The Organization under Extreme Conditions
- the case study of UNHCR during the Syrian crisis

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Abstract

The contemporary crises become increasingly complex, accompanied by more hostilities leading the infected societies to witness more unfortunate events, especially when political solutions are absent in war times or internal conflicts. The humanitarian sector, on the other hand, has to mitigate the severe effects of these crises on communities and provide assistance despite lack of funding and data. The action of UNHCR during the conflict in Syria has been taken as a case study due to the complexity of the situation in Syria.

Contingency theory has been adopted within this study to investigate how does the humanitarian crisis in Syria impact the structure of UNHCR. Furthermore, contingency planning as a vital element to address emergencies effectively, enabling the organization to absorb shocks entirely or even partly, is adopted to investigate whether the UNHCR's crisis management is efficient or not.

The study reveals that UNHCR's emergency preparedness planning is a sophisticated tool in meeting emergencies, particularly when adopting and implementing these plans on the ground and in coordination with the other stakeholders. Emergency preparedness planning has been observed to be an advantage to the organization primarily when the existing hazard or the predicable one is described as very dynamic. The case study discovers that UNHCR experienced extreme conditions in Syria, such as lack or absence of the data, funding gaps, and safety threatening. Despite these challenges, the organization developed an inclusive response action in which it collaborates with the other humanitarian organizations in Syria and involves the local communities to design site-oriented and more accurate plans.

Abbreviations

ACAPS - The Assessment Capacities Project
AHA - All-Hazards Approach
AL - Arab League
CRIs – Core Relief Items
DESS - Division of Emergency, Security, and Supply
E.S. – Emergency Services
ERP - Emergency Response Preparedness
FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization
FPM - Four Paradigms Matrix
HRP- Humanitarian Response Plan
HRSS - H.R. Staff Services
IASC - The Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP - Internally Displaced Person\People
IFRC - International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IGO – Inter-Governmental Organization
IRC - International Rescue Committee
MCH - Maternal and Child Health Services
MoSA- Ministry of Social Affairs
NFIs – Non-Food Items
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA - U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR - Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
ORVs - Outreach Volunteers
PAP - Preparedness Action Plan
ROI - Return on Investment
RRA - Regional Refugee Appeal
SARFIT – The Structural Adaptation to Regain Fit
SDF- Syrian Democratic Forces
SDGs – The Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations
SRP - The Strategic Response Plan
U.N. – The United Nations
UNDP - The United Nations Development Program
UNFPA - United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund
UNISDR - United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNRWA - The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
WEF - World Economic Forum
WFP - World Food Program
WHO - World Health Organization
WoS - Whole of Syria approach
WW2 - World War II

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1 Introduction

This Chapter provides a background to briefly clarify what the characteristics of human disasters and humanitarian aid organizations are. Then an introduction to what commonly called the "Arab Spring" is carried out. An explanation of the empirical problem also will be introduced.

Chapter one also includes the problem statement. More focus is put on the empirical problem of the humanitarian crisis in Syria and the action of UNHCR. The problem statement takes the empirical case in more detail, explaining how the humanitarian crisis in Syria has developed since 2011, generating poverty and health problems, and challenges that face humanitarian aid organizations in general and UNHCR in particular. At the end of this Chapter, the aim, research questions, and delimitations of the study are presented.

1.1 Background

Recently, the number of disasters has increased markedly, whether natural disasters or human-caused ones (Nilsson *et al.* 2010). Therefore, the adoption of well-functioning disaster management systems is vital to overcome and mitigate these disasters (ibid). Humanitarian organizations face high levels of uncertain environments (Larson & Foropon 2018). Furthermore, the broad-base of the stakeholders that are related to humanitarian aid processes, i.e., host governments, donors, military, international partners and beneficiaries, require coordination among different types and levels of standards and cultures to overcome or mitigate a particular crisis (UNHCR, Division of Operations Support 1996; Larson & Foropon 2018).

Further, the efficient response to a particular humanitarian crisis requires the availability of contingency planning, the ability for immediate decision-making, and sufficient preparedness facilities (UNHCR, Division of Operations Support 1996). In fact, extraordinary events lead the normality state of the affected society to disturbance asking for an operational response such as saving lives securing vital instruments and infrastructure (Eriksson & Mcconnell 2011). Additionally, a political response is also required during crises such as declaring the state of crisis, informing the public about the current procedures, and relocating the resources (LaPorte 2007). In turn, contingency planning enables organizational responders to allow exceptional arrangements in the procedures of crisis management, exceeding the ordinary standards or the status quo (Eriksson & Mcconnell 2011).

In addition, modern societies become increasingly vulnerable toward disasters; hence, the need for in-advance planning is essential, but it does not, however, guarantee adequate crisis management (Choularton 2007; Eriksson & Mcconnell 2011). Harrald and Mazzuchi (1993) argue that even though contingency planning is important to anticipate risks; thus, it allows more comprehensive management of events during a crisis but, it cannot serve this management in the long run. However, UNHCR states that contingency planning is significantly needed when a risk becomes possible to occur; further, it argues that contingency planning must by collectively implemented *"The contingency plan is not an end in itself. It sets out planning decisions for an emergency response that all partners have agreed to."* (UNHCR 2020 p. 1).

The nature of humanitarian disasters is very challenging and complex, since managing a humanitarian and disaster relief supply chain differs fundamentally from managing a retail supply chain (Van Wassenhove 2006; Day *et al.* 2012). Humanitarian disasters are substantially dynamic and demand unique types of management according to the contingent factors that are governing the operations area (Day *et al.* 2012). Therefore, helping crisis victims requires contingency planning by humanitarian organizations wherein the efforts must be coordinated and unified among the involved parties, as stated above. This contingency planning is a progressive process; hence it needs readjustments according to the evolutions and the contingency factors that are evolving while implementing the plan (UNHCR, Division of Operations Support 1996). Additionally, contingency theory considers that the optimal way to manage an organization depends on harmonizing the internal and the external factors that surround the organization, similar to organization size and environmental uncertainty (Junqueira *et al.* 2016). Besides, contingency theory is likely to be a critical success factor in the work of humanitarian organizations by linking the contingency factors of a crisis with the optimal process improvements (Larson & Foropon 2018).

One of the most challenging modern crises is the Syria crisis which has evolved amid the so-called "Arab Spring", in March 2011, when the symptoms of a crisis begun to appear in Syria after some young students wrote some anti-government graffiti on the walls of a school in Daraa city in southern Syria calling for freedom, leading to that they were soon arrested and tortured by the government. However, the incarceration of the young students had triggered anger across the country while the security forces attacked protesters and started to shoot randomly at them (Rodgers *et al.* 2016). Protests sparked in several areas of Syria, urging President "Bashar Al-Assad" to step down from power. The military forces used violence against protestors, which increased demonstrations all over the country. The Syrian forces' violence against the protesters led the latter to hold weapons to defend themselves and to force the military authorities to leave their areas due to the massive arrests and violence against civilians (ibid). Because the conflict is ongoing, the number of victims increases as well, and the regional and the international intervention developing the Syrian crisis into a complex war (Tan & Perudin 2019).

The civil war in Syria has turned into a proxy war due to the intervention by many countries in the conflict since 2011 (Marshall 2016). This intervention occurs between different and contrary agendas and ideologies on the Syrian ground where Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia are backing the Syrian opposition; meanwhile, Russia and Iran support the Syrian regime. At the same time, Kurdish armed groups, in many cases, fight as on-ground proxy soldiers to the U.S (ibid). Figure 1 below illustrates Syria's map and borders showing who controls areas, where SDF refers to Syrian Democratic Forces (Aljazeera News 2020).

UNHCR is a very influential organization regarding humanitarian action in Syria. UNHCR has been taken as a case study in this research. It was established in 1950 after WW2 to help the European communities who suffered the outcomes of the war. Its presence in Syria belongs to 1991 after the first Iraqi war. The organization expanded its operations in Syria as a response to the onset of the humanitarian crisis in 2011, thus reacting to the increasing number of IDPs and addressing the challenges the refugees encounter there (UNHCR Syria 2014).
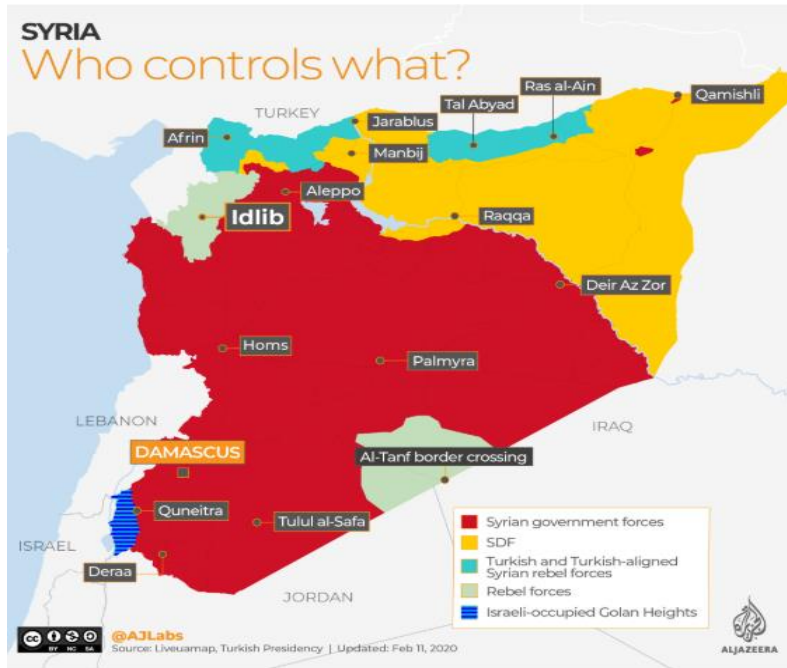
Figure 1. The Power Areas in Syria (Aljazeera News 2020).

1.2 Problem statement

The conflict in Syria has led to a humanitarian crisis since 2011 and left more than 11.7 million people in need of humanitarian aid and over six million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) (UNHCR 2019e). This humanitarian crisis demands urgent action that must be taken by the regional and international actors. Nevertheless, the increased number of victims in Syria shows that all efforts by governments and the humanitarian organizations that operate in Syria are still not sufficient (Ferris & Kirisci 2016). Financial aid allocated for alleviating people's suffering is neither adequate currently nor sustained if the war expanded over the coming years (ibid). In 2015, Antonio Guterres, the former director of UNHCR, described the humanitarian crisis in Syria as a very challenging crisis with limited financial sources.

According to Antonio Guterres statement on the web site, World Economic Forum (WEF) (Guterres, Weforum.org 2015):

> As a global society, we have the technology, resources, and the
> know-how to make a massive difference to living standards
> everywhere, including for refugees. But this will not happen until
> the private sector steps up and becomes not just a bit player, but
> a driving force in fixing the global emergency that is upon us.
> Syria has left no doubt that the old approach no longer works.
> It's time to get serious about building a new one.

Humanitarian aid organizations, in case of emergency, work under high uncertainty, extremely unpredictable evolutions, and the speed of their actions make the difference between death or life (Van Wassenhove 2006). Since 2011 the Syrian crisis has led to many complex and interconnected humanitarian challenges, including IDPs, injured people, hunger, and poverty (Saleh et al., 2018). The main characteristics of the humanitarian crisis in Syria involve the destroyed infrastructure, schools, hospitals, and services such as electricity, water,

and sanitation networks (International Rescue Committee n.d.). Humanitarian aid organizations try to mitigate such challenges by implementing either long-term or short-term aid programs (Beamon & Balcik 2008; Haavisto 2014). Often, the short-term aid activities occur during emergencies and include providing goods or services, i.e., food, medical assistance, clean water, or cash to cover an urgent need or to mitigate immediate risk, and these activities have unstable and unpredictable environments (Beamon & Balcik 2008; Haavisto 2014). On the other hand, development activities have relatively stable environments and provide longer-term assistance like housing, rehabilitation infrastructure, encouraging self-sufficiency building initiatives (ibid).

Concerning UNHCR, the organization witnesses hazardous circumstances in Syria such as the indirect gunfire and mortars; further, the restrictions caused by the ongoing war, which shifts throughout the Syrian cities suddenly (UNHCR Syria 2015, 2016). UNHCR struggles to assist the people of concern despite the funding gap every year (UNHCR Syria 2015, 2017). The organization describes the challenges of the operational environment in Syria as the following: 1- unsafety for humanitarian workers, 2- unpredictability, 3- limited capacities of the local partners, 4- complexity of the formal procedures, 5- limited spaces to establish residential solutions for IDPs, 6- lack of data, 7- limited number of NGOs who get permissions to work inside Syria, 8- lack of funding, 9- shifting war lines, 10- inaccessibility to many areas in hard-to-reach areas and 11- the self-organized returnee of IDPs to their destroyed homes (UNHCR Syria 2014, 2016, 2018).

Despite these challenges, UNHCR introduces initiatives to not only provide emergency aid, rather build the resiliency of its people of concern (UNHCR Syria 2017). However, during the study, there is no adopted distinction between emergency aid and sustainable aid efforts. Both will be considered humanitarian aid because they have more or less essential effects.

As stated above, the humanitarian crises in Syria has led to a massive number of challenges on both the Syrian community and the humanitarian organizations that are working in Syria (UNHCR Syria 2015; Saleh *et al.* 2018), the following sub-sections shed light on the major challenges there.

1.2.1 Poverty crisis

The Syrian economy is collapsing since 2011, and around 530,000 jobs are eroded per annum (The World Bank 2017). The side effects associated with the crisis impact welfare levels, such as hostilities, disabilities, banditry, and forced displacement (ibid).

Extreme poverty expanded from 2.2 million in 2010 to 3.7 million in 2012, and studies conducted by The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the UNDP in 2011, reveal that more than half of the population lives under the extreme-poverty line (Rohwerder 2014).

 Extreme-poverty is defined as "*the people on the lower end of the poverty line, where they struggle to secure the most basic food and non-food items required for survival*" (Rohwerder 2014 p. 7). In addition, the long-term conflict consumed the households' budgets, and inflation, on the other hand, increased the prices of all vital goods as well as heating and oil (Alhassan 2018).

Also, the tourism sector, which contributed to ~ 5% of the Syrian economy before the conflict, has collapsed because of the deteriorating security situation, which influences the civilians and their livelihoods negatively (ACAPS & MapAction 2016).

1.2.2 Health crisis

People fleeing from wars, usually, are more vulnerable to many health-related issues (Saleh *et al.* 2018). Syrian refugees in the neighboring countries have witnessed a high complexity of health conditions (Saleh *et al.* 2018).

According to UNHCR, 12.8 million people required health assistance in 2016 (UNHCR Syria 2016 p. 4). Moreover, new waves of conflict came to Idlib in northwest Syria in 2019 (IRC 2019). This conflict is occurring when writing these words. Around 800,000 fled from the conflict since December 2019, most of them live in informal settlements now, and there are estimations that an additional 500,000 persons are likely to flee as well, according to David Miliband, the CEO, and president of the International Rescue Committee (IRC). The group of 800,000 persons who fled from Idlib involves 30 IRC-workers. They strive to save their own lives and other's lives. According to Miliband's statement on the IRC web page (Miliband, 2020, In Munich Security Conference):

> The catastrophe in Idlib is a symptom of the utter failure of diplomacy and abandonment by the international community of Syrian civilians. The IRC is making an urgent call for an immediate ceasefire to stop the killing. The IRC is also calling for accountability - for violations of international law to have meaningful consequences. One such opportunity is through the U.N. Board of Inquiry into attacks on civilian infrastructure in the Northwest, whose findings must be made public and those responsible held to account. U.N. Security Council members should also make clear the damaging consequences of the elimination of vital aid border crossings - so that there is no doubt in the minds of S.C. members about the depth and gravity of human suffering on the ground.

1.3 Aim, Research Questions, and Delimitations

Below, the aim of this study and the research questions are introduced. Then the delimitations of the study are defined within two sub-headings, theoretically and empirically.

