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PRACTICAL SHEET

10 THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE ROLLING OUT TWO-WAY SMS

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SET UP A TEXT COMMUNICATION TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION WITH COMMUNITIES? HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE PROCESS.

1. IS TEXTING AN 'APPROPRIATE' CHANNEL?

- **Conduct an assessment of the information and communication needs** of communities, to see if SMS is one of the channels they use (or would like to use).
- Do the groups you want to communicate with have sufficient **access to mobile phones**?
- If SMS are not mentioned or if it is only used by certain members, your text campaign will not have the desired impact.

2. CAN YOUR TEXT BE ANSWERED?

- Even if you want to use text only to share information (one way), people may naturally **feel the need to respond to you**.
- Even if you write "**DO NOT ANSWER**", there will still be incoming messages.
- To avoid leaving urgent messages unanswered, **plan a protocol to respond to incoming messages** appropriately.
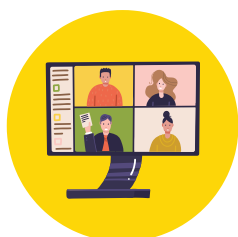
3. DO YOU HAVE SUFFICIENT RESOURCES?

- Examine **your own internal capacity** to design, provide, and maintain this channel (manage the technological part, write messages ...)
- Before starting, confirm with the colleagues involved that **they have the time available** to engage in this process.
- If you are short on resources, you may be better off considering **an external service provider** who can take over some of the work.

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4. IS YOUR ROADMAP READY?

- The roadmap illustrates step by step the complete course of your work. It describes **who is responsible** for each task and when.

- Your roadmap determines which organization is **the most appropriate** if action is to be taken as a result of a message received.

- This will avoid the risk that some **urgent requests** will not be processed.

5. WHAT TOOLS WILL YOU USE?

- Sending texts may require the use of other technologies.

- You may need a system that lists **urgent messages on specific issues** (such as GBV).

- In your roadmap, specify **all the tools you will have to use** in order to avoid unwanted surprises.

6. IS ANYONE EXCLUDED?

- In a community, not everyone has the same access to the telephone (women, the elderly, etc.). Think about **how to include all groups** in your communication.

- For example, by involving community structures to pass information **through word of mouth** to groups that do not have access to a telephone.

- **Device distribution** may be required for some groups.

7. IS TEXTING ALREADY USED ELSEWHERE?

- Text can be used by many actors at the same time. **Humanitarian organizations must coordinate and cooperate** so as not to overwhelm communities with messages.

- For example, **organize a working group on communication with communities**, bringing together several organizations

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8. HOW TO MEASURE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SMS?

- Before sending thousands of texts, **test your content with a few members of the community** to verify understanding of your message and to anticipate possible misinterpretations.

9. HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

- To find out the cost, **determine the number of people you want to reach**, the number of messages you want to send, and the cost per message.
- **Contact mobile network operators** to negotiate preferential rates.

10. DIY OR CONTRACT A SERVICE PROVIDER?

- Before making large investments, **test several platforms and several providers**. This will give you a better idea of the type of solution you need.
- For example, **you can test a service provider on a "trial period"**. This will help you quickly rule out options that don't match your needs.
- After these tests, you will know if you need a solution to develop yourself (DIY) or go through an external service provider.