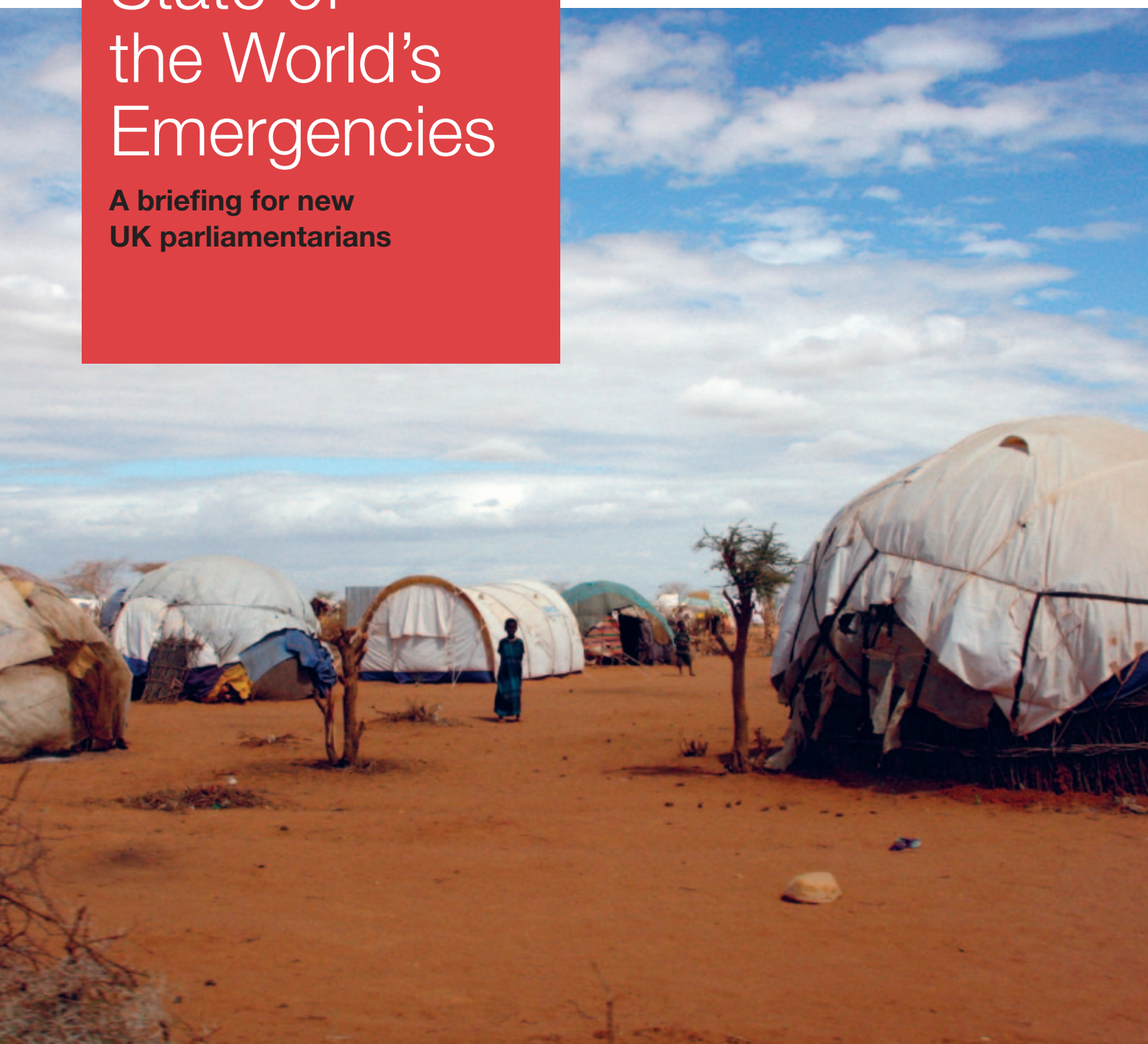


State of the World's Emergencies

**A briefing for new
UK parliamentarians**



About Bond

Bond is the UK membership body for over 440 organisations working in international development, ranging from large agencies with a world-wide presence to community and specialist organisations. We work to influence governments and policymakers, develop the skills of people in the sector, build organisational capacity and effectiveness, and provide opportunities to exchange information, knowledge and expertise.

Acknowledgements

This briefing was produced by Bond's Humanitarian and Conflict Policy groups. Bond Groups are spaces where our members can share expertise and best practice, and work together to formulate collective policy responses on key issues and to influence governmental and institutional decision-making. To find out more, please visit bond.org.uk/groups

List of acronyms

CAR	Central African Republic
CSSF	Conflict, Stability and Security Fund
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FAC	UK Foreign Affairs Committee
FCO	UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
GBV	gender-based violence
IDPs	internally displaced persons
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IPC	infection prevention and control
IS	Islamic State
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
MINUSCA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR
NCDs	non-communicable diseases
NGOs	non-governmental organisations
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNAMA	UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UN Refugee Agency)

Front cover: Refugee shelters in the Dadaab camp, northern Kenya.

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1. Introduction



Above: DFID worker checking supplies on a RAF C17 bound for the Philippines.

Sgt Ralph Merry ABIPP RAF / Ministry of Defence

Thank you for taking the time to read this briefing. It has been put together by many dozens of international non-governmental organisations under the leadership of Bond's Humanitarian and Conflict Policy groups, who 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.

1. Introduction

The briefing is designed to give incoming members of parliament a rapid overview of some of the world's most fragile situations and highlight actions which key influencers can take to ensure the UK government most effectively delivers on its moral and political responsibilities. Beginning with summaries of key issues we face as agencies working in humanitarian crisis and conflict settings, the briefing then focuses on short summaries of 10 fragile situations and emergencies. The information is accurate to the middle of April 2015.

There are a number of ways in which you can become active as a parliamentarian in addressing these issues. Many of the countries we cover have related All Party Parliamentary Groups which are currently being reconstituted. For a personal briefing please contact individual groups and agencies listed at the end of each chapter.

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 trust you will continue to build on this legacy, and use your office to engage, provide oversight and influence action, so that lives can be saved and more people can live free from violence and fear.

2. Why the UK must support principled humanitarian assistance

Above: Vast tracts of land in Pakistan's Sindh province remain submerged under water, six months on from the monsoon rainfall.

Russell Watkins / Department for International Development

The basic humanitarian needs of people affected by conflict and natural disasters around the world are increasing. More and more people urgently require food, water, shelter and other assistance to survive. New and ongoing conflicts force ever greater numbers of people from their homes.

