

# The Public Information for Disasters Contingency Plan

## Background

- Public Information for Disasters Contingency Plan was developed to improve the PHT's coordination of media engagement with the aim of achieving the following :
  - Improved ability to advocate for the needs of disaster affected populations;
  - Improved ability to communicate with disaster affected populations;
  - Greater success in resource mobilization from donors/public;
  - Improved perceptions of work and worth of humanitarian community.

## Methodology

- The Plan was developed by drawing on the expertise and opinion of Public Information Officers from PHT agencies throughout the Pacific.
- One day workshop in Suva, led by Amanda Pitt, UNOCHA's most senior Public Information Specialist from Bangkok – PI Plan was drafted
- Discussion was based on
  - Humanitarian Reform;
  - How the Cluster Approach could be applied to the management of media relations; and
  - Unique challenges of working with the media during a disaster.
- A similar meeting was subsequently held in Samoa to include PIOs from this region in the planning process.

## Guiding principles

To achieve the positive outcomes the plan aims to meet the following broad objectives:

1. Ensure that all communication with the media draws information from the same source - consistency of messages.
2. Ensure that each person who is likely to undertake communication understands their role, responsibilities and authority - avoids duplication.
3. Ensure that each person who is likely to communicate with the media is appropriately resourced - skills and tools required to do their job.
4. Ensure that, where possible, appropriate preparedness measures are taken prior to the onset of the cyclone season. This will reduce the workload during a disaster by allowing some decision making to be made during periods of relative calm

# Implementation

- 2 phased approach:
  1. Preparedness
  2. Response

## Preparedness Phase

1. Build, maintain and circulate contact details of key media targets
2. Produce and circulate "what to do" and "what not to do" media training one pager
3. Agree on a set of generic holding statements
4. Agree on key spokesperson at Cluster and IASC level – guidelines for media engagement

## Response Phase

1. All communications to draw on OCHA's situation reps for statistics
2. Cluster PIOs work with RC to develop key advocacy messages
3. Key advocacy messages reviewed regularly and amended

## Implementation

- Central/coordinating figure is necessary to ensure successful implementation of the Plan.
- Ability of media to +/- affect a number of aspects of a disaster response. They also play a major role in shaping the general reputation of the humanitarian community.
- Need to proactively manage media relations.
  - A coordinated approach will be most effective and the Public Information for Disasters Contingency Plan is a first step towards organizing this.
- UNOCHA / RCO roles?
- Workshops – simulation exercise

## Way Forward

- OCHA to foster initial adoption of Plan
- Endorsement by RCs
- Implementation by PHT