Situational Analysis of Communication, Community Engagement and Accountability in Burkina Faso

Contents

Purpose of the mission: To undertake a scoping mission of the status of response-wide Communication, Community Engagement and Accountability towards Affected Populations (CCEA) in Burkina Faso and to provide recommendations for a strengthened response.

Purpose of report: We expect the outcome report to provide guidance on what works well and what improvements and efficiencies can be made across the response for the common good in the context of CCEA. The project will create synergies between the various coordination efforts. It will support existing collective platforms and related cluster coordination functions. Where CCEA is not evident, it will provide technical advice on how it can best be integrated. It will also lay the groundwork for perception analysis work by GTS, which is always done as a common good response-wide service to all actors.

Immediate objective 1:	Support the inception and integration of a common services approach to AAP, communication and engagement with communities across coordination efforts
Immediate objective 2:	Help response actors understand immediate needs, gaps and opportunities in AAP

SECTION 1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Burkina Faso is dramatically confronted with the consequences of violence, persistent food insecurity and malnutrition. Five of the thirteen regions of the country are particularly affected, and the humanitarian situation has been steadily deteriorating since 2017 with a peak observed in the second half of 2019. In total, 2.2 million people face crucial unmet needs created by the deterioration of their living conditions; among them more than 918,000 people are in need of services linked to their survival. The closure of health facilities, schools and markets, the displacement of populations, and poor access to WASH services are among other visible impacts of the security and humanitarian crisis in Burkina Faso.[2]

Attacks by armed groups in Burkina Faso have multiplied since the start of 2016, with a further worsening in the second half of 2019. From January to October 2019, more than 800 security incidents were reported, which left several hundred dead and injured, most of them civilians. The deterioration of the security situation and the insufficient response of the Defense and Security Forces (FDS) throughout the national territory have led to the emergence of local security initiatives, in some cases of an ethnic nature. The most illustrative case is the development of self-defense groups commonly known as "Koglwéogo" in the central and northern regions of the country. Given the insecurity in the Sahel, North Central, North and East regions, the proliferation of these local security initiatives could translate into an increase in violence and the likelihood of rights violations.[3]

The humanitarian crisis that Burkina Faso is experiencing is unprecedented in its history and has never been experienced in the sub-region, with the degradation of conditions rapid and drastic. In 2020, it is estimated that 2.2 million people will require humanitarian assistance. This increase of more than 32% compared to 2019 and 57% compared to 2018 is justified by the deterioration of the security environment which impacts the living conditions of the affected populations. The affected population is

---

[2] HNO 2020 draft November 2019.
[3] ibid.

estimated at 5.3 million people living mainly in the Sahel, Center-North, North, East and Boucle du Mouhoun regions. Among those in need, there are 0.9 million people with urgent and severe needs.[4] For more details on the context, see the latest ACAPS Briefing Note, 01 November 2019.[5]

In late October 2019, the Humanitarian Country Team was activated in Burkina Faso, replacing the Humanitarian-Development Country Team as of October 24. The request for OCHA to activate seven clusters followed in late November, to enable dedicated leadership in coordination and information management in support of a focused multi-sector response based on clearly established humanitarian priorities. Cooperation between the Humanitarian Country Team and the Government has remained operational and effective while the country has experienced a rapid surge in humanitarian capacity through the UN agencies and NGOs operating in the field. The rapidly increasing demands on humanitarian actors has not yet been matched with adequate capacity to meet the recognised humanitarian needs, and it should be acknowledged at the time of drafting this report, the coordination structure and related mechanisms are incipient.

In this context, some humanitarian actors expressed concern about the slow movement of some agencies' processes towards the urgent demands of a humanitarian response, and frustration with the pace and 'mindset' of multi-year programming. Others see this as an opportunity to test and pilot the nexus framework: for a transitional cooperation to be built between humanitarian and development actors and indeed for humanitarian capacity to complement development programmes that were established pre-crisis, or to assist those agencies with little or no humanitarian capacity to operationalise those development programmes towards urgent assistance. Some perceived an opportunity in Burkina Faso to *not* make "the same mistakes", or risk destroying or side-lining existing structures and mechanisms that may be positively leveraged for the emergency response.

Humanitarian actors report that they are operating in an increasingly restrictive security environment; insecurity hinders assistance and field teams have had to try to find ways to adapt in order to reach communities in need. There was an observation made on several occasions that many agencies have an operational modality to go *into* communities or locations to distribute aid or undertake monitoring, and to retreat back to hubs such as Kaya, referred to by several of those consulted as 'missions'. Many agencies are relying increasingly on national staff to move in and out of insecure districts as they can travel unobserved or undetected. Some organisations express growing concern about the operating environment in direct relation to armed groups although the specific threats need more analysis, while others with more experience of working in conflict settings are deploying community-based strategies, involving gaining access to vulnerable communities through community leaders. Strategic decision making is taking place in the capital, Ouagadougou. The deepening humanitarian crisis is examined in a report in *The New Humanitarian*, published on December 20, 2019.[6]

For the purpose of this report, it should be noted that the vulnerable affected populations are experiencing a dynamic displacement, and comprise the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people, as well as the host communities who are receiving and integrating them and also those who remain in locations directly affected by insecurity. It should also be noted that there are multiple typologies in terms of where and how IDPs are finding shelter, including living arrangements in organised and structured settlements, in emergency shelters (semi-permanent) facilitated by agencies

---

[4] ibid.
[5] https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20191101_acaps_briefing_note_conflict_in_burkina_faso.pdf
[6] https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2019/12/20/Burkina-Faso-displaced-attacks-extremist

or NGOs, and those living in host community houses (renting or staying as guests), or camping on open land or gardens of houses in towns and villages. Some family groups, or village groups move together, with some individuals staying at one location along the route and potentially waiting to return to places of origin or moving internally within regions. Therefore, the profiles of the affected communities and their relevant needs are diverse, complex and dynamic.

