Yemen
Impact report: December 2019 - December 2020

To understand how humanitarian decision-making and analysis can play a more useful role in supporting the humanitarian response in Yemen, ACAPS interviewed 19 key stakeholders[1] about their interaction with ACAPS' Yemen Analysis Hub (YAH) and its products. This report provides a brief overview of the stakeholders' interviews, including their views on the impact products published by the YAH between December 2019–December 2020 had on their decision-making processes.

KEY FINDINGS

YAH products **inform and influence** decision-making related to the Yemen humanitarian response, **increase** contextual understanding, and **contribute** to actions taken by humanitarian actors, donors, and UN agencies.

When asked why they engaged with ACAPS, respondents explained how the restrictive operating environment in Yemen and lack of meaningful data have **created a need for better contextual understanding and analysis of trends and evolving risks**, which the YAH provides.

YAH reports have been used to argue for changes in policy, to help coordinate or manage a perceived risk, and to update or revise programme planning and strategy.

The YAH can better influence humanitarian decision-making by:

- producing reports that have the most up-to-date information and which align with humanitarian planning, increasing the likelihood of the reports being used for key decisions
- building trust in the quality of analysis with high-quality, simplified analysis of complex topics
- improving its networks in order to share YAH analyses with people who influence decisions or make decisions themselves.

Engagement with the YAH varies by organisation, and is driven by interpersonal communication and perceived information and support needs.

RESPONDENTS' RECOMMENDATIONS TO ACAPS

- Editorial strategy: provide a better picture of the scope of analysis of ACAPS/the YAH for users. Give more clarity on ACAPS' editorial calendar and release products in alignment with the humanitarian cycle of funding and organisational planning.

- Editorial quality: provide more systematic summaries and maintain the use of visuals to highlight key messages. Push the analysis spectrum a step further and make sure the "so what" question is answered, and always present the humanitarian consequences.

- Reach and communication: provide summaries and key takeaways with each product to ease the sharing process within users' organisations. Reach out to national and international staff within Yemen.

- Further develop collaborative working relationships with operational actors, and ensure ACAPS analysts participate in advocacy groups, country directors' regular meetings, and clusters in order to discuss new products and to increase quality.

IMPACT METHODOLOGY

As part of ongoing efforts to understand and measure the impact of ACAPS' analysis on humanitarian decision-making in Yemen, ACAPS YAH conducts interviews with three to four key informants each quarter. To gain a broader understanding of the impact of the hub on humanitarian decision-making, an additional 19 people working on the Yemen response were interviewed from November–December 2020. Interviewees included individuals working with INGOs, NGOs, donors, think tanks, UN agencies, and clusters/working groups.

This report is not a representative sample. It is a consolidation of views from key users identified by ACAPS. Therefore, it does not represent the perspective and interaction of all ACAPS product users.

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1   The 19 stakeholders were: five donors, four INGOs, two NGOs, six UN agencies, and two think tanks.

WHY ACAPS

Humanitarians reach out to ACAPS, read ACAPS' products, and/or interact with ACAPS because of the fragile information landscape and growing information gap that have resulted in a need for a better contextual understanding and needs and trends analysis. The constrained operational environment makes it difficult to understand the scale and impact of the conflict on the Yemeni population.

> "We are able to respond in places that we go to, but the reality is **that most of us do not know what is going on in the majority of Yemen** to do any sort of real analysis, to say is this the area most in need". Interviewee

INGOs that do have a good understanding of the crisis are unable to share their experience with the wider community for fear of negative consequences for their project, staff, or the people they support. From their perspective, ACAPS can raise awareness and address the lack of time and resources dedicated to data and trend analyses. One interviewee explained that even when trends are available, it may be difficult to apply the information to specific geographical areas where humanitarians operate. The question often remains: what does this mean for humanitarian needs? The interviews revealed that the reasons "users" access YAH material vary between operational actors, UN agencies, and donors.

Operational actors (INGOs/NGOs) shared that the majority of their information on Yemen comes from their MEAL team, information management officers, and local teams. While having teams in Yemen does create a better understanding of the environment, their ability to share experiences and reliable information is greatly restricted by local authorities. Operational actors expressed the value of having an external source to share information with that they are not able to report on, such as risks within Yemen or anything considered politically sensitive that may put their staff in danger and negatively affect what little access they have in Yemen.

Lack of time and resources further constrain their ability to combine and analyse data from different sources. Respondents said it would be useful to combine humanitarian needs overview and protection severity data and to place it into tables or overlay it with maps.

UN agencies seek collaboration with ACAPS to gain a better understanding of the impact that drivers in the context have on the humanitarian environment. In 2019, the Cash and Markets working group reached out to ACAPS to better understand how the economy works and its influence on currency fluctuations. UN staff have relied on rapid ACAPS contextual analysis to build their scenario and contingency planning.

