

Information management

for communication,
community engagement
and accountability to
affected people (CCE/AAP)

Guidance

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Acknowledgements

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Overview

Principled and effective humanitarian action acknowledges that people and communities are the primary responders in a crisis and ensures that they drive decision-making. Information makes this possible. This document seeks to provide clear guidance on how information management associated with communication, engagement and accountability activities with communities affected by crisis supports humanitarian action.

What is information management (IM)?

IM in the humanitarian context involves a series of organisational or collective actions, including: gathering, analysing, categorising and contextualising data from communities; archiving, storing and safely deleting it; and providing information directly to communities in order to support the needs and preferences of people affected by crisis. This involves ensuring that information is generated and brought together from different actors and activities and then made available to the right person, in the right format, at the right time, and in a language they understand and medium they trust. It has often been undervalued, and yet its purpose is fundamental to the core goals of humanitarian action. IM makes it possible for responses to humanitarian crises to be driven by the needs and preferences of the crisis-affected community (through their data, engagement and meeting their needs for information) and to therefore be as impactful as possible.

IM for communication and community engagement/accountability to affected people (CCE/AAP) may overlap with some of the core activities of CCE/AAP programming, which involves providing, adapting and enabling two-way passage of information via dialogue with and between communities. This guide pertains to the actions that link CCE/AAP programme outputs and outcomes with decision-making in the humanitarian sector.

Introduction

The flow of information between crisis-affected communities and humanitarian actors is vital to ensuring that a humanitarian response is impactful and that communities are able to determine its design and implementation and hold humanitarian actors to account. Information is also vital for supporting actors in a humanitarian response to work collectively with affected communities: making transparent each other's activities; advocating collectively for the primacy of community voices; establishing collaborative communication mechanisms that collate large amounts of data; and much more. Information is therefore arguably the lifeblood of the actions taken by humanitarian actors to enable CCE/AAP in responses.

It therefore follows that it is not possible to have effective CCE/AAP within a response without effective associated IM. A vast amount of information exists and is created within a response, and data flows between humanitarian actors and communities are at risk of being ineffective and extractive. Consequently, it is important to carefully consider IM as a whole and across a range of different activities, to enable data to be used to inform decision-making and to empower the communities to lead, or at the very least be active partners in, their recovery. The success of a response depends on it.

Communication, engagement and accountability go beyond the design and delivery of formal humanitarian action. Actors should apply equal focus to facilitating communication and dialogue within and between people and communities affected by and involved in a crisis, including private sector and other individual or organised actors. Actors should examine and respond to the information needs of crisis affected people, paying close attention to the circulation of misinformation and rumours that negatively affect the community, as well as the information needs identified by communities themselves. This document focuses on two-way dialogue and information-sharing between affected people and formal humanitarian actors in order to provide guidance on a specific component of overall humanitarian response.

The 'information' that this guidance refers to as the focus of 'CCE/AAP information management' includes:

- Information that is intentionally collected from communities (such as assessment of needs and preferences, feedback, complaints)
- Information that is provided directly to communities (such as public health or early warning messaging)
- Information that relates to actors involved in CCE/AAP activities (such as mapping of complaints systems, contact databases)
- Information that relates to the context with relevance to CCE/AAP activities (such as the media landscape, rumours and misinformation circulating within the community)

Without managing this information, it's impossible to be accountable to communities and to meet the core purpose of humanitarian action.

Purpose and audience

This guidance builds on the CDAC Network orientation paper '[Information management for coordinated community engagement: information management functions of an inter-agency AAP/CCE working group](#)'. It aims to provide practical guidance to support effective management of information related to collective CCE/AAP across different stages of a humanitarian response. Additionally, it supports the development of a common understanding of CCE/AAP IM as a function, as it is not currently well defined when compared with other humanitarian sectors.

The activities highlighted in this document do not represent a 'to-do' list that must be undertaken. Rather, they present examples of current 'good practice' in humanitarian responses which may support achievement of the key objectives for CCE/AAP IM for each stage of the programme cycle. It's much more important to think about the purpose of the activities and what they are designed to achieve than to replicate the form of IM activities undertaken in other responses or guidance documents. The overall purpose of CCE/AAP IM is to build a better relationship between the community and humanitarian actors and drive greater impact of humanitarian action for the community in their recovery from a crisis.

Although this guidance document does not provide detailed guidance on meeting data protection standards, it highlights that every actor within a response that is collecting data from affected communities has a responsibility to adhere to common methodologies and data protection standards.

The consensus is growing for the need for a dedicated Information Management Officer for CCE/AAP in crisis responses, but it is not yet common. This guidance is therefore written with a broader audience in mind: CCE/AAP IM officers (where they exist), but also decision-makers, practitioners, programme managers and other staff involved in collective CCE/AAP work in humanitarian contexts.

It is relevant to a wide range of humanitarian contexts: rapid-onset, public health emergency, conflict and other complex emergencies, as well to preparedness work in advance of a crisis.

Core considerations: vulnerability, data and standards

IM in humanitarian responses is not a benign function and greatly impacts the rights of crisis-affected communities to receive protection and assistance and to ensure the basic conditions for life with dignity. It has enormous power to affect decision-making and influence resource allocation. It also brings with it other real-life consequences for affected communities: it affects their access to information as a right and their ability to act with agency, but can also present serious threats to their security and privacy. Ensuring that CCE/AAP IM activities are informed by clear principles supports the achievement of purpose and prevention of harm. [The previous iteration of this guidance](#) proposed some clear principles that are relevant to all aspects of CCE/AAP IM and are foundational to this guidance document (see Appendix).

