

What crisis affected communities need from a humanitarian reset

A guide based on two years of conversations with people on the front lines of crisis

Global analysis report | March 2025



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Acknowledgements

Thank you to the many people who took the time to speak with us and share your views. Names of people we have quoted have been changed throughout to protect their anonymity.

This report has been made possible through generous support and funding from our core donors, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, as well as by the donors of each of the projects included in this analysis.

Thanks to the following people who generously volunteered their time to provide expert review: Talatu Adiwu, Stijn Aelbers, Aditya Bahadur, Hibak Kalfan, Mark Laichena, Nazanine Moshiri and Mauricio Vazquez.

We would like to thank our research and amplification partners for their exceptional work: Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD), Baoro Consulting, DataQ, FACT Foundation, Fama Films, Fama Agency, Foundation Towards Dialogue, Heart of a Child Foundation, Ihsan Relief and Development, Innovation & Entrepreneuriat Social Congo (IES Congo), Innovative Hub for Research in Africa (IHfRA), International Centre for Climate Change and Development, Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, National Congress of Ukrainians of Moldova, Nazan Consulting, New Access International, NGO CASMED, NGO Girls, NGO Stimul, Open Space Works Cooperative, Public Association DEMOS, Primăria Municipiului Edineț, Raagsan, Salma Consulting, TK-APS Consultancy Products and Systems Ltd, UMBRA, Victim’s Hope DRC, Alaina Koina, Arsene Merci, Aristide Madjitolngar, Bienvenu Ngas, Crescens Gbongbonbo Kamtha, Doumtoudjimbaye Elysée Moubane, Frederic Ngaramadji, Mireille Denenodji Ngarkodji, Sobdibe Anicet, Stéphane Adisso Dokpohol, Tchindebe Berkeunbe, and Yves Wang-Namou Fya.

Introduction

What does humanitarian assistance look like in a world with less money, less global solidarity and ever-increasing numbers of people in need?

Over two years and across 12 countries, Ground Truth Solutions held more than 34,000 conversations with people experiencing crisis to find out what they want and need humanitarian action to do for them. They offer some clear priorities that should help us navigate this funding crisis.

We are in a period of global upheaval. People on the front lines of crisis are paying the cost of an international community retreating from its responsibilities – on climate, on international law, on global solidarity. Needs were outstripping resources well before drastic cuts were made to humanitarian aid across the world this year. Overlapping crises are increasing in frequency and intensity, and exacerbating one another's effects. The climate emergency is gathering pace, with both acute and slow-onset impacts battering frontline communities as global average temperatures near 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial averages. We are experiencing the most active conflicts since the end of World War II,¹ with increasing attacks on civilians and on humanitarian workers. The global rise of populism has brought with it decreased respect for international law, with war crimes and other atrocities carried out in Gaza, Sudan, Ukraine, Myanmar and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with zero sanction while the world watches. Civic space is shrinking, and human rights are under attack across the globe.

A humanitarian reset is badly needed: the current system is no longer fit for purpose. An estimated 305 million people around the globe require humanitarian assistance² and more people have been forcibly displaced from their homes than at any other time since records began.³ At the same time as needs are growing, aid is being called upon to do more and more, filling the gaps left by governments, development and climate actors, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

And now the organisations there to help fulfil the basic rights of those in crisis are in crisis themselves. Humanitarian and other global support is being slashed. Even before dramatic cuts to US aid in early 2025 affected 40% of global humanitarian funding,⁴ the past two years have been marked by massive decreases in humanitarian funding and other global support streams. These cuts have left an already creaking global humanitarian system on its knees. Donors have made it clear that there is no going back: the US has left a gap they are unwilling to fill. Other countries, including the UK, the Netherlands and Germany, are stepping back, too. There will be no return to the humanitarian system of the past 20 years. If we have any chance of rebuilding the system for the better, things have to be done differently.

Humanitarian need is a consequence of global inequity. Listening to people in crisis starts with recognising that without governance structures stepping up to the plate to tackle resource management, conflict, climate change and unjust systems of wealth generation, a crumbling humanitarian system has little chance of doing its job.

We urgently need a humanitarian reset⁵ that makes resources work harder and go further to deliver the aid people tell us they need when they need it – not what we think they need, or what we have in surplus to give them. By driving long-overdue reforms to the way aid is designed, allocated and delivered, we can ensure lives and livelihoods are protected even as humanitarian funding plummets. As decision-makers embark on a brutal prioritisation exercise, they'll have to consider whose priorities count and whose preferences should drive cuts.

Our report synthesises data from conversations with more than 34,000 people in 12 countries⁶ about the challenges they face, their most pressing needs, fears and aspirations, and what they want global support actors to know and do differently.

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- ¹ IRC 2025 Global Watchlist notes a record 59 active conflicts in 2023, the highest since World War II and up nearly a third in a decade. IRC. December 2024. "[2025 Emergency Watchlist](#)."
 - ² OCHA. December 2024. "[Global Humanitarian Overview 2025](#)."
 - ³ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. 2024. "[2024 Global Report on Internal Displacement](#)."
 - ⁴ While the precise impact of the US funding cuts are not clear at the time of publication GTS analysis suggests we will see a reduction of up to \$13 billion from the US and \$1.5 billion from other donors in 2025. Ground Truth Solutions. 2025. "[Financial Accountability Project](#)."
 - ⁵ Tom Fletcher. February 2025. "[Statement by Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher – Humanitarian Reset](#)."
 - ⁶ This report is based on data collected by Ground Truth Solutions during 2023 and 2024 including 18 quantitative studies, which involved a total of 32445 face-to-face and telephone interviews, as well as a number of focus group discussions. Additionally, we included findings of the study conducted in Bangladesh in 2022 (Q3). Since the latter was finalized at the beginning of 2023, the findings were not presented in our [previous global report](#).

The information they've shared with us shows that humanitarian assistance is not working: it's not reaching the right people in sufficient amounts, and it's not supporting their greatest needs or aspirations. Their feedback and recommendations must be both the starting point and the measure of success for the humanitarian reset.

Figure 1

Ground Truth Solutions collected data from 34812 respondents across 12 countries in 2023 and 2024



From the past two years' data we have identified five key imperatives – more necessary now than ever before – to make humanitarian assistance fit for today's overlapping crises:

1. Support the growing importance of community-led response
2. Build a humanitarian response fit for a more violent world
3. Support people's long-term aspirations and invest in crisis prevention
4. Make information work harder
5. Step up efforts to reach the most marginalised with the right assistance

The humanitarian reset must be led by what crisis-affected people need. The world cannot afford – morally or financially – a humanitarian system that isn't shaped by this principle.

01 Support the growing importance of community-led response

“These community organisations are deeply rooted in the local reality and can play a key role in the resilience and empowerment of the population.”

– Jean-Baptiste,⁷ DRC

Summary

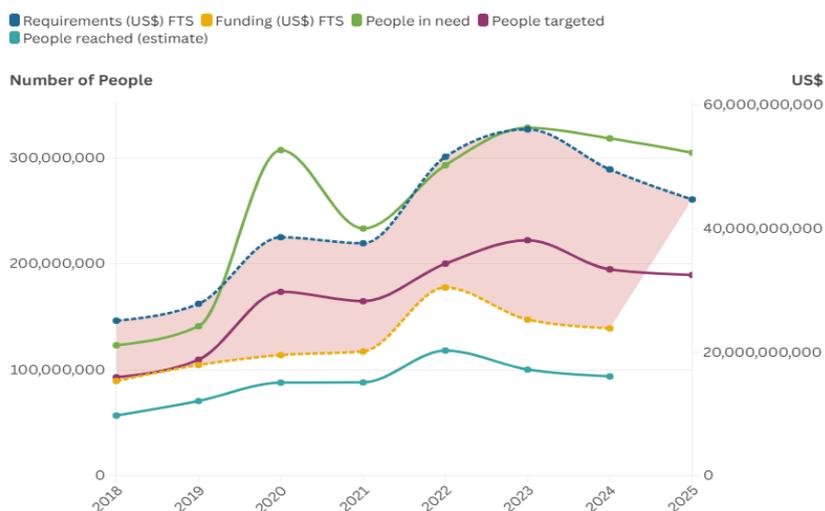
As the international response to people’s needs falls increasingly short, local actors and mutual aid efforts – always the core of the response – are now playing an even bigger role in helping communities to navigate and recover from crisis. The humanitarian reset must prioritise support to community-led initiatives by accelerating the overdue localisation agenda, taking a more people-focused approach to risk, and by better understanding and complementing the support strategies communities already have in place.

International aid isn’t coming close to meeting people’s needs

Even before the 2025 US aid freeze, the discrepancy between needs and available resources had been steadily growing. Many of the communities we worked with in 2023 and 2024 reported that either their most vulnerable people⁸ or, in some cases, the entire community⁹ were receiving no external support, despite being in severe need.

Figure 2

Aid cuts in 2025 only worsen the growing gap between reported humanitarian needs and the resources available to meet them¹⁰



Across countries, people consistently say that the aid they receive is not nearly sufficient to meet their most basic needs (see figure 3). Predictably, the worst results are found in the most acute crises. In late 2024, more than 80% of people we spoke to in South Darfur said the support they were receiving wasn’t meeting their most urgent needs.¹¹

One of the clearest messages we receive from across contexts is that the volume of assistance provided is so minimal that its impacts are negligible, or extremely limited.

⁷ Names of respondents have been changed throughout the report to protect their privacy.
⁸ 55% of people we spoke to in South Darfur had received no support in the past six months, despite facing acute food insecurity.
⁹ In Chad, communities near the Chari River in Hadjer-Lamis said they hadn’t received any support from the government or NGOs in recent years, despite facing recurrent challenges with floods.
¹⁰ The estimated number of people reached is calculated by dividing total funding by the average cost per beneficiary, which is determined by dividing the required funding by the total number of people targeted. This is a rough approximation, as it does not account for sector-specific costs or the varying number of people targeted per sector. As of February 2025, confirmed funding stands at \$2.38 billion. Due to incomplete data for the year, neither the funded budget nor the estimated number of people reached are shown in the graph.
¹¹ Ground Truth Solutions. February 2025. “We have seen enough death. We cannot speak up because no one will hear our voices.”

