

101 Seminar Series: Humanitarian Broadcasting



The CDAC Network's purpose is to position two-way communication with affected people at the heart of resilience-building, preparedness and response. Network Members believe this will enhance the effectiveness of aid, foster greater accountability and transparency, and improve the outcomes experienced by affected people. Importantly, it will enable stronger communications within affected groups and between affected groups and other stakeholder.

Seminar Lead

BBC Media Action:

BBC Media Action uses media and communication to provide access to information. This creates platforms that enable some of the poorest people in the world to take part in community life, and to hold those in power accountable. BBC Media Action's programming directly engages people in debate and discussion, and encourages communication across political, ethnic, religious and other social divides.

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About the CDAC-N 101 Seminar Series

The purpose of the CDAC Network's '101 Seminar Series' is to build the capacity of Network members by improving information sharing among members as well as the wider humanitarian community. The seminars utilise the expertise and experience of member organisations who are asked to share their knowledge with other members through face-to-face, practical workshops. To date, the CDAC Network has organised two seminars: 'Humanitarian Financing' and 'SMS Mobile in Emergency'. This report covers the latest seminar, 'Humanitarian Broadcasting' led by BBC Media Action's Senior Humanitarian Programme Producer Jacqueline Dalton and Robert Powell, Senior Adviser, Humanitarian Response and Resilience.

Definition of Humanitarian Broadcasting

Humanitarian Broadcasting is special programming for people affected by humanitarian crises using mass media communication channels such as television and radio. It supports the overall relief effort. Humanitarian broadcasting can be an especially powerful tool in the immediate aftermath of rapid onset emergencies. Media platforms such radio, television and mobile can communicate life-saving and risk-mitigating information rapidly and efficiently to crisis-affected communities on a large scale,¹ while relief providers are still mobilising to reach the affected population. In the longer term, broadcast media can improve accountability and two-way communications with aid recipients² and help communities address issues related to recovery. Radio has proven to be a particularly effective tool in humanitarian emergencies. According to BBC Media Action, the benefits include:

<p><u>Radio is immediate:</u> It can reach people straight after an event has occurred, sometimes more quickly than rescue services can. It can respond rapidly to a changing environment, such as outbreaks of conflict.</p>
<p><u>Radio is wide-reaching:</u> It can deliver factual humanitarian information from expert sources to millions of people at once, avoiding distorted messages that can occur through word-of-mouth communication. It can also reach areas otherwise cut-off from humanitarian aid.</p>
<p><u>Radio is portable:</u> It can be accessed without mains electricity, with batteries or wind-up/solar-powered receivers. Displaced people often choose to take radios among the few possessions they carry. In many countries, people also listen to FM radio on their mobile phones.</p>
<p><u>Radio is therapeutic:</u> Radio can serve as psychosocial support for a traumatised population. It can support mass trauma by promoting hope, connectedness, a sense of calming, and a sense of self- and collective belonging.</p>
<p><u>Radio is accessible:</u> It can meet the needs of a low literacy society and be tailored to vulnerable groups, including women, children and the elderly.</p>
<p><u>Radio is private:</u> Sensitive information, such as gender-based issues in emergencies, can be listened to in private – with headphones – creating a personal exchange between the radio programme and the listener.</p>
<p><u>Radio is public:</u> People often gather to listen to radio programmes in groups, prompting</p>

¹ In Haiti, Internews developed Enfomasyon Nou Dwe Konnen (ENDK – News You Can Use in creole) to provide actionable information and advice on the response to the earthquake. Within weeks it was being broadcasted by more than 20 stations in Port-au Prince and was heard across Haiti and diaspora communities worldwide.

² In 2009, UK charity WaterAid supported the Agency for Cooperation and Research Developed local Kenyan radio (Radio West) to conduct a series of radio programmes inviting local communities, service providers and local authorities to publicly discuss poor access to water and find suitable solutions.

discussion on the issues they've just been hearing about. In Somalia, BBC Media Action partnered with a local organisation that set up 'listening groups' to listen to the programmes and provide community support.

