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| Information Management Strategy 2015  Ukraine – 20 December 2014 |  |

Overview

Information management (IM) is a critical component of an OCHA offices. A clear and simple IM strategy can help the OCHA head of office focus the efforts of their IM unit in order to maximize the impacts of the unit’s work. If there is no clear IM strategy in place information management officers (IMO) are often pulled into ad-hoc tasks, unable to focus on the core products and process that have the greatest overall benefit to the OCHA office and the wider humanitarian community.

The IM unit of an OCHA office should not be seen as a separate entity but integrated into the core functions of the office. The IMU will need to work closely with all other OCHA units and the field offices both requesting critical data and providing coordination products.

For example a field office may provide access data or contact information for actors in their area and the IMU will provide an access graphic, training on uploading documents to the website and reference maps for the field office to distribute.

The IMU and coordination management unit (CMU) will need to work especially closely to ensure that clusters/sectors are providing inputs on time and in the correct format to inform the humanitarian program cycle and other core OCHA products. The CMU can identify clusters/sectors that might need more IM strategic support or guidance so that they can provide inputs to OCHA more accurately and on time.

Objectives and strategy of the Ukraine IMU

The primary goal of the OCHA Information Management Unit (IMU) for Ukraine should be to enhanced inter-sector and intra-sector coordination as well as effective operational and strategic decision-making. This is accomplished, through standardized and predictable data collection, processing and analysis, information sharing, the support of sectors in their IM activities, and the monitoring and sharing of good information management practices.

The objectives and strategy of the IMU should be influenced by the overall strategic objectives of the humanitarian response but core OCHA products and processes should be maintained. The core OCHA IM tasks normally include:

Information sharing with the sectors/clusters (once established):

* Once the clusters are established, an Information Management Working Group (IMWG) should be formed and meet monthly to ensure all IM actors are maximizing their efforts and efficiently sharing data. Centralizes data and information on the Ukraine humanitarian response web platform (https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/Ukraine). OCHA and sectors/clusters will be responsible for uploading data to the site;
* Define a common data and information storage system (dropbox could continue to be used for the short term);
* Disseminates all the relevant IM Products (maps, reports, infographics, etc.) to the humanitarian community.

Inter-sector data collection, processing and analysis:

* Ensure the best available common and fundamental operational datasets are uploaded to the registry on the Ukraine Humanitarian Response website (<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/Ukraine>) or to the HDX site to facilitate sharing of all data with humanitarian actors;
* Coordinates IM activities and standardizes the IM workflow between sectors through the IM Working Group;
* If none exists, provides sectors with standards and templates that support data inter-operability;
* Provides standardized cross-sector needs/gaps analysis visuals based on the information provided by sectors/sectors;
* Supports OCHA’s reporting and advocacy work with the creation of visuals for its reporting and communication products.

Support of sectors/clusters in their IM activities:

* Participates in and provides IM expertise to all technical working groups / task forces in country;
* Supports sectors in their IM activities through the IMWG;
* Supports sectors in the identification of monitoring indicators;
* Develop complementary IM tools with sectors where possible to avoid duplication of efforts;

OCHA office support:

* File Management for the OCHA office (currently using Owncloud)
* Provide IT support if needed (ideally this is provided by UNDP or a dedicated IT professional)

Manages/supports the humanitarian situation monitoring (HSM) activities

* Management of NGO collecting the data
* Analysis of HSM data
* Production of reports
* Sharing of data in agreed forum/website
* Working with clusters and agencies to analyze HSM data

Current information management capacity

The information management unit (IMU) work plan will need to be modified based on the size of the IMU. There can be a reduction in the frequency of tasks or products and some tasks or products should be postponed until more assistance arrives. It is unrealistic to expect that a small team IMOs can produce the same number of products with high frequency as a larger office of specialized IMOs. Often quality is sacrificed to meet the demand. The focus of the unit should be on collecting the best data possible so that the highest quality information products can be produced even if that means that they will not be able to be produced as frequently. Close coordination with the OCHA Head of Office will help set realistic demands and focus the priorities of the unit.

