World Disasters Report 2018

Leaving ~~Millions~~ No One Behind

Executive summary

The international humanitarian sector must do more to respond to the needs of the world's most vulnerable people

International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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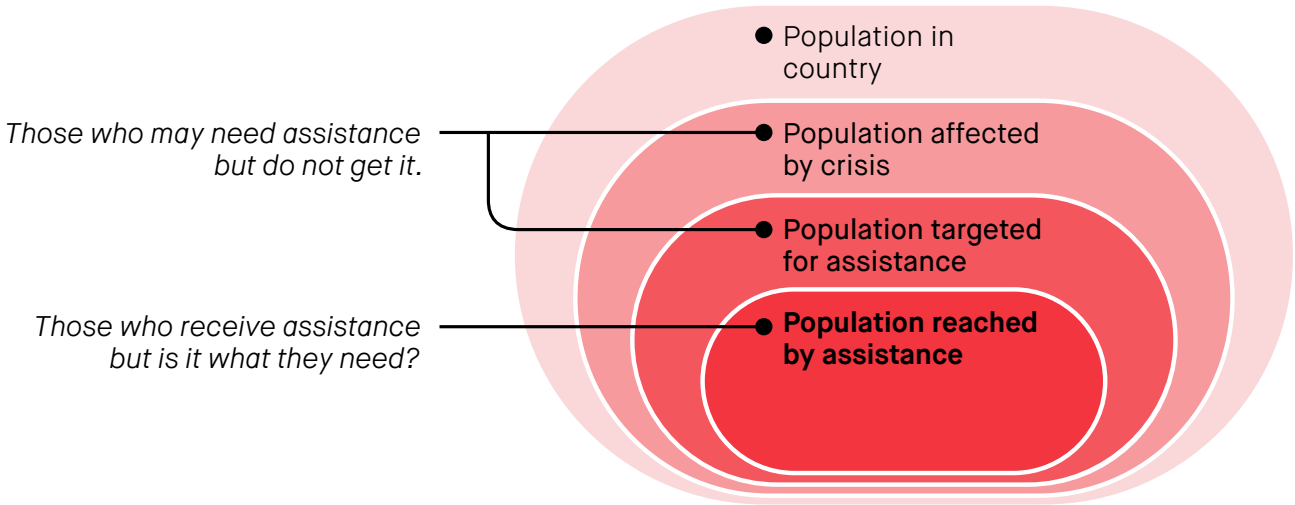
Executive summary

In 2015, the world pledged to 'leave no one behind' as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. But millions of people are left behind in humanitarian crises.

Precise figures remain elusive (given measuring need is an inexact art), but the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' Global Humanitarian Overview (OCHA, 2018a) estimates that some 134 million people will require humanitarian assistance worldwide in 2018. It further estimates that approximately 97 million people would be selected for international assistance under the joint humanitarian response plans, leaving a 27% gap which would only be partially met by domestic authorities or other organizations including the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement[1]. In a number of the major operations of 2017, fewer than half of the people estimated to be in need were actually known to be reached by internationally supported humanitarian assistance.

Fig. 1 Humanitarian population 'onion model'



Source: Based on ACAPs (2015b)

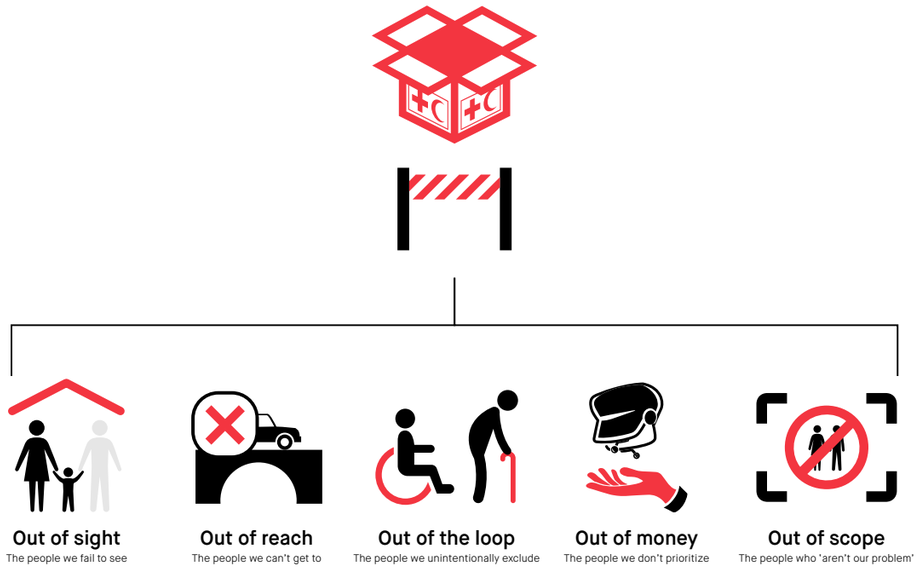
1 Statistics based on the OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview website, accessed October 2010.