The Burkinabe Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation is known as CONASUR (*Conseil National de Secours d'Urgence et de Réhabilitation, Ministère de l'Action Sociale et de la Solidarité National*). It is the government's ministerial agency focusing on humanitarian and social affairs, with a presence in all regions. While at the national political and strategic level there is cooperation between CONASUR and the HCT, it is important to note that CONASUR has an implementation role and operational relationships with many humanitarian actors. CONASUR is responsible for registering IDPs with the support of UNHCR (using Kobo), selecting distribution points, and providing this information to agencies such as WFP and Red Cross, who are providing urgent assistance. *Action Sociale* is CONASUR's local presence and public face in the field operating in all regions of the country, in association with municipalities (the exact structure is complex).

Finally, the need for additional funding is recognised as a challenge by most humanitarian actors operating in the country. Some expressed optimism that funding will increase in the coming year. ECHO (European Commission European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid) and AFD (Agence Française de Developpement) have a presence in country. OFDA (USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance) currently has a base in neighbouring Niger and Mali, through which some regional programmes are supported to include Burkina Faso. There is an intention to deploy staff jointly representing OFDA and FFP to Burkina Faso in 2020. Many embassies and foreign co-operations have supported development programmes in Burkina Faso, including Switzerland, Sweden, Canada, Germany, Italy, Belgium and Luxembourg.

The following findings and draft recommendations form an initial assessment based on 33 consultations conducted in Burkina Faso between 2 and 18 December 2019. Existing capacity, gaps, opportunities, and promising practise in communication, community engagement and accountability (CCEA) are highlighted within the report. Note that the report refers specifically to the CEA Working Group and Coordinator, in line with the common understanding and reference to that group and role in the coordination architecture. Findings are accompanied by recommendations, technical advice and suggestions.

2. GENERAL FINDINGS, INITIAL ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Coordination and Collaboration on CEA and related decision-making

Coordination of the humanitarian response is increasingly robust, particularly in final months of 2019, with the activation of the clusters (late November 2019). The current draft of the humanitarian coordination architecture includes a thematic Working Group on Community Engagement and Accountability. However this is not yet established**.** Alongside this structural and collective commitment from the HCT, there is recognition across the response that communication, community engagement and accountability are central to effective and responsible implementation of programme goals, and to build access and trust with the affected populations. At the time of drafting there is recognition and informed support for coordinated community engagement and accountability efforts among all the humanitarian actors consulted, especially regarding the expansion of development programmes to respond to the emergency or to build complementary emergency operations.

A Community Engagement and Accountability Working Group is included in the proposed architecture as a cross-cutting *Groupe Thematic* alongside Information Management and Cash Transfers Working Groups. Importantly, it is currently unclear who will lead or coordinate this working group. The necessary technical leadership, tools and resources – both human and financial – to support and strengthen collective CCEA are not present in the country context. Therefore, there is no process in place for ensuring that the working group becomes an effective entity, or that community engagement and accountability are properly resourced. The conclusion is that coordination and collaboration on CEA will require significant strengthening to meet the immediate and medium-term needs of affected people, and to build the existing capacity of humanitarian actors, whether government, I/NGOs, UN agencies, humanitarian or development actors**.**

If the response is to realise the collective commitments of the Grand Bargain, localisation and the participation revolution in particular, the CEA Working Group, as a coordination mechanism, will need to have direct links to the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Humanitarian Country Team. This is necessary to ensure that analysis, feedback and perceptions of affected communities are brought into decision making forums, leading to policy and programme adaption. To support a response-wide CEA approach, it is important that the CEA Working Group coordinator does not sit in an operational cluster, and that s/he instead has an inter-cluster focus. It is recommended therefore that the CEA Coordinator, in the Burkina Faso context, should sit with OCHA and work alongside with NGO co-leadership of the Working Group. Further, the working group is not envisaged as a technical *advisory* mechanism – technical support may be brought in to advise as needed. Rather, the CEA Coordinator sitting within OCHA and the CEA Working Group itself through ICCG should be operationalised to be part of the overall coordination architecture to strengthen communications with communities, community engagement and participation activities, and efforts towards collective accountability.

To achieve this, there must be a coherent, interconnected and agreed HCT approach to communication, community engagement and accountability to affected people, reinforcing HCT commitments on AAP that would provide overarching support for the work in implementing recommendations 3-14 below, which constitute a technical and operational strategy. This approach starts with the Humanitarian Coordinator. It is critical that the HC offers leadership and guidance to ensure those operational

recommendations are undertaken. To materialise this leadership, the following two recommendations address the role of the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Humanitarian Country Team.

