**Disaster Recovery Guidance Series**

# Communication during Disaster Recovery

# Acknowledgments

## About this Guide: Aim, Relevance, Scope

This Guide provides practical guidance for governments regarding how to effectively communicate with communities during the recovery phase following an emergency. It explains how to identify communication needs, and presents "best fit" communication methods and strategies to deploy to support Disaster Recovery Frameworks (DRF) and recovery strategies.

For the purposes of this Guide, recovery communication includes sending, gathering, managing and evaluating information. Communication flows between governments and communities can be one-way, whereby information is sent out to communities, and/ or two-way, whereby communities have an opportunity to voice their views/opinions to governments. Past recovery experience suggests it is critically important that governments do more than just send information to communities. They should also engage in two-way communication. Two-way communication helps ensure that recovery priorities in DRFs and recovery strategies align with community priorities, thereby harmonizing recovery efforts of governments and communities.

This Guide is intended primarily for local and national government officials and key decision makers involved in disaster recovery planning and operations. As such, it is also likely to include finance and/or central planning agencies responsible for coordinating the development of a whole-of-government DRF or similar recovery strategy. Other local and national stakeholders including civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private sector entities also may benefit from the guide.

The Guide is divided into six sections, as follows:

**SECTION 1**   Good Practice Principles for Effective Communication

**SECTION 2**   Barriers to Effective Communication

**SECTION 3**   How to Identify Communication Needs during Recovery

**SECTION 4**   Communication Methods for Recovery Planning and Operations

**SECTION 5**   Developing a Communication Plan

**SECTION 6**   Key Take-away Messages

This Guide focuses on external government communication with individuals and communities. It is not aimed at supporting internal communication within government. Also, there is no specific geographic focus to this resource. Rather, it has been developed to support communication during recovery planning and operations in a range of different country contexts. Similarly, this Guide is designed to be applicable to any disaster type (for example, storms, floods, landsides, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, drought, wildfires), as individuals and communities often require the same types of information, irrespective of the type of disaster. The information contained herein is useful for guiding effective communication in large- to small-scale recovery contexts. The Guide is also applicable to conflict settings, as disasters often strike countries affected by conflict and fragility.

Women beneficiaries of Nuton Jibon (livelihood) Project at the Nuton Jibon Community Center, Barisal District, Bangladesh. Photo: © Dominic Chavez/World Bank

This Guide is accompanied by a list of resources that is also available on the World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery's (GFDRR) Recovery Hub website, under the "Communication" section.

For the purposes of this Guide, the Disaster Recovery Framework Guide[1] defines "recovery" as the restoration, and where appropriate, the improvement of facilities, livelihoods, and living conditions of disaster-affected communities — including efforts to reduce disaster risk factors. This Guide also makes an important distinction between reconstruction and recovery. "Reconstruction" focuses primarily on the construction or replacement of damaged physical structures, and the restoration of local services and infrastructure. The term "recovery" in this Guide encompasses both "recovery" and "reconstruction".

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[1] GFDRR, EU, UNDP: The Disaster Recovery Framework Guide, 2015 file:///C:/Users/WB491002/Downloads/DRF-Guide%20(1).pdf.

# Section 1:
# Good Practice Principles for Effective Communication

## Why is communication important in recovery?

Recovery at its core is a partnership between the affected community, the broader community, governments, aid organizations and the private sector. As such, successful recovery is built on effective communication between these key stakeholders. Good communication is also needed to manage community expectations about what government can and cannot do; who is responsible within the government for leading the recovery effort; and what communities can expect in terms of recovery assistance.

> *"Information is a vital form of aid in itself …. People need information as much as water, food, medicine or shelter. Information can save lives, livelihoods and resources".*
>
> **—International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), World Disasters Report (2005)**

Typically, communities in the recovery phase want to access practical information about what governments intend to do, what the response will be regarding their long-term challenges and how to adapt to their new situation. They want information that will assist them in making plans and taking decisions about their future, including clear and concise information from government and aid agencies about plans for recovery and preparedness. Effective communication empowers both disaster-affected and non-affected communities alike, helping to increase social cohesion, and acting as a valuable form of community development.

Despite increased international attention to communication during the recovery phase following an emergency, there is little in the way of research or tools available that governments can access. This situation contrasts dramatically with the large body of research on communication, including advances made by the global humanitarian community. Examples of such initiatives include the *Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network, and Communicating with Communities* working groups.[2] The latter have been established by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) when responding to specific humanitarian situations (for example, Typhoon Haiyan in Philippines in 2010 and the earthquake in Haiti in 2010).

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[2] *Communications with Communities (CwC) is an emerging field of humanitarian response that helps to meet the information and communications needs of people affected by crisis. CwC is based on the principle that information and communications are critical forms of aid, without which disaster survivors cannot access services or make the best decisions for themselves and their communities. OCHA advocates CwC approaches and services as a central component of disaster response. It coordinates and supports CwC actors where necessary, and ensures CwC principles and approaches are integrated into OCHA's work. OCHA is also a founding member of the Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities (CDAC) Network.* OCHA on Message: Communications with Communities, January 2014 at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OOM-CommunicationwithCommunities_eng_311013.pdf

**BOX 1: Three Basic Rules for Effective Communication during Recovery**

There are three basic rules underpinning effective communication in recovery, namely: information should be relevant, clear, and targeted. These terms in the context of communication during the recovery phase following an emergency are as follows:

**Relevant:** Commonly, affected communities are often overwhelmed by large volumes of information at a time when they are under stress and unable to retain information. Local governments should ensure all information communicated to the affected community is relevant. People commonly want to know:

- What is happening with the recovery process
- What support is available
- What they need to do to qualify for such support
- What they can do if they have questions and concerns or complaints

**Clear:** To support transparent communication and empower communities to self-recover, it is important that information provided to the communities be presented in ways that are easy to understand. If technical information needs to be communicated, it should be conveyed using non-technical language where possible. Additionally, it is important to ensure information is provided in formats that are accessible for people with a sensory impairment, or who may come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.  As such, communication products may need to be produced in different languages, and sign language interpreters may be needed at community meetings.

