

RAISE

THE BAR

A blueprint for EU leadership

in a world of escalating crises



**INTERNATIONAL
RESCUE
COMMITTEE**

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FOREWORD



The five years since the last European elections have demonstrated how risks that were once contained within states or regions can spill far beyond their boundaries.

From the health of our publics to their quality of life, economic prosperity, and the air they breathe – serving the citizens of Europe requires foresight, vision and global action. The forthcoming US elections should focus minds. In the absence of any guarantee of transatlantic support, the urgency of equipping Europe to deliver autonomously on global geopolitical challenges has never been clearer.

Ahead of the coming EU elections, it is evident that the EU's approach to humanitarian contexts is not keeping pace with reality – where conflict, climate change and economic shocks are creating a new geography of crisis. The IRC's analysis shows that while needs are concentrated in a handful of fragile and conflict-affected countries, aid is increasingly designed for more stable settings. This leaves whole regions and countries at risk of being left behind, and poses serious questions as to if – and how – the EU will be able to meaningfully advance the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

Over the coming five years, the EU needs to rethink its ways of addressing compounding crises and seek

constructive solutions to better deliver for people caught in their crosshairs. If it fails to do so, we can expect the humanitarian picture at the next elections in 2029 to be even more extreme – with millions more lives hanging in the balance. In this report, the IRC outlines its blueprint for change, highlighting seven priority areas the EU should focus on over the coming years if it hopes to chart a different course.

It's time for the EU to lead with humanity and use its influence to raise the bar – not just for the international community, but ultimately as the only way to deliver for its own citizens.

DAVID MILIBAND

President and CEO, International Rescue Committee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the last European elections in 2019, the world has changed dramatically. The number of people in humanitarian need has more than doubled to nearly 300 million.¹ Displacement has soared by almost 40% to 110 million.² And the global population facing acute food insecurity has risen by 160% to almost 350 million.³ For many people across the globe, this is the worst of times.

It is crystal clear that the approach and actions of the international community, including the EU, has not kept pace with this rapidly escalating level of humanitarian need. The communities that the IRC works with across the globe have borne witness to this dangerous disconnect, and we have learned abundant lessons from them on what needs to change.

Today's humanitarian context is characterised by three key drivers: **conflict, climate change and economic crises**. This deadly brew is **converging with particular strength in a handful of regions and states, including the Sahel, Somalia, and Sudan, to create a new geography of crisis**. The people caught in its midst are being increasingly left behind. As the IRC's **2024 Emergency Watchlist** reveals, just 20 countries are now home to 86% of the global population in humanitarian need. Meanwhile, the global humanitarian funding gap hit a record high of \$32.5 billion in 2023. The international community must overhaul the way it responds to these three intersecting drivers.

Firstly, the **nature of conflicts is changing and becoming increasingly protracted**. Conflicts are spilling across borders and becoming internationalised, while conflict actors are fragmenting. As a result of these trends, civilians are caught between states and armed groups,

and wars are fought for longer - without regard for International Humanitarian Law (IHL) or respect for humanitarian access, which is vital to ensure aid can reach the people who need it most.

Secondly, **climate change is a "threat multiplier"**, amplifying the risks, cracks and inequalities that already exist in fragile states or those affected by conflict. The World Bank estimates that up to an additional 135 million people could be pushed into poverty by 2030 due to climate change.⁴

Thirdly, **economic turmoil is plunging people into extreme poverty**, as states struggle to recover from the negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and fallout of the war in Ukraine, which drove up fuel and food prices in many fragile and conflict-affected countries, particularly in East Africa. The global rise of interest rates on loans has made borrowing more expensive, resulting in many countries that were already affected by fragility and conflict racking up significant debts.

1. See: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2024-enarfrsp>

2. Displacement is projected to soar by almost 65% to 130 million in 2024.

3. In 2019, 79.5 million people were displaced. In 2024, it is projected to reach 130.8 million. The percentual increase is 64.52%; see <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2024-enarfrsp> In 2019, 135 million were acutely food insecure. the percentual increase is 159.3%; see: <https://www.wfp.org/publications/2020-global-report-food-crises>

4. See: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2021/09/climate-change-and-inequality-guivarch-mejean-taconet#:~:text=The%20evidence%20is%20mounting%3A%20a,2030%20because%20of%20climate%20change>

They now have fewer resources to spend on vital services including healthcare, education and climate resilience, feeding into the same vicious cycle that forced them to borrow in the first place.

And, as ever, **women and girls are bearing the brunt of these interlocking crises.**

They represent almost three in four of the global population facing chronic hunger, yet face disproportionately high barriers to accessing humanitarian support, legal and safe work, and education. Women and girls are also at heightened risk of sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse, with up to 70% of women in some crisis contexts reporting experiences of gender-based violence.⁵ Despite these grave risks, women and girls' perspectives, needs and concerns are often overlooked when planning a humanitarian response, and in longer-term resilience and development work.

Meanwhile, despite more than **110 million people globally now being displaced from their homes**, almost all of whom remain in the global south, most EU states are failing to meet their pledges for refugee resettlement, and safe pathways for people seeking asylum are shrinking. As Europe hardens its borders, the IRC and partners have seen systematic violations of the fundamental rights of people seeking safety, including pushbacks and denial of access to asylum. It is clear these 'border security' policies are not meeting their stated objective of establishing greater order at the border nor reducing the level of people smuggling. The need for a safe, orderly and humane European response to asylum and migration has never been greater.

With whole regions and countries at risk of being left behind, serious questions must be raised as to if – and how – the EU will be able to meaningfully advance the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

The EU has the means and the influence to tackle these global challenges. But if it is to serve its own ambitions, and reach more communities in humanitarian need, the EU will need to fundamentally rethink its ways of working.

It is time to take a fresh approach. In the context of the European elections, the IRC's agenda for change demonstrates seven ways the EU can redefine its response to a world of uncertainty and compounding crises:

NO. 1

Focus on fragile and conflict-affected states, taking a 'people first' approach to delivery.

NO. 2

Harness humanitarian action for long-term development impact.

NO. 3

Save lives impacted by the climate and food security crises by investing in solutions that work.

NO. 4

Deploy innovative approaches to unlock new sources of finance.

NO. 5

Prioritise gender equality in crisis response and shift power and resources to women-led organisations.

NO. 6

Protect humanitarian and civilian space by consistently calling out violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and challenging impunity.