1.3.1 Aim and research questions

The contemporary crises become more problematic, violent, and unpredictable, leading both the subjected societies and aid organizations to be more crisis-prone (Richardson 1994). Humanitarian aid organizations, with limited resources, try to tackle the side-effects of these crises by helping victims (Osei 2017). Moreover, usually, humanitarian aid organizations work under politically changeable conditions and extreme levels of uncertainty, so they must be well-prepared for the unexpected circumstances while securing sustained humanitarian assistance to victims (UNHCR, Division of Operations Support 1996; Van Wassenhove 2006).

This study aims to develop an understanding of how efficient contingency planning is in enabling humanitarian organizations to reach their objectives effectively during ongoing and extremely violent conditions — taking the response of UNHCR in Syria as a case study.

There are two research questions have been formulated in order to attain the aim.

1- What is the approach of contingency planning, UNHCR implements in Syria?
2- How effectively does this approach work?

This study is related to the business administration field. It is expected to contribute to the research field it belongs to, by increasing the awareness of contingency planning and understanding how organizations may survive during emergencies. The pandemic of Covid-19 is an essential example of these emergencies that can change the order of things suddenly. Therefore, this study and the other similar researches may build our knowledge in addressing and mitigating the impacts of contingencies on our organizations.

1.3.2 Delimitations

Theoretically:

This study belongs to the business administration field. Therefore, the point of view within this paper is committed to the theories and concepts in regard to business administration. More specifically, Eriksson and McConnell (2011) argue that the relationship between crisis planning and crisis management is very complex and nuanced, where proper crisis planning does not-certainly-secure a good crisis-management. Still, the absence of contingency planning may lead to crisis mismanagement or chaos. Therefore, henceforward the contingency theory will be used to analyze how the different contingencies of the operational environment of the Syrian conflict affect the response and structure of UNHCR. Furthermore, the theoretical concept of contingency planning is used mainly to reflect the outcomes of UNHCR's implemented emergency planning and management in Syria. The two theoretical terms, contingency theory and contingency planning, are two separate theoretical concepts, and they are introduced in Chapter 2.

The study will shed light on the main attributes of the work of UNHCR in Syria without implementing specific indicators regarding the performance. Moreover, the author will not be committed to specific standards that identify satisfactory performance, misfit, or fit status. Also, as described next in the theory chapter, there are formal and informal management approaches adopted by humanitarian organizations, at this level, the author will not adopt particular definitions of what procedures will count as formal or informal. The analysis has been given a room in order to determine what kind of structure does UNHCR implement in Syria and to figure out how effectively this structure works.

Empirically: the empirical study considers humanitarian aid organizations. The scope will be limited to how do those organizations handle emergencies in their operational environments. Therefore, the focus will be practiced over the downstream operations, in which how these organizations work on ground rather than how the strategic management acts. The same perspective will be adopted in the case study. More attention will be paid to UNHCR inside Syria and, to some extent, how the higher management operates. Furthermore, the perspective during the whole study has been directed to investigate the phenomenon taking only the events that occur inside Syria, not in the neighboring countries or the asylum countries.

2 Theory

Chapter 2 starts with an explanation of the contingency theory and the term 'fit', followed by a description of the contingency theory within the humanitarian context. Then the contingent factors that may affect the performance of organizations are presented as the following: Structure and size, Strategy, and Environment. In addition, contingency planning is also described in detail.

2.1 Contingency theory

The contingency theory was introduced within the category of the organizational theory in the late 1950s (Larson & Foropon 2018 p. 3). Contingency theory holds two main assumptions; first, there is no one best way to manage an organization; second: not all the forms of managing an organization have the same effects (Betts 2003). According to the theory, matching the external environmental characteristics with the organization's characteristics is called "fit," and the more fit the organization reaches, the higher performance it has. This matching is the contingency theory (ibid). While organizational theory aims to figure out how the organizations can survive, the contingency theory strives to examine how organizations can adapt to their surrounding environments, hence survive within the environments they operate in (Haavisto 2014).

According to the theory, the structure, size, strategy, and environment of an organization represent the contingencies that must be considered and assessed by managers, amounting to fit between these factors increases the performance (Haavisto 2014). The purpose behind choosing the contingency theory in this study is to figure out what are the effects of the contingent variables of the Syrian conflict on UNHCR. Also, to know how UNHCR attempt to dodge or to neutralize the influence of these contingencies on its performance.

Donaldson is one of the foremost theorists in regard to contingency theory, synthesizes different approaches and contributions to the contingency theory into the Structural Adaption to Regain Fit model (SARFIT) (Scott *et al.* 2007 p. 311). SARFIT underpinned all the contingencies that were discussed by the contingency theorists and integrated them into a framework in order to introduce a unified and integrated analysis model (Haavisto 2014; Junqueira *et al.* 2016). Further, SARFIT helps managers and leaders to implement the optimized adjustments in structure, size, and strategy within the organization to match between all the organization's internal and external elements (Junqueira *et al.* 2016). Figure 2 shows the SARFIT model below, which illustrates the mechanism of change and adaptation to it. SARFIT model will support and enrich this study in analyzing the different implications of the Syrian crisis on the performance of UNHCR.

The SARFIT model assumes that the organization initially is aware of the contingent factors that surround it; in other words, its structure fits the characteristics of the surrounding environment, which reflects a satisfactory level of performance (Junqueira *et al.* 2016). According to Figure 2, when a contingent variable change and the organization does not adopt this change in its structure, it means that the organization's structure misfits the existing variables or does not fit the reality where the organization operates (ibid). Thus, a reduction in the level of performance will occur, demanding new structural adoption to these new evolutions in order to fit the characteristics of the environment again, hence regain a high level of performance (Junqueira *et al.* 2016).
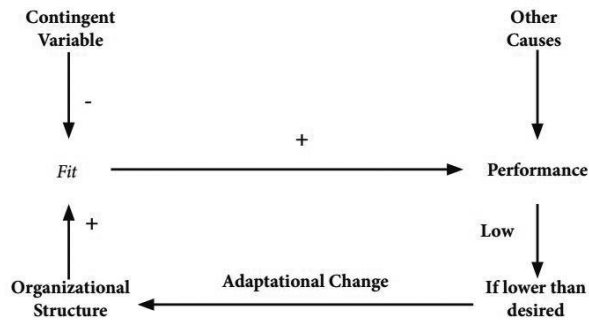
Figure 2. SARFIT model based on Donaldson (1999) (Junqueira et al. 2016 p. 3).

Burns and Stalker (1961) concluded that organizations that seek to develop a balance between their internal and external conditions have to understand the differences between a stable environment and dynamic one (Kessler *et al.* 2017). The organization either adopts a mechanical structure or an organic one. The mechanical structure is centralized, fewer people are involved in decision making and planning, and this structure fits the stable environments (ibid). Instead, the organic systems are decentralized, include a broader base of people in decision making and strategic planning, and this type of management system or structure is appropriate to the dynamic environments (Kessler *et al.* 2017)).

Lawrence and Lorsch (1967), argue that the contingency theory has an open and rational view in regard to the organization's structure, emphasizing that there is no one perfect structure fits all conditions. Therefore, as stated above, how much dynamic and changeable the operational environment is, determine how the organization should be structured to fit the conditions of this environment (Lawrence & Lorsch 1967).

2.2 The application of the contingency theory in the humanitarian context.

The description of the next contingent factors is defined according to Figure 2 above and in consistency with (Lawrence & Lorsch 1967; Haavisto 2014; Junqueira *et al.* 2016; Larson & Foropon 2018).

2.2.1 Structure and size

It looks senseless that organizations should follow up the contingencies and therefore change their structure continuously to regain fit with the surrounding circumstances because the contingencies are changeable in turn, which seems to mean that organizations who seek fit will gain no fit at all (Donaldson 2006). However, Donaldson (2006) argues that at least by changing its structure to follow up the contingencies, the organization attains quasi-fit. This means that "*the organization will move closer to fit but not attain fit completely*" (Donaldson 2001 p. 259) since its structure fits the contingencies partly (Donaldson 2006). Therefore, it gains better performance than if it did no structural changes (ibid). This gives an insight that quasi -fit is better than misfit because the prior status can enhance the organization's ability to fit incrementally with its environment, "*The organization will adjust the level of its structure to narrow the gap between its actual level and that required to fit its contingencies without completely eliminating the gap*" (Donaldson 2001 p. 259).

In the humanitarian context, changes in the contingent factors such as strategy or environment are well-known, these changes impose misfit; thus low performance in case the organization does not act to face these changes, this explains why most of the humanitarian aid organizations adopt the organic approach in planning and management (Haavisto 2014). Moreover, organizations that work within the humanitarian context have to consider the different backgrounds, needs, and ideologies of its people of concern to attain an inclusive and well-functioning structure (Van Wassenhove 2006; Kovács & Tatham 2009).

2.2.2 Strategy

Chakravarthy (1982) observed that the strategy is not a constant element dealing with a constant environment (Chakravarthy 1982). Instead, strategic planning is an ongoing process that aims to cope with external and internal changes leading the organization to fit the external conditions where it acts (ibid).

Adopting measurable goals makes it easier to check and enhances the strategies and plans the organization takes; thus, the performance it attains (Locke 1968). Further, by defining strategic plans or goals, the organization regulates individuals' behavior by informing them what goals they have to achieve (Locke 1968; Haavisto 2014). The goal-setting approach in strategic planning is advantageous for humanitarian organizations since the donors increasingly demand results-driven performance (Van Wassenhove 2006; Duke & Long 2007; Haavisto 2014).

Moreover, to secure sustained cash flows from donors, humanitarian organizations have to design flexible and sophisticated strategies that are likely to introduce effective and timely response (Van Wassenhove 2006; Beamon & Balcik 2008).

2.2.3 Environment

In the contingency approach of management, the external environment is an independent factor that affects the organizations; thus, the manager should deal with it as an uncontrollable elements such as the national laws (Luthans & Stewart 1977). However, managers can indirectly affect the environments in which they operate when they design strategies and attempt to change systems in order to attain their goals (ibid). The settings of relief organizations are unique when they compared with others (Van Wassenhove 2006), in which disaster environments are very changeable and unstable (Beamon & Balcik 2008). Moreover, in the humanitarian context, if an organization has a low-level of performance because its structure does not fit with its environment, for instance, that means the donors will not provide funding anymore. On the other hand, deaths and victims will increase (ibid). These high-variable and uncertain environments make the nature of relief and humanitarian aid very risky and require a high-rate of flexibility to gain satisfactory performance (Beamon & Balcik 2008).

Contingency scholars have divided the environments of the humanitarian aid organizations, into several sub-divisions to understand and analyze them, among these divisions; heterogeneous\homogeneous, shifting\stable, or certain\uncertain (Haavisto 2014). The environments of crises where humanitarian aid organizations operate are very dynamic and uncertain (Van Wassenhove 2006; Chandes & Pache 2010). This dynamicity can be described as unpredictable demand for aid and an unsustainable flow of funding from donors,

and this categorization will be adopted during this study (Van Wassenhove 2006; Haavisto 2014).

Humanitarian organizations, most often face unpredictable demand depending on the impact of the crisis, demographic, and socioeconomic factors (Beamon & Balcik 2008). The demand is usually a need for health care, acute finance, shelter, water. However, this uncertainty leads the workers in humanitarian aid organizations to estimate the demand for aid aftermaths. Consequently, the uncertain demand the humanitarian organizations face may hinder these organizations to respond timely to an emergency (ibid).

2.2.4 Performance

Back to the SARFIT model in Figure 2, it can be observed that continuous changes in contingencies must be followed by continuous changes in structure (Donaldson 2006). This means there is no one perfect fit status; instead, there are many situations of fit that can be approached to maintain a high level of performance according to the contingency condition (Donaldson 2006). According to Donaldson (1996), these unbroken changes explain why organizations show incremental developments or shifts in their structures (ibid). An adequate fit between the structure, strategy, and environment of an organization, is expected to produce a better or satisfactory rate of performance (Haavisto 2014).

In order to acquire a better performance, an organization may seek to move from a misfit to full-fit state by following a growth path, as shown in Figure 3 below, for example, by increasing its size or enhancing its structure it can attain a quasi-fit state. Incrementally it can gain a full- fit thus higher performance (Donaldson 2006). This track of growth will lead the organization in the long run to a new state of misfit, but here because of the surplus of resources generated by following a development path. By conducting structural adjustments, the organization can reach a quasi-fit; therefore, a full-fit state. This mechanism of quasi-fit can regulate the SARFIT model by streamlining the outcomes of the cumulative and incremental changes that occur as a response to the contingencies, in other words, by pushing or pulling the circle of growth forward and backward the organization can move from misfit condition to fulfill passing by a quasi-fit (ibid).
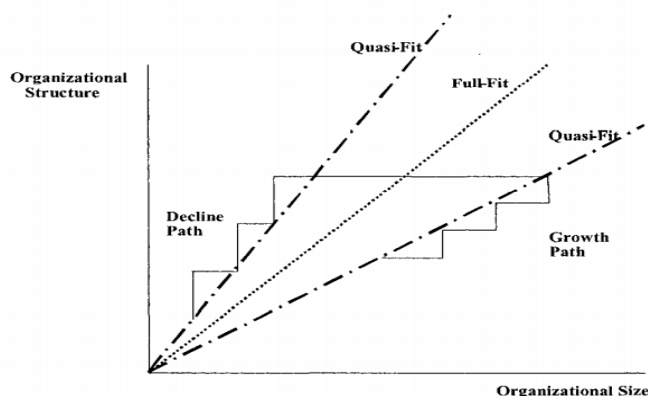
Figure 3. Quasi-fit lines of growth and decline paths (Donaldson 2006 p. 6).

In addition, all humanitarian aid agencies around the world are supposed to perform within a common framework called "Humanitarian Space" (Van Wassenhove 2006), as Figure 4 below illustrates. Humanitarian aid organization must provide the aid to the beneficiaries regardless of their beliefs, backgrounds or gender, taking into consideration to be unbiased toward the conflict, which means that they try not to change the course of events in favor of one party over the other (ibid).
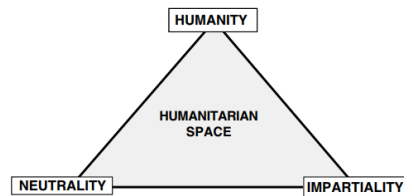
Figure 4. Humanitarian Space triangle (Van Wassenhove 2006 p. 5).

2.4 Contingency planning

The term contingency planning is a hard-to-define concept because it is likely to be contextual depending on the situation and the activities in action (Schedler 2007; Mabaso & Manyena 2013). Choularton (2007) adopts the following definition for contingency planning: "*A process, in anticipation of potential crises, of developing strategies, arrangements, and procedures to address the humanitarian needs of those adversely affected by crises*" (Choularton 2007 p. 3). Also, Eriksson and McConnell (2011) adopt a definition of contingency planning as it is a procedure that leads to in-advance resources' allocation including human capital, facilities, accountabilities, and decision-making rules, these prior producers are accompanied by capacity building to test the ability to face any sort of emergencies effectively.

Even though contingency planning does not certainly guarantee successful crisis management amid the emergency, but if there is no contingency plan at all, the crisis becomes more likely to affect negatively (Eriksson & Mcconnell 2011). Emphasizing the necessary existence of realistic contingency planning, Perry & Lindell (2004) argue that the ignorance of contingency planning or passing over the lessons from recent disasters may lead the affected society or organization to a critical level of threat. Moreover, as mentioned above, the existence of emergency plans does not mean for sure an enhanced response, because of different factors that may hinder these plans such as; inadequate training, insufficient planning, lack of skills, and\or resources (Perry & Lindell 2004).