Radio is interactive: It supports two-way communication with the affected population. It can provide a public platform where those who are most affected can make their voices heard.

Humanitarian broadcasting should respond to concerns that affected communities have post-disaster. For example, people might want answers to questions such as: What happened? Is it safe to go back home? Where can I get shelter? Where and what kind of help is available? Humanitarian broadcasts should aim to answer these questions, providing actionable information that enables the target population to make better-informed choices about how to cope with the situation. Ideally programming should be based on a communication needs assessment that identifies which channels, formats and content/information would be most useful to the community.

Traditional media coverage of disasters tends to focus on reporting *about* the population, often with an emphasis on the negatives of the crisis (eg: how much people are suffering, the failings of relief providers, etc). Humanitarian broadcasts should be *for* the affected people. It emphasises what they can do for themselves to improve their situation.

According to Jacqueline Dalton from BBC Media Action: "Humanitarian messages are actionable pieces of information that support crisis affected communities. They are not about transmitting general information to the wider public, but about providing very specific information useful those directly affected by a crisis." Using actual broadcast messages, during the 101 Seminar Jacqueline illustrated how much existing communication around disasters – both within the media and humanitarian sectors – is often of little direct use to affected people. Relief agencies often use the media for fundraising or public relations purposes, as opposed to using it to directly assist communities facing emergencies. Likewise, the media tends to offer little practical information that affected people can use to improve their situation. The seminar discussion emphasised that scarce airtime on channels broadcasting to those affected should prioritise helpful messages in emergency situations. Aid recipients should be at the centre of an emergency communication strategy and their key concerns should be directly addressed, based on the realities of the local situation.

The examples below showcase helpful/not helpful messages discussed by BBC Media Action during the 101 Seminar.

Not helpful for those affected	Helpful for those affected
A news report describes the devastation, suffering and sense of helplessness among earthquake-affected people.	A humanitarian bulletin tells earthquake-affected people what to do to stay safe (eg: 'there may be aftershocks, stay out of buildings', etc.)
A reporter describes chaos and rioting at	An SMS to displaced people explains what they

food distribution points, saying there is not enough food for everyone.	need to do to claim food, and reminds them that food vouchers are not to be bought, sold or traded.
A statement discusses the recent implementation of a new UN coordination committee.	A television drama educates children on the dangers of waterborne diseases in polluted rivers.
A television clip shows a woman crying over the body of her dead son.	A flyer with photos of different kinds of unexploded ordnance informs children to stay away from such devices.
A report describes the relief effort as slow and ineffective.	A relief coordinator on a radio show explains that delivery of food aid has been hampered by blocked roads, and urges people to ration existing supplies and not to attack aid workers when they arrive.

In the recovery phase of an emergency, broadcast media can improve aid accountability and two-way communication. Between 2009 and 2010, ALNAP conducted field-based data from 1,104 aid recipients in four countries (Haiti, DRC, Pakistan, Uganda). More than 50% of respondents claimed they were not able to voice their opinion or make complaints on programmes.³ This observation shows the limited integration of beneficiary feedback mechanisms in humanitarian operations. Broadcast media, with its public and wide-reaching nature, creates a forum for crisis-affected populations to publicly share their experiences as recipients. For example, radio hosts can encourage listeners to call-in and give their opinions, acting as a voice for local populations on a public platform. This service can provide anonymity, guaranteeing the security and protection of any person who raises a concern about an issue or a humanitarian organisation. A television documentary can capture gaps in humanitarian recovery efforts in order to encourage authorities to address the needs of the population.

