

1. Introduction

The first six chapters of the *World Disasters Report 2018* focus on the theme of leaving no one behind in humanitarian response. Consultations with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies around the world supported the selection of issues, guided by the examples most frequently cited when asked to identify people left behind. While this is not intended to be a comprehensive or systematic review of all the gaps, it reflects the experience and concerns of the global International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) network and of the community-based volunteers at its core.

The seventh chapter, *Disaster trends and IFRC insights* revives an earlier World Disasters Report tradition of a dedicated section of the report outside the thematic focus, looking at trends in disasters and disaster management from the point of view of the IFRC.

Leaving no one behind in humanitarian response

With the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the ambition to ‘leave no one behind’ has effectively become the mission statement of the international development agenda. While not necessarily phrased the same way, similarly large ambitions have long driven humanitarian action as well.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement’s articulation of the Fundamental Principle of Humanity commits it to “prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found”. Likewise, the (more than 700) organizational signatories to the Code of Conduct of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief “recognize our obligation to provide humanitarian assistance wherever it is needed”.

But humanitarians have also long worried that they are falling far short of their ambitions. In 2006, the *World Disasters Report* focused on the issue of neglected crises, asking “[w]hich communities languish in the shadows of emergency response and prevention – neglected by the media, aid organizations, donors, even by their own governments?” and found multiple causes for neglect, ranging from media fickleness to inconsistent needs assessment practices and geopolitics.

These concerns have become particularly urgent recently, as the gap between identified humanitarian needs and available resources has reached new heights – in excess of 10 billion US dollars in 2017 for the UN-coordinated appeals alone (OCHA, 2018a). This is despite the size of the international humanitarian sector, and the levels of donor contributions, also reaching historical peaks (High Level Panel, 2016). At the same time, pressure to truly address long-acknowledged blind spots of the humanitarian community – such as those concerning gender, internal displacement and disability – has also grown evident in the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) process, which made strong use of the leaving no one behind slogan.

Leaving no one behind as an impetus for humanitarian reform

It is now widely agreed that the humanitarian sector is “stretched to its limits” (ALNAP, 2015a) and that many trends (such as ever-more protracted crises, climate change, uncontrolled urbanization, population growth and the globalization-fuelled circulation of contagious disease), are only likely to make its job dramatically harder – resulting in even more people in need being left behind. This shared diagnosis has, ironically, led both to proposals to expand and to constrict the scope of international humanitarian action.

The WHS itself fell mainly in the former category. Then-UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon called for humanitarians to step out of mandate-driven silos and work more closely together with development, peacekeeping and other partners in the areas of “ending need” (both through peacebuilding and risk reduction), developing long-term solutions for people trapped in protracted crises (particularly internally displaced persons), and addressing climate change, among others (UNSG, 2016a, 2016b).

On the other hand, a growing chorus of critics has instead called on the international humanitarian sector to “let go” of many of the roles it has gradually taken on and “get back to basics” (Bennett et al, 2016a; Donini, 2012; Dubois, 2018). They urge it to reassign extraneous tasks to others, in particular, development agencies and local responders (both governmental and non-governmental), to concentrate on a more focused approach.

While the WHS did not immediately lead to sector-wide transformation, change is nevertheless in the air – in ‘silo-busting’ changes at the UN driven by the current Secretary-General; in a drive for efficiency in humanitarian action as evidenced by the 2016 ‘Grand Bargain’ between donors and agencies; and in efforts to listen to previously unheard stakeholders (particularly affected people and local responders), officially consulted for the first time as part of the run-up to the WHS. Other ‘system disrupters’ that may drive action for reform include the growing engagement and assertiveness of affected states and regional bodies, the much stronger engagement of the World Bank in protracted crises, and the cumulative impact of technological changes that are reducing entry barriers to new and different kinds of humanitarian responders – stretching definitions of the ‘system’ (see Box 1.1).

Box 1.1 The humanitarian ‘system’, ‘sector’ or ‘ecosystem’

Global reports (and indeed the *World Disasters Report* itself in the past) have generally referred to the ‘humanitarian system’. This term has its advantages, in particular its ability to take into account not only humanitarian organizations but also the international financing that underlies their work. On the other hand, it also implies a sort of global machine, with various cogs functioning in an integrated, top-down manner. This is neither accurate as a description of the current reality (Borton, 2009, Bennett, 2018) nor a particularly desirable ideal to aspire to.

The recently ascendant term ‘humanitarian ecosystem’ might be an alternative, with its suggestion that various actors all have different parts to play in a complementary manner. This term also lacks a single definition – but given the comprehensive connotation that the term ecosystem inspires, it should be seen fully to incorporate not only international actors, funding and mechanisms, but also national and local ones (e.g. Maietta, 2017). No ecosystem would make sense without this full picture.

