



A water tank built by Oxfam for people displaced as a result of drought caused by El Niño, Hariso, Ethiopia, 2015. Photo: Abiy Getahun/Oxfam

# COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

## What world leaders must promise at the World Humanitarian Summit

The World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016 will take place in a world in which warring parties kill civilians without consequence, and in which El Niño highlights yet again the rising tide of disasters affected by climate change. The Summit also takes place in the shadow of Syria's conflict and the greatest displacement crisis of our age, as well as in the context of the EU–Turkey agreement which may trade human beings for political concessions, and in the midst of a US Presidential campaign engulfed in a discourse of bigotry towards the world's most vulnerable people.

These are the political failures that drive the world's ever-expanding humanitarian crises. That is why the fundamental challenge is to world leaders who fail to resolve conflicts, permit warring parties to ignore International Humanitarian Law, and do everything possible to keep the world's refugees and displaced people from their doors.

But Oxfam, other NGOs and UN agencies must change too in the face of escalating humanitarian demands – including by giving a greater role and more funding directly to local actors.

This briefing sets out Oxfam's challenge to world leaders, alongside Oxfam's own commitments to change.

## FOREWORD



At Oxfam, the humanitarian spirit of our founders in 1942 endures. In occupied Greece during the Second World War, people were dying of starvation in their thousands. The Allied powers blockaded the country, preventing food from being let in. Oxfam was formed. We campaigned. We spoke truth to power. We agitated. We put human lives first. Eventually – under considerable domestic pressure and with support from people in Canada and the US – the British government

let some food through.

Seventy-four years on, in a world of immense and heightening injustice, inequalities and unfathomable suffering, that spirit is needed as much as ever. The failure to eradicate the 'scourge of war', as promised in the UN Charter, is the world's greatest disappointment. International political leaders seem powerful enough to initiate and prolong conflicts, but too often powerless to stop them. The human cost of that is poverty, deprivation and displacement, exacerbated by the impact of climate change – at Oxfam we see this impact every day.

This World Humanitarian Summit is both important and timely. It must build on the momentum of the Sustainable Development Goals agreed in Agenda 2030, and the Paris Agreement on climate change. Our humanitarian system has a huge number of stakeholders, and the World Humanitarian Summit has reflected this by ensuring a multi-stakeholder process – a rare opportunity for world leaders and affected people to sit together to create a world where no one is left behind. This must be maintained at the Summit itself, with local civil society in particular ensured a space to speak out on behalf of affected people. And the leaders at the Summit must be concrete and decisive in their commitments, so that the current UN Secretary-General can pass the baton from Istanbul to the next Secretary-General, who must take on the challenge of making real change to help civilians everywhere.

Certainly, we must design a better global humanitarian system, and local actors – like the thousands of local civil society bodies we are honoured to call our partners – must sit at the centre of that design. At Oxfam we are proud to have significantly changed our humanitarian design to match this. We are committed to increase the amount of our humanitarian funding that goes to local actors to 30 percent by May 2018. The global average is just 0.2 percent.

Fundamentally, however, we need to reverse the shocking erosion of respect for International Humanitarian Law and hold governments and other parties responsible for preventing conflict. The failure to protect civilians and bring peace is driving so much of the suffering that refugees, displaced people and migrants face around the world. This makes it even more important to counter a rising tide of demagoguery towards the most vulnerable.

We need more than an inspirational message from Istanbul. People need strong commitments enshrined by world leaders. Istanbul must mark a turning point in building a more humane, humanitarian world.

**Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of Oxfam International**

# 1 LEFT BEHIND AND LET DOWN



Families who fled from the conflict in Syria in an informal settlement in Lebanon, 2016. Photo: Oxfam.

In September 2015, world leaders committed to ‘leave no-one behind’ in their pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals. But no-one is left behind more than the 125 million people affected by conflicts and disasters. They are left behind and let down by their national leaders because of the failure to resolve conflicts, to prevent or build resilience to disasters, to tackle gender equality, and to ensure every person’s access to the assistance and protection they are entitled to receive.

They are let down too by the fractured ‘international community’ that seems to use humanitarian aid to hide its failure to bring peace, reverse the rising tide of climate-related disasters, or come up with anywhere near a fair and legal settlement to share the responsibility for hosting the world’s refugees and displaced people. Even the most generous donors to countries such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, publicize and promote their aid, while at the same time blocking refugees’ safe and legal routes to seek safety. Only three countries – Canada, Germany and Norway – have met their ‘fair share’ towards Syria’s crisis in terms of both aid and resettling Syrian refugees.<sup>2</sup>

But the greatest humanitarian challenge in 2016 is that warring parties around the world have, in effect, impunity to kill civilians without consequence; to violate International Humanitarian Law (IHL), including the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Protocols, without substantial damage to their international contacts, their arms deals and their alliances. While the parties to conflict are responsible for all the violations they commit, this is made possible because governments that are *not* directly involved in the world’s conflicts put their deals and alliances ahead of their much-repeated, but in truth qualified, respect for the international law that already exists.