NO. 7

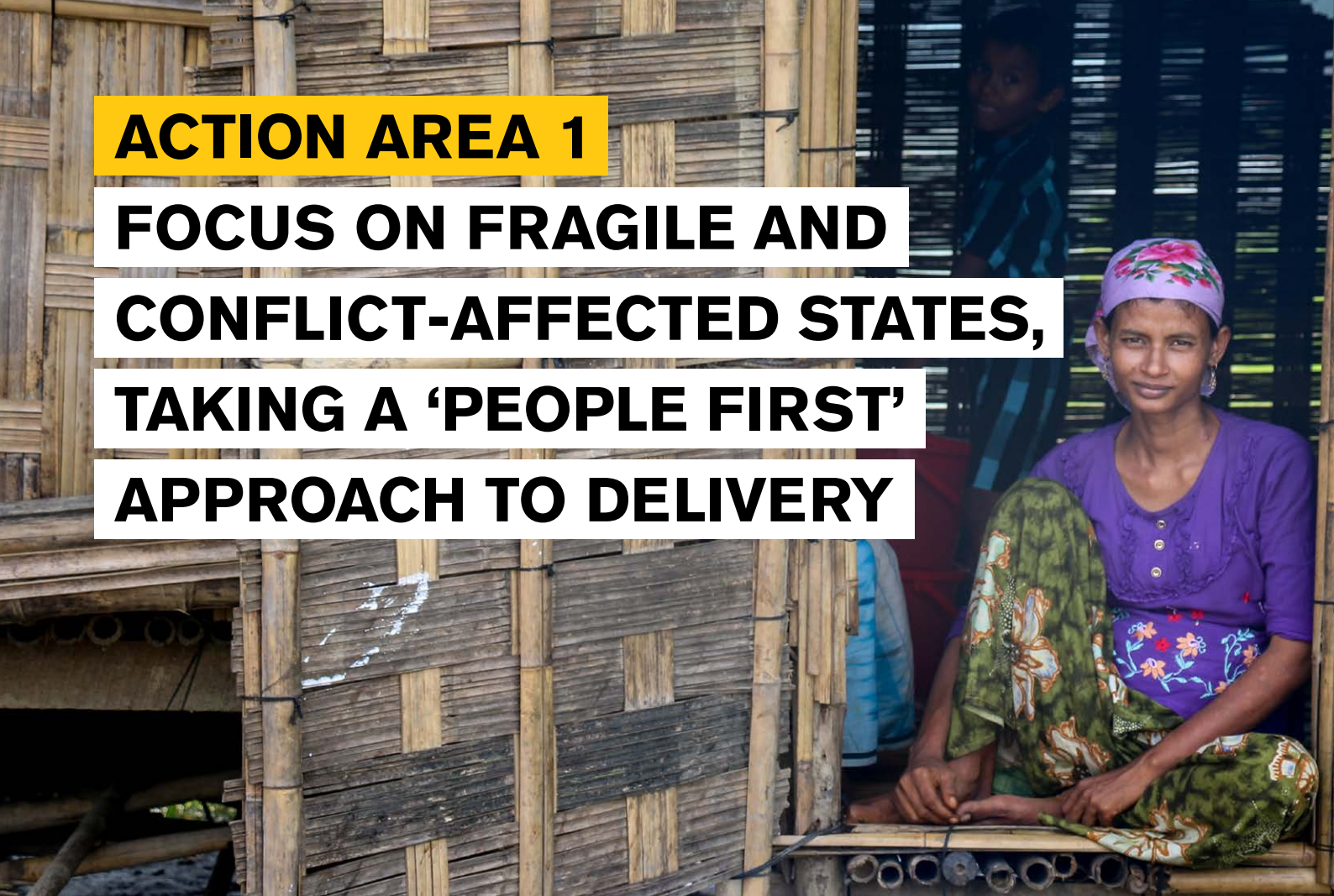
Ensure a safe, orderly and humane approach to asylum and migration.

The coming five years will be a test of the EU's commitment to humanitarian leadership – an opportunity to do more, do better, and truly raise the bar.

5. See: https://www.actionaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/actionaid_policy_report_on_the_frontline_catalysing_womens_leadership_in_humanitarian_action.pdf

ACTION AREA 1

FOCUS ON FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED STATES, TAKING A 'PEOPLE FIRST' APPROACH TO DELIVERY



NO. 1

Checklist for transformative EU action

- ✓ **Commit half of all bilateral Official Development Aid (ODA) to fragile and conflict-affected states**
- ✓ **Encourage EU states to spend at least 0.7% of their Gross National Income on ODA**
- ✓ **Invest in delivery models that work in the places with the greatest concentration of needs**
- ✓ **Support civil society organisations through scaled up 'people first' partnership models which help meet the challenges encountered in fragile and conflict settings**
- ✓ **Drive 'people first' reform within the wider humanitarian system**

If the EU is serious about stopping the spiralling crises we see today, it must focus its attention and resources on fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS).

Humanitarian needs are today being increasingly concentrated in a small handful of countries. In order to drive meaningful change for affected populations, the international community needs to tailor its approach to FCAS, bearing in mind their specific contexts and vulnerabilities. However, at present the momentum is moving in the opposite direction – the funding gap in these particularly fragile countries is growing, and current delivery models are not fit for purpose.

The global humanitarian funding gap reached a new high of **\$32.5 billion** in 2023, with the 20 countries featuring in the IRC's 2024 Watchlist accounting for 86% of these unmet funding needs. In order to address this disconnect, the EU can take a number of steps.

The EU should increase the proportion of aid reaching fragile and conflict-affected states.

Targeting Official Development Assistance (ODA) to where it is needed most is an important step. With the greatest needs concentrated in just a handful of countries, common sense dictates that a far greater proportion of funding should be directed to these countries. More specifically, the EU institutions and its Member States should:

- **Commit half of all bilateral ODA to fragile and conflict-affected states**⁶ – 25% disbursed now⁷. This funding should be provided in grants and, when delivered via development banks, be highly concessional. This commitment alone would see almost EUR 5.5 billion⁸ in additional funding made available to fragile and

conflict-affected states – a sum which would bridge the gaps in humanitarian response funding worldwide (with an increase from 43% to 56% of funding needs being met).⁹

- **Encourage all EU Member States to increase their funding to meet the target set by the UN of spending 0.7% of their Gross National Income on ODA.** While a number of EU countries have shown global leadership in their commitment to meet this UN target, only three – Luxembourg, Sweden and Germany – made this a reality in 2022.¹⁰ A total of 11 Member States made ODA allocations of less than 0.5%.¹¹ If all EU Member States were to meet the 0.7% commitment, this would significantly increase their combined funding by USD 27.5 billion (EUR 25.3 billion), bringing the total to USD 78.9 billion (EUR 72.7 billion).

6. We use the World Bank Definitions of FCAS. See: [FCSListFY24-final.pdf](https://www.fcslistfy24-final.pdf) (worldbank.org)

7. OECD-DAC, 2023 Trends and Insights on Development Cooperation: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/c0ad1f0d-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/5e331623-en&csp_ =b14d4f60505d057b4566dd1730d8fcea3&itemGO=oeecd&itemContentType=chapter

8. Currently, 6.2 billion USD is disbursed to FCAS, constituting 25.6% of EU's gross bilateral ODA. 50% of ODA would be 12.1 billion - an additional 5.91 billion USD, or 5.5 billion EUR.

9. Based on OCHA global humanitarian overview, which states that 20bn USD out of 46.4bn USD has been committed, which constitutes only a 43% funded response. An additional 5.9bn USD would fund 56% of the response. See: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2024-un-launches-46-billion-appeal-2024-global-humanitarian-outlook-remains-bleak-enar>

10. CONCORD, AidWatch 2023: <https://aidwatch.concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2023/10/Aidwatch-2023.pdf>

11. See: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/official-development-assistance.htm>

The EU should put increased focus on delivering services in partnership with civil society groups, including ensuring those with close relationships to affected communities receive a greater proportion of Global Europe¹² funding.

A substantial increase in financing to FCAS, while essential, is not enough. Even when financing is available, governments alone are often unable to operate in these challenging contexts, as they may lack the control, capacity, access and - at times - the willingness to deliver services across entire countries. As a result, when instability takes hold, donors' first instinct is too often to withdraw funding or suspend programmes. This can leave humanitarian actors struggling to meet the scale of needs, and vulnerable populations, who already bear the brunt of neglect and insecurity, in an even more precarious position. Where governments can deliver, they should be supported to do so, but in

their absence, investing in delivery models that work in fragile settings could play a significant role in filling these financing gaps. The EU should:

- **Develop a toolbox of more ambitious and scaled-up partnerships designed to be responsive to the challenges encountered in fragile and conflict settings, spanning from advisory support to direct delivery.**

In fragile and conflict settings, it is usually civil society and NGOs, particularly women-led civil society organisations, that have the strongest relationships with communities in need and are well placed to support in delivery. An expanded range of partnerships would enable the EU, through INTPA in particular, to further broaden its approach to delivery and crowd in a wider range of partners to provide additional capacity and ensure that financing does not cease to flow to the places where it is most needed. Such partnerships can be designed to be responsive to the challenges encountered in conflict settings and span from advisory support to direct delivery. They can have the added benefit of supporting long-term government system change.



