



Orientation: Information management for coordinated community engagement

Information management functions of an inter-agency AAP/CCE working group

** Work on this will continue in 2020 and beyond **

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Objective

To develop a guidance document to articulate the role of an Information Management Officer in supporting a CCE working group (WG), and to enable a common understanding of the information management functions and needs.

This also serves to orient an AAP/CCE Coordinator as to the information management tasks that they may need to complete, in the event that an Information Management Officer (IMO) is not available or deployed. In this situation, the tasks would need to be prioritised and/or remote support provided to enable the coordinator to fulfil their coordination responsibilities, in addition to the information management functions. This document was supported by funding from UNICEF.

Audience

This guidance is a resource developed for AAP/CCE Information Management Officers, CCE practitioners and decision-makers requesting AAP/CCE surge support (as an advocacy tool around the need to deploy IMOs to support the CCE Coordinator).

In addition, the guidance aims to enable global CCE leadership to develop a common understanding of information management needs. Potentially this could form the basis of working towards a more predictable and consistent inter-agency approach to the way information from affected communities is collected, protected, stored, analysed and shared.

Background

Unlike other technical areas of information management (e.g. health, WASH), the discipline of AAP/CCE information management is not well-defined or structured. In order to enable a more predictable approach to AAP/CCE, there needs to be a common understanding of the definition, the key components, tools and methodologies of AAP/CCE information management.

Without such clarity, there will not be predictable information management needs, which means deploying suitable information management candidates to support the AAP/CCE work will be hard, if not impossible.

While there may be specific responsibilities for a Coordinator or IMO on AAP/CCE, the reality is that everyone collecting data from the affected community has a responsibility to adhere to standards and common methodologies. These will enable the data to be used to inform decision-making and to empower the communities to be able to be active partners in their recovery.

While originally envisaged as a briefing for the Coordinator and the IMO deployed to support AAP/CCE, this document should also act as a broader awareness-raising tool, to ensure that all humanitarian actors working on AAP/CCE are aware of the need to have a principled, systematic and collaborative approach to collecting information from the community, as well as including some basic minimum standards in data protection.¹

¹ This should follow a similar approach as the [Protection Information Management](#) (PIM) initiative.

This document draws heavily on the work of clusters, notably WASH, to develop guidance for information management functions, as well as the work of the Protection Information Management (PIM) initiative to harmonise approaches to collecting protection-related information across humanitarian actors.

Overview of AAP/CCE working group information management functions

Information management refers to the collection, analysis, reporting, storage and sharing of humanitarian information in a coordinated, systematic and transparent way. Three broad levels of humanitarian information management have been identified:²

- Strategic
- Technical
- Operational

The associated IM functions and outputs for a working group associated with these different levels are described below:

Strategic level

An IM workplan and strategy for the AAP/CCE working group must be developed. The IM workplan will outline the critical reporting outputs and dates (e.g. of SitReps, dashboards, 4Ws, WG meetings, bulletins, etc).

A good IM strategy should include an assessment of the IM environment, which defines the existing capacity for collecting, protecting, recording and sharing information in the working group and within partner organisations; as well as a review of existing, pre-crisis information.

The strategy will consider the simplification of information collection systems and limiting all collection to priority, mission-critical information, as well as guidance for recruiting additional IM support.

Technical level

Information management is critical for ensuring that practical and easy-to-use systems to collect, interpret and disseminate information are identified and, where necessary, adapted to the context.

Within an AAP/CCE working group context, this could include more effective or efficient means of conducting needs assessments, simple data harmonisation approaches, methods

² Adapted from 'Humanitarian Information Management, WASH Cluster'. Available at: <http://washcluster.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2016/06/1a.-GCCU-The-role-of-an-Information-Management-Officer.pdf>

to aggregate feedback data across organisations, as well as ways to visualise consolidated feedback data to help inform decision-making, etc.

Operational level

Information management is critical for collecting a minimum level of information to support decision making in an emergency response. This would include developing standardised information products to enable effective coordination of AAP/CCE activities, including:

- Contact directories of humanitarian partners
- Meeting schedules, agendas and minutes of meetings
- Who does What Where When (4W) database and maps
- Documents about the context (mission reports, assessments, etc)
- Inventory of common cluster data sets
- Situation reports
- Mapping products

AAP/CCE information management support throughout the Humanitarian Programme Cycle

AAP/CCE is a cross-cutting way of working applicable to all humanitarian action, as well as being a programmatic area in its own right. This dichotomy means that in addition to the support to WG partners, there is also an advisory role for the Coordinator – and therefore, by default, the IMO – for the other clusters/sectors.

