Interim Progress Report #4
OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data
Submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Grant start date: 1 July 2020
Grant end date: 30 June 2023
Interim report period: 1 January 2022 – 30 June 2022

I. Overview

This narrative report covers the activities of the OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data during the period 1 January through 30 June 2022. The end of this six-month period concluded the second year of our 2020-2023 business plan.

Significant achievements during the reporting period included:

● Unique users in HDX grew by 26 percent from January to June, and The State of Open Humanitarian Data 2022 was published in February with 7,193 unique downloads from February through June (compared to 6,385 downloads for the 2021 report).
● The HDX Ukraine Data Explorer and the Ukraine Private Sector Donations Tracker were released following the outbreak of war in Ukraine in February.
● A climate forecasting workshop was held in The Hague in June with OCHA colleagues from field and HQ locations.
● A new learning path was launched for information and data managers on the Humanitarian Exchange Language (HXL).
● Eight OCHA offices were supported with data responsibility guidance; a new tip sheet on data security in operational data management was released in collaboration with Yale University.
● A predictive model used to inform cash distribution on Toga from the Data Intensive Development Lab at University of California, Berkeley was peer reviewed.
● Analysis for several OCHA anticipatory action pilots was conducted, including an assessment of flood risk in South Sudan.
● A trigger mechanism for drought in Burkina Faso was endorsed for use in the anticipatory action framework.

During the reporting period, we signed an agreement with USAID for $400,000 for the continuation of our work on addressing data gaps and the state of data report through 2022.

Details on the substantive work of the Centre are provided below.

II. Objectives and Key Results

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

The Centre’s operations are organized around four workstreams: data services, data responsibility, data literacy, and predictive analytics. Together, the workstreams contribute to the Centre’s four objectives:

1. Increase the availability of data for humanitarian response.
2. Increase the trust and cooperation across organizations sharing humanitarian data.
3. Increase the capability of humanitarians to work with data.
4. Increase the use of predictive models for anticipatory action.

These workstreams are supported by a number of enabling functions such as management, partnerships, and communication, as well as our field personnel in Bangkok, Nairobi, Dakar, and Jakarta.
A. Data Services

The Humanitarian Data Exchange

The Centre’s data services work includes management of HDX and increasing the use of data standards, including HXL and IATI. Over the six-month reporting period, the average number of unique users per month increased by over 26 percent, from 105,873 in January to 133,960 in June. The total number of datasets downloaded remained steady, with a 1% increase from 1,018,853 (July - Dec 2021) to 1,032,125 (Jan - Jun 2022). The uptick in users is attributable in part to the Ukraine crisis.

Unique Users on HDX

During the reporting period, close to 1,200 new datasets were added to HDX. The largest new dataset contributors were Kontur (487), UNOSAT (192), geoBoundaries (125), Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team (139) and UNHCR (74).

Eleven new organizations joined HDX in the first half of 2022. Due to the removal of 13 inactive organizations during the same period, the total number of organizations on HDX reduced slightly from 358 on 31 December 2022 to 356 on 30 June 2022. The World Bank (4,618 datasets), Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team (4,487 datasets) and WorldPop (1,071 datasets) contribute the most datasets to HDX.

We continued to maintain the COVID-19 Data Explorer which was created in June 2020 to understand the progression of the pandemic in the 63 countries that are part of the Global Humanitarian Overview. In collaboration with OCHA’s Operations and Advocacy Division, we issued quarterly reports - the latest report covered the period from April to June 2022.

In response to the Ukraine crisis we developed two data visualizations. In March 2022 we launched the Ukraine Data Explorer, which brings together key figures and datasets related to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. It includes the number of refugees in surrounding countries, estimates for internally displaced people within Ukraine, civilian casualties, conflict events, border crossing points, and funding levels. The tool is designed to make it easier for the humanitarian community to track developments. Together with the OCHA/UNDP Connecting Business Initiative, we also developed and launched the Ukraine Private Sector Donations Tracker to make it easier to visualize, explore, and understand the scope and scale of private sector donations being made for the benefit of affected people. In doing so, we hope to shine a light on the generosity of local and global businesses while also bringing more transparency and accountability to the sources and uses of funds being allocated to support affected people.