In addition to principles, and as an important way to translate principles to humanitarian action, voluntary standards like the [Core Humanitarian Standard](#) (CHS) offer practical guidance to improve quality and accountability in crisis responses. Strong CCE/AAP IM can be seen as playing a critical role for each of the CHS commitments.

Throughout the guidance there is reference to the importance of ensuring consideration is given to different dimensions of vulnerability among the affected community in any context. This relates to understanding the different ways in which people are prevented from exercising their rights, accessing resources and being heard. It is widely accepted that, within any geographical location, communities are not homogenous and people will experience suffering and recovery differently according to their different levels of vulnerability. Undoubtedly the most vulnerable will suffer the most and experience the weakest recovery. Vulnerability must be understood as specific to a context and multidimensional; it may be associated with gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, wealth, sexual orientation and other sociocultural dimensions.

The guidance

The guidance is structured in two ways: first, it is organised around the key relevant stages of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, with the addition of ‘crisis preparedness’ as a separate stage to support CCE/AAP IM in anticipation of crises. Second, each stage is organised according to three pillars of collective CCE/AAP work: working collaboratively; sharing information with communities; and listening and responding to communities. These are not neatly bounded areas and they contribute importantly to one another, but using these pillars highlights the higher-level purpose of CCE/AAP IM as opposed to focusing on just the activities themselves. Therefore, each section includes descriptions of the key IM objectives and related activities that may support their achievement, as well as prompting questions to help inform action, suggested key outputs and links to key tools/resources.

Table 1 outlines the content included in this guidance.




	● Crisis preparedness	● Needs assessment and analysis	● Strategic planning	● Implementation and monitoring
 Working collaboratively				
 Providing information for communities				
 Listening and responding to communities				

Table 1 Outline of content included in the guidance

Crisis preparedness		
	Working collaboratively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actor capacity and mechanism mapping • Foundations for collective action • Support risk and preparedness consultations with communities
	Providing information for communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Messaging to meet information needs • Assessing preferred and appropriate channels
	Listening and responding to communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing preferred and appropriate channels • Joint or multi-sector needs assessment • Tracking rumours and misinformation
Needs assessment and analysis		
	Working collaboratively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping/tracking actors and activities • Support risk and preparedness consultations with communities
	Providing information and listening and responding to communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing preferred and appropriate channels • Joint/multi-sector needs assessment • Technical assessment • Community consultations • Data validation • Secondary data
		
Strategic planning		
	Working collaboratively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy within the response leadership/coordination • AAP/CCE in strategic plans • CCE/AAP indicators • Data management approach • Taxonomy and language
	Providing information for communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning for information sharing
	Listening and responding to communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning for seeking and acting on feedback
Implementation and monitoring		
	Working collaboratively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping/tracking actors and activities • Coordination IM • Facilitating effective coordination
	Providing information for communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Messaging to meet information needs • Information-sharing mechanisms
	Listening and responding to communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping mechanisms • Collating and harmonising data • Analysis of stakeholder data use • 'Closing the loop' with communities • Analysis of data • Rumour and misinformation tracking • Monitoring & evaluation

1 Crisis preparedness

Preparedness activities undertaken in anticipation and advance of a crisis enable a better humanitarian response and support greater community resilience. CCE/AAP IM can support these activities to be informed by the perspectives and needs of the community itself, so that preparedness and subsequent crisis response plans are as people-centred as possible.

CCE/AAP IM primary objectives at crisis preparedness stage

- Maximise communities' input into crisis preparedness plans by supporting their participation in plan development, and by ensuring the inclusion of appropriate CCE/AAP and associated IM activities within preparedness plans.
- Build strong foundations for collective action by fostering awareness of and connections between actors working on CCE/AAP.
- Develop tools and appropriate channels for sharing learning and good practice ahead of a crisis.

Activities to support the objectives

Working collaboratively



- Actor capacity & mechanism mapping
- Foundations for collective action
- Support risk and preparedness consultations with communities

Providing information for communities



- Messaging to meet information needs
- Assess preferred and appropriate channels

Listening and responding to communities



- Joint or multi-sector needs assessments
- Assess preferred and appropriate channels
- Track rumours and misinformation

Working collaboratively

- **Develop actor capacity and mechanism mapping.** At this stage, IM can play a key role in enabling an integrated view of existing actors that are sharing crisis-related information or that have established mechanisms in place for communicating with communities in the context (e.g. social media, low-tech mechanisms, operational feedback mechanisms such as hotlines). Producing this view may involve mapping the geographical presence of actors/mechanisms or maintaining a 4W matrix.



- **Build foundations for collective action.** Functional IM activities, such as establishing and maintaining a contact database for CCE/AAP actors, can support the quick collective mobilisation of actors following a crisis.
- **Support risk and preparedness consultations with communities.** CCE/AAP IM should focus on promoting people-centered development of risk analysis and anticipatory response plans. This may involve ensuring that consultations with communities (with specific consideration for including people with different dimensions of vulnerability) are conducted in an inclusive way and lead to appropriate prioritisation in plans for CCE/AAP activities, and that secondary data sources used to inform context analysis are people-centred and quality-assured.