The AAP/CCE IMO would be primarily involved in three of the HPC steps for the working group: Needs Assessments and Analysis, Strategic Response Planning and Implementation and Monitoring.³ For these steps, activities to support the AAP/CCE working group are set out below, but which also support the wider response, in recognition of the cross-cutting nature of AAP/CCE.

Needs Assessments and Analysis

The development of a common knowledge base, about the situation of the affected community from an AAP/CCE perspective, is fundamental in enabling evidence-based decision-making. Key stages in this process are: assessing existing secondary data, integrating AAP/CCE questions into joint assessments, developing more technical, in-depth AAP/CCE assessments, and aiding the analysis of results.

Assessing existing secondary data

³ The IMO may also be involved in a more limited capacity in the other two steps. For instance, assisting in project development and funding allocations in the Resource Mobilisation step and working group performance monitoring for the Operational Review and Evaluation step.

In many contexts there can be a lot of existing secondary information about the affected communities affected collected pre-crisis that can help inform decision-making about the humanitarian operations.

However, far too often, this potentially valuable resource is overlooked. New assessments are conducted, which add additional (and likely repetitive) pressure on communities in terms of answering assessment questions. Uncoordinated or repetitive assessment can both raise community expectations – and begin to cast confusion or doubt on the usefulness of such assessments.

Analysing the existing secondary data should be a key information management function of the working group, to identify what information gaps exist, what information needs to be validated and who in-country could potentially advise on tools and methodologies. This analysis should draw on knowledge in the development, private and social science (e.g. anthropology) sectors.

Developing an information product that reflects the analysis of the secondary data can help the working group but also other cluster/sectors as they plan their own assessments and subsequent response.

Integrating AAP/CCE questions into joint assessments

It is essential to include AAP/CCE questions as part of the Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) for the response, or its equivalent. The questions would need to be contextualised based on the specifics of the humanitarian operations and the communities to be assessed. The development, contextualisation and prioritisation of the questions should involve relevant clusters/sectors; they will be the end-users of the data, so must value and need the data being collected, increasing the likelihood that the information is actively used in decision-making. There is an existing [menu of potential AAP/CCE questions that could be included in the MSNA from the IASC](#), which can be adapted and contextualised.

The IMO would provide advice on how to ask the right questions, using the right methodology to get the information needed to be of strategic use both by AAP/CCE practitioners and wider relevant clusters/sectors. These questions would also inform the development of the response-wide AAP/CCE indicators, which can be used for monitoring purposes.

The IMO can also offer guidance to assessment enumerators on how to integrate participatory and inclusive approaches to data collection. For example:

- Advising on sampling methods to ensure representative sampling, including disaggregated by age, gender and other vulnerability criteria (e.g. people living with disabilities).
- Advocating for the use of open questions e.g. “what are your top priorities” and “what are your preferred means of delivery” (in-kind, vouchers, cash etc) – and provide suggestions for how this can be categorised and analysed to inform decision-making.

- Advising on the need to field test assessment questions, using local languages, before rolling out the full assessment.
- Advising of the need to train enumerators on how to conduct the assessment, with an emphasis on culture and language, as well as potentially key informant interview or focus group discussion skills, if needed.

Developing more technical, in-depth AAP/CCE assessments

It is likely that in addition to the snapshot the MSNA (or equivalent) provides, a more detailed technical assessment will be needed; a standalone AAP/CCE assessment that can offer greater insights into the concerns, needs and priorities of the affected population.

The content of such an assessment will be highly context-specific, with the objective being to provide a richer understanding that can enable more effective and efficient community engagement across the response. It should consider some cultural and anthropological factors – social norms, community dynamics, social exclusion, etc.

Examples of assessment tools, which could provide source questions, tools or approaches, include:

- Internews’s [Information Ecosystem mapping tool](#), which looks at eight dimensions: information needs, information landscape, production and movement, dynamics of access, information use, information impact, social trust and influencers.
- IFRC have piloted a rapid Knowledge Attitudes and Practices (KAP) assessment tool in response to disease outbreaks and other crises.
- UNHCR coordinated a regional assessment of the [information and communication needs of refugees and migrants caught up in the Venezuela crisis](#).

The specifics of the content and assessment methodologies will vary based on the context, but the need for the technical advisory function of the IMO on the most appropriate tools and approaches will be constant.

Regardless of the type of assessment implemented, the IMO could also provide support to the working group during the needs assessment and analysis phase by:

- Assisting partners/WG Coordinator and assessment teams in the operational planning of assessments (sharing maps and situational data for the target assessment areas);
- Sharing information to aid the undertaking of assessments (e.g. mobile data collection information, example partner templates).
- Collating completed assessments and creating metadata on assessments;
- Sharing/uploading assessments to the operational website and ensuing partners/OCHA are aware of new assessments.

