

Global Humanitarian Assistance

User Survey Report

GHA Evaluation

31st March 2011



Global Humanitarian
Assistance

A DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE 

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GHA Evaluation: User survey Report

Executive summary

The Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) programme is a Development Initiative of the not-for-profit company Development Initiatives Poverty Research based in Wells, UK. The aim of the programme is to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and coherence of humanitarian response by further increasing access to reliable, transparent and understandable information on the aid provided to people living in humanitarian crises. The GHA programme was created in 2008 when it received funding for a four year period from the governments of the United Kingdom, Canada, Denmark, Netherlands and Sweden.

The GHA programme is undergoing an evaluation¹ in the second half of its third year. To feed into this process, GHA posted a survey on its website to which it directed users, inviting their involvement over a period of one month. This was seen to be an important component in understanding how the programme's stakeholders and audience use the GHA's key deliverables. Interviews were also conducted over the telephone with a select group of key users.

This report will present qualitative and quantitative findings collected through the completed surveys and interviews, in order to feed into the wider evaluation process.

Introduction

The survey produced by GHA included 16 questions covering four general topics;

- The user's background,
- Their use of GHA,
- To what extent GHA meets the user's needs with regards to global humanitarian assistance,
- Resources used beyond GHA.

GHA received 54 completed surveys over the period of one month.

In addition to this, GHA team members Georgina Brereton and Dan Sparks conducted 15 telephone interviews between them with key known users of the programme and its various resources. The questioning during these interviews addressed the areas covered in the survey but also allowed for broader qualitative discussion in order to provide a clearer picture of interviewees' opinions, impressions and comments.

¹ This is being conducted by Ian Smillie, with a connected component on communications and outreach being undertaken

Findings: the survey

The user's background

The vast majority of respondents, 84%, have a professional interest in the work of the GHA programme, with only 16% claiming a personal interest.

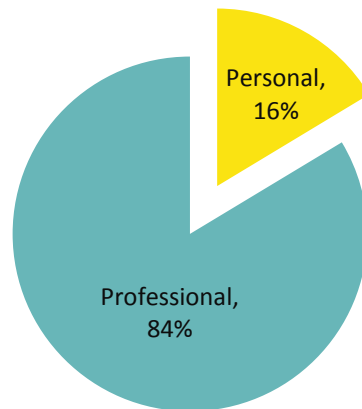


Figure 1: Main interest in humanitarian aid

The largest proportion of the 54 respondents told us they work for NGOs, 20 in total. International institutions (such as UNICEF, OCHA etc.) come next in line with 12 respondents from this field, followed by universities / academic / research institutions with 10. Users from the media were poorly represented, with only one completing the survey.

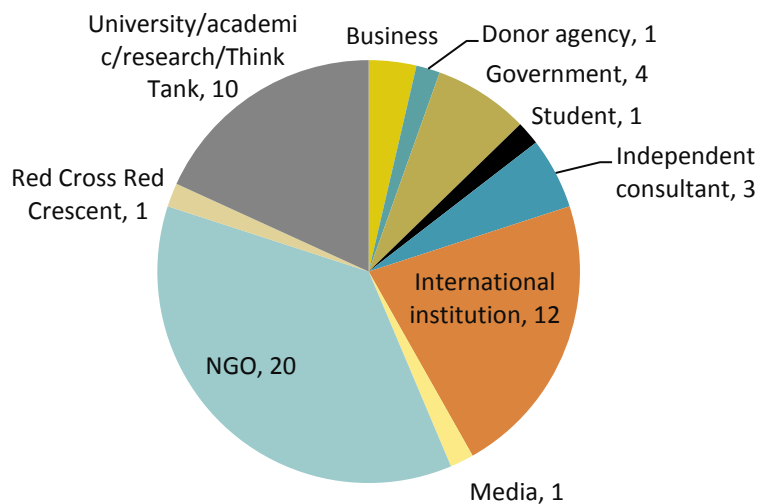


Figure 2: Breakdown of respondents by organisation type

Respondents work for a variety of organisations, as shown in the table below.

