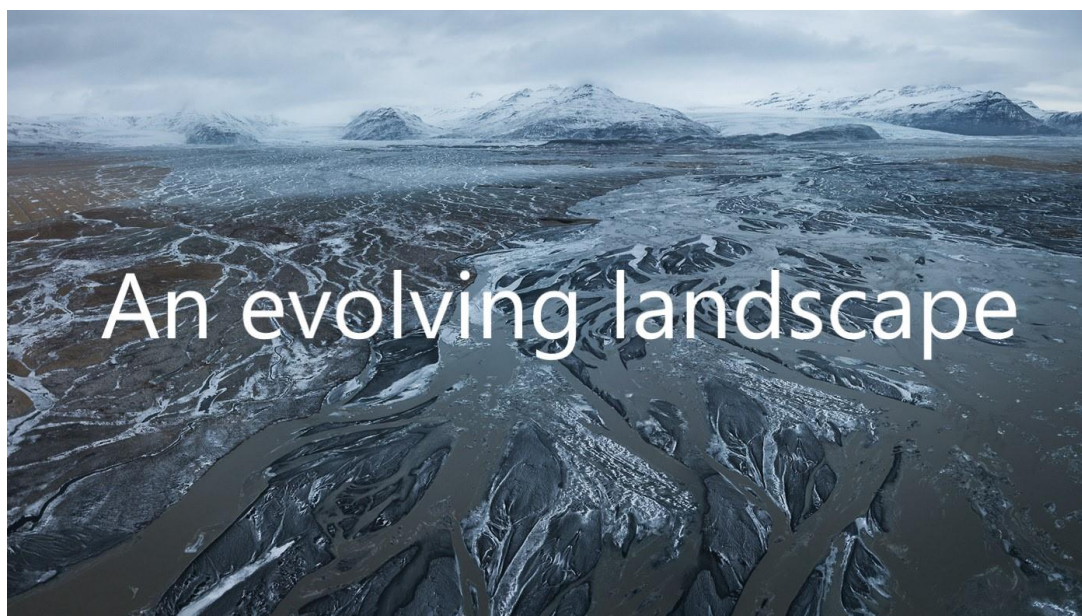


COVID – 19

The OTHER SOLUTIONS' Newsletter



Summary

The official number of infected patients with Covid – 19 crossed the symbolic threshold of 1 million on Apr. 2nd. Although the number is widely believed to be underestimated, this mark vividly signals the reach of the disease in medical, economic and social terms.

It is too early to fully grasp the landscape that will emerge from the havoc wrought by the disease. Some trends are however identifiable.

- While the disease is global, responses are very focused domestically and should remain so for some time at the likely expense of international assistance programs, although US support is ramping up and EU emergency support may yet increase.
- Post-epidemic pathways are expected to be very diverse over time. Although vaccine research is on an accelerated track, it should not be available before 2021. Manufacturing constraints are expected to lead to a very uneven rollout. As a result, the coexistence of countries with different degrees of epidemic control should result in sustainably constrained international movements.
- Organizational set-ups currently emerging should therefore remain in place for a substantial amount of time, probably until 2022, if not longer.

The degree of preparedness of organizations before the pandemic was uneven to start with and Covid-19 has exposed growing needs in terms of crisis management and business continuity. Coupled with forthcoming Donor realignment of priorities, this should substantially alter the physiognomy of the aid sector and associated business concerns.

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Covid 19 Developments

1. The United States are or will soon be the new epicentre of the pandemic. The virus is expected to affect millions in coming months. The Johns Hopkins University tracking tool showed 181 countries and regions to be affected as of April 2, with over 3 billion people in lockdown following India's decision to enforce a three-weeks countrywide confinement on March 23rd.
https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/?utm_source=jhu_properties&utm_medium=dig_link&utm_content=ow_jhuhomepage&utm_campaign=jh20
2. Economic consequences are already staggering. Without consolidated estimates, the US Labor market provides a proxy for the toll Covid is taking. Figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics published on Apr. 2 showed that close to 10 million American workers had filed for unemployment in the last two weeks.
<https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OPA/newsreleases/ui-claims/20200551.pdf>
3. There is no evidence that heat and/or humidity affect positively or adversely the spread of the virus, and organizations should plan accordingly until further notice.
[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lannglo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(20\)30123-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lannglo/article/PIIS2214-109X(20)30123-6/fulltext)
4. Research for treatment (including palliative treatment) is ongoing with numerous trials. Research for vaccines is in full swing, with 42 candidates currently being developed, including 2 for which trial has begun.
<https://www.who.int/blueprint/priority-diseases/key-action/novel-coronavirus-landscape-ncov.pdf?ua=1>
5. Note that, even under revised and accelerated pandemic procedures for developing vaccines, successful outcomes should not be expected before 2021, and rollout procedures related to slow manufacturing should lead to a gradual rather than massive use of vaccines.
https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2005630?query=featured_coronavirus
6. Although the disease tends to focus all on one issue, it is now fairly clear that all countries are going to be affected differently and that pandemic control will be slow and unevenly distributed among countries. Further, it is already apparent that although the pandemic is global, effective strategies should be tailored to local circumstances.
[https://theconversation-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/theconversation.com/amp/why-a-one-size-fits-all-approach-to-covid-19-could-have-lethal-consequences-134252](https://theconversation.com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/theconversation.com/amp/why-a-one-size-fits-all-approach-to-covid-19-could-have-lethal-consequences-134252)
<https://set.odi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Economic-Vulnerability.pdf>
7. For organizations that work overseas, there is a strong possibility that uneven disease trajectories combined with asymmetric distribution of vaccines when available will keep affecting operations for a substantial amount of time. Restrictions on movements will be lifted on a case by case basis. The desire and need to resend expatriates to the field should be severely limited by duty of care considerations.
8. As a result, we anticipate that set-ups arising from ongoing reorganizations should last until 2022, if not longer.

