

Communication and Community Engagement

LOCAL MEDIA DOMINICA OVERVIEW October 2017

Local media in Dominica play a key role in communications with communities and generally have well-established positive trusted relationships. In general, the affected community see local media as “theirs”. They are independent from the humanitarian response and are likely to know how to get in touch with them.

In return, local journalists are some of the most knowledgeable people within a community, they understand the context, can interpret the relevance and urgency of the concerns of their audience, and can play an important role as “mediators” between the community and the national and international humanitarian actors, including government. Local media has a unique role to play, which cannot be replaced by regional or international media who are not part of the community they are reporting on.



Building the capacity of local media is just as valuable as building capacity in any other part of the community during crisis (e.g. health workers, local government or civil society organizations). The local media can help by facilitating communication the affected communities benefiting all other humanitarian activities.

A. Media Landscape

Listener surveys and media landscape guides in Dominica are scarce and largely outdated, so there’s no solid information on media-usage and preferences. The national broadcaster CBS refers to the “Revenue Enhancement Consultancy Report” by CARICAD which dates back to 2006.

The following is compiled in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, based on interviews with key informants (media professionals/Telecom-sector/community members) and online research. It focuses on media based on Dominica, as these are the actors that can play the “mediator” role as described above. From interviews, it is clear that people use a mix of channels, including sometimes radio stations (online & FM) from neighbouring countries or foreign TV, but people indicate it is mostly to listen to music or watch soaps/movies. International news outlets (BBC, CNN...) are mentioned too, but as a source for locally relevant information, these are limited.

1. Radio

There's a mix of national public and private radios, with some community-based radio stations. The national radio stations are based in Roseau. Generally reporters don't leave the capital often to do on the ground reporting of the situation in the rest of the island. The definition of news still seems to be limited to information coming from government, with some incidents and accidents added to the mix. People outside the capital indicate they don't feel represented by what they hear on the radio.



National Radio Stations

- **“DBS”** or Dominica Broadcasting Corporation (they changed the name, not the acronym) – Government owned - based in Roseau – - two channels: one with mostly music, the other with more information.

Broadcasts in mainly in English, with daily news in Creole (10 min) and a weekly two-hour show in Creole.

<http://listen.dbcradio.net>

Status: On Air

Damage: currently still two towers down and struggling to keep the 3rd one up due to mix of problems with power-supply (Portsmouth) and damaged equipment (Eggleston & Petite Soufriere)

- **Kairi FM**: Privately owned – based in Roseau – mostly music with news and some information programmes- sometimes broadcasts government programmes from DBS in relay (like “Government in Focus”). Broadcasts in English

<http://www.kairifm.org>

Status: On air – no information about damage or reach

- **Q95**: Privately owned – based in Roseau – perceived by some as “pro-opposition” – mix of music and information/talk shows. Broadcasts in English

<http://www.q95da.com>

Status: On air – no information about damage or reach

- **Vibes FM**: privately owned, mostly music. Broadcasts in English

<http://www.vibesradio.dm>

Status: On air – no information about damage or reach

Local Radio Stations

- **Voice of Life**: Christian radio station, based in Loubiere – staffed by volunteers –

<http://voiceofliferadio.dm>

Status: unknown - no information about damage or reach

- **Radio En Ba Mango**: community radio station – Grand Bay Area

<http://southcityagain.webs.com>

Status: off air – extend of damage unknown

- **Possie Vibrations** – community radio station – Portsmouth - run by local NGO/volunteers.

<https://www.facebook.com/PossieVibrationsRadio/>

Status: on air – about 5 miles reach around Portsmouth

2. Digital TV

All TV is digital and requires a subscription and digi-box. Both Digicel and Flow offer digital TV-packages with both providers having channel 7 dedicated to the Government Information Service.

- Digiplay- owned by Digicel
<https://www.digicelgroup.com/dm/en/mobile.html>
- Marpin – owned by Flow
<http://www.marpin2k4.com/main/>
- CBN4 - Cable Broadcasting Network
<http://www.cbn4.com>

3. Online

There's a vibrant online information-ecosystem with some dedicated news-channels, Facebook-pages and other platforms where information is shared, with various levels of verification and, as usual, a mix of concerns, opinions and – sometimes- facts.

