



Humanitarian Assistance: Saving Lives and Promoting Dignity in Humanitarian Emergencies

The world continues to witness an unprecedented rise in the scale and number of humanitarian crises unfolding around the globe. Natural disasters are more frequent and more destructive than ever before; innocent civilians continue to suffer as complex, protracted conflicts increase desperation and persist for years. During emergencies, women and girls are often the last to eat, access health services, find safe haven for themselves and their families, and they are highly vulnerable to abuse, violence and exploitation. With more than 70 years of emergency response experience, CARE understands the importance of flexible, effective and timely responses that alleviate suffering in the immediate and long-term aftermath of a crisis.

The Problem:

In 2017, protracted conflict and natural disasters drove humanitarian needs to levels not seen since World War II. We witnessed an increase in the number of people experiencing food insecurity for the first time in more than a decade, displacement continued to rise and the challenges of protecting people became more difficult. Additionally, four countries experienced the threat of famine simultaneously, jeopardizing the lives of 20 million people who continue to live on the brink of starvation.

Today, these protracted conflicts and environmental stresses continue, and in some places have intensified, leaving an estimated 136 million people around the world in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. Due to armed conflicts, violence, drought and natural disasters, the United Nations is predicting global humanitarian needs to increase through in 2018. This increase in need accounts for the continued and immediate threat of famine conditions in Northeast Nigeria, the Horn of Africa, South Sudan and Yemen, as well as emerging responses to escalating crises in the DRC, Bangladesh/Myanmar, and Afghanistan.

The Solution:

The only way to face this unprecedented era of ever-increasing catastrophes is with robust funding, strong diplomatic engagement and new ideas for reform of current humanitarian response – including prioritizing the unique needs of women and girls in emergencies.

CARE's humanitarian staff around the globe work in the toughest of conditions to bring lifesaving assistance to the most vulnerable populations. These programs are the critical first step to building long-term solutions for people living in crises and conflict. For example, building resilience in Somalia helped communities weather consecutive failed rains, while also supporting displaced families. Helping Syrian families in Jordan meet their basic needs allows them to continue to send their children to school, keeping them out of exploitative labor conditions and lowered incidents of child marriage. However, the demand for this type of assistance – assistance that strengthens communities – is outstripping the ability of the international community to respond.



The U.S. has always been the largest single humanitarian donor globally. Americans are generous and compassionate people – and humanitarian assistance cuts to the core values that define us as a nation, a people and a country. We have found that when the U.S. speaks out, or steps up, other countries follow. Strong United States leadership galvanizes other countries to engage diplomatically and provide assistance that saves lives, reduces suffering and respects the dignity of the most vulnerable populations. Further, humanitarian crises undermine growth and reverse hard-won development gains, increase poverty and without proper response, can lead to long-term instability.

Next Steps:

CARE does not anticipate the needs for humanitarian assistance to wane in the coming year. However, we advocate for the following policies to reduce need and provide smarter assistance:

- Increase in diplomatic engagement by leaders within Congress and the administration, encouraging them to put necessary pressure on all relevant leaders to bring about peaceful solutions to violence
- Robustly fund humanitarian accounts that save lives, build resilience and lead women, communities and countries toward self-reliance.
- Increase assistance that addresses women and girls in crisis, including access to sexual and reproductive health services, protection, gender-based violence services and those that prioritize the unique needs of women and girls at the outset of a crisis.



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