challenges, followed by *coverage* and *efficiency* affected each by four challenges respectively. Thus the findings suggest that the *nontechnical (external)* challenges not only have a high potential to compromise the ability of UN and IPs to reach humanitarian objectives, but they could also damage the cost effectiveness and scope of projects. **Table 1** below presents the number of identified negative consequences by challenge and criteria. The main findings are discussed in detail below, and **Annexe 3** includes the full framework used for the analysis.

Table 1

Criteria	Challenge 1	Challenge 2	Challenge 3	Challenge 4	Challenge 5	Challenge 6	Grand Total
<i>Appropriateness</i>		3		1	1		5
<i>Coordination</i>		1		1		1	3
<i>Coverage</i>	2	4		3	1		10
<i>Effectiveness</i>	3	4	3	3	3	4	20
<i>Efficiency</i>		2		2	1	3	8
<i>Impact</i>		1	1				2
Grand Total	5	15	4	10	6	8	48

Appropriateness

By potentially associating projects implemented under the IP modality with UN or donor political and military goals and or other forms of interests, **Challenge 2** (active politicisation) and **4** (UN Coherence) have a conceivable ability to damage the appropriateness of a project funded and implemented by UN NGO IPs. Lack of relevance is particularly pertinent to operations affected by a rampant politicisation of aid where donor political strategies can reduce the ability of UN agencies and their IPs to engage in projects that address local needs and priorities. In particular, these two challenges can affect selection criteria or damaging relations with local stakeholders.

Moreover, **Challenge 5** (earmarking) damages appropriateness of humanitarian projects implemented under the IP modality and, depending on the rigidity of earmarking; it can be harmful even such funding is not explicitly politicised. Since earmarking today affects all humanitarian operations and earmarked funding constitutes the bulk of funding to UN humanitarian agencies, it can be especially harmful to the appropriateness of projects implemented under the IP modality.

Coordination

Challenge 2 (active politicisation) and **4** (UN coherence) could seriously impede coordination of projects in operations affected by these contextual challenges. In particular, they can trigger some humanitarian actors to restrict, or in extreme situations seize, coordination with UN agencies and, to a lesser degree, with their IPs, due to their association with political or military actors and objectives.

Challenge 6 (competition culture) could damage coordination in all or most humanitarian contexts in two specific ways. Firstly, it could trigger some humanitarian actors to restrict coordination efforts with UN agencies and IPs implementing projects due to competition over funding. Secondly, it could create an internal competition dynamic between UN agencies, on the one hand, and among their IPs, on the other. As such, coordination in operations facing funding cuts can see an exacerbated damage from this particular challenge, particularly when there is a significant number of established of IPs that have invested significantly in their field presence and capacities. In contrast, generous funding in a context can also attract an exceptionally high number of IPs and thereby potentially complicate coordination efforts among actors. The third form of competition that can affect coordination is between the UN agency and its partners, especially when there is a significant difference in implementation modalities and strategies.

However, little evidence was found to support such an analysis; beyond the mention of visibility and branding of projects as possible areas of contention.

Coverage

As noted earlier, nontechnical (external) challenges can significantly harm the coverage of UN-NGO implementing partnerships, the analysis suggests. **Challenge 1** (different organisational cultures) can harm coverage by preventing or hindering projects from reaching affected areas when there is a restricted or limited state consent or due to diverging priorities and strategies. For example, this can happen when a UN agency decides to work in close collaboration with a government versus non-state actors in the context of an armed conflict, thus limiting partnerships to IPs operating in government-held areas or restricting interventions on the opposing side.

Challenge 2 (active politicisation), **4** (UN coherence) could present a more severe test to the coverage of projects implemented under the IP modality. By their ability to influence beneficiary selection criteria and causing some IPs – who enjoy a wider humanitarian access and reach – to refrain, limit or exit a partnership with a UN agency, due to the association of its funding with political or military agendas. In fact, even the perception of politicisation can be significantly harmful to coverage and access. By damaging the neutrality and impartiality of UN and IP humanitarian workers, these two challenges could also necessitate stricter limitations on movement and lead to deterioration of access in areas controlled by armed actors or groups that are opposed to a donor state or UN agendas.

Finally, **Challenge 5** (earmarking), a global challenge, can inherently restrict the coverage of projects to affected populations and locations, where there are humanitarian needs but a lack of donor interest in funding projects that respond to them.

Effectiveness

As highlighted earlier, the *effectiveness* of implementing partnerships appears to come under particular stress by *nontechnical (external)* challenges. The specific damage could stem from **Challenge 1** (different organisational cultures) which creates a fertile ground for counterproductive tensions and disagreements between UN agencies and their NGO IPs, even at the project level. In fact, all the *nontechnical (external)* could damage effectiveness by increasing tensions that complicate working relations between UN agencies and IPs for different reasons; ranging from projects that conflict with humanitarian principles, different approaches, contract renewals and competition. **Challenge 1** also could result in diverging priorities or, interpretation

of priorities, between UN agencies and partners. In other words, effectiveness suffers when partners have structurally different views on how to implement projects, different mandates, strategies, policies, guidelines and terminologies; let alone “organisational autonomy, something that is now jealously guarded” (Barnett, 2010, p. 417).

Challenge 2 (active politicisation) and **4** (UN coherence) could affect effectiveness by damaging the neutrality and impartiality of UN and their IPs in operations affected by politicisation, necessitating restrictions on access and limitations on field presence and thus potentially leading to lower quality monitoring and implementation. In the same token, the two challenges could damage effectiveness by putting at stake UN and IP relations with the major stakeholders, including the affected population.

Meanwhile, **Challenge 3** (passive politicisation) is likely to harm effectiveness by creating conditions that are inherently unfavourable to effective protection programming and, as such, predestines projects for minimal or questionable positive impact on the affected population, in addition to unduly raising their expectations.

Challenge 5 (earmarking) can lead to ineffectiveness not only when donors dictate how and where projects are implemented based on their preferences rather than humanitarian imperative and needs, but also when donors try to influence partner selection based on their interests rather than unique capacities and added value for the project.

As discussed earlier, **Challenge 6** (competition culture) creates strong incentives among partners to conceal information on failing or unsuccessful projects and thus could contribute to ineffectiveness by lowering the chances of corrective action at every level even inside organisations, which also highlights the potential of doing harm, reputational damage and other consequences. Finally, competition in the sector can also damage effectiveness by increasing pressures on NGOs and UN agencies in two additional ways. Firstly by pressure to implement projects that are outside the scope of expertise and capacities. Secondly, by diluting synergies between projects and thus undermining the overall impact of their work at the programme level as Cooley and Ron point out.