12. See: https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/funding-instruments/global-europe-neighbourhood-development-and-international-cooperation-instrument_en



Establish effective and standardised funding mechanisms for NGOs that are adapted to the geographic programmes under the EU's Global Europe initiative,

recognise the diversity of civil society actors, and involve CSOs/NGOs/non-sovereign actors more systematically in new initiatives such as the Team Europe approach and Global Gateway. While it is encouraging that the Global Europe programme includes the specific commitment to "support civil society organisations", now is the time to take forward concrete steps to put this into practice.

- **Exert EU influence to drive reform in the wider humanitarian system**, encouraging Multilateral Development Banks, starting with the World Bank, to define clear ways of working with civil society and NGOs to develop delivery systems that are focused on the reality of fragile and conflict settings and the lives of people in need.

The EU must take these concrete actions if it is to raise the bar and keep up with the pace of spiralling crises globally. By focusing attention and resources on fragile and conflict-affected states, the EU can advance the SDGs in the lead-up to 2030.

PHOTO P8 Kamal, an IRC client who has lived in the Doro Refugee Camp in South Sudan for 11 years since fleeing internal conflict in Sudan.

PHOTO P9 Severe drought and conflict in Somalia forced Halima, mother of five, to flee to a camp for internally displaced persons in 2019.

ACTION AREA 2

HARNESS HUMANITARIAN ACTION FOR LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT IMPACT



NO. 2 Checklist for transformative EU action

- ✓ Establish a new jointly owned INTPA-ECHO-NEAR Resilience Fund
- ✓ Improve and scale up ECHO's Programmatic Partnership model
- ✓ Meet the agreed 30% increase in multi-year funding
- ✓ Maintain DG INTPA, ECHO and NEAR as separate entities

Humanitarian crises across the globe are not just increasingly concentrated in a small number of states, they are also becoming more protracted. In light of this, it is vital that EU funding is able to both respond to people's immediate needs, and set them up to thrive in the longer-term.

There is growing recognition that the bifurcation of humanitarian and development finance is unhelpful in addressing contexts of protracted crises. When the right conditions are in place, humanitarian action can be harnessed to achieve long-term development impacts, paving the way for communities and households to build their resilience, meet basic needs, and thrive without reliance on external assistance. The EU's funding structures need to mirror this logic if the EU is to keep up with increasingly protracted crises, ensuring no one is left behind.

The 2019-2024 Commission inherited important EU commitments to better coordinate humanitarian and development actions with a view to addressing the root causes of vulnerability, fragility and conflict while simultaneously meeting humanitarian needs and strengthening resilience.¹³ The roll out of the Team Europe approach since 2019 has been promising in fostering better coordination between the EU and its member states, but collaboration between EU development and humanitarian action remains far too siloed. Financing that drives collaboration and plays to the complementary strengths of development and humanitarian actors engaged in building the long-term resilience of communities remains gravely lacking. There are three immediate commitments the next Commission should take to address this:

Establish a new Resilience Fund jointly owned by INTPA, NEAR and ECHO, to meet basic needs and drive resilience in fragile and conflict-affected states.

An ambitious, shared financing mechanism would leverage both ECHO's expertise in delivering in fragile contexts, and INTPA and NEAR's strengths in catalysing longer-term sustainable development outcomes.

- **Ensure that this mechanism becomes a vehicle to support locally-led NGOs and build expanded partnerships for delivery and long-term impact.** This would drive greater reach, scale and impact of programmes in conflict-affected states and support the continuation of essential service delivery in different sectors, while building the capacity of governments to assume responsibility for service delivery in the long-run. **See Box A.**

13. In its May 2017 Conclusions, the European Council called on the Commission and Member States to address this disconnect by piloting a new approach in six countries to coordinate humanitarian and development actions.



Funding must be flexible to allow for the complexities of access to populations in need and the ever-changing context.

Eatizaz Yousif

IRC Sudan Country Director



Improve and scale up ECHO's Programmatic Partnerships model, which provides strategic, multi-year funding to partners, to deliver more effectively.

The establishment of the Programmatic Partnership under the 2019-2024 Commission is a very welcome step towards an alternative to the standard, annual funding model that is better adapted to the realities of protracted crises. The flexible and multi-year approach frees up partners to design and adapt programmes which enable emergency support to lay the foundations for longer-term development outcomes.

- **Seize opportunities that have been missed through the lack of a multi-country**

approach. Less than 10% of ECHO's funding is delivered through Programmatic Partnerships, fewer than 2% of contracts are truly multi-year, and less than half are signed with civil society organisations. The EU should increase these percentages significantly, in order to fully reap the benefits this vehicle offers, and ensure Programmatic Partnership contracts prioritise large scale, multi-country initiatives that have the potential for meaningful long-term impact. Multi-country approaches can greatly contribute to improved efficiency and help countries share lessons across borders, and - where relevant - allow for an issue to be effectively tackled on a regional basis. Multi-country approaches can also be particularly important where countries are small or geographically isolated.

Meet the 30% increase of multi-year funding agreed in ECHO's Quality Funding Caucus¹⁴ which is designed to unlock more and better funding in the humanitarian system, and hold UN partners accountable for delivering on their own commitments.

The commitments made by ECHO in the Quality Funding Caucus are important but just a first step.

- **Allocate multi-year funding as ECHO's default option and demand that UN partners also cascade funding in multi-year tranches, as agreed.** This is a key area of opportunity for the new Commission to make the most effective and efficient use of scarce resources to meet client needs.

Maintain INTPA, ECHO and NEAR as separate entities.

Whilst enhancing collaboration and coherence in external action is essential, the development and humanitarian wings of the house must remain separate and not merged with other DGs. In ECHO, the EU has set a gold standard in humanitarian action. Its independence, rooted in humanitarian principles, is a fundamental pre-requisite for the EU to continue to drive global humanitarian leadership. On its end, INTPA plays a critical role in contributing to sustainable development and eradicating poverty and must remain separate.

In sum, the EU must seize every opportunity to not only respond to people's immediate needs, but to set them up to thrive in the longer term. By transcending the traditional division between humanitarian and development finance, the EU can lead the way on harnessing the potential humanitarian action offers for long-term development impact, charting a course for communities and households to build their resilience and to eventually thrive without external assistance.

BOX A

GFFO / BMZ fund

In 2019, the German Government launched a special fund entitled the 'Nexus Chapeau Approach for Humanitarian Aid and transitional Development assistance', jointly managed by the Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The approach provides parallel funding from both ministries to support connections between humanitarian, development and peace actions with the aim of strengthening collaboration, coherence and complementarity. This approach is well adapted to the realities of protracted crises, and supports the design of projects that meet people's immediate needs while laying the foundation for long-term development outcomes. It also shows great promise as a means of ensuring that affected communities are engaged and have ownership in planning and implementation.

PHOTO P12 Watering taps built through the IRC's EU-funded WASH programme in Ethiopia help numerous internally displaced families daily.

