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| Information Management Strategy 2015Nigeria – March 2015 |  |

Overview

Information management (IM) is a critical component of any OCHA office. A clear and simple IM strategy can help the OCHA head of office (HoO) focus the efforts of their information management unit (IMU) in order to maximize the impacts of the unit’s work. If there is no clear IM strategy in place information management officers are often pulled into endless 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.

Information management should not be seen only as the responsibility of the IMU but the responsibility of the entire OCHA office. The IMU is the leader of the process but contributions from all OCHA staff are critical to success. The Nigeria IMU should not be seen as a separate, stand-alone entity but integrated into the core functions of the office. The IMU will need to work closely with all other sections and especially the field offices in the collection of data, analysis of the information and production and dissemination of key coordination products.

Information Management Officers (IMO) and Humanitarian Affairs Officers (HAO) will need to work especially closely to ensure that sectors are providing inputs on time and in the correct format to inform the humanitarian program cycle and other core OCHA products. Clear predictable inflow of data and information will allow both the IMO and the reports and public information officers to produce high quality and informative products.

Goals of an OCHA IMU

The primary goal of an OCHA Information Management Unit (IMU) 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. Based on the IM operational guidance the core OCHA IM tasks normally include:

* Providing information products and services to the humanitarian community;
* Suggesting standards that allow for datasets and databases to be compatible in order to support inter-operability of data;
* Producing predictable standardized information products in collaboration with sectors and made available to all include:
	+ Contact directories of humanitarian partners and IM focal points;
	+ Who does What Where (3W) database and derivative products;
	+ Inventory of relevant documents on the humanitarian situation, i.e. mission reports, assessments, evaluations, etc.;
	+ Inventory of relevant common sector data sets, including population data disaggregated by age and sex;
	+ Data on the humanitarian funding requirements and contributions;
	+ A country-specific or disaster specific humanitarian web-portal;
	+ Situation Reports or Humanitarian Bulletins; and
	+ Mapping products.
* The minimum services to be provided or made available to sectors are:
	+ A space where the humanitarian community can access information resources;
	+ Maintenance of common datasets that are used by the majority of sectors;
	+ Geospatial data and analysis relevant to inter-sector decision making;
	+ Management of the collection and dissemination of all inter-sector information;
	+ Advocacy for data and information sharing within the humanitarian community as well as the adoption of global data standards;
	+ Provision of technical IM advice to sectors on survey design for needs assessments and/or other significant external data collection exercises; and
	+ Access to schedules, agendas and minutes of sector coordination meetings.
* Provide standardized cross-sector needs/gap analysis based on information provided by the sectors.
* Establishing an Information Management Working Group in order to coordinate IM activities and support sectors in their IM activities, including the promotion of best practices.

Strong IM improves the capacity of stakeholders for analysis and decision making through strengthened collection, processing, interpretation and dissemination of information at the intra and inter-sector level. Information is in this sense the foundation on which decision-making for a coordinated and effective response is based.

Goals of the Nigeria IMU

The goals of the Nigeria IMU should mirror those of an OCHA IMU however when a new country office is established it can take time to put all the processes and tools in place. The IMU and HoO will need to meet on a regular basis to discuss priorities. In the next section is a recommend short and longer term prioritization of tasks.

The work of the Nigeria IMU can be broadly broken into the following topics:

* Information sharing
* Collection of relevant data
* Support the humanitarian program cycle (HPC)
* Provide mapping and geographic information system (GIS) support
* Support the production of products that aid coordination
* Support the OCHA office

Information sharing

Information sharing should be seen as a core component of the work of the IMU. Ensuring that all actors and decision makers have access to critical data and information is the first step to building working relationships. Tasks include:

* Along with the Government the OCHA IMU should take a leadership role in the Information Management Working Group (IMWG). The IMWG for Nigeria was established in March and the terms of reference should be finalized for the group by the end of the month. Initially the group should meet every two weeks as sector IMs start arriving in the country and then could be reduced to one a month. The draft TOR of the group is in draft format but will be shared on humanitarianresponse.info once finalize. The main goal of the IMWG is to ensure all IM actors are maximizing their efforts and efficiently sharing data. The IMWG should (in order of priority):
	+ Establish data standards including common codes, spelling of states, local government areas, wards, and cities (if possible) by the end of March.
	+ Ensure operational datasets are agreed upon and upload to HDX. 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);
	+ Support the government’s efforts to coordinate and harmonize IM activities of all humanitarian partners.
	+ Discuss and develop response monitoring system in close consultation with sectors.
	+ Start a Nigeria IMO skype group for all IMs responding to the emergency. Membership would be open to all sector 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.
* HumanitarianResponse.info forNigeria ([http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/Nigeria](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/ukraine)) should be used for the collection and dissemination of information products, meeting minutes, key documents, and other critical documents, maps and infographics. The site has an events section for meetings and an assessment registry as well as document storage functionality. OCHA and sectors will be responsible for uploading documents to the site. The IMU staff should provide training to sector IMs and OCHA staff on how to use and upload documents to the site;
* The Assessment Registry on HR.info (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/nigeria/assessments>) should be used as soon as possible to capture all of the assessments that have been or will be conducted. The IMU staff should provide training to sector IMs and OCHA staff on how to use and upload assessments to the registry;
* A common data and information storage system (such as Dropbox) should be defined by the end of March to be used by the sectors and field offices for sharing data.
* Ensure the best available common and fundamental operational datasets are uploaded to the Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) (<https://data.hdx.rwlabs.org/>) which has both a public and protected sections. The majority of data should be in the public section however the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) and the detailed 3Ws should be placed in the protected section of the site;
* Dissemination of all information products on the appropriate platform:
	+ **HumanitarianResponse.info for Nigeria** ([http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/Nigeria](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/ukraine)) is the operational website for the response. It should be use to share, store and retrieve all relevant documents on the humanitarian situation – i.e. reports, assessments, evaluations, maps, contact details, etc.
	+ **Humanitarian data exchange** (HDX) (<https://data.hdx.rwlabs.org>) should be used for storage and viewing of all datasets including 3/4/5W, needs comparison tool, Displacement Tracking Matrix, and all operational datasets.
	+ **Relief Web** (<http://reliefweb.int/country/nga>) – all final documents should be submitted by each sector or organization. OCHA should submit all final dashboards, snapshots, info-graphics, maps, etc.
	+ **Humanitarian Kiosk** (an app that can be downloaded for both apple and android products) should be used only for the most recent documents.

Collection of relevant data

The collection of data that aids in coordination is a core function of an IMU. Each crisis is unique in the availability and type of data that needs to be collected or is available. For the crisis in Nigeria several critical datasets have been identified including the displacement tracking matrix (DTM) being collected by the Government and IOM; response activities (3/4/5W); access data; and the most basic of all coordination tools the collection and sharing of contact information for humanitarian organizations delivering aid in the field and coordinating in the capital.

As the Nigeria OCHA office matures more data can be collected and analyzed however in the early months it is highly recommend to start simple, establish regular data collection mechanism and then add more indicators if absolutely necessary, keeping in mind that more data does not always aid in the coordination of the response.

The basic data that is currently being collected is contact information, operational presence 3W (who is doing what where), and simple activity based 4/5W (who is doing what where for whom and when). The IMU needs to focus on getting these information flows establish and regularized, templates developed and staff trained. The products that will be produced primarily from these basic datasets include:

* + contact lists for humanitarian actors at national and sub national level,
	+ dashboard at national and state levels,
	+ activity maps at national and state levels, and
	+ Situation reports.