That this is true in 2016 is an indictment of the international community, but particularly of the permanent members of UN Security Council, charged with

## VITAL AID AND POLITICAL FAILURE

World leaders pledged more than \$11bn for Syria and its neighbours in February 2016. Meanwhile attacks on civilian areas continued in Aleppo, forcing 35,000 people to flee in one week.<sup>1</sup>



upholding international peace and security, and of the states which support warring sides in Syria, Yemen and beyond as part of their regional rivalries.

The World Humanitarian Summit cannot change all that. But it is a rare chance for world leaders to do two vital things.

## POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY

The first is to say, plainly and clearly, that they will not allow the systematic violation of International Humanitarian Law – and the failure to uphold the spirit of International Refugee Law and International Human Rights Law – to become the ‘new normal’.

They must wholeheartedly commit to tackle the toll of civilian death and displacement as parties to conflict regularly violate International Humanitarian Law, and governments around the world, in effect, permit them to do so. They must *stop* giving their support to parties that are likely to commit violations of IHL. They must work tirelessly to bring peace through political processes that uphold the rights of women and men affected by conflict, and that provide opportunities for all – including civil society, women and women’s organizations – to genuinely participate in those processes. And they must *start* taking a fair share of the responsibility for the world’s most vulnerable people, which, for almost all wealthy countries, means welcoming far more refugees than they have had the courage to do up till now. They must provide far greater international support to people on the move and to host countries, while giving refugees a future with dignity, livelihoods and education.

## MOMENTUM FOR REFORM

The second is to give the essential political momentum to the reforms that are still needed among humanitarian donors and agencies – UN and NGO – to improve and increase resources for humanitarian action, and to dramatically increase support for the frontline and national responders, including women and women’s organizations, who are closest to the crisis.

Humanitarian action must *always* be as effective as it possibly can – meeting needs immediately and building the capacity to do so even better in the future. That means being as local as possible and as global as necessary – in the spirit of ‘subsidiarity’ and complementarity in which local, national, regional and international actors all support the efforts of affected people themselves to cope and recover from crises. This is a vision of a diverse ‘ecosystem’ of different agencies playing to their strengths at every level. It is an ambition that world leaders, not just humanitarian agencies, must get behind.

## A CHALLENGE TO ALL

Humanitarian agencies do not have the fundamental responsibilities that states do to uphold international law. But governments are not the only organizations that let down women, men and children struggling in crises. NGOs can too, not least when they and others fail to respond to new crises as quickly as needed. The UN system can also fail people, not just through the 'silos' of different agencies that divide its humanitarian work, but most fundamentally by failing to protect civilians from atrocities, such as through the mixed performance of UN peacekeeping.

The challenge to world leaders is part of a wider challenge to every actor involved in humanitarian crises, from the UN to Oxfam and the smallest local organization. Every relevant UN agency, NGO or private corporation must demonstrate how it will work as effectively and efficiently as possible to *maximize* its impact for people struggling in crises and *minimize* the costs incurred between the donor and ultimate recipient.

Those UN agencies which simply manage funds, rather than implement programmes, should no longer retain more than a minimum 'management fee'; while NGOs too must take every step to ensure that the highest proportion possible of their income goes towards their humanitarian, development and campaigning work, rather than their fundraising or administrative costs.

Section 3 will set out how Oxfam must continue to change. But the main focus of this briefing is on governments and world leaders. At Istanbul, they must set a course for the decisive steps that they can take at later events to tackle the causes as well as consequences of conflicts and disasters. Section 2 outlines what those commitments should look like.

### SHARING OR SHIRKING RESPONSIBILITY

Most of the world's refugees are not hosted by Europe, North America or Australia. .

Instead, **Lebanon** hosts more refugees compared to its population than any other country, and **Ethiopia**, one of the poorest countries in the world, pays most in relation to the size of its economy, with 469 refugees for every \$ of GDP.<sup>3</sup>

## 2 COMMITMENTS TO CHANGE

Oxfam calls on world leaders to do more than echo the words of the UN Secretary-General in his report and *Agenda for Humanity*<sup>4</sup> on 9 February 2016 ahead of the Summit. But it is vital that world leaders uphold all five of the core responsibilities that the Secretary-General set out in that call. The rest of this section therefore is organized under the headings of those five responsibilities.

*'The Summit must lead to genuine change.'*

Ban Ki-moon, *Agenda for Humanity*, February 2016.

### UPHOLD THE NORMS THAT MUST SAFEGUARD HUMANITY



In 2015, residents of Aden, Yemen, were cut off from food, fuel and medical supplies for months. Photo: Mohammed Taleb/Oxfam

*'The skies of Saada are raining fire every day. Houses are destroyed, farms are burnt, and everyone's dead or they've fled, nothing but death all around us.'*

Noor, a 25-year-old woman, Saada Yemen, 2015<sup>5</sup>

Too many governments and armed groups woefully fail to ensure respect for International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law to protect civilians. That, together with the shortage of effective peace processes, is what causes the scale of human suffering that drives so much of the world's forced displacement and undermines the pursuit of sustainable development. The World Humanitarian Summit's single most important legacy would be a genuine commitment to change this.