14. DG ECHO co-launched the Quality Funding Caucus in 2022 in collaboration with the IRC. The discussion that followed resulted in a set of new commitments to allow for more predictable, flexible and longer-term, multi-year funding. Notably, all signatories committed to increase their amount of multi-year funding by 30%. See: https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/grand-bargain_en

ACTION AREA 3

SAVE LIVES IMPACTED BY THE CLIMATE AND FOOD SECURITY CRISES BY INVESTING IN SOLUTIONS THAT WORK



NO. 3

Checklist for transformative EU action



Set a target for adaptation financing to reach conflict-affected and climate-vulnerable countries



Ensure that a minimum 5% of ECHO's budget is spent on anticipatory action



Champion the use of Simplified Protocols as the default treatment for acute malnutrition

If the EU is to effectively tackle humanitarian crises, climate action and malnutrition must remain firmly at the top of its agenda, and it must opt for solutions that are proven to work.

Firstly, to protect people in fragile and conflict settings from the most devastating impacts of the climate crisis, it must scale up innovative climate adaptation and resilience solutions in fragile and conflict settings. According to the IRC's analysis, 16 priority countries are currently at the epicentre of this crisis. These countries are responsible for just 2.7% of global greenhouse emissions annually, but account for 10% of the global population, 44% of people affected by natural disasters over the last three years, 43% of those living in extreme poverty, and 60% in humanitarian need. See Figure 1.

FIGURE 1
16 countries at the epicentre of crisis



Secondly, it is essential to recognise that while combatting the effects of the climate crisis and overhauling the global financing architecture are vital steps towards reducing food insecurity in the medium term, it comes too late for the almost 350 million people across 79 countries already facing acute food insecurity. This figure has almost doubled since before the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, with the consequences of inward looking Western economic policies also playing a role.¹⁵ Four countries – Burkina Faso, Mali, South Sudan and Sudan – were identified by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in their outlook for November 2023 - April 2024 as being most immediately at risk of famine with populations facing catastrophic levels of hunger and widespread acute malnutrition.¹⁶ In addition, the Occupied Palestinian Territories (oPt) was added to the list of countries and territories of highest concern due to the Gaza conflict, which has left the entire population facing food insecurity and 576,000 people now estimated to be experiencing catastrophic levels of hunger (IPC 5).¹⁷



15. Rather than cooperate to stabilise food costs globally, richer countries have enacted inward-looking monetary policies, ignoring the consequences these have for countries in crises. While raising the interest rates in rich countries helps alleviate the pressures of inflation, it depreciates weaker currencies and pushes inflation rates even higher for countries that are already experiencing currency fluctuations.
16. Hunger Hotspots: FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity, November 2023 to April 2024 outlook. See: <https://www.wfp.org/publications/hunger-hotspots-fao-wfp-early-warnings-acute-food-insecurity-november-2023-april-2024>
17. IPC 5 is the most severe phase of acute food insecurity that is marked by starvation and critical levels of acute malnutrition.

In light of this, the EU can take decisive action to save lives on the frontlines in the following ways:

Set a target for the amount of adaptation financing to reach conflict-affected and climate-vulnerable countries.

While the EU has taken some positive steps in this regard – including setting an ambitious spending target for climate mitigation and adaptation in EU development policy, and the allocation of over 50% of EU and Member State climate financing to adaptation in 2022 - it should go further to ensure this adaptation funding reaches the most impacted communities. In 2021, only about 13% of the EU's adaptation financing to developing countries was committed to the 16 most climate-vulnerable and conflict-affected countries.¹⁸ The EU should:

- **Allocate direct funding to the 16 most conflict and climate affected countries,** to reach those in most need yet most neglected by climate finance first. The IRC estimates that conflict- and climate-affected states' adaptation financing needs currently represent about 25% of all developing countries' needs, and this same percentage should thus be the benchmark for determining funding allocations.¹⁹



18. IRC calculation based on OECD DAC's 2021 data on climate-related development finance – recipient perspective. See: <https://www.oecd.org/development/climate-change.htm>
19. IRC calculation based on annual adaptation finance needs expressed in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) from developing countries.

“

Droughts are not new to me but to my experience, this is the worst I have ever seen.

Hawo Hashi Mohamud

80 year-old farmer in Somalia



Invest in anticipatory action.

Experience from **IRC programming**²⁰ shows that anticipatory action can reduce losses and damages sustained by communities at the forefront of the climate crisis. This can be addressed by the following:

- **ECHO should follow the German Federal Foreign Office's lead by ensuring a minimum 5% of its budget is spent on anticipatory action**, with a strategy for further expansion by 2030, in order to scale such programmes in line with the ECHO 2021 Communication on EU Humanitarian Aid, which proposed a new strategic vision to strengthen the EU's humanitarian impact globally. In 2022, around 2% of ECHO's overall budget was spent on anticipatory action. With a roadmap to increasing investment in anticipatory action in place, 5% would be a more than achievable target.

- **Give priority to climate-vulnerable, conflict-affected states**, where needs are greatest, when scaling up anticipatory action programmes.

Invest in life-saving solutions that tackle acute malnutrition through Simplified Protocols.

Acute malnutrition causes two million preventable deaths every year. And yet we have proven and effective, simplified approaches to treating acutely malnourished children at the community level, which allows over 90% of children to recover in a matter of weeks. Tragically, four in every five children who need this treatment, do not receive it. Reaching these children is a political and humanitarian imperative which the next Commission must commit to deliver.

20. See: <https://www.rescue.org/report/acting-disaster-strikes-impacts-anticipatory-cash-transfers-climate-resilience-northeast>

We urge the EU and its member states to lead this charge through a new Team Europe initiative focused around three key areas of action:

- **ECHO and INTPA should champion the use of Simplified Protocols as the default treatment for acute malnutrition.**

Specifically, there should be one food product and one point of service to treat Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM). Evidence shows this approach is equally effective and can reach far more children, thus allowing the same level of scarce resources to drive significantly more impact. See Box B.

- **Set global targets with teeth.** ECHO and INTPA should actively engage in the 2025 Nutrition4Growth summit, and encourage Member States to seize this moment to set ambitious targets with the ultimate aim of cost-effectively treating all children with SAM and MAM, including regular reporting on progress towards those targets.

- **Engage fast-mover countries.** These goals should be presented in partnership with fast-mover countries that have a high-level prevalence of acute malnutrition, but show leader level commitment to closing the treatment gap. As a first step, the EU and its member states should engage these countries to develop concrete action plans to scale prevention and treatment to meet targets. Ultimately, every country with significant numbers of acutely malnourished children should have a locally owned, costed operational plan to scale treatment to reach all children with SAM and MAM.

There is no excuse for inaction. In the medium term, the preventative actions set out above can help protect people in fragile and conflict settings from the most devastating impacts of the climate crisis. More immediately, a better EU response to food crises that scales up proven treatment solutions could avoid millions of preventable deaths.

BOX B

A simplified, combined protocol

The IRC has developed and proven an efficient, simplified approach to treating acutely malnourished children at the community level. The simplified, combined protocol collectively treats children on the continuum of malnourishment (whether moderately or severely) in the same programme and location, instead of dividing into two programmes based on severity. It moreover allows for the treatment to be delivered by community health workers rather than requiring delivery by formal health professionals in formal settings.

The protocol uses a simple, single diagnostic criterion, instead of complex measurements. Additionally, the protocol utilises one treatment product, instead of two different products for moderate and severe malnutrition that require different supply chains. Our approach uses ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) which allows over 90% of children to recover in a matter of weeks.

PHOTO P16 In Ethiopia, IRC health and nutrition officer Abdurahman Gidi determines the severity of malnourishment experienced by three year-old Fidiya.

PHOTO P17 Lack of rain forces Makito to walk 3km twice daily to fetch water for her family at a camp for internally displaced persons in Ethiopia.

PHOTO P18 Fleeing conflict in Ethiopia, father of ten Gedeno was able to send his children to school thanks to cash assistance from the IRC.