Organisations		
Aga Khan Foundation	ICRC	Oxfam
Christian Aid	IFRC	Publish What You Fund
CIDA	Institute of Certified Bookkeepers	Shushilan
Development Research and Training	Institute of Studies on Conflicts and Humanitarian Action	Sida
DFID	International Campaign to Ban Landmines	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
Escola de Cultura de Pau	International Medical Corps	UNICEF
Global Public Policy Institute	MAG	UNHCR
Globalinked	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands	University of California
HAQOOKE-NISWAN	Norwegian University of Science and Technology	University of Sheffield
Help Age International	OECD	University of Turku
Human Security Report Project	OFADCEC	VOICE
ICCO	Opportunity International Australia	

Table 1: Respondents’ organisations

The survey’s respondents come from a wide variety of countries, the highest number from the UK (12), followed by the USA (eight). However, users were also based in several African countries (three in Kenya for example) as well as elsewhere in the developing world (including two in Bangladesh).

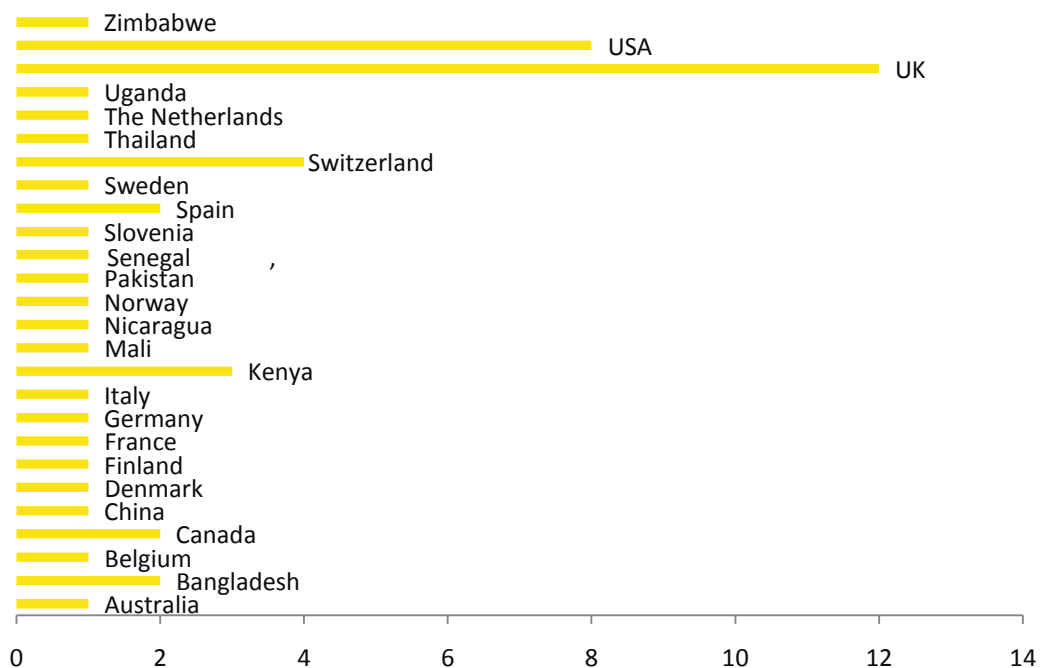


Figure 3: Geographic spread of respondents

The use of GHA

The web has been GHA’s key driver of referrals, with 16 respondents having come to the programme in that way. The GHA report also plays a significant role here, followed by word of mouth. Very few respondents had come to GHA through blogs or twitter, only one from each.

