



ANNUAL REPORT 2016

IRIN NEWS

THE INSIDE STORY ON EMERGENCIES

Foreword

The new IRIN: From a rich UN history to a stronger, independent future

There is a simple motivation that drives all of us at IRIN: quality journalism makes the world a better place.

An independent press plays a vital role across society. And, amid the unprecedented scale of humanitarian crisis around the globe, strong impartial journalism is more important than ever.

Set up in 1995 to improve information flow in the wake of the Rwandan genocide, IRIN has been providing field reporting on humanitarian crises in a way no other institution does for more than two decades. Our fusion of storytelling and analysis amplifies the voices of those most affected by crises and plays a watchdog role in their interest.

On our anniversary at the end of 2015, we quietly celebrated 20 years of award-winning reportage, photography, and documentary filmmaking from some of the toughest places on earth. We are rightly proud of our legacy, but the growing importance of our mission demands dynamic evolution to keep us fit for purpose in this fast-changing world.

At the start of 2016, we began a new chapter, reconstituting IRIN as an independent entity outside the United Nations – our first step in a journey to revitalise the organisation.

Over the course of this year, we laid solid foundations: striking a new governance board, unveiling a new website, winning significant funding from new donors, and boosting accountability of the \$20-billion emergency aid sector with the launch of an investigative reporting unit.

We are building on the best of our heritage, networks, and expertise while leveraging new opportunities in technology and partnerships to develop our content formats and reach a broader audience.

This annual report outlines changes towards this sharper editorial focus and shows the impact of our most powerful stories from 2016 – from those that shone a spotlight on overlooked conflicts to those that exposed shoddy aid practices.

In today's complex and troubled world, this role is more needed than ever.

Howard W. French
President

Heba Aly
Director



“

“In any humanitarian emergency, information is key. IRIN ... keeps the need for effective humanitarian action high on the political and policy agenda.”

Kofi Annan,
Former UN Secretary - General

Photograph: Alex Pritz/IRIN

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About us

IRIN reports from the front lines of crises and analyses the policies and the politics to drive more effective and accountable response.

Our **mission** is to put quality, independent journalism at the service of the world's most vulnerable people.

Our **vision** is a world where that journalism changes the minds, attitudes, and actions of people in a position to save lives, alleviate suffering and protect human dignity in times of crisis.

We help drive more effective and accountable action by contributing to:

- Better decision-making
- Increased accountability and transparency
- Greater awareness

We do this by producing journalism that:

Provides in-depth, field-based perspectives on humanitarian crises:

Our specialised editors and on-the-ground correspondents produce deep analysis and reportage with informed “insider” takes.

Casts a critical eye over the emergency aid sector:

We ask tough questions and conduct independent investigations into aid policy and industry dynamics: how aid is delivered, who really benefits, where the money comes from and how it is spent.

Shines a spotlight on forgotten stories and emerging trends:

We highlight crises, angles, and communities overlooked by mainstream media and flag brewing problems before they erupt into full-blown crises.

Our recent change in status to an independent media non-profit organisation has strengthened our voice and provided new opportunities to develop our content, reach and impact.

Journalism about crises has never been more important

The number of people affected by humanitarian crisis has more than doubled in the last decade to 125 million. Climate change, population growth, volatile markets, water scarcity, and the mushrooming of armed groups are pushing more and more communities to the edge.

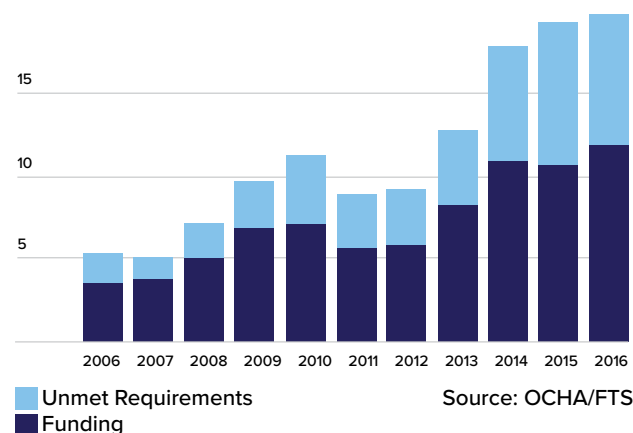
The resulting crises have exposed serious weaknesses in the world's capacity to respond: financing is unsustainable; local communities lack a voice, and needs are inadequately met. It is a critical time of change for the international emergency aid industry, which is under pressure to reform.

The humanitarian sector, like all others, requires an independent voice that can assess needs on the ground, make sense of complexity, dispel misconceptions, and hold those responsible to account.

Yet international reporting – especially thoughtful, accessible analysis – has declined as mainstream news outlets have cut foreign bureaus and reduced travel budgets.

Technology has enabled information-sharing at unprecedented levels, but it can't guarantee the veracity, nuance, or depth of what is being consumed. In the age of viral videos and 140-character narratives, informed examination of serious issues in the public sphere is dangerously rare.

United Nations Appeals for Funding (US\$ Billions)



US FRONT PAGE COVERAGE OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS 1987-2004

**DOWN
50%**

Pew Research Centre

INTERNATIONAL NEWS IN UK PAPERS 1979-2009

**DOWN
45%**

Media Standards Trust

IRIN fills this gap. Faster than think tanks, more accessible than academic journals, more objective than aid agency communications, and more consistent and in-depth than the mainstream media, our strengths lie in our:

STORY-TELLING

We listen to those at the heart of crises and amplify their voices by blending interviews and reportage to tell their important stories. We maximise our use of photography and film to ensure our content always has a powerful human element.

EXPERTISE

We are specialists at our beat. We have an intimate understanding of the humanitarian sector that gives us rare insights. Our history as part of the UN has strengthened our extensive networks of contacts and provided us an insider view that avoids sensational reporting.

GLOBAL FOOTPRINT

Many of IRIN's 200 correspondents are citizens of the countries they cover, and our editors are based in the field. We speak the local language, understand cultural dynamics, and have access to people and places that many aid agencies and foreign journalists do not.

PERSPECTIVE

We don't parachute in. Our journalists are present in-country before crises erupt, and long after the foreign teams have packed up and left. We take the long view, factoring in historic trends and putting current events into context.

VALUES

At IRIN, the humanitarian imperative comes first. Our first responsibility is to those at the heart of crisis zones whose voices we seek to amplify. We are neither driven by commercial or corporate interests, nor by advocacy. We strive to be independent, authentic, constructive, bold, humanising, trustworthy, and respectful of diversity.

