Toolkit for
MAINSTREAMING COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITIES
in Emergency Response

CONTENTS

Acronyms and **ABBREVIATIONS**

CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard
CPP	Cyclone Preparedness Program
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
CwC	Communication with Communities
DMA	Disaster Mitigation Act
HCTT	Humanitarian Country Task Team
HPC	Humanitarian Program Cycle
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plans
JNA	Joint Needs Assessment
NFI	Non-Food Items
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SOD	Standing Orders on Disaster
UN	United Nations
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene

1. BACKGROUND

In the context of humanitarian action, Communication with Communities (CwC) refers to activities where the exchange of information is used to save lives and mitigate risks of the disaster affected community[1]. It also enables greater accountability in humanitarian organizations and facilitates the designing of a response according to the needs of the community. CwC initiatives also cater to the communication and information needs of the people caught up in conflicts, natural disasters and other crises. Without access to the right information at the right time, disaster survivors cannot access the help they need, make informed decisions or be effective leaders in their own recovery [2].

Two-way communication is an integral part of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS). However, CwC may still not seem to be an area of priority for responding organizations. Therefore, awareness about the importance of CwC interventions is needed. Integrating CwC into programming will improve the program quality and also fulfill the CHS elements that humanitarians are obliged to respect. Communication between agencies and crisis-affected people is also an important element as it ensures accountability and participation.

In view of the above, an attempt has been made by Action against Hunger and Shongjog members to develop this toolkit to integrate CwC throughout the humanitarian program cycle in order to address the communication needs of people affected by crises. The content of this toolkit has been prepared after consulting with a number of humanitarian practitioners and it will be reviewed and updated from time to time.

1.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE TOOLKIT

The overall objective of this toolkit is to guide policy actors and practitioners of national and international humanitarian agencies, donor communities, private sector entities, government ministries and departments to adapt CwC for the development of an appropriate disaster affected community-centered communication strategy throughout the project cycle and integrate it into policies, priorities and practices.

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[1]Definition and Key Messages to Support Advocacy and Action for Communication with Communities. Available at http://www.comminit.com/global/content/definition-and-key-messages-support-advocacy-and-action-communication-communities

[2]Communicating with Communities: Experiences from Asia-Bangladesh-Myanmar-Philippines. Available at http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Communicating%20with%20Communities%20Infographic%20Regional.pdf

2. UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITIES (CWC)

2.1 WHAT DO WE UNDERSTAND BY CWC?

Communication with Communities (CwC) is an emerging field of humanitarian response that helps to meet the information and communications needs of people affected by crises[3]. It is a process that provides life-saving, useful and actionable information to communities, and uses or establishes two-way communication channels to listen to their needs, concerns, feedback and complaints, ensuring that they actively participate and guide the emergency response[4].

Information and communication are critical to ensure that disaster affected people are at the center of humanitarian action[5]. Along with food, water and safety, having the right information at the right time helps empower the affected community to mitigate their risks and distress at the time of the disaster. They can make informed decisions to steer themselves and their close ones away from harm's way and actively participate in building their resilience to such calamities.

The two-way communication aspect of the CwC approach helps to utilize the benefits of community wisdom when solving the problems of the affected community. Furthermore, it helps to shape the emergency response by integrating feedback from the community, thereby ensuring that the aid provided to the community is need-based and effective. Ultimately, CwC helps to meet the essential elements of accountable and high-quality humanitarian action that has been described in commitment 4 and 5 of the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS). The commitments and quality criteria state that it must be ensured that the affected communities are aware of their rights and entitlements, have access to information and are given the opportunity to participate in the decisions affecting them[6]. Additionally, they should have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaint. Therefore, CwC ensures that information needs and the promotion of greater dialogue with the community are priortized through out the program cycle, thereby creating an environment of greater trust and accountability between aid providers and affected communities.

