

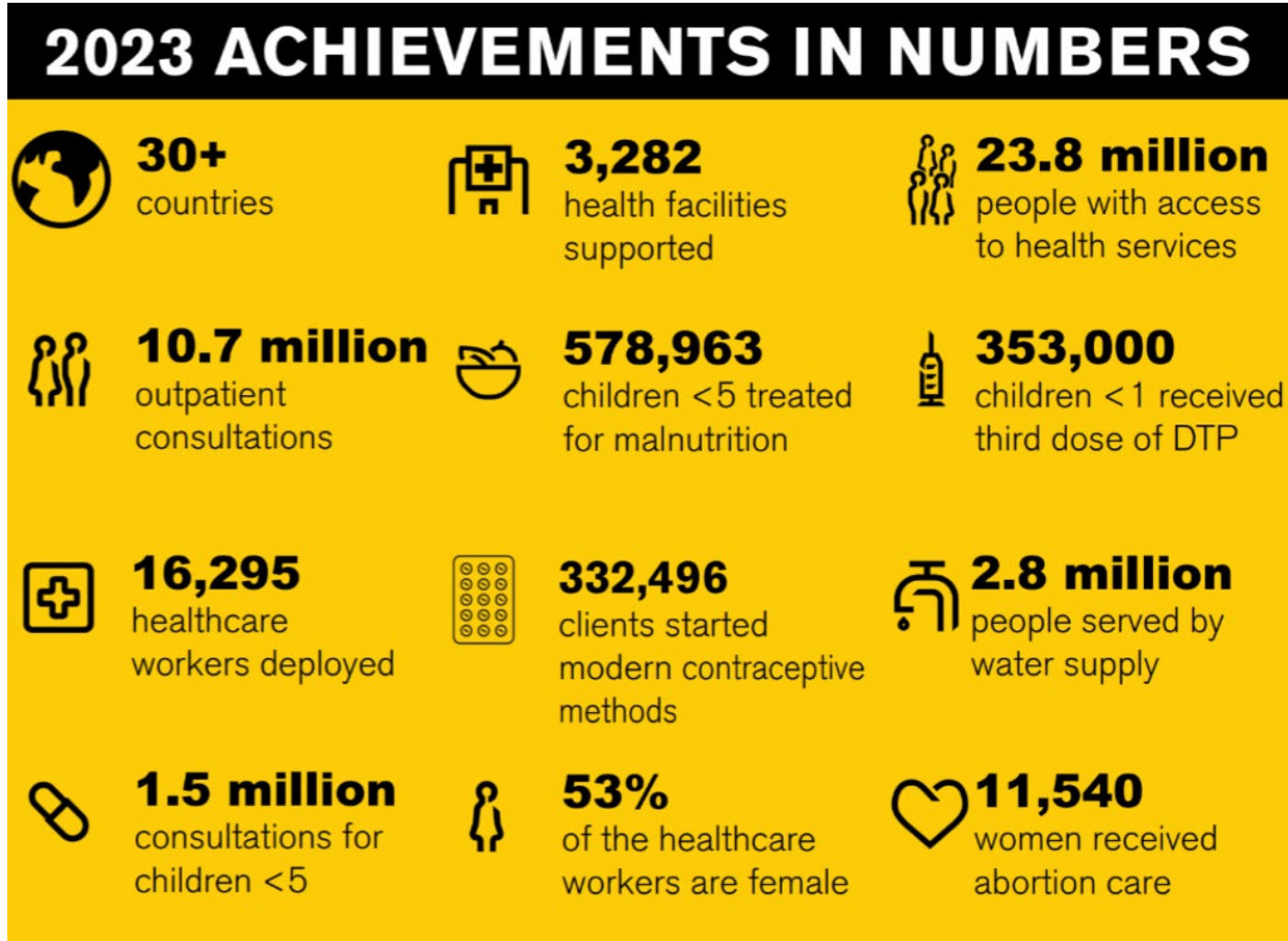


## Immunization in Fragile Contexts: Addressing Challenges and Exploring Opportunities in HPV

**Sheetal Sharma (Ph.D.) Immunization  
Specialist**

**Stella Njagi (MChB, MPH) NCD Specialist**

# IRC Works In More Than 40 Crisis Affected Countries, US States & Europe



# International Rescue Committee (IRC)

## The IRC: Delivering Lifesaving Impact - Our Mission

- Founded in 1933, the IRC helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover, and regain control of their future.

