

# Conclusion

**T**here are many ways in which people with significant humanitarian needs are left behind by the humanitarian sector. While the groups passed over, and the reasons they are missed, sometimes change, there are clear common routes to exclusion.

This year's *World Disasters Report* has looked at the **people who are not seen** and who stay off the collective radar – the hidden people who are undocumented, the places and problems which do not appear in maps, in government or humanitarian databases and people whose needs are otherwise hidden from humanitarian response. It has sought out some of the **people who are hard to reach** even when they are known to be in need, for instance, due to conflict and insecurity, remoteness and/or lack of or destroyed infrastructure. It has tried to identify some of the **people left out of the loop** due to generic programming approaches, where humanitarians take the easy route, providing assistance in a way that is easiest for the humanitarian sector but that cannot be understood or accessed due to physical, cultural, social or political limitations.

The report has also looked at more intentional areas of exclusion. It has sought to highlight the **people who are not prioritized for funding** when resources are limited, often because they are absent from the media and donor spotlight. And, related both to the current conversations around bridging the gaps between development, humanitarian and peacebuilding work and to a more traditional and limited assessment of the scope of humanitarian action, there are the **people seen as out of scope**. People who are not seen as humanitarians' problem, even though they have very clear needs – sometimes of the same scale and severity as the people who humanitarians do consider their 'caseload'.

Each chapter has put forward a series of detailed recommendations that the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) calls on policy-makers and humanitarian actors to take up. In this section, we (the IFRC) propose some overall conclusions and recommendations. While many of the recommendations throughout this report are just as applicable to the IFRC and its members as to our partners, we will also take specific note here of some of our own commitments for action.

## **Adopting the goal: deciding to leave no one behind**

The Sustainable Development Goals' commitment to 'leave no one behind' can be the rallying call for collective action that meets the needs of all people affected by crises, but humanitarianism's own bedrock principles, particularly humanity and impartiality, have long established a similar imperative.

In reality, humanitarian action is fundamentally about triage – and with increases in global risks and constraints on resources and access, humanitarians will never have the capacity to address all needs arising from conflicts and disasters. Yet they can and should go beyond the people most visible, most convenient, easiest to reach, simplest to programme for and who neatly fit the response model.

Certainly, it will not always be the case that resources and efforts should be prioritized to serve the ‘expensive few’ people when also faced with the equally affected ‘many’. However, it will sometimes be the right thing to do and, at a minimum, choices must be made in a more conscious and transparent way.

Moreover, it *is* always the case that humanitarian action should try to prioritize the people most in need, regardless of the expense or challenges of reaching them – yet the sector can hardly do so if it is unaware, wilfully ignorant or unadaptable. As described in Chapter 6 ‘out of scope’, moreover, humanitarians must be ready and open to finding the people most in need wherever they may be, including in non-traditional settings and crises.

Ideas have power and if there is sector-wide acceptance of leaving no one behind as a central goal, the notion will generate more of the good practice and commitment to change showcased throughout this report. Consciously adopting this goal, therefore, is the first recommendation, to all in the sector. However, success will also depend on some systemic transformations, some of which are already on the table in current policy debates, and some of which are not. Both kinds are examined in greater detail here.

### Getting the incentives right

The next step is fortifying the good intentions around leaving no one behind with the right incentives. Many people being left behind are missing out for a reason: it is often harder, more expensive and riskier to go the last mile to find and serve them. Maximum media coverage, minimum cost per person reached, and the smoothest political sailing are often best guaranteed to people who stay close to the capitals and away from disfavoured populations. At the other extreme, the criminalization of aid, such as in over-broad counter-terrorism, money laundering or anti-smuggling laws, and (to a lesser extent) bureaucratic barriers to the entry of relief personnel and goods or to the funding of local responders, can have a significant chilling effect.

Transforming these skewed incentives will require real commitment and investment, as well as specific policy changes from key actors across the sector.

The IFRC therefore recommends that:

#### Donors:

- Define ‘value for money’ in light of the goal of leaving no one behind, seeking the most efficient approach that successfully reaches the people most in need – even if they are more expensive to serve than others.

- Prioritize and incentivize the people hardest to reach with proactive and tailored strategies and tools, such as through allocating funds specifically for the under-supported and hardest-to-reach groups (bearing in mind the overall goal of serving the people most in need, whether they are easy or difficult to help).
- Remove disincentives to working in hard-to-reach areas, including bluntly designed counter-terrorism regulations that criminalize principled humanitarian action, requiring the presence of foreign humanitarian workers when local responders can adequately carry out programmes, and the adoption of approaches that shift risk down the implementation chain rather than sharing and jointly mitigating the risks necessary to meeting the needs of people being left behind.

