



# HUMANITARIAN EXPERTS NETWORK

## COVID-19 Humanitarian Outcome Survey V Key findings

11 May 2020



## Introduction

This is our 5<sup>th</sup> report and it gave us the opportunity to follow up on the following issues that emerged from previous surveys:

Programme adaptations

Concerns for children not in school

Increasing numbers of people in need

Increasing levels of domestic violence

To understand these issues better, in this edition we asked **how** informants were finding out about the increasing numbers of people in need and also **how** they were identifying domestic violence in the current COVID-19 conditions.

From May 4 to May 9, the HEN network grew to 831 members from 442 organisations across 104 countries. 112 HEN members participated in this week's survey.

**HEN respondents have received permission to continue with the following interventions:**

- COVID-19 specific responses
- Health and nutrition programmes
- Refugee programmes
- Food distribution
- WASH programming
- Cash transfers
- Livelihoods programming
- Seed distributions
- Construction activities

## Limitations

The ACAPS' HEN survey provides a rapid, weekly snapshot of what aid workers across the globe are seeing, thinking and doing about the COVID-19 pandemic, and how things are changing in the contexts in which they work. The survey is NOT based on a statistical sample. HEN combines and contrasts the current observations of people on the ground in different countries. It provides a distinctive source of information on people's lives which is not captured by other information (such as COVID-19 statistics or health and economic data).

<sup>1</sup> "Special permissions" is used here to refer to humanitarian/development organizations and their staff being permitted to operate and move in ways that would be prohibited under the government measures to contain COVID-19. These are sometimes also referred to as "humanitarian exemptions".

## Key findings

- Despite the government restrictions across the globe, **humanitarian operations have largely continued** due to programme adaptations and special permissions.<sup>1</sup> 98 of the 112 HEN respondents this week reported having received special permission to continue work.
  - **Provision of essential services and staff movement** are the most commonly reported type of special permission received.
  - Adaptations in programming are mostly related to technology use to support remote work and an increase in cash-based programming.
- **Respondents from all regions are concerned about children not being in school.** Concerns for children highlight that schools are considered a safe place where children are protected from domestic abuse and dangers outside their home. For many children, they provide access to meals. 98 of 112 respondents are concerned that children will miss out on school due to a lack of technology or material. Many respondents (58/112) worry that some will not return to school after the crisis has passed.
- **The number of people in need increasing.** Evidence about this comes from a range of sources including media sources (social media, radio, and local news) and HEN's own direct observations of increased numbers of people at welfare organizations and individuals scavenging and begging in their context.

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.

## What HEN members told us about Africa

### Adapting programming to COVID-19

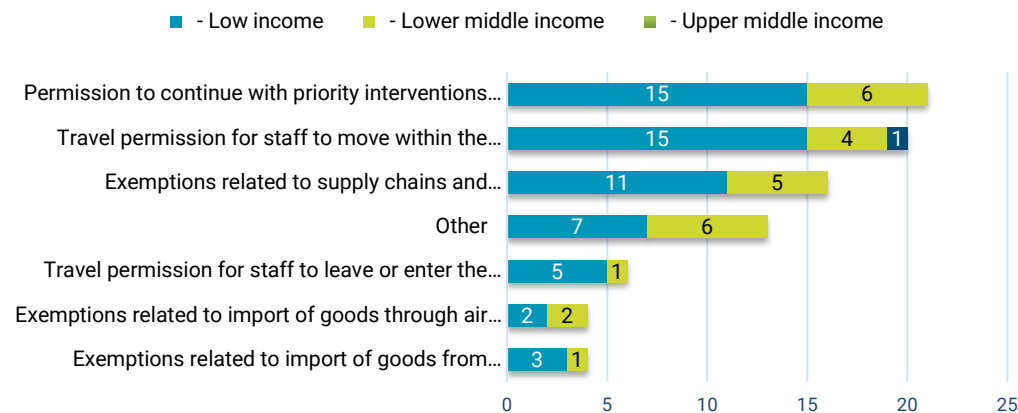
- Awareness raising initiatives for COVID-19 through the use of mobile phones, audio visual equipment, radio and social media were the most shared examples of programme modifications due to movement restrictions.
- In Cameroon, there is a focus on the development of new methodologies for COVID-19 sensitization activities.
- Online training courses are a challenge to implement in countries lacking electricity and Internet connectivity (e.g. Sudan), causing them to be placed on hold.