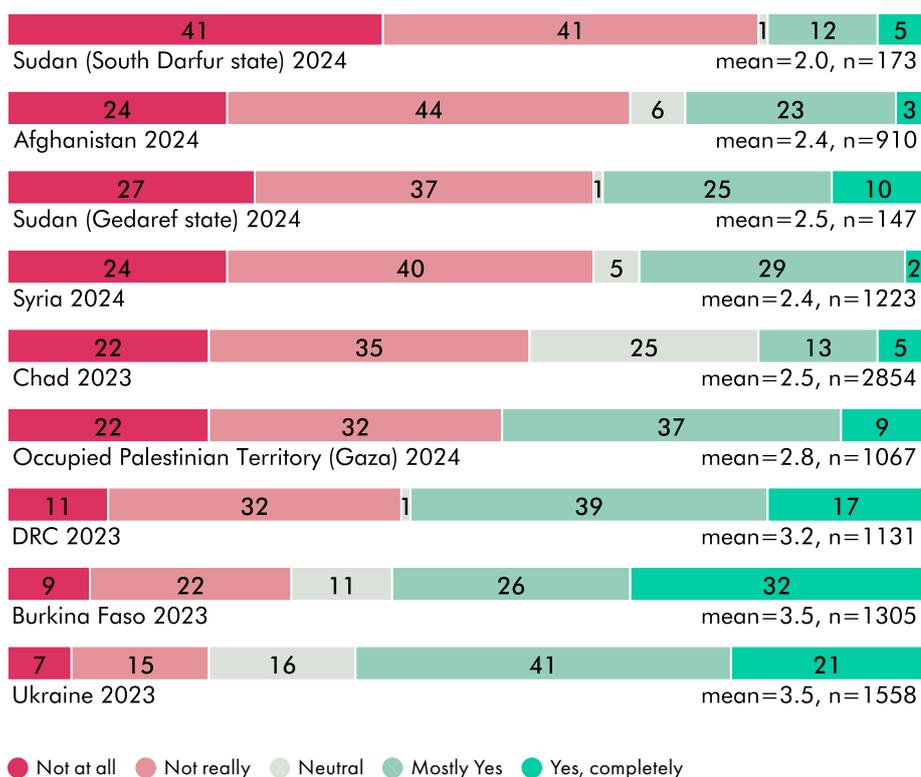
This is perhaps a consequence of a sector obsessed with reporting in numbers reached rather than impact. In Somalia, people who had received cash assistance to help them cope with the impacts of the 2020–2023 drought said they were back in the same precarious situation shortly afterwards.

“I think the issue is that organisations underestimate displaced people’s needs. They allocate very little aid and think we can survive with as little as USD 30.” – Safia, Somalia.

Figure 3

People in most countries report that the humanitarian aid and services they receive do not meet their most important needs

Do the humanitarian aid and services you receive meet your most important needs?¹²



Community-led and mutual aid is shouldering an increasingly heavy burden

As international assistance declines in relative importance, mutual aid – always the first line of crisis response – plays a larger role. Everywhere, but particularly in “forgotten crises”, as well as in crises where international humanitarian access is highly restricted, people tell us that informal and formal community support is critical to their survival.

When international assistance for Gaza was reduced to a trickle in 2023, people focused on doing whatever they could to help each other: organising water distributions, sharing what they had, triaging medical cases and highlighting the most serious ones for assistance:¹³

“I provided food and financial assistance, helping people with the car, providing flour, supporting the sick and providing nappies for the children.”
– Mariam, Gaza, Occupied Palestinian Territory

“I did not receive any aid before [7 October]. I was a university doctor and

¹² Note that in some countries rephrasing of this question has been used to adapt it to the local context. Each version has been cognitively tested to ensure comparability of the results.

¹³ Ground Truth Solutions. October 2024. [“Stories of solidarity and survival from Gaza and Lebanon: resilience, self-help and grassroots action by people under bombardment.”](#)

could do without aid. Here we have been cooking and distributing food to people around us as a collective, with our personal efforts and partly with donations from the surrounding community.” – Ibrahim, who had fled to Rafah, Gaza, Occupied Palestinian Territory

In Sudan, formal and informal community-led support efforts, including the well-documented Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs),¹⁴ provide lifesaving aid. The following experiences are indicative of countless others across the country.

“I was part of an initiative providing first aid at the hospital for people injured due to the war. We treated the wounded.” – Ahmed, South Darfur, Sudan

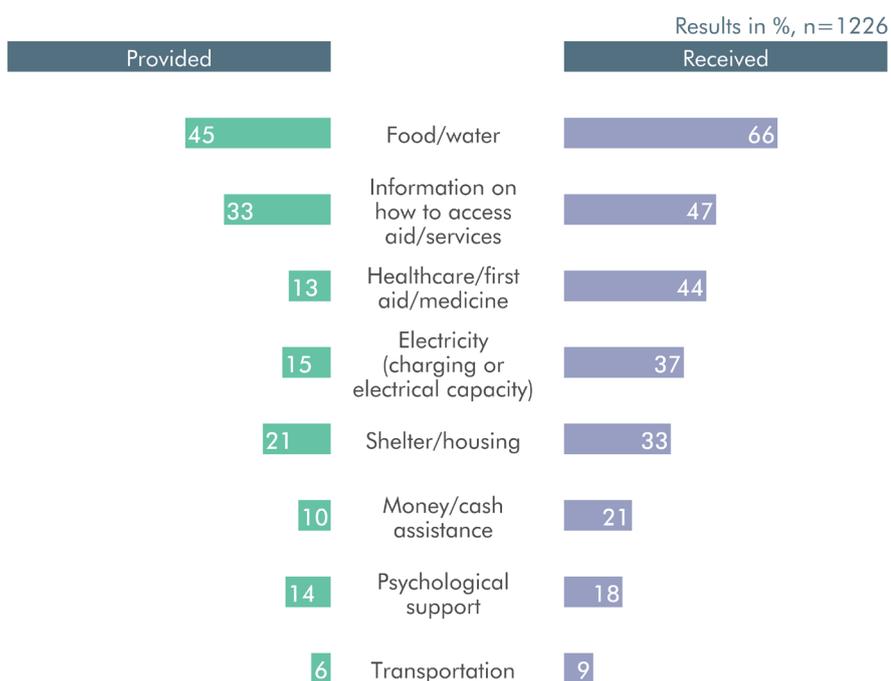
“I work with the emergency rooms in Buram, and we determine who should receive the aid and who shouldn’t.” – Salma, South Darfur, Sudan¹⁵

Just over one-third of people we spoke to in South Darfur had received some form of assistance from mutual aid or grassroots initiatives, and almost three-quarters of respondents had received food from their friends, family or neighbours.

Figure 4

In 2024 aid – particularly food – was frequently shared by neighbours and communities in Gaza (top) and Sudan (bottom)

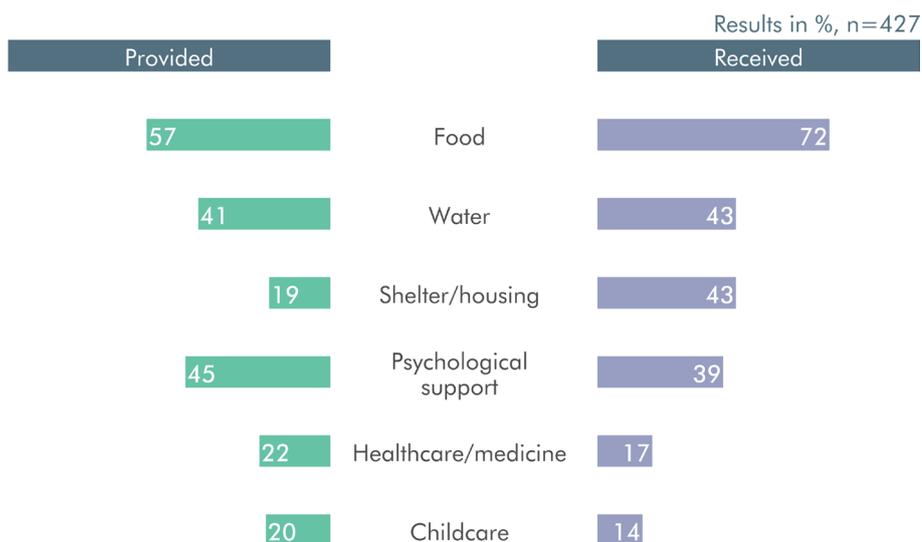
Have you provided and/or received help/support from other community members (individual or other families in your community/region/area) in the last month? (Gaza, Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2024)



¹⁴ Time. January 2025. [“Locals in Sudan Are Saving Lives That International Aid Agencies Can’t Reach.”](#); The Guardian. December 2024. [“‘Deeply inspiring and humbling’: how neighbourhoods in Sudan are coming together to fill gaps left by foreign aid.”](#)

¹⁵ Ground Truth Solutions. February 2025. [“We have seen enough death. We cannot speak up because no one will hear our voices.”](#)

What support, if any, have you provided to friends, family and neighbours in the last 12 months? (South Darfur, Sudan, 2024)



In “forgotten” or underserved crises we often hear that community support is the only form of aid available. Members of flood-prone communities in Hadjer-Lamis, Chad monitor various environmental signals to predict floods,¹⁶ triggering community-wide preparedness activities when flooding is imminent: the construction of dykes, the filling of sandbags and bags of soil, or the preparation of meals for those doing construction work. Community funds and support from private businesses or families living outside the community make these initiatives possible.

