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Co-creation of the concept of Humanitarian Justice: perspectives from Humanitarian Observatories practitioners

A Research Paper Design

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Disclaimer

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"When asking ourselves, do we want to speak the truth? We also need to ask if we can handle the truth" - Humanitarian Practitioner

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HSC	Humanitarian Studies Center
HO	Humanitarian Observatories
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IHSA	International Humanitarian Studies Association
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
HJD	Humanitarian Justice Declaration

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Abstract

The Humanitarian Justice Declaration was launched with the aim to bring crisis affected communities to the center of a conversation that is essential during this time in the humanitarian field. The Humanitarian Studies Center and the Humanitarian Observatories embarked on an initiative to co-create and define a humanitarian justice concept with a geographically diverse participation from communities. This research followed the co-creation process to identify the key aspects that communities demanded to have a thematic justice that contests the classical justice constructs. Finally the main focus was on bridging a conceptual framework into practice by interviewing humanitarian practitioners to identify the challenges and opportunities to apply this new framework into their everyday work.

Relevance to Development Studies

The relevance of this research to development and humanitarian studies relies on the contribution to both academic and practice-oriented fields first by understanding the process of co-creation of the humanitarian justice concept then by bringing practitioners perspectives into what is needed for the next steps of the agenda. This whole process followed a methodology that brings the voices of crisis affected communities to the center with a supporting voice from practitioners on its implementation in practice. By following these frameworks the process moved from a classical top-down approach to a bottom-up participatory initiative and research. All this comes at a time where the humanitarian sector is facing many challenges and transformation, by addressing these issues we are starting a conversation that is needed right now.

Keywords

Chapter 1: Introduction

"where leadership exists, humanitarian justice flourishes: leaders act as bridges between external actors and the most vulnerable, making aid more accountable, culturally appropriate, and rooted in local priorities" (Humanitarian Observatory, reports, 2025)

The concept of humanitarian justice is one that was just launched in October of this year during the International Humanitarian Studies Association (IHSA) conference. This marks a great achievement to address structural problems and bring to the table a conversation that is needed now more than ever.

With evolving crises, budget cuts, climate change and shifting political interests, the humanitarian sector is going through significant transformation. Just this year some of the largest aid organizations, including some UN agencies, have reduced their funding immensely (The New Humanitarian, Jan 2025). With all this changes it is clear that traditional approaches to humanitarian aid need to change in their conceptualization, design and implementation (VanRooyen, 2024) specifically this needs to be done by having bottom-up approaches where crisis-affected communities are part of the decision-making process and are supported from the rest of the humanitarian governance actors.

Historically, the humanitarian sector relies on the UN Guiding principles on Humanitarian assistance, International Humanitarian Law (IHL), Human Rights and the Sendai framework to uphold accountability and justice when crisis happens. However, The New Humanitarian (2025) argues that nowadays the threat of justice and accountability to international humanitarian law is not preventing as many violent acts as it was expected. This sentiment towards the international system has helped to evolve some practices that will be addressed and central to this research. First by defining how humanitarianism is understood in this research, and how these transformations are the starting path to the concepts and theories applied. Then the discussion will center on the use of bottom-up approaches to accurately understand the importance of it nowadays and finally the constructs of justice(s). This conceptual

and theoretical framework is made up of mostly "new approaches" to their historical understanding, and this is what I believe is part of the essence of the humanitarian justice declaration as well, a group of diverse actors that came together to stretch the understanding of justice in crisis settings and bring change to structural problems.

1.1 Rationale behind Humanitarian Justice

The transformation to focus more on local actors not only happened in the humanitarian sector but it can be seen in the development field as a whole. One of the examples of this transformation can be seen in the increase of thematic 'justices' that uses a bottom-up approach such as: social justice, disaster justice, climate justice, racial justice, among others. This phenomenon is happening on top of the already existing international frameworks which are responsible for protecting the rights for everyone but especially vulnerable groups in times of crisis or disasters. The added perspective of thematic justice is the focus on a specific development challenge, in this case in a humanitarian setting.

It is well known that humanitarian assistance nowadays is more focused on long-term resilience and having a multidimensional response (Van Rooyen, 2024) this is to create a more sustainable impact. But when it comes to justice it is mostly left to the side until formal institutions can address these inequalities, without taking into consideration that most of those are structural problems since before the crisis and not addressing them in a timely manner can lead to reproducing unjust practices (Ahmad, 2018) this practices can come from any actor within the field.

Thus the question follows on how to stretch this classical construct of justice approaches (distributive, procedural, restorative and retributive) (Tomkins & Applequist, 2008) into one that understands that non-economic wrongs are also injustices like misrecognition or misrepresentation in a society; this way if justice is reshaped since the beginning there are higher chances of addressing structural

changes in how humanitarian assistance is done and takes affected communities as well as humanitarians into account (Fraser, 2008; Ahmad, 2018). This means that justice does not necessarily rely on formal institutions to be present, but does need all humanitarian governance actors to come together to create a "fair, transparent, inclusive and respectful humanitarian response" (Humanitarian Studies Center, 2025).

Taking this context into account, the Humanitarian Studies Center (HSC) embarked on an initiative within the thematic justice framework to co-develop the concept of humanitarian justice with the collaboration of eight humanitarian observatories. The Humanitarian Observatories (HO) are a knowledge and advocacy network from different places that has the goal to understand the constant changes the humanitarian field is undergoing to collaborate or exchange ideas on solutions focused on crisis-affected communities (Hilhorst, D., Alburo-Cañete, K.Z., Aparicio, J.R. et al. ,2025). By collaborating with this global network of observatories the data gathered will result in diverse perspectives that will support the creation and agenda for the concept of humanitarian justice.

During the co-creation process, I will be supporting the Humanitarian Studies Center on the creation of a work plan and methodology to ethically work with the communities to define what is humanitarian justice for them. My involvement in this process was the reason behind the focus of this research to deepen perspectives of the initiative as well as the possibility to access the information that we were creating at the same time. The use of the information that was created for the initiative was used ethically and responsibly when mentioned during this paper to avoid identification.

Moreover, the focus that this research will be looking at is the experience of humanitarian practitioners from the observatories that contributed to the humanitarian justice declaration. This is relevant since they will be familiar with the concept but can also bring a critical approach on how to advance this declaration and what is needed to be able to put it into practice. To support their knowledge and deepen the understanding, the research will analyze the reports created by the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with the communities. By working alongside the

Humanitarian Studies Center to co-create this concept, with communities at the center, will bring a different perspective into its practicefulness and what practitioners involved in the co-creation process perceive is needed in the agenda to advance this new concept.

1.2 Research questions

Through this research, I intend to portray the co-developing process of the humanitarian action concept as a new lens through which crisis affected communities and humanitarian practitioners will be able to exercise their rights when they are in a crisis setting. This collaborative process was carried out by the Humanitarian Studies Center and the Humanitarian Observatories during a process in which communities were at the center of the co-creation process. By doing this process with a bottom-up approach it meant to create a more participatory and equitable process and response in the future.

To have a supporting view and insight into this process, the objective of this research is to bring and analyze the experiences and perspectives of different actors within the humanitarian governance space that are already knowledgeable about the creation of this concept as well as implementing initiatives in the field. The interview participants were local organisation members, policymakers and humanitarian practitioners that shared their input on how to bring this new concept into practice and what the agenda of humanitarian justice should look like going forward.

By looking at the reports from affected-communities as well as the interviews with the practitioners, this research tried to share what the humanitarian justice agenda should take into consideration. The aim of this research paper is to provide insights to shorten the gap between this new conceptualization and the use of it in practice.

The question that will guide my research is:

What do practitioners from the humanitarian observatories perceive is needed to bring the humanitarian justice declaration into practice?

And my sub questions will be:

- How was the process of co-creating the concept and why is it valuable to use this approach?
- What actors are needed to implement the declaration ?
- What are the perceived challenges and opportunities to apply a humanitarian justice lens in their context?

1.3 Relevance of the research

Time and time again there's been conversations about decolonising the humanitarian sector by addressing the power asymmetry when responding to crisis, however, there is never clarity on how this is going to be done and to what extent (Aloudat, 2022). It is in this aspect that the relevance of this research lies on, first on following the co-creation process of a new concept that centers the demands of crisis affected communities to present as supporting data. Secondly, the aim is to present what the how, meaning what some of the members of the humanitarian observatories see as the next steps to bring this declaration to practice. By having both of this process and perspective, this research will be responding to both academic and practice oriented fields.

Although this research does not use decolonial methodologies of research, it is important to mention that the theoretical and conceptual framework focus on concepts that encapture what Aloudat (2022) said is needed to decolonize humanitarianism that is to "Move away from making decisions on behalf of people to following their lead and providing technical assistance and resources when they need it". This is where the approach makes the difference from other thematic justice or global humanitarian systems, because it is one that since the beginning followed a

methodology that focused on bringing together different voices, context, cultures that all had gone through different types of crisis and brought their lived demands to create the humanitarian justice declaration.

Of course, that is the case of the initiative but this research will follow on that practice by bringing a supporting perspective on the perception of what the next steps should look like after the launch of the declaration directly from the ones that are living this process with the communities, humanitarian governance actors. The members of the observatories interviewed were made up of a group with different working backgrounds, gender, age and countries. This adds to the relevance because it acknowledges that humanitarian action looks different in every place and that it also calls for diverse solutions and steps to achieve the declaration's purpose.

Lastly, this research brings a timely relevance to the humanitarian sector as more and more uncertainty and transformation happens in the field, it is evident that injustices are more evident but with no specific agenda to address what justice would look like. By no means this is the solution to all injustices but it does bring together the voices of communities, academia and practitioners in one declaration to start a conversation that is needed in both the humanitarian and development fields.