In the first half of 2022 we continued focusing on closing data gaps in priority humanitarian operations, as measured through the HDX Data Grids. We reviewed the Data Grid methodology which led to a number of improvements to how we maintain and measure the grids. Baseline Population and Baseline Population by Age & Sex were merged into a single Baseline Population subcategory; IDPs and Humanitarian Profile Locations were merged into a single...
IDPs subcategory; and Global Acute Malnutrition and Severe Acute Malnutrition were merged into a single Acute Malnutrition subcategory. We also dropped the subcategories on casualties, affected schools, and damaged/destroyed buildings. We added a new subcategory on Climatic Hazards. These changes simplified the grids by reducing the number of subcategories from 27 to 20. We also retired the Zimbabwe and Pakistan Data Grids as these countries are no longer HRP countries. At the end of June, the HDX Data Grids were 66% complete across 25 locations.

The International Aid Transparency Initiative

During the reporting period, we continued to update and maintain the IATI COVID-19 Funding Dashboard, particularly as organizations began to include COVID-19 terms more generically. Alongside this, we investigated ways to repurpose the architecture of this dashboard, including a focus on funding flows for the Ukraine crisis which is still under development. Our work on these dashboards was presented at the IATI Virtual Community Event on 28 June 2022. We also liaised with the OCHA Financial Tracking Service (FTS) team to initiate a working group of IATI publishers with the goal of collectively drafting guidance on IATI publishing in humanitarian contexts. Finally, we supported OCHA in enhancing its IATI data as measured by the 2022 Aid Transparency Index. With our help, OCHA was ranked in the top ten of all organizations for the first time, with a score of 85.9% (Very Good), up from the previous rating of 74% (Good) in 2020.

B. Data Responsibility

The Centre’s data responsibility work is focused on providing field support and developing guidance for how OCHA manages data in humanitarian crises. During the reporting period, we supported field colleagues with the adoption of different actions for data responsibility. This included work with OCHA offices in Afghanistan, Cameroon, Indonesia, Iraq, Sudan, and Ukraine. We also started a new engagement with the OCHA office in Ethiopia.

The Centre supported OCHA Afghanistan in developing guidance on data responsibility in third party monitoring (TPM) for the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund. This guidance outlines roles and responsibilities for responsible data management by TPM service providers. The Centre team also delivered a remote training session for TPM staff after the guidance was endorsed.

Working with coordination structures and stakeholders in Cameroon in both the North-West/South-West response and the Far North response, the Centre supported OCHA Cameroon in developing separate Information Sharing Protocols (ISPs) for both response contexts: the NWSW ISP and the Far North ISP (in French). The Centre also supported the development of a chapeau document to help guide practitioners find the relevant protocol for different response contexts in the country.

The Centre supported OCHA Indonesia and Iraq with conducting Data Responsibility Diagnostics, which provides observations and recommendations related to data responsibility. In Indonesia the diagnostic informed inputs on data responsibility for the Humanitarian Country Team’s Contingency Plan. In Iraq the diagnostic was supplemented by a Data Asset Registry so that both the types of data managed in the context and an overview of relevant policy and governance instruments, existing processes and procedures, and technical tools used in the response are tracked.

The Centre supported OCHA Niger to develop an ISP which has been submitted to the HCT for information and endorsement. We worked with OCHA Sudan to develop data ecosystem maps for various data types and related data management activities.

The Centre has been working closely with OCHA Ukraine and its partners on different actions for data responsibility from the outset of this current crisis. This includes the development and ongoing refinement of a Data and Information Sensitivity Classification to inform the responsible sharing of different types of operational data and information across the response, as well as the drafting of a response-wide ISP which is currently under review. In addition, the Centre has played a central role in supporting responsible data management in the delivery of Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance through direct support to the Ukraine Cash Working Group and
its different Task Teams. We also supported OCHA and its partners on activities related to Accountability to Affected People (AAP), including an information ecosystem mapping exercise.

We initiated work with OCHA Ethiopia and partners to develop an interactive platform to visualize community feedback. The Centre reviewed the dashboard and the Standard Operating Procedure for the partners involved in the development and maintenance of the platform to support integration of additional measures for data responsibility.

We released a tip sheet on data security in operational data management, and published our eight part guidance note series in Spanish, which can be found in the resource library on the Center website.

The management of sensitive data on HDX according to our quality assurance process continues to be an important area of work. During the reporting period, 22 datasets were flagged for review for containing potentially sensitive data. Fourteen of those datasets were taken through a statistical disclosure control process to assess the level or risk and the other eight were assessed through another risk assessment process. In total, six datasets were shared without changes, two shared after removing sensitive data, six shared via HDX connect, four are still under review, and four datasets were deleted. REACH continues to share the majority of sensitive data so we continue to work closely with them to ensure they understand our process for statistical disclosure control and to train their staff in these techniques where relevant.

