Community Engagement Strategy

Context

Community engagement\(^1\) should be embedded in all efforts to make the humanitarian response more accountable, inclusive, and enabling to enhance community participation and overall quality of the humanitarian interventions. These include utilizing communication mechanisms, accountability frameworks and community participation channels to advance the people-driven response, safeguard the humanitarian principles and turn post disaster adversity into opportunities that will help better understand gender-sensitive vulnerabilities, enhance local resilience and adaptive capacity, encourage participation and emphasize equity of affected communities.

In practice, effective community engagement work includes establishing ways that ensure that affected communities regardless of sex, age or social status have access to the information they need to make informed choices, ensure that their voices are heard by responding agencies, and humanitarian agencies are accountable to respond to those issues or concerns.

Communication is a two way process and effective community engagement strategies deliver transparent dialogue between affected communities and humanitarian agencies (local and international). Community engagement work involves using all available communications channels including existing traditional or local forms of communication, print, radio, TV, SMS, human networks and social media\(^2\) as well as face to face (including but not limited to community consultation). It is essential to effective delivery of aid as well as pre-positioning of resources or capacities on preparedness.

In the same way, that accountability framework as regards enhanced community participation should be established and sustained as part of addressing the evolving needs of the affected communities from emergency to early recovery.

This strategy aims to meet the two-way communication channel, feedback mechanism, accountability platform and community participation needs of the affected or those considered as at-risk communities in the Philippines for responding to emergencies and enhance the level of preparedness.

Key objectives

To date, some members of the Community of Practice (CoP) and field level Technical Working Groups (TWG) in the Philippines have focused on four main areas of work on community engagement:

- **Coordination Services.** Both at the national and field level, there is a need to sustain the provision of strategic and operational coordination services. From typhoon

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\(^1\) Integrated community engagement includes Communications, Accountability, Community Participation and Common Service Partnerships

\(^2\) Including emerging technologies and understanding how information is being created and shared in new ways, how data trails left by use of digital technology (big data) can help humanitarians listen to and understand the needs and behaviour of affected communities, and developing new ways through which humanitarians can listen to and interact with those affected.
Bopha in 2012 as well Zamboanga conflict, Bohol earthquake and typhoon Haiyan in 2013 and preparedness initiative during typhoon Hagupit in 2014, various field level technical working groups have been established with more than 25 organizations or agencies (including the government) as active members. The CoP was activated as ad hoc initiative during typhoon Hagupit as part of preparedness and also as an action point for post-Haiyan intervention as early as July in 2014.

- **Supporting clusters and operational agencies.** The CoP with the support from the field level TWG and the CDAC network will provide technical support and advice on improving two-way communication or feedback mechanism (including the use of media), contextualizing accountability frameworks and supporting varieties of participatory approaches for the affected populations (including maximizing the Common Service Projects) to clusters and agencies.

- **Identifying communication/information, accountability and participation gaps.** In 2013, OCHA introduced the Rapid Information Communication Accountability Assessment (RICAA) to the field level TWG as part of assessing the immediate information needs and preferred communication channels of the affected communities. The said assessment was used by various agencies and is complemented by the community feedback form and the closing the communication loop tools. Part of the minimum preparedness actions of the CoP is to pre-position this in the conduct of an assessment 72 hours after the disaster.

- **Preparedness (early warning system, communication protocol and evacuation procedure).** Community of Practice (CoP) is a network that coordinates and enhances the preparedness capacities and resources of humanitarian organizations undertaking various levels of community engagement. The network was active during the response to Zamboanga conflict and Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 as well as preparedness during Typhoon Hagupit in 2014. Part of the CoP’s function is to facilitate partnerships among its members or partners both in preparedness and emergency response.

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5 Formalizing the CoP is underway at the national level. The ToR has been drafted and core group members have been identified to provide advisory and technical guidance to the all-inclusive members of the COP.

6 Common Service Project (Pamati Kita or Let’s talk together) Documentary Video 2015. [https://www.dropbox.com/sh/e0a35495o3l0nrd/AADzPfyzyowjnnk7uLS4ZY1Ma/1.%20PAMATI%20KITA_EDIT2.mp4?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/e0a35495o3l0nrd/AADzPfyzyowjnnk7uLS4ZY1Ma/1.%20PAMATI%20KITA_EDIT2.mp4?dl=0)


Progress from 2012 to 2015

1. Coordination and support for Community engagement

- Typhoon Bopha – a CwC working group (WG’s) was established as a cross-cluster mechanism communication support service and coordination mechanism.

