



CAMP COORDINATION  
AND CAMP MANAGEMENT



# COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITIES IN IRAQ IDP CAMPS BASIC GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS

## COMMUNICATION IN CAMPS: A RIGHT AND A RESPONSIBILITY

Access to information is a human right, and communicating with the camp population is a core responsibility of camp management. Camp residents have a right to basic information about their surroundings, available services and situations affecting them. Communication must also be two-way; the camp population (including individuals and groups most at risk) must have opportunities to provide feedback and be involved in decision-making processes, as well as to communicate effectively with each other and with loved ones. In the absence of information, rumour and spread of misinformation is common, which can lead to bigger problems.

### SECTION A: CAMP COMMUNICATION – MINIMUM CONSIDERATIONS

Good communication is the cornerstone of camp management, and needs to be mainstreamed into all aspects of the work of camp managers. But it also needs to be considered more deliberately as a service in its own right. Camp managers must ensure the following are implemented effectively in camps, at a minimum:

- Orientation to the camp and local area for new residents
- 24-hour access to basic camp service and survival information
- Specific mass communication on camp events (distributions, activities, assessments)
- Specific mass communication on health, safety and protection issues
- The ability for camp residents to connect with loved ones and to obtain information on their own (in Iraq, this often means reliable and inclusive mobile phone access)
- A complaints and feedback mechanism
- A camp committee structure
- Coordinated messaging between operational agencies

It is important to remember that each camp and population is different and the “best way” to communicate will depend on the context. As a general principal, the camp population should be involved as much as possible in the design and implementation of communication activities, and the needs of vulnerable groups should always be taken into account.

### SECTION B: BUILDING ON MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR CREATIVE, PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES

Communication is the lifeblood of any community, and so being intentional about using communication to enhance camp life, mitigate tensions, ensure inclusion and promote participation is important in IDP camps. This can mean many things, but camp managers should consider the following in camp and service planning:

- Participatory community communications projects
- Spaces and equipment that promote camp communications activities
- Communication involving the host community

**This document offers recommendations and guidance for camp managers on the above aspects of camp communication.**

# CAMP COMMUNICATION – MINIMUM CONSIDERATIONS

## 1. ORIENTATION TO THE CAMP AND LOCAL AREA

It is essential that new camp residents receive an orientation on their new home. As well as being shown where they will live (ie: which tent/shelter is theirs) they should be given information immediately on:

- Items that can and cannot be brought into the camp
- Camp code/s of conduct
- Location of latrines and showers
- Location of services in the camp and information on any restrictions or targeting criteria
- Ways in which they can provide feedback, complain or ask questions of management
- Any relevant safety information, including evacuation plans
- Contact details for emergency services
- Local area information, including transportation options and available services

This information should be given verbally at a minimum, and preferably supplemented with accurate printed material in appropriate languages.

## 2. 24 HOUR INFORMATION ACCESS FOR COMMUNITIES IN CAMPS

Beyond the orientation, the camp community should have around-the-clock access to clear information regarding:

- Camp management mandate and structure (with contact information)
- Agencies working in the camp, and what they are doing
- Camp map, with facilities, services assembly and evacuation points highlighted
- Details of upcoming events, assessments, surveys or distributions
- Way/s in which camp residents can provide feedback, complain or ask questions
- Contact details for emergency services and legal assistance

This information should be available at all times to everyone, including those with disabilities or particular vulnerabilities. A simple and practical starting point is a noticeboard. Boards should be weatherproof and located for easy access by the majority of camp residents, with information updated regularly. Text should be in appropriate language/s and supported by graphics.

Noticeboards, though, need to be supplemented with verbal communication, especially when they are being updated with new information that everybody needs to know. The best way to do this will vary camp-by-camp. At the very least, information should be verbally provided to a camp committee for further dissemination, with recognition of extra support needed by camp management to ensure messages reach the most vulnerable. Updated information can also be shared by community mobilisation teams, in community meetings, or via existing camp services (eg. in health clinics or schools). See below: “Mass information”.

**Always consider vulnerable groups – the elderly, women, people with disabilities, people who cannot read – how will you ensure they have access to this core information?**

**A noticeboard with inaccurate or out-of-date information is useless. Ensure that the information and any contact details provided are always accurate and up to date.**

### 3. MASS INFORMATION

Camp residents need information on many topics, and at various stages of camp life: upcoming events (assessments, distributions, camp committee elections, opportunities for participation, entertainment, etc); protection and safety guidance; changes to policies affecting their lives, etc. To ensure that information is received and understood by women, men, girls and boys, a variety of mechanisms should be used. Choices will depend on the type of message to be communicated, the size and profile of the population it needs to reach, protection considerations and the technology available in the camp. It is important to:

- field test information before it is widely circulated in order to understand how to present key messages
- realise that use of certain words can have different impacts on different target groups
- utilise a variety of techniques to share key information: holding meetings – which should include house-to-house visits for people who are not mobile, and must always take gender into account; radio or newspaper announcements; information boards; flyers or hand-outs; formal addresses from key persons in the community; employing educated and respected members such as heads of religious communities or teachers to hold discussion groups
- follow-up to make sure that messages have been understood and acted upon. This often overlooked step provides an important option not only for clarifying that messages have been understood, but also to receive important information back.

