



Data responsibility in humanitarian action: from principle to practice

Monday 20 – Wednesday 22 May 2019 | WP1688

Overview

Humanitarian organisations are collecting and sharing more data than ever before. This trend will continue as more systems, sensors and people come online in crisis settings. How the humanitarian community handles the data revolution to inform decisions and improve lives will be a key determinant of its future effectiveness.

As part of its efforts to build data responsibility into the daily practices of humanitarian organisations, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Centre for Humanitarian Data, in collaboration with Wilton Park, is convening an event in May 2019 to advance discussions around the responsible and safe sharing of data about crisis-affected people.

The meeting will explore key questions in relation to responsible data use in crisis response. In particular, participants will consider issues with regard to the technological, policy, and procedural requirements for responsible data management and, relatedly, the mitigation of digital risk and management of critical incidents.

Format and objectives

The 48 hour off the record, residential meeting, to be held over 3 days/2 nights, will include roundtable discussions in plenary and smaller breakout groups.

It aims to:

- **Build** a shared understanding on good and bad practice in the management of humanitarian data;
- **Align** around a vision and requirements (operational guidance, skills, resources, etc.) for data responsibility in the humanitarian system; and
- **Agree** on collaborative mechanisms for realising data responsibility in practice

Proposed outcomes

This convening will inform a series of guidance notes and related case studies that will be produced by the Centre and its partners in 2019 and 2020. It will also assist to frame a shared agenda for action. The primary outcome of the event will be identification of the key issues for the humanitarian community to address to ensure data responsibility across the humanitarian system.

Meeting outcomes will be captured in a report summarising the discussions, conclusions, policy recommendations, and actions, which will be widely circulated to interested parties and posted on Wilton Park and other websites.

Proposed themes for discussion

Tensions and challenges in moving from principle to practice in humanitarian data responsibility

- What are the foundational principles for data responsibility in humanitarian response?
- What are the points of tension?
- How to navigate these issues, and what is the role of leadership?
- Prioritisation of concerns/issues.

Critical incident management

- Current state
- What's the learning to date? Where are the gaps?
- Best practice (based on case studies and scenarios)
- Lessons learned and recommendations for investment and action

Tools and processes for data responsibility

- Current state
- What's working well? What could be improved? Where are the gaps?
- Best practice (based on case studies and scenarios)
- Lessons learned and recommendations for investment and action

Collective investments and action for data responsibility in the humanitarian system

- What are the leverage points in the system?
- What is the vision?
- What does it take to get there?
- Commitments from leadership
- Actions/activities
- Costs and other resources

Who should participate?

The event will bring together up to 50 selected participants from the humanitarian community, including representatives from United Nations agencies, funds, and programmes; international and local non-governmental organisations; academic institutions; governments; multilateral and international organisations; and major technology companies. Emphasis will be placed on participants involved in humanitarian decision-making roles in crisis/field locations (to include eg. protracted conflict, natural disasters, forced displacement.) Senior leaders from headquarters locations are also expected to attend. Information management expertise is not required, as discussions will focus on policy rather than technical design.

Monitoring and evaluation

Wilton Park's Monitoring and Evaluation process includes follow-up with all participants, speakers and partners on planned actions. An electronic questionnaire will be completed by all participants during the meeting and a further survey conducted 3-6 months after the event.

About Wilton Park

[Wilton Park](#), a not for profit 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.

About the OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data

Inaugurated by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in December 2017, the [Centre for Humanitarian Data](#) is dedicated to increasing the use and impact of data in the humanitarian sector and creating a future where everyone involved in a humanitarian crisis has access to the data they need, when and how they need it, in order to make responsible and informed decisions. It is managed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The Centre's services are available to humanitarian partners and OCHA staff in the field and at Headquarters free of charge. For more information, please email centrehumdata@un.org.

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