Future of Aid: INGOs in 2030

A summary of the report

IARAN

The legitimacy and efficacy of what we consider the formal humanitarian sector[1] is eroding. In the past, when the formal humanitarian sector has been unable to adequately respond to needs, new humanitarian actors have appeared or programmatic approaches have evolved. The humanitarian sector is once again in a period of crisis, this presents both a challenge and an opportunity for humanitarian leaders to create a more inclusive and efficient humanitarian ecosystem that better reflects those within it and those it serves. Fundamental, not incremental, change is required if a shift in power is to be realized, collaboration is to become the norm, and the community is to meet the goals to which it has committed, such as the Agenda for Humanity.

A number of trends will shape the environment in which the humanitarian ecosystem operates in 2030.

Populations are growing larger (especially in Sub-Saharan Africa), older, more urban, wealthier. Climate change will be threat multiplier – putting pressure on resources in already environmentally fragile parts of the world. Inequality in access to services, in wealth, in vulnerability and, across rural and urban divide is likely to continue worsening. Protracted state fragility will be concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. It is in these countries that the least progress towards human development will be made.

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[1] Actors included in the formal humanitarian sector are those for whom humanitarian work is their primary purpose, those that have had a role in shaping the institutions that govern and structure international humanitarian action, and finally, those that subscribe to traditional humanitarian principles.

Humanitarian needs will continue to grow, crises will be increasingly politicized and rising protectionism will mean that states will prefer to respond without external assistance. The slow shift towards the global south will intensify within humanitarian organisations as resources, values, knowledge, and eventually power shifts to developing countries. New actors will continue to challenge traditional humanitarian principles and actors with their advocacy and their ways of working.

Framing uncertainty – possible future scenarios of the world in 2030

There are a number of trends and also several key uncertainties shaping the possible global environment for humanitarian action in 2030. Such uncertainties include: how will the role of networks, companies, megacities, and citizens in governance structures evolve? How will nation states and regional organizations manage large-scale forced migration? The key uncertainties that were identified were gathered into two groupings, those focusing on global governance and a second on the main types of crises likely to involve humanitarian actors. This resulted in four scenarios that illustrate distinct potential futures of the global operating environment of the humanitarian ecosystem in 2030.

In addition to the global context in which humanitarian action takes place, the types of crises to which the humanitarian ecosystem must respond will also evolve – there will be protracted, recurrent and emerging crises. Actors in the humanitarian system must consider not only how the global environment will change, but how those shifting uncertainties will affect human vulnerability.

Summary of scenarios

The Narrow Gate	Overflow	To Each Their Playing Field	(R)evolutions
Rise of nationalism leading to a decline in the relevance of global governance institutions, politicization of crises, particularly those in areas of chronic fragility	Withdrawal of global governance, resurgence in the preeminence of sovereignty, dramatic escalation in humanitarian need, intensifying ecosystemic crises	Series of protracted, localized crises, dramatic growth in large-scale involuntary migration, actors coalesce into networks, forming new institutions organized around specific thematics or geographic areas of interest	Establishment of a new and more diverse system of international governance, driven by self-regulation, inclusivity supports the adoption of a more systematic approach to the increasingly ecosystemic crises and escalating levels of humanitarian need

INGOs in 2030: An amplifier in the ecosystem

Building from the analysis of the changing dynamics in the humanitarian ecosystem and the context in which it will operate, a series of organizational profiles that present five different approaches to the structure, mandate, competencies, and business models of future INGOs are explored in the report. There will not be a one-size-fits-all model that is most appropriate or effective but rather many potential structures, creating a diverse spectrum of INGOs with different rationales for their place in the evolving system. A new way of working necessitates that INGOs challenge the competitive incentive structure in which they operate to build a more collaborative response. A change in organizational profile would result in a complete change in structure, as each requires markedly different resources and expertise to be effective.

- **INGO©:** The INGO structure is built on a system of franchised national NGOs and private partners, coordinated by regional management.
- **INGO Global Foundation:** The INGO structure is a conduit for gathering and managing public, private funds and revenues.
- **Fire-fighting INGO:** The INGO structures are built on four levels of network complexity (Local, National, Regional and Global) which can be modulated in terms of where resources flow according to the geo-risk and hazard mapping.
- **INGO & Co:** INGO support services (human resources, logistics, financial management etc.) are privatized. Policy, lobbying, advocacy, stakeholder empowerment are managed in consortia.
- **INGO at your service:** INGOs provide a valuable source of expertise on a demand driven basis to advise on program design, support advocacy and empower new humanitarian actors.

Recommendations for INGOs:

- Think strategically about their value-add and how they will be situated in the humanitarian ecosystem vis-à-vis other actors, in order to ensure that they continue to effectively alleviate human suffering and build community resilience.

- Analyse where they can optimise impact through restructure, refocus or partnerships

- Be prepared to challenge the vested interests in the system and critically assess who can deliver the best services moving forward (organisationally and individually).

Conclusions

1. Humanitarian organisations will need to adapt their structure, operations and values, to remain relevant and successful by 2030.

2. If they do not traditional actors could find themselves side-lined as parallel systems are created.

3. The humanitarian ecosystem must learn to act pre-emptively if it is to prepare for the escalating levels of humanitarian needs and new types of potential crises.