### Special Permissions in the Field

Special permissions play a big part in the continuation of activities.

While the rapid spread of COVID-19 has not yet taken hold in much of Africa, bureaucratic impediments in some places have become more difficult. In some countries governments have not put lock down measures in place but organizations have instigated their own movement restrictions to mitigate the spread of the virus and protect staff (Tanzania).

### COVID-19 Special Permissions - Africa



### School closures impact on Children

Across the world, including in Africa, HEN members are concerned about children being out of school. Key concerns reported from Africa are:

- Children missing out on learning which cannot be continued at home due to lack of technology and learning materials (32 out of 39).

### 39 HEN informants in Africa answered the survey this week

- Increasing child labour (22 of 39).
- Potential for increased child marriage (16 of 39).
- Greater risk of domestic violence and abuse at home (15/39).
- Children missing out on school meals and school feeding programs (19 of 39).

Over half of HEN members in Africa (20 of 39) are concerned that children will not return to school after the crisis, even when classes resume.

### What HEN members are seeing, hearing and reading that contributes to their understanding of vulnerability and domestic violence

Almost all HEN responses from Africa say that the number of people in need is increasing (two exceptions being Ethiopia and South Sudan). This conclusion is based on local media (20 of 39 respondents); local radio (16 of 39) or social media (15 of 39).

- HEN respondents also rely on their observations of what is going on around them; 15 of 39 said they had seen increased numbers of people begging or scavenging. 12 said they saw more people going to local welfare institutions and charities where assistance is distributed and 8 reported increased caseloads in their own projects. 9 of 39 said they had access to surveys, including phone surveys, showing increased needs.
- HEN respondents in Africa also highlighted rising criminality as evidence that people were being pushed into more desperate situations. Respondents in Kenya and Ethiopia told us about increased theft and petty crime, including of food aid. A HEN respondent in Sudan told us that increasing numbers of people were breaking curfew restrictions to reopen their small businesses due to economic need.
- 22 of 39 respondents in Africa told us they assumed domestic violence had increased based on what was known about the prevalence of it before the COVID-19 situation and considering the current pressures facing households; 13 said there was increased reporting of domestic violence in local media; 7 had seen an increase in official reporting, and 5 referenced increased calls to domestic violence helplines. Some respondents said they were receiving feedback from grassroots organisations, community leaders or were carrying out their own research.
- At the same time, almost a third of HEN respondents (12 of 39) said there was so little information on domestic violence it was impossible to judge the situation.

## What HEN members told us about the MENA

### Adapting programming to COVID 19

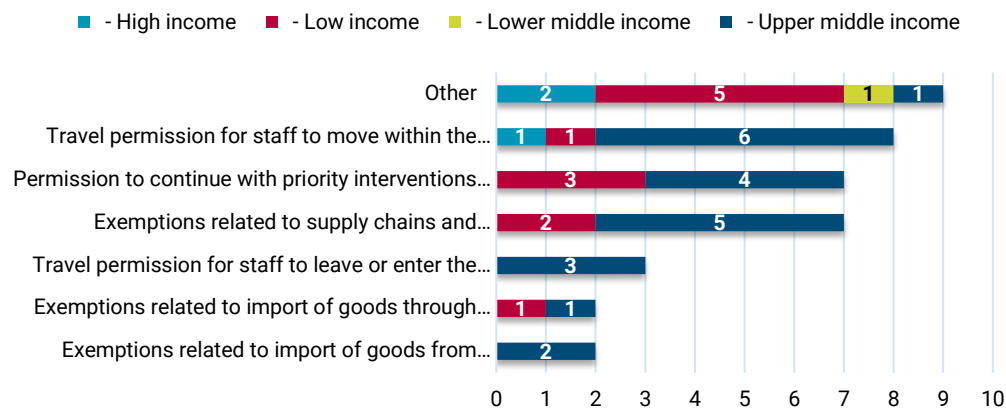
Adapting to remote ways of working are critical to being able to continue activities –

- In Jordan, virtual townhall meetings, and remote registration of people of concern and verification of new births among refugees have been implemented.
- Use of hotlines, phone counselling, and remote implementation modalities have been used in Palestine and Lebanon during lockdown.
- Syria has severe movement restrictions that make it difficult to adapt programming; more information is needed to understand programme adaptations possible in Syria.
- At least four organizations in the Middle East have modified their programmes to cash distributions, including the use of digital payments.

