

**United Nations Office  
for the Coordination of  
Humanitarian Affairs  
(OCHA)  
Background Guide**

**Cleveland Council on  
WORLD AFFAIRS**



## United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Background Guide

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The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) was established in 1998 with the purpose of coordinating humanitarian response, policy development, and humanitarian advocacy.<sup>1</sup> In 1991, the UN General Assembly adopted UN resolution 46/182 that called for stronger leadership in response to humanitarian crises.<sup>2</sup> The resolution established the role of Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), an individual who serves as the international leader for people affected by crises and the primary advisor to the UN Secretary-General on all humanitarian issues.<sup>3</sup> The GA also created the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the Consolidated Appeals Process, and the Central Emergency Revolving Fund as mechanisms and tools of the ERC.<sup>4</sup>

In 1992 the Department of Human Affairs was created (DHA).<sup>5</sup> The ERC was established as the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. In 1998, under the Secretary-General's reform program, the DHA was transformed into OCHA.<sup>6</sup> OCHA received additional responsibilities including developing policies for the prevention of humanitarian crises, improving active crisis management, and creating solutions to ensure long-term sustainability.<sup>7</sup> Currently OCHA functions under IASC with the ERC as the chair. With the primary goal of inter-agency decision making, OCHA's members include all humanitarian partners.<sup>8</sup>

OCHA is primarily in charge of four things: alerting and informing organizations in the case of a humanitarian crisis, funding humanitarian organizations, leading the development of

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, "This is OCHA," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, [https://www.unocha.org/ocha?qad\\_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCCQjwwae1BhC\\_ARIsAK4Jfrxx5O-DJlIkqvZ80fdObjfqnnLdDFR73CiKJ-qGjiwb\\_QX1KT-97GugaAqLrEALw\\_wcB](https://www.unocha.org/ocha?qad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCCQjwwae1BhC_ARIsAK4Jfrxx5O-DJlIkqvZ80fdObjfqnnLdDFR73CiKJ-qGjiwb_QX1KT-97GugaAqLrEALw_wcB)

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, "This is OCHA."

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, "This is OCHA."

<sup>4</sup> United Nations, "This is OCHA."

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, "This is OCHA."

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, "This is OCHA."

<sup>7</sup> United Nations, "This is OCHA."

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, "This is OCHA."

new policies, and campaigning for the rights of people affected by humanitarian crises.<sup>9</sup> In the case of crises, OCHA oversees alerting and informing the international community. In addition, OCHA collects and shares data on crises in an attempt to prepare organizations to aid the people affected. OCHA also ensures that humanitarian organizations have the funds necessary to provide aid.<sup>10</sup> Every year, OCHA carries out a Global Humanitarian Overview that collects data as to the needs of people affected by crises.<sup>11</sup> The committee then mobilizes funds and resources necessary to meet those needs. OCHA is also in charge of developing prevention policies.<sup>12</sup> By continuing to develop new strategies to address the challenges caused by humanitarian crises, OCHA ensures that the humanitarian system continues to progress to meet the globe's and civilians' evolving needs. Finally, OCHA campaigns for the voices of affected people. By amplifying civilians' voices and advocating for the highest levels of principled humanitarian action, OCHA ensures that the humanitarian system is accountable to the civilians.<sup>13</sup>

In 2023, OCHA established six of its transformation priorities. This was titled as OCHA's Strategic Plan for 2023-2026.<sup>14</sup> This plan highlights the priorities of OCHA when addressing humanitarian challenges amid growing humanitarian needs. The plan outlines the following as its six priorities: a unified humanitarian approach that provides contextual tangible solutions with a focus on the people and community, systematic and predictable leadership, sustainable solutions to long-term internal displacement, humanitarian responses that are inclusive, fast, and reliable sources of humanitarian funding that impact civilians, and the strategic analysis of risk and trends to adapt to evolving situations and landscapes.<sup>15</sup> With a continued commitment to improving humanitarian aid worldwide, OCHA has worked tirelessly

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<sup>9</sup> United Nations, "We Coordinate," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, [https://www.unocha.org/we-coordinate#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20Disaster%20Assessment%20and%20Coordination%20\(UNDAC\)%20system%20is,requires%20additional%20international%20coordination%20resources](https://www.unocha.org/we-coordinate#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20Disaster%20Assessment%20and%20Coordination%20(UNDAC)%20system%20is,requires%20additional%20international%20coordination%20resources)

<sup>10</sup> United Nations, "We Coordinate."

<sup>11</sup> United Nations, "We Coordinate."

<sup>12</sup> United Nations, "We Coordinate."

