

# chapter 4

## location and timing

where, when and for how long

Syria was the single largest recipient of international humanitarian assistance for the fourth year running in 2015, receiving US\$2.1 billion. Many of the same countries feature in the group of 10 largest recipients year on year, but in 2015 there were some significant changes: Yemen and Nepal made first-time appearances; while long-featuring Sudan and Afghanistan were notably absent.

Humanitarian funding was concentrated on a few large emergencies in 2016. The five emergencies receiving the most international humanitarian assistance accounted for more than half (54%) of all crisis-specific funding, according to data from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Financial Tracking Service (FTS). While this concentration was roughly the same in 2014, in 2012 less than a third of funding went to the five largest recipients.

Government donors in Europe and North and Central America provided the majority of funding to four of the five largest recipients of international humanitarian assistance in 2016. The exception was Yemen, where donors in the Middle East region provided 50% of total funding, consistent with previous patterns of donor geographic focus.

Crises continue or reoccur in the same high-risk contexts, leading to repeated calls for international humanitarian assistance. A review of appeals data reveals that 13 countries have published UN-coordinated appeals in at least eight of the last ten years; six of these have had UN-coordinated appeals every year since 2007.

International funding in response to these crises – both protracted and recurrent – is also often provided over extended periods, though typically in successive annual grants. In 2015, the vast majority (88%) of official humanitarian assistance went to long- and medium-term recipients. But while there are clear commitments for more multi-year humanitarian planning and funding, over three-quarters of UN-coordinated appeals were single- rather than multi-year in 2016. And there is not yet a means of counting multi-annual humanitarian funding from donors, nor evidence suggesting a major shift in this direction.

Early funding to anticipate crises and manage risk is also critical. Analysis of early financing in response to the impacts of the El Niño weather phenomenon in Ethiopia and Kenya highlights good practice, as well as lessons to be learned for future crises.

## The largest recipients of international humanitarian assistance

International humanitarian assistance went to 145 countries in 2015 (the most recent year for which Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) data on where humanitarian assistance goes is available). Consistent with the trend over the past three years, the 10 largest recipients of international humanitarian assistance accounted for almost 60% of total funding allocated to countries in 2015. Six of those countries were in the Middle East region (Syria, Yemen, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon); three in sub-Saharan Africa (South Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia); and one in the South and Central Asia region (Nepal).

For the fourth year running, in 2015 Syria was the single largest recipient of international humanitarian assistance. According to analysis of OECD DAC, UN OCHA FTS and Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) data, US\$2.1 billion – 12.5% of total country-allocated international humanitarian assistance – went to Syria, an increase of 17% on the amount it received in 2014.

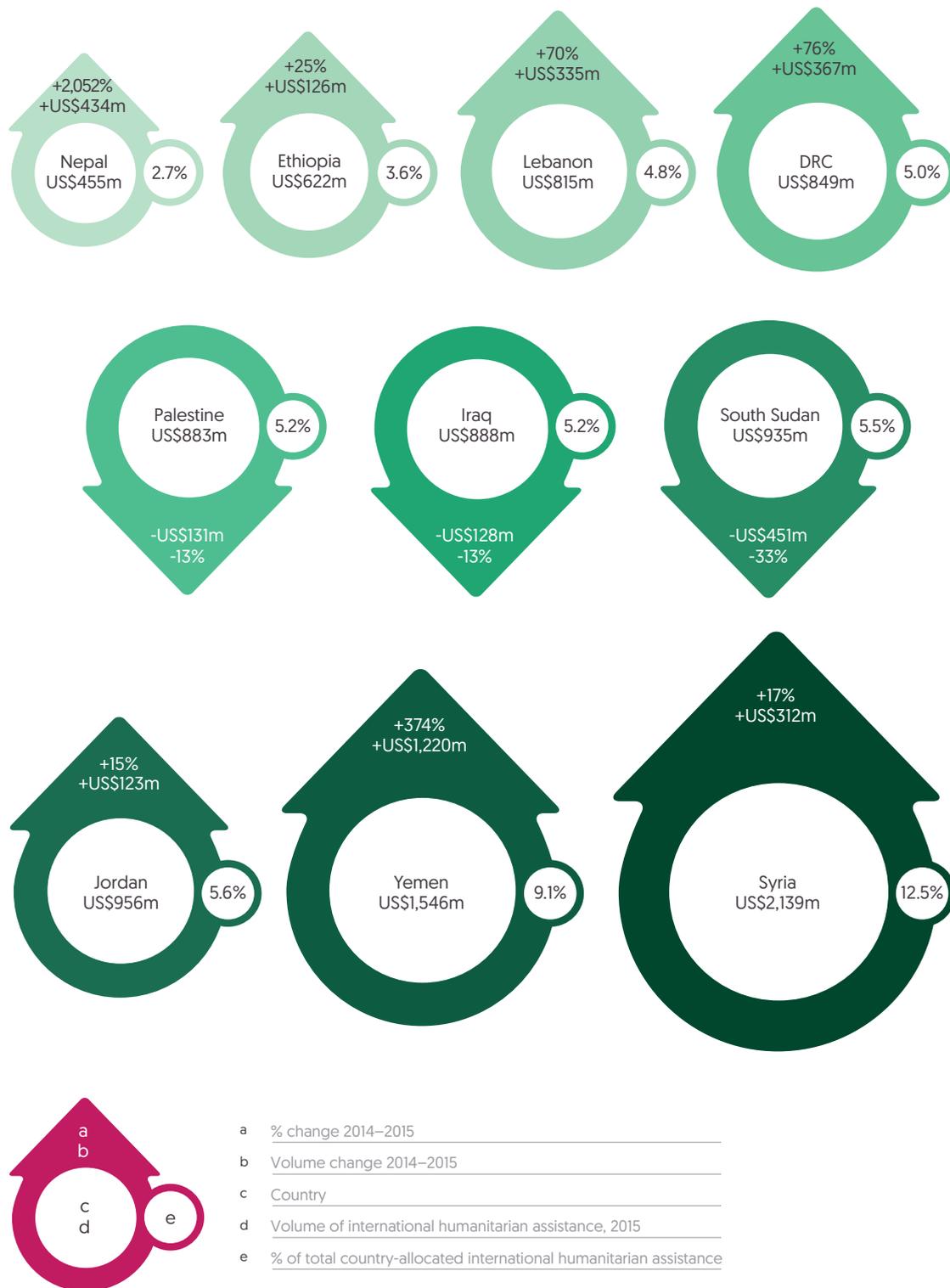
While many countries have appeared in the group of largest humanitarian recipients repeatedly over a period of years, 2015 did see some notable changes. Countries to appear for the first time included Yemen and Nepal; and countries to drop from the list were Sudan<sup>1</sup> (falling to 11th place), Afghanistan (down to 13th place), and the Philippines (17th place). This is the first time that Afghanistan has been absent from the group of 10 largest recipients since 1999 and the first time in 20 years, since 1995, that Sudan has not appeared. Despite severe and continued humanitarian need,<sup>2</sup> funding for both countries decreased between 2014 and 2015 – by 15% in the case of Afghanistan and 10% for Sudan.