“During past floods, we did not receive any support from the government or NGOs. However, the communities showed solidarity among themselves by giving each other empty bags, food and money.” – Ahmat, Chad

Across the countries we work in, we hear how community savings and loan initiatives help people to withstand shocks and plan for the future. Community members in Nigeria say “Adashe”, a traditional savings system based on group contributions, enables low-cost saving, loans and solidarity grants in hard times, and provides mutual support and encouragement for those starting businesses.¹⁷ In DRC, those who are part of Village Savings and Loan Associations say they feel better equipped to plan for the future.¹⁸ And while humanitarian cash transfer volumes are painstakingly calculated to support a single household’s needs, people across countries tell us they pool these resources, sharing them out to meet community members’ most pressing needs.¹⁹

“We all benefit from each other when we receive cash. Those who received it before the flood shared it with those who didn’t. When the second batch came after the flood, those who received cash assistance helped those who had helped them before the flood.” – Aisha, Nigeria

Communities and local organisations engaged in this work express frustration that external humanitarian assistance often ignores and duplicates these efforts rather than supporting them, as well as discounting the expertise that communities have regarding their own challenges and resilience.²⁰ In Burkina Faso, 70% of people surveyed believe that the most efficient way humanitarian actors can help them become autonomous is by financing their existing initiatives. In Chad, people are asking for support that strengthens actions they are already taking to predict and reduce the impact of flooding. They have frequently made this request to aid organisations and private companies and feel they have not been heard. In discussing findings from Chad and Nigeria with humanitarian actors, the Ground

¹⁶ Ground Truth Solutions. December 2024. “Prevention is better than cure.”

¹⁷ Ground Truth Solutions. April 2024. “Rampant inflation and climate crisis: can cash cope?”

¹⁸ 38% of Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) members versus just 19% of non-VSLA members say aid helps them to plan for the future. Ground Truth Solutions. December 2023. “No transparency, no trust.”

¹⁹ Ground Truth Solutions. April 2024. “Rampant inflation and climate crisis: can cash cope?”

²⁰ In this report we treat resilience as meaning that people’s long-term wellbeing and ability to withstand shocks is increased, and that the number of options people have to cope with crisis is increased.

Truth Solutions team frequently encountered surprise that communities “already have so much of their own anticipatory action in place and share resources.”²¹

“Humanitarian organisations can help us become self-sufficient by supporting our initiatives. I am a labourer, and if I receive support for my project I believe that within two to three years I can be self-reliant.” – Daouda, Burkina Faso

Community support mechanisms are not without their own challenges. When scarce community resources are exhausted, community members may rely on risky coping mechanisms to get by. Over the three years we have worked in Afghanistan, for example, we have seen an increasing reliance on harmful coping mechanisms as aid has reduced in volume and the Taliban’s restrictions have worsened: in 2024, nearly one family in ten were considering early marriage for their daughters as a coping strategy, and more than a quarter were sending children to work, up 10% from the previous year.²² People are forced to sell off their assets, putting them in more precarious situations and hindering crisis recovery. In South Darfur, one woman told us, **“I was a teacher but because of the difficult work situation, I resorted to looking for manual labour such as farming to cover my family’s needs. This is exhausting. We were forced to sell our property for fear of being looted and we used the money for basic needs. The situation is really very difficult.”**

More formal community-led initiatives also struggle with a lack of resources, with people we spoke to in Sudan identifying this as the key barrier to accessing community support. National governments have a major role in supporting or obstructing community-led efforts, which can have significant outcomes for the effectiveness, funding and access of mutual aid actors.

This lack of support sees community initiatives struggle to satisfy their users. In South Darfur, 60% of respondents said the ERRs did not provide aid in a fair way, with many saying that vulnerable groups – elderly people, people with disabilities, women-led households and children – were left out. In Gaza, people wanted it known that providing mutual aid became harder and harder as the situation worsened, and that community aid should not be romanticised as a replacement for global solidarity and justice.

Local aid providers are often seen as more relevant

Communities often prefer support from local organisations that are more deeply rooted in the communities in which they work. In DRC, cash recipients said they were quicker to trust organisations that **“are deeply rooted in the local reality”**²³ because they understood and remained in the communities they serve. Local NGOs were also seen as more transparent than international actors, with many people expressing a preference for those local organisations to play a bigger and more influential role in crisis response. In Gaza, a young man told us that locally led aid is necessary **“because the international initiatives are far from the people ... and part of that aid that enters Gaza is sold because some of the people don't need it.”** In Afghanistan, women reported that community-based women’s groups are important interlocutors for engagement with international aid actors, providing a safe and acceptable way of ensuring women’s needs and priorities are included in aid planning.²⁴ In many places, communities continue to call for international support and solidarity, and feel that international actors can play a critical role in ensuring fairness where there are concerns about corruption and unfair distribution.

Despite the massive global push to accelerate localisation of humanitarian aid, with donors committing to **“achieve by 2020 a global, aggregated target of at least 25% of humanitarian funding to local and national responders as directly as possible”**²⁵ through the Grand Bargain, progress on shifting resources has been slow, and the meaningful shift in decision-making power even slower. Amounts of funding provided to local organisations had reached only around 5% of total funding by

²¹ Quote from GTS team member.

²² Ground Truth Solutions. January 2024. [“We as women's groups can find women in need when organisations can't.”](#)

²³ Community leader, Fizi, DRC – collected during our US aid cuts impact work in February 2025.

²⁴ Ground Truth Solutions. January 2024. [“We as women's groups can find women in need when organisations can't.”](#)

²⁵ Inter-Agency Standing Committee. May 2016. [“The Grand Bargain and localisation commitments.”](#)

2024, and this category is dominated by national governments.²⁶ While local actors undertake most humanitarian response activities, with an estimated 70% of funding to international NGOs being passed through to local actors,²⁷ “for the most part,” local and national NGOs “continue to operate as sub-contractors, with limited influence.”²⁸ Beyond accessing more humanitarian resources – which tend to be short-term and unreliable, as the past few months have proven – local responders may have access to alternative sources of funding including diaspora contributions, philanthropic support and private sector engagement which can help to ensure long-term sustainability.

Local organisations express frustration with their lack of influence and decision-making power in an ecosystem dominated by large international NGOs. In Ukraine and Türkiye, local aid providers feel that the expertise and relevance gained from their strong community ties are underestimated, and they struggle to shoulder the heavy administrative burdens required for international partnerships, rendering them ineligible to participate. In the Central African Republic (CAR), local aid providers feel that international aid actors don’t listen to feedback shared from communities and – even if they do listen – struggle to adapt their programmes accordingly.

Donors often cite the increased risks associated with working directly with local actors but, as this section demonstrates, there are also significant risks associated with continuing to work primarily through international actors who have less contextual understanding, engage in short term cycles and cannot be relied upon for sustained and accountable support.



What needs to change:

As aid volumes decrease further, local and community-led aid needs to be better supported. This has been understood for decades and now requires urgent action. People we work with tell us this includes:

- | Significantly increasing direct and flexible funding to local actors and community-based initiatives
- | Understanding and learning from the expertise communities have on their own challenges and solutions
- | Treating community members as part of the solution, not simply “people in need”
- | Supporting – rather than duplicating or replacing – the activities communities already have in place
- | Enabling local actors to play a bigger decision-making role in the response



Questions for humanitarian leaders

1. How can community-led response be more effectively and sustainably supported?
2. How can we rapidly increase the resources and power held by local actors?
3. How can international agencies be restructured to maximise a solidarity model?

²⁶ Ground Truth Solutions [Financial Accountability series](#)

²⁷ Wall, I. and Hedlund, K. May 2016. “[Localisation and locally-led crisis response: A literature review](#)”; Svoboda, E. and Pantuliano, S. March 2015. “[International and local/diaspora actors in the Syria response](#).”

²⁸ Development Initiatives. August 2022. “[Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2022](#).”

02 Build a humanitarian response fit for a more violent world

“We want peace and we want security. We want our children not to be afraid and not to grow up hearing the sound of gunfire every day.” – Rasha, South Darfur, Sudan

Summary

As conflicts grow in both number and intensity, with increasingly frequent attacks on civilians and on the humanitarian workers seeking to reach them, the humanitarian reset must enable humanitarian aid to operate in riskier contexts and to offer meaningful protection to the people it serves.

More people feel unsafe in their daily lives

Over the past two years we have frequently heard that people feel unsafe in their daily lives and that personal safety and fear of losing a loved one top the list of people’s concerns. In Chad, DRC, Burkina Faso, Gaza and South Darfur more than half of people surveyed report feeling unsafe where they are. This reflects a global deterioration in both respect for the laws of war and the protection people receive across crises:

*“Over the past year, more women and children were killed in Gaza than the equivalent period of any other conflict over the past two decades, while in Ukraine an average of at least 16 children have been killed or injured every week since Russia’s invasion in February 2022. The number of United Nations verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence was 50 per cent higher in 2023 than the year before.”*²⁹

The first and clearest message from people we spoke to in situations of violence was that the international community should do more to bring an end to conflicts and ensure people are protected:

“The international community is standing by, doing nothing. If they truly want to stop the war, they have the power to do so, but I don’t see them taking action.” – Hiba, South Darfur, Sudan

“To help us become more self-sufficient in these circumstances, we ask humanitarians to plead our cause with our government to restore peace and lasting security. Without this, we will be unable to do anything.” – Emmanuel, DRC

International actors have a clear role beyond facilitating aid, including on ensuring accountability and protecting human rights. Recent aid cuts threaten these broader roles, with impacts on the security of people facing humanitarian crisis already becoming clear.³⁰

In Gaza, 77% of those we spoke to did not feel safe where they were, including in so-called “safe zones”. Losing a loved one was the greatest concern of 81% of people.

“I am afraid to leave the house, and I am afraid of the future and what our fate will be, and I am afraid that I will be injured and have an amputation, and I am afraid that I will die, and I am afraid that I will lose one of my daughters ... I am so afraid that I will lose one of my daughters.” – Khaled,

²⁹ OCHA. December 2024. [“Global Humanitarian Overview 2025.”](#)

³⁰ See [“The Human Cost of US Aid Cuts”](#), Ground Truth Solutions 2025.

Gaza, Occupied Palestinian Territory

In South Darfur, where people face indiscriminate attacks by armed fighters and repeated aerial bombardment, almost half the people we spoke to identified their family’s safety as their greatest concern.

