



# The CDAC Network: 2016 – 2021<sup>1</sup>

## Leading communication with communities in crisis now and into the future

### Introduction

Over the last five years, the CDAC Network has contributed to huge progress in raising the profile of Communication with Communities (CwC) to a globally-recognised issue of policy and practice. It has a membership of unique breadth with a ‘collaborative, participatory way of working’ and a ‘community... of agencies who knew each other less well just 10 years ago’.<sup>2</sup> Sustained commitment by individuals continues to break new ground in collaborations and good practice.

In this next strategic period, the Network must build on this progress, leveraging the strength and potential agility of its diverse membership and partner base to provide leadership, generate evidence and spark capacity-building at all levels of the global humanitarian system.

This Strategy document is deliberately high-level, intended to provide clear direction from the Board and Membership to the new Director, the Secretariat and the Membership itself, operating through communities of practice (see [The CDAC Network Ecosystem](#) below). It was developed through a participatory drafting process, supported by consultations with both members and non-members, and a Strategy Working Group who set the tone and structure and contributed many hours of comment and drafting.

### Definitions

- **Communication and community engagement** are both with and between communities. Here, they are used to refer to activities where the exchange of information is used to save lives, mitigate risk, enable greater accountability and shape humanitarian response, as well as to support the communication needs of people affected by and at risk of emergencies.

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<sup>1</sup> This Strategy was approved by the CDAC Network Members Council on 30 June 2016

<sup>2</sup> Context Review and Strategy SWOT Analysis, 2016

- We see these activities occurring at **all stages of the response**, from preparedness, through emergency to recovery, and beyond.
- Our focus includes **all humanitarian emergencies**: both sudden-onset and protracted crises, both manmade and natural disasters, including conflict and public health crises.

## Our Context

### Global policy and practice context

*You have the winds of change on your side. In philosophy and approach you are [...] at the very centre of the tectonic shifts that are happening – that need to happen – in the humanitarian world. Above all, the shift that will see affected people and communities in the midst of crisis better able to help themselves to survive and better determine their own future.*

*Nigel Fisher, Keynote Address, CDAC Network Members' Forum, July 2015*

The CDAC Network is at the forefront of a complex area of activity that is now a major focus for humanitarian action. The Sustainable Development Goals, World Humanitarian Summit and the 'Grand Bargain', among other policy initiatives and declarations, have given increased prominence to communicating with communities (CwC). Network Members and others have advocated through these mechanisms to put CwC at the heart of more localised and responsive humanitarian aid. Common standards, coordinated approaches and mechanisms, and participatory decision-making are increasingly recognised as a requirement of effective, accountable provision of humanitarian aid. Major agencies have internalised, and started to act on, the challenge of systematically incorporating communication with and between communities into their operational work. Coordination agencies recognise their role in leading it, and have invested in staffing and advocacy accordingly.

Yet challenges remain: CwC and meaningful accountability remain 'nice-to-have' in much mainstream operational protocol. Crises continue to increase in complexity, challenging the capacity of the sector in all ways, including in communication and community engagement. Pandemics and major movements of people require massive adaptation of existing systems and approaches: new collaborations, and a sea change in the priority and resources given to information, listening and communication. And the response is too often inadequate in this regard: information provision is still limited, and focussed on agency activities, rather than providing people with the information they need to make informed decisions, feel informed and connected, and have meaningful agency in the response itself. Feedback mechanisms often fall short of giving communities a meaningful 'say' in how aid is provided, and may not include a response from agencies either in word, or in deed. Local and national people are too often absent from humanitarian decision-making bodies. Response strategies are not always driven by a thorough understanding of complex social and behavioural drivers. Appropriate, sustainable, successful uses of technology for communication remain the exception, and innovation funding is often poorly targeted and prone to 'pilotitis'. Still more

investment in preparedness is needed, and collaboration and coordination must translate into coherent, joint communication channels that are easier for recipients of aid to navigate.

For the CDAC Network, the next five years are a critical moment to harness the considerable momentum around its core issues and, through members, to translate it into concrete action and lasting change to the power structures, communication imbalances and assumptions that are embedded in the DNA of global humanitarian response.

## The CDAC Network Ecosystem

The CDAC Network is a unique communication-focussed, cross-sector collaboration in the humanitarian sector. It brings together over 30 Member agencies, from international organizations and UN bodies; through international NGOs to national and regional NGOs, all involved in the delivery of humanitarian aid. Others are thematically-focussed or technologically specialist members (H2H or humanitarian-to-humanitarian organizations) with a horizontal offering, such as media and communication, translation, local radio, or low-end technologies. Still others are for-profit or profit-for-purpose organizations. Critically, Members include organisations from low-income, low-infrastructure and risk-prone countries.