Our formats include

PHOTO GALLERIES

CURATED READING LISTS

INTERACTIVE MAPS

OP-EDS

TIMELINES

ANIMATED DATA VISUALISATIONS

VIDEO EXPLAINERS

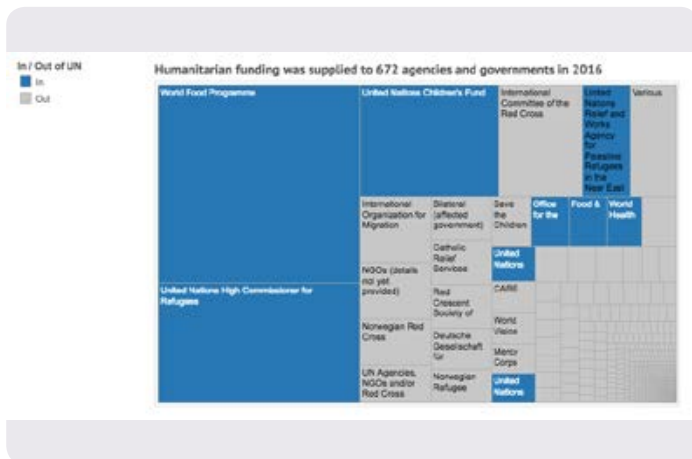
CARTOONS

NARRATIVE JOURNALISM

INFOGRAPHICS

LIVE BLOGS

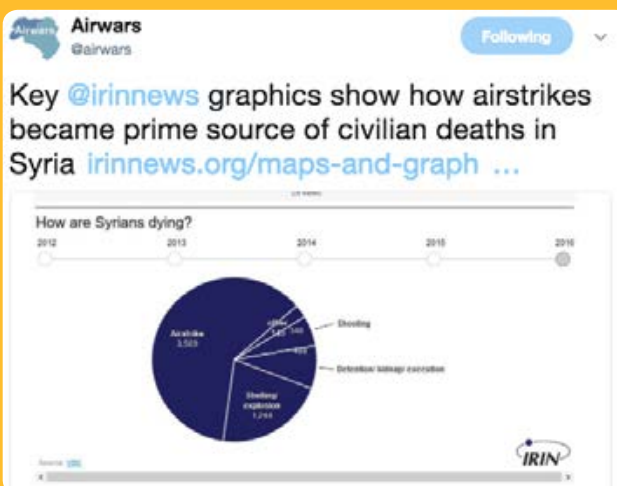
TWITTER CHATS



Somini Sengupta @SominiSengupta Following

This map:

IRIN News @irinnews
NEW: No way out: How Syrians are struggling to find an exit as borders close: irinnews.org/analysis/2016/...



Mark Yarnell @yarnellmark

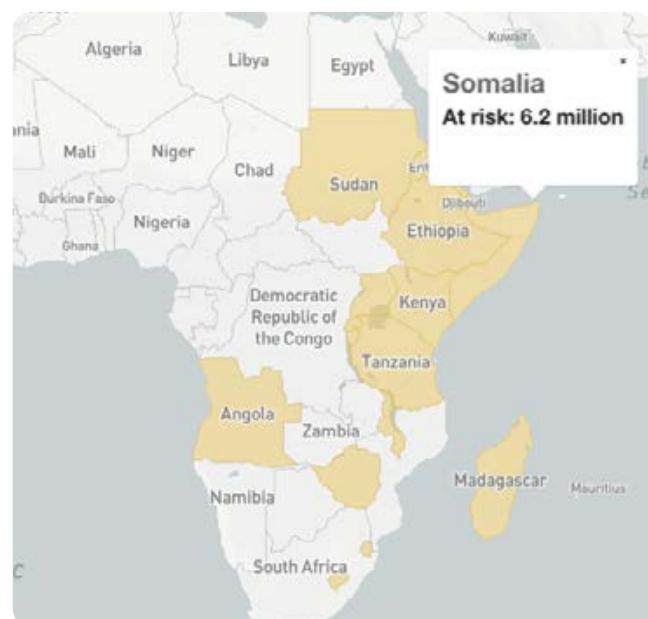
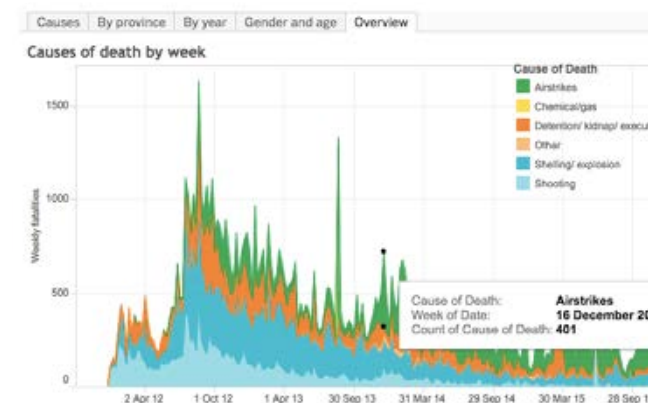
Incredible feature piece on unaccompanied #refugee minors transiting through #Greece by @taniakaras via @irinnews irinnews.org/feature/2016/0...

3:27 PM - Feb 24, 2016

Pamela DeLargy @umasalam

@BenParker140 @irinnews @annieslem this is a truly brilliant analysis. Should be required reading. THANK YOU

2:13 PM - Feb 12, 2016 · Camberwell, London



2016 at a glance

JANUARY

IRIN constitutes an independent legal entity, with a meeting of its founding board of directors in Geneva, Switzerland



FEBRUARY

IRIN launches a new website

IRIN establishes a new syndication partnership with the Los Angeles Times' Global Development Watch

The United Kingdom House of Commons invites IRIN to provide evidence to its parliamentary inquiry into the global humanitarian system. Our [submission](#) is cited several times in the [final report](#) highlighting UK priorities for reform at the World Humanitarian Summit

MARCH

IRIN signs a new funding partnership with Dutch Foundation Stichting Vluchteling

IRIN Association registered at the Geneva Registry of Commerce

EXCLUSIVE: The ethical failure – Why I resigned from the UN

Anders Kompass on the UN's failure to uphold its principles



MAY

Heba Aly takes over as Director of IRIN

IRIN launches a new investigative unit with co-founder and former CEO Ben Parker at its head

The first report, "[US probe into Turkey-Syria aid corruption deepens](#)", exposes the scale and impact of corruption in aid delivery across the Turkey-Syria border

IRIN's hard-hitting coverage of the [World Humanitarian Summit](#) includes scoops, analysis, and critique that is widely shared, praised, and republished

JUNE

The Overseas Development Institute, IRIN's temporary fiscal host during its transition period, transfers the running of operations to the newly created IRIN Association

IRIN publishes the multimedia feature, [Blue Nile: Sudan's Forgotten Front](#), as part of our Forgotten Conflicts series. The feature later wins an Amnesty International Media Award and second place in the National Press Photographer's Association Quarterly Multimedia Contest

IRIN breaks the news of the resignation of a senior UN official who exposed the sexual abuse of children by peacekeepers in Central African Republic in 2014. In an [exclusive commentary](#) for IRIN, Anders Kompass details the impunity and lack of accountability in the UN that led him to quit. The article is cited by The New York Times, the BBC, The Guardian, Le Monde and other news outlets around the world

APRIL

IRIN strikes a new multi-year funding partnership with the Swiss Lottery (Loterie Romande)



JULY

IRIN [exposes](#) UN funding for a charity run by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's wife, causing at least one Western donor to reconsider its funding to the UN agency involved

AUGUST

IRIN hires Multimedia Producer Miranda Grant. Her first film "[Who in the world is Millie Wonder?](#)" is later shortlisted for a One World Media Award

The World Humanitarian Day film festival in Geneva screens IRIN's film, "[The Body Collector](#)", about a young Sierra Leonean risking his life to fight Ebola

Peter Maurer, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, addresses staff at IRIN's annual retreat



SEPTEMBER

IRIN gains [rare access](#) to Saudi Arabia's defence ministry headquarters, where Middle East Editor Annie Slemrod gives the world a window into military targeting decisions that have led to thousands of civilian casualties

IRIN publishes the film, "[Why this Indonesian fisherman risked it all](#)", which later wins an award for Excellence in Video Reporting from the Society of Publishers in Asia

IRIN's new investigative unit [exposes](#) ties between the UN and a blacklisted blood diamond company in Central African Republic



OCTOBER

IRIN officially [opens](#) its new headquarters in Geneva in the presence of ambassadors from several countries, Swiss authorities, and representatives of NGOs, UN agencies, academia, and the private sector

IRIN publishes a special in-depth report on [Afghanistan's deepening migration crisis](#)

NOVEMBER

Human Rights Watch uses [IRIN's article](#) on Afghan refugees being deported from Pakistan to put pressure on the UN to act

IRIN strikes two new funding partnerships with the Open Society Foundations for coverage of resilience to climate change in Africa and militancy in West Africa

IRIN publishes a [detailed exposé](#) of a [major corruption and governance scandal](#) at the Irish NGO GOAL



DECEMBER

IRIN hires Administration & Finance Manager Victoria Bytsko

IRIN develops a new five-year strategy focused on three key pillars: high-impact journalism, audience growth, and managing with excellence



Photograph: Dimitri Tosidis/IRIN

Our journalism in action

2016 was, by any definition, a year of crisis. Fuelled by conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, and most of all Syria, the number of people forcibly displaced around the world reached a record high of 65.6 million. At the start of the year, the focus was on the one million plus migrants and refugees arriving in Europe. By the end, the world watched in anguish as the noose tightened around an ever-shrinking rebel enclave in East Aleppo, and as war raged once again in South Sudan. New crises emerged in Myanmar, Cameroon, and Venezuela, while old ones rumbled on under the radar in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic. An inaugural World Humanitarian Summit promised great reforms and innovation, while the gap between needs and funding stretched to record levels. Meanwhile, the strongest El Niño phenomenon on record led to an extreme drought in 2016 in several African countries, with 10.2 million in need of food aid in Ethiopia alone.