## Our Approach

- Providing health care to crisis-affected communities.
- Helping children learn and thrive
- Empowering individuals and communities toward self-reliance.
- Prioritizing the unique needs of women and girls in all interventions.

## Global Reach & Health Impact

- Operating in 40+ countries, delivering humanitarian aid and development programs.
- Supporting refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and host communities in crisis-affected regions.
- Resettlement, asylum, and integration services in the U.S. and Europe.
- Health programs make up over 50% of IRC's work in 33+ countries.

### MISSION

To help people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster, including the climate crisis, to survive, recover and gain control of their future.



### Where we work



### Who we serve

**People forced to flee** from conflict and disaster, including refugees, internally displaced people, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants – regardless of their formal status, **the host communities** that support them, and **those who remain** in their homes and communities



The **growing climate crisis** demands our attention and explicit mention in our mission. We will implement climate programming and reduce our carbon footprint.

# The Growing Humanitarian Need

- 305 million people need humanitarian aid.
- 82% (242 million) live in IRC's 20 Watchlist countries, including:  
**Sudan | Myanmar | Syria | DRC | occupied Palestinian Territory | Chad.**
- A record 120 million people are fleeing conflict and disaster.  
123 million forcibly displaced worldwide.
- 256 million people face severe food insecurity.
- **Funding & Donors:** Backed by donor governments, foundations, individuals, and corporate partners, ensuring sustainable impact.



2/27/2025



# 2025 EMERGENCY WATCHLIST AT A GLANCE

## a world Out of Balance

The **Emergency Watchlist report** is the International Rescue Committee's (IRC) assessment of the 20 countries at greatest risk of new or worsening humanitarian emergencies each year. The report is based on an analytically rigorous process that deploys 74 quantitative and qualitative variables, as well as qualitative insights from the IRC's experience of working in more than 40 countries, to identify which countries to include on the list and where to rank them.

The 2025 Watchlist countries represent an outsized burden of crisis. **These 20 countries contain only 11% of the global population but account for:**