There are many ways in which people with significant humanitarian needs are left behind by the humanitarian sector (including humanitarian agencies and their donors). While the groups passed over, and the reasons they are missed, sometimes change, there are clear common routes to exclusion.

The 2018 *World Disasters Report* asks challenging questions of, admittedly overburdened affected states donors, and local and international humanitarian organizations. It includes a strong call for more, better and more equitable funding and action to meet the rising needs. It also calls for a more conscious and transparent approach to ensuring the people in greatest need are placed first in line for assistance.

The report identifies five fatal flaws that are allowing so many people to fall through the cracks: too many affected people are 1) *out of sight*, 2) *out of reach*, 3) *left out of the loop*, or find themselves in crises that are 4) *out of money*, or deemed to be 5) *out of scope* because they are suffering in ways that are not seen as the responsibility of the humanitarian sector.

Fig. 2 Five different reasons that affected people may not receive the assistance they need.



Out of sight: the people we fail to see

The humanitarian sector cannot help people if it fails to see them. Sometimes, this takes a significant effort. For example, people whose births are not registered or who lack proof of identity are often effectively out of sight when it comes to receiving the assistance they need.

This lack of visibility also extends to problems no one wants to talk about, such as sexual and gender-based violence – which is systematically underestimated in disaster settings – and it also frequently includes the issues faced by marginalized groups. The consequences for minorities affected by crises – such as sexual and ethnic minorities and migrants – are often the most unseen.

Many communities and settlements are also overlooked for reasons of inaccessibility, poverty and marginalization. Areas that are changing and expanding at a rapid rate, such as urban slums, are often largely unmapped. This can have the effect of excluding those people living there from disaster planning and restrict their access to resources and support.

Fig. 3 Who is missing from the map? Maps versus reality

Notes: Shots of Mbuyuni sub-ward, Kigogo ward, Dar es Salaam, before and after a community mapping project.

Source: Dar Ramani Huria

Out of reach: the people we can't get to

Some communities are hard to reach for geographical or political reasons, because of conflict and insecurity, or bureaucratic and legal bottlenecks created by affected states and donors alike. These can all pose serious challenges to humanitarian access.

There is a range of physical, logistical and technological barriers to humanitarian access that are linked to challenging terrain and limited infrastructure and exacerbated by conflict or natural hazards. It is significantly more expensive and time-consuming to provide services in remote areas with a widely dispersed population, for example, or in areas with extremes of climate and topography. There are also security challenges in many contexts that make certain populations difficult for humanitarian service providers to reach.

Humanitarian action is also hindered or prevented by legal, political and administrative factors. International organizations in particular often need to consider not only the risks to staff and programmes in a given context, but also the risk of potential future complications, for example where there are tensions in providing impartial humanitarian assistance in a manner that also complies with laws and policies of national governments and donors.

Any humanitarian operation that involves especially high risk – such as to the safety and security of staff, to a programme continuing, to an organization's ability to operate elsewhere or to its commitment to high standards of accountability – will involve a far higher financial cost than one that does not.

This highlights one of the fundamental humanitarian dilemmas: how far should humanitarian action stretch to reach populations where the access will be very difficult, and thereby costly and risky?

Fig. 4 Factors inhibiting presence of internationally funded humanitarian assistance

A: PHYSICAL

- physical environment – terrain, climate and lack of infrastructure

B: CONFLICT AND INSECURITY

- military operations and ongoing hostilities
- presence of mines and unexploded ordnance
- violence against humanitarian workers/assets/facilities
- obstruction of access to assistance by affected populations

C: POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES AND LAWS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE AFFECTED OR DONOR COUNTRIES:

- denial of existence of humanitarian needs
- restriction of entry of humanitarian goods or staff into country (including an absence of functional systems to facilitate the necessary processes)
- restrictions on movement within country
- interference in humanitarian activities, including influencing beneficiary and staff selection
- restrictive operational requirements, such as requiring the presence of international staff for monitoring
- restrictive and complicated legal obligations, such as counter-terrorism requirements

Left out of the loop: the people we unintentionally exclude

A lack of insight on the part of humanitarian organizations can leave people and communities at risk even when support is being provided – because it is not the right kind of support or is being offered in ways that the target population cannot understand or access.

Generic programming approaches often fail to meet the specific needs of particular groups. For example, they often use language and communication tools that work for humanitarians but are not understood by the people in need, or assistance may be provided in a way that is easiest for humanitarians but cannot be physically accessed due to physical, cultural, social or political limitations affecting the target population.

People most at risk do not always receive the assistance and information they need in a manner that meets their needs. In particular, too many relief programmes are not adequately tailored to specific needs. These failings are most systematic and alarming when it comes to older people and persons with disabilities. The sector too often leaves them out of its disaster planning and fails to take their particular needs and capacities into account.

Fig. 5 Initiatives to improve data on persons with disabilities: the Washington Group Short Set of Disability Questions (2018)

Do you have difficulty **seeing**, even if **wearing glasses**?

Do you have difficulty **hearing**, even using a **hearing aid**?

Do you have difficulty **walking** or **climbing steps**?

