

Perceptions and Sources of Information in the Zemio region

(October 2012)

Population-based Survey in Zemio for
“Integrating Local Media and ICTs into Humanitarian Response in CAR”

A project implemented by Internews and funded by the Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF)

Report #3 written by Patrick Vinck, Ph.D. and Jean-Pierre Dushime

Executive Summary

Between June 30th and July 10th, 2012, a team of four trained interviewers conducted interviews with 400 randomly selected adults, representative of the adult population of the town of Zemio and its surroundings, over 1,000 km east of the capital Bangui in the prefecture of Haut Mbomou, near the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The rapid assessment was conducted to serve as a comparison case to the previously published [assessment conducted in Obo](#), the capital of Haut Mbomou, in July 2012. The Haut-Mbomou, one of the 14 prefectures of the Central African Republic (CAR) is under the threat of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), a notoriously violent armed group from northern Uganda.

The key findings are:

- Radio is the most important and trusted (54%) source of information, but the lack of a local radio, except for “radio” Gambopila -two megaphones in the center of town-. may explain the higher reliance on informal sources of information, such as family and friends (86%), local leaders (38%) and mobile phones (46%), and the lower perceived quality of information on news, security, and humanitarian action.
- While 86% relied on friends and family among their main sources of information, just 45% indicated this source among their trusted ones. Similarly, while 66% relied on “radio” Gambopila as a main source of information, just 29% mentioned it among their trusted source.
- Security (71%), health (65%), news (61%), education (53%), and humanitarian action (31%) are the topics people in Zemio want to know more about.
- Overall, over half the respondents (58%) indicated owning a radio, more than in Obo (47%), but just three out of four (79%) had access to one, less than in Obo (94%). However, the lack of radio (55%) and lack of money (33%) were the main constraints identified to access information. At the same time, nearly half the population listened to the radio on a daily basis (45%), and another 27% listened to it several days a week.
- In Obo, radio Zereda was about the only radio station accessed by respondents. In Zemio, there is a wider variety of stations, with 71% listening to Radio Centrafrique at least occasionally. Other popular radio stations include Radio France International (46%), Africa #1 (33%), and to a lesser extent, radio Sudan (5%).
- Respondents want to have more access to radio (48%), Internet (14%), and TV (13%).
- Mobile phones are relatively common (51% ownership), and 34% indicated using text messages.

- Perception about information on humanitarian actions is worse than in Obo, but respondents judge humanitarian actions and their understanding of humanitarians more positively
- Respondents in Zemio are, on average, more likely to be literate and/or educated: 70% reported being literate compared to 51% in Obo.
- Overall, respondents were more frequently involved in trade than respondents in Obo (mostly agriculture), which may reflect differences in access to road network, information, and trade opportunities. Increased economic activities may also explain the higher average monthly income among Zemio respondents (12,500 FCFA/month – approx.. US\$ 24/month), compared to respondents in Obo (9,800 FCFA/month – approx.. US\$ 19/month).

These results suggest that information must first be local. Respondents in Zemio lacked a local source of news that would contribute to a better perceived access and quality of information. However, having a local quality information source may not necessarily have an impact on understanding and reported perception of humanitarian action.

About the project

"[Integrating Local Media and Information and Communications Technology \(ICTs\) into Humanitarian Response in the Central African Republic \(CAR\)](#)" is an Internews 6-month project awarded by the Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF). Internews is working in partnership with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and Ushahidi.

The project has set up an innovative system that fosters a bounded network of trusted local media organizations that gathers real-time first-hand information from local populations that once verified and validated by a coordination center in Bangui, is uploaded into a crisis map (www.cartehumanitairerca.org) publicly accessible.

Humanitarian organizations on the other hand can have access to verified information and reports from hard to reach areas and also share useful information about their activities for local media to report on and local populations to know about. This creates a two-way communication flow between local population and humanitarian organizations putting local media and ICT at the core of it. This system will eventually improve emergency response, community participation and community resilience. The project ran until September 2012.

About Internews in CAR

In early 2011, Internews created a unique network connecting 11 community radio stations in CAR to overcome the difficulties of communication caused by power outages, lack of Internet access, bad roads, and rebel occupation in several areas.

