7

CHAPTER

HOW QUICKLY

and for how long?

Crises rarely fit neatly into 'sudden onset' or 'protracted emergency' boxes; and people's needs and vulnerabilities can rarely be described as neatly 'humanitarian' or 'development'. Humanitarian assistance encompasses action "during and in the aftermath" of emergencies as well as preparedness and prevention.[1] So humanitarian actors are stretched between the imperatives to act early and stay late. The diversity of demands on humanitarian response requires flexible approaches as well as availability of other kinds of funding.

The humanitarian imperative requires quick response, often within a short window of time, to heed early warnings, meet urgent needs and prevent further loss of life or escalation of suffering. Timely humanitarian action depends on timely funding. Rapid response funds and other gear-shifting mechanisms have been designed to enable this.

Yet overall, even for acute crises triggered by sudden natural disasters, the time it takes for donors to respond at scale can vary enormously in the first weeks and months. In conflict and complex emergencies, humanitarian funding tends to get off to a much slower start following the launch of an appeal, and shows an unpredictable pattern of response to increases in severity of humanitarian need.

The overwhelming majority (78%) of humanitarian spending from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors continues to be for protracted emergencies in long- and medium-term recipient countries, prompting new initiatives including multi-year appeals and funding. Most long-term assistance is also spent in countries with high levels of poverty and low levels of government spending, once again highlighting the need for both longer-term funding models and better links with development spending and other resources to build resilience.

Speed and timing of response

Timely response to humanitarian crises is critical for effective action. This involves heeding early warning signs, reacting to sudden crises or deteriorations and responding promptly and predictably to appeals. While appeals may be for a response over many months, having strong funding commitments early on enables better planning, continuity and pre-positioning.

For disasters triggered by sudden natural hazards, such as earthquakes or extreme weather events, the speed of response varies significantly (see Figure 7.1). The anomalous response in 2005 to the UN-coordinated appeal following the Indian Ocean earthquake-tsunami saw more than double the proportion of needs met in the first month than the appeal following Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013. Again, the proportion of needs met in the first month of the Haiti appeal (49%) was more than double that at the same point following the Pakistan floods (24%). It was only around the fifth month after each of the Haiti earthquake and the Pakistan floods that the differences began to level out and both saw over 65% of their requirements met. Yet, at the same point, the proportion of needs met for Typhoon Haiyan was trailing at just above 55%.

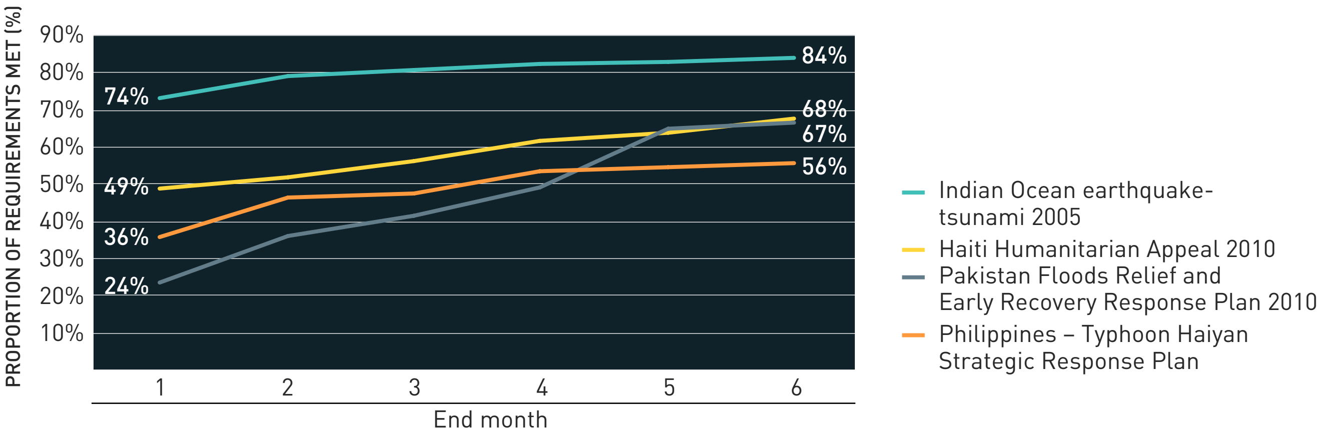
Conflict-related and complex crises saw a slower response to the requirements set out in their UN-coordinated appeals (see Figure 7.2). Levels of requirements, access, lack of sustained media and political attention, as well as donor preferences and funding cycles, all play a role in this. None of the appeals for South Sudan, Syria, Central African Republic (CAR) or Yemen were 50% funded by the sixth month. Indeed, at this point, even the relatively high-profile Syria humanitarian assistance response plan (SHARP) and regional response plan (RRP) appeal requirements were only 24% met.

