

HPG commissioned report

Reducing the humanitarian financing gap

Review of progress since the report of the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing

Barnaby Willitts-King and Alexandra Spencer

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Kingdom of the Netherlands

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Acronyms

AIR	Annual Independent Review
ARC	African Risk Capacity
CBi	Connecting Business initiative
CERF	United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
CRS	Creditor Reporting System
CRW	Crisis Response Window
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DG ECHO	Directorate-General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (European Commission)
DGGF	Dutch Good Growth Fund
DREF	Disaster Relief Emergency Fund
DRR	disaster risk reduction
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
EU	European Union
FCV	fragility, conflict and violence
FTS	Financial Tracking Service
GB	Grand Bargain
GCF	Global Concessional Financing Facility
GDP	gross domestic product
GHD	Good Humanitarian Donorship
GHO	Global Humanitarian Overview
HIB	humanitarian impact bond
HLP	High-Level Panel of the United Nations Secretary-General on Humanitarian Financing
HPG	Humanitarian Policy Group
HRI	Humanitarian and Resilience Investing Initiative
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDA	International Development Association

IDP	internally displaced person
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFI	international financial institution
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JIAG	Joint Intersectoral Analysis Group
MTR	mid-term review
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PACT	Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformations
PBF	UN Peacebuilding Fund
REAP	Risk-Informed Early Action Partnership
RRRP	Regional Refugee Response Plan
SME	small/medium-sized enterprise
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
UNGA	UN General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WEF	World Economic Forum
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

Executive summary

Key messages

- The key recommendations from the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing (HLP) in 2016, to reduce need by adopting more development approaches to crises and to broaden the resource base by increasing the diversity of donors, continue to be valid and even more relevant today. Needs measured by inter-agency appeals have doubled since then, and conflicts have persisted in Syria and Yemen, and flared up in new areas, with little optimism for a reduction in conflict globally.
- The HLP’s solutions to the ‘financing gap’ between humanitarian need and resourcing therefore continue to be relevant. In hindsight this was clearly a long-term agenda, that required a strategy, focus and leadership to drive it forward, rather than one that could be achieved within five years.
- Progress on ‘reducing need’ (Pillar 1 of the HLP) is greater than perceived, particularly relating to the humanitarian–development–peace nexus and risk-informed anticipatory action; but this progress is uneven, fragmented and not at scale. There has been a disappointing lack of progress on widening the resource base of the existing humanitarian system (Pillar 2) through partnerships with new/emerging bilateral donors, the private sector or Islamic social finance.
- Consistent, high-level leadership supported by broad coalitions, such as on anticipatory action, has helped drive progress in some areas. However, the lack of a dedicated structure to follow up on the HLP’s recommendations has meant overall progress is challenging to measure.
- There are opportunities to make further progress on the HLP recommendations, particularly on financing development approaches in crisis, but a focused approach has the greatest likelihood of impact in the short term given the demands on the humanitarian system and current limited appetite for ambitious reform. This narrow approach should make stronger connections to existing fora such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee OECD/DAC and Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Results Groups and be complementary to the Grand Bargain (GB) in its next iteration.
- While a more focused approach is recommended in the short term, there is a need for a more ambitious future vision to strengthen the global system for responding to crisis, including through the humanitarian system, but also through scaling up development approaches in crises and financing crisis responses more predictably.

Progress has been made mostly on development approaches to crisis to reduce humanitarian need (Pillar 1), but achieving scale is a challenge and progress has been slow in many areas particularly on widening the resource base (Pillar 2)

Progress has been made mostly on development approaches to crisis to reduce humanitarian need through the World Bank’s increased engagement and development of new tools for fragility, as well as the OECD/DAC recommendation on the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.

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Risk-informed approaches such as anticipatory action and risk financing have grown in profile and momentum, including an acceptance that considering risk-based approaches is appropriate within humanitarian crises and focusing only on need is insufficient. Even so, these areas of progress are still at the stage of early promise rather than large-scale implementation, due to unrealistic expectations of how long change takes to happen, donors' risk aversion to untested approaches, and entrenched structural issues and few incentives to change among humanitarian agencies. Where they do exist, initiatives are siloed and fragmented with little sharing of lessons.

Efforts to widen the resource base have not been successful, whether from new donors, the private sector or Islamic social finance, where there has been little growth in funding or sustained partnerships, whether collectively or as individual agencies. However, there is also increasing recognition that the current paradigm of the funding 'gap' based on appeals may need adjusting to better reflect the contributions and motivations of actors such as emerging donors and the private sector that bring considerable resources to crises, but not through the channels of the international system.

Ingredients for accelerating and improving progress

Based on these lessons, in order to move ahead with the agenda of the HLP's first two pillars, the following elements and principles should be considered when taking forward the recommendations for action that follow:

- Be ambitious about making progress in the longer term, but realistic about the timescale over which change happens, and prioritise based on capacity/leadership – take the long view on culture change and new partnerships in particular.
- Connect the conversations on the future of the GB with the findings of this research into the other two pillars.
- Build on what works and look at scaling success by removing barriers to scale and ensuring sufficient continued investment.
- Build small, broad-based coalitions to take forward collective action such as Germany/UK/ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) on anticipatory action.
- Get consistent high-level champions to sponsor specific actions, build coalitions and ensure their sustained involvement.
- Have a structured approach but work through and complement rather than duplicate existing fora such as the GB, Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD), OECD/DAC and IASC; work to strengthen links between fora, considering comparative advantages, and ensure work is complementary.
- Focus on improving how progress on this agenda is measured by including benchmarks and indicators in a light follow-up mechanism.

Recommendations for action

In order to address the financing gap and provide better humanitarian assistance in the spirit of the HLP, the following priorities are recommended both to align current processes and to make further progress on areas of potential.

Develop a framework for HLP follow-up and construct a more ambitious vision for strengthening the crisis response system

In the short term, key humanitarian actors should develop a light mechanism to advance the HLP agendas of reducing needs and widening the resource base more systematically and ensure a more structured monitoring and sharing of lessons – focusing on the recommendations below. This could be included in the next iteration of the GB if there is appetite among signatories, or developed as a standalone, but connected, mechanism. A high-level review mechanism within or on the margins of the GB annual meeting, with quarterly opportunities for sharing lessons and progress, could be hosted and/or co-led by relevant constituencies such as the European Commission Directorate-General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), World Economic Forum (WEF), United Nations (UN), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the World Bank and the Red Cross/Crescent movement.

Such a platform or mechanism could also be used to explore a more ambitious future vision to strengthen the global system for responding to crisis, including through the humanitarian system, but also through scaling up development approaches in crisis and financing crisis responses more predictably. This could ultimately be part of a more harmonised approach that brings together and updates the three different pillars of the HLP into a future roadmap and platform for crisis financing and system reform.

Scale up anticipatory action

The momentum in risk financing and anticipatory action needs to be scaled up and diversified to different contexts. Donors should increase financial commitments and support to broad-based coalitions such as the Risk-Informed Early Action Partnership (REAP) while all actors should document lessons more systematically and engage in more collective policy discussions.

This requires continued high-level stewardship and commitment to building the evidence base so that the right solutions can be adapted to different crisis contexts, particularly looking more at conflict in addition to disasters. Germany's focus on this area could be complemented by greater engagement from DG ECHO/the European Union (EU) and the US, and continued Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) leadership.

Strengthen nexus working

Strong leadership from a major donor such as DG ECHO, working with the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the OECD/DAC could build a coalition to work alongside the GB to share lessons and drive progress on nexus working at crisis level – and make this progress more measurable and visible. A regular stocktake on progress would be of benefit. Greater engagement by development actors could be fostered by exploring links with key development fora and mechanisms such as the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

This needs to be connected firmly to the GB, OECD/DAC and the IASC Results Group. As the Annual Independent Review (AIR) 2020 noted, ‘there are still calls from many signatories for a space within the GB to debate key challenges and collaborate on possible solutions relating to the nexus. Any such mechanism would need to be clearly defined in terms of its added value and how it would work in complement to, rather than in competition with, existing platforms at global level’ (Metcalf-Hough et al., 2020: 101).

The World Bank, with support from its shareholders, should deepen its engagement in humanitarian crises and focus on outreach to a range of partners to build mutual understanding. This could benefit from a collective discussion between the World Bank and its key humanitarian agency partners, perhaps as part of the annual Fragility Forum.

Strengthen private sector cooperation and innovative financing

The lack of progress on public–private cooperation could be unblocked by more collective approaches among UN agencies and donors, focused less on fundraising and more on identifying specific areas of complementarity and practical platforms for collaboration. The WEF and other platforms such as the UN Global Compact should be invited to participate in discussions with humanitarian actors in broad-based groups like the GB signatories.

The specific theme of innovative financing has a number of high-level champions in the WEF-coordinated High-Level Group on Humanitarian and Resilience Investing. Driving forward this agenda into practical pilots, sharing lessons, and financing the design of financial products and research to build the evidence base should be priorities for members of the group and other fora.

Develop broad coalitions to engage with new donors

High-level engagement should continue to encourage emerging donors from the Gulf, China and other areas to see predictable funding as part of being an effective supporter of people in crisis (even if not delivered through the humanitarian system), rather than making ad hoc contributions to specific strategic countries. An informal coalition of DAC donors, perhaps with support from the OECD/DAC, could use specific relationships to engage with emerging donor countries. Major donors such as the US and ECHO,

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as well as others who have bilateral relationships, could conduct informal dialogues with such countries where there was mutual interest. This must be a sustained process that focuses as much on encouraging non-financial contributions and complementary partnerships as on financial contributions.

Develop a long-term, joined-up vision on Islamic social finance, with high-level sponsorship

While there are a number of initiatives around Islamic social finance, there is a need for high-level championing and leadership over a sustained period (a minimum of five years) to focus in on where progress could be made, learn the lessons of previous initiatives and overcome blockages. This could include representatives from the HLP, senior figures from Islamic donor countries in the Gulf and Southeast Asia, as well as other donor countries and agencies that have been working on this, such as IFRC and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), and financial institutions including the Islamic Development Bank and Maybank.

Develop practical approaches to considering resource flows beyond appeals

The gradual progress in moving away from focusing solely on inter-agency appeals could be accelerated by the establishment of a wider coalition on all-resource planning comprising donors and agencies such as the Netherlands, World Bank, Development Initiatives and OCHA.