In 2013, for the first time since World War II, the number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons (IDPs) around the world exceeded 50 million, and it now stands at 51.2 million. The Ebola crisis in West Africa has further underlined the risks posed by pandemic outbreaks, and the need for robust, comprehensive systems to contain them, while climate change is expected to generate more frequent and more devastating natural disasters.

2. Why the UK must support principled humanitarian assistance

In light of the increasing scale, severity and frequency of humanitarian crises, this briefing outlines the key challenges faced by aid agencies and calls on the new UK government to work with national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to support and protect the vital role humanitarians play in providing assistance to the most vulnerable in conflict settings, in slow and sudden onset natural disasters, and during pandemic outbreaks.

Key challenges

Shrinking humanitarian space

Humanitarian NGOs work in highly insecure environments. In order to ensure safe access to all those in need, work is carried out under and governed by the principles of humanitarian action: humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. However, the “space” in which NGOs can safely operate around the world is becoming more and more restricted.

In 2013 violence against aid workers reached an all-time high, with 155 humanitarian workers killed and 134 kidnapped in 251 separate attacks. The risks to aid workers' safety and our ability to deliver aid to those in need are heightened when our work can be perceived as being 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 perception.

Governments must avoid such blurring of objectives. Aid agencies' access to assist people in crisis settings is not only threatened by insecurity; often governments and armed groups refuse to allow them access. Through diplomatic channels, presence and political pressure, the new government should push to ensure that access is facilitated, to ensure assistance reaches those most in need, without life-threatening delays.

Funding gaps

Over the past 10 years donations to international humanitarian appeals have risen by 600%, from \$3 billion in 2004 to \$17.9 billion in 2014. But although donor pledges have risen, they have not kept pace with rising needs. Future humanitarian funding must be increased to (impartially) meet growing global needs.

As well as increased levels of funding, donors must also consider the ways in which funds are delivered. Experience from Afghanistan, Central African Republic (CAR), the Sahel and South Sudan illustrates the importance of predictable, multi-year funding to enable partners to prepare for and respond to recurrent humanitarian crises.

Challenges to civilian protection

NGOs are increasingly frustrated by collective international failures to provide meaningful protection to civilians during conflict. The UN's Human Rights Up Front agenda – created following the 2012 Internal Review Panel on UN Action in Sri Lanka and its findings of “systemic failure” – is still a work in progress, but offers an important opportunity to ensure that human rights and protection are central to all humanitarian action; it should therefore be supported.

Evidence from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), CAR and South Sudan, where civilians continue to suffer appalling human rights abuses, further highlights the need for a greater emphasis on civilian protection in UN peacekeeping missions. The UK government should capitalise on its position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and ensure that such missions are given strong protection of civilian mandates and receive adequate funding and resources.

Global demographics

Younger and older people are particularly vulnerable during emergencies. Children constitute half of many populations affected by crisis, while global ageing leaves an increasing proportion of older men and women at risk and in need of assistance not traditionally provided by humanitarians, for example, management of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) or access to treatment for malnutrition. The current responses in Ukraine and Syria clearly illustrate both the higher risks and increased mortality rates driven by interruptions in treatment for NCDs. Ensuring that these groups receive appropriate and accessible assistance, and are consulted and empowered to actively participate in the design and delivery of relief, is critical to the accountability and effectiveness of assistance.

2. Why the UK must support principled humanitarian assistance

Gender-based violence (GBV) in emergencies

Despite an increased focus on the physical and sexual abuse suffered by far too many women and girls of all ages during humanitarian crises and a number of global initiatives that have been launched, response to and prevention of GBV in emergencies remains inadequate. The UK can be proud of the key role it has played in developing high-level commitments such as the Call to Action on Protecting Girls and Women in Emergencies and the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative. The new UK government should stay the course and push for the implementation of these commitments, to ensure that women and girls of all ages have safe access to lifesaving GBV services, and appropriate response, prevention and risk reduction programmes.

Urban humanitarian response

Rapid global urbanisation poses major challenges for humanitarian responses, with increasing numbers of people displaced by conflict heading for cities, towns and villages rather than traditional camps. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) recognises this trend and the resultant challenges, and has been a global leader on 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.

Next steps

The United Nations Secretary-General will convene the first-ever global humanitarian summit in Istanbul in May 2016. The goal of the summit is to find new ways to tackle humanitarian needs in an ever-changing world. Managed by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the summit offers a major opportunity to build consensus around critical and necessary reforms to the global humanitarian system.

The new UK government takes office at a time of a major increase in need that demands a re-think of how the humanitarian system operates to ensure it is fit for purpose in the future. The UK government should ensure that frontline humanitarian responders, including NGOs, organisations in developing countries, and affected populations who are often side-lined in such processes, are central to the summit and any reform processes that it produces.

For more information, please contact the Humanitarian Group co-chairs, Melanie Teff (melanie.teff@rescue-uk.org) and Marcus Skinner (mkskinner@helppage.org)

3. Why the UK must continue to focus on fragile and conflict-affected states



Above: A Congolese soldier based in Dungu, Province Orientale, Democratic Republic of Congo. Oxfam supports community-based protection committees who lobby for better security in their local area and act as a bridge between their community and the local authorities.

Simon Rawles / Oxfam

Today 1.2 billion people live in fragile and conflict-affected states, with 43% of them living in poverty.¹ As noted by the UN High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the World Bank and many others, development programmes will achieve little for the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world if they do not help reduce conflict and violence, and build sustainable peace.

Recognising this, during the last parliament DFID committed to spend 30% of its budget on these contexts. However, working in fragile states is challenging – as noted in an independent assessment of DFID's work in such places² – and comes with risks.

3. Why the UK must continue to focus on fragile and conflict-affected states

Support for development in fragile and conflict-affected states must be informed by a good understanding of the specific dynamics in each context, including conflict factors. Failure to do this risks doing harm by exacerbating underlying conflict issues, and making communities more vulnerable to a range of shocks and stresses, as has happened before. Indeed, aid must go further than simply being sensitive to conflict issues (the “do no harm” approach); it must also contribute to building peace and stability.

The UK is uniquely placed to make this happen. As the world's second largest bilateral donor, it can use its membership of the EU and permanent status on the UN Security Council to play a leading role in encouraging peaceful growth in fragile contexts. Similarly, UK-based international NGOs have been among those at the forefront of incorporating peacebuilding and conflict-sensitive development. The strong partnership between DFID and UK civil society organisations is a further asset for UK leadership in this field.