In covering these stories, we sought to better inform decision-makers of the realities on the ground, deepen understanding of complex issues, and bring to light forgotten angles, in line with our historic mission.

But in 2016, we also introduced a new focus in our reporting on aid sector accountability and transparency. With IRIN co-founder Ben Parker at the helm of our new investigative unit, launched in May, we uncovered corruption and malpractice, gave a platform to whistle-blowers, and dug into the lack of progress towards the aid reform agenda.

Because powerful narratives are crucial in giving a proper voice to those most affected by crises, we also invested in new formats, in more visual storytelling, and in building a stronger network of talented contributors. This year for example, we recruited [Aron Lund](#), one of the most respected analysts specialising in Syria.

Effective presentation is paramount in explaining complex issues. The launch of our new Drupal-powered website in February 2016 re-invigorated the visual dynamism of our content. It has a slicker interface, is more responsive on mobile, and its greater functionality opens the door to new content formats and layouts, including 360-degree video, full-width photo, parallax scrolling, and auto-play film.

In the following pages, you'll find highlights of our coverage along the three objectives of our work:

**BETTER
DECISION-MAKING**

**INCREASED ACCOUNTABILITY
AND TRANSPARENCY**

**RAISING
AWARENESS**

Our journalism in action: Better decision making



“I’m really impressed
by the quality of the
work you do”

Jeremy Konyndyk

Former head of the Office for
Disaster Assistance at USAID

Policy-makers who design programmes and allocate resources for crisis prevention, resilience, and response can make better decisions with real-time information about changing needs that is independent of partisan interests and spans the whole continuum of crisis: not just the news as it breaks, but also the early warning before and the vital lessons learnt after.

In 2016, we provided in-depth analysis on the three humanitarian crises deemed the most complex and challenging by the UN, namely those in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, but we also shone a spotlight on the more forgotten crises from Central African Republic to Afghanistan, from Myanmar to Congo, from the Philippines to Ukraine. Beyond this appallingly wide geography of needs, we joined the dots between continents on cross-cutting global issues: from El Niño-related drought to the outbreak of Zika virus, from food ration cuts in Africa to rising Islamist militancy in Asia, from the tail-end of Europe’s mass migration influx to the start of the Rohingya exodus from Myanmar.



Replying to @irinnews

Thank you! Great encounter with your editors today. @Irinnews reporting & analysis on #humanitarian crises is & will remain indispensable

10:14 am - 18 Aug 2016

DIGGING DEEPER ON HEADLINE CRISES

IRIN stayed ahead, even on the major crises, unearthing the angles others hadn’t.

Syria migration

We [explored perceptions](#) of an all-too-cosy relationship between the UN and the government of President Bashar al-Assad; we [explained](#) how starvation was being used as the ultimate strategic weapon in the sick trading of besieged civilians; we [considered](#) the idea of aid airdrops long before they became popular – all the while providing [up-to-date analysis and reporting](#) about the conflict dynamics playing out



Image from our series on Boko Haram. Photograph: Ikechuku Ibe/IRIN

on the ground and the desperate situation for millions of displaced men, women, and children both inside and outside the country.

Iraq's multiple challenges

On Iraq, our hard-hitting analysis pointed out [the failure](#) of the aid response in Fallujah and [warned](#) of the massive needs ahead as the battle for Mosul loomed.

We examined the rise of the Shiite [militias](#), and the lack of options for young men; and we [investigated](#) the abuses of captives being screened for sympathies to so-called Islamic State.

Middle East Editor Annie Slemrod then travelled herself to look at the situation in Baghdad and Sunni-dominated Anbar Province, [flagging up](#) the displacement and sectarian timebombs lying ahead.

A weak response to the massive refugee crisis

2016 saw displacement reach record levels. IRIN highlighted the forced [return](#) of Afghan refugees from Pakistan, and Afghanistan's deepening migration crisis. We [reported on the fate](#) of thousands of Rohingya refugees stranded on boats off Indonesia and Malaysia in a regional tug-of-war no one wanted to win. We [covered the growing influx](#) of South

Sudanese refugees into Uganda and warned that it might be the tip of the iceberg. One of our most-read [reports](#) in 2016 highlighted the lack of preparedness of humanitarian aid organisations confronted by a new wave of mass displacement out of Aleppo. Inspired by IRIN's [piece](#) on Eritrean asylum seekers being deported from Sudan back into Eritrea, where they were likely to face abuse, Human Rights Watch wrote a [report](#) demanding answers and action from the UN and the Sudanese government.

Brexit, Trump and hardening attitudes to refugees

While shining a light on migration flows in developing countries, which host the vast majority of the world's refugees, we also critically examined the West's response to the Syrian refugee crisis. With populism and far-right parties on the march in Europe and the United States, Migration Editor Kristy Siegfried exposed dangerous migration myths and drew attention to the facts that contradict them. While most people had written off the prospect of Donald Trump winning the presidential race, she separated the practical reality from the political rhetoric in a prophetic take on the [implications of a Trump win](#) for refugees and migrants. She also explored the consequences of Brexit and the changing political landscape for refugees, including the risk that EU politicians promote sentiments of fear and alienation.

At the end of the year, we drew attention to the [critical migration trends](#) that would unfold over the course of 2017, many of which came to pass as predicted.

UNDER-COVERED CRISES

In 2016, much of the mainstream media concentrated on the war in Syria and the refugee crisis in Europe, overlooking many other protracted crises. IRIN filled the gap, reporting on new massacres being perpetrated in South Sudan, children starving in Yemen, and waves of suicide bombings going under-reported in Nigeria.

The ripple effect of Boko Haram

We published nearly a dozen stories on Boko Haram and its impact on Nigeria and beyond. Contributor Hilary Matfess exposed the lack of support for Boko Haram's victims; journalist Mbom Sixtus showed how the 2.8 million Nigerian citizens who had fled in Cameroon's Lake Chad region from Boko Haram were fuelling a growing malnutrition crisis amongst their desperately poor hosts; and IRIN Africa Editor Obi Anyadike examined whether female suicide bombers – [a signature weapon of Boko Haram](#) – were coerced or committed.

Yemen's tragedy:

exploring causes and reactions

In our most popular article in February 2016, IRIN Middle East Editor Annie Slemrod went searching for answers to why the crisis in Yemen was so ignored. Marginalised? Complex? Crisis fatigue? The reasons were varied but the conclusion was clear. Ultimately, a leading Yemen expert explains, "people will be asking this question: Why didn't we pay more attention to Yemen? Why didn't we take it more seriously when we had a chance to do something?" This piece was made all the more poignant by the loss, on 17 January, of Almigdad Mojalli, IRIN's regular contributor in Yemen, who was killed in an airstrike.

