

IRIN NEWS

THE INSIDE STORY ON EMERGENCIES

www.irinnews.org





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



Our mission

IRIN uses local voices and expert analysis to bring the inside story on emergencies to the public. Our frontline reporting seeks to influence policy, mobilize opinion, and improve humanitarian response to save lives.

Through a network of local correspondents, experienced editors and analysts, and an intimate knowledge of the humanitarian sector, IRIN provides unique multimedia news and analysis from hotspots in more than 70 countries.

Why IRIN?

The number of people affected by humanitarian crises has almost doubled over the past decade. Climate change, population growth, volatile markets, water scarcity, sectarianism and the mushrooming of armed groups and extremists are pushing more and more communities to the edge. The world is an increasingly troubled place.

And yet, time and again – in Syria, in Sri Lanka, in the Democratic Republic of Congo – the traditional international humanitarian relief apparatus has been unable to respond adequately. The emergency aid industry is worth \$24 billion a year and needs a major overhaul to become more flexible and networked, principled and fair, transparent and grounded in local structures.

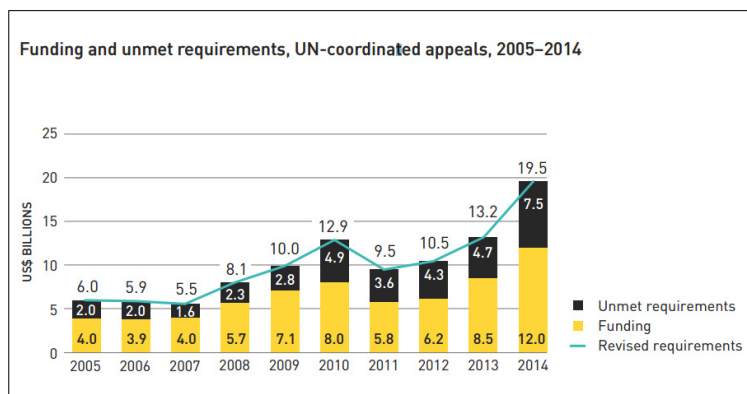
That change is underway. New players are emerging. People are helping each other in novel ways. Expectations for aid effectiveness and accountability are ever-growing. In five to ten years, the emergency relief enterprise may be unrecognizable.

Core to this emerging landscape is a new vein of communication, analysis and reporting. Like the humanitarian system itself, crisis reporting has to fit a turbulent world. Saving lives is messy. We need to talk about uncomfortable truths. We need to acknowledge when politics skews budgets, when aid workers have to negotiate with tyrants; or when good intentions pave the road to hell.

Yet as the number of crises – and the money required to respond to them – have increased in recent years, mainstream media have drastically cut their coverage of international affairs (see below). Even Thomson Reuters Foundation's Trust.org, IRIN's closest competitor, has reduced its number of editors. New online media ventures are a lot stronger on kittens than refugee camps.

IRIN stands against the tide. For nearly 20 years, as part of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, IRIN has been the leading source of credible, in-depth news about crises. As an independent media non-profit organization as of January 2015, IRIN's editorial voice is bolder and its reach is expanding.

In today's world, IRIN is more needed than ever.



What we do

IRIN produces reportage, in-depth interviews, video explainers, interactive maps, graphics, galleries, top ten lists, curated reading suggestions, guest commentary and more.

Over two decades, we have developed an archive of more than 100,000 frontline reports that track the buildup to crises before they start and continue to follow them long after the spotlight has moved on. We also have a 30,000-strong photo library and a back catalogue of slideshows, documentaries and video shorts.

We report on Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas. We offer reports in English, French and Arabic (IRIN is the only consistent source of Arabic humanitarian news worldwide), and will be adding Spanish and Mandarin down the road.