Recommendations

We urge the UK government to:

- Maintain consistent aid spending in fragile and conflict-affected states that is sensitive to conflict dynamics, so that interventions reduce poverty and increase stability.
- Ensure the UK continues to mainstream gender, including the prevention of sexual violence, in its foreign policy. The UK should champion inclusive and meaningful participation of diverse voices in local, national and international peace processes, particularly those of women, children, the elderly, disabled and other marginalised groups.
- Ensure that the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include a clear and specific focus, in the form of a standalone goal, on tackling deficiencies in the rule of law, poor governance and other drivers of instability and violence.
- Ensure that UK policy on building stability in fragile states – working towards a clear and comprehensive vision for promoting more peaceful societies – continues to focus on conflict prevention and not only response, and is joined-up and consistent across Whitehall.
- Protect the pro-poor focus of development assistance by ensuring that the objectives and activities of the UK's new Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) are transparent and accountable to parliament, and that aid priorities are not set by narrow national security objectives.
- Ensure that international NGOs working for peace are able to work in complex environments, and where appropriate be in contact with armed groups, without fear of falling foul of UK anti-terror legislation.

For more information, please contact the Conflict Policy Group co-chairs, Shelagh Daley (sdaley@saferworld.org.uk) and Paul-André Wilton (wilton@careinternational.org)

4. Afghanistan



Above: A young girl pictured on International Women's Day in Helmand, Afghanistan.

Mette Bastholm / Department for International Development

Ongoing conflict, natural disasters and large-scale displacement are undermining the progress that has been made in Afghanistan, and much of the country remains in the grip of a humanitarian emergency. OCHA estimated that in 2015 almost 7.5 million Afghans will need humanitarian assistance out of a population of only around 30 million people. These needs arise “from widespread but low- to medium-level conflict, internal displacement due to conflict and natural disasters, Pakistani refugees seeking refuge in Afghanistan, and a decrease in the ability of the government to deliver its planned development goals.” Other indicators paint

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an even worse picture: a 2013 national nutrition survey, for example, pointed to high levels of child malnutrition – one in ten Afghan children under the age of five is acutely malnourished, and one in twenty-five is at risk of death through severe malnourishment.

Key challenges

Environmental disasters

Afghanistan is prone to a range of recurrent environmental disasters, including earthquakes, avalanches, drought and flooding. Droughts and floods are especially severe in northern provinces as a result of geography and environmental degradation. Floods in 2014 were devastating, affecting 150,000 people, while in early 2015 avalanches and floods killed 224 people and left thousands homeless.³

Protracted conflict

The violent and protracted conflict has taken a heavy toll on Afghans. Civilian casualties rose again throughout 2014, up 22% from 2013. The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) recorded a total of 10,548 civilian casualties (3,699 deaths and 6,849 injured) in 2014, the highest in a single year since records began in 2009.⁴ Conflict continues to disrupt already limited health services and prevent civilians from safely reaching markets, places of employment and schools. The conflict and violence also impacts communities' access to humanitarian assistance. Afghanistan continues to be an extremely dangerous setting in which to deliver aid, with 57 aid workers killed, 47 injured and 182 abducted in 2014.⁵

Declining international support

The practical impact on humanitarian assistance is that aid workers sometimes cannot work where they are needed most. Despite the large scale of ongoing emergencies in Afghanistan, international support for the humanitarian response is declining. In 2014 the UN lowered its humanitarian appeal by 14% despite acknowledging a worsening humanitarian situation, recognising that donors were not likely to provide adequate funding for a larger appeal. Even more concerning, the appeal remained only 55% funded by September of that year. The United States, by far Afghanistan's biggest donor, slashed its total assistance to Afghanistan (including non-humanitarian

funding) from \$4 billion in 2010 to \$2 billion in 2014, with most of the funding for large-scale development projects rather than community-based development or humanitarian assistance.⁶

Food insecurity

Afghanistan's decades of conflict and frequent natural disasters have created chronic problems as well as dynamic, new ones. Despite significant improvements in recent years, Afghanistan remains one of the least developed countries in the world. Eight million Afghans are food insecure, meaning that they have a calorie intake that is insufficient to sustain a healthy and active life; a further 2.2 million are very severely food insecure.⁷

Un- and underemployment

According to latest figures (2012), 25% of the working-age population are un- or underemployed, and a staggering 81% are in vulnerable employment (day labourers, unpaid family workers etc), resulting in 36.5% of the population living below the poverty line.⁸ This increases the risk of young people adopting negative coping strategies such as turning to crime, drugs and gangs within urban settings, and facing radicalisation across the country.⁹

Access to education

Although the number of children enrolled in school has significantly increased in the last few years, 52% of Afghan girls still do not have access to primary education.¹⁰ In the population aged 25 years and older, less than 25% completed any formal education, and only 10% of women, resulting in literacy rates of only 47% for men and 17% for women.¹¹ Compounding the lack of education facilities and personnel for children and adults, schools and education staff are the targets of attacks such as suicide bombs and arson, with 1,100 incidents from 2009-12.¹²

Access to basic services

Afghans lack adequate access to basic services, particularly in rural areas. On average there are only three health workers available per 10,000 Afghans, substantially below the 22 minimum standard.¹³ Access to health services remains even more challenging in the insecure provinces and districts where it is needed most.¹⁴ In recent years, aid agencies, donors and the Afghan government have improved their ability to coordinate in responding to these long-term crises, but without a comprehensive plan to coordinate humanitarian and development

4. Afghanistan

programming, aid providers still cannot ensure that local people are getting the lifesaving and life-building assistance they need.

Displacement

Displaced women, children and young people suffer disproportionately from emergencies and chronic poverty in Afghanistan. The country is still in the midst of the world's largest protracted displacement crisis, with 667,000 Afghans displaced inside the country. As conflict between Afghan security forces and non-state armed groups has increased, so too have levels of forced displacement. While 5.8 million Afghans have voluntarily returned to Afghanistan from other countries since 2002,¹⁵ this has presented huge challenges for Afghanistan's absorption capacity and hampered development efforts.

Since summer 2014 eastern Afghanistan has seen an influx of refugees from Pakistan, escaping military operations there; more than 95,000 people have fled to the Afghan province of Khost and another 17,000 to the neighbouring Paktika province.¹⁶ Just as worrying is the sudden influx of returnees from Pakistan in early 2015: in a 10-week period, almost 52,000 Afghans returned from Pakistan, more than double the number for the whole of 2014. Many reported that their return was a result of harassment and intimidation by Pakistani authorities¹⁷ who recently stated that all legally registered Afghan refugees must leave their country by the end of 2015.

