

Committee: Human Rights Council

Topic: Providing Humanitarian Relief in the Myanmar Civil War

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Position: President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Loukas Kargiotis, and I am deeply honored and excited to have the opportunity to serve as the President of the Human Rights Council at this year's DSTMUN conference.

First of all, I congratulate all of you for participating in this conference. From past experiences, such a conference is helpful in many ways. On the one hand, you get to broaden your horizons and practice your English skills; on the other, you get to know new people and have fun.

Our topic is a critical one, as it has been deliberated and discussed for many years. Nowadays, however, the discussion is at its peak, since the civil war in Myanmar has reached a point where the decisions made, can and will play a vital role in the lives of the people of Myanmar in the following years. Thus I expect we will use this chance to make the debate interesting and fruitful.

This study guide should introduce you to the topic, thus I encourage you to read it carefully, review the bibliography at the end of the guide to examine some of the sources yourselves and conduct your research on the topic for a more detailed notion, that will ensure you are accumulated with the issue to the need extent.

Being a part of the MUN Club and participating in conferences has always brought me joy and excitement. I am looking forward to the 7th DSTMUN and meeting you all. I hope that you share the same excitement as I do! We will have an amazing time!

My email address is loukaskargiotis@gmail.com. You are more than welcome to ask me about our topic, the study guide, your country's policy or the rules of procedures of the conference.

Good luck conducting your research and I am looking forward to meeting you all!

Sincerely,

Loukas Kargiotis

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The ongoing civil war in Myanmar, which intensified following the military coup in February 2021, has plunged the nation into a severe humanitarian crisis. The conflict, characterized by clashes between the military junta and various ethnic armed groups and pro-democracy forces, has caused widespread devastation, displacing millions and creating urgent humanitarian needs. Providing aid in Myanmar is fraught with difficulties due to the volatile security situation. Rebel offensives and military crackdowns create dangerous conditions for aid workers and restrict access to affected areas. This insecurity has significantly hampered efforts to deliver essential supplies and services to those in need.

The conflict has driven millions from their homes, resulting in a dire need for temporary shelter, food, and medical care. Refugee camps and internally displaced persons (IDP) settlements are often overcrowded and under-resourced, struggling to cope with the influx of people. The destruction and repurposing of healthcare facilities for military use have led to a critical shortage of medical supplies and personnel. Malnutrition is on the rise, particularly among children, due to disrupted agricultural production and market access.

Additionally, schools have been targets of attacks, significantly disrupting the education system. This not only impacts children's immediate well-being but also their future prospects, contributing to a cycle of poverty and instability. The international response to the crisis has faced numerous challenges. Organizations and neighboring countries have struggled to deliver effective aid due to the junta's restrictions and the complex web of controlling factions. Diplomatic efforts continue to seek ceasefires and ensure the safety of humanitarian corridors, but progress is slow and often hampered by ongoing violence.

Ethnic and religious minorities, particularly the Rohingya, face severe discrimination and violence, exacerbating their humanitarian plight. Many live in perpetual fear and marginalization, with limited access to essential services. The collective international effort, including pressure on the junta, diplomatic negotiations, and increased humanitarian aid, is crucial to alleviating the suffering in Myanmar. Addressing the root causes of the conflict, ensuring safe access for aid delivery, and supporting displaced populations are key components of the ongoing response efforts. Only through sustained and coordinated efforts can the humanitarian catastrophe in Myanmar be mitigated, offering a glimmer of hope to the millions affected by the relentless conflict.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Civil War

“A violent conflict between a state and one or more organized non-state actors in the state’s territory. Civil wars are thus distinguished from interstate conflicts (in which states fight other states), violent conflicts or riots not involving states (sometimes labeled

intercommunal conflicts), and state repression against individuals who cannot be considered an organized or cohesive group, including genocides, and similar violence by non-state actors, such as terrorism or violent crime.”¹

Humanitarian Aid

“Humanitarian aid is channeled impartially to the affected populations, regardless of their race, ethnic group, religion, gender, age, nationality or political affiliation.”²

