MULTI STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM ON COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITIES

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background of the Multi Stakeholder Platform on Communication with Communities:

Communication with Communities (CwC) during disasters is itself an aid. Globally, there is a growing acknowledgment of the critical importance of effective two-way communication with communities in disaster management. Humanitarian aid and communication agencies have formed the [Communication with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC)](#) Network to focus on this aspect of aid. The vision is to co-create a system for effective and consistent communication as an integral part of humanitarian response. Several INGOs operating in Bangladesh and UN agencies are part of this global network, though the network itself has no presence yet in the country. However, a Working Group for Communication with Communities in Emergency (CwCiE) was formed in Bangladesh in 2013 to contribute to building effective two way communication mechanisms. It was chaired by the Department of Disaster Management and convened by UNICEF and BBC Media Action. Several cluster representatives and the Red Crescent Society were among its members. The structure was not formalized and therefore activities remained sporadic, even though it made significant contributions in the disaster management sector in Bangladesh. Based on the experience of the CwCiE working group, key stakeholders from government, UN agencies, national and international NGOs including the Department of Disaster Management agreed on 1st July 2015 to create a Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) to improve effective delivery of humanitarian assistance to disaster affected communities in Bangladesh, through predictable, coordinated and resourced two-way communication.

The MSP will be linked with the following entities for better coordination and effective delivery of services and assistance to affected communities –

   i.   Government
   ii.   Humanitarian Architecture in Bangladesh (Government and UN systems)
   iii.   Voluntary networks such as Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, Fire Service & Civil Defense Urban Volunteers.
   iv.   National and international NGOs working on disaster management.

The MSP on Communication with Communities (CwC) is expected to ensure that there are identified credible sources of information, where information is managed and updated. The MSP will also create and promote trust between communities and be used for effective communication by recognising community voices through reflection on strategies, policies and decision-making processes. The MSP will also put special emphasis on reaching the most vulnerable groups, such as children, women and girls, widows, persons with disabilities, and socially excluded groups as well as use appropriate, inclusive and diverse channels of communication to reach all groups, including the most vulnerable and those with special needs. It will also establish close feedback loops so that communities are aware of this commitment and how such information is used.

1. **Vision**

Maximise the abilities of both communities and organisations - based on an analysis of hazards - to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters by developing a comprehensive and inclusive mechanism for genuine two-way communication and information exchange.

"To achieve this we need to-
- Identify credible sources of information, and ensure that information is preserved, analysed updated and acted upon.
- Create and promote trust between communities, multi-stakeholder platform and other platforms for effective communication with communities.
- Commit to recognising community voices by reflecting them in strategies, policies and decision-making processes. We also need closed feedback loops so that communities are aware of this commitment and the way information is used.
- Use appropriate, inclusive and diverse channels of communication to reach all groups, especially those who are most affected by disaster, and including the most vulnerable and those with special needs, such as children, women and girls, elderly, widows, persons with disabilities and socially excluded groups."

2. **Role & Functions of the Multi Stakeholder Platform**

2.1 "The CwC multi-stakeholder platform should be a strong national network/working group of appropriate Government, U.N., BDRCS, international, national and local NGOs and other relevant organizations, which will collaborate with communities to provide strategic directions to embed CwC in policy, strategy and implementation of humanitarian programmes. It should function for as long as it is required or determined by its members to ensure that coordinated communication with communities is an integral part of humanitarian response. It should secure official recognition and endorsement to ensure its sustainability and influence.

Its key roles should be to:
- Coordinate among members and with other stakeholders including humanitarian architecture on CwC and build capacities to ensure consistent and coordinated communication to prepare for, respond to and recover from disaster or the hazards thereof.
- Advocate and advise stakeholders, including private sector agencies and media, to influence CwC related practices, products and processes
- Facilitate implementation through recognised entities including government, non - government institutions and statutory bodies/programme to facilitate utilization of resources that currently exist and are appropriate.
- Ensure that messages and information are updated, consistent, relevant and accurate as well as developing a database for agencies to obtain information.
- Ensure that CwC is institutionalized by actively engaging with government to incorporate objectives of MSP in SOD."