In May 2016, Slemrod gained rare access to the [war rooms](#) in Saudi Arabia where the military targeting decisions are made, highlighting the enormous gulf between the anodyne operation she was shown and the horror on the ground, where more than 80 percent of the 10,000 deaths are estimated to be civilians.





Image from our series on the Rohingya Crisis. Photograph: Aurélie Marrier d'Unienville/IRIN

EARLY WARNING

It's an oddity of today's globally connected world that so many crises – from famines to wars to environmental catastrophes – still fail to be spotted in the early stages, a symptom perhaps of system failure, political apathy, lack of public awareness. Because our reporters are on the ground before, during, and after crises, we witness brewing problems and sound the alarm early. 2016 saw IRIN draw attention to three emerging or re-emerging conflicts that became major crises down the line.

Shining a spotlight on South Sudan

As the situation began to worsen again in South Sudan mid-2016, we published more than a dozen reports in June and July warning of the dangers ahead as the risk of sustained conflict increased and refugees began pouring into Uganda in larger numbers.

The Rohingya fight for recognition

Building on years of coverage of the Rohingya people, in 2016 we reported on the growing challenges they faced in Myanmar. In July,

we wrote of the Rohingya's [distrust](#) of the government's citizenship program, which many feared would provide a pretext for expulsion further down the line. We followed this up with a [feature](#) examining the wider – and chaotic – citizenship system.

Later in the year, we spoke to [Buddhist aid workers facing a backlash](#) for helping the Rohingya and in December our Asia Editor Jared Ferrie laid out the [mounting evidence](#) of serious persecution of the Rohingya by the Myanmar government and military who denied any oppression.

Flagging the rise of extremism in Mindanao

We also picked up early on the brewing dangers of [rising Islamist militancy](#) on the southern Philippine island of Mindanao, which later exploded into a full-blown crisis. The island is now under martial law and the city of Marawi suffered a months-long siege after being taken by extremists affiliated to the so-called Islamic State.

Our journalism in action: Increased accountability and transparency



“I’ve been more and more impressed with the IRIN file recently. Much sharper and bolder in holding the whole sector up to scrutiny.”

Senior Editor

Thomson Reuters Foundation

This vital strand of our work enjoyed a massive boost in 2016 with the launch of an investigative unit, which produced a rich vein of reporting that exposed malpractice and corruption in the humanitarian response sector. Complementing those special reports, our in-depth policy analysis flagged failures in aid response, highlighted best practice, and provided lessons learnt.

UNPACKING THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

The first World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in UN history took place in May 2016 as the number of people affected by humanitarian crises grew dramatically, climate change bit deeper, and the refugee crisis took a more critical turn.

The summit was a critical opportunity for the humanitarian response sector to agree reforms to the way assistance and protection are provided during crises. IRIN was there in full force, covering the lead-up to the summit, the event itself, and the aftermath.

Our dramatic [scoop](#) on the eve of the summit that one of the world’s most prominent NGOs, Médecins Sans Frontières, had dropped out of aired some of the scepticism about a gathering many feared had become a “fig-leaf of good intentions”.

In fact, the summit resulted in some 1,500 commitments made by governments and aid agencies to reform aid delivery, including reshaping the top-down nature of the humanitarian system, and a “Grand Bargain” between donors and UN agencies to make emergency aid finance more efficient and effective. Our specialist knowledge allowed us to meaningfully dissect and analyse these commitments and hold signatories to account for their promises.

IRIN’s expertise on aid policy was borne out by the United Kingdom House of Commons’ invitation to then Managing Editor Heba Aly to provide evidence to its parliamentary inquiry into the global humanitarian system. The government cited her [submission](#) several times in its [final report](#) highlighting UK priorities for reform at the WHS; it was also [cited in a book](#) and published as an [Op-Ed](#) in the UK’s Guardian newspaper.



Struggling to make sense of the bewildering series of discussions at the [World Humanitarian Summit](#) earlier this week? Here is the mother of all round-ups, by our very own Heba Aly:



The World Humanitarian Summit: winners and losers

Not sure what to take away from this week's unwieldy World Humanitarian Summit? Here's our summary of what was – and wasn't – agreed.

IRINNEWS.ORG

63 Likes 1 Comment 43 Shares

EXPOSING COVER UPS, CORRUPTION... AND MORE

The aid sector is full of inherent conflicts of interest but has limited accountability mechanisms. Most monitoring and evaluation of aid work is done by those same aid agencies themselves. In places like Syria, it has at times been nearly impossible to get an honest, accurate picture of the realities of aid delivery. Our aim is to be an objective resource in combatting this.

A sobering dark secret at the UN

Our most popular article of the year reverberated heavily around the corridors of UN headquarters. We [broke the news](#) that Anders Kompass, a senior UN official who exposed the sexual abuse of children by French and African peacekeepers in Central African Republic in 2014, was to quit. Then, in an [exclusive commentary](#), he went on to detail the reasons for his resignation. When Kompass reported the abuse to the French government,

the UN appeared to be more interested in hounding him for not using the proper channels than in pursuing the perpetrators; and a monumental scandal followed. Our story was cited by Agence France-Presse, the BBC, The Guardian, The New York Times, Le Monde and other global media, and viewed more than 52,000 times on the IRIN website.

Over the course of 2016, our nascent investigative unit published a host of stories that exposed shoddy practices in the humanitarian response sector.

Syria's aid headaches: corruption, deadlock and chaos

Our special report on corruption by NGOs working along the Syria-Turkey border revealed that an investigation by a US government watchdog ran deeper and involved more international NGOs than previously reported, undermining vital cross-border relief for desperate Syrians.

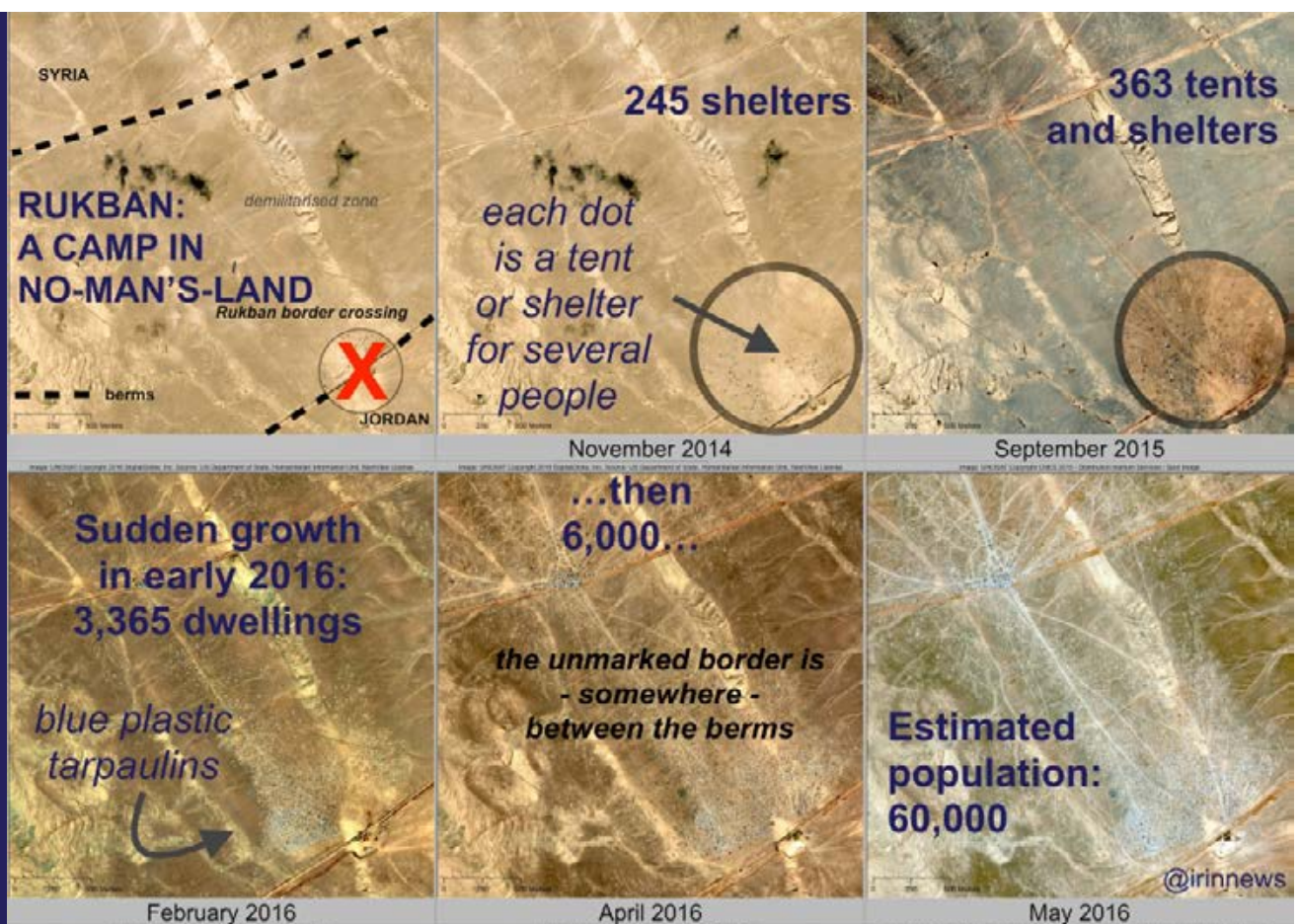
In July 2016, as the siege of rebel-held East

