Beyond donorship
UK foreign policy and humanitarian action

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Acknowledgments

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Acronyms

CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CHASE	Conflict, Humanitarian and Security Department (DFID)
COBR	Cabinet Office Briefing Room
CRI	Countries at Risk of Instability
CSSF	Conflict, Security and Stabilisation Fund
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
DFID	Department for International Development
ECHO	European Commission Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
G7	Group of 7 major advanced economies
GHD	Good Humanitarian Donorship
GNI	Gross National Income
HERR	Humanitarian Emergency Response Review
ICAI	Independent Commission on Aid Impact
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NHS	National Health Service
NSC	National Security Council
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
P5	Permanent Members of UN Security Council
PCRU	Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit
SU	Stabilisation Unit
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

Executive summary

For much of the past half century, the UK has exerted its influence to help create the rules and standards that underpin the formal humanitarian system. The UK is the world's third-largest humanitarian donor, and so is well positioned to lead the humanitarian system as it adapts to new donors and a stronger role for national governments and NGOs. However, as the UK navigates an increasingly complex set of crises that impinge on its national security, particularly in the Middle East, and as the country's exit from the European Union (EU) creates new imperatives for trade, its reputation as a 'good' humanitarian actor and its role as a leader in the humanitarian field is at risk if 'aid in the national interest' does not encompass a principled humanitarian approach.

Decisions on UK responses to humanitarian crises rest on an uneasy combination of how severe the crisis is, judgements about the UK's comparative advantage, public opinion and press coverage and economic and political interests.

Structurally, foreign, security and development policy-making has been centralised through the National Security Council, usually chaired by the Prime Minister. Such structural changes may produce better-coordinated responses to crises, but also risk undermining the humanitarian principles the government says it supports. Although some government policy statements reassert a commitment to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, as well as International Humanitarian Law (IHL), others emphasise 'aid in the national interest', leading to concerns that a 'principled' approach to crises is being compromised.

There have also been changes in how the UK allocates its aid. Following the 2008 financial crash and deep cuts to the budgets of most government departments, the Department for International Development (DFID) has sought new ways to implement its programmes, with increasing reliance on private sector contractors alongside large NGOs, whose role as advocates for humanitarian causes can be compromised by their dependence on government funding. The military's involvement in humanitarian

crises accounts for a relatively minor part of the UK's overall humanitarian spend, but is magnified by popular press coverage and is generally met with scepticism by NGOs and academic commentators. Both are out of proportion to the contribution that the UK military makes to humanitarian response.

This study found little evidence that responses to sudden-onset natural disasters and to many protracted African crises, for example in Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan, were driven by wider foreign policy interests. More widely, the balance of UK responses to UN appeals and how the country channels its aid funds show little evidence of a significant foreign policy bias in allocations. The UK contributes two-thirds of its humanitarian aid through unearmarked pooled funding or UN agencies, where spending decisions are made largely outside of its control. Officials and former ministers dispute claims that national interest negatively influences humanitarian decision-making, and argue that differing responses to crises reflect considerations of humanitarian need. However, this study found evidence of greater UK interest and influence in those crisis countries with which it has a historical or colonial relationship, shared linguistic and cultural ties and a greater existing UK diplomatic and development presence. Diaspora communities in the UK have also been effective in raising funds for and the profile of some crises, for example in Pakistan or Sri Lanka, and hence influencing the degree of UK government engagement.

Whereas responses to natural disasters and lower-profile protracted crises are generally driven by a more straightforward sense of the UK's values and obligations as a 'good' humanitarian donor, there are an increasing number of complex situations where multiple national interests, including counter-terrorism, arms sales and migration, coincide with humanitarian crises. In these cases, national interest appears to trump international humanitarian commitments, or produces a complex mix of policy objectives within which the humanitarian imperative can get lost.

This tension is particularly acute in Yemen, where the UK has spent more than £111 million in humanitarian

relief since 2015, while at the same time licensing £3.3 billion of arms sales to Saudi Arabia, a belligerent party in the conflict. As Riyadh's second-largest arms supplier, the UK has received considerable criticism following reports of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by the Saudi-led coalition. The UK arms industry is a major part of the country's export economy, and could become even more important after the country leaves the EU. The UK also has a number of competing humanitarian and political objectives in the Syria crisis. It has provided more than £2.3bn in humanitarian assistance to Syria and surrounding countries since 2012, but has declined to take in its share of refugees due to perceived domestic opposition to immigration. Similar tensions are evident in stringent counter-terrorism legislation, which restricts the operations of legitimate Islamic charities, limits engagement by non-Islamic humanitarian organisations with listed individuals and groups and makes remittances harder to send to countries in crisis.

The UK's future as a leading donor is at a critical juncture. With a new Secretary-General at the UN and a UK government committed to an outward-looking foreign policy as it exits the EU, there should be an opportunity to develop a longer-term view of how the UK should engage with the world. Given signs of significant shifts in the world order, and despite its competing interests, the UK should remain true to its values and provide the leadership on humanitarian policy and crisis response that others seek from it. Failure to do so is likely to damage the country's wider foreign policy influence.

To this end, the UK government should:

- Recommit to the humanitarian endeavour and principles, and be more transparent where national security and humanitarian imperatives are in competition.
- Provide more evidence to support the case that cross-government approaches produce better humanitarian outcomes, and be more transparent about the costs of government departments' involvement in humanitarian responses.
- Take a more strongly principled approach to crises: for example, the UK should stop arms sales to Saudi Arabia until there is peace in Yemen; accept refugees in numbers consistent with its international obligations; and review the counter-terrorism measures that are restricting financial services for humanitarian agencies, pushing up the costs of remittances and limiting the operations of Muslim charities in particular.

In holding the government to account on these issues, the UK parliament's International Development Committee should review the impact of national security concerns on humanitarian outcomes. Major UK NGOs should also be more vocal and critical of UK government policies in this area, even where they separately deliver programmes for the government.

Making such changes will require a shift in approach and culture within the whole of the UK government when it comes to humanitarian priorities, and open acknowledgement that supporting international humanitarian priorities in word and deed is in the UK's longer-term national interest.

1 Introduction

Humanitarian action is just one of the UK's many foreign policy objectives. Like any other government, British foreign policy encompasses considerations of national security, economic interests, aid and traditions of working in different alliances. These various interests – and values such as being a 'good' humanitarian donor – can be in conflict with each other, and depending on the crisis, humanitarian considerations may be accorded a lower priority than others. As a major donor, but also as a major global player, how the UK resolves these tensions – and capitalises on areas where other foreign policy interests can support humanitarian action – has significant implications for international responses to crises.

This report is part of a two-year programme of research on state humanitarianism undertaken by the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) between 2015 and 2017. The research, 'Beyond Donorship: Foreign Policy and Humanitarian Action', examines the interaction between countries' foreign policies and humanitarian policy and operations. The other country studies in this research programme cover China and Saudi Arabia, providing contrasting examples of geographical and political priorities and institutional arrangements.

This study seeks to explain how the UK government's foreign policy and humanitarian aid systems work, and to explore the influence, positive and negative, of UK foreign policy on its humanitarian operations. As the UK prepares to leave the European Union (EU), with the government saying it will adopt a renewed global foreign policy, and as many of the institutions of the international humanitarian system appear under threat, this is an appropriate time to examine what drives UK humanitarian assistance. In doing so, the study aims to shed light on how the UK's foreign policy shapes its engagement in humanitarian action, and vice-versa. When is this connection an obstacle or an opportunity to meet needs on the ground? While there is unsurprisingly no simple answer to this question, the research exposes some of the challenges facing the UK when a national interest-driven foreign policy and a longer-term principled humanitarian approach clash. The objective is to consider the implications of such tensions for donorship, decision-making and policy.

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 of the report explains the UK's development and humanitarian policy and its legal underpinnings, institutions and decision-making processes. Chapter 3 considers some of the factors driving UK humanitarian policy, and discusses tensions between values and national interests in policy decisions.

1.1 Methodology

This study is based on a literature review of published government documents, official and other scrutiny of government programmes, academic commentary, analysis of published statistics and semi-structured interviews with 40 former government ministers, current and former civil servants, representatives of NGOs and the Red Cross and academics. Preliminary conclusions of this paper were tested at an HPG roundtable discussion in October 2016 with UK government representatives and UK-based aid actors.

For the term 'humanitarian assistance', this paper uses the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative (GHD) definition developed by Western donors including the UK. This refers to assistance and activities that include 'the protection of civilians and those no longer taking part in hostilities, and the provision of food, water and sanitation, shelter, health services and other items of assistance, undertaken for the benefit of affected people and to facilitate the return to normal lives and livelihoods', and which aim to 'save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations' (GHD, 2016). This study uses a broad definition of foreign policy as a government's strategy for dealing with other nations, including diplomatic, economic, security and aid relations and humanitarian action. The paper focuses on humanitarian assistance as reported by the UK government to the UN's Financial Tracking Service (FTS), rather than wider development aid, though where relevant it comments on links between the two.