With the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimating that there are 1.6 million legally registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and twice as many illegal refugees, the Afghan government and UN agencies face an urgent capacity and funding crisis to support these returnees. IDPs and returnees are doubly disadvantaged, experiencing both the challenges affecting the entire country and the acute issues that accompany migration, including limited access to land to settle, safe drinking water, basic sanitation, shelter, land for grazing, basic services and job opportunities.

Across Afghanistan, women and girls face disproportionate protection risks like sexual exploitation, early marriage and domestic violence, and they are limited in their ability to work or obtain education, a situation that is compounded if they are displaced.¹⁸ Almost two in five women cannot find enough work, and families of female-headed households are worse off than those with men.¹⁹

Children from displaced families "are often forced into child labour to support their families, preventing them from attending school and putting them at risk of child recruitment" into armed groups.²⁰

Recommendations

We urge donors to:

- Respond adequately to the large scale of humanitarian need in Afghanistan, fully funding the UN appeal and providing additional direct support to aid agencies.
- In line with Good Humanitarian Donorship principles,²¹ 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 aid actors and each other to ensure that humanitarian and development funding and programming are connected and complementary. Effective pursuit of post-2015 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.
- Support programming that is context sensitive. Aid actors should work impartially with all members of the community. Donors should incorporate flexibility in management of funds and explore remote management possibilities.

For more information, please contact the British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group director, Jawed Nader (+44 (0) 20 7633 4977 jawed.nader@baag.org.uk)

5. Central African Republic



Above: A teacher's blackboard at Betokomia Trois bush school, Central African Republic.

Simon Davis / Department for International Development

The Central African Republic is one of the poorest countries in the world. Since independence in 1960 the country has experienced only one democratic transition and countless coups. Following the most recent crisis in March 2013, CAR has spiralled into a complex humanitarian emergency marked by widespread human rights abuses, displacement and ongoing inter-communal violence.

Before this, diverse ethnic and religious communities in CAR had lived together for decades without major conflict arising from their faiths. However, in the past year the country has been swept up in a surge of

5. Central African Republic

religious and ethnic violence led by majority Christian militia known as anti-Balaka in response to atrocities committed by majority Muslim Seleka rebels when they took power in March 2013. Religion and ethnicity have been manipulated by competing elites forcing communities apart.

The humanitarian outlook for the coming months is extremely concerning and requires urgent support from the international donor community. Currently, 2.7 million people, more than half the country's population, are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. But to date, only 11% of the required funds for the UN Strategic Response Plan have been pledged by the international donor community.

The UK government has so far played a leading role in supporting the humanitarian response, being among the top five donors to the UN appeal in 2014 and providing £23 million since the beginning of the crisis. A sustainable solution to the crisis in CAR will require a long-term commitment that addresses underlying vulnerabilities and poverty.

Key challenges

Conflict and displacement

International peacekeeping forces, including the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA), have struggled to restore stability and order. In spite of some improvement, the security situation across the country remains highly fragile.

Widespread criminality and violence continue to be committed against the civilian population in a culture of impunity where gender-based violence against women and girls is unrestrained. Furthermore, ongoing insecurity, coupled with very poorly developed road and air transport networks, poses significant challenges to aid agencies when it comes to the safety of staff.

Approximately one in five people have been forced to flee their homes and there are over 453,000 Central African refugees in the neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Chad, DRC and Republic of Congo.

Food insecurity

Insecurity has severely impeded crop production. Around 1.5 million people are in need of food assistance and all areas of the country are expected to experience crisis levels of food insecurity through to the end of the upcoming lean season in August. At least 32,000 children will suffer from severe acute malnutrition in 2015 and these numbers could rise given ongoing displacement, lack of healthcare services and deteriorating access to clean water.

Access to services

Looting and destruction of public infrastructure has worsened the already-poor condition of pre-existing health services and more than half of Central Africans are without effective access. The transitional authorities have little capacity to assist those affected, and humanitarian organisations are hindered in their relief efforts by poor infrastructure and insecurity.

Recommendations

We urge the UK government to:

- Support a continued UN peacekeeping presence in the country, urging the full and timely implementation of the "protection of civilians" strategy, ensuring that the full capacity of 12,870 troops is deployed as soon as possible, and making available necessary technical capacity and financial resources to ensure that the operation is adequately resourced to protect civilians.
- Maintain its position as a top five humanitarian donor for 2015, prioritise the protection of civilians and use its international position to encourage other donors to contribute to the UN appeal.
- Increase long-term funding for economic recovery and resilience activities, including vocational training, and support financial mechanisms that intend to bridge the humanitarian-development divide.
- Ensure sustained support for locally-led social cohesion efforts to create an enabling environment for those who have been displaced to return to their communities.

For more information, please contact the Central African Republic NGO Working Group coordinator, Anthony Neal (aneal@cafod.org.uk)

6. Democratic Republic of Congo



Above: Imani works as a tailor inside his temporary shelter in Buporo camp, eastern DRC. He is also president of the Oxfam Water Committee.

Eleanor Farmer / Oxfam

The Democratic Republic of Congo sits at the heart of the African continent and shares borders with nine countries. Since it gained independence from Belgium in 1960, the country has experienced decades of instability, wars, coups, corruption and fierce dictatorship. Despite its abundant mineral wealth, the DRC is one of the least developed countries on earth.

6. Democratic Republic of Congo

The economy is growing steadily, but these positive rates have had no tangible impact on a population that is getting poorer. More than 80% of the population lives on less than \$1 a day. Access to essential services is extremely limited: only 22% of Congolese have access to drinking water and just one in ten households use electricity. Unemployment is high, at 32%.

The DRC has a poor record on human rights, and security remains a major problem, particularly in the east of the country where people live under the constant threat of violence and economic exploitation from armed groups, despite numerous peace efforts. This problem is compounded by the army, which has been accused of being responsible for many abuses, rather than protecting citizens. The lack of security in the east has led to massive population displacement, both internally and externally, and sexual violence is widespread.

Key challenges and recommendations

Elections

Ensuring fair, free and democratic elections following the announced road map.

We urge the UK government to:

- Stress the importance of holding elections in 2016 in accordance with the constitution.
- Speak out against restrictions to freedom of expression and other political freedoms and deteriorating conditions for mobilisation of citizens by opposition parties.

Peace and security

Supporting the creation of a secure and peaceful environment in which civilians are protected.

We urge the UK government to:

- Support the implementation of the Framework Agreement on Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSCF).
- Ensure that MONSUCO prioritises protection of civilians and that any stabilisation measures are focused on increasing people's security.
- Address sexual and gender-based violence and women's participation in formal and informal decision-making structures.

Humanitarian concerns

Ensuring adequate and timely response to the shifting conflict dynamics.