Donors rely on economic, conflict, and humanitarian trends analyses by ACAPS to support decision-making. In 2020, one donor reached out to ACAPS to assist with monitoring change in currency and food imports. A donor respondent suggested that ACAPS holds regular monthly briefings with donors and humanitarian actors to better explain economic and political developments and how these may relate to their everyday operations.

PRODUCT USE

ACAPS products are used for programming, policy and advocacy, prospective, and analytical purposes.

At the beginning of each interview, individuals were asked if they would like to focus on a specific ACAPS product. The following section focuses on the products selected, and does not refer to all ACAPS YAH products.

Trends analysis

The trends analysis report published on 13 May 2020 was used by a donor to inform their understanding of Yemen, helping them to identify gaps in their understanding and to verify the possible ways in which the context could develop in 2020. The report was shared widely within the organisation, especially among senior management and donor government officials prior to a high-level online pledging event hosted by Saudi Arabia on 2 June 2020.

The Five years of data report produced in June 2020 was used by a donor and think tank to provide a strong reference point for knowing what data currently exists for Yemen and where it is lacking. The dataset was also used to analyse trends and deepen the donor's understanding of the Yemen crisis to better inform public policy.

Scenario building

The scenario reports are used by INGOs and donors to build on internal risks and scenario planning and to inform their upper management of potential key developments.

ACAPS' independent position was considered valuable by donors and INGOs for strengthening decision-making at the highest levels.

Previous quarterly impact interviews revealed that a UN agency used the scenarios to help them understand the context during the COVID-19 response. Operational actors have used the analysis to adjust impact indicators and triggers in their own risk analysis and contingency planning.

> "One of the last scenarios reports that ACAPS produced came just at the time we delivered a similar message to our HQ in terms of trends and perspective. We were delighted to see the same analysis in a nice and structured manner that confirms what we are thinking in-country and **it builds upon our thinking with a better structure**." Donor

STAKEHOLDERS HAVE USED ACAPS PRODUCTS FOR:

Programming purposes: adjust, revise, prioritise

- Help coordinate and plan for a response.
- Revise programming planning and strategies.
- Write proposals.
- Frame discussions and responses within donor agencies.

Policy and advocacy purposes, including donor policy and to influence HQ decisions

- To lobby the UN, OCHA, the special envoy office, and international maritime organisations.
- Advocacy as a "wake-up call" for public policy.
- Inform policy briefs for COVID-19.
- Influence decision-makers at regional levels (Saudi Arabia, Iran, US).
- To engage with authorities on the payment of beneficiaries.
- To negotiate politics around blocked currencies in the north and south.
- Inform senior leadership prior to pledging conferences.

Prospective purposes: preparedness and risk analyses

- Adjust impact indicators and triggers for internal risk analysis.
- To check costing and currency planning of partners.

Analytical purposes: test assumptions, understand context, and identify gaps and priority areas/people in need

- Provide contextual analysis for reports.
- Select which areas to prioritise for operations (hard-to-reach areas).
- Challenge information coming from partners and to test assumptions.
- To understand how the economy is functioning.
- Identify gaps and verify thinking about the context.
- Triangulate existing data.

Thematic analysis

ACAPS' district profiles on hard-to-reach areas were initially requested by an INGO to help build its strategy and to select which areas to prioritise for a response. During the impact interviews, the Marib report was selected by two respondents as a favourite of YAH products, crediting its useful collection of data and breakdown of migrant patterns. The product was used by respondents to raise awareness of the pressing needs in Marib, in the hope of mobilising more humanitarian partners to respond to mounting needs.

The Introduction to the tribal system report produced in August 2020 was highlighted as a favourite report by respondents. One operational actor commented, "I saw it and thought, woah, that is the kind of report we cannot do and it changes our ability to understand the context." Another actor asked us to go a step further and specify what the information means for humanitarian work. "For example, should I know which tribes are participating and are there existing tensions?" The Houthi supervisory system report produced in June 2020 was used by donors to build on internal policy reports and for comparative analysis. INGOs, donors, and UN agencies all referenced both reports in their interviews as valuable sources of information that taught them something new about the Yemeni context.

The timeliness of the Yemen COVID-19 risk report published in March 2020 – the first analytical piece published prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 in Yemen – was especially appreciated by operational actors trying to understand the potential scope of the epidemic. The timing of a product release in relation to current events was often referred to as a determinant of whether or not a person would read a report.

