

Guidance for Establishing

Affected Persons Information Center



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Guidance for Establishing Affected Persons Information Center

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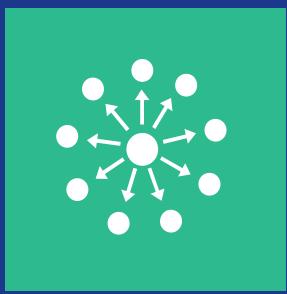
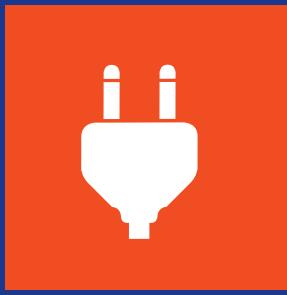
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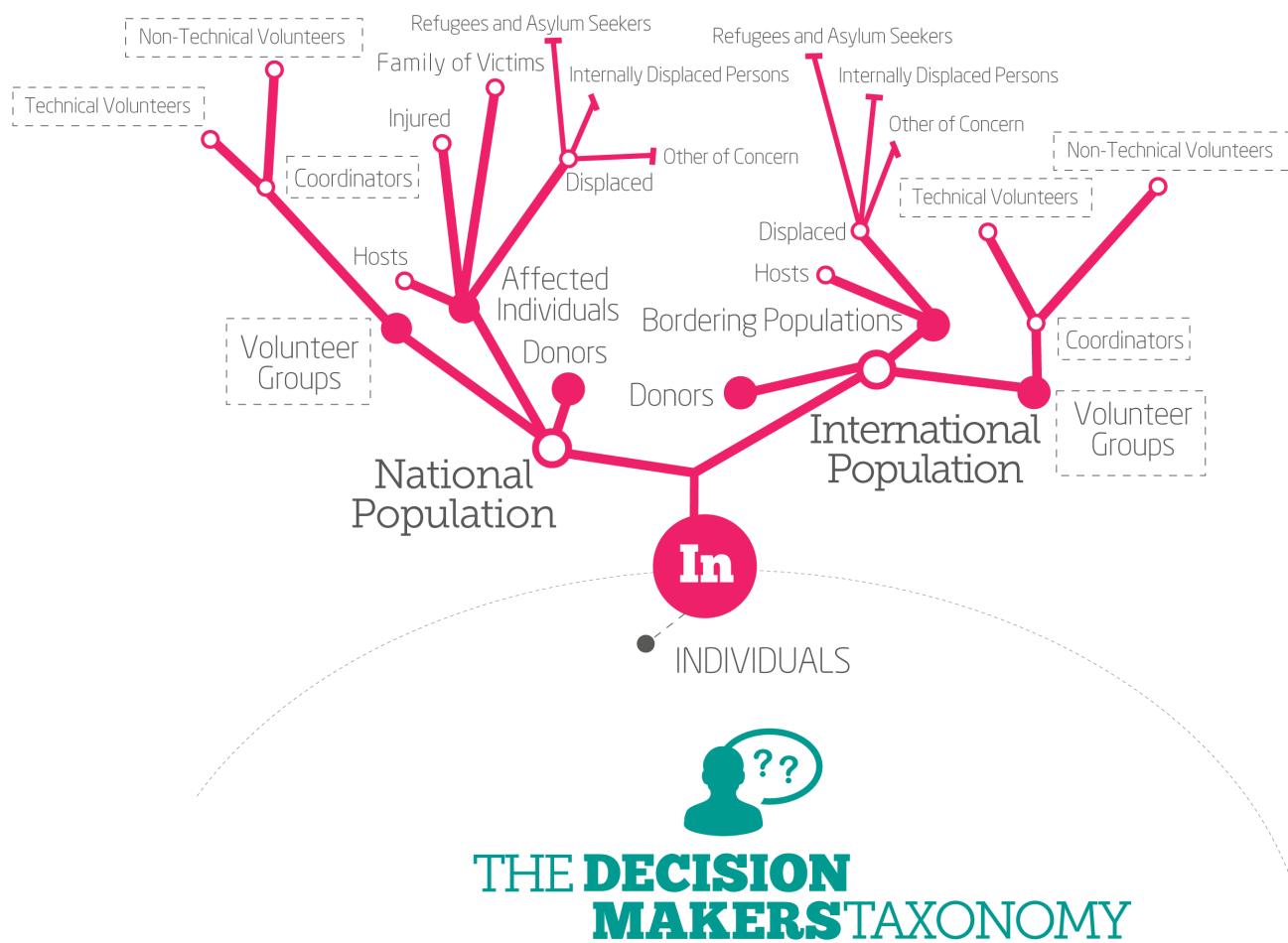
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About

This guidance is intended for in-country responding entities that seek to share information in a way to empower the affected community. This guide will outline the rationale and guidance for establishing an information center targeted towards assisting affected individuals, including those who have been injured and displaced (Figure 1). An **Affected Persons Information Center (APIC)** is a publicly accessible space where affected persons can gather vital information and responders are able to conduct structured data collection. In an effort to augment traditional and established methods of information broadcasting, the APIC amalgamates the independent, yet complementary, channels of dissemination and collection.

Figure 1.





Part I: Understanding Affected Persons Information Centers

Recognition of the Importance of Information

Information has proved to be vital to all parties involved during a humanitarian disaster. Most notably, information is essential to national populations who have been directly affected (the benefactors of humanitarian aid) and those providing assistance be it the public sector, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and militaries (the responders). Access to information is now considered a fundamental human right as evidenced by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights insofar as individuals have the right “to seek, receive and impart information and ideas”.¹ More practically, the owner of Haitian radio station Melody FM notes that in the event of an emergency, “information is as important as food”.²



The importance of information in humanitarian disasters has largely been accepted by the humanitarian community. However, while the information demanded may be complementary, there are often two distinct channels:

	<p>information that is broadcasted to affected populations</p>
	<p>information that is collected and disseminated to responding organizations</p>

1. Leos, Raymond. “Access to Information in Southeast Asia and Cambodia”. Last accessed on July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.cchrcambodia.org/admin/media/report/report/english/2009-01-08-%20Access%20to%20Information%20in%20Southeast%20Asia%20and%20Cambodia-%20EN.pdf>

2. Mandel, Jennifer, and Erich Sommerfeldt. (May 2012). “Closing the Loop—Responding to People’s Information Needs from Crisis Response to Recovery to Development: A Case Study of Post-Earthquake Haiti,” Internews. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from https://internews.org/sites/default/files/resources/Haiti_ClosingTheLoop_2012-05-screen.pdf

There are a number of entities that are committed to disseminating important information to affected populations. Some include Internews,³ the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) cluster,⁴ as well as Communicating with Communities (CwC) and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) groups.⁵ These entities have been relatively successful in sharing vital information to affected populations. For instance, the CwC working group distributed over 8,000 radios in Tacloban, Eastern Samar province, Ormoc, and Roxas following Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.⁶ There are also a number of alternative methods of simplistic information broadcasting that have existed for decades such as bulletin boards, story boards, house visits, town meetings.

On the other side of the spectrum humanitarian responders also demand information in a response in order to effectively and efficiently distribute aid.