“Yesterday, the air force dropped about 10 barrel bombs, and this morning it was the same. All of the bombings targeted civilians’ homes. There is no safety at all.” – Yusif, South Darfur, Sudan

“We want peace and we want security. We want our children to not be afraid and to not grow up hearing the sound of gunfire every day.” – Rasha, South Darfur, Sudan

Even beyond these headline-grabbing conflicts, we see protection concerns on the rise. In Burkina Faso more than half of the people surveyed do not feel safe in their daily lives. The presence of armed groups contributes to widespread feelings of insecurity, exacerbated by a lack of adequate infrastructure to protect people from external threats. In Nigeria, increasing need drives insecurity:

“The fear of keeping money at home has grown considerably. This fear is largely due to widespread hunger; people who end up going a day without food or sleeping hungry are driven to seek help by any means necessary, including accessing money urgently.” – Musa, Nigeria

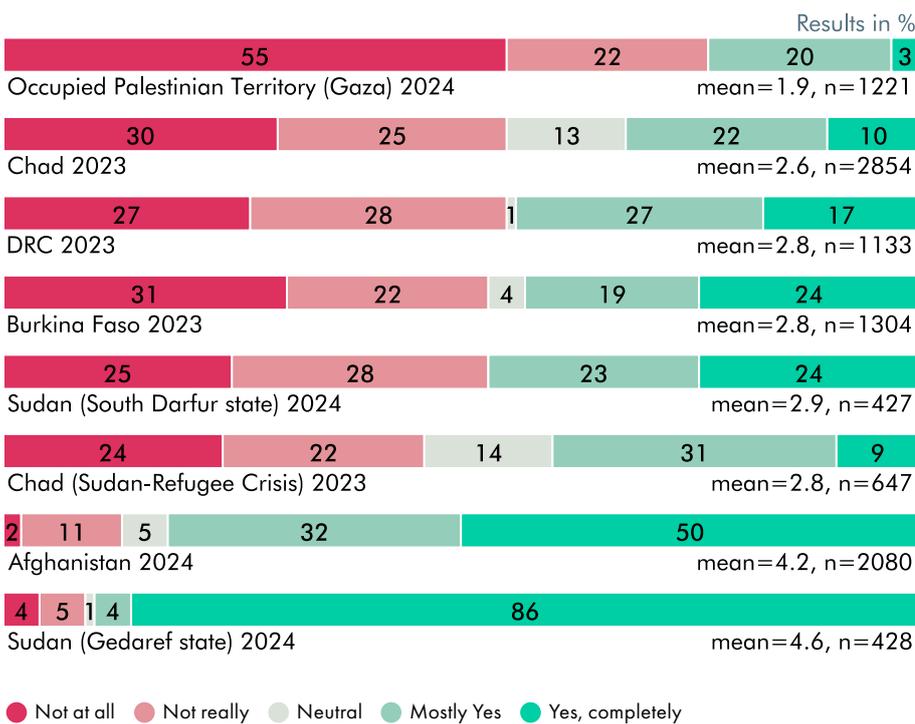
Beyond immediate physical harm, people – especially internally displaced people (IDPs) – are concerned about their psychological well-being and that of their community.

“We are constantly afraid because of the day we had to leave our homes. There were (gun)shots that still haunt us, even in our sleep.” – Amina, Burkina Faso

Figure 5

In Palestine (Gaza), Chad, DRC, Burkina Faso and Sudan (South Darfur) more than half of people say they do not feel safe where they live

Where you are staying now, do you feel you and your family are safe on a daily basis?³¹



³¹ Note that in some countries rephrasing of this question has been used to adapt it to the local context. Each version has been cognitively tested to ensure comparability of the results.

Humanitarian aid can protect or endanger

In many places we hear that people feel safe when accessing humanitarian aid and that the presence of humanitarian actors plays a positive role in protection. In DRC 85% of respondents³² and 96% in Nigeria feel safe when accessing aid. We heard positive feedback about measures in place to keep aid recipients safe: in Afghanistan, the adoption of practices such as prioritising women at distribution centres and having gender-specific spaces at aid distribution sites have made women feel safer.³³

Where aid is extremely scarce or available assistance dwarfed by levels of need, however, communities point to aid as a potential driver of insecurity. People in Gaza described aid distributions as highly unsafe, putting people at risk of theft or violence. A woman in Deir al Balah told us that when an aid truck passes, sheer need compels people to attack it.³⁴ In Sudan, people described the dangerous conditions surrounding aid distributions:

“I see lawlessness, like when mosquito nets are distributed – it’s chaotic. One time... a child died from the crowding and pushing.” – Amina, South Darfur, Sudan

Feedback from communities in the wake of the US aid cuts reinforces the role of humanitarian aid in supporting protection, and the dangerous consequences of sudden cuts to aid. Respondents across countries pointed to rising tensions and insecurity as a result of cuts, and increased risks of recruitment into armed groups and violence against women and girls.

“Many may be tempted to join armed groups out of necessity, due to the lack of economic alternatives. There is a real risk of mass recruitment into militias and rebel groups, as when people no longer have means of subsistence, they may be forced to take up arms to survive.” – Paul, DRC

“Yes, there has been increased aggression due to the significant unmet needs and lack of financial support.” – Laila, Syria

“With the aid that had been protecting these vulnerable groups no longer available, the young men began to take advantage of the situation. They started targeting young girls, luring them into isolated or unsafe environments, where they could exploit and abuse them.” – Fatima, Nigeria

The ways in which aid is distributed play a major role in links to protection. People in Afghanistan, DRC and Sudan describe the dangers of having to travel long distances to access aid:

“The road is not safe, meaning that you are walking in a place where there are thieves in the street, so it would be good if they brought the distribution place closer.” – Ibrahim, South Darfur, Sudan

Women in Afghanistan reported abuse and harassment, particularly around checkpoints, when undertaking long journeys to access aid.

Even where physical security is less of an issue, people tell us that accessing aid can be time-consuming, physically draining and undignified. In Nigeria and Burkina Faso people reported spending many hours waiting under the sun at aid distribution sites with their children, with their health suffering as a result. The wait is psychologically draining as people do not know if it is worthwhile: many are turned away for incorrect documentation. In DRC we heard how the needs assessment process can feel invasive and dehumanising:

“Taking pictures of us and invading our privacy, you cannot do that. A young woman came to our house, supposedly to conduct the needs assessment. She went into the grandmothers’ rooms to see their sleeping conditions. This

³² Data collected before the rise in M23 attacks in early 2025.
³³ Although concerns remain about the lack of female aid workers and the need to travel long distances to access distribution sites.
³⁴ Ground Truth Solutions. August 2024. [“We do not want aid from the world. We want to stop the war.”](#)

needs to stop.” – Junior, DRC

When we spoke to people in DRC about their safety needs, they felt that these were not being taken into account. As reporting on protection still tends to resort to counting how many people are 'reached' quantitatively with often unspecified interventions, people are calling for more participation in identifying both the problems and solutions.



What needs to change:

As the world becomes more violent and civilians increasingly become targets, the humanitarian reset needs to enable support to the most vulnerable as identified by communities, even in situations where support itself is under attack. People tell us they need:

Aid distribution modalities which reduce people's exposure to violence – through better management, provisions for vulnerable groups, mobile money and bringing distributions closer to where people live

Sufficient support that reduces the risk of criminality and insecurity among communities, and the risk of violence at distribution sites. This includes more support for youth, even where it is not considered “life saving”

Increased emphasis on community-driven security approaches, consulting communities about the key protection concerns people face and their ideas for how to addressing them



Questions for humanitarian leaders

1. How can aid organisations protect recipients and workers in increasingly lawless environments?
2. What innovative funding and partnership models are needed to sustain aid delivery despite rising insecurity?
3. How should humanitarian actors navigate the political realities of delivering aid in contested or fragile territories?

03 Support people's long-term aspirations and invest in crisis prevention and recovery

"People don't want any more rice and lentils. There is no more land to live on. We need better support." - Nafisa, Bangladesh

Summary

As the climate crisis gains pace and conflicts worsen, straining longstanding livelihoods, driving up costs and increasing the frequency and intensity of shocks, people across contexts see their baseline situation getting worse. Even in acute crises, we frequently hear that people's priorities focus more on long-term support than on emergency relief. The humanitarian reset must complement and advocate for a wider system of support that prioritises adaptation and development in fragile contexts, preventing crises before they happen. A poorly-designed 'life-saving' prioritisation will make people suffer, and will cost more in the long term.

People are increasingly concerned about their futures

Even during acute crises, people we speak to increasingly prioritise support that helps them make long-term plans and recover – returning to their homes, rebuilding, strengthening livelihoods – yet they are overwhelmingly not receiving it. This does not simply mean providing more aid; it means providing better aid. In Ukraine people strongly emphasise the importance of rebuilding infrastructure, especially educational and healthcare facilities, and support with upskilling and livelihood diversification. In Burkina Faso, where almost all available support comes in the form of short-term humanitarian response, people express a need for longer-term solutions such as agricultural support to help them regain their autonomy.