Chapter 2: Co-developing the concept of humanitarian justice and key concepts

"Justice is not just what you give us; it's how you see us." (Humanitarian Observatory, reports, 2025)
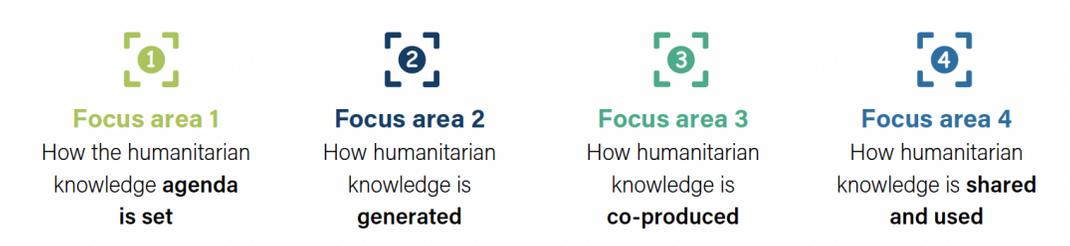
2.1 Humanitarian justice co-developing process

The initiative to co-develop the concept of humanitarian justice started at the Humanitarian Studies Center, an organisation that is focused on co-creating and disseminating knowledge from diverse actors in the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding fields (HSC, n.d.). Through grounded engagement with affected communities, the HSC formed a network of Humanitarian Observatories that by themselves can address context specific needs, but as a whole seek to bring together a diversity of actors to create spaces for learning, strategic thinking and action (Hilhorst, 2023). This network of observatories are essential for this initiative since they will be the ones working directly with the communities and the HSC team to create a declaration on what defines humanitarian justice from the bottom-up. Although the HOs network currently consist of 16 observatories it was with eight of them that this initiative took place: Democratic Republic of Congo (OH-RDC), Latin America & The Caribbean (based in Colombia), Ethiopia, The Philippines, Humanitarian Observatory Initiative South Asia (HOISA) (based in India), Namibia, Humanitarian Observatory Initiative Libya (HOILY), and Humanitarian Observatory for Central and Eastern Europe (based in Poland).

Working with geographically and culturally diverse observatories is an element that adds to the legitimacy the declaration can have. By having multiple voices the initiative seeks to find commonalities amongst them to bring the document to life, but at the same time understanding there is no one-size fits all in crisis settings so it can be then applied according to their context. With three specific goals the initiative will: "collaboratively develop an understanding of Humanitarian Justice that is

praxis-oriented and contextually grounded; identify and articulate common themes of Humanitarian Justice that resonate across various geographical and crisis contexts; And to enable humanitarian observatories and other actors to effectively advocate for humanitarian justice using a clearly defined framework" (unpublished project document). To better showcase how the co-developing process was implemented to achieve these goals, the Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) (2024) published a vision paper highlighting four focus areas that helps identify if a project used equitable humanitarian knowledge and evidence landscape in their process.

Figure 1. Focus areas for equitable humanitarian knowledge

| Focus area 1 | Focus area 2 | Focus area 3 | Focus area 4 |
| How the humanitarian knowledge **agenda is set** | How humanitarian knowledge is **generated** | How humanitarian knowledge is **co-produced** | How humanitarian knowledge is **shared and used** |

Source. Humanitarian Advisory Group (2024).

The vision paper from the Humanitarian Advisory Group, as shown in Figure 1, has components that can be seen and applied in the humanitarian justice initiative. It is well known that nowadays national governments and organizations are in the lead to respond to crisis in some context (Hilhorst,, Alburo-Cañete, Aparicio, et al. 2025) if this is the case, then using a participatory approach makes for a more sustainable and valuable process.

The first step to co-develop the concept was creating a methodology that outlines clear objectives and stages to be able to define humanitarian justice. According to an unpublished project document the stages to follow were:

1. Methodology Development: at this stage participating HOs and the HSC will develop a methodology that can be tailored to context specific needs for communities involved.
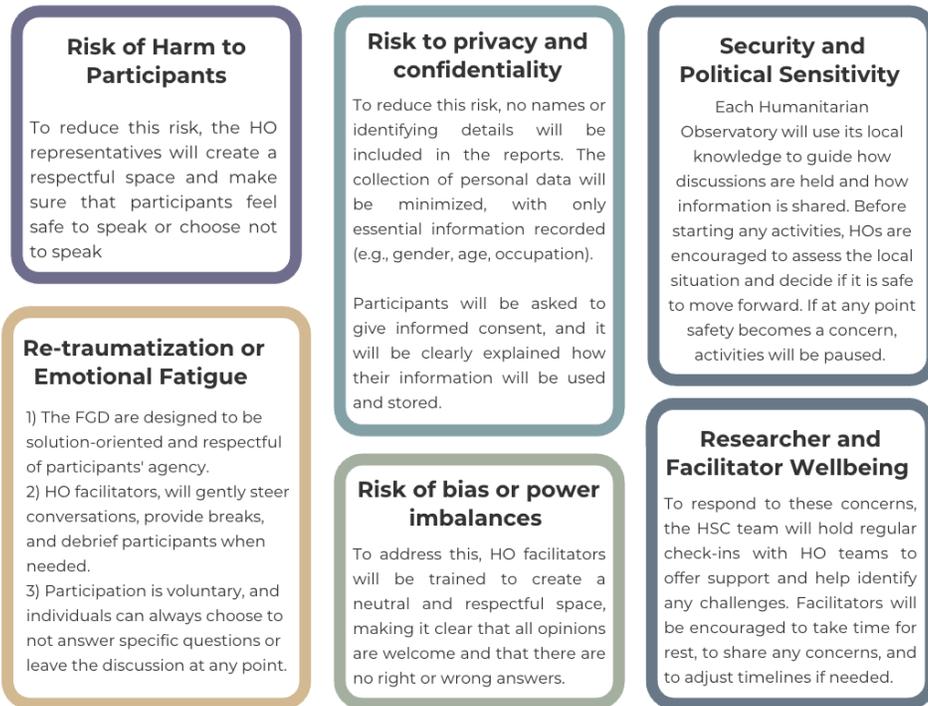
2. <u>Workshops with Humanitarian Observatories</u> - each HO will conduct this workshop within their own members to identify key words and principles that will guide the next stages with communities.

3. <u>Focus Group Discussions</u> - This is the most important stage since it is where each HO will conduct 2 FGDs with approximately 10 participants to learn the knowledge and experiences they relate to humanitarian justices so it can later be analyzed.

4. <u>Learning workshops</u> - The HOs will have a workshop to create a report on the findings and discussion during the FGDs. This time will also be helpful to identify commonalities and differences found.

5. <u>Co-analysis and co-writing</u> - Lastly the HSC and the HOs will create collaborative processes to identify commonalities and differences from all the reports to create a statement that reflects all the different contexts and can be validated after by the FGD participants.

In this case the HSC took on the role of supporting and facilitating that these stages happened or were adjusted accordingly. If we put side by side the methodology for the humanitarian justice declaration and the focus areas of the humanitarian advisory vision paper it is noticeable how central the co-creation process was to this declaration. First the agenda setting needs to be dominated with the properties of local actors or communities (Humanitarian Advisory Group, 2024) and this is what the two first stages set out to do, the methodology development and the workshop with the HOs, since the HOs are already made up of local actors in each of the contexts it is already a local knowledge that is being brought to the front. The second focus area is knowledge generation, this is achieved by applying diverse methodology frameworks and the co-production which is to have a horizontal equitable partnership and share the decision-making process with local communities (HAG, 2024). Both of these focus areas are represented in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) "process which will be carried out two times in each country with groups between 8-10 participants for approximately two hours" (unpublished project document). These FGDs were designed to have different knowledge gathering methodologies like brainstorming, identifying and situating experiences, or more

creative outlets to help dismantle barriers like being unconformable, illiteracy, speaking in public, etc. to allow for meaningful participation (Potts, Fattal & Kolli, 2022).

Moreover, the methodology document took into consideration two aspects that are not directly mentioned in the focus areas of the HAG but are very important given the possible ethical complexities and sensitivity when co-creating with crisis-affected communities. The first one was to ensure different perspectives were represented in the participants of the FGDs like a balanced number of women and men, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ or ethnic minorities, among others (unpublished project document). To ensure the security of this part of the process, the Humanitarian Studies Center and the Humanitarian Observatories created a risk analysis and mitigation plan with the commitment "to do no harm, promote equity, and foster justice not only as a research outcome but as a research process" to both the communities and researchers and found six main issues: risk of harm to participants risk to privacy and confidentiality, security and political sensitivity, Re-traumatization or emotional fatigue, risk of bias or power imbalance, and, researcher and facilitator wellbeing. (unpublished project document).

Figure 2. Risk analysis and mitigation plan for Focus Group Discussions.

Risk of Harm to Participants

To reduce this risk, the HO representatives will create a respectful space and make sure that participants feel safe to speak or choose not to speak

Risk to privacy and confidentiality

To reduce this risk, no names or identifying details will be included in the reports. The collection of personal data will be minimized, with only essential information recorded (e.g., gender, age, occupation).

Participants will be asked to give informed consent, and it will be clearly explained how their information will be used and stored.

Security and Political Sensitivity

Each Humanitarian Observatory will use its local knowledge to guide how discussions are held and how information is shared. Before starting any activities, HOs are encouraged to assess the local situation and decide if it is safe to move forward. If at any point safety becomes a concern, activities will be paused.

Re-traumatization or Emotional Fatigue

1) The FGD are designed to be solution-oriented and respectful of participants' agency.
2) HO facilitators, will gently steer conversations, provide breaks, and debrief participants when needed.
3) Participation is voluntary, and individuals can always choose to not answer specific questions or leave the discussion at any point.

Risk of bias or power imbalances

To address this, HO facilitators will be trained to create a neutral and respectful space, making it clear that all opinions are welcome and that there are no right or wrong answers.

Researcher and Facilitator Wellbeing

To respond to these concerns, the HSC team will hold regular check-ins with HO teams to offer support and help identify any challenges. Facilitators will be encouraged to take time for rest, to share any concerns, and to adjust timelines if needed.

Source: Unpublished project document

Having this process of mitigation and security for all participants is one that helps build trust and ethical integrity on a research, but specially in one that is being co-developed (Potts, Fattalm Kolli, 2022).

This brings us to the next steps of data-collection and how it is going to be used to create the declaration that will be launched. As it was mentioned before, the last two steps of the methodology were the internal workshop each humanitarian observatory had and then the co-analysis and co-writing of the declaration. This process is no stranger to the humanitarian field since it has been part of decision-making processes during the last few years, also, as Hilhorst, Alburo-Cañete, Aparicio, et al. (2025) mentioned this data also influences how these communities are represented and acted upon. This means that the data collected needs to be used very carefully because of the impact it can have on the participating communities in the future.

