

Geopolitics & Governance

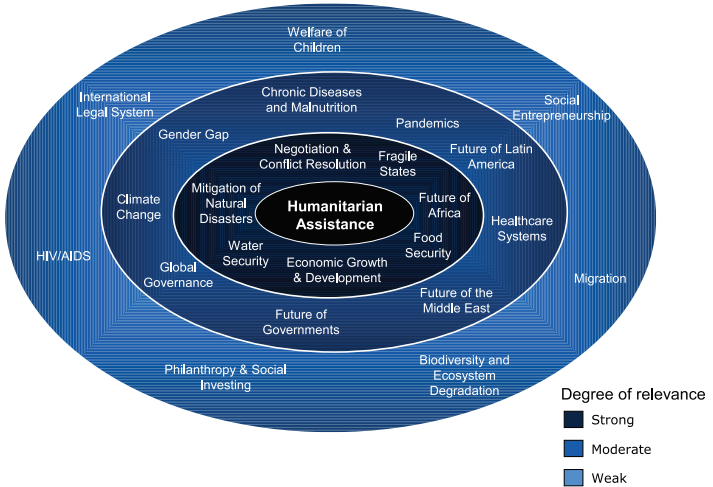
Humanitarian Assistance

A. Description of the issue

Over the past two decades, the international community has significantly improved its humanitarian response capabilities through actions such as the development of best practices, standards and codes, and the creation of coordinating institutional structures, among others. Despite such developments, the humanitarian sector requires additional strengthening, and even more so now as it faces an unprecedented increase in crises around the world.



An interconnected set of factors such as climate change, high food and fuel prices, and increasing levels of inequality exacerbate underlying vulnerabilities and impact the sector's ability to respond to crises. These trends are likely to continue, and as such the humanitarian sector will need to not only improve its own capabilities but also further support the rest of the international system in addressing the root causes of humanitarian crises now and for the future.



Humanitarian Assistance

B. Dimensions

- **Drivers of future humanitarian crises:** In addition to the conventional drivers of humanitarian crises, such as state fragility, ethnic conflict and natural disasters, several other new drivers are already being felt, including climate change and high food and fuel prices. Climate change is expected to result in increasing extreme weather events, droughts, famines and substantial migration flows. At the same time, high food and oil prices over the past year have themselves resulted in humanitarian crises and have impaired the ability of the humanitarian sector to provide aid to needy populations. How will these new drivers interrelate with the conventional drivers of humanitarian crises? Which will be the most likely drivers of the humanitarian caseload in the future?
- **Interrelationship between humanitarian crises and other parts of the global governance system:** Both the conventional and new drivers of humanitarian crises are connected in some way to other parts of the system of global governance – whether through policies on fragile states, agricultural development or on the international climate change regime. Through a better understanding of these linkages, the humanitarian sector can advocate for the underlying causes of humanitarian crises to be addressed or, at a minimum, lessened in extent. How are the most likely drivers of the future humanitarian caseload linked to policy choices taken by other parts of the global system? What advocacy agenda should the humanitarian sector pursue to influence these policy choices and address their impacts on the drivers of humanitarian crises?
- **Strengthening the humanitarian response system:** As many studies have shown, the international humanitarian response system needs to be strengthened to deal with the current and future caseload of humanitarian crises. For such strengthening, the humanitarian sector will need to develop new forms of intervention and partnerships with new actors, such as national governments and the private sector. What new forms of intervention will the sector need to deploy in responding to future crises? What types of partnerships does the sector need to develop – with national governments, the private sector, militaries, etc.? What reform agenda should be pursued to improve the international humanitarian response system?