These collective appeal responses do, however, mask the individual response times of specific donors and funding mechanisms. There are a number of pooled funds that seek to support a rapid humanitarian response, including the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)'s rapid response window as well as the NGO-led RAPID and Start Funds (see Chapter 5). The UK Department of International Develoment (DFID)'s rapid response facility (RRF) also aims to support more agile humanitarian response. In certain rapid onset emergencies, or sudden spikes in chronic disasters, it releases funds within 72 hours to pre-screened and pre-qualified implementing partners. RRF funding has been disbursed in situations including the South Sudan conflict in January 2014 and flooding in northern India in July 2013.

While humanitarian funding needs to be able to scale up rapidly for early response, development funding needs to anticipate and respond to cyclical and predictable crises – both conflict- and natural disaster-related. One development financing mechanism designed to enable a rapid gear-shift in reaction to warning signs or sudden changes is the 'crisis modifier'. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) introduced these after the 2011 food crisis, to speed up the pace of disaster response in the Horn of Africa and other drought-prone areas.[2] Project activities are linked with triggers to alert decision-makers to a worsening of food security, livelihoods and nutrition indicators. Before a critical tipping point has been reached, the system prompts a simplified and accelerated funding approval process and an expansion of interventions including the provision of emergency fodder and animal health services.[3] DFID is experimenting with a similar initiative in Yemen.[4]

FIGURE 7.1

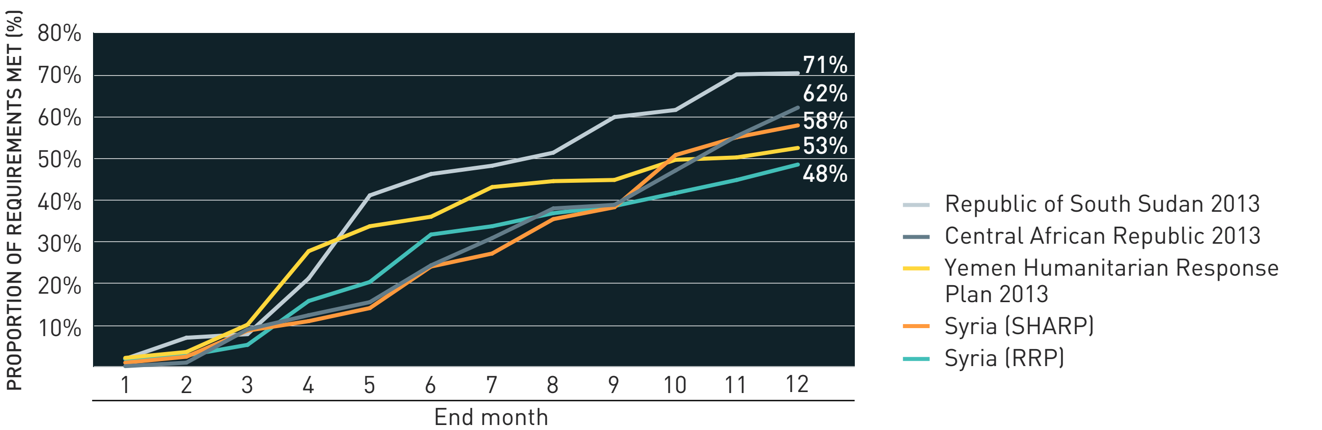
Timing of funding response to four natural disasters: Indian Ocean tsunami-earthquake, Haiti earthquake, Pakistan floods and Philippines' Typhoon Haiyan



Source: Development Initiatives based on UN OCHA FTS data

FIGURE 7.2

Timing of funding response to five UN appeals, 2013: conflicts and complex emergencies in Syria, Central African Republic, Yemen and South Sudan



Source: Development Initiatives based on UN OCHA FTS data

FIGURE 7.3

Funding to Syria crisis and number of registered Syrian refugees, December 2012 to December 2013

