



Comm-a-Thon



The importance of listening to the voice of disaster affected communities, and engaging in two-way communication with those communities during response and recovery is recognized by humanitarian actors. In recent years, beneficiary accountability, feedback and communicating with communities has become a pillar of humanitarian programmes. The Inter-Agency Common Feedback Project (CFP) is the first response wide programme aimed at providing these services to the entire humanitarian community.

The most challenging aspect of this work, common to all agencies working in the field, is in “closing the information loop” with communities. This means: after listening and understand the issues, concerns and questions of communities, going back to them with the right information and answers. As a pioneer in this field, the CFP wanted to explore new ways of meeting this challenge.

The three-day Comm-a-Thon workshop was organized by CFP from 25 to 27 June 2016 with the aim of harnessing the energy and the creativity of youth from across the earthquake affected areas to explore innovative solutions to closing the information loop. The event, held at Gokarna Forest Resort, in Kathmandu, brought together 42 youths with diverse backgrounds from across the 14 earthquake affected districts in order to combine as many perspectives and skill sets as possible. Ten teams were formed, comprising four to five participants each, from different geographical areas and different academic/professional backgrounds, including software development, business, farming, media, teaching and science. The teams were given the challenging task of developing a communication strategy that includes:

- Identification of the information gap
- Identification of the target group
- Identification of the appropriate platform/channel
- Packaging of information
- Dissemination of information



Over the course of the three day Comm-a-Thon teams worked closely to overcome the challenges of bridging their unique perspectives, and meet the objective set forth by the CFP organisers. All ten teams came up with inspiring communication concepts, which were evaluated on the final day by 11 judges from a range of humanitarian, donor and civil society organisations, including: Care, Plan, Save the Children, UNICEF, Kathmandu Mini Maker Faire, UK Aid, Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium and UNV and UNOPS.



**THERE IS NO SUCH THING
AS A BAD IDEA !**

Comm-a-Thon Communication Concepts

Incentivized Hotline

Manish Shrestha, Prabhu Jirel, Shanta Tamang and Sudip Giri

This group brilliantly built on the high mobile penetration rate in Nepal, and devises a solution to closing the feedback loop that built upon a system of incentives to “crowd source” an effective complaint hotline. In their innovative system, once a complaint is made it is verified by the relevant authority and followed up on. Verified complaints reward the complainant with mobile top-up. A map of complaints, along with their follow up status is openly published online to improve accountability.

1st Prize Winner



Photo By : Saifullah Muhammad

Story Telling

Dilip Ranabhat, Sneha Shakya, Sunil Sharma and Visha Shrestha

Identifying that 77% respondents in CFP’s Reconstruction Perception Survey expressed the need to repair, rebuild or retrofit their house, yet 51% stated they had no knowledge of safer building practices, this group set out to bridge that information gap in a creative and memorable way. They crafted a highly engaging drama and delivered accurate messages on safer construction through that medium, connecting with the audience strongly.

2nd prize Winner



Photo By : Saifullah Muhammad

Road Show

Anil Rijal, Juna Rai, Khusboo Pradhan and Sunil Kumar Ghimire

This group found the lack of information on preparedness for disaster to be a grave concern, and thus built a communication strategy on improving preparedness in through “edutainment” measures that are interactive, informative and entertaining. The strategy used a combination of platforms, including a road show, flash mob with earthquake preparedness song, distribution of flyers, loudspeaker announcements, information booths, games and gift hampers, targeting both urban and rural population.

3rd prize Winner



Haat Bazaar

Diwash Pradhan, Ipsu Khadka, Nimlekee Sherpa and Ram Krishna Baniya

With the aim of reducing the burden on affected people in information sharing campaigns, this group's concept was to weekly village markets (haat bazars) to disseminate important information throughout the recovery process. The concept brilliantly captures a unique opportunity to take information to the people by going to the place where they congregate from all across the VDC in an informal setting to buy and sell different items.



