

# CDAC NETWORK TYPHOON HAIYAN LEARNING REVIEW CASE STUDY: RADYO BAKDAW: ACCOUNTABILITY AND MEDIA IN RESPONSE TO TYPHOON HAIYAN - APRIL 2014



Radyo Bakdaw reporters, 2014. Courtesy of Internews.



This case study was written following an event held on Tuesday 15th April 2014, #CDACLearn: Philippines – Information, Accountability and Media.<sup>1</sup> It is included here as part of the CDAC Network Typhoon Haiyan Learning Review<sup>2</sup>, which examines communication with communities (CwC) initiatives and coordination of CwC during the response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in November 2013.

Radyo Bakdaw was started by Internews in Guiuan, Eastern Samar, two weeks after the area was devastated by Typhoon Haiyan in November 2013. The emergency radio station, funded by DFID, was set up to provide humanitarian information, news and entertainment to communities affected by the Typhoon, who had very little access to information. Every building was destroyed in Guiuan, which was the first place to be hit by Typhoon Haiyan and was cut off from aid for five days. Remarkably an aerial remained intact, and the small Internews team worked with local journalists to set up Radyo Bakdaw. The local journalists employed by the station were coached in 'humanitarian broadcasting'<sup>3</sup> – targeting

affected communities with 'news they can use', rather than reporting on the situation back to Manila. A short clip available online shows the views of local radio practitioners involved in the project.<sup>4</sup>

As well as providing news and information to affected communities, Radyo Bakdaw also provided a space for dialogue and for community members to ask questions, and raise concerns, about the humanitarian relief effort. In this way, Radyo Bakdaw, played an important role in making humanitarian responders (local and international) more accountable to communities they were aiming to serve. Through facilitating dialogue on air between people affected by the disaster, international agencies and local government, Radyo Bakdaw attempted to ensure the communities' concerns were heard and responded to, which was well appreciated by the listeners. As one woman in another short video by Internews explains 'When we have problems, we now go to the radio. And they give us answers right away. They provide solutions.'<sup>5</sup>

1 Internews, Event Recording of #CDACLearn: Philippines – Information, Accountability and Media, April 2014. Available at: <http://www.internews.eu/News/Discussing-Lessons-Learnt-on-the-Philippines-Respo/>

2 CDAC Network Typhoon Haiyan Learning Review, 2014. Available at: [www.cdacnetwork.org](http://www.cdacnetwork.org)

3 CDAC Network, Humanitarian Broadcasting 101, 2012. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1s3opzn>

4 Internews, Short clip showing views of radio practitioners: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0o9vib5Yz4Q>

5 Internews, Short clip showing affected people's opinions of Radyo Bakdaw: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmU0dfJcPU>

At one point during the response, the station was receiving an average of 1000 text messages a day, as well as calls and drop-ins. These ranged from song requests to appeals for help in finding loved ones, and inevitably highlighted problems in relief efforts. When concerns and complaints were raised by listeners, the Internews Team Leader would contact the government department or humanitarian agency involved, explain what they had been hearing, and invite them on to the programme.

Examples were given of two incidences where aid delivery was changed as a result of these exchanges. The first dispelled tension between the community and the local government, who came to an agreement on shared use of a generator live on air. The other resulted in a humanitarian agency daily broadcasting the contents of their food relief packages on air, so that communities knew what to expect. This dispelled tension in the community, as Baranguay captains had been accused of stealing when the agency had changed the contents of its ration packages without letting the community know.

Through providing a space for dialogue and giving everyone involved an opportunity to be heard, Radyo Bakdaw became a neutral 'bridge', trusted by the community, humanitarian agencies and the government. The aim of the station was to help the response run as smoothly as possible: to reduce tension and improve aid delivery, rather than create scandals by 'naming and shaming' relief providers when something went wrong.

People use media to hold powerful people and organisations to account all over the world, and to encourage meaningful dialogue between divergent actors on a daily basis. The community response to Radyo Bakdaw shows the essential role independent media can play in holding aid providers - whether a local government official, a UN agency or a national NGO - to account on their aid delivery, and making sure community voices are heard and celebrated.

The station did not only bridge a gap between local communities and aid providers, but also helped increase connectivity between local people. One story was that the station broadcast a call from a listener who was in need of a wheelchair. Later that day another listener, having heard the message on the radio, brought a wheelchair he had been planning to sell for scrap metal to the station to be delivered to the person in need.

In Guiuan and surrounding areas, Radyo Bakdaw ended up acting as an important informal feedback mechanism for the communities affected by Typhoon Haiyan, in a similar way to humanitarian station Radyo Abante in Tacloban.<sup>6</sup> The 'neutrality' of the radio station was a key factor in its success – it worked partly because it was not really part of the humanitarian system. In the rapid review of DFID's Humanitarian Response to Typhoon Haiyan, Internews' Radyo Bakdaw is mentioned as a 'thoughtful and cost-effective niche programme which led to disproportionately

positive impacts', including reuniting families, providing weather updates and broadcasting details of aid distributions.<sup>7</sup>

One of challenges for the future is how to make services like Radyo Bakdaw and Radyo Abante a standard part of humanitarian response, without over-formalising it, so it loses its neutrality and spontaneity.

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6 See CDAC Network Case Study: Radyo Abante: A Collective Commitment to CwC & Accountability

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7 ICAI, Rapid Review of DFID's Humanitarian Response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, March 2014. Available at: <http://icai.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/ICAI-Philippines-report-FINAL.pdf>