Aleppo had just begun, IRIN's Ben Parker wrote of political deadlock, aid agencies in disarray, and even of a UN grant to a charity chaired by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's wife.

Palantir, CAR sanctions, China's double-game

In an exclusive story, we revealed that the UN had paid more than \$500,000 to a company on its own sanctions list for allegedly fuelling the conflict in Central African Republic through the sale of "blood diamonds".

Other investigations included: Jared Ferrie's dive into China's [dangerous double-game](#) of arms supply in Sudan and South Sudan; Obi Anyadike's exposé of CIA-linked tech firm Palantir's foray into the world of humanitarianism, [Spies Sans Frontières](#); and a series of special reports on [70,000 Syrian would-be refugees stuck](#) in a no-man's land between the Jordanian and Syrian borders.



"The "buffer zone" plan for 70,000 stranded Syrian refugees" report



“The UN’s accountability system is broken. It simply doesn’t work.”

Anders Kompass,
Former UN field operations
director at OHCHR

Photograph: Andrew Quilty/IRIN

Our journalism in action: Raising awareness



“IRIN provides absolutely essential humanitarian news from places no one else goes”

Peter Bouckaert

Emergencies Director,
Human Rights Watch

IRIN seeks to expand its audience beyond decision-makers and aid practitioners, bringing urgent humanitarian crises to the attention of a wider readership so that an engaged and well-informed public puts pressure on the political elite to act. In 2016, we proactively sought out this new readership through targeted videos, multimedia, and social media products that were more accessible to a general audience. Such formats are key to attracting audiences who are not already invested in humanitarian issues.

In this video to mark World Humanitarian Day, IRIN Multimedia Editor Miranda Grant featured [Millie Wonder](#), a rape survivor who gives self-defence training to schoolgirls in a Nairobi slum, showing readers how individual and communities can make a lasting impact in small but powerful ways.

SPOTLIGHT ON FORGOTTEN STORIES

While some humanitarian crises sail off the mainstream media’s radar far too quickly, others never even make it there at all. Our [Forgotten Conflicts](#) series sought to remedy that.

Blue Nile’s forgotten war

In 2016, we published our award-winning cutting-edge multimedia feature from [Blue Nile](#) in Sudan. Overshadowed by higher-profile conflicts in Darfur and South Sudan, the long-running conflict in Blue Nile that pits the government in Khartoum against rebels fighting for their independence has had immense humanitarian consequences.

Contributors Amanda Sperber, Will Miller, Alex Pritz, and Ashley Hamer crossed the border by road from South Sudan and spent two weeks crisscrossing the province. What they found was a region depopulated by violence, stalked by hunger, and abandoned by the international aid community. With local voices, graphics, and audio-visuals, this feature on a remote southeastern province of Sudan offers a unique, immersive multimedia experience – “Find the time to read this incredible multimedia piece,” wrote Max Bearak of the Washington Post.



Across the Border

Images from our report [Blue Nile: Sudan's Forgotten Front](#)

Unpicking the roots of conflict in the Philippines

As part of the forgotten conflict series, Asia Editor Jared Ferrie reported in-depth on the raft of non-state armed groups on the southern island of Mindanao. He examined everything from the stalled communist insurgency to the humanitarian repercussions for indigenous peoples being driven off their land by a complex mix of paramilitaries, clan-based private armies, and networks of organised crime. Read [Forgotten Conflicts: The Philippines](#) for more.

Telling more powerful stories through maps, data and video

Our “World at War” [interactive map](#) highlighting ongoing conflicts around the world, launched at the very start of the series and updated multiple times, has garnered tens of thousands of views, including via top-circulation media organisations.

Raising awareness is also about making the facts, the text, and the visuals more accessible. Over the course of 2016, we demystified labyrinthine UN data by putting it in easy-to-understand data visualisations; and we plunged audiences into a 360-degree video experience of [mass evacuations from eastern Aleppo](#). We also prioritised using [films](#), charts, and [maps](#) to make complex stories easily understandable for the widest possible audience.



[“World at War” Interactive map](#)



Photograph: Sevim Turkmani/ICRC

Production and reach: The numbers

As we seek to build up new, independent sources of financing following our spin-off from the UN, we have focused on quality over quantity in our journalism. Still, in 2016, we published: 548 articles, features, in-depths and other formats; 1,000 original photos; and 19 films. We reported from dozens of countries covering the gamut of humanitarian themes – from conflict to aid innovation. We increased the percentage of articles that are analytical in nature and we boosted the number of features and multimedia formats. Nearly half of our content was translated into Arabic and one third into French.

IRIN's Global Presence in 2016

Our stringers and editors reported from these countries



Articles written from:

Alghanistan	Mali
Algeria	Mauritania
Azerbaijan	Mexico
Bangladesh	Mongolia
Belgium	Morocco
Bolivia	Myanmar
Brazil	Nepal
Burundi	Nicaragua
Cambodia	Nigeria
Cameroon	Norway
Canada	Pakistan
Central African Republic	Palestine
Chad	Philippines
China	Rwanda
Colombia	Saudi Arabia
DRC	Senegal
Djibouti	Serbia
Dominican Republic	Sierra Leone
Ecuador	Somalia
Egypt	South Africa
El Salvador	South Sudan
Ethiopia	Sri Lanka
France	Sudan
Germany	Sweden
Greece	Switzerland
Haiti	Syria
India	Thailand
Indonesia	Timor-Leste
Iraq	Tunisia
Israel	Turkey
Italy	Uganda
Jordan	Ukraine
Kenya	United Arab Emirates
Laos	United Kingdom
Lebanon	United States
Libya	Venezuela
Madagascar	Vietnam
Malawi	Yemen
Malaysia	Zimbabwe