ACTION AREA 4

DEPLOY INNOVATIVE

APPROACHES TO UNLOCK

NEW SOURCES OF FINANCE



NO. 4

Checklist for transformative EU action

- ✓ **Strengthen the EU's role in development finance and Member States' roles as shareholders to the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs)**
- ✓ **Review the geographical allocation of concessional and non-concessional resources to free up funding to meet the needs of FCAS**
- ✓ **Advance innovations in sovereign debt restructuring**
- ✓ **Increase commitments to the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA)**

If the EU truly hopes to effectively respond to the soaring scale of humanitarian need – in the coming five years and beyond – it should take steps to unlock new, innovative and much-needed sources of finance. At present, humanitarian priorities are underfunded by nearly EUR 37.5 billion every year, yet the amount of financial assets under management in global capital markets is estimated to be USD 100 trillion (approximately EUR 92 trillion).

It has been estimated that the **Sustainable Development Goals** financing in developing countries increased by more than 50% in 2020 reaching USD 3.9 trillion.²¹ Meanwhile, a global increase in public debt is preventing low- and middle-income countries' governments from investing in the social systems and infrastructure needed to build longer-term resilience to crises. Innovative approaches to finance can catalyse some of this capital for humanitarian need. The EU should:

Show collective leadership by speaking with one voice to advance reforms of MDBs and the global financial architecture.

The incoming Commission and President of the European Investment Bank take their posts at a time when Development Finance Institutions (DFI) and Multilateral Development Banks (MDB) reflect on the urgent need for reform.

- As key shareholders of some of the major multilateral development banks, together owning around one-quarter of the World Bank's voting shares, EU Member States should coordinate collective positions to show stronger international leadership on the issue, including on MDB reform.

Review the geographical allocation of concessional and non-concessional resources to free up funding to meet the needs of FCAS.²²

The EU's own toolbox of development finance includes grants, budget support, blending, loans, guarantees, and macro-financial assistance (MFA). But currently, a significant proportion of grant funding is allocated to countries that could potentially benefit instead from concessional loans, freeing up more funds to be deployed in the form of grants to FCAS, where loans are not appropriate. The EU should:

- **Initiate a review of the existing mix of concessional and non-concessional financing instruments.** A rebalance of how and where concessional (**see Box C**) and non-concessional funding is deployed could go a long way towards delivering scale and impact in FCAS

21. See: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/fcbe6ce9-en/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/fcbe6ce9-en>

22. See: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2021/09/16/what-you-need-to-know-about-concessional-finance-for-climate-action>

BOX C

What is concessional finance?

Concessional finance is a form of lending where financial assistance is provided to countries or organisations under more favourable terms than standard market conditions. The concessional aspect typically involves lower interest rates, extended repayment periods, or even partial forgiveness of the loan. This approach aims to strike a balance between providing assistance and minimising the financial burden on the recipient, fostering a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship between lenders and borrowers.

by channelling more development finance in the form of grants and soft loans to these contexts.

- **The EU should prioritise NGO partnerships with MDBs** to drive more sustainable, community-led solutions for fragile, frontline communities.

Take a leading role in advancing innovations in sovereign debt restructuring.

These have potential to unlock funding that is currently allocated towards financing the debt payments of countries that are burdened by the compounding crises of debt and climate change. Debt-distressed countries are currently forced to pay high interest rates on their debts, limiting how much funding they can allocate to their citizens, to adapt for climate impacts, or to provide support for hosted refugee populations. The EU should:

- **Explore humanitarian debt swaps** as part of a broader package of debt relief and restructuring mechanisms. Humanitarian debt swaps help targeted countries restructure their debts at preferable interest rates, with a portion of the savings' proceeds being allocated to communities at the frontline of crisis, for climate action, food security, gender equality, and more.
- **De-risk and mobilise the private sector investments in FCAS through greater use of guarantees.** As a result of the creation of the European Fund for Development plus (EFSD+) under the NDICI Global Europe programme, the EU now has a significant amount of additional finance for guarantees at its disposal.²³ The EU should engage on widening existing guarantee mechanisms to be available to support debt swap mechanisms and further incentivising the use of these guarantees in order to improve access to finance for populations in fragile contexts and the local private sector.

23. A key component of these transactions is a DFI guarantee; modelling the 'blue bond' example from Belize and Ecuador where the US DFC provided a political risk guarantee in case of default. Other DFI guarantees could also be applicable.

EU Member States should leverage ODA to secure additional financing by supporting the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA),

which provides concessional financing in the form of grants and highly concessional loans to Low Income Countries (LICs) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) that have limited access to other sources of funding due to their lack of creditworthiness and high debt. The World Bank has expanded IDA's budget by leveraging donors' commitments to draw resources from the market: for every dollar donors provide, IDA leverages nearly four dollars in concessional finance. IDA's business

model has allowed an increase in the overall amount available to recipient countries. Specifically:

- **EU Member States should increase their commitments for the IDA 21 replenishment that will be concluded at the end of 2024,** in order to ensure that IDA is fit for purpose and can address the escalating needs in conflict-affected LDCs. In the long term, EU contributors should work towards a tripling of IDA financing by 2030, as urged by the Independent Experts Group's recommendation to the G20.

A number of innovative approaches to financing are readily available. The EU should leverage these with the aim of catalysing tangible change in crisis contexts and advancing the 2030 Agenda – before time runs out.

BOX D

Advisory Model Partnerships

The "Advisory Model" is the concept of humanitarians advising investors in order to enhance the social impact of a project, and enable investors to make more inclusive and sustainable decisions around investments in fragile contexts. "Investors" might be Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), Development Finance Institutions (DFIs), or private sector investors – from startups and venture capital to private equity. With the support of ECHO to kickstart the project, the IRC has developed a range of "Advisory Model Partnerships" in fragile contexts, addressing challenges from wastewater and infrastructure to climate financing and economic development.

The Advisory Model has demonstrated the potential of such partnerships to enhance the financial and humanitarian impacts of investments in fragile or conflict-affected settings, reduce the financial risk to investors, and increase the amount of investment capital deployed in pursuit of humanitarian objectives. To ensure that private sector investment not only does not harm, but actively contributes to humanitarian outcomes and ensures funding reaches affected populations, ECHO should embed the learnings from this pilot in future ways of working and develop a robust pipeline of investor-humanitarian partnerships.

ACTION AREA 5

PRIORITISE GENDER EQUALITY IN CRISIS RESPONSE AND SHIFT POWER AND RESOURCES TO WOMEN-LED ORGANISATIONS



NO. 5 Checklist for transformative EU action

- ✓ **Include local women-led organisations (WLOs) in programme design and decision making**
- ✓ **Ring-fence dedicated funding for a Local Feminist Fund for WLOs**
- ✓ **Reform the funding architecture and partnership model to make funding accessible to WLOs**
- ✓ **Leverage the Gender Action Plan (GAP) III to tackle the global rollback on women's rights**

The escalating humanitarian crises we see today impact women and girls differently and disproportionately. In addition, the world has witnessed a global rollback on women's and girls' rights over the past few years.²⁴

This calls for significantly ramped up efforts to address gender equality in crises, and the EU is well placed to continue its strong global leadership in this regard.²⁵ Failing to effectively redress gender inequality has a knock-on effect on the humanitarian response overall, and efforts will continue to falter without a feminist approach which places strong, funded partnerships with women-led organisations (WLOs) front and centre.

These organisations are a critical driving force in providing effective response services to women and girls impacted by conflict and displacement, and are strong partners in identifying needs, building trust, and accessing hard-to-reach and diverse populations. Women's leadership brings greater awareness of, and responsiveness to, women's gender-based needs in humanitarian emergencies. It contributes to better disaster preparedness and risk reduction, and has the potential to advance conflict resolution in communities. This critical expertise is currently largely missing from humanitarian efforts, with feminist civil society remaining dramatically underfunded.

