

Communicating with communities in the aftermath of Cyclone Idai



Just before midnight on Thursday 14th March, Cyclone Idai battered the port city of Beira, in central Mozambique, and swept a path of destruction 300km inland into Zimbabwe. Over the weekend, torrential rains caused rivers to overflow. Entire villages were under water. People clung to roofs and trees to survive. At least 600 people died, 1,600 were injured and 140,000 were displaced. Some 230,000 houses were damaged or destroyed. Idai destroyed crops just before the harvest, seeds and tools.



By 4th April, the CDAC Network had flown a Communication, Community Engagement and Accountability Coordinator to Mozambique, who was funded by the [H2H Network](#) and hosted by OCHA at the Emergency Operation Centre at Beira Airport. Experience demonstrates that embedding a common service communication, community engagement and accountability at the very start of a response is critical for its effectiveness.

“Keep your family together inside the house. Keep documents dry and with you. Stock food. Charge phones and torches. Move to higher ground if needed.” In Nhamatanda, at a camp for displaced survivors, women recalled the useful tips broadcast by the local community radio in the days before the cyclone. “The radio saved many lives,” said Belita Antonio Redenção.



Custava Antonio Zambo (right), 20, fled with her two children to higher ground, but her husband, a fisherman, stayed by the Pungwe river and drowned. Fatima Abel Jeque, 25, lost two young brothers when their house collapsed.



On 28th March, as soon as power was restored, radio Nhamatanda was back on air. Listeners tuned in seeking news of loved ones. With mobile phone service down, radio helped reunite families. CDAC supported the Forum of Community Radios. Half of its 15 radios in Sofala had suffered extensive damage. *Photo:* Homeless survivors who sheltered at schools for weeks after the cyclone relied on radio for news.



In early April, a team from Health Communication Resources flew by helicopter into flooded Buzi town, 200km south of Beira, the worst affected area. In four days, HCR set up a temporary radio. The team brought a ‘radio-in-a-suitcase’ and climbed to the town’s highest point – a water tower - to install an FM broadband dipole antenna. Radio Buzi, now nicknamed the Voice of Hope, reached people as far as 65km away with life-saving information. HCR is a member of First Response Radio, a CDAC Network member.

Disease follows disasters. By mid-May, Sofala province counted 6,800 cases of cholera, mostly in Beira and Buzi, and 27,000 malaria cases. Pickups and motorcycles fitted with loudspeakers roamed towns and villages explaining how to prevent disease. *Photo:* Radio Buzi’s new antenna is atop the water tower in the background.



Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) and CDAC assessed the damages in 13 community radios in cyclone-hit areas. ETC will replace or repair equipment, like Radio Nhamatanda’s unstable antenna tower (pictured).



The Forum of Community Radios offers humanitarian actors a weekly hour of free airtime. CDAC harmonises health messages and links radios with health experts to provide content for the programmes in Portuguese and local languages. *Photo:* Like this shopkeeper in Gorongosa, many Mozambicans listen to radio on their cell phones.

In April, staff from CDAC, ETC and WHO drove 140km from Beira across Sofala province to Gorongosa town, where the local radio team (pictured) organised a chat about cholera, malaria and malnutrition. The one hour programme was recorded in Portuguese and translated into the local language Xiduma. In the post-cyclone recovery phase, community radios help people build resilience and health.



Joao Zivari, 45, is an electrician by trade and a community leader at the Guara Guara resettlement camp in Buzi. He lost everything to the cyclone with the exception of a fridge, a TV and a set of pliers that he moved to a neighbour's brick home. Zivari received one of the windup radios distributed by First Response Radio at each transit camp in Buzi. Every day, in the shade of a tree, Zivari adds a wire to the antenna for better reception and a crowd gathers to listen to newscasts, health programmes and music.



