MESSAGE FROM
ED SCHENKENBERG VAN MIEROP
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

2013 will probably go down in the history of humanitarian action as the year in which the Syrian refugee crisis turned from an acute emergency into a protracted crisis. As DARA Chief Executive, I had the honour and privilege to be one of two non-UNHCR representatives on an expert team looking at the way in which the UN refugee agency has been able to respond to this crisis. The real-time evaluation (RTE) showed that UNHCR has managed to prevent the crisis from spiralling out of control, but that it faces major challenges in addressing the massive needs of the Syrian refugees. A humanitarian response alone will not be sufficient.

Evaluations, such as this real-time evaluation, are a critical tool for DARA to influence humanitarian policy and practice. They will remain DARA’s top priority.

Other important evaluations that DARA carried out or started in 2013 include the evaluation of the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, a partnership of 41 countries and 8 international organisations committed to helping developing countries reduce their vulnerability to natural hazards and adapt to climate change. DARA also completed long-term agreements with the UN World Food Program to review their country and strategy programs.

With the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), DARA worked together in producing a study called “Saving Lives Today and Tomorrow.” This publication provides new directions for humanitarian organisations in addressing humanitarian challenges. It suggests that for the humanitarian community adopting an anticipatory approach, i.e. acting before a crisis happens, may be more efficient and effective than the reactionary way of working, which has been the model of choice for humanitarians until now.

Another achievement in 2013 has been the launch of the Risk Reduction Index for six West African countries, which DARA developed with support from AECID, the Spanish government agency for international cooperation and AusAid. In the RRI DARA looks at a number of factors that make regions more vulnerable to the impact of disasters and asserts that with this knowledge disaster preparedness and prevention can be more effective.

TIMELINE 2013

JANUARY
△ DARA hosts an ALNAP Community of Practice workshop for international humanitarian aid evaluators:
   Strengthening evaluation capacities: Consultation and peer-learning with evaluators, Madrid.

MARCH
△ Participation in the Disaster Risk Reduction Cross-border Mapping Exercise organised by the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS), Abuja, where DARA presented the preliminary findings of the Risk Reduction Index in West Africa.
△ DARA participates in UNISDR’s 4th Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, Geneva, where UNISDR presented the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (GAR 2013), featuring findings from DARA’s Risk Reduction Index in West Africa.

APRIL
Talking about the effectiveness of humanitarian aid also featured in other pieces of DARA’s work. With AECID, DARA co-organised a number of debates in which high-level international humanitarian executives expressed their views on what makes humanitarian response more effective. Making humanitarian aid more effective will continue to be a main driver for DARA. I am grateful for having worked with a great and dedicated team committed to this cause. Let me also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to DARA’s donors who support our work and share our goals and objectives.

**SEPTEMBER**

- The World Bank commissions DARA to carry out a retrospective evaluation of the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery efforts in a sample of disaster-prone countries: Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Guatemala, Malawi and Nepal. The report was published in May 2014.
- Publication of the study: How to Define and Measure Value for Money in the Humanitarian Sector for the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), in which DARA, Indevelop and GRM participated.

**OCTOBER**

- The Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and DARA launch a three-part Humanitarian HardTalk Series on Aid Effectiveness with three leading humanitarian actors: Valerie Amos, UN Under-Secretary General and Emergency Relief Coordinator; Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); and Claus Sørensen, Director General of Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department, DG ECHO. Representatives of the Spanish humanitarian community, including UN agencies and NGOs, attended the events in Madrid. The resulting report Now or Never: Making Humanitarian Aid More Effective was published in April 2014, and is being used as a working tool in the run-up to the World Humanitarian Summit.

**AUGUST**

- UNHCR publishes From slow boil to breaking point: A real-time evaluation of UNHCR’s response to the Syrian refugee emergency, carried out in June 2013 with the participation of Ed Schenkenberg, DARA’s Chief Executive.

**NOVEMBER**

- DARA publishes the evaluation report of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation’s (FAO) work in disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific, and in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- WFP operation evaluation in Mali, and strategic evaluation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo begin.

**DECEMBER**

- Launch of DARA’s report Risk Reduction Index in West Africa, Analysis of the Conditions and Capacities for Disaster Risk Reduction In Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Niger and Senegal, in Madrid. In West Africa, underlying risk drivers continue to increase communities’ vulnerability to natural hazards, decrease their overall resilience, and diminish important development gains. The RRI has identified links between underlying risk factors and increased vulnerability, raising awareness around the need for greater risk management initiatives.
- The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and DARA finalise the report Saving Lives Today and Tomorrow: Managing The Risk of Humanitarian Crises. The report was launched in May 2014, New York. It calls for aid groups and donors to begin the shift away from responding to crises in a purely reactive manner and to instead adopt an approach that proactively anticipates and prevents crises through effective risk management.
DARA is an independent non-profit organisation committed to improving the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian action for vulnerable populations affected by armed conflict and natural disasters. Through evaluations and research, we encourage organisations to reflect on the impact of their work, and help them take evidence-based decisions at the policy, strategy, and programming levels, and in critical moments of delivering assistance.

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*As of June 2014
**Until June 2014

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