**Targeted:** The method of communication used should be tailored to the audience. Therefore, it is important to understand the communication culture (that is, the beliefs, language and value systems that influence and drive communication and related behaviors) of the communities targeted, as well as the best way to reach them.

*Source:* Adapted from "Communicating in Recovery," Australian Red Cross (2010).

## Guiding principles for effective communication during recovery

People affected by disaster are often overwhelmed by large amounts of information. Alternatively, there may be limited to no information from the government. As a result, their ability to take in information or initiate self-recovery is significantly impacted. During recovery, standard communication principles will apply, but there will be additional considerations.  The guiding principles for effective communication include the following:

- **For most crises, the initial, key recovery messages regarding government intentions need to be developed and disseminated quickly.** Initial messages should be developed in consultation with core partners and community representatives or leaders within a couple of days of the disaster event. Initial key messages are commonly simple statements explaining government processes, including where to access information about recovery activities. Additionally, government agencies need to reach agreement on spokespeople tasked with communicating the initial messages. Commonly, representatives from the government's disaster management agency are the first spokespeople after a disaster event.

- **Reiterate key messages and re-communicate regularly.** During and after an emergency, people may have trouble remembering information. Therefore, it is important to reiterate and re-communicate information periodically throughout the recovery phase.

- **Information needs to be updated regularly.** This includes ensuring key information sources, including websites, are updated regularly and connected to partner websites.

- **Use the most appropriate methods of communication and delivery channels for different target audiences.** It is important to adapt communication methods and delivery channels to best fit a target audience's capacity to access and understand such information. This requires close collaboration with communities to ascertain if cultural sensitivities and/or socioeconomic dynamics exist that dictate the most effective type of communication method and delivery channel to deploy.

- **Use existing community networks where available.** If trusted community hubs/networks exist, it makes good sense to use them. This might include working through communication conduits, such as schools, churches, and women's groups. If trusted communication hubs/networks do not already exist, then it may be important for the government to support the establishment of a formal community forum. Such a forum would provide a platform for community engagement between government agencies and citizens.

- **Acknowledge the impact of disasters on human wellbeing in validating people's experiences.** Past experience demonstrates the importance of communities to validate the stress and trauma that disasters may cause. Governments can support this process through launching key messages regarding the importance of mental health in recovery, including how to access relevant services.

- **Ensure that information is accessible to audiences in diverse situational contexts (including persons living in remote and hard-to-reach areas; socially and economically vulnerable persons; and persons displaced by the disaster).** Many individuals and communities may experience barriers to accessing information. Thus, it is important that barriers to access are carefully assessed. Where necessary, strategies should be devised to overcome these barriers. Examples include bringing information to persons with mobility disabilities, disseminating information from an accessible location, or providing sign language interpreters, Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART) for the deaf, as well as other materials in accessible formats (for instance, Braille, large print).

- **Establish mechanisms for coordinated and consistent communications between all service providers, organizations, individuals and the community.** It is important to harmonize efforts to leverage whole-of-government efficiencies, as well as to reduce the risks of contradictory and confusing information being released to external stakeholders. Having one common spokesperson delivering coordinated messages can support this principle.

- **Provide information that helps individuals and communities make decisions about their future, supporting their self-recovery.** Consider what critical information is needed at each step of the recovery process that will assist the affected community to take charge of its own recovery efforts. This will include, for example, housing repair or reconstruction information, financial protection and livelihood support, new regulatory or policy decisions that will remove barriers for self-recovery, and preparedness needs for future disasters.

- **Recognize communication needs to be two way, and that community input and feedback should be encouraged.** Two-way dialogue is important for governments to ensure recovery investments are creating

the right outcomes for communities—and to identify emerging issues and manage them before they become problematic. Additionally, it is important to ensure affected communities have an opportunity to convey their opinions and views to government about the recovery actions being taken. Examples of mechanisms that support two-way communication include complaints/ grievance processes; community meetings; and social media platforms for sharing views (for instance, Facebook, Twitter, and crowd-sourcing platforms).

- **Do not forget the "unaffected".** It is important that individuals and communities not directly affected by a disaster are not forgotten, as they can often experience significant stress following a disaster. Governments need to ensure they do not alienate communities by differentiating between the affected and unaffected during the recovery process.

- **Leverage appropriate technology to support interconnectivity/communication between communities and government.** With the introduction of Facebook in 2004 and Twitter in 2006, social media has become an increasingly valuable tool in disaster response and recovery situations. Governments should leverage new technologies, but not without first prioritizing which digital technologies are best fit for the intended purpose. Twitter is probably the most useful social media for disaster response because it facilitates the quick dissemination of pertinent information without a lot of other distractions for the viewer. Facebook and YouTube are more useful in the context of being able to share more detailed information. With YouTube, for example, agencies could post an informative video showing how to make water safe to drink following a disaster. Additionally, crowdsourcing platforms can be

a way to invite the public to suggest ideas and priorities.

- **Manage rumors and false information, including tracking and managing rumors and false information that may cause community disunity and conflict.** It is important to recognize that conflicting knowledge, values and priorities among individuals, the community and organizations may also create tensions. This will be particularly important when there is an existing internal conflict within the affected area/country. Having formal connections with local community leaders may reveal these rumors and false information early during a disaster; as such, they can be managed appropriately.

- **Public information, not public relations.** Effective communication does not entail public relations campaigns promoting particular organizations or political parties. Rather, it is important communication in the recovery phase is fundamentally about assisting the community to recover. Any effort perceived to be public relations rather than honest public information could cause dissatisfaction and anger among the community.

- **Be flexible, taking into account changes in community needs or stakeholder expectations as they relate to communication.** Community needs and stakeholder expectations will often change over the course of the recovery phase. Therefore, it is important to monitor emerging needs and expectations, and to adjust strategies to reflect changes in circumstance. For example, new community needs, issues and expectations may mean key messages, communication methods, and delivery channels need to be altered.

