

PROMOTING SAFER BUILDING WORKING GROUP (PSB WG)

# Engagement pathways and MEAL for Promoting Safer Building and Support Self-Recovery

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## Scoping Review

Short Version

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## PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVE

The way that information for safer construction is communicated is key to defining how disaster-affected families can make informed decisions with the best, most appropriate and timely guidance for the reconstruction of their homes. The shelter sector is not only responsible for ensuring that the information provided for safer reconstruction is appropriate in content, but also accessible to - and understood by - communities when it is most relevant and useful. Evidence from shelter programme reports and evaluations suggests that the sector faces a challenge in communicating guidance in the complexity of an emergency. A further challenge is how to monitor the direct and indirect impacts of the diffusion of this guidance through multiple channels. The Promoting Safer Building Working Group (PSB WG) of the Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) is dedicated to better understanding these challenges and to find ways to address them.

This scoping review complements the *Protocol*<sup>1</sup> that develops guidance for Shelter and Settlement IEC resources with an emphasis on understanding HOW we engage with affected communities. It examines what has been documented on knowledge engagement and communication for safer reconstruction, what is known amongst practitioners about what should be done and what is actually being done in practice. This informs potential future steps that the PSB WG could take to overcome the challenges facing the shelter sector in communication and knowledge engagement. The findings of the scoping review draw on a combination of desk research of existing documents, online survey to shelter practitioners, interviews of key informants and a focus group discussion with communication and shelter experts.

## FINDINGS

### A. Literature Review

Most literature was developed by organisations or stakeholders that communicate. Little is known about the **point of view of the beneficiaries** that receive the communicated message. The literature does explore behavioural factors that affect people's decision-making processes, enabling a better informed shelter response that target those influencing construction practices.

Likewise, there are few studies on the **circumstances** under which these engagement strategies are developed and implemented; for example the timing, resources, capacities, skills and team dynamics that have shaped the outcome.

**Guidance for good communication** found in the literature expresses the importance of carrying out an assessment to identify target audiences and their characteristics prior to defining a communication strategy. It states as well that communication expertise, anthropologists and social science methodologies and skills should be a part of knowledge engagement in humanitarian response to support the design of this strategy.

**Timing and timeframes** appear important but are not extensively explored in the literature.

Literature provides an extensive overview of **available media and channel options** to carry out knowledge engagement, which has been summarized in the communication channel analysis<sup>2</sup>, but these are not always used.

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<sup>1</sup> Dalgado, D. (2018), *Informing Choice for Safer Building: A Protocol for Developing Shelter and Settlement Information, Education, Communication (IEC) Resources*, Global Shelter Cluster – Promoting Safer Building Working Group (GSC PSB WG)

<sup>2</sup> Can be found as Annex to this document

Impact studies show that often the **barriers** to better engage with affected people do not lie in the 'what' we want to communicate, but in the 'how' we are doing it. This refers to first the identification of the target audience and their characteristic, adapting the message to be fully understood by the target audience and lastly reaching them through the most effective channels.

Some examples of low scale implementation of engagement strategies were encountered in the shelter sector, but there is little evidence showing how to develop **impact studies** and understand if objectives are being achieved.

## **B. Practitioners' experience**

This review highlights the **skills or roles** needed to design and implement a communication strategy. The reality that respondents face in practice contradicts good communication guidance and recommendations, which are seldom considered when writing a shelter proposal. Most practitioners say they need **more time and specific skills** to meet knowledge engagement needs in a responsible way.

Practitioners highlighted the **importance of assessments** and knowing as much as possible about target audiences to be more effective in developing ways to communicate. This can only be done with time and resources. Assessments or baselines are generally done very quickly with a focus on construction needs and markets. They rarely collect information about communication habits such as what are the commonly used and trusted channels to get information, how do they pass on messages, what are their information needs, what is their daily or seasonal routine, what is their educational level to understand messages, what potential target audiences can be identified, etc.

The **limited funding** for communication activities was another key issue mentioned. Even when a budget line is allocated to software activities, it is usually very limited and rarely used to do an appropriate analysis of previously employed communication practices. Instead it is allocated to implementing basic activities. It is also often the first target area when budgets need to be cut. Coordination between sectors and resource sharing in communication issues has been only little explored.

To overcome the limitations practitioners have in the field, many look for **local capacities** to support the communication activities. Working with local experts who know the context and whose skills and languages enable better representation or shaping of the information being communicated to people should be standard practice.

At the same time, the importance of **engaging** with the target audience in a **participatory way** for the co-design of information, material, activities and solutions is outlined. People need to understand the message easily to avoid indifference or misunderstanding, therefore **adaptation and translation** of messages and deciding the best **way to present the content** using different channels and formats, becomes a key task.