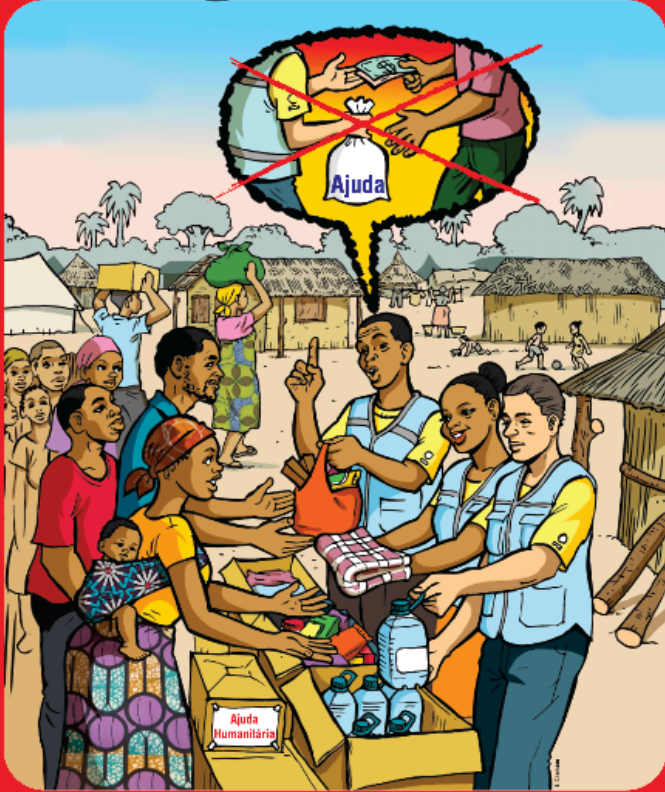


CDAC and OCHA advocated for each transit camp for displaced people to have an information tent. In interviews with CDAC, people said their most pressing information needs were when they could leave the camp, and what assistance was being provided to help them rebuild their lives.

At Guara Guara camp, staff told a CDAC and OCHA visiting team that people in Xingmidje village had to walk 40km to the health clinic because the road was still cut off, six weeks after the cyclone. Tents and food were delivered by motorcycle to the last accessible point and people walked one hour to fetch these. The hamlet of 40 families is so remote it is not in maps. We informed OCHA and within two days a helicopter flew in critical supplies.



A ajuda humanitária é gratuita!



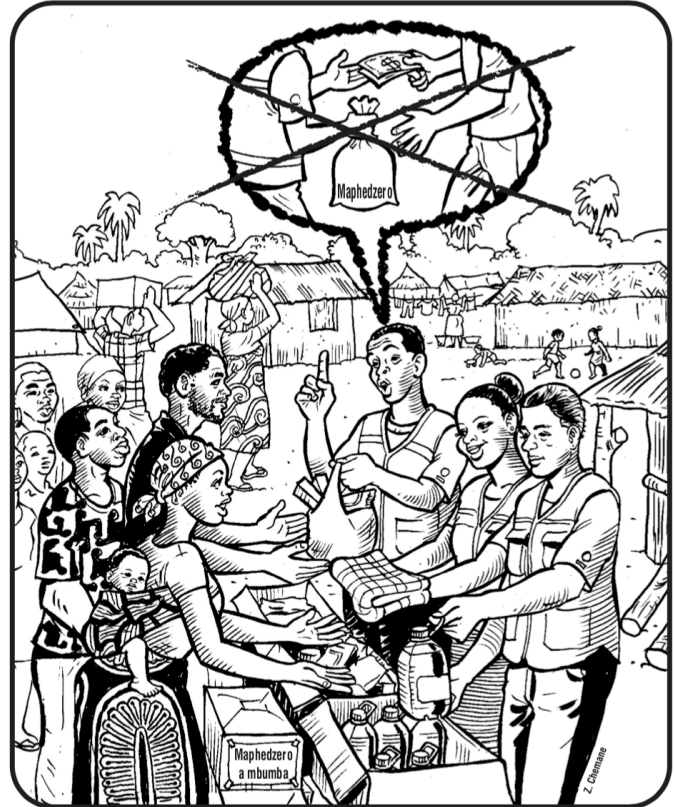
In late April, Human Rights Watch reported cases of women forced to exchange sex for food aid in cyclone Idai -affected areas. CDAC was tasked with producing posters to prevent aid-related sexual exploitation. CDAC worked with Zacarias Chemane, a Mozambican illustrator, and tested the images in focus groups organised with partners. The poster read: Humanitarian aid is free.

