

United Nations
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
Ref.



Guideline

Survey of Surveys

DRAFT

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Approval date: *xx October 2011*

Contact: *Chief, ISS/CISB*

Review date: *xx October 2013*

GUIDELINE ON SURVEY OF SURVEYS

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A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this guideline is to outline the key components of the Survey of Surveys (SoS). The SoS is a registry of the various assessments that have taken place in a given emergency that is compiled by OCHA with the intention of allowing the humanitarian community to benefit from the assessment work of other groups. Additionally, the SoS allows for the identification of gaps in assessment coverage (by geography, sector, and/or time period). This guideline is intended to define the SoS dataset and related information products in order to increase standardization and predictability of the SoS globally, while still allowing flexibility to adapt the contents of the SoS to the local operational context.

B. SCOPE

This guideline applies to OCHA at the country level and should be of interest to Information Management Officers (IMOs) tasked with creating or maintaining OCHA's core information products. Others in OCHA or the humanitarian community who are involved in planning assessments or monitoring and evaluation activities may also find the guideline relevant. Adherence to this guideline is strongly recommended for predictability. However, flexibility in the application of the guidance to meet country specific, operational needs is acceptable.

C. RATIONALE

The SoS is part of the minimum set of predictable, standardized information products to be produced by OCHA at the country level in collaboration with the cluster/sectors¹. However, the contents, technical approach, and visualizations of the SoS used by various offices vary greatly. As OCHA seeks to standardize and make predictable the information management protocols and products employed globally, it has recognized that some guidelines are needed. At the same time, flexibility must be maintained so that the SoS can be adapted to the operational requirements of a given office.

¹ Operational Guidance on Responsibilities of Cluster/Sector Leads & OCHA in Information Management: <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/downloaddoc.aspx?docID=4911&type=pdf>

Additionally, by allowing the identification of assessment gaps (in geography, sectors, and/or time periods) the SoS is a key component when planning assessments to support the consolidated appeal process or other planning processes. It is also a component of the workflows being developed by the IASC's Needs Assessment Task Force². As SoS becomes integrated into other workflows within OCHA and the humanitarian community, the need for standardization and predictability increases.

D. GUIDELINES

Data, Metadata and Information Products

It is important to make distinctions among assessment data, metadata that describes an assessment, and the information products derived from the assessment data. **The SoS does not attempt to hold the actual assessment results, but rather to serve as a registry of information that describes the assessments.** This is the metadata. Collectively, the metadata about all the assessments registered in the SoS form a dataset. The dataset can be thought of as a table in which each record (or row) represents a survey and each field (or column) represents a piece of metadata about the survey (such as the sector, location, date, etc.). This dataset can be presented in various information products depending on the kind of questions that users need the dataset to answer.

Key Metadata Elements

The key metadata elements for the SoS that should be included in any implementation are listed in the table below. While more may be added, increasing the information required to submit an assessment to the SoS may decrease the number of assessments included or the frequency of updates. The fields included here are only those that are essential for using the SoS in gap analysis and allowing users to access individual assessments identified from the SoS.

Definition of an Assessment

One of the potential complications of the SoS is that a single assessment activity may actually generate multiple datasets. For example, if an assessment generated health-related data in districts A, B, and C and education-related data in Districts B, C, and D, it is difficult to represent them in one SoS record. In these cases, the assessment should be represented using multiple records to reflect the distinct geographic and sectoral coverages.

² IASC Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crisis: <http://onerresponse.info/resources/NeedsAssessment/publicdocuments/Operational%20Guidance%20for%20Endorsement%20-%20Final%20Version.pdf>

	Dataset Element	Description and Implementation
	Title of the assessment	Text field for the name of the assessment
Sectorial Information	Clusters/Sectors covered by the assessment	Multi-select field listing the clusters/sectors defined for the emergency. Depending on the solution used to visualize the data, it may be necessary to have multiple pick-list fields, each allowing the selection of one of the clusters/sectors.
	Subsectors covered by the assessment	In its most simple form, this is an optional text field allowing users to provide sub-sectorial detail. More sophisticated implementations will include context sensitive pick-lists which appear with the relevant sub-sectors when the cluster/sector field is completed.
Methods	Unit of Measure	If the assessment is a structured survey, this is a text or pick-list field indicating the unit of measure represented by each data point in the assessment. For example, household, settlement, and individual could all be valid values. Note that it is common for there may be no consistent unit of measure in an assessment conducted during the early phases of a sudden onset emergency.
	Methodology	A text field for describing the method by which the assessment was conducted.
Location Information	Location of the assessment	To allow mapping (either geographic or in a matrix) of the assessments, it is critical that the location information be tied to the CODs for Administrative Boundaries and (potentially) the Populated Places COD. As such the field(s) capturing this data must be well structured. In its most simple form, this data element may be captured by a single pick-list field which contains a concatenation of every possible combination of all admin levels deemed relevant for the SOS. The drawback to this approach is that it requires the user to enter the same survey multiple times for each of the lowest-level admin units (or populated places) covered by the assessment. A more sophisticated relational database implementation of the SoS would allow the user to add an unlimited number of location records to a given survey. See note below on geographic complications.
	More details about the location	This is an optional text field which may be required to allow the entry of specific location details that may not be captured in the "Location of the assessment" data element, such as neighborhoods or other geographic references that may not be captured in the Admin Boundaries or Populated Places COD. See note below on geographic complications.
Date and Status Information	Status of the assessment	A pick-list of Planned, Ongoing, Field-work Completed, Report Completed
	Starting date of the assessment	Date field for the starting date or intended starting date of a planned assessment
	Ending date of the assessment	Date field for the ending date or intended ending date of a planned assessment
	Frequency	If the assessment is intended to be repeating, what is the intended frequency
matin	Accessibility of the report or data	A pick-list of Publicly Available, Available on Request, Restricted Distribution, Not Available
	How to obtain the	A text field for instructions on how to obtain the report or associated