Practitioners identified **build back safer messaging** produced from different countries or other documents providing guidance as a very useful way forward. But lack of material translated into key languages and shared on the GSC website remains a challenge.

To develop a good strategy that has the potential to influence people as and when they begin to rebuild, **time and timing** are crucial. Messaging and technical guidance needs to be disseminated as quickly as possible to avoid a gap between the emergency and recovery phases. **Software and hardware** activities should go hand-in-hand from the beginning.

There is a tendency to provide all information at the same time. This is considered unnecessary, may not be retained by the audience and takes more time to be released. **Information** should be staggered in phases, based on people's demand and simplified if possible. The **frequency of messaging** should also be considered, ensuring continued dialogue.

The **effectiveness of each engagement pathway** (channel) is relative to the context in which it is being applied. In most cases, there was some connection between the methods best understood by practitioners and the methods most frequently used and observed in practice.

- The use of **printed material** is the dominant form of engagement mentioned by practitioners, but its impact is being challenged.
- Positive experiences have been shared regarding the use of **model houses** and **practical trainings**.
- There is a growing interest in **digital and social media**, but so far its application has been very limited.
- Many respondents highlighted the value of **face-to-face** contact, ongoing accompaniment and creative and humorous forms of engagement.
- Another crucial factor is recognition of the importance of **ownership and a sense of empowerment** resulting from any form of knowledge engagement used.

So far, **very few evaluations have been done** in relation to effective engagement pathways. The way that practitioners are currently monitoring knowledge engagement demonstrates that the focus is more on process rather than on impact. Interviewees rarely referred to specific **indicators** to measure to what level the received knowledge is put into place and mostly identified this as a gap. It was repeatedly mentioned that not only quantitative, but also some qualitative indicators should be included in the project's impact framework.

The authors observed a **missing consensus** amongst practitioners on what the aim of communication and knowledge engagement in shelter responses really is. Do we seek to reach the most people, have a perfectly safe house or do we promote informed choice?

## CONCLUSIONS AND GAPS

### BE MORE RELEVANT

*Improved listening to our audience:* Knowledge flow and message definition are mostly decided by organisations. Discussions should be focused on what will interest people at a specific time and be most relevant to their personal experience. This can only be reached doing a good and **participatory assessment** that tries to better understand **information deficits and information needs** of affected people and adapt messages to their reality. First engagement pathways can be defined using 'light-touch' media monitoring to listen to what communities are discussing early on.

### BE BETTER UNDERSTOOD

*Communicate more like your audience:* Using engagement pathways that are **familiar** to the population, could facilitate acceptance. Identifying and understanding used and trusted communication channels will help to connect quickly with communities. The most frequent direction of information dissemination happens between affected individuals and within communities. This **three-way communication**, which considers information exchange dynamics amongst and within communities, has a significant multiplying effect. However, as an opportunity for engagement, it remains little understood, within the shelter sector.

## BE HEARD

*Taking smaller risks and staggering information:* Not all information needs to be communicated at the same time nor does it need to be communicated with the same intensity at all times. Communication strategies should **prioritize messages** that can be communicated in a staggered way. Even a small amount of information and guidance at an early stage, addressing people that have begun to self-recover, can be very helpful and sometimes life-saving. The possibility of taking smaller risks in information dissemination should be explored and promoted, in order to be able to reach communities within shorter time-scales.

## BE MORE CONSISTENT

*Increase relevance of engagement activities through more resources and acknowledgement:* The move to cash-based responses, to process-oriented assistance and the growing work in urban contexts has increased the focus on technical guidance, but the value of software activities has not materialised in practice. Communication and knowledge engagement for humanitarian shelter response continues to be significantly under resourced and not prioritized when looking at budgets, log-frames, skills and time. An increased **acknowledgement of the importance and cost-effectiveness** of knowledge engagement in the shelter sector is needed, giving it **equal weighting** to its complementary hardware components and it should be **budgeted from the start**. Practitioners' knowledge has to be developed in order to better understand the type of engagement pathway options open to them, the potential coverage and the budget required for these different approaches. **Donor education and advocacy**, were identified as a major challenge to reduce this gap.

## BE MORE EFFECTIVE

*Consistencies in collaboration:* Due to limited resources and skilled people available to develop and implement an effective knowledge engagement strategy in the sector, as well as the complexity of some communication technology, it is important to establish **key relationships and collaborations** before and during a response. An option is **mapping** the actors and expertise already working or available at global and field levels, signing **pre-agreements** of collaboration, but also **exploring coordination and resource-sharing with other sectors**. Working with **local experts** should be standard practice to develop and implement a coherent strategy.