Military Coup

“The sudden, violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group. The chief prerequisite for a coup is control of all or part of the armed forces, the police, and other military elements. Unlike a revolution, which is usually achieved by large numbers of people working for basic social, economic, and political change, a coup is a change in power from the top that merely results in the abrupt replacement of leading government personnel.”³

Refugee Camp

“Temporary facilities built to provide immediate protection and assistance to people who have been forced to flee their homes due to war, persecution or violence. While camps are not established to provide permanent solutions, they offer a safe haven for refugees and meet their most basic needs such as food, water, shelter, medical treatment, and other basic services during emergencies.”⁴



Figure 1: Refugee camp in Sittwe, Myanmar⁵

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historical Background

The roots of Myanmar's current conflict trace back to its colonial past and the post-independence period. After gaining independence from British rule in 1948, Myanmar, known as Burma, faced immediate ethnic and political turmoil. Various ethnic groups, who had been promised autonomy, began armed struggles against the central government, leading to decades of insurgencies. The situation deteriorated further following a military

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/civil-war>

² https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid_en

³ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/coup-detat>

⁴ <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/camps/>

⁵ <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/fire-at-rohingya-refugee-camp-kills-6-in-myanmar-1286789>

coups in 1962, which ushered in nearly half a century of authoritarian rule by the military junta. The junta allows a government to be formed, however it retains substantial authority.

The 1962 coup marked the beginning of an era of military dominance under General Ne Win, whose policies of isolationism and socialism led to economic decline and increased ethnic strife. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the government faced persistent insurgencies from ethnic armed groups seeking greater autonomy. The 1988 pro-democracy uprising, brutally suppressed by the military, led to the formation of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), later renamed the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), which continued the military's grip on power.

The 2021 Military Coup and Escalation of Conflict

The situation in Myanmar dramatically worsened on February 1, 2021, when the military, known as the Tatmadaw, seized power, overthrowing the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) and the 1962 coup. The coup came just hours before the newly elected parliament was set to convene, following the NLD's landslide victory in the November 2020 general elections. The military justified the coup by alleging widespread electoral fraud, claims that were widely dismissed by international observers and the country's election commission.

The coup prompted mass protests and a nationwide civil disobedience movement. Citizens from all walks of life, including civil servants, healthcare workers, and students, took to the streets in unprecedented numbers, demanding the restoration of democracy and the release of detained leaders. In response, the military launched a brutal crackdown, employing live ammunition, arbitrary detentions, and torture. This violent repression resulted in thousands of deaths and injuries, with numerous reports of extrajudicial killings and human rights abuses.

The initial peaceful protests soon gave way to the formation of new armed resistance groups. The Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), a body of ousted lawmakers, and the National Unity Government (NUG), an opposition government in exile, began coordinating efforts to oppose the junta. In parallel, the People's Defense Force (PDF) was established as the armed wing of the NUG, comprising defectors from the military, police, and civilian volunteers. The PDF, along with existing ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), intensified their operations against the military, contributing to a complex and multifaceted civil war.

Existing ethnic armed organizations, which had been engaged in longstanding conflicts with the central government, saw an opportunity to strengthen their positions and escalate their demands for autonomy. Groups like the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Karen National Union (KNU), and Arakan Army (AA) renewed their offensives against the Tatmadaw, capturing territory and inflicting significant casualties. The convergence of the

newly formed resistance groups and the long-standing ethnic insurgencies has led to a nationwide conflict, marked by fluid frontlines and shifting alliances.

The military's response to the growing insurgency has been characterized by indiscriminate violence and widespread human rights violations. The junta has employed airstrikes, heavy artillery, and scorched-earth tactics, resulting in extensive civilian casualties and the destruction of entire villages. The conflict has caused significant displacement, with over a million people forced to flee their homes, seeking refuge in makeshift camps or across borders in neighboring countries.

2024 Escalation of Conflict and International Response

In 2024, the conflict in Myanmar further escalated, with the military junta intensifying its crackdown on both armed resistance groups and civilian populations. The junta launched a series of large-scale military offensives in regions controlled by ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and the People's Defense Force (PDF). These operations included heavy bombardments, airstrikes, and the use of landmines, leading to a sharp increase in civilian casualties and displacements. Reports emerged of entire villages being razed, and international observers documented numerous human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings and the widespread use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. This year could be a turning point in Myanmar's war, military analysts say. With each week, the junta's forces abandon more outposts. Myanmar's military is overstretched and underprovisioned. Even at the best of times, its biggest asset has been numbers, not expertise.

