Information and communication are critical forms of aid, without which disaster survivors cannot access services, engage with aid providers, and make the best decisions for themselves and their communities.

Communities empowering themselves to lead in their own recovery.

Communication is Aid

Communicating with communities (CwC) - a field of humanitarian preparedness and response helping to meet the information & communication needs of people affected by or prone to disasters.
This approach recognized the areas of specialisation of CwC and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) - where they differ - as well as supporting the areas of significant complimentarity.

Both AAP and CwC plans included aspects of CwC and AAP. However, there were areas of work that were both independent and interrelated.

CwC sought to re-establish two-way traditional communication channels which extend beyond the ‘aid provider-receiver’ relationship by working with local media, telecommunication providers.

Our Approach

Communications specialist partners needed coordination.
Leveraged off a pre-existing regional CwC network of some 140 members from about 80 partner agencies; including private sector, media, UN, INGO and regional groups.

This network is comprised of CwC and AAP focal points, as well as programme staff and senior management.

The immediate outreach collaborative efforts of CwC and AAP staff helped improve communications and bridged gaps in the work of humanitarian partners, local government, civil society, local media, voluntary groups and affected communities themselves.

**Some Positives**
With leadership from both WFP and OCHA interagency approach to CwC/AAP was resourced and mobilized early. There was strong multi-sector coordination early and continues – particular with government, but also with the private sector, local media, humanitarian partners and survivors themselves.

The CDAC-N continues to support an inter-agency approach to CwC and has been involved in establishing an formal regional network lead by OCHA.

- Regional COP network on Haiyan response – for info sharing
Clusters and Government sharing information through the CwC Working Group relating to back to school events, dengue awareness, building techniques, separated and unaccompanied children, trafficking, psychosocial support, and access to livelihoods support.

Emergency radio stations established in affected areas. Using content shared through the CwC coordination mechanism - shared programming as well as opening up opportunities for listeners to call/SMS in (feedback).

Some Examples

Working with mobile operators and local radio stations to ensure humanitarian partners effectively use the technology rather than crowding each other out, and creating ‘humanitarian spam’.
Engagement leads to vibrant response

Corporate entities are obliged to support/respond e.g. telcos repairing phone musts/lines, setting up mobile phone charging stations

People take charge of their own lives/response – 30% of CwC meeting participants were survivors of Hayian imputing to response

A better feel of needs is captured in assessments – when affected people are engaged, they give information openly

Engagement eases monitoring/feedback
Some Challenges

How cross-cutting issues are managed in a response. A range of thematic advisors were deployed on CwC, AAP, gender, NGO coordination, private sector, cash and environment – could be handled better with coordinated preparedness measures in place.

Impact measurement of CwC/AAP.

Need to identify key indicators on measuring the impact of coordination (for both CwC and AAP) and how to harmonize this data with partners’ implementation data.
The more remote operational hubs would have benefited from more direct engagement and technical support from CwC/AAP during the initial phase.

It's important to look at how does the Inter-cluster Coordination Mechanism (ICC) manage all cross-cutting issues and how these can coordinate with each other.

Funding and resources were, and continue to be limited in this response.
Some Lessons Learned

The CwC Working Group was replicated based on experience over the past 12 months in the Philippines including Typhoon Bopha, Zamboanga conflict and Bohol earthquake responses.

Lessons learned from each of these experiences, coupled with learning from preparedness and response pilots more broadly in the Asia Pacific region had a significant impact on the success of the current response.
Lesson One

Develop a National-Level CwC Preparedness Network

To enhance current preparedness work, establish national-level network of partners for communication with communities - media and media associations, UN agencies, INGOs and local NGOs where feasible, and the private sector.

Dedicated CwC specialists and a stronger interagency approach to AAP is required.

Nepal, Bangladesh and the Philippines piloting this approach.

AAP and other cross-cutting issues play a role in this.
Lesson Two

Develop Clear Policy on Technical Working Groups

Develop clear policy to better guide the activation of cross-cutting technical working groups making clear their mandate and how the inter-cluster coordination mechanism should engage.

As the nature of humanitarian response evolves in light of the dynamic broader global environment, so too must these technical areas.

This will require enhanced investment to realize the true value and enable them to evolve accordingly.
Lesson three

Develop Common Methodology for Impact Measurement

Develop and implement a commonly agreed methodology for impact measurement

Linking impact measurement for coordination as well as implementation is essential

Need to further studying the causal link between preparedness and response efforts
Lesson Four

Advocate For and Attract Stronger Funding

Through interagency leadership, donors would be encouraged to support agencies to build CwC into their strategic plans and funding proposals.

Ensures communities have reliable information about humanitarian efforts, influence aid provision and re-establish traditional communication channels to lead their own recovery.

Resources must be allocated to CwC Coordination and implementation in order to realize its value-add to a response.