The [Association of Journalists for Human Rights](#) (RJDH in the French acronym), a local organization that was founded in December 2010 at one of the journalism training sessions organized by Internews, manages the network. Using mobile phones and Internet, the Association links the 11 stations with one other to facilitate the exchange of news and information, which in turn provides humanitarian agencies with an opportunity to learn what is happening in hard-to-reach areas and to quickly exchange information with communities throughout the country.

About the Population-Based Survey

This population-based survey conducted in Zemio is part of the series of assessments commissioned by Internews to inform and evaluate the design and implementation of its HIF funded project. This

report is based on the results of 400 interviews conducted over 11 days of data collection in Zemio, between June 30th and July 10th, 2012. The sample was designed to be representative of the adult population living in Zemio. It is the third assessment report, following “[Documenting mistrust between humanitarians and local media](#)”, which was released in June 2012, and “[Perceptions and Sources of Information in the Obo region, CAR](#)” which was released in July 2012.

Methodology

A team of four trained interviewers (two men and two women) conducted 400 interviews using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire contained thirty open-ended questions, and five questions using a likert-scale type of answers (very good to very bad).

Respondents were selected using a multi-stage cluster random sampling process proportionate to population size. At the first stage, 10 quartiers were selected within Zemio. At the second stage, a geographic random sampling method was used to select dwellings. Interviewers chose a random direction at the center of the quartier and selected every other dwelling in that direction. Finally at the third stage, the interviewers randomly selected one individual aged above 18 within the selected household. Male interviewer only selected among the eligible men, and women interviewer selected only among women interviewer. All the selected respondents agreed to participate in the survey.

Limitations

Survey data may be affected by inaccurate recalls or social desirability that hinders discussion of sensitive topics. However, the questionnaire was made simple and interviewers were trained to establish contact. No names were collected and respondents were not offered incentives to participate in the study.

Context

This second survey was conducted to compare perceptions and sources of information and perception of humanitarian action between Obo and Zemio.

Zemio, like Obo, is a small city in southeastern CAR along the Mbomou River on the border with the DRC. The cities are located in Haut-Mbomou, one of the CAR fourteen prefectures, an area deeply affected by Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) violence.

Unlike Obo, however, Zemio does not have a community-based radio. As Raimondo Chiari, the Humanitarian and Media Liaison Officer for Internews in CAR pointed out in a [blog post](#), it does have a faith-based “radio” consisting of two megaphones powered by solar panels installed on a tree in the town center, and connected to a wired microphone.

It was anticipated that differences in access to information would be associated with differences in perception of information and humanitarian action. The design of the study does not allow establishing causal relations, and the two cities differ in a number of ways other than access to information.

Characteristics of Respondents

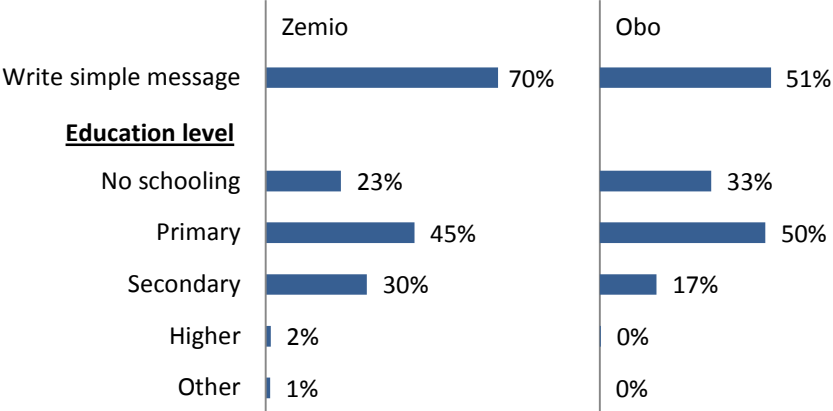
Demographics

The sample from Zemio was composed of half men and half women, with about three quarter of the respondents (73%) being in a marital relationship or partnership. The average age of respondent was 34 years old.

Over two-third of the respondents (70%) indicated being able to read and write simple messages. Less than one-fourth (23%) had no formal education, 45% had some or completed primary education, and nearly one-third (30%) had some secondary education or higher. Compared to Obo, respondents in Zemio were on average more literate and educated.

