NGO briefs for the World Humanitarian Summit
High Level Leaders’ Round Tables

The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) can serve as a critical milestone in the transformation of aid. Attracting world leaders, including heads of state and humanitarian leaders, and informed through a comprehensive consultation process, the Summit in Istanbul represents a critical opportunity for all humanitarian actors to commit, to call upon others, and to hold ourselves to account to take concrete steps to realise more principled effective and efficient humanitarian aid for affected populations.

NGOs have actively engaged in the extensive WHS process. NGOs were represented in the regional and thematic consultations, influenced various WHS outcome documents, and are now bringing concrete commitments to the WHS. Following the Summit in Istanbul, NGOs - implementing up to 80% of all humanitarian programming - must better influence the governance, architecture, policies and implementation of humanitarian action.

Due to the size and format of the Summit, opportunities for amplification of key NGO commitments, messages and calls to action are limited. On account of this, ICVA has created a series of short ‘NGO briefs’ for each of the seven High Level Leaders’ Roundtables (HLRTs). These HLRTs represent one key avenue for NGOs to amplify commitments, and table key issues of concern and calls to action for all humanitarian actors, and particularly to Member States and the United Nations.

These briefs were developed together with ICVA’s membership, with thanks to those NGOs who led and contributed, listed in the introduction to each brief.

The briefs are accessible in the following pages, and on ICVA’s website:

- Political leadership to prevent and end conflicts
- Uphold the norms that safeguard humanity
- Leaving no one behind: a commitment to address forced displacement
- Women and girls: catalysing action to achieve gender equality
- Natural disasters and climate change: managing risks & crises differently
- Changing people’s lives: from delivering aid to ending need
- Humanitarian financing: investing in humanity

These briefs serve as a succinct, informed and collective resource and are encouraged to be shared and used widely in communication, advocacy and social media channels.
Political Leadership to prevent and end conflicts
NGO brief for the High Level Leaders’ Round Table

This brief is intended to inform discussions with stakeholders leading up to, and during the High Level Leaders’ Roundtable (HLRT) ‘Political Leadership to prevent and end conflicts’. Coordinated by ICVA with inputs from the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and shared widely amongst ICVA’s membership this brief is based on a foundation of collective NGO experience and analysis.

Context

Today, some 60 million people have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict and violence, including 38 million displaced internally. The prevalence of national and international conflict has increased from four in 2007, to eleven in 2014. A third of ongoing civil wars have involvement of international actors supporting specific parties to the conflict, resulting in an increase in their severity and duration. As NGOs we welcome this HLRTs, affirming that political will is ultimately required in order to address the political impasse that we face in many conflicts today and which means emergencies increasingly stretch into protracted situations. Humanitarian action cannot replace urgently required political solutions to today’s conflicts.

World leaders must take up the challenge of recommitting to their responsibility to make early warning, prevention, mediation and conflict resolution a priority. This HLRT can contribute to addressing these issues by presenting policy and operational steps for States to take towards reinvigorating a culture of conflict prevention and resolution among political actors.

Key NGO messages for this High Level Leaders’ Roundtable

In relation to Core commitments listed below, NGOs stress the importance of the following key messages to Member States, the UN and all non-state actors engaged in humanitarian action in conflict, to take action.

Core Commitment 1: Commit to acting on early warning findings and shared conflict analysis in accordance with international law, in situations where there may be potential conflict.

1. States and armed groups must go beyond merely reaffirming the humanitarian principles. States respect International Humanitarian Law, and support the implementation of humanitarian principles.

2. Political actors must recognise that preparedness and response to natural disasters differs to conflict and protracted crises and adapt their responses must accordingly.

3. NGOs urge States to proactively react to early warning systems and emerging crises analysis (e.g. FEWS NET) rather than reacting to escalating crises.

Core Commitment 2: Commit to improving prevention and conflict resolution capacities at the national, regional and international level.

4. NGOs urge permanent members of the Security Council to suspend their veto in cases of mass atrocity and facilitate the international processes which are aimed at halting ongoing atrocities.

5. NGOs urge States to commit to the full scope of key treaties and essential covenants.

Core Commitment 3: Commit to long-term political leadership and engagement through all stages of a crisis to limit the risk of the emergence or relapse into conflict.

6. **NGOs urge states to ensure the separation of humanitarian aid from all other objectives**, including crisis management, stabilisation, countering violent extremism and other non-humanitarian strategies.

7. **NGOs urge states to refrain from politicising or instrumentalising humanitarian action.**

8. **NGOs call upon states, where necessary, to limit the impact of counter-terrorism measures on humanitarian action** and call for relevant exemptions for humanitarian actors.

Core Commitment 4: Commit to addressing structural root causes of conflict and reducing fragility by investing in the development of inclusive, peaceful societies.

9. **NGOs urge the Security Council members and all Member States – who shape the UN system and fund humanitarian response - to demonstrate political leadership in proactively addressing root causes of civil and international conflict.**

10. **NGOs support the SG’s proposal, which calls for Member States, the UN, International and Regional Organisations to develop cooperation and assistance frameworks over 10 to 15 years, more accurately reflecting the time and investment needed in building peaceful and inclusive societies.**
Uphold the norms that safeguard humanity
NGO brief for the High Level Leaders’ Round Table

This brief is intended to inform discussions with stakeholders leading up to, and during the High Level Leaders’ Roundtable (HLRT) on Upholding the norms that safeguard humanity. Led by Action Contre La Faim and Christian Aid, with inputs from Save the Children, coordinated by ICVA and shared widely amongst ICVA’s membership, this brief is based on a foundation of collective NGO experience and analysis of the lack of respect for the norms that States developed to safeguard humanity.