In the group of 10 largest recipients (see Figure 4.1), Nepal experienced the biggest increase in international humanitarian funding, largely in response to the 2015 earthquake, with contributions rising from US\$21 million in 2014 to US\$455 million in 2015 – a 22-fold increase. Funding for Yemen, affected by a major escalation of violent conflict, displacement and food insecurity, also experienced a sharp increase – from US\$326 million in 2014 to US\$1.5 billion in 2015, an increase of 374%.

Not surprisingly, there is little overlap between the largest recipients of international humanitarian funding in 2015 and the EC Department of Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO)'s Forgotten Crisis Assessment (FCA) index – a widely referenced tool for identifying and responding to 'neglected' emergencies. Of the 13 countries prioritised by the FCA index for 2015, only one (Yemen) was among the largest recipients of country-allocated international humanitarian assistance that year. Others were considerably lower on the list. Algeria, for example, highlighted by the FCA index because of the long-running Sahrawi refugee crisis, was the 49th largest recipient of international humanitarian assistance in 2015; and Colombia, affected by conflict and widespread internal displacement, was 38th on the list of humanitarian recipient countries.

**Figure 4.1**

10 largest recipients of international humanitarian assistance, 2015



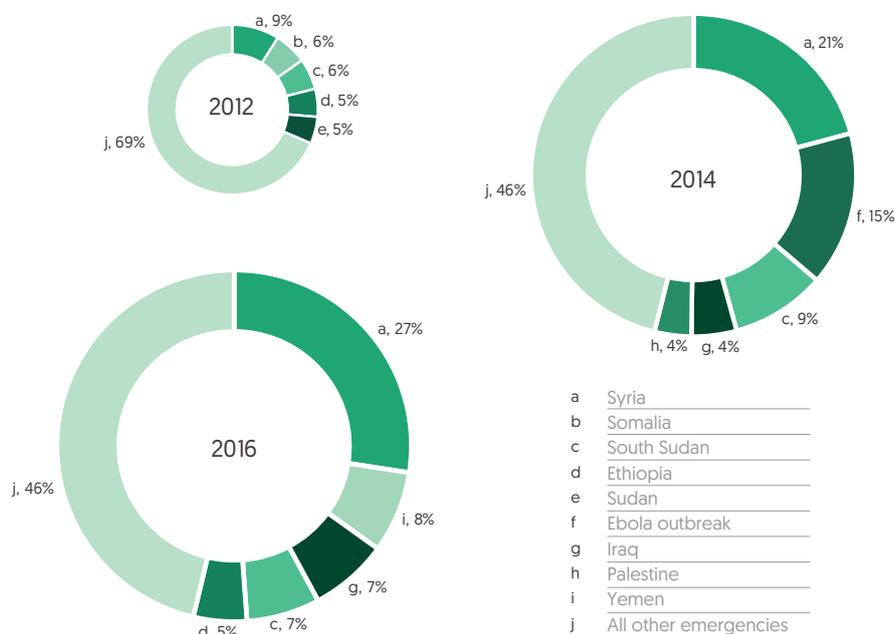
Source: Development Initiatives based on Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC), UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Financial Tracking Service (FTS) and UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) data.

Notes: DRC: Democratic Republic of the Congo. Data is in constant 2015 prices. Graphics scaled by volumes of international humanitarian assistance.

## Concentration of funding by crisis

**Figure 4.2**

Five emergencies receiving the most international humanitarian assistance reported to UN OCHA FTS, 2012, 2014 and 2016



Source: Development Initiatives based on UN OCHA FTS data.

Notes: Circles scaled by volume of international humanitarian assistance reported. Totals are shown by crisis rather than country and, in the cases of Syria, Yemen and South Sudan, funding is for the regional crises.