Similar to Obo, the survey found major differences in literacy and education between men and women. Half the women in Zemio (52%) indicated being literate, compared to 84% of the men, and 34% of the women had no formal education compared to 11% of the men. Still, women in Zemio reported twice more frequently being literate compared to women in Obo (52% vs. 26%).

Figure 1: Literacy and education level



A majority of respondents were involved in agriculture (63%) as their main livelihood activity, followed by small trade (21%), and a range of other occupations (16%).

Overall, respondents tended to be less frequently involved in agriculture and more frequently involved in trade than respondents in Obo, which may reflect differences in access to road network and trade opportunities. Increased economic activities may also explain the higher average monthly income among Zemio respondents (12,500 FCFA/month), compared to respondents in Obo (9,800 FCFA/month).

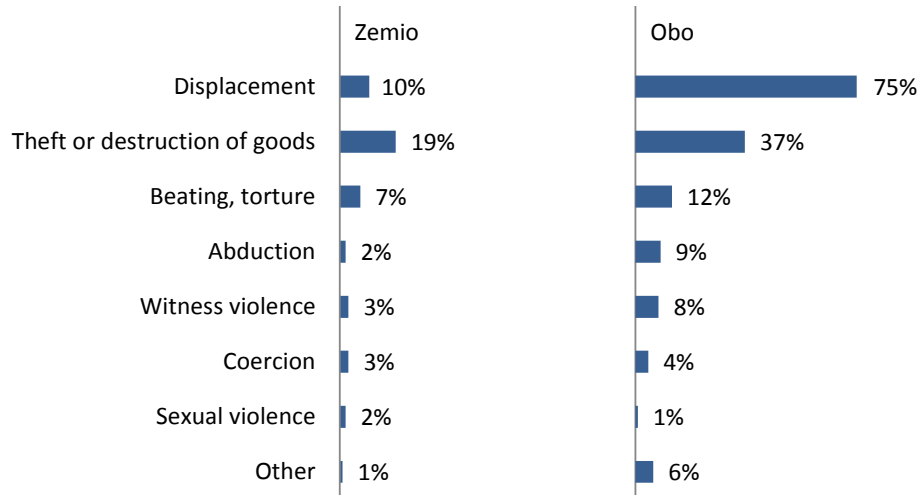
Exposure to Violence

As the previous survey showed, the population of Haut-Mbomou has paid a high toll to armed violence. In Obo, three out of four respondents (75%) had been displaced, nearly half the respondents reported the theft or destruction of their goods or belongings (37%), and about one in ten respondent reported having experienced beating or torture (12%), having been abducted (9%), and witnessing violence (8%). A smaller but nevertheless important proportion of respondents reported some form of coercion, such as carrying loads (4%), or sexual violence (1%).

Residents in Zemio have been significantly less affected by armed groups' violence. One in ten respondents had been displaced, about one in five (19%) reported the theft or destruction of their goods or belongings, and 7% reported having experienced beating or torture by armed groups. Overall, 30% of the respondents reported having experienced violence by armed groups, compared to 80% in Obo.

As was the case in Obo, the majority of the armed group violence is associated with the LRA. One in four residents of Zemio reported having been affected by the LRA, and 5% had been affected by the Central African Army.

