STAYING THE COURSE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Delivering on the ambition
of the World Humanitarian Summit

AGENDA FOR HUMANITY ANNUAL SYNTHESIS REPORT 2018

OCHA

AGENDA FOR HUMANITY
5 CORE RESPONSIBILITIES
24 TRANSFORMATIONS

Cover photo: A woman attends a community meeting in Zamai IDP site, Mayo Tsanaga, in the Far North province of Cameroon. She fled with her children after her house was attacked by Boko Haram and her husband was killed. OCHA/Eve Sabbagh

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VISUAL SUMMARY

Key messages

1

At the World Humanitarian Summit, participants made thousands of commitments to deliver the Agenda for Humanity, launching an agenda for change.

2

As a result:

• Humanitarian and development partners are working in a more joined up way.

• Stakeholders are acting earlier to mitigate the impacts of crises.

• Resources are being directed to strengthen local and national capacities.

• Momentum is building for multi-year and flexible funding.

3

But progress has been uneven and mainly limited to what can be achieved within existing humanitarian systems. To decrease vulnerability, the focus must move beyond short-term solutions or outputs.

4

Diverse partners must now engage one another on how to measure change and assess collective progress for the future.

5

Collectively, we must stay the course to achieve systemic change and deliver real results for people affected by crises.

Top five challenges reported that impeded progress, 2017

Funding

Human resources /capacity

Data

Field conditions/ access

Coordination

Geographic distribution of stakeholders who reported in 2017

4 NORTH AMERICA

41 EUROPE

7 CENTRAL AND SOUTH ASIA

4 AFRICA

6 MIDDLE EAST

11 ASIA-PACIFIC

4 LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARRIBEAN
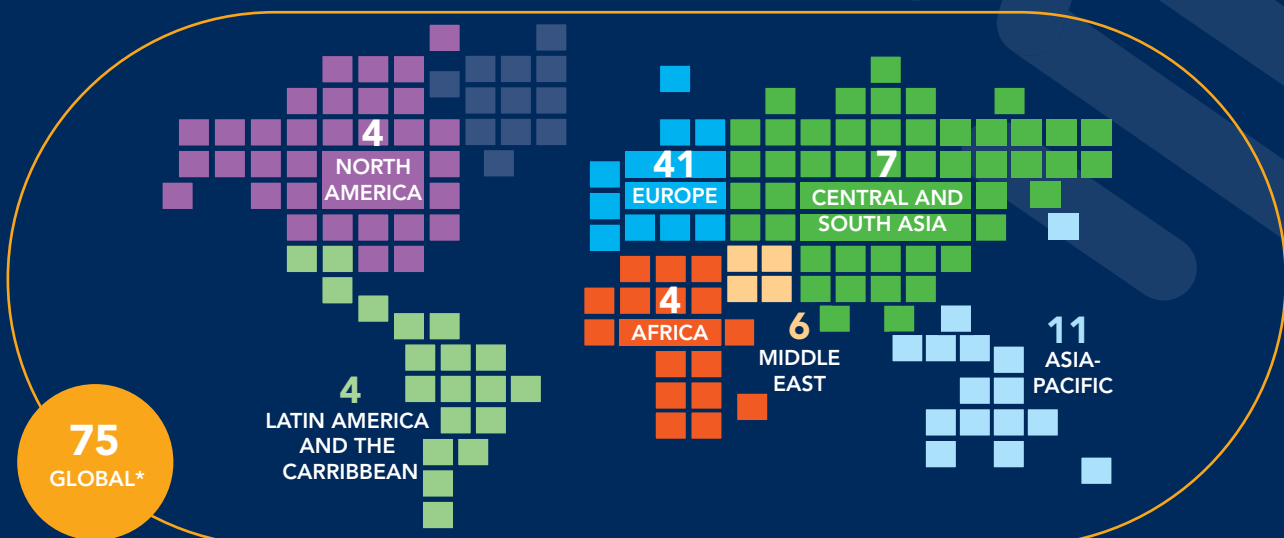
75 GLOBAL*

Global denotes an organization with multiple headquarters or chapters.

