

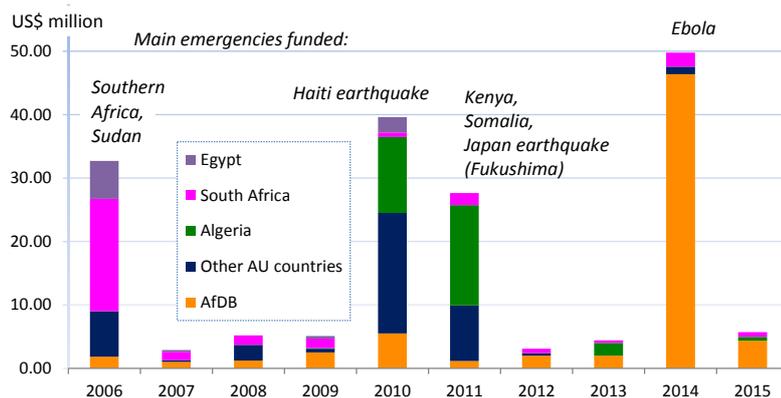
The African Union's humanitarian policy

Africa is the continent that receives the most humanitarian aid. African countries are not big donors, but many of them host large populations of displaced people. The African Union (AU) has developed a framework outlining innovative humanitarian principles and tools to prevent and mitigate crises, and since 2010 more coordinated action from AU states has been taking shape.

Small donors hosting large numbers of displaced people

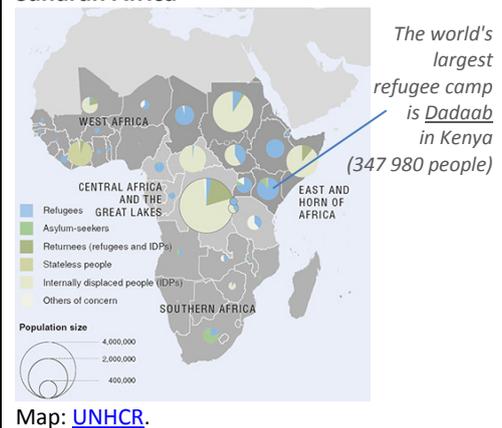
Nineteen of 2016's 33 humanitarian emergencies to date concern [Africa](#). In 2015, humanitarian aid from AU states and the African Development Bank (AfDB) accounted for only 0.03% of global humanitarian funding. However, Sub-Saharan African countries host more than [17 million displaced people](#) out of 60 million 'people of concern to UNHCR' in the world. This figure includes 4 million refugees and 10 million people displaced within their own country (IDPs: internally displaced persons). Refugee laws and principles are widely respected, in particular in [Central](#) and [West](#) Africa. But UNHCR has reported violence against refugees in [South Africa](#) and cases of refugees being sent back to Nigeria from [Chad and Cameroon](#), and [Kenya](#) has announced plans to shut down all its refugee camps, which host around 600 000 people.

AU humanitarian donors 2006-2015 (governments + AfDB)



Data: [GHA](#), [UNOCHA](#).

Persons of concern to UNHCR in Sub-Saharan Africa



Some African humanitarian action benchmarks

In recent years the AU and its member states have reacted to several regional crises:

- In 2010, AU Heads of State called for an African Humanitarian Fund for Haiti in the wake of the earthquake ('[the first black republic](#)' has strong links with Africa). They also [called for](#) the establishment of an African rapid humanitarian response mechanism. This was a decisive step towards the drafting of the AU Humanitarian Framework.
- In 2011, to fight famine in the Horn of Africa, the AU organised a pledging conference. [US\\$351 million](#) was pledged, but this included [US\\$ 300 million](#) from the AfDB, to be committed over a three-year period.
- In Mali, in 2012, while regional powers competed to address the security issue, [regional organisations](#) were better coordinated when it came to tackling the humanitarian crisis through the [Food Crisis Prevention Network](#) (RPCA).
- In 2014, the Ebola outbreak revealed the [coordination](#) difficulties facing AU member states and other actors, but the AU nevertheless succeeded in setting up a humanitarian mission ([ASEOWA](#)) to support health services and build capacity in the three worst-affected countries. According to observers, the ASEOWA experience has demonstrated both the need and the potential for regional organisations to play a [leading role](#) in emergency response.
- In South Sudan, the 2015 peace agreement, which incorporates [humanitarian provisions](#) including fundraising mechanisms for reconstruction, was drafted by the Eastern African Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), while the AU has a leading role in monitoring the peace process and the humanitarian situation.