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[3]OCHA on Message: Communications with Communities. http://reliefweb.int/report/world/ocha-message-communications-communities

[4]Joint international Red Cross and Red Crescent movement paper on the grand bargain. http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Documents/Secretariat/201605/Grand_Bargain_RCMov_Paper-vf.pdf

[5]Practice Brief: Communicating with Communities during the First Six Weeks of an Emergency Response. http://www.cdacnetwork.org/contentAsset/raw-data/3b8afbbf-d9de-4a0e-be3f-71bd36ef030f/attachedFile

[6]Core Humanitarian Standard on quality and accountability. https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/

2.2 WHY IS CWC A CRITICAL COMPONENT IN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE?

The role and importance of effective communication with crisis-affected people has grown significantly in recent years, driven by the proliferation of accountability initiatives within the humanitarian sector[7]. CwC is based on the principle that information and communication are critical forms of aid. **Without information and communication, affected people can neither access services to make the best decisions for themselves and their communities; nor can they hold aid agencies to account.** When people are given the opportunity to voice their opinions and provide feedback, this enhances their sense of well-being, helps them the mitigate the challenges they face, and better enables them to take an active role in their own recovery[8].

In the Context of an Emergency Response, Putting CwC at the Center will Ensure that it:

- Saves life
- Gives crisis affected populations a voice
- Holds relief providers to account
- Facilitates dialogue between responders and affected communities
- Helps to ensure community complexity is understood and manages community expectations
- Promotes self-help within the affected communities
- Helps address rumors and misinformation
- Provides psychosocial protection
- Helps to recognize community capabilities and needs
- Helps to build and maintain partnerships
- Empowers local action
- Helps to leverage and strengthen social infrastructure, networks and assets

Adapted from: A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action.

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[7]Improving communication between aid agencies and crisis-affected people: Lessons from the infoasaid project. http://odihpn.org/resources/improving-communication-between-aid-agencies-and-crisis-affected-people-lessons-from-the-infoasaid-project/

[8]Practice Brief: Communicating with Communities during the First Six Weeks of an Emergency Response. http://www.cdacnetwork.org/contentAsset/raw-data/3b8afbbf-d9de-4a0e-be3f-71bd36ef030f/attachedFile

2.3 WHO IS THIS TOOLKIT FOR?

This toolkit is intended primarily for Shongjog members as well as for government agencies, aid providers, the humanitarian community and private sector entities, technical working groups and others involved in humanitarian communications. Additionally, any humanitarian practitioner or implementing organization that is working to ensure the consistent integration of Communication with Communities in their projects can benefit from using this toolkit.

2.4 HOW CAN THIS TOOLKIT STRENGTHEN YOUR PROGRAM?

- The toolkit can be used as a guide in developing strategic plans and programs for emergency response ensuring that it is:

ACCOUNTABLE TO CRISIS AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

IN CONFORMITY WITH CORE HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES

COMMUNITY-LED

BASED ON CRISIS AFFECTED COMMUNITY NEEDS

ADEQUATELY RESOURCED

INCLUSIVE
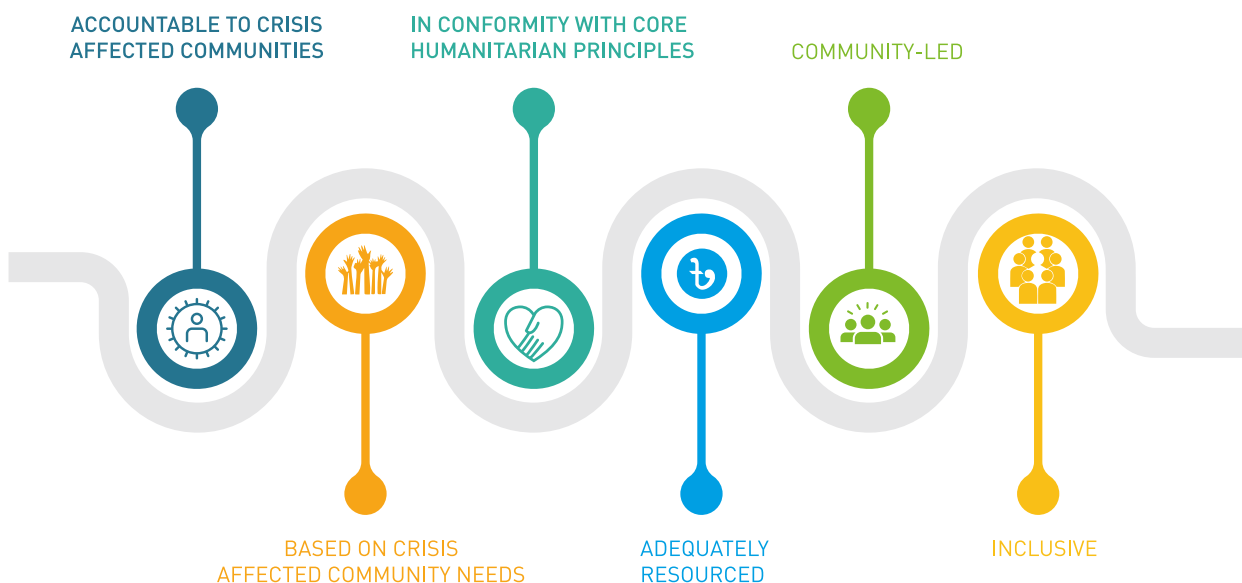
- Donors can also use this toolkit to hold humanitarian actors accountable by ensuring that core CwC elements are addressed. This will help donors to identify the steps the humanitarian actors have taken to strengthen community engagement, promote transparency and establish feedback mechanisms.