### Ensuring respect for International Humanitarian Law

World leaders should commit to end violence against civilians not only by committing to join a global campaign to reverse the erosion of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law as the UN Secretary-General has suggested. All governments claim to support international law, but the truth is that, for many, their support is muted by their political and commercial interests. Signing up to a global campaign will mean nothing unless world leaders commit to:

- **End security or military support, including the transfer of arms, that is likely to facilitate or condone violations of International Humanitarian Law.** Also, while governments must use their diplomatic influence to press all parties to respect IHL, their statements and visits must never suggest support or indifference to violations, or that they rank violations of IHL as less important than their commercial or security interests. Security assistance should be coupled to mechanisms that track civilian casualties and support recipients in complying with IHL. Importantly, security donors must not cite a lack of definitive proof of war crimes to avoid cutting off security assistance when a widespread pattern of civilian harm, combined with other evidence from the field, is highly suggestive of violations. In this commitment, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council must lead from the front. They must also refrain from the use of their veto in cases of mass atrocities, and all Member States should **declare support for the Code of Conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes;**
- **Agree to establish an international, independent fact-finding mechanism in any and all situations of armed conflict where there are significant civilian casualties, as a means to improve IHL and IHRL compliance.** Make public all national investigations into specific allegations of violations of IHL;
- **Ensure that monitoring civilian harm in armed conflicts is a key priority on the agenda of every opening session of the UN General Assembly;**
- **Develop strong international standards that restrict the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effect in populated areas,** given their tendency to cause severe harm to individuals and communities and damage to vital infrastructure. Parties should review and strengthen national policies and practices on the use of explosive weapons and gather and make available relevant data, including through the tracking and recording of civilian casualties;
- **Strictly comply with the Arms Trade Treaty, which can help protect civilians in even the most difficult situations** by placing International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law at the centre of decisions on whether or not to transfer arms.

#### The Arms Trade Treaty

- All States that have not yet done so should become Party to the Treaty, and incorporate it into national legislation, at the earliest possible date.
- States Parties must *robustly* implement the Treaty, giving commercial concerns secondary importance to upholding IHL and IHRL; submit their Treaty-mandated reports on implementation, and annual reports on arms transfers, on deadline and in public, to ensure that peer review between States, and public scrutiny by Parliamentarians and civil society organizations (CSOs) can help improve the implementation of the Treaty.

- **Affirm their commitment to facilitate affected people's timely and safe access to humanitarian assistance and protection,** without any obstacles created by disproportionate military tactics or unreasonable bureaucratic impediments;

- **Parties engaged in military operations should commit to recording, tracking and analyzing civilian casualties** and adapt their conduct accordingly to minimize civilian harm and other collateral damage;
- **Support and demand the centrality of protection in all humanitarian action, including from governments themselves, the UN and NGOs.** This will require developing and implementing comprehensive protection strategies that build on the complementary roles of communities, CSOs, humanitarian agencies, peacekeepers and diplomats as appropriate, and coordinates their work together to improve the safety of civilians. UN Special Representatives of the Secretary-General in each crisis and Humanitarian Country Teams should be held accountable for ensuring this happens;
- **Reaffirm the core humanitarian principles, including that of impartiality which makes no distinction in the protection of rights of those at risk** on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions, and states that humanitarian action should be independent and free from political influence;
- **Conscientiously apply these humanitarian principles at this time of global struggle against violent extremism and terrorism**, so that combating violent extremism or terrorism never influence where or when humanitarian aid is provided, and that people are assisted solely on the basis of need; so that legislation and policies to counter terrorism include humanitarian exemptions to prevent unintended consequences for humanitarian aid; and specifically that when judging which local organizations to support the risk to *the people affected by each crisis* is not neglected, while considering other, including financial, risks;
- **Promote better prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence**, including ensuring that governments and NGOs deliver on their pledges against the 2013 Call to Action on Protection of Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, make concrete commitments to implement its *Road Map*, and fully support the implementation of global guidance such as the IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action.

## GLOBAL LEADERSHIP TO PREVENT AND END CONFLICT

World leaders have a wider range of policies available to them than the important proposals for early and sustained political action included in the Secretary-General's *Agenda for Humanity*. They should also tackle the causes of conflicts including the denial of poverty, inequality, human rights abuses, gender inequality, and climate-related environmental pressures. And within this they should put a strong emphasis on delivering the Women, Peace and Security agenda that the UN reaffirmed in 2015.<sup>6</sup>

The Secretary-General has identified a number of needs, which world leaders should prioritize:

- **Seek solutions to conflicts in ways which not only include the people affected, but as far as possible respond to their leadership – including the meaningful participation of women and women's groups in all peace**

*'The people of South Sudan desperately need an end to this war. South Sudan is spiralling into a free fall. The only way to address it is to end ceasefire violations and ensure a long lasting peace and a start to rebuilding the country.'*

Zlatko Gegic, Oxfam South Sudan



**processes**, supported by advocacy training and adequate technical and financial support;

- **Create political unity to prevent and not just respond to conflicts, including through the UN Security Council holding monthly updates on all situations of concern;**
- **Invest in risk analysis and act early on its findings *before* situations deteriorate**, including through accepting early assistance from bilateral, regional and international partners as needed to prevent suffering;
- **Sustain international engagement in resolving conflicts, including systematically using regional and international contact groups** in fragile and post-conflict settings, to maintain political attention and sustained investment over the long term.