Providing information for communities

- **Collate messaging to meet information needs.** As part of collective crisis preparedness activities where the likelihood of different types of crises are identified and assessed, it should be possible and useful to also anticipate potential information needs among affected communities. An IM activity that might support this would be to develop and establish a library of (existing) messaging and work with communities to test the effectiveness of different information messaging according to predicted potential crises.
- **Assess preferred and appropriate channels.** A preparedness initiative provides an opportunity to anticipate CCE/AAP activities and associated required IM in any response. At a minimum, this should involve documenting secondary data about the known preferred and appropriate channels for information-sharing with communities in the context, disaggregated by different groups (and especially according to different dimensions of vulnerability), and the presence and uptake of print/broadcast/social media and other sources of information trusted by the community. Using existing or developing 'media landscape' data relating to present media actors and community communication preferences would be a good, tested approach to this.
- **Map early-warning communications.** Where early warning systems exist for pre- or post-crisis event communications with communities (such as cyclone, earthquake, tsunami and flood warning systems), these can be documented as an IM activity to provide a foundation of knowledge for any subsequent CCE/AAP collective response, and to enable potential utilisation for broader information-sharing or communication with communities.

Listening and responding to communities

- **Assess preferred and appropriate channels.** Using data collated on trusted and preferred channels for communication, anticipate actions that involve *two-way* communication. Ensuring that communication channels allow two-way dialogue can require further consideration and may also involve mapping existing or previous experience of feedback mechanisms.
- **Contribute to the design of joint or multi-sector needs assessment.** IM may have a role in ensuring that preparedness initiatives relating to the design of context-appropriate needs assessment tools include sufficient questions on CCE/AAP and that a process exists to provide feedback to communities.
- **Prepare to track rumours and misinformation.** Anticipating the circulation of rumours and misinformation within the community allows preventative and responsive activities to be included in

preparedness. It is well evidenced that sharing accessible and relevant information with communities is one of the best ways to reduce the prevalence of rumours. Including ways of tracking, analysing and responding to rumours into preparedness plans can help make this a core part of response plans from the outset. One of the best ways to prevent negative or damaging rumours about humanitarian action is to commit to communicating openly and actively with communities: rumours thrive in an information vacuum.

Prompting questions

- **Actors and communication mechanisms:** Which actors within the humanitarian community *and* the context more broadly (including civil society, government bodies, private sector actors, established platforms and networks) have mechanisms in place for sharing messaging and communicating with communities affected by crises?
- **Information needs:** What are the most predictable crises for the context and what information needs are therefore most likely for affected communities? What activities/processes can be put in place to ensure the timely and relevant sharing of information to reduce the spread of rumours/misinformation? What existing tools for information-sharing/messaging from previous crises can be built upon?
- **Early warning systems:** What and how effective are the existing early warning systems serving communities, and how might these be used within a response to share critical information?
- **Communication channels:** What does existing secondary data tell us about the most appropriate and preferred ways to communicate with communities (such as mobile phone access/usage, TV/radio usage, trusted sources of information)?

Potential IM outputs

- Actor capacity map (presence of existing actors, services and key mechanisms for CCE/AAP)
- Messaging bank/library (contextualised and relevant to most likely crises)
- Early warning system map
- CCE/AAP questions in joint needs assessment tools
- Summary of previous information ecosystem analyses

Tools

CDAC Network's Message Library (CDAC Network, n.d.) and **Message Library User guidance** (CDAC Network, 2022). The library and its guidance are a reference for those wanting to quickly disseminate critical information to people affected by disasters, providing clear, concise and simple messages on a range of topics as templates for different contexts.

IASC accountability and inclusion resources portal (IASC, n.d.). This portal brings together Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidance and other essential resources, such as tools relating to AAP, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and inclusion, and access to technical support through a helpdesk.

Mapping information ecosystems to support resilience (Internews, 2015). This tool is designed to support decision-makers in understanding how information contributes to a more connected and resilient community, exploring a community's information needs and use.

CDAC Network's Media Landscape Guides (CDAC Network, n.d.). Media landscape guides map out the media and communications environment in different countries, including the audiences, producers, preferences of different groups in the community, communications culture and languages associated with the media.

CDAC's how-to guide on collective communication and community engagement in humanitarian action (CDAC Network, 2019). A guide for those implementing communication, community engagement and accountability in humanitarian action, bringing together a wealth of best practice.

Information & communication needs assessment (CDAC Network & ACAPS, 2014). A collection of tools to enable understanding and assessment of a community's information needs and available communication channels.

Menu of AAP-related questions for multi-sector needs assessments (IASC, 2018). Potential questions for organisations to choose from and adapt to the context, situation and phase of response they are operating within. The questions are designed for use in multi-sector needs assessments (MSNAs) for the collective response but could also be adapted for sector-level assessments at both inter-agency and agency levels.

Rumour has it: a practice guide to working with rumours (CDAC Network, 2017). A practical guide to working with rumours and misinformation in a crisis response.

2 Needs assessment and analysis

Ensuring that a humanitarian response is driven by the needs and preferences of the affected community is not negotiable. As part of achieving this, CCE/AAP IM can ensure that the assessment and analysis of the affected community's needs are done in a community-centered way; one which generates data that informs the way dialogue is held and information is shared with the community.

CCE/AAP IM primary objectives at needs assessment and analysis stage

- Make sure that data from the community on their needs and preferences determines the planning of the response and allocation of resources.
- Make clear the community's preferences for how they wish to receive information, provide inputs and feed back complaints, and make sure that these are used to inform the response.