The implementation of workable and successful contingency planning is expected to provide excellent potentials not only to control the outcomes of violent conflict or another humanitarian crisis, but it is likely to prevent emergencies from developing into further extreme conditions (Türk 2019). Besides, contingency planning has three key benefits: 1- it promotes the capability of preparedness, thus, increased capacity to face a potential hazard, 2- it addresses the inherent risk by predicting the effects of a potential hazard then considering the magnitude of the vulnerable population or livelihoods that are likely witness the hazard, 3- finally, by offering the ability for mitigating potential risk, it is a key element to enhance the resilience which can give society bounce forward advantage (Mabaso & Manyena 2013). Manyena et al. (2011) explain that missions of humanitarian actions have to be understood by giving the victims the ability to bounce-forward in which they become more dynamic to

consider and to face the post- and pre-crisis circumstances. Comparably, they illustrate the bounce-back as the ability to recover from certain conditions by stepping-backward to the pre-crisis status (Manyena *et al.* 2011).

In addition, UNHCR defines an emergency as an outstanding or an expected state wich menacing lives or the community's well-being; this situation requires an immediate and effective response (UNHCR 2003). The situation of emergency or crisis means a change in the regular order of things; this change may be critical. On the other hand, well-functioning contingency planning may reduce the level of the threatening or at least mitigate the outcomes of the emergency (ibid). Furthermore, contingency planning aims to prepare an organization to meet emergency and its impacts on humans, timely and adequately, the failure of risk management plan during a crisis demands the activation of the plan B, which is the contingency plan (Mabaso & Manyena 2013). Also, contingency planning is a managerial instrument involve the highest possible utilization of the organization's human and financial resources (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) 2012).

However, some scholars argue that the adoption of formal or informal organizational structures is a contextual matter (Perry & Lindell 2004; Choularton 2007; UNISDR 2007). While certain operational environments may demand less-hierarchal structure, other enviroments may demand the opposite (Perry & Lindell 2004; UNISDR 2007). Moreover, Perry and Lindell (2004) argue that the size of the affected community and the structure of the local government determine how the organization in question has to design its contingency plan, while the large communities require more formal structure and procedures, the smaller communities motivate to adopt informal structure. Also, the UNISDR (2007) states that the decentralization of responcibilities and resources is sometimes reqired to implement site-oriented plans which will motivate the local participation in these plans.

According to a review conducted by Mabaso and Manyena (2013) on contingency planning, the review reveals that the latter can be described as the following:

1- Contingency planning is a progressive process, needs to be developed as new events emerge.
2- Contingency planning should be designed in light of preparedness and response policies.
3- It is expected to lead the organization to take immediate action once a potential crisis became near to occur or has been already occurred.
4- It includes preparedness procedures such as training and capacity building to ensure optimized response during crises.
5- Contingency planning is an inclusive process meaning that multi-stakeholders should participate in order to design workable plans.
6- Once a crisis emerges, contingency planning can be seen as a series of actions that are previously adopted, and the staff has trained to implement it.

3 Method

This chapter starts by illustrating the research philosophy. Then the design of the research is presented; this includes illustrations on methodological choice with reasoning and problematizing the chosen strategies. The literature review is given as well, showing its importance within this study. Data collection is explained by mentioning updates on the situation in Syria. The data collection part explains why the author has chosen the secondary source of data and what limitations and advantages this source of data has. In addition, data collection offers an explanation of why UNHCR has been taken as a case study among the other organizations in Syria.

In the data assurance section, some additional efforts have been paid to ensure strict data quality standards. Finally, data analysis has been designed to fit the methods chapter as overall. Hermeneutics, the adopted data analysis method, is presented later in the data analysis section, illustrating gathering and analyzing data step-by-step.

3.1 Research philosophy

Ontology explains how the author perceives reality and what can be known from this reality (Guba & Lincoln 1994). It interprets the way the researcher sees the relationship between the studied phenomenon and the social actors concerned with its existence (Saunders *et al.* 2009). The ontology includes two different views on the relationship between the phenomenon and the human actors related to it; subjectivism or objectivism (Saunders *et al.* 2007). Objectivism is a position that assumes that the social aspect is independent of the social actors related to it (Guba & Lincoln 1994). On the other hand, subjectivism asserts that the social phenomenon is constructed through its social actors' perceptions and actions (Saunders *et al.* 2009; Bryman & Bell 2011).

On the other hand, epistemology is concerned with describing what we can know and what we cannot and how to approach the desired knowledge (Saunders *et al.* 2009; Bryman & Bell 2011). Positivist epistemology admits only the experience captured through senses and aims to develop generalizable laws by testing hypotheses or presumptions (Bryman & Bell 2011). Further, positivism assumes that reality can be reached empirically and explained by logical and rational analysis (Leong 2008). In contrast with positivism, at the end of the 19th century, an anti-positivist philosophy has grown refusing to apply the ideology of the natural sciences on the social phenomena, this trend called "Hermeneutics" (Wright 1971 p. 5). Hermeneutics, which attempts to interpret the social action to find causal explanations to the forces behind it, as Weber (1947) describes (Bryman & Bell 2011). Hermeneutics is adopted as the data analysis approach in this study, and it is explained later. Interpretivism, which is in line with hermeneutics, asserts that our knowledge is cumulated, and the social reality is not isolated or independent for the social reality and its human actors; instead, we all, as humans, interact with our social reality, affect it, and are affected by it (Walsham 1995; Bryman & Bell 2011).

Therefore, interpretivism acknowledges the role the human actors play in constructing the researched social reality (Elshafie 2013). In contrast, positivism investigates human behavior as it is unified or stable factor (Gage 1989).

The author was born in Damascus- Syria, he speaks Arabic and has his preconceptions about the conflict there. Therefore, the author interacts with the human subject of this study because he is connected to the phenomena of the humanitarian crisis in Syria, internal displacement, and forced migration. On the other hand, subjectivism asserts the strong relationship between the knower and the known "*Subjectivism in the social sciences refers mainly to individual experience, perception, and interpretations of the world as well as the material conditions and social relations that mold a person's vision*" (Mills *et al.* 2012 p. 2).

Consequently, this gives the reader a keen insight that the ontological subjectivism and epistemological interpretivism are the postures of the author. These philosophical postures are suitable for the study because 1- understanding organizations necessitate an understanding of their environments (Inzerilli 1981), 2- humanitarian aid organizations often work under extremely unpredictable situations (Van Wassenhove 2006), 3- among the other organizational theories, contingency theory is concerned with the uncertainty of the environment (Inzerilli 1981), 4- society and organizations are isomorphic towards each other; this means the information and practices move in a circular way between community and organizations (Mueller, 1994), and 5- societal studies necessitate that the researcher must dive inside the social fabric to be able to understand the phenomenon, which means the researcher must talk the studied social being's language and know the culture or at least understand what the connected human-being wants to tell about the phenomenon (Myers 2009).

After introducing the ontology and epistemology that are adopted in this study, the research design will be defined accordingly next. This means that the research design is markedly influenced by the ontological and epistemological points of view.

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 Procedure of Analysis

The adopted reasoning approach in this study is the abductive approach due to its balanced characteristics between the inductive and deductive approaches. The deductive reasoning approach is more related to the positivist studies (Bryman & Bell 2011). It helps to confirm or reject a theory or hypotheses, while the inductive approach is more related to the qualitative studies to generate new theory (Saunders *et al.* 2009; Bryman & Bell 2011). Moreover, the deductive reasoning approach applies a theory, or general knowledge on a specific domain to confirm or reject the presumptions. In contrast, inductive reasoning is applied when the social researcher attempts to find a new theory by investigating a social reality where the theory "*will be grounded in this reality.*" Hence, it moves from observations to findings and, lastly, to introduce a theory (Saunders *et al.* 2009 p. 503).

This study nether aims to test hypotheses nor to introduce a new theory; instead, it seeks to understand a social reality. The abductive approach is adopted in this study to attain an in-deep understanding of emergency management and planning. Abductive reasoning fits the aim of this study by applying a relationship between the empirical evidence, which is UNHCR, and the theoretical framework (the contingency theory and contingency planning) in order to attain the targeted understanding (Mantere & Ketokivi 2013). Abduction motivates the researcher to understand the case study by setting a "*sufficient or nearly sufficient*" theoretical framework to generate several explanations to the phenomenon or the

aim, which is less linear procedure compared with the deductive and inductive approaches (Ketokivi & Mantere 2010; Saunders *et al.* 2019 p. 152).

Furthermore, the abductive reasoning approach is in line with hermeneutics analysis approach, which assumes that to understand a particular domain, the researcher has to move circularly between the whole knowledge he\she has in regard to the studied reality and the details of this reality in order to uncover more explanations, as described in 3.6.

3.2.2 Strategy of the Research

The case study approach has been chosen in this study among the other methods available to do social-science research, such as experiments, surveys (Yin 2009). Case studies are more appropriate for researches with how-, what- and why- research questions and to study a phenomenon that occurs in contemporary life (Saunders *et al.* 2007; Myers 2009; Yin 2009). Case studies are suitable for researches that are limited to a specific geographical location and seek to examine entities that have a particular purpose intensively (Bryman & Bell 2011). Further, the case study approach is useful to understand an in-deep questioning within a complex phenomenon that is happening in the real world (Yin 2013 p. 1). In addition, case study is an appropriate approach for qualitative researches (Stake 2008).

The case of the UNHCR is implemented in Chapter 4 to answer the how- and what- questions, as shown in section 1.3.1. Besides, the phenomenon is happening currently. Therefore, the case study approach is appropriate for this study, considering that case studies add contributions to knowledge by applying empirical evidence, or more, from real organizations and people in real life, which is in line with the adopted research philosophy (Myers 2009).

3.2.3 Methodology choice

In social or organizational studies, quantitative methods are vital to assess numerical data such as profit or Return on Investment (ROI), but, on the other hand, to investigate people's behaviors and relations within an organization, the qualitative approach is more related and suitable (Greener 2008). Further, qualitative researches provide a more explicit description of peoples' feelings as individuals and as human elements of an organization and their perceptions of the social world (Greener 2008; Saunders *et al.* 2009), which is in the front line with research philosophy.

By integrating social actors' feelings, opinions, and impressions, the qualitative approach enhances the adopted research philosophy. Consequently, the qualitative research approach will be adopted in this study. Besides, as discussed above, the researcher holds an interpretive point of view, in which he aims to see the phenomenon of humanitarian aid in Syria through the relevant human's eyes; thus, qualitative methods are more connected to the ontological path of the researcher and the research subject (Bryman & Bell 2011).

3.3 Empirical background

Reviewing the relevant literature helps in determining how to collect and to analyze data (Bryman & Bell 2011). It is connected to several advantages when conducting research; 1- it provides a broader background to the researcher about the phenomenon being studied, 2- it gives an in-depth understanding of the issue by reading what the other researchers have written about the topic and how they perceive the subject (Given 2008). Therefore, it helps in

defining what the potential success factors or limitations of this study are. Also, the literature review is beneficial in providing sources to strengthen the research (ibid).

The empirical background introduced in the first half of Chapter 4, enriches this study by leading to understanding the mechanisms of the contingency theory and contingency planning, what it is, and what approaches it has from a real-life perspective. The researches' interpretations regarding contingency theory within humanitarian aid organizations will enrich this research in capturing an overall idea of what are the benefits of implanting contingency managerial strategies. Thus, the review may give a better understanding of how UNHCR is working in Syria now and how it could be better in the future. Finally, the empirical background is essential to build up a cumulated knowledge about the phenomenon of this study (Paterson & Higgs 2005); this knowledge will inspire the author how to investigate the phenomenon in Syria. Below, in the data analysis section, the cumulated knowledge will be conceptualized in detail. On the other hand, the empirical review will give an understanding of the theoretical concepts of contingency theory and contingency planning by putting these concepts in a real-life context, which is the humanitarian sector. This understanding is expected to facilitate investigating the case study.

3.4 Data collection

Note: While this section is being written. There is a war raging in north-western Syria. It has so far resulted in the displacement of about 48,000 civilians and the death of about 40 children in February 2020 alone, according to IRC's CEO and president David Miliband's statement on the IRC website on February 27, 2020 (Miliband 2020).

The author aspired to conduct semi-structured interviews with IRC and UNDP. Requests for interviews were sent via email and Facebook. However, there was no response, and the notice mentioned above could be an excuse for these organizations where they indeed work to help people as possible. The time range allocated for the study is shaped by twenty weeks. Therefore, there is no time flexibility to wait for their response and then conduct the interviews and analyze the data, because qualitative primary data analysis is very time demanding (Saunders *et al.* 2009; Bryman & Bell 2011). Hence, the only possible way the collect the data is from secondary sources, mainly from the organizational published documents by UNHCR.

An important consideration that business researchers must be aware of when collecting the data that the data have to be enough for answering the research questions. However, at the same time, these data should not exceed the need of the study in which the data may turn into obstacles more than benefits to the study (Lancaster 2012). Secondary data is information that exists in several forms, such as documents, news articles, websites, or annual reports (ibid). Further, literature as a secondary source of data helps to build an enhanced understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Saunders *et al.* 2007). Some researches need secondary data, while others require secondary and primary data. However, the internet makes it more straightforward to publish and access data (ibid).

For business researches that uses qualitative methods, it could be challenging to find secondary data that takes the same phenomenon (Greener 2008), and this is the case in this study because the humanitarian crisis in Syria, as mentioned several times before, is complex and ongoing. Therefore, there is no one resource of data that can cover the rapidly emergent stories on the ground. Hence the researcher will adapt to this by using a broad base of data

including peer-reviewed articles, books as printed materials or soft copies from the internet, published Ph.D. and master theses, visual elements, published documents from UNHCR, news articles, i.e., from The Guardian, websites, and even literary content if needed such as novels and documentaries. Using literary data is eligible in describing specific human behaviors or social phenomena (Given 2008).

According to Lancaster (2012: 74,75), the choosing of data resources is shaped by many considerations, such as:

1- Time: the collection of data and the number of surveys, if any, must be moderated by the time allocated for the study. This is one motivate that has led to favoring secondary data collecting.
2- Availability and accessibility: Some sorts of data could be highly available, mainly secondary data. However, in some cases collecting specific data can be difficult, for example, due to confidentiality or sensitivity of data. This also an important consideration because the situation in Syria is very complicated, so maybe the people in charge within these organizations will not provide information if they were interviewed more than the reports do.

Secondary data problematizing

Secondary data can be raw data, which may, but not always, require some analysis, or it can be summarized and completed information. Also, business research, particularly those who adopt the case study approach, tend to use this sort of data (Saunders *et al.* 2009). According to Saunders et al. (2009), secondary data resources have many pros and cons. Some of them are mentioned below:

Advantages:
1- Collecting secondary data may save time and money if compared with collecting and analyzing primary data.
2- Unobtrusive: if the researcher needs urgent information, secondary data can be the best option. Besides, secondary data are likely to have higher quality than the primary collected once. Cowton (1998) argued that organizational data are very beneficial, particularly in sensitive situations (Saunders *et al.* 2009 p. 268), as we have here in this study.
3- It can result in unforeseen discoveries: reading and treating secondary data can be advantages in which some new considerations may emerge during re-analyzing documents or other sorts of secondary data.
4- Existence: the secondary data are permanent and available, which makes it easier to audit the finding and the data by other parties.

Disadvantages are presented below, according to Saunders *et al*. (2009) and each, is matched with a potential solution offered from the author's beliefs:

1- Secondary data may be collected in a way that misfits the primary purpose. The in-depth knowledge of the author with the phenomenon being studied can give a clear insight into what data the research needs. Besides, the data analysis approach will avoid this (see below: Data Analysis).
2- Access may be difficult or costly. A conclusion was made when conducting a literature review; the vast majority of the needed data are available from humanitarian

organizations which have a reasonable rate of transparency. Additionally, news articles and the authorized access to the scientific journal articles that SLU offers to the students can fill the data acceptability gap.

3- Aggregations and definitions may be unsuitable.
4- The quality of secondary data is not always good; this will be discussed later in the data assurance section.

