2022-2024 CartONG Strategy

SUPPORTING HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ACTORS TO FACE THE DATA CHALLENGES OF AN EVOLVING SECTOR

Abridged version
December 2021

RATIONALE

Since the publication of CartONG's Associative Project in June 2019, there had been **a strong desire to work on a strategic document that would help guide the association's future actions** while offering enough flexibility to adapt to new constraints or opportunities. After 15 years of existence, this momentum was seen as **a new step** of a larger consolidation and development process for the organization.

Staying true to its values, CartONG therefore started to work on its very first multi-year strategy in November 2019 using a collaborative approach. The final document, formally approved during the General Assembly of June 2021, thus represents the **collective vision and ambition** of CartONG's employees, members, volunteers and Board members for the next three years.

WHO ARE WE?

CartONG is a H2H (Humanitarian to Humanitarian) support NGO specialized in Information Management (IM) and which aims to put data – in particular geographic data – at the service of humanitarian, development and social action projects. Our work is dedicated to better understanding the challenges faced in field environments and to improve the quality and accountability of field activities, especially through better needs assessment and monitoring and evaluation.

As a multidisciplinary resource and expertise center, we support our partners' organizational strategies and field operations across the whole range of Information Management expertise.

Our teams also support the sector as a whole by producing documentation, building capacity and raising awareness about the technical, strategic and ethical challenges of digital technologies.

Created in 2006 and based in Chambéry, CartONG is a French non-profit organization.

We have endorsed the Principles for Digital Development and are members of the H2H and Coordination Sud networks - via the CHD.

PREPARING CARTONG TO FACE THE FUTURE CHALLENGES OF THE SECTOR

The localization of aid, which has been underway for several years now, has brought considerable changes for the entire sector. For international NGOs in particular, the main challenge is to navigate the redistribution of fundings, remain flexible, and tackle the redefining of the landscape in terms of partnerships.

As donors require aid actors to conform with an ever more complex set of standards and guidelines, access to funding is also becoming more complicated for small and medium-sized organizations. The Covid-19 pandemic has once again highlighted the importance of local actors and their key role in the implementation of humanitarian action.

This new context offers a unique opportunity to create or redefine partnerships between international and local actors – with local actors taking more responsibility (regarding data, e.g. by managing data collection in the field) and international NGOs focusing more on transferring skills and building consortia capable of capitalizing on the diversity of their members.

In addition, our consultations with partners reaffirmed that there is a real benefit for CartONG to work closely with communities on the ground.

CartONG wishes to consider new alliances and intervention modes, building on its solid experience in capacity building and cooperation with actors in the field.

Central theme of Strategic Area 1.

Growing insecurity in the field and increasingly complex and protracted crises call for a change in the way the aid sector operates.

Developing long-term exit strategies, focusing on community resilience and building the capacities of local responders is more than ever the key to an efficient and relevant humanitarian action.

This creates challenges - in the face of institutional gaps, lack of funding, cultural differences... - making collaboration and information sharing essential for a sustainable impact.

This is both an opportunity for actors such as CartONG who already promotes these approaches through their very work, and a challenge as these improvements require long-term change management, not always compatible with the need to react urgently.

Participatory methods are an asset for including communities and social actors in the early stages of program design, even though this means moving away from traditional project management approaches.

CartONG wishes to build on the work already undertaken in favor of collaborative approaches and information sharing. It will also be about using a more human-centric approach to better meet the needs of Information Management practitioners, while CartONG develops or expands its activities on a list of thematic topics considered as key.

Central theme of Strategic Area 2.

All sectors of activity - including the aid sector - are facing challenges related to data and the ever-evolving digital world. In the aid sector in particular, the critical need for data often collides with issues such as data quality, infobesity, digital inclusion, limited data literacy, questions relating to the environmental impact of technologies or the ethical aspects of some of the sector's data practices.

These challenges are all the more problematic due to the lack of significant investment in the topic by humanitarian and development actors, meaning that CartONG's experience and expertise is a real asset.

Defining a responsible level of use of technologies, and proposing it to all concerned stakeholders, as well as making the sector's practices evolve towards responsible data management are central issues we are therefore already confronted with.