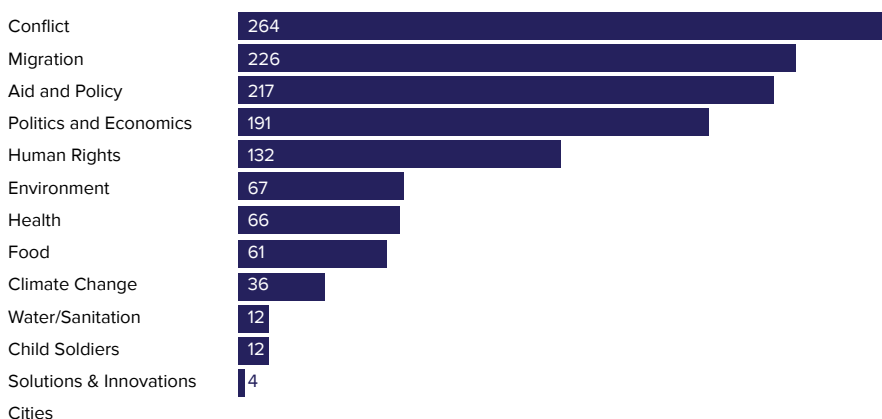
Production in English by Region

1 January - 31 December 2016



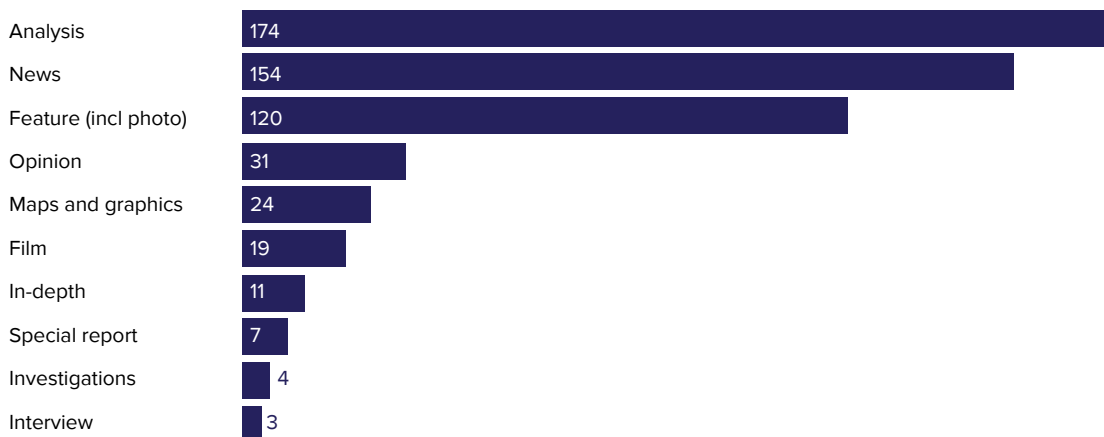
Production in English by Theme

1 January - 31 December 2016



Production in English by Format

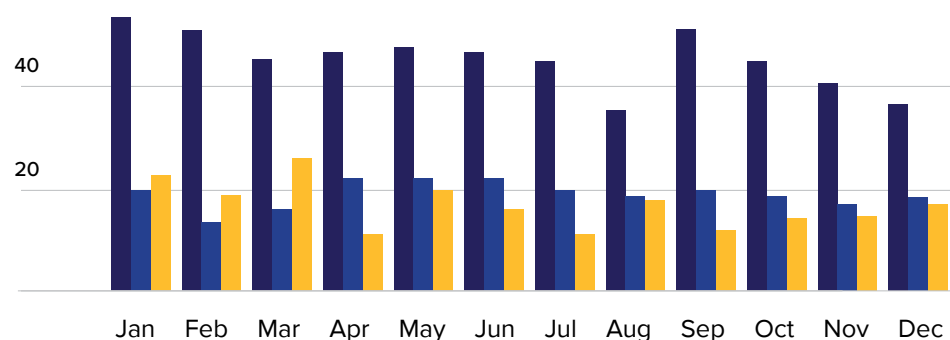
1 January - 31 December 2016



Production by Language

1 January - 31 December 2016

■ English ■ Arabic ■ French



Audience, syndication and marketing: Doing more with less

IRIN's audience combines the decision-maker and the millennial, the West and the Global South, humanitarian aid practitioners and the general public.

We give invested readers who drive global opinion real-time access to local texture and analysis that no one else has the expertise, time, or money to cover: nearly two thirds of IRIN readers have an impact on humanitarian issues and policies; 40 percent live in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

As we renewed our emphasis on quality over quantity, our website traffic performed well, with only slightly less traffic despite significantly lower production levels.

Our 2016 stories generated more than 4,482,061 total page views on the IRIN website, with an average of just over 212,000 monthly visitors and 41 percent of them connecting from mobile devices.

This healthy growth across mobile was mirrored on social media, where followers on Twitter and Facebook grew by 20.5 percent and 18.5 percent respectively. Our reports were shared with 38,000 email subscribers from more than 190 countries via tailored mailing lists, designed to inform relevant authorities, analysts, and specialists on their areas of interest.

Boosting Syndication

A key objective of our work - achieved through media syndication – is to raise awareness

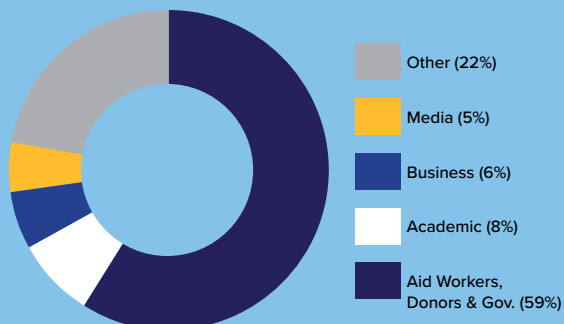
about crises among wider audiences, forcing humanitarian issues onto the agenda. By helping sophisticated global audiences understand how and why atrocities happen and what can be done to prevent them in the future, IRIN contributes to increased global solidarity and an enabling environment for humanitarian response.

Mainstream media channels and local newspapers turn to IRIN as a source for new insights into humanitarian crises and regularly cite or republish our material. Over the course of 2016, IRIN established new syndication partnerships with the Los Angeles Times' Global Development Watch and the Media and Information Policy Journal (a quarterly magazine focused on the nexus between media, information, international relations and humanitarian affairs), in addition to our existing partnerships with the Guardian Development Network, All Africa, and ReliefWeb.

In 2016, IRIN was republished and/or quoted by international and regional news outlets in the United States, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, including The New York Times, Agence France-Presse (AFP), the Guardian, Le Monde, the BBC, Bloomberg, Le Temps, the Voice Of America Times, Poynter, Foreign Policy, the Mail & Guardian Africa, Internazionale, Welt Sichten, Human Rights Watch, Médecins Sans Frontières, the International Organization for Migration, Amnesty International, Dawn's Digest, the World Humanitarian Summit, Rights in Exile Newsletter, Klvn Mag, Mizzima (Myanmar), Sunday Times Sri Lanka, Al Arab, the Yemen Observer, and Al Wasat (Bahrain), among others.

Audience

IRIN has a diverse global readership, drawn predominantly from the international aid sector.



More than 40% of IRIN's audience originates from Africa, Asia & the Middle East

Reach



Tens of thousands of engagements on social media/month



Around 210,000 unique visitors/month



Around 37,000 email subscribers globally



More than 33,000 Facebook fans



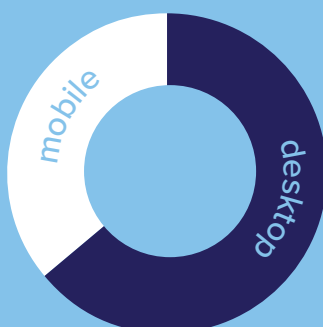
More than 66,000 Twitter followers



200 newspapers, websites & journals republish/cite IRIN's work

Desktop vs Mobile

At least 36% of IRIN's audience is reading, watching, listening to IRIN's content on mobile (30%) and tablet devices (6%)



An increasing number of IRIN's readers are engaging with content through mobile and tablet devices

BUILDING OUR PROFILE, INFORMING DEBATE

The quality and originality of our journalism was recognised yet again in 2016. Our special report on the forgotten conflict in [Sudan's Blue Nile](#) province was shortlisted for an Amnesty International Media Award, alongside the BBC and the Guardian, and won second place in the National Press Photographer's Association Quarterly Multimedia Contest. Our photo feature "[Rocky road: Disabled refugees battle through the Balkans](#)" by Jodi Hilton was nominated for an AidEx humanitarian journalism award and our film "[Who in the world is Millie Wonder?](#)" was shortlisted for the One World Media Women's Rights in Africa Award.