Analysis of the results

Regardless of the type or level of assessment, one of the most important information management functions for the AAP/CCE IMO and working group is the analysis of the data

collected from the community. The data collected needs to be analysed to turn it into actionable information to guide decision-making.

The IMO would be responsible for providing an analysis of the data collected relating to the AAP/CCE questions or assessments, for the working group to consider.

The analysis should draw on both the primary and secondary data that has been collected. The data needs to be interpreted and contextualised to acquire meaning – this should be done with the guidance of the IMO but should involve partners and stakeholders who know the context, as well as representatives of the teams who collected the data.

Data analysis is made up of three steps:⁴

1. **Data preparation:** grouping similar data to allow patterns in the data to emerge. These patterns are the basis for analysis and decision-making
2. **Description of data:** describes similarities and differences between two measures. Different comparisons can be made:
 - between geographical locations, district A and district B, rural and urban locations, camp and non-camp, etc.
 - between social groups e.g. IDP and host community, men and women, etc.
 - pre- and post-disaster, dry vs. rainy season
3. **Interpretation of data:** attaches meaning to data, determining why a trend exists. This requires judgements to be made. Different analysts can interpret the same data differently. It is important that interpretation happens in a group setting with different technical backgrounds and knowledge, and where consensus is reached.

Once the analysis has been conducted, it is necessary to develop information products and share the analysis findings with the wider humanitarian community. A process should also be developed to validate a summary of the analysis with the affected community, wherever possible.

Depending on the stage of the HPC, the assessment analysis can directly inform the Humanitarian Needs Overview, or cluster/sector planning.

Strategic Response Planning

The planning of the AAP/CCE strategy for the working group must be based on the assessed needs of the affected community – i.e. it must be demand-driven. It can be very easy to focus more on the capacity of the humanitarian actors to respond and develop a strategy that is built around this capacity – a supply-driven approach. The information management function is essential to provide the best quality data that can inform more strategic, demand-led decision-making.

Equally important is how the AAP/CCE-related information (based on data gathered by the assessments) is presented to other clusters/sectors, to inform their programming. This

⁴ Adapted from IFRC's 2014 [Operational guidance: initial rapid multi-sectoral assessment](#)

function can show the added value of coordinating AAP/CCE and provide insights that the clusters/sectors are unlikely to have had access to individually. Additionally, it can help mainstream AAP/CCE as a way of working within their other technical areas, such as WASH, health, etc. The IMO could support the Coordinator in the development of sector/cluster-specific analysis, and on presentations to clusters/sectors of relevant AAP/CCE information.

Specific actions for the IMO to support the strategic planning phase include:

- Helping the Coordinator to **develop the AAP/CCE sections of the response plan** (if necessary) or the AAP/CCE working group strategy, by providing general response data, needs assessment information and figures on needs and partner capacity;
- **Analysing gaps in AAP/CCE support** based on analysis of the response data, needs assessments and AAP/CCE working group 4Ws.
- **Identifying appropriate indicators** with the Coordinator, for both the AAP/CCE strategy and the wider response plan – ensuring that the indicators identified are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound)
- **Designing and agreeing specific monitoring tools** with working group partners to track progress against the agreed indicators.

Implementation and Monitoring

The information management function of an AAP/CCE working group is critical at this stage of the HPC. The aggregation of community feedback from organisational and/or common feedback mechanisms should inform analysis that identifies trends and issues more broadly within the affected community. This is where the working group can play an active role in amplifying the voice of the community to inform decision-making.

While having harmonised feedback mechanisms is the ideal, the reality is that organisations have their own methods, tools and approaches for gathering community feedback. Changing these may be unrealistic during an active response environment. In order to be able to provide information about priority community concerns and issues, it may therefore be necessary to ask organisations for their analysis of the community feedback collected. The IMO can then conduct a meta-analysis (an analysis of the analysis), in order to identify trends in community feedback more broadly.

The outcomes of this meta-analysis can then be presented in decision-making fora to enable course corrections or programme adaptation as necessary. This function, done well, can elevate the working group from an information-sharing body to one that has strategic value across the response.

The IMO can support this by:

- **Orienting the working group partners as to the meta-analysis**, including advocating and persuading them to share their feedback data/analysis. This would include how the data will be anonymised, protected and what it will be used for (i.e. trend analysis), as well as what it will not be used for (e.g. highlighting any specific organisations' bad practice or failure). Having a mock-up of what the final information product could look like can help allay partners' concerns at this stage.

