



# HUMANITARIAN EXPERTS NETWORK

## COVID-19 Humanitarian Outcome Survey Key findings

27 April 2020



## Introduction

To help make sense of the COVID-19 crisis ACAPS launched the Humanitarian Experts Network (HEN), a contributing group of humanitarians, based all over the world, who can provide valuable information as the crisis unfolds. This report shares findings from HEN's third global survey launched on 20 April 2020. From April 20 to April 27, the HEN network grew to 707 members from 373 organisations across 97 countries and 66 HEN members participated in the third online survey. This tells us the HEN is a good idea and you want this information, but it also presents a challenge to providing the most complete story possible. We recognize that HEN members are busy and under pressure, and greatly value the time taken to respond, but we need more surveys completed weekly.

The COVID-19 crisis is the combination of the measures being used to contain it and the behaviours they provoke; the impact goes far beyond health. Your voice, and your opinions shape how we collectively understand the impact on the communities, households and individuals in your respective locations. To make this work, we need your input. We will keep the surveys brief, we will continue to be better, more targeted, and we will promise to get the information to you as quickly as we can every week, within days of closing the survey.

## Limitations

The ACAPS' HEN survey provides a rapid, weekly snapshot of what aid workers across the globe are seeing, thinking about and doing on the front lines of the COVID-19 response, and how things are changing as the crisis evolves

HEN is NOT based on a statistical sample. HEN combines and contrasts the current observations of people on the ground in each country. It provides a unique source of information on people's lives not captured by statistical information, or traditional health or economic data. It is an additional information source for understanding the complex nature of the interface between the COVID-19 outbreak, the containment measures and the behaviours and actions these have provoked – this is the crisis we are trying to understand so, collectively, we can continue to respond better.

Please **share the HEN network with your contacts** across the globe who can help us all develop a clearer picture of how this crisis is evolving and impacting on the most vulnerable communities.

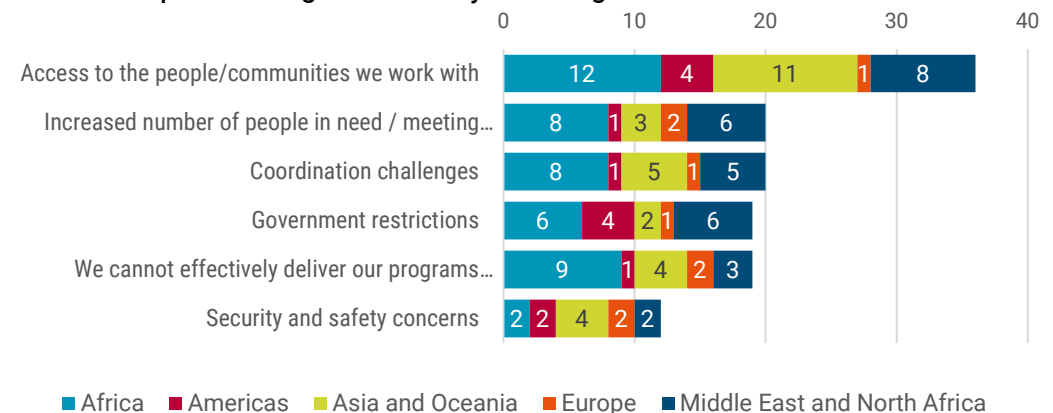
To join the HEN and participate in future surveys, click [here](#). Surveys are administered on a weekly basis and will take 5 minutes to complete. If you wish to be involved to a greater degree – please contact [hen@acaps.org](mailto:hen@acaps.org) we would love to hear from you.

## Key findings

The key findings are based on perceptions of 66 HEN respondents and not based on statistical sample or peer-reviewed evidence-based data.