2 UK foreign and humanitarian policy

2.1 UK foreign policy: an overview

Since the end of the Second World War, British foreign policy has been driven by the UK's status as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, its membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), its close relationship with the United States on political and security issues, its colonial legacy and its uneasy relationship with mainland Europe, culminating in June 2016 with the referendum decision to leave the EU. More recently, both foreign and security policy have been dominated by the repercussions of the attacks in the United States in 2001, in particular the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the rise of Islamic State (IS). Concerns around the terrorist threat posed by IS and other extremist groups have meshed with public unease at the social and economic consequences of mass migration into Europe from Syria and elsewhere to become key drivers of UK foreign policy decisions.

The practical impact of the UK's Brexit decision in June 2016 on both foreign policy and humanitarian aid remains to be seen, with negotiating positions still being worked out at the time of writing. The government has announced that it wants a more outward-looking foreign policy (May, 2017), but it is unclear what this means beyond seeking new markets, or whether it will include a stronger rules-based approach to resolving international crises, or a narrower focus on national interest. Brexit may diminish British influence (Lang, 2016; Froggatt, 2016; Chalmers, 2017: 7) and, subject to its longer-term effect on the economy, may reduce the resources the UK devotes internationally (Chonghaile, 2016). While the UK will be able to implement a more unilateral response to crises on Europe's borders, its current strong partnership with the European Commission Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) is likely to weaken (Anders, 2016).

2.1.1 Foreign policy decision processes
Following the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, successive UK governments have stressed the importance of a 'comprehensive approach' bringing together the full range of foreign policy capabilities: 'hard' military power, almost always as a junior partner to the United States, but also 'soft' power, in the form of diplomacy, aid and cultural influence, notably through aid programmes, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the British Council, the UK government's cultural and education outreach organisation.

While the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) traditionally leads on foreign policy issues, many different departments have an interest in this area. In particular, the Department for International Development (DFID) leads on international aid, the Home Office has a close interest in migration, the Department for International Trade in overseas trade promotion, the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice in security and terrorism issues and the Department of Health in international health policy. With a range of ministries engaged in foreign policy, effective cross-government coordination and decision-making is critical. Different governments have used different systems. In the Blair years from 1997 until after the invasion of Iraq in 2003, processes were informal, with strategic decisions mostly taken by small groups of ministers. There was no use of the formal Ministerial Cabinet Committees on foreign and defence policy. (They were rarely used in the Thatcher years either.) These informal arrangements, leading sometimes to the exclusion of important players such as DFID, have been widely criticised (Butler, 2004: 146).

On taking office in 2010 the Conservative-led coalition government established a National Security Council (NSC) 'to oversee all aspects of Britain's security' (Cameron, 2010). The NSC usually meets weekly and is chaired by the Prime Minister. Member departments include the FCO, the Treasury, the Home Office, the MoD, the Attorney-General's Department, DFID and the Cabinet Office.[1] Cabinet ministers in departments not

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1   The Cabinet Office is a ministerial department supporting the Prime Minister and Cabinet, including the National Security Council. It assists in the development, coordination and implementation of policy.

principally engaged with security issues attend NSC sessions as necessary. Task groups of ministers are established to ensure the delivery of key government policies. The NSC's work is scrutinised by a Joint Parliamentary Committee comprising the chairs of other Select Committees with a role in foreign policy, and an annual report on its work is presented to parliament. The NSC has approved about 35 strategies for UK engagement in different parts of the world, informed by the government's Countries at Risk of Instability (CRI) index, which is updated annually (UK parliament, 2016). Neither the CRI nor the strategies are published, in part because they may contain information from intelligence sources.

2.2 UK humanitarian assistance: an overview

The UK has been a major humanitarian actor both in terms of policy leadership and in the scale of its financial and other assistance. The country was at the forefront of the diplomatic conferences which led to key treaties including the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the three Additional Protocols, the 1997 Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention, the 2008 Cluster Munitions Convention and the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty. The UK has also been a prominent supporter of the GHD initiative, the Sphere standards and a range of measures intended to strengthen the UN-led international humanitarian system. It was the leading donor behind an expanded Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and supported country pooled

humanitarian funds and the cluster system. It was also an active member of the coalition driving negotiations around the Grand Bargain between donors and agencies announced at the World Humanitarian Summit. The UK is the only G7 economy with legislation enshrining the UN spending target of 0.7% of GNI on overseas aid, which it met in 2013 (UK government, 2015). In 2016 the UK was the world's third largest bilateral donor, providing £1.42 billion in assistance (more than triple the level of a decade before (OCHA, 2017)).

2.2.1 Legislative and policy framework

With the exception of a brief interlude in the 1970s, when the Ministry of Overseas Development had its own Cabinet Minister, the Overseas Development Administration was part of the FCO. It focused mainly on administering projects within a medium-sized aid programme (relative to other Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors), and played a limited role in international development policy debates and within the UK government. This subordinate arrangement changed with the advent of Tony Blair's New Labour government in 1997. This marked a watershed in the UK's role as a humanitarian and development donor. Legislation made poverty reduction and humanitarian relief the sole purposes of the UK's aid programme, and a new government department, the Department for International Development (DFID), was created, with its own Cabinet Minister. The aid budget grew, and DFID was given licence to challenge and shape policies affecting developing countries. DFID has established itself as a major international aid player,

Figure 1: UK humanitarian assistance, 2006–2016
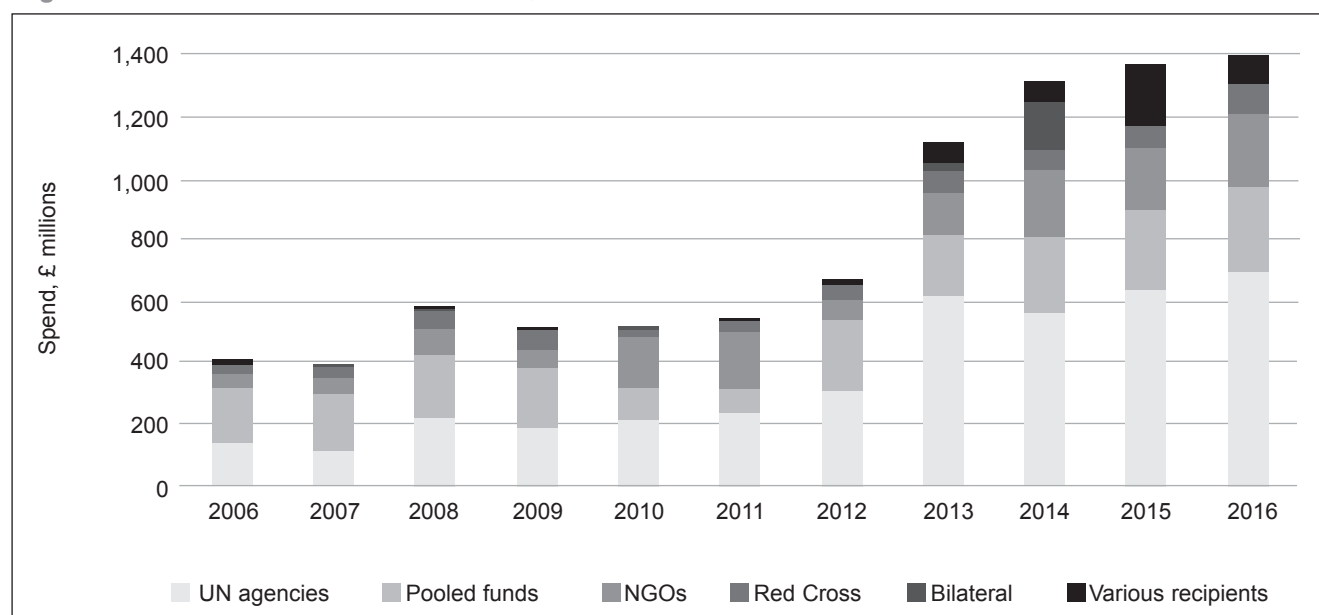
and domestically has been successful in making the case for pro-poor considerations in government policy more broadly, particularly in relation to climate change, conflict and trade (OECD, 2014).

The key piece of domestic legislation governing the UK's aid programme is the 2002 International Development Act, which provides for aid to be given to reduce poverty overseas, and for humanitarian assistance.[2] Under the Act:

> *The Secretary of State may provide any person or body with development assistance if he is satisfied that the provision of the assistance is likely to contribute to a reduction in poverty.*
>
> *Before providing development assistance under subsection (1), the Secretary of State shall have regard to the desirability of providing development assistance that is likely to contribute to reducing poverty in a way which is likely to contribute to reducing inequality between persons of different gender* (UK government, 2002: 1).

In terms of humanitarian assistance, the Act stipulates that '[t]he Secretary of State may provide any person or body with assistance for the purpose of alleviating the effects of a natural or man-made disaster or other emergency on the population of one or more countries outside the United Kingdom'.

The UK government has published multiple papers either directly on humanitarian policy, or which impact upon it. Following the Humanitarian Emergency Response Review (HERR) in 2011, DFID strengthened its capacity to respond to sudden-onset humanitarian crises and developed the resilience agenda to 'join up' humanitarian and development work (Ashdown, 2011). In conflict-related humanitarian work, the emphasis has shifted more towards prevention and post-conflict recovery.

The UK's humanitarian policy, set out in 2011, has seven key elements:

- Strengthen anticipation and early action.
- Build resilience to disasters and conflict.
- Strengthen international leadership and partnership.