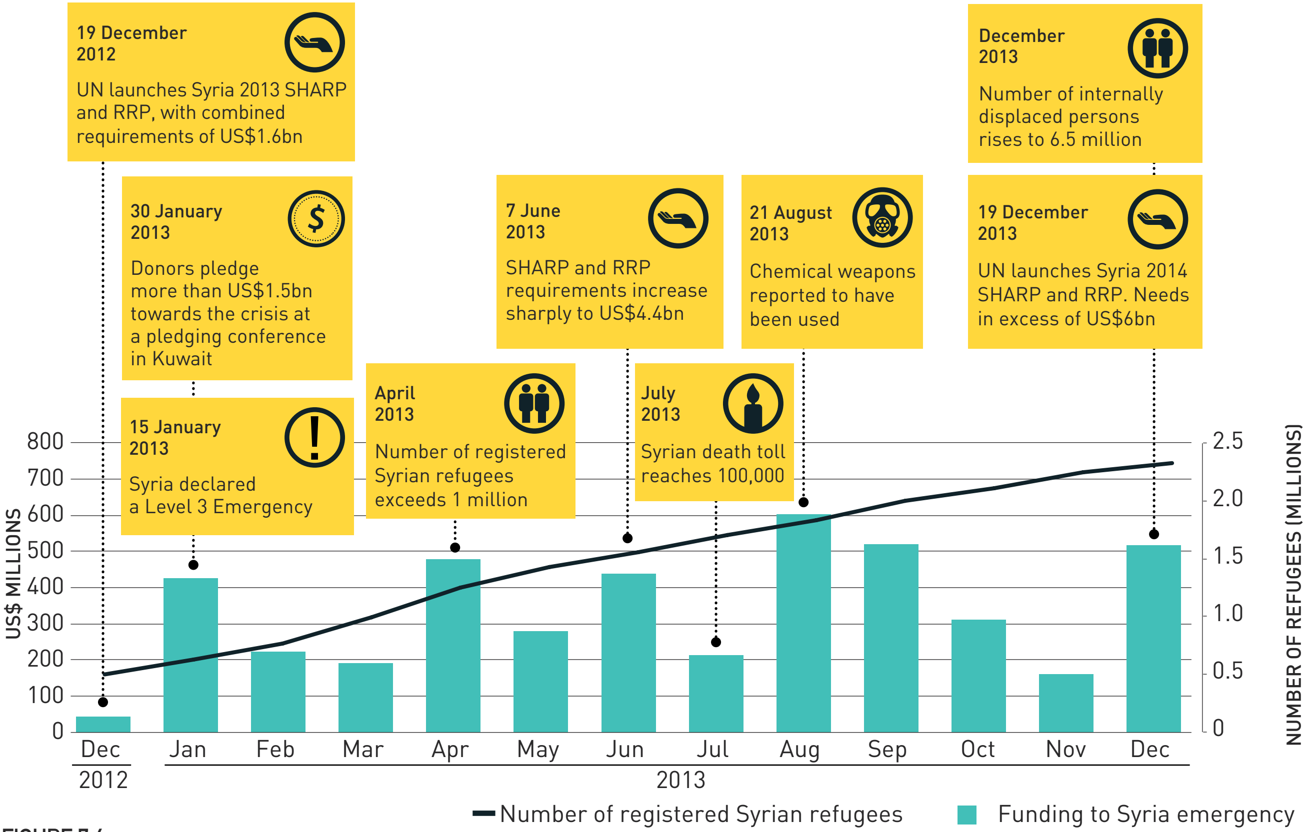
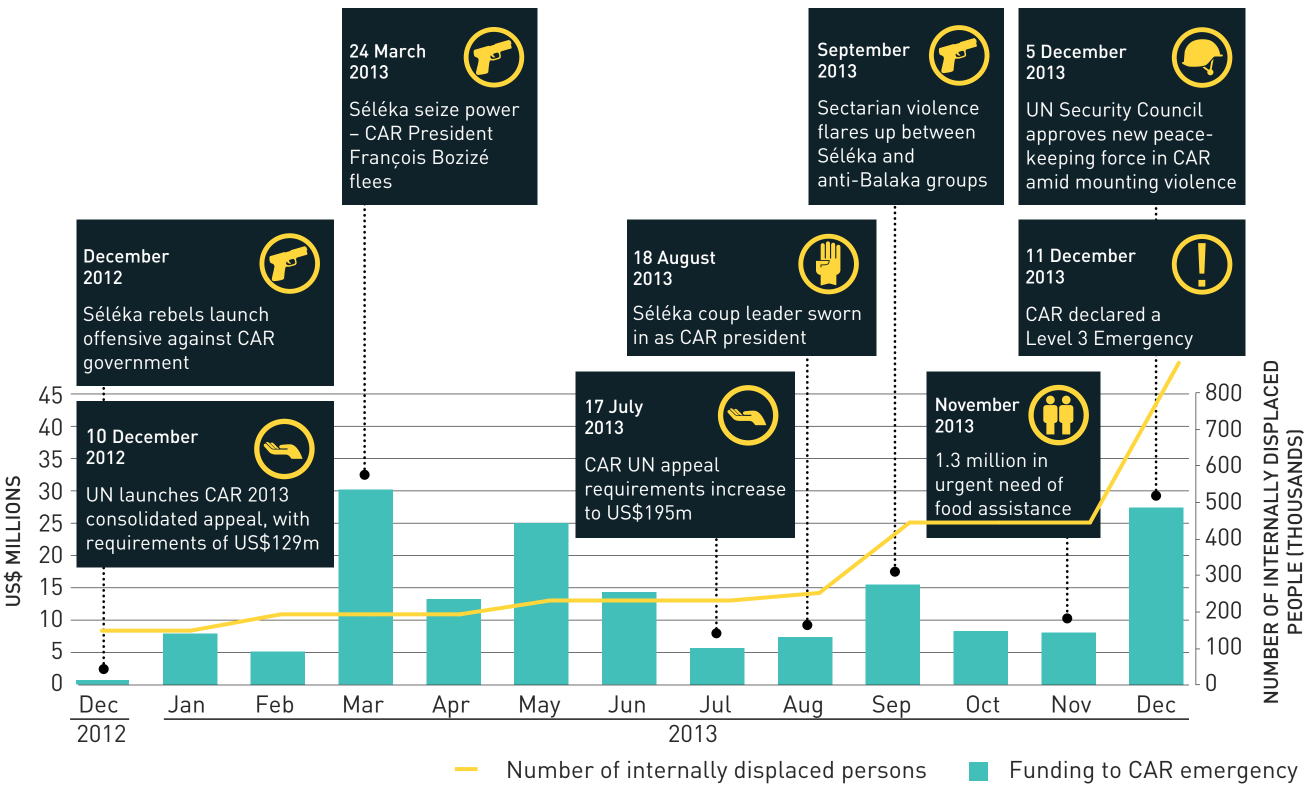