This agenda could be advanced by developing country-level pilots on better understanding all resource flows (perhaps using OCHA's Financial Tracking Service (FTS) and/or International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)) and using this lens in designing Humanitarian Response Plans, while recognising the limitations of obtaining usable data on such flows. The Joint Intersectoral Analysis Group (JIAG) could also usefully develop guidance on how a range of diverse resource flows, such as from remittances and non-traditional funders, may contribute to the coping capacity of people affected by crisis.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing

In January 2016, the HLP published its report *Too important to fail – addressing the humanitarian financing gap* (HLP, 2016), which formed the basis for the GB negotiations in early 2016. It contained recommendations under three pillars:

1. Shrinking needs by bringing development financing into crisis situations; it also referenced reducing conflict but did not make specific recommendations.
2. Broadening the resource base, including bringing in new donors and the private sector.
3. A Grand Bargain on efficiency in which donors would provide more and better-quality funding with a reduced reporting burden in exchange for aid agency reforms around localisation, transparency, participation and needs assessment, among others.

Since 2016, the GB has emerged as one of the key outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS). With its 10 workstreams and now 63 signatories, it has been reviewed annually (Metcalf-Hough et al., 2020). The key recommendations from Pillars 1 and 2 are the focus of this study and are summarised in Box 1.

Box 1 High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing: top-level recommendations from Pillars 1 and 2

Pillar 1 – Shrink the needs: a shared responsibility

1. Reorient official development assistance towards the reduction and prevention of situations of fragility.
2. Create fiscal space and generate local and national capacity for crisis prevention and response.
3. Promote development finance in protracted crises and, wherever possible, move to joint humanitarian–development financial programming.
4. Change the eligibility criteria for access to low-interest loans and grants to follow the people in need.
5. Increase the International Development Association (IDA)’s Crisis Response Window funding by at least a factor of three.

Pillar 2 – Deepen and broaden the resource base for humanitarian action

1. Establish an international solidarity levy mechanism to support the health and welfare of displaced people.
2. Intensify funding from new donors by ensuring that their contributions receive appropriate recognition in the key tracking systems for humanitarian funding.

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3. Engage the private sector to commit resources for in-kind response, with the UN Global Compact creating opportunities to tap into assets, skills and capabilities.
4. Unleash the full potential of Islamic social finance.
5. Develop international media platforms for more systematic and predictable individual giving.

Source: HLP (2016)

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 Terms of reference

The terms of reference for the study state its objective is ‘to identify, assess and analyse different ongoing initiatives that are being taken in the spirit of the Panel’s recommendations of the pillars (1) shrinking the needs and (2) broadening the resource base and identify possible links with progress on the Grand Bargain of Pillar 3’.

The key questions to be addressed by the study to achieve this objective are:

- Are the recommendations of the HLP still valid to address today’s humanitarian financing gap or has the debate ‘moved on’?
- Was there any structured or unstructured, explicit or implicit follow-up on the recommendations from Pillars 1 and 2 of the HLP Report on Humanitarian Financing? (Mapping)
- If so, what have been major trends and initiatives, and what have been some specific results?
- Who were the major actors to drive this change and achieve these results?
- What were some of the challenges they faced and how were they able to overcome them?
- What are some of the links with the GB?
- How has the Covid-19 pandemic influenced some ways of working?
- What lessons can be drawn from these initiatives when addressing the financing gap in 2021 and beyond?

1.2.2 Scope and limitations

Interviews were conducted with a broad cross-section of the humanitarian and development communities including donors, UN agencies, local and international NGOs, the Red Cross/Crescent movement and researchers/analysts. Twenty-five remote interviews were completed with a total of 46 individuals.

Relevant literature was also reviewed at the broader strategic level and in relation to specific recommendations. For example, this study also reflects GB reporting against Workstream 10 on the humanitarian–development nexus, where there is overlap with the first pillar of the HLP. Synergies were sought with the upcoming GB AIR, also being carried out by HPG.

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The study was a rapid review undertaken over 10 weeks in January–March 2021, covering the wide scope of the HLP. The evidence base for progress is therefore by necessity a combination of literature and qualitative impressions from stakeholders. The study did not engage with multiple individuals in key organisations, so varying views within those organisations were not explored in detail. The findings have been triangulated and peer reviewed.

2 Progress and challenges in follow-up of the High-Level Panel Pillar 1 and 2 recommendations

2.1 Changes in the humanitarian landscape since 2016

In its most simple measure, there has been little progress since 2016 in reducing humanitarian need as measured by UN-coordinated appeals. On the one hand, funding in absolute terms has increased by \$6.3 billion since 2016. However, humanitarian needs have doubled since 2015 and have been rising every year, with a jump in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic (see Figure 1). The funding gap has also persisted, with only 48% of the \$38.6 billion in funding needs received in 2020, below the typical 60% funding level of previous years.

Beyond these figures, the humanitarian and international landscape has worsened since 2016. To pick just some headlines: the Syria conflict has evolved but is still not resolved as it enters its 10th year; fragility continues in South Sudan; and the Yemen crisis has worsened. The Tigray conflict in Ethiopia, and tensions in Nagorno-Karabakh in recent months, show the potential for escalating conflict. Global numbers of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) have continued to grow, up 35% between 2015 and 2019 to 86.5 million persons of concern (UNHCR, 2020a).

The European refugee ‘crisis’, which saw sharp increases of migrants and asylum seekers attempting to enter Europe in late 2015, was catalytic in bringing distant conflicts more acutely and visibly into the media and politics of the continent. The impacts of climate change on disasters and conflict have also become increasingly apparent (van Bronkhorst and Bousquet, 2021).

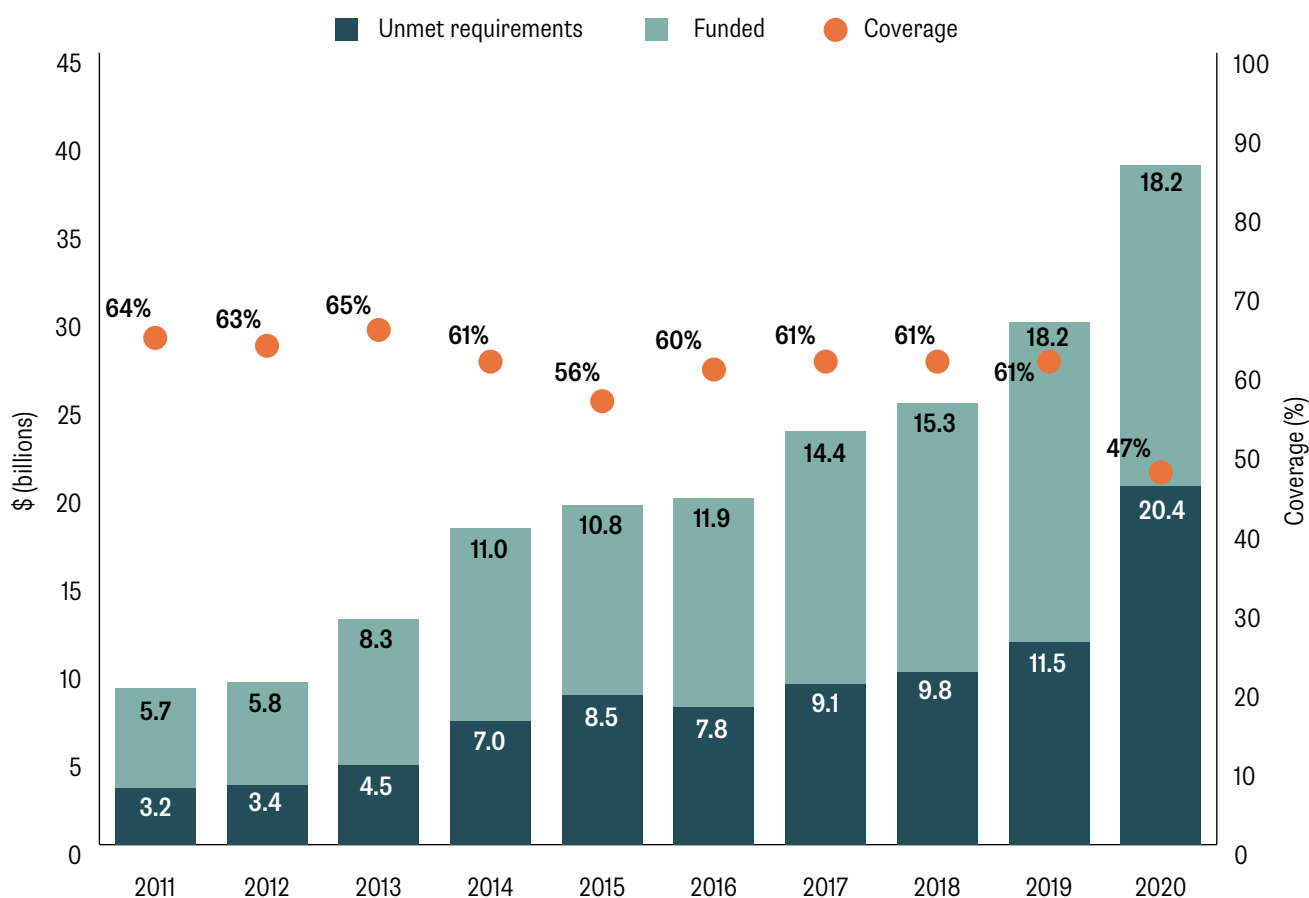
International cooperation to address these crises has been blunted by the four years of the Trump administration in the US from 2017–2020, and continued tensions between major global powers. David Miliband, President of International Rescue Committee, has spoken of an ‘age of impunity’ in which power has shifted towards autocratic regimes, war crimes go unpunished and human rights are under pressure, fuelled by greater ambivalence towards them in liberal democracies (IRC, 2020). It is also an ‘age of caution’, in which UN Member States have not provided the diplomatic support needed for the UN to play its role in diplomacy and advocacy with conflict parties (Bowden and Metcalfe-Hough, 2020).

A related trend is increased downward pressure on international assistance through Official Development Assistance (ODA). While international humanitarian aid has continued to grow, it has neither kept pace with the growth of needs, nor is it certain whether this can continue when ODA is further reduced as economies contract as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This has impacted levels

of international humanitarian assistance along with changes in remittances, investment and trade. At a more fundamental level, there is growing attention to questions of power in the aid system, such as the colonial roots of aid and the need for genuine progress on shifting the power to the Global South.

The pandemic, and its foreseen secondary impacts on economies and livelihoods in both crisis-affected and donor countries, bookends a period of already negative trends, raising concerns about continued uncertainty, reduced international cooperation and fewer resources to address growing humanitarian challenges in coming years.