<sup>13</sup> United Nations, "We Coordinate."

<sup>14</sup> United Nations, "OCHA's Strategic Plan 2023-2026: Transforming Humanitarian Coordination," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, [https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/ochas-strategic-plan-2023-2026-transforming-humanitarian-coordination#:~:text=OCHA's%20Strategic%20Plan%202023%2D2026%20\(the%20Plan\)%20outlines%20six,and%20promotes%20concrete%20protection%20outcomes](https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/ochas-strategic-plan-2023-2026-transforming-humanitarian-coordination#:~:text=OCHA's%20Strategic%20Plan%202023%2D2026%20(the%20Plan)%20outlines%20six,and%20promotes%20concrete%20protection%20outcomes)

<sup>15</sup> United Nations, "OCHA's Strategic."

to make reformations to current systems while developing new strategies to combat arising challenges.

## I. Emergency Relief for Natural Disasters

### Statement of the Issue:

Natural disasters have wreaked havoc in various areas across the globe for years on end. The occurrence of natural disasters is usually followed with the internal displacement of civilians, humanitarian crises like lack of adequate healthcare, the destruction of infrastructure, and more. In such cases, the role of the OCHA in coordination and communication is essential for efficient and effective responses to crises at hand.

In the case of natural disasters, OCHA oversees the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC).<sup>16</sup> In other words, OCHA essentially provides the basis and strategies under which UNADC carries out its operations. OCHA does the planning and strategy-making, while UNDAC does ground-on work. OCHA's oversight of UNDAC involves several responsibilities including coordination, oversight, and instruction.<sup>17</sup> OCHA oversees the deployment and overall activities of UNDAC.<sup>18</sup> In addition, OCHA is in charge of setting goals, priorities, and guidelines for UNDAC's operations. OCHA ensures that UNDAC operates within existing frameworks and guidelines that have been established.<sup>19</sup>

In recent years, gaps in disaster-relief strategies have been evident. With issues related to coordination, communication, resource-availability, and regional access, disaster relief efforts have faced several setbacks pushing international communities to see the importance of structural improvements in disaster-relief frameworks. As threats of natural disasters grow globally, it becomes imperative for OCHA to provide immediate attention to improving the gaps in disaster-relief strategies.

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<sup>16</sup> United Nations, "We Coordinate."

<sup>17</sup> United Nations, "We Coordinate."

<sup>18</sup> United Nations, "We Coordinate."

<sup>19</sup> United Nations, "We Coordinate."

**History:**

The early 20th century brought about the first few humanitarian aid organizations. While organizations like the Red Cross were established in 1863 and played pivotal roles in early disaster relief efforts, international coordination was significantly lacking.<sup>20</sup> In fact, in many cases, coordination within countries was limited. For example, the 1906 earthquakes in San Francisco wielded very localized humanitarian aid responses, highlighting the importance of coordination and focus on increasing organized international support.<sup>21</sup>

Fortunately, following World War II, the UN was established in 1945.<sup>22</sup> As a result, the following few decades were years of increased international cooperation, communication, and coordination. However, disaster responses still tended to be reactive and lacked centralized coordination. With the UN still developing as an international organization, countries were still trying to figure how to adequately cooperate on global crises.

The years of 1970-1980 saw an extreme increase in catastrophes across the world. More specifically, the 1970 cyclone in Bangladesh highlighted the deficiencies in existing international disaster response strategies. The Bangladesh cyclone left 300,000 people deceased, and several more displaced.<sup>23</sup> As more and more catastrophes blanketed various parts of the world, the international community started to realize the need for a strong international strategy or mechanism for crisis management and more importantly, prevention.<sup>24</sup>

As a result, OCHA was established in 1991 with the goal of improving crisis response and prevention through a centralized international mechanism.<sup>25</sup> OCHA was tasked with coordinating humanitarian aid among various organizations and actors as well as ensuring that crisis responses were efficient and organized. In 1993, UNDAC was also created for specialized attention to natural disaster zones.<sup>26</sup> UNDAC was assigned to operate under OCHA with OCHA

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<sup>20</sup> Heather Rysaback-Smith, "History and Principles of Humanitarian Action," National Library of Medicine, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4910138/>

<sup>21</sup> National Park Service Staff, "1906 Earthquake: Relief Efforts," National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/prsf/learn/historyculture/1906-earthquake-relief-efforts.htm>

<sup>22</sup> Rysaback-Smith, "History and."

<sup>23</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Staff, "Disaster Response - International," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/museum/online/story-of-cdc/disasters/index.html>

<sup>24</sup> CDC Staff, "Disaster Response."