Photo By : Saifullah Muhammad

School and Mother's Group

Binda Thapa, Kanchan KC, Padam Raj Shrestha and Subarna Tandukar

This team tackled the issue of drying up of water sources, one of the latest findings from the CFP survey, by sharing simple solutions such as conserving rain water to reuse. The group conceptualized the flow of information through village development committees to mothers' groups, youth groups to children's groups and finally by both groups passing the information to the community people via interpersonal communication.



Photo By : Saifullah Muhammad

Printed T-Shirt

Kami Tamang, Kiran Shrestha, Sushila Ghimire and Sunaina Singh Shrestha

This group also tackled the issue of 51% of people lacking knowledge on safe reconstruction practices. The overall communication strategy included door to door and community meeting campaign to reach the maximum number of people, disseminating simple messages on safe reconstruction, accompanied by a printed T-shirt with images of these practices as a constant reminder of how to rebuild safely.



Safe Building Video

Pooja Fyuba, Rishav Malla, Shahina Bhandari and Subash Gautam

This group produced a short video "Let's Build a Stronger Home Where Our Heart Lives" on how and why to ensure safe reconstruction, to be played in public spaces, including: on buses, in cinemas, malls and department stores, as these are the areas where people congregate en masse.



Referral Hotline

Menuka Dureli, Rina Khanal, Sadikcha Chaudhary and Sandesh Rawal

Taking into consideration that 62% of people surveyed through the CFP Perception Survey do not know how to access reconstruction support, this group conceptualized a toll free number for people to seek reconstruction related information, as well as lodge complaints. These issues are then referred for follow up to concerned stakeholders, such as DDRC, VDC, I/NGOs and others for solutions.



Dedicated Radio Frequency

Arjun Dahal, Indira BK, Ingi Hopo Koinch Sunuwar, Renu Shrestha and Saifullah Muhammad

Also building off of the problem of 62% of people not knowing how to access reconstruction support, and with the information through CFP's Communications Needs Assessment that 73% of respondents use radio as a main source of information, this group approached a tested communication method (radio) in a new way. They conceptualized a dedicated radio frequency as a communication platform to reach audiences in both rural and urban areas, partnering with local radio stations to broadcast content and through a satellite channel. The format of radio programmes included Public Service Announcement, News, Vox Pop, interview with experts, among others.



Photo By : Saifullah Muhammad

SMS PRBT APP

Anuj Adhikary, Chiranjivi Baral, Nawaraj Adhikary, Nilu Maharjan and Shivani Chhetri

With the high ownership of mobile, this group cleverly used SMS and PRBT (personal ring back tone) to inform communities in earthquake affected districts about video conference meetings to discuss issues and receive information regarding reconstruction and recovery. The system stores a large database of vital information, which allows messages distributed to communities through this system to be targeted based on a variety of factors (geography, gender, age, caste/ethnicity, damage grade, etc.).



Photo By : Saifullah Muhammad

Organizing this event was a challenging, but highly rewarding learning experience for the CFP team. The enthusiasm of the participants, as well as their dedication to the subject and the challenge of finding creative solutions to closing the feedback loop, was the highlight of the event. What was clear was their passion for using their energy and efforts to solve a complex problem. All of the participants impressed organisers, mentors and judges alike, and should be applauded for their accomplishments.



"Personally, it was very uplifting to see the commitment of CFP to listen to and respond to the voices of the people, and the dedication of the CFP team members towards that goal. The team's constant attention and guidance definitely pushed us to think outside the box, and I hope we did that and made you all proud. Not only did I have a really good time at the Comm-a-Thon, but had the opportunity to work with people so different than me. Our endless inter-group and intra-group discussions, arguments, bouncing ideas off of each other, and pushing each other to our brains' limits was challenging but very rewarding. The whole experience made me recognize the bubble I am living in Kathmandu, and opened up my mind to new perspectives and ideas. This is something that I will definitely take with me and use moving forward, so thank you all for that."

Ipsu Khadka, Kathmandu