Figure 2: Exposure to violence by armed groups

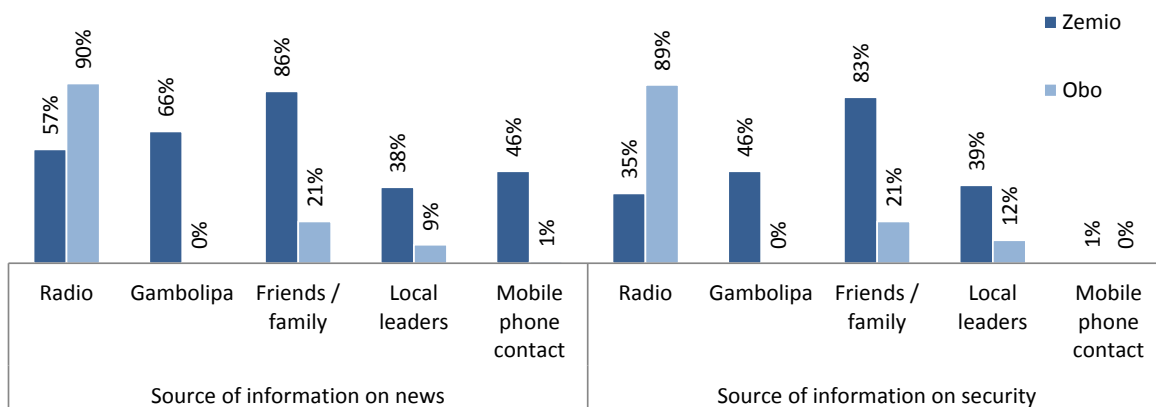


Information and Media

Sources of Information

Survey results from Zemio confirm the importance of radio as a source of information. Over half the respondents indicated radio as one of their main sources of information, and 66% mentioned “radio” Gambolipa, which is not truly a radio, but rather a limited loudspeaker system used in the center of town. Overall, 88% of the respondents mentioned the radio and/or Gambolipa as their main source of information.

Figure 3: Sources of information on news and security



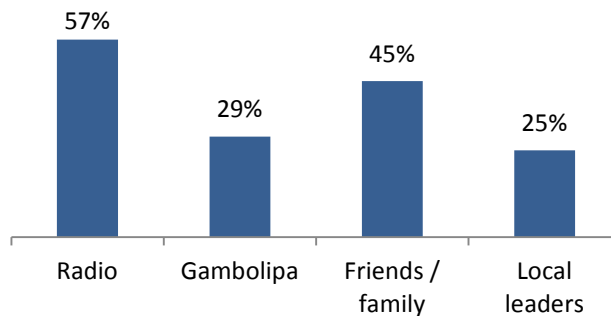
Importantly, compared to Obo, a significantly larger proportion of respondents also mentioned their family and friends as their main sources of information (86%), as well as local leaders (38%). Nearly half the respondents (46%) received at least part of their information through cellphones.

Looking specifically at information on security suggests that radios in general, including Gambolipa, played less of a role as a main source of information compared to friends and family.

Trust, quality and access to information

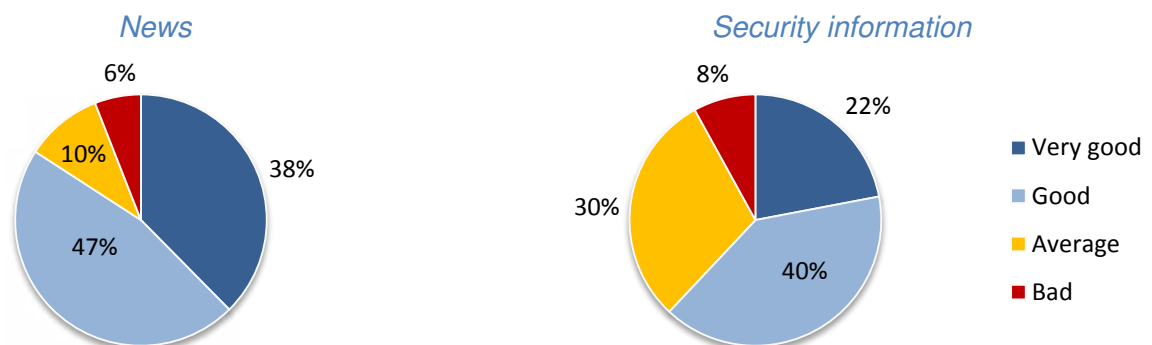
The survey further asked respondents what sources of information they trusted. While 86% relied on friends and family among their main sources of information, just 45% indicated this source among their trusted ones. Similarly, while 66% relied on Gambolipa as a main source of information, just 29% mentioned it among their trusted source. The most frequently trusted source of information was the radio (54%).