Offline activities are an important part of IRIN's strategy in both building our profile and enriching and informing debate. 2016 saw members of our team participate in international conferences, alongside politicians and aid officials to provide their insights. Our team was regularly interviewed by other media and gave a series of university lectures. Here are some highlights:

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

The World Humanitarian Summit,
Istanbul, Turkey
The Dubai International Humanitarian Aid & Development Conference & Exhibition,
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Aidex Africa, Nairobi, Kenya
The InterAction annual forum,
Washington, D.C.

UNIVERSITY LECTURES

John Carroll University, United States
City University, United Kingdom
Rothberg International School,
Jerusalem

MEDIA INTERVIEWS

National Post Radio, Canada
Politics and Reality Radio, United States
AFP, International

PROVIDING EXPERT INSIGHT

Input into a report by the International Committee of the Red Cross on communicating with people affected by crises.
Participation in round-table discussion on stigma against refugees in the media at Oxford University



Guardian republication of: [Bridging the language divide in Thailand's strife-torn deep south](#)

Organisational developments

IRIN's path towards full independence was carefully planned and executed to ensure we constructed strong foundations for future growth and development.

AN ORGANISED ROUTE TO FULL INDEPENDENCE

During our transition from the UN, IRIN was hosted administratively and financially by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London until we could establish an independent legal entity. In close cooperation with IRIN's Operations Manager and the wider management team, ODI handled our finance, administration, HR, and logistics, receiving funding on IRIN's behalf and contracting our staff and vendors, while IRIN retained full authority over its organisational priorities, strategy, staffing, and editorial decision-making.

Building upon best practice established at ODI, and under ODI's strategic guidance and capacity building, IRIN began to build its own independent administrative capacity. This involved months-long preparation and consultation with a selection of partners and service providers in human resources, accounting, and legal, risk and insurance matters. This ensured that the newly born IRIN Association was ready to function and that its policies and procedures (statutes of incorporation, new employment contracts, financial, HR & travel policies, etc.) were in compliance with both Swiss law and local jurisdictions in the countries in which IRIN operates.

IRIN constituted an independent non-profit legal entity in January 2016, headquartered in Geneva, and governed by a newly established board of directors. ODI then began a phased handover of activities to the IRIN Association.

In March 2016, IRIN Association was registered as the Geneva Registry of Commerce; in May, IRIN opened its own bank accounts; and in June, IRIN began receiving funding directly and employing all its own staff and contractors. While IRIN now operates completely independently of ODI, the two organisations continue to collaborate where relevant, as governed by a Memorandum of Understanding. Sara Pantuliano, managing director at ODI, sits on IRIN Association's governance board.



New headquarters opening ceremony

NEW GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

IRIN's newly established governance board, known as the Executive Committee, met three times in 2016. IRIN's founding members bring together expertise in journalism, crisis zones, humanitarian affairs, technology and organisational strategy. They are:

- Howard French, award-winning former New York Times international correspondent and associate professor at Columbia University (President)
- Andy Martin, founder and director of the civil society strategy consulting firm Firetail (Vice President and Treasurer)
- Dr. Marco Ferrari, former deputy head of Swiss Humanitarian Aid Department (Secretary)
- Peter Bouckaert, emergencies director at Human Rights Watch
- Mark Bidder, head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Philippines

Over the course of the year, the board elected two new members: Dr. Sara Pantuliano, managing director at the Overseas Development Institute, and Paula Fray, veteran South African journalist and media trainer.

A high-level advisory group provides further guidance.

NEW HEADQUARTERS

On 12 October 2016, IRIN opened its new headquarters at 3 Rue de Varembé, Geneva in the presence of ambassadors, Swiss authorities, and representatives of NGOs, UN agencies, academia, and the private sector.

Ambassador Valentin Zellweger, permanent representative of Switzerland to the Office of the United Nations in Geneva, spoke of the importance of quality humanitarian journalism:

"We observe a monoculture in terms of media coverage. IRIN is different. At this unprecedented time of crises around the world, IRIN's high-quality, responsible coverage is therefore more needed than ever."

In his keynote speech, Yves Daccord, Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross, aptly encapsulated IRIN's mission:

"Numbers are important. What qualifies humanitarian crises is numbers. But it doesn't tell us anything about the reality of people. Please help us to see the people beyond the numbers... We need you to help us to communicate, to report about complexity. I'm not seeing that in

NEW 5-YEAR STRATEGY

Based on an in-depth assessment of the areas of work where IRIN has the most impact, the management team developed a five-year strategy at the end of 2016, with three key pillars:

1. PRODUCING HIGH-IMPACT JOURNALISM

To break through an increasingly cluttered information landscape, high-quality, high-impact journalism must be at the core of what we do. To this end, we are reviewing our operating model to reallocate our human and financial resources towards those formats and approaches that have the greatest impact, including a ramp-up of our investigative work, while reinvigorating our journalism by injecting more of a news culture into the organisation.

2. ENGAGING THE WIDEST POSSIBLE AUDIENCE

With audience comes relevance, influence, and thus impact. Humanitarian action is no longer solely dominated by governments and the UN. The private sector, new philanthropists, and citizen volunteers all play an increasingly important role. As such, we will seek out the widest possible audience of consumers who care about, are affected by, or can influence the evolution of crises. We will build on the best of our heritage, networks, and expertise, and exploit new opportunities in technology and partnerships to ensure our content reaches and informs this broader audience of change-makers.

3. MANAGING WITH EXCELLENCE

To achieve our vision, IRIN's new operational infrastructure must be top notch. We cannot take risks when sending people into war zones. We will not forego our duty of care towards our staff and our contributors. In order to pursue high-risk stories with confidence – both in the field and in our investigations – we must have robust security and legal protections in place. We must also maintain the trust of our donors with robust financial management practices. And we must put in place the fundraising infrastructure to sustain our work over the long-term.

Our team



The IRIN team

ANNUAL STAFF RETREAT

IRIN's annual staff meeting, held in Geneva in August 2016, brought together all staff – from as far afield as Kenya, Cambodia, and Canada – for three intensive days of strategy discussions, training, and team-building. Guest speakers included Peter Maurer, the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and experts in international humanitarian law and investigative journalism. Other sessions included a review of IRIN's mission, objectives, positioning, and audience; as well as story analytics and performance. The meeting was also an opportunity for a decentralised staff to meet each other – in many cases for the first time – and get to know those with whom they work on a daily basis.

OUR TEAM

In 2016, Heba Aly, formerly managing editor, took over the leadership of IRIN. Heba is a quadri-lingual multimedia journalist and aid commentator, with a decade of experience reporting from sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia.

Our specialist editorial staff are based in Phnom Penh, Nairobi, and Jerusalem, giving us a global reach. Their work is supported by more than 200 freelance reporters, filmmakers, and graphic designers, based in crisis zones around the world.

Over the course of 2016, we invested in new staff to bolster our operations, financial management, and visual story-telling. In August 2016, we hired multimedia producer Miranda Grant, who significantly increased film and multimedia production and diversified IRIN's social media output. The recruitment in December of administrative and financial manager Victoria Bytsko improved IRIN's internal capacity for financial reporting and allocation of funds.

