




CASE STUDIES

Local And Global Collaboration To Accelerate The Establishment Of A Collective Community Engagement And Accountability Platform: Lessons From Burkina Faso

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The Community Engagement and Accountability Working Group in Burkina Faso was founded in March 2020 to bring greater accountability to affected populations in the humanitarian response in Burkina Faso. Its aim was to promote intersectoral coordination for the effective inclusion of needs, concerns and priorities of affected communities, and kick-start efforts to provide coordinated feedback to communities.



N E T W O R K

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Burkina Faso, West Africa, covers an area of around 274,200 square kilometres and is bordered by Mali to the northwest, Niger to the northeast, Benin to the southeast, Togo and Ghana to the south, and Côte d'Ivoire to the southwest.

What is the initiative?

The establishment and operationalisation of inter-agency platforms and mechanisms to support community engagement and accountability in the humanitarian response in Burkina Faso.

THE CENTRAL PLATFORM of this collective community engagement platform is the Community Engagement and Accountability Working Group (CEAWG), which ensures strong and cohesive interagency participation around the principles of communication with communities, listening to feedback and adapting humanitarian programmes to be more responsive.

The CEAWG in Burkina Faso was founded in March 2020 to bring greater accountability to affected populations in the humanitarian response in Burkina Faso. Its aim was to promote intersectoral coordination for the effective inclusion of needs, concerns and priorities of affected communities, and kick-start efforts to provide coordinated feedback to communities. The group was established with clearly-defined TORs, an Action Plan and clear lines of coordination with the clusters, the Humanitarian Country Team, relevant government bodies and NGO groups.



Membership of the working group is diverse and active, and currently includes representation from UN Agencies, national and international NGOs, clusters, donor agencies, government, media and the private sector.

How was localisation considered?

A model was established for the implementation of this work, in which a global-national partnership was championed. This was possible through an innovative approach that included installing a senior national coordinator, bilingual in French and English, to work full-time from the capital Ouagadougou, while maintaining the international consultant who had conducted an initial assessment as an advisor to work in a technical support and supervisory role and introduce global resources. Decision making was shared, while implementation was undertaken primarily by the senior national coordinator. This was an effective way of working, bringing the best of global networks and resources and local knowledge, networks and best practice to decisions about what to try to achieve, how and with whom. The approach was facilitated by CDAC, in collaboration with OCHA, who hosted the coordination team in-country and whose head of office had previous experience working with CCEA initiatives and was a strong supporter of their integration into the overall humanitarian response. The local-global partnership accelerated the establishment of the working group and promotion of good practice and localisation in CEA and humanitarian action.

With a national coordinator appointed in April 2020, the operationalisation of the CEAWG has seen considerable progress in its first year, particularly after the delays caused and challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic during March and April 2020. The objectives of the CEAWG and workplan of the coordinator through the initial phase were drawn from recommendations made by the working group itself, and those outlined in the [Situational Analysis](#) that was conducted by CDAC, in partnership with OCHA, in December 2019. Membership of the working group is diverse and active, and currently includes representation from UN Agencies, national and international NGOs, clusters, donor agencies, government, media and the private sector (a full list can be found at the end of this document). During 2020, two regional working groups were established in the Eastern and Centre-Nord regions, to respond to more local needs and facilitate the coordination of organisations working more specifically with communities there. The efforts of all the working groups are documented in the portal which has been developed on the [Humanitarian Response website](#), as a resource for all agencies and organisations seeking to strengthen community engagement and accountability in the country.



With support from the CDAC coordination team, UNICEF, an active member of the CEAWG at national level, took the lead in setting up two regional-level working groups