The methodology created for data collection after the FGD happened was for each humanitarian observatory to reconvene amongst them to create a report of their findings in an accurate and concise manner with the following characteristics present (unpublished project document):

1. Details on FGD: date, time and place
2. Detail on participants: amount of people, basic characteristics and the process of selection
3. Observations during FGD: what was the dynamic like? Were the participants comfortable? Did they feel free to speak?
4. Detail on how the informed consent was gathered
5. Detail on how the project was explained before the start of the activities
6. Extra: anything relevant that needs to be added, specific local words or phrases that are related to the concept of humanitarian justice

After all these considerations the Humanitarian Observatories sent their reports to the Humanitarian Studies Center to combine this information. During this time virtual and in-person meetings happened to create a consensus on what is defined and needed for an agenda on humanitarian justice. As it has been evident, the co-creation is at heart of this process, bringing different actors from the humanitarian governance space thus making it a multi-layered collaboration that will lead to more actionable once it's launched because of their input in the process (Potts, Fattal, Kolli, 2022).

Finally the last focus area is brought back, the sharing and use of the knowledge to ensure the outcomes are accessible, actionable and benefit affected-communities (Humanitarian Advisory Group, 2024). Well the HSC and the HOs launched the declaration during a panel at the International Humanitarian Studies Association (IHSA) conference, this was done with the goal to share the findings with a broad and diverse audience (unpublished project document). This allows for more transparency and a broader co-creation where now more academics, practitioners and organizations can provide feedback, further the concept or just to begin by signing

the declaration. In the future the goal is to translate the declaration to the languages of the communities that participated, and then to any other that can expand the concept.

As demonstrated during this section, developing a co-creation process needs to be carefully integrated every step of the design, creation and implementation, if this is not done correctly then the whole initiative risks as Potts, Fattal, & Kolli, (2022) describe as a shift from "extractive data collection" to a "collaborative knowledge creation". Also it was shown that there is no one-size fits all when co-creating, the vision paper lacked some of the steps that the Humanitarian Justice Declaration did take into consideration. This is to say that if this process and declaration is used as a model in the future, remember that every process has its own challenges and needs that need more attention than others.

After understanding the importance of how this process was created and achieved, this research will go deeper into understanding how some of the current and past debates within the development sector are crucial to be able to have this thematic justice and the way they are designed and created.

2.2 Key Concepts

As the context of the humanitarian justice declaration has been set, there have been several concepts and constructs that have been mentioned and need to be deepened to understand why the timing of this declaration in the humanitarian sector is crucial. The key concepts this research will be focusing on are humanitarianism, bottom-up and justice(s). All three of the concepts within this section have a classical and contemporary understanding and approaches, this will be explained in each section. Just like the co-creation of humanitarian justice concept, the ones discussed in this section also brought relevant discussions to the humanitarian field in their respective periods.

The composition of this section will tighten together a path that started long ago, with debates and conversations that now when they are brought together it makes sense for thematic justices being implemented and thus adding the humanitarian justice concept. As McEvoy (2007) said, community-based approaches (bottom-up) are embedded in such a way that makes justice (constructs of justice) more accessible and responsive to the needs of the people it means to serve (humanitarianism).

Humanitarianism

The system of international humanitarian action was born from Henry Dunant by proposing the creation of a relief agency that helped wounded soldiers and civilians during wartime, leading to the creation of the Red Cross (Rysaback-Smith, 2015). This is where classical humanitarianism began and the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence became a central part for a long time in the humanitarian field. Barnett, (2013) explains the reasoning behind echa principle as impartiality for providing aid based on needs, neutrality to avoid appearing biased to one side of the conflict, independence to avoid being connected to a party that has a stake in the conflict. However, it has been shown that this classical approach of humanitarianism lies on the logics of "exceptionalism" because it only saw crisis as temporary and with short-term responses (Hilhorst, 2018). This approach to humanitarianism is one that relies on top-down approaches, meaning mostly on International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) like the UN, the Red Cross, MSF, among others that also relied on international staff when responding to crises.

This approach to humanitarianism was contested not only from their principles but also in the way the system worked. In response to this contestation, the concept of resilience humanitarianism started to be more popular. Hilhorst (2018) explains it as a paradigm that views "crisis as the new normality" by accepting that local actors (governments, communities and organizations) are the first responders when crisis comes. By moving the focus from INGOs to local response, this approach is focused more on long-term solutions that build resilience in the community, hence the name. However, there have also been arguments that resilience humanitarianism by

promoting local resilience and engagement with a discourse of empowerment, participation or community building ends up ignoring structural injustices that the communities are living (Ilcan & Rygiel, 2015). Lastly, there's also been an argument that the resilience paradigm functions as a form to depoliticize the affected communities so they don't demand their rights, justice or reparations ((Ilcan & Rygiel, 2015) or the potentially abandonment by the international system because of their self-resilience (Hilhorst, 2018).

With this context in mind, the approach of resilience humanitarianism still makes more sense with today's response to crisis. There has even been a visible change with INGOs shifting their approaches to be more local-led and looking into more sustainable ways of responding to crises, which most of the time are long-term. During this research the understanding of humanitarianism will rely on the resilience paradigm since it coincides with the local approach that the humanitarian justice declaration took during its process and presentation.

By using two main arguments it will further explain why resilience humanitarianism is the guiding framework during this research. First the contestation on humanitarian principles as political; as it was already explained, these are four ethical principles from which humanitarianism has been guided for centuries were believed to only do good without taking into consideration other complications. These have been debated because as Slim (1997) argues humanitarianism is inherently political since they work during times of political uncertainty, crisis and realities. Just understanding this already contradicts three of the principles, moreover, nowadays when working with governance actors and not only the government, humanitarians find themselves making decisions that make them break one principle to respect another. Siddiqi et al. (2023) agrees that, for humanitarianism to be able to challenge the status quo of the principles and be a more equitable field, it needs to understand how neutrality can be shaped by geopolitical interests (donors, UN agencies, etc.) and power imbalances that end up reproducing structural inequalities. One possible way to solve this is by mitigating the possible risks, meaning there is an understanding that bad things can happen but how can you prevent or respond to them (Slim, 1997). By focusing on

resilience humanitarianism, the humanitarian justice concept process took into account the risk and mitigation plans needed for the communities, thus understanding the possible political risks by participating in the process. Also the objective of the concept is to have more equitable responses to humanitarian action with the communities and practitioners in the decision-making process rather than focusing on international staff and organizations as "savior" that will know what is justice for the communities.

The second argument expands on accountability in the humanitarian field as a central value but conflicting depending on the paradigm applied as well. Hilhorst et al. (2021) explain the three components of accountability as: to take account, to give account and responsibility. To take account refers to 'listening and communication' and more participatory approaches; to give account refers to transparency with communities about programs; and responsibility refers to accepting blame and credit for the action or non-actions (Hilhorst et al., 2021). These three components are considered to be applied more in the case of downward accountability which is when the dimensions are focused on affected-communities having more of a resilience humanitarian approach as well as the humanitarian justice concept.

By understanding the two main paradigms it is clear that resilience humanitarianism is addressing more sustainable and people centered approaches that are needed right now. This paradigm also brings the challenge of humanitarians being political in their work to achieve justice and equality in a way that fully involves the communities that have been affected by the crisis. To bring this to practice, the data presented in this research will be about practitioners that carried out their work with a bottom-up approach and how they see themselves applying these political and accountability tasks that are ahead in implementing the humanitarian justice agenda.

Bottom-Up approach

In development studies there are two approaches that are mostly applied when working on development and international cooperation known as top-down or bottom-up. Historically, these interventions were centered on top-down approaches since it was believed that the "technical skills, capital and aid" came from the Global North to support developing countries (Kaiser, 2020). The reason this approach is called top-down is because it relies on international non-governmental organizations or central governments to design, create and implement projects without the input of the persons this project will impact on. As Lie (2024) explains, this discourse of top-down relied on "structural binaries" that impacted on donor-recipient relationships or North-South knowledge that created a hierarchical way of doing international development. This approach is also linked to the colonial design the aid sector was created on and how it can be used as well as a means to have an influence on another place that is going through a transformation and rebuilding of their government in most cases. Another argument that contested this approach was that this way of working failed to "reduce poverty" and enable "sustainable economic growth" because of lack of participatory methods and accountability (Kaiser, 2020). However, not everything from this approach is criticized since it has resulted in positive outcomes like the mass health campaigns, or reduction of mortality (Kaiser, 2020) also visible in the sense that it was an approach that was used for many years before the changes we see nowadays.

It was until the late 1980s that the bottom-up approach appeared (Kaiser, 2020) as a framework to decolonize and shift power and resources (Mawi, 2024) to local organizations, governments and communities. This also shifts from the short-term response practice to a more long-term assistance that we see nowadays as well as the acknowledgement that the communities are their own first responders when crisis and disasters happen. This approach has been useful for adding the local knowledge, networks and skills to the initiatives that then will be useful for sharing information, adjusting and creating more resilience within (Haeffele & Storr, 2020). However, this approach also has been debated because of their limitations to replicate in other

places, reproduce them on a larger scale, transferring this knowledge to organizations, a local elite benefitting more than others, and because most of the time these initiatives are tailored, context and time specific collaboration with communities   (Kaiser 2020; Kruse et. al, 2019; Mawi, 2024). Although there are several critiques to the bottom-up approach, it is still widely used and has even gone to develop recent concepts that try to support this approach but haven't been as solid and well received.

For example, bottom-up approach is not to be confused with the localisation agenda that started in 2016 with the aim to "respect national authorities and agencies and enhance their role in the implementation and decision-making of aid as part of the "participation revolution"" (Hilhorst, Alburo-Cañete, Aparicio, J.R. et al., 2025). This concept has since been criticized because of there is no clear definition on what "local" implies (Roepstorff, 2019) thus going back to the binaries that existed since the top-down approach with the other side of the localization agenda being the "international". In simpler terms, the focus will be on the bottom-up approach since it is how initiatives and projects involve communities and local actors on the design and implementation process that then achieves 'localization', not on the international agenda that is putting forward this way of working that then would lead back to the application of bottom-up approach.