The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) established Humanitarian Information Centers (HICs) in an attempt to collect and manage information in a disaster for responders from 1999 to 2008. The function of HICs was to “support the humanitarian community in the systematic and standardized collection, processing and dissemination of information with the aim of improving coordination, situational understanding and decision making”.⁷

3. Internews is an organization committed to broadcasting information through local radio and media networks. For more information: <https://www.internews.org>.

4. The CCCM cluster established Collective Centers in displacement camps in times of crises that utilize pre-existing structures and buildings to provide shelter for displaced persons. The CCCM cluster is tasked with managing the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, which includes information broadcasting. For more information: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and International Organization for Migration. (2010). “Collective Centre Guidelines”. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://cpwg.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2013/08/UNHCR-IOM-2009-collective-centre-guidelines.pdf>

5. CwC and AAP are organizations that are committed to not only providing vital information to affected persons, but to also adapt and improve the humanitarian response based on feedback. For more information: International Organization for Migration. “Communications with Communities and Accountability to Affected Populations”. Philippine Response Blog. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://philippinesresponse.iom.int/communications-with-communities>

6. Humanitarian Response. (2014, May 16). “Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) Consolidated Cluster Briefs”. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <https://philippines.humanitarianresponse.info/document/typhoon-haiyan-yolanda-consolidated-cluster-briefs-14-may-2014-10mb>

7. Inter-Agency Standing Committee. (May 2008). “Terms of Reference: Humanitarian Information Centers (HICs)”, pg. 3. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <https://ochaenr.unocha.org/PG/Policy%20Guidance/IASC%20-%20Humanitarian%20Information%20Centre%20Terms%20of%20Reference%20-%20May%202008.pdf>

8. Ibid.

9. Humanitarian Information. (Archived). “Humanitarian Information Centers and Partners”. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://web.archive.org/web/20110719010009/http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/>



A report published by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) highlights the efficacy of HICs as they not only offered a physical and virtual space to coordinate and exchange information, but were a tool in establishing strong ties with the local governments and networks.⁸ Nevertheless, the last HIC established for humanitarian response was in Myanmar in 2008. HICs were closed due to a threat of redundancy with the mainstreaming of information management in a humanitarian response along with the high costs associated with the centers.⁹

While HICs are no longer used, there are a number of methods to collect data and information in a humanitarian response. One could argue that the UN-OCHA run website, HumanitarianResponse.info (HR.info), is a digital HIC. HR.info includes integral information such as Common Operational Datasets (CODs) and Fundamental Operational Datasets (FODs) that are integral to an effective and efficient humanitarian response.¹⁰ There are also a number of mechanisms such as field Informational Management Officers (IMOs) and partnerships within the Digital Humanitarian Network (DHN) that facilitate data and information dissemination to other organizations responding to the humanitarian disaster.

Nevertheless, there remain significant gaps in structured and direct information collection from affected persons.

For instance, two methods of information collection that responders perform are conducting key informant interviews as well as utilizing new technologies as a means for the affected population to articulate their needs.

- 
1. While there are a number of interviews that various clusters perform, they are usually administered with **key informants within the population**.

A primary example is the information collected by the Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) report that uses direct observation and key informant interviews for primary data collection.¹¹ By conducting interviews that focus on a few key informants, the information collected is often broad and does not encompass the variety of needs from various individuals in the affected population.

- 
2. The development of various technologies has allowed for the **creation of a various feedback mechanisms** that provide information and data to responders.

However, such mechanisms are limited to particular features and/or segments of the affected population that have access to such technology. Moreover, while data and information mechanisms have numerous benefits, face-to-face data collection remains important. For instance, Nigel McNie notes that face-to-face data collection mitigates any “user bias” that might arise as it does not account for the perspectives of those individuals who became frustrated or did not understand the technology.¹²

10. Humanitarian Response. (2014). “About Us”. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/home>

11.. Inter-Agency Standing Committee. (March 2012). “Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA)”. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from https://assessments.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/mira_final_version2012.pdf

12. Boehmer, Erin. (2010, July 20). “Coordinating Efforts By Volunteer and Technical Communities for Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Relief”. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from http://www.tcc.virginia.edu/pip/research_papers/2011/Boehmer.pdf

13. Guha-Sapir, Debarati, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. (2014, June 4). “Data and Evidence about Conflict Affected People: Can we do Better?” IASC Event in Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.



3. As Debarati Guha-Sapir noted in a discussion on data and evidence concerning conflict affected people, **the operational capacity of many organizations, particularly non-governmental organizations (NGOs), is challenged** as data collection becomes another layer on what these small and limited organizations are required to do.¹³

An APIC is a way to address these gaps in information collection and dissemination through the creation of a publicly accessible space that supports direct primary information collection. Nevertheless, these centers do not seek to replace the work of Internews, CwC, AAP, CCCM, IOM, or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), but rather combine and augment current methods alongside information collection activities.



What is an Affected Persons Information Center?

An APIC will be a publicly accessible physical space that will augment current methods of information collection and dissemination. While the center will be open any individual who seeks the services provided, the central target group is the affected community. The center will entice individuals to access the center and provide necessary information to responders through the provision of services.

The center's central functions are:



1

to empower affected persons through sharing information



2

to facilitate a participatory aid model by enabling technology use by the affected population during an emergency



3

to allow responders to collect valuable information in a structured way as people visit

While the characteristics and features of the center will be explained in greater lengths throughout this guidance, they include:

> Provision of a publicly accessible physical space committed to information broadcasting and collection

> Co-run by representative from affected population as well as from humanitarian responders (with knowledge of local language)

> Visible bulletin boards (including text and visuals) with relevant and updated information

> Access to electrical power for the purpose of charging devices such as mobile phones, tablets, and laptops (from renewable and simplistic technologies)

> Provision of telephone and Internet services in partnership with local Mobile Network Operators (MNOs)

> Staffed with Humanitarian Concierge that provides, and has access to, emergency services (such as hospitals, psycho-social hotlines, a humanitarian call center)

> Education and guidance on various technologies used to facilitate aid and continue communication such as Freedom Fone and Twitmobile

> Where such capacity exists, maintain a social media presence in order to share information and dispel rumours regarding the response

> Advise the affected population as well as the responders about shifting security concerns or situations

> Where the capacity and need exists, create a mobile APIC that can access smaller and remote communities

Adapting to New Demand: Similar Projects



There have been a number of initiatives and projects that demonstrate the utility of various functions of the APIC. One is the ACT Bushfire Recovery Centre that was created on January 24, 2008 following large bushfires in Canberra, Australia. The centre acted as a “one-stop-shop for support”.¹⁴ The Recovery Centre provided clothing, assisted affected individuals with retrieving necessary documentation, and later became a donation “hub”.¹⁵ A study conducted by Camilleri et al. on benefactors of the center found that as 86.2% of respondents viewed the centre as being “helpful” or “very helpful”.¹⁶ One major critique affected persons had related to issues of bureaucracy, receiving inaccurate information, and the inaccessible operation hours.¹⁷ In addition to lessons learnt, this initiative shows the value and demand for a “one-stop-shop” for information and support during a crisis.

