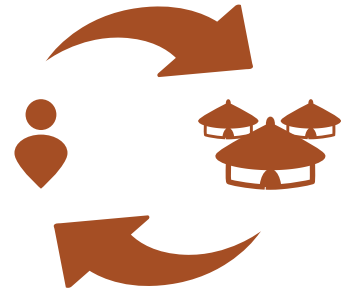


TIPS

Implement your communication methods

You've selected the program's communication methods, but how should you implement them? Here are some tips on communicating via community meetings, notice boards, written materials, community-based organizations, SMS messaging, radio and megaphones.



Community meetings

Community meetings give programs an opportunity to invite a wider population and to hear feedback. Programs can hold community meetings at regular intervals, such as every two months, to create opportunities for dialogue. These meetings should not be about individual sectors but instead should be cross-sectoral, so community members need only attend one meeting to understand the program's holistic approach.

How to hold community meetings

1. Agree to a plan

Work with local leaders and others to organize and run meetings. Consider what role they can play (in order to empower them as part of this activity) and what role the agency or partners should fill.

Agree to a location, time of day and duration. The meeting should last no more than 1.5 hours. Keep in mind times when most people will be free.

Identify key topics to discuss during the meeting, assign responsibilities to staff and fill out the form titled "Planning tool for community meetings."



2. Invite stakeholders

Invite people to the meeting in advance. Think about how you will invite people, especially how to invite harder-to-reach individuals.

Invite other groups that are working in the same area if you think they may want to give an update or make an announcement.



3. Conduct the meeting

Use different techniques and methods during the meeting to convey different messages and keep it interesting. For example, meetings can include

- question-and-answer sessions,
- role playing and drama,
- visual materials and
- several speakers.

Keep to the time limit, and ensure that a staff member is recording participants' questions and feedback.

Set a date for the next meeting.



4. Follow up on feedback

Share the participants' feedback with the appropriate manager. At the next meeting, tell the participants how the program used their feedback.

Planning tool for community meetings

Field teams can fill out this form to plan successful and productive community meetings.

Meeting's date: _____

Meeting's time: _____

Meeting's location: _____

Who will be invited? Which zones are they from?

What is the meeting's objective?

What is the meeting's agenda?

List key topics for discussion.

Who is the meeting's facilitator?

Who is the meeting's note taker?

What other staff will attend?

List their names and their roles in the meeting.

How will the organizers inform people about the meeting and invite them to it?

Who will take the lead?

What needs to be done to ensure the venue is suitable and ready for the meeting?

Who will take the lead?

What messages or materials need to be prepared for the meeting?

Who will take the lead?

Feedback tool for community meetings

During each meeting, the note taker should fill out this form to record the information that people share. Afterward, the meeting's facilitator should check the form and sign it if the notes are accurate. Then the supervisor should read the notes, write comments and sign the form.

Meeting's date: _____

Meeting's location: _____

Number of men: _____ Number of women: _____

Type of participants (e.g., beneficiaries, leaders, masons, carpenters, community members, community-based organization): _____

Facilitators' names: _____

Main points discussed in the meeting:

Suggestions/feedback from participants:

Action needed, and person responsible:

Comments from the facilitator:

Next meeting set for (date): _____

Name and title of facilitator (print): _____

Facilitator's signature: _____

Supervisor's comments and signature:

Written materials and notice boards

How to develop written materials

1. Make a plan

- Develop key messages and submit them for approval.
- Decide what visual material you need.

2. Create the materials

- Translate key messages into the local language.
- Work with an artist, if needed, to develop visual materials.
- Combine the materials to create posters, flyers or leaflets.

3. Test the materials

- Show the materials to a few community members.
- Ask questions to find out whether they understand the text and images.
- Look for potential misunderstandings, and revise the materials to make the message clear.

4. Print and distribute the materials

Print the materials, taking into account how they will be used. (For example, materials for notice boards need to be waterproof to withstand rain.)



