

WHY DO WE NEED TO COMMUNICATE WITH COMMUNITIES?

Communication is as crucial as food, water, shelter and medicine.

When people don't have the information they need, they become confused, isolated, afraid and angry. When people can't communicate with those making decisions, they feel powerless and frustrated, and they are vulnerable to corruption and exploitation because they don't have channels to report it. Communication and community engagement changes that: it puts people affected by disasters in control of their lives.

6 STEPS TO COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

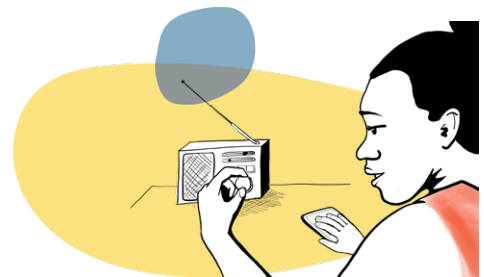
All humanitarian responders at all levels – organisations, Area Councils, provincial authorities and working groups, national authorities, clusters, inter-cluster groups, and the media – have an important role to play in ensuring that there is two-way communication between communities and decision makers in times of disaster.

STEP 1: INFORM

Reliable and clear information that helps people to prepare for disasters, to warn them when disasters are about strike, to keep them informed about what has happened in their own and other areas, and to tell them what to expect next can help people survive and recover.

It's critical that people affected by disasters receive:

- The RIGHT INFORMATION
- At the RIGHT TIME
- Through the RIGHT CHANNELS

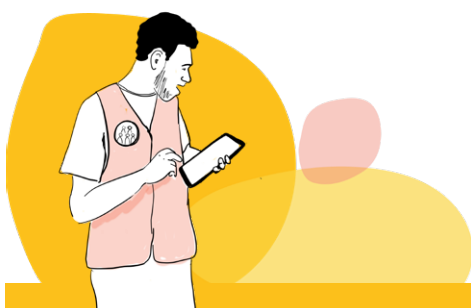


STEP 2: LISTEN

Community engagement makes aid more effective. We need to ask people affected by disasters what they think and need, at all stages from disaster preparedness and throughout the disaster response.

You can:

- Collect information through community meetings, Focus Group Discussions, face to face interviews, phone surveys and more.
- Ensure you capture the views of all different members of the community – including women and men, young people and older people, and people with and without disabilities.
- Be part of coordinated, collective community feedback mechanisms – contact the Communications and Community Engagement Sub-Cluster for more information.



STEP 3: LEARN

It's only after data is analysed that it becomes information that can be used to inform decision making. The Communications and Community Engagement Sub-Cluster can help with analysis of data from community research.

Consider:

- Which results were expected and which results were surprising?
- Would follow up interviews or group discussions help clarify the findings?
- What are the general trends in the data?
- Are there any particular groups or themes which stand out?



STEP 4: SHARE

When responders in communities, areas, provinces, and nationally work together to share information to and from communities and with each other, communities receive more clear and consistent information and spend less time answering questions from multiple responders, decision makers have better information and can leverage diverse expertise, and disaster responses are better coordinated and more effective.

You can:

- Share your organisation's and cluster's work with other clusters
- Share resources you produce or use with the Communications and Community Engagement Sub-Cluster to post on the NDMO Resources page for consistent messaging to communities
- Work with the Communications and Community Engagement Sub-Cluster to produce and disseminate materials so information to communities is coordinated.

STEP 5: ACT

Listening and learning about communities' needs won't help unless we act on what we hear. It's crucial to use the information we have received to make adjustments to our own organisation's programs and operations, as well as the disaster response as a whole.

Limits on funding, staff and other restrictions might make it difficult, or just not possible, to give communities what they ask for. But looking closely at communities' feedback and what changes – both small and substantial – that we can make to our programs, distributions and other parts of the response can make a big difference in delivering a response that is effective in helping communities recover and increasing their satisfaction with the assistance we provide. In Vanuatu, decisions about a collective disaster response are made through the NDMO with the support of the Cluster system.

STEP 6: REPEAT

Good communication is not one-way, and it is not a once-off event. We need to keep talking – and listening – to people affected by disasters to make sure our support really helps.

You can:

- Report back to communities the findings of what they said, and what action is going to be taken as a response. This is called "closing the feedback loop" and it helps strengthen accountability and transparency in the disaster response.
- Collect feedback at regular intervals throughout the response on changing needs, issues, preferences and, over time, the impact of the changes you make.