Do you have difficulty **remembering** or **concentrating**?

Do you have difficulty (with **self-care** such as) **washing all over** or **dressing**?

Using your usual language, do you have difficulty **communicating**, for example **understanding** or **being understood**?

Notes: The six questions short set is being used as part of a pilot project *Disability Statistics in Humanitarian Action* which aims to improve the availability and quality of data on persons with disabilities in humanitarian contexts.

Out of money: the people we don't prioritize

The massive and growing gap between the funds required and the funds available for humanitarian response is a major factor behind the exclusion of the world's most vulnerable people. Humanitarians – local or international – may know the needs, but not have the funds and other capacities to meet them (in 2017, for example, only 60% of UN-coordinated appeal requirements were met). This gap is widening and has been for many years.

This is not a new financing gap – humanitarian funding has been increasingly outpaced by need for well over a decade. But now, as the volumes of known international humanitarian assistance have reached record levels, so have the demands made on it. The data suggests that while aid levels may be reaching their peak, the level of need has not yet reached its peak.

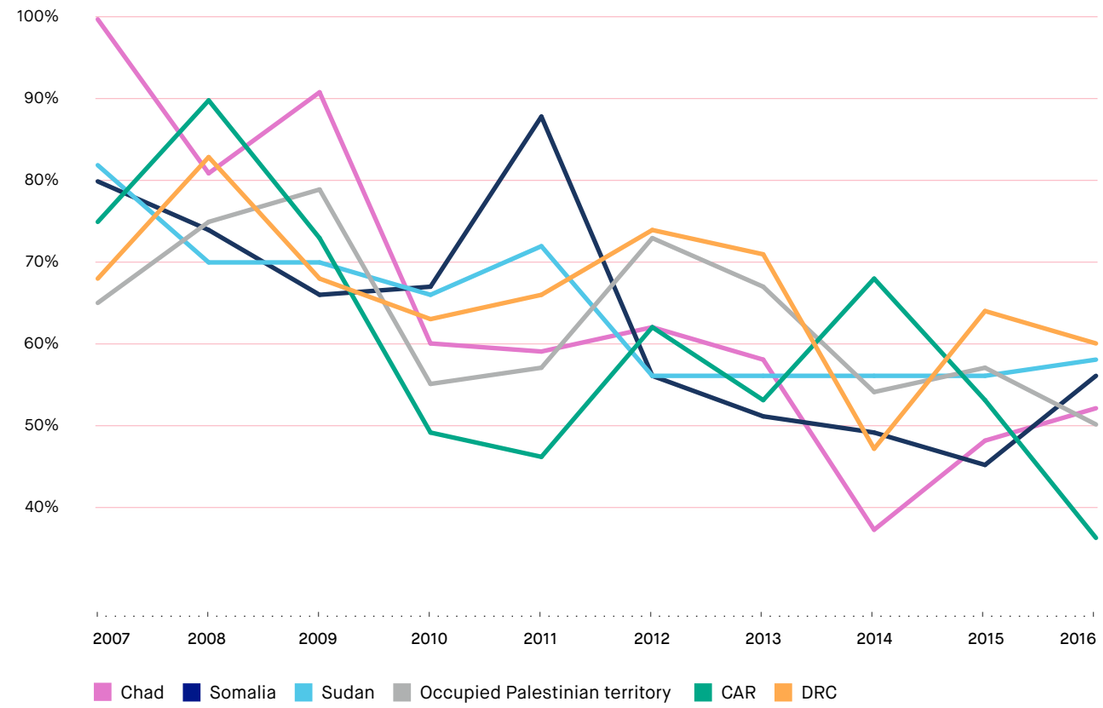
The *World Disasters Report* asks which responses are 'out of money', what are the causes, what are the consequences and what solutions can be found? It focuses on three types of underfunded crisis – small rapid-onset disasters, larger slow-onset disasters and long-term complex emergencies.

Many small-scale disasters cause severe damage and trauma in affected populations but do not trigger international appeals or generate major headlines. The cost of response and recovery can nevertheless be beyond the means of national responders, and international funding may be too stretched, inflexible or slow to react.

Larger slow-onset disasters seldom meet with a strong response from donors, with appeals-based calls for funding being notoriously unreliable. Even with clear early warning of a disaster, calls for support are overlooked or not prioritized when viewed alongside more urgent requests for acute needs.

Meanwhile, long-term complex emergencies are prone to funding fatigue, where high levels of short-term humanitarian financing cannot be sustained in the face of chronic needs and long-term development donors are unable to invest or constrained by perceived financial risks. In these cases, people are at high risk of being left behind by humanitarian response.