<sup>25</sup> United Nations, "This is OCHA."

<sup>26</sup> United Nations, "This is OCHA."

overseeing UNDAC's operations. UNDAC's responsibilities were to handle ground-on coordination as well as providing rapid assessments of conditions in crisis-affected areas.<sup>27</sup>

Following the creation of both OCHA and UNDAC, the world saw many more natural disasters. In 2004, South Asia suffered the effects of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. This tsunami's effects were vast, causing deaths and destruction across 14 countries with 230,000 deaths.<sup>28</sup> The creation of OCHA and UNDAC paid off, with the crisis-response being notably efficient and effective. While international funding confusion caused a slight setback, it led to significant systematic improvements for future crisis responses.<sup>29</sup>

The 2010 Haiti earthquake highlighted various other shortcomings within OCHA's crisis-response strategy. During the earthquake, the OCHA's mobilization of funds was successful and smooth. However, the challenges occurred during the logistical execution of the strategies. The main challenge occurred with OCHA's inadequate coordination and communication with local authorities and communities.<sup>30</sup> While the international community's response was strong, local authorities lacked resources and coordination to efficiently respond.<sup>31</sup> As a result, the Haiti earthquakes signaled the importance of coordination with local authorities and communities when planning crisis responses as well as the importance of integrating local knowledge in crisis-management responses.<sup>32</sup>

In 2015, Nepal witnessed a disastrous earthquake that once again highlighted setbacks in crisis response protocols. While the UNDAC deployment was efficient and helped provide early critical assessments of the situation, the actual deployment of aid was delayed.<sup>33</sup> With continued

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<sup>27</sup> United Nations, "This is OCHA."

<sup>28</sup> Tom Wright, "UN Failed to Coordinate Tsunami Relief, Red Cross Report Says," New York Times, October 6th, 2005, <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/06/world/asia/un-failed-to-coordinate-tsunami-relief-red-cross-report-says.html#:~:text=GENEVA%20E2%80%94%20Rivalry%20between%20international%20aid,in%20a%20report%20published%20Wednesday>.

<sup>29</sup> Wright, "UN Failed."

<sup>30</sup> Farah Abdessamad, "Haiti is a Cautionary Tale for Any Earthquake Recovery," Dawn, September 13th, 2023, <https://dawnmena.org/haiti-is-a-cautionary-tale-for-any-earthquake-recovery/#:~:text=Six%20months%20after%20the%20earthquake,disenchantment%2C%20inequality%20and%20unabated%20violence>.

<sup>31</sup> Abdessamad, "Haiti is."

<sup>32</sup> Abdessamad, "Haiti is."

<sup>33</sup> Mahshid Abir and Melinda Moore, "Another Nepal Earthquake Makes Disaster Relief Planning Even More Important," RAND, May 13th, 2015, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2015/05/another-nepal-earthquake-makes-disaster-relief-planning.html>

logistical difficulties, aid delivery was slow, once again highlighting the importance of efficient aid delivery and coordination.<sup>34</sup>

Recently, the international community has made significant strides in disaster response. By utilizing technological advancements, social media, and learning from past mistakes, crisis responses have been more effective and efficient. However, there is still much work to be done. Each natural disaster has highlighted areas of improvement that the international community must continue to focus on. By utilizing modern advancements and continuing technological research, the international community can improve crisis responses even more.

### **Analysis:**

When brainstorming areas of improvement in natural disaster response frameworks, it is extremely important to take into consideration failures in history. For example, OCHA and UNDAC still struggle with a lack of resources. With inadequate funding being a continuing problem, OCHA and UNDAC find themselves struggling with a lack of resources when dealing with humanitarian responses. While international countries and funds have always been an immediate source of funding, it is important to consider sustainable, long-term, and reliable sources of funding that ensure adequate access to resources.

Moreover, a lack of effective coordination has caused many issues in the past with disaster-relief efforts. As the OCHA is responsible for coordination for UNDAC's operations, it is imperative for OCHA to develop strategies to ensure successful coordination in relief efforts at times of crisis. As previously stated, inadequate coordination has resulted in many failed and inefficient relief efforts in the past. Without coordination, disaster relief efforts fail due to the possibilities of duplication in efforts and resources, disjointed responses, and more.<sup>35</sup> Without communication, international organizations run into the possibility of overlapping resources and services provided, impeding progress in the affected area.<sup>36</sup> This is where the role of OCHA is vital. With a strong centralized coordination body, like OCHA, coordination and communication across humanitarian organizations becomes easier, providing a conducive environment to

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<sup>34</sup> Abir and Moore, "Another Nepal."