Context

The Secretary General’s report, One Humanity: Shared Responsibility, highlights the urgent importance of leaders to mobilize resources to exert stronger influence over the way in which State and non-State actors conduct hostilities today. The report points in particular to the contagious effect of flouting the most basic rules governing the conduct of hostilities, which can amount to an invitation for all parties to lower the bar, subjecting civilian populations to a range of intolerable dangers and hardships in contravention of key principles of international humanitarian law (IHL) and in violation of their fundamental human rights. The NGO community welcomes this emphasis, and supports the Secretary General’s powerful arguments in favour of change under Core Responsibility 2.

This roundtable should reach a unified position on how overall compliance with IHL can be concretely strengthened, including specific strategies:

• to deter military actors from targeting civilians and civilian property for which there is no legitimate military objective under IHL;
• to equip military actors in distinguishing between civilian and military objects;
• to ensure that military actors are accountable for greater efforts to minimize incidental civilian injuries, deaths and damage to civilian property in both non international and international armed conflicts; and
• to fulfil the obligation of all parties to armed conflicts to facilitate the delivery of neutral and impartial humanitarian relief to populations under their effective control, where the basic needs of women, children and men are not otherwise being met.

Where strategies to improve compliance are not successful, we call on States to strengthen universal jurisdiction and to seize existing legal enforcement mechanisms such as the International Criminal Court to prosecute grave breaches of IHL. This roundtable must further consider the international influence and leadership that can be meaningfully brought to bear on parties to protracted conflicts around the world, including those which involve complex international dimensions where foreign forces are implicated in non-international armed conflicts.

In the context of aid delivery, humanitarian actors in conflict zones regularly encounter difficulties in their efforts to access populations in need. Challenges range from undue administrative delays to the lack of clear accountability of armed actors on the ground to ensure activities can be carried out safely. Indeed, many humanitarian actors experience a growing vulnerability to attack. Violence against the humanitarian mission harms not only the target of the attack but leads inevitably to restrictions on access to people in need. We need to go beyond condemnation after the fact, towards concrete initiatives that have the possibility to break new ground in encouraging respect and protection for essential humanitarian action.

Key NGO messages for this High Level Leaders’ Roundtable

In relation to Core commitments listed below, NGOs stress the importance of the following key messages for action by Member States, the UN, NGOs themselves and all actors engaged in humanitarian action.

Core commitment 1: Commit to promote and enhance respect for international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and refugee law, where applicable.
1. **NGOs call on States to adhere to obligations under IHL, including their responsibility to “respect and ensure respect” for IHL, and international human rights law, noting the applicability of international human rights law to humanitarian crises caused by both armed conflicts and hazard-related disasters.** In line with this, *adequate independent mechanisms must be established to monitor and report on violations.*

2. **NGOs call on States to reaffirm their obligation under IHL to ensure the basic needs of populations under their control.** When not in a position to meet the needs of these populations, neutral and impartial actors may offer humanitarian assistance based on need alone and regardless of gender, age, ability, ethnicity, socio-economic status or other characteristic. Where consent is given, States must allow and facilitate rapid access to humanitarian assistance. Consent is required, but cannot be withheld arbitrarily.

3. **NGOs call on States to allocate funding for research to develop lessons in relation to the arbitrary withholding of consent to humanitarian relief operations, and for the International Law Commission to develop guidance on the prevention of the arbitrary withholding of that consent.**

4. **NGOs call on States to proactively identify, condemn and work tirelessly to bring an end to collective punishment, such as sieges (GC 14, Article 17, AP II Article 14), which severely impact the ability of crisis-affected populations to meet their basic needs.** We commend the recent Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015, provision 12) in this regard.

5. **NGOs also call on States to:**
   - *Adopt and implement International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance (IDRL) guidelines*
   - *Adopt regional conventions developed to protect internally displaced populations* in a manner consistent with the Kampala Convention on IDPs.
   - Ensure that persons fleeing armed conflict are allowed to access a country of asylum and be protected from refoulement in line with State responsibilities under the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, and support *the wider adoption of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its Protocol*

Core Commitment 2: Commit to promote and enhance the protection of civilians and civilian objects, especially in the conduct of hostilities, for instance by working to prevent civilian harm resulting from the use of wide-area explosive weapons in populated areas, and by sparing civilian infrastructure from military use in the conduct of military operations.

6. **NGOs call on States to publically recognize that the use of explosive weapons in populated areas causes significant harm to civilians through death, injury, damage to vital infrastructure such as schools and hospitals, restrictions on access to humanitarian aid, and long term psychological harm – and that there is a need to address this harm.** NGOS will also continue to document the harm caused by this practice and call for measures to alleviate this harm including towards advocating for, and contributing to, the development of stronger international standards.

7. **NGOs call on States to put in place concrete measures to curb as much as possible the use of educational facilities for military purposes,** for instance through military manuals, doctrine, rules of engagement or operational orders. We call on States to commit to use the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict* which offer valuable practical guidance in this regard for all actors present in conflict areas.

8. **NGOs call on States to cease military supplies and diplomatic support** to any party that does not comply with the fundamental IHL principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution.
9. **NGOs call for humanitarian aid to be directly allocated to local humanitarian action that supports preventative and remedial responses to humanitarian protection issues raised by civilians**, in support of the centrality of protection in humanitarian response.

Core Commitment 3: Commit to ensure all populations in need receive rapid and unimpeded humanitarian assistance.

10. **NGOs call on ourselves, States and other stakeholders present in humanitarian settings to reaffirm their respect for and compliance with the core humanitarian principles** of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality. Specifically, State and non-State actors should respect the distinction of principled humanitarian actors from other international actors or coalitions with political, military or peace-keeping mandates, and allow them rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access to populations in need of assistance so that aid reaches those most in need in support of the principle of impartiality.

11. **NGOs call for an independent rapporteur to advise the UN Secretary General and parties to a conflict** in relation to the unimpeded and safe delivery of humanitarian assistance, and to record and address protection concerns raised by humanitarian actors. We request that lessons learned inform investment in State preparedness for any future humanitarian situations.

