Interim Progress Report #1

OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data

Submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Grant start date: 1 July 2017
Grant end date: 30 June 2020
Interim report #1 period: 1 July - 31 December 2017

I. Overview

This narrative report covers what was achieved in the first six months of operations of the OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data. During this initial reporting period, the focus was on establishing the Centre in The Hague. This involved relocating two OCHA staff from New York to The Hague, with the staff arriving in August 2017. The Centre was initially located in a temporary space at Leiden University’s campus in The Hague, thanks to a hosting arrangement with the University’s Centre for Innovation. The Centre opened in the The Hague Humanity Hub with a high-profile launch event on 22 December 2017.

In terms of substantive work, the focus was on increasing adoption of OCHA’s data sharing platform, the Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX), as well as the Humanitarian Exchange Language (HXL) data standard. In addition, we hired additional team members to take forward new work streams for data policy, data literacy and network engagement. We hosted a joint data skills workshop in Amman, Jordan with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and we convened a planning workshop with the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) Secretariat to support the streamlining of financial reporting to OCHA’s Financial Tracking Service (FTS).

The Centre secured an additional donor with a $400,000 grant agreement from the Education Above All Foundation to improve access to data about education in emergencies. The grant includes funding for the Centre’s inaugural Data Fellows Programme which will take place in June and July 2018 in The Hague.

In November 2017, the Centre contracted the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) Humanitarian Policy Group to conduct research to ensure our three-year results framework is appropriate and robust, and that our indicators, outputs and outcomes are measurable. The goal of the research is to assess the framework, finalise the outcome indicators, and develop the baseline measurements. ODI finalized the report outside of this reporting period (i.e. in early 2018), but the baseline measures from that research are included in the results framework section of this report.

Additional details on the work of the Centre are provided below.

II. Objectives and Key Results

The mission of the Centre is to work with partners to increase the use and impact of data in humanitarian response. The vision is to create a future where all people involved in a humanitarian situation have access to the data they need, when and how they need it, to make responsible and informed decisions.

The Centre is focused on four objectives which are related to the four workstreams, including:

- Increase the interoperability of humanitarian data through shared standards and integrated systems (data services)
- Increase the trust and cooperation across organizations sharing data in humanitarian response (data policy)
- Increase the capability of people to access and use data in support of humanitarian efforts (data literacy)
- Increase the number of active partners engaged with the Centre (network engagement)
A. Data Services
The Centre’s data services work includes management of HDX and increasing the use of data standards, including HXL and IATI. During the reporting period, fifty organizations joined HDX bringing the total to 335 organizations by the end of 2017. Sixty-five percent of the organizations on HDX had shared at least one public dataset. HDX saw growth in the number of new datasets added and unique users throughout 2017, but especially towards the end of the year as the Centre was established (see chart below). Four new organizations began using HXL, bringing the total to 47 adopters. By the end of the year, we had about 6,000 registered users — an increase of 40% as compared to 2016.

2017 HDX Growth

We developed or supported the development of a number of custom data visuals, including:

- Somalia Cash Distribution
  https://ocha-dap.github.io/hdx-somalia-cash-v2/
- Rohingya Camps in Bangladesh
  http://iom.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=f6ee41ef81b4ee183c96085cb60801
- Somalia Response Monitoring
  https://data.humdata.org/visualization/somalia-monitoring/
- Inform West Africa
  https://data.humdata.org/dataset/2016-sahel-inform
- Global Refugee Flows
  https://explorables.cmucreatelab.org/explorables/annual-refugees/examples/webgl-time-machine/

An updated version (1.1) of HXL was released in December 2017. This release expanded the standard with new hashtags and attributes, especially for cash programming and surveys. As part of the Grand Bargain, donors and aid providers agreed to increase the use of cash or a cash-equivalent during a crisis response. In collaboration with the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP), the HXL Working Group added several new core hashtags related to cash and financing: #value, #modality, #currency, #item, and #access.