## ‘LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND’



Photo: Sam Tarling/Oxfam

*‘I’ve nearly been shot three times and seen people killed in front of my eyes. I’m willing to face the danger of travelling to Europe to help my children have a life.’*

Ahmad Mohammad, a Syrian refugee father of two, Zarka, Jordan, 2015<sup>7</sup>

In September 2015, world leaders promised to ‘leave no one behind’ as they agreed the Sustainable Development Goals to be met by 2030. But in fact, millions more people are being left behind as the world fails to respond effectively to the rising numbers of refugees, migrants and people displaced by a wide variety of factors.

It is tragic in particular that the World Humanitarian Summit takes place in the shadow of the deal between Turkey and the EU in March 2016 which has undermined the reputations of both parties as humanitarian leaders. The European Commission is the second-largest humanitarian donor in the world. Turkey, if its support for Syrian refugees on its territory is included, is the fourth.<sup>8</sup> But horse-trading the rights of refugees due to the inability to reach a political agreement to manage refugee and migrant flows in a way that upholds and prioritizes the rights of women, men and children has set a dangerous precedent that the rest of the world must reject.

## Sharing the world's responsibility for refugees and displaced people

World leaders should commit to vigorously respect the 1951 Refugee Convention and its Protocol as the *basic minimum* of a decent global response to displacement (including that all states that have not yet signed or ratified the Convention and Protocol should do so immediately).

They should also declare that they will **never undermine international law by bargaining with other governments or regional organizations to take any action in respect to refugees in exchange for money or political concessions**. This must apply throughout the world, including to the European Union, all its members and all countries negotiating accession to it.

Instead world leaders should **share responsibility fairly for addressing large-scale movements of refugees and displaced people** – with wealthy countries contributing far more than most have, and all states fulfilling the 1951 Refugee Convention and its Protocol by offering sanctuary to those fleeing violent conflict and persecution. This new shared responsibility must include commitments to:

- **Ensure that all people forced to flee their homes can reach safety through safe legal avenues**, including by: scaling up the resettlement of refugees worldwide, including but not only from Syria's devastating conflict; extending and simplifying procedures to reunite families separated by displacement; supporting refugees to relocate from one country to another to ensure that countries take a fair share of their responsibility; increasing humanitarian visas; and guiding embassies and consulates in relevant countries to support people applying for asylum;
- **Uphold the right to claim asylum, so that every individual has access to fair and humane procedures to determine their eligibility for international protection**;
- **Protect and promote refugees' rights, including to work, education and all essential services** in countries of asylum, with the effective legal frameworks to ensure this;
- **Give far greater financial and technical support to lower- and middle-income host countries with long-term, predictable funds, to help meet the specific needs of both displaced and host communities** – both of which must be recognized as a vital 'development constituency'. This will require developing and implementing programmes that take a development approach to helping displaced people find livelihoods that benefit them *and* host communities alike; and integrated development planning at all levels, including for delivering essential services;
- **Ensure fair and prompt procedures to determine the status of returning displaced people**, and refrain from returning them to their areas or countries of origin before it is safe to do so.

### OVERLOOKED CRISES

Across Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad, more than 2.8 million people have been displaced as a result of violence related to Boko Haram. Oxfam is one of many agencies responding to what the UN has rightly called 'an overlooked crisis in a neglected region.'<sup>9</sup>

## CHANGE PEOPLE'S LIVES



### FIRST RESPONDERS FAST

After Nepal's April 2015 earthquake damaged or destroyed 90% of the houses in Gorkha district, it was Nepalese mountain guides that got through with shelter and food. And it was with local organizations that Oxfam was able to support more than 100,000 people.<sup>10</sup>

Porters deliver relief supplies on foot because landslides prevented access to remote areas, following the earthquake in Nepal in 2015. Photo: Sam Spickett/Oxfam.

If world leaders are really serious about preventing and responding to crises, they must put political weight and resources behind the drive to embrace local people and organizations – both civil society and, where possible, government – as genuine partners in humanitarian action. They must make it clear that delivering the 'Grand Bargain' on efficiency developed by the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel must ensure that frontline and national responders have as easy access to direct funding as possible.

As a rights-based organization, Oxfam believes that people most affected by crises should be calling the shots. Humanitarian action should shift power, resources and responsibility, where appropriate, from international actors (UN agencies, Oxfam and other international NGOs, Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement) to local actors (national and local governments, Red Cross/Red Crescent local chapters, national and local NGOs, and community-based groups and CSOs, including women's groups).

### Crises driven by natural hazards

This is especially true in countries prone to disasters from natural hazards, where the human and economic costs are escalating. In the last two decades an average of 218 million people annually were affected by such disasters and the annual cost to the global economy now exceeds \$300bn.<sup>11</sup> Wherever possible, shifting power, resources and leadership to local actors – including national and local governments – in these contexts makes sense for a number of reasons. Local people are already the first responders when crisis hits and know the context, including social norms, cultural, religious and ethnic dynamics that are important to take into consideration when responding. Their costs of labour, overhead expenses, start-up expenses, supplies, travel, lodging and security are usually less expensive.