After the 2004 Indonesian Tsunami the Irish Red Cross developed a community outreach programme to improve two-way communication between aid agencies and the affected population. Using a mix of print, radio and TV, the IRCS established a communication loop to capture feedback and deliver this information to aid agencies. For example, the IRCS would receive complaints about substandard shelter provision by certain NGOs and present this to the concerned party. This feedback encouraged the NGO to deliver a radio campaign to explain its shortcomings and repair the defective houses. For the full case and lessons learnt please visit our website [entry](#).

Key Learning

The use of broadcast media in humanitarian response should be carefully planned and executed to avoid providing inaccurate, conflicting or potentially life-threatening information. It is also critical to select the most appropriate channels to reach those most affected; messages are

³ ALNAP, 2012. The State of the Humanitarian System. ALNAP. Available [online](#).

wasted if they do not reach their intended audience. During the 101 Seminar, four groups participated in a simulation exercise that explored different aspects of a communication response to a major cyclone in Bangladesh. Some participants developed public service announcements, while others drew up a ‘running order’ for a radio magazine programme. Other participants practised negotiating with radio station bosses to secure a partnership for humanitarian broadcasting. The Infoasaid project developed a template of key considerations for a successful strategy that is available [here](#).

Lesson 1: Know Your Environment

Media consumption depends on multiple factors including access to hardware, age group, socio-economic situation and cultural background. Each town, city and country has a unique media landscape that will have major consequences on resulting strategies. Below are some of the key questions it is necessary to consider:

- How does the target population access media?
- How can the strategy deliver its objective of targeting affected populations, given the media landscape?
- What are the in-country social and political dynamics?

Using the Infoasaid [Media Telecoms and Landscape Guides](#) the matrix below shows some basic macroeconomic and communication indicators that are useful in terms of knowing your environment.

	The Philippines	Bangladesh
Demographic indicators	94m people. 308.0/km	150m people. 1,033/km.
Economic Indicators	GDP: 457.3 bn. Per Capita: 4,691 USD	GDP: 306 bn. Per Capita: 2,033 USD
Mobile Penetration rates	99 per 100 people	64 per 100 people
Radio Penetration rates	93% in urban areas and 72% in rural areas	15% of the population listens to radio once every week.
Main Radio Broadcaster	Manila Broadcasting Company’s Radio Natin	Bangladesh Betar
Access to Television	47% of households have access to a television. 57% of under-10s are exposed to television.	84% of households in urban areas. 43% in rural areas.
Rural population (% of total)	51%	71%
Languages	Two official languages: English and Filipino. Eight recognised regional languages.	One official language: Bangla

This table shows how some very basic indicators can influence a humanitarian communication strategy. There are many more considerations to identify the appropriate channels to use in an emergency, including language and the degree to which the channel is trusted as a source of information. How do you think these will influence a humanitarian broadcasting strategy? The Infoasaid Media and Telecoms Landscape Guides provide a very useful summary of the broadcasting context of 22 countries. A review of the Guides by the CDAC Network is available on our [website](#).

Lesson 2: Understanding Your Options

A crisis can drastically affect the communications infrastructure. Roads, telecommunications and power lines are often disrupted. Access to necessities, such as fuel or even communication professionals, means humanitarian agencies often have limited options when devising a communication strategy.

The simulation exercise undertaken during the Seminar, and focussed on Bangladesh, stressed how a post-disaster infrastructure analysis can determine the scope of action. Due to power outages and damage to masts, most of the radios in Bangladesh were not operational. The remaining stations, powered by generators, had low fuel reserves. Television networks could only be restored in three weeks. However, as one participant noted, post-crisis repair often takes longer than expected. As a result, strategies need to take into account these infrastructure limitations and the delays in having functioning communications channels. Some questions to consider are:

- Which broadcasting channels are operational? Which radio and TV stations are still on air?
- Can the target audience receive the broadcast of those stations that are still on air? Have transmitters and relay stations been damaged? Does the affected population have access to radio and TV sets? (Note: The use of multiple channels is often the best way to achieve impact.)
- Do radio stations have power? Consider the time required to repair or if they have a generator, how much fuel do they have to continue broadcasting?
- Do crisis-affected populations have access to batteries, solar panels or fuel for generators?
- How long will it take to fix a mobile or radio network?
- How can people charge their mobile phones if there is no mains electricity?
- How should the information be presented to the population?
- How will the population know to tune in to the right station to access lifeline information?