Fig. 6 Levels of requirements met in countries with appeals every year, 2007–2016



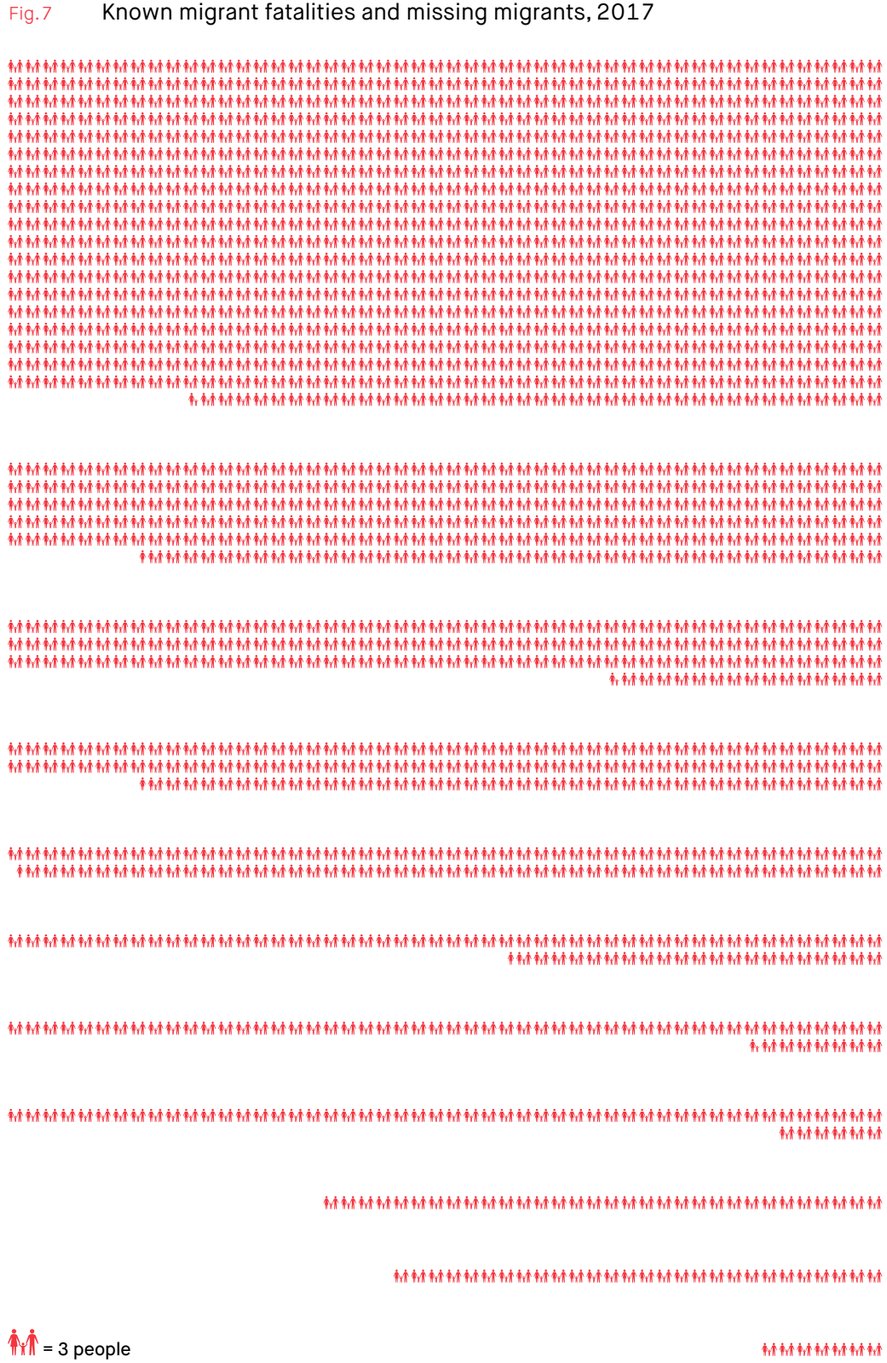
Source: OCHA FTS

Out of scope: the people who 'aren't our problem'