Figure 1 Total requirements and funding for UN-coordinated appeals, 2011-2020



Notes: The requirements for 2019 include total Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO) requirements; this represents the additional value of requirements of portions of the Regional Refugee Response Plans (RRRPs) coordinated by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

Source: UN OCHA FTS data

2.2 Relevance of the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing

In this context, there is general consensus that the HLP's analysis of the humanitarian financing gap is still valid; indeed, with the mounting pressures noted above, arguably its recommendations need to be taken further. While the humanitarian landscape has changed, the underlying systemic challenges remain similar to 2016, and many of the solutions identified then remain correct, including those of Pillars 1 and 2.

While the top-level indicator of the financing gap between needs and resources remains gloomy, according to interviewees the WHS did change the trajectory and discourse of the humanitarian system, for example around localisation, and there are some grounds for optimism, or at least reasons to continue with some of the directions of travel recommended by the HLP.

There are, however, a range of views on progress against the HLP's recommendations, which we review in detail below. This in part relates to expectations of how quickly change is likely to happen and what scale of change could reasonably be expected in five years. Impatient humanitarians are frustrated at the lack of progress, while recognising the rhetorical shifts that have happened around localisation and the nexus, for example. Innovative approaches to new partnerships with businesses, or viewing financing through a more holistic 'crisis' lens, have made conceptual progress but not made much difference in practice. Development actors view the shifts in nexus working, development financing in fragility and anticipatory action as promising, and as taking place over the years that system change should be expected to take.

2.2.1 Follow up to the HLP

The HLP report did not have a structured framework for implementation or follow-up, except specifically in relation to the GB through the workstreams and secretariat, which were progressively instituted after the WHS. The WHS's 'Agenda for Humanity' plan of action included a number of commitments corresponding to HLP Pillars 1 and 2, and was followed up through voluntary reporting to the 'Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformations' (PACT) against commitments made by organisations at the WHS (OCHA, n.d.). Between 2017 and 2019 OCHA synthesised these self-reports on an annual basis, with a final synthesis report in December 2019, covering progress made to the end of 2018. This final report was by its nature not a critical review, but its conclusions identified the need to sustain the ambition of the WHS by identifying structural obstacles and operational solutions, ensuring a diverse and inclusive process, and strengthening the measurability of change.

A consolidated and more analytical review of these pillars was a joint high-level discussion organised by NRC and the World Bank in Geneva in March 2018 (World Bank and NRC, 2018). This discussed progress against the two non-GB pillars and resolved to continue mapping initiatives against them. The current study represents follow-up from that meeting and has built on preliminary background analysis undertaken by NRC to inform the 2018 briefing discussion.

2.3 Major trends and results

The HLP recognised as a priority the need to reduce conflict in order to reduce needs, but focused its recommendations on technical solutions within the remit of the humanitarian sector. This acknowledged that addressing conflict has been and continues to be the hardest agenda to deliver, lying beyond the humanitarian mandate in the realm of politics and global strategic interests. Better collaboration between aid actors, or conflict sensitivity, cannot on its own deliver political solutions to conflict where great power rivalry and UN Security Council paralysis are paramount, particularly in the polarised geopolitics since 2015.

The HLP therefore focused its recommendations on a bold pitch for expanding humanitarian financing into a range of new or underexplored areas. The two themes that have shown most progress according to interviews for this study fall under the first pillar of the HLP (shrinking the needs):

1. development approaches to crisis (the ‘nexus’); and
2. risk-informed approaches and anticipatory action.

While some progress has been made, it is still not clear whether these approaches can be taken to scale, as discussed below.

2.3.1 Development approaches to crisis - the ‘nexus’

The HLP pillar of ‘shrinking the need’ had a significant emphasis on bringing development approaches and financing further into situations of fragility and crisis. While results are still mixed, this area has seen the most progress in terms of the HLP recommendations, according to consistent views from interviewees.

The ‘triple nexus’ has emerged as a common shorthand to refer to better coordination and collaboration between humanitarian, development and peace actors and activities. For many it is ‘old wine in new bottles’, representing the latest reformulation of debates over linking relief and development – while for others it is leading to new ways of working, particularly operationally in crisis-affected countries. The significance of this latest formulation as the ‘nexus’ is in its increasing inclusion in key policy processes following agreement on the GB and the WHS Agenda for Humanity. This includes leading to the UN’s ‘New Way of Working’, being formalised by donors in the OECD/DAC recommendation, and increased engagement by the international financial institutions (IFIs).

GB workstream 10 on the humanitarian–development nexus was operational until 2018 and was then meant to be mainstreamed into all the other workstreams on the basis that other fora such as the OECD/DAC and IASC Results Group 4 were better placed to be the main platforms for this theme. Signatories to the GB still report against the workstream; the analysis of the workstream within the last GB AIR is very pertinent: ‘A great deal of activity is clearly being undertaken by Grand Bargain signatories under this workstream, with tangible results being reported for individual programmes and approaches. But this does not yet appear to signify a system-wide shift in practice’ (Metcalf-Hough et al., 2020: 101).

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Interviews indicated that the wide scope of this thematic area has eluded effective coordination and initiatives are fragmented. There is a long way to go to achieve major transformation of how aid actors work in crisis that accounts for the increasing protractedness of such crises, the central yet sometimes challenging role of affected governments, and understanding and measuring the impacts of activities on the desired outcome of shrinking needs. There is also a challenge to be ‘trilingual’ across the three elements of the nexus in order to engage in collective processes, but this is a rare skillset. There is ambivalence from some funders to support nexus projects – particularly as it is still seen as a humanitarian issue with limited buy-in by development actors.

At a macro level, funding trends show some growth in ODA to fragile contexts, while the OECD/DAC recommendation on the humanitarian–development–peace nexus represents a positive normative step, even if modest in ambition and slow in its implementation. Various initiatives are underway, including within the UN system and relating to refugees. The engagement of IFIs, particularly the World Bank, is significant but still nascent. This is discussed in more detail below.

Progress has been quite conceptual and normative with the DAC recommendation on the nexus, and while some agencies talk of ‘sustainable humanitarian impact’, a commonly identified challenge is that lessons are not being clearly publicised or learned. There are growing numbers of examples from operational settings. For instance, examples of ‘nexus working’ by donors, NGOs and the World Bank have been recorded in Iraq and Yemen (CIC, 2019). Recent analysis of triple nexus programming by Development Initiatives in three countries highlights the mixed results so far at country/operational level and identifies practical lessons from the point of view of development cooperation across partnerships, coordination, programming, financing and organisational issues, concluding that ‘more joined-up, coherent programming among humanitarian, development and peace actors requires these actors to understand each other’s language, systems, ways of operating, and the challenges they face when working in crisis contexts’ (FAO et al., 2021). On the donor side, for example, DG ECHO has made some progress in linking with DG DEVCO (now DG International Partnerships: DG INTPA) through a high-level political statement, but there is not a well understood narrative on how this has taken place. There has been progress on joint working around displacement through the Global Compact on Refugees and associated processes, but here, too, there has been limited exchange of learning.

Anticipatory action – discussed below – has been a specific instance of applying a development lens to humanitarian action to be more risk-informed, which has risen in prominence significantly since the WHS.

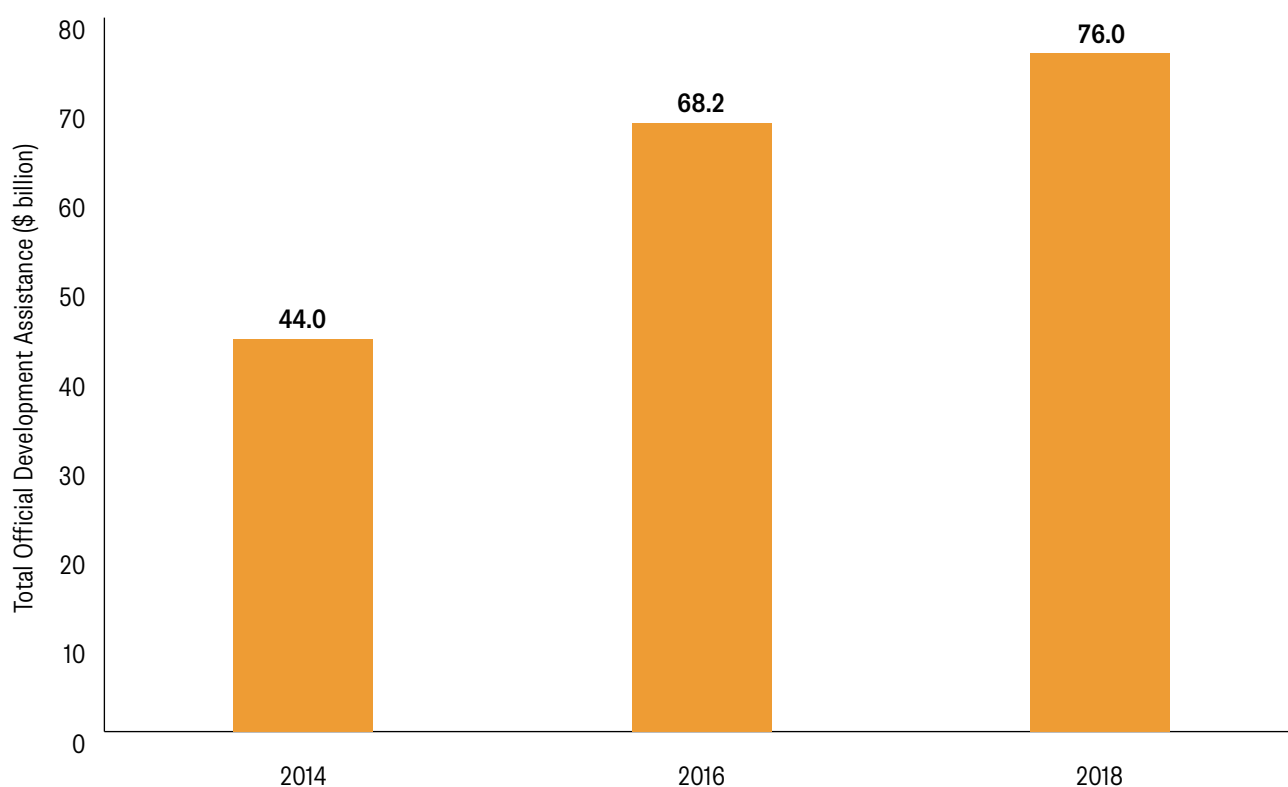
Funding trends

In line with the panel’s recommendation, according to the OECD/DAC, more ODA (\$76 billion) went to fragile contexts in 2018 – the latest year for which data is available – than ever before, and ‘in extremely fragile contexts, ODA amounted to 11.5 times the level of foreign direct investment and 2.5 times the amount of remittances’ (OECD, 2020: 21) (see Figure 2). Specifically, DAC members spent 63% of their net country-allocable ODA on fragile contexts. While this has increased since 2016, these figures in aggregate show us little about where this money is spent. These figures are particularly important in the context of decreasing aid budgets post-Covid-19, as there may be growing disparities between recipient countries.