The growing humanitarian crisis triggered renewed international condemnation. The United Nations and various human rights organizations called for immediate action to protect civilians and ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid. However, the junta continued to block access to conflict zones, hampering relief efforts. In response, the international community, led by the United States and European Union, imposed further sanctions on the military regime and its economic interests, though these measures have had limited impact on altering the junta's actions.

Meanwhile, diplomatic efforts to mediate the conflict have faced significant challenges. ASEAN's special envoy made multiple attempts to broker peace talks, but these efforts have been undermined by the junta's refusal to engage in meaningful dialogue. In response, some ASEAN members have begun reassessing their approach, with countries like Indonesia and Malaysia advocating for a more robust stance against the junta.

The situation in Myanmar remains dire, with millions of people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and the conflict showing no signs of abating. The international community continues to grapple with how to respond effectively to the ongoing violence and instability, as the country edges closer to becoming a failed state.

In June 2024, Myanmar soldiers allegedly committed severe atrocities in Rakhine State, including killing at least 50 people, torturing villagers, and forcing detainees to drink urine. The military was searching for Arakan Army (AA) supporters amid ongoing conflict. Survivors reported extreme violence, including cutting off tattoos and burning skin. The junta denied the accusations, claiming their actions were "peace and security" measures. The National Unity Government (NUG) vowed to hold those responsible accountable, while the conflict's intensity hinders independent investigations.

Humanitarian Impact and Displacement

The ongoing conflict has resulted in a severe humanitarian crisis, with millions of people displaced from their homes. According to various sources, refugee camps and internally displaced persons (IDP) settlements are overwhelmed, lacking sufficient resources to meet basic needs. The destruction and repurposing of healthcare facilities by the military have exacerbated health crises, leading to critical shortages of medical supplies and personnel. Malnutrition is a growing concern, particularly among children, as agricultural production and market access have been severely disrupted.

Health and Nutrition

The civil war has crippled healthcare services in Myanmar. Many hospitals and clinics have been destroyed or taken over by the military, leaving large swaths of the population without access to medical care. International humanitarian organizations face significant challenges in delivering medical supplies and services due to the insecure environment, as well as the junta's blockade. The disruption of food supply chains has led to increased rates of malnutrition, with children being the most vulnerable. Efforts to provide nutritional support are often met with restricted access to conflict zones.



Figure 2: Providing Humanitarian Aid in Myanmar⁶

Shelter and Basic Needs

The displacement crisis has led to a dire need for temporary shelter and basic necessities such as clean water, sanitation, and food. Refugee camps and IDP settlements are often overcrowded, with inadequate infrastructure to support the displaced populations. This has led to poor living conditions, increasing the risk of disease outbreaks and other health issues. Humanitarian agencies are working to provide essential services, but their efforts are constrained by ongoing violence and logistical challenges.

⁶ <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-steps-aid-displaced-myanmar-conflict-intensifies>

Education Disruption

Education in Myanmar has been one of the sectors hardest hit by the conflict. Schools have become targets in the ongoing violence, either being attacked or occupied by armed groups. This has forced many schools to close, leaving millions of children without access to education. The long-term impact on the country's youth is profound, as the disruption of education not only affects their immediate well-being but also their future opportunities and the country's overall development. International aid organizations are working to provide alternative education solutions, but their efforts are frequently hindered by security concerns and logistical challenges.

Schools in conflict zones have been attacked or used for military purposes, making them unsafe for students and teachers. This has led to widespread closures and has deprived children of their right to education. The psychological impact on children, who face trauma from the violence and the disruption of their daily routines, is significant and has long-term implications for their mental health and development.

In response to the education crisis, various organizations are implementing alternative education solutions, such as community-based schools and online learning programs. These initiatives aim to provide some continuity of education for children, despite the challenging circumstances. However, these efforts are often limited in reach and effectiveness due to the ongoing conflict and lack of resources.