The channel used will significantly influence options for broadcast. The most suitable format and amount of airtime allocated for humanitarian programming will depend on many factors, including the phase, scale and severity of the crisis; the broadcast channel; and what fits in best with existing programming. It might be presented through:

- A simple bulletin: a presenter simply explains what has happened and offers clear instructions on what to do. This is often suited to the immediate aftermath of a sudden major emergency.
- Interviews: suitable interviewees might be humanitarian experts involved in the relief operation, doctors, psychologists, etc. The voices of those directly affected can be included if appropriate.
- An illustrated bulletin, including field reports, packages and interviews.
- Public Service Announcements/Spots: short segments of humanitarian information, interspersed with regular programmes.
- A drama: a useful tool for dealing with complex or sensitive themes, usually best-suited to longer-term programming in the later stages of a crisis.
- Debate programme: a useful tool for holding to account those responsible for relief and reconstruction, which is better suited to the later stages of response.
- A magazine-style programme, with a range of the above, perhaps including phone-ins if appropriate.

Lesson 3: Making the Most of Limited Resources

The simulation also emphasised that access to financial resources may be a major obstacle. Aid agencies seldom budget for communicating with the affected community in their emergency response planning. It is seldom regarded as a priority in the current humanitarian response framework. CDAC Network members present at the event agreed that securing funding for communicating with the affected population is often overlooked. As in any humanitarian response, funds for a communications strategy will compete against funds for shelter, food and other necessities.⁴ The CDAC Network advocates for a wider acceptance that communication is aid and believes it should be included as a core provision in the humanitarian response framework.

Questions to consider are:

- What strategy will maximize the impact of limited resources?
- What is the time efficiency versus money trade off?
- How can aid providers convince broadcasters to provide free airtime to minimise delivery costs?
- How can aid providers help broadcasters who have suffered damage to their building and equipment and a serious loss of commercial revenue to stay on air and continue to pay their staff?
- How can an organisation get donors involved to secure sufficient funds for a successful execution?

⁴ A briefing on the humanitarian financing is available on the CDAC website from our 101 Seminar Series on humanitarian financing lead by UNOCHA which includes a section on the cluster system and the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP).

Lesson 4: Coordinating and Prioritising Messages

The 101 Seminar stressed the need to coordinate messages amongst aid agencies. It is imperative to avoid disseminating conflicting information. As a result, coordination between government authorities, NGOs, UN agencies and civil society is crucial to a successful humanitarian broadcasting strategy. Key points included the need to:

- Tell people affected by the emergency how they can take action to stay safe and look after themselves until help arrives.
- Inform the affected community about the aid response. Timeframes, relief efforts and updates are very important.
- Manage expectations of aid support.
- Deliver consistent and coordinated messages with no conflicting information.
- Prioritise announcements that will maximise the well-being of the target population.
- Respect the 'do-no-harm' principle – ie, make sure not to inadvertently broadcast information that may cause more damage.

When it was still active, the infoasaid project developed an online searchable database of messages, called the Message Library, to act as a reference for those wanting to disseminate critical information to affected populations in an emergency. It was developed in collaboration with the following clusters: health; WASH; nutrition; food security; protection; education; and CCCM. The Message Library can be used as a disaster preparedness tool and following the outbreak of an emergency.

The Message Library represents an innovation in two primary ways:

1. **Content:** It is the first time the humanitarian sector has had access to a multi-sector central database of generic messages.
2. **Process:** This database encourages different clusters and agencies to *work together* in a coordinated fashion to deliver the messages. This is because they must first discuss what and where the threats are, who is at risk, who is the target audience and how the messages need to be contextualised, depending on the situation on the ground. Moreover, the Message Library indicates how messages link across clusters in an attempt to reduce the silo effect commonly associated with the cluster system.