Recommendation 1: *The Humanitarian Coordinator initiates and guides the overall HCT commitment and collective approach to Communications, Community Engagement and Accountability to Affected People, providing a direct link to the HPC and response-wide planning, decision-making and adaptive programming.*

Recommendation 2: *The Humanitarian Coordinator seeks to ensure that financial and human resources are allocated to enable a collective approach to Communications, Community Engagement and Accountability to Affected People, by advocating to donors for dedicated funding and to agencies for pooled funding and resources.*

In order to deliver on the operational implementation of identified strategies related to communications, community engagement, participation and accountability commitments, it is recommended that a senior French speaking coordinator be deployed for a minimum of 6 months to establish and lead the coordination and operational relationships of the CEA Working Group and to bring technical skills, tools and best practice along with resources to the response. It should be noted that OCHA will need to seek support from a standby partner to deploy a technical expert to fill the role and advocacy for this from supporting agencies will be required.

Recommendation 3: *A dedicated senior coordinator (French speaking) should be deployed for a minimum of 6 months, positioned within OCHA, to establish and lead the coordination and operational relationships of the CEA Working Group and bring resources and technical expertise to the wider response.*

Recommendation 4: *The CEA Working Group should sit within the overall humanitarian coordination leadership structure, linking with lead operational agencies to provide technical coordination and support via the ICCG.*

Recommendation 5: *Consideration should be given to having the CEA Working Group co-chaired by an NGO representative who has on-the-ground field teams working in the crisis-affected areas and has an established and effective CCEA strategy, in order to build and strengthen the connections between the humanitarian response at both field and strategic decision-making levels.*

Recommendation 6: *Individual agencies, where possible, should deploy CEA technical expertise or increase and enhance their capacity in this area through targeted training.*

Recommendation 7: *The CEA Working Group should investigate the opportunity to build a network of CEA focal points in Kaya and other regional hubs, in order to have a coordination structure and input at field level.*

As it will likely take some time to address the above structural recommendations, the following two immediate actions are recommended as initial practical steps. Each cluster can include information and feedback as a standing agenda item at cluster and ICCG meetings to facilitate the practice of bringing voices of affected communities into these forums. Each cluster can review what it is doing to better address two-way information exchange, feedback and community engagement activities, the conclusion of which can later feed into to a CEA Coordinator-led 4Ws matrix which is continually updated. These recommendations are detailed more specifically in the relevant sections below.

2.2 Communications landscape: language, translation and communication channels

There is some analysis currently available about the communications landscape, literacy and the languages spoken and understood in Burkina Faso. However this requires a more thorough review, particularly as some existing analyses may have changed in the past year due to the crisis. Burkina Faso is considered to sustain one of the most 'free press' contexts in Africa, despite the conflict. A media landscape guide published by IMS in 2015 provides some insight but does not take account of the transition that the country has experienced since then.[7] Deutsche Welle have a presence in the country and produced a profile in May 2019.[8] Needless to say, given the current conflict situation, open communication has become increasingly challenging with sensitivities around communication linked to armed groups and other parties to the conflict.[9] Aside from a general media freedom analysis, some initial findings and observations can be drawn from consultations undertaken by CDAC in December 2019, and the following section also contains some basic findings from a limited assessment undertaken by REACH Initiative.

REACH's assessment in the Centre Nord and Sahel regions of Burkina Faso used data collected through the month of November 2019. The project is funded out of Niger and involves an assessment of a sample of villages across the border region between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Populations in around 150 villages in Burkina Faso were surveyed, as part of a total of 750 villages. The assessment uses an established methodology for 'hard to reach' areas (previously used in Syria and South Sudan) and undertakes surveys at settlement level in the context of dynamic displacement. Teams of enumerators are trained to identify people who have information in the community, and those key informants provide data pertaining to places of origin and displacement. At the time of consultation, REACH had just completed the collection of the first data which included a small section on communication needs. The data has since been analysed and are available online – see in particular the final page of the reports for Sahel and for Centre-Nord regions. Initial findings reveal radio and mobile phones are commonly used sources of information. The most frequently cited reason for not having access to information is security and many people say they need information about humanitarian assistance. In terms of who they trust, they refer to friends and family, and customary leaders. It is also worth noting that REACH intend to continue expanding this project through June 2020. [10]

2.2.1 Language and translation
Language and literacy are a necessary consideration in relation to communicating with affected communities in Burkina Faso, which comprises more than 60 ethnic groups and spoken languages. Affected communities use multiple local languages.

French is the national language. Primary education is conducted exclusively in French; however English is also taught in some secondary schools. Importantly, many people from the more rural and remote areas and settlements that are distant from the bigger cities and towns do not use French to communicate. **Moore** is the most commonly spoken and understood language in Burkina Faso after French. Up to 70% of the population speak or understand it as it originates from the capital

---

[7] https://www.mediasupport.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/publication_BurkinaFaso-ENG-jan2015-final.pdf
[8] https://www.dw.com/en/dw-akademie-in-burkina-faso/a-18549981
[9] See, for example: https://cpj.org/2019/07/burkina-faso-parliament-passes-legal-revisions-cri.php
[10] REACH has funding for this project through to June 2020, from USAID (OFDA) through Niger office, and would expect to expand it to include regular perceptions tracking starting in January 2020 through to June. Expansion would include two other regions, with a base in the north. The Est region is also a concern and a bigger project plan for 2020 would include setting up a base there.