## BE MORE ACCOUNTABLE

*Consensus amongst practitioners about sought impact:* It is essential to have some kind of **impact evaluation** about knowledge engagement effectiveness in humanitarian shelter responses. Nevertheless, for some practitioners, the aim of knowledge engagement is to encourage a **change in construction practice**; for others it is to ensure the **informed choice** of affected population. The differences in opinions suggested limited clarity on what evidence practitioners should monitor and evaluate, which would define the **indicators** needed to design a MEAL framework. Figuring out **behaviour determinants** that influence whether or not hazard-resistant practices are applied, can give some guidance on the direction in which measuring impact could be taken.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Get consensus** amongst shelter practitioners on the aim of engagement activities (change in construction practices vs. ensure informed choice?).
- **Increase knowledge and skills** towards communication and engagement methods within the sector at decision and operational level.
  - Enhance shelter software activities allocating enough **resources, skills and time**.
  - Collaborate in a more systematic way with **communication experts** and local capacities.
  - Further research to better understand **community perspectives** on knowledge engagement for promoting safer building to complement this study.
- **Advocate** for more support for engagement initiatives at donor level showing value for money.
- Carry out **Assessments** of communication and engagement habits of affected population before starting a Shelter Programme.
  - As part of the needs assessments, identify **information deficits** of affected people in relation to shelter.
  - Develop **Engagement Strategies** including clear **indicators** on engagement pathways to monitor progress.
  - **Adapt engagement strategy** and use of communication channels to the culture, habits and level of understanding of the affected population.
  - During implementation, limit and **prioritise number of messages** and stagger them over time.
  - Carry out **Impact Evaluations** in relation to the engagement options utilised.

## NEXT STEPS

- Advocate the development and implementation of a consistent and coordinated **communication strategy at Country Shelter Cluster** and also at organisational level during preparedness time, but especially from day one of an emergency, taking into account **enough financial support, skills and time** to follow the *Protocol* and other guidelines.
  - Open up the debate about what we mean by success (**informed choice vs. safer house**) and **reach consensus on impact objectives and develop indicators** on communication in shelter response, so they can begin to be integrated into standard humanitarian shelter practice.
  - **Develop MEAL-tools** for understanding impact of communication in shelter response that can be shared and used in multiple contexts, including impact monitoring guidelines.
  - Include assessment questions that are related to communication and **engagement habits**, to identify preferred and trusted channels and formats.
  - Include questions in the needs assessment that focus on the identification of **information deficits** of affected people in relation to shelter; this will ensure that messages take into account the community perspective and are not simply decreed by organisations.
  - Build relations/network/agreements/MoUs with **communication specialists** to collaborate when necessary at a global scale in times of emergency. Extend the network of contacts initiated by this study.
  - Coordinate with other humanitarian sectors and communication specialists to boost an effective **communication WG across sectors** from the onset of an emergency in order to share resources and coordinate communication efforts.
  - Identify funding for future research into understanding how to **measure “informed decision making”** (of direct and indirect beneficiaries) as well as more research into knowledge engagement

for promoting safer building (especially to **understand community perspectives** which is currently a gap in this study).

- Map actors and initiatives and possible future collaborations in **research on knowledge engagement** for safer (and better) reconstruction. This could be at global, but also at field level.
- Begin **developing advocacy documents**, learning exchanges and communication scenarios to raise awareness amongst shelter practitioners, donors and decision makers about the importance and cost-effectiveness of a good communication strategy in shelter responses.
- Advocate for an **Engagement with Community / Communication Profile** as part of the standard Shelter Coordination Teams (SCT)
- Promote **learning exchanges** between shelter sector practitioners, communication practitioners and other sectors.
- **Finalise communication channel analysis/compendium** (including pros and cons of channels in different contexts, efficiency of combining them and identifying case studies) and develop as a live document to include in resources that support use of protocol. *See Annex 1.*
- Explore how to link engagement strategies with **cross cutting themes** like people with disabilities, gender, protection, etc.
- Organise and **share the most relevant and useful documents** identified during the literature review of this study to be accessible to Shelter Coordination Teams and shelter practitioners on the GSC resources page as reference documents.
- Create link between Humanitarian Library and GSC upcoming library with CDAC network libraries and other platforms for **sharing of resources** on effective communication and raise awareness about these resources
- **Pilot** the Protocol and specific engagement pathways strategies through deployment and secondment to an active Shelter Cluster; **the learning** can support further shelter software improvements.