12. **As NGOs we reaffirm that, as humanitarian actors, we must be empowered to engage in dialogue with all relevant State and non-State actors to enhance acceptance and facilitate the delivery of impartial humanitarian assistance for all populations in need of relief.** Counter-terrorism legislation and the prohibitions on contact are impeding reaching those most in need and must be reviewed so that impartial and neutral humanitarian actors are able to provide assistance to remote and dangerous areas where there is urgent need and which are otherwise inaccessible.

13. **NGOs call on States to reaffirm that humanitarian action cannot be implicitly or otherwise linked to any military action whether or not determined by the UN Security Council under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.** Recommendations made by Governments must be determined by the humanitarian needs of communities at risk, not the security interests of humanitarian donors. Humanitarian action must not be a substitute for expedited settlement of disputes under Chapter VI of the UN Charter.

Core Commitment 5: Commit to speak out and systematically condemn serious violations of international humanitarian law and serious violations and abuses of international human rights law and to take concrete steps to ensure accountability of perpetrators when these acts amount to crimes under international law.

14. **NGOs support the creation of a global watchdog** to systematically track, collect data and make transparent trends of serious violations, **including the arbitrary withholding of humanitarian access, direct and disproportionate attacks on civilian infrastructure and civilians, and serious and deliberate attacks on humanitarian workers**, in the interests of identifying persistent perpetrators and fighting impunity.

15. **NGOs call on States to be united in their systematic condemnation at the Security Council in the event of serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, demand accountability for those with command responsibility for direct and disproportionate attacks on civilians or humanitarian workers by any State or non-State actor;**

16. **NGOs call on States to ensure that criminal and abusive behaviour by soldiers** operating under the auspices of United Nations peacekeeping missions is prosecuted immediately and with the full force of the law, and the facts publically known.

17. **NGOs support the UN Secretary General’s proposal for a global campaign to mobilise State parties, civil society and other global leaders to ardently pursue the protection of civilians and prevent the erosion of international law.**
Leave No One Behind: A Commitment to Address Forced Displacement

NGO brief for the High Level Leaders’ Round Table

This brief is intended to inform discussions with stakeholders leading up to, and during the High Level Leaders’ Roundtable (HLRT) ‘Leave no one behind: A commitment to address forced displacement’. Led by Asylum Access, with inputs from the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Save the Children, coordinated by ICVA, this brief has been shared widely amongst ICVA’s membership and is based on a foundation of collective NGO experience and analysis.

Context

NGOs welcome the Secretary General’s commitment to comprehensively addressing forced displacement and ensuring that IDPs, stateless persons and refugees are included in 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (2030 Agenda).

NGOs acknowledge that forced displacement is a complex problem with political and development dimensions that need immediate attention to facilitate long-term solutions. We also support the development of a new international cooperation framework on responsibility-sharing for refugees to the extent that it can improve the respect, protection and promotion of the rights of displaced persons.

This HLRT represents a key opportunity to set out a concrete plan for international cooperation and to realize the rights of every person who has been forced from his or her home. Unless we address the issues the forcibly displaced face in transit, origin, and destination we will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), much less stay true to the global pledge to “leave no one behind” set out in the 2030 Agenda.

Key NGO messages for this High Level Leaders’ Roundtable

The five proposed core commitments for the High Level Round Table (HLRT) are aligned to the Secretary General’s (SG’s) Agenda for Humanity Report, which, in summary call for:

1. A new approach to addressing forced displacement which meets both immediate needs, reduces vulnerability and improves resilience, self-reliance and protection of refugees and IDPs;

2. Safe, dignified and durable solutions for refugees and IDPs, working towards a 50% reduction in internal displacement by 2030;

3. Stronger support to countries and communities hosting displaced populations;

4. Collective efforts towards a Global Compact in responsibility-sharing for refugees;

5. Upholding the institution of asylum and the principle of non-refoulement with stronger implementation of national, regional and international laws and policy frameworks to improve the protection of refugees and IDPs.
In relation to the core commitments listed above, NGOs stress the importance of the following key messages for action by Member States, the UN, NGOs themselves and all actors engaged in humanitarian action:

1. **Solutions for refugees and stateless persons must include access to meaningful legal status.** Legal status should increase and improve access to freedom of movement, labour markets, education and health care on a par with host communities.

2. **Displacement is a development and human rights issue, and should not be seen solely through the lens of service provision.** As such, access to housing, education, work, health services for displaced people and the ability to control their lives should be incorporated in all cooperation frameworks, as well as in development plans, national policies, domestic legislation and budgets.

3. **Alternative pathways must always enable people fleeing persecution and conflict to seek safety without penalization.** All actors are urged to preserve the right to seek asylum, and protection from *refoulement*. Addressing forced displacement requires leadership and political courage: border securitization, detention and offshore processing are not acceptable solutions.

4. **New frameworks and collective outcomes are encouraged, and must improve the respect, protection and promotion of the rights of displaced persons.** With due regard for protecting the space for principled humanitarian action, NGOs call upon all humanitarian actors to strive towards a common set of goals for host governments, the UN system, the World Bank and civil society to achieve meaningful solutions for the displaced.

5. **NGOs call upon States to commit to a permanent distribution system for resettlement places, alternative and expedited pathways in case of large movement, and full and predictable financing.** Such a framework should incorporate and implement the clear rights and duties described in the 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions, its Protocol and other relevant human rights agreements.
Women and Girls: Catalysing action to achieve gender equality
NGO brief for the High Level Leaders’ Round Table

This brief is intended to inform discussions with stakeholders leading up to, and during the High Level Leaders’ Roundtable (HLRT): “Women and Girls: Catalysing Action to Achieve Gender Equality”. Led by ActionAid, CARE and Plan International, coordinated by ICVA, and shared widely amongst ICVA’s membership, this brief is the result of collective analysis by NGOs heavily engaged in gendered humanitarian response.

Context

The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) aims at achieving major global reforms to better protect and assist people affected by crisis. With this, NGOs call on the WHS to put women and girl’s leadership, gender equality and prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) at the heart of these reforms.