## Conflict settings

But local partners are also being relied on more than ever before to access insecure areas in some conflict settings. Though the capacity of local organizations varies considerably from one conflict to another, local aid workers may often be best placed to navigate ethnic or sectarian tensions with sensitivity and local knowledge. For example, in Iraq, Oxfam's partner REACH works across sectarian and political divides, providing assistance by relying on knowledge of the local context and having a diverse staff from all ethnic backgrounds. In every conflict, of course, both local and international NGOs must demonstrate that they are impartial; neither being local nor international guarantees that they are inherently so.

## Complementarity

As the UN Secretary-General has said, humanitarian action should be as local as possible and as international as necessary. The ability of international agencies to meet communities' needs will remain vital, not least when national capacity is overwhelmed by natural events, or destroyed by conflict. But international NGOs must also support and, where needed, facilitate and bring together local civil society. INGOs, UN agencies and donors should all increase their focus on strengthening the capacity of local actors and establishing strong, effective partnerships in which local actors can play a key decision making role at every stage, from needs assessment through project design to implementation and evaluation.

In short, international actors, including Oxfam, must do more to recognize local capacity, acknowledge the different experiences and capacities each actor brings to the work, and be open to mutual learning to build a system that is based on the strengths of collaborative partnerships. To do that, local actors need core funding to help them grow sustainably; including, where possible, to help them develop their own funding from local sources.

## Local humanitarian leadership

World leaders, humanitarian donors and agencies – indeed every actor gathered at the Summit – must set out a compelling new plan to build on national and local humanitarian leadership, by both local civil society and government, so that humanitarian action is always as local as possible and as international as necessary. This must include new commitments to:

- **Substantially increase support for nationally led approaches to emergency preparedness and response, including *multi-year core funding of local organizations*; commit to target at least 10 percent of humanitarian funding directly to national or local organizations by 2020;** simplify and harmonize donor, UN and INGO contracting processes; make UN Country-Based Pooled Funds swiftly and easily available to national NGOs, so that they are granted far more than the 16 percent they are currently granted;<sup>12</sup> and support the development of new NGO-led pooled funds to resource local actors;
- **Prioritize engaging local women's groups to work on humanitarian assistance and protection.** This will require developing a plan that builds on their core strengths and constituencies; investing in their capacity; promoting

### FUNDING LOCAL RESPONDERS

Local actors, including national governments, received only 1.87% of international humanitarian assistance between 2007 and 2013.



their full participation and leadership in humanitarian action, from planning to evaluation and lesson learning and across all themes from building resilience to emergency response; and ensuring dedicated funding support for this;

- **Strengthen the technical and organizational capacity of local actors and develop joint strategies for humanitarian intervention**, to ensure that local NGOs are equal partners, not just implementers;
- **Track second- and third-tier funding** that goes to local actors, to understand the quantity and quality of this funding.

## More effective, more accountable aid

World leaders should ensure that people affected by crises, especially vulnerable groups and those facing discrimination, can shape the decisions that affect them, giving affected people the choice of the aid that they get, including cash-based programmes.

- **Ensure that all humanitarian interventions further gender equality by addressing the strategic, as well as the practical, needs of men, women, boys and girls.** Donors should systematically use gender markers, such as the IASC Gender Marker or the Gender-Age Marker<sup>14</sup> in assessing proposals, and monitor implementation against it.
- **Collect and use evidence to design the most effective and cost-efficient responses possible**, bearing in mind both the immediate and long-term objectives of those responses, which may include investing in capacity for the future.
- For better transparency and accountability, funders at the beginning of the chain should **commit to track their grants** until reaching the final implementer.

*'Men cannot go out because they might be killed. So women go out to get food. That's how we are often raped.'*

Focus group of women in Masisi, North Kivu, DR Congo, 2014<sup>13</sup>

## INVEST IN HUMANITY



Photo: Abiy Getahun/Oxfam.

*'There have been other droughts. But this one is the worst I have ever seen. We are still here waiting for support.'*

Fatuma Hersi, an Ethiopian mother who has lost all but seven of her 300 sheep and goats in the current drought, Siti, Ethiopia, 2016<sup>15</sup>

No decent world can choose between adequately funding emergency responses, and preventing humanitarian crises in the first place. But the more that is invested in preventing disasters and taking early action to address them, the less will be needed to fund responses when they happen.

## National responsibility

All states vulnerable to disasters or fragility should prioritize investments to reduce risks, above and beyond their responsibility to ensure their citizens' access to humanitarian assistance and protection. This must include setting out national strategies to reduce poverty that include clear plans to manage risks from all forms of shocks, such as natural hazards, violence or sudden political and economic events, and longer term stresses such as environmental change; as well as defining their social protection floor and investing more in social protection.

