

State of the world's emergencies

A briefing for UK parliamentarians



About Bond

Bond is the UK network for organisations working in international development. We unite and support a diverse network of over 450 civil society organisations and allies to help eradicate global poverty, inequality and injustice. We work to influence governments and policy-makers, develop the skills of people in the sector, build organisational capacity and share expertise.

Acknowledgements

This briefing was produced by Bond's Humanitarian and Conflict Policy groups. Bond groups are spaces where our members share expertise and best practice, work together on collective policy responses to key issues, and influence governmental and institutional decision-making.

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State of the world's emergencies: a briefing for UK parliamentarians,
September 2017

Published by Bond, Society Building, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL, UK

Registered Charity No. 1068839 Company Registration No. 3395681
(England and Wales)

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Front cover image:

Second airstrike on Douma's main market by the Syrian Regime's MIGs, causing the death of more than 100 civilians and more than 200 injuries © Dimashqi Lens

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Image below:

Two seasons of failed rains and insecurity has pushed 155,000 people from rural areas in to the provincial capital of the Bay region in South West Somalia
© Peter Caton/Mercy Corps



List of acronyms

- CAR** Central African Republic
- CSSF** Conflict, Stability and Security Fund
- DDR** disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
- DFID** UK Department for International Development
- DRC** Democratic Republic of the Congo
- FAC** UK Foreign Affairs Committee
- FAO** Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations
- FCO** UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- ICC** International Criminal Court
- IDPs** internally displaced persons
- IGAD** Intergovernmental Authority on Development;
- IHL** international humanitarian law
- IPC** infection prevention and control
- Isis** Islamic State;
- KRI** Kurdistan Region of Iraq
- LRA** Lord's Resistance Army
- MINUSCA** UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR
- MONUSCO** UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
- NCDs** non-communicable diseases
- NGOs** non-governmental organisations
- OCHA** UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
- ODA** Official Development Assistance
- SDGs** Sustainable Development Goals
- SGBV** sexual and gender-based violence
- UNAMA** UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
- UNAMID** African Union - United Nations Mission in Darfur
- UNHCR** UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UN Refugee Agency)
- UNMISS** UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan
- WHS** World Humanitarian Summit

Introduction

This briefing has been put together by a significant number of international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) under the leadership of Bond's Humanitarian and Conflict Policy groups. These NGOs are either actively operational in these contexts or working to raise awareness in the UK of the challenges faced by people experiencing humanitarian disasters, conflict and upheaval.

This briefing is designed to give new and returning members of parliament a rapid overview of some of the world's most complex and protracted emergencies. It highlights actions which parliamentarians can take to ensure the UK most effectively delivers on its moral and political responsibilities as a key actor on the global stage. It begins with summaries of key issues across humanitarian crisis and conflict settings, followed by short summaries of ten of the world's most complex emergencies. Humanitarian issues are always fast moving and this information is accurate to September 2017.

Over many decades, the UK has been at the forefront of humanitarian relief operations and work on conflict issues. It has used its considerable financial and political influence, as well as intellectual leadership, to help support those trapped in crisis situations. We welcome the UK's commitment to spend 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) on aid to help alleviate global poverty and to focus 50% of the UK Department for International Development's (DFID) budget in fragile states and regions.¹

At a time when the UK is assessing its international role, we trust you will continue to build on this global legacy, and use your office to engage, provide oversight and influence UK action. Only with your support can we not only save but also transform lives, so that more people can live free from violence and fear.

There are a number of ways in which parliamentarians can be active in addressing these issues. You can table questions and debates, and write to and meet with Ministers to raise issues of concern. Equally many of the countries covered have related All Party Parliamentary Groups which are open to new membership.



19 year old Fatima Abdi Iman getting clean water in a camp in Baidoa, Somalia.
© Mercy Corps/Peter Caton



For a personal briefing on any of the issues covered, please use the contact information provided at the end of each chapter or contact Bond's public affairs and government relations manager, Alison Stiby Harris asharris@bond.org.uk

Why the UK must respond to crisis and conflict

Today two billion people live in countries where development is undermined by fragility, conflict, and violence. By 2030, it is projected that 46% of people living in extreme poverty will be those living in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, up from 17% today.² More and more people affected by conflict and crises urgently require food, water, shelter and other assistance to survive. New and ongoing conflicts force ever greater numbers of people from their homes. There is an urgent need for the UK to continue to prioritise its lifesaving work on crisis and conflict.



Man holding gun at cattle camp in South Sudan
© Saferworld/Marcus Perkins

20 million people are currently facing starvation and famine in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and Nigeria.³ The UN has called this "the largest humanitarian crisis since the creation of the United Nations."⁴ One person every three seconds was displaced in 2016 as a result of war and persecution, bringing the global number up to 65.6 million refugees, asylum-seekers and internally-displaced people (IDPs) at year end, compared to 59.5 million just 24 months earlier.⁵

The conflict in Syria has now entered its seventh year, and the conflict in South Sudan has seen the fastest-growing levels of displacement. In Yemen the total number of suspected cholera cases has hit 500,000 with nearly 2000 people dying since the outbreak at

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the end of April. The international community needs to respond to these crises by providing immediate assistance to meet people's needs as well as supporting long-lasting, political solutions to the drivers of conflict.

Key challenges

The key challenges to humanitarian action are outlined below. This briefing recommends that the UK government works to address these issues as part of a comprehensive response to conflicts and emergencies:

Shrinking humanitarian space

The space for humanitarian NGOs working in highly insecure environments is becoming increasingly restricted. In 2016, 101 aid workers were killed, 98 wounded and 89 kidnapped.⁶ Civilian facilities like hospitals and schools are also increasingly targeted. Humanitarian assistance must be delivered based on the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. These "humanitarian principles" are vital for ensuring access to those most in need, acceptance by armed actors, and the safety of aid workers. The risks to aid workers, and their ability to deliver aid, are heightened when this work is perceived to be motivated by political, economic, military or other considerations.

When governments talk about humanitarian aid being used as a tool against terrorist groups, it contributes to this negative politicised perception, so governments must avoid blurring these objectives. The use of military assets to support the delivery of humanitarian assistance also has implications for the perceptions of the independence, neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian aid, potentially undermining access and workers' safety. It is critical that military assets are used in line with UN guidelines on the use of foreign military and civil defence assets in disaster relief.⁷



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Civic space, human rights, and inclusive peace

Globally, the space for those who defend human rights, speak out for justice, or challenge violent actors and repressive governments, is in continuous decline. The UK government and parliamentarians have an important role to play in challenging this, defending basic rights and freedoms, and upholding international norms and standards. This also means making foreign policy decisions that reinforce and do not undermine human rights.

The UK should also push for the inclusion of civil society in local, national and international peace processes, making sure that women, youth and other marginalised voices are part of the discussion. Too often, elite deals are agreed that do not take into account the needs of wider society, decreasing the prospects that agreements will be sustainable in the longer term.

Funding gaps

Ongoing and new crises left an estimated 164.2 million people in 47 countries in need of international humanitarian assistance in 2016.⁸ The amount of funding going to UN-coordinated appeals rose by 12% in 2016, still leaving a 40% global shortfall.⁹ Future humanitarian funding will need to be increased to meet growing global needs.

The ways in which funds are delivered must also change. Experience illustrates the importance of predictable, timely and flexible multi-year funding to enable partners to prepare for and respond to recurrent humanitarian crises. At the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) many donor governments, including the UK, made commitments to deliver multi-year humanitarian funding as part of the Grand Bargain to reform humanitarian financing, which included improved access to funding for local actors.¹⁰

Civilian protection

There has been a collective failure to provide meaningful protection to civilians during conflict. Evidence from Syria, Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Central African Republic (CAR) and South Sudan, where civilians continue to suffer appalling human rights abuses, highlights the need to urgently prioritise civilian protection. This requires insistence on compliance with International Humanitarian Law (“the laws of war”), International Human Rights Law and International Refugee Law by all conflict parties and their supporters, and a greater emphasis on civilian protection in UN peacekeeping missions.

Children, older people and disability in crises and conflict

Nearly 28 million children have been forced to leave their homes because of conflict and more than half of the world's refugees are now children.¹¹ More than 245 million children are estimated to be living in conflict zones, with implications for their education and development, as well as peace and stability in the longer term.¹² In addition to risks of death and injury, children caught up in conflict are often exposed to further exploitation and violence at unprecedented levels, including recruitment by armed groups, sexual abuse, trafficking, forced labour and child marriage.

Globally, one in eight people are over the age of 60, 15% are living with some kind of disability, and 26% of the world's population are aged 14 or under.¹³ Children, older people and people with disabilities of all ages face significant barriers in accessing humanitarian assistance and often require special protection to ensure their safety and well-being during emergencies. For example, older people have high mortality rates from noncommunicable diseases due to interruptions in treatment, and their malnutrition risks are often poorly understood. Ensuring appropriate and accessible assistance, and consulting those affected on the design and delivery of relief, is critical to the accountability and effectiveness of assistance.

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Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)

A decrease in security due to crises leads to increased vulnerability to all forms of sexual and gender-based violence for men, women, girls, boys and sexual and gender minorities. Addressing conflict-related sexual violence has been prioritised by the international community, reflected in specific international frameworks and initiatives to address it (such as the UK's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative), but there is much to be done.

Effective crisis response must be informed by sound gender analysis to help ensure that responses are appropriate, needs-based and context-specific. This is crucial for ensuring that the right services are available for survivors of SGBV, or those more at risk. Working in partnership with a diverse range of local and national organisations, including women's rights, children's rights and LGBTI organisations, is vital to effectively preventing and responding to SGBV. The UK can support these organisations, for example, by providing accessible, long-term, flexible funding.

Women's rights in peace and conflict

Women play multiple and varied roles in conflict, including as combatants and peacemakers. They are often marginalised from peace processes, despite evidence showing that peace agreements are more sustainable when women are included.¹⁴ Funding to support women's rights in conflict is extremely limited and local women's rights organisations, despite the front-line support they provide, receive little support.