Finally, data collection, which takes place in chapter 4, is started by conducting a literature review on humanitarian organizations and contingency planning and practices, then gathering data for the case study of UNHCR in Syria. The case study is implemented by reviewing the published documents of the organization. The data collection is occurring by moving circularly between the organization's published documents on emergency management and policies, and the documents published concerning the organization's action and emergency management in Syria. This dialectical movement asserts the philosophy of this study, which seeks knowledge about the phenomenon from the involved social actors' eyes. Additionally, this circular interpretation of the phenomenon from published documents is in the front line with the hermeneutic approach (Paterson & Higgs 2005), which is explained later in the data analysis section. Moreover, this non-linear procedure is in line with the adopted abductive reasoning.

The case study of UNHCR in Syria has been chosen for several reasons:

1-UNHCR is mandated in Syria to lead and coordinate the international efforts that aim to protect the refugees there and to solve the issues they face (UNHCR n.d), 2-the organization has a significant role in coordinating and leading the efforts to offer a lifeline for people who have fled Syria since 2011 to the neighboring countries, in collaboration with different NGOs and host-governments across the region (UNHCR n.d), 3-UNHCR leads the multi-sectoral response to the refugees' situation in Syria (UNHCR Syria n.d),4-furthermore, it leads three major aid sectors out of eleven activated in Damascus contributing to goals of the UN-coordinated Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) that was issued to save lives, increase the resilience of the Syrian people and protect civilians, and 5-in addition, UNHCR has many vital aid actions implemented in Syria, including legal aid, protection, health, empowering vulnerable people, shelters, health, cash-based aid, and non-food aid (UNHCR Syria 2017, 2018).

The previous points show how much effort the organization provides in order to mitigate the negative impacts of the conflict on civilians. Maybe, it is more official to conduct a multiple-cases study and then to compare the results. However, as we will see in Chapter 4, UNHCR has several actions and partnerships inside Syria that are adequate to extract what the study aims to attain and to compare the results on the ground with the policies on emergency management the organization has designed. Besides, the research will capture the organization's action during a timeline from 2014 until 2020, which gives the ability to offer a comparison over the years.

3.5 Data assurance for secondary resources

Stewart and Kamins (1993) stated that secondary data are lucrative when it comes to evaluation because the data are already collected the collector\ researcher can evaluate data in advance or before using it (Saunders *et al.* 2007).

Reliability, validity, and generalizability are standard evaluation criteria in the quantitative studies (Bryman & Bell 2011). Some scholars suggest them, although as evaluation criteria in qualitative studies such as Saunders et al. (2009). While other scholars tend to use alternative evaluation criteria for qualitative research methods like Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) (Bryman & Bell 2011 p. 395), and Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) as well (Auerbach & Silverstein 2003).

The author tends to adopt the alternative evaluation criteria suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1985,1994) (Bryman & Bell 2011 pp. 395–399) and by Auerbach & Silverstein. The reason behind this decision is that validity and credibility tend to judge the social phenomena as there is only one truth behind it, while there are maybe more than one or even several interpretations for on phenomenon (Auerbach & Silverstein 2003; Bryman & Bell 2011). This is in line with the research philosophy presented above.

3.5.1 Trustworthiness

In Chapter four, there are sub-questions presented after the literature review. These questions will be brought when investigating the case study. Using these sub-questions is ensuring a touch on the base, which means the author is repeatedly aware of the primary aim of the study; hence, he will avoid missing the scope of the research, in which the progress still focused on the business administration field (Paterson & Higgs 2005). In addition, to go further in trustworthiness criteria, Bryman and Bell (2011) explain how Guba and Lincoln divide this criterion into sub-headings to illustrate how the qualitative study become more trusted (Bryman & Bell 2011 p. 395).

Credibility: asserts the presenting trusted data resources and analyzing the data using multiple methods or perspectives to compare the outcomes hence, to ensure that the results reflect the truth or the reality as it is (Bryman & Bell 2011).

Transferability: asserts that researchers should dive deeply into the social phenomenon to introduce data or results that can enrich another aspect; Geertz (1973) refers to this process as a thick description of the phenomenon (Geertz 1973; Bryman & Bell 2011).

Confirmability: qualitative methods allocate more space for the researcher to impose his\her perceptions, but confirmability emphasizes that the researcher cannot present these thoughts entirely free (Bryman & Bell 2011). Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) argue that when the researcher presents his\her own thoughts arbitrarily, this called 'Unjustifiable use of subjectivity' which means that the researcher is interpreting the data or the phenomenon depending on personal biases with no regard to what the literature says about the phenomenon (Auerbach & Silverstein 2003 p. 83).

3.5.2 Data Suitability

The researcher has to pay attention to focus on the extent of the secondary data and how these data are relevant to the study in order to avoid incorporating irrelevant data that do not enrich the research questions and aims (Saunders *et al.* 2007). The targeted secondary data have to be relevant to the studied human being, geographical context, and era (Saunders *et al.* 2009). Further, the collector of data must consider the suitability of the data with the original purpose behind collecting it (ibid). Further, since the source of data will be secondary, the researcher should collect the secondary data from well-known organizations or news agencies that can ensure offering trusted data (Saunders *et al.* 2009).

3.5.3 Transparency and Communicability

Transparency and communicability are more concerned with the evaluation of data analysis than the criteria mentioned above. Transparency criteria require that the author illustrates to the reader or the other researchers how the data have been analyzed and how the author arrived the results, this does not mean that the others must agree with the author or not (Auerbach & Silverstein 2003).

On the other hand, communicability means that the author has to provide precise results and interpretations (Auerbach & Silverstein 2003). These interpretations have to show logic when they are presented. Again, it does not mean that the reader has to agree on or not, while the results must be clear and understandable (ibid).

3.5.4 Ethical considerations

As stated before, the author is very connected to the phenomenon, social reality, and the human subjects of this study. Therefore, the results and analysis have to be neutral and unbiased. Furthermore, data will be gathered from secondary resources, which means the absence of those who issued the documents, and the approach of analysis is depending on interpreting the events. Thus the author has to be very careful when illustrating data and consider what the publisher wants really to tell.

3.6 Data analysis

Hermeneutics is one of the most relevant approaches to the interpretivism among the other secondary qualitative data analysis approaches (Bryman & Bell 2011). This approach refers to analyzing the texts and bring the essence of the content, considering the one\ the party who issued it. Consequently, this requires attention and familiarity with the historical, cultural, and social context, which by the content has been released (ibid). Schleiermacher (1977) transformed the classical use of hermeneutics from the illumination of the biblical texts toward understanding the human (Paterson & Higgs 2005). Dilthey (1988) expanded the hermeneutics approach from understanding the individual to understand the social systems and organizations (ibid).

Heideggr (1962) emphasized three cornerstones when seeking to interpret a phenomenon, 1- make familiarity with the past that is related to the aspect, and this is the historical horizon, 2- understanding the present, and 3- provide possibilities for ongoing understanding in the future (Titchen 2000).

Gadamer is one of the most influential theorists on hermeneutics, in his book Truth and Method (1960) he describes the approach in which it helps us to interpret things from other's perspectives, hence, gain an expanded horizon (Clark 2008; Zimmermann 2015). Horizon represents how much knowledge has a person about a particular matter; this knowledge is cumulative (Paterson & Higgs 2005; Clark 2008). Hence, the more breadth the horizon, the deeper the understanding one has (Paterson & Higgs 2005).

Hermeneutics criticizes how the objectivism seeks to understand the world by neutralizing the knowledge and experiences of the researcher (Zimmermann 2015). Besides, hermeneutics argues that we seek to interpret the world because we are parts of it and exist in it; therefore, our perceptions and historical knowledge are essential in understanding (ibid). According to the above, hermeneutics will lead to attaining the aim of this study by illustrating the phenomenon using the case study (the perspective of UNHCR regarding the phenomenon).

3.6.1 Hermeneutics in this study

According to the previous paragraphs, hermeneutics has been chosen as the analysis method for the following reasons:

1- It considers the human being as the constructivist of social reality; this is in line with interpretivism.
2- By inspiring the author to bring essence from texts, counting his\her historical knowledge, hermeneutics is suitable for the adopted subjectivism approach.
3- Hermeneutics addresses the data assurance by comparing between data resources. Besides, it limits the author's biases by requiring the latter to refer repeatedly to the other researchers regarding their interpretation of the phenomenon.

Below, both data collection and data analysis processes through Figure 5, will be explained in detail. The next figure does not divide the study into particular divisions or steps; instead, it has been implemented to present a visualized conceptualization of hermeneutics as an analytical approach within this study.

3.6.2 Explaining Figure 5

Data analysis strategy is explained here to maintain the transparency and communicability of the data analysis approach, as mentioned before in data assurance. Also, the hermeneutics spiral approach requires the unity of the historical knowledge, the subject, and the object of the study (Gürer *et al.* 2015).

The first spiral will be established in Chapter 4 by presenting an empirical background to capture how the other scholars interpret the phenomena of contingency management and planning in humanitarian organizations. Now, spiral one besides Chapters 1 and 2 represent the whole cumulated knowledge, which is called 'Historical Horizon' by the hermeneutics scholars (Malpas 2018). When the empirical background (spiral one) is done, sub-questions will be defined. The aim behind these sub-questions is to investigate the case study by inspiration from the historical horizon 'touch base' (Paterson & Higgs 2005 p. 349). This will ensure the circular movement between the whole knowledge and the case study, as it is emphasized by the hermeneutic approach and the abductive reasoning (Herda 1999; Zimmermann 2015).

The second spiral represents the first part of the case study of UNHCR. Here, the investigation will go through the policies the organization has designed in order to address emergencies during its action. After that, the spiral three takes place as the second part of Chapter 4. The third spiral applies the sub-questions to investigate the work of UNHCR in Syria, thus, to understand how the organization implements its policies on emergency management from a real-life point of view.

Spiral four involves answering the primary research questions according to the whole knowledge that cumulated during the study. Spiral 4 takes place in Chapter 5 and represents the Fusion of Horizons, which means that the case study of UNHCR in Syria will be explained by comparing it to the Chapter 2, in order to make a bridge between the familiar and the unfamiliar (Weinsheimer 1988; Paterson & Higgs 2005; Clark 2008; Malpas 2018).

Practically, Chapter 5 will offer answers to the research questions. Chapter 6 is to discuss the results of this study in light of the empirical background, in order to synthesize the results of this study and the results of the others.

Finally, Chapter 7 includes the conclusions and suggestions for ongoing critique and further studies and the limitations of this research. Further studies will be presented from the perspective that hermeneutics asserts that there is no one absolute truth in social reality (Malpas 2018). Heideggr (1962) emphasizes three cornerstones when seeking interpretations: 1- become familiar with the past, 2- introduce the present, and 3- provide possibilities for ongoing understanding in the future (Titchen 2000; Paterson & Higgs 2005). In addition, Bontekoe (1996) asserts that the 'art' of questioning in hermeneutics implies that experiencing the world demands that one has more questions rather than answers (Bontekoe 1996 p. 115). These questions, according to Gadamer, are the vital tool to know more, and they are endless, where each question paves the way for another one; this process is called the 'openness of question' (ibid

Spiral 1
empirical background on contingency planning and practices

Cumulated knowledge
Chapter1
Chapter2

Sub-questions identified

Whole knowledge

Spiral 2
Planning for emergencies in UNHCR.

The whole knowledge is extended after reviewing UNHCR's policies regarding planning for emergencies.

Spiral 3
The Case Study of UNHCR in Syria, answering the sub-questions

Whole knowledge now is packed by understanding of how the organization practices its policies on the ground

Spiral 4
Analysis and results (Fusion of Horizons > Answering RQs)

Conclusions

Publishing and opening the door for ongoing critique and further studies

Figure 5. Hermeneutics Spiral adapted from (Paterson & Higgs 2005 p. 344,345; Gürer et al. 2015 p. 167).

4 Empirical Background

This chapter introduces the empirical background. It starts by highlighting the humanitarian sector. Then, the contingency planning and the different approaches for planning are provided. After that, Chapter 4 presents the policies and procedures of preparedness planning and the strategic policy concerning emergency adopted by UNHCR. The previous elements pave the way to define the sub-questions to investigate the case study. Finally, the case study of UNHCR with different dimensions and concentrations is explained by answering the sub-questions.

4.1 Humanitarian aid organizations and contingency planning

This part will offer a review of the humanitarian organizations and will include the issues related to uncertainty and the different aspects to meet the unpredictability of crises.

4.1.1 Highlighting humanitarian aid organizations

Humanitarian aid organizations are witnessing improvements and developments since the early 21st century, and they are even radically changed compared with the humanitarian actions in the 1980s (Ryfman 2007). Contrary, the crises become more complex, accompanied by more turbulent and hostile circumstances (Richardson 1994). Recently, humanitarian organizations are being asked for more transparency from donors (Van Wassenhove 2006). The auditing does not include only the cash flows like inputs and outputs; instead, it is expanded to monitor the effectiveness of the aid. Not long ago, these organizations started to consider the importance of logistics management as the private sector did but before a considerable period (ibid). The classical approach of crisis-responding management could be proscribed as reactive, in which the responding for a crisis occurs aftermath (Richardson 1994).

On the other hand, the modern world is more likely to develop hostile circumstances (Richardson 1994). This means that societies and organizations become increasingly crisis-prone. Consequently, relief organizations must develop a two-sided strategic managerial approach that takes into account understanding social and organizational life, and how the societies and organizations have to be developed in order to be proactive, thus crisis avoidants. Further, strategic management paradigms can influence the worker in the relief organizations to be a crisis avoider rather than crisis manager (ibid).

Generally spoken, relief organizations provide the Syrian victims short- and long-term aid and sustainable assistance, as mentioned before in chapter one. These efforts are increasing the resiliency of victims or society at large (UNDP 2018). The resilient society is more change-resistant and adaptive, and it is more likely to come over disasters faster than another community which did not adopt resiliency strategies or plans (Manyena *et al.* 2011; Hermann & Pagé 2016). Further, the international and regional efforts are needed in coping with complex issues such as displacement and forced migration (Türk 2019). To deal with displacement, a holistic approach, international, national, and regional coordination must take place in order to find root solutions that can decline or overcome the phenomenon of migration (ibid). To this extent, overcoming migration does not mean that humanitarian organizations must prevent the movement of victims who seek survival. Instead, these

organizations are asked to apply broad cooperation between different stakeholders to prevent uprooting these victims from their places (Türk 2019).

In their study on the aid and development NGOs, Hermann and Pagé (2016) found that the managers of the aid NGOs tend to challenge the constraints of their environments, even if they forced to find informal paths (Hermann & Pagé 2016). Besides, the study reveals that managers of aid NGOs prefer non-hierarchical management structures. They assume it is easier to face the uncertainty of the emergencies if the manager can practice informal communications and processes, where they describe their tasks as short-run and require fast responses. In contrast, the development NGOs managers show more tendency to formal and hierarchical communications and practices (ibid).

4.1.2 Planning for uncertainty within humanitarian organizations

As mentioned before, humanitarian aid organizations act within relatively higher degrees of uncertainty, where emergencies are often unpredictable in which, when they occur and how they develop (Liberatore *et al.* 2013). Besides, wars are likely to develop much more unpredictable environments (Benini 1997). Even though humanitarian organizations know that unpredictability lies within their work environments, but these organizations sometimes fail to address their uncertain environments (ibid).

Humanitarian organizations usually follow three methods of contingency planning; each of them is used on several factors to meet the organization's tasks, i.e., degree of threat, degree of uncertainty. These sorts of contingency planning influenced by a variety of factors, such as the flexibility of the organization's hierarchical structure and the ability to apply the desired Strategy (Choularton 2007).

1- Scenario-based contingency planning:
It is the most used approach to contingency planning (Choularton 2007). Simply the organization develops different scenarios for a particular issue; then, it develops a response plan for each of these scenarios. This sort of contingency planning is bet used when the emergency or the risk factor already exists, and it demands a detailed plan that covers all the sides of this emergency (ibid).

