

2023 Humanitarian
Leadership Conference



CENTRE FOR
HUMANITARIAN
LEADERSHIP

26-28 April



Re-engineering the global disaster response system

IMPACT REPORT



Within a shared,
creative space
you, them and I
becoming 'we' poetically
not politically, though!

We are the reflections
of the land we come from
the land we live and work
the oceans we cross
the people we meet
the crises we survived
the atrocities we faced
the scars we hide
and the memories we wade.

We are meeting today**
on this land of Wurundjeri people
the traditional custodians
of land that is bruised, not healed
from the father of all disasters
we call it colonisation.

We are gathered here today
with a burning passion
to re-engineer the ivory tower
the Empire of Giants
where global is the North
local is a myth
most of us lost somewhere
in between Global South and
Global North.

*** the last day of the conference;
in-person attendance.*

*Excerpt from the spoken word poem performed by Jeevika
Vivekananthan at the 2023 Humanitarian Leadership Conference*

A word from the Acting Director and Conference Convenor

Since the Centre for Humanitarian Leadership's last conference in 2021, we have emerged from the depths of a global pandemic but not from global crisis, disaster and hardship. War and conflict are buffeting South Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East, climatic events are ravaging dozens of countries across the world, and the aid system is besieged by the enormity of people and places needing support and assistance.

It is the ideal time then, to focus on re-engineering the global disaster response system to better meet the needs of people now and in the future – and this idea was at the heart of our 2023 Humanitarian Leadership Conference.

Over the course of the conference, Themrise Khan and Adelina Kamal's keynote remarks sparked introspection and reflection and set the tone for the many insightful panel sessions. Together, we dug into the challenges of decolonising and localising humanitarian assistance and disaster management. We had conversations about whole-of-society emergency responses, including with private sector colleagues. We heard how change is already happening in the Philippines, South Sudan, Thailand, Somalia, and in many other contexts around the world.

I found the discussions around existing and new models of assistance particularly insightful. There were fascinating examples of how to improve the sources and efficiencies of the money used to pay for disaster

responses and management. The current humanitarian mandate was heavily critiqued, and presenters and participants alike pointed to multiple examples of the need to stand in solidarity with those experiencing the effects of crises. The toxicity of existing motivations and incentive structures was also highlighted, not only for us as individuals but also for organisations embedded in the current systems.

We were honoured to engage with 350 people from over 65 countries, and thank everyone who shared their thoughts and feedback with us during and after the conference. As promised, we will be continuing the conversation over the coming months through a series of publications, posts, and videos, and we would love you to take part in these discussions, as we continue our mission to shift the power and create a more equitable, effective and locally-led disaster response system

Our conference partners made this event possible, and we are deeply grateful for their ongoing support to continue this important work. Thanks also to Deakin University, and a special thanks to my wonderful colleagues at the Centre for Humanitarian Leadership.

Until 2025!