For 2015 the Ukraine IMU will have a core capacity of one P3, one NOA and one G6. Ideally this will be supplemented with one P3 standby partner to assist with general IM support and one international intern to work on an IM specific project. The possibility of adding an assessment expert standby partner (P3) to run the humanitarian situation monitoring (HSM) should also be explored

An IM team with four or five staff will require more management time from the head of the unit. A unit work plan needs to be developed, individual team member workplans discussed and approved in the spring with a mid-year review in September and an end of year review at the end of the contract or in March. In addition when new staff are hired that have no IM or humanitarian experience it can initially slow down the unit while the new team member is trained. Time spent in training new national officers needs to be included into the work plan of the unit.

Needed IM skills

Ideally the skills and expertise of the team is tied into the products and processes that the unit is producing or supporting. Products and process are discussed later in this document. Based on current priorities the unit will need to have staff skilled in the production of core products, general IM coordination skills, humanitarian program cycle (needs analysis, indicator selection and monitoring), general database skills, and with the addition of the humanitarian situation monitoring (HSM) assessment skills.

Based on the type of processes and products that the IMU will need to produce it is suggest that the following skills are needed on the IM team:

In general if the IMU staff have a combination of these skills they should be able to take on almost any task required. Training for professional and national staff is available however it is limited thus local and/or on-line opportunities should be explored. OCHA will be running general IMO training which could be an excellent opportunity for new national staff to get advance their on-the-job IM skills and get up to speed with the most recent advancements in IM.

Information management unit core functions

Although the work plan might evolve throughout the year it is critical that core IM functions are performed on a regular basis.

IM working group (IMWG) and IM collaboration tools

The IMWG should meet monthly once the clusters are established and cluster IMs arrive. The IMWG should:

* Establish data standards including common codes, spelling of cities, oblasts and raions.
* Ensure Common Operational Datasets are agreed upon and upload to the COD registry. These operational datasets should be reviewed once a year and updated accordingly.
* Discusses information needs and gaps of the humanitarian community, and ways to improve the overall information management process (data collection, consolidation, analysis, storage, and dissemination);
* Allows the sharing of information between clusters, using standard tools and practices.
* Supports the government’s efforts to coordinate and harmonize IM activities of all humanitarian partners.
* Discuss and develop response monitoring system in close consultation with clusters.

Other collaboration and tools

* + It is suggested that OCHA establish a Ukraine IMO skype group for all IMs responding to the emergency in an informal and secure setting. Membership would be open to all cluster IMs, OCHA IMs, Assessment officers and any others that are working directly with data or information. An added benefit to this is that it can help to build a “community” atmosphere with the IMOs.
  + Establish a free Dropbox account and invite all sector IMs. Careful structuring should be used to ensure that sectors knew where they can place and/or edit data.
  + Assessment Registry on HR.info should be used as soon as possible to capture all of the assessments that have been or will be conducted.
  + HR.info platform: this platform should be encouraged by all clusters and OCHA. FIS Geneva can provide remote training if needed.
  + Develop and maintain a contact list for humanitarian actors at national and sub national level

Support for situation reports, snapshots, 3W and timelines

The IMU will need to provide support for situation reports (SitReps) and snapshots. The time line for these products should be establish early so that products become predictable for OCHA management partners and clients and to reduce the ad-hoc request which can pull an IMU (and OCHA office) away from agreed upon priorities. By using this approach, sectors/cluster can have the space to do their work between reporting periods allowing them to be predictable with their sector/cluster members (as they define a reporting cycle for their members). Having predictable products will allow for HQ and management’s to know when products will be available.

**Suggested reporting timeline**

Due to the limited resources of the IMU it is suggested that displacement graphics are done once a week as data becomes available from the government. Snapshots should be done no more than once every two weeks and ideally once a month. SitReps are currently produced once every two weeks but hopefully this will soon move to a monthly humanitarian bulletin.

Once the reporting timeline is established the sectors/cluster need to be informed as they are a critical source of data both for the SitReps and 3W infographics. For example they should know that once every two weeks their inputs to the SitRep will be required on a Wednesday so that OCHA can prepare the SitRep for Friday distribution. A predictable OCHA schedule will help the sectors/clusters collect data from their partners in time to submit their data to feed the products.