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However, the HLP recommendation of allocating 1% of assessed contributions from Member States to the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) has yet to be implemented. The Fund's strategy for 2020–2024 briefly mentions this recommendation, suggesting that it is still a priority, but as yet no practical solutions have been offered (UN Peacebuilding, 2020). At the PBF Replenishment in January 2021, the Advisory Board called for more support from Member States, first through increasing their voluntary contributions to improve predictability of funding and to increase the pool of donors. Additionally, they urged for the membership to 'collectively [continue] to address the vital question of some form of assessed contribution' (PBF Advisory Group, 2021). This potentially means that the peace/security dimension of the triple nexus will continue to trail behind the others.

Figure 2 Official Development Assistance to fragile contexts, 2014-2018



Source: OECD (2016; 2018; 2020)

Donor efforts to advance the nexus

The Member States of the OECD/DAC issued a new recommendation on the nexus in 2019 through which they are committed to improve coordination, programming and financing in support of coherent, complementary and effective approaches in fragile contexts; it has also been taken on by five UN agencies. This is seen as an important normative milestone that demonstrates commitment, while also reflecting a long period of engagement with conflict and fragility by development donors (including the 2011 World Development Report on conflict, security and development). Even more fundamentally, the Sustainable Development Goals have driven a shift in development donors to consider how to 'leave no-one behind', which has meant a pivot towards fragile and crisis-affected settings.

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However, the GB AIR 2020 highlighted that several GB signatories cautioned that ‘the DAC recommendation is – by nature of being a multilateral effort – not the most ambitious, and overlaps with other preexisting commitments. It represents progress and is a positive political sign, but is not, on its own, likely to deliver a major shift in practice’ (Metcalfe et al., 2020: 97). The proof will be in its implementation, which will be reinforced among DAC donors through its inclusion in the DAC peer review framework, but this is likely to mark an evolutionary, incremental change in practice.

On a bilateral basis, many donors have developed different approaches in the spirit of the nexus, both in terms of internal working practices and structures and specific crisis programming. For example, the EU has published a cross-Commission guidance note and is piloting a nexus approach in six countries, along with EU Member States, while Germany and the US have published transitional development and fragility strategies respectively. The Netherlands has launched a major partnership (PROSPECTS) amounting to 500 million euros in the Horn of Africa and Middle East, working with the International Finance Corporation (IFC), World Bank, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), UNHCR and International Labour Organization (ILO) to support refugees and host communities (Government of Netherlands, 2019). Denmark has also focused on forced displacement at both global policy and crisis level, for example supporting the joint World Bank/UNHCR Data Centre. Meanwhile, Australia has taken a multi-year approach to funding in Iraq, which combined humanitarian, stabilisation and social cohesion activities (DFAT, 2020). The challenge is that many of these initiatives are in an early stage and differ widely in approach and geography, so it is difficult to learn lessons as a whole and consider where they are relevant or what system change has occurred or is still needed.

UN approaches to the nexus

The UN has operationalised the nexus through the ‘Ending Need’ agenda and the New Way of Working. This has focused on the need for greater programming and financing coherence across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus (UNDP et al., 2020). Five agencies (UNDP, World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF, International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) are all adherents to the OECD/DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus, and are thus committed to working together to ensure ‘that states, societies and communities at risk are no longer in need of humanitarian aid, and instead are set on a path out of fragility, towards dignified self-reliance as embodied by Agenda 2030’ (ibid.). This approach is being trialled in Haiti and is set to continue throughout 2021. Prior to this, some Resident Coordinator’s offices, such as in South Sudan, have sought nexus or ‘New Way of Working’ advisors to support joint planning of collective outcomes. In addition, humanitarian–development collaboration was identified by the IASC as a Strategic Priority for 2018–2020. Their workplan focuses on operationalising the nexus in order to reduce risks and vulnerabilities, ensuring humanitarian principles and diverse partnerships as well as addressing humanitarian crises in urban contexts (IASC, n.d.). The Results Group 4 follows on from the IASC Task Team on Strengthening the Humanitarian/Development Nexus, which ran from February 2016 until January 2019.

Global Compact on Refugees

The European refugee ‘crisis’ was a strong rallying point for governments and agencies that gave considerable momentum to the New York Declaration of the special high-level United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) meeting in September 2016. The mechanisms of the Global Refugee Forum (December 2019), Global Compact on Refugees (December 2018) and the development of Comprehensive Refugee Response Frameworks (CRRFs) for specific crises have been tangible results of a convergence of political energy followed by funding and specific initiatives. This has led to \$5–6 billion of investment in more developmental approaches to support refugees (with the World Bank as a key mechanism for this – see Box 2). The impact of such investments is not easy to discern – while some interviewees suggested this money could have prevented needs from becoming even higher, it may also have led to reductions in humanitarian support before developmental outcomes were achieved, particularly where there is a political imperative to move refugees towards self-reliance.

While something of a success in reaching agreements and raising funds, the challenge will be to sustain momentum and senior leadership engagement in the face of other competing issues such as Covid-19 and climate change. There is a risk that engagement becomes increasingly focused on specific crises rather than being sustained by global momentum.

Box 2 Social protection

Social protection is seen as an area where the World Bank could have a clear role, particularly in building ‘shock-responsive social protection’ systems that may be connected to humanitarian cash transfers. However, it is one of a number of new thematic areas that the Bank is trying to engage in simultaneously – there are concerns that it is spreading itself too thinly and risking limited success. The countervailing view is that social protection risks undermining humanitarian neutrality – for example, in Afghanistan, NGO partners that have managed to work in Taliban areas by being seen as independent of government are finding it more difficult to operate when partnering with the World Bank to deliver social protection because this is seen as being closer to the national government.

Role of international financial institutions

Engagement by IFIs, particularly the World Bank, in fragility and crisis has increased since the WHS, and the Bank is now more visible in crisis situations and policy discussions – including on refugees and increasingly IDPs. The publication of its policy for fragility, conflict and violence (FCV) marks a key milestone in the bank’s engagement (World Bank, 2020a).

The World Bank and IFIs have implemented several HLP recommendations specific to their funding mechanisms and operations. These include in expanding the eligibility criteria for access to low-interest

loans and grants so that they follow the people in need rather than the per capita income levels of the refugee-hosting countries. In pure financial terms, these recommendations represent a major achievement towards the HLP's aims (see Box 3).

Box 3 Implementation of High-Level Panel recommendations by international financial institutions

Alongside its more strategic shift towards engaging in fragility, the World Bank has implemented specific recommendations of the HLP on certain financing tools.

The IDA 2018 Replenishment included a \$2 billion sub-window for refugee programmes specifically for IDA-eligible countries, which provide concessional financing to support development approaches for refugees and host communities (World Bank, 2020a). The Window for Host Communities and Refugees offers financing dependent on three criteria:

1. the number of UNHCR-registered refugees is at least 25,000 or 0.1% of the population;
2. the country adheres to an adequate framework for the protection of refugees; and
3. the government has in place a strategy or plan that describes the concrete steps, including possible policy reforms, toward long-term solutions that benefit host communities and refugees (World Bank, 2020b).

Additionally, the World Bank launched the Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF), which can offer up to \$500 million in concessional financing – thus far, the GCFF has supported Jordan, Lebanon and Colombia. Lastly, in some settings, the Bank has made use of multi-donor trust funds to garner international support to invest in large development programmes, reducing the burden on governments (World Bank, 2020a).

Further success has been seen through the expansion of IDA's Crisis Response Window (CRW), which was asked by the HLP to increase by at least a factor of three. Under IDA 18, the CRW increased more than three-fold, from \$900 million to \$3.0 billion. Following that, under IDA19, the CRW will provide \$2.5 billion in crisis response financing, with the opportunity to adjust at the IDA19 mid-term review (MTR) if additional resources are required for crisis response and including up to \$500 million in resources dedicated to the new early response financing framework (World Bank, 2020b). Although the initial replenishment shows a slight decrease, the Regional Window has increased by \$2.6 billion, suggesting a reprioritisation of funds recognising the nature of crises and in total funding from IDA has increased.

The availability of funds at the regional level and specifically for refugees and other displaced people helps to support recommendations to integrate displacement into the development plans of host countries and receive adequate support from the international community to implement this. Other progress on this recommendation is less clear.

On increasing the capacity for funding emergencies by other development finance institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has become more responsive to crises since the 2008 financial crisis. Its Rapid Financing Instrument provides prompt financial assistance for all member countries facing an urgent balance of payments need (IMF, 2020). They have recently adapted their access limits in response to members' need throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, making available up to \$250 billion to member governments. Along this theme, the African Development Bank launched the Covid-19 Response Facility under the African Development Fund (African Development Bank, 2020). Some other examples of approaches to emergency funding include the World Bank's Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility, which is being closed after not being viewed as particularly successful, and their Famine Action Mechanism, which has been in development for several years as a way to use data analytics and country protocols to unlock rapid funding; it is now a global partnership focusing on scaling up anticipatory/early action (CGD, 2020; World Bank, 2021).

Beyond these specific interventions, the potential of the Bank is in its ability to influence governments and other actors: the political weight the Bank can bring to situations of fragility, as well as its analytical and technical knowledge (for example on social protection and resilience) is significant. Being a major financial resource can incentivise states to change systems and policies, for example in relation their Global Compact commitments – as seen in Jordan and Ethiopia. During the Covid-19 crisis, IFIs have played a significant role in supporting government response (Poole and Gressman, 2020).

Humanitarians have a range of views on the role of the World Bank, however. The more positive consider it to be major progress for the Bank to be where it is, while there is also a view that it has been on the brink of a major breakthrough in this area, without actually managing to get there.

The critique is that the Bank has a poor record on addressing human rights issues and is only beginning to learn how to navigate its close relationships with governments and commitments to uphold international norms and laws, including on refugee protection. It is seen by humanitarian agencies as a slow moving and impenetrable bureaucracy.

There is a huge issue of culture and expectations. Working with governments is the default for the World Bank, and it does not see itself or operate as a traditional humanitarian donor in terms of how it spends or lends money. Understanding its relationship with government, but also how humanitarians can influence it, is critical – particularly where there is less focus on a funding relationship. UNHCR has forged a successful partnership with the Bank by being a strategic partner and not seeking funding. WFP implements directly as a partner of IFIs or indirectly as a partner of host governments supported by IFIs to deliver social protection and cash transfers, which has been of increasing importance in the context of Covid-19.