- The humanitarian program designers and planners can also align their emergency response activities using the toolkit.

3. MAINSTREAMING CwC IN THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE CYCLE

Figure: CwC in emergency response cycle

3.1 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

According to the Sphere Standards, a humanitarian response should start with an assessment of the needs of the affected population so that a prioritized plan of action can be designed based on those needs[9]. This can be done by assessing the extent and impact of damage caused by the disaster (the needs), and the capacity of the affected people to meet their immediate survival needs (degree of vulnerability).

In events of emergency response, the most relevant form of needs assessment is a rapid assessment, which is carried out within 72 hours of the disaster in order to gather the basic needs of the population and identify priorities for providing assistance. A detailed assessment and continual assessment should follow to identify a long-term support system for the affected communities. It is increasingly being considered good practice to carry out the needs assessments jointly, either as multi-cluster or inter-agency assessments, especially at events of large scale disaster[10].

[9]The Sphere Handbook. http://www.spherehandbook.org/

[10]Assessing Information & Communication Needs. http://www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-and-resources/i/20140721173332-ihw5g

The typical needs that may arise at events of disaster are as follows:

- ✓ Right Information at the right time
- ✓ Food and nutrition
- ✓ Shelter, safety and security
- ✓ Livelihood and vulnerable groups' needs
- ✓ Essential items (Non-food items such as blankets and water containers)
- ✓ Health care
- ✓ WASH
- ✓ Psychosocial support, child protection and gender based violence

Key elements to consider in needs assessment:

The following list provides some of the key elements to look at when carrying out a needs assessment. These elements will ensure that CwC has been integrated in the needs assessment phase and that community engagement can play a vital role in shaping the emergency response in line with the Core Humanitarian Standards and Humanitarian principles.

- The assessments must be carried out in a participatory and respectful way to establish a good and trustworthy relationship with the community and improve the quality of the information collected. Consulting with the community before starting an assessment will help affected people to feel ownership of the process and findings

- Community leaders should be asked to provide guidance and technical inputs. Questionnaires should be shared with the community if possible and consultation meetings should be arranged to ensure community engagement.

- All data obtained from the affected communities needs to be recorded along with the source and contact information

- Ensuring open communication and coordination with other aid providers in the area is of equal importance because this will help to avoid repetition and redundant activities.

☀ Assessment must take 'Information needs' into account. Therefore, data about information and the communication ecosystem of the affected community needs to be collected and assessed. This encompasses a range of issues, including availability of trusted communication channels, type of information demanded and difficulty in accessing information.

☀ Coordinating agencies must communicate using the same message to minimize confusion at community level.

Related resources:

CRA guide: https://www.ffiec.gov/cra/guide.htm

CDAC Network and ACAPS Needs Assessment tools: http://www.cdacnetwork.org/i/20140721170540-7vd0o

3.2 STRATEGIC DESIGN AND PLANNING

Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) are required for any humanitarian crisis requiring the support of more than one agency, and are prepared by a humanitarian country task team (HCTT) based on the humanitarian needs assessment findings. It provides the evidence base and analysis of the magnitude of the crisis and identifies the most pressing humanitarian needs. These needs inform the strategic objectives in the HRP. The various cluster plans follow from these strategic objectives[11].

Integration of CwC into the design and planning phase will –

- Ensure the program planning process is carried out in a participatory and transparent manner.

- Ensure CwC activities are included as part of program plans, budgets and indicators. This prevents CwC activities becoming stand-alone or detached from the rest of the program.

