



COHORT

Coordination of Humanitarian Organizations
in Relief using Technology

Global Symposium +5 Information for Humanitarian Action

Survey Report

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1 Executive summary

The Global Symposium +5 Information Management Collaboration Survey was conducted by Penn State University researchers during the symposium held in Geneva on October 22-26, 2007. The survey results provide an initial picture of the humanitarian information management community, but caution must be exercised in drawing insights from the survey. The findings are organized into four general themes: survey respondents and their employment, their relationships, support, and barriers to coordination.

The survey was distributed to 175 attendees, of which 68 were returned, resulting in a 39% response rate. Although the respondents indicated a range of professions on the survey, the typical respondent considers him-or-herself to be a manager in information management working at headquarters. This respondent profile also possessed the highest rates of employment fluidity, or turnover.

Relationships among attendees and organizations are important in terms of information sharing, coordination, and further development of the information management field. Unsurprisingly, UNOCHA proved to be a central node in this relationship network and a facilitator of projects and activities. The survey indicated that respondents knew a great many of the other attendees at the symposium, on average 20-30. However, respondents from UN-related organizations had more prior relationships than those from non-UN-related organizations.

In line with the above finding regarding UNOCHA as a central node in the relationship network, UNOCHA along with ReliefWeb were named most often (43% of respondents of the survey) as leaders in humanitarian information management. In terms of further development of the profession, the creation of an association of humanitarian information management professionals was supported by over 80% of the respondents to the survey.

Such an association may help overcome the several barriers to coordination identified in the survey, which fell into three primary categories: 1) internal barriers such as organizational structures that conflict with collaboration efforts and external barriers such as governmental delays of such activity; 2) lack of Human/Financial resources, and 3) concern about the use of communication tools.

Finally the survey also indicated that a significant number of respondents intend to use symposium documents for a variety of purposes. The principles and best practices identified by participants were expected to be useful for 75% of respondents. They plan to use the documents to promote projects, monitor project progress, for organizational and personal purposes, and for external use.

Based on these findings and their preliminary nature four recommendations are made on areas for future research. The recommendations generally aim to provide more thorough information about the nature of the community and its perceptions about leadership and professionalization, as well as developing a more nuanced picture of the barriers information managers face in their attempts to coordinate across organizations.

2 Purpose and methodology

Building upon a process that began in Geneva five years earlier in 2002, Global Symposium +5 was held in Geneva on 22-26 October 2007. The symposium brought together more than 300 participants representing organizations engaged in information management in the field of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief from the international community. They included representatives from donor agencies and disaster management agencies, governmental organizations, United Nations agencies, the Red Cross Movement, non-governmental organizations, scientific and research institutes, academia, the media and the private sector.

During the symposium a survey was conducted in order to provide initial information on the state of collaboration on humanitarian information management and exchange among the symposium participants. The results of this survey, described herein, represent a snapshot of a small but important part of the overall humanitarian information field. It is the intention of the researchers conducting the study to use these results as baseline information for further analysis of the sector.

The survey was distributed on the second day of the Symposium Plenary. Participants were asked to fill out a two-page survey (see appendix). A total of 175 survey questionnaires were distributed and 68 responses were received, representing a response rate of roughly 39%. Responses were transcribed and coded manually. The statistical analyses were done with SPSS software and the social network analyses with UCINET (Borgatti et al., 1999).

3 Findings

The goal of the survey was to provide a snapshot of the state of the humanitarian information management field, to understand who is involved, the relationships between those organizations, their challenges and ways in which the symposium helps to further develop the field. The results reported below are broken into four sections: 1. survey respondents and their employment, 2. their relationships, 3. support and 4. barriers to coordination.

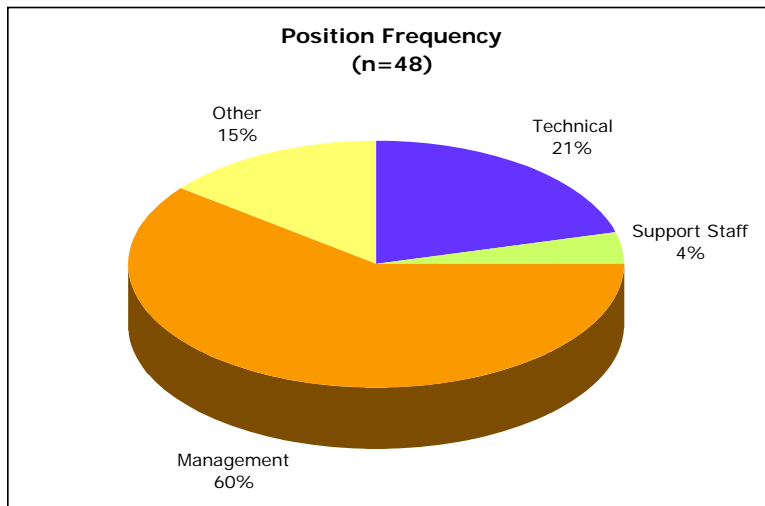
3.1 Survey respondents and their employment

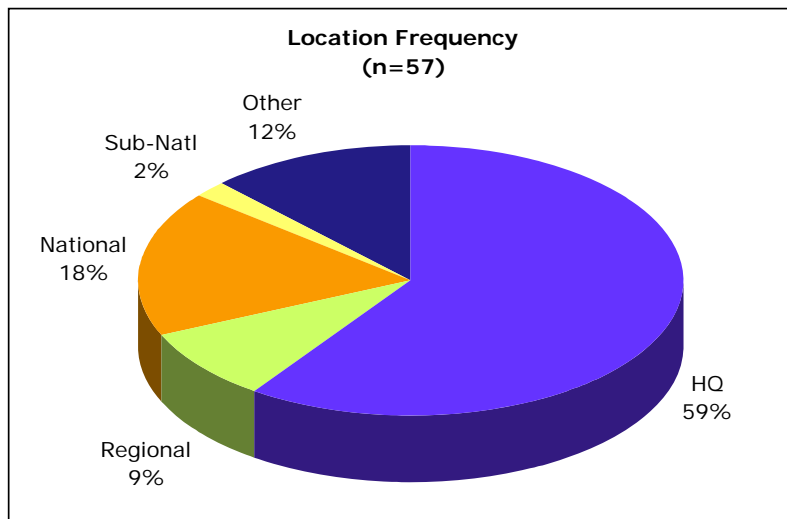
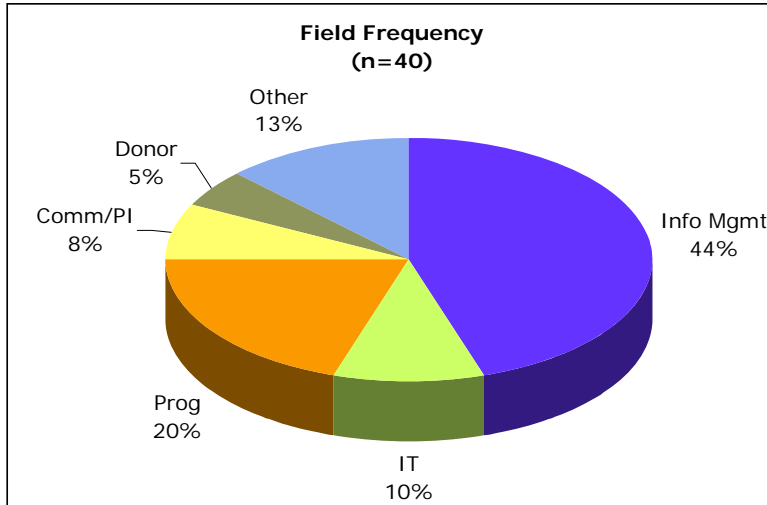
To understand whose opinions the survey results reflect the discussion of findings begins with a description of respondents' current work as well as an assessment of the extent to which their employment changes.

3.1.1 Who filled out the survey?

Finding: The “typical” survey respondent can be characterized as a *Manager* working in the field of *Information Management at Headquarters*.

Figure 1. Positions, Fields, and Locations of Survey Respondents





For each of these questions on the survey (i.e., position, field, and location), respondents were asked to describe their *current work* and were able to indicate more than one category. Multiple responses for position and location were relatively few, with only 10% and 13% of respondents indicating more than one position or location, respectively. Multiple responses for field was much greater, with approximately 33% of respondents indicating more than one field type. The selection of multiple fields by survey respondents suggests that the role distinctions within the field of information management may not be clearly defined. Whether this lack of role rigidity occurs by design, by circumstance, a combination of the two, or because of some other reason needs further investigation. Because of the uncertainties associated with multiple responses, the graphs in Figure 1 reflect survey responses that indicated only one position, field, and location.

Among those with single responses, the majority of respondents considered themselves to be managers, working in the field of information management, and located at headquarters. While these categories may characterize the typical survey respondent in

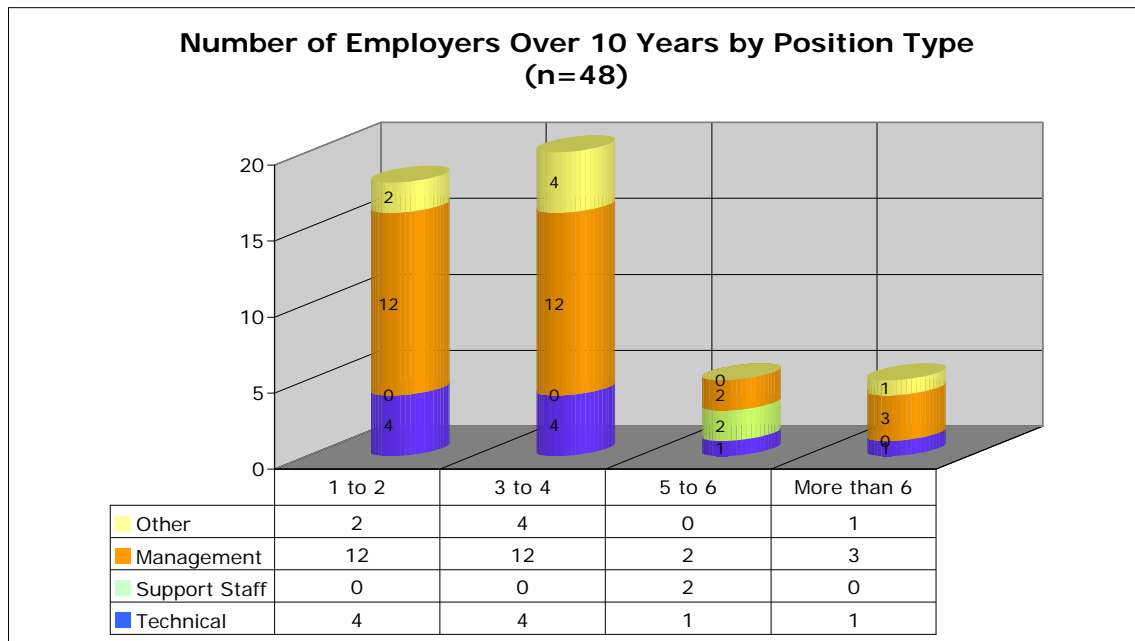
this study, further study of the humanitarian domain must be conducted to determine exactly how representative the survey respondents are in relation to all attendees at the symposium and the entire humanitarian information management domain. This question concerning representativeness must be considered when speculating on or deriving any conclusions from the data regarding fluidity frequencies, for example, and any potential solutions for reducing them.