### Special permissions in the field

Travel permission, the top special permission reported among HEN members in MENA (9 of 19), is largely related to permissions to continue with priority interventions/essential services. This may be due to the pre-existing access constraints and permissions needed across the region to provide life-saving aid in conflict zones and areas controlled by various political or military parties. Seven informants have not yet received special permissions for their operations.

### COVID-19 Special Permissions MENA



## 19 HEN informants in MENA answered the survey this week

“All Cash Voucher Assistance (CVA) programmes in Gaza were badly affected by the restrictions...The main issue is the distribution of CVA: banks either closed or reduced working hours and staff, same for hawala companies and other FSPs. Organizations had to rethink delivery modalities and distribution mechanisms, e.g. switching to cash in hand and vouchers.” – **Palestine**

### School closures impact on Children

The impact of school closures is a concern to many respondents. Specific concerns are:

- Children
- are missing out on learning (16 of 19) due to the lack of technology and learning materials.
- School closures increased the risk of child labour (9 of 19).
- School closures pose safety concerns as more children would be out in local neighbourhoods (9 of 19).
- Like other regions, many HEN respondents in the Middle East and North Africa (8 of 19) are concerned children will not return to school after the crisis.
- Increased child marriage (2 of 6 responses in Yemen).

### What HEN members are seeing, hearing and reading that contributes to their understanding of vulnerability and domestic violence

Similar to Africa, all responses from MENA told us that the number of people in need was increasing. HEN members in MENA primarily relied on social media to understand changes in the number of people in need in the current context (12 of 19 respondents),

- Several HEN respondents in MENA also saw direct evidence of rising numbers of people in need. 10 of 19 said they had seen increased numbers of people begging or scavenging, 8 had access to surveys showing increased needs, and 7 saw increased caseloads in their own programs or with local charities and welfare organisations.
- 12 of 19 respondents in MENA told us they assumed domestic violence had increased based on the pre COVID-19 situation and the current pressures facing households. 5 said there was increased reporting in local media or an increase in calls to domestic violence helplines.
- A quarter (5 of 19) said there was so little information on domestic violence it was impossible to judge the situation.

## What HEN members told us about Asia and Oceania

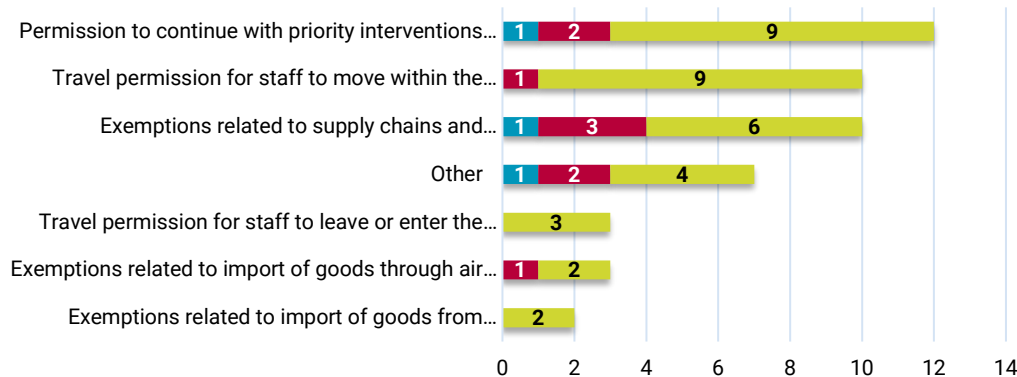
### Adapting programming to COVID-19

A range of programme adaptations combined with special permissions to continue operating have enabled the work of HEN respondents in Asia and Oceania to continue. Adaptations include:

- Remote training through online or phone-based support
- Field research using phone and online interviews
- Cash for work programme replaced with unconditional cash transfers
- From Bangladesh a mobile application for patient tracking and knowledge management for COVID-19 affected communities is being developed

### COVID-19 Special Permissions Asia and Oceania

■ - High income ■ - Low income ■ - Lower middle income



“All programme activities that the government does not recognise as critical has been stopped. Health, WASH, waste management are still deemed as critical and we are continuing these activities through our staff and volunteers after securing their protection and following the social distancing norms. At the same time, we are deliberating how best to utilise resources that will not be spent due to suspension of many programme activities for response and recovery operations” – **Bangladesh**

## 26 HEN informants in Asia & Oceania answered the survey this week

### School closures impact on children

Like other regions, HEN members in Asia and Oceania (23 of 26) are concerned about children not being in school. Over two thirds of respondents (17 of 26), a greater fraction than in any other region, are concerned that children would not return to school after the COVID-19 crisis was over and schools re-opened.

