



SUSTAINING THE AMBITION

Delivering Change

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AGENDA FOR HUMANITY ANNUAL SYNTHESIS REPORT 2019





**AGENDA
FOR HUMANITY**
5 CORE RESPONSIBILITIES
24 TRANSFORMATIONS

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Cover photo: Local primary schoolchildren in North Kivu. The first six months of 2018 were difficult for millions of Congolese, marked by violence, disease, food insecurity and pressure on host communities. Democratic Republic of the Congo. OCHA/Tommaso Ripani

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key messages

In the third year of reporting since the World Humanitarian Summit, **117 stakeholders** reported on their efforts to implement their commitments to the Agenda for Humanity. This is the final Annual Synthesis Report.

CORE RESPONSIBILITY 1

Prevent and End Conflict



- Policy and institutional reforms have propelled a shift towards conflict prevention.
- Stakeholders have developed internal systems for preparedness and early warning while building new expertise and capacity.

CORE RESPONSIBILITY 2

Respect the Rules of War



- The state of protection of civilians in conflicts remains bleak.
- There is considerable scope for practical measures to improve compliance with international humanitarian law.

CORE RESPONSIBILITY 3

Leave No One Behind



- The longer-term needs of refugees are being more comprehensively addressed, but progress on internal displacement lags behind.
- Normative commitments on gender equality and on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action have been made. These now need to be matched by funding and programming.

CORE RESPONSIBILITY 4

Work Differently to End Need



- The participation and leadership of national and local organizations has increased, and governments have strengthened their capacities to predict, prepare for and manage disaster risk.
- Yet, much remains to be done to create a more balanced and equal relationship between international, national and local responders.
- Efforts to collaborate better across the humanitarian, development and peace pillars have been re-energized, with stakeholders working to operationalize coherent programming in varied contexts.

CORE RESPONSIBILITY 5

Invest in Humanity



- Updated technologies have improved operational efficiencies. Stakeholders have also improved the transparency of funding and spending by using standards.
- Despite the generosity of donors, the funding gap remains.

Sustaining the ambition – delivering change:

- Stakeholders must not lose sight of the broader ambitions for the Summit to reshape the ways in which the international community engages in humanitarian action.
- Stakeholders must drive forward operational solutions while adapting to different contexts and bridging the gap between policy and practice.
- A diverse, inclusive, bottom-up approach will be paramount to maintaining momentum and driving forward an agenda for change.