<sup>35</sup> Carlos Martin, Carolyn Kousky, Manann Danaghoe, and Karina French, "Federal Disaster Management is a Confusing Patchwork. Reforming FEMA and Improving Interagency Coordination Can Fix It," Brookings, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/federal-disaster-management-is-a-confusing-patchwork-reforming-fema-and-improving-interagency-coordination-can-fix-it/>

<sup>36</sup> Martin, Kousky, Danaghoe, and French, "Federal Disaster."

efficient and effective relief efforts. Thus, it is imperative for this body to develop adequate centralized frameworks to improve current relief efforts.

Building off responsibilities of coordination, OCHA must also prioritize communication. While the two issues go hand in hand, communication issues must be solved from a different angle. Delays in communication during disaster-relief can cause multiple setbacks. Such setbacks include delays in the delivery of information, confusion due to the receiving of inaccurate or contradictory information, delays in aid delivery due to the lack of communication with local communities, and much more.<sup>37</sup> As a result, it is important to prioritize the efficiency of communication. This can be done through proactive measures such as establishing reliable communication systems. Moreover, increased interactions with local civilians after disaster-relief is also important. Communication post-disaster with local communities can provide important information and feedback for organizations like OCHA to continue adapting frameworks to increase efficiency and effectiveness.<sup>38</sup>

Another issue this committee must tackle is the lack of access to affected areas. During relief efforts, aid organizations tend to face setbacks through lack of access.<sup>39</sup> These include geographical barriers where aid organizations are unable to reach remote areas.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, natural disasters tend to destroy infrastructure used to access these areas. This includes roads, bridges, etc. These issues significantly delay deployment and progress in disaster relief.<sup>41</sup> As a result, OCHA must include proactive and alternative measures in relief frameworks that address issues of access.

History has also repeatedly shown the importance of adaptive solutions that take into consideration local conditions and differences in regions. Without local sensitivity, relief plans struggle to be effective. In fact, taking into account regional differences play a huge part in a relief strategy's success.<sup>42</sup> As a result, it is important for OCHA to prioritize regional adaptability in disaster relief strategies. Moreover, local civilian coordination is imperative for humanitarian

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<sup>37</sup> Martin, Kousky, Danaghoe, and French, "Federal Disaster."

<sup>38</sup> Martin, Kousky, Danaghoe, and French, "Federal Disaster."

<sup>39</sup> Rural Health Information Hub Staff, "Rural Barriers to Emergency Preparedness and Response," Rural Health Information Hub, <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/emergency-preparedness/1/rural-barriers>

<sup>40</sup> Rural Health Information Hub Staff, "Rural Barriers."

<sup>41</sup> Rural Health Information Hub Staff, "Rural Barriers."

<sup>42</sup> Sandra Appleby-Arnold, Noellie Brockdorff, Ivan Jakoljev, and Suncica Zdravkovic, "Applying Cultural Values to Encourage Disaster Preparedness: Lessons From a Low-Hazard Country," Science Direct, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212420918300554>



aid programs and progress to be successful.<sup>43</sup> This calls for organizations to prioritize cultural sensitivity. By increasing cultural awareness and sensitivity training, collaboration with local communities and authorities, and continuing research on local regions, OCHA can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of disaster-relief frameworks.

Finally, it is important for OCHA to continue taking proactive steps to be prepared for disasters. This includes continued research on disaster-affected and disaster-prone areas as well as ongoing monitoring and evaluation of various global regions. In addition, it is important for OCHA to prioritize international cooperation. Natural disasters cause trans-border destruction, stressing the importance of international cooperation and action in times of need. As such, it is imperative for the OCHA to approach the topic of natural disaster-relief from a transnational cooperative perspective.

**Conclusion:**

Natural disasters have and will continue to span our world for the foreseeable future. With threats of global warming on the rise, the topic of natural disasters becomes one of immediate concern. OCHA and UNDAC are tasked with developing efficient and effective crisis responses for ongoing and future natural disasters. With the responsibility of overseeing the operations of UNDAC, OCHA is tasked with developing preventative, proactive, and immediate solutions for disaster-relief.