## Annex 1. Communication Channel Analysis

Type	Engagement pathway	Communication Channel	Format	Best for....	Comments
<b>Digital and Social Media</b>					
<b>A</b>	<b>Use of mass media</b>	Online information	Website, QR, links		Need good access to internet; have to have a good understanding of technologies
			Blog		
		Social Media	Facebook/ Twitter/Instagram	Providing basic information; engaging in a dialogue	Liked by younger, more affluent and urban
		SMS / Whatsapp	Advocacy message	awareness raising	
			Announcement message, early warnings	provide basic information	
		Apps	Online game	younger people	
			Basic information		
		Crowdsourcing	Interactive mapping		Need a quality control system
			Feedback information		Give people a voice, present their own concerns; Need of a Response mechanism if necessary
			Data collection	Assessments	
<b>Printed, Visual and Audio-Visual Mass Media</b>					
<b>A</b>	<b>Use of mass media</b>	Radio	Podcast / show	can be call-in or just talk	related the stories to their own daily lives

			Advertisement	get a specific message through		
			series / drama	entertainment education		
			TV	Programme podcast / show	get a specific message through	reach large audiences and can be cost-effective if used well and targeted carefully
				Advertisement	get a specific message through	likely to be successful if linked to other actions on the ground
			Series / drama		audiences should get involved; should be very contextualized	
			Quiz / competition		Visual communication transcends language	
			Video	Youtube	Advocacy or technical	
		DVD		Advocacy or technical		
		Participatory video			Gives people a voice. It allows them to tell their own stories and present their own concerns, and to share these with other communities	
		<b>B</b>	<b>Visual materials</b>	Printed material	Leaflet / Fliers	Support material to other activities
Poster / Stickers / Banners	Support material to other events				cheap and easy to manage, reaches large number of people; think about visual impact	
Factsheets / Info graphics	Support material for decision makers					
Comic strips						
Brochure / Information cards	Support material to other activities				if inappropriate presentation, low impact	
Calendar / Bookmarks	Support material to other activities				analyse how people interpret and understand it	
Risk / urban maps						
<b>C</b>		Audio/Soundtrack	Megaphone announcements	get a specific message through		

	<b>Sensitisation campaigns to communities</b>		CD, MP3, USB	for people on the move	can be played in public transport or public spaces
			Song, jingle		Reach large audience
		Newspaper (tabloid)	Advert	get a specific message through	Reach large audiences and can be cost-effective if used well and targeted carefully
			Article		Need to be adapted to the audience
			Newsletter		
			Magazines		
<b>Other</b>	Traditional media	Any alternative traditional form of communication (e.g. drums)		Can reach people that are usually been left out	
<b>Public events and activities</b>					
<b>C</b>	<b>Sensitisation campaigns to communities</b>	Event sponsorship	Festivals / Anniversaries		Could be also school events
			Sport contest		
			Painting contest / graffiti		
		Shows	Cinema	Awareness raising	Could be combined with further or previous thematic discussion
			Drama / Theatre / Forum Theatre	Awareness raising	Should be adapted to culture and context; Forum Theatre promotes participation and solution findings
			Puppet show / Clowns	Awareness raising	need to be culturally acceptable
			Storytelling	Awareness raising	can be devised to suit the local situation; can be recorded
			Dance / Performance	Awareness raising	
		Public exhibition	Model house		
Demonstration			e.g. analyse weak point of a building in a practical way		
<b>Interpersonal communication</b>					
<b>D</b>	<b>Focus group conversation with</b>	Face-to-face communication	Community mobilisers	establishing trust and closer relationship	

	<b>individuals, groups, or communities (sensitisation activities)</b>		Amongst the same community members	community empowerment	understand informal communication; work with trusted local leaders
			Exchange visits	community empowerment	e.g. visit and analyse a not affected house; use carefully participants
			Short orientation session pre-distribution	Emergency phase	can be complemented with printed material
			Meetings		
		Complains/Feedback mechanism		participation, empowerment	has to be linked with a good working response mechanism
<b>E</b>	<b>Training and/or workshops</b>	Training / WS	ToT	cascade knowledge	need to have a certain follow up to evaluate reach
			Training of engineers/architects	improve knowledge at decision making level	
			Skilled labour	introduce or improve construction technics	trainings to masons/ carpenters/ builders/...to
			Unskilled labour	sensitization of community	
			Creative workshops	empowerment, learn local ways of doing	
		Technical support	Kiosk / Info points	personalized support; info sharing	
			On-site supervision	personalized support; vulnerable people	
			Model house construction		
			Improve public buildings as model for example		need coordination with other sectors and authorities
			Thematic/technical info sessions (materials, HLP, etc.)		
<b>F</b>	<b>Local influences (government policies,</b>	Meetings	Community meeting (awareness raising)	sensitization of community	Can instigate open discussion and immediate responses; often familiar and trusted mean

	<b>national engineers, municipal regulations)</b>		PASSA	empowerment of community; Recovery phase	should have additional budget to support PoA
			Games	younger people to arise awareness	
			Awareness to a specific influence group		Could be to local leaders, religious leaders, influencers, governments, vendors of construction material, etc.
			Session in schools for children /teachers	building on behaviour change	coordination with other sectors and authorities