Then if both top-down and bottom-up approaches are being contested, what is the benefit and reasoning behind preferring to use bottom-up instead of top-down. Well some authors propose that there shouldn't be a choice between them but a mix of both that could encompass the complexities of crisis settings by having state responsibilities and sufficient financial aid, while also having the local knowledge and the participation of grassroots movements (Walton et. al., 2016; Kaiser, 2020). However, I disagree with this approach since a 50/50 is still not enough participation and decision-making from the people that have been directly affected by the crisis. Having this mixed approach can help INGOs and central government to have more support and legitimacy in their work but it would be at the expense of communities and local NGOs to fall into a dynamic of 'developmentality' which is when donors

hold power over their programs thus being able to "govern at a distance" (Walton et. al.,2016; Lie, 2024).

What is really needed is for communities to hold power and be part of all the decision-making processes because they are the ones that hold the knowledge of the formal and informal cultural and societal ways of living. On the other hand, humanitarian agencies need to move from an implementation role to an enabling/empowering role (Pantuliano, 2016) by taking the supporting role it is also important not to impose practices and beliefs that are embedded in the humanitarian sector. For example the humanitarian principles, as stated in the past section, the contestation on the principles come from understanding that humanitarianism is political but when applying a bottom-up approach it takes a whole new meaning since they are part of the society that went through crisis thus being unable to be impartial, neutral or independent. This understanding is also helpful when communities come together to create local resistance networks, by avoiding the bureaucracy of their own government to reach people for assistance and collect data is called 'politics for dignity and distinct existence' by Mawi (2024). By using a bottom-up approach and understanding its political implications Haeffele & Storr (2020) says that it often leads to communities creating their own self-governing institutions and a process of bottom-up state-building that prioritizes 'customary governance structures'.

This leads to a deeper understanding of why the co-creation process for the Humanitarian Justice concept was one of the most important aspects of the initiative. It helped to give legitimacy to the declaration, to be political about their needs for equality and justice in times of crisis, to be part of the decision-making process and to address systemic injustices. This process understood the realities of existent law-centric international systems and still took the initiative to co-create a multi-dimensional view of justice with communities that helped expand not only the political but the ethical dimensions of justice in humanitarian crises (Belda-Miquel et. al., 2020; Lundy, 2008).

Justice(s)

The idea of justice has existed for centuries around the world, it is believed it serves as a moral compass within a society. However, there are several understandings of this construct as well as the outcomes they can achieve, during this section the idea of justice will be addressed and understood specifically of justices in times of crisis and involving national and international actors. Justice - just like humanitarianism and bottom-up concepts - used to have a very western-centric approach on what communities needed and most of the time this was solved according to IHL and Human Rights Conventions. Even though these mechanisms are very important till this day it is also important to change alongside crises and societies to have a proper response. Moreover, this contestations in what, who and how is justice considered is also another way to observe how the political space within humanitarianism is being questioned and changed. With this context, I will explain how this contestation has looked like for the past few decades and how this is a stepping stone to understand and have thematic justice(s).

First, Reus-Smit & Zarakol (2023) says that the international order has been in crisis not only because of geopolitics or the decline of western leadership but because of the multiple claims of justice that expose the systemic injustices in the current international order. Then, what are the classical constructs of justice that are being contested?, according to Tomkins & Applequist (2008) there are four constructs of justice: distributive, procedural, restorative and retributive justices. Figure 3 briefly describes what each one of them entails.

Figure 3. Justice Constructs
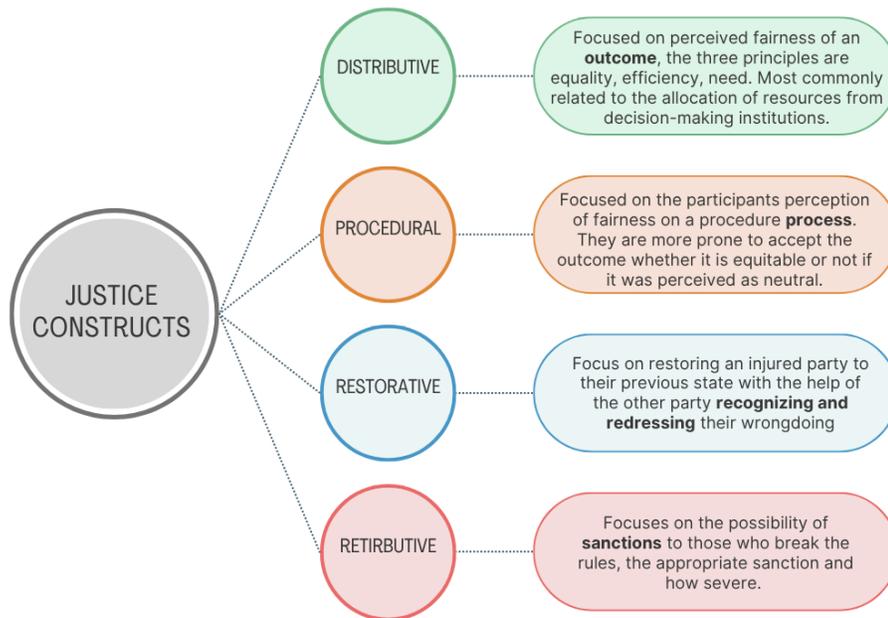
Source: Tomkins & Applequist, 2008

As it can be seen, these constructs rely mostly on formal institutions or processes to be able to access justice mechanisms regarding the situation. In the case of humanitarian settings the type of justice that is more commonly applied is distributive justice which is when the allocating resources, rights, responsibilities and burdens are perceived as 'just or fair' by societal systems (Cook & Hegtvedt, 1983). However, as Fraser (2008a) implies we are living in a time of abnormal justice where the 'grammar of justice' meaning the what (ontology), the who (scope) and the how (procedure) are being widely contested and part of it is because of globalization. All of this implication falls specifically under the distributive justice theory looked in a more contemporary way.

To understand more closely why it is that we are under abnormal justice, Fraser (2008a) says that the three rival conceptions of the 'what' are redistribution, recognition and representation that need to acknowledge the non-economic wrongs as injustice as well. Reus-Smit & Zarakol (2023) argue that apart from recognition, redistribution and representation that institutional reform, historical and epistemic redress and intergenerational equity are also part of what they call the 'polymorphic justice claims' and that all of the six claims need to be treated as intersectional, multiscalar and multivocal to address the contestation of justice in today's global setting. An example of this is the current amount of social movements that shed light on the disadvantages some people suffer thus creating a new dimension of justice that wasn't part of the literature before, like the different thematic justice are doing, and now the humanitarian justice concept as well.

To achieve this claim is to understand that not only the distribution of resources is important but also the recognition of who is a member, thus it is proposed to do so by implementing the parity participation principle by breaking social hierarchies that don't let some people participate fully as partners in social interactions since it is part of people's identities to be recognized (Fraser, 2008a; Reus-Smit & Zarakol 2023). This claim's focus is on bringing community voices to the front where before those injustices were only dealt with by the international or formal systems, by broadening this aspect it is possible to bring bottom-up approaches to a space where local knowledge wasn't recognized in the past but can bring solutions right now.

Another important claim to take into consideration is supporting the claim of the 'who' which is questioning who counts as subject to make claims and to whom? (Fraser, 2008a). Which then is argued if this should be a territorial/domestic matter or a regional/transnational one. According to Carney (2001) there are strong and weak versions of international distributive justice, the weak is when obligations only apply to some outside the state (regional) while strong is when the obligations apply to everyone globally. An example could be the institutional claims on justice that is the scrutiny the international system is going through for being biased and having unequal representation (Reus-Smit & Zarakol 2023). To solve this claim, Fraser (2008a) proposes the all-subjected principle in which "those subjected to a given

governance structure, that sets the ground rules for interaction, will have the same moral standing as subjects of justice". The specification of governance structures and not state or government is key to the humanitarian justice concept since it comes from a resilience humanitarian perspective that focuses on affected communities to work with multiple actors like local and national governments, local NGOs, INGOs, and other communities, all of them a part of the humanitarian governance setting, to support their claims to be part of the decision-making process and understand the knowledge that comes from lived experiences.

Then how do we move from the established approaches of justice constructs to one that identifies the agency of affected communities during a crisis. First, there needs to be a recognition of existing epistemic injustices within the humanitarian field where the question of what counts as knowledge when addressing past and current events can come from the communities that lived through them and not form donor or international agencies. Secondly, as it was explained, we are moving from a time that acknowledges more than economic wrongs, we also need to take into consideration political misrepresentation and 'misframing' which is described as state-centric processes excluding affected communities from seeking redress (Fraser, 2008b). When the author uses misframing is referred as the "wrongly exclusion of disadvantaged communities from challenging the forces that oppress them" this can happen by elites or states monopolizing the decisions of who can participate (Fraser, 208b). By applying a bottom-up approach to avoid the monopolization of justice constructs it takes a step forward for the communities to become more resilient and for this measure to be more sustainable since it comes from within giving it a purpose.

It is important to note that this research will not be using or focusing on transitional justice since it is an approach that although it is similar in the sense that it is used in a place after conflicts happens in an international setting. This approach is commonly used in top-down approach that relies on retributive justice like truth commissions or international courts to access justice and sometimes missing political inequalities that contribute to conflict (Lundy, 20098). Some critics to this approach are the lack of

local ownership and meaningful participation; this is needed to move from limitations that policies can have in practice and better focus on processes that go beyond consultation to create genuine partnerships that will create meaningful outcomes (Lundy, 2008; Firchow & Selim, 2022).

Given the multiple existing justice constructs and approaches it is impossible to think that by using only one of them, communities will be able to achieve participation and just treatments in times of crisis. If the humanitarian field keeps focusing only on distributive justice, then there will be other aspects that will be left behind like is happening right now. This is why there needs to be an agenda that does use bottom-up approaches to bring affected-communities to the design and decision-making process with an intersectional lens on justice constructs to make a time-specific and context-specific approach. For example an approach that addresses political misrepresentations of vulnerable groups that can't access justice mechanisms (retributive justice) and also the recognition of affected communities as knowledge bearers and as full subjects to make claims to demand justice (distributive justice). By taking on this mixed construction approach it will be responding to the aspects that transitional justice is lacking and it will also be creating a path where the actual needs and context of crisis affected communities can be prioritized and supported by humanitarian practitioners.

Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology

This research was made through a qualitative research approach using interviews and analysing methods given the objective to understand what practitioners perceive is needed to put into practice the humanitarian justice declaration and how this supports what the communities said was needed. This will be achieved by looking at the reports that resulted from the process of co-creation of the concept with the experiences and perspectives of crisis affected communities and then by conducting interviews with practitioners regarding the concept of humanitarian justice. Qualitative research is the methodology chosen because it tries to interpret the perspectives of a particular environment and to describe specific issues by having a high level of involvement (Tümen-Akyıldız & Ahmed, 2021).

Since the co-creation process was done with a bottom-up approach by conducting focus groups discussion organized by the Humanitarian Observatories and resulted in the creation of reports, this will be used as the secondary data of the research. The goal is to review the reports using content analysis and keywords-in-context methods to find commonalities and differences of the demands from the different contexts. Then for the primary data I will be conducting interviews to practitioners from the Humanitarian Observatories to achieve the high level of involvement necessary on what the agenda of the Humanitarian Justice Declaration should look like in practice.

3.1 Semi-structured interview

As mentioned, this research has data collected from semi-structured interviewing from practitioners of the Humanitarian Observatories that participated in the co-creation process of the humanitarian justice declaration with the aim to be able to understand more deeply how this process can be taken into the next steps and the practical field. The practitioners that were interviewed even though they are presented as members of the HOs, it is necessary to note that they all come from different sectors like local NGOs, local governments, civil society and INGOs based in their countries. The reason to choose a semi-structured interview method is it

allows for the conversations to have a guide to achieve its objectives while also having the flexibility to add follow-up and clarifications according to the responses from the participants (Chu, 2024). This method is fitting since the participants were already active participants in the co-creation process that they already understood and had the background of this initiative, by then adding their expertise in practice this interview allowed for the conversations to be a comfortable space to share knowledge. This also means they can share their perspectives and experiences during the co-creation process and not only on the next steps necessary to implement it.

The process of creating the structure of the semi-structed interviews needed to take into consideration that this process will be done with a geographically diverse practitioners from eight different HOs. This also goes hand in hand with Naz et. al. (2022) interpretation of interviewing in qualitative research since it seeks to understand multiple realities and context-specific perspectives to obtain rich data. The process of conducting interviews is preferably done in-person since there can be non-verbal observations that support the data collection, in this case it was a mixed approach between in-person for most of the participants and two online interviews.

Furthermore, selection of participants for the interviews derived from using a non-random sampling method, specifically the purposeful sampling, since it will be targeted to people that have knowledge in the matter and have experience about the research interest (Tümen-Akyıldız & Ahmed, 2021). The participants were selected from the eight participating Humanitarian Observatories in the process of co-creation of the concept of humanitarian justice from: Democratic Republic of Congo (OH-RDC), Latin America & The Caribbean (based in Colombia), Ethiopia, The Philippines, Humanitarian Observatory Initiative South Asia (HOISA) (based in India), Namibia, Humanitarian Observatory Initiative Libya (HOILY), and Humanitarian Observatory for Central and Eastern Europe (based in Poland). This means that participants will be from a geographically diverse context but there might be a bias since they share a commonality in thinking and goals by belonging to the same humanitarian network. Also another characteristic for selecting the participants, since not every member could be interviewed, was by identifying and prioritizing the

members I could interview in-person during a conference where all the observatories that participated would be represented by at least one person.

Moreover, it is important to acknowledge there was an existing contact with the humanitarian observatories since I was part of the co-creation process of the humanitarian justice concept. This opportunity allowed me to approach them with a request for an interview in a more relaxed manner, however, there was no previous relation with the participants limiting the possibilities of biases. The request was made for a 30 minute interview with 12 participants out of which 10 replied positively and two declined and finally only some of them could take place, six of them in-person and two of them online, in appendix B is the list of guiding questions made during the semi-structured interviews.

Lastly, since I was already knowledgeable about the humanitarian justice declaration process and understood the possible ethical and sensitive information that could be disclosed. To avoid this situation and to protect the information shared during the interviews, they were given a consent form, see attached in appendix C, where the process and purpose of the research was explained as well as the protection of their privacy and information. This concluded in the pseudonymization of their personal details, thus being referenced as participant # from now on.

Table 1. Broad profile of interviewed participants

Participant	Sex	Age range	Format
Participant 1	F	40s	In-person
Participant 2	M	40s	In-person
Participant 3	F	60s	In-person
Participant 4	M	40s	In-person
Participant 5	M	50s	In-person

Participant 6	M	50s	In-person
Participant 7	M	40s	Online
Participant 8	F	50s	Online

Source: made by the author

3.2 Data Analysis

Additionally, to understand the knowledge shared during the interviews with practitioners, I looked into the process of co-creating the concept of humanitarian justices as secondary data. To identify which analysis method was better suited it was necessary to know how the process was carried out. The Humanitarian Justice concept was developed with a bottom-up approach where the participating observatories carried out two focus group discussions each of approximately two hours of duration leading to a total sample of approximately 70 people in 7 different contexts. At the end the HOs created a report with the information collected which is the one that was analysed to use as background for the contributions the interviewed participants make.

According to Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) the best techniques to analyse focus group discussion are: constant comparison analysis, content analysis, keywords-in-context, and discourse analysis. In this case the focus was on content analysis and keywords-in-context. First, content analysis is used to assess the meaning of given patterns, words or perceptions (Tümen-Akyıldız & Ahmed, 2021) this is done by 'categorizing' the data with detailed descriptions of these categories and the frequency in which they were used during the focus group discussion (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). This approach is useful because the reports that were analyzed have a different context, culture and participants profile thus creating a wider opportunity to

find the similarities and differences between them and how the declaration of humanitarian justice came to be.

When choosing this analysis method it was taken into consideration that it needs to be part of the qualitative methods that are commonly used, in this case it became apparent since it is also identified as 'subjective interpretation of the content of text data' because it requires to identify themes and patterns within the information (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Since this information was gathered in the format of FGD in different cultures and contexts, analysing their findings will give a context background to understand the contributions the interviewed practitioners made and also see if there were similarities and differences between the FDGs that were implemented in the same context, not only comparing them. Hsieh & Shannon (2005) propose three approaches to content analysis: conventional, directed and summative; the one that will be applied in this research is the directed approach because it is used when there are already existing theories and frameworks that guides the categorizations made and aims to extend those existing frameworks.

Since the collection of the information came from focus group discussions, Tümen-Akyıldız & Ahmed (2021) said the objective is to produce the greatest number of arguments and perspectives with limited time while creating a more authentic environment for participants. This gives a significant amount of information to be analyzed and also to create a common declaration that represents their demands but that can also be later on implemented according to a specific context. However, this also means that participant identification is important so this authentic environment where participants feel confident when expressing their opinions and share disagreements will generate useful data (Nyumba et. al, 2018). This is where the methodology creed by the HSC at the beginning of the process comes into play where it was explicitly written the need for a balanced representation of men and women, as well as vulnerable groups like persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ or ethnic minorities to be considered. Also the methodology contemplated the place where the FGD took place ensuring the affected communities felt safe and comfortable to share their experiences in the group.

Lastly, the analysis method also relied on the keywords-in-context method because of the purpose to analyze the meaning of words in diverse contexts with their expressions (Tümen-Akyıldız & Ahmed, 2021). More specifically Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) said that this analysis represents the culture, language and how the words are used. This approach will be mildly used specifically when identifying how the word 'justice' has different meaning and usage in different contexts and how this will be interpreted to become part of the humanitarian justice concept. Also in the creation of the agenda when the declaration is possibly translated to different languages and dialects and still be able to portray the same meaning and sentiment. A combination of both approaches will be to understand both the context of the process and the additional information from the practitioners.

3.3 Ethical consideration

The ethical considerations for this research have been carefully considered since there are several aspects that need to be taken into account. Even though the direct ethical consideration that should be addressed is that of the interviews conducted with practitioners, I find important to highlight the ethics that went into co-creating the humanitarian justice concept since this research will also be looking into the reports that resulted from that process, one that is even more sensible since it was carried out directly with the affected communities.

First, the ethics consideration of the co-creation process and how this impacts this research. When creating the methodology and process of the initiative the Humanitarian Studies Center followed the rigorous ethics process they have as well as aligned it with the ones from Erasmus University Rotterdam, this is an important consideration since it means there was a specific process that was revised by a committee that concluded it was correct. To achieve this the team acknowledges ahead of implementation that there might be ethical complexities because of the

setting and scope of a participatory and bottom-up approach initiative. Thus it was stated that this process must ensure a respectful, responsible and safe environment for the participants and the researchers (unpublished project document). This coincides with Mirza et. al (2023) statement that ethical consideration in qualitative research most important principle is the well-being of the participants and this should be the responsibility of the researchers.

By having a well established base of ethical research from the co-creation process, where the personal information of the participants was carefully pseudonymized and having an established risk and mitigation plan, the reports inherently made it a trustworthy source of information for my secondary data. This means that even though I have access to the final reports from the focus group discussion, I never had direct contact with personal data of any of the participants.

Then the ethics considerations applied directly to this research naturally followed the steps of the HSC. As well as the five key ethical requirements in a qualitative research that are: respect and dignity, informed consent and transparency; confidentiality and anonymity; addressing conflicts of interest; and reporting back and trustworthiness Mirza et. al. (2023). First, the participants were given a detailed consent form, see appendix C, which stated their participation as voluntary and that they could withdraw from participating at any point before the pseudonymization of the information since at that point it will be hard to identify which information came from them. Also before the interviews they were explained the aim of the research, the methodology used and that they could choose not to answer some of the questions without explanation or repercussion.

Moreover, the interviews were carried out in two formats, online and in-person, in both cases it was necessary to secure a space that allowed the participants to share their opinion without worrying about confidentiality. This was achieved by finding a quiet space to talk when carried out in-person and having a relaxed atmosphere when they were online. During this process it is also important to share how their information would be treated and protected after the interview and for how long, this information can be found in detail in the consent form as well. Following clear

ethical guidelines is beneficial for both the research process and the integrity of the practitioners that allowed me to speak to them and share their knowledge.