#### All governments:

- Adopt laws, rules and procedures both to facilitate international disaster response operations and to promote adequate quality standards.
- Ensure that their laws, procedures and personnel guarantee humanitarian organizations’ access to all people in need. This includes ensuring that anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking laws and related measures do not criminalize principled humanitarian assistance to vulnerable migrants.
- Draw attention to, and insist that international responders also take into account, the needs of people in hard-to-reach areas.

#### Humanitarian organizations:

- Systematically integrate steps to support people hardest to reach into their appeals and response plans, including, where necessary, prioritizing mobilizing funds to mitigate any security risks (both for themselves and their local partners)

#### The IFRC’s commitment:

- The IFRC commits to prioritizing support to people most in need in its own operations, regardless of the difficulty in reaching them, including by orienting our needs assessment guidance (currently under revision) toward identifying the people most in need, and by highlighting them in our appeals.

#### Recognizing and supporting the role of local humanitarian action

Local responders have an enormous potential to reduce gaps across nearly every aspect of exclusion examined in this report. They are often the only ones able to reach people in remote or insecure areas. Local associations for women, for persons with disabilities, and for older people (such as Afghanistan’s grandmothers’ committees), bring unique

perspective on how these populations may be affected and how aid efforts may miss their particular needs. Local organizations can also bring an understanding about populations whose suffering may be hidden, that outsiders lack.

Of course, local responders are not perfect – like their international counterparts, they have biases and blind spots; they make assumptions and mistakes. But at the moment, international investment in their areas of strength – and support to overcome areas of weakness and special risk (particularly in dangerous areas) – remains extremely poor, notwithstanding commitments to the contrary, such as in the Grand Bargain. The share of total international humanitarian assistance provided directly to local and national responders (as reported in OCHA's financial tracking system) has increased from 2.0% (458 million US dollars) in 2016 to just 2.9% (603 million US dollars) in 2017 (Development Initiatives, 2018), still a far cry from the Grand Bargain's target of 25% to be channelled as directly as possible by 2020. Moreover, while there have been encouraging signs of progress among a number of UN agencies and international NGOs, international–local partnerships still tend toward one-way, extractive relationships which fail to take best advantage of local knowledge or strengthen longer-term local capacity.

#### The IFRC therefore recommends that:

##### Donors:

- Invest in local responders, in particular their long-term institutional capacities, in line with high ambitions of the Grand Bargain and its target of 25% of international financing to be channelled as directly as possible to them by 2020. Investment can and should include support to develop and implement policies and procedures around capacity development for management of international funds, fraud, accountability and safeguarding as well as to ensure safety of staff.
- Invest in national governments' capacity to adequately facilitate and regulate international assistance, to ensure their primary role in coordination and to avoid unnecessary bureaucratic barriers, as well as to enhance their accountability for the use of funds deployed to support their populations.

##### Governments:

- Invest their own resources in local response capacities, including those of civil society, at the domestic level, to reduce reliance on international funding. This should include developing the necessary laws and procedures to facilitate and regulate international assistance.
- Welcome and allow international investment in local capacities, including those of civil society, actively seeking it out when they feel that their own resources are not great enough to address the risks.

#### Humanitarian organizations:

- Strengthen their partnerships with local responders, with a conscious goal of devolving decision-making and nurturing long-term capacity.
- 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's commitment:

- 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 service. This will include cooperating with ICRC to build a new 'National Society Investment Alliance': a pooled fund for significant, flexible, multi-year financing, and support to National Societies' long-term sustainability.
- The IFRC commits to continue to strengthen its support to National Societies to advise and assist their governments in developing effective laws, procedures and mechanisms for facilitating and regulating international assistance.

#### Adopting a community-centred, participatory approach

To avoid misunderstanding priority needs and missing people who need help, the humanitarian sector also needs to scale up the implementation of previous commitments (such as those in the Grand Bargain) around the participation of affected communities, in particular community members who might otherwise be passed over.

Despite excellent intentions across the sector, communities continue to report that they are not well informed on how to access support, do not feel able to participate in decisions that affect them and do not feel the aid they receive is relevant to them (Ground Truth, 2018).

#### The IFRC therefore recommends that:

##### Humanitarian organizations

- Prioritize integrating community participation – with particular attention to groups likely to be passed over, such as women, older people and persons with disabilities – in all areas of programming, ideally before, but at least from the very beginning of a crisis. Feedback should be shared more effectively across aid organizations so that all actors are aware and able to respond to community concerns.
- Rethink needs assessment methods and approaches to make sure that these seek out and find the people most in need, even if they are not in 'traditional' categories, and adequately value the preferences of affected people themselves when prioritizing needs.