The UK has made numerous commitments to supporting women's participation as part of a gender-sensitive approach to responding to conflict and crisis.¹⁵ It is crucial that the UK government is encouraged to deliver on these commitments, including supporting women's rights organisations and pushing for women's inclusion in peace processes.

Urban humanitarian response

Rapid global urbanisation poses major challenges for humanitarian response, with increasing numbers of people displaced by conflict heading for cities, towns and villages rather than traditional camps. DFID has been a global leader in addressing this issue. Dealing with more humanitarian crises in cities and responding effectively to the needs of urban residents during crises requires urgent attention, commitment and funding.

Conflict sensitivity

Working in fragile states is complex – external interventions, whether humanitarian, development or wider engagement (i.e. diplomacy, defence or the private sector), will always have an impact on conflict dynamics. Part of effective support for fragile and conflict-affected states is making sure that it is “conflict sensitive”, which includes being informed by a good understanding of the context to “do no harm”, and where possible, promote peace. The UK government should be encouraged to strengthen its promotion of conflict sensitivity, making sure that it is well-informed by a strong conflict analysis, both in its own work and that of its implementing partners.

Conflict prevention and peacebuilding

The UK government has long recognised the value of a preventative approach to addressing conflict, whether through crisis diplomacy when tensions are high, or investing in programming to address the issues that are at the root of conflict. The UK government should continue to support programmes, diplomatic work or other activities that seek to address the issues that cause or drive conflict, informed by a solid understanding of the context and needs of local people. This also means continuing to invest in local peacebuilding activities, including tapping into the potential of community leaders, women’s and youth groups, to provide the space for reconciliation and prevent further escalations of violence.



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The role of the UK

The UK has committed to spending 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) on aid to help alleviate global poverty, and to focus 50% of DFID’s budget in fragile states and regions.¹⁶ The government has also committed to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include a specific set of goals and targets related to building peaceful, just and inclusive societies (set out in Goal 16).

The UK also endorsed the “Grand Bargain” to improve humanitarian financing at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, and can play a leadership role in its implementation.¹⁷ In 2017 – 2018, consultations and negotiations will take place to agree on a Global Compact on refugees and a Global Compact on safe, orderly and regular migration. This is an important opportunity for the UK to work towards global responsibility sharing and to ensure better protection for refugees and migrants.

Following the 2017 general election, joint ministerial posts were established between DFID and the Foreign Office, presenting the opportunity to increase the coherence of UK policy towards particular conflicts and crises. However, more clarification is needed on how these posts will work strategically to improve the UK’s response in these challenging contexts, and avoid politicising aid in the pursuit of objectives other than the alleviation of poverty and suffering. The UK has also established several cross-government funds, including the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF), overseen by the National Security Council, which is intended to address conflict and promote stability; it was subject to a recent parliamentary inquiry¹⁸ and is undergoing a rapid review.¹⁹ The National Security Council produces strategies for all of its focus countries which guide the work of the CSSF and other government funds; their objectives, concerning, are not currently shared with implementing partners or parliament.

Key recommendations

In response to the challenges detailed above, we urge the UK government to:



Garasdoor IDP camp in Baidoa © Steph Ginski/World Vision

- **Promote respect for humanitarian principles**

The UK must ensure continued support for principled, impartial and independent humanitarian response. This means taking precautions not to blur the lines between the UK's political and military objectives, and ensure its commitment and responsibility to impartially meet humanitarian needs. Through diplomatic channels and political pressure, the UK government must continue to push for humanitarian access to ensure assistance reaches those who need it.

- **Create an enabling environment for working in complex contexts**

The UK should support those who are willing to push for change and stand up for human rights and basic freedoms. Recognising that the UK has legitimate security concerns, they must also work to ensure that international NGOs working for peace and responding to crisis are able to work in complex environments. Where appropriate they must also be in contact with armed groups, without fear of falling foul of UK anti-terror legislation.

- **Adequately fund humanitarian response**

The UK Government must maintain its proud tradition of humanitarian funding, and work to increase its flexibility and responsiveness. The fast and generous contributions to address food insecurity and famine in Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen and the Lake Chad Basin are examples of the leadership role the UK must take. In addition, continued financing must be found to assist those displaced by conflict, and support smaller local organisations to respond.

- **Promote civilian protection**

The UK government should use its position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council to take a lead in demanding full compliance with international law by all parties to conflict, and also ensure that UN peacekeeping missions are given strong mandates to protect civilians and receive adequate funding and resources.

- **Support inclusive peace and responses to crisis and conflict**

The UK government should champion the meaningful consultation and participation of diverse voices, including women, young people and other marginalised groups, in national and international peace processes, and in the design of crisis response. Continue to mainstream gender, including the prevention of sexual violence, in UK aid, foreign and development policy. Provide support for women's rights organisations as part of the UK's commitments on women, peace and security.

- **Prioritise conflict sensitivity**

The UK must ensure that aid, and other interventions, are delivered in a way that takes into account conflict dynamics, so that interventions increase the prospects for peace and at minimum 'do no harm'. This should be informed by regular context analysis.

- **Invest in conflict prevention**

UK policy on fragile states should include commitments to prevent conflict, be joined-up across Whitehall, and based on a shared vision for sustainable peace. The two new joint ministerial posts shared between FCO and DFID should be used as an opportunity to articulate a clear and comprehensive approach to peace and stability, including through the work of the CSSF.

- **Implement the SDGs**

The UK should lead on implementing the commitments to peace in the Sustainable Development Goals, with an emphasis on Goal 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies and the goals that intersect with it (such as Goal 5 on gender).

- **Protect the pro-poor focus of development assistance**

The UK government must ensure that cross-government strategies and plans are transparent and accountable to parliament, and that aid priorities are not set by narrow national security objectives.



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Afghanistan

The current conflict in Afghanistan is the latest in a series stretching back several decades to at least 1978. This has had severe impacts upon poverty and vulnerability, the development of the country and the environment. Though communities have proven resilient, vulnerability and needs are increasing. In 2016, Afghanistan saw increasing numbers of displaced people, many of whom faced prolonged displacement in major cities such as Kunduz, further stretching coping mechanisms for both host and displaced populations. 2016 also saw a dramatic increase in the number of returnees from Pakistan and Iran, many of whom required additional support. An upsurge in conflict throughout 2016-17, coupled with a stagnant economy, has significantly increased the number of people below the poverty line.

Key challenges

Declining international support

Afghanistan's humanitarian needs are rising but international humanitarian support has not kept pace, in part due to the nature of the crisis and because crises in the Middle East have eclipsed Afghanistan. Annual Humanitarian Response Plans for Afghanistan continue to be severely underfunded by hundreds of millions of dollars per year even though over recent years the plans have been focused on immediate life-saving needs, reflecting the shortfall in funding. In 2016 only 58% of the funding requested was received, and a flash appeal to help more than a million refugees returning from Pakistan and Iran received only 59% of the \$152 million requested. 2017's Humanitarian Response Plan recognises that 9.3 million people are in need but only targets 5.7 million as those most in need, calling for \$550 million.¹ As of March 2017 only \$92 million had been received.²

Protracted conflict

Violence and protracted conflict continue to take a heavy toll on the Afghan population. In 2017, the deepening and geographic spread of conflict prompted a 13% increase in the number of people needing humanitarian assistance. An average of 1,500 people are newly displaced by fighting every day.³ Civilian suffering has increased steadily since the drawdown of international security forces in 2014. The UN recorded 23,712 security incidents in 2016, the highest number in a single year ever recorded by



An Afghan mother uses her Chadari to protect her school going children from dusty wind / © Leslie Knott

the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).⁴ The conflict has severely impacted Afghan children; in 2016, 3,512 child casualties were recorded; an increase of 24% from 2015, mainly due to a 66% increase in civilian casualties from explosive remnants of war.⁵ There were also a record number of 1,218 women casualties, with an increase in documented civilian casualties to 11,418 across the country.⁶

Displacement, returnees and IDPs

The massive increase in returnees and internal displacements due to conflict has had major impacts on Afghans, girls, boys, women and men. Large scale returns started in July 2016, reaching numbers of over 6,000 per day in the fourth quarter. In 2016, over 618,000 refugees and undocumented returnees arrived from Pakistan, in comparison to around 138,000 between January to September 2015. Numbers from Iran also increased with 443,968 returning or being deported in 2016.⁷

Returnees from Pakistan often have been given as little as 48 hours by the Pakistani authorities to leave. Many have lived in Pakistan for more than 40 years and arrive in Afghanistan with very few belongings, assets or social support links. Those returning do receive assistance, but the level depends on whether they are registered or non-registered (undocumented) rather than need. Many of the returnees have settled in Nangarhar, putting huge pressure on local housing and employment markets.⁸

Internal displacement due principally to conflict also increased as a result of the deterioration in security across the country and in specific areas. In 2016, more than 623,000 people in Afghanistan fled their homes due to conflict, the highest number on record, a 30 per cent increase compared with 2015.⁹ Continued fighting around Kunduz has created multiple repeated displacements. The North East has the highest number of newly displaced of which Kunduz contributes almost three-quarters of the total.¹⁰

Environmental disasters, food insecurity and access to services

Afghanistan is susceptible to a range of recurring environmental disasters, such as avalanches, floods, earthquakes, landslides and droughts. On average over 230,000 people in Afghanistan are affected by natural disasters each year.¹¹ Responding to natural disasters in a conflict environment where many areas remain inaccessible and/or under the control of Armed Opposition Groups remains a challenge.

In addition, chronic food insecurity affects about 40% of the population, over 11 million people, 1.57 million of which are critically food insecure. In mid 2016 the FAO food security survey noted 22 of 32 provinces measured as being in a state of crisis.¹² IDPs are most affected by food insecurity due to a lack of access to assets and marginal livelihoods.