FIGURE 7.4

Funding to CAR crisis and number of internally displaced persons, December 2012 to December 2013



Source: Development Initiatives based on UN OCHA FTS, UNHCR, IDMC data and media reports

Long and medium-term humanitarian assistance

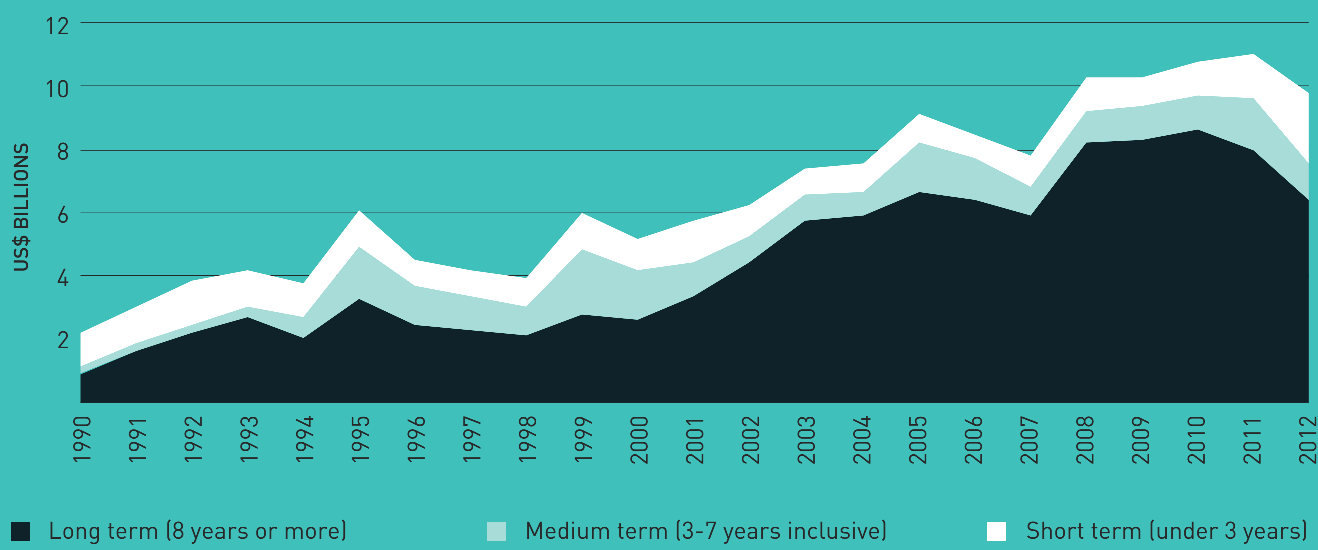
The majority of international humanitarian assistance continues to go to long-term recipient countries. In 2012, 66% of humanitarian assistance from OECD DAC donors went to such countries, defined as those having received an above-average share of their official development assistance (ODA) in the form of humanitarian assistance for eight or more of the alast 15 years. In the same year, a further 12% went to medium-term recipients – those receiving an above average share for three to seven years inclusive.[5]

OECD DAC recipient country data for 2013 is not yet available, so these figures do not reflect the high levels of funding to Syria or neighbouring countries affected by the conflict. Most of these countries would currently fall into the short-term recipient category, as they have been in receipt of high levels of humanitarian assistance for less than two years. However, it appears that the conflict and the refugee situation will not be short-term crises and Syria and some of its neighbours may become medium or long-term recipients.

