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HERE-Geneva 10-Year Review Final Report

Presented to: HERE-Geneva



Making change happen
for social good

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Executive Summary

This review marks HERE-Geneva's tenth anniversary as an independent think tank dedicated to bridging gaps between humanitarian policy and operational practice. Since its founding in 2014, HERE has focused on principled humanitarian action, protection, and accountability through rigorous independent research, commissioned evaluations, and sector-wide convenings. This review assesses HERE's achievements, identifies lessons from its experiences, and provides recommendations to ensure continued relevance, influence, and sustainability.

Strategy and Positioning

Over the past decade, HERE has successfully maintained its thematic consistency by sustaining a focus on key issues such as adherence to humanitarian principles in conflict settings, protection risks, and aid accountability. HERE's hybrid model—combining independent research, commissioned evaluations, and normative advocacy and convenings—has allowed it to operate effectively within the humanitarian ecosystem by providing institutional memory and a principled critique of policy and operational gaps. While commissioned projects embed HERE's expertise within humanitarian operations, stakeholders note that these engagements occasionally limit strategic reflection and internally driven research.

Research and Influence

HERE's influence spans multiple dimensions. **Conceptually**, it reframes humanitarian debates and challenges underlying assumptions about humanitarian principles. Through **agenda-setting**, HERE has elevated critical issues like risk-sharing within the Grand Bargain process and subsequently influenced donor and UN strategies. **Instrumental** influence is evident through the concrete uptake of HERE's research recommendations in institutional policies and practices, such as UNICEF's cluster leadership guidelines and IOM's protection policy frameworks. Additionally, HERE's established **network** influence within the humanitarian community is reflected in its consistent invitations to participate in high-level panels, deliver keynote addresses, and contribute to donor strategy development.

Audience Engagement

HERE is particularly strong in its engagement with Geneva-based donors and UN agencies, with which it has leveraged its commissioned evaluations and policy dialogues to sustain strategic relationships. However, engagement beyond traditional humanitarian networks—including local NGOs, regional think tanks, and emerging donors—remains an opportunity for growth. Stakeholders value HERE's rigorous and principle-based analysis but express a desire for more concise and accessible communication formats, including executive summaries and structured briefings that facilitate the practical implementation of recommendations.

Exchange (Convening)

HERE's role as a convener is widely recognized and valued for fostering candid and productive discussions on humanitarian coordination, protection, and accountability. Stakeholders frequently commend HERE's "critical friend" approach, appreciating its capacity to facilitate challenging yet constructive dialogues. However, limited systematic follow-up mechanisms following convenings has been identified as an area for improvement. Structured follow-up processes aligned with major policy moments (e.g., Grand Bargain

reviews, OCHA Flagship Initiative, coordination reform) could significantly enhance HERE's sustained impact and ensure that insights are translated into actionable outcomes.

Funding and Sustainability

The review highlights an increased reliance on commissioned project income, driven by declining core funding, which has reduced HERE's flexibility to undertake self-initiated research. Comparative analysis with similar humanitarian think tanks suggests that diversified funding approaches—such as multi-donor pooled research funding and philanthropic foundations—could offer greater stability and autonomy and mitigate risks associated with dependency on a limited number of core donors.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Looking ahead to the next ten years, HERE stands at an inflection point in a humanitarian ecosystem experiencing more protracted crises, an uncertain political environment, shifting donor priorities, and increased scrutiny on the effectiveness of humanitarian action. HERE's priorities and track record—rooted in humanitarian principles, protection, and accountability—are likely to remain deeply relevant. At the same time, emerging challenges require HERE to adapt its basic frameworks, be more strategic in engaging the policy process, and expand partnerships beyond its traditional networks. Building on HERE's established strengths in bridging policy and practice, the following recommendations propose practical steps to ensure that HERE remains a principled and influential force in a rapidly changing humanitarian environment:

- Adopt an **agile strategic approach** that balances commissioned work and independent research around its core mission, proactively aligns these efforts with key donor and policy windows and cultivates global partnerships to extend its reach beyond Geneva. Continuing to focus on thematic priorities (principled action, protection, accountability) and managing its project portfolio for both financial viability and intellectual independence will reinforce HERE's distinctive “critical friend” role.
- Use its **Theory of Change as a living strategy map** that aligns day-to-day activities with a longer-term vision, explicitly spells out precise pathways for influence, situates each project within significant policy windows, and facilitates continuous learning and adaptive management. This approach will function as a practical guide for achieving measurable, systemic outcomes.
- Anchor each commissioned or independent study in a **clear influence framework** articulating intended pathways, influence types, and how findings will be disseminated and integrated into decision-making. Mapping relevant policy moments, pinpointing potential champions, and defining simple indicators for uptake will concretely demonstrate how research initiatives advance humanitarian policy, practice, and systemic change.
- Systematically **expand engagement beyond the Geneva-based ecosystem** by forging partnerships with local NGOs, regional think tanks, and non-traditional donors. Tailoring outreach formats (concise policy briefs, board-level summaries) and integrating clear influence pathways into audience strategies will ensure analysis resonates effectively with diverse humanitarian decision-makers.
- Design **convening events** with explicit outcomes, integrate them into relevant policy windows, and pair them with structured follow-up mechanisms. Aligning convenings with the influence framework—identifying champions, policy moments, and simple outcome indicators—will transform roundtables

and workshops into effective drivers of change and enable participants to translate dialogue into actionable commitments.

1. Introduction

The Humanitarian Exchange and Research Centre (HERE-Geneva) was founded in 2014 as an independent think tank that bridges the persistent gap between policy and humanitarian practice. Over the past decade, HERE has pursued this mission by conducting rigorous independent research, undertaking commissioned evaluations, and convening sector-wide dialogues to foster evidence-based improvements in humanitarian action. It emphasises promoting humanitarian principles, enhancing protection, and strengthening accountability.

As HERE marks its tenth anniversary, this review serves two primary purposes: **first**, to systematically assess HERE's achievements and contributions to the humanitarian sector; **second**, to identify critical lessons and make recommendations to ensure its relevance, influence, and sustainability moving forward.

The report is structured around four interconnected thematic areas:

- **Strategic Alignment** — Assessing HERE's strategic evolution, responsiveness to shifts within the humanitarian sector, and maintenance of its core mission integrity.
- **Research and Influence** — Assessing the uptake and broader influence of HERE's independent studies and commissioned evaluations.
- **Audience Engagement** — Analysing HERE's engagement strategies with key audiences, including donors, policymakers, operational agencies, implementing partner organisations, and peer institutions.
- **Exchange and Convening** — Examining the effectiveness of HERE's dialogue mechanisms—such as roundtables, workshops, and closed-door dialogues—in translating research into actionable insights.

These themes are interconnected through HERE's **Theory of Change (ToC)**. The ToC asserts that independent research, commissioned studies, and facilitated dialogues contribute to systemic improvements in humanitarian outcomes by promoting principled humanitarian action, challenging policy assumptions, strengthening collective accountability, and enabling candid discussion on systemic challenges (Section 2).

HERE does not directly implement humanitarian policies or advocate specific policy positions; rather, it seeks to inform, equip, and incentivise humanitarian actors to make decisions consistent with humanitarian principles and lead to enhanced protection and stronger accountability. This review distinguishes between HERE's **independent research** (initiated internally and aligned to strategic objectives) and **commissioned work** (evaluations and studies requested by partners and donors) (Section 3). It employs an analytical framework that considers **four types of influence**: instrumental, conceptual, agenda-setting, and network. Together with **seven distinct influence pathways**, these concepts inform the analysis of how HERE systematically contributes to humanitarian outcomes (Section 4).

The methodology integrates **document analysis** (examining annual reports, strategic documents, research outputs, and evaluations), **influence mapping** (systematically tracing HERE's recommendations and conceptual framing in policy debates), and **targeted interviews** with 21 key stakeholders across donors, partner agencies, board members, and staff. We acknowledge inherent challenges in measuring policy influence due to non-linear processes, attribution difficulties, bureaucratic dynamics, and high turnover. Given these constraints, the review prioritises identifying consistent patterns of influence rather than precise quantification. We draw on stakeholder perceptions, verifiable references in policy and practice documents, and HERE's internal monitoring records as primary evidence sources.

2. Strategy

2.1 Introduction

HERE-Geneva has addressed the persistent disconnect between policy commitments and operational realities for a decade. Through independent research, commissioned evaluations, and high-level convenings, HERE has positioned itself as a trusted analyst and a critical yet constructive voice. Central to HERE's mission is an **accountability function**—holding the humanitarian system accountable to its commitments and highlighting inconsistencies between policy rhetoric and operational reality. This section examines how effectively HERE has navigated its strategic role by exploring four core analytical questions:

1. **Mission Alignment and Adaptability** — How effectively has HERE's strategic approach aligned with its mission and adapted to sector priorities?
2. **Coherence Between Independent and Commissioned Work** — To what extent has HERE attained strategic coherence between its independent research and commissioned work?
3. **Financial Sustainability vs. Intellectual Independence** — Does HERE's funding model promote financial sustainability and intellectual independence?
4. **Adaptation to Evolving Humanitarian Contexts** — How has HERE adjusted its strategy to evolving contexts and emerging humanitarian challenges?

These questions shape the analysis in Sections 3.2 through 3.4.

HERE's **distinctive hybrid approach** — integrating (1) *independent research*, (2) *commissioned evaluations*, and (3) *normative advocacy and convening* — positions it at a unique intersection within the humanitarian ecosystem. These three workstreams are central to assessing HERE's effectiveness. Understanding their interplay is critical to determining how well HERE leverages these activities for systemic influence. Throughout this review, we recognise that HERE's primary contribution lies in fostering critical reflection and accountability at a systemic level rather than engaging in direct policy advocacy. Its goal is to improve humanitarian effectiveness by bridging persistent gaps between policy commitments and operational realities. This distinction is important for establishing realistic expectations about the outcomes that can reasonably be attributed to HERE's work in the following Sections.

The following subsections assess the **strengths**, **challenges**, and **tensions** of this positioning. They lay out the degree to which HERE has maximised its influence and mitigated the trade-offs inherent in balancing these roles.

2.2. Strategic Positioning and Alignment with Sectoral Trends

We begin by examining how effectively HERE's strategic approach has aligned with its mission and remained relevant amidst evolving humanitarian priorities. HERE-Geneva's thematic consistency — its focus on **principled humanitarian action**, **protection**, and **accountability** — has been a defining feature of its work for the past decade. In interviews, stakeholders repeatedly affirmed the continued relevance of these themes, particularly given ongoing challenges related to adherence to humanitarian principles in conflict settings, protection risks, and aid accountability. Despite shifts in sectoral priorities and repeated reform efforts, these core issues remain central to effective humanitarian action. HERE has worked to keep them on the agenda and to ensure they shape coordination, risk-sharing, and humanitarian leadership discussions.

Several stakeholders noted that HERE's work serves an important **institutional memory function** in a sector characterised by high staff turnover and episodic reform efforts. One stakeholder described the humanitarian system as being in a "constant state of reform," noting how multiple rounds of coordination restructuring have yet to resolve persistent challenges such as leadership gaps, coordination inefficiencies, and competing institutional mandates. By maintaining a long-term perspective and leveraging its strong reputation, HERE helps ensure that lessons — and the root causes of systemic weaknesses — are not lost. This function extends beyond coordination to broader debates on risk-sharing, localisation, and operationalising humanitarian principles.

HERE's framework provides **intellectual coherence** across its diverse research and advisory workstreams. Rather than focusing on narrow, technocratic solutions, HERE applies a principle-based lens to humanitarian effectiveness. Stakeholders emphasised that this approach differentiates HERE from research organisations that focus primarily on policy design or technical assessments; by grounding its work in humanitarian principles, HERE ensures that its findings and recommendations remain relevant across diverse operational contexts. In recent years, this has included analysing nexus programming, shifts in humanitarian financing, and responses to emerging crises such as COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine.

2.3. Hybrid Model and Strategic Tensions

HERE's overall influence hinges on the **distinct, hybrid space it occupies** at the intersection of research, policy influence, and operational engagement. It functions as an independent policy think tank, a technical partner for evaluations and advisory work, and a principled advocate for humanitarian accountability. This three-pronged identity enables HERE to hold the humanitarian system accountable while offering actionable insights that improve practice. Donors and agencies regard HERE's ability to produce rigorous, principle-focused analysis — while maintaining close ties to operational realities — as a core strength that allows it to challenge assumptions constructively.

While HERE shares thematic and methodological similarities with other humanitarian think tanks (e.g. ODI's Humanitarian Policy Group, Centre for Humanitarian Action (CHA) Berlin, and Groupe URD), its focus on bridging policy commitments with field realities remains distinct. Larger institutions often address broad policy agendas, whereas HERE's narrower thematic focus — principled humanitarian action, protection, accountability, and coordination — creates intellectual consistency across its work.

Unlike organisations operating at arm's length from practitioners, HERE's ongoing engagement through evaluations and high-level technical studies keeps its research grounded in practice. This reinforces its credibility among policymakers and practitioners alike. This blend of independence and proximity to operational realities has positioned HERE as an organisation that assesses the humanitarian system and actively engages it to improve performance and accountability.

HERE does not fit neatly into any single category in Table 1. Instead, it combines elements of academic, contractor, and advocacy models:

- **Academic** — Produces independent, principle-based research and conceptual frameworks for the sector.
- **Contractor** — Undertakes donor-funded evaluations and advisory work that informs humanitarian operations.
- **Advocacy** — Maintains a clear normative stance on accountability, protection, and principled action, holding stakeholders to their commitments.

Table 1: Types of Think Tanks and Their Features¹

Think Tank Type (and Interest Served)	Scope of Expertise	Institutional Affiliation	Funding	Agenda	Staffing	Research Products
Academic (public interest)	General or specialised	Independent or university-based	Diversified	Neutral/non-partisan	Strong academic credentials preferred	Books and longer analytical papers
Contractor (contracting agency's interest)	General or specialised	Independent, government-affiliated, or corporate	Dominated by one or few sources	Donor/client driven	Strong academic credentials preferred	Mainly reporting to contracting agencies
Advocacy (group or party interest)	General or specialised	Independent or party-affiliated	Diversified or dominated by few sources	Ideology driven	Ideological credentials preferred	Brief papers focused on topical issues

While this positioning strengthens HERE's relevance, it also introduces strategic and operational tensions that require ongoing navigation. HERE's mixed funding model — combining donor-supported independent research with commissioned evaluations and advisory work — provides financial flexibility and close engagement with humanitarian actors. However, it also raises questions about how independent a think tank can be when consultancies are responsible for a large share of its income. In practice, HERE preserves its autonomy by selectively accepting commissioned projects, retaining editorial control, and consistently applying its principled lens — an approach that commissioners generally value. Still, some stakeholders note the challenge of sustaining visibility in global policy discussions while meeting the demands of client-driven projects. The extent to which HERE is *perceived* as an independent think tank versus a trusted policy advisor remains a live question as HERE prepares to refine its approach for the next strategic cycle.

2.4. Balancing Independent Research and Commissioned Work: Tension and Synergies.

A central issue emerging from the review is how HERE balances its independent research (e.g., critiques of global humanitarian policy commitments) and commissioned work (e.g., advisory roles for donor agencies). While this dual approach enhances HERE's credibility, stakeholders have raised concerns about the risk of mission drift, particularly given that commissioned, project-based funding is increasing as a proportion of overall funding (77% of HERE's income in 2023). Several stakeholders noted that the opportunistic and reactive nature of engaging in such projects risks consuming staff resources and limiting strategic reflection and investments in long-term, proactive research.

Compounding this concern is HERE's small size — just over five full-time equivalent staff members. With limited staff capacity, HERE must make strategic decisions about resource allocation, the types of commissioned projects it pursues, and how to refine its engagement strategy to maximise policy influence.

¹ Axyonova, V. and F. Schoppner (2018). "Ukrainian Think Tanks in the Post-Euromaidan Period: Exploring the Field." In Shapovalova, N. & Burlyuk, O. (Eds.), *Civil Society in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine: From revolution to consolidation*, pp. 215-240

Balancing immediate consulting demands with the organization's broader thought leadership ambitions is critical for sustaining HERE's continued relevance and ensuring its role as a mirror to the sector.

A recurring discussion within HERE is whether commissioned work could compromise the organisation's objective and independent voice. However, while internal and external stakeholders identified operational challenges (mainly due to time constraints), there is little evidence to suggest that it has affected HERE's independence per se. Much of this is attributable to the Director's credibility, networks, and communication style, which have established a clear expectation among commissioning agencies about what engaging HERE entails. As one commissioner noted, "*We knew what we were getting when we contracted HERE.*" In fact, in some cases, commissioning agencies have explicitly recognised and sought out HERE's critical perspective as an asset that "*kept them on their toes.*" This confidence in HERE's independence is further reinforced by its reputation for high-quality, rigorous analysis, which remains central to its credibility. "*There are few organizations that can do complex evaluations as well as HERE.*"

HERE's portfolio combines multi-year, independent research projects alongside commissioned evaluations and studies, each playing a complementary role in strengthening the organisation's overall influence. As detailed in Annex 2, HERE has conducted eight independent research projects (each spanning two to four years) alongside 15 commissioned evaluations and 15 commissioned studies. These streams often intersect to create synergies and enhance HERE's strategic positioning. (See Table 3.2.) Across HERE's portfolio, three recurring patterns emerge in how independent research, commissioned work, and exchange activities reinforce each other:

- **Independent Research as a Foundation** — Self-initiated studies establish analytical frameworks that inform subsequent commissioned evaluations. For instance, *the Mandates Study*² and *On The Right Track* report provided the conceptual foundation for country-specific evaluations on principled humanitarian action in Iraq, Yemen, and Sudan.
- **Commissioned Work Generating Evidence for Independent Research**—Evaluations generate empirical insights that feed back into HERE's larger research agendas. For example, the UNICEF Cluster Leadership Review provided operational data that HERE incorporated into its broader research on humanitarian coordination effectiveness.³
- **Holistic, Strategically Planned Initiatives**—In some cases, HERE's independent research, commissioned projects, and convenings are carefully and strategically planned around a unified vision. The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) Influence Campaign exemplifies this approach, where HERE synchronised research, commissioned studies, and convenings to shape global policy discussions.

Table 2 summarises seven strategic clusters and illustrates how workstreams intersect to maximise results. By **intentionally designing** its projects around these reinforcing mechanisms, HERE ensures that its contributions are greater than the sum of their parts — fully leveraging the strengths of each workstream to **create synergies**.

² Full title: "The role of 'mandates' in humanitarian priority setting for international non-governmental organisations in situations of armed conflict." Final report: "[Unpacking Humanitarianism](#)."

³ The independent "Future of Humanitarian Coordination" roadmap drew on findings from commissioned evaluations of cluster leadership mechanisms for UNICEF, UNHCR, and the Global Education Cluster. These studies informed a series of roundtable discussions, including engagements with the then newly appointed Emergency Relief Coordinator, creating a feedback loop that refined recommendations and built momentum for systemic reform.

Table 2: Strategic Synergies between Independent and Commissioned Work⁴

Strategic Cluster	Purpose	Independent	Commissioned	Exchange	Synergy
1. World Humanitarian Summit Influence Campaign	Strategic effort to shape global humanitarian policy priorities	Humanitarian Priorities Project (2015-2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Istanbul and Beyond (IFRC/ICRC joint publication, 2016) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Debate: 30 Days to Istanbul (2016) Accountability Working Meeting (2016) WHS Global Preparatory Meetings 	Deliberately timed and coordinated independent research, commissioned support, and high-profile convenings to maximise influence on a major policy process.
2. Humanitarian Coordination	Comprehensive effort to reshape coordination frameworks and strengthen leadership models	Future of Humanitarian Coordination Roadmap (2021-2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OCHA Future of Clusters study (2015) UNHCR Leadership Review (2019) UNICEF CLARE II evaluation (2022) Education Cluster Co-leadership Review (2022) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humanitarian Coordination Roundtable (2022) Buddha, Hercules, and Others in Humanitarian Leadership (2019) UNHCR's Leadership and Coordination Role in Refugee Response (2019) 	Used commissioned evaluations to gather empirical evidence on coordination challenges, synthesised findings through independent research, and engaged key stakeholders through targeted convenings to build momentum for system-wide reform.
3. Operationalizing Principled Action	Strategic initiative to translate humanitarian principles from theory to operational reality	Humanitarian Mandates Study (2016-2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principled Humanitarian Assistance in Iraq (2017) Principled Humanitarian Programming in Yemen (2021) Principled Humanitarian Response in Sudan (2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yemen Principles Humanitarian Programming Briefings (2022) Expert Panel on Humanitarian Principles (2015) Principles Working Meeting (2015) 	Developed conceptual framework through independent research and case studies, tested implementation through country-specific commissioned studies, and engaged operational stakeholders through targeted exchanges to drive application.