3.4 Positionality

I see my positionality during this process as a duality that was changing constantly, first while being part of the Humanitarian Studies Center process of co-creating the humanitarian justice concept, by being able to be present in the discussions that allowed me to learn in so many ways from more experienced professionals and academics working as a group to bring a new concept to life.The way this initiative was done, with a participatory approach as central to every step with a very diverse group of people made me acknowledge my positionality as a Mexican woman studying her post-graduate degree in Europe.

However, during my research process when I thought about my positionality as a researcher I noticed I did not feel comfortable about it and part of it was because here I am talking about humanitarian justice from affected communities and practitioners from the safety of my home. This is why I decided to use Ng (2011) approach of focusing positionality on communities and practitioners rather than my own, by shifting this self-reflective examination of my own identity I will be using it as a relational tool to understand representation, access and power within the context of my research and the communities. This research will be guided by solidarity to echo the demands and needs of affected communities and to present ways that moving forward can support their access to justice.

On another hand, I will be closely working and talking to the humanitarian observatories practitioners, this means closely relating with multiple people that each one of them come from different cultures that are not my own but by all of us come from formerly colonized countries that are considered from the Global South we can share similarities and mutual understanding. By trying to build a cultural

understanding and also understand its limitations, I aspire to achieve a transparent and reflective analysis of their shared knowledge during the interviews as well as their lived experiences working in the humanitarian field (Ng, 2011).

Chapter 4: Findings and analysis

"The co-development process has shown that Humanitarian Justice is not an abstract concept but a lived demand." (Humanitarian Observatory, reports, 2025)

The findings are going to be divided into two sections that will try to answer the research questions. The first section focus is going to be on the key aspects found from the humanitarian justice concept by looking at the outcomes of all the reports that were made from the focus group discussion carried out by the eight humanitarian observatories. The analysis aimed to find commonalities and differences between the reports as well as within the same country to support the humanitarian justice declaration agenda for its later implementation.

The second section of the findings will move from looking into the conceptual aspect of the declaration into the next steps for its practical application from the lens of humanitarian justice from practitioners. Using the information gathered in the semi-structed interviews this part is going to present both the opportunities and limitations identified by practitioners working within the humanitarian governance field, linking these findings to the conceptual framework presented in the literature review.

4.1 Humanitarian Justice Declaration key aspects

The co-creation of the Humanitarian Justice concept realized a series of focus group discussion with the support of eight of the humanitarian observatories to then present reports with their findings and recommendation to later co-write what came be the Humanitarian Justice Declaration (HJD). Then to identify what key aspects were taken into consideration and how this was represented in the final document, I identified from the reports a group of categories and patterns on what humanitarian justice was defined as from the communities and then I looked into approaches that

might be used differently because of contextual and cultural diversity to then see how this is represented on the HJD that will guide the agenda for later implementation.

First, I will address the commonalities and patterns found across the report that the HOs made from the FGD were seven aspects, represented in figure 4, representing the most commonly found as needed to have a humanitarian justice concept.

Figure 4. Commonalities on Humanitarian Justice
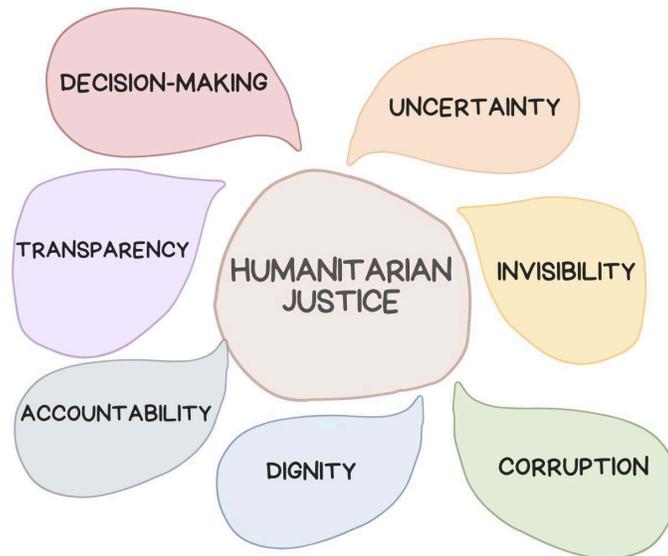
Source: made by author

The most mentioned and addressed demand was both mentioned as lack of decision-making participation and the necessity to be part of the decision-making process. This demand was mentioned across all the FDGs and contexts, evidencing a structural problem across all humanitarian responses from different actors where resilience humanitarianism is either not implemented overall or just implemented on paper but not practice. One of the reports mentions a participant saying *"We built this country with our hands. Now we are left with nothing, not even a voice"* another mentioned feelings of *"disrespect and ignored"* (Humanitarian Observatory, reports, 2025), this showcases how people that have lived through protracted conflicts end up feeling excluded and powerless when they cannot participate in what happens in their own

communities. On the other hand the demand to be part of all stages of the decision-making process is something all the communities agree on, one of the participants said they *"value aid but wanted it delivered more equitably and with involvement"* this demand from affected communities is to go from passive recipients to active involvement. This involvement can achieve a great difference between projects that operate with a top-down approach and one that fully embraces the *"existing strengths and organization"* from the community, it can eliminate duplicated efforts, the resources can be allocated to things that are really needed as well as the knowledge to know what is needed. Lastly, another of the reports mentioned the recurrency in which participation and decision-making is only given to communities in a superficial basis and what really is needed is a dialogue that respects knowledge systems - language, culture, norms - and in this case talking about justice is to also understanding that being part of the decision making-process is tied inherently to power dynamics of who is part of this process and who is affected by it (Humanitarian Observatory, reports, 2025).

Next, the most mentioned aspects were transparency and accountability, what I found about the use of these concepts was that sometimes it was used as an interchangeable concept or as if by having one the other followed. However, both of these concepts don't necessarily go hand in hand, meaning it is possible to be transparent but don't take accountability for your actions or the other way around, this is even visible in current debates about increasing accountability in the humanitarian field. Some key aspects mentioned about accountability were *"the need for communications to also be shared in local languages and accessible so communities know their rights and can hold actors accountable"* and the need to have *"systems in place to prevent malpractices in the aid sector by holding agencies accountable"* (Humanitarian Observatory, reports, 2025). In the case of transparency the demands centered around agencies being *"honest about their limitations"* and for *"clear and fair frameworks that coordinate all actors",* I believe this is one of the most important but difficult things to achieve, specifically if it is focused on justice, this is because there are still a lot of projects that work according to donor trends or government support that don't disclose most of their process, resources or outcomes fully transparent if it is not beneficial. In this

case when a project or initiative finds that a process is not working and should be adjusted or changed it is when the information should be the most transparent so other programs learn from that lesson and that way humanitarian responses can advance everywhere.

Moreover, the concepts of dignity, corruption, invisibility/exclusion and uncertainty are terms that were not present in every report but that did come up in at least half of them. Some of the key mentions about dignity were *"the manner in which aid was delivered left the communities with a feeling of disrespect"* and that the support provided *"did not uphold the well-being and dignity"* of affected communities. In the case of corruption it was mostly related to political interest when aid is being delivered like *"politicians only aiding their relatives or supporters"* and *"humanitarian aid being insufficient, unevenly distributed, and influenced by political bias"* (Humanitarian Observatory, reports, 2025) this point support the belief that humanitarianism is not necessarily a neutral endeavor and even when it comes to supporting affected communities they depend on certain political social norms to access support that is not necessarily related to institutional needs.

Lastly for the concept of invisibility/exclusion it was mentioned as a way in which not all vulnerable groups are receiving support or not the kind they need, for example with persons with disabilities. One of the reports mentioned the communities felt there was *"invisibility of specific displacements, selective empathy and a failure to recognize some crisis as humanitarian"* this was shared in a more broad sense of a challenge within the humanitarian field, however, another report also shared the *exclusion of affected communities from education, healthcare and identification documents"* which consist more of an exclusion that is lived by most of the communities but in a personal way leaving them with a sense of uncertainty when thinking about future plans.

As it can be seen the last three concepts were more negative denotations that the communities related to when asked about justice in a humanitarian setting as opposed to the other four that bring more of an aspirational objective to how they see this agenda moving forwards. I believe having both of these perspectives is

helpful when moving towards the co-writing process because it gives a deeper understanding of their experiences and realities they go through every day to access their rights. However, most of these concepts if not all are ones that have been contested and debated to change towards a more participatory and sustainable response that requires for these concepts to be in place from the design till the end of the implementation. Also, all these concepts can be applied to a more general sense for example talking about funding and they'll still be relevant, then how can these approaches be specific to justice to propose to be present in the humanitarian justice declaration.

First, this can be done by the emphasis that has been made in several of their statements around distribution, equity and fairness, all components that allude to something being seen as just or unjust. One of the concepts that was mentioned throughout most of the reports but was not added to the list was fairness and the reason it wasn't added was because of the different meaning it took in every context. Here is where the method of word-in-context came useful because it did not fit the pattern but it is not completely different either, for example some reports mention fairies every time they talked about the distribution of aid and how that distribution system worked, this also alludes to a classic approach to distributive justice. However, other reports applied the term of fairness in a collaborative way of being included in the programs that are implemented in their communities, this relates more to abnormal justice where social and political representation are forms of justice as well. This means that communities are not looking for solutions that are embedded in institutions to achieve humanitarian justice but they see it more represented in the participation they can bring to make them more resilient, in the knowledge they can share to appropriate the process and make it more sustainable as well as the capabilities to construct a more just recover answering to systemic inequalities.

After looking at these findings it is very clear that the voices of the communities were at the center of the humanitarian justice declaration, found in appendix D, with the goal to "models of assistance that nurture and recognize community leadership while demanding responsibility and accountability from governments, humanitarian

organizations, for-profit companies, and others that hold power." by defining it as "Humanitarian Justice is a lived need of crisis-affected people for fair, transparent, inclusive and respectful humanitarian responses that are rooted in principles of dignity, solidarity, care and shared responsibility" (Humanitarian Studies Center, 2025). The main concepts found in the analysis can be seen here, and in more detail while reading all the declaration, but it can be said that the goal of co-creating this humanitarian justice was achieved, now the next step is to create an agenda and identify actors that will support these demands during the crisis .

