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**“Can evidence save lives?  
Perspectives from humanitarian actors”**

*19 July 2012 (16:30 – 18:00)  
Conference Room B, North Lawn Building  
United Nations, New York*

*Co-chairs: CRED, University of Louvain, Brussels  
and European Commission DG ECHO, Brussels*

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**Does humanitarian aid go to the neediest?**

The humanitarian principles commit humanitarian actors and donors to the provision of humanitarian assistance on the basis of needs. Recent thinking emphasizes use of objective and credible data to better assess needs and understand the impact of humanitarian aid. This data is also needed to ensure more qualitative humanitarian aid programmes. But how do we obtain this data, how do we ensure its quality and finally how does this data become actually useable for policy and aid allocation?

The recent crises in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel suggest that even when evidence is available rapidly, response can be slow as the links between evidence and action may need strengthening.

The challenges surrounding data from crises situations are many. These include substantive ones such as availability of robust and standardised methods for data collection (e.g. SMART), rapid data capture in the field, criteria to establish quality and objectivity of data. Inadequate data can misguide policy and aid allocations and in humanitarian settings the stakes of such mistakes are high. This policy debate will discuss the following questions:

- *Are humanitarian operators overwhelmed by the demands to provide hard evidence and should it be their role? Realities on the field for cross agency and cluster data collection.*
- *Is there case for better exploiting operational data from humanitarian actors? “Lack of data” may be an alibi for non-action.*
- *How can evidence be better linked to decision making? Do coordinated humanitarian needs assessments serve as a basis for evidence based humanitarian programming? How can UN Flash Appeals and CAPs become more strategic for the purpose of decision makers?*



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## Panelists

The panel consists of experts in evidence and data from disaster and conflict settings. They will present concise messages on gaps and how to fill them:

- Opening remarks by *Kristin Hedstrom*, co-chair, Humanitarian Policy Advisor at the European Commission - DG ECHO

- Shannon Doocy, PhD, is Professor at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health
- Emmanuel D'Harcourt, MD, MPH is Senior Health Director at the International Rescue Committee, New York
- Ayaz Parvez leads the Emergency Response and Central Results Team at the Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction, World Bank
- Peter Walker, PhD, is Senior Research Fellow, Dfid, UK and Professor at Tufts University

- Concluding remarks by *Debarati Guha-Sapir*, PhD, co-chair, Director of the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters and Professor at the University of Louvain.

The panelists are available for interviews after the session.