PRODUCT QUALITY

Overall, respondents were satisfied with the quality of the products, seeing them as **reliable** and well-informed resources. They assumed that the information comes from reliable sources, yet they are not always sure where the information is from or how the YAH analyses the data. This perspective differs from respondents in earlier impact reports, who referenced ACAPS' reliability because of its careful triangulation of secondary data and datasets – even commenting on the links inserted in products that can redirect a reader to the exact source used for reference. The reports are forwarded among colleagues and across organisations when considered relevant to unfolding events or when the information is considered new and/or useful – indicating the products' **relevance and legitimacy.**

"I do prefer more visualisation – maps definitely do attract more attention of the reader." Donor

Visual analysis also contributes to the perceived product quality; illustrations in thematic pieces and embedded maps are considered an added value. One respondent remembered small spelling or grammatical errors in reports and expressed how imperative clean report writing is to perceived product quality. At least five interviewees recommended keeping the depth of the analysis spectrum in our reports, but to also consider new ways to present the same information in a quick and digestible format for senior decision-makers who do not have time to read long essays.

HUMANITARIAN DECISION-MAKING

In Yemen, the governing authorities have greatly restricted humanitarian access to in-country visits, which has impacted data collection, any form of assessments, and the ability to provide face-to-face training. This has created a large data gap that greatly reduces the ability of management teams to make decisions based on evidence-based needs. So how are humanitarian decisions made? Conversations with the 19 humanitarian stakeholders revealed three major factors that contribute to ACAPS' impact on humanitarian decision-making: timing, making sense of complexity, and networking.

> "In the absence of data, a lot is based on conversations. We have a really strong information- sharing mechanism through the Country Directors group. Because everything in Yemen is so sensitive, it takes a long time to build trust. But once you have the trust people share information quite freely and quickly through their networks. I would say because of lack of hard data in Yemen, we do more informal information sharing through our network. Trust building is really important." INGO

1. Timing

The analysis may be of a high standard, but if it is not timely enough to reach the hands of the right people, its impact will be greatly reduced or not realised at all. Analysis that is provided following a new development in a particular context or preceding a major change helps to raise awareness and gives the reader a powerful reference to bring to leadership when seeking information for strategic decision-making.

The internal processes of organisations' strategic planning exercises may also determine the usefulness of analysis. One UN agency has a scenario-building process that seeks out external information sources while working to inform the leadership of potential developments. Likewise, a donor explained that "Our normal programming cycle is from January to December. Plans are made in September to October, and October to November is when we allocate the money. If you want to influence or impact the decision-making strategy, I would say August/September is the best period. November is already too late. When there is something like the UN fundraising summit, something would be appreciated close to the event." **Producing reports that have the most up-to-date information and which align with humanitarian planning increases the likelihood of their use in key decisions.**

2. Making sense, not data

Good analysis has the ability to make sense of data in a way that the reader can understand, remember, and share with others easily. Simple, attention-grabbing language or graphics that the majority can understand are more likely to be used by upper management when time is limited, in order to understand the complexity of unfolding dynamics in Yemen. **The ability to break down and explain complex topics can build trust in ACAPS' quality of analysis.**

3. Networking

In the absence of accurate data, and when information sharing can be risky, decision makers rely more on information gathered through personal networks they trust. Through these networks, ACAPS YAH material is shared – whether this is an individual physically bringing analysis into meetings, people sitting in on a call, a presentation of ACAPS' work, or actively participating in a workshop. Trust is built through interpersonal interaction.

One interviewee highlighted the success of getting ACAPS' *Marib district profile* analysis into the right hands to encourage other operational actors to join her organisation's work in Marib. She further explained her perception that ACAPS' interaction with donors in Amman has the ability to influence donors' perspectives on needs in Yemen. **Analysis in the hands of people who influence decisions or make decisions themselves can have a greater impact on ensuring aid reaches those most in need.**

ENGAGEMENT LEVEL

Interviewees have read ACAPS material, forwarded/shared the products, or have had meetings with ACAPS. When asked why they trust ACAPS as a reliable source, their personal interaction with ACAPS was highlighted as the biggest influencing factor. At least five individuals spoke of their introduction to ACAPS at the beginning of their time in Yemen as a useful starting point to begin to understand the context. Eight out of the 19 individuals expressed interest in new ways of increasing their engagement with ACAPS in 2021. The three Yemeni citizens interviewed had only engaged with the ACAPS team once; they recounted a positive experience, and suggested further interactions.

While respondents are reading, referencing, and sharing ACAPS reports, many expressed an overall uncertainty regarding ACAPS publication dates and data collection methods. Interviewees asked questions about ACAPS' scope of work during the interview, as they were not fully aware of ACAPS products – aside from what had been passed on to them from colleagues in their offices. A general improvement in YAH outreach in raising awareness of upcoming ACAPS products and previous products can increase engagement with key decision makers across the response.