We urge the UK government to:

- Provide flexible funding mechanisms to address the protracted crises in eastern DRC.
- Address any funding shortfalls for chronic and acute needs.

Natural resources

Supporting the development of an accountable and transparent extractive sector.

We urge the UK government to:

- Work to agree EU measures to ensure responsible mineral supply from conflict affected and other high risk areas are developed and implemented.
- Ensure that British companies working in DRC do not engage in corruption and do not source conflict minerals and improve transparency regarding extraction of national resources.

For further information, please contact the DRC NGO Working Group chair, Fraser Murray (fmurray@christian-aid.org)

7. Iraq



Above: An Iraqi refugee girl with her family at Newroz camp, where they are being helped by the International Rescue Committee.

Rachel Unkovic / International Rescue Committee

Successive waves of armed conflict within Iraq have left a total of 5.2 million people – half of them children – in need of humanitarian assistance, and resulted in the country having one of the largest populations of IDPs in the world. Some 2.6 million people have been forced from their homes since January 2014, with some 40% of them taking refuge in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). More than one million people remain displaced from the sectarian violence that wracked the country from 2006 to 2008.

Those urgently requiring emergency assistance in Iraq include 1.5 million people hosting those displaced by conflict, 1.4 million people living in active areas of fighting (where access to basic services is minimal),

7. Iraq

and 250,000 refugees, most of whom have fled civil war in neighbouring Syria. Iraq's internal crisis and the impact of the Syrian conflict make it the only country in the world to simultaneously confront two emergencies classified by the UN as "Level 3" (the organisation's classification for the most severe, large-scale humanitarian crises).

Fighting between Islamic State (IS) 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: some 2.2 million people in need are in areas that aid agencies can reach only sporadically and with difficulty. Some of those forced to flee their homes are now returning to areas where explosive remnants of war – including improvised explosive devices – remain, posing risk of death and injury to returnees and the aid agencies working to meet their basic needs.

Funding for humanitarian operations is also an issue: a number of critical food, water and sanitation programmes face curtailment or closure over the coming months due to a lack of resources, while UN education and protection appeals are only 10% and 43% funded respectively (as of April 2015). Finally, 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, who are at risk of violence from many armed groups (eg Shia militias), not just IS.

Areas of concern

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

- Many of those fleeing violence, and particularly Sunni Arabs, are being denied access to safer territories within Iraq, including the KRI. People spend weeks at checkpoints hoping for permission to enter, with some dying while waiting.
- The bulk of humanitarian operations in Iraq have focused on meeting needs in camps in the (relatively secure) KRI, and neglected people sheltering outside of camps (eg in schools, unfinished buildings, rented accommodation in urban settings), and those in need in southern and central Iraq.
- Donors, and some UN agencies, continue to provide assistance based on status (ie whether a person is a refugee, IDP, returnee or host community member) rather than on basic humanitarian need.
- Western government statements linking humanitarian aid to anti-IS operations threaten to undermine NGOs' ability to safely deliver neutral, impartial aid to all those in need.
- Donors are increasingly seeking to provide stabilisation funding (allocated according to political priorities) to Iraq, rather than humanitarian funding (focused on the needs of the most vulnerable). As of 13 April 2015 the UN's humanitarian appeal for Iraq is just 4% funded. Stabilisation funding will leave the basic needs of many unmet, which risks fuelling the conflict.
- 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, limiting their ability to access women's centres and services aimed at addressing their needs.
- Despite reports of high levels of violence – including sexual violence – against children in Iraq, there are inadequate levels of services aimed at preventing, identifying and providing support to those who have suffered such violence.

7. Iraq

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 less generous donors to increase their contributions.
- Step up efforts to assess 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.
- Support the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq in her efforts to reform and simplify the UN's coordination system in the country, and avoid divisions (including through donor funding) between refugees, IDPs, returnees and host community members, which complicate the humanitarian response.
- Urge the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to uphold the Iraqi constitution by permitting freedom of movement into their territories.
- Refrain from conflating military, political and humanitarian objectives in public statements and policy objectives.
- Ensure that counter-terrorism regulations do not hamper humanitarian operations.
- Provide, and urge other donor governments to provide, emergency funding to programmes aimed specifically at addressing violence against women and girls, and to efforts to reduce the risk of violence to women and girls.
- Address the lack of political inclusivity in Iraq, which continues to pose a threat to the country's stability.

*For further information, please contact the
UK Iraq Advocacy Group chair,
Luke Browne (luke.browne@rescue-uk.org)*

8. Sahel



Above: A woman feeds ready-to-use therapeutic food to her malnourished daughter in Niger.

Olivier Asselin / UNICEF

According to the UN, the Sahel region includes Burkina Faso, North Cameroon, Chad, The Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Northern Nigeria and Senegal, some of the poorest places in the world. Out of 187 countries, the 2014 UN Humanitarian Development Index ranks Niger in last place at 187, Chad at 184, Burkina Faso at 181 and Mali at 176.

Some of the challenges facing this fragile region include high levels of poverty; 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; poor delivery of basic services; and conflict and political upheaval.

8. Sahel

Key challenges

Food insecurity and malnutrition

The Sahel faces continuous cycles of food insecurity. An estimated 20.4 million people in the Sahel are currently food insecure and millions more will face deteriorating food security during the rest of 2015. In addition, a predicted 5.8 million children under five will suffer from global acute malnutrition in 2015, and on average one third of children in the Sahel suffers from stunting.

Conflict and displacement

Conflict, both internal and external, is having a devastating impact on the region. The impacts of this exacerbate food insecurity, hinder markets, set back development efforts and impede the ability of humanitarian agencies to bring much-needed assistance across the region. As of the start of 2015 over 2.8 million people in the Sahel are displaced, a million more than at the start of 2014. Over 200,000 Nigerian refugees have fled to Niger, Chad and Cameroon and there are an estimated 1.1 million IDPs in north-east Nigeria.

The situation in northern Mali remains highly unstable, which is hindering the return of refugees. Approximately 80,000 Malians remain internally displaced, with over 130,000 Malians living as refugees in neighbouring countries. The conflict in neighbouring CAR has also displaced around 330,000 refugees into Chad and Cameroon.²²

Elections and political upheaval

Burkina Faso: In October 2014 an uprising forced out long-term president Blaise Compaore as he sought to amend the constitution to prolong his 27-year rule. This was followed by a short period of army rule, led by Lieutenant Colonel Isaac Zida, before power was handed back to an interim civilian president, Michel Kafando, although Zida remains as the interim prime minister. Elections are due to be held in November 2015.