Research and experience have demonstrated how the failure to address the gendered impacts of crises, including sexual and reproductive health and GBV, is one of the biggest weaknesses and reoccurring gaps in emergency responses. Further, women and girls with disabilities face particularly grave risks and are often excluded from decision making processes and assistance programs. Women, girls and local women’s rights organisations are often amongst the first responders in crises, taking risks, providing unpaid care and essential work, and making important contributions to recovery efforts that too often go unrecognised. More lives will be saved, and resilience efforts will be strengthened if we put the agency and rights of women and girls at the heart of the WHS outcomes.

Key NGO messages for this High Level Leaders’ Round Table

The five proposed core commitments for the HLRT are aligned to the Secretary General’s (SG’s) Agenda for Humanity Report, which, in summary call for:

6. The empowerment of women and girls as change agents and leaders;
7. Universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights;
8. Implementation of a coordinated global approach to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in crisis contexts, including through the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies;
9. Increased funding for gender-responsive humanitarian programming; and
10. Full compliance with humanitarian policies, frameworks and legally binding documents related to gender equality and women’s empowerment.

In relation to the core commitments listed above, NGOs stress the importance of the following key messages for action by Member States, the UN, NGOs themselves and all actors engaged in humanitarian action:

1. The empowerment of women and girls from crisis-affected populations to participate meaningfully and equitably in the leadership of humanitarian preparedness, response, protection and recovery programmes, and the formulation of humanitarian policy. This is a call to all humanitarian actors, consistent with the SG’s appeal, to implement and adequately resource policies and programmes that aim for women and girls’ full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels, including women and girls with disabilities.

Note: An inclusive and intersectional dimension to policy implementation and programming recognizes that women are not a homogenous and/or equal grouping, and their ethnic, social and economic realities must be taken into consideration.
In realising this,

1.1. All stakeholders at the WHS should commit to strengthen and scale-up their support to such empowerment and guarantee women’s meaningful involvement in local and national disaster risk reduction (DRR), resilience, preparedness and response and reconstruction plans and programmes;

1.2. All humanitarian actors should take towards achieving equal representation of women in humanitarian positions in all stages of preparedness and response, and at all levels;

1.3. Member States and the UN should ensure a minimum representation is guaranteed for women in all local, national and international peace negotiations and conflict transformation processes;

1.4. Member States should use their influence to encourage all actors to advance greater investment in capacity building and stand-alone programming that will enable women and girls to better organise and mobilise to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies;

1.5. Humanitarian Actors must ensure the voices and priorities of women and girls, including those from traditionally marginalized groups, are heard. This is vital, and will include providing an opportunity and platform to raise specific demands of humanitarian actors.

2. Recognising that local women’s rights organisations are often amongst the first responders, but their contributions remain inadequately resourced, and their voices not heard in the humanitarian architecture, NGOs appeal to all humanitarian actors to prioritize the empowerment and engagement of local and national women’s rights organisations, including organizations of women with disabilities, in humanitarian action. This should be done through different avenues including reforms in humanitarian funding, partnerships, leadership and coordination. We make this call echoing the SG’s appeals to empower women and girls; substantially increase funding to local women’s groups; and integrate the specific needs of women and girls in national and international development and humanitarian programming and funding.

With this, NGOs call upon:

2.1. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to undertake major reforms in structures like the wider cluster coordination system, humanitarian country teams and country-level gender task forces, and in the GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR) - to promote the inclusion of women and girls at all levels, including in humanitarian oversight mechanisms. This reform is to facilitate the formal engagement of local and national women’s rights organisations at the global, country and local levels in monitoring humanitarian effectiveness to respond to women’s and girls’ needs and tracking progress in closing the gender gap in humanitarian action.

2.2. All humanitarian actors pledge to strengthen their partnerships with a diverse range of local and national women and girl’s rights organisations on both policy decision-making and practice.

2.3. All humanitarian actors pledge to increase their funding in support of the work of local and national women’s rights organisations, as part of a larger commitment to ensure increased funding flows to local actors.

3. NGOs call on all governments to urgently strengthen their institutional capacity and put in place minimum standards that will advance gender equality and women’s leadership in national disaster risk reduction (DRR), resilience, preparedness and response plans and programmes.

As such,

3.1. NGOs call for political commitments that as a priority will translate into building greater state capacity for gender responsive budgeting and gathering of sex and age disaggregated data;

3.2. All States need to ensure that the development of national plans on DRR, emergency preparedness and response guarantees the meaningful involvement and inclusion in decision-making by local women’s rights organisations and women from crisis-affected communities at all stages (consultation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation).

4. NGOs strongly endorse the call for all WHS stakeholders to rally to more effective approaches to promoting accountability for gender responsive programming.
4.1. Following on from the Summit, existing processes to document and scale up good practices in use of the IASC Gender Marker, the ‘Minimum Standards’ relating to age, gender and disability, the piloting of ‘gender equality measures’, the deliberations on the accountability framework for the IASC Gender Policy Statement should be brought together to promote a more effective, aligned and comprehensive approach across policy and practice. While no ‘one size fits all’ approach is necessary or desirable, there is a clear need to share and promote good practices, avoid inconsistencies and encourage alignment. Learning from efforts to promote accountability for addressing GBV, SRHR and gender equality in humanitarian action, along with efforts to address issues that inter-sect with gender such as age and ability, should be brought together into a coherent framework. Accountability for gender must shift beyond the ‘tick box’ approach to more effectively save lives and build resilience in the future.

5. NGOs urge all humanitarian actors to ensure that the protection of women and girls from GBV, and the provision of comprehensive sexual reproductive health services, in all emergencies, is at the heart of WHS outcomes on humanitarian aid effectiveness and accountability. We also call for the adherence of existing minimum standards and normative frameworks echoing the SG’s urge for all actors to “Guarantee access to sustainable and dignified livelihoods and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services.”