Efficiency

Challenge 2 (active politicisation) and **4** (UN Coherence) could have a direct influence on the efficiency of projects by necessitating higher security expenditures by UN and IPs, due to their direct damage to neutrality and increasing security risks faced in the field. As mentioned before,

together with **Challenge 6** (competition culture), they could restrict UN and IP collaboration with other humanitarian actors, thus reducing the chances of pooling or sharing resources and engagement in cross-organizational cost-saving collaboration, widely accepted as a key to improving the efficiency of humanitarian operations and logistics.

Challenge 5 (earmarking) can negatively impact efficiency by possibly dis-incentivizing UN and their IP-NGOs from exploring innovative or cost saving approaches due to financial restrictions posed by tightly earmarked donor grants that can even dictate procurement conditions based on donor interests and preferences.

In the same way that it harms effectiveness, **Challenge 6** (competition culture) can incentivise both IPs and UN agencies to conceal information on inefficient projects and activities, thus clearly leading to a waste of resources.

Impact

As discussed previously, **Challenge 2** (active politicisation) can trigger conditions favourable to the diversion of aid provided by NGO IPs to military or political actors supported by donor states, leading to a negative impact of these projects on affected communities. Moreover, **Challenge 3** (passive politicisation) can broadly result in projects contributing towards a viable alternative to political action that addresses the root causes of a crisis.

4.2. Analysis of *technical (internal)* challenges

As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, INGOs seem to be increasingly outspoken about technical difficulties relevant to their implementing partnerships with UN humanitarian agencies. The previous section demonstrated that *external (nontechnical)* challenges could have a significant negative impact on efficiency, effectiveness and coverage of projects implemented through the IP modality and, as such, have consequences of a technical nature. In this section, the aim is to identify the main purely technical challenges affecting these partnerships through looking at some recent reports and studies drafted by NGOs, UN agencies and donors on the topic. Also, it presents evidence linking internal (technical) and external (nontechnical) challenges. The analysis serves to answer the second part of the research question on the association between the two sets of challenges. Three main categories of technical challenges were identified based on the following themes: risk management, reporting requirements and administrative processes.

4.2.1. Challenges of risk management

Risk management policies and practices feature prominently in the organisational literature on technical challenges to partnership in humanitarian settings. For instance, a recent study by ICVA identifies UN agency and donor risk management policies and practices as the primary cause for technical hurdles facing NGO IPs in the field (ICVA, 2016). On the one hand, the report highlights that risk assessments and mitigation strategies have a strong influence on the frequency and scale of reporting requirements and administrative processes (discussed later in this chapter). On the other hand, it suggests that donors are transferring financial and non-financial risks to UN agencies that successively transfer these risks to their IPs with severe impacts on projects:

“This creates a multiplication factor whereby funds are administered with increased rigidity in the passage from institutional donors to UN agencies, NGOs and any other intermediary actor managing funds and leads to a multiplication of conditions that become more stringent at each transaction,” (ICVA, 2016, p. 37)

Even donors themselves increasingly acknowledge their low tolerance and appetite for risk as key challenges. While not representing the official views of the organisation, which groups the biggest humanitarian donors, an OECD working paper sums up the problem as follows:

“Most donors...have a low tolerance for risk-taking and indeed may not yet have actively defined their risk tolerance levels. As a result, failure to deliver is more often punished by restricting future funding to that partner, rather than being used more proactively as a learning opportunity.” (OECD, 2012, p. 43)

As elaborated in the discussion around **Challenge 6** (competition culture), risk management practices, therefore, can, like competition, act towards creating an incentive for IPs to withhold or distort information on failing projects from UN agencies, which could do the same with their donors. The incentive could be particularly high in the cases of corruption or aid diversion where NGOs are facing "double punishment" with already spent funds reclaimed by the UN agency (NRC; BCG, 2016, p. 3).

Moreover, the NRC study suggests that NGOs are resorting to risk avoidance by evading delivering in high-risk areas – where the humanitarian needs are arguably the highest – since they are responsible for taking on most of the financial risk associated with implementation in such areas (NRC; BCG, 2016). **Figure 3**, annexed to the study, illustrates how “zero tolerance” to in high-risk environments, such as conflict situations, incentivizes NGO IPs to operate in lower risk

areas to minimise exposure and financial loss due to for instance aid diversion, corruption, or compliance breach.

Links to risk management with external (nontechnical) challenges:

Technical Challenge 1 has strong connections to several nontechnical challenges. In particular; it is evident from the examined organisational literature that there is a close link with **Challenge 6** (competition culture). In other words, UN agencies seem to be employing more stringent risk management as a result of increased exposure to the risk presented by higher IP budgets, the proliferation of actors in the sector and competition among them. On the one hand the increasing number of partners and volume of resources allocated to IPs by itself “demonstrates the extent of risk exposure” to UN Agencies (Bartsiotas & Prom-Jackson, 2013, p. 5) and seems to trigger or necessitate by itself increasingly stringent risk management policies.

On the other hand, the increasing number of IPs presents particular risk management challenges for UN agencies regarding identifying, selecting, managing and monitoring their work, the same report adds. For example, “competition among (UN) agencies for the same IPs is also a recurrent issue” in emergency situations, and such environments are conducive to the particular “risks of favouritism and corruption” in the selection of IPs (Bartsiotas & Prom-Jackson, 2013, p. 24). As such, competition requires stricter risk management policies in the opinion of the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), clearly a significant UN oversight body.

Additionally, there is substantial evidence that **Challenge 5** (earmarking) exacerbates the particular difficulties to UN agencies and NGO IPs regarding risk management, especially in a global environment where donors increasingly pressure to improve effectiveness and efficiency. In particular, the JIU study argues that there is “a growing intolerance on the part of donor Member States regarding fraud and corruption”, undoubtedly a factor in their low appetite for risk that factored into their earmarking practices. In fact, the inspectors go to the extent of suggesting UN agencies need not only to deliver programmes in line with their mandates but with the regulations imposed on them by donors. While troubling from a humanitarian perspective, the JIU study rightly sees it as essential to manage high exposure to the risk of being financially in-compliant and unaccountable to donors (Bartsiotas & Prom-Jackson, 2013, p. 14).

The last UNICEF audited financial statement leaves little doubt on the direct relationship between earmarking and heightened financial risks for UN agencies, and thus for their IPs. In fact, this is relevant to the extent that UNICEF recognises earmarked funding as both a financial

asset and a liability. “The liability is reduced and revenue is recognised only when (donor) conditions have been satisfied,” the report points out (UNICEF, 2015, p. 79).