82%

of people in humanitarian need

77%

of people forcibly displaced

32%

of people living in extreme poverty

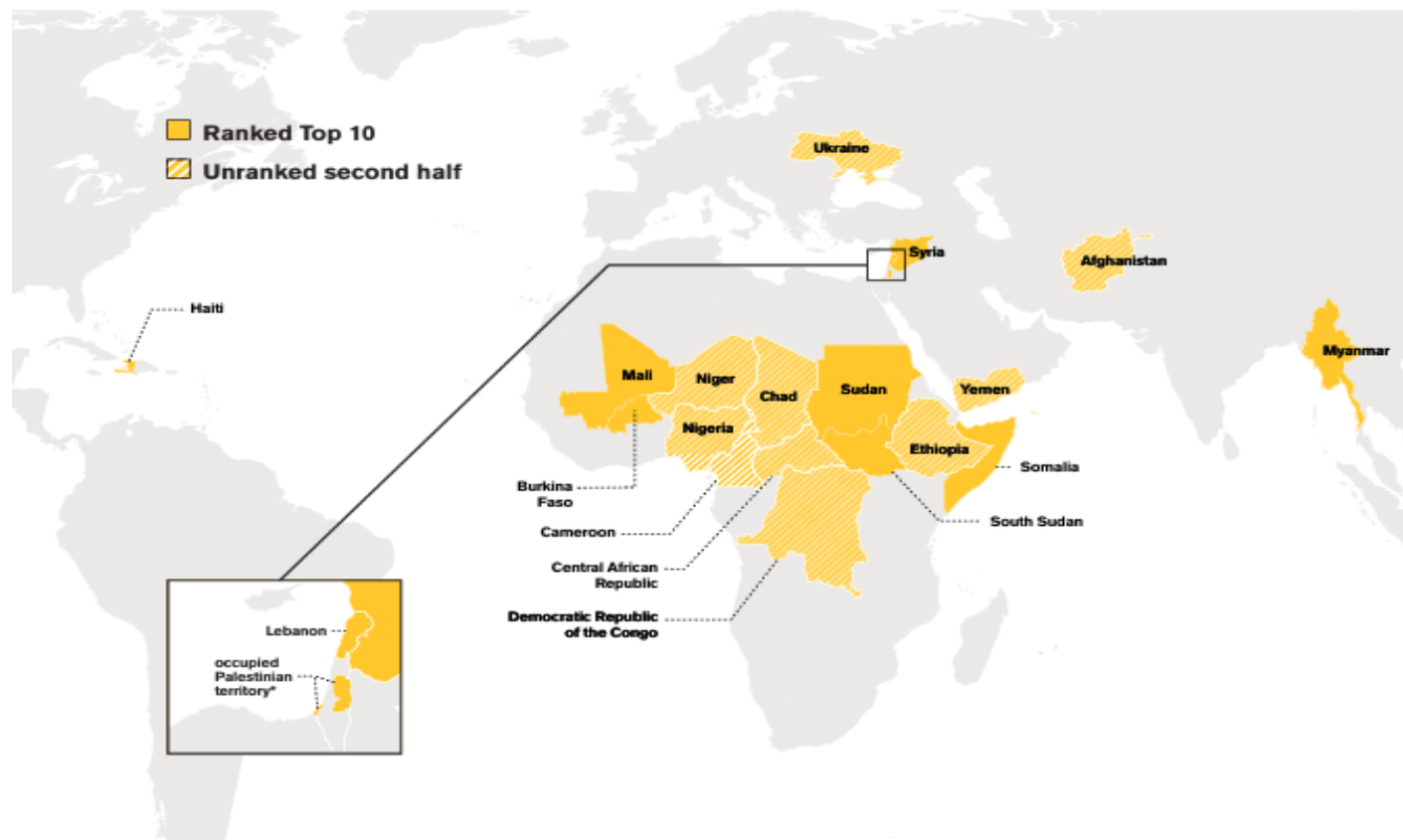
73%

of people facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity



The **Emergency Watchlist report** is the International Rescue Committee's (IRC) assessment of the 20 countries at greatest risk of new or worsening humanitarian emergencies each year. The report is based on an analytically rigorous process that deploys 74 quantitative and qualitative variables, as well as qualitative insights from the IRC's experience of working in more than 40 countries, to identify which countries to include on the list and where to rank them.

The 2025 Watchlist countries represent an outsized burden of crisis. **These 20 countries contain only 11% of the global population but account for:**



### Ranked top 10

1. Sudan
2. occupied Palestinian territory
3. Myanmar
4. Syria
5. South Sudan
6. Lebanon
7. Burkina Faso
8. Haiti
9. Mali
10. Somalia