Despite the fact that less than one-quarter (22%) of humanitarian assistance from OECD DAC donors in 2012 went to short-term recipients, humanitarian assistance still tends to be conceived and delivered in short-term cycles. The fact that the majority of humanitarian assistance goes to long-term recipients experiencing recurrent or protracted crises and people facing chronic poverty (see Figure 7.6), poses a challenge to humanitarian donors and implementing organisations to fund and plan over a longer timeframe. As this and the analysis in Chapter 8 shows, it also poses a challenge to development actors to invest in building resilience and in addressing the chronic poverty, risks and vulnerabilities that cause crises to recur or become entrenched.

FIGURE 7.5

Long, medium and short-term recipients of official humanitarian assistance from DAC donors, 1990–2012



Source: Development Initiatives based on OECD DAC data

In focus: Multi-year approaches and the Somalia appeal

The need for a longer-term humanitarian assistance and resilience approach in protracted and recurrent crises has prompted the advent of multi-year, UN-coordinated appeals. In 2013, Somalia was the first and only country to launch a multi-year appeal. In 2014, a further 13 countries had multi-year strategic response plans (SRPs).[6]

The Somalia plan integrates life-saving and livelihood support to address the cycle of recurring crises brought on by drought and conflict. Within its multi-year framework (called a consolidated appeal process (CAP) appeal because it was introduced in 2013, before the changes to the system), annual SRPs are developed to reflect changes and short-term shocks.

This framework could be an opportunity to secure multi-year funding, supporting predictability, continuity and long-term approaches in programming. However, while the umbrella document for the Somalia CAP provides an indication of financial requirements for the full three-year timeframe, the annual response plans present strategies with one-year financial requirements only; and multi-year initiatives are not easily distinguishable from short-term projects.

The two largest donors in Somalia (the United States (US) and the EU institutions) continue their 12 or 18-month funding cycles but the following donors are providing multi-year funding:

- United Kingdom (UK) – US$89 million over four years (late 2013 to late 2017), including US$41 million to a joint UNICEF/Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)/World Food Programme (WFP) resilience programme and US$33 million to the Livelihoods and Resilience Consortium; DFID agreed this multi-year programme prior to the introduction of the multi-year CAP.
- Sweden – US$15 million over three years (2013–2015), of which US$9 million is for the multi-year (2013–2016) Somalia Resilience Program (SomReP); Sweden cites the multi-year CAP as the main reason for its multi-year funding.
- Denmark – over US$11m to Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) over two years (2012–2013), and over US$20 million over three years (2013–2015) including grants to FAO and SomReP. Notably, this funding comes from both development and humanitarian budget lines; grants were awarded prior to the multi-year CAP but are in line with its priorities.

In 2013, Somalia had the first and only multi-year appeal. In 2014, a further 13 countries had them.

The Somalia Humanitarian Donor Group (chaired by European Commission's Department of Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) and Sweden) is currently considering the effects of this multi-year CAP. One concern is that its strong resilience focus may over-shadow insufficiently sign-posted urgent humanitarian needs. Indeed, in June 2014, the Emergency Response Coordinator (ERC) issued an urgent request to the UN Security Council for an immediate injection of US$60 million[7] to meet the most urgent funding needs within the critically underfunded appeal. A full evaluation of the Somalia multi-year CAP is not in OCHA's plans, but such a review would yield lessons for all multi-year appeals – including effects on volumes and duration of humanitarian assistance and other resource flows, as well as challenges in balancing urgent response with resilience-building.

Financing for resilience

Resilience has been defined as "the ability of individuals, communities and states and their institutions to absorb and recover from shocks, while positively adapting and transforming their structures and means for living in the face of long-term changes and uncertainty".[8] The concern for resilience arises from the need to address the underlying poverty, inequalities and insecurities that drive people into crisis and prevent them from emerging and staying out of crisis. As such it demands resources and policies beyond humanitarian assistance, a context-specific blend including those resource flows explored in Chapter 8.

The concept of resilience continues to gain momentum in the run-up to three major global processes in 2015: the creation of a successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA2) 2005–2015, the agreement of the post–2015 sustainable development goals and a new, international climate change agreement. The World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 represents an opportunity to develop a humanitarian ecosystem that supports and complements the commitments emerging from these three processes. To date, resilience discussions and initiatives have tended to focus on drought, food insecurity and natural disasters, with strong links to DRR. Application of this approach to conflict settings is much more emergent, with UNICEF trialling the first multi-stakeholder resilience systems analysis in Eastern DRC in 2014.[9]

While resilience demands a major change in policy, institutional structures and programming, it also demands shifts in funding; and shifts in funding can, in turn, change behaviour and approaches. Some donors have developed resilience funding initiatives to better bridge humanitarian and development aid.