A small number of large crises receive the majority of international humanitarian funding [see Figure 4.2]. In 2016, according to information reported to OCHA's FTS, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, South Sudan and Ethiopia accounted for more than half [54%] of all crisis-specific humanitarian funding. These were all severe crises with some of the largest populations in need [see Chapter 1].

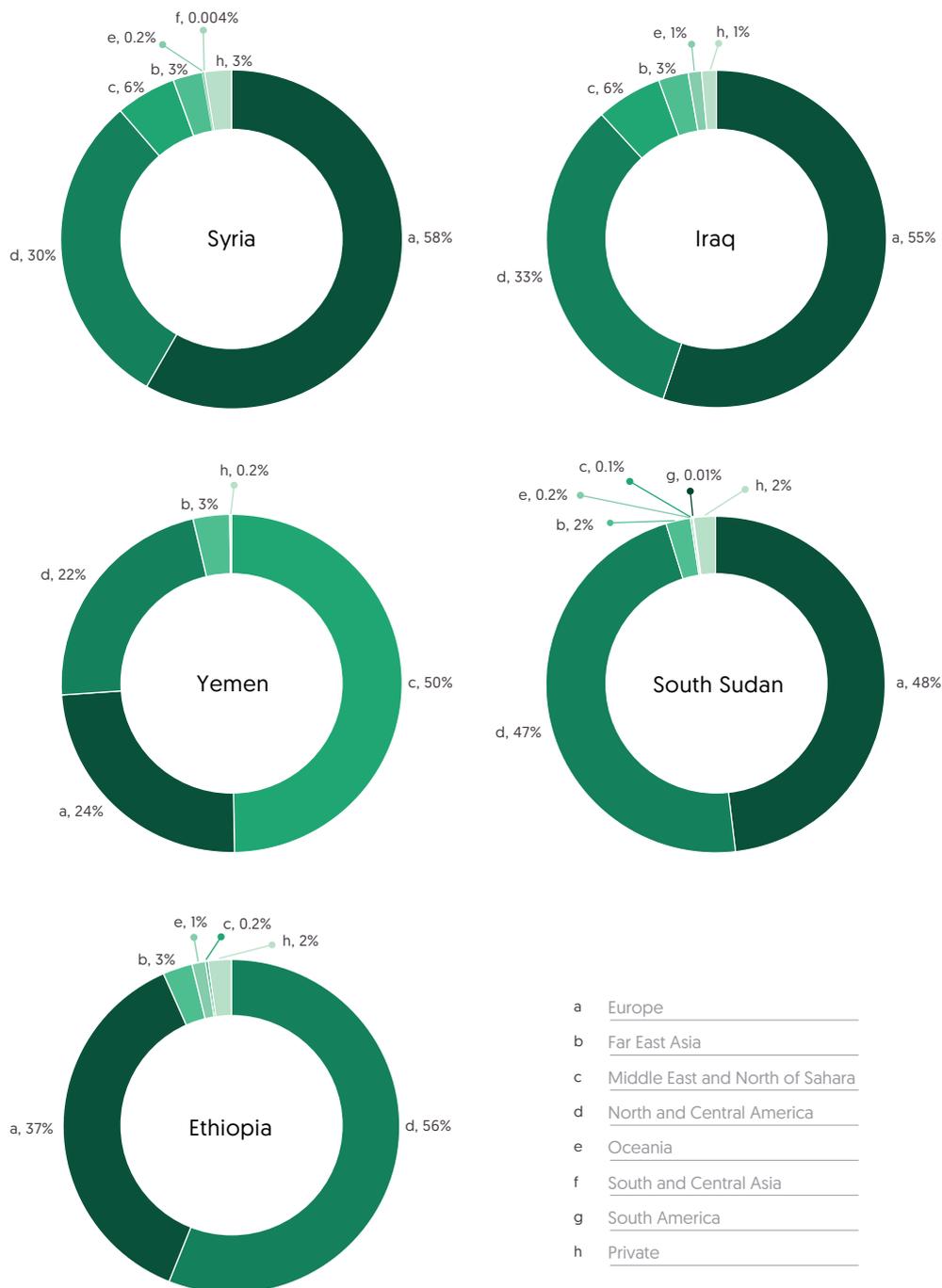
The level of concentration was much lower five years ago. In 2012, the five largest recipient emergencies accounted for less than a third of crisis-specific international humanitarian assistance. Since 2013, while some of the countries in the group of the largest five have changed, the overall concentration of funding has remained roughly the same. And it is unlikely to reduce in the near future given the protracted and complex nature of today's largest emergencies.

## Donor preferences

Analysis of international humanitarian assistance as reported to the FTS reveals the preferences of donors from different regions. In four out of the five largest recipient crises – Syria, Iraq, South Sudan and Ethiopia – donors in Europe and North and Central America [primarily the United States and Canada] provided most funding in 2016 [see Figure 4.3]. Yemen was the exception, where government donors in the Middle East and North of Sahara region provided 50% [US\$805 million] of the total. Most of this [US\$762 million] came from governments of the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Overall, private donors provided just over 2% of funding reported to the FTS for the largest five recipients in 2016 combined, and private funding was less than 1% of total international humanitarian assistance for Yemen.