- Conflict in Zamboanga – a communications working group has been established in collaboration with the City Government Public Information Office and it brought together all actors working in public information, two-way communications, accountability, and those directly engaged in communicating with internally displaced people.

- Bohol earthquake – IOM worked with Philippine Information Agency (PIA) in setting up series of transparency dialogue forum for humanitarian actors, government agencies and the affected communities. OCHA, a week after the disaster, introduced the assessment tool on information needs and preferred communication channels of the affected communities.

- Typhoon Haiyan – an integrated CwC/AAP TWG’s was established across four hubs in Eastern and Western Visayas region.

- Typhoon Hagupit - the Community of Practice was established as part of preparedness, formalizing it at the national level is underway.

2. Advocacy and policy (mainstreaming community engagement and supporting clusters, operational agencies)

At the national level, CoP has the role of advocating for community engagement not only as key element of humanitarian preparedness and response but also as an integral part of the overall country-level communication/information, accountability and community participation strategy. The communication (Public Information) strategy highlighted community engagement as one of the top three objectives.

This strategy will support for community engagement to be mainstreamed across clusters and in the process will be institutionalized as a good practice of sustaining the network on coordinated and integrated community engagement approach.

3. Identifying communication/information, accountability and community participation gaps

In Zamboanga, field level working group has provided technical support to ensure that the affected communities had access to information, which is gathered and disseminated though a number of sources, and ensured that feedback mechanisms are in place.

In Bohol, IOM has taken the lead in the conduct of information needs/communication channel preferences assessment and direct engagement with affected communities as part of its two-way communication platform strategy.

The partnership of OCHA Philippines CwC team and AAP Interagency Coordinator during the Typhoon Haiyan response produced the Rapid Information, Communication & Accountability Assessment (RICAA). In terms of identifying information gaps, the tool goes beyond collating
data on the aggregated information needs and communication channel preferences of affected communities by considering accountability and various segments of the community.

During typhoon Hagupit, the preparedness effort on integrated community engagement (CwC and AAP) was enhanced since existing partnerships and networks were maximized to respond to the typhoon. RICAA, community feedback form, closing the communication loop template, situation report and thematic brief were readied and produced before, during and after the disaster.

Where does Community of Practice on Community Engagement want to be at the end of 2015 or beyond?

1. It continues to ensure a consistent coordinated approach to all emergencies currently affecting and those that may affect the Philippines. This will be through coordinating Community of Practice at the national level and technical working groups at the field level in all active disasters and in early recovery phase. Technically, CoP will support the enhancement of CwC/AAP capacity of humanitarian partners and government to share information and use this to operationalize accountability efforts to influence the overall humanitarian response strategy and operational approach.

2. It continues to support humanitarian partners and government to develop, maintain and innovate on the use of two-way communication, information sharing platforms for affected communities to engage with humanitarian actors. This may be through a variety of means including feedback mechanisms, radio and the use of local media and government/joint agency call centres.

3. It continues to work with humanitarian agencies and government to support communities to have access to updated information relevant to each sector, prioritizing life-saving and life sustaining information, but also operationalizing accountability efforts by including information on humanitarian agencies and government, rights and entitlements, how to complain, give feedback or ask questions, and the additional information they require to make informed decisions about response and recovery and enhance community participation.

4. It continues to support the development of a CoP on Community Engagement Preparedness Plan to respond to future emergencies in the Philippines building on past experience and existing capacity. Since CoP will be established, it follows that a coordinated and integrated preparedness plan will be developed with partners from Government (PIA, DSWD, and OCD), HCT (including PINGON), CSOs, media agencies and the private sector.

5. The CoP team will develop and implement a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. It is understood that measuring some of the outputs on CwC/AAP programming is challenging. The CoP will be looking for support on how to do this from agency colleagues, CDAC network and from a cross section of implementing partners.

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9 Like the Common Service Project
10 Part of the Minimum Preparedness Action (MPA) activity for the CoP
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How do we get there? Moving forward

1.) Provide a coordinated approach to all emergencies currently affecting the Philippines. The Philippines is a pilot country for an integrated CwC/AAP globally and there is strong commitment for it to be an institutionalized good practice across the country.

Provision of coordination and technical support is at the core of what the CoP will do.

