

# Protracted Conflicts

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World Vision Australia's  
Public Policy Position

# World Vision Australia's position on protracted conflicts

World Vision Australia recognises that protracted conflicts are a result of political impasses and require political solutions.

Humanitarian assistance is increasingly going to protracted crisis situations, especially conflict situations, despite being essentially designed for emergency relief. However, the complexity of protracted conflicts demands much more than a traditional humanitarian response and humanitarian actors are, in practice, bearing more responsibility for responding to protracted conflicts than they are able or suited to do. Protracted conflicts are ultimately a result of political impasses, requiring political solutions.

World Vision Australia views protracted humanitarian crises as development setbacks requiring an integrated humanitarian, peacebuilding and development approach.

To this end, the World Vision Partnership is developing a Fragile Contexts Expansion Strategy to ensure our work in protracted conflicts reaches the most vulnerable children and that our programs are designed to address the root causes of poverty, vulnerability, fragility and conflict, ensuring children have access to basic services and are protected from harm.

Protracted conflicts are closely related to protracted displacement situations. For analysis and recommendations regarding displacement, please see World Vision Australia's Displacement Public Policy Position.

## World Vision's mandate to advocate on protracted conflicts

World Vision's humanitarian work is predominantly and increasingly taking place in protracted conflict contexts. World Vision has been responding to protracted crises in Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic Congo for more than 20 years.<sup>1</sup> World Vision has been responding to the displacement crisis from Syria since 2011, and now manages a whole of Syria operation from Amman, Jordan, with response operations being carried out inside Syria, in southern Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.<sup>2</sup> Operations in Iraq<sup>3</sup> and the Central African Republic<sup>4</sup> opened in 2014, and World Vision is now scaling up its long-standing operations in Niger and Chad to respond to the emerging Lake Chad Basin crisis.<sup>5</sup> In each of these locations, World Vision responds to emergency needs and attempts to address underlying causes of vulnerability, which are in all cases multi-dimensional, complex and long-standing. Our work in the field underscores the need for in-depth policy and advocacy work on protracted crises, to bring decision-makers and implementing actors together to develop sustainable solutions to entrenched vulnerabilities.

# World Vision Australia's policy recommendations for change

## **World Vision Australia calls on agencies responding to protracted conflicts to:**

1. Ensure the integration of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding expertise to address the root causes of protracted conflicts, through sustainable, long-term, collaborative approaches.
2. Prioritise evidence-based research and evaluation to identify and share best practices and adapt operational models to changing contexts.
3. Promote collaborative, multi-year, interagency planning and support efforts to adapt and integrate humanitarian planning cycles with development frameworks, such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and poverty reduction strategies.

## **World Vision Australia calls on the Australian government to:**

1. Commit to using political influence to prevent and resolve conflicts and instability and increase international assistance for conflict prevention, peacebuilding, good governance, and strengthening the rule of law.
2. Fund Australia's fair share of global humanitarian needs resulting from protracted conflicts to ensure United Nations response plans are fully funded.
3. Separate allocations to disaster risk reduction and protracted crises in the Australian federal budget to allow greater transparency with respect to these two critical but distinct aspects of humanitarian funding.
4. Provide predictable, multi-year, flexible funding for individual protracted crises, such as South Sudan and Iraq.
5. Ensure that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) utilises the full range of its humanitarian, development and peacebuilding experience so that responses to protracted conflicts address root causes and are designed to sustainably transition from relief, to early recovery, to stabilisation, and to development.
6. Support long-term investment in education, child protection and mental and psychosocial support programs for children in protracted conflicts.
7. Promote international accountability for breaches of international law, including the six grave violations of children's rights.

# Background

While humanitarian actors and donors frequently refer to “protracted crises”, very few definitions exist. Those that do essentially refer to length and intractability. For instance, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) define protracted crises as countries reporting a food crisis for eight years or more, receiving more than 10 per cent of foreign assistance as humanitarian relief and being on the list of Low Income Food Defecit Countries.<sup>6</sup> The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines protracted refugee situations as those where refugees have been in exile for five years or more without immediate prospects for implementation of durable solutions.<sup>7</sup> In such situations, “refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo”.<sup>8</sup>

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) defines protracted crises as situations where “extreme, widespread and unpredictable needs exist alongside long-term structural vulnerabilities, and ‘emergency’ needs persist over multiple years”.<sup>9</sup> The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) similarly identifies that the underlying causes of humanitarian needs in protracted crises are “chronic vulnerabilities and multidimensional poverty”, combined with “recurrent or cyclical shocks”, dysfunctional social safety nets, corruption and low governance capacities.<sup>10</sup>

