

Doing more with less – report on funding for disaster relief

News story

GAD's new report for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies looks at how disaster risk financing can meet as many humanitarian needs as possible.



The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) has assessed the ways that the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) can make the greatest use of available funds. The report has been published by the Centre for Disaster Protection.

GAD's involvement

'Financing the forecast-based early action protocols' has been written by the Deputy Government Actuary Colin Wilson, and GAD actuary Georgina Bedenham.

In it, they consider ways that the IFRC can manage the risks and examine the funding options available to the IFRC.

Planning and responding

The IFRC has developed early action mechanisms through forecast-based financing.

These response plans, or early action protocols, set out just when the IFRC should respond to a disaster, what it should do and what level of funding is available.

Maximise impact

Report co-author Colin Wilson said: "There are several steps that disaster relief organisations should consider, especially as not all disasters will occur at the same time.

“They should have resources ready should a disaster materialise, make sure the funds are used effectively in order to maximise humanitarian impact, and plan how to address any potential funding shortfalls.”

The report is available to view at [the website of the Centre for Disaster Protection](#).

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Media Freedom Coalition statement concerning media freedom in Belarus

The Media Freedom Coalition expresses its deep concern about continued attacks on media freedom and the targeting of independent journalists in Belarus. Media freedom is an important part of democratic societies and essential to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Since the contested presidential election was held on August 9, authorities in Belarus have restricted access to information and have led a brutal and sustained campaign to persecute and harass independent journalists and those from foreign media organizations and prevent them from performing the vital role of objectively reporting on events and holding authorities to account. Access to unfettered information is vital for citizens during protest. Independent journalists play a key role in informing citizens on the causes of unrest and state responses.

Some 400 journalists and media workers in Belarus have faced various forms of repression in the course of the election and its aftermath. On January 12, 2021, media consultant Andrei Aliaksandrau was arrested for allegedly providing financial support to protestors. On December 22, members of the Press Club Belarus were arrested and charged on tax evasion.

On January 19, the Belarusian courts confirmed their rule of December 3 which rescinded the official media status of independent news website Tut.by, thereby stripping its journalists of the official protection they have the right to expect when doing their job.

Tut.by journalist Katsiaryna Barysevich remains in custody under criminal charges of the alleged disclosure of medical secrets of the late Raman Bandarenka, who died after reportedly being beaten by security forces. On November 15, independent journalist Yekaterina Bakhvalova was arrested and had criminal charges brought against her after filming police officers firing stun grenades during a memorial for Raman Bandarenka. Authorities detained another 23 journalists who were covering this event.

It is deeply troubling that RFE/RL journalist Ihar Losik felt the need to go on hunger strike in order to bring attention to his unjust imprisonment. We are relieved Mr. Losik has halted his hunger strike but remain concerned about his ongoing detention. Sadly, this is only one example of the impact of the authorities' blatant contempt for media freedom.

These are not isolated incidents but tragic examples of the authorities' wider campaign to restrict the fundamental freedoms of opinion and expression, by violently suppressing peaceful political protests by opposition supporters and demonstrators. These actions have also been strongly condemned by UN human rights experts and the likeminded international community.

We reaffirm our unequivocal condemnation of the targeting, harassment and detention of journalists and media workers. We call on Belarus to protect media freedom, desist from shutting down Internet access, and respect international human rights law. We strongly urge Belarus to implement OSCE Moscow Mechanism report recommendations on freedom of expression and the media. Political prisoners must be immediately released.

We call on Belarus to release journalists and other media workers who have been arbitrarily detained and hold accountable those responsible for attacks on journalists and media workers.

Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

[New Covid-19 testing site opens in Aberdare](#)

News story

The UK Government opens a walk-through coronavirus testing facility in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

A new walk-through coronavirus testing facility has opened for those with symptoms to book appointments at Coleg y Cymoedd Aberdare Campus Northern Car Park (CF44 8EN) in Aberdare, as part of the UK Government's drive to continue to improve the accessibility of Covid-19 testing for communities.

The new site in Aberdare, which opened on Wednesday 3 February, is situated so it is easily accessible without a car. Anyone attending an appointment at a walk-through test site will be provided with guidance on getting to and from the test site safely, with additional support for vulnerable groups and people with disabilities.

Secretary of State for Wales, Simon Hart, said:

It is important people do not have to travel long distances for a test and the announcement of this site in Aberdare enables local people to access these vital facilities closer to home.

The continued rate at which these centres are being created is testament to the hard work of the NHS and its partners. There are now more than 50 UK Government testing facilities in Wales, as well as the Newport Lighthouse Lab which is working round the clock to process samples. All are playing a hugely important role in our continued fight against the virus.

The UK Government is committed to continue expanding the capacity of the network of UK test sites and laboratories to make it even easier to get tested and reduce the time it takes to receive test results.

The site is part of the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities created in British history which has the capacity to process more than 700,000 tests a day and includes more than 800 sites across the UK, including 87 drive-through sites, 475 walk-through sites, six Lighthouse laboratories, home testing and satellite kits, and a large number of mobile units.

Appointments are made available each day. Book a test at <https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus> or by calling 119

Exceptional courts and tribunals staff recognised with Palace gongs

Two of our colleagues have received awards in this year's New Year Honours for their work to rapidly bring in new ways of working at the start of the pandemic.

Two more of our people have been honoured for their outstanding contribution to other areas.