Unfortunately, available data on how humanitarianism is carried out at the local level in the absence of international funding and actors is quite fragmented, making it difficult to come to global conclusions. In light of these limitations, the analysis in this report mainly focuses on action by international actors or carried out with support from international finance (unless otherwise indicated).

Consistent with this narrower focus, this edition of the *World Disasters Report* uses the term ‘humanitarian sector’ to refer to international humanitarian organizations and donors.

Similarly, there is currently no single, commonly agreed, definition of ‘humanitarian action’. It has generally been considered a time-limited endeavour, bounded in space and content, with a narrow, principled focus on saving lives and alleviating suffering in times of extremis, and undertaken by a limited number of actors (GHD, 2003). As discussed in this chapter, this notion is under some strain as the practices and expectations of the humanitarian sector evolve, but will nonetheless inform discussions in this report (precisely to allow for this evolution to be more clearly understood).

The development roots of ‘leaving no one behind’

But what does leaving no one behind really mean? Given that its use in the development agenda has firmly placed it on the map of recent international dialogue, its origins there are an obvious starting point.

In 2015, the then UN Secretary-General hailed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as “the most successful anti-poverty movement in history” and there was certainly impressive progress. Since their adoption in 2000, the number of people living in extreme poverty and the global rate of under-five mortality were both more than halved, maternal

mortality fell by 45%, primary school enrolment in developing countries rose to 91% and the proportion of malnourished people was almost halved (UN, 2015a).

Yet the benefits of these advances were not evenly felt. The UN reported that “millions of people are being left behind, especially the poorest and those disadvantaged because of their sex, age, disability, ethnicity or geographic location”. Enormous disparities continued between rich and poor countries, between the poorest and richest households and between women and men, among others.

Leaving no one behind therefore became the top-level objective of the successor to the MDGs, the SDGs. States pledged that no one will be left behind: “[r]ecognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the goals and targets met for all nations and peoples, for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first” (UN, 2015b).

Many of the individual goals reflect this ambition either by setting equality as their only purpose (e.g. Goal 5: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, Goal 10: reduce inequality within and among countries) or by emphasizing that they can only be reached if everyone benefits (e.g. Goal 1: end poverty in all its forms everywhere, Goal 3: ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages). The agenda further requires that data gathering and review processes are designed to make good on this pledge. Particularly in light of the commitment to ‘reach the furthest behind first’, it has been noted that the SDGs’ agenda goes well beyond avoiding discrimination, requiring “prioritisation and fast-tracking of actions for the poorest and most marginalised people” as well as efforts purposely designed to develop baselines and measure progress (Stuart and Samman, 2017).

Implications for the humanitarian agenda

What does all this mean for the humanitarian sector, with its particular principles, mandates and limitations? In theory, it means a much greater involvement of development actors and financing to address the underlying causes and long-term consequences of crises. This is supported by the express inclusion of language about disaster risks in the SDGs, which, for example, calls for “build[ing] the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduc[ing] their exposure and vulnerability to climate related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters” and aims to “significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected... by disasters... with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations”.

The reality, however, is that the humanitarian sector is itself increasingly expected to contribute to development-oriented goals, notwithstanding its limited mandate and resources. In the run-up to the WHS, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) published a report arguing not only that people affected by humanitarian crises are likely to end up “left behind” from development gains but also specifically calling on humanitarians to “contribute to the vision” of the SDGs, arguing that “meeting basic needs in crisis will remain critical, but it is no longer enough” (OCHA, 2016c).

The WHS also pressed participants to make a “core commitment”, to “transcend humanitarian–development divides: work together, toward collective outcomes that ensure humanitarian needs are met, while at the same time reducing risk and vulnerability over multiple years and based on the comparative advantage of a diverse range of actors” (WHS, 2016). While not directly requiring humanitarians to deviate from their core role, however, working toward ‘collective outcomes’ with development actors clearly must have some impact on the focus of humanitarians.

This suggestion had its critics. Médecins sans Frontières, for example, pulled out of the WHS, in large part because of its efforts to break down walls between development and humanitarian action (MSF, 2016). It has likewise been suggested that the term ‘development’ inherently requires support for strengthening state institutions, which may be impossible to reconcile with the principle of independence and the need for humanitarian space in conflict settings (Guinote, 2018). On the other hand, it is also true that the large majority of self-described ‘humanitarian’ organizations, in particular local organizations, have considered themselves ‘double-hatted’ with many ‘development-like’ activities for a very long time. For example, most humanitarian organizations have embraced the idea that they should be contributing to risk reduction efforts well before disasters strike, including strengthening community resilience.¹ Likewise, humanitarian responders have reached increasingly far into the recovery arena, for example through shelter activities, which increasingly go well beyond ‘tarpaulins and tents’ to provide more permanent solutions, as well as through some livelihoods approaches.