Access to education is increasing but challenges remain. Only one third of Afghan youth receive an education or training.¹³ In 2015, the UN recorded 132 incidents targeted towards education and education-related personnel. These incidents have severely affected access to education, causing more than 369 schools to partially or completely close down. Anti-government groups have also restricted access for women and girls to education beyond the 4th or 6th grade or have completely banned education for women and girls altogether.¹⁴

Many Afghans have limited or no access to essential health services, and attacks on health centres further limit access.¹⁵ Child and maternal mortality rates in Afghanistan are one of the highest in the world. Conflict in the region has resulted in the closure of at least 41 health facilities, which affected over half a million people. Due to lack of trained staff very few facilities are able to provide surgical services. The lack of certified surgeons often results in surgical operations being performed by regular doctors.¹⁶

Afghanistan's challenge with providing livelihoods and employment has increased since 2014. Afghanistan has a predominantly young population with more than 48% of the population 15 and below. This, along with returnees, means that large numbers are entering the job market every year: over 400,000 young people. A large portion of the labour force is unemployed or underemployed. Official data shows that more than 34% of the labour force cannot find sufficient work. For women it is even worse, with every other woman not able to find sufficient work.¹⁷

Recommendations

We urge the UK government to:

- Respond adequately to the large scale of humanitarian need in Afghanistan, work with other donors to fully fund the UN appeal and provide additional direct support to aid agencies.
- In line with Good Humanitarian Donorship principles,¹⁸ promote resilience to recurrent natural disaster by providing support to Afghan institutions, NGOs and local communities for disaster risk reduction, emergency preparedness, livelihood support and social protection.
- Coordinate with other aid actors to ensure that humanitarian and development funding and programming are connected and complementary. Effective pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals, including livelihood creation and education, is needed to build resilience and tackle the underlying causes of humanitarian crises.
- Prioritise the needs of vulnerable groups, particularly women, children, IDPs and refugee returnees. Donors should provide financial and technical assistance for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees and the National IDP Policy.
- Along with other donors, advocate with the governments of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan to work together to ensure that returns are voluntary, safe, gradual and dignified and provide greater support for the Afghan government for reintegration.
- Support programming that is context sensitive. Aid actors should work impartially with all members of the community, incorporate flexibility in management of funds, and explore remote management possibilities.

Case study

A widow displaced by war is helped to feed and educate her children

Sheela, a widow with four children, is a resident of Kunduz city. Her family was affected by the conflict in Kunduz (2015-16), which twice forced her to seek protection in Taloqan city in Takhar province.

She returned to Kunduz when the situation improved but does not have her own house and rents a small house for 2,000 Afghanis (\$30) a month. Her 12-year-old son sells plastic bags in the local market and her 10-year-old son works as a helper in a pharmacy, receiving about 50 Afghanis (\$ 0.74) per day.

She was jobless and did not have any kind of income to support her family. Recently, she received a sewing machine and some tailoring equipment from a programme run by Oxfam and the Afghan Development Association (ADA).

The money she has earned from sewing dresses has helped her to buy necessary food and other supplies for her family and cover education costs for her children. She hopes that her customers will increase and that her business grows to become self sufficient.



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Central African Republic

The Central African Republic (CAR) is one of the poorest countries in the world. Since independence in 1960, the country has experienced only one democratic transition and multiple coups. Four years have passed since a crisis began in 2013 when the Séléka coalition seized power from President François Bozizé, sparking a backlash from the militia group anti-Balaka. Since then, CAR has become a complex humanitarian emergency marked by widespread human rights abuses, displacement and ongoing inter-communal violence.¹



Red Cross water point at M'Poko airport camp, Bangui / © Steve Cockburn/Oxfam

Although the situation improved from the initial crisis period, since September 2016 the situation in CAR has significantly declined to levels close to those of 2013, with 60% of the country still under the control of armed groups and 25% of the population internally displaced (500,000 people) or refugees in border countries (500,000 people).² Although religion and ethnicity are not the main drivers of the conflict, it is often inaccurately reported that people are targeted on this basis. A new escalation of conflict in the south-east of the country in May 2017, displacing over 100,000 people, has increased the already immense needs for sustained humanitarian assistance.

Currently, half of CAR's population is in need of humanitarian assistance. As of 15 June, the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan, amounting to \$399.5 million, was funded only at 29.6%, or \$118.2 million.³ The immediate humanitarian outlook is increasingly concerning and requires urgent support from the international donor community. The UK government has so far played a leading role in supporting the humanitarian response, providing £63million between 2013 - December 2016.⁴ A sustainable solution to the crisis in CAR will require a long-term commitment that addresses underlying vulnerabilities and poverty, and recognises and responds to the swift deterioration of the current humanitarian situation.

Key challenges⁵

Humanitarian-development divide

Despite the recent increased need for humanitarian assistance, funding is currently at the lowest it has been - with only 36.5% of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) funded in 2016 and only 29.6% funded in 2017. This comes alongside a reduction

in humanitarian access across the country due to significant security concerns, particularly safety concerns for NGO workers, which has limited access to funding that otherwise could have been available.

There has been a misleading shift in the narrative of the situation, suggesting that CAR has undergone a transition from humanitarian need to development. Funding streams have followed this trend, further reducing the humanitarian funding available for the current acute humanitarian needs.

International NGOs are concerned that this shift fails to recognise and respond to the multiple and different needs across the country (humanitarian, early recovery and development). An integrated, more flexible approach to funding is required to provide immediate life-saving support, whilst paving the way for recovery and development.

Security and MINUSCA

The security situation in CAR has deteriorated since September 2016 - with violence reaching levels seen in 2014. There have been ongoing clashes between armed groups (e.g. in Ouaka, Nana-Gribizi, and Haute-Kotto) and inter-communal violence fueled by so-called self-defense groups. Multiple acts of violence against civilians have affected areas that had been relatively peaceful (e.g. Basse-Kotto, Mbomou). 100,000 people were displaced in May 2017 alone. Violence against women and girls is of particular concern. Furthermore, the regional dimension to this crisis is significant, with the presence of armed groups from neighboring countries, such as Chad and Sudan, and the recent withdrawal of US and Ugandan forces that had been combating the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).⁶

The UN peacekeeping mission in CAR - MINUSCA - does not have sufficient resources to carry out its mandate and respond to the multitude of security situations. The French 'Sangari' mission to CAR ended in November 2016 and this has reduced additional support for MINUSCA. Restricted humanitarian access, insufficient protection of civilians and sexual abuse allegations against peacekeepers represent a huge concern for NGOs in CAR.

Peace, reconciliation and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR)

Building peace and achieving reconciliation in CAR is vital for the country to move forward. In November 2016, the CAR government launched its National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (RCPCA) outlining its priorities for the next five years - with a key focus on supporting peace, security and reconciliation. However, until donor pledges materialise, the plan will remain on paper and progress will not be made.

As outlined in the RCPCA, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of combatants is key for peace and reconciliation in CAR. However, it is stalling. Two years on from the Bangui DDR forum, NGOs share their concern about the delayed adult DDR process and the lack of a clear road map and funding for this. The lack of a child DDR plan and efforts to prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict requires attention.

Recommendations

We urge the UK government to:

- Maintain its position as a key humanitarian donor and use its international position to encourage other donors to contribute to the UN appeal and further funds for the increased number of humanitarian emergencies in CAR.
- Increase multi-year flexible funding for humanitarian response and early recovery and resilience activities, as well as long-term development work to address the humanitarian-development divide.
- Support a continued UN peacekeeping presence in the country, calling for MINUSCA's mandate to be renewed in November 2017, and providing necessary technical capacity and financial resources to ensure the operation is adequately resourced to protect civilians.
- Support the CAR government in the implementation of their National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan by urging relevant stakeholders to fulfil their commitments - financial or otherwise.
- Ensure sustained support for locally-led social cohesion efforts to support peace and reconciliation.
- Support the CAR government to put in place a clear DDR process, encompassing milestones and credible reintegration paths, whilst fighting impunity for grave violations of human rights committed by armed groups involved in the DDR programme.

Case study

Providing clean water and sanitation to people displaced by conflict

Ericaine is one of more than 500,000 people displaced within the Central African Republic. Her home is a displacement camp in Boda, in the south of the country where she has been for three years. The fighting has come within a few miles of the camp but the main threat to her now is sickness and disease. When Ericaine and her family first arrived in the camp there were no toilets and the nearby spring was not kept clean. Modesty drove women into the bush, even though they feared being attacked by snakes or militia.

Tearfund began working in Ericaine's camp in 2014. The team capped the nearby spring to ensure a good supply of clean water and built toilet blocks, washrooms and handwashing stations. They also taught camp residents about hygiene and found volunteers to take on responsibility for cleaning the toilets and making sure people used them properly. Ericaine volunteered immediately. Now, she and her team are often busy with their rubber gloves, brooms and buckets. Everyone in the cleaning team is highly motivated to keep the toilets clean and avoid disease.

Tearfund's activities in the Lobaye region of CAR focus on water and sanitation, food security, improving access to markets and social cohesion. They also support local partners to implement livelihoods and literacy projects.



Toilet Twinning / © Ralph Hodgson



For more information, please contact the Central African Republic NGO Working Group co-chairs: Luz Larosa MariaL@warchild.org.uk and Robyn Boosey robyn.boosey@tearfund.org

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a country the size of western Europe, has suffered from armed conflict and general insecurity for many decades, creating one of the world's most complex and long-standing humanitarian crises. It currently contains 3.8 million Internally Displaced People (IDPs), the highest number of displaced men, women and children on the continent of Africa,¹ and the third highest number of displaced people in the world.² Over half of its 26 provinces are affected by armed violence, disease, and natural disasters, all within a volatile regional context and amid historically low levels of funding.³



Sheldia, 4, gets her Yellow Fever vaccination / © Tommy Trenchard/Save the Children 2016

Eastern DRC for example hosts over 70 armed groups, causing high levels of vulnerability and displacement, high rates of sexual and gender-based violence and recruitment of child soldiers.⁴ Often described as a protracted conflict, the instability is a result of series of acute crises around local customary power, international disputes, ethnic division, and resources (land, timber, minerals), exacerbated by poor governance. In the midst of this instability a drawdown of UN peacekeepers (MONUSCO) is being considered, as they face up to a 20% reduction in budget, leaving security vacuums in their wake.