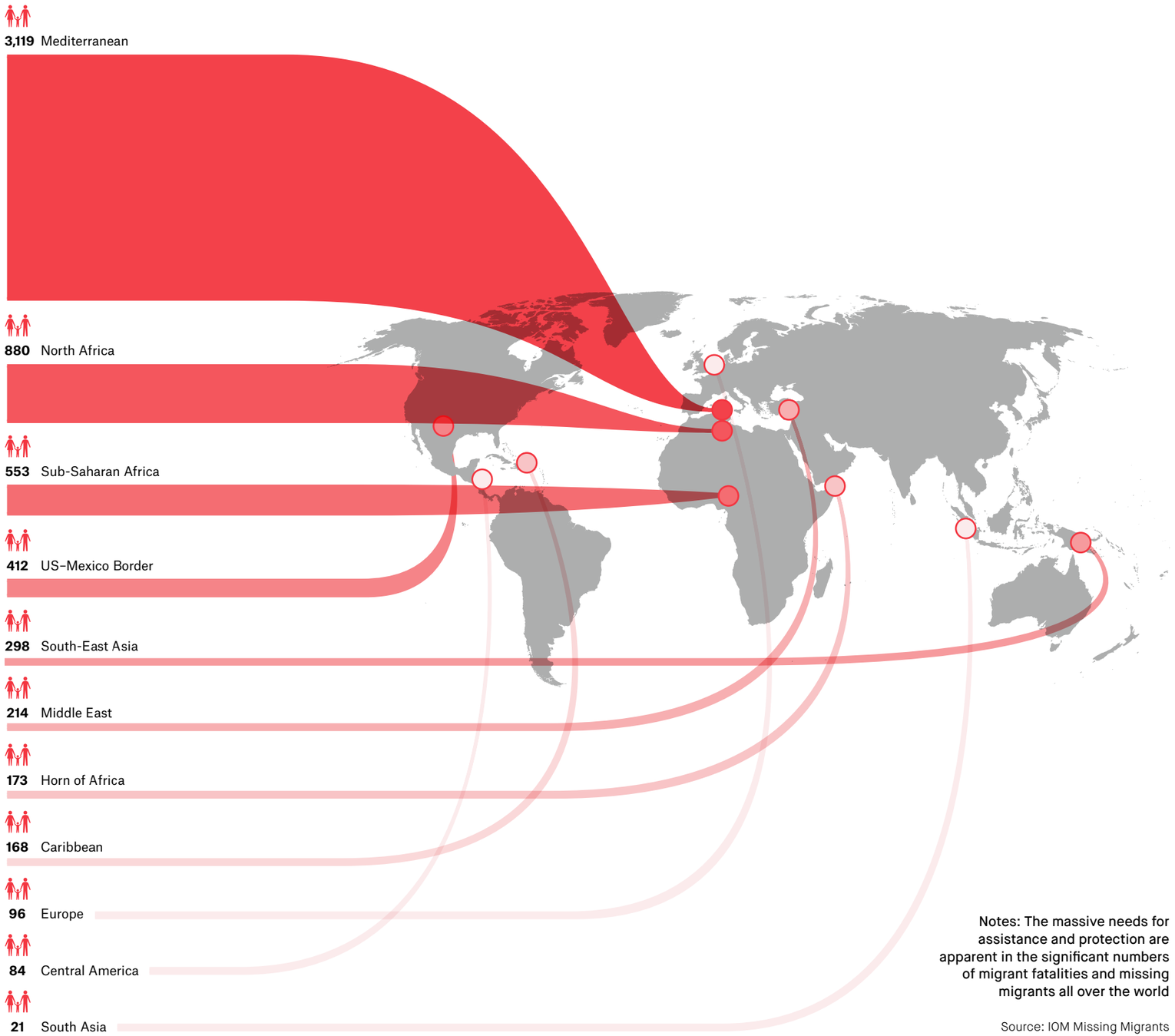
Many of the world's most vulnerable people do not receive support from the humanitarian sector because their needs or crises do not fit into traditional areas of concern of the humanitarian sector. This is often true, for example, of the specific and differentiated needs of people trapped in protracted crises – or who are not aided to become resilient in advance of crisis – as they fall between the cracks in the perceived 'turf' of development and humanitarian actors and funding streams.

However, there are also some groups of people suffering widespread, acute crisis very similar to 'traditional' humanitarian crises whose suffering has not attracted major support from the humanitarian sector.

Fig. 7 Known migrant fatalities and missing migrants, 2017



= 3 people



Notes: The massive needs for assistance and protection are apparent in the significant numbers of migrant fatalities and missing migrants all over the world

Source: IOM Missing Migrants

Two vivid and shocking examples of this are the situations of (non-refugee) irregular migrants and people facing major situations of urban violence. In both cases, the response of the international humanitarian sector has been minimal despite suffering akin to catastrophes that might otherwise lead to major international appeals and widespread media coverage.

Their situations raise the question – is the humanitarian sector choosing to respond on the basis of objective criteria or the force of habit? As the nature and contexts of human suffering continue to change, how can the humanitarian sector continue to evolve and offer support wherever it is needed most?

Recommendations

The *World Disasters Report* sets out recommendations in six main areas, and addresses specific calls to action in each area to governments, international humanitarian organizations and donors.

1. Getting the incentives right

We recommend that donors define 'value for money' in light of the goal of leaving no one behind, and reaching the people most in need – even if doing so is more expensive. This means prioritizing the people who are hardest to reach and incentivizing their assistance through proactive and tailored strategies and tools. These include allocating funds specifically for the under-supported and hardest-to-reach groups, and removing disincentives to working in hard-to-reach areas, including approaches that shift risk down the implementation chain rather than sharing and jointly mitigating the risks. We recommend that humanitarian organizations systematically integrate steps to support the people hardest to reach into their appeals and response plans, including, where necessary, prioritizing mitigation of security risks (both for themselves and their local partners).

The IFRC commits to prioritizing support to the people most in need in its own operations, regardless of the difficulty in reaching them.

2. Recognizing and supporting the role of local humanitarian action

We recommend that donors invest in local responders, in particular their long-term institutional capacities, including providing support to develop and implement policies and procedures around capacity development for managing international funds, fraud, accountability and safeguarding as well as to ensure safety of staff.