Stakeholders who reported through PACT, 2017

Stakeholder	Count
ACADEMIA	6
FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATION	14
FOUNDATION	2
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION	2
MEMBER STATE	41
NGO - INTERNATIONAL	47
NGO - NATIONAL	5
OTHER	9
PRIVATE SECTOR	9
REGIONAL ORGANIZATION	1
UN	16

43
NEW STAKEHOLDERS
IN 2017

152
TOTAL STAKEHOLDERS

Tracking progress in reporting

215
358 Total stakeholders 2016
REPORTED 39%
143
2016

213
366 Total stakeholders 2017
REPORTED 41%
152
2017

64%
Commitments covered by reports
IN 2017

Report levels by transformations in 2017 and 2016

REPORTS SUBMITTED

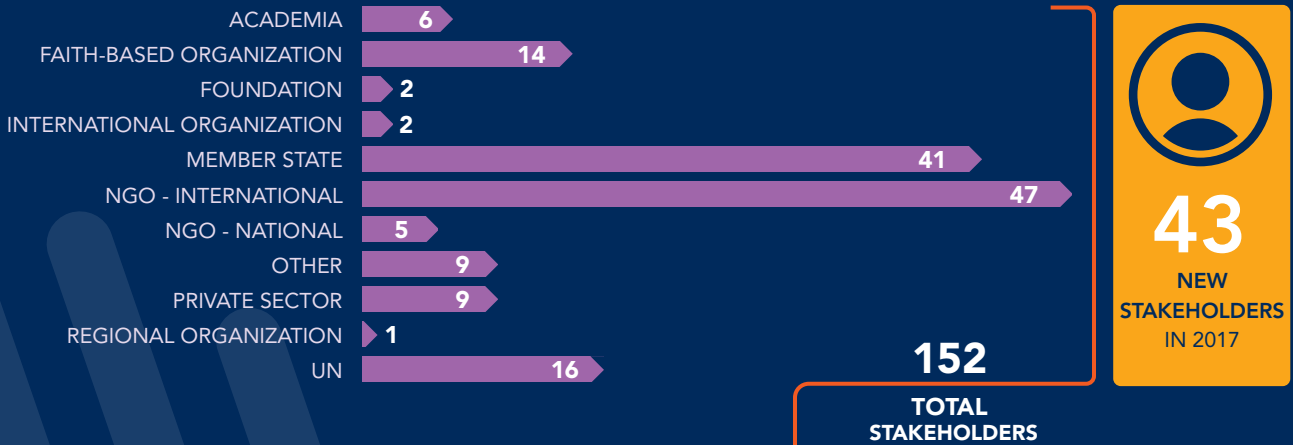|	1A	1B	1C	1D	2A	2B	2C	2D	2E	3A	3B	3C	3D	3E	3F	3G	4A	4B	4C	5A	5B	5C	5D	5E
2017	5	43	46	32	43	55	36	80	51	69	14	5	73	23	17	32	101	80	78	54	40	21	41	65
2016	5	36	45	28	38	50	27	71	39	63	9	3	66	24	14	29	92	71	73	50	31	21	33	60

Number of 2017 reports   Number of 2016 reports
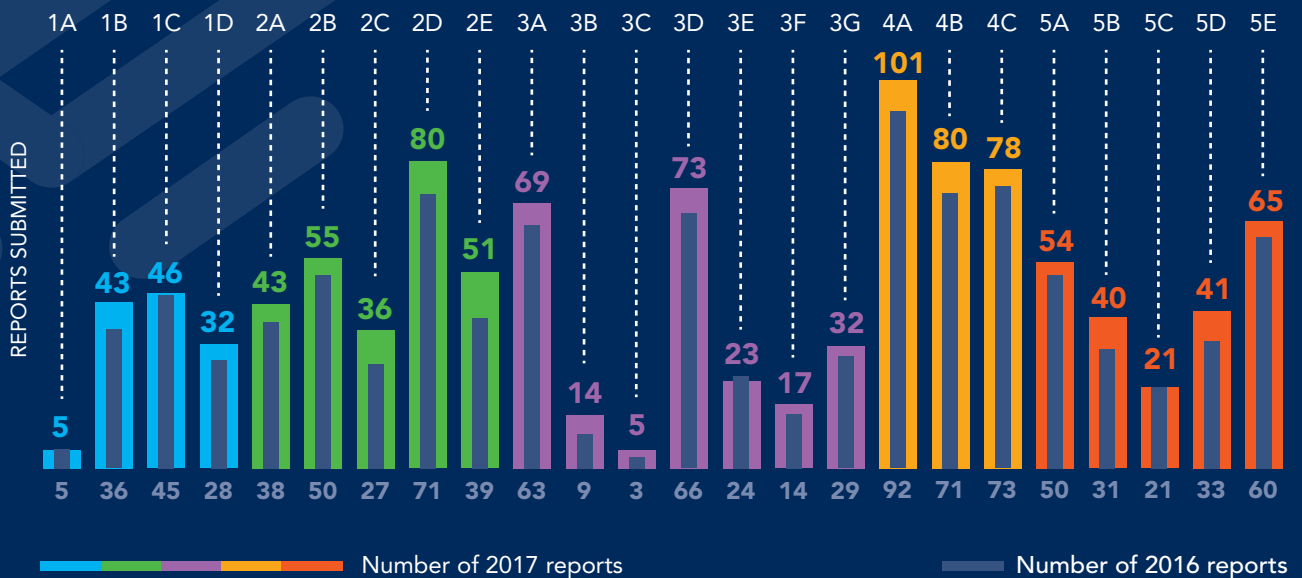
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"We cannot achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development without redoubling our efforts to reach those left farthest behind: refugees, internally displaced people, women and girls, children and all people whose lives have been overturned by conflicts or disasters. […] The call to action set out in the Agenda for Humanity remains as urgent as ever."