In practical terms, the Bank works differently to humanitarian organisations and is large and difficult to navigate – so investing in relationship-building and being conscious of different perspectives on timescales is critical. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has invested in establishing

its relationship with the Bank, building on the initial Somalia partnership, through recruitment of staff with World Bank experience, as has UNHCR. A number of organisations such as UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and IFRC have funding partnerships with the World Bank based on service delivery in specific contexts such as Yemen, where the Bank's traditional ways of working directly with government have not been possible.

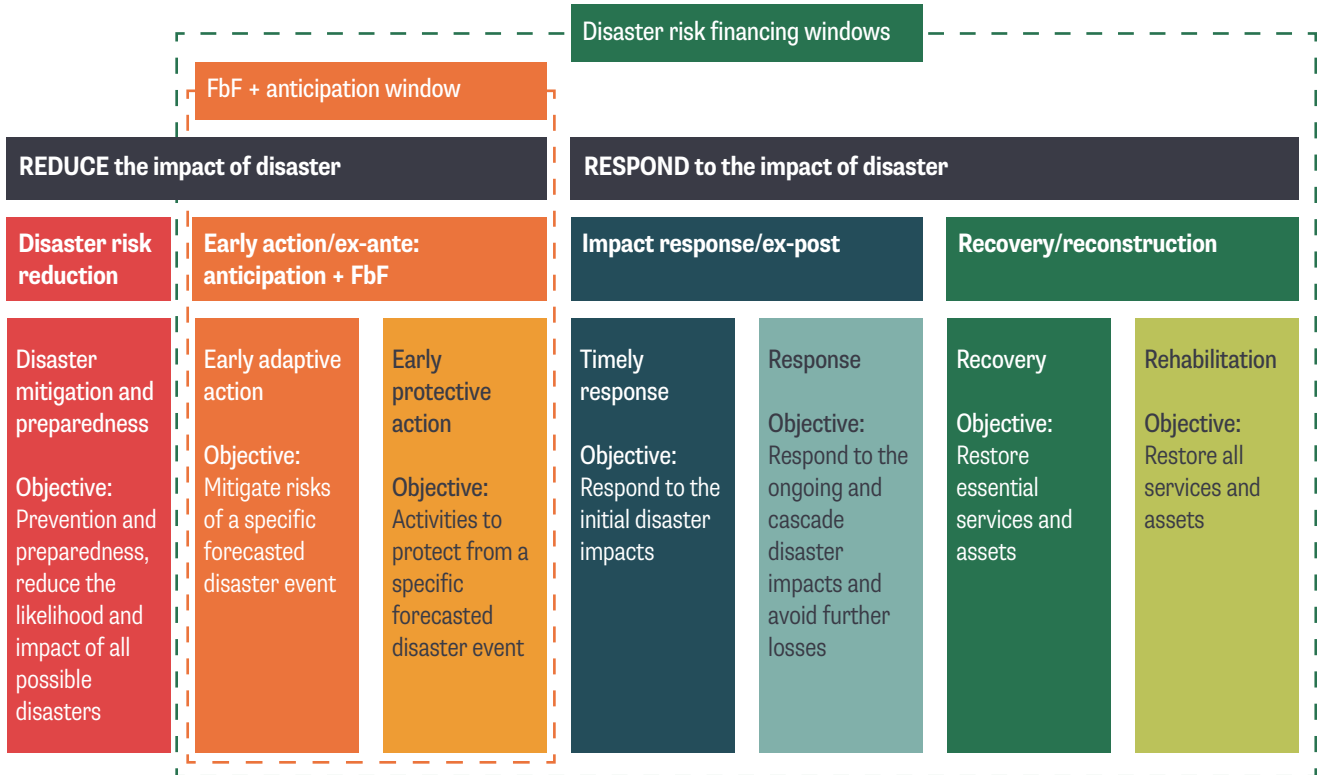
The final HLP recommendations for the World Bank refer to the importance of having development representation in humanitarian fora and vice versa. This has had mixed success: while the World Bank Principal is active in IASC, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) is not consistently included in different development fora.

2.3.2 Risk-informed approaches: anticipatory action and risk financing

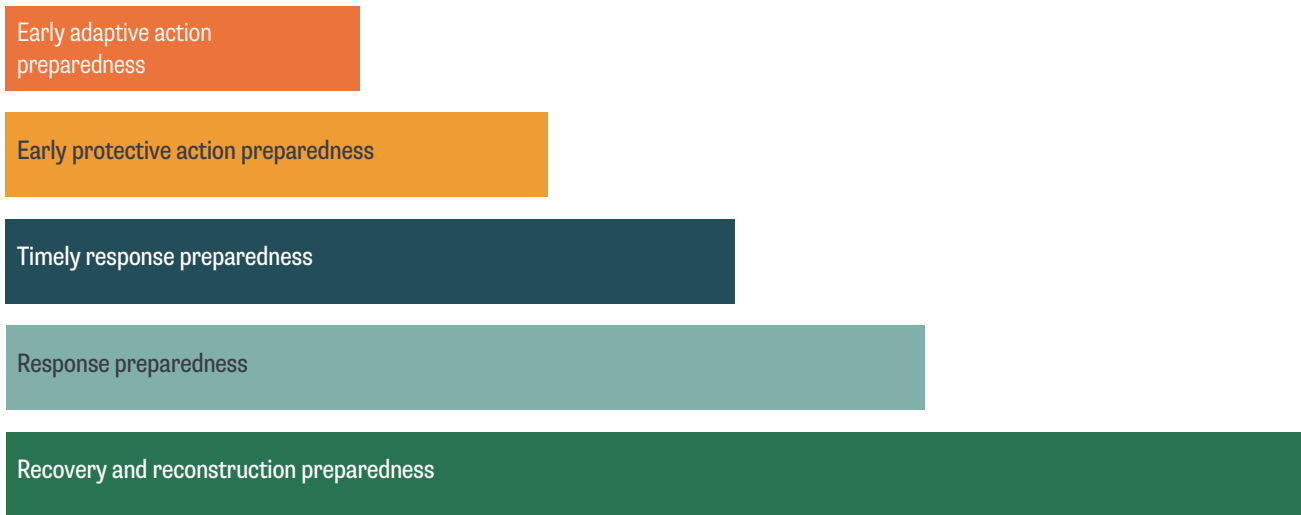
The HLP referred to better preventing and anticipating crises but its specific recommendations related mainly to increasing investment in disaster risk reduction (DRR). Anticipatory action and risk financing were widely perceived by interviewees as an area where more has been achieved than was expected in terms of its prominence within the HLP report, but which is very much in the spirit of the report.

There have been considerable conceptual and practical advances since the WHS. These are captured within the framing of 'risk-informed approaches to humanitarian action' – see Figure 3 (Willitts-King et al., 2020). These are again a 'nexus' approach in bringing together humanitarian and development tools and approaches into a joint framework. This was previously framed as the resilience agenda, although it has become less popular as it turned into a catch-all for everything from climate change to food security, and so not operationally useful (Levine et al., 2012). The Centre for Disaster Protection has advocated for a holistic approach to crisis financing based on acting early, being prepared and planning the finances across humanitarian, development and financial sectors, which the Covid-19 pandemic has made all the more urgent (Clarke, 2020; Poole et al., 2020).

Figure 3 Risk-informed approaches to humanitarian action



Preparedness for action



Note: FbF = forecast-based financing.
 Source: Adapted from Harris and Swift (2019)

Anticipatory action

Anticipatory action requires pre-determined (1) forecasts, triggers and decision-making protocols; (2) timed and planned early actions; (3) financing mechanisms; and (4) delivery channels. Anticipatory action planning relies on risk information, specifically: hazard forecasts; vulnerability and exposure data; and records of impacts from past emergencies (Weingartner and Wilkinson, 2019).

Anticipatory action includes a range of approaches such as early warning/early action, forecast-based early action and forecast-based financing. A clear example of its success can be seen in the regional response to desert locusts in Africa in 2020, where data and forecasting on locust movements enabled better preparedness and response in order to reduce impact on farmer livelihoods (FAO, 2020). Other examples include anticipatory action to respond to floods and typhoons.

As well as providing financing, anticipatory action is a catalyst for better planning – in order to respond to a shock, setting out detailed plans among key stakeholders is critical so that they can be put into place immediately.

Important global programmes and initiatives that have developed since the HLP include:

- **Programming:**

- CERF anticipatory action: \$140 million earmarked for anticipation from June 2020 until December 2021.
- Start Fund Anticipation Window (since 2016): £6 million in 21 responses.
- IFRC forecast-based action by 15 National Societies through the DREF.
- OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data work on predictive analytics.

- **Networks:**

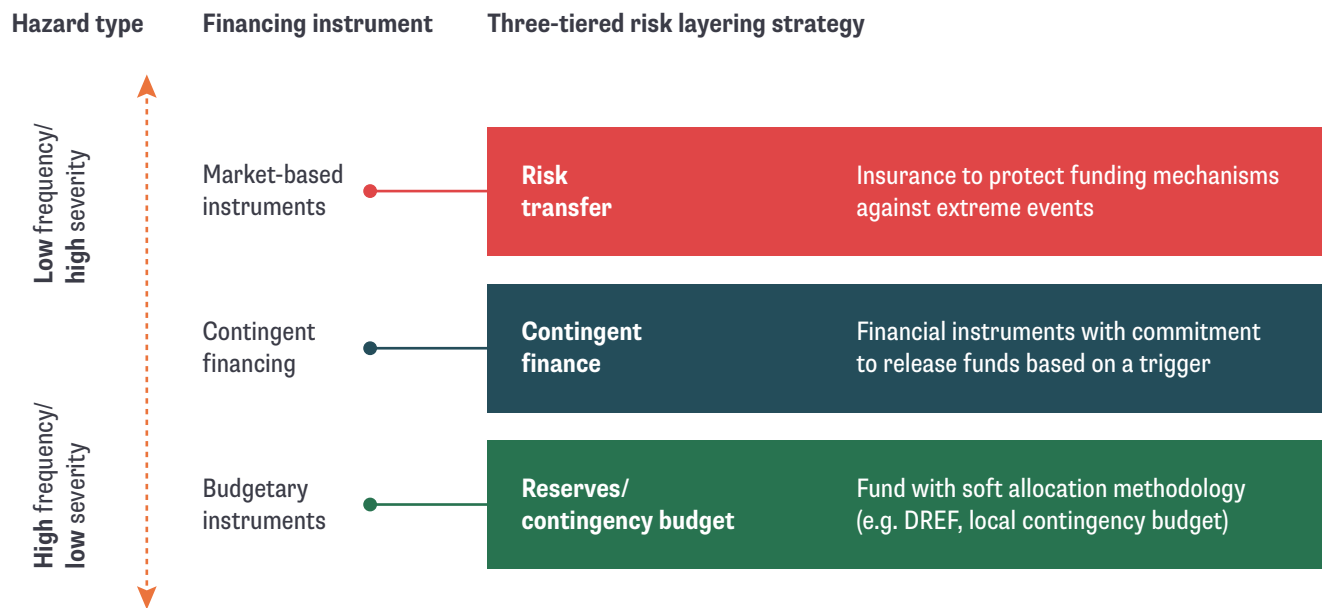
- Centre for Disaster Protection, funded by the UK.
- REAP.
- The Crisis Lookout Coalition has renewed efforts to focus on how the world responds to risk and reacts to disasters. In a letter to the G7 members, they called for them to: (1) predict crises better; (2) prepare responses better; and (3) protect people better – a drive for better risk information and more pre-arranged financing in order to reduce the impact of disasters on affected people (Crisis Lookout, 2021).

