

Following the catastrophic consequences of the typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in November 2013 and the subsequent activation of the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC) important steps were taken towards integration of people centric issues such as age, gender, disabilities, protection and Accountability to Affected Populations across the phases of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle. Five months on, in April 2013, the FSAC went back to partners to compile concrete evidence on how various agencies operationalized the commitments made in the Strategic Response Plan for the integration of people centric issues. Based on the feedback provided by 7 agencies (Concern Worldwide, Save the Children, Plan International, National Coalition of Churches in the Philippines, FAO, WFP and CARE), a summary is provided on the overall achievements and challenges.

People Centric Issues in the Strategic Response Plan

The SRP was developed after extensive consultations with various actors including experts on protection, gender, age, disability and Accountability to Affected Populations. The final narrative reflected four areas of commitments made by the Cluster towards people centric issues.



1. **Inclusive assessments:** In-depth assessments that involve all segments of the affected communities across gender, age, disability and diversity will be required in the coming 2-3 months in both highly and moderately affected areas to better define the profiles and needs of target populations, specifically:
 - ✓ Individuals displaced with inadequate social support systems and total loss of livelihoods and assets;
 - ✓ Groups with multiple vulnerabilities in inaccessible areas and not adequately covered by existing support programs;
 - ✓ Individuals with special nutritional needs, as per assessments conducted by the Nutrition Cluster;
 - ✓ Women and men of all ages and with expertise in agriculture, fisheries and related micro, small and medium sized enterprise (MSME)
2. **Sex and Age Disaggregated Data:** As recommended in the Sphere Standards, continuous collection of sex and age disaggregated data, will be used to inform male and female targets of various age groups and the ways that cluster assistance will benefit them.
3. **People centric programming:**
 - ✓ Specific needs of vulnerable groups will be identified during all stages of the delivery of assistance.
 - ✓ Gender, age and diversity dynamics of cash-for-work/assets will be comprehensively explored to ensure equitable reach and access. Close links with protection advisors will ensure that guidance is in place to avoid the exclusion of older people, People with Disabilities (PWD) and women from Cash for Work (CFW/A).
 - ✓ Preventive measures will be taken to ensure that protection threats are addressed at distribution and work sites, as well as through other assistance platforms.
4. **Accountability to Affected Populations:** The cluster partners will provide needs-based quality services and humanitarian accountability, including appropriate feedback mechanisms for affected populations, prevention from harm and exclusion, as well as meaningful engagement with men and women of all age groups. Cluster partners will also uphold codes of conduct, including sustainability and protection of the environment as core elements in the response plan.

Inclusive Assessments

5 out of 7 agencies reported that their assessments captured the needs across gender, age, disability, diversity and protection, including “do no harm.” For example, **NCCP** reported their assessments indicated that most of the affected population had male-headed families involved in fishing and women played a major role in increasing the family’s income through alternative livelihoods, such as mat-making and fish processing. **Plan International** also launched the Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) of Cash transfer in February covering 75 households. The information on sex and other information like disability also lead to a more responsive distribution system. One of the constraints identified by **Plan** was the timeliness and frequency of assessments that are needs-based to inform food security programming effectively. Oftentimes assessments did not result in a dynamic process to collect information and lacked the use of the seasonal calendar in addressing various community members’ needs, based on food and livelihood seasonality.

Sex and Age Disaggregated Data (SADD) Collection

5 out of 7 agencies reported that they were able to collect SADD at various levels. **Save the Children** reported that in the Tacloban area (8 municipalities) and in Panay they collected information at household level disaggregating data per age and sex of the HHs members. Due to the disaggregated information, it could design interventions to reach women, ages 16 to 24

who were engaging in poor coping strategies (i.e. trafficking, unskilled labour, migration and early marriages) due to lack of family income. **Plan International's** cash programmes use a database documenting information on the number of beneficiary household members, males and females, boys and girls. **CARE's** local partners ensured that SADD was collected before the actual distribution took place (food packs, shelter repair kits and cash transfer for livelihood programs). **NCCP** collected data on the family beneficiary profile, including age and gender, in addition to the barangay demographic profile. **FAO's** rice project was age disaggregated, but it also collected information on the gender of household heads and whether any disabled individuals were part of the household beneficiaries.

