Communicating with Communities in Emergencies Working Group, Bangladesh

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background:
Bangladesh is one of the most disaster prone countries in the world. Cyclones, floods and tornados occur frequently, causing widespread damage and destruction. There is also a risk in the country of emerging infectious diseases such as anthrax, Nipah virus, Bird flu and H1N1. Materials for communicating with the population exist – mainly on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and emergency preparedness - but these are not systematically shared and there is no standardisation. In addition, there is a lack of materials on what to do **following** a disaster and a lack of 2-way communication with communities (information and feedback) during the response phase. There is recognition that standardised, contextualised messages (in Bangla) would be useful both in preparedness and response. Not only would this help avoid the common problem of duplication and confusing and conflicting messages, it would also facilitate the rapid dissemination of materials that had been agreed upon beforehand.

Overall aim:
To develop an effective coordination system for developing and sharing information related to emergency preparedness, disaster risk reduction and effective response with people affected by disasters and for listening to their concerns, in line and supporting the work of the LCG DER/HCTT.

Objectives:

- Bring together key actors[1] working in communication during humanitarian crises to develop an effective coordination mechanism for sharing information with people before, during and after emergencies and for listening to their concerns.

- Provide tools to humanitarian actors, including the government, where required, to improve their capacity to exchange information with those affected.

- Provide technical support on improving communication in thematic areas.

- Ensure consistency in information and advice provided to affected communities, particularly by working with relevant line ministries and clusters.

- Ensure that communities are involved in identifying their own threats and needs before, during and after emergencies.

Activities:

Phase 1
- Establish initial membership and agree on terms of reference
- Map, collate and review materials already produced by cluster members and other organisations and arrange according to emergency phase (Disaster Risk Reduction, Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery)

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[1] Government, media, telecommunications, UN, INGOs and NGOs, civil society, advertising agencies, Islamic Foundation

- Standardise local language materials in agreement with the government, cluster members and other relevant organisations.
- Create a web-based platform for sharing localised messages and materials and ensuring widespread dissemination amongst international and national humanitarian agencies, local media and government.
- Conduct a 3W (who, what, where) mapping exercise of SMS initiatives
- Conduct a 3W (who, what, where) mapping exercise of other more traditional communication channels[2]
- Create a list of local media contacts (TV, Radio print media, internet) and humanitarian agencies in Bangladesh and open data initiatives (e.g. horizontal learning programme).

Phase 2
- Expand group to include actors in the private sector (see footnote 1 on page 1) and local media.
- Conduct information needs and access assessments with communities affected by disasters and ensure their participation in developing materials that help address their needs.
- Regularly conduct and share information and research to better understand the communication environment in order to ensure that communication work is based on a sound understanding of how different communities share, access and evaluate information.
- Prepare, field test and then disseminate consistent information and advice for affected communities, particularly by working with relevant line ministries and clusters.
- Regularly share communication activities conducted by individual organisations within the working group to avoid duplication and enhance learning.

Phase 3 (in the event of a disaster)
- Design and support ways in which those affected by disasters can access the information they need about available assistance
- Design and support ways in which humanitarian responders can listen more effectively to the needs and concerns of those affected.
- Provide technical support to clusters and agencies, including the government, where required to improve their capacity to interact with those affected.

Governance
In order to undertake the key tasks outlined above in Phase 1 and 2, a Steering Committee will be set up. This will consist of: a Disaster Management Department representative; focal points from each cluster (Health, WASH, Nutrition, Education, Shelter, Food Security and Early Recovery); representatives from the two convening organisations (UNICEF and BBC Media Action) and the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society.

Convening organisations
The Disaster Management Department (DMD), Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, will lead the Steering Committee and will be supported by two convening organisations - BBC Media Action and UNICEF. The DMD is responsible for final approval of all materials; the two convenors will be responsible for initiating and hosting meetings and sharing minutes with the Steering Committee and Working Group.

Frequency/Timing of meetings
The Steering Committee will aim to meet twice a month at the beginning to ensure key activities are followed up on. This can be reviewed depending on needs and/or emergency phase.
The wider Working Group will aim to meet once a month. Location to be decided by convening organisation and Disaster Management Department.

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[2] Such as street theatre, miking, megaphones/loudspeakers