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NGO and Donor Response

1. NGO response varies between medical and non-medical organizations, the former already trying to deploy staff and assets within the framework of ongoing efforts. Size and organization are presumed to be a significant marker differentiating organizations. Larger and more structured ones have already addressed staff movements and HQ reorganization, now addressing field set-ups. They should be redefining program priorities reasonably soon. Smaller organizations that didn't have existing procedures governing crisis management or business continuity may be more affected.
<https://www.devex.com/news/covid-19-reveals-weak-spots-in-ngo-contingency-planning-96814>
2. ECHO, the EU's humanitarian branch has belatedly focused on civil assistance activities, including repatriation and support to procurement and dispatch of essential medical equipment within the EU.
https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response/crisis-management-and-solidarity_en
Several contacts have however mentioned that, as of date, there was no clarity from ECHO in relation to ongoing programs and additional funding.
3. US assistance (USAID/Global Health, OFDA and BPRM, essentially) is ramping up. \$274 Mn have been made available primarily for bilateral country support and assistance to multilateral organizations (UNICEF and UHCR). The detail is available here:
<https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/fact-sheets/mar-2020-us-leading-humanitarian-and-health-assistance-response-covid-19>
4. Unconfirmed but reliable sources suggest that \$300Mn have been made available to OFDA for Covid – 19 related programming. Further, \$3Bn have been released to the World Bank. Both budget lines appear to relate to the massive \$2Trn + package recently voted.
5. That said, funding stability remains an open question. This is partly related to ongoing policy discussions within the US Government about the difficult arbitration of aid between domestic and international priorities.
<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/31/pence-task-force-coronavirus-aid-157806>
6. Devex has developed a tracking tool to monitor additional funding released to address the pandemic. Although the figures are colossal, it appears that a majority are directed domestically. The economic costs of the crisis suggest that global assistance may be further impacted in coming months as domestic concerns should remain the overarching priority of traditional major donors (EU, US and UK).
<https://www.devex.com/news/interactive-who-s-funding-the-covid-19-response-and-what-are-the-priorities-96833>
https://public.tableau.com/views/COVIDFundingvisualisation/COVID-19funding?:embed=y&:toolbar=no&:display_count=no&:showVizHome=no

“Funding stability remains an open question.”

Security

1. The security landscape remains very fluid. Daesh has issued guidance cautioning its troops while suggesting that opportunity attacks may be carried out when possible.
<http://www.aymenjawad.org/2020/03/islamic-state-editorial-on-the-coronavirus>
2. Anti-western sentiment appears to be rising in Africa but has not translated yet into major incidents.
3. Based on interviews, an ongoing INGO concern relates to the health safety of national staff, the organization of which is proving a challenge for all in terms of procurement of relevant supplies and organization, as power supply and connectivity remain largely out of reach of national staff in several countries. This slows the development of functional remote working solutions and is feared to negatively impact health outcomes for national staff.
4. Economic damage is going to increase fast and is expected to spur petty crime as well as targeted attacks on individuals and organizations perceived to be wealthy. This should be a major point of attention for organizations with international staff overseas, especially for those in individual housing units. That being said, anecdotal evidence suggests that organized crime may play an unexpectedly beneficial role in terms of epidemic control, as gangs appear to be doing in Rio de Janeiro favelas, for instance.
https://www.ft.com/content/aaef1591-2fc5-4e6f-ab84-0e83b5a146ca?segmentId=114a04fe-353d-37db-f705-204c9a0a157b&fbclid=IwAR0Yb79Gr9nK-ULLu80xDj6sCenjho7qcZkLHNRhO_gcGqK9-Uz6dhdr3fk
5. Cyber insecurity is going to be a growing concern as a majority of organizations have shifted to a variety of video conferencing tools. The most popular of such, Zoom, has seen usage grow exponentially. It appears that the underlying software is susceptible to a variety of attacks. Organizations are cautioned to ramp up their IT security apparatus and upload security patches on a regular basis.
https://objective-see.com/blog/blog_0x56.html

“Cyber insecurity is going to be a growing concern.”

OSC Response

As a result, the need for enhanced monitoring of insecurity and adequate assessment and mitigation measures remains high. To that end, building on its uniquely multidisciplinary team of consultants, OTHER SOLUTIONS is expanding its range of support solutions.

In addition to the customary range of support we offer (risk assessment and analysis, security audits), we have developed a suite of coaching and advisory solutions, designed to support you and your field teams in crisis management, business continuity, logistics and communications.

Support may range from a few days, for instance to assist in the development of continuity or crisis management plans, to a few weeks or months in order to support building staff competence in critical sectors.

We are transitioning our trainings towards web-based platforms with a focus on concrete, simple and affordable options. The first training delivery date is expected early May, although we already have the capacity to develop rough versions of web-based trainings on demand.

Lastly, we will soon issue a survey designed to better understand the variety of needs across organizations, depending on their respective specificities. The results of the survey will be shared through our weekly newsletters.

To reflect our adaptation and desire to provide you with a wider range of options, we are transitioning to a new visual identity. We trust you'll join us in judging that it reflects core values of hope, simplicity and steadfastness.

“OTHER SOLUTIONS is expanding your range of options, to include a suite of coaching and advisory solutions, with a focus on simple, concrete and affordable options.”

Feel free to contact us at contact@othersolutions.net for any further information.