To remain credible as a digital expert, such a situation requires CartONG to continue to develop and adapt its fields of expertise to reflect the evolutions of the digital world and the aid sector; thus also proving its added value as a H2H support organization in comparison with the private sector, that is increasing its involvement in aid projects.

CartONG wishes to strengthen its expertise by additional training for its team, systematizing technological watch and developing new skills and competences at an organizational level, while continuing to rely on its excellent integration with and knowledge of the sector.

Central theme of Strategic Area 3.

OUR ROLE

CartONG supports humanitarian, development and social action actors in meeting the new challenges of Information Management in an evolving sector, while ensuring that their activities comply with responsible data management practices.

◆ We accompany them - first and foremost - using our expertise in the entire Information Management chain, which includes: defining data needs, planning the entire data cycle responsibly, implementing the data collection, structuring and storing data, making it available for visualization, analysis and sharing purposes, and ensuring its retention, archiving and destruction at the end of its life cycle.

◆ We provide services ranging from direct support to field operations to supporting organizational strategies, as well as knowledge and capacity building by advising on, applying and/or developing innovative tools, solutions and methodologies adapted to the needs of our partners.
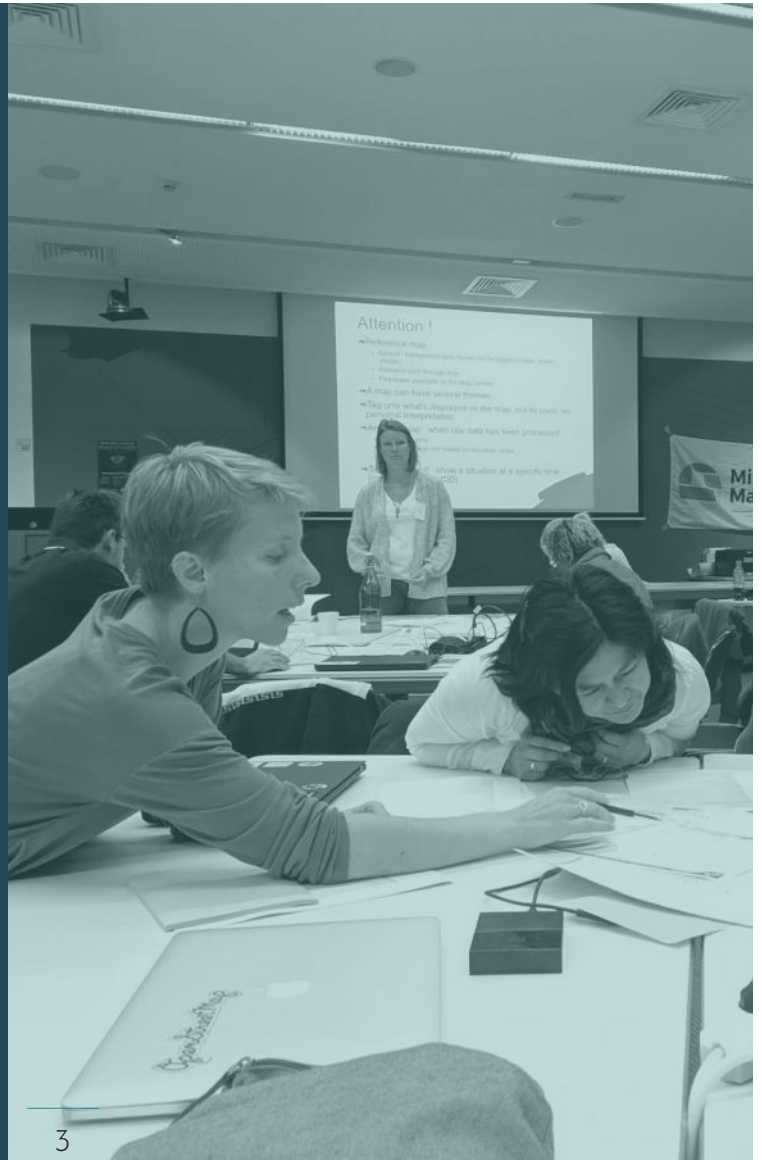
The strategic areas and objectives chosen by CartONG echo the challenges we are facing.

They are meant to help CartONG advance forward and upward, on both operational and organizational levels, while allowing us to retain core elements of our organizational culture, such as our values and the way we work.

◆ Strategic Area 1

Make organizations as well as local communities more autonomous in their use of Information Management technologies and processes.