Finally, **Technical Challenge 1** is concomitant to **Challenge 2** (active politicisation) and **Challenge 4** (UN Coherence) through donor state and UN counter-terrorism agendas, legislation and policies that not only influence funding and partner selection decisions but increase significantly financial and reputational risks of operating in conflict situations. For instance, counter-terrorism risk management measures have resulted “in a greater percentage of humanitarian finance internally absorbed rather than being utilised to directly support affected populations” due to their impact on the operationally of NGOs (ICVA, 2015), clearly, a sign of risk avoidance discussed earlier. The HLP notes that counter-terrorism financing legislations can even create obstacles to the transferring of funds to IPs operating in high-risk areas.

“It is important to seek ways to reduce these barriers so that humanitarian aid workers are able to deliver aid in some of the most volatile and crisis-affected parts of the world,” (United Nations, 2016, p. 13)

The paper presents the first technical challenge, its consequences and its links with external challenges as follows:

Technical Challenge 1 (risk management) -- Global

UN agencies employ stringent risk management practices that transfer risks to IPs

Links to external (nontechnical) challenges:

- Exacerbated by Challenge 6 (competition culture), Challenge 5 (earmarking), Challenge 2 (active politicisation) and Challenge 4 (UN Coherence)

Some potential negative consequences on UN-NGO field-based partnerships:

- Could increase reporting and administrative requirements
- Could limit access to some affected populations
- Could decrease incentives for transparency among partners
- Could damage relations between UN and implementing partners

4.2.2. Challenges of reporting

As any humanitarian practitioner would expect, reporting requirements feature as one of the most prominent technical difficulties to implementing partnerships in the analysed organisational literature. Several studies lament the magnitude of reports and documentations submitted by NGOs to UN agencies and other donors, and some go to the extent of suggesting there is “limited evidence that it is used” due to lack of received feedback (ICVA, 2016, p. 7).

In particular reference to UN-NGO implementing partnerships, the ICVA study suggests that agencies demand more frequent reports from their IPs, compared to institutional donors. While

UN humanitarian agencies required six to eight official reports per year, donors needed on average two reports to a maximum of six per year. Not contrary to the study by ICVA, the UN JIU study provides insights on the reasons for high reporting requirements on IPs by UN agencies, expressing concerns that there could be an overreliance on reporting to verify implementation rather than monitoring and field presence. For instance, the study notes in emergency contexts some UN agencies may not have direct access to the beneficiaries and thus have to rely entirely on “IP self-reporting” due to security restrictions or lack of access and projects implemented remotely. The lack of staff versus the number of projects implemented by IPs can also contribute to this problem (Bartsiotas & Prom-Jackson, 2013).

Furthermore, the lack of harmonisation in the reporting formats between UN agencies themselves, in addition to donors, creates significant challenges for NGO IPs, according to the examined organisational literature. For instance, the harmonisation of financial reporting formats across UN agencies and humanitarian donors can save up to 898,000 work hours per year for NGO IPs (NRC; BCG, 2016, p. 10). Regarding the direct impact of high reporting requirements on field-based partnerships, the ICVA study suggests that it primarily underscores the increasing prominence of office rather than operational work in humanitarian settings. In other words, “it illustrates how aid can be affected by the compliance with administrative requirements, rather than fulfilling need: a cornerstone of humanitarian principles,” (ICVA, 2016, p. 23). The HLP report to the UNSG confirms that reporting requirements not only have significant costs in staff time and financial resources but can significantly affect the work of frontline humanitarian workers especially in emergency situations where field presence is needed most. For example, the HLP highlights the following example from NGOs responding to the Syria refugee crisis:

“...international and national NGOs working in Turkey who expressed concerns regarding how much time they were spending in the office—instead of serving Syrian refugees—as a result of the increasing reporting requirements which result in greater administrative burdens,” (United Nations, 2016, p. 21)

Links to reporting requirements with external (nontechnical) challenges:

The increasing reporting burden is broadly a result of requirements by humanitarian donors, especially in a global context where state donors increasingly need to justify funding humanitarian aid to their constituencies. Consequently, “they impose customised reporting formats and systems on the implementing partners to which they contribute,” (United Nations,

2016, p. 21). As such, it is likely that the reporting pressure placed on UN agencies is being passed down, similarly to risk, from donors to their implementing UN agencies who then forward the burden to their IPs.

In fact, the study by ICVA found that earmarked funding, in particular when a project is co-funded by earmarked donations from several donors, requires burdensome grant-specific reporting and “repeated reporting for each donor contributions to a project” (ICVA, 2016, p. 15). UNICEF and UNHCR project agreements with NGOs, for instance, stipulate that in addition to standard reporting, the two agencies can ask for donor-specific additional reporting during the course of a project. Thus, **Challenge 5** (earmarking) creates a need for UN agencies to increase reporting requirements and request customised reports from their IPs, for them to be able to report to their donors in sufficient detail and remain accountable.

Furthermore, as discussed earlier, increased reporting requirements can be broadly linked to the reliance on reports in emergency situations to verify progress. As such, since **Challenge 2** (active politicisation) and **5** (UN coherence) can contribute to limitations on access and field presence, they could also be seen as an indirect factor in increasing the UN agency reliance on reporting in highly politicised environments, which compromise security.

The paper presents the second technical challenge, its consequences and links with external challenges can as follows:

Technical Challenge 2 (reporting) -- Global

UN agency require a high number of reports from NGO implementing partners

Links to external (nontechnical) challenges:

- Exacerbated by Challenge 5 (earmarking), Challenge 2 (active politicisation), and Challenge 5 (UN coherence)

Some potential negative consequences on UN-NGO field-based partnerships:

- Could increase costs in terms of staff time and financial resources
- Could limit access to some affected populations
- Could lead to lower quality of implementation
- Could damage relations between UN and implementing partners

4.2.3. Challenges of administrative processes

Issues around inflexible processes of administrative nature feature prominently as key technical challenges to partnerships between humanitarian actors. In fact, the sector as a whole continues to face “structural deficiencies” due to duplicated administrative systems and processes (ALNAP, 2015, p. 112).