14. Thorpe, Clarissa. (2013, January 14). “Rebuilding after Canberra Fires Not Limited To Bricks”. ABC News. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-01-14/rebuilding-after-canberra-fires-not-limited-to-bricks/4461136>

15. Camilleri, Peter, Chris Healy, Elspeth Macdonald, Susan Nicholls, Jolyon Sykes, Gail Winkworth, and Merrilyn Woodward. (2007). “Recovering from the 2003 Canberra Bushfires: A Work in Progress”. Australian Catholic University. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/faculties,_institutes_and_centres/institute_of_child_protection_studies/our_work/publications/publications_by_year/?a=466580

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

Moreover, following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, there were various initiatives that were launched to support technology as a form of aid. The Thomson Reuters Foundation arrived in Haiti two days after the earthquake and established an Emergency Information Service (EIS). This project was a free service that sent and received SMS messages in order to broadcast vital information.¹⁸ In the first few days the service offered assistance to search and rescue teams and in later days helped disseminate important health information and directed affected persons to hospitals.¹⁹ In partnership with InSTEED, the Thomson Reuter Foundation launched Mission 4636. This mission provided a free phone number where affected persons requested certain services such as medical attention. The phone number garnered over 80,000 messages that were subsequently used by crowdsourcing platforms such as Ushahidi and OpenStreetMap.²⁰



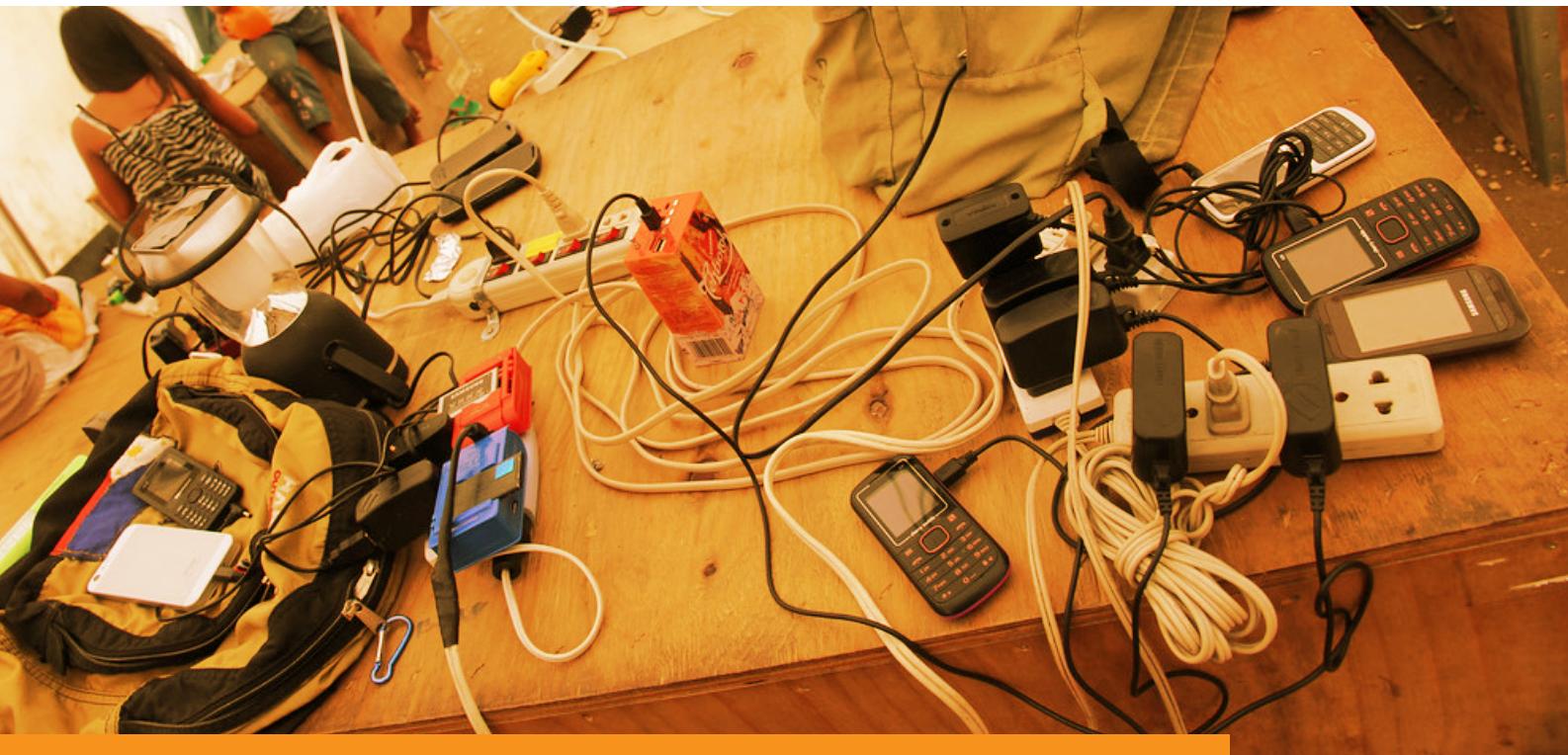
This project demonstrates the need and utility in establishing channels for two-way communication with affected populations through utilizing telecommunication systems and technology.

18. Munoz, Eduardo. (2010, January 25). "Cell Phones and Radios Help Save Lives After Haiti Earthquake". Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/01/25/us-haiti-telecoms-idUSTRE60O07M20100125>

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

Lastly, various projects demonstrate the utility in mobile phone charging stations in the wake of a crisis. Local telecommunication networks began a number of initiatives to ensure affected individuals had access to mobile phone services following typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. For instance, Smart Communications Inc. established “Libreng Tawag” services, or mobile phone charging stations.²¹ Globe, another large telecommunications company in the Philippines, also created a number of emergency services that include charging stations, Internet “hotspots”, and free access to Facebook.²² These services are highly demanded in the wake of a disaster. The going rate for 15 minutes of phone charging in Port au Prince following the 2010 earthquake was 40 gourdes (USD\$1), the equivalent of a daily average income in Haiti.²³



While these initiatives solidify the need and success of such services, the APIC is unique in that the center becomes a central and physical hub for these services while also meeting the needs of humanitarian responders.

Moreover, the APIC will consolidate all of these efforts. While Mission 4636 was relatively successful in Haiti for instance, there is the potential to combine the mission with mobile phone charging stations and a physical space to offer support in-person.

Benefits

> Mutually beneficial method of information exchange

Establishing a physical space for an APIC creates a venue for the exchange of important information for both responders and benefactors. First, affected persons will be able to receive integral information such as what services are offered at certain locations and updates on current events. By having a physical space to interact with representatives, benefactors will have the ability to ask questions and request specific information. The humanitarian concierge would facilitate this in that the concierge would be the human interface that the benefactors are able to interact with. Second, responders will be able to collect vital information in a structured way through surveys and interviews. In this way responders will be able to collect information from a larger more diverse part of the affected population. As information collection is integral to any humanitarian response, it is advantageous to establish a center where information is the central objective.

Moreover, as APICs with the capacity to do so become active on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, the exchange of information extends beyond the responder and benefactor and into the general public. This characteristic is extremely beneficial because the APIC has the ability to subsequently dispel myths and rumors about the humanitarian response while also acting as a means to encourage donations.