How to set up effective notice boards

1. Follow the above process

Read the steps in the above list, “How to develop written materials.”

2. Remember your audience

All materials should be written in the community’s language. Avoid using acronyms, initialisms and NGO jargon.

3. Create an eye-catching design

Think about how you can display information using both words and pictures. Here are some examples:

- Use “before” and “after” photos or a timeline of photos to show a project’s progress.
- Include diagrams to show the design of transitional shelters.
- Illustrate key messages with drawings.

4. Agree to a location

Decide on the location the notice boards with the community. Notice boards should be in central locations where lots of people can easily read them.

5. Ensure community ownership








The community needs to take ownership of the notice board. Here are some ways to accomplish this:

- Identify someone in the community who can help maintain the board.
- Encourage others in the community to use the board for community announcements.
- Ask local children or groups to decorate the board.

6. Update the notice board

Nominate a staff member to regularly update the notice board.

Example of a notice board

<p>Purpose of this notice board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share information about activities happening in this community • Not for political messages 	<p>Project name, objectives & activities for each sector</p> 	<p>Other</p> <p>(For example, announcements, upcoming activities, list of committee members, space for community members' fliers)</p>										
<p>Who is CRS?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What you can expect from CRS • Mechanism for feedback and complaints 	<p>Project plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start date and end date • Process and criteria for selecting participants • Schedule of activities 											
<p>In this zone X, CRS is working with partner Y and members of the community to implement the program.</p> <p>Key people for the program in zone X are:</p>  <p>Map of the area of intervention:</p> 	<p>Progress since the start of the program</p> <p>What changes has the project made?</p> <p>Before</p>  <p>After</p>  <table border="1"> <tr> <td rowspan="3">Income</td> <td>Potential</td> <td></td> <td>\$3,860/ha</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Final</td> <td></td> <td>\$1,733/ha</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Missed</td> <td></td> <td>\$2,127/ha</td> </tr> </table> <p> = \$500 per hectare (ha)</p>	Income	Potential		\$3,860/ha	Final		\$1,733/ha	Missed		\$2,127/ha	
Income	Potential			\$3,860/ha								
	Final			\$1,733/ha								
	Missed		\$2,127/ha									

Committees, CBOs and other groups

These groups can not only assist with program activities but also share information with the community members and gather feedback. It is essential for the agency and partners to work closely with community groups in order for this relationship to succeed.

How to use groups to spread your message

1. Identify community leaders

Before visiting the community, try to get the contact information of a community leader.

During your first visit to the community, identify known community leaders (e.g., teachers, activists, barbers, shopkeepers). Keep in mind that these are not necessarily the most vocal people in the community. Make observations: Which people seem to be respected by other community members? Who do people listen to during meetings?

2. Establish a committee if one doesn't exist

Explain that there should be a representative from each group so that everyone's voice can be heard. If it is necessary to do so for cultural reasons, create two committees—one for men and one for women.

Ask the community members to either select committee members or give feedback about them to ensure that these people are respected by the community.

3. Discuss mutual expectations

- Explain the project to the committee members.
- Discuss roles and responsibilities with the committee.
- Ask committee members to sign an agreement with CRS or the partner.
- Exchange contact information so you can reach each other more easily.

4. Share information

- When you need to ensure that a message reaches the community, share the message with two or three of the committee members, in person or by phone.
- Share the committee's feedback with the rest of the program's staff. (For example, "Community members are harvesting rice. Now is not a good time to conduct trainings.")



SMS messaging

SMS messaging can be an effective way to quickly share many types of key information with a large number of people. For example, you can use it to

- announce the time and location of a distribution, or other key activities;
- inform people that they have or have not been selected as program participants;
- reassure community members (e.g., if an office closes for security reasons, SMS can explain why and state that CRS hopes to reopen the office when the situation is calmer);
- communicate key CRS values (e.g., that all aid is free).

