

Major reductions in funding and key proposals for humanitarian reform

A Think Tank / Donor Dialogue | EHF 2025 side-event
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Structure

1. Where are we starting from?

- › SWOT - The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

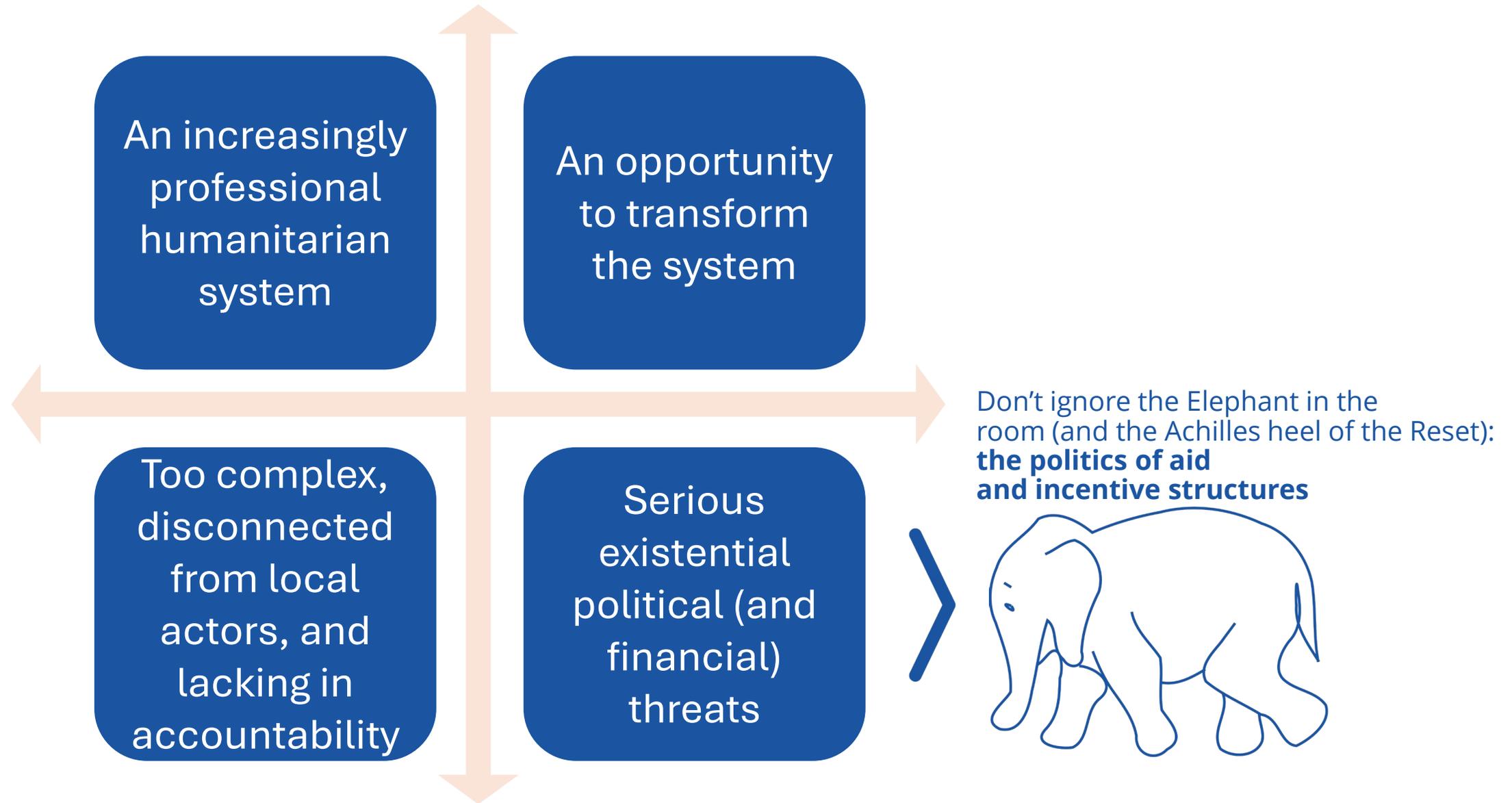
2. Where do we need to go?

- › Processes and coordination
- › Architecture

3. What can donors do to get there?

- › In the short term?
- › In the long term?

1. Where are we starting from?



2. Where do we want to go?

> Processes and coordination

Key challenge: who gets to make decisions about the future of the humanitarian system?

- Key voices un- or under-represented
- Fragmentation
- Vested interests

No or
minimal
change

Donors should not be the sole decision-makers, but need to set incentives.

Key principles:

- Need both coherence and a wide range of perspectives
- Be both incremental and ambitious (ie use existing structures, but recognise their weaknesses)
- Hold largest organisations to account, disincentivise competitive behaviour

2. Where do we need to go?

Architecture

Recognising the sector, not only the UN system

Humanitarian response, Development, & Peace



3. What can donors do to get there?

› Ensure better donor coordination

In the short term

- Start by substantially improving European donor coordination for intelligent division of labour in view of safeguarding principled humanitarian action
- Refrain from pushing pet priorities onto agencies and NGOs
- Prioritise system relevant services at risk such as data services, baseline services for cross cutting programmes (eg FEWSNET, IPC , UNHAS, HDX, REACH)
- Prioritise short term sectors most affected by USAID withdrawal (global and reproductive health / climate / gender / inclusion) wherever appropriate and complimentary

In the longer term

- Establish a donor-only forum for consultations globally and at country-level to increase complementarity in approaches and funding priorities
- Ensure coordination around funding priorities, focusing on collective outcomes informed by bottom-up processes of what principled humanitarian assistance and protection looks like, not external ideas/interpretations of life-saving.
- Establish parallel, linked discussions around short-term humanitarian response and more sustainable mechanisms for responding to chronic poverty and protection challenges

3. What can donors do to get there?

> Prioritise local leadership

In the short term

- Focus on rescuing short term local networks and structures at financial risk
- Make "Why not going local?" guiding question for all funding decisions
- Prioritise locally led / locally focused funding mechanisms incl pooled funds and beyond
- Establish different risk management approaches and reward agencies for fair risk-sharing
- Look for opportunities to promote bottom-up data gathering exercises in support of area-based coordination

In the longer term

- Make local participation baseline of all coordination bodies locally, nationally, internationally
- Conditionalise UN / INGOs funding on proof programmes reach max. possible localisation level
- Ensure flexible funding mechanisms in donor systems and locally-led pooled funds
- Protect volunteer and mutual aid groups and ensure different standards compared to NGOs
- Invest in locally embedded coordination models adapted to contexts, with roles for local authorities, civil society, private actors etc as appropriate

3. What can donors do to get there?

> Prioritise agency accountability

In the short term

- Make UN agencies / INGOs prioritise in transparent criteria-based way vs general cuts to save organisational structure
- Establish lead on UN side with decision making power to streamline UN agencies (HC / OCHA)
- Consider actions to dis-incentivise competition over collective approaches within & between agencies
- Make "Why UN?" the leading question before funding UN operations to focus on contexts with comparative UN advantages
- Conditionalise additional funding for UN/INGOS on transparency on USAID impacts + resilience to change language & approaches

In the longer term

- Require agencies to report on outcomes instead of outputs
- Reassess UN structures / organisations / mandates / mergers to define future roles of UN bodies in a locally based system, with collective outcomes in mind
- De-link assessment processes / HCPs etc from implementing agencies for independent assessments incl local participation

- > Does this resonate with you?**
- > What do you need to do this?**
- > How can we help?**