This extended network comes with connections to the private sector, civil society groups, communities and national governments. All come together flexibly according to their strengths and through their work, address a recognised gap: to improve communication with and between communities in humanitarian preparedness and response. By their embodiment of the principles and values of the Network, they further its mission.

The Network offers an unprecedented 'platform' through which partners and collaborators can access a wide breadth of organizations. The business models employed by its membership support varying engagement modalities, including partnerships, implementing relationships, and consultancies.

Members of the CDAC Network commit to deliver the Network's agenda by participating in Network activities. Through flexible collaboration, through and beyond the Communities of Practice, members' capacities are literally networked to incubate new approaches and ideas, dramatically magnifying the power and value of those efforts and building greater change than would be possible working alone. The Network also has Secretariat capacity to support Members' change agenda and to contribute to delivery.

The Members' Council is the Network's highest body, which approves and agrees the strategy, elects the Board, appoints the Chairs of Communities of Practice, and holds those bodies to account through the Board. The Board is the Network's quasi-executive body. It provides strategic and financial oversight in accordance with the views and priorities of the Council.

The Network seeks to cultivate a balance between consensus among its diverse membership and collective action in support of its mission.

## Leading change

To achieve the Network's Vision will require Members to lead and participate in transformative change both within themselves and in their environment. This is a complex process, occurring within a complex and dynamic humanitarian environment. Members collaborate in Communities of Practice which take forward key areas of work; jointly fundraise for and carry out collaborative projects, research and policy initiatives; along with independent members, staff the Board; and set the Network's direction through consultation, participation in thematic meetings and working groups and the Annual Members Council.

Communities of practice are a primary mechanism (along with ad hoc Member-led consortia) of strategic implementation, collaboration and coordination, and may be global and thematic, or geographic and local.

## Vision

**A world in which the needs of people affected by humanitarian crises are addressed more effectively and quickly, and they are respected and valued as agents of their own response and recovery.**

## Purpose

**The CDAC Network brings together diverse local, regional and global actors to catalyse communities' ability to connect, access information and have a voice in humanitarian emergencies.**

## Our Common Values

A number of common values guide our behaviour and bind us together beyond our individual brands. These values define what is important to us and how we work together to achieve our vision, mission and strategic aims.

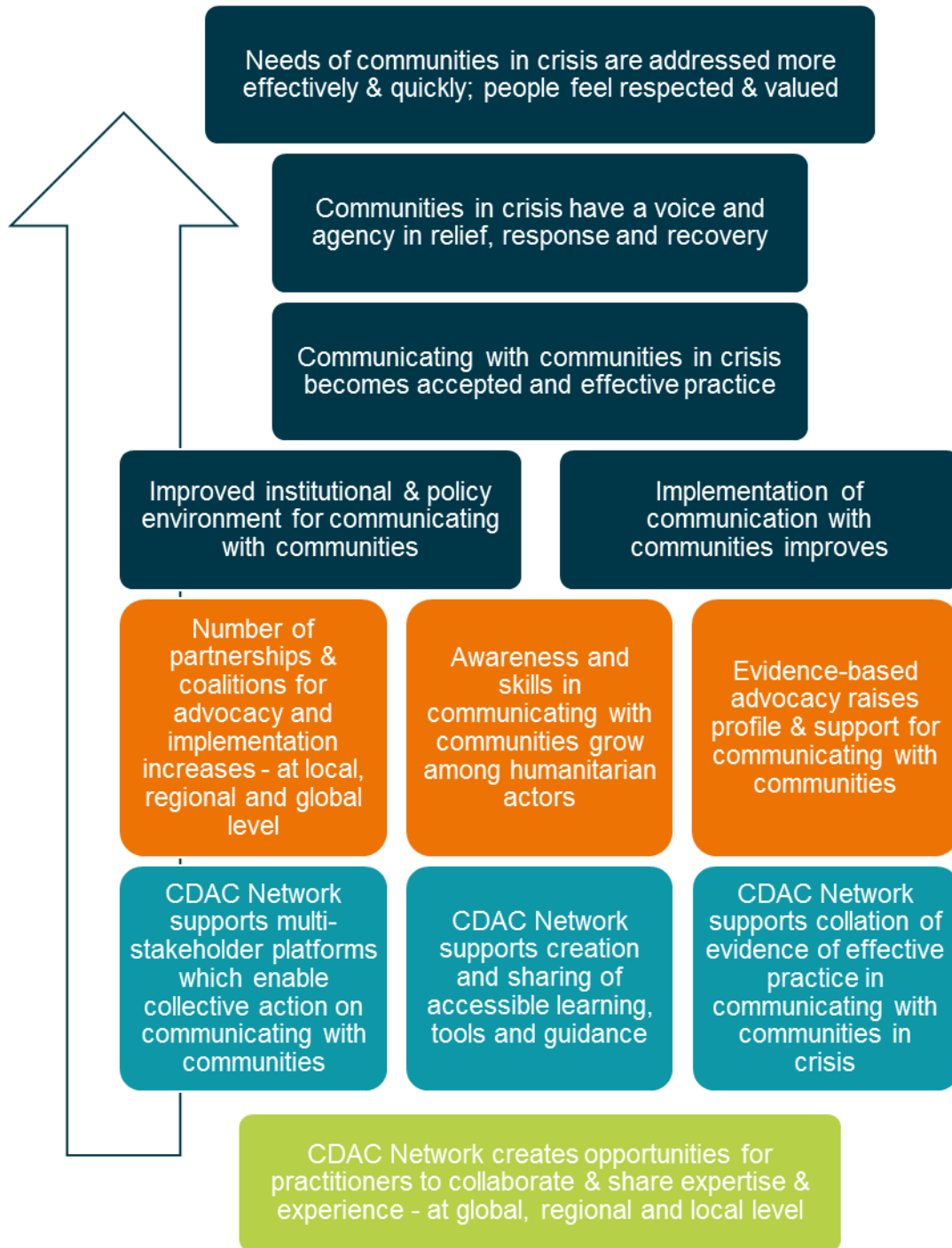
- **Collaboration** – we work together globally to ensure consistency of approach and message across the network and partner together locally to enable communities to have the most effective and appropriate solutions
- **Empowerment** – we demonstrate by our work practice that we are supporting and enabling government and civil society leadership action and decision-making in-country, recognising community members as critical first responders