Ethnic and Religious Minorities

Ethnic and religious minorities in Myanmar, particularly the Rohingya, are among the most severely impacted by the conflict. The Rohingya, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group, have faced decades of systematic discrimination and violence, culminating in what many international observers describe as genocide. The ongoing civil war has exacerbated their plight, as many are confined to overcrowded camps with little access to basic services.

The Rohingya crisis is one of the most prominent examples of humanitarian issues in Myanmar. Since 2017, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have fled to neighboring Bangladesh to escape military-led violence. Those who remain in Myanmar live in terrible conditions, with limited access to education, healthcare, and employment. International efforts to repatriate and support the Rohingya population have been met with numerous obstacles, including the lack of political will from the Myanmar government and ongoing security concerns.

Other ethnic minorities, including the Shan, Kachin, and Karen, have also been severely affected by the conflict. These groups have long-standing grievances regarding autonomy and ethnic rights, which have fueled their armed struggles against the central government. The current civil war has intensified their plight, leading to further displacement and human rights abuses. International humanitarian efforts aim to support

these communities, but the complexity and scale of the conflict pose significant challenges to effective intervention.

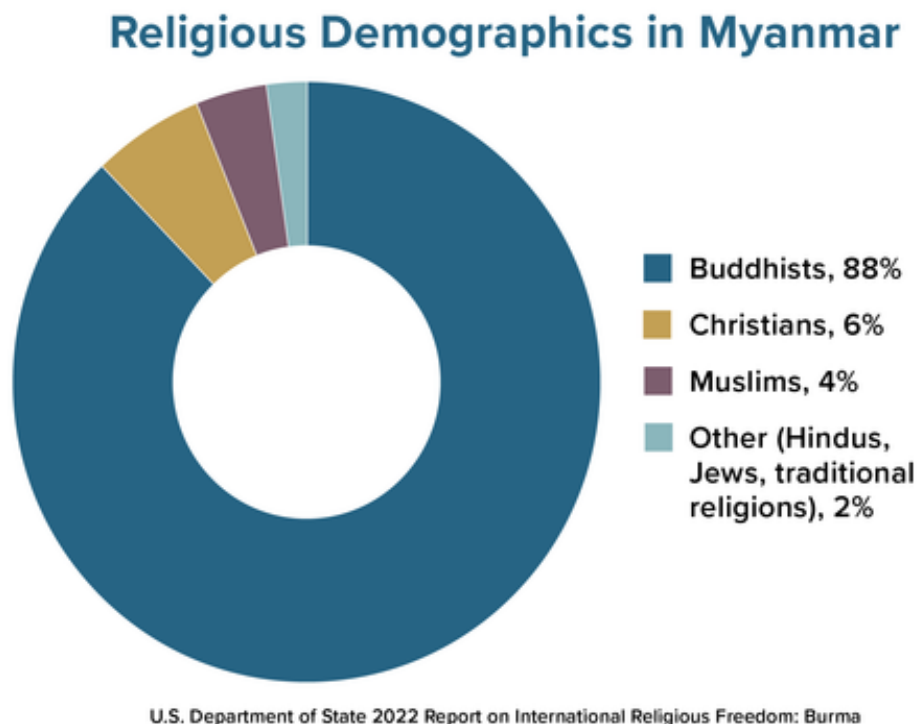


Figure 3: Religious Demographics in Myanmar⁷

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Bangladesh

Bangladesh hosts a significant number of Rohingya refugees who fled Myanmar due to previous military crackdowns. It has been vocal in international forums about the Rohingya crisis and the need for a sustainable solution, including safe repatriation.

China

China has taken a more cautious stance, emphasizing stability and non-interference. It has maintained relations with the military junta while also engaging with some ethnic armed groups due to its strategic interests and border security concerns. It's been reported that the Arakan Army receives considerable funding and military equipment from China, however, none have been confirmed.

Moreover, China has developed the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC), a major infrastructure project under China's Belt and Road Initiative, aiming to enhance connectivity

⁷ <https://www.usip.org/programs/religion-and-conflict-country-profiles/myanmar>

between China and Myanmar. The corridor includes the development of roads, railways, and pipelines that connect China's Yunnan province to Myanmar's key economic hubs, including the Kyaukphyu deep-sea port on the Bay of Bengal. CMEC is designed to facilitate trade, improve access to resources, and enhance economic cooperation between the two countries, while also providing China with a strategic route to the Indian Ocean, bypassing the Strait of Malacca.