"I don't think the conflict should prevent humanitarians from setting up aid projects with a long-term perspective." – Christina, DRC

Once again, there is a sense from many people we speak to that while humanitarian aid is welcome, the amounts are far too small to have any impact that lasts beyond a few days. This means that efforts that prioritise 'life-saving' aid in the name of cost-cutting represent a false economy. Needs will recur and costs will balloon. In northeastern Nigeria, people who received cash ahead of floods in 2023 said its impacts were extremely short-lived. They were dealing with one of the country's worst financial crises, with inflation reaching almost 30% by February 2024, and people said they found themselves back in the same precarious situation soon after receiving the cash.³⁵ People in Somalia say that while assistance still helps and that they are grateful to receive it, it only enables them to cover their needs for a short while.³⁶

"I would rather be paid a good amount of money and invest in a machine that grinds grain in the fields so that later, when my kids need something, I can help them." – Hawa, Somalia

"You cannot plan with three months of cash. We receive USD 60 per month for three months. Our children might get sick, they might need new clothes and if someone dies, the funeral cost alone is USD 180. All these needs with this amount? It is impossible to plan." – Hassan, Somalia

³⁵ Ground Truth Solutions. April 2024. ["Rampant inflation and climate crisis: can cash cope?"](#)

³⁶ Ground Truth Solutions. August 2023. ["Overcoming power imbalances: Community recommendations for breaking the cycle."](#)

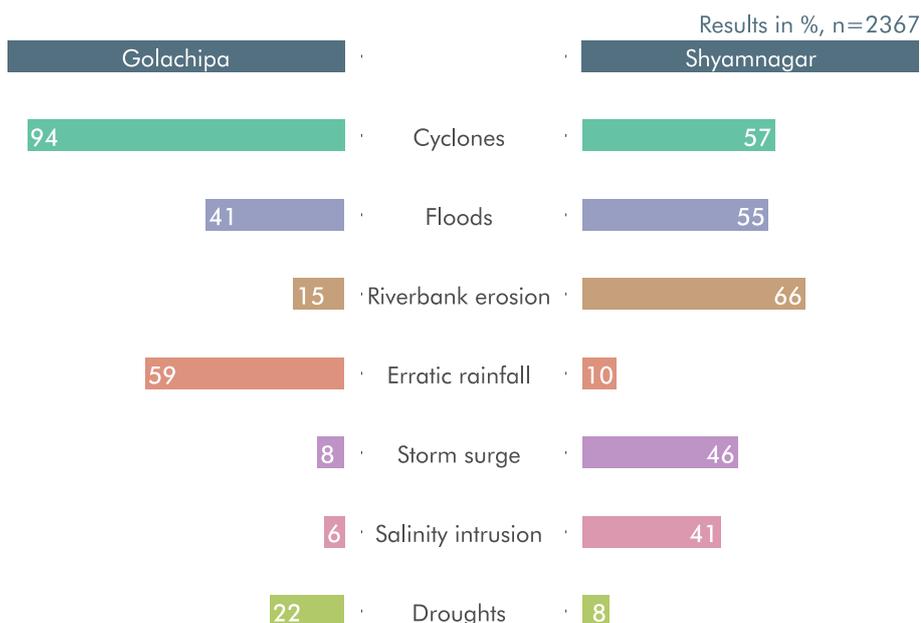
People are facing more frequent and devastating “natural” disasters

People we speak to are increasingly affected by “natural” disasters. They feel ill-prepared for these disasters and are unsatisfied with how support is provided to address them.

Figure 6

People in two districts of Bangladesh are affected by a wide range of “natural” disasters

Which natural disasters are you and your community most affected by? (Bangladesh)



In Chad and Nigeria, people expressed frustration with the continued focus on short-term solutions to frequent challenges – they want long-term investment in resilience and development, not just cyclical disaster responses. People told us that increasing access to resilient housing and healthcare facilities and constructing better roads and sustainable flood barriers should be bigger priorities. Of those surveyed in the coastal sub-district of Shyamnagar in Bangladesh – an area highly vulnerable to cyclones and storms – 83% put climate-resilient infrastructure at the top of their priority list, even above access to safe drinking water.³⁷ Overall, there are clear calls from communities to focus more on the investments that prevent crises from happening – climate-resilient infrastructure, agricultural reforms, safety nets – to avoid being trapped in repeated cycles of response to bigger and bigger crises.

“Building dykes with durable materials could be a sustainable solution to the recurrent flooding problems that our area faces.” – Mariam, Chad

The chronic impacts of climate change are putting livelihoods under strain

Many of the people we speak to are dependent on highly climate-sensitive livelihoods. They see the effects of climate change on their lives, and want long-term support to strengthen or transition away from their threatened livelihoods, or even to be able to move away from areas they see are becoming unliveable:

“There have been so many changes to the environment. Before, this area

³⁷ Ground Truth Solutions. April 2023. “We are not getting the support we need to lead a better life.”

was completely covered by bushes and leafy trees. Nowadays, it doesn't rain like it used to and because of all the charcoal production, so many trees and animals have disappeared. Before, the rain was good and the land was fertile and we had enough grain to last an entire year for each household. This is impossible now – it doesn't rain enough, and the soil is increasingly weak. The surface of Lake Chad is considerably smaller than before. The environment is destroyed – the Sahara is encroaching on us, and it is very worrying. – Souleymane, Chad

“People keep losing their land and homes. There are no work opportunities, so people are extremely poor. We have to rent other people's lands to live but even those are eroding away. The conditions here are not liveable anymore.” – Sharmin, Bangladesh

In Ukraine and Afghanistan, livelihood training and support feature at the top of the list of people's priorities. In Nigeria, people want support that enables them to adapt their agricultural practices to be less vulnerable to flooding: training on irrigation, and information on alternative farming strategies, fast-growing seeds and how to minimise crop damage during floods. Some people in Nigeria seek information on how to minimise the health effects of climate change, including illnesses arising from flooding and the health issues caused by exposure to dust and sandstorms.

“Community members should not only receive cash or other forms of aid but should also receive assistance to develop the skills that will sustain their lives in the future.” – Farah, Somalia

“There's a need for more cash support to enable us to get alternative farmlands. We shouldn't have to be solely dependent on areas we all know are very prone to disasters and keep us relying on cash assistance to recover from damages due to the floods.” – Mohammed, Nigeria

Even when people receive short-term support, intended for food or some sector-specific purpose, they use it to plan for their longer-term recovery. This includes people selling material aid to get cash to try to start a small business or save for children's education, sacrificing meeting their daily needs to save cash assistance for rebuilding a livelihood, or pooling aid resources with others to build a community safety net.



What needs to change:

What people prioritise is often not what humanitarian aid can provide. If humanitarians are to do more with less, they must pay attention to evidence about how people are using resources, and adapt. This does not mean further stretching into areas where humanitarian aid is not best adapted to support, but working with communities on prioritising scant humanitarian resources, and ensuring cooperation with systems where long-term investments in disaster prevention, climate adaptation and development are reaching and benefitting fragile contexts. People we spoke to told us this should include:

- | Better consulting crisis-affected communities to understand what they need, prefer and prioritise
- | Blending humanitarian, climate and development financing to create more sustainable, long-term support systems
- | Recognising the human need to recover from, not just endure, a crisis
- | Advocating for long-term investments and support in the communities where humanitarian aid providers work
- | Ensuring all support is provided in ways that are resilient to future disasters



Questions for humanitarian leaders

1. How can community members themselves be the driving force behind what is prioritised with scant resources, to give them the best chance to recover from, not just withstand, crisis?
2. How can humanitarian, development and climate support be brought together more effectively in fragile and conflict-affected contexts?
3. What contribution can humanitarian assistance make to supporting long-term climate resilience?

04 Make information work harder

“We have the impression that aid is forced on us: we must take what we are given without questioning it.” – Jérôme, DRC

Summary

There has long been a recognition of the role of information in helping or hindering humanitarian action. But the right information needs to reach the right people at the right time, and be trusted and actionable. The humanitarian reset needs to maximise the impacts of information, and transparency, for vulnerable people. Especially at a time when freedom of the press, and open civil societies, feel increasingly threatened.

For people in crisis, information is critical to families trying to make decisions with scant resources, especially in insecure environments. Without this, it's impossible for people to exercise their self-determination, reduce dependency and increase efficiency of humanitarian resources.

People want information on coming disasters, on available aid, on what humanitarian actors are doing with their money, and on conditions and opportunities elsewhere in the country to inform their preparations and decisions. Misinformation and disinformation are also growing barriers to accessing effective assistance. While people in crisis access information from multiple sources – community networks, digital platforms and government sources, for example – humanitarian actors have a key role in being transparent, facilitating people's access to trustworthy, actionable information that helps improve their lives.

Early warnings aren't always getting through

People want better information about risks and hazards to help them make timely decisions to safeguard themselves, and these aren't reaching the most vulnerable people in usable ways. In Afghanistan, 72% of the people we spoke to hadn't received any early warning information ahead of shocks (primarily floods, droughts and earthquakes), despite being in one of the countries most impacted globally by natural disasters. While riverine communities in Hadjer-Lamis, Chad have their own traditional methods for predicting flooding, they highlighted the necessity of receiving official forecasts, which would enable them to prepare more effectively.

In Nigeria and Afghanistan, people placed early warnings at the top of the list of information they need about natural disasters. In Nigeria, people also wanted information on how to prepare for and mitigate damage from flooding, as well as extreme heat and droughts. When people know what's going on, they make better decisions. Any attempt at 'efficiency' that doesn't recognise this will cost more in the long run.

Clear and credible information about aid enhances impact and builds trust

A lack of clear communication about aid, including availability and eligibility, as well as how long aid will last, limits people's ability to safely access support and to plan for the future. In Ukraine, two-thirds of cash recipients say they do not feel well-informed about assistance available to them. They reported fatigue associated with the need to be constantly online, searching for available aid. They were wary when they did find opportunities, following the establishment of fake aid programmes

designed to scam people. In Sudan, people were confused about what would be distributed, where and when, and who was eligible. They spoke of elderly people waiting for hours in the sun only to return home with nothing. In Gedaref, 29% of respondents cited a lack of clear information as a major impediment to receiving aid, while misinformation was another frequently mentioned obstacle.

“Some of the displaced people do not know the date of the distribution, and when they come to the distribution point, they find that the aid has run out.”

