



communicating with disaster affected communities

A learning review of Communications and Community Engagement during the Hurricane Maria Response in Dominica

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This learning review was commissioned by CDAC Network and undertaken by Sarah Routley of Humanitarian Research Initiatives



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Executive summary

Hurricane Maria quickly evolved from a Category 1 storm to a Category 5 hurricane in less than 18 hours, just before hitting Dominica. It seriously affected communications and connectivity across the island, and with the outside world. The unprecedented nature of the hurricane, its impact on the state, coupled with the role of the diaspora in information communications and the new operating environment for many humanitarian actors (including CDAC Network (CDAC) members) means that there is much that can be learned from the response. There is also much to be gained by developing a common understanding of lessons learnt and good practices on Communications and Community Engagement (CCE).

Summary of approaches used for information Provision

Initially, communications and access were impossible, and there were perceptions of an 'initial silence from aid providers'. Information was scarce and mostly provided through occasional community visits, by word of mouth from people who had news, or via radio and Ham radio. The Prime Ministers (PMs) daily press releases included some limited details about humanitarian activities, often focusing on what had been achieved or broad plans for the response. Amateur radio operators in country, played a key role in sharing information at the national and community level, with the support of the wider network of associations overseas and linkages to Facebook. Once connectivity and access had improved, more information was shared through face-to-face contact, during meetings and visits. Community stakeholders began to play a more active role in disseminating information. Some agencies established field teams to strengthen circulation of project information and facilitated specific meetings and undertook dissemination activities in communities. The role of social media, phone and WhatsApp became increasingly important as connectivity improved. The diaspora played a crucial role in passing on humanitarian information, targeted specifically to the needs of their family and friends.

Summary of the type of information received by communities

Most of the information initially received by communities was focused on general news and situational updates, weather forecasts, family news and safety information. After the initial days of silence, people felt that they slowly started to receive relevant information and that social media played an important role. There were limited details of specific humanitarian activities, intended beneficiaries and timing of aid deliveries. Feedback and research undertaken by organisations such as GroundTruth (GT) highlighted specific information gaps, and in response, the information provided by humanitarian organisations gradually became better targeted and more relevant. In the recovery phase, information provision focused on sector-specific technical information, mostly relating to shelter, cash transfers, and on the beneficiary selection processes. Although important from a project perspective, this can be seen as a direct form of aid, aimed at helping people recover. There were very few examples of information systematically being provided about how communities could access and communicate with aid providers, means of providing feedback, or how they could raise concerns and complaints. This gap is now beginning to be filled by the promotion of agency hotlines and through work of field staff. There was limited information received by communities that could be considered to have increased the efficiency and effectiveness of aid, or which strengthened accountability.

Summary of community preferences and gaps

Initially, affected people felt paralyzed and scared by the lack of information. As information started to filter through to them, they felt frustrated by the lack of details and delays in information they received. They wanted to know what assistance they were entitled to and from whom, and they wanted to understand how decisions about the selection of

beneficiaries were made. They wanted to know how the information they provided to agencies and government staff would benefit them and lead to changes in their situation, and were frustrated when their questions weren't answered. They wanted to feel listened to and to receive answers and responses to their questions; they asked for details of how to contact people who could help them. People wanted to be able to cross-check the accuracy of information, and be told in advance about visits and activities. There were frustrations when plans changed without explanation, or activities were delayed. There were many rumours about how areas and beneficiaries were selected which were made worse because people did not understand, or trust how decisions had been made. In the recovery phase they wanted more practical information about how to adapt to their new situation and the long-term challenges they faced. They wanted information that would assist them in making plans and taking decisions about their future. Community members want greater openness and transparency from the government and aid agencies about their plans for recovery and preparedness, and they want to understand how broad policies for recovery and climate resilience would be translated into practical assistance.

Summary of the different types of communication

Most of the communication that occurred at the community level was focused on information provision; when two-way communication occurred, it tended to focus on gathering specific sector information. This had the potential to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of activities, but it tended to be extractive in nature. Communication tended to occur at specific times, rather than through regular visits to listen to community views. There was limited evidence of organisations establishing a presence in communities for the purpose of strengthening accountability; to ask questions that went beyond enquiring about levels of satisfaction about programme activities, or to encourage community members to actively raise concerns, or complaints, and to feedback on the quality and effectiveness of aid. This was beginning to be strengthened at the time the review was undertaken, through the work of field staff collecting feedback from communities' and by the introduction of agency hotlines. The recent series of multi-stakeholder meetings at the community level were very popular with community members, as they gave access to a wide range of stakeholders, allowing people to ask questions, clarify information and raise concerns. They also permitted an immediate response which was welcomed. Government staff and citizen journalists played a crucial role in facilitating communication with communities and humanitarian agencies. People preferred to give feedback face-to-face and written feedback was considered to be 'a hassle, and too formal'. People were said to be reluctant to write complaints and give their names due to perceptions of the lack of confidentiality and the risk that any complaints might affect the provision of assistance to them in the future.

