

NRC

NORWEGIAN
REFUGEE COUNCIL



2023 THE WORLD'S
MOST **NEGLECTED**
DISPLACEMENT CRISES



- 1: Burkina Faso
- 2: Cameroon
- 3: DR Congo
- 4: Mali
- 5: Niger
- 6: Honduras
- 7: South Sudan
- 8: Central African Republic
- 9: Chad
- 10: Sudan

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Design: Tove Skjeflo

Cover photo: "My biggest worry as a mother is that my children are hungry, and I don't have enough food to feed them. Sometimes they cry because of hunger, and it breaks my heart. They don't grow like they used to do in our village. They are losing weight, and so am I," said Mariam, internally displaced in Burkina Faso now living in the town of Kongoussi. Photo: Ingebj org K arstad/NRC

Sources: UN Financial Tracking Service, Meltwater, HRW, WFP, ACAPS, IDMC, UNOCHA, UNHCR, NRC

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definition

neglect

- 1. To pay little or no attention to; fail to heed; disregard
- 2. To fail to care for or attend to properly
- 3. To fail to do or carry out, as through carelessness or oversight

Source: www.thefreedictionary.com/neglected



Neglect is the new normal

As the world's attention ebbs and flows around new crises and conflicts, an unsettling trend is emerging. Neglect of the protracted displacement crises featured in this report is becoming the new normal. Displacement numbers are rising, and needs are spiralling out of control. Yet funding, media attention and political engagement remain inadequate.

Each year, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) publishes a report of the ten most neglected displacement crises in the world. The purpose is to focus on the plight of people whose suffering rarely makes international headlines, who receive little or no assistance, and who never become the centre of attention for international diplomacy efforts.

This is the list for 2023.

All crises featured in this year's report are protracted and have been affecting the lives of communities for years, sometimes even decades.

The calamity in Sudan is a stark warning of what happens when neglect deepens and the world turns its back on a crisis. In 2023 Sudan plunged into devastating warfare, forcing over 10 million people to flee their homes and making Sudan the world's largest internal displacement crisis. Despite the severity of the situation, the looming threat of famine and the immense needs, the country remains on this list, and the people of Sudan remain neglected.

This year's list represents a race to the bottom, with Burkina Faso maintaining its position as the world's most neglected displacement crisis for the second year running. The country saw a record-breaking 707,000 new displacements and hundreds of thousands of people cut off from aid. Media coverage fell as access became more difficult for both journalists and humanitarian organisations. Meanwhile, the situation in the country worsened and needs rose at a rapid pace.

Across the world, there was a record-breaking USD 32 billion shortfall in aid budgets, leaving 57 per cent of humanitarian needs unmet in 2023.

The human cost of the growing funding gap is high, and it is life-shattering for millions across the world. Neglect

has become so ingrained and normalised that the reality of this gap no longer elicits shock. In many of the countries on this list, the gap translates into people not having enough to eat, families fleeing over and over again in search of safety and resources, children unable to access education, and individuals losing their means of earning an income.

The funding gap means humanitarian organisations struggling to reach those most in need, selective allocation of aid, and compounding crises. It means that when severe climate disasters hit, people will not be prepared to withstand potentially disastrous consequences. Neglect is also fuelling rising hunger levels across all countries on our 2023 list. Each country is now experiencing, or is predicted to experience, severe levels of hunger. Food insecurity is in turn compounded by cuts or suspension of humanitarian and development funding. Most of the countries are dealing with the effects of conflict both within and outside their borders. War in Sudan spills over into poverty-stricken Chad and South Sudan, while Cameroon grapples with mounting internal pressure amid a broader regional conflict. Protracted neglect has consequences that cross borders and create crises within crises.

Society finds itself in a state of crisis fatigue. Travesty after travesty is splashed across news screens but distressing images no longer retain their shock value, and the page is simply swiped, flipped, or clicked away. Amidst this worrying desensitisation and the acceptance of record-breaking statistics from the world's neglected displacement crises as the new normal, lies the danger of complacency. We must not give up hope and allow ourselves to become numbed by the ceaseless barrage of crises. We need a reboot of global compassion and a refocus on where needs are greatest.



Methodology

All displacement crises* resulting in more than 200,000 displaced people have been analysed – 39 crises in total. The report was generated based on three criteria, which were given equal weight:

1. Lack of international political will

A qualitative analysis of the international community's willingness to contribute to political solutions was carried out on all 39 crises, based on contributions by NRC country and regional experts. For situations of ongoing conflict, the analysis covered relevant UN Security Council resolutions, peacekeeping missions, UN special procedure mechanisms, UN investigations, and any other relevant regional or international diplomatic efforts throughout 2023. The existence of special envoys for particular countries or regions was taken into consideration, as were any high-level international discussions or other international engagements in, for example, peacebuilding or human rights.

The analysis also looked at any significant trends in bilateral and multilateral donor support, with insights from NRC's representative offices in key donor capitals.

This qualitative analysis was complemented by secondary sources of data including severity (INFORM Severity Index), access (ACAPS Humanitarian Access Overviews), fragility (OECD States of Fragility Index), populations at risk (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect), and relevant displacement figures from the UN refugee agency (UNHCR). Finally, the level of political engagement was considered in relation to the size and severity of the displacement crisis and the number of refugees hosted.

2. Lack of media attention

The level of media attention towards the various displacement

crises was measured using figures from the media monitoring company Meltwater, which measures online media coverage. To capture news stories focused on displacement, the search terms "displaced OR displacement OR refugee*" were used in conjunction with the country name. When comparing media attention towards the different crises, we calculated the media coverage relative to the number of people displaced by each crisis, including both internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees, using the latest figures from NRC's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) for the number of conflict-displaced IDPs, and UNHCR for other figures.

3. Lack of humanitarian funding

Every year, the UN and its humanitarian partners launch funding appeals to cover peoples' basic needs in countries affected by large crises. The amount of money raised for each crisis in 2023 was assessed as a percentage of the amount required to cover the needs. Where there was both a humanitarian appeal for support inside the country and a regional refugee response plan, these were averaged. Where there was no funding appeal, this criterion has been omitted from the analysis.

The percentage of the appeals covered gives us an indication of the level of economic support, but the results may be skewed by the humanitarian community sometimes adjusting their appeals to what they think may be achievable. While the humanitarian community in some countries tries to reach all people in need, the ambition level may be much lower in other countries.

1 Burkina Faso

2022 ranking: 1

Engulfed in conflict since 2019, Burkina Faso tops the neglected crises list for the second year running. With a record-high 707,000 new displacements within the country's borders, the humanitarian crisis continued unabated in 2023, while hundreds of thousands of people were cut off from aid.

The number of people killed in violence doubled last year, with over 8,400 deaths. Meanwhile the number of Burkinabè refugees seeking safety in neighbouring countries almost tripled, reaching a total of 148,317 according to UNHCR figures. An unprecedented 42,000 people suffered catastrophic levels of food insecurity and up to 2 million civilians were trapped in 36 blockaded towns across the country by the year's end. As armed groups imposed movement bans, little to no humanitarian assistance reached some of these areas. At least half a million people were cornered into a near-total aid blind spot.

With over 6,100 schools closed by spring 2023, Burkina Faso was home to nearly half of all closed schools in Central and West Africa. Up to 400 health facilities were shut down, and about as many were only able to provide minimal services, leaving 3.6 million people without access to healthcare – a 70 per cent increase from 2022.

On 8 February 2023, two Médecins Sans Frontières staff members were murdered by an armed group in north-western Burkina Faso. This was the first time since the start of the conflict that national aid workers of an international NGO were killed while providing life-saving aid. As road access to many areas remained plagued

by security incidents, humanitarian organisations increasingly relied on limited air transport, escalating operational costs and further restricting the amount of assistance reaching people in need. Funding dwindled, which aggravated the financial strain on humanitarian organisations. Only 37 per cent of the response plan funding was covered in 2023, down from 43 per cent in 2022.

Independent media coverage decreased as several international news outlets and journalists were banned from working in Burkina Faso in 2023. Additionally, the domestic press corps shied away from sensitive topics due to the heightened risks.

An all-time high of 6.3 million people will need humanitarian assistance in 2024 and over 2 million remain internally displaced. While some have started to return home, concerns are growing about the protection of civilians. Returns, which the Kampala Convention states must be voluntary, dignified and safe, are set to be a major humanitarian issue for 2024.



"One day the militia came and told us they don't want to see anybody left in this village by tomorrow. I was kidnapped and really badly beaten. I survived. My neighbour didn't," said Ousmane, now living in Fada. Photo: Ingebjørg Kårstad/NRC



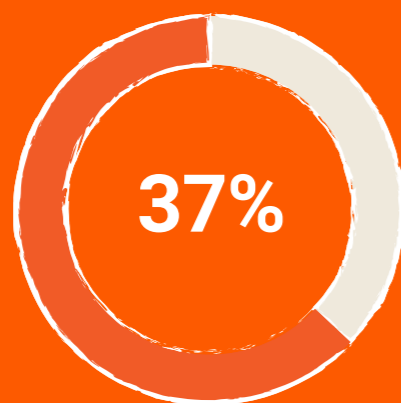
Media reach

Media coverage of the displacement crisis relative to the number of people displaced.



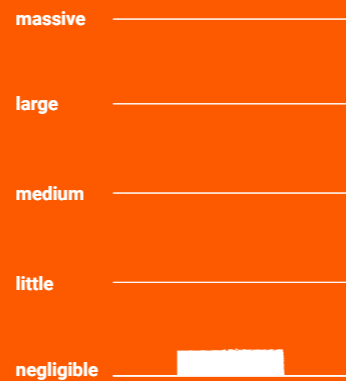
Humanitarian funding

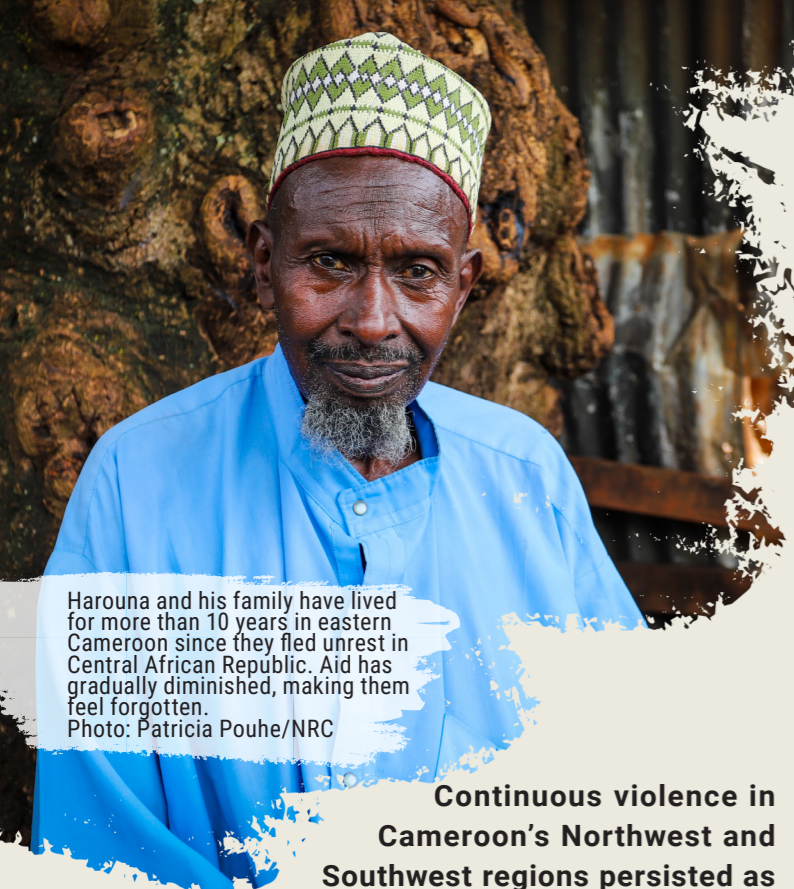
Percentage of requested humanitarian funding received.



Political engagement

The international community's willingness to contribute to political solutions.





Harouna and his family have lived for more than 10 years in eastern Cameroon since they fled unrest in Central African Republic. Aid has gradually diminished, making them feel forgotten.
Photo: Patricia Pouhe/NRC

2 Cameroon

2022 ranking: 8

million refugees now residing in Cameroon. Access to services remains a challenge in the East region, where most refugees have settled, with occasional conflicts flaring up over resources.

People in the Far North region and the Anglophone regions of Northwest and Southwest struggled to find safety amid human rights violations including killings and abductions. Meanwhile, access to food, water and basic healthcare was limited across Cameroon. The protracted crisis is increasingly taking on a socioeconomic dimension, with every sector of the economy affected and rising food prices exacerbating rampant food insecurity – at least 2.5 million people are dangerously short of food.

A total of 4.7 million people required aid in 2023, while funds remained limited. Only 32 per cent of the humanitarian response plan was covered by international donors, the lowest rate since 2016. This left hundreds of thousands of people without lifesaving support and protection services, including basic services such as health and education, and legal aid to help them secure essential documents and land and property rights.

The three crises engulfing Cameroon remain off the map and the situation threatens to stagnate. Rising levels of unaddressed needs coupled with a lethargic response from the international community mean that another challenging year awaits Cameroon in 2024.

Continuous violence in Cameroon's Northwest and Southwest regions persisted as the crisis entered its seventh year. In parallel, the security situation in Cameroon's Far North region became increasingly volatile, with civilians frequently being targeted by non-state armed groups as fighting surged in the Lake Chad Basin area. Alongside mounting pressure internally, Cameroon also hosted refugees from neighbouring countries, stretching the country to its limits.

Escalating violence forced many Cameroonians to flee their homes, resulting in 1.1 million people displaced within the country by the year's end. The arrival of refugees from the neighbouring Central African Republic put a further strain on resources, with almost half a

3 DR Congo

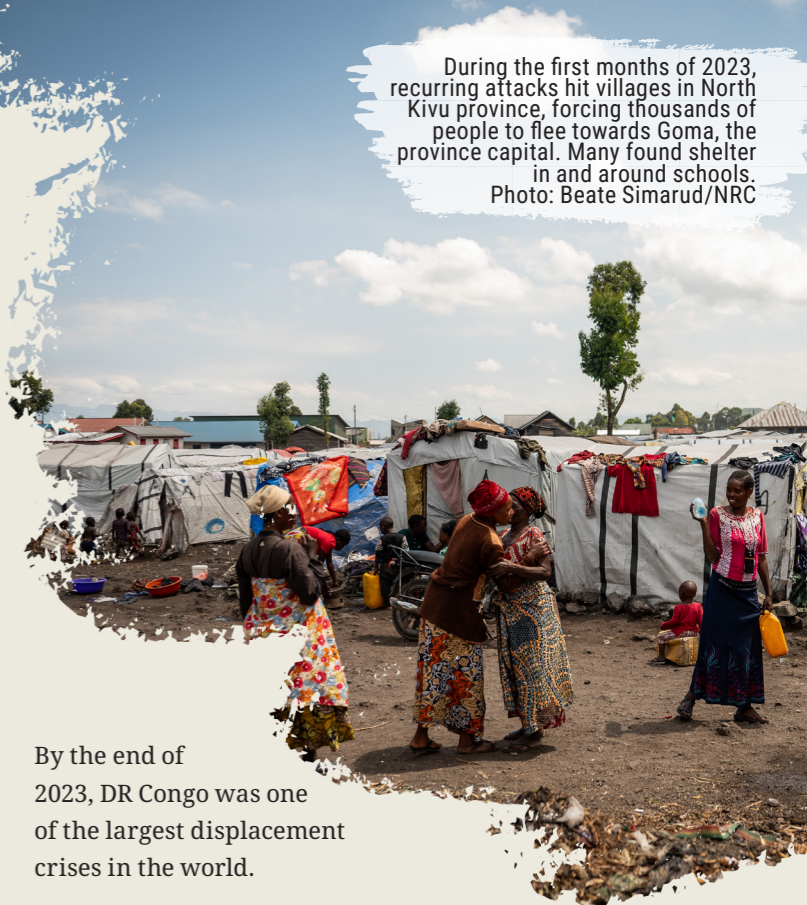
2022 ranking: 2

For the eighth consecutive year, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) remained among the world's most neglected crises. Over 25 million people continued to face multiple emergencies, and violence across eastern DR Congo worsened in 2023.

North Kivu and Ituri provinces witnessed an escalation in fighting and local conflict. Civilians bore the brunt of the attacks, with fighting often targeting informal camps and urban centres.

Some 6.9 million people across DR Congo were displaced by the end of 2023, the majority in the eastern provinces. Since the resumption of hostilities in March 2022, over 1.6 million people have been driven from their homes in North Kivu, a number that increased sharply in the last three months of 2023. In Ituri, hundreds of thousands were displaced as conflict contributed to a breakdown in social relations within communities.

Away from their homes, many people found themselves living in makeshift shelters and camps, with limited access to safe drinking water and no possibility to secure an education for their children. Due to the lack of aid, they increasingly relied on negative coping mechanisms to survive, such as going to dangerous areas where sexual attacks are common to collect wood to sell, or exchanging sexual favours for food, money and other opportunities.



During the first months of 2023, recurring attacks hit villages in North Kivu province, forcing thousands of people to flee towards Goma, the province capital. Many found shelter in and around schools.
Photo: Beate Simarud/NRC

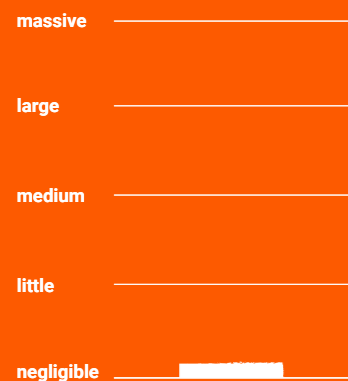
By the end of 2023, DR Congo was one of the largest displacement crises in the world.

Areas less affected by conflict also faced the impact of neglect. Disputes over land and access to basic services unsettled the more stable parts of Ituri and North Kivu. Humanitarian funding struggled to keep up with needs, with only 41 per cent of the required USD 2.25 billion covered. Early recovery funding continued to be mostly absent, and the root causes of the different crises remain unaddressed.

Tensions between communities are rising as investment in both urgent and long-lasting solutions remains scarce. Escalating violence in the final quarter of 2023 and growing tensions in the Great Lakes region mean DR Congo is on track for a challenging 2024.

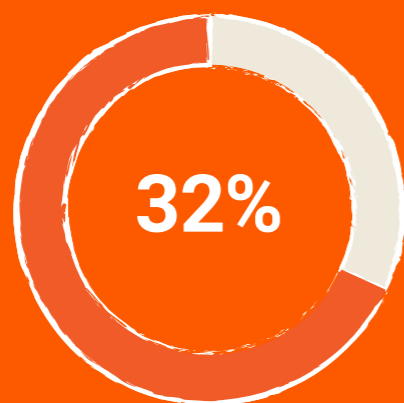
Media reach

Media coverage of the displacement crisis relative to the number of people displaced.



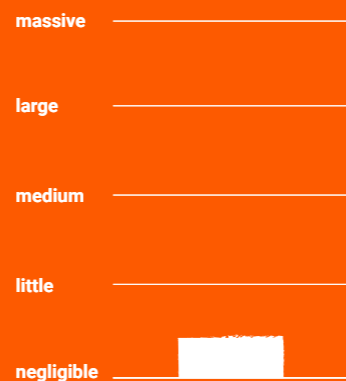
Humanitarian funding

Percentage of requested humanitarian funding received.



Political engagement

The international community's willingness to contribute to political solutions.



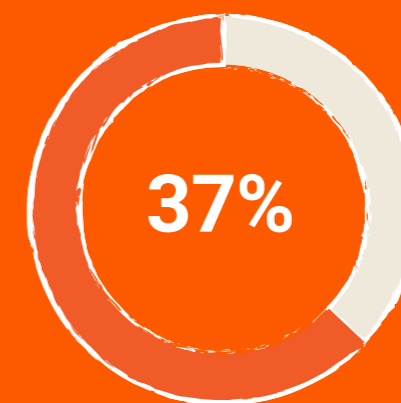
Media reach

Media coverage of the displacement crisis relative to the number of people displaced.



Humanitarian funding

Percentage of requested humanitarian funding received.



Political engagement

The international community's willingness to contribute to political solutions.



*Humanitarian Response Plan + Regional Refugee Response Plan



In the village of Tombonka in central Mali, Fatoumata, draws water from a borehole to water her newly planted crop. Access to land is a challenge, particularly for displaced women. Photo: Ousmane Drabo/NRC

4 Mali

2022 ranking: 7

need of humanitarian assistance at the end of 2023 had decreased to 7.1 million, down from 8.8 million in 2022. This reduction was partly propelled by the need to reprioritise humanitarian aid due to funding shortfalls.

Humanitarian access became increasingly restricted because of clashes in areas where aid organisations sought to operate. Movement restrictions, imposed by armed groups to fully control the movement of goods and people, further limited access. Media attention in 2023 focused on the sociopolitical situation and reconquest of territory, while the humanitarian situation was neglected.

The impact of climate change in Mali is a key driver of human mobility and has led to a rise in food insecurity. This issue grew in severity in 2023, with 2.5 million people in need of food assistance. Only 31 per cent of the funding required to deliver humanitarian assistance was mobilised in 2023, less than half of what was achieved in the previous year.

2024 might hold further challenges for the people of Mali, with food insecurity on the rise, a growing vulnerability to climate change, increased armed confrontation, and the ongoing displacement of civilians.

On 30 June 2023, at the request of the Malian authorities, the United Nations

Security Council requested the decade-long UN peacekeeping mission

in Mali to withdraw from the country by the end of the year. The withdrawal of the 13,000-strong operation led to an increase in clashes between the state's military and non-state armed groups in northern Mali. People were forced to flee their homes in search of safety, and Mali faced the fight against armed groups on its own.

Over 340,000 people were internally displaced as of December 2023. Despite the growing violence, however, the number of people who were deemed in

5 Niger

2022 ranking: new

Once a symbol of stability in West Africa, 2023 saw Niger lose political and financial support from Western countries and break ties with long-term regional partners. The country faced a multifaceted crisis that included climate disasters, food insecurity and epidemics. Nearly 4.3 million people required humanitarian assistance.

Before the coup d'état in July 2023, Niger was heavily dependent on international aid to provide essential services, such as healthcare and education. The country received nearly USD 2 billion in development aid every year. As one of the world's poorest and most fragile countries, such support was significant.

After the coup, the situation changed. Development aid was mostly suspended or curtailed by key donors, and only 43 per cent of the humanitarian response plan was funded. Political tensions between Niger and regional entities, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), culminated in sanctions without humanitarian exemptions. This exacerbated the dire economic situation by restricting Nigeriens' access to banking services and trade. Prices of food and essential goods soared as imports were impeded. Food insecurity reached a new high in 2023, with 2.3 million people in food crisis, more than double the number of people affected in 2022.

An increase in insecurity and the presence of non-state armed groups in the Diffa, Maradi, Tahoua and Tillabéry regions forced more than 335,000 people from their homes



Widespread insecurity and a lack of funding have led to a dramatic increase in school closures in Tillabéri, Niger, barring children from learning and leaving them without a much-needed support network. Photo: Tom Peyré-Costa/NRC

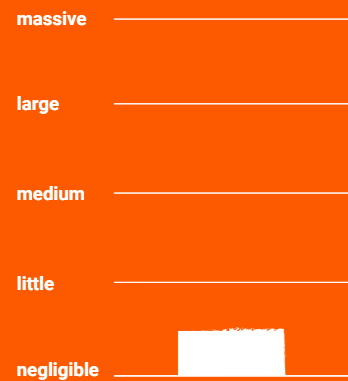
in 2023. Within the same period, Niger hosted 290,000 refugees and over 35,000 asylum seekers escaping conflict in neighbouring countries.

Bureaucratic constraints and a turbulent security environment made it difficult for humanitarian organisations to reach people in need. Coupled with a lack of funding, access constraints meant that only a quarter of those targeted by the humanitarian response plan were reached.

The crisis in Niger is expected to deepen in 2024. Humanitarian and development aid continues to dwindle while the world's attention is drawn to other countries, leaving millions of people in dire need.

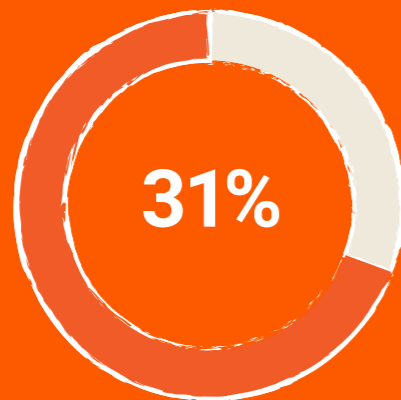
Media reach

Media coverage of the displacement crisis relative to the number of people displaced.



Humanitarian funding

Percentage of requested humanitarian funding received.



Political engagement

The international community's willingness to contribute to political solutions.



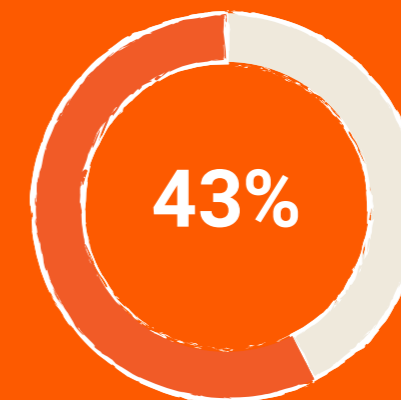
Media reach

Media coverage of the displacement crisis relative to the number of people displaced.



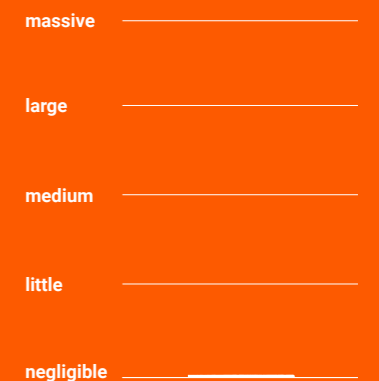
Humanitarian funding

Percentage of requested humanitarian funding received.



Political engagement

The international community's willingness to contribute to political solutions.





6 Honduras

2022 ranking: *new*

basic necessities. The number of Hondurans who returned to their home country in 2023 reached 56,000. Many of them were forced to return and were highly vulnerable, struggling to find their feet, and in need of assistance.

Honduras is a transit country for many refugees and migrants who pass through in the hopes of reaching Mexico or the United States. These people on the move need support such as a safe place to sleep and healthcare. The number of people transiting has increased exponentially over the years, with more than three quarters of a million passing through Honduras in 2023 alone.

Despite the growing needs, Honduras continued to be largely overlooked by the international community, and the response to the crisis remained inadequate. The humanitarian response plan raised only 15 per cent of the required USD 280 million in 2023, making it the most underfunded of all the crises featured in this report. Efforts from the humanitarian community to draw attention to the crisis were met with a lacklustre response, and the situation threatens to deteriorate if there is no UN-led humanitarian response plan for Honduras in the future.

Violence is rampant in Honduras. "We live locked up in our neighbourhoods, and the gangs have humiliated us. We can't speak, we can't go out," said Marina, a resident in the capital Tegucigalpa. Photo: Ingrid Prestetun/NRC

Honduras grappled with a complex crisis in 2023. People in the country faced widespread violence, organised crime and gang presence, alongside the impact of climate shocks, entrenched poverty and hunger.

In 2023, 3.2 million people required humanitarian aid. More shocking still was the high rate of femicide in Honduras, with a woman being killed nearly every day.

These factors drove people to flee their homes in search of safety both within and outside the country. Almost a quarter of a million displaced individuals needed support with food, protection from violence, and other

7 South Sudan

2022 ranking: *new*

In 2023, South Sudan grappled with crises stemming from chronic political instability and intercommunal conflict. Economic decline, severe flooding and drought exacerbated the situation and led to multiple cycles of displacement.

Nine million people needed humanitarian assistance – around 70 per cent of the population. Due to neglect and underfunding, only a fraction of these needs was met, leaving around 6.9 million people facing severe food shortages, including 1.7 million malnourished children.

Since the conflict began in South Sudan in 2013, one in three people have been displaced, often having to flee more than once. Despite people's resilience, the scale of the shocks they have had to endure has weakened their ability to recover. More than four million have been forced to flee their homes, including 2.2 million who fled the country to become refugees. The arrival of half a million people fleeing war in Sudan following the events of April 2023 put a further strain on resources. There was already not enough food, safe water, shelter, sanitation facilities and healthcare in the areas that people were fleeing to.

The neglect of South Sudan's crisis can be attributed to its complex political landscape, where conflict and politics intertwine. Ongoing violence, economic collapse, and a



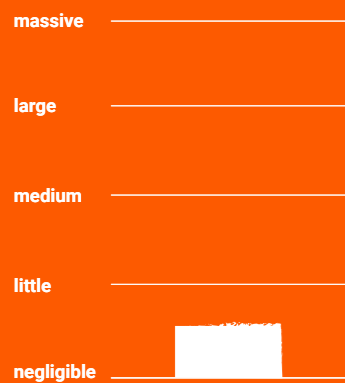
South Sudanese returnees are offered the opportunity to travel onwards in South Sudan. The easiest way of moving the returnees is by boat down the White Nile. Photo: Richard Ashton/NRC

dependency on oil revenues further compounded the crisis. Endemic violence perpetuates displacement and disrupts agriculture, increasing food insecurity. The recent damage to oil pipelines poses a risk to the government's stability, and has led to economic turmoil and inflationary pressures.

Without increased international support and policy changes, South Sudan faces an uncertain future. The economic crisis, the war in Sudan, and the looming prospect of elections in late 2024 add another layer of uncertainty, with potential implications for the fragile peace agreement and humanitarian situation.

Media reach

Media coverage of the displacement crisis relative to the number of people displaced.



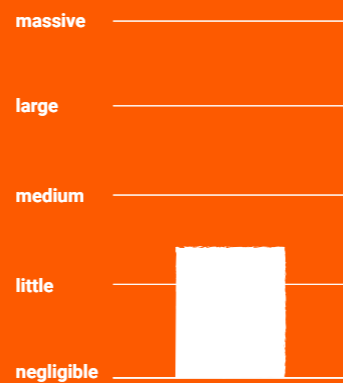
Humanitarian funding

Percentage of requested humanitarian funding received.



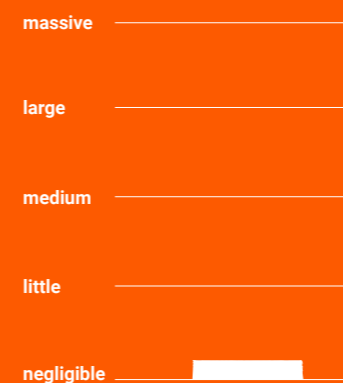
Political engagement

The international community's willingness to contribute to political solutions.



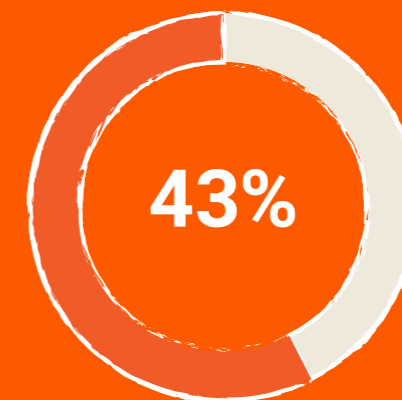
Media reach

Media coverage of the displacement crisis relative to the number of people displaced.



Humanitarian funding

Percentage of requested humanitarian funding received.



Political engagement

The international community's willingness to contribute to political solutions.



*Humanitarian Response Plan + Regional Refugee Response Plan



Rachel does the dishes after making a meal for her family in Bimon, Central African Republic. Photo: Marion Guenard/NRC

Despite a slight improvement in the security situation and a drop in the number of people displaced in 2023, the Central African Republic (CAR)

continued to pay the price for a decade of conflict. It remained unnoticed by the media and forgotten by donors.

Some 2.8 million Central Africans needed humanitarian support in 2023. Access to fundamental services, particularly safe drinking water, remained a major challenge in a country where public services have been stretched to breaking point. Two million faced the looming threat of acute food insecurity.

Although internal conflict slightly abated, the north-east of CAR was affected by the war in Sudan and insecurity

8 Central African Republic

2022 ranking: *new*

in the border area. Consequently, trade decreased while the prices of essential goods surged. Security conditions also deteriorated in the areas bordering Chad, marked by the presence of armed groups and conflict between transhumant herders and Chadian farmers.

One out of five Central Africans remained displaced within the country or abroad because of ongoing violence. Chronic displacement affected social cohesion within communities and hampered the possibility of rebuilding the country.

Education needs were severe, and the number of permanent teachers remained well below requirements. With 11,180 primary teachers in the public sector (2022 figures), the majority of whom were parents paid a stipend, there was just one primary school teacher for every 113 students.

Humanitarian donors turned away from the crisis in CAR, while development funding remained stagnant. In 2023, only 59 per cent of the funds required by the humanitarian response plan were mobilised, a sharp decline from previous years. Ongoing violence, an unfolding food crisis and falling funding spell another challenging year for Central Africans in 2024.

9 Chad

2022 ranking: *new*

After war erupted in Sudan in 2023, over 600,000 people crossed into eastern Chad fleeing ethnically driven attacks in West Darfur. Half of these arrivals sought shelter in informal camps and remained there months after crossing. In Adré, close to the border with Darfur, refugees now outnumber locals by more than two to one.

Chad is one of several countries reeling from the wider global neglect of the Sudan crisis. It hosted nearly 40 per cent of Sudanese refugees in 2023, bringing one of the world's largest displacement crises to one of the world's poorest countries. This landlocked country in Africa's Sahel region has one of the highest levels of hunger in the world, with 42 per cent of its population living below the poverty line. Eastern Chad, where most of the Sudanese refugees sought safety, is severely underdeveloped and locals already lacked necessities such as food and water.

Before the current crisis, Chad was already home to more than half a million refugees from neighbours like Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Nigeria, as well as Sudan itself. Additionally, 200,000 Chadians were displaced within their own country.

Chad is now the fifth largest refugee-hosting country in the world per capita, and the number of refugees escaping violence in Sudan is predicted to reach one million by the end of 2024.



"I was two months pregnant when armed men came and burst through our door, looking for my husband to kill him," said Mariam. Fortunately, the family managed to seek refuge in Chad. Photo: Karl Schembri/NRC

*Names changed to protect identities.

The world's media barely reported on Chad in 2023 and increasingly forgot the broader Sudan crisis. The United Nations and other humanitarian organisations sounded the alarm to scale up support for the emergency in eastern Chad but achieved little impact.

The humanitarian response was only just over a third funded against the USD 998 million required in 2023.

Neglecting the crisis in eastern Chad leaves both the refugee and local populations highly vulnerable. Chad is at risk of climate disaster and is grappling with violence in the Lake Chad Basin and a chronic lack of basic services throughout the country. Refugee numbers are increasing and more than 2.9 million people are predicted to be food insecure in 2024.

Media reach

Media coverage of the displacement crisis relative to the number of people displaced.



Humanitarian funding

Percentage of requested humanitarian funding received.



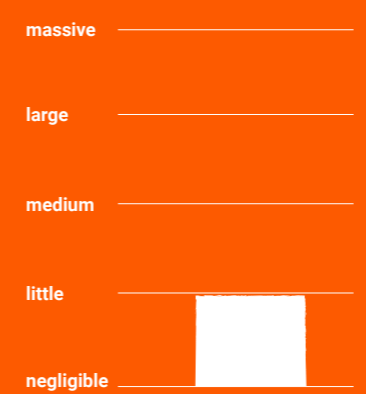
Political engagement

The international community's willingness to contribute to political solutions.



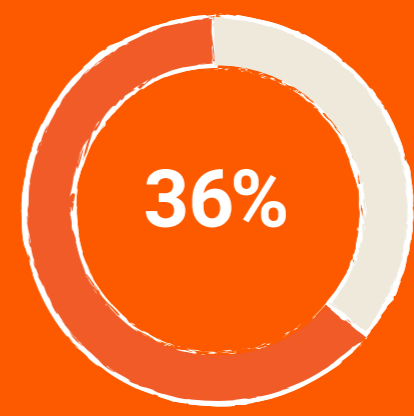
Media reach

Media coverage of the displacement crisis relative to the number of people displaced.



Humanitarian funding

Percentage of requested humanitarian funding received.



Political engagement

The international community's willingness to contribute to political solutions.





Awadia has spent a life of displacement throughout Sudan. Now she is displaced again in White Nile province after fleeing the violence in the capital Khartoum. Photo: Ahmed Omer/NRC

April 2023 marked one of the darkest chapters in Sudan's history. Years of growing violence culminated in a war that has ravaged the country and taken a devastating toll on civilian lives.

Relentless warfare and indiscriminate violence destroyed Khartoum, Sudan's capital city, and tore through the regions of Darfur and Kordofan, as well as Al Jazirah, the country's breadbasket.

The human toll of the fighting remains unknown, with reports of between 13,000 to 26,000 deaths. Countless homes were destroyed, and more than a hundred villages and camps for displaced people were razed to the ground. Large scale, ethnically driven attacks in Darfur resulted in mass killings and entire communities forced to flee,

10 Sudan

2022 ranking: 4

while rape and sexual violence were frequently used as tactics of war. Sudanese people were left with no means of making a living as the economy collapsed and prices skyrocketed.

1.4 million fled across the border, and more than 8 million people were internally displaced, making Sudan the largest internal displacement crisis in the world. Critical infrastructure, including water networks and healthcare facilities, were extensively damaged. In total, more than half of Sudan's population – nearly 25 million people – needed humanitarian aid.

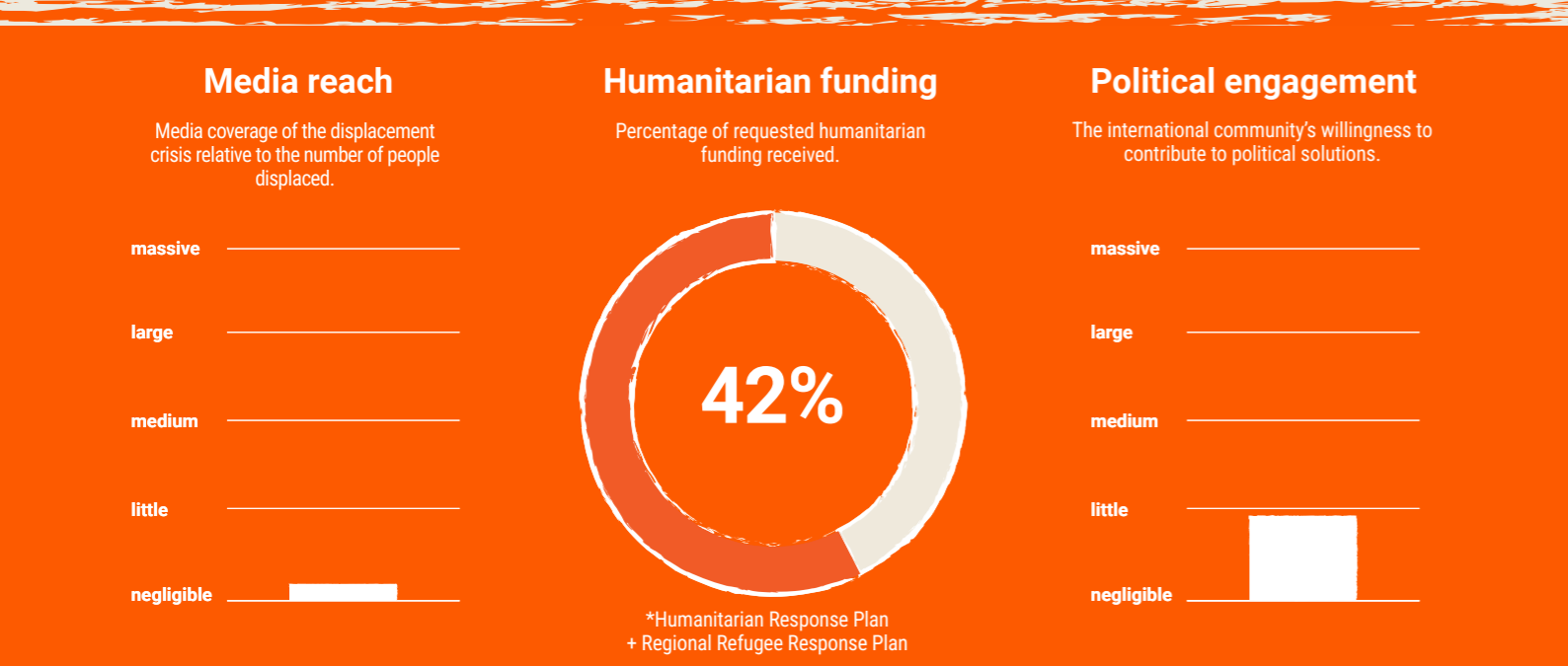
Despite the magnitude of the crisis and its destabilising effect on the area between the Red Sea and the Sahel, it remained grossly neglected by the international community. By the end of 2023, the humanitarian response was less than half funded even though worrying signs of famine were beginning to emerge.

Diplomatic efforts were scattered and not prioritised, and the United Nations Security Council remained silent as blatant violations of international humanitarian law were routinely committed by parties to the conflict. With the media prevented from entering the country and only a few headlines dedicated to the conflict, Sudan collapsed in silence.

Conclusions

While each of the ten crises outlined in this report should be given dedicated support and attention, we can draw several broad conclusions across them:

- The majority of the crises in this year's report have featured repeatedly, and yet still more crises are now falling into a vicious cycle of neglect. Scores that would have placed a country third on last year's list leave it outside this year's top ten due to an overall race to the bottom across the three criteria used by NRC to measure neglect. International political neglect, limited media coverage, donor fatigue, and ever-deepening humanitarian needs are contributing to a wider pattern of neglect.
- Most of today's humanitarian crises are protracted in nature and involve multiple parallel crises. Across the countries featured in this report, a disastrous combination of conflict and violence, intercommunal tensions, displacement, and recurring disasters induced by climate change is making humanitarian needs all the more severe.
- Many of the neglected crises featured in this report are interconnected. A crisis in one country often has ripple effects beyond its borders, affecting neighbouring countries and populations, and sometimes causing a broader regional impact. Competition over resources between refugees and local communities is a source of tension in most of the countries featured, partly driven by the lack of funding. A siloed approach to these crises may no longer be sufficient.
- Hunger levels are becoming acute in all countries featured in this report, an issue exacerbated by inflation and climate-induced disasters.
- Conflict-related displacement is on the rise, and the number of internally displaced people worldwide hit a disastrous record high in 2023.
- The ever-widening gap between needs and humanitarian response is compounding vulnerabilities, especially for displaced populations. Of the 39 countries analysed, 14 were less than 40 per cent funded in 2023 – up from five in 2022. This lack of funding, and the often short-term nature of any funding that does come in, is adding to the neglect. The humanitarian response remains inadequate and falls short of covering the most basic, urgent needs of populations.
- At the same time, the suspension of development funding by certain donors in response to a takeover of power by non-elected actors compounds the state of crisis.
- Across many countries in this report, people are increasingly unable to access humanitarian support and basic services due to ongoing hostilities, bureaucratic impediments, and a fatal disrespect for international humanitarian law among parties to conflicts.
- The lack of media attention towards these neglected crises is often compounded by strict restrictions on freedom of the press and on journalists' ability to travel to certain areas of great humanitarian need.
- In conflict-affected countries and situations of repeated displacement, only lasting peace deals and inclusive political solutions will allow people to resume and rebuild their lives. Further political efforts – at national, regional and international level – and strengthened humanitarian diplomacy are essential to encourage parties to join, or return to, the negotiating table.



Recommendations →

Recommendations

Although an identical formula will not work for all the neglected displacement crises in this report, the recommendations below suggest several actions that can be taken by different stakeholders to address political, financial and media neglect.

Recommendations to donor governments:

- Provide humanitarian assistance according to the needs of people affected, and not according to geopolitical interests or levels of media attention towards certain crises. Similarly, ensure that all humanitarian issues receive an equitable distribution of resources to prevent the recurring neglect of some sectors such as education and protection.
- Increase quality funding in the humanitarian system – including timely, flexible and multi-year allocations – in addition to direct funding for local responders in line with the commitments of the Grand Bargain. This will serve to better address the overlapping factors of conflict and violence, displacement, and recurring climate-related disasters.
- Engage with a broader stakeholder group to attract additional financial contributions into the humanitarian system. Use their diplomatic leverage to address access or other operational constraints and get conflicting parties to the negotiating table.
- Influence development finance actors, including international financial institutions and climate finance actors, to encourage investment in displacement-affected contexts. Complementary humanitarian, development and climate financing is key to meeting the needs of displacement-affected people, addressing recurring challenges and tackling root causes.
- In contexts where there have been unconstitutional changes in government, avoid automatically suspending development funding as this exacerbates already dire humanitarian situations. Donors need to find alternative modalities to continue to meet the needs of people in areas or countries governed by de facto authorities.
- Support the ability of humanitarians to work in complex contexts by simplifying due diligence procedures. Offer more manageable risk-sharing models for aid agencies and local partners, and implement consistent humanitarian safeguards

within sanctions and counterterrorism laws.

- Move from reactive to proactive discussions to respond to neglected displacement crises by initiating mechanisms and platforms to put the countries back on the radar. Together with like-minded states, organise high-level pledging events, appoint special envoys, and champion accountability or political dialogue mechanisms as relevant.
- Increase humanitarian and development budgets, particularly to neglected and underfunded crises, to meet the existing target to spend 0.7% of gross national income on official development assistance (ODA). At the same time, ensure that any growth spent on refugee costs in-country does not outpace the growth of international humanitarian support overseas.
- Commit to increasing refugee resettlement quotas and ensure safe and legal routes for all those fleeing all crises – not just those in the headlines.

Recommendations to UN member states:

- Ensure that neglected or protracted crises are given adequate attention by the UN Security Council (UNSC) and relevant multilateral fora and bodies. This includes holding dedicated geographic, regional and thematic meetings, and tabling votes or resolutions where appropriate.
- Prioritise effective diplomatic engagement and mediation with all conflict parties to secure unfettered humanitarian access and the protection of vulnerable populations, particularly in politically sensitive contexts where existing processes may not be effective.
- Use the UNSC mandate to its full extent to urge and ensure all parties to conflict respect international humanitarian law, particularly in contexts of increasing violations of protection of civilians, access constraints, and disregard for the rules of war. Where violations are identified, support international accountability mechanisms.

- Foster high-level political engagement at national and regional levels in support of inclusive political solutions. Only an end to conflict and violence will bring longer-term stability in complex and protracted displacement crises.

- Help humanitarian organisations secure safe and unimpeded access to hard-to-reach areas. Remove and prevent increasingly pervasive bureaucratic and administrative impediments, and negotiate with all parties to a conflict.

- Ensure that counterterrorism measures and sanctions do not unintentionally prevent humanitarian organisations working in difficult operating environments from trying to reach those most in need quickly and safely. Member states must transpose humanitarian exemptions under UN Security Council Resolution 2664 into domestic legislation promptly and consistently.

- Ensure that the mandate of UN peacekeeping missions is sensitive to humanitarian concerns, adequately resourced, and prioritises the protection of civilians. Close coordination with aid agencies and accountability to local populations are equally important.

Recommendations to humanitarian organisations:

- Strengthen humanitarian leadership in-country, including through seasoned country directors and humanitarian coordinators who can engage with national and international stakeholders on behalf of the humanitarian community and raise issues at the highest level.
- Strengthen humanitarian diplomacy capacity and activities among the humanitarian leadership in countries and across regions affected by protracted and neglected displacement crises.
- Increase advocacy efforts towards new stakeholders to broaden the donor base – including new donor countries, the private sector, and foundations.
- Provide evidence-based analysis to donors to help shape annual humanitarian aid allocations based on the severity of needs.
- Improve coordination between aid organisations on the ground. Optimise the use of resources and avoid unnecessary competition for the limited resources available.

- Invest in advocacy. Often country operations that receive the least funding cannot afford advocacy and communication resources, creating a vicious circle and making it difficult to draw attention to these crises at an international level.

- Link up with foreign policy think tanks, research institutions, and other organisations that can help approach neglected crises from different perspectives. Collectively press for humanitarian issues to be included in broader policy debates or decisions..

Recommendations to journalists and editors:

- Invest in journalism from underreported crises and commit to informing audiences about topics and contexts that are often off the media radar. Report in a way that places a focus on human stories, the humanitarian impact of conflicts, and solutions needed by all parties.
- If red tape such as lack of media permissions, visas or other access issues hinders reporting from a crisis, use media platforms to advocate for the necessary changes. Explore digital and remote solutions to get firsthand accounts from people on the ground.
- Advocate for the protection of press freedom and the safety of journalists to ensure domestic and international journalists working in crisis-affected countries can continue to report.

Recommendations to the general public:

- Help hold your government and politicians to account against existing commitments around aid levels and displacement-related policies – such as legal routes for migrants and asylum seekers and resettlement quotas. Write letters, sign petitions, and submit questions to your national legislatures.
- Read up on neglected crises and support quality journalism that covers forgotten conflicts. Speak up about these crises and share articles and stories on social media.
- When donating to a crisis, try to give as generously to those far from the media spotlight as you do to those in the headlines. If possible, make your donation unrestricted so it can be spent on the crisis that needs it the most at that time.



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