Stakeholders who reported through PACT, 2019



Top five challenges reported that impeded progress, 2019



Funding



Human resources/capacity



Data

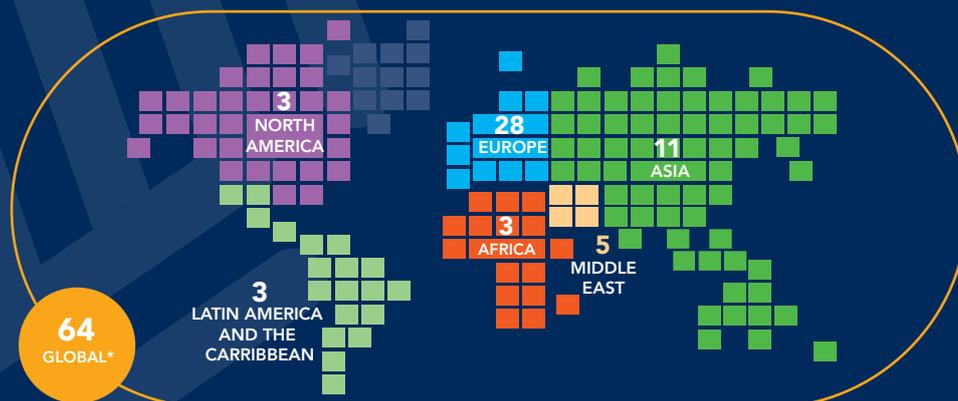


Funding modalities



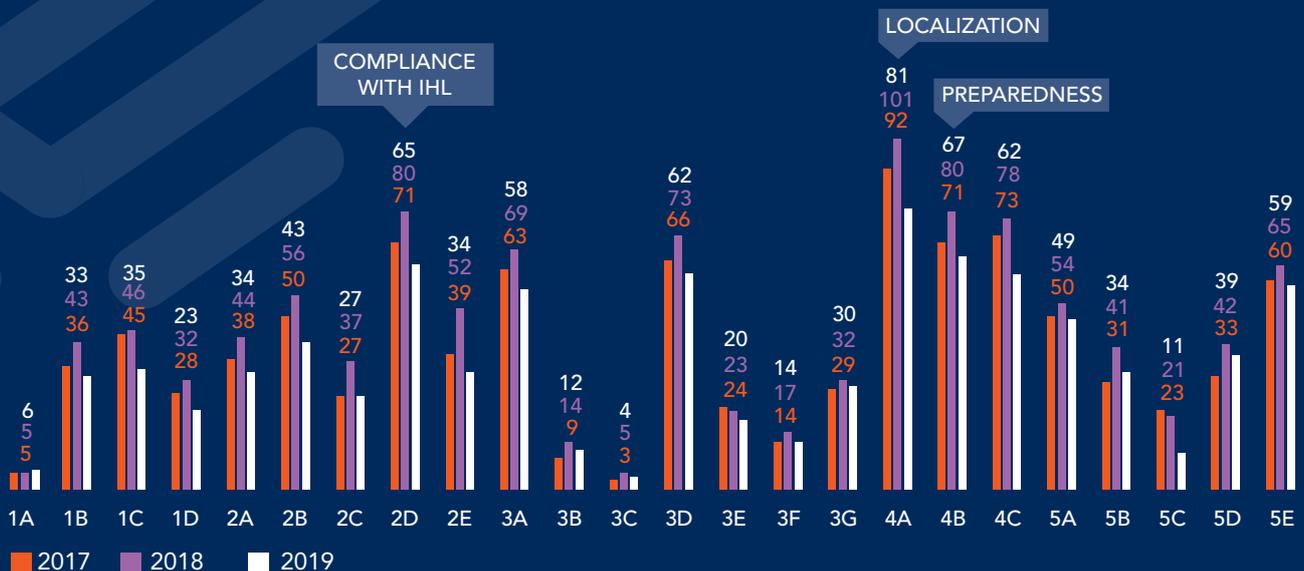
Coordination

Region of operation of stakeholders who reported in 2019



*Global denotes an organization with multiple headquarters or chapters.

Stakeholder reporting by transformation, 2017, 2018 and 2019*



*Year denotes when stakeholders submitted their reports rather than when activities took place.



SUSTAINING THE AMBITION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), Member States, humanitarian organizations, civil society, private sector partners and crisis-affected communities came together to launch an agenda for change. Together, they made more than 3,000 commitments to alleviate suffering, reduce risk and lessen vulnerability to the impacts of conflicts, natural disasters and climate change. These commitments were aligned with the five Core Responsibilities and twenty-four Transformations of the Agenda for Humanity – a bold agenda for change proposed by the United Nations Secretary-General, based on extensive consultations held around the world.

Following the Summit, stakeholders were invited to self-report on the implementation of their commitments. Over the past three years, hundreds of stakeholders have documented their achievements on the online Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformation (PACT, available at www.agendaforhumanity.org), creating an invaluable record of progress, experiences and lessons learned.

The *Report of the Secretary-General on the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit (A/71/353)* established PACT for a period of three to five years. 2019 – the third year of reporting since the Summit – will be the final year of self-reporting. In 2020, the follow-up process to the Summit will conclude. No further reporting on commitments made during the Summit will be expected. PACT will continue to be public and will become an online archive, housing all the data and reporting on commitments as well as material from the WHS. While significant progress has been achieved in the years since the Summit, systemic change still needs to be supported. To realize this global vision and improve humanitarian aid, stakeholders are encouraged to continue implementing their commitments under the Agenda for Humanity, even if they no longer report on them.