We recommend that governments invest their own resources in local response capacities, including those of civil society, at the domestic level, to reduce their reliance on international funding. This should include developing the necessary laws and procedures to facilitate and regulate international assistance. And we recommend that humanitarian organizations strengthen their partnerships with local responders, with a conscious goal of devolving decision-making and nurturing long-term capacity, and find ways to better integrate local knowledge (in particular about cultural issues, hidden vulnerability and local capacities) into needs assessments, in particular through investing in pre-disaster mapping exercises with local partners in disaster-prone states.

The IFRC commits to continue to strengthen its investment in the operational and functional capacity of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as frontline responders to support their delivery of relevant services.

3. Adopting a community-centred, participatory approach

We recommend that humanitarian organizations prioritize the integration of community participation in all areas of programming, ideally before, but at least from the very beginning of a crisis – and share feedback more effectively across aid organizations. This should include paying particular attention to the people likely to be passed over, such as women, older people and persons with disabilities. It is important to ensure that needs-assessment methods and approaches seek out and find marginalized groups and the people most in need, even if they are not in 'traditional categories', and actively seek relevant information in the preparedness phase before disasters strike. We also recommend that donors prioritize resources for community engagement activities and ensure flexibility in how funds are allocated to programmes throughout a crisis so that course correction based on feedback from communities can occur.

The IFRC commits to strengthening its community engagement and accountability, and to ensuring greater use of the outcomes of vulnerability and capacity assessments in response programming.

4. Taking up our shared responsibility for resilience

We recommend that all governments (including donors) and humanitarian organizations invest much more heavily in community resilience and local response capacities before disasters and other crises. This means scaling up the use of anticipatory funding for predictable and recurrent hazards in international and domestic response systems, and promoting legal and policy frameworks for disaster risk management that focus on the needs of the most vulnerable people. We recommend that donors ensure that funding structures for development, climate and humanitarian assistance promote resilience, local capacity and preparedness. And we recommend that humanitarian organizations systematically include resilience strengthening in their interventions, unless they lack the relevant competence or capacity or such activity would undermine their compliance with humanitarian principles.

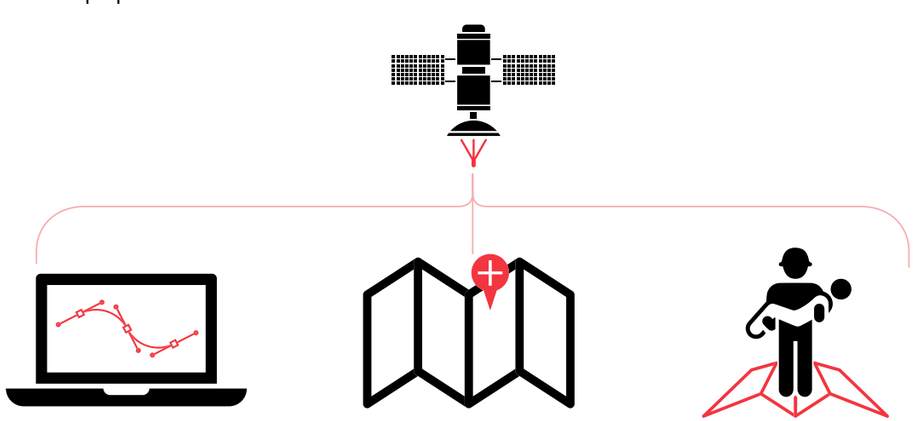
The IFRC commits to continuing its support for resilience building, including, where possible, through incorporating relevant activities into emergency operations, supporting National Societies to strengthen community resilience, and supporting the development of legislative and policy frameworks for climate-smart disaster risk management.

5. Improving appropriate use of data and technology

We recommend that all governments (including donors) and humanitarian organizations invest in stronger data gathering and analysis capacities across the humanitarian sector and at the national level. This should focus on finding people and needs that might be out of sight – in particular older people and persons with disabilities. They should ensure that there is agreement on basic data standards and methodology to ensure comparability and interoperability, as well as adherence to a strong 'do-no-harm' approach to data protection and sharing. At the same time, gathering data must not become an end in itself; it must not replace action.

The IFRC commits to continuing to invest in its own and its members' capacity to gather and analyse relevant data designed to identify the people most in need and detect anyone who might be left behind. This will include building our own data literacy, improving our gathering of sex, age and disability-disaggregated data, increasing participation in open source approaches to data sharing in the sector, and developing and implementing appropriate data protection and privacy policies.

Fig. 8 An initiative to ensure better awareness of people and their communities: the Missing Maps process



Step 1
Remote volunteers trace satellite imagery into OpenStreetMap.

Step 2
Community members assist in adding local data to the map.

Step 3
Mapped information is used to plan risk reduction and disaster response activities.

Source: Missing Maps

6. Addressing the critical cases

We recommend that all governments (including donors) and humanitarian organizations guard against blind spots when it comes to assistance for people lacking government-issued identification, without formal title to their homes, whose communities are not mapped, and who silently endure hidden crises, such as sexual and gender-based violence.

