Joint System-Wide Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility and Challenges During the COVID-19 Response

IASC Briefing
22 May 2020

UNHCR's experience advancing Data Responsibility

- Data Responsibility is the **safe, ethical, and effective management of data**.

- It entails a set of **principles, processes and tools** that seek to leverage data to improve people's lives in a responsible manner.

- It works to **ensure people's rights** to consent, privacy, security and ownership around the information processes of collection, analysis, storage, presentation and reuse of data while respecting the **values of transparency and openness**

- **Safe:** Reflective of data protection, data privacy and data security, data sensitivity

- **Ethical**: Ethical conduct in data activities and evidence generation is derived from humanitarian ethical principles and but also ethical issues associated with data. This is necessary both in its own right and as a significant contributor to ensuring quality and accountability in the evidence generated.

- **Effective:** Data and information management is efficient, is purpose driven, is sustainable, is usable to inform decision making, and is interoperable as appropriate.

- **UNHCR's Data Transformation Strategy**
    - Highlights importance of data protection, digital identity, data interoperability, as well as quality and availability of statistical data for coordinated assessment, response design and monitoring.
    - Elevating the importance of data within the organisation.
    - Regionalisation of data capacities while providing stronger guidance "rules of play" at the center.

- **Value of collaborative and inter-agency process to support data and information management activities for policy, framework and standards development**
    - Joint data centers: IOM, OCHA, UNHCR-WB
    - Inter-agency work on assessment, such as Grand Bargain Principles for Joint Assessments Ethos
    - PIM Initiative
    - International Standards for Statistics for Refugees and for IDPs
    - Common and Fundamental Operational Data Sets
    - Many technical working groups

- **The current pandemic highlights a number of tensions and concerns that bring the value of 'data responsibility' lens to the fore**
    - Unequal access to quality information and data (reliable, timely, relevant and accurate) for decision making
    - Public health and privacy and data protection
    - Ethical (including safe) data collection, data minimization and data reuse
    - Open information verses risks to protection and rights

centre for humdata

OCHA

Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action

The Centre's data responsibility work is focused on developing a **framework and guidelines for how OCHA manages data** in humanitarian crises.

This work also contributes to **increasing trust and cooperation** across organizations sharing data in humanitarian response.

oblo

We also work to catalyze **collective action** around data responsibility in humanitarian action.

WILTON PARK
20-22 MAY 2019 | DATA RESPONSIBILITY IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION
From Principle to Practice

OCHA | centre for humdata
THE CENTRE FOR HUMANITARIAN DATA
#DataResponsibilityWP | @humdata

oblo

Improving **data responsibility** requires individual and **collective action**.

Developing Joint System-Wide Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility

The **Sub-Group on Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action** was initiated in January 2020 under the auspices of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Results Group 1.

The Sub-Group is co-led by the **OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data**, the **International Organization for Migration** (IOM), and the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees** (UNHCR).

The primary objective of the Sub-Group is to develop **joint, system-wide guidance on data responsibility** for endorsement by the IASC. Once endorsed, this operational guidance will serve as a benchmark for key actions and accountabilities vis-a-vis data responsibility in humanitarian action.

➔ **Develop joint system-wide operational guidance on data responsibility** through a consultative process

➔ **Secure IASC endorsement** of the operational guidance

➔ **Devise a strategy for implementation** of the operational guidance following formal endorsement

➔ **Build a community of practice** around data responsibility in humanitarian action

➔ **Desk Review** of existing policies, guidance, and other relevant documents on data responsibility

➔ **Public Survey** to identify priority issues to be addressed in the operational guidance (396 responses + 78 countries)

➔ **Development and first revision of complete draft** operational guidance for review at global and field levels