2.2 "Possible activities of the multi-stakeholder platform should include:

- Coordinate activities of members and other stakeholders

- Conduct research to identify gaps, needs, innovative products and latest practices in order to develop appropriate products and processes
- Generate knowledge products and develop materials, including local and indigenous knowledge
- Develop capacity of:
  - Members to promote conceptual understanding of CwC and build skills. Members, in turn, should develop capacity of partners
  - Other stakeholders, such as private sector agencies involved in communication with communities during disaster
- Mobilise resources to ensure continuity of activities. Responsibility for resource mobilization should be shared among members.
- Support and monitor implementation through government institutions (such as departments of disaster management, agriculture, health, education), statutory bodies and other institutions (both government and non-government)
- Liaise with universities and develop a curriculum on CwC for inclusion in disaster management courses
- Foster private sector engagement for CwC (PPPs, CSR etc)
- Collect information on agency CwC plans (Comms 4Ws + 4W info for discussion during disasters)
- Conduct advocacy with organizations, public policy makers and donor agencies for prioritizing CwC for allocation of resources"

3. **Membership of the Multi stakeholder platform**

3.1 General Membership

Membership of this platform is open to any organisation that works on disaster management in Bangladesh, regularly contributes to the system, runs programmes or expends funds. Government agencies with a mandate for communication with communities in disaster according to the Standing Order on Disaster (SoD) are also expected to be part of this platform. Organisations satisfying any of the following criteria 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 to the CwC working in Bangladesh.

All interested organisations need to endorse the spirit, values and principles of the Communication with Communities in Bangladesh initiative as well as humanitarian imperative and principles. Organisations also need to commit active participation in the platform in order to achieve its vision.

Any organisation meeting the criteria can apply for general membership in the prescribed manner. General membership will be reviewed by the Core Group biannually and membership will expire unless members are participating actively.

3.2 Core Group membership

- The Core Group will consist of nine members, including the Department of Disaster Management (DDM) and one other government agency, two UN agencies, two iNGOs, two National NGOs/CSO working in Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society.

- Membership of the core group (except for the Department of Disaster Management (DDM) and Bangladesh Red Crescent Society) will be decided by the members of each representative group of the MSP as general members. (iNGOs will select the iNGO representative for the core group; UN agencies will select the UN agency for the core group).

- Organisation/s who host funds for MSP but are not a Core Group member shall be the member of the Core Group during their project period in addition to the 9 members mentioned above.
- Membership of the core group will be for one year. After one year of tenure, each member will be reviewed by their respective representative group. Each representative group can renew, review or replace their representation in the core group after one year.

- A core member will maintain its status for one year until:
    - They resign
    - They are unable to perform based on the responsibilities defined above and agreed upon.

4. **Responsibilities**

4.1 General Members will:
- Actively participate in collaborative activities to achieve the vision and goals of MSP, as well as meeting the requirements of the role outlined above
- Develop coordinated strategic priorities and a plan for MSP
- Contribute to the MSP strategic plan and annual activities. Contributions can include direct and indirect funding for the MSP, technical expertise, staff time, air time, broadcasting expertise as well as contribution to coordinated public dissemination.
- Select Core Group Members from their own representative group (i.e. iNGOs will select the iNGO representative for the core group)
- Promote the principles and values of the Platform as well as advocate for CwC
- Share knowledge and information on lessons learned, success stories, case studies, program results related to the work of the Platform
- Proactively coordinate with other humanitarian actors during disaster/any other emergency response concerning communication with communities.
- Follow additional guidelines for disaster and humanitarian response to ensure effectiveness of services and assistance.