**Week 2**

**Week 3**

**Week 4**

**Week 1**

IMWG

Meeting

SitRep



SitRep



3W Infographic



Displacement

Infographic



Displacement

Infographic



Displacement

Infographic



Displacement

Infographic



It should be noted that sectors/clusters are responsible for collection of 3W, indicator reporting and general reporting to OCHA and it is OCHA’s responsibility for consolidating the data from the sectors/clusters and preparing consolidated products. As OCHA field offices are established it should be clearly explained to all NGOs that they must report to the appropriate sector/cluster and OCHA should not accept data outside of the sector/cluster.

Support to humanitarian program cycle (HPC)

Although the HPC products are only produced once a year they are time and labor intensive. Ideally the entire OCHA team is involved in the HPC throughout the year. The IMU plays a critical role in the entire cycle but especially in the humanitarian needs overview (HNO) and the quarterly monitoring reports. The specific support includes:

* Work with clusters to help monitor indicators against strategic response plan (SRP) objectives.
* Review sector indicators to help in the development of SMART Indicators (<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/applications/ir>)
* Work with the sectors/clusters on the collection of needs assessment data.
* Prepare all maps and graphics for the final documents.
* Support in the tracking of response activities and monitoring of indicators

Mapping and geographic information system (GIS)

With few IMOs in country there is currently high demand for sector specific GIS support. Development of simple base maps in PowerPoint and in .pdf format could help to ease the requests from the sectors/clusters. Given the high workload of the IMU it is suggested that cluster/sector mapping support be only in the form of providing good reference maps and sharing operational based data with all sector/cluster partners.

Data and product sharing platforms

The IMU has to ensure that all partners are properly using the information sharing web platform -humanitarian response Ukraine (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/ukraine>) to share, store and retrieve all relevant documents on the humanitarian situation – i.e. reports, assessments, evaluations, maps, contact details, etc. All final reports should also be uploaded to Reliefweb (<http://reliefweb.int/country/ukr>). Using humanitarian data exchange (HDX) (<https://data.hdx.rwlabs.org/>) as a means to share and visualize data should also be explored. HDX is still in the early stages of development but should become the primary data sharing platform for OCHA in 2015.

File management

The IM Unit needs to establish a data sharing and back-up system for all OCHA staff. Currently Owncloud is being used and should continue into 2015. IMU will need to train all new OCHA field staff on the use of the tool.

Humanitarian situation monitoring (HSM)

The IMU has been pulled into the oversight of the NGO conducting the HSM and will soon have to take on the full responsibility for reporting. This is not a simple task and although there has been excellent support from the assessment experts in Geneva all work will need to be conducted by the OCHA office in 2015.

If that work is to be done by the IMU there will need to be some careful prioritization so that the IMU can complete all required OCHA products, support the clusters and provided management for the HDM. Since the current funding for the HSM will expire at the end of March 2015 all plans options are until that time. Ideally the HSM continues throughout 2015 and in March a plan for the year will need to be identified.

Option 1: An assessment expert is brought in as a Standby Partner for 3 months

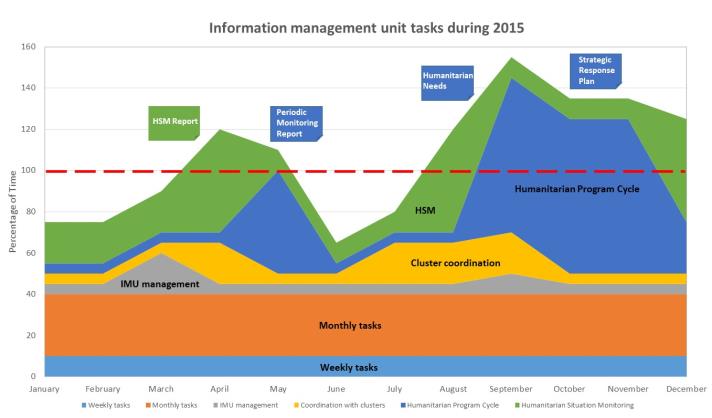
With a dedicated assessment expert to manage the HSM there will be adequate resources to produce detailed monthly reports and work with the clusters/sectors on sectorial analysis. An on-line dashboard could be developed and detail maps and tables could be produced along with broader analysis.

