

## Action For Humanity Syria Analysis of International Development White Paper

### International development in a contested world: ending extreme poverty and tackling climate change

It is positive that the UK has reaffirmed its commitment to poverty reduction, for its actions to be rooted in humanitarian principles and to support sustainable solutions in protracted crises. In light of previous recent strategies, the acknowledgment of conflict and fragility as significant barriers to global progress, including the SDGs, is particularly welcomed, as is the acknowledgement that 80% of the escalating humanitarian need comes from conflict situations. We welcome the commitment to allocate 50% of bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Least Developed Countries (LDCs). However, we suggest that a more explicit focus on Fragile and Conflict-Affected Areas (FCAs) would be more beneficial, given the acute needs in these regions. The humanitarian commitments to address disaster risk financing are a positive inclusion, but details on practical application are limited and will need to be expanded upon, particularly in protracted crises, where most humanitarian assistance is allocated (Syria is one of the top 5 biggest protracted emergencies).

The allocation of up to 15% of humanitarian provision for resilience-building alongside relief efforts is commendable, reflecting an understanding of long-term solutions to mitigate future disasters. It is also great to see commitments to supporting countries to achieve self-reliance. However, in the case of Syria, it will be critical that the UK uses its role as a convenor to mobilise other states to depoliticise the conversation surrounding early recovery and push for a clear and internationally accepted definition that distinguishes it from non-humanitarian development and reconstruction efforts. Without this, many of its other aims such as enabling access to education for children in crisis, water, healthcare, and livelihoods will remain out of reach. It is also great to see the UK has committed to ensure that sanctions do not impede legitimate humanitarian action. For this to be effective it is critical that the UK exemption aligns fully with the spirit of UNSC resolution 2664 to avoid de-risking, overcompliance and ensure its full impact is felt.

The commendable commitments to inclusivity, longer-term thinking, and the acceptance of risk and failure in peacebuilding indicate a positive direction. The acknowledgment of the pivotal role of women peacebuilders is also very welcomed, emphasising the importance of diverse perspectives in humanitarian response and conflict resolution. However, the absence of a commitment to embed and integrate peacebuilding into climate and humanitarian action represents a considerable missed opportunity for signalling substantive change.

Finally, the White Paper asserts a commitment to upholding international humanitarian law and a focus on atrocity prevention. However, a critical analysis reveals a discrepancy in its application in the context of Syria, and more recently in Gaza. Despite the stated commitments, there are instances where the UK's actions or lack of robust defence of humanitarian principles may raise questions about the consistency of its adherence to international humanitarian law. This calls for a closer examination of the practical implementation of these commitments in specific regions, such as Syria, to ensure alignment with the articulated principles in the White Paper.