

COMMUNITY REPORT ON MERCY CORPS' DATA PROTECTION & PRIVACY GUIDES

OCTOBER, 2022

Background

In June, Mercy Corps released a series of [Data Protection and Privacy Guides](#), under open license, to help staff and partners better understand and implement responsible data practices. While the guides are primarily a Mercy Corps' resource, we are interested in collaborating with others to expand and maintain the material in the commons for the benefit of the wider humanitarian and responsible data communities. **This report is the first step to continue this discussion with a community call to help decide the future of the DPP Guides.** As promised during the release of the Guides at Rightscon, information regarding the call will be advertised via the Responsible Data Forum mailing list. You can sign up for the list here: https://lists.theengineerroom.org/lists/info/responsible_data.

Questions we will ask about the guides during the community call include should they remain in the commons? Are others interested in contributing to them as well as using them? Is there interest in building a community of practice around responsible data training in organizations? Whatever your interest in responsible data or cybersecurity, we'd love to see you there!

Below we describe some outcomes and what we've learned about adoption (or at least viewership) of the Guides in the first few months following their release. This information, along with the upcoming community call, will help guide our strategy for the guides moving forward.

Overview of the Guides

The DPP guides combine Mercy Corps policies and guidance with new content such as videos and tutorials for practical use cases on topics ranging from encryption and de-identification, to privacy impact assessments. The guides are available in a variety of formats and languages, [all of which can be accessed here](#). The guides are meant to accompany and incorporate, not duplicate, many great toolkits that are already available, such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies [Data Playbook](#); the Engine Room's [Handbook of the Modern Development Specialist](#); Cash Learning Partnership's [Data Responsibility Toolkit](#); and others.



Outcomes so far:

We launched the guides at RightsCon with a community feedback session and have continued to socialize them extensively over the last four months. To gauge adoption, we have conducted focus groups and interviewed users, tracked views, downloads, and engagement across internal and external social media. The reaction to the guides has been overwhelmingly positive: they have been the basis for Mercy Corps trainings and been included in standard operating procedures in two countries. While social media engagement has been modest by most standards, the guides are being viewed and downloaded at the same rate as some of the most core documentation for the entire organization.

What have we learned so far?

- Users really appreciate having videos and even non-native English speakers consider them a useful accompaniment to the written material.
- Having explicit use-cases and tutorials rather than just high-level guidance has been extremely useful for users.
- Users often request more broad responsible data and cybersecurity information that is already broadly available (e.g. multi-factor authentication) or information that is outside the scope of the guides (e.g. blockchain, AI, etc). While we do link out to more in-depth resources for this type of material in each guide, users often don't realize this or follow the links. Thinking through how best to frame the scope of these guides, and more directly link them to the Mercy Corps context is an area for improvement.
- Connecting the guides to programmatic guidance such as deciding when you need data, what you need to collect it, how consent is obtained would be helpful for many users.
- Open licensing and the use of Github for unbranded content has been lauded, but also creates barriers and usability issues. Many viewers would prefer to access unbranded content via a website or via documents in the cloud using Dropbox, Google Drive, or similar. Those viewers who are willing to contribute content or perform content review would rather do so via Google docs or similar.

If you're working on issues related to the intersection of responsible data and the humanitarian sector, we'd love to hear from you! Email us at [dataprotection\[at\]mercycorps\[dot\]org](mailto:dataprotection[at]mercycorps[dot]org).

We want to express our thanks to...

The great folks at [the Engine Room](#), [Linda Raftree](#), the whole crew at the [MERL Center](#), [Mala Kumar](#) and [Cynthia Lo](#) at Github, [Stu Campo](#) and [team at HDX / OCHA](#), [Heather Leson](#) at IFRC, and [Rakesh Bharania](#). Thanks for taking the time to speak with us and share your own stories about creating guides and supporting material for responsible data!