### Unranked second half

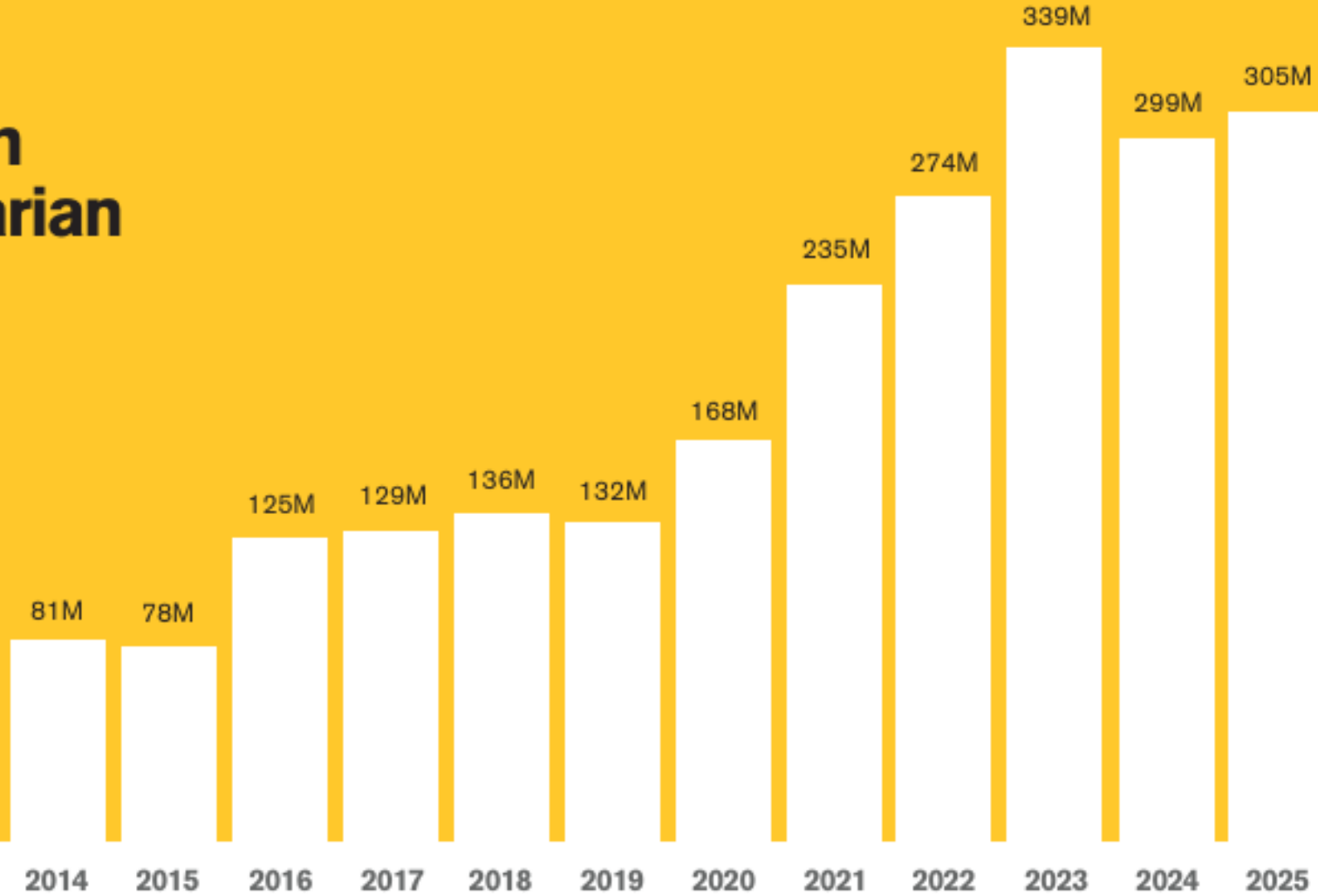
- Afghanistan
- Cameroon
- Central African Republic
- Chad
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Ethiopia
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Ukraine
- Yemen



FIGURE 1

# Growth in humanitarian needs

Source: Global Humanitarian Overview



# The Growing Humanitarian Need

## Comprehensive & Integrated Health Services

- ✓ Addressing **immediate crises & long-term health challenges** for vulnerable populations.
- ✓ Prioritizing **integrated primary care, nutrition, and environmental health** across six pillars: **Nutrition, Immunization, Contraception, Infectious Disease Control, Primary Health Care, Clean Water & Sanitation**

## Scaling Vaccination in Humanitarian Contexts

- ✓ **Closing the immunization gap** for children & adults affected by conflict & disaster.
- ✓ **Proven scalability** through the **Gavi-funded REACH Consortium - Ethiopia | Somalia | South Sudan | Sudan | Chad | Nigeria** through **global and local partners**.
- 📌 **8 million vaccine doses** delivered as of **November 2024**. **Expanding HPV Vaccination & Cervical Cancer Screening**
- ✓ HPV vaccination is supported in **Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Thailand, Libya, Burkina Faso, and Sierra Leone**.
- ✓ **In Partnership with: Ministries of Health (MoH); Multilateral donors; Private funding sources**