⁴ Framework based on assessment of research reports, annual reports, and interviews (2025). Description of synergies is based on Humentum interpretation of data.

Strategic Cluster	Purpose	Independent	Commissioned	Exchange	Synergy
4. Protection Implementation Lifecycle	Strategic approach to strengthening protection systems from concept to implementation	Protection research embedded in Mandates Study and Humanitarian Priorities Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2019 ADH Bangladesh/ Myanmar Rohingya Evaluation • IOM's Role and Responsibility in Protection/DIAP (2022) • Compass Mid-term Evaluation (2022) • Compass Final Evaluation (2024) • ICRC Prevention and Protection (2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on Legal Basis of Protection (2021) • Protection Working Meeting (2015) • Meeting on Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) in Rohingya Crisis (2018) 	Developed protection frameworks, built capacity through training, and evaluated implementation—creating a full-cycle approach.
5. Humanitarian Financing Reform	Strategic initiative to enhance accountability and effectiveness of pooled funding	Humanitarian Response Index 2.0 (2017) TRACK project component (2019-2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBPF Capacity Strengthening (2017-2018) • ICVA Pooled Funding Analysis (2023) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing to CBPF NGO Platform (2017) • Norwegian Government CERF Advisory (2018) 	Leveraged technical expertise from commissioned work to inform independent analysis and strategic engagement with funding decision-makers
6. Real-Time Learning Methodology	Strategic effort to enhance humanitarian learning during emergencies	"Time for Real-Time Reviews" Convening (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hurricane Matthew Response RTE (2017) • DEC Emergency Appeal Myanmar Real-Time Evaluation (2018) • Rohingya Response Evaluations (2019) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time for Real-Time Reviews policy discussion (2018) • Synthesis presentation events (2019) 	Applied methodology through commissioned evaluations, used convenings for reflection, and refined approaches for future applications.
7. COVID-19 Strategic Response	Rapid-response strategic initiative to analyse and address pandemic impacts	Beyond the Pandemic research (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No directly COVID-related commissioned work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 and Future Response series (2020) • COVID-19: Vision or Fashion? roundtable (2020) • What Next? Global Virtual Conference (2021) 	Rapidly mobilised independent research and convenings to analyse pandemic impacts and inform post-pandemic humanitarian reform.

Although HERE has achieved notable synergies in several strategic clusters — often by seizing opportunistic alignment between commissioned and independent work — stakeholders also pointed to missed opportunities where a more proactive, structured approach might have yielded greater results.

As further discussed in Section 6 (Exchange), some convenings and follow-up mechanisms were not systematically planned around key policy moments. A more structured integration strategy, grounded in proactive planning rather than purely opportunistic alignment, could further strengthen HERE's strategic positioning and policy influence, ensuring that commissioned projects consistently reinforce independent research instead of diverting time and resources.

2.5. Research Planning

The analysis in the preceding section (2.4) highlights the potential for synergy between commissioned and independent research, if timeframes are managed strategically and projects align with HERE's core thematic priorities. Yet, sustaining that synergy depends heavily on how well HERE engages stakeholders, orchestrates convenings, and ensures follow-through.

Balancing independent and commissioned work requires careful scoping of independent research with realistic timeframes. The Mandates Study, for instance, was widely praised for its analytical depth, but its multi-year duration demanded sustained efforts to keep partners engaged. Stakeholders also emphasised that operational feasibility — including consideration of **staff bandwidth** and **the deadlines of commissioned projects** — is integral to sustaining both intellectual independence and high-quality outputs.

Without clearly defined timeframes and dedicated resources, interviewees cautioned that independent research risks being overshadowed by urgent, better-funded commissioned tasks. They further noted that linking independent research, commissioned work, and convening activities into a strategic engagement plan can help maintain visibility and influence.

Key Findings: Strategy

- Despite the sector's "constant state of reform", HERE's commitment to principled humanitarian action, protection, and accountability remains highly relevant (see Section 2.2).
- HERE's combined role as an independent think tank and a commissioned research partner yields unique operational insights and challenges sustaining independence and visibility (see Section 2.3).
- Alignment between independent and commissioned work can produce cumulative impact, as evidenced by synergy examples in Section 2.4.
- Stakeholder feedback suggests that intentional planning of independent research and exchange—e.g., policy engagement from the start—can enhance HERE's influence.
- With a small team, HERE must select research and convening activities strategically to avoid overextension and mission drift (Sections 2.5).

3. HERE'S Theory of Change

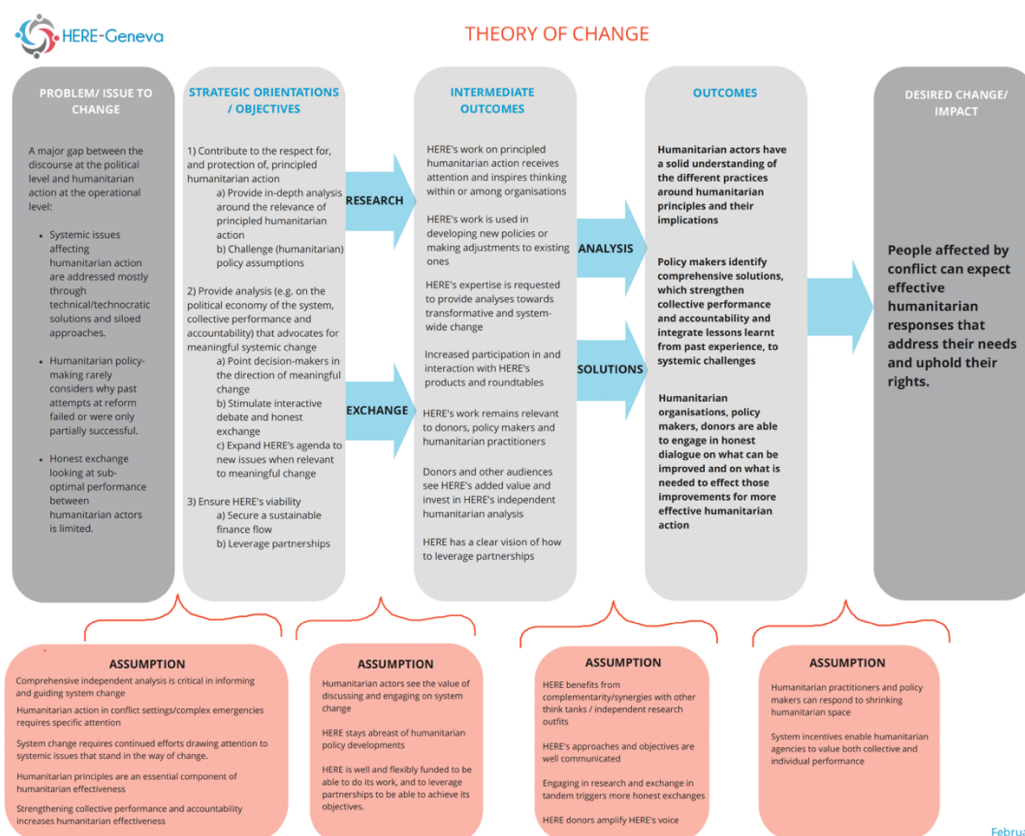
3.1. Why Discuss the Theory of Change?

The importance of HERE's Theory of Change (ToC) emerged organically from stakeholder consultations conducted during this review. Multiple interviewees highlighted the need for a clearer articulation in the ToC of how HERE's independent research, commissioned evaluations, and convening activities systematically combine to influence humanitarian policy and practice — how it all adds up.

HERE-Geneva's ToC is foundational to its strategy: it ties together the four core components of the review—*strategy* (the overarching vision), *research* (the analytical work), *audience* (who is engaged), and *exchange* (how engagement is facilitated). The ToC is intended to articulate how HERE's work contributes to more effective humanitarian action. It does this by **addressing systemic gaps**, such as disconnects between policy commitments and operational realities, overreliance on technocratic solutions, a lack of honest exchange about performance, and a lack of reflection on the experience and lessons of past reform processes. (See Figure 1.)

To address these gaps, HERE engages in independent research, commissioned studies, and convenings to promote adherence to humanitarian principles, advocate for meaningful systemic change, and strengthen collective accountability and performance. By providing in-depth analysis, challenging policy assumptions, and fostering open dialogue, HERE aims to shape decision-making, influence humanitarian policies, and contribute indirectly but strategically to better humanitarian outcomes.

Figure 1: HERE's Theory of Change



3.2. Analytical Observations on HERE's Theory of Change

In its current form (2023), HERE's **ToC appears to lack a clearly articulated influence framework** — a systematic 'through-line' — linking its diverse activities to intended humanitarian outcomes. Stakeholder feedback indicates that, while individual activities are perceived as relevant, valuable, and influential, external audiences do not always clearly see how HERE's work builds momentum toward sustained humanitarian policy and operational improvements. HERE's work often sparks critical discussions, yet some stakeholders express uncertainty about how these engagements systematically connect (or are intended to connect) to a structured influence strategy. This absence of a clear influence logic could limit the sustained uptake of HERE's recommendations.

The **conceptual ambiguity within the ToC** itself compounds this analytical gap. For example, while the Strategic Orientations broadly reflect HERE's values and aspirations, they do not explicitly align with or clearly differentiate between HERE's three main activity streams: independent research, commissioned evaluations, and convening (exchange) activities. Similarly, the ToC's outcomes do not explicitly reflect HERE's four core thematic focus areas — humanitarian principles, protection, accountability, and coordination. As a result, stakeholders may find it challenging to identify (theoretically and practically) precisely how HERE's activities are intended to advance each of these thematic priorities systematically.

In Section 4 of this report, we introduce an analytical framework that can help link HERE's activities to its intended outcomes and provide greater conceptual clarity through defined influence types and mechanisms. Such an explicit influence framework could help HERE clarify how each type of activity leads to specific outcomes through distinct influence pathways.

Key Findings: Theory of Change

- Stakeholders consistently highlighted the need for a **clearer articulation of how HERE's activities cumulatively influence** humanitarian policy and practice.
- HERE's current ToC lacks a **clearly articulated influence logic**, which limits stakeholders' understanding of how its activities systematically combine to achieve outcomes.
- The ToC does not explicitly align HERE's **three distinct activity streams** (i.e., independent research, commissioned evaluations, and convenings) with its intended outcomes.
- The outcomes in HERE's ToC are not explicitly mapped to its **core thematic focus areas** (humanitarian principles, protection, accountability, and coordination).

4. Research Uptake and Influence

4.1. Introduction

This section examines the **influence and uptake** of HERE's research to assess how effectively its findings have shaped humanitarian policies, institutional decision-making, and practice standards. Influence is not only a matter of producing high-quality research — it also depends on how research is positioned for uptake.

HERE-Geneva's research program is the cornerstone of its work; it provides analysis and actionable insights to address gaps between policy commitments and operational realities in humanitarian action. The full scope of HERE's research portfolio — independent initiatives and commissioned studies — demonstrates **thematic consistency** around humanitarian principles, protection, accountability, coordination, forced displacement, and leadership. Annex 1 lists HERE's research activities.

While individual projects vary in focus, they frequently demonstrate strategic synergy across different dimensions of humanitarian action. HERE's work often engages with significant **policy moments** (e.g., Grand Bargain, World Humanitarian Summit), contributes to **system-wide reforms** (e.g., coordination reform, real-time evaluations), or responds to **donor-driven priorities** (e.g., localisation, principled assistance, pooled funding mechanisms). These strategic alignments enhance HERE's ability to influence policy and practice. A complete list of HERE's research and related publications and advisory engagements is provided in Annex 3.

While HERE's work has contributed to high-profile policy discussions — including the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), Grand Bargain deliberations, humanitarian coordination reforms, and donor-led protection strategies — the extent to which its research has directly influenced policies, practice, and systemic change varies. Policy influence is inherently complex, often diffuse, and shaped by multiple actors, making it difficult to attribute specific changes to a single organisation. To assess the effectiveness of HERE's research, this review considers **documented uptake evidence** (e.g., citations, policy recommendations adopted, operational shifts), **stakeholder feedback**, and **influence mapping** to trace pathways of influence.

While this section documents numerous examples of HERE's influence across policy and practice, it is important to acknowledge the inherent limitations in capturing the full scope of a think tank's impact. Policy influence typically follows **non-linear pathways that unfold over extended timeframes** — often years or even decades. Ideas may percolate among key audiences, seemingly dormant until conditions suddenly align for their adoption. As one senior humanitarian policy expert noted during interviews, *"I find it a sort of unrealistic that a think tank would leave a constant snail trail of influence. That's not how it works."* He observed that in the space of prevention and policy thinking, influence *"bounces and stagnates"* rather than flowing continuously. Sometimes, research *"can be in the wilderness for years"* before suddenly becoming relevant when contexts shift.

This perspective was echoed in other interviews with policymakers engaged with HERE's work, who note that discussions and analysis from convenings frequently shape their official positions in ways that are meaningful yet difficult to measure. *"For sure, what has been said during this meeting will be reflected in our final position... Maybe it's difficult to measure, but for sure they have an impact. At least I can see it for my own organisation."*

In this environment, even the most rigorous tracking systems will inevitably miss significant elements of influence. While HERE can enhance its ability to document influence through more systematic monitoring, the fundamental nature of policy influence means that some of its most significant contributions may only become apparent in retrospect when ideas once considered aspirational gradually transform into accepted practice. This reality should inform expectations about what can reasonably be captured and attributed in real time.

The following sections explore how HERE achieves influence, the types of uptake it has generated, and how its research has been reflected in policy and practice. The **influence typology** categorises the different types of influence HERE has achieved. The section on **verified uptake** presents concrete, documented examples of research leading to policy adoption or operational shifts. A section on **influence pathways** examines the mechanisms through which HERE translates research into policy engagement, funding shifts, and operational change and how different approaches reinforce one another. The final section highlights **opportunities for strengthening** these pathways to ensure HERE's research is strategically positioned to maximise influence and uptake.

4.2. Types of Influence

HERE-Geneva's influence in the humanitarian sector operates across multiple levels, from shaping policy conversations to directly informing decision-making processes. This influence can take **diffuse** forms, where HERE's research and convenings shift how stakeholders think and talk about issues, or **concrete** forms, where findings lead to specific policy changes, funding decisions, or operational reforms.

Beyond its **research**, stakeholder interviews affirm that HERE has developed a strong reputation as a **convener**, as demonstrated by its continued ability to bring donors, policymakers, and humanitarian agencies together to discuss system-wide challenges and opportunities. While HERE's convening strength is primarily concentrated within the Geneva humanitarian community, perspectives differ on whether this geographic focus represents a strategic advantage (proximity to decision-making centres) or a limitation (operating within a "Geneva bubble"). Section 6 discusses convenings in greater depth, including suggestions for strengthening effectiveness.

To assess the reach and influence of HERE's work, this report categorises their influence into four key types:

1. **Conceptual Influence** (diffuse) —HERE's research and convenings introduce new ideas, reframe debates, or deepen understanding of humanitarian challenges, even if they do not immediately translate into policy action.⁵
2. **Agenda-Setting Influence** (diffuse to concrete) —HERE's work informs sectoral priorities by influencing donor strategies and reform discussions.⁶
3. **Instrumental Influence** (concrete) —HERE's evaluations and studies lead to direct policy uptake, funding shifts, or operational changes.⁷

⁵ Weiss, C. H. (1977). "Research for Policy's Sake: The Enlightenment Function of Social Research." *Policy Analysis*, 3(4), 531-545.

⁶ Kingdon, J. W. (1984). Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.

⁷ Nutley, S., Walter, I., & Davies, H. T. (2007). Using Evidence: How Research Can Inform Public Services. Bristol: Policy Press.

4. **Network Influence** (diffuse and concrete) — HERE becomes embedded in decision-making processes as a subject-matter expert in policy consultations and advisory roles. The fact that HERE is regularly invited to participate in speaking events, roundtables, and working groups demonstrates its recognised standing and influence in the sector — stakeholders clearly value HERE’s perspective and contributions to humanitarian dialogue. Through this access and recognition, HERE is positioned to influence sector-wide debates (Conceptual Influence), donor strategies (Agenda-Setting Influence), and operational decision-making (Instrumental Influence).⁸

Table 3 presents substantiated examples across the four influence types.

⁸ Sabatier, P. A., & Jenkins-Smith, H. C. (1993). Policy Change and Learning: An Advocacy Coalition Approach. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Table 3: HERE's Substantiated Influence by Type

Type of influence	Description	Examples ⁹	Tracking
Conceptual	HERE reframes debates, introduces new concepts, or deepens understanding of key issues in the humanitarian sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HERE's approach to SGBV, emphasising comprehensive protection for men, boys, and sexual minorities alongside women and girls, informed the Government of Norway's strategic thinking and funding priorities for SGBV prevention in conflict settings. HERE's framing of protection aligned with and helped sustain this broader perspective Norway's humanitarian policy.¹⁰ • The OCHA-chaired IAHE steering committee is currently preparing a meta-review of seven major IAHEs (including the northern Ethiopia IAHE) to consolidate learning around recurring systemic issues across different crises. IAHEs are frequently referenced beyond their initial publication; they carry gravitas and contribute to a long-term evidence base. In principle, the synthesis will strengthen institutional memory in a sector with high turnover and support leadership, policy discussions, and strategy development. • The Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies in Yemen recognised (paper, blog post) the importance of HERE's evaluation of UNICEF L3 response in Yemen as having amplified (and leading to the acceptance of its findings) its own work on "When Aid Goes Awry: How the International Humanitarian Response is Failing Yemen".¹¹ • Two influential reports contain multiple citations of HERE's work: 2020 <i>Humanitarian Review</i> (UNICEF) and the 2022 <i>State of the Humanitarian System</i> report (ALNAP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • References in major sector reports (e.g., ALNAP, UNICEF). • Invitations to high-level panels, consultations, and donor roundtables. • Adoption of HERE's terminology or framing in sector debates or donor strategies.

⁹ These examples are not exhaustive but represent those substantiated through interviews and public documents.

¹⁰ [Norway's Humanitarian Strategy 2024–2029](#)

¹¹ From the Sana'a Centre with regard to HERE's Yemen report, showing that uptake is a combination of opportunism, good timing, carefully building on different evidence pieces "The combined weight of recent research has been credited with publicly identifying problems, establishing a baseline of understanding of the challenges, and forcing more honest discussions. Donors stated that they found the evaluations useful in supporting efforts to confront and pressure the system, draw stricter lines, and have more transparent conversations."

Type of influence	Description	Examples ⁹	Tracking
Agenda-Setting	HERE's work contributes to shaping reform priorities and leads to new donor initiatives or organisational strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HERE's Ethiopia IAHE, particularly its findings on UNFPA's response to sexual violence, informed Norway's strategic thinking and funding priorities in relation to SGBV prevention in conflict settings. • HERE's report <i>Becoming the MSF We Want to Be</i> initially raised awareness but had limited immediate systemic impact due to its late release in the strategy cycle. However, multiple international board members independently revisited the report years later in the context of subsequent strategic planning exercises. This unprompted use underscores the report's long shelf life and its ability to influence organizational thinking over time, even without HERE's direct involvement. • HERE contributed to WHS discussions by organising thematic roundtables and producing critical reports reinforcing core humanitarian principles, accountability, and protection as sector priorities. • HERE is widely recognised (across interviews) for sustaining the humanitarian sector's focus on principles, protection, and accountability over many years — “keeping it on its toes” by challenging assumptions and framing critical reflection.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of HERE's research in donor strategy documents or agency policy papers. • Engagement in donor-funded initiatives and policy design processes. • Requests for HERE to contribute technical guidance to new policies.
Instrumental	HERE's research findings or recommendations directly shape agency policies, funding decisions, or operational models.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HERE Director was engaged as a subject matter expert on protection by the Norwegian and Swedish governments to inform the development of their humanitarian strategies.¹² • HERE's analysis and recommendations were incorporated into IOM's Institutional Approach to Protection (DIAP) and influenced IOM's 2022 Protection Roadmap and internal governance structure. • The CLARE II evaluation directly informed UNICEF's internal cluster coordination strategy and reinforced leadership expectations within the CLA framework. UNICEF clarified its Cluster Lead Agency (CLA) responsibilities, improved strategic oversight, and integrated changes into the 2024 Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) Cluster Guidelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal adoption of HERE's recommendations in donor policies or agency reforms. • Shifts in funding models or operational approaches that are traceable to HERE's research. • Policy decisions referencing HERE's evaluations.

