

# Humanitarian Services Data Standards for International Humanitarian Response

**Next Call:** To be notified of next call, email [marie@sarapis.org](mailto:marie@sarapis.org)

## **Facilitators:**

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## Goals

1. to strengthen coordination between stakeholders involved in providing technology and/or data on **human services in disaster response and recovery** with the aim of reducing duplication, filling gaps and maximizing collaboration
2. to improve interoperability of tools/data by establishing guidelines/standards around services data

# Participants

## Anyone who should be added?

- Renee Black, PeaceGeeks (facilitator)
- Marie Irvine, Sahana (facilitator)
- Helen Campbell, MapAction
- Per Aarvik, SBTF
- Simon Johnson, British Red Cross
- Devin Balkind, Sahana
- Greg Bloom, Open Referral
- Tim Davies, Practical Participation
- Sara-Jayne Terp, Open Crisis
- Willow Brugh, Aspiration
- David Megginson, UNOCHA
- Edouard Legoupil, UNHCR
- Alexander Bertram, ActivityInfo
- Jake Watson, ServiceInfo
- Mariann Unban, UNHCR
- Andrej Verity, UN-OCHA
- Aidan McGuire, Scraperwiki

# Calls

## Agenda & Notes, 11/06/15

### Problem Statement (DRAFT):

"In a disaster, many established agencies/institutions, tech providers and spontaneous grassroots groups emerge, each seeking to **collect and disseminate directory data** on humanitarian services. Currently, each will collect this information in a **separate data model and format**. **Since there is no widely used standard**, people organize this information in incompatible ways that make it **very difficult to aggregate, organize and synthesize it all into a useful product**.

### As a result of this costly and ineffective status quo:

**People in need** have difficulty discovering and accessing services that can help them live better lives.

**Service providers** struggle to connect clients with other services that can help meet complex needs.

**Decision-makers** are unable to gauge the effectiveness of resource allocation for community health.  
**Innovators** can't find usable, reliable data necessary to develop valuable tools for any of the above"

While some actors will have the capacity to develop relational dataset housed in a database, many other actors will be limited to using spreadsheets as a means for collecting data. **Whatever solution is developed needs to serve the needs of both use cases."**

## Potential Use Cases

- Migrant Crisis
  - Greece, OHI, UNOCHA 3W?

## Next Steps

- **Flat Dataset on the Directory side as a start**
  - M&E as a potential second step
  - Open Referral not Flat, Tim Davies expressed interest in helping convert between flat/structured
    - "Elegant Data" not useful for the field
    - Who is managing human services data?
    - OCHA manages 3W (for coordination)
    - Directory for end users
- **Comparative analysis of fields** (Devin, Simon, Dave)
  - ActivityInfo
  - OHI?
  - Greece 3W?
  - SBTF
  - Others?
- **Who else should be on the call? (wider buy-in)**
  - OCHA, UNHCR, Serviceinfo, IFRC (Renee)
  - Evert Bopp (Sara-Jayne)
  - Community Stakeholder
    - EU Commission Contact (Aidan)
  - Connect with Translators without Borders (MKI)
- **Find better comms channel (again!)**

## Agenda & Notes, 10/19/15

We will use this document for collective note-taking during call

- 1) **Brief introductions of self + project (data or tech)**

- Renee Black
  - PeaceGeeks
  - Products Service Advisor, discovered additional tools
  - Goals for conversation (see below)
  - Compatibility with HXL
- Marie Irvine
  - Sahana/Sarapis
  - Resilience CoLab project, interested in data standards in humanitarian field in general
  - Sahana Refugee deployments
- Devin Balkind
  - Sahana/Sarapis
  - Sahana = software provider, looking into expanding into human services, in US and internationally. Module in development. Needs data model. Working with Greg Bloom of Open Referral
- Alex Bertram
  - Activity Info
  - In Middle East
  - Interested in seeing how they may be able to support
  - preferred the first version of the HXL; less crazy about V2
- Willow Brugh
  - Aspiration
  - Thinking about how these platforms empower the frontline community and those who want to directly support them.
- Tim Davies
  - Open Data Services works on implementation of open data standards. Made focus are [Open Contracting Data Standard](#). Some humanitarian linkages. National Transparency. [International Aid Transparency Initiative](#): looking at where the funding is coming from. Small building blocks. Interoperability when there are different ways for services to be viewed and explored.
  - [Joined up data alliance](#) with HXL etc, conversation between standards groups. Open Data Charter to create a sector-specific guidance for governments around specific standards. Also exploring how Greg Bloom etc's work can be linked into UK efforts. Bridging between complex structured data and spreadsheets you can use when the power's out.
  - Open data services - on implementing open data standards
  - IATI, HXL, etc.
  - intersection between different standards
  - Creating conversation between standards groups
- Per Aarvik, SBTF

