



Wilton Park

Concept Note

Responsible Data Sharing with Donors: Accountability, Transparency and Data Protection in Principled Humanitarian Action

Thursday 17 & Friday 18 September 2020 | WP1777V1

Part I: Virtual dialogue

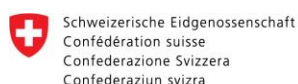
Summary

Humanitarian organisations are facing increased incentives to collect and share data for various purposes such as improved coordination, more efficient service provision and accountability. At the same time, they have to ensure that data is only used for humanitarian purposes and does not cause harm to vulnerable populations. These ambitions often lead to contradictory practices: sharing more disaggregated data while also increasing efforts to anonymise and otherwise protect data.

This dilemma is particularly relevant in the ongoing dialogue between donors and humanitarian organisations vis-a-vis data sharing in principled humanitarian action. Donors' interest in more detailed and interoperable data has only increased in recent years, largely in the interest of increased accountability and transparency. Although the issue has been addressed in multiple forums and in bilateral dialogues, stakeholders have not yet reached a common understanding on best practices for responsible data sharing between humanitarian organisations and donors.

Within the *Humanitarian Data and Trust Initiative* launched by the Government of Switzerland, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) Centre for Humanitarian Data, this Wilton Park Dialogue offers a platform to address the issue and an opportunity to shape commonly agreed principles for data sharing in the context of humanitarian reporting.

In partnership with:



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA



ICRC



OCHA

Objective

The dialogue aims to establish a common understanding of different stakeholders' objectives and constraints vis-a-vis data sharing, with a view to agreeing on shared guidelines or principles for data sharing between humanitarian organisations and donors.

Method and Deliverables

The dialogue is a conversation in a neutral environment between humanitarian actors and donors that aims to clarify two elements:

- I. The **specific purposes for increased requests for disaggregated data** by donors. These include accountability, coordination, partnership, and transparency, and can lead to diverse requirements that are not always commonly understood by stakeholders.
- II. The **specific risks associated with such data sharing** in humanitarian operations. These include potential violations of privacy and other fundamental human rights, increased vulnerability and fragility of populations, and targeting of individuals or groups with violence or other forms of harm, among others.

The dialogue will inform the drafting of commonly agreed principles or guidelines related to the responsible sharing of data with donors that will be presented, *inter alia*, at the UN World Data Forum in October 2021. These principles or guidelines will complement existing guidance and contribute to further collective action in this area.

Format and Timeline

The Wilton Park dialogue will be held in two parts, within a series of events hosted through the Humanitarian Data and Trust Initiative in 2020 and 2021 (pictured below).

- **Part I: Virtual dialogue** -- two, 2-hour virtual meetings, **17 & 18 September 2020**
- **Part II: Wilton Park dialogue** -- 3-day in-person meeting, **7-9 April 2021 (tbc)**



Context and Key Policy Issues

The Swiss Government, the ICRC, and the OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data ('the Centre') launched the *Humanitarian Data and Trust Initiative* (HDTI) in April 2020.

The HDTI is a multi-stakeholder initiative designed to promote the protection and responsible use of humanitarian data. Through its three pillars ("Policy & Dialogue", "Research & Development", and "Education & Outreach"), it aims to connect technological expertise with policy research and catalyse collective action on data responsibility.

This Wilton Park Dialogue represents an important building block for the HDTI. It aims to take stock of existing processes and practices related to data protection and data responsibility in humanitarian action, and to develop commonly agreed principles or guidelines for data sharing between humanitarian organisations and donors.

The dialogue will build on recent convenings and ongoing discussions:

- The Wilton Park dialogues: [Data responsibility in humanitarian action: from principle to practice](#) (organised in association with the Centre) and [Digital Dignity in armed conflict: a roadmap for principled humanitarian action in the age of digital transformation](#) (organised in association with the ICRC, Norway, and Switzerland). Both highlighted the importance of developing a dialogue on data responsibility between donors and humanitarian organisations.
- Within the Grand Bargain Risk Sharing Initiative, the ICRC is working closely with the Kingdom of the Netherlands to foster in-depth conversations about risk and risk sharing among humanitarian actors. Without such dialogues, greater efficiency of the humanitarian sector cannot be fully achieved.
- The Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative, co-chaired by Switzerland and EU/ECHO.

The dialogue will also feed into the UN [World Data Forum](#) that will take place in Bern in October 2021.

Within the ICRC, this is a significant step toward the ICRC's strategic orientation to embrace digital transformation and to establish relevant mechanisms to disaggregate the data it collects about populations in line with the principle of "do no harm" and pursuant to its obligations as a trusted manager of personal data. Similarly, this work contributes directly to the Centre's strategic objective of increasing the trust and cooperation across organisations sharing data in humanitarian response.

About Wilton Park

Wilton Park, an executive agency of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, is a global forum for strategic discussion organising over 60 events a year in the UK and overseas, bringing together leading representatives from the worlds of politics, business, academia, diplomacy, civil society and media. We focus on issues of international security, prosperity and justice. Our meetings provide a neutral environment for round-table discussion encouraging innovation in global thinking. Discussions are non-attributable to encourage frank exchanges and open and lively debate.

Discussion in all Wilton Park sessions is 'off the record' and no individual speaker or participant should be quoted (nor their identity or institutional affiliation revealed) without that individual's express permission. The protocol also applies to all uses of digital and social media, both before, during and after the event.

Our communications team will develop a communications strategy, in collaboration with the partners, to promote the themes of the event and maximise outcomes.

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