Length and intractability, the key characteristics of protracted crises, give rise to persistent humanitarian needs that both exacerbate and are exacerbated by structural vulnerabilities and state weakness present in the societal context. Over 90 per cent of current humanitarian appeals have existed for longer than three years and their average duration is seven years.<sup>11</sup> As respect for international humanitarian law and protection for civilians weakens, children are increasingly bearing the brunt of conflict and are the subjects of grave violations of their rights, including the six grave violations against children during times of armed conflict identified and agreed upon by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (recruitment and use of children; killing or maiming of children; sexual violence against children; attacks against schools or hospitals; abduction of children; denial of humanitarian access).<sup>12</sup>

There is a tendency to conflate conflict-based crises (countries with medium to high intensity conflict and neighbouring countries hosting large influxes of people forcibly displaced by conflict) with slow-onset natural disasters and rapid-onset disasters which lead to protracted consequences because they occur in contexts of pre-existing chronic vulnerabilities (for example, Haiti).<sup>13</sup>

## Key resources & references

### Key resources

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), *An end in sight: Multi-year planning to meet and reduce humanitarian needs in protracted crises*. Think Brief, OCHA Policy and Studies Series, 2015, available at: [https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OCHA\\_TB15\\_Multiyear%20Planning\\_online.pdf](https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OCHA_TB15_Multiyear%20Planning_online.pdf)

Christina Bennett, 'The development agency of the future: Fit for protracted crises?' *Overseas Development Institute (ODI) Working Paper*, 2015, available at: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9612.pdf>

Christina Bennett, 'Time to let go: Remaking humanitarian action for the modern era', *Overseas Development Institute (ODI)*, 2016, available at: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10422.pdf>

### References

<sup>1</sup> Since 1992 in Somalia (see World Vision Somalia, *2015 Somalia Annual Report*, 2015 available at: <http://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2015%20ANNUAL%20REPORT%2010220160%20press%20final%20.pdf>); in Sudan from 1983 to 1988 and then again from 2004 onwards in Blue Nile, Khartoum and South Darfur states (see World Vision Sudan, *2015 Sudan Annual Report*, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2015%20Annual%20Report%20.pdf>), in South Sudan since 1989 (in what was then the southern Sudan region of Sudan) (see World Vision South Sudan, *2015 South Sudan Annual Report*, 2015, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/South%20Sudan%20Annual%20Report%202015%20re-done.pdf>); and in the Democratic Republic of Congo since 1984 (see World Vision Republic of Congo, *2013 Democratic Republic of C Annual Report*, 2013, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/WVI%20ANNUAL%20REPORT%202013%2004062014.pdf>).

<sup>2</sup> See World Vision Jordan, '*2015 Syria Crisis Response Report*', 2015.

<sup>3</sup> See World Vision Iraq, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/iraq>

<sup>4</sup> See World Vision Emergencies, Central African Republic, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/emergencies/central-african-republic>

<sup>5</sup> See World Vision Niger, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/niger> and World Vision Chad, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/chad>

<sup>6</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and the World Food Programme, *State of Food Insecurity in the World*, 2010, available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1683e/i1683e.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> United Nations High Commission for Refugees, *Conclusion on Protracted Refugee Situations. Executive Committee 61<sup>st</sup> session, Extraordinary meeting: 8 December 2009, 2009*, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-au/excom/exconcl/4b332bca9/conclusion-protracted-refugee-situations.html>

<sup>8</sup> United Nations High Commission for Refugees, *Protracted Refugee Situations. Executive Committee, 30<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee*, 2004, available at:

<http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4a54bc00d.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Christina Bennett, 'Time to let go: Remaking humanitarian action for the modern era'. ODI, 2016, available at: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10422.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *An end in sight: Multi-year planning to meet and reduce humanitarian needs in protracted crises*, 2015, p5, available at:

[http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA\\_TB15\\_Multiyear%20Planning\\_online.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA_TB15_Multiyear%20Planning_online.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *An end in sight: Multi-year planning to meet and reduce humanitarian needs in protracted crises*, 2015, p4, available at:

[http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA\\_TB15\\_Multiyear%20Planning\\_online.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA_TB15_Multiyear%20Planning_online.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> See Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, *The six grave violations against children during armed conflict: The Legal Foundation*, updated 2013, available at:

[https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/publications/WorkingPaper-I\\_SixGraveViolationsLegalFoundation.pdf](https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/publications/WorkingPaper-I_SixGraveViolationsLegalFoundation.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> United Nations Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *An end in sight: Multi-year planning to meet and reduce humanitarian needs in protracted crises*, 2015, p4, available at:

[http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA\\_TB15\\_Multiyear%20Planning\\_online.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA_TB15_Multiyear%20Planning_online.pdf)