ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NGOs
3 – 5 JULY 2012 - International Conference Center Geneva

BACKGROUND PAPER

Information Management Exhibition: Strengthening Information in Humanitarian Response

Tuesday 3 July 2012, 14h30 – 16h15 – Room 4

Session description: The *Information Management Symposium* is an interactive exhibit showcasing "Information Stations" where the information management tools, methodologies and strategies currently in use in the field will be featured. You are invited to exchange knowledge and ideas on how technology, data and information management as well as coordination can strengthen the way the humanitarian community addresses emergencies, saving lives, resources and ensuring a timely and coordinated response. You will also find out more about UNHCR's information management strategy for the coming years of which a summary follows below. Copies of the Strategy will be made available at the NGO Consultation.

UNHCR INFORMATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2012-2014
SUMMARY

Background

Learning from experience in recent refugee emergencies and clusterized IDP situations, UNHCR's approach towards Information and Data Management[1] must be designed, viewed and delivered as a service that UNHCR provides to others – not only to itself - in order to ensure optimal delivery of services and protection to refugees and others of concern.

With this in mind and recognising the need for a predictable, modern and appropriate Information Management approach and capacity**,** UNHCR developed the Information Management Strategy 2012-2014. Intended for an inter-agency context, the strategy is aimed at strengthening UNHCR's capacity to share information, coordinate information systems between different actors, and provide predictable information management services in the context of humanitarian response. This will mean developing or expanding the use of innovative data-collection methodologies and data visualization

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[1] Information/Data Management is the capture, handling, storage, analysis and dissemination of data pertaining specifically to operations and the populations of concern, including demographic and statistical information. It involves information on needs and conditions, geo-referenced information, and information related to protection and sector-specific concerns related to needs, delivery and impact in health, nutrition, water/sanitation, core relief items, shelter and education.

technologies; training and capacity building; information dissemination; internal and inter-agency needs assessment systems; and policy development. A central pillar of the Strategy is to establish a network of Information Managers worldwide.

Strategy goal and objectives

The **goal** of Information Management in UNHCR is to:

"Provide quality information and data on operational activities in a reliable, predictable, innovative and meaningful way to those who assist displaced and stateless persons".

To meet the goal described above, the strategy contains **seven priority objectives:**

1. UNHCR's mandated leadership role in refugee situations is reinforced by excellent and predictable Information Management activities which are designed to serve all partners.
2. UNHCR delivers on its Information Management responsibilities in global and field clusters as they are defined by a lead cluster role and expected by the humanitarian community.
3. UNHCR systematically deploys skilled and respected Information Management personnel and resources to its field operations, starting in refugee emergencies through to solutions.
4. UNHCR's humanitarian population data management skills are maintained and strengthened.
5. UNHCR develops and disseminates credible protection monitoring systems providing quality and actionable information.
6. UNHCR needs assessment practices are institutionalized and further professionalized with particular regard to advice on assessment methods, and on participation in and coordination of joint and harmonized needs assessments.
7. UNHCR Information Management activities are based on established standards and procedures for operational data collection, management and distribution.

Key principles[2]

Accessibility: Humanitarian information and data should be made accessible to all humanitarian actors by applying easy-to-use formats and by translating information into common or local languages. Humanitarian information and data, once cleared from an operational and protection perspective, should be made widely available through a variety of online and offline distribution channels including the media.

Relevance: Information should be practical, flexible, responsive, and driven by operational needs in support of decision-making throughout all phases of a crisis. Data that is not relevant should not be collected.

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[2] These principles are an adapted sub-set of the principles selected by the international humanitarian community at the "Global Symposium +5" on interagency humanitarian information management (22-26 October 2007, Geneva)

Timeliness: Humanitarian information should be collected, analysed and disseminated efficiently, and must be kept current.

Reliability: Users must be able to evaluate the reliability and credibility of data and information by knowing its source and method of collection. Collection methods should adhere to global standards where they exist to support and reinforce credibility. Reliability is a prerequisite for ensuring validity and verifiability.

Humanity: Information should never be used to distort, to mislead or to cause harm to affected or at risk populations and should respect the dignity of the population of concern.

Expected impact

The strategy builds on the organisation's existing strengths and systems - such as population data management, geographical information analysis, the Information Management System for Gender-based violence, standards and indicators reporting, proGres[3], and the web-based Health Information System – as well as promotes areas new to UNHCR such as leadership of inter-agency Information Management in emergency refugee response, Web Portals for data sharing and innovative partnerships with the private sector.

By implementing the strategy, direct benefits will not only be experienced by UNHCR and its partners, but, most importantly, by refugees and others of concern in some of the following ways:

- Refugees and others of concern will receive better quality, more timely information, which will help facilitate informed decision on solutions and building of communities.
- Better quality needs assessments should produce a more targeted and appropriate response to the needs of refugees and others concern.
- The development of case management systems will support protection delivery.
- The improvement of distribution information systems will aid the delivery of material humanitarian assistance.
- The anticipated increase in donor contributions as a result of improved information will benefit the whole operation, including the refugees or others of concern.

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[3] UNHCR's registration software