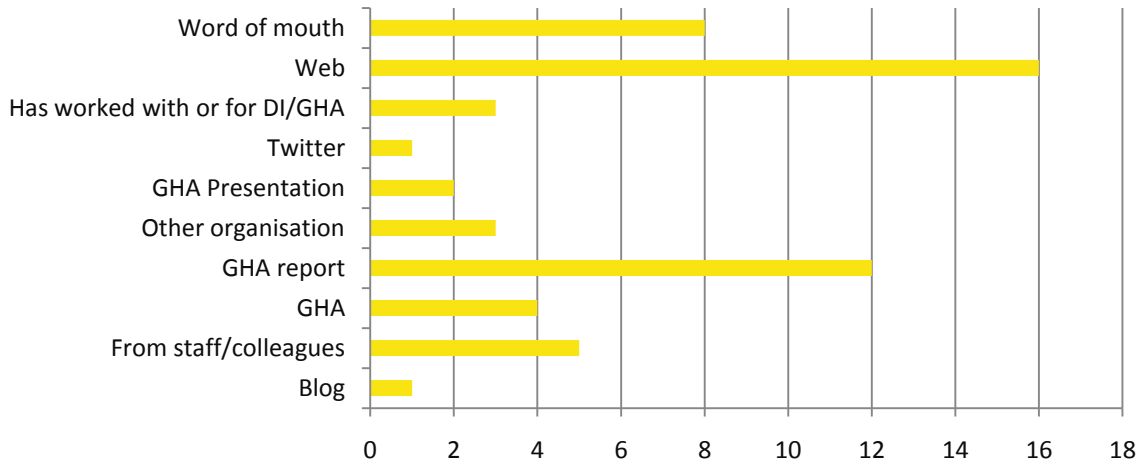


Figure 4: Means through which users came to GHA

It was possible to choose more than one response to the question regarding respondents’ reasons for using GHA resources, and analysis and policy, as well as DATA stood out as the primary attractions for these users of GHA. Gaining a general understanding of humanitarian financing and context was also shown to be a key motivation for people using the programme, with specific country information following on in levels of importance. It is likely that as the country profiles become better known, country information will become an increasingly important factor in people’s reasons for using GHA.

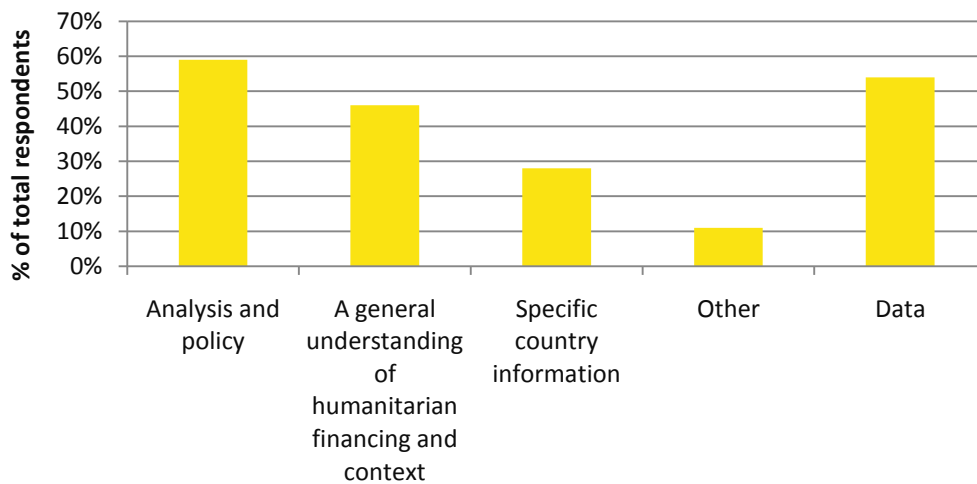


Figure 5: Primary reasons for using GHA

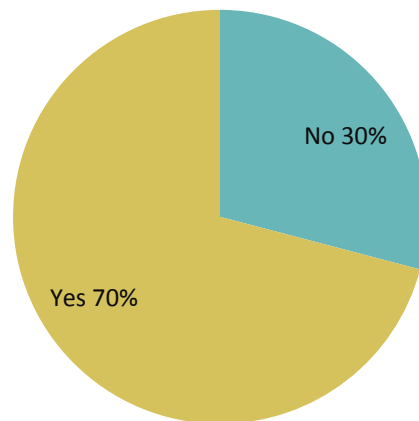


Figure 6: Proportion of respondents actively involved in humanitarian work

The 70% of respondents who are actively involved in humanitarian work progressed on to answer the following question regarding their specific use of GHA resources. It was possible to select a number of options for this answer. 67% of the respondents said that GHA resources were used as reference material for briefing papers, analysis and policy discussion while 35% considered the programme to be useful as background for advocacy on specific issues.