- **HEN respondents are already seeing a reduction in services** because of COVID 19, however they have not entirely stopped. Education, health, food and transport services are the most affected. The Americas report the largest impact on services, particularly food services. Fuel shortages in Venezuela are hampering food distribution.
- **Over two thirds of HEN respondents are already seeing COVID-19 impact access to food**, particularly in Africa, Asia and the Americas. Inability to afford food due to price rises and job losses was the main cause, followed by challenges accessing markets.
- **An increase in poverty and people in need**, furthering the disparity between rich and poor, was expressed across all regions.
- **Exclusion of vulnerable people from work opportunities** was a key concern overall.
- **Domestic violence** was revealed as a concerning protection violation followed by the exclusion of children from education.
- **Movement restrictions – though necessary as a containment measure – are the biggest barriers that aid workers are facing in delivering their programs in all regions (excluding Europe)**. The top challenges in program delivery reported by HEN members are; access to the people and communities they work with, coordination challenges, and increasing numbers of people in need.

## Global snapshot: Program delivery challenges



## What HEN members told us about Africa

### Key insights

- Across the region access to basic services has reduced due to a combination of factors including shutdowns, fear of COVID-19 and containment measures restricting movement.
- Food access has reduced almost everywhere, according to respondents, due to the combination of price increases, lost household income and movement restrictions.
- Domestic violence is a concern but there is a gap in obtaining evidence on this.

### Living conditions and essential services

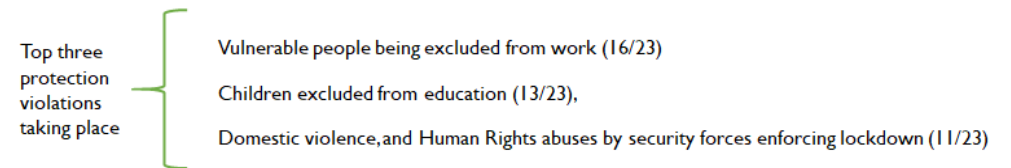
All but one respondents in Africa (22 of 23) reported that there had been at least some impact on some basic services; 15 said that **COVID 19 had reduced access to some services**, but most were still operating and 7, almost a third of respondents from the region, said that **COVID 19 had already had a major impact on services, particularly: Education; health; transport and food sector services.**

- In Somalia, Liberia and Zambia, fear of contracting the virus is stopping people from going to health facilities.
- In Ethiopia and South Sudan movement restrictions are stopping people travelling to health services, and making it difficult for many health care staff to get to work.
- In South Sudan and Liberia maintenance has stopped on water services, promoting concerns about future water access.
- The cost of sanitary items in Ethiopia has increased making them unaffordable for many.

Almost all the HEN responses from Africa said that **COVID 19 was already reducing people's access to food** due to increases in the price of staple goods, job losses reducing incomes and purchasing power (particularly in the informal sector) and movement restrictions. Food prices had tripled in some areas, with this mainly attributed to increased transport costs and border closures. HEN members in Tanzania were the only respondents to tell us they had not yet seen any impact on access to food. Even there however, concerns were expressed that it would become an issue in the future. In Zambia a HEN member told us that an early harvest had provided some relief, though people were still struggling with food insecurity.

## Social cohesion, protection and gender concerns

Several members highlighted the challenges in really knowing the situation in relation to **domestic violence**. In Somalia, one member shared how the shift from men spending



time outside the home chewing “khat” to time indoors with the family was resulting in “addiction hangovers” which can manifest in them physically assaulting their children and wives. Domestic violence was also highlighted in Liberia with the comment, “We assume there is domestic violence going on too but cannot confirm now.”

### Humanitarian and development operations

**“My concern is that it is difficult to do any work except COVID 19. We [work] in agriculture and there is a lockdown. Our Field staff are unable to visit our communities. This impacts on our work in poverty reduction as the women in the Village Savings and Loans projects no longer meet or are able to make payments on loans taken. Our programming is literally brought to a halt. It is impossible to do programming in the field from home.” Liberia**

Top program delivery challenges in Africa:

1. Access to the people/communities we work with (12/23)
2. We cannot effectively deliver our programs through remote work (9/23)
3. Coordination (8/23) and increased number of people in need (8/23)

In Ethiopia organisations face challenges because of limited funding opportunities and a lack of flexibility of donors. Limited internet makes it challenging to serve vulnerable groups in rural areas.