Achievements and challenges in 2018

In the third year of reporting since the WHS, 117 stakeholders reported on their efforts (between January and December 2018) to implement their commitments to the Agenda for Humanity. The achievements reported by a diverse body of stakeholders demonstrate the strength of their continuing commitment to the changes called for by the five Core Responsibilities, as well as contribute to the broader work of the humanitarian community to bring people in crises closer to the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals.



CORE RESPONSIBILITY ONE Prevent and End Conflict

A boy stands in a building targeted by air strikes in Aden, Yemen.

OCHA/Giles Clark

In 2018, stakeholders consolidated their support for a multilateral system geared towards preventing conflicts and sustaining peace. Member States provided funding to multilateral instruments for peacebuilding, stabilization and mediation, strengthening the international community's capacity to act flexibly and rapidly to prevent, respond to and resolve conflicts. Stakeholders developed policy, implemented programmes and shared experiences on working to address root causes. In fragile and conflict-affected areas, they worked to improve coherence between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding approaches, and to ensure that women, youth and civil society were meaningfully engaged in efforts to build resilient and peaceful societies. Nonetheless, the lack of predictable and sustained financing for conflict prevention continues to slow progress and limit investment in new approaches, as does the lack of quality data upon which to make evidence-based decisions. Stakeholders also emphasized the need for approaches developed from the bottom-up that include and build on the strengths of women, youth and civil society.

In the three years since the WHS, the international community's focus on conflict prevention has increased, and reporting indicates a palpable shift from a reactive to a preventive approach to conflicts. Spurred by the leadership of the United Nations Secretary-General, Member States and organizations are shifting policies and reforming institutions to deliver this change. More stakeholders are monitoring and proactively responding to early warning signs of conflict, and the capacity of the international community to engage in conflict prevention is improving. As part of a growing impetus for inclusive, people-centred action, stakeholders have taken practical steps to empower women as peacebuilders, mediators, peacekeepers and civil society leaders.



CORE RESPONSIBILITY TWO Respect the Rules of War

Increasing hostilities are driving large-scale displacements. In Pulka, the town sometimes receives up to 150 new daily arrivals, stretching scarce resources. Nigeria.

OCHA/Yasmina Guerda

Parties to armed conflict continue to disregard international humanitarian and human rights law, with devastating impacts on the lives and well-being of civilians. Stakeholders who reported in 2018, engaged mainly in diplomatic and advocacy efforts to remind parties of their obligations to respect the rules of war, as well as supporting measures to end impunity – namely, the International Criminal Court and international investigative and evidence-gathering mechanisms. A handful of stakeholders took practical measures to increase respect for international humanitarian law, including monitoring situations of conflict, documenting violations, providing training on the rules of war, and researching and sharing best practices.

However, there is still a pervasive lack of accountability for violations, sustained by a shortage of political will, limited funding and the paucity of data and evidence to drive decision-making. On a national level, the absence of national frameworks or authorities for protecting civilians – or the limited capacities of such authorities – impedes the protection of civilians and civilian objects, as do certain State practices such as counter-terrorism measures and unrestricted arms transfers. Lack of funding, challenging operational conditions, limited access and security concerns also remain serious practical barriers to protecting civilians or gathering evidence of violations.

Despite the concerted efforts of a committed group of stakeholders, the challenges to improving compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law have not changed since the WHS, and the state of civilian protection remains bleak. However, there is considerable scope for concrete improvements in the promotion and implementation of the law, and the practical actions reported by stakeholders provide evidence of what can be done – a foundation upon which the international community can build in years to come.

CORE RESPONSIBILITY THREE

Leave No One Behind

In the three years since the WHS, there has been significant normative progress in ensuring that humanitarian action meets the needs and upholds the rights of the most vulnerable people in crises, including forcibly displaced people, migrants, stateless people, women and girls, children, youth, and persons with disabilities. However, despite concrete progress in addressing the needs of refugees, durable solutions for internally displaced persons are still lacking. In addition, operationalizing commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and including the most marginalized in humanitarian action, still lags behind normative progress.