Involving the community in the planning process

Plans, activities and timelines (and even budgets, if appropriate) should be developed in partnership with the community. The list below provides some of the key elements to consider for integrating

Bangladesh has a long history of natural disasters. Today, Bangladesh is a global leader in disaster management and risk reduction. The most demanded legal instrument – the **Disaster Management Act**-was enacted in 2012, incorporating existing orders, reforming institutions, envisaging new institutions, putting necessary mechanisms in place and making the disaster management system accountable with mandatory legal provisions. Before this Act, the **Standing Order on Disaster (SOD)** was issued in 2010. It has two important features - provision of duties and responsibilities for the ministries and departments and secondly, the establishment of committees at all levels, considering the inter-relatedness of disaster management activities.

Source: Policies & institutional development of disaster management. http://cri.org.bd/2014/08/14/policy-institutional-development-of-disaster-management/

CwC in the strategic design and planning phase of the project cycle, along with advice on adopting a CwC approach within the program planning and design process, The aim of this is to ensure the program better fits community needs and involves them in decision-making.

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[11]Strategic response planning: Overview. https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/programme-cycle/space/page/strategic-response-planning

Key elements to consider in the strategic design and planning phase:

- It has to be based on needs assessment and also take account of learning from past programs including results of previous community satisfaction surveys or perception studies, and sector best practice

- CwC indicators should be included in the program log frame or planning documents.

- Indicators should be based on community perceptions of success.

- Clear selection criteria outlining who will receive assistance should be discussed and shared with the community. Clear explanation must be provided to affected families who do not qualify to receive aid to avoid any misunderstanding. The criteria should be developed in partnership with the community.

- Program plans should include a phase out strategy. This would show respect to community members, ensure their involvement, support a smoother exit and increase the likelihood that changes implemented during the program will be sustained.

- Design of two way communication mechanism(s) should be included, to reach and allow disaster affected communities to ask questions and give feedback.

- Information sharing meetings with local communities should include a cross-section of the population, including women, men, children and marginalized groups.

Define CwC objectives and audiences

CwC activities and approaches should always:

- Support the program to achieve its aims through the inclusion of information as aid, behavioral change or evidence-based advocacy activities.

- Strengthen program transparency and community participation.

Just like the overall program plans, the CwC objectives and activities should also be developed in partnership with the community. The following two questions can be used as a guide in the development of CwC objectives:

a) Who are the target audiences?
b) What information do the audiences need?

Plan CwC activities and approaches

The CwC activities and approaches depend on what we want to achieve and who we need to reach. Different communication channels will work better for different objectives, while different audiences will access and trust different communication channels. The key is to select a range of activities and channels that can work together to achieve the CwC objectives and support the wider program aims.

Plan for Community feedback

Community feedback mechanisms should be established in this phase to judge what works well, what might need to be adapted and to identify any problems before they escalate. Managing feedback and complaints in a respectful manner also builds trust with the community.

The feedback loop: Feedback and complaints systems need to receive, analyze, act on and respond to feedback. This process is seen as a continuous loop – if one stage is missing, then the feedback system is not fully functioning.

Choosing the right channel for the audience:

✓ **Preffered channel:** For Example, the channel through which the community wants to get information.

✓ **Locally available:** For example, only use television if people have access to TV.

✓ **Trusted:** Use the TV or Radio channel that is most trusted by the community

✓ **Accessible:** Consider literacy issues and avoid printed materials if literacy rates are low.

✓ **Use multiple channels:** People use different channels to access information, so no one channel will reach everyone in the community. In addition, people are more likely to understand and take action if they hear it from more than one source.

✓ **Who is excluded?** Women, children, disabled or minority groups might not have access to or use mainstream channels. We need to find other ways to engage women and children.

✓ **Flexible:** Needs will change throughout the program, so we have to be ready to adapt communication approaches to meet new challenges and respond to feedback from the community.

Finally, it must be remembered that other organizations will also be engaging with communities, so it's a good idea to cross-check their plans to avoid duplication.

Adapted from: ICRC CEA guide (2016)

Timeline and budget

The cost of specific CwC activities will need to be considered in order to prepare a realistic budget and timeline. This timeline should include how often each activity will be carried out and the length of time the activities will take to prepare and deliver. It is apparent that CwC activities may

not always be standalone initiatives but rather integrated into regular programming. Therefore, if these activities are reflected in the timeline and budget, program managers will be able to

follow up on the implementation of CwC activities. Ultimately, this will enhance the integration or mainstreaming of CwC.

Issues to consider when setting up a feedback and complaints system:

✓ Get management, staff and organizational buy-in and support to make it an organizational practice.

