

Fact sheet¹ Commitment 2

Transparency, Communication and Information Provision

FAO is committed to greater and more routine transparency, two-way communication, and information provision for affected communities

Humanitarian organisations fail to respect the communities they work with when they are not, at a minimum, transparent about their role, their agenda, and what communities can expect from them. Further, information and effective communication are key aid deliverables in their own right. Aid agencies therefore need to gain specific understanding of the information needs of communities they are assisting, and then strive to meet those needs to the fullest extent possible. This may include working with partners to improve access to information overall. Respectful, culturally appropriate communication and regular information provision aimed at a range of literacy levels acknowledge that people affected by emergencies are rational beings able to make reasoned decisions for themselves, but require information to do so in an informed way. Communication that ignores this principle can impact on relations and the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance.

FAO is committed to:

- Facilitating two-way dialogue with affected communities at all stages of the project cycle, including to determine what kind of information the communities require and the best means for them to receive it.
- Providing appropriate, accessible and timely information to all segments of an affected community, including on:
 - FAO and partners, accountability commitments, code of conduct, complaints procedure and relevant contact details
 - Projects, including goals and objectives, evaluation/ progress reports, project time span and budgetary information as relevant
 - People's rights and entitlements
 - Processes that affect the people FAO seeks to assist, to ensure that they can make informed decisions and choices
 - Criteria and processes for targeting and selecting people for assistance, with sensitivity to stigma and privacy when relevant
 - Feedback from participatory processes
 - Wider information about access to assistance (which may include that provided by other providers)
 - Lifesaving information as a form of assistance

Additional Notes

Using the IASC CAAP tools self-assessment section will assist in identifying what areas of transparency, information provision and two-way communication could be strengthened. An information plan developed from this self-assessment should be reviewed and updated over time and as the understanding of the local context increases. For example, it is important to base a communication with affected communities strategy based upon an understanding of what information the communities require, and in what formats. Formats may be quite different for men and for women, and how information is trusted can also vary. For example, research in certain regions in Pakistan conducted by Internews found that women tend not to trust local media sources, and prefer to rely upon word of mouth via known people.

To facilitate stronger communication and information sharing, it is essential to become aware of the existing types of communication structures and preferences, ranging from radio and television to magazines or newsletters, but also including community meetings, noticeboards, markets or festivities, for example. Awareness and analysis of the options can assist in identifying the best ways to present accessible and comprehensible information and reach the highest coverage including the most vulnerable and marginalized groups who might not access information through the most common channels. At the same time, there is scope to be innovative in communication strategies and methods in order to target specific groups, or to

¹ This document supports the [FAO in Emergencies Guidance Note on Accountability to Affected Population \(AAP\)](#) and the [IASC CAAP\(Commitments on AAP\) Tools](#). It includes: Each FAO commitment as presented in the Guidance Note, Further detail and explanation from other sources, Case studies and examples on each commitment in practice, and Links to external resources.

bypass local politics or structures that may be invested in controlling or distorting information for the gain of particular groups.

Case studies

Transparent Processes in Beneficiary selection in Cambodia

During the 2011 floods response, FAO Cambodia put in place a household selection process that allowed participation, transparency, and open communication with affected communities. Selection criteria were shared with the commune chiefs and village leaders. Village chiefs themselves drafted a beneficiary list based on these criteria, and random spot checks were carried out to ensure the proposed list was well received by respected persons in those villages. When proposed farmers did not match the criteria, they were replaced with new ones in consultation with the chiefs. Finally, copies of beneficiary lists were posted at the village information board in all targeted villages for five days. These public announcements aimed at getting any feedback or complaints before finalizing the list, seeking to ensure transparent selection criteria, and to ensure the most vulnerable and affected households were included in the project.

International Agencies Communicating in post-earthquake Haiti²

Many of the organisations responding to the earthquake in Haiti addressed communicating with affected communities early on. For example, WFP saw the need for local communication capacity as a direct operational requirement of their food distributions, while IFRC promoted the importance of communication with affected populations from headquarters, on the basis of the engagement with the CDAC network³ at the global level and of their own long standing institutional commitment to this issue. IOM developed field capacity because their public information officer believed that outreach should be a priority for the organisation and lobbied internally to great effect. UNFPA fielded a Haitian American communication officer who spoke Creole and tasked him specifically with supporting access to services for victims of gender-based violence. UNOPS argued successfully from the start that communication was essential to technical delivery of their post-earthquake building assessment project, convincing a major bilateral donor to invest 20% of the project budget in communication. Following the immediate post-emergency period, a second wave of organisations, such as Oxfam and WVI, began work in this area, primarily as part of accountability and transparency agendas. In almost all cases, early communication work was led by one or two individuals at field level who lobbied for inclusion of outreach in budgets and project design. These people were either communication staff, or operational staff with background/experience in communication. Staff who established outreach and communication work early on reported that the support of their head of office was essential, as well as the support of senior managers.