C. Data Literacy

The Centre’s data literacy workstream is focused on delivering training and developing learning resources designed to help humanitarians use data effectively.

With the loosening of COVID-19 restrictions on travel and in-person meetings, we were able to deliver in-person training again. In April 2022, we took part in the Development Coordination Office’s Data, Monitoring and Results Retreat in Istanbul, delivering sessions on how to find and share data on HDX, how to identify and address data gaps and how to visualize data.

In June 2022, we hosted a Climate Forecasting Workshop with 16 participants from four country offices, three regional offices and OCHA headquarters. The workshop was designed to build a deeper understanding of the concepts and methods used for modeling drought, working with climate data, developing anticipatory action frameworks, and using these tools to make data-informed decisions. We were fortunate to have climate scientists from Columbia University’s International Research Institute for Climate and Society, the UK Met Office, and the IFRC Climate Centre join us to facilitate sessions and contribute their expertise. Feedback on the workshop was overwhelmingly positive. Of those that completed the final evaluation, all said the workshop improved their confidence in discussing, engaging with, and working with climate data and climate forecasts. Many field colleagues expressed interest in running similar workshops at the country and regional level. In the coming months, we will explore how to best roll out this type of training and develop additional resources designed to help humanitarian make use of climate data.

In addition, we delivered several remote trainings during this period. At the request of the OCHA’s regional office in Latin America, we organized a Spanish language training on HDX, identifying and filling data gaps, and managing data responsibly. We also took part in OCHA IMPACT training in February 2022 and trained 28 OCHA staff with sessions on HDX, data responsibility and HXL.

Based on the feedback we received on our learning path on Statistical Disclosure Control, we revamped the learning path pages and created a new ‘Learn with the Centre’ section on our website. We also published a new learning path on the Humanitarian Exchange Language and are finalizing a learning path on working with geospatial data. In total, our two learning paths
and the other training resources have been accessed about 1,400 times between 1 January and 30 June 2022.

D. Predictive Analytics

The Centre's predictive analytics workstream focuses on providing technical support to humanitarian partners, building capacity and promoting the responsible use of predictive analytics in the sector.

As part of the Centre's peer review framework, we finalized the model developed by the Data Intensive Development Lab at University of California, Berkeley to target cash transfers in Togo. The Model Card and Model Evaluation Matrix were published in March 2022. We also started the review of anticipatory action triggers developed for drought in Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad.

Our scenario planning and modeling support extended to a mission and analysis of seasonal flood risk in South Sudan. Based on this analysis CERF and the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund have released $19 million ahead of projected flooding to prepare and protect people in the Bentiu camp for internally displaced people and surrounding areas in Unity State. We have also established new collaborations with several partners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo during a joint mission with the CERF team to advance the development of a cholera anticipatory action framework. Our ongoing support to OCHA's anticipatory action agenda resulted in the endorsement of a drought framework for Burkina Faso. We continue to develop trigger mechanisms for anticipatory action frameworks for drought in Chad and plague in Madagascar.

We continue to support the development of the Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF) 2.0, which is the proposed methodology for the estimation of the number of People in Need (PIN) in the upcoming Humanitarian Needs Overviews. We have provided technical support through aggregation and testing of historical HNO data to inform proposed and finalized quantitative methods.

We also concluded our research on the feasibility and expected performance of conflict prediction models. Our research found insufficient justification for using quantitative conflict prediction models as the only input to drive anticipatory action. We will publish the findings in the next quarter.

E. Enabling Functions: Partnerships and Communications

The Centre hosted four events including three webinars and one reception in The Hague. The 20 January webinar was on the Relative Wealth Index dataset, a series of Artificial Intelligence-powered poverty maps available for nearly 100 low- and middle-income countries, in partnership with Meta (Facebook) Data for Good. The webinar explored how the dataset may be used for the expansion of social protection programmes in humanitarian operations and provided operational examples of Togo and Nigeria.

On 3 March, the Centre held a webinar on climate modeling and climate forecasting for anticipatory action. The webinar delved into examples of existing floods models, where these have been used to inform anticipatory action (such as Bangladesh and Nepal), and the spatial and temporal scales at which these provide risk information. The webinar also looked into the interpretations of probabilistic models and their uncertainties. Speakers included experts from the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, Google, and the University of Reading.