India

India has a complex relationship with Myanmar, balancing strategic and economic interests. It has expressed concern over the violence and supported democratic processes but has also engaged with the military due to border security issues and insurgent activities along its northeastern border.

Furthermore, India's Act East Policy emphasizes strengthening bilateral ties through economic cooperation, connectivity projects, and security collaboration. Myanmar is a key gateway for India to access Southeast Asia, making it central to the policy's goals. India has invested in infrastructure projects like the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project, which aim to improve connectivity between India and Southeast Asia through Myanmar. Additionally, India engages with Myanmar to address border security concerns, particularly insurgent activities in its northeastern states, while also promoting trade and cultural exchanges to bolster its strategic presence in the region.

Japan

Japan has historically been a major aid donor to Myanmar and has advocated for dialogue and peaceful resolution. It has suspended new aid projects in response to the coup but continues to provide humanitarian assistance.

Myanmar

The military junta, known as the Tatmadaw, is the central actor in the conflict, having seized power in a coup on February 1, 2021. The junta's actions have led to widespread violence, human rights abuses, and a severe humanitarian crisis. The military's policies and operations directly impact the nation's stability and the lives of its citizens.

Thailand

Thailand, sharing a long border with Myanmar, has been directly impacted by the conflict through refugee flows. It has provided refuge to some fleeing the violence while maintaining a pragmatic relationship with the junta for security and economic reasons.

United States of America

The United States has imposed several rounds of sanctions targeting Myanmar's military leaders and military-controlled businesses. It has also called for the restoration of democracy and the release of political prisoners, providing support to pro-democracy groups.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

ASEAN has been engaged in diplomatic efforts to mediate the conflict, though its approach has been criticized for being too lenient. The bloc has appointed a special envoy to facilitate dialogue between the military junta and opposition groups.

European Union (EU)

The EU has imposed sanctions on Myanmar's military leaders and entities connected to the coup. It has also provided substantial humanitarian aid to support displaced populations and those affected by the conflict.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The ICRC is actively involved in delivering humanitarian aid, including medical supplies and assistance to conflict-affected areas. It works to ensure the protection of civilians and the provision of essential services.

BLOCS EXPECTED

Bloc 1

This alliance focuses on advocating for the restoration of democratic governance in Myanmar and addressing human rights abuses. Its policy includes imposing economic and political sanctions on the military junta, providing support and recognition to pro-democracy groups like the National Unity Government (NUG), which represents Myanmar in the United Nations, and facilitating humanitarian aid to affected populations. The bloc seeks to apply international pressure on the military regime while promoting democratic reforms and supporting the protection of human rights. Countries such as the USA, Canada, and Australia should join this Bloc.

Bloc 2

This coalition emphasizes maintaining regional stability and safeguarding economic interests in Myanmar. Its policy includes engaging with the military junta to manage security and economic concerns, avoiding direct confrontation or punitive measures. Members focus on securing economic investments, ensuring border stability, and managing refugee flows. They advocate for dialogue and negotiation rather than sanctions, prioritizing regional stability and their own strategic and economic interests over direct intervention in the political

conflict. Countries such as China, India, Thailand, and Bangladesh should be part of this alliance.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
January 4, 1948	Myanmar’s Independence from Britain
March 2, 1962	General Ne Win leads a military coup, establishing a military regime and initiating decades of authoritarian rule under the Burma Socialist Programme Party.
August 8, 1988	Large-scale protests demand democratic reforms. The military responds with violent repression, leading to the formation of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC).
November 7, 2010	SLORC is replaced by the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) which introduces limited political reforms and elections.
November 8, 2015	The National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi, wins a landslide victory in national elections, leading to a partial democratic transition.
February 1, 2021	The Tatmadaw overthrows the NLD government, citing alleged electoral fraud, leading to widespread protests and a violent crackdown.
February 7, 2021	The now-exiled NUG calls for civilian militias to target the junta and protect civilians. In this defensive war, as they state, they manage indeed to start liberating northern regions.
February 26, 2021	The Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the United Nations condemns the coup d’etat and urges the international community to take action through the General Assembly.
August 2, 2021	The UN Security Council calls for an end to violence and urges the military to respect human rights, though concrete actions remain limited.

