

# THE CDAC NETWORK: TYPHOON HAIYAN LEARNING REVIEW



A Review of  
Communicating  
with Communities  
Initiatives and  
Coordination in the  
Response to Typhoon  
Haiyan in the  
Philippines

**ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL  
LAUNCH REPORT**

**TUESDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2014**

## Introduction

Typhoon Haiyan, which struck the Philippines in November 2013, was a catastrophic humanitarian crisis – it also proved to be an information crisis. Information saves lives – however there are enormous gaps in the humanitarian system in the provision of timely, relevant and coordinated information. When having to make hard choices in how to allocate resources and funding, why invest in information sharing or two-way communication?

On the 25 November 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand, 30 humanitarian actors representing a variety of countries and organizations<sup>1</sup> including INGOs, Filipino civil society, UN agencies, media development agencies, donors and a regional NGO/CSO network gathered to discuss the findings and recommendations from the [Typhoon Haiyan Learning Review](#), commissioned by the Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network.

The Review, now available from the CDAC Network [website](#), examines both the initiatives aimed at improving communication with disaster affected communities, and the coordination of these initiatives during the response to Typhoon Haiyan. Communicating with communities (CwC) initiatives, and the coordination of these initiatives, were reviewed against well-established criteria and thematic frameworks that considered the relevance, appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, connectedness and coverage of approaches at sub-national, national and global levels. The report should be used to inform the development of advocacy, policy and forward planning, both at an operational and strategic level.

Three case studies were also launched along with the Review:

- [Consolidating Community Feedback through CwC and AAP Technical Working Groups in the Philippines](#)
- [Radyo Abante: A Collaborative Commitment to CwC & Accountability](#)
- [Radyo Bakdaw: Accountability and Media In response to Typhoon Haiyan.](#)

## Launch Highlights

The Regional Launch was opened by Mr Oliver Lacey-Hall, Regional Director, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. Mr Lacey-Hall noted a key point raised in the Review: that communication between communities themselves was regarded as essential by the community members who were consulted during the review. He continued that the Review also suggests that communities affected by Typhoon Haiyan felt they needed information to be provided through a range of different channels of communication, and that these need to be locally preferred and well-understood channels. The opportunity to remain anonymous was valued by community members when giving feedback, as communities expressed concerns around losing support or assistance if they complained to humanitarian or government agencies. Being able to express concerns or ask for information or support that was outside the boundaries of agencies' programming was highlighted as especially important.

Mr Lacey-Hall's opening remarks also noted the World Humanitarian Summit, when the humanitarian community gathers in Istanbul in 2016, is fast approaching. During the regional consultation in Tokyo this year, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos, challenged us to be *"bold, provocative and creative in identifying new ways of working and in finding solutions that meet the basic needs of people and provide them with the dignity to which they are entitled."*

Mr Lacey-Hall, posing his own challenge, asked whether we are leveraging the advances in communications technology effectively; whether we are providing the tools for communities to strengthen their existing, traditional ways to communicate; and whether this is translating into communities taking a more active and meaningful role in their own response and recovery.

Following the opening remarks, Caroline Austin, co-author of the Learning Review, briefly [presented](#) the methodology, findings and a selection of the recommendations from the report. She noted a stronger commitment by the humanitarian sector to communicating with communities, as evidenced by an increase in CwC<sup>2</sup> human resourcing in some agencies, budgeting for CwC activities and the inclusion of communications and

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<sup>1</sup> BBC Media Action, CDAC Network Secretariat, OCHA (Myanmar, Regional and Philippines Offices), World Vision International (Regional and Philippines Offices), Asia Disaster Risk Reduction Network (ADRRN), Télécoms Sans Frontières, Save the children, United Methodist Communications (UMCOM), WFP, ICRC, ECHO, IOM, IFRC, American Red Cross, International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and Peace & Conflict Journalism Network (PECOJON).