BOX E

Underfunding of female-led civil society

- In 2021, women's rights organisations received only **0.13%** of Official Development Assistance (ODA).
- Key sectors, such as gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response, received just **20%** of the funding requested in 2022, dropping further to **18.5%** in 2023, while overall appeals were on average **58%** funded.
- **89%** of WLOs report that their organisation is at risk of closure due to a lack of funding.²⁶
- WLOs primarily rely on ad-hoc project support, rather than long-term or multi-year funding.²⁷

24. Birchall, J. (2020). Rollback on gender equality and women and girls' rights in international fora since 2016. K4D Helpdesk Report 933. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies

25. EU efforts to-date include looking beyond the emergency response towards longer-term resilience and development. For example, the EU's Gender Action Plan III and the 2023 ECHO Guidance on Localisation provide a strong foundation to ensure the EU's external action - backed by the EU's third largest humanitarian budget - empowers women and girls living in humanitarian emergencies. In addition to the EU's commitment to global initiatives such as the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, the EU partnered with the UN to initiate the [Spotlight Initiative](#), one of the largest international programmes to eliminate violence against women, which also supports WLOs. Furthermore, INTPA has for years had in place a Financial Framework Partnerships Agreement with WECF.

26. The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, 'CSO Annual Survey On Women, Peace And Security And Humanitarian Action.' See: https://wphfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/WPHF-CSO-Survey-on-WPSHA-Aug2022_FINAL.pdf

27. Association for Women's Rights in Development, 'Watering the leaves, starving the roots'. See: <https://www.awid.org/publications/watering-leaves-starving-roots>

Ensure humanitarian interventions are accountable to women and girls by including local women-led organisations (WLOs) in programme design and decision making.

There is a need for women's and girls' leadership in programme design and related strategic decision making within the context of ECHO's, INTPA's and NEAR's efforts. Indeed, women and girls should be considered as agents of change, and the approach, knowledge and access of WLOs can have transformative results in crises and beyond. The following steps should be taken:

- **ECHO, INTPA and NEAR should continue to champion efforts that go beyond merely funding gender-responsive programming.** By supporting more transformative strategies, funders can help drive progress towards gender equality through women's leadership and economic empowerment.
- **ECHO, INTPA and NEAR should fund well-positioned groups such as the GBV Sub-Cluster or the UN Women Gender in Humanitarian Action to conduct mappings** of the WLOs operating in-country, paying particular attention to youth-led WLOs. Such a mapping could inform a more inclusive humanitarian set up in-country and help facilitate partnerships between INGOs and WLOs.
- **ECHO should, in accordance with the ECHO Guidance Note,²⁸ advance positive partnership practice,** for example through a dedicated percentage of the Programmatic Partnership for WLO empowerment. This could involve a dialogue with WLOs on whether an ECHO/INTPA advisory group of WLO leaders would be appropriate, to ensure consistent consultation and meaningful involvement

in programme design and decision making. It could also ensure a direct link between WLOs and decision-making bodies, facilitating their access to information and opportunities.

Ring-fence dedicated funding for a Local Feminist Fund for WLOs and reform the funding architecture and partnership model.

To accelerate progress towards its localisation targets and fulfil its feminist ambitions to fund WLOs, the EU should further diversify funding allocations, include explicitly feminist funds, and commit to measurable targets to increase the amount and quality of funding going to WLOs within humanitarian contexts.

- **ECHO must follow through on its commitment, as outlined in its 2023 guidance note,** to increasing its support to other funding mechanisms that benefit local actors, such as multi-year funding and Programmatic Partnerships, including projects that focus on WLOs and those representing marginalised groups.²⁹
- **DGs should consider the best way of funding local WLOs.** Options include the development of a specific joint ECHO/INTPA fund to support feminist organisations, following the example of the Dutch initiatives "**Leading From the South**" or "**Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action**". Such a specific, ring-fenced fund to support WLOs could be modelled along the lines of the **AFD fund**, and managed through a Team Europe approach. Alternatively, these funds could also be funnelled by ECHO and INTPA to feminist organisations via existing global funds such as the Equality Fund,³⁰ the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund,³¹ regional funds such as the Urgent Action Fund Africa³² or national funds such as the Ukrainian

28. ECHO Guidance Note. See: <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/echo/items/784231/en>

29. ECHO 2023 guidance note, p. 37.

30. See: <https://equalityfund.ca>

31. See: <https://wphfund.org>

32. See: <https://www.uaf-africa.org>

Women's Fund.³³ These are able to offer smaller grants with more flexibility to local partners, and can absorb some of the administrative burden between donor and WLO grantees.

Leverage the EU's Gender Action Plan

(GAP) III as a key instrument to tackle

the global rollback on women's rights.

- **All actors involved in the further development of the Action Plan ought to ensure that it places strong emphasis on the leadership of**

female-led civil society, with clear aims and objectives to realise this vision. This will enable the EU to leverage the GAP as a key instrument within the context of a global backsliding of gender equality, and play a leading role in advancing gender justice through its diplomatic and humanitarian work around the world.

While the EU has long provided commendable leadership on prioritising and advancing gender equality within humanitarian action and development settings, more can and must be done to translate commitments into impact at the operational level, and turn a page on the detrimental underfunding of feminist civil society once and for all.



Women's leadership contributes to better disaster preparedness and risk reduction, more efficient and effective humanitarian response, and inclusive and sustainable peace building and conflict resolution in communities. This [is not meant] to essentialise women's leadership, but to recognise that women and women's organisations may have much-needed expertise that is currently missing from humanitarian efforts.

Leader of one of IRC's partner organisations



PHOTO P27 Members of an IRC-supported, women-led community organisation in DRC working on the crops they sell for income.

33. See: <https://uwf.org.ua/en>

ACTION AREA 6

PROTECT THE HUMANITARIAN AND CIVILIAN SPACE BY CONSISTENTLY CALLING OUT VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW (IHL) AND CHALLENGING IMPUNITY



NO. 6

Checklist for transformative EU action

- ✓ **Put accountability for IHL violations at the heart of EU humanitarian diplomacy efforts**
- ✓ **Engage with states and non-state actors to protect and promote humanitarian access**
- ✓ **Invest in efforts to improve data collection on humanitarian access to support collective EU action**
- ✓ **Support the France-Mexico declaration to suspend the use of the UN Security Council veto in the case of mass atrocities**
- ✓ **Provide national and international NGOs with financial support and training so they can negotiate access on their own terms**

Increased and better funding for humanitarian aid as a stepping stone to development is not in itself sufficient to address today's compounding crises. The EU must also raise the bar in its efforts to protect the humanitarian and civilian space as a precursor for reaching populations in need.

With conflict remaining the primary driver of humanitarian need in far too many places, (see IRC's **Emergency Watchlist 2024**),³⁴ wars are increasingly fought with disregard for international law— with civilians bearing the brunt. While International Humanitarian Law (IHL) obliges warring parties to take steps to mitigate the impacts of war on civilians, we have instead entered an Age of Impunity, with devastating impacts on the communities IRC serves around the world.

Moreover, parties to conflicts are increasingly weaponising critical aid, blocking it from reaching certain populations. Nearly 40 countries are currently experiencing high constraints on humanitarian access. In order to tackle IHL violations, the world does not need new rules or laws, but a re-invigorated commitment to implement existing ones. If it hopes to reduce the impacts of conflict on civilians, the EU should redouble its efforts through political dialogue and the promotion of IHL in the following ways:

Put accountability for IHL violations, including but not limited to access restrictions, at the heart of EU humanitarian diplomacy efforts, engaging with states and non-state actors to protect and promote humanitarian access.