UN Secretary-General António Guterres, Statement on the first anniversary of the World Humanitarian Summit, 23 May 2017

The World Humanitarian Summit was a landmark moment that launched a vital agenda for change. Participants made thousands of commitments to deliver the Agenda for Humanity, a five-part plan to alleviate suffering, reduce risk and lessen vulnerability on a global scale. As the implementation of commitments progresses, stakeholders must stay the course in their ambition to deliver results for the millions of people affected by crises.

In the second year since the World Humanitarian Summit, 152 stakeholders reported on their efforts to achieve the changes called for in the Agenda for Humanity, demonstrating wide support for the aspirations set out by its five Core Responsibilities. The achievements recorded by stakeholders on the online Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformation (PACT, available at agendaforhumanity.org) between January and December 2017 contribute to the broader work of the international community to bring people in crises closer to the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Although still in its early stages, the Agenda for Humanity is beginning to reshape global and local approaches to preventing, preparing for and responding to humanitarian crises, laying the foundations for greater changes to come. Humanitarian-development cooperation is being taken forward at the highest levels of the United Nations and reshaping Member States' aid strategies, while at country level, the New Way of Working is gaining operational momentum. Stakeholders are responding to early warning by funding and delivering early action to mitigate the impacts of crises. A group of committed Member States and international organizations have adopted legal and policy changes that are enabling new approaches, including direct funding of local actors and multi-year funding in support of collective outcomes. International humanitarian actors are directing resources towards strengthening local and national capacities to prepare for and respond to crises, while working to make international action more transparent, efficient and effective. The Grand Bargain and other multi-stakeholder

Serah, 7, is an IDP living in Rann, Borno State, Nigeria.

OCHA/Yasmina Guerda

initiatives launched at the Summit—such as the Charter for Change, the Charter for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, Education Cannot Wait and the Connecting Business Initiative—have laid the groundwork for collective action in key areas.

In spite of these real achievements, progress remains uneven. Some of the Agenda for Humanity's 24 transformations have maintained momentum; some have seen progress slow as the impetus of the Summit fades, while others have yet to receive the attention they need. The lack of sustained and predictable financing for conflict prevention and peacebuilding remains a major impediment to more coherent programming across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The UN Secretary-General's new vision for sustaining peace and reinvigorating the UN's peacebuilding architecture should provide a much-needed catalyst and direction for guiding progress in the coming years. However, there is no such road map for curbing the devastating suffering of civilians in today's conflicts, as widespread violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL) continue unabated, and concrete measures to increase accountability remain elusive. Progress in both of these areas will require a great leveraging of political will, leadership and advocacy that extend far beyond the humanitarian community.

Internal displacement remains relatively low on the global agenda, despite some positive developments in 2017. National and local humanitarian organizations remain under-represented in decision-making processes, in particular at the global level, and meaningful partnerships between international and local organizations need to be strengthened. Affected people still have little say in decisions that affect their lives, at both global and local levels, despite the efforts of a small group of committed stakeholders to

A Rohinyga refugee helps build temporary shelters in preparation for the heavy monsoon rains. Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh

OCHA/Vincent Tremeau

improve participation, transparency and accountability. Finally, little progress has been made to find new resources to meet growing humanitarian needs. Mobilizing the political will, partnerships and resources to address the shortfall remains perhaps the greatest challenge in the years to come.

