



## BACKGROUND

**Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Climate Week (MENACW)** will take place from 8-12 October 2023 in Riyadh, hosted by the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. MENACW 2023 is a platform for policymakers, practitioners, businesses, and civil society to exchange climate solutions, barriers to overcome, and opportunities realised in different regions. It is the second of the Regional Climate Weeks for 2023.

The Regional Climate Weeks consider four major systems-based tracks with an aim to provide region-focused contributions to inform the global stock take. The themes are:

- 1 ENERGY SYSTEMS AND INDUSTRY;**
- 2 CITIES, URBAN AND RURAL SETTLEMENTS, INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT;**
- 3 LAND, OCEAN, FOOD, AND WATER;**
- 4 SOCIETIES, HEALTH, LIVELIHOODS, AND ECONOMIES.**

Due to the nature of Start Network's work and expertise, the focus of our contributions is on the fourth topic.

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# KEY FACTS & FIGURES IN THE MENA REGION



It is expected that climate change will increase the risk of floods, increase disease transmission, change precipitation patterns and reduce crop productivity in the MENA Region. In less than a decade, it is estimated that temperatures in the region could rise by two degrees, and as a result increase water scarcity, drought, and desertification ([UNHCR, 2021](#)).



**CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEPLETION OF NATURAL RESOURCES IS A THREAT MULTIPLIER IN THE CONTEXT OF HIGH SOCIO-POLITICAL INSTABILITY, DRIVING FORCED DISPLACEMENT, EXACERBATING RISKS OF VIOLENT CONFLICT AND POSING A SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO VITAL ECOSYSTEMS ([WORLD BANK, 2021](#)).**

**REGIONALLY, MENA IS THE SMALLEST RECIPIENT OF CLIMATE FINANCE IN THE WORLD ([WORLD BANK, 2021](#)).**

## THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND HUMANITARIAN NEED

*The [2023 Global Humanitarian Assistance Report](#) states that in 2022, three-quarters of all people in need of humanitarian assistance faced at least two risk dimensions: conflict, climate and/or socioeconomic vulnerability. Of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, those that also face long-term humanitarian crises receive less climate funding ([Development Initiatives, 2023](#)).*

*Climate change exacerbates needs where vulnerabilities are highest and humanitarians are already stretched. The impacts of climate change are expected to lead to increased humanitarian costs exceeding US\$ 20bn per year ([ALNAP, 2023](#)).*



## WATER

The MENA region is the most water stressed region globally. According to 2018 data ([FAO, 2022](#)), **14 of the 17 most water stressed countries globally were from the region, including all of the top six.** ([SIWI & UNICEF, 2023](#)).

Both land and water are scarce resources in the MENA region, this impacts the agricultural sector and food production ([OECD, 2022](#)).

### AGRICULTURE IS THE LARGEST WATER CONSUMING SECTOR

**84%** OF THE WATER IN THE REGION IS USED FOR FARMING PURPOSES

**65%** OF CROPLAND IS PLANTED WITH WATER-THIRSTY CEREALS ([UN ESCWA, 2020](#)).



### FREQUENT DROUGHTS AND WATER SHORTAGES ENDANGER FOOD SECURITY IN A REGION WHERE:

**55M** PEOPLE OUT OF **456.7 MILLION** ARE ALREADY UNDERNOURISHED ([FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP AND WHO, 2020](#)).



## ENERGY

MENA's major resource-rich countries are economically dependent on the oil and gas trade. Fossil fuels average 50% of exports for the Gulf Cooperation Council, Iraq, Libya, and Iran. When compared to other regions, MENA's greenhouse gas (GHG) footprint is low overall, however the region is also home to some of the world's top per capita carbon emitters in the

world. MENA is the only region in which growth of CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions per capita has outpaced the growth of average incomes. ([World Bank, 2021](#))

Climate change is imposing challenges on energy systems that are already straining to meet the demands of economic growth, energy security and social welfare in the MENA region ([International Energy Agency, 2023](#)).

There is also increased pressure from other countries, particularly in Europe, for MENA countries to generate and export renewable energy given North Africa's high potential for solar and wind power ([European Council on Foreign Relations, 2023](#)).



START NETWORK'S FINANCING MECHANISM, **START FUND**, PROVIDES RAPID RESPONSE FUNDING TO UNDER-THE-RADAR, SMALL TO MEDIUM-SCALE CRISES, FILLING A CRITICAL GAP IN THE HUMANITARIAN AID SYSTEM.

## START FUND ACTIVATION: FLASH FLOODS IN OCCUPIED PALESTINE

From November 2022 onwards, Gaza, in the occupied Palestinian territories experienced heavy rainfall, which led to the accumulation of rainwater in dams and reservoirs in Israeli-controlled areas. On 26 December 2022, Israeli authorities opened the dam gates which sit along the perimeter fence east of Gaza, resulting in widespread flooding South and in the middle of the blockaded Gaza strip. The sudden onset, underreported and particularly severe nature of this crisis led to significant damage to infrastructure and agriculture. Farmers in particular were affected, leading to direct loss of their primary and often only source of income (cash crops). In total, over 300 greenhouses were destroyed or partially damaged.

A national NGO and Start Network member, the Agricultural Development Association (PARC) received numerous appeals from farmers requesting urgent livelihood and food security support following the flash floods. Nine days after the beginning of the crisis, PARC, in coordination with ACTED, raised an alert to the Start Fund to respond to the urgent needs of affected communities.

Because of numerous factors including the little media visibility the crisis had received, the Start Fund Committee decided it was unlikely that the target population would be responded to by other actors, especially as the crisis was considered to be relatively small. The Start Fund was activated for a disbursement of GBP £150,000.

