



WHEN INFORMATION SAVES LIVES

ENGAGING LOCAL MEDIA
IN HUMANITARIAN CRISES



Internews

As well as saving lives, information reduces suffering in the wake of disaster. Aid organizations must recognize that accurate, timely information is a form of disaster response in its own right.

Markku Niskala, Secretary General, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2005 World Disaster Report



VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY:

Kettia Marcellus, a reporter for *Enfomasyon Nou Dwe Konnen* (News You Can Use) in Haiti, knew her work on the daily post-earthquake information program was having an impact when she overheard a conversation between two men discussing a tent. One man was telling the other that he was pitching his tent a different way that night, because he had heard about the best way from the radio, and he decided to follow their advice. Marcellus realized it was her voice that had told him how to do it.

WHEN INFORMATION SAVES LIVES

In humanitarian disasters, people affected by the unfolding tragedy need more than the physical necessities of life: they also have an urgent need for information.

In the wake of crises from earthquakes to civil war, survival can depend on knowing the answers to questions such as: What is the extent of the damage? Should I stay with my family or go for help? Where can I get clean water? Is it safe to go back home? In these desperate circumstances, rumors and misinformation spread rapidly, making a bad situation even worse.

Independent, local media can improve humanitarian relief and enable people in the midst of crisis to take an active role in their own survival and recovery.

“Giving vulnerable people the right information at the right time is a form of empowerment,” writes Jonathan Walter,

Editor of the 2005 World Disasters Report published by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. “It enables people to make the decisions most appropriate for themselves and their families and can mean the difference between being a victim or a survivor.”

Local media can play a vital role to see that people get the accurate and timely information they need to save lives and reduce suffering. Known and trusted by the local population, speaking in the local language, and deeply familiar with local politics and culture, local media can meet an important need that international relief agencies and other outside groups cannot meet on their own.

The ultimate goal of this work is to save lives and reduce suffering by improving the flow of information during humanitarian disasters.

CASE STUDIES: Starting with the 2004 Asian tsunami, Internews has developed projects that engage local media in a wide range of humanitarian disasters. These include rapid-onset natural disasters such as earthquakes, chronic or slowly unfolding crises such as displaced populations, complex emergencies such as war and political crises, and rapid-onset, high mortality pandemics. Internews tailors its response to each unique situation. The following pages detail selected case studies.



WAR GAZA

THE NEED: The military conflict between Israel and Hamas in late December 2008 caused electricity outages and shortages of diesel fuel that quickly forced Gaza’s independent broadcasters off the air. Mobile phone services were also cut off, leaving ordinary Gazans with no reliable source of information in the crisis.

THE RESPONSE: On January 9, 2009, during the height of the conflict, Internews became the first and only international organization to organize the broadcast of vital information on distribution of food and blankets, safe havens, road closures, medical care, and other humanitarian news to the people of Gaza. Produced by a team of Palestinian journalists, the special broadcasts, which also covered the fragile ceasefire and reconstruction period, aired on three independent radio stations in Hebron and one in Gaza.

FLOODS PAKISTAN

THE NEED: In the summer of 2010, the worst floods in decades left an estimated 20 million people injured or homeless in Pakistan, and put approximately 20% of Pakistan’s total land area under water.

THE RESPONSE: Working with local radio stations in the hardest hit areas of Pakistan’s northwest region, Internews helped local journalists report on the devastation and on relief efforts underway. Through three radio programs, airing on a network of independent FM stations and through the State Broadcaster’s AM network, Internews-supported productions reach nearly five million people. For many, the programs are the only source of information.

Internews also worked in partnership with the BBC World Service Trust to broadcast radio programs through the BBC Urdu service, as part of the **infoasaid** project. Six daily bulletins in Urdu and Pashto provide vital information on how to stay safe, avoid disease and access aid. By facilitating communications with local media and the humanitarian community, Internews also supported the launch of Pakreport, an online service which collects and maps SMS reports from individuals in flood-affected regions, to highlight needs on the ground.