Option 2: IMU will continue to manage the HSM

If the IMU continues to manage the HSM it is recommend that the assessment continue to be collected monthly but the raw data only will be shared with the clusters/sectors at the end of each round. The next detailed report would be produced in April so that it can provided humanitarian situation overview for the quarterly monitoring report. There will be limited to no opportunity to provide support to clusters/sectors for sectorial analysis.

Yearly work cycle

The IMU has a high number of products and process that it must attend to throughout the year. In March end of year reviews are due for all staff and individual work plans for 2015 must be finalized. In April the humanitarian situation monitoring (HSM) report will be due and it will feed into the quarterly monitoring report of the strategic response plan (SRP). By August all clusters should be working on finalizing any assessment work that can feed into the humanitarian needs overview (HNO) which should be finalized by October. The HNO will feed the SRP work in October and November.

Throughout the year the IMU will need to continue to produce the weekly displacement graphics, contact lists, meeting schedules and upload documents to humanitarian response website. Monthly the IMU will be working on displacement infographics, SitReps, and 3W reports. Cluster coordination is also a regular task with monthly meeting and additional support in the weeks before and during the production of the HNO, SRP and periodic monitoring reports.

Knowing that during certain months of the year the IMU will be working beyond normal capacity should help guide the focus and expectations of the unit. For example an ad-hoc request in October will most likely not be possible but such a request in February or June might work. This cycle can also help staff plan yearly leaves.

Relationship with the strategic response plan (SRP)

The key humanitarian issues as outlined in the SRP include; 1) winter emergency shelter & NFIs, 2) protection of affected, 3) ongoing insecurity, 4) humanitarian access and 5) continued displacement. Thus the focus of the OCHA information management unit needs to be on these issues while maintaining the core OCHA products and services. The imminent activation of the cluster should bring in more information management officers but will also add additional tasks to the IMU such as regular Information Management Working Group Meetings, alignment of cluster reporting and possibly training. The coordination objectives outlined in the SRP include:

* Coordinate joint assessments, strategic planning and monitoring
* Information products: sitreps, 3W, contact lists, meeting schedules, needs assessment registry.

Recommendations for 2015

* Start an information management working group that meets monthly
* Refocus IMU to predictable products – reduce number of ad-hoc requests
* Promote a client focused approach to IM – active outreach to the clusters.
* IMU should start to spend more time with sector/cluster IMs since they are one of the key sources of data
* IMU staff should attend the cluster/sector coordination meetings and provide updates from the IMWG and other IM related issues.
* Provide on-the-job training for the new staff (allowing them the necessary time to take on core products)
* Send NOB to IMO training in the spring
* Work to integrate the IMU into the rest of the office
* IMU should print out products and ensure they are given to sectors/clusters and to all OCHA staff (especially the new field offices)
* Determine HSM reporting cycle (recommend quarterly detailed reports), staff resources, and the future of the HSM (does it continue after March 2015)

**Information Management Working Group**

**Terms of Reference**

**Date**

Context

The overall objective of the Information Management Working Group will be to build upon existing relevant information systems that are currently in place in the Ukraine and provide support to the Humanitarian Coordinator in coordinating and harmonizing information management activities of all humanitarian players.

Information Management (IM) tools are increasingly used including databases of varying complexity, geographic information systems (GIS) and other tools by the humanitarian actors and government agencies. In order to facilitate the sharing of these assets amongst the various agencies and to improve inter-sector analysis, there is a need for a coordinated approach in the development and use of IM technologies. It is also equally critical that a core set of agreed upon standards is in place.

Purpose

The purpose of the IM Working Group would be to contribute to IASC Country team and Clusters efforts in the use of humanitarian information for more evidence based and effective development and humanitarian policy, planning and managerial decisions. The IM Working Group is open to receive guidance and requests from bodies such as the Cluster Coordination Team and the IASC Country Team. The objectives of the task force will include:

* Encouraging collaboration between IM actors in the collection and storage of data, usage of software and sharing of expertise in order to streamline IM activities
* Promoting consensus on minimum standards for IM activities, chiefly; Definitions of indicators, common language, consistent use of names administrative units, common datasets, etc.
* Agreeing on use of common tools, and where this may not be possible, data format and structure standards will be agreed upon to facilitate interoperability.
* Coordinating data collection efforts to ensure harmonization of data standards and to avoid duplication and over-assessment by multiple agencies.
* Facilitating sharing of results and collected data between agencies and clusters.
* Create a broad picture of IM activities through use of integrated work plans and coordination mechanisms
* Building capacity/training related to common goals and developed work plans.