The CDAC Network will continue to develop the infoasaid Message Library over time, and will seek to pilot it in a number of different country contexts over the coming three years in partnership with relevant stakeholders.

Lesson 5: Delivering an Effective Humanitarian Information Broadcast

The key components, according to BBC Media Action, of an efficient and impactful communication strategy are to:

- Repeat key messages regularly, especially in the early stages. Bear in mind that when people are traumatised, they can have trouble retaining information.

- Present information in a simple, clear way: people will be acting on your messages and need clarity at this confusing time.
- Where possible, present messages as a call to action: too often people faced with a humanitarian emergency are treated as passive recipients, who are expected to sit and wait for help. But, with a bit of guidance, they are the best-placed people to improve their situation.
- Be positive: Tell people what they can or should do, rather than telling them what not to do.
- Encourage people to share the information with their friends, family and community.
- Provide contact points for further information: Websites, addresses, phone numbers, service kiosks.
- Don't sensationalise ('this must be the most devastating disaster ever!'); stick to the facts.
- Consider those who may have special needs: Women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities often face additional challenges in a humanitarian crisis.
- Attribute sources: In the chaos of a crisis all kinds of rumours can emerge. Double-check facts and say where they came from.
- Check the credentials of the experts you speak to and do not ask them questions beyond their areas of expertise.
- Create a sense of community; people will suffer less if they feel that they are not alone (see 'two-way communication' below).
- Promote hope: simple things such as an encouraging, reassuring tone can make a difference.

Conclusion and Resources

This report provides a short overview of humanitarian broadcasting based on the CDAC Network's 101 Seminar led and hosted by Member BBC Media Action. Many agencies are now using broadcast media in their programmes. The list below provides some of the key available resources for humanitarian practitioners interested in the topic.

[Infoasaid Website](#)

A two-year DFID-funded initiative, jointly managed by BBC Media Action and Internews that ended in 2012. The project resulted in the creation of the media and telecoms landscape guides as well as some key resources on how to use communication as an aid. These resources are still available on the infoasaid website www.infoasaid.org. A review of the media and telecoms landscape guides is available from the CDAC Network.

[The CDAC Network Media, Tools and Tech Directory](#)

A CDAC Network online database listing media, tools and technology available to improve communication with crisis-affected communities. Provides useful infographics, emergency radio hardware providers, as well as links to software and applications. Here are a few examples of what is available:

- Radio in a box from First Response Radio
- Community Radio station hardware from Internews in partnership with RadioActive

Training Opportunities

BBC Media Action trains relief agencies, government responders (including military, police disaster relief bodies) and media on how to do humanitarian communication and broadcasting. More information can be found on [their website](#).

The World Food Programme via the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) works across the world to provide telecommunication to humanitarian responder. In 2012 they operated in [Mali, Syria and South Sudan](#). They also provide [ICT training](#).