Some notable **websites** (including their “offspring” on social media):

- Website of the Prime Minister's Office (<http://www.opm.gov.dm>) Posts daily press conference of the Prime Minister, often with guests who are given the opportunity to give updates in their field of work, like representatives from the different ministries and international agencies. links also to
 - o <https://www.facebook.com/SupportRooseveltSkerrit?ref=hl>: Personal Facebook-page of the Prime Minister.
 - 45,213 followers
 - o <https://www.youtube.com/user/dominicagovernment/videos>: Youtube-channel of the government
 - 2753 followers
 - o [@SkerritR](#): twitter handle of the prime minister
 - 5248 followers
- Dominica News Online (<http://dominicanewsonline.com>) up to 10-12 articles per day – mix of national and international news. Posts the daily press conference of the Prime Minister in its entirety. Opportunity to comment, but mostly a one-way-news-channel. Also present on:
 - o https://www.facebook.com/DominicaNewsOnline/?ref=br_rs
 - 91,392 followers
 - o [@DNONews](#): twitter handle of Dominica News Online
 - 2892 followers (27/10/2017)
- The Dominican (<http://thedomincanet.net>) mix of national and international news. Also present on:
 - o <https://twitter.com/thedomincanet> : the editor of the Dominican on twitter
 - 243 followers (27/10/2017)
 - o <https://www.facebook.com/The-Dominicannet-TDN-102945123139643/>
 - 2892 followers (27/10/2017)
- Dominica Vibes (<https://www.dominicavibes.dm>) national and international news – linked with Vibes FM
- The Sun Dominica (<http://sundominica.com>) website of the (printed) newspaper The Sun. Last article posted online is from September 15th.
- The Dominica Chronicle (<https://www.dominicachronicle.net>) website of the (print) newspaper The Chronicle. Last article online dates from June 2016. Very heavy (and slow) to download.

- The Dominica Post (<http://dominicanpost.com>) news site – national and international news
- Dominica Central (<http://dominicacentral.com>) news site – national and international news
 - o <https://www.facebook.com/domicacentralnews/>
 - 246 followers

4. Civil Journalism

Besides the government and local media, some individuals have stepped up their game and started reporting on the recovery, from their perspective. As much as it gives a very rich, alternative perspective on what's going on.



DOMINICA FINALLY GETS TARPAULINS for ROOFS ✓
MystProductionz
4.5K views • 5 days ago

Mystelics Vlogs

<https://www.youtube.com/user/MystProductionz> News updates, interviews with people in the street, drone-footage of the damage across the island, with videos from 3,000 up to 39,000 views

- 3,300 followers



Emonews Emonews – facebook-page run by Emerline Anselm – a teacher based in Portsmouth, who goes out of her way to cover the recovery in her area.

<https://www.facebook.com/emerline.carrette.7>

Besides some of these existing news channels, a number of **Facebook-groups** have popped up in the aftermath of Maria to organise support for the recovery. They also give updates on distribution, recovery and channel a fair bit of positive, constructive energy, mixed at times with some frustration:

- Hurricane Maria – Dominica Amateur Radio Communications Page (https://www.facebook.com/HurricaneMariaDARCI/?ref=br_rs) Facebook-page set up by amateur radio operators with a focus on connectivity & electricity/power issues (but not only)
 - 5411 followers
- Dominica Hurricane Relief (https://www.facebook.com/Helpdominica/?ref=br_rs:
 - 2316 followers
- Hashtag Dominica (https://www.facebook.com/hashtagdominica/?ref=br_rs)
 - 3569 followers

5. Newspapers

There's 2 weekly newspapers that appear in print in Dominica. Neither has been printed since Hurricane Maria

- The Chronicle: weekly newspaper - perceived as being close to government
- The Sun: weekly newspaper - perceived as more critical to government

B. Infrastructure

The local media infrastructure on Dominica has been damaged, much like the rest of the island. Masts went down, transmitters, repeaters and other equipment got damaged. the local radio stations are doing everything they could to get back on air, to repair masts and replace equipment, but 5 weeks into the response, large parts of the island, especially on the East Coast, are still out of reach of the radio signals.

1. Radio

Currently the following radio stations are back on air:

- DBS: Government radio station
- Kairi FM:
- Q95
- Vibes.
- Possie Vibes – local radio station in Portsmouth.