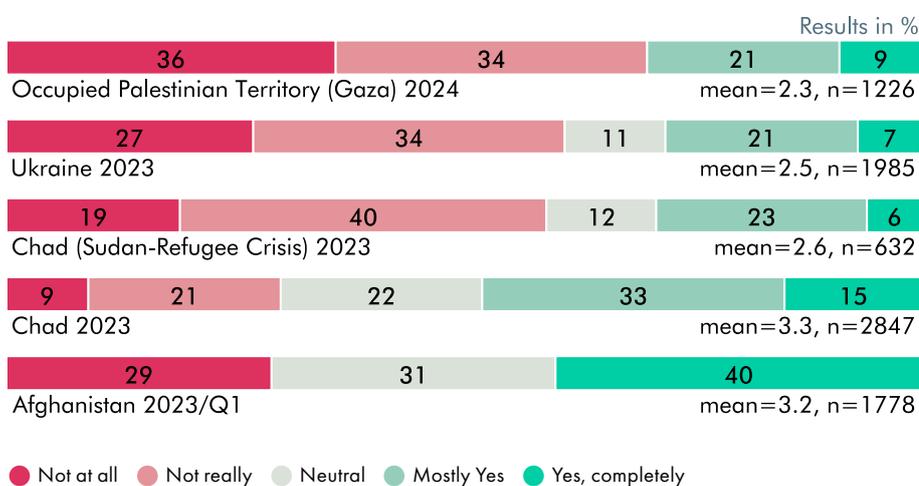
– Amal, Gedaref, Sudan

“It is important to be informed in advance so that we can plan other activities. It is easier than being left without information. Often, distributions can pass by without warning and we miss out.” – Merveille, DRC

Figure 7

Across countries, many people don't feel informed about the humanitarian assistance available to them

Do you feel informed about the humanitarian assistance available to you?³⁸



A lack of clarity on the amount, duration and frequency of assistance is also widespread, making planning difficult.

“Some organisations tell us aid will last for four or five months, but the community is confused. There is conflicting information coming from the organisation’s staff and the camp leaders. We don’t know who to trust or believe. It is true many of us do not have any idea how long the aid is going to be for.” – Halima, Somalia

In many places we work, misinformation and disinformation present significant challenges to accessing aid, and trust in humanitarian organisations’ messages is low. In Ukraine, there are widespread disinformation campaigns, propaganda and conspiracy theories, and people say they find it hard to know what information to trust. In Gaza, where connectivity blackouts and constant bombardment render proper information-sharing nearly impossible, almost no information is trusted. **“I verify all the information from its source myself, as I do not trust institutions or people, and I have reached the point where if I do not see something myself, I do not believe anyone,”** one woman told us.

In many places, people don't get clear information about targeting decisions, leading to perceptions of corruption or random decision-making. Several people in Sudan expressed frustration over what appears to be arbitrary or unjustified selection criteria. Just a quarter of those surveyed in Gedaref and 9% in South Darfur understand how aid providers decide who receives assistance, and trust in aid actors

³⁸ Note that in some countries rephrasing of this question has been used to adapt it to the local context. Each version has been cognitively tested to ensure comparability of the results.

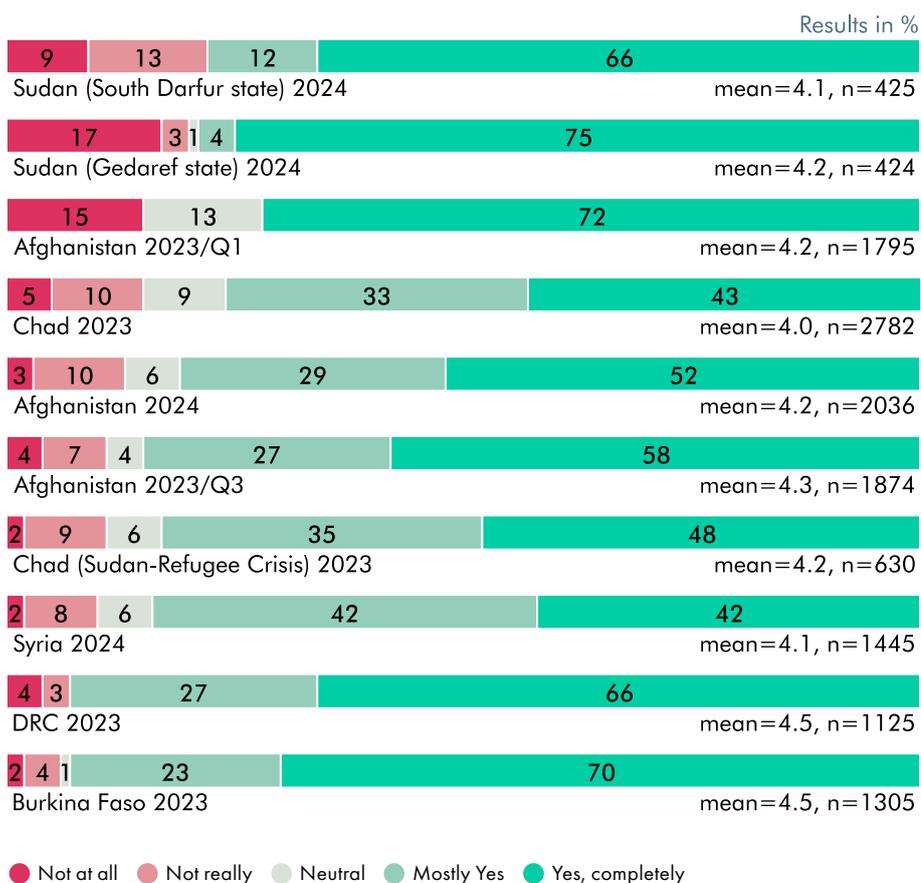
to make those decisions fairly is low. In Nigeria and Afghanistan, people told us that opaque decision-making on targeting exacerbates tensions in the community and within households.

Every aid actor has a responsibility to be accountable, but internationally-led aid is often seen as a black box. It is impossible to separate this issue from the need to ensure aid is led by, and designed closer to, communities.

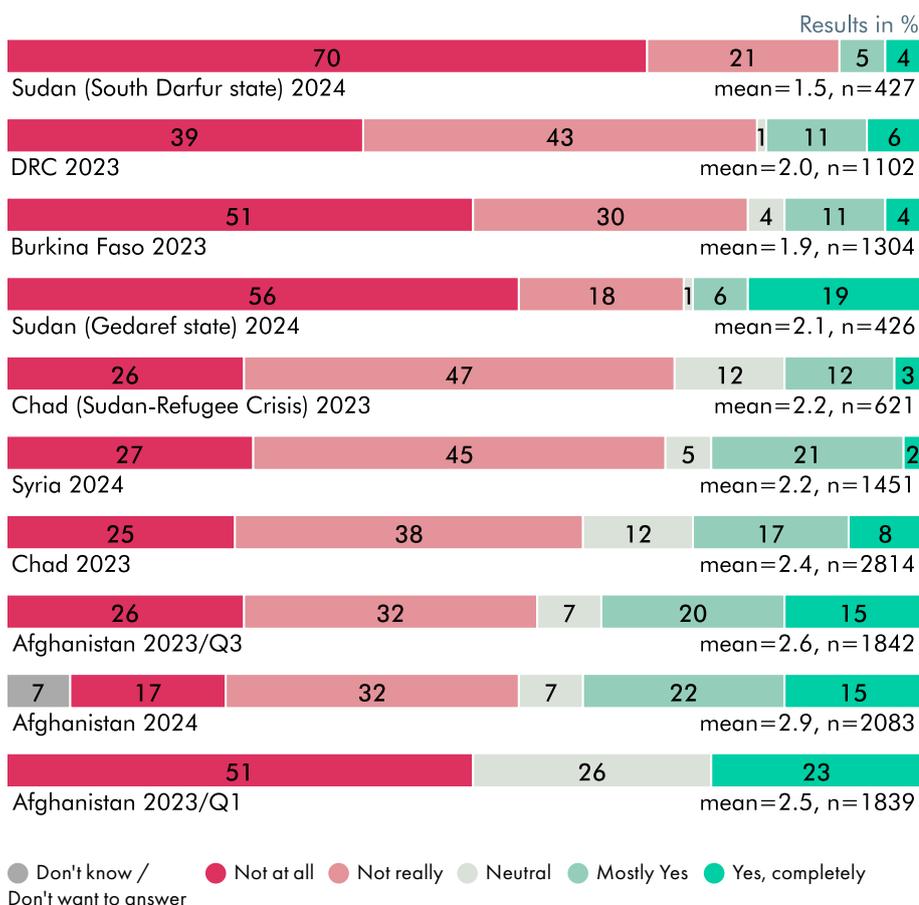
Figure 8

The majority of people think it is important to know how aid providers decide who receives humanitarian aid and services and who does not (top), but few say they have this information (bottom)

Is it important to you that you know how providers decide who receives humanitarian aid and services and who does not?



Do you know how aid providers decide who receives humanitarian aid and services and who does not?



People still don't have a meaningful say in assistance designed to serve them

In every one of our projects, we underscore the fact that people want a say in how aid is allocated, designed and delivered, and emphasise that this still isn't happening. When the intended recipient communities don't participate in aid allocation, support is less effective, less aligned with priority needs and less sustainable. In the face of overlapping crises – with needs rapidly outpacing available resources – it is more critical than ever that people's greatest concerns and preferences drive the prioritisation and allocation of scarce resources.

"There are no consultations. They plan their things in their offices and come to us with their plans and we accept what they provide. They should ask us and consult us about our needs, like education, healthcare and other necessities." – Abdi, Somalia

"We have the impression that aid is forced on us: we must take what we are given without questioning it. I would say I have seen nothing change since we shared our opinions with them. It seems our views are not important." – Jérôme, DRC

The data below shows that an overwhelming majority of people across countries feel they have not had a say in the aid they receive and how little faith – with the exception of cash assistance in Nigeria, where people felt their desire for cash was heard and the systems deemed to be straightforward.

Figure 9
People feel excluded from the aid provision process

Have you participated in decisions about humanitarian aid and services?