In November 2017, the Centre hosted a joint workshop with colleagues from FTS, Development Initiatives, and the IATI Secretariat. The goal of the workshop was to identify ways to enable humanitarian actors to share financial data with FTS using IATI. FTS, DI, and the Centre agreed on one-year joint work plan to enable five organizations to adopt IATI for humanitarian reporting.
B. Data Policy

The data policy workstream is focused on developing an OCHA Data Policy and institutional data sharing agreements. During the reporting period, we hired a Data Policy Officer who began the research to inform the eventual policy. We drafted a template data sharing agreement for partners which was shared with the UN Office of Legal Affairs for advice and feedback. We also continued to engage with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the Danish Refugee Council on a framework for data sharing in practice; a second meeting on this subject was held with partners in Copenhagen in early December 2017.

In terms of data security, we focused on a deeper review of the various types of survey data that have been shared through HDX in order to identify the risk of people or communities. We also released a new feature called HDX Connect which allows organizations to share the existence of data by publishing only the metadata and releasing the underlying data by request. This helps organizations to avoid any risk with sharing potentially sensitive data publicly while also providing access to the data under agreed conditions.

C. Data Literacy

The Centre’s data literacy workstream involves developing a data literacy curriculum and delivering a number of training events. During the reporting period, we held a data skills workshop in Amman, Jordan for over twenty people from partner organizations working on the Syria crisis. The data skills workshop was the second in a series (the first was in Dakar) that have been implemented in partnership with the IFRC. The Centre continued to offer a number of webinars on HDX and HXL for OCHA staff and partners. A job profile for a Data Literacy Advisor was developed and will be advertised in early 2018.

The Data Fellowship Programme was finalized in anticipation of advertising for the fellowship positions in early 2018. We decided to host the inaugural class of Fellows at the Centre in The Hague in June and July 2018. The programme will be publicly launched in March 2018.

D. Network Engagement

The Centre’s final area of work is network engagement which involves building and engaging an active community of individuals and organizations working with humanitarian data. The Centre collaborated with dozens of humanitarian organizations and private sector partners through information sharing, implementation of shared projects, and staff secondments. As part of an agreement with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), a staff member was seconded to the Centre to work with us on improving access to displacement data. The staff member started in September 2017 and will be with the Centre for its initial three year project period.

On 22 December 2017, the Centre officially opened its doors as part of The Hague Humanity Hub. The official launch of the Centre was attended by more than 200 senior representatives from the City of The Hague and Government of the Netherlands, multilateral institutions, non-governmental organizations, and foreign embassies.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres welcomed the participants, saying in his opening remarks that the "Centre for Humanitarian Data is a signpost to the future... show[ing] how the technologies that are revolutionizing every aspect of our lives can be harnessed to help and support vulnerable people all over the world." Mayor of The Hague Pauline Krikke also spoke, highlighting that "sharing and making data and knowledge accessible is crucial. Unhindered access to data increases the self-reliance and resilience of citizens." Additional remarks were delivered by Sigrid Kaag, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Mark Lowcock, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Participants were invited to tour the Centre’s office and tour several workstations to learn how data is being used to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian responses around the world by OCHA and partner organizations such as IFRC and the World Food
Programme. A virtual reality film highlighting the impact of data in Nigeria, The Big Picture, was also screened on headsets donated by the United Nations Development Programme and Samsung. The launch was widely covered in print and online media, including on Facebook and Twitter. Video from the launch is available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tpfou_kixgo and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJuavHsGKB0, and a slideshow of photos can be accessed at https://centre.humdata.org/?id=index-1&ucat=110&slideshow=centreOpening.

The opening of the Centre also functioned as a ‘soft launch’ for The Hague Humanity Hub. Throughout the reporting period, the Centre worked closely with The Hague Humanity Hub’s staff, board members, and contractors to identify the location of the office; provide feedback on design of the physical space; develop shared procedures, contracts, and templates; and recruit additional Hub tenants. The Centre is proud to be a part of this innovative platform for organizations developing new solutions to global challenges in peace, justice, and humanitarian affairs.