History has repeatedly shown us gaps in international disaster-relief strategies. From the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami to the 2015 Nepal earthquakes, each disaster has revealed gaps in relief protocols that need to be addressed. Moreover, OCHA must prioritize sustainable solutions. While international organizations have long relied on various methods of funding, they have yet to discover sustainable and reliable sources of funding for resources and disaster-relief operations. New issues, such as a lack of coordination, communication, and local consideration, have caused more setbacks in developing efficient and effective disaster-relief solutions.<sup>44</sup> As a result, it is imperative for OCHA to fill these gaps in an attempt to increase the success of future disaster relief operations. By continuing to conduct research, develop sustainable funding methods, and to increase communication, cooperation, and adaptability, OCHA can slowly fill

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<sup>43</sup> Appleby-Arnold, Brockdorff, Jacokjev, and Zdravkovic, "Applying Cultural."

<sup>44</sup> Martin, Kousky, Danaghoe, and French, "Federal Disaster."

the gaps in international disaster-relief programs, hoping to create lasting efficient and effective solutions.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What lessons can be taken from previous natural disaster responses to improve current and future disaster response coordination and practices?
2. How can OCHA take into account sustainability with delivering aid and developing solutions?
3. Considering the importance of sustainability and adaptability, how can OCHA involve affected communities in identifying and addressing their needs during and after a disaster?

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[https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/ochas-strategic-plan-2023-2026-transforming-humanitarian-coordination#:~:text=OCHA%27s%20Strategic%20Plan%202023%2D2026%20\(the%20Plan\)%20outlines%20six,and%20promotes%20concrete%20protection%20outcomes.](https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/ochas-strategic-plan-2023-2026-transforming-humanitarian-coordination#:~:text=OCHA%27s%20Strategic%20Plan%202023%2D2026%20(the%20Plan)%20outlines%20six,and%20promotes%20concrete%20protection%20outcomes.)

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## II. Emergency Relief for Conflict Zones

### Statement of the Issue:

In recent years, the world has seen exacerbation of various global conflicts. One of the most notable is the conflict in the Gaza Strip. Destruction has increased exponentially in conflict zones calling for emergency relief and rehabilitation services. The majority of the international community's relief efforts have focused on short-term relief, such as immediate food and healthcare services. While those services are important, it is also imperative for OCHA to focus on providing conflict zones with long-term sustainable redevelopment plans.

Political models have repeatedly reinforced the idea that an increase in economic performance and security reduces the impacts and continuation of war.<sup>45</sup> As these models explain, the more economic incentives there are, the less individuals are incentivized to take part in war and terrorism. Lack of participation results in a reduction in war and terrorism and promotion of peacekeeping and ceasefires.<sup>46</sup>

Post-conflict regions tend to face extreme poverty, destruction, and instability. Without redevelopment programs, post-conflict areas have extremely high tendencies to resort back to violence. By introducing programs that rehabilitate economic performance through an increase of jobs, education, etc., post-conflict areas will start to see exponential growth within the areas of peacekeeping as well as economic and social prosperity.<sup>47</sup>

As a result, OCHA is urged to develop adequate programs to focus on regional redevelopment and long-term sustainable growth. By increasing access to education, jobs, long-term healthcare, and more, OCHA ensures the continued growth and greater change of lasting peace in conflict-ridden areas.

### History:

In recent history, the world has witnessed various conflicts; however, for the sake of this topic, the focus will be on the current conflicts in Sudan, Gaza, and Yemen. Sudan has faced

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<sup>45</sup> Macartan Humphreys, "Economics and Violent Conflict," Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, <https://hhi.harvard.edu/publications/economics-and-violent-conflict#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20main%20factors,as%20agents%20for%20conflict%20prevention.>

<sup>46</sup> Humphreys, "Economics and."

<sup>47</sup> Humphreys, "Economics and."

prolonged conflict for the last few decades. After independence from Britain and Egypt in 1956, Sudan faced the prolonged marginalization of minority ethnic groups in the region.<sup>48</sup> Tensions between these groups increased eventually led to a civil war in 1955. The civil war was largely fueled by questions of governance, marginalization, and autonomy. Eventually, in 1972, the civil war ended.<sup>49</sup> However, peace was short lived as Sudan witnessed its second civil war in 1983. As governments tried to centralize power and impose Sharia Law, tensions arose causing a war between northern Sudan and the South.<sup>50</sup> In 2005, a separate territory, called South Sudan was created, ending the war and starting a period of relative peace.<sup>51</sup> However, that peace was at the cost of widespread humanitarian disasters. The war not only caused widespread displacement but had led to extreme famine. In the midst of this humanitarian crisis, the Darfur conflict began.<sup>52</sup> The Darfur conflict began when the Sudanese government supported Arab militia groups against non-Arab rebel groups led to mass killings and violence in the Darfur region. This ongoing conflict has led to mass humanitarian crises along with concerns of ethnic cleansing and genocide.<sup>53</sup> With the Darfur conflict still ongoing, humanitarian crises in Sudan are on the rise. Furthermore, with conflicts in South Sudan ongoing as well as a 2021 coup, political instability and protests are rising, exacerbating the current humanitarian crisis.<sup>54</sup>