✓ Define the purpose of the system and who is likely to use it.

✓ Consult with the community during the design phase.

✓ Decide how complaints will be received.

✓ Plan in advance how serious or sensitive complaints will be handled (i.e. relating to abuse or corruption).

✓ Develop a system for analyzing and sharing feedback and complaints with partners and donars.

✓ Train relevant staff on the feedback system.

✓ Decide how to provide updates to the community on changes made as a result of their feedback.

✓ Go back to the community and discuss the proposed feedback system in advance.

✓ Advertise the system clearly to the community.

Adapted from the ICRC, CEA guide (2016)

3.3 RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

Resource mobilization is the third element but it takes place throughout the Humanitarian Program Cycle (HPC)[12]. It is a process by which resource is acquired from the resource provider and utilized to implement activities so that the pre-determined objectives and goals can be achieved. Therefore, it also encompasses activities that enable better use and maximization of the existing resources.

It is possible for decisions around resource mobilization to be improved in terms of appropriateness and effectiveness by considering the resource allocation from the lens of CwC. CwC initiatives shed light on two very important elements of humanitarian response. These are: ensuring the voice of the affected community is accounted for in the emergency response program and meeting the community's information needs. Therefore, resources can be allocated with these elements in focus.

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[12]https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/programme-cycle/space

Key elements to consider during resource mobilization:

- Resource allocation should be need based.

- The allocation of resource from the donor side should be flexible to address the findings gathered in the needs assessment phase. In other words, humanitarian agencies need to advocate to donors for more flexibility in addressing information and communication needs on the ground.

- Meeting the information needs of the community should stand as an important influencing factor in resource mobilization decision making. Aid providers should hence plan their resources in terms of their collaboration with other humanitarian organizations.

- Organizations must carry out capacity building activities with its staff and partner's staff so that, during an emergency response, human resources can be better utilized.

- If the humanitarian activity requires coordination with multi-stakeholder platforms or clusters, the representatives or the contact persons should be pre-determined.

- Effective coordination will have to be ensured so that the collective resources of all the humanitarian actors that are active in a particular area are utilized effectively. Therefore, promoting coordination is deemed as an important activity in resource mobilization from the perspective of CwC.

- Partnership with the media and local channels of communication is an important aspect of resource mobilization. This way, resource can be specifically allocated with a focus on addressing the information needs of the affected community.

- Considerable thoughts and resources will have to be applied to information gathering and dissemination. Humanitarian agencies can refer to the message library that has been facilitated by Shongjog.

- In times of emergency, the locally available resources and volunteers are important. Local resource mobilization is gaining popularity and it is expected to become crucial for humanitarian agencies undertaking long-term projects[13]. Any contribution from the local community that can assist in the implementation of an activity can be considered as a local resource. Therefore, the local resources, ranging from volunteers, local leaders, local learners, facilitators, community wisdom and also any chance of local philanthropy should also be taken into account during resource mobilization. Utilizing the local resources can provide a number of benefits. One of them is that this will build a sense of ownership in

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[13]Challenges Facing Local NGOs in Resource Mobilzation. Humanities and Social Sciences. http://article.sciencepublishinggroup.com/pdf/10.11648.j.hss.20140203.12.pdf

Affected people that can contribute to the positive development of the community. This will help develop relationships between the community and the humanitarian agencies, thereby ensuring future support. This also adds to the sustainability of projects as local supporters are likely continue supporting the initiatives[14].

3.4 IMPLEMENTATION

Integration of CwC into the implementation phase will help ensure the program is delivered in a participatory and transparent way, including around the collection of community feedback and provision of regular updates on program progress. CwC activities also support the program to achieve its outcomes and contribute to community resilience.

INSTITUTIONAL REFORM AND CAPACITY BUILDING:
Bangladesh has become a leader in its institutional framework for disaster risk reduction and sustainable development, with a number of core government policies and programs incorporating risk reduction from their earliest stages.

Source: Policies and institutional development of disaster management.
http://cri.org.bd/2014/08/14/policy-institutional-develop ment-of-disaster-management/

Key elements to consider during implementation:

- **Capacity building:** Prior to implementation, staff and volunteers may require training to support the delivery of high-quality CwC activities within the program. As a minimum, everyone involved in the program should receive a basic training on CwC and accountability, so they understand why it is important and necessary to ensure our accountability to targeted communities.

