**Context Analysis Checklist**

As with any project, it is important to start with a context assessment to inform project activities and design. Customs and systems are unique to each context, and need to be evaluated before deciding on a course of action and appropriate type and use of technology. ICT methodologies should capitalize on and integrate with current efforts.

This document suggests some issues to assess your communications context. It will help you think through ways to use SMS in your work. Adjust this word document based on your own needs and context- it will prompt you to analyze hardware, connectivity, data, community, cultural, and organizational considerations.

**Hardware and Connectivity:**

1. Who owns handsets?

* What % of community members and organizational staff own mobile phones? What do they use SMS for?
* What is the breakdown of basic, feature, and smart phones?
* If people don’t own phones, do they have their own SIM card they can use with a shared phone? (Where poverty and supply restrict access to handsets, people may have their own SIM card but share or borrow a handset, or simply share a phone.)
* What, if any, is the primary operating system run on these phones?

1. How widespread is network coverage?

* What kinds of mobile and internet connection/coverage do community members and organizational staff have? Are there regular interruptions in this coverage?
* If organizational staff travel to different communities, how does their coverage change from place to place?
* What plans do organizational staff and community members subscribe to? Pre-paid, pay-as-you-go, subscription?

Note: Answering these questions will help paint a picture of the frequency and times which people are most likely (or simply able) to use mobile and SMS.

1. How much does mobile actually cost?

* When using different plans, and sending or receiving messages, how much do people pay?
* What are the indirect costs (for example, costs associated with charging their device or access to a generator)?

1. How do mobile phone users consider different networks and pricing plans? Is service hindered by use of one network over others? Do users own multiple SIM cards for different networks that they switch between?
2. To what extent are mobile networks controlled or owned by the state?

* Does the state have incentives to examine the contents of messages?
* Does the state have different relationships with different mobile network operators in considering how information may be collected or viewed?

1. Has mobile network infrastructure suffered damage as a result of an emergency, inclement weather, been shut down, or regularly experience usage overload?

Note: If this is happening, it is important to know the reason, and in order to find possible alternative solutions.

1. What devices do administrative offices have (computers, tablets, phones)?

* What are the energy sources for these devices?
* How are these devices stored/protected when not in use?
* How is access to these devices managed or controlled?
* Is there wifi access in the office? If the power fluctuates, or if there is no wifi, is mobile data available?

Note: this affects how you might run FrontlineSMS or FrontlineCloud.

**Data:**

1. Is the information being communicated able to be structured in a simple format?

* If information needs to be separated into several parts (multiple numbers or multi-part responses), does this affect time and cost considerations for the organization or the person sending/receiving the message/s?

1. How is the information you plan to collect and disseminate through mobile currently transferred to/from the same groups or people? How is it currently stored and transferred within the organization?

* What would motivate people to move their current communication to SMS? What would deter them?
* What are the costs associated with the current system (time, materials, etc.)?
* Is this information politically sensitive? If so, take special consideration of the data integrity implications of communicating through SMS.
* Are there special measures your organization would need to take to protect information about people or that they have shared?

**Community and Culture:**

1. What communication channels do people use and trust? Do they trust and use different channels for different types of information? For example, are these the same channels they trust for political information, participation, expression, and interaction?
2. What are the literacy levels of community members intended to be reached through SMS communications? Keep in mind that some people may be able to interpret and respond to SMS with a standard format despite not being literate.
3. Do the phones most people use support a script for the language they speak and understand?
4. Are there differences in mobile phone use and ownership based on gender, age, ethnicity, physical ability or other factors?
5. What are community expectations and concerns about response, being informed, and receiving updates?

* What are their expectations and concerns on political issues, civic issues, public service delivery, transparency and accountability issues?
* How important is it that these updates be in real-time?
* What consequences may arise from updates with outdated information?
* Do updates require any immediate action or response?

**Organizational:**

1. Can staff use SMS to keep in touch?
2. Does the organization have the capacity to build relationships or partnerships with mobile network operators for specialized services or service packages?
3. What does the current relationship between the organization and community look like?
4. Will a mobile or SMS outreach/communications initiative raise expectations of community members in a way that the organization is not yet able to respond to?
5. If the organization expects SMS communication to raise the volume of inquiries, requests, needed responses or service requests, does the organization have a plan for absorbing and accommodating that new volume?
6. Who has the internal influence to alter organizational/administrative practice and/or policies (to allow for new formats/technology/processes)?