The **Kenyan Red Cross** has previously embraced social media in this regard. For instance, the organization utilized social media platforms in order to dispel rumors, provide updates on real-time information, directions and advice for shelter, and many other important forms of information.²⁴

21. PhilStar. (2013, August 24). "Smart Deploys Record Number of "Libreng Tawag" Stations". Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.philstar.com:8080/telecoms/2013/08/24/1126431/smart-deploys-record-number-libreng-tawag-stations>

22. Globe. "Emergency Services". Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.globe.com.ph/bangonpinoy/emergency-services>

23. Robinson, Lisa, and Imogen Wall. (March 2012). "Policy Briefing: Still Left in the Dark?". Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.cdacnetwork.org/public/resource/policy-briefing-still-left-dark>

24. Ibid.



> Strengthened relationships

An APIC is a space that fosters collaboration. As Mary B. Anderson, Dayna Brown, and Isabella Jean note in a CDA Collaborative Learning Projects report, “communication is not the same as information”.²⁵ Communicating necessary information allows for clarification and deeper explanations. APIC would consequently foster communication rather than simply act as a venue for information dissemination.

Through having an information center run by a representative from the local population alongside a responder, a range of information needs are expressed. The relationship between responders and benefactors will subsequently be strengthened as it would also be a space for individuals to clarify and inquire. For instance, when communities are continually questioned and do not receive direct feedback or results they get disgruntled.²⁶ Moreover, as Nigel McNie notes, face-to-face communication is not only a way to mitigate “user bias” but is also a way to evaluate what information is being shared throughout the community and gaps that might exist.²⁷ These issues that challenge relationships are mitigated with face-to-face interaction, an ability to provide feedback, and the inclusion of representatives from the affected community.

25. Anderson, Mary B., Dayna Brown, and Isabella Jean. (November 2012). “Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid”. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.cdacollaborative.org/media/60478/Time-to-Listen-Book.pdf>

26. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. (2013). “World Disaster Reports: Focus on Technology and the Future of Humanitarian Action”. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.rodekruis.nl/actueel/pers/persberichten/documents/wdr-rapport%202013.pdf>

27. Boehmer, Erin. (2010). “Coordinating Effort by Volunteer and Technical Communities for Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Relief”.

> Ensures continued communications

One component of an APIC, is the availability of phone charging stations or other means to provide communication abilities to affected persons. There are a number of benefits in providing a space for affected persons to charge or access mobile phones. First, affected persons will be more likely to come to the space in order to receive services such as free mobile charging stations. Moreover, affected persons will have the ability to utilize their mobile phones in order to receive and transmit important information after leaving the center. The importance of mobile phones in disaster situations is becoming clear. Imogen Wall, a former employee with the Communication with Communities team in OCHA, noted that mobile phones are “amplifying the capacity of disaster survivors to find resources and to find what they need to get them out of whatever situation they’re in”.²⁸

There are greater avenues for communication when an affected person leaves the center with key information, communicating important information to responders, and accessing a charged and functioning mobile phone.



First, as has been previously mentioned, these centers will create and foster relationships between the responders and benefactors.



Second, mobile phones are an important component of communication for both responders and benefactors. Affected persons will be able to gain access to integral information, such as service and distribution sites through various applications and technologies. There are a number of ways in which a humanitarian response can incorporate technology to become more effective and efficient. Technologies include Twitmobil, Freedom Fone, and the creation of a digital Humanitarian Concierge.



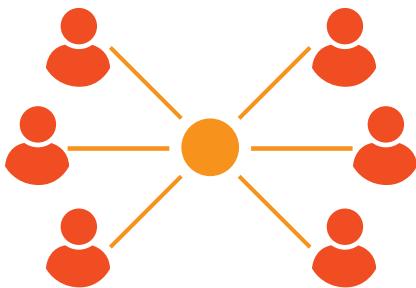
These benefits also extends to the responders. With charged mobile phones responders are able to access important information by scraping for geo-tagged photos of damage, seeking urgent calls for help through social media outlets, and crisis maps to name a few. As a result, organizations who participate in the CrisisMappers network²⁹ will have access to more information as affected persons will have access to telecommunications networks and charged phones.

28. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. (2013). “World Disaster Reports”.

29. Crisis Mappers. “What is Crisis Mapping”. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://crismappers.net/>

> Offers direct repository

An additional benefit to APICs is that they create a direct repository of information that is publicly accessible for all affected persons and humanitarian responders. As information and data collection becomes a core component of a humanitarian response, the responsibility of collection and analysis extends to the majority of clusters and NGOs. While there is utility in widespread data collection, Debarati Guha-Sapir has noted that it often times challenges a smaller organization's operational capacity.³⁰ In light of this, APICs act as a centralized and core information repository of which other entities responding to the humanitarian disaster can receive support and additional information so as to avoid duplication.



The information collected could include questions concerning **who is doing what, where** (also known as the 3Ws), information concerning the affected population, contact lists, as well as information that assisted in the Information Needs Assessment.³¹ The data and information collected at the center can subsequently be used by all responders (including, but not limited to, the different clusters) and summarized for decision makers in an attempt to support and foster **open humanitarianism**.

The information can be stored in a variety of ways. Taking into account different circumstances following a disaster, the information can be using technology when available or without technology if it is not available and/or reliable. Regardless of the method chosen to store the information, numerous security measures will be implemented to secure information that is personally identifiable. For instance, protocol such as the International Committee of the Red Cross' (ICRC) Professional Standards For Protection Work will be followed in order to protect affected persons in a disaster or conflict.³² More specifically, it is important to assess existing local legal frameworks surrounding information of individuals that includes various international human rights treaties in addition to domestic and regional laws.³³ Second, information should be "open", or shared, when possible. In instances where information is particularly sensitive, justification should be provided to the humanitarian community.

30. Guha-Sapir, Debarati, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. (2014, June 4). "Data and Evidence about Conflict Affected People: Can we do Better?"

31. For more information on what information UN-OCHA requires visit: OCHA. "Information Management: Services". Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/information-management/im-services>

32. International Committee of the Red Cross. (2013). "Professional Standards for Protection Work." Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/publication/p0999.htm>

33. Ibid.

Characteristics of the Center

> Structure: Who runs the Center?

The center should be co-run by an individual representing the responders with knowledge of the local language alongside a community representative that is classified as an affected person (refer to *Figure 1*). While the center should be managed by two representatives, individuals from both the responding community and the affected population will be responsible for the day-to-day functions of the center. As Internews highlights, “the people who know local issues best are locals themselves”.³⁴ Stemming from this fundamental understanding, it is beneficial to have both the responders and benefactors active as both representatives understand where the gaps in information are within this respective “communities”. Both individuals can therefore facilitate communication in order to collect the necessary information.