Do these aspirations, which look well beyond immediate life-saving, also expand the responsibility of the humanitarian sector, in terms of whom it is expected to serve and when? For instance, is it leaving people behind if it does not engage, with vigor proportionate to probable long-term harm, in areas experiencing food insecurity at pre-crisis levels (e.g. Integrated Food Security Phase Classification levels below 3)? Does it fail in its duties when it ‘transitions out’ humanitarian aid for people facing chronic poverty? Can it be satisfied it has discharged its role when thousands of people affected by disasters remain in ‘temporary’ shelter years after the triggering event?

Is it sufficient to say that the disconnect between needs and resources decreasingly allows humanitarians even to fulfil their ‘traditional’ role? Or that the Principle of Impartiality points them to ‘the most urgent cases of distress’, rendering the long-term well-being of people it serves ‘somebody else’s problem’?

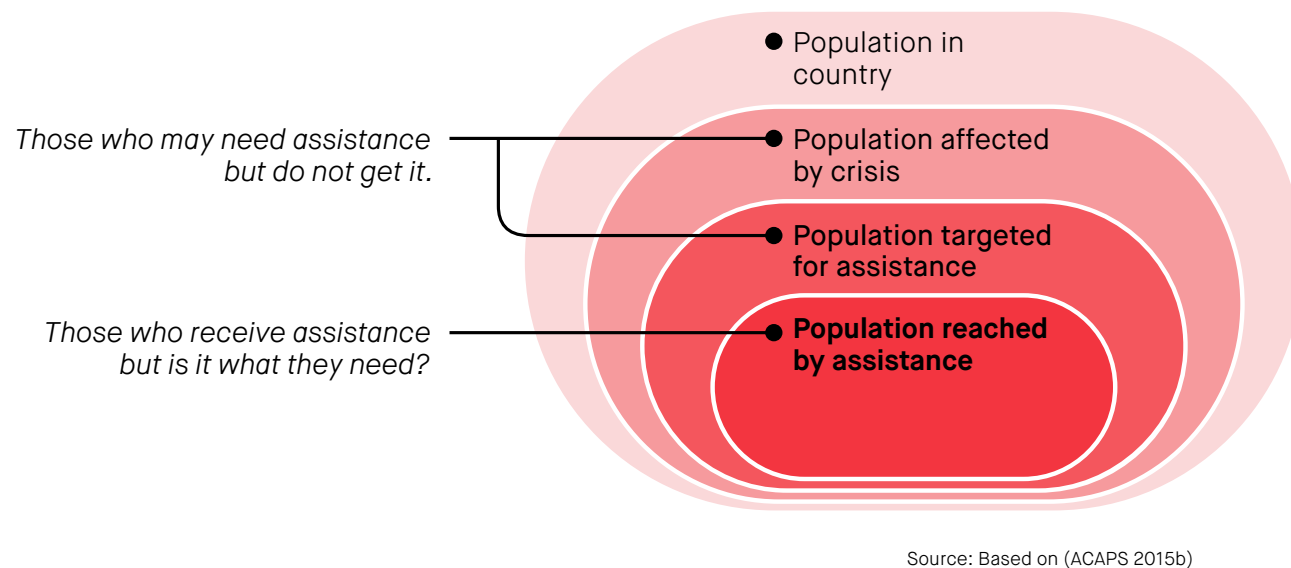
In his commentary on the Principle of Impartiality, Jean Pictet saw the quandary about urgent cases as “comparable to that of a raft which will sink if any more castaways cling to it. Can one, in all conscience, use an oar and rap the knuckles of human beings, children perhaps, whose misfortune it is to have not arrived first?” Pictet himself could not answer this question, concluding that it “represents a matter of conscience, as it is called, because the decision must be left to the individual responsible ... Who, after all, can claim to hold the scales of perfect justice?” (Pictet, 1979).

1. For the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, this was strongly signalled in the Agenda for Humanitarian Action adopted at the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in 2003 (ICRC and IFRC, 2003), where Movement components and the state parties to the Geneva Conventions pledged together to “protect human dignity, lives and livelihoods from the devastating impact of disasters, by fully integrating disaster risk reduction into national and international planning and policy instruments and implementing appropriate operational measures to reduce risks”.