September 16, 2022	Alleged attack from the military against NUG-funded school. 14 dead, at least 6 of them children.
October 27, 2023	Commence of Operation 1027. "The Three Brotherhood Alliance" launched offensives and regained control of regions near the Chinese border.

For more informative resources visit: "<https://www.myanmarwitness.org/>"

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2669

UN Security Council Resolution 2669, adopted on August 2, 2023, addresses the ongoing crisis in Myanmar, emphasizing the need for immediate cessation of violence, the restoration of democracy, and the protection of human rights. The resolution calls for an immediate end to the military's attacks on civilians and urges all parties to engage in inclusive dialogue to resolve the conflict. It condemns human rights abuses and highlights the urgent need for humanitarian access to affected areas. The resolution also underscores the importance of international cooperation to support Myanmar's democratic transition and calls for enhanced efforts to address the humanitarian crisis and provide aid to displaced populations.

European Parliament Resolution (2023/2694(RSP))

The resolution calls for the reinstatement of dissolved political parties in Myanmar and the immediate, unconditional release of all political prisoners. It demands an end to the unlawful state of emergency, the cessation of military violence, and the restoration of civilian governance. Additionally, it urges the EU to significantly boost humanitarian aid to Myanmar and its refugees, including the Rohingya, and to impose stricter sanctions on the Burmese military and its business interests. It also calls for enhanced human rights due diligence for any engagement with Myanmar, including by private companies.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Non-Profit Organizations

Medicines Sans Frontières (MSF)

MSF has delivered emergency medical care, including surgeries, through temporary clinics and mobile teams, reaching those in need despite security challenges.

Doctors of the World

Doctors of the World has been involved in providing medical care and support to conflict-affected areas in Myanmar. They have focused on delivering essential healthcare services, including treatment for injuries and managing diseases exacerbated by the conflict.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

In response to the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar, particularly following the military coup in February 2021, OCHA has been crucial in managing and coordinating international aid. OCHA has facilitated collaboration among various humanitarian actors, including UN agencies and NGOs, to ensure that assistance is efficiently distributed and avoids duplication. It has gathered and analyzed data on the humanitarian situation to guide effective interventions and identify gaps in the response. Despite challenges in accessing conflict-affected areas, OCHA has negotiated and advocated for safe delivery of aid. Additionally, through the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), OCHA has mobilized financial resources to provide essential supplies and medical care. OCHA has also raised international awareness about the crisis, advocating for increased support and highlighting the urgent needs of displaced and affected populations.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Strengthen International Humanitarian Coordination

To address the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar, several solutions can be implemented. Strengthening international humanitarian coordination is essential; this involves enhancing collaboration among UN agencies, international organizations, and local NGOs to streamline aid distribution and avoid duplication. Establishing a central coordination hub can facilitate effective collaboration and resource allocation.

Improve Humanitarian Access and Safety

Improving humanitarian access and safety is also crucial. This requires negotiating safe access to conflict zones and areas with restricted entry to ensure that aid reaches affected populations. Working with local and international actors to establish secure humanitarian corridors is necessary for the delivery of aid.

Expand Emergency Relief Funding

Expanding emergency relief funding is another important solution. Increasing financial support through international funding mechanisms like the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and encouraging donations from both government and private sectors will help address critical needs such as food, shelter, and medical care.

Support Local Capacities and Community-Based Initiatives

Supporting local capacities and community-based initiatives can significantly enhance aid effectiveness. Strengthening the ability of local organizations and community groups to deliver aid effectively involves providing them with training, resources, and logistical support. Local actors often have a better understanding of the needs and dynamics on the ground.

Advocate for and Implement Humanitarian Relief Policies

Finally, advocating for and implementing humanitarian relief policies is vital. This includes working with international bodies to promote policies that facilitate aid delivery, address the root causes of the crisis, and ensure the protection of civilians. Engaging in diplomatic efforts and monitoring policy implementation can help ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches those who need it most.

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