Core Group Members:

A member organisation of the core group needs to assign a person as focal point for the core group who can contribute to the decision making process and represent the perspective of the respective representative group. Thus, member organisations of the core group are requested to nominate a mid-level senior staff member with sufficient knowledge and understanding of Communication with Communities. Core Group members have the following responsibilities:

- Develop coordinated annual activities and budget for the MSP in close consultation with general members following strategic priorities and plan
- Support member agencies to execute and implement the strategic plan, annual activities and budget in accordance with agreed standard and quality, as well as implement decisions taken by the core group during meetings
- Drive for required resources and maintain relationships with donor and emerging partners, such as the private sector
- Establish a Secretariat and provide guidance and support to ensure their effectiveness in the platform. The Core Group will work with the Secretariat to review its work and agree on key lessons learnt for better service delivery.
- The Core Group, together with the Secretariat, will ensure that the activities and deliverables of the MSP are carried out properly. A mechanism for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) may be established by the Core Group, as and when appropriate.
- Report back to the MSP general membership as appropriate
- Establish, provide guidance to and interact with the working group and taskforce, if required
- Proactively coordinate with other platforms, stakeholders and agencies when necessary and contribute to the humanitarian system, especially in case of disaster and emergency response
- Brief the Director General, Head of the Agency, Country Director and other key people on a regular basis to ensure institutional support for CwC
- Approve general membership of the platform based on the above criteria and organise meetings, workshops and briefing sessions for general members as well as other stakeholders
- Decide the time and location of Core Group meetings. The location will be rotated among core group members.
- The TORs for the Multi Stakeholder Platform will be reviewed by the Core Group on an annual basis. The review process will be based on specific performance criteria. The core group can seek approval from the general members' meeting for changes to the ToR.

4.3 Chair:

- The Department of Disaster Management (DDM) has agreed to chair the Multi Stakeholder Platform on Communication with Communities. The Director General (DG) of DDM will nominate a senior official (Deputy Secretary or above) as Chair of the Multi Stakeholder Platform.
- The responsibility of the chair will be to ensure that discussions and decisions during the meeting are captured in the minutes appropriately. The chair may assign a suitable person to take the minutes.

- The Chair, in consultation with Core Group, will provide guidance to the Secretariat as necessary between the Core Group meetings.

4.4 <u>Secretariat</u>

The Core Group of the MSP on Communication with Communities will establish a Secretariat to support the implementation of its plan and activities. The role and function of the Secretariat, as well as its composition will be agreed based on the available resources, activities and plan for MSP. There shall be a secretariat among the core group members hosted voluntary basis. In case of availability of the fund Organisation/s who host fund for the platform may support the Secretariat.

If a secretariat is established, it shall maintain its neutrality while supporting the core group.

A key responsibility of the Secretariat is to support and assist the Core Group to deliver its responsibilities. The Secretariat should not be expected to deliver all the work by itself. Roles and responsibilities of the Secretariat include:

- Support the core group to organise meetings and facilities (rooms, conference call facilities etc.) in collaboration with the Chair
- Disseminate final meeting minutes and propose a draft agenda for the next meeting in collaboration with the Chair.
- Support the preparation of regular progress reports on the strategic plan, annual activities and expenditure to the Core Group and General Members especially during funded project.
- Keep and maintain records online and off-line, at a minimum updating the membership list and uploading meeting minutes and progress reports online.
- Act as key contact in case of any queries about the MSP
- Support MSP for disaster response on CwC when necessary
- Other supporting functions as appropriate and agreed by both the Secretariat and core group in advance

5. Decision Making Principles

The following decision making principles must be respected in all the MSP activities following the spirit of MSP formation:

- The decision making process should be transparent
- It should be based on a defined process with which all members agree
- It should be based on criteria that are clear to decision makers and other members
- Decisions should be unbiased and accountable
  - Decisions should be based on objective criteria
  - Decisions can be questioned and the rationale, process and criteria should be explained to all members