Ouagadougou and surrounding regions. **Dioula** is second biggest language – also spoken in Cote D'Ivoire and Mali. In Burkina Faso it is almost as commonly used as Moore, with up to 60% of the population using it. It is spoken in the South West around the capital of that region, Bobo. **Fulfulde** is the third most commonly spoken language and is used by the Fulani, from the Sahel; it is also commonly used in the wider region that is experiencing the humanitarian crisis. There are other languages to note, however those above are strongly identified as key during the consultations.

In the humanitarian response in Burkina Faso, the prioritisation of translation and interpretation is important, as many people from crisis-affected regions, especially those that are more rural and remote, do not speak French and have limited literacy in any language, and therefore require information to be accessible in multiple languages, and in verbal / audio / visual formats. There may be one or two people within a family or village grouping who can communicate in French or have some literacy skills; and there appear to be some individuals present in the displaced populations and host communities who can speak both French and another local language. While literacy is limited, especially among the displaced communities who have come from rural and regional settings, it was suggested there is some purpose in having written materials available and translated into the several local languages commonly spoken because if information is presented and explained with reference to printed materials in local languages, it may instil some level of trust in the person who is delivering that information. Affording credibility to that person will potentially ensure information is repeated and shared more widely.

The conclusion is that translation and interpretation will be a fundamental element of effective programming and meaningful communications with communities in Burkina Faso. While many people cannot read, some skills and capacity to read and share written information apparently does exist – if limited – in the displaced and crisis-affected communities. It is recommended that the community members who have skills and capacity should be further identified to support the facilitation of humanitarian communications. This requires some further expert assessment and coordination, especially regarding the opportunity to identify individuals who could be trained to support the transmission of information in local languages and possibly form a network of translators and interpreters that humanitarian actors could depend upon. Such an assessment would in turn support and resource the wider humanitarian response in both the shorter and longer term. The CEA Coordinator and Working Group could lead on such an exercise in cooperation with a specialised agency, such as Translators Without Borders and/or the international NGO SIL that operates in Burkina Faso, providing resources on translation, language and literacy.[11]

Recommendation 8: *Agencies should consider going beyond the official language French and take into consideration the range of mother tongue languages; they should use audio/visual medium in all communications with communities; and identify and explore opportunities to include community translators who can facilitate information sharing in the range of local languages used by the affected communities.*

2.2.2 Radio and mobile technology
Radio – both local community and national – is a widely utilised and trusted medium. Radio broadcasts have national reach, and radio is widely perceived as a dependable source of news and information. There are multiple local and national radio channels and broadcasters, and local radio broadcasts take place in various languages. News is broadcast in every region (13) and province and in every regional

---

[11] http://sil-burkina.org/en/content/resources

capital city there is a minimum of one local radio station. The larger radio channels based in the national capital have partnerships with regional radio stations around the country. News and other content are syndicated. Interactive radio programmes on political and social topics are apparently popular with listeners and TV viewers, demonstrating a participatory media culture. The following is an overview gathered from various discussions – note that it is not comprehensive and requires a more thorough review.

1. **Radio Omega**. This is the most popular channel; news hour first in French, second in Moore, then 3x per week in Fulfulde.
2. **Savane FM**. Broadcasts predominantly in Moore, plus some in French, Fulfulde, and partner is **Savane TV**.
3. **Wat FM**. Broadcasts in French, Moore and sometimes Fulfulde, and the corresponding television is **Three TV**.
4. **Burkina Vingt-Quatre**. Owned by the current Minister for Communications and Public Relations between the Government and Parliament.

For the purpose of this report, it is worth making note of *Studio Yafa*, the three-year media initiative currently being undertaken by Fondation Hirondelle in Burkina Faso (2018-2021) which involves daily radio and once-weekly TV broadcasts by a team of trainee journalists and translators. The project is funded by the Swedish and Swiss co-operations, includes the establishment of studios in Ouagadougou and is networked independently with 25 regional community radio stations across the country, including throughout the crisis-affected regions. The five-minute radio programmes are produced daily in French, then translated, recorded and broadcast in four other languages (Moore, Djoula, Fulfulde, Gulmancema). The weekly TV 'debate' is produced in French only. Another element of this project is building a *riseau* – a participating radio network. The directors of the network's member radio stations came together in the first week in December and established a positive cooperation. Fondation Hirondelle also partners on a project involving 'listeners groups' throughout the country – five persons with solar radio, who listen and translate together. This is an initiative of the National Youth Council of Burkina Faso, a grassroots organisation with 4,500 members. Such initiatives and networks could present humanitarian agencies with a real opportunity for collaboration in the immediate term.

The mobile phone network in Burkina Faso has national coverage, although the 3G/data network is not utilised significantly outside the capital and large regional cities and towns. Simple (Nokia) phones are used by much of the community as needed, mainly for calls (not SMS). Family groups on the move would have access to at least one phone, and many people apparently use their phones to listen to local radio via a simple app (*appli)*. Assuming that the 'antennae' for receiving this is part of the headphone cable, listening to radio via the mobile telephone is a solo rather than a group activity.