The survey gave HEN members the opportunity to express their concerns for development, poverty reduction and humanitarian programming because of the impact of COVID-19.

- A respondent from Cameroon noted the challenges in coordinating humanitarian, development, and government actors because they do not normally work together.
- In Niger, limited funding opportunities to respond to existing and additional COVID-19 related needs has been compounded by access constraints imposed by the government.
- Respondents in Mozambique and Niger raised concerns of an increase in poverty and the potential suspension or reallocation of ongoing development projects.

## What HEN members told us about the MENA

### Key insights

- Access to basic services are disrupted across the region. Access to populations in need are also a concern.
- The impact on food security is most notable in Palestine and Yemen where food affordability is a serious concern. Significant price increases are reported across the region (particularly in Lebanon) and will impact food access over time.
- There are concerns that ongoing programmes with vulnerable communities will be de-prioritised in terms of funding to focus on COVID-19.

### Living conditions and essential services

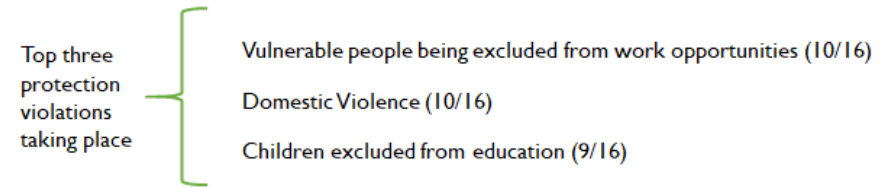
HEN members in the Middle East and North Africa reported a reasonably high level of disruption to services compared to other regions. Most (9 of 16) said that COVID 19 had had some impact on services, and more than a third (6 of 16) said that COVID 19 had a big impact on services. Like other regions, education, health, food and business sector services were the most heavily affected. HEN members in Palestine reported shortages in specialised health services, intensive care, personal protective items and testing kits, particularly in Gaza. HEN members were also concerned that online learning was not working well in Palestine as many students did not have access to laptops, phones and printers to participate fully in learning. Palestine had announced some easing measures which HEN members hoped would help improve economic activity and reduce domestic violence.

Currently, food insecurity is less of a concern in the Middle East and North Africa than in other regions according to HEN reports. Half of respondents (8 of 16), told us there had not yet been a significant change in access to food due to COVID-19, second only to Europe.

In spite of this, food prices are increasing, and food affordability is a concern that may worsen over the coming weeks. HEN respondents in Lebanon and Syria told us about sharp rises in the price of food – up to 40% in Lebanon. In Lebanon there are concerns about the impact COVID-19 is having on prices and jobs as it comes on top of an existing economic crisis dating back to popular protests against the government from October 2018. HEN members in Palestine and Yemen were more likely than in other countries in MENA to report that people were already unable to afford food.

**“Lebanon was already facing a major economic crisis, and devaluation of the currency that was causing interruption of the supply chain, the pandemic exacerbated the existing crisis and led to interruption of basic services” Lebanon**

## Social cohesion, protection and gender concerns



COVID-19 has increased poverty, exclusion, and pre-existing social tensions in fragile states across the Middle East and North Africa, greatly raising the risk for increased violence. Ongoing protection issues related to occupation and human rights violation in Palestine were expressed by a HEN member.

### Humanitarian and development operations

Top program delivery challenges in the Middle East and North Africa:

1. Access to the people/communities we work with (8/16)
2. Government restrictions (6/16)
3. Supply chain disruptions (6/16)
4. Increased number of people in need (6/16)

In the Middle East and North Africa, HEN members connected their concerns for humanitarian and development operations to collapsing economies, increased conflict, and the continuation of access restrictions, due to conflict or political motives, in the region. In Yemen, Lebanon, and Palestine development actors were concerned that shifting priorities towards humanitarian response could deprioritise programs that are regularly serving vulnerable populations and that increasing needs will not be able to be met.

