# RESPONSIBLE DATA - DEFINITIONS

## Key terms for responsible data, data protection, and information security

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## Basics

### Responsible Data at Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps is committed to the protection of personal data for program participants, team members, visitors and partners around the world. The purpose of Mercy Corps’ Responsible Data Policy is to set principles for the transparent, secure and responsible use of personal data across the agency, and incorporating those principles into our daily work.

### Data

Any unit of information, comprised of letters, numbers, symbols, images, or any combination thereof. Data exists in both digital and physical form.

**Data Subject**Any individual who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to Personal Data.

### Personal Data

Personally Identifiable Information (PII) or Demographically Identifiable Information (DII), including information that can be used to identify a Data Subject or any distinct demographic group. Common examples are name, address, phone number, date of birth, and social security or national ID number.

### Sensitive Data

This information is often used as a basis for targeting a particular group or individual. Common examples are race, religion, political opinion, sexual orientation, health or biometric information.

### Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

Information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('Data Subject'); an identifiable person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identification number or to one or more factors specific to their physical, physiological, mental, economic, cultural or social identity.

### Demographically Identifiable Information (DII)

Information that can be used to identify a community or distinct group, whether geographic, ethnic, religious, economic, or political.

### Data Processor

The natural or legal person, public authority, agency or other body who processes the content and use of Personal Data or Personally Identifiable Information, or Demographically Identifiable Information, at the request of the Data Controller. This is regardless of whether or not such data are collected, stored, processed or disseminated by that party or by an agent on its behalf.

### Data Controller

The natural or legal person who, alone or jointly with others, determines the purposes and means for the collection, storing, processing or dissemination of Personal Data or Personally Identifiable Information, or Demographically Identifiable Information.

## Data Approach

**Data Management**Comprises all disciplines and processes relating to the use of data. Underlying assumption: data is a resource worth protecting.

### Legitimate Interest

The lawful basis for processing personal data. Legitimate interest assumes that there is a valid and necessary purpose for processing the data. If an individual exercises their right to data privacy, legitimate interest can be overridden.

### Data Minimization

A data collection approach: gather only the data that is adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the legitimate interest for data processing.

### De-identification

Any data processing activities or methods that work to prevent a Data Subject’s identity from being revealed. Example types: Anonymization and Pseudonymization

### Anonymization

The process by which Personal Data is rendered anonymous, such that a Data Subject is no longer identifiable. Common methods include removing certain amounts of Personal Data, or applying a range of values across certain sets of Personal Data.

**Pseudonymization**  
The processing of personal data in such a manner that the personal data can no longer be attributed to a specific data subject without the use of additional information, provided that such additional information is kept separately and is subject to technical and organisational measures to ensure that the personal data are not attributed to an identified or identifiable natural person.

### Informed Consent

Any freely-given, specific and informed indication of agreement from the Data Subject, with regards to the collection and processing of Personal Data relating to the Data Subject. This agreement may be given either by a written or oral statement or by a clear affirmative action. Agreement must be obtained at the time of Personal Data collection, or as soon as reasonably possible thereafter.

## Data Resources

### Data Sharing Agreement (DSA)

An agreement between Mercy Corps and a Third Party, which states the terms and conditions of use of Personal Data, including which data components are to be shared, the mode of transfer, how the data may be used, data security measures and other related issues.

### Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA)

A process which assists organizations in identifying and managing privacy risks associated with any new activity, such as new programs, technology, or policies.

### Subject Access Request

The process by which a Data Subject would request to look at, request changes to, or erasure of their Personal Data and supplementary information.

## Legal Framework

### General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

The General Data Protection Regulation is a regulation in EU law on data protection and privacy in the European Union (EU) and the European Economic Area (EEA). The GDPR aims primarily to give control to individuals over their personal data and to simplify the regulatory environment for international business by unifying the regulation within the EU, as well as data transfer to non-EU countries.

### Data Protection Officer (DPO)

Under Article 37 of GDPR, if an organization collects or processes the personal data of EU citizens, the organization must appoint a Data Protection Officer. DPOs work to ensure their organization is compliant with GDPR and following best practices in data protection and privacy.

Mercy Corps Europe has a DPO, and they can be reached at [mce-dataprotection@mercycorps.org](mailto:mce-dataprotection@mercycorps.org). At the time of this writing, Mercy Corps Global does not have a DPO, but you can reach the team at [dataprotection@mercycorps.org](mailto:dataprotection@mercycorps.org).

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Mercy Corps is a leading global organization   
powered by the belief that a better world is   
possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than   
40 countries around the world, we partner to put   
bold solutions into action — helping people triumph   
over adversity and build stronger communities   
from within. Now, and for the future.



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