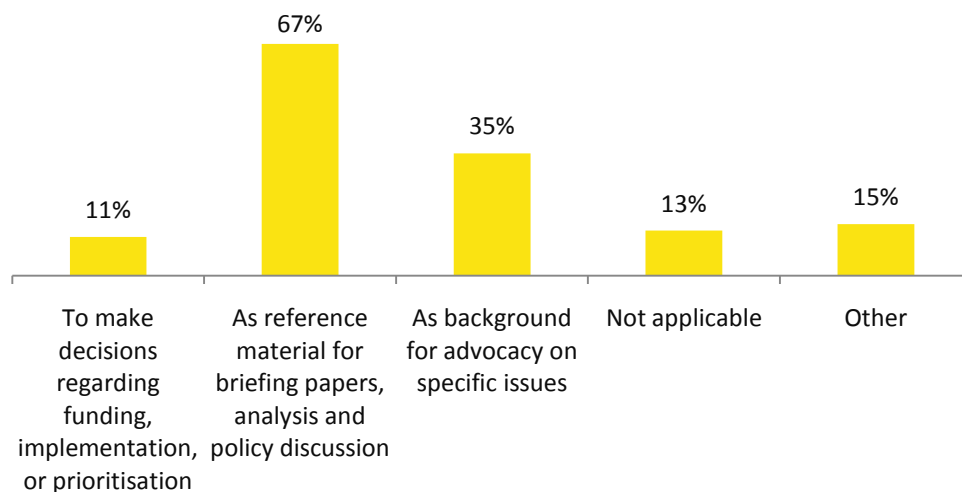


Figure 7: Use of GHA materials within the humanitarian field

Findings: the survey

Respondents were then asked to provide specific examples of the use of GHA programme resources and a variety of answers were given. A selection of those examples is provided in the table below:

Used in informing National Disaster Policy	GHA report and other programme resources used in training sessions on humanitarian funding
Used as background material for country Peer Reviews	Data used to inform our policy position on humanitarian financing.

Table 2: Examples of GHA use

Again, a variety of answers were given in response to the question regarding the impact of the work done using GHA material. A selection can be seen below, although it was noted that users had difficulty defining real impact, finding it easier to cite where GHA resources have been of use:

- “It has enabled me to quickly and accurately reference data and trends for other analyses, avoiding having to collate the data myself, which is very useful”.
- “It helps people to understand that humanitarian funding is more complex than it is generally perceive it to be”.
- “It helps to have data and figures to illustrate our presentations”.
- “It has helped us to form recommendations to clients on how to adapt their approach to government donors”.

The resource which was shown to be considered ‘very useful’ by the largest number of people is the GHA Report, with over 50% of respondents describing the product in that way, while the website was considered ‘very useful’ by over 40% of respondents.

Both the website and GHA’s commentary and analysis were considered ‘useful’ by over 40% of respondents. Conversely, over 70% of respondents have never used the helpdesk and information service². The choice of ‘not very useful’ to describe any of the GHA resources was rare.

² Discussion is underway within the GHA team with regards to how ‘public’ the helpdesk service should be, given the resources required. Questions around time limits and the like would need to be addressed.

