Standard Operating Procedures

Communication with Persons of Concern

Template

Introduction

This template for Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) can be adapted at country level within the Syria Refugee Response to describe guiding principles, procedures, roles and responsibilities in Communicating with Persons of Concern (PoC).

The SOPs have a focus on Syrian refugees living in urban contexts, camps and/or other settlements/collective shelters, but include other refugees or the host population affected by the influx.

Definitions

Communication with Persons of Concern, also referred to as Mass Information within UNHCR, or C4D (Communication for Development) in UNICEF, Communication with Communities, Communication with Affected Populations, and Mass Communication in other UN Agencies and organisations, is of considerable importance in the Syria Refugee Response.

The right to information, as well as the ability to provide feedback on services and assistance rendered, should be incorporated into every operation, especially in emergencies. Therefore "**communication**" refers not only to information going out from humanitarian partners, but also feedback coming in from PoC. For the purpose of this paper, "**PoC**" will refer to Syrian and other refugees as appropriate and their host communities.

Purpose

Of the 2.4 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt, 80 per cent reside in the host community, rather than in camps, making outreach more challenging. Refugee literacy levels, media habits, information needs, and levels of trust in humanitarian agencies vary greatly throughout the region, creating the necessity for a coordinated Communication with PoC approach involving governments, UN agencies, NGOs and other stakeholders.

The purpose of the present template for SOPs on Communicating with PoC is to provide a reference for Sector Working Groups (SWGs) endeavoring to incorporate Communication with PoC into their respective activities and projects.

Responsibilities

1. **Sector Working Groups** – Consider a communication with PoC component is present in their ToRs and is an integrated part of projects and activities targeting PoC. SWGs are advised to seek the support of a Communication with PoC focal point where available/applicable.

2. **Focal points Communication with Persons of Concern** – Depending on the nature of the SWG, focal points can be a staff member of a UN Agency or an NGO. He/She should provide support to SWGs be it in developing a wider, more comprehensive communication plan/campaign, or dedicated actions to serve only particular projects.

Participation of persons of concern

Involving persons of concern in programme planning and implementation not only helps in meeting needs, managing expectations, and contributing to smooth implementation, but it also promotes dialogue and cements accountability. This two-way communication implies simple and well-communicated messages about the programme/activity/ service/ campaign being delivered in a timely manner to persons of concern, as well as feedback being collected and incorporated or used to formulate a response.

Feedback should be gathered not only on WHAT, but also on HOW—i.e. methods of delivering messages on the respective programme/activity/ service/ campaign (see Annex1 on Steps in Developing a Communication Plan and Annex 3 on Collecting feedback).

Annex1: 10 Steps in Developing a Communication Plan

Step 1: Bring partners together

Think about any governmental bodies, UN agencies, international and national NGOs who are implementing similar programmes and get them together, albeit such fora most probably already exist: i.e. Sector Working Groups, Task Forces, etc.

Step 2: Set objectives/ issues which need to be addressed

Setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic, Time-related) objectives is an essential part of a communication plan, although at times deliverables are challenging to measure (i.e. you can measure how many leaflets were printed, but this doesn't say how many people actually read them).

EXAMPLES OF COMMON OBJECTIVES

- Raise awareness of a particular danger/damaging practice (i.e. accidental fires)

- Ensure PoC are informed about programme/activity/campaign details (who, what, when, where)

- Manage expectations about a particular programme (i.e. resettlement)

- Augment trust and/or awareness (of existing programme/service or organization)

Step 3: Define target audience(s)

Think of the group(s) of people you want to reach with your communication efforts and collect information on their respective profiles, including information on demographics, literacy level, location, social background, and preferred source of information.

Keep in mind the fact that staff are also a very important audience, because if they understand the programme and its objective, they will be able to deliver the message to persons of concern more efficiently. Thus, workers will have different profiles, messages, methods of communication, as well as feedback loops. In themselves, they will ultimately become "a channel" through which messages are communicated to the persons of concern.