Figure 4: Most trusted sources of information



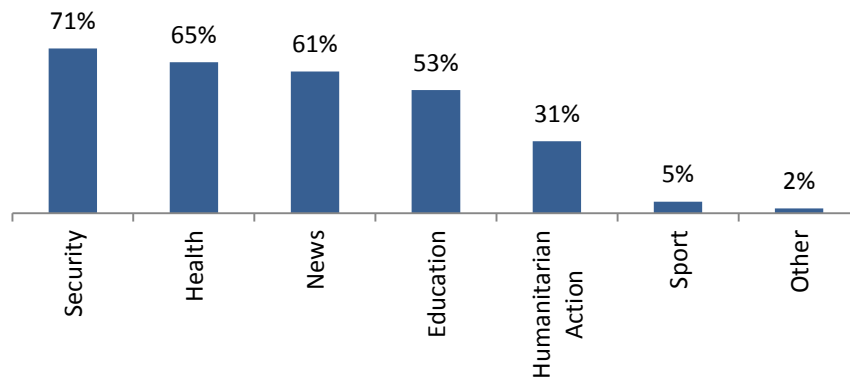
The lack of trust in sources of information may explain the lower levels of satisfaction about the quality of news among respondents in Zemio compared to Obo. Over four out of five respondents (85%) judged the quality of the information on news available to them as being good or very good, compared to 96% in Obo, and 62% judged the quality of information on security available to them as being good or very good, compared to 85% in Obo.

Figure 5: Quality of information



The lack of radio (55%) and lack of money (33%) were the main constraints identified to access information, and when asked what sources of information they would like to have more access to, the most frequent answer was the radio (48%), followed by the internet (14%), and television (13%). Respondents were further asked topics for which they would like more information. Security was the most common answer (71%), followed by health (65%), news (61%), education (53%), and humanitarian action (31%).

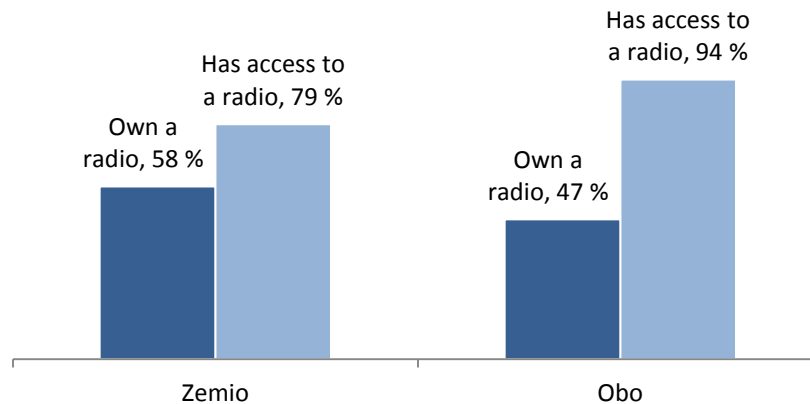
Figure 6: Request for more information



Radio Consumption

The survey further explored radio consumption habits. Overall, over half the respondents (58%) indicated owning a radio, more than in Obo (47%), but just three out of four (79%) had access to one, less than in Obo (94%). This is reflected in the proportion of individuals who indicated listening to the radio at least occasionally (79%).

Figure 7: Radio access and ownership

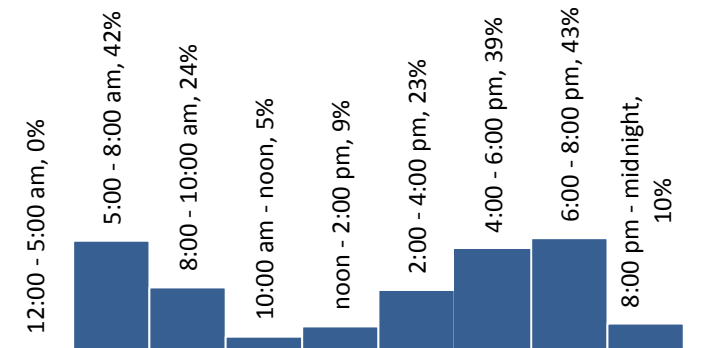
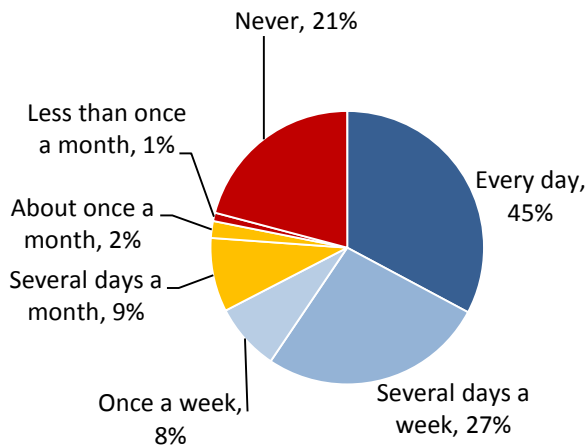