The NRC study on donor requirements, for instance, found that NGOs see it challenging and time-consuming to claim administrative expenditures and costs from UN agencies and donors, noting that significant staff time and resources are “wasted on cumbersome” processes (2016, p. 11). Similarly, the ICVA study blames that the diversity and complexity of administrative procedures put in place by different UN humanitarian agencies. Such processes not only demand from NGO IPs a high level of staff skills but sophisticated financial and managerial systems that often requires adaptation to ensure compliance (ICVA, 2016). In particular, the study notes that Partner Capacity Assessments (PCAs), the very process of selecting and IPs, and auditing present heavy administrative burdens. For example, NGOs consider requirements of UN agencies particularly high since each agency conducts their own extensive PCAs and organisations rarely share results among each other. Also, duplication between audits and verification exercises put additional administrative burdens on IPs. The JIU report expresses the same view calling for the creation of a common UN framework for sharing information on IPs:

“A robust information-sharing framework for IPs would...promote joint monitoring, evaluation and auditing of common IPs. It would also permit the use of pre-assessments, progress reports and audits already done by one United Nations organization, and hence reduce administrative and transaction costs,” (Bartsiotas & Prom-Jackson, 2013, p. 43)

While the administrative burdens are high on UN IPs, the NRC study suggests a growing hesitance among UN humanitarian agencies to fund administrative costs, creating not only difficulties in meeting requirements but a risk of overcharging other donors. Indeed, evidence from UN organisational literature supports growing tensions between agencies and IPs around coverage of administrative costs. For instance, UNHCR latest financial statement outlines the agency’s aim to continue reducing administrative expenses and maintain pressure on IPs for efficiency, in the last financial statements:

“Tight control over administrative costs is the key mechanism by which UNHCR can control the overall costs of implementing partners and ensure continued pressure to secure efficient delivery to beneficiaries,” (UNHCR, 2015, p. 11)

Links to administrative processes with external (nontechnical) challenges:

Partnerships between the UN and NGOs seem to be particularly affected by administrative hurdles stemming from two self-contradicting factors. Firstly, pressure by donors on UN agencies to increase efficiency, and thus a pressure by the agencies on IPs to reduce administrative costs.

Secondly, the need to maintain complex processes to be able to meet the requirements requested by the same donors. The pressure to increase efficiency suggests a clear link with **Challenge 6 (competition culture)** since competition is the primary driver behind organisational efforts to demonstrate themselves as efficiently as possible and remain competitive and financially sustainable vis-à-vis other organisations. The need to maintain complex administrative processes could result from **Challenge 4** (earmarking), which influence the heaviness of procedures when donors require specific audit requirements, or when projects are co-funded by several earmarked grants necessitating complex financial reporting systems and skilled staff. Moreover, there is some evidence that **Challenge 1** (different organisational and operational cultures) can contribute to tensions around administrative issues. The NRC study takes such a view: “UN agencies do not consider themselves donors and therefore expect NRC to cover parts of admin and support costs with own funds,” (NRC; BCG, 2016, p. 12), evidently an issue for UN agencies:

“...most implementing partners will generally seek to recover the full cost of their activities, in order to ensure their own financial sustainability, and that those risks need to be carefully managed,” the report adds (UNHCR, 2015, p. 28).

The paper presents the third technical challenge, its consequences and its links with external challenges as follows:

Technical Challenge 3 (administration)

UN humanitarian agencies require IPs to abide by complex administrative processes but are hesitant to increase admin/support costs

Links to external (nontechnical) challenges:

- Exacerbated by Challenge 6 (competition culture), Challenge 4 (earmarking), Challenge 1 (different organisational and operational cultures)

Some potential negative consequences on UN-NGO field-based partnerships:

- Could increase costs in terms of staff time and financial resources
- Could divert attention from needs to office work and administrative processes
- Could create tensions/disagreements between partners

5. Conclusions

The general findings of the study point that while it is evident UN agencies and NGOs play an increasingly prominent role in global governance – as demonstrated in the growth of their collaboration and the humanitarian sector as a whole – their ability to conduct principled, efficient and effective humanitarian action is hampered by complex interrelated challenges.

External (nontechnical) challenges to these partnerships are multifaceted but gulf into two broad categories. The first type encompasses challenges that result directly from instrumentalization of UN humanitarian action by donor states, host states or the political UN, including active and passive politicisation, UN coherence and earmarking. These challenges clash with the basic principles of humanitarian action and often divert field partnerships from the needs of affected populations. UN agencies appear to have become convenient targets for a form of strategic manipulation due to dependency on voluntary funding. While some scholars argued that UN agencies insulate their partners from a deeper form of instrumentalization, it could be in the fact that donors found it more practical and efficient to instrumentalize through the UN. Instead of manipulating each actor bilaterally, an impossible task, donors rely on funding to influence humanitarian response strategically, and by earmarking their funds, they ensure compliance and control at every level. Instrumentalization not only defeats the very purpose and benefits of multilateral humanitarianism but makes individual projects less effective and costlier. The second category includes external challenges that humanitarians themselves have mostly built or contributed to; a form of self-instrumentalization by their different organisational cultures and approaches, in addition to a competition culture that puts autonomy and growth first.

Furthermore, the study found that internal (technical) challenges to these partnerships are to a large extent consequential to external challenges. Competition, earmarking and politicisation create substantial financial and nonfinancial risks that UN agencies have to manage and thus transfer them to IPs. Burdensome reporting and administrative processes requirements are also consequences of tight earmarking and seem to increase when security conditions restrain field presence. These processes also result of actors' insistence on organisational autonomy (thus the chronic lack of harmonisation) aggravated by a two-faced push by donors for efficiency, while their earmarking increases the burdens and complexity of processes. Against a background of growth, the title of the paper asked if there has been a shift to a closer form partnership between the UN and NGOs, but found evidence pointing to the contrary. More is not always better.

