
foreword

Humanitarian financing in the context of the Covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic

For 20 years, Development Initiative's annual Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) report has comprehensively assessed international financing at work in humanitarian situations. Now, the Covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic presents a new challenge to the world. As the global crisis unfolds, and the response continues to take shape, the *GHA Report 2020* frames the crisis financing landscape in which the pandemic has become the pre-eminent feature.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed existing weaknesses in national and global systems, structures and leadership. We cannot yet see the scale of the global fall-out, but early evidence already shows disproportionate impact on the world's most vulnerable people – those already living in fragility and poverty, already in or at risk of crisis. As ever, the *GHA Report 2020* looks back to analyse existing crises and vulnerabilities, and the financing at work to help those in need. This year, we have added new analysis to examine the financing response to Covid-19, illustrating a humanitarian system under immense strain.

Covid-19 has spread in a world in which humanitarian need was already widespread and growing, due to ongoing conflict, disasters associated with natural hazards, and forced displacement. An estimated 216 million people needed humanitarian assistance in 69 countries in 2019. Millions continued to need assistance as a result of conflict in Yemen and Syria; a cyclone and flooding in southern Africa devastated communities in Mozambique and neighbouring countries; and millions were displaced from Venezuela as the consequence of ongoing political and economic turmoil.

The pandemic has also exposed the vulnerabilities of governments not usually in need of international humanitarian assistance. It continues to spread at speed around the world, dominating the Americas, extending widely throughout the Indian sub-continent, while Europe fights to reduce transmission rates. Globally, new cases continue to rise, having topped 10 million by June 2020. Wealthier nations are struggling to meet the immediate healthcare needs of their citizens, and mitigation efforts have weakened even the strongest economies.

All this presents the humanitarian system with new challenges, of an unanticipated scale and complexity. Governments and institutions that traditionally support international humanitarian response are feeling the direct effects of this pandemic, and facing pressure to tackle the widening inequalities exposed by it at home. The pandemic also presents the humanitarian system with immediate challenges. How to deliver assistance in a public health emergency in which travel restrictions and duty of care do not allow for the typical presence of international aid workers in crisis contexts? How to sustain assistance for pre-existing crises alongside newly emerging requirements related to Covid-19? How to address all of these challenges in the shadow of spreading global economic recession?

Yet, the response to the Covid-19 pandemic also highlights ongoing efforts to reform the delivery of humanitarian assistance. There is evidence of significant changes in how humanitarian financing is being delivered, perhaps most notably the greater flexibility of funding. We wait to see if these positive changes will become routine practice and whether progress can be accelerated in other areas of reform, particularly the empowerment and increased funding of local and national actors. The pandemic has shone a light on the importance of response delivered by community-based organisations, yet ensuring financing reaches them directly remains a challenge.

As we have consistently highlighted in previous reports, there remain significant challenges in accessing and making sense of data on financing to crisis contexts. Key challenges include tracking funding through the transaction chain, and aligning humanitarian and development flows. These challenges are increasingly evident now, as the system demands good, accurate, localised and disaggregated real-time data to inform urgent decision-making in the Covid-19 response. We will continue to explore and seek solutions to improve the impact and effectiveness of humanitarian financing to the [Covid-19](#) response.

Development Initiatives remains committed to providing relevant, accessible and trusted analysis to decision-makers and practitioners. We hope that this year's GHA report meets your needs.

Thank you for your interest.

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