But we need to continue pushing the boundaries. From our historic home in the United Nations, IRIN has branched out. We have shown that we can do our job even better from a position of independence. Our reporting has taken on new dimensions:

Investigative: We get behind the scenes, and uncover what does - and doesn't - work. Beyond

sunny sit-reps, the humanitarian system needs real-time critical examinations of the key policy questions and dilemmas. If peacekeepers are fuelling sex work; if relief items are not reaching rebel-controlled territory; if aid workers are pressured to compensate for political failures - you'll read it on IRIN, but with the nuance, context and understanding that can lead to constructive dialogue, not scandalous headlines.

Engaged: IRIN is a hub for debate and dialogue on humanitarian issues. You can find guest bloggers and experts writing on our site. And we bring the debates to you on different platforms - from Meerkat to Medium; in conferences, live events and op-eds. Our reporters are a part of the conversation on- and offline.

Innovative: We will always be committed to serious, quality journalism, but our presentation will always evolve. From Snapchat to drones, big data interactives to mobile-native, shareable social content, we are always looking for new formats to do what we do best: making sense of crises.

We bring the whole digital journalism toolkit to the most critical topic of today or any day: life and death.



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

Peter Bouckaert, Emergencies Director,
Human Rights Watch





We all treasure IRIN, of course,
lift ideas and angles from
you guys, and never give you
any credit.

Alex Duval-Smith, Correspondent
The Guardian (UK)

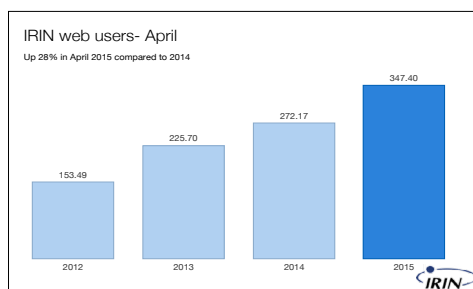
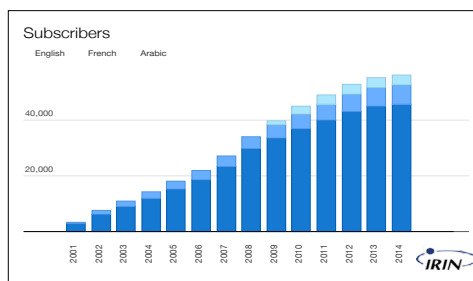
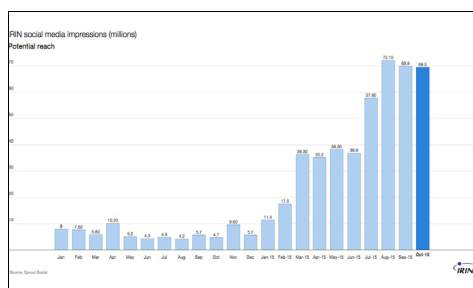
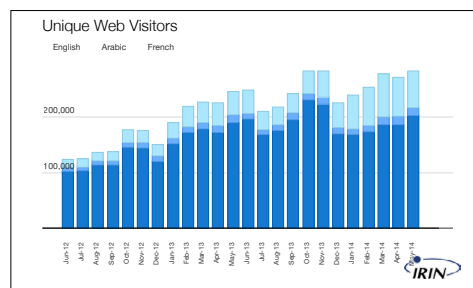


Our reach

We are the largest humanitarian news service in the world. Every month, our work reaches up to 70 million people through social media. Up to 300,000 people visit our website every month, more than one-third of them from mobile devices. We have 40,000 subscribers around the world, spanning almost every country. We have consistently grown over the years, including a doubling in unique visitors to our website over the last three years.

Governments, aid agencies, academics, risk consultancies and human rights organizations alike turn to us as a reference. Two-thirds of our readers have an impact on humanitarian issues and policy, among them senior decision-makers. But we also reach a new, young, and diverse audience. More than half of our readers are less than 34 years old, and three-quarters of our readers are new visitors. We have a strong readership in the Global South and among non-English speakers.