4.2 Understanding humanitarian justice from practitioners

Once the key aspects of the focus groups discussions and the reports from the humanitarian observatories were identified and analysed to understand the demands of crisis affected communities then I went in to see how this can look like in practice and what next steps, either challenges or opportunities, will support the Humanitarian Justice Declaration.

To get more insights into how the implementation of the declaration could look like, I interviewed eight humanitarian practitioners that are also part of the humanitarian observatories. The background of the practitioners range from government officials, local NGO practitioners, INOG practitioners and academia background as well. This also means that they were already knowledgeable about the objectives and process of the project, because of being a member of the HO in their countries, but now the questions were centered around them as part of the practice field in response to crisis and how they can support this declaration.

First, the interviews centered around the value of applying a co-creation process, this is relevant since it can give us an insight into the values this practical framework can

have and the feasibility when implementing a bottom-up approach in their contexts. For example participant 8 started by explaining how they used to think "we are doing justice because we give food, water and other things the communities want" however, since hearing about the HJD process they were questioning themselves if justice was really done (Participant 8, personal communication, 2025). I believe this thought process can happen not only to practitioners but communities as well, once the needs are being met, there needs to be a space for them to think outside of the urgents needs to also be able to attend to more structural problems that will continue to affect them. Then some participants expressed that by having this participatory approach, principles like inclusiveness and democracy (Participant 2) and the legacy that co-creating leaves within a community (Participant 6) are key for the communities defending the HJD in the future since it came directly from them and how they can continue to bring the declaration to life. As participant 7 said "the value of co-creating the declaration lies on the ownership, the legitimacy and its authority" for affected communities and NGOs to use.

Then how can these values and voices keep advancing the necessary agenda for humanitarian justice?. By looking at the findings there are two aspects to focus on: first will be the actors that need to be involved and in what ways and the second one is one the role the communities can take going forward. The contributions in these two focus areas range from a long-term process in the sense that those changes cannot happen in the next few months or year and then there are others that focus on actions that can start right now and will support those longer term ones.

First the involvement of new actors, the one that was mentioned the most throughout the interviews were the local and national governments of each of their countries. Working with the governmental institutions was seen both as a challenge and an opportunity for the implementation of the HJD, participant 7 shared this duality between the government in their country being the one that leads humanitarian operations and responses, this includes the coordination of humanitarian actors, but also the one that generate the most injustices and human rights violations because of their proximity to the communities, then the solution

proposed was to show them the declaration so they can start using it and hold the accountable as well (Participant 7, personal communication, 2025). This coordination and collaboration with governmental institutions can help change or create policies that follows what the HJD states from a communities perspective, by working collaborate like Participant 1 stated "We want to deconstruct something, we want to have a sign, the same scenario, we together among community, researcher, and government government agency".

However, it was well understood that collaborating with governments is not always an easy task and to be able to achieve this several of the participants agreed it should be done through media outlets. One participant stated there needs to be an advocacy strategy to gain attention from media (Participant 1) another stated that not only social media but also TV and Radio to take into account different generational audiences (Participant 2), lastly Participant 4 agreed that their next action will be to spread the declaration thru audible methods to take into account the population that can't read and to encourage they exchange this information within their communities. All these actions are in the hopes not only to spread the existence and application of the declaration but it was also proposed as a means to push power holders into taking attention to this and actually using it. As Participant 5 stated:

"So the challenge would be to have this kind of cooperation between the local community and the institutions, especially the public institutions to try to consider the declaration, try to maybe change policies, change some regulations, establish even one of the recommendations. Our discussion was to establish a national authority for aid coordination, which is not there."

This also shows how the same observatories are taking inspiration from the humanitarian justice co-creation process to find solutions on how humanitarian response can be better, more efficient and collaboratively.

Lastly the actors that were also mentioned to bring into the application of the HJD are the humanitarians themselves, calling on more practitioners to know about this advancement and also to adhere to the declaration. Participant 6 said one action of the agenda should include "awareness training and sensitisation to those that are really in the field" this is with the objective to better operationalize its implementations and defend it when state and non-state humanitarian actors violate

its provisions (Participant 7, personal communication, 2025). I believe this is really important as well since it could lead to replicating these approaches and principles that will then benefit the most people in the long-term.

Then the next focus area found during the interviews is the role communities can take after the co-creation process, of course remembering that this is their own declaration and not the agencies or governments., as well as actions that can be taken with a more direct impact. For example one proposal from Participant 1 said was to have a version of the HJD in a more simple language without technicalities that people might not understand, also Participant 4 added that it should be considered to translate the declaration into other languages and dialects so the communities can appropriate the concept even more. This is a short-term action that can deepen the decolonial approach into this process by giving back to the communities the knowledge they shared in the beginning and now turned into the declaration as we know it. Supporting this view, Participants 2, 4, 6 and 7 agreed that the next level should also include heads of the villages, local level actors, and the same communities that participated to bring them the final product to present it to them, to see what they think about it. If this action were to be done, then it would complete a full circle of the participatory approach as well, taking out the common practice to just collect data from communities and don't show them the results, to a truly co-creation where they can see the outcome and discuss their opinions about it and take ownership of the text as well.

As the Humanitarian Justice Declaration has already launched, there was a part that proposed some first steps on a humanitarian justice agenda. This entailed a Humanitarian justice that is:
- Guided by principles and practices of care, empathy and respect for affected communities, that empowers local leadership and drives transformative change.
- Humanitarian responses that are fair, needs-driven, rights-based and free of corruption or favouritism.

- Responses that are embedded in the lived realities of disaster- and the cultural practices of conflict-affected communities
- Humanitarian responses that provide short-term relief while addressing the root causes of vulnerabilities and existing injustices that cause disasters and crises in the first place (Humanitarian Studies Center, 2025).

This list of four action points is just a part of the agenda attached to the declaration, however, I choose to add this one because they highlight first of all the seven key aspects found in the reports and also their action areas mentioned by the humanitarian practitioners. It also makes sense that the agenda in the declaration is somehow general and not long because it takes into consideration that this needs to be applied to a context-specific place. But I think it also takes into consideration that it is the practitioners and humanitarian actors' job now to find out how to better support crisis affected communities with the guidance of the Humanitarian Justice Declaration.

The co-creation process and launch of the declaration is just the start to a conversation that was needed and that everyone can add to now. During the interviews I decided to ask the practitioners if they had any aspirations and hope into where this declaration could go and the answers I got were a mix of positiveness and wariness. While some said a bit sadly that changes like this take time *"I think it's not something that we are going to see in the next few days, in the next years, even if here, people adopt the declaration and it's, you know, well recognized publicly or by scientist, but to translate it into reality will take time"* (Participant 6, personal communication, 2025). Another added *"In short time from violating provisions of international human humanitarian law or human rights, like old habits die hard. But the challenge is changing the practice, the way organizations deliver it. So it it needs like a continuous engagement"* however at the end of the interview the participant ended on a brighter hope saying *"the long term value of the document is really high and then it may even endorse it at the UN level. Who knows?* (Participant 7, personal communication, 2025). On the other side there were practitioners that had a more positive response like calling the declaration a wake up call for communities to show them they will be included in the decision-making (Participant 8) and another stating *"There would always*

be challenges, but for as long as we are, you know, committed, very determined, there's nothing that we can't do to make things realized or to achieve our purpose, and the actions that we want" (Participant 3, personal communication, 2025).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

"But people in the communities, they don't care about words, they just care about action."

(Participant 1, personal communication, 2025)

The Humanitarian Justice Declaration was co-created and launched during a time where the humanitarian field is going through a challenging and transformation period that needed this kind of initiatives to bring a forward not just to stretch the constructs of justice but also to understand how the humanitarian principles are changing, how bottom-up approaches should be designed and implemented with meaningful participation and to understand how communities want to be supported.

When understanding that humanitarianism has a political nature that adheres to the international order and principles but that are not protecting communities and humanitarian alike it is time to have more responses centered on care and transparency where communities are not just considered but at every step of the decision-making process. It is crucial to collaborate with meaningful participation and to have different actors working together to ensure an engagement based on solidarity, empowerment and change.

By stretching the constructs of justice, from a legalistic norm-centered approach, to a more social one where recognition is taken into consideration it can make a complete difference on how justice is approached in humanitarian settings. It was clear from the FGD that the communities want systemic changes where inequalities and victimhood are thrown away for a more just, inclusive and dignified treatment. For this to happen humanitarian practitioners need to support those changes by dismantling practices that don't take communities into account. It is also clear from the interviews that there are steps that need to be taken to advance this agenda like the two focus areas presented. To have humanitarian justice present in local NGOs, INGOS and governments the work should start now by spreading the voice and by making them accountable to these principles.

The declaration is just a start of a conversation, a living document, that now needs to be amplified and applied to context and time specific crises. As one of the observatories stated "Humanitarian Justice is both a moral compass and a practical framework" and this is exactly what it should be understood as. The declaration is already there, now we need to work on creating a path that brings words into action.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Guiding questions to analyse reports

1. How is justice described?

2. How is humanitarianism described across contexts?

3. Did communities resonate with the name of "humanitarian justice"? Taking into consideration how this translates to their language.

4. According to the FGD, what are crisis affected communities looking for when they seek justice?

5. What different actors are needed to implement humanitarian justice in the region?

6. Were there differences in objectives between FGD from the same HO?

7. Are crisis affected communities part of the decision-making and co-creation of projects? How do communities perceive their participation in this process? (Are they participative, are they interested, etc)

Appendix B: Question for semi-structured interviews

Interviews to the members of the Humanitarian Observatories

Before the interview
1. Explain what the research is about and the approach

2. Ask for consent on doing the interview and explain that they can refuse to answer questions they are not comfortable with

3. Explain pseudonymization of their personal data for the research

4. Explain how the information will be treated after the research is completed

5. They can withdraw their consent before the RP is submitted

General Information

1. Name
2. Gender
3. Age
4. Working sector

Guiding questions

1. What was your motivation to join the Humanitarian Justice Declaration process?

2. What do you think is the value of co-creating this declaration with crisis-affected communities?

3. How do you see this declaration being put into practice? What are the next steps?

4. What are your hopes/aspirations for this declaration?

5. What are some challenges or limitations you perceive when implementing the humanitarian justice declaration?

Appendix C: Consent form for participants

Information and consent form
Perspectives from Humanitarian Observatories practitioners

Introduction
The research you are asked to participate in is part of the Research Paper written by Ana Diaz Flores Rivera, as part of the thesis requirement of the Masters' program at the International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam (ISS-EUR). The interview will focus on your experience, as a practitioner and member of a humanitarian observatory, in the co-creation process of the concept of humanitarian justice.