DBS has restored the masts of

- Roseau
- Marigot
- Eggleston
- Portsmouth (although there are issues with the generator, which results in black-outs)

The masts of Petite Soufriere and Grand Bay are still down (as per 29/10/2017), which leaves large parts of the east and south coast deprived of radio signal.

The Studio of Radio En Ba Mango (in Grand Bay area) is severely damaged and they are still off air.



2. TV

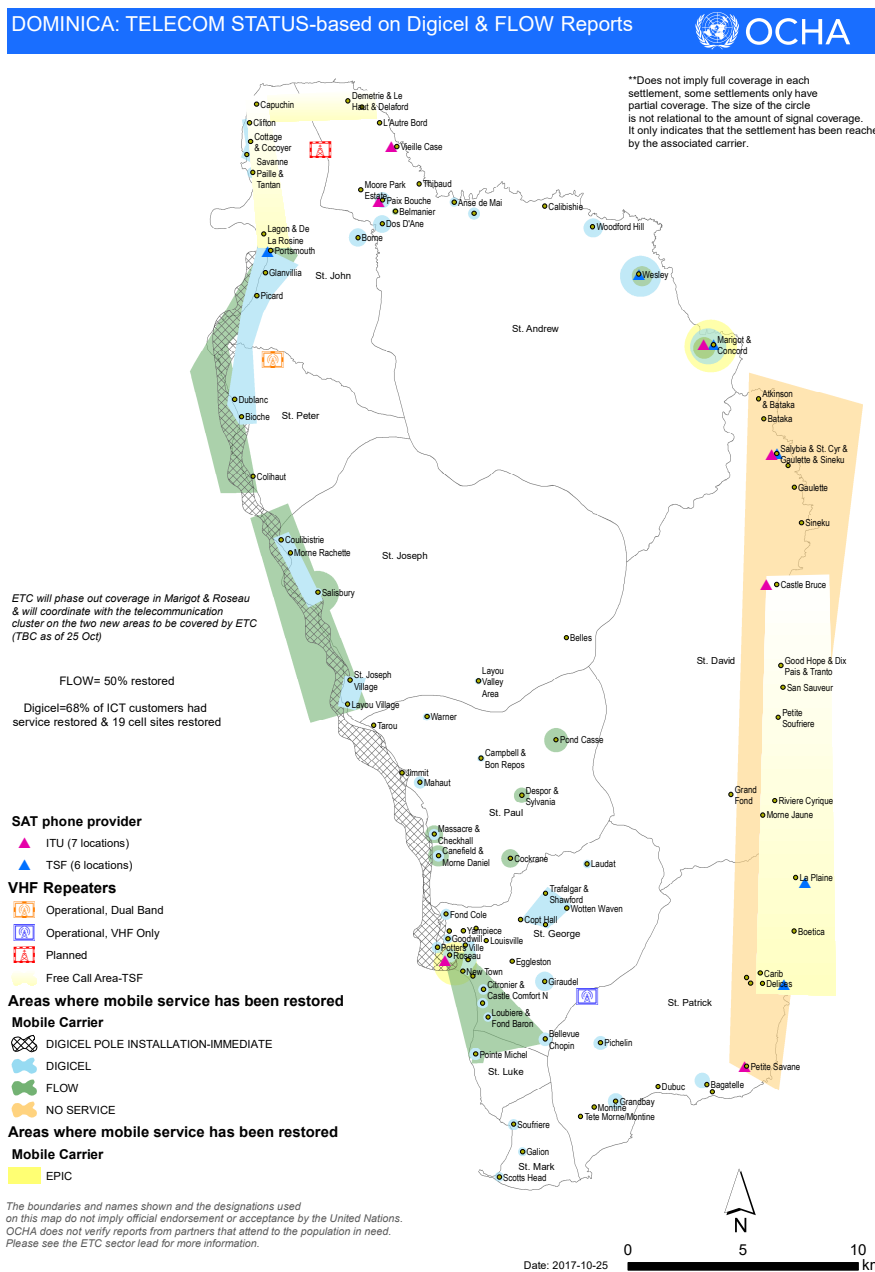
The GIS-TV-studios were flooded by the storm and looted in the aftermath of Maria. As a result, GIS only produces short clips on social media, but hasn't resumed live-broadcasting. They are in conversation with FLOW to restore their internet-connection.