To this end,

5.1. National government capacity to deliver GBV prevention and response services should be built, informed by best practices and standards including the new Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action (IASC GBV Guidelines).

5.2. All actors should commit to implementing the ‘Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies’ Roadmap to 2020, and recommendations from the 15th anniversary review of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325.

5.3. The Summit deliberations and outcomes should promote and strengthen recommendations from the Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) on Reproductive Health in Crisis Situations which recently released a global study assessing gaps in frontline service provision for reproductive health in emergencies.

This NGO brief strongly aligns with a recent joint NGO position calling for a pledge to empower women at the World Humanitarian Summit [http://gadnetwork.org/gad-resources/2015/8/18/joint-position-calling-for-a-pledge-to-empower-women-at-the-world-humanitarian-summit](http://gadnetwork.org/gad-resources/2015/8/18/joint-position-calling-for-a-pledge-to-empower-women-at-the-world-humanitarian-summit) developed through extensive input from women from crisis-affected communities and local women’s rights organisations from contexts affected by natural disasters and conflict. It builds on recommendations generated at consultations with over 40 women at the UN Commission on the Status of Women (March 2015), a regional consultation with over 75 representatives of women’s rights organisations in the Latin America region (April 2015), a workshop in The Hague on the 15th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 (May 2015) and an online consultation in July 2015 with many more civil society groups.
Natural Disasters and Climate Change
NGO brief for the High Level Leaders’ Round Table

This brief is intended to inform discussions with stakeholders leading up to, and during the High Level Leaders’ Roundtable (HLRT) ‘Natural Disasters and Climate Change’. Led by Christian Aid and ACTED, with support from CARE, Oxfam and PIANGO, coordinated by ICVA and shared widely amongst ICVA’s membership, this brief is the result of collective analysis by NGOs heavily engaged in natural disasters and climate change.

Context

Action that addresses the interlinked challenges of disaster risk, sustainable development and climate change is a core priority. Approximately 90% of recorded major disasters caused by natural hazards from 1995 to 2015 were linked to climate and weather including floods, storms, heatwaves and droughts. Since the first Climate Change Conference in 1995, over 600,000 lives have been lost and over 4 billion people have been injured, left homeless or in need of emergency assistance as a result of weather-related disasters. UNISDR estimates that economic losses from weather-related disasters – including earthquakes and tsunamis – is between US$250 billion and US$300 billion annually. This HLRT must result in bold commitments to action from all representatives of the humanitarian sector.

Key NGO messages for this High Level Leaders’ Roundtable

In relation to Core commitments listed below, NGOs stress the importance of the following key messages for action by Member States, the UN, NGOs themselves and all actors engaged in humanitarian action.

Core Commitment 1: Commit to accelerate the reduction of disaster and climate-related risks through the coherent implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, as well as other relevant strategies and programs of action, including the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway.

1. Limiting global warming and the associated climate change impacts as much as possible is crucial. The Paris Agreement’s legally-binding obligation to “holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change” must be matched with enhanced ambition by all countries and institutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This requires a rapid shift away from the use of and investments in fossil fuels to sustainable forms of renewable energy.

2. NGOs call for the implementation of innovative funding sources which to generate truly additional resources for climate and sustainable development purposes. The Report of the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Finance, for example, included the consideration of using revenues from a Financial Transaction Tax and a solidarity on air tickets. In other circumstances, such as the UNFCCC loss and damage discussions, additional proposals were made, such as a fossil fuel extraction levy. However, despite the clear gap in available resources, these instruments have not received adequate attention, and the WHS should conclude with a clear goal to pursue the future implementation of new instruments.

3. There is an incontrovertible case for increased investment in preparing for emergencies and reducing the risk of disasters. Evidence shows that investing before disasters happen to get communities ready to cope with disasters is much more cost-effective than waiting for disasters to happen. Every USD$1 spent on preparedness saves more than $4 in disaster response; yet disaster risk reduction remains a low priority. NGOs are calling on aid donors and national governments to invest more financial resources in preparedness at local level. NGOs are proposing a target that the proportion of Official Development Assistance devoted to resilience should rise beyond the unambitious 1% sought by the SG.
Core Commitment 2: Commit to reinforce national and local leadership and capacities in managing disaster and climate-related risks through strengthened preparedness and predictable response and recovery arrangements.

4. NGOs support calls for the humanitarian and development sectors to work in a more integrated way, to ensure a coherent approach to reducing disaster risk, preparing for climate change impacts and building resilience including through tackling underlying drivers of risk and vulnerability. This requires including multi-risk analysis within development planning and more integrated approaches to addressing development and humanitarian needs in parallel; as well as a common understanding of risks, vulnerabilities and capacities across development and humanitarian actors. NGOs are calling for longer term humanitarian funding to allow the necessary resources and time to build resilience and reduce vulnerability.

5. NGOs call on the United Nations and Member States to work in partnership with NGOs to increase complementarity between humanitarian and development actors, but without undermining principled humanitarian action. Whilst the short-term impact of humanitarian action remains critically important to respond to urgent needs, the SG’s call to overcome traditional silos is ever more urgent. Humanitarian and development actors must move beyond traditional silos created by mandates and financial structures, working in strategic partnerships and frameworks as appropriate.

6. Insufficient attention is given to slow-onset natural hazards – i.e. drought – in the SG’s report. The humanitarian system is better set-up for fast onset crises, but ill-equipped to respond to drought. Often, governments do not wish to declare a disaster for political reasons. Funding is barely available to enable early action. El Nino is an outstanding example of this problem.

Core Commitment 3: Commit to improve the understanding, anticipation and preparedness for disaster and climate-related risks by investing in data, analysis and early warning, and developing evidence-based decision-making processes that result in early action.