Josh Hallwright
CHL Acting Director and
#2023HLC Conference Convenor



The Conference in numbers



351
Total delegates



67
Countries



108
Delegates personally affected by disaster or crisis

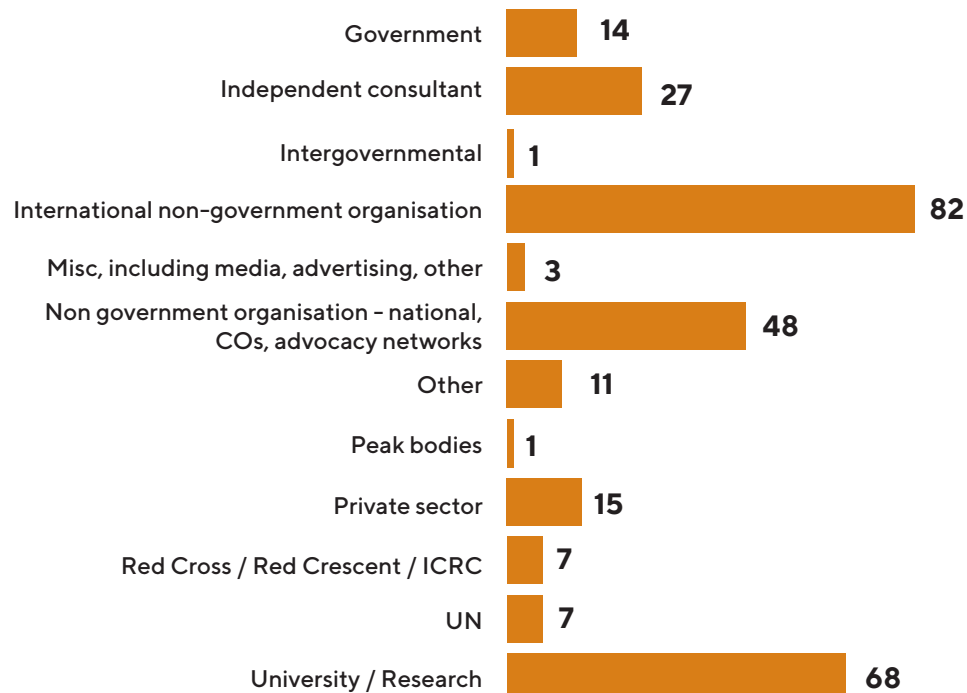


16
Sponsored registrations

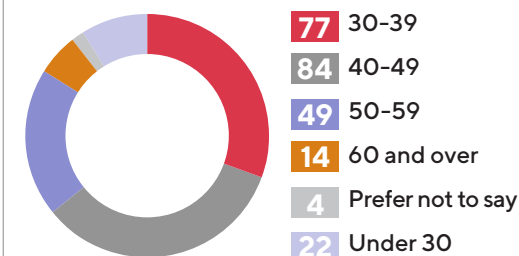


89
In-person delegates in Melbourne (April 28)

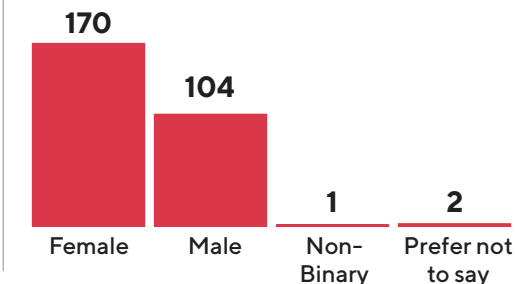
Work category



Age



Gender



"Thank you, Centre for Humanitarian Leadership, for organising the event, and inviting me! [I] Enjoyed the interaction and learnt a lot from the insights of the speakers, panelists and participants!"
- Adelina Kamal, Humanitarian, Disaster Management Practitioner and Policy Development Strategist



The program



156
Speakers



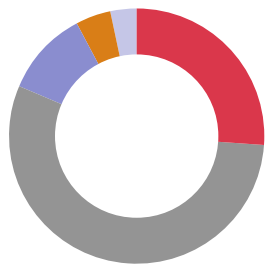
37
Countries



8
Exhibitors



Languages
featured: English,
French, Spanish
and Turkish



- 17** Panels
- 36** Oral presentations
- 7** Workshops
- 3** Plenaries
- 2** Creative encounters

Feedback

We received 26 responses to the post-Conference survey; with 84% of respondents rating the event as 'Excellent' or 'Very good'. Overall, we achieved our goal of providing a platform for humanitarians and people working in the disaster response system to challenge the current ways of working. We were also pleased to deliver an accessible and inclusive event with enhanced language options for both the submission and registration process, and live translation options on the Conference platform.

84%

of respondents rated the event as 'Excellent' or 'Very good'.



"Such a well organised event, very timely and relevant."
– Gopinyath Parayil, Founder and Director, The Blue Yonder

"Thanks so much Centre for Humanitarian Leadership for hosting such a successful conference!" – Beth Eggleston, Co-founder and Director, Humanitarian Advisory Group



Key learnings

Based on the survey results, we will work towards the following goals when planning for the next Conference:

- Maintaining a hybrid event format, with the possibility of hosting the in-person component in another Australian city, or possibly in the Asia-Pacific region
- Making abstracts available to delegates for all presentations and panels
- Featuring more representation from Pacific local actors, NGOs and CSOs
- Allowing more time for speaker briefings before discussion panels
- Ensuring workshops allow enough time and focus on participation, rather than panel discussions



“Congratulations on such a successful, ambitious conference! It was so good to meet new people, hear new perspectives and learn!” – Sorchá O’Callaghan, Director, Humanitarian Policy Group, ODI

Sponsors

Thank you to our Conference sponsors for making this event possible.



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About the Centre for Humanitarian Leadership

The Centre for Humanitarian Leadership is an innovative collaboration between Deakin University and Save the Children Australia that combines quality practice with academic rigour.

We are transforming humanitarian leaders and influencing how organisations, and the system, respond to the increasingly complex global context.

We champion humanitarian action that centres the agency of communities affected by crises, respects diverse perspectives, elevates local actors, and furthers social justice.



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