Humanitarian Connections
Letter from the President

The changes in the Middle East North Africa region have enabled The Humanitarian Forum to act like a compass: on one hand helping small, emerging CSOs better navigate the waters of the international community and on the other hand pointing INGOs in the direction of humanitarian partnerships between Eastern and Western humanitarian organisations.

The Arab Spring has also meant that we have been challenged to work in "hot" political and military environments. We have succeeded in pushing forward our humanitarian agenda at a time of difficult political and military conflict in the MENA region by creating connections.

Our conferences and meetings for Libya, Somalia and Syria have brought together key stakeholders and cemented the humanitarian partnership between The Humanitarian Forum, League of Arab States, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and UN OCHA.

Our vision is to bridge the gap between different humanitarian communities. We are raising a new flag to advocate for a more inclusive humanitarian family; one which allows each player to have a say in the steering of the humanitarian ship.

We would like to invite everyone on a journey to cross cultural gaps to achieve effective humanitarian partnerships.

President

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Editorial

Over the last 6 months, we have been proud to give voice and access to Somali, Syrian and Yemeni civil society organisations, at a time of dire humanitarian need in those countries. At the same time, we have continued to support the League of Arab States, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and UN OCHA in their conversations with each other and with NGOs.

The Arab Spring may herald a Humanitarian Spring for "non traditional" actors. "New" humanitarian leaders are growing in profile and capacity. They need to be recognised as equals by the international humanitarian community because of their access, legitimacy and connections. As you can read in the following pages, we have been supporting renewed humanitarian leadership through:

International and regional connections We are giving an equal platform to those with knowledge and legitimacy. We are honoured that our relationship is growing with the League of Arab States, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and UN OCHA. Through our joint stakeholder meetings, many regional and local organisations are meeting each other for the first time.

National connections Local NGOs need to be seen as equals, supported by our longterm commitment to building a strong NGO sector in different countries. We are supporting platforms of local and Diaspora NGOs for Indonesia, Somalia and Yemen.

Skills training In all our events, international and national experts share information, ideas and skills. We are continuing our training in Indonesia, Libya, Sudan, Yemen.

Online connections Our website and Social Media connect small and large NGOs with the wider audience, creating bonds between all stakeholders.

The humanitarian crisis in Syria continues. The famine in Somalia is receding but great challenges remain. By building stronger partnerships we can create solutions together.

James Shaw – Hamilton

Director
Somalia—Crisis and Development

Somalia has been in a protracted crisis for the past decade. In July 2011, following a prolonged drought, the UN declared famine in the region, with 11 million people affected. We are working with local and international stakeholders to create a vital space for collaboration benefitting those in need. Shahira Maarouf, our Programme Manager, reports.

In mid-2011, the situation on the ground in Somalia reached a tipping point, with the UN officially declaring famine in the region. To respond to the dire needs of local communities, we organised a humanitarian coordination workshop in Nairobi on 15 August, attended by 61 people representing multilateral organisations, western and Muslim international NGOs, and local Kenyan and Somali NGOs. The coordination and relief efforts were put in perspective by Mark Bowden, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia: “Humanitarian activities should also lead to a better future in development terms”.

To further this agenda, we organised a second meeting in Nairobi over two days in late September with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Over 120 delegates from more than 75 local, international, and multilateral humanitarian agencies participated in a lively discussion. The participants developed projects for water, food and agriculture, and livelihood and livestock.

Both Nairobi meetings offered an important neutral cross-cultural humanitarian space for key stakeholders to coordinate relief and development agendas, while avoiding duplication of efforts for the sake of those in need.

Although the UN has declared the famine over, humanitarian needs remain. Find out more about our partnership with the Somali Diaspora on page 11. Access our website humanitarianforum.org for more information.

“Recovery is a duty, there has been too much short-termism”. Rozanne Chorlton, UN
Somalia—Humanitarianism before Politics

On 23rd February, London played host to an intergovernmental meeting for Somalia, discussing security and stability. The conference was focused on security and NGOs were not invited. To put humanitarianism firmly ahead of the political agenda, we organised a conference on 20th February in partnership with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation attended by 100 delegates from 78 leading Somali, international, and multilateral humanitarian agencies. The issue of inclusivity and empowerment featured heavily, with John Ging (UN OCHA) stressing the importance of finding a dynamic of how to work better together, with a common objective of saving lives and reducing human suffering. “A new world is emerging. We have to seek to engage and better understand, rather than decide unilaterally.” The breakout groups discussed in detail: access and principled humanitarian action; refugees, IDPs and protection; increasing Somali voice; from relief to development.