## International solidarity

International donors should take long-term, strategic and flexible approaches to assist fragile and vulnerable states with more technical and financial support, above and beyond meeting immediate humanitarian needs, far more than at present. They should in particular:

- **Commit to go *beyond* the existing target to focus one percent of Official Development Assistance on Disaster Risk Reduction and preparedness by 2020 – by committing to provide five percent of ODA**, consistent with partner countries' national plans for disaster risk reduction, by that date;
- **Deliver on the commitment in the December 2015 Paris Agreement to 'significantly increase adaptation finance from current levels' by 2020**, 'considering the need for public and grant-based resources for adaptation', especially in the least developed and most vulnerable countries and communities. Beyond 2020, they should establish a specific quantified target for adaptation finance to help communities adapt to changing conditions and prevent the impacts of climate crisis from spiralling out of control;
- **Offer flexible long-term financing, including specific funding lines to support early response to slow-onset drought, and allow programmes addressing resilience in conflict to adapt to new spikes in violence.**  
Develop clear rules to share responsibility for funding early action between development, humanitarian and climate change adaptation. UN-led appeals for protracted crises should be multi-year and seek to take a **multi-year view** on measuring impact (rather than inputs) and on initial investments for strengthening the capacity of national and local actors;
- **Design and develop every aid programme to be informed by the risks facing countries vulnerable to recurrent disasters** – grounded in a shared vision and approach between development and humanitarian actors, including shared risk analysis, joint multi-year planning informed by climate-induced shocks such as El Niño and mutually agreed divisions of labour;
- **Demonstrate that every aid dollar in fragile states is driven by the needs of affected people in those countries**, irrespective of donor governments' political priorities – and that funding to fragile states is not disproportionately focused on the states that donor countries see as the greatest threats to their own security.

## FUNDING FOR RESILIENCE

For every \$100 spent on development aid, just 40 cents is invested in protecting that aid from the impact of disasters.

### 3 OXFAM'S COMMITMENTS



Oxfam staff prepare vouchers for distribution of emergency relief to families in Daanbantayan, northern Cebu, 2013. Photo: Paolo Ruiz.

#### INNOVATION

Oxfam seeks to learn lessons from every new crisis. As successive typhoons hit the Philippines in recent years, it has distributed pre-paid Visa cards to help people meet their basic needs, and found that 45% of users kept some funds on their cards as a 'disaster emergency fund' for the inevitable next crisis.<sup>16</sup>

Oxfam already works with more than eight million people struggling in humanitarian crises and has been one of the international NGOs at the heart of humanitarian reforms in the past 20 years. But it is committed to being part of the more fundamental changes needed to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of humanitarian aid, to make sure that the greatest possible resources reach affected people and those organizations working with them directly on the ground. Oxfam will be working hard in the run up the Summit to further develop, refine and finalize its commitments, joining forces with others where possible to have the maximum impact and contributing to the high-level roundtable Core Commitments. To that end:

**Oxfam endorses the *Charter for Change* and commits to work with others to enable greater local leadership in humanitarian action**, including to:

- Pass at least 30 percent of its own humanitarian funding directly to local NGOs by May 2018;
- Endorse and sign on to the Principles of Partnership introduced by the Global Humanitarian Platform in 2007;
- Streamline and harmonize across NGOs its requirements for partners; namely capacity assessments, funding proposals and reporting requirements, and commit not to ask of its partners more than its donors ask of Oxfam;
- Support local actors to become robust organizations that continuously improve their role and share in the overall global humanitarian response;
- Document the types of organization that Oxfam cooperates with in humanitarian response, and publish these figures in its public accounts using a recognized categorization such as the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report's classifications in real-time, or the International Aid Transparency Initiative standard;
- Pay local NGOs an adequate amount for their core administrative as well as direct programme costs and publish the percentage of Oxfam's humanitarian

funding to local NGOs for capacity building by May 2018;

- Commit to introduce its NGO partners to its own direct donors with the aim of them accessing direct financing;
- Address the negative impact of recruiting national NGO staff and develop a fair compensation policy for local organizations for the loss of skilled staff if and when it contracts a local organization's staff;
- Involve its local partners in the design of programmes from the outset and enable them to participate in decisions and monitoring of Oxfam's programmes and partnership policies;
- In communications to the international and national media and to the public, Oxfam will promote the role of local actors and acknowledge the work they carry out.

**Oxfam will reiterate the centrality of protection in all its humanitarian action and proactively act to reduce violence, coercion and abuse against civilian populations, including all forms of gender-based violence (GBV), and ensure respect for International Humanitarian Law, including to:**

- Campaign for better monitoring and improved compliance with International Humanitarian Law in all relevant crises;
- Increase its engagement with national human rights organizations as its partners and contribute to specific campaigns to uphold IHL;
- Train all Oxfam humanitarian staff to understand protection – including knowledge of IHL and the IASC Guidelines on GBV – and to possess the basic skills, capacities and tools necessary to help increase the protection of civilians, and continue to increase investment in community-based protection programmes;
- Ensure all humanitarian responses are informed by an ongoing protection analysis, including analysis of GBV, and that all relevant strategies include actions to prevent and respond to all forms of violence and abuse including GBV; for example through facilitating survivor referrals to specialist and emergency services;
- Provide policy staff in each crisis to help influence national governments and others, including on protection;
- Seek to ensure that *at least* 30 percent of its staff in each crisis are women;
- Evaluate all Oxfam's humanitarian responses in conflict-affected situations: assessing their impact on civilian protection, and publicly sharing its learning with other humanitarian actors.

**Oxfam will support renewed efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts,**  
including to:

- Partner closely with women's rights organizations on peace and security, including support for their strategic engagement in peace talks, mediation and resolution;
- Raise the alarm bell on emerging crises and ensure that voices of affected people and local civil society are brought to centres of power and decision makers.