Activities to support the objectives

Working collaboratively



- Map/track actors and activities
- Ensure quality approaches across the response

Providing information and listening and responding to communities



- Assess preferred and appropriate channels
- Joint or multi-sector needs assessment
- Technical assessment
- Community consultations
- Data validation
- Secondary data

Working collaboratively

- **Map/track actors and activities.** An important IM activity is ensuring good coverage of assessment activities relating to CCE/AAP, considering both the geographic location of the affected community and relevant considerations to vulnerability. This can involve aligning assessment tools and methods to ensure a good standard of data can be produced by all actors and used collectively.
- **Ensure quality approaches across the response.** IM for CCE/AAP can also make advice available to other actors/coordination groups within a response, to support the response to be as participatory for and responsive to the affected community as possible (*reference preferred and trusted channels documentation*). This might include advising others who are conducting needs assessments on sampling

methods to ensure population representation (including disaggregation of data by age, gender and other dimensions of vulnerability); advocating for the use of open questions (e.g. ‘what are your top priorities?’ and ‘what are your preferred means of delivery?’); advising on categorising and analysing data to best inform decision-making; advising on the need to test questions and use appropriate languages; providing a repository of tools/questions; advising on the appropriate training of enumerators (for instance, emphasising cultural sensitivity or enabling focus groups to be as inclusive as possible); as well as other practices that support community participation.

Providing information and listening and responding to communities

IM may support the collective input into assessments and analyses as they are designed and undertaken, focusing on inclusion of *all* stakeholders and the use of current good practice. Activities may include:

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 - **Assessment of preferred and appropriate channels.** Critically important for providing information and broader communication with affected communities is understanding preferences and most effective channels from the perspective of affected communities. Assessment activities should enable this by collecting and analysing relevant data for the population as a whole, as well as according to disaggregated groups (gender, age, disabilities and other dimensions of vulnerability) and with consideration for languages spoken and literacy levels. This should also draw on available secondary data that may provide critical insights relating to access to different media (including print, broadcast and social media) and technology (such as mobile phone access) as well as cultural norms across the affected community as a whole and the most vulnerable groups. In some contexts, this information is packaged together as a ‘media landscape’ document. It’s important to note that secondary data is frequently not centred around the voices and needs of the affected community themselves (as well as being less ‘real-time’ and more likely to be incorrect than rapid needs assessment), and so should be considered highly limited as assessment data to inform response planning.
 - **Joint or multi-sector needs assessment.** In responses where there is joint or multi-sector needs assessment (MSNA), an important IM function is to ensure that CCE/AAP questions are included. These should be relevant to the context (both the community itself and the nature and effects of the crisis), based upon consultation with users of the data to increase the chance of the resulting data being used (such as different response actors and coordination bodies) and tested in advance of use with the community. Where possible, open questions should be asked to enable community members to articulate their own views without prompting. It’s important to remember that the CCE/AAP assessment questions will also inform the development of response-wide CCE/AAP indicators, which are then used for monitoring purposes.
 - **Technical CCE/AAP assessment surveys.** In addition to the snapshot the joint needs assessment provides, a more detailed technical CCE/AAP assessment survey may be needed. This is likely to be a standalone CCE/AAP assessment initiative that can offer greater insights into the information needs and preferences for communication channels. It can also enable a more detailed understanding of trusted sources of information or trusted institutional relationships, and a greater understanding as to the ways in which differently vulnerable groups within the community would prefer and be able to provide feedback or make complaints. As above, the questions and tools should be designed to be open to allow a full expression of views.
 - **CCE/AAP community consultations.** In addition to the collection of quantitative data resulting from surveys, needs assessment should be complemented with data from direct consultations with communities and individuals, with a consideration for inclusion of people with different dimensions of vulnerability. Consultations may include focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) as well as other qualitative methods.

- **Data validation.** Whether a joint or technical assessment, IM can also support the validation of data produced, to ensure that the affected community are given the opportunity to endorse or challenge the insights identified from the data. This is an important part of 'closing the loop' with affected communities.
- **Secondary data collection.** Separate to needs assessment data but often valuable is secondary data relevant to the context, particularly at the early stages of a response when good-quality primary data may not yet be available. IM for CCE/AAP can play an important role in ensuring that this data is accessed and used to inform response decisions by collating, synthesising and conducting analysis. Relevant secondary data might include anthropological data about beliefs and culture, detailed demographic data or data relating to media access and consumption. A key part of this process is ensuring a control on the quality of the data, by assessing different sources (and their trustworthiness and veracity) or utilising experts to provide assurance. It's important to note that secondary data is very often not centred around the voices and needs of the affected community themselves and is less likely to be created post-crisis (and more likely to be out of date), and so should be considered highly limited as viable assessment data to inform response planning.

Prompting questions

- **Questions:** How do standard CCE/AAP assessment questions need to be adapted/added to for joint/multi-sector needs assessments to better reflect the context and produce the right data to inform response-wide CCE/AAP?
- **Valuing quantitative and qualitative data:** How can the predominantly quantitative data resulting from needs assessments be complemented with qualitative data from consultations with affected people (particularly from groups with different dimensions of vulnerability) to better understand needs and the broader context from a people-centred perspective?
- **Sector-specific assessments:** How can sector-specific needs assessment activities that are relevant to CCE/AAP be supported to ensure they produce usable data and support a people-centred approach?
- **Secondary data:** What trusted sources of secondary data are available and relevant to CCE/AAP response (such as media landscape, technology access/usage, social science/anthropological research)?
- **Data disaggregation:** In what ways does population and needs assessment data need to be disaggregated to ensure actions can be responsive to context-appropriate dimensions of vulnerability (e.g. gender, wealth, disabilities, marginalised groups)?
- **Language:** What languages are spoken by the affected population and in which geographical areas? How do literacy levels vary within the community and according to different dimensions of vulnerability?
- **Data validation:** How will assessment data be best validated with affected communities and insights shared to ensure the communication loop is respected?
- **Data management:** How is data being stored, managed and extracted to ensure strong standards of data protection and safety are met?

