

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

What is it?

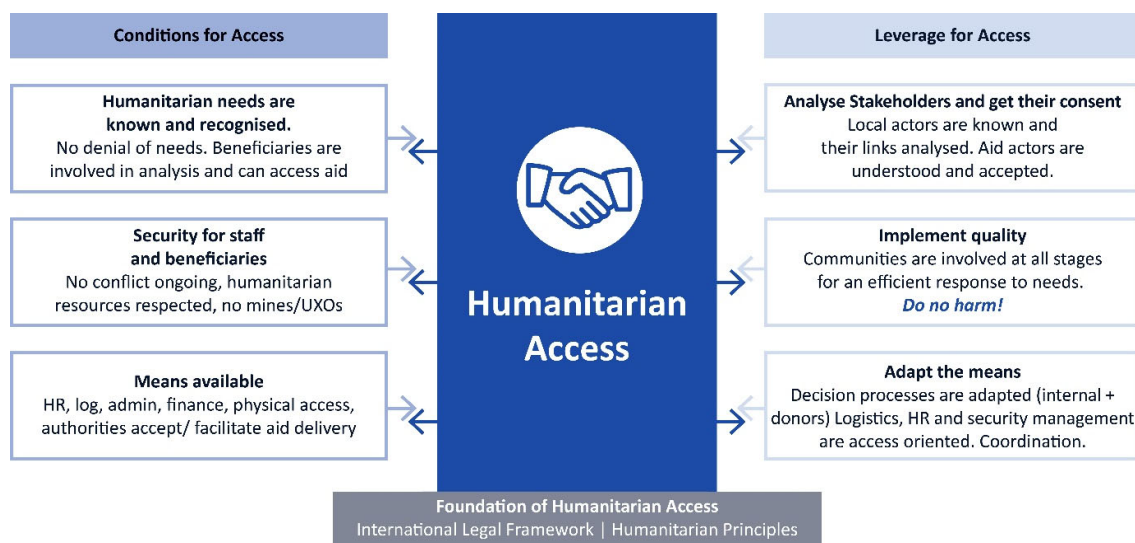
Humanitarian access refers to a double idea comprising:

- Humanitarian actors' ability to deliver aid for populations in need
- Affected populations' access to assistance and services.

Full and unimpeded humanitarian access is a fundamental prerequisite to effective humanitarian action, especially in situations of armed conflict but also in the context of natural disasters or civil unrest. When it is restricted humanitarian organizations have the duty to carry out independent and coordinated actions to defend access to affected populations.

We propose here two approaches to summarize the main component of humanitarian access.

Conditions for access and leverages to increase it



Constraining and enabling factors¹

This matrix can especially be used to analyse a situation where humanitarian access is not sufficient.

¹ Source: Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL), ICRC.

Constraining factors	Enabling factors
INTERNAL	
Restrictive internal security policies that deter or prevent teams from seeking access to those most in need.	Effective organizational security rules and procedures that keep staff safe while facilitating their ability to secure and sustain access.
Non-responsive internal policies (regarding logistics or cash flow for example) within the organization.	Rapid and effective internal decision-making and resource allocation.
Incoherent understanding of humanitarian needs among beneficiaries, humanitarian actors and civilian authorities.	Clear expectations with beneficiary populations, authorities, and humanitarian organizations.
Insufficient acceptance of the NGO, the project or some behaviours.	Aid workers and organisations are well-known and accepted by all stakeholders.
The organisation has a bad reputation due to its historical presence in the area (partnerships, incidents, projects).	Successful former projects/ appreciated historical presence of the organisation in the area.
Default in the context understanding (culture, actors' analysis).	Local actors' links and interests are known. Aid actors are accepted.
Default in the participatory process at all stages of the project cycle.	Communities are involved at all stages for an efficient response to needs.
EXTERNAL	
International frameworks including counter-terrorism policies (national laws, donor policies) prevent/ restrict NGOs from cooperating with some	National and international advocacy and awareness allow a mutual understanding of NGOs needs of being neutral and generate relationships with all parties.
Denial of the existence of humanitarian need by authorities.	Recognition of humanitarian need and support by authorities and other actors with control or influence over access.
Restriction of movement of humanitarian agencies, personnel, or goods into the affected country; complex, unclear and cumbersome bureaucratic processes.	Few and easily accessible/ applicable bureaucratic impediments for humanitarian agencies.
Military operations and ongoing hostilities impeding humanitarian operations.	No or limited restrictions from military authorities and/or armed groups to access conflict-affected populations and/or for conflict-affected populations to access assistance (including having good relationships with military actors along the route/upon arrival).
Violence directed against humanitarian personnel, assets, and facilities.	A relatively secure physical environment.
Presence of mines and UXOs	A relatively secure physical environment.
Environmental challenges, including weather, geographical restrictions, and poor infrastructure.	Adequate internal resources and logistical capacity to overcome environmental challenges.
Restrictions on, or obstruction of, access by people in need to essential goods and services.	Restrictions from authorities for people in need to access essential goods and services.
Lack of means (funding, logistics, human resources).	Appropriate means are available (local availability, sufficient own/ donor funding).

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- Several leverages are in your hands to improve your humanitarian access and protection.
 - A deep understanding of local counterparts' needs, and quality projects are key.
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