Other specific concerns were that:

- Children were missing out of learning due to the lack of technology and learning materials (23 of 26).
- School closures were exposing children to a greater risk of domestic violence and abuse at home (15 of 26).
- School closures could increase child labour and child marriage. (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Cambodia, Nepal).

### What HEN members are seeing, hearing and reading that contributes to their understanding of vulnerability and domestic violence

All HEN members in Asia and Oceania told us that the number of people in need was increasing. A majority of HEN members in Asia and Oceania saw direct evidence of rising numbers of people in need, including:

- More people going to local welfare institutions where they could receive assistance) (19 of 26 respondents);
- Increased numbers of people begging or scavenging (10 of 26),
- Increased caseloads in projects (5 of 26).
- Many HEN respondents saw reports of rising numbers of people in need in local print and social media (16 and 15 of 26 respondents).
- Less than 20% (5 of 26) reported they had access to surveys, compared to over 40% in the Middle East and North Africa.
- 19 of 26 respondents in Asia and Oceania assumed **domestic violence** has increased based on the pre COVID situation and pressures now facing households. 13 said there was increased reporting in local media. 5 said there was an increase in calls to domestic violence helplines or an increase in official reports.
- However, a quarter (6 of 26) said there was so little information on domestic violence it was impossible to judge the situation.



## What HEN members told us about South America

### Adapting programming to COVID-19

- Remote and digital data collection and monitoring
- In Columbia, shift to digital payment methods and e-transfer cash programming.
- In Brazil and El Salvador, the suspension of INGO activities have created opportunities for two organizations to support local communities and implementing partners in COVID-19 response activities.

### Special permissions in the field

Cash transfers programs in Columbia have received exemptions to continue operations. More information is needed to better understand the state of special permissions in South and Central America.

### School closures impact on children

- All HEN respondents in South America were concerned that children were missing out on learning due to a lack of technology and materials (8 of 8), other concerns are about:
  - Missing out on school meals and school feeding programs (7 of 8).
  - That school closures exposed children to greater risks of violence or abuse at home
  - In Colombia (3 of 4) thought that children were missing out on learning due taking on domestic duties, caring or work at home.
- HEN members in South America appear to be less concerned that children would not return to school after the crisis. Only 2 of 8 respondents (both of them in Colombia) thought children might not return to school, compared to half or two thirds of respondents in other regions.

### What HEN members are seeing, hearing and reading that contributes to their understanding of vulnerability and domestic violence

All HEN respondents in South America said that the number of people in need was increasing, based on the following:

## 8 HEN informants in South America answered the survey this week

- Reports in local media and social media about increased needs (5 of 8)
- Increased calls to local help lines (3 of 8)
- Observing more people at local welfare institutions (4 of 8)
- Increased caseloads in their own projects (3 of 8)

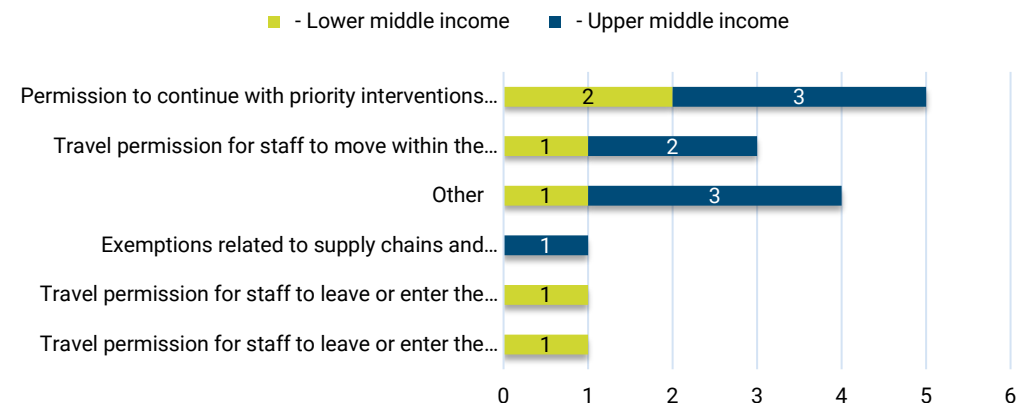
Only a quarter of respondents said they had access to surveys on needs, only Asia and Oceania had less access to surveys.