É crime exigir sexo ou favores em troca de ajuda humanitária



It is a crime to demand sex or favours in exchange of aid, says this poster by Zacarias Chemane for CDAC. The posters are prominently displayed in transit camps and food distribution sites. Through CDAC and OCHA advocacy, the cyclone Idai response included a strong component of community engagement in its strategy for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

Maphedzero a mbumba mba ku sowa ntengo!

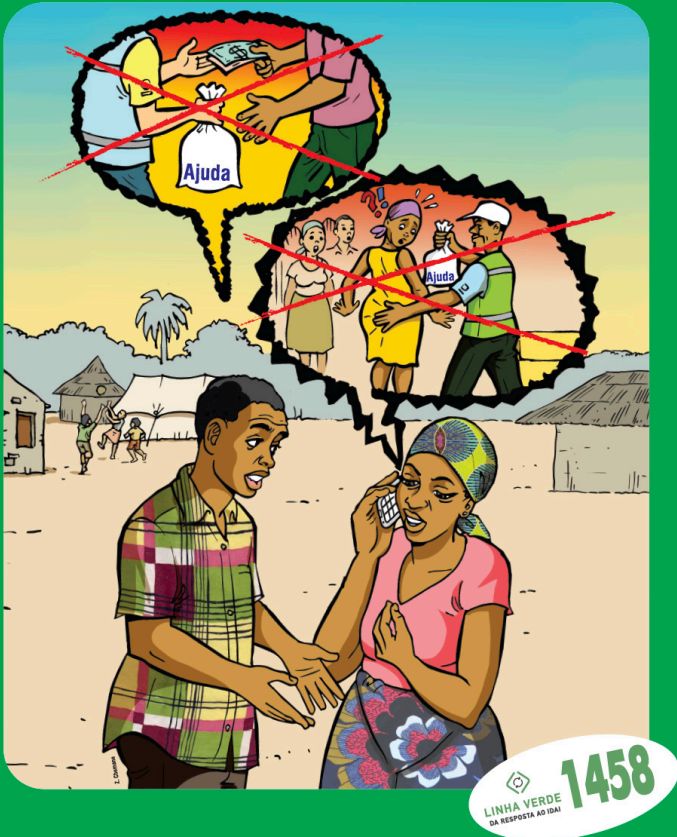


CDAC member Translators without Borders (TwB) translated the posters into the local languages Sena and Ndau. By mid-May, TwB had translated over 80,000 words into Portuguese and local languages, and surveyed selected transit camps to assess languages spoken. A joint CDAC/TwB training provided guidance for 20 humanitarian staff on how to assess language needs and how to support interpreters through simple good practices.



The CDAC coordinator trained 30 young activists working in camps for displaced people in Beira on the concept and practice of communicating with communities, why it is important throughout the humanitarian cycle, and how it improves accountability and participation. The trainer used CDAC's Briefing Module and Communication is Aid video. The International Organization for Migration and Mozambique's National Institute for Disaster Management partnered in this one-day training. Community engagement helps prevent abuses related to aid.

Para reportar abusos na ajuda humanitária,
ligue para a **Linha Verde 1458**
Não se paga a chamada



To report abuses around humanitarian aid, call Linha Verde 1458, calls are free, says this poster produced by CDAC. The interagency helpline Linha Verde 1458, set up in the aftermath of cyclones Idai and Kenneth, is staffed with trained counsellors, information and a referral pathway to services.

An estimated 74,000 pregnant women will give birth within six months in Idai-affected areas. Delfina (below, centre) fled the cyclone with her one-day old baby strapped to her back; Nelia gave birth the day after the cyclone and Maria will deliver her baby any day. They stay at the Samora Machel transit camp in Beira. Their biggest information need, they told CDAC, is to know when they will be allocated plots on higher ground to rebuild their homes.



Community engagement is equally needed in the recovery phase after the emergency. In Sofala province, 4,500 families are being resettled. The right communication in the right format will help them reduce risks, take control over their own recovery and adapt to the challenges they face. *Photo: a young man carries a tent to his plot in the new settlement in Guara Guara, in Buzi district.*