To lay the foundation for the collection of crisis specific data several operational datasets are required. The operational datasets that are needed include (in order of priority):

* + State, Local Government Area (LGA), and Ward level administrative codes, spellings and geographic boundaries. Note this data should be in both MS Excel and GIS shapefiles and shared widely (hr.info, HDX, meetings, etc.). The properly coded administrative boundaries will be used in almost all data collection efforts.
		- The administrative datasets are available the IMU needs to reviewed, cleaned and presented to the IMWG for endorsement ideally no later than the end of March.
	+ Pre-crisis census data
		- Census data is available however it is old and possibly not accurate. This issue needs to be addressed in the IMWG and a consensus reached on which is the best or most accurate.
	+ IDP camp(and camp-like) locations
		- This data would be collected from the DTM and OCHA field offices.
	+ Populated places properly coded with coordinates.
		- More investigation is needed on the best available dataset. As this is a difficult dataset to get 100% correct so it is recommend that not too much time is spent on this dataset in the short term but a “good enough” dataset is identified, presented to the IMWG for endorsement.
	+ Transportation infrastructure
		- This dataset already exists, it should be quickly reviewed and presented to the IMWG for endorsement.
	+ Typography
		- This dataset is already available.
	+ Health Facilities
		- Although an important dataset the collection of information on health facilities should be the responsibility of the health sector. The collection of this dataset often takes much time and effort. It is recommended that the IMU work on the collection, analysis and dissemination of this dataset later in the year.
	+ Education Facilities
		- Although a useful dataset the collection of information on education facilities should be the responsibility of the education sector. The collection of this dataset often takes much time and effort. It is recommended that the IMU work on the collection, analysis and dissemination of this dataset later in the year.

Needs comparison tool

Just as OCHA tracks and maps operational presence and response, we need also to track humanitarian needs. This activity is commonly performed using a ‘Needs Comparison Tool’ that allows the cross comparison of basic humanitarian indicators such as IPC data, IDP figures, malnutrition rates, etc.

* + This tool enables us to track and map both geographically and sectoral priority areas for intervention, and promote a shared understanding of the humanitarian situation in affected areas at the same time.
	+ The tool ingests consolidated sectoral needs information from any reliable source – IRNAs, Sectoral assessments, SitReps, expert judgment on the ground, etc.
	+ By generating this consolidated view of needs we also find areas where there is insufficient information - and trigger assessment missions to fill these information gaps.
	+ By sharing the outputs from the Needs Comparison Tool (tables, heat maps and thematic maps) we ensure that all humanitarian actors share a basic understanding of the humanitarian situation in terms of ‘hot spots’ and gaps in information and response.
	+ These outputs are indicative and not infallible or authoritative and should serve as a starting point for structured and transparent inter-sectoral discussions on how to best address humanitarian needs in an equitable, principled and prioritized way

Provide mapping and geographic information system support

Currently there are few request from outside of OCHA for mapping support. However it is recommend that the OCHA IMU develop high quality National, State and LGA reference map. These maps can be shared with partners and will form the templates for thematic maps. It would also be useful to develop simple maps in PowerPoint that partners can use to make their own maps. Recommendations include (in order of priority):

* + State level reference maps
	+ LGA level reference maps
	+ National level reference maps
	+ National, state and LGA simple maps in PowerPoint.

Support the production of products that aid coordination

The IMU will need to provide support for situation reports (SitReps), humanitarian bulletin, dashboard 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 can have the space to do their work between reporting periods allowing them to be predictable with their sector 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

**Week 2**

**Week 3**

**Week 4**

**Week 1**

IMWG

Meeting

Humanitarian Bulletin

Dashboard & 3W Graphics

Snapshot

Needs Comparison Tool

It should be noted that sectors 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 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 and OCHA should not accept data outside of the sector.

Support the humanitarian program cycle (HPC)

The work plan of the IMU should be closely tied to the HPC. In most offices the IMU is most heavily involved in the development and analysis in the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and less involved in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) however IMs have a critical role to play in the production of each document. Due to the importance and time consuming nature of these processes the IMU needs to structure their yearly work plan carefully.