Whilst the focus of international attention has often been towards the east of the country or the capital Kinshasa, currently the Grand Kasai provinces on the border of Angola face an unprecedented security and humanitarian crisis, with some 1.4 million displaced and 30,000 refugees forced over the border to Angola as of 22 June as a result of conflict.⁵ This violence comes from a variety of sources - including self-defense militias, anti-government insurgencies, inter-ethnic tensions and pro-government movements. Anecdotal evidence from aid workers in the region estimates some 40-60% of all militia members are

under 18, making children the first victims of violence in this war over customary power.

Beyond this, DRC faces political uncertainty. A delay in the national electoral registration process and the uncertainty this brings has raised inflation, increased ethnic tension through political manipulation, weakened government services and increased need. DRC's neighbors are observing these developments with caution, fearing renewed conflict on their borders.

Finally, increasingly limited humanitarian access means that aid workers struggle to reach DRC's most vulnerable populations. Insecurity and poor infrastructure hinder delivery of aid, with attacks against humanitarian workers a frequent occurrence, particularly in the East. Furthermore, bureaucratic impediments, including visas that take months to arrive, prevent aid workers from entering the country.

Key challenges

Key areas of concern for UK-based international NGOs with regard to DRC include:

- Addressing the deteriorating humanitarian situation, funding shortfalls, the need for conflict-sensitive delivery of aid, increasing investment in recovery, social cohesion, building long-term resilience to shocks, and development that promotes economic growth and sustainable livelihoods.
- Tackling rising gender-based violence, threats to the physical safety of the displaced, including unaccompanied or separated children, and the recruitment and use of children by armed groups, particularly in the Grand Kasai.
- Creating a secure and peaceful environment, with an emphasis on the protection of civilians, peacebuilding, youth and women's empowerment, and civic engagement.
- Addressing ongoing restrictions in humanitarian access, and reminding the DRC government of their responsibility to provide security to humanitarian actors.
- Offering protection and assistance to Congolese refugees and IDPs.

Recommendations

We urge the UK government to:

- Strongly encourage the government of DRC to streamline entry procedures for humanitarian personnel, equipment and goods into the country. This includes visa confirmations ("visa volant") for international personnel coming to support the various humanitarian crisis.
- Publicly condemn all violence against civilians, particularly gender based violence and violence against children, by all parties to the conflict.
- Publish and swiftly implement the DFID business case for the Kasais. This and other DFID business cases should have a focus on education and protection, as both sectors are currently less than 5% funded.
- Work to ensure that DFID and other donor approaches to financing for food security is flexible, to allow partners to manage and respond as the context changes
- Consider a quick increase in UK aid spending to DRC in light of the additional conflict in the Grand Kasai to try and prevent further deterioration, with an emphasis on programming in sectors that increase a protection for civilians and promote social cohesion (i.e. in child protection, agriculture, market development, and education). The total UN appeal for the DRC remains underfunded at only 24%.
- Convene a meeting of all donors to DRC to decide upon priorities in light of increasing tensions, need and political instability, including targeted advocacy activities to raise the profile of the crisis internationally.

Case study

Vaccinating families against a deadly yellow fever outbreak

DRC experienced an unprecedented yellow fever outbreak in 2016. The potentially-deadly disease is spread by mosquitos, who found a perfect breeding ground in DRC's capital, Kinshasa. 7 million of the city's 10 million inhabitants were believed not to be vaccinated and at risk of contracting yellow fever.

Ani, a 56 year old mother of six and grandmother of five, got her yellow fever vaccination with one of her grandchildren, Shelidia, 4 years old. Ani sells charcoal on the street to make a living, but

it's barely enough. She lives with her children and grandchildren in Kinshasa.

Ani and Shelidia came to one of 102 vaccination sites early in the morning on the fourth day of a vaccination campaign by the DRC's Ministry of Health and Save the Children. Ani was very grateful for access to free vaccinations, as she doesn't have many means to purchase these. Ani and her family live close to the vaccination site where they got their vaccines along with a vaccination card.



Children who have recovered from malnutrition in 2016 / © Didier Nagifi/World Vision



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Iraq

Successive waves of armed conflict within Iraq have left a total of 11 million in need of humanitarian assistance. The pace of displacement over the past three years is nearly without precedent. In 2014, over 2.5 million civilians were displaced in Iraq; in 2015, an additional 1 million more people were forced to flee. Currently 3.4 million Iraqis are internally displaced with a further 250,000 refugees currently seeking refuge in Iraq.¹ Millions of Iraqis are expected to return home over the next months despite the wide variation in levels of destruction, availability of services and community acceptance in the return locations.



MAG deminers in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq / © Sean Sutton/MAG

Since military operations began to oust Islamic State (Isis) in Mosul city in October 2016, about 837,450 people have been displaced from their homes,² including over 600,000 people who have been forced to flee from the western neighbourhoods of Mosul city alone.³ More than 318,574 people are currently sheltering in emergency sites and camps around Mosul while an estimated 384,609 people are staying with families, friends or being hosted by local communities.⁴ This displacement can only be expected to increase as military offensives in areas still under the control of Isis - such as Hawiga, Telafar, and western Anbar - take place.

Fighting Isis militants and Iraqi security forces, including the Kurdish Peshmerga and other armed groups, as well as a prevailing climate of insecurity and ethnic and political tensions between Sunni and

Shia groups, have created significant challenges for the delivery of aid and protection of civilians in Iraq. Reports of severe human rights abuses and gross violations of international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict persist, raising serious protection concerns for Iraq's civilian population.

Iraq has an unprecedented level of contamination of explosive remnants of war - such as improvised explosive devices - in areas previously under the control of Isis including displacement routes and settlement areas. Some of those forced to flee their homes are being forcibly returned or are prematurely returning to areas where explosive remnants of war remain, posing risk of death and injury to returnees, those who remained, and the aid workers striving to meet their basic needs.

Funding for humanitarian operations is also an issue. The UN humanitarian appeal for Iraq is currently only 46.22%⁵ funded with key sectors experiencing major funding gaps. This situation has severe consequences for the continuation of life saving humanitarian

and protection services in Iraq. Finally, it is critical that investments in the future of Iraq are prioritized through early recovery and resilience initiatives that include civil society.

Areas of concern

Key areas of concern for UK-based international NGOs with regard to Iraq include:

- While the battle for Mosul is entering its final phase, further fighting against Isis in areas including Tel Afar and Hawija will continue to pose significant risks of civilian casualties to those who are unable or unwilling to flee when military operations commence.
- Those who flee the battle against Isis face the prospect of unaccountable and non-transparent screening processes where civilian identifications are checked by numerous Iraqi authorities and military actors. Cases of abuse, arbitrary detention and even disappearance during screening have been reported along with evidence of the removal of ID cards, undermining people's ability to access services. This situation undermines trust in the authorities, particularly amongst Sunni Arabs – a dynamic which contributed to historical violence and the rise of Isis.
- Many of those fleeing violence are being denied access to safer territories within Iraq.⁶ In addition, local authorities have blocked returns of some displaced families usually delaying the processing of documentation.⁷ In some areas blocked returns are linked to efforts to manage the demographic makeup of areas⁸ and hence support political objectives.
- The bulk of humanitarian operations in Iraq have focused on meeting needs in camps in the relatively secure KRI. This has neglected people sheltering outside of camps (e.g. in rented accommodation or with family or friends in urban areas, in schools, and unfinished buildings), and populations living in southern and central Iraq where needs remain great.
- Some donors are increasingly providing stabilisation funding to Iraq, which is allocated according to political priorities, rather than humanitarian funding, which is focused on the needs of the most vulnerable. This shift risks leaving basic needs unmet. Western government statements linking humanitarian aid to anti-Isis operations threaten to undermine the ability of NGOs to safely deliver life saving aid to all those in need.
- Current Iraqi-led plans for post-conflict stabilisation in areas such as Mosul fail to provide a clear strategy for addressing humanitarian needs, supporting returns, or addressing issues of political, social and ethnic tensions that have acted as conflict drivers in the past.
- Women and girls in Iraq report increased incidents of sexual assault, abduction, intimate partner violence, early and forced marriage and exploitation and abuse, leading to a heightened sense of insecurity and restrictions on mobility, undermining their access to essential services. Despite high levels of violence against women and girls, there are inadequate services aimed at preventing, identifying and providing support to those who have been affected.
- Children continue to be targeted by different armed forces for recruitment and deployment as child soldiers.

Recommendations

We urge the UK government to:

- Continue to provide financial support (on the basis of need, not status, and not linked to political objectives) to the humanitarian response in Iraq, including for those sheltering outside of camps, and encourage other donors to increase their contributions. In doing so the UK government should refrain from conflating military, political and humanitarian objectives in public statements and policy objectives.

- Urge coalition partners and Iraqi military actors to respect the principles of distinction and proportionality in anti-Isis operations, adjust their tactics, and, if needed, slow the pace of operations to ensure civilians can be protected and can reach safety should they wish to do so.
- Step up efforts to assess and respond to needs in central and southern Iraq, and support the UN and NGOs to get humanitarian access into hard-to-reach areas on an impartial basis.
- Urge the government of Iraq and the Kurdistan regional government to uphold the Iraqi constitution by permitting freedom of movement into their territories and ending programs of forcible displacement and returns. All returns should be voluntary, informed, and dignified. Where needed, opportunities should be found for integration for displaced families who are unwilling or unable to return to their areas of origin.
- Ensure screening and detention is conducted in-line with international best practice and families are notified of where their loved ones are being held. Detainees should be granted due process rights under Iraqi law, held in appropriate facilities and conditions, and adults held separately from children. Urge authorities to publish regularly updated public numbers of how many individuals have been detained in the battle against IS.
- Provide, and urge other donor governments to provide, emergency funding to programmes aimed specifically at preventing and addressing violence against women and girls.
- Support Iraqi authorities to develop a strategy for governance and reconciliation which addresses the root causes of conflict, such as human rights violations, political and civil society exclusion, economic marginalization and discrimination, land and governance disputes, and lack of accountability. It is critical that any such strategy includes the full participation of women, youth, and minority groups.
- Ensure that counter-terrorism regulations do not hamper humanitarian operations.

