Common operational datasets (CODs) and fundamental operational datasets (FODs)

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Key points

- Ensure that data presented on UNHCR maps incorporate accepted common and fundamental operational datasets and established boundaries.
- Ensure data collection exercises and databases use agreed CODs and FODs at country level.
- Take the lead in using common datasets to set standards in operations; make colleagues and partners aware of their value and importance.

1. Overview

Developed and endorsed by the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC), and disseminated by OCHA, Common operational data sets (CODs) and fundamental operational datasets (FODs) are datasets used in humanitarian emergencies to support technical standards, improve the quality of data, and strengthen interoperability. OCHA identifies, publishes and maintains CODs and FODs for use in humanitarian emergencies.

Though not all countries are included in the COD/FOD Registry, information managers and designated focal points in UNHCR should periodically check OCHA’s online registry (http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/applications/data) to ensure their operations are using available CODs and FODs as the baseline for all operational data and information products. All UNHCR staff should be aware of the contribution that COD/FOD datasets make to data collection, sharing data, and reporting.

Please note: much of the text for this entry was taken directly from OCHA's, Humanitarian Response, and Data: COD FOD Registry; COD vs. FODs; available online at: http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/applications/data; accessed 7 Oct 2014.
2. Relevance for emergency operations

CODs and FODs provide a foundation for coordinating the humanitarian response in an emergency, by articulating and sharing agreed baseline data, across sectors, for mapping and other information and planning purposes.

**Common Operational Datasets (CODs)** are the de facto standard for the humanitarian community. They represent the best-available datasets on a range of basic subjects:

- Administrative boundaries.
- Populated settlements, towns, cities.
- Transportation network (roads, ports, etc.).
- Hydrology (streams, bodies of water, etc.).
- Hypsography (elevation models, contours).
- Population statistics.
- Humanitarian profiles (caseload).

**Fundamental Operational Datasets (FODs)** are datasets that are specific to a particular sector or fall outside the COD categories above. FODs cover:

- Everything else: schools, flood plains, security incidents, wells, etc.

When CODs and FODs are available, UNHCR and partners use them to inform the baseline that underpins response and planning in a refugee emergency.

3. Main guidance

**Underlying process - how does this work?**

**OCHA maintains** the agreed datasets and coordinates their distribution and updating in emergencies. If OCHA is unable to provide this service in a specific country, Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) or other inter-agency coordination structures may identify another agency to undertake this role.

**According to OCHA, each dataset has a designated ‘sponsor’** who is responsible for identifying and liaising with ‘sources' or owners to analyze, collate, clean and reach agreement on a specific operational dataset. Sponsors are identified early in an emergency and then assume responsibilities in relation to their thematic dataset. OCHA maintains lists of dataset sponsors, in each country and globally, and coordinates relations between them.

**Each dataset has one or more designated source or owner.** These may be national authorities or agencies, a cluster, NGO, UN agency etc. The designated owner of a dataset is
UNHCR’s role and accountabilities

UNHCR is the ‘source' and ‘sponsor' of several standard datasets which it maintains, updates and disseminates: on refugee locations, population statistics, border crossing points, and the presence and status of UNHCR offices, for example. Other datasets may be added at country level.

Considerations for UNHCR’s engagement at country level

At country level, the information manager (IM) should track the names of locations, coordinates, CODs and FODs, and Pcodes. (Pcodes are unique geographic (geo)identification codes, represented by combinations of letters or numbers, that identify a specific location or feature on a map or in a database.) Contact your local OCHA office for area-specific Pcodes or consult the website.

Information Management Officers should: share the Excel database of Pcodes, CODs and FODs with all operational partners to ensure that they use the same units of assessment for data analysis; liaise with them on data quality issues and data standards; participate in or organize inter-agency data groups at field level; advise partners on methodological issues (where needed); and encourage prompt reporting of data, according to agreed standards.

Distribute information products, CODs and baseline data that are to be used by all partners.

Annexes

IASC Guidelines Common Operational Datasets (CODs) in Disaster Preparedness and Response

What is a GLIDE Number. When to use them and why they are useful

4. Links

IASC. Guidelines on the Common Operational Datasets in Disaster Preparedness an... CODs and FODs

5. Main contacts

Local OCHA office or the Humanitarian Response website.
For questions on UNHCR datasets, contact UNHCR DPSM / FICCS at: mapping@unhcr.org