When selecting an individual to represent the larger community in the center, one must utilize local established networks in order to ensure cooperation and legitimacy. To avoid translation difficulties, translation organizations, such as Translators Without Borders should be actively involved.³⁵

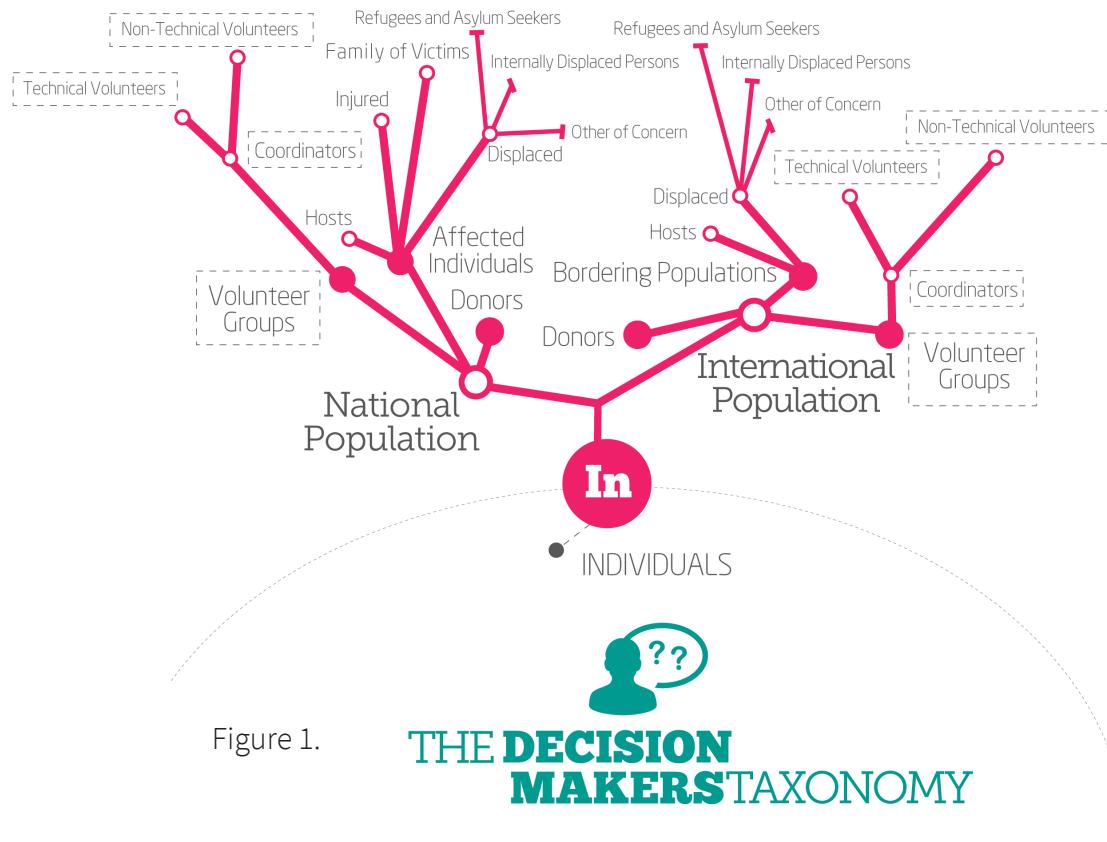


Figure 1.

34. Internews Europe. (2013). "Humanitarian Information Service: Dadaab." Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from http://www.internews.eu/docs/Publications/Internews_HIS_Dadaab_2013_Brochure.pdf

35. Translators Without Borders. "About us". Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://translatorswithoutborders.org/About-Us>

> Spreading the Word: How will people know we exist?

An integral component of establishing APICs is making affected populations aware of the location and purpose of the centers. One major way that the APIC will be publicized in the community is through local channels such as established radio programs. This strategy proved to be successful when Thomson Reuters Foundation used this method to advertise the EIS and 4636 mission in Haiti that has previously been discusse d.³⁶

Another important channel that should not be overlooked are previously established and trusted relationships. As a result, it is extremely important that affected persons who visit the center have a positive experience. As Di Butcher notes, “the way you deal with people in those first few hours or those first few days really sets the tone [because] those people go away and tell others”.³⁷ Moreover, it is commonly understood than an individual’s friend or family member are often the most trusted source of information. This is another reason why the APIC will involve affected persons in the daily functionings of the center and management.



> Services Offered: Why will people come?

Depending on the context, the center can be a simplistic physical space whereby representatives are available to facilitate discussions or a more technologically savvy tent providing communication services. While access to information is a key “pull” factor, the centers can incorporate features or services that entice affected populations to visit.

One way to entice both responders and affected populations to visit the centers is to provide accessible technical services that will be beneficial in the long-run.



In coordination with organizations such as Télécoms Sans Frontières’ (TSF) and local Mobile Network Operators (MNOs), the centers will be a place in which affected persons can make necessary phone calls and charge functioning mobile devices. The work that TSF has been involved in has been very successful. Following Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines for instance, TSF is estimated to have provided 12,000 minutes of communication and supported 5,100 families.³⁸ The demand for TSF’s services demonstrates the need for such services in emergency situations.



While some communities may have a generator where affected persons could charge their mobile phones, the generator is a temporary, limiting, highly demanded solution. There are a number of renewable technological solutions that are on the public market that provide renewable power through kinetic and solar energy such as nPower Personal Energy Generator³⁹ and Volt⁴⁰. APIs would work with leading-edge partners to establish this technology in the wake of a disaster. More importantly, this technology can be transitioned to the local population when the center closes. Affected persons would consequently not only be drawn into the information center by the service, but the provision of such services would also facilitate the dissemination of fruitful technology.

36. Munoz, Eduardo. (2010, January 25). “Cell Phones and Radios Help Save Lives After Haiti Earthquake”. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/01/25/us-haiti-telecoms-idUSTRE60007M20100125>

37. Thorpe, Clarissa. (2013). “Rebuilding After Canberra Fires Not Limited to Bricks”.

38. Télécom Sans Frontières. (December 2013). “TSF & The European Commission in the Philippines”. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.tsfi.org/en/action/emergencyresponse/217-tsf-et-les-nations-unies-travaillent-ensemble-pour-apporter-un-soutien-aux-philippines->

39. nPower Personal Energy Generator (PEG) uses kinetic energy to charge devices. The device can hold its charge for up to 100 days while sitting still. When the energy has run out however, one can shake the device to gather enough energy to make a phone call. For more information: nPower Personal Energy Generator. (2014). “How it Works”. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.npowerpeg.com/new-how-it-works>

40. Volt is a company based in Denmark that provides energy for individuals to charge devices at music festivals where power outlets are not available. It takes approximately 90 minutes to charge an iPhone 4S from 0%-100. For more information: Volt. (2014). “About-Volt”. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://getvolt.dk/>



Moreover, in more technologically connected countries the center could also be equipped with computer charging stations, laptops, and an Internet connection. While satellite Internet is seen to be the “expensive” option, new developments are allowing this technology to become more affordable. One example is YahClick that is based in Abu Dhabi.⁴¹ Access to the Internet and a place to charge/use computers is extremely beneficial as it provides another method of communication, and eases quests for crowd funding that is community based.



