Responsive Information Services in Emergencies Toolkit

A set of tools to help frontline responders deliver information as aid for crisis-affected people

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This toolkit and its contents are a culmination of the years-long work of IRC Signpost and Protection and Rule of Law (PRoL) teams who have designed, tested, and improved these approaches and tools. It was developed further through an extensive mapping, compilation, and incorporation of good practices, lessons learned, tools, and approaches from a diverse set of interagency stakeholders who have pioneered the info is aid movement and advocated for the importance of lifesaving information in achieving protection outcomes, accountability, and meaningful, empowered recovery for crisis-affected people.

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Responsive Information Services in Emergencies Program Model

IF CRISIS-AFFECTED PEOPLE HAVE INFORMATION THAT IS…

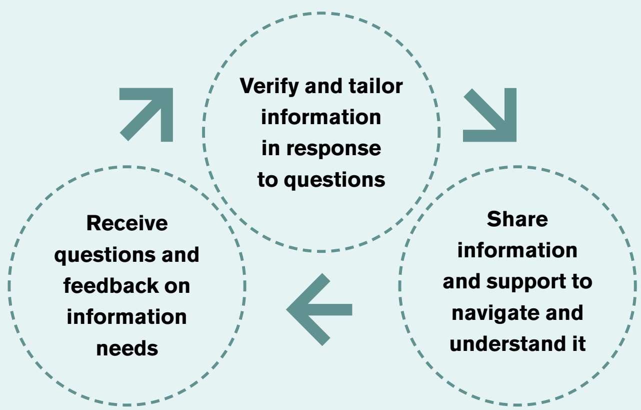
- Responsive to the immediate needs and concerns that they have, focused on what they want to know to realize their priorities for safety and wellbeing
- Relevant to their context and lived realities
- Accurate, verified, trusted
- Accessible though channels or platforms that they prefer and can use, communicated through formats that can be understood

THEN THEY ARE BETTER ABLE TO…

- Make decisions
- Exercise their rights
- Access services
- Stay safe

HOW IT WORKS

Responsive information services continuously listen, adapt, and respond to the information needs that crisis-affected people identify.



KEY INSIGHT

Information is a crucial catalyst of dignified, empowered, meaningful recovery and psychosocial wellbeing in a crisis. Information is power.

Toolkit Overview

SEE FULL TOOLKIT MENU

Foundational learning

Prioritizing and profiling a target audience, determining objectives

Coordination and partnerships

Using two-way and one-way communication channels

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2.2 Assess the communication landscape, information needs, barriers, and preferences

Contents

Toolkit Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Why focus on responsiveness to the information needs of crisis-affected people?

Safe, meaningful access to accurate information is required for crisis-affected people to make choices that reduce exposure to harm, to access services, to know and claim rights, to hold power to account, to participate in decisions that affect them, to locate loved ones, and to identify and define their own path to recovery.[1] Accessing the right information at the right time also has a psychological impact for crisis-affected people, promoting a sense of safety, self-efficacy, connectedness, and hope.[2] In an emergency, information is often identified as a critical need with acute demand from crisis-affected people at all stages of the crisis.[3] Like anyone else, people affected by crisis make decisions based on the best possible information available to them at the time.

However, emergencies can fracture, politicize, or destroy normal information ecosystems, meaning that information often becomes least accessible to those most affected. Lacking safe access to the right information at the right time can exacerbate – or cause – harm. Denial of access to information and disinformation in crises is repeatedly identified as a tool to deprive affected communities of access to public and humanitarian services, fostering negative coping mechanisms, and exacerbating other protection risks such as gender-based violence, discrimination, trafficking, or restriction of movements.[4]

Moreover, access to information is a right in and of itself – it is considered fundamental to the achievement of all human rights, is recognized in international human rights treaties, is a norm of customary international law, and is enshrined in global commitments, such as the SDGs, Grand Bargain, IASC Commitments, and Global Protection Cluster Strategic Commitments.

1. **SDG 16, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions:** Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.[5]
2. **Core Humanitarian Standards on Quality and Accountability:** People and communities can exercise their rights and participate in actions and decisions that affect them.[6]
3. **IASC Commitments on AAP and PSEA:** Adopt agency mechanisms that feed into and support collective and participatory approaches that inform and listen to communities, address feedback and lead to corrective action.[7]
4. **IASC Collective AAP Framework:** Using feedback obtained through actions in Outcome 2, deploy a broad range of information provision systems, leveraging localized collective approaches and using appropriate language and communication channels, to ensure that communities are aware of the objectives of the humanitarian response, its actors, programmes and targeting criteria, as well as where to go to find additional information or to provide feedback and submit complaints.[8]
5. **Global Protection Cluster Strategic Framework, Priority 4:** Developing of inter-agency approaches to responsive, two-way, user-driven information services focused on improved decision-making on matters prioritized by affected populations.[9]

See *Communication is Aid* video explainer here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6bB0y8DdYY

What is the challenge this toolkit responds to?

Despite increasing recognition of the importance of information for crisis-affected people, collective, responsive approaches to information services and community engagement still struggle to take hold in humanitarian responses generally and considerably more so in emergency settings. Though the power of information in dignified and meaningful recovery has been increasingly recognized, meeting information needs has historically not been flagged as a top priority for emergency responders.

When communication-focused work appears in emergency preparedness and response plans (if at all), allocations are typically small, tied to a particular sector, and framed around "sensitization" or awareness raising. Objectives of communication are often focused on improving the efficacy and/or accountability of aid, including through behavior change and increased participation of affected communities.

This creates a dynamic where different sectors have disparate communication lines with affected communities but are not able to address information needs beyond their sector-specific messages. However, the information needs of crisis-affected people can be complex, nuanced, and wide-ranging, and almost always relate to multiple sectors and agencies. Without dedicated, deliberate approaches that enable frontline responders to solicit and respond to more holistic information needs quickly and effectively, generic top-down messaging will often fail to reflect and respond to lived realities.

Communication and community engagement tied to specific sectoral objectives and programs are crucial to the efficacy and accountability of aid.

Still, communication driven by the priorities of aid providers is often insufficient to meet the holistic and dynamic information needs of crisis-affected people.

What is this toolkit for?

Rather than conducting an initial needs assessment and developing a set of key messages to widely broadcast, the RISE program model offers a complimentary approach that invests in *continuous* feedback from communities about their information needs through two-way communication, and building systems that are equipped to provide tailored, timely responses to that feedback. RISE programs first ask crisis-affected people, "what is it that you need to know?" and mobilize resources around finding and communicating the answers to those questions.

The core objective of responsive information services is empowerment of crisis-affected people, by delivering information as a lifesaving resource. This toolkit provides a consolidated set of guidance in designing and implementing mechanisms for ensuring that crisis-affected people have access to the dynamic and holistic information they need in order to make informed decisions about their lives, know and claim their rights, access the services they need, and stay safe. It brings together best practice and operational resources - aligning with existing communication and community engagement and Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) approaches - to propose an operational program model for dedicated, responsive information services in emergency settings.

Communication is a core building block of cross-sectoral emergency response, and these approaches can be leveraged to set up a full-scale information service or to simply make your communication efforts more responsive and effective.

What might the RISE program model compliment, but not always accomplish on its own?

- **Behavior change communication:** Responsive information services can, and often do, have ripple effects on peoples' behaviors. But empowerment is the primary goal of these approaches. You can, for example, measure if the information a client received helped them access a service. But the goal is not to tell people what to do, it is to provide the information they tell us they need to make informed decisions for themselves.

- **Facilitating participation in humanitarian project design for other aid services or developing a Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM).** Responsive information services constantly seek feedback on information needs and how the service itself is meeting those needs, ensuring accountability standards just like any other humanitarian aid service. The questions that affected people ask through a responsive information service can provide useful, continued insight into their priorities and needs and where services or support to meet those needs are lacking, which can have effects on improving humanitarian response. While this feedback can certainly be leveraged for this purpose, the primary goal is to create channels for communication with emergency responders that do not ask anything of clients, but rather are a source of timely, actionable information. This toolkit does not include guidance on developing a CFM, which requires a unique set of protocols and approaches. However, evidence shows that CFMs are often overwhelmed by questions that they are not equipped to answer. For this reason, you might consider how you can integrate responsive information service approaches within a CFM. Otherwise, when a responsive information service receives complaints or feedback about broader humanitarian response, it typically provides information about accessing the established CFM, as it would for any other service.

- **Sole responsibility for ensuring community awareness of the objectives of the humanitarian response, its actors, programs and targeting criteria, expected conduct, etc.** As these are often critical information needs identified by the community in emergencies, a responsive information service in an emergency *will* share information about aid agencies, the principles they adhere to, how they expect staff to behave, the programs they are implementing, and rights when accessing services. Responsive information services are a critical component of commitments to AAP and inextricably strengthen response-wide communication with communities on the humanitarian response. However, a responsive information service is centered around producing and sharing tailored information on topics that crisis-affected people *request*, and they might not always identify these topics as their priority information needs in making decisions for their safety and wellbeing. Therefore, it should be noted that responsive information services are not meant to be a replacement for strong communication and community engagement by sectoral aid responders, but rather are meant to compliment, and fill the gaps which evidence repeatedly shows cannot be met by such efforts alone.

If accountability objectives are a goal, responsive information services can – of course - proactively communicate on these topics. But responsive information services should not lose sight of the importance of responsive information as a lifesaving resource.[10] A *responsive* information service can also support agencies or sectoral teams understand if they need to scale up these AAP/PSEA-focused communication efforts, and partner to do so, if questions are frequently being asked on these topics, for example.

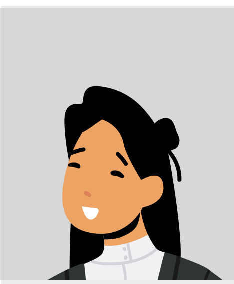
Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is for frontline actors who are preparing for or responding to an emergency, who want to support people affected by crisis to access the useful information they need to make informed choices, know and exercise their rights, access services, and stay safe.

The responsive information services program model was pioneered in the protection sector, but the approaches can be applied to a range of sectors and areas of work. It may have applications to actors working to strengthen Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), Communication with Communities (CWC) or Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE), Media and/or Media Development Actors, or other sectoral actors focused on delivering lifesaving information.

While this toolkit originated from the humanitarian aid space, it is meant to provide a starting point of ideas and tools for a diverse set of potential actors. Whether you are an aid agency, community group, journalist, media outlet, content creator, concerned citizen, or otherwise, this toolkit is meant to support you in rapidly setting up a responsive information service to support people affected by crisis to get the information they need to make decisions for their safety and wellbeing, or strengthening responsiveness of the information you already provide.

Examples



I am a producer for a local radio show. This area is prone to natural disasters, and our team of journalists are well-equipped to provide information to our community in the wake of a disaster. But during the last earthquake, we were not prepared. I am interested in collecting available data on needs and preferences for communication, training my team, building relationships with humanitarian actors, and setting up systems that can be rapidly deployed when an emergency hits to listen to the most pressing information needs and quickly create radio programming to respond to them.

I am part of a community organization responding to a sudden emergency in my country. My team is part of a few WhatsApp groups where people in our community ask questions and share information. We have been trying to share as much information as we can through these groups, but would like to have a more organized approach and better equip ourselves to respond to people who are in emotional distress or facing acute protection concerns.

More examples on the next page →

Examples (Continued)

I am a Protection Coordinator and one of the programs in my portfolio is a Responsive Information Service. Our team is staffed with information production managers, who develop and update informational content, and frontline communicators, who answer questions in the community. The program was set up in an acute emergency phase and I am now looking to strengthen approaches, build new partnerships, demonstrate impact, and find effective ways to talk to donors about the program.

We have a community outreach strategy to share information about livelihood programs and cash assistance but there is nevertheless a lot of frustration in the community and many rumors circulating. I am interested in exploring approaches to be more responsive to the questions and concerns of community members, rather than just sharing generic key messages.

I manage a Client Feedback Mechanism (CFM). While we have good systems for managing client feedback on the services that my organization provides, about half of the communications we receive through the CFM are questions that we aren't currently equipped to provide comprehensive answers for. I am trying to figure out how we might start providing quality responses to these questions, including processes to gather the information, validate it, and keep it up to date.

How to use this toolkit

This guidance document is meant to support users in choosing the methods appropriate for their context and lay out key elements of responsive information design and delivery. This document should support you in understanding core concepts and best practices, and identifying what you need to do.

This guide is organized in three modules, which can be used individually as needed:

Module 1: Getting Started provides the foundational knowledge you need to use the rest of the toolkit. It supports a strong understanding of responsive information services, including core concepts of participation and inclusion and how to apply them.

Module 2: Design provides the guidance and tools you need to assess needs and context and use those findings to shape a strategy to effectively reach your target group, with a specific focus on factors of inclusion, coordination, and strengthening/building on existing local initiatives.

Module 3: Implement provides the guidance and tools you need to implement, manage, monitor, and adapt your responsive information service project with staff who are prepared to answer questions and manage interactions safely and effectively, develop inclusive and responsive content, and map services.

A few things to keep in mind:

You don't need to use everything. Because this toolkit is meant to support a diverse set of actors, you may find that not everything in this toolkit is relevant to you and your goals for responsive information services. Use what is relevant to you.

You don't need to use everything in order. Because this toolkit is also primarily meant to be used in emergencies, users are encouraged to use what they need at the time they need it, rather than viewing this toolkit as a step-by-step guide. You might use part of each module to get started, then return to each module over time as you have more time or capacity, or to strengthen scale or quality of your intervention.

Adapt, adapt, adapt. Responsive information services will never be a one-size-fits all approach. The guidance and tools included here provide a consolidated set of best practices derived from a growing community of practice and evidence base on delivering information as aid to people affected by crisis. This toolkit will provide minimum standards, best practices, ideas, and tools to get you started, but feel empowered to adapt the guidance and tools in this toolkit to meet your needs. View the tools in this toolkit as a starting point and guide to meet your needs, the context, and the resources and time available to you.

Practical tools and training packages support this guide, which are linked to throughout. The set of tools should support you in identifying how to do what you need to do. All tools in this guide are available at: https://rescue.box.com/s/aktx52flj4xvunwdhke50vjhg9l5aq1i

Definitions and Acronyms

<table>
<tr><th>Term</th><th>Definition</th></tr>
<tr><td>Responsive Information Services in Emergencies (RISE)</td><td>Responsive information services deliver information as a form of aid to people affected by crisis. In the same way that frontline responders provide food, shelter, and health services, this toolkit describes how to provide information as a humanitarian service. Information gives people power. It is foundational to protection in emergencies, and is a crucial catalyst of dignified, meaningful recovery in emergencies.

In this toolkit, the term “information” means verified facts on a range of topics that crisis-affected people identify as necessary to make informed decisions, stay safe, access essential services, and claim their rights. These topics are almost always related to multiple sectors and agencies.

To be “responsive” means doing something as a reaction or response to something. In this toolkit, this means that we provide information in reaction to the questions and feedback crisis-affected people share with us about their information needs.

A responsive information service accepts questions from crisis-affected people and directly responds to those questions with the verified, timely, and useful answers they need - centering our clients as the drivers of information production.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Client</td><td>A client is a person for whom frontline responders in emergencies provide, or intend to provide, assistance or services. The IRC uses the term “client” (as opposed to “beneficiary” or “victim”), because it signals our belief that the people we serve have the right to decide what kind of aid and services they need and want. This toolkit will use the term “client” interchangeably with “target audience”, which is a term frequently used in communication to identify who certain information or communication strategies are for.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Communication, Community Engagement, and Accountability (CCEA)</td><td>Other terms may include: “Communication with Communities”, “Community Engagement and Accountability”, “Accountability to Affected Populations”, among others. There are many definitions for these terms, but put simply, CCEA is a way of working in humanitarian action which ensures that crisis-affected people who receive our services are able to exercise their rights to:

1. Participate in the decisions that affect their lives
2. Receive the information they need to make informed choices (including staying connected with each other and the outside world)
3. Be heard if they feel the help they receive is not adequate or has unwelcomed consequences
4. Know what agencies are doing in their communities and how money is being spent

Like any other humanitarian service, community engagement and accountability are mainstreamed into responsive information programs – working to build trust, client satisfaction, and client demand for types and channels of information delivery, specifically through ensuring accountability at every stage of design and implementation.

Responsive information services also inherently contribute to whole-of-response community engagement and accountability through increased access to lifesaving information and community awareness of options, rights, and intersectoral and interagency services. Moreover, the feedback responsive information services collect about information needs can also naturally serve as a rich source of data on community needs and desires. However, the primary purpose of responsive information services is to provide lifesaving information, not to replace transparent communications about the response, complaints and feedback mechanisms, or participation in sectoral program design. Rather, responsive information services amplify, refer to, and strengthen access to such efforts.</td></tr>
</table>

Term	Definition
Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)	Risk communication is the real-time exchange of information, advice and opinions between experts or officials and people who face a hazard or threat to their survival, health, or economic or social wellbeing. The purpose of risk communication is to enable people at risk to make informed decisions to mitigate the effects of a threat (hazard) – such as a disease outbreak – and take protective and preventive measures. Community engagement is the process of developing relationships and structures that engage communities as equal partners in the creation of emergency response solutions that are acceptable and workable for those they impact. The goal of community engagement is to empower communities to confidently share the leadership, planning and implementation of initiatives throughout the health emergency response cycle. Put together, RCCE activities target individuals, social groups/networks and organizations at household and community level to mitigate the risk/impact of outbreaks through preventing exposure, stop transmission and prevent infection, and manage and respond to the social and economic consequences of risk mitigation measures. When implemented in parallel with strong community engagement to form participatory response solutions, responsive information services provide a crucial channel for risk communication, rumor management, and amplifying community capacities.
Protection	At its core, responsive information services are a protection intervention. Protection is defined as “all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law” (i.e. International Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law, International Refugee law). Protection is an objective, legal responsibility, and a multisectoral activity that aims to prevent or stop violations of rights, ensure a remedy to violations, and promote respect for rights and the rule of law. An activity is considered to have a protection outcome when the risk to affected persons is prevented or reduced. The reduction of risks occurs when threats and vulnerability are avoided or minimized and, at the same time, the capacity of affected persons is enhanced.
Inclusion	Inclusion means enabling people from diverse backgrounds and traditionally marginalized communities to fully participate in collective processes, including decision-making and power-sharing while bringing their whole selves into these processes based on equality with others. “Barriers” are the factors that prevent full and equal participation, and “enablers” support participation. This toolkit draws on a rights-based, intersectional approach to inclusion, which means that beyond meeting immediate needs of the affected population, you consider the role of your responsive information service in addressing the root causes of exclusion (and the way multiple forms of discrimination affect groups of people or individuals), rather than the needs resulting from the denial of rights. Information in emergencies has an intrinsic value – when some people have access to information and others don’t, risky power dynamics can arise. This means we focus on ensuring that the channels, formats, and content of the information that we provide are accessible to people – in all their diversity – from the start (universal design). When barriers to access remain, we focus on developing targeted strategies (reasonable accommodations) to implement enabling solutions and mitigate risks of exclusion.
Participation	Participation means involving crisis-affected people in the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring or evaluation of your responsive information service project. Participation forms the core of the responsive information services program model and is uniquely built-in, whereby the information produced is constantly informed by client feedback. Responsive information services are most effective when they are designed, driven, and implemented by the affected community themselves.