3. Internet

3G is steadily restored across the island, but as per 29/10 there are still areas without coverage.

Notably the centre of the island and the East Coast still have limited connectivity. Telecom Sans Frontières and Ericson Response under ETC-coordination have provided wifi-hotspots, moving them whenever 3G is restored to places which are still deprived from internet.

3G-coverage as per 25 October 2017



4. Print

The government printing facilities have been flooded, but they were aiming to be back in business on 1/11/2017.

C. Content

1. Government information

The Government Information Service of Dominica produces daily updates (up to 12) on the response. This is shared on radio, youtube, facebook and twitter. The high number of updates, mean that the information is up to date and manages to address issues that are relevant for the affected population. However, the updates are broadcasted in a one-to-many format, with little to no interaction possible.

On top of that, the Prime Minister has a daily press conference, also shared on social media and radio. But even on the popular prime minister's facebook-page, comments are plenty, but questions are rarely addressed.

There are interesting examples where factual information is being provided to debunk "rumours" which indicates a level of responsiveness in the communication. An example is the press conference on 24/10, where rumours of massive amounts of food not leaving the port were debunked by Ambassador Henderson and followed up with a clear, transparent overview of food distribution plans, presented by WFP.

Another example is the IOM-presentation on tarpaulins, with a representative in the studio and a Youtube-clip as part of the presentation. But the clip was not made available separately and therefore only shared as part of the one-hour- press conference.

While there is clearly a dedicated team working hard on all these outputs, it is still very much one-way-communication, with few linkages to other government initiatives like the helpdesk and hotlines, which could serve as a tool to become more demand-driven in their information-provision. With a few adjustments in formatting, the content could also be presented in a more user-friendly way, to optimise the already considerable efforts that go into it.

2. Media

"Most of the news happens in the city and when it is outside of Roseau, which is seldom, it is the news editor who does it" (media professional in Roseau)

"There's only information about Roseau on the radio" (CSO-representative from Portsmouth")

In general, the idea of what news is, seems rather limited to what comes from the government, amended with some incidents and accidents. People outside of Roseau do not feel represented or included by what they hear or see on the radio or online.

Some journalists have found their way to Fort Young (current base for humanitarian actors) and the humanitarian actors, but interactions seem rather ad hoc and scarce.

With GIS having its own channels and newsroom, the prime minister being very active using his own newsroom and channels, together DBS as the public broadcaster – a lot of weight is given to government communication.

From the private radio stations, Kairi FM and Vibes FM are broadcasting the Prime Minister's daily press conference and they seem to be on good terms with the government. Q95 FM is being perceived as an opposition radio station and both community radio stations (in Portsmouth and Grand Bay) seem to have an important role to counterbalance the weight that is given to information from the capital.

Before the storm there was a pre existing collaboration between UNICEF and the Ministry of Youth Affairs, who have trained youth reporters between 13 and 19 years old called "Youth Vibes". They have their own radio show on DBS every Saturday. Unfortunately most of their equipment (camera/recorders) have been destroyed by the storm.

3. Humanitarians

As indicated above, there's been interactions between humanitarians and local media, but these have not gone beyond the occasional interview or presentation. Interactive formats where listeners can ask questions, or initiatives online to engage with the people of Dominica are still unexplored.

Some formats could organise a more continuous and open conversation between the humanitarian agencies and the affected population. For example:

- a. call in radio show: one topic (announced in advance) – one expert (or two) – one hour – to be repeated regularly
- b. Facebook-repair-café: Facebook-page dedicated to shelter where people can share ideas, compare solutions, ask questions – facilitated and monitored by experts.
- c. after visiting the Prime Ministers press conference - pass by the radio station(s) to answer questions from journalists and/or listeners.

Besides these fairly simple formats, the humanitarian actors could also look at ways to make the information they compile on a regular basis (and a vast scale) available for the general public. This, of course, besides efforts to address questions and inform people outside of the classical media-channels.

D. Revenue

All media in Dominica rely for some part or entirely on advertising, including state-owned radio station DBS. With a lot of business still closed and focusing on restarting, the revenue for local media has dropped significantly.

There's a sense that some of that lost advertising space could be recuperated by replacing it with public information campaigns with humanitarian messages.

For more Information

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