Lastly, the center can act as a hub for various modes of communication beyond the center itself. For instance, the center can act as the hub for a Humanitarian Call Center. The idea behind a Humanitarian Call Center is that affected persons could call or talk to a representative at the center to identify gaps in aid, to clarify on issues they may have with current aid, or be put in contact with other organizations who can directly help them. A pilot project with the Humanitarian Innovation Fund conducted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) with Anahi Ayala Iacucci, fostered two-way communication between responders and affected persons whereby questions are answered quickly and shared publicly and was incorporated onto the Ushahidi platform.⁴² An APIC is an ideal ‘hub’ for similar Humanitarian Call Centers in the wake of a disaster.

In addition to the Humanitarian Call Center, the APIC can incorporate more complex technologies and applications that caters to individual needs.

These include applications such as Twitmobil⁴³ and Freedom Fone.⁴⁴ Moreover, Andrej Verity introduced the idea of a digital Humanitarian Concierge.⁴⁵ A digital Humanitarian Concierge is an idea inspired by a smartphone application called Sosh⁴⁶ that could be used by affected populations to find information such as the field hospital with the shortest wait times or when the next food delivery will take place.⁴⁷ As one key feature of the APIC is to provide services to help reconnect and charge their mobile phones, this technology has great potential.

41. Press Release by Duo Marketing. (January 2015). “Affordable satellite set to fill SA’s Broadband Gap.” Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from http://www.itweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=50898

42. Iacucci, Anahi Ayala. (2012, June 18). “The Very First Humanitarian “Customer Calling Center””. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://crismapper.wordpress.com/2012/06/18/the-very-first-humanitarian-customer-calling-center/>

43. Twitmobil is a system where an individual can receive Twitter feeds on their mobile phones by subscribing to specific feeds. For more: CDAC Network. (January 2012). “Twiitmobil,” Infoasaid. Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.cdacnetwork.org/public/content/twiitmobil>

44. Freedom Fone is an application that allows users to call a number and receive information that is prompted by a computer. This has proved to be effective in the field as affected persons were able to receive vital information such as current market prices. For more: CDAC Network. (January 2012). “Twiitmobil,” Infoasaid. Accessed May 26, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.cdacnetwork.org/public/content/twiitmobil>

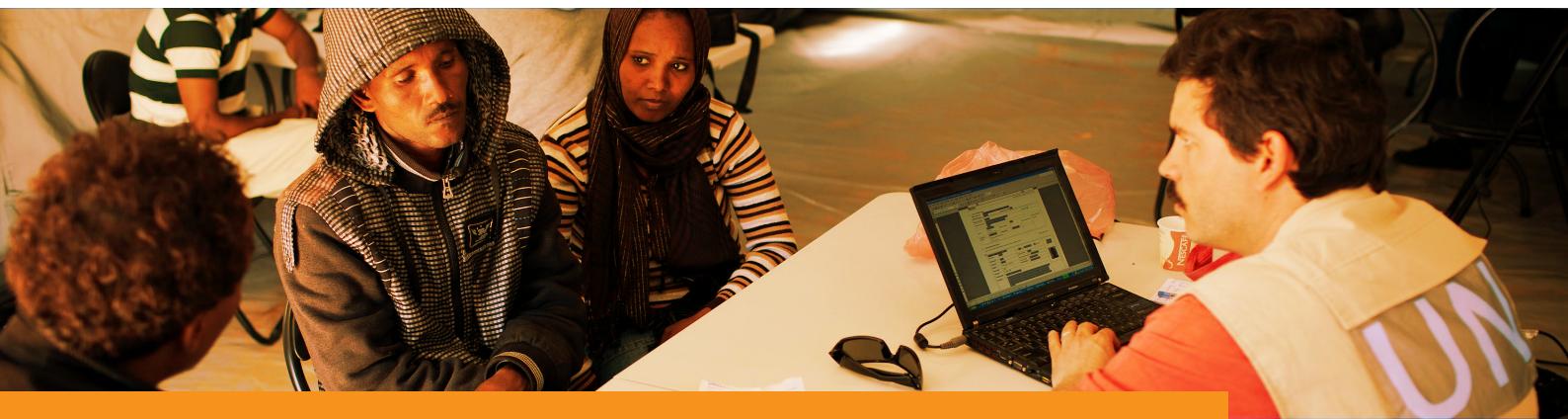
> Communication: What information will be shared?

Responders

Responders will have the ability to collect information from the affected population. These questions can be asked through surveys and/or interviews conducted while the individual is charging their mobile device or after they have received information they require.

Benefactors

Affected persons who visit the information center could also gather information that they require at that moment. This information has been divided into four main categories by UN-OCHA (i) alerts, (ii) awareness, (iii) self-care, and (iv) service prompts.⁴⁸



Establishing a physical space allows affected persons to clarify information they receive. The focus on information dissemination has historically made it difficult to open these channels for clarification. In a Cluster Brief on Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines for instance, safe vs. unsafe zones and non-dwelling zones were difficult to communicate.⁴⁹ A central objective of the center is to facilitate this conversation and clarify such issues.

The information center is also a place in which affected persons can retrieve information and guidance regarding using technology as aid. There are a number of applications and methods by which a mobile phone can act as a form of aid such as Gcash⁵⁰, Twitmobil, a Humanitarian Concierge and call center, among many others.

45. Verity, Andrej. (2013, May 9). "Humanitarian Concierge." Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://blog.veritythink.com/post/50009571891/humanitarian-concierge>

46. Sosh is described as "a personal concierge for your social life" This application allows individuals to search restaurants, food specials, and activities around their community. It currently is available in Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, D.C. Retrieved from Sosh. (2014). "About Us". Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://sosh.com/>

47. Verity, Andrej. (2013). "Humanitarian Concierge."

48. Davies, Stewart- OCHA. "Communicating with Communities". Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/UN-OCHA-Communications-with-Communities.pdf>

49. Humanitarian Response (May 2014). "Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) Consolidated Cluster Briefs". Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <https://philippines.humanitarianresponse.info/document/typhoon-haiyan-yolanda-consolidated-cluster-briefs-14-may-2014-10mb>

50. GCash is a way in which individuals can receive money transfers directly to their mobile devices. For more information: Globe. (2014). "GCash". Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.globe.com.ph/gcash>



Current mechanisms that encourage two-way communication often times overlook important information that may not be viewed as “vital”.

Such information includes job postings and government plans as opposed to solely work done by the international community. As a result, the APIC will also be equipped with job notice boards, connections to organizations or companies that are hiring, as well as updates concerning the national government plans and projects.

Moreover, the APIC can advise both benefactors and responders on changing security situations. By acting as a “permanent” publicly accessible space, any individual in the community can visit the center in order to receive the most current information. This is advantageous as it has the ability to become a reliable and trusted space to receive such information, particularly because it is to be a “hub for information”.

> Utility: Where will the information go?

The additional structured information collected from the affected population would feed into existing information management mechanisms such as Situational Analysis and Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) reports. Situational Analysis are issued within 72 hours of an emergency and MIRA reports are produced and shared within two weeks following a humanitarian response.⁵¹ The information that responders are able to collect in a structured way through these centers is invaluable as they feed into such reports. In the initial stages of the humanitarian response the centers will directly facilitate data and information collection. After the initial reports have been completed, the center will go beyond key informants and incorporate perspectives and information provided by affected persons from various backgrounds and perspectives.