**Figure 4.3**

Funding by donor region/private donors to the five largest recipients of international humanitarian assistance, 2016



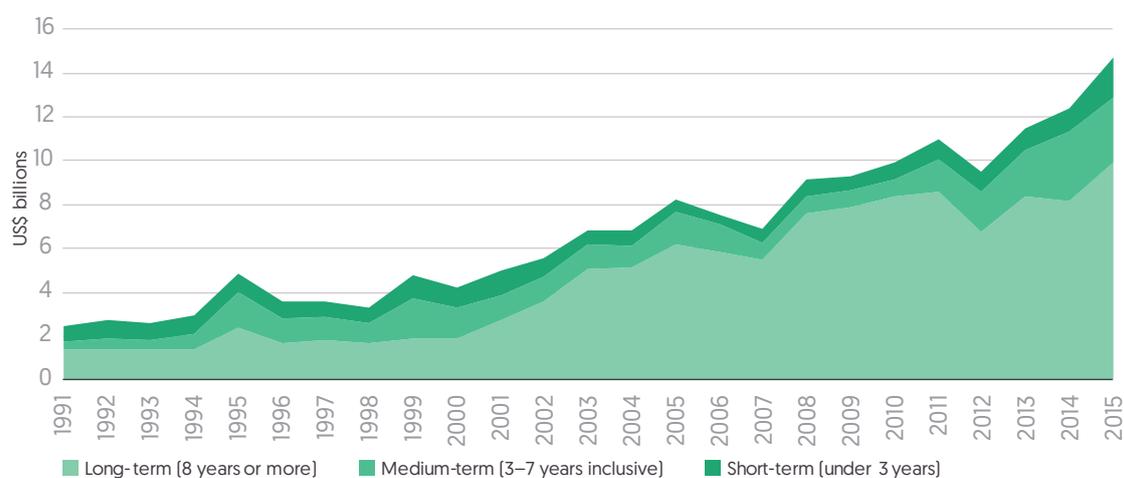
Source: Development Initiatives based on UN OCHA FTS data.

Notes: The five largest recipients for 2016 are based on funding reported to UN OCHA FTS only. Private figures are based on FTS data, not on Development Initiatives' dataset for private contributions. Unlike in Figure 4.2, which shows funding by crisis, this analysis is organised by recipient country.

## Long- and medium-term international humanitarian assistance

**Figure 4.4**

Long-, medium- and short-term recipients of official humanitarian assistance, 1991–2015



Source: Development Initiatives based on OECD DAC and UN CERF data.

Notes: Long-, medium- or short-term classification is determined by the length of time the country has received an above-average annual share of its official development assistance (ODA) in the form of humanitarian assistance. Calculations are based on shares of country-allocated humanitarian assistance. Data is in constant 2015 prices.

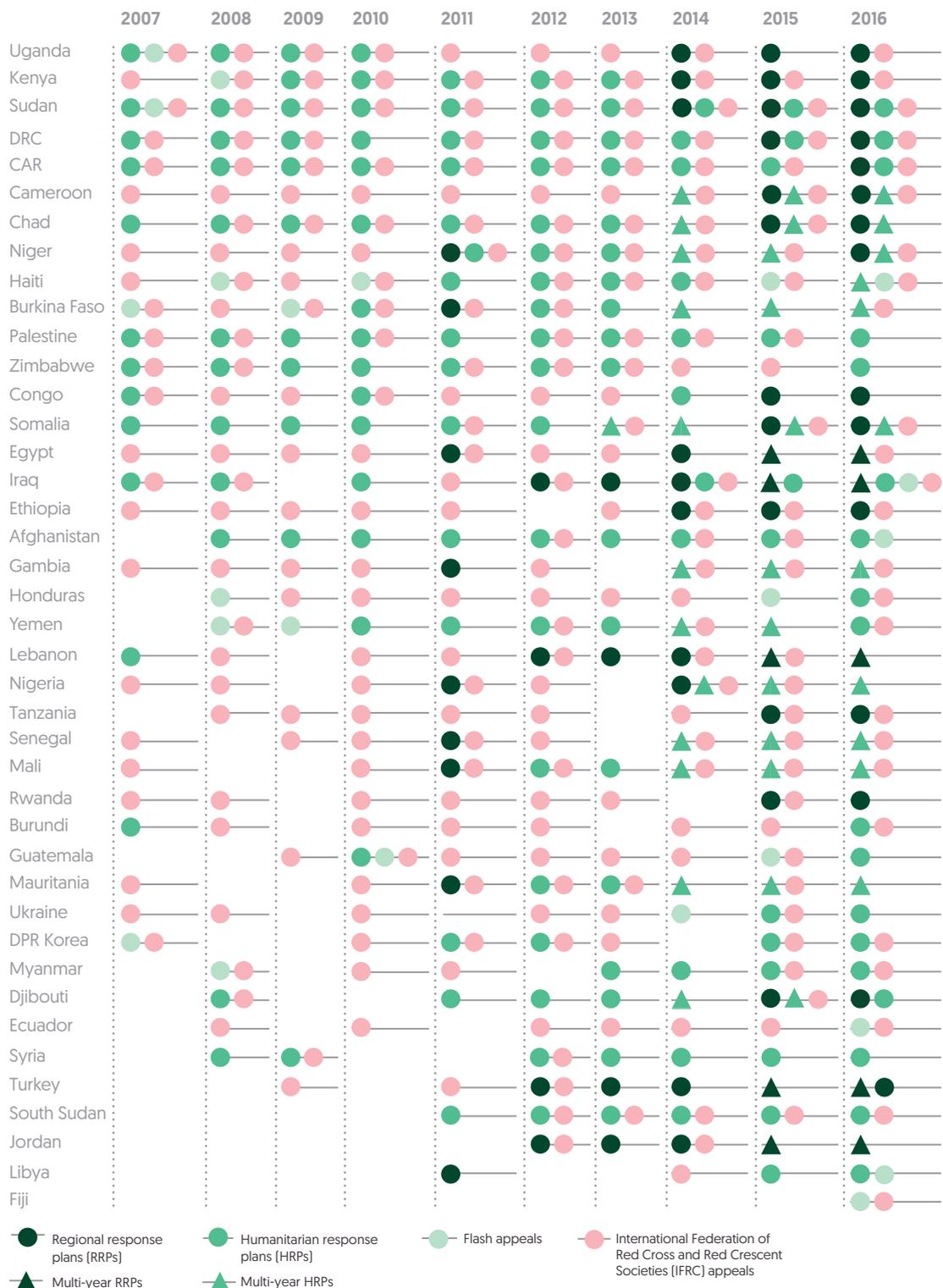
Most countries with humanitarian needs experience multiple crisis types (see Chapter 1), often protracted or recurrent in nature, to which effective responses are rarely quick fixes. In 2015, nearly 88% of official humanitarian assistance went to long- and medium-term recipients combined, continuing a consistent trend (see Figure 4.4). Over two-thirds (67%) went to long-term recipients: those who have received an above average share of their official development assistance (ODA) in the form of humanitarian assistance annually for eight years or more. A further 20% went to medium-term recipients: those who have met the same criteria for between three and seven years.

