



International Rescue Committee

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Chapeau

The Chapeau should ensure the Pact for the Future includes a central focus on making multilateralism work for the world's crisis-affected contexts which include some of the most vulnerable populations and those most likely to be left behind. If the multilateral system does not work for these contexts, there will be little progress in advancing our common agendas including the SDGs. As the divide between stable and fragile countries grows deeper, for the Global North to regain the trust of the Global South, they must deliver genuine financial commitments to humanitarian and development action and ensure the result of these commitments reaches those most at-risk of being left behind.

At the end of the SDGs in 2030, an estimated 348 million people are projected to live in extreme poverty in fragile and conflict-affected states—a 33% increase from 2015. Today one-third of all people living in extreme poverty are concentrated in just 15 countries that are both climate vulnerable and conflict affected. These three trends represent the new geography of crisis.

Yet these are exactly the contexts most likely to be left out of global action because they are seen as too hard to reach, too complicated to operate in, too different for traditional approaches to work. But solutions exist that work even in these challenging contexts, and a new approach and new focus is needed urgently to ensure the divide between fragile and stable countries does not further deepen.

The true test for multilateralism is whether it can rise to the challenges presented by a new geography of crises. The three priorities action should be centered around:

- *Save lives in fragile and conflict affected states by investing in climate adaptation, resilience and anticipatory action.*
- *Tackle extreme poverty and economic drivers of rising humanitarian needs.*
- *Stem impunity and reinforce International Humanitarian Law.*

Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

- *Recommendation 1: Save lives in fragile and conflict affected states by investing in climate adaptation, resilience and anticipatory action.*

Building community resilience to climate shocks, including droughts and floods, and supporting communities to adapt their lives and livelihoods, should be a priority for climate finance contributors. However, the global approach to climate finance investments is heavily skewed toward mitigation and emissions reduction. While crucial to prevent the worsening impacts of climate change, a focus on mitigation without adequate parallel investments in adaptation fails to address the immediate climate impacts faced by conflict-affected communities. Addressing immediate climate-related needs and risks for conflict-affected communities requires testing and scaling innovative adaptation and resilience approaches.

- *To achieve this, 50% of all public climate finance to developing countries should be allocated to adaptation by 2025 in line with the U.N. Secretary General’s target.*
 - *To increase finance for climate adaptation, reaching conflict-affected communities that are outside of government control requires reforms in finance and delivery mechanisms: 20% of all multilateral development bank (MDB) and other multilateral climate finance to conflict- and climate-impacted countries should be channeled via non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including local NGOs and women-led organizations.*
 - *Experience from IRC programming shows that anticipatory cash programs can reduce losses and damages sustained by communities at the forefront of the climate crisis. To scale these programs, a minimum 5% of humanitarian budgets should be spent on anticipatory action, with a strategy for further expansion by 2030.*
 - *Climate finance contributors should fulfill the \$100 billion-per-year climate pledge for climate action in developing countries with new and additional financing, while taking active steps to ensure funding is accessible to a diverse range of partners in conflict-affected countries.*
- ***Recommendation 2: Tackle extreme poverty and economic drivers of rising humanitarian needs:***

Conflict, climate change and economic turmoil are together driving a rise in extreme poverty in conflict-affected states, while global levels are in decline. The response to these trends requires creative thinking about the roles of both humanitarian and development actors, and the types of interventions needed. Beyond traditional humanitarian/development service provision, additional support is required to ensure that assistance reaches those most in need and macroeconomic stability is maintained in the face of shocks and emergencies.

 - ***Increase the World Bank’s ability to work in complex emergencies through new partnerships.*** *In countries where governments are sometimes unwilling or unable to deliver critical services, the World Bank’s government-first delivery model is not viable or effective. Where governments can deliver, they should be supported. Where they cannot, the Bank should use its forthcoming Partnerships Charter to institutionalize new funding and delivery partnerships with a wider range of actors, including the U.N., I/NGOs and women-led organizations (WLOs). First, the Bank should establish a civil society consultation mechanism to guide the development and implementation of the Charter. In addition, the Bank should seek endorsement for the Charter at the highest levels of leadership to ensure the approach is applied across all operations. Finally, as part of the Charter’s development, the Bank should establish an internal system (potentially housed in the Country Diagnostics or Risk Resilience Assessment) to map which U.N., I/NGO and*

WLO partners at country level are best able to support the design and delivery of basic services to formalize partnership programming in-country.

