



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

## **UK Humanitarian Framework**

# UK Humanitarian Framework

---

## Purpose

1. The UK Humanitarian Framework (HF) sets out how the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) will deliver the UK's ambitions on humanitarian preparedness and response as set out in the International Development Strategy (IDS). This paper outlines the vision for the UK's humanitarian action, our core objectives, and the key pillars of our approach.

## Vision

2. Our vision is a world focused on preventing humanitarian need and suffering and where humanitarian aid is a last resort.
3. The UK stands for humanity and dignity and is committed to unlocking the potential and agency of people trapped in cycles of crises and conflict. With our partners and through our efforts across the globe, we will project our values and work towards a more resilient and prosperous world where health crises, disasters and conflicts are prevented – benefiting the world's poorest people, partner countries and the UK.
4. Our aim is to strengthen people's ability to recover from crises, and to protect and prioritise the most vulnerable people when crises occur, including from gender-based violence. We will amplify the voices of the most marginalised including women and girls and ethnic and religious minorities, and ensure their needs are met.
5. We will do this by building on our long-standing global reputation and experience as a principled humanitarian leader, and deploying our thought leadership, diplomacy, and assistance, as well as British expertise to tackle crises and their drivers. We will leverage alliances, build new partnerships, and mobilise Official Development Assistance (ODA) and non-ODA finance. With science and innovation at the core of our approach, we will engage internationally to strengthen solutions to crises and reduce humanitarian need.

## Context

6. Global humanitarian need is at the highest level it has been since World War II, driven by conflict, climate change, and governance failures. Growing disregard for International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is further amplifying need. In 2022, over 300 million people are estimated to need humanitarian assistance, including over 26

million Ukrainians. This is four times the population that was in need in 2015. More than 100 million people have been forced to leave their homes worldwide.

7. The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically exacerbated food insecurity: 49 million people live one step away from famine in 2022, compared with 27 million people in 2019. Humanitarian funding has not kept up with rising need, and the humanitarian system is under significant pressure. The illegal and unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused additional strain globally, as rising fuel prices have imperilled people's food security and increased the cost of humanitarian assistance.
8. Conflict and crises are increasingly trapping marginalised people, in particular women and girls, in cycles of vulnerability. 70% of women in crisis settings experience gender-based violence as well as other human rights violations such as child, early and forced marriages and exclusion from education. Adolescent girls in conflict zones are 90% more likely to be out of school compared with girls in conflict-free countries. 60% of preventable maternal mortality deaths take place in conflict, displacement, and natural disaster settings.
9. The UK is uniquely placed to lead international efforts to transform how we tackle crises. We reached 33.7 million people with humanitarian aid between 2015 and 2019 - saving lives and alleviating suffering in places like Syria, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan. In 2021, we secured agreement to the first ever G7 Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Crises Compact, and mobilised funding for early response in crises.

## **Core Objectives**

10. We will build on our long tradition of driving reforms of the international humanitarian system, using our thought leadership and funding to strengthen the system. In order to deliver our vision, we will focus our efforts on three objectives:
  - Prioritise humanitarian assistance to people in greatest need and provide them with what they need the most to recover from crises.
  - Protect the people most at risk, including from conflict-related sexual violence and barriers to humanitarian assistance.
  - Prevent and anticipate future shocks and build resilience in long-running crises by tackling the underlying drivers of crises, instability, and extreme food insecurity.
11. We will deliver on these objectives through harnessing and diversifying our Partnerships. Through long-standing partnerships with the UN, Red Cross Movement, NGOs and UK rapid response capability, we will continue to reach millions of people in dire need every single day, make sure they are safe, and

ensure they have what they need to recover from crises. With our bilateral and multilateral partners, the G7 and G20, and the support of UK academia and science and tech expertise, we will work to strengthen global approaches to protection and prevention. We will look beyond the humanitarian system, drawing on International Financial Institutions, development and climate actors, Disaster Risk Finance institutions, the City of London and harness UK diplomatic and geopolitical levers, to decrease need over time.

### Prioritise

12. We will work with all our partners to **prioritise people in greatest need and provide principled humanitarian assistance at times of crisis**. We will rapidly deploy UK expertise such as the UK Public Health Rapid Support Team and UK International Search and Rescue in response to new crises. We will increase our investments in science and tech solutions, working with the UK private sector and research institutions to scale up for instance digital cash transfers, digital ID and biometric technology to improve the efficiency of humanitarian support and prioritise assistance to those who need it the most. We will also promote safe and secure data collaboration, transparency, and protection across all our work.

### Protect

13. Our focus will be on **protecting the most at risk in situations of conflict and crisis**, including civilians, refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs), women and girls, and people with disabilities. We will work to improve humanitarian access and protection of civilians, including through our efforts at the UN Security Council (UNSC). We will also ensure broader security efforts do not hinder humanitarian action, as we did with other UNSC members in protecting humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan from sanctions.

14. We will **uphold International Humanitarian, Human Rights and Refugee Law** and meet our international obligations to protect refugees and people seeking asylum. This will include resettling vulnerable people in partnership with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), including those in need of urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture, and women and children at risk.

### Prevent

15. Our priority is to decrease the impact of crises on the most vulnerable, and stop famines before they happen. We will do this by pushing the international system to scan for, prepare and **act ahead of these shocks and to prevent them from getting worse when they happen**. We will work with the World Bank and the UN to strengthen the global focus on anticipating and preparing for crises and reducing

humanitarian need. We will use our expertise in the patient development of systems and institutions to strengthen the ability of countries and communities to recover from crises.

16. In particular, we will draw on our investments in social protection, climate and nature, health and nutrition, food systems, education, peacebuilding, and governance to strengthen the ability of communities and countries to cope in the face of crises. We will support local leadership and governments to work at national and local level and with public, private and non-government actors to mitigate future crises. We will encourage the use of innovative finance and insurance mechanisms to better help countries to manage and recover from crises, drawing on UK expertise in disaster risk financing and the City of London. We will invest in science and tech solutions drawing on artificial intelligence, modelling and satellite imagery to better forecast disasters.

## **Key pillars**

### Broaden the expertise and funding base

17. We will work with International Finance Institutions, notably the World Bank, and financial markets as well as with British Investment Partnerships to diversify the expertise and finance channelled to humanitarian contexts and ensure these drive innovative approaches to prevention, anticipation, preparedness, and resilience. We will ensure that international climate finance, in particular the COP26 commitment to double adaptation funding, effectively reaches and enhances the resilience of the most vulnerable communities in crises settings. In doing so, we will also work to improve the coordination, coherence and complementarity between humanitarian, development, climate, and conflict efforts, and where appropriate, through pooled and joined up funding.

### Harness diplomacy

18. We will complement and enhance the impact of our spend through placing humanitarian objectives at the heart of our diplomatic, geopolitical and influencing efforts at post, in UK missions and through the UNSC and multilateral platforms. We will use our diplomatic levers to give a voice to marginalised groups in crises and improve their protection, drive prioritisation and coordination of global assistance according to humanitarian principles, lead efforts on humanitarian access, and convene like-minded partners to shape more effective approaches to crises. Our diplomatic and influencing efforts will be underpinned by an enhanced focus on building the evidence of what works and sharing this with partners.

### Put science, technology and data at the heart of our actions

19. We will increase our focus on science, data, evidence, and technology. We will focus on better data to help governments, humanitarian actors and others prioritise and protect the most vulnerable people. We will also engage a range of actors across the private sector, climate science and academia to deepen early warning expertise, promote innovation, and strengthen systems to prevent and anticipate shocks. We will use our investments in research and innovation to promote the most cost-effective approaches to humanitarian response.

### Place agency at the centre of our approach

20. We will work to ensure international responses reflect better the voices, needs, experiences, and aspirations of affected populations, in particular marginalised people including women and girls, and of civil society, including women-led organisations. Wherever possible and appropriate, we will support and strengthen delivery, leadership, and decision-making by local and national actors. We will promote participation of local actors and in particular women-led organisations in the design and delivery of responses. We will hold ourselves, our partners, and the wider system accountable for meeting standards and public commitments on inclusion, accountability to affected populations, and safeguarding against sexual exploitation abuse and harassment (SEAH).

### Maintain UK rapid response capability

21. Through our world class forecasting and rapid response capability, we will continue to respond rapidly to new and deteriorating crises. We will strengthen our 24/7 monitoring for new crises and work across government as well as with allies and partners to provide early information to allow us to respond to crises as soon as possible. We will work with British expertise as we deploy our humanitarian response capability, including specialist UK capabilities such as logistics support, emergency medical teams or search and rescue.

### Build the capabilities we need

22. We will invest in sustaining our recognised network of humanitarian experts both in headquarters and at post. We will build networks within FCDO and across government, so that we bring the full weight of the UK's diplomatic, scientific and development capability to bear in pursuit of our humanitarian objectives. We will partner with experts in areas such as political affairs, climate, conflict, health security and women and girls to maximise opportunities for joint approaches to prevent and respond to crises.

## Manage risk

23. We recognise that humanitarian crises and conflict settings are inherently risky, and that in specific cases, a higher risk exposure to deliver humanitarian priorities will be necessary. We will manage these risks through investing in understanding these dynamic contexts, assessing our risks and returns, investing in our own systems, measuring outcomes, understanding our partners and through patient diplomacy and adaptive programming. We will manage risks of SEAH, fraud and corruption robustly, showing zero tolerance for inaction or mishandling.