

Information Management Working Group (IMWG)

Guidance on Common Operational Datasets (CODs)

in Emergency Preparedness and Response

INTRODUCTION

1. This Guidance on Common Operational Datasets in Emergency Preparedness and Response, together with an accompanying technical support package, provide a framework for national authorities, development actors, and humanitarian agencies to develop, maintain and adopt a common, shared set of operational data to support coordinated preparedness and response activities. A wide body of evidence supports the assertion that information management systems are an essential component of an effective response. Numerous challenges in information management arise when responding to a major disaster or conflict: recording the damage to housing, infrastructure and services; tracking displaced populations; distributing humanitarian supplies; and coordinating the work of numerous national and international actors. Developing and implementing a basic framework which improves the understanding, organizing and articulation of data collected before, during and after an emergency is essential to building better response capacity.

2. The 2004 UN General Assembly Resolution 59/212 calls upon States, the United Nations and other relevant actors, to assist in addressing knowledge gaps in disaster management and risk reduction by identifying ways of 'improving systems and networks for the collation, collection and analysis of information on disasters, vulnerability and risk to facilitate informed decision-making'.

3. Both the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 recognize that an information management and dissemination system that facilitates the exchange of information among stakeholders is a key component in preparedness planning. Both Frameworks also stress the importance of data collection and management throughout an emergency in order to increase financial and end-user accountability, as well as support the identification of lessons for future responses.

4. The management of Common Operational Datasets is recognised as a 'minimum preparedness action' under IASC guidance on Emergency Response Preparedness and as such is required to achieve positive outcomes in an initial emergency response phase. Pre-existing data standards, such as an agreed list of administrative divisions, enable the interchange of information and data among actors, whilst pre-existing baseline data enable rapid analysis of the severity and scope of an emergency and the estimation of initial needs and response priorities.

5. The primary audience for this guidance is IASC members who are engaged in emergency preparedness and response activities, including inter-agency contingency planning to increase their level of preparedness and enhance their ability to respond to emergencies. Resident / Humanitarian Coordinators, Humanitarian Country Teams, UN Agencies, Cluster Leads, International Organizations, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and national societies, and Non-Governmental Organizations, will work collaboratively to collate, collect, maintain, use and share Common Operational Datasets within their country or region.

6. This guidance recognizes the primary role of the State affected by disasters to organize, coordinate and implement humanitarian assistance within its territory and to be the primary source of operational data to support coordinated preparedness and response activities. To this effect, this guidance aims to ensure that Common Operational Datasets are developed, maintained and shared in collaboration with the mandated national agencies as a way to support national information systems and standards, build local capacities and maintain appropriate links with relevant Government, State and local authorities.

7. This guidance supersedes the 'IASC Guidelines: Common Operational Datasets (CODs) in Disaster Preparedness and Response' endorsed by the IASC Working Group on 1 November 2010.

8. An associated 'Technical Support Package: Common Operational Datasets' forms an annex to this guidance and provides detailed technical guidance on these data. It will be updated on a regular basis to reflect evolving needs, technology and practice.

DEFINITIONS

Common Operational Dataset (COD)

9. Common Operational Datasets (CODs) are authoritative reference datasets needed to support operations and decision-making for all actors in a humanitarian response. CODs are 'best available' datasets that ensure consistency and simplify the management of key data.

10. Core CODs are required in all disaster-prone countries as a preparedness measure, including administrative boundaries and sex and age disaggregated population data (SADD), and in all countries with ongoing humanitarian operations, such as data on humanitarian population figures. Other Common Operational Datasets (CODs) are defined at a country-level based on local hazards and operational requirements. Examples include key infrastructures that could be impacted or used during relief operations such as schools, health facilities and refugee camps; or topographical data such as rivers, land cover and elevation. The technical support package that accompanies this guidance provides recommended CODs for each disaster type as well as detailed technical information on each dataset to help ensure they meet minimum standards for quality and accuracy.

Information Management Network (IM Network)

11. An Information Management Network (IM Network) is a country-level, inter-agency working group under the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) that coordinates and harmonizes the information management activities of all humanitarian partners, including efforts to develop and maintain core and Country-specific Common Operational Datasets.

GOVERNANCE

12. The Global Information Management Working Group (IMWG) is responsible for maintaining guidance on Common Operational Datasets.

13. OCHA provides global oversight of two core Common Operational Datasets - administrative boundaries and sex- and age-disaggregated population data - and is responsible for making them available through a public platform or service. OCHA will ensure these data are maintained for countries that are risk-prone or have ongoing humanitarian operations.

14. National authorities are the primary source of most Common Operational Datasets (CODs), including administrative boundaries and population data. Whenever possible, CODs will reflect available national datasets and data standards.

15. At country-level, the Resident / Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) has overall responsibility for ensuring that Common Operational Datasets (CODs) are maintained according to this guidance and the accompanying technical support package, including final endorsement of CODs.

16. UN Country Teams (UNCT), Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT) and Inter-Cluster Coordination Groups (ICCG) or their equivalent bodies will ensure that member organisations provide necessary resources and support towards the management of Common Operational Datasets.

17. At country-level, the Information Management Network (IM Network) or equivalent body is responsible for working with the relevant governmental entities to define and endorse Common Operational Datasets.

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