By	Characteristics
Demographics	Age
	Gender
	Ethnicity
	Language
	Religion
Education	Fully literate
	Semi-literate
	Non literate
Catchment Area	Whole country/ District /Municipality
	Camp
	Certain spot (registration center, clinic, etc.)
Status	New arrivals
	Camp based refugees
	Unregistered refugees
	Out-of-camp refugees
Social Structure	Families/Clans
	Informal leaders
	Political leaders
	Religious leaders
Trusted Sources of Information	Word of mouth
	Opinion leaders
	Radio
	TV
	Newspapers
	Internet
	Printed materials
	Educational arts

Step 4: Decide on key messages

Once you have decided which groups you want to reach, you can think about what:

> ✎ You want target audiences to know about programmes/services/organisation
>
> ✎ Target audiences want to know (based on FAQs, feedback, etc.)

It always helps if you categorise messages: below messages are placed on an X (validity) and Y (complexity) axes. As a result, messages that are short-lived and simple can be referred to as "announcements", messages that are either simple and long-lived or complex and short-lived generally "require action", and messages that are both long-lived and complex are directed at "behavioural change".
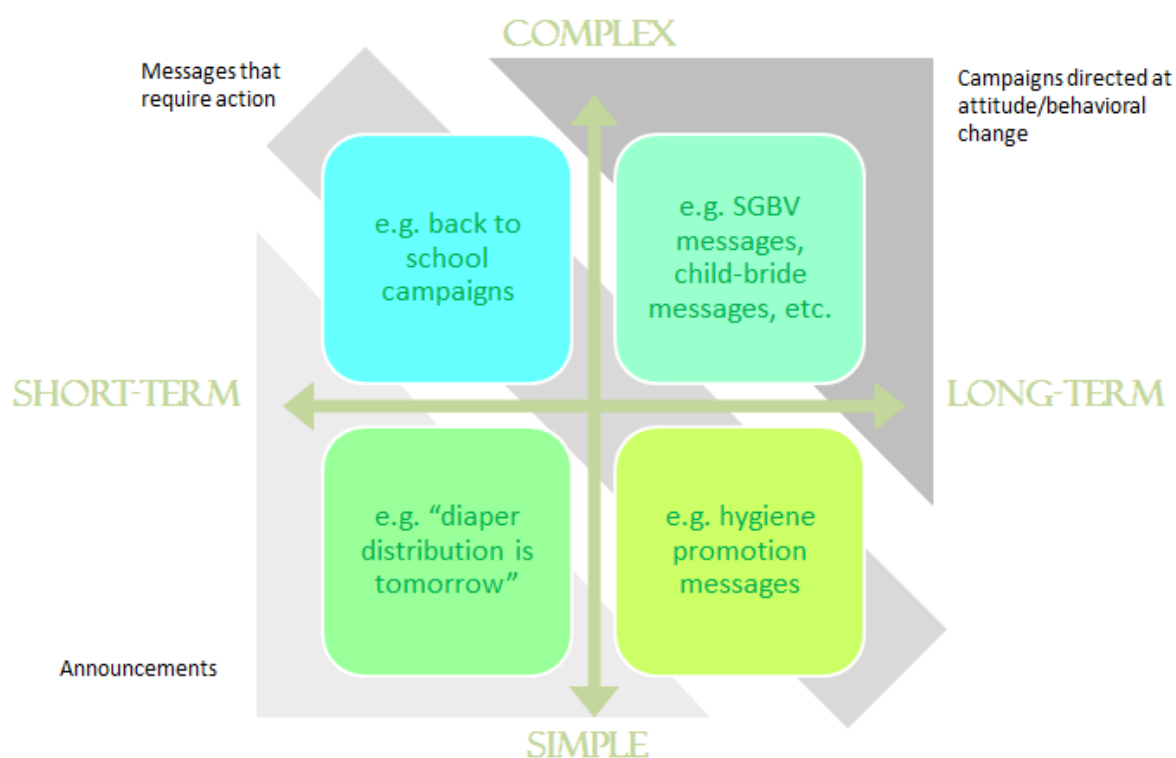
Step 5: Choose communication methods

The most successful communication plans have employed not one, but several communication channels, both oral and written (taking into account audience profiles). For more guidance on how to produce printed and basic video material using only office soft-ware and hardware you can access the Toolkit. Communication methods should also ideally be tested to ensure efficiency, by running the pilot by a small, representative sample. For example, before printing 60,000 brochures, make sure that terminology and messag-es are understood.

