

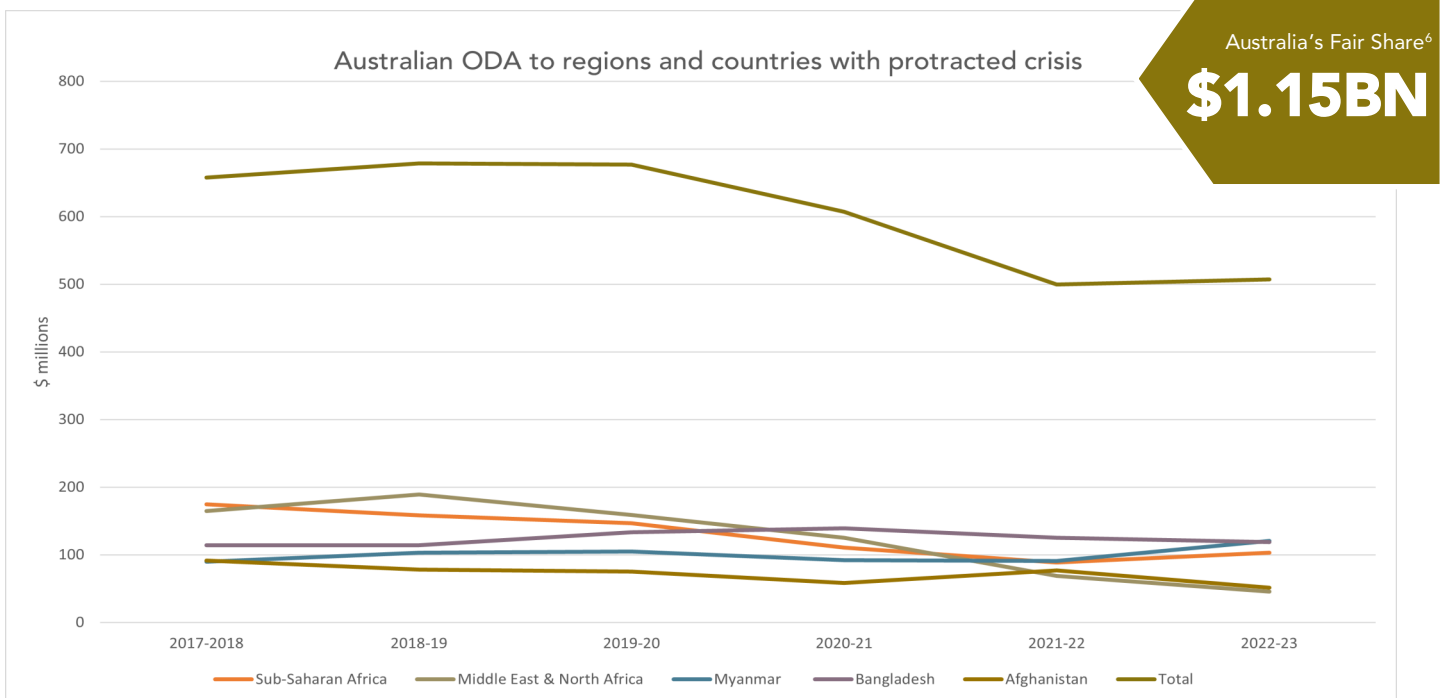
Playing our part: Raising the bar on Australia's role in protracted crises

"...the intensity and confluence of today's challenges in an interconnected world are without precedent...the new Australian Government is determined to play its part..."¹ - Foreign Minister, Sen. Wong UNGA 2022

The average length of a humanitarian crisis is now 9² years and the average time people are displaced is 17 years.³ By 2030, We now face a world in which increasing conflict and rising climate-related natural disasters have led to accelerating displacement. By 2030, 60% of people living in poverty will be in fragile contexts.⁴

Despite Australia's strong history of principled humanitarian action, heightened global instability and the onset of polycrises⁵ as the 'new normal', recent trends show a decline in Australia's support for protracted crises. Protracted crises create cycles of poor development outcomes and humanitarian suffering as well as increased displacement and geopolitical instability. Without adequate resourcing, and a whole-of-government rethink in how Australia responds to protracted crisis, Australia remains acutely unprepared for future crises both globally and within our region.

Australia must act on its commitment to international stability and rules-based order through a whole-of-government approach to protracted crises that is preventive and responds to immediate humanitarian needs for the duration of the crisis.



Footnotes

1. National Statement to the UN General Assembly, New York | Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs (foreignminister.gov.au)
 2. https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/irc-news-and-updates/humanitarian-crisis-around-world-are-becoming-longer-and-more-complex-2020-11-20_en#:~:text=An%20average%20humanitarian%20crisis%20now,are%20also%20becoming%20increasingly%20complex
 3. <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/report-secretary-general-e-effective-coordination-humanitarian-assistance-efforts#:~:text=The%20average%20length%20of%20a,most%20effective%20or%20efficient%20approach>
 4. Global poverty: Facts, FAQs, and how to help | World Vision
 5. <https://reliefweb.int/report/australia/polycrisis-and-urgent-case-boosting-australias-humanitarian-and-development-funding>
 6. Oxfam Fair Share Calculation
- Graph figures based on DFAT statistical summaries.

What can Australia do?

Complex environments require complex, not single actor responses

Recommendation 1.

Improve Australia's whole-of-government humanitarian approach by **expanding crisis taskforces to include civil society and all agencies relevant to protracted crises across the disaster cycle**, including displacement and conflict contexts.

In a constrained global financial environment, investing in prevention and addressing the root causes of crises is the most cost-effective and humane way of working.

Due to their complex nature, polycrises cannot be prevented or addressed effectively by the humanitarian sector alone.

A whole-of-government expanded crisis taskforce should cover the full disaster cycle (prevention, preparedness, response, recovery) and include civil society, political and diplomatic stakeholders to support humanitarian access and political advocacy.

This approach is essential to ensuring Australia's humanitarian program is coordinated and effective when working in contexts such as Afghanistan and Myanmar.

Local actors have the greatest knowledge of local contexts and can respond quickly and effectively in crisis

Australia has committed to the Grand Bargain 2.0 which puts local-actor engagement at the heart of humanitarian response. In practice, this translates to flexible and secure long-term, multi-year funding and resourcing to local actors, including organisations representing marginalised groups.

Multi-year funding allows for greater impact and organisational stability while improving the ability of NGOs to contribute to capacity building and develop meaningful relationships with local actors over a longer period of time. This supports a transition of decision making and power to local actors which is not possible in short-term interventions.

Recommendation 2.

Increase investment in protracted crises designing, at minimum, a further **two global multi-year funding packages** of assistance in line with Australia's Grand Bargain commitments that promote locally-led humanitarian response

Doubling the HEF

Australia has committed to the Humanitarian Principles which require that humanitarian need be addressed wherever it may be found. The Australian Government should **double the Humanitarian Emergency Fund from AUD\$150M to \$300M per year**, as this is the primary flexible mechanism for that enables humanitarian response to crises in our region and in protracted crises globally.



Hiba, right, is excited to be attending school in Aleppo, after years of being unable to access education because of the war in Syria. Photo credit: Antwan

Safeguarding Humanitarian

Recommendation 3. Legislate a standing humanitarian exemption to all autonomous sanctions regimes and conduct briefings with financial institutions to call for them to 'apply focused and proportionate measures to address terrorist financing in line with a risk-based approach'

Without clearly worded and explicit humanitarian exceptions, sanctions complicate and delay the delivery of humanitarian aid, especially at times of crisis and disaster. ACFID and its members have seen this become a recurrent issue in both autonomous and UN Security Council sanctions regimes in Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, and Yemen. Sanctions can restrict humanitarian action in a range of ways and the international community agrees it is good practice to have a standing exemption. Humanitarian work in sanctions-affected environments is often also impeded by private-sector de-risking. In seeking to mitigate the possibility of running afoul of sanctions laws (which can be complex and difficult to interpret), banks and other private sector actors often restrict or refuse to provide services to humanitarian organisations. This causes delays to the procurement and import of crucial humanitarian

During humanitarian crises, women, girls and sexual and gender minorities are at greater risk of exploitation, abuse, and harassment. In addition to the above, people with disabilities face significant risk of being left behind, injured or killed. Protection, gender and inclusion have been hallmark trades of Australia's development and humanitarian program but to ensure we continue to reach communities most in need of assistance, we must be proactive about how we deliver assistance and also acknowledge and support the agency, strengths and resilience inherent within these communities.

Recommendation 4. Ensure humanitarian assistance reaches those most vulnerable through:

- A)** Applying Australia's target that 80% of all investments, regardless of their objective, effectively **address gender equality** across all sectors to humanitarian investments including by honouring our commitment to the Global GBV call to action.
- B)** Establishing mandatory a requirement that all data collected in protracted crises settings is disaggregated using the Washington Group short set questions to identify **beneficiaries with disabilities** throughout the humanitarian program cycle.
- C)** Committing \$24 million over three years to **Education Cannot Wait**, the UN Global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises.

Unprecedented global displacement

Australia should commit to UNHCR's regional mega-pledge at the Global Refugee Forum in December to address the displacement crisis now entering its sixth

Global forced displacement due to conflict and violence has doubled in the last decade (currently 110 million) and is set to double again in the next 7 to 8 years. Ongoing regional instability in contexts such as Myanmar and the growing threat of climate displacement to populations in Small Island Pacific states places Australia in a position of urgently needing to step up its role in regional and global displacement efforts.

Cox's Bazaar case study: There are approximately one million Rohingya refugees living in 33 camps across the Cox's Bazaar region of Bangladesh, with an average increase of 30-40000 people annually. In the absence of a political solution for the Rohingya, camp conditions within Cox's Bazaar continue to worsen as recent funding cuts have placed even greater strain on existing services.

Experts in their field: Australia's critical civil society partnerships



Communicating the value of Australia's aid program: Through holding strong and trusted relationships with the Australian public, including diaspora communities, Australian humanitarian agencies directly connect Australians to individuals and organisations on the ground in humanitarian crises. These organisations are able to communicate and promote the value of Australia's aid program. The positive flow-on effects of this exchange only increases as public trust in Australian development NGOs increases.



Strong local partnerships: Strong people to people links developed through long-standing relationships with local partners and communities means Australian humanitarian agencies are well-equipped to deliver effective, localised humanitarian assistance. For example, in the Syria and Türkiye earthquake response, the Australian Humanitarian Partnership had a network of 42 local partners responding and Australian Red Cross was able to channel support through local National Societies, the Turkish Red Crescent Society and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.



Inclusive: Australian humanitarian agencies are recognised global leaders in delivering humanitarian assistance that actively addresses disability inclusion and gender inequality in crises contexts. In Cox's Bazaar in 2022 the Australian Humanitarian Partnership, through their local partners, have assisted 20,640 adults and children with a disability.



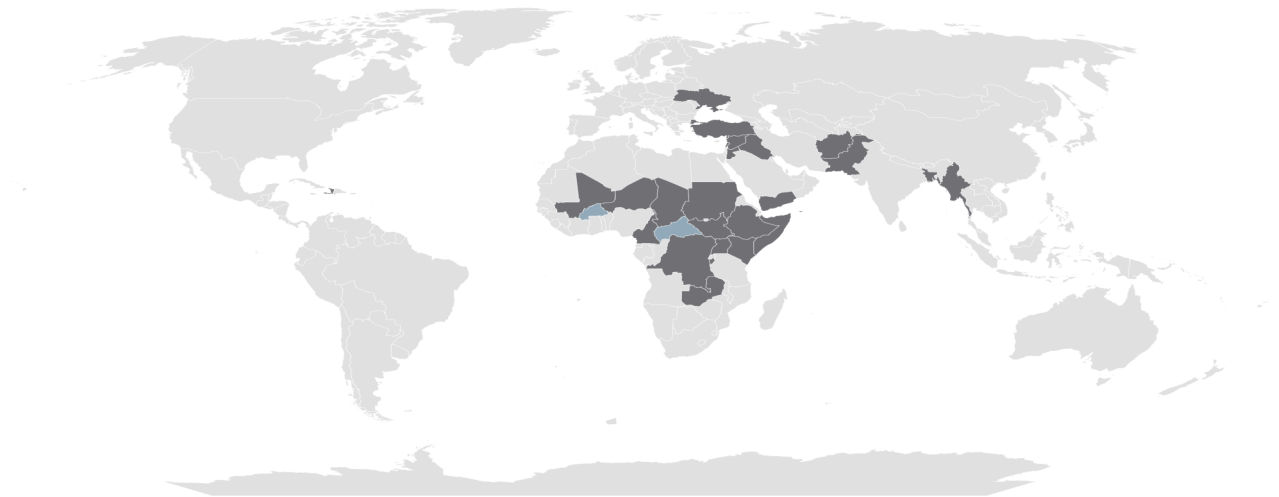
Risk Management: ACFID members operate in the 10 most dangerous conflicts worldwide and have demonstrated experience working in and securing access in complex emergencies. For example, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is able to work across conflict lines and operate in Afghanistan, Syria, Sudan, Ukraine to assist communities, visit POWs and support family reunification. Accreditation under the ACFID Code of Conduct and DFAT requires Australian humanitarian agencies to maintain high standards of compliance around risk and these agencies do this while prioritizing the humanitarian imperative to alleviate suffering.



Scale, Reach and Speed: In successive crises Australian humanitarian partners consistently provide urgent often life-saving assistance to large proportions of the affected population through effective and rapid mobilization. For example, in Türkiye and Syria, Australian Humanitarian Partnership agencies responded with regional and global coordination teams in an average of 1.5 hours, with 843 staff and volunteers, with a global collective income of USD 176.3M. Their

ACFID member presence in protracted crises globally

■ Protracted crisis where ACFID members are working ■ Protracted crisis where ACFID members aren't working



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Australia's Humanitarian Partners

Local organisations,
NGO's and diaspora
*First responders,
community experts*

Red Cross Red Crescent
Movement
*Global network, auxiliary to
public authorities*

Australian Humanitarian
Partnership
*Australia's Collective NGO
Partnership*

Emergency Action
Alliance
Mobilising public funds