# Advancing Women's & Girls' Health in Crises

- IRC ensures that women and girls survive crises and regain control of their lives through simple, cost-effective, and proven solutions:
- **Reduce** unintended pregnancies & unsafe abortions
- **Improve** maternal health outcomes
- **Strengthen** immunization coverage & vaccine access
- **Prevent & Address** gender-based violence, HIV, HPV & STIs
- **Our Impact**
- 📈 **10.7M** outpatient consultations in 30 countries (33% increase in 2023)  
🏥 Strengthening health systems through **direct services, partnerships & advocacy**
- **The Urgent Need**
- 🌍 **72M** women & adolescent girls need humanitarian aid
- 🏠 **450M** women & girls live in fragile settings
- 🚨 **Disruptions** in PHC services → reduced access to SRH care, immunizations & screenings
- **Humanitarian Realities (2024 Appeals)**
- 💠 **13%** of the global population affected
- 💠 **58%** of maternal deaths occur in crises
- 💠 **37%** of newborn deaths & **36%** of stillbirths
- 💠 **25%** of women lack access to family planning
- 🟢 Adolescents need **comprehensive health services** to secure their futures



# Integrated Health Approaches: Expanding Access to Life-Saving Health Services

- **Sexual & Reproductive Health (SRH) and Contraception**
  - 🧑‍⚕️ In **2023**, IRC and partners enabled **332,496 people**, including **55,000 adolescent girls**, to access **modern contraception**.
    - 🧑‍🎓 **Adolescent engagement in SRH program design** has enhanced **facility readiness & client experiences** in **Nigeria, South Sudan, DRC, and Chad**.
      - 💡 The **IRC's Airbel Impact Lab** drives **innovation, self-care models & policy advocacy** to expand global **SRH access**.
- **Routine Immunization**
  - 🧪 **Conflict-affected and remote communities** are often missed by national immunization programs.
    - 🌍 Through the **Reaching Every Child in Humanitarian Settings (REACH) initiative**, funded by **Gavi**, IRC has administered **2 million vaccine doses** to children in:
      - 📍 **Ethiopia | Somalia | South Sudan | Sudan**
- **Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in Crisis Settings**
  - 🩺 **NCDs like cervical cancer and diabetes** are often deprioritized in humanitarian settings.
    - 🏥 In **2023**, IRC provided **1+ million NCD outpatient consultations**, integrating **screening, treatment, and prevention** into **Primary Health Care (PHC) programs**.
      - 🧡 **Cervical cancer** is the **4th most common cancer in women**, with the highest burden in **Africa and Asia**—highlighting the urgent need for expanded **prevention and treatment** efforts.



## HPV Vaccination & Cervical Cancer Prevention in Humanitarian Settings

### Our Reach & Impact

- ✓ **HPV Vaccination:** Kenya, Uganda, Bangladesh, Thailand, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Libya, Burkina Faso, Chad
- ✓ **Target pop:** 10-19 – Refugee, migrants, host community, Internally Displaced Persons, and Hard-to-Reach Persons (e.g. Turkana).
- ✓ **Partnerships:** Collaborating with MoH & EPI partners to obtain and track doses, report data, and deliver services via static & mobile outreach.
- ✓ **Vaccine Use:** Gardasil (quadrivalent) & Cervarix (bivalent); dosing varies by country (1-2 doses).

### Challenges in Humanitarian Settings

- 🚧 **Healthcare Disruptions:** Conflict, displacement, natural disasters damaging facilities.
- 🚧 **Limited Funding:** Unpredictable resources affecting program sustainability.
- 🚧 **Cultural & Awareness Barriers:** Misinformation, stigma, and vaccine hesitancy.
- 🚧 **Access Barriers:** Mobility, security constraints, distance, and healthcare worker shortages.
- 🚧 **Supply Chain Issues:** Vaccine stock-outs, cold-chain storage limitations.



