TOOL 11

Tips on holding community meetings and how to use information and feedback[1]

Community Engagement and Accountability / IFRC / June 2016

This document is intended as guidance to support programme managers to plan and hold community meetings. This information in this document comes from a variety of documents including ALNAP, Sphere, Good Enough Guide and USAID/AI.comm.

What Is the Purpose of a Community Meeting?

By bringing together a cross-section of viewpoints, a community meeting is the perfect setting to exchange ideas and information, grant community groups real opportunities to affect plans and make changes and gives them responsibility as part of the process so that they feel their efforts will matter.

Tips on holding a Community meeting:

Planning

Start planning at least a week before the meeting date. Designate a planning committee which has members of the community who would be helpful in the planning process. Community leaders are useful during mobilization. Develop and set a clear goal and agenda for the meeting and communicate this widely. Invite participation from a cross section of the community.

Facilitation

If possible, consider using two facilitators for each meeting. One leads the discussion, the other takes notes, but make sure you have permission from the group to take notes. When facilitating a discussion, use open-ended questions as much as possible to bring out the views of participants. Be aware that residents may express anger about past experiences. Acknowledge unresolved anger and frustration from past events and move forward with a positive tone. Try to remain positive and unbiased: do not guide the discussion toward a certain outcome or dwell on particular problems. Encourage all members of the group to participate.

Use open-ended questions such as:

- How...?
- What...?
- Why...?
- Can you tell us more about...?
- Can you tell us what happened?
- How did you feel when…?
- Why do you think…?

At the end of the meeting, check if the written record has reflected the main points

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[1] From the Accountability to Beneficiaries in East Africa and the Indian Ocean Islands / November 2014/

ICRC

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Public

Participants

Try to hold the meeting in an open space, but away from spectators or other interruptions. Groups of participants should reflect the community and various constituencies, such as a family caregivers, business owners, healers, or teachers. Attempt to capture as much **diversity** of the community as possible, including men, women and marginalized.

Timing

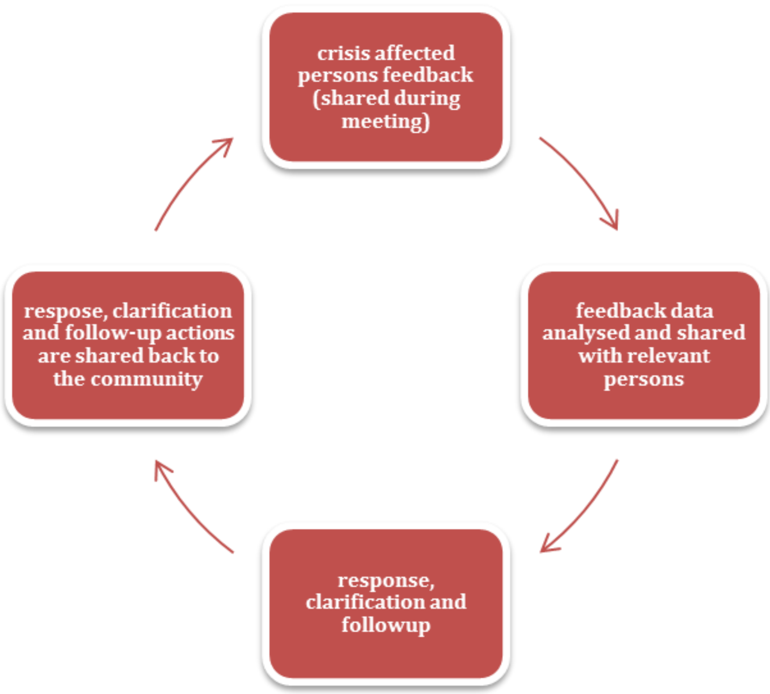
Try to keep the discussion to an hour at most.

AFTER A MEETING: how to use information and feedback

Tracking, information and feedback help field teams to know what is working and what is not working. If information from the meeting is not used, collecting it is a waste of time and resources.

Share your summary with local leaders, community organizations, health care workers, and others in the community who can use the information to help better plan their programmes and activities. Share your findings with the provincial health department, your branch or HQ, and others who create policies and make resource allocations for your community. Finally, use your summary to identify the information gaps that you can try to fill next time your community meets to discuss these issues.

Response, clarification and follow-up actions (if taken, or not taken) should be communicated back to the community or affected persons.



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The Sphere handbook, Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in humanitarian response. The Sphere Project

'we are committed to listen to you' World Vision experience with humanitarian feedback mechanisms in Dafur, Case Study, ALNAP ; CDA