HMCTS Acting Chief Executive, Kevin Sadler said:

All four of our staff receiving awards from the Queen really are a credit to HMCTS. I was thrilled to hear they had been recognised in this way and they should all be proud of this tremendous achievement.

I'm proud of all the people within HMCTS and I know that this is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the exceptional talent, experience and ingenuity across our organisation.

I was especially pleased to see recognition for the way in which our staff have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. I know how much effort has gone in from people across HMCTS to keep courts and tribunals running since last March – that work has been formally recognised with these honours.

Online services in the family court

For her work in the family court during the pandemic, Jurisdictional and Operational Support Manager Rebecca Cobbin has been awarded an OBE.

Rebecca, who has worked in courts for 33 years, and her team promoted an online process that made it easier for parents to make child arrangements. They also created guidance on how to prioritise injunction applications, when cases of domestic abuse started to rise during the first lockdown.

But in Rebecca's words, this isn't unusual and many of her colleagues are going above and beyond for court users.

Remote hearings in tribunals

Meanwhile, for his work in Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) tribunals, Delivery Manager Jason Greenwood, who is based in Darlington, has been recognised with an MBE.

Jason used knowledge of cloud video platform (CVP) to allow more remote hearings to take place at the start of the pandemic. Not only did this result in no hearing cancellations, but Jason's team believe they've been able to hear more cases than if all hearings were held in person.

Jason, who has worked in the tribunal for nearly 20 years, said:

Even though it was awarded to me, it's really for the whole team, the judiciary and the service users.

Health and wellbeing champion

For her efforts to improve her colleagues' health and wellbeing, Family Legal Team Manager Tracy Etienne has been awarded an MBE.

Tracy, who works in the Cheshire and Merseyside region and was previously based in Wales, has been a qualified fitness instructor for more than 20 years.

She used those skills to launch many initiatives including producing exercise guidance and videos for colleagues. She has also raised more than £3,000 for a hospice by running fitness classes for colleagues in return for a donation.

Tracy said:

My mum was so excited when I told her that she spent the whole day on the phone to her friends to tell her.

Mum was part of the Windrush generation, and I'm the first person in our family to even go to university, let alone receive an MBE!

Charity fundraiser

Finally, Ann Gumery has received a British Empire Medal for raising money for charity through a series of tough treks and climbs.

For the past 20 years, Ann has completed challenges including trekking 100km across the Sahara, and again in Jordan, climbed Kilimanjaro twice, completed the Inca Trail and walked the length of Hadrian's Wall.

These efforts were prompted, back in 2001, when Ann saw a corporate video from Macmillan Cancer Care. It struck a chord with her as she had lost her four-year-old son, David, to cancer in 1983.

In 2019, in celebration of her sixtieth birthday and what would have been David's fortieth birthday, she and her family trekked 40 km across the Malvern hills in Worcestershire, raising money for Birmingham Children's Hospital, which had cared for David.

Foreign Secretary press conference – Cyprus – 4 February 2021

Thank you very much. It's a huge pleasure to be here. Both to renew the connections and friendship we have between the UK and Cyprus, but also -given the upcoming talks- to help make progress to support our friends here in Cyprus.

I want to thank the President of the Republic, Mr Anastasiades, and also you Foreign Minister for your friendship, your hospitality, and for the constructive discussions that we had today.

I also look forward to meeting Turkish Cypriot leader, Ersin Tatar, later this afternoon.

The UK-Cyprus relationship is strong. We have a lot of history, a lot of water under the bridge in our relationship. We have shared values, shared legal systems, joint membership of the Commonwealth, and a very big web of people-to-people relations, including students – we talked a bit about that as well today.

We have got great partnerships and a network of personal relations, particularly in education, science, research, and security, all of which serve our joint interests and contribute to our friendship.

We want to continue strengthening those links and we want to reinforce and nurture these relations, and perhaps widen them as well.

So we will continue to work together to uphold the values that we both share and deal with the challenges we both face, whether that is including tackling Covid, climate change and regional challenges.

You can count on our friendship, you can count on our support and you can count on us on playing an active and full role.

And we also want to play a supporting role in helping the people of Cyprus, both sides of this dispute, to move things forward, to break the deadlock, to

find a settlement that works in everyone's interest.

We are a problem solving nation by instinct, we are a Guarantor Power, we are a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

But above all, the UK feels we are also a long standing friend of the Cypriot people across the island.

So we want to see a permanent, enduring and lasting end to the dispute.

And I hope that all parties should seize the opportunities that the 5+1 talks present to really change the conversation and give the children, the young people of the island, the brightest prospects for the future in years ahead.

I think it's an opportunity to push for a Settlement which will benefit both sides but also have a premium dividend, if you like, for regional stability, security and prosperity.

I think a failure to reach a settlement after so many efforts will benefit no-one.

So again, I urge all sides to come to the talks with a willingness to demonstrate flexibility and compromise and I was very heartened by my conversations at the scope for that.

We will work with the Cypriot people and the UN of course, to finally resolve the Cyprus problem and achieve a just and lasting settlement.

So that, again, the young people, the next generation of Cypriots, can fulfil their aspirations, their dreams and evade their fears and anxieties that appear in both communities.

A reunited, Cyprus can achieve its full potential as a beacon of democracy, stability, prosperity and, frankly, the underlying values that Nicos and I, that Brits and Cypriots share.

Thank you very much again for your very warm welcome.