Several organisations commented that work in outreach and communication, especially that involving technology, played well with international media and thus helped generate visibility for projects. Communications staff commented that this helped to raise the profile of their work within the organisation and deepen colleagues' understanding of what they were doing.

IFRC communication tools in Haiti⁴

The IFRC established a "Beneficiary Communication Unit" in post-earthquake Haiti 2010, where they developed and implemented communication tools for information dissemination, collecting and sharing. Tools included a short code phone line that could handle SMS, a suggestion box and public chalkboard, community meetings, face-to-face discussions, sound trucks, maps and posters explaining programmes, and written explanations of selection criteria.

Collecting and sharing information through women's CBOs⁵

In a livelihood project in West Bank and Gaza strip women's Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) were invited to support information collection about project participants. They reported to FAO the number of families and inhabitants in the community, their traditional working methods and problems they tend to face.

The participant selection process was discussed with them and after the preliminary stages, announcements and posters were used to inform regarding the project location and the selection criteria. The CBOs were then

² http://infoasaid.org/sites/infoasaid.org/files/iaa_haiti_2010_0.pdf

³ http://www.cdacnetwork.org/sites/www.cdacnetwork.org/files/cdac0612_haiti_lr_005_full_1.pdf

⁴ http://infoasaid.org/sites/infoasaid.org/files/iaa_haiti_2010_0.pdf

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/Participation/selection-female-benef-lessons.html>

also involved in sharing the project details with communities. Information was provided at community events (after Friday prayers for instance) and was published in widely visible sources (newspapers, posters in the market, local shops, village council building etc). The local project committee, made up of members of women's CBOs, assisted FAO in choosing the final participants by providing information on applicants' social status and carrying out home visits with those who met these criteria to clarify their general suitability. These home visits were highly valued, and it was reported that people felt their application was given due attention, that the selection process was fair and transparent and that community ties were strengthened as a result.

FAO benefited greatly from the local expertise of the CBOs and their position of influence. CBOs were well placed to report on any problems that may have arisen during the implementation of the project (such as misunderstandings, frustration or lack of motivation on the part of participants etc), given their close links with the participants and the community as a whole. CBOs provided collective support and motivation for the participants to commit to the project.

Transparency, Communication and Information Provision Useful Links and resources

World Vision Haiti Earthquake Response Information Provision Guidelines

<http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/information-provision-guidelines.pdf>

An example of hand-out how to provide information to communities by World Vision used in Haiti.

CDAC Network Haiti Learning Review

http://www.cdacnetwork.org/sites/www.cdacnetwork.org/files/cdac0612_haiti_lr_005_full_1.pdf

CDAC Haiti's work, mainly supported by Internews and OCHA illustrates the power of new media, technologies and collaboration to enhance humanitarian response through better two-way communication with disaster-affected communities. Modern technologies are facilitating innovative responses to humanitarian needs, fuelled by new cross-sector partnerships that put the people we seek to serve at the heart of our work and in greater control of their own recovery.

An example of CAFOD Accountability Briefing: information sharing with communities

<http://hapinternational.org/pool/files/accountability-briefing-level-1-information-sharing-en.pdf>

A step-by-step guidance for CAFOD partners on how to share information with the communities they support through development and/or humanitarian projects.

ECHO Review of Existing Practices to Ensure Participation of Disaster-Affected Communities in Humanitarian Aid Operations

http://www.cdacnetwork.org/sites/www.cdacnetwork.org/files/dg_echo_review-participationreport-092012.pdf

This review provides an overview of the most relevant policy, practice, literature and research concerning the participation of disaster affected communities in humanitarian action. It identifies key case studies and examples of best practice from a range of organisations and scenarios. The review includes an analysis of donor funding policies and approaches, as well as the impact of "lessons learnt" on future actions. This includes the way "participation" is formulated in terms of policy and how it is carried out in practice in multiple contexts. The report provides a set of conclusions and specific recommendations for DG ECHO with the aim of further integration of participatory approaches in future humanitarian interventions.

Hap Website Resources on Information Sharing

<http://www.hapinternational.org/case-studies-and-tools/sharing-information.aspx>

This page contains a number of Policies, procedures and guidelines and example on Information Sharing.

Infoasaid, Improving communication with disaster affected communities

<http://infoasaid.org/>

Infoasaid's goal is to improve the quality of humanitarian assistance through enhanced information exchange between crisis-affected populations and aid agencies. Infoasaid develop preparedness tools to help aid agencies communicate better in an emergency; deploy teams to the field to support partners in delivering communications responses; work on advocacy at system and organization level; and research to promote learning and strengthen the evidence base in this sector.

The CDAC (Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities) Network

www.cdacnetwork.org/

The CDAC Network advocates for changed priorities - and hence capabilities - in the humanitarian system, aiming towards a two-way communication among individuals, organisations and inter-agency processes, becoming a predictable and consistent element of preparedness and humanitarian response efforts. The CDAC Network strengthens the capacity of practitioners and managers so that they know how to place two-way communication at the heart of preparedness and response, thereby changing operational practice.