Responsiveness to feedback

There were examples given both of substantive changes and minor adaptations being made to activities and programmes as a result of community feedback. The evidence provided by GT, and feedback collected and analysed by CDAC was said to have facilitated the development of specific information for dissemination and sector communications strategies.

Summary of conclusions and recommendations

CDAC supported CCE through assisting agencies with technical support, through building staff capacity and assisting agencies to realise their own CCE commitments. They provided strategic leadership to the working group, and coordination of CCE efforts. They played a crucial role in keeping CCE at the forefront of programming and encouraging agencies to develop their own dedicated CCE capacity. CDAC was instrumental in working with agencies to respond to the information provided through H2H agencies and to adapt their activities

accordingly. CDAC's was said to have created connectors between CCE actors, such as the media and humanitarian organisations. They supported CCE by directly representing the views of communities and seeking their feedback, and assisting in the establishment of feedback mechanisms. The conclusions relating to preparedness, the approaches of the various actors in Dominica, and H2H, CDAC, and the secretariat are summarised below, and the main recommendations are highlighted in boxes.

Conclusions on Preparedness

In order to be better prepared, people wanted more information provided in advance which was accessible in communities, along with access to emergency communications. They also wanted to understand their entitlements in a disaster.

Recommendations for Preparedness

An effective systems of disaster communication needs to include channels for two-way communication with communities. Information based on the main threats, key messages and contacts could be prepared and disseminated in advance.

Conclusions on the role of the CCE working group

The wide participation and involvement of actors in the working group has allowed CCE to be integrated more widely within the response and has been critical in sharing, discussing and responding directly to community feedback.

Recommendations to the CCE working group

The CCE working group should remain a key part of the coordination system. It should consider expanding its membership and local partnerships, including to the media association and Ham radio associations. CDAC members should commit to its support and leadership.

Conclusions for humanitarian organisations

Humanitarian staff have become more aware of their role in CCE and the breadth of potential activities, and agencies CCE capacity has been enhanced. Agencies still feel constrained by their limited staff capacity and funding for CCE activities. There is a need for information to allow communities to better adapt to their new situation and the longer-term challenges they face, so they can make practical decisions and plans. Information to help communities communicate with humanitarian actors should be improved. Importantly, people want to feel they are 'listened to', and to get a response to their questions, they want concerns to be acknowledged, even if this does not lead to their preferred outcome.

Recommendations for humanitarian organisations

More emphasis should be placed on the full accountability components of CCE; with provision of information to facilitate improved communication with humanitarian agencies and the collection of wider feedback, beyond specific project related information prioritised. Greater clarity is required concerning agencies' CCE commitments. Technical support from within agencies, is required to support the integration of CCE into future responses. CCE activities should be included within all initial project proposals, along with allocated staff time and funding dedicated to activities. Time should be spent in communities listening to people and ideally, staff should be recruited from within the local communities.

Given the role of the diaspora and social media for passing on information, agencies missed an opportunity to engaging more proactively and to use of Facebook for the provision of humanitarian information.

Recommendations on social media

Agencies should develop stronger links with media and work collaborate on information provision through social media from the outset of a response, ensuring information is accessible and understandable. A collaborative Facebook page should be established for a response, for the provision of simple, accurate and up to date information from agencies. Agencies should establish their own Facebook pages and webpages, taking into account bandwidth restrictions.

Conclusions for media organisations

The media has a greater awareness of its potential role in broader CCE in disaster and an appetite for greater involvement and training. A sophisticated use is being made of social media by citizen journalists to include humanitarian information and cover activities by agencies.

Media organisations should support humanitarian actors in greater aware of the opportunities for funding activities with the media and for collaboration. Greater capacity should be developed in relation to CCE and disaster response. Agencies should be encouraged to link with citizen journalists and develop opportunities for collaborative work, visits and greater use of social media.

Conclusions for the Radio Ham Association

The Ham radio was considered to be a crucial form of emergency communications for communities and its role in facilitation of CCE should be the focus of future collaboration.

Ensure CCE is included in training of relevant community operators and the most appropriate sites should be determined for equipment to be housed to ensure greatest access by community. Research potential and develop the role of the radios in two-way communication throughout a response.

Conclusions for the government

The Government is actively involved in discussions about community feedback with agencies, both in the field and at the sector-level and a key participant of the CCE working group. They have been developing and improving information provision throughout the response in response to community feedback. Government staff have acted as gatekeepers to communities facilitating communication for humanitarian actors.

Recommendations for government

The government's participation within the CCE Working Group should be strengthened and continued. Opportunities for collaboration with field staff, on the collection of feedback through community meetings, discussion of feedback and its resolution should continue to be sought.