6. Bibliography

- ALNAP. (2013). *Evaluation of Humanitarian Action: Pilot Guide*. London: ALNAP. Retrieved from <http://www.alnap.org/resource/8229>
- ALNAP. (2015). *The State of the Humanitarian System*. London: ALNAP/ODI. Retrieved from <http://www.alnap.org/what-we-do/effectiveness/sohs>
- Barnett, M. (2010). *The International Humanitarian Order*. New York: Routledge.
- Barnett, M. (2015). Paternalism and Global Governance. *Social Philosophy*, 32(1), 216-243.
- Bartsiotas, G. A., & Prom-Jackson, S. (2013). *Implementing Partners in United Nations System Organizations*. Geneva: Joint Inspection Unit - United Nations. Retrieved from https://www.unju.org/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2013_4_English.pdf
- BBC News. (2017, March 11). *UN: World facing greatest humanitarian crisis since 1945*. Retrieved from BBC News: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-39238808>
- Beals, E., & Hopkins, N. (2016, September 8). *Aid groups suspend cooperation with UN in Syria because of Assad 'influence'*. Retrieved from The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/08/aid-groups-un-syria-concern-assad-united-nations>
- Carbonnier, G. (2015). *Humanitarian Economics: War, Disaster and the Global Aid Market*. London: C. Hurst & Co.
- Christie, R. (2015). Critical Readings of Humanitarianism. In R. M. Ginty, & J. H. Peterson (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion of Humanitarian Action* (pp. 38-48). New York: Routledge.
- Cooley, A., & Ron, J. (2002). The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transnational Action. *International Security*, 27(1), 5–39.
- Dijkzeul, D., & Hilhorst, D. (2016). Instrumentalisation of aid in humanitarian crises: obstacle or precondition for cooperation? In V. M. Heins, K. Koddenbrock, & C. Unrau (Eds.), *Humanitarianism and Challenges of Cooperation* (pp. 54-71). New York: Routledge.
- Donini, A. (2012). Afghanistan: Back to the Future. In A. Donini (Ed.), *The Golden Fleece: Manipulation and Independence in Humanitarian Action* (pp. 67-88). Sterling: Stylus Publishing.
- Donini, A. (2012). Introduction. In A. Donini (Ed.), *The Golden Fleece: Manipulation and Independence in Humanitarian Action* (pp. 1-13). Sterling: Stylus Publishing.

- Donini, A. (2016). Decoding the software of humanitarian action: universal or pluriversal? In V. M. Heins, K. Koddenbrock, & C. Unrau (Eds.), *Humanitarianism and Challenges of Cooperation* (pp. 72-82). New York: Routledge.
- Els, C., Mansour, K., & Carstensen, N. (2016). *Funding to national and local humanitarian actors in Syria: between sub-contracting and partnerships*. L2GP. Retrieved from http://www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/L2GP_funding_Syria_May_2016.pdf
- Ferris, E. G. (2011). *The Politics of Protection*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.
- Georgieva, K., & Shah, S. N. (2016). Coordinating Funding for Humanitarian Emergencies. *The UN Chronicle*(1), 19-22.
- GHA. (2016). *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2016*. Bristol: Development Initiatives. Retrieved from <http://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Global-Humanitarian-Assistance-Report-2016.pdf>
- Glad, M. (2012). *A Partnership At Risk? The UN-NGO relationship in light of UN integration*. Oslo: Norwegian Refugee Council. Retrieved from <https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/a-partnership-at-risk.pdf>
- Hasani, S., El-Haddadeh, R., & Aktas, E. (2016). The Partner Proliferation Problem in Disaster Response Networks. In C. W. Zobel, N. Altay, & M. P. Haselkorn (Eds.), *Advances in Managing Humanitarian Operations* (pp. 111 - 135). Springer International Publishing.
- Herman, J. (2015). International law and humanitarian space in the twenty-first century: challenged relationships. In A. Zwitter, C. K.Lamont, H.-J. Heintze, & J. Herman (Eds.), *Humanitarian Action: Global, Regional and Domestic Legal Responses* (pp. 11-32). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hopkins, N., & Beals, E. (2016, August 29). *How Assad regime controls UN aid intended for Syria's children*. Retrieved from The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/29/how-assad-regime-controls-un-aid-intended-for-syrias-children>
- ICVA. (2015). *Inputs to the High Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing from the NGO Community*. Geneva: International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA). Retrieved from <https://www.icvanetwork.org/resources/high-level-panel-humanitarian-financing-ngo-inputs>
- ICVA. (2016). *Less Paper More Aid: Reporting, Partner Capacity Assessment, and Audit*. Geneva: International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA). Retrieved from <http://lesspapermoreaid.org/documents/lpma-reporting.pdf>

- Janmyr, M. (2014). Attributing Wrongful Conduct of Implementing Partners to UNHCR. *Journal of International Humanitarian Legal Studies*, 5, 42-69.
- Joachim, J., & Schneiker, A. (2016). Between marketisation and altruism: humanitarian assistance, NGOs and private military and security companies. In V. M. Heins, K. Koddenbrock, & C. Unrau (Eds.), *Humanitarianism and Challenges of Cooperation* (pp. 185 - 198). New York: Routledge.
- Kent, R., & Evans, S. (2015). Humanitarian Futures. In *The Routledge Companion to Humanitarian Action* (pp. 387 - 402). Routledge: New York.
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *Definition of instrumentalize*. Retrieved February 2, 2017, from Merriam-Webster.com: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/instrumentalize>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *Definition of Marketization*. Retrieved January 26, 2017, from Merriam-Webster.com: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/marketization>
- Minear, L. (2012). Humanitarian Action and Politicization: A Review of Experience Since World War II. In *The Golden Fleece: Manipulation and Independence in Humanitarian Action* (pp. 43-64). Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing .
- Natsios, A. S. (1995). NGOs and the UN system in complex humanitarian emergencies: conflict or cooperation? *Third World Quarterly*, 16(3), 405-420.
- NRC; BCG. (2016). *Institutional donor requirements: Report on Sectoral challenges*. Oslo: Norwegian Refugee Council. Retrieved from <https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/office/whs/institutional-donor-requirements-report-on-sectoral-challenges-21.05.pdf>
- OECD. (2012). *Towards Better Humanitarian Donorship: 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews*. Paris: OECD. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/towardsbetterhumanitariandonorship.htm>
- OED Online. (2016, December). *Definition of politicization*. Retrieved January 25, 2017, from OED Online: <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/146894?redirectedFrom=politicization#eid>
- Salomons, D. (2015). The perils of Dunantism: the need for a rights-based approach to humanitarianism. In A. Zwitter, C. K. Lamont, H.-J. Heintze, & J. Herman (Eds.), *Humanitarian Action: Global, Regional and Domestic Legal Responses* (pp. 33-53). Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.
- Sandvik, K. B. (2016). Stronger, faster, better: three logics of humanitarian. In V. M. Heins, K. Koddenbrock, & C. Unrau (Eds.), *Humanitarianism and Challenges of Cooperation* (pp. 97-112). New York: Routledge.

