First Quarterly Report 2020 (January - March)

I. Introduction and highlights

During the first quarter of 2020, the **Geneva Centre for Education & Research in Humanitarian Action** has been actively engaged in the response to COVID-19, given its role as part of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Geneva and its concern for the humanitarian impacts of this global pandemic. The Humanitarian Encyclopedia team is supporting the Centre's efforts by cross-posting the online COVID-19 scientific resource centre and op-eds by our staff, such as the COVID-19 impact in crisis zones.

This worldwide crisis has demonstrated the value of shared understanding for collective response, and the negative impact of misinformation. The response to COVID-19 calls for a critical lens on many humanitarian concepts, e.g. 'contingency planning', 'epidemic', 'ethics', 'evidence', 'psychosocial support', and 'vulnerability'. Research explaining these concepts can help foster a coherent collaborative response. In the next quarter, the Humanitarian Encyclopedia Team will explore how concept analysis can support the COVID-19 response, and welcomes any suggestions or ideas our readers might have.

II. Activities to develop the Humanitarian Encyclopedia (HE)

Revision of the HE project concept

With the discussion of the Advisory Board last December as reference, Prof. Karl Blanchet reviewed the concept to ensure the project better supports and engages with humanitarian actors. The revised concept emphasises a collaborative approach using the HE online platform to co-produce knowledge, connect diverse actors from relevant sectors at multiple levels, and promote open dialogue to enhance collective humanitarian action.

Researcher for concept entries

In March, Alex Odlum joined our team as the HE's Research Coordinator. In the first quarter, the HE team has been taking stock of the linguistic analysis and concept entry drafting process, and consulting stakeholders on how to move forward. In the next quarter, the HE team will present these findings to the Advisory Board and Scientific Committee.

In addition to 'dignity' and 'evidence', authors submitted drafts for another three concepts this quarter: climate change, development and forced displacement. The linguistic team has begun analysis of 50 priority concepts for 2020, building on the 13 completed last year.

Lastly, the Research Coordinator is consulting with Dr Clara Egger, Dr Pilar Leon and concept

authors, and Skoli[1] on how to visualise linguistic analysis, concept entries and the humanitarian organisations database (HOD) for diverse audiences, and to define content specifications for the forthcoming online platform.

Development of the HE online platform
The development of the platform has been supported by the University of Geneva (UNIGE). In cooperation with Skoli, a final version of the HE ontology[2] was produced. UNIGE integrated this ontology into its customer management system and presented a proof of concept (PoC).

The PoC was discussed early March and validated by the HE project team. A developer will be hired, hosted by UNIGE, to develop the HE platform based on the PoC. If all goes well – considering the impact brought by Covid-19 – the online platform will start taking shape in the second quarter of 2020.

III.   Governance

Dr Hugo Slim left the position of Head of Policy of ICRC in February and returned to the University of Oxford. We would like to thank him for his strong support during the past five years in the development of the HE and training humanitarian professionals. The ICRC's active participation in the HE Advisory Board will resume when the new Head of Policy takes up the position in September.

IV.   External representations

HNPW
At the 2020 Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (HNPW), we and ACAPS, in collaboration with InZone, organised a session on 'Learning and partnering for better local humanitarian outcomes', with 'localisation' as its focus. Participants from humanitarian agencies, government, and academia, actively discussed the understanding of humanitarian concepts, local actors' meaningful participation in decision-

making, and collaboration between humanitarian and academic sector. (Read the report)

During HNPW, we also hosted a briefing session to highlight the importance of continuous capacity building of humanitarian actors, in order to increase the effectiveness of the sector.

Our exhibition stand for HNPW received visitors from various sectors, including humanitarian, development, government, think-tank, academia and private sectors. Visitors explored the HE's Humanitarian Organisation Database, and appreciated its role to connect humanitarian actors at multiple levels and provide information on who does what and where.

WSIS
In collaboration with UNIGE's activities for 'digital humanities', we will display the HE online platform at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which will now take place from 31 August to 4 September due to COVID-19 crisis.

V.   Acknowledgement

We thank Mr Pascal Imhof's civilist support in developing the HE, and wish him all the best for his master degree studies at the Graduate Institute starting from September.

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[1] *Skoli, a consultancy firm, is in charge of managing the links with the developers of the platform at the University of Geneva.*

[2] In computer science, *an ontology is a way of showing the properties of a subject area and how they are related, by defining a* set of concepts and categories that represent the subject. (wikipedia)