The main concerns in relation to development, poverty reduction and humanitarian programming because of the impact of COVID-19 are:

- Challenges in access, due to areas of controlled by different armed forces.
- Money in the bank not being able to cover the projects.
- Lack of resources to respond to the direct impact of COVID-19.
- Increased hunger and food insecurity along with lack of knowledge on malnutrition rates.
- Socio-economic consequences on fragile economies in Turkey, Lebanon and Palestine; with impact being greatest on the poorest households.



## What HEN members told us about Asia and Oceania

### Key insights

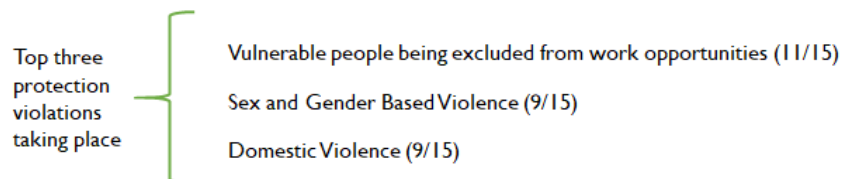
- Disrupted access to services is a serious concern in South Asia. India and Pakistan report that some services have shutdown. There are reports of health facilities not taking non-COVID cases and that many people are not getting the health care they need.
- Fear of the virus, fuelled by misinformation is one of the main concerns in much of Asia
- Access to food is disrupted across the region.
- More protection related concerns were reported in Asia /Oceania than in other regions, including concerns specific to children.
- The longer-term impacts of COVID-19, related to increases in poverty, greater vulnerability and marginalised groups, are already being raised.

### Living conditions and essential services

Consistent with other regions, health and education were the main services experiencing interruptions. Across South Asia (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal), HEN members reported that health facilities were unwilling or unable to take on patients with non-COVID symptoms. As health systems brace themselves for an influx of patients (India); or are struggling with reduced staff numbers as health workers were not turning up to work (Bangladesh). One HEN respondent in Pakistan said they had already seen an increase in deaths from non-communicable diseases. Respondents in Nepal expressed their concern that movement restrictions, and the diversion of resources to emergency health, were preventing people from accessing care for chronic diseases, immunisation, maternal health and support for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

Almost all HEN members in Asia and Oceania reported that COVID-19 was already impacting on people's access to food (14 of 15 respondents). People are unable to afford food due to price rises and movement restrictions. Fear of contracting COVID-19 is also a factor. A HEN member in Cambodia told us that sellers were not going to the market due to fear of the virus.

### Social cohesion, protection and gender concerns



One HEN member from Bangladesh told us that symptomatic individuals are forced to leave their homes or villages. In addition to the top three protection violations (given above), child protection concerns (specifically violence, abuse and exploitation, and risk of separation from parents due to quarantine) were noted as potential protection violations already taking place due to COVID-19.

**"[There is a] massive economic and social impact. Cambodia is very reliant on the garment and tourism industry, which has been massively disrupted due to COVID-19 and the withdrawal of the 'Everything but Arms (EBA)' deal earlier this year." Cambodia**

### Humanitarian and development operations

Top three program delivery challenges in Asia and Oceania:

1. Access to the people/communities we work with (11/15)
2. Supply chain disruptions (6/15)
3. Coordination challenges (5/15)

Access to people/communities is now particularly difficult for groups serving villages in the countryside. High quality internet and even consistent electricity varies by location, affecting remote work and requiring program adaptations for workers usually based in or regularly going to the field. In Bangladesh, a member shared that field-based management staff are overwhelmed by a significant increase in requests from upper-management on top of their usual activities. This is largely due to the desire to support remote work, assist with adaptations, and fulfil additional donor/HQ requests for information, but is having a counter-productive impact on workloads and stress.