These long-term recipient countries often receive the most. Of the 20 largest recipients of international humanitarian assistance in 2015, 18 are either long- or medium-term recipients. There is also some correlation between low government spending and sustained high levels of international humanitarian assistance. Eight of the ten developing countries for which data is available with the lowest government expenditures per capita<sup>3</sup> are also either long- or medium-term recipients of humanitarian assistance. This reinforces what we know about the links between domestic coping capacity and humanitarian need (see Chapter 1).

Despite clear evidence of protracted or recurrent humanitarian needs, much of the funding provided to long- and medium-term recipient countries still comes in the form of successive annual grants. Multi-year planning and funding have the potential to support longer-term planning and action alongside initiatives to meet immediate needs, though there is little evidence yet of this happening at scale (see following section). In addition, other resources beyond humanitarian assistance can be deployed more predictably and effectively to contribute to 'shrinking'<sup>4</sup> humanitarian needs over time and working towards collective outcomes<sup>5</sup> that address the long-term causes and consequences of crisis (see also Chapter 2).

# Multi-year planning and funding

**Figure 4.5**  
Recurrence of humanitarian appeals since 2007



Source: Development Initiatives based on UN OCHA, UN OCHA FTS, UN High Commissioner for Refugees and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) data.  
 Notes: CAR: Central African Republic; DPR Korea: Democratic People's Republic of Korea; DRC: Democratic Republic of the Congo. Countries with an HRP, a flash appeal or captured within an RRP in 2016 are shown in the chart. Where a country breakdown was not available for historic regional appeals, information is not captured within this analysis. IFRC data used in this chart comprises all appeals, and differs from Figure 1.5 and Figure 2.4, which include only emergency appeals. Countries that have multiple appeals of the same type in a single year are not marked up.

Multi-year planning can enable longer-term approaches and provide opportunities for links between humanitarian, development and stabilisation initiatives.<sup>6</sup> However, most UN-coordinated humanitarian response plans and regional refugee response plans are for a single year only. This is despite appeals for international humanitarian assistance often being launched repeatedly in the same countries year after year and sometimes simultaneously within years (see Figure 4.5).

A review of countries with UN-coordinated appeals in 2016 reveals that thirteen countries published UN-coordinated appeals in at least eight of the last ten years; six of these have had UN-coordinated appeals every year since 2007. Since 2000, Sudan has had 22 UN-coordinated appeals; and, since 2008, a further 10 appeals were initiated by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Few UN-coordinated appeals are multi-year. The first multi-year UN-coordinated appeal was launched in Kenya for 2011 to 2013.<sup>7</sup> By 2014, there were 13 multi-year plans in place – nearly half of all UN-coordinated appeals that year. As the overall number of appeals increased in 2015 and 2016, both years saw reductions in the number and proportion of multi-year appeals, down to just five in 2016 (Haiti, Libya, Sahel, Somalia and the Syria regional appeal) – around a quarter of total appeals that year.<sup>8</sup>

Multi-year planning requires sustained and predictable support from donors. Some donors already have multi-year instruments in place and in certain cases this has resulted in longer-term commitments. At the Supporting Syria and the Region conference<sup>9</sup> in early 2016, for example, significant levels of multi-year funding were pledged for the five-year period 2016 to 2020. By January 2017, of the total US\$12 billion of grants pledged, US\$2.8 billion had been contributed for the period 2017–2020.<sup>10</sup>

Public fundraising appeals conducted by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)<sup>11</sup> are consistently multi-year, with projects lasting between two to three years. Indicative allocations are agreed at the outset and confirmed during the first year, allowing member agencies to plan a multi-year response from the beginning. DEC organisations cited benefits from this approach, including being able to retain assets and expertise, reduce bureaucracy, build better partnerships and strengthen local capacities; operate flexibly to respond to changing needs; and smooth the transition from emergency to recovery programming.<sup>12</sup>

Beyond specific examples, it is hard to determine the scale of multi-annual funding at the global level. The Grand Bargain includes commitments to increase multi-year planning and funding instruments.<sup>13</sup> However, despite evidence of initiatives by donors to enable more multi-year financing in varying degrees, no major collective shift in funding is yet apparent. Measuring change is difficult given that financial tracking platforms are largely limited to single-year reporting, though changes to FTS may in the future make tracking of multi-year commitments possible.<sup>14</sup> This will be an important step forward – allowing for robust monitoring of commitments, and contributing to an evidence base on multi-year planning and funding as enabling factors for a more appropriate, efficient and effective response.