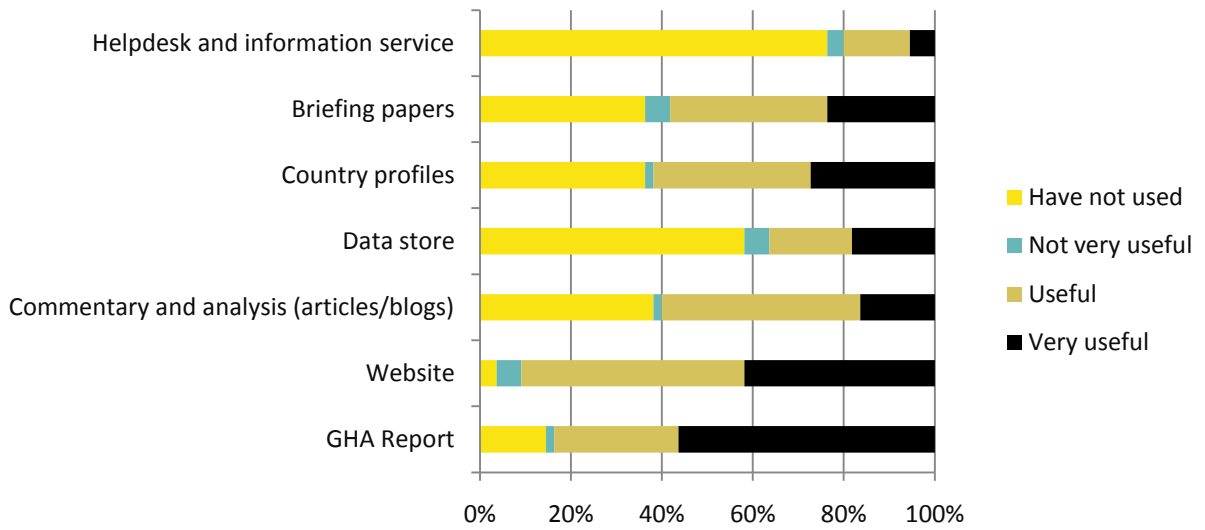


Figure 8: Levels to which GHA resources are considered useful

The majority of respondents, 63%, describe their use of GHA as occasional, although almost a quarter use the programme monthly.

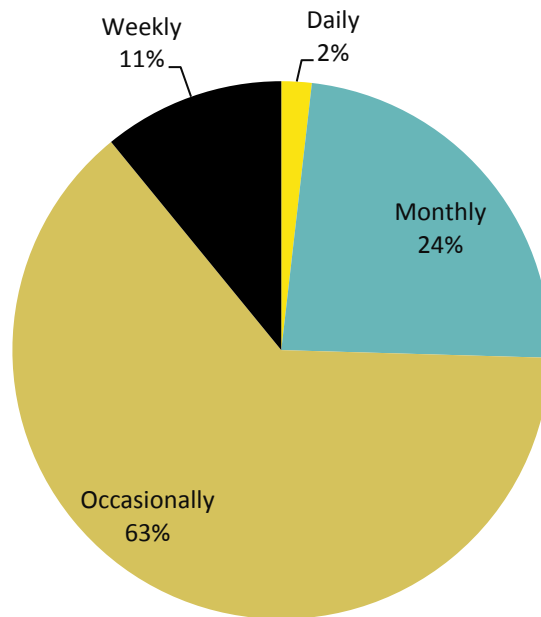


Figure 9: Regularity of use of GHA resources

Findings: the survey

Results showed the Global Trends workstream to be the one in which the largest number of respondents, 83%, claimed to have an interest. Again, several options could be selected here and Financing Mechanisms was also shown to be popular, amongst 56% of the respondents. However, overall, all workstreams received a good level of interest.