- **Early warning systems:** Numerous models for an effective early warning system exist. To be effective, these warnings need to be scientifically sound and consistent. It is advised to discuss the early warning systems at community level in order to identify the most appropriate warning system for the targeted communities.

- **Emergency:** The impact of life-saving assistance increases when people are provided with self-help information on an ongoing basis, and there are systems that integrate community feedback to improve the response.

- **Early recovery:** In order to address the community's right to information, they should be informed about their entitlements, available services and the deliverables owed to them during the entire continuum of preparedness, response and recovery phases.

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[14]Participant's Manual: Local Resource Mobilization and Social Entrepreneurship. http://thestewardsjourney.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/LocalResourceMobilisationManual.pdf

Adjust activities based on monitoring, feedback and learning: Program activities need to be regularly adjusted on the basis of community feedback and learning. This includes adapting CwC activities, such as communication messages designed to promote social and behavior change radio campaigns, feedback channels or advocacy techniques based on community and monitoring data.

Tackling Rumor: Rumors should be tackled quickly and efficiently by addressing them and providing the correct information to the community. It is a good practice to provide the correct information with reference to a reliable source via the local media and establish a mechanism for the community to verify the information (e.g: a hotline or helpdesk). These can also open a way for humanitarian agencies to collect feedback from the affected community.

Coordination with other agencies: It is important to coordinate with other departments via clusters/thematic meetings. Different colleagues within the network will normally attend different cluster/thematic meetings. It is important to be aware of the outcomes of these meetings, as these will influence the choice of CwC activities deployed and inform collaborative approaches, when possible.

Working with the media: Proper media channels should be identified to provide the affected community with actionable information. Media agencies should also be advised to focus on information for the community and not about the community.

Phase-out: A consultation period must be included and the Community should be given the opportunity to contribute to decisions about what will happen after the program ends. Advance notification should be provided so that people have enough time to prepare and adjust. A system should be in place to enable the receiving and answering of questions and complaints. Throughout the implementation of phase out all the relevant and important information should be communicated clearly, honestly and in a way the community can understand. The community should be consulted to plan the way forward. Organizing a closing ceremony with communities is a good example of smooth phase-out activity.

Documentation and showcasing the success stories and best practices: Implementing partners and staff involved in humanitarian activities should be encouraged to document and showcase case studies, success stories and best practices, which would serve a number of purposes, such as profile-building, capacity-strengthening and increasing organizational sustainability.

3.5 MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL)

A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan is a document that helps track and assess the results of the interventions throughout the life of a program. In a rapidly changing emergency situation, where fast action is necessary, monitoring – and heeding its findings – is especially crucial.

Sustained engagement: Humanitarian organizations' engagement extends over several decades. Given the complexity of the issues and the institutional challenges, there is no 'quick fix.' Bangladesh's experience highlights the importance of gradual and self-supporting change. Engagement is most effective when spread across a range of stakeholders, from government bodies to civil society organizations.

See Bangladesh experience in annex

Key elements to consider in monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL)

Community involvement: Communities should be involved at each stage of the evaluation process by being given the opportunity to participate in design, data collection, data validation and analysis, and dissemination of the results. If this is not possible, at the very least they should be consulted on the impact of the program and the results of evaluations should be verified and shared with them.

Record keeping: Recording the impact of CwC activities alongside other program activities, as they are supposed to support the achievement of the overall program aims.

Documentation: Including a separate section documenting issues raised by the community, both informally and formally, through the feedback and complaints system. Action taken or changes made as a result of community feedback should also be documented. Ultimately, this documentation will help humanitarian organizations to realize the positive impact of two-way communication and provision of information as an aid to meeting the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS). This will help them to adapt better CwC initiatives in the future and mainstream them across other humanitarian agencies too.

Evaluation: Involve community in the evaluation process to gather their suggestions through community meetings, focus group discussion (FGD) or In-depth interview (IDI). Ensure the evaluation methodology includes collecting community feedback from different segments.

Verifying and sharing findings: Sharing the evaluation findings with the community to validate the findings is an important part of the evaluation process. If the community has taken the time to answer questions, it is good practice to also ensure that they are given the results. This can be undertaken in a number of ways, from a simple community meeting to posters on notice boards or workshops.

Role of the media: The evaluation process must also take into account the information that has been disseminated by the media. Any conflicting information that was broadcasted by the media should be notified to the relevant agencies and assistance must be provided to promote the dissemination of actionable information (i.e information 'for the affected people' and not 'about the people'). Additionally, any authentic information about the suffering of the community that was brought to light by the media but was not in the knowledge of the humanitarian agencies, should be noted and acted upon to construct a better response plan in the future.