- Invest in research and innovation.
- Improve accountability, impact and professionalism.
- Protect civilians and humanitarian space.
- Reinforce the UK's capacity to respond.

The policy asserts that 'our humanitarian action will be based on need, and need alone, and will be autonomous from political, military, security and economic objectives' (DFID, 2011). A further humanitarian policy paper is planned for 2017, which will reiterate previous commitments and update policy following the World Humanitarian Summit.

Separately, in 2011 the Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs, Defence and International Development published a government strategy entitled 'Building Stability Overseas' (DFID, FCO and MoD, 2011). This was 'designed to protect and promote legitimate political authority, using a combination of integrated civilian and military actions to reduce violence, re-establish security and prepare for longer-term recovery by building an enabling environment for structural stability' (Stabilisation Unit, 2014: 1). The strategy signalled a more systematic approach to early warning of trouble in countries at risk of instability, while also reasserting that '[t]he UK will ensure that its humanitarian aid is delivered on the basis of need alone and on the basis of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence … We will maintain a principled, non-politicized approach to humanitarian aid' (DFID, FCO and MoD, 2011: 23).

Finally, the Strategic Defence and Security Review published in November 2015 includes commitments to lead by example in respecting International Humanitarian Law (IHL), to strengthen disaster response capacity and to lead in preventing sexual violence in conflict (UK government, 2015). The 2015 UK aid strategy, 'UK Aid: Tackling Global Challenges in the National Interest', reiterated these themes, setting out four strategic objectives to direct aid spending:

- 'Strengthening global peace, security and governance: the government will invest more to tackle the causes of instability, insecurity and conflict, and to tackle crime and corruption. This is fundamental to poverty reduction overseas, and will also strengthen our own national security at home.
- Strengthening resilience and response to crises: this includes more support for ongoing crises including in Syria and other countries in the Middle East and

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2   The 2002 Act is complemented by a 2015 Act, which received cross-party support, that required UK ODA spending of at least the UN-recommended level of 0.7% of GNI.

North Africa region, more science and technology spend on global public health risks such as antimicrobial resistance, and support for efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

- Promoting global prosperity: the government will use Official Development Assistance (ODA) to promote economic development and prosperity in the developing world. This will contribute to the reduction of poverty and also strengthen UK trade and investment opportunities around the world.
- Tackling extreme poverty and helping the world's most vulnerable: the government will strive to eliminate extreme poverty by 2030, and support the world's poorest' (DFID and HM Treasury, 2015: 9).

According to the strategy: 'We want to meet our promises to the world's poor and also put international development at the heart of our national security and foreign policy'. It is unclear whether the inclusion of national security and prosperity as priorities in the strategy is consistent with the International Development Act's focus on poverty reduction.

2.2.2 Decision processes and response capacity

The International Development Secretary is the lead minister for humanitarian crises overseas, and will usually chair an emergency coordination meeting of ministers from interested departments to determine the government's response (this meeting is known as COBR, or popularly COBRA).[3] The Foreign Secretary may take this role when a substantial number of UK citizens are at risk. Cross-government capacity to respond to crises includes:

- A cadre of DFID humanitarian advisers, often posted in DFID country offices. This cadre was recruited in 2006–2007 to provide advice to ministers on humanitarian issues and help to determine priorities for the bilateral aid budget between humanitarian and longer-term development programmes.
- The Conflict Humanitarian and Security Operations Team (CHASE OT), currently supplied by Crown Agents, which supports DFID's Conflict Humanitarian and Security Department and

provides humanitarian experts to assess needs and organise humanitarian response.
- A range of Ministry of Defence assets and personnel from all three services (see more detail below in Section 2.2.3).
- Experts from the domestic rescue services, particularly for natural disasters.
- Health experts from the National Health Service (NHS), who work with governments or NGOs in an emergency.
- FCO staff, who work mainly with UK citizens affected by a crisis. The FCO also leads on aspects of human rights, including an initiative to reduce sexual violence in armed conflict and the provision of legal advice on IHL.

A Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit was established in 2004 and relaunched as the Stabilisation Unit (SU) in 2007. The unit now has around 1,000 civilian staff on its roster. It sees its role as clearly distinct from the humanitarian side, and only exceptionally (for instance in the Ebola response in Sierra Leone – see Box 1) do SU and humanitarian staff work together.

Cross-government structures also support humanitarian action. For example, for the Sudan peace processes DFID and the FCO worked together through a joint Sudan Unit headed by a senior diplomat, and overseen by DFID Secretaries of State Clare Short

Box 1: The UK Ebola response

It was initially hoped that the Ebola outbreak in West Africa would be resolved locally with existing resources, but as the outbreak spread, and following international appeals by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the UN Secretary-General, the then UK Prime Minister David Cameron chaired a cross-government coordination process (COBR) which decided that the UK should play a major role in the response. The International Development Secretary led the response, working closely with ten government departments including the FCO, MoD, Department of Health and Public Health England and the Stabilisation Unit. An overall budget of $427m was committed. The UK agreed to lead the intervention in Sierra Leone, and the UK military provided important logistical support and a useful link to the Sierra Leone military, one of the few local institutions that continued to function effectively throughout the crisis.

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3 COBR stands for Cabinet Office Briefing Room and is the term used to refer to emergency meetings held by the government involving ministers, civil servants, police and intelligence agencies to determine government responses to events of national importance.

and then Hilary Benn. From 2002–2003, the British Ambassador in Sudan headed a joint team in the Embassy, and chaired a Friends of Sudan Group and a Friends of the Nuba Mountains Group, including UN agencies, NGOs and Western donors, which met weekly. The Abuja peace talks on Darfur, which Benn attended as DFID Secretary of State in 2006, were strongly supported by the FCO. The main drivers of UK policy in Sudan were humanitarian and developmental, rather than any specific national security or commercial concern, though of course success in Sudan would have enhanced the UK's reputation internationally. Joint working was easier because, according to one interviewee, 'after Afghanistan and Iraq a cadre of FCO officials developed for whom DFID speak was not a foreign language'.

Joint DFID and FCO lobbying have also helped to impress on affected governments the UK's assessment of humanitarian risks. For example, in Ethiopia in 2015 the FCO and DFID persuaded the Ethiopian government to recognise that the country faced a food crisis. In policy advocacy, joint lobbying by FCO and DFID on IHL and wider humanitarian issues helped to secure the Cluster Munitions Convention in 2008 following an initiative led by the Norwegian government.

2.2.3 The UK military

The British military has a long history of delivering humanitarian supplies in crises, from the Berlin airlift in the late 1940s to the famine in Ethiopia in the 1980s, Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 and air drops to the Yazidis in Iraq in 2014 (Johnston, 2014). The UK military was also heavily involved in the Ebola response, drawing on a new call-down agreement with DFID (see Box 1). Internationally, figures for 2010 suggest that about 4% of humanitarian assistance was spent globally through militaries, but the UK does not systematically report on this (Poole, 2013). Although ministers are usually keen to involve UK forces in humanitarian responses, this is a sensitive subject. Deployments to crises overseas may be more expensive than civilian alternatives, they may duplicate others' work and the military may not always be best equipped to conduct humanitarian tasks. As one analysis puts it, deployments are 'often a highly political decision, motivated by a range of domestic and foreign policy concerns' (Metcalfe, Haysom and Gordon, 2012). Military deployments are almost invariably followed by popular press interest, often disproportionate to the military's actual contribution.

2.2.4 Partnerships

International NGOs are major implementers of UK assistance. However, the significant share UK NGOs receive of the increasing UK aid budget and their alignment with the government on major development policy issues has arguably led to greater reticence to criticise the UK government publicly. Having multiple mandates under one roof, including advocacy, longer-term development and humanitarian work, also creates tensions internally (Shani, 2013). As Mark Goldring, CEO of Oxfam, acknowledged, on the risk of getting too close to government: 'As long as the big NGOs seek to do large scale service delivery, the more risk there is' (Gill, 2016). That said, Oxfam and Amnesty International secured a legal opinion that UK sales of arms to Saudi Arabia and their subsequent use in Yemen was illegal – a ruling since reversed in the High Court – and have led calls for an end to those sales.

As well as increasing funding through large international NGOs, the combined pressures of an increasing aid budget with no increase in staff, the drive to monitor expenditure and promotion of private sector development have seen the UK government increasingly rely on a few large private contractors to deliver programmes. In the 2013–14 financial year, £1.4bn of the aid programme as a whole was spent through private contractors, with £192m going through Crown Agents, £122m through PriceWaterhouseCoopers and £88m through Adam Smith International (ASI). The UK government has been criticised for increasing the profits of private contractors rather than spending directly in developing countries (House of Commons International Development Committee, 2017). DFID recently initiated a review of all such contracts as a result of media and parliamentary pressure, which has led to the resignation of four senior ASI executives and a number of management reforms (Provost, 2016). This has primarily focused on longer-term stabilisation and development interventions rather than direct responses to humanitarian emergencies. In fragile states such as Afghanistan, however, where the distinction between humanitarian and development responses has been blurred, the role of firms such as ASI has been called into question (House of Commons International Development Committee, 2017: 8).