For the first time, stakeholders reported on the specific challenges they face in implementing their commitments. The greatest obstacle overall was the scale and complexity of humanitarian need, which again reached record heights in 2017. In this context, stakeholders reported that funding and capacity gaps were the top two challenges they faced, reflecting their struggle to deliver assistance and protection with limited resources, often in very difficult conditions. The need for better data and analysis was the third most frequently cited challenge. The humanitarian sector's lack of capacity to gather, analyse and use data to inform decision-making was highlighted as a constraint accross all transformations.

Stakeholders also faced challenges in implementing the change agenda itself. The work of operationalizing commitments, and of turning ambitious pledges and well-meaning policies into practical action on the ground, has brought to light the structural barriers, legal restrictions and capacity gaps that must be addressed. Solutions to these challenges are especially urgent in efforts to include diverse voices, provide multi-year and flexible financing, and fund national actors directly. The lack of time and resources invested in doing things differently, and the reluctance to adapt entrenched systems, processes and attitudes, mean that, for the most part, progress has been limited to what can be achieved within existing humanitarian structures. Changes that require rethinking the established way of doing things, including those that call for the inclusion of a more diverse set of actors in decision-making, have made less headway. Finally, in the absence of a clear framework for measuring progress and outcomes, stakeholders struggled to assess whether changes are having the desired impact for people affected by crises.

Achievements and challenges in 2017

The achievements reported by stakeholders in 2017 reflect a wide spectrum of individual and collective efforts to deliver on their commitments and bring about the changes called for in the Agenda for Humanity. The following section summarizes broad areas of collective progress against Core Responsibilities One, Two, Three and Four. Achievements under Core Responsibility Five are described under the core responsibilities they support. More detailed analysis of progress on the 24 transformations across all five core responsibilities can be found in the chapters that follow.

CORE RESPONSIBILITY ONE
Prevent and End Conflict

Reporting against Core Responsibility One demonstrated the concerted efforts of a group of stakeholders to bolster the international community's capacity to prevent, respond to and build resilience to conflicts. In line with the UN Secretary-General's call to make prevention a priority, stakeholders reported on a number of political, strategic and practical actions to increase focus on conflict prevention, embed preventive approaches in humanitarian and development policy frameworks, and improve operational capacities to prevent conflicts, resolve crises and maintain peace. Reporting also demonstrated strong support for improving coherence and coordination across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, and for developing approaches to respond to crises and promote stability that are consistent with efforts to implement the SDGs. Underpinning such approaches, stakeholders also took steps to improve conflict analyses and tools, and to engage women, youth and faith communities in building peaceful and resilient societies. However, stakeholders identified the lack of sustained and predictable financing for conflict prevention and resolution efforts as the primary obstacle to progress—despite the efforts of some Member States and other partners to direct funds towards these activities. Stakeholders also highlighted the critical need for improvements in data collection and analysis to support more coherent approaches and bolster national and international capacities to deliver conflict-sensitive programming.

Internally displaced women and girls gather around water taps as they fill containers at the Dalori camp in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria,

UNICEF/Gilbertson VII Photo

CORE RESPONSIBILITY TWO
Respect the Rules of War

A committed group of Member States and civil society organizations reported on their efforts to enhance respect for the rules of war and improve the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. Stakeholders engaged primarily in advocacy to remind parties to conflict of their obligations under IHL and IHRL, including ensuring accountability for violations. A small number also reported practical measures to improve compliance, including collecting data on violations, researching best practices for minimizing civilian harm, strengthening national and organizational capacities to protect civilians, and training State armed forces and non-state armed groups on the applicable rules. Stakeholders continued to demonstrate a strong political commitment to protect women and girls from gender-based violence (GBV), putting their commitment into action by funding and implementing programmes to prevent or respond to GBV and raise awareness of women's rights. A number also reported stepping up efforts to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse.