European Commission: Supporting Horn of Africa's Resilience (SHARE)

Established in 2012 after the food crisis, SHARE is a US$358 million[10] joint humanitarian and development initiative to build resilience to drought. It aims to improve the livelihoods of farming and pastoralist communities as well as the capacity of public services to respond to crises. SHARE-funded programmes include improving land resource management, as well as the income opportunities for livestock-dependent populations. In the long term they aim to find lasting solutions for the heavy burden of both chronic malnutrition and protracted displacement.[11]

USAID: Resilience in the Sahel-Enhanced (RISE) initiative[12]

Through the five-year RISE initiative, USAID aims to join up its humanitarian and development efforts in the Sahel to address the root causes of vulnerability in the region. In its first two years, US$130 million has been allocated for areas in Niger and Burkina Faso. Its stated goal is to break the crisis cycle of an estimated 1.9 million people, and to reduce the need for future humanitarian assistance. RISE is not a new programme as such but rather an initiative to integrate existing humanitarian and development programming [or assistance].

> The concept of resilience continues to gain momentum in the run up to three major global processes in 2015: HFA2, the post-2015 sustainable development goals, and a new climate change agreement.

DFID: Multi-year approach in Yemen

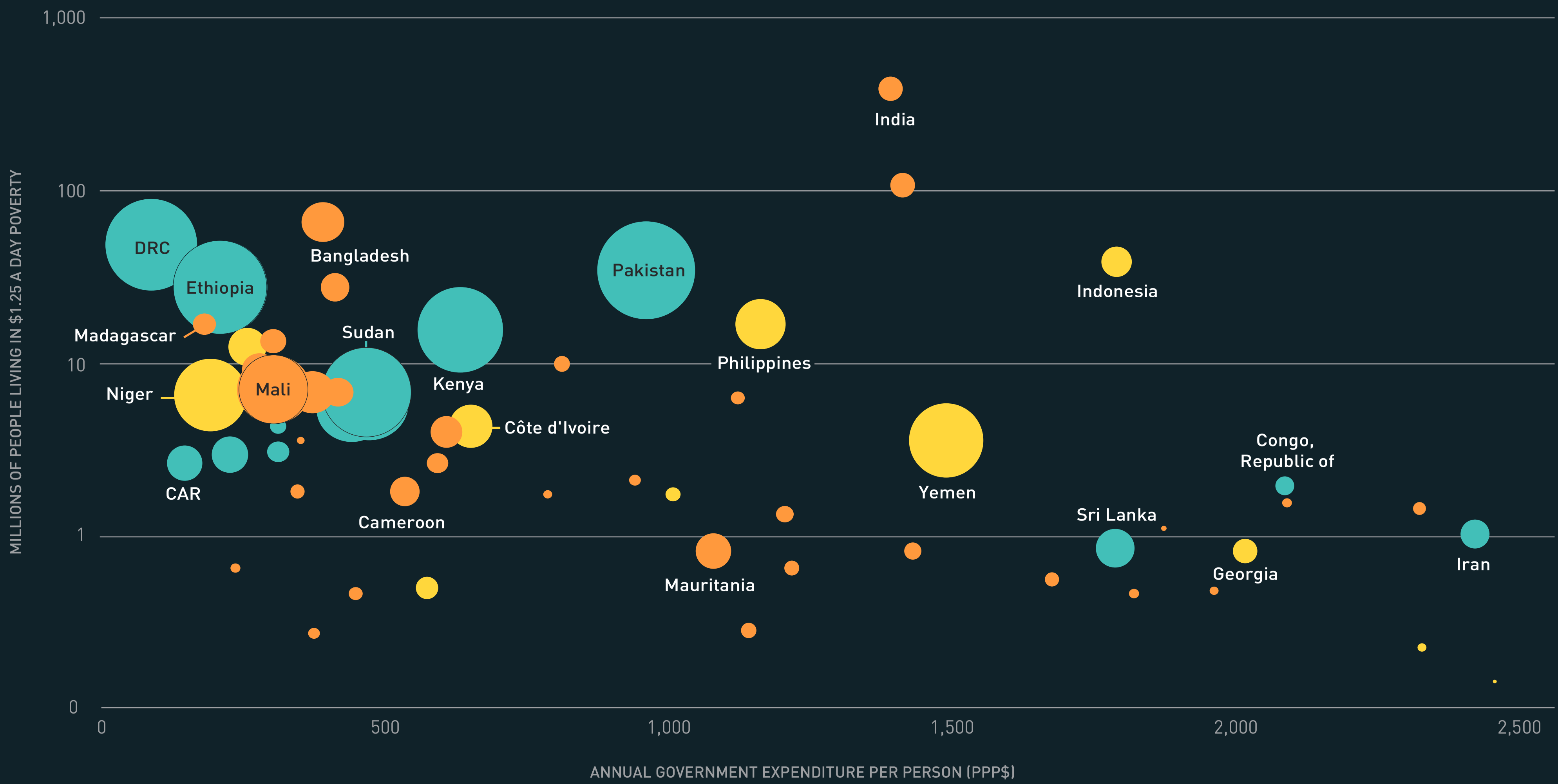
As seen in the Somalia example on page 86, multi-year humanitarian assistance can contribute to resilience-building but cannot be expected to do so alone or automatically. To better understand this relationship, DFID has commissioned a global review of its multi-year funding, including in DRC, Pakistan and Yemen. In Yemen, a major medium-term recipient of humanitarian assistance, DFID is the first donor to move to multi-year humanitarian financing and is doing so with an explicit resilience focus.[13] A pilot 'crisis modifier' (see page 82) is under development; this aims to help people maintain their purchasing power in the event of dramatic changes in food prices.[14]