Conclusions: H2H and CDAC approaches

Information from the different H2H agencies was considered to have filled an important gap and provided evidence to use to lobby for more dedicated resources for CCE activities and to promote changes to policies and government recovery practice. There was no awareness of CDAC or H2H early on in the response, and no dedicated CCE staff or funding.

Recommendations to the CDAC Secretariat

CDAC should play a greater role in encouraging members to promote its work among their staff and facilitate a better understanding of network members' commitments. CDAC should agree common definitions and ideally establish a minimum set of commitments for its members. Operationalisation should be based on a thorough assessment of the areas of focus, and of in-country gaps, in order to determine which H2H partners are best placed to support the response.

The need to promote common CCE and CCE definitions

The lack of definition of what is meant by CCE, and the use of inconsistent, loose terminology has led to confusion and detracted from the core accountability components of CCE.

Clearer and consistent definitions of CCE should be agreed to assist agencies in implementing the full scope of CCE, allowing better monitoring and articulation of deliverables. More emphasis should be placed on the full accountability components of CCE and listening to what communities want to say, on their terms.

The importance of identifying a local counterpart

The failure to identify and train a local counterpart was considered to have been a missed opportunity in Dominica and raises questions about the sustainability and future of CDACs work in the country. A key commitment of the World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain that followed is the promotion of an enabling environment for a more locally led response.

Potential local counterparts for CDAC should be identified to promote longer-term sustainability in CCE. These could be from the media, press and Ham associations. In the absence of an agreed counterpart CDAC should support the CCE working group in developing and strengthening local partnerships.

The importance of promoting innovative Partnerships

Establishment of emergency communication is a key step in CCE, as is the opportunity for greater access for affected people.

CDAC should continue to strengthen its relationships with providers of emergency telecoms and the ETC globally, and lobby for access for affected people to emergency telecoms.

The value of harnessing the potential of Diaspora

The role of the diaspora has been critical in humanitarian information provision and communication with affected people since the hurricane. Humanitarian providers should consider how they can support the maintenance of these critical social networks and more effectively provide them with appropriate and useful information that they can share. Further research is needed to better understand the role of diaspora in communications and information provision during disaster.

Humanitarian organisations should lobby for the provision of access to communications devices such as ham radio equipment, cell phones/credit and WIFI connections and hotspots to help communities stay in contact and communicate with diaspora during disaster. They should develop appropriate platforms for sharing up to date, simplified, language appropriate (no jargon) and locally specific and relevant humanitarian information. H2H agencies should support the development of a ‘multi agency information sharing platform’ in a disaster, which is accessible to communities and diaspora for greater humanitarian information sharing. CDAC should develop its understanding of the potential role of the diaspora in CCE, with further case studies and research.

Creating linkages to and continuing to support the media

H2H should develop their role in supporting the media in CCE and ensuring their potential role in CCE is understood and supported at the local level. They should work with all stakeholders to support linkages to humanitarian actors and foster greater understanding from the outset of a response. Greater strategic engagement is needed and there are potential options to work with associations which should be explored.

Recommendations for CDAC Secretariat and in Dominica

At the outset of a response, CDAC should seek to strengthen understanding between the media and humanitarian organisations about each other’s roles and identify opportunities for collaboration, modes of operations and platforms for engagement. In Dominica CDAC should support training to ensure CCE is a key component.

Looking to the future: Recommendations for a CDAC operational model

The role of CDAC in Dominica evolved from what was initially envisaged, that of the provision of coordination and technical support, to a more operational role, with activities being implemented directly.

Recommendations to CDAC Secretariat

CDAC needs to position itself carefully in the field to ensure that it achieves an appropriate balance between supporting agencies own CCE efforts and direct implementation; this balance will vary according to context and agencies’ own capacities within a response and different models should be developed depending on context. These are further developed in section 6.3.



Section 1: Introduction and purpose of the review

On 18 September, Hurricane Maria evolved from a category 1 storm to a category 5 storm in less than 18 hours, just before it slammed the Caribbean island of Dominica (Source: NASA). Communications, connectivity and power were severely impacted, as vital infrastructure was destroyed; a period of 'darkness and silence' ensued. Six months after Hurricane Maria, the Government and humanitarian actors continue to work together to address the needs of the most affected. Even though the situation is normalizing throughout the country, Dominica remains seriously impacted. Over 80 percent of houses still have inadequate roofing. In the current recovery phase of the response, there is an overwhelming need for information on shelter support from the affected communities.

Hurricane Maria is regarded as the worst natural disaster in the history of Dominica. Given the uniqueness of the hurricane, the impact on the state coupled with the role of the diaspora in information communications this the new operating environment for many humanitarian actors, including CDAC Network (CDAC) members that are present on the ground have articulated the need to reflect together on their experiences and create a common narrative of what happened.