- Schöch, R. (2008). Afghan Refugees in Pakistan during the 1980s: Cold War. *New Issues in Refugee Research*. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/research/working/4868daad2/afghan-refugees-pakistan-during-1980s-cold-war-politics-registration-practice.html>
- Schwartz, E. P. (2016). Humanitarian NGOs as instruments, partners, advocates and critics in the governance of international humanitarian response: complementary or conflicting roles? *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Administration*, 38(1), 43-59.
- Seybolt, T. B. (2008). *Humanitarian Military Intervention: The Conditions for Success*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Slim, H. (2015). Wonderful Work: Globalizing the ethics of humanitarian action. In R. M. Ginty, & J. H. Peterson (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Humanitarian Action* (pp. 13-25). New York: Routledge.
- Smillie, I. (2012). The Emperor's Old Clothes: The Self-Created Siege of Humanitarian Action. In *The Golden Fleece: Manipulation and Independence in Humanitarian Action* (pp. 17-41). Sterling: Stylus Publishing .
- UNHCR. (2005, May 27). *Ogata calls for stronger political will to solve refugee crises*. Retrieved from UNHCR: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2005/5/4297406a2/ogata-calls-stronger-political-solve-refugee-crises.html>
- UNHCR. (2015). *Financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2014: Report of the Board of Auditors*. New York: United Nations. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/55f2c7099.pdf>
- UNICEF. (2015). *Financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2014 and Report of the Board of Auditors*. New York: United Nations. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/A-70-5-Add3-Financial_reports-ODS-EN.pdf
- United Nations. (1996, September). *Former Yugoslavia - UNPROFOR*. Retrieved from United Nations : http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unprof_b.htm
- United Nations. (2016). *High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing Report to the United Nations Secretary-General: Too important to fail—addressing the humanitarian financing gap*. New York: United Nations. Retrieved from <https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/%5BHLP%20Report%5D%20Too%20important%20to%20fail%E2%80%94addressing%20the%20humanitarian%20financing%20gap.pdf>
- Walker, P., & Maxwell, D. (2009). *Shaping the Humanitarian World*. New York: Routledge.

Weiss, T. G. (2015). The United Nations. In R. M. Peterson (Ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Humanitarian Action* (pp. 167-178). New York: Routledge.

Weiss, T. G. (2016). Humanitarianism's contested culture in war zones. In V. M. Heins, K. Koddenbrock, & C. Unrau (Eds.), *Humanitarianism and Challenges of Cooperation* (pp. 17-38). New York: Routledge.

WHS. (2016). *The Grand Bargain - A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need*. Istanbul, Turkey: WHS. Retrieved from https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/grand_bargain_final_22_may_final-2_0.pdf

7. Annexes

7.1. Annexe I: Definitions

Instrumentalization of humanitarian aid: To instrumentalize is to “render instrumental (serving as a crucial means, agent, or tool)” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Instrumentalization of humanitarian aid is therefore understood in this paper as a concept embodying all efforts to utilise or influence humanitarian action and actors to accomplish objectives other than providing protection and assistance to populations affected by conflict, human-made or natural disasters in line with the humanitarian principles²². This understanding is consistent with Donini’s, who defines instrumentalization as a “shorthand for the use of humanitarian action or rhetoric as a tool to pursue political, security, military, development, economic and other non-humanitarian goals,” (Donini, 2012, p. 2). In this regard, the study also adopts the understanding outlined by Weiss that there are three main forms of instrumentalization affect humanitarian action: politicisation, militarization, and marketization (Weiss T. G., 2016).

Politicisation of humanitarian aid: The Oxford dictionary defines politicisation as “the action or process of making political or of establishing upon a political basis” (OED Online, 2016). In the context of humanitarian response, Christie identifies two ways the concept is used. On the one hand, the concept has been used by scholars to explain and criticise the tendency by states to dictate the terms of humanitarian aid based on political interests (Christie, 2015). “The argument here is that humanitarianism inherently transcends politics, that it is based on commitments that are (or at least should be) inalienable. In this view any role of the state that diminishes the primary commitment to the ‘other’ is deeply problematic,” (Christie, 2015, p. 45). On the other hand, Christie identifies a second utilisation of the concept that discusses ‘re-politicising’ humanitarianism, since it operates as a universal ideal that ‘imposes’ a particular meaning of human dignity on ‘the other’. This necessarily requiring political engagement with states on ensuring rights and protection of civilians (Ibid.). Both types of politicisation are relevant to this study, but the emphasis is placed on the first type as it poses a more serious challenge.

Militarization of humanitarian aid: Weiss describes militarization in the context of humanitarian action as the increasingly ‘routine involvement’ of military forces in humanitarian efforts (Weiss T. G., 2016). For this study, it is considered that the concept is inclusive of any

²² For further information and definition of humanitarian principles, please see https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples_eng_June12.pdf

military involvement in humanitarian contexts; whether in it is in a context of peacekeeping, protection of humanitarians or delivery of aid by militaries. In addition, the study utilises the concept to shed light on particular challenges facing NGO-UN partnerships in conflict contexts where the UN simultaneously operates peacekeeping, peacebuilding and political missions, in addition to providing humanitarian aid.

Marketization of humanitarian aid: The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines marketization as “the act or process of entering into, participating in, or introducing a free market economy” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). In the context of humanitarian action, marketization has been used by scholars to describe several closely-related trends: the growth in humanitarian budgets leading to its transformation into a full-fledged “industry”, competition among humanitarian organizations mimicking private enterprises, adoption of business practices by aid actors, and the increasing involvement of private entities and contractors in the delivery and security of humanitarian action.