**Oxfam will respond to the growing crisis facing displaced people, refugees and migrants in their countries of origin, the countries many transit through, and the countries they seek protection in, including to:**

- Substantially increase its investment in campaigning, along with other civil society organizations, to uphold the rights of displaced people, refugees and migrants, and for all countries to take a fair share of global responsibility for supporting and hosting them. This includes to campaign for concrete commitments by governments on access to livelihoods, work and education and for rich countries to welcome significantly more refugees than they have done to date, in the run up to the UN Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants in September 2016 and beyond;
- Contribute to tackling the poverty, inequality and humanitarian crises that help drive forced displacement and migration, through its programmes in relevant countries;
- Support both refugees and host communities in the relevant developing countries that host the great majority of the world's refugees, including seeking to support refugees' right to work and sustainable livelihoods for all;
- Use its programme experience to contribute to greater understanding of the development benefits as well as challenges of mass migration;
- Continue to expand its new programmes in selected European countries to support refugees and migrants;
- Advocate for the integration of protracted displacement and durable solutions in national development plans, including in poverty reduction strategies and UN Development Action Frameworks in line with Agenda 2030, as well as in peace negotiations and agreements.

**Oxfam will support women and men in ways that contribute to the transformation of gendered power relations in humanitarian settings, including to:**

- Ensure all humanitarian responses are informed by gender and GBV analysis and include targets and indicators to measure improvements in the situation of women and girls, including adequate training on the Gender in Emergencies Minimum Standards and IASC *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action*;
- Increase financial support and level of engagement with women's rights organizations to engage in humanitarian preparedness, response and influencing – beginning with an analysis of Oxfam's current support for women's rights organizations to establish specific markers for future progress.

**Oxfam will work internally to strengthen its work across the humanitarian–development nexus, including:**

- In countries particularly vulnerable to recurrent natural hazards, ensure that programmes are developed which are informed by hazard risk, and enable a flexible response;
- Undertake an internal review of Oxfam's response to the El Niño-exacerbated drought, looking for blocks and incentives for improved response, including a greater use of drought cycle management;
- Prepare now for the potential La Niña event in late 2016.

**Oxfam commits to meaningfully engage with the Grand Bargain for improved efficiency of humanitarian resources, including to:**

- Develop and implement a transparent process for costing aid programmes and publishing these on its websites and in annual reports;
- Undertake, as Oxfam is already doing, a thorough review to identify further opportunities to reduce management costs or duplication, and keep this under regular review;
- Work with others to undertake more joint and impartial needs assessments;
- Use cash as a preferred option in humanitarian programming, unless it is not appropriate in a specific case, including to:
  - contribute to learning in the humanitarian sector, for example through hosting the Cash Learning Partnership;
  - ensure its increase in cash-transfer programming (CTP) contributes to positive outcomes for women and girls and the advancement of women's rights, including through the use of on-going gender assessments to identify the benefits and potential risks of CTP;
  - invest in the capacities of national governments to develop cash programming and preparedness, for example through building on existing safety nets and social protection systems for CTP at scale when viable and appropriate.

## CONCLUSION

Oxfam makes these commitments because it is acutely aware that it must continue to change to face the rising tide of humanitarian need and to be as effective, transparent and accountable as the millions of people affected by crises have a right to demand. All humanitarian agencies – UN and NGO, international and local – must also continue to change.

But the fundamental responsibility to uphold international law, and to tackle the political causes of crises, lies with states. Almost 70 years since the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the struggle to ensure respect for International Humanitarian Law goes on. More than 60 years since the 1951 Refugee Convention, the struggle to uphold it is more vital than ever.

The World Humanitarian Summit will certainly *not* be the end of those struggles. But if world leaders have the will to make it so, it may pave the way for the profound, tangible changes that are so urgently needed.