3.1.2 How many different organizations/employers have you worked for in the past 10 years?

Finding: The fluidity of employment, or turnover, in the humanitarian information management field has been analyzed according to position type, field and location. The findings indicate that the highest frequencies of fluidity occur among *Managers* in *Information Management* who work at *Headquarters*. It should be noted however that the most frequent survey respondents were also managers in information management located at headquarters and hence further research is needed to understand fluidity.

The highest frequencies of fluidity for position, field, and location over the entire 10-year period, as well as for each range of *number of employers*, occurred among *Management, Information Management, and Headquarters*, respectively. As in section 3.1, in each case only those responses in which one position, field and location were reported were used. This resulted in the 48 responses for position type, 40 for field type, and 57 for location.

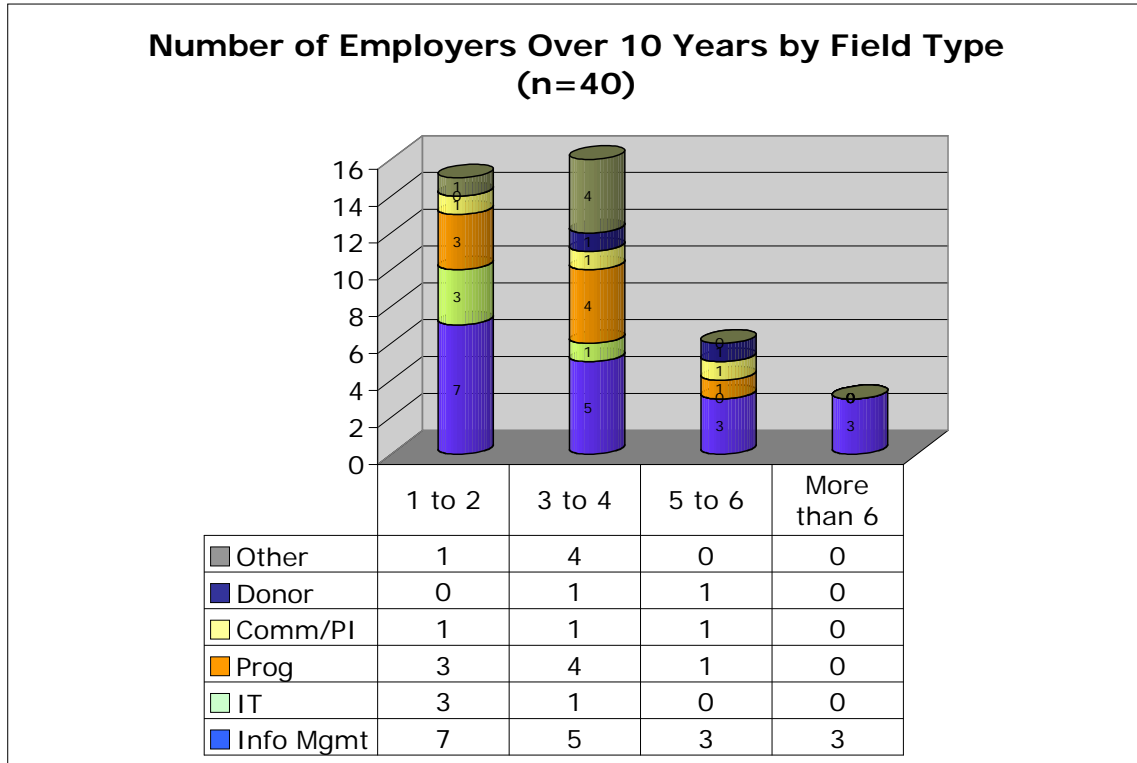
Figure 2. Fluidity Frequencies for Position Types



The above chart illustrates the number of employers for whom respondents indicated as having worked over the last 10 years in relation to the type of position (i.e., management,

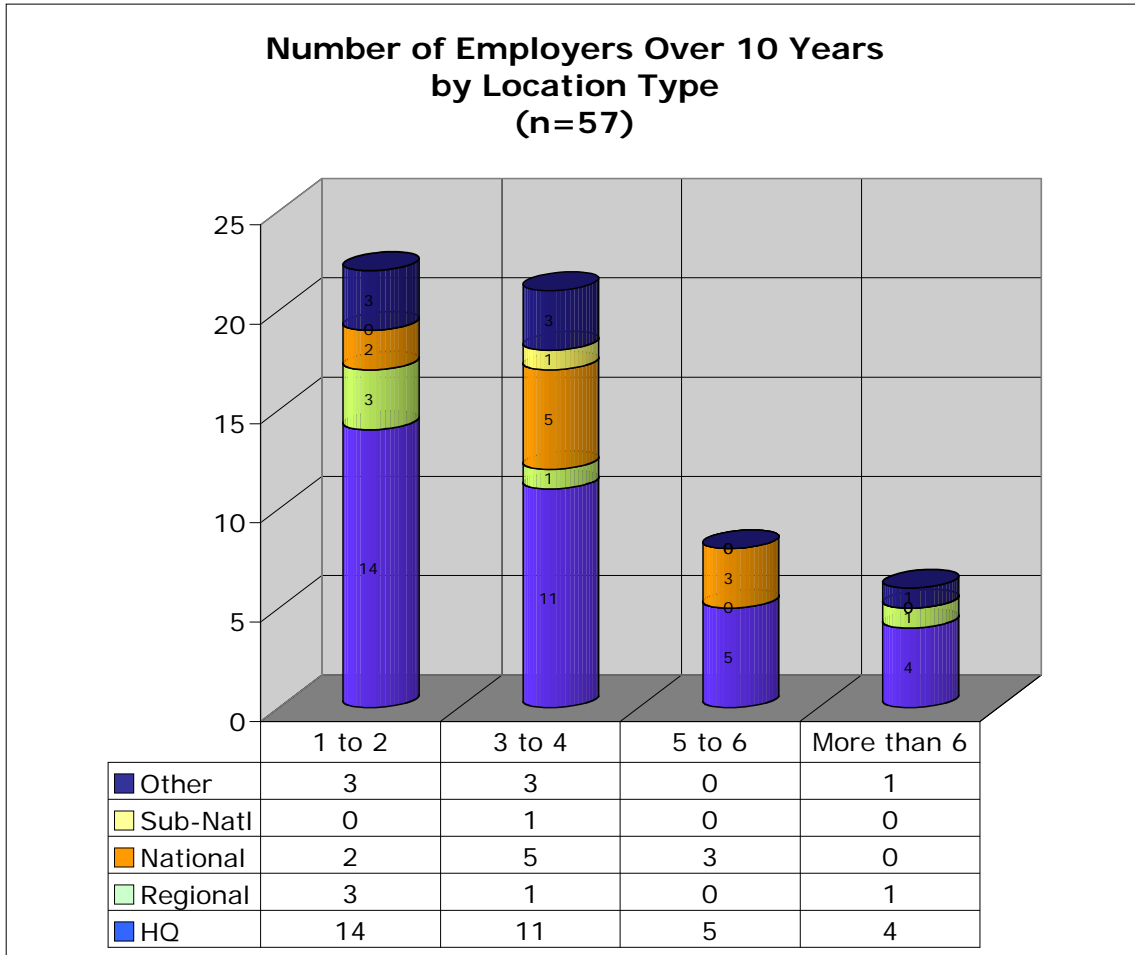
support staff, technical, or other). As above, those responses that included more than one position type were excluded resulting in 48 usable responses.

Figure 3. Fluidity Frequencies for Field Types



The above chart illustrates the number of employers for whom respondents indicated as having worked over the last 10 years in relation to the type of field (i.e., information management, information technology, programmatic, etc.) in which they were employed. As above, those responses that included more than one position type were excluded resulting in 40 usable responses.

Figure 4. Fluidity Frequencies for Location Types



The above chart illustrates the number of employers for whom respondents indicated as having worked over the last 10 years in relation to the type of location (i.e., headquarters, regional, national, etc.) in which they were employed. As above, those responses that included more than one position type were excluded resulting in 57 usable responses.

