



2021 Global Humanitarian Policy Forum

9 - 10 December / *Virtual Session* – [Register Here](#)

On 9-10 December 2021, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in partnership with the United Nations Foundation, will convene the tenth Global Humanitarian Policy Forum (GHPF). This year's GHPF will assess the current landscape through a series of thematic, interactive panel discussions including the growing humanitarian climate crisis, persistent challenges around access and humanitarian negotiations, increasing cyber threats impacting humanitarian action, and the linkages between COVID-19 and conflict and the importance of vaccines in humanitarian settings. Discussions will be held virtually on Zoom.

2021 was marked by great uncertainty around global socio-economic recovery following unprecedented disruptions worldwide in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, threatening to eliminate hard-won gains towards the Sustainable Development Goals. And a clear end of the pandemic is not in sight. While a number of developed countries with unrestricted access to vaccines struggle with vaccine hesitancy and social distrust, we see a near total lack of accessibility to vaccines in other parts of the world. Many countries with Humanitarian Response Plans are not expected to have sufficient coverage of their population until mid-2022 or later.

At the same time, the climate crisis is threatening to inundate national and international support systems, leading to more vulnerability and fragility worldwide. Continued and resurgent outbreaks of conflict remained the main driver of humanitarian needs. Growing geopolitical tensions and political division are increasing competition and preventing effective collaboration in many places. Increasing use of data and new and emerging technologies provide an abundance of opportunities but also the threat posed by adverse cyber operations. Terrorism, religious extremism, and organized crime continue to exploit weak institutions and power vacuums to undermine state authority. The GHPF will look at these evolving trends and key challenges that continue to shape the operating environment of humanitarian response.

Since 2012, the Forum has convened members of the humanitarian community and experts from other fields to anticipate future trends, launch new policy ideas and explore the practical challenges and opportunities of shifting policy to practice in crisis contexts. Over the past nine years, the GHPF has been at the forefront of shaping the international humanitarian community's policy agenda.

Please see the outline of the event below, and [use this link to register and join the discussions](#).



[Thursday 9 December](#)

9:00 – 10:00 EST

High-level Opening

The Forum will open with a High-level Panel, bringing together a diverse group of leaders across different sectors, to share their perspectives on the current global landscape, marked by the increasingly disruptive effects of a growing geopolitical divide; more and more visible compound effects of intersecting global challenges such as climate change, disease outbreaks, poverty, inequality, urbanization and challenges posed by continuing violent conflict, resulting in increasing fragility and vulnerability of those most in need; and severe intersecting and corresponding geo-political or socio-economic challenges with significant implications for the humanitarian operating environment and programmatic choices. Discussions will focus on persistent and emerging socio-economic, political, ethical and security challenges, like climate change, new and resurging conflicts, mounting economic pressures, and rising food insecurity worldwide, compounded by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and other concurrent crises. The panel will identify a number of strategic, organizational or operational challenges for humanitarian actors and their partners, and the decisions they may have to make.

10:15 – 11:30 EST

From Checkpoints to High Politics: Humanitarian
Access Negotiations in Action

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 is increasingly used as a bargaining chip, with a devastating impact on populations in need. The increased politicization of access requires humanitarian organizations to rethink their approach to negotiations: 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 at their disposal, and how can relief organizations gain “political acceptance”? Drawing on experiences in multiple crisis, this panel will look at the politics affecting humanitarian access. Panelists 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 military and political actors and how to build trust and acceptance with those interlocutors.



[Lunchtime Event:](#)

11:45 – 12:45 EST

[Sparks on the Horizon: COVID-19 and Fragility](#)

COVID-19 has created the social, political, and economic conditions that make increased fragility and instability more likely as it exacerbates existing vulnerabilities and risks in countries affected by crises. Without Member States making different choices, the world may see more violence and instability in coming years. The panel will explore how COVID-19 is likely to increase the risk of conflict and the choices the international community must take in this respect, including by ensuring that people everywhere have access to vaccines and economies in poorer countries can more quickly recover.

[Friday, 10 December](#)

9:00 – 10:15 EST

[No Return to Normal: Realities and Opportunities of the Growing Humanitarian Climate Crisis](#)

The climate crisis is a humanitarian crisis. It is real, it is irreversible, and it is now. Humanitarian workers, civil society actors and local Governments struggle with the exponentially growing impacts and needs triggered by ever increasing temperatures. At the current level of 1.2 degree warming, the world is already witnessing steep increases in climate disasters. An increase to 1.5 degrees and beyond 2 degrees would not only test the limits of local and international aid systems but likely lead to their inundation. The current trajectory of 2.7 degrees warming will most certainly lead to a runaway humanitarian crisis of unprecedented proportions and a collapse of the international aid system as we know it. On the frontlines of climate change, in many of those already most vulnerable countries, humanitarian workers witness, every day and everywhere, how the climate crisis is exacerbating vulnerabilities, is serving as a force multiplier for other global challenges and is creating new humanitarian “hotspots” where the humanitarian system was traditionally not or less active. Returning to normal is no longer realistic, and urgent shifts in mindsets and approaches are needed, with adaptation and community resilience at the centre. Panellists will look at the realities of the growing climate change crisis and explore the mindset shifts, transformations and partnerships needed to contribute more effectively to strengthening community resilience.



10:30 – 11:45 EST

The Humanitarian Implications of Cyber Threats

Adverse cyber operations have become a critical security threat, and they are rapidly gaining momentum as the digital transformation forges ahead. For humanitarian actors, cyber threats come in three contexts: to critical infrastructure that serve our communities, in the political and social environment where we work, and our own organization readiness and preparedness for attacks. The opportunities of new technologies and the growing digitalization of essential services is accompanied by a stark rise in cyberthreats against critical infrastructure sectors that provide services to the public, such as energy, power generation, water and sanitation, education, commercial and financial services, transportation, telecommunications, and electoral processes. Cyber activities are reshaping the political and social environment, in some cases threatening core democratic processes and institutions. Finally, our organizations are under threat. How prepared are today's humanitarian organizations to face cyber-security challenges? As the rush to digitalization continues, vulnerabilities to cyberthreats become heightened. Panellists will discuss the myriad of threats posed by today's cyber landscape and their impacts on humanitarian organizations and operations, and for people affected by humanitarian crises; and will look at possible ways forward for humanitarians to mitigate and respond to cyber threats, including legal, technical, organizational, capacity-building and cooperation measures.