51. Inter-Agency Standing Committee. "Multi- Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment". Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <https://assessments.humanitarianresponse.info/guidance#SituationalAnalysis>



Part 2: Identifying and Addressing Limitations

Security

A central issue to establishing an APIC revolves around security. As with many aspects of humanitarian work in disaster situations, these centers may be placed in insecure environments that puts responders at risk.



However, by having the center co-run by an individual representing the responding community and a representative of the affected population, security risks could be substantially decreased. For instance, in insecure environments a representative from the affected community could take more of a leadership role if they are more secure because of established networks.



A second security issue that may limit the efficacy of the center is the fact that the center will contain valuable technology. However, it is important to note that the centers do not have to be large or contain sophisticated technologies. For instance, much of the technology (such as mobile phone chargers) will be basic and not extremely monetarily valuable.



An additional security challenge relates to the value of the information collected at these centers. However, the premise behind having a representative from the information management team within the responding community co-run the center will manage and mitigate these issues. For instance, the principles and procedures that are involved with information management, such as *The Camp Management Toolkit*⁵² and *ICRC Professional Standards for Protection Work*⁵³ will be followed.

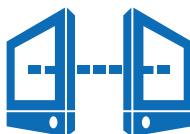
52. Norwegian Refugee Council and Camp Management Project. (May 2008). “The Camp Management Toolkit”. Pg. 143. Last accessed on July 31, 2014. Retrieved from http://www.nrc.no/arch/_img/9295458.pdf

53. International Committee of the Red Cross. (2013). “Professional Standards for Protection Work.”

Potential for Marginalization

A central characteristic of the APIC is the incorporation of technology in communication during a humanitarian response. There is undoubtedly a substantial increase in the number of mobile subscriptions in the last decade. Various estimates suggest that of 6.8 billion subscriptions in 2012, however, the actual number of mobile phone users is closer to 3.2 billion due to inactive users.⁵⁴ With a focus on the use of technology, APICs may marginalize large segments of the affected population that are “disconnected” or not technologically aware in the wake of a disaster. This becomes increasingly relevant as often times the areas that are most often subjected to severe humanitarian crises mostly affect communities and individuals that are “disconnected” from society.

The APIC seeks to foster channels of communication amongst the largest number of people. As a result, the center will mitigate the potential for marginalization in three ways.



First, the APIC will not only provide mobile phone charging stations, but will offer access to Internet and telecommunication networks, as well as assistance in installing certain applications.



Second, various antennas not only established to extend the bandwidth, but there can be a mobile APIC that seeks to reach beyond the initial APIC reach. This mobile APIC will drive to more “disconnected” communities and offer similar information services.



Lastly, the risk of marginalization is also mitigated as the APIC is to be run by various individuals from both the responding community and the affected population. While there will be two central figures that will manage the center, individuals from various genders, ethnicities, religions, and sections of the community will be asked to assist the APICs daily activities.

54. Wireless Intelligence. (2012). “Analysis: Global Mobile Penetration—Subscribers versus connections.” As cited in International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. (2013). “World Disaster Report 2013: Focus on Technology and the Future of Humanitarian Action.” Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/134658/WDR%202013%20complete.pdf>

55. OCHA. (February 2014). “Communications with Affected Communities in CAR.” Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from <https://car.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/CWC%20Report%20FINAL%20%282%29.pdf>



Social, Cultural, and Political Constraints

While APICs will be established based upon similar core ideas and characteristics, unacknowledged social, cultural, and political contexts could limit the efficacy of these information centers. For instance, theatre and radio have been discovered to be the most effective way to communicate information in the Central African Republic (CAR).⁵⁵ If an APIC were to be established in a community where theatre and radio are the best way to communicate, the APIC should incorporate these practices of communication. As a result, a survey of the best method of communication and needs assessment must be conducted prior to the establishment of a center. This analysis ensures that the APIC is not viewed as a “silver bullet” solution, but rather must be molded to each individual community.

Unidentified Limitations

A key component in establishing centers and addressing gaps in humanitarian response is preparing for unidentified limitations or unforeseen issues. As a result, APICs will emphasize evaluation mechanisms. By focusing on creating a physical space to foster communication and information management, individuals are encouraged to continue to stress the importance of assessing the current methods and proposing improvements.



Part 3: Guidance for the Construction of an Affected Persons Information Center

Staffing the Center: Who?

An important component of the APIC is how the center is staffed. As a result, the APIC is to be co-run by the two stakeholders in information management during an emergency; the responders and the benefactors.

> Checklist for Staffing of APIC

Prior to the establishment of an APIC:

Evaluate local networks within the affected community

- > What is the structure in the community (i.e. tribal, political, professional, etc.)?
- > Who are the most affected within the community?
- > Develop relationships with local networks in order to appoint a community representative

Evaluate local networks within the humanitarian responders

- > What organizations are responding (i.e. found through UN-OCHA)?

Is there a “natural” leader within the affected population?

- > If not, mechanisms to determine trusted and visibly legitimate representative?

After establishment:

Affected persons can contribute in day-to-day functioning of the APIC

Requirements for staffing:

- > Shadow a staff member/representative for one day shift
- > Understand importance of information security and anonymity
- > Sensitive to cultural/class/ethnic differences amongst affected population
- > Committed to getting information to the people that need it the most
- > Fluent in the local language

Information to be Communicated: What?

The type of information that is discussed in the APIC will be highly contextual. Different centers should provide information to benefactors that have not been clearly communicated elsewhere. Likewise, responders should be collecting information that they have no collected through other channels. As the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies notes, data collection fatigue is often a byproduct of information collection.⁵⁶ This becomes more difficult when communities do not receive a follow-up or directly benefit from sharing the information.⁵⁷ As such, there must be an analysis of the communities information needs prior to the establishment of a center.



> Checklist for evaluating information needs

Prior to the establishment of an APIC:

Evaluate the initial information needs on both sides:

- > What information do affected persons require based on four categories from UN-OCHA:
(i) alerts, (ii) awareness, (iii) self-care, and (iv) service provision
- > What information do clusters need?

Protection	Logistics
Food Security	Nutrition
Emergency Telecommunications	Emergency Shelter
Early Recovery	Camp Management and Coordination
Education	Health
Sanitation, Water, and Hygiene	

- > What information do affected populations need?

- Job opportunities
- National government plans



After Establishment:

- > Information demanded by responders based on cluster and Information demanded by affected populations based on cluster

Protection	Logistics
Food Security	Nutrition
Emergency Telecommunications	Emergency Shelter
Early Recovery	Camp Management and Coordination
Education	Health
Sanitation, Water, and Hygiene	

56. Norwegian Refugee Council and The Camp Management Project. (May 2008). "The Camp Management Toolkit." Last accessed July 31, 2014. Retrieved from http://www.nrc.no/arch/_img/9295458.pdf

57. Ibid.



Method of Communication: How?

There are currently a number of ways in which humanitarian actors disseminate information in the wake of a disaster. As has been previously highlighted, the APIC should not replace previous methods, but rather augment them by providing a physical space for communication. Prior to establishing a center, responders should evaluate the best method for information dissemination.