Sweden: Inclusion in humanitarian and development assistance

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) considers reducing risk as a key component of both humanitarian and long-term development assistance and is committed to including risk reduction and resilience in its programming.[15] Financial contributions include US$7 million to UNDP's Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme in Bangladesh, 2011–2012.[16] The programme aims to strengthen national capacity to manage risks, including during response and recovery efforts. An important part of this approach is recognising all hazards, as well as integrating DRR and adaptation measures to build communities' resilience.

FIGURE 7.6

Long, medium and short-term recipients of humanitarian assistance: levels of poverty, domestic resources and humanitarian assistance, 2012



- Long-term recipient of Humanitarian Assistance (8 years or more)
- Medium-term recipient (3–7 years inclusive)
- Short-term recipient (under 3 years)

Source: Development Initiatives based on World Bank and OECD DAC data

Note: Chart uses a logarithmic scale. Bubble size represents the volume of humanitarian assistance each country received in 2012. Poverty data is the latest available estimate (note that for some countries estimates are pre-crisis). For South Sudan, Somalia and Afghanistan there are no estimates of $1.25 a day poverty. Longer-term recipients are defined as those having received an above average share of their ODA in the form of humanitarian assistance for eight or more of the last 15. Medium-term is defined as three to seven years inclusive and short-term as under three years.

Poverty and long-term humanitarian assistance

International humanitarian assistance should act to fill the gap where domestic resources are not able to meet urgent needs. Government spending across all developing countries is on average PPP$2,170 (2011 PPP$) but in many countries that receive humanitarian assistance, the figure is much lower.

Indeed, 35% of total humanitarian assistance in 2012 went to countries where government spending is less than PPP$500 per citizen per year, such as Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Niger and Mali; and a further 19% to countries where government spending is between PPP$500 and PPP$1,000 per citizen per year.

It is not surprising that long-term crisis, poverty and limited domestic capacity are often found in the same places. Crises both drive people into poverty and erode their ability to improve their wellbeing, while poverty, in turn, undermines their resilience to shocks. An estimated 179.5 million people were living in extreme poverty in the 30 long-term recipient countries of humanitarian assistance.[17]

In 2012, 38% of funding to long-term humanitarian recipients was spent in countries with per capita government expenditure of less than PPP$500 and 50% was spent in those with less than PPP$1,000. This can be seen in Figure 7.6 where recipients of large volumes of humanitarian assistance are long-term recipients (shaded blue) and also tend to appear in the top left corner of the distribution as they have large populations living in poverty and low per capita government expenditure.

Conversely, in countries such as Turkey, which has relatively high levels of government spending and low incidence of poverty, international humanitarian assistance acts to support response to short-term shocks rather than to respond to recurrent or protracted crises that are rooted in chronic vulnerabilities.

The relationship between poverty and humanitarian crisis is long-understood and is increasingly gaining recognition. Resilience is providing a common concept to bring humanitarian and development actors together to address the challenges of poverty, risk and crisis. While this connection was not explicit in the targets set in the Millennium Development Goals, it is informing the negotiation of the forthcoming sustainable development goals, due to be finalised in 2015.