The EU should utilise its strong and independent voice to press for access and respect for IHL more broadly. This includes engaging with states and, where possible, working on the ground with non-state actors. The EU has previously provided leadership on this front,³⁵ and is well-positioned to place access at the heart of its diplomacy efforts once again by doing the following:

- **Invest in efforts to improve data collection on humanitarian access to support collective EU action**, recording cases where access is denied. This work should provide the evidence needed for coordinated private EU and bilateral Member State diplomacy and, where appropriate, public condemnation of access denial.
- **Ensure continued quiet diplomacy.** ECHO's presence often adds great value to discussions at field level – and for many IRC teams, its ongoing quiet diplomacy has been central to successful efforts to overcome access barriers - but presence does not always translate into political influence. Establishing dedicated deployable EU access expertise at senior level that could support diplomatic engagement when access is denied would not only build capacity, but also

34. See: <https://www.rescue.org/eu/emergency-watchlist-2024>

35. This includes for instance efforts in Senior Officials Meeting on Yemen; the prioritisation of humanitarian access in engagement with the de-facto authorities in Afghanistan; consistent engagement with Libyan and Nigerian authorities to rollback restrictive visa policies for staff; and support to push back on the imposition of armed escorts in Niger.



People in fragile or conflict-affected states cannot properly gain humanitarian relief if access to care cannot be guaranteed. The safety of humanitarian aid workers is the essential foundation for relief services that save lives and, in turn, enables long-term recovery and long-term development.

Ciarán Donnelly

IRC's Senior Vice President, Crisis Response, Recovery, and Development



demonstrate the importance the EU places on addressing this trend.

- **Enhance efforts to elevate the importance of IHL in EU partnerships.** While promoting IHL is a core objective of the EU's external action, more can be done to elevate its importance in EU partnerships.³⁶ Building commitments to protect humanitarian space into partnerships could play a positive role in ensuring aid reaches those that need it most.
- **The EEAS should declare humanitarian access to be a priority issue and consistently reiterate this in key EU humanitarian diplomacy efforts.** In particular, the EU should champion the role of regional organisations. Commitments in the EU/AU Joint Vision for 2030 to promote compliance with International Humanitarian Law are an important

starting point. The EU should now invest further in this partnership to support regional organisations to assume their responsibilities towards the promotion and protection of access.

- **The EU should utilise its independent voice to support the exploration of initiatives for improved access.** In a multipolar world, the diplomatic response to access denial cannot be limited to the UN. Existing reporting mechanisms, including the Protection of Civilians and Children and Armed Conflict reports, fail to shed adequate light on the trends and impact of access denial. In response to this reality, the EU should utilise its voice to support initiatives such as a non-profit Independent Access Organization (IAO) proposed by the IRC, to advance calls for improved access.³⁷

36. Efforts to integrate modules on IHL into training offered to partner forces in Mali, CAR and Somalia are welcome, but must be conducted with the highest degree of conflict sensitivity to ensure interventions contribute to a reduction in violence.

37. Such an independent body could systematically report on barriers imposed globally, bring new status and force to exposing the strangulation and weaponisation of humanitarian aid, and take steps towards depoliticising humanitarian access.

Support the France-Mexico declaration to suspend the use of the UN Security Council veto in the case of mass atrocities.

The UN Security Council (UNSC) is often left paralysed to act due to political divisions. Countries and territories regularly in the Top 20 of the IRC's Emergency Watchlist (such as oPt, Afghanistan, Syria and Yemen) are frequently discussed by the Security Council, but action to support civilian protection or monitoring of atrocities remains severely limited. The five permanent Security Council members' use, or threat, of the veto too often leave war crimes unpunished, and mass atrocities unaddressed. To this end:

- **EU leaders should support the France-Mexico declaration to suspend the use of the veto in the case of mass atrocities.**

This proposal is a tool for Security Council reform with significant buy-in from UN member states: at least **104** UN member states and two UN observer missions have signed the declaration, including Brazil, France, Germany, Mexico, New Zealand, Spain, Türkiye, and Ukraine.

- **Support the articulation of what constitutes mass atrocity by an independent panel.** To limit political divisions from further polarising action, the determination of what constitutes a mass atrocity (and thus a suspension of the veto) should be made through an independent and neutral panel, as established by the UN General Assembly. The veto suspension proposal could drive a renewal

in Security Council legitimacy at a time when the role of the Permanent 5 is regularly questioned.

Support national and international NGOs with financial support and training so they can negotiate access on their own terms.

This can be achieved by taking the following steps:

- **The EU and its Member States should provide financial support and training** to civil society groups, and NGO coordination bodies, to analyse access barriers, and engage in access negotiations. This will not only strengthen the overall capacity of the humanitarian sector, but also ensure NGOs have the expertise to complement negotiations led by the UN. Practically, this could be achieved by establishing an NGO co-lead role on access work alongside OCHA at country level.
- **The EU and its Member States should simultaneously commit to consulting and, where appropriate, actively engaging with a diverse cross-section of civil society voices in access diplomacy.** As we strive for greater local leadership of responses in contexts like Ukraine, these steps will prove critical.

There are thus several concrete actions which the EU can take over the coming five years, to ensure conditions are in place for life-saving aid to be delivered to the people who need it most.

ACTION AREA 7

ENSURE A SAFE, ORDERLY AND HUMANE APPROACH TO ASYLUM AND MIGRATION



NO. 7

Checklist for transformative EU action

- ✓ **Establish and operationalise the Union Resettlement Framework**
- ✓ **Put Europe's Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion into practice**
- ✓ **Ensure close oversight of the implementation of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum to ensure fundamental rights are upheld throughout**
- ✓ **Press for substantial, efficient relocation through the Pact's solidarity mechanism**
- ✓ **Monitor any new facilities created for the purpose of screening or border procedures**
- ✓ **Develop durable options for transition out of the Temporary Protection (TP) regime for people displaced from Ukraine**

With humanitarian needs escalating across the world and conflicts becoming increasingly protracted, the number of people forced from their homes has dramatically increased. An effective EU response must include better solutions, closer to home. The myth that restrictive border policies can deter people from seeking asylum needs to be busted, and the chaotic humanitarian crisis at Europe's borders more effectively addressed.

The EU's response to forced displacement from Ukraine demonstrates the capacity to manage large-scale displacement situations in the spirit of solidarity. It demonstrates that Europe can offer safe routes, freedom of movement, and a mechanism for refugees to access protection, legal advice, and other essential services like education, healthcare, and access to labour markets. This must be the norm, not the exception. With humanitarian and protection needs at record highs, the EU must demonstrate leadership by forging a safe, orderly and humane approach to asylum and migration. It can do so by seizing the following opportunities:



Establish a truly Europe-wide pathway to safety through the Union Resettlement Framework and make bold commitments to increase and future-proof refugee resettlement, while upholding the right to seek asylum.

In 2024, UNHCR estimates that 2.4 million people are in need of resettlement globally. Yet, EU states have jointly pledged to welcome just 30,960 refugees via resettlement from 2024-2025 – accounting for less than 1% of all people in need of resettlement, and less than 0.1% of global refugees.

The long-awaited Union Resettlement Framework (URF) could go a long way toward strengthening resettlement in the EU, and increasing its predictability. However, this framework will only be effective if it leads to a tangible increase in the number of people resettled overall. This requires:

- **DG HOME and the EU Asylum Agency to work towards a tangible increase in the number of EU states pledging to resettle**, seeking to bring about increased quotas and funding for existing resettlement programmes, and by improving their overall quality and efficiency.
- **The EU institutions to call out any moves by Member States aimed at introducing more restrictive asylum policies and practices under the guise of increased resettlement numbers.** States must at all times provide full and fair access to asylum in the EU regardless of how people arrive, as required by international and EU law.
- **The EU to enable adequate involvement and consultation of relevant civil society, humanitarian, and refugee-led organisations**, including in the High-Level Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Committee.³⁸ This would guarantee operational and field knowledge in recommendations regarding resettlement numbers and target priority regions, contributing to the URF's efficiency.