The African Humanitarian Policy Framework

The [Draft African Humanitarian Policy Framework](#) was presented by the AU Commission in March 2010. It encompasses two visions: the need for regional cooperation and the need for humanitarian action to take on board measures for [development and conflict resolution](#), on a continent where natural disasters increase [competition](#) for land and resources, and where conflicts in turn trigger humanitarian crises. The framework brings together principles set out in a variety of AU policies.

Extended duty of protection. In line with the [African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa](#) (Kampala Convention, 2009) and the [African Union Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development policy](#) (2006), the Framework recommends that the duty of protection should apply also to civilians in conflict-affected zones and to internally displaced persons. Guidelines were later developed [for the protection of civilians in African Union peace support operations](#) (2012).

Non-discrimination. Extending the 1951 Geneva Convention definition of a refugee, the African Humanitarian Policy Framework considers that AU member states should apply the principle of [non-refoulement](#) to people compelled to flee their country not only because of fear of persecution but also because of 'events seriously disturbing public order', which could include non-state violence as well as natural disasters. The Framework also advocates non-discrimination against economic migrants.

Neutrality. The use of military assets is subject to the agreement and supervision of humanitarian organisations present in the field. Guidelines on [the role of the African Standby Force \(ASF\)](#) in humanitarian operations are to be added to the Humanitarian Policy Framework.

Some principles set out by the AU inspired the **European Parliament resolution** of 16 December 2015, [Challenges and opportunities for humanitarian assistance](#). Here Parliament advocates the expansion of the 'Kampala Convention to protect and assist displaced people around the world, as well as those affected by climate change', and calls for 'attention to be paid to particularly vulnerable groups, such as migrants, stateless persons and refugees, who are often neglected in the humanitarian debate'.

Better preparation and early response. In the case of natural disasters, elaborating on [the Africa regional strategy for disaster risk reduction](#) (2004), the framework calls for better prevention and rapid response through training, an early warning and monitoring system, and a database of disaster-management experts.

Coordination. The African Humanitarian Policy Framework defines a coordination mechanism with a leading role for the AU Commission. The Commission is in charge of drafting common strategies and evaluation mechanisms, and providing material and technical support for humanitarian intervention. It should also assess the capacity of the various stakeholders, including affected member states, in order to provide the most efficient aid and avoid gaps and overlaps (in accordance with the [subsidiarity principle](#)). The Commission is also responsible for **finding funding sources**, beyond the traditional donors, from the African private sector and wealthy individuals.

Outlook

In several respects, the African Humanitarian Policy Framework is innovative and goes beyond the traditional boundaries of humanitarian law. For example, it insists that humanitarian assistance draw no distinction between refugees, internally displaced persons and economic migrants. Also, because conflicts involving non-state actors are on the rise in Africa, the Framework's declared ambition is that international humanitarian law – developed largely 'in the context of conflicts between sovereign states' – become fully applicable to non-international conflicts. At sub-continental level, the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas) adopted a similar [policy framework](#) in 2012. However, frameworks are not binding for AU member states or African [Regional Economic Communities](#); as for the conventions, although most member states have ratified the [Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa](#) (1969), only 25 out of 54 have ratified the 2009 [Kampala convention](#) on internally displaced persons.

A new version of the Framework might be presented for the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016. Regional [consultations](#) in preparation for the summit have often highlighted the need for the affected populations to be more involved financially and politically in risk preparedness and response. In Africa, this [repossession](#) means overcoming at least two obstacles: a possible [lack of political will](#) on the part of recipient states, and too big a perceived [influence of external donors](#), as they finance the bulk of the aid.