Dataset Element	Description and Implementation
report or data	datasets. Ideally this is a link to a copy of the assessment report and/or datasets on the interagency website for the emergency.
Contact name and telephone	An optional text field for contact name and telephone
Contact email	An optional text field for contact email

Geographical complications may arise when the relevant areas in which assessments are conducted do not correspond to the available admin boundaries or populated places. In urban environments, neighborhoods may be a convenient way for describing the location of an assessment, but there may be no fixed boundary for mapping. In such circumstances, it may be desirable to create an artificial set of admin boundaries for the SoS. However, creating such a dataset may run the risk of humanitarian actors using that dataset to manage their activities, leading to misalignments between national and the various humanitarian data systems.

Information Products Derived from the SoS

Although the SoS may be presented as a table like that described above, such a visualization may not support the kinds of questions users may ask of the SoS. There are two primary use cases that drive the need for the SoS. Each implies a different visualization to satisfy the use case.

- **Use Case 1: Reviewing a geographic area.** The user is seeking information about a particular geographic area. Typically such users are NGOs or other humanitarian actors who are considering working in an area with which they are not familiar. The SoS in this use case serves as a register of previous assessments, allowing the users to identify documents that should be consulted as background to their current efforts. At its most basic, the visualization of the dataset can be a simple table, sorted by geographic, sectorial, and date fields.
- **Use Case 2: Identifying gaps.** The user wants to identify gaps in assessment knowledge. These gaps may be geographic, in which a certain region has not been assessed, sectorial, in which a certain region has not been assessed for particular sectors, or temporal, in which a certain region has not been assessed for particular sectors within some recent time period. For this use case, tabular visualizations of the SoS dataset are particularly cumbersome. A much better approach is to produce a series of maps (or an interactive map) which allows the user to see which administrative units have been covered by an assessment within a given sector within a given time period (usually the last few weeks or months). This use case is particularly relevant as part of assessment planning to support the launch of a new or revised funding appeal.

Roles and Responsibilities in the SoS

The *Operational Guidance on Responsibilities of Cluster/Sector Leads & OCHA in Information Management* specifies that the SoS is the responsibility of the OCHA at the country level, but it is to be produced in collaboration with the clusters/sectors. To further clarify, it is OCHA's responsibility to create and maintain a system for storing the SoS data and to create information products based on it. OCHA also has the responsibility to advocate for the use of the tool and to coordinate networks and information flows for the timely updates of information. Referencing cluster guidance for effective management of information, it is the role of the clusters to provide the metadata about assessments to populate the SoS. Additional key collaborative partners include UNDP/BCPR which rely on this information for Post Disaster/Conflict Needs Assessments (PDNA, PCNA) and UNFPA who are essential partners in demographic data collection and maintenance. These partners have a shared responsibility in advocating for the use of the SoS and providing inputs to the collaborative SoS mechanism.

E. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

COD: Common Operational Datasets. See [IASC Guidelines on Common Operational Datasets \(CODs\) in Disaster Preparedness and Response](#).

F. REFERENCES

Normative or superior references

Operational Guidance on Responsibilities of Cluster/Sector Leads & OCHA in Information Management:

<http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/downloaddoc.aspx?docID=4911&type=pdf>

IASC Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crisis:

<http://onerresponse.info/resources/NeedsAssessment/publicdocuments/Operational%20Guidance%20for%20Endorsement%20-%20%20Final%20Version.pdf>

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

<http://onerresponse.info/resources/imtoolbox/publicdocuments/IASC%20Guidelines%20on%20Common%20Operational%20Datasets%20in%20Disaster%20Preparedness%20and%20Response%201%20Nov.%202010.pdf>

G. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

Monitoring of adherence to this guideline is part of the overall evaluation of a country office's performance on production of the core set of OCHA products. Specific process and impact indicators should be monitored at defined frequencies to monitor the initiation, use and impact of the SoS with appropriate feedback channels in place to adjust the SoS to the needs of a specific operation.

H. DATES

Effective Date: This Guideline is valid as of xx October 2011.

Review Date: This Guideline will be reviewed with the relevant focal points no later than two years from the approval date.

I. CONTACT

The contact for this Guideline is the Chief of Section of ISS/CISB

J. HISTORY

There was no Guideline on the subject prior to this document.

SIGNED:

DATE:

DRAFT