On 24 May, the Centre hosted a discussion with the author Hugo Slim on his book Solferino 21: Warfare, Civilians and Humanitarians in the Twenty-First Century on the key challenges he identified and how these challenges relate to the way humanitarians can use data and technology to deliver better, simpler aid to populations in crisis. Issues discussed included the trends shaping next generation warfare and how these will impact humanitarian response, the implications for humanitarian response in an increasingly digitized world, the major ethical concerns around integrating new technology and data sciences into humanitarian action, and
ways that humanitarians may ensure ethical deliberation on the use of data and technology in increasingly complex crises.

In the margins of the Centre-hosted Climate Forecasting workshop in The Hague, the Centre also hosted a discussion, Getting Ahead of Crises: Using Climate Forecasts in Humanitarian Response on June 28th to explore how climate science can be used to monitor and forecast hazards (drought, floods, extreme heat, and storms both in isolation and when they compound / co-occur with each other) and their expected humanitarian impacts. Speakers included experts from the UN, including the field, and Columbia University. The event brought together those in academia, think tanks, UN, and private sector with an interest in anticipatory action.

The Centre participated and spoke at 28 events, including during the 2022 Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week, the 55th session Commission on Population and Development, and the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, hosted by NGOs, UN, donors, private sector, and academia, as well as webinars held by UN agencies such as UNDP and UNEP.

The Centre published eight blogs, ten videos, five articles, and two slideshows. Our blogs included one on the main findings and conclusions of the The State of Open Humanitarian Data 2022, and others on how to use the Humanitarian Exchange Language, data requirements for anticipatory action, using anticipatory action for response to floods in South Sudan, and responsible data sharing with donors. We featured two Community Q&As on the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification and our partnership with Meta Data For Good.

III. Centre Results Framework

The Centre’s Results Framework for the 2020-2023 Business Plan includes four objectives and eight results. The table below includes the baseline measurements and the results achieved from 1 January through 30 June 2022.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 1 (Data Services): Increase the availability of data for humanitarian response</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Q1 2022</th>
<th>Q2 2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1(a). 25% increase in unique users on HDX annually</td>
<td>63,672</td>
<td>144,930 (users per mo/3 mo average)</td>
<td>170,660 (users per mo/3 mo average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>94,513</td>
<td>99,488</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(b). Data grids 80% complete for all 2020 HRP locations by end of year three</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>68% (25 locations)</td>
<td>66% (25 locations, new climate hazards subcategory)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 2 (Data Responsibility): Increase the trust and cooperation across organizations sharing humanitarian data</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Q1 2022</th>
<th>Q2 2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2(a). Data responsibility guidance adopted by 80% of OCHA offices</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>16/35 = 45%; new engagement w/ Ethiopia; progress in adoption status for Indonesia, Sudan and Ukraine; release of tip sheets on data security.</td>
<td>16/35 = 45%; progress in adoption status for Afghanistan, Iraq, Niger, Sudan and Ukraine; guidance note on data security under review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(b). Prevent personal or sensitive data from being shared on HDX</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 high risk datasets published. 13 datasets flagged in total. Among those 8 went through disclosure control.</td>
<td>0 high risk datasets published. 9 datasets were flagged for review. Among those, 2 datasets went through disclosure control (Global Health Monkeypox and International Cocoa Initiative).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 3 (Data Literacy): Increase the capability of humanitarians to work with data</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3(a). Data literacy training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>delivered to 200 people by the end of year three</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>120</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3(b). Data literacy capacity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>building material accessed by 6,000 people by the end of year three</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6,043 people (cumulative) accessed materials</td>
<td>6,567 people (cumulative) accessed materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Objective 4 (Predictive Analytics): Increase the use of predictive models for anticipatory action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4(a). Twelve predictive models developed by partners are taken through the Centre’s peer review process by the end of year three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4(b). Scenario planning and modeling support provided in 25 humanitarian contexts by the end of year three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV. Conclusion

The next six month period will be focused on drafting our next business plan which will run from mid 2023 to 2026. With the help of the consulting firm Frog Design, the Centre will reflect on its position within the UN and the humanitarian sector and on its portfolio of products and services in order to prepare for our next phase. The purpose of this strategy review is to come up with high-level recommendations around the Centre’s overall direction, ambition and approach with an understanding of how this could inform the scope of its work and any necessary innovations to its products and services. In the next period we will also conduct an internal review of the Centre progress over the first two years of our three-year business plan.