7. NGOs welcome the UNSG’s call for a paradigm shift to ‘‘anticipate, do not wait, for crises’’. As climate change intensifies shocks and the effects of El Nino’s changing and recurrent weather patterns are felt in Central America, Africa and parts of Asia, listening to and supporting local and national capacities is imperative for adequate early action to any major risk. With forecasting mechanisms improving, this should be matched with similar improvements in capacity and funding to address climate shocks in the window of opportunity after early warning - but before full emergency onset.

8. NGOs note the growing interest in climate risk insurance, through initiatives such as the African Risk Capacity and the G7 Climate Risk Insurance Initiative. Whilst insurance products may offer some potential to transfer risk, they are not a magic bullet solution. Climate risk insurance must be able to demonstrate its value for money through robust evidence of the benefits it can deliver to those segments of the populations and communities who are most vulnerable – and the same or better returns on investment as DRR – before it is scaled up with scarce climate finance resources. To motivate a circle of greater resilience lowering insurance premiums, insurance can only work as part of a coherent resilience-building process, alongside investments and additional support for active adaptation measures. Care must be taken to ensure that poorer, more vulnerable people are not regressively penalized with larger insurance premiums, as they would be in a purely market-based approach. Those deemed uninsurable – the most vulnerable – must be at the heart of broader resilience-building measures.

Core Commitment 4: Commit to increase investment in building community resilience as a critical first line of response, with the full and effective participation of women.

9. NGOs call for the strengthening of national and local preparedness and response capacities and the provision of adequate and timely resources to frontline national responders. NGOs welcome the UNSG’s call for the humanitarian system to “reinforce, not replace national and local systems” - and his
call for “concrete targets to immediately increase direct funding to local partners, combined with long-term support to develop their capacity”. Whilst recognizing that international operational response capacities remain essential in some contexts, concrete action is required to enable a more prominent role for local and national NGOs, backed up with meaningful change to existing funding mechanisms, including those managed by the United Nations. Further, whilst disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation has been recognized as critical for reducing losses, this recognition is currently not matched with the commitments to resource it.

Core Commitment 5: Commit to ensure regional and global humanitarian assistance for natural disasters complements national and local efforts.

10. We need to encourage scalable systems whereby existing national systems expand to cover new needs, rather than promoting a parallel humanitarian system which is inefficient and costly. For particularly vulnerable countries, natural hazards need to be treated as an integral part of the context, especially as climate change takes hold. Many countries have linear growth strategies — assuming that economic growth will rise in a linear fashion — whereas they should be cyclical, planning for periodic impacts of natural hazards. Development plans should therefore address development, DRR, response and recovery priorities. National governments should commit to national social protection floors, and to incorporating natural hazard risk into their national growth strategies, with DRR as a core government strategy.

11. The SG calls for collective outcomes and empowered leadership. The detail of exactly how this would play out in practice is unclear. Whilst a great deal of the SG’s Agenda for Humanity is to be applauded, the area of the SG’s vision that NGOs feel most uncomfortable with is its centralized, one-system-fits-all, UN-centric approach. NGOs call for a decentralised global humanitarian system. Effective and principled humanitarian action can be better realized through an ecosystem of diverse local, national and international organizations operating according to the principle of complementarity, taking decisions and actions at appropriate levels together with affected populations.

12. NGOs are calling on donors to build on alternative approaches to ensuring accountability, based on informed management of risk, such as those used in the DRC and Somalia OCHA-led country based pooled funds. Whilst we recognize that donors face hard constraints in their own staff capacity and external accountability requirements, it is vital that donor due diligence procedures are proportionate to the size, length and complexity of the specific grant and do not act as a barrier for local and national engagement. The SG rightly calls for more funding for humanitarian crisis, but proposes a key vehicle for this to be a massive increase in the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). The CERF goes to UN agencies, which already control more than half all available humanitarian funding. Channelling more funding to the UN through the CERF does not speak well to the need to better fund local actors. NGOs urge for donors to channel additional funds through mechanisms that better cohere with the ‘reinforce not replace’ agenda.

13. NGOs are calling on donors to publicize funding opportunities where NNGOs will see them - allowing reasonable time-frames to allow NNGOs a fair chance to apply; translating documentation into appropriate working languages; and allowing flexibility in minimum grant sizes for NNGOs. If the benefits of the Grand Bargain are to be achieved, UN agencies must pass the greater flexibility in donor funding to national and international NGOs who they contract to deliver assistance.

14. The Charter for Change: As a strong signal of support to the UNSG’s agenda to “reinforce not replace national and local systems”, 23 INGOs have signed and well over 100 NNGOs have endorsed the Charter for Change - www.charter4change.org – in which INGOs make 8 concrete pledges to strengthen the role of national actors, including:
   o by passing at least 20% of their funding direct to national actors,
   o by giving compensation to national actors if recruiting their staff during an emergency, and
   o by including fair provision for management, administrative and overhead costs in support to national actors.
Changing People’s Lives: From Delivering Aid to Ending Need
NGO brief for the High Level Leaders’ Round Table

This brief is intended to inform discussions with stakeholders leading up to, and during the High Level Leaders’ Roundtable (HLRT) ‘Changing People’s Lives: From Delivering Aid to Ending Need’. Led by ACTED, with inputs from World Vision International (WVI) and Christian Aid, coordinated by ICVA and shared widely amongst ICVA’s membership, this brief is based on a foundation of collective NGO experience and analysis.

Context

Over the past decade, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has risen from 40 million, to an estimated 114 million people. Further, between 2004 and 2015, annual inter-agency humanitarian appeals have grown by approximately 600 per cent, from US$3.4 billion, to US$19.44 billion. However, the gap between what is requested and what is received - has also grown, from $3.3 billion in 2011 to $7.2 billion in 2014. In parallel, the length of humanitarian responses over time has also increased with a shift from shorter-term needs to protracted crisis contexts. The increasing concentration of poverty in fragile states will result in rising humanitarian needs in the coming years.