Potential IM outputs

- Contextualised CCE/AAP assessment tools/questions for both joint and technical needs assessments, as well as community consultations
- Collated/analysed secondary data relevant to CCE/AAP (including languages spoken, population disaggregation data, context-relevant dimensions of vulnerability)
- Media landscape (including mapping of print, online and broadcast media producers, audiences, languages)
- Analysis of CCE/AAP needs assessment data that provides insights into preferred and appropriate information provision and communication channels (including quantitative and qualitative sources), disaggregated by context-relevant dimensions of vulnerability

Tools

CDAC Network's Media Landscape Guides (CDAC Network, n.d.). Media landscape guides map out the media and communications environment in different countries, including the audiences, producers, preferences of different groups in the community, communications culture and languages associated with the media.

CDAC's how-to guide on collective communication and community engagement in humanitarian action (CDAC Network, 2019). A guide for those implementing communication, community engagement and accountability in humanitarian action, bringing together a wealth of best practice.

Intentional inclusion of people with diverse SOGIESC (LGBTIQ+ people) in communication, community engagement and accountability (CDAC Network, 2022). A guide for humanitarian practitioners and organisations on background and entry points for inclusion of people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics in communication, community engagement and accountability in humanitarian responses.

Information & communication needs assessment (CDAC Network & ACAPS, 2014). A collection of tools to enable understanding and assessment of a community's information needs and available communication channels.

IASC accountability and inclusion resources portal (IASC, n.d.). This portal brings together IASC guidance and other essential resources, such as tools relating to AAP, PSEA and inclusion, and access to technical support through a helpdesk.

Technical review: secondary data review (ACAPS, 2014). These guidelines describe the systematic development of a secondary data review (SDR) during the initial days and weeks after a disaster, and how an SDR can be used in combination with primary data collection.

Menu of AAP-related questions for multi-sector needs assessments (IASC, 2018). Potential questions for organisations to choose from and adapt to the context, situation and phase of response they are operating within. The questions are designed for use in multi-sector needs assessments (MSNAs) for the collective response but could also be adapted for sector-level assessments at both inter-agency and agency levels.

Mapping information ecosystems to support resilience (Internews, 2015). This tool is designed to support decision-makers in understanding how information contributes to a more connected and resilient community, exploring a community's information needs and use.

3 Strategic planning

In the strategic planning phase, there is an opportunity to set clear intentions across a response to ensure the response is 'demand-driven' and inclusive of communities, and to outline the ways that CCE/AAP information will inform the response from the outset and throughout. The use of information relating to CCE/AAP activities is the primary way in which the voices and engagement of crisis-affected people are placed at the heart of the response: making sure that communities have opportunities to actively participate in the response; that their views are heard throughout; and that they are able to hold decision-makers to account.

CCE/AAP IM primary objectives at strategic planning stage

- Facilitate programming decisions that are responsive to data from affected communities, including needs assessment and throughout implementation.
- Integrate CCE/AAP mechanisms in all response strategies and implementation plans, with clear consideration for how information will be managed and used and the resources that this will require.
- Identify the most appropriate and accessible channels for information-sharing and communication with affected communities to support their engagement in the response.

Activities to support the objectives

Working collaboratively

- **Enable advocacy within the response leadership/coordination.** Establishing CCE/AAP and its associated IM as core to the entire response is crucial and may require specific advocacy efforts with response leaders and actors involved in coordination mechanisms. IM can support this by providing data on what works. Key advocacy objectives include: ensuring that community feedback and complaints and information-sharing mechanisms are established and resulting information is used to inform decision-making relating to resources and adapting programming throughout the response; and that funding and human resources are in place to support these to function well and in a collaborative way across multiple actors.
- **Embed community perspectives, preferences and feedback in strategic plans.** The collective CCE/AAP effort aims to ensure that response strategic planning is informed by information from communities, such as through needs assessment and analysis as well as ongoing feedback and complaints data. IM activities (such as collective feedback or the collation of data from actor-specific mechanisms) should be included within key strategic planning as well as reference to the key specific outputs (such as community feedback analysis or dashboards), and a clear indication as to how this data will be used in decision-making at the outset and throughout a response.



- **Develop effective CCE/AAP indicators.** At the strategic planning stage, actors collaborating on CCE/AAP should agree indicators to monitor their collective effectiveness, as well as agreeing the data collection and analysis plans that will enable indicators to be monitored and acted upon. It is not uncommon that indicators determine the actions that are taken (as opposed to the other way around) and inform prioritisation decisions within a response. Therefore, it is important to ensure these indicators (and the activities they reflect) align with a principled approach and a clear strategic intention that places communities at the centre of the response. It is easy to fall into the trap of selecting easy-to-measure indicators, and therefore also the concurrent least-impactful activities that do little to meet the intention to be led by communities' needs and feedback.
- **Develop a shared data management approach.** The strategic planning stage may also provide an opportunity to establish a shared approach to data management among CCE/AAP actors, and one that recognises that protecting individuals' personal data is an integral part of protecting their life, integrity and dignity. This should include agreeing standards for data protection that are safe, ethical and effective and give full consideration to the uniqueness of the context and needs of the affected community (and in particular the most marginalised groups who may face additional protection concerns). A shared approach to data management is likely to also include establishing data-sharing agreements between actors, as well as common approaches to storing and transferring data from affected communities. Data management should be informed by a principled approach. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Data Protection Guidelines¹ set out clear principles for data responsibility in humanitarian action that are based on upholding commitments to 'do no harm' while maximising the benefits of data accountability; confidentiality; coordination and collaboration; data security; defined purpose, necessity and proportionality; fairness and legitimacy; human rights-based approach; people-centred and inclusive; personal data protection; quality; retention and destruction; and transparency.
- **Agree taxonomy and language.** At the strategic planning stage, it is beneficial for CCE/AAP actors to agree on a shared taxonomy and approach to language on two levels. First, agreeing and sharing definitions for a common approach to language between actors can support inclusive participation (particularly from local actors) and reduce misunderstandings (and resulting friction) in working collaboratively. A shared taxonomy might include agreement on naming, describing and classifying data from communities, as well as language references for different types of mechanisms used for CCE/AAP activities. Second, with communities as the focus, ensuring that the 'right' languages/dialects are used for communications with different groups within the affected community across all CCE/AAP activities (considering geographical location, ethnicity, education level) is key to ensuring as many voices as possible are heard.