Building on the momentum of the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the international community adopted (in December 2018) the Global Compact for Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. In line with these global commitments, stakeholders who reported under Core Responsibility Three continued to provide comprehensive support for refugees, working with development partners to deliver more predictable funding and programming to meet both short- and longer-term needs. Efforts to improve data and analysis, particularly on internal displacement, also gained traction. Nonetheless, despite an increase in collective advocacy to mark the 20th anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, global attention and collective action to reduce and address internal displacement has continued to lag behind. Developing risk mitigation strategies and solutions for cross-border displacement in the context of disasters and climate change also remains a critical gap.

In 2018, new high-level commitments to gender equality were adopted – including the G7 Whistler Declaration on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action – and the humanitarian community continued to increase its capacity to deliver gender equality programming in emergencies. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee

Minova was established spontaneously when hundreds of families fled violence in Goma in 2007. It became an official site in 2012 now hosts 287 families. Democratic Republic of the Congo.

OCHA/Eve Sabbagh





Displaced women in Dar Pai camp, which is home to more than 8,000 people. Myanmar.

OCHA/Htet Htet

rolled out its Policy (and Accountability Framework) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls. Some stakeholders reported taking measures to advance gender parity and promote women's leadership within humanitarian organizations. A core group of committed stakeholders also stepped up funding and political advocacy for sexual and reproductive health rights and services in emergencies. However, funding and targeted programming for gender equality still lag behind normative commitments, and efforts to advance gender equality, mainstream gender, and mitigate, prevent and end gender-based violence remain under-prioritized and under-funded in humanitarian response. Similarly, efforts to empower women as decision makers are still limited.

Efforts to advance commitments to including persons with disabilities in humanitarian action continued in 2018. In July, the first Global Disability Summit was held and, in December, the UN Security Council held its first-ever discussion on issues facing persons with disabilities in armed conflict. Stakeholders also continued to mobilize awareness, political action and resources for education in emergencies, and to involve young people in humanitarian action and empower them as agents of change. However, in many cases, efforts to include marginalized groups remain on paper only. Continued improvements to humanitarian analysis, planning, response and monitoring are needed to ensure that commitments to inclusion become an operational reality. In addition, a lack of understanding of the intersectional nature of vulnerability, and the limited attention to other marginalized groups – including those who are persecuted on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity – remain persistent gaps that the humanitarian community must address.

CORE RESPONSIBILITY FOUR AND FIVE

Work Differently to End Need and Invest in Humanity

Three years after the WHS, the humanitarian community has largely embraced the shift towards working more closely with development and other actors, and made efforts to operationalize the profound changes that this requires. The participation and leadership of national and local humanitarian responders in humanitarian coordination has increased, and more international organizations are taking on roles as enablers and supporters of national systems, capacities and resilience. National governments have strengthened their capacities to predict, prepare for and manage disaster risk, and to build resilience to the impact of climate change. Humanitarian and development work, once seen as a linear continuum, is increasingly recognized as a complex spectrum of overlapping vulnerabilities and needs, and stakeholders have generated an important body of experiences and lessons learned in operationalizing more joined-up programming. Needless to say, such efforts are still in their early stages. To bring about system-wide change, the policies, experiences and lessons learned over the past three years will need to be expanded beyond pilot approaches.

In 2018, the humanitarian community continued its efforts to reduce barriers to locally and nationally led response efforts – for example, by ensuring that local and national organizations hold more leadership roles in humanitarian coordination. Donors directed funding towards pooled funds that can be accessed by national and local partners, while other international stakeholders supported the capacity-building of national and local responders, and created more equitable partnerships. However, despite a broad acceptance that a more balanced and equal relationship is needed between international and national and local responders, there is still a disconnect between the discourse at global level and the implementation of commitments at operational level, where demanding conditions and the short-term and inflexible nature of funding limit progress.

Due to water scarcity in Pulka, children walk long distances from the camps and the town to collect water from a nearby earth dam. Nigeria.