Our partners

Our funding comes from a mix of governments, foundations, and private organisations. Several new fundraising partnerships struck in 2016 have laid the groundwork for longer-term growth. In 2016, several discussions were underway with new donors for funding in 2017.

Listed below are grants received in 2016 (for both core and earmarked funding). Please note that the corresponding grant periods vary by donor, with some of the grants also contributing to 2017 activities.

DONOR	TOTAL GRANT (local currency)	TOTAL GRANT USD (\$)
Loterie Romande	CHF 850,000	816,000
Swiss Development Cooperation	CHF 250,000	255,000
Swedish International Development Agency	SEK 1,000,000	121,000
Stichting Vluchteling	€100,000	110,000
UN Foundation	\$50,000	50,000
Open Society Foundation	\$100,000	100,000
Open Society Initiative for West Africa	\$100,000	100,000

In a bid to build up reserves and provide longer-term financial stability, independent of grant funding, IRIN also began generating additional revenues from activities such as syndication and advertising. Building additional levels of reserves is one of IRIN's key strategic objectives.

OTHER REVENUE GENERATION	TOTAL GRANT (local currency)	TOTAL GRANT USD (\$)
Bespoke Analysis (Contract with the European Asylum Support Office)	€40,000	48,000
Content Licensing, Advertising & Sub-letting	CHF 1,813	1,869
Foreign Exchange gains	CHF 1,604	1,653



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra



Finances

BACKGROUND

From January until May 2016, IRIN's financial transactions were processed by the Overseas Development Institute as a distinct part of its accounting system. ODI's financial year runs from 1 April – 31 March and it has issued external audit reports with unqualified opinions for both 2015/16 and 2016/17. From June and for the rest of 2016 and beyond, IRIN has assumed direct responsibility for its financial transactions and set up its own accounting system as a newly independent Swiss association.

2016 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Below is a summary of IRIN's Income and Expenditure for the calendar year of 2016. This represents a combination of IRIN's ODI-hosted accounts and the accounts at IRIN Association in Switzerland. IRIN's total expenditure for 2016 was almost entirely funded by grants from donors with some grant funding received towards the end of the year being carried forward into 2017. Some additional, but limited, revenues were generated from content licensing, advertising, and bespoke analysis activities, as well as some small foreign exchange gains.

IRIN Association has engaged staff as both employees, for those based in Switzerland, and long-term consultants, for those based elsewhere. Total staff costs are a combination of "salaries" and "consulting fees" figures in the accounts (Swiss financial reporting regulations require that employee and consulting costs are reported separately).

Further detailed information can be found in the reports from IRIN's external auditors – Berney Associés – in the annexes:

Annex 1: Report of the auditors on the consolidated statement of IRIN's financial activities for the year 2016

Annex 2: Report of the auditors on the limited statutory examination for IRIN Association from March to December 2016

IRIN Association expects to have one statutory external auditor's report for 2017 and for each year thereafter.

Income	2016 US Dollars
Grants Received	1,287,597
Other operating income	49,869
Total operating income	1,337,466
Expenditure	
Staff costs (including consultants)*	881,608
Other expenditure	456,158
Total operating expenditure	1,337,766
Operating surplus / (loss) for the year	(300)
Financing (gains) / losses	1,653
Net surplus / (loss) for the year	1,353

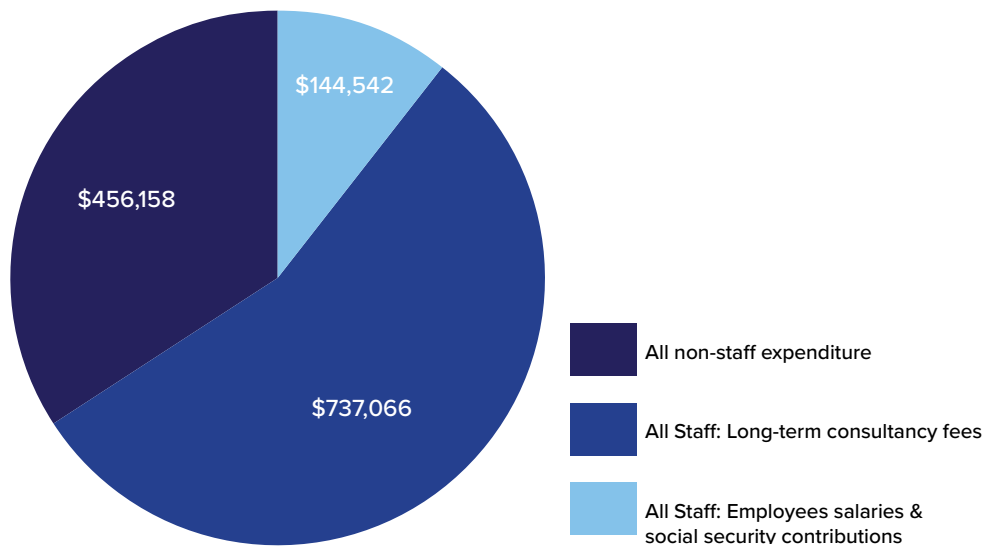
OPERATING COSTS

Staff costs (employees and consultants) represented two thirds of all costs, which is normal for an information service provider. IRIN has a lean core team of employees at Head Office and international regional editors, engaged as consultants. Our in-house staff leverage a wider global network of freelance journalists, who are paid by the article – a much more efficient model than parachuting in staff reporters.

During 2016, IRIN established a well-balanced cost structure to serve as the foundation for future growth. Editorial spending represented 61 percent of total expenditure. This spending ratio of approximately 2:1 between editorial and non-editorial costs allows the optimum focus on delivery of core journalistic objectives, bolstered by a professional and efficient range of essential support services.

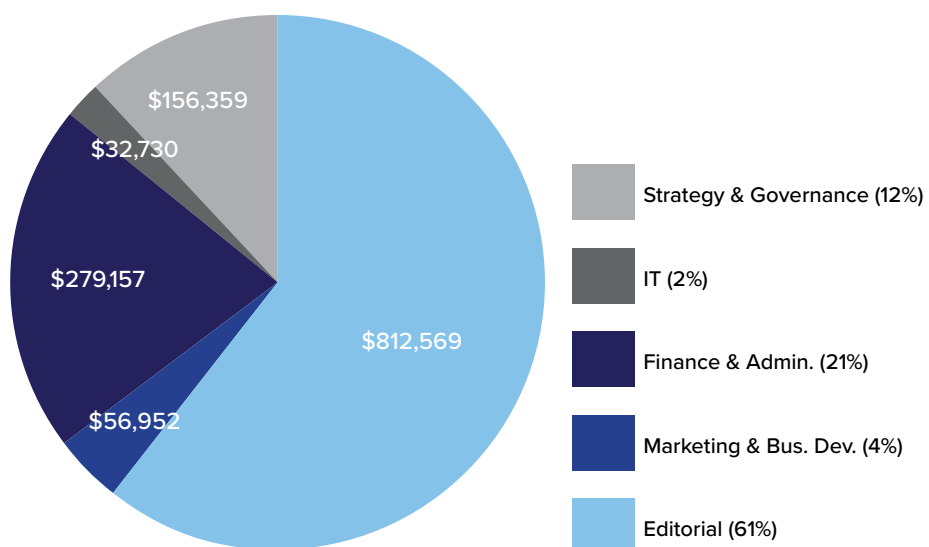
IRIN: 2016 Expenditure = \$1,337,766

All Staff (66%) &
All Non-staff costs (34%)



IRIN: 2016 Expenditure = \$1,337,766

All Costs By Function





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IRIN_{NEWS}

THE INSIDE STORY ON EMERGENCIES

IRIN Association
Rue de Varembe 3
CH - 1202 Geneva
Switzerland

Tel: + 41 22 525 6603
Email: hello@irinnews.org

Cover Photograph: András Hajdú/IRIN