



# National Communications and Public Information Strategy for the Rohingya Humanitarian Response

Version 1, May 2020

**ISCG** | INTER SECTOR  
COORDINATION  
GROUP

## 1. Background

Since the influx of Rohingya refugees in August 2017, there has been an increase in tensions between refugee and host communities and anti-humanitarian community sentiment, exacerbated by poor local media coverage of the response. The overall socio-economic condition of Cox's Bazar District has drastically changed since the Rohingya influx of August 2017. Being a tourist area, people are mostly dependent on their trades. Directly or indirectly many traders have benefited from the influx, though this is not reflected in local media. Moreover, Cox's Bazar District has been receiving special attention from local and international media when the world witnessed one of the largest forced displacements of recent times.

Some examples of negative perceptions include refugees accused of stealing local jobs, destroying the environment, causing market prices to increase, being involved in the drug trade; and a demand for localisation and more jobs and services to be given to local community. These negative perceptions have been fueled by local media and local prominent figures, which has led to some demonstrations and violent incidents in and outside the camps.

The local media plays an influential role in creating mindset and perception of the host community about the Rohingya refugees and the overall crisis response. According to a UNDP analysis (April 2020), 24% of social media posts are against UN/INGO/NGOs, 13% against Rohingya refugees, and 7% against government/Camp-in-Charges (CiCs). Majority of journalists have little formal training, and there are limited opportunities at the District level for professional development, workshops on ethics etc. This lack of capacity for the local journalist has an overall impact on the response which might not be always reflected at the national level and complicates day-to-day operations at the local level.

To address this issue, the humanitarian community has included 'Strengthening Peaceful Social Cohesion' as one of its strategic priorities in the [2020 Joint Response Plan](#) and has developed a National Communications and Public Information (PI) Strategy.

## 2. Objectives

The purpose of the National Communications and PI Strategy is to strengthen media engagement and media relations in Cox's Bazar District and support local journalists to enhance their understanding of balanced and ethical reporting in humanitarian operations, particularly on the Rohingya humanitarian response. The Strategy aims to achieve the following five objectives:

- **Encourage** fact-based media coverage of the humanitarian response and Rohingya refugees, including enhancing local journalists understanding of humanitarian reporting and increasing information products available in Bangla.
- **Promote** positive perceptions of refugees and the humanitarian response to reduce social tension, prejudice, and discrimination.
- **Engage** local journalists and facilitate their knowledge and understanding of the humanitarian response supporting both Rohingya and local communities.
- **Strengthen** systematic monitoring of press and media trends at the Cox's Bazar level to support the overall Rohingya response and ISCG Secretariat and its partners.
- **Ensure** a common approach and messaging from the humanitarian community in local media engagement.

## 3. Target Audiences

- Media representatives i.e. local journalists from print/online/other media
- Government representatives i.e. local authorities at Cox's Bazar District level
- Civil society i.e. writers, columnists, social and cultural activists, youth leaders, politicians, religious leaders
- Humanitarian community i.e. UN agencies, NGOs, and donors
- General public i.e. Bangladeshis and Rohingya refugees

#### 4. Mode of Communication

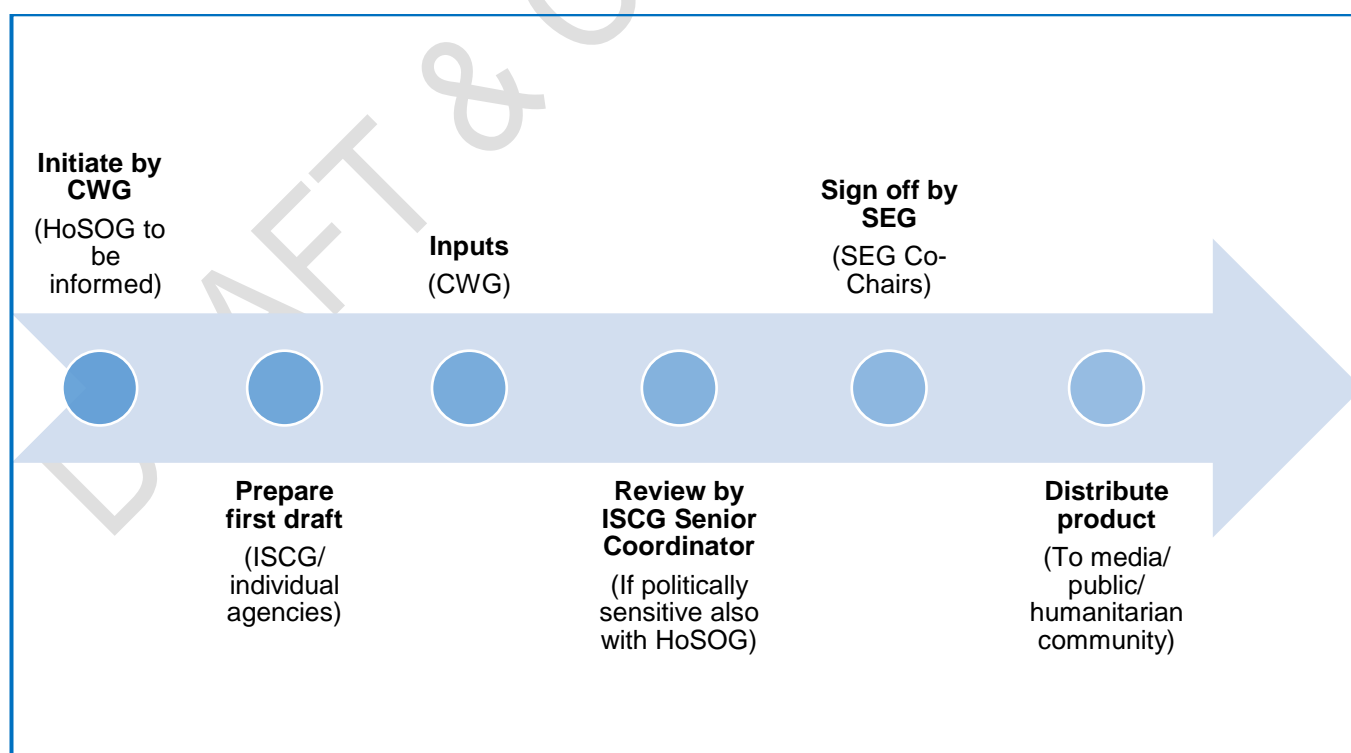
The following three key modes of communication will be used to reach the target audience:

- **Social Media** – Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. are strong and popular cost-effective tools used to promote humanitarian work and highlight the needs of refugees. ISCG official Facebook page and Twitter account will be used for outreach to wider audiences.
- **Print, Online and Broadcast Media** – There are a variety of active online media in Cox’s Bazar District; broadcast media who carry a high influence to spread news to the wider community; and established media outlets and national dailies.
- **Website** – ISCG’s official website is a key platform where local and national media can locate all updates including Bangla versions in one place.

#### 5. Communication Channels

- **Communication Working Group (CWG)** – CWG is the first and foremost platform to share information and plays a vital role in the development and proposal of ideas for joint communications implemented by ISCG.
- **Cox’s Bazar Local Media Mailing List** – ISCG disseminates key operational updates and communication products to national and local media through this mailing list, which includes platforms like CXB Journalist Association, and Press Club who represent the local journalist fora.
- **Heads of Sub-Offices Group (HoSOG) and Sector/Working Group Coordinators** – Based on the relevancy of the messages, key decision-makers in the Cox’s Bazar humanitarian response can be engaged to share communication products with their partners and media network to increase community outreach.
- **Communication with Communities Working Group (CwC WG)** – CwC WG produces regular and key messages to the refugee and host communities through diverse community engagement platforms, which can be used to increase outreach of joint communication products supporting social cohesion.

#### 6. Clearance Process for Joint Humanitarian Products



## 7. Deliverables

Tasks	Frequency	Channel
Prepare press releases and share a summary report on outreach impact	Ad-hoc	ISCG
Develop joint humanitarian community media lines on trending topics for local media engagement	Ad-hoc	ISCG
Respond to local media queries	Ongoing	Press
Share reports and publications of ISCG and relevant inter-agency products	Ongoing	Press
Translate key media content such as speeches and directives produced by local and national authorities	Ad-hoc	ISCG
Prepare and organize special features/stories/Op-Eds in the local media	Monthly	Press
Update ISCG National Communications and PI strategy	Yearly	ISCG
Update local media mapping analysis	Monthly	CWG
Monitor social media in Bangla for negative content on the Rohingya response	3 x a week	ISCG
Organize capacity building initiative for local journalists	Bi-monthly	Press
Roundtable discussion with key media representatives on major issues	Ad-hoc	Press
Develop social media content in Bangla	Daily	ISCG
Organize joint field visits to highlight the humanitarian community's efforts in the refugee camps and host communities	Ad-hoc	Press
Develop videos and other joint communication products in Bangla and English for local media	Ad-hoc	Public
Develop joint humanitarian community communication guidelines for engaging with local media	Ad-hoc	CWG
Liaise with inter-agency communications focal points to provide a platform to share Bangla content on the Rohingya response	Ad-hoc	ISCG
Liaise with CARU UNDP to stay informed of existing and emerging trends of negative rhetoric on social media	Ongoing	ISCG

## 8. Measuring Success

A quarterly report on the implementation of the strategy will be produced using the following indicators to monitor and measure success:

- # of mentions of ISCG in the local news/agency
- # of capacity building initiatives organised for local journalists
- # of local media queries received
- # of campaigns and roundtable discussions organized
- # of special features/stories/Op-Eds published in the local and national media
- # of press releases produced and shared
- # of local media agencies who covered the press releases
- # of social media content developed in Bangla highlighting host community support
- # of social media monitoring reports produced
- # of translated documents developed and shared
- # of videos in Bangla on the Rohingya response produced

END