Although the HPC products are normally 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). IMU specific support could include:

* Working with the sectors on the collection of needs assessment data.
* Assisting in the analysis of response activities, needs assessments and identification of gaps.
* Working with sectors to help monitor indicators against humanitarian response plan (HRP) objectives.
* Reviewing sector indicators to help in the development of SMART Indicators (<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/applications/ir>)
* Preparing all maps and graphics for the final documents.
* Supporting in the tracking of response activities and monitoring of indicators

Support the OCHA office

* If there is no IT full time staff the IMOs will provide a basic file structure and set up a file sharing system. It is recommend for business continuity that the office should consider using an on-line file management system such as Dropbox or Egnyte. With multiple field offices and the frequency of staff travel one of these systems (or a similar one) should be considered. Staff need to be discourage from only keeping files on their computers.

Current information management capacity

The information management unit (IMU) work plan will need to be modified based on the size of the IMU. Currently there is one standby partner who will ideally be extended until the end of June. A request has also been made for an additional standby-partner that will focus on GIS activities. However by late 2015 the IMU will most probably be three staff: one P3 head of unit, one NOA working on database and GIS, and one G6 assistant that should focus on maintaining the website, collecting 3W data and contact information.

The two standby-partner IMOs should focus their work on tasks that need to be done once a year and in training the yet-to-be hired national staff. Once the unit is at its core size the HoO needs to help prioritize the tasks of the unit which could involve a reduction in the frequency of tasks or products. It is unrealistic to expect that a small team of IMOs can produce the same number of products with high frequency as a larger office of specialized IMOs, often quality is sacrificed to meet 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.

A short term (March-June) work plan has been developed. The work plan for the rest of the year should be developed in early June. The time and effort need to recruit and train national staff needs to be included in the work plan. Initially brining in new staff will slow down the unit while the new team member is trained.

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), and general database 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:

If the IMOs 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.

Nigeria Information Management Unit Plans

Due to the dynamic nature of the humanitarian response it is suggested that the IM strategy be divided into a short term and a long term plan. The short term plan will focus the efforts of the IMU on fundamental tasks that will lay the foundation for more detailed collection of information which should be able to take place later in the year. By focusing initial data collection on “simple” product such as operational presence 3W, contact lists, training sector IMs on how to upload documents to humanitarianrespons.info for Nigeria, and the critical operational datasets the IMU can then build on these foundations to collect more data and ensure data interoperability across the humanitarian response.

Short term (March-June) Tasks

Short term tasks recommend would maximize the efforts of the IMU however these tasks need to be discussed in detail with the HoO and the IMU to ensure that they align with the office strategy.

* Identify, hire and train national IM staff
* Develop detailed work plan
* Establish the IMWG
* Collect and disseminate contact information
* Collect and disseminate operational presence 3W
* Define templates for all activity data collection
* Ensure the administrative boundaries for State and Local Government Area (LGA) have accurate place codes and are used by all humanitarian actors
* Ensure that humanitarinaresponse.info for Nigeria has been tailored to fit the needs of the country office and the sectors.
* Train sector IMs, OCHA Field staff and OCHA Abuja staff to upload documents and add events to the calendar.

Long Term (July –Dec)

The points below do not include everything that needs to be accomplished by the IMU during the year (the list is quite long), it is recommended that these tasks are delayed a few months due to the time and effort required to do them correctly.

* Work with the sectors and OCHA field office to collect more detailed response activity data.
* Enhance the needs comparison tool
* Review all operational datasets with a focus on the collection of health facilities, schools, and other requested data.
* Once the HRP the best method of reporting on the HRP indicators needs to be identified. The Online Reporting System (ORS) <http://ors.ocharowca.info/>, developed by the OCHA Regional Office in Dakar, could be used.
* Review the Access database to determine if it is useful to implement in Nigeria