Structure

The IM Working Group would be convened within the context of the country Humanitarian Coordination mechanism. The Working Group will meet formally on a monthly basis, but ad hoc meetings will be organized in between as and when required. In the early response phase, meetings take place more frequent responding to needs.

The convening agency could rotate and OCHA will initially perform as secretariat. *Ideally, the task force would be co-convened together with a relevant government counterpart.*

Participation

Participants in the IM Working Group would be technical representatives from the clusters, Government agencies, UN, bilateral and civil society organizations who are dedicated to working collaboratively in the area of Information Management.

Expected Results and Outputs

The task force will contribute to ensure that consistent and reliable Humanitarian Information is made available to all concerned policy makers, managers and planners. Information products will be updated on a periodic basis as deemed appropriate. Expected outputs and results include:

* Regular coordination meetings and dissemination of the summary records of those meetings
* Established data sharing mechanism
* A common set of data standards
* Collaborative effort to define terms and numbers for common use of the Humanitarian community.

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| **Information Managers Skype Group Guidance**  Template |  |

Background / Objectives

In order to help with the informal exchange of information among information managers working in the Ukraine a skype group was set up in {*month, year*} after discussion in the monthly information management working group (IMWG). The IMWG decided that the objectives of the IM skype group are:

* To create a community atmosphere among IMs working in *country*;
* To provide a forum for IMs to ask questions or request informal assistance from other IMs working in *country*;
* To provide a venue for new IMs to connect to their counterparts in the agencies, clusters, NGOs or those working in other locations in *country*.

The IM skype group is not a forum to determine or discuss policy but rather a means for informal information sharing and technical discussions among IM colleagues.

Group Membership

The group is managed by OCHA IMOs in *country* who are also responsible for the informal moderation of the group. Membership in the IM Skype group, as determined by the IMWG members and should include:

* IMs based in *Country* that are working on the emergency response;
* IMs temporarily based in *Country* on surge or on short term mission that are working on the emergency response; or
* If sponsored by an IM working in *Country*, IMs based outside of *Country* can join and participate in the group for a limited time and only if they are providing technical support to a cluster, agencies or other IM colleagues in *Country*.

Once a participant leaves the country they should be removed from the group unless they are going to continue to directly support their IM colleagues in *Country*.

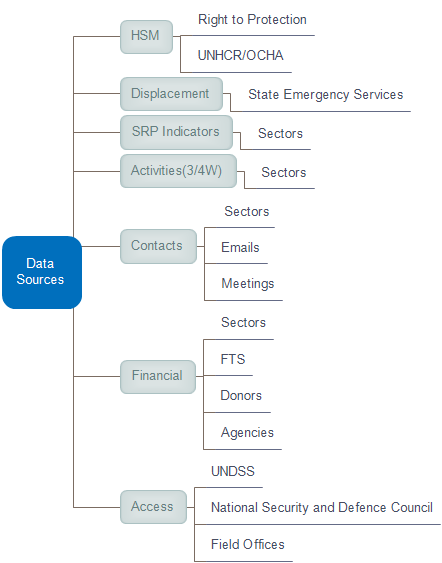
Additional Information

* Participation in the Skype group is voluntary and participants are free to leave whenever they desire or when they leave the country.

Interaction / Moderation

* All new participants must be sponsored by an existing participant and should be introduced to the group by the person who adds them. This introduction includes their name [as Skype ID are commonly not intuitive], their organization and their role in the response.
* Once a new member joins they should add their first and last name along with their organization.
* All messages should begin with @skypeid/name if the message is being addressed to someone specific. @all can be used to address to the entire group.
* The Skype group is an informal platform so there needs to be room for people to be ‘informal’. Participants need to be allowed to raise non-topic issues, add emoticons, and have fun. However, the moderator must ensure that the conversation does not stray too far from the overall group topic or cause too much ‘noise’ for a majority of the participants.
* Although an informal platform, participants must understand that their comments are being seen by many in various organizations so comments should remain polite and on topic.

Additional Graphics

Primary Data Sources for Products and Reports

