

**COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITIES WORKING GROUP**  
**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**Background to the South Sudan Communicating with Communities (CwC) Working Group:**

Information is a critical component of aid, and globally there is growing acknowledgment of the importance of effective two-way communication with communities in disaster management. In South Sudan – a region prone to devastating recurring violence, population displacement and destitution – community consultation and preparedness systems for communities at risk of disaster has traditionally been subpar. A scoping mission conducted by OCHA in mid-2014<sup>1</sup> found that information sharing and genuine dialogs between service providers and affected or at-risk populations, i.e. communication with communities, existed in piecemeal forms with substantial variation in scope and application. Most partners generally agreed that a forum for actors to:

- (i) seek collaborative opportunities,
- (ii) systematically standardize and disseminate materials for communication,
- (iii) strengthen self-help information and
- (iv) ensure that affected people’s voices are heard

would go a long way in structuring operations, maximizing resource use, minimizing duplication and facilitating rapid communication between agencies and populations.

The creation of a CwC working group (WG) – comprising national and international partners such as NGOs, UN agencies, civil society organizations, media development agencies and eventually government bodies (when suitable and possible) – was identified as the way forward to improve effective delivery of humanitarian assistance to disaster affected communities in South Sudan through predictable, coordinated and resourced two-way communication.

**Definition of CwC**

CwC initiatives aim to support people affected by crisis to access information and to communicate with humanitarian responders and to each other, in order to stay safe, access aid, begin their recovery, and hold humanitarian agencies and government to account. CwC is a matter of respecting and upholding their right to information and to be part of their own recovery.

Of greater importance, CwC should enable affected people and local organizations to lead rather than to follow. This will require a culture and mind-set change on behalf of all those involved in delivering humanitarian assistance in order to place a greater emphasis on listening, engaging, understanding and prioritizing solidarity over charity. Thus CwC holds the promise of empowering local people to have greater autonomy about how they put their lives back together in the aftermath of a crisis.

**CwC Working Group Purpose (Vision)**

*“Maximize the abilities of affected populations and humanitarian and development organizations to prepare for, respond to and recover from disaster by developing a comprehensive and inclusive mechanism for genuine two-way communication and information exchange.”*

**Role and Functions of the CwC Working Group**

Key roles of the CwC WG include:

- Improve effective delivery of humanitarian assistance to disaster affected communities, through predictable, coordinated and resourced two-way communication.

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<sup>1</sup> OCHA Eastern Africa South Sudan Scoping Mission draft report, 23 April - 2 May 2014.

- Improve the institutional arrangements and policy environments for building CwC humanitarian capacity, including information exchange and generating evidence and learning on best approaches, convening key partners, establishing coordination mechanisms.
- Ensuring that communities are involved in identifying their own threats and needs before, during and after emergencies.
- Improve and expand the dialogue between affected populations and the humanitarian community to improve the design and delivery of humanitarian services.

Functions of the working Group include but are not limited to:

- Coordination, research, development of knowledge products
- Capacity development and skill-building activities for members and other stakeholders around CWC, including technical support to partners
- Mobilizing resources to ensure continuity of functions, supporting and monitoring workplans to avoid duplication
- Conducting information needs and access assessments with communities affected by disasters and ensuring their participation in developing materials that help address their needs.
- Designing and supporting innovation around two-way dialogue

### **Membership of the CwC Working Group**

Membership of the WG is open to any entity that works on, contributes to, runs programs related to or expends funding for disaster management in South Sudan. Organisations satisfying any of the criteria mentioned below are eligible for membership:

- Organizations that can represent diverse perspectives and networks on the issue of disaster management and thereby can contribute to framing products and processes for communication with communities.

And/or

- Organizations that have access to communities, either themselves or through their networks, and influence over networks and systems that have the ability to contribute into the CwC Working Group in South Sudan.

All interested organizations need to endorse the spirit, values and principles of the Communication with Communities in South Sudan as well as humanitarian imperatives and principles. Organisations also need to commit active participation in the platform in order to achieve its vision.