As noted in the report of the UN Secretary General to the WHS, humanitarian action must not only strive to address the immediacy of disasters, but also ensure it contributes to addressing the root causes of crises and fragility. Realising this shift is essential to integrate the increasing complexity and risk of humanitarian contexts and to cope with the overstretching of the humanitarian sector. Existing silos between humanitarian and development action must be overcome, whilst respecting humanitarian space and principled humanitarian action.

Key NGO messages for this High Level Leaders’ Roundtable

In relation to the Core commitments listed below, NGOs stress the importance of the following key messages for action by Member States, the UN, NGOs themselves and all actors engaged in humanitarian action.

Anticipate, Do Not Wait: to invest in risk analysis and to incentivize early action in order to minimize the impact and frequency of known risks and hazards on people.

1. The most effective way to reduce humanitarian need is to prevent or rapidly resolve crises before they take their toll on local populations. As such, NGOs call on states and multilateral actors to exercise their political will and use all available tools including the UN Security Council and regional governmental organizations to prevent and find peaceful solutions to conflict situations as early as possible.

2. Regular and coordinated data collection and analysis, addressing risks and vulnerabilities, is required to identify emerging crises and support prevention and early action. Furthermore, maintaining a common understanding of risks, vulnerabilities, capacities and priority needs in risk-prone contexts can improve the coherence and effectiveness of responses, whilst enabling root causes of conflict to be understood and addressed. Predictable and regular financial resources are required to create and sustain such a global risk monitoring framework.

Reinforce, Do Not Replace: to support and invest in local, national and regional leadership, capacity strengthening and response systems, avoiding duplicative international mechanisms wherever possible.

3. A power shift within the humanitarian system is needed. NGOs call for a decentralized humanitarian system, ensuring stronger participation of local and national organizations in humanitarian policy and decision making fora, such as Humanitarian Country Teams. Effective and principled humanitarian

---

3 OCHA (2016) Leaving no-one behind: Humanitarian effectiveness in the age of the sustainable development goals.
action can be better realized through an ecosystem of diverse local, national and international organizations operating according to the principle of complementarity, taking decisions and actions at appropriate levels together with affected populations.

4. It is critical for humanitarian action to be based on a sound understanding of local and national dynamics, capacities and vulnerabilities, with the participation of local and national stakeholders. This can be promoted by moving beyond sector silos and one-system-fits-all methodologies, through contextually driven approaches and through planning and implementing responses on a geographic basis. These approaches will enable contextualized responses to leverage the diversity of local and national actors, including civil society, private sector and institutional stakeholders and is necessary to support existing national systems, rather than creating parallel structures.

5. NGOs welcome the call to invest in local capacity. However, capacity building should be driven by local and national organizations and institutions - not by international actors. Local and national organizations and institutions should be driving their own development.

6. The empowerment of local actors, who are often the first responders, must include efforts to improve local and national NGOs’ access to funding opportunities through better information sharing on funding sources, capacity support to access donor funding, whilst advocating to ensure counter-terrorism measures to not hinder access to funding for principle humanitarian action. If the benefits of the Grand Bargain are to be achieved, UN agencies must pass the greater flexibility in donor funding to local, national and international NGOs.

7. Parallel to reinforcing local and national capacities, NGOs call to retain international operational response capacities in certain contexts and large scale emergencies and crises. International humanitarian actors need to retain their response capacity to deploy rapidly in times of crises. This deployment must occur without undermining local and national response systems and without creating parallel structures.

8. Humanitarian and development actors must move beyond traditional silos created by mandates and financial structures, working in strategic partnerships and frameworks as appropriate, without undermining principled humanitarian action. Recognizing the protracted nature of crises, this requires predictable multi-year funding for holistic, multi-sector and multi-actor approaches tailored to the specific context. This will enable humanitarian programming to address longer term resilience oriented solutions, rather than solely short-term, reactive humanitarian interventions.

9. The potential benefits of financial and political investment in crisis preparedness and risk reduction have been extensively documented. Despite this, investment in better risk analysis, early warning and early action remains a low priority for donors. NGOs are calling for longer term humanitarian funding to allow the necessary resources and time to build resilience and reduce vulnerability, and to increase funding for disaster and crises preparedness and risk reduction funding.

Commit to enable coherent financing that avoids fragmentation by supporting collective outcomes over multiple years supporting those with demonstrated comparative advantage to deliver in context.

10. Better coordination of humanitarian and development agendas is clearly required. However, the most appropriate coordination, funding and planning mechanisms to achieve this, remains unclear.
Humanitarian Financing: Investing in Humanity
NGO brief for the High Level Leaders’ Round Table

This brief is intended to inform discussions with stakeholders leading up to, and during the High Level Leaders’ Roundtable (HLRT) on Humanitarian Financing. Led by World Vision, with input from IMPACT, coordinated by ICVA and shared widely amongst ICVA’s membership, this brief is based on a foundation of collective NGO experience and analysis of Humanitarian Financing.

Context

Humanitarian financing is overstretched and no longer fit for purpose. Each year humanitarian action is at least 30% underfunded, and despite ever increasing commitments from major donors, contributions are not keeping pace with expanding needs. Funds are often inaccessible to frontline responders, particularly national NGOs, and saddled with burdensome administrative requirements. Funding flows through different channels - pooled funds, UN agencies, international NGOs, national NGOs, the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, which is difficult to track, and with limited means of knowing what is more efficient or expensive.

In the run up the WHS, donors, implementers and UN agencies are under pressure to reform the financing system. The need for reform has been laid out in a number of key reports including Looking Beyond the Crisis (CAFOD, FAO, WVI – and supported by the IASC HFTT), the Too Important to Fail High Level Panel report on Humanitarian Financing, the Secretary General’s Agenda for Humanity and the ICVA Briefing Paper on the Grand Bargain.