DATA POVERTY: POVERTY DATA

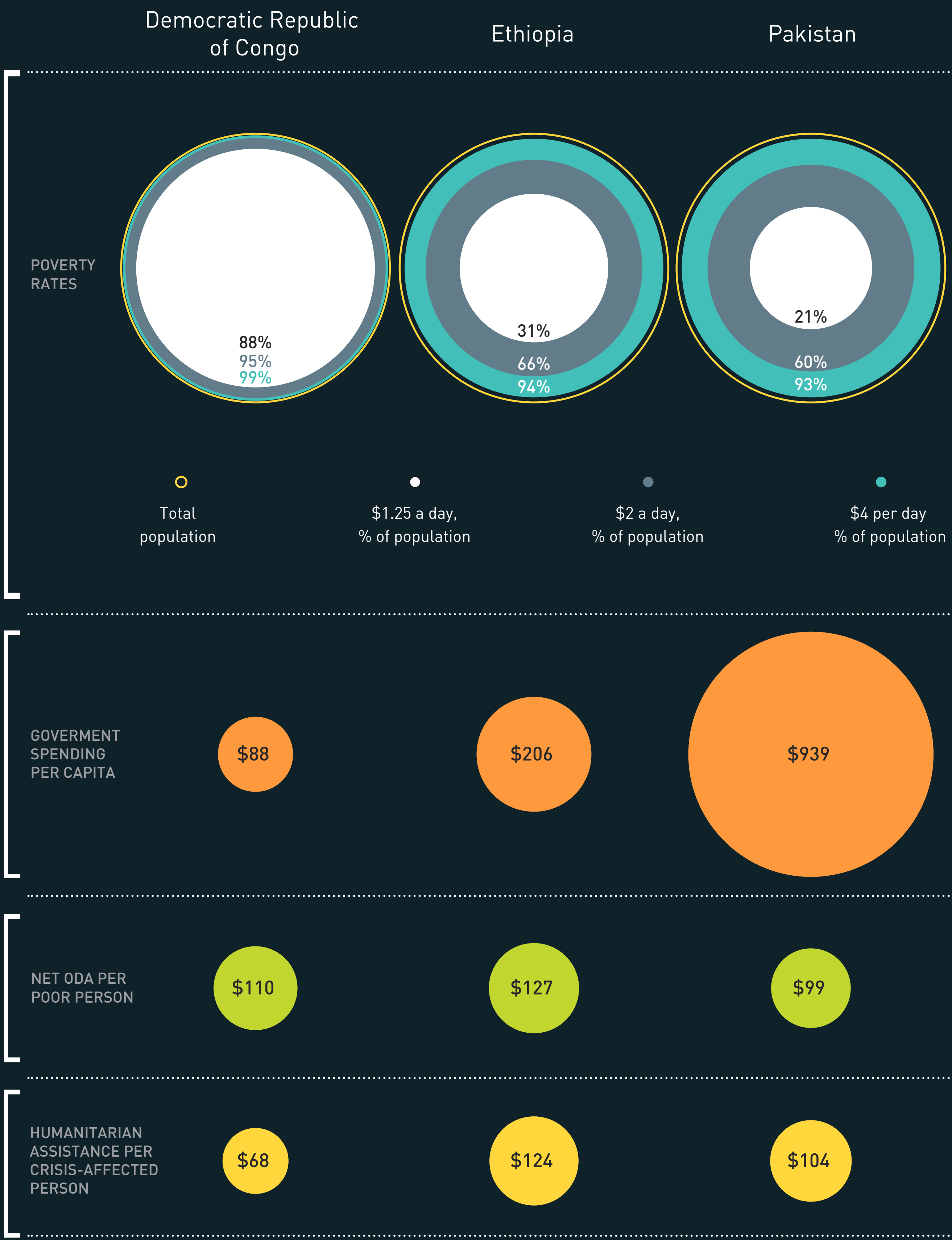
Of the 30 countries categorised as long-term recipients over the past 15 years, 25 were classed as fragile states in 2013.[9] Reliable data, such as government expenditure and poverty rates, is often absent in such countries, part of the pervasive challenge of measuring poverty faced in many contexts. For example, the levels of extreme poverty are not known for eight of the 30 long-term recipient countries, including Somalia, Afghanistan and Myanmar.

Even in countries where data is available, it is possible that humanitarian crises have increased poverty levels and affected government expenditure even further since figures were last gathered. In Syria for example, there is no data to show how steeply the conflict has driven up poverty; the most recent data on poverty was collected a decade ago and shows pre-conflict poverty at the relatively low rate of 1.7% (2004). The conflict has had a dramatic effect on the poverty levels of the population in Syria, both directly and indirectly as a result of falling agricultural production and a contracting economy. Measured against national benchmarks, almost two-thirds of the population are now living in extreme poverty.[18]

In sub-Saharan Africa, 43 of 49 countries conduct poverty surveys – but only 28 of these have been conducted in the past seven years. A quarter of the region's population is estimated to be living in extreme poverty – but this figure is derived from data collected in 2005 or earlier.

FIGURE 7.7

Poverty and major resource profiles of three long-term recipients of humanitarian assistance, 2012



Source: Development Initiatives based on World Bank, OECD DAC, UN OCHA FTS and IMF WEO data, and UNHCR, EMDAT CRED, IDMC and UN appeal documents