## HPV Vaccination in Humanitarian & Fragile Settings

- **Access Gaps:** In conflict-affected and displaced communities, HPV vaccine access is **low due to health system disruptions, lack of awareness, and cultural barriers.**
- **Refugee & IDP Impact:** Girls in refugee camps and conflict zones have **limited access to routine immunization, SRH services, and cancer screening.**
- **HPV Vaccine Challenges:**
  - **Cold chain and logistics** in fragile settings
  - **Misinformation and vaccine hesitancy**
  - **High dropout rates** for the second dose
  - **Lack of integration** with other adolescent health services
- **Potential Solutions:** Community-based interventions, outreach vaccination, and integration with **SRHR and adolescent health programs.**



# Spotlight: HPV Vaccination in Kenya & Thailand

## Expanding HPV Vaccination in LMICs

- HPV causes 95% of cervical cancer cases, yet prevention efforts remain limited in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).
- The IRC is addressing this gap by providing HPV vaccinations to adolescent girls in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Thailand:

### 📍 Kenya (Kakuma Refugee Camp)

- ◆ 2023: Vaccine misinformation halted HPV immunization efforts.
- ◆ The IRC led community engagement to rebuild trust.
- ◆ 2024: 4,254 girls received dose one, 2,472 received dose two (57% coverage for girls aged 9-14).
- 📍 Bangladesh ◆ 2024: 7,942 girls (10-14 years) vaccinated via Health Cluster efforts.

### 📍 Thailand (Tham Hin Refugee Camp)

- ◆ 2023: 3,146 girls (9-14 years) vaccinated.
- **Our Approach** 🏠 Vaccinations delivered through health facilities, schools & outreach campaigns near cold chain storage sites. 🗣️ Advocating for a single-dose HPV vaccine strategy to improve coverage & adherence.
- **IRC's Commitment to Adolescent Health:**
  - HPV vaccination integrated with **SRHR** in camp settings across **Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Thailand.**
  - **Community engagement** to address vaccine hesitancy.
  - **Support for national HPV programs** to ensure refugee and displaced girls are included.



# Cervical Cancer Screening

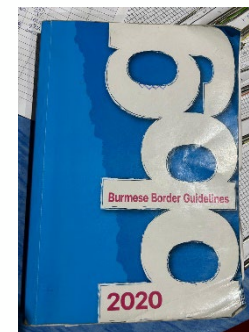
Cervical cancer screening is an integrated service with SRH & family planning services in Uganda, Thailand, Libya, Lebanon, Kenya, Ecuador, and Burkina Faso, in partnership with MOH, UNHCR & Project Hands (Philanthropy). Screening methods include visual inspection with acetic acid (VIA) and Pap smears (Uganda), with referrals provided for treatment of positive cases, targeting the reproductive age group.

## Challenges:

- ✓ Economic barriers to programs and clients to offer screening, supply chain & attrition challenges due to lack of screening and treatment
- ✓ Healthcare Human Resource: Workload for healthcare workers, capacity/skills and lower on the priority scale.
- ✓ Cultural and Social: Low literacy levels in clients, fear of pain, misconceptions (fertility scare & promiscuity perceptions), movement of populations, and follow-up

## Scaling Cervical Cancer Prevention & Treatment

- **◆ HPV Vaccination & Integration**
  - ✦ Support Ministries of Health to integrate HPV vaccination with other preventive measures.
  - ✦ Strengthen partnerships with national immunization programs (e.g., Libya) to ensure equal access for host communities & migrants.
- **◆ Screening, Detection & Treatment**
  - 🏥 Invest in effective screening, early detection, and treatment of precancerous cervical lesions (PCLs) and early-stage cervical cancer (Sierra Leone).
  - 🤝 Partner with Project HANDS & professional volunteers for sustainable screening in low-resource settings.
  - 📣 Enhance community awareness to increase early detection & care-seeking behavior.
- **◆ Essential Equipment & Infrastructure**
  - 🏠 Provide critical cervical cancer treatment equipment, including:
    - ✓ Telecobalt Unit (Cobalt-60) & Linear Accelerator
    - ✓ Modern imaging (MRI, PET, CT scanners) to improve diagnosis & treatment planning.
- **◆ HPV Vaccine Sustainability**
  - 💰 Identify external funding opportunities to secure continuous HPV vaccine supply (Thailand).