Term	Definition
Information Ecosystem	This is how information flows through communities. An information ecosystem encompasses the relationships between a community's information needs, its communication landscape (communication channels, actors, and resources), the production and movement of information through that community, dynamics of access to information, use of information, social trust, and influencers. Understanding the information ecosystem in an emergency context is important to develop effective strategies for responsive information services.
Two-Way Communication	Two-way communication is a conversation between two people or groups, where both can exchange information. This is distinct from one-way communication, where only one person or group is able to share information with the other. Two-way communication forms the basis of responsive information service delivery.
Information Production	Information production describes an "editorial" process, meaning the planning and preparing of material for publication. This toolkit uses the term "information production" to encompass all activities related to the verification, preparation, adaptation, and sharing of information that is responsive, accurate, timely, relevant, actionable, and accessible. This term is linked to others used in this toolkit such as: "content" or "information products." These terms refer to the outputs of this editorial process. Informational content is used to communicate information with clients and to support frontline communicators to respond to client questions.
Frontline Communication	Frontline communication refers to two–way conversations between clients and a responsive information service's team. During these conversations, client questions are answered using verified information, supporting them to navigate available information, helping them to make informed choices, and connecting them with services who can help. Frontline communicators are the beating heart of responsive information services.
Service Mapping	Service mapping encompasses all activities related to collecting and sharing information on available services for crisis-affected people, including developing relationships with service providers and other response actors, gathering important information about accessibility and ensuring consistency, and keeping a mapping of services up to date.

Getting Started

This module provides the foundational knowledge you need to use the rest of the toolkit. It supports a strong understanding of responsive information services, advocacy, and includes core concepts of participation and inclusion and how to apply them.

How to use this module

1.1 Orientation to Responsive Information Services in Emergencies

Familiarize yourself or your team with the responsive information services in emergencies program model and minimum standards, examples of responsive information services, and illustrative guidance on scaling and phasing programming in emergencies.

- **Tool 1.** RISE Onboarding Training

- **Video.** Orientation to Responsive Information Services in Emergencies

1.2 Leadership and Advocacy for Responsive Information Services in Emergencies

Review the evidence that supports this model and develop a strategic advocacy plan for decision makers in your organization.

- **Tool 18.** RISE Strategy and Advocacy Template

1.3 Foundational Concepts for Inclusion

Understand core concepts for rights-based approaches to inclusion, including accessibility and universal design, and reasonable accommodation.

- **Tool 2.** Inclusion Core Concepts Training

1.3.1 Start by identifying barriers and designing to meet accessibility standards from the start.

In everything you do, stop and assess the factors that may prevent a person from having full and equal access and participation in that activity and ensure universal design for accessibility.

1.3.2 If - despite universal design - barriers to access remain, provide reasonable accommodation.

When there are people who may still face difficulties accessing responsive information services, reasonable accommodation should be implemented immediately whilst a more sustainable accessibility solution can be established.

1.4 Foundational Concepts for Participation

Understand core concepts and tips for ensuring crisis-affected people are involved in the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring or evaluation of your responsive information service project.

1.4.1 When capacity, time, and resources are limited, ensure minimum standards for participation.

In the early stages of a response, for smaller or shorter emergencies, with limited community engagement and accountability experience and capacity within your organization, or when there is limited funds and human resources available for the response – focus on taking minimum actions for participation as you use the rest of this toolkit.

1.4.2 When there is more capacity, time, and resources, take advanced actions for participation.

Later in the response, for larger, protracted, or longer emergencies, with strong community engagement and accountability experience and capacity within your organization, or when the response has stronger funding and human resources – in addition to the minimum standards (1.4.1), aim for taking advanced actions for participation as you use the rest of this toolkit.

1.1 Orientation to Responsive Information Services in Emergencies

Learn

Responsive information services can be implemented through different approaches and at varied scale depending on the context, resources, and needs.

At a minimum, a responsive information service meets the following standards (See Figure 1):

1. **A 'two-way' channel for communication:** At least one communication channel where two-way conversations can happen – meaning that people affected by crisis who need information can ask questions, and you can answer those questions using that channel. Responsive information services might also use 'one-way' communication channels to proactively share information on trending information needs.

2. **Continuous data collection and analysis on information needs:** Programs are designed based on evidence of information needs, barriers, and preferences for communication and information production is driven by client feedback. Questions from clients over two-way communication channels are tracked and analyzed – potentially in combination with information needs assessments or other data – to identify frequently asked questions, pressing information needs, and track rumors, with the purpose of informing an iterative informational content production strategy.

3. **Human resources for two-way communication, service mapping, and content production:**

   - Frontline communicators who listen to the questions that clients ask over two-way communication channels and respond to those questions, having conversations to help clients navigate the information you are providing and safely escalating acute protection concerns;
   - Service mapping focal points that map available essential services that clients need information on; and
   - Information production focal points who work on researching the answers to client questions and produce informational content in the formats most appropriate for your context (for example, articles, videos, explainers/FAQ sheets, infographics, videos, radio programs, etc.), both to prepare frontline communicators to respond to the questions that clients ask, and to proactively share information on those topics with your audience.

The scale and quality of responsive information services at the start of a crisis is entirely dependent on existing preparedness, capacity, and resources. There is no one-size-fits-all scaling model, and this may look different for different types of frontline actors using this toolkit and in different types of emergency contexts.

No matter the context, teams should focus on meeting the above minimum standards at the scale and through the approaches which are possible to implement safely and effectively, while working to strengthen inclusion, coordination, and trust. For an illustrative example, see Table 1.

- **Tool 1.** RISE Onboarding Training
- **Video.** Orientation to Responsive Information Services in Emergencies

Figure 1. What does a responsive information service look like?

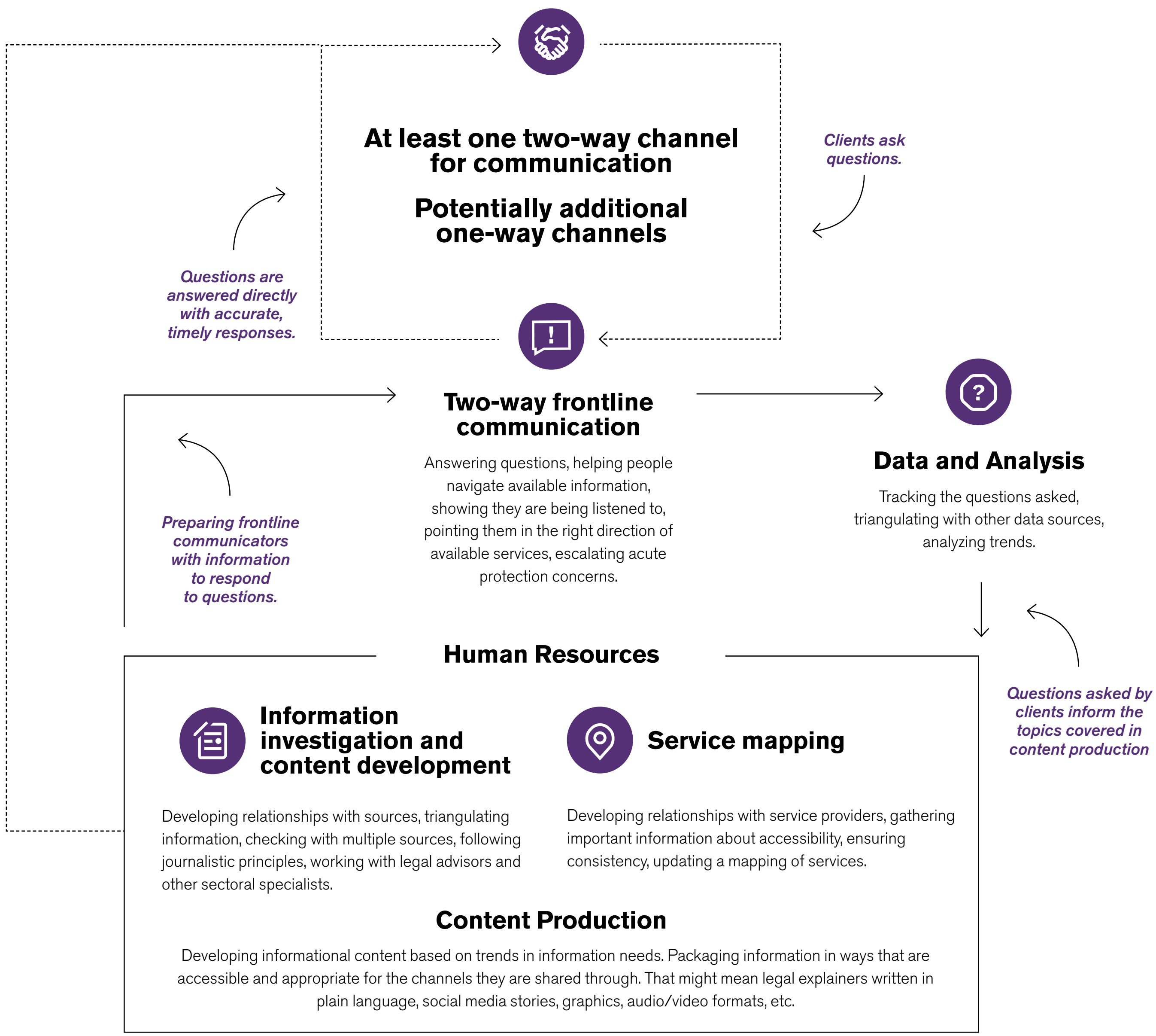


Table 1. Example of strengthening Responsive Information Services in Emergencies

Examples: Responsive information services in emergencies	
Signpost – A global open-consortium for responsive information services led by IRC	Signpost (https://www.signpost.ngo/) is an interagency project that creates digital help centers to empower people impacted by conflict, disasters, poverty and violence. Driven by community needs, these help centers allow clients to access essential services and make informed decisions on the issues that matter most to them. This toolkit draws heavily on approaches, tools, and lessons learned from Signpost. The 2015 humanitarian crisis in Greece in reflected a common humanitarian challenge: a rapid arrival of refugees from multiple locations, speaking multiple languages, traumatized and trying to stay safe in a new environment. While people had arrived with smartphones and their own strategies and capacities, they were met with megaphones, policy jargon, and an information vacuum. Uncoordinated and poorly resourced information and communication models were causing riots, undermining adherence to beneficial policies, heightening distress and exploitation, and sowing distrust and discord between refugee populations and state and humanitarian providers. IRC and Mercy Corps came together to try something new: centering journalism and social media expertise to develop action-oriented, easy to understand information based on trends in client questions and feedback, deploying this information rapidly through clients' preferred communication channels, and hiring refugees themselves to help others navigate the information they needed with empathy, safety, and trust. Signpost also began to define success differently: shifting from whether the information we provided led to a person to access a service we were providing or adopt a behavior we recommended - to whether the information we provided was useful in making informed decisions on the issues that mattered most to clients. Over time, this initiative ended up reaching hundreds of thousands of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers and spread to Italy, Serbia, and Bulgaria. **Examples of Signpost initiatives globally:** • Refugee.Info (https://www.refugee.info/) is a European information service for refugees migrants and asylum seekers. • Gidan Bayani (https://www.facebook.com/GidanBayani) is an information service in Northeast Nigeria serving IDPs and host communities. • ImportaMi (https://www.importami.org/locale-select?target=%2F) helps unaccompanied children across the US to get access to legal services and local resources.
Emergency Communications in Haiti – Radio 1	Prior to the 2010 earthquake, Radio 1 was one of the biggest radio stations in Haiti – one of only a handful that broadcasts nationwide and to the Haitian diaspora. It was also one of the few left largely unscathed by the earthquake: its internet connection, remarkably, survived. One of the first staff members to go back to the station hours after the quake was DJ Carel Pedre, a well-known broadcaster and social media enthusiast with a strong Facebook presence and a Twitter feed followed by thousands. Carel's visibility on social media and radio broadcasts told his listeners that he was alive and the station was functional. As a result, Radio 1 was besieged by listeners wanting to share their stories, tell people they were alive or appeal for information. Carel also began to receive hundreds of messages from across Haiti and overseas on Facebook and Twitter feed, asking for his help to locate friends and family. To respond, Carel set up a multi-platform information system that could consolidate all the incoming requests, attempting to respond to them systematically and sharing the information collected with his broadcast and social media audiences. The system involved four friends with laptops all logged into Carel's Facebook (receiving over 100 messages a day) and Twitter feeds, who compiled requests and responded to messages. This was in addition to a team of producers who interviewed all those arriving at the station (an average of 50 people every hour). Each day, the compiled list of people who were being sought was given to the office courier who went out on his motorbike to search for them. Simultaneously, the teams uploaded this information to Facebook, relayed it on Twitter and broadcast it on air. The whole system ran for several weeks without any support from the international aid effort. (BBC Policy Briefing – Still left in the dark? How people in emergencies use communication to survive – and how humanitarian agencies can help, 2012)

Table 1. Example of strengthening Responsive Information Services in Emergencies

Examples: Responsive information services in emergencies (Continued)	
Sri Lanka Tsunami Call Center – TAFREN	In Sri Lanka, a government body created to coordinate response to the 2004 tsunami - the Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation (TAFREN) - established a call centre in the weeks after the disaster. This operation was outsourced to Bates, a local advertising company with experience in call centres. Over a week, Bates trained a five-person team to answer the most common questions put forward by survivors and advertised through local papers and radio stations. The centre received hundreds of calls, an analysis of which showed that most were related to housing and livelihoods and concerned basic requests for assistance. Although no independent evaluation was carried out, Bates reported they were able to provide satisfactory answers to over three quarters of callers without the need for further referral. The project was funded by the World Bank. (BBC Policy Briefing – Left in the dark, The unmet need for information in humanitarian responses, 2008)
Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh Information Hubs and Information Service Centres – CWC Working Group	From 2017-2019, Bangladesh welcomed nearly 1 million forcibly-displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN), who required immediate, large-scale humanitarian services to address their basic needs. Multi-stakeholder needs assessments identified that the majority of the new arrivals either had little knowledge of how and where to access services or were not aware of services being available or provided to them. They also needed rapid and complete information and knowledge on key lifesaving/priority practices. As part of the response, the members of CwC Working Group ran around 90 "Information Hubs (Info Hub)/Information Service Centre (ISC)" and are operating multi-sectoral information hubs, which aim to provide information to affected people as well as provide a route for community members to ask questions, give feedback or lodge complaints about services they are receiving. (Communication with Communities Working Group Cox's Bazar – Standard Operating Procedures for Information Hub and Information Service Center, 2019)
South Sudan Boda Boda Talk Talk Humanitarian Information Service - Internews	In February 2014 just weeks after the conflict began in South Sudan, Internews launched Boda Boda Talk Talk (BBTT). BBTT is a twice-weekly community-led audio program produced to radio broadcast standards. However, rather than broadcast on the airwaves to a wide public audience, the 25-minute program is recorded onto tools such as USB sticks or SD cards and played on speakers that revolve around the IDP site on the back of quad bikes. This keeps the programs hyper-local to their environment in context, content and geographical reach. The quad bikes visit public Listening Stops where people can hear the programs as they go about their daily business. Programs are also heard by dedicated Community Listening Groups and played at health clinics and other Static Listening sites managed by the community themselves or by partner aid organizations. The BBTT-HIS is made by Community Correspondents recruited, trained and mentored from the displaced communities themselves, by skilled Humanitarian Journalism Trainers. This ensures that the language of vital humanitarian information is effectively communicated, and that the content is accurate and relevant. Information Officers also recruited from the displaced community not only monitor the quality of the output as measured by the audience of the displaced population, but they also keep their eyes and ears to the ground to ensure a wide spectrum of community voices influence new upcoming program content. BBTT-HIS Community Correspondents work like Citizen Journalists; they create engaging content by gathering voices, questions and concerns from the community about the humanitarian aid response – turning them into features and stories. (Internews South Sudan Humanitarian Learning Collection – Boda Boda Talk Talk Module, 2017)

1.2 Leadership and Advocacy for Responsive Information Services in Emergencies

Learn

A key barrier to delivering responsive, inclusive, timely information services in emergencies is that it is often not considered a top priority amongst other humanitarian services by decisionmakers, which makes it so adequate preparedness actions are not taken and resources are not allocated when an emergency strikes.

Adapted from CDAC How to Guide for Leaders and Responders, Section Five[11]

Leaders of organisations are critical to ensuring that community engagement is timely and sustainable. Only they can ensure that teams have the human capacity, time, funding and space needed to properly mainstream it. Strong leadership is required to ensure that communication and community engagement evolves from an 'add on' to a nonnegotiable part of how we work.