Scenario-based contingency planning involves a process divided into three key factors; the governance of these factors will later judge the success of the contingency planning or not, the three factors are detailed below within three stages according to (Watkins & Bazerman 2003).

- The first stage: recognizing disasters is a vital factor in building effective plans; contrary, negligent this emergency may lead the organization to a considerable catastrophe soon.

- The second stage: after the manger has recognized the emergency, he\she must reflect appropriate attention to this emergency in which it is prioritized well in the organization.

- The third stage: once the manger recognized and prioritized a particular issue, the manager has to respond adequately to this contingent; otherwise, it will be mobilization fail.

2- Preparedness Planning:
Taking this approach means that the organization starts to identify its capacities, resources, roles, and responsibilities in order to respond timely and efficiently to the contingent once it occurs (IFRC 2000). This approach becomes increasingly adopted to check out how capable the organization is to face emergencies by developing a series of reactions to specific or general crises, then the organization investigates how to increase the capacity or to reduce an existing gap in planning (Choularton 2007).

Preparedness planning helps to define a set of plans to face an emergency, but all that is occurring within a state of uncertainty and when an emergency strike indeed, the organization develops a plan that fits the circumstances and its organizational capabilities that have already identified (IFRC 2000).

3- All-Hazards Approach (AHA):
This approach is commonly implemented by emergency planners who work for governments, especially in western countries (Bodas *et al.* 2020). AHA aims to develop a plan that can face a chain of emergencies that have commonalities (Choularton 2007; Bodas *et al.* 2020). The type of planning here is more formal and consistent in which responsibilities, commands, and tasks are profoundly identified, and everyone knows how the outcomes during an emergency should be (Choularton 2007).

4.1.3 Organizational adoption of contingency planning approaches

In order to predict the emergency; thus, the need for contingency planning, organizations adopt indicators to wake up the efforts of the organization. The more deeply organization dives into reality and its potentials, the more ability it has to save more lives through attaining better consciousness, preparedness, and contingency planning (Annan 1999a). The effectiveness of contingency planning during many disasters, for instance, in the former Yugoslavia, stresses the importance of shifting from the culture of reaction on disasters towards prevention disasters' culture, which is more likely to save lives and less costly than the other agendas (Annan 1999b). Also, contingency planning must be clear, workable, and able to be implemented and understood by the regional organization's representatives (WFP 2002; Choularton 2007).

4.1.4 Early Warning and Contingency Planning

Early-warning mechanisms play a crucial role in mitigating and, to some extent, preventing the severe effects of hazards by triggering the contingency exercises (Yang 2003; Choularton 2007). As mentioned above, prevent a disaster is more advantageous compared to the reaction to it; early warning mechanisms support the prioritizing of hazard prevention by containing the effects of a sudden emergency (Yang 2003).

Early warning mechanisms and contingency planning play an essential role in enhancing social welfare because they neutralize a significant share of disasters' negative impacts (Bagolong *et al.* 2013). Even though early-warning mechanisms give insights that an onset emergency is likely to strike, but practically they have a weak influence on contingency planning (Choularton 2007; Bagolong *et al.* 2013). The behavior of humans is dynamic, so it is challenging to predict how a particular emergency is coming to develop within the society;

therefore, organizations have to consider the dynamic nature of societies where they act (ibid).

4.2 UNHCR and the contingency planning

UNHCR leads the international efforts of the UN to help victims who lost their homes and forcibly displaced because of war or oppression (Sverige för UNHCR n.d). The organization now experiences the highest displacement record since its establishment addressing around 70.8 million displacement cases in the world (UNHCR n.d). Below, the adopted policies by UNHCR to engage with emergencies are presented.

4.2.1. The UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021

The overview under this heading is based entirely on the published document by UNHCR on January 16, 2017, '*The UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*' (UNHCR 2017b).

UNHCR takes into consideration that today's challenges concerning forced displacement are not the same as before; therefore, the organization has introduced a five-year framework. Between 2017-2021. Moreover, this framework is expected to enhance the organization's cooperation and partnerships with the involved parties in concern of the internal displacement and protection of victims.

As stated above, nowadays, the humanitarian crises become more complex than before; on the other hand, the global environments become more dynamic and unpredictable. Therefore, the UNHCR adopted a new framework in 2017 to enhance its response to these challenges more efficiently over five years until 2021.

- **Protection**
The organization will work vigorously to address refugees and IDPs issues by securing safety and better living conditions to them. Further, it attempts to improve its cross-border aid delivery to ensure that all people of concern are served and secured.

Moreover, the UNHCR emphasizes markedly in its document on the importance of local, regional, and international partnerships on humanitarian action. The organization will reform the engagement paradigms with states and international partners to come over the challenges of internal displacement.

In concern of this study, there is an important point the organization mentioned in the document. The organization will apply creative, principled, and pragmatic approaches in order to address the challenges of internal displacement and statelessness. This view will lead to a responsive solution-setting mechanism by allowing the organization to follow the new trends related to its work by adopting dynamic interpretation and progressive development of laws and practices. The new paradigm is supported by research, analysis, and evidence base. To some extent, this new approach could be referred to as the structural adaptation for changes, as mentioned in Chapter 2, 2.2.1 Structure.

- **Respond**
UNHCR will improve its repose to emergencies and unpredictable changes by strengthening its engagements with states and the other IGOs. Further, the organization will undertake

strategic and evidence-based relationships with parties who concern in order to mobilize efforts to respond timely and effectively to people in need.

This approach illustrates what the policy adopted by UNHCR to respond immediately and effectively to emergencies by reinforcing its capacities and preparedness capabilities.

- **Include**

Promoting the implementation of the Agenda 2030 for the Sustainable Development and leaving no one behind by integrating the refugees more into the host communities. This mission demands cooperation with states and host communities. Further, by empowering the refugees to contribute to their new societies. For this purpose, the organization attempts to shift toward the cash-based humanitarian aid, which enhances the refugees' integration and reinforce the host communities' economies.

- **Empower**

The organization will improve service provision for people of concern, and it will power women and youth in a way that allows them to contribute to their societies. The organization will focus on the most marginalized people by giving them the chance to develop their skills and let their voices affect by ensuring that confidential feedback in place is activated well.

- **Solve**

The organization aims to develop new methods to solve the causes of internal displacement and statelessness radically. UNHCR seeks solutions by expanding its relations and agreement with the national and international players. The organization encourages helping the victims in their lands by secure help there.

4.2.2 The 2017 Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response of the UNHCR

This sub-section provides an overview of the UNHCR's 2017 policy and has been totally summarized from the document published by the UNHCR in 2017 under the title '*Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response*' (UNHCR 2017a).

In 2017 the UNHCR introduced the Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response replacing the former one which is taking place since 2015. This policy reflects the experiences of the UNHCR that have been captured through many lessons during its work in the humanitarian context. Further, the new policy explains how the organization will respond and engage with emergencies in line with the Strategy of 2017 mentioned above. The policy reflects UNHCR's efforts to improve its action within several areas. The improvements will shape the organization's engagement with emergencies, respond, and preparedness.

1- The improvements the policy of 2017 involves

- Enhancing the accessibility of resources and simplify the procedures to ensure a faster response.
- Continues reviewing system for resources and operational capacities.
- The organization attempts to Strengthening relationships with potential parties of concern, including states and NGOs.
- Building simplified access to human and financial resources and giving the ability for headquarters to make the decisions in cases of emergency.
- Prioritize the duty of care and putting people at the center.

2- The Policy in Action

UNHCR sets actions to take place according to the situation. It is committed to putting people at the center of its focus. Therefore, when a humanitarian crisis threatens the life, rights, or well-being of the people of concern to UNHCR, the latter take immediate action in order to prevent risks on these people.

According to the situation's complexity and risk and capacities of the regional operation where the emergency occurs, or it is expected to, the policy defines three levels of actions that shape the response of UNHCR.

- Emergency Level 1: proactive preparedness
    It takes place when an emergency is likely to occur, but it is exceeding the capacities of a country's operation. The situation, in this case, means that the existing resources lack sufficient capabilities to respond adequately. This level may contain coaching the stuff or improving other resources.

    The level one includes several procedures mentioning some of them will be useful for this study.

    The Pre-emergency phase includes practices that will be implemented by all UNHCR representatives and country operations. The country operations must complete an annual risk analysis for emergencies taking the minimum preparedness level. The country operation which measures an emergency as high-risk will be listed on the high alert list for emergency preparedness. In addition, the country operation will implement Preparedness Action Plan (PAP) also, if needed, a scenario-based contingency plan by collaboration with other parties of concern.

    Furthermore, in case the risk is associated with non-refugee circumstances, in other words, out of the central organization activity, UNHCR participates by putting preparedness initiatives and Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP). The participation of UNHCR with the other UN-agencies is arranged by (and called) the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

- Emergency Level 2: stepped-up Bureau support
    Level 2 is activated when a particular operation needs additional support to respond timely and expertly. The country operation, when this level is activated, is packed by the Regional Bureau.

- Emergency Level 3: whole-of-UNHCR response
    Activation Emergency Level 3 means that the risk of a crisis has serious consequences that transcend what the country operation or the Original Bureau can absorb. In this case, a cooperation of the whole-of- UNHCR is required.

4.2.3 The 2019 Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response of the UNHCR, Updated, and Revised

This section is reviewed and concluded from the published document "*Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response, Updated, and Revised, 2019*" (UNHCR 2019d).

In 2019 the organization published an updated and revisited version of its policy in 2017. The main updated points that are of the importance of being mentioned in this study are discussed below.

1- The revised version of 2019 realigns the Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response with the IASC system concerning emergency activation, implication, and expiration.
2- The updates of 2019 are to ensure that the policy fits the current guidance on emergency, preparedness, and high-risk situations.
3- The UNHCR will increase its proactive engagement with emergencies and preparedness for hazards.
4- In line with previously mentioned policies, UNHCR will support the host governments regarding refugees' flux. It will engage more with civilian movements and the private sector to ensure more developed managing of internal displacement. The organization will play a sophisticated role in the IASC protocol.

After presenting how the organization is planning to deal with different aspects of risk, how it will behave in different circumstances, and how it will engage with partners, it is time now to investigate theses plans from a real-life example, which is the UNHCR in Syria.

The punch of documents the organization publishes every quart-year and half-year. Each felid of its action is given its own touch and detailing, as the reader can observe on the UNHCR's webpage, Publications (UNHCR n.d). Therefore, to avoid collecting mass-scale data that can demand very long analyzing time and keep the focus on the study's object, the author tends to analyze only the End-of-Year Reports.

4.3 The Sub-questions extracted from the empirical background

According to the plan that is explained in the data analysis part 3.6, and figure 5, it is time to determine the sub-questions after the empirical background. Besides, after the case study, a resume will emerge and defined.

1- What kind of aid does the organization provide victims?
2- What is the degree of uncertainty the organization encounters and does it cooperate with other parties to receive logistic\or additional support?
3- How does UNHCR address the uncertainty of the operational environment in Syria?
4- What are the challenges that are facing the organization in Syria?
5- What are the improvements\ learned lessons the organization attained during its action in Syria?
6- How can the performance of UNCR be described?
7- How can the structure of UNHCR be described?

4.4 UNHCR in Syria

The presence of UNHCR in Syria established in 1991 after the first Iraqi war. The organization expanded its operations in Syria as a response to the onset of the humanitarian crisis in 2011, thus reacting to the increasing number of IDPs. The actions of the organization in Syria were conducted under the HRP framework (UNHCR 2017b).

UNHCR publishes its End-of-Year reports regarding its work in Syria since 2014. The review will cover, therefore, the period from 2014 until June 2019, the last published Fact Sheet about UNHCR in Syria.

4.4.1 What kind of aid does the organization provide victims?

During its work in Syria, the frequently observed sortation of humanitarian aid provided by UNHCR can be summarized as the following:

1- Core Relief Items (CRIs): the term CRIs refers some times to Non-Food Items (NFIs) (UNHCR Syria 2015). These kits include items other than food such as mattresses, plastic sheets, cooking utensils, and hygiene kits provided as humanitarian aid for natural or human-made disasters' victims. These kits can be modified according to need, such as winter or summer conditions (UNHCR Syria 2014).

2- Emergency Shelter: the organization works with different local, international, and UN partners to respond to victims' needs timely and effectively (UNHCR Syria 2014). The rehabilitation approach has been adopted collectively by providing victims emergency shelters and tents supported by rehabilitation facilities such as clean water, sanitation, and cold-prevention equipment (UNHCR Syria 2014). UNHCR safeguards the standers for building shelters regarding shelter collaborations with other agencies (UNHCR Syria 2014, 2015).

3- Protection: The organization in Syria works hard to access the inaccessible areas because of the conflict. It coordinates with different NGOs, local government institutions, and other UN Parties to reach and help the victims. UNHCR has several initiatives to engage with local communities in helping affected individuals. Further, it pays crucial attention to protect children and women against sexual and gender-based violence.

4- Health: UNHCR provides several health-related aids, including clinics, medication, mental health, and psychosocial support (UNHCR Syria 2014). Significant efforts have been placed to reach vulnerable groups, such as people with chronic diseases like asthma, diabetes, kidney failure, and cancer (UNHCR Syria 2015).

Furthermore, the organization works on providing longer-term aid which is the sustainable livelihoods (UNHCR Syria 2016). The organization empowers IDPs and victims with disabilities by initiating market-oriented programs which focus on building these persons' skills, making them self-resilience (UNHCR Syria 2017). These programs aim to reduce the dependency among people of concern on assistance and rehabilitate them to establish their projects (ibid).

4.4.2 What is the degree of uncertainty the organization encounters, and does it cooperate with other parties to receive logistic\or additional support?

First of all, the situation in Idlib in north-western Syria still unforeseen (UNHCR Syria 2018). The accelerated conflict in Idlib produces a massive number of challenges and cases of victims (UNHCR Syria 2018; UNHCR 2020). The offensive and the military operations

imposed by the Syrian army forces and their Russian allies generate massive cases of IDPs and the risks on the rest of civilians who still there (Slater 2020).

Furthermore, the circumstances, despite the new pandemic of the COVID-19, the virus that spread around the world since December 2019, lead the situation in Idlib for more uncertainty (Forsberg 2020). Until March 2020, there are no confirmed Covid-19 cases, but there is no test equipment, and many treated patients showed the same symptoms as the virus causes (ibid).

In 2016, the organization faced a considerable level of uncertainty concerning the number of potential IDPs because of distributed tensions and conflicts around the country (UNHCR Syria 2016). In 2014 and 2015, the major challenges concerning unpredictability were related to the rapid changes in the political and social contexts on the country level and the regional once (UNHCR Syria 2014, 2015). The uncertainty in 2015 evoked the need for shelters, UNHCR implemented the holistic package view, which means developing the shelter programs with other initiatives such as health and education. The development of efforts regarding shelters has adopted in combined with UNHCR's partners through the Shelter Working Group (ibid).

4.4.3 How does UNHCR address the uncertainty of the operational environment in Syria?

As mentioned before, in the section, 4.1.3 preparedness actions are usually adopted to influence the effects that are likely to occur after predicted risks.

On the other hand, UNHCR asserts that the Preparedness Actions Plan approach is taken as a precautionary strategy against the unpredictably after the Emergency Level one has declared, as stated in section 4.2.3 (UNHCR 2019d). Furthermore, within its strategies regarding the policies on emergency, the organization confirms its tendency the be proactive against hazards by applying preparedness for contingencies (UNHCR 2017a, 2019d).

In conclusion, UNHCR adopts the approach of preparedness action as the leading strategy to meet the uncertainty of the future. In case the situation demands, UNHCR will approve for scenario-based planning as a supplementary strategy (UNHCR 2017a, 2019d). However, during its action in Syria, it was observed that the organization applied the emergency response preparedness to meet the needs there, and the influx IDPs emerged (UNHCR Syria 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018).