## NOTES

- 1 Syrian Center for Policy Research. (2016). *SCPR Alienation and Violence Report 2014*: Retrieved 4 April 2016 from <http://scpr-syria.org/publications/policy-reports/scpr-alienation-and-violence-report-2014-2/>
- 2 Oxfam. (2016). *Syria Crisis Fair Share Analysis 2016*. Retrieved 18 April 2016 from <http://oxf.am/ZnVx>
- 3 UNHCR. (2015). *Mid-Year Trends 2015*. 18 December 2015. Retrieved 18 April 2016 from <http://www.unhcr.org/56701b969.html>
- 4 UN. (2016). *Agenda for Humanity: Annex to the Report of the UN Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit*. Retrieved 18 April 2016 from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2282agendaforhumanity.pdf>
- 5 Oxfam. (2015). *British Aid and British Arms: a Coherent Approach to Yemen?* Retrieved 18 April 2016 from <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/british-aid-and-british-arms-a-coherent-approach-to-yemen-577040> and blog: <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/blogs/2015/08/yemen-noor-omar-and-the-cave>
- 6 For Oxfam's recommendations on this, please visit: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/women-peace-and-security-keeping-promise>.
- 7 Oxfam. (2015). *Syria refugee crisis: an issue that is not going away*. Oxfam America. 11 September 2015. Retrieved 18 April 2016 from <http://www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/stories/syria-refugee-crisis-an-issue-that-is-not-going-away/>
- 8 Development Initiatives. (2015). *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2015*. Chapter 3. Retrieved 18 April 2016 from <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/report/gha-report-2015>.
- 9 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2016). *Humanitarian Needs and Response Overview, January 2016*. Retrieved 18 April 2016 from [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/lcb\\_hnro\\_2016.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/lcb_hnro_2016.pdf)
- 10 J. Hanson. (2015). *Rivers, mountains and landslides: reaching remote Nepal*. Oxfam blog, 30 October 2015. Retrieved 18 April 2016 from <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/blog/2015/10/rivers-mountains-and-landslides-reaching-remote-nepal>
- 11 World Humanitarian Summit secretariat. (2015). *Restoring Humanity: Synthesis of the Consultation Process for the World Humanitarian Summit*. New York: United Nations. Retrieved 18 April 2016 from <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Restoring%20Humanity-%20Synthesis%20of%20the%20Consultation%20Process%20for%20the%20World%20Humanitarian%20Summit.pdf>
- 12 CAFOD. (2016). *Localisation of Humanitarian Financing: Policy options for the Grand Bargain for bilateral donors*.
- 13 M. Deleu. (2015). *Secure Insecurity: the continuing abuse of civilians in eastern DRC*. Retrieved 18 April 2016 from <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/secure-insecurity-the-continuing-abuse-of-civilians-in-eastern-drc-as-the-state-345148>
- 14 European Commission. (2013). *Gender-Age Marker Toolkit*. Retrieved 18 April 2016 from [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/gender\\_age\\_marker\\_toolkit.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/gender_age_marker_toolkit.pdf)
- 15 Oxfam. (2016). *Millions at risk as Ethiopia suffers worst drought in a generation*. Oxfam news release, 29 January 2016. Retrieved 18 April 2016 from <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2016/01/millions-at-risk-as-ethiopia-suffers-worst-drought-in-a-generation-oxfam-el-nino-food-shortage>
- 16 G. Smith. (2015). *Cash Coordination in the Philippines: a review of lessons learned during the response to super typhoon Haiyan*. The Cash Learning Partnership. Retrieved 18 April 2016 from <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/cash-coordination-in-the-philippines-a-review-of-lessons-learned-during-the-res-557230>

© Oxfam International April 2016.

This paper was written by Ed Cairns. Oxfam acknowledges the assistance of Charlotte Stemmer and colleagues across the Oxfam confederation in its production, and input from Jenny McAvoy of InterAction in the development of the paper. It is part of a series of papers written to inform public debate on development and humanitarian policy issues.

For further information on the issues raised in this paper please e-mail [advocacy@oxfaminternational.org](mailto:advocacy@oxfaminternational.org)

This publication is copyright but the text may be used free of charge for the purposes of advocacy, campaigning, education, and research, provided that the source is acknowledged in full. The copyright holder requests that all such use be registered with them for impact assessment purposes. For copying in any other circumstances, or for re-use in other publications, or for translation or adaptation, permission must be secured and a fee may be charged. E-mail [policyandpractice@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:policyandpractice@oxfam.org.uk).

The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

Published by Oxfam GB for Oxfam International under ISBN 978-0-85598-719-0 in April 2016.

Oxfam GB, Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2JY, UK.

## OXFAM

Oxfam is an international confederation of 20 organizations networked together in more than 90 countries, as part of a global movement for change, to build a future free from the injustice of poverty. Please write to any of the agencies for further information, or visit [www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org)

Oxfam America ([www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org))  
Oxfam Australia ([www.oxfam.org.au](http://www.oxfam.org.au))  
Oxfam-in-Belgium ([www.oxfamsol.be](http://www.oxfamsol.be))  
Oxfam Canada ([www.oxfam.ca](http://www.oxfam.ca))  
Oxfam France ([www.oxfamfrance.org](http://www.oxfamfrance.org))  
Oxfam Germany ([www.oxfam.de](http://www.oxfam.de))  
Oxfam GB ([www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk))  
Oxfam Hong Kong ([www.oxfam.org.hk](http://www.oxfam.org.hk))  
Oxfam India ([www.oxfamindia.org](http://www.oxfamindia.org))  
Oxfam Intermón (Spain) ([www.intermonoxfam.org](http://www.intermonoxfam.org))  
Oxfam Ireland ([www.oxfamireland.org](http://www.oxfamireland.org))  
Oxfam Italy ([www.oxfamitalia.org](http://www.oxfamitalia.org))  
Oxfam Japan ([www.oxfam.jp](http://www.oxfam.jp))  
Oxfam Mexico ([www.oxfammexico.org](http://www.oxfammexico.org))  
Oxfam New Zealand ([www.oxfam.org.nz](http://www.oxfam.org.nz))  
Oxfam Novib (Netherlands) ([www.oxfamnovib.nl](http://www.oxfamnovib.nl))  
Oxfam Québec ([www.oxfam.qc.ca](http://www.oxfam.qc.ca))  
IBIS (Denmark) ([www.ibis-global.org](http://www.ibis-global.org))

Observers:

Oxfam Brasil ([www.oxfam.org.br](http://www.oxfam.org.br))  
Oxfam South Africa