- Actively seek relevant information on needs, capacities, vulnerabilities and perspectives in the preparedness phase before disasters strike. This includes researching how best to communicate with members of communities (including languages and literacy levels).

#### Donors:

- Ensure flexibility in how funds are allocated to programmes throughout a crisis so that programme courses can be corrected based on feedback from communities.
- Prioritize resources for community engagement activities and make community engagement and response a clear expectation of all grant recipients and a component of monitoring and evaluation.

#### The IFRC's commitment:

- The IFRC commits to strengthening its community engagement and accountability, including through developing minimum standards in this area for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
- The IFRC commits to ensuring greater use of the outcomes of vulnerability and capacity assessments in response programming including through developing an online repository for these.

#### Taking up our part of the responsibility for resilience

As noted in the introduction, humanitarian agencies – and their donors – have traditionally seen themselves as the last resort – waiting to act only after crises have overwhelmed local resources and then only to reduce their worst impacts. However, nearly 30 years on from the proclamation of the International Decade of Natural Disaster Reduction, this limited view no longer adequately describes the humanitarian sector's role or responsibility.

Without investments in risk reduction, in community resilience, and in anticipatory approaches, many people will continue to be left behind. As reported in the *World Disasters Report 2016*, the case for this approach was made and globally accepted long ago. Yet the practice remains far from what should be expected. Funding for disaster risk reduction remains negligible as a proportion of development aid – accounting for just 0.5% of official development assistance as of 2016, the most recently available figures.

Unsurprisingly, whereas the overwhelming majority of 'humanitarian' organizations are (or are fast becoming) 'double hatted' with regard to emergency and development activities, the lopsided nature of international funding means that activities actually remain strongly response focused. While risk reduction work is arguably much more effective in saving lives than post-crisis assistance, there is a lack of corresponding urgency about coverage gaps in this area, and they are not as systematically illustrated as those regularly tallied for emergency appeals.

While it is of course true that 'pure' development institutions have an indispensable role to play (which some, such as the World Bank, are making important steps to take up), for many of the international stakeholders, the divisions are internal and self-imposed. The conceptual and administrative bifurcations between resilience building and response only exacerbate the negative dispersal of the responsibility that both agencies and donors have for people left exposed to risk.

#### The IFRC therefore recommends that:

##### All governments (including donors) and humanitarian organizations:

- Move toward tallying and reviewing coverage of 'appeals' for emergencies and resilience-building side by side, thus ensuring that success is judged on the overall degree to which human suffering has been prevented (as a preference) or reduced (where needed).
- Invest much more heavily in community resilience and local response capacities before disasters and other crises.
- Seize the 'low-hanging fruit' of anticipatory funding for predictable and recurrent hazards, including scaling up the success demonstrated in instruments such as forecast-based financing, and promoting its use both in international and domestic response systems.
- Promote legal and policy frameworks for disaster risk management that focus on the needs of the most vulnerable people.

##### Donors:

- Break down the artificially created silos between their own development, climate and humanitarian funding structures that leave resilience, local capacity support and development, and preparedness chronically underfunded.
- When requested, fund humanitarian organizations for activities related to building resilience, even if these might traditionally be seen as development oriented, and seek out alternative providers when humanitarians feel that they cannot undertake them.

##### Humanitarian organizations:

- Systematically include resilience strengthening in their interventions, even if they are of a type traditionally considered 'development' rather than 'humanitarian', unless they lack the relevant competence or capacity or such activity would undermine their compliance with humanitarian principles.

#### The IFRC's commitment:

- The IFRC commits to continuing its support for resilience building, including, where possible, through inclusion of relevant activities in emergency operations.
- The IFRC commits to supporting National Societies to strengthen community resilience, regardless of whether it is considered 'humanitarian' or 'development' in nature.
- The IFRC commits to continue its support for the development of legislative and policy frameworks for disaster risk management and climate change adaptation focused on resilience approaches.

#### Improving appropriate use of data and technology

Data has a transformative potential for ensuring that no one is left behind. Indeed, it will be impossible to know if the goal of leaving no one behind has been reached without a stronger use of this critical tool. Data – particularly properly disaggregated data – also has a unique potential to expose hidden trends and problems that might lead to groups of people being left behind. Likewise, new technologies provide incredible opportunities to address many of these gaps.