¹² Protection against SGBV in Norwegian Humanitarian Strategy: <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/norways-humanitarian-strategy/id3039373/?ch=4#id0058>

Type of influence	Description	Examples ⁹	Tracking
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HERE's review of the Global Education Cluster's co-leadership model addressed key leadership and funding challenges. It informed the development of a new MoU between UNICEF and Save the Children in 2022. • The IASC Humanitarian Country Team's response to the IAHE in northern Ethiopia led to immediate measures to improve strategic coordination and accountability HERE-Geneva presented findings to key operational and policy groups (OPAG, EDG) before finalisation. However, it remains unclear whether findings have led to broader system-level or structural changes beyond acknowledgements and high-level discussions. 	
Network	HERE is recognized as a key actor in policy discussions and is directly engaged as an expert, advisory partner, or participant in key debates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norway continued to reference HERE's research to inform humanitarian policy, particularly on humanitarian principles and protection, even after direct funding ended. • HERE convenes closed-door donor meetings and technical working groups (e.g., risk-sharing, coordination reform), engaging donors, policymakers, and practitioners in strategic discussions. • HERE continues to be invited to convenings and consulting engagements, both despite and because of its reputation for "uncompromising analysis" (See Annex 2, Exchange). • HERE continues to be contracted for ongoing advisory support to donors and agencies, including the UNICEF evaluation group and the Netherlands MFA for the operationalisation of PROSPECT recommendations. HERE was asked to help the MFA think through its strategy on forced displacement for the Afghanistan region based on the insights from PROSPECTS. HERE's work on COMPASS has also identified potential areas of complementarity within MFA's work itself. • HERE was invited by the Norwegian Government and ICRC to present its findings on risk sharing (as opposed to risk transfer) during the 2020 Grand Bargain Annual Meeting; HERE directly briefed ministers, donor agencies, UN leaders, and NGO heads.¹³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recurring invitations to donor consultations or advisory groups. • HERE's experts serving on formal policy review panels, advisory boards, or task forces. • HERE's research being commissioned for internal agency reviews.

¹³ https://www.kuno-platform.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/GB_Debriefing_Report_final.pdf

4.3. Verified Uptake – Documented Cases of Instrumental Influence

The verified uptake table (Table 4) provides documented examples (non-exhaustive) of instrumental influence that link HERE-Geneva’s research and evaluations to concrete policy uptake, operational shifts, and strategic reforms within humanitarian agencies and donor frameworks. Unlike other forms of influence that unfold over time or indirectly shape discourse, **Instrumental Influence is the most verifiable**, as it often results in formal policy documents, strategy adjustments, or funding decisions. These uptake cases fall into three broad categories: **direct policy adoption**, **operational shifts**, and **formal institutional responses**.

HERE’s most visible instrumental influence has been in protection, cluster leadership, and humanitarian coordination, where its research has shaped agency policies, institutional frameworks, and global coordination debates. Policy uptake has been most effective when HERE’s research is embedded in institutional decision-making through commissioned evaluations and high-level analytical and advisory work that directly inform agency policies and donor strategies. The alignment of commissioned research with HERE’s independent agenda has strengthened its ability to shape institutional policies and operational frameworks and ensured that research findings contribute to decision-making processes. In this way, commissioned work is a leverage point for operationalising HERE’s thought-leadership — bridging conceptual insights and concrete policy and programmatic action.

Table 4: HERE-Geneva’s Verified Uptake

Uptake	Details / Context
Grand Bargain – Risk Sharing Initiative: HERE/ICRC risk-sharing paper taken up by Grand Bargain stakeholders.	The discussion paper on risk-sharing was commissioned by the Netherlands and ICRC and presented by HERE at the 2020 Grand Bargain annual meeting. This put risk-sharing (vs. mere risk transfer) on the agenda for all signatories. The recommendations were aimed at Grand Bargain signatories and fed into the Grand Bargain 2.0 commitments on improved risk-sharing (also here).
UNICEF Cluster Lead Agency Evaluation (CLARE II): Findings used to strengthen UNICEF’s cluster coordination role.	UNICEF management accepted the recommendations of HERE’s CLARE II evaluation of UNICEF’s cluster co-lead role and has begun implementing changes (e.g. clearer guidance on cluster lead responsibilities). (See UNICEF Cluster Unit Update , UNICEF 2022 Management Response and 2024 Cluster Guidelines and IASC 2024 Cluster Guidelines .)
Global Education Cluster Co-Leadership Review: Informing a new UNICEF–Save the Children MoU for cluster co-lead.	HERE’s review of the global Education Cluster’s co-leadership (UNICEF and Save the Children) is noted in the 2021 annual report, with findings to inform an updated MoU. UNICEF and Save signed a new global co-leadership MoU in 2022 to reaffirm their partnership. (See Education Cluster News).
IFRC Disaster Law Study: HERE’s 2015 study on regulatory barriers used in IFRC policy advocacy.	The IFRC commissioned HERE to update the 2007 findings on legal barriers in international disaster response. The HERE-Geneva study’s results were integrated into IFRC’s report on IDRL (International Disaster Response Laws). This informed IFRC’s progress assessment and reinforced advocacy for clearer disaster-response legal frameworks. (The uptake is documented in IFRC’s official progress report .)
CHS Verification Scheme Review: Recommendations adopted by the CHS Alliance to improve accountability.	In 2022, HERE led a review on making the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) verification more accessible for national NGOs. The CHS Alliance endorsed the review’s recommendations and aligned them with its strategic plan (See also the Management Response). Concrete follow-up steps have been taken – for example, the Alliance increased outreach to local NGOs and is considering streamlining CHS indicators to lower barriers to verification.

Uptake	Details / Context
Principled Humanitarian Programming (Yemen): Findings cited in global guidance on humanitarian principles.	<p>HERE's report "Principled Humanitarian Programming in Yemen: A Prisoner's Dilemma" (2021) has been referenced in United Nations evaluation guidance on integrating humanitarian principles.</p> <p>Findings and recommendations from the report were taken up in the co-chair summary at the 4th Yemen Humanitarian Senior Officials Meeting in Brussels in 2022 (See Co-Chairs Summary).</p> <p>Research influenced high-level thinking and guidance. However, beyond citations in policy guidance recommendations were included in terms of reference for similar types of research in Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Sudan. Findings and recommendations of the HERE report have also been directly embedded into the IAHE report for Yemen which took place roughly at the same time.</p>

4.4. Influence Pathways

While the typology of influence explains the different ways HERE's research contributes to humanitarian policy and practice, the effectiveness of that influence depends on **how research findings are positioned, disseminated, and engaged with key stakeholders**. Influence in policy spaces is rarely automatic—it requires intentional engagement, strategic timing, and sustained follow-through.

HERE's research uptake and influence are facilitated through seven interconnected influence pathways. Each plays a distinct role in shaping sectoral debates, donor priorities, and institutional decision-making:

1. **Embedding Research in Institutional Decision-Making** — When HERE's findings are directly incorporated into agency strategies, funding frameworks, or policy guidance, strengthening institutional approaches. This pathway is effective because there is presumably an owner/ champion within the commissioning agency, which is responding to an identified or mandatory need.
2. **Aligning Research with Policy Windows** — When HERE strategically times research releases to coincide with major policy discussions or reform processes, ensuring findings reach decision-makers at appropriate moments. Policy windows may also coincide with a search for new ideas or perspectives.
3. **Building Political Will Through Convenings** — When HERE brings together key decision-makers to align perspectives, foster consensus, and generate momentum around critical policy issues.
4. **Strengthening Policy Influence via Internal Champions** — When HERE cultivates trusted relationships with senior decision-makers, who then advocate for the uptake and application of research findings.
5. **Framing Humanitarian Policy and Expert Discourse** — When HERE's research shapes how humanitarian challenges are understood and debated, influencing long-term sectoral priorities.
6. **Translating Research into Policy Action** — When HERE condenses research findings into policy briefs, guidance notes, or technical recommendations, ensuring findings are actionable and accessible for policymakers and practitioners.
7. **Contributing to Long-Term Learning and Reform** — When HERE sustains engagement over time, reinforcing policy discussions and institutional shifts through cumulative research, advisory roles, and follow-up engagement.

These pathways do not function in isolation — they are mutually reinforcing, and the most effective influence strategies involve a combination of approaches (see WHS case study below). For example:

- *Aligning research with policy windows* increases the likelihood that research findings will be *embedded in institutional decision-making*.
- *Building political will through convenings* can help identify *internal champions* who advocate for research uptake within agencies.
- *Framing humanitarian discourse* shapes the *long-term policy environment* and facilitates the acceptance and action of future research findings.
- *Contributing to long-term learning and reform* ensures that research findings remain relevant beyond a single policy cycle; it *reinforces institutional memory and sustained sectoral engagement*.

Table 5: HERE-Geneva's Influence Pathways

Influence Pathway	Process	HERE-Geneva Example(s)
1. Embedding Research in Institutional Decision-Making	1. Conduct research → 2. Present findings to agency leadership → 3. Findings inform internal strategy and policy changes.	CLARE II evaluation led to UNICEF clarifying its Cluster Lead Agency (CLA) responsibilities, improving strategic oversight, and integrating changes into the 2024 IASC Cluster Guidelines.
2. Aligning Research with Policy Windows	1. Identify upcoming policy moment → 2. Release research at the right time → 3. Engage key actors in discussions.	HERE's research on protection and principles helped shape Norway's humanitarian strategy by reinforcing its focus on sexual violence beyond a general GBV lens. WHS: HERE strategically released reports and discussion papers to influence preparatory discussions.
3. Building Political Will Through Closed-Door Convenings	1. Organize private discussions → 2. Foster informal consensus → 3. Shape donor and agency commitments.	Swiss Protection Workshops refined Switzerland's global protection priorities through internal policy dialogue, influencing how protection is framed in donor strategies. WHS: HERE convened key humanitarian actors in pre-WHS thematic meetings to align priorities on principles, protection, and accountability.
4. Strengthening Policy Influence via Internal Champions	1. Identify and engage influential decision-makers → 2. Provide tailored research and support → 3. Champions advocate for implementation.	HERE's long-term engagement with IOM leadership influenced the Protection Roadmap, with its analysis shaping IOM's Institutional Approach to Protection (DIAP) and 2022 Protection Roadmap. WHS: HERE built relationships with agency champions who later helped translate WHS commitments into institutional policies.
5. Framing Humanitarian	1. Define key narratives in humanitarian debates → 2. Publish research in high	'Unpacking Humanitarianism' (2020) influenced the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) and Norwegian

Influence Pathway	Process	HERE-Geneva Example(s)
Policy and Expert Discourse	visibility outlets → 3. Speak at expert panels and summits.	<p>Refugee Council (NRC) debates on mandates and coordination.</p> <p>HERE research and convening on COVID-19 sector-level impacts were widely cited to frame response (e.g., New Humanitarian, UNICEF).</p> <p>HERE's research on pooled funding has been cited in global discussions on localisation.</p> <p>WHS: HERE's research framed key WHS debates on accountability and principled humanitarian action.</p>
6. Translating Research into Policy Action	1. Condense findings into short, actionable recommendations → 2. Disseminate to decision-makers via policy briefs, targeted briefings, and working papers → 3. Facilitate uptake through advisory roles.	<p>ICVA/HERE's pooled funding brief structured for donor advocacy informed discussions on the design of country-based pooled funding mechanisms. HERE's support to OCHA to help operationalise Country-based Pooled Funds (CBPF) through opportunity identification and a monitoring toolkit.</p> <p>WHS: After WHS, HERE assisted donors and agencies in operationalising their WHS.</p>
7. Contributing to Long-Term Learning and Reform	1. Maintain cumulative research over time → 2. Engage in sustained advisory roles with key institutions → 3. Inform and influence system-wide humanitarian governance reforms.	<p>HERE's Humanitarian Coordination Research has shaped thinking on leadership coordination reforms over multiple years.</p> <p>HERE's sustained research, convenings, and advisory roles have kept focus on principled humanitarian action and reinforced donor and agency commitments, even as shifting political and operational pressures have led to <i>de facto</i> de-prioritization of these issues.¹⁴</p>

¹⁴ Recognition of this influence came across strongly during interviews with donors, agencies, and peers.

4.5. Case Study: Multi-Pathway Influence Strategy—The World Humanitarian Summit

The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) provided a structured policy moment where HERE-Geneva strategically aligned research, convenings, and policy engagement to maximise its influence. This example demonstrates how HERE used multiple influence pathways in a coordinated manner to achieve policy results. By integrating research dissemination, strategic convenings, and engagement in institutional decision-making, HERE shaped WHS discussions, contributed to Summit commitments and supported their subsequent implementation. This multi-pathway approach offers a model for how HERE can structure future influence strategies.

- **Framing Humanitarian Policy and Expert Discourse (Pathway 5):** HERE contributed to WHS discussions by producing research and discussion papers that framed key debates on localisation, accountability, and principled humanitarian action. These publications helped shape discussions leading up to the Summit and reinforced the need for reforms beyond institutional restructuring to address field-level challenges.
- **Aligning Research with Policy Windows (Pathway 2):** Recognizing the WHS as a high-impact policy moment, HERE timed the release of key research findings to coincide with preparatory discussions. This ensured that HERE's analysis was available when donors, agencies, and policymakers were formulating their WHS positions, increasing the likelihood that its priorities would be reflected in Summit commitments.
- **Building Political Will Through Convenings (Pathway 3):** In the lead-up to WHS, HERE organised, and participated in high-level closed-door discussions, roundtables, and expert working groups to facilitate dialogue on accountability, protection, and principled humanitarian action. These convenings contributed to shaping donor and agency commitments, which were reflected in post-WHS organisation position statements (e.g., ICRC/IFRC, *Istanbul and Beyond*).
- **Translating Research into Policy Action (Pathway 6):** Following WHS, HERE assisted donors and agencies in operationalising Summit commitments. These efforts are reflected in commissioned initiatives in Annex 1.

4.6. Analysis of Influence

HERE's strongest influence has been in **protection, humanitarian coordination, and leadership**. Across its research and advisory work, HERE has contributed to policy discussions and institutional frameworks in these areas. Its work on protection has reinforced donor and agency commitments to principled humanitarian action, and its research on coordination and cluster leadership has informed decision-making. These themes appear consistently across the Influence Typology and Verified Uptake sections, underscoring their prominence.

HERE's most tangible research uptake occurs when findings are embedded in institutional decision-making. Most documented cases of policy uptake stem

Key Findings: Research and Influence

- Our analysis underscores that HERE's influence emerges from a strong thematic focus (principles, protection, accountability, coordination), well-timed alignment of research with key policy windows, and deliberate engagement across multiple pathways.
- Research findings embedded in donor or agency decision-making through commissioned work is particularly influential.
- Systematic follow-up (e.g., after convenings) and ongoing influence monitoring can further enhance HERE's visibility and impact.

from commissioned research and evaluations conducted for donors and agencies as consultancies. Generally, commissioning organisations have already identified a need, and there is an internal owner/champion. The findings and recommendations are often incorporated directly into institutional policies, funding mechanisms, and operational strategies. Long-term advisory roles and engagement with key institutions have helped HERE understand their entry points and dynamics and created opportunities to shape internal agency frameworks and governance structures.

Conceptual Influence plays a role in shaping humanitarian discourse, but it is more difficult to measure.

HERE's research and convenings have contributed to sector-wide discussions on a range of issues such as GBV, coordination, localisation, and principled action. These contributions help define how humanitarian challenges are framed and understood but do not always result in immediate or directly attributable policy uptake. Given the diffuse nature of policy influence, conceptual contributions often take time to manifest in concrete changes. They are best identified through engagement with decision-makers rather than direct policy citation

HERE's convening power is a recognised strength, but structured follow-up could enhance its effectiveness. HERE has successfully brought together donors, agencies, and humanitarian practitioners to discuss key policy issues. However, some stakeholders noted that without clear follow-up mechanisms, the long-term influence of these convenings is limited. Strengthening post-event engagement — such as structured follow-up discussions, tracking commitments made, and focused engagement over time — could help translate high-level discussions into sustained policy influence and operational change.

The timeframe for influence varies depending on the type of research and engagement. Instrumental Influence can sometimes be rapid, leading to policy uptake or operational shifts. Some examples include HERE's support of IOM's protection framework, OCHA's CBPF guidance and monitoring toolkit, and Swiss MFA's protection strategy. However, access to opportunities to shape policy and operational decisions is often built over longer periods, requiring sustained engagement, reputation, and networks. Consultancy outputs, such as the Ethiopia IAHE, while primarily intended for immediate or near-term decision-making, also contribute to a growing body of work accumulating over time to shape perspectives, narratives, and strategic thinking.

A more strategically articulated framework linking independent work (i.e., research and exchange) and commissioned work could improve HERE's ability to achieve systemic change. Much of HERE's direct policy uptake has resulted from commissioned research, while its independent research has contributed to agenda-setting and conceptual influence. Ensuring that independent research is strategically positioned within policy windows and decision-making processes could help HERE expand its long-term influence and align its independent research with clearly defined objectives.

HERE should have regular conversations with partners and workshop participants to systematically identify and document how its work influences their thinking and actions. Given the complexity of measuring policy influence, HERE could benefit from a light-touch data collection framework to systematically track how its research, convenings, and advisory engagements contribute to sectoral change. A structured system would allow HERE to more systematically document uptake and demonstrate the pathways through which its work informs policy and practice.

- **A relational database** to track engagements, research outputs, and interconnections, including thematic clustering, key hypotheses, workstreams, and relevant policy platforms.
- **A set of key indicators** aligned with the four influence types to systematically capture policy-related outcomes and uptake patterns.

- **Regular feedback collection** from donors and agencies is needed to assess HERE's influence on policy discussions and decision-making and facilitate the collection and synthesis of evidence of research uptake.

5. Audience

5.1. Audience and Influence

HERE-Geneva's ability to shape humanitarian policy and practice depends on the quality of its research and convenings and how effectively it engages key stakeholders in ways that translate insights into action. As an independent research organisation, HERE seeks to influence decision-making and stimulate discussion and critical reflection at multiple levels — from donors and UN agencies to operational actors and coordination mechanisms that shape humanitarian response at a systemic level.

As outlined in the previous section, HERE's work contributes to change through multiple pathways. Audience engagement is a key enabler of these pathways. The effectiveness of HERE's influence depends on who engages with its research, how findings are introduced into policy discussions, and whether insights translate into institutional reforms or operational shifts.

This section examines two key questions: *How effectively has HERE engaged its stakeholders and promoted the uptake of its work? What opportunities exist to expand HERE's reach and engage underrepresented voices?* The first section assesses HERE's engagement with donors, UN agencies, international nongovernmental organisations (INGOs), and coordination structures, considering whether its current approach ensures that research findings are used to inform policy and practice. The second section explores engagement gaps, focusing on the inclusion of Global South actors, emerging policy influencers, and potential strategic partnerships that could enhance HERE's relevance and reach.

5.2. Engaging Key Stakeholders to Maximize Influence

HERE's stakeholder engagement reflects a strong presence within Geneva-based donor¹⁵, UN, and INGO networks, moderate engagement with operational actors, and limited structured interaction with Global South research institutions and national NGOs (NNGOs). In addition to publishing research or hosting convenings, effective engagement requires sustained interaction with decision-makers, repeated exposure to policy discussions, and alignment with institutional decision-making processes.