Main concerns HEN members express for development, poverty reduction and humanitarian programming because of the impact of COVID-19

- Extreme poverty will increase due to reduced livelihoods, loss of income, reduced remittances, border closures, and returned migrants.
- Livelihoods of the poor and marginalised will be further compromised.
- The long-term impact on children and families, particularly the interplay between economics and education may result in many children not returning to school if their families are struggling financially and need them to work.
- Funds currently and usually allocated to development and poverty alleviation will be diverted towards the COVID-19 response, worsening pre-existing poverty and humanitarian conditions

## What HEN members told us about Americas

### Key insights

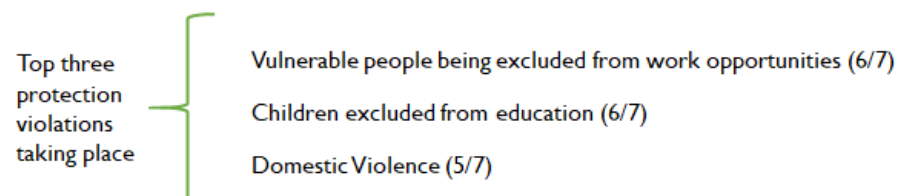
- Across the region, with the exception of Canada, access to services is heavily impacted.
- Fuel shortages and other transportation issues such as a reduction in public transport are making it hard for people to access services, for markets to be supplied and for people to access markets.
- The main challenge people face in terms of food is rising prices.
- In a region which already faced economic challenges the growing numbers of people in need and potential migration is foreshadowed.

### Living conditions and essential services

The Americas reported the highest level of impact on services compared to other regions. Responses from across the region (excluding Canada) reported that COVID-19 had already had a big impact on services or would have a big impact in the future. Unlike other regions, respondents reported a high impact on the food sector, particularly in Venezuela where HEN members said that fuel shortages were preventing food distributions, as well as impacting water and health services. A high impact on education services was also reported.

Rising prices and job losses are the major cause of food insecurity in the Americas, except for in the US where respondents told us that transportation challenges, specifically the reduction in bus services, is making it difficult for poorer Americans to get to grocery stores.

### Social cohesion, protection and gender concerns



“[The] previous context of complex humanitarian emergency had left provision of basic services (health, food, education, transportation) severely affected; COVID-19 adds to this severity and larger numbers of people in need are expected, as well as an increase in numbers of forced migration.” **Venezuela**

### Humanitarian and development operations

Top three program delivery challenges in the Americas:

1. Access to the people/communities we work with (4/7)
2. Security and safety concerns (2/7)
3. Government restrictions (4/7)

Similar to Africa and Asia/Oceania, program delivery in remote villages in the Americas has been particularly challenging. In Venezuela, gasoline shortages have prevented staff from reaching facilities. In the United States, the government’s lack of “honesty, empathy and emotional intelligence” was also cited as a challenge for program delivery.

Main concerns HEN members expressed for development, poverty reduction and humanitarian programming because of the impact of COVID-19

- An increase in the number people in need, leading to increased forced migration from Venezuela.
- Economic recovery for nations already facing severe economic challenges (Bolivia)

“The combination of a pandemic with a global depression will have long lasting effects on poverty in the United States.” **United States**

## What HEN members told us about Europe

### Key insights

- Responses in Europe reflect the overall higher income status of countries. Services are impacted, including tourism and business.
- Increases in the cost of food are compounded by job losses, and this impacts migrants, low income households and people working in the informal sector most.

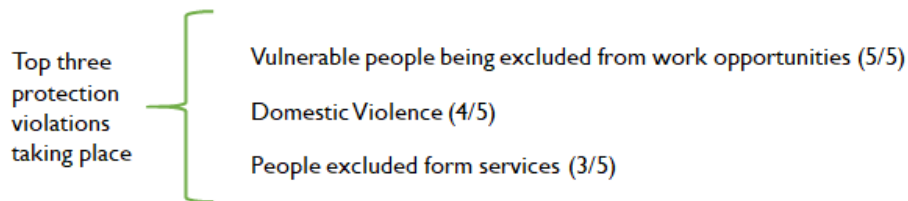
### Living conditions and essential services

The majority of HEN respondents in Europe reported a significant impact on services. However, unlike other regions (which mainly focused on interruptions to health, education or food services), the impact was more evenly spread across service sectors, particularly education, health, tourism and business services.

