

## MODULE 2 COMMUNICATING WITH BENEFICIARIES AND COMMUNITIES

### PART 6 Supporting Communications

This final chapter will explore Supporting Communication.

In your project design, you should think about how you can support communications for beneficiaries and communities. *Support can come in all shapes and sizes*, such as translation of documents, support for transport, technological support, and support for physical infrastructure. Even providing a community with batteries and phone chargers can make a huge difference, especially if the normal power supply is damaged or faulty.

#### 1. Technological support

Other forms of support include the provision of mobile phone SIM cards, data or credit usage, and Wi-Fi hotspots to enable families to get in touch with their relatives and loved ones either overseas or elsewhere across the country. This is particularly significant following conflict outbreaks or natural disasters so that communities can let others know of their predicament and well-being.

#### 2. Translating communication

You can also support communications for beneficiaries and communities by translating written documents or radio messages into the appropriate dialect for the group you are working with as this can aid *mutual understanding*.

#### 3. Transport Communication

Sometimes beneficiary communities use messengers who travel via car, truck, bicycle, motorcycle, or other means to exchange information with social services such as hospitals. To support them and their safety, you can provide fuel, bicycles, or motorbikes to improve communications.

#### 4. Physical Communication Infrastructure

Often following conflict outbreaks or natural disasters, communications infrastructure is severely damaged. Whilst it is normally the responsibility of the government to replace this, there are ways in which you can help restore that infrastructure and underwrite communications costs for people who have lost their livelihoods.

For example, after earthquakes or hurricanes, community meeting places may be damaged or destroyed. To remedy this, you can offer support by rebuilding family houses, rehabilitating public spaces, or constructing new community areas. As this often requires substantial funds and labor, you can request support and coordinate with the local authorities who in turn may provide you with key contractor phone numbers, email contacts, and radio support for your rehabilitation projects.

#### 5. Map the radio coverage in the area

Another way in which you can support communications for those who have lost their livelihoods following natural disasters or conflicts is to map the radio coverage in the area. This will give you a better idea of how many people you can reach. You could also consider working with radio and TV companies to empower communities to have their voices heard and promote visibility for their situation and for your project. This could subsequently attract the support of other NGOs and/or donors.

However, when thinking about communications strategies do not forget to remember **potential bias and politicization**.

1. Think about whether *communication* means and messages could be used *equitably*.
2. Are some people going to *benefit more than others*?
3. Will the provision of communications support *exacerbate pre-existing tensions* within and between communities? Could your communications support be *exploited or misconstrued* by political groups?

You should consider all these factors - both the advantages and disadvantages - when supporting communications for beneficiaries and communities.