¹⁵ The focus here is on humanitarian donors—those that shape policy, funding priorities, and institutional decision-making in the humanitarian sector. This includes (1) Bilateral humanitarian donors (e.g., SDC, ECHO, Norwegian MFA, German FFO, USAID, FCDO), (2) Multilateral humanitarian funding mechanisms (e.g., OCHA's CERF, CBPFs), (3) Donor coordination platforms (e.g., G12 group of OCHA donors, OCHA Donor Support Group (ODSG), Grand Bargain donor caucuses).

Table 6: Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder Category	Examples	Role in HERE's Work	Influence on Humanitarian Policy	Engagement with HERE	Observations and Opportunities
Humanitarian Donors and Funding Partners	SDC, ECHO, Norwegian MFA, German FFO, Swiss Solidarity	Fund commissioned research and independent initiatives; participate in donor briefings and policy consultations; advocate for HERE's inclusion in strategic discussions	High – Shape humanitarian funding priorities, policy commitments, and agency strategies	High – Regular engagement in research and convenings	Humanitarian donors fund agencies (and HERE's work) and can facilitate access to key policy forums. Maintaining strong relationships and demonstrating policy results are critical for sustained engagement.
Humanitarian Donor Networks and Policy Platforms	OCHA Donor Support Group (ODSG), Grand Bargain Working Groups, IASC	Drive coordination reform and funding governance discussions	High – Core agenda-setting platforms	Moderate to High – HERE participates in select discussions	HERE is positioned well on these platforms but lacks systematic influence. Donor allies could support HERE's access to key reform conversations.
UN Agencies and Multilaterals	OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM, WFP	Commission evaluations and advisory work; participate in coordination reform and funding discussions	High – Influence coordination, policy, and funding mechanisms	High – Participate in convenings and as research partners	HERE is well-embedded in coordination and leadership discussions. Opportunity to strengthen engagement in nexus and localization-focused UN processes.
Think Tanks and Peer Research Institutions	ICVA, GPPI, ODI, CHA, ACAPS, Groupe URD	Co-convene events, conduct joint research, engage in policy analysis	Medium – Inform policy debates and donor strategies	High – Frequent collaboration in convenings and publications	Enhancing partnerships can expand HERE's reach beyond Geneva and integrate Global South perspectives into research.
INGOs and Operational Humanitarian Actors	International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), NRC, MSF, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Save the Children	Participate in convenings; commission research on localisation, risk-sharing, and coordination	Medium – Influence policy implementation and advocacy	Moderate – Engage selectively in research and discussions	HERE has strong ties with INGOs, but engagement could be more structured to drive research uptake at operational levels.
National NGOs and Global South Humanitarian Actors	Africa-based and MENA-based NGOs, national Red Cross Societies	Minimal participation in HERE's convenings; rarely commission research	Low to Medium – Emerging influence through localisation agendas	Low – Underrepresented in HERE's activities	Significant gap in HERE's engagement, though not absent. Need to expand representation through partnerships, advisory roles, or regional convenings.

Stakeholder Category	Examples	Role in HERE's Work	Influence on Humanitarian Policy	Engagement with HERE	Observations and Opportunities
Non-Traditional Donors and Regional Actors	Gulf states (UAE, Saudi Arabia), BRICS countries, ASEAN humanitarian bodies	Potential funders: limited engagement in HERE's convenings and research	Growing – Expanding influence in humanitarian financing	Low – HERE has limited interactions	Opportunity to engage through targeted convenings and policy dialogues to diversify funding sources and broaden HERE's reach.

The stakeholder mapping above highlights HERE's strengths in Geneva-based donor, UN, and INGO networks while also identifying strategic gaps and opportunities. Although deeply integrated within established humanitarian circles, HERE faces challenges and opportunities related to extending its reach beyond traditional networks. To maximise its influence, HERE can better align its audience engagement strategies with clearly defined influence pathways — strategically positioning its research and convening activities to enhance uptake among targeted stakeholders. The following **key takeaways** summarise these insights and implications for HERE's strategic audience engagement moving forward:

- **Strong Geneva-based network** — HERE is well-integrated into Geneva-based donor, UN, and INGO networks. This reflects its credibility as a policy-relevant research institution, an aspect that comes through clearly in stakeholder interviews. Through commissioned research and convenings, HERE has built strong relationships with major donors and UN agencies, particularly around humanitarian financing, protection, and coordination reform. This positioning has supported **Agenda-Setting Influence** and increased the likelihood that key policy discussions reflect HERE's evidence-based recommendations.
- **Challenges of operational uptake** — Commissioned research and advisory work have strengthened HERE's access to key decision-makers and provided insight into agency operations that is recognised as a unique asset among think tanks. However, ensuring that research findings extend beyond policy discussions and lead to operational change remains an ongoing challenge. The influence framework outlined in the previous section suggests that HERE's most influential work occurs when findings are **embedded in institutional decision-making** — but this requires structured follow-up and engagement with actors responsible for implementation.
- **Opportunities for strategic expansion** — Expanding strategic partnerships with think tanks and INGOs could serve as an entry point for broader engagement beyond Geneva and relationships in regional policy spaces. This is already underway with think tanks through the European Network of Humanitarian Thinktanks (HuT), where HERE is an active member. Engagement with think tanks and research institutions supports **Framing Policy and Expert Discourse**.
- **Potential of non-traditional audiences** — Opportunities exist to engage non-traditional donors and regional policy actors to ensure HERE's research remains credible and relevant in emerging trends in the broader humanitarian community. Stronger engagement with these actors could enhance HERE's **Network Influence** and amplify HERE's voice in high-level discussions outside of traditional platforms and the "Geneva Bubble."

5.3. Donors as Policy Influencers and Potential Convening Allies

HERE has successfully positioned itself among humanitarian donors as a research provider, a trusted source of analysis, and a critical yet objective voice that informs funding decisions and policy discussions. Donors actively engage with HERE's research, and several noted that they use its findings in internal policy discussions and strategic planning processes. However, several stakeholders noted missed opportunities for more structured coordination among key donor institutions. Interviewees suggested that HERE could play a stronger role in facilitating this coordination, explicitly linking its research and convening capacities to help donors align their strategic discussions and policy approaches more effectively.

The G12 group of humanitarian donors was identified as a potential platform for HERE to strategically facilitate donor engagement. While G12 members influence OCHA's strategy, their effectiveness depends on whether they align around common priorities and coordinate their engagement. Several stakeholders

suggested that HERE could support this process by synthesising key research findings, preparing targeted policy briefs, and ensuring donors are equipped with evidence-based recommendations when engaging with OCHA and other UN agencies. Similarly, HERE has had discussions with non-G12 donors—medium-sized donors—who have expressed an interest in HERE’s accountability function, given their own limited leverage within the broader humanitarian coordination structures.

Stakeholder interviews stressed that donors value HERE’s engagement for its expertise and critical yet objective and evidence-based perspective. At the same time, they expressed a desire for HERE to extend its role beyond convener and critic by helping them translate insights into coordinated, practical action. By clearly articulating intended outcomes and strengthening its position as a strategic external partner, HERE could help catalyse collective action among humanitarian donors.

Systematically translating HERE’s convening and research into actionable guidance has resource implications. To date, HERE has had limited success in securing dedicated funding from commissioners for advisory follow-up. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily require substantial additional resources; HERE can embed strategic recommendations and practical guidance directly into its outputs from the outset to enable stakeholders to operationalize findings independently.

5.4. Boards as an Underutilized Audience for Long-Term Influence

While much of HERE’s engagement focuses on policymakers and donors, several stakeholders pointed to UN agency and INGO governing boards as an underutilised but highly influential audience. Boards shape institutional strategy, funding priorities, and internal accountability mechanisms, yet they are often overlooked in traditional research dissemination strategies. Engaging boards more intentionally could ensure that HERE’s research shapes operational policy and the long-term strategic direction of major humanitarian organisations.

In at least one case, a HERE report was revisited years after its publication by the board of a major INGO to inform its strategic planning process. This demonstrates that HERE’s research can have long-term relevance, even if immediate uptake is not always visible. However, this process is informal rather than structured. It relies on individual board members to identify and champion research findings. HERE could enhance its long-term influence by developing a structured approach to board engagement, ensuring that research findings:

- Introduce findings at strategic planning moments that align with board and governance discussions.
- Present findings in ways that align with board decision-making processes — such as concise strategic summaries and targeted briefings — to ensure findings are digestible and actionable.
- Systematically reintroduce findings and recommendations over time to ensure continued relevance rather than relying on one-time exposure.

5.5. Challenges in Research Uptake and Communication Strategy

Multiple stakeholders highlighted that HERE’s research is well-regarded but not always easily accessible when decision-makers need it most. While HERE has developed a reputation for producing rigorous and critical analysis, several interviewees noted that decision-makers increasingly rely on executive summaries, targeted policy briefs, and structured discussions rather than long reports.

The [New Humanitarian op-ed](#) on the northern Ethiopia IAHE illustrates the power/benefits and limitations/risks of high-profile media engagement. Interviews highlighted the New Humanitarian as a

primary news source for humanitarian practitioners — something that is checked every morning. The op-ed triggered immediate agency responses, including damage control with the government of Ethiopia and significant adjustments in the coordination structure. However, stakeholders noted that while the op-ed generated short-term visibility, its long-term impact remains uncertain and stressed that, in a slow-moving bureaucracy, systemic change requires sustained engagement beyond media exposure. The reaction also highlighted the risks associated with high-profile critiques, as the op-ed led to significant anxiety among some senior UN officials and resulted in a new provision in OCHA contracts imposing a six-month media embargo on IAHE team leaders to restrict communication between evaluation leaders and the press.

This raises strategic questions about how HERE frames its messaging. Stakeholders suggested that HERE could balance public-facing critiques with more sustained, behind-the-scenes policy engagement, ensuring that research findings:

- Are heard and acted upon without triggering counterproductive defensiveness.
- Are introduced at multiple points in decision-making cycles rather than relying on single events.
- Combine high-profile engagement with structured follow-up to reinforce key messages over time.

HERE has already begun experimenting with this approach through breakfast meetings and brown-bag sessions with donors, focusing on coordination reforms, as well as one-on-one briefings with OCHA donors before major Flagship Initiative meetings on humanitarian coordination. These “behind-the-scenes” engagements offer opportunities for HERE to introduce findings early and continue conversations over time — aligning well with stakeholders’ recommendations for a more deliberate policy engagement strategy.

5.6. Opportunities to Expand HERE’s Reach and Better Target Its Audiences

HERE’s engagement with Global South research institutions, national NGOs, and regional policy actors remains limited. Several stakeholders emphasized that broadening participation beyond Geneva-based institutions could enhance HERE’s credibility and policy relevance. We recommend that HERE explore potential relationships with think tanks and research institutions in the Global South.

For example, in a [paper](#) and [blog post](#) on the influence of its policy research, the Sana’a Center for Strategic Studies in Yemen recognised the importance of HERE’s evaluation of UNICEF L3 response in Yemen as having amplified (and leading to the acceptance of its findings) its own work on “[When Aid Goes Awry: How the International Humanitarian Response is Failing Yemen](#).” There is significant potential synergy inherent in this example — SDC funds Sana’a CSC, and this specific report is known within the UN agencies.

Formal collaborations with [Rift Valley Institute](#) (East Africa) and the [Heritage Institute for Policy Studies](#) (Somalia) could help HERE integrate regional expertise into its research and convenings and ensure that

Key Findings: Audience

- Geneva networks are strong, but global representation remains limited.
- Donors trust HERE’s critical lens but want more structured follow-up.
- Boards are an underutilized audience for strategic change.
- Tailored communication tools (e.g., concise briefs, structured executive summaries) make findings more accessible and actionable for diverse audiences.
- High-profile media outreach can spark immediate attention and catalyze short-term actions but may provoke defensive responses or overshadow deeper reforms.
- Behind-the-scenes engagement fosters buy-in and sustainable operational uptake yet risks reduced visibility and momentum.

perspectives from affected regions inform discussions. Engaging Southern NGO alliances such as the [Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub](#) (South Asia) and [Africa Humanitarian Action](#) could also introduce diverse perspectives into global humanitarian debates. These efforts would contribute to **Framing Policy and Expert Discourse** to ensure HERE's work reflects a broader range of perspectives and is positioned for greater uptake in non-traditional policy spaces.

6. Exchange

6.1. Introduction

HERE-Geneva's exchange activities serve as a core pillar of its work. Exchange functions as a platform for convening humanitarian actors and a mechanism for translating research into policy influence. Through roundtables, briefings, public debates, and closed-door policy dialogues, HERE has positioned itself as a trusted convener of critical discussions on humanitarian coordination, financing, leadership, and localisation. The key questions driving this analysis of HERE's exchange activities include: ***How effectively has HERE engaged its target audiences? To what extent have its convenings fostered meaningful dialogue, collaboration, and influence? And how well do exchange activities contribute to shaping humanitarian policy and operational practice?***

This section examines the evolution of HERE's convening role, tracing how the organisation moved from facilitating broad discussions on humanitarian principles to using convenings as a tool for research dissemination and policy engagement. The section considers stakeholder perspectives of HERE's convening model, particularly the need for stronger follow-through mechanisms and alignment with key policy touchpoints. Broader concerns about audience engagement — including the need to expand engagement beyond traditional humanitarian actors — are addressed in the Audience Section. The discussion here focuses on structural and strategic issues related to how HERE's exchange activities translate into sustained engagement, influence, and results.

6.2. HERE's Convening Role

Over time, HERE transitioned from foundational dialogues (i.e., raising awareness and keeping focus on core humanitarian principles, protection, and accountability) to strategic convening aimed at amplifying research findings and fostering actionable discussions.

Initially (**2015–2016**), HERE-Geneva's convening role was primarily focused on creating spaces for conceptual dialogue on core humanitarian principles, protection, and accountability. Events such as the Humanitarian Priorities Project working meetings and the 30 Days to Istanbul debate provided forums for critical reflection on humanitarian norms and their application in operational settings. These discussions often involved a mix of practitioners, donors, academics, and policymakers, positioning HERE as an independent convener of rigorous, evidence-based debate.

By **2017–2019**, HERE expanded its convening role beyond normative discussions to more targeted engagement with humanitarian financing and localisation debates. Events such as the CBPF NGO Platform Briefings brought together donors, pooled fund managers, and implementing agencies to address the practical implications of donor commitments under the Grand Bargain. While this period marked a shift toward convenings that aimed to analyse sectoral challenges and to shape operational decision-making, HERE remained critical of the Grand Bargain process itself, viewing it largely as a technocratic exercise that tended to lose sight of core humanitarian principles once discussions turned to funding. Consequently, HERE maintained a values-based perspective, emphasising that financing mechanisms need to remain aligned with humanitarian principles rather than solely technical or financial considerations.

Over time, HERE's convenings became increasingly research-driven. Convening has served as a platform for applying findings from commissioned evaluations and independent studies to policy and operational debates. From **2020 onward**, HERE increasingly used convening as a platform for research dissemination and policy influence. Events such as the Future of Humanitarian Coordination Roundtables (2021–2023)

and Principled Humanitarian Programming in Yemen briefings (2022) provided structured forums to translate research findings into actionable recommendations for donors, policymakers, and humanitarian leaders. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated HERE's adaptation to virtual convening, expanding its global reach while maintaining high-level engagement through events like the *What Next? Global Virtual Conference* (2021).

This **transition from foundational dialogue to strategic convening** reflects HERE's growing role in shaping humanitarian policy discussions through evidence-based engagement. Stakeholders consistently praised HERE's analytical contributions and ability to convene relevant actors for candid debate on critical humanitarian issues.

HERE has adapted its engagement strategy effectively to address different audiences and objectives, using a **variety of event formats**. Early convenings primarily featured expert meetings and roundtables, but the approach has broadened over time to include high-level policy dialogues, public debates, and advisory roles. This structured approach underscores HERE's evolution into a recognised agenda-setter and policy influencer. The table below (Table 7) outlines the primary types of exchange activities and their intended roles within HERE's broader engagement strategy:

Table 7: HERE's Broader Engagement Strategy

Format	Description	Example
Expert Meetings and Roundtables	Typically, self-initiated or co-convened. Involve humanitarian practitioners, academics, and policymakers.	Humanitarian Priorities Project expert meetings (2015-2016), which shaped HERE's early positioning.
Policy Dialogues and High-Level Briefings	Direct engagement with donors, UN agencies, and government representatives.	Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Humanitarian Segment and Grand Bargain Annual Consultations (2017-2020)
Public Debates and Conferences	Larger-scale discussions aimed at shaping sector-wide discourse.	Universal Humanitarian Values and Principles debate (2015) ahead of WHS. What Next? Conference
Advisory and Capacity-Building Engagements	HERE served in advisory roles. Provided technical input into accountability frameworks and coordination models.	Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative (HQAI), IOM Protection Policy, International Council for Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) pooled funding analysis; PROSPECTS and COMPASS in follow up to IOM Protection Policy, CHS, Swiss Solidarity

6.3. Alignment with Global Frameworks

HERE-Geneva has strategically aligned its exchange activities with key moments in global humanitarian policy to ensure its convenings were relevant to ongoing policy discussions and reform processes. HERE has amplified discussions on coordination, financing, leadership, and localisation within broader sector-wide reform efforts through its convenings. By aligning with key initiatives such as the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), the Grand Bargain, and UN coordination reform processes, HERE has positioned itself as a policy-relevant actor engaging with high-level decision-makers.

This strategic alignment began with HERE's early engagement in WHS discussions, convening experts, policymakers, and donors to advance humanitarian principles, accountability, and protection commitments. As global policy debates evolved, HERE's convenings became more tied to humanitarian

coordination mechanisms, operationalising principles of humanitarian response, and humanitarian finance. Events such as the CBPF NGO Platform Briefings served as forums where donors, operational agencies, and fund managers assessed how global commitments translated into funding decisions and accountability structures.

Subsequently, HERE deepened its involvement with leadership and coordination reform processes, collaborating with OCHA, the IASC, and donor support groups to highlight structural gaps in humanitarian leadership, the role of Humanitarian Coordinators, and the effectiveness of coordination mechanisms. Research-driven convenings, such as the Future of Humanitarian Coordination Roundtables and Principled Humanitarian Programming briefings, have further elevated HERE's role as a credible, policy-relevant voice in these discussions.

6.4. Balance Between Convened and Invited Participation

Invited participation remained consistent over time; convening and co-convening activities demonstrated HERE's continued ability to attract and engage key audiences and lead critical discussions. (See Annex 3.)

HERE-Geneva has maintained a balance between convening its own events, co-convening with key partners, and participating as an invited expert in high-level policy discussions. This mix of engagement strategies reflects HERE's evolving influence and positioning within the humanitarian community and demonstrates its ability to set agendas, collaborate with peers, and engage directly with decision-makers in policy forums.

- **Self-led convenings**, such as the Future of Humanitarian Coordination Roundtables and Principled Humanitarian Programming briefings, provide HERE with a platform to define discussions, amplify research findings, and engage directly with policymakers and practitioners. These events reflect and reinforce HERE's role as a trusted convener and thought leader. Stakeholder interviews underscore the continued value they place on HERE's "truth-telling" in the sector through its convenings.
- **Co-convened events**, while not as common as self-led, signal HERE's credibility and standing among peer organizations. Collaborations with ICRC, NRC, CHA, and UN agencies reflect HERE's recognition as a valued partner in humanitarian discourse. By co-hosting events such as the "Where It Matters" panel with ICRC and NRC, HERE leverages the networks and reach of its partners to broaden engagement while maintaining influence over the policy agenda. Co-convening could provide a means for HERE to expand partnerships, particularly outside of Geneva, as discussed in the previous section. HERE's membership in the HuT network is a move in this direction, but it is also recommended to cultivate relationships with institutions in the Global South.
- **Invited participation** in high-level forums, such as the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, OCHA Donor Support Group (ODSG), and Grand Bargain stocktaking meetings, illustrates HERE's standing as a respected contributor to global policy conversations. These engagements provide direct access to decision-makers and allow HERE to translate its research and convening discussions into policy recommendations to shape donor strategies and sector-wide reforms.