Several people who were consulted referred to the potential to share information via simple phones carried by community members. This should be taken into account and considered in a further review of the potential use of phones for communications with communities in Burkina Faso. Similarly, the limited literacy and need for information to be provided in audio/visual formats (IVR, not SMS) should remain a consideration. According to one mobile technology specialist working with not profit Viamo – see paragraph below – many people do not open SMS messages and inboxes fill up, causing incoming messages to bounce. Smart phones that can carry data messages – audio visual information shared via WhatsApp for example – may be used by field workers or those based in regional cities, or the capital, but are not commonly used by the wider community. Communities from rural and remote settings are unlikely to own or use smartphones.

A potentially useful model exists around the use of phones to get audio information to communities in Burkina Faso. The not-for-profit enterprise, Viamo, operates national hotlines for various NGOs across West Africa and the Sahel, with a permanent presence in Burkina Faso where they have a partnership with the mobile operator, Orange. With a short code (321) members of the community can access recorded information via a limited number of free calls per person per month. Viamo have partnerships with NGOs such as Fondation Hirondelle, Marie Stopes and others, producing IVR recordings of useful information on health, agriculture, weather, youth, etc. Their clients pay to make content available, at a standard rate of 1,000 USD per message per year.[12]

Regarding the use of mobile phones for communications with affected communities in Burkina Faso, a red flag was raised. Some field workers have expressed concern after observing that communities are 'self-censoring', and sometimes demonstrate caution or fear about receiving or giving information in an obvious way via group gatherings or via mobile phones. This is apparently due to the experience of being threatened or accused of giving information to government authorities. Equally it can be assumed that they may fear that information might be channeled to groups who have previously attacked their own villages and surrounding areas. This requires further investigation and should be considered in relation to any mass communication planning process that may be proposed by government and humanitarian responders.

In conclusion, while affected communities may be tuning in to radio or getting information via phones or other media, these channels do not appear to be clearly recognised, nor effectively utilised by the government, humanitarian actors or development agencies in reaching affected and displaced communities. From this, we may conclude that there is a real and immediate opportunity to improve on communications with affected communities via existing radio and mobile networks or build on and enhance existing information provision initiatives, particularly via radio. A Communications Working Group has been established and is operational with leadership from OCHA and may be an effective forum with which to consult on the implementation of the following recommendations in the absence of a CEA Working Group.

Recommendation 9: *Identify and analyse affected communities' information needs as well as preferred channels of communications and access to information, by embedding a minimum set of key questions within sector-specific and multi-sector needs assessments, in order to ensure the analysis is regularly updated and incorporated into the Humanitarian Needs Overview.*

2.3 Communications with communities, messaging and common messaging

A fundamental challenge to communication with communities lies in reaching those who are affected, as they comprise a complex, mobile and dynamic population. It includes IDPs, host communities, family groups, women, young and elderly people, and those communities or individuals who remain in localities affected by insecurity. IDPs are experiencing a wide range of living conditions, including in organised camps and shelters, and ad hoc camping arrangements on public land, empty public buildings and in the compounds and houses of host communities. Therefore, it is not surprising that access to trusted information currently appears to be predominantly dependent on word of mouth, through persons of agency who have moved with the community, and through people who are identified as connected to sources of information such as government and decisions makers, from within either displaced or host communities.

Trusted sources of information include:

---

[12] https://viamo.io/

1. **Customary chiefs**, the *Chef du village* who, in the IDP camps or in mobile communities might assume the same role of leadership and engagement and liaison with government and humanitarian actors.
2. **Government representatives** at field level (*Action Sociale*) are approached for information as they are an established, known, and an identifiable primary source, however there are reports that information is not reliably available at *Action Sociale*, because personnel may not be present when communities approach, or they don't have access to that needed information themselves.
3. **Some individuals** in IDP communities have emerged as 'accidental leaders' – both men and women who for various reasons have access to information, and the wider community has come to look to them and trust them. They may be IDPs who arrived first, having moved at an earlier date and become established in places of settlement. They tend to be more literate, have a connection with government (*Action Sociale*) or humanitarian agencies, and therefore have more access to information.
4. **Field workers** at distribution points, health facilities, other points of interaction between field teams/humanitarian actors and affected communities.

There does not appear to be effective coordination of information provision, or of validating and sharing messages between agencies. Indeed, it appears that limited specific information is being generated by humanitarian actors to share with communities at this stage. However this needs more investigation at a field level. Further investigation may reveal that there has been an increase in the frequency or scale of information provision by some organisations, or the utilisation of existing information-sharing networks that were established over time through development programmes for the dissemination of messaging around GBV, rights, WASH, hygiene, health, education, etc. In the current context, with agencies in the process of upscaling their operations to respond to the increasing needs of the population and bringing in emergency response teams, existing information channels could be leveraged (if not already) to include humanitarian information at an increased pace/urgency/frequency. In the context of the expanding humanitarian response, messaging may be developed by agencies organically, as outreach and assistance programmes are established or extended, and the need to communicate with communities becomes increasingly apparent.