3.6 CHECKLIST FOR MAINSTREAMING CWC

1. BASIC UNDERSTANDING FOR INTEGRATING CWC		
Questions	**Yes**	**No**
a) Do you know what is CwC? If you do not, please refer to section 2.1, Page No. 5 of the toolkit.		
b) Are you aware of the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) and the humanitarian principles? If you do not, please refer to the annex section of this toolkit, or visit: https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard		
2. CWC MAINSTREAMING DURING 'NEEDS ASSESSMENT'		
a) Have you asked the affected community about their immediate needs such as safe drinking water, food and shelter including health care services etc.?		
b) Have you collected data about what communication channels are preferred by the affected communities for information? (sample questionnaire: CDAC Network needs Assessment tool). What are the main channels for communication?		
c) Have you asked the different groups of people about their needs including people with disability women, adolescent girls and boys, children, pregnant women, ageing population etc.? What do they need to know more about?		
d) Have you incorporated humanitarian principles and the Core Humanitarian Standards during needs assessment?		
3. CWC MAINSTREAMING DURING 'STRATEGIC DESIGN AND PLANNING'		
a) Have you consulted the community during planning for emergency response? Which sources of information do people trust the most?		
b) Have you asked affected people how they would most like to communicate with aid agencies? (e.g. to ask a question or make a suggestion)		
c) Have you engaged the local persons for communicating with the community during emergency preparedness? Have you secured their commitment?		
d) Have you conducted a review of secondary data on CwC (literature review)?		
e) Have you ensured that all collected data is disaggregated by age, sex, disability and then analyzed?		
f) Have you incorporated humanitarian principles and the Core Humanitarian Standards during strategic design and planning?		
g) Have you identified interventions corresponding to the key challenges in the integration of CwC and their solutions?		
h) Have you informed communities of their entitlements and clarified the beneficiary selection criteria? Based on needs assessment have you designed a two-way communication mechanism?		

4.	**CWC MAINSTREAMING IN THE 'RESOURCE MOBILIZATION PHASE'**		
a)	Are your field teams oriented on CwC and the significance of it? Have you identified the primary beneficiaries of your project, and ensured the project will equitably reach those most in need? Is your two-way communication mechanism properly resourced?		
b)	Have you identified the needs of Implementing Partners/Shongjog members including government and program staff regarding CwC resources, support and training to respond to these needs?		
c)	Have you allocated efficient human, financial and material resources for CwC activities?		
5.	**CWC MAINSTREAMING IN THE 'IMPLEMENTATION PHASE'**		
a)	Have you established feedback and response mechanisms to facilitate CwC mainstreaming in the project, including the designation of CwC as an agenda in all meetings and the designation of a CwC focal point or champion?		
b)	Have you conducted a mapping exercise to identify major challenges as well as opportunities with regard to CwC mainstreaming in emergency response, and developed a CwC Action Plan to address these challenges?		
c)	Have you assessed whether girls, boys, women, men and people with special needs participate equitably in the project, in terms of physical presence and decision making?		
d)	Have you incorporated humanitarian principles and the Core Humanitarian Standards during implementation?		
6.	**CWC MAINSTREAMING IN THE MONITORING, EVALUATION & LEARNING PHASE**		
a)	Have you developed a two-way communication focused monitoring and evaluation process?		
b)	Have you collected and analyzed data to identify any gender gaps in access, participation, or benefit for groups of stakeholders?		
c)	Have you investigated why any gender/inclusion gaps in access, participation or benefits are happening, including identifying root causes?		
d)	Have you undertaken corrective actions (as needed) to adjust interventions based on monitoring results for CwC considerations?		
e)	Have you clarified & communicated with crisis affected communities of any change made based on evaluation and their feedback?		
f)	Have you integrated gender and inclusion issues in the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan?		

4. CONCLUSION

The intention of this guide is to demonstrate that communication deserves to be an integral component of the humanitarian response in emergency, disaster and early recovery management. Two-way communications that provide the right information to communities and incorporates their feedback makes a better approach to serving affected populations while establishing accountability for aid providers.