- Identify the framework. Identify existing policies, guidance, plans and values in your organization that are enablers for communication and community engagement and use these as frameworks for suggesting new approaches and activities. Lobby for inclusion where they are missing from policies, guidance and protocols – especially for emergency preparedness.
- Create awareness. Start a conversation with colleagues and collaborators about what more could be done to champion – prepare, budget, and coordinate for - community participation in meeting information needs in crisis. Ask for community engagement to be included as a standing agenda item for meetings, strategic and operational planning, and reviews. Get your manager and colleagues on board and convey shared messages.
- Share information and success stories with colleagues and collaborators. What are the benefits to the organization and collective humanitarian response? How does it help to implement organizational or global commitments like the Core Humanitarian Standard, IASC Commitments to AAP, and Protection Frameworks? What has interested you in doing more about communication and community engagement? You could do this in meetings, in newsletters or by hosting an event or training.

- IRC. (2020). An Evidence Review of the Signpost Project, Empowering Through Responsive Information.
- BBC Media Action. (2012). Still Left in the Dark? How people in emergencies use communication to survive – and how humanitarian agencies can help.
- CDAC. (2017). Policy Paper. The Role of Collective Platforms, Services, and Tools to support Communication and Community Engagement in Humanitarian Action.
- CDAC. (2019). Collective Communication and Community Engagement in humanitarian action, How to Guide for Leaders and Responders. Pg 7-8.
- BBC Media Action. (2015). Humanitarian Broadcasting In Emergencies: A Synthesis Of Evaluation Findings.
- Harvard Humanitarian Initiative. (2017). The Signal Code: A Human Rights Approach to Information During Crisis and Ethical Obligations for Humanitarian Information Activities

1.3 Foundational Concepts for Inclusion

Learn

Module 1.3 is adapted from the [IRC Inclusive Client Responsiveness Toolkit.](#)[12]

Inclusive responsive information services work to identify and remove systemic barriers (and the risks associated with those barriers) when providing assistance. This means promoting equal rights and participation of the clients you are targeting in a community.

Key concepts to understand:

- **Inclusion** means enabling people from diverse backgrounds and traditionally marginalized communities to fully participate in collective processes, including decision-making and power-sharing while bringing their whole selves into these processes based on equality with others.
- **A 'rights-based' approach** means that beyond meeting immediate needs of the affected population, you consider the role of your responsive information service in addressing the root causes of exclusion, rather than the needs resulting from the denial of rights. This is distinct from a 'charity-based' approach, which pities or aims to 'help' people who are seen as dependent or helpless. Instead, a rights-based mindset instead says, 'society is the problem', and focuses on removing barriers that block inclusion, rather than 'helping' people who are excluded.
- **Intersectionality** is the way multiple forms of discrimination affect groups of people or individuals. For example, the discrimination of women based on sex and gender is inextricably linked with oppression and marginalization based on other discriminatory systems such as those based on race, ethnicity, religion or belief, health, status, age, class, caste, sexual orientation and gender identity.
- **Barriers** are factors that prevent a person from having full and equal access and participation in society. Barriers must be identified from the start to ensure accessibility. There are three types of barriers you should consider: environmental (physical and informational), attitudes, and institutions (including financial). See Table 2 for more information on barriers.
- **Enablers** are factors that can be put in place to support participation in society. Examples of enablers may include providing information through/in accessible channels, formats, languages and locations; raising awareness of staff on the in inherent capacities of persons with disabilities; ensuring that a variety of options are available to access the information service; and ensuring an appropriate and accessible follow-up to the questions received from clients.
- **Universal design** means designing services, communication, and information to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. Accessibility is a precondition to inclusion. A universally designed environment allows participation of people with disabilities, older adults, and other marginalized groups. Prioritizing universal design can seem like a significant constraint but will ultimately benefit all clients and is the cheapest approach – retrofitting accessibility is always more expensive.
- **Reasonable accommodations** are solutions that facilitate accessibility when a person may still face difficulties or specific barriers, despite universal design, to access services. A reasonable accommodation should be effective (the solution is tangible and durable), independent (the client does not require assistance of a third person), safe (does not put the client in danger), and facilitate equality (the service you provide or activity you are conducting can be used easily and without hindrance). See Table 3 for more information on reasonable accommodation.

● **Tool 2.** Inclusion Core Concepts Training

Table 2. Types of Barriers

Reference: IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action

Type	Description
Physical	Physical obstacles in the natural or built environment that prevent access and affect opportunities for participation. This also includes lack of services or problems with service delivery.
Informational	Inaccessible communication systems. For example, they do not allow persons with disabilities to access information or knowledge and thereby restrict their opportunities to participate.
Attitudinal	Negative attitudes that may be rooted in cultural or religious beliefs, hatred, unequal distribution of power, discrimination, prejudice, ignorance, stigma and bias, among other reasons. Attitudinal barriers are at the root of discrimination and exclusion.
Institutional	Laws, policies, strategies or institutionalized practices that discriminate against persons with disabilities or prevent them from participating in society.

Table 3. The Seven Principles of Universal Design

Reference: CBM Policy on Accessibility

Type	Description
Equitable use	The design is useful and marketable (make the design appealing to all users) to a wide range of clients.
Flexibility in use	The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
Simple and intuitive use	Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the client's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
Perceptible information	The design communicates necessary information effectively to the client, regardless of ambient conditions or the client's sensory abilities.
Tolerance for error	The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions and provide warnings of hazards and errors.
Low physical effort	The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.
Size and space for approach and use	Appropriate size and space are provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

Accessibility/Universal Design **+** Reasonable Accommodation **=** **Equal Access**

Take Action

1.3.1 Start by identifying barriers and designing to meet accessibility standards from the start.

In everything you do – including conducting assessments, and designing and implementing your program – stop and assess the factors that may prevent a person from having full and equal access and participation in that activity (see Table 2). Ideally, potential barriers should be identified during the design of responsive information services to ensure universal design of the communication channels and formats (see Table 3).

How to assess barriers and design an accessible program:

- Review existing data - or collect data - which speaks to barriers different groups may face and their preferences in accessing that activity. When collecting data, use the Washington Group Short Set of questions to disaggregate data by disability, in addition to age and sex. Include specific questions on barriers and preferences for communication. Seek support from representative organizations to ensure that these groups are included in any consultations. Train staff in how to provide reasonable accommodation to ensure persons with disabilities and other groups can participate in the data collection.

> **RESOURCE** – See the IRC Inclusive Client Responsiveness Guidance for guidance on collecting and analyzing disability-disaggregated data (pg. 29), tips and examples of reasonable accommodations (pg. 25 and 47), and tips for conducting accessible focus group discussions or key informant interviews (pg. 48).

- When designing any activity, involve children, women, persons with disabilities, older persons, and other contextually relevant groups in the design of responsive information services, either directly or through engagement or representative organizations.

> **RESOURCE** – See the UNICEF Disability Inclusive Humanitarian Toolkit for tips on engaging with organizations of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action.

- When designing information services, establish a flexible budget line for accessibility and reasonable accommodation as costs are likely to depend on the context (estimated 0.5-7% of overall budget). Consider formulating partnerships with representative organizations to support outreach efforts and use multiple accessible formats and channels of communication. Conduct a safety and accessibility audit to evaluate the level of accessibility and safety of those approaches, and to identify existing barriers of different communication channels through a checklist (which can also identify budget required). Include considerations of protection risks and barriers which result in underrepresentation, isolation and marginalization in risk assessments. Explicitly define the proactive measures that will be taken to engage with persons with disabilities, women, children, and older people to improve accessibility of communication channels and address barriers and risks identified in assessments.

- When implementing responsive information services, ensure all staff are trained on inclusion and accessibility – frontline communicators should understand the rights-based model to inclusion and information production focal points should understand accessible content development.

> **Tool 2.** Inclusion Core Concepts Training

- When monitoring and evaluating the program, collect data which can be disaggregated by disability, age, and sex. Monitor, for example, whether persons with disabilities benefit from information and communication approaches. Pay particular attention to the experiences of persons who face multiple, intersectional, or heightened access barriers due to their impairment, gender, age, or social status.

Whose inclusion might we pay particular attention to?

**Depending on context, other groups are going to be marginalized and therefore you should not be limited by this list.*

- **People with disabilities:** For the purposes of this guidance, people with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.[13] Access to information is often a barrier for persons with a disability who have specific communication needs. They are often excluded from decision-making spaces and have unequal access to information and availability of services. They can be socially isolated if they don't access the community regularly through employment or education for example.[14]
- **Women and girls:** Diverse women and girls are present in every humanitarian context. Diverse women and girls face multiple forms of oppression, which further reduce their power, choice, and protection and increase barriers to accessing services.[15]
- **Older people:** We use the term older people to describe someone in later life. It is common in all societies and cultures to divide our lives into different stages, with older age being the latter stage and an older person being someone in that stage.[16] Older people may face barriers in accessing and understanding information or services due to physical constraints or complicated processes.
- **People with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics (SOGIESC):** We use the term SOGIESC to describe Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Two-Spirit, and the countless affirmative ways in which people choose to self-identify. People with diverse SOGIESC may experience marginalisation within households, communities, institutions, public services, laws and other aspects of life means that lead to a lack of opportunities to build resilience and rebuild their lives, access services, and may self-exclude due to expectations of violence and discrimination.[17]
- **Children:** Younger children might not have access to or might find it difficult to understand publicly available information. Unaccompanied and separated children may be particularly challenged in accessing timely and relevant information.[18] Children are usually unable to express their fears / anxieties.[19]
- **Other contextually relevant marginalized groups:** This might include people with certain legal statuses (e.g. resident, registered asylum seeker, unregistered/no legal status), ethnic groups, religious groups, etc.

1.3.2 If - despite universal design - barriers to access remain, provide reasonable accommodation.

Accessibility can take time to implement, and there are people who may still face difficulties accessing responsive information services, regardless of the level of accessibility. In either case, reasonable accommodation should be implemented immediately whilst a more sustainable accessibility solution can be established. It is usually implemented on an individual basis, through an interactive dialogue with the client, with the objective of facilitating punctual access to a particular service or situation.

EXAMPLE – A client in the community experienced mobility challenges and could not physically access a static information desk. So, the team asked this client how they would like to receive support. Because the client had a phone, they proposed that they call with their questions, offering an alternative, confidential channel for support.

How to provide reasonable accommodation:

- Identify what the client requires to participate. For example, ask, "Do you know how to share your questions with us and access the information you need? Would you require any adaptation or support to access our information service and communicate with us?"
- Identify solutions to facilitate participation, given available resources. Verify with the client if the solution proposed meets its purpose.
- If no solution is found or suitable, justify the denial of reasonable accommodation objectively. This means that you have considered every resource that is available to hand to meet the request from the client. If the offered solution or other available options do not meet the requirement of the client, failure to meet their requirement is not discriminatory. Inform the client in a timely manner of your inability to accommodate due to the operational limitations.

RESOURCE – See page 11 of the IRC Inclusive Client Responsiveness Guidance for more on providing reasonable accommodation.

1.4 Foundational Concepts for Participation

Learn

Module 1.4 'Learn' is adapted from the CDAC How to Guide.[20]

Participation means that you involve crisis-affected people in the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring or evaluation of your responsive information service project. Participation forms the core of the responsive information services program model and is uniquely built-in, whereby the information produced is constantly informed by client feedback. Still, local populations are the first to react in a crisis - especially if you are not from the communities you are targeting - you must seek their input on how to appropriately deliver responsive information services on an ongoing basis.

Community engagement must go beyond passive participation, whereby the affected population is simply kept informed. People must be able to participate in decisions that affect them. They need opportunities to determine and shape services, including during preparedness, and perform leadership roles (e.g., serving on management communities). The degree of involvement will vary depending on the circumstances, and there will always be debate about what constitutes 'real' or 'meaningful' participation.

Tips for facilitating participation in emergencies:

- **When?** Different levels of participation may be appropriate at different times. For example, in the early stages of a response, consultation might only be possible with limited numbers of people, but over time there will be more opportunities for deeper engagement (See Table 4). Engaging early saves a lot more time than trying to fix inappropriate decisions. Bear in mind that the physical and psychological impact of a disaster or conflict on communities, social breakdown and previous experience of aid influences how engagement efforts may be met. Communities should be actively engaged in the monitoring and evaluation of responses, and all stages of the cycle should be focused on enabling communities to take full responsibility for resources and responses, giving voice to those who would typically be disempowered or disenfranchised (women, children, youth, disabled, elderly).
- **Who?** Ensure representation of the community is inclusive, engaging people at all stages of the work. You may need to work with existing structures, advocate for them to be restructured if they are not representative or develop new or complementary ones so that people, including the most marginalised and vulnerable, are fairly represented. As a result of the context or pre-existing differences in power (e.g. based upon gender, race, class, caste, or other characteristics), participation will not usually occur spontaneously. Foster a process of mutual learning and dialogue to stimulate greater participation. Pay particular attention to groups or individuals traditionally excluded from power and decision-making processes. Remember that children also have a right to participation. There are specialist organisations (such as Save the Children) with whom you can partner so that any work undertaken with children is done so appropriately and with the right safeguarding measures in place.
- **How?** Determine whether direct participation or participation by representation (i.e. through community representatives, committees or community-based organisations) is appropriate, bearing in mind power dynamics and biases. Assess risk to both the community and staff in engaging communities and ensure that no harm is done. Take into account safety, security, cultural and societal factors. Gain informed consent, whereby permission is granted in full knowledge of the possible consequences, risks and benefits.

Table 4. **Reference:** Alternative systems of inquiry for a sustainable agriculture, in the *Institute of Development Studies Bulletin*, vol 25, (*Brighton Institute of Development Studies*, 1994), pp. 37-48. Adapted from Pretty, J.

The 'Ladder of Participation'	
Passive participation	The affected population is informed of what is going to happen or what has occurred. While this is a fundamental right of the people concerned, it is not one that is always respected.
Participation through the supply of information	The affected population provides information in response to questions, but it has no influence over the process, since survey results are not shared and their accuracy is not verified.
Participation by consultation	The affected population is asked for its perspective on a given subject, but it has no decision-making powers, and no guarantee that its views will be taken into consideration.
Participation through material incentives	The affected population supplies some of the materials and/or labour needed to conduct an operation, in exchange for payment in cash or in kind from the aid organisation.
Participation through the supply of materials, cash or labour	The affected population supplies some of the materials and/or labour needed for an intervention. This includes cost-recovery mechanisms.
Interactive participation	The affected population participates in the analysis of needs and in programme conception, and has decision-making powers.
Local initiatives	The affected population takes the initiative, acting independently of external organisations or institutions. Although it may call on external bodies to support its initiatives, the project is conceived and run by the community; it is the aid organisation that participates in the people's projects.

Take Action

Module 1.4 'Take Action' is adapted from the IFRC CEA Guide.[21]

1.4.1 When capacity, time, and resources are limited, ensure minimum standards for participation.

In the early stages of a response (i.e., the first few months), for smaller emergencies with a shorter timescale (i.e., less than six months), or when there is limited community engagement and accountability experience and capacity within your organization, or when there is limited funds and human resources available for the response – ensure you meet the below minimum standards as you use the rest of this toolkit.

Minimum actions for participation:

- **Assessments:** Understand community needs, capacities, and context by conducting a secondary data review and conducting an in-crisis rapid Information Needs Assessments (INA). Without assessing needs, capacities, and context, there is a risk you will fail to meet people's needs, undermine local capacity, or do more harm than good. This damages credibility and leads to a loss of time and resources while mistakes are corrected. Discuss the assessment in advance with key people in the community, including leaders, heads of community groups and associations, and local authorities. Ask for advice on how to conduct the assessment and if other organizations have already carried out assessments. Provide information on the purpose of the assessment, what happens when it is completed, staff codes of conduct and behavior, and how people can ask questions or raise concerns (ensuring staff are briefed on answering questions without raising expectations).

- **Design:** Discuss with a mix of community representatives including leaders, heads of groups and associations, and local authorities response plans and how your organization should work with them to design your program. At a minimum, conduct indirect consultation with frontline staff on program design[22] to empower them to enable participation of affected people and ensure at least one person on your team is local to the community. As much as is possible, partnerships to strengthen the efforts of local groups should always be your first option to strengthen and support existing local channels of communication, before developing your own channel or mechanism for communication. Check that activities will meet the needs and priorities of the community and ask about the best ways to deliver them. If feasible, discuss what should happen at the end of the program and how the community and/or other stakeholders could take over activities. Coordinate internally and externally to avoid causing frustration in communities.

- **Implementation:** Communicate clearly who your responsive information service is providing support to, and why, to manage expectations. This includes the languages you provide support in, and the geographic areas for which you can provide information on (particularly related to service mapping). Train frontline communicators to handle questions, feedback, and critical feedback. Prioritize the production of informational content on the basis of assessments and trends analysis of inquiries from two-way communications.

- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Discuss feedback received through two-way communication frequently and proactively collect feedback on client satisfaction of your responsive information services.

1.4.2 When there is more capacity, time, and resources, take advanced actions for participation.

Later in the response (i.e., from month three onwards), for larger or protracted emergencies, with a longer timescale (i.e., more than six months), when there is a good level of community engagement and accountability experience and capacity within your organization, or when the response has a good level of funding and human resources – in addition to the minimum standards (1.4.1), aim for meeting the below advanced standards as you use the rest of this toolkit.

Advanced actions for participation:

- **Assessments:** Conduct detailed Information Needs Assessments (INA) and consider interagency joint assessments. Attend external coordination meetings to gather information on what others are doing, and discuss assessment plans and findings, to identify areas for collaboration and avoid duplication. This includes attending community engagement and accountability coordination groups. Share the results of the assessment with community representatives and cross-check they are accurate and discuss anything that is still unclear.