1.1 Purpose and objectives of the learning review

The learning review is an opportunity to reflect together on experiences of communication and community engagement during the response, and for shared learning. It will highlight examples of good practice, lessons learnt and where and why challenges arose. The views of affected people will be captured; their experiences of accessing information, of communication and engagement during the response, as a starting point in influencing future planning and preparedness for any future response. It is hoped this review will help build a picture of what a successful communication and community engagement response looks like in such a context, and map what is needed from different actors to achieve this. It will make recommendations on how CCE can be improved in Dominica and to CDAC and H2H on their role.

Figure 1: Review methodology

The review will focus on the approaches used to strengthen CCE by various stakeholders; government, humanitarian (UN, NGO, NNGO), the CCE working groups, media actors, diaspora and affected communities. It will analyse changes throughout the phases of the response. Specifically it will study approaches; to information provision, needs and information preferences of communities, 2-way communication and feedback approaches, and responsiveness to feedback. Mixed methods were used including; interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and workshop, participatory community consultations, social media surveys and a desk review of literature.

Due to flight and funding constraints the field work took place over a period of 7 days in country, with community consultations held with 3 groups. Some key stakeholders lacked availability within the timeframe of the review, with limited the number of NGO interviews and time spent with the CCE working group.

1.2 Summary of methodology

A total of 67 people were consulted as shown in figure 2. FGD being held with a diverse group of community representatives in Roseau, a rural community at a collective shelter and a group of young students at State College, a further community consultation was cancelled due to staff commitments.

Figure 2: Review participants

Review Consultations	Number
INGO/NNGO/UN Including head of missions, field staff, project managers and cluster representatives from; WASH, ETC, Shelter, Education and the CCE working group	17
Government representatives Including the ETC, MoI, MoH, DDO representatives	4
Media FGD Including representatives from; TV and radio (state and independent), the Media Association, private/freelance journalist, online blogger, citizen journalist/Facebook news	9
Youth FGD at the state College	13
Representatives from DARCI	3
Community FGD at 2 locations with mixed groups of men and women, including people of mixed ages and with disabilities	17
CDAC and GT network representatives	4

1.3 Report structure

The report will document examples of good practice, challenges and lessons learnt and the views of affected people throughout and be structured as follows:

Section 1: Provides an introduction to the review and methodology

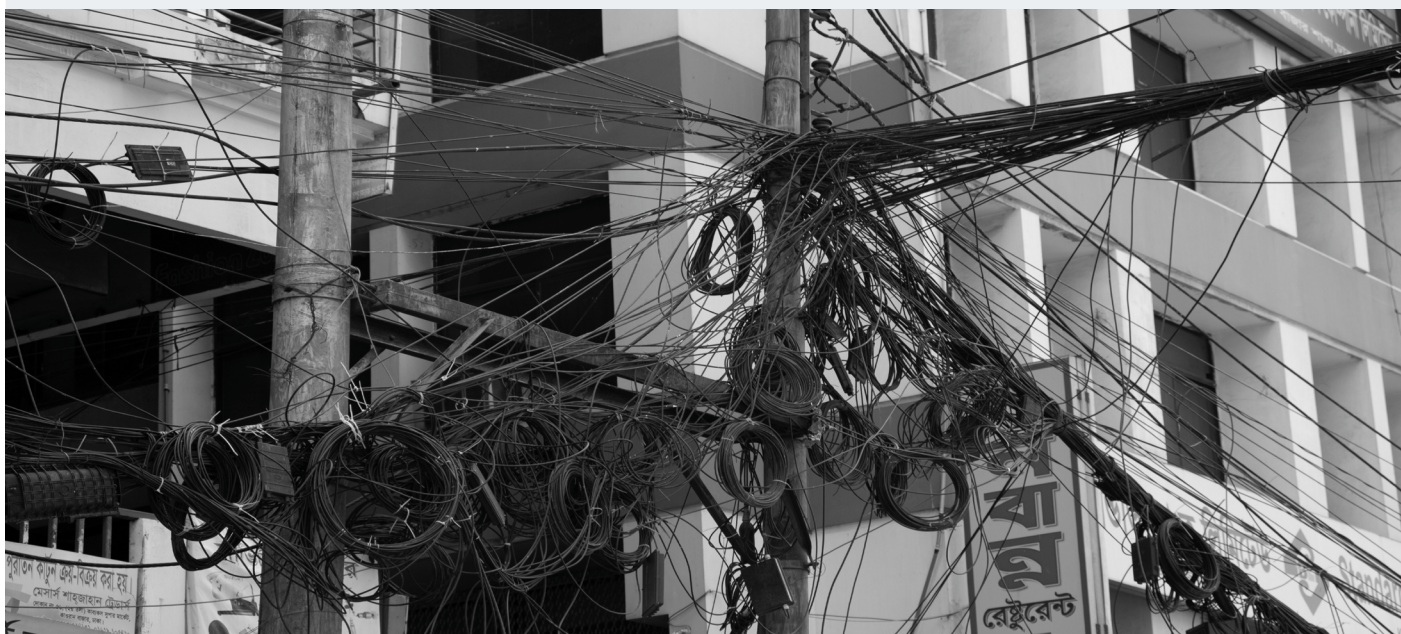
Section 2: details the background to the response, CDACs and H2H's role and the importance of CCE.