Providing information for communities

- **Plan for information sharing.** Ensure that the affected communities' information needs are understood to be a vital part of the humanitarian response. At the strategic planning stage, this might involve ensuring that the information management functions associated with this are clearly included in response plans and appropriately resourced: activities to support a collective approach to information-sharing; the development and testing of appropriate and contextually relevant messaging and consideration to how

¹ [OCHA Data Protection Guidelines](#) (2021). The guidelines include practical tools as well as full definitions of the proposed principles for data protection.

messaging may be adapted throughout a response; assessment and testing of different mechanisms (e.g. social media, broadcast technology, community-based mechanisms). IM activities may include establishing and updating a response messaging bank/repository; testing different information-sharing mechanisms with communities; establishing an information flow at the outset and throughout a response that connects the information needs to adapted messaging; and active coordination with different sectors/actors to ensure a collective approach.



Listening and responding to communities

- **Plan for seeking and acting on feedback.** As with information-sharing, at the strategic planning stage it's vital to ensure that there is a clear and core intention in the response to seek and act upon the perspectives of affected communities, at the outset and throughout. IM activities play a crucial role in supporting this commitment to be met, and so response strategies must include identified activities and the assurance that they'll be appropriately resourced. These activities include CCE/AAP assessments; establishing collective mechanisms; collating and analysing data from different mechanisms; production and sharing of outputs that enable the data to be shared with decision-makers on a timely basis. If the data isn't used to inform and adapt the response, the activities are worthless. Therefore, all CCE/AAP IM efforts should be centred around ensuring that IM is led by this fundamental purpose.

Prompting questions

- **Advocacy and leadership:** How can information from communities be used as centrally as possible in the planning and ongoing adaptation of the delivery of the response? What role can IM play in ensuring CCE/AAP activities are prioritised and resourced and subsequent data from communities is valued and acted on within the response to ensure community voices are at the core? What are the blockages in the response to ensuring CCE/AAP activities can fulfill their purpose, and how can IM address them?
- **Data users:** Which potential users of CCE/AAP data do you need to consult with to ensure your products present the needs and feedback from communities in a way that meets decision-makers' needs and influences their decisions?
- **Actor inclusion:** How may IM activities support the inclusion of a broad range of actors in CCE/AAP, relevant to the local context (for instance, defining key language terms)?
- **Data management:** In what ways for the context does data management need to be safe, ethical and effective? How must generic principles be adapted to the context to be appropriate?

Potential IM outputs

- IM CCE/AAP strategy (or IM content in a CCE/AAP strategic plan)
- IM workplan including critical reporting outputs and dates (such as dashboards, sitreps, 4Ws, meetings)
- CCE/AAP coverage map (identifying gaps in access to information services, feedback/complaint mechanisms)
- CCE/AAP collective effort/working group key indicators and monitoring plan
- CCE/AAP taxonomy and key language definitions
- CCE/AAP data management practice (with standards for data protection)

Tools

Capacity decision framework for CCE/AAP (CDAC Network, 2022). This framework is designed to inform CCE/AAP surge capacity requests at a country level to address inter-agency, response-wide CCE/AAP gaps. It considers capacity requirements to deliver CCE/AAP across a humanitarian response in situations of natural hazard, forced displacement, conflict or public health emergency.

IASC accountability and inclusion resources portal (IASC, n.d.). This portal brings together IASC guidance and other essential resources, such as tools relating to AAP, PSEA and inclusion, and access to technical support through a helpdesk.

Communication with communities: walking the talk. Putting people at the centre of humanitarian response (Internews, 2017). This policy paper provides a clear articulation of the importance of CCE/AAP that may support advocacy messaging within a response.

Handbook on data protection in humanitarian action (ICRC, 2020). This manual seeks to help humanitarian organisations to comply with personal data protection standards by raising awareness and providing specific guidance on the interpretation of data protection principles in the context of humanitarian action, particularly where new technologies are employed.

OCHA data responsibility guidelines (OCHA, 2021). These guidelines offer a set of principles, processes and tools that support data responsibility in OCHA's and its partners' work.

IASC operational guidance on data responsibility in humanitarian action (IASC, 2021). System-wide guidance to ensure data responsibility in all phases of humanitarian action.

4 Implementation and monitoring

The most critical role of CCE/AAP IM activities in this stage of a response is to drive the response to be as adaptive and responsive as possible to the ongoing feedback and complaints from the affected community. IM is focused on ensuring that data from communities is used to inform decision-making and lead to changes in ongoing implementation of response programmes. A key part of IM is to support a collective approach and support actors to listen to and act on feedback and complaints from across a response by collating, analysing and making data accessible and actionable. IM makes the ‘listening’ possible and connects the data to the decision-makers.

CCE/AAP IM primary objectives at implementation and monitoring stage

- Provide data from communities to humanitarian actors and support its use by presenting it in appropriate outputs that enable responsive action.
- Promote and enable two-way communication with communities and work to ‘close the loop’ with communities on how their data is used to inform the response.
- Facilitate a collective approach to how a response communicates with and listens to communities, by facilitating coordination and sharing standards, systems and tools among actors.
- Support the testing and refining of CCE/AAP activities to ensure their effectiveness.