2.2.5 Funding sources, channels and allocations

The vast majority of the UK's overseas aid funding comes from DFID's budget: in 2015, almost 80% of UK ODA was spent by DFID, a slight reduction on

2014's figure of 86% (NAO, 2015: 5). Of that, between 8% and 15% of DFID's annual total spend is on humanitarian assistance. In the absence of a separate humanitarian budget, DFID has three main sources of funding for humanitarian work:

- Bilateral and some regional programme budgets will normally be the first call for humanitarian funding. Civil servants managing country budgets make recommendations to ministers on choices between humanitarian and longer-term development work, including how to connect the two, for instance in Ethiopia through the Productive Safety Net Programme, and in Kenya through the Hunger Safety Net Programme. Civil servants or ministers, depending on the amounts, also decide how to channel humanitarian funding: whether to use UN agencies, Common Humanitarian Funds, the Red Cross or international or local NGOs.
- A centrally held budget in CHASE funds core contributions to humanitarian agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and global funds like the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the START Fund. These allocations are usually linked to a logical framework that identifies reforms that DFID will help the agency to make, but funding is not tied to particular crises.
- Finally, an annual reserve of £500m of DFID money is set aside for sudden-onset emergencies (HM Treasury, 2015: 28). Other government departments can bid for this reserve, which is managed jointly by DFID and the Treasury.

Although in the past DFID has been able to seek funding from a Treasury reserve, with its increased budget this would only be considered in the most extreme emergencies. The £1.3bn cross-government Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF), which mainly funds peacekeeping and conflict prevention activities, may also be used to fund humanitarian assistance, albeit not on any large scale (HM Treasury, 2013: 24).

Other government departments can provide humanitarian aid, or have used aid finance to strengthen capacity for humanitarian response. For example, the FCO uses some CSSF funding for work in refugee camps in countries surrounding Syria, Public

Health England received up to £16m over three years to build its crisis response capacity (Greening, 2013) and domestic departments manage expenditure on Syrian refugees in the UK. Although these are likely to remain small parts of the total humanitarian spend, the government has made provision for increased ODA spending by other departments, so that DFID's share could fall to 72% by 2020, with the new CSSF and Prosperity Fund taking around 10% each (Rabinowitz, 2015).[4] This, combined with the expectation that, as the UK has met its 0.7% of GNI target, the overall aid budget will now only rise (or decline) in line with GNI, means that DFID will face tougher spending choices in the future, which could have an impact on the scale of the UK's humanitarian response.

Except for the most urgent sudden-onset responses, ministers' spending decisions are justified in publicly available business cases, often covering multiple years. Business cases set out the results that are expected, and usually compare alternative routes for achieving them. All allocations are subject to annual monitoring and are scored according to whether they are achieving their objectives (the OECD has praised this practice and suggested that other donors follow DFID's model) (OECD, 2014). Development and humanitarian aid spending is subject to scrutiny through the National Audit Office (NAO), which reports to parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC). Separately, the Independent Commission on Aid Impact (ICAI) reports on all departments' aid spending to parliament's International Development Committee (IDC). Both Committees have the power to call ministers and officials to give evidence, and all reports are published.

As Figure 2 shows, of the £1.42bn in humanitarian spending reported by the UK in 2016, over half (almost £700m) was channelled through UN agencies, and a notable 17% through pooled funds. However, a significant proportion of this is earmarked (for example, 88% of UK contributions to the World Food Programme (WFP) in 2015 were earmarked to specific countries) (Gov.uk, 2016). In 2016, the three largest recipient agencies, UNICEF, WFP and UNHCR,

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4   The Cross-Government Prosperity Fund is a £1.3bn UK government fund to help promote economic growth in developing countries from 2016 to 2021. Announced as part of the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review, the fund's priorities include improving the business climate and market competitiveness and reducing corruption. Many of its programmes in the first year were in middle-income states, including China, India, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa (FCO, 2017).

Figure 2: Channels of UK humanitarian funding, 2016
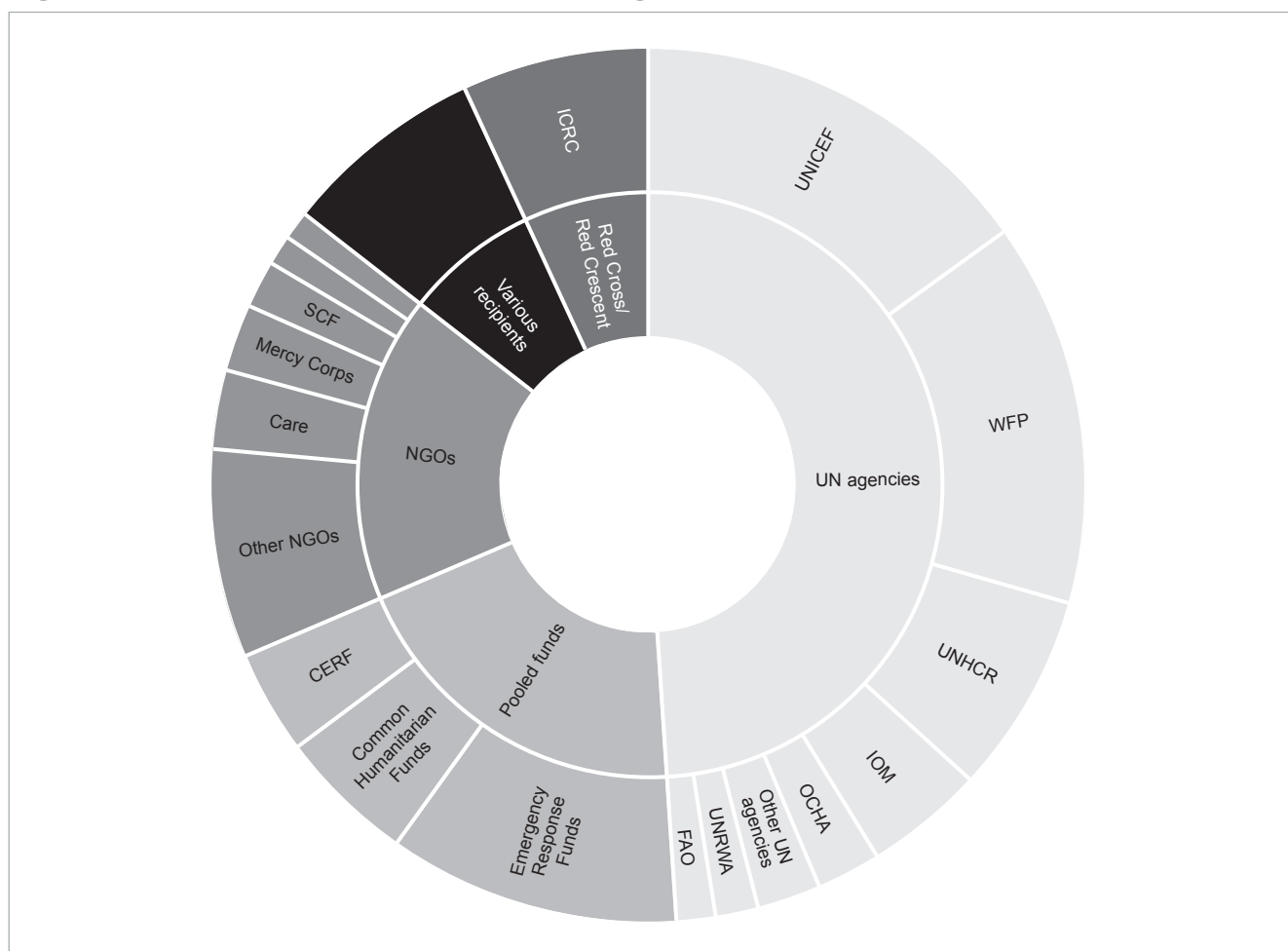
Source: OCHA Financial Tracking Service

accounted for over £500m. Of the other major channels in 2016, £230m went through pooled funds, and another £210m through NGOs (see Annexes 1 and 2 for a more detailed breakdown).

Aid provided through multilateral channels tends to be seen as more 'humanitarian' than bilateral, government-to-government support because it implies less direct control over where and how the money is spent, and therefore provides fewer opportunities to bring other foreign policy concerns to bear (Mesquita and Smith, 2007) – although earmarking at the country level undermines this to a degree. Overall, though, the UK's marked preference for the UN and pooled funds would tend to suggest that it is not seeking to direct funds according to priorities other than need. DFID's choice of channels is also driven in part by staffing constraints. While the UK's aid budget has risen to 0.7% of GNI, DFID staff budgets and numbers have remained broadly static. Meanwhile, the requirements for value for

money and other checks have increased. Multilateral contributions might be favoured in these circumstances as they generally imply lower transaction costs.

In terms of country/regional allocations, expenditure patterns do not show an obvious consistent bias towards UK foreign policy priorities as opposed to levels of humanitarian need, at least as indicated through the proxy of UN humanitarian appeals, though there is an increasing coincidence between flows of humanitarian assistance and foreign policy priorities because of the crises in the Middle East. Syria has been the largest recipient of UK humanitarian assistance every year since the crisis there began in 2012, and together with Yemen and Iraq made up three of the top five recipients in 2015. These crises were also in the top five UN appeals for 2015 (see Annex 3). There is also a strong correlation between overall humanitarian spending patterns and countries where DFID has a country office.