Roles/Responsibilities of the WG members include but may not be limited to:

- Actively participate in collaborative activities to achieve the vision and goals of WG. Contributions may include, but are not limited to, direct or indirect funding for the WG, technical expertise, staff time, air time, broadcasting expertise and coordinated public dissemination and advocacy of work produced by WG members.
- Develop coordinated strategic priorities and plans for the WG.
- Share knowledge and information on lessons learned, success stories, case studies, program results related to the CwC activities of the working group.
- Proactively coordinate with other humanitarian actors during disaster/any other emergency response concerning communication with communities.

The WG will be led by a Chair and two co-Chairs (one of which is national body), and supported by a Secretariat comprising one or two individuals. The Chair and co-Chair nominees will be mid-level or senior staff who bring requisite experience, knowledge, and influence to the table.

The Secretariat, Chair and co-Chairs will rotate every 6 months. They will be elected or endorsed by the WG membership and will ideally comprise of a representative from a UN agency and NGO. One of the three positions should always be covered by a National NGO.

The Chair and co-chairs will help:

- Develop coordinated annual activities, MEL and budget for WG in close consultation with the general members, and support member agencies to execute and implement strategic plans, annual activities and budgets in accordance with agreed standard and quality
- Maintain relationship with relevant donors and other emerging partners
- Establish the secretariat and provide enough guidance and support to ensure their effectiveness in the platform.
- Report to the WG general members as appropriate.
- Proactively coordinate with other platforms, stakeholders and agencies when necessary and contribute to the humanitarian system especially in case of disasters and emergency response.
- Host the WG meetings.
- Ensure that CwC WG meeting the discussions and decisions are captured in the minutes appropriately. The Chair may assign someone to take minutes.
- Liaise with the overall cluster system in South Sudan and in particular with the Inter-Cluster Working Group (ICWG)

The Secretariat supports the implementation of its plan and activities. Roles and responsibilities of the Secretariat include:

- Support the WG to organize meetings and facilities (rooms, conference call facilities etc.) in collaboration with Chair and co-Chairs,
- Dissemination of final meeting minutes and proposing draft agenda for the next meetings in collaboration with the Chair and co-Chairs
- Support in the preparation of regular progress reports on the strategic plan, annual activities and expenditure to WG members.
- Keeping and maintaining records online and off-line, at a minimum updating membership list.
- Act as key contact in case of any queries about the WG
- Support emergency response and issues requiring immediate action within the functions and financial resources of WG
- The secretariat will be supported by the DEPP Project Manager in performing the tasks mentioned above or any other task

### **Meetings:**

Meetings will be held monthly, or as called upon by the Chair/co-Chairs and supported by the Secretariat. WG members are welcome to attend. Emergency meetings may be held on an ad hoc basis, if decided by the chair or co-chair and can be requested by any member of the WG.

### Conduct of Business

Decisions requiring majority consensus may be taken at the monthly meetings or via an online vote on a case-by-case basis – as decided by the Chair/co-Chairs. As far as possible, decisions should be based on objective criteria, accountable, efficient, collaborative, and based on clear guidelines. Decisions may be questioned, and the rationale, criteria and processes for decision-making should be transparent. If consensus cannot be established on an important issue, it must be reflected in the meeting minutes, and members should explore creative means of decision-making.

### Minutes & Record Keeping

The Secretariat will take minutes during WG meetings.

### Budgetary provision & financial mechanism

Mobilizing resources for WG activities is the responsibility of all the members. Resources allocated by members ought to align with the strategic priorities of the WG and require endorsement from other members. Decisions requiring majority consensus may be taken at the monthly meetings or via an online vote on a case-by-case basis – as decided by the Chair/co-Chairs. As far as possible, decisions about budgetary provisions and financial mechanisms should be based on objective criteria, accountable, efficient, collaborative, and based on clear guidelines. Decisions may be questioned, and the rationale, criteria and processes for decision-making should be transparent. If consensus cannot be established on an important issue, it must be reflected in the meeting minutes, and members should explore creative means of decision-making.

### **Dissolution of the platform**

If there is a low rate of participation among members, or if the mandate of the platform has been completed or if members no longer feel that the mandate of the platform is relevant for CwC work in South Sudan, members can choose to dissolve the WG.