Activities to support the objectives

Working collaboratively



- Map/track actors and activities
- Coordination IM
- Facilitate effective coordination

Providing information for communities



- Messaging to meet information needs
- Information-sharing mechanisms

Listening and responding to communities



- Map mechanisms
- Collate/harmonise data
- Analysis of data
- Analysis of stakeholder data use
- ‘Close the loop’ with communities
- Rumour tracking
- Monitoring



Working collaboratively

- **Map/track actors and activities.** The most critical IM function is to ensure there is a way of capturing and sharing CCE/AAP activities. Commonly this is done by establishing and regularly updating a 4W tool (or similar activity matrix) across the area of response. As well as enabling actors' awareness of one another's activities, it also enables the identification of gaps in coverage for the community that can then be addressed, including monitoring.
- **Keep actor details up to date and available.** Ensuring that coordinating actors can access information about each other and their activities is vitally important. At the simplest level, this could include keeping and ensuring accessibility of an up-to-date contact list, coordination meeting minutes, CCE/AAP-specific sitreps, agreed messaging for communities and key documents such as CCE/AAP IM strategy.
- **Facilitate effective coordination.** Knowing who the actors are and how they are communicating is the easiest way to promote coordination. This might also involve understanding which channels people are using and ensuring databases of contacts are up to date. It may be helpful to produce and implement surveys to support this information, using tools such as Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, SurveyGizmo or Zoomerang.



Providing information for communities

- **Curate a shared bank of messages.** Information messages to share with communities should be informed by developments within the crisis context and assessment of needs. Messages should be provided in the most accessible language, tested with the community to ensure their effectiveness and adapted as necessary. IM can support this by developing a shared, accessible bank of messaging, advising on the testing of messaging and ensuring information-sharing with communities is captured by activity tracking such as 4Ws.
- **Develop information-sharing mechanisms.** IM can play an important role in ensuring that appropriate information-sharing mechanisms are used, and decisions relating to this are informed by data (such as access to technology, disaggregated by gender, age and other dimensions of vulnerability).



Listening and responding to communities

- **Map mechanisms.** It's important to understand and map the different sources of available feedback and complaints data from affected communities. These may include collective mechanisms (such as online feedback tools or SMS/telephone hotlines), actor-specific mechanisms (such as face-to-face feedback records or community-based complaints boxes) and listening exercises carried out by other coordinating bodies (such as by sector-specific clusters or locally based coordination mechanisms). Once identified, the flow of data needs to be drawn out and agreed with the responsible actors – ideally in a repeatable way and usable format.
- **Collate and harmonise data.** Collating and harmonising data from different sources may involve agreeing a coding rubric among CCE/AAP actors, to enable feedback and complaints data to be aggregated according to set categories (for instance, the type of feedback, the activity to which it relates, the way in which it was shared). However, it's important to also consider how to capture and share rich qualitative data, which can easily be lost when subsumed within an aggregating process.
- **Provide analysis of data.** Analysis of feedback and complaints data requires the identification of key insights and trends. Critically, this must be done as an average across the entire response, but also according to geographical location, agreed core data disaggregation (such as age, gender, disabilities and other contextually appropriate dimensions of vulnerability). Any analysis done is a snapshot in time, and so this activity must be done regularly to ensure subsequent actions taken are relevant and responsive.

- **Analysis of stakeholder data use.** The purpose of collating feedback and complaints data is to ensure it is used to influence the response and that the affected community have voice and agency. Therefore, it's important to consider the different stakeholder groups (and identify the key decision-makers) who need to receive the analysis of feedback and complaints data, and the form and frequency in which they need to receive it (for instance, thinking about the accessibility of language used, the level of detail provided, balance of text/visual content). Depending on the target users, data may be produced as different outputs (for instance, dashboards, one-pagers, bulletins, reports).
- **'Closing the loop' with communities.** Often overlooked, it's really important to ensure that affected communities themselves are identified as key stakeholders for receiving the analysis of feedback and complaints. The commitment to 'close the loop' on this communication means ensuring that communities are made aware of the trends and insights that the response actors are identifying and, critically, how they intend to adapt the response or address concerns. The communication to communities in this regard may be done in a number of ways (as a collective message, via response actor, or via collective mechanisms like clusters) and should be part of ongoing engagement and dialogue.
- **Support rumour tracking.** Rumours and misinformation circulate abundantly in crises and can have catastrophic effects for both communities and the actors working with them. However, they may also be a useful source of information as to the community's perception of the humanitarian action that they experience and so can be used to inform the ongoing adaptation and improvement of the response. Building a cycle of conversation that involves listening to affected communities, identifying rumours and misinformation (thinking about a wide range of appropriate channels), recording them to identify issues and trends (either in a specific log or with other community feedback), verifying the facts and then engaging communities with new narratives can help to address the impacts of negative rumours. It also is a way of strengthening engagement with the community, which is critical to the impact and accountability of the response. This cycle is more effective if done collectively with CCE/AAP actors and supported with strong IM practices, such as maintaining a way of collecting and tracking rumours (using a log/database) and sharing analysis of rumour data with response actors for subsequent action.
- **Monitor CCE/AAP.** Monitoring the CCE/AAP effort within the response is an important part of upholding the accountability of actors. This is about asking how well the collective CCE/AAP effort is working and how it can be improved. This is likely to involve regular monitoring of a set of key indicators (which involves collecting, synthesising and analysing the data), acting on the findings, and also taking part in response-wide review or evaluation initiatives that consider questions of effectiveness and impact. Indicators should reflect the commitments and principles underpinning the response, and not just the factors that are easiest to measure. Below are example questions that may be used to develop indicators:
 - **Participation:** How effectively are we involving affected populations in the decisions that affect them?
 - **Information provision:** How well are we providing affected communities with information they need about their rights/entitlements and how they can participate in decisions that affect them?
 - **Managing complaints:** How successfully are we responding to complaints from the perspective of the affected community?
 - **Communication feedback loop:** How do affected communities feel about intentions to ensure feedback is two-way and not extractive?
 - **Confidence/trust:** To what degree do communities feel that the organisations assisting them are managing resources effectively, efficiently and ethically?