- ***Increase investment in social safety nets and cash responses.*** Roughly 36% of those classified by the World Bank as “very poor” have escaped extreme poverty as a result of social safety nets. Yet, of the world’s poorest, 1 in 5 are still not covered by social protection schemes. As increasing costs of living exacerbate hunger and hardship in fragile and conflict-affected states, donors and development banks should expand inclusive social assistance and cash support, with a particular focus on Africa.
- ***Recommendation 3: Promote shared prosperity by increasing aid and tackling the debt crisis.***

The levels of humanitarian and development aid countries receive—and the debt they carry—affects their ability to manage the impacts of conflict and climate change. Over three-quarters of Official Development Assistance (ODA) currently goes to states not impacted by war or economic fragility. HRP’s continue to be severely underfunded.

 - ***The IRC calls for OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors to commit half of all bilateral ODA to fragile and conflict-affected states***—up from 25% disbursed now — and for funding to be provided in grants and, when delivered via development banks, highly concessional financing. This commitment alone would see over \$30 billion in additional funding made available to fragile and conflict-affected states—a sum equivalent to the funding gaps in all country-focused humanitarian response plans worldwide.
 - ***Funding must also be increased.*** Only five¹⁵ DAC donors fulfilled their commitment to spend 0.7% of their gross national income on ODA in 2022. If G7 countries alone met their commitments, they would almost double the annual bilateral ODA by DAC countries, creating an additional \$168 billion.
 - ***Donors should strive for an ambitious IDA 21 (International Development Association) replenishment while also committing to triple IDA by 2030,*** in line with the Independent Experts Group G20 recommendations. The World Bank should also bring IDA commitments for conflict-affected states toward (at least) parity with non-conflict-affected states.
 - ***Addressing the burden of sovereign debt requires long-term debt relief,*** including through the World Bank’s Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. In addition, creditors should explore current and new approaches to ease the burden of their debt stocks, to support investment in humanitarian response, climate adaptation and social protection. Any new agreements should be focused on canceling or restructuring—rather than rescheduling—debt. Innovations building on “debt for nature swaps” could help countries restructure outstanding sovereign debt, freeing up hundreds of millions of dollars for humanitarian purposes or climate adaptation.

Chapter II. International peace and security

- ***Recommendation 1: Stem impunity and reinforce International Humanitarian Law***

Wars are increasingly fought with disregard for international law— with civilians bearing the brunt. Violations have become normalized: attacks on hospitals, schools and homes, denial of access to

critical lifesaving aid, and mass killing with impunity. Without accountability, these trends will continue. The U.N. Security Council (UNSC) is charged with upholding peace, yet political divisions have left it paralyzed to act. Faith in the international system needs to be restored.

- **States committed to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) should agree to bring forward the same mechanisms authorized by the U.N. General Assembly, Human Rights Council and bilaterally in response to the invasion of Ukraine for new crises as part of a new “Accountability Menu.”** Mechanisms include setting up a Commission of Inquiry to gather evidence on violations of IHL, supporting a Joint Investigation Team to assess when war crimes and genocide have been committed, and deploying an Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group to document, preserve and analyze evidence of atrocities.
- **Council members should support the France-Mexico declaration to suspend the use of the veto in the case of mass atrocities, with the determination of what constitutes a mass atrocity made through an independent and neutral panel, as established by the U.N. General Assembly.** This declaration has support across the General Assembly and would drive not only greater action on some of the most abhorrent crimes, but a renewal of the legitimacy of the Council itself.
- **Build commitment to international humanitarian law (IHL) into global military partnerships.** The rise of internationalized civil conflicts has often seen foreign countries intervening by, with and through local security partners rather than directly. Security partnerships should be leveraged to improve the understanding of and adherence to IHL by local security forces (state and non-state) to minimize civilian harm that drives displacement and humanitarian need. Conditionality for security assistance tied to adherence to IHL could incentivize greater prioritization of civilians and civilian infrastructure like health facilities and schools.
- **Use the legal principle of universal jurisdiction to prosecute those committing egregious abuses and violations of international humanitarian law.** A coalition of countries should publicly commit to undertake this work and expand the scale and reach of this accountability to both substantive and symbolic effect. States should strengthen these efforts by establishing universal jurisdiction for war crimes in their national legislation to ease prosecutions; by standing up and resourcing investigation units dedicated to IHL universal jurisdiction cases within justice and interior ministries; and by linking these accountability efforts to other tools at their disposal, including their control of financial assets. By systematizing and coordinating their efforts, states could send a powerful message against impunity.