3 UK foreign policy and humanitarian assistance

The central aim of this study is to explore the extent to which UK foreign policy shapes, supports or undermines the UK government's humanitarian objectives. On the one hand, the UK is a leading humanitarian donor pursuing principled humanitarian action, with broad public support. On the other, it is a global power with multiple foreign policy interests that go far beyond the narrow subset of humanitarian objectives. It faces criticism domestically and internationally for contradictions or tensions between these humanitarian objectives and its security, trade and political agendas. This is not a static situation, as the changing domestic and global environment – such as Brexit – drives significant shifts in the UK's foreign policy, with knock-on effects for its approach to international humanitarian and development assistance. The institutions and decision-making processes that manage this mix of interests and values also have their own legacies and constraints.

Decisions on where and how to respond weigh up a combination of humanitarian need, public opinion and press interest, the UK's international humanitarian commitments, judgements about the UK's comparative advantage and national interest. What drives the UK's response also varies by crisis. Responses to natural disasters and lower-profile protracted crises are driven by a more straightforward sense of the UK's values and obligations as a 'good' humanitarian donor. However, there are an increasing number of complex situations where multiple national interests, including counter-terrorism, arms sales and migration, coincide with humanitarian crises. In these cases, national interest appears to trump international humanitarian commitments, or produces a complex mix of policy objectives within which the humanitarian imperative can get lost.

3.1 Values and principles

The UK is a leading proponent of principled humanitarian action and the rules-based international

Box 2: Public attitudes to overseas aid

Evidence on UK public support for overseas aid is mixed. Research by the Gates Foundation and University College London shows a long-term decline in public concern about poverty in developing countries (Bond, 2014). In 2014, 47% said they were concerned or very concerned about global poverty, compared to 82% in 2006. This is a faster decline than in France and Germany. In an interview for this study, one former DFID Secretary of State commented that the 'political licence to spend granted by the public to ministers had declined since 1997'. There is little public understanding of the 0.7% of GNI spending target, and concerns about corruption in recipient countries are growing. In contrast, a Eurobarometer Survey in 2015 found that 86% thought helping people in developing countries was important, slightly up from 84% in 2014 (Eurobarometer, 2015). In Amnesty International's 2016 Refugees Welcome Survey of 27 countries the UK was judged the third most welcoming, behind China and Germany (Prudhomme, 2016: 12). So the evidence is inconsistent, probably reflecting continued support for poor people in need, combined with some scepticism about the effectiveness of official development aid (Save the Children, 2016). Public confidence appears to be higher in relation to humanitarian aid, particularly in response to natural disasters. The Gates/UCL survey cited above showed that the UK public had the highest preference for aid that provided emergency relief after natural disasters or immunisations for children against deadly diseases (Bond, 2014).

system. There is a core framework of values, distilled in the principles and practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship, which the UK was instrumental in fashioning, and which are used as a normative framework by the OECD-DAC in its peer reviews of donor behaviour (OECD, 2014). A key element of these norms is funding according to need, based on the

principles of impartiality, neutrality and humanity. As a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, and a major contributor to UN agencies and operations, the UK has been a strong advocate for an internationalist and multilateral world order based on internationally negotiated rules and frameworks, including agreements on peace and security, disarmament, climate change, refugees and trade. As one of the architects of this post-war global system, the UK has a vested interest in maintaining it – both as a mechanism to resolve difficult global challenges, and as a system from which it benefits by dint of its influence and status.

The UK's response to natural disasters is inherently less driven by other political considerations and more by the UK's commitments to meeting humanitarian need. Major rapid-onset natural disasters in recent years to which the UK has responded include the 2003 Bam earthquake in Iran, the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, earthquakes and floods in Pakistan, Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, the 2010 Haiti earthquake and Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013. The main factors in the UK's response were the scale of humanitarian need, based on assessments by DFID's humanitarian specialists; the UK's comparative advantage in responding quickly and with what was needed; and the extent of UK public interest, often driven by the media. In the response to Typhoon Haiyan, for example, UK experts assessed the scale of need, but decisions in Whitehall were also influenced by the high-profile coverage of the disaster in the media.

Ministers apply the idea of comparative advantage in varying ways, in particular the extent to which they should respond to a crisis where they believe other countries should take the lead. Thus, the UK played a relatively minor part in the initial response to the Haiti earthquake, in the expectation that the United States and France would play a prominent role, France because of historical ties and the US on account of geographical proximity. The UK also provides limited contributions to crises in francophone Africa. Comparative advantage may mean the presence of a DFID office and an Embassy or High Commission, providing local knowledge, or the presence of Royal Navy ships in the area, as was the case in the Haiyan response. A country's historical ties to the UK may also be a consideration (HPG interview, 2016): Pakistan's close links with the UK probably led to a larger response to both the 2005 earthquake and 2010 floods than would otherwise have been the case. In 2015, the UK

parliament's Public Accounts Committee noted that 'historical ties appear to have played a role in the recent international response to the Ebola epidemic in West Africa: the UK, US and France each took a leadership role in the international response in the countries with which they had strong historical or colonial ties, namely Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea respectively (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2015).

Broadly speaking, there seems to be a correlation between former colonies and UK aid programmes in Africa. This affects the allocation of humanitarian aid because DFID considers that it has a comparative advantage in those countries and country programme budgets are the first source of funding for humanitarian crises. In interviews for this study, some NGO staff and academics assert that the UK government's decisions to start large-scale aid programmes in countries which were not colonies, such as Mozambique, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and particularly Ethiopia, were based on political and security concerns. While the Ethiopian regime, for example, is rightly criticised on some aspects of human rights, the overall picture does not support the argument that the UK has made Ethiopia (or Rwanda or the DRC) a priority for other than humanitarian and developmental reasons. These decisions were made during a period of maximum DFID independence in the years soon after it was created, when reducing poverty was more clearly the sole driver of choices and the aid budget was growing. UK aid to Ethiopia – around £300m per year – is directed there because of the large numbers of poor people in the country, and policies that suggest that the Ethiopian government is concerned with its people's welfare. The challenging question remains to what degree the UK should be engaging on human rights issues in countries such as Ethiopia, rather than solely focusing on poverty.

Responses to sudden-onset natural disasters have sometimes had tangential beneficial effects, either in terms of UK policy objectives or more broadly. The UK's substantial contribution to Typhoon Haiyan may have helped widen access to senior levels of the Philippines government on climate change and offered some commercial advantages, though interviews suggested that this was more a beneficial consequence than a driver of the response. The large-scale international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami, including from the UK, helped push forward the peace process between the Indonesian government

and Acehnese separatists (Gaillard, Clave and Kelman, 2008), and the military junta's decision to accept outside help in response to Cyclone Nargis in 2008 helped open Myanmar up to political and economic change. But these positive outcomes were not the main impetus for the initial humanitarian response, which interviews indicated was primarily based on the level of need and gaps in national response capacities.

Needs rather than other priorities also appear to be the primary driver for the UK's response to protracted crises in eastern DRC, Sudan and South Sudan. These countries rarely catch the UK public's eye because they are long-running, chronic situations in countries where the UK does not typically have significant foreign policy or commercial interests, and where the risk of friction between humanitarian and foreign policy interests is low. Even so, all three have consistently featured among the top recipients of UK humanitarian aid (see Annex 3). As one former UK ambassador to the DRC put it to this study:

> There was little UK political interest apart from the UN peacekeeping force, or commercial interest in the DRC beyond some mining in Katanga and we had no commercial officer in the embassy. The rest was humanitarian and development. As Ambassador DFID's humanitarian adviser would ask me to lobby ministers or the President to help secure access to populations at risk and I would help. I was not involved in deciding where or how to spend humanitarian aid.

3.2 Interests

Globally, the UK has multiple foreign policy interests and objectives, which may conflict with or be in tension with humanitarian objectives. Chief among these is national security, as well as more broadly where counter-terrorism, epidemic risks and migration have been framed within a narrative of national security. A second area of tension is over trade, particularly relating to arms sales to countries and regions where the UK is also a humanitarian donor. Concerns about the potential negative influence of these priorities on humanitarian action, and inconsistency with the UK's framing of itself as a rules- and values-based international actor, have been sharpened by policy statements on international development explicitly linking aid to UK national

interests (DFID and HM Treasury, 2015). The Secretary of State for International Development, Priti Patel, has written that 'if we allow extreme poverty, instability and humanitarian crises to go unchecked, the consequences will eventually be felt just as deeply back in Britain as they are abroad' (quoted in Carter, 2016). Likewise, former Prime Minister Cameron cited humanitarian aid as an 'integral pillar' of wider UK national security strategies in the Middle East.