Nigeria: Presidential elections were delayed for six weeks due to the Boko Haram insurgency in the north-east of the country. Elections were finally held on 28 March, with former military ruler and leader of the All Progressives Congress, Muhammadu Buhari, becoming the first opposition candidate to win a presidential election in Nigeria. Election violence has been minimal, aided by the actions of Goodluck Jonathan, leader of the People's Democratic Party, in conceding defeat.

Mali: While stability has been restored in Mali following the crisis of 2012-13, peace talks between rebel groups in northern Mali and the national government are still ongoing and the peace agreement is yet to be signed. There are high levels of banditry in the north of the country, distrust at the local level regarding the UN peacekeeping operations and, while the root causes of the crisis are not addressed, the risks of ongoing instability and an escalation of violence and conflict remain high.

FAC inquiry

In March 2014²³ the Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) published an inquiry into statements made by David Cameron in January 2013 in which he appeared to commit to scaling up the UK's involvement in North and West Africa. The report "questions as to the strength of the FCO's analysis" [para 95] due to the apparent failure to anticipate the regional fallout from the 2011 intervention in Libya "which has been enormous and, in some cases, disastrous" [para 13].

The FAC states "the ongoing crisis in Libya has also destabilised a far wider area and, in so doing, strengthened the extremists' hand" [para 70]. Many of the mainly Tuareg mercenaries that the Gaddafi regime is known to have hired over the years left hurriedly after the regime collapsed, heading to northern Mali and helping to catalyse the Tuareg uprising which led to the 2012 crisis in the country [ibid]. And a proliferation of small arms in the region from the failure to secure the Gaddafi regime's arms caches "had even ended up in the hands of Boko Haram militants, thousands of miles from where they originated."

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The UK has significant investment in Nigeria with aid rising by 116% over the 2010-15 period to £284.4 million²⁴ (although the Nigeria Response Plan Fund is currently 89% underfunded). However, as the FAC notes, “Nigeria is now the only country in the region with which the UK has a bilateral aid relationship”²⁵ [para 89] and the government asserts in its response²⁶ that it has “no plans to open any new Missions in the region” [page 13].

The Sahel region is highly interconnected and events in one country impact the others. The FAC report has highlighted the negative implications from a fragmented approach in the region, a lack of strong analysis from few resources on the ground, and the possible risks of relying on international partners for information.

Recommendations in the FAC report urge the government to:

- Reflect on weaknesses in analysis that the events appear to have exposed, and how these might be rectified at departmental level.
- “Consider increasing its resources in the region and its reserves of specialist knowledge” [para 14] and “contemplate an enhancement of its diplomatic profile in Francophone parts of the Western Sahel Sahara region” [para 15]. It was felt “former colonial links were no longer a fit basis on which to arrange modern diplomatic networks.” [para 101]

Recommendations

We urge the UK government to:

- Consider recommendations from the FAC report and increase diplomatic presence in region. The UK should also work to build stronger partnerships with the EU, the AU and ECOWAS in supporting the region.
- Support long-term flexible funding, to build long-term resilience in the region. The 2015 Sahel Strategic Response Plan is currently 85.5% underfunded.
- Support strong engagement with civil society – key to building the resilience of local populations across the region. In addition to addressing critical humanitarian needs, the UK should support economic development and good governance initiatives across the region, taking a long-term approach to building local markets and employment opportunities, and strengthening the demand and supply side of government, and associated service delivery.
- Support improved protection and provision for IDPs (particularly the most at risk groups: women, children, elderly and disabled) within camps/ host communities and for returnees to liberated communities in areas of conflict across the region.
- In Nigeria, increase focus on the challenge of children affected by conflict and prioritise their concerns into comprehensive reconstruction plans for north-east Nigeria, including those children coerced into fighting. Any UN Security Council- authorised Multinational Joint Task Force to combat Boko Haram must include an embedded human rights monitoring team, ensure freedom of movement of IDPs and use appropriate treatment of detainees, with a commitment to ensure no arbitrary arrests.

For further information, please contact the UK Sahel Working Group chair, Stephanie Gill (stephanie.gill@tearfund.org)

9. Somalia



Above: A nurse registers a malnourished child to be admitted for treatment at a care center in Baadbado camp, Somalia. Oxfam is an implementing partner for this lifesaving programme with SAACID, a local Somali agency.

Geno Teofino / Oxfam

For more than two decades after 1991, Somalia was without effective government and in a state of conflict between warring clans, foreign forces and other groups. In 2012 a new internationally-backed government was installed although to this day Somalia remains insecure. In 2007 the AU peacekeeping mission in Somalia (AMISOM) deployed to try and reduce the threat of armed groups. It began its most recent military offensive with the Somali Armed Forces in March 2014. Civilians bear the brunt of the protracted armed conflict and insecurity. The Somali Federal

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Government lacks control of some towns and many rural areas in south-central Somalia. Access to parts of Somalia remains a key challenge due to insecurity. Where the state is present, its capacity and institutions remain weak.

Somalia's humanitarian crisis remains among the largest and most complex in the world. This year about 3.2 million people are in need of life-saving or livelihood support, the vast majority being internally displaced. Over 1.1 million Somalis are internally displaced, and a further one million have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. The current humanitarian situation in Somalia also stands against a backdrop of some of the lowest development indicators in the world. About 1.7 million school-age children do not go to school; one in twelve women die in childbirth; one in every ten Somali children die before their first birthday; and only one in three Somalis has access to safe water. About 40% of Somalis rely on money sent from relatives and friends overseas to meet their basic needs. The New Deal for Fragile States, of which the UK is the lead donor, is intended to coordinate donors behind a country-led plan to bring Somalia out of fragility but to date has yet to deliver any projects on the ground.

Areas of concern

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

- Addressing the deteriorating food security situation, humanitarian funding shortfalls, the need for conflict-sensitive delivery of aid, and increasing investment in resilience.
- Creating a secure and peaceful environment, with an emphasis on protection of civilians, peacebuilding and women's empowerment.
- Addressing ongoing restrictions in humanitarian access.
- Offering protection and assistance to Somali refugees/returnees/IDPs.
- Ensuring civil society is included in the Somalia New Deal, and appropriate delivery of its projects.
- 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.
- Implementing the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) and tackling gender-based violence.

Recommendations

We urge the UK government to:

- Support the adoption of a comprehensive Somali-led strategy to build conditions for sustainable peace, most crucially inclusive political dialogue and support for good governance, including women's participation at local and federal level.
- Continue to prioritise financial support to the Somali people. Funding must be flexible, sustainable and timely with a clear balance between development and lifesaving assistance. It should also address the needs of refugees and returnees. The UK government should encourage other donors to do likewise.
- As the lead donor for the New Deal, continue to ensure civil society and communities are consulted and included within this process, in order to ensure relevance of projects on the ground.
- Put mechanisms in place to ensure remittances continue to flow to Somalia, while long-term sustainable solutions are developed.