- **Partnership** – we broker relationships and work together constructively in accordance with the Principles of Partnership<sup>3</sup> in pursuit of the CDAC Network’s vision and purpose. The principles encourage behaviours that promote: *Equality, Transparency, Results-Oriented Approach, Responsibility and Complementarity*
- **Innovation** – we explore and engage with new information and communication technologies, taking risks when needed, being creative and adding value to our work

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<sup>3</sup> The Global Humanitarian Platform (GHP) adopted Principles of Partnership (PoP) in 2007. The GHP was originally set up in 2006 by leaders of 40 humanitarian organisations including NGOs, UN agencies, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the World Bank, and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Source: <https://icvanetwork.org/principles-partnership-statement-commitment>).

# Theory of Change



# Strategic Aims

## 1. Strengthen collaboration for more effective communication and community engagement

- a. **Convening and collaboration** At the local, regional and global level, to organize and facilitate new foras, and create new communities of practice, cross-sector connections, showcase good practice, mainstream inclusive technology approaches, and build capacity
- b. **Support common services** Invest in country-level and inter-agency multi-stakeholder platforms and common services

## 2. Advocate for systemic change to put the voices of communities at the heart of humanitarian preparedness and response

- a. **Community voices** Directly and through better and more inclusive feedback systems, amplify the voices, communication needs and feedback of communities affected by or at risk of crisis to improve policy and practice
- b. **Information** Strengthen the business and ethical case for providing timely and accurate information, utilizing evidence-based advocacy approaches
- c. **Operational change** Through evidence-based advocacy to donors and other gatekeepers, and capacity-building direct to implementers, support the trend towards adaptive programming and effective innovation

## 3. Strengthen learning and support the production of evidence about communication and community engagement

- a. **Building an evidence base** Build the evidence base around Communicating with Communities, the role of communication in crisis, impactful use of appropriate communication technologies and effective institutional and policy change
- b. **Guidance, tools and good practice** Develop, synthesise and curate evidence-based strategic and operational guidance
- c. **Library of resources** Create a searchable, curated library featuring case studies, best practice, and tools in diverse languages
- d. **Capacity development and roster** Develop capacity at the individual and agency level, by highlighting and providing training and peer-to-peer learning opportunities around the world, and maintaining a roster of skilled deployable experts

## 4. Strengthen the Network to ensure robust governance principles and a sustainable financial structure

- a. **Funding and business model** Diversify the funding model for innovation around CwC and for the Network's activity
- b. **Governance** Through a new governance and incorporation model and more diverse governing board, embody and support the development of the Network that can carry out the Strategy
- c. **Secretariat** Members and Board will dynamically and flexibly maintain a Secretariat which can support the network to deliver on its aims, having regard to sustainability and positioning within the global humanitarian system.

### Acknowledgements

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