



## Recommendations on the New Bureau of Disaster and Humanitarian Response

April 2026

The new Bureau of Disaster and Humanitarian Response (DHR) consolidates PRM's Office of International Disaster Response (IDR), the Office of Global Food Security (GFS), and selected overseas humanitarian positions into 12 foreign assistance hubs. This reorganization creates the opportunity to strengthen the coherence, speed and accountability of U.S. humanitarian assistance, while safeguarding quality and effectiveness.

InterAction supports the goal of a more coherent and capable U.S. humanitarian architecture focused on rapid response and lifesaving assistance in sudden-onset disasters and complex emergencies. The recommendations below are designed to help DHR deliver measurable outcomes while maintaining strong oversight, transparency and responsible stewardship of public funds.

### 1. Results-Driven, High-Impact Assistance

DHR's mission has been rightly framed around 'high priority' disasters and emergencies. While aligning aid priorities to foreign policy objectives is the prerogative of the State Department, it should not come at the expense of field verified and/or independent needs-driven assessments and prioritization that ensure effectiveness. Needs-based allocations improve performance and outcomes, while also promoting the credibility of U.S. lifesaving programs and are the most cost-efficient way to ensure every dollar delivers results.

#### Recommendations

- Establish needs-based, field-verified assessment as the standard for funding decisions—ensuring taxpayer dollars go where they produce the most impact on identified needs.
- Base funding allocations on independent assessments tied directly to findings, eliminating guesswork and reducing waste.
- Establish a firewall between humanitarian programming decisions and the diplomatic reporting chain for the first six months of response, to preserve operational effectiveness and credibility.
- Report annually to Congress comparing assessed need versus actual programming, disaggregated by country, crisis, and sector—demonstrating accountability and credibility.

### 2. Staff Capacity and Operational Effectiveness

DHR will inherit 192 FTE positions across Foreign Service and Civil Service, plus approximately 40 personal services contractors, while realigning 45–50 overseas positions into 12 hubs. The Administration’s restructuring instinct is sound—but effectiveness requires adequate capacity. A lean structure can succeed only if it preserves technical depth and demonstrated partnerships, along with the staffing required to deliver on the Bureau’s mandate, meet Congressional appropriations requirements and surge into major crises.

## Recommendations

- Publish a Transition Risk Management Plan before realignments are finalized, including knowledge transfer protocols, overlap periods, and partner continuity measures, ensuring a smooth handoff and minimizing disruption to ongoing operations.
- Retain experienced humanitarian personnel with specialized expertise in disaster operations, protracted crisis coordination, food systems, logistics, and market-based programming—this institutional knowledge directly reduces costly learning curves and implementation failures.
- Align the DHR workforce to deliver the Bureau’s objectives and meet compliance requirements; current staffing levels will need to at least double to ensure responsible stewardship of U.S. foreign assistance funds.

### 3. Quality Standards and Accountability of Assistance

Speed and logistics are critical—but a focus on quality protects both the recipients and the American taxpayer. Poorly executed aid programs that fail technical standards will not meet the lifesaving needs in crisis situations; they also create reputational risks for the U.S. government, invite Congressional scrutiny, and often require costly remediation. DHR’s Office of Technical Assistance must be empowered as a real quality-assurance mechanism—not just a back-office advisory function—with authority to flag or pause programs that fall short of standards.

## Recommendations

- Require adherence to accepted minimum standards of assistance (including Sphere Standards and the Core Humanitarian Standard) and strong safeguarding requirements in all awards to ensure U.S. funding is being used most effectively.
- Embed conflict-sensitive programming and ‘do no harm’ principles in design and monitoring, to prevent U.S.-funded programs from inadvertently fueling instability or creating additional lifesaving needs.
- Maintain rigorous technical standards for food security, nutrition, health, water and sanitation, shelter, child protection, market support, and community recovery—even under rapid response timelines. Speed cannot come at the expense of effectiveness.

### 4. Effectiveness, Accountability, and Responsible Stewardship

Efficient and effective humanitarian programming requires that the people receiving aid have meaningful input into how it is designed and delivered. This is not an ideological position—it is a practical one. Programs designed without community input routinely underperform, waste resources, and require costly corrections. Accountability to beneficiaries and accountability to taxpayers are two sides of the same coin.

## Recommendations

- Require that all DHR-managed grants include accessible feedback and complaint mechanisms for beneficiaries, with documented response protocols—a basic safeguard against abuse, exploitation, and waste.
- Commission a GAO review of DHR’s first 12 months focused on outcomes and impact—moving beyond output metrics alone—give Congress and the Administration a clear picture of return on investment.
- As DHR expands its partnership base, take steps to prevent dilution of quality, local capacity or financial accountability. Apply best practices in high-risk crisis settings to protect communities and ensure responsible use of taxpayer resources.

## 5. Invest in American Nonprofit Organizations as Essential Partners

U.S. nonprofit organizations are essential responders with deep community relationships, specialized expertise, and the ability to operate in insecure and hard-to-reach contexts where government and UN presence is limited. They bring agility, innovation and rigorous financial accountability. They operate under stringent U.S. legal oversight, auditing, and reporting requirements, ensuring transparency and responsible fund use. Critically, they leverage federal investments with private sector resources and billions of dollars in donations from the American public, multiplying the impact of every taxpayer dollar.

## Recommendations

- Create dedicated nonprofit funding windows within the International Humanitarian Assistance account, and expand rapid-response, flexible funding for nonprofits in sudden-onset crises.
- Involve nonprofit partners in response planning, assessments, strategy development, and after-action reviews, drawing on their experience to sharpen programming and priorities.
- Prioritize nonprofit roles in supporting recovery and resilience, reducing long-term aid dependency and building durable local capacity and leadership.

## Conclusion

DHR represents a genuine opportunity to improve the speed, coherence, and results of U.S. humanitarian action. By grounding decisions in field-verified data, protecting operational capacity, preserving technical expertise, enforcing quality and accountability standards, investing in lifesaving nonprofit partners, and ensuring transparency through the transition, the Administration and Congress can ensure this reorganization delivers what it promises: faster, smarter, and more accountable assistance that saves lives and advances U.S. interests. InterAction stands ready to engage constructively with the Bureau’s leadership as it establishes its operational standards.

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