7.2. Annexe II: Figures

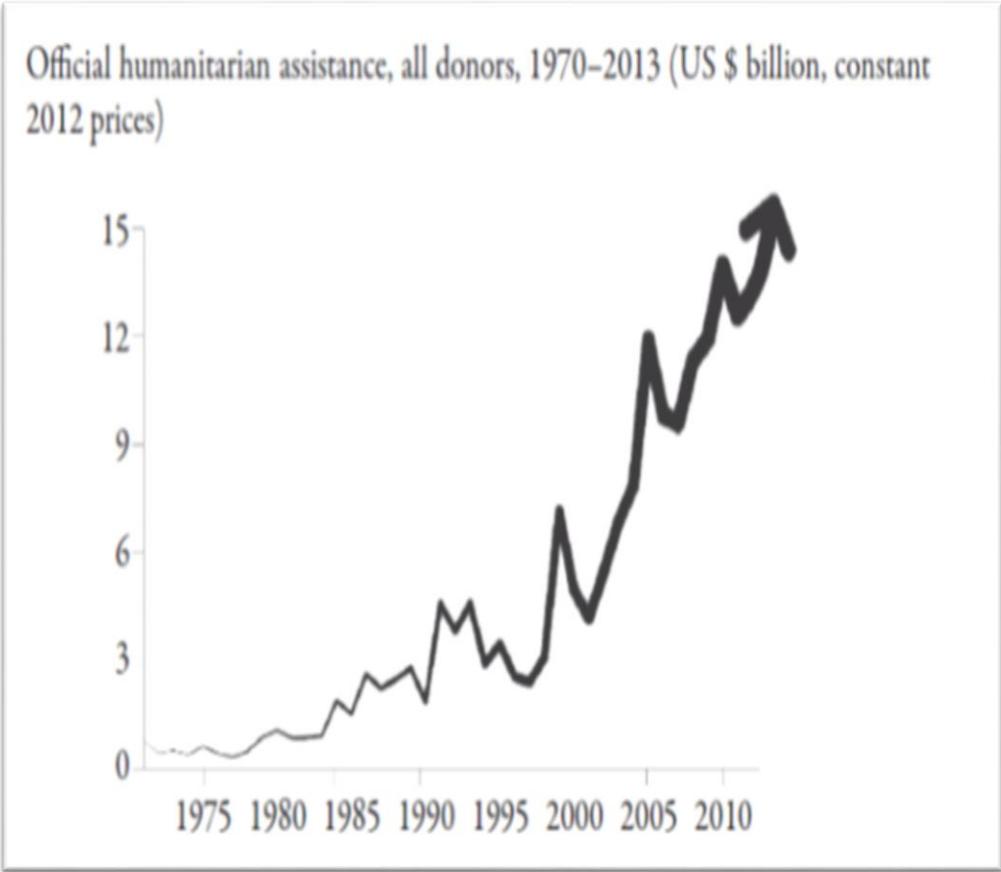


Figure 1, source: (Carbonnier, 2015, p. 42)

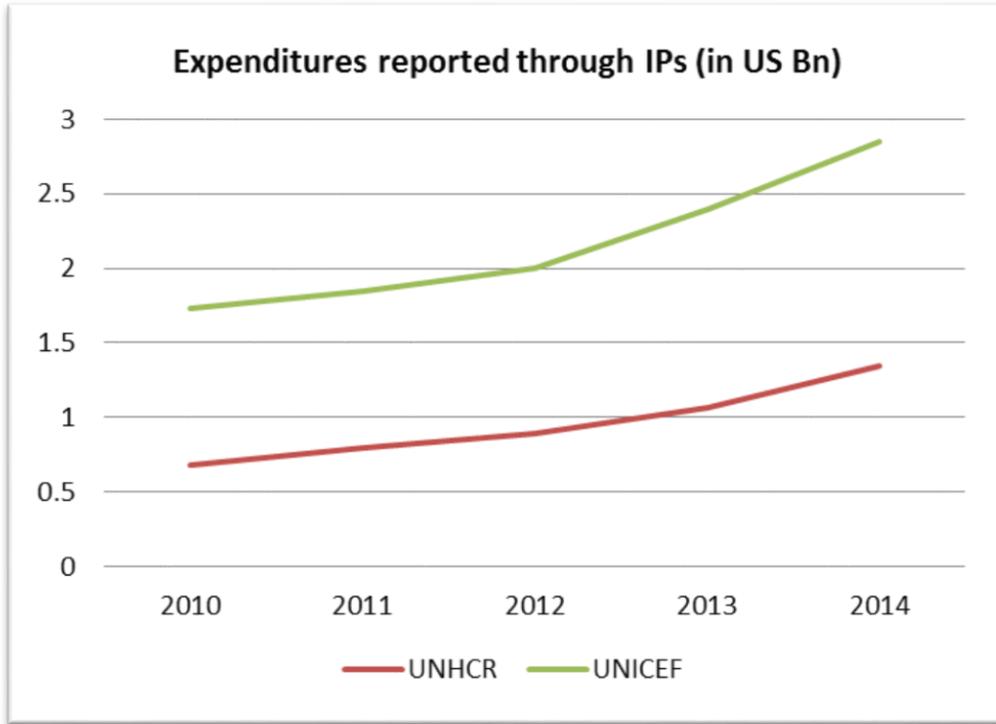
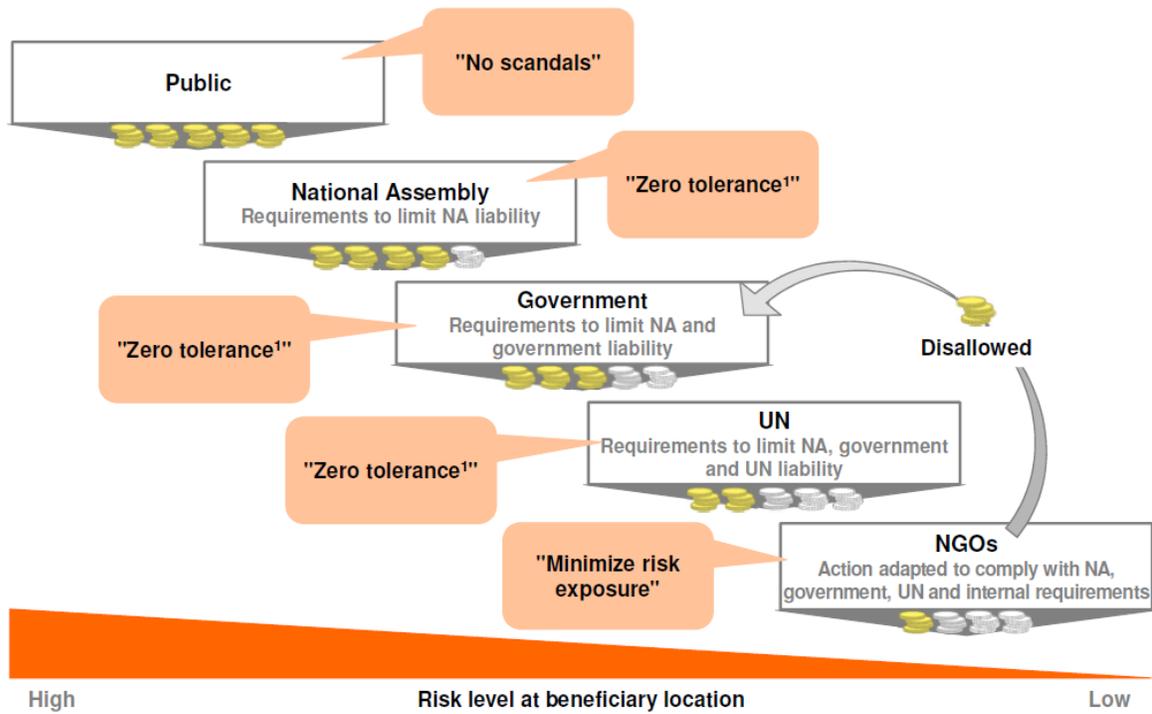