Next Steps

The participants put forward recommendations for the 23rd February intergovernmental meeting, encouraging a humanitarian mindset for Somalia’s welfare, as opposed to a political/security mindset. We met with FCO and DFID ministers to discuss the recommendations, and these were also used by OIC delegates. The document is available to download on our website www.humanitarianforum.org.
Syria—Humanitarian Context

Like other countries from the MENA region, Syria has seen a wave of unrest, followed by a government crackdown which left in its wake overwhelming humanitarian needs. Information has been scarce, access even more so. Khalid Al Mulad, our External Relations Manager, discusses the Syrian humanitarian context.

According to the UN, between 1.5 and 3 million people have been affected by the violence in Syria. This has created enormous humanitarian needs, with local communities and organisations being called upon to help those in need. Access has been at a premium and for many months INGOs have been denied rights of passage, leaving an alarming number of people in need. The UN also estimates that at Syria's borders with neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon, there are over 230,000 refugees.

Our member organisations have been actively responding to the Syrian emergency, identifying humanitarian needs and providing relief (medicines, sanitation and cash assistance). We have taken a similar approach to the Libyan crisis, by holding humanitarian coordination meetings for important stakeholders and training workshops for both emerging and established civil society organisations.

On the following page you can find out more about our two conferences for Syria held in Cairo, while on page 13 you can find out more about our training workshops for civil society organisations.

“The situation on the ground is unacceptable by all standards”.
HE Dr. Nabil Elaraby, Secretary General of the League of Arab States
Syria—Coordination

To bring together important stakeholders in dealing with the Syrian humanitarian crisis, we organised a series of conferences in Cairo with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, UN OCHA and League of Arab States. Tareq Bakri, our Partnership Manager, reports.

To bring together key Eastern and Western humanitarian stakeholders for the Syrian crisis, we organised the first conference on 17th December. We followed this up with a second conference on 4th March 2012 to encourage humanitarian collaboration for the sake of the Syrian people. 110 participants from over 70 multilateral, international and national NGOs and UN agencies discussed the escalating humanitarian situation in Syria and its impact on the neighbouring countries (Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon) as a result of the recent unrest. In opening comments, His Excellency Dr. Nabil Elaraby, Secretary General of the League of Arab States, deplored the humanitarian situation in Syria and urged the participants and international community for a “collaborative effort to alleviate the suffering from the Syrian people”.

The 4 thematic working groups discussed in detail the situation on the ground: Health, Food and Non-Food Items, Access and Humanitarian Principles. The participants agreed at the meeting to focus on medical relief to the injured and some partnerships were forged, with the World Health Organisation (WHO) pledging to work with other organisations to provide help. The conference statement and recommendations are available on our website www.humanitarianforum.org. The meeting recommendations were put forward at the Syria Humanitarian Forum, held in Geneva and Cairo.

Find out more about our workshops for civil society organisations working for Syria on page 13.
Around the world with

We organise workshops, attend conferences and aim to build trust around the globe, between Eastern and Western partners.

London Ongoing: In cooperation with Muslim Charities Forum, we held a series of meetings for Somali and Yemeni NGOs based in the UK.
We welcomed Khalid Almuaiq in the role of External Relations Manager.

Tunisia: November/December 2011: Dr. Hany facilitated a workshop for local civil society organisations and youth groups.

Egypt: Ongoing: We are fostering a partnership with the League of Arab States, while Dr. Hany is giving a series of talks on civil society needs.

Libya April–November 2011: We held CSO training workshops in Benghazi, Derna, Al Bayda, Tobruk and Ajdabiya.

March/May/June 2011: Humanitarian Coordination meetings in Cairo for Libya with LAS, UNOCHA and OIC.

Sudan and South Sudan June 2011: Dr. Hany gave a speech at the OIC “Civil Society Organisations in the Islamic world” NGO Forum conference.
We also welcomed Ibrahim Abdellatief as Sudan Country Manager.

Somalia: August–September 2011: Nanyo, for meetings on the human focused on strategic and operational assistance and participants discuss efforts.

February 2012: We held a conference on Somali voice amidst an intergov Somalia.

Ongoing: We are supporting new organizations (GRDF and SHOQ).
The Humanitarian Forum 2011–2012

Here are just some of our recent travels from 2011 and 2012. For constant updates, browse our website and Facebook pages.