Section 3: Provides an analysis of information provision, the approaches used, types of information, community preferences, gaps and needs and looks at adaptations made for specific groups

Section 4: Provides an analysis of the approaches used for two-way Communication, feedback and complaints handling

Section 5: Presents the conclusions and recommendations on Preparedness, the role of the CCE working group and for the various actors.

Section 6: Presents the conclusions and recommendations to CDAC and H2H, including suggestions for future operational models.



Section 2: Background to the hurricane, the response and the role of CDAC

2.1 Hurricane Maria and the Dominica context

Dominica was hit by the category 5 hurricane Maria on the 18th September 2017. It was the strongest on record to hit the island with winds recorded of up to 260 km/hr. In less than 18 hours, and with little warning, Maria evolved from a category 1, to a category 5 hurricane in less than a day and was only the 5th hurricane on record to have directly hit the island. It destroyed the country's power, water and electricity supply. It damaged telecommunications infrastructure including equipment, masts, mobile network towers, transmitters and repeaters, which seriously hampered communications and information flow. The heavy rain led to landslides on the steep mountains and flooding, which damaged roads, bridges and buildings and cut off parts of the island for many weeks. According to the United Nations situational report on the 25th September¹, it led to the damage or total destruction to 98% of the roofs and 50% of building frames and left over 50,000 people in need of urgent shelter. It damaged 53 of the islands health centres and destroyed 100% of agriculture. Flooding in Roseau damaged government communications infrastructure and emergency communications equipment, destroying servers and information, affecting information management longer term. Dominica briefly became cut off and unable to communicate with the world.

2.2 Communications situation: the 'darkness and silence'

After 18-hours of communications 'darkness and silence', the first communication from communities was facilitated by amateur radio operators, from the Dominica Amateur Radio Club (DARCI)². This allowed some limited communication across the island, between communities and to the wider Caribbean and globally. The club manned a radio at the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), facilitating initial communications support to first responders, coordination of evacuation and medical responses. It helped to coordinate the helicopters and traffic at the port and facilitated the maintenance of government business and work of the police. The Hurricane Maria Dominica Amateur Radio Communications (DARCI) Facebook page was established by the local ham operators on the island a few hours before the storm. A live audio feed was set up to the Facebook page, creating a connection to the outside world, 48 hours after Maria³. The diaspora and wider radio associations played a critical role in facilitating information flow, both out from Dominica and back to community members.

The Government worked through the Emergency Telecoms Cluster (ETC) to establish some communication in the days following the hurricane working. A quick deploy satellite was set up by World Food Programme (WFP) and Ericsson Response, and Telecoms San Frontiers (TSF) worked to establish hotspots at key locations including the EOC, remote locations and the airport. A small number of satellite phones were available to facilitate government business. The National Radio station (DBS) began broadcasting bulletins, allowing residents to check in and give updates on their villages on the 3rd day after the hurricane. The mobile network Digicel retained a limited service in Roseau, but people had limited access to electricity to charge phones for many months and some households are still currently awaiting a connection today. This meant that people tended to turn on their devices quickly to check for messages and then turn them off again to conserve power. In the North of the island, there was a complete blackout of electricity and mobile network, with Flow resuming

1/ Hurricane Maria Dominica UN situational report 1, 25th September 2017

2/ Interview DARCI

3/ Interview DARCI

its network in certain areas only after four weeks. There was some access to social media, and information through radio and television, in the south of the island⁴. A cash economy prevailed across Dominica as electronic transactions were impossible, phone credit and data were only available to those with a prepaid plan, or with friend and relatives overseas to top up phones. WhatsApp became a popular way of contacting people, due to its limited use of bandwidth. Frequent outages to mobile networks, WIFI connectivity and limited electricity supply are still affecting communications today, six months after the hurricane.

2.3 The humanitarian response

Led by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), and supported by the UN and humanitarian agencies, and military troops from several countries the aid response was launched on the 19th September. Specialists, personnel and resources were brought in to distribute aid to 65,000 people. The government coordinated the response through the Office of Disaster Management (ODM), immediately establishing the EOC. Initially there was limited communication with communities, or with the Village Councils (VC), and village level Disaster Management Committees (DMT)⁵. At the local level communities were represented through District Development Officers (DDO)⁶; who played a role in gathering information on community needs for the Ministry of Social Services, Community Development and Gender Affairs (MSSCDGA). Political representation at the community level is through the Parliamentary Representative (Parl reps) for both the opposition and government. Figure 3 outlines the response timeline.