Case study

'We have lost everything - but there is no life without a home'

Nazamine and her daughter Nora fled Tulaband, east of Mosul in Northern Iraq, when Isis attacked the village in August 2014. The attack forced more than 500 families, around 2,250 people in total, to flee. Many found themselves having to sell off possessions to pay for shelter and food.

When Daesh were finally pushed from the village in May 2016, several families returned. Like many others, Nazamine and Nora found their house destroyed and the area littered with improvised landmines and booby-traps, preventing them from resuming some form of normality. Keen to salvage what was left of their former lives, families were unaware of the danger awaiting them. Improvised landmines killed eight men in a single day.

"We have lost everything," said Nazamine, "but there is no life without a home."

MAG has cleared more than 10,000 improvised landmines and booby traps in Northern Iraq. This supports the restoration of water and power supplies, and enables people like Nazamine and Nora to rebuild their lives and their communities free from fear of death or injury.



© MAG



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Sahel and Lake Chad Basin

The UN defines the Sahel region as including Burkina Faso, North Cameroon, Chad, The Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Northern Nigeria and Senegal, some of the poorest places in the world. Out of 188 countries, the 2016 UN Humanitarian Development Index ranks Niger in second to last place at 187, Chad at 186, Burkina Faso at 185 and Mali at 175.¹



Seven month old child is weighed during a visit to Save the Children's outpatient therapeutic nutrition site near Maiduguri, North East Nigeria / © Tommy Trenchard/Save the Children

Some of the challenges facing this fragile region include high levels of poverty, gender inequality and discrimination; weak and unaccountable governance; environmental challenges, including poor and erratic rainfall, floods, droughts and pests; food insecurity

and malnutrition from volatile food prices and poor harvests; high levels of unemployment, especially amongst young people; poor delivery of basic services; and conflict and political upheaval.

Key challenges and areas of concern

Food insecurity and malnutrition

The Sahel faces continuous cycles of food insecurity. The UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) estimates that 29.2 million people in the Sahel are currently food insecure,² with 9.4 million suffering from severe food insecurity. The complex emergency in the Lake Chad Basin is affecting 17 million people in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger.³

It has destroyed lives and livelihoods and forced 2.35 million people to flee their homes. The majority of the displaced are sheltered by communities who are among the poorest in the world. Across the region, one in three families is food insecure, and malnutrition rates have reached critical levels. One in every two people needs urgent humanitarian

assistance, 515,000 of whom are children suffering from acute malnutrition. The Humanitarian Response Plan remains extremely underfunded.⁴

Conflict and displacement

Conflict, both internal and external, is having a devastating impact on the region. It exacerbates food insecurity, displaces populations from their livelihoods, hinders or closes markets, sets back development efforts, leaves populations vulnerable to sexual violence and forced recruitment and impedes the ability of humanitarian agencies to deliver critical assistance. As of the start of 2015, over 2.8 million people in the Sahel were displaced; by December 2016 the figure had risen to just under 4.9 million⁵ and the number continues to rise. Nigerian refugees have fled to Niger, Chad and Cameroon and there are an estimated 1.8 million internally displaced people in North East Nigeria.⁶

The situation in northern and central Mali remains highly unstable, with the conditions outlined above only increasing the country's economic frailty and the appeal of armed groups. Approximately 45,000 Malians remain internally displaced, with over 140,000 living as refugees in neighbouring countries.⁷ The conflict in Central African Republic has also displaced more than 347,000 refugees into neighbouring Chad and Cameroon.⁸

To avoid future crises in the region, work must be done to address the underlying drivers of conflict and violent extremism, often rooted in longstanding underdevelopment, inequality, insecurity and experience of real or perceived injustice.

Humanitarian access

Whether due to conflict, infrastructure or government restrictions, access to areas most in need is frequently inhibited within the region; even accessible areas are only open on an ad hoc basis. This often means that humanitarians have a limited and unpredictable window of access to those most in need. Donors have responded with rapid reaction programmes, however this is not a sustainable and methodical way to deliver support in the face of sustained need.

Education and child protection

Across the Sahel, millions of children are unable to access quality education due to school closures and a lack of qualified teachers, exacerbating children's vulnerability to harmful labour conditions, recruitment, trafficking and abuse. In Nigeria alone, more than ten million children are out of school, 70%

of whom are in the poorest, violence-hit northern regions.

Education facilities in communities hosting large numbers of displaced children are under severe strain. Access to education for girls and boys has been severely affected by the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin. Boko Haram has deliberately targeted schools, which have been burnt, bombed and used for military purposes, forcing teachers to flee.

Harmful traditional practices such as child, early and forced marriage as well as teenage pregnancy are also barriers to girls' education in the Sahel – leading to high dropout rates. Niger, for example, has the highest rate of child marriage in the world.⁹ Child protection services are weak or almost entirely absent across much of the region.

Protection of civilians

Women, girls, men and boys have been subjected to horrific human rights abuses across the region, including sexual violence, abductions, killings, torture, forced recruitment, forced disappearance and arbitrary detention. In North East Nigeria, Boko Haram continue to attack and abuse civilians, while soldiers, police, and government officials have allegedly used their positions of authority and gifts of desperately needed food or supplies to sexually exploit and abuse vulnerable people, particularly women and girls. Accountability measures must be put into place to prosecute those who harm civilians.

Resilience and long term solutions

The region has endured a succession of food crises over the last decade, each of which has further entrenched hunger and poverty. Faced with recurring shortages and spikes in need, people are forced to resort to short-term coping strategies, such as taking children out of school or selling vital assets such as livestock, leaving them more vulnerable to shocks in the future. Building people's resilience to food crises is crucial in the Sahel; it can reduce the impact of crises when they occur and help improve long-term prospects of development.

The Sahel Working Group has undertaken extensive research¹⁰ into resilience-building which indicate that actions such as supporting rural livelihoods at community level and early response to signs of crisis remain vitally important.

Recommendations

We urge the UK government to:

- Spend aid in a way that enables funding to reach frontline actors efficiently and effectively. Encourage other international donors to give as generously to underfunded Humanitarian Response Plans and through INGOs.
- Promote a long term approach that addresses the root causes of crisis. This includes promoting a regional response that prioritises social, economic and governance issues, and includes women and marginalised groups. This must also take into account the region's vulnerability to climate change.
- Call on regional governments to provide safe, unhindered humanitarian access to communities, particularly in areas that are insecure and difficult to access. This includes fast-track measures for visas for international humanitarian workers and imports of urgent relief items, and working to reduce administrative barriers such as demands on international organisations to register at both federal and state levels.
- Continue to call on the governments of Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon to respect international law and prioritise civilian protection. Diplomatic avenues should be used wherever possible to raise allegations of abuses and ensure robust, transparent investigations are completed, with those responsible held accountable.
- Urge regional governments to ensure that any return of IDPs to their homes is voluntary. While many IDPs are eager to return home, they must be given accurate information to make independent decisions about when to do so. Returns should be accompanied by security guarantees, repair of damaged infrastructure and property, humanitarian assistance, and basic services.
- Continue to play a leading role in encouraging regional humanitarian responses with strong UN leadership, and pushing for longer-term deployments of experienced humanitarian staff.
- Work to make sure all humanitarian and development interventions are conflict sensitive and respond to gender dynamics. Fund programmes that address the needs of adolescent girls, who face specific risks as a result of their gender and age, and are frequently missed by international assistance.
- Support multi-year flexible funding to build resilience in the region, which demands a long-term perspective on disaster vulnerability whilst still being able to respond quickly to humanitarian crises. Agencies need both a long-term source of funding and the flexibility to use to respond to fluctuating levels of need.
- Prioritise funding for education, life-skills and child protection. These sectors are critical for meeting the needs of girls, boys, and adolescents and for reducing risks of gender-based violence, including child marriage, trafficking and sexual exploitation.
- Strengthen Early Action systems to prevent slow onset food shortages escalating into humanitarian crises. Early action to respond to signs of a growing crisis based on pre-agreed thresholds and triggers should be rapid and coordinated, including donors, national governments and implementing agencies.

Case study

"I struggled to save my girl but I had nothing and they had guns"



Maryam with her sewing machine in a camp in Damboa / © Tom Saater/Oxfam Novis

Maryam,* a 40 year old woman with four children, was a trader in her village before their displacement to a camp in Damboa, Borno State, Nigeria. Her husband was a farmer. "During our last harvest season, just before we left our village, my husband harvested 10 bags of groundnut, 40 bags of sorghum and 30 bags of maize, but all were taken away by the armed group," Maryam explained.

The armed group employs property looting, forced recruitment of young men and abduction of girls. Maryam's daughter was forced to marry underage and later forced by her husband to go to the camp of the armed group. "Her husband went to the bush for 5 months. He and his friend came back and forcibly took his wife - my little girl - to their camp."

Maryam's daughter eventually escaped. Her family immediately left their village and journeyed from place to place until they arrived at a camp in Damboa.

"When I came to this camp, I heard Oxfam talking to us about our rights as women, I immediately became interested and joined the Protection Committee." Maryam is now part of 16 women advocating to other women and girls in their camp about their rights and creating safe meeting space for others to voice their concerns. She is also involved in sensitizing others about proper hygiene practices.

*names and professions changed to protect identity



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Somalia

Somalia has one of the longest running and most complex protracted emergencies in the world. For more than two decades, the country was without effective government and was in a state of conflict between warring clans, foreign forces and non-state armed groups. Attempts have been made since 2000 to unite warring factions through the development of a parliament and appointment of transitional government. In 2012 the Federal Government of Somalia was formed, and in February 2017, Somali parliamentarians elected a new president, Mohamed Abdullahi "Farmajo" Mohamed, who took over in a peaceful transition of power. However, many parts of the country remain insecure and acute humanitarian need persists.