- **Design:** Use participatory planning approaches, such as community workshops and meetings, human-centered design, vulnerability capacity assessments or activities such as ranking, decision trees, mapping, etc. Engage all groups in the community in planning the response. Conduct more in-depth consultation or collaborate with frontline staff[23] to design the program. Consider agreeing on who your responsive information service should target with the community given the resources available to you. Cross-check plans with the community before you start implementing.

MODULE 2

Design

This module provides the guidance and tools you need to assess needs and context and use those findings to shape a strategy to effectively reach your target group, with a specific focus on factors of inclusion, coordination, and strengthening/building on existing local initiatives.

How to use this module

2.1 Coordinate with other actors from the beginning

Map key stakeholders to engage with, particularly focusing on established coordination platforms in your context. Engage early and throughout the program cycle to avoid duplication and to identify opportunities for joined efforts and efficiencies, funding, and more.

2.2 Assess the communication landscape, information needs, barriers, and preferences

Assess the communication ecosystem in your context, barriers, needs, key stakeholders, and risks to ensure you know who in a community you can reach and how to effectively reach them and to avoid doing harm.

2.2.1 Work with your team to draft a set of learning questions.

In the early phases of an emergency, you may be most concerned with identifying top information needs, and existing channels of communication you can use to reach communities. Over time, as assessments become more nuanced, so should the questions associated with communication and community engagement to improve information services.

2.2.2 Identify existing secondary data

Always start with a desk review of the information landscape, needs, barriers, and risks and draw on lessons learned from similar emergencies in the past to anticipate how information ecosystems may change.

2.2.3 Collect the data you need

The timing of and ability to conduct specific assessments will always be context and resource dependent. Considering the existing data you have, and the urgency of the situation, use tools to collect data from the affected population, other frontline responders, and/or media outlets. Only conduct a separate assessment if it is not possible to integrate into planned ones.

- **Tool 3.** INA Survey and Analysis Guidance
- **Tool 4.** Humanitarian Responder Questionnaire
- **Tool 5.** Media Station Profile Questionnaire
- **Tool 6.** INA Focus Group Discussion Guide
- **Tool 7.** INA Reporting Template

2.2.4 Conduct a stakeholder analysis

Conduct or update an existing stakeholder analysis to identify the actors and relationships that influence the affected population's access to the information they need and to inform how to work and who to partner, coordinate or engage with in order to best achieve the outcome, and assessments of risk.

- **Tool 8.** Stakeholder Analysis Meeting Facilitation Template
- **Tool 9.** Stakeholder Analysis Matrix Template
- **Tool 10.** Stakeholder Engagement Plan Template

2.3 Define success

Responsive information service programs should be guided by a results framework and monitoring and evaluation plan. Based on evidence and before designing the program, determine the expected outcome(s) of responsive information services.

- **Tool 35.** Sample Logframe for RISE

2.4 Develop strategies to reach your audience

Draw on available data as well as the judgement, skills and experience of key stakeholders to decide a strategy which is appropriate for the context.

- **Tool 11.** Analysis and Design Meeting Facilitation Template

2.4.1 Define your target audience

Due to the realities of constraints in funding and capacity you may need to prioritize who your information service should target. If you need to prioritize who you will serve, work through a set of questions to guide your thinking.

2.4.2 Consider how to build on local initiatives and form the right partnerships

Review your stakeholder analysis and consider if you can work any other actors who are already conducting activities that are part of the RISE model as well as other types of actors who are trusted by, have access to, or have knowledge about the needs of particular groups.

- **Tool 9.** Stakeholder Analysis Matrix Template
- **Tool 10.** Stakeholder Engagement Plan Template

2.4.3 Determine the channels and formats for communication you will use

Reviewing the data you have, consider how you will engage with your target audience based on their preferences and habits, the channels and formats they can access and barriers they face, operational realities and feasibility in the emergency context, and potential risks. Consider first what existing channels are already working or could be adapted in the community.

- **Tool 12.** Communication Channels and Formats Guidance

2.4.4 Conduct a safety and accessibility audit

Complete an audit to assess levels of accessibility and identify potential barriers and identify actions you need to take for inclusion.

- **Tool 13.** RISE Safety and Accessibility Audit

2.4.5 Conduct a project risk assessment

Work through an exercise to identify, plan for, and monitor potential risks and unintended harm to your audience, staff, and communities as a result of your activities.

- **Tool 14.** Risk Assessment Guidance Note and Discussion Guides
- **Tool 15.** Risk Assessment Meeting Facilitation Template
- **Tool 16.** Project Risk Matrix Template

2.4.6 Determine the human resources you need

Consider the core functions – or roles - required to manage a responsive information service and identify if these functions can be covered by your existing team – or if they are covered by other response actors – or if you need to hire or form partnerships for additional support.

2.4.7 Formalize and fund your strategy

Build a budget, document or update your strategy, and develop proposals to access emergency funds from the government or donors.

- **Tool 17.** RISE Sample Budget Template
- **Tool 18.** RISE Strategy and Advocacy Template

2.1 Coordinate with Other Actors from the Beginning

Learn

Coordinating with other actors is essential to providing a quality information service. Working with other actors throughout the program cycle is important to avoid duplication and to identify opportunities for joined efforts and efficiencies, funding, and more.

For example, to conduct joint interagency assessments, to collaborate on information service delivery to reach different segments of the population. Coordination is also particularly important to strengthen your service mapping and information production efforts and avoid duplication. For service mapping, it will be necessary to identify and gather information from a range of service providers, and collaborating with other frontline responders can help you to obtain existing information about service providers that has already been collected. When producing information, you will need to work with a range of intersectoral actors to quickly develop and validate information content, and collaboration with other frontline responders can help you obtain existing information or key messages which have already been verified or obtain content that is already prepared and can be shared with your audience immediately.

Tips for coordination:

- Engage with coordination mechanisms to efficiently coordinate with a range of interagency stakeholders. See Table 5 for a list of potential structures that may exist in your context.
- Start identifying and communicating with a broad range of stakeholders early. Both service mapping and information production rely on building strong relationships with other stakeholders – building these connections early and clearly articulating what you are doing is essential to the success of responsive information services, as these can be the most time-consuming factors for implementation.
- Once you have mapped fora to engage with, you these platforms to introduce RISE as a program model and your context-specific RISE strategy, as it is developed. These can also be spaces to gather feedback from other actors on community information needs and preferences and collaborate on service mapping efforts and to expand your mapping of information sources to verify information. Often, you can request the inclusion of agenda items to present and solicit engagement.
- Often, national coordination platforms will conduct a mapping exercise of who is doing what, where, when ('4Ws') to know which agencies are working on communication and community engagement and their focal points to inform analysis of opportunities and needs integrated into overall coordination. Use this as a resource and ensure your team's RISE efforts are represented.
- Don't underestimate the power of coordination with actors outside of government or humanitarian spaces, such as media. Local media play a key role in communications with communities and generally have well-established positive trust relationships with their communities.[24] They also have broad reach, which may also stretch to remote areas you can't reach. Establish relationships with local journalists, journalists' networks, and media development agencies to share information on your program – your team may be able to be a valuable source of information for them, and they may a valuable source of information for you.

RESOURCE - For more information, see 'Collaborating with broadcasters beyond partnerships' in the BBMA Lifeline Guidance on Working with Broadcasters in Humanitarian Crises[25] and Internews' The Space Between Us: Understanding trust, communication and collaboration between media and humanitarian organizations in public health emergencies[26].

Table 5. Common relevant coordination platforms

RISE doesn't fit perfecting into any single coordination mechanism – as information is important to all sectors but is often not systematically prioritized or funded – so coordination can be unclear. This can be both an opportunity and a challenge when thinking about how to go about collaborating with coordination platforms in your context. The structure and functions of national platforms will vary according to context, based on needs and capacities, but all act as a complementary coordination service to existing and emerging humanitarian architecture.[27] **Examples include:**
Clusters are convening bodies of organizations related to specific sectors of humanitarian action. The cluster system is activated in non-refugee emergencies by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). While information services – or related communication and community engagement efforts - do not have a dedicated cluster, it is integrated into a number of different sectors and their corresponding clusters. Lifesaving information is often a particular priority for the Protection Cluster (led by UNHCR), Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (led by WFP, with focus on provision of telecommunications infrastructure, connectivity, access to devices, mobile phone charging etc.), and Health Cluster (led by WHO).
Inter-cluster working/coordination groups may be called different names depending on the context, but its main purpose is to create a space for cluster leads to share information and discuss crosscutting issues (usually led by OCHA)[28]. In some contexts, this is where communication and community engagement is coordinated.
Working groups are coordination systems that can exist alongside or separate from the cluster system. Information services may exist as a dedicated (sub) working Group, under different names. Examples of relevant working groups might include Communicating with Communities (CwC), Communication and Community Engagement (CCE), or Accountability to Affected People (AAP). Priorities related to information services may be part of the mandate of other working groups, such as protection (including child Protection/GBV) or equivalent, or cash.
Government-led coordination platforms
Intergovernmental NGO (INGO) forums, which exist in certain contexts coordinating the response of INGOs. Often links with the UN-led coordination mechanism.
NGO or CBO forums, which may be a separate coordination body led by local or national NGOs or community-based organizations.
Communities of practice
Common services, for example a common feedback mechanism or hotline.
Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) Collective Service, which is a group specific to health-related messaging and community engagement, with focus on social and behavior change objectives. Jointly led in partnership by WHO, UNICEF and IFRC.
Task teams or sub-groups to a task team
Networks
Media and journalism networks and forums

2.2 Assess the Communication Landscape, Information Needs, Barriers, and Preferences

Learn

To deliver an effective responsive information service, it is paramount to repeatedly assess the communication ecosystem in your context, barriers, needs, key stakeholders, and risks. Understanding these factors is important not only to ensure you know who in a community you can reach and how to effectively reach them, but also to avoid doing harm.[29]

While it is important to conduct needs assessments and map the information ecosystem in the design phase, this process needs to be repeated frequently to determine whether you are still meeting the needs of the community. Information needs and uses are never static and especially in a humanitarian context, can change rapidly, so it's important to continually assess, analyze and adapt.

In preparedness and emergency phases, it is helpful to frequently assess the following factors:

- **The community profile and context:** Communication and community engagement requires a sound understanding of the community: its languages, culture, economic conditions, social networks, political and power structures, norms and values, demographic trends, history, and experience with engagement efforts by outside groups.[30]
- **The dynamics of access to information:** Attention should be paid to whether particular groups (such as women, children, disabled or older people, minority language speakers) face specific challenges in accessing or providing information. See Module 1.3 for more information on barriers.
- **The communication landscape:** Areas which have lost coverage, power, how people are currently accessing information, and key stakeholders that might influence your work or that you might work with to strengthen it. A good understanding of the media and telecommunications environment is important if you are considering working with a partner to facilitate two-way communication, particularly in conflict situations.
- **The channels people prefer and have access to communicate with you through:** There is a range of different ways ('channels') by which people prefer to communicate and access information, from radio, newspaper or television, to word-of-mouth, participatory theatre, leaflets or town hall meetings with community leaders. Preferences vary depending on factors such as mother tongue, literacy level, age, ethnic group, social or economic vulnerability, disability, gender or religion, and can change over time, particularly when usual channels are disrupted.
- **Information needs:** Information needs and communication preferences vary over time. After an earthquake, people might want information on tracing missing relatives, how to access aid, whether they can enter damaged houses and what to do with bodies recovered. But later, they might want information on replacing lost documentation, compensation rights, and legal issues.

Take Action

2.2.1 Work with your team to draft a set of learning questions.

In the early phases of an emergency, you may be most concerned with identifying top information needs, and existing channels of communication you can use to reach communities. Over time, as assessments become more nuanced, so should the questions associated with communication and community engagement to improve information services.[31]

EXAMPLE – Common learning questions may include:

- What is the relevant profile of the community (languages spoken at home, literacy, legal statuses, other marginalization factors)?
- What does the community identify as their most pressing problems, risks, and concerns? What information does the community need to solve those main problems?
- What are the main barriers and risks the community faces in accessing that information? How do barriers differ for different community groups, especially for marginalized groups? Are there any topics which are particularly difficult for some groups to access information on? What are the information-related protection risks faced by the community (denial of access to information, the presence of misinformation, disinformation, rumors)?
- What does the communication ecosystem look like now (how are people sharing and receiving information)? How has it changed since the emergency? Are there any groups which are particularly left behind in the current situation? Who are the key stakeholders who may influence access to information?
- What are the main communication channels different groups have access to? What are the main communication channels preferred by different groups? What are the main sources of information that different groups in the community trust most? What languages and formats do different groups prefer to receive information in?

2.2.2 Identify existing secondary data.

Secondary data is data that was collected by someone else at an earlier time. Always start with a desk review of the information landscape, needs, barriers, and risks and draw on lessons learned from similar emergencies in the past to anticipate how information ecosystems may change. In early stages of the emergency, you might not have time to conduct a detailed data collection exercise and need to rely on existing information. If you don't have any preparedness data you can use, it would be a good idea to still quickly build a profile of the communication environment and community profile using available public resources, and learnings from prior emergencies.[32]

Coordination - Connect with intersectoral stakeholders to see if any information that responds to your learning questions already exists or if assessments were conducted in a preparedness phase.

If in a preparedness phase, identify gaps in existing secondary data and take steps to fill those gaps. Data preparedness can save precious time when an emergency strikes. The more you know about the information and communication ecosystem of a community - knowing how and when people receive and share information, and anticipating how this may change during an emergency- the better you will be able to decide which communication channels and initiatives to focus on in your response. Pre-crisis data on a community's profile, their preferred channels of communication, and the media and telecommunications environment will give you an idea about where and what support may be needed during and after an emergency.

Table 6. Common Assessments Where You May Find Relevant Secondary Data

Type	Description
Cross-cutting response data	Intersectoral needs assessments (for example, Rapid Protection Analysis), context analysis, emergency preparedness plans, scenario projections and response planning, access assessments, safety and security assessments, response capacity assessments, existing feedback from communities, etc.
Information needs assessments (INA)	To assess channels of communication available, barriers to information access, trust in information sources, information needs, preferred communication channels. Intersectoral assessments by INGOs, UN, and Media Development Organizations often ask about information needs and communication, for example in Protection Monitoring, UNICEF Social and Behavior Change (SBC) programs, or assessments by Internews, CDAC[33], or BBC Media Action[34], Emergency Telecommunications Clusters. Clear Global also hosts language maps for many countries.[35]
Media landscape guides	This is a report that compiles information of all communication channels and resources in a country, including information on the media and telecommunications landscape, profiles of media channels, contact details, mobile coverage, languages, and habits. Multiple guides already exist for a set of countries, or you can develop one as a valuable preparedness activity. See existing guides from CDAC here.[36] National regulatory bodies, mobile phone companies, journalist networks (e.g. unions), state radio and TV, any media development agency in country, or private sector advertisers may also have relevant information.[37]
Information ecosystem assessments	To assess how information is generated and flows within a community. An information ecosystem assessment may already exist in your context, or you can develop one as a valuable preparedness activity. See Internews' guidance on Mapping Information Ecosystems to Support Resilience here[38], and samples of existing IEAs here.[39]
Protection analysis	To guide protection-specific situation analysis and the organization of data and information to provide an evidence-base for programming, advocacy and dialogue for the purpose of influencing behaviors and policies in support of a more favorable protection environment. See existing protection analyses here.[40]
Community profiles	Illustrating socio-economic characteristics, lifestyle, media consumption habits, and barriers in accessing information of target groups. If you cannot find information on how communities receive and share information, consider carrying out a community profiling exercise. See sample guidance on community profiling here. [41]
Gender analysis	To understand barriers and risks to safety and access, particularly for women and girls, and to develop strategies to mitigate these risks. See guidance on conducting gender analyses here. [42]
Stakeholder analysis	To identify the actors and relationships that influence access to responsive, relevant, accurate, information for the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of crisis-affected people, determine how to work and who to partner, coordinate or engage with in order to best achieve the outcome. Coordinate with other actors to identify existing stakeholder analyses in your context.
Conflict sensitivity analysis	Comprehensively analyze the dynamics of a conflict in order to design and implement projects in a conflict-sensitive way. Conflict-sensitivity analysis is about making sure any activity/service we provide is designed and delivered in a way that minimizes negative impacts (Do No Harm) and maximizes positive impacts. See guidance on conducting conflict sensitivity analyses here.[43]
Political economy analysis	Analyzing power relations, distribution of resources, and the role of formal and informal institutions in relation to accessing responsive, relevant, accurate, information for the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of crisis-affected people. In a preparedness phase, PEA may be used to inform emergency plans and/or to strengthen systems for information and communication. See guidance on conducting PEAs here.[44]

Take Action (Continued)

2.2.3 Collect the data you need.

The timing of and ability to conduct specific assessments will always be context and resource dependent. Do what you can with the resources and time available to you to capture the strongest picture possible of the context, needs and how to effectively respond to them. If you are in a startup phase, before you begin collecting data you will want to begin to consider who your target group for your information service will be. This is to make sure your assessments actually capture data from the population(s) you will serve, rather than a broader group. You might collect some early data from needs assessments and use that to determine who is most in need, further refining your assessments to capture the needs of that group. Prioritize and build a profile of your target group as the picture of the crisis becomes clearer.

Coordination - Check if anyone else is planning on conducting assessments that speak to your data needs to avoid duplication and advocate for joint assessments inclusive of inquiries into information needs and communication. Only conduct a separate assessment if it is not possible to integrate into planned ones. If you are planning an assessment, collaborate with other relevant service providers to design the assessment and ensure any data or analyses conducted for RISE are shared with relevant humanitarian structures/ mechanisms in country (national and international).