Suggested Readings

Title	Publisher	Year	Short Synopsis
Ann Kite Yo Pale or Let Them Speak: Best practice and lessons learned in communication in Haiti	infoasaid	2010	This paper attempts to capture some of the communication work implemented by a whole range of partners, and to identify what was delivered from the perspectives of those affected by this major emergency. The purpose of this exercise is to inform the continuing response in Haiti and to provide practical case studies and analysis of best practice models in communication as aid that may be useful elsewhere.
BBC Media Action - BBC Burma Lifeline Radio Project: Living Today, Stronger Tomorrow	BBC Media Action	2012	The BBC Media Action response, with support from Irish Aid and Vodafone Group Foundation, was to broadcast a lifeline programme on radio, providing potentially life-saving information to promote the health and well-being of those affected by Cyclone Nargis.
BBC Media Action - BBC Somalia Lifeline Radio Project	BBC Media Action	2012	In 2009, BBC Media Action (then BBC World Service Trust) responded to a spike in conflict and ensuing displacement with a six-month Lifeline radio project. The project was funded by UNICEF, IOM, UNFPA, UNHCR, and UNOPS and consisted of a number of activities, including: formation and radio broadcasting
Beneficiary Communication and Accountability: Lessons learned and recommendations: Indonesia, Haiti, Pakistan	IFRC	2011	This document outlines lessons learned from recent beneficiary communication and accountability programmes in Indonesia, Haiti and Pakistan, and provides recommendations for staff and volunteers in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The lessons are captured from practical experiences of field teams. Annex 4 contains a useful breakdown of different Beneficiary Communications Tools (eg. Radio, SMS, Notice Boards, etc.) and how they can be used for transparency, participation, M&E and complaints & response.
Chad & the Darfur Refugee Crisis	Internews	2013	This report thoroughly documents seven years of Humanitarian Media Assistance to Darfur refugees in Chad.
Closing the Loop - Responding to People's Information Needs from Crisis Response to Recovery	Internews	2012	This paper, a review of an Internews humanitarian-information radio program launched in Haiti after the January 2010 earthquake, argues that information provision should be a core component of any humanitarian assistance or development program. Radio is a cost-effective, ubiquitous, widely used and

to Development			credible news source in Haiti. The Internews program, Enfomasyon Nou Dwe Konnen (News You Can Use, or ENDK), reported directly on concerns that members of the affected population identified as most important to them in the year after the earthquake, a year that included a destructive hurricane, a cholera epidemic and election violence.
Communicating in Recovery	Australian Red Cross	2010	This guide is for people or organisations managing information in a post emergency/disaster environment. Affected people often require the same types of information, irrespective of the type of emergency. This guide takes an all-hazards approach with no geographic focus, and can be used in large or small emergencies. There is no geographic focus to this resource. However, it has been developed primarily to suit the conditions of recovery in Australia. Use of this guide for other areas would require modifications where appropriate.
Dadaab, Kenya: Humanitarian Communications and Information Needs Assessment Among Refugees in the Camps: Findings, Analysis and Recommendations	Internews (with IMS, Radio Ergo, Star FM, NRC)	2011	There are clear indications that information gaps are hampering the aid response and that despite important efforts from individual agencies, current communication strategies for affected communities are not working as effectively as they could, and critical coordination needs to be improved. These are the clear indications from the joint Communications Needs Assessment led by Internews in collaboration with Star FM and Radio Ergo/IMS and with support from NRC. The assessment included an extensive survey of more than 600 refugees in all three of Dadaab's camps. According to this assessment, existing channels are unfortunately limited in both their reach and, in many cases, their effectiveness
Deepening Participation and Improving Aid Effectiveness through Media and ICTs	Swiss Agency for Cooperation	2011	This report is an attempt from a donor's perspective to identify opportunities of improved participation and improving aid effectiveness through media and ICTs. Of particular interest is the list of potential use of ICT in different humanitarian contexts.
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC): Two-Way SMS Communication with Disaster Affected People in Haiti	IFRC	2012	Following the Haitian earthquake The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) realised that an effective method of two- way communication with disaster affected people was needed. Radio and TV broadcasts, posters, leaflet distribution, loudspeaker trucks and face-to-face discussions were all used. However, it was quickly realised that more was needed. Mobile technology seemed the obvious answer as a high proportion of Haitians own mobile phones.
World Vision & infoasaid pilot project, Taita Taveta County, Kenya	Infoasaid project	2012	World Vision and infoasaid launched a pilot communication project in February 2012, aiming to support the delivery of World Vision's Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation through improved communication with drought-affected communities. The project introduced a weekly interactive radio programme on livelihoods, food security and health related issues, established a FrontlineSMS information hub, provided communications training for World Vision staff and partners and distributed phones and solar chargers to crisis-affected communities.