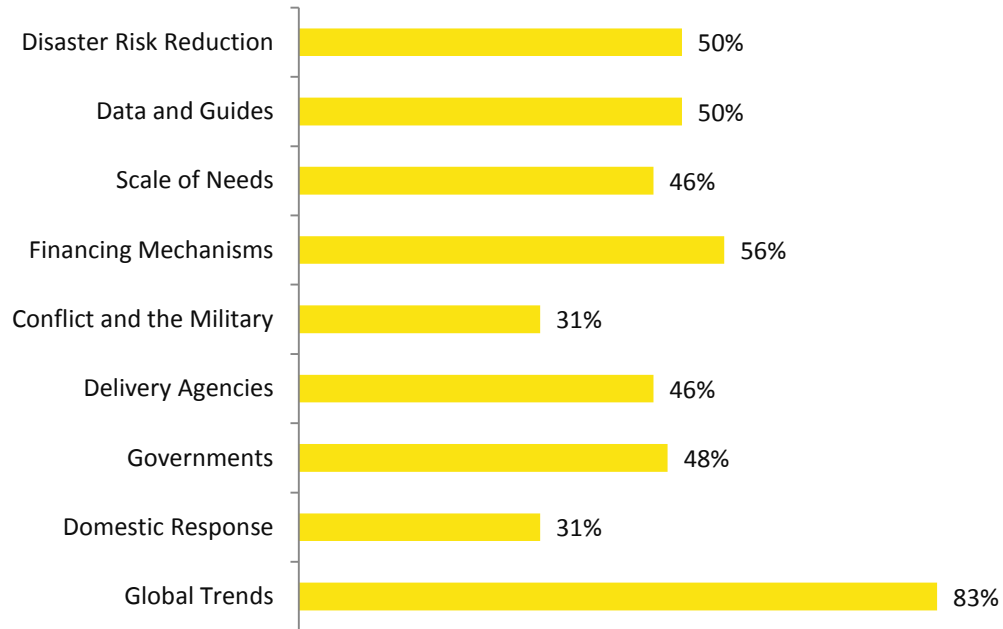


Figure 10: Interest shown in GHA workstreams

Does GHA meet needs?

Responses to the question regarding the standard of GHA’s programme resources were generally very positive, with 42% of respondents considering the GHA programme to be of an ‘excellent’ standard and 36% selecting ‘very good’. One individual did select ‘average’ and one more ‘poor’, which is a concern, but this is a very small proportion.

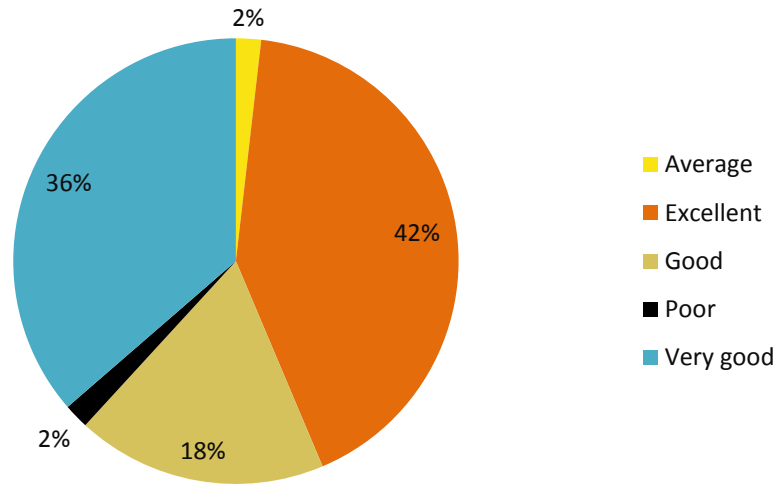


Figure 11: Standard of GHA resources

Respondents were given a number of options in answer to a question regarding the potential expansion of the GHA product base from which they could choose more than one, and they showed significant interest in the idea of such an expansion, with 61% of respondents indicating that it would be useful for GHA to produce more factsheets with a focus upon the mechanisms of humanitarian assistance for example.

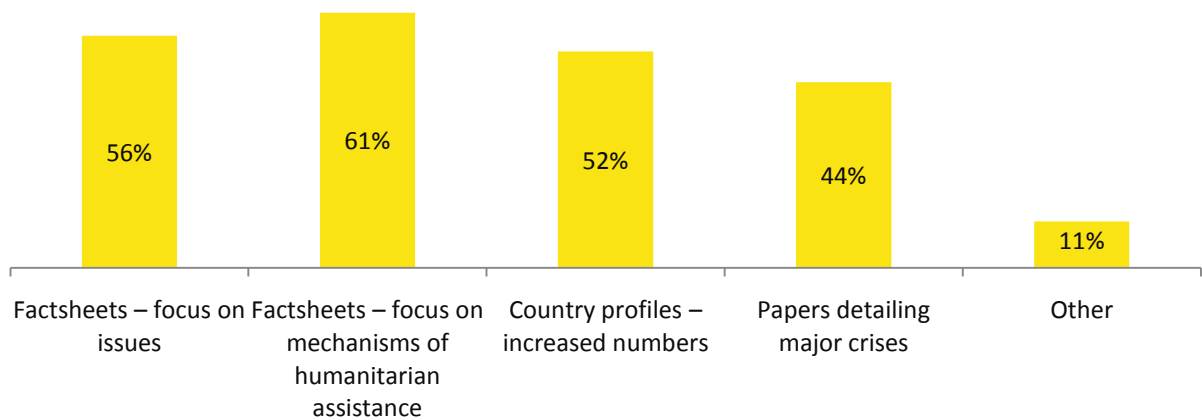


Figure 12: Level of interest in GHA product expansion

43% of respondents thought that it would be useful if GHA increased the amount of topics covered to include the issue of chronic poverty, 37% said the same of military spending and 35% would be interested to see work on illicit funding flows.