Inclusion - Make plans to ensure that people with disabilities, older people, or other marginalized groups participate in any assessments and that you capture meaningful data from these groups. Seek support from representative organizations[45] to ensure that these groups are included in any consultations, and conduct targeted qualitative assessments where necessary. Where possible, discuss the assessment with key stakeholders or representatives from potentially marginalized groups to tailor your approach and identify any existing data. Use the Washington Group Short Set of questions to disaggregate data collected through the needs assessment, in addition to age and sex (Additional translations can be found here). Include specific questions on barriers and preferences for communication. Train staff in how to provide reasonable accommodation to ensure persons with disabilities and other groups can participate in the data collection. See the IRC Inclusive Client Responsiveness Guidance[46] for guidance on collecting and analyzing disability-disaggregated data (pg. 29), tips and examples of reasonable accommodations when communicating with people with disabilities and older people to support training of data collectors (pg. 25 and 47), and tips for conducting accessible focus group discussions or key informant interviews (pg. 48).

Information Needs Assessment (INA) Toolbox

What is in the toolbox?

- **Tool 3.** INA Survey and Analysis Guidance
- **Tool 4.** Humanitarian Responder Questionnaire
- **Tool 5.** Media Station Profile Questionnaires
- **Tool 6.** INA Focus Group Discussion Guide
- **Tool 7.** INA Reporting Template

Participation - At a minimum, discuss the assessment in advance with key people in the community, including leaders, heads of community groups and associations, staff from your organization, and local authorities. Ask for advice on how to conduct the assessment and if other organizations have already carried out assessments. Introduce your organization and the purpose of the assessment, and what happens once it's completed. When there is more time, coordinate with external partners and local authorities and verify your assessment findings and analysis with the community.

In the first few days (48-72 hours) of an emergency

In-crisis rapid assessment of the communication ecosystem: Focus on identifying what communication channels can be used to reach communities now. Assess the impact of the crisis on existing (remaining) communication ecosystems. Quickly assess areas which have lost coverage of phone, radio and TV, mobile phone networks, radio and TV stations which are still operational, areas which have lost power, and how people are currently receiving and sharing information. This will help rapidly determine which information and communication channels still exist/could be quickly restored and begin to consider how your agency will communicate with the crisis-affected population, given how the crisis has impacted the communication infrastructure. Check what data is already available from media reports or direct contact with media outlets and service providers; government information agencies; government situation reports; reports from other organizations working in the affected area or by directly contacting NGOs who have programs in the affected area and asking about people's access to information and communication channels; agencies' field teams conducting rapid field assessments. Observations on the ground can give some idea of the damage (e.g. damaged telecommunications towers; tuning in to radio stations to check which are still on air; checking for mobile phone signal in different areas).

In the first 1-2+ weeks of an emergency

Rapid Information Needs Assessment (INA): Gather high-level information on channels of communication available, barriers to information access, trust in information sources, information needs, preferred communication channels by integrating a few priority questions into planned broader needs assessments by government, a single agency or multiple agencies (e.g. Inter-Agency Rapid Assessment, Joint Needs Assessment or Multi Cluster Initial Rapid Assessment).

In the first 3-4+ weeks of an emergency and beyond

Detailed Information Needs Assessment (INA): More nuanced information on channels of communication available, barriers to information access, trust in information sources, information needs, preferred communication channels. This enables humanitarian responders to design effective programs based on the needs identified and, in sudden onset disasters, move from response to recovery.

When the responsive information service is functional

Data tracking and analysis of client questions: Because responsive information services are based on two-way communications where its target groups can ask questions, you can keep track of the questions asked to assess trends in information needs and rumors once your responsive information service is operational.

> See Module 3.4.1 for more information on how data collection on two-way communications informs information production.

- **Tool 27.** Two-Way Communication Data Collection Form Template

2.2.4 Conduct a stakeholder analysis.

There are two primary reasons to conduct a stakeholder analysis: (1) to determine how to work and who to partner, coordinate or engage with in order to best achieve the outcome (See Module 2.4.2), and (2) to inform risk assessments (See Module 2.4.5) by identifying potential 'bad' actors or spoilers who may hinder achievement of intended outcomes. It builds on existing stakeholder information and typically will include a participatory internal meeting or workshop by engaging with communities and local actors to understand the role, relationships, and strategies of local actors in that context. Conduct or update an existing stakeholder analysis to identify the actors and relationships that influence the affected population's access to the information they need. You might also conduct a Stakeholder or Social Network Analysis to inform Conflict Sensitivity Analysis and/or Political Economy Analysis.

The following types of actors should be mapped:

- Actors who are doing activities relevant to responsive information services, such as service mapping, communicating with communities, creating content etc.
- Actors who have geographic coverage in targeted areas, either because they have existing programming, or access to targeted areas.
- Actors who serve population groups you're targeting.
- Actors who have operational capacity. Such as the ability to procure equipment or hire staff quickly.
- Actors who have influence over people and polices relevant to responsive information services.

Stakeholder Analysis Toolbox
Tool 8. Stakeholder Analysis Meeting Facilitation Template
Tool 9. Stakeholder Analysis Matrix Template
Tool 10. Stakeholder Engagement Plan Template

2.3 Define Success

Learn

Responsive information service programs should be guided by a results framework and monitoring and evaluation plan. Based on evidence and before designing the program, teams should define their intended outcomes. In crisis, responsive information service interventions do not aim to shift specific behaviors or social norms, but instead focus on enabling people to understand what has happened and equip them with the information to decide how best to respond in their particular context.[47] Therefore, the highest-level outcome of responsive information services is framed around empowerment to accomplish the affected population's goals for meaningful recovery from the crisis.

Types of Results:

- **'Outcomes'** measure the effect(s) of responsive information services for clients, or the changes that may occur in their lives as a result of engaging with the responsive information services.

  Example: IDPs affected by the conflict in North State are better able to access services, know and claim their rights, make informed decisions, and stay safe.

  Example: People affected by the cholera outbreak in East State are better able to access treatment health services and make informed choices about preventative measures.

- **'Intermediate outcomes'** measure critical results which are essential to achieving higher-level outcomes.

  Example: Clients access, trust, and understand information provided.

- **Outputs** measure the products and services delivered that contribute to achieving outcomes. Output information does not reflect the consequences of the products and services delivered, but shows the scope or size of what the inputs and activities produce.

  Example: Informational content that is responsive to client needs is developed.

- **Activities** measure the tasks which contribute to achieving outputs.

  Example: Staff are trained.

- **Inputs** measure resources used to conduct activities and provide services.

  Example: Human resources, time, funding, etc.

While at the design phase of your programming, you might want to develop a Theory of Change (TOC) together with your Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) team. A TOC outlines how outputs contribute to achieving outcomes. It can be shared with partners, sectoral stakeholders, and communities. Each element of a TOC should include a clearly defined result and indicators to measure it. Indicators should be relevant to the context and consider feasibility of data collection and analysis. A TOC should always be specific to your strategy and context and be informed by evidence. Responsive information services results contribute to the achievement of cross-sectoral goals. If you are working on a sectoral team, you may include responsive information as an intermediate outcome as a part of a sectoral theory of change. Figure 2 shows a standard project-level TOC for responsive information services, which can be adapted. Figure 3 shows a sector-level TOC from the protection sector which reflects responsive information as an intermediate outcome to sector outcomes.

● **Tool 35.** Sample Logframe for RISE

Figure 2. Project-level theory of change for responsive information services in emergencies

Outcomes	Information is useful for clients Clients are better able to access services, stay safe, know and claim their rights, make informed decisions, and/or feel a sense of control or at ease in their environment.		
↑			
Intermediate Outcomes	Clients access timely information	Clients trust information	Clients understand information
↑			
Outputs	Informational content that is responsive to client needs is developed		
↑			
Activities	Service mapping focal points are trained to map essential services available for crisis-affected communities	Information production focal points are trained on how to investigate questions from the audience, and develop and disseminate content that packages useful, timely, inclusive, accessible, holistic information on the issues that matter most to them	Frontline communicators are trained on how to address questions, deliver verified information, and collect data on two-way communications, and on psychological first aid and safe referrals.

Figure 3. Sector-level theory of change with responsive information services in emergencies

People are able to access justice and exercise their rights

Then…

Pathway 1: Demand and Access Justice

Women, men, girls and boys have information, and support needed to demand and access justice independently

Pathway 2: Access to Legal Assistance and Justice Services

Women, men, girls and boys can access quality legal assistance and justice services across formal and informal systems

Pathway 3: Justice System

Justice actors fulfill their responsibility to provide justice services that meet the needs and rights of the people they are required to serve

If…

1.1

Rights information is responsive, trustworthy, relevant and tailored to the needs of specific groups

1.2

Women, girls and other groups discriminated on the basis of gender and sexuality have tailored support to claim and exercise their rights

2.1

Quality services and support are available across legal counseling, assistance and representation needs

2.2

Local, community and state actors are supported to provide rights protective non-violent dispute resolution, paralegal and other Alternative Dispute Resolution services

2.3

Barriers for women, men, girls and boys to access justice are identified, addressed and monitored

3.1

Duty bearers are aware of the rights of W/M/G/B, and have the skills and knowledge to implement and enforce relevant laws in a way that is rights protective

3.2

Formal and informal legal systems and authorities are available, effectively planned, managed, accessible and accountable to W/M/G/B

3.3

National, local and community systems are protective of human rights

2.4 Develop Strategies to Reach Your Audience

Learn

Draw on available data as well as the judgement, skills and experience of key stakeholders to decide what is appropriate for the context. There is no ideal framework for this – do what is most relevant. You could undertake the action planning through brainstorming and drafting workshops, supplemented by further research and validation.[48]

It is essential that multiple actors feel ownership over this process, including your intended clients and frontline staff, for it to be effective. Depending on what is relevant for your context, you might include clients or client representatives, frontline staff, leadership, technical experts, monitoring and evaluation experts, safety and security focal points, emergency coordinators, finance specialists, government representatives, local media, community or representative organizations, etc.

RESOURCE – See Tool 1.2 of the IRC Empower to Enable (E2E) Toolkit for guidance on the engagement of frontline staff in proposal design.[49]

Where possible, you will want to also understand the envelope of funds you might have available to you or the donors you might be submitting proposals to in order to support your decision-making process.

In the early days of an emergency, you might quickly run through these steps to identify how you can communicate now with the affected population leveraging existing resources, returning to these steps when you have more data and time to develop a more nuanced strategy. Do what you can with the time and resources available to you.

Participation – *Adapted from the IFRC CEA Guide*[50]

Discuss response plans with a mix of community representatives including leaders, heads of groups and associations, staff and volunteers, and local authorities. Check activities will meet the needs and priorities of the community and ask about the best ways to deliver them. If feasible, discuss what should happen at the end of the operation and how the community and/or other stakeholders could take over activities. Discuss with key community representatives how your organization should work with them during the operation, including how, when and what information should be shared, how feedback should be managed, and the best approaches for community participation. Coordinate internally and externally to avoid causing frustration in communities Internal planning meetings help to make sure sector plans are complementary and won't lead to duplication. Plans should also be discussed with government and other responders to avoid duplication and identify opportunities for collaboration and sustainability. This also reduces the risk of making promises to communities to provide support that goes against government policies.

Tool 11. Analysis and Design Meeting Facilitation Template

What is in the tool?

This template can be adapted to facilitate design conversations with key stakeholders, using data from Module 2.2 to inform decision making.

Take Action

2.4.1 Define your target audience

Due to the realities of constraints in funding and capacity you may need to prioritize who your information service should target.

> **NOTE –** You might make/revisit this decision throughout the design process, as you consider partnerships, channels, risks, budget, etc.

A few common crucial considerations for determining a target audience for this program model include:

- **Identifying who is most in need of information:**

  Needs vs. capacities - Consider both humanitarian needs and existing capacities to access the information that the affected population needs. There may be one geographic area for which humanitarian needs are extremely high, but existing formal or informal communications infrastructure is already working to serve that group to provide information. In this case, you could either partner with those actors to support their ongoing efforts, or consider focusing on another geographic area.

  However, even where there are existing capacities, there may be groups who are left behind – for example, all information is in one dominant language, or a particular group cannot access the information point. In this case, you may partner with those existing actors to strengthen inclusivity of their ongoing efforts or consider focusing solely on meeting the needs of those left behind.

  Potential impact of information - It is important to consider the 'empowerment potential' that information can provide for different groups. For example, if access health services or to obtain legal documentation are the most pressing needs, but there are no health services to access and no legal rights to claim, providing information might be less impactful for that population as you are unlikely to be able to provide useful information. On the other hand, where services and rights are limited, rumors can be exacerbated and people can turn to untrustworthy sources for information on alternative options – in this example, providing information services might have strong impact.

- **Meeting information needs:**

  Information production capacity - Verifying information requested by clients can require a significant time investment. When the information needs of your target audience are hugely varied, staff can become overwhelmed, and timeliness can be impacted. This can be difficult to predict as information needs will change over time but is important to keep in mind when considering including multiple targeting audiences with markedly different needs.

  Service mapping capacity - Often, a large component of information requests in emergencies – especially early in the emergency - relate to accessing services. Remember that as you expand your geographic focus, you will also need to expand your service mapping efforts. Consider what service mapping efforts already exist, and what it would take to build on these without overwhelming staff or sacrificing timeliness. See Module 3.2 for more on service mapping.

- **Preferences and barriers for communication:**

  Languages - Serving multiple languages has significant impacts on staffing and budgeting. Consider that to work in multiple languages, you need daily translation and interpretation capacity – either through hiring staff who speak those languages, or through engaging with external actors (which can be extremely costly). See Module 2.4.6 for more on working across languages.

> **Inclusion -** Different client groups will face different barriers in accessing communication channels. It is extremely important that you focus on 'universal design' from the start, which means your services are usable by all people included in your target audience, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. Consider whose needs you can feasibly and equitably meet and, if necessary, limit your scope to focus on universally designed services for those groups. There are many examples of risky power dynamics that can arise when some groups have access to lifesaving information and other groups are excluded. See Module 2.4.5 for more on risks.

Figure 4. Decision Tree – Guiding questions to prioritize target groups for responsive information services

Rapidly assess the communication landscape

- Which geographic areas are most affected by the emergency?
- What problems are being faced right now as a result of the emergency? What has changed in the context?
- What are the key humanitarian risks and concerns for the most affected populations(s)?
- Where is likely to be affected by another or continued crisis?

Rapidly assess the communication landscape

- How are telecommunications and electricity impacted by the crisis?
- How are people currently receiving and sharing information?
- Where are there any information services (formal or informal, including media) which are still functional, or could be functional soon? Which group(s) can access these?
- What is preventing different groups from getting the information they need now?

Have a discussion about humanitarian needs and existing information service capacities:

In which areas, and for which groups, are humanitarian needs highest?

In which areas, and for which groups, are most underserved in accessing the information they need right now? Why?

Assess information needs, preferences, and barriers

- Considering the key risks and concerns for the affected population, what information do different groups need to solve the problems they are facing?
- Which sources of information do different groups trust the most? The least?

Assess access, preferences, and barriers

- What channels do different groups have access to now?
- Which channels do different groups prefer to access the information they need?
- What language(s) do differnt groups speak at home?

Have a discussion about information needs:

Editorial and service mapping capacity - In which areas, and for which groups, are information needs very similar? For which areas, and for which groups, are information needs very different? Can you verify information needed in one area more effectively than another? What existing service mapping has been done? Can you provide information to clients leveraging the sources they trust?

Potential impact of information - In which areas, and for which groups, would meeting information needs actually lead to empowerment to solve their most pressing risks and concerns?

Have a discussion about feasibility to meet needs for access (universal design):

Do you – or a partner – have the capacity to reach clients on the channels they can access and prefer? For example, if clients require face-to-face communication, where is there physical access to communities (by you or a partner)? Where can you get access?

Take Action (Continued)

2.4.2 Consider how to build on local initiatives and form the right partnerships

Where possible, develop new partnerships as a preparedness activity rather than in the heat of a response to ensure people can be mobilized immediately to help - especially for partners with whom you are not used to working or who have a different organizational culture.[51]

What do we mean by partnerships?

A partnership is when more than one organization or actor agrees to work towards shared objectives and who make explicit agreements and have accountability to each other. This includes both relationships that might be captured in a contract as well as in a more informal agreement such as a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or terms of reference (ToR).

Example – Partnership modalities could look like:

- *Transfer of funds, paying for staff salaries, donations:* For example, an organization is already providing responsive information services but has insufficient funding, so you provide financial support to continue their work.
- *Provision of equipment and supplies:* For example, an organization is already providing responsive information services but is having issues procuring communication equipment, so you provide them with telephones.
- *Provision of expertise:* For example, an organization is conducting community outreach and would like support on how to turn their engagement into responsive information services.
- *Co-implementation:* For example, a media organization is creating content, and your community-based organization is conducting household visits, so you partner to expand reach of their content through household visits.

Why might you partner?

Partnerships can increase program quality, scale, and operational efficiency, each of which can have impacts on inclusion, safety, and overall impact.

- Maximize program quality by leveraging diverse expertise and enhanced capacity, providing culturally appropriate services.
- Increase scale by expanding geographic coverage, reaching different segments of the population, providing services in more languages.
- Increase operational efficiency by avoiding duplication, gathering and verifying information from diverse sources more quickly, leveraging existing networks and communication channels.

Who might you partner with?

Review the stakeholder assessment you conducted or updated during the assessment phase (See Module 2.2.4). Start by considering other actors who are already conducting activities that are part of the RISE model (e.g. communicating with communities or information sharing, service mapping, or other forms of content creation, information verification, translation or interpretation) as well as other types of actors who are trusted by, have access to, or have knowledge about the needs of particular groups. If you didn't identify any actors conducting RISE-related activities in the stakeholder assessment process, you may want to consider trying to identify such actors in relevant coordination spaces (See Module 2.1). Importantly, consider your strengths and what you can offer to those partners. See Table 7 for examples of potential partners.