EASTERN REGION	CENTRE-NORD REGION
<p>The Working Group (WG) in the eastern region was established in June 2020. The group is chaired by the Regional Directorate in charge of Humanitarian Affairs and is coordinated by UNICEF. Its membership includes international and national NGOs, the ICRC, UN agencies as well as local government departments such as the Regional Directorate for Health, and the Regional Directorate for Pre-school, Primary, and Non-formal Education. The group meets once monthly and has elaborated TORs an action plan for the second half of 2020 which includes a mapping of humanitarian actors' CCEA activities and mechanisms in the region, capacity building and experience and resource sharing. In November, the WG is holding a training workshop in Fada N'Gourma to strengthen the capacity of its members in CCEA.</p>	<p>The Working Group (WG) in the Centre-Nord region was established in September 2020. The group is chaired by the region's Governor, and coordinated by UNICEF, in close collaboration with OCHA. The WG meets on a monthly basis, has elaborated TORs and will work on an action plan to be implemented in 2021. Membership includes international and national NGOs, UN agencies, as well as the Regional Directorate for Health. For the remainder of 2020, the WG in the Centre-Nord is working to build its membership and has started providing technical support at the request of members implementing projects in the region. In November, it is supporting Fondation Hironelle in building the capacity of young IDP women in CCEA in Kaya through training. The training participants will use their skills to collect and feed information back from the communities in the IDP sites where they live.</p>
<p>The Working Group (WG) at the national level has provided technical support for the establishment of regional WGs and continues to do so for the elaboration of their key documents and for their capacity trainings. The regional coordinators participate in all national WG meetings. In 2021, it is expected that more WGs will be established in other regions (Sahel, Nord, Boucle du Mouhoun), and that a Community of Practice will emerge, constituted of all coordinators at regional and national levels, to ensure effective coordination and information sharing.</p>	



OCHA/GILES CLARKE



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Why did it happen?

Burkina Faso continues to experience a dynamic and complex humanitarian crisis, resulting from the severe consequences of conflict and violence and climate variability resulting in displacement, chronic acute food insecurity and malnutrition. Attacks by Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG) in Burkina Faso have been on the increase since early 2016, with a marked and sustained spike since the second half of 2019. The closure of health facilities, schools and markets, the displacement of populations, and poor access to WASH services are among other visible impacts of the security and humanitarian crisis in Burkina Faso. Severe climate shocks, including widespread drought and flooding, have added to the crisis. As a result, vulnerable affected populations are experiencing a dynamic displacement, with more than 1 million people internally displaced in less than two years, as well as the host communities who are receiving and integrating them and also those who remain in locations directly affected by insecurity. The situation has been steadily deteriorating since 2017, with a peak observed in the second half of 2019, followed in early 2020 by the onset of the wide-ranging challenges presented by COVID-19. Of the country's 13 regions, the humanitarian response focused on five of the six most-affected regions in 2020, increasing to six in 2021 (Boucle du Mouhoun, Centre-Est, Centre-Nord, Est, Nord, and Sahel). In those six regions, more than three-and-a-half million people face crucial unmet needs created by the deterioration of their living conditions; among them more than one million people are in need of services linked to their survival. In late October 2019, the Humanitarian Country Team was activated in Burkina Faso, replacing the Humanitarian-Development Country Team and establishing a broader humanitarian architecture in response to the escalating crises. Eight clusters have been formally activated at national level. CDAC's situational analysis was undertaken late in 2019 to identify needs and opportunities to establish and strengthen community engagement and accountability as an integral element of this humanitarian intervention. In turn, the assessment revealed the need to identify and map the existing community engagement capacity in humanitarian and development actors across the response and building more cohesive and effective collective accountability.

How does it work?

The CEA working group was not envisaged as a technical advisory mechanism – rather as a central part of the overall national and international coordination architecture to strengthen communication with communities, community engagement and participation activities, and efforts towards collective accountability to affected populations. It was conceived as being linked to the clusters and to national mechanisms. The scoping mission, and resultant situational analysis set the pace for rapid operationalisation which was included in its recommendations. This initial assessment also enabled the establishment, and laid the foundations of relationships between, the future CDAC coordination team and key participants of the newly-formed working group within months. While this arrangement was taking shape, COVID-19 disrupted plans for implementation, including in-country missions from the international technical advisor, and the cooperation between team members was conducted remotely and online. However, the coordination team quickly established a CEA network through the working group members, as well as effective cooperation with the government's RCCE COVID-19 response and with other key stakeholders such as donors and the UN's sub-national offices.

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How did it happen?