Community member scrutinizing project budget on information board. Pringkuku, East Java. Project: PNPM Rural.
Photo Bakti Kusumaningrum/World Bank.

## BOX 2: Case Example: Strategic Communication as a Key Factor in the Success of the Multi-Donor Fund for Aceh and Nias, Indonesia

The Multi-Donor Fund (MDF) for Aceh and Nias, Indonesia is widely recognized as having played a significant role in the recovery of Aceh and Nias following some of the worst disasters in Indonesia's recent history.

Strategic communications enhanced transparency of the projects implemented and was a key factor in the MDF's success. Various community forums were employed to socialize project activities and procedures. So too, monitoring by communities played an important part in promoting transparency. Help lines and project complaint-handling systems were implemented across projects. In addition, both project- and program-level websites were established to provide online reporting of project activities.

The MDF Secretariat maintained regular communications and engagement with the Steering Committee, partner agencies, line ministries and local governments, which allowed for inclusive and consultative resolution of problems and issues as they arose. Timely, high-quality strategic communications with a wide reach were important for managing expectations of all stakeholders, promoting transparency and inclusiveness, and facilitating stakeholder engagement on critical issues.

*Source:* The Multi Donor Fund for Aceh and Nias: A Framework for Reconstruction through Effective Partnerships. (MDF-JRF Secretariat, The World Bank Office, Indonesia, December 2012) available at: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/17631/839030NWP0Box382108B00PULBIC00no5.pdf;sequence=1

## Section 2:
## Barriers to Effective Communication

Governments will often confront barriers to effective information dissemination and two-way dialogue with communities. It is important to identify what barriers may exist and how to overcome them during the development of a communication plan. Additionally, it is important to identify any new barriers that may emerge during the recovery phase, and adjust the communication plan accordingly. Examples of barriers that may exist include the following:

■ **Physical breakdown of telecommunications:** Communications infrastructure may be damaged during the disaster, and it may take longer than the emergency response phase to reestablish critical communications infrastructure. There are technical options available for temporary communications infrastructure to ensure communications can be provided as early as possible to support recovery objectives. For example, where cell towers have been destroyed portable towers can be used to establish temporary cellular services.

■ **Lack of access to communications:** Community members may not have access to mass communication channels, such as radio, mobile phones, newspapers, and so on. This is particularly the case for vulnerable people, such as those with a disability, and people living in remote communities. Additionally, for similar reasons, community members may not be able to participate in community meetings without financial and logistical travel support.

■ **Public information is not always trusted by communities:** Not all individuals and communities trust official communications.

Trust issues can be a big challenge for government agencies managing public information campaigns. It will be important in some country contexts for the government to put substantial efforts into building community trust in the official information. For example, trust can be built through community engagement. At the low-end, community engagement techniques may include informing (primarily information being relayed) and consultation (gathering some limited public feedback). However, these techniques offer limited control over the outcome. At the other end of the spectrum are collaboration (partnering with the public) and — at the farthest end — empowering (placing the decision in the hands of the public).

■ **Limited capacity to coordinate communications and produce joint messages:** Often, government agencies and partners do not have the resources and/or existing capacity to effectively coordinate their communications. If there is no cohesion or links between communication channels managed by the recovery lead and partners, there will likely be mixed messages. This will likely result in confusion among the community in a variety of ways, for example, how the effort is tracking key recovery issues, and what recovery tools are available to them.

■ **Communities are not empowered to act and communicate:** Governments should recognize that community-based communication systems are important for recovery. Often community-based leaders do not have the information from governments that they will need to provide

Students from Tonga's Tailulu College making the most of new high-speed broadband services at 2013 World Telecommunication and Information Society Day celebrations in the the Tongan capital, Nuku'alofa. Nukua'lofa, Tonga. Photo: Tom Perry / World Bank.

their community with reliable and timely recovery information. This barrier can be easily overcome by government sharing of information with community leaders, and by supporting community leaders in disseminating such information widely.

■ **Communication between government and communities can be challenging in fragile and conflict-affected settings due to pre-existing tensions and distrust between these parties.** However, communication can potentially play a positive and crucial role in managing expectations, building trust in government, and fostering an engaged and participatory community. It is important that communication plans developed to support DRFs or recovery strategies in fragile and conflict settings are informed by analysis of local conflict dynamics. In this context, best efforts should be made to deploy communication methods that incentivize positive connections between the community and the government. For example, creating spaces for dialogue, deliberation and participation in government recovery efforts can also contribute to peacebuilding in conflict-affected settings. In such environments, it is important that participatory processes that bring people together also have the capacity to produce results. Otherwise, participants could become disillusioned with the process.

# Section 3:
# How to Identify Communication Needs during Recovery

Before commencing public information campaigns and community engagement, it is important to identify and understand the target audiences and determine the key messages. One way of doing this systematically is to complete a communication needs assessment (CNA). A CNA is a way of gathering information about a community's opinions, needs, challenges, and assets. This information will help determine local needs and ensure that recovery reflects these needs, thereby enhancing community capacity and resilience. Table 1 provides a basic outline of a CNA that can be used or adapted for use.

Ideally, the CNA should be completed at the same time as a Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) or local PDNA is undertaken.

Governments already do extensive planning and have a range of data which can be drawn upon to inform a CNA. For example useful information and data sources include: national or local development plans; population data; poverty and vulnerability analysis; gender analysis; Emergency Risk Management Plans; and conflict analysis in fragile, conflict and violence (FCV) contexts.