EARTHQUAKE HAITI

THE NEED: Following a 7.0 magnitude earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, the Haitian government estimated that 230,000 people were killed, 300,000 were injured and 1,000,000 made homeless. Massive damage to Haiti’s infrastructure hampered relief efforts and rendered most media in the affected area inoperable.

THE RESPONSE: Days after the earthquake, with a team of local reporters, Internews began producing a daily 15-minute news program – *Enfomasyon Nou Dwe Konnen* (News You Can Use). *ENDK* aired on nine local stations initially, expanding to 33 as more outlets regained their broadcast capacity.

The program has reported critical information about openings of displaced persons camps, relief and rebuilding efforts, public health advisories, education, and culture. The program invites direct feedback from the affected population in the form of SMS text messages and emails; reporters investigate listeners’ questions and broadcast answers on the air.

A survey in the months following the program’s launch found that 82% of men and 67% of women listened to *Enfomasyon Nou Dwe Konnen* as an information source.

ON THE COVER:

Top: In Pakistan, a man listens to a wind-up radio following the 2005 earthquake. [Mark Edwards / Still Pictures / Internews]



AVIAN FLU SOUTHEAST ASIA

THE NEED: As cases of the deadly new strain of H5N1, or avian flu, began spreading across Southeast Asia and beyond in 2005 and 2006, confusion, mistrust, and even panic began to grow along with the disease. Lacking a scientific background and, in some cases, fearful of contracting the virus themselves, many journalists in the region felt ill-equipped to cover this important story.

THE RESPONSE: To support journalists in their coverage of avian flu, Internews developed a journalism training program for Southeast Asia in 2006 to improve the technical skills needed to cover this complex and rapidly developing story in a scientifically accurate way. The program also trained journalists on

safety precautions needed when covering “bird flu,” and provided access to accurate, up-to-date information in local languages. Internews also produced a trainer’s manual on how to conduct trainings on avian flu reporting.

ETHNIC VIOLENCE KYRGYZSTAN

THE NEED: The local population in southern Kyrgyzstan suffered through the worst case of inter-ethnic violence in the country’s history as ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities clashed in June 2010, resulting in thousands of deaths and the displacement of some half a million people.

THE RESPONSE: Internews set up two emergency press centers in Osh and Jalalabad, the two epicenters of violent clashes in Southern Kyrgyzstan, as a clearinghouse for information about the security situation, humanitarian needs, relief efforts, political reform and reconciliation process in the South. Internews staff members worked to evaluate the post-violence media landscape, gather local production crews and produce video news segments. The video was then distributed to broadcasters across the country to be aired as part of their newscasts. From Bishkek, Internews also launched an SMS distribution network among local journalists personally affected by the violence, held a seminar on conflict-sensitive reporting for local reporters, and – once the clashes were over – gathered some 50 local journalists for a multi-day psychological rehabilitation retreat.

In collaboration with the BBC World Service Trust, Internews also produced rapid-response broadcasts of daily humanitarian news in Kyrgyz and Uzbek. Besides the immediate impact of providing information about relief services, the humanitarian news coverage also helped to counter widespread rumors that fuelled stress and panic.



KASHMIR EARTHQUAKE PAKISTAN

THE NEED: On October 8, 2005, a massive earthquake laid waste to large areas of Pakistan-administered Kashmir and the North West Frontier Province. The quake killed some 80,000 people, including 30,000 children in classrooms, and left an estimated 3.4 million homeless. Landslides made the remote, mountainous regions of the quake nearly impassable.

THE RESPONSE: Within hours of the earthquake, Internews staff in Islamabad began an assessment of how local media had been affected. They soon began training a team of Pakistani journalists and helping them to produce a syndicated program, *Jazba-e-Tameer* (Desire to Rebuild) with vital information on coping with the disaster and rebuilding their lives. Internews successfully advocated for emergency broadcast licenses for the earthquake-ravaged areas and helped build seven humanitarian information radio stations to reach populations out of reach of existing stations.