- Planning to engage to collate more info on the Refugee Crisis to a central database - need partners to discuss best practise structures for this potential project.
- Sara-Jayne Terp
  - Thoughtworks data scientist, working on tech for good. OpenCrisis: mentored system builds (people, process, tech - tech as a small component) for several orgs, including Columbia SIPA projects.
  - Care very much that we're not imperial when building things (see pro/parap/per model of development). Build things with the community means of communication, needs, environment in mind. Bor

## 2) Goal Overview

- a) to strengthen coordination between stakeholders involved in providing technology and/or data on **human services in disaster response and recovery** with the aim of reducing duplication, filling gaps and maximizing collaboration
- b) to improve interoperability of tools/ data by establishing guidelines/ standards around services data

## 3) Coordination of Service Data/Tech

- **what exists?** see doc [here](#)
  - **Data Models:**
    - GeoJSON - points, polygons, lines
    - what else?
      - Weeell, if we're talking about data formats, you have json, xml, csv, excel, spss, sas, sql, stata
      - If we're talking about maps, we have geojson, kml, topojson, geotiff, shp, wkt
  - **Data standards:**
    - Community resources: [openreferral.org](http://openreferral.org)
    - <http://advisor.unhcr.org/>
    - [HXL](#)
    - [OASIS](#) (e.g. CAP, hospital data standards)
    - [IATI](#) (money)
    - Schema.org - basic building blocks for address, organisation etc.
    - Sphere, PRML, MOAC, etc (see [this](#) and [this](#))
    - [OCDS](#) & CoVE/[Flat Stanley](#)
    - **On the Spreadsheet vs. Structured data debate** - see: <https://github.com/open-contracting/technical-approach> for a discussion of data models and serializations
  - **Tech/Applications:**
    - [Ohana API](#)
    - Sahana
    - [OpenStreetMap]
    - [ActivityInfo](#)
    - ServiceInfo

- MyUNHCR (in development)
- Ushahidi?
- WordPress
- Drupal
- Amani (Drupal based website deployment platform)
- Badging of volunteers
- **what is needed?**
  - Common data standard?
    - Fit w/ HLX? With OASIS etc?
    - (Open Data Services has been working on some tooling to convert from HXL style tagged data to a linked data model based on an OWL ontology - happy to share what we have so far)
    - Is this a good moment to explore open data standards? The MedCrisis gives us a chance to try out a more unified standard. People are already organizing information, they're going to organize it in a silo on an adhoc basis, or in a data sharing community. If we're the data sharing community (we probably are), it behoves us to explore that problem. how do we walk in the direction of interoperability?
      - Can we tap into the backend of things, to see where to condense down?
      - Front-end/back-end common standard (API, Json, etc)
  - **Process?**
    - See [here](#) for example
    - Needs room for local adaptation
    - Move from semantic -> spreadsheet based on usability
    - Reason that working group moved away from semantic models was because no one was using it
    - What is the concrete goal of a data standard?
    - Using ServicesAdvisor as basis?
    - Who bears the **cost** of using/creating the data?
      - simple tags, models, "building blocks", that producers can use while creating/producing data
      - feedback loop
    - Two back-end representatives on call:
      - ActivityInfo
      - Sahana
      - How to tie into front-end, such as ServiceAdvisor?
  - Spreadsheets or no spreadsheets?
    - used 90%+ by grassroots/unpaid/local & digital
    - NGO/institutional level using more sophisticated tools

### 3) Next steps?

- Do we have agreement on potential group tasks/goals?
    - no consensus :)
    - 2 different use cases (enterprise-level, community-level?)
      - Can we build for both?
  - Action items?
  - Next call?
    - **Find better com channel! :)**
- 
- 1) Define problem statement(s) prior to next
    - a) Tim Davis to initiate
  - 2) Define two (?) use cases? Clear descriptions
    - VTC -> Devin
    - ActivityInfo?
    - List the options/strategies for responding
    - List out 'What is happening anyway' - and see how to align existing forward motion;

Comment from Jen Ziemke: Would you all consider opening this up for viewing to the OGC and as well having a conversation with some of the core members/leaders in this org?