Figure 2 source: data from UNHCR and UNICEF financial statements



1. Zero tolerance for aid diversion, corruption, force majeure, compliance breach – regardless of context

Figure 3 source : (NRC ; BCG, 2016, p. 3)

7.3. Annexe III: Framework for analysis of external challenges

Row Labels	Appropriateness	Coordination	Coverage	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Grand Total
Challenge 1 Different organizational cultures			2	3			5
Could lead to low quality of implementation							
By leading to ineffective programming due to difference in strategies and approaches				1			1
Could limit access to affected populations							
By restricting UN agencies and IPs ability to work in areas where there is a restricted state consent			1				1
Could restrict implementing partnership in some contexts							
By preventing or hindering projects from reaching objectives due to diverging priorities of UN agencies and IPs				1			1
Could restrict or break off implementing partnership in some contexts							
By causing some IPs to limit or exit partnership with UN agencies due to diverging priorities and strategies			1				1
Could damage working relations between partners							
By creating tensions between UN agencies and IPs for treatment as subcontractors and not as equal partners				1			1
Challenge 2 Active politicization	3	1	4	4	2	1	15
Could damage partnership reputation and credibility							
By damaging UN and IPs relations with local stakeholders due to association	1			1			2

Row Labels	Appropriateness	Coordination	Coverage	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Grand Total
with political/military agendas							
Could lead to doing harm to affected population							
By creating conditions favourable to diversion of aid to political/military actors supported by donor states						1	1
Could lead to the exclusion of some affected groups/populations from assistance/protection							
By affecting beneficiary selection criteria or excluding beneficiaries who belong to certain affected groups	1		1	1			3
By associating projects with donor political/military goals and away from local needs and priorities	1						1
Could limit access to affected populations							
By restricting access of UN and IPs to areas controlled by military actors or groups, opposed to donor agendas			1				1
Could restrict or break off implementing partnership in some contexts							
By causing some IPs to limit or exit partnership with UN agencies due to political/military association			1				1
Could damage working relations between partners							
By increasing tensions or disagreements among UN and IPs around humanitarian priorities and principles				1			1
Could increase security risks for UN and partners							
By damaging the neutrality of UN and IPs humanitarian workers, necessitating					1		1

Row Labels	Appropriateness	Coordination	Coverage	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Grand Total
higher security expenditures							
By damaging the neutrality of UN and IPs humanitarian workers, necessitating limitations on field presence				1			1
By damaging the neutrality of UN and IPs humanitarian workers, creating restrictions on access			1				1
Could limit collaboration including sharing of information and resources							
By restricting UN and IPs collaboration with other humanitarian actors					1		1
Could weaken coordination with other actors							
By causing some actors to restrict or seize coordination with UN agencies and IPs due to political/military associations		1					1
Challenge 3 Passive politicisation				3		1	4
Could damage partnership reputation and credibility							
By leading to ineffective protection and assistance programming that raises expectations and fails to address root causes				1			1
Could lead to doing harm to affected population							
By contributing to an alternative to effective political action						1	1
Could lead to low quality of implementation							
By leading to ineffective protection and assistance programming that raises expectations and fails to address root causes				1			1
Could damage working relations between partners							

Row Labels	Appropriateness	Coordination	Coverage	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Grand Total
By increasing tensions or disagreements among UN and IPs around humanitarian principles				1			1
Challenge 4 UN Coherence	1	1	3	3	2		10
Could damage partnership reputation and credibility							
By damaging UN and IPs relations with local stakeholders due to association with political/military actors				1			1
Could lead to the exclusion of some affected groups/populations from assistance/protection							
By affecting beneficiary selection criteria or excluding beneficiaries who belong to certain affected groups			1				1
By associating projects with donor political/military goals and away from local needs and priorities	1						1
Could limit access to affected populations							
By restricting access of UN and IPs to areas controlled by certain military actors or groups, opposed to political UN agendas			1				1
Could restrict or break off implementing partnership in some contexts							
By causing some IPs to limit or exit partnership with UN agencies due to political/military association			1				1
Could damage working relations between partners							
By increasing tensions or disagreements among UN and Is around humanitarian principles				1			1

Row Labels	Appropriateness	Coordination	Coverage	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Grand Total
Could increase security risks for UN and partners							
By damaging the neutrality of UN and IP humanitarian workers, necessitating higher security expenditures					1		1
By damaging the neutrality of UN and IP humanitarian workers, necessitating restrictions on field presence				1			1
Could limit collaboration including sharing of information and resources							
By restricting UN and IP collaboration with other humanitarian actors					1		1
Could weaken coordination with other actors							
By causing some actors to restrict or seize coordination with UN agencies and IPs due to political/military associations		1					1
Challenge 5 Earmarking	1		1	3	1		6
Could lead to programming based on donor priorities rather than humanitarian needs							
By donors dictating how and where projects are implemented based on interests and not humanitarian needs				1			1
By donors dictating how and where projects are implemented based on interests and not local needs and priorities	1						1
Could lead to unfit partner selection							
By causing IPs to be selected based on donor interests rather than unique capacities and added value				1			1
Could limit access to affected populations							

Row Labels	Appropriateness	Coordination	Coverage	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Grand Total
By restricting access to affected areas and populations, where there is a lack of donor interest			1				1
Could limit innovation and experimentation							
By increasing financial limitations and triggering UN and triggering UN and Is to avoid financial risks					1		1
Could damage working relations between partners							
By increasing tensions or disagreements among UN and Is around humanitarian principles and priorities				1			1
Challenge 6 Competition Culture		1		4	3		8
Could damage partnership reputation and credibility							
By damaging the reputation of UN and IPs due to competitive behaviour				1			1
Could lead to low quality of implementation							
By increasing pressure on IPs and UN agencies to implement projects outside their scope of expertise and capacity				1			1
Could damage working relations between partners							
By increasing tensions or disagreements among UN and IPs around financial contributions and contract renewals				1			1
Could limit collaboration including sharing of information and resources							
By restricting UN and IPs collaboration with other humanitarian actors due to fierce competition					1		1
Could weaken coordination with other actors							

Row Labels	Appropriateness	Coordination	Coverage	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Grand Total
By causing some actors to restrict or seize coordination with UN agencies and IPs due to competition		1					1
Could lead to duplicated projects							
By damaging coordination and collaboration and creating duplication among IPs and other humanitarian actors					1		1
Could decrease transparency between partners							
By incentivising IPs and UN to conceal information on failing or unsuccessful projects, leading to wasted resources					1		1
By incentivising IPs and UN to conceal information on failing or unsuccessful projects, leading to failure to reach objectives				1			1
Grand Total	5	3	10	20	8	2	48