More than 200 newspapers, websites and journals republish and cite our work – from the New York Times to Uganda's Daily Monitor, from the BBC to the Palestine Chronicle. The Huffington Post, Upworthy, the New York Times Syndicate, the Guardian and other powerful media aggregators are exploring ways to market and distribute IRIN's content. Content licensing agreements with ReliefWeb, the United Nations Foundation and AllAfrica are also underway. We publish content on several different platforms for further reach and engagement.



Our impact

IRIN keeps the general public, aid agencies, and donors informed and accountable.

1. IRIN raises awareness among the general public:

We keep forgotten humanitarian crises on the policy agenda by engaging the general public with compelling news and features from places that are too often overlooked. In doing so, **we help mobilise resources**. People give when they care – when they know the human stories behind suffering. An informed public can put pressure on its politicians to act. Donors and their taxpayers also need clear analysis that can explain the importance of humanitarian aid. Global audiences have become more sophisticated. Tear-jerkers just don't cut it anymore; people are tired of sob stories. They want to understand how and why things happen and what can be done. **So we make it all make sense**. We break down 'insider baseball' policy discussions and help the public understand the trends and why they matter.

IRIN acts as a **bridge to the mainstream media**, allowing advocacy messages to reach much larger and more diverse audiences. Local and international media reference our work (see "Our Reach" above) and are often inspired to follow suit. Our French and Arabic services spread the message to non-English speaking communities that are often left out of the conversation. We also have a trusted network of filmmakers in the field who produce feature-length

films about humanitarian issues for broadcasters to pick up.

IRIN can be a key advocacy partner for aid agency country offices or HQs looking to reach a wider audience, or for donors trying to justify aid spending to their constituencies.

2. IRIN contributes to better decision-making in aid

IRIN's reporting provides a view from the ground that informs the allocation of resources and programmes. As the World Humanitarian Summit consultations have reaffirmed, the present system lacks **high-quality, real-time, independent reporting** on the changing needs. Monitoring and evaluation is too often done by partisan agencies looking to fundraise for themselves. In places like Syria, it's nearly impossible to get an honest, accurate picture of the realities of aid delivery.

Our network of more than 200 trusted journalists in more than 70 countries gives us access to local authorities, community organisations, affected people, and parties to conflicts. Our reporters are often citizens of the countries in which they are based, speak the local language, have followed domestic developments for years, and have extensive personal networks. A recent study found that IRIN's coverage is more **tapped into local sources** than the mainstream press and our correspondents often have greater access and mobility than the UN.



IRIN has become an indispensable source of reliable, accesible and readable information to an unprecedentedly wide audience.

John Ryle, Executive Director
Rift Valley Institute





I read IRIN's news almost every day and I have greatly appreciated your newsfeeds on the regions that I follow. It helps me a lot when assessing information about situations where we may receive applications for support to humanitarian interventions. The new IRIN is so far very promising.

Mikael Wiking, Humanitarian Coordinator,
Swedish Mission Council



IRIN consistently tracks simmering issues before they hit crisis point and are covered elsewhere. We were writing about Nigerian militant group Boko Haram in 2009 – long before the notorious kidnapping of schoolgirls. We reported on the impending 2011 famine in Somalia months before it hit the news. We've been flagging discrimination against Myanmar's Rohingya people since 2008. We were first and accurate on Darfur, eastern DRC, and many more crises. By **raising the alarm early**, IRIN encourages preventative – rather than responsive – action.

Our reporting offers aid workers parachuting into emergencies a better understanding of their operating environments. IRIN is a curator of lessons learned, best practice, and innovations among aid agencies or sectors that often operate in silos. And in the push towards localisation of emergency response, we help identify local capacity, including with our ongoing project to build the world's largest database of charities.

For aid agencies and donors looking for trends analysis, IRIN is a source of objective information grounded in field realities. It is also able to provide fast turn-around bespoke analysis for agencies looking to answer specific research questions or advocacy objectives. For academics frustrated that their research is not informing policy-making, IRIN takes their work out of ivory towers to ensure it makes a difference in the real world.