Relying on data and technology has its risks, however. Poor understandings of the gaps in data sets can give misleading impressions and paper over rather than reveal gap areas. Poorly protected and poorly conceived data initiatives can expose vulnerable people to new forms of harm. Likewise, excessive reliance on technological solutions such as drones and satellite information risks displacing human engagement.

#### The IFRC therefore recommends that:

##### All governments (including donors) and humanitarian organizations:

- Invest in much stronger data gathering and analysis capacities across the humanitarian sector and at the national level, with a focus on finding people and needs who might be out of sight – in particularly older people and persons with disabilities.
- Ensure that there is agreement on basic data standards and methodology to ensure comparability and interoperability.
- Make sure that data actually underlies decision-making, including by developing widespread internal digital literacy within their organizations in addition to digital 'infrastructure' investments.
- Resist an exclusive reliance on data or technical modelling to understand the complexities of different contexts.
- Ensure a strong 'do-no-harm' approach to data protection and sharing.

##### Donors:

- Make sure that the results of these investments are accessible to the variety of stakeholders, including local responders and that gathering data does not become an end in itself – an activity that replaces rather than stimulates action (as seems to be the case for urban violence and irregular migration).

#### The IFRC's commitment:

- The IFRC commits to continue to invest in its own, and its members', capacity to gather and analyse relevant data designed to determine whom is most in need and to detect anyone who might be left behind. This will include building our own data literacy, consistently gathering sex, age and disability-disaggregated data, and increasing participation in open source approaches to data sharing in the sector.
- The IFRC commits to promoting the use of data to strengthen community-level resilience building and response activities, without displacing direct action with data gathering.

- The IFRC commits to developing and implementing appropriate data protection and privacy policies and to support its members to do the same.

#### Addressing the critical cases

This report has raised various examples in its discussion of the question of leaving no one behind. However, they have not been raised here merely as illustrations, but rather as critical cases of neglect that require immediate attention in light of this global goal. Some critical cases include people lacking formal identification papers or property title, people vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence, older people and persons with disabilities, irregular migrants and people suffering from elevated urban violence. None of these cases are particularly new – the gaps have been amply signalled in the past – now is the time to act on them.

#### The IFRC therefore recommends that:

All governments (including donors) and humanitarian organizations:

- Guard against blind spots in assistance for people lacking government-issued identification, people without formal title to their homes, whose communities are not mapped, and who silently endure elevated risks of sexual and gender-based violence. This will require greater efforts to understand where and how these gaps are likely to occur, for example, through advance mapping of national laws related to housing, land and property rights (as the Australian Red Cross is currently leading in the Pacific), and proactive efforts to train and prepare humanitarian personnel to ask the right questions. For its part, the IFRC commits to supporting these efforts and to continue its work with National Societies to reduce and prepare for sexual and gender-based violence risks in disaster settings.
- Ensure that humanitarian budgets, plans and financing incorporate specific allocations and programmes to reach out to older people and persons with disabilities, improving the quality and sharing of data gathered about them. Humanitarian organizations in particular should work harder to ensure a strong role for older people and persons with disabilities themselves in decision-making, including through partnering with dedicated local organizations, where they exist. For its part, the IFRC commits to partnering with organizations of older people and of persons with disabilities and to developing network-wide disaggregated data on IFRC and National Society programming.
- Acknowledge that the suffering of irregular migrants and of people experiencing urban violence in many parts of the world have already reached levels rendering them humanitarian crises and that investment is made accordingly. And do so bearing in mind that local responders will likely continue to be best placed to undertake most response initiatives, but will need additional resources to do so. For their part, the IFRC's member National Societies have made strong commitments to scale up their humanitarian programming for migrants across migratory trails, having adopted the first network-wide strategy on service to vulnerable migrants in 2017. The IFRC

commits to support its members to strengthen their services to migrants and to build understandings with their authorities about their role and contributions. The IFRC further commits to supporting members to develop activities, promote non-violence and address the impacts of urban violence, such as psychological trauma.

Recognizing there will always be unmet needs and humanitarians will constantly struggle to fill the gaps, the sector regardless needs to do better at meeting the most urgent needs. This report has tried to explore what we as humanitarians, but also in partnership with others, can do to better leave no one behind. Most importantly it has sought to challenge 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, to make these people the top priority. It is time we all make real the pledge of making the last mile the first mile.



Portugal, 2018

More than 200 volunteers and staff from the Portuguese Red Cross are providing first aid, health care and psychosocial support to people affected by forest fires.

©Portuguese Red Cross



Turin, Italy, 2017

Italian Red Cross camp in Settimo Torinese (Turin, Italy). The Red Cross volunteers prepare the paperwork for the Eritrean refugees who will be transferred to another EU country according to the relocation programme.