People left behind by the humanitarian sector

As suggested by Pictet, the question of whether short-term humanitarianism impermissibly leaves people with long-term needs behind may need more philosophy than analysis to answer. However, even looking only within more traditional confines of the expected coverage of humanitarian action, it may still be asked if people are being left behind, and if the people furthest behind can proactively be reached first. This report focuses its analysis in this more limited space.

Fig. 1.1 Humanitarian population 'onion' model



Drawing on the humanitarian population 'onion' model (Figure 1.1), the report focuses on people affected by a disaster or crisis and therefore needing assistance. Those left behind in this schema may include people who are not targeted for assistance, people who are targeted but not reached, and people who are reached but not really assisted (ACAPS cited in ALNAP, 2015a). Obviously, individual contexts differ, but there are also numerous examples of systemic gaps.

Many people who need humanitarian assistance are not even targeted for support. Precise figures remain elusive (measuring need is an inexact art), but in 2017 OCHA predicted that some 129 million people would require humanitarian assistance worldwide but indicated that (regardless of the financing that might be made available) only 93 million would be targeted for international aid, a 28% gap (OCHA, 2017a). In 2018, the gap was even larger, with an estimate of 134 million people expected to require assistance and just under 96 million people actually to be targeted (OCHA, 2018a). OCHA explains that this gap is partially attributed to "what national actors can cover" but also to the fact that affected country governments and other actors target a portion of those in need, but also

to "prioritization and assessment of capacities and access" of international humanitarian organizations (OCHA, 2017a).

In terms of people actually reached with assistance, global figures are not available, and country figures are imprecise but some indications about the magnitude of the people being left behind might be inferred from individual countries where data has been gathered. Taking the illustrative list of countries indicated in Figure 1.2 (derived from UN figures from 2017 – and not including operations of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and some other organizations), there is a huge range in targeting: from 82% of people identified in need in South Sudan to less than half of people in need in Afghanistan. Similarly, in terms of the proportions reached, there is a huge difference between countries – from 71% in South Sudan to 28% in Ukraine. In the latter case, it is no coincidence that the donor response to the humanitarian appeal is also very low.

People left out of sight, out of reach, out of the loop, out of money and out of scope

Even these rough figures, however, may understate the numbers of people in need. As described in Chapter 2, some people are 'out of sight' for the humanitarian sector. This chapter focuses on the 'hidden people' who lack the basic documentation needed to qualify for assistance; the 'hidden problem' of under-reported sexual and gender based violence, and the 'hidden places' where crisis-affected communities are unmapped.

Even if humanitarians are aware of people in need, they are sometimes 'out of reach', as described in Chapter 3. In many cases, disasters or conflicts themselves artificially create remoteness, by destroying airports, seaports or roads – or by rendering the areas where people live too risky to approach. But disasters and crisis also often affect people far from convenient urban centres, whether in mountain villages or isolated islands. Insecurity, bureaucratic impediments and sometimes donor laws and policies can further hamper the ability of humanitarians to reach people in need, and for people in need to reach the assistance they need.

Moving one step closer in the concentric circles in Figure 1.1 are people who are 'left out of the loop'; people both 'in sight' and 'in reach' but who still cannot make use of humanitarian assistance because of the way it is designed or offered. While there are many examples, Chapter 4 focuses on two such populations most often cited by National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies – older people and persons with disabilities. These groups represent large and growing proportions of the population in crisis-affected contexts – research shows the disproportionate impact that crises can have on them as well as their repeated marginalization in responses to emergencies. The chapter examines the barriers older people and persons with disabilities face and highlights existing good practice to ensure that typically marginalized groups are able to fully participate in, contribute to and benefit from inclusive humanitarian action.

While the problems identified in these three chapters may never be perfectly addressed, they could be greatly reduced. Doing so would require greater attention to the blind spots in the mechanics of humanitarian action, beginning with humanitarians' approach to assessing needs and identifying the people most in need and most vulnerable. If humanitarians