3.2.1 National security
The tension between values and interests is perhaps most acute when it comes to the UK's national security. British forces participated directly in the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, alongside and as a junior partner with the United States. Although in both countries a full-blown humanitarian crisis was avoided, at least initially, the wider strategic impact on humanitarian action was considerable due to a perception in the Muslim world that these interventions were an attack on Islam and the wider Muslim community. This, coupled with the fact that UK forces were explicitly part of a coalition supporting one side in these conflicts, made it much harder for humanitarian actors, particularly those within the Western humanitarian system, to sustain a perception of neutrality, impartiality and independence in their operations. Access became more difficult, with increased attacks on aid workers and declining adherence to international humanitarian norms (Collinson and Elhawary, 2012). The predominant focus on strengthening government capacity and authority and dealing with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda also arguably diverted attention away from humanitarian needs, while the combining of civilian and military assistance in the form of Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRTs) further restricted humanitarian space. While the UK PRT in Helmand played only a limited direct role in humanitarian assistance (Fishtein and Wilder, 2012; Haysom and Jackson, 2013), the heavy UK security presence deterred Afghans from seeking international help, and the proliferation of Western actors made it very difficult for the Taliban to distinguish between humanitarian NGOs, the UN and the military. Where UK forces and stabilisers may become involved in supporting a government facing an insurgency there is a case for more detailed planning to work through how humanitarian functions will be separated, and that separation communicated to the local population. Planning for that would be helped by closer contact and joint training between the Stabilisation Unit and CHASE.

The Syria crisis – and the way in which the UK has responded to it – provides another stark example of the challenges of incorporating humanitarian objectives within wider foreign policy priorities in a high-profile, large-scale conflict. As well as responding to the humanitarian crisis, the UK has multiple, often competing, objectives in Syria. These include opposing President Bashar al-Assad, defeating Islamic State, achieving regional stability and preventing, or at least reducing, migration to the UK. These objectives themselves are hard to reconcile even before humanitarian considerations are added to the mix.

The UK's opposition to Assad within the UN Security Council (following France and the United States) meant that peace negotiations were delayed, encouraging the fragmentation of the opposition and the spread of Islamic State (HPG interview, 2016). In hindsight, a more accurate assessment of the strength of the Ba'ath Party's hold on power and the likelihood that the opposition would splinter might have led to different policy choices, earlier peace negotiations and a better humanitarian outcome. Clearly, the ultimate aim of bringing peace to Syria would have the most significant positive consequences for the humanitarian situation – the challenge comes in deciding when to sacrifice short-term humanitarian objectives for this longer-term goal, particularly when the complex and volatile situation makes the success of particular initiatives very difficult to predict.

In terms of the humanitarian response in the region, since its first grant was made in February 2012 the UK has contributed £2.3bn (DFID, 2017). The UK is one of the largest donors to the crisis, with about half of its assistance going to people inside Syria. In the early years of the crisis, before agreement on cross-border aid operations was reached in 2014, it was the leading donor supporting cross-border responses by NGOs in the absence of approval from the Damascus government or a UN Security Council resolution. The UK government argues that, in humanitarian terms, this was consistent with its commitment to provide humanitarian assistance according to need, but it also met the political objective of bolstering the moderate opposition, and has helped to keep refugees within the region.

With multiple competing foreign policy objectives it might be expected that the humanitarian response would have been relegated below other competing policies. Certainly, there was pressure on DFID to support other UK objectives, and an independent

evaluation in 2015 found that DFID's humanitarian strategy for Syria was 'explicitly and clearly embedded in HMG's overall Syria Strategy of April 2013' (Agulhas, 2015). While 'there was no evidence of other parts of the government blocking DFID from achieving its humanitarian objectives or pushing it not to stick to humanitarian principles', the evaluation also noted that 'individuals in other government departments do not fully understand and own the principles of humanitarian response … In the case of the FCO, DFID has found itself having to clearly set out humanitarian principles (notably over the FCO's desire to identify cross-border aid into Syria as from the UK) and respond to lobbying requests for UK aid to be used for particular purposes and to support particular groups in Syria'.

So, while the evidence is fairly consistent that humanitarian considerations were neither ignored nor subverted, the process of policy-making on complex crises such as Syria makes for a challenging story to analyse, and an evolving and fluid one. The humanitarian implications of wider foreign policy objectives (and the risks of them being undermined) need to be continually considered within a detailed analysis of context. Ensuring that principled humanitarian action is not sidelined or undermined by other government priorities is a significant challenge when high-profile crises strike. The stronger cross-government approach reflected in the NSC means that a number of departments and their ministers and officials are engaged in policy-making. However, interviews suggested that they may not fully understand the risks to those delivering the humanitarian effort, or that this effort represents more than 'just' delivering life-saving goods. While a centralised decision-making structure can ensure a voice at the table for humanitarian considerations, there is a continued challenge in making the case that this voice should be heard, and that the humanitarian implications are fully explored and balanced against other priorities. Persuading ministers to separate humanitarian action from national security would be easier with more documented evidence linking public statements with the extra difficulties faced by humanitarians.

3.2.2 Counter-terrorism
Countering the threat of terrorism globally is a priority national security objective for the UK government. The government's strategy to mitigate terrorist threats is wide-ranging, including legislation targeting political

organisations and statements glorifying terrorism, and powers relating to the investigation and detention of suspects. Some aspects cause particular concern for humanitarian actors, in particular countering the financing of terrorism by restricting banking facilities and the perceived threat of criminal liability for aid actors should aid fall into the hands of proscribed groups. International and domestic UK legislation and policies aimed at curbing the financing of proscribed organisations are being interpreted very cautiously by major international banks that provide services to UK-based international NGOs working in Syria, Somalia, Gaza and other high-risk contexts, including UBS, HSBC and NatWest. A number of UK INGOs operating in these areas, including ones receiving UK government funding, have had banking services withdrawn or subject to significant delays (Metcalfe-Hough, 2015). INGOs complain that new administrative requirements make it more difficult for them to operate quickly and effectively in some of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Decisions taken by banks have appeared ad hoc, based on unverified media reports, and are not subject to appeal by the client. Various UK government departments have, until recently, been reluctant to intervene, either to clarify legislation for the banks or to vouch for INGOs that they work with or fund (*ibid.*). Although DFID is engaged in discussion on these issues with other government departments and the Charity Commission, counter-terrorism objectives appear to be a higher priority than humanitarian concerns. This is a clear example of the unintended consequences for humanitarian action – and particularly aid agency operations – of measures designed to address a different government priority.

With regular and very serious terrorist attacks in Europe, it is harder for the UK government to take a long-term perspective to the policies that make banks, the Charity Commission and the security agencies risk-averse. But the restrictions are pushing up the costs of remittances and limiting the operations of Muslim charities in particular, both of which are likely to breed resentment, increase humanitarian need and reduce flows of legitimate aid. DFID ministers should give priority to the interdepartmental dialogue to provide better guidance to banks and NGOs on what they should and should not do.

3.2.3 Migration

Migration has been a significant domestic policy issue in the UK for many years, but has become particularly pressing recently as the flow (and visibility) of migrants and asylum-seekers heading to Europe has increased. Public and political concerns in this area are part of wider unease over levels of both EU and non-EU immigration into the UK. UK policy has been to focus on keeping refugees within their region, in part because the cost of supporting them is significantly lower in neighbouring countries than in the UK (Metcalfe-Hough, 2015). DFID argues that it is meeting twin objectives – responding both to humanitarian need and to migration – and that it is common for government policies to have more than one purpose. But the UK's approach has been controversial because it appears to run counter to the country's obligations under the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol to provide protection for people fleeing 'persecution and serious harm'. The UK has agreed to take only 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020, compared to almost 500,000 in Germany in 2015 alone, and over 2m in Turkey (UNHCR, 2017). Germany reported spending almost £2.5bn, or over 16% of ODA, on refugees in Germany in 2015, 17 times more than in 2014.[5] By contrast, UK expenditure on refugees in the UK stood at £320m, or just over 2% of ODA, over the same period (DAC Secretariat, 2016). Although funds are directed to European NGOs rather than directly to refugee-hosting governments, the UK's €3m pledge to the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa has also been seen in some quarters as supporting regimes including Sudan and Eritrea in order to keep refugees out of Europe.[6]

As well as the direct impact on the number of refugees they accept themselves, there is some evidence that the restrictive refugee policies of the UK and other Western governments are leading some of the world's largest hosting states such as Kenya to question why they should continue to shoulder this burden when much richer countries decline to do so. Thus, as 'goodwill has ebbed away, discussions on refugees have moved towards more transactional arguments for assistance. While there are benefits in this model, including increased funding to refugee-hosting countries and discussions on refugees' access to labour markets, there are also clear losses for refugee protection on a global

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5   Under Development Assistance Committee (DAC) rules, the first year of domestic support to refugees can be counted as ODA.

6   The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa is a Commission-managed pooled fund for NGOs that seeks to address the root causes of destabilisation, displacement and irregular migration across the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and North Africa. In 2016, investment to these three regions stood at over £2bn (European Commission, 2017).

level if overt transactionalism is not balanced by respect for the norms enshrined in the Refugee Convention' (Hargrave and Pantuliano, 2016).

3.2.4 The arms trade

Humanitarian aid has been less entangled than development assistance in accusations that it is used as a tool to advance the UK's economic interests, not least because it is less involved with infrastructure projects that could be tied to contracts for UK firms. However, one key area where trade interests have become intertwined with humanitarian ones is in arms sales. According to government data for 2015, the UK was the world's second-largest arms exporter between 2005 and 2015, accounting for 12% of arms exports in 2015 (UKTI, 2016). Over the years, concerns have been raised by both the Parliamentary Committees on Arms Export Controls (CAEC)[7] and international humanitarian and human rights organisations about the UK's application of legislative controls on arms exports to states where there is a risk that such exports may be used in breach of international humanitarian and human rights law. A number of these states or regions are also destinations for UK government humanitarian aid, including Syria and Libya.