The WHS Round Table on Humanitarian Financing represents an important opportunity to advance the reform agenda. It will feature EC Vice President Kristalina Georgieva, who will present the results of a “Grand Bargain for Efficiencies” to be struck by 15 donors, 15 aid agencies (UN agencies, IOM, ICRC, IFRC, ICVA, SCHR, and InterAction). Participants in the Round Table can make pledges towards the Grand Bargain, in addition to a range of other pledges falling under one or more of 5 general “Core Commitments” as listed below

Key NGO messages for this High Level Leaders’ Roundtable

Humanitarian action must be principled and effective. To realise this, the humanitarian system must move away from a centralized, command and control, one-system-fits-all approach, towards an ecosystem of diverse actors, with contextualised responses to crises, in which frontline responders receive adequate and timely resources.

In relation to the Core commitments listed below, NGOs stress the importance of the following key messages – both overall, and in relation to specific core commitments, for action by Member States, the UN, NGOs themselves and all actors engaged in humanitarian action.

1. Overall, the core commitments contain many welcome statements, but are light on concrete means to achieve them. There is a danger they are commitments in principle rather than to action.

2. A number of NGOs are concerned about the continuing gap in funding for emergencies and protracted crises is absent from the WHS Agenda.

3. When examining options, all stakeholders - including donors, UN agencies, and NGOs - must adhere to humanitarian principles, the Principles of Partnership and Good Humanitarian Donorship (especially flexible, timely, predictable, and multi-annual funding, capacity strengthening and harmonised reporting).

4. Humanitarian assistance cannot be delivered efficiently and effectively by a one size fits all global system. We need an ecosystem of approaches for different contexts that draws on differing

---

5 Front line responders have been defined as those local, national or international actors that are best placed to respond.
configurations of host government, UN, civil society and private sector actors. There should be an explicit commitment that the primary benefits of the core commitments should be local communities and the front line responders that directly provide goods and services to them. All organizations making commitments should recognize the need to pay benefits forward to the field and recognize the value that non UN actors bring to humanitarian action.

Core Commitment 1: Commit to substantially increasing and diversifying global support and sharing of resources for humanitarian assistance aimed at addressing the needs of populations affected by humanitarian crises, particularly in fragile situations and complex emergencies, including increasing cash-based programming in situations where relevant.

5. The commitment to increase and diversify global support and share of resources for humanitarian assistance is welcome. However, when considering sub commitments all actors should be clearer about where this funding is coming from. For example, will this be new money or redirected from other humanitarian or development funding? When considering cash, we must acknowledge that cash is not solely a cost saving that reduces humanitarian action to a blanket set of transfers into bank accounts. A field presence is required for beneficiary registration, selection, complaints, monitoring and evaluation and to meet protection needs. NGOs and frontline responders have an important role in this process. The scaling up of cash raises fundamental questions around what parts of the humanitarian system can be bypassed (e.g. logistics and procurement costs) and what needs to be preserved. These decisions should be made based on community needs.

Core Commitment 2: Commit to empower national and local humanitarian action by increasing the share of financing accessible to local and national humanitarian actors and supporting the enhancement of their national delivery systems, capacities and preparedness planning.

6. NGOs call upon all humanitarian actors for tangible sub-commitments to achieve this commitment. For example, local and national capacity could be built better if implementing organizations could allocate an agreed percentage allocation on all grants for local and national level capacity building.

7. NGOs call upon key blocks of stakeholders (such as the top GHD 15 donors) to make collective commitments that have well defined means to achieve them. We need to not just fund the crisis of the moment – or those that fit the geopolitical interests of the donor commitments – we need to restate the humanitarian imperative and equality of all.

Core Commitment 3: Commit to promote and increase predictable, multi-year, un-earmarked, collaborative and flexible humanitarian funding toward greater efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of humanitarian action for affected people.

8. Moving towards predictable, multi-annual, un-earmarked, collaborative and flexible humanitarian funding is highly welcome. Such funding will enable humanitarian actors to meet needs in accordance with the humanitarian imperative and in line with the humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality. However, further work needs to be done to operationalize these improvements. The multi-annual, un-earmarked and more flexible funding of UN appeals must also benefit implementing organizations. Harmonised, simplified and proportionate financial and narrative reporting requirements can maximize efficiency if applied to all humanitarian actors. These three principles should be reflected within partnerships agreements between actors. Sub commitments must also consider the importance of joint planning on the use the multi-annual funds and a whole of civil society approach, which includes host governments and development actors alongside the humanitarian appeals and planning.
Core Commitment 4: Commit to invest in risk management, preparedness and crisis prevention capacity to build the resilience of vulnerable and affected people.

9. There is an incontrovertible case for increased investment in preparing for emergencies and reducing the risk of disasters. Evidence shows that investing before disasters happen to get communities ready to cope with disasters is much more cost-effective than waiting for disasters to happen. Every USD$1 spent on preparedness saves more than $4 in disaster response; yet disaster risk reduction remains a low priority. NGOs are calling on aid donors and national governments to invest more financial resources in preparedness at local level. **NGOs are proposing a target that the proportion of Official Development Assistance devoted to resilience should rise above the unambitious 1% sought by the SG.**

Core Commitment 5: Commit to broaden and adapt the global instruments and approaches to meet urgent needs, reduce risk and vulnerability and increase resilience, without adverse impact on humanitarian principles and overall action (as also proposed in Round Table 6 on “Changing Lives”).

10. **NGOs call on Member States and the UN to go beyond solely looking for cost savings in instrument and approach.** The current system is characterized by funding flows through various routes from the primary donor through various pass through ‘fundamediaries’ to the final implementer. When allocating funds, consideration of the most efficient funding routes is rarely considered. Alongside efficiency reforms within organizations and intuitions, **humanitarian actors must better develop the means to compare the efficiency of different mechanisms and then choose which ones make the most sense.** These may be UN mechanisms or civil society mechanisms such as the Start Fund. In a humanitarian system that is significantly underfunded, this has significant humanitarian implications for affected populations. Being clear about transaction costs of different funding routes will open up a new area of potential savings for the most efficient mechanisms to be chosen in each context.