Accountability to Affected Populations in Limited to No-Access Zones

<http://www.fao.org/emergencies/resources/documents/resources-detail/en/c/172976/>

This paper sets out some reflections on these efforts, offers case studies and presents some good practice examples and references regarding methodologies applied in particularly challenging environments, specifically in terms of communication and information provision, feedback and complaint mechanisms, participation throughout needs assessment and monitoring activities. The examples presented are intended as a guide to systems which, when applied in specific contexts, would need contextualization to local circumstances, such as levels of access, local frameworks and capacities, existing systems, etc .

Code of Conduct for SMS Disaster Response

<http://www.cdacnetwork.org/public/resource/code-conduct-sms-disaster-response>

During the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona in February 2013, the Disaster Response Program from GSMA presented a code of conduct for SMS use during disaster response, hoping to address the mobile industry's growing role in humanitarian crisis management. The code is based in large part on the experience that Meier and other crisis-mapping volunteers faced in running [4636](#), the Ushahidi platform that helped to locate victims of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. The program, which was named for the SMS shortcode that was secured from [FrontlineSMS](#), enabled volunteers to aggregate and map hazards, shortages, and other threats to the safety of the population.

The 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management -

<http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/2010-hap-standard-in-accountability.pdf>

The HAP standard sets some guidance for organisations intending to comply with the HAP Principles of Accountability. The resource is also a means to assess organisations against recognised benchmarks of accountability and quality management and to improve its practice.

The Guide to the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management -

<http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/guide-to-the-2010-hap-standard-printer-friendly-version.pdf>

According to international standards, guidelines and principles of continual improvement, the HAP 2007 Standard underwent an extensive revision process. The review reflects learning of applying the Standard and accountability practice since 2007.

The Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response -

<http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/>

The SPHERE Project's core standards describe conditions that must be achieved in any humanitarian response in order for disaster-affected populations to survive and recover in stable conditions and with dignity. The inclusion of affected populations in the consultative process lies at the heart of Sphere's philosophy.

Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid

http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/book/time_to_listen_pdf_Pdf1.pdf

This paper summarises the experiences and analysis of nearly 6,000 people in 20 aid receiving countries, as well as the reflections of aid workers themselves, on the effectiveness of international aid efforts. These experiences and analysis was captured through [The Listening Project](#).

Mobile Technology in Emergencies

<http://www.cdacnetwork.org/public/resource/mobile-technology-emergencies>

Efficient cash transfer mechanisms and effective two-way communication with disaster-affected communities using mobile phone technology

New Technology & the Prevention of Violence & Conflict Case studies

http://www.cdacnetwork.org/sites/www.cdacnetwork.org/files/jpi-undp_2013new-technology-conflict-prevention-advance.pdf

For more case studies consult the New Technology & the Prevention of Violence & Conflict report which explores how innovative forms of communication, information gathering, information sharing, and information analysis over the internet (eg: social media, information mapping, and GIS mapping), via mobile phone applications, and text messaging can be utilized in the service of conflict prevention.

People In Aid's Code of Good Practice

<http://www.peopleinaid.org/code/>

The Code of Good Practice is a management tool that helps humanitarian aid and development agencies enhance the quality and accountability of their human resources management.

The Joint Standards Initiative: Humanitarian Standards for Aid Workers - <http://www.jointstandards.org/>

The Initiative aims at supporting the humanitarian system in providing accountable programming that meets accepted standards of quality, both in the immediate humanitarian response, and in the development and implementation of organisational and operational strategies for short and long-term recovery and the prevention of future crises.

Sphere Quality and Accountability Best Practices Guidelines

<http://www.sphereproject.org/resources/>

A set of materials to be used in training workshops or as an introduction to the range of quality and accountability initiatives for humanitarian response. The materials enable participants to understand the approach to quality and accountability of 8 main Accountability initiatives (such as HAP, ALNAP or the Sphere project).

ALNAP's Evaluating Humanitarian Action

www.alnap.org/resources/guides/evaluation/ehadac.aspx

This guide was developed after discussions within the evaluation community about how to strengthen evaluation of humanitarian practice, and how to foster more effective use of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria. The objective of this guide is to provide practical support on how to use the DAC criteria in Evaluation of Humanitarian Action (EHA). It draws on good-practice material on evaluation and on EHA, including other guides, handbooks and manuals.

The ECB Project's Good Enough Guide

<http://www.ecbproject.org/the-good-enough-guide/the-good-enough-guide>

In this guide, accountability means making sure that the women, men, and children affected by an emergency are involved in planning, implementing, and judging the response to their emergency. This helps ensure that a project will have the impact they want to see. The *Good Enough Guide* was developed by the Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB). The ECB is a collaborative effort by CARE International, Catholic Relief Services, the IRC, Mercy Corps, Oxfam GB, Save the Children, and World Vision International.