In line with the overall higher income status of many countries in the region, HEN members in Europe were least likely to report that COVID 19 had prevented people from accessing food. Three of five respondents in Europe said that COVID 19 had not caused a significant change in access to food. However, it was noted from members in Italy and the UK that people are finding it harder to afford food due to job losses. Migrants, low income households and people working in the informal sector are most affected.

“[I am most concerned about] awareness of COVID-19. even though a lot of people are aware, there are some people that take this response lightly.” **Netherlands**

### Social cohesion, protection and gender concerns



### Humanitarian and development operations

Top three program delivery challenges in Europe:

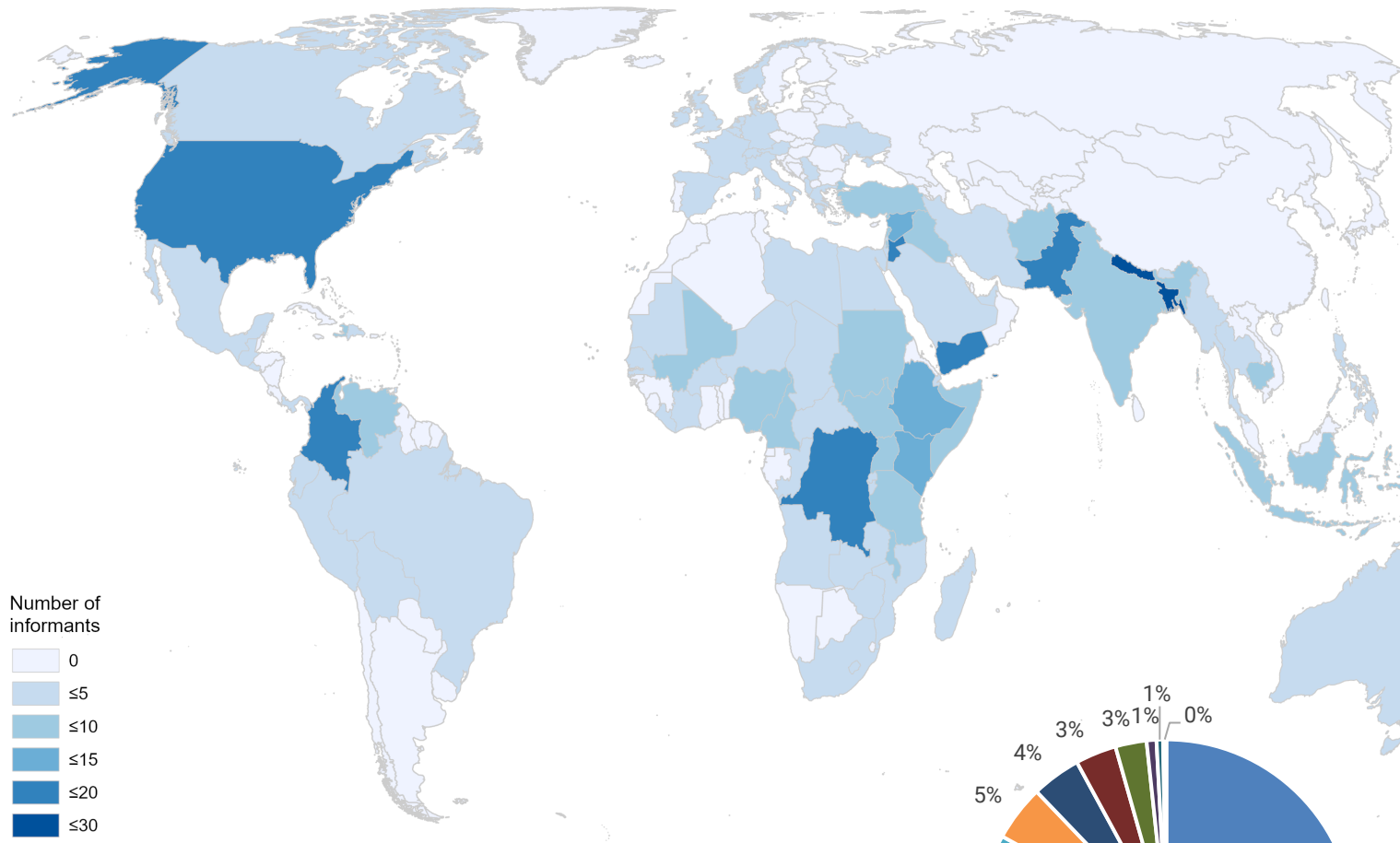
1. Increased number of people in need (2/5)
2. Security and safety concerns (2/5)
3. Challenges to program delivery through remote work (2/5)