What we're aiming for

To help humanitarian, development and social action actors – in particular local organizations and communities – navigate the world of Information Management.

1.1 INCREASE the number of projects and the diversity of partnerships supporting local organizations and communities.

1.2 BUILD, disseminate and promote effective and useful training methods and learning materials.

1.3 EXPLORE and formalize technical collaborations and exchanges with other organizations, networks and working groups.

1.4 POSITION ourselves and raise awareness on topics related to our areas of work, in particular, **responsible data management** and **Open Data**.

◆ Strategic Area 2

Take a human-centric approach to better respond to the needs of Information Management practitioners, especially in the field.

What we're aiming for

To better understand the needs of Information Management practitioners, particularly in the field, to ensure any tools, products or processes CartONG designs, sets up or recommends are best suited to the contexts in which they are intended to be used.

2.1 IMPLEMENT a more systematic approach to using human-centered and agile methods in our projects to better meet the needs of partners and practitioners.

2.2 INCREASE our use of participatory and collaborative methodologies to involve stakeholders and beneficiaries wherever possible.

2.3 DEVELOP activities on **key topics** as well as **key technologies and approaches**, in partnership whenever possible.

TOPICS ◆

Protection

Climate change

Resilience in urban contexts

TECHNOLOGIES & APPROACHES ◆

Low tech

Remote sensing

Participatory mapping methods

Monitoring & Evaluation

Open Data

Responsible data management

❖ Strategic Area 3

Stay on top of technologies to continue to fulfill our role as a technical support organization.

What we're aiming for

To ensure that our team remains at the forefront of technologies, methodologies and processes related to our field of expertise, whether it be new technologies and tools available on the market, or continuing to work with the low-tech tools used by the majority of humanitarian and development organizations in the field.

3.1 ENSURE the exploration of technologies and methodologies can be sufficiently pursued.

3.2 STRENGHTEN and systematize our technical testing and quality control methods.

3.3 STRUCTURE our experience sharing and transversal activities, in order to improve our internal learning.

❖ Strategic Area 4

Reinforce our organization to support the strategic areas.

This fourth and final strategic area stands apart from the other three.

It aims to **SOLIDIFY THE FOUNDATIONS OF CartONG** - still a young organization - in terms of its governance, management, human resources (staff and volunteer), business model, monitoring and evaluation and IT infrastructure.

This internal consolidation effort aims at making sure CartONG can implement its ambitions in the long-run, while preserving its values and identity.

WHAT ABOUT OUR VALUES? ❖

HUMAN-CENTRIC & AGILITY

These first two values guide much of our organization's approach. We have devoted the entirety of strategic area 2 to them.

COLLABORATION

Whether it is in the way we operate internally, implement our projects, or approach our support to humanitarian, development and social actors, collaboration is at the core of all four strategic areas.

PROFESSIONALISM

Strategic areas 3 and 4 underline our willingness to invest so that our team stabilizes and continues to develop its expertise.

AUTONOMY

This is what we hope to achieve for all Information Management practitioners out there, as illustrated in strategic area 1.

CONNECTEDNESS

We address this in strategic area 4, by building our community and embodying the CartONG spirit.

OUR ASSETS

◆ **15 years of expertise** in Information Management in support of humanitarian, development and - more recently - social action actors, whether at headquarters or in the field.

◆ A deep conviction that what sets us apart is a strength: a strong emphasis on **capacity-building** - the key to real autonomy for the actors CartONG supports - and on **collaboration**, by co-producing resources and services for instance, by organizing experience-sharing events such as the GeOnG or via our membership to many networks, working groups and communities of practice.

◆ An ability to make every effort to ensure the **sustainability of our actions**, which is achieved through the **quality of the support** we provide and the **special attention paid to the end user** of the solutions we propose or develop.

◆ A team that combines **advanced technical skills** in mapping, Geographic Information Systems, Mobile Data Collection and data processing, with a deep understanding and **command of key Information Management transversal topics** and **innovative methodologies** such as Open Data, responsible data management, the Agile methodology, and participatory and subjective mapping.

◆ A continued willingness to support **actors of all sizes**, even going so far as to offer *pro bono* support to the smallest organizations with the help of our **fantastic community of volunteers**.

More info at:

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