Throughout this guide, attempts have been made using state-of-the-art CwC approaches to enhance humanitarian responses through consistent, appropriate and timely communication mechanisms. A two-way communications system is critical across all phases of an emergency, disaster or early recovery response. Feedback from communities is essential to improving the quality of information needed by affected populations, managing their expectations and, eventually, improving aid programs and the humanitarian response. The mechanism for collecting feedback has to be put into the design of communications strategies to ensure that the voices of the people are heard and enable humanitarian responses to remain demand-driven and in line with the requirements of intended beneficiaries.

Adequate two-way communications will eventually increase the efficiency and suitability of assistance programs, as well as trust in aid agencies and partners.

ANNEX

Mainstreaming CwC in Emergency Response: Tips for Advocacy

- Organize roundtable discussions and dialogues to promote and foster communication with communities involving key stakeholders including people affected by crisis.

- When approaching donors, include criteria around the integration of CwC in the project proposals.

- Share evidence of how CwC makes relief efforts more effective, leading to recovery (audio-visual).

- Advocate for integration of CwC in government policy (SOD, DMA).

- Include communication needs assessments in government led JNA.

- Build capacity of community leaders so that they can voice their own needs.

- Sensitize policy makers on the importance of communicating with communities, involving them in different CwC events (meetings, workshops and consultations).

- Involve the media (print, electronic and traditional media) for wider coverage on CwC issues.

- Ensure active involvement of local government representatives in CwC events so that they can take the CwC agenda forward.

- Make sure that CwC is listed as an agenda item in all emergency response meetings and discussions.

Develop key messages and frequently asked questions

Developing key messages involves more than just writing messages for a poster or leaflet. It also refers to the development of the overall picture we want to share with the community and should be linked to the program's objectives.

Information shared with communities has the most impact when it is timely, relevant, accurate and tailored to the audience. It is important to share information with staff and volunteers before it is communicated publicly so that everyone shares consistent messages. In addition, information should be tested with community members and volunteers to ensure it is well understood by the community.

Guidelines for drafting an FAQ document

- Quick turnaround ensures relevancy
- Simple language must be employed
- The document must have a clear layout
- Only accurate information must appear in the document
- Contact numbers appearing in the document must be up-to-date.

What is the Core Humanitarian Standard?

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) sets out nine commitments that organizations and individuals involved in humanitarian response can use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. It also facilitates greater accountability to communities and people affected by crises: knowing what humanitarian organizations have committed to will enable them to hold those organizations to account[15].

What are Sphere Standards?

Sphere standards help aid workers determine the minimum level of quality in humanitarian aid, providing a description of what's required, quantitative indicators to help determine if these are met, and guidance notes as to how agencies should work with communities, in 4 key sectors: water and sanitation, health, food security, and shelter[16] .

[15]https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard

[16]https://www.danchurchaid.org/about-us/quality-assurance/sphere-standard

Communicating with Communities – Bangladesh experience:

🔊 Initiatives undertaken prior to **cyclone Mahasen** making landfall in May 2013, highlighted how communications – SMS - supported early warning enabling the evacuation of over **1 million people** from risky areas.

🔊 A library of 137 common messages, covering communication on risk reduction, preparedness and response, was drafted and agreed by government, UN agencies and the INGO humanitarian community.

🔊 39 public service announcements on radio and television, in three language dialects, helped communities prepare for and recover from cyclone Mahasen. Produced for the Department of Disaster Management by BBC Media Action.

🔊 Community radio stations Lokobetar and Krishi Radio collaborated to produce "Ghure Daray" (Get back on your feet), broadcast daily following the cyclone and totaling 228 minutes of original content across a three week period. Listeners reported increasing their knowledge, taking action in response to the programs and sharing and encouraging others to do the same.

🔊 The TV series "Amrai Pari" (Together we can do it), broadcast on BTV in summer 2014, reached 15.8 million people. It encouraged communities to work together to be better prepared for natural disasters.

🔊 The government-led Cyclone Preparedness Program (CPP) is a successful initiative spearheaded by 55,260 volunteers.

🔊 About 77% of internet users (over 28 million people) in Bangladesh have online access via their mobile phone. There are 110 million active mobile subscriptions.

🔊 89 key people from 40 organizations were trained in Lifeline communications by BBC Media Action aimed at improving communications with affected people.

🔊 14 community radios are now on air in Bangladesh. 4.6 million people in rural Bangladesh are now listening to these radio stations. Another 18 community radio stations will be on-air soon.

Source: UN-OCHA Bangladesh, BBC Media Action