For further information, please contact the Somalia Advocacy Group chair, Sarah Pickwick (sarah.pickwick@worldvision.org.uk)

10. South Sudan



Above: A Mundari fisherman carrying smoked fish in Terekeka, Central Equatoria State, South Sudan.

Leonard Tedd / Department for International Development

South Sudan became independent from Sudan in 2011, and the world's newest country is one of the least developed countries in the world. In December 2013 conflict erupted in South Sudan. It reflected a split within the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) party, but quickly morphed into a national crisis, which unravelled within a context of decades of conflict, combined with frequent natural disasters and disease outbreaks.

The causes of the conflict are complex, and ultimately any political solution must also take into account the need to address root causes, including acute governance issues, problems within the SPLM, access

10. South Sudan

to land and resources and the proliferation of small arms, as well as the need for reconciliation, justice and accountability.

The crisis has resulted in dire humanitarian consequences, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)-led high-level mediation has yet to result in a meaningful peace agreement or cessation of hostilities. The UN has declared South Sudan a “Level 3” emergency.

South Sudan's humanitarian crisis, in numbers²⁷

- 6.4 million in need of emergency assistance (out of a population of 11 million)
- 2.5 million people facing severe food insecurity
- 1.9 million displaced, including over 500,000 refugees in neighbouring countries
- 244,600 refugees in South Sudan from neighbouring countries
- 235,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition

As the second-largest bilateral donor to South Sudan and as a member of the “Troika” (along with the US and Norway) which helped broker the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and continues to play a significant role in supporting the current mediation, the UK has had, and still has, an important and influential role.

Recommendations

Humanitarian assistance

We urge the UK government to:

- Ensure timely and predictable availability of flexible funds for emergency response and work with other international donors to commit their fair share.
- Integrate a long-term perspective that addresses South Sudan's acute development needs in states not directly affected by conflict and ensure that any intervention is based on a strong conflict analysis.
- Strongly and publicly support humanitarian response, in particular safeguarding operational environment and NGO space so that the response can effectively reach those in need.

Protection of civilians

We urge the UK government to:

- Apply concerted pressure on all parties to the conflict to stop the fighting and ensure that civilians can access protection and humanitarian assistance.
- Prioritise the protection of civilians, including around 117,000 who continue to seek protection in UN bases by holding the UNMISS to account to fulfil its mandate to protect civilians.

Inclusive peace process

We urge the UK government to:

- Engage strongly in the political process, working with the Troika and other members of the IGAD-Plus process pushing for an inclusive process that addresses the root causes of the conflict, including the need for reconciliation.
- Continue to call for the final report of the African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan to be published, and ensure accountability for human rights abuses.
- Ensure that the voices of South Sudanese, civil society, national organisations, and local community, faith and women's groups are given a strong platform for engagement, and that outcomes of the political process are communicated across South Sudan.

For further information, please contact the South Sudan Working Group chair, Natalia Chan (nchan@christian-aid.org)

11. Syria



Above: A woman from Homs, Syria, now a refugee in Lebanon, shows off knitted woolen clothes that she's learnt how to make, with support from the International Rescue Committee and UK aid.

Russell Watkins / Department for International Development

We are now in the fifth year of the conflict in Syria, which began in March 2011. The conflict has spawned one of the worst humanitarian crises of our time which is being felt strongly throughout the Middle East. The conflict in Syria has eroded any semblance of normal life for the majority of the population; it has destroyed livelihoods, childhoods and schooling, and is creating a “lost” generation for whom war and conflict is the new “normal”.²⁸

Syria conflict, in numbers

- \$2.9 billion needed to provide for all the humanitarian needs in Syria in 2015²⁹
- 12.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance³⁰

11. Syria

- 7.6 million displaced inside Syria³¹
- 3.9 million Syrian refugees³²
- 3 million children dropped out of school³³
- 1.1 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon according to official figures, increasing Lebanon's population by 20%. Unofficial figures put the Syrian population seeking refuge in Lebanon much higher³⁴
- 200,000 people killed since 2011³⁵
- 143 Syrian refugees resettled in the UK since the start of the conflict³⁶
- 56 years old – life expectancy in Syria reduced by two decades, from nearly 76 years old³⁷
- 3 in 4 people live in poverty and 54% live in extreme poverty. Only a few years ago Syria was a middle-income country³⁸

Key challenges and recommendations

End the conflict

The only way to bring an end to the humanitarian crisis is to put in place steps to end this violent conflict and to begin an inclusive peace process. There will be no military solution to this conflict. We ask the UK government to not only redouble efforts on the international stage to bring about a ceasefire, but to support grassroots initiatives for peace and reconciliation which are currently happening in Syria and neighbouring countries, which demonstrate the commitment of so many Syrians to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Increase humanitarian access

The unanimous adoption of UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2139 at the end of February 2014 brought with it much needed hope for people in Syria and across the Middle East. In it, the UNSC called for an urgent increase in access for humanitarian aid in Syria and demanded that all parties immediately cease attacks against civilians, end arbitrary detention, kidnapping and torture, and lift sieges of populated areas.

Despite two additional resolutions (2165 and 2191) which authorised UN aid operations to enter Syria from neighbouring countries without requiring the consent of the Syrian government, aid has failed to reach those in hard to access areas and besieged communities. We urge the UK government to continue to work with influential governments and the international community to increase humanitarian access and to

continue to support humanitarian actors to deliver aid based on need alone. We also ask that all sides to uphold their obligations to protect civilians and respect international humanitarian law.

Fund the refugee response adequately

Almost four million people have been made homeless by the crisis in Syria. Many are now either living in vast refugee camps or with host communities in rural and urban settings in neighbouring countries. For these refugees a continued commitment to provide them with humanitarian aid is essential. However, the provision of very basic humanitarian assistance is simply not enough and fails to address the long-term needs of refugees and host communities.

Hundreds of thousands of children have missed out on vital years of education, while opportunities for families to earn a living are few and far between. Similarly, access to health and legal services, especially for those not living in formal settlements or camps, is very limited. To ignore these medium- to long-term needs will make us complicit in creating a “lost generation”³⁹ which will have a profound impact on the region for decades to come.