Figure 3: Hurricane Maria response timeline

Emergency Phase September -December 2017	Recovery Phase January-March 2018	Preparedness Phase April-September 2018
Priorities; food, water, electricity, tarpaulins and building materials. Support to displaced people in 63 shelters	Priorities; repair to roofing and house construction using 'Building Back Better' psychosocial support, livelihood support / cash transfers and rehabilitation of public infrastructure and services	Priorities; preparedness planning for the hurricane season June-October, linking to Government Ministry preparedness planning ⁷

2.4 The importance of Communications and Community Engagement (CCE)

In Dominica CDAC and H2H agencies used the terminology CCE, with UN agencies using the terminology AAP. NGOs referred to CCE, Community Engagement, or just communication and information. No formal or common definition was seen amongst the agencies or within the working group. For the purpose of the review, community engagement is defined by the consultant as engagement with communities through;

- the provision of information to; save and protect lives, mitigate risk, change behaviour, support mental health, dispel rumours, access aid, facilitate access and communications with aid providers, provide feedback, concerns and complaints;
- listening or communication between providers and communities;
- ensuring the views of affected people shape the response, humanitarian activities and decision making.

4/ ETC 29/10/2017

5/ There are 42 VC some of which have active DMC comprised of;

6/ There are 2 DDO per district (including one assistant) and the country is divided into 7 districts

7/ Government ministries will deliver their preparedness plans at the beginning of May (from interview)

CCE is a critical aspect of humanitarian response; it allows people to gain access to assistance, adapt to the challenges they face and to participate in decision-making, and to hold organisations to account for the quality of the assistance they provide. When people have the opportunity to voice their opinions, it enhances their sense of well-being and enables them to take an active role in their own recovery. Feedback about the levels of satisfaction with activities and suggestions for improvement plays an important role in improving quality and effectiveness of projects. Listening carefully to people and using feedback to determine the assistance that is provided improves the quality effective of programmes.

There is a lack of formal definition of CCE and it tends to be less well-defined than Accountability to Affected People (AAP), with its clear articulation of commitments within the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS). CCE is often viewed as an 'enabler of accountability' but is also considered to be distinct from AAP, as information and communication are themselves seen as an important form of aid⁸. Importantly, it includes the element of engagement with communities, ensuring that agencies respond to affected people in their decision making and activities. Community engagement is the process by which humanitarian

Figure 4: Definitions of CCE

BBC Media Action make the distinction between:⁹

Accountability Communications; is communication that seeks to improve humanitarian response such as feedback on projects and is aimed at increasing efficiency and effectiveness of aid and ensuring people's needs are met.

Information and communications as a direct form of aid; is designed to provide practical guidance to survival and recover, provide a voice and allow concerns to be raised. Such communication can also play role in accountability by giving people a voice to increasing access to aid.

IFRC describe Beneficiary Communications in their Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) toolkit as;¹⁰

Communication that aims to save and improve life through the provision of timely, relevant and accurate information and support an environment of transparency and accountability through creation of feedback mechanisms.

The Communications and Community Engagement Initiative (CCEI); aims to improve the quality and effectiveness of aid through a harmonised collective approach in order to improve; community access to appropriate, timely and coordinated information, opportunities to participate and input into decision making processes and aid workers consistent use of feedback data to continually adjust and improve response.

The Core Humanitarian Standard states that humanitarian response should be based on communication, participation and feedback and that communities have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints. The World Humanitarian Summit WHS and the Grand Bargain include commitments on enhancing; localisations, accountability and participation of local communities. The IASC AAP commitments support collective and participatory approaches that inform and listen to communities, address feedback and lead to corrective action.

8/ Buchanan-Smith M, Ong J, Routley S. (2015). *Who's Listening? Case study of AAP in the Haiyan response*, Plan-International.

9/ Hannides, T (2015) Humanitarian Broadcasting in emergencies BBC Media Action

10/ IFRC CEA tool kit

agencies work collaboratively to address issues with the community; Alex Jacob states that this includes working together with each other, with local leadership and government¹¹. There are several helpful descriptions of aspects of CCE from different authors and initiatives that have formed the basis of understanding for this review (figure 4).

CCE requires that community members are routinely asked how they prefer to communicate with and give feedback to organisations. These issues should be explored at the assessment stage and throughout monitoring and evaluation of activities. Approaches should be designed to routinely consult different parts of the community, particularly those that are the most vulnerable. Affected people have the right to complain to an organisation and to receive an appropriate and timely redress. Complaints allow organisations to understand and address specific problems and to deal with grievances. Complaints mechanism help organisations to recognise and respond to serious issues and improve the quality of their programmes. Feedback from communities should inform processes of humanitarian planning and decision making, and adaptation of activities.