Best practice demonstrates that accurate information shared in timely manner can significantly improve affected communities' experience of crises and access to assistance, and that to do so requires collective and coordinated approaches to information provision. Conflicting information or the absence of it can be harmful to communities and vulnerable individuals. Therefore a coordinated approach is strongly recommended. If established early, a process for resourcing the above with CWC / CEA tools and systems, and for coordinating common messaging, could benefit programmes, field teams, and, of course, the affected communities themselves. In parallel, community feedback and perceptions monitoring would need to be upscaled to define, validate and update the information provided to communities. Coordination of this would be possible through the CEA Working Group, and common messages would be developed in response to communities' needs, questions and concerns as relayed from communities by agencies and field teams. The feedback component of this effort is further addressed below in section 2.5 on Accountability and Feedback Mechanisms.

An information needs assessment would reveal more useful detail to guide and monitor the efforts in this regard. Such an assessment could be facilitated by organisations with relevant expertise, such as REACH Initiative and Ground Truth Solutions, producing concrete data around communities' current or preferred channels of communication, information needs and perceptions so that information provision

could be more effectively coordinated.[13] It should also be noted that maintaining this type of data collection within existing multi-sector or sector-specific needs assessments is also recommended, to ensure the analysis can be updated regularly, which is especially necessary in Burkina Faso where the context is fluid and dynamic. Information needs assessments should also be grounded in the Humanitarian Program Cycle, with data that is gathered in 2020 contributing to the 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview.

In the meantime, a set of basic messages could be agreed upon through CEA Working Group, or in its absence, the clusters and ICCG and facilitated at field level by agencies with their own budgets and human resources. For more analysis of information capacity and channels of communication, refer to section 2.2 on communication landscape, language and channels.

Recommendation 10: *Identify and analyse affected communities' information needs as well as preferred channels of communications and access to information by embedding a minimum set of key questions within sector-specific and multi-sector needs assessments in order to ensure the analysis is regularly updated and incorporated into the Humanitarian Needs Overview.*

Recommendation 11: *As an immediate measure, humanitarian actors, through the clusters, should investigate opportunities for common messaging to be shared by authorities (Action Sociale), customary leaders, first responders in the community and humanitarian field teams, and distributed through the medium of community radio.*

2.4 Engagement with affected communities

Across the response, multiple efforts are being made by humanitarian actors to engage meaningfully with those communities that they are working to assist. UN agencies and implementing partners, national and international NGOs, all have existing initiatives, strategies and commitments around engaging affected communities. These include focus group discussions, participatory assessments, information sessions, protection monitoring, and post-distribution monitoring or 'sensitization' campaigns that take place at a field level. Currently, these initiatives appear to be designed and implemented on an agency-by-agency, or programme-by-programme basis and are predominantly focused on guiding operational decisions and policy in terms of providing direct aid and assistance. They appear less oriented towards developing more systematic or collective efforts to ensure participation or engage communities in decision-making processes, or to understand their perceptions and views of the humanitarian response. Winning the trust of communities was raised as a concern, particularly in connection to challenges around gaining access to communities, in an operating environment significantly restricted by insecurity. Building trust with the community is an approach that is currently being discussed through the Access Working Group, and it would be important for collective efforts to be consolidated through coordination between the AWG and the CEA Working Group. The connection between community engagement, trust, and access to the affected communities is widely recognised, though the range of technical tools and best practice methods for achieving this may not be familiar to the agency and cluster leads or field teams in the country.

A coordinated approach could be implemented by the CEA Coordinator, with a strategy designed by the Working Group, to build the capacity for effective community engagement. In the meantime, there is a real opportunity to identify and build capacity in the first responders within the affected communities, both in IDP and host communities, and to engage them in participatory decision-making processes. As

---

[13] REACH is currently considering undertaking a Multi Sector Needs Assessment in 2020, with support from OFDA. Inclusion of a section with key indicators on information needs and preferred channels could be discussed with REACH.

previously mentioned, IDPs who moved early are better placed to inform those who arrive afterwards and those who have some established social network or contacts within host communities are naturally looked to by others as a trusted source of accurate information. It is worth noting again that there is an operational modality to go *into* communities or locations to distribute aid or undertake monitoring, and to retreat back to hubs due to insecurity and a restrictive operating environment. Some organisations are currently establishing and expanding community engagement initiatives within host and IDP communities in 'hard to reach' areas. For example, ACTED is establishing outreach into communities and plans to build a local committee structure for community governance, incorporating a referral system. It is a method that ACTED has used in other country contexts where communities are hard to access (currently in Somalia). The Danish Refugee Council has some similar approaches to outreach; including contracting 'community volunteers' (who receive a stipend and some additional benefits from the contract, such as phone credit), to assist with protection monitoring by identifying risks in their communities. Another approach undertaken by DRC is to establish 'community committees.'

In addition, there is a real opportunity to identify and operationalize existing networks, that have been built through longer-term development initiatives in Burkina Faso. Some examples follow; this list is not exhaustive.