In 2015 aid actors estimate that \$8.7 billion is needed to support 18 million people in Syria and neighbouring countries. We ask that the UK government work with the international community and regional bodies to encourage all donors to provide long-term flexible funding for the refugee response that provides for the needs of both Syrian refugees and host communities. It will also be necessary to develop a strategic plan which will allow countries to share the burden of the refugee crisis and provide for their needs.

Resettle more of Syria's refugees in the UK

For some of the most vulnerable refugees a resettlement place in the UK will offer a long-term solution. As part of the emergency response, UNHCR has called upon states to provide resettlement places for 130,000 refugees in 2014-16, providing solutions for some of the most vulnerable refugees from Syria. We are calling on rich and developed countries to agree collectively to resettle at least 5% of the total Syrian refugee population by the end of 2015 and we ask that the UK government takes its fair share of this 5%.

For further information, please contact the UK Syria Advocacy Group chair, Louise Finan (lfinan@christian-aid.org)

12. West African Ebola epidemic



Above: A decontamination team in Sierra Leone burn all dangerous items removed from the house of an Ebola victim.

Corporal Paul Shaw / Ministry of Defence

The West Africa outbreak of Ebola virus disease (EVD) was first reported in March 2014 and then spread throughout the region, with the majority of cases in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. More than a year on from the first confirmed case, there have been a total of 26,044 reported confirmed, probable and suspected cases of EVD in these three countries, with over 10,808 reported deaths (although outcomes from many cases are unknown).⁴⁰ The outbreak has severely strained already weak health systems in affected countries and has had huge economic and social consequences.

12. West African Ebola epidemic

As a result of large-scale efforts to contain the virus, the situation in West Africa has dramatically improved. In the past three weeks no new cases have been reported in Liberia (weeks to 19 April). The situation in Guinea and Sierra Leone is also improving with fewer provinces reporting cases than in previous weeks, 21 confirmed cases for Guinea and 12 for Sierra Leone (in the week up to 19 April).⁴¹

The UK led the response in Sierra Leone, and has so far committed over £405 million, which includes humanitarian aid directed towards healthcare, medical research, coordination, regional preparedness and deployment of experts to the affected countries.⁴²

Key challenges and recommendations

Avoid complacency

The Ebola epidemic is still not over. Ending this outbreak requires continuous community mobilisation; community event-based surveillance; continuous infection prevention and control (IPC) in health facilities; mobility and support for burial teams; and political will to continue to have all burials be medically safe and dignified. Neighbouring countries still remain at risk of their own Ebola virus outbreaks, however, so cross-border monitoring and regional cooperation are key.

Address needs of vulnerable groups

At this stage in the response, there is an urgent need to address overlooked needs like psycho-social care for affected health workers, burial teams and Ebola survivors; protection for children and for women and girls; the needs and contributions of vulnerable groups such as older people; as well as livelihood opportunities. A lack of attention to marginalised and vulnerable groups can hamper the remaining response efforts and hinder the establishment of effective recovery measures.

Focus on community engagement

There remains a key need to focus on strong community engagement, without which treatment, case finding, contact tracing and safe burials will not function effectively. All actors should recognise the role of faith leaders in creating the community engagement needed to address stigma, discrimination and to promote survivors' reintegration into society and establishing a community-based approach to health services.

Respect human rights

Care must be taken that all response measures, including measures that isolate potential cases, respect basic human rights, otherwise community confidence and effectiveness will be significantly undermined.

Learn from the experience

Recovery plans should be informed by the Ebola experience and take into account the damage Ebola has caused. As healthcare facilities and schools reopen, it is critical that elements of the emergency response, such as comprehensive IPC, be mainstreamed. Furthermore, the emergency response has brought valuable resources to affected countries, including stronger human resources – governments and donors should capitalise on these resources and properly transition them to revitalise health services.

Mobilise and support communities

The emergency response and recovery measures should also seek to fully mobilise and support all resources within communities for halting the transmission of Ebola and rebuilding the communities affected. Particular attention should be paid to the role of people of non-working age, including youth and older people. Livelihoods programmes should recognise the formal and informal contributions they make as workers and carers and ensure they have full access to the assistance they require.

For further information, please contact the UK Ebola Advocacy and Policy Working Group chair, Chelsea Purvis (chelsea.purvis@rescue-uk.org)

13. Yemen



Above: Vendors in the street selling traditional sweets, Sanāla, Yemen.

Foad Al Harazi / World Bank

Yemen, the poorest country in the Middle East, is in the midst of a humanitarian catastrophe.

Yemen conflict, in numbers

- 15.9 million people, more than 60% of the population, in need of humanitarian assistance⁴³
- 12 million people going hungry, with one million children under five suffering from life-threatening levels of malnourishment⁴⁴
- 1,976 people killed and 8,034 injured since 19 March 2015⁴⁵
- 90% of food⁴⁶ and 50% of fuel requirements⁴⁷ met by imports. The closure of land, sea and air routes has directly increased the humanitarian impact

13. Yemen

A Saudi-led coalition (with UK political support and arms) has conducted airstrikes in Yemen for over two months now in response to an armed takeover of Yemen by Houthis and their supporters. Indiscriminate bombing and attacks by the Houthis have damaged much civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, homes, schools, water networks and grain silos. These airstrikes, combined with ground fighting between several armed actors, have led to the displacement of more than one million people, and left civilians to bear the brunt of the conflict.

Many more lives are at risk from a de facto blockade of Yemen by the Saudi-led coalition than from the violence. With the country overwhelmingly dependent on food, medical and fuel imports, this has caused acute shortages of food, water and medical supplies, and dramatically raised the prices of basic commodities.

The current turmoil and specifically the coalition airstrikes have allowed non-state armed actors to gain ground in Yemen, including Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). This includes taking control of new areas of territory.

The UK government made clear its support for the Saudi-led action in Yemen but has committed UK aid to meet humanitarian needs. We remain concerned by the UK's role in this conflict and urge the government to work towards a peaceful settlement and an end to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

Recommendations

We urge the UK government to:

- End support for airstrikes in Yemen.
- Call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and ensure all parties are included in negotiating a peaceful settlement.
- Press for the full opening of land, sea and air routes, enabling the import and export of humanitarian and commercial goods, and enabling Yemenis to escape the conflict.
- Immediately suspend arms transfers, support services and other military exports to all parties engaged in operations in Yemen, and call for an arms embargo on all parties at the UN.
- Provide increased levels of lifesaving humanitarian and long-term development support to Yemen, and encourage other donors to do the same.
- Arrange for British Yemenis and their close relatives to leave Yemen together and enter the UK.

*For further information please contact
the UK Yemen Advocacy Group chair,
Anna Chernova (achernova@oxfam.org.uk)*

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