- Provide technical and coordination support in all major emergencies in the Philippines.
- Produce guidance and policy brief on learning’s from past and current emergencies.
- Host a post disaster workshop, forum and capacity building focusing on both lessons learnt in working with partners and agencies.
- Continue to document good practices (that can be replicated), case studies and learning reviews.
- As global focus for the Philippines on the integrated community engagement (CwC/AAP) both in preparedness and emergency response, it’s important that all CoP members and partners have good understanding of what community engagement can achieve. Training on communication as aid, core accountability framework, humanitarian reporting, use of social media-digital humanitarian network-other technologies (including frontline SMS and Community Resource Map) and closing the communication loop will be provided to the members and partners.

2. Institutionalize two-way communication, information sharing platforms for affected communities to engage with humanitarian actors. There is still a need for funding to support such common service projects.

The CoP will continue to advocate measures for funding for such projects. Even without funding, the CoP will support the coordination of information and review of platforms for hosting feedback from the communities. This will also feature heavily in the preparedness planning.

- Advocate measures for funding common service projects
- Using the field level technical working group, there is a need to ensure that key actors have good understanding on how common service projects could enhance the whole humanitarian response and recovery.

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12 The case of Zamboanga, Cotabato and post-Haiyan as well as post Hagupit in Eastern and Western Visayas areas.
• Support the government through the CoP and field level TWG network to enhance their existing feedback mechanisms. This will include the service provision and analysis of the feedback.\textsuperscript{13}

• CoP will work with other thematic areas\textsuperscript{14} to develop new and innovative ways of listening to affected communities

• CoP will also work with Public Information Unit to utilize media tools including social media (Twitter, Facebook).\textsuperscript{15}

• Identify local champions (government, CSOs, media and private sectors) in terms of communications, accountability and community participation advocacy.

3. Through coordination (CoP, field level TWG and through the inter-cluster coordination mechanism), CoP will ensure that there is life saving and life sustaining information relevant to each sector available for affected communities.

• The CoP and field level TWG will complete an analysis of information, accountability and community participation gaps.

• In times of emergencies, the CoP with support from field level TWG will facilitate the provision of key messages to cluster leads and operational agencies based on identified urgent and evolving community needs.

• Aside from direct technical support, the CoP will refer clusters to the InfoAsAid message library and other resources such as those provided by CDAC-N as required.

4. Support the development of a CoP on Community Engagement Preparedness Plan to respond to future emergencies in the Philippines building on past experience. The CoP will work with partners from Government, CSOs, media agencies and the private sectors.

• Identify Local Champions.

• Policy Brief/Paper will be produced.

• Documentation of Good Initiative/Good Practice.

5. The CoP will develop and implement a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.

• Standard Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) report system will be established (to ensure continuity of an effective CwC/AAP across the country and response to future emergencies).

\textsuperscript{13} Such as the use of community feedback form, closing the communication loop template and conduct of transparency forum

\textsuperscript{14} Such as on Public Information, Cash, Gender, Environment, Civil-Military (if needed and appropriate) and the overarching Preparedness component

\textsuperscript{15} On-going initiative with the Information Management Unit and the Public Information through Humanitarian Communications Group (HCG)
By 2015, CoP outcomes will be:

- All identified emergencies are supported by context specific integrated community engagement coordination and support mechanism.
- CoP produces a preparedness blueprint that details strategic action plan to pre-position minimum resources and capacities to respond to future crisis or disasters.
- Conduct Community Engagement 101 pilot training for CoP members based in Manila and replicate, if needed and required, in other areas as part of further mainstreaming the components of Community Engagement.\(^{16}\)
- Standard Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) report system is established (to ensure continuity of an effective community engagement across the country and response to future emergencies).
- CoP in the Philippines is institutionalized through the humanitarian programme cycle not just within UN agencies but across all-inclusive partners or members.
- Local champions are identified (in the Philippines local champion pertains to an individual or groups that can help any cause in terms of advocacy and resource mobilization on communication, accountability and community participation).
- Policy Brief/Paper is produced (aside from learning review, this paper will provide advisory inputs to Humanitarian Country Team and other decision makers for changes and innovations on humanitarian policy, advocacy and strategy).
- Documentation of Good Initiative/Good Practice on community-based preparedness and adaptive capacity as part of transition from emergency to early recovery (IEC materials, short video documentary) is prepared.
- Training on CwC/AAP to all members and partners is supported.
- Community engagement is fully mainstreamed not just into OCHA’s external information services but into other partner or member agencies as well (sitreps, bulletins etc).
- Other thematic areas are worked on to develop new and innovative ways of listening to affected communities including the use of social media, gender lenses and other tools, UAV vehicle, etc.

\(^{16}\) This will be outside Manila as per recommendations by the CoP members