In the view of interviewees, there is a growing body of evidence that anticipatory action approaches are effective. But to achieve scale, greater investment is required – this is happening to some extent as existing schemes are now expanding into new countries. While there is momentum around anticipatory action, there is also an appreciation that it will not be relevant to all humanitarian crises, and in the absence of data on hazards in all contexts, forecast-based financing will remain a relatively small proportion of the financing picture. In particular, the applicability of anticipatory action to protracted crises and conflicts is at an early, exploratory stage, although UNHCR has modelled ways to predict displacement and there have been many attempts to ‘predict’ conflict, or more practically, to provide early warning of conflict and displacement. However, it is not clear how far better early warning can successfully reduce the effects of conflict.

Risk financing

Having the right financing in place to fund the right response is an essential element of effective anticipatory/early action. Risk layering uses different financing instruments to pre-agree financing according to the frequency and severity of the hazard (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Risk layering through financing instruments



Source: Adapted from GRIF/IFRC presentation on disaster risk finance

Considerable interest has been paid to market-based instruments, particularly the role of the insurance industry and its opportunities for risk financing products for disaster-prone countries, specifically to finance early action.

A number of these mechanisms now exist and/or have been developed further since the HLP’s recommendations in 2016, including African Risk Capacity (ARC) Replica, InsuResilience, Global Index Insurance Facility, regional sovereign disaster risk insurance, insurance linked securities/catastrophe bonds and microinsurance models, as well as the World Bank’s Famine Action Mechanism and Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility (WEF, 2019; Willitts-King et al., 2020).

These amount to significant sums of money and multiple pilots, with many at the stage of moving towards scale. Scaling up faces challenges due to the reluctance of humanitarian donors to use humanitarian budgets to fund what are seen as development activities, and which are funding the *possibility* of action rather than clearly defined humanitarian response activities. Conversely, it has been difficult to engage development funders in crisis settings, which are seen as the domain of humanitarians. The potential to scale up lies in increasing involvement beyond humanitarians to development actors who are better equipped to engage in the long term with governments.

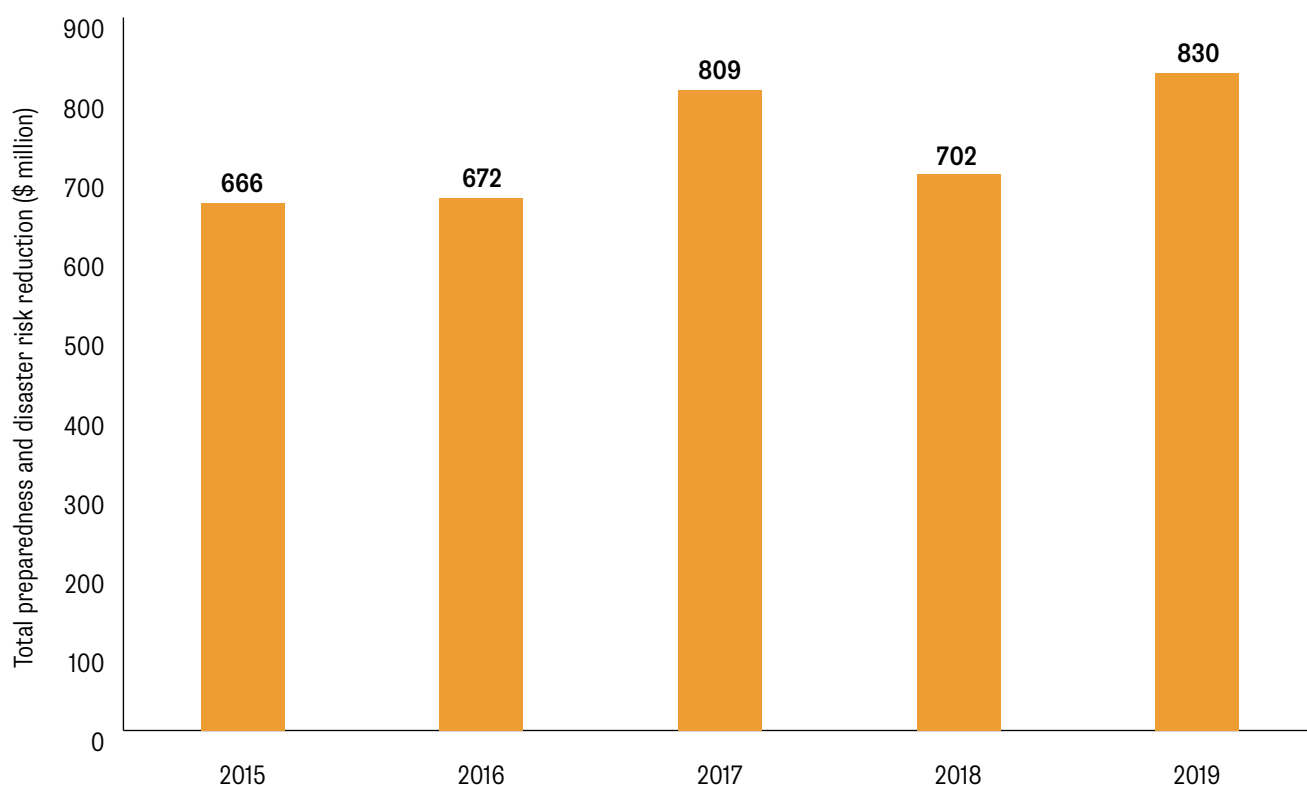
Disaster risk reduction

Finally, ensuring all governments have emergency reserve funds and dedicated disaster risk reduction (DRR) budget lines to reduce risk and prepare for when disaster hits has been on the policy agenda since the Hyogo Framework was set out in 2005. While agreed at a policy level, as with risk financing, progress has been slower in terms of both funding and implementation.

Kellett et al. (2014) noted that only 20 countries reported dedicated budget allocations to local governments for DRR, even though the majority of countries (65%) reported that it was a legal obligation for local governments to enact DRR measures. The 2015–2030 Sendai Framework also references the need to integrate DRR policies, plans, programmes and budgets at all levels but, as yet, there is no evidence to suggest this has been achieved universally (UNDRR, 2015). That said, there are some good examples from the Philippines and Indonesia, and growing concerns about the impacts of climate change suggest this needs to become a greater focus.

At global level, the OECD reports a modestly increasing trend in DRR-related funding from DAC donors between 2015 and 2019, with \$830 million provided in 2019 – a 25% increase since 2015 (Figure 5). When including a wider set of donors, such as non-DAC governments and multilateral organisations, this figure rises to \$2.3 billion, of which the World Bank’s IDA contributed almost \$1 billion in 2019.

Figure 5 Disaster risk reduction-related funding from Development Assistance Committee donors, 2015–2019



Notes: DRR-related funding includes sector codes ‘43060: disaster risk reduction’ and ‘74020: multi-hazard response preparedness’

Source: OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

2.4 Where has progress been slow and why?

Widening the resource base – the second pillar of HLP recommendations – has shown significantly less progress across its different dimensions of the private sector, new donors and Islamic social finance. This is partly due to having unrealistic expectations of what change could be achieved in five years: developing new partnerships takes time and is not always successful. Another common challenge has been maintaining consistent and sustained leadership of reform initiatives at a high level.

There is also some clarity emerging over some of the ‘theories of change’ assumed by the HLP around how to motivate new donors to contribute. Increasing recognition of new donors’ contributions has not been enough to raise new money as their motivations are different from DAC donors. The private sector, for example, is much more interested in developing deeper partnerships than philanthropic grant-making to humanitarian agencies. Also, bureaucratic limitations have made new mechanisms such as Islamic social finance and innovative finance difficult to pilot, let alone scale, in typical DAC and UN/Red Cross bureaucracies. These different resource types are discussed in detail below.

2.4.1 Private sector engagement

HLP recommendation: engage the private sector to commit resources for in-kind response, with the UN Global Compact creating opportunities to tap into assets, skills and capabilities

Harnessing the potential of the private sector has long been referenced as essential to meet growing humanitarian needs. The HLP specifically highlighted the need to engage the private sector to commit resources for in-kind response, with the UN Global Compact creating opportunities to tap into assets, skills and capabilities. Progress on these recommendations has been hard to track and little has been written specifically around the role of the private sector and these recommendations.

However, a clear message from interviewees is that progress has qualitatively been slow on this recommendation. The pool of international private sector engaged with humanitarians beyond service delivery has remained small, and there is some frustration at how hard it is to work with humanitarians.

While there have been some advances in acceptance of the private sector’s role in refugee contexts and disaster response, the humanitarian community remains suspicious of the private sector and its motives despite it already providing goods and services through procurement processes. In particular, there is still insufficient recognition at a policy level that what the private sector offers is shared value – bringing business opportunities and solutions to bear on the sector – rather than philanthropy through cash donations. Nonetheless, the metric of success for private sector partnerships continues to be the level of grant funding received – rather than the in-kind resources recommended by the HLP.

There is also a lack of appreciation of the diversity of the private sector, especially the role of the local private sector as well as multinationals. It is unhelpful to use this catch-all term to refer to everything from a local tea seller to Microsoft.

Understanding the granularity of the private sector role in specific sectors is key. There are some examples of good practice, such as the Smart Communities Coalition co-chaired by Mastercard and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which brings together more than 50 organisations in a public-private effort to deliver basic services and create economic opportunity for forcibly displaced people and host communities in East Africa and Latin America (Mastercard, 2020).