Information can be disseminated through radio, meetings and leaflets/posters at mass gatherings, through religious institutions, at water points, schools and marketplaces among other frequently visited public areas.

**Mass info at camp distributions:** Distributions can be particularly complicated and appropriate communication is critical. It is essential that information is shared with camp residents about the items and quantity to be distributed and the distribution procedures, including any changes. Monitoring should then be done to ensure the information has been understood. Messages to camp residents about distributions should contain the basics on **who, what, when, where, and how**. Pre-distribution announcements are the responsibility of the distributing agency, though the camp management agency should monitor and supervise. Simple things like knowing what items (e.g. boxes, buckets, bags) to bring to the collection site in order to carry away received food can help keep queues down and people calm and orderly. For more information on distributions, refer to the camp management toolkit and the FSC cluster.

### 4. ACCESS TO COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

The ability to communicate with family, friends, social services and authorities is a lifeline for families who have been displaced. Mobile phone usage is high in Iraq – approximately 90% - and people rely on the ability to stay connected. Each camp will differ when it comes to how best to support telecommunications needs. If there is no electricity available at household level, the establishment of communal mobile phone charging stations is recommended. It is important that information needs are included in camp assessments, so that appropriate responses can be recommended to agencies. In larger camps, for example, SMS can be an effective way to communicate with camp residents, but only if there are ways to ensure that the messages will reach the whole family (including women and the elderly). In some camps, sim cards have been distributed. In other camps, the establishment of internet cafes helps people access information as they need it. Access to news and other media can also be important to displaced families

seeking information on their places of origin, security or other situations that affect them. Communal spaces in camps should ideally have access to a news source (radio or TV).

## 5. COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK

Camp residents must always have the ability to communicate complaints and feedback. This not only builds trust and legitimacy, but also provides opportunities for the management of the camp to improve, and enables the detection of protection concerns. There will always be complaints and feedback, so it is essential to ensure that complaints are handled, addressed/referred and learnt-from appropriately. Complaint mechanisms with follow-up procedures help to preserve the dignity of displaced persons and ease tensions in the camp. By establishing a complaint mechanism, agencies are accountable for mistakes and signal their preparedness to rectify them. Once one or more appropriate mechanisms (complaints box, community outreach teams, hotline, etc) have been established, it must be ensured that information on how and where to direct grievances is communicated to all camp residents.

Complaints procedures should:

- include a standard complaints form, but review all complaints received, regardless of format
- give persons submitting a complaint an opportunity to identify themselves – to the management, at a minimum – whilst respecting their anonymity, should they fear retaliation
- include provisions to submit complaints through a staff member other than the one about whom the complaint is made
- ensure access by all people, including those who cannot read or write or may be less able to complain freely due to family/community power structures
- inform camp residents of their right to confidentiality and to know what information is being collected, what it will be used for and what feedback and follow-up to expect.

**The role of traditional dispute-resolution systems must be understood and monitored – while they are often the most respected and accessed measure of accountability, they often do not provide adequate redress for female GBV survivors.**

## 6. WORKING WITH CAMP COMMITTEES

It is recommended in almost all camp settings that camp committees are established. Leadership structures in the camp will be more effective if they include members of the camp community. Trusted camp committee structures can be very effective ways to facilitate two-way communication in camps, and can also generate ideas and projects for communications in camps, with a deeper understanding of cultural and other sensitivities. Ensure the role of the committee in information sharing and communications is included in camp committee TORs. When disseminating information to the camp community it is important for the Camp Management Agency to ensure that information reaches all concerned and does not stay at the level of camp leadership. Information can be misused by leaders as a tool to retain or regain power or control or for the manipulation or misuse of certain information. Appropriate forums and mechanisms should be developed to enhance information flow to the wider community.