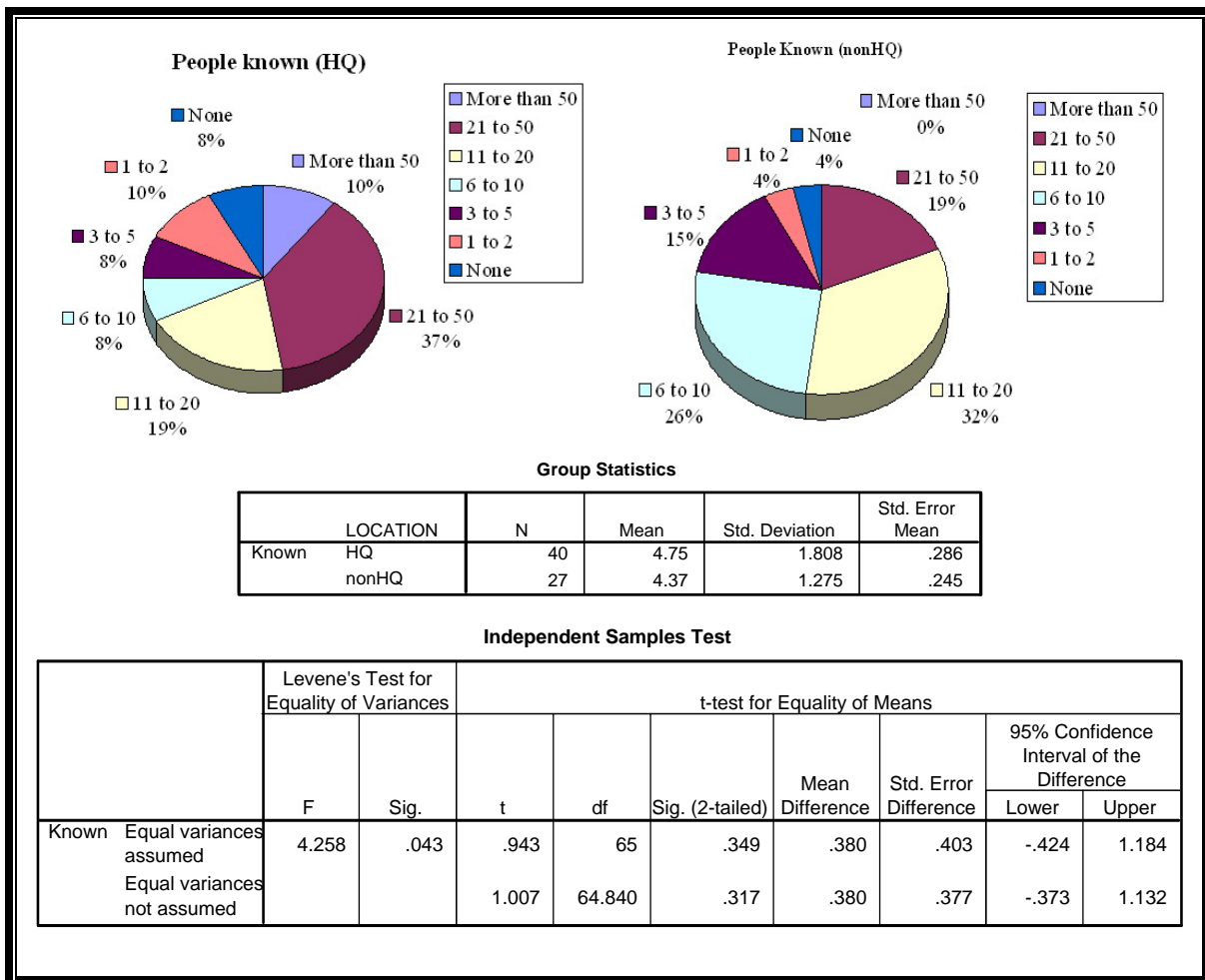
3.2 Their relationships

The relationships between survey respondents are indicated both by the number of attendees they knew before the symposium as well as the structure of the network of partnerships between them.

3.2.1 How many people attending this Symposium have you met or known before?

Finding: Working locations do not have a significant impact on the number of people that respondents knew before the symposium, however the employer of respondents (UN versus non-UN) does.

Figure 5. Impact of Location on Prior Relationships Among Attendees (HQ and nonHQ)

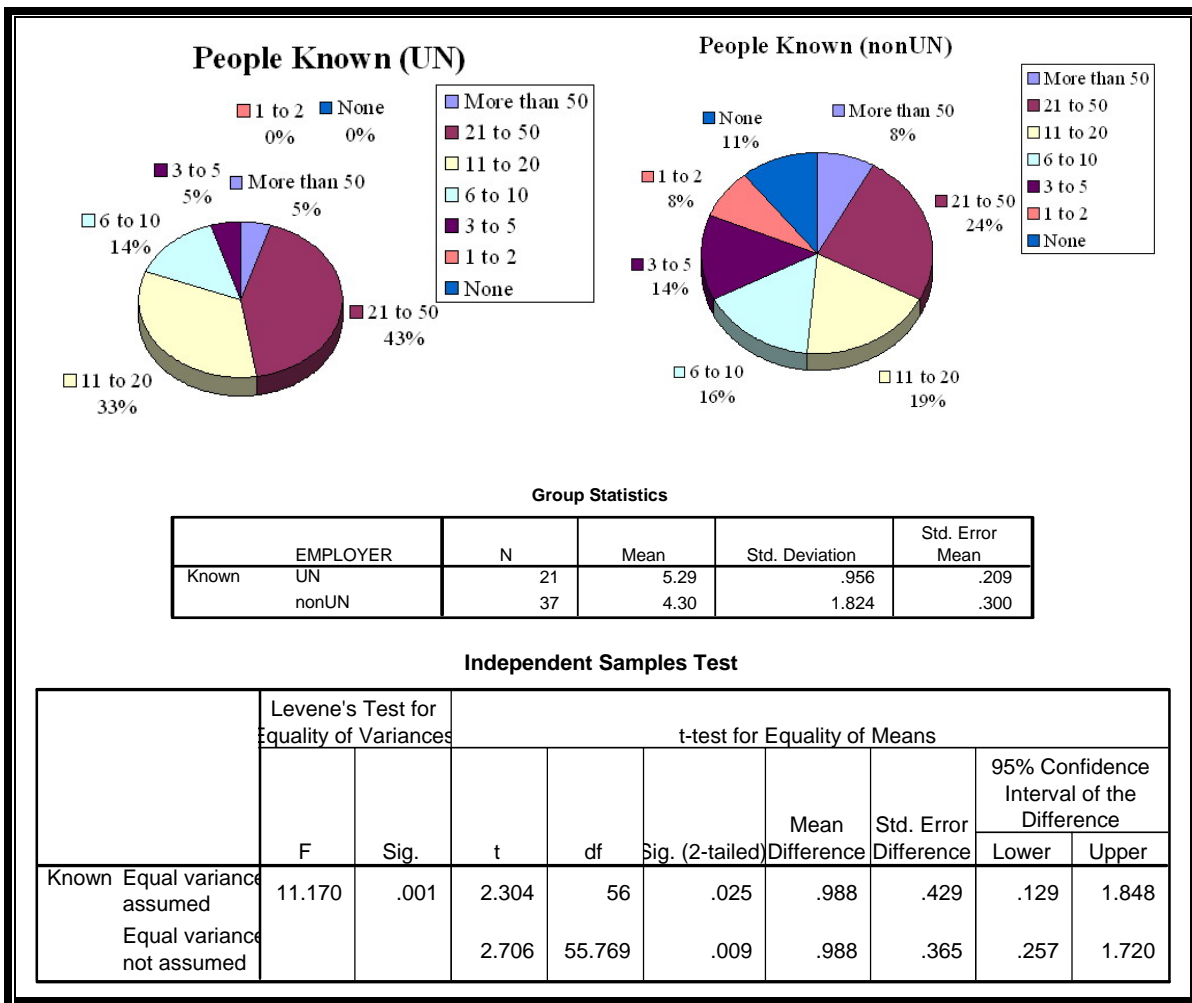


Responses to the question concerning the extent to which respondents had established a relationship prior to the symposium were first divided by working location (Headquarters (HQ) and non-Headquarters (nonHQ)). While the pie charts indicate that differences do

exist, the averages for the two groups are roughly the same (demonstrate no statistically significant difference).

Given that the symposium was organized by a UN entity it is also interesting to understand whether or not organizational affiliation had an impact on the extent to which respondents knew others at the symposium. Thus, the sample was divided into two categories: UN-related employee (UN) or non-UN-related employee (nonUN). A statistical analysis of the differences between these two samples (depicted in Figure 6) indicates that organizational affiliation did influence the extent to which respondents knew others, with UN employees on average knowing more attendees prior to the symposium.

Figure 6. Impact of Employers on Prior Relationships Among Attendees (UN and nonUN)



3.2.2 What is the structure of partnerships between the symposium participants?

Finding: The network structure of partners with respect to information management activities and projects is centralized around UNOCHA, but also includes other key actors.

Figure 7. Social Network Structure of Activities and Projects Partners

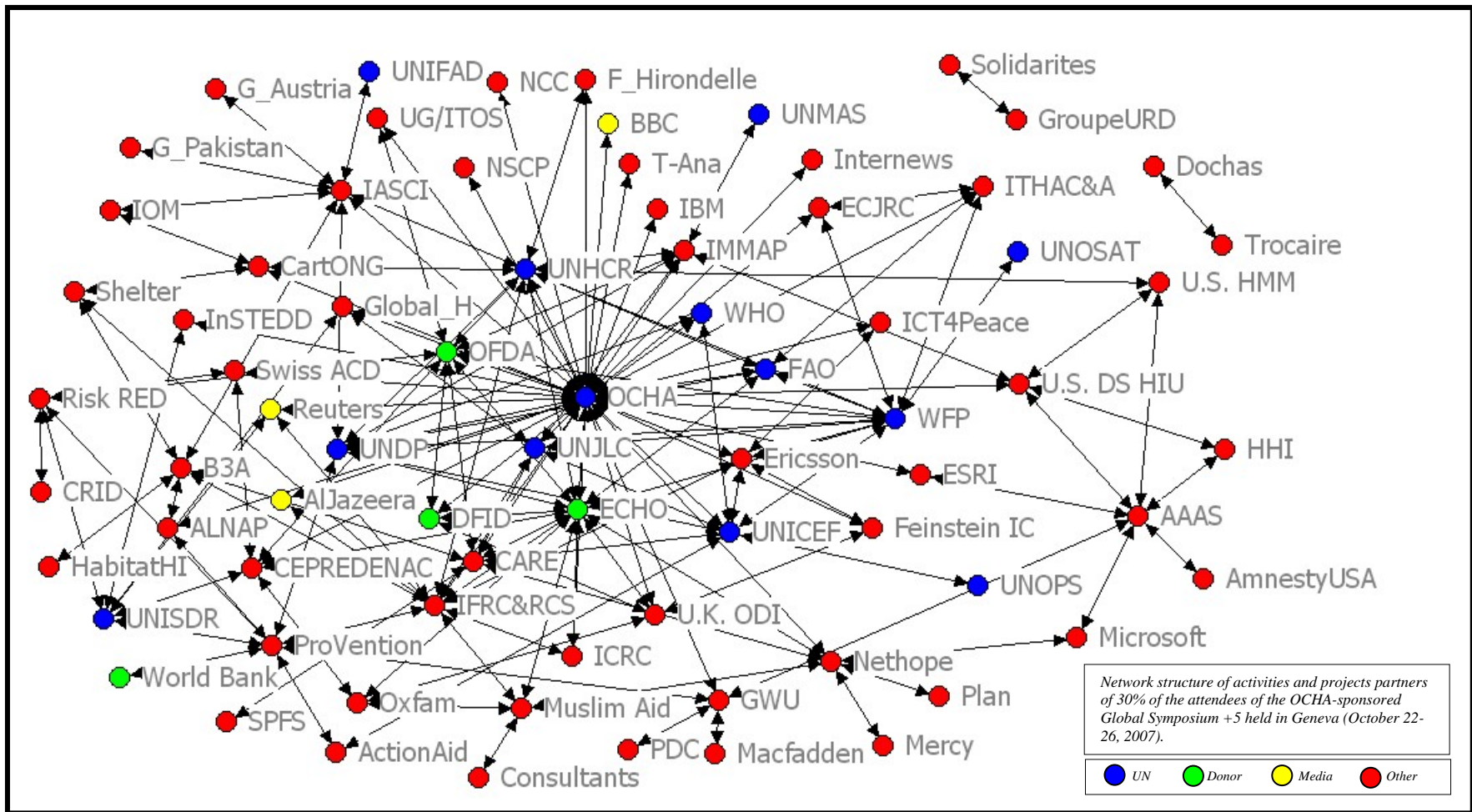


Figure 7 shows the network structure of partners with respect to information management activities. The network illustrates a significant centralization around UN organizations, whose employees make up a little over a third of the survey respondents. The degree of centrality of the different nodes of the network was computed using UCINET (Borgatti et al., 1999). Out of a total of 320 connections in the network, 41 are directly connected to UNOCHA. This central position denotes the pivotal role played by UNOCHA in the network. Other key actors in the network include European Commission Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) (15 connections), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC&RCS) (12 connections) and U.S. AID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) (10 connections). This network diagram constitutes an appropriate baseline structure for further study of the collaborative dynamic among organizations engaged in information coordination and management for disaster relief.