The UK states that it has the highest standards of arms export controls in the world and has 'led the way in establishing international humanitarian law to govern the sale of arms', having been at the centre of international efforts to establish the UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) that came into force in 2014 (House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, 2016; FCO, 2014). The treaty recognises the case for the arms trade for countries to meet legitimate requirements to defend themselves, but sets standards to control it. For their part, INGOs have criticised the UK for arms exports to Israel, for example, on the grounds that these weapons may have been used in Israeli military operations in the occupied Palestinian territory. According to the Committees on Arms Exports Controls, 'previous [UK] government investigations have concluded that components of UK origin have almost certainly been used in previous armed attacks by the Israeli military in Gaza' (Committees on Arms Exports Controls, 2015: 93). The apparent contradiction is that, in 2015, the UK provided over $42m of humanitarian aid to people affected by the conflict in which these arms are being used (OCHA FTS, 2017).

The UK's arms trade with Saudi Arabia, which is leading a regional military campaign, supported by the UK and others, against Houthi rebels in Yemen, has also faced heavy criticism. The impact of the conflict on civilians, including an economic embargo and air attacks by Saudi-led coalition forces, has been devastating. Since March 2015, over 40,600 people have been killed and at least 3.1m displaced, and 12.6m are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance (OCHA, 2016). The longer-term consequences are also profound: the economic costs to the country in 2015–16 alone have been estimated at $14bn in damage and loss of productivity (Reuters, 2016).

The UK is a major humanitarian donor to Yemen, spending $111m in 2015 and 2016, and supports the peace process seeking to end the conflict.[8] It has also been a major arms supplier to Saudi Arabia since the 1960s, and is currently its second-largest supplier, accounting for 30% of the country's purchases (SIPRI, 2016: 4). The UK licensed £3.3bn of arms sales to Saudi Arabia in the year after its campaign in Yemen started, and a range of arms is on order, including 14 combat aircraft (SIPRI, 2016: 8). The UK is under increasing pressure to halt these exports in light of reports of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by the Saudi-led coalition (UNGA Human Rights Council, 2016; Oxfam, 2015; Allen, 2016). A joint opinion from prominent legal experts in December 2015 concluded that the UK was in breach of its obligations under domestic, European and international law for its authorisation of sales of arms used in the conflict (Sands, Clapham and Ghralaigh, 2015). Following their inquiry on the subject, the Parliamentary Committees on Business, Innovations and Skills and International Development concluded that 'it seems inevitable that any violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by the coalition have involved arms supplied from the UK', and that the UK government 'suspend sales of arms which could be used in Yemen to Saudi Arabia' (House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills and International Development Committees, 2016). The government, particularly the MoD and FCO, have

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7 A quadripartite committee of the House of Commons comprising the International Development, Business Innovations and Skills, Defence and Foreign Affairs Committees.

8 The UK was the fourth- and the third-largest donor in 2015 and 2016 respectively, according to OCHA's Financial Tracking Service.

stated that they are confident that UK-supplied arms are being used in compliance with relevant legislative and policy standards. This position was supported by a judicial review of the arms sales policy, which ruled in July 2017 that sales were lawful. The MoD has said that it does not believe that the Saudis are deliberately targeting civilians. Although UK military advisors train their Saudi counterparts in IHL and weapons targeting, they do not supervise targeting decisions, and it is not clear that the coalition is observing the IHL guiding principles of distinction (between combatants and non-combatants) and proportionality in the conduct of its campaign.

The UK arms industry is a major part of the country's export economy, and could become even more important after the country leaves the EU. However, while the judicial review does not stand in the way of such growth, at the same time the UK risks undermining its own humanitarian and peace-making objectives by supporting the arming of parties to conflicts where their adherence to IHL is in question. Existing legislation and policy has not proven up to the task of managing these tensions. In line with the recommendations of the CAEC, the UK should ensure strict application of its own regulations and policies with regard to export guarantees on arms sales to high-risk countries. It should also acknowledge the challenges inherent in being a major arms exporter and an advocate for greater respect for international human rights and humanitarian law, and articulate how these can best be managed.

3.3 Balancing values and interests

The UK's discourse on its values is sometimes seen as in tension with an explicitly interest-based aid policy (as indeed the legal obligation of poverty reduction may be in tension with 'the national interest'). This study cites examples of where these potentially come into conflict, and highlights concerns among critics who argue that pursuing national interests is antithetical to championing principled humanitarian action. The reality is more complicated: while they clearly can be in contradiction, national interest and humanitarian principles are not inherently contradictory. It can be both in the national interest to support independent humanitarian action as a global public good in itself alongside a narrower, short-term concern for British security or economic interests. This is a fine line to tread, and the challenge comes in institutionalising decision-making and familiarising key decision-makers with the potential risk that foreign policy considerations crowd out humanitarian priorities (Bryce, 2014). This is both a political and an institutional challenge, since responses to high-profile crises are forged in the full glare of public scrutiny, which may drive different political priorities. Institutionally, while progress has been made in streamlining Whitehall processes and making them more consultative, cultural barriers within the bureaucracy can only be overcome by continued advocacy around humanitarian concerns and risks.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

The UK's position as an important humanitarian actor – and one to whom other states look for policy leadership – risks being undermined by the sometimes negative impacts of its wider foreign policy priorities. The risks are highest where the UK is actively involved in a conflict; where national security considerations prevail; and where domestic drivers around migration trump a deep-seated sense of British values around charity. Where national interests are pre-eminent, decisions and actions in crisis response should be underpinned by an explicit and transparent consideration of humanitarian values and principles, and in compliance with existing UK commitments under international treaties and conventions. It would be naive to assume that politics can be relegated to a secondary position – but institutions, policies and culture can all play a part in minimising, mitigating or managing negative foreign policy influence.

The UK has a comparative advantage in its ability to project a response internationally through civilian and military assets, the size of its aid budget and its deep partnerships around the world. But it needs to act with and through others. Supporting and working through the multilateral system and with like-minded (and not-so-like-minded) donors, the UK should be a forceful advocate of principled humanitarian action. Moreover, with a new UN Secretary-General, and a UK government committed to an outward-looking foreign policy, there should be an opportunity to develop a longer-term view of how the UK should engage with the world. Given signs of significant shifts in the world order, or at least short-term turbulence, the UK has the potential to develop a model of principled, smart humanitarian action that is both true to its values and in line with the UK's role as a major global player with multiple, and sometimes competing, interests. Making such changes requires a shift in approach and culture within the whole of the UK government when it comes to humanitarian principles and priorities, and open acknowledgement that supporting international humanitarian priorities in word and deed is in the UK's longer-term national interest.

To this end, the UK government, through all relevant departments including the FCO, DFID and the MoD, should consider the following recommendations:

Recommit to the humanitarian endeavour and humanitarian principles

- The UK government should reiterate its commitment to humanitarian principles forcefully and often, including that humanitarian aid should not be used as an instrument to pursue national security concerns. The government should assert the independence of the humanitarian endeavour generally, and provide evidence of the independence of UK humanitarian aid specifically, consistent with the humanitarian principles that the government says it supports.
- Existing institutions, including the NSC, FCO, MoD and DFID, should explicitly and transparently incorporate humanitarian considerations into decision-making in crisis contexts.

Increase the transparency of humanitarian policy and decision-making

- The UK government should be transparent about how it decides between multiple and competing interests in different contexts, and where these interests depart from stated values. Apparently contradictory policy statements asserting support for the humanitarian principles and the use of aid to promote national security need to be challenged and changed.
- The UK government should build evidence for and highlight the positive ways in which a joined-up government response improves humanitarian outcomes and where it can put them at risk. Linked to this, the UK government should be more transparent about the costs of government departments' involvement in humanitarian responses, including the UK military.
- The UK needs a more engaged public debate about its commitment to a values- and rules-based international system. This would include discussing

when it makes sense to support humanitarian interventions, and the extent to which the UK relies on and invests in the multilateral system for responses to crises. UK NGOs need to lead this debate and without penalty when they are also receiving UK government funds to deliver programmes.

The UK government should urgently review certain national security-based decisions that either exacerbate humanitarian crises or make responses more difficult. Specifically, the UK government should:

- Suspend sales of arms to Saudi Arabia for use in combat until peace is achieved in Yemen.
- Urgently seek solutions to the restrictions counter-terrorism measures place on British charities and remittances.
- Revisit the limits on accepting legitimate refugees who want to come to the UK.

In holding the government to account on these issues, the UK parliament's International Development Committee should review the impact of national security concerns on humanitarian outcomes.