REFUGEES DARFUR/EASTERN CHAD

THE NEED: The six-year conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan has made millions homeless and sent hundreds of thousands of traumatized Darfuris across the border to refugee camps in eastern Chad. Meanwhile, fighting in neighboring Chad has displaced many local Chadians and forced them into IDP camps.

THE RESPONSE: Starting in 2005, Internews has built three community radio stations along the Chad-Sudan border and trained Chadian and Sudanese journalists to run them. The stations allow Darfur refugees and displaced Chadians to hear and produce news that directly affects their survival, including information on security, food rations, and water distribution; news on their home areas; and special programming on women’s issues. The stations also serve as a communication channel between relief agencies and camp dwellers, helping to ameliorate tensions and provide a forum for dialogue.



INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS SRI LANKA

THE NEED: The conflict in Sri Lanka has killed an estimated 70,000 people and displaced over 500,000 people since it began 25 years ago. Many have lost everything, from their houses and rice paddies to their family photos. Thousands have been living in IDP camps for years. They are largely cut off from the news and information that might help them improve their lives.

THE RESPONSE: Internews, working in Sri Lanka since the 2004 Asian tsunami, began its *Lifeline* project in early 2008 to help displaced Sri Lankans get vital humanitarian information. The local *Lifeline* team produces a weekly newspaper and broadcasts daily radio programs on national radio stations about services that the government and relief agencies are providing. *Lifeline* also covers key topics such as how to replace birth certificates that were lost as people fled their homes, or when the next health mobile clinic in their area will take place.



ASIAN TSUNAMI ACEH, INDONESIA

THE NEED: The Asian tsunami of December 26, 2004 was one of the deadliest natural disasters in human history, killing over 225,000 people in eleven countries. In the Indonesian province of Aceh, the earthquake and tsunami killed or injured many journalists. Media equipment was smashed or washed out to sea, and all media outlets were forced off the air.

THE RESPONSE: Internews, which had been working with journalists in Aceh for six years, responded to the crisis by flying in a radio team and two suitcase radio stations. Internews enabled the only radio station back on the air to extend its coverage beyond the capital, Banda Aceh. Using a team of Acehese and Javanese journalists, Internews began producing a popular daily radio program, *Peuneugah Aceh* (News from Aceh), which aired news of relief and reconstruction to 31 Acehese radio stations and 200 IDP camps for an estimated audience of one million people.

POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE KENYA

THE NEED: In the wake of bitterly contested elections, violence erupted in Kenya in early 2008. Ethnic groups battled in the streets and thousands of people were terrorized and turned out of their homes. Some vernacular radio stations broadcast hate speech in thinly veiled metaphors. A year later, many Kenyans were still displaced, impoverished and traumatized.

THE RESPONSE: Within days of the outbreak of violence, Internews convened a meeting of Kenyan journalists desperate to discuss the media’s role in inciting the bloodshed. Later Internews worked with staff in the small radio stations in the conflict-torn Rift Valley, helping them report sensitively on the volatile situation. Working with an Internews trainer on humanitarian reporting, the Kalenjin-language radio station KASS FM invited Peter Kariuki as a guest for a three-hour call-in show. Peter is a member of the Kikuyu tribe who was forced to flee during the ethnic violence. The program put a human face on “the other” and Peter’s story moved many callers to tears.

“If you go to Haiti, everyone, just everything they say is, ‘News You Can Use said that. News You Can Use said that.’”

Caitlin Klevorick, Special Assistant to Counselor Cheryl Mills, US State Department, at a panel discussion on the Haiti earthquake response. *News You Can Use* is a daily humanitarian news show produced in Haiti by Internews.



Workers sift through rubble at Radio Tele Ginen, a station destroyed by the 2010 Haiti earthquake. Journalists salvaged equipment and resumed broadcast outside, days after the earthquake.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Collaboration between relief agencies and media partners is critical to the success of humanitarian response.

Internews builds partnerships with organizations and government agencies at all stages of program implementation.

Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities Global (CDAC Global) was founded by a group of international relief and media development organizations including Save the Children, International Federation of Red Cross, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), Thomson Reuters Foundation, BBC World Service Trust, International Media Support, and Internews. CDAC works to improve dialogue between disaster-affected communities and the humanitarian agencies that seek to assist them.