Early Stage Monitoring & Evaluation

We are still exploring how best to define the “success” of the guides over time. However, we have developed early stage monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to understand the initial reaction to the guides and how we might improve them.

Based on overall downloads and social media views, our DPP Guides have proven popular and are being widely used in comparison to other core Mercy Corps documents, which often have between two and three hundred downloads. Our social media posts on YouTube and Workplace have been viewed almost 3 thousand times and the total number of downloads – via both internal and publicly available Digital Library links – is at 2,165. According to these statistics, the Guides are being downloaded at the level of core essential documents for the agency.

FIGURE 1: VIEWS AND DOWNLOADS BY GUIDE TOPIC

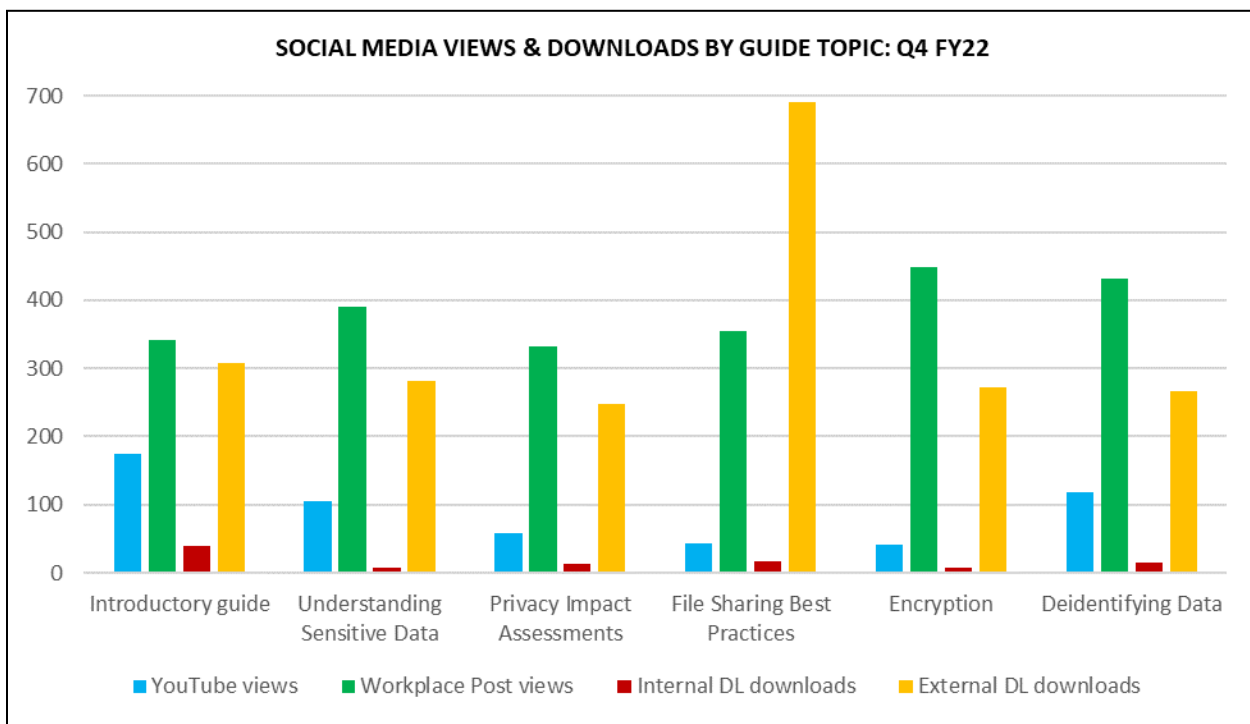


Figure 1 shows downloads and views, by individual guide, across four channels: YouTube, internal Workplace posts, downloads via Mercy Corps’s Digital Library by internal link and external link.