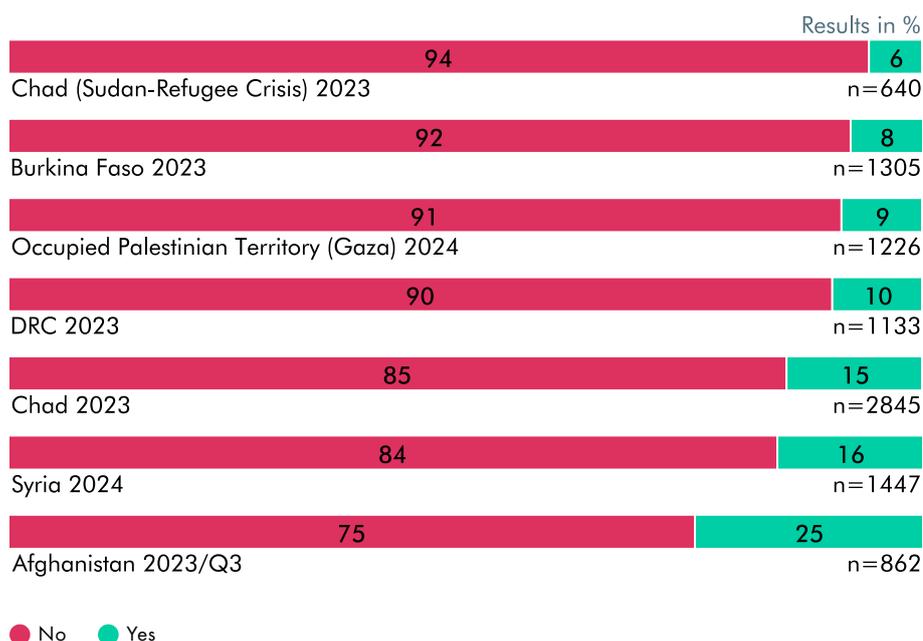
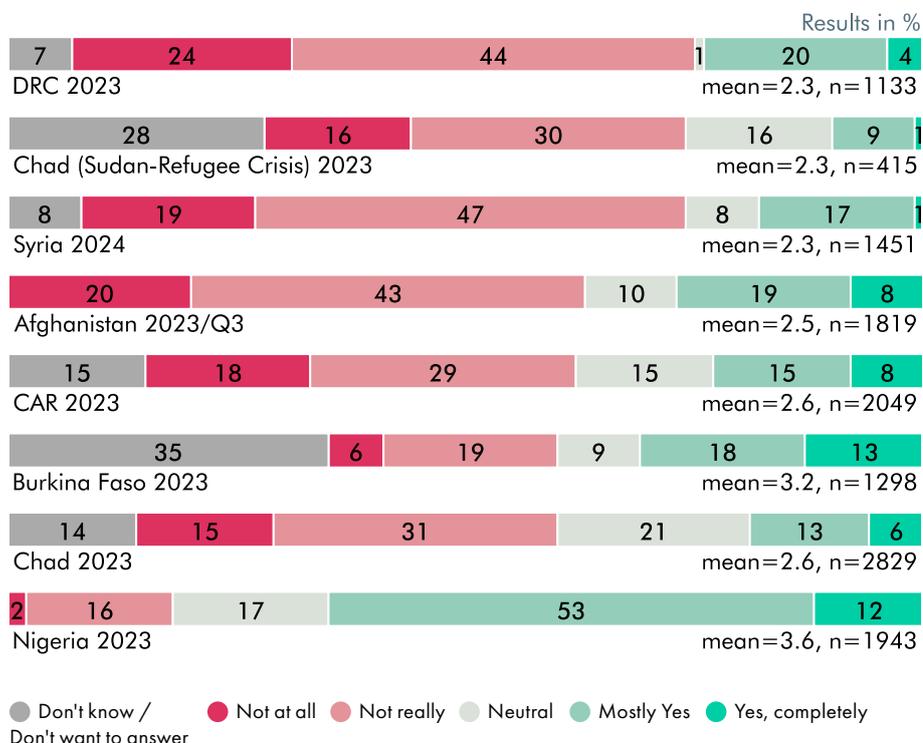


Figure 10
...and believe that their input is largely ignored by aid providers

Do aid providers act on/implement/make use of the suggestions your community shares?



Even where information about humanitarian assistance and communication with its providers are available, certain groups face significant access issues. Cultural, religious and legal barriers in Somalia and Afghanistan prevent women, especially those without a male guardian, from accessing information about aid and from influencing the decisions that dictate its planning and distribution. In Nigeria, women

report that when they provide feedback on aid, they risk reprimand and being branded as a troublemaker. In Chad, people say the language they speak, their access to a phone and their physical location can all limit their ability to access information. Other vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities or limited mobility, people with low education levels, those living in remote villages and those working in the fields all day without a phone, have limited access to certain information.

With the current financial downturn, humanitarian actors must act more transparently, being able to demonstrate that money is getting to communities as directly as possible without countless international intermediaries, and letting communities drive tough decisions about aid prioritisation. Reducing accountability to crisis-affected people to 'interagency feedback' completely misses the point.



What needs to change:

As aid resources diminish and opportunities to share actionable data increase, the humanitarian reset should embrace the possibilities of information: both in terms of what shared information can do to maximise the impact of aid, and how information itself can be a form of lifesaving support. People we spoke to say this includes:

Increase aid to local actors so that more decisions are made closer to communities, and ensure aid agencies act with radical transparency about how scant resources are being spent

Maximise the power of communication to help people make better decisions with their own, and available, resources

More effective two-way communication on aid – understanding needs and preferences, being transparent about how choices are made and clearly communicating what is available

Providing clear and actionable early warning information, including to the most marginalised

Prioritising meaningful community engagement throughout the life of the response – tokenistic “feedback mechanisms” added as an afterthought to projects that did not listen in the first place are not enough



Questions for humanitarian leaders

1. How can communities have exponentially more influence over decisions about the prioritisation of resources?
2. What more can we do to get clear, trustworthy and actionable information to communities in crisis?
3. How can humanitarian leaders tell a more compelling story about transparency and the maximisation of humanitarian funds?

05 Reach the most marginalised, moving from supply to demand-driven response

“We are hungry, but we are given buckets, mosquito nets, stoves and soap. We sell the soaps to feed our children instead.” – Milla, Chad

Summary

Crisis-affected communities consistently say that aid does not reach those who need it most, and that particular groups – elderly people, people living with disabilities, women-led households – are excluded. They also report a mismatch between the aid they receive and their most pressing needs and priorities. The humanitarian reset must preserve the reach and information needed to reach the most vulnerable, and ensure prioritisation efforts are driven by demand and not supply.

Aid is not reaching those who need it most – and specific groups are losing out

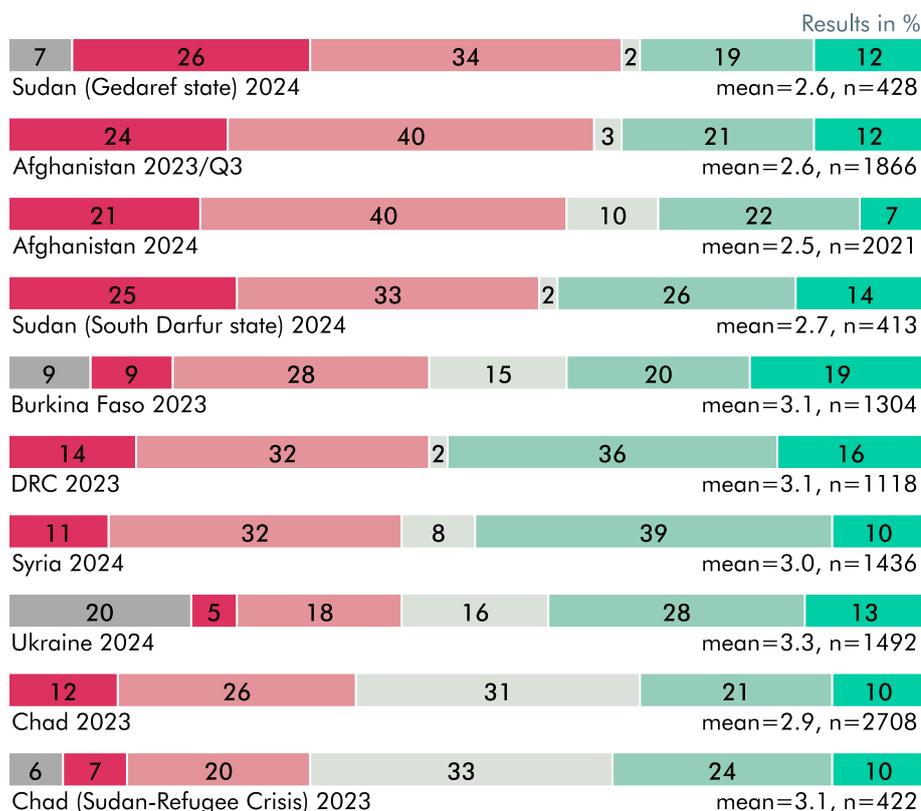
In Sudan and Afghanistan more than 50% of people say aid does not reach those who need it most. In Afghanistan, only 23% of people believe that humanitarian assistance reaches the most vulnerable women and girls. In South Darfur, many people feel that the wrong individuals are prioritised while vulnerable groups – such as the elderly, children, people with disabilities and single mothers – are overlooked.

“I don’t know the exact reason, but sometimes they give aid to people who don’t need it, like someone healthy and capable of working, while they neglect someone who is ill or disabled and unable to work.” – Sara, Sudan

Figure 11

In Sudan and Afghanistan, the majority of people feel that aid and services doesn't reach those most in need

Do aid and services go to those who need it most?



● Don't know / Don't want to answer ● Not at all ● Not really ● Neutral ● Mostly Yes ● Yes, completely

A related challenge is that both globally and within countries, the areas where needs are most pressing do not align with the areas where most aid is concentrated. This is sometimes related to complex access constraints but also reflects where aid is cheapest and easiest to distribute. In Somalia, for example, we hear from local responders that the practice of distributing aid in government-controlled areas forces people to make long and dangerous journeys out of Al-Shabaab controlled territory. In these government areas, people sometimes opt to stay as IDPs, which increases their dependence on aid and strains the humanitarian response.³⁹

The humanitarian principle of impartiality is revered and sometimes used to defend international action. Still, data shows it consistently fails to do what it is supposed to in terms of identifying and reaching vulnerable people. Across different crises, there are vulnerable groups that are systematically left behind: the elderly, people with disabilities, children and women-led households. In Burkina Faso, DRC, South Darfur (Sudan), Chad and Ukraine, older people top the list of those missing out on assistance because of limited mobility and lower digital literacy. Women and women-led households also face unique challenges, particularly when cultural, religious and legal norms limit their access to information and public spaces. In Burkina Faso, while married women receive information through their husbands, widows and single women are more likely to be left out without the assistance of a man who can access the networks and spaces where people exchange essential information. In Nigeria, women without male relatives are often excluded from aid distribution, despite meeting the criteria.⁴⁰ Women also assert that exclusion from the decisions that affect them leads to less effective and appropriate assistance:

³⁹ Information from dissemination workshops held during Somalia cash project.