1. *Action Sociale* is known and recognised by the community, and currently undertakes the registration process for IDPs. It has a presence in every municipality. It would make sense to activate communications with communities and community engagement initiatives through this network as soon as possible.
2. The Health Ministry (supported by the WHO) have an established network of registered community health workers, who are living in the communities; they often have the experience of working in the health centres that have been forced to close, and consequently moved with the IDPs. CoGes – *Communite de Cogestion de Sante* – is a community structure, with representatives recognised by the government and is comprised of communities within a designated health area.
3. UNICEF have undertaken advocacy work around the rights of children over a number of years, specifically with 100 customary leaders from around the country – who are cited among the most trusted people to go to for information. The group of leaders attended training on advocacy earlier this year and UNICEF maintains an active advocacy with them.
4. UNICEF is also investigating collaboration with the Ministry of Youth about building on an existing database of 'youth ambassadors' around the country.
5. UNHCR has recently conducted the annual participatory assessment with refugees and IDPs (Oct-Nov).
6. The National Red Cross volunteers' network is well established, although there may be a tendency to rely too heavily on them as they have long term presence and credibility in the country.

Undoubtedly, there are many more initiatives and networks like this. It is reasonable to expect national and international NGOs and UN agencies to welcome support and guidance on how to build and leverage networks that they have previously established through development activities, advocacy efforts and via initiatives undertaken in partnership with each other, with civil society and the government. A CEA Coordinator would be able to strengthen such co-ordination, activation and capacity building through bringing training and other resources to agencies working in the field. In the meantime,

some practical steps towards strengthening community engagement could be undertaken by clusters and the ICCG.

Recommendation 12: *Agencies identify and draw on existing networks, participatory processes and capacity in communications, community engagement and accountability from their ongoing development work and these foundations are built upon to establish collaborative approaches and to bring best practice to the response.*

2.5 Accountability and Feedback Mechanisms

Many agencies operating in Burkina Faso have feedback and complaints mechanisms, including those that were established prior to the current crisis to support particular development programmes and projects. As with community engagement initiatives, feedback and complaints collection appears to take place on an agency-by-agency, or programme-by-programme basis. Methods for collecting feedback have included complaints/suggestion boxes, email addresses, hotlines and even postal addresses. There are complaints desks at distribution points and there are mobile outreach teams doing post-distribution monitoring on some programmes. There is a need for more investigation to map and understand the operational capacity of existing feedback mechanisms as part of a more thorough assessment, as well as to ascertain which programmes and agencies are planning to implement feedback and impact assessments or enhanced post distribution monitoring. The following provides an initial snapshot and some examples of existing complaints and feedback mechanisms.

Currently, ECHO funds free hotlines (*lignes vertes*) for WFP, Humanity International, the ICRC and Terre Des Hommes.

The Belgian/Burkinabe Red Cross have a 24-7 hotline that was established to respond to complaints about their own cash assistance programme. The phone number inviting feedback/complaints is printed on the back of the cash vouchers but is not advertised elsewhere. People can make complaints or provide feedback at the cost of a local call. The line is staffed by one person, who speaks multiple languages. Importantly, there is a comprehensive referral process to support the system, with activation of a complaints committee within 24 hours, and standard Red Cross protocols and timeline assigned to the system. Oxfam have a similar hotline, staffed by one person, with the phone on 24-7 though not always attended. Feedback has until now been resolved quickly or locally, but there are reports that this is becoming more complex, particularly in reference to complaints about security issues.

The WFP hotline is available to recipients of their food distribution programme and follows standard protocols that have been used in other responses. People are able to file a complaint by phone, which may be used as a guide for operations, for example regarding the relocation of distribution points. Complaints about precise locations for distribution points were raised by various agencies and led to operational changes. WFP, ICRC and Oxfam all noted that they received complaints that the selection of food distribution points required people to travel 30-40km to pick up a heavy package of food aid (monthly allocation). In addition, some have heard through community consultations that people prefer food vouchers, which they can use to purchase items from local traders as required; these also being located more conveniently and able to be accessed discretely. Adaptation to this is being investigated via procedures for changing the distribution locations and modalities of delivery.

Some consolidated feedback was noted in the Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020, based on systematic monitoring of perceptions of the community via two main sources: protection monitoring, led by UNHCR and implemented by DRC, and post distribution monitoring, particularly with food distributions,

undertaken by WFP and national implementing partners. This feedback is noted as follows: Among people in need, whether IDPs, host communities or vulnerable people who remain in localities affected by insecurity, perceptions remain very mixed. On the one hand, there is hope among IDPs and host communities in view of the presence of humanitarian actors, on the other hand, we are witnessing the appearance of a feeling of dissatisfaction with the aid received. And among the host communities, there has been a feeling of discrimination linked to unequal aid between IDPs and host communities. From the analysis of the information collected within the framework of the hotline made available to assisted persons, post-distribution monitoring reports and informal exchanges with the field actors, the impressions below come back repeatedly:

- Anxiety, fear, trauma

- Sensation of forgetfulness on the part of the authorities

- Insufficient response to meet needs

- Pessimism about returning to normal

- Loss of dignity (girls and women) of hygiene

While efforts at collecting feedback are ongoing or being established or planned by agencies and organisations, there appears to be limited specific effort in place regarding collective and coordinated approach to accountability to affected communities, or the integration and influence of community views and perceptions in the overall humanitarian response. Humanitarian actors consulted were committed to the principles of accountability and transparency, though it is not immediately apparent how and to what extent agencies are ensuring affected communities are informed about the procedures, structures, programmes and criteria used by humanitarian actors, or have access to channels to provide input or perspectives to improve policy and programming.