3. IRIN keeps the aid industry accountable

People in trouble, wherever they are, deserve to have their stories heard. Even within the humanitarian system, the views of those most affected are often overlooked. **We connect the refugee to the decision-maker.**

We also help donors assess how well their aid dollars are spent by providing an independent picture of what works – from **the perspective of those most affected**. A recent study of IRIN's coverage of the 2015 Nepal earthquake found that two-thirds of IRIN articles cited at least one affected person, 95 percent of whom were Nepalese, rather than foreigners.

The World Humanitarian Summit consultations have called for an **independent mechanism** through which affected populations can rate the performance of aid agencies, which would then inform funding flows. With its field presence, newly independent status, proven capacity for analysis, and understanding of the humanitarian sector, IRIN is well-positioned to fill this gap.

We are also a catalyst for change: In Nigeria, an IRIN article on malnutrition in the northwest forced the government to reluctantly admit to the problem and partner with aid agencies to intervene. In Egypt, an IRIN article about the quality of the Nile River's water led to the Minister of Irrigation being questioned in parliament. An IRIN DVD on sexual violence against women was used to train UN peacekeepers, governments and aid agencies. These are just a few of many examples.

Amid the largest push in decades for a more accountable, transparent aid system that puts the people most affected by crises at its heart, IRIN provides checks and balances and ensures the voices of those suffering are heard most. It is ready to contribute to more formal accountability processes that may emerge in the wake of WHS.

Our needs

IRIN's specialist, global, multimedia production in three languages costs about \$5 million per year. We are looking to stabilize our current operations and then grow our geographical footprint and language offerings and increase our investigative, data-driven journalism and interactive, visual design. We aim for diversified funding in order to foster independence, sustainability and stability. As such, we continue to seek funding from foundations, individuals, corporations and bilateral donors.

We are also exploring new business models, which would allow us to generate our own revenue to be reinvested into the organization's mandate and support our financial sustainability. They include membership, advertising, events, sponsorship, content licensing,

and bespoke analysis services, to be developed over the next five years.

But by their very definition, “forgotten crises” are not a commercially viable proposition: they are expensive to report, often geopolitically unimportant, and not populist in nature. In order to access as many people as possible, IRIN wishes to remain free at point of delivery, particularly in the developing countries, which are both our journalistic focus and a large portion of our readership. As such, grant funding is expected to continue to cover the majority of IRIN's costs, in line with other successful non-profit public interest journalism ventures like ProPublica, FirstLook and the Marshall Project.

For more information:

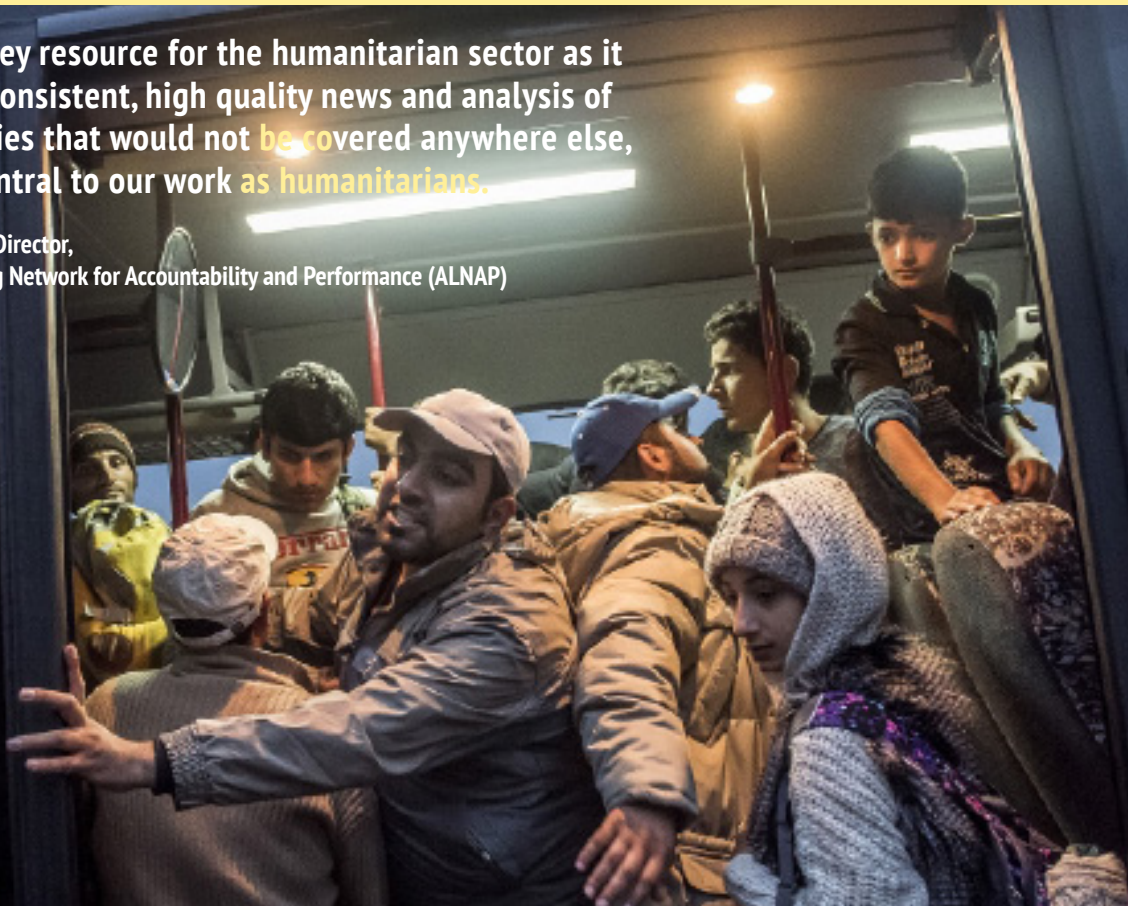
Heba Aly, IRIN Director: heba@irinnews.org

Emmeline Booth, IRIN Outreach and Reporting Officer: emmeline@irinnews.org



IRIN is a key resource for the humanitarian sector as it provides consistent, high quality news and analysis of emergencies that would not be covered anywhere else, yet are central to our work as humanitarians.

John Mitchell, Director,
Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP)





“ It is where I point my students to get a realistic picture of what is going on in crises.

Dr. Peter Walker, Feinstein International Centre
Tufts University

Our team

IRIN is led by Director Heba Aly, a quadri-lingual multimedia journalist and aid commentator, with a decade of experience reporting from sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. Heba played a key role in IRIN's successful spin-off from the UN, leading the organization's outreach, fundraising and governance.

The management team also includes IRIN's co-founder Ben Parker, a former aid worker in East Africa with decades of experience in senior management at the United Nations, online media and development communications, who now heads IRIN's new stream of enterprise and investigative reporting; Chief Editor Andrew Gully, a journalist and editor whose 12-year career at Agence France-Presse took him from Europe to the Middle East to the Caribbean, culminating as Deputy Desk Chief for North America; and Operations Manager Valerie Cambours, who brings 20 years of international operational experience in start-ups, private sector and NGO management and administration. IRIN's specialist editors are based in Phnom Penh, Nairobi, Jerusalem and Oxford, supported by more than 200 freelance reporters, photographers, filmmakers and graphic designers around the world.

Our structure

IRIN is a non-profit association, headquartered in Geneva, and governed by Swiss law. Its founding members bring together a mix of expertise in journalism, crisis zones, humanitarian affairs and organizational strategy. Award-winning author and former New York Times foreign correspondent Howard French, now an associate professor at Columbia Journalism School, serves as the association's president. A high-level advisory group provides further oversight.

The new governance structure and website are the latest steps in IRIN's renewal: IRIN spun off from the UN in 2015, and was hosted by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) during its transition.

Our partners

In 2015, IRIN was funded by Jynwel Charitable Foundation, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. New partners in 2016 include the Swiss Lottery (Loterie Romande), United Nations Foundation and the European Asylum Support Office.