4.4.4 What are the challenges that are facing the organization in Syria?

The data below represents the significant challenges UNHCR encounters in Syria from 2014 and onwards. Theses challenges are collected and summarized from the End of Year reports UNHCR publishes on its webpage https://www.unhcr.org/sy/end-of-year-reports-a-year-in-review.

In 2014: Around 12.2 million persons needed humanitarian assistance in 2014, funding gap, changing conflict's conditions, security threatenings on the staff, data shortages regarding IDPs and the host communities, challenges caused by the sanctions affecting the import of the CRIs, and the inflation of the prices which affects the IDPs, rocket strikes near to Aleppo

field office. Moreover, in 2014, the UN received threats from militant groups, which caused a reduction of staff by 50%.

In 2015: NGOs have limited presence and capacities. The nature of the crisis becomes increasingly dynamic, which affects the distribution of the CRIs negatively and mortar strikes.

In 2016: ISIS got more power and control over areas, attacks on humanitarian aid-loaded tracks; many of them were belonging to UNHCR, limited availability of sites that can be used to build shelters, insecurity aspects involving rockets and kidnapping, inaccessibility to several areas in eastern Syria because of ISIS, the continues conflict hinders the organization from accessing the IDPs who increased in 2016 and the declining in funding where the organization obtained only 33% of the budget it needs.

In 2017: Besides the previous challenges, inaccessibility and insecurity issues. Also, a shortage in the number of shelters that can absorb the emerging demand. Shortage in the operational capacities to address the massive amount of the current needs represented by the self-organized returns of IDPs to their destroyed homes and cities. Furthermore, the local partners have limited capabilities, lack of reliable data regarding IDPs, lack of monitoring and assessment capacities, and bureaucratic constraints.

In 2018: Despite the challenges concerning funding and data, the acceptability reached better conditions in 2018—additional problems described as delays or lack of approvals needed by the organization. Moreover, the security situation was sensitives, and the presence of local partners was limited. The self-organized returns of the IDPs, still a challenge in the year.

In 2019: The main challenges witnessed by the organization in Syria in 2019 were caused by the escalated conflict in northern Syria. The battles in Idlib and northern Syria in 2019, introduced massive influxes of IDPs and refugees to the neighboring countries and areas inside Syria. The internal displacement in Syria in 2019 was described as the biggest in the world.

In 2020: UNHCR faces a problematic situation in north-western Syria in Idlib because of the chaos offensive there and the increased number of IDPs (UNHCR 2020). Furthermore, the outcomes and challenges of the pandemic Covid-19 besides airstrikes and military operations, make the protection as a very-challenging task when it comes to protecting the IDPs in tents and overcrowded shelters in the north and north-western Syria (Forsberg 2020; Slater 2020). In addition, the resolution 2165, which makes it possible for the humanitarian sector to deliver aid across borders to the besieged border areas in Syria, expires in January 2020. The UN Security Console could not pass the renewal of it because of the Veto form China and Russian Federation (UN Security Council 2019).

4.4.5 What are the improvements\ learned lessons the organization attained during its action in Syria?

2014: Better aid delivery because of the Resolution 2165, improved and more effective response after applying the WoS framework, enhancing the monitoring and reporting skills in Aleppo, Tartus, and Homs field offices, building up the capacity for child protection among partners, increased capability in accessing hard to reach areas, establishing agreements with new implementing partners in governorates in eastern Syria, the thing is expanding the

UNHCR's presence to 13 Syrian provinces, responding and organizing rapidly to a flux of refugees came from Ninawa in Iraq to the Hassakeh governorate Syria, expanding the presence in Damascus for a third building with opening a new one in Sweida., reaching many besieged positions across Syria either by UNHCR's efforts or by collaboration with other UN or humanitarian actors.

In 2015: the organization "has had to do more with less," as UNHCR describes (UNHCR Syria 2015 p. 32). UNHCR was this year responsible for addressing more cases than 2014 with declined funding. The solution was by adopting cost-efficient CRIs. Moreover, around 865,654 beneficiaries provided protection services, and more than 9,046,097 CRIs dispatched to 3,213,275 vulnerable people in 12 out of 14 governorates. UNHCR reached 33 hard-to-access locations. Despite the increased access challenges, 74 convoys crossed the border thanks to the resolution 2165, providing capacity building traineeships for 375 partner organizations to help them in developing their operational quality, securing more partnerships with other parties, including the Syrian government, and adopting community-based initiatives and capacity building programs to people of concern and partners.

In 2016: The WoS framework led to increased partnerships leading to enhanced information exchanges, reducing overlaps in coverage the response actions. Adapting for the absence of urgent political solutions, the organization coordinated with humanitarian missions in 2016 by implementing the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), which aims to make access for aid easier, enhance protection efforts by promoting the commitments toward international law and support the resilience of the people of concern. Furthermore, UNHCR increased its efforts in regard to community mobilization and self-reliance approaches considering these actions as the basis of providing protection, adopting a framework to offer mobile and capable response units by establishing Community Centers, which involve 25 Outreach Volunteers (ORVs). The ORVs support their related Community Centers by providing information about the community of concern. They inform the Community Centers about the households' needs and risks and inform this community about the services their related Community Centers offer. With the closure of the Nusaybeen crossing point with Turkey, the Hassakeh governorate was out-of-reach by road. As a contingent response, UNHCR secured 36 humanitarian airlifts to Qamishly (beside Hassakeh governorate) from Damascus and Amman in Jordan. Thanks to the resolution 2156, 46 convoys crossed the border. Also, 91,725 individuals benefited from the shelter programs that have been implemented by UNHCR and 13shelter partners. The increase in beneficiaries in 2016 compared with 2015 reached 79%.

In 2017: The organization reached 2.6 million people in need of protection, 27 Community Centers were either reestablished or newly opened. By the end of 2017, the number of Community Centers have reached 92 centers. These centers with their ORVs and the mobile units played in 2017 a crucial role in raising awareness among people about the services the organization offers. Further, they provided vital data about response and preparedness needs. In addition, 56 cross-border convoys took place in 2017, with 1,102,388 people provided winter aid exceeding the target by 10%. UNHCR started to increasingly on self-resilience initiatives and capacity building for people of concern. For this purpose, UNHCR signed a partnership agreement with UNDP. The organization showed closer partnerships with its partners.

In 2018: With an increased number of IDPs and refugees returned to their areas, UNHCR, in 2018, played an essential role in establishing rehabilitation programs for returnees. By the

end of the year, the number of community centers has reached 98 centers with 26 satellite centers, 100 mobile units, and 2,849 ORVs. Increasing the efforts on education and cooperating with the UNCIF. Moreover, reestablishing many schools and houses and improving the collaboration with communities in rebuilding cities and neighborhoods paving the way for IDPs and refugees who decided to come back home. To address the fact that 70% of the population is under extreme poverty in 2018, UNHCR, in collaboration with UNDP and FAO, including national and international NGOs, established innovative livelihood projects. The return of many IDPs and refugees to their areas caused many legal-related challenges this year because of the lack of national ID-cards. As an urgent response to these contingent constraints, UNHCR introduced legal aid programs to provide legal support and documentation.

The year 2018 witnessed several agreements and cooperations with the Syrian government, including arrangements for the civil register, education, and shelter. The organization's representative in Syria asserted the vital role of the partnership with UN agencies and the other partners in securing the immense humanitarian aid needs (UNHCR Syria 2018 p. 7).

In 2018, three emergencies struck in three different places in Syria. The organization addressed these contingencies by its strengthened and well-prepared NFI, Shelter, and protection programs. UNHCR, through the HRP framework, projected the return of around 200,000 people during 2018. Using these projections, UNHCR scaled up its preparedness and response plan for refugee returns.

The number of ORVs reached 2,810, and the community centers reached 97 centers with 100 mobile units. CRI program upgraded to include three activities in 2018; 1- introducing the Emergency CRI program in order to respond timely for the new emerging contingencies, 2- Introducing the vouchers scheme which by, the UNHCR distributes vouchers to be exchanged with items produced by local manufactures which supports the national economy and to create new job opportunities, and 3- to distribute the winter and seasonal items.

UNHCR, as part of its efforts in IDPs' capacity building, introduced the project "Doors and Windows" in 2018 to rehabilitate the destroyed houses and to equip shelters against the cold winters. UNHCR increased the self-sufficiency of individuals by training them to install doors and windows and increased its capacity in regard to receiving the returnee. UNHCR describes the project as "implemented by the community, for the community" (UNHCR Syria 2018 p. 5).

In 2019: The report published in June 2019 by UNHCR emphasizes the role of cooperation with the Syrian Government. Further, the partnership with other UN agencies and NGOs is essential as well. The estimated number of IDPs who returned their areas are determined by 216,200 persons until June 2019. In addition, the organization registered the returnee of 41,570 refugees under the same period. UNHCR allocated significant efforts in 2019 to prepare for more self-organized returnee movements by setting more reliable plans. Community centers, mobile teams, satellite units, and the ORVs played vital roles in attaining effective and timely response (This point was observed in the previous years as well). In 2019, the organization established frameworks to contribute to facilitating a sustainable and safe rehabilitation for the IDPs and refugees return. Also, 2019's work plane aimed to shift the protection framework from an individualized approach to a community-based one.

The strategy of protection in 2019 has been formulated to protect people by reducing vulnerabilities, building self-sufficiency, and encouraging community-based activities.

Concerning the year 2020, there is no End-of-Year document published yet.

4.4.6 How can the performance of UNHCR be described?

By reviewing the End-of-Year reports, the organization publishes on its webpage from 2014 until June 2019; there is no consistent element that can lead to a good view of the performance. Therefore, to answer this question, figure 6 below illustrates data about funding gaps and the number of people who have been reached with CRI among those who are in need from 2015 until 2018. This figure is likely to visualize how the organization maintains a specific performance or attains a better one throughout the years of investigation.
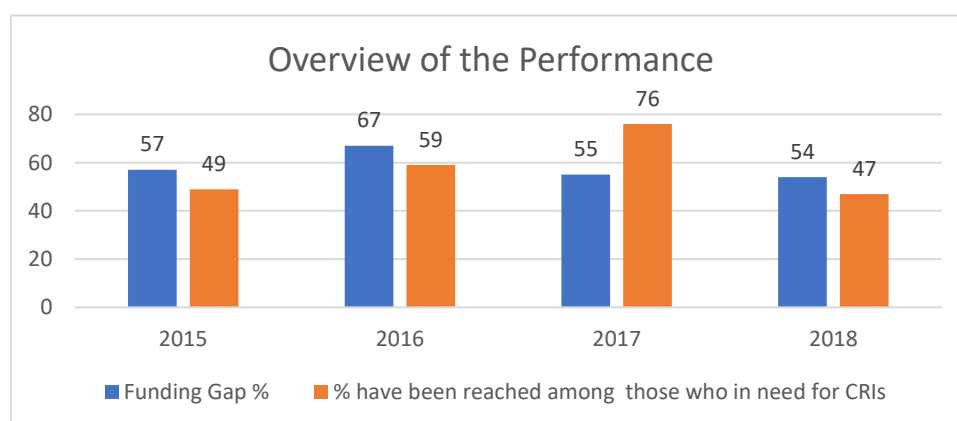
Figure 6: Overview of the UNHCR's performance, adapted from (UNHCR Syria 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018).

4.4.7 How can the structure of UNHCR be described?

There is no direct statement that says whether the management procedures are centralized or not, or, at least, the study did not find such information. However, below, the management attributes and responsibilities are described as UNHCR states in many places. Later on, the challenges the organization faces in Syria and the adopted solutions are presented in a way that can build a comprehensive understanding of management practices.

The Policy on Emergency, Preparedness, and Response 2017 and the revised and updated version of 2019 provide signs on the management and leadership attributes within the UNHCR.

- The activation of the Emergency Level one, which only demands a proactive preparedness, as mentioned in 4.2.3, is mandated to the High Commissioner- Operations Assistant, who draws on the situation analysis provided by the country representative (UNHCR 2019d).
- The Emergency Level Two and Three can be declared only by the High Commissioner.
- The declaration of Emergency levels is shaped by several procedures and routines (UNHCR 2017a, 2019d).

- The compliance with the policy is not optional, and in case the organization sees emerging updates, it will release new or revised plans according to the situation and inform the country operations by these updates (UNHCR 2017a, 2019d).
- The organization adopts the Whole-of-UNHCR approach. The term refers to the unification of the roles, resources, and capabilities of the organization, which are allocated according to need in an optimized way (UNHCR 2019d).
- Furthermore, the organization adopts a centralized cash-management approach to enhance cash positioning ability (UNHCR 2014).
- The High Commissioner is accountable for the organization's emergency operations and has the overall authority for resource allocation.
- HR Staff Services (HRSS): is a vital unit not only within UNHCR but also to be mentioned within this study.

HRSS is responsible for advising the Director on the developments that are needed to change the dynamic organizational needs (UNHCR 2014). It is also committed to ensure a consistent implementation of the administrative rules and to monitor, evaluate, and recommend changes to these rules. HRSS is given the task of managing the resources of its concern to provide timely and effective service for managers and field offices (UNHCR 2014, 2015).

In addition, the reviewed documents that are published by UNHCR regarding management procedures, roles, and accountabilities reflect a centralized approach in management (UNHCR 2015). Every person has specific roles, and authorities and the high commissioner has the power to ask the local representative to step down in case he or she is not qualified to meet a particular emergency and even to keep the existing leadership arrangements or to replace them (UNHCR 2014, 2019d). For more understanding of the UNHCR's management, please refer to Operational Support and Management with the link: unhcr.org/uk/51b1d647b.pdf and the published document Headquarters: https://www.unhcr.org/5461e60f0.pdf

The organization attempts to work collectively with different partners inside and outside Syria to improve the quality of the action and to attain timely response (UNHCR Syria 2014; UNHCR 2015). The Whole of Syria and the IASC frameworks are examples of how UNHCR desires to encourage the coordination between actors in Syria.

The Whole of Syria approach (WoS) is a framework in which humanitarian organizations who work inside Syria or across the Jordanian and Turkish borders operate collectively to enhance the quality of their response. The approach is taking place since September 2014 and aims to make the committed organizations to "respecting the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence" (UNHCR Syria 2014 p. 15). Implementing the WoS approach, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria will continuously in consultations with the UN and other humanitarian organizations (UNHCR Syria 2014).

Furthermore, UNHCR in Syria works in an organized fashion. It prepares a strategic response plan each year to engage with existing and predictable emergencies. The organization mobilizes the resources and capabilities to address the challenges in Syria by formulating an SRP for each year. The Strategic Response Plan (SRP) is one of the WoS principles which, for the first time, brought all local and regional humanitarian actors to operate collectively (UNHCR Syria 2014). According to the SRP principle, the member humanitarian

organizations will together identify the needs, resources, and gaps to attain improved response planning activities through all hubs and cities (ibid).

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC): the humanitarian sector in Syria act under the principles of the IASC. It represents a guide for the involved actors to respect the principles of neutrality, independence, impartiality (UNHCR Syria 2015). UNHCR acts in Syria with other agencies respecting the international laws on human rights and providing equal assistant to people of concern regardless of their gender, background, or ideology (UNHCR Syria 2016).

On the other hand, UNHCR is not cooperating only with organizations; rather, it engages increasingly with local communities in order to increase the self-sufficiency among IDPs and refugees and to empower the local people to assist their communities (UNHCR Syria 2016, 2017). The organization interacts with people in Syria through different channels, most importantly, the community center, the mobile teams, the satellite centers, and the Out-Reach volunteers (ORVs).