> See also Appendix A for *A Communications Needs Assessment template.*

**Table 1:** Communications Needs Assessment

| Issue | Questions to Ask |
|---|---|
| **Situational Context** | What is the context of the emergency?<br>How is the recovery proceeding?<br>What government and non-government actors are engaged in recovery?<br>Has the disaster impacted housing and/or essential services?<br>Is there disaster-related violence or are there pre-existing fragility and conflict conditions?<br>What human and financial resources does the government (national and local levels) possess to support the development and implementation of a communications plan? |
| **Audience (Stakeholders)** | Who is the audience (include the range of different stakeholders[a])?<br>What are their specific needs?<br>What communications channels and processes already exist that can be used?<br>What are the issues/problems confronting the audience?<br>Are there existing geographic, cultural, socioeconomic, political barriers to engaging with the audience? |
| **Objectives** | What is to be achieved by communicating?<br>What information should be communicated? |
| **Communications Methods** | What communication methods are best suited to the audience, and what is to be achieved? |
| **Feedback** | What strategies or actions can be deployed to ensure community views and opinions (positive and negative) are fed back into the recovery process?<br>Are there existing grievance mechanisms that can be built upon? |

*Source:* Adapted from "Communicating in Recovery," Australian Red Cross (2010).

*Note*: [a] Stakeholders may include the disaster-affected population, the unaffected population, the private sector, NGOs, community groups, international organizations, and academic institutions.

Syrian refugee, Ahmad (far left) teaches a religion class to Syrian refugee children in the Ketermaya refugee camp, outside Beirut, Lebanon. Photo: © Dominic Chavez/World Bank.

## Section 4:
## Communication Methods for Recovery Planning and Operations

There are a range of methods that can be used to share information and establish a two-way dialogue. This Guide presents good practice communication methods used by governments and aid organizations in recovery. There are other methods available that are less commonly used, so this is not an exhaustive list of every available communication method.

It is important to ascertain which communication method is the most suitable for each target audience, and for helping to achieve the recovery outcomes envisaged by the Disaster Recovery Framework. Different communication methods will need to be deployed depending on a number of factors, including: the size and geographic location of each target audience; the particular information needs of each target audience; the government's capability and budget; the desired level of community input/feedback; and any special

needs of audience segments that may present potential barriers to information access (that is, the elderly, children and youth, persons with disabilities, displaced people, people with poor literacy, linguistic and religious differences, and so on). For example, a combination of spoken, written and visual communication methods should be utilized rather than relying on just one method. Thus, it is important that public information campaigns and two-way dialogue are socially inclusive, respecting all community members in their right to information. For more information about communicating with people with a disability in the recovery phase, see Appendix C.

Table 2 presents communication methods; strengthens and weaknesses of each method; and, suitability of each method for the different stages of recovery (early to longer term recovery and reconstruction).

**Table 2:** Communication Methods

| Method | Strengths | Weaknesses | Most Suitable for |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Community meetings** are a core part of communication and community recovery. This holds true for all phases of recovery — from planning to operations and evaluations of recovery efforts. For example, these can be planned at schools, community centers, or municipal government buildings. | ■ Provides a platform for community members to have face-to-face contact with decision makers.<br>■ Facilitates the immediate feedback loop between decision makers and community members.<br>■ Offers an opportunity for community members to connect with one another; and helps create a sense partnership between government and community.<br>■ Actively builds social cohesion.<br>■ Provides the community with a sense of ownership over the recovery process.<br>■ Allows government agencies to gain vital data and information about what is happening in the community in terms of self-recovery.<br>■ Translators/sign language resources can be made available at the meeting to facilitate communication for all. | ■ Requires that individuals are aware of meetings and can physically access them.<br>■ Meetings can be politicized by individuals. | ■ Early stages of recovery planning.<br>■ Explaining technical issues or policy decisions and answering community questions.<br>■ Keeping the community updated and soliciting their immediate feedback.<br>■ An effective way of consultation regarding particular recovery activities, including hosting focus groups at community meetings. |
| **Face-to-face** communication consistently ranks as the most influential means of relaying information to people. | ■ Creates a perceived trustworthiness of information.<br>■ Creates a sense of participation/ownership of the recovery by the affected people.<br>■ Ability to tailor information to suit specific individual/community needs. | ■ Limited in the number of people that can be reached. | ■ Face-to-face communication is a core part of the communication process and community recovery in all phases of recovery — from planning to operations and evaluations of recovery efforts.<br>■ For example, this could include a dedicated face-to-face service to support individuals with complaints or to advise on recovery challenges, including livelihood or housing challenges. |
| **Word of mouth** is the most common and strongest form of communication, but it entails the most risks because individuals can circulate false information and rumors. | ■ Highly trusted form of communication.<br>■ Communications occur quickly through established networks, and new networks that may emerge during recovery.<br>■ People can inform others in their networks about services they can access or ways to participate in recovery. | ■ People can easily spread misinformation and rumors, which may require new communications to be developed to combat misinformation that is spread through word of mouth. | ■ Simple messages (for example, informing people of meetings and events, and calls to action).<br>■ If done correctly, community members can become agents for government communications, disseminating them through their networks. This can potentially be done by providing clear messages to people that they can easily pass on others through their respective networks. |

**Table 2:** Communication Methods (cont.)

| Method | Strengths | Weaknesses | Most Suitable for |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Newspapers** can be a highly effective and trusted method of sending information out to a large number of people. | ■ Existing level of trust and respect within the community as seen as a key source of information. May need to check community perceptions of the newspaper before using it. | ■ Requires literacy and access to a newspaper distribution network.<br>■ Newspapers can be biased toward one group or political view.<br>■ Unless purchasing advertising space, little control over what is printed.<br>■ One-way information exchange. | ■ Early stages of recovery planning.<br>■ Keeping the community updated on recovery progress. |
| **Radio** A very well-known and commonly used method of communication in emergencies and recovery operations. | ■ Communities often have pre-existing local radio stations.<br>■ Offers a low technology and inexpensive means of communication.<br>■ Messages can be transmitted across long distances, depending on transmitter strength.<br>■ Individuals with no access to electricity can use wind-up or solar powered radios. Enables two-way communication between the public, hosts, guests and audience.<br>■ Caters to different linguistic and/or religious groups.<br>■ Access radio through websites and podcasts in some country contexts.<br>■ Interviews can be conducted with decision-makers taking questions from the public. | ■ Requires station to be operational following the emergency.<br>■ Ineffective for people with impaired hearing.<br>■ Almost no ability to know who has heard the information.<br>■ Radio shows or interviews are usually only presented once, meaning there is only one opportunity for people to hear the information (unless it is a podcast). | ■ Early stages of recovery planning.<br>■ Disseminating detailed information about specific services and events.<br>■ Broad and general information updates on recovery efforts.<br>■ Soliciting community feedback on recovery progress. |
| **Notice boards** are an important means of communication. They are inexpensive to erect and use, and can provide a public (and anonymous) voice to reach the community. | ■ Low cost and good for localized information exchange.<br>■ Used to visually present reconstruction initiatives, including architectural designs of new public facilities or spaces at specific sites.<br>■ May already exist in the area; and, if not, they can be set up quickly after an emergency.<br>■ Facilitates a local meeting place or area.<br>■ Allows community members to provide updates and feedback.<br>■ Allows anonymous contributions.<br>■ Community members or businesses can advertise recovery services.<br>■ Effective method for directing people to other points/information sources | ■ Difficult to target information.<br>■ Can quickly become covered in unnecessary information if not regulated.<br>■ No control over, or knowledge of, who receives or does not receive the information.<br>■ Geographical scope might be limited unless there is an investment in a widely-dispersed number of notice boards. | ■ Disseminating broad, general information in all phases of recovery from planning to operations.<br>■ Located in areas which may find other communication channels difficult to access. |