Five days after the Start Fund activation, PARC were able to reach the crisis affected communities in middle Gaza and Khan Younis Governorates of the occupied Palestine Territories with assistance. The main activities planned by the local NGOs were:

- FOOD VOUCHER DISTRIBUTION TO 125 FARMER FAMILIES (740 INDIVIDUALS)
- REHABILITATION OF GREENHOUSES
- REHABILITATION OF AGRICULTURAL ROADS

PARC used a tiered approach during implementation, ensuring that both immediate and long-term needs of affected communities were addressed. For example, they made sure to prioritise food voucher distribution in the first week of response so that farmer families had been fed before working together to restore land productivity. In order to support farmers to restore their greenhouses, PARC provided cash to affected farmers. This allowed farmers to take charge of the rehabilitation process, ensuring that the materials bought were appropriate for their needs and sustainable. The affected community was also heavily involved in the rehabilitation of agricultural roads. This was seen as an important activity following the floods and was very much appreciated by the impacted farmers.



FROM NOVEMBER 2022 ONWARDS, GAZA, IN THE OPTs EXPERIENCED

**HEAVY RAINFALL**



LEADING TO THE ACCUMULATION OF RAINWATER IN DAMS AND RESERVOIRS IN ISRAELI-CONTROLLED AREAS

26 DECEMBER 2022, ISRAELI AUTHORITIES OPENED THE DAM GATES



RESULTING IN WIDESPREAD FLOODING



THIS CRISIS LED TO SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE TO INFRASTRUCTURE + AGRICULTURE INCLUDING:

**300+** GREENHOUSES DESTROYED OR DAMAGED

ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:



FOOD VOUCHER DISTRIBUTION



REHABILITATION OF GREENHOUSES



REHABILITATION OF AGRICULTURAL ROADS



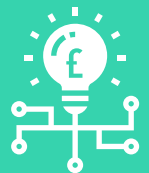
## KEY MESSAGES

BEYOND THE HEADLINES OF EXTREME WEATHER AND SEVERE DISASTERS, START NETWORK HAS BEEN ADDRESSING THE HUMANITARIAN IMPACTS OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS IN A NUMBER OF WAYS.

**01 Performing a lifesaving and gap-filling role** by responding to under-the-radar, small to medium sized crises through the Start Fund.



**02 Protecting people at risk of climatic crises through innovative financing** with Start Ready, which prepositions funding for predictable climate hazards. Start Ready pools risks across countries to stretch funding further and respond quickly to locally identified climate risks.



**03 Driving systemic change that prioritises locally led action**, and co-creating shifts in the way humanitarian action is approached, resourced, and delivered. By shifting power and decision-making through the work of the locally led humanitarian hubs working in partnership with us we advocate for a humanitarian system that is more locally led and anticipatory.



# POLICY ASKS



TOGETHER WITH OUR NETWORK OF MORE THAN 80 LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL GLOBAL ORGANISATIONS WORKING ACROSS FIVE CONTINENTS, WE ARE ADVOCATING FOR:

## 01 INCREASED FINANCING TO ADDRESS THE LOSSES AND DAMAGES CAUSED BY THE CLIMATE CRISIS.

Loss and damage is typically understood as the adverse impacts of climate change which have occurred and will occur despite mitigation and adaptation efforts. It is key that continued progress is made towards the targets on mitigation and adaptation, but it is also necessary to take steps to avert, minimise, and address current and future loss and damage. **Previous analysis** has estimated that the Global North is responsible for 92% of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Loss and Damage Financing Mechanism must be aligned with the calls from countries experiencing the biggest effects of climate change and cover both economic and non-economic loss and damage, including the impact on lives, societies, and environments. This should not be duplicative financing but rather in addition to existing financing from other sectors (e.g., humanitarian, development, and climate). Furthermore, the Loss and Damage Financing Mechanism should ensure that funding reaches people and communities affected and at risk of climate impacts.

## 02 A MORE LOCALLY LED HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO CLIMATE RISKS.

**The Grand Bargain** is an agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian aid organisations, and calls for 25 per cent of global humanitarian funding to local and national responders.

Through our financing mechanisms, we are able to shift resources to national and local organisations to anticipate and respond to crises. Local communities and people who are disproportionately affected by climate change must have access to risk information, early warning systems, and pre-arranged financing to respond to crises in a timely and efficient way to protect themselves.

Local knowledge, expertise, and leadership must be recognised to strengthen responses to climate risks. More locally informed and inclusive approaches to humanitarian response involves supporting community-based innovation, recognising local and Indigenous knowledge, and including the needs of all people in their diversity (e.g., traditionally marginalised populations like women, youth, elderly, and persons with disabilities).

## 03 A SYSTEMIC CHANGE IN THE HUMANITARIAN FINANCING SYSTEM, BASED ON INNOVATIVE, FLEXIBLE, AND PROACTIVE WAYS TO RESPOND TO CLIMATE NEEDS AND REDUCE RISK.

For some hazards it is possible to use science and risk modelling to determine the predictability and patterns of occurrence which can be utilised to act in anticipation or earlier in the evolution of the crisis.

The current humanitarian financing system is slow, reactive, and fragmented.

By shifting mindsets, resources, and financing to a proactive approach supported by financing that is released rapidly (and where possible in advance of crises) and responses that are led by actors within the crisis-context, it is possible to protect more people and reduce humanitarian impacts.

Anticipatory and early action must be complemented and connected to wider disaster risk management efforts to further reduce risks and continue to build resilience.