2.5 CDAC Network and H2H

The CDAC Network (CDAC) as part of its membership to the H2H network, undertook a scoping mission in the Caribbean in September 2017, and a rapid assessment in Dominica, funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), to establish the most effective way of supporting information and communications to the countries affected by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in the Caribbean. H2H agencies agreed to support humanitarian responders in Dominica through deploying a small team of staff from; CDAC Network, Ground Truth (GT), Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) and Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN). They provided information and analysis on the hurricane's impact, reporting on the effectiveness of the response, facilitated information dissemination, and assisted in communication with communities; linking affected people to humanitarian and decision makers. The main activities of H2H are summarised in figure 5.

Figure 6: Community engagement roles

CDAC initial coordination role

The initial role focused on coordination and technical support; establishment and strategic leadership of a CCE working group, representation of community voices and analysis of feedback, advocacy of responsiveness to affected people within response, technical support and support to ACAPs and GT and dissemination of findings, liaison with local media, and regular CCE and media reporting.

CDAC role in recovery

The role of the coordinator increasingly focused on direct implementation of CCE activities; leading the CCE working group to mainstream CCE within recovery and preparedness, engaging with local media, support the development of key messages and information campaigns, providing training, assisting in establishing feedback mechanisms and analysing community feedback, support to the inclusion of CCE in assessments and surveys, disseminate of H2H partner survey results and facilitation of community meetings to disseminate information and collect feedback.

CDAC information officer role

Media monitoring and reporting weekly on trending media stories and liaison with local media and media development organisations and proactive engagement over opportunities

11/ *Improving community engagement in humanitarian action: a practical agenda* Alex Jacobs's 1 speech at the conference "A Quest for Humanitarian Effectiveness?" held in Manchester, UK, 16th September 2015

Figure 5: Timeline of key CDAC activities in Dominica

	Month	H2H	Description
2017	September	IRIN/GT	Regional Scoping Mission and Dominica rapid assessments IRIN reporting; GT round 1 data collection
	October	CDAC coordinator arrives ACAPs	H2H UKAID funding proposal Local Media Overview Establish CCE working group Support to Beneficiary Selection Committees design Liaison with Ham radio Association and Media ACAPs Dominica Profile
	November		ACAPs Regional Caribbean Briefing Note Agency CCE survey undertaken, and feedback mechanism analysis CCE Toolbox development
	December	CDAC coordinator leaves	GT Round 1 report and CDAC Dissemination of findings
2018	January	Information Officer starts CDAC Coordinator arrives	Re-establish CCE working group and undertaking of CCE mapping Analysis of community feedback Engaging with local media and undertaking Media Landscape review CCE Foundation Training for 19 x NGO/media Support to WFP hotline establishment ACAPs Lessons Learned Hurricane Maria Dominica ACAPs Impact of Hurricane Maria Dominica GT Round 2 report and CDAC Dissemination of findings
	February		Coordination of messages for assessment, inter-agency messaging, FAQs Training in CCE and 2-way communications Support to communications on Cash Transfer and Beneficiary Selection Facilitation of community meetings to support shelter sector communications and advocacy Facilitation of community feedback sessions Support to establishments of shelter hotline (IOM) Development of communications strategy shelter sector
	March	CDAC coordinator leaves	Support to CCE training Ham radio training with DARCI GT round 3 report and CDAC Dissemination of findings Support to shelter FAQ development and development of material CCE training IOM field staff and hotline management Support to key messages and FAQ hygiene promotion (posters, fliers) Facilitation of community meetings x 4
	April		Handover CCE working group; Learning review
	Planned in absence		Media training Completion of MoH awareness campaign on hygiene promotion Arrival and deployment of Ham radio sets x 3

Section 3: Information provision during the humanitarian response

Information is a key form of aid, it allows people to gain access to assistance, to participate in decision-making, and to hold organisations to account for the assistance they provide.

‘No one anticipated the complete and utter destruction of the island and its communications networks. With no internet, cell phone or land line connectivity, electricity or power, there was no means of communication and very limited information about available aid’¹²

It took weeks and months for the lack of communications to be addressed and six months later connectivity and power are still unreliable. It is important to acknowledge that the role of the government, media and humanitarian organisations was severely hampered by the hurricane, with staff and families having been severely affected. Equipment, paperwork and office buildings had been damaged; for many just travelling to work was a challenge. The government’s ability to access and manage information was affected by damage to servers, computers and other vital equipment.

3.1 Approaches to Information provision

Initially, the only way to provide information to communities was through visiting, or passing messages through the radio, and remotely via social media. People both in rural communities and Roseau said the only way they initially received information was word of mouth, often through chance meetings with someone who know something, or had come from Roseau. Most of the information was second-hand, and about the general situation; there were a lot of rumours that were difficult to confirm and vet. In rural communities’ information was slowly received through the VC, Parl Rep, DDO and key community stakeholders such as nurses, or church pastors. In the shelters information was said to come mainly through DDO and Parl Rep visits. The GT findings suggest displaced people feel better informed the general population¹³, although interviews show they were frustrated by the gaps in details and that their questions were not responded to.