Participation – Actors closest to the crisis are the main agents of response and recovery. Especially if you are not a part of the community you are targeting, consider how you can partner - formally or informally - with organizations or actors who are. When we partner with local actors, we contribute to greater impact and scale and more sustainable outcomes. Moreover, grassroots and local organizations will often be the first to quickly mobilize in a crisis to share information and connect affected people to the resources they need. Tap into and build on those initiatives.

Inclusion – Pay particular attention to partnerships with actors focused on or that represent people disproportionately impacted by crisis and systemic inequality (including women, children, persons with disabilities, diverse SOGIESC, etc.), which can be crucial for inclusivity.

Table 7. Examples of types of actors and how they might contribute to delivering responsive information services

**Please note that this list is not exhaustive, but it can provide a starting point of ideas. This table offers examples of the different kinds of actors you may consider partnering with and what they might bring to a RISE program. These are meant as illustrative examples and may not be the case for every context.*

Type of Organization	How They Might Contribute – Examples
Community organizations or community leaders	• **Consultation on program design:** Support to co-design the program to program to strengthen accessibility and relevance for their community • **Communication:** Support to collect and track questions from the community; improve reach in the community or acceptance and uptake of information by cascading information you provide; translation or interpretation support • **Content development:** Support review of content to verify information or strengthen relevance of information to the community See IRC's Guide for Engaging Community Leaders during Disease Outbreaks[52] and Guide for Engaging Religious & Faith-based Leaders during Disease Outbreaks.[53]
Larger humanitarian actors (eg. INGOs, UN, etc.)	• **Access:** To humanitarian coordination fora, donors, etc. • **Expertise:** In working in emergency/crisis settings, training, etc. • **Funding:** To procure equipment, cover staff salaries, etc. • **Content development:** Sharing verified information with you to share through your channel(s) • **Service mapping:** Sharing updated service mapping information with you to share through your channel(s)
News media organizations	• **Expertise:** In triangulating and verifying information, training, etc. • **Content development:** Share verified content with you for you to share through your channel(s) • **Communication:** Improve reach by sharing your content or verified information you share with them through their channel(s), host broadcasts where community questions are responded to See BBCMA Lifeline Guidance on Working with Broadcasters in Humanitarian Crises[54], Internews Local Media and Community Engagement in Humanitarian Settings[55], The Space Between Us: Trust, Communication, and Collaboration between Media and Humanitarian Organizations in Public Health Emergencies[56], and IFRC Sample Radio Program Proposal[57].
Representative groups for women, children, persons with disabilities, diverse SOGIESC, etc.	• **Consultation on program design:** Support to conduct accessibility audits or co-design the program to strengthen accessibility and relevance for the groups they represent. • **Two-way communication:** Support to collect and track questions from the groups they represent; improve reach in those groups or acceptance and uptake of information by cascading information you provide. • **Content creation:** Support review of content to verify information or strengthen relevance of information to groups they represent. See the UNICEF Disability Inclusive Humanitarian Toolkit for tips on engaging with organizations of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action.[58]
Sectoral actors (health, protection, cash, AAP, etc.)	• **Content development:** Support review or development of content relevant to their sectoral expertise (for example a health actor contributing content on how to prevent disease infection, or a lawyer contributing to content on legal documentation). • **Channel(s) for communication:** Support integration of services. For example, an information desk is stationed in a health center, or a complaints and feedback mechanism integrates a responsive information service to respond to questions. • **Communication:** Support integration of services. For example, staff from the nutrition sector are trained as frontline communicators to answer questions and provide verified information when they deliver food rations. • **Overcoming barriers:** Support in providing the necessary tangible assistance the population needs to access the information service. For example, partnering with the cash team to disburse phone credit vouchers. • **Expertise:** In specialized areas for staff training and capacity building. For example, a protection actor helps advise on how to respond appropriately to community members with acute protection needs or to mitigate protection risks.
Government actors	• **Content Development:** Ability to advise on or contribute content on government services or processes. • **Communication:** Help with acceptance and uptake of information (depending on perception of government actors in the context).
Mobile Network Operators or technology companies	• **Communication:** Can provide temporary network access when systems are down or offer other forms of connectivity in low connectivity environments. See the GSMA Humanitarian Connectivity Charter[59] and Nethope.[60]

Take Action (Continued)

How to partner?

1. Select potential partners whose vision, mission, values, strategic priorities and programming align with yours. (See Module 2.2.4).

2. Discuss and decide on partnership potential: Initiate a conversation and build the relationship with the identified actor(s). Explore your respective visions for meeting information needs and the role each of might have in your potential partnership. These discussions usually start by exploring the overall vision for the partnership and the broad role of each partner; over time they get more specific and detailed. Prioritize open, respectful communication and be aware of and mitigate any power imbalance between organizations. Approach the partnership as an opportunity to achieve more together than you could separately and promote collaborative analysis and decision making from the outset.

3. Enter into a co-design session with your partner and/or decide how you will partner. Once you have decided who to partner with, determine how you will work together and the ways in which you might support one another (see examples of partnership modalities on page 49). Also work together to define how you will each monitor success of the partnership.

NOTE – If the partner will play a significant role in responsive information service delivery, include them in program design conversations from the start. At a minimum, collaborate with these partners to allocate program resources, based on what will improve impact and scale, maximizing funds for those leading service delivery.

Tool 11. Analysis and Design Meeting Template

4. Conduct a risk assessment of the potential partnership. In addition to considering any historical red flags and the capacity of the partner, you will also want to consider the perception of the community of that potential partner, its ties to specific groups or leaders that may be political, and other potential risks to the integrity, credibility, and trust of your information service. This process should be collaborative. Reflect with the partner on the relevance and application of the risks to the proposed project collaboration and determine the appropriate mitigation strategies together. For example, conducting due diligence and signing agreements (See Module 2.4.5).

5. Create a written agreement for your partnership. Different to coordination and collaboration, where there is a loosely defined way of working, a partnership usually requires written documentation. This can be legally binding, such as a contract, or can be less formal such as agreed upon memorandum or understanding (MOU) or Terms of Reference (ToR).

   These agreements might stipulate:

   - Role and responsibilities
   - A timeframe for the partnership
   - Outline of key activities and who is going to do what
   - Specification of value amount if providing funds
   - Accountability mechanisms to one another, such as outlining frequency of meeting or submission of written reports

6. Where relevant, support partners that desire a full handover of the project. A partner may seek to develop its organizational capacity to operate independently of your organization.

RESOURCE - See INTRAC's Exiting / transitioning from international partnerships: a toolkit for small NGOs[61] for more information.

2.4.3 Determine the channels and formats for communication you will use

Reviewing the data you have, consider how you will engage with your target audience based on their preferences and habits, the channels and formats they can access and barriers they face, operational realities and feasibility in the emergency context, and potential risks.

Think about using the most available, popular, and preferred combination of communication channels available that can reach the widest number of people. Once you have identified the communication channel(s) you will use, consider the formats in which you will provide information through those channels.

Tool 12. Communication Channels and Formats Guidance

What is in the tool?

This tool provides information and examples on potential communication channels and formats, and guidance on potential barriers for client access.

NOTE – Definitions of key terms:

- A 'channel' is the platform you use to communicate. (For example, an information desk, community meeting, text messages, phone calls, radio, social media, etc.)
- A 'format' is the way you convey information through your channel (e.g. written text, speaking or recorded audio, graphics/images, video, braille, etc.)
- A 'two-way' channel allows you to exchange information and/or engage in a conversation.
- A 'one-way' channel only allows you to share information, but not to receive a response.

Considerations for selecting communication channels

Building on what exists – Start by considering what channels are already working or could be adapted in the community. What functioning communication options do you have available that you can use to reach your target audience? What planned program activities could be used? How accessible is the community? As much as is possible, strengthen and support existing local channels of communication before developing your own channel or mechanism for communication. Partnerships to strengthen the efforts of local groups should always be your first option. (See Module 3.4.2).

RESOURCE - If you are considering setting up a new technology, first review MIT's Don't Build it Guide.[62]

At least one two-way communication channel – Focus your efforts on ensuring you have at least one channel that enables two-way dialogue. Remember the central purpose of a responsive information service is to have conversations to learn about and respond to the information needs of your target group, not to disseminate one-way messages.

- It is possible to integrate two-way communication into approaches leveraging one-way channels. For example, adding a WhatsApp number or Facebook group where viewers of a TV spot can ask questions and receive responses, or soliciting questions from the community before airing a radio program that responds to those questions.
- At the start of an emergency, you might use available one-way channels to quickly disseminate information on safety, rights, services, and options. Focus your continued efforts on opening up a channel for dialogue, so you can begin listening and responding to individual information needs.

NOTE - If you are using multiple two-way communication channels, your team may also consider using Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software to collect and manage information from client interactions, integrating the channels you are using. Software such as Zendesk, FreshDesk, Salesforce, Zoho CRM, Meta Business Suite, Zapier, and Trengo can be explored to create and manage tickets for interactions with clients, create automations, track engagement and response times, analyze trends through dashboards, and more. Zendesk is particularly useful to integrate applications that you are using for communication, especially for websites and social media channels, setting up 'bots', creating different levels of access for different staff members, and more.

Risk management – When you conduct a project risk assessment, consider potential risks related to the channels and formats you choose. For example, is there a risk that certain information will be misunderstood or perceived as associated with a particular political or armed group? Could certain communication methods put staff or community members at risk? How do you need to protect user data? Remember that excluding segments of the population due to the channels and formats you use is also a risk - there are many examples of risky power dynamics that can arise when some groups have access to lifesaving information and other groups are excluded. Identify measures to minimize the potential for harm to groups you are not able to reach (See Module 2.4.5).

Your capacity – Reflect on the capacity of you or your organization and urgency of the situation – time, funding, experience. What staff and budget are available for communication? What is the operational feasibility of you managing a specific channel? What is the sustainability of that channel?

Inclusion – Use data to identify barriers to accessing channels for different groups, diversify the channels and formats you use, and conduct a safety and accessibility audit.

- Think through barriers to accessing specific channels, especially for marginalized groups, and develop strategies for reaching them. It is important to consider the specific access to the communication channels you are considering for women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, and other potentially marginalized groups. Equally, consider the accessibility of the formats that can be used on the channel(s) you are considering for these groups. When considering digital channels, in addition to accessibility of the channel itself, pay close attention to digital literacy for these groups.
- A best practice for universal design is to use multiple channels and formats for your audience to ask questions/request information, and through those channels, to utilize multiple formats to communicate information. Even if you can only use one channel and format now, work to diversify the ways that clients can access your services.
- Conduct a safety and accessibility audit of the channels and formats you use and make plans to address barriers. (See Module 2.4.4).

2.4.4 Conduct a safety and accessibility audit

Another way to ensure inclusive design of responsive information service communication channels is to complete an accessibility audit to assess levels of accessibility and identify potential barriers. This should be done during the design phase, though it can be done during implementation (likely at a higher cost if retrofitting an existing approach is required).[63]

An accessibility audit is a method to evaluate the level of accessibility and safety and identify existing barriers of different communication channels through a checklist. It can be conducted by an external expert, for example by a local Organization of Persons with Disabilities, or through a self-audit.

Tool 13. RISE Safety and Accessibility Audit

What is in the tool?

This is a checklist to evaluate the level of accessibility of your communication channels and identify barriers. It includes an action plan to track how barriers will be addressed and examples throughout.

2.4.5 Conduct a project risk assessment

Work through an exercise to identify, plan for, and monitor potential risks and unintended harm to your audience, staff, and communities as a result of your activities. Risk assessments should be conducted in the design phase, and updated at start-up, during implementation (monthly, quarterly, semi-annually), and during project closeout.

Risk assessments draw on existing information, including Do No Harm Assessments, Conflict-Sensitivity Analysis, Scenario Planning, Gender Analysis, etc. They also will draw on Information Needs Assessments, Safety and Accessibility Audits, and information about potential partners.

The findings of a risk assessment can be used to inform a contextualized theory of change and intervention to local dynamics, risk mitigation plans for marginalized groups, conflict-sensitive and gender-sensitive project planning, stakeholder engagement plans (See Tool 10. Stakeholder Engagement Plan Template), staff recruitment (See Module 2.4.6), procurement, client targeting (See Module 2.4.1), and standard operating procedures (See Module 3.2).

RISE Risk Assessment Toolbox

What is in the toolbox?

- **Tool 14.** Risk Assessment Guidance Note and Discussion Guides
- **Tool 15.** Risk Assessment Meeting Facilitation Template
- **Tool 16.** Project Risk Matrix Template

2.4.6 Determine the human resources you need

The majority of funding required for responsive information services are for human resources. A team of frontline staff that is prepared, trusted, and empowered to manage the activities of a responsive information service is the most vital driving force of success. The staff and skills you need to operate your responsive information service will vary depending on your organization, scale, and the channels you are using. Consider the core functions – or roles - required to manage a responsive information service and identify if these functions can be covered by your existing team, if they are covered by other response actors, or if you need to hire or form partnerships for additional support.

NOTE - Above all, remember that information and communication is nuanced and extremely context specific. A team that represents your target audience - and empowering them to make decisions – is the most practical thing you can do to strengthen quality and outcomes.

> See Module 3.1 Build Your Team for guidance on hiring the right people.

- **Tool 19.** Sample Job Descriptions for RISE

Core functions for RISE human resources include:

1. **Strategic leadership / coordination / project management**

   Someone who oversees the project and is responsible for the overall strategy.

2. **Investigating and verifying information and developing content**

   This is a person or team of people who manages the content strategy for the responsive information service. They develop relationships with sources and work with legal advisors and other sectoral specialists, triangulating and verifying information with multiple sources following journalistic principles. They develop informational content based on trends in information needs and package it in ways that are accessible and appropriate for the channels they are shared through. They also support frontline communicators to respond to client questions with verified information.

3. **Service mapping**

   This is a person or team of people who will oversee efforts to map essential services that clients request information on. They develop relationships with service providers, gathering important information about accessibility and ensuring consistency, while keeping a mapping of services up to date.

4. **Frontline communication**

   This is a person or team of people who manages two–way communication with clients of your information service. They answer client questions using verified information, help clients navigate available information, point them in the right direction of available services, and show they are being listened to. They also track trends in client questions and escalate and/or provide referrals for acute protection concerns.

Considerations for determining the human resources you need:

1. **Strategic leadership**

   Ideally, they have experience in humanitarian communications and are capable of leading and providing feedback on information content and frontline communication. This person might cover other core functions, so depending on the level of additional capacity, they may dedicate between 25% - 100% of their time to the project.

2. **Investigating and verifying information and developing content**

   Ideally, they have experience in journalism, communications, humanitarian response, and potentially graphic design, social media, or other specific areas.

   Consider that if you are working in multiple languages, it is most ideal if the person(s) covering this function speaks and can write in the languages(s) you are covering. Otherwise, you may need to consider hiring translation support, which can be extremely costly. See more on working across languages below.

   When considering the capacity required, note that verifying information requested by clients and keeping information up to date requires a significant time investment. Sharing information that is inaccurate poses critical risks, and therefore it is important to ensure that the person(s) taking on this role have enough capacity. What are the priority information needs clients have identified? Are they very similar or markedly different across client groups? How big is the geography you are covering (and therefore, how much does the information need to be tailored to each specific context)? Is this information readily available (through humanitarian coordination mechanisms, government, etc.), or will it require significant investment to verify? How quickly is information changing, and therefore how often can you expect to need to update content?

3. **Service mapping**

   This function may not need to be covered by your team if there are existing service mapping efforts in the context that meets your needs (See Module 2.1). In that case, service mapping could be handled in partnership with another organization as overseen by the strategic lead, for example.

   Especially early in an emergency, a large component of information requests often relate to accessing services. How big is the geography you are covering (and therefore, how much effort is required to have quality service mapping in each geographic area)? What existing service mapping efforts are ongoing, and what would it take to build on these without sacrificing timeliness in responding to client requests?

4. **Frontline communication**

   This function can be covered in a variety of ways, which may include hiring staff directly, working with community mobilizers, leaders, or groups, training existing sectoral frontline staff who interact with the target group, partnering with government or news agencies, etc., or some combination.

   The amount of capacity you need for frontline communication will always be context dependent. Think about the channels you are using for communication, the scale of the target audience you are serving and their access to the channel(s) you are using, and the geographic areas you are covering to estimate the volume of questions you can expect to receive from clients on a daily basis. Consider how many information requests frontline communicators can reasonably respond to through that channel in a day. For example, at an information desk, perhaps one frontline communicator can serve 20 clients in a week.

   If you are using online or remote channels (a Facebook group or hotline, for example), and community access to those channels is high, you may expect to have a higher volume of information requests than you would for face-to-face modalities. Moreover, if you are using a public social media channel(s), it is paramount to ensure that you have enough staff to regularly monitor and moderate the public page for hate speech, illegal activity, criticism and complaints, etc. (See Tool 31. Frontline Communication Handbook). Consider that if you are working in multiple languages, it is crucial that the people covering this function speak the languages(s) you are covering. Otherwise, you will need daily interpretation support. See more on working across languages below.

Other potential functions when working across multiple languages:

It is crucial to provide information in the mother tongue(s) of your target audience. Working across languages is often a key challenge when communicating with communities, and is especially challenging in RISE interventions due to the speed and volume of information production and responses to client questions. Because of this, serving multiple languages has significant impacts on staffing and budgeting. Consider that to work in multiple languages, you need daily translation and interpretation capacity – either through hiring staff who speak those languages, or through engaging with external actors (which can be extremely costly). See Table 8 for more information on options to ensure the inclusion of diverse languages in RISE interventions.

- **Interpretation:** Even if frontline communicators speak the language(s) you are covering, it is likely that clients who speak other languages or require sign language interpretation may contact your information service. If this need is significant, you might consider having on-call interpreters who you can hire when you need them.
- **Translation:** If the person(s) covering the function of investigating and verifying information and developing content do not speak and write in the language(s) you are covering, it can be most practical and cost-effective to hire a full-time translator to quickly translate information.