FIGURE 2: DOWNLOADS OF ALL GUIDES, VIA PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE LINK, BY LANGUAGE

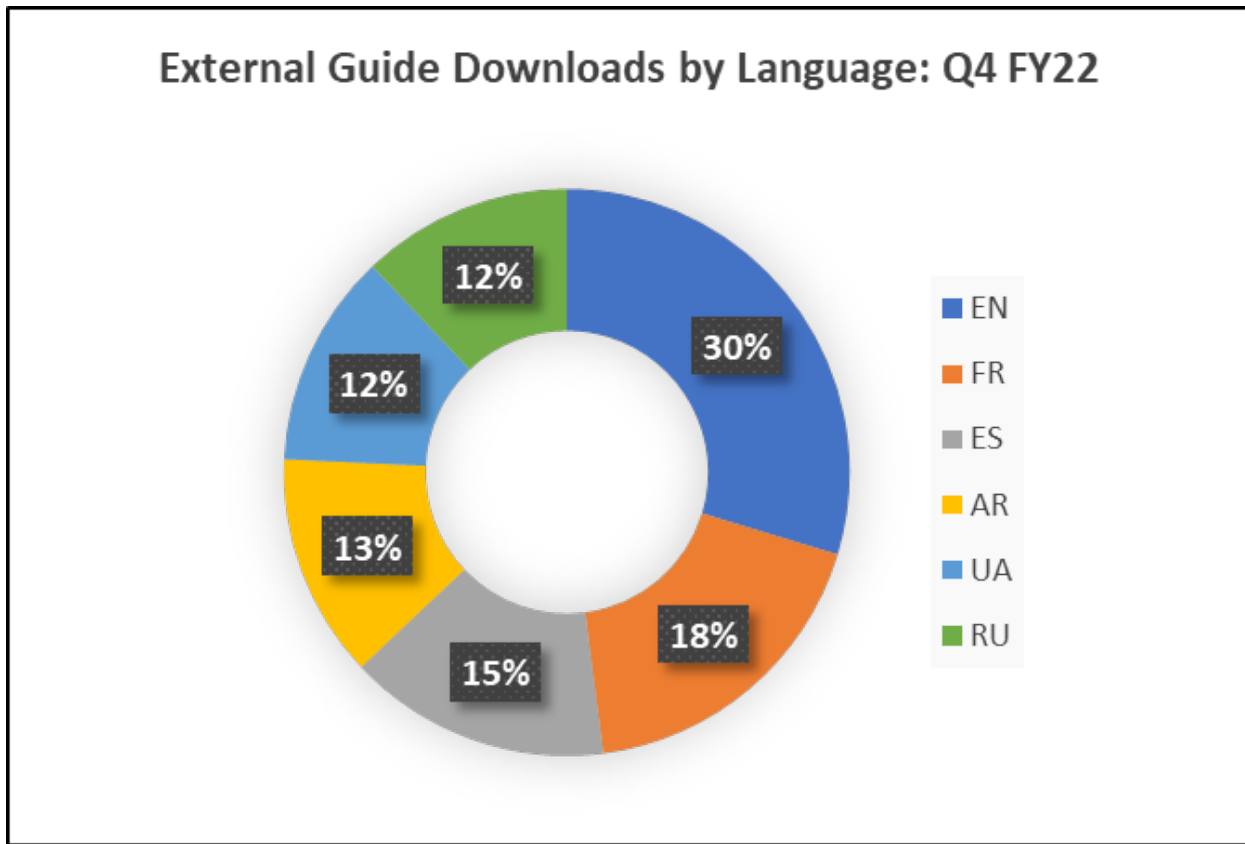


Figure 2 shows the total download of all guides available via external (public) Digital Library link broken out by language. It is notable that while English (EN) documents saw the most downloads, the remaining translations, French (FR), Spanish (ES), Arabic (AR), Russian (RU), and Ukrainian (UK) make up roughly two-thirds of all downloads and show a relatively even distribution of downloads among languages.

