2021 Economic and Social Committee
Humanitarian Affairs Segment
<u>Side-event report</u>

<u>Improving and Safeguarding the Humanitarian Data Ecosystem</u>

<u>OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data, International Organization for Migration, and the International Rescue Committee</u>

<u>Friday 25 June, 12:00 – 13:30 (Geneva time)</u>

Objective: The objective of the side-event was to discuss the opportunities and challenges in improving the global humanitarian data sharing ecosystem, while offering practical solutions and recommendations for the responsible use of data in humanitarian action.

Panel Members

- Moderator: Sandra Hart, Co-Founder, Emerging Impact
- Annalisa Brusati, Director for Country Support, Violence Prevention and Response Unit, International Rescue Committee
- Kendra Derousseau, Country Director, World Vision Vanuatu
- Nuno Nunes, Global Coordinator for the Displacement Tracking Matrix, International Organization for Migration
- Godfrey Takavarasha, Data Manager, OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data

Statements from the Floor were made by:

- Government of the United States of America (UN Office in Geneva)
- Government of Switzerland (UN Office in Geneva)

Main points:

- **Godfrey Takavarasha**: Data gaps in the ecosystem continue to exist despite increasing efforts to ensure that data is shared openly by humanitarian organizations. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed new and persistent gaps in humanitarian data availability; data use varies by country context.
- **Annalisa Brusati:** The push for more and better data collection, sharing, analysis and use must include an equally strong push for data responsibility, security and ethics. The highest standards of confidentiality and consent, and to ensure the rights of clients to own and control their own data, can and must be maintained by all actors who work with clients' data, and without which, we put clients and staff at risk. To ensure that data protection is a fact, not a buzzword, the humanitarian community must invest in: systems that have inter-agency governance, standardization and coordination; data literacy within displaced populations; and strengthened accountability mechanisms across all sectors and areas of expertise.

- **Kendra Derousseau:** Local organizations need a seat at the table from the beginning of emergencies to decide how data collection can be coordinated so that it best matches the country's data ecosystem and context. The time and effort (and associated costs) that go into ensuring that data is synthesized, analysed and put into understandable formats, including by client populations, is onerous to local organizations, especially as demands for data from governments and donors rise.
- **Nuno Nunes:** A data coordination function within the humanitarian inter-agency coordination structure is a necessity more than ever before. With the increasing volume of data generated and the use of advanced technology, humanitarian actors are navigating unchartered territory of increasingly complex implication of data collection, use, and analysis to the affected population. Data coordination function will promote a responsible, coherent, and inclusive country-level data strategy, cooperation, and systems.

Key messages of the side event:

- Filling gaps in critical data should be a top priority for all humanitarian and development actors. Governments, humanitarian organizations, and regional development banks thus need to invest in data collection, data-sharing infrastructure, and the people who manage these processes.
- A data coordination function within the humanitarian inter-agency coordination structure is a necessity more than ever before.
- The push for more and better data collection, sharing, analysis and use must include an equally strong push for data responsibility, security and ethics.
- The humanitarian community must invest in systems that have inter-agency governance, standardization and coordination; data literacy within displaced populations; and strengthened accountability mechanisms across all sectors and areas of expertise.
- Technology – when managed and used appropriately – can make data easier to collect, synthesize, understand, share and access; it can also support better collaboration on sharing of aggregate data for decision-making.
- Data competency – of humanitarians and client populations – is critical to engage responsibly with data and technology.

Additional points raised during the discussion:

There were no questions from the audience due to technical issues.

Outcomes of the side event:

Nothing specific was agreed.

Recording of the side event: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-u5fXmPQNk