Also, be mindful of two-way communication with persons of concern, so communication methods/channels shouldn't just carry key messages from humanitarian partners, but plan to receive feedback as well.

See Annex 2: Audience-Message-Channel for a basic outline.

Step 6: Establish a timeline

Consider that each of the steps in developing a communication plan, as well as the activities in the implementation stage (step 8) should have a deadline and a focal point who holds the responsibility for that particular component.

Step 7: Draft a budget

Think about your needs in terms of actual communication products (brochures, posters, flyers, videos, etc.), as well as training, capacity-building, and human resourcing and potential external partnerships that may involve additional funds. You should also consider physical items that may need purchasing, such as megaphones, notice boards, etc.

Step 8: Implement

The implementation stage is where you pull together the envisaged activities, their respective focal points and deadlines and go ahead with carrying them out. Some activities can happen only once, periodically, or throughout the whole programme. The table below is an example of scheduling activities and recording their focal point and location. Location refers to point of distribution/screening (i.e. registration centers) and how refers to placement method (i.e. website, e-mail, social media, etc.). Recording this information will also come in handy when putting together 4 Ws (Who/When/What/Where). Also, remember to test your products before you go ahead with production (step 5).

Activity (What)	Focal point (Who)	Time												Location (Where)	How
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		

Step 9: Monitor

The most common mistake is thinking that once the planning and implementation stage are over, the programme can be considered a closed chapter. However, the feedback mechanisms that have been incorporated into the plan, will enable you to periodically collect feedback from both the beneficiaries and the implementers in the field. Also keep an eye on the indicators that you've set in order to help you measure success. If the programme is half-way through and the indicators are still at 0, it might be worth reviewing whether the indicator was realistic and/or the methods are appropriate (see Annex 2 on Collecting feedback).

Step 10: Evaluate and re-plan

Evaluate implementation at least twice: mid-way and at the end of the programme. You can always tweak your programme/campaign half-way through if you notice that something is not going the way it should. It is also advisable to record good practice and lessons learned for other future projects. A short project description for an activity/initiative that went very well will come in handy for other offices to replicate in their context.

Annex 2: Audience-Message-Channel

CHANNELS	TYPES OF MESSAGES				AUDIENCES			
	Short-term	Long-term	Simple	Complex	Camp	Non-camp	Literate	Illiterate
Posters	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Flyers & brochures	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟡
PA systems/sound trucks	🟢	🔴	🟢	🔴	🟢	🔴	🟢	🟢
Hotline	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
SMS	🟢	🔴	🟢	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟡
Phone calls	🟢	🔴	🟢	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Radio	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
TV	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Social media	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟡
Meetings	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Educational arts	🔴	🟢	🟡	🔴	🟢	🔴	🟢	🟢

🔴 Unsuitable
🟡 Conditional
🟢 Suitable

* Remember that the above table is meant as a guide and is not by any means a "one size fits all" solution, applicable in any context.

Annex 3: Collecting feedback

Feedback is an essential part of planning and implementing, as it provides the information necessary for altering programme activities, as well as for understanding what the target audience thinks of the programme. Feedback shouldn't only be collected from beneficiaries, but also from staff working in the field, as they are most likely to receive opinions and complaints.

Below is a list of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods.

☐ Surveys/ Questionnaires

☐ Direct observation

☐ Community mobilisation (meetings with community leaders and thematic focus groups)

☐ In-depth interviews (either group or individual)

☐ Complaint boxes

Example of basic feedback loop

- Unit looks into programme and adjusts
- Unit informs relevant SWG on adjustments
- WG informs focal point on Communication with PoC
- Focal point on Communication with PoC and SWG work on appropriate communication method
- Change is communicated to PoC through comms channels or staff in the field
- PoC provide feedback to staff in the field
- Staff in the field record feedback
- Staff in the field share feedback with relevant Unit