However, stakeholders noted that widespread violations of IHL and IHRL, combined with a lack of accountability, remain major challenges. Insecurity and lack of access hinder efforts to protect, assist and provide medical care in armed conflicts. Difficult field conditions also pose a significant barrier to identifying and documenting violations of international law and ensuring accountability, as well as developing policy, designing programmes and evaluating progress on the protection of civilians. To make collective progress, there is a need for more practical action, such as adopting national policy frameworks on the protection of civilians, engaging with parties to enhance their respect for IHL and IHRL, and promoting compliance through advocacy and pursuing accountability for violations.

Leave No One Behind

Important normative progress was made in 2017 to uphold the rights of and find solutions for the most vulnerable groups, including forcibly displaced people, migrants, stateless people, women and girls, children, youth, and persons with disabilities. Following the 2016 adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, stakeholders contributed to the development of the global compacts for refugees and on migration supported the roll-out of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. Reporting in 2017 showed increased political mobilization, advocacy and research around internal displacement, although this issue remained low on the global agenda. Stakeholders also continued to improve cooperation and financing for more joined up responses to meet both the short- and longer-term needs of displaced people.

Furthermore, 2017 reporting demonstrated that work begun in 2016 to entrench principles of gender equality and inclusion in humanitarian action has begun to deliver results. New policies, guidance and tools on gender equality were adopted at the policy level, and stakeholders funded and delivered programmes to empower women, provide essential services for women and girls, and increase women's participation in humanitarian decision-making. Stakeholders put into practice their commitments to make humanitarian action more inclusive, reporting actions to fund and deliver disability-sensitive programming and build their institutional capacities to address the needs of persons with disabilities.

Despite these achievements, reporting revealed that the most vulnerable are still being left behind. Political leadership to provide durable solutions and address root causes is desperately needed, as the high levels of displacement and humanitarian need generated by protracted crises outstrip the resources available to meet them. The need for better data and analysis to inform decision-making and measure impact, in particular sex- and age-disaggregated data, emerged as the foremost challenge across Core Responsibility Three. Human resource, funding and capacity constraints also held stakeholders back from implementing more vulnerability-informed programming.

Stakeholders also highlighted that the humanitarian sector's commitment and capacity to work towards gender equality and empower women and girls remains woefully inadequate. They further identified a persistent lack of leadership and expertise to ensure that humanitarian actors work in ways that empower, include and meet the needs of disabled people, young people and other marginalized groups. The international community must invest in closing these gaps if it is to help accelerate the 2030 Agenda by reaching the furthest behind first.

Work Differently to End Need and Invest in Humanity

Core Responsibilities Four and Five of the Agenda for Humanity called for profound changes in the way stakeholders work together to deliver programming and financing that not only meet immediate needs, but also reduce vulnerability, build resilience and, ultimately, diminish humanitarian needs in the longer term. Two years on, the aspirations set out by these two core responsibilities have become synonymous with the change agenda launched at the World Humanitarian Summit; efforts to operationalize these changes have resulted in substantial reflection, discussion and debate.

The call from the World Humanitarian Summit to strengthen national systems, build local capacities and empower local actors was a cross-cutting theme of reporting across all 24 transformations. International stakeholders remained firmly committed to this change, with important achievements in 2017. Several donor States amended legislation and policy that, for the first time, enabled them to directly fund local non-governmental organizations, and many increased their allocation to country-based and other pooled funding mechanisms. Stakeholders continued to direct resources towards strengthening local and national capacities, and also made efforts to support the participation and representation of local organizations in humanitarian coordination. Nonetheless, commitments to include a more diverse set of actors in humanitarian decision-making have not been realized in a systematic way. Major structural, legal and institutional barriers prevent local actors from directly accessing international humanitarian finance; and humanitarian funding channelled through country-based pooled funds, an important instrument for supporting local action, remains well below the target of 15 per cent.

Stakeholders also made important strategic and operational shifts to better anticipate crises, including by directing more financing towards preparedness, disaster risk reduction and building resilience. In 2017, stakeholders successfully used early warning to launch early action, playing a key part in mitigating the impacts of food insecurity and extreme weather conditions in a number of crises. Stakeholders reported boosting regional and national preparedness capacities, increasing urban resilience and improving data collection and analysis to support risk-informed decision-making. However, anticipatory action remains relatively under-prioritized and under-resourced; stakeholders highlighted that this impeded progress in critical areas, including in data collection and analysis. Significant political and practical efforts are needed to scale up existing initiatives and realize the vision for a more anticipatory approach to humanitarian crises; this will require the engagement of a broad cross-section of partners from Government, the private sector and civil society.