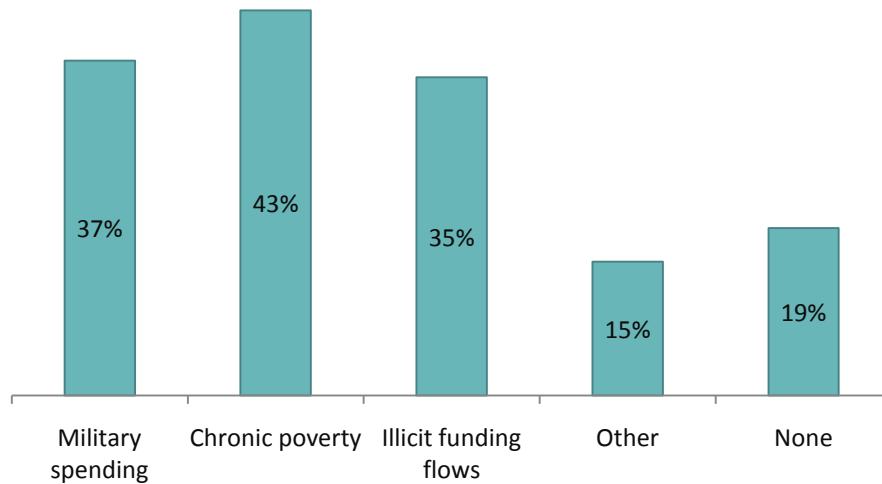


Figure 13: Level of interest in GHA topic expansion

It is important to bear in mind that GHA needs to be careful with regards to use of its resources; were we to expand our work in every direction we would be in danger of spreading ourselves too thinly.

Beyond GHA

A range of other resources are drawn upon by the 54 respondents, of which OCHA's FTS emerged as the most popular, with ALNAP and the Humanitarian Response Index not far behind. Only four respondents claimed not to use any other resources beyond GHA for information regarding humanitarian assistance.

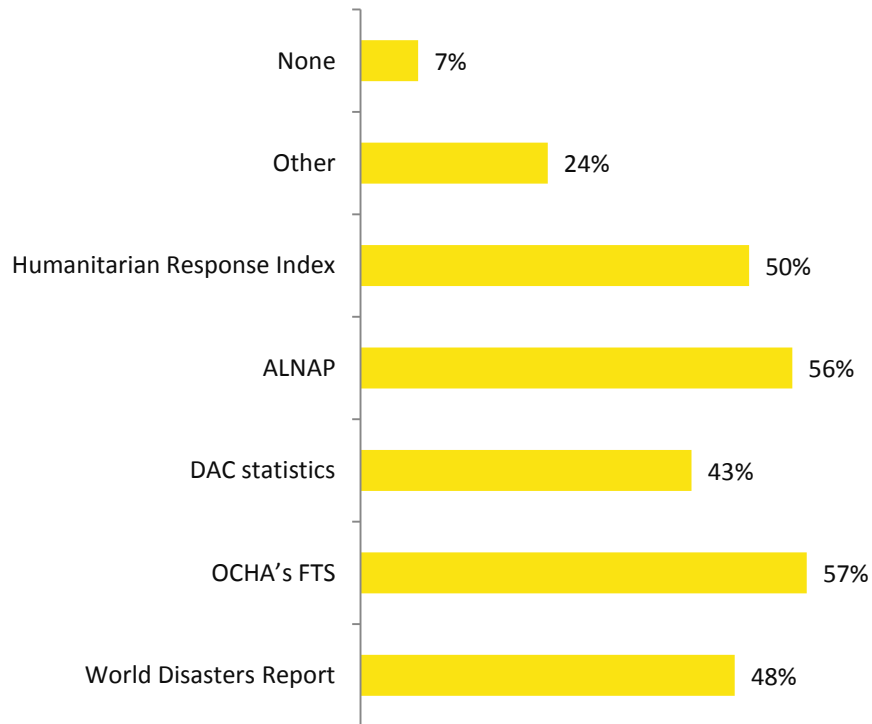


Figure 14: Other resources used for information regarding humanitarian assistance

Findings: the interviews

The 15 telephone interviews conducted by Georgina and Dan gave interviewees the chance to feed additional comments and opinions into the evaluation process. Although many of the discussions reflected what has already been presented in the graphs and commentary above, several additional points emerged.