The level of ownership and access to radios are reflected on the frequency at which respondents listened to a radio. Nearly half the population listened to the radio on a daily basis (45%), and another 27% listened to it several days a week. Overall, 80% of the respondents in Obo listened to the radio at least once a week, compared to 92% in Zemio. As was the case in Obo, women were less likely to listen to radio even occasionally compared to men. In Obo, about everyone (94%) listened to the radio between the hours of 6:00 and 8:00 pm. In Zemio, the audience is more spread throughout the day, with audience peaks in the early morning (42% between 5:00 and 8:00 am), and in the early evening (43% between 6:00 and 8:00 pm). This may reflect the fact that broadcasts are available throughout the day.

Figure 8: Media consumption

Days in a month

Hours of the day

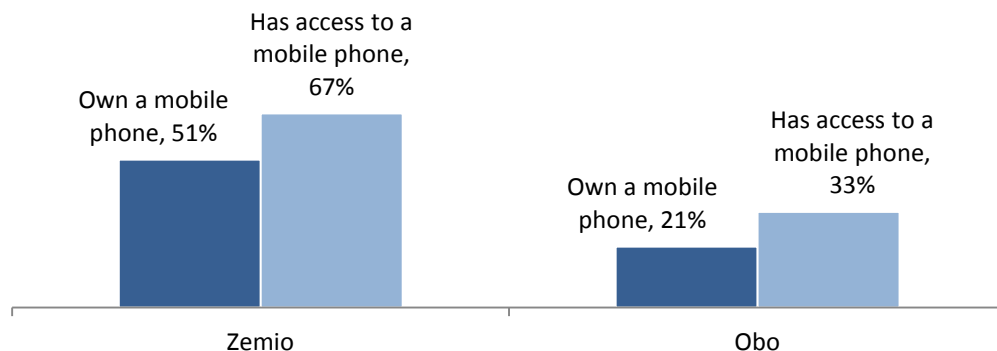


In Obo, radio Zereda was about the only radio station accessed by respondents. In Zemio, there is a wider variety of stations, with 71% listening to Radio Centrafrique at least occasionally. Other popular radio stations include Radio France International (46%), Africa #1 (33%), and to a lesser extent, radio Sudan (5%).

Mobile Phones

The result showed that nearly half the respondents received information through their cellphone. The survey assessed mobile phone ownership and use among the population. Overall, half the respondents (51%) indicated owning a mobile phone, and two-third had access to one (67%). This is significantly higher than in Obo where just 21% owned a phone, and 33% had access to one. SMS use was also significantly higher in Zemio (34%) compared to Obo (9%). There was, however, no access to internet. All cellphone users relied on Orange.

Figure 9: mobile phone ownership and access

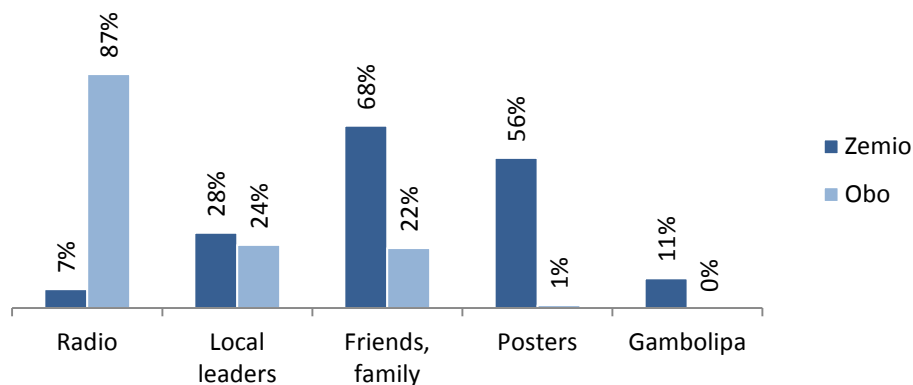


Humanitarian Information and Perception

In Zemio, sources of information on humanitarian information differ from the sources of information on news and security.