REACH OF THE SURVEY

396 responses

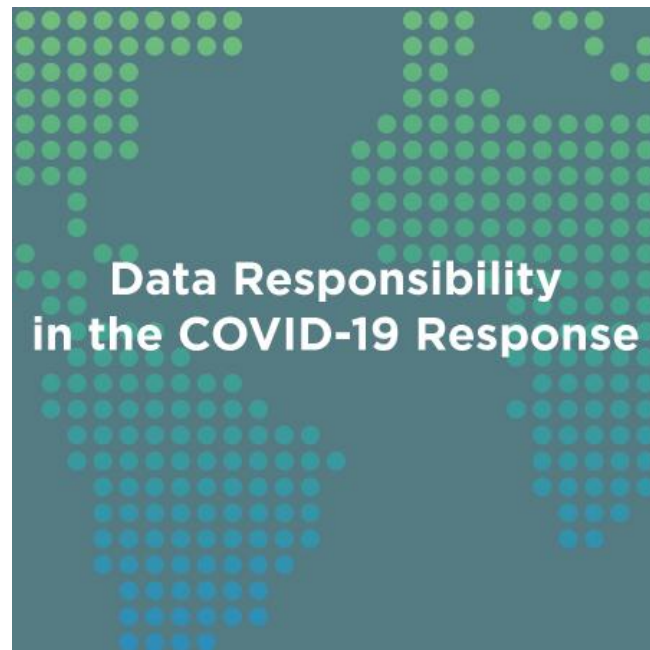**78** countries represented

45% NGO respondents, 42.5% UN, 12.5% Other

➔ Respondents identified **data confidentiality**, **data security**, and **do no harm** as the three most important principles for data responsibility in humanitarian action.

➔ Respondents selected **data protection**; **data ethics**; **assessing risks, harms, and benefits**; and **data sharing** as the most important themes that the guidance should address.

➔ The majority of respondents said that the guidance should offer recommendations for actions at both the **cluster/sector** & **organization level**.

➔ Many respondents noted the **importance of multi-stakeholder approaches** and **collective action on data responsibility**, and noted that the guidance should **complement other inter-agency initiatives** already underway.

The Sub-Group developed an **FAQ on Data Responsibility in the COVID-19 Response** to bring together existing guidance and offer practical tips for how to address common challenges and opportunities related to data management in the response.

Available here:

https://data.humdata.org/faq-data-responsibility-covid-19

Data Responsibility
in the COVID-19 Response

oblo

IOM's experience advancing Data Responsibility
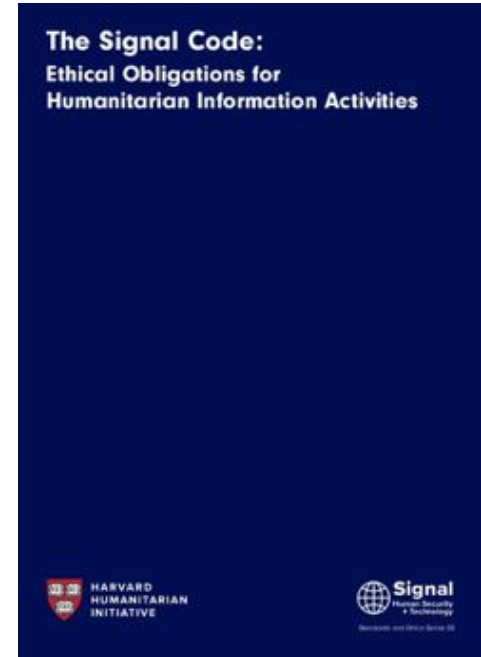
IOM has always had a culture of the **practical** and **principled** approach towards data responsibility considering its operational focus.

IOM has developed a number of guidance and policies (**Data Protection Manual**, **Migration Data Governance Policy**, **Reporting Standards** and **Framework for the Ethical use of Advanced Data Science Methods** etc**)** allowing for the continued accountability, transparency and efficiency regarding migration and displacement data usage, handling and sharing.

- 2014 saw advocacy for the sector wide principle-based standards on data ethics

- Collaboration with **UNHCR** and a range of other actors in the ***Protection Information Management initiative***

- Development of *Ethical Obligations for Humanitarian Information Activities* by **Harvard Humanitarian Initiative** with support from IOM

The Signal Code:
Ethical Obligations for
Humanitarian Information Activities

HARVARD
HUMANITARIAN
INITIATIVE

Signal
Human Security
+ Technology

➔ Data responsibility is **multi-faceted and not exclusive to one area** (ICT, Legal, HR, Programmes, etc.)

➔ **A collaborative** approach to principles and guidance is critical for all layers of the organisation and the system

➔ Given the architecture of the system, it is critical that we have both our own **organizational policies and collective guidance**, developed through a **coordinated process**

Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action