# IRC's HPV approach

Looking ahead, the IRC aims to:

- **Expand cervical cancer programming:** Prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Integrate services: SRH, NCD management, and immunization.
- **Collaboration:** Work with MoH on HPV vaccination strategies for adolescent girls.
- **Expanding** IRC's HPV vaccination programs to more crisis-affected settings by advocacy for inclusion of displaced populations in national HPV vaccine programs
- **Work with humanitarian and local partners to deliver vaccination**, drawing on lessons from REACH – GAVI ZIP.
- **Increase access:** Use low-cost detection and treatment methods.
- **Task shifting:** Deliver services in primary health care centers in fragile and humanitarian settings.
- **Strengthen social protection:** Link immunization and health services with cash-based assistance and other social protection programs to improve health outcomes for vulnerable populations.





# Demand Generation: Human Centered Design work



TDA: Focus Group Discussion with Female Caregivers in Somalia



A co-creation & ideation workshop in Somalia



An ideation workshop in South Sudan



TDA: Focus Group Discussion with males in Somalia Somalia



Testing a HCD prototypes in Somalia

- TDA – Transitional Design Artifacts
- Demand/ supply side barrier analysis
- Ideation, prototyping, CE

# Differentiated vaccination service delivery strategies: Last mile supply chain and logistics

- Strategy:
  - Outreach
  - Fixed
  - Mobile
  - Hit & Run
- Capacity building
- Differentiated demand creation
- Capacity building
- Last mile supply support
- Monitoring



Outreach team in Sudan



Outreach team in Somalia



Outreach at a cattle camp in South Sudan



Using a traditional canoe to deliver vaccines across a river, Ethiopia



Delivering Arktek, Ethiopia



Installing solar panels, Ethiopia

# Integration: ECD, Nutrition and the Ahlan Simsim Initiative



Family Resources

Our Work

About Us

Support Us

Q Sign In

Donate

## Ahlan Simsim Initiative

Bringing vital early education to children affected by conflict and crisis in the Syrian response region.



Ahlan Simsim is a transformational program from Sesame Workshop and the International Rescue Committee that integrates direct services for families affected by conflict and crisis with engaging educational media.

Ahlan Simsim is reaching children wherever they are — from classrooms, to health clinics and learning centers, to TVs and mobile devices.

The single largest early childhood intervention in the history of humanitarian response, Ahlan Simsim has reached over a million children through direct services in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria and 23 million children through *Ahlan Simsim*, the award-winning locally produced Arabic-language version of *Sesame Street* airing across the Middle East and North Africa.

Made possible by a landmark \$100 million grant from the MacArthur Foundation and additional support from the LEGO Foundation, Ahlan Simsim is transforming the way children are served in conflict and crisis.



## Going forward

- The IRC is committed to **expanding cervical cancer prevention, diagnosis, and treatment** as part of **integrated PHC**. We aim to:
  - Support **ministries of health (MoH)** in implementing **HPV vaccination strategies** for adolescent girls.
  - Increase **access to low-cost detection and treatment options**.
  - **Task-shift services** to primary health care centers in fragile and humanitarian settings.



## Surveillance, Training, RCCE

- Support health facility and community-based surveillance by ensuring relevant case definitions are available at all levels to improve early detection and reporting of mpox cases.
- Provide training and resources to staff and health workers to enhance their understanding of mpox transmission, reduce stigma, and improve recognition of often-misdiagnosed symptoms, enabling more accurate diagnosis and treatment.
- Tailor community messaging to improve understanding of mpox transmission, reduce stigma and denial, and encourage early symptomatic treatment when necessary.

### **Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE):**

- Engage communities and influencers to foster trust, combat misinformation, and ensure culturally sensitive communication.
- Increase awareness in humanitarian settings, emphasizing the importance of early reporting and vaccination to prevent outbreaks.