CDAC and OCHA collaborated to initiate the original scoping mission and recruit the national leadership of the coordination team. With funding from H2H Network, essential resources were secured to ensure the successful operationalisation of the new CEA platforms and mechanisms. OCHA provided office space and support staff resources, including information management and administration as required as well as logistical support for field missions. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of the coordination work was undertaken remotely and from the home-office. The initial meetings of the working group were conducted virtually, and were essentially a forum where members could contribute to the establishment of an action plan for the upcoming year, as well as share updates on their own activities, highlighting the gaps and opportunities for collaboration. This culminated in a [comprehensive national training workshop](#) in October 2020, which is due to be replicated at the regional level. The coordinator took the initiative to record and produce the training sessions of the national workshop, so that modules were available in the regions, where resources and capacity are more limited. [These videos](#) draw on specialised resources that are more available at the national level but not easily deployable to all of the sub-national levels, and are products that will continue to be available for use in-country and in other francophone operations in the region and globally.

Importantly, this first period was required to strengthen the basic understanding of how to implement and facilitate better community engagement with affected communities. Throughout the year, it was observed that this comprehension and capacity grew stronger and the group gained confidence to share and discuss the principles and activities of CEA. Having a both national and international expertise in this establishment phase provided a strong foundation upon which to consolidate understanding of the CEA principles and action, as well as sustain engagement within the working group and broader humanitarian community.

Over the year, the working group developed the capacity to quickly form taskforces or sub-working groups to work on specific issues and activities to respond to emergencies and then dismantle. This has been demonstrated in the support to the government's COVID-19 Taskforce (GT-CREC) on messaging and getting information to communities, and via a workshop in the Centre-Nord region and in the joint analysis of the surveys and assessments. In the case of the COVID-19 response, the coordinator ensured group members were able to access a centralised message bank and liaised closely with government authorities responsible. More time and skill-building will be required to enable the working group to act quickly and coordinate themselves to respond to an emergency need; however, the foundations for this were laid in this initial establishment phase. The working group's organisational survey with the clusters, the workshop at the national level and a joint analysis of assessment data are also evidence of the members' capacity to activate quickly based on need; more can be done to leverage this capacity and RCCE may be a future focus of the working group. The formation of those taskforces/sub-working groups has to be triggered and driven by the coordination team, and requires a good knowledge of the capacity of each member in terms of expertise and active engagement. The overall success of the initiative has been contingent upon the enhancement of existing capacity and resources that come from each member organisation, and members' commitment to undertake and improve CEA initiatives both within their own agencies and in collaboration with other Working Group members.





What happened?

Several initiatives emerged from the fostering of interagency collaboration via the CEAWG. The following are among the highlights:

1. Organisational capacity analysis: mapping capacity and identifying gaps in collaboration with the ICCG

A survey was designed and administered within CEAWG and cluster membership to collect information on:

- Existing mechanisms and processes used to collect feedback from affected communities prior to, during, and post-implementation of humanitarian programmes and projects
- Mechanisms used to manage feedback collected from affected communities as well as their place within the humanitarian response architecture, and the existence and potential for the development of inter-cluster/inter-agency mechanisms
- The effectiveness of mechanisms in place
- Capacity building needs and recommendations from organisations that are members of the CEAWG and the clusters

Analysis was performed by the CEAWG coordination team and results presented to the group and clusters. The results were useful in deciding on areas of focus for immediate and future capacity strengthening workshops. They also represented the basis for recommendations around areas of future priorities for group members at organisational level and for the humanitarian community as a whole, including increasing the number of CE/AAP focal points, setting up referral mechanisms for complaints that actors might not be able to manage, and strengthening inter-cluster/inter-agency mechanisms for discussing and managing feedback and complaints in a collective manner.

2. Training workshop and video production: building capacity and strengthening skills

The Working Group's terms of reference also committed to improving the quality of engagement with affected communities through [capacity building of humanitarian actors](#). The need for this was reinforced by the results of the organisational survey conducted in collaboration with the ICCG. To this end, in October 2020, and in line with local guidance on physical distancing in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Coordination team organised a capacity-building workshop to help develop the collective capacity of the working group and its members. The agenda was formed based on a self-assessment process, which enabled participants to identify areas in need of strengthening and knowledge and skills that needed to be developed. The result was a three-day, in-depth workshop that addressed the challenges and opportunities of systematically embedding communication, community engagement and accountability (CCEA) in a humanitarian response in West Africa. It equipped participants with a basic understanding of the key principles of humanitarian response, community engagement and accountability through the combination for learning modules and practical exercises. At the end of the workshop, participants gained valuable, practical, and contextualised knowledge on various CCEA related topics, including perception surveys, multi-sector needs





assessments, and feedback and complaints management. To ensure sustainability, in response to the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 restrictions, and to provide much-needed resources in French to the wider humanitarian sector, the workshops were filmed and edited into training videos – available to any francophone humanitarian operation.

