INFORM Global Crisis Severity Index (GCSI)

Beta version

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the GCSI?

The INFORM Global Crisis Severity Index (GCSI) is an improved, timely way of measuring the severity of humanitarian crises and disasters globally. The GCSI is a sensitive, regularly updated, and easily interpreted model for measuring crisis severity that can assist decision-makers and contribute to improved effectiveness and coordination in humanitarian action. The GCSI data are free and open to all.

Why do we need the GCSI?

Humanitarian actors make strategic decisions about which crisis to allocate resources to. The GCSI seeks to contribute an improved method for quantitatively measuring crisis severity, which can enhance the range and usefulness of information available to decision-makers. Existing methods of measuring crisis severity are not widely adopted and face a number of technical challenges. The primary advantage of the GCSI is that it allows measurement of severity against an objective, common scale.

Where does the data used in the GCSI come from?

The GCSI aggregates information from a range of credible, publicly available sources, such as UN agencies, governments and other multilateral organisations. This includes for example the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and Integrated Food Security Phase classification (IPC) where available. Expert judgement is involved in deciding what data to include. A confidence level estimate is provided for each crisis.

How is the GCSI score calculated?

The GCSI is a composite index, which brings together 31 indicators impacting severity, organized in three dimensions: impact, conditions of affected people and complexity of the crisis. All the indicators are scored on a scale of 1–5. These scores are then aggregated into the overall severity score.

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If you have comments or questions about the INFORM GCSI, you can send them to:

contact@inform-index.org

What are the limitations of the GCSI?

Humanitarian crises are by definition extremely complex and therefore any attempt to model them is a simplification of reality. The choice of indicators to represent severity is subjective, the quality of data is variable and comparable data is not always available between crises. These limitations result in uncertainty, which limit the accuracy of the final result. Therefore, we have chosen to present a categorisation of crises – all crises fall into one of five categories. Secondly, in any crisis there will be a range of conditions experienced by the affected people. Some individuals will be extremely severely affected and require assistance, even in a crisis that is not assessed as extremely severe overall.

How should the GCSI be used?

The GCSI should be used to support decisions that require an understanding of the severity of crises globally. The GCSI can also be used to understand changes in crisis severity over time. The GCSI should not be used for decisions about the detailed response to a specific crisis. All crises are different, with different levels and types of need and different response strategies and costs. Crisis-specific information should be used to support response-decisions. The GCSI does not replace, and in fact relies on, this information.

Who developed and publishes the GCSI?

The GCSI has been developed by a technical working group, guided by a larger group of organisations convened under the INFORM initiative. It is based on a review of existing tools, two technical workshops, development of a prototype in 2017, and data collection and cleaning of data for a subset of 26 crises and extended testing and adjustment of the prototype model during 2018. ACAPS – an INFORM technical partner – is responsible for collection, cleaning, analysis and input of data into the model and the production of the final results.

How often will the GCSI be updated?

The GCSI will be updated every 3 months, and possibly monthly to include new crises. The GCSI will include all major crises and inclusion of a crisis in the GCSI will be based on pre-defined thresholds.

What is the implementation plan for the GCSI?

Results of the GCSI will be published as a beta version during 2019. This year will be used to test the process for production of the GCSI, get feedback from users, make further refinements to the methodology, and improve documentation and messaging. The results of the GCSI will be publically available during this time on the INFORM website and in ACAPS website.

What is the relatio etween the GCSI with other INFORM products and the ACAPS Crisis InSight?

The INFORM GCSI measures the severity of an existing crisis. The INFORM Global Risk Index (GRI) measures the risk of a crisis or disaster occurring in a country in the future. ACAPS CrisisInSight combines the results of the GCSI with ACAPS qualitative analysis and a forward-looking scan for risks.

What is the relationship between GCSI and the Humanitarian Programme Cycle?

In countries where it exists, information generated as part of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, especially the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), is used in the GCSI. The HNO and resulting Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) include identified needs, agreed response strategies, and costs. They remain the primary source of information for response decisions about a specific crisis. In 2019, there are country-level HRPs and similar response plans covering 26 countries, whereas the GCSI covers over different 100 crises.

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