Main concerns HEN members have for development, poverty reduction and humanitarian programming because of the impact of COVID-19

- Impacts of social Isolation. Echoing previous HEN feedback related to the impact that loneliness has and its links to depression, alcoholism and other negative consequences.
- The lack of a deep enough understanding of the virus to motivate behaviour change to limit the spread (Netherlands).

## Who is in the HEN?

Humanitarian Expert Network as of 27 April 2020

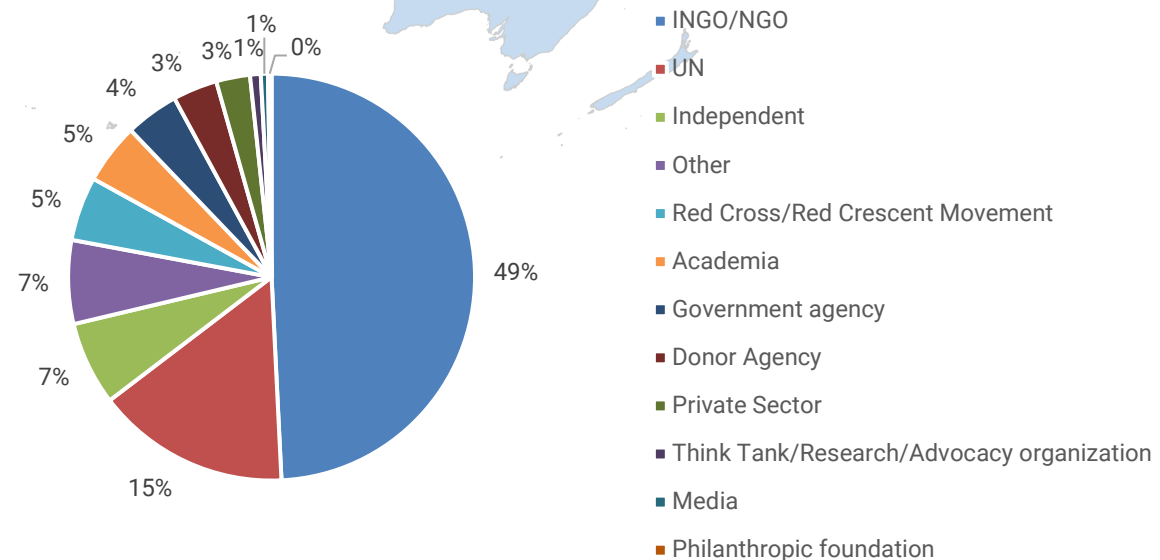


## HEN members know what they are talking about!

44% have more than 10 years experience in humanitarian or development work, two thirds have more than 5 years experience.

Responses are informed by a broad range of sources: national and international news, staff and peers, visible changes in their communities, and feedback from project participants. A number of HEN members also report being part of aid and government coordination fora, or national COVID-19 taskforces.