OCHA/Yasmina
Guerda



Meanwhile, in 2018, governments in countries prone to natural disasters and vulnerable to the impact of climate change continued to strengthen their national capacities to prepare for, reduce and manage disaster risk, and build resilience. Early warning systems were used to anticipate crises and trigger forecast-based financing, mitigating the impacts of disasters and helping to prevent suffering. Regional and global initiatives were launched to improve data and analysis, and facilitate knowledge-sharing. Nonetheless, global investment in disaster risk reduction and preparedness is still limited, and financial risk aversion has held back the scaling up of early action approaches.

In protracted and recurrent crises, humanitarian and development organizations continued to align their work around collective outcomes, aiming to reduce risk, vulnerability and, ultimately, humanitarian needs. With the addition of peacebuilding as the third pillar of humanitarian, development and peace collaboration in 2018, stakeholders focused on operationalizing coherent programming in a variety of contexts. These efforts generated valuable best practices and lessons learned for future humanitarian, development and peace collaboration. Recent experience shows that successfully defining and operationalizing collective outcomes at country-level is based on rigorous assessment and decisive leadership, joint analysis, joined-up programming and planning, as well as strategically aligned and sequenced multi-year financing.

To make limited financial resources go further, stakeholders also took steps to increase operational efficiencies by updating technologies and introducing new tools, and by streamlining processes both internally and in partnership with others. Stakeholders also continued to improve the transparency of humanitarian funding and spending. However, despite the increasing generosity of donors, the gap between humanitarian funding requirements and the resources available to meet them remains substantial, and progress to diversify the humanitarian resource base has been slow.



Local Yemeni boys pose before playing football on the beach in Aden, Yemen.

OCHA/Giles Clark

Achieving the transformation

In the three years since the WHS, humanitarian needs around the world have continued to increase, reaching the highest levels in decades. For millions of crisis-affected people around the world, the ambition of the Agenda for Humanity to reduce suffering remains as critical as ever.

The change agenda launched at the Summit was broad and far-reaching, and stakeholders have made remarkable progress in a relatively short period of time. As individual progress reporting against commitments concludes, stakeholders must continue to engage with one another to consolidate the gains made thus far, and maintain momentum towards the wider ambitions set out by the Agenda for Humanity. Turning normative and policy commitments into tangible change for affected people and moving beyond a pilot mentality remains a challenge across nearly all Core Responsibilities; the risk that differences in approaches will lead to fragmentation remains high. Only sustained collective action will result in tangible progress in alleviating suffering, reducing risk and lessening vulnerability to humanitarian crises.

Each chapter of this report provides recommendations for practical actions to take forward the Core Responsibilities and Transformations of the Agenda for Humanity. To sustain the momentum towards systemic change, stakeholders should:

- **Maintain the ambition for structural change:** As work to implement commitments necessarily becomes more granular, stakeholders must not lose sight of the bolder ambitions of the WHS to reshape the way the international community delivers for people caught up in, or at risk of, humanitarian crises. Stakeholders must remain engaged with another, working collaboratively to overcome persistent and structural barriers to change, and ensure that the implementation of commitments leads to sustainable and systemic reforms.
- **Drive forward operational solutions:** In the short time since the Summit, normative and policy changes have laid the groundwork for change. Stakeholders must continue to focus their efforts on closing the gap between policy and practice and adapting to different contextual realities on the ground.
- **Engage diverse stakeholders in inclusive change:** Efforts to deliver on commitments, both globally and at country level, must continue to involve a diverse range of stakeholders from national and local responders, civil society, women- and youth-led organizations, organizations of persons with disabilities, the private sector, academia, and affected communities themselves. Inclusive, bottom-up approaches to implementing commitments at community and country level are essential for driving the change agenda forward.
- **Strengthen the measurability of change:** Looking beyond self-reporting, stakeholders must continue to engage one another on key questions for the future – including on how to strengthen the measurability of achievements and progress. The ‘assessing progress’ boxes at the end of each chapter of this report provide some initial insights into the existing processes and tools that could be used to assess collective progress and evaluate the success of the international community in delivering the changes called for by the Agenda for Humanity.



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