Messages may be sent via the local phone network or the internet, and both methods are quick to set up.

Method 1: To use the local phone network to send messages, you will need a computer and either a mobile phone or a modem with a local SIM card. The software commonly used for this type of messaging is FrontlineSMS (<http://www.frontlinesms.com/>). Charges per SMS are based on the mobile phone's local network rates.

Method 2: To use internet to send messages, you will need a computer with internet access. Two services are Clickatell (<https://www.clickatell.com/>) and BulkSMS (<http://www.bulksms.com/>). Charges per SMS are based on fixed rates, regardless of country.

Test your SMS system to ensure that you can easily and quickly send a large number of messages. This will enable you to fix glitches *before* you need to send time-sensitive messages. In Haiti, CRS found that internet-based messaging was more effective at sending SMS to thousands of people.

How to send SMS messages

1. Create a database of mobile-phone numbers

Collect mobile numbers as part of program activities.

Set up or expand an existing database to store the numbers. Linking each mobile number to other details about a person (such as whether the person is a program participant, nonparticipant, leader, man or woman) will allow you to send specific messages to certain groups as well as to send certain messages to everyone.

2. Compose the message

Use simple language. Your message might need to be no more than 160 characters long. It will depend on your phone network's requirements.

Make sure that the message is clear. Show it to field staff or community members, and ask questions to see whether they understand.

3. Send the message

Test the message by sending it to one mobile phone. Make sure that there aren't any strange symbols. Then send the final message to the group.

4. Check for responses

People may respond to the SMS. Check for incoming messages. You might receive feedback that should be responded to.

Radio

Radio shows are normally 30–60 minutes long with content that changes regularly. You can use radio in several ways. Here are some examples:

- Talk shows normally have a presenter with guests, phone-in segments, music, competitions and other features to make them engaging and interesting. Each talk show may focus on a different topic and theme.
- Dramas or radio plays can be used to communicate messages through storytelling. The program can develop characters and explore different topics in each show. Normally, programs should create a series of episodes and broadcast each episode once or twice.
- Short radio spots or jingles (3–4 minutes long) can be broadcast during and between shows, at prearranged times.

How to develop material for radio

1. Assess the situation

Assess whether target communities have radios. If they do, how many do they have, and do they use them? Is radio one of the main sources of communication? At what time of day do people listen? Look for differences between men, women and other groups.

Gather data on available radio stations, their current number of listeners and the cost of running shows, spots and jingles.

2. Train a team to develop the material

Work with the radio staff, partners and community leaders to select who should be trained to develop the shows, spots or jingles. Consider what role the community can play and what role CRS needs to take.

Plan and conduct the training with facilitators who have experience in developing material for radio. It usually takes 4–5 days to teach a team how to produce radio material.

During the training, participants should develop the radio show, spot or jingle. Consider how you will encourage people to listen to your broadcasts. For example, you could play popular music, broadcast drama and sketches or hold competitions (and offer prizes).

3. Test the material and the messages

Test the material a few times with community members in different locations. Allow the listeners to ask questions and make recommendations. Make corrections before using the material.

4. Sign contracts with radio stations

Make agreements with different radio stations, specifying

- the days and times when they will run the show, spots or jingle, and
- how long the material will be.

Inform the target communities of the dates and times to listen (for example, by putting up banners in strategic places or by sharing this information via the radio).

5. Go live!

If you are conducting radio talk shows,

- select appropriate people from different communities to participate,
- allow listeners to call in so they can make comments or ask questions,
- ensure that the show's hosts and guests are punctual about arriving at the studio and
- if you are using recorded CDs, ensure that people are available in the studio who have been trained on how to operate the equipment.

If you are using spots or jingles, the radio presenters will play them at prearranged times.