Prompting questions

- **Actor activities:** What's the most appropriate way of capturing and updating a matrix of CCE/AAP actors and their activities, to ensure good awareness among actors and the ability to assess gaps in the response?
- **Community feedback data:** How can feedback data from collective and actor-specific mechanisms be brought together according to a specific frequency and analysed? How can coding of feedback data be used to support aggregation, while still valuing rich qualitative data (that is lost through coding)?
- **Communication outputs:** How can feedback and complaints data analysis be shared with different stakeholder groups in the most appropriate ways, in order to inform decision-making? For instance, what type and frequency of output would be appropriate for humanitarian leaders, response coordination groups, or the affected community?
- **Rumours and misinformation:** Which actors or activities are actively tracking rumours and misinformation that are spreading within the affected community, and how is this data shared among actors? How are actors responding to this data to ensure a cycle of communication with communities?

Potential IM outputs

- 4W database or similar activity matrix
- Contact database of CCE/AAP actors
- CCE/AAP coordination functional information (updated contact list, meeting minutes, key documents) for CCE/AAP actors
- Inventory of common cluster or other coordination mechanism datasets
- Process for harmonising data from different actors/systems that enables appropriate aggregation (such as a coding rubric) but also enables the collation of rich qualitative data
- Meta-analysis of feedback received, identifying key insights and trends disaggregated appropriately (such as geographically, according to different dimensions of vulnerability, different sectoral responses)
- Actor-focused communication outputs (and agreed frequency) for communicating with different stakeholders within the response (trends in feedback received, recommendations)
- Community-focused communication output (and agreed frequency) for communicating with communities (trends in feedback received, actions taken within the response)
- Rumour-tracking database and regular analysis outputs

Tools

CDAC's how-to guide on collective communication and community engagement in humanitarian action (CDAC Network, 2019). A guide for those implementing communication, community engagement and accountability in humanitarian action, bringing together a wealth of best practice.

CDAC Network's Message Library (CDAC Network, n.d.) and Message Library User guidance (CDAC Network, 2022). The library and its guidance are a reference for those wanting to quickly disseminate critical information to people affected by disasters, providing clear, concise and simple messages on a range of topics as templates for different contexts.

IASC accountability and inclusion resources portal (IASC, n.d.). This portal brings together IASC guidance and other essential resources, such as tools relating to AAP, PSEA and inclusion, and access to technical support through a helpdesk.

Who does What Where (3W) (OCHA, 2022). Overview of the purpose and process for developing a 3W or 4W matrix, with links to templates and further guidance.

Rumour has it: a practice guide to working with rumours (CDAC Network, 2017). A practical guide to working with rumours and misinformation in a crisis response.

Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) repository of feedback (Internews, n.d.). A dashboard of data originating from Internews' Humanitarian Information System and its other rumour-tracking and feedback collation systems across different contexts.

Appendix: Principles

These principles are adapted from the Protection Information Management (PIM) initiative.²

- **People-centred and inclusive:** Activities will be guided by the interests and well-being of the population, which must participate and be included in all relevant stages of CCE/AAP IM. CCE/AAP IM activities must be sensitive to age, gender and other issues of diversity.
- **Do no harm:** Activities where there is a risk of harm to the affected community must include a risk assessment and take steps, if necessary, to mitigate identified risks. The risk assessment must look at negative consequences that may result from data collection and subsequent actions or service delivery as long as the CCE/AAP IM activity is being carried out.
- **‘Protection’ and ‘safeguarding’ awareness:** Approaches require a careful assessment of risk, especially in situations of armed conflict or violence as engaging individuals or certain groups may put them at greater risk or alienate them. Adequate and effective safeguards are put in place, including effective data security and protection mechanisms.
- **Led by a defined purpose:** Given the potentially sensitive and personal nature of CCE/AAP-related information, the gathering, use and retention of such information must always serve a clear and specific purpose. The information must be proportional to both the identified risk and costs vis-à-vis the expected response, and be aimed at enabling the communities’ voices to influence decision-making.
- **Based on informed consent and confidentiality:** Personal information may be collected only after informed consent has been provided by the individual in question, and that individual must be aware of the purpose of the collection. Further, confidentiality must be clearly explained to the individual before the information may be collected.
- **Follow established data protection protocols and security:** CCE/AAP IM must adhere to international standards of data protection and data security.
- **Led and undertaken by competent individuals with the right capacities:** Actors engaging in CCE/AAP IM activities are accountable for ensuring that activities are carried out by IM and CCE/AAP staff who have been equipped and trained appropriately.
- **Impartiality:** All steps of the CCE/AAP IM cycle must be undertaken in an objective, impartial and transparent manner while identifying and minimising bias.
- **Coordinated and collaborative:** All actors implementing CCE/AAP IM activities should promote the broadest possible collaboration and coordination among humanitarian actors and other stakeholders, while adhering to the principles noted above. To the best extent possible, CCE/AAP IM activities should avoid the duplication of other efforts and must instead first aim to build on existing efforts and mechanisms.



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