How to build an innovative humanitarian aid strategy: spotlight on current and forgotten crises

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The European Parliament adopted by 432 votes to 33, with 98 abstentions, a resolution on how to build an innovative humanitarian aid strategy: spotlight on current and forgotten crises.

The gap between global humanitarian needs and the resources allocated to meet them continues to widen. In 2022, the funding gap was USD 23 billion, with only 55 % of global needs covered. The EU, together with its Member States and the United States account for the vast majority of global funding for humanitarian aid.

The Commission allocates at least 15 % of its initial annual humanitarian budget to forgotten crises meaning humanitarian crises that receive limited attention and media coverage, are often overshadowed by other emergencies or ongoing conflicts.

Innovative structural solutions are needed to address global humanitarian challenges and ensure that the humanitarian system is more agile, prepared for and responsive to humanitarian crises. These solutions should focus the following:

Funding

Members urgently called on the Commission and the Member States to substantially **increase their humanitarian aid budgets** – without compromising their development budgets – to respond to humanitarian needs, which are at a record high. They reiterated their call on the Member States to allocate a fixed share of **0.7 %** of their gross national incomes to official development assistance (ODA). They called on the Member States to set ambitious targets and create roadmaps for gradually increasing ODA to meet the final target of **10 %**.

The resolution called for the revision of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) to include a substantial increase in the humanitarian aid budget to match the new humanitarian landscape and needs, including the specific needs of women and girls.

Members are concerned that the funds earmarked for external crises under the Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve (SEAR) were already exhausted in the first quarter of 2023. In this regard, they suggested splitting the SEAR into two separate parts, reflecting the internal and external dimensions, and equipping each part with adequate funding. Any reinforcement of the SEAR should be complementary to and not substitutive of the humanitarian aid budgetary line.

Parliament and the Council are called on to substantially increase the humanitarian aid instrument in the context of the 2024 annual budget.

The resolution underlined the important role of civil society, humanitarian organisations and local partners in identifying needs and delivering humanitarian aid directly to those in need.

The triple nexus

Parliament noted that the triple nexus is key to addressing the underlying causes and context-specific needs in complex and protracted crises and to building resilience to future crises. It underlined that

poverty, conflict, instability and forced displacement are closely related phenomena that must be addressed in a coherent and comprehensive manner. Members insisted on more nexus-specific funding, transparency, visibility, coordination and knowledge-sharing among stakeholders when applying the triple nexus approach, including through better involvement of local actors.

Climate justice

Members called for climate funding to be scaled up in order to prevent, mitigate and respond to the alarming impact of climate change on humanitarian crises. They called for donors and Member States to adopt and implement the humanitarian aid donors' declaration on climate and the environment by increasing their funding for disaster prevention, preparedness, anticipatory action, and response.

People-centred approach

While stressing the importance of building human resilience by enhancingprotection, Members called for efforts to enhance local and sustainable agricultural and food production by promoting agro-ecological methods and sustainable fisheries to increase food availability and prevent dependence on external supplies in times of humanitarian crises. They highlighted the role and importance of local formal and informal civil society organisations in the humanitarian response.

Enabling environment

Parliament insisted on the need to reinforce the centrality of and respect for international humanitarian law, international human rights law and humanitarian principles in the EU's external action.

The Commission is called on to:

- develop a humanitarian diplomacy strategy together with the Member States, ensuring a more systematic and coordinated approach to humanitarian diplomacy;

- establish a European Centre for Humanitarian Research and Innovation, bringing together experts from academia and practitioners to foster innovation in the humanitarian sector, notably on access to new sources of finance.

Role of media

The resolution underlined the critical role of media in raising awareness of crises and generating public support for crisis response. Media organisations should not abandon coverage of conflicts, even if they are deemed 'prolonged' 'or 'forgotten', as continued reporting is essential for keeping the international community informed, maintaining pressure on relevant stakeholders and supporting efforts towards conflict resolution and peacebuilding.