Each type of engagement serves as an indicator of HERE's position and influence within the humanitarian ecosystem. The ability to convene decision-makers, co-lead policy discussions, and gain entry into exclusive forums reflects HERE's credibility as both a thought leader and an operational policy actor.

6.5. Stakeholder Perspective on Exchange Activities

HERE-Geneva is highly valued for its sharp analysis, independent voice, and convening power. Stakeholders praised HERE's role in challenging assumptions and facilitating frank discussions on humanitarian policy and practice. Stakeholders offered diverse perspectives on how HERE could build on these strengths, reflecting a range of expectations regarding HERE's role and approach as a think tank.

Critiques, where offered, were consistently framed as an invitation to build on HERE's strengths. One interviewee described HERE as a *"promise still waiting to happen,"* adding, *"I do still see the promise. I see the added value of its sharp and incisive critique. And I think it would be a pity not to build on that. Our critique is not about what HERE does but rather...that it has more potential than what we've seen. It is an invitation for HERE to build on that."*

Stakeholders also highlighted the potential for HERE to become more intentional and strategic in translating convenings into actionable outcomes. They suggested HERE clarify how convenings fit into a structured approach for sustained influence, rather than as standalone activities. They recommended HERE strengthen its capacity to proactively guide stakeholders in taking concrete actions informed by its analysis. They emphasised that HERE does not need to become an advocacy organisation but could play a more intentional role in guiding humanitarian donors, policymakers, and agencies to take actions informed by its research and convening.

The following section outlines key challenges raised by stakeholders, focusing on HERE's strategic vision, follow-through, and sustained influence beyond individual convenings.

Strategic Vision and Theory of Change for Exchange Activities

Stakeholders raised concerns about HERE's lack of a clearly articulated theory of change for its exchange activities. While HERE's convenings are widely recognised as insightful and highly relevant, some interviewees found it difficult to determine how these discussions fit into a broader, sustained strategy for change. Several stakeholders felt that HERE successfully identifies critical issues and brings the right people into the room. However, its convenings do not always clearly define what they aim to achieve or how discussions could or should translate into tangible actions or outcomes over time.

One participant noted that convenings often *"lack a clear through-line that connects discussions to a broader strategy for change."* Another reflected on this challenge, noting, *"I think the products, the question, and the issues they raised are really good. But how to reach the results, the impact they want to have—I don't have the answer. But I still think that they could have a stronger impact."*

Several stakeholders emphasised that they perceived HERE's convenings to be responsive to specific policy moments rather than strategically structured to align with key decision-making cycles. HERE's discussions appear — at least to some participants — to stand alone, making it difficult to track how insights contribute to long-term sectoral change. They stressed that improved clarity on strategic intents — the specific outcomes it sought from convenings — and deliberate, ongoing engagement after events would better position HERE's research, discussions, and advisory activities for maximum influence.

Some suggested that HERE would benefit from identifying key leverage points for influence and structuring its convenings around these goals. One stakeholder described the need for research organisations like HERE to identify leverage points where small interventions can create significant shifts in sectoral debates. They compared it to a supertanker — where minor, well-placed adjustments at the base create long-term

directional shifts. This reinforces the idea that HERE needs to be more deliberate and strategic in selecting moments of intervention and shaping policy conversations in ways that drive meaningful change.

Follow-through and Sustained Engagement

Several interviewees praised HERE's ability to convene the right people for difficult conversations but emphasized that momentum is often lost after the event. Stakeholders described high-quality discussions that expose critical issues and engage the key actors but lack structured follow-up to sustain engagement or translate insights into concrete action. Follow-through tends to occur via advisory engagements linked to commissioned work. Stakeholders report that follow-through is less evident in relation to independently organised research and exchange activities.

One stakeholder observed that convenings often generate important discussions but do not always provide clear next steps, making it difficult for participants to know how to carry the conversation forward. Another noted that without structured mechanisms for follow-up, key insights risk being lost rather than reinforced in decision-making spaces over time.

Several stakeholders suggested that HERE could achieve sustained engagement by integrating follow-up mechanisms into its convening strategies. Suggestions included structured follow-up reports or talking point memos, dedicated working groups or thematic engagement plans, or simply periodic reconvening of key actors.

Shaping Donor and Policy Agendas

There was also a sentiment among interviewees — particularly humanitarian donors — that HERE could play a more facilitative role to help them coordinate and establish consensus positions vis-à-vis the agencies they fund. One donor noted: "HERE is very good at identifying the problem, but they're not always helping us figure out what we do next." Another donor representative added: "I appreciate their independent voice, but sometimes I need clearer recommendations on how to use their research in practice."

As one stakeholder put it, *"In the end, we actually all know what to do, but often we need some help and assistance and guidance on how to do it better. Bringing people together on certain topics, for example, to go beyond just one meeting but then to guide us towards change—to create a group of people who continue to discuss and think further about how to improve prioritization. That kind of structured input and assistance would have been helpful because, at the end [of the meeting], we all said our thoughts about how we prioritize and what our challenges are, and then we walked out. But we [already] know that we should prioritize."*

Interviews identified several natural policy cycles that can offer "natural" touchpoints and influence pathways to structure this kind of facilitative support, including ODSG expert and high-level meetings and Grand Bargain meetings.

Key Findings: Exchange

- HERE has shifted from foundational dialogues on humanitarian principles to targeted, research-driven convenings.
- Strategic alignment with global frameworks (WHS, Grand Bargain) has increased HERE's relevance among donors and agencies.
- Despite praise for HERE's frank discussions, stakeholders emphasize the need for structured follow-up to sustain momentum and drive concrete action.
- Many stakeholders see room for clearer articulation of how convenings link to broader outcomes and encourage HERE to identify leverage points where small interventions can yield significant shifts.

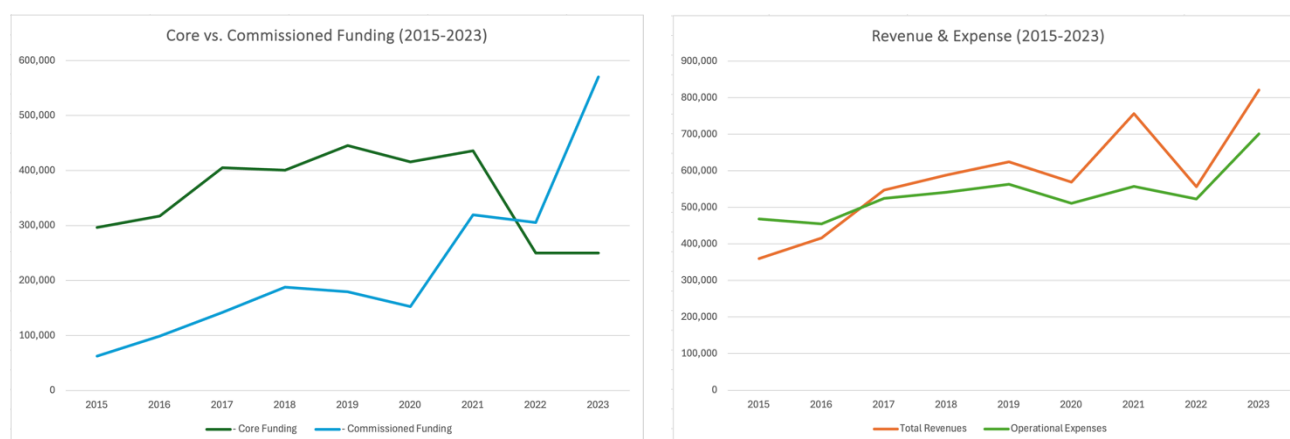
In sum, HERE is widely valued for its independent analysis, convening power, and ability to surface and critically engage key issues in humanitarian policy. However, some stakeholders have suggested that HERE could enhance its influence by more clearly communicating how specific convenings and follow-up actions align with its strategic objectives. Strengthening intentional engagement with key stakeholders, including clearer articulation of intended outcomes from its convenings, could help HERE systematically translate its insights into sustained influence.

7. Funding and Sustainability

7.1 Introduction

HERE-Geneva's funding structure has evolved significantly over the past decade, characterised by periodic shifts in the balance between **core** (unrestricted or loosely restricted) and **commissioned** (project-based) funding. Core funding initially increased modestly and remained relatively stable from 2017 to 2021 but subsequently experienced a decline. This recent decline likely results from a combination of factors, including shifting donor priorities toward immediate crises, economic constraints following the COVID-19 pandemic, and increased emphasis on project-specific funding rather than unrestricted or loosely restricted support. The decline compelled HERE to pursue more commissioned work as a deliberate strategy to ensure organizational sustainability. As a result, commissioned funding has grown steadily, with a particularly sharp increase between 2021 and 2023, substantially surpassing core funding and driving overall revenue growth.

Figure 2: HERE-Geneva's Funding, Revenue, and Expense Trends



This divergence introduces strategic challenges for HERE. Although the rise in commissioned funding has improved financial stability and allowed the organisation to grow overall, the decline in core funding reduces HERE's strategic flexibility and capacity to set its own research agenda. Increasing reliance on revenue from commissioned projects ultimately constrains HERE's ability to conduct proactive, mission-aligned research, which has potential implications for its **intellectual independence**. These dynamics underscore the importance of a more balanced, resilient funding mix that preserves HERE's capacity for independent inquiry.

The crux of the challenge lies in balancing the short-term security of project-driven income with the strategic flexibility afforded by core funding. While commissioned contracts increasingly generate reliable revenue and enable near-term growth, their rising predominance — primarily driven by necessity rather than strategic preference — limits HERE's capacity to pursue proactive, mission-aligned research. Exacerbating this tension is an overreliance on a single core donor, whose shifting priorities could quickly undermine HERE's intellectual autonomy. Ultimately, **HERE requires a more balanced, resilient funding mix** that preserves the advantages of commissioned work while ensuring the organization retains control over its strategic direction and research agenda.

Achieving this balance requires strategic adaptation by HERE as well as sustained commitment from donors to invest in core, independent capacities. Specifically, HERE should reinvigorate relationships with existing

donors by clearly communicating the strategic value of independent, core-funded research and demonstrating how this independence aligns with donors' broader humanitarian and policy objectives. Concurrently, attracting new donors through diversified outreach and well-articulated value propositions remains essential to securing HERE's financial resilience and intellectual autonomy.

7.2. Benchmarking HERE Against Other Members of the HuT Network

The following benchmarking examines the revenue models of other humanitarian think tanks within the European Network of Humanitarian Thinktanks (HuT) to contextualise HERE-Geneva's funding structure and identify opportunities for diversification.

Organization	Funding Model	Major Donors
Groupe URD (France)	Independent humanitarian think tank funded through project grants and long-term support from institutional donors (on an “almost permanent basis”).	Long-standing core donors include the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French Development Agency, the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Regional Council, and the European Commission.
KUNO (Netherlands)	Platform for humanitarian knowledge exchange jointly supported by its member organizations and government.	Backed by a <u>consortium</u> of Dutch NGOs and academic institutes such as CARE Nederland, MSF, Oxfam, Save the Children, Dutch universities, etc.) and <u>co-financed</u> by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
IECAH (Spain)	Independent civil-society institute sustained via collaborations with numerous public and private entities, which provide logistical support and financing	<u>Key supporters</u> include the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), Fundación La Caixa, the Madrid City Council, the European Commission's humanitarian office (ECHO), as well as partnerships with NGOs (e.g. Médicos Sin Fronteras).
Humanitarian Policy Group (ODI, UK)	Research group within ODI financed through a multi-donor <u>Integrated Programme</u> – an independent, multi-year humanitarian research agenda made possible by unearmarked contributions from multiple donors.	Supported by a pool of government and institutional donors. For example, past HPG core funding has come from agencies like <u>GAC</u> (Canada), USAID (United States), AusAID (Australia), the UN World Food Programme, and philanthropic organizations (e.g. the Fritz Institute). (e.g., see <u>ODI donors</u>)
Centre for Humanitarian Action (Germany)	Independent German humanitarian think tank (CHA) funded by substantial core contributions from its founding humanitarian NGOs, supplemented by support from additional “ <u>endorsing</u> ” <u>partner organizations</u> and project-specific grants.	<u>Core funding is provided</u> by Doctors Without Borders Germany, Caritas Germany, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, and (since 2021) the German Red Cross. Additional financial support comes from other NGOs (e.g. Islamic Relief Deutschland, Action Against Hunger, Oxfam Germany, Save the Children Germany, etc.) and <u>project funding</u> from the German Federal Foreign Office.
HERE-Geneva (Switzerland)	Geneva-based research center funded through a mix of core donor funding and commissioned project work. HERE balances unearmarked donor grants with income from contracted research/evaluations to maintain financial independence.	Major core donors include the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) and previously the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Norway and Sweden. Additional revenue comes from commissioned studies and projects for various humanitarian partners.

Funding Patterns Among HuT Members

Three broad patterns emerge in the funding models of these HuT organisations. On one end of the spectrum are **multi-donor “integrated programs,”** such as the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) at ODI, which pool unearmarked contributions from various government and philanthropic donors into a flexible core budget. KUNO (Netherlands) and the Centre for Humanitarian Action (CHA) in Germany use **membership structures** whereby a consortium of NGOs or founding institutions commits to reliable, multi-year funding. This arrangement provides a predictable cushion each year and frees up capacity for proactive research and sector engagement.

Meanwhile, organizations such as IECAH (Spain) and Groupe URD (France) depend on a diverse **mix of public and private partners** — ranging from government agencies and philanthropic entities to NGOs — for project-specific grants and long-term support. Although the funds may be designated for specific themes, they originate from multiple sources, making these think tanks less reliant on any single donor.

HERE’s Funding Model in Contrast

HERE, by comparison, is significantly more vulnerable to sudden shifts. The organisation currently relies heavily on one principal “core” donor, the Swiss government, whose support now partially depends on meeting specific outcomes. This setup, combined with unpredictable commissioned evaluations and studies, yields **less overall security** than its HuT peers. Although many other think tanks also undertake project-based work, they typically bolster this with **multiple overlapping sources of recurring income** — whether through pooled donor arrangements, formal partnerships, or membership contributions. For HERE, depending on a single government donor and sporadic contract opportunities translate into higher financial volatility. Even modest changes in a funder’s priorities or contracting cycles can substantially affect HERE’s capacity to pursue an independently defined research agenda.

7.3 Diversifying Funding

Drawing on these HuT benchmarking insights, the following recommendations present practical steps for HERE to diversify its funding base and mitigate the vulnerabilities associated with a single core donor model.

Develop a Multi-Donor Integrated Program

The current reliance on a single core donor (the Swiss government) leaves it HERE vulnerable to sudden shifts in donor priorities. Establishing a multi-donor integrated program would help diversify risk by consolidating semi-earmarked contributions from various government and philanthropic sources into a unified budget line. This approach replaces one-to-one funding agreements with a more flexible model that effectively addresses **cross-cutting research** and **overhead costs** in a predictable manner.

For instance, leveraging HERE’s established strengths in implementing humanitarian principles, the organization could invite donors—such as Norway, Sweden, and selected foundations—to co-fund a multi-year analytical agenda. A key aspect of this model entails moving **from transactional donor-recipient relationships to more collaborative partnerships**, where donors actively influence (and subsequently benefit from) HERE’s evidence-based insights. Through tailored relationship management and open discussions about shared priorities, HERE can illustrate how its principled analysis enhances donor impact.

Over time, this reframing of donor engagements positions HERE to cultivate **lasting partnerships**, decrease reliance on any single source of core funding, and uphold the editorial independence necessary for high-

quality, principle-driven research. Ultimately, a multi-donor integrated program provides greater strategic flexibility, ensuring that HERE's agenda stays aligned with its mission while delivering broader benefits to donors themselves.

Monitor Grant Calls (RFPs) for Humanitarian R&D and Knowledge Management

Although HERE already pursues commissioned contracts, it has yet to fully leverage specialized R&D and knowledge-management grants available from both governmental and private donors. Calls from entities such as the European Commission's Horizon Europe program, specific branches of the UN, and large philanthropic funds focus on fostering new methodologies, policy innovations, and inter-organizational learning. These RFPs often invite multi-partner consortia and encourage cross-sector collaboration — areas where HERE can excel by providing rigorous analysis and a strong track record in principled humanitarian action. Monitoring and preparing for these calls on a rolling basis — perhaps by designating a part-time resource for opportunity scanning — could help HERE secure funding beyond the usual roster of bilateral or project-based contracts. Winning even one or two medium-sized R&D grants annually would relieve the pressure on core resources and enable HERE's team to engage more deeply in forward-looking, self-directed research projects.

Examples of Humanitarian R&D Funding Windows (Illustrative)

- DG ECHO “[Knowledge for Action in Prevention & Preparedness](#)” (KAPP) Call 2025
- [European Prize for Humanitarian Innovation](#) (InnovAid)
- “[Creating Hope in Conflict](#)” – A Humanitarian Grand Challenge
- Horizon Europe – “[Civil Security for Society](#)” Calls 2024

Explore Loading Daily Rates to Cover Research and Development (R&D)

While commissioned projects provide steady revenue, they seldom allocate a budget line for broader organisational R&D. Adding daily rates—specifically, including a **small margin or “R&D supplement”** in HERE's standard fees—would establish an internal pool dedicated to advancing methodologies, piloting new analytical tools, and pursuing self-initiated research. In practice, this could involve incrementally raising daily consulting rates for selected contracts (particularly those with donors willing to accept higher overheads) to cover the true cost of delivering high-quality evaluations. The resulting margin would be reinvested in staff training, innovations in humanitarian evaluation, and strategic research not included in project budgets. HERE must ensure transparency in explaining why its fees encompass this additional component and how it ultimately benefits the donor (for instance, by enhancing evaluation quality and providing cutting-edge analytical frameworks). Even a modest markup across multiple contracts could accumulate into a significant R&D fund, helping maintain HERE's position as a leader in independent, principle-based humanitarian analysis.

Deepen Partnerships with Philanthropic Foundations

HERE has a proven track record of foundation support (e.g., the Oak Foundation in the past and the Mastercard Foundation currently), demonstrating that philanthropic donors recognise the value of HERE's comprehensive evaluations and principled analyses. However, these relationships have often been informal or tied to specific outputs. Moving forward, there is an opportunity to **develop longer-term, learning-oriented collaborations** with foundations interested in thematic areas such as refugee entrepreneurship, protection in conflict settings, and new coordination frameworks. By positioning itself as a thought leader on accountability and principled action, HERE can offer foundations the chance to shape and monitor impact in areas where robust independent analysis is essential. Aligning with a foundation's strategic pillars — while maintaining editorial independence — would enable HERE to conduct self-initiated research on critical sector issues and expand its portfolio of core funding sources. Over time,

cultivating familiarity and trust with a select number of carefully chosen foundations could result in multi-year grants that provide financial security and flexibility to address urgent, emerging topics.

Table 8: Potential Foundation Donors for HERE-Geneva (Illustrative)

Donors	Humanitarian Work Funded	Examples of Grants	Website
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Crisis policy research, multilateral development reform, emergency response	Funding to CGD for crisis policy and multilateral development research Support to ODI for humanitarian financing solutions Investment in epidemic and disaster humanitarian interventions	https://www.gatesfoundation.org
Open Society Foundations	Refugee-led organisations, accountability, transparency in humanitarian aid	ODI report on funding to refugee-led organisations Support for transparency and accountability in humanitarian aid	https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation	Refugee financing, direct funding to local actors	Research on refugee financing and localisation Support for refugee self-reliance research	https://www.hiltonfoundation.org
William & Flora Hewlett Foundation	Policy research, aid transparency	Co-founding of Think Tank Initiative Funding for Publish What You Fund	https://www.hewlett.org
Wellcome Trust	Health research in humanitarian crises	Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises (R2HC) Pandemic preparedness research	https://wellcome.org
IKEA Foundation	Refugee livelihoods, research funding	Grant for refugee livelihoods research Support for the Refugee-Led Research Hub	https://www.ikeafoundation.org
Novo Nordisk Foundation	Humanitarian crisis research, food security, health systems	€6.2 million in competitive grants for humanitarian research	https://novonordiskfonden.dk
Robert Bosch Stiftung	Humanitarian policy, migration policy, refugee support	Funding for GPPI, Brookings, and ODI	https://www.bosch-stiftung.de
Dubai Cares	Education in emergencies, refugee education	E-Cubed fund for research on Education in Emergencies	https://www.dubaicarees.ae

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1. Conclusions

Strategy. Over the past decade, HERE has consistently focused on the disconnect between humanitarian policy rhetoric and field realities, positioning itself as a trusted organisation that challenges prevailing assumptions while offering constructive solutions. Its “hybrid” model — integrating independent research, commissioned evaluations, and principled advocacy — has proven both an asset and a source of tension. Financial sustainability often depends on commissioned work, creating pressures that can overshadow internally driven research. Nonetheless, stakeholders consistently laud HERE’s principled approach, long-term perspective, and relevance to policy debates.