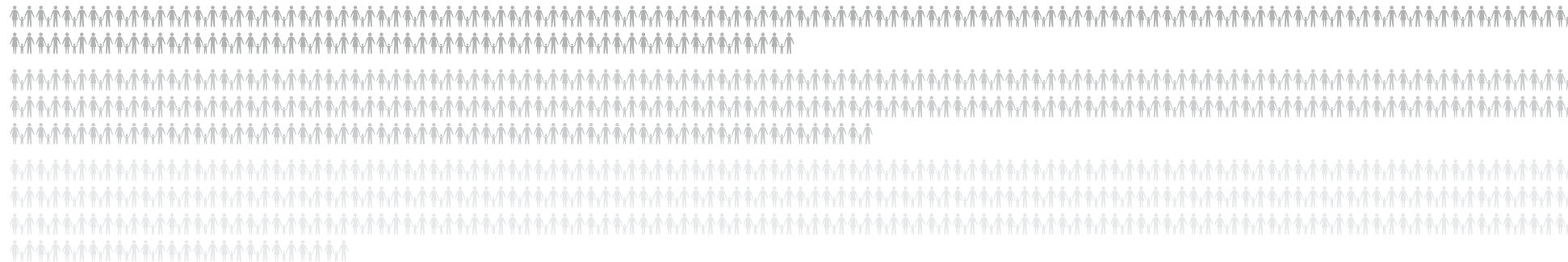
Fig.1.2 People in need, targeted and reached under 5 UN-led humanitarian response plans (HRPs) (2017)

Syria



67% of people in need targeted
 58% of people in need reached
 51% of HRP requirements funded

DRC



56% of people in need targeted
 21% of people in need reached
 59% of HRP requirements funded

South Sudan



82% of people in need targeted
 71% of people in need reached
 72% of HRP requirements funded

Afghanistan



49% of people in need targeted
 55% of people in need reached
 77% of HRP requirements funded

Ukraine



60% of people in need targeted
 27% of people in need reached
 37% of HRP requirements funded

30,000 people Reached Targeted but not reached Not targeted

Sources: 2017 humanitarian response plans year-end reports for Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), South Sudan, Ukraine, Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) and Afghanistan; OCHA Financial Tracking Service funding for 2017

do not look for people who are not most visible, who are not in easy reach, or who require specific inclusion efforts, they certainly will not find them.

However, any technical improvements along these lines would also need resources. Filling in missing poverty data, mapping missing communities, reaching communities in distant places and ensuring the expertise and approaches necessary to address communities who are 'left out of the loop' all require investment. Directing investments requires trade-offs about whose needs to prioritize with limited resources. The Principles of Impartiality and Humanity can guide but cannot definitively resolve the daily dilemmas of triage between and within crises.

Chapter 5 therefore addresses this fundamental resourcing issue – the 'out-of-money' problem. The financing gap between humanitarian needs and funding is not new, but it does appear to be growing. Limited resources lead both to deliberate and unconscious choices about where, how and for whom finite funding is spent – and who is left behind. The chapter focuses on three types of crises that often experience underfunding – small rapid-onset disasters, larger slow-onset disasters and long-term complex emergencies. It explores how, in a world where resources will always be stretched, crises can be financed differently – to mitigate inequities of distribution and to diminish the need for international humanitarian action.

Chapter 6 takes on a final question – whether certain crises are 'out of scope' for the humanitarian sector merely because they do not fit mainstream expectations for humanitarian action. This chapter focuses on two such crises most frequently cited by National Societies: the plight of irregular migrants and people suffering extreme urban violence. In both cases, affected people receive very limited protection from their own or other governments and are experiencing suffering at the scale and severity of a humanitarian crisis. These situations raise the question of whether the humanitarian sector is governed more by habit and tradition than by principled analysis, and whether it can adapt to the changing realities of human suffering.

Disaster trends and insights

Chapter 7 departs from the thematic analysis of the previous chapters to review data and trends on disasters around the world and share insights from the IFRC on recent innovations in disaster risk management.

This chapter first provides an integrated analysis of the frequency of various disaster types, their geographical locations and their impacts, comparing them with trends in the IFRC's own international deployments, appeals and programming over the last ten years. It then explores some of the limits and dangers of making decisions based on these existing data sets, in light of their many hidden omissions and biases.

The chapter concludes with several IFRC insights 'beyond the numbers', reviewing progress in three areas of critical evolution of the global approach to disaster risk management: achieving early action when there are early warnings for climate-driven disasters and budding pandemics, strengthening and promoting the place of local actors in the international humanitarian ecosystem, and building modern and effective legal and policy frameworks for disaster risk management at national level.

Philippines, 2018

75-year-old Maulana Malunay is one of the elders from the village of Panganan. She was only able to salvage this necklace and a few items clothing when Typhoon Tembin hit. She is from the Matigsalug tribe, one of the many indigenous groups from Mindanao. The Matigsalug had always lived beside the Salug river, but in 2017 when the river inundated their fields and washed away their homes during the typhoon they were forced to relocate to an area inland.

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Somaliland, 2017

The Somali Red Crescent mobile team provides medical outreach services to nomadic families like this in a remote hillside in Sahil region, Somaliland.

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