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Annexes

Annex 1: UK humanitarian spending breakdown, UN FTS, £, 2016

CARE	41,692,930	All NGOs	242,027,578
International Medical Corps	15,756,075		
Mercy Corps	35,281,538		
Oxfam	15,767,719		
Save the Children	24,759,298		
Other NGOs	108,770,015		
FAO	20,296,429	UN agencies	696,087,198
IOM	62,888,658		
OCHA	33,710,477		
UNHCR	106,105,855		
UNICEF	214,906,392		
UNRWA	22,888,348		
WFP	201,722,446		
Other UN agencies	33,568,589		
Central Emergency Response Fund	54,495,471	OCHA Pooled Funding Mechanisms	278,545,512
Emergency Response Funds	151,877,604		
Common Humanitarian Funds	72,172,436		
British Red Cross	709,648	Red Cross Societies	98,580,478
ICRC	97,870,829		
Various recipients (details not provided)			104,833,781
Total			**1,420,074,549**

Source: OCHA FTS.

Annex 2: UK humanitarian funding channels as %, 2006–2016
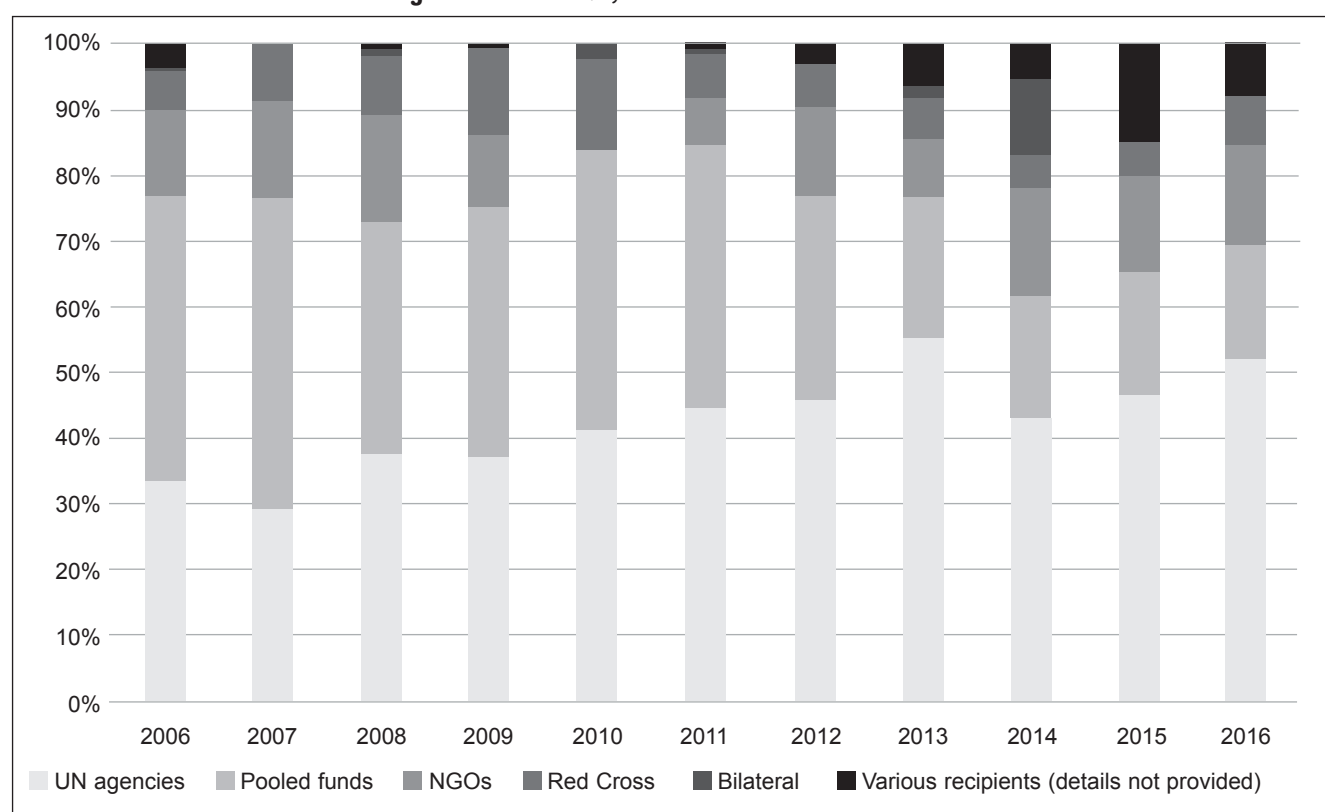
Annex 3: Analysis of UK contributions to top ten appeals 2010–16

Year		Appeal	Total required (US$m)	Total funded (US$m)	UK contribution to appeal funding (US$m)	UK percentage of total funded (%)
2016	1	Syria Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan	4,539.3	2,803.3	158.8	5.7
	2	Syria Response Plan	3,193.6	1,723.4	217.9	12.6
	3	Yemen	1,632.6	1,008.5	168.8	16.7
	4	South Sudan	1,291.1	1,182.3	146.7	12.4
	5	Sudan	971.7	566.7	70.1	12.4
	6	Somalia	885.2	494.5	59.4	12
	7	Iraq	860.5	775.1	65.7	8.5
	8	DRC	690	414.7	30	7.2
	9	oPT	570.7	289.1	0.74	0.1
	10	Chad	541.3	282.8	0.15	0.03
2015	1	Syria Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan	4,319.9	2,773.3	263.9	9.5
	2	Syria Response Plan	2,893.4	1,239.7	358.6	28.9
	3	South Sudan	1,635.5	1,064.7	213.6	20
	4	Yemen	1,600.8	881.8	112.9	12.8
	5	Sudan	1,035.9	592.8	52.6	8.8
	6	Somalia	862.6	378.3	69.3	18.3
	7	OPT	706.1	399.9	2.9	0.7
	8	Iraq	704.3	524.5	56.7	10.8
	9	DRC	692	440.9	48.5	11
	10	South Sudan Regional Response Plan (Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda)	657.8	186.1	26.4	14.1
2014	1	Syria Regional Response Plan	3,740.6	2,357.1	187.7	7.9
	2	Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP)	2,256.1	1,144.7	107.5	9.4
	3	South Sudan	1,801.7	1,592.1	188.6	11.8
	4	Iraq	1,113.2	788.8	30.1	3.8
	5	Sudan Humanitarian Work Plan	985.6	547	59.6	10.8
	6	Somalia	933.1	453.8	48.7	10.7
	7	OPT	931.1	502.5	39.3	7.8
	8	DRC	832.1	393.4	52.1	13.2
	9	Philippines – Typhoon Haiyan Strategic Response Plan	775.7	469.1	57.9	12.3
	10	South Sudan Regional Response Plan (Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Uganda)	657.6	355.3	80.1	22.5
2013	1	Syria Regional Refugee Response Plan	2,981.6	2,181	228.6	10.5
	2	Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan	1,409.8	959.3	137.8	14.4
	3	Somalia	1,153.1	586.1	52.1	8.9
	4	South Sudan	1,072	771.9	74.2	9.6
	5	Sudan	985.1	549.9	34.9	6.3

Annex 3: *(continued)*

Year		Appeal	Total required (US$m)	Total funded (US$m)	UK contribution to appeal funding (US$m)	UK percentage of total funded (%)
2013	6	DRC	892.6	629.4	46.8	7.4
	7	Yemen	705.8	395.8	31.6	8.0
	8	Kenya Emergency Humanitarian Response Plan	663.3	370.5	27.5	7.4
	9	Chad	509.9	297.9	18.8	6.3
	10	Mali	476.9	264.7	22.6	8.5
2012	1	South Sudan	1,176.9	787.3	76.9	9.8
	2	Somalia	1,167.7	612.3	69.1	11.3
	3	Sudan	1,051	585.3	41.1	7.0
	4	Kenya Emergency Humanitarian Response Plan	796.8	544.3	23.4	4.3
	5	DRC	791.3	583.4	63.1	10.8
	6	Yemen	585.6	325.1	55.6	17.1
	7	Chad	571.9	356.1	4.3	1.2
	8	Niger	489.6	312.7	17.1	5.5
	9	Afghanistan	448.6	223.8	26.1	11.7
	10	OPT	419.9	305.8	13.6	4.4
2011	1	Sudan	1,133	741.5	78.3	10.6
	2	Somalia	1,003.3	868.1	107.9	12.4
	3	Kenya Emergency Humanitarian Response Plan	741.8	529.5	23.4	4.4
	4	DRC	735.8	487.4	57.1	11.7
	5	West Africa	712.2	286.8	20.9	7.3
	6	South Sudan	619.7	377.8	0	0.0
	7	Afghanistan	582.3	423.2	16.1	3.8
	8	OPT	536.9	305.4	5.8	1.9
	9	Chad	535.3	314.1	4.8	1.5
	10	Zimbabwe	478.6	221.7	3.1	1.4
2010	1	Pakistan Floods Relief and Early Recovery Response Plan	1,963.5	1,371.5	115.6	8.4
	2	Sudan	1,843.4	1,217	95.4	7.8
	3	Haiti	1,502.2	1,101.2	9.8	0.9
	4	DRC	827.6	521	51.8	9.9
	5	West Africa	774.9	421.5	15.9	3.8
	6	Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan	774.5	505.3	2.3	0.5
	7	Kenya Emergency Humanitarian Response Plan	603.5	399.3	7.9	2.0
	8	OPT	603.4	329.7	6.3	1.9
	9	Somalia	596.1	399.9	19.5	4.9
	10	Chad	544.1	326.3	11.5	3.5

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