In Yemen, conflict has also been growing. Prior to colonization, Yemen had a complex regional division dynamic. Historically, Yemen was divided into North and South Yemen until 1990.<sup>55</sup> In 1990, the regions united.<sup>56</sup> That unification of the North and South led to tensions as economic and political disagreements arose. Such disagreement led to the 1994 Yemen Civil War in which the North emerged victorious, led by President Ali Abdullah Saleh.<sup>57</sup> In 2011, following President Saleh's victory, Yemen started to witness the start of the Arab Spring protests. Eventually, the escalation of these protests caused Saleh to resign, transferring power to

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<sup>48</sup> Center for Preventative Action, "Civil War in Sudan," Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/power-struggle-sudan>

<sup>49</sup> Center for Preventative Action, "Civil War."

<sup>50</sup> Center for Preventative Action, "Civil War."

<sup>51</sup> Center for Preventative Action, "Civil War."

<sup>52</sup> Center for Preventative Action, "Civil War."

<sup>53</sup> Center for Preventative Action, "Civil War."

<sup>54</sup> Center for Preventative Action, "Civil War."

<sup>55</sup> BBC Staff, "Yemen Profile - Timeline," BBC, November 6th, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14704951>

<sup>56</sup> BBC Staff, "Yemen Profile."

<sup>57</sup> BBC Staff, "Yemen Profile."

his deputy, President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi. This transition of power resulted in increased governmental instability including corruption, economic instability, and regional unrest.<sup>58</sup> In 2014, a Shia rebel group from Northern Yemen called the Houthi Movement took control of the government's instability and seized the Yemeni capital.<sup>59</sup> By 2015, the Houthi Movement had forced President Hadi into exile in Saudi Arabia. This exile led to the intervention of a Saudi-led coalition that hoped to reinstall President Hadi's power.<sup>60</sup> In 2015, this Saudi-led coalition, along with several Arab states launched a military campaign against the Houthis. Since 2015, this conflict has been ongoing, turning into a proxy war that has caused widespread destruction and resulted in a humanitarian crisis.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, the conflict in Gaza is one that has caused increasing globally recognition of devastation. Prior to 1948, the Gaza Strip was part of the British Mandate of Palestine.<sup>62</sup> This region has experienced long-standing tensions between the Jewish and Arab communities. In 1948, Israel was declared as a separate state. This declaration led to the start of the Israel-Arab War, a war that led to the massive displacement of Palestinians.<sup>63</sup> From 1948 to 1967, the Gaza Strip was administered by Egypt, limiting the autonomy of the local Palestinian population. As tensions with Israel continued, the Gaza Strip witnessed the Six-Day War. The culmination of the Six-Day war resulted in Israel occupying the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and East Jerusalem.<sup>64</sup> This occupation reshaped and accelerated Israeli military control and settlement operations. In 2000 to 2005, the Second Intifada witnessed intensified violence between Israelis and Palestinians.<sup>65</sup> In 2006, an Islamist political and militant group known as Hamas won Palestinian elections and administration of the Gaza Strip.<sup>66</sup> In 2008, violence between Hamas and Israel escalated leading to increased Israeli airstrikes and ground operations in Gaza. This surge in violence led to increased rates of civilian casualties in Gaza. Since then, violence, tensions, and Israeli military attacks have continued in the Gaza strip, leading to unimaginable destruction,

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<sup>58</sup> BBC Staff, "Yemen Profile."

<sup>59</sup> Center for Preventative Action, "War in Yemen," Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/war-yemen>

<sup>60</sup> Center for Preventative Action, "War in."

<sup>61</sup> Center for Preventative Action, "War in."

<sup>62</sup> Center for Preventative Action, "Israel-Palestinian Conflict," Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/israeli-palestinian-conflict>

<sup>63</sup> Center for Preventative Action, "Israel-Palestinian."

<sup>64</sup> Center for Preventative Action, "Israel-Palestinian."

<sup>65</sup> Center for Preventative Action, "Israel-Palestinian."

<sup>66</sup> Center for Preventative Action, "Israel-Palestinian."

death, and violence.<sup>67</sup> Gaza has been amid a humanitarian crisis for years, with the situation only worsening by the day. Since 2007, Israel has imposed a blockade in Gaza that limits, and sometimes entirely prevents, civilians from leaving as well as the delivery of food, water, and aid to the region.<sup>68</sup> This has significantly exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza strip with issues of food and medical shortages increasing exponentially.