**Table 2:** Communication Methods (cont.)

| Method | Strengths | Weaknesses | Most Suitable for |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Websites** are increasingly being viewed as a primary means of obtaining information, but they can be costly. Also, they need to be maintained and regularly updated. | ■ Effectively deliver information to the broader general public.<br>■ Provide very detailed information that people may be seeking.<br>■ People can be directed to a website by receiving simple messages through SMS/text messages and notice boards. | ■ At times, difficult to relay and retain quality and timely information from the field.<br>■ Requires web and reading literacy. May not be appropriate for the visually impaired, people with a cognitive disability, or those who are injured.<br>■ Requires access to computers, electricity and internet.<br>■ High cost/resources required to keep it managed and updated. | ■ Disseminate information in all phases of recovery — from planning, public engagements, operations, to evaluating and reporting on recovery efforts. |
| **Television** increasingly people view television in many country/local contexts as a primary means of obtaining information. | ■ Communities often have pre-existing television stations (although not in every household).<br>■ Messages can be transmitted across long distances, depending on transmitter strength.<br>■ Enables two-way communication between the public, hosts, guests and audience.<br>■ Caters to different linguistic and/or religious groups.<br>■ Can establish relationships with trusted TV news agencies before disaster strikes.<br>■ Decision-makers can be interviewed on television and respond to public queries. | ■ Requires television station to be operational following a disaster.<br>■ Requires access to a TV and electricity.<br>■ May not be appropriate for the visually or hearing impaired, and/or people with a cognitive disability. | ■ Disseminate information in all phases of recovery — from planning, public engagements, operations, to evaluating and reporting on recovery efforts. |
| **Mobile phone (SMS/text messages).** Commonly used low-cost communication method | ■ Large number of people with access to mobile phones.<br>■ Direct access to people everywhere (assuming network connectivity).<br>■ Effective for reaching people who may have left the disaster area.<br>■ Good and effective means for simple messaging. | ■ Requires electricity and phone reception.<br>■ May have difficulty obtaining people's phone numbers.<br>■ Lack of assurance that people have received messages.<br>■ Messages must usually be short and succinct.<br>■ There may be privacy legislation or other issues in contacting people. | ■ Early stages of recovery planning, notifying people of events and meetings.<br>■ Keep the community updated. Direct people to more detailed sources of information (for example, websites). |

**Table 2:** Communication Methods (cont.)

| Method | Strengths | Weaknesses | Most Suitable for |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, badges and widgets, and blogs).** Social media can help alert people to upcoming events, such as community meetings, providing a forum for expression. | ■ Good for quick informational updates to the public (for example, Twitter).<br>■ Provides a forum for users to offer opinions, identify community needs, and raise issues (for example, the Facebook crisis response tool).<br>■ Enables those with a physical disability and those who are socially isolated to connect with others.<br>■ Effective for alerting people to events.<br>■ Good way of obtaining quick responses from the community.<br>■ Allows the community to see visual proof of recovery efforts (for example, Instagram).<br>■ Blogs can provide space for written contributions from partners.<br>■ Often used by youth, which may increase their participation in the recovery planning process. | ■ Requires computer and internet access, electricity, and computer/reading literacy.<br>■ Limited control over content; inability to control opinions or views expressed in postings.<br>■ Not conducive to conveying large amounts of dense information, although an established Facebook page may offer regular updates. | ■ Suitable for all phases of recovery — from planning to operations and evaluations of recovery efforts. Particularly suitable for information that can be communicated simply and easily. |

*Sources:* Adapted from "Communicating in Recovery," Australian Red Cross (2010).

**BOX 3: Case Study: Differences in Information Needs and Preferred Sources of Men and Women following the 2015 Nepalese Earthquake**

Many Nepalese said that their main information needs immediately after the 2015 earthquakes concerned shelter and temporary settlement, accessing relief, and staying safe and surviving aftershocks. These needs were partially met, but rumors caused concern and confusion.

Seven months on, information needs changed. The Nepalese wanted to know about government assistance, especially for permanent shelter solutions as winter intensified, as well as whether the land was safe to settle and cultivate. However, the information circulating was contradictory. In this context, it is important to disaggregate data as differences emerge. For instance, women wanted information about dealing with trauma and future quakes, but did not feel that these needs were well met. They also wanted information about caring for children, older people and pregnant women. Men tended to be concerned about how to treat the injured and deal with the dead (including animals). Also, they wanted to know what they could expect from the government. Young people wanted to know when schools and colleges would re-open.

*Source: Collective Communication and Community Engagement in Humanitarian Action.* How to Guide for Leaders and Responders. CDAC Network (2019). Adapted from: Are you Listening Now? Community Perspectives on Communication with Communities during the Nepal earthquake. Margie Buchanan-Smith, Subindra Bogati and Sarah Routley, with Srijana Nepal, Sweta Khadka, Yamima Bomjan and Neha Uprety for CDAC Network (2016). See: http://www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-and-resources/20160811085949-qjzug.