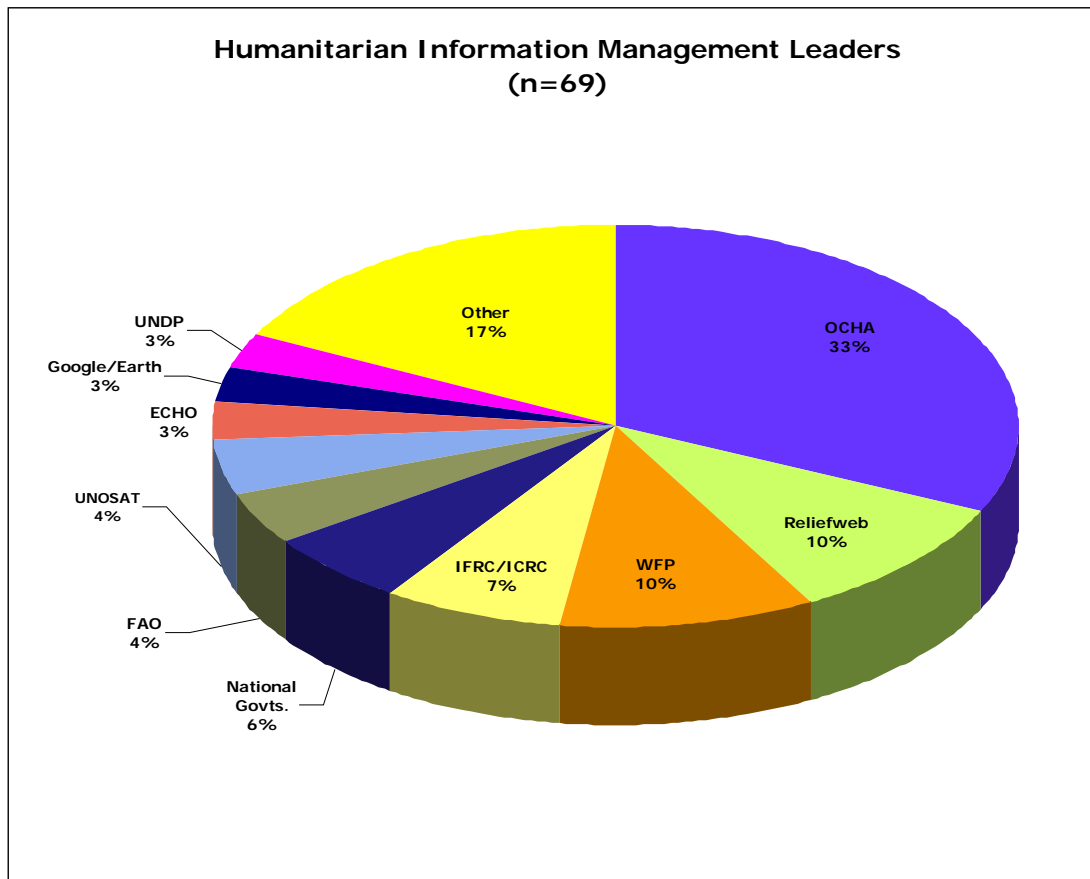
3.3 Support of humanitarian information management

The further development of the humanitarian information management field and the important activities it undertakes will require both leadership and support. It may also be facilitated by new institutions such as a professional association. The following paragraphs describe respondents' views on the leaders in the field, donors and networks of relations between donors and organizations as well as the extent to which they would support the formation of a professional association.

3.3.1 Which organizations can be seen as leaders in the Humanitarian Information Management (HIM) field?

Finding: OCHA and its Reliefweb are cited as leaders by 43% of respondents and all UN agencies combined are recognized by 64% of respondents as leaders in humanitarian information management.

Figure 8. Humanitarian Information Management Organization Leaders



These findings are derived from an open-ended question that allowed respondents to write in the leaders and provided space for up to three responses. The study generated 35 usable surveys with 69 unique responses. These usable responses were derived from an original pool of 68 surveys with a total of 109 unique responses. However, in order to

help eliminate bias and ensure reliability, answers were excluded for the following four reasons. First, individual responses of self-nominations, responses where the respondent indicated their own organization as a leader, were excluded as well as those that did not identify their current employer. Additionally, one essay-like answer and three “None” answers from four different surveys were also eliminated as non-responsive. Thus, given that these results represent the opinions of only 35 symposium attendees, further research is needed to provide a valid picture of leadership in humanitarian information management.

The above chart reflects the relative percentages of responses for the 69 nominations and was derived from the following tables:

Table 1. Frequencies for Humanitarian Information Management Organization Leaders

Organization	Frequency
OCHA	22
Reliefweb	7
WFP	7
IFRC/ICRC	5
National Govts.	4
FAO	3
UNOSAT	3
ECHO	2
Google/Earth	2
UNDP	2
Other	12

The Other category for the table and figure above, consisted of 12 organizations that were listed as an organization leader only once among the 69 nominations. These 12 organizations are listed in Table 2 below:

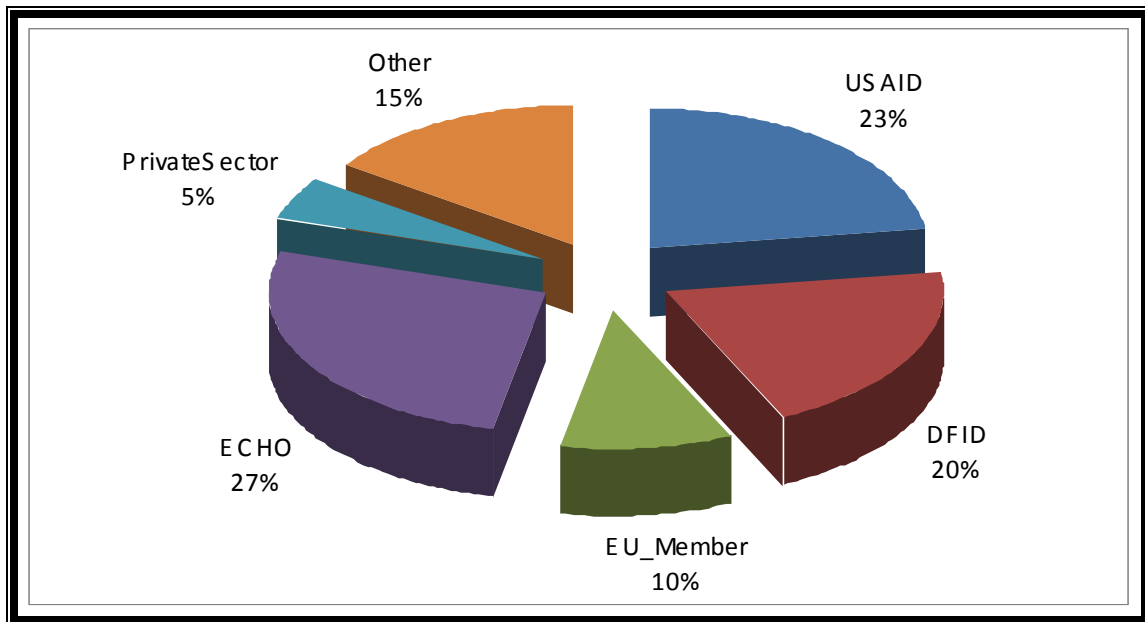
Table 2. Response Frequencies for Organization Leaders in the Category of Other

Organizations in the Category of Other	Frequency
Academic	1
CartONG	1
GDACS	1
IASCI	1
IRIN	1
ISCRAM	1
JRC	1
Microsoft	1
OXFAM	1
RedR	1
UNEP	1
UNICEF	1

3.3.2 Who supports inter-organizational IM activities and projects?

Finding: The European Commission Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid (ECHO), followed closely by USAID and DFID, were identified most frequently as providing funding for inter-organizational humanitarian information management activities and projects in the community represented by survey respondents.

Figure 9. Organizational Funding of Information Management Activities and Projects

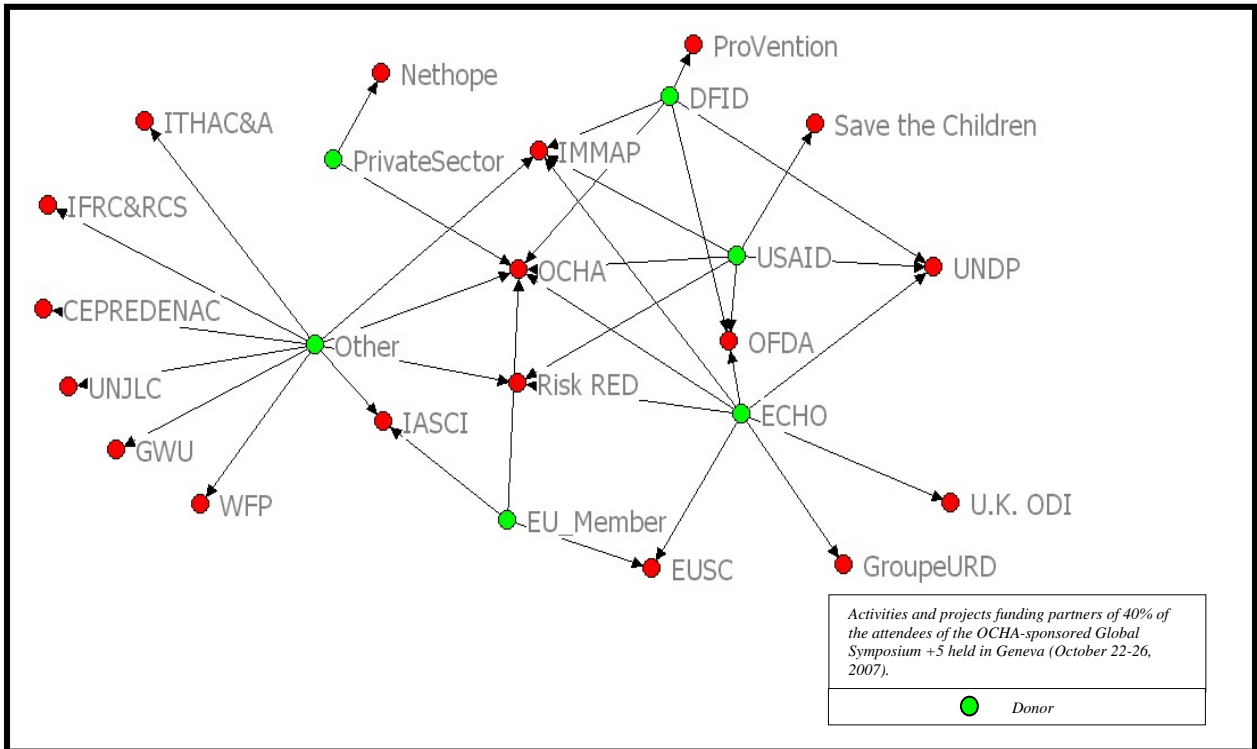


The above chart shows that ECHO, USAID, and DFID together were mentioned by 70% of the respondents as providing support for their inter-organizational projects. Additionally donors, such as EU Member States, the private sector and others, including governments, financial institutions such as the World Bank, and other UN organizations such as UNDP, are also seen as providing support.

