

Devex - Humanitarian System at Crossroad

At a Crossroad

Today, the humanitarian system is responding to 130 armed conflicts worldwide, with famine sweeping Gaza, thousands fleeing their homes in Sudan, and clashes erupting in West Africa. Humanitarians have been left struggling to manage. **But does the entire concept need to be rethought?**

“The whole humanitarian idea, as it’s currently conceptualized, is in trouble,” said Mukesh Kapila, a former U.N. official and current emeritus professor at the University of Manchester. “[We need to] reconceptualize the whole thing.”

Kapila was also [speaking at the Devex event at WHA 77](#), where humanitarian health experts talked about how – and if – their sectors could adapt to the staggering landscape of today’s emergency needs. He addressed the **lack of trust in humanitarian organizations’ neutrality**, especially in a world where remaining neutral is frowned upon, and standing in solidarity is respected. He also highlighted organizations becoming too big to create real change, and local players bearing the brunt of the cost, Devex Reporter Elissa Miolene says.

But while Kapila pushed for transformative change, others, like the [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#)’ director for health and care, Petra Khoury, **called for something much different**: an awareness that humanitarian players were simply responding to the failure of the world’s political systems.

“Yes, the humanitarian system needs to refine itself, yes we are at a crossroads,” said Khoury, speaking alongside Kapila. “But the fundamental core of all of this is **the failure of the political system**. For years and years, the policymakers that we voted for, each one in our respective countries, are contributing today to what we’re seeing on the humanitarian side.”

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