Female students from the University of Laos during a Library Week event in campus. Gender equality in education enhances productivity and improves development goals for the next generation. Vientiane, Lao PDR. Photo: HUMA/World Bank.

# Section 5:
## Developing a Communication Plan

Aligned to the Disaster Recovery Framework, including the recovery vision and principles, a communication plan is highly valuable in bridging the communication needs assessment and implementation of information and communication activities. A communication plan needs to be developed early in the recovery planning process to help maximize government and community partnerships, as well as efforts aimed at self-recovery. It is also important that a lead ministry or agency is designated as the 'owner' of the communication plan. This will help to ensure that it is implemented over the entire course of the recovery process (that is, from early to longer-term recovery and reconstruction).

There is no "one way" of developing a communication plan. In fact, there are many different ways of approaching the task depending on the disaster context and expected recovery outputs and outcomes. It is important to develop a communication plan in such a way as to align with the vision and approach of the DRF or recovery strategy. In this context, it should be based on local reality. The advice provided below serves only as a guide.

Most recovery communication plans include the following elements:

- Key objective
- Audience (**Who** is the target audience?)
- Key messages (**What** are the key messages?)
- Communication methods and activities (**How**, specifically, what communication means will be deployed for each target audience?)
- Key actors and their respective responsibilities

*"An investment in researching access, sourcing, flow and trust around information movement in any given community is vital to the design of truly effective communications strategies, ensuring that people will believe, trust and act upon the information they receive, and thus ultimately saves time and money."*

*Source: How to Establish and Manage a Systematic Community Feedback Mechanism, IFRC and Ground Truth Solutions* (2018). https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/06/IFRCfeedback-mechanism-with communities_ok_web.pdf.

- Complaints/grievance system
- Resources (financial and human)
- Evaluation and amendment
- Time line

**Key objectives:**  It is important to clearly articulate the core objective of the communication plan. In most cases, the purpose of the communication plan will be to provide timely and useful information to the community, thereby helping to restore community confidence in the recovery process. Additionally, it is important to set SMART goals. SMART refers to specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely objectives. The objectives should also be evaluated to check the implementation progress of the plan, specifically that it is on track toward achieving the expected results. A Communication Plan should not be an end in itself. Rather, it exists to support the overall strategy and/or the

DRF. Clear and well thought through links between the communication plan and the DRF vision and approach will help to reinforce the importance and relevance of communication, thereby demonstrating a convincing case for the proper resourcing of communication activities.

**Audience:** Ensure that key stakeholders in the DRF and/or recovery strategy are identified. From this list of key stakeholders, it will be important to broadly identify and prioritize target audiences for each core service sector in the DRF, for example, recovery activities related to health, education, community development, land, law and justice, and infrastructure (for example, roads and bridges, water and sanitation, and electricity).  As a next step, it is helpful to disaggregate the large audience into smaller groups or segments who have similar needs, values and/or characteristics. Segmentation recognizes that different groups will respond differently to key messages and interventions. If it makes sense to segment the audience, then there are lots of ways of doing so. Plenty of advice is also available.  The most common criteria used are demographics (age, education, income, ethnicity, and gender) and geography (region, district, community/ urban, rural, peri-urban). An audience segment that is derived exclusively from demographics, such as African youth, will still constitute a large

group. As such, it may have varied beliefs, values and behavior. Thus, demographics may be insufficient as segmentation criteria. More sophisticated segmentation strategies use psycho-social, behavioral and psychographics (that is, personality, values, attitudes, interests, level of readiness for change and lifestyles) as variables to categorize audience subgroups. Once the audience has been divided into segments based on the selected criteria, campaigns can then be designed and communication channels selected to effectively reach their intended audience.

**Key Messages:** Key messages should be clear and succinct. They should be targeted to audiences in an easily comprehensible way. The lead government agency/ministry responsible for development of a communication plan may also need to obtain agreement from core ministries/stakeholders regarding key messages.

**Communication methods and activities:** It is important to identify the most appropriate communication methods and activities in communicating key messages to the target audience. Communication means and activities should also be aligned with the human and financial resources available within the set time frame. As outlined in Section 4 of this Guide, there are a wide range of communication methods that governments can deploy.  These communication methods can be effective

Figure 1: Audience Segmentation Process
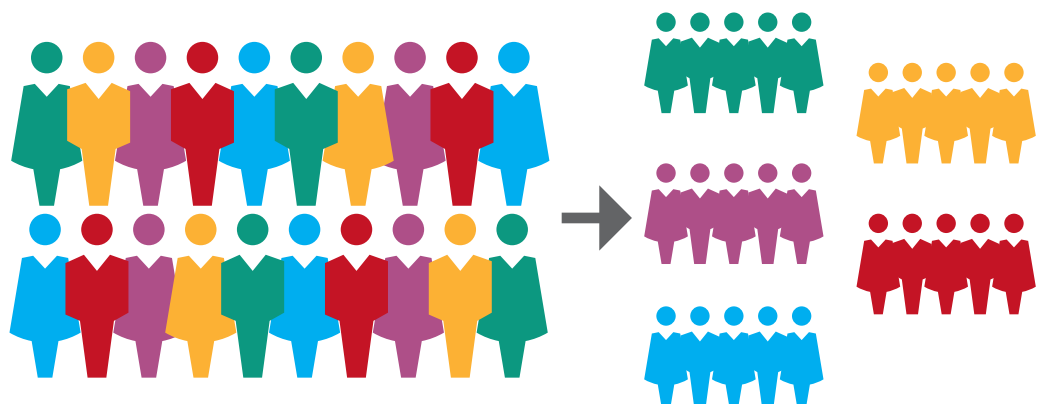
channels for both large- and small-scale public information campaigns, as well as community consultations.

