



From Checkpoints to High Politics: Humanitarian Access Negotiations in Action

Thursday, December 9, 2021 | 10:15 - 11:30 am EST

Virtual Session - [Register Here](#)

Overview:

From Syria to Afghanistan and elsewhere, the “politics of humanitarian access” have become a feature of today’s armed conflicts and humanitarian emergencies. Humanitarian access has been increasingly used as a bargaining chip, with a devastating impact on populations in need. Provision of humanitarian assistance and protection requires engagement with a variety of stakeholders including government, armed groups and community members. However, this engagement has become more challenging with the politicization of humanitarian access, the proliferation and fragmentation of Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG) or the complex web of counter-terrorism measures and legislations.

Drawing on experiences in multiple crisis, this panel will look at the politics affecting humanitarian access. Panellists will reflect on ways to manage those politics to yield positive humanitarian outcomes; and share their views on the on ways to further professionalize the humanitarian approach to access negotiations. They will look at the perception of humanitarian organizations by political actors and armed actors and how to build trust and acceptance with those interlocutors.

They will discuss various forms of negotiations and advocacy and assess their effectiveness to convince parties to conflict and key stakeholders. They will share good practices, such as joined-up initiatives negotiated by humanitarian actors with parties to the conflict (e.g. humanitarian pauses or corridors); or the use of a coordinated and joined-up public and private advocacy.

Guiding Questions:

- How do “big politics” impact on humanitarian access negotiations? What are the trends? Is this impact greater or lesser today than it used to be? What kind of dilemma does that create for humanitarian organisations?
- What are some the current challenges, best practices and lessons learned in navigating humanitarian dilemmas and negotiating access?



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- Are humanitarians equipped to navigate the politics of access? Do they have the necessary expertise and networks to lead negotiations and influence those blocking access?
- What are the tools available to negotiate access and how can relief organizations gain and maintain “acceptance”? Is there a need to re-think humanitarian negotiations?
- How can we use non-conventional actors to help mediate humanitarian negotiations? Who are they? And how to safeguard the humanitarian character of negotiations?
- How to better coordinate negotiation efforts and enhanced the interplay between in-country, regional and global negotiations?

Moderator:

Rob Grace, Researcher and Affiliated Fellow. Brown University, Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies.

Panellists:

- **Dr. Fiona Terry**, Head of Operational Research, International Committee of the Red Cross
- **Charles Petrie**, Human Securities Consultant and former ASG
- **Tom Gregg**, Senior Advisor to the UN
- **Ghada Hatim Eltahir**, Deputy Director for Eastern and Southern Africa, OCHA