On the UN side, there has been some progress on the establishment of local and industry-specific business networks able to support humanitarian preparedness and response through the UN's Connecting Business initiative (CBI). In 2019, nine CBI Member Networks and their partners addressed 31 crises – from earthquakes to cyclones and political unrest to flooding (CBI, 2019). They were able to participate in search and rescue operations, collect and distribute relief aid, restore power lines, share information, make financial contributions and work alongside governments and aid organisations (ibid.).

The Dutch Good Growth Fund (DGGF) also offers a blended finance approach to allow for investment in fragile contexts to nurture entrepreneurial ecosystems in these typically 'high-risk' markets. In 2016, the DGGF decided to support South Sudan's first specialised small/medium-sized enterprise (SME) lender with the aim of setting an example for other frontier market investors. With the support of DGGF's investment, Kinyeti has been helping to build the private sector in South Sudan by providing SMEs with long-term capital that is otherwise not available.

2.4.2 Innovative financing

The use of innovative financial products to bring private capital into situations of fragility is in the spirit of the HLP but has shown limited progress in the past five years. Innovative financing is the use of market mechanisms such as bonds, investment funds and insurance (Willitts-King et al., 2019a). For fragile situations, this is often in the form of 'blended' finance which combines private and public funds, the latter reducing the risk or cost of the private investment in order to make the investment viable.

Since 2016 the most high-profile 'innovative' product has been the ICRC's humanitarian impact bond (HIB) which raised 20 million Swiss francs of investment funding to be paid back to investors by traditional donors with a return based on performance of five physical rehabilitation centres. This is not additional funding; the objective is to increase efficiency and value for money by having payment based on meeting or exceeding performance targets.

Also since 2016, WEF's Humanitarian and Resilience Initiative (WEF HRI) has provided a platform to bring together donors, agencies and investors to forge new partnerships on new financing models. Through a high-level group of champions and publication of papers and case studies the HRI has helped make new connections in order to start constructing new products and partnerships.

As a new market for investors, there have been a number of small-scale pilots; the challenge has been in reaching sufficient scale to create a consistent flow of new opportunities in which investors can invest. This is in part linked to the absence of a track record for such investments, which is all the more

challenging because a critical element of financial products is to have measurable indicators – in situations of fragility these are often difficult to achieve. The nature of private investment means that the most active conflicts will be the least appealing in terms of taking financial risks or their appropriateness for such products. The most promising thematic areas have included support to refugees, who in some cases reside in stable countries with a financial infrastructure (such as Jordan) and are expected to remain in countries of refuge for many years – so constitute a reliable ‘market’. Energy also shows some promise, with inefficient diesel generators for refugee camps being replaced by more sustainable solar power as part of an investment approach with private providers (IKEA Foundation, 2018).

Supporting employment and financial services have also been areas of opportunity. For example, the Dutch Entrepreneurial Development Bank FMO operates both in fragile and less fragile contexts through the creation of jobs and access to finance and financial services. One such example of their intervention is the NASIRA Risk Sharing Facility, a joint venture with the European Commission. Under this programme, FMO invested in Tamweelcom, Jordan’s second largest micro finance institution, which serves 90,000 clients including youth and women entrepreneurs. With FMO’s support, Tamweelcom now provides loans to Syrian refugees in possession of UNHCR identification and a Jordanian Ministry of Interior Card (www.nasira.info).

While some agencies are looking to develop products and find investors, other humanitarian actors are still uncomfortable with the perceived values of the private sector and the idea that aid money might be used to pay a return to investors, which might make the outcome more costly than a straightforward grant to a traditional humanitarian partner. There is a lack of evidence on this but there are many assumptions, including that the private sector is a single homogeneous entity. It is certainly the case that in their initial phase, financial products are costly to design and therefore require considerable start-up investment – particularly given investors’ lack of familiarity with fragile situations.

So while there is interest in moving forward, and momentum within these initiatives, some scepticism in the wider humanitarian community persists about the ultimate potential of such approaches and how far they can scale to make a meaningful dent in humanitarian needs. Humanitarians are not yet equipped with the tools to understand where private investment is financially viable, even when de-risked by ODA, and examples are so far relatively few.

2.4.3 New donors

HLP recommendations: establish an international solidarity levy mechanism to support the health welfare of displaced people. Intensify funding from new donors by ensuring that their contributions receive appropriate recognition in the key tracking systems for humanitarian funding. Develop international media platforms for more systematic and predictable individual giving

The HLP had high hopes to raise new funds for humanitarian action from a range of donors outside the usual group of DAC donors, as well as from other sources such as private individuals or innovative global levies. Progress on this has been very disappointing, despite significant investment in new fundraising approaches and lobbying other countries to contribute to appeals.

Analysis of the number of donors contributing to UN-coordinated appeals does show an increasing number of donors providing support – however, the number of government or intergovernmental donors has stayed relatively consistent between 2016 and 2020, fluctuating between 79 and 82 (Figure 6). On a more positive note, the number of private donors contributing to UN appeals has increased from 46 in 2016 to 72 in 2019 and 2020. Although this includes UNICEF national committees (between 25 and 31 in each year), there is still an upward trend in the number of private donors, but the volumes contributed have not been significant or trended upward. Between 2016 and 2020, the volume of funding to UN-coordinated appeals reported by private donors fluctuated from a high of \$350 million in 2016, to a low of \$209 million in 2018, before increasing to \$289 million in 2020.¹

The HLP’s recommendations on increasing both individual giving and developing an international levy to fund humanitarian action (such as a small additional ‘tax’ on airline tickets) have not progressed in any significant way in the absence of clear leadership or a mechanism to drive them forward.

Figure 6 Number of donors contributing to UN-coordinated appeals, 2016-2020



Notes: Categorisation of donors as per FTS coding.

Source: UN OCHA FTS data

1 For consistency over the period, these figures are presented in constant 2015 prices.

In terms of bilateral donors, there have been one-off contributions by Gulf countries in response to specific crises in the region, but despite high-level engagement in the last year or two by DAC donors this has not become sustained or predictable. China provides very small volumes of assistance via the international system, in proportion to gross domestic product (GDP), and Turkey provides significant volumes of assistance to Syrian refugees but not through the international system.

Here the HLP's analysis was that giving visibility to contributions from such countries could increase their generosity. However, the experience from the past five years is that there are deeper reasons why this recommendation may be unrealistic. Reasons vary, but generally come down to the motivations for contributing to humanitarian appeals being different from those of DAC donors. China does not see its humanitarian aid as distinct from its development aid, which is mainly bilateral and built on relationships with governments; it also sees itself as a developing country partnering with others in the Global South rather than a donor. It engages in small ways with the multilateral system, but this is unlikely to expand significantly as China's interests are not aligned with the West and it sees the multilateral system as dominated by the West (Willitts-King, 2021).

The issue here is to some extent about transparency. China and Turkey put significant resources into countries in crisis and refugees respectively, but this is not reported through the DAC or FTS so they are 'invisible'. This is a problem in terms of coordination and complementarity with other donors, but there is also a need to better understand the resources flowing into crises beyond international humanitarian aid. An HPG study found that, globally, humanitarian aid amounted to only 1% of resources flowing into crisis countries. As well as non-DAC funding, the flow of remittances, investment and community-level support, for example, are all potentially much more significant to some of the people who depend on them than international aid flows (Willitts-King et al, 2019b).

Expanding the resource base beyond non-DAC donors needs re-framing. DAC donors' narrative should shift to reflect that being a responsible global player includes transparency over resources and also that these can flow in different ways beyond ODA. There is increasing awareness of the need to look at 'all resources' rather than just appeals, but the mechanisms to do this are still in their infancy and hindered by the lack of data on many of the sources.

2.4.4 Islamic social finance

Islamic social finance was another area of great hope for the HLP. The co-chair of the Panel, the Sultan of Perak in Malaysia, was a senior Muslim figure and a number of new partnerships were announced at WHS. However, there has not yet been a revolution in attracting more funding from the traditional Islamic social finance modalities of *zakat* (almsgiving) and *waqf* (endowment fund) towards the international humanitarian system; in developing new structures and partnerships with Islamic funders; or in understanding that Islamic social finance is already an important mechanism in crises, operating independently of the international humanitarian system, so that better synergies could be built between international and national/local response.

Some UN agencies already receive *zakat* contributions – for example UNHCR has a Refugee Zakat Fund for individuals to donate their *zakat* towards UNHCR activities in eight target countries. This amounted to \$43 million in contributions in 2019, its first year of operation (UNHCR, 2020b), but is a tiny proportion of its budget and the billions of *zakat* given annually. Questions remain over how comfortable those who make such contributions are with directing it towards global agencies rather than local or national charities.

High-profile partnerships that are also yet to bear fruit are NRC and Maybank's planned launch of a global *waqf* (endowment fund), and IFRC's OneWash *sukuk* (bond) with the Islamic Development Bank. Challenges include internal requirements for due diligence on the sources of funds and bureaucratic barriers. Given the very different ways in which these funds operate, there has also been insufficient learning and sharing of experience between early pilots. The initial investment required to overcome these barriers has been very high, creating an obstacle for wider adoption until a better common understanding and shared approach can be developed.

3 Analysis and recommendations

3.1 Where has the High-Level Panel vision been achieved?

The vision of the HLP was ambitious and it has not yet been achieved in its entirety. This will come as little surprise to either former Panel members or the humanitarian community. For both Pillars 1 and 2, some changes are only just starting to coalesce (such as innovative financing), while others are showing signs of scaling (anticipatory action). There has been little progress in building strategic links between the humanitarian system and new sources of funding (Islamic social finance and new donors). Across the Pillar 1 and 2 recommendations progress has been patchy and it has been difficult to move beyond ad hoc, individual responses toward more collective approaches.

There has been considerable progress on the concepts, institutions and financing of the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, anticipatory action, and crisis and risk financing. But the vision of the Panel to achieve a consistent and coherent engagement of development financing and institutions in crisis settings is far from being achieved. Based on interviews, there is still significant resistance to (or neglect of) much of this agenda across major swathes of the humanitarian and development communities. The aggregate progress is very uneven, even if individual tracks within it are moving ahead.

By contrast, the area of least progress has been in widening the resource base. Despite great ambition from the HLP, this has fallen short across a number of recommendations, whether among new/emerging donors, individual giving or Islamic social finance. This may partly be due to the theory of change for the expansion of new donors being flawed, but also about the timescale over which change might be expected, along with a lack of coherent strategy, leadership and capacity.