**Key actors and their respective responsibilities:** It is important to identify the core ministries/stakeholders who will be involved in communications activities, and to agree on who is responsible for the various activities. A Communications Coordinator should be appointed (if the position does not already exist) to undertake a communications assessment that will directly inform the development of a communications plan. A Communication Spokesperson(s) should also be identified to help provide consistency of resources to the communication activities. A key communication coordination mechanism for the core ministries/stakeholders will also need to be agreed and established.

**Typhoon Yolanda "Haiyan" in the Philippines**

*"We all know that a successful post-disaster rehabilitation and recovery is beyond the control of one person. But an effective communications strategy would have helped the government manage expectations and shape people's perception about the Typhoon Yolanda rehabilitation and recovery efforts".*

Attorney Lesley Jeanne Y. Cordero, former Undersecretary Office of the President, Presidential Assistant for Rehabilitation and Recovery.

**Complaints system:** A communication plan should set out what complaints system(s) will be available to communities to voice their complaints and concerns about recovery activities, and how the government will respond.

**Resources:** Use human and financial resources to set legitimate levels of expectations and outline the case for more dedicated resources. Communication specialists will need to develop and implement a communication strategy. Other specialists will also be required to implement the communications plan, including editors and designers.

**Evaluation and amendment:** A Communication Plan should be evaluated to assess its effectiveness with both internal and external audiences. Using the collected feedback, it should then be amended as needed. A particular focus should be checking that key messages are being received by the audiences, and that the approach is supporting the objectives of the Communications Plan and the DRF.

**Timing:** A Communication Plan needs to be developed early in the recovery process, and it should outline a timeline for implementation of the identified communication activities.

Thanks to a World Bank backed line of credit, livestock production in Georgia has increased. Photo: World Bank.

## BOX 4: Case Study: The Haiti Reconstruction Fund (HRF) Communication Strategy

**The Haiti Reconstruction Fund (HRF) is a multi-donor fund established between the Government of Haiti and the international community to help finance post-earthquake reconstruction. The Fund was established in 2010, and a communication strategy to support implementation was developed shortly thereafter.**

**The strategy aims to maximize Haitian input in recovery activities. This approach has had the following implications for the strategy:**

- **Local communication specialists were hired to support implementation, and to ensure communication methods deployed were based in local realities.**

- **The HRF logo, slogan and jingle were designed by Haitian school children.**

- **Haitian images of the reconstruction are used in HRF publications and sourced from local amateur and professional photographers, often through competitions.**

- **Goods and services for the strategy are procured, whenever possible, from Haitian suppliers.**

- **Publications and communications are issued in the official languages of the country (Creole and French) depending on the target audience. This approach is helping to ensure that Haitians more fully recognize, understand and benefit from the messages that are being communicated through the communication strategy.**

*Source:* The HRF Communication Strategy (amended in 2012) available at: https://www.haitireconstructionfund.org/documents/communication/en.

# Section 6:
# Key Take-away Messages

The key take-away messages from this *Guidance Note on Recovery Communication* are as follows:

- **Successful recovery is built on effective communication.** Communication between governments, individuals and communities is important in all stages of recovery (from early recovery planning to longer-term recovery and reconstruction). It helps to ensure that the recovery needs are effectively and efficiently identified and prioritized, and that quality and timely recovery outcomes are achieved.

- **Information flows and interaction between all stakeholders needs to be both top-down and bottom-up, and the participatory process should start early.** Recovery is a partnership between the affected community, the broader community, governments, aid organizations and the private sector.

- **Governments should develop and disseminate the initial key recovery messages to communities within a couple of days of the disaster event.**

- **Lead ministries/sectoral agencies are encouraged to build budget lines for communications into their recovery funding.** Additionally, lead ministries/ sectoral agencies should identify communication specialists to direct communication activities. If government agencies do not have communication specialists on staff, they may need to engage consultants.

- **National governments are encouraged to direct dedicated funding and technical support to entities that may need to produce community-focused outreach

campaigns, but that lack the requisite expertise, such as local governments.**

- **Governments need to ensure they communicate with all stakeholders during recovery –** including both affected and unaffected populations.

- **Identify the target audience for recovery communications and their communications culture.** Be conscious of and responsive to target audiences changing needs over time.

- **Governments should provide information that communities need** to support their capacity to make plans and take decisions about their recovery and longer-term future. Information needs to be clear, concise and honest (that is, acknowledge uncertainties) to enable communities to deal with emerging issues.

- **Governments should use existing complaint and grievance mechanisms to support transparency and accountability; where they do not exist, they should be established.** It is also important that complaint-handling systems be implemented across projects.

- **Governments should establish mechanisms for coordinated and consistent communication across government service providers and aid organizations** to ensure maximum impact and minimum confusion caused by potentially contradictory messages from the various sectoral agencies.

- **Governments are encouraged to use existing communication platforms and community networks and assets, as opposed to developing new ones.** For

Girls attend morning assembly at the Shaheed Mohamed Motaher Zaid School in Sana'a. The Social Fund for Development provided funds to the school as part of their 'quality of education' program. Republic of Yemen. Photo: Dana Smillie/World Bank.

example, schools, churches, sports groups (that is, groups that meet regularly) may be deployed as communication platforms.

- **Access to information is vital at all stages of recovery, and information must be accessible to all in the community.** Communication methods deployed by the government during recovery planning and operations need to be socially inclusive (that is, they should address the different information needs of the poor and vulnerable individuals and groups within the community).

# Resources

Australian Red Cross. 2010. *Communicating in Recovery.*

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Media Action. *Policy Briefing: Still Left in the Dark: How People in Emergencies use Communication to Survive – and How Humanitarian Agencies can Help.* See: www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/publicationsandpress/policy_still_left_in_the_dark.html • www.infoasaid.org

____. 2015. *Humanitarian Broadcasting in Emergencies.* Based on evaluations of four crisis interventions, this research report assesses the effectiveness of mass media interventions in enabling people to survive and recover from disasters. See: http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/pdf/research/humanitarian-broadcasting-in-emergencies-2015-report.pdf.

