- Discuss how best to get information out to affected communities, and to ensure communities can communicate easily with your agency. This may involve working with local media stations, community leaders, volunteer networks and other trusted sources of information. [Note, check beforehand who runs the station and if a partnership with them could threaten or contradict humanitarian principles.]

- If a communication coordination mechanism exists (e.g., working group), ensure you share your communication data and activities through regular meetings and other info-sharing methods.

- Investigate the possibility of being part of a common service project or a communication coordination mechanism with other actors to ensure effective coordination of communication activities and to avoid duplication or contradiction of messages, which can lead to confusion. Examples include a telephone hotline, inter-agency community consultations, or collaborating to sponsor a radio or TV programme for affected communities.

Phase 3 (3–4 weeks)

Phase 3 is often when more detailed assessments are carried out, usually by individual organisations or by multiple agencies or clusters. This enables humanitarian responders to design effective programmes based on the needs identified and, in sudden onset disasters, to move from response to recovery.

As with other sectors, approaches to two-way communication will evolve along with changes in the situation on the ground. In some humanitarian contexts, the communication infrastructure can be restored relatively quickly; in other contexts, such as conflict situations, it may take much longer. It is therefore essential to continuously check what is working and trusted, and what is not.

Funds and capacity permitting, media development agencies such as BBC Media Action, Fondation Hirondelle, International Media Support and Internews can conduct a more comprehensive information and communication needs assessments.

The media development agencies who are part of the CDAC Network have agreed to use common assessment tools which are available on the CDAC Network website. These tools, or questions from them, can be used by any humanitarian agency.

For information on these tools or to find out more about conducting in depth communications assessments, visit the CDAC Network website: www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-and-resources

This pocket guide is part of a longer guidance booklet developed by ACAPS and the CDAC Network, available at www.cdacnetwork.org

Phase 1 (first 72 hours)

To determine how best to communicate with communities, find out:

- Areas which have lost coverage of phone, radio and TV
- Mobile phone networks, radio and TV stations which are still operational
- Areas which have lost power
- How people are currently receiving and sharing information

Information about the impact of a crisis on existing media channels can be obtained from a range of sources:

- If on the ground, direct observation can give an idea of the damage (e.g. looking out for damaged telecom towers; tuning in to radio stations to check which are still on air; checking mobile phone signal).
- Calling national regulatory bodies, mobile phone companies, journalist networks (e.g. unions), popular radio and TV stations in the affected area and any media development agencies in country. Contact details can be found in the infoasaid Media Landscape Guides (for the 20 countries covered): www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-and-resources/media-landscape-guides
- Calling NGOs who have programmes in the affected area and asking about people’s access to information and communications channels.
- For information on mobile phone connectivity, contact the Emergency Telecommunication Cluster or national/international associations of telecommunications companies (e.g. GSMA: www.gsma.com)

What could be done with this data?

- Consider how your agency will communicate with the crisis-affected population, given how the communication infrastructure has been impacted
- Ensure the information you have collected on communication channels and infrastructure is shared with relevant humanitarian structures/mechanisms in country (national and international)
Phase 2 (first 2 weeks)

Include these five questions in agency/inter-agency rapid needs assessments:

1. A: What are the main channels of communication available to your community now? [Rank top 3 only, 1=most used]
   B: What channels did you use before? [Rank top 3 only, 1=most used]
   
   - Television
   - Social Media
   - Word of mouth
   - Music
   - Radio
   - Internet
   - Community leaders
   - Film
   - Newspapers
   - Mobile phone call
   - Religious leaders
   - Theatre
   - Magazine
   - Mobile phone SMS
   - Government
   - Other
   - Billboards
   - Leaflets
   - Friends & family
   - Don't know
   - Posters
   - Loudspeakers (mobile/fixed)
   - Health professionals
   - Refused

2. A: What is preventing you from getting the information you need now?
   B: Are there groups within the community who have more difficulty accessing information and why? (Open ended answer – note who and why alongside)
   
   - No access to electricity
   - I don't trust where the information is coming from
   - My device is damaged/lost:
     - TV
     - Radio
     - Computer
     - Mobile phone
   - TV/radio station is no longer running (specify what happened)
   - Mobile networks are down
   - I can’t buy credit
   - Information is in wrong language
   - Other (write in)
   - Information is written but I can’t read
   - Don’t know

3. A: Which sources of information do people trust the most? [Rank top 3]
   B: Which sources do people trust the least? [Rank top 3]
   C: Are there any groups who trust different sources of information (e.g., men/women, young/older people, disabled people)? (Open ended answer – note alongside)
   
   - Television (specify channel)
   - Radio (specify station)
   - Print media (specify)
   - Internet (specify site)
   - Social Media (specify)
   - Health professional
   - Government
   - Community leader
   - Other community members
   - Religious leader
   - Armed forces
   - NGO worker
   - Community
   - UN staff
   - Other community members
   - Other (write in)
   - Armed forces
   - Police

4. What would the community like more information on at the moment? What do you need to know more about? [WARNING: This question is often misinterpreted to mean general needs rather than information needs, and may need further explanation: avoid leading the respondent]
   
   - News on what is happening here
   - News on what is happening at home
   - Finding missing people
   - The security situation here
   - The security situation at home
   - Communicating with people who are in a different place
   - How to register for aid
   - How to get water
   - How to get food
   - How to get shelter/accommodation or shelter materials
   - Information about nutrition
   - Food prices
   - Local crop/livestock prices
   - How to get cooking fuel/wood
   - The weather
   - How to get healthcare/medical attention
   - How to get help after attack or harassment
   - How to stay safe to prevent attack/harassment
   - How to replace personal documentation (e.g., ID, birth certificate)
   - How to get access to education
   - How to find work
   - How to get transport
   - How to get money/financial support
   - Information about possible return to place of origin
   - Information about relocation
   - Other (write in)

5. How would you most like to communicate with aid agencies? (e.g. to ask a question, to complain or to make a suggestion) [Rank top 3 only]
   
   - Face to face (at home)
   - Face to face (office/desk)
   - Phone call
   - SMS
   - Email
   - Letter
   - Radio/TV show
   - Social Media (specify site)
   - Suggestion box
   - Tweet
   - Other

What could be done with this data?

- Based on the information collected, develop a communication strategy in line with your humanitarian programme that identifies aims, objectives, target audiences, key messages, communication methods and feedback channels. This will help to integrate communication activities into your overall response and ensure the content, audience and method/channel are appropriate.

  A useful resource for developing messages is the infoaidsaid Message Library (www.cdar-network.org/tools-and-resources/message-library)

- Explore ways to more effectively use the communication channel(s) identified by the community.