Chapter III. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation

Recommendation 1: Solving difficult, long-term problems requires prioritizing investment in research, design, and adaptation. And it requires collaboration and partnership which upend old models of how progress is made.

Technology and innovation can be a game-changer when it comes to offering solutions and having sustainable access to crisis-affected populations. To get to this point however it takes years of investing in

iterative design, consultation with key users, and trial and error to develop this suite of tools that prioritize quality and accessibility. The international community needs more program model examples which disrupt our thinking in order to facilitate accessible outcomes while also giving insight on the limitations. This requires a diversified portfolio to find the right balance of allocation between experimentation and sure bets, and future vision and urgent needs. Untested innovations sometimes fail, and that failure is not a risk, rather progress towards groundbreaking solutions. Many of these learnings are emerging from an IRC flagship program, Ahlan Simsim, which had the mandate to do just that.

- **Enable investment strategies that encourage prototyping, micro-pilots and pivots. Put flexible funding, multi-year approaches at the forefront of investment strategies.** This requires allocating and implementing resources as a portfolio, giving implementers flexibility to shift based on learning and opportunity and shoring up risk appetite for testing and failing to contribute to long term change
- **Strengthen focus on quality funding and programming, elevating promising research as guidance for assessments,** as well as better communicate new programmatic results to the multilateral community in an effort to reinforce doing business differently.
- **Leverage new partners and ways of working to seed and incentivize change.** Seek out the capabilities of mobile technology, social networks, AI, trusted consumer brands, the entertainment industry, and other powerful forces not yet engaged in crisis response. Structure incentives so UN organizations are encouraged to innovate and take risks, much in the way private sector start-ups operate. Consider how playful approaches are embedded in program models to motivate staff, governments, and communities.
- **Widen the tent for where responsibility lies for innovation, technology and digital cooperation.** Think creatively about your definitions of basic services, expanding interpretations in order to strengthen creative approaches to achieving new pathways to existing outcomes. Prioritize investment in country based human resources that are responsible for overseeing the long-term growth and development of crisis affected populations.

Chapter IV. Youth and future generations

- **Recommendation 1: Close the malnutrition treatment gap to safeguard children's futures in fragile and conflict -affected states.**

Two million children under 5 years old die every year from acute malnutrition, otherwise known as wasting. Wasting is responsible for 1 in 5 deaths in children under age 5 worldwide, making it one of the top threats to child wellness and survival. The compounding crises of conflict, climate change and extreme poverty contribute to the rise of child wasting—whether through floods increasing rates of cholera or poverty putting nutritious meals out of the reach of families. But deaths due to wasting are preventable. A proven solution, using a shelf-stable, fortified peanut paste known as Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF), exists that helps 92% of acutely malnourished children recover, yet 80% of children suffering from acute malnutrition historically do not have access to this lifesaving remedy. Additionally, the current treatment and delivery system is unnecessarily complex, inefficient, and bifurcated, with two U.N. agencies delivering two products to treat severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) separately.

- *The first step is the adoption of a simplified, streamlined approach to diagnosis and treatment that breaks down the existing bifurcation between WFP and UNICEF.* More than a decade of IRC evidence shows this simplified, combined approach increases the cost effectiveness and scalability of treatment by using 30% less RUTF and costing 20% less per severely malnourished child treated.
 - *The second step is a new people-first delivery model that focuses on bringing treatment to children through the use of community health workers rather than bringing malnourished children to static treatment facilities that are often inaccessible for food-insecure populations living in conflict zones.*
 - *Third, overcoming the complex range of barriers to treatment in a given context requires a series of national action plans that build context-specific, people-first strategies and give community leaders a seat at the table in a meaningful way.* These national action plans should be supported by a new financing model that consolidates resources for fighting malnutrition and distributes funds according to the joint strategy.
 - *Finally, the success of this new approach will also depend on the strength of a global coalition led by affected countries and communities, donor governments, the U.N. system, and NGOs and local civil society working hand in hand and holding one another accountable for progress.*
- **Recommendation 2: Strengthening education systems to prepare for and respond to crises.**
In crisis settings, education is a beacon of hope for a better future – but all too often, children and youth are unable to access school and learn. Conflict and disasters repeatedly disrupt education, and increasing crises and climate events will make an already untenable situation worse. Systems are unable to prepare for and respond to these crises, leading to interrupted education for millions, with the most marginalized hit the hardest. Incremental change won't be enough to solve these problems. We need new ways of thinking and acting – dramatically expanding the solutions that work, and investing in innovation to fill the gaps that remain. And we need scale that sustains – leveraging our experience and evidence to build lasting change together with clients, partners, ministries and donors.
 - *Prioritize explicit inclusion of children and caregivers in all relevant national policies and funding allocations to **strengthen and scale access, quality, and equity of foundational and social emotional learning as well as early childhood development***
 - *Major funders, inclusive of the US government, World Bank, FCDO, AfD, GAC, and ECHO alongside the Global Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait, should **increase investment in rigorous research and measurement**, paving the way for strengthened data collection, disaggregation, and aligned data systems across refugees, IDPs, migrants and host communities.*
 - *Humanitarian response entities inclusive of OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF, and WHO to **sharpen needs assessments and response plans on provision of learning and child development opportunities at times of crisis.** Including a specialized focus on growing climate anticipatory action and facilitating cross-sectoral, locally led solutions for women and children*

- *Through improved evidence on what working for whom at what cost for children and caregivers, aligned with humanitarian response needs assessments, the US government, World Bank, FCDO, AfD, GAC, and ECHO alongside the Global Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait should adopt **innovative approaches to blend humanitarian-development financing models to ensure funding is available and accessible.***

Chapter V. Transforming global governance

While there are a plethora of relevant existing multilateral mechanisms and channels to support the delivery of existing international commitments, including the SDGs, there continue to be gaps where new mechanisms would support efforts to ensure the multilateral system is working for fragile and conflict-affected states. We recommend the establishment of the below:

- ***A new inter-agency mechanism housed within UN OCHA to forecast the impacts of economic shocks on humanitarian needs and response.** Macroeconomic trends, economic policy and volatility are driving humanitarian needs—and undermining responses to them. In Afghanistan and Venezuela, asset freezing contributed to the weakening of fragile economies, with resulting inflation leaving basic goods unaffordable for millions. In Somalia, the government spends more on servicing debt than investing in public services. U.N. Security Council resolutions on Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and Afghanistan all call for efforts to support state macroeconomic functions, but responsibility for action remains diffused and poorly defined. To address this gap, U.N. member states should establish and fund an inter-agency mechanism to address the humanitarian impact of economic fragility, housed in U.N. OCHA to develop analysis, forecast economic trends and develop recommendations. This mechanism would fill a void in coordination between International Financial Institutions, Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), private sector actors, central banks and humanitarian actors.*
- ***An Independent Access Organization (IAO).** Denial of access to populations in need undermines any efforts to progress on humanitarian-development-peace or climate objectives. Existing reporting mechanisms on denial of assistance, including the Protection of Civilians and Children and Armed Conflict reports or regular OCHA/NGO reporting, give inadequate profile to the trends, impact and nature of access denial. In a multipolar world, the diplomatic response to access denial also cannot be limited to the U.N. A new Independent Access Organization (IAO) should be established to improve reporting on access, raise awareness of its impacts, and catalyze action by global, regional and national-level policy makers. It's primary goal will be to provide evidence and catalyze action by global, regional and national level policy makers to address humanitarian access barriers and in doing so contribute to the reinvigoration of the international community's commitment to the normative frameworks (IHL) and the humanitarian principles that refuse to tolerate access denial or constraints on arbitrary grounds*