3. Needs assessments and analysis to improve responsiveness, accountability and access to aid

The Working Group provided coordination and technical support for the elaboration of Burkina Faso's 2021 Humanitarian Programming Cycle (HPC) documents (the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)) and is informing the HCT's AAP commitments in 2021. This exercise involved a joint analysis conducted by REACH, Ground Truth Solutions (GTS) and UNHCR, all members of the Working Group, who conducted the three main assessments that collected and analysed the needs, perceptions, and recommendations of affected communities in the country. These assessments, which collected data directly from affected communities, represented the main sources of information for Burkina Faso's 2021 HNO and HRP:

1. Accountability section of the Multisectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA) conducted by REACH
2. Perceptions Survey conducted by GTS
3. Consultations with affected communities conducted by UNHCR and ACT Alliance at the request of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement

The joint assessment provided data, common conclusions, and common indicators around:

- Participation and decision making: affected communities' views on how they had been considered in humanitarian decision-making processes
- Quality of humanitarian assistance: affected communities' perceptions around the quality of the assistance they receive, their preferred aid mechanisms, and their recommendations on how to improve the humanitarian response
- Economic empowerment and durable solutions: affected communities' recommendations on ways to make aid more durable and better able to improve their livelihoods in the long-term
- Information and communication: affected communities' preferred mechanisms for receiving information and communicating feedback and complaints
- Feedback and complaints mechanisms: affected communities' knowledge and use of existing complaints mechanisms
- Protection: affected communities' perceptions around their own safety in their daily lives and when accessing humanitarian assistance

The common accountability indicators from the joint analysis will be included in Burkina Faso's 2021 HRP. Between January and March 2021, the Working Group will work on sets of sub-indicators and recommendations for their inclusion in members' programming in order to facilitate monitoring and reporting. Monitoring of and reporting on the AAP indicators will constitute a major part of the CEAWG's activities in 2021.



What did we learn?

Capacity strengthening is essential and delivers demonstrable benefits and tangible results

The organisational survey undertaken by the coordination team reveals where there are clear opportunities for improvement in terms of lack of capacity, confusion about the different elements, approaches to community engagement and accountability. For example, C4D and how this is understood. There needs to be more capacity strengthening in both national and international agencies, in terms of understanding how to communicate with disaster affected communities, and the relevant and responsive action resulting from it. Training workshops were successful in themselves, and certainly provided additional capacity and enhanced the discussions already underway in working group meetings: every meeting of the working group has progressed this a bit further. The training materials and resources have been utilised by working group members and trainees. For example, CDAC's [Collective Communication and Community Engagement in humanitarian action: How To Guide for leaders and responders](#), which was shared during the workshop, was appreciated and helped grow people's understanding of where to find online resources. The crux of the work has begun, but sustainability is going to be a challenge and it is clear that overall this capacity needs further strengthening and sustained facilitation, education and commitment.

The benefits of the CEA platform are cumulative; coordination strengthens collective approaches

The CEA working group as a central platform is widely viewed as a useful forum. Across the year there has been a visible progression in the groups' understanding of CEA. Interactions within the group have improved – with demonstrably more active participation from its members and there are more questions and interrogation of what other members are undertaking, a better appreciation of coordination to overcome duplication, share learning and identify gaps. Numbers of individuals and agencies in attendance have increased across the year and in the short period of its existence, this progress signals future success.

The sustainability of the platform is largely dependent upon the availability of future facilitation capacity and resourcing

However, future success will not be possible without close facilitation and resourcing, and it would appear to be the beginning of a long road. Assessing impact and demonstrating positive consequences of this and resourcing the work will be essential to sustained effectiveness. Group members are more capable, now the challenge for them remains in educating and capacitating their own organisations and leadership to allocate resources to the CEA initiatives. The establishment of two regional working groups indicates a willingness to coordinate but the regional groups are still lacking capacity to initiate and facilitate effectively.



What might we do differently?



There is a need to continue to build the capacity of the CEA Working Group members, to be able to respond both immediately and in the longer term to communication crises and affected communities' needs.