## Early financing

Disasters triggered by weather patterns are often predictable. In such situations, the case for early financing to support early action is well known, particularly since the fatally late response to the 2011 drought in the Horn of Africa.<sup>15</sup> Evidence also shows that early financing is more cost efficient.<sup>16</sup> One model, based on a number of African countries, estimated that the cost of the response four months after a failed harvest averaged US\$49 per household, compared with US\$1,294 after six months.<sup>17</sup>

Swift mobilisation of humanitarian grants is only part of the solution. As Figure 2.10 shows, other mechanisms such as risk financing, domestic safety nets and adaptable development funding are also key. A number of mechanisms are in place in several El Niño-affected countries including social protection schemes, and household and regional insurance instruments. However, these were not in evidence or at scale everywhere and, despite such initiatives, national and international responses still fell short.

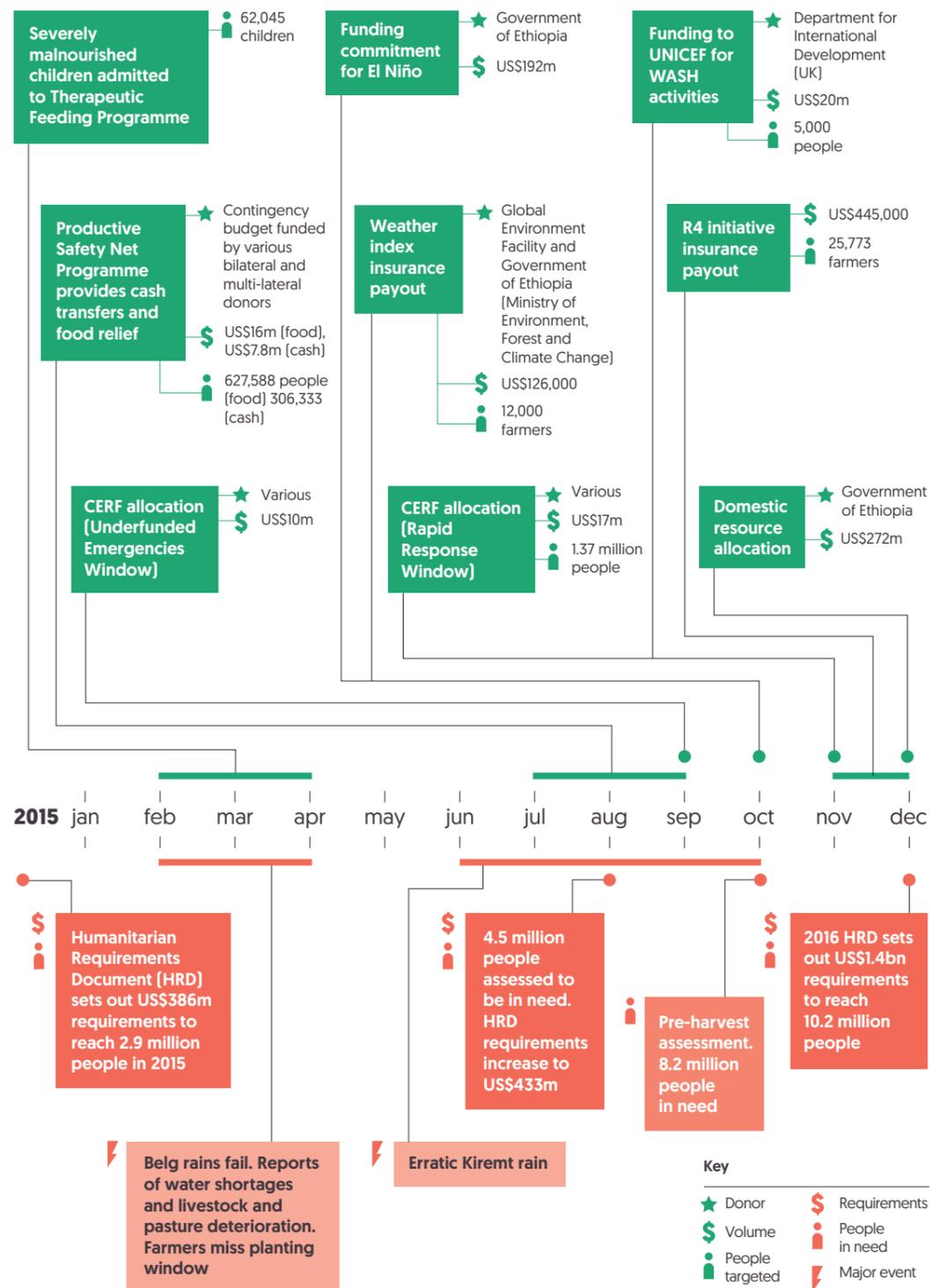
Figure 4.6 shows how key financing sources contributed after failed rains in Ethiopia caused by the El Niño phenomenon. In Ethiopia, early government funding for the Productive Safety Net Programme was provided, as well as quick contributions from a number of government donors, including the United States and United Kingdom.<sup>18</sup> Insurance payouts and a national emergency seed scheme also supported many thousands of households; there are also innovative partnerships, such as the World Food Programme/Government of Ethiopia LEAP (Livelihoods, Early Assessment and Protection) programme that links early warning triggers to the release of a World Bank-managed fund designed to scale up national safety nets.<sup>19</sup> Yet there was still a need for emergency international humanitarian assistance to respond to the scale of urgent needs, and by mid-2016 only 51% of humanitarian requirements in the US\$1.6 billion appeal had been met.<sup>20</sup>