⁴⁰ Feedback from FACT foundation during report review.

“We want the decision-making process to involve women. We want to voice our concerns, opinions and views. Our views need to be taken into account because our needs usually differ to men’s.” – Amirah, Nigeria

People with disabilities are also often excluded from or struggle to access assistance. In DRC, people with disabilities report that they are deliberately passed over during registrations and distributions, and those with disabilities in Burkina Faso feel the least informed about the assistance available to them.

Deliberate discrimination against certain groups has been reported in several contexts. In Ukraine, for example, Roma people say they face discrimination in accessing assistance, and both Roma and LGBTQIA+ people struggle to find safe accommodation and face violence.

“The LGBTQIA+ community, especially couples, cannot live in shelters run by the state or by humanitarian aid organisations. We had a lot of problems in regular shelters with violence towards LGBTQIA+ people.” – Serhii, Ukraine

Syrian refugees in Türkiye said they couldn’t access certain items, received less support or were treated less humanely than their Turkish counterparts, and in Nigeria, minority ethnic groups are often excluded.⁴¹ And some people feel that arbitrary targeting decisions exclude certain high-need populations: in Sudan, many respondents think that aid providers disproportionately focus on people living in collective shelters while neglecting those living in host communities.

Many communities spoke of corruption, particularly of “gatekeepers” who seize aid and channel it to allies and relatives. Corruption is seen as a major problem, with 41% of people in Afghanistan⁴² and 38% of people in South Darfur, Sudan categorising it as the biggest barrier to accessing assistance.

“Community leaders sometimes take the aid and give it to their people, which is unfair, and no one can say anything about it.” – Khalid, Sudan

In Somalia, while some people said they voluntarily share some of the aid they receive with gatekeepers for redistribution, others feel they have no choice:

“Some gatekeepers tell you that you have to pay a part of the aid you received. If you don’t want to and refuse, they will not register you next time. No matter what, the person has needs and has to agree.” – Mohamed, Somalia

There’s a mismatch between people’s priority needs and the aid they receive

Despite the massive shortfall of resources, we persistently see a mismatch between what people need most and what they receive. This suggests that people’s priorities are not sufficiently understood and reflected in aid allocations. This is one of the most consistent findings across contexts and points to massive systemic inefficiencies, which the humanitarian reset must urgently address. In South Darfur, most people we spoke to said the aid they receive is not aligned with their priority needs: almost everyone named food as their highest priority need but only 30% of people had received food in the past six months (more had received non-food items). In Chad, DRC, CAR, Gaza and elsewhere, people raise similar concerns:

“To our surprise they gave us mosquito nets. We didn’t need them; we still had nets from their last intervention.” – Ferdinand, DRC

“In my village, there’s an NGO with a latrine project. In the field, instead of informing the population to gather their wishes, it has started to build latrines. The population, who need to rebuild schools that were destroyed during the crisis, opposed this project, and the NGO was forced to stop work and leave the village.” – Jean, CAR

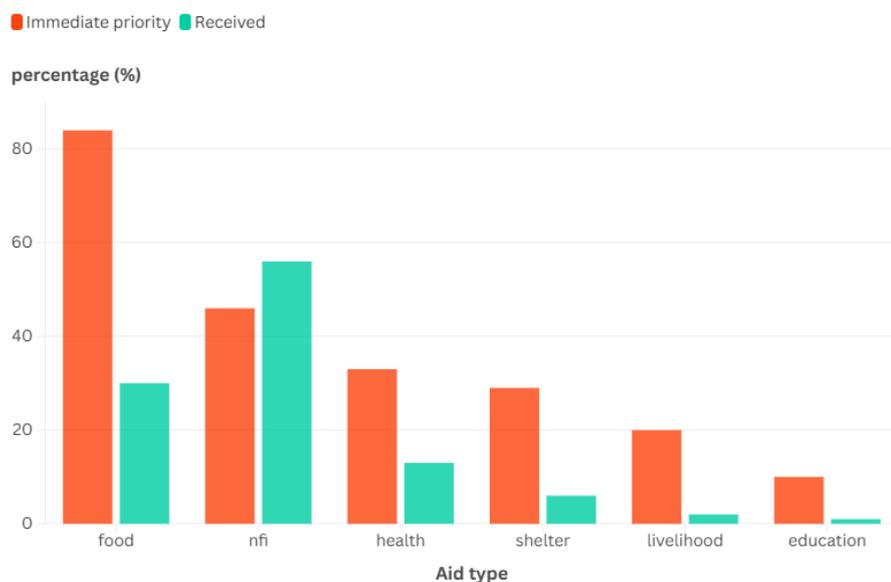
⁴¹ Feedback from FACT foundation during report review

⁴² Ground Truth Solutions. January 2024. [“We as women’s groups can find women in need when organisations can’t.”](#)

Figure 12

The gap between people’s priority needs and the aid they received in Sudan (South Darfur)⁴³

Sudan (South Darfur state) 2024



Selling – at a loss – aid that’s been distributed to get the resources to buy what is needed is also a common theme. About 40% of people in DRC and 36% of people in Chad say they sell at least some of the aid they receive to better cover their priority needs. This includes selling food aid to access more nutritious or appropriate food:

“Some of the products provided by international organisations, such as canned food or toast bread, are not what is really needed, and part ... is sold because some of the people don’t need it.” – Ali, Gaza, Occupied Palestinian Territory

“We received red millet and spaghetti. Horses, camels and sheep eat red millet here, so we sell it to get rice and other foods.” – Zara, Chad

Because of this, we see a strong preference for cash across countries; cash gives people the flexibility to meet their most pressing needs, as well as supporting local economies and giving aid recipients more power over their own recovery.

Perhaps the biggest takeaway here is that an annual process of needs identification and supply-driven response simply doesn't work. Harking back to the section on longer-term support, people need to be equipped to respond to their own needs as they evolve. Aid should be designed to let them do that, not trap them in an endless cycle of humiliation and dependency.



What needs to change:

In an acute funding shortfall, both omission of the most vulnerable people and the mismatch between needs and assistance are not only short-changing people, they are also a massive driver of inefficiency. The humanitarian reset must keep a laser focus on reaching the most vulnerable, and must ensure that understanding what people most need and prioritise is driving assistance. It must also grapple with

⁴³ Received (green bar) refers to the question “What type of humanitarian aid and services did you receive?” while “Immediate priority” (red bar) refers to “What are your most immediate priorities?”

questions around who is best placed in communities to identify and reach people, recognising the repeated failure of the international system to do so. People we spoke to call for:

Meaningful engagement of communities in the allocation, design and distribution of aid, which usually means large agencies relinquishing power and involving communities in hard decisions, matched with flexible funding modalities that help them meet their own needs

Greater transparency around how prioritisation decisions are made and how people are targeted, and engaging community members in these decisions

Conducting more regular and dynamic prioritisation exercises to ensure aid remains relevant to evolving needs and circumstances, and strengthening feedback mechanisms to allow people to voice concerns in real time

More flexible assistance (particularly cash) that gives recipients the power to choose what they most need



Questions for humanitarian leaders

1. How can the humanitarian reset drastically change humanitarian planning, making it more people-centred?
2. How can the humanitarian reset ensure the most vulnerable people are reached?

Conclusion

Sweeping aid cuts as needs continue to spiral mean radical changes to the ways humanitarian assistance is planned, prioritised and delivered. These changes will happen in one of two ways. They could be driven by power and politics, resulting in a slimmed-down version of the current inefficient model. Our data says that this would be disastrous – inaccurate diagnoses of what is “life saving” leading to wasted resources, and risking lives and livelihoods. Or the changes could be driven by what people in crisis need and prioritise, resulting in a radical rethinking of humanitarian aid towards something better, fairer and more future-fit.

Despite being clear for many years what reforms are needed in the humanitarian system, we have been unable and unwilling to achieve them even in times of plenty. The stakes are now far graver, and the cost of failure far higher. Getting this right now would involve a serious reassessment of how funders handle prioritisation and risk, and some big questions about how international actors can work in solidarity. We sincerely hope power-holders choose to pursue the second option, and that this summary of communities’ key priorities helps to guide the prioritisation process.

Bibliography

Afghanistan	2023/Q1	<u>"Only a woman can understand another woman."</u>
	2023/Q3	<u>"We as women's groups can find women in need when organisations can't."</u>
	2024	Forthcoming
Bangladesh	2022	<u>"We are not getting the support we need to lead a better life."</u>
Burkina Faso	2023	<u>"Needs grow as funding falls."</u>
Central African Republic	2023	Forthcoming
	2024	Forthcoming
Chad	2023	Multiple provincial reports available for round 8 – see <u>"An accountable humanitarian response in Chad."</u>
	Sudan- Refugee Crisis 2023	<u>"Perceptions of people recently displaced from Sudan to Chad."</u>
	2024	<u>"Prevention is better than cure."</u>
Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)	2023	<u>"No transparency, no trust."</u>
Nigeria	2023	<u>"Men have the power to say everything, women don't."</u>
	2024	<u>"Rampant inflation and climate crisis: can cash cope?"</u>
Occupied Palestinian Territory	2023	<u>"Stop the war and let me return to my home, even if it is destroyed."</u>
	2024	<u>"We do not want aid from the world. We want to stop the war."</u>
Ukraine	2023	<u>"Cash is king –if you can get it."</u>
	2024	<u>"Strengthening systems so people can take charge."</u>
Sudan	South Darfur state 2024	<u>"We have seen enough death. We cannot speak up because no one will hear our voices."</u>
	Gedaref state 2024	<u>"Our lives have been turned upside down and scattered."</u>
Somalia	2023	<u>"Overcoming power imbalances: Community recommendations for breaking the cycle."</u>



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