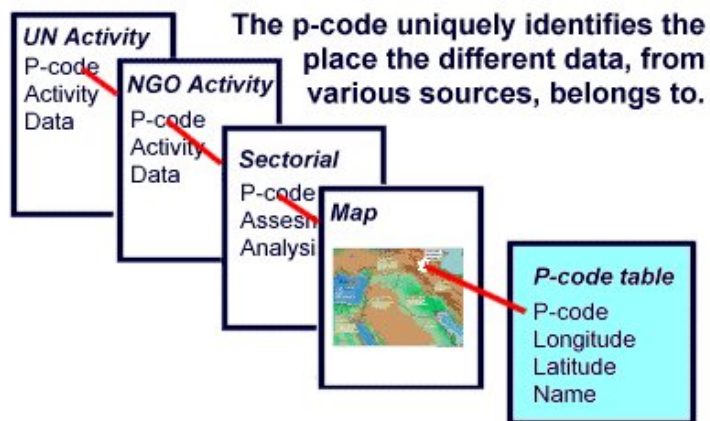


Place-Codes/Geo-Codes – Quick Guide for Cluster Leads

What are P-codes? P-code is an abbreviated term for 'Place Code'. P-codes are similar to zip codes and postal codes and can form part of a data management system that provides unique reference codes to thousands of place locations. These codes provide a systematic means of linking and exchanging data and analysing relationships between them.

Why are P-codes useful? P-codes resolve the basic issue of what we all call a place. Using place-names as identifiers can easily lead to confusion over spelling, different languages or scripts as well as duplication. If agencies develop individual systems for naming or coding places this makes data sharing extremely difficult and huge amounts of potentially useful information go unshared, are manually re-typed or filed and forgotten. Spatial data standards agreed by all agencies provide a single, unified system for referring to locations, allowing the free exchange of data between participating agencies. Any information that is linked to one location with a P-code can be linked and analysed with any other.



Why should my agency use P-codes? P-codes support the predictable and accountable information exchange during an emergency response. It allows clusters to share information available in P-code format, including population, housing damage, agriculture and assistance distribution data. This data can help you to plan your own programmes and avoid repeating surveys already done by others. Agencies using the P-codes for their own data management will be able to combine this information with datasets from other participating organisations.

What about national systems? If a country has already created P-Codes (or equivalent system) it is very important to use their P-Code system so that census and other pre-disaster information can be shared. OCHA should obtain or create a guide showing villages and listing p-codes and share it quickly with the humanitarian community.

How can P-codes be used in my existing databases? In most cases, adoption of P-codes requires only the addition of an extra column to your existing databases and spreadsheets. Over time it is recommended that any other naming or coding systems be phased out and that all new data collection use the P-codes.

Who is responsible for P-codes? In a humanitarian emergency, OCHA is responsible for sourcing P-code information from national authorities, or in the absence of P-codes, creating them. This is usually undertaken in close coordination with technical counterparts within the UN system, as well relevant national authorities.