**Syria: December 2011 / March 2012** In partnership with OIC and LAS, we organised two humanitarian coordination meetings for Syria.

**December 2011 / February 2012** We organised training workshops for Syrian humanitarian workers in Cairo.

**Kuwait: September / November 2011** Our international Trustees met with our local partners from Humanitarian Forum Kuwait, as well as local important humanitarian actors.

**February 2012** We facilitated a training for women in development in partnership with IFO.

**Saudi Arabia: February 2012** Taner, our Partnerships Manager, trained 30 Saudi humanitarian workers in partnership with INTRAC and King Khalid Foundation.

**Yemen: June / July 2011** A workshop initiated and developed by the Humanitarian Forum Yemen on emergency management skills was held.

**August / October 2011** Humanitarian Forum Yemen coordinated the aid distribution for people in need affected by the unrest in the restricted access area of Abyan.

**February 2012** Noha Al Ismail, Programme Manager, attended the ANSARW Consultancy Workshop for Yemen in Cairo.

**Indonesia: Ongoing** Humanitarian Forum Indonesia continues its inter-faith and accountability work through workshops for NGOs, INGOs and communities.

*Note: The Humanitarian Forum and the OIC gathered in an emergency in the Horn of Africa. The meetings focused on issues associated with the delivery of humanitarian aid and how humanitarian partners can coordinate their response in partnership with OIC in London to raise the profile of the meeting discussing the security situation in the Horn and the need for improved assistance for displaced people.*
Yemen

The political unrest and violent clashes between various factions have increased humanitarian needs, with food, water and access to basic health services at a premium. Noha Yehya Al Eeyani, Programme Manager, tells us how Humanitarian Forum Yemen is responding to the needs of communities.

After we have successfully coordinated the distribution of Ramadan campaign food parcels for the refugees and IDPs in Abyan by local NGOs in August 2011, we organised a second phase in October 2011. 345 displaced families (over 2,139 individuals) from the districts of Ga’ar and Zingebar received flour, rice, sugar and cooking oil.

In December of the same year, due to prevailing insecurity and a massive need for humanitarian assistance, we organised a workshop in partnership with UN OCHA.

Because of our workshop, local organisations mobilised, pooled together their resources and devised a joint needs assessment. The findings were disturbing from a humanitarian point of view: 48% of households suffered from water-related health problems; 17 out of 20 schools were affected by fighting, with some occupied by armed groups; 73% of people reported no food stocks and 48% of the affected households found shelter with relatives, while 37% were living in partially destroyed homes.

We are working with our members and partners to help affected communities and are planning a second humanitarian coordination conference for Yemen in May with the League of Arab States and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

Find out more about our work on www.humanitarianforum.org.
Diaspora

The Humanitarian Forum believes in local grassroots solutions for communities. Because of this, we are supporting Diaspora organisations in the UK and worldwide and working with them to find solutions for crises. Shahira Maarouf, our Programme Manager, talks about our partnership with the Somali Diaspora, while Khalid Al Mulad, our External Relations Manager, tells us more about emerging Yemeni humanitarian leadership.

Somalia

The relationships between the Diaspora and the country are vital. Somalia is a good case study of how these can emerge. A network of Somali relief and development CSOs is growing, supported by Somali Diaspora NGOs and Muslim NGOs in the UK providing support and training: Somali Relief and Development Forum (www.srcf.org.uk) and Muslim Charities Forum (www.muslimcharitiesforum.org.uk). The Humanitarian Forum provides connections to the regional and international humanitarian community.

Yemen

Yemen has been in a protracted crisis for a very long period of time, prompting the UN to liken the situation to that of Somalia. To respond to the needs of communities in Yemen, The Humanitarian Forum has supported the creation and registration of a new UK-based umbrella organisation. Yemeni Relief and Development Forum was registered in April 2012 and gathers under one umbrella several Yemeni Diaspora organisations centred within major UK cities. It will act as a coordinating body, enabling the flow of information between the Diaspora and Yemen-based organisations championed by The Humanitarian Forum Yemen.
Civil Society Training Workshops

Tareq Bakri, our Partnerships Manager, reveals details about the workshops we held to empower communities at local level in Libya, Syria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and others.

Libya

In April, June and July 2011 we held a series of highly successful workshops, aimed at supporting the leadership and management of emerging Libyan civil society organisations. The areas that we focused on were project cycle management, good localised public governance and links with civil society organisations and disaster management.

In November we returned to Derna for a four-day workshop aimed at youth. The Community Youth Leadership Programme enabled young Libyan aspiring community leaders to gain the necessary skills to make a difference to their local communities. The workshop included a field visit to two community organisations: Direct Aid and Derna Women Coalition.

We have trained over 1,100 humanitarian and community workers in Libya and are committed to supporting humanitarian leadership at grass-root level.
Saudi Arabia

In partnership with INTRAC and the King Khalid Foundation, we trained representatives of 30 Saudi NGOs from different parts of the country in February and March 2012. The training workshops focused on project cycle management, monitoring and evaluation and community needs assessment.

Syria

Due to the complex humanitarian situation in Syria and the refugee influx in its neighbouring countries, we trained 35 Syrian humanitarian workers in Cairo in humanitarian principles, needs assessment and designing projects in December 2011.

Kuwait

In February 2012, we facilitated a workshop in cooperation with International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) in Kuwait looking at the role of women in humanitarian work at times of emergency and longer term development both in their own home country or other countries. The programme explored the challenges and opportunities that female humanitarian workers and volunteers face when they do work in the field. This is seen as a pre-requisite to address those challenges in the most optimal way. Follow up seminars and workshops will be planned in the near future with wider participation from the MENA region.
Indonesia

Since the previous issue of our newsletter, our colleagues from Humanitarian Forum Indonesia have been busy with their work in accountability in humanitarian aid. Hening Parlan tells us more about their work.

Humanitarian Forum Indonesia has continued to focus on formulating standards of accountability in aid and interfaith issues in humanitarian work. Our members have been with us every step of the way on this journey.

Internationally, we have also been coordinating our members’ response to the famine in the Horn of Africa. Two of our members, Dompet Dhuafa Republika and PKPU, have sent missions to Somalia and Kenya, providing much needed relief.

Locally, in partnership with PIRAC we have devised a set of accountability guidelines for humanitarian aid management. Humanitarian Forum Indonesia also held a series of training sessions enabling teachers and school children to be better prepared when disaster strikes.

Humanitarian Forum Indonesia continued its commitment to expose disaster preparedness and health techniques to a broader audience through a CSR project with AXIS Telecom.

The most up-to-date news on Humanitarian Forum Indonesia can be found on: www.humanitarianforumindonesia.org or on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/pages/HumanitarianForum-Indonesia

Habitat for Humanity is an international non-profit organization which focuses on building decent houses for the unfortunate families across the world. They started working in Indonesia in 1997 and up to date have built more than 32,000 decent houses and sheltered 120,000 people across Indonesia.

We have welcomed two new members in our network:
Church World Service Indonesia
and Habitat for Humanity Indonesia

Together with local organizations, Church World Service provides humanitarian assistance, help address food insecurity and the effects of poverty and supports sustainable development. CWS was established in 1946 and has been operating in Indonesia for over 40 years.
We keep our users up to date via our news and events section with the most important humanitarian resolutions, engaging reports, pressing emergencies and humanitarian events. Our website provides a neutral space for organisations to share projects online. Our database contains some of the most important resources for small and medium-sized NGOs. To learn more about our activities, sign-up to our newsletter.

You can get involved by sending us a profile of your organisation or sharing resources you want to make known to the world at info@humanitarianforum.org. Around 2 billion people have access to internet and 600 million of those have Facebook accounts. The value of the website as a humanitarian tool, for communicating with the users, is indisputable. Our page is updated constantly, keeping the people who click LIKE up to date with the most important issues, our own blog posts or Dr. Hany’s, videos and exclusive photos.

Early 2012 we asked our supporters to send us their wishes for the year ahead. The response was overwhelming, with supporters from the West and Muslim world responding to the challenge and sending us pictures of their wishes. We are grateful for your continued support. You can find all the pictures from this campaign on our Flickr stream or see a video on our YouTube channel.
“Let me seize this opportunity to express our appreciation for the work that you are doing to bring together the different humanitarian actors - International and local Islamic NGO’s and grassroots organisations, international and Western NGOs, the UN bodies, intergovernmental organisations and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement - on current emergencies such as Libya, Somalia and Syria.”

Ronald Offeringer, Advisor to the Director of Operations of the ICRC, Standing Invitee to The Humanitarian Forum

We create humanitarian connections at a national level to give local organisations a voice.

We create humanitarian connections at an international level to enable effective coordination.

At the heart of our work is the aim to better serve and improve the lives of those in need.

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