Like other regions, most respondents believed domestic violence was increasing. Responses to why they thought this differed slightly from other regions which all were mainly based on *assumptions* due to pre-existing vulnerabilities and the added stress of COVID-19 restrictions likely to increase domestic violence. In South America although this was part of the thinking, it was not as important as other factors such as:

- Increased calls to domestic violence helplines (5 of 8 respondents)
- Local media reporting (5 of 8);
- Pre-crisis understanding of the situation (4 of 8),
- Increase in official domestic violence reports (3 of 8).

Unlike other regions, no respondents in South America (or Europe) told us that the lack of information on domestic violence made it impossible say whether it was increasing or not.

### COVID-19 Special Permission - South America



## What HEN members told us about North America

### Adapting programming to COVID 19

- Virtual meetings with front-line responders and increased participation in coordination meetings with external partners via zoom.
- Reallocation of budgets due to import restrictions in Haiti

### Special permissions in the field

Similar to Europe, North America did not require many special permissions to operate. In Haiti informants shared that they have not had to request any special permission so far.

### School closures impact on children

As across all regions, respondents are concerned about children being out of school for educational and non-educational reasons.

- All HEN respondents (10 of 10) in North America reported that children were missing out on learning due to a lack of technology or materials.
- Most respondents in North America were concerned that children were missing out on school meals and school feeding programs (9 of 10).
- Children were exposed to a greater risk of domestic violence or abuse (8 of 10).

### COVID-19 Special Permission - North America



## 10 HEN informants in North America answered the survey this week

### What HEN members are seeing, hearing and reading that contributes to their understanding of vulnerability and domestic violence

All HEN respondents in North America reported increasing people in need, their understanding of this was based on the following:

- Local media reports (7 of 10 respondents)
- Radio (6 of 10)
- Increased numbers of people seeking help from welfare institutions (5 of 10)
- Increased caseloads in projects (5 of 10).
- As in other regions, most HEN informants in North America thought domestic violence was on the rise based on their understanding of the pre-outbreak context and current pressures on households (6 of 10 respondents). Other factors played some part in supporting this understanding - local media reporting (3 of 10) and increased calls to local hotlines (2 of 10).
- 3 of 10 respondents said they did not have enough information to judge the domestic violence situation.

“One of our projects related to School Feeding had to consider take home rations for children, as schools were closed....our Food programming had to change in terms of increased sensitization on hygiene promotion; and social distancing was taken into account. In addition, modality change in terms of food delivery is currently being explored to reduce beneficiary movements.” – Haiti

## What HEN members told us about Europe

### Adapting programming to COVID-19

- Increased use of electronic communication tools
- Staff are working from home

### Special permissions in the field

Special permissions to continue operations were not required in Europe– this is largely due to the “high income” status. On Friday, May 8th ECHO has started a special flight bridge (with more or less 40 flights) that allows passage towards crisis affected countries in order to bring essential materials and staff. (EU 5/08/2020)

### School closures impact on children

The majority of respondents in Europe (6 of 7) reported that children were missing out on learning due to a lack of technology or materials and risked not returning to school after the crisis (5 of 7).

5 of 7 respondents were concerned that when vulnerable children missed school, they also miss out of school meals and school feeding programs and are exposed to the risk of violence and abuse at home.