It is important to ensure that humanitarian budgets, plans and financing incorporate specific allocations and programmes to groups with particular needs, including older people and persons with disabilities, working with dedicated local organizations, where they exist. Meeting the needs of irregular migrants and of people experiencing urban violence should also be prioritized, bearing in mind that local responders will likely continue to be best placed to undertake most response initiatives, but will require additional resources to do so.

The IFRC commits to continue its work with National Societies to support vulnerable groups regardless of where they are. This includes work to reduce, prepare for and respond to sexual and gender-based violence in disaster settings and specific initiatives with and for older people and persons with disabilities. It will continue to support National Societies in strengthening services for migrants and to build understanding with their authorities about their role and contributions. The IFRC further commits to supporting National Societies to develop activities to promote non-violence and to meet the psychosocial needs of victims of urban violence.

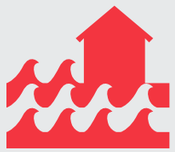
Conclusions

Humanitarian action has never been able to come close to ending all suffering caused by conflicts, disasters and other crises. Difficult choices are commonplace in the worst situations and this will continue to be the case. The *World Disasters Report* nevertheless argues that the humanitarian sector can – and must – make a stronger effort to meet the most urgent needs.

The report explores how humanitarians – acting alone or in partnership with others – can improve their practices to leave fewer people behind. It challenges all those engaged in humanitarian action – the donors, the multilateral, international, national and local service providers – to constantly seek to identify the people most in need and hardest to reach, to identify people who may be excluded for all of the reasons outlined here and more, and to make these people the top priority.

A snapshot of disaster trends

Fig. 9 What type of disasters are happening and with what impact?



3,751

Natural hazards recorded by EM-DAT over the last **10 years**

84%
are weather related hazards

Floods 40.5%, storms 26.7%, other weather related 16.9%

2bn

Estimated **number of people** affected by natural hazards over the last **10 years**

95%
of people are affected by weather related hazards

Floods 36.7%, storms 17% other weather related 41.8%

US$1,658bn

Estimated **cost of damages** in 141 countries over the last **10 years**

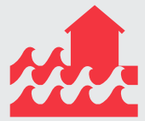
76.2%
of costs are due to weather related hazards

Storms 41.7%, floods 21.9%, other weather related 9%

Notes: The total number of natural hazards is based on data for 198 countries/territories. For 17 countries there is no data on people affected. For 57 countries there is no data on estimated cost of damages. This figure does not include damages due to epidemics.

Source: EM-DAT: the Emergency Events Database - Universite Catholique de Louvain (UCL)/CRED, D.Guha-Sapir – www.emdat.be, Brussels, Belgium "EM-DAT *The Emergency Events Database*"

Fig. 10 Overview of IFRC operations, 2008–2017



1,107

Number of crises resulting in IFRC/internationally-funded operations over the last 10 years... around a third of which were triggered by floods

Floods	**32.6%**
Epidemics	**18.7%**
Cyclones	**9.3%**
Top 3	**60.6%**

53.7%

Over the last ten years 53.7% of operations were triggered by weather related events

231.7m

Number of people the operations aimed to reach with assistance over the last 10 years... 79.4% of whom were affected by 207 epidemics

Epidemic	**79.4%**
Food insecurity	**4.2%**
Population movement	**3.5%**
Top	**87.2%**

79.4%

207 epidemics have accounted for 79.4% of the people targeted for assistance since 2008

CHF 2.3bn

IFRC operational budget over the last 10 years... a fifth of which were in response to 46 earthquakes

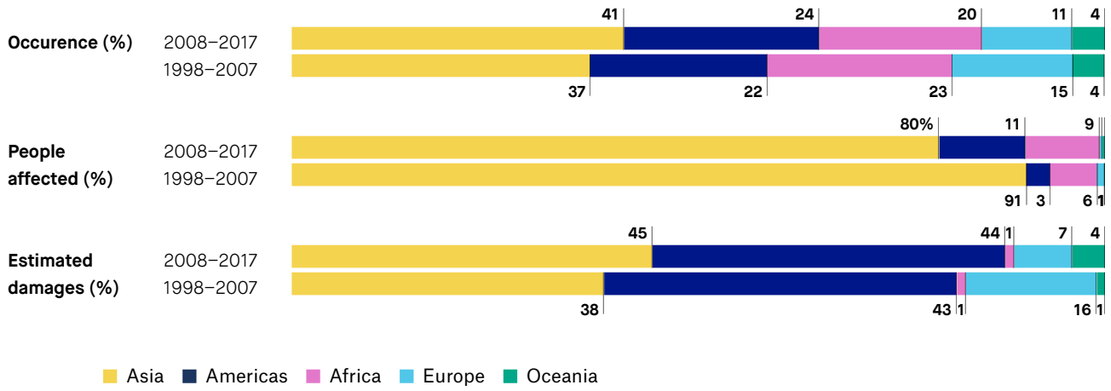
Earthquake	**20.0%**
Population movement	**13.4%**
Cyclone	**12.6%**
Top 3	**45.9%**