Megaphones

Megaphones are especially useful in crowded settings, such as camps and emergency distribution sites. In all cases, but particularly in a distribution setting, it is important to do several things:

- Develop clear messages. Each team member needs to give the same message to reduce confusion and keep people calm.
- Test the message and the messengers.
- Keep people at the back of the queues informed about what is happening. If people at the back are not kept informed, there is a danger that they will push to the front and compromise people's safety.
- Make sure you have spare batteries.



Examples from the field

Ensure that community committees do not become gatekeepers

In Pakistan, CRS uses community committees as the primary way to share messages with communities and to modify projects. Staff understand the risks of relying on committees. Committee members may not pass on the information to the community, for example, or the information may not reach groups that are more vulnerable. Staff implemented several solutions:

- To clarify the role and expectations of the committee, CRS signed an agreement with the committee members.
- To ensure that messages reach all vulnerable groups, CRS program staff participated in the formation of the committee and confirmed that the committee included representatives from different groups. CRS' team also observed who the community listened to during the initial meeting and ensured they were part of the committee.
- To communicate with the community more quickly, the team contacted more than one person from the committee.
- To minimize the risk that the community would perceive the committee as a “gatekeeper,” CRS shared staff’s phone numbers and set up a dedicated hotline for feedback and complaints.

The team learned that following up with the committee is essential and that they should not be afraid to call the committee more than once with a message. When staff visit the field, they verify that the message has been shared by talking to community members.

A related resource

For guidance about some of the risks associated with overreliance on committees and about reviewing the role and perceptions of an existing committee, see *Camp Committee Assessment—A Tool for Deciding How to Work With Camp Committees*, available at http://www.eshelter-cccmhaiti.info/jl/pdf/CCAT_en_September_2010.pdf.



High levels of mobile phone ownership do not guarantee that SMS will be effective

In 2012, Infoasaid found that despite very high levels of phone ownership in Bangladesh, levels of SMS messaging are extremely low. SMS is impossible for most owners because most handsets do not support Bengali characters.⁵

Related resources

For FrontlineSMS software, user guides and summaries, see <http://www.frontlinesms.com/>.



To determine whether SMS might be suitable for your program, see “Assessing the Mobile Environment: Factors Affecting the Suitability of SMS and Mobile

⁵ “People Talk by Mobile in Bangladesh, but They Don’t Text,” Infoasaid, <http://infoasaid.org/news/people-talk-mobile-bangladesh-they-don-t-text/>.

for Communicating With Disaster-Affected Communities,” available at http://infoasaid.org/sites/infoasaid.org/files/infoasaid_frontline_sms_context_analysis_checklist.pdf.

Find ways to reach people during their daily activities

In Haiti, the International Organization for Migration produced a series of prerecorded dramas on cholera prevention, hurricane preparedness, domestic violence and youth participation. Community radio stations broadcasted these programs and *tap-taps* (the local buses that most Haitians use on a daily basis to travel around the city) played the programs for their passengers. The shows—distributed on discs to participating *tap-tap* drivers—often feature actors discussing common issues and devising solutions. The programs encourage audience participation by offering listeners a small prize for calling a free phone number and answering a set of questions related to the show’s topic.

One hundred fifty *tap-taps* played the programs, and one driver even commented that the shows helped his business: travelers chose his *tap-tap* because the programs gave them something interesting to listen to during their trip.

People will pass along information if it is relevant to their lives

Radio is the cheapest way of sharing messages with communities in Uganda. CRS produced a series of radio talk shows and jingles to support peacebuilding and agriculture projects. Community radio stations broadcasted the programs in the local languages. Many farmers participated in the talk shows. Young people, women and community leaders also took active parts in the talk shows.

CRS found that those with a radio would share what they learned with those that did not have radios. People discussed the shows during community social gatherings. For example, women shared ideas from the talk shows whenever they met in the market, in the streams or in their gardens. Many would travel long distance to take their answers to the radio stations for the show’s competitions.

A related resource

For more information on using radio (and other forms of media), see <http://www.internews.org/>.