In addition to the communications products developed to support the launch event, we also published a number of blogs about our work during the reporting period, including:


We also published two impact stories, including:

- HXL is Creating Efficiency at the IFRC https://centre.humdata.org/hxl-is-creating-efficiency-at-the-ifrc/
- Making Sense of Displacement Data in the Republic of the Congo
### III. Centre Results Framework

A Results Framework for the Centre was included in our Business Plan with one-year targets and three-year outcomes. These have been slightly edited based on research conducted by ODI to develop baseline measurements. The final ODI report was delivered in February 2018 and will be reported on during the next reporting period.

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<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Year One</th>
<th>Interim Result</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Increase the interoperability of data through shared standards and integrated systems</td>
<td>1.1 Increase organizational adoption of HXL by 20% by Q4; support 5 partners with adoption of IATI by Q4</td>
<td>Baseline: 43 HXL adopters; 0 orgs using IATI to submit to FTS</td>
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<td>1.2 Develop and deploy HDX Tools with adoption by 2,000 unique users (across tools) by Q4</td>
<td>Baseline: HDX Tools not deployed; Quick Charts and Tag Assist v1 released in November 2017; 300 unique users by end of 31 Dec</td>
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<td>1.3 Increase programmatic data sharing to (organizations) and from HDX (unique users) by 10% by Q4</td>
<td>Baseline: 16 organizations sharing data via API; 26 average unique weekly direct downloaders</td>
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<td>2 Increase the trust and cooperation across organizations sharing data in humanitarian response</td>
<td>2.1 Agree on v1 OCHA data policy by Q2; develop processes and tools to ensure adoption with staff and partners by Q4</td>
<td>Baseline: no policy, some previous research; v1 OCHA data policy not agreed</td>
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<td>2.2 Finalize 6 institutional MOUs with partner organizations to formalize data collaboration by Q4</td>
<td>Baseline: 0 MOUs in place; 0 MOUs in place; data sharing framework meeting held with partners in Copenhagen</td>
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<td>2.3 Deliver report on requirements for OCHA offices storing sensitive data by Q4</td>
<td>Baseline: no previous research; Research has not started</td>
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<td>Increase the capability of people to access and use data in support of humanitarian efforts</td>
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<td>Increase the number of active partners engaged with the Centre</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4.3</td>
<td>Deliver a partnership strategy by Q2</td>
<td>Baseline: no strategy in place</td>
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<td>4.4</td>
<td>Develop a sustainable model for aspects of the Centre's work (volunteers, fees for service, membership, sponsorship) by Q4</td>
<td>Baseline: no model in place</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
<td>25% increase in number of unique users per humdata.org property (HDX + Tools, Centre).</td>
<td>Baseline: HDX + Tools: avg weekly unique users: 4,551; Centre: 712</td>
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<th>3-year outcome indicator</th>
<th>2-year independent eval</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Increase the use and impact of data in humanitarian sector</td>
<td>0.1 Increase the speed of data from the end of data collection to published product (e.g., file shared, pdf created, embedded visuals)</td>
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<td>0.2 Increase the number and strength of connections with the Centre, across categories of engagement</td>
<td>Baseline: HDX orgs 285; HXL adopters 43; funders 4; implementing partners 0; API connections 16; secondments or co-location 0; orgs attending trainings 0.</td>
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<td>0.3 Increase the use of HDX</td>
<td>Baseline: HDX org members: 277; avg weekly downloads: 9,252;</td>
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IV. Challenges

As the Centre was getting established in The Hague during this reporting period, there were questions with whether and how the work fit within OCHA’s change process, new strategic framework and reduced budget environment. The change in leadership from OCHA Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator (USG/ERC) Stephen O’Brien, who had signed the host country agreement and announced the initiative at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, to USG/ERC Mark Lowcock created uncertainty with OCHA’s commitment to the Centre. These issues were ultimately resolved but it was disruptive and slowed down some of the planned activities for this initial period.

V. Conclusion

Following the official opening of the Centre at the end of 2017, we expect to increase the scope and scale of our activities in 2018. The next reporting period, from January to June 2018, will build on the momentum created by the Secretary-General’s presence at the Centre’s launch and his support for our goals. We look forward to making progress against our objectives and creating value for OCHA and our partners.