Coffee chats

Coffee meetings are considered a valuable opportunity to network and learn more about the Yemeni context. Operational actors expressed the need for a space in Amman to meet Yemen-focused individuals and to talk about higher-level issues impacting their work. During COVID-19, ACAPS continued to host these meetings online, adding structure to typically informal meetings with presentations of reports or topics. This approach was highlighted by one respondent as being very useful, with specific reference to "top-quality information" shared by an anthropologist on both North and South Yemen dynamics in relation to COVID-19 perceptions and rumours.

Training

From April–June 2020, ACAPS supported a cluster with 12 online COVID-19 protection preparedness trainings. 26 INGOs and 58 NGOs based in Yemen attended the sessions. 93 out of 508 participants responded to a feedback questionnaire. The quality of the content was considered very good, as well as the facilitation of the sessions. Most of the participants would rather have had more interactive and engaging sessions with the facilitators however, in order to increase their understanding. Generally, the participants were very happy with the training sessions, and found them useful for their day-to-day jobs.

HAP training

The Humanitarian Analysis Programme (HAP) is a six-month training programme on humanitarian needs analysis. From July–December 2020, the first iteration of the Yemen HAP was delivered to 16 participants from 13 organisations. 12 out of the 16 HAP participants (75%) demonstrated increased analysis capacity according to the course criteria (evidence of progress against individual learning plans). Participants were asked to complete a final evaluation survey where they reflected on whether their participation in the programme improved their organisation's capacity for analysis. Ten out of 16 participants responded to the survey, with eight of the ten expressing their belief that the programme had led to an improvement.

HOW WE IMPROVE

At the end of each interview, respondents were asked for recommendations and what future analysis they would like to see. The recommendations given to the YAH can be categorised into four groups: recommendations related to the editorial strategy, editorial quality, editorial content, and reach and communication.

Editorial strategy

- Provide a better picture of the scope of analysis of ACAPS/the YAH to users.

- Give more clarity on ACAPS' editorial calendar (publication dates for regular and upcoming products), and release products in alignment with the humanitarian cycle of funding and organisational planning.

- Develop collaborative working relationships with operational actors, and participate in advocacy groups, country directors' regular meetings, and clusters in order to discuss new products and to increase quality.

Editorial quality

- Be more straightforward regarding the purpose of each product and always ensure that products are adapted to the intended audience.

- Clearly communicate the methodology and limitations of sources accessed for report purposes.

- Be clear on the intended audience.

- Push the analysis spectrum a step further. Make sure the "so what?" question is answered and always present the humanitarian consequences.

- Provide more systematic summaries (in a quick and digestible format) and maintain the use of visuals to highlight key messages and respect the reader's lack of time.

- Strengthen the language editing to avoid spelling/grammatical errors and to make the product more accessible (using simple language).

Editorial content

- Conflict analyses in the form of situational reports were commonly requested as hard data evidence on response effectiveness, especially in relation to access and its impact on the Yemen response.

- More focused and dynamic reports that zero in on a particular context and help to build the connection of how a localised context is impacted by the crisis were also requested.

Reach and communication

- Continue and strengthen interactive presentations of products.

- Propose regular (monthly?) exchanges on the evolution of the context.

- Provide summaries and key takeaways with each product to ease the sharing process within users' organisations.

- Reach out to national and international staff within Yemen; make sure products reach Yemen and are not only targeting remote management teams in Amman.

- Extend the reach of certain products by showcasing them through the media. Find a way to amplify key findings.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE ANALYSES

Respondents shared the type of analyses on Yemen that they would like to see over the coming year. Their interest can be grouped further by topics including the economy, conflicts and actors, and a deeper look at the Yemeni context, including the impact of climate change and response effectiveness.

Future analysis on Yemen

General context

- Drivers of the crisis.
- District profiles for risk planning.
- Situational reports on the contextual dynamic.
- A better form of access reporting on access constraints in Yemen.
- A better and more nuanced understanding of the very localised context, especially when it comes to the divide between the humanitarian/development nexus.
- Hard data evidence on response effectiveness (the impact of access on the Yemen response).
- The impact of climate change.
- Better security analysis.
- Recap of all ACAPS YAH reports and comparisons from 2019–2020.
- Synthesis of population data including pre-war populations.
- The Muhamasheen and longer-term approaches to improving their situation.

Economy

- How markets are affected by cash and how this impacts displacement.
- Trade imports.
- How a lack of salary payments impacts on people.

Conflict and actors

- Conflict analysis: periodic updates on shifting dynamics (front lines, access, political situation, forecasts, and trends).
- Tribal dynamics: who would stay or go based on previous displacements from Al Jawf and other places.
- Actor group mapping.
- Understanding key actors' structures and roles.
- Connected data that goes beyond localised trends (displacement and conflict connection).