# The Global Burden of HPV

## Prevalence:

- Approximately 12% of women worldwide have detectable cervical HPV infections, with higher rates in sub-Saharan Africa (24%), Eastern Europe (21%), and Latin America (16%). [hpvworld.com](http://hpvworld.com)
- About 31% of men globally are infected with genital HPV, with 21% carrying high-risk strains. [who.int](http://who.int)

## Associated Cancers:

- HPV is responsible for an estimated 620,000 new cancer cases in women and 70,000 in men annually. [who.int](http://who.int)
- Cervical cancer is the fourth leading cause of cancer and cancer-related deaths among women, with approximately 660,000 new cases and 350,000 deaths worldwide in 2022. [who.int](http://who.int)

# IRC's Health Impact in Crisis-Affected Communities

<p><b>Comprehensive Support for Vulnerable Populations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Delivering healthcare, education, and economic support with a focus on women &amp; girls.</li> <li>✓ Operating in 33+ countries, with health programs making up 50% of IRC's work, addressing both immediate crises and long-term challenges.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Populations &amp; Geographic Focus</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↑ Supporting refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and host communities in conflict-affected and disaster-prone regions.</li> <li>↑ Targeting populations facing limited healthcare access, high disease burdens, malnutrition, and food insecurity.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Health Impact &amp; Priorities</b></p>
<p>↗ IRC's health programs focus on six key pillars:</p>	<p><b>Nutrition; Immunization; Contraception (SRH &amp; Maternal/Newborn Health); Infectious Disease Prevention &amp; Control; Last-Mile Primary Healthcare; Clean Water &amp; Sanitation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↗ Additional priorities: Health system strengthening, mental health, antimicrobial resistance, &amp; climate-related health challenges.</li> <li>↗ 23.8 million people reached in 33 countries (2023).</li> <li>↗ 10 million+ consultations provided across 3,282 static &amp; mobile health facilities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Funding &amp; Resources</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌐 Supported by donor governments, foundations, individuals, and corporate partners.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Scaling Immunization &amp; HPV Prevention in Displaced Communities</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↗ Expanding lifesaving immunization services to reach missed communities &amp; prevent disease outbreaks.</li> <li>↗ Gavi-funded REACH Consortium delivers vaccines where national programs cannot operate safely.</li> <li>↗ 8 million vaccine doses delivered in: Ethiopia   Somalia   South Sudan   Sudan   Chad   Nigeria.</li> <li>↗ 900,000 children received their first DTP1 dose &amp; 300,000 zero-dose children identified.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Displaced &amp; Hard-to-Reach Populations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌐 305 million people need humanitarian assistance.</li> <li>🌐 242 million live in IRC's 20 Watchlist countries.</li> <li>🌐 123 million forcibly displaced &amp; 256 million facing severe food insecurity.</li> <li>↑ Highest concentrations of displaced populations: Sudan   Gaza   Myanmar   Syria   South Sudan   Lebanon   Haiti   Mali   Somalia   Afghanistan   CAR   Chad   DRC   Ethiopia   Niger   Nigeria   Ukraine   Yemen.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Barriers to Healthcare Access</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🚧 Conflict &amp; displacement destroy health facilities, making them physically &amp; financially inaccessible.</li> <li>🚧 Violence threatens patients &amp; healthcare workers.</li> <li>🚧 Disruptions in medical supply chains hinder service delivery.</li> <li>🚧 Unpredictable &amp; insufficient funding limits res...</li> </ul>



## IRC's HPV Vaccination Approach

- **IRC's Commitment to Adolescent Health:**
  - **HPV vaccination integrated with SRHR** in camp settings across **Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Thailand**.
  - **Community engagement** to address vaccine hesitancy.
  - **Support for national HPV programs** to ensure refugee and displaced girls are included.
- **Key Results in Thailand (Tham Hin Refugee Camp):**
  - **5,028 doses** of HPV vaccine secured.
  - **3,146 adolescent girls (9–14 years) vaccinated** with their first dose.
  - **Health education sessions** delivered to increase awareness.
- **Scaling HPV vaccination to more humanitarian settings** through partnerships and outreach programs.

