Rapid needs and damage assessments are being done following any disaster of significant scale. Most of the time however, they do not cover the information needs, communication channel and medium access and availability, feedback and complaints mechanism, and preferences. If and when these kinds of information are included, perspectives of children are often left out or not purposively assessed.

Children, who are considered part of the most vulnerable population, often comprise a significant percentage of the population affected by crisis. Their need for information, communications preferences, their capacities, their perspectives and dispositions need to be respected and considered. Thus, in gaining better understanding of the information and communication landscape of children before and after a disaster, purposive consultation with children using the right tool and by asking the right questions, is critical to ensure relevance and appropriateness of any humanitarian action.

One of the best times to consult with children is during the pre and post crisis assessment phase. The IASC Needs Assessment Task Force suggests a framework that identifies three phases in the emergency assessment processes – these are generally applicable to all emergencies, whether large or smaller scale.

- Phase I – Preliminary scenario definition. This phase should happen within 72 hours of the onset of the emergency and does not include sector-specific questions.
- Phase II – Multi-Cluster/Sector joint assessment. This phase should take place within the first two weeks of the onset and looks into top priority sector issues.
- Phase III – Cluster/Sector-specific assessments. This phase addresses more detailed and in-depth sectors specific questions and takes place during the third and fourth week following the onset of an emergency.

Mapping or assessment of information, communication and accountability needs before a disaster had been realized as an important resource for humanitarian response planning and programming. In the experience of Haiyan Response in the Philippines, an integrated CwC and AAP field level working groups across humanitarian hubs in Eastern and Western Visayas regions established a mechanism for community consultations using the rapid information, communication and accountability assessment tool or RICAA. The tool has evolved and has been used into a pre-crisis mapping tool that has become an integral part of the working group’s minimum preparedness actions for the “Big One” (Earthquake in Metro Manila).
1. Review the pre crisis and post crisis assessment tools that your organization is using.
2. Ensure that the questions correspond to the data that you need. In this case, you are looking at communications landscape, information needs and communication channel preferences.
3. Integrate questions related to information, communication and accountability needs. ICAA is not a standalone tool. It can be flexible and can be integrated to existing assessment tools like RDANA, PDANA, Basic Rapid Assessment Tools and Pre Crisis Mapping tools.
4. Design your process based on the target age group of children, time allocation and context of the community and the methodology you want to use.
5. You may want to check methodologies like focused group discussion, group interview, survey or key informants interview.
6. Remember, your participants are children. Make your process fun and creative and allocate the right amount of time where children can express themselves freely.
7. Always test your tool. See if you are asking the right questions and using the appropriate method.
8. You can use the aid of technology for designing your ICAA tools and for collecting the data from children.
9. Translate the tool in local language or in the language preferred by children.
10. Ensure that you get the right facilitator and documenter.

Example: RICAA Tool (CoP in Community Engagement, TWG, Philippines)