

Recent trends in Humanitarian thinking – celebrating 30 humanitarian blog selections

Today, the International Humanitarian Studies Association (IHSA) celebrates the 30th issue of its humanitarian blog posts selection! We started this initiative seven months ago, and we want to celebrate by sharing some of the trends we observed in humanitarian thinking from the blog posts that we collect, read, and suggest every week.

One of the objectives of IHSA is to promote a global network of universities, research centers, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to improve links between knowledge, policy and practice in humanitarian crises. We strive for different voices and multiple language sources (English, Spanish, Arabic and French) to bring out the diversity of humanitarian studies and humanitarian scholars. We hope that our weekly selection brings us closer to achieving this objective.

About IHSA's Weekly Selection

Since the 1st of April, we have prepared a weekly selection of humanitarian blog posts, that reflects the latest thinking about the nature of humanitarian crises, and responses by individuals, communities, politicians, and humanitarians. Key topics have included: disaster preparedness and response, migration and displacement, famine and food crisis, politics, human rights, disaster preparedness and response, and aid policies and practices. Within aid policy and practice, racism and the need to decolonize aid have dominated.

Each week, the IHSA blog selection team collects blog posts from more than 80 different sources and chooses the ones considered most relevant to the audience. Then, every Wednesday we send out an email with the compilation of the publications we found most interesting and relevant for humanitarian studies in the past week.

Since our first picks, we've tagged every suggested post and now our readers can search all of our suggested content by topic in our [blog post directory](#).

Our audience and its engagement

Each week, more than 2,000 humanitarian and development professionals, consultants and academics receive our selection directly to their mailbox and around 5,000 people get it through social media.

In the 30 selections we sent out, we suggested more than 350 free access blog posts and opinion pieces in English, French, Spanish and Arabic. They reflect humanitarian issues both globally and locally. So far, one of our most read suggestions has been a “global scope” article entitled "[Is racism part of our reluctance to localise humanitarian action?](#)" by Hugo Slim. In this opinion piece the author invites members of the “white humanitarian elite” to understand, speak and challenge the racist gaze

that still exists in humanitarian action. Another of our most popular suggestions has been [“Why Uganda has suspended hundreds of refugee aid agencies”](#) by Cristiano D'Orsi, a blog post in which the author explains why the Ugandan government suspended the operations of 208 refugee aid organizations during September 2020.

Regardless of geographic scope (global, regional or local), most of our suggestions capture the attention of our audience. Over the past seven months, our suggestions have generated nearly 4,500 clicks to read, which means that, on average, each suggested post has been clicked to read around 10 times.

IHSA Weekly Selection, emerging trends

In the last seven months, we have also detected three key trends in what has been published on blog sites:

When Covid-19 and other disasters collide

So far, most- entries have been related to the outbreak of Covid-19, its impacts in developing countries and how it overlaps with other crises. Learning from past crises, and how in some ways African countries were better prepared was one topic on which many blogs were written. One recent example is a blog post by Dave Pilling on [“How Africa fought the pandemic”](#). Many other examples can be found by browsing [Africa and covid-19 in our blog posts directory](#). For many countries, Covid-19 comes on top of conflict, disasters like drought and floods, and climate change. This makes people more vulnerable to the effects of Covid-19 and the response more challenging and complex. Great examples of this are one by Rod Mena, [“Rethinking how to respond to COVID-19 in places where humanitarian crises intersect”](#), and [“Dealing with COVID-19 in conflict zones needs a different approach”](#) by Katie Peters & Sherine El Taraboulsi-McCarthy

Localisation, racism in humanitarian action and the need to decolonize aid

The necessity of greater localisation, and the strong re-emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement after the killing of George Floyd, triggered a series of posts that highlighted the racism, discrimination and injustices present in the humanitarian sector. Humanitarian aid is still a long way from implementing the localisation agreed on at the Humanitarian Summit of 2016. Lately we have also shared many posts related to the need to decolonize aid and humanitarian studies. Covid-19 has not only highlighted inequalities in societies everywhere, but also within the aid sector and in how research on humanitarian issues is done. An example of these highly read entries are [“Fighting racism and decolonizing humanitarian studies: toward mindful scholarship”](#) by Thea Hilhorst, and [“Aid workers: It's time to practise what you preach”](#) by Thandie Mwape Villadsen. We also reposted Degal Ali's post from last year on how [systemic racism impacts humanitarian response](#). Many of our most-read suggestions are on racism in humanitarian action and the need to decolonize aid, if you would like to find more interesting reads related to this, [click here](#). As most of our blog

posts on racism and decolonizing aid are by white Westerners, we also realise that more work is to be done to present different voices.

Disproportionate impact on poor and marginalised populations

Finally, many blog posts reflected on the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on poor and marginalized populations, in particular migrants, displaced populations, and refugees. Covid magnifies inequalities. Blog posts covered the heightened risk faced by those living in overcrowded places, due to the difficulties of social distancing and hygiene measures. A good example of an early blog on this topic was: [‘we are all fragile but we are not equally fragile’](#), by Andrea Silkoset, and one of our most popular blogs on this topic is: [‘lockdown’s effects are political – restrictions on the poor always are](#) by Graeme Young. For many in the informal sector, the lockdown policies themselves caused the crisis, drastically reducing income (lost work and closure of markets) and their ability to access food. Although as Cedric Habiyaremya wrote: [A pandemic driven food crisis can be prevented if the right measures are taken.](#)

The increase in deterrence measures and suspension of asylum and resettlement procedures in Europe and the US following Covid, has been a topic of many of the blog posts we published, and is illustrated by our special on the [new EU pact on migration](#).

At the International Humanitarian Studies Association we hope that our weekly selection helps you in your thinking and in what you do. In the coming months, we will keep posting reflections on the rapidly changing world of humanitarian crisis, practice and studies. We also aim to increase both the diversity of the blog writers as of our readers. And of course we continue to welcome your contributions!

*Article written by **Nicolás Caso** and **Susanne Jaspars***