By comparison in neighbouring Kenya, where the El Niño phenomenon manifested in different weather patterns and less severe needs, there was no humanitarian appeal. The government's contingency plans were mobilised ahead of rains and subsequent flooding, and the Hunger Safety Net Programme was scaled up, supported by international donors, to include populations not usually covered under the scheme to enable them to prepare for the floods. A number of donors also provided rapid funding for pre-positioning and response while the Kenyan and British Red Cross Societies activated forecast-based seed distributions. However, insurance schemes such as the high profile African Risk Capacity and Index-Based Livestock Insurance did not result in payouts.

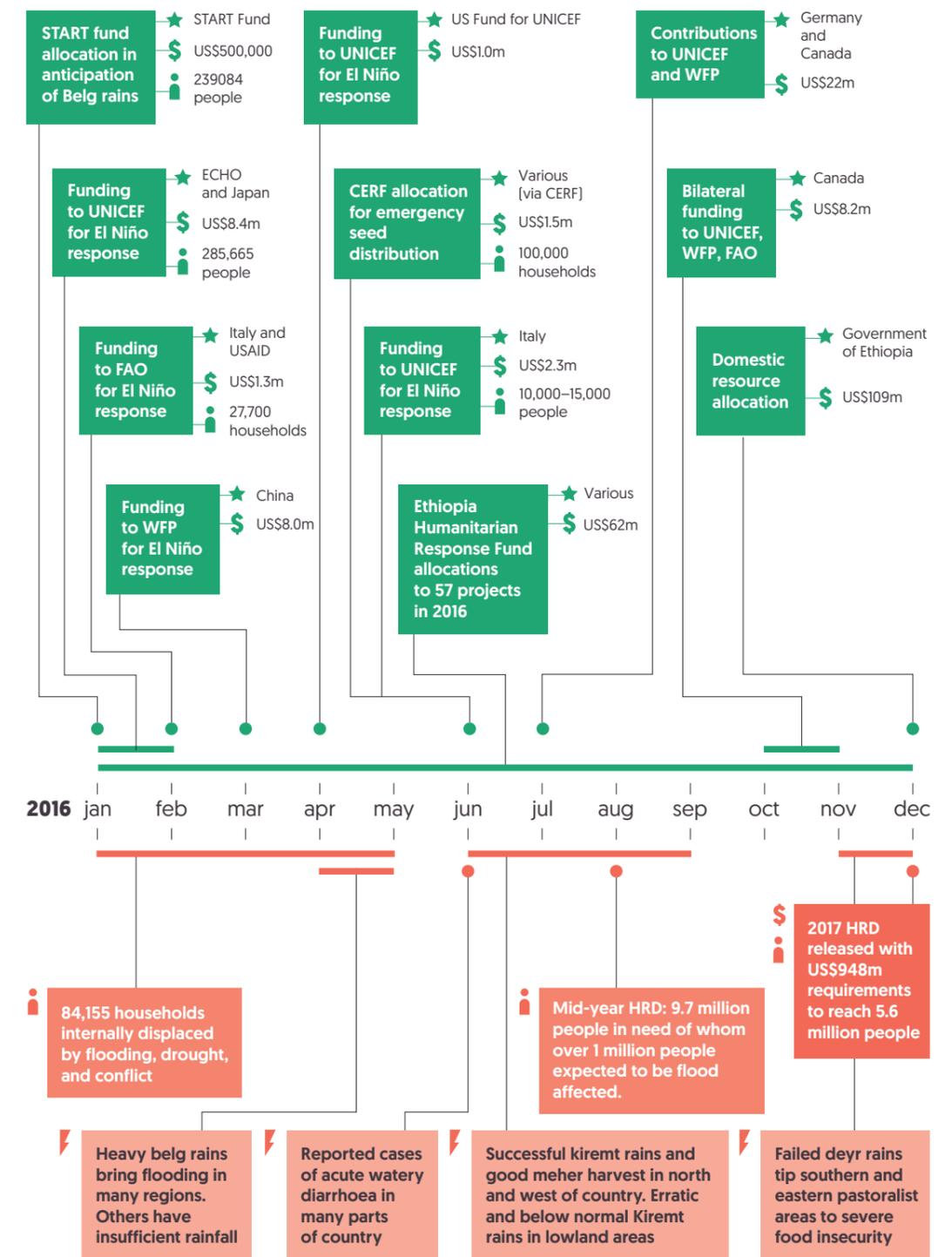
While there were delays and shortfalls in both the Ethiopia and Kenya responses, the reaction was swifter and more sophisticated than in some other El Niño-affected countries in Africa. In Angola for example, where the government's financing tools and fiscal space to respond are limited, there was a funding gap of 84% in appeal requirements by October 2016, according to the regional Inter-Agency Standing Committee action plan for Southern Africa.<sup>21</sup>

**Figure 4.6**

Timing of funding to Ethiopia for El Niño preparedness and response



Source: Development Initiatives based on Ethiopia annual and mid-year humanitarian requirements documents; UN OCHA FTS, CERF, UN Development Programme, UNICEF, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Oxfam America, ReliefWeb, US government – foreignassistance.gov, World Food Programme (WFP), International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO).