Website

Several interviewees gave positive feedback about the website in particular, describing it as accessible and user friendly, and significantly more so than the previous website. One individual described it as excellent, saying that in their opinion it was worth investing in the visual element and dynamic presentation and that they enjoyed the wide variety of media employed (such as twitter) and thought that the inclusion of author profiles provided a personal touch (users can picture who they are communicating with when contacting GHA). However, one individual thought that the website is quite overloaded and not very easy to navigate.

Presentations

A number of interviewees remarked on how useful presentations regarding the GHA report had been, as they helped to break down and explain the content of a document which may otherwise have been far less accessible for users.

Country profiles

We received feedback regarding the country profiles, referring to how important they are for professionals working in the humanitarian world.

The request was made for more comprehensive profiles such as the factsheet which has been produced on Egypt ('Egypt Aid Factsheet') and several people suggested that we should produce as many country profiles as possible!

Reports

Comments were made on the significant improvement of the GHA report and other reports over recent years in terms of subject matter and becoming more user friendly. Users found it very helpful to receive hard copies of the GHA report, although a comment was made about the colours used not being printer friendly.

Data

When asked about useful areas for expansion, comments were made inviting more quantitative data and more information regarding FTS trends. Users also called for GHA to further highlight the inefficiencies of data. Concerns were voiced about GHA not always being clear to the reader about data validity which led to concern about the ability to draw conclusions from the data. One user was keen to discuss the quality of the data with a GHA team member.

Visibility

It emerged from the interviews that several users were unfamiliar with the broader resources provided by GHA beyond the GHA report and the data. There seems to be a need to publicise and direct people to the wider work produced by the programme, such as the articles and blogs, an issue

which will hopefully be addressed by the forthcoming e-newsletter. Suggestions were made to build on links with NGOs in order to get information out to the wider public.

No spin

One individual made an interesting point regarding the ‘no spin’ approach adopted by GHA, suggesting that if we are keen to develop the commentary element of the website it makes it difficult to maintain a ‘no spin’ approach. On a related point, one individual thought that it would be a good idea to state our position clearly on the website with regards to whether or not we have partnerships and alliances with other organisations; this was thought to be one way of strengthening our credentials and helping to position us, whether in alliance with others or as an independent entity.

GHA accessibility

Interviewees told us that the programme is quite complex and that if we want to be accessible to wider groups i.e. media/wider groups of NGOs/general public we would need to simplify the communication of our content. However, a number of interviewees posed the question about whether we really want to appeal to a broader audience stating that our work is heavily geared towards the humanitarian practitioner and donor and would there be value in ‘dumbing down’? We were also asked whether we would consider translating the website into different languages.

GHA expansion

A number of interviewees suggested that GHA should concentrate on consolidating and improving what it already does well i.e. data provision and analysis, providing information regarding funding flows and mechanisms rather than try to expand and risk spreading itself too thinly into areas where it does not necessarily have expertise. However, we were also told that it would be of interest for GHA to develop work on DRR and Recovery data, as well as financing for urban and rural areas and work on gender and protection.

GHA approach

We received positive feedback regarding our proactivity (of which the survey was thought to be an example) and the genuine interest we show in meeting user needs. It was felt that giving presentations was an example of using initiative for the purpose of proactive dissemination.

Other

We were told that GHA is useful because it takes an original view of donorship rather than the typical north-south view and in that line, that GHA provides a truer picture of the way aid works than one often sees elsewhere. The suggestion was made that GHA could do more explanatory hyperlinking to sites or sources outside of GHA.

Conclusion

We hope that the exercise of conducting a survey amongst users of the GHA programme alongside interviews with a carefully selected few will have been a valuable component of the broader programme evaluation and will assist the evaluator in his assessment of the programme to date and importantly his recommendations on forward development.



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