Theory of Change. HERE’s Theory of Change (ToC) underscores its mission of strengthening collective accountability, protection, and principled humanitarian action through evidence-based research, critical reflection, and convening. While broadly aligned with HERE’s vision, the ToC can more explicitly articulate how each activity stream — independent research, commissioned work, and convening—cumulatively generates influence. Clarifying which influence pathways and type of influence (instrumental, conceptual, agenda-setting, network) are intended for each project or initiative would help audiences see how HERE’s research and dialogues link to meaningful sectoral changes.

Research and Influence. HERE’s methodological rigor and sustained focus (protection, accountability, coordination, and principled action) have positioned it to shape policy debates. Instrumental influence is especially evident when agencies or donors directly adopt findings from commissioned evaluations. At the same time, conceptual and agenda-setting influences often stem from independent research that reframes issues over the long term. Stakeholders highlight that high-quality analysis alone does not guarantee results; the clearest results occur when HERE embeds or presents its recommendations in the right forums and with a clear follow-through plan.

Audience. HERE is strongest among Geneva-based donors, UN agencies, and large INGOs, where trust and credibility have grown over repeated engagements. However, operational-level uptake is uneven, and engagement with local organisations, regional research institutes, and non-traditional donors remains limited. The next phase of HERE’s work would benefit from greater emphasis on tailored outreach, tailored “packaging” of evidence and recommendations, and cultivating relationships outside the “Geneva bubble.” Donor representatives also suggest HERE take a stronger facilitation role to help them align policy goals and coordinate reform agendas.

Exchange. HERE’s convening power—through roundtables, briefings, and closed-door sessions—is widely praised. These gatherings often spark open, frank discussion among high-level decision-makers. However, interviewees called for more structured follow-up so that convening outputs can translate into actionable commitments. Timing events to coincide with major policy moments (e.g., IASC reforms, Grand Bargain, OCHA Flagship Initiative) and establishing post-event plans or working groups would help HERE secure sustained momentum for its recommendations.

8.2. Recommendations

Looking ahead to the next ten years, HERE stands at an inflexion point in a humanitarian ecosystem experiencing more protracted crises, an uncertain political environment, shifting donor priorities, and increased scrutiny on the effectiveness of humanitarian action. HERE’s priorities and track record — rooted in humanitarian principles, protection, and accountability — is likely to remain deeply relevant. At the same

time, emerging challenges require HERE to adapt its basic frameworks, be more strategic in engaging the policy process and expand partnerships beyond its traditional networks. Building on HERE's established strengths in bridging policy and practice, the following recommendations propose practical steps to ensure that HERE remains a principled and influential force in a rapidly changing humanitarian environment.

Strategy

Overall. It is recommended that HERE adopts an agile strategic approach that balances commissioned work and independent research around its core mission, proactively aligns these efforts with key donor and policy windows, and cultivates global partnerships to extend its reach beyond Geneva. By continuing to focus on a concise set of thematic priorities (e.g., principled action, protection, accountability) and managing its project portfolio for both financial viability and intellectual independence, HERE will reinforce its distinctive “critical friend” role in the sector. In this way, the organisation's strategy provides a coherent framework for maximising credibility and influence.

- **Recommendation 1:** Prioritize commissioned projects that strategically align with HERE's mission while **proactively engaging donors to understand their priorities**. This approach preserves intellectual independence, ensures alignment with emerging policy windows, and positions independent research to complement donor interests and sector needs.
- **Recommendation 2:** Begin each research cycle with clear **policy engagement goals** and a map of key decision-making forums. Identifying opportune moments early in the cycle helps HERE target its findings where they can shape donor priorities and wider humanitarian reforms.
- **Recommendation 3:** For every new research initiative — whether commissioned or independent — create a **concise concept note** that outlines strategic relevance, potential donor engagement, expected outcomes, and clear success indicators. By anchoring each project in a well-developed concept note, HERE can increase its overall intentionality, integrate planning elements, and ensure each initiative is feasible and influential.

Theory of Change

Overall. It is recommended that **HERE use its Theory of Change as a living strategy map** — one that aligns day-to-day activities with a longer-term vision, spells out precise pathways for influence, situates each project in the context of significant policy windows, and facilitates continuous learning and adaptive management. In this way, the ToC will function as a unifying framework and a practical guide for achieving measurable, systemic outcomes.

- **Recommendation 1:** Revise HERE's Theory of Change to incorporate **four influence types** (conceptual, agenda-setting, instrumental, network) and ensure each research product or convening clearly identifies its intended pathway(s) and how success will be measured. This will help audiences and partners see how HERE's discrete outputs add to broader systemic changes. (See Figure 8.1.)
- **Recommendation 2:** Develop a simple annual or biannual **map of major humanitarian decision points** and schedule HERE's projects, dissemination events, and convenings accordingly. Aligning research with these policy windows will increase the likelihood of uptake and practical influence.

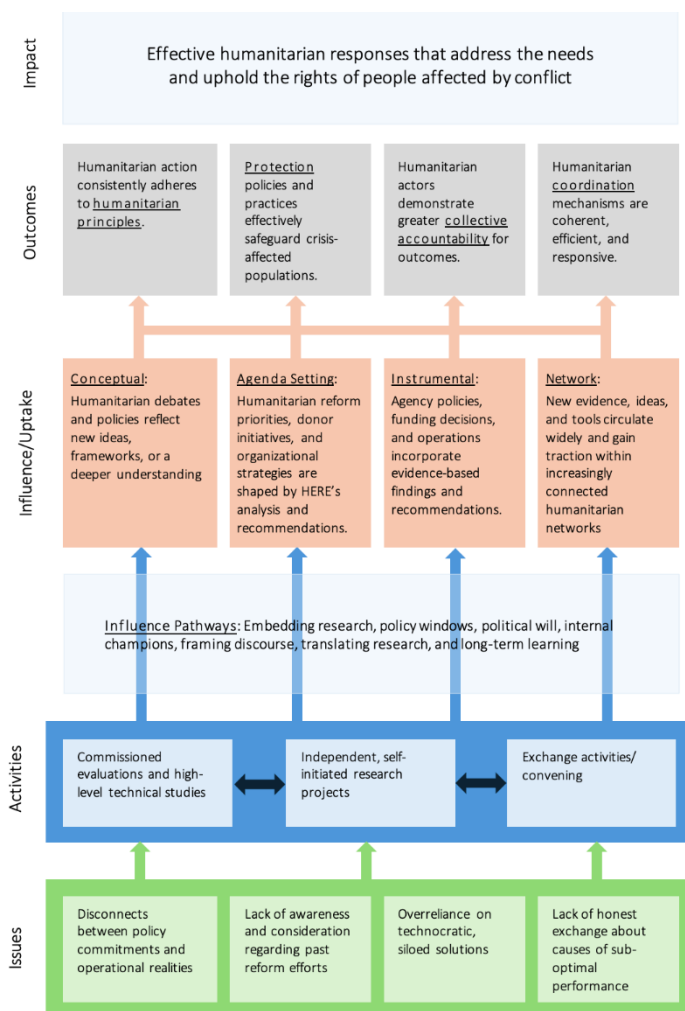
- **Recommendation 3:** Introduce a streamlined **monitoring system** (e.g., minimal indicators) to regularly track each project's contribution to the Theory of Change. Document evidence of influence — drawing on the influence typology framework — to continuously learn from successes, adjust where needed, and document the outcomes of HERE's work.

Research and Influence

Overall. HERE should anchor each commissioned or independent study in a clear influence framework that articulates its intended pathways and influence types and identifies how findings will be framed, disseminated, and integrated into decision-making processes. This involves mapping out the relevant policy moments, pinpointing potential champions or convenings, and defining simple indicators for measuring uptake — thereby allowing HERE to demonstrate, in concrete terms, how each research initiative contributes to measurable advances in humanitarian policy, operational practice, and long-term system change.

- **Recommendation 1.** Adopt a **multi-year research agenda** focused on core themes (i.e., protection, principles, and accountability themes), referencing commissioned and independent projects, and conduct periodic reviews to adapt to emerging crises or reform priorities.
- **Recommendation 2.** Leverage each **commissioned evaluation as an opportunity** to feed into HERE's broader **thought leadership** and systematically map operational findings to potential follow-up research questions or gaps in the independent research pipeline.
- **Recommendation 3.** Institutionalize **synergy between research outputs and convenings** by scheduling a dedicated event for each major project to share results, co-create policy or operational recommendations with participants, and reconvene 6–12 months later to assess uptake and refine lessons learned.
- **Recommendation 4.** Build in regular, **structured time for internal learning, reflection, and brainstorming**. Implement brief monthly or quarterly internal learning sessions where staff present new insights from commissioned and independent work—mapping them to ongoing or upcoming projects for cross-fertilisation.

Figure 3: Example of potential revisions to HERE's Theory of Change



Audience

Overall. HERE should systematically expand its engagement beyond the Geneva-based ecosystem by forging stronger partnerships with local NGOs, regional think tanks, and non-traditional donors. By tailoring outreach formats (e.g., concise policy briefs, board-level summaries) and integrating clear influence pathways into its audience strategy, HERE can ensure its analysis resonates with the right decision-makers at the right moments — ultimately broadening its reach, influence, and credibility across diverse humanitarian actors.

- **Recommendation 1. Align audience engagement strategies** with the four influence pathways and diversify **communication formats**—such as executive summaries, policy briefs, and targeted briefings—so that findings are delivered in the proper form to the right audience at the right time.
- **Recommendation 2.** Facilitate structured **coordination among Geneva-based donors** (e.g., G12 and ODSG) by leveraging HERE’s convening role and impartial perspective; help them align around shared positions and oversight functions to support strengthened accountability and principled action.
- **Recommendation 3.** Proactively **broaden reach** by engaging non-traditional donors, regional humanitarian actors, and local NGOs or think tanks to ensure HERE’s evidence and recommendations integrate diverse perspectives and inform a broader spectrum of decision-makers and field-level practitioners.

Exchange

Overall. HERE’s convening role will be most effective when each event is designed with clear outcomes in mind, integrated into relevant policy windows, and paired with structured follow-up. By aligning convenings with the same influence framework — explicitly identifying potential champions, policy moments, and simple outcome indicators — HERE can turn its roundtables and workshops into more effective drivers of change and enable participants to translate evidence and dialogue into actionable commitments.

- **Recommendation 1.** Plan convenings around **key humanitarian decision-making moments** (e.g., OCHA, Grand Bargain, donor cycles) and define clear policy-relevant outputs — such as brief action points, recommendations, or agreed next steps—to ensure discussions lead to tangible results.
- **Recommendation 2.** Introduce **structured follow-up mechanisms** (e.g., targeted policy briefs, working groups, short follow-up sessions) after each convening so participants remain engaged, committed actions are tracked, and progress updates can be shared.
- **Recommendation 3.** Create a concise **annual convening roadmap** aligned with HERE’s strategy and Theory of Change and adopt a simple framework to measure each event’s results—capturing immediate policy references, potential funding shifts, and longer-term operational changes stemming from the convening.

Annexes

ANNEX I. HERE-Geneva Activities, 2014-2024

Activity	Commission	DESCRIPTION	Publications	Convenings, Exchange, Advisory	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Independent Initiatives														
Priorities and Commitments in Humanitarian Action (World Humanitarian Summit/Grant Bargain)	Self	Examined humanitarian sector adherence to core principles, commitments, and priorities, focusing on protection, accountability, and humanitarian principles; insights contributed to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) debate and subsequent policy discussions.	Jigsaw of the International Humanitarian Response System (2015) Setting priorities to protect civilians in armed conflict (2015) The Universality and Application of Values and Principles (2015) On the Right Track (2016) HERE Humanitarian Priorities (May 2016) – FINAL REPORT	Public Debate: 30 Days to Istanbul (2016); Thematic Meetings: Accountability (2016), Protection (2015), Principles (2015); Policy briefings for humanitarian organizations on operationalising WHS commitments; Technical inputs to WHS discussions	•	•								
HRI 2.0 Feasibility Study (no specific platform – relevant to Good Humanitarian Donorship/Grand Bargain monitoring)	self (Joffe)	Desk review and interviews with key stakeholders focused on (1) a review of the current humanitarian accountability environment, (2) an analysis of the original strengths and weaknesses of the HRI, and (3) suggestions for a future business model	Addressing the Humanitarian Donor Accountability Gap? Feasibility Study for an HRI 2.0 Report	<i>“...concluded that it would not be a worthwhile exercise to revive it as such in today’s environment and given HERE’s positioning and capacities.”</i> [Note – report has nonetheless been referenced in other humanitarian reports, including the 2020 UNICEF Humanitarian Review.]			•							
Role of Mandates (no specific platform)	Self	Research on influence of organisational mandates on humanitarian operations and decision-making; in-depth case studies to analyse	Country Studies (Mali, CAR, Myanmar, Ethiopia) (2018-2020)	Initial stakeholder meeting with focal points; Internal workshops tailored to each participating organisation to share key insights from case studies and the final report, including separately				•	•					

Activity	Commission	DESCRIPTION	Publications	Convenings, Exchange, Advisory	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		mandate effectiveness in different operational contexts	Unpacking Humanitarianism (2020) – FINAL REPORT	tailored workshops for participating organisations; Policy exchange with donor government representatives (Netherlands, Norway, and Switzerland); Presentation at ALNAP Annual Meeting (2019); Presentation at HPN Week Session (2020)										
TRACK (no specific platform – relevant to GHD)	self	Informed by HRI 2.0 feasibility study and experiences from Mandates Study; framework project to review commitments of donor governments and organisations in: (1) protection (SGBV, ICRC-led professional standards, (2) accountability to affected populations, and (3) humanitarian-development nexus	Mapping of GBV Commitments in Humanitarian Action	Attended thematic pledging conference hosted by the Norwegian government to renew and strengthen commitments to addressing SGBV in humanitarian settings						•				
Beyond the Pandemic (no specific platform)	self	Analysis of how the COVID-19 pandemic affected humanitarian systems across four countries (Cameroon, Colombia , Libya, and Myanmar).	Overview of findings (2021)	3-day virtual conference (What Next?); podcasts; virtual roundtable discussions							•			
Future of Humanitarian Coordination (not organized around a specific platform, but relevant to OCHA/IASC – and now to the Flagship Initiative	self ¹⁷	Multi-year initiative addressing gaps in global humanitarian coordination <i>Builds on three commissioned pieces: CLARE II evaluation; review of the co-leadership of the Global Education Cluster;</i>	Roadmap to Humanitarian Coordination (2022) Video Series	Roundtable discussions								•		

¹⁷ From 2021 report: “Supported by the Government of Sweden as well as our core funding from Switzerland and Norway”

Activity	Commission	DESCRIPTION	Publications	Convenings, Exchange, Advisory	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
launched in 2023 and now in its pilot phase) ¹⁶		<i>and UNHCR's leadership and coordination role in refugee settings</i>												
Commissioned Work														
Regulatory Issues in International Disaster Response	IFRC	Conducted a legal and policy review on regulatory barriers to international disaster response, analysing how legal frameworks impact humanitarian action.	Report	Commissioned as a discussion paper for IFRC Experts Meeting	•									
State Perspectives on Dilemmas and Opportunities	NRC	Conducted state-level analysis on humanitarian challenges, assessing how governments perceive the role of humanitarian actors in conflict and disaster response. Mapped state policies on humanitarian access, sovereignty concerns, and engagement with international aid organisations.			•									
Future of Humanitarian Clusters (in relation to anticipated reforms introduced at the WHS)	OCHA	Evaluated the effectiveness of the humanitarian coordination system; identified gaps and areas for reform in cluster coordination and leadership structures; provided recommendations for improving coordination		Findings shaped OCHA's internal discussions on humanitarian coordination reform.	•									

¹⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/pulse-humanitarian-coordination-2023-overview-iasc-structures-country-level-december-2024>; <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2025-enarres> ; <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/pulse-humanitarian-coordination-2023-overview-iasc-structures-country-level-december-2024>; <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/colombia/flagship-initiative-first-year-learning-report-march-2024> (IDS-led)

Activity	Commission	DESCRIPTION	Publications	Convenings, Exchange, Advisory	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Global Retreat Facilitation for Food Security Cluster Coord	WFP	Facilitated a global retreat for WFP's Food Security Cluster; supported strategy development for coordination, funding, and response effectiveness.	Developed roadmap for strengthening global and national-level coordination.	Brought together WFP leadership and humanitarian partners to assess operational gaps in food security coordination.	•									
ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment Review	SDC	Conducted a review of the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment (HAS) discussions and assessed how the forum contributed to policy coherence in humanitarian action.			•									
<u>Istanbul and Beyond</u> (In preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit)	IFRC/ICRC	First-ever joint publication of ICRC and IFRC Provides the perspective and experience of the Movement on core humanitarian principles, resilience and local humanitarian capacity, the needs of migrants and displaced persons, and WHS-related pledges.	<u>Istanbul and Beyond: Perspectives and pledges of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement on the occasion of the World Humanitarian Summit</u>			•								
Funding Guidelines	Swiss Solidarity	Develop generic guidance for Swiss NGOs to apply for SWS funds; the new guidance note stresses the importance of accountability for commitments to humanitarian principles and standards such as the Core Humanitarian Standard and Sphere standards	<i>Not publicly available</i>			•								
Local Leadership and Response Capacity in Syria Context	British Red Cross	Case study of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and its international partners.	<i>Not publicly available</i>	Presentation of the report in Beirut		•								

Activity	Commission	DESCRIPTION	Publications	Convenings, Exchange, Advisory	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
The Challenges of Localised Humanitarian Aid	MSF-OCBA	Commissioned report outlines MSF's reservations about the blanket endorsement of the localisation agenda from a conceptual and a practical perspective	The challenges of localised humanitarian aid in armed conflict (MSF Emergency Gap Series)			•								
Independent Grand Bargain Report	GPPI (ECHO)	Provided expert advice and drafted theories of change for two of the ten work streams: reducing management costs, reducing earmarking	Independent Grand Bargain Report			•								
Hurricane Matthew Response RTE	DIFD	Real-time evaluation of the international response to hurricane Matthew (first large-scale rapid-onset disaster since the World Humanitarian Summit, (including the Grand Bargain); RTE team used Grand Bargain commitments as the analytical framework; looked at the whole of the system: donors, UN, INGOs, NNGOs	Evaluation report				•							
Whose Responsibility? Accountability for Refugee Protection	DRC	Study to explore opportunities and risks for accountability under a "whole-of-society" approach and what is required for positive changes through the Global Compact on Refugees.	Whose Responsibility? Accountability for Refugee Protection				•							
Capacity Strengthening Opportunities, Country-based Pooled Funds (CBPFs)	OCHA	Support to OCHA in two stages: (1) mapping opportunities (2) development of CBPF monitoring toolkit	Capacity Strengthening Opportunities and the Role of Country-Based Pooled Funds				•							
Principled Humanitarian Assistance of ECHO Partners in Iraq	NRC (ECHO)	In-depth look at the extent to which ECHO-funded humanitarian organisations	Principled Humanitarian Assistance of ECHO Partners in Iraq	Post-review briefings for ECHO staff, donor governments, and MSF-OCBA network (2018)			•							