In 2024, humanitarian crises are spanning our world from Sudan, to Yemen, to Gaza. Famine and food insecurity has caused severe health issues, increasing mortality rates in these conflict-ridden areas.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, these regions lack access to healthcare, exacerbating issues such as malnutrition.<sup>70</sup> With increased rates of displacement as well as significant infrastructure damage, these conflict-ridden regions are in immediate need of attention and action. While OCHA must focus on providing emergency relief and immediate solutions to these areas, it is also important for the solutions to be sustainable and viable in the long-term. OCHA must utilize international cooperation and resources to brainstorm viable, effective, and efficient solutions to the ongoing humanitarian crises spanning our world.

### **Analysis:**

While much action has been taken by the international community and organizations to provide humanitarian aid in conflict-ridden regions, there is still much more that needs to be done. By understanding the success and failures of previous solutions and frameworks, the OCHA can brainstorm effective future solutions.

The humanitarian crises in these regions can be broken down into four main areas: displacement, famine and food insecurity, human rights abuses, and lack of access to healthcare and education.<sup>71</sup> All four of these areas are intertwined, each affecting the others. As human rights abuses increase, so do displacement rates, along with a decrease in access to healthcare and education and an increase in famine and food insecurity. While international communities strive to provide aid to these regions, they face many issues in providing adequate support.

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<sup>67</sup> Center for Preventative Action, "Israel-Palestinian."

<sup>68</sup> Center for Preventative Action, "Israel-Palestinian."

<sup>69</sup> World Relief Staff, "5 Current Humanitarian Crises We Can't Ignore," World Relief, <https://worldrelief.org/blog-current-humanitarian-crises/>

<sup>70</sup> World Relief Staff, "5 Current."

<sup>71</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council Staff, "The World's Most Neglected Displacement Crises," Norwegian Refugee Council, <https://www.nrc.no/feature/2024/the-worlds-most-neglected-displacement-crises-2023/>



One of the biggest challenges faced by the international community when providing humanitarian aid to affected regions is access. In Sudan, for example, malnutrition is of large concern. With over 4 million malnourished children, Sudan needs immediate help. However, the issue lies in accessing the communities facing malnutrition. Humanitarian aid organizations are unable to access communities of malnourished children due to destruction, instability, and fears over safety of personnel.<sup>72</sup> While these aid organizations have plans to provide immediate aid and have the necessary resources, they are unable to reach the affected communities. As such, it is imperative for OCHA to develop strategies to increase access to affected regions.

Moreover, since Israel's offensive in Rafah, international aid operations have all failed in Gaza. Once again, a large issue remains a lack of access.<sup>73</sup> Without access to the affected communities, aid cannot be provided. In addition, the population in Gaza, especially children, are suspected to have faced acute psychological trauma.<sup>74</sup> In addition, resources to provide mental health care and support are extremely scarce, calling for solutions to increase resource availability and services across the board.<sup>75</sup>

One of the main areas OCHA must focus on is increasing the sustainability of humanitarian aid solutions. While immediate action is important, it is equally imperative for solutions to be viable in the long-term. Political models have repeatedly shown that an increase in economic progress and decrease in inequality leads to an increase in peace and political stability in regions.<sup>76</sup> As a result, it is important for international organizations like OCHA to develop solutions to improve long-term economic stability and equality. The committee must approach solutions to healthcare access and food security with a long-term, sustainable mindset. In other words, how can we turn sanitation systems, healthcare programs, and food security solutions into long-term services?

The UN currently implements a structure called the Cluster System. Within this framework, the UN groups UN and non-UN humanitarian aid organizations into sectors, organized by the humanitarian action of focus such as water, health, shelter, education, and

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<sup>72</sup> Geoff Bennett, "UNICEF Chief on the Hunger Crisis Afflicting Millions of Children in Sudan and Gaza," PBS News, June 25th, 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/unicef-chief-on-the-hunger-crisis-afflicting-millions-of-children-in-sudan-and-gaza>

<sup>73</sup> Bennett, "UNICEF Chief."

<sup>74</sup> Bennett, "UNICEF Chief."

<sup>75</sup> Bennett, "UNICEF Chief."