3.3.3 What are the funding relationships among organizations?

Finding: Most donors are providing funding to a variety of organizations in the sample.

Figure 10. Network of Donor Relations

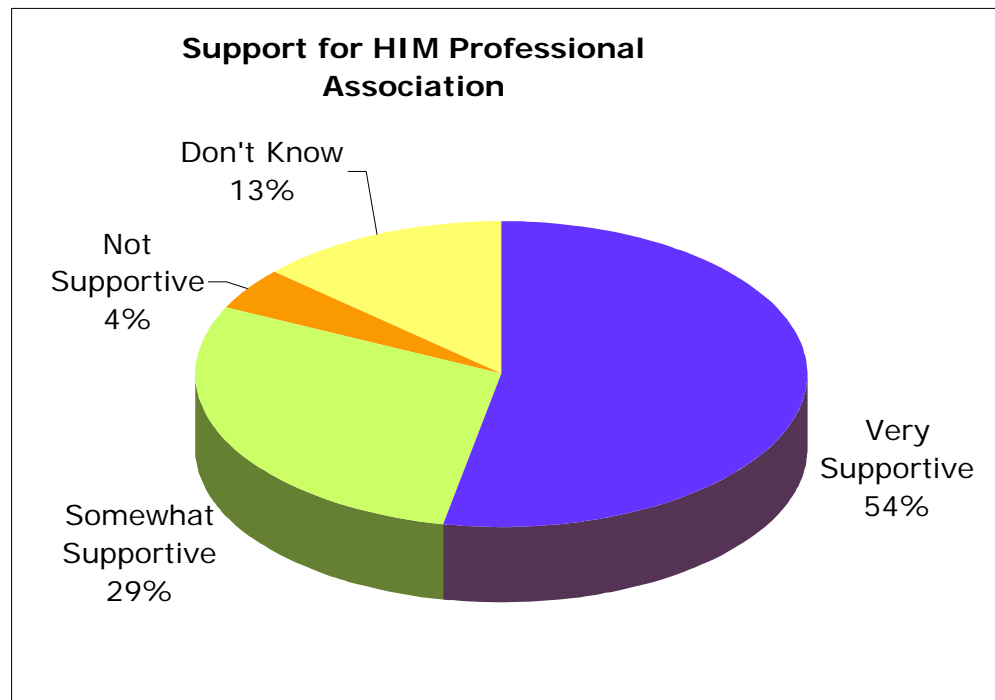


The above diagram shows funding relationships among organizations. The diagram was generated from the responses to the question concerning project funding together with responses of organizational affiliation. With the organizational affiliation reports being lower than the overall response rate, the relationships indicated on this graph do not reflect all relationships among the respondents. However, it does provide an initial picture of attendees' perceptions of who their funding partners are.

3.3.4 How supportive are you of creating a Professional Association for Information Management in the field of Humanitarian Assistance?

Finding: More than 80% of respondents indicated they are somewhat or very supportive of creating a Humanitarian Information Management Professional Association, although several caveats to their support were indicated.

Figure 11. Support for Humanitarian Information Management Professional Association



The survey asked respondents to rate their support for the creation of a professional association for humanitarian information management. They could indicate whether they were very supportive, somewhat supportive, not supportive, or didn't know if they would be supportive. A vast majority of respondents indicated that they support the formation of such a professional association.

The respondents were also given the opportunity to comment about the creation of a professional association. An analysis of the comments regarding an HIM Professional Association reveals that there are a few central themes of concern among respondents. Respondents may have made similar comments, yet rated their level of support differently. The central themes identified in the comments are:

1. **Support is dependent** upon the structure, leadership and objectives of the association.
2. The association **will enhance best practices** (e.g., improved disaster response) as well as the sharing of information and networking.
3. Concerns about adequate **funding**
4. Concerns about **duplicating efforts** or already existing associations
5. Concerns about membership **inclusion/exclusion**

The comments provided on the surveys are included here, broken out by type of support. They illustrate how similar concerns can generate differing levels of support. For example, the theme of *support is dependent* was provided by respondents who were very supportive, somewhat supportive, as well as those who didn't know what level of support they would lend to creating the association.

Table 3. Theme Categorization of Comments on HIM Professional Association

Very Supportive	Theme
Depends on the structure	1
Opportunities to create synergies for better response to disasters is always welcome	2
Not led by the UN, not professional just an open network for a community of practice	1
No certification, yes to networking exercises, labs, share best practices and mistakes	2
Would love to look to see some draft TORs or concept paper	1
I think it may be a very useful step to make the importance of the work of IM brought to a level it requires these days just as journalists or even logistics persons.	2
A must to move the profession forward in a unified way	1
The only way to keep promoting several recommendations discussed at the symposium plus 5 is via an organized group and not as individual initiatives	1
Somewhat Supportive	
Not sure that association would [illegible] as it will require resource to manage (funds?!)	3
Rather a cluster on general level	1
Place/event specific	1
Could be accomplished through existing platforms	4
I think we must think and act together and give tools to enable people to manage information in particular to improve analysis--however IM should not be an end itself. So it depends on the objectives of this association, that I imagine are very operational.	1
As long as it is not redundant with existing structures	4
I think HIM should be considered as something in which all humanitarian workers are involved and not just as an isolated, specialized field.	5
Watching the years of efforts it took to get the HLA off the ground I would be cautious	1
Not Supportive	
We should just join other associations	4
I would prefer an informal community work towards accreditation through university programs	1
Don't Know	
Depends on what they want to do. We have too many 'associations'	1
Depends on who leads it, could be a waste of time.	1

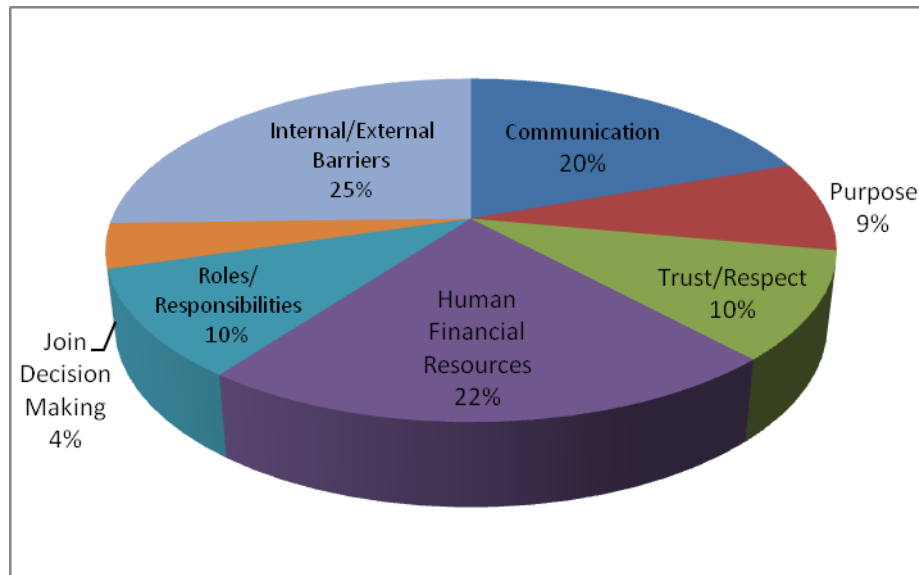
3.4 Barriers to coordination and use of symposium documents

The following survey results document the barriers that respondents experience in their attempt to coordinate on information management across organizations. With these challenges in mind, the use of the symposium documents, and consequently their potential contribution to reducing these barriers, are also discussed.

3.4.1 What are the biggest barriers to inter-organizational HIM collaboration and projects?

Finding: Respondents reported three main categories of barriers to inter-organizational HIM collaboration: Internal/External Barriers, Human/Financial Resources, and Communication. Further, differences were found in the perceptions of barriers between those located at headquarters and elsewhere.

Figure 12. Barriers to Inter-organizational HIM Collaboration Overall



Respondents were asked as part of an open-ended question to identify the three biggest barriers to HIM collaboration and projects. Sixty seven percent of the responses fell into three primary categories (defined as 20% or greater of the total responses): Internal/external Barriers, Human/Financial Resources, and Communication. The responses categorized as **Internal/External** barriers were those that explained how organizations' internal structures often oppose collaboration efforts and how external factors, e.g., governments, delay such collaborative activities. The responses categorized as **Human/Financial** resources included those that were concerned with the lack of time, human, or financial resources. And the responses categorized as **Communication** were those concerned with the manipulation of data and the use of communication tools.

The remaining categories identified are as follows:

1. **Purpose:** Responses that expressed differences about goals and expected outcomes between agencies.
2. **Trust/respect:** Responses related to competition issues and protectionist practices.

3. **Roles/Responsibilities:** Responses that explained the problems of clear leadership and specific distribution of duties.
4. **Joint Decision Making:** Responses about the issues faced during consensus building activities.

The survey respondents were grouped into two categories for comparison: those located at Headquarters and those at other locations. As depicted in Figures 13 and 14 below, within these two groups the three primary barriers to collaboration are consistent with those in the combined sample. However, differences between the groups do exist. Figures 13 and 14 suggest that the degree to which these barriers matters differs, for example that human and financial resources are a more important concern for those in locations other than headquarters. However, likely due to the small sample size, those differences are not statistically significant. The statistically significant differences between the groups discussed here lie in the less important barriers, namely the areas of ‘purpose’ and ‘roles and responsibilities’.