The most frequently mentioned sources are friends and family (68%), and posters (56%). Only 7% of respondents mentioned radio stations, which likely reflects the absence of a local radio. In contrast, 87% of the respondents in Obo identified the radio among their main source of information on humanitarian action.

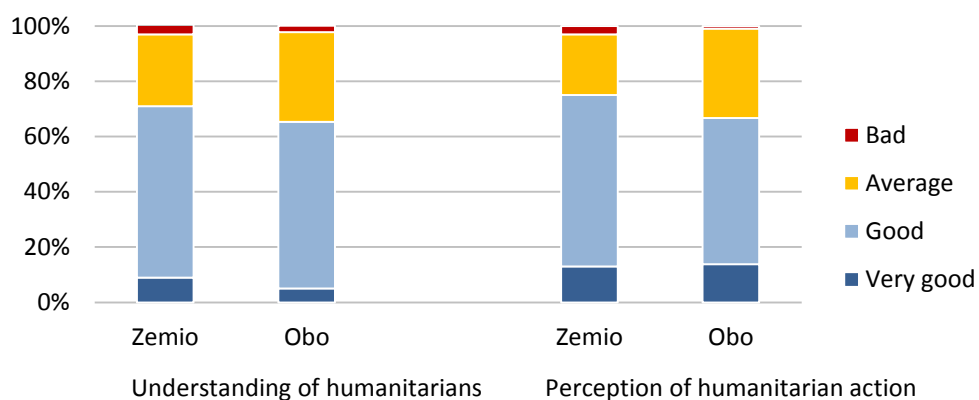
Figure 10: Sources of information on humanitarian action



The lack of formal sources of information may be associated with the relatively low satisfaction with regards to the quality of information on humanitarian action: 61% of the respondents judged the quality of information on humanitarian actions to be very good or good compared to 90% in Obo. Despite the lower access and perceived quality of information in Zemio compared to Obo, perception of humanitarians did not differ or ranked better in Zemio compared to Obo.

In Zemio, 71% of respondents reported having a good to very good understanding of humanitarians, compared to 65% in Obo, and 75% judged the work of humanitarians to be good or very good compared to 67% of the respondents in Obo. These results may appear counterintuitive, but it may reflect local implementation of humanitarian programs and direct experience of respondents.

Figure 11: Understanding and perception of humanitarian action



Conclusions

This rapid assessment in Zemio was conducted to serve as a comparison case to the assessment conducted in Obo.

Zemio does not have a functioning community radio and is not part of Internews' program to integrate local media and ICTs into Humanitarian Response in CAR. For these reasons it was selected as a comparison.

However, the two cities also differ in socio-economic characteristics as well as in their experience of armed group violence and humanitarian response. Respondents in Zemio are, on average, more likely to be literate and/or educated, have a higher average income, and are more likely to own a cellphone or a radio. Respondents in Zemio have also on average experienced fewer violent events compared to those in Obo.

Despite these limitations, the results suggest that:

- While radio access and ownership is higher in Zemio, a higher proportion of respondents rely on other sources of information such as family and friends or local leaders among their main sources of information compared to Obo. This is especially true for information regarding humanitarian action.
- Respondents in Zemio had a poorer judgment of the quality of information on news, security, and humanitarians compared to those in Obo, despite listening more frequently to national media/radio stations.
- Respondents in Zemio more frequently owned or accessed a cellphone and used it to send text messages compared to those in Obo. Cellphones were also frequently used to exchange information on news and security.
- Despite a worse perceived access and quality to information on humanitarian action, the respondents reported understanding and judgment of humanitarians was similar or better than in Obo.

These results suggest that information must first be local. Despite better performances on socio-economic indicators and better access to national media, respondents in Zemio lacked a local source of news that would contribute to a better perceived access and quality of information. However, having a local quality information source may not necessarily have an impact on understanding and reported perception of humanitarian action.