<sup>76</sup> Humphreys, "Economics and."

logistics.<sup>77</sup> These sectors are given clear goals and responsibilities that must be carried out. The sectors are temporary fillers in the conflict-area. This means that they are simply there to assist the government and increase their capacity to respond to humanitarian crises.<sup>78</sup> The sectors are designed to gradually hand over responsibilities to the national and local governments.<sup>79</sup> While the cluster system has been effective in different situations, it is not viable in regions with high levels of ongoing conflict, such as Gaza. With intense conflict ongoing in Gaza, instilling a rehabilitation or rebuilding program can be premature. However, cluster programs can be extremely effective in regions like Sudan and Yemen. While conflict is still ongoing in both regions, Sudan and Yemen are in positions where rebuilding efforts can support peacemaking as well. The Cluster System can be utilized in regions like Yemen and Sudan to provide support to displaced populations. This includes taking upon responsibilities such as food distribution, health services, access to education, and more. While the Cluster System can be extremely effective, lack of access to a region impedes its effectiveness. With ongoing blockades in Yemen, conflict volatility and regional blockades in Sudan, OCHA must develop strategies to increase access in conflict-ridden areas.

Building upon the topic of sustainable growth, economic redevelopment and reconstruction is a priority in rebuilding a country's socio-economic system. Reconstruction even within conflict zones is extremely effective as economic progression has a positive correlation to an increase in maintaining peace.<sup>80</sup> Economic reconstruction includes both the increase of jobs as well as the implementation of educational facilities. Investing in sustainable economic development through an increase in jobs and educational opportunities can prove to be helpful for gradual post-conflict reconstruction as well as peacekeeping. However, to instill reformation programs, funding is needed. Debates over appropriate funding methods have continued for decades. While foreign countries' financial support has always helped redevelopment, the committee must be wary of fostering financial dependency that has historically proven to destabilize many developing nations. Moreover, while international aid has proved to do

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<sup>77</sup> UNHCR Staff, "Cluster Approach," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, November 20th, 2023, <https://emergency.unhcr.org/coordination-and-communication/cluster-system/cluster-approach>

<sup>78</sup> UNHCR Staff, "Cluster."

<sup>79</sup> UNHCR Staff, "Cluster."

<sup>80</sup> Humphreys, "Economics and."

wonders in conflict-affected areas, research has shown that foreign investment can be more beneficial to sustainable economic reconstruction rather than emergency relief.

Finally, it is once again important for OCHA to understand the importance of sustainable long-term redevelopment. While organizations tend to focus on emergency relief in a short-term solution angle, it is also important to evaluate emergency relief from the sustainable development angle. While there are efforts to integrate recovery and resilience-building, these efforts are often overshadowed by the need for emergency assistance. As a result, OCHA must be urged to focus on providing *both* emergency immediate relief services and developing resilience-building strategies through long-term development goals for conflict-affected regions.

### **Conclusion:**

With the escalation of numerous conflicts across the world, it has become imperative for the international community to take action. While OCHA must focus on providing immediate emergency relief services, it must also focus on developing long-term sustainable redevelopment plans. The fragility of sustainable socio-economic development lies in finding the balance between short-term emergency responses and long-term sustainable solutions. It is also important to address the dependency between peacekeeping and socioeconomic development. While economic progression promotes peacekeeping, recurring conflict is disastrous to sustainable socioeconomic growth.<sup>81</sup> The conflicts mentioned must be approached from a sensitive and fragile humanitarian perspective.

Moreover, OCHA must understand the versatility between each regional conflict. As mentioned above, the conflict in the Gaza Strip is extremely different from the conflict in Yemen or Sudan. As such, OCHA must be ready to create adaptive, tailored solutions that will be effective in each region. This increases the importance of regional communication and cooperation for the success of aid operations.

International cooperation is also of utmost importance. Without the support of international communities, aid organizations will struggle with resources and funding shortages. Humanitarian conflicts affect the whole world, emphasizing the importance of global cooperation.

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<sup>81</sup> Humphreys, "Economics and."

While efforts have been made in the past to improve the humanitarian crises in the aforementioned regions, more has to be done. With families being displaced, millions of children facing starvation, and uncountable deaths, the humanitarian crises that span our world must be addressed immediately. To start, access to affected regions must be improved and economic inequality must be reduced. As humanitarian crises cease to exist, peacebuilding is strengthened. As a result, it is imperative for OCHA to develop long-term, sustainable redevelopment strategies to provide efficient and effective emergency relief to conflict zones with an effort to end to violence across the world.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What strategies can OCHA develop to improve regional access to help in the delivery of humanitarian aid?
2. Considering the fact that cluster programs cannot be implemented in areas like Gaza, what alternative can OCHA implement in these conflict-ridden areas to improve the growing humanitarian crisis?
3. What strategies can be used to build local capacities and resilience in conflict zones to reduce dependency on international aid?

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