

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

Humanitarian access refers to a two-pronged concept, comprising: Humanitarian actors' ability to reach populations in need, and affected populations' access to assistance and services. Humanitarian access should be principled – in line with the humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality. Respecting these principles is central to enabling access and protecting humanitarian space.

ACCESS CONSTRAINTS

Access constraints refer to impediments or hindrances which prevent, delay or degrade the quality of assistance or services, provided by impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian organizations, for civilian populations in need. They can be found in the external context, as well as within and between humanitarian organizations. Both humanitarian actors and affected populations face their own access constraints.

ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility is one way of thinking about the quality of humanitarian access. It has two primary dimensions: the range of humanitarian assistance and services that is possible, as well as the frequency with which it can be provided.

STAKEHOLDERS

Humanitarian access is a shared responsibility and priority. Externally, no single organization is responsible, and internally, no single team or individual is responsible. Instead, the burden must be shared and well coordinated across actors.

COMPARATIVE STRENGTHS

UNICEF has comparative strengths that it must leverage to secure its own access to children in need. It must also strive to contribute these strengths to the wider humanitarian community. Other organizations have their own comparative strengths which UNICEF should seek to leverage when appropriate.

HUMANITARIAN NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

The primary elements of the humanitarian normative framework at UNICEF include certain aspects of international law, as well as humanitarian, protection and CRC principles. These elements, particularly the principles, are critical to help staff frame and explain the humanitarian identity, its ways of working, as well as specific decisions and actions. Its elements are also critical lenses (i.e. criteria) by which to generate or evaluate options (during planning) or agreements (during a negotiation).

ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY AND GUIDANCE

UN and UNICEF policy and guidance are designed to help staff implement the humanitarian normative framework and the critical tasks necessary to achieve rapid, unimpeded and safe humanitarian access in a sustained manner.

HUMANITARIAN DILEMMAS

Humanitarian dilemmas, or normative trade-offs, are central to the experience of humanitarians working on humanitarian access. These dilemmas occur when conformity with one norm means some level of compromise with another. When confronted with a humanitarian dilemma, staff should follow a deliberate decision-making process which considers the short-, medium-, and long-term consequences of all different options and compromises. A structured process is essential to properly mitigating the risks to UNICEF staff and partners, as well as affected populations.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

PROCESS MATTERS

Following a process for humanitarian access helps staff and teams, working on access, to know what to do and when to do it. It ensures that critical tasks and processes are completed, that they build on one another, and that everyone better understands the contribution of others, as well as mutual accountabilities. The three phases of this model (Analysis, Planning, Implementation) are presented sequentially to demonstrate how they build on one another, but in reality, all three are usually ongoing simultaneously.

PHASE 1: ANALYSIS

Staff working on humanitarian access can be consumers, contributors, or generators of analysis. However it's done, analysis must be available to do the following: assess programme coverage and identify unaccessed populations; identify access constraints and those responsible; understand and map influencers and other gatekeepers; and understand the comparative strengths and weaknesses of different humanitarian and other relevant actors in the domain of humanitarian access.

PHASE 2: PLANNING

During the planning phase, access technical teams create an access strategy and an access action plan to implement it. It's in this phase that staff determine priority areas or populations to access, review access constraints in those areas and the actors responsible for them, and decide upon the access techniques and specific actions required to overcome them.

PHASE 3: IMPLEMENTATION

There are things to consider after devising an access strategy and an access action plan. Phased implementation should be considered if limited resources mean that not every access issue can be resolved simultaneously, or when seeking to establish a precedent, rapport, or greater acceptance by delivering more agreeable programmatic activities first. Staff should also follow a deliberate process for managing risk and should have pre-established thresholds to tell them when to escalate an issue. Finally, every strategy and action plan should have a regular review.

NEGOTIATION

Humanitarian access is negotiated, not imposed. Humanitarian access negotiations are conducted in line with the normative framework and bearing in mind key stakeholders' responsibilities for humanitarian assistance and towards humanitarian actors. Note that negotiation may occur throughout the three phases. Analysis should inform access negotiations, and information gained during negotiation should feed back to analysis. Negotiation itself is a form of planning whereby the humanitarian interlocutor goes back and forth between internal and external stakeholders to find a way forward. Finally, negotiation is an access technique which will be used in the implementation phase of access strategies and access action plans.

ENABLERS

There are several things that can increase the effectiveness of an access strategy and an access action plan. These primarily are in the form of resources (staff time and expertise, funding, etc.), processes, and comparative strengths of UNICEF and its partners.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS**ACCESS TECHNIQUES**

Access techniques refer to methods and measures which have been found to be effective when seeking to establish, sustain or improve humanitarian access. These various techniques can be grouped into four broad categories: acceptance building techniques, engagement techniques, programme techniques and situation-specific techniques.

ACCEPTANCE BUILDING TECHNIQUES

Without acceptance there is no humanitarian access. UNICEF requires the acceptance of communities, authorities, and all others who project influence in a targeted area, with a targeted population, or along a required route or corridor. Acceptance is built over time by sustaining presence and engagement, by delivering assistance and services that meet community needs, by proper communication and advocacy and by effective engagement.

ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Engagement is one of the primary ways of establishing, sustaining and improving humanitarian access. There are several different forms of engagement including negotiation, advocacy, networking and constituency building, and access coordination. Staff should be familiar with the usefulness of each.

PROGRAMME AND OPERATIONAL TECHNIQUES

Programme and operational techniques include a wide range of measures which can be taken in response to challenges on the ground. They can involve a wide range of different partners (e.g. communities, INGOs), delivery modalities (e.g. Rapid Response Mechanism, Mobile Team) and other logistical measures (e.g. Cross-border, prepositioning), as well as alternative forms of assistance (e.g. Cash).

SITUATION SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES

Situation-specific techniques provide staff with possible courses of actions and measures to take when confronted with certain context-specific challenges. These challenges include high-security risk settings, UN integrated mission settings, and settings which are characterized by any of the following: political and bureaucratic impediments, counter-terrorism measures, de-facto authorities, etc.