Activity	Commission	DESCRIPTION	Publications	Convenings, Exchange, Advisory	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		have incorporated the humanitarian principles in their strategy, decision-making, and practice in Iraq.		ICRC Panel discussion: Where It Matters										
Real Time Response Review: DEC Emergency Appeal, Myanmar	DFID/DEC	Conduct Real-Time Review of DEC member agencies' initial responses to the Rohingya humanitarian crisis; take stock of achievements, identify remaining challenges, and share learning to inform the next phase of the response	Real-Time Response Review of the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) Emergency Appeal for People Fleeing Myanmar					•						
Participation of Refugees and IDPs in Decision-making	DRC	Research to understand how to ensure the participation of refugees in political processes that affect them; report focused on durable solutions processes, global and regional policy discussions, and national and local legislation and action plans of action related to local integration, resettlement, and voluntary repatriation or return.	‘Listen to Our Voices’: What does it take to improve refugee participation in durable solutions processes?					•						
Strategy Review, MSF-OCBA	MSF-OCBA	Evaluation of the organisational impact of MSF's decision to designate its Operational Centre Barcelona-Athens (OCBA) as its hub for its operations in highly insecure environments	<i>Not publicly available</i>					•						
Evaluation of UNICEF's Response to the Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Bangladesh	UNICEF	Evaluation piloted 'Real-Time Evaluations Plus', an innovative approach in which standard evaluation stages are compressed; an Evaluation Office staff member is embedded in the team and a more	Evaluation of UNICEF's Response to the Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Bangladesh					•						

Activity	Commission	DESCRIPTION	Publications	Convenings, Exchange, Advisory	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		participatory approach is taken.												
Synthesis of Rohingya Response Evaluations	UNICEF	Effectively an RTE; synthesis report summarised the inter-agency emergency response to date, identified commonalities and differences, and consolidated conclusions and recommendations.	Synthesis of Rohingya Response Evaluations of IOM, UNICEF and UNHCR						•					
Evaluation: Protection work by ADH members, Rohingya	ADH	Evaluation of ADH (German coalition for collective private fundraising for new emergencies) members' protection work for the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh	Evaluation Report						•					
UNHCR's Leadership and Coordination Role Refugee Response Settings (desk review)	UNHCR	Independent desk review looks at past refugee responses in the period 2014—2018 and considering whether and how UNHCR may need to reorient its leadership and coordination of refugee responses; outbreak of the COVID pandemic prevented any follow-up.	UNHCR's Leadership and Coordination Role in Refugee Response Settings (Final Report)	Workshop with 15 UNHCR middle-management staff with coordination responsibilities; Round table with Geneva-based representatives of some 20 member states of UNHCR's Executive Committee; Round table with a dozen NGOs at the time of UNHCR's annual consultations with NGOs					•					
Becoming the MSF We Want to Be	MSF	State of Affairs analysis on the implementation of MSF's regional operating centre (OC) strategy in Geneva	One-page summary Report not publicly available	Workshop on 'Becoming the MSF We Want to Be' at the 2020 MSF International General Assembly						•				
UNICEF CLARE II Evaluation	UNICEF	Evaluation of UNICEF's effectiveness in cluster leadership roles across child protection, education, nutrition, and WASH	Comprehensive evaluation report									•		

Activity	Commission	DESCRIPTION	Publications	Convenings, Exchange, Advisory	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Review of Education Cluster Co-Leadership	UNICEF	Review of Education Cluster Co-Leadership (UNICEF-SCF); assessed progress, provided suggestions for confront challenges.	Evaluation report											
IOM Role and Responsibility in Protection (DIAP)	IOM	External assessment of policies and staff perspectives on protection; assistance in defining an institutional approach to Protection (DIAP)	External assessment Recommendations for institutional approach <i>Reports are not publicly available</i>											
Risk Sharing (Discussion Paper) (Grand Bargain 2.0)	Netherlands MFA and ICRC	Focused on systemic issues in humanitarian risk-sharing – to inform dialogue at the 2020 Grand Bargain meeting (risk sharing is a cross-cutting theme of the GB 2.0)	Discussion Paper											
Support in building M&E Framework for MSF-Austria Strategy	MSF Austria	Support in building M&E Framework for MSF-AT Strategy												
Support on Localisation and Partnership with Local/National organisations	Swiss Solidarity	Facilitated strategic clarity and improved effectiveness in localisation and partnerships between Swiss NGOs and local/national organisations.												
Evaluation: WFP Nigeria Strategic Plan	WFP	Evaluated implementation of WFP Nigeria's strategic plan; covered adherence to humanitarian principles, gender equality, protection, and accountability to affected populations	Evaluation report	See management response										
Review: Principled Humanitarian Programming, Yemen	ECHO	Assessed the challenges and decisions related to negotiations, access, and coordination that organisations pursue to	Principled humanitarian programming in Yemen: A 'prisoner's dilemma'?	HERE made presentations to the Aden Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), the Humanitarian Advocacy Working Group, and donors based in Amman. HERE informed discussions in Brussels at the										

Activity	Commission	DESCRIPTION	Publications	Convenings, Exchange, Advisory	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		uphold principled humanitarian action in Yemen		preparatory meeting ahead of the Yemen Senior Officials Meeting , co-chaired by the European Union (DG ECHO) and Sweden										
Training: Legal Basis of Protection in Humanitarian Aid	IFHV	Legal basics of protection, including knowledge and understanding necessary to recognise and address protection issues in daily work, in particular in situations of forced displacement												
Mid-term Review: Multi-year partnership for refugees and IDPs (PROSPECTS)	Netherlands MFA	Evaluated this hybrid nexus initiative operationalizing NWoW principles across eight countries	COMPASS Mid-Term Evaluation	After the mid-term evaluation of the partnership in 2022, HERE supported the PROSPECT with targeted advice. In 2023, HERE guided the Dutch MFA and its partners to develop a global results framework for the partnership, with suggestions for relevant indicators and assisted in developing a global accountability framework to clarify ownership of responsibilities and articulate plans for information gathering, monitoring and reporting.										
Mid-term Evaluation: COMPASS Program (IOM)	Netherlands MFA	With Ecorys, evaluated a multi-country migrant protection program and provided insights into the strengths and systemic constraints.	Final report											
Review: CHS Verification Scheme	CHS Alliance	Reviewed the Core Humanitarian Standard's verification processes with recommendations for improving accountability and transparency	Improving the Accessibility of CHS Verification Scheme for National Actors – final report											

Activity	Commission	DESCRIPTION	Publications	Convenings, Exchange, Advisory	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
			Verification review report											
Evaluation (IAHE) of Northern Ethiopia	OCHA	Assessed the collective humanitarian response to the crisis in the three northern regions of Ethiopia; found that humanitarian leadership failed and that principled humanitarian approach, crucial during armed conflict, was not adequately realized	Executive summary and Evaluation report	New Humanitarian Op Ed									•	
Prevention Engagement and Protection of Civilians	ICRC	Evaluation of whether and how the ICRC's prevention work contributes to its protection engagements in crisis contexts	Executive Summary Full Evaluation (not publicly available)											•
FDFA Protection Priorities Advisory	Swiss FDFA	Advise on Switzerland's agenda and priorities for civilian protection in armed conflict												•
Evaluation: UNICEF L3 Response, Yemen	UNICEF	Comprehensive assessment of UNICEF's overall response in Yemen against its own mandate, corporate commitments, stated objectives and standard evaluation criteria; make recommendations to improve the response in Yemen and similar responses elsewhere	Evaluation of the UNICEF L3 Response in Yemen	Management response has been validated and updated.										•
ICVA Analysis of OCHA-managed Pooled Funds	ICVA	Evaluated the effectiveness of pooled funds in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, innovation, learning, knowledge sharing, and achieving policy objectives.	Pooled Funding at a Crossroads: A Comprehensive Review and Analysis										•	

Activity	Commission	DESCRIPTION	Publications	Convenings, Exchange, Advisory	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Swiss Solidarity/Chaîne du Bonheur Ukraine Project Portfolio Review	Swiss Solidarity	For 3 consecutive years, assessed the fund's relevance and adequacy based on existing evaluations of Ukraine's response												•
GHD (Good Humanitarian Donorship) Initiative Review	FCDO and Estonia MFA	With ODI/HPG, reviewed the effectiveness of the GHD platform and proposed revitalization strategies.	Preliminary findings presented in 2023; final report in 2024											•
Principled Humanitarian Response in Sudan	ECHO	The study reflects – together with the INGO community in Sudan – on what it means to provide principled humanitarian programming in a context like Sudan and to identify recommendations that would strengthen principled humanitarian action to increase access to assistance and protection for affected populations and learning exercise on experience negotiating access and delivering aid.												•
<u>Final Evaluation: COMPASS Program</u> (IOM)	IOM	Conducted final evaluation of COMPASS, a multi-country migrant protection program, with Ecorys and Bath Social Development												•

ANNEX 2. HERE-Geneva Exchange Activities

Year	Event	Type	Core Systemic Issue	Strategic Alignment	Participants	Outputs and Results
2015	Humanitarian Priorities Project – Protection Working Meeting	Expert Meeting (Convenor)	Focused on critical challenges in discharging protection responsibilities in armed conflict.	Theme: Protection Protection as a cornerstone of humanitarian action	Practitioners (e.g., humanitarian protection specialists), academic experts	Dialogue on how the humanitarian community carries out its lofty aspirations and daunting duties; challenged dogma, status quo and one another; critical analysis, pragmatic suggestions and ‘big picture’ ideas.
2015	Humanitarian Priorities Project – Principles Working Meeting	Expert Meeting (Convenor)	How the humanitarian community understands and applies humanitarian principles.	Theme: Principles Gap between rhetoric and practice	Diverse group of experts in humanitarian action, including (NGO) representatives from Pakistan, China and Indonesia	Identifies concrete steps to improve the understanding and application of the principles; nourished HERE’s position on principles.
2015	Universal Humanitarian Value and Principles: Accuracy or Fallacy?	High-level Public Debate – eve of the WHS Global Consultation (Convenor)	Whether humanitarian values and principles can reset political agendas (universalism)	Theme: Principles Humanitarian Priorities; World Humanitarian Summit	Meeting: practitioners and experts in the fields of international humanitarian law, anthropology, theology Panellists: Ulrika Modéer (Sweden), Jan Egeland (NRC), Elhadj As Sy (IFRC) Audience: WHS participants, Geneva stakeholders Donors, UN agencies, NGO representatives	Shared views on the values and principles underpinning humanitarian action
2015	Expert Panel on Humanitarian Principles	Roundtable (co-convenor with ICRC)	Inconsistent application of principles in operational decision-making	Theme: Principles World Humanitarian Summit	Panellists: Helen Durham (ICRC), Marc DuBois (former ED, MSF UK), Kate Half (SCHR),	ICRC article: Coming Clean on Neutrality and Independence: The Need to Assess the Application of Humanitarian Principles

Year	Event	Type	Core Systemic Issue	Strategic Alignment	Participants	Outputs and Results
					Sorcha O'Callaghan (British Red Cross) Audience: 80+ state representatives, practitioners, policymakers	Revived dialogue on principles ahead of WHS; Fresh insights on the practical relevance of principles and the need for measurement mechanisms
2015	ECOSOC Humanitarian Segment Side Event	High-Level Discussion (invited)	Expectations for WHS outcomes	Theme: Principles, Protection, Accountability World Humanitarian Summit	Donors, UN agencies, NGO representatives	Advanced dialogue on reform priorities for WHS outcome document
2015	World Humanitarian Summit Global Preparatory Meeting	Panel Discussion (invited)	Lack of political will for burden-sharing in crises	Theme: Principles World Humanitarian Summit	Donors, UN agencies, NGO representatives	Elevated HERE's role in global forums, led to invitation to join HQAI Board
2016	Humanitarian Priorities Project – <u>Accountability Working Meeting</u>	Expert Meeting (Convenor)	Expanding accountability beyond outcomes to include protection and humanitarian principles	Theme: Accountability World Humanitarian Summit	20+ experts (academia, governments, NGOs)	Generate a more nuanced analysis of the potential and limitations of existing frameworks for promoting accountability, to help close the gap between the 'talk' and the 'walk'.
2016	<u>Public Debate: 30 Days to Istanbul</u> (25 Apr)	High-Level Panel (Co-convenor with ICRC)	Underlying obstacles that have long stood in the way of effective humanitarian action	Theme: Humanitarian Principles World Humanitarian Summit	Panellists: Lemilah Mahmood (IFRC), Bruno Jochum (MSF CH), Berk Baran (Turkey) Moderator: Tania Dussey-Cavassini (HERE Trustee) State representatives, humanitarian practitioners, and other policymakers.	Explored whether WHS would meaningfully recognise and address key humanitarian challenges; facilitated a frank discussion about expectations for WHS outcomes.

Year	Event	Type	Core Systemic Issue	Strategic Alignment	Participants	Outputs and Results
2016	WHS Global Preparatory Meetings	Policy Dialogue (Invited)	Disconnect between high-level pledges and on-the-ground challenges (e.g., politicisation of aid)	Theme: Principles, Protection, Accountability World Humanitarian Summit, Grand Bargain	OCHA, donor governments, INGOs	Amplified messages from “ <i>On the Right Track?</i> ”; advocated for conflict-focused priorities; strengthened HERE’s role as a thought leader.
2016	Taking the Humanitarian Priorities Forward (Post-WHS Working Meeting)	Expert Roundtable (Convener)	Reflection on WHS outcomes and follow-up; debate on respect for law and humanitarian identity	Theme: Localisation World Humanitarian Summit, Grand Bargain	10+ stakeholders (NGOs, donors, WHS Secretariat)	Nuanced localisation debate; flagged protection as missing in WHS outcomes
2016	Yale University Workshop	Academic Dialogue (Invited)	Challenges and opportunities in humanitarian accountability frameworks	Theme: Accountability Workstream: N/A	Yale students/faculty	Introduced accountability frameworks to next-gen practitioners
2016	MSF International General Assembly Keynote	Sector Conference (Invited)	Differentiating humanitarian independence from isolationism in operational settings	Theme: Humanitarian Principles	MSF global leadership	Clarified the distinction between independence/isolationism for MSF
2016	HQAI Board Participation	Governance Role (Invited)		Theme: Principles	HQAI (Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative)	Pushed HQAI to assess “doing the right things” (principles) alongside technical compliance
2017	ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs	Policy Dialogue (Invited)	Challenges in measuring Grand Bargain commitments and donor accountability	Theme: Accountability Grand Bargain	Senior policymakers, donors, humanitarian agency representatives	HERE Executive Director presented the Haiti real-time evaluation findings at the Annual Grand Bargain stocktaking meeting.
2017	OCHA Donor Support Group Meeting (Annapolis)	High-Level Discussion (Invited)	Donor influence on humanitarian coordination reform and OCHA restructuring	Theme: Coordination Coordination Reform	Representatives from major donor governments	HERE provided an informal briefing note on OCHA’s change process to selected donors, which was well

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						received and supported donor discussions.
2017	Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative (HQAI) Annual Learning Event	Learning Event (Invited)	Application of impartiality in humanitarian organisations and the need for better scrutiny mechanisms.	Theme: Accountability GHD (Good Humanitarian Donorship)	Humanitarian practitioners, accountability experts, HQAI representatives	HERE's Executive Director contributed to discussions on improving oversight of the principle of impartiality in humanitarian operations.
2017	Professionals in Humanitarian Action and Protection (PHAP) Credentialing Advisory	Advisory Role (Invited)	Integrating humanitarian principles into professional certification and training	Theme: Humanitarian Principles Principled Assistance	PHAP leadership, credentialing program developers, humanitarian training professionals	HERE advised PHAP on integrating humanitarian principles into credentialing programs.
2017	Briefing to the Country-Based Pooled Fund (CBPF) NGO Platform and Pooled Fund Working Group	Policy Briefing (Invited)	Implications of localisation commitments for fund managers and implementing partners	Theme: Localization and Accountability Localisation, Capacity Strengthening of CBPFs	Representatives from pooled fund managing agencies, local and international NGOs, UN officials	HERE provided a briefing on how localization commitments affect the role and expectations of country-based pooled fund managers.
2017	Geneva Evidence Lounge	Roundtable Discussion (Invited)	Utilisation of evidence in humanitarian decision-making and donor funding strategies	Theme: Accountability Grand Bargain	Humanitarian researchers, policymakers, donors, think tank representatives.	HERE contributed insights on improving evidence utilization in humanitarian policy and decision-making.
2017	"Where it Matters," part of the ICRC conference cycle on War in Cities	Panel Discussion (co-convened with ICRC and NRC)	Humanitarian response services those most in need during armed conflict situations.	Theme: Humanitarian Principles Application of principles in war zones	ICRC, MSF, NRC representatives; German government and ECHO donors; 120+ attendees	Highlighted the need for access managers and security integration in conflict zones; Emphasized institutional willingness to manage risks; Advocated open dialogue on balancing humanitarian principles
2017	Café Humanitaire	Informal exchange	Aimed to address "collective challenges" (e.g., risk aversion,	Theme: Coordination	Geneva-based humanitarian professionals	Launched informal platform for sensitive discussions; planned expansion in 2018

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		session (convened)	coordination failures) not openly debated in formal forums			
2018	Time for Real-Time Reviews	Policy discussion (convenor)	Decline in use of real-time evaluations (RTEs) and their role in improving collective humanitarian response effectiveness	Theme: Accountability Grand Bargain; TRACK (collective performance)	20+ humanitarian practitioners, donor government representatives, and independent experts	Confirmed continued interest in RTEs; Highlighted RTEs' value for course correction; Stressed importance of RTE ownership and data sharing; Participants emphasised RTEs as participatory efforts aimed at learning rather than assessment.
2018	Breakfast Meetings with Permanent Missions in Geneva	Informal Briefing and Dialogue (convenor)	Role of Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators in leading system-wide responses in armed conflict	Theme: Coordination Coordination Reform	Senior representatives from multiple Permanent Missions in Geneva	HERE provided insights on gaps in coordination and leadership; Allowed mission representatives a platform for open discussions; Part of a pilot initiative with plans for future engagement, though limited by scheduling constraints
2018	Meeting on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in the Rohingya Crisis	Expert Panel Discussion (Invited)	Insufficient response to SGBV in the Rohingya refugee crisis	Theme: Protection Grand Bargain; TRACK (protection commitments, accountability frameworks)	Hosted by Swedish Ambassador to the UN in Geneva, humanitarian experts, UN representatives, INGOs	Raised concerns about lack of gender-based violence programming; Recommended greater international engagement to improve response efforts; Contributed to HERE's ongoing work mapping commitments to SGBV under TRACK.
2018	Grand Bargain Annual Independent Report Consultation	Advisory Role (Invited)	Earmarking and flexibility in humanitarian financing	Theme: Accountability Grand Bargain (flexible funding)	ODI Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), donor representatives, humanitarian organisations	Contributed expertise on earmarked vs. flexible humanitarian funding; Recommendations fed into Grand Bargain Annual Independent Report; HERE's input specifically addressed challenges in balancing donor

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						preferences with operational flexibility.
2018	Advisory Support to Norwegian Government on CERF Meetings	Policy Briefing (Invited)	Effectiveness of pooled funding mechanisms and allocation priorities	Theme: Accountability, Coordination Grand Bargain (CERF and Pooled Funding)	Norwegian government representatives preparing for CERF Advisory Group meetings	Provided technical expertise on pooled funds; Informed Norway's strategic positioning on humanitarian funding mechanisms; emphasised CERF's role in improving equitable allocations during crises
2018	Participation in ACAPS Strategic Planning Event	Strategic Discussion (Invited)	Future of humanitarian needs assessments and data analysis; challenges in adapting needs assessments to evolving crises contexts	Theme: Accountability WHS/ Data and Evidence	ACAPS leadership, humanitarian analysts, donors, UN agencies	Contributed insights into enhancing humanitarian data use; Discussed challenges in needs assessment methodologies; HERE's participation highlighted gaps between data collection practices and their application at the field level
2019	Buddha, Hercules, and Others in Humanitarian Leadership	Roundtable Discussion (convened)	Examining humanitarian leadership styles and behaviours in the context of coordination.	Theme: Coordination, Leadership	20 humanitarian practitioners, donor representatives, individual experts.	Explored different leadership models (e.g., Hercules vs. Buddha styles) and their relevance to humanitarian coordination; Fostered critical discussion and self-reflection on leadership behaviours in the humanitarian sector; Highlighted the need for leadership adaptability in a changing global context.
2019	ALNAP 32nd Annual Meeting	Roundtable Discussion (Invited)	Planning for relevance in programme design and decision-making.	Theme: Accountability, Humanitarian Principles WHS/Quality and Accountability	ALNAP network members, humanitarian practitioners, and donors.	HERE presented insights from the Role of Mandates study, highlighting how impartiality affects crisis-affected populations' participation; Contributed to discussions on how humanitarian programme design incorporates the perspectives of affected populations.