- Decision making should be efficient
  - There should be no unnecessary bureaucratic processes for taking decisions
- Decisions should be based on clear and agreed guidelines
  - Guidelines should define the criteria and process as clearly as possible
  - Guidelines should be clear on who should be consulted and how the consultations will feed into collaborative decision making
- Decisions should be taken collaboratively as far as possible, based on alignment with underlying principles, process, rationale and criteria

- If decision making stalls, then decision makers and/or members should creatively explore other means of decision making, without violating the above principles

6. Flexibility of the structure for Multi Stakeholder Platform

The objective of this structure is to facilitate work on Communication with Communities in Bangladesh. As mentioned in the decision making principal, members of the MSP collectively and creatively explore other means of decision making if it gets stuck in the process without violating the decision making principal. However -

- At least 30% of MSP General Members can request for a meeting of the full MSP at any time with a specific agenda if required in the hope that it will help the MSP to resolve any debatable issues in a wider group.
- The quorum of the General Members as whole group for decision making and adopting recommendation will be 55% of general members. If a consensus cannot be established on a decision relating to an important issue, it must be reflected in the meeting minutes as discussion.
- The core group can develop its own working procedure in line with the spirit of this ToR to ensure effectiveness of the platform. It is expected that future core group will respect the working procedure developed collectively and collaboratively in the beginning of the MSP formation (Annex 1), but changes can be made as required.

7. **Dissolution of the platform**

The Core Group together with members will be measured on how well the Multi Stakeholder Platform meets the goals and targets defined in the strategy and annual work plans. If a majority of targets cannot be met in the two-year time period of the work plan and there is a low rate of participation among members, or if the mandate of the platform has been completed, or the members no longer feel the mandate of the platform is relevant for communication with communication work in Bangladesh, the members can decide to dissolve the Platform.

ANNEX 1

WORKING PROCEDURE FOR MULTI STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM

The following procedure is designed to ensure functionality and continuity of the Multi Stakeholder Platform on Communication with Communities in Bangladesh. The core group can review, revise and rearrange any of the procedures to ensure effectiveness of the platform. Such changes should be shared with general members in writing/by email with the general members for their information.

Working Group/Task force

A temporary and/or general working Group/Taskforce can be established for a special purpose or specific issues of the MSP on Communication with Communities. Any specialised organisation and/or individual can be invited into the Working group/taskforce as member where needed.

- Temporary Working Groups/Taskforces can be convened by the core group members, including the general members, to work on specific issues defined by the Core Group. The Working Group remains in operation for the period defined by the Core Group.

- General Working Groups/Taskforces can be convened by core members including the general members to work on specific issues on an ongoing basis. General Working Groups could be convened for the purpose of coordinating issues related to specific sectors or geographical areas agreed upon by the Core Group.

Meetings:

Frequency
- General members will meet regularly once every six months. In addition, a meeting of the full MSP at any time will be organised by the Core Group if at least 30% of the MSP members request such a meeting with a specific agenda and issues to discuss. In the event of a disaster, additional guidelines outlined below will be applicable.
- The core group will meet at least bi-monthly, preferably once every month for smooth delivery of its responsibilities. In case of an emergency, additional guidelines will be applicable based on the needs at the time.
- The working group/taskforce will define their principles for their meeting following the principles of this ToR.

Convocation of meetings

- Regular Meetings: The Chair of the Core Group will call regular meetings (supported by the Secretariat if there is any) for core group in line with the programme of work and following informal consultation with rest of the Core Group members on the suitability of proposed meeting dates. If any of the MSP member, other than the Core Group, want to join the Core

Group meeting as an observer, they must submit a formal request to the Chair. The Chair may accept the request and invite the organisation to join the meeting.
- The chair of the Core Group will call a General Members' meeting once every six months, or more frequently if requested by the members following the principles outlined in the ToR.
- Ad Hoc Meetings: Meetings on issues requiring the urgent review of the work of the Core Group will be organised on an ad hoc basis, if called for by the Chair.

