

Humanitarian Encyclopedia project

Third Quarterly Report 2020 (July-September)

I. Introduction and highlights

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged multilateralism and the role and functioning of the systems and institutions set up after the Second World War. In particular, it has highlighted the need for significant innovation in the humanitarian sector to better include civil society organisations. Empowering local actors and promoting multilateralism from the bottom-up is crucial to efforts to build a more inclusive and resilient humanitarian system.

Our vision for the Humanitarian Encyclopedia platform is to build **a tool that supports local actors and researchers to engage and communicate effectively at multiple levels and arenas** to influence the agenda and direction of this system. This quarter, we made further steps towards developing the content and infrastructure of this platform, based on the feedback and direction provided by our practitioner and scientific advisors in June.

II. Activities to develop the Humanitarian Encyclopedia

COVID-19 priority concept summaries and questions

In August, we completed the **visualisation and summary of raw corpus data for our COVID-19 concepts**, and added discussion questions to stimulate reflections on the concepts. These were posted to the Humanitarian Encyclopedia website and picked up in an [article on Geneva Solutions](#) which highlighted a range of emerging projects

that “translate” humanitarian buzzwords, keywords and concepts.

Scaling up data visualisation and exploration

Following the approach piloted with the COVID-19 concepts, we scaled up the raw data exploration to **visualise the frequency of the [129 concepts in the corpus](#)**, our collection of around 5,000 documents and 71 million words published by humanitarian organisations between 2005 to 2019. The visuals provide a first impression of the concepts and associated concepts, as well as its usage by organisations, regions, and years. The analysis aims to be a useful reference point for experts and researchers authoring concept entries.

We also analysed across the concepts and found that from our list of 129 concepts, the **top ten most frequently occurring were**: aid, child, community, development, education, health, management, need, policy, security.

Call for authoring of concepts

With thought-provoking content now available to introduce all 129 concepts, we are now calling for authors [to contribute to a concept entry](#). As a global public good, knowledge co-produced by stakeholders is at the heart of the Humanitarian Encyclopedia project.

Full explanation online

After reviewing and testing different models of ‘concept explanation’ over the past year, we finalised an example **concept entry for ‘[affected population](#)’**. We identified key definitions of the

concept, and **generated practical insights around key issues**, including:

- Accountability to affected populations
- Needs of affected populations
- Access to affected populations
- Participation of affected populations

Drawing on both linguistic analysis and external resources, this entry serves as an example of a modular and scalable approach to concept entries amenable to co-production, discussion and debate. The example also serves as a reference to guide potential authors of other concepts.

Web designer and developer on board

After a public bidding process, the web firm ‘Apollo’ was hired to develop and design the interactive Humanitarian Encyclopedia online platform. A series of development “sprints” will allow the platform to take shape by the end of 2020.

‘Risk’ and ‘Aid Dependence’ survey

A survey of key Humanitarian Encyclopedia stakeholders and users, conducted in June, focused on the concepts of ‘risk’ and ‘aid dependence’, as well as the feasibility of interpreting and explaining linguistic data. Respondents provided deep and valuable insights on the concepts themselves and the linguistic methodology, which are being synthesised and channelled into concept explanations.

Community engagement strategy for the HE

Guided by the Knowledge Management Strategy as endorsed by the Advisory Board in December 2019, a **Community Engagement Strategy was finalised** based on research and consultations with key stakeholders and advisors. It serves as a reference for the web developers, and assists the Humanitarian Encyclopedia team to develop its community of users and knowledge co-creators.

III. Governance

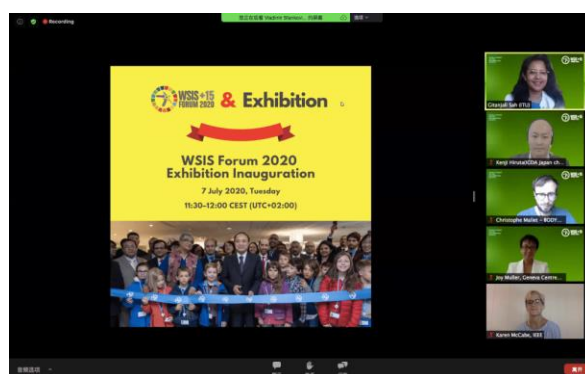
Mr Arafat Jamal left the position of Head of Partnerships and Coordination Service at UNHCR to take another assignment. **The Humanitarian Encyclopedia team thanks Mr Jamal for his active participation** in Advisory Board meetings. We

welcome his successor, Ms Annika Sandlund, on board, and thank UNHCR for its continuous involvement in the development of the Humanitarian Encyclopedia.

IV. External representations

WSIS

On 7 July we participated in the inauguration panel of the **virtual exhibition of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum 2020**. The panel was opened by the Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union.



The Humanitarian Encyclopedia was part of the Centre and the University of Geneva’s joint virtual exhibition stand, which was open from the beginning of July to mid-September. It generated interest from visitors, increased visits to the HE Website, and generated requests from multiple organisations to be listed in our Humanitarian Organisation Database.

ICVA

Starting from August, the Centre has become an **affiliate member of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)**, with thanks to the endorsement from two Humanitarian Encyclopedia advisory board members, Care International and Action against Hunger.

This affiliation provides the Centre a great opportunity to increase its interaction with humanitarian actors, better understand their needs, and constructively engage with them.