## 7 HEN informants in Europe answered the survey this week

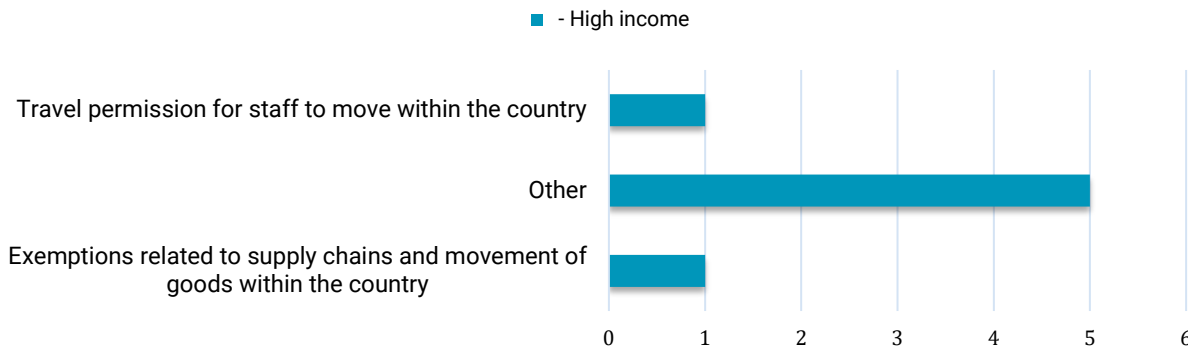
### What HEN members are seeing, hearing and reading that contributes to their understanding of vulnerability and domestic violence

All HEN respondents in Europe reported increasing needs, based on local print media, radio reports and increased numbers of people seeking help from welfare institutions (5 of 7 respondents for each).

- Like most other regions, domestic violence was thought to be on the rise based on respondent’s understanding of the pre-outbreak context and current pressures on households (6 of 7 respondents), with local media reporting (5 of 7) and increased calls to local hotlines (3 of 7) also informing understanding of this.
- Europe was like South America in that no respondent expressed a doubt that domestic violence was increasing. This differed from the other regions where some respondents saw the possibility for some doubt based on a lack of information. This likely reflects the stronger level of public debate on this topic in European countries.

**“All of our training was face to face and we have now had to reorient everything online. Our open calendar of courses is on hold across all of our three locations - the UK, Jordan and Sudan.” – UK**

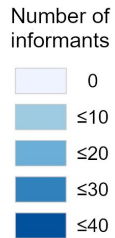
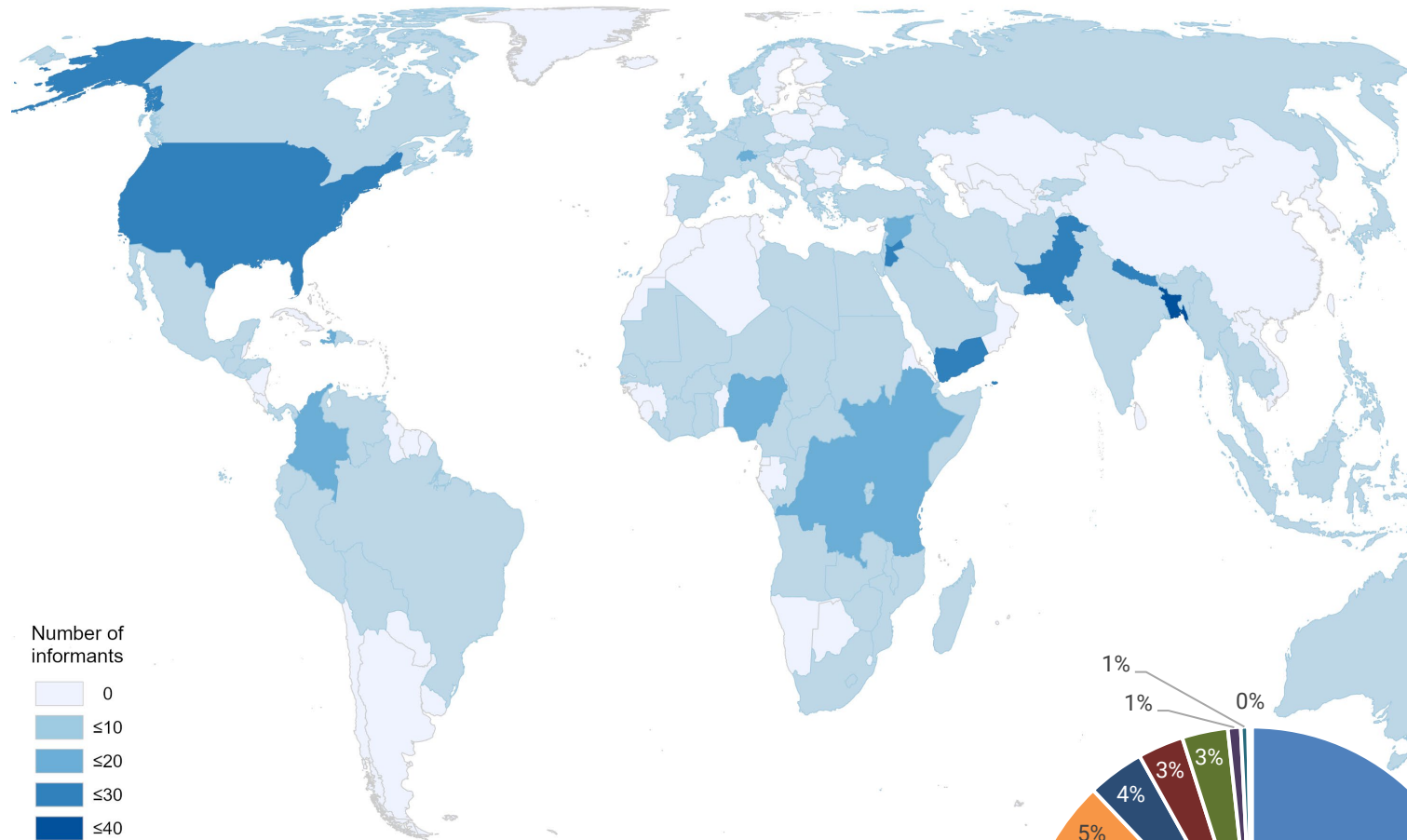
### COVID-19 Special Permissions - Europe