3.1.1 Links with the Grand Bargain

In its original formulation by the HLP, the GB was about efficiency – making sufficient savings to give donors the confidence to contribute more – but the way it has been implemented and rolled out has meant the GB has already extended beyond this focus. The inclusion of Workstream 10 on the nexus reflected a recognition that the other two pillars of the HLP report were closely connected with the change processes foreseen under the GB. Although that workstream closed in 2018, parts of the GB remain closely linked to the spirit of the other two HLP pillars. For example, localisation clearly requires multi-year investments in capacity-building. At minimum there needs to be continued and closer coordination between the fora of DAC, GHD, the IASC Results Group on the nexus and the GB, as well as at crisis level. Such coordination should work to find broad-based coalitions to make further practical progress on specific dimensions of development approaches to crisis at country level in terms of coordination, prioritisation, planning and financing. Given this close relationship, some interviewees suggested deeper integration was needed between the issues addressed in this study and the ongoing discussions on the future of the GB.

3.1.2 Influence of the Covid-19 pandemic

Covid-19 has exacerbated some but not all existing trends. The AIR 2020 reflected that the pandemic had the potential to advance GB commitments on cash assistance, localisation and, to an extent, quality funding (Metcalf-Hough et al., 2020), but subsequent analysis suggests this has mainly been in terms of cash programming and not localisation (Barbelet et al., 2020).

Beyond these areas, the pandemic has demonstrated the importance of understanding different risks and people's vulnerabilities (and compounding multiple risks), as well as humanitarian needs, in order to work to mitigate and better prepare for potential needs. This speaks to the focus on the nexus, anticipation and crisis financing (which have made most progress since the HLP) and how much further they need to progress to be able to deal adequately with such a global challenge.

The pandemic has also highlighted the central role of governments in coordinating responses, however imperfectly, as well as the role of global and local solidarity mechanisms in sustaining both grassroots and global action. However, the pandemic has also reduced the ambition among humanitarian stakeholders to engage on bigger strategic issues, when maintaining existing programmes (and in some cases funding) has been the priority focus.

3.2 Lessons for the future

In this picture of uneven progress, the ingredients for success have included consistent institutional and personal leadership, and sustained engagement.

3.2.1 Be both pragmatic and ambitious

Progress has been slower when entrenched interests have blocked change, or where there needs to be a fundamental rethink of approach and ways of working. For example, the concept of the humanitarian financing gap should be recast as a more expansive approach to understanding a wider range of resources in crisis and the tools to be better and more holistically able to be prepared and respond. While a modest approach is pragmatic given current limits to bandwidth and political capital, in the longer term it would be appropriate to explore a more ambitious vision of crisis financing and system reform that further deepens the process already started by the HLP.

3.2.2 Ensure consistent leadership

Making progress has relied on consistent and sustained leadership. For example, Germany has been a strong supporter of anticipatory action through IFRC, while ERC has been a strong advocate within the humanitarian system. The World Bank has put its political weight behind working in fragility through its FCV strategy and engagement, particularly in situations of forced displacement. Progress has also been driven forward on some issues by the different Eminent Persons and the high-level engagement

between the World Bank and UNHCR. This is particularly important given the challenges relating to expectations and the different timescales on which organisations see change as being possible – particularly humanitarian versus development timescales.

3.2.3 Create a framework with coalitions of the willing

The structured, multi-stakeholder nature of the GB, led by the Eminent Person, has contrasted with the lack of traction of the WHS PACT. While the GB has the advantage of being a multi-stakeholder mechanism, this is not the only way to bring together different interests – as seen for example through the growth of cash or anticipatory action as thematic areas where coalitions coalesced around a convergence of politics, evidence, opportunity and leadership.

However, progress without a strategy, leadership and a dedicated mechanism is difficult and results in institutional and personal interests driving priorities. Fundraising is deeply competitive and the incentive to work collectively is lower when agencies are chasing the same scarce funding. While there has been progress, the fragmentation of initiatives without an overarching framework has clearly been a limiting factor.

Better identifying smaller, broad-based coalitions of the willing (or caucuses) for collective action, building on existing processes, and ensuring sharing of experience and expertise, with sustained high-level leadership, are mutually supporting elements.

3.2.4 Make it measurable

Measuring progress against such a broad vision is difficult – even the more structured GB process faces challenges in this regard. The qualitative impressions of stakeholders and available reports suggest that progress has been made, but greater consideration needs to be given in future to how progress can be objectively measured.

3.3 Taking forward the agenda of High-Level Panel Pillars 1 and 2

3.3.1 Ingredients for accelerating and improving progress

Based on these lessons, in order to move ahead with the agenda of the HLP's first two pillars, the following elements and principles should be considered when taking forward the recommendations for action in sub-section 3.3.2.

- Be ambitious about making progress in the longer term, but realistic about the timescale over which change happens, and prioritise based on capacity/leadership – take the long view on culture change and new partnerships in particular.
- Connect the conversations on the future of the GB with the findings of this research into the other two pillars.

- Build on what works and look at scaling success by removing barriers to scale and ensuring sufficient continued investment.
- Build small, broad-based coalitions to take forward collective action, such as Germany/UK/IFRC on anticipatory action.
- Get consistent high-level champions to sponsor specific actions, build coalitions and ensure their sustained involvement.
- Have a structured approach but work through and complement rather than duplicate existing fora such as the GB, GHD, OECD/DAC and IASC; work to strengthen links between fora, considering comparative advantages, and ensure work is complementary.
- Focus on improving how progress on this agenda is measured by including benchmarks and indicators in a light follow-up mechanism.

3.3.2 Recommendations for action

In order to address the financing gap and provide better humanitarian assistance in the spirit of the HLP, the following priorities are recommended both to align current processes and to make further progress on areas of potential.

Develop a framework for HLP follow-up and construct a more ambitious vision for strengthening the crisis response system

In the short term, key humanitarian actors should develop a light mechanism to advance the HLP agendas of reducing needs and widening the resource base more systematically and ensure a more structured monitoring and sharing of lessons – focusing on the recommendations below. This could be included in the next iteration of the GB if there is appetite among signatories, or developed as a standalone, but connected, mechanism. A high-level review mechanism within or on the margins of the GB annual meeting, with quarterly opportunities for sharing lessons and progress, could be hosted and/or co-led by relevant constituencies such as DG ECHO, the WEF, UN, NGOs, the World Bank and the Red Cross/Crescent movement.

Such a platform or mechanism could also be used to explore a more ambitious future vision to strengthen the global system for responding to crisis, including through the humanitarian system, but also through scaling up development approaches in crisis and financing crises more predictably. This could ultimately be part of a more harmonised approach that brings together and updates the three different pillars of the HLP into a future roadmap and platform for crisis financing and system reform.

Scale up anticipatory action

The momentum in risk financing and anticipatory action needs to be scaled up and diversified to different contexts. Donors should increase financial commitments and support to broad-based coalitions such as REAP while all actors should document lessons more systematically and engage in more collective policy discussions.

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This requires continued high-level stewardship and commitment to building the evidence base so that the right solutions can be adapted to different crisis contexts, particularly looking more at conflict in addition to disasters. Germany's focus on this area could be complemented by greater engagement from DG ECHO/the EU and the US, and continued OCHA leadership.

Strengthen nexus working

Strong leadership from a major donor such as DG ECHO, working with the World Bank, UNDP and the OECD/DAC could build a coalition to work alongside the GB to share lessons and drive progress on nexus working at crisis level – and making this progress more measurable and visible. A regular stocktake on progress would be of benefit. Greater engagement by development actors could be fostered by exploring links with key development fora and mechanisms such as the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

This needs to be connected firmly to the GB, OECD/DAC and the IASC Results Group. As the AIR 2020 noted, 'there are still calls from many signatories for a space within the GB to debate key challenges and collaborate on possible solutions relating to the nexus. Any such mechanism would need to be clearly defined in terms of its added value and how it would work in complement to, rather than in competition with, existing platforms at global level' (Metcalf-Hough et al, 2020: 101).

The World Bank, with support from its shareholders, should deepen its engagement in humanitarian crises and focus on outreach to a range of partners to build mutual understanding. This could benefit from a collective discussion between the World Bank and its key humanitarian agency partners, perhaps as part of the annual Fragility Forum.

Strengthen private sector cooperation and innovative financing

The lack of progress on public-private cooperation could be unblocked by more collective approaches among UN agencies and donors, focused less on fundraising and more on identifying specific areas of complementarity and practical platforms for collaboration. WEF and other platforms such as the UN Global Compact should be invited to participate in discussions with humanitarian actors in broad-based groups like the GB signatories.

The specific theme of innovative financing has a number of high-level champions in the WEF-coordinated High-Level Group on Humanitarian and Resilience Investing. Driving forward this agenda into practical pilots, sharing lessons, and financing the design of financial products and research to build the evidence base should be priorities for members of the group and other fora.

Develop broad coalitions to engage with new donors

High-level engagement should continue to encourage emerging donors from the Gulf, China and other areas to see predictable funding as part of being an effective supporter of people in crisis (even if not delivered through the humanitarian system), rather than making ad hoc contributions to specific strategic countries. An informal coalition of DAC donors, perhaps with support from the OECD/DAC, could use specific relationships to engage with emerging donor countries. Major donors

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such as the US and ECHO, as well as others who have bilateral relationships, could conduct informal dialogues with such countries where there was mutual interest. This must be a sustained process that focuses as much on encouraging non-financial contributions and complementary partnerships as on financial contributions.

Develop a long-term, joined-up vision on Islamic social finance, with high-level sponsorship

While there are a number of initiatives around Islamic social finance, there is a need for high-level championing and leadership over a sustained period (a minimum of five years) to focus in on where progress could be made, learn the lessons of previous initiatives and overcome blockages. This could include representatives from the HLP, senior figures from Islamic donor countries in the Gulf and Southeast Asia, as well as other donor countries and agencies that have been working on this, such as IFRC and NRC, and financial institutions including the Islamic Development Bank and Maybank.

Develop practical approaches to considering resource flows beyond appeals

The gradual progress in moving away from focusing solely on inter-agency appeals could be accelerated by the establishment of a wider coalition on all-resource planning comprising donors and agencies such as the Netherlands, World Bank, Development Initiatives and OCHA.

This agenda could be advanced by developing country-level pilots on better understanding all resource flows (perhaps using OCHA's FTS and/or IATI) and using this lens in designing Humanitarian Response Plans, while recognising the limitations of obtaining usable data on such flows. The JIAG could also usefully develop guidance on how a range of diverse resource flows, such as from remittances and non-traditional funders, may contribute to the coping capacity of people affected by crisis.

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