Notes: WASH: water, sanitation and hygiene; WFP: World Food Programme. Belg: short rainy season from March to May (in highland and mid-land areas). Kiremt/meher: long and heavy rainy season from June to September/post-Kiremt harvest. Deyr: short rainy season from October to December (in Somali Region). Data is in current prices.

## chapter 4

- 1 The *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2016* [Development Initiatives, 2016] reported that Sudan was the 12th largest recipient of international humanitarian assistance in 2014. Analysis was repeated in 2017 using up-to-date data and shows Sudan in 7th place for 2014.
- 2 UN OCHA, 2014. *2015 Strategic Response Plan: Afghanistan*. Available at: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/Afghanistan%20HRP%202015%20SRP%20Final%2024Dec2014.pdf>; UN OCHA, 2015. *Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan 2015*. Available at: [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/sudan\\_2015\\_humanitarian\\_response\\_plan\\_16\\_apr\\_2015.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/sudan_2015_humanitarian_response_plan_16_apr_2015.pdf)
- 3 See Development Initiatives' Development Data Hub: <http://data.devinit.org>
- 4 UN, 2016. *One Humanity, Shared Responsibility. Report of the United Nations Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit*. 2016. Available at: <http://sgreport.worldhumanitariansummit.org/>
- 5 UN OCHA, 2017. *New Way of Working*. Available at: [https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/NWOW%20Booklet%20low%20res.002\\_0.pdf](https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/NWOW%20Booklet%20low%20res.002_0.pdf)
- 6 Grand Bargain signatories, 2016. *The Grand Bargain – A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need*. Available at: <http://www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3861>
- 7 UN OCHA, 2017. *Evaluation of Multi-Year Planning*. Available at: <http://reliefweb.int/report/world/evaluation-multi-year-planning-february-2017>
- 8 There may be several factors behind the declining number of multi-year appeals. UN-coordinated appeals may include single-year elements of multi-year programmes from participating UN agencies and NGOs; some countries may experience situations too volatile for multi-year planning; and, as a recent evaluation found, combining humanitarian and development objectives in multi-year appeals can lead to a 'prioritisation dilemma' for donors when scarce funding is stretched to meet both acute needs and longer-term objectives. See note 7.
- 9 The Supporting Syria and the Region conference brought together 48 donors in London in February 2016 to mobilise funding to respond to the needs of the people affected by the Syrian crisis. For more information see: Development Initiatives, 2017. *Supporting Syria and the region: Post-London conference financial tracking. Report Two*. Available at: <https://2c8kkt1ykog8lj8k9p47oglb-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Syria-Report-TWO-8.pdf>
- 10 See note 9.
- 11 The Disasters Emergencies Committee [DEC] conducts public fundraising appeals in the aftermath of emergencies on behalf of a group of 13 UK-based NGOs. For more information see: <http://www.dec.org.uk/>
- 12 Oxfam GB, World Vision UK and CAFOD provided examples of the benefits of multi-year funding through DEC appeals.
- 13 See note 6.
- 14 In February 2017, UN OCHA FTS was renewed to allow more effective tracking of elements related to the Grand Bargain commitments. This includes multi-year funding, though a strong body of detailed data has not yet been reported to FTS to allow for analysis of the extent of multi-year funding.
- 15 Oxfam and Save the Children, 2011. *A Dangerous Delay: the cost of late response to early warnings in the 2011 drought in the Horn of Africa*. Available at: [https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/bp-dangerous-delay-horn-africa-drought-180112-en\\_4.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp-dangerous-delay-horn-africa-drought-180112-en_4.pdf)
- 16 Inter alia: Department for International Development, 2016. *The Economic Case for Early Humanitarian Response to the Ethiopia 2015/2016 Drought*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/dfid-research-outputs/the-economic-case-for-early-humanitarian-response-to-the-ethiopia-2015-2016-drought>; Department for International Development, 2013. *The Economics of Early Response and Resilience: Lessons from Mozambique*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/dfid-research-outputs/the-economics-of-early-response-and-resilience-lessons-from-mozambique>

- 17 International Food Policy Research Institute (Clarke and Hill), 2013. *Cost-Benefit Analysis of the African Risk Capacity Facility*. IFPRI Discussion Paper 01292. Available at: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2343159](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2343159)
- 18 Cabot Venton, C., 2016. *The Economic Case for Early Humanitarian Response to the 2015/2016 Ethiopia Drought*. Available at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5567b109e4b0101076d7f0bd/t/581b75e0cd0f68b05009b283/1478194658325/Ethiopia+Contingency+Analysis.pdf>
- 19 For more information on LEAP see: <http://www.wfp.org/climate-change/initiatives/livelihoods-early-assessment-protection>
- 20 Government of Ethiopia, Ethiopia Humanitarian Country Team, 2015. *Ethiopia: Humanitarian Requirements Document 2016*. Available at: <http://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-humanitarian-requirements-document-2016>
- 21 Regional Inter-Agency Standing Committee (RIASCO), December 2016. *RIASCO Action Plan for Southern Africa*. Available at: [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/riasco\\_action\\_plan\\_dec2016.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/riasco_action_plan_dec2016.pdf)