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2019	Humanitarian Networks and Partnership Week (HNPW)	Policy Discussion (convened at OCHA suggestion)	State of the humanitarian quality and accountability agenda.	Theme: Accountability WHS/Quality and Accountability	Philippe Besson (SDC), humanitarian practitioners, donors, OCHA representatives.	Discussed progress, bottlenecks, and political challenges in accountability mechanisms; Philippe Besson (SDC) provided insights on progress made and key challenges in accountability standards.
2019	Fordham University – Strategic Issues Course and International Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance	Academic Engagement (invited)	Strategic issues in protection and the humanitarian imperative.	Theme: Protection, Humanitarian Principles	Fordham University students, humanitarian practitioners.	Lecture on how protection is essential to every humanitarian strategy; Closing session on the tensions between the humanitarian imperative and operational realities.
2019	Retreat for Swiss Humanitarian Aid (SDC) Strategy Development	Strategic Policy Engagement (Invited)	Maintaining principled humanitarian action in armed conflict settings.	Theme: Coordination, Humanitarian Principles	SDC leadership, humanitarian experts.	HERE's Executive Director was one of two external presenters; Focused on principled humanitarian action in conflict contexts and challenges posed by the humanitarian-development nexus.
2019	Synthesis of Rohingya Response Evaluations (UNICEF, UNHCR, IOM)	Evaluation and Policy Discussion (Convened)	Comparing agency-specific evaluations for collective learning and response improvement.	Theme: Protection, Accountability Grand Bargain; Refugee Response	UN leadership, donors, partner organisations (Cox's Bazar and Dhaka levels).	Presentation of HERE-led synthesis comparing findings from the 2018 Rohingya response evaluations of UNHCR, IOM, and UNICEF; Workshops facilitated honest discussions on achievements and response gaps; Concluded that protection was not initially placed at the centre of the response, and gender-related issues were overlooked.
2019	Review of UNHCR's Leadership and	Workshop and Roundtable	Assessing UNHCR's leadership challenges in refugee coordination under the Global	Theme: Coordination Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)	UNHCR staff, donor state representatives, NGO representatives.	Explored UNHCR's leadership challenges and inter-agency coordination issues; Recommended investing in leadership behaviour

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	Coordination Role in Refugee Response	Discussions (Convened)	Compact on Refugees (GCR).			and a networked coordination approach.
2019	Grand Bargain and CERF Advisory Meeting	Advisory Role (Invited)	Effectiveness of pooled funding mechanisms and alignment with Grand Bargain commitments.	Theme: Accountability, Coordination Grand Bargain, CERF	Donor representatives, humanitarian organizations.	HERE provided technical expertise and strategic input on CERF allocations and helped inform donor strategies on pooled funding effectiveness.
2020	HNPW Session: ‘Nexus Environments: Who Do We Need to Know and What Enablers Are Required?’	Group Discussion (Convenor)	Leveraging complementarities in nexus approaches	Theme: Coordination Nexus Programming	UN agencies, NGOs, UN member states	HERE facilitated discussion using insights from the Role of Mandates research project.
2020	UNHCR’s Leadership and Coordination Role in Refugee Response: Exchange among NGOs	NGO Consultation (Invited)	Assessing UNHCR’s coordination role in refugee settings	Theme: Coordination Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) Leadership and inter-agency coordination under GCR commitments	ICVA members, UNHCR staff	HERE’s Executive Director presented findings from a desk review on UNHCR’s coordination role; consultation was part of broader work on UNHCR’s leadership review.
2020	COVID-19 and The Future Humanitarian Response – Series of Reflections	Virtual Discussion Series (Convened)	Impact of COVID-19 on humanitarian operations and response	Theme: Accountability COVID-19 Response	Humanitarian practitioners, donor representatives, independent experts	HERE hosted four video interviews and a live-streamed debate on humanitarian response adaptations; series was exploratory and intended to spark dialogue.
2020	Multilateral and Local Civil Society Perspectives on ‘Peace’ in the Triple Nexus	Webinar (Invited)	Exploring complementarity between humanitarian, development, and peace actors	Theme: Coordination Nexus programming	100+ participants from civil society, international representatives, political stakeholders	HERE’s Research Director contributed insights on operationalizing humanitarian-development-peace complementarity.

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2020	Exploring the Impact of COVID-19 on AAP	Virtual Panel (Co-convenor with CHS Alliance)	Adapting Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) during COVID-19	Theme: Accountability COVID-19 Response	CHS Alliance members, humanitarian practitioners	HERE hosted a panel discussion on remote engagement strategies and lessons for post-pandemic humanitarian action.
2020	COVID-19: Vision or Fashion?	Virtual Roundtable (Convenor)	Systemic changes in humanitarian response due to COVID-19	Theme: Accountability, Coordination COVID-19 Response	Donor representatives, humanitarian practitioners, independent experts	Discussed systemic changes, inequalities highlighted by COVID-19, and managing organisational change.
2021	'What Next?' Global Virtual Conference	Virtual Conference (Convenor)	Future of humanitarian action in a post-COVID world	Theme: Coordination Beyond the Pandemic	~ 50 participants attended (out of ~100 registered), including humanitarian practitioners, policymakers, and experts Opening remarks from ICRC President Peter Maurer.	Three-days virtual conference; organised as part of HERE's <i>Beyond the Pandemic</i> project; Discussion focused on humanitarian coordination challenges and reform needs, particularly with the appointment of the new ERC.
2021	Future of Humanitarian Coordination Roundtable	Policy Roundtable (Convenor)	Humanitarian coordination challenges and reform needs	Theme: Coordination Future of Humanitarian Coordination	Humanitarian practitioners, independent experts, Martin Griffiths (UN USG for Humanitarian Affairs)	Part of HERE's <i>Future of Humanitarian Coordination</i> project: Addressed humanitarian coordination challenges and reform needs.
2021	Donor Consultation on the Future of Humanitarian Coordination	Donor Consultation (Convenor)	Donor perspectives on humanitarian coordination	Theme: Coordination Future of Humanitarian Coordination	Representatives of donor governments	Part of HERE's <i>Future of Humanitarian Coordination</i> project: Gathered donor perspectives on challenges and potential coordination improvements.

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2021	Training on the Legal Basis of Protection	Training Workshop (Invited)	Legal basis of protection in humanitarian aid	Theme: Protection	20-22 participants from German NGOs, German Federal Foreign Office	HERE delivered training on the legal basis of protection in humanitarian aid.
2021	Principled Humanitarian Programming in Yemen - Chatham House Presentation	Policy Briefing (Invited)	Lack of trust and coordination among humanitarian actors undermines principled programming effectiveness.	Theme: Humanitarian Principles Operationalising Principled Assistance	Operational agencies, independent policy experts	Disseminated key findings, emphasised collective approaches, and supported ongoing dissemination efforts.
2022	Humanitarian Coordination Roundtable - 'A New Vision or It Is What It Is?'	Policy Roundtable	Addressing challenges in UN-led humanitarian coordination	Theme: Coordination Future of Humanitarian Coordination	Senior humanitarian practitioners, donor representatives, independent experts	Built on HERE's <i>Future of Humanitarian Coordination</i> research; aimed to move from analysis to actionable solutions; discussed obstacles and proposed solutions for a more effective humanitarian coordination system.
2022	CHA Annual Conference - 'Where is the Humanitarian Turning Point?'	Panel Discussion (Invited)	Challenges of humanitarian coordination and localisation in Europe	Theme: Coordination Future of Humanitarian Coordination	Humanitarian policymakers, think tanks, NGOs	HERE participated in a panel discussion on humanitarian coordination and localisation.
2022	Russia-Ukraine War Roundtable - 'The Armed Conflict That Destabilises the World'	Policy Roundtable (Convenor)	Impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on humanitarian action	Theme: Coordination	Policy experts, donor representatives, humanitarian actors	First in-person convening since pandemic; implications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on multilateralism, cyber warfare, and global humanitarian funding.
2022	Yemen Principles Humanitarian Programming Briefings	Research Dissemination and Advocacy (Invited)	Application of humanitarian principles in Yemen	Theme: Humanitarian Principles Yemen Humanitarian Response	Aden HCT, Humanitarian Advocacy Working Group, donors	HERE debriefed actors in Yemen on findings from its research on principled humanitarian programming; Findings influenced discussions at the Yemen Senior Officials Meeting in Brussels.

Year	Event	Type	Core Systemic Issue	Strategic Alignment	Participants	Outputs and Results
2022	European Think Tank Network Meetings	Policy Engagement (Invited)	Strengthening collaboration among humanitarian think tanks	Theme: Policy	CHA, GPPI, Groupe URD, ODI, KUNO, IECAH	Explored formalising collaboration among European humanitarian research institutions, including CHA, GPPI, Groupe URD, ODI, KUNO, and IECAH.
2022	Humanitarian Access and Support Services: HNPW Panel	Panel Discussion (Invited)	Coordination challenges in humanitarian access	Theme: Coordination Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week	Danish Refugee Council (DRC), OCHA, humanitarian access experts	Integrated findings from HERE's Yemen humanitarian principles research.
2022	Brown Bag Lunches with Donors	Donor Engagement (Convenor)	Presenting research findings on humanitarian coordination	Theme: Coordination Donor Relations	Norwegian MFA (Jan), German Federal Foreign Office (Nov)	Presented key conclusions from HERE's research on humanitarian coordination.
2022	CHA/GELI Thought Leadership Lab on Humanitarian Leadership	Thought Leadership Discussion (Invited)	Exploring collective vs. individual leadership challenges	Theme: Leadership Humanitarian Thought Leadership	CHA, GELI, global humanitarian leaders	HERE contributed a paper (<i>More than the Sum of the Parts? Collective Leadership vs Individual Agency</i>) and participated in discussions on humanitarian leadership.
2023	Small Fish in a Big Pond: Ukrainian Organisations' (Lack of) Access to International Funding	Panel Discussion (convenor)	Challenges in localisation and access to international funding for Ukrainian NGOs	Theme: Localisation Ukraine Response	Ukrainian NGOs, international donors, humanitarian practitioners	Explored funding gaps, accessibility barriers, and pathways for improved localisation.
2023	Humanitarian Reform: What's Left to Do?	Policy Roundtable (convenor)	Reviewing past humanitarian reform efforts and their limitations	Theme: Coordination Humanitarian System Reform	Senior humanitarian practitioners, UN and non-UN agencies, donor representatives, independent experts	Assessed coordination, accountability, and leadership issues; sought to build an informal network of reform advocates.
2023	No Trespassing? Access and Prioritisation of So-Called 'Hard to Reach' Areas by Humanitarians	Hybrid Roundtable (convenor)	Barriers to accessing conflict-affected and hard-to-reach areas	Theme: Coordination, Protection Humanitarian Access	Humanitarian access experts, field practitioners, policy experts	Discussed challenges in operating in 'hard-to-reach' areas and explored new approaches to improving access.

Year	Event	Type	Core Systemic Issue	Strategic Alignment	Participants	Outputs and Results
2023	European Think Tank Network Meetings	Policy Engagement (co-convenor)	Strengthening collaboration among humanitarian think tanks	Theme: Policy Humanitarian Research and Policy Coordination	CHA, GPPi, Groupe URD, ODI, KUNO, IECAH	HERE co-convened meetings in Madrid (May) and Germany (June) to discuss humanitarian policies and donor engagement.
	PODCASTS					
2021	Hear, HERE! Podcast Launch – Episode 1: Protection	Podcast Discussion (HERE)	Current state of protection in humanitarian action	Theme: Protection	HERE Executive Director, Research Director	Raised concerns about misunderstandings of protection, dilemmas, and recommendations for improving its impact
2021	Hear, HERE! Podcast – Episode 2: Cluster System	Podcast Discussion (HERE)	The history and reform of the cluster system.	Theme: Coordination Cluster System	HERE Executive Director and Manisha Thomas (Consultant)	Examined the creation and evolution of clusters, their effectiveness, and ongoing challenges
2022	Hear, HERE! Podcast – Episode 3, Part 1: Humanitarian Data	Podcast Discussion (HERE)	Humanitarian data collection and digital transformation (in response to the cyberattack on ICRC servers)	Theme: Protection Humanitarian Data	Valentine Hambye-Verbrugghen and Balthasar Staehelin (ICRC)	Explored data collection practices, regulatory frameworks, and GDPR compliance in humanitarian settings
2022	Hear, HERE! Podcast – Episode 3, Part 2: Humanitarian Data	Podcast Discussion (HERE)	The role of affected people in humanitarian data processes.	Theme: Protection Humanitarian data	Valentine Hambye-Verbrugghen and Balthasar Staehelin (ICRC)	Addressed biometric data, consent, and ethical concerns in digital humanitarianism
2023	Podcast: The Leadership Lab (GELI)	Podcast Discussion (invited)	Leading Better Together.	Theme: Leadership	Ed Schenkenberg.	Explored the tensions between individual and collective leadership in humanitarian action
2023	Podcast: Norwegian Centre for Humanitarian Studies - “Talking Humanitarianism”	Podcast Discussion (invited)	Ethics of localisation	Theme: Localisation	Ed Schenkenberg	Examined power-sharing, funding dynamics, and decolonisation in humanitarian responses

ANNEX 3. Convened, Co-convened, and Invited Engagement

	Convened		Co-Convened		Invited	
Year	#	Scope	#	Scope	#	Scope
2015	3	Protection Working Meeting; Principles Working Meeting; Public Debate on Humanitarian Values	1	Expert Panel on Humanitarian Principles with ICRC	2	ECOSOC Humanitarian Segment Side Event; WHS Global Preparatory Meeting
2016	2	Accountability Working Meeting; Post-WHS Working Meeting	1	Public Debate: "30 Days to Istanbul" with ICRC	4	WHS Global Preparatory Meeting; Yale Workshop; MSF General Assembly Keynote; HQAI Board Participation
2017			2	Café Humanitaire; "Where it Matters" Panel with ICRC and NRC	6	ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment; OCHA Donor Support Group Meeting; HQAI Annual Learning Event; PHAP Credentialing Advisory; CBPF NGO Platform Briefing; Geneva Evidence Lounge
2018	2	Real-Time Reviews; Breakfast Meetings			4	SGBV Meeting; Grand Bargain Consultation; CERF Advisory Support; ACAPS Event
2019	4	Leadership Roundtable HNPW Discussion; Rohingya Synthesis; UNHCR Leadership			4	ALNAP Meeting; Fordham Lectures; SDC Retreat; CERF Advisory Meeting
2020	2	COVID-19 and Future Humanitarian Response; COVID-19: Vision or Fashion?	1	Exploring the Impact of COVID-19 on AAP	3	HNPW Session: Nexus Environments; UNHCR Leadership and Coordination Role in Refugee Response; Multilateral and Local Civil Society Perspectives on Peace, Triple Nexus
2021	3	What Next? Global Virtual Conference; Future of Humanitarian Coordination Roundtable; Donor Consultation, Future of Humanitarian Coordination			2	Training on the Legal Basis of Protection; Principled Humanitarian Programming in Yemen (Chatham House)
2022	2	Humanitarian Coordination Roundtable; Russia-Ukraine War Roundtable	1	HuT Network Meetings	5	Humanitarian Turning Point (CHA); Yemen Humanitarian Principles Briefings (SOM meeting and EHF in Brussels; HNPW Panel, Access and

	Convened		Co-Convened		Invited	
Year	#	Scope	#	Scope	#	Scope
						Support Services; Donor Brown Bag Lunches; Thought Leadership Lab, Leadership Challenges
2023	3	Small Fish in a Big Pond: Ukrainian Organisations' Roundtable; Humanitarian Reform: What's Left to Do? Roundtable; Access and Prioritisation of So-Called 'Hard to Reach' Areas Panel Discussion	1	HuT Network Meetings (Madrid and Germany)	6	People-centred humanitarian response in conflict (ICRC); Humanitarian Congress Berlin; Leadership challenges, German and EU missions to the UN in Geneva; CHA-GFFO meeting; High-level GHD meeting in New York; European Humanitarian Forum
2024		Taking the next step in reforming humanitarian action Roundtable;				

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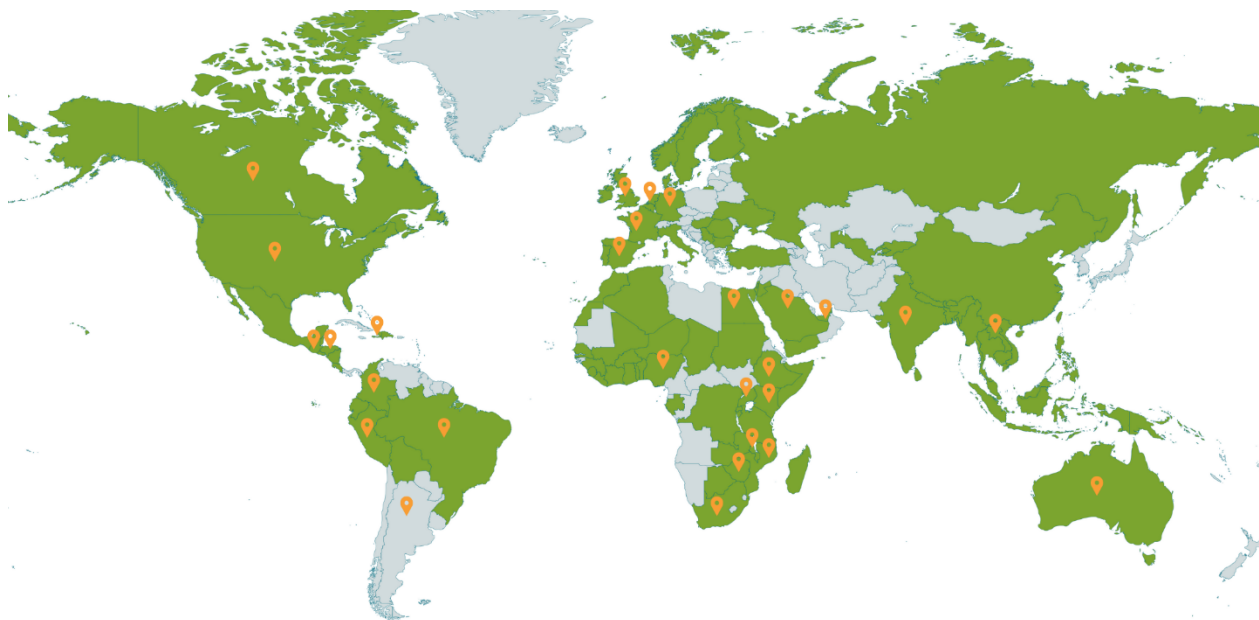
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Our consultants



Charles Benjamin

Lead Consultant

Charlie brings over 30 years of experience in international development. As the President & CEO of the Near East Foundation (NEF) for more than 12 years, Charlie has deep, hands-on experience in organizational strategy and development, business processes and systems, and fiscal management.

At NEF, he provided overall leadership for an international development organization with approximately 250 staff and operational programs in eleven countries in the Middle East and Africa. He has deep expertise in stocktaking for evidence-based programming, including refugee livelihoods tracking and needs assessments. During his tenure, Charlie designed, launched, and served as CEO of affiliate organizations in the UK and Belgium.

Charlie holds a Ph.D. in Natural Resources and Environment from the University of Michigan. Since 2023, he has provided strategic consulting services to leading INGOs, localization, learning and adaptation, and program design.



Thomas Lewinsky

Peer Reviewer

Thomas has over 18 years of international consulting experience in Europe, Africa, and Asia. He is driven by complexity in governance, strategic, and organizational issues. He holds an M.Sc. in International Development and an MBA in strategic consulting and organizational transformation.

His core expertise includes governance, strategy development, restructuring, and change management in multicultural contexts.





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