The research paper will be conducted according to ISS-EUR data privacy and processing exclusively or for research purposes.

If you have any questions, please ask me.

Why are we asking you to participate?
We ask you to participate because you are a member of the Humanitarian Observatories that work with the Humanitarian Studies Center. More specifically you were part of the co-creation process of the concept of humanitarian justice and both of these roles bring valuable experience and knowledge that can help the research paper objectives.

You decide whether to participate
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Not participating will not affect you in the rest of the project or any further research related to this. You can stop at any time and would not need to provide any explanation.

If you want to participate in the study, you can indicate this at the end of this form.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?
During the interview, personal questions will be asked about the process of co-creation and previous experience as a practitioner. These may trigger unpleasant memories and emotions. You may therefore wish not to answer some of the questions or stop your participation in the interview overall.

What data will I ask you to provide?
During the interview I will be collecting and processing the following personal data: name, country, age, gender, working sector, opinion on humanitarian justice and the co-creation process. I will store your data so that I can be in contact with you to share the results of your participation.

I will also use the support of audio recording that will only be used to support my analysis for the research, no one will have access to the audio recordings but myself. If you feel uncomfortable about audio recording, this can be shared and then only notes will be taken during the interview.

Who can see your data?
- All your data will be stored securely.
- Only persons involved in the research can see your data. This includes me, Ana Diaz Flores Rivera and my thesis supervisor, prof.dr.ir. Dorothea Hilhorst.
- Recordings are transcribed. Your name is replaced with a participant number.
- Data such as your name, country, contact details and recordings will be stored/deleted separately from the transcription.
- Your participation and answers may be in the published Research Paper, but your name will be pseudonymized and the information cannot be traced back to you

Although we do not include your name in publications or communicate it to other participants or third parties, there is a risk that you could still be indirectly identified. This is for example because people can look online who are some of the members of the humanitarian observatories.

How long will your personal data be stored?
According to the EUR Research Data Management Policy, your data must be kept for 10 years after publication to allow other researchers to verify that the research was conducted correctly

Using your data for new research

Your data will be pseudonymized publicly available so that any interested person can use it. The data collected may be important for education or other scientific research by us or others.] The data that we use for this purpose is **not** traceable to you.

We would like to make the data available for that purpose. In the consent form you can indicate whether you consent to this. Are you not giving your consent? Then you can still participate in this study.

How will you receive the results of the study?
You may indicate if you would like to receive a summary of the results. The results will be published in the ISS Repository of MA Research Papers on the ISS website.

Do you have questions about the study?
If you have any **questions** about the study or your privacy rights, such as accessing, changing, deleting, or updating your data, please contact me.

Name: Ana Diaz Flores Rivera
Phone number: +31 613632064
Email: 673733ad@eur.nl

Do you regret your participation?
During or after the study, you may regret your participation. Please indicate this by contacting me. Deleting your data is no longer possible if the data has been anonymized, making it impossible to trace which data came from you. Anonymizing the data is done within one week period after the data was collected.

Ethics approval
This research has been reviewed and approved by my thesis supervisor at ISS-EUR to ensure the process.

Do you have a **complaint** or concerns about your privacy? Please email the Data Protection Officer (fg@eur.nl) or visit www.autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl. (T: 088 - 1805250)

Declaration of Consent

I have read the information letter. I understand what the study is about and what data will be collected from me. I was able to ask questions as well. My questions were adequately answered.
By signing this form, I:
1. consent to participate in this research;
2. consent to the use of my personal data
3. confirm that I am at least 18 years old;
4. confirm that I understand that participating in this research is completely voluntary and that I can stop at any time;

5. confirm that I understand that anonymous data is used for publication, educational purposes and further research;

Check the boxes below if you consent to this.

Data
I consent to the collection, use and retention of the following data: name, country, age, gender, work field.

Audio recording
I consent to the interview being audio recorded for analysis purposes.

Sharing of data
I consent to the sharing of my data with Erasmus University in Rotterdam.

My answers in the article
I give permission for my answers to be used in papers, such as research papers, articles in a journal or book. My name will not be included.

Use for educational purposes and other research
I hereby consent to having my personal data, namely my name and contact details stored and
used for educational purposes and for other research:.

New research
I give permission to be contacted again for new research. My contact information will be kept for this purpose.

Name of participant:

Participant's signature: **Date:**

The results will be published in the ISS Repository of MA Research Papers on the ISS website.

Appendix D: Humanitarian Justice Declaration

Istanbul-Bergen Declaration on Humanitarian Justice

In the lead up to the International Humanitarian Studies Association conference of 2025 in Istanbul and Bergen, and during one of the most turbulent years in

humanitarian history, humanitarian observatories in 8 crisis-affected areas: Central and Eastern Europe, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Latin America and the Caribbean, Libya, Namibia, the Philippines, and South Asia engaged in a process to develop a definition and agenda for humanitarian justice.

The Observatories held consultations with affected communities and other stakeholders. These resulted in area-specific reports that were collectively developed into this declaration, launched in Istanbul on 16 October 2025.

Humanitarian Justice

Humanitarian Justice is a lived need of crisis-affected people for fair, transparent, inclusive and respectful humanitarian responses that are rooted in principles of dignity, solidarity, care and shared responsibility for people, nature and the planet, and that respect International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. Humanitarian Justice is a practical moral framework that insists on humanitarian responses that address both immediate suffering and the deeper systemic injustices that disasters, climate-related crises, and conflicts expose.

Humanitarian Justice requires timeliness: recognizing that fairness, equity and accountability must apply across the entire spectrum of crisis engagement - from anticipation and immediate response, to long-term recovery and systemic change. Humanitarian Justice requires a transformative shift from short-term relief to peaceful, equitable and just development where communities control their natural resources and that are in harmony with the needs of the planet, and that the voices and knowledge of affected communities are heard and respected. Humanitarian Justice requires that collective community action is recognized and supported and that affected communities are substantially included in decision-making.

Humanitarian Justice extends beyond immediate relief to address deeper wounds – social, psychological, and systemic – through a framework rooted in dignity, equity, and accountability. It is about transforming crises into times and places for healing, accountability, and systemic change. It requires that authorities, humanitarians and others with power acknowledge survivors not as broken but as bearers of wisdom, right-holders and agents of renewal.

We observe and experience that:

Dignity is often violated when humanitarian responses are not grounded in respect for people's rights, including the rights of refugees, internally displaced persons, and stateless persons, and when these rights are applied in a discriminatory way based on gender, race, ethnicity, age, religious identity, disability, or other grounds.

Protection of civilians in times of conflict and enabling their access to safe areas of assistance, including the protection of service providers and medical personnel, is neglected - often willfully - while crimes against people and service providers are committed with impunity.

Community knowledge, worldviews, cultures, and practices are often undervalued by those delivering aid, and affected communities are frequently excluded from decision-making processes regarding humanitarian response, despite their roles at the forefront of crisis response.

Systemic failures in the aid system, including corruption and favoritism lead to exclusion of vulnerable groups and create or exacerbate risks and vulnerabilities.

Current responses to crises often fail to acknowledge the injustices experienced by affected people or fail to commit to the necessary reparation and redress required for genuine Humanitarian Justice.

The endurance of humanitarian crises is largely caused by (geo)-political interests, economic greed, colonial histories and donor priorities, at the expense of voices and knowledge of local and indigenous communities.

Exit strategies of humanitarian organizations often fail to handle transitions responsibly and ethically, leading to abrupt aid cuts, gaps in services, and the undermining of community resilience. The poor implementation of these strategies leaves lasting negative effects that undermine the integrity of humanitarianism for affected communities.

We aspire for:
A jointly built global humanitarian community that advances the well-being, rights, and dignity of people affected by crises, especially those from historically marginalized groups.

An enabling political environment for humanitarian assistance according to the principles of International Humanitarian Law, where conflict parties and geo-political actors uphold their commitments to prevent and solve conflict and foster peace.

Models of assistance that nurture and recognize community leadership while demanding responsibility and accountability from governments, humanitarian organizations, for-profit companies, and others that hold power.

A broad, mutually reinforcing, and effectively coordinated collaboration between actors, which respects and recognizes community members as first and direct responders, and invests in locally grounded, equitable aid systems.

Humanitarian responses that are attuned to community needs, assets, resources and lived realities.

Structural approaches that prioritize prevention, peace building and risk reduction over ad-hoc responses to crises.

An Agenda for Humanitarian Justice:
Humanitarian action that starts from the notion of a shared humanity and is guided by principles and practices of care, empathy and respect for affected communities, that empowers local leadership and drives transformative change.

A world order that holds conflict parties to account for restraining violence, respecting the lives and needs of communities and enabling safe access to medical and humanitarian services.

Humanitarian responses that are fair, needs-driven, rights-based and free of corruption or favouritism.

Responsible and ethical transition and exit strategies that are collaboratively planned with local actors from the outset, and that prioritize sustainable and locally-led development. The withdrawal of international aid cannot compromise the long-term well-being and basic needs of affected populations.

Humanitarian action that centers on well-being in a broad sense, by combining material aid with a focus on losses that are not solely material (such as mental health, community culture and cohesion, relations with land and nature) by actively addressing needs for psychosocial support and fair compensation for such losses.

Responses that are embedded in the lived realities of disaster- and the cultural practices of conflict-affected communities.

Humanitarian responses that provide short-term relief while addressing the root causes of vulnerabilities and existing injustices that cause disasters and crises in the first place.

We call on all actors involved in the shaping of humanitarian action to join us in advancing this agenda for Humanitarian Justice. We recognize that we and all others

working for Humanitarian Justice may also be part of the systems we seek to transform, and that this work comprises reflection on our own roles and responsibilities.