- Community Centers: UNHCR has introduced the initiative of the community center, which secures a useful connection channel between societies, the IDPs, and the organization. Through community centers, UNHCR attains better accessibility to vulnerable groups and provides them the assistance they need (UNHCR Syria 2014). UNHCR builds the capacities of Syrian people who can serve the IDPs. Through these centers, they provide the organization number of demands and needs. At the same time, they assist people of concern with different aspects such as awareness-raising, especially about human rights, livelihood, support people with disabilities, clinical therapy, and vulnerable people empowerment (UNHCR Syria 2014, 2016).

- Satellite centers: represents a smaller version of the community center. This initiative has been introduced to reach populations rapidly with chronicle demands to provide them prioritized aid (UNHCR 2017b).

- ORVs and mobile units: Mobile units represent a supplementary outreach capacity to the community center. Each Community Centre is backed by several ORVs who identify communities' needs and protection potentials. They inform as well the communities about the services that community centers provide. Mobile units can reach the vulnerable population with a lack of abilities to access the community centers, for instance, people with disabilities, in remote areas, or people inside a hard-to-reach area (UNHCR Syria 2016, 2017). The mobile units provide a two ways connection channel, in which distributing information to people of concern and supplying assessments about needs and demands to the organizations. These services support UNHCR to implement flexible, qualified, and timely response with an increased ability to predict challenges and emergencies (UNHCR Syria 2016).

5 Analysis and Findings

Analyzing the case study of UNHCR occurs according to the data analysis section in 3.6. The case study of UNHCR in Syria is now about to be interpreted by comparing it with theoretical study Chapter 2, representing the Fusion of Horizons that is introduced in Figure5 in spiral 4. The analysis below is expected to bring up the key findings on how UNHCR addresses the different contingencies and challenges in Syria.

Committing to the Data assurance in 3.5, the analysis will be conducted by bringing the essential elements in Chapter 2. In this way, the author involves the reader in the analysis process showing how the results have emerged.

5.1 Answering the first research question, what is the approach of contingency planning, UNHCR implements in Syria

The empirical review on the contingency planning within UNHCR reveals that the latter holds a point of view in which the current challenges that face the organization are likely to develop more severe outcomes. Therefore, the organization has introduced the UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021, which determines how UNHCR will engage with different contingencies. UNHCR believes that the circumstances it faces concerning the displacement become increasingly unpredictable, also the global conditions are incredibly dynamic; therefore, the organization must adapt to these dynamic challenges by developing updated and revised versions of its policies and arrangements. Also, the organization has updated its policies on emergency preparedness and response in 2017 and released an updated one in 2019 to adapt to the changes in its operational environment.

This ongoing consideration for the global and local circumstances inspires the organization to update its policies regarding emergency management and planning continually, i.e., the Strategic Directions 2017-2021 and the policies on emergency preparedness and response 2015, 2017, and 2019. The development of policies is in line with the main assumptions of contingency theory; 1-there is no one perfect way to manage an organization and, 2- not all the management approaches have the same implications. Moreover, this asserts that UNHCR account for the significance of the learned lessons. Also, the strategic plans that determine how the organization will behave under emergencies are developed and adopted at the strategic management level, i.e., by the High Commissioner. Further, these policies are binding to the regional or the local UNHCR's missions, as stated in 4.4.7, which reflects the centralized approach in policies' designing. On the other hand, as the sub-question 4.4.4 shows, the emergency response plans in Syria are developed by collaborating with the local communities and UNHCR's volunteers, which gives an insight that UNHCR tends to decentralize the adoption of the local response and contingency plans even partly as described below.

The organization adapts for contingencies it faces by implementing the emergency response action, which is supported by the collective response and the WoS approach (UNHCR Syria 2014, 2015, 2016), and if needed, by carrying out scenario-based plans (UNHCR 2017a, 2019d). Moreover, the adaptation for emergencies and designing of response strategies are site-oriented inside Syria in order to produce policies that can recognize the needs for materials and coordination with governments and the other partners in the sector (UNHCR 2019b).

As a result, UNHCR adopts the preparedness planning approach to meet the uncertainty and the contingencies that influence the performance. Also, the organization encounters a lack of funding every year, as Figure 6 explains. To deal with the high level of uncertainty or the shifting war zones as the organization describes it, unpredictable demands, and the lack of funds, UNHCR adopted an integrated preparedness framework. The integrated model of preparedness action held by working with the skilled IDPs and by the collaborations with the other humanitarian organizations. UNHCR is collaborating with the other actors either under the IASC framework or by initiating collaborative structures such as the WoS approach.

5.2 Answering the second research question, how effectively does this approach work, can be illustrated as the following:

UNHCR asserts the value of the community-based solutions allowing the community to serve its members by building up the capacities of IDPs who can work and the other people of concern, taking the sustainability-oriented initiatives as a cornerstone in the recovering communities (UNHCR Syria 2017, 2018; UNHCR 2019c). Furthermore, the organization recognizes the crucial role of the development of social and economic systems since the onset of emergencies (UNHCR 2019d). In addition, UNHCR attempts to meet the contingencies by designing and implementing its emergency response actions and capacity management approaches in place inside Syria (UNHCR 2019c).

The organization adapts to emergencies imposed by the dynamic conflict in Syria by collaborating with the local communities. According to 4.4.5, the organization addressed most of those emergencies and problems by engaging with local communities such as the ORVs and the mobile units, to fill the data gap, and by collaborating with the other relevant organizations to enhance the quality of the response and to attain a promoted resource utilization and distributions.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Donaldson (1999) argues that organizations should maintain consistency between their structure, size, strategy, and environment in order to operate at a satisfactory performance. The following is to analyze how does UNHCR addresses these elements in Syria.

5.2.1 Structure and size

As mentioned before, in Chapter 2, the contingency theorists emphasize that organization must adopt structural adaptations to regain fit with their operational environments in case the latter have changed, as shown in Figure 2 SARFIT. Donaldson (2006) argues that the structural adaptation to address contingencies is definitely an ongoing process, in which the organization moves from misfit to quasi-fit, finally to complete fit as illustrated in Figure 3 Quasi-Fit Lines (Donaldson 2001, 2006).

Back to 4.4.4, UNHCR has been exposed to several challenging circumstances in Syria, such as indirect rocket strikes, which fell in close ranges of the organization's field offices (UNHCR Syria 2014, 2015, 2016). Theses mortar strikes are disturbing the work of the organization and challenging its expansion across Syria. Also, the development of the organization has been subjected to threats because of the shifting war lines, which flicks from an area to another.

It is observed that UNHCR between 2014 and 2019 promoted its structure by integrating the people it works for into the operations, as stated in 4.4.5. The organization strengthens its presence by collaborating with local communities. Moreover, it encourages the existence of community centers, mobile teams, satellite centers, and ORVs throughout Syria. These initiatives strength the presence of the organization by providing a long list of services for both, the people of concern and UNHCR, for instance, by analyzing the risks and demands for resources, "*The establishment of the community centers promotes social mobilization as they offer a space for interaction and socialization among displaced and local communities*" (UNHCR Syria 2014 p. 27).

Despite the challenges, the organization continues to provide assistance for victims and to expand its size throughout Syria. Furthermore, to reach the areas with accessibility obstacles, the organization initiated the satellite centers, ORVs, and mobile units, which supported markedly the effective and timely response the organization desires. Moreover, UNHCR is still opening new field offices and introducing new satellite centers each year.

Concerning structure, UNHCR adopted structural improvements by collaborating with other partners in the sector, integrating and cooperating with the local communities, and by supporting the expansion of the ORVs and the mobile teams. Besides, the community centers reach very effectively people affected by the conflict and assist them. Also, the organization works on building and improving the capabilities of its partners, for example, capacity building related to monitoring capabilities. Also, it supports the skilled IDPs to integrate them in the rehabilitation activities of the destroyed homes and infrastructure. It also builds the capacity of its staff regarding emergency management, for example, through the Emergency Training programs.

Despite the accessibility issues, the community centers, mobile teams, satellite centers, and the ORVs teams give the organization the advantage in offering assistance in the remote areas and the overwhelmed areas and capturing their opinions, demands, and numbers. Reaching more people, especially those in the hard-to-reach areas and those with disabilities, means an ongoing adaptation to the continuously shifting war lines. Further, integrating the local skills to gather statistics and publish information concerning humanitarian aid makes UNHCR more able to allocate the resources and enhance its capabilities.

5.2.2 Strategy

UNHCR's strategy has been exposed to extreme conditions since 2011, as shown in 4.4.4. UNHCR shows a sophisticated ability to absorb and adapt to the main challenges that were stressing the strategy of the organization, such as lack of data and funding, and the shifting war lines between the Syrian hubs and areas.

A positive change developed markedly after 2017 when several areas in Syria became accessible. This is a welcomed transformation in the crisis, but the organization has had to mobilize its limited resources to respond to the increased new demands. As an example, in 2018, new areas became accessible to the humanitarian sector, 1,16 million people required humanitarian assistance, creating unpredictable challenges in terms of numbers and scope (UNHCR Syria 2018).

Also, the returnee of IDPs to their homes and the people reached in the newly accessed areas, have been accompanied by a challenge that these people had a lack of legal documentation such as ID cards and birth documents.

To regain fit with the new circumstances in regard to the strategy, the organization expanded its presence through supporting and developing the ORVs, mobile units, and the satellite centers. These initiatives helped in mobilizing the resources to assist as much as possible people. Furthermore, UNHCR collaborated with the skilled labor it already supports to rehabilitate the destroyed homes paving the way for the returnee to use their homes again.

The lack of funding, as illustrated in Figure 6, represents considerable stress over the Strategic Response Plan (SRP) the organization design for each year. UNHCR adapt to this challenge by reprioritizing its plans to maintain a sustained humanitarian response for the most vulnerable cases, for example in 2015, UNHCR "*forced to significantly reduce the weekly dispatch of CRIs in order to retain the capacity to respond to further emergency displacements*" (UNHCR Syria 2015 p. 11).

By referring to the theoretical framework, unsustainable funding is likely to lead the strategies of humanitarian organizations to very negative impacts adding to that when this lack of financing occurs accompanied by increased demand for resources. In line with the SARFIT model, as mentioned above, UNHCR reallocates the resources to meet the most urgent needs. Further, it cooperates with the local communities and develops their resiliency in order to decline the future demands on aid and other resources.

To respond for the self-organized returnee of IDPs and refugees, UNHCR has begun to encourage the shifting from the individual-based assistance toward the community-based one in order to establish sustainable protection and resiliency for communities, the thing that helps communities to rebuild their opportunities and protect more lives, especially to those who return to their homes. The organization attempts since 2017 to allocate the biggest efforts and resources in favor of the whole community by training individuals to rebuild the destroyed houses, for instance, it ensures a sustainable flow of assistance because those local skilled people will help their communities to recover. These strategies implemented by the organization in Syria assert that it becomes more resilient than before. Despite the lack of funding and the increased demands, the organization implement adapts its SRPs to the contingencies, and it still able to work and attain the SRPs.

The UNHCR's policies on emergency and preparedness of 2017 and 2019 include the strategic objective the organization attempts to attain despite the challenges. Table 1 below illustrates what targets the organization could address between 2014-2018, depending on sub-question 4.4.5.

Table 1. The attained strategic goals of the policies on emergency and preparedness by UNHCR. (self-adopted from the sub-question 4.4.5)

Attained goal	How?
Enhancing accessibility to resources and areas	By implementing the collective response frameworks such as WoS and the Community Centers. Also, by collaborating with local producers to cover the demand for the CRIs overcoming the import parries.
Ongoing assessment system for resources and demands	By adopting the ORVs, mobile units, and the satellite centers, the organization enhances the predictability of assistance demands, especially in the besieged areas.
Simplified access for assistance and putting people at the center	Providing various sorts of aid, i.e., education, health, legal, shelter, protection, cash-based, sustainable livelihoods, and CRIs. Further, informing people about these sorts of aid through the ORVs who visit the remote areas to meet people and provide them information and count their demands.

Also, it is of importance to mention that according to the sub-heading 4.4.5, the organization started in 2019 to step up its efforts in regard to community rebuilding and strengthing. Moreover, the organization in 2018 started to pay more attention to community-based and community-oriented initiatives.

5.2.3 Environment

In general, contemporary crises become more problematic with more violent circumstances (Richardson 1994). Syria, as an operational environment, is an extremely challenging environment for the humanitarian sector to operate within (UNHCR Syria 2014, 2015).

The case study of UNHCR reveals that the organization has to deal with different sorts of emergencies because the conflict in Syria is ongoing. The organization deals with various types of emergencies in Syria. Firstly, UNHCR has to treat the already existing cases it has, such as IDPs, refugees, disabilities, etcetera. Furthermore, the organization must manage the challenges and contingencies that occur while it is working, and, it has to consider that maybe the future will come with more hostilities generating an influx of IDPs—adding to that, the safety concerns of the crisis on the aid workers.

On the other hand, the political environment changes rapidly as well. The conditions of the war influenced by national, regional, and international circumstances. UNHCR According to encounters declined possibility to offer and distribute the humanitarian assistance because of several political barriers such as the expiration of the Resolution 2165 in 2020 will hinder the organization from reaching the besieged areas across borders. Moreover, the sanctions issued by the Arab League and other European countries impose parries on importing the equipment UNHCR needs to provide CRIs and building shelters.

Despite the challenges related to the operations environment, the organization shows high adaptative capacity. It engages with the local communities to fill the gap of data by opening new community centers every year, as the sub-question 4.4.5 reveals. The organization addresses the lack of funding and import barriers by localizing the demand for materials. By implementing the WoS framework with other partners, the organization enhances the accessibility for further areas every year than the previous one, by activating the collective response framework. UNHCR attains every year better and more effective response actions by designing or leading solutions for collective action frameworks. Furthermore, the implementation of the community centers and the ORVs promotes the monitoring ability of the organization by accessing the hard-to-reach areas. In addition, the organization responds to the contingencies in Syria under the IASC framework. The integrative action spirit the IASC and WoS offer, guide the response of the humanitarian sector to act within the principles of neutrality, independence, and impartiality, complying with the Humanitarian Space principle in figure 4.

5.2.4 Performance

It was mentioned in Chapter 2 that the changes in contingencies must be followed by developments in structure, size, or strategy. Donaldson (1996) argues that these adaptations to regain fit with the circumstances of the operational environments justifies why organizations witness incremental innovations and developments (Donaldson 2006). Accordingly, UNHCR expanded its operation in Syria since 2011 (UNHCR Syria 2014). It witnesses different contingencies that impact its action. The organization implements site-

adopted solutions developed inside Syria and attains flexible adaptation to emergencies ensured within the "*The UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021.*" Moreover, the organization updates the policies regarding emergency preparedness and response depending on learned lessons, reflecting the desire to apply creative, principled, and pragmatic approaches in order to address the challenges related to internal displacement and statelessness.

Sub-question 4.4.4 reveals that UNHCR has been subjected to many emergencies leading it to misfit the external conditions. The organization was willing to absorb the shocks of most of the contingencies, as shown in 4.4.5. Enhancing acceptability, building resiliency among IDPs, and coordination with other organizations in the sector all lead UNHCR to stabilize its performance. Figure 6 is an evidence of the stabilization in CRIs distribution the organization could maintain between 2015 and 2018 despite the lack of funding.

5.2.5 Planning

Concerning the annual emergency response action, UNHCR encourages the local adoption of these plans. Moreover, it handles the emerging developments by adopting regulative adjustments such as reconsidering the NFIs' distribution to address the sudden IDPs emergency in 2015. further, the organization adopts initiatives such as the WoS approach and the ORVs to anticipate the demands for assistance more precisely and even in the hard-to-reach areas utilizing the mobile teams and by collaborating with the other aid organizations. It considers the learned lessons from previous years and from the other missions such as developing the Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response of the UNHCR into several versions in 2015, 2017, and 2019. Furthermore, the organization is eager to train its staff members and even more to build the capacity of its partners in Syria to enhance the response quality. Besides, it works to build the capacity of its people of concern in order to turn them from vulnerable to willing individuals.

It is noticeable in the question in 4.4.5 that UNHCR in 2018 started to utilize some learned lessons from events in Syria to build more reliable contingency plans. In 2018, the projections about the returning IDPs led to promote the preparedness capacity of UNHCR to address the IDPs' influxes. Moreover, by working with the local communities, the organization captured an enhanced capability to predict needs and emergencies and, therefore, work in advance to absorb shocks despite lack of funding and resources.

Depending on sub-question 4.4.7, the leadership and management arrangements of UNHCR can be observed in a high-level consistency of administrative procedures and practices. Furthermore, the organization tends to be more active with the other organizations in the sector and to involve the local communities within its response in Syria. The UNHCR's long-term targets in Syria aim at introducing long leased humanitarian assistance, and for this reason, it allocates and mobilizes the resources and capacities in order to approach the following major goals: 1- prioritizing aid distribution depending on needs, 2- enhancing the accessibility of the humanitarian sector, 3- adopting flexible plans and procedures, 4- working collectively to offer a better response, 5- emphasizing the importance of the emergency response planning,6- simplifying the accessibility for resources and 7- distributing the protection services at a larger scale (UNHCR Syria 2015, 2016, 2018).

6 Discussion

This chapter is to discuss what are the others' interpretations of the phenomenon in light of the empirical background in Chapter 4 and what are the results this study came with, in Chapter 5.

This chapter is to compare the relevant studies from other scholars and the results this study came with.

Donaldson argues that the structural adaptation to regain fit will lead the company to incremental improvements and developments (Donaldson 2006). In line with Donaldson's argument, UNHCR Syria is witnessing incremental developments, and it is challenging the operational obstacles in Syria that hinder its presence and expansion. Several examples shed light on these developments, such as providing solutions to address the gap of data by initiating the WoS approach, enhancing accessibility by establishing the ORVs and the mobile teams, and tackling the lack of funding by training the skilled IDPs to become self-sufficient and in order to help the organization in rehabilitating the destroyed houses. Furthermore, on the strategic level, the organization also considers the learned-lessons year after year. Therefore it is introducing updates frequently for its policy on emergency and preparedness as the cases in 2015, 2017, and 2019 in order to attain more effective plans.

Figure 3 explains that organizations move from misfit to complete fit with their operational environments by attaining quasi-fit; for example, the organization may expand its size in case a hazard spread all over the operations area to help more affected people. The case study uncovers a fact that agrees with Figure 3. UNHCR follows an incremental expansion in Syria by opening new field offices to respond to the increased demand and approach more affected people. Furthermore, when a city becomes a conflict zone, it becomes inaccessible to UNHCR, which means that the latter mismatch the new conditions. In order to follow a growth path leading the organization to a quasi-fit strategy, the mobile teams, satellite centers, and ORVs can assist the victims there and provide vital data for the organization.

Chakravarthy (1982) mentioned that the strategy of the organization is not a constant element dealing with a dead environment (Chakravarthy 1982). In line with the previous point, UNHCR implements the principle of the ongoing and flexible identification of the global conditions in order to develop workable strategies and policies that can deal with the changeable local or international conditions (UNHCR 2017b).

The contingency theory asserts that there is no one perfect approach to manage an organization (Betts 2003). Furthermore, Lawrence and Lorsch (1967), argue that the degree of unpredictability of the operational environment determines how the structure should be. The case of UNHCR in Syria shows that the environment there is highly unpredictable, such as the IDPs influxes. Furthermore, the study reveals that UNHCR tries to mitigate this uncertainty by applying more decentralized processes like designing site-oriented emergency or response plans. Also, the organization gives more space for the local communities to capture their opinions and comments in order to adopt more suitable procedures by opening new community centers each year and by utilizing the satellite unites and ORVs in the hard-to-reach areas. These examples show that UNHCR has an open perspective on its structure and can, therefore regulate some processes according to the conditions like reconsidering the resources' dispatch, send mobile units for the destroyed or war-zones and satellite units for

the besieged areas, which is in line with Lawrence and Lorsch's (1967) argument on the contingency theory. In other words, the structure of UNHCR may seem very formal or mechanical, as shown in the sub-heading 4.4.7 and the mentioned external documents. However, the action of UNHCR in Syria reveals that the organization is open to its policies and guidelines and can, therefore, adopt regulative reforms on the annual emergency or response plans to fit the dynamic conditions of the Syrian crisis.

Regarding the literature review, Richardson (1994) argues that contemporary become increasingly complicated. Therefore, the humanitarian sector should develop frameworks to be proactive in response to emergencies and to make societies less crisis-prone (Richardson 1994). According to the results in Chapter 5, UNHCR becomes increasingly proactive by operating collectively and by involving the local communities in measuring the demands through the Community Centers and the ORVs, which provide vital data from the people of concern and the besieged areas. Also, the organization works in Syria by collaborating with the other agencies to enhance the quality of response and to avoid shocks because of the influx of IDPs by insuring optimized data about demands and distribution plans.

As stated before, depending on the uncertainty of the environment, the structure should be designed as dynamic to address changeable situations or mechanic to fit more stable environments (Kessler *et al.* 2017). As a result, form the reviewing UNHCR's action in Syria, the latter adopts predefined accountabilities, roles, and procedures, as shown in the Strategic Directions 2017 2021, and the policies on emergency preparedness and the response of 2017 and 2019. However, the 2017 Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response can give a slight indication of the efforts to decentralize some of the procedures. The policy explains that UNHCR aims to develop simplified access to human and financial resources to the headquarters and to give them the authority to initiate actions in emergencies. Furthermore, as stated in the theoretical study, the scholars regarding planning for emergencies argue that humanitarian aid organizations should be organic and decentralized includes all the relevant parties and people. The study could not find a specific statement regarding decentralized management. Still, it is markedly found that UNHCR in Syria works increasingly with people and organizations under the WoS approach and the Community Centers to provide better response quality and site-oriented policies, and it cooperates with the other UN agencies under the IASC framework (UNHCR Syria 2014, 2015). However, the arguments of Perry & Lindell (2004) and UNISDR (2007), which suggest that organizations should be more open to local conditions. Indeed, UNHCR relies increasingly on the regional and local missions in regulating some of the predefined procedures or emergency plans depending on the conditions on the ground in order to attain optimized utilization of its resources and human capital which can explain that UNHCR depending on learned-lessons in Syria becomes more organic-structured and increasingly opened to the local conditions.

Moreover, Chapter 2 shows that humanitarian aid agencies are supposed to perform within a common framework called "Humanitarian Space" (Van Wassenhove 2006). By introducing the WoS and by working under the IASC framework, the organization has committed to providing aid neutrally respecting human-rights of the beneficiaries regardless of their ideologies, genders, or backgrounds (UNHCR Syria 2014).

UNHCR adopts preparedness planning among the other contingency planning approaches mentioned before. More specifically, IFRC suggests that organizations take this approach must identify their capabilities, rolls, and accountabilities in order to respond efficiently and timely for contingencies (IFRC 2000). Choularton (2007) argues that preparedness planning

is suitable to design a general framework that will help the organization in addressing uncertain future of an emergency, this approach gives the organization the ability to fill the gap in planning or resources if found, meaning that the organization within this approach can reform the plans on the ground according to need. UNHCR introduces an SRP every year to identify the potentials and challenges in Syria. Further, it may conduct revisions on these plans if the case demands such as declining the distribution of CRIs in 2015 to meet potential risks, as mentioned in the results, as mentioned above, this approach makes the structure of UNHCR more flexible to address\absorb the shocks.

Concerning the early warning mechanisms, the literature review on humanitarian organizations uncovers that early warning mechanisms play a vital supplementary role in the success of contingency planning, these mechanisms support the relief organization to be crisis avoidant (Yang 2003; Choularton 2007). The study did not find a specific statement about the early warning mechanisms. However, the missions of the mobile teams, satellite centers, and the ORVs are very similar to theses mechanisms in which these unites provide data from the besieged or the hard-to-reach areas to the organization in order to adopt more suitable or evidence-based solutions or plans.

As mentioned in chapter 2, contingency planning should lead to anticipate potential risks, and, it gives the ability to develop processes, procedures, and arrangements accordingly, in order to help the vulnerable persons or victims during crises, and this also includes the mobilization of resources and human capital, but these emergency plans do not guarantee successful crisis management (Choularton 2007; Eriksson & Mcconnell 2011). Besides, contingency planning is a continuous process that must consider new conditions and previous lessons. UNHCR, in the front line with these considerations, updates its policies on emergencies and response regularly. Also, the organizations do not pass over the learned lessons and adopt the polices and the response plans of each year according to what it has learned and encountered before and what the organization predicts for the coming year. The updates UNHCR implements on its policies such as in 2015, 2017, and 2019 accordingly give a keen insight that the organization considers contingency planning and the related preparedness and response guidelines as ongoing processes. Furthermore, capacity building of the partner organizations in Syria and including multi-stakeholders into the response actions by introducing the WoS approach, the organization deals with continence planning as a multidisciplinary approach, which must include preparedness planning. In addition, UNHCR takes into account the necessity of training the staff and the partner organizations in implementing the emergency plans in order to attain a reliable and advantageous implementation of these plans, where for this purpose, it emphasizes the capacity building of the local NGOs and the other aid workers.

As stated in chapter 2, organizations may adopt formal or informal structures depending on the situation, where dynamic environments require organic structure, and the more stable environments demand a formal one (Burns & Stalker 1961; Perry & Lindell 2004). UNISDR (2007) argues that the organizations which work with disaster management may benefit from their decentralized structures in introducing site-oriented plans and thus motivate the local participation. UNHCR is already working with the local communities in Syria, and it empowers the vulnerable groups to participate through the community centers. Furthermore, the organization collects opinions and feedback from the persons in the remote and besieged areas in order to introduce plans that suit the site needs.

7 Conclusions, Future Study and Limitations

Concluding the study, this chapter provides reflections on the research questions and the aim. The next headings are to introduce the conclusions of each research question and the aim of this study.

7.1 What is the approach of contingency planning, UNHCR implements in Syria

From the results, it can be observed that UNHCR addresses the dynamic and challenging operational environment in Syria by adopting emergency preparedness planning. The organization is willing to meet most of the challenges it faces in Syria, and it was observed the functionality of the preparedness planning to meet the high uncertainty of the Syrian crisis. Scenario-based emergency planning is an approach of contingency planning, but it needs a more predictable environment in order to develop plans to meet the potential circumstances. Therefore, the organization has made an excellent choice by adopting the preparedness planning to design its annual SRPs in Syria, where the conflict develops every while new circumstances, leaving no space to predict the evaluations. Therefore, the adoption of the preparedness planning approach gives the organization the possibility to regulate its annual plans according to the evaluations.

UNHCR utilizes the adoption of preparedness planning by setting out bases for roles, responsibilities, and resources allocation to face an emergency situation, which is the changeable crisis in Syria. When an emergency occurs suddenly, the organization reconsider parts of this plan according to the conditions. Moreover, as described before, the organization adopts formal and hierarchal procedures to drow out strategies, policies, and responsibilities of its members. However, the case in Syria shows that UNHCR tries to keep on its formal and hierarchal procedures as appropriate with a tendency to give the local and regional managers broader authority to engage with different events and for the local communities to participate in designing and implementing site-adopted solutions.

Furthermore, the organization is eager to implement collective response actions in Syria by coordinating with several international and local parties. The benefits of the collective response approach UNHCR implements and supports in Syria represent unexpected results to the auther. The organization becomes increasingly able to meet the challenges of the conflict, the lack of data, and the lack of funding by cooperating with other organizations in the sector to distribute the heavy load the crisis causes every year.

7.2 How effectively does this approach works

As stated above, by coordinating with the other organizations in Syria, UNHCR becomes more proactive with enhanced functionality. Perhaps, if the organization acts independently in Syria, its performance will not be as it is now. Dealing with the extreme challenges caused by the conflict in Syria, emergency preparedness planning has proved satisfactory outcomes. Moreover, it is of importance to mention the role of the resiliency of the Syrian communities plays during the battle. Volunteers and workers in the besieged areas provide a two-channel connection tool between the organization and the people who need assistance.

Moreover, the results uncovered that UNHCR is flexible in revising its plans on resource allocation to respond to different dynamic needs, especially in 2015 and onwards. However, referring to the results in regard to the performance, emergency preparedness planning was a comprehensive approach enabling the organization to maintain stability despite the very challenging restrictions became from the lack of funding, lack of data, and the shifting war zones.

In addition, it is observed that even though UNHCR is an international organization that regularly publishes strategies on emergency and preparedness and documents that describe the responsibilities of managers, headquarters, units, and local representatives, but it also shows flexibility in dealing with emergencies. The organization was able to overcome the majority of the challenges in Syria introduced in this study, and it was efficiently adapting its emergency plans to fit the changeable conditions frequently. Furthermore, the organization shows the ability to readjust its structure and strategies in Syria in light of the local, regional, and international requirements despite the threatenings such as indirect rocket attacks.

7.3 The aim of the study

This study aims to develop an understanding of how efficient contingency planning is in enabling humanitarian organizations to reach their objectives effectively during ongoing and extremely violent conditions — taking the response of UNHCR in Syria as a case study. The case study of UNHCR Syria uncovers that it is possible for humanitarian aid organizations to survive and even to operate effectively in very complex and extreme environments. One of the most important reasons for the UNHCR's success in Syria is the cooperation with local and international organizations. As a result, the organization obtains more accurate data on humanitarian needs, therefore, increased ability to prioritize resources allocation. The organization is also working on building the capacity of local organizations, which has reduced the burden on it.

The statement above may reflect that UNHCR can absorb most of the shocks and address the majority of the emergencies in Syria by collaborating with several parties, especially the local communities, who are more able to provide the appropriate recipes for their issues. Further-more, the coordination with aid organizations across Syria and introducing solutions to collecting data from the remote and besieged areas are examples of factors that help the organization to be proactive, leading it to build more accurate emergency plans.

It is also of importance to mention that the flexibility UNHCR shows in readjusting its structure and strategies in Syria, is also a critical success factor in finding and implementing new solutions continuously. UNHCR has been subjected to several threatenings in Syria, such as the indirect gunfires and the rocket strikes besides its offices, but it could find new inventions such as the mobile units and the ORVs. Also, the organization is able to readjust its response plans thanks to this flexibility, like reconsidering the CRIs dispatch in 2015 to respond to other emergencies and training the skilled IDPs to rebuild the destroyed houses to address the returnees' increased waves after 2017.

In addition, involving local communities onboard and initiating site-oriented polices have been observed within this study as very vital solutions to meet uncertainties and the gap in data. Capacity building of victims and empowering them are beneficial elements, enable UNHCR to overcome the lack of funding in which those people become more able to assist themselves and their families. Besides, responding to crises collectively and involving the

capabilities of the local communities can enable the humanitarian organizations and infected communities to bounce back and, in some cases, to bounce forward.

7.4 Future study

As mentioned in the data analysis part, hermeneutics asserts that there is no one absolute truth about a social phenomenon. Every answer paves the way for a new question because questioning is an ongoing process. Therefore, the research suggests expanding the scope in the future to involve the perspectives of the benefices in order to capture their feedback on the assistance they receive. Furthermore, it will be the right approach if the next study backed by another or more case study to provide a comparative view of the phenomenon.

7.5 Limitations

The study approached its aim, and the analysis provided a satisfactory view of the results, even though there were many challenges faced by the research, introduced below:

The conflict in Syria is ongoing; therefore, it is not possible to gather data in place due to safety concerns. Moreover, as mentioned before, in the data collection part, the researcher aspired to collect primary data, but the requests for interviews did not meet a response from IRC and UNDP.

In addition, the crisis in Syria is unique, and the studied phenomenon is very problematic because it is connected to several aspects and considerations, such as the local, regional, and international political conditions. The study is shaped by only one case study, and it could be more advantageous if the research included several cases. However, UNHCR has been chosen among the others due to its very crucial role in Syria.

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