Where context allows, there may have been greater benefits in establishing a national leadership structure in the CEAWG sooner, with the CDAC Coordinator providing direct technical support to them, rather than leading and implementing the action plan, and then facilitating a transition. The working group is now associated with CDAC but was intended to be an interagency, common service platform that was not tied to any one agency or organisation or viewed as a stand-alone project. CDAC generally aims to instigate action and provide technical assistance and guidance – ideally to a national entity such as a large NGO or network of NGOs. In this case, as the situational analysis revealed, there wasn't a national entity, rapidly identifiable leadership or an established structure to support this. In Burkina Faso, CDAC's aim was to establish the national platform and build the capacity and identify entities to whom the CDAC personnel can handover the leadership. In this case, the Burkina Faso Caritas Forum has agreed to step into the co-chairing role with OCHA Burkina Faso for 2021. It is worth considering a second way of engaging, which is to initiate more sustained support to local leadership earlier, and to identify indicators for measuring this partnership, with funding arrangements to support such engagement where prioritised. In Burkina Faso, CDAC partnered with OCHA to ensure coordination within the humanitarian system in order to reach and assist affected people. Even though it was experimental, the partnership and hosting arrangement between CDAC and OCHA proved successful overall. It may have been improved by more clearly establishing the agreement between both parties, clarifying in more detail the roles and responsibilities and reporting arrangements and developing a joint workplan.

A separate observation is that the initiative could have benefited from having two full-time staff on the ground, a coordinator and an information management officer. It would be beneficial to propose this structure for the establishment of national platforms in the future.

What happens next?

As this initiative rolls into phase two, and moves beyond the establishment phase, it will be beneficial to investigate how to work more closely and forge deeper linkages with local national government and non-government agencies. There is a need to continue to build the capacity of the CEA Working Group members, to be able to respond both immediately and in the longer term to communication crises and affected communities' needs. Part of this work will involve enabling a rapid response system in which members understand their roles and responsibilities – and the allocation of resources – in relation to emergency needs and their own accountability commitments. In relation to all the efforts of the working group, an impact monitoring framework should be systematised and coordinated, making use of CDAC's [Framework for Assessing Success of National CCE Platforms](#).

This case study was written by **Sandra Zerbo**, CDAC Senior National Coordinator for CCE in Burkina Faso, and **Rachel Maher**, CEA Advisor and member of the CDAC Expert Pool.

Full list of Member Organisations/Clusters/Working Groups

ACF, ACTED, Association Koom, Association Semfilms, CARE, CASH WG, CDAC, Shelter Cluster, Education Cluster, Protection Cluster, Protection Cluster- Child Protection AOR, Protection Cluster- GBV AOR, Refugee Response Coordination, Health Cluster, Food Security Cluster, Logistics Cluster, Nutrition Cluster, WASH Cluster, CN/AEJTB, CNRST, Belgian Red Cross, Burkinabè Red Cross, CRS, Deutsche Welle, DRC, Houndé Regional Health Directorate, ECHO, FAO, Fondation Hirondelle, Ground Truth Solutions, GT-GSAT (Site Management Working Group), HELP, Humanity & Inclusion, ICAHD International, iMMAP, INTERSOS, IRC, Malaria Consortium, NRC, OCADES Caritas, OCHA, OHCHR, IOM, WHO, OXFAM, WFP, UNDP, Rapid Response Coordination Group, REACH, SOLIDARITES, Terre des Hommes, UNCT, UNHCR, UNICEF, VIAMO.

Full list of products created

REPORT: Situational Analysis of Communication, Community Engagement and Accountability in Burkina Faso: <http://www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-and-resources/i/20200217221516-frj5k>

VIDEOS: Renforcement des capacités au Burkina Faso/Building capacity in Burkina Faso (training videos from the capacity strengthening workshop): <http://www.cdacnetwork.org/i/20201124012448-wpdt6>

BLOG: Engaging with communities in Burkina Faso in the time of COVID-19: English: <http://www.cdacnetwork.org/i/20200528181713-syu0d>; French: <http://www.cdacnetwork.org/i/20200618195624-ihx74>

BLOG: The complexity of communicating in conflict: the case of Burkina Faso: <http://www.cdacnetwork.org/i/20200217222017-iyrp2>

RESOURCES: Resource-sharing platform on Humanitarian Response Info: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/op%C3%A9rations/burkina-faso/engagement-communautaire-et-redevabilit%C3%A9>



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