Said, a farmer in Somaliland / © World Vision/Steph Gliniski

The African Union peacekeeping mission in Somalia, AMISOM, which has been deployed since 2007, continues to try to fulfil its mandate of reducing the threat of armed groups, though it is not without criticism. Military offensives are ongoing and civilians continue to bear the brunt of the protracted armed conflict and insecurity. The Somali Federal Government still does not control some towns and many rural areas in southern Somalia, where humanitarian access is a key challenge.

Somalia's humanitarian crisis is one of the largest in the world. As of June 2017, over 6.7 million people

(more than half the population) were in need of protection and humanitarian assistance.¹ The country was the site of declared famine in 2011, when nearly 260,000 Somalis died. Currently there is a risk of famine in parts of the country, as instability and weak governance exacerbated a devastating drought which has led to acute water shortages, large-scale crop failure and a sharp increase in food prices across the Horn of Africa. Cases of diarrhoea, cholera and measles are rising fast, and humanitarian access in some areas is limited. Over 1.1 million Somalis have been internally displaced for a protracted period of

time, and a further one million have sought refuge in neighbouring countries.² More than 739,000 people have been displaced by the drought since November 2016, the majority of them being women and children, including those with disabilities.³

The current humanitarian situation in Somalia stands against a backdrop of some of the lowest development indicators in the world. There are an estimated 3 million children out of school and in need;⁴ one in twelve women die due to pregnancy-related causes;⁵ one in every seven Somali children

die before their first birthday;⁶ and only 45% of Somalis have access to improved water sources.⁷ About 40% of Somalis rely on money sent from relatives and friends overseas to meet their basic needs.⁸ The new National Development Plan is the first of its kind since 1986 and shows the desire of the Federal Government of Somalia to adopt a development-orientated approach. However, this must be accompanied by continuing support to meet ongoing humanitarian and security needs.

Areas of concern

Key areas of concern for UK-based international NGOs with regard to Somalia include:

- Addressing the deteriorating drought situation and risk of famine, humanitarian funding shortfalls, and the need for conflict-sensitive delivery of aid. Increasing investment in early recovery, long-term resilience and development that promotes economic growth and sustainable livelihoods is needed alongside humanitarian support.
- Tackling rising gender-based violence, threats to the physical safety of the displaced, including unaccompanied children, and the recruitment and use of children by armed actors, particularly in areas with a high concentration of newly displaced people.
- Creating a secure and peaceful environment, with an emphasis on protection of civilians, peacebuilding, and youth and women's empowerment and civic engagement.
- Addressing ongoing restrictions in humanitarian access.
- Offering protection and assistance to Somali refugees, returnees, and IDPs.
- Ensuring civil society is included as a major stakeholder and actively consulted in the delivery of Somalia's National Development Plan and the New Partnership Agreement.
- Protecting remittances as a key lifeline for Somalis, in light of the high levels of need in the country and few alternative livelihood opportunities.
- Addressing concerns around bureaucratic impediments which restrict the humanitarian enabling environment.

Recommendations

We urge the UK government to:

- Use its role in supporting Somalia's path to stability to encourage the adoption of a comprehensive, Somali-led strategy to build conditions for sustainable peace. Crucially, this must have a focus on inclusive political dialogue and good governance, including women's participation at local and federal level.
- Prioritise civilian protection by all actors, including AMISOM and the Somali security forces. It is imperative that armed conflict, including by those allied with the government, is not escalated in the current environment, as this would deepen the humanitarian crisis and create even more displacement.
- Continue to prioritise humanitarian support to the Somali people, especially to avert the current risk of famine and respond to protection risks and disease outbreaks. Funding must be flexible, sustainable and timely, with a clear balance between immediate, life-saving assistance and longer-term early recovery, and should address the needs of refugees and returnees. The UK government should encourage other donors to do likewise.

- Invest in longer-term development that promotes economic growth and livelihoods, especially among vulnerable communities that are subject to frequent shocks.
- Continue, as the one of the key donors supporting Somalia, to ensure civil society organisations and local communities are consulted and included in the implementation of the National Development Plan and New Partnership Agreement, in order to ensure the relevance of projects on the ground.
- Continue to support the flow of remittances to Somalia, including through: support to business investments for Somali remittances, and by taking a risk-based approach to tiered 'know your customer' regulations.

Case study

Treating children on the brink of famine and starvation

Deqo Ibrahim Isak is one of thousands of people in Somalia forced from their homes by the ongoing drought – but for the mother of eight, reaching Mogadishu quickly was about more than finding food and shelter. Her one-year-old daughter Asho was sick, and in Middle Shebelle, where the family lived, there was no help to be found.

"I felt so helpless," Deqo recalls. "My daughter was growing weaker each day, but I had no money to access the medical help I knew she so desperately needed."

Millions of men, women and children in East Africa are on the brink of famine and starvation. Drought and civil war have taken the region to the point of catastrophe. The drought has also exacerbated the spread of diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera, whooping cough and measles - particularly amongst young children.

Eventually Deqo reached Mareeg camp in Kaxda district in Mogadishu, where an International Medical Corps mobile health and nutrition team learned of baby Asho's deteriorating condition.

International Medical Corps' mobile health clinic diagnosed Asho with severe acute malnutrition and a respiratory tract infection. She was provided the appropriate treatment and follow up care until she could fully recover.

"I was happy my daughter got the treatment she needed which saved her life. There are many children like Asho here in these camps and I will let them know that there is still hope out there."



Mother of eight, Deqo with 1 year old daughter Asho / © International Medical Corps UK



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South Sudan

Three and a half years of conflict have dramatically altered the trajectory of the world's newest nation, as the devastating effects of the war which erupted in December 2013 have deepened and spread across the whole country. The past year has seen particularly troubling developments, as famine was declared in parts of South Sudan, displacement significantly increased, and the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide warned of a strong risk of violence escalating along ethnic lines, with the potential for genocide.



New arrivals at a UN protection of civilians site in Wau / © Nektarios Markogiannis/UNMISS

South Sudan became independent from Sudan in 2011 and, despite significant challenges as one of the least developed countries in the world, South Sudanese were buoyant as Africa's longest running civil war in Sudan had finally come to an end. The conflict which erupted in December 2013 reflected a split within the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement party (SPLM), but quickly escalated into

a national crisis, dividing communities along ethnic fault lines. A peace agreement, brokered by the regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), was signed in August 2015, and in May 2016 a Transitional Government of National Unity was formed. However, in July 2016 conflict erupted once again in Juba, and 2017 has seen escalating conflict and heightened tensions.

South Sudan's crisis in numbers

- 7.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance,¹ with 6 million severely food insecure² (out of a population of approximately 12 million)
- 1.8 million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries³ (Bidibidi in neighbouring Uganda has become the world's largest refugee camp) with 2 million displaced internally.⁴ Women and children make up more than 85 per cent of the refugees arriving in neighbouring countries⁵
- Disease outbreaks, including cholera, kala-azar and measles, with more than 2 million cases of malaria reported between January and November 2016⁶ and at least 246 deaths from cholera since the first case was reported in June 2016⁷
- At least 82 humanitarian workers have lost their lives,⁸ and access restrictions and operational impediments have worsened
- Continued attacks against civilians and human rights violations, including widespread sexual violence
- The economic crisis has escalated as hyperinflation hit record levels in 2016, with the South Sudanese Pound reaching all time lows while the cost of living has risen exponentially
- More than 1.17 million children aged 3 – 18 have lost access to education due to conflict and displacement, while about 31% of schools have suffered attacks.⁹ An adolescent girl is three times more likely to die in childbirth than to complete primary school¹⁰ and 76% of school aged girls are not in school¹¹

The UK has an important and influential role to play as the second-largest bilateral donor to South Sudan and a member of the "Troika" (along with the US and Norway) which helped broker the Comprehensive Peace Agreement¹² and continues to play a significant role in supporting the current mediation. In 2017, the UK is deploying 400 support troops to the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), principally medics and engineers.¹³

Recommendations

We urge the UK government to:

Address the root causes of conflict

- Invest in community-based peacebuilding and locally-led reconciliation initiatives, maintaining a conflict sensitive approach to support. The link between the national and local conflict is critical.
- Ensure that the commitment to mechanisms outlined in Chapter 5 of the peace agreement – including transitional justice mechanisms such as the Hybrid Court, truth, healing and reconciliation – is strongly adhered to and that these mechanisms are implemented without delay.¹⁴
- Robustly support civil society space, press freedom and freedom of expression – all of which have been reduced extensively - as critical to meaningful peace and dialogue.
- Continue to call for all actors to stop human rights violations, investigate alleged abuses and hold perpetrators to account.

Political solution to the conflict

- Engage strongly in the political process, in coordination with the Troika and other regional and international actors, to push for a renewed process and increased diplomatic investment. Long-term engagement is critical, and without a political solution to the conflict the humanitarian situation will continue to worsen.
- Ensure that processes are inclusive, and that the voices of South Sudanese, including the churches, civil society, traditional leaders, and grassroots community, faith, women and youth groups are given a strong platform for engagement.

Support for humanitarian assistance and protection

- Strongly and publicly support humanitarian responses in South Sudan and in neighbouring countries for refugees. In particular, safeguard humanitarian access and the operational environment against bureaucratic constraints

- and impediments, and ensure the safety of humanitarian workers, so that the response can effectively reach those in need. Local actors should be strongly supported.
- Ensure timely and predictable availability of flexible funds for emergency response, and work with other international donors to commit their fair share.
 - Ensure that UNMISS fulfills its mandate and is accountable to affected populations, especially delivering on its promise of protection.
 - Integrate a long-term perspective that addresses South Sudan's acute development needs and ensure that any intervention is conflict sensitive.

