

TOOL 16

EXIT STRATEGY GUIDANCE ¹

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This guidance document is intended to support staff and volunteers when considering exit strategy communications with communities. Exit strategy information should be shared with communities well in advance of activities ending, however the exact timing will depend on the specific context and duration of the programme. The information below offers some key points to think about and final timelines on when information shared and how should be made by the programme manager.

Why?

It is critical to communicate properly with beneficiaries in the run-up to program closure because:

- Sharing your plans and giving people the chance to be involved in what happens next means a smoother exit/handover for you and less problems after you are gone
- It shows respect for the community you have been working with.
- We need to be accountable to our beneficiaries, which means being transparent and participatory
- People 'just want to know'. Even it is bad news about a service stopping, knowing in advance means they can plan ahead.

Key communication stages

Plan how and what you want to communicate at each of the four key stages of the exit strategy:

1. Planning your exit
2. Community consultation period
3. Services are stopping and being handed over
4. Monitoring the situation for a short period after you've finished.

Key information you need to provide

- When services will stop
- Programme achievements to date
- How people can get involved in deciding what happens after you leave
- How they can ask questions and make their concerns felt at each stage of the process
- Outline what will happen during each stage of the handover or shut down
- What will be the system after you leave, including who will be in charge
- A means of getting in touch after you leave if there are any major problems.


General advice

- Give people advance warning of changes AT LEAST 1 WEEK before you implement them

¹ From the Accountability to Beneficiaries in East Africa and the Indian Ocean Islands toolkit



ICRC

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

- Have a consultation period where the community has the opportunity to feed into decisions about what will happen after you leave
- Set up a method for people to ask questions or raise complaints. This can be a formal system like a telephone line or informally through community mobilizers. The main thing is people know they can ask questions and how they can do this
- Use as many channels as possible to communicate with people, for a example a mix of posters, community mobilizers, SMS, radio
- Make sure all the tools you use to communicate are giving the same messages to avoid confusing people
- Tackle rumours quickly by addressing them and providing the correct information – don't ignore them
- Be honest with people

Choosing your communications channel

A range of beneficiary communications tools that can help you communicate your exit plans. For more information please refer to Tool 8: 'Communication Channels'.

Or visit the Beneficiary Communications Library:

<https://fedteam.ifrc.org/global/collaboration/disasters/bc/default.aspx>

Exit strategy example – WATSAN water trucking in Haiti

Beneficiary communications plan – Water trucking exit strategy

March 2011, Port au Prince, Haiti

The issue

The IFRC WATSAN programme is currently trucking free water to 66 water points throughout Port au Prince. The trucking of water is extremely expensive and not sustainable in the long term. Therefore WATSAN are planning to hand over water provision to Haitian authorities, private vendors and communities and cease all emergency water trucking from September 2011. This deadline was originally set for September 2010, but was delayed due to the cholera outbreak and subsequent response.

Over the coming months, WATSAN will be working with communities to find and help establish alternative solutions so that people will still have access to safe water for drinking and household purposes. Alternative solutions include handing over to the Government water authority DINEPA, finding private suppliers or establishing community management of water points, amongst others.

The issue is to communicate these changes to communities and engage them in choosing, establishing, and promoting the alternative solutions to ensure success.

Overall communications objective

To communicate to those who currently use IFRC trucked water that this service will be stopping by October 2011 and that the IFRC will be working with them during this time to find alternative, sustainable solutions that meet the needs of their community.

Communication aims

Affected communities will know:

- Red Cross water trucking will end in September 2011
- The IFRC will be working with them to find alternative solutions
- How they can be part of the decision making process to establish new sources of water
- How and where to get water when IFRC trucking stops and are informed of the scale-down process
- How they can ask questions and make their concerns felt at each stage of the process

Key messages (for beneficiaries)

- Following the reduction in cholera cases, Red Cross emergency water trucking will end by September 2011, but we will work with communities to find and set up alternative sources of water
- All communities affected by this will have a chance to ask questions and play a role in choosing alternative sources of water
- Trucking water is very expensive so the Red Cross can't do it forever and the money used on this could be better spent on reconstruction water projects
- In many cases, water will be provided by the authorities or private vendors, the same as it was before the earthquake
- We will keep you informed each step of the way and make sure you know how and where to get water when Red Cross trucking stops.

Activities

All activities below will support and work in tandem with the activities of the community mobilisation team.

Phase 1 – Mass communication and closing of underused water points (MARCH/APRIL 2011)

Aim 1 – to spread the message widely that Red Cross water trucking will end by September, explaining why and how the process will work.

- Radyo Kwa Wouj show on 30 March 2011 with guests from WATSAN. The show will discuss why water trucking can't continue and introduce the process from now until September, stressing the key messages above. Live calls from the audience will help gauge public reaction to this

- Generic posters will be designed and printed that can be used at all 66 water points and throughout camps affected to explain that IFRC water trucking can't continue and explaining the collaborative process.

Aim 2 – to communicate the immediate closure of 4-5 under-used water points to those affected.

- Posters communicating the closure will be put up at each water point. These posters will give the next nearest water location
- An SMS will be sent to everyone on the Voila network within 1KM of the water points to tell them when the point will be closing and the next nearest available source of water
- Ideally the SMS and the poster will provide a telephone number people can call if they have any questions
- The closure of these points can be advertised on the above Radyo Kwa Wouj show.

Phase 2 – Community involvement (APRIL ONWARDS AND THROUGHOUT)

Aim 1 – Communities have a means of and know how they can feed into the process of finding and establishing alternative water solutions.

Aim 2 – Communities have a means of raising complaints and asking questions about the process.

- Posters will be produced highlighting different options open to each individual camp
- The SMS system can be used to send information to each camp/community – advertising how they can get involved or asking them to vote on different options
- A Red Cross complaints and questions line will be advertised in camps, where people can call and raise their concerns. Information gathered through this line will be shared with WATSAN
- An interactive voice recognition (IVR) free-call line can be used to upload recorded information specific to each camp/community and this can be advertised in the camp. The IVR can also be used to run detailed surveys, where participants press buttons to indicate their answers, so tackling any literacy and size constraints of the SMS
- Sound trucks can be used to spread messages around camps and could operate in tandem with community mobilisation teams – for example, a sound truck could play recorded information and then community teams could hold a Q&A on what people have heard.

Phase 3 – Project handover & communicating new water processes

Aim 1 – Communities know the date IFRC water trucking will stop in their camp and how they can access water after this point.

Aim 2 – Communities have a means of asking questions and raising any concerns about the new process.

- Posters giving details of the new process and the date water trucking will stop
- Information can be distributed by SMS
- IVR can be used to provide recorded information on new processes
- Red Cross complaints and questions line can take residents calls

- Sound trucks can visit each camp to explain new water processes

Phase 4 – Monitoring and evaluating of new process

Aim 1 – To gather feedback on the new water process and make sure any outstanding issues can be raised and communicated to IFRC

- Red Cross complaints and questions line can continue to take calls
- IVR and/or SMS could be used for survey purposed to gauge people's satisfaction with the new processes

Next steps

- Immediately agree communication actions for the 4/5 unused water points that are due for closure in the next 10 days
- Agree a timeline with WATSAN for water point closure in other camps and communities, building in time for consultation and community involvement
- Combine beneficiary communications activities complement community mobilization plans

Impact

The Red Cross beneficiary communications evaluation, carried out in June 2011, found that people in communities affected by the end of water trucking felt well informed about the new processes and appreciated receiving the information. They were not angry over the stopping of the service and 'just wanted to know' what was happening.