## Where do HEN members work?



## Who are HEN members?

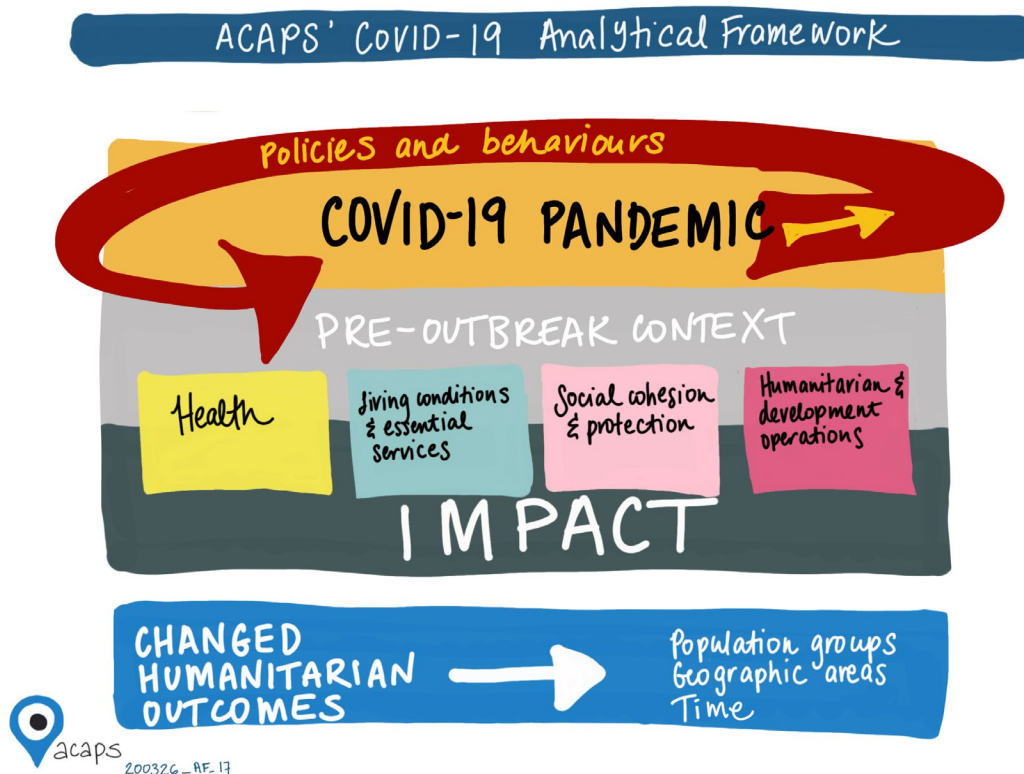
- 707 people (42% female, 52% male, 6% prefer not to say) from 373 organisations across 107 countries
- 323 are in a country level position
- 100 regional
- 126 global
- 158 did not answer



## ACAPS Analytical Framework

To respond to the need for information and analysis in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, ACAPS has developed an analytical framework on how we will approach the unfolding crisis. While the situation is in flux as the pandemic progresses across the globe, this analytical framework will guide ACAPS analysis and data collection (ACAPS 2020).

The framework looks at the pre-pandemic context and how changed policies, behaviours, and actions in reaction to the crisis impact humanitarian efforts, and what the knock-on effects of these may be. The framework categorises analysis of impacts in four main areas: health; living conditions and essential services; social cohesion and protection; and humanitarian development operations.



## How did ACAPS analyse the data?

Six ACAPS analysts, with technical support from Satellite Applications Catapult, cleaned, coded and summarised the HEN results. We used a Grounded Theory Approach for qualitative data.

We are presenting our findings by five regions (Africa, Asia and Oceania, Middle East, Americas, Europe). Over time, with more responses, we will transition to more country level information. Our goal is to have 20 experts responding for every crisis affected country worldwide.

## Data and sources

Satellite Applications Catapult produced the map in this report. The INFORM Severity Index is a composite index that measures severity of humanitarian crises and disasters globally. It brings together 31 indicators impacting severity organised in three dimensions: impact, conditions of affected people and complexity of the crisis. All the indicators are scored on a scale of 1-5. These scores are then aggregated into the overall severity score. See the full INFORM Severity Index data set [here](#).

## Acknowledgements

This report wouldn't have been possible without the time and contribution of Satellite Applications Catapult and HEN members.

