

5 From people to policy: A call for new approaches

The surveys' results are a clear call to combine humanitarian aid with longer-term solution in crises contexts. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus calls for greater coherence when engaging in crisis contexts. This requires a common analysis that helps frame the context, risks and opportunities for donors engaging in crises using a set of instruments that includes, but is not restricted to, humanitarian assistance. Emerging good practice – on education for example – shows that global analysis and coherent programming can help international responses alleviate the impact of crises by supporting both affected people and local economies and infrastructure. Continuing on the reform path will mean turning aid programming into a genuinely people-centred approach, implying a significant shift from the current supply-driven humanitarian system to a customer approach.

Key messages

- Humanitarian assistance must be complemented wherever possible and as soon as possible with other instruments, including development co-operation, political dialogue and peacebuilding measures, as relevant, to create development opportunities for affected people, including host populations.
- Because it allows different instruments to address the underlying causes of crises, operationalising the DAC Recommendation on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus will help protect the unique role of humanitarian assistance and its guiding principles.

In 2016, the report “One Humanity, Shared Responsibility” called for a new paradigm in the way humanitarian assistance was conceived, programmed and delivered (UNGA, 2016^[1]). The scale and complexity of many crises highlight the challenge for the international community in designing and funding interventions that are fit for such mixed situations. Yet surveys in all countries point at the need to better articulate the response to people’s short-term and long-term needs in crises contexts. It reveals a clear call to speed up reforms in the way donors support people and countries in crisis contexts. In line with the DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (OECD, 2019^[2]), these reforms primarily require from donors a new approach to crises and a fresh look at programming and partnership in these contexts.

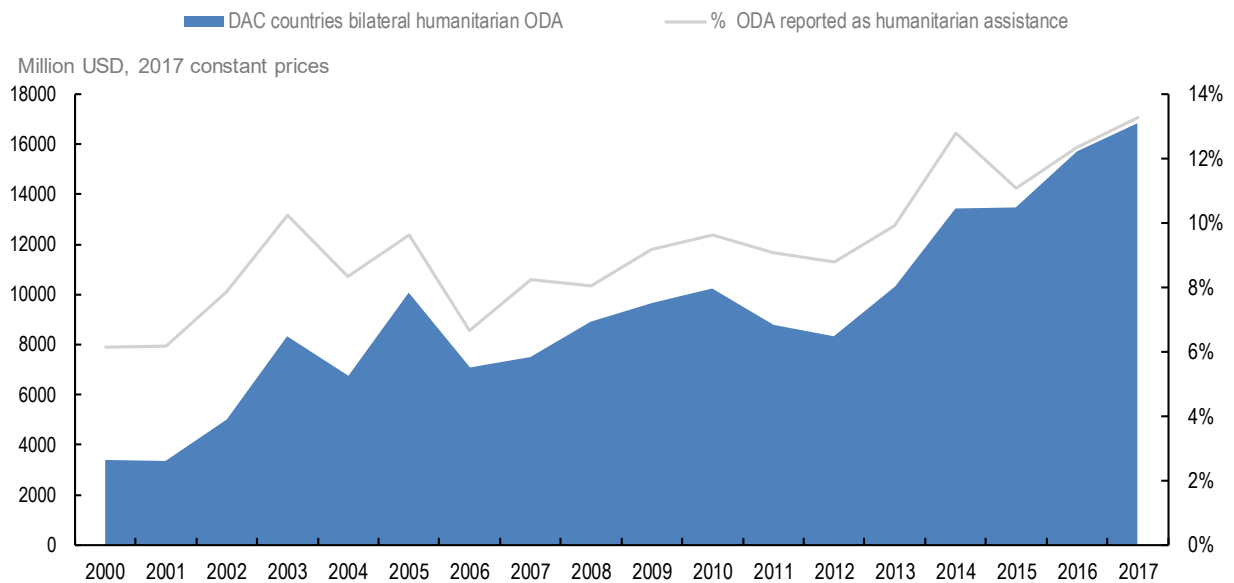
Look beyond the humanitarian response

Most actors in the political, international development and humanitarian sphere – but also the media and general public – refer to “humanitarian crises”. However, labelling a crisis “humanitarian” calls for a humanitarian response, and implies that humanitarian assistance is the right tool to address that crisis. Clearly, humanitarian assistance is designed to meet humanitarian needs and not to address the underlying cause of these needs (ICRC, 2016^[3]). The crises creating humanitarian needs are either political crisis or natural disasters, and they should be referred as such to help DAC members in mobilising an array of instruments that include humanitarian assistance, but not exclusively.

Humanitarian needs originate from a complex interaction of social, economic, environmental and political and security crisis drivers that are far beyond humanitarian programmatic cycles, as the surveys have shown, and that the humanitarian sector is not equipped to prevent or address. Humanitarian assistance can have a positive or negative impact on crisis dynamics (The Peace Promise, 2016^[4]), but as seen in the surveys, other instruments – including political dialogue, peace instruments and development co-operation funds – should also be mobilised by default to support the affected population and affected countries in crises that will become protracted.

The biggest humanitarian appeals relate to protracted crises for which there are no short-term solutions. Yet, in such contexts, DAC members mainly mobilise short-term humanitarian budgets that have increased by 76% in the last decade, from USD 8.7 billion in 2008 to USD 15.3 billion in 2018 (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1. The growth in DAC members' bilateral humanitarian assistance



Note: Commitments, USD, 2017 constant prices.