<sup>2</sup> Communicating with disaster affected communities continues to be an emerging field of humanitarian response that aims to meet the information and communications needs of people affected by crisis. There are various different terms in use to

information questions within rapid needs assessments. She however also noted major gaps in communication, citing an example of the use of the phrase 'storm surge', which was unfamiliar to the majority of Filipinos and caused confusion and inaction when used during typhoon warnings. Ms Austin's main findings and recommendations centred on the themes of integration of CwC coordination into the wider system, measurement of CwC, and resourcing of coordination. She noted that coordination among humanitarian actors at field level, specifically through technical working groups, avoided duplication, stopped conflicting information being communicated, and identified information gaps. The integration of CwC coordination within the wider humanitarian system is still defined more by its potential contribution, rather than its actual integration within standard operating contexts. Picking out several key areas, Ms Austin recommended:

- **More investment in preparedness** to build familiarity, trust and relationships, particularly with local actors,
- The **identification of programme cycle entry points** and clarity on where CwC can contribute to cluster-led activities,
- Careful **monitoring** of CwC coordination in humanitarian action, based on rigorous evaluation and testing **to ensure the best and most appropriate information is shared and acted on**,
- **Better use of tools such as the Community Feedback Form**, with information consolidated and passed onto relevant agencies and clusters for action,
- **Developing protocols, standards and best practice guidelines** for CwC coordination (including how CwC coordination interacts in the wider humanitarian system), as well as standards for how and by whom the information that is collected will be processed, used and stored, and
- **Increasing community and local involvement in CwC work** by strengthening local and national CwC capacities and skills.

Following Caroline's presentation, two presentations were made showcasing CwC initiatives. Len Manriquez from the Peace & Conflict Journalism Network (PECOJON) presented on how PECOJON and media were an integral partner in the coordinated communications efforts. Produced by PECOJON 140 days after the typhoon made landfall, a short [video](#) was presented, speaking to the need for local participation and leadership in order to recover, rebuild and develop community resilience. Jessica Lomelin from Plan International then introduced Plan International's [Youth Reporter](#) initiative which works with youth to inspire them in the aftermath of the typhoon, to train them on creative media to better amplify their voices and share their stories.

The floor was opened for questions and discussion, and several interesting points were raised:

- There is still an underlying need to evidence why information and communication are essential components of a humanitarian response, and for coordinated, collective advocacy on the issue in order for it to gain traction. It is also important that CwC is not seen as an add-on, that it is not separated from programs. A participant observed, 'isn't this just about good programming?' A comparison was drawn to gender which has become mainstreamed over the last years, where CwC is a more contemporary mainstreaming issue. Our attitude has to be one of increasingly drawing agencies' attention to it, with encouragement (or 'stick!') from donors.
- A participant noted that information sharing is an informal process in the work that we do and that a barrier to CwC is actually how we approach it in a more systematic, predictable way. Another noted that 90% of Filipinos self-recover – how can CwC help them? What can be learned from the long-term development agencies who undertake longer consultations with communities?

The launch provided an opportunity for the CDAC Network to share some of its work, including the [CDAC Network Foundation Training](#) which was piloted in Bangkok during the week of 17 – 21 November, interagency initiatives such as the [Understanding the Information and Communication Needs of IDPs in Northern Iraq Assessment](#) and the [Humanitarian Communication and Media Roster](#). Discussions also looked ahead to 2015, when the Network will be increasing its work on preparedness. Looking towards the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, Mr Lacey-Hall urged participants to think about how to advocate for CwC both at such a forum but also upwards within organisations. Advocacy messages should highlight the need for more localized humanitarian responses which incorporate strong CwC approaches, so that affected communities can take a more active and meaningful role in their own recovery.

For more information please go to [www.cdacnetwork.org](http://www.cdacnetwork.org) or contact Rachel Houghton, Director [rachel.houghton@cdacnetwork.org](mailto:rachel.houghton@cdacnetwork.org).

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describe this area of work, the current most common being communicating with communities – or CwC. This is the term adopted in this report and is also the name adopted for a number of technical working groups in the affected areas.