BOX F

What is refugee resettlement?

Resettlement is an internationally-agreed framework, enabling the transfer of refugees who have already fled their country and claimed asylum in a second - such as Türkiye, Pakistan or Uganda - to a third country that is more able to support them and meet their needs.

Refugees are identified as in need of resettlement when they have particular needs or vulnerabilities in the country where they have been granted asylum, and cannot return to their country of origin. A large majority of people in need of resettlement are women and girls, survivors of violence, and people with specific protection needs.

Resettlement helps to ease the pressure on the low- and middle-income countries currently hosting 75% of the world's refugees, and also enables receiving countries to welcome people in a humane and efficient way.

38. To advise the Commission on the Resettlement Regulation, a High Level Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Committee will be set up, consisting of representatives of Member States, the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament.

“

Refugees who are approved for resettlement feel like their dream has come true. Getting this chance is a big blessing, a process that can take years.



Flavia

Ugandan refugee resettled to the US

Put the principles at the heart of Europe's Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion into practice.

A European approach to the integration of refugees and asylum seekers is crucial to moving forward as a welcoming, inclusive, economically vibrant, and diverse European society. The EU needs to do more to ensure the principles of the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion are translated into practice across all Member States. This should be coupled with increased funding and capacity building for Member States.

- **The European Commission should encourage Member States to abide by the EU Action Plan on Integration and**

Inclusion and start integration support at the reception stage, based on a National Strategy with clearly defined targets and timelines. The Strategy should include a special focus on women and girls, and be in line with the four pillars on the EU Action plan: inclusive education and training; improving employment opportunities and skills; promoting access to health services; and access to adequate and affordable housing. A keen emphasis should be placed upon building and practising alternatives to detention.

- **The EU, notably through the Commission and EUAA, should support EU Member States in their efforts to establish new reception solutions to address the shortage of accommodation for asylum seekers and refugees. The experience of private citizens**

accommodating people displaced from Ukraine is just one example of a creative solution that could be further explored, building on the existing forms of community sponsorship, but also on buddying/mentorship programmes and welcome circles.

- **The Commission must encourage better investment in open, community-based reception solutions** when reviewing states' national programmes under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), as well as through the resources of the AMIF thematic facility. Higher co-financing rates for specific types of reception, whereby the EU contributes a larger share of financing for projects which favour community-based reception models, could contribute to this achievement.
- **Building equitable partnerships with refugee-led organisations and initiatives** is key to implementing evidence-driven and rights-based approaches to inclusion and integration efforts that put refugees needs, interests and intentions at the centre of policy and decision-making processes. Working with other local organisations that represent and specifically focus on the most vulnerable groups and individuals promotes greater inclusion.

Ensure implementation of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum ('the Pact') does not lead to further rights abuses and precarity for people on the move.

While reforms to the EU's approach to asylum and migration are urgently needed, the IRC is concerned that many of the changes now agreed upon within the Pact risk exacerbating rather than solving existing challenges, such as decreasing pressure on states of first entry, addressing violence at borders, upholding the right to asylum, and creating a Common European Asylum System with clear rules and regulations. Now that the negotiations are finalised, we are looking to EU leaders for guarantees that

its implementation will safeguard rather than further erode fundamental rights and protections for people in search of safety. In particular:

- **Ensure close oversight of the implementation of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum**, by carrying out a one-year review of the Pact, including specific metrics on integration and inclusion, protection (in particular of vulnerable groups including children), access to asylum, pushbacks, and more, to measure its success. Fundamental rights monitoring should, at a minimum, be present throughout administrative procedures foreseen in the Pact; involve relevant independent authorities and non-governmental organisations; and have clear consequences for Member States who fail to cooperate with the mechanism, do not set it up or ignore its findings.
- **Ensure substantial and efficient relocation through the Pact's solidarity mechanism.** Studies have shown that policies aimed at deterring refugees' from seeking asylum are both cruel and ineffective, and serve merely to push vulnerable people into increasingly dangerous routes and strengthen human smuggling networks. For this reason, the Commission should urge Member States to prioritise true solidarity mechanisms, by welcoming people seeking asylum to countries beyond those of their first arrival, and by offering support and capacity-strengthening for relocation via the EU Asylum Agency.
- **Establish a fundamental rights monitoring mechanism to oversee any new centres created for the purpose of screening or border procedures** in order to prevent the further proliferation of detention-like conditions and restrictions on free movement, including entry and exit of these facilities. It is also vital that residents have access to essential services and affordable transport to nearby urban areas, and swift transfer to community-based accommodation once initial screening has been completed.

Develop durable options for transition out of the Temporary Protection (TP) regime.

While the extension of the Temporary Protection regime is welcome, the IRC calls for additional measures. In particular, the European Commission should:

- **Extend the current TP regime for an additional year.** Whilst this would not provide a longer-term solution, it would allow for more predictability for displaced persons and time for the policymakers to develop durable options.
- **Explore and define options to ensure that current TP beneficiaries can transition**

into more durable status, with continued access to rights, protection, and essential services, as well as inclusion and integration support, and safeguards against forced returns. These options must offer displaced people clear pathways towards a long-term status, taking into consideration the specific needs of the most vulnerable individuals.

In sum, if the EU hopes to address the global crises with humanity, it needs to start by welcoming people with dignity and respect on its own territory. Safe, orderly and humane migration can and must be the new reality, and the time has come for strong and humane leadership in this regard.



PHOTO p33 Afghan brothers Mehdi and Ali reunite in Frankfurt, Germany after being apart for ten years.

PHOTO p35 After taking part in the IRC's Women Rise programme, Sagal, 23 from Somalia, founded an organisation to empower women and girls in her community.

PHOTO p37 Iryna fled the invasion of Ukraine with her baby, arriving in Poland in March 2022.

CONCLUSION

NOT ONLY NECESSARY, BUT PERFECTLY POSSIBLE



In 2024, the stakes have never been higher – neither for people caught in crisis globally, nor for the European Union as it seeks solutions to these challenges.

If the EU wants to achieve its objective of securing peace and prosperity for its citizens, be a humanitarian heavyweight, and reach its potential as a force for good in the world, it urgently needs to overhaul its approach to these complex, multiple and intersecting crises.

In the coming five years, it is imperative that the EU and its Member States adopt new, innovative approaches. This report has highlighted that solutions already exist, and are - in many cases - ready and waiting to be rolled out.

The IRC's teams on the ground, and the communities we work to serve, show us that it's not only necessary - but perfectly possible - to do more and do better. Now the EU needs to put this blueprint into practice. It's time to raise the bar.



PHOTO P38 Abuk availed of the IRC's nutrition programming in South Sudan to treat her young daughter's malnutrition after disastrous flooding.

PHOTO P39 Makito, a farmer and mother in the Baide Balaba IDP camp in Ethiopia, supports her family with cash assistance from the IRC.



INTERNATIONAL
RESCUE
COMMITTEE

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) helps people whose lives have been shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and rebuild.

Founded in 1933 at the call of Albert Einstein, we now work in over 50 crisis-affected countries as well as communities throughout Europe and the Americas.

Ingenuity, fortitude and optimism remain at the heart of who we are. We deliver lasting impact by providing healthcare, helping children learn, and empowering individuals and communities to become self-reliant, always with a focus on the unique needs of women and girls.