**Camp committees do need to be monitored to ensure adherence to humanitarian principles and to prevent the abuse of power. This applies to communications activities also.**

## 7. COORDINATED INFORMATION – COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGENCIES

NGOs or other agencies working in the camp will be communicating with camp populations, and may also have their own feedback mechanisms. As much as possible, ensure information sharing occurs between all agencies, as this will help to ensure that messages that reach IDPs are consistent, accurate and do not cause further confusion. To address frequently asked questions, it is recommended that a Q&A document is produced by the camp coordination team and shared between all agencies, so that all camp staff are not sharing conflicting information. As long as it is clear and accurate, more information is better than less, so build direct contact and collaboration between NGOs and the wider camp population, in addition to contact via the committee – in order to share key information directly with the population, and understand needs and views of different groups.

**The camp management team does not need to implement all communications activities, but it is responsible for ensuring that effective, two-way communication occurs in the camp. The camp management team has an important role to play in identifying gaps, coordinating and supporting agencies which have requisite expertise and implementing where needed.**

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# STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATION: CREATIVITY & PARTICIPATION

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Communication on any topic will be more effective if there are high levels of community participation and leadership. On top of working within community structures to disseminate information, avenues should be sought to give communities their own voice. Very often, camp populations include people with skills in journalism, the arts or communications, and this can be utilised to the benefit of the camp community.

Participatory communications can take many forms, and will always depend on the setting and participants. Examples in existing camps include community radio stations, photography projects and film festivals. Some ways to promote participatory communications include:

- Providing/facilitating access to communications tools, equipment and training for community-led projects
- Providing space, equipment and support for community-led events
- Encouraging projects by media development agencies or NGOs with relevant expertise
- Encouraging media, film, theatre or arts clubs
- Providing space, equipment and support for community-led events
- Encouraging projects by media development agencies or NGOs with relevant expertise

Simple activities like camp Q&A sessions or community forums, particularly for women, children, the elderly or vulnerable groups, can also ensure voices from the camp are being heard.

**Consider when you might be able to build on pre-existing community structures, or help to set up groups of people who may have specific needs (such as disabled people, pregnant women, elderly, and children) to work on projects.**

**While participatory approaches should respect local culture there needs to be due regard for culturally-embedded power relationships which may be exploitative or oppressive.**

## THE HOST COMMUNITY

For a nearby village, town or other local community, hosting a camp population can place significant demands on precious and limited resources. They may resent the camp population and the assistance they are receiving, especially if they do not share the same ethnicity, language, history or traditions. They may be fearful of the impact that the camp will have or the trouble it could cause them. The role of the Camp Management Agency is to establish and promote effective links with the host community such that their fears and needs can be heard and participatory action, where possible. Establishing forums and lines of communication and ensuring host community representatives at camp meetings is important, as is jointly exploring scope for interventions which could be mutually beneficial for camp and host communities. Supporting community-led communications events for the whole community can be an effective way of bridging community gaps. Forums and systems are in place for representatives of the camp and host communities to meet regularly to address and resolve issues.

## CwC CHECKLIST FOR CAMP MANAGERS

- ◁ At least one agency is responsible for camp orientation, including printed materials
- ◁ A noticeboard (or several) has been erected in the camp, and is updated regularly with important and up-to-date information
- ◁ Information about the services and programmes within the camp is well-mapped and disseminated
- ◁ A complaints and feedback mechanism is in place, with appropriate follow-up
- ◁ The camp management agency's mandate and project plan have been made available to the camp residents
- ◁ Information on the applicable code(s) of conduct has been made available to the camp population
- ◁ The camp population (including women and children) know where to report a case of humanitarian misconduct or abuse
- ◁ Local leaders are regularly involved and consulted
- ◁ Vulnerable groups are regularly involved and consulted
- ◁ Children and women are provided appropriate opportunities to talk about their concerns, ideas and questions
- ◁ Community coordination forums, mechanisms and information channels are effective
- ◁ Sector specific and cross-cutting camp committees are established and utilised for communications
- ◁ Special attention is given to ensuring that all groups are able to participate, including those with specific needs and/or those who are marginalised and lacking a voice in decision-making
- ◁ Information and communications needs are considered in camp assessments and gap analysis
- ◁ The camp community participates and is involved in information management
- ◁ The camp community provides and receives information about the standards of living in the camp; their right to the adequate provision of services and assistance; and decision-making processes which affect their lives
- ◁ Information in the camp is designed in such a way as reach persons with limited literacy
- ◁ Referral systems are coordinated, checked and in place, ready to respond to issues raised through CwC activities or feedback mechanisms
- ◁ Forums and systems are in place for representatives of the camp and host communities to meet to address and resolve issues
- ◁ Spaces, equipment and/or projects are available in the camp to enable residents to express themselves and be heard
- ◁ Camp residents have access to appropriate telecommunications technology
- ◁ Camp residents have access to news and cultural media
- ◁ Communication occurs with the host community as required

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE REFER TO THE CAMP MANAGEMENT TOOLKIT**