- **Engaging humanitarian decision-makers to identify what analysis or information they would find most useful** to guide their decision-making (e.g. cluster/sector coordinators or HCT).
- **Advising on minimum standards** of data and/or analysis provided by organisations, to enable meta-analysis.
- **Developing and managing an appropriate data flow** for the data and/or analysis provided by organisations and frame this within the larger IM workflow, within the IM strategy for the WG.
- **Carrying out the meta-analysis** with a group of technical specialists from partner organisations, including producing the information identified by decision-makers, and other relevant information.
- **Developing an information product** for leadership within the humanitarian operations to guide decision-making.

Monitoring

Regular monitoring of the AAP/CCE working group strategy (through the agreed indicators/targets) together with community perception surveys can provide evidence towards the working group's achievements, as well as highlighting critical gaps in the response.

The 4W is a crucial tool in monitoring the response and in identifying gaps and duplication. It is suggested to take a staged approach in the early days of a response to developing the 4W, as it will often take weeks to develop and agree AAP/CCE indicators, once the emergency situation and community needs become better understood. Indicators for the 4W will evolve during this period; agreeing them too early can lead to frustration if submitted information is quickly rendered unusable as the indicators develop. This can make partners less likely to supply additional information in the future, for fear that data too will become obsolete.

Specific information management functions during the monitoring phase could include:

- **Creating/amending the 4W** until the indicators are defined (not all IMO's will have to do this; they may deploy in the later stages of an emergency).
- **Determining the best software solution** for 4W.

The focus of the IMO function should be on the monitoring of the progress of the AAP/CCE working group strategy, or more specifically, on monitoring the AAP/CCE activities and indicators. This will require an effective information management system to be in place, to enable effective monitoring and coordination of the partners' AAP/CCE activities.

Building capacity

The current lack of standardisation, or common understanding, of AAP/CCE information management means that a key role of the IMO will inevitably be building such capacity among partners and stakeholders. This could include:

- **Briefing partners on the AAP/CCE working group information management strategy** and how this support the wider humanitarian operations
- **Developing templates and tools** to facilitate data collection and sharing
- **Developing an AAP/CCE information management product.** Topics could include:
 - AAP/CCE information management principles, minimum standards, tools, approaches, methodologies, etc.
 - AAP/CCE data – where to find it, and how and when to use it
 - Information management tips in emergencies
 - Using data responsibility – data protection and safeguarding
- **Developing short training or courses for AAP/CCE information management** for local partners. Topics could include:
 - Using qualitative data analysis software for analysing assessments
 - Using Excel in emergencies.

Guiding principles of AAP/CCE information management⁵

All AAP/CCE information management activities should follow some core guiding principles. Actions should:

Be people-centred and inclusive: Activities will be guided by the interests and well-being of the population, which must participate and be included in all relevant stages of AAP/CCE information management. AAP/CCE information management activities must be sensitive to age, gender, and other issues of diversity.

Do no harm: Activities must include a risk assessment and take steps, if necessary, to mitigate identified risks. The risk assessment must look at negative consequences that may result from data collection and subsequent actions or service delivery as long as the AAP/CCE information management activity is being carried out.

Be ‘protection’ and ‘safeguarding’ aware: Approaches require a careful assessment of risk, especially in situations of armed conflict or violence as engaging individuals or certain groups may put them at greater risk or alienate them. Adequate and effective safeguards are put in place, including effective data security and protection mechanisms.

Have a defined purpose: Given the potentially sensitive and personal nature of AAP/CCE-related information, the gathering, use and retention of such information must always serve a clear and specific purpose. The information must be proportional to both the identified risk and costs vis-à-vis the expected response, and be aimed at enabling the voices of the communities to influence decision-making.

Be based on informed consent and confidentiality: Personal information may be collected only after informed consent has been provided by the individual in question, and that individual must be aware of the purpose of the collection. Further, confidentiality must be clearly explained to the individual before the information may be collected.

Follow established data protection protocols and security: AAP/CCE information management must adhere to international standards of data protection and data security.

⁵ Adapted from the Protection Information Management (PIM) initiative

Be competent: Actors engaging in AAP/CCE information management activities are accountable for ensuring that activities are carried out by information management and AAP/CCE staff who have been equipped and trained appropriately.

Be impartial: All steps of the AAP/CCE information management cycle must be undertaken in an objective, impartial, and transparent manner while identifying and minimising bias.

Be coordinated and collaborative: All actors implementing AAP/CCE information management activities must promote the broadest possible collaboration and coordination between humanitarian actors and other stakeholders, while adhering to the principles noted above. To the best extent possible, AAP/CCE information management activities must avoid the duplication of other efforts and must instead always first aim to build upon existing efforts and mechanisms.