

**Discussion paper on research focus and approach:  
Multi-Year Funding for Humanitarian Response**

The current study has been commissioned to respond to Activity 6 of the IASC Humanitarian Financing Task Team's workplan under output 1: "**Commission a study exploring the scope and implications of multi-year financing in the context of multi-year planning, including on work across the humanitarian - development nexus.**" The study comprises two sequential stages:

- 1) Determine to what extent multi-year funding is actually being provided to meet the needs as stated in a select number of multi-year or annual Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) through a desk review and baseline data gathering exercise.
- 2) Undertake an analysis of multi-year funding and its implications for humanitarian organisations in particular how it affects budgeting, resource mobilisation, relationships with donors, agreements between first-level funding recipients and implementing organisations, possibilities for innovative financing solutions, and operations in the field. This analysis will include MYF that is exclusively for **humanitarian response**, as well as MYF for humanitarian organisations working across the **humanitarian – development – peacebuilding nexus**.

The following discussion relates to the second stage of analysis, which in exploring the research themes outlined above, will look to capture evidence of **added value, best practices**, and **innovation**, as well as identifying **challenges**. Suggested expanded research questions include:

- (a) In what ways does multi-year financing benefit the **humanitarian system**?
  - Building on the desk review and baseline data gathering exercise, what different types of multi-year funding are in existence (earmarked and un-earmarked funding at the global and country-levels; multi-year commitments/awards); who provides them (including distinguishing humanitarian or development donors; bilateral, multilateral, private donors); who receives them; and what they use them for (programmatic focus; internal institutional purposes)?
  - What are the theoretical efficiency and effectiveness gains and at what levels of the system do they accrue, for each of the different types of multi-year funding (donor, recipient, sub-recipient)?
  - What evidence is there that these expected gains have been delivered where multi-year funding is in place?
  - What evidence is there to demonstrate *additional* added value and/or innovation has resulted at the institutional or system-level?
  - Where these gains have not delivered as expected, what were the barriers and disincentives?
  - What are the costs and drawbacks of multi-year funding at each level of the system (includes responsiveness, traceability/visibility)?

- (b) In what ways does multi-year financing contribute to an **improved humanitarian response** and better outcomes for crisis-affected people?
- What are the theoretical benefits of multi-year funding for response outcomes and impact (could include response times, flexibility, innovation and learning)?
  - How do the benefits vary according to the type of crisis and its duration?
  - To what extent are the benefits of multi-year funding and approaches being measured?
  - What evidence is there to demonstrate expected improved response outcomes?
  - What are the barriers and challenges to delivering against expected improved response outcomes?
  - What can we learn from recent experiences – what unexpected gains, innovation and learning has resulted?
- (c) How does multi-year funding benefit working across the **humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus**?
- What are the theoretical gains to be derived from multi-year funding and improved programming across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus? And are these made explicit in programme design?
  - To what extent, where and how do humanitarian actors use multi-year funding to deliver activities and objectives which span or complement development and peacebuilding?
  - From the perspective of recipient organisations, what does their funding portfolio for programming which is longer-term and/or linked to development and peacebuilding activities and objectives comprise? What role does development funding already play?
  - In what ways does multi-year funding facilitate coordination across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus?
  - What lessons and evidence of good practice and/or innovation in multi-year financed humanitarian action facilitating better working across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus?
  - What barriers and other challenges exist?
- (d) Based on findings, lessons and examples of good practice derived from (a), (b) and (c), do we need to adjust our understandings and expectations of multi-year funding, and how should we refine our policy asks in light of this?