Types of meetings

In the interest of efficient use of time and limiting costs associated with meetings, the Core Group will complement regular meetings as held at a host member site with virtual meetings (i.e. teleconferences and videoconferences) of the Core Group as a whole or its Working Group(s) as necessary.

General Membership meetings will be held face to face and any interested member organisation can host the meeting with prior approval and support of the Core Group. The Core Group (or Secretariat if there is any) will send the invitation to the General Members.

Conduct of Business

- The quorum of the core group for decision making and adopting recommendations will be the presence of a minimum of five (5) core group members. The Chair will seek to achieve consensus for decisions. If this is not achieved, then a majority vote will be sought provided a quorum is represented. (At least five organisations need to be present.) If necessary, the chair will execute his/her casting vote. Where consensus cannot be established on an important issue, it must be reflected in the meeting minutes as discussion. Observers have no voting power.
- The quorum of the General Members as whole group for decision making and adopting recommendations will be 55% of the General Members. If a consensus cannot be established on an important issue, it must be reflected in the meeting minutes as discussion.

Minutes & Record Keeping

Minute-taking of core group meetings will rotate amongst the members. The Secretariat may support the Core Group if required. During the General Members meeting, the Core Group will assign a dedicated member to take the minutes and share it with the Core Group for further approval.

The Chair/other selected members, depending on the subject matter, will review the minutes within one week of the meeting. The Secretariat with the approval of the Chair will circulate the meeting minutes to MSP members no later than two weeks after the meeting.

<u>Budgetary provision & financial mechanism</u>

- Mobilising resources for MSP activities is the responsibility of all the members. Any interested member can lead a specific process in consultation with the Core Group.

- Any member raising money for the MSP should do so in line with the strategic priorities of the platform. Integration of activities from such initiative needs endorsement from both Core Group and General Members.

- Financial mechanisms for such initiatives need to be fully agreed in written between the grant host and the MSP

<u>Reporting</u>

The Core Group provides quarterly operational updates to the General members. The Core Group will support the grant host to ensure that reports to donors on MSP work are accurate and timely.

<u>Transparency and Accountability</u>

Any MSP member agency can ask to be an observer in any Core Group meeting to observe the process only. An observer will not have any right to influence the discussion nor vote in the decision making procedure.

At least 30% of MSP General Member agency can request a meeting of the full MSP at any time.

An annual report on the MSP's work and operations is shared with the wider humanitarian community and published on-line.

The Core Group on behalf of the MSP will establish an appropriate feedback mechanism for its work and assign a designated focal person (or request one from the Secretariat) to provide information and answer appropriate queries.

Additional Guideline:

<u>Operational procedures in a disaster and humanitarian emergency</u>

In case of a humanitarian emergency, the following procedures can be followed to switch from normal time strategic work to operating in a response situation –

- The Chair/any Core Group Member (in case of unavailability of the Chair) can convene a meeting of the MSP in the aftermath of a disaster, if they believe that coordination of communications would help meet humanitarian needs and support affected people.

- The MSP will have two roles in the immediate response to a disaster: (1) to directly deliver, through its members, communication-based response activities and (2) to coordinate communication-based response (including those not being directly delivered by the MSP).

- At the first meeting following a disaster, when it is clear that a communications response is likely, the MSP will select a co-ordinator (from one of the MSP member agencies) who will represent the MSP and help co-ordinate across humanitarian architecture in Bangladesh including, but not limited to, Government and HCTT, Clusters, iNGOs ESC etc.

- The MSP may request additional capacity and joint resources in order to meet co-ordination needs and to assist it to deliver communication-based response activities in Bangladesh.

- The MSP will try to follow the ToR as much as possible – if required, MSP can establish appropriate standard operating procedures (SoP) for a specific context based on the decision making guidelines mentioned above.