____. 2016. *What Role does Lifeline Preparedness Play in Enabling Effective Communication in Crisis?* This report evaluates to what extent BBC Media Action's preparedness work has built its own capacity and that of its partners to produce Lifeline broadcasts that meet audience information and communication needs in a crisis.

See: http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/rmhttp/mediaaction/pdf/research/lifeline-evaluation.pdf

Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network. The CDAC Network is a growing platform of more than 30 humanitarian, media development, social innovation, technology, and telecommunication organizations dedicated to saving lives and making aid more effective through communication, information exchange and community engagement. See: http://www.cdacnetwork.org/.

____. 2019. *Collective Communication and Community Engagement in Humanitarian Action: How to Guide for Leaders and Responders.*

____. 2016. *Are you Listening Now? The Challenge to Humanitarian Aid of Communicating with People Affected by Disaster.* A briefing paper that considers whether people were getting information that was useful and relevant to their needs in the aftermath of the Nepal earthquakes in April and May 2015. See: http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Are%2Byou%2BListening%2BNow%2B-Briefing%2BPaper_LR.pdf

____. 2014. *Typhoon Haiyan Learning Review.* A review of communication initiatives in the humanitarian response to Typhoon Haiyan, Philippines. See: http://www.cdacnetwork.org/contentAsset/raw-data/7825ae17-8f9b-4a05-bfbd-7eb9da6ea8c1/attachedFile2.

____. 2012. *Ann Kite Yo Pale:Let Them Speak.* Best practice and lessons learned in communication with disaster affected communities – Haiti 2010. See: http://www.cdacnetwork.org/contentAsset/raw-data/940adbcd-d86a-4e5a-9d3f-05003ce3ba28/attachedFile.

Commonwealth of Australia. 2013. *Communicating with People with Disability: National Guidelines for Emergency Managers.*

The Haiti Reconstruction Fund (HRF) Communication Strategy (first published in 2010, and amended 2012) available at: https://www.haitireconstructionfund.org/documents/communication/en

Humanitarianism in the Network Age. See: www.unocha.org/hina

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. 2005. *World Disasters Report – Focus on Information in Disasters.*

World Bank Group. 2012. *The Multi Donor Fund for Aceh and Nias: A Framework for Reconstruction through Effective Partnerships.* (Published by the MDF-JRF Secretariat, The World Bank Office, Indonesia, December 2012) available at: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/17631/839030NWP0Box382108B-00PULBIC00no5.pdf;sequence=1.

Winstanley, A., K. Cronin and M. Daly. 2011. S*upporting Communication around the Canterbury Earthquakes and Other Risks: A Learning Workshop.* April 7. GNS Miscellaneous Series 37.

## Appendix A:
## Communication Needs Assessment Template

**Blank template**

| ISSUE | NOTES |
| --- | --- |
| Situational | |
| Stakeholders | |
| Objectives | |
| Methods | |
| Feedback | |

# Appendix B:
## Recovery Communications Plan Template

| AIM | What is the purpose of the communication plan? |
|---|---|
| | In most cases, the purpose of the communication plan is to provide timely and useful information to the community and restore public confidence in the recovery process. |

| SMART OBJECTIVES | **S**pecific |
|---|---|
| | **M**easurable |
| | **A**chievable |
| | **R**elevant |
| | **T**imely |

| WHO | WHAT | WHEN | HOW |
|---|---|---|---|
| Who is the audience? Identify and prioritize the target audience | What are the key messages? These should be clear and succinct statements about what messages the target audience should receive | When are the messages going to be delivered? These need to be timely and appropriate. | How are the messages going to be delivered? Select methods that meet the community needs and use existing resources. |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

| Ref# | AGREED ACTIONS | PRIORITY | GOVERNMENT MINISTRY/ STAKEHOLDER | RESPONSIBILITY | TIMING/ RESOURCES REQUIRED |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

# Appendix C:
# Quick Guide to Communicating with People with a Disability*

## COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

■ Always put the person before the disability.

■ Avoid using patronizing or demeaning phrases, labels and/or stereotypes.

■ Provide relevant information in a range of formats (for example, relevant language, pictures, video and audio visual).

■ Face and speak directly to the person, even if they have an interpreter or caregiver.

■ Ensure there is enough time for the person to absorb the information and respond on their own.

■ Always respect the person's dignity, individuality and desire for independence.

■ Always ask for before providing assistance.

| PHYSICAL | HEARING | VISION | GENERIC |
|---|---|---|---|
| ■ People with a mobility disability (including a temporary disability) may find access to information and/or travel limited. <br> ■ Provide information in multiple formats, for example: internet, radio, podcast, video/DVD or disk. <br> ■ Consider accessibility issues, including community meetings in recovery centers. | ■ Signage alerts, announcements and instructions need to be visually accessible and placed in well-lit areas. <br> ■ Provide information in multiple formats, for example: sign language interpreters; SMS/text message phone updates; easy local language versions; demonstrations; pictures; flash cards; picture exchange; and communication whiteboards. | ■ Provide auditory announcements and instructions, including some descriptive information to orientate someone who is vision-impaired or blind. <br> ■ Provide information in large print versions for those individuals with vision difficulties. | ■ Only provide or send necessary and relevant information. <br> ■ Use multiple formats. <br> ■ Verbalize visual information, including phone numbers and web details. <br> ■ Keep information consistent, accurate, short and sharp. <br> ■ Use clear language and uncomplicated/simple sentences. <br> ■ Use pictures or simple photos to support written information. <br> ■ Use positive or value-neutral language. |

* *Source:* Commonwealth of Australia, "Communicating with People with Disability: National Guidelines for Emergency Managers." (2013).

**GFDRR**
Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery

The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) is a global partnership that helps developing countries better understand and reduce their vulnerabilities to natural hazards and adapt to climate change. Working with over 400 local, national, regional, and international partners, GFDRR provides grant financing, technical assistance, training and knowledge sharing activities to mainstream disaster and climate risk management in policies and strategies. Managed by the World Bank, GFDRR is supported by 34 countries and 9 international organizations.

**https://www.gfdrr.org/recovery-hub**