Table 8. Options to ensure the inclusion of diverse languages in RISE interventions

**Please note that this list is not exhaustive, but it can provide a starting point of ideas. When you consider how to manage working across languages, work with coordination forums to identify opportunities to join efforts or identify human resources (See Module 2.1).*

Type	Description	Pros	Cons / Considerations
Staff	Hiring dedicated translation and interpretation staff on RISE teams. Recruiting speakers of di-verse languages directly within content creation and frontline communication teams, including key minority languages used by affected communities.	• Embedding language diversity within staff may help bridge language expertise and subject matter expertise (e.g. responsive information approaches, technical content areas). • Promoting hiring of local staff or individuals from marginalized or affected communities.	• Full-time staff may have higher budget implications compared to other options: salary, benefits coverage, logistical support, etc. • Recruitment constraints in emergencies may hinder timely start-up and onboarding (e.g. lengthy recruitment timelines and process, availability of desired skill sets in labor markets, competition with other organizations, etc.) • Hiring peers requires heightened attention to issues of confidentiality, safeguarding, and protection principles. Information can get lost in translation, community tensions amplified, messages skewed by power dynamics, vulnerabilities exacerbated, and interpreters can suffer poor mental health after what they are exposed to if they are not properly supported. It is important to provide training for bilinguals to become translators or interpreters if professionals aren't available, especially for minority languages and responders on working with many languages.[64]
Service agreements, Consultancies	Alternate contract type to engage full-time translation or interpretation, or on-call interpretation support for frontline communicators. Part-time language support or support for a specific scope of work, for example: • Tasks: Translation of individual documents or set of documents. • Activities: Translation or interpretation for an information needs assessment, information sharing event, etc. • Reasonable accommodations to cover braille or sign language, or minority languages. For example, organizations like Handicap International provide support for communicating through those that have communication disabilities.[65]	• May offer flexible arrangements, depending on needs, tasks, or deliverables. • Ability to focus on specific tasks based on the provider's expertise or specialization.	• Potential high budget implications with high volume of new content creation during start-up phase, which may decrease over time as focus shifts to updating and revisions of content. • On-call interpretation support may not be consistently available, especially risky in time-sensitive or crisis situations.
Community volunteers, Incentive workers	Engaging with community volunteers or networks to ensure representation of diverse languages (including minority languages) in content creation and frontline communication. May include, for example, community-based committees, protection action groups, community outreach workers, etc. Community-based accountability mechanisms or client responsiveness mechanisms can inform content creation.	• Community-driven or peer-led communications can facilitate plain language content in local languages or for easy translation and access by community members. • Flexible options for non-financial incentives for non-staff personnel, such as phone credit, material assistance, stipends, etc.	• Incentive worker agreements may be subject to local labor laws, organizational policies. • Community initiatives can be challenging to sustain after funding or volunteer incentives end: financial reimbursement, material compensation, etc. • Engaging peers or community volunteers requires heightened attention to issues of confidentiality, safeguarding, and protection principles. Information can get lost in translation, community tensions amplified, messages skewed by power dynamics, vulnerabilities exacerbated, and interpreters can suffer poor mental health after what they are exposed to if they are not properly supported. It is important to provide training for bilinguals to become translators or interpreters if professionals aren't available, especially for minority languages and responders on working with many languages.[66]

Table 8. Options to ensure the inclusion of diverse languages in RISE interventions (Continued)

**Please note that this list is not exhaustive, but it can provide a starting point of ideas. When you consider how to manage working across languages, work with coordination forums to identify opportunities to join efforts or identify human resources (See Module 2.1).*

Type	Description	Pros	Cons / Considerations
Translation technologies	Machine Translation (MT) and translation management, such as Transifex, GlobalLink, Google Translate or DeepL; Computer-Assisted Technology (CAT), such as Matecat.	• Produces rapid or on-the-spot translations. • Can provide translation memory to "learn" how to strengthen quality of translation over time. • Easy to use, accessible online or via digital apps, often free or low cost, via enabled devices (ex. smartphones, tablets) used by frontline communicators.	• May produce translations that are inaccurate or unnuanced, especially risky for sensitive or specialized content. • Rarely available in minority languages; when available, quality is inconsistent or poor. • Can be dependent on network connectivity, digital literacy, device capability (ex. access to smartphone).
Partners	Modalities to engage partners may include partnership agreements, donations (funding or contributions in-kind), Memorandums of Understanding, etc. (See Module 2.4.2). Based on their areas of expertise, partners may have unique skills or entry points to facilitate inclusion of diverse languages: • Specific languages: engaging partners with expertise in specific languages, including minority languages, braille or sign language, child-friendly communications. • Specific populations: engaging partners with a focus on reaching specific populations such as minority groups (including speakers of minority languages) or sensitivity to Age, Gender, and Diversity and how AGD impacts language, literacy, and understanding of information. • Specific activities: engaging partners with specialist expertise conducting inclusive activities such as information needs assessments, community engagement, media broadcast, and dissemination of information products or information channels (ex. hotlines, call centers).	• Opportunity to provide complementary RISE interventions that address gaps in mainstreamed information services. • Amplifying known, trusted partners may facilitate access to and credibility with minority, marginalized, or hard-to-reach groups.	• Partners may need support to shift away from traditional one-way awareness raising activities towards two-way participatory and responsive information approaches. • Negative preconceptions or reputations of partners may limit their effectiveness, reach, or credibility.
Government bodies, line ministries	Local and national government bodies may offer official messages in local languages or have official translation or interpretation services.	• May be readily available or quickly mobilized.	• In certain contexts, or for certain groups, government or state actors may not be perceived as credible, trustworthy, or safe.

Take Action (Continued)

2.4.7 Formalize and fund your strategy

Build a budget, document or update your strategy, and develop proposals to access emergency funds from the government or donors.

- **Tool 17.** RISE Sample Budget Template
- **Tool 18.** RISE Strategy and Advocacy Template
- **Tool 35.** Sample Logframe for RISE

> See Module 3.4 Monitor and Adapt to select indicators, set targets, and plan for monitoring and evaluation.

Inclusion – Guidance for including a budget line for inclusion

Adapted from the IRC Inclusive Client Responsiveness Toolkit[67]

Due to the lack of systematic guidance, it is recommended to establish a flexible budget line for accessibility and reasonable accommodation as costs are likely to depend on the context.

Dedicated funding is needed to guarantee accessibility and provide reasonable accommodation (See Module 1.3). This is called inclusive budgeting which occurs when an organization allocates funds to enable the removal or mitigation of barriers during the planning phase and promotes participation and targeted activities for people with disabilities.

Inclusive budgets should be established at the program level and should include costs for improving accessibility of responsive information services and providing reasonable accommodations. They can include specialized items such as assistive devices, mobility equipment and accessible communications.

There is a lack of evidence on budgeting both for accessibility and reasonable accommodation in humanitarian action. Existing guidance from sources such as Help Age, CBM, Handicap International, Light for the World and the Humanitarian inclusion standards for older people and people with disabilities advise that accessibility should be planned in advance, funded as 0.5-7% of the total budget, and implemented promptly. To meet the physical accessibility requirements of people with disabilities (for example, when constructing facilities for information desks), it is estimated that the budget should be increased by between 0.5% and 1% overall. To provide specialized non-food items (NFIs) and mobility equipment to people with disabilities, estimates suggest a further 3-4% increase, and up to 7%.

The accessibility audit is another opportunity to estimate the cost of addressing barriers and ensure that there is a dedicated budget to implement changes (See Module 2.4.4).

Guidance on resource mobilization - *Adapted from the CDAC How to Guide*[68]

Emergency responses where international assistance is requested by a Government are typically guided by a response-wide, coordinated Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) based on a Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO). Where no international assistance is requested, the Government will set the response plan. Response plans are used to communicate the scope of the response to affected communities, donors and the wider public, as a key means for resource mobilisation. They are also used for response monitoring, setting out the goals and targets, complemented by indicators.

Communication and community engagement needs and plans must be clearly articulated in such documents if they are to be funded and included in a response. The detail of how this will then be implemented should be developed by the national platform though action planning, which should also determine the required resources (human, financial and material) and how success will be measured. This approach supports fundraising through mechanisms like OCHA's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Country-based Pooled Funds (CBPF).

- Ensure that communication and community engagement is included in any preparedness and contingency planning as well as in the assessment phase, advocating for its inclusion if necessary to ensure that communication and community engagement is strategically included in the overall response plan.
- Advocate for inclusion of appropriate, systematic and coordinated mechanisms for ensuring that crisis-affected people have access to the information that they need in response-wide plans, such as the Humanitarian Response Plan or Joint Response Plan.
- Include your communication and community engagement planning as an explicit element in agency and response-wide plans and budgets, referencing the framework and minimum services and actions for communication and community engagement.

MODULE 3

Implement

This module provides the guidance and tools you need to implement, manage, monitor, and adapt your responsive information service project with staff who are prepared to answer questions and manage interactions safely and effectively, develop inclusive and responsive content, and map services.

How to use this module

3.1 Build your team

Recruit the right staff as needed to cover the core functions – or roles - required to manage a responsive information service. At a minimum, responsive information services should aim to have at least one staff member who is from the community they aim to serve.

- **Tool 19.** Sample Job Descriptions for RISE

3.2 Establish guidelines and standard operating procedures, train your team

Develop clear guidelines and standard operating procedures for information production, service mapping, and frontline communication to maintain quality and manage risks.

3.2.1 Establish guidelines and SoPs for producing information

Define an information production workflow, a checklist to review before sharing any content, a system for tracking and managing the development, sharing, and updating of content, and begin mapping your sources for information verification.

- **Tool 20.** Information Production Workflow Template
- **Tool 21.** Content Calendar Template
- **Tool 22.** Publishing Checklist Guidance and Example
- **Tool 23.** Information Verification Source Map Template

3.2.2 Establish guidelines and SoPs for service mapping

Define a process for collecting consistent information from service providers and obtaining consent for publishing their information publicly, and a process for tracking the information you collect from service providers.

- **Tool 24.** Service Mapping Data Entry Form Template
- **Tool 25.** Service Mapping Matrix Template

3.2.3 Establish guidelines and SoPs for frontline communication

Define a high-risk referral pathway and adapt data collection and tracking tools for documenting two-way communication with clients and assessing trends in information requests.

- **Tool 26.** High-Risk Escalation and Referral Pathway Template for RISE
- **Tool 27.** Two-Way Communication Data Collection Form Template
- **Tool 28.** Two-way Communication Data Tracker and Dashboard

3.2.4 Equip your team with on-the-job guidance

Leverage handbooks for core functions of RISE which include a set of guiding principles, best practices, considerations, and standard processes for information production, service mapping, and frontline communication.

- **Tool 29.** Information Production Handbook
- **Tool 30.** Service Mapping Handbook
- **Tool 31.** Frontline Communication Handbook

3.2.5 Train your team

Conduct trainings on responsive information services, inclusion, information production, service mapping, and frontline communication, in addition to briefing on expected staff code of conduct.

- **Tool 1.** RISE Onboarding Training
- **Tool 2.** Inclusion Core Concepts Training
- **Tool 32.** Information Production Training
- **Tool 33.** Service Mapping Training
- **Tool 34.** Frontline Communication Training

3.3 Launch and publicize the responsive information service

Set up any necessary infrastructure and obtain any relevant permissions, collect existing service mappings and begin to update them, develop some initial informational content based so you can be prepared for potential questions and establish legitimacy, and publicize your information services.

When operational, begin tracking two-way communications to inform your editorial strategy and for follow-up with clients, where necessary.

3.4 Monitor and adapt

Monitor and evaluate your program throughout the program cycle, triangulating evolving situations with community perceptions and program progress, rather than after-action activity monitoring.

- **Tool 35.** Sample Logframe for RISE

3.4.1 Monitor two-way communications

Collect and analyze data on topics of information requested by clients during two-way interactions to inform an iterative information-production strategy that is continually informed by the needs of the community and measure your program's reach and timeliness.

- **Tool 27.** Two-Way Communication Data Collection Form Template
- **Tool 28.** Two-Way Communication Data Tracker and Dashboard

3.4.2 Monitor client satisfaction

Collect data on client experiences with your information service to understand if desired outcomes have been achieved and to ensure accountable programming, which collects and responds to client feedback.

- **Tool 36.** Client Satisfaction Survey Template
- **Tool 37.** Client Satisfaction Survey Dashboard

Tool 38. Client Satisfaction Focus Group Discussion Guide

3.4.3 Monitor service mapping and content production

Collect data on the products delivered that contribute to achieving outcomes to reflect the scope or size of what trained staff produce.

Tool 21. Content Calendar Template

Tool 25. Service Mapping Matrix Template

3.4.4 Monitor one-way communications

Determine how to adapt monitoring indicators if you are also producing and sharing one-way information (meaning that clients are reading, listening to, or watching informational content, but not asking questions).

3.4.5 Reflect and act on monitoring and evaluation data

Plan for reflection and action taking based on monitoring and evaluation data, for example, by holding regular team meetings to reflect on data throughout program implementation.

3.1 Build Your Team

Learn

Module 3.1 is adapted from the CDAC How to Guide.[69]

- Plan ahead to understand human resources required, where, in what core function(s), for how long and what competencies and skills they will need (such as language or technical knowledge). Remember to include the required budget in your overall response funding plan (See Module 2.4.6).
- Recruit locally. The added value of having a diverse workforce and policies that support this cannot be emphasized enough. People with lived experience of marginalization are likely to be strong assets. Moreover, close knowledge of the context and language skills are incredibly valuable for responsive information services.

Participation – At a minimum, responsive information services should aim to have at least one staff member who is from the community they aim to serve.

The profiles required for core functions of responsive information services may be difficult to find – particularly for information production. Even if community engagement experts are not available, there will be many people with expert skills in data management, minority group engagement, language, journalism, etc. Investing in staff local to the context and familiarizing them with response systems will be a more sustainable investment than relying on short-term expatriates.

- Due to a sector-wide gap in personnel skilled at communication and community engagement, provide awareness raising and training in responsive information services across your organization and partners working in the response, both to gain buy-in and deepen knowledge and skills. Consider collaborating with other organizations to advertise posts, (for example, universities or community groups). Hiring for content development support can be challenging – consider working with media or media development organizations to identify candidates with journalism experience.
- Check staff rosters, either at your own organization through your HR department, or partner agencies (for example, NORCAP or RedR) that deploy expert personnel in communication and community engagement. As a preparedness measure, consider setting up a partnership agreement with any rosters from which you may request deployments in future. This helps roster managers to understand demand, advocate for funds and plan for future surges in requests.

RESOURCE – See CDAC Expert Pool.[70]

Tool 19. Sample Job Descriptions for RISE

What is in the tool?

This tool provides sample job descriptions which can be used to identify the skills you need on your team and can be adapted to develop job postings.

3.2 Establish Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures, Train Your Team

Learn

It is important to develop clear guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to maintain quality and manage risks. In addition to training on core principles and technical expertise, teams should be trained on the guidelines and standard operating procedures you develop.

For information production:

Information people in crisis need can often be confusing, uncertain, political, sensitive, highly technical, or rapidly changing. It is important that your team and the stakeholders involved have a shared understanding of how you will operate to deliver responsive and useful information with timeliness and while building trust and maintaining quality, even in dynamic and complex information environments.

Moreover, timeliness is one of the most important factors of a responsive information service, and clear guidelines and planning processes will help ensure you are sharing the information people need when they need it. Timeliness is also important to build trust and engagement with your information service – your audience needs to view your information service as a reliable source.

For service mapping:

Developing and maintaining a consistent and accurate map of essential services available for crisis-effected communities in the geographic area covered by your responsive information service is crucial to enable you to provide accurate, actionable, up to date information. It is important that your team has standard processes for collecting information from service providers, obtaining their documented consent for publishing their information publicly, and organizing that information to be used for content development or in two-way communications.

For frontline communication:

Unless specifically designed to do so, responsive information services do not provide direct services or case management and are not an appropriate channel for clients to use when they are facing an acute individual emergency. A key part of a 'do no harm' approach is to be clear about your limitations so that clients don't develop expectations you cannot meet. However, even when those limits are clearly communicated, frontline communicators may be contacted by people with immediate and acute needs who need special attention. It is crucial that frontline staff know how to handle these situations effectively and can make appropriate referrals so they do not handle these kinds of cases alone, especially if they do not have appropriate technical protection expertise.

The questions that clients ask frontline communicators during two-way interactions are the most important data source to drive information production. It is important to develop systems to document information about client interactions, to manage follow-up and to analyze trends in information needs.

Take Action

3.2.1 Establish guidelines and SoPs for producing information

NOTE – Definitions of key terms:

'Producing information' relates to the preparing, adapting, and refining of responsive information that is accurate, inclusive, consistent, accessible, useful, and does not cause harm, to be shared with crisis affected people.

- **Define an information production workflow:** Editorial workflows define the steps your team will take from idea generation to publication or sharing of the information you produce, and the responsibilities and necessary approvals required throughout that process.
- **Create a checklist to review before sharing any content:** A publishing checklist is used to check all content you produce before sharing to help your team adhere to your editorial principles and guidelines with consistency, timeliness, and while building trust and maintaining quality.
- **Create a system for tracking and managing the development, sharing, and updating of content:** A content calendar is a way to plan and organize your content production schedule. A content calendar can help you establish a process for creating content that follows your editorial workflow, organize when, where and how your content will appear, share content consistently so that your audience has you in mind when they need information, determine deadlines, and flag content for review and updating. Content calendars detail what you will share, when you will share it, where you will share it, and when you will review the content to check if the information is up to date. This can also be the data collection tool for monitoring and evaluation indicators that track the number of information products developed.

> See Module 3.4.3 Monitor Service Mapping and Content Production for more on how data collection on content production informs monitoring and evaluation.

- **Map sources for information:** Regardless of the size of your team, the scope of your project and the context you work in, it's a good practice to start collecting and listing the sources your team can go to find and verify information that you will use to produce and update content. Identifying and building relationships with sources can be time-intensive and an initial effort to verify and organize your sources can save time later. Use data from initial assessments to identify sources that clients trust.