FIGURE 3: DOWNLOADS OF ALL GUIDES, VIA INTERNAL (MERCY CORPS STAFF ONLY) LINK, BY LANGUAGE

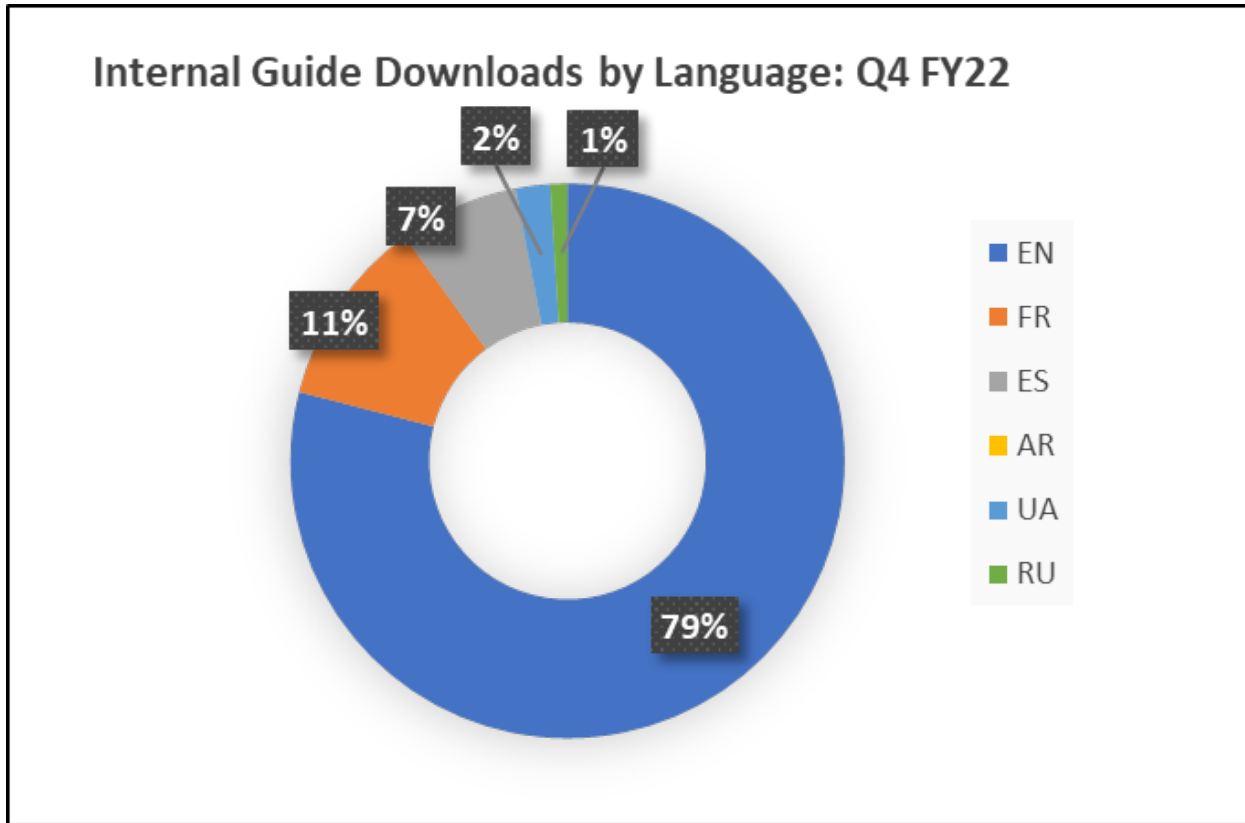


Figure 3 shows the total download of all guides available via internal (Mercy Corps staff only) Digital Library link broken out by language. It is notable that, as opposed to the externally available documents, internal downloads are almost entirely in English (EN) and that the remaining translations, French (FR), Spanish (ES), Russian (RU), and Ukrainian (UK) show great disparity in use and that no Arabic (AR) documents have been downloaded via internal link.

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ABOUT MERCY CORPS

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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