Some of the common challenges faced in collecting SADD as experienced by **CARE**, especially in the early rounds of the food distributions included the lack of clear understanding of the definition of female-headed households and disabled individuals. This, in turn, led to a misconception of the reality on the ground. During the emergency phase, many partners were faced with access constraints, limited power supply and internet connection, as well as precarious safety and security conditions. **Plan** also experienced challenges in the form of population movements and insufficient time available to accurately validate information and periodically collect it.

People centric programming

5 out of 7 agencies reported to have addressed the specific needs of affected populations, especially during the delivery of assistance. **CARE** ensured that vulnerable groups were included in community consultations, beneficiary targeting and throughout the entire implementation process. Priority queues were created for vulnerable groups who were also assisted in transporting food and shelter materials to their homes. **Plan** also undertook targeted food distributions and cash programming for vulnerable groups, which were identified based on standard criteria of the Food Security Cluster. Similarly, **Plan International** ensured that vulnerable individuals were given priority at distribution points. **Save the Children** also designed specific interventions for men, women, girls and boys by targeting their specific nutritional needs. In response to the emerging needs as reported in various Cluster meetings, **WFP** with partners **IMC** and **HelpAge/COSE** provided special nutrition to older people in 4 municipalities in Leyte.

Accountability to Affected Populations

Several partners addressed humanitarian accountability, including appropriate feedback mechanisms. **NCCP** also embarked on a CRM project, where community workers were the front liners in the village, receiving complaints from the affected populations and forwarding this information up to barangay leaders and national offices. Similarly, **CARE** posted tarpaulins and distributed flyers with contact numbers and email addresses in barangays. **CARE** also put suggestion boxes in every food distribution site. Field teams would process the feedback from the community members and provide them with a response letter posted in barangay hall. **CARE**, moreover, actively worked with local partners and promoted their long-term involvement in planning and decision-making through regular monitoring, partner meetings and assessments.



Protection from harm and exclusion measures were also taken by **Concern Worldwide**, which has a Programme Participant Protection Policy, to which all staff and associated agencies must adhere. It provides the option to community members of making complaints via phone, SMS, email, in person or through the LGU and provides dignified and meaningful engagement with different population groups. **Save the Children**, similarly established a very effective feedback mechanism that communities are using to report back on targeting processes. It posts information about targeting criteria and processes and project information at *Barangay* level. All feedback that requires action is addressed via the MEAL team, which undertakes thorough investigations where major complaints are reported. The MEAL team in fact encouraged communities in Tacloban to identify the most vulnerable households amongst themselves to minimize exclusion errors. Help Desks were also set-up in cash distribution centres. In Panay, **Save the Children** worked in remote and hardly reachable areas to ensure that vulnerable groups are not left out from receiving assistance. **FAO** conducted a rice post-distribution survey to understand whether there were any vulnerable households who were excluded from receiving **FAO** assistance. **FAO** also developed draft key messages for communities outlining the criteria and process for the beneficiary selection and highlighting that inputs into the feedback forms are free and voluntary.

Conclusion

Although only 7 partners of the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster in the Philippines participated in this exercise, the findings obtained provide us with a basis for building evidence on the mainstreaming of people centric issues and its effect on the recovery of the most vulnerable affected populations in a dignified way. It also provides us with a way forward on how people centric issues can be addressed at the various phases of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle. The engagement and inputs of experts of various people centric issues in the Strategic Response Plan provided the Cluster with concrete commitments to take forward, which as the evidence demonstrates were followed up by some key cluster partners.