- **Tool 20.** Information Production Workflow Template
- **Tool 21.** Content Calendar Template
- **Tool 22.** Publishing Checklist Guidance and Example
- **Tool 23.** Information Verification Source Map Template

3.2.2 Establish guidelines and SoPs for service mapping

- **Develop a process for collecting consistent information from service providers and obtaining consent for publishing their information publicly:** To collect the required information for your service map, you can consider using a fillable form. Forms ensure that correct and adequate information is collected. If your service map is published publicly, they also ensure that you get consent from the provider to publish information about the service or services they provide.
- **Develop a process tracking the information you collect from service providers:** While you might use a variety of formats to share information about services with clients, it can be helpful to have an internal list of service providers that can be shared with frontline communicators to answer client questions or used as a basis for developing informational content. This can also be the data collection tool for a monitoring and evaluation indicator that tracks the number of services mapped.

> See Module 3.4.3 Monitor Service Mapping and Content Production for more on how data collection on service mapping informs monitoring and evaluation.

- **Tool 24.** Service Mapping Data Entry Form Template
- **Tool 25.** Service Mapping Matrix Template

3.2.3 Establish guidelines and SoPs for frontline communication

- **Develop a high-risk referral pathway:** A referral pathway is required to equip frontline communicators with the knowledge and information to appropriately respond to clients which present acute protection needs and/or when a client requires a specialist response. Specialized protection teams may expand this to provide an expanded set of referrals, but at a minimum, all responsive information services should identify referral pathways for clients who disclose or show signs of gender-based violence, abuse, trafficking, suicide risk, health emergencies, and child neglect.
- **Adapt data collection and tracking tools for documenting two-way communication with clients and assessing trends in information requests:** A standard data collection tool can be used to guide frontline communicators through providing information services to crisis-affected populations and to track individual communications for follow-up in providing information. Collecting this data is crucial to inform an iterative information-production strategy that is continually informed by the needs of the community. Data collected using this tool should be recorded in a secure online tracker (eg. Excel tracker) to facilitate with data analysis for monitoring and evaluation indicators that track your program's reach, responsiveness, and the topics of information requested by clients.

> See Module 3.4.1 Monitor Two-Way Communications for more on how data collection on engagement with clients informs monitoring and evaluation.

- **Tool 26.** High-Risk Escalation and Referral Pathway Template
- **Tool 27.** Two-Way Communication Data Collection Form Template
- **Tool 28.** Two-Way Communication Data Tracker and Dashboard

3.2.4 Equip your team with on-the-job guidance

The Information Production Handbook, Service Mapping Handbook, and Frontline Communicator Handbook are meant to be an on-the-job tools support frontline staff with a set of guiding principles, best practices, considerations, and standard processes for:

- Producing useful, responsive, accurate, digestible, inclusive, and consistent information. Editorial workflows, checklists, and source maps can be added as annexes to the handbook for easy reference for your team.
- Identifying and collecting information from service providers and secondary data sources, maintaining service maps, and sharing service information with clients.
- People-centered and 'do no harm' communication approaches, managing expectations, handling criticism and rumors, confidentiality, psychological first aid (PFA), responding to clients which require high-risk referrals, safety, and moderating online channels.

- **Tool 29.** Information Production Handbook
- **Tool 30.** Service Mapping Handbook
- **Tool 31.** Frontline Communication Handbook

3.2.5 Train your team

Ensure that the people on your team do not just have the technical skills but also understand the values of responsive information services, and the importance of putting the community at the center of everything we do, inclusion, and empowerment.[71] All staff should also be briefed on your organization's code of conduct and humanitarian principles. It is also recommended that all staff are trained on core principles of inclusion.

RESOURCES –
See IRC's Code of Conduct[72] and IFRC's Code of Conduct[73] briefing.

See CLEAR Global guidance and trainings on language interpretation and translation:

- Basics of Humanitarian Interpreting[74]
- Training Course on Humanitarian Translation[75]
- Basic Translator Training[76]
- Introduction to Translation Tools[77]
- Practical Tips for Community Interpreters[78]
- Field Guide to Humanitarian Interpreting & Cultural Mediation[79]

See CLEAR Global guidance and trainings on working with interpreters and translators:

- How to Work with Interpreters and Translators: A Guide for Organizations Responding in Emergencies[80]
- Six tips for humanitarians working with interpreters on sensitive topics[81]

Inclusion – Tool 2. Inclusion Core Concepts Training should be used only when you have appropriate technical expertise on Inclusion to deliver the training. If you don't, staff can access an online, self-paced training from Handicap International, Introduction to Disability-Inclusive Humanitarian Action (Available in English[82] and French[83]).

Information production staff working to produce information for digital channels may also benefit from training in digital accessibility.

See the European Disability Forum's training on Inclusive Digital Communication:

- Accessible Video Toolkit[84]
- Accessible Online Meeting Toolkit[85]
- Accessible Website Toolkit[86]
- Accessible Social Media Toolkit[87]
- Accessible Power Point Toolkit[88]
- Accessible Word Toolkit[89]
- Accessible Online Meetings[90]
- Accessibility of Audiovisual Media[91]
- Accessible Meetings[92]

Tool 1. RISE Onboarding Training

Tool 2. Inclusion Core Concepts Training

Tool 32. Information Production Training

Tool 33. Service Mapping Training

Tool 34. Frontline Communication Training

3.3 Launch and Publicize the Responsive Information Service

Take Action

Before you begin engaging your target audience:

- Set up any necessary infrastructure and obtain any relevant permissions, authorizations, and licenses.
- Collect any existing service mappings in the context and compliment these or fill gaps by mapping the services available to your target group in the geographic area you are covering to prepare to respond to questions from clients. Use initial assessments to prioritize the types of services clients are most in need of information on.

Tool 30. Service Mapping Handbook

Tool 24. Service Mapping Data Entry Form Template

Tool 25. Service Mapping Matrix Template

- Develop some initial informational content that can already be shared based on the information needs you identified in your assessments so you can be prepared for potential questions and establish legitimacy. Collect any existing content that responds to information needs from existing coordination structures or sectoral aid providers. Set up your content and engagement calendar and begin populating it.

Tool 29. Information Production Handbook

Tool 20. Information Production Workflow Template

Tool 21. Content Calendar Template

Tool 22. Publishing Checklist Guidance and Example

Tool 23. Information Verification Source Map Template

When you are ready to engage your target audience:

- Publicize your responsive information service. Consider how you will reach out to your target audience to let them know how they can access your services and how it can support them in accessing the information they need.

> **NOTE -** If you are using a website or platform that can be searched, you might consider leveraging search engine optimization (SEO), which is the process of optimizing websites so that they rank well on search engines through organic (nonpaid) searches.

Tool 12. Communication Channels and Formats Guidance

- When two-way communication channels are operational, begin tracking two-way communications to inform your editorial strategy and for follow-up with clients, where necessary.

Tool 27. Two-Way Communication Data Collection Form Template

Tool 28. Two-Way Communication Data Tracker and Dashboard

- Have regular check-ins with all team members to ensure healthy team dynamics and a continuous collaborative spirit between staff members.

3.4 Monitor and Adapt

Learn

Responsive information services are constantly adapting. It is essential to continually gather learning to ensure responsive information services remain effective in meeting the information needs of affected communities. Monitoring and evaluation is done throughout the program cycle, triangulating evolving situations with community perceptions and program progress rather than after-action activity monitoring.[93] Include indicators on responsive information services in humanitarian response plans to ensure accountability.

There are five primary ways that responsive information services monitor information needs and how they are meeting them:

Tracking and Monitoring of Questions, Feedback, Engagement, and Responses
> Module 3.4.1

- Analyze trends in frequently asked questions, rumors, and misinformation to proactively produce and share content
- Measure and improve response time, reach, and accessibility
- Collect reactive feedback about the responsive information service
- Track required follow-ups

Continuous data collection. Minimum monthly analysis suggested.

Client Feedback
> Module 3.4.2

- Measure outcomes for different client groups
- Measure perceived quality for different client groups (responsiveness, trust, accessibility)
- Measure satisfaction and collect proactive feedback about the responsive information service

Data collection and analysis suggested at least every six months.

Continuous adaptation

Needs assessments and landscape analyses, information from partners
> Module 2.2

- Measure and identify trends in information needs, barriers, and preferences
- Understand changes in communication environment and context

INA data collection suggested periodically. Information production focal point stays continuously up-to-date on contextual.

Risk Assessments, Accessibility Audits
> Module 2.4.4/5

- Measure risks and effectiveness of mitigation strategies, including risks related to exclusion

Update risk assessments periodically during implementation.

Content Development and Service Mapping
> Module 3.4.3

- Measure the scope or size of what trained staff produce

Data collection is continuous throughout implementation.

Tool 35. Sample Logframe for RISE

Table 9. Monitoring and Evaluation Learning Questions for RISE

The following questions and methods can guide teams in formalizing learning and adaptation. These questions are not exhaustive and can be contextualized depending on the approaches and scale.

For all questions, try to think what may be beyond the data – what are some reasons why we are not reaching the target audience? How does information relevance and easiness to understand vary across clients from different age groups or languages? What surprised us in the data? What challenged our own assumptions, and what validated what we also see from data collected from other sources? You might need to complement your monitoring and evaluation approach with additional learning activities, including targeted FGDs, surveys, or triangulation from other sources, to better understand your program and be able to take informed decisions about what you need to adapt.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Outcomes of responsive information services for clients:</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">To what extent did responsive information services meet its stated outcomes?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Have information services effectively reached the target audience?</td><td rowspan="2">Collect data on one-way and two-way communications throughout service delivery. To the extent possible, disaggregate by age, gender, and other factors.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Have information services effectively reached women, children, older persons, people with diverse SOGIESC, persons with disabilities, and other potentially marginalized groups?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Are responsive information services addressing the immediate needs and concerns that clients have to realize their priorities for safety and wellbeing? Do clients trust and understand the information?</td><td rowspan="2">Conduct a Client Satisfaction Survey at at the middle, and end of implementation (suggested minimum every six months). To the extent possible, disaggregate by age, sex, disability, and other factors.</td></tr>
<tr><td>How effectively have we addressed the specific information needs of women, children, older persons, people with diverse SOGIESC, persons with disabilities, and other potentially marginalized groups?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Are responsive information services meaningfully addressing and mitigating risk?</td><td rowspan="2">Revisit your stakeholder analysis, safety and accessibility audit, and risk assessment periodically (monthly, quarterly, semi-annually), and during project closeout. Talk about how your understanding of risks and potential 'bad actors' have changed, and continually update mitigation strategies.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Are data security and client confidentiality risk mitigation strategies relevant and effective? Are frontline communicators effectively moderating any online platforms for harassment, hate speech, or risks of exploitation? Has information shared remained neutral and actionable? How accurate and reliable was the information disseminated? Have women, children, older persons, LGBTQIA+ persons, persons with disabilities, and other potentially marginalized groups equally accessed the information service? Have acute protection concerns identified through the information service been effectively escalated?</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Outputs of responsive information services:</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">To what extent were defined outputs successfully implemented?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Were trends in topics of information requested during two-way communication assessed?</td><td rowspan="2">Collect data on two-way communications throughout service delivery to inform mapping and content approaches. Track service mapping and content development efforts.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Were essential services mapped and informational content developed that is responsive to those trending needs?</td></tr>
</table>

`Take Action

3.4.1 Monitor two-way communications

Collecting data on topics of information requested by clients during two-way interactions is crucial to inform an iterative information-production strategy that is continually informed by the needs of the community. This also forms the basis for tracking your program's reach and timeliness.

Data collection is continuous throughout implementation.

Collecting data on two-way communications with clients informs the following indicators:

Level	Result	Indicator
Intermediate outcomes	Clients access information	# of people receiving individual support through two-way communication
	Information is timely	# of days on average taken to respond to individual client questions
Outputs	Informational content that is responsive to client needs is developed	% of clients requesting information related to [topic / theme]

- **Tool 27.** Two-Way Communication Data Collection Form Template

- **Tool 28.** Two-Way Communication Data Tracker and Dashboard

3.4.2 Monitor client satisfaction

Collecting data on client experiences with your information service is crucial to understand if desired outcomes have been achieved.

Participation – This is also required to ensure accountable programming which collects and responds to client feedback.

Data collection is recommended at a minimum every six months, for example by integrating questions into wider client feedback exercises or conducting standalone surveys.

NOTE - However, it can be difficult to re-reach clients who have accessed information services to administer the survey, as teams often don't collect contact information for clients unless they need to follow up with them to close the loop on their information request. Therefore, you might conduct continuous data collection. To do this online, you might send a link to a digital survey after closing every two-way interaction and/or post a survey link for feedback on an online page (for example, on your website or Facebook page). Offline, you might consider adding a question to Tool 27. Two-Way Communication Data Collection Form Template, to seek consent to contact the client to obtain their feedback and document their contact information. You can also ask if a client has accessed your services before and administer the survey at the time of contact, keep paper surveys at an information desk, or conduct exit interviews, for example. See Tool 36. Client Satisfaction Survey Template for more information.

Collecting data on client satisfaction informs the following indicators:

Level	Result	Indicator
Outcome	Clients are better able to access services, stay safe, know and claim their rights, make informed decisions, and/or feel a sense of control or at ease in their environment (information is useful).	% of clients reporting that the information from the responsive information service was useful for them % of clients reporting that information from the responsive information service helped them to access a service % of clients reporting an improved understanding of their rights and legal entitlements because of the Responsive Information Service % of clients reporting that the information from the responsive information service helped them make a decision or solve a problem % of clients who feel that they can plan for their safety because of information from the responsive information service % of clients reporting that the information from the responsive information service made them feel less anxious or more at ease in their environment
Intermediate outcomes	Clients trust information provided by the Responsive Information Service	% of clients who report that they trust the responsive information service as a source of information % of clients who report that they would share information from the responsive information service with friends or family % of clients who report that the information shared by the responsive information service is accurate % of clients reporting that the responsive information service team members care about their situation, want to help, and are respectful
	Clients understand information	% of surveyed users who report that the information they received from the responsive information service was easy to understand

Tool 36. Client Satisfaction Survey Template

Tool 37. Client Satisfaction Survey Dashboard

Qualitative data can also be collected early in implementation, when surveys are not possible, or to complement findings from Client Satisfaction Surveys.

Tool 38. Client Satisfaction Focus Group Discussion Guide

3.4.3 Monitor service mapping and content production

Collecting data on the products delivered that contribute to achieving outcomes is important to reflect the scope or size of what trained staff produce.

Data collection is continuous throughout implementation.

Collecting data on service mapping and content production informs the following indicators:

Level	Result	Indicator
Output	Informational content that is responsive to client needs is developed	# of information products on safety options developed # on information products on rights or how to access legal protections developed # of services mapped

Tool 21. Content Calendar Template

Tool 25. Service Mapping Matrix Template

3.4.4 Monitor one-way communications

This indicator can be adapted if you are producing and sharing information over a platform that is passively accessed by your audience (meaning that they are reading, listening to, or watching informational content, but not asking questions).

Data collection is continuous throughout implementation.

Collecting data on one-way communications with clients informs the following indicator:

Level	Result	Indicator
Intermediate outcome	Clients access information	# of people who have meaningfully interacted with the responsive information service OR # of people reached with information through one-way communication

NOTE - This indicator # of people who have meaningfully interacted with the responsive information service was developed originally to analyze interactions with a responsive information service as an aggregate count of reach, inclusive of one-way and two-way communication. However, aggregating reach by simply adding the measurements of reach of one-way and two-way communications together can lead to double counting. For example, if a team manages a Facebook page which posts one-way information and responds to questions through Facebook Messenger, that team may assume that the count of engagement with one-way postings on the Facebook page includes those who also contacted you through Facebook Messenger.

Digital software such as Google Analytics, Adobe Customer Journey Analytics, Clicky, Meta Business Suite, Hootsuite Analytics, etc. can be used to analyze engagement with online channels. Meaningful access on a website or Facebook, for example, might be users viewing a page, post etc. for more than 10 seconds (reflecting all unique users, based on Facebook and Google analytics and accounting for overlap). Analytics can also inform other areas of inquiry, for example, tracking searches on your website that yield no result (meaning you don't have the information the client needs), can feed into iterative content production.

If one-way and two-way communication are not through the same channel, or you cannot avoid double-counting (for example, you host a weekly radio show that disseminates information and also run an information desk, and there is no way to know if the same person is engaging with both), you can consider counting reach of one-way and two-way communications separately, using # of people reached with information through one-way communication.

However, indicators measuring the reach of one-way communications can be challenging to measure. This indicator may need to be adapted to measure dissemination instead of reach, depending on the channel(s) you are using. For example, if you are printing and posting banners in a camp, you might use the indicator # of posters disseminated.

From BBC Media Action Humanitarian Broadcasting in Emergencies: A Synthesis Of Evaluation Findings[94]:

A clear reason for prioritising a communication response, and an obvious indicator of success, is the number of people it is capable of reaching. One of the benefits of mass communication also makes it very difficult to evaluate. Broadcasts can reach people that are isolated and that other NGOs cannot reach but, as a consequence, it is difficult to record how many people broadcasts reach and what their effects are.

3.4.5 Reflect and act on monitoring and evaluation data

It is important to plan for reflection and action taking based on monitoring and evaluation data. A good practice is to hold regular team meetings to reflect on data throughout program implementation.

Always disaggregate data by age, gender, disability, and other demographic factors, where possible.

Participation – *Adapted from the IFRC CEA Guide.*[95]

When there is more capacity, time, and resources, involve communities in planning the evaluation, organize a community-led evaluation, and discuss evaluation findings with communities and external partners.

Additional Resources

These are supplementary materials to enhance your understanding and application of the toolkit. It includes a mapping of additional resources for further reading and deeper insights into responsive information services and related topics.

VIEW ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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