Answering the call of the Agenda for Humanity and following the lead of the UN Secretary-General, stakeholders made important progress in improving cooperation between humanitarian and development actors to reduce risk and vulnerability and build resilience in protracted crises. Institutional reforms to enhance humanitarian-development cooperation were taken forward by Member States and by the UN, including through the creation of the Joint Steering Committee to advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration. Country-specific strategies to operationalize the New Way of Working and support the articulation of collective outcomes were developed in several countries. A core group of Member States are facilitating this operational progress by providing joined up, multi-year, flexible funding. Despite high-level political support and promising achievements in some countries, operationalizing humanitarian-development cooperation and providing the right mix of funding and financing to reduce humanitarian need is still in its early stages. Building on lessons learned and supporting the articulation of collective outcomes in different contexts will require joint analytical frameworks, multi-year stakeholder support and strong leadership.

Finally, stakeholders reported on a number of ongoing initiatives to create cost efficiencies, including piloting harmonized and simplified reporting templates, reducing management costs, and increasing cash-based assistance. Humanitarian actors have made considerable collective progress in publishing data to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) and a number of individual stakeholders have supported efforts to improve data and analysis of humanitarian funding flows. While these efforts are important, even the most radical efficiency gains cannot make up for the huge shortfall between humanitarian needs and the resources available. Mobilizing the political will, partnerships and funds to close the gap remains perhaps the greatest challenge in the years to come.

People navigate a flooded street in Havana, Cuba after Hurricane Irma.

EFE/Rolando Pujol

Achieving the transformation

The changes called for in the Agenda for Humanity are far-reaching, challenging and often confronting. A focus on short-term solutions or outputs will not yield the systemic change needed to decrease vulnerabilities. The fact that so many stakeholders remain engaged and committed to delivering these changes is a testament to how necessary and relevant they are for the millions of people caught up in crises around the world. With the implementation of commitments now in the third year since the World Humanitarian Summit, stakeholders must stay the course and sustain their ambition to reshape the way they work to prepare for, respond to and rebuild following humanitarian crises. The international community must not lose sight of the common ambition and shared responsibility to alleviate suffering, reduce risk and lessen vulnerability. Only sustained collective action can bring the millions of people trapped in humanitarian crises or at risk closer to the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Each of the report's chapters recommend actions to consolidate gains and take forward the Agenda for Humanity and the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit. At a broader level, stakeholders must engage with one another to:

Every year is more difficult,' says Maurice Dom Dom. He tries to provide for his whole family from this small piece of land in Paoua, Central African Republic. Due to funding cuts, Maurice will no longer receive humanitarian support this year.

OCHA/Eve Sabbagh

Violence in and around Wau, South Sudan, has resulted in the repeated displacement of about 80,000 people since early 2016.

OCHA/Guiomar Pau Sole

- **Sustain the momentum for systemic change:** The Agenda for Humanity calls for a fundamental reshaping of how stakeholders work together before, during and after humanitarian crises. As the change process progresses, the humanitarian community must not lose sight of larger ambitions or shy away from confronting structural barriers that limit the ability to deliver better outcomes for people affected by crises. Stakeholders will need to remain involved and work together to overcome obstacles, maintain ambition and tackle difficult questions. Bold leadership, ongoing advocacy and engagement at all levels of humanitarian action will be required to push the implementation of commitments beyond the incremental level to realize real systemic change.

- **Develop solutions for different contexts:** Stakeholders must embrace the different realities of humanitarian action in various contexts. Recognizing that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach, the transformations called for in the Agenda for Humanity must be adapted to different contexts and operational realities, while remaining true to a broader vision for change. Stakeholders should also continue to share lessons learned and best practices from these experiences.

- **Engage a diverse range of stakeholders:** As the implementation of commitments progresses, stakeholders must be wary of losing the diverse voices that enriched the World Humanitarian Summit process. Efforts to define, implement and assess change must include the voices of national and local actors, civil society, women- and youth-led organizations, and other stakeholders. Greater collaboration with academics, research institutions and the private sector can help build evidence for what works, while bringing diverse skills and technologies to bear on humanitarian challenges.

- **Strengthen the measurability of change:** In addition to recording achievements and challenges on PACT, stakeholders must engage one another on key questions for the future, including how to strengthen the measurability of change, determine the impact of achievements, and assess collective progress against the transformations called for by the Agenda for Humanity.