Figure 7: Main channels for information provision used by humanitarian agencies

Emergency Phase

Village councils
Key community stakeholders
DDO and Parl Rep
Facebook
Radio
Ham radio
Daily Press briefings

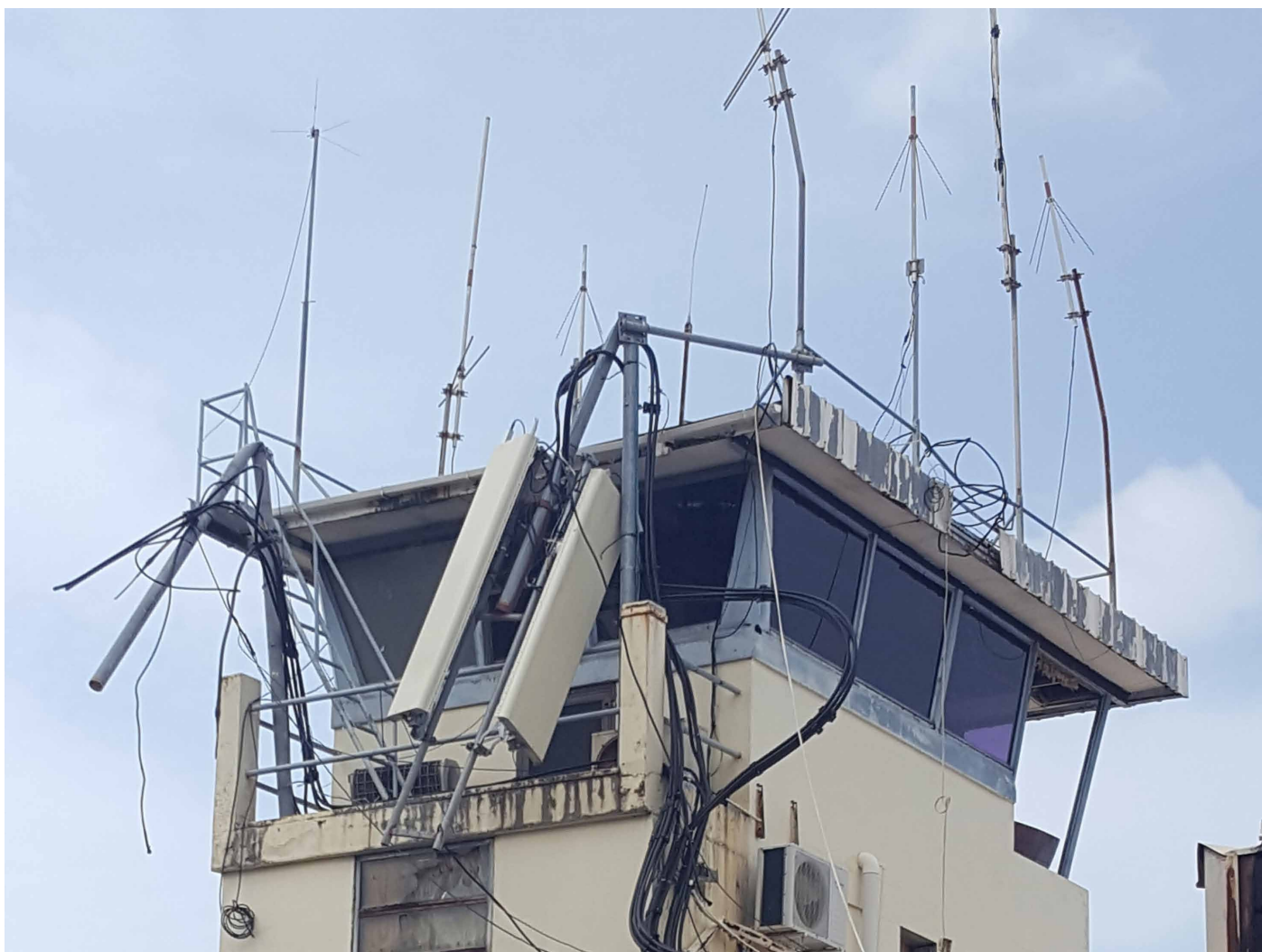
Recovery Phase

Meetings with communities
Village councils
Key community stakeholders
Facebook
WhatsApp
Radio
Phone Calls

Gradually as access improved, meetings were held at the community level and home visits allowed information to be provided directly. It became easier to make calls and to contact people. Throughout the response Facebook and WhatsApp were considered to have been an important channel for humanitarian information, with messages often passed through friends and family