Key Messages on Information Management in UNHCR

Definition: “Information/Data Management is the capture, handling, storage, analysis and dissemination of data pertaining specifically to operations and the populations of concern, including demographic and statistical information. It involves information on needs and conditions, geo-referenced information, and information related to protection and sector-specific concerns related to needs, delivery and impact in health, nutrition, water/sanitation, core relief items, shelter and education.” (UNHCR, Information and Data Management Strategy Paper 2012-2014)

Use information and data to enable targeting of resources and evidence-based decision making, ultimately speeding up response time and saving lives.

Principles that guide UNHCR’s Information Management (IM) approach

- IM is a core responsibility of UNHCR, and improvements in this area have a direct impact on the quality and efficiency of our operations. The Information Management Officer’s (IMO) role is not to undertake IM for every position within UNHCR, but to empower colleagues throughout the office to undertake IM within their specific roles; it is up to the Representative to decide on responsibilities and reporting lines. IMOs are client-oriented and support data and information processes, standards and systems across the entire operation - sit with them to discuss your specific work and initiatives.

- Accessibility: Open your data – Sharing information is powerful, share it to empower

UNHCR has a responsibility to share humanitarian information and data with all humanitarian actors by applying easy-to-use formats and by translating information into common or local languages. Humanitarian information and data, once cleared from an operational and protection perspective, should be made widely available through a variety of online and offline distribution channels including the media. IM is not only a function UNHCR requires for its internal needs, but is also a service we provide to fulfil the needs of partners.

- Relevance: Collect only what you need and use what you have

Information should be practical, flexible, responsive, and driven by operational needs in support of decision-making throughout all phases of a crisis. Data that is not relevant should not be collected, i.e. an operation should only collect information they use, and use information they collect.

- Timeliness: Data and Information have “expiration dates”

Humanitarian information should be collected, analyzed and disseminated efficiently, and must be kept up to date.

- Reliability: Reliability is based on confidence in sound IM processes and standards – work with IMOs early in initiatives to build data processes and systems

Data is only credible when presented alongside its collection method and source. Collection methods should adhere to global standards where they exist to support and reinforce credibility. Reliability is a pre-requisite for ensuring validity and verifiability.

- Humanity: “Do no harm”

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1 The following five principles are an adapted sub-set of the principles selected by the international humanitarian community at the “Global Symposium +5” on interagency humanitarian information management (22-26 October 2007, Geneva)
Information should never be used to distort, to mislead or to cause harm to affected or at risk populations and should respect the dignity and confidentiality of the population of concern.

**Do you have questions? Here is where you can find answers and assistance**

- **UNHCR** has a dedicated unit, the Field Information Coordination and Support Section, (FICSS) which provides IM support on a wide range of questions for all UNHCR operations and deploys technical staff for short term missions where needed (contact: hqim@unhcr.org). For specific regions, Regional IMOs are the first line of support to countries covered. Many country offices have one or more IMO which are direct support to country operations.

- The **Emergency Information Management Toolkit** is a collection of step-by-step tools, guidance, examples and supporting links and establishes UNHCR’s internal information and data management roles and responsibilities during the first phase of a refugee emergency ([http://data.unhcr.org/imtoolkit](http://data.unhcr.org/imtoolkit))

- The **Global Protection Cluster** offers a dedicated Information Management Capacity for all protection related questions on IM (needs assessments, monitoring) on [www.globalprotectioncluster.org](http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org); or write to: helpdesk@globalprotectioncluster.org)

- The **Global Shelter Cluster** provides remote Information Management support ([hqshelter@unhcr.org](mailto:hqshelter@unhcr.org)) and information on shelter cluster IM tools and guidance can be found at [www.sheltercluster.org](http://www.sheltercluster.org).

- The **Global CCCM Cluster** offers a wide range of tools on their website ([www.globalcccmcluster.org](http://www.globalcccmcluster.org))

- In many **Refugee Emergency Situations** UNHCR provides an online Inter-agency platform for consolidating and sharing data and information called the Portal ([http://data.unhcr.org/](http://data.unhcr.org/)). For **IDP Situations** a similar site is provided by OCHA called Humanitarian Response ([https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/))

- **Population Reference Data** from UNHCR can be found at [http://popstats.unhcr.org/](http://popstats.unhcr.org/)