Prior to the establishment of an APIC:

Evaluate any cultural characteristics for how information is received/transmitted

- > Mobile phone usage
- > Literacy rates
- > How stories or ideas are communicated in the community (i.e. is there a strong storytelling culture?)
- > What language(s) are spoken in the community?

What percentage of the community can read/write? What language(s)?

What is their ethnicity?

What is their religion, if practiced widely?

Do they have access to a radio?

Do they have access to a television?

Do they have access to a mobile device?

- > If so, is it working or was it damaged?

- > What do they use their mobile phones for?

What is their most trusted source of information?

How do they communicate information to other people?

Once this initial community profile is established, responders can begin to establish lines of communication in these information centers. The guidance varies on the connectivity of each community.

It is important to note that if this information is unavailable before establishing the center, the APIC should assume the community is “connected”.

Highly Connected

- > More than 75% of community members have access to functional mobile phones
- > More than 40% are “smart phones” and tablets that can download applications (iPhones and Androids)
- > Local mobile networks are semi functional to fully functional

Connected

- > Between 50-75% of community members have access to functional mobile phones
- > Some individuals have access to “smart phones” and tablets that can download applications (iPhones and Androids)

Disconnected

- > Less than 50% of the population have access to functional mobile phones
- > Few individuals have access to “smart phones” and tablets that can download applications (iPhones and Androids)



Based on these classifications information centers in these communities are equipped with different technology and modes of communication. Here is an example of such classifications:

	Highly Connected	Connected	Disconnected
Features of the Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Mobile phone charging stations > Access to satellite phone and Internet networks > Surveys can be conducted through applications on benefactors mobile phones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Mobile phone charging stations > Access to satellite phone and Internet networks > Surveys can be conducted through applications on benefactors mobile phones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Available mobile phones that individuals can use within the center > Conduct in-person surveys and interviews > Highlight communication component
Continuing Methods of Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Establish “Freedom Fone” device⁵⁹ > Update individuals on weekly market prices and where services are being provided where > Application so community members can report on 3Ws from the field > Establish radio station that is rooted in the center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Establish “Freedom Fone” for those with device > Disperse working mobile devices to representatives from communities surrounding the center > Establish radio station that is rooted in the center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Disperse working mobile devices to representatives from communities surrounding the center > Establish radio station that is rooted in the center > Establish “Freedom Fone” for those with mobile devices (including those dispersed in the community)

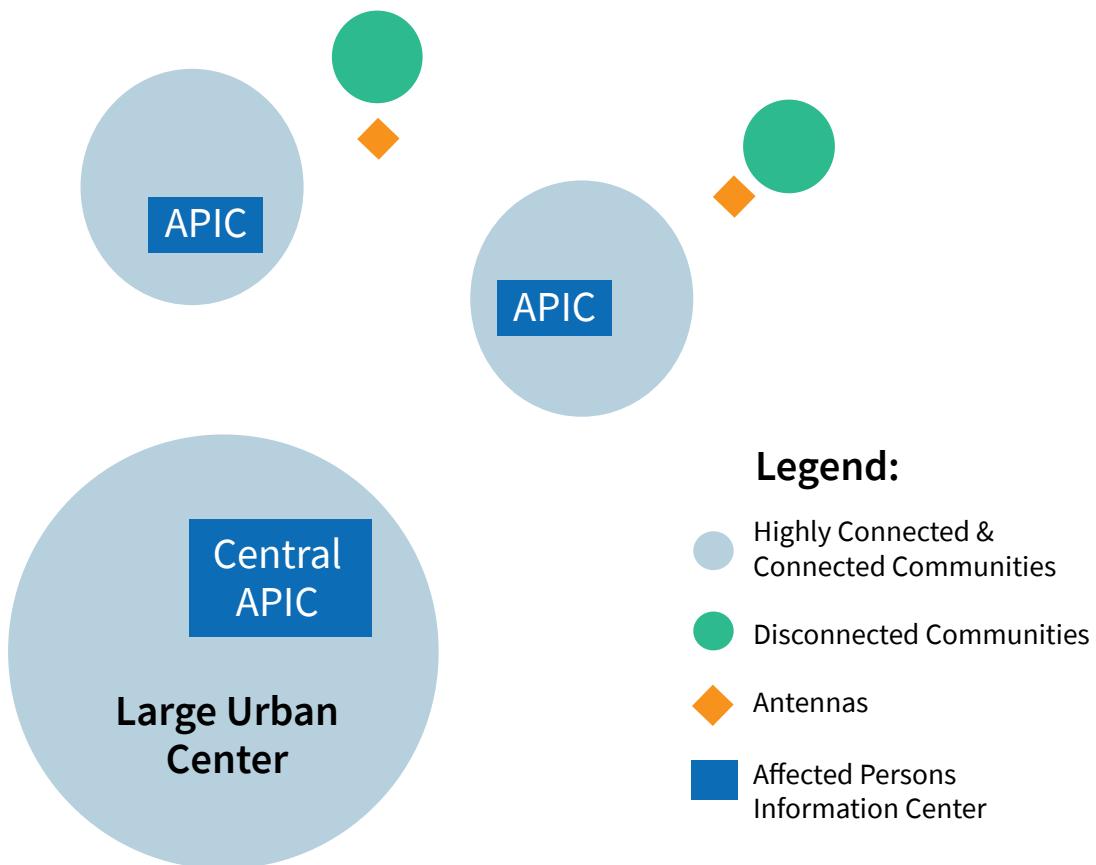
59. A “Freedom Fone” device allows a computer to be connected to mobile phones through having a recording play when people call a number and follow the prompts (i.e. for information on X press 1 now). Retrieved from <http://www.odihpn.org/hpn-resources/network-papers/improving-communication-between-aid-agencies-and-crisis-affected-people-lessons-from-the-infoasaid-project>

Size and Layout of the Center: Where?

While most APIC will be similar insofar as they provide similar services, the size and location of the centers will also be contingent on the community characteristics. For a community that has been classified as “highly connected”, for instance, a larger center will be established in an urban center while smaller antenna centers will be established to extend connectivity. Conversely, in a community that is considered “disconnected” there will be smaller centers spread throughout the region in addition to antenna centers in order to maximize the number of connected affected persons (Figure 2).

Where the capacity exists there will be a mobile APIC that can provide similar services as permanent centers such as mobile charging services, mobile phone networks, and the Humanitarian Concierge.

Figure 2.



Checklist for dispersion and layout centers:

Identify central urban center :

- > Within central urban center, identify central location not in close proximity to an internally Displaced Persons Camp (IDP), if information center is already established within camp
- > Identify and locate surrounding communities and evaluate their connectivity (i.e. highly connected, connected, or disconnected)

- > For highly connected and connected communities: Establish antennas to ensure strong connection between smaller communities and the central APIC

- > In larger communities outside the urban center: establish a “satellite” center that has similar services and information, but at a much smaller scale
- In smaller disconnected communities where information gaps exist (benefactors and/or responders): establish small information center

- > In smaller disconnected communities that are well informed or in close proximity to a larger community or information center: establish antennas that expand bandwidth and also send responders on “day” visits to communicate with community representative

- > Identify and locate surrounding communities and evaluate their connectivity (i.e. highly connected, connected, or disconnected)



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