CDAC Haiti, led by Internews and supported by UNOCHA, includes experts in radio, mass media, SMS, online communications, public information officers, and journalists, both local and international. Key services include a daily humanitarian radio program, advice for relief agencies in working

with local media, outreach campaigns, support to local media, audience research, and audience mapping.

infoasaid is a collaborative project between the BBC World Service Trust and Internews. In Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan, infoasaid projects have brought life-saving local-language news to affected residents. The project is funded as a consortium by UKaid to improve the efficiency of humanitarian responses.

Collaborations with Global Voices and Ushahidi in Haiti, Kenya and elsewhere have connected local bloggers and individuals to relief and communications efforts via online, first-person accounts, interactive mapping, and mobile SMS reporting.

Collaboration with Frontline SMS has helped establish quick, low-cost text messaging services that enable local journalists to use their mobile phones to report on humanitarian relief. For example, in the aftermath of a devastating May 2006 earthquake in Java, Indonesia, Internews created a mobile network of more than 180 local journalists, providing a means to exchange humanitarian news throughout the affected area.



WATCHDOGGING RELIEF EFFORTS:

Peuneugah Aceh (Voice of Aceh) was a radio program providing news of relief and reconstruction for the Indonesia province of Aceh after the Asian tsunami. The program once reported that there was no clean water in the Lhong Raya IDP camp because the roads were too muddy and difficult for the water truck. A few days later, the camp leader called the reporter to thank him: water deliveries had resumed.



RADIO BY AND FOR DARFUR REFUGEES: When relief agencies urged Darfur refugees to use solar cookers instead of hunting for scarce firewood, Radio Absoun, a community radio station in Iriba, Chad, covered the story. The station's reporting helped refugees to voice their concerns – including objections that the cooking did not taste as good – but also made them more aware of the consequences of firewood collection on the environment and relations with local Chadians.

SUPPORT FOR LIFESAVING INFORMATION

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EMERGENCY MEDIA FUND

In November 2009, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation approved a \$500,000 three-year grant to Internews Network to seed an Emergency Media Fund, designed to support journalists, media outlets and the free flow of information during political and humanitarian crises. The fund provides Internews with the means to develop and deploy an immediate media response in rapidly evolving crisis situations. Internews is using the MacArthur funds as a challenge grant to raise additional resources to the fund, as well as to leverage increased support to emergency media response.

“Imagine an African widow with eight children and nothing to eat and whom you give five to eight kilos of millet a month. It's very difficult. We go to camps, we meet people, and we hear their complaints. Then we talk to humanitarian workers to see if there is a solution.”

Houda Mahamat Malloum, a journalist for *La Voix du Ouaddai* (The Ouaddai Voice), a radio station Internews established in eastern Chad



www.internews.org

A reporter interviews a man who lost his house to severe floods in Pakistan.

ABOUT INTERNEWS

Internews is an international media development organization whose mission is to empower local media worldwide to give people the news and information they need, the ability to connect, and the means to make their voices heard.

Through our programs, we improve the reach, quality, and sustainability of local media, enabling them to better serve the information needs of their communities.

Internews has worked in more than 70 countries and trained more than 80,000 people in media skills. Together with local partners, our activities include establishing and supporting media outlets, journalist associations, and broadcast networks. We also have special programs to improve reporting on the environment, humanitarian crises, public health and women's issues.

Formed in 1982, Internews Network is a 501(c)(3) organization headquartered in California. Internews has worked in more than 70 countries, and currently has offices in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North America.

INTERNEWS NETWORK
ADMINISTRATIVE HEADQUARTERS
PO Box 4448
Arcata, CA 95518 USA
+1 707 826-2030

INTERNEWS NETWORK
WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE
1640 Rhode Island Ave. NW Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036 USA
+ 1 202 833-5740

www.internews.org
info@internews.org
www.facebook.com/internews
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“Information is as important as water.”

Dimitry Léger, Communications Officer, United Nations Population Fund