The Dominica Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA):
How the flow of information impacts disaster preparedness and response
The Caribbean region is vulnerable to many types of natural hazards, including floods and droughts, tropical storms and hurricanes, earthquakes and volcanic events. The threat of hurricanes has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and getting the right information can literally mean the difference between life and death. Affected communities need information about the nature of the disaster, level of risk, what services are available, connecting with family and friends etc. Without access to accurate, trusted information, rumors and misinformation can exacerbate a crisis, leading people to make poor decisions and making them more vulnerable.

As part of the Information Saves Lives Pilot in Dominica, Internews commissioned an IEA to investigate how the flow of information in vulnerable communities affects residents’ response and readiness to disaster preparedness and the COVID19 pandemic. The methodology used a mix of remotely implemented, quantitative and qualitative data-gathering methodologies including broad information-related questions, focus group discussions and key informant interviews which generated important insights into the socio-cultural dynamics, trends, and nuances of information flow.
Dynamics of information landscape

Information channels most frequently used:
- Radio: 79.8%
- Social media: 58.2%
- Face-to-face: 54.3%
- Internet: 49.5%

Most frequently used social media platforms:
- WhatsApp: 53.8%
- Facebook: 47.6%

Main sources of information:
- Local family/friends: 78.8%
- Local radio personalities: 72.6%

Dominicans’ selection of information channel is dependent on location since phone, radio, TV, and internet services are only accessible in some areas of the island.
At least 30% of the respondents from six (6) of the targeted communities complained that poor mobile network coverage sometimes prevents them from obtaining the information they need. Lack of access to internet is a major challenge for some communities.

At least 40% of the respondents in all the targeted locations reported that they do not have internet at home.
Local radio personalities were identified as the most trusted source for accurate information about COVID-19, disasters, and emergencies.

Access to timely disaster and crisis related information from government authorities is challenging for media.

Disruption to communications infrastructure since the passage of Hurricane Maria in 2017 limits access to critical disaster and emergency information in Dominica.

Respondents believe Dominicans remain ill prepared for future disasters due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, lack of emergency shelters in some communities, & infrastructural issues across the island.
Dominica has committed to become the world’s first climate-resilient nation. Strengthening the information ecosystem for citizens to access the information they need to make informed decisions in emergency and non-emergency situations is key for resilience building. Recommendations for key stakeholders in the ecosystem include:

**Government and its stakeholders:**
- Promote the free flow of information between government authorities and public to maintain an informed and proactive citizenry during emergency and non-emergency;
- Invest in more disaster resilient radio systems, such as amateur radio, and facilitate training in their usage to improve information access during times of disaster;
- Tailor disaster risk reduction framework and information for key populations (e.g., Indigenous Kalinago people, elderly, children, and persons with disabilities);
- Facilitate infrastructure deployment across affected communities for fixed and broadband service.

**The Media:**
- Develop disability-inclusive emergency information and access for that target group;
- Commit to strengthening the quality of their journalism.
Do you want to learn more about our assessment findings and ideas for improving community news and information flow in the IEA? Read our full research report here:

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