The integration of accountability commitments to responsive and adaptive programming into the Humanitarian Program Cycle is supported at a strategic level by the HCT, and these commitments are well understood by the cluster leads. Alongside this, there is a general understanding that a CEA Working Group could support the clusters, via the ICCG, to develop response-wide strategies to strengthen accountability to affected people. The necessary leadership on accountability is discussed with recommendations in the first section of this report on collaboration and coordination. However, establishing a common, coordinated accountability framework would require technical expertise to be brought into the country. In this context it should also be acknowledged that consolidated systematic and iterative feedback relies on good systems for data and information management, which are still under development in Burkina Faso, presenting a challenge.

Ground Truth Solutions, with the endorsement of the HCT, proposes to undertake systematic feedback collection, ensuring community views, priorities and perceptions are taken into account in the evolving response in Burkina Faso. The approach will be designed in collaboration with OCHA and HCT members and includes the following three phases:

- systematically collecting the views of affected people on key aspects of the humanitarian program
- analysis of what communities are saying
- providing close support to agencies as they think through the findings and determine how they can act in response

In support of durable solutions, this approach will include efforts to bring the perspectives of local authorities on the way the response is implemented and to ascertain how they can be brought into the process more fully. The approach will build on the model tested by GTS in Chad, using surveys of local authorities and workshops to solicit their perspective and inputs. This work will be cyclical, providing responding agencies and coordinators with the opportunity to demonstrate course correction and adaption, and will feed into overall coordination, as well as collective efforts on AAP. Indicators will be tracked alongside, or as part of, the Humanitarian Response Plan's monitoring framework.

Alongside bringing specific capacity and a 'common service' to the country context, establishing a response-wide systematic feedback and complaints approach that coordinates the feedback collected by agencies may be implemented in a phased way. An interim process could be put in place to ensure that agencies' feedback and complaints, both formal and informal, are channeled to back through coordination and decision-making structures. Cluster leads, through the ICCG, can regularly discuss perceptions, trends or noted changes in data that have been collected and been brought to their attention from the field between meetings. Agencies can agree on minimum standards and key questions for collecting feedback to improve quality and share what is learnt at field level and via agency mechanisms like hotlines. This is a practical step in the absence of a common accountability framework to ensure that complaints and trends in feedback that are gathered by agencies and operational actors are tabled, shared and monitored; and that responsive action, such as referral pathways or appropriate case management are implemented to ensure feedback and complaints do not 'fall through the gaps'.

Safeguarding and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse is understood as a fundamental commitment within the humanitarian response. Individual agencies have PSEA policies and procedures, however there has been no dedicated action to ensure that a coherent, collective and active approach is taken on PSEA. Certainly, no network has been established, nor messaging developed to inform communities about their rights, or processes for reporting and referral. As described above, there is effort by agencies to have complaint mechanisms in place, however it is not yet clear the extent to which there are incidents of exploitation and abuse. A PSEA Advisor is scheduled to arrive in Burkina Faso in January 2020.

Recommendation 13*: As an initial step towards building a collective feedback and complaints response framework, cluster leads, through the ICCG, discuss updates on trends in feedback alongside existing community engagement and participation initiatives through a standing agenda item, to ensure it is considered in agency and response-wide decision-making.*

Recommendation 14: *In cooperation with the Humanitarian Country Team, regular independent community perception surveys should be undertaken by Ground Truth Solutions, providing analysis of trends to ensure they inform response-wide decision making.*

Annex 1: Organisations consulted in Burkina Faso in December 2019

	Organisation	Position
1	OCHA	Head of Office
2	OCHA	HOA Access
3	OCHA	HOA Coordination
4	Independent	Translator/Interpreter
5	UNHCR	Senior Protection Officer
6	OCHA	Head of Sub Office, Kaya
7	WHO	Health Cluster Coordinator
8	Belgian Red Cross	Country Representative
9	UNICEF	Head of Field Operations
10	UNHCR	External Relations
11	UNHCR	Protection Cluster Coordinator
12	IOM	Emergency Coordinator
13	OCHA	IM Officer
14	ACTED	Country Director
15	UNICEF	Cash Expert
16	DG ECHO	Head of Office
17	OHCHR	Senior Human Rights Officer
18	FAO	Emergency Coordinator
19	REACH INITIATIVE	Country Director
20	ECHO	Programme Officer
21	Danish Refugee Council	Protection Coordinator
22	Danish Refugee Council	Head of Programmes
23	Viamo Mobile Company	Country Manager
24	Fondation Hirondelle	Représentant National
25	WFP	Nutrition Cluster Coordinator
26	WFP	Emergency Coordinator
27	WASH Global Cluster	Surge Team
28	UNICEF	WASH Cluster Coordinator
29	OCHA	Communications Officer
30	Oxfam	Country Director
31	Oxfam	Regional Advocacy lead (Dakar)
32	ICRC	Deputy Head of Delegation
33	ICRC	ICRC, EcoSec Officer