30.9%

Weather-related disasters and non-technological man-made disasters each account for a 30.9% share of the operational budget over the last 10 years

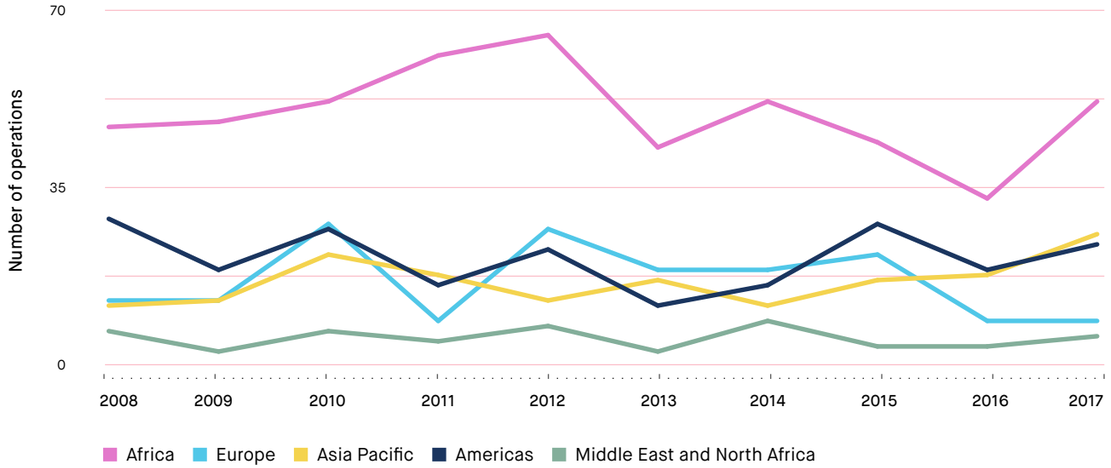
Source: IFRC GO

Fig. 11 Which regions are most affected by disasters?



Source: EM-DAT *The Emergency Events Database*

Fig. 12 IFRC operations by region, 2008-2017



Source: IFRC GO

Bangladesh, 2018

An early walk in the campfire haze at Kutupalong camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. People with disabilities face huge challenges in the camps.

©Antony Balmain/Australian Red Cross

Fig. 13 Snapshot of IFRC in countries affected by disasters

Location of disasters resulting in IFRC/internationally funded operations over the last 10 years...

Country	Number	% of total	
Kenya	**37**	**3.3%**	Top 3
Uganda	**31**	**2.8%**	**8.2%**
Philippines	**23**	**2.1%**	
Tajikistan	23	2.1%	Top 10
CAR	22	2.0%	**21.2%**
DRC	21	1.9%	
Sudan	21	1.9%	
Cameroon	20	1.8%	
Russian Federation	19	1.7%	
Niger	18	1.6%	
Others	872	78.8%	
Total	**1,107**		

38.6%

The largest share (38.6%) of disasters resulting in IFRC/ internationally funded operations over the last 10 years have occured in LMICs.

Location of people the operations aimed to provide assistance to over the last 10 years...

Country	People affected (m)	% of total	
DRC	**18**	**7.8%**	Top 3
Uganda	**15**	**6.8%**	**29.2%**
Guinea	**15**	**6.6%**	
Mali	13	6.0%	Top 10
Burkina Faso	13	5.9%	**64.1%**
Kenya	11	4.9%	
Cameroon	10	4.5%	
Niger	8	3.7%	
Republic of Congo	7	3.3%	
Sierra Leone	7	3.2%	
Others	109	47.3%	
Total	**231**		

50.9%

The largest share (50.9%) of people targeted for assistance through IFRC internationally funded operations over the last 10 years have lived in LICs. A further 27.8% in LMICs.

IFRC operational budget over the last 10 years by country...

Country	CHF (m)	% of total	
Haiti	**282**	**12.0%**	Top 3
Syria	**174**	**7.4%**	**23.5%**
China	**154**	**6.6%**	
Kenya	147	6.2%	Top 10
Philippines	143	6.1%	**51.9%**
Pakistan	102	4.3%	
Turkey	76	3.2%	
Myanmar	74	3.2%	
Sierra Leone	68	2.9%	
Ethiopia	68	2.9%	
Others	1,060	45.2%	
Total	**2,347**		

35.4%

...of IFRC/internationally-funded operational budgets over the last 10 years has been spent in LMICs.

Notes: There has been a big increase in the number of responses to disasters in LICs this decade, especially in East Africa, and a rise in the number of operations taking place in HICs, mainly arising from population movements. The number of people who operations aimed to assist in LICs is 10 times higher this decade than in 1998–2007. The change is accounted for by population movements, epidemics, food insecurity and drought. The operational budget to assist people in LICs has increased more than four times in the last ten years. The total number of people targeted represents the number of people included in each operational plan – there may be some overlap/double-counting where people are targeted by more than one operation.

Source: IFRC GO

The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

Humanity The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary service It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies