At no time in history has there been such need for broad, international action to provide effective humanitarian aid to millions of people suffering from crises. In 2014, the world experienced a surge in humanitarian crises, with 5 countries being given the L3 emergency status: Syria, Central African Republic, Iraq, South Sudan and the Philippines. Over US$ 10 billion were spent on humanitarian relief in 2014. Despite record levels of money being spent on humanitarian aid in crises across the world, needs still go unmet and demands continue to rise. Through evaluations DARA has contributed to improving the response of three of the major crises affecting the world in 2014.

In Iraq over 2.5 million people have been displaced and hundreds of thousands are in need of assistance due to the surge in violence between the government and armed groups. In 2014 the number of people in need of assistance more than doubled from 0.89 million in January to 2.12 million in December. Even with such a high level of need, the crisis only received US$ 821 million out of the US$ 1.11 billion requested in its Strategic Response Plan (SRP) in 2014. West Africa, a region previously plagued by civil war and underdevelopment, experienced significant economic growth in recent years; however, the outbreak of ebola has resulted in the death of thousands and crippled entire sectors of domestic economies, with estimates of lost GDP for the region in 2014 ranging from US $2.2 billion to US $7.4 billion. So far it has only received 66 percent of funds requested in its SRP. The crisis in Central African Republic (CAR) that started in 2012 has grown into a major humanitarian and protection crisis, with refugees spilling over into neighbouring countries due to growing violence within CAR. While it is one of the better funded crises, having received 70 percent of funding requested, over half of the population is still in need of humanitarian assistance.
To overcome the many challenges the humanitarian community faces, evaluations and policy studies aim to strengthen decision making and action through recommendations. Here is an overview of what we did in 2014 to help strengthen accountability and learning for more effective humanitarian action.

**EVALUATIONS AND STUDIES**

**Retrospective Evaluation of the Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction (GFDRR) Program in a Sample of Disaster-Prone Countries.** The GFDRR, a partnership of 41 countries and eight international organisations, commissioned DARA to evaluate its disaster risk management efforts in five vulnerable countries (Guatemala, Malawi, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Vietnam).

**World Food Program (WFP) Operation Evaluation (OpEv) of the Regional Emergency Operation Assistance to Refugees and Host Communities Affected by Insecurity in Mali (Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, and Niger) 2012-2013.** The evaluation analysed the extent to which WFP contributed to preventing both deterioration in the food security status and an increase in the incidence of global acute malnutrition of Malian refugees; and how successfully it has provided treatment for children with acute malnutrition and malnourished pregnant and lactating women.

**DARA’s Risk Reduction Index: Burkina Faso Case Study.** DARA presented a new country case study carried out in Burkina Faso of the Risk Reduction Index (RRI) funded by Australian AID and King’s College London. The case study is an extension of the FOREWARN initiative that covered 6 West African countries. The RRI aims to help governments, civil society and other actors understand the underlying risks that render communities more vulnerable to natural hazards, so that they can be addressed from a more integrated perspective. The case study provides an analysis of the capacities and conditions for Disaster Risk Reduction in Burkina Faso across four risk drivers: environment and natural resources; socioeconomic context; land use and the built environment; and governance. DARA presented the case study in Burkina Faso for the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission in Abuja, Nigeria. In addition, DARA presented the RRI in West Africa at the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) weekly meeting in Geneva on 22 January, highlighting the need for greater engagement with risk reduction efforts in the humanitarian sector.
Saving Lives Today and Tomorrow: Managing the Risk of Humanitarian Crises. OCHA in collaboration with DARA produced this policy report identifying global trends, areas of success and areas for improvement in the response to humanitarian crises and risk management for governments, donors, and humanitarian and development organizations.

OpEv of WFP PRRO Nutrition and Livelihoods Support to Vulnerable Populations in Guinea Bissau 2013-2015. The evaluation assessed WFP's support to vulnerable groups and communities affected by the post-election crisis, which aimed to address malnutrition, strengthen human capital through education, and rebuild livelihoods.

OpEv of WFP Iran Protracted Recovery and Relief Operation (PRRO) Food Assistance and Education Incentive Support for Afghan and Iraqi Refugees in Iran 2013-2015. The evaluation assessed WFP’s support to refugees in the settlements, which aims to improve food consumption of vulnerable households and increase access to education and human capital development for refugee girls and youth.

Evaluation of DG ECHO actions in coastal West Africa 2008-2014. The evaluation aims to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of DG ECHO actions in coastal West Africa for the period 2008-2014 with a strong focus on accountability and learning. The evaluation should provide inputs to help shape future ECHO approaches to LRRD and resilience; conflicts and their consequences; preparedness and emergency response to epidemics, such as Ebola, cholera and meningitis; floods; and providing humanitarian assistance in urban settings.

The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid – an NGO Perspective. VOICE commissioned DARA to undertake the study of NGO views on the crucial aspects of the European Consensus on humanitarian aid and the its relevance for Member States’ policies and practices.
OpEv of WFP Somalia PRRO Strengthening Food and Nutrition Security and Enhancing Resilience in Somalia 2012-2015. The evaluation analyses WFP’s support to help communities, in particular vulnerable pastoralists, IDPs and the urban poor, more effectively to cope with hardships through recovery assistance, including rebuilding food and nutrition security in households, and protecting livelihoods during shocks and seasonal vulnerabilities. The evaluation is planned to run through April 2015.

Humanitarian HardTalk Series. Now or Never: Making Humanitarian Aid More Effective. A joint report with the Spanish Cooperation (AECID) over the first Humanitarian HardTalk Series held in 2013, in which three key leaders from humanitarian organizations (Valerie Amos, OCHA; Peter Maurer, ICRC; and Claus Sorensen, ECHO) discussed views on humanitarian aid effectiveness. The report is being used as a working tool in the run-up to the World Humanitarian Summit.

In 2014 DARA and the AECID launched the second round of the three-part Humanitarian HardTalk Series on The Many Faces of Humanitarianism. The three talks included: Diversity within the European Union with Kristalina Georgieva, European Commissioner, International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response; Universality of Humanitarian Action with Yves Daccord, Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); and Challenges in WFP’s Food Assistance with Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director, World Food Programme (WFP).

OpEv of WFP Zimbabwe PRRO Responding to Humanitarian Needs and Strengthening Resilience to Food Insecurity 2012-2014. The evaluation analysed WFP’s activities in Zimbabwe with the objective of providing insights on a number of innovative programmatic changes that WFP’s Zimbabwe Country Office has been recently implementing, including the gradual scale-up of market-based transfer modalities and the shift from unconditional to conditional assistance.
The Listen and Learn project: Improving Aid Accountability in Haiti.
A joint DARA/Keystone initiative funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, which aimed to improve the accountability of aid efforts in Haiti and provide a model for greater beneficiary accountability in relief and recovery programming.

Strategic Evaluation of WFP Democratic Republic of Congo Portfolio 2009-2013. From 2009-2013, WFP implemented three PRROs and five Emergency Operations (EMOPs). The evaluation examined WFP’s activities in DRC during this time period with a special focus on the interrelation between different coordination mechanisms and the roles of UN agencies and other key humanitarian actors. The evaluation analysed the strategic alignment and positioning of the portfolio, factors informing strategic choices made and portfolio performance and response.


Publication of the independent study commissioned by the Disaster Response Dialogue, Addressing the Perennial Problems of Disaster Response, which looks at humanitarian financing to disaster-affected governments and other national actors. The Disaster Response Dialogue is a platform convened by OCHA, the Swiss Government, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA).
Presentation of Risk Reduction Index in West Africa at IASC weekly meeting in Geneva


Launch of second round of the three-part Humanitarian HardTalk Series on The Many Faces of Humanitarianism with three leading humanitarian actors. First and second HardTalks

Publication of Now or Never: Making Humanitarian Aid More Effective

Publication of Retrospective Evaluation of the GFDRR Program in a Sample of Disaster-Prone Countries

Launch of The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid – an NGO Perspective

Completion of the WFP OpEv of the Regional Emergency Operation Assistance to Refugees and Host Communities affected by Insecurity in Mali (Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, and Niger) 2012-2013

Third Humanitarian HardTalk, Challenges in WFP's Food Assistance

Completion of OpEv of WFP Zimbabwe PRRO Responding to Humanitarian Needs and Strengthening Resilience to Food Insecurity 2012-2014


Completion of Strategic Evaluation of WFP Democratic Republic of Congo Portfolio 2009-2013


Publication of The Listen and Learn Project: Improving Aid Accountability in Haiti

Publication Addressing the Perennial Problems of Disaster Response

Presentation in Abuja of DARA’s Risk Reduction Index country case study in Burkina Faso


Launch of Evaluation of DG ECHO actions in coastal West Africa 2008-2014

Award of Evaluation of UNICEF’s Response and Programme Strategies to the Crisis in CAR 2013-2015
DARA is an independent non-profit organisation committed to improving the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian action for vulnerable populations affected by armed conflict and natural disasters. Through evaluations and research, we encourage organisations that are on the front lines of relief efforts to reflect on the impact of their work and help them make evidence-based decisions at the policy, strategy and programming levels, and in critical moments of delivering assistance. DARA actively promotes humanitarian principles, learning and accountability.