## Who is in the HEN?

Humanitarian Expert Network as of 11 May 2020

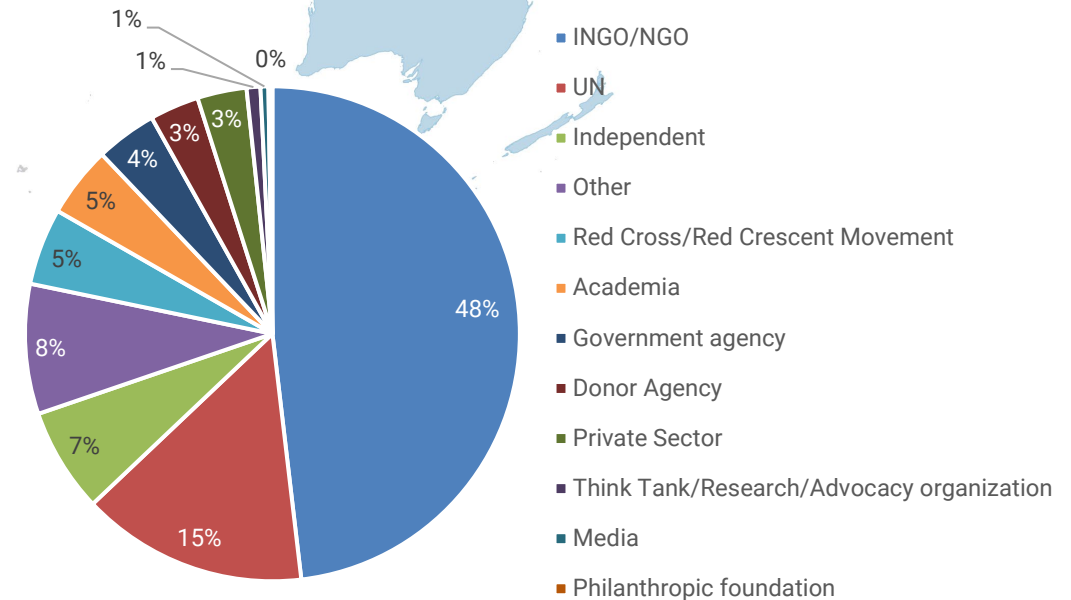


## HEN members know what they are talking about!

44% have more than 10 years' experience in humanitarian or development work, almost 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?

831 people (41% female, 50% male, 9% prefer not to say) from 442 organisations covering 104 countries

367 are in a country level position

116 are regional

146 are global

Details for 202 members are not known

## 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.

Income levels displayed in the graphs are based on World Bank classification.

## Acknowledgements

This report would not have been possible without the time and contribution of Satellite Applications Catapult and HEN members.