Source: (OECD, 2018^[5]), Creditor Reporting System, <https://stats.oecd.org/> (accessed on 25 April 2019).

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Because people have been caught in a crisis or been forced to cross a border does not mean that all their needs are humanitarian. Understanding the different dimensions of a crisis and monitoring how it develops will allow DAC members to select the best set of instruments to address the crisis drivers while meeting people's needs.

Implement the humanitarian-development-peace nexus

The surveys have shown that humanitarian aid does not help people affected by crises to reach self-sufficiency (Chapter 3). Because not every problem in a humanitarian context calls for a humanitarian response, pursuing coherence among humanitarian assistance, development co-operation and peace is all the more important to build on the comparative advantage of each instrument. In some contexts, only humanitarian actors have the expertise to reach people in need, provide assistance and protect the most vulnerable. In other crises, the actual delivery of services is not a humanitarian endeavour. It is for example debatable whether the fragmented humanitarian sector is better-placed to manage the process of delivering debit card and cash transfers to refugees than a single private bank with the network and expertise – as in the example of Lebanon. Determining which instrument and which channel are best suited to meet people's needs requires collaboration, coherence and complementarity among assistance instruments, in line with the DAC Recommendation on the humanitarian, development peace nexus (OECD, 2019^[2]). Undertaking a joint analysis will help understand the context in which people affected by crises have urgent and long-term needs, and how responding to these needs can also strengthen local capacities and economies, when relevant.

Fill gaps and build opportunities

Emerging good practices in supporting livelihoods, or in basic services provision in crisis contexts, such as education (Chapter 4), show that a joined-up analysis and coherent programming can help the international response alleviate the impact of crises in supporting both local economies and infrastructure. In Iraq, for example, most survey respondents called for an improvement in public services across the country, especially in areas of return. They demanded better access to potable water and the provision of electricity and healthcare in the former conflict-affected areas. Employment was considered just as important.

When a large-scale crisis hits, including from a natural event, the whole population, economy and development are affected, including in neighbouring countries. Needs rapidly expand beyond the humanitarian remit. Affected people – displaced and host population alike – want to recover and they aspire to be autonomous in meeting their needs beyond survival. Because humanitarian assistance is not designed to end need, and does not allow for self-sufficiency, it must be complemented wherever possible and as soon as possible with other instruments, including political dialogue and peacebuilding measures, when relevant. This combination can create development opportunities that promote sustainable livelihoods for affected people in rebuilding their lives, or preparing to return, relocate or successfully integrate.

Shift from a supply- to a customer-driven approach to meeting needs

The use of data and information technology in both humanitarian assistance and development co-operation can help advance the “participation revolution” by individualising humanitarian assistance, notably through cash transfer (UNHCR, 2017^[6]). To date, humanitarian response is based on a collation of mandate-based agencies needs assessments. A genuine participation revolution would require individual assistance to be based on a household economy analysis and individualised vulnerability assessment, in a customer approach to assistance, where relevant and possible. Joint delivery mechanisms supported by both development and humanitarian funds could help beneficiaries to better understand the type of assistance they can expect in order to factor this assistance into their livelihood plans. The surveys and additional research show that people affected by crises appreciate receiving aid in cash (Chapter 4). However, turning cash delivery into a people-centred approach requires a significant shift from the current supply-driven system – often involving different cash delivery mechanisms or different ATM cards for each organisation – to a client relationship in which programming starts with a client preference analysis (UNHCR and WFP, 2015^[7]). The analysis of big data generated by such transfers can help improve customise service (Flaemig et al., 2017^[8]). Such an approach would be valid for protracted crises where longer-term programming cycles are available and where assistance provision can have a transformational effect on a country’s social services, justifying the mobilisation of development funds.

Change paradigms to protect the unique role of humanitarian assistance

There is no doubt that humanitarian assistance remains relevant in the most complex crises. Because affected countries’ capacities are scarce, or because host countries’ political contexts and legal frameworks prevent affected people from building sustainable and decent livelihoods, they need humanitarian assistance to support them through their most difficult periods. Humanitarian assistance is filling some of the gap to help people live a more decent life. The most difficult contexts, such as in Yemen, offer little alternative to humanitarian assistance.

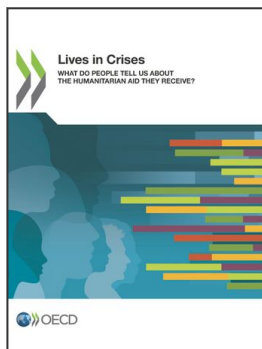
Yet, when 90% of UN-coordinated humanitarian appeals continue for three years at least, and many ongoing crises show little prospect of political resolution, mobilising huge amounts of humanitarian

assistance over years or decades is unsustainable and can discourage the mobilisation of other political, peace or assistance instruments. Across countries, the surveys reported on here have helped to reveal that some progress has been made, notably on some of the Grand Bargain commitments. However, improvement to the current humanitarian system alone is unlikely to help meet both emergency and long-term needs for people affected by crises.

Changing paradigms, starting by looking at how each instrument can best help design a coherent response to a given crisis, will help to build opportunities to make people affected by crises to be actors in their own lives and in their economy wherever possible, allowing humanitarian response to fulfil its original mandate of protection and assistance in the places where other instruments can't be mobilised.

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