Figure 13. Barriers to Inter-Organizational HIM Collaboration at Headquarters

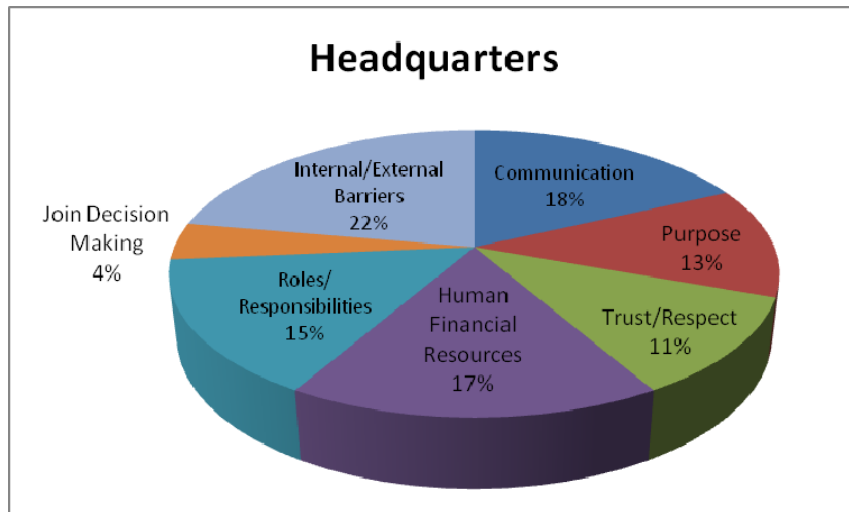
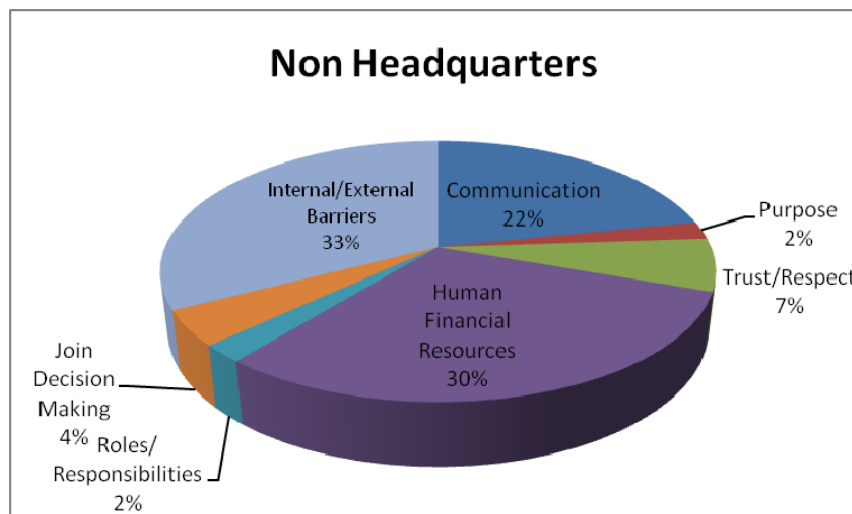


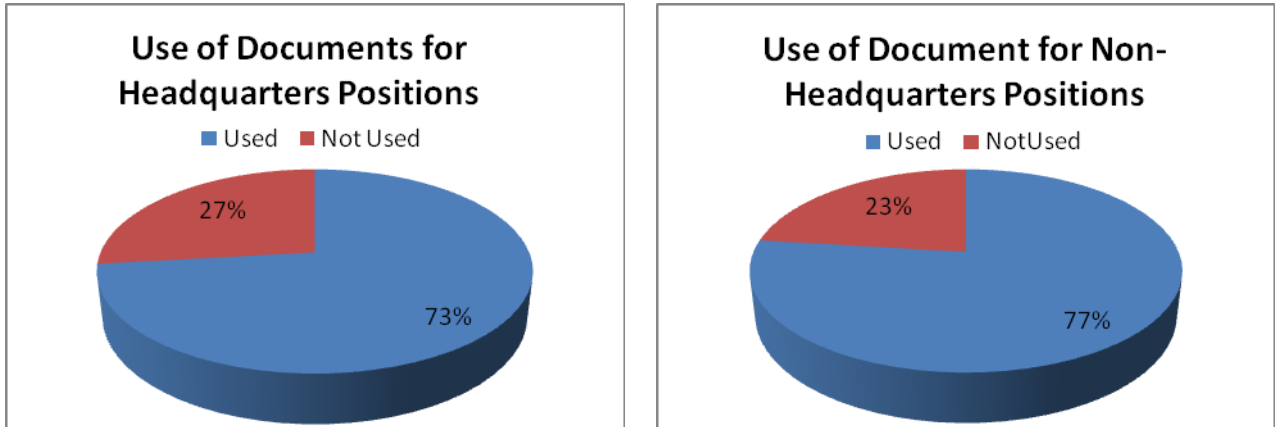
Figure 14. Barriers to Inter-Organizational HIM Collaboration Not at Headquarters



3.4.2 Can you think about how symposium official reports/documents might be used in the future?

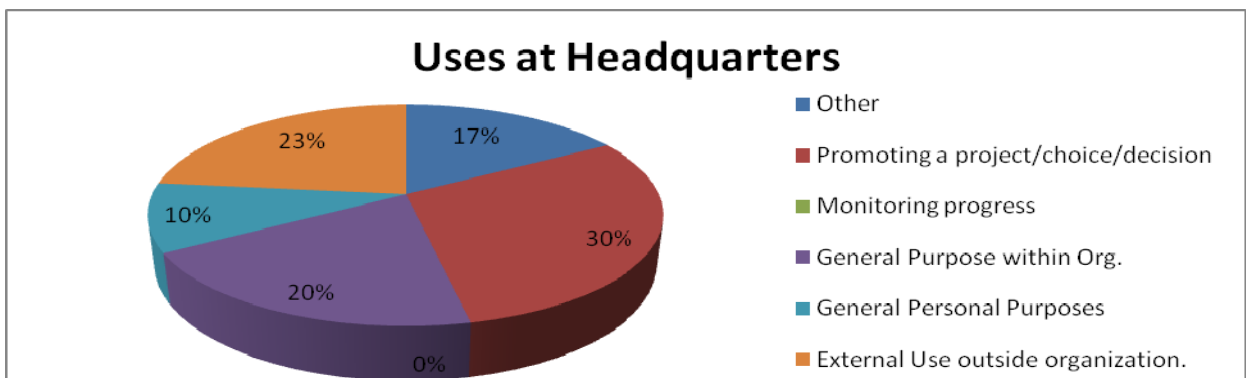
Finding: The majority of respondents will use the report in a variety of ways, independent of whether they work at headquarters or other locations. The uses fall into five main categories: promoting project choice, monitoring project progress, general purpose within organization, general personal use, and external use.

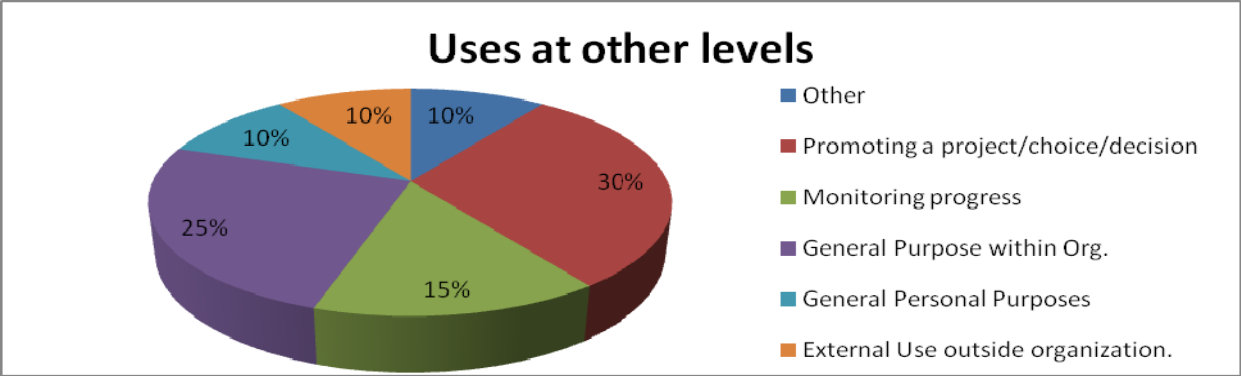
Figure 15. Thinking about the use of the symposium official reports/documents



The data on report use were collected through a question that allowed respondents to indicate their intention to use them (yes/no) and then provided room for them to describe how they would use them. The data were analyzed to identify both the extent of intended use as well as to identify general categories of the ways in which they would be used. The chart above shows that respondents, in large majorities and from all locations, reported that they thought the symposium official documents might be useful. Results showed that 73% of respondents located at Headquarters and 77% of respondents located at non-Headquarters, not a statistically significant difference, planned to use the document.

Figure 16. Use of the Symposium Official Reports/Documents





The chart above illustrates how respondents from HQ and those from other locations would use the symposium official reports/documents in the future. Five categories emerged from analysis of the 67 responses. Some sample responses are given below.

Table 4. Symposium Official Documents Use Category

Promoting Projects	Monitoring progress	General Purpose within org.	General Personal purpose	External use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobby for idea Justifying work Advocate greater support for IM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benchmark Summary of key issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage other staff to use them Use in meetings Debrief management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align work to best practices Guidelines to improve projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact with international organizations Follow up Networking Formalize actions Professionalize approaches

Comparing responses between those working at headquarters against all other positions, those at headquarters plan to use the document much more often for external use and communicating with other organizations. Non-headquarters respondents are the only ones that plan to use the documents to monitor progress on projects.

4 Summary of findings

The findings of the survey provide a broad, although not complete, picture of a particular segment of the field of humanitarian information management upon which future research can be based. The findings are summarized below and are followed in Section 5 by a discussion of their significance.

Survey respondents and their employment:

- The “typical” survey respondent can be characterized as a Manager working in the field of Information Management at Headquarters.
- The highest frequencies of fluidity occur among *Managers in Information Management* who work at *Headquarters*. It should be noted however that the most frequent survey respondents were also managers in information management located at headquarters and hence further research is needed to understand fluidity.

Their relationships

- Working locations do not have a significant impact on the number of people that respondents knew before the symposium, however the employer of respondents (UN versus non-UN) does. Respondents from the UN-related organizations knew more participants before the symposium than Respondents from the non-UN-related organizations.
- The network structure of partnerships on information management activities and projects is centralized, particularly around UNOCHA, ECHO, the IFRC&RCS and U.S. AID OFDA.

Support of humanitarian information management:

- OCHA and its Reliefweb are considered to be leaders in humanitarian information management by 43% of respondents of the survey. All UN agencies combined are recognized by 64% of respondents as HIM organization leaders.
- The European Commission Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid (ECHO), followed closely by USAID and DFID, are most frequently cited as providing support for inter-organizational humanitarian information management activities and projects in the community represented by survey respondents.
- More than 80% of respondents indicated they are somewhat or very supportive of creating a Humanitarian Information Management Professional Association, although many caveats were mentioned.
- The central themes of these comments or caveats are:
 - *Support is dependent* upon the structure, leadership and objectives of the association.
 - The association *will enhance best practices* (e.g., improved disaster response) as well as the sharing of information and networking.
 - Concerns about adequate *funding*
 - Concerns about *duplicating efforts* of already existing associations
 - Concerns about membership *inclusion/exclusion*

Barriers to collaboration and use of symposium documents:

- Three main groups of barriers to inter-organizational HIM collaboration were reported. They are: Internal/External Barriers, Human/Financial Resources, and Communication.
- Participants from headquarters consider that Purpose and Roles/Responsibilities are important factors undermining collaborative efforts.
- There was essentially no difference between respondents from HQ and respondents from other locations regarding the usefulness of the symposium official report and documents. Approximately three-quarters of each group indicated that the documents would be useful.
- Respondents reported five main categories of future use for the symposium official documents: promoting projects choice, monitoring projects progress, general purpose within organization, general personal purpose, and external use.