Case study

Building understanding and peace between youth in Wau

Wau in South Sudan has seen a recent rise in inter-ethnic tensions. Years of civil war have exacerbated communal divisions, culminating in violent conflict between mainly Dinka militia groups affiliated with the government and the Fertit rebels. In June 2016, a fresh eruption of violence forced thousands of Fertit community members into displacement, settling in a newly established UN protection of civilians (PoC) site.

A source of hostility and mistrust has come from rumours circulating within the youth groups, spurring on rivalries and increasing violence. In late 2016, Saferworld and local partner Community Empowerment for Progress Organisation (CEPO) brought together 40 youth from both groups to ease tensions, form a sense of common understanding and avert violence.

Tensions between the youth groups had been running high, with one side accusing the other of violence. After a hostile start to the dialogue,

where the participants expressed strong feelings of mistrust towards the other group, the youth began to address misunderstandings, challenge misconceptions, and learn about each other's communities.

Leader of the youth group from the Wau UN Protection of Civilians (PoC) camp Joseph noted, "today marks the beginning of a new relationship among the youth group.... a relationship based on mutual trust and togetherness".

Relations between the two youth groups showed visible signs of improvement after the dialogue. Before the youth had feared being attacked if they moved outside of the PoC, but PoC youth leaders have been able to leave the site and enter Wau town. Freedom of movement has improved for both communities. The ongoing national conflict in South Sudan however, continues to impact Wau's security and stability.



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Sudan

Sudan has for decades been the site of protracted violent conflict and routine abuses of international humanitarian law by conflicting parties. A civil war with the south led to the secession of South Sudan in 2011, and conflicts in Darfur, and in the South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, the “Two Areas”, continue, driving displacement and acute humanitarian need. Its president, Omar Al-Bashir, remains the subject of an outstanding arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide in Darfur.¹ Sudan has recently gained attention as a transit hub for human trafficking, smuggling and migration to Europe.



Woman in her temporary home in the Sudanese mountains, located in caves as shelter from aerial bombardments / © Samantha Hudson/HART

South Sudan's crisis in numbers²

- 4.8 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance (out of a population of 39.6 million).
- 4 million long-term displaced people³
- Sudan's humanitarian response plan for 2017 is only 25% funded⁴
- 3.6 million people are currently suffering from crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity, and 2.2 million children are suffering from acute malnutrition.⁵

Key challenges

Humanitarian access

Humanitarian agencies live in the shadow of an en masse expulsion of aid agencies by President Bashir following his 2009 ICC indictment, as well as individual ejections afterwards, usually in the months preceding "dry season" offensives. The issue of humanitarian access has recently come to dominate and potentially derail the peace process between conflicting parties, notably a disagreement about cross-border provision of aid to the Two Areas.

In Darfur, provision of humanitarian aid is tied to the operations of the region's hybrid UN - African Union peacekeeping mission, UNAMID. The mission has long suffered routine violations of its agreement with the Government of Sudan, including on gaining access to conflict areas, such as the Jebel Marra region that was the site of heightened violence in 2016. In June 2017 the UN Security Council made the decision to close parts of the mission and reduce the military and police components by almost a half and a third respectively. Concerns have been raised about the ability of Sudanese state bodies or the UN country team to replace this lost capacity, especially given long-standing shortages in funding. This will severely impact humanitarian service delivery moving forward.

A January 2017 decision taken by the United States to partially lift 20-year sanctions against Sudan was in part tied to progress on humanitarian access. This, as well as guidelines on directives and procedures for humanitarian action issued in December 2016 by the country's Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC), have been credited with the easing of bureaucratic impediments to the delivery of aid. However, the gains are marginal, and unfettered access, as well as sustained and sustainable service delivery, remains a distant reality.

Displacement and migration

Conflict has driven waves of displacement from and within Sudan, with particularly high levels of internal displacement, as well as long-term displaced populations living in neighbouring countries. Many are repeatedly displaced, so although upwards of 200,000 individuals are classed as returnees over the last three years, these groups remain vulnerable to further displacement.⁶ Many also cite fears that their homes and land have been distributed to groups held in favour by the government, with the aim being to demographically change the region, particularly Darfur.

Recently, Sudan has been of renewed interest to the international community as a transit country for Horn of Africa refugees and migrants on their way to Europe, and also as a host country for large numbers of people fleeing the conflict in South Sudan. Development assistance is increasingly tied to migration outcomes. In the European Union (EU) this takes the form of the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative, or "Khartoum Process", with a €100 million development pot repackaged as a plan to improve livelihoods to reduce migration "push factors", as well as other funds totalling €46 million for use in improving security and border control measures.⁷ There are concerns that the Khartoum Process fails to take into account the needs and wishes of vulnerable migrant populations living in Sudan, as well as those who are forced to flee the country, and may actually worsen their situation given that promised funds may embolden security actors.

Against this backdrop, the UK is uniquely placed to improve the situation on the ground in Sudan because of a "Strategic Dialogue" currently underway between government officials from both countries.⁸ This affords an opportunity to address shared issues of concern, including improvements to humanitarian access and delivery, and commitments to a responsible approach to forced displacement, migration and mobility.

Recommendations

We urge the UK government to:

- Use the opportunity afforded by the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue to push for rigorous, enforceable benchmarks on humanitarian access.
- Decouple discussions about humanitarian access from political dialogue between conflicting parties, leading to an inclusive and comprehensive peace.
- Prioritise the needs of vulnerable populations in engagement on migration, and the establishment of safe, legal migration pathways for those for whom leaving the country is the only option.
- As the penholder on Darfur in the Security Council, the UK should continue to push for UNAMID to have a strong protection of civilians mandate, and ensure it is adequately resourced to undertake it. Now that the mission has been repurposed with a peacebuilding mandate, it needs to be ensured that their existing vital programmes, and the populations they support, are not simply abandoned.
- As a substantial donor to humanitarian efforts in Sudan, the UK should keep a watchful eye on Sudan's implementation of new HAC directives and procedures to ensure that they fully remove bureaucratic impediments, and result in actual aid delivery.

Case study

Dialogues for peace in Abyei

In the past year, the Abyei area has seen the peaceful resumption of pastoral migration, in part achieved through the work of Concordis International. Last year, a joint pastoralists' meeting was held in Amiet, where 63 participants from both Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities discussed the challenges to the February 2016 Peace Agreement.

They paid particular attention to practical measures around the seasonal movement of people and their livestock to new pastures, which

often caused tensions and sometimes violence between pastoralists and local communities.

Peace, reconciliation and forgiveness have resulted in an uninterrupted farming season and the opening of Amiet market, as well as the resumption of migration routes and strengthening Ngok Dinka-Misseriya relations.

The Joint Pastoralists' meeting is the latest in a series of inter-community dialogues organised by Concordis to address the challenges facing specific groups, including youth, women and traders.



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Syria

We are now in the seventh year of conflict in Syria, which began in March 2011. The conflict has spawned one of the worst humanitarian crises of our time which is being strongly felt throughout the Middle East and beyond. It has destroyed lives, livelihoods, childhoods and education, and is creating a “lost” generation for whom war is the new normal.



The aftermath of an attack close to one of Syria Relief's schools in Eastern Aleppo / © Syria Relief 2016

Syria conflict in numbers

- There are 13.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria, with more than 4.5 million in besieged and hard to reach areas (as of August 2017, 540,000 civilians in 11 besieged locations, without adequate access to food, water, and healthcare and no freedom of movement. A further 4 million are in hard-to-reach areas where humanitarian aid is delivered with great difficulty).¹
- 6.3 million people are internally displaced in Syria by the violence.²
- More than 5 million Syrians are refugees.³ This does not account for those who are unregistered, for example in Lebanon where registration was frozen by order of the Lebanese authorities in January 2015, but Syrians continue to arrive illegally.
- Lebanon has more than 1 million Syrian refugees in a country with a population of around 4 million.⁴
- Since 2014, the UK's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme (VPRS) has resettled 5,453 Syrians in the UK out of a target of 20,000.

This is in addition to the 1,507 cases of granted asylum or an alternative form of protection to Syrian nationals in the year ending March 2017 (statistics as of May 2017).⁵

- Inside Syria alone \$3.3 billion⁶ is needed to provide for all the humanitarian needs in 2017. The Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Syria is currently only 35.7% funded.

- At least 3 million children under the age of six inside Syria have only known war. At least 3 million children live in areas with high exposure to explosive weapons, and since the beginning of the conflict more than 4000 schools have been attacked.⁷
- Prior to the conflict, Syria was a middle income country; 85% of Syrians are now living in poverty.⁸
- Life expectancy in Syria has been reduced by two decades, from 76 years of age to 56 years of age.⁹

Key recommendations

Support a just and inclusive peace

More must be done to ensure a just and peaceful negotiated end to this conflict. The UK government can support this objective by providing technical and diplomatic support for men and women from Syrian civil society to be heard and involved. This would reflect the outcomes of the 2016 London conference on Syria, which pledged to support a peaceful transition that included all of Syrian society, supporting them to develop the knowledge and skills to rebuild their country, with a particular emphasis on including women and girls in building the peace.¹⁰

Increase humanitarian access and worker protection

Access to areas desperately in need of humanitarian relief remains a massive issue inside Syria. Across Syria, there are more than 4 million people in besieged or hard to reach areas. In January 2017, UN Senior Advisor for Syria, Jan Egeland described the Syrian government permit process for delivering aid as a "hopeless bureaucratic quagmire".¹¹ Even when they are able to gain the necessary permits, it has been reported that UN aid convoys often have key supplies, such as medical aid, removed before being given access. A similar picture exists in areas controlled by opposition groups, where the UN has also been blocked when attempting to deliver aid. It is crucial for the UK government to continue to push strongly for humanitarian access through its engagement at the UN.

In areas newly under government control, more humanitarian workers are being detained as they are considered "activists", i.e. "enemies of the state". This has meant that many humanitarian workers are displaced to other areas of the country to escape this fate. This is in addition to the direct attacks, including airstrikes, detention, and torture inflicted on

humanitarian workers by all parties to the conflict. There must be assurances that, as part of the ongoing peace processes, humanitarian workers are given protection and that perpetrators are held to account for these acts. The majority of civilian violent deaths have been from conventional high explosive attacks (rather than, say, chemical attacks); there is still no policy in place to end the bombing of hospitals and rescue workers, or to end air and artillery attacks on populated areas.

Adequately fund the Syria response

In addition to the 13.5 million in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria, there are more than 5 million Syrians living as refugees in neighbouring countries. The current resourcing requirements are woefully underfunded, with funding at only 18%, a gap of nearly \$3 billion. As recommended in the 2017 INGO "Stand and Deliver" report,¹² bilateral and multilateral support to Syria's neighbouring countries must be continued and expanded to ensure necessary policy changes are introduced to protect refugees. Furthermore, as certain areas of the country begin to rebuild, it is imperative that any funding that is delivered is accompanied by clear conditions on a permanent ceasefire, political transition, treatment of detainees, and internally displaced people.

Avoid politicising humanitarian aid

The complexity of the operating environment demands that humanitarian action be viewed and respected as principled humanitarian assistance. Regardless of progress towards stabilisation or reconstruction, the role of humanitarian actors must be respected. Increased access to civilians in desperate need of humanitarian assistance must not be politicised or jeopardised as an indicator of stability and normalisation.

Resettle more Syrian refugees in the UK

Protection of refugees must be at the heart of the UK's response. The vast majority of refugees from Syria are being hosted by countries in the region, which are experiencing their own economic and security crises. Capping the Dubs scheme to accepting 350 (with an increase of 130) lone refugee children and suspending accepting disabled children and adults for refuge in the UK was a massive blow to the UK's response to the global refugee crisis. It is imperative that the UK continues to accept Syrian refugees and expands its pledged 20,000. Wealthy countries including the UK must increase resettlement to at least 10% of the Syrian refugee population by the end of 2017.

Recognise and support Syrian civil society

In March 2017, Assaad al Achi of Syrian NGO Baytna ("Our House") referred to civil society as "the last hope [Syria] has left". In the years of the conflict, it is Syrian civil society that has been at the forefront of relief and support, including providing education, medical care, food, and psychosocial support. The future of Syria must not be considered only in terms of a choice between various armed factions and the government. Civil society must be given its place at the negotiation table and have fair access to funding to continue the work they have been doing to advocate for a just and equitable future for Syria.

Challenge impunity by supporting international justice

The adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution 71/248 of 21 December 2016, establishing a mechanism to assist in the investigation of the most serious crimes under international law committed in Syria since March 2011, was long overdue and very welcome. This mechanism, with the assistance of the UN and its partners, is capable of bringing some measure of justice and accountability to the victims of the crimes committed in Syria since March 2011. However, unless serious steps are taken to ensure the effective implementation of the resolution, impunity and the horrific cycle of violations will continue.

The Independent, International, and Impartial Mechanism (IIIM) needs \$13m in its first year – the UK contributed only £200,000 – substantially lower than Germany and the Netherlands which each contributed more than \$1m. Funding is welcome but a substantial increase needs to be committed by 2018 and beyond to ensure the mechanism can be properly established and rapidly begin investigating the most serious crimes in Syria.

Protect civilians in Raqqa

Raqqa, a city in the north of Syria has been under Islamic State (Isis) control since 2014. In 2016, an anti-Isis coalition began a military operation to retake the city, primarily led by Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), with US troops providing support on the ground along with the wider coalition (including the UK) providing land and air support. Since November 2016, 271,620 people have been displaced from Raqqa, 33,063 of these since the beginning of July 2017. There are estimated to be 18-25,000 civilians trapped inside the city. While as of mid-August civilians continued to leave, their departure routes were significantly reduced and those attempting to flee face being killed by Isis snipers or mines. Those who remain face the threat of being used as human shields. Safe points of exit should be identified and marked and their position communicated safely to civilians inside Raqqa.

There is a vast humanitarian crisis as a result of the military operation, with an estimated 440,000 in need of humanitarian assistance in Raqqa governorate, including inside Raqqa city, where there are severe food shortages, lack of drinking water, and little or no medical support. Bread is now being sold at a 100% price increase since July, with reportedly only one remaining bakery in the city, the other one having been destroyed in an airstrike. There are serious questions about the accountability of the coalition-backed forces on the ground, and it appears that insufficient measures have been taken to uphold the international humanitarian law (IHL) principles of distinction and proportionality. The UK should, as part of the coalition, urge its members to make public the steps they will take to ensure respect of IHL in the conduct of hostilities.

Case study

"I was afraid I wouldn't be able to walk again at first"

Roqaya, 14, was very seriously wounded by a shelling in Syria. Both of her legs had to be amputated at the knee. She didn't know if she'd ever be able to walk again. But, less than a year later, she's walking independently again thanks to the donations of supporters and UK Aid.

"My mum and I were at home, talking on the phone, when a shell exploded nearby", she says quietly. "Mum was killed and I was injured. I lost consciousness, and when I woke up I was in hospital here in Jordan."

Both of her legs had to be amputated at the knee. She didn't know if she'd ever be able to walk again. She was evacuated across the nearby border into northern Jordan. Not long after she'd had initial

treatment in a Jordan hospital, she was referred to Handicap International. Handicap International physiotherapists visited her in hospital and started supporting her recovery, providing physiotherapy sessions and arranging custom-made prosthetic legs for her.

"I was afraid I wouldn't be able to walk again at first", says Roqaya.

"And then, when I first received my new legs, I was afraid they were too heavy for me.

"But I have a strong personality, and I can walk normally now. I just want to walk, work and do everything as I used to do in Syria before the accident."



Roqaya, who lost both her legs in a bombing on Syria / © Abbie Trayler-Smith/Panos For DFID



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Yemen

Yemen is facing the world's largest humanitarian crisis, with over 20.7 million people in need of aid, including 6.8 million at imminent risk of famine.¹ The conflict, which escalated in March 2015, pits the southern-based exiled government under Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi supported by a Saudi-led coalition, against northern Houthi-led forces supported by Yemen's former president Ali Abdullah Saleh and armed forces loyal to him. The conflict has had a devastating impact on civilians, both directly from the violence on both sides and from its consequences, including a devastating cholera outbreak.²

Hospitals, schools, markets, homes, food stores, water networks and aid agencies have been attacked by airstrikes from the Saudi-led coalition and ground shelling and fighting including by Houthi allied forces since the conflict escalated in March 2015. The UN believe up to 54,000 civilians have been killed or

injured during the war³ with 60% of casualties being caused by airstrikes in the year to June 2016.⁴ Three million Yemenis have lost their livelihoods after being displaced during the violence. Al Qaeda has taken control of territory in the south of the country as government and services have collapsed.

Key challenges

The conflict has led to the world's largest cholera outbreak for decades with over 400,000 suspected cases⁵ in a country where over 14.5 million people are in need of clean water and sanitation. Yemen's economy has collapsed; 1.2 million public workers – including health and water workers – have not received their salaries in ten months and are therefore unable to help people with cholera. Waste is piling up on the streets, adding to the risk of several diseases spreading, with one child under five dying every 10 minutes according to the UN.⁶

Over 90% of Yemen's staple foods are imported. The Saudi-led coalition has imposed an intermittent air and sea blockade on Yemen, regularly denying deliveries of food, medicine and critical fuel supplies to the country, and has threatened to attack its main port of Hodeidah. Houthi forces have similarly imposed sieges on key cities such as Taiz, leaving people eating leaves according to ICRC.⁷ Thousands of people have been detained or disappeared by both Saudi-led coalition forces, including UAE ground forces, and Houthi allied forces.

Since the start of the war, the UK government has approved the sale of over £3.3 billion of arms exports to Saudi Arabia, as well as providing



Eight year old girl collects water from the Al-Manjoran IDPs camp in Hajjah / © Moayed Al Shabani/Oxfam

diplomatic support for their operations. There is some evidence to suggest Saudi Arabia may have broken assurances to the UK government not to use certain weapons including cluster munitions. British Aerospace Engineering (BAE Systems) recently refused to confirm whether some of its 6,200 staff in Saudi Arabia are loading bombs on planes for use in Yemen following a job advert for weapons loading technicians.

The UK has failed to table a UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire as promised in October 2016, and has repeatedly blocked diplomatic protests and resolutions at the EU

and the UN, including calls for a UN led independent investigatory mission into violations of human rights by all parties.

The UK is currently the third largest humanitarian donor to the crisis, including £139m in 2017/18⁸ but this is far less than the more than £1 billion announced this year to help Syrians refugees. Despite being the largest humanitarian crisis in the world today, Yemen is receiving one of the smallest allocations of all countries DFID funds, including other countries facing famine like Somalia, South Sudan and Nigeria.⁹

Recommendations

We urge the UK government to:

- Support a new UN Security Council resolution on Yemen calling for a permanent and immediate ceasefire.
- Suspend both extant and future licensing of UK arm sales to Saudi Arabia for use in Yemen.
- Press for unrestricted access into Yemen so that the private sector and humanitarian organisations can provide food, fuel and medicine for those in need, including reopening Sana' airport to commercial flights and protecting Hodeidah port from attack.
- The UK should significantly increase its aid to amounts comparable with crises of similar size. The UK should be providing funding to restore the functioning of critical Yemeni institutions and their staff including, water, health, and solid waste service providers.

Case study

Providing water to 4,700 people

Fekri is a 40-year-old father of 4 children, living in Al-Jalilah village, in Al-Dhale governorate. Without a sustainable income, he depends on whatever he can earn from working on the market from day to day.

"Life is difficult these days, and we cannot afford all the essential items. We also had to reduce our water consumption because it's very expensive and more than half of our money is spent on water," explained Fekri.

Oxfam supported Fekri and the 4,700 inhabitants of Al-Jalilah village by building a water tank with a pump line to the village to decrease the cost of buying water by 60%.

More than 1,000 families also received hygiene kits and benefited from several other activities implemented by Oxfam. Oxfam has helped over a million people since the start of the war providing water, sanitation, and giving cash transfers for people to buy food.



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