5 Discussion

The survey results provide an initial picture of a segment of the humanitarian information management community. As such these results need to be carefully interpreted taking into account the source of respondents, namely the attendees of the Global Symposium +5, as well as the limited number of respondents. Although these limitations require caution in using the results as a basis for insights, below we discuss these tentative findings both in relation to one another as well as in the broader context of the humanitarian sector and organizational research in general.

5.1 Respondents and their employment

While the number of respondents was limited, even among this small group a diverse range of professions, locations and levels within the organizational hierarchy are represented. In terms of professions, respondents indicated they were from a range including IT, communications, programmatic and information management, although the majority (44%) identified themselves as in information management. This result suggests that the field is developing and that among the community positions in 'information management' have been either formally established or participants see their positions as such.

In addition to being a partial reflection of the state of formalization of information management, the results related to respondents provided two additional pieces of information. The first is related to symposium organizers' goals related to diversity of attendees and the second is concerned with the fluidity of employment in the field. Each is discussed in turn below.

5.1.1 Symposium attendees and goals

The organizers of the Global Symposium +5 were interested in having a diverse group of attendees at the symposium plenary. The survey respondents predominantly came from central positions within their organizational hierarchies. The respondents were managers, rather than technical or support staff. They were located at headquarters, as opposed to

national or sub-national locations. These two combined suggest participants were from positions of centralized decision-making and resource control. And while diverse positions and locations were reported, the relative numbers among them suggest a lack of diversity.

Another goal expressed by the organizers of the Symposium was to increase the technical staff participating in the symposium. The outcomes for this goal are not so clear cut. The respondents to the survey were 44% Information Management and another 10% Information Technologists. Surprisingly, only 22% identified themselves as technical staff (as opposed to management, etc.) within these fields. While this would suggest that the majority of the respondents associated themselves with information in some form within their organizations, they did not also see themselves as technical staff. This gap may indicate the need for development of another form of technologist, a professional information manager in the humanitarian relief field, neither technician nor pure management.

In addition to identifying the type of people present at the symposium, the survey also sought to understand the level of employment turnover, or fluidity, with the humanitarian information management field.

5.1.2 Fluidity

Both the fields of humanitarian work and information technology services are often described as possessing a high employee fluidity rate. According to Loquercio, Hammersley and Emmens (2006) of the Humanitarian Practice Network at ODI¹, “Staff turnover has become a major concern for humanitarian agencies. Unplanned staff turnover is problematic and expensive, affecting not only learning and efficiency, but also the capacity of agencies to respond to new emergencies, or even sometimes just to continue existing programmes.”

However, humanitarian agencies are not alone. In the broader field of IT high fluidity, or turnover, has also become a concern as IT markets become more competitive. A high turnover rate has been described as a natural, or endemic, behavior of the IT professional career (Meland et al. 2004). Before 2001, the end of the dot com era, high turnover of IT staff was expected as employees sought out the best deal for themselves as they changed jobs on average every 24 months (ITAA, 2002). However, employees are changing jobs less often and holding on to current jobs a few months longer than several years ago. (30 months in 2004 compared with 25 months in 2002 according to ITAA 2004 data). A survey of some 1,500 chief information officers (CIOs) in 21 countries suggests that IT managers throughout the world are experiencing a difficult combination of unprecedented demand for IT workers and high turnover rates. Turnover rates range from 35 to 45 percent (ITWS).

¹ See <http://www.ecbproject.org/publications/ECB1/Understanding%20and%20Addressing%20Staff%20Turnover.pdf>.

Considering this, for the respondents to this survey, the highest frequencies of fluidity for position, field, and location over the entire 10-year period, as well as for each range of number of employers, occurred among Management, Information Management, and Headquarters, respectively. While these results may be biased by the makeup of the respondents, they suggest that differences in turnover may exist along the lines of position, field and location and further that the humanitarian information management field, similar to other areas of the broader humanitarian sector, is experiencing a much higher rate of employment change than is found in other sectors.

If these findings are indeed replicated by a larger sample study, this may mean that the continuity and organizational history of the large body of Information Managers in Humanitarian relief work will be found in decentralized locations and positions. However, given the centralized role of OCHA and Headquarters and management, perhaps some mechanism to reduce fluidity in these areas will provide greater longevity, stability and institutionalization of Information Management and its best practices in the entire field over time.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Efforts to professionalize and institutionalize humanitarian information management may be influenced, both positively and negatively, by the high level of fluidity. Further research is necessary to 1. better understand where fluidity is the highest and 2. understand its implications for professionalization of the field.

5.2 Their relationships

In addition to understanding the characteristics of the survey respondents, and more generally of the attendees, it is also important to understand the relationships between the organizations. These relationships are likely the basis of information sharing, coordination and further development of the information management field.

5.2.1 Knowing one another

The symposium, as with many field-level meetings, faces a challenge in bringing new members into the community while at the same time providing a place where the current community can reconnect with members of their professional network.

The survey results find that given the majority of respondents were Headquarters-based staff, headquarters staff reported that they knew a large portion of other attendees. Typically respondents knew approximately 20-30 other people, suggesting that the network of individual attendees was significant before the symposium. However, respondents from UN-related organizations had more prior relationships before the symposium than respondents from non-UN-related organizations. This suggests that in the symposium community the UN plays a strong central role in the network of individual participants.

Thus, while the symposium was likely a very good venue for headquarters employees to connect with similar colleagues from other organizations and particularly those within the UN, and may have been an interesting venue for non-headquarters employees to network

with those from headquarters. However, it is unclear whether or not it had value for establishing field-based networks.

5.2.2 Structure of relationships

The structure of inter-organizational relationships based on projects and activities among survey respondents shows that UNOCHA is a central member of this network. Given that OCHA was the sponsor of the symposium from which the sample was drawn this is, to some extent, not surprising. However, it does provide a better understanding the very diverse range of relationships between all of the organizations.

The centrality of OCHA in this network has both positive and negative implications. On the positive side, the centrality of OCHA suggests it is helping to develop a community of humanitarian information managers and plays an important role in this field. On the negative side, some members may prefer that this role be fulfilled by a non-UN organization. Also, for OCHA this position implies a certain level of responsibility and leadership that OCHA may not want to carry.

RECOMMENDATION 2: While further research on headquarters-to-headquarters and headquarters-to-field based networks can be carried out through continued analysis of this community, research on field-to-field networks will require a different group. Also, further research is required to identify the reasons for the relatively lower representation of field and technical personnel at the symposium and potential strategies for increasing their representation.

5.3 Humanitarian information management support

The development of the field will be influenced by its leadership, supporters and institutions. The following observations made concerning the survey results in these areas.

5.3.1 Leadership

The survey provided an important first insight into which organizations symposium attendees believe are leaders in this field. OCHA and ReliefWeb were the most frequently cited leaders by 43% of respondents of the survey. All UN agencies combined were recognized by 64% of respondents as leaders. This strongly significant response might be partially explained by the role OCHA has played in organizing, hosting and leading the two symposiums. For these agencies this leadership role may also come with a growing responsibility to take a continued active role in this space, shaping and guiding these information management professionals across organizations in the humanitarian relief arena.

While valuable, these findings about leadership fail to address significant questions about the desired nature of leadership. Perhaps more important is an understanding of what members of the community expect from leaders. Any indications drawn directly from these results, for example that members equate leadership with organizing symposia or providing information through a web-based portal, are mere speculation and clearly further research is needed.

5.3.2 Financial support

The results related to support include both identification of those organizations that provide support for inter-organizational humanitarian information management activities as well as the partnership relationships among members of community and those donors. The results indicate that several organizations provide support to the community and that members of the community individually typically receive support from several sources.

While representing only a fraction of the relationships among symposium participants the findings suggest that there are dense ties among donors and members of the community. The diversity of donors suggests that the problems associated with inter-organizational humanitarian information management are recognized and that members of the community will be insulated by changes in priorities at any one organization. This in turn however requires that organizations have many relationships to manage and many people to please.

And while the current diversity of donors reflected in the results is a positive outcome, the findings may provide a basis for identifying new sources of support or expanding the presence of those already mentioned. For example, in response to a question about which organizations not present that attendees would have like to have seen several private sector firms such as Google were mentioned². This may indicate a desire for greater engagement with the private sector by this community.

5.3.3 Professional association

One of the clearest and strongest findings from this survey is the interest of respondents in learning more about the possibility of creating a Humanitarian Information Management Professional³ Association. More than 80% of respondents indicated they are somewhat or very supportive of creating such a Professional Association. Some of the respondents offered comments associated with their support and couched their support in

² The results to this question were so diverse and difficult to summarize that they are presented in this report.

³ Professions have been defined as a field that required extensive study and a mastery of specialized knowledge, such as medical, religious, legal and engineering fields (Denning, 2001). The term profession is often contrasted with occupation, which refers generally to the nature of a person's employment. While both profession and occupation can refer to the method by which an individual earns an income, unlike occupation, profession ordinarily implies a commitment to a field of work, which usually involves years of planning, preparation and study. Professions also usually require rigorous training and schooling beyond a basic college degree. A profession includes institutions for preserving the knowledge and the practices, enforcing the standards, and educating professionals. Trait theory states that an occupation becomes a profession by attaining certain characteristics, including adherence to a code of ethics, a body of theoretical knowledge, licensure or registration, and loyalty to colleagues. Proponents of trait theory have devised checklists of attributes that can be ticked off to determine how far a given occupation has progressed toward the goal of professionalization. (See Mikelson 1996; Tseng, 1992; Carter, 1990) An example of trait theory applied to IT professional come from Peter Denning (2001). Denning finds that in a general sense, professions have four main hallmarks:

- A durable domain of human concerns.
- A codified body of principles (conceptual knowledge).
- A codified body of practices (embodied knowledge including competence).
- Standards for competence, ethics, and practice.

terms of its dependence on the structure, leadership and objectives of the association, the goals of the association, the funding of the association and the potential membership of the association.

A professional association would help to institutionalize⁴ the practices of humanitarian information management and further promote professionalization. However, the caveats included with the support strongly indicate that the community would like more information about what such an organization would look like and suggested a white paper or prospectus on the topic be developed. Further, serious consideration should be given to the role that OCHA or any other UN agency would play in such an organization.

RECOMMENDATION 3: More systematic research on the perceptions of leadership and the community's expectations in this realm, as well as on the structure of funding, is needed. This research could subsequently help to formulate a prospectus for a humanitarian information management professional association that can be distributed to the community for further comment.

5.4 Barriers to coordination and use of symposium documents

The respondents stated there were several barriers to coordinating activities between information managers across humanitarian organizations. Respondents were asked to identify the three biggest barriers to collaboration and projects in this field. The responses fell into three primary categories: Internal/external Barriers, Human/Financial Resources, and Communication. The responses categorized as Internal/External barriers were those that explained how organizations' internal structures often oppose collaboration efforts and how external factors, e.g., governments, delay such collaborative activities. The responses categorized as Human/Financial resources included those that were concerned with the lack of time, human, or financial resources. And the responses categorized as Communication were those concerned with the manipulation of data and the use of communication tools.

The importance of these categories was also reflected in the sub-samples of headquarters and non-headquarters respondents. And while differences in the level of importance of these categories between these two groups were not statistically significant, it stands to reason that resources are likely a larger barrier to coordination for those in the field versus those at headquarters. Also, the distribution of concerns between the groups varied. Whereas for the non-headquarters respondents, internal/external barriers,

⁴ An institution is "a set of roles, graded in authority, that have been embodied in consistent patterns of actions, that have been legitimated and sanctioned by society or segments of that society; whose purpose is to carry out certain activities or prescribed needs of that society or segments of that society" (Mills, 1959). Something becomes an institution when self-perpetuating internal social patterns reproduce themselves without the need of sustaining action or collective action by its members (Painter, 2002). Instead, routine procedures support and sustain the pattern, furthering its reproduction, unless collective action blocks or external shocks disrupt the pattern (Jepperson, 1991). Institutions arise due to enacted practices from which stable sets of structures evolve, with formalized rules and laws. Drawing from contemporary literature focused on developing theories of professional institutions, occupations become professionalized or institutionalized when they are believed to require extensive formalized study and a mastery of specialized knowledge; are autonomous; self-restricted and self-regulated; and generally exclusive. A professional institution includes organizations for preserving the knowledge and the practices, enforcing the standards, and educating professionals (Tseng, 1992; Carter, Grebner, Seaman, and Foret, 1990).

communication and resources accounted for 85% of their nominations for barriers, at headquarters, the three largest barriers accounted for only 57% of their nominations. This suggests that that it may be that a greater consensus on the barriers exists in non-headquarters locations, which in turn could indicate that it might be easier to make progress in these locations. Clearly such conclusions would require further research.

5.4.1 Use of symposium documents

The symposium documents, which intend to provide direction to humanitarian information practitioners both by proposing best practices and principles as well as identifying the key issues in the field, can both help to further professionalization of the field and may help reduce barriers to coordination.

To understand their contribution to these goals the survey sought to understand a basic element in this equation, namely whether or not the documents were likely to be used and if so how. Overwhelmingly, 75% of all respondents stated they anticipated a use for the documents. Respondents reported five main categories of future use for the symposium official documents: promoting projects choice, monitoring projects progress, general purpose within the organization, general personal use, and external use.

While it is difficult to draw direct relationships between document use and professionalization, these categories suggest that the documents have a role to play in establishing standard approaches to both identifying and promoting projects as well as monitoring their progress. The relationships between these uses and the barriers may be as follows. First more effective promotion of projects may bring more organizational resources to bear on information management problems thereby reducing the resource barrier to coordination. Next, while not a significant barrier to coordination, standardized approaches to project promotion and monitoring may aid in joint decision making. Also, applications of best practices may help to facilitate inter-organizational communication, particularly in those instances where communication tools are specified. Finally, a common understanding of the role of information management within organizations may facilitate the understanding of both roles/responsibilities, purposes, and trust/respect across organizations. Clearly establishing a link between the extent to which use of these symposium documents has even the potential for breaking down barriers to inter-organizational coordination in humanitarian information management activities will require further research.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Further research is need to both clearly identify the barriers to coordination in inter-organizational humanitarian information management as well as to identify how these barriers differ among locations, positions and fields. Further, longitudinal research is needed to understand the extent to which these barriers are changing and whether or not the symposium documents or other outcomes, such as networks, facilitate inter-organizational coordination.

6 Appendix

Below is the survey distributed on the second day of the Global Symposium +5 from which the results discussed herein are derived.

Research Consent Form, The Pennsylvania State University

Global Symposium +5 Information Management Collaboration Survey

Principal Investigators: Dr. Carleen Maitland and Dr. Andrea Tapia

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Purpose of the Study: We are conducting research concerning collaboration and coordination between agencies and organizations engaged in Information Management in the field of Humanitarian Assistance.

Procedures to be followed: You will be asked to fill out a paper, two-page survey given to you along with this document.

Duration: The survey is likely to take between 5 and 10 minutes.

Discomforts and Risks: There are no risks beyond those experienced in everyday life.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, with the data collected from this study we hope to improve coordination and collaboration between Information Managers in the field of Humanitarian Assistance and eventually get help to those that need it more efficiently and effectively.

Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. Only Drs. Maitland and Tapia and their research assistants, will know your identity. The data will be stored and secured in a locked filing cabinet in Dr. Maitland's locked office on the Penn State Campus. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. Penn State's Office for Research Protections, the Social Science Institutional Review Board, and the Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services may review records related to this project.

Right to Ask Questions: Please contact Dr. Carleen Maitland or Dr. Andrea Tapia at 814-865-1524 or 814-863-0460 with questions or concerns about this study. Please call the Office for Research Protections (814-865-1775) if you have questions about the rights of research participants.

Voluntary Participation: Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please complete the associated survey.

This copy is for your records.

Global Symposium +5 Information Management Collaboration Survey

By completing the survey below you give your consent to participate in this research. Please see the accompanying document entitled "Research Consent Form" for details as to this research, your participation and your consent.

Which of the following best describes the nature of your current work? (Circle all that apply)						
Location	Headquarters	Regional	National	Sub-national	Other	
Field	Information Management Communications/ PI		Information Technology Donor Relations		Programmatic Other	
Position	Technical	Support Staff	Management		Other	
How many different organizations/employers have you worked for in the past 10 years?	1-2	3-4	5-6	More than 6		
How many people attending this Symposium have you met or known before?	None 21-50	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-20 More than 50 people	
Please list up to 3 organizations that would have benefited from attending this Symposium which are not present?	(please list)					
Which organizations can be seen as leaders in the Humanitarian Information Management (HIM) field?	(please list)					
In the past 3 years have you engaged in inter-organizational Humanitarian Information Management (HIM) projects?	YES	NO	(if so, please describe the most important one)			
What are the biggest barriers to inter-organizational HIM collaboration and projects?	1. 2. 3.					
If your HIM inter-organizational project required external funding, how many of these projects received funding?	None	A third	A half	Three-quarters	All	Not Applicable
Which donors? (Circle all that apply)	USAID ECHO Other (please list)	DFID	Private Sector	EU Member	Not Applicable	
At this Symposium have you met anyone new with whom you intend to correspond after the end of the meeting?	YES	NO	(if so, to what end?)			
What steps do you plan to take to maintain the new relationships you have made at this symposium? (circle all that apply)	None email/phone contact Apply for funding together		Make an appointment to meet in person Meet at a conference/future meeting Other:			
How supportive are you of creating a Professional Association for Information Management in the field of Humanitarian Assistance?	Very supportive Not supportive Comments?		Somewhat supportive I don't know			
In thinking about the official reports/documents created at this symposium, can you think of how you might use these in the future?	YES	NO	(if so, please describe)			

In reference to this list, please do TWO things.

Mark an X on the name of the organization for which you currently work (or write in an "other")

CIRCLE the names of up to FIVE organizations with whom you have partnered on important inter-organizational information management activities or projects.

Permanent Missions to the UN

Country: _____

United Nations

FAO
UNHCR
UN OCHA
UNDP
World Food Programme
UNICEF
WHO
UN World Health Organization
OTHER: _____

AAAS

ActionAid

Adventist Development and Relief Agency International

Al Jazeera International

ALNAP

Amnesty International USA

AnsuR Technologies

Association For Development Twese Hamwe

B3 Associates

BBC World Service (& Trust)

Canadian Govt. Dept. of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

CARE International

CartONG

CEPREDENAC

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition

Development Seed

Dunamis Dunatos

Engineers Without Borders UK

Ericsson AB

Environmental Systems Research Institute

European Commission Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid (ECHO)

European Commission Joint Research Centre

European Union Satellite Centre (EUSC)

Faculty of Administrative and Financial Sciences Sudan

Feinstein International Center

Femmes Africa Solidarite

Fondation Hironnelle

Geneva Centre for Security Policy

GeoConcept International Software

Global Hand

Global Voices Online

Group on Earth Observations

Groupe URD

Habitat for Humanity International

HAP International

Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI)
Health Communications Resources (HCR)

Human Rights Information and Documentation Systems, International (HURIDOCS)

Humaninet

IBM (& International Humanitarian Relief)

ICT4Peace

Independent consultant

Information Management & Mine Action Programs (iMMAP)

InSTEDD

The George Washington University

Institute of Studies on Conflicts and Humanitarian Action (IECAH)

International Agency for Source Country Information (IASCI)

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC)

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Internews (Europe & International)

Information Technology for Humanitarian Assistance, Cooperation and Action

ITU

Lutheran World Federation

Macfadden

McGill University

Media21 (InfoSud)

Mercy Corps

Microsoft (& Humanitarian Systems)

Muslim Aid UK

National Artificial Insemination Centre Tanzania

National Coordination Agency for Survey and Mapping (Bakosurtanal)

National Institute for Disasters Management (INGC) Mozambique

National Reconstruction Bureau Pakistan

National System of Civil Protection Panama

Nethope Inc/Oxfam GB

NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq (NCCI)
Norwegian Refugee Council - Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

Observatoire Volcanologique du Karthala (CNDRS)

U.K. ODI

U.K. Department of International Development

OneWorld Network

Oxfam

Pacific Disaster Center

Pakistan Government Military Secretary

Plan International

ProVention Consortium

Puntland Parliamentarians for Commonwealth Group

RedR UK

Reuters AlertNet

Risk RED

Safety net Programme/Food Security (Pastoral Development Office) Ethiopia

Save the Children (USA & other)

Sensorium Public School India

Shelter Centre

SOPAC

Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development SDC

T-Ana International

Television for Education - Asia Pacific

Thales (ALENIA Space & Security Systems)

The Livelihoods Program

Tilburg University

Trocaire

U.S. Department of State (Humanitarian Information Unit & others)

U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

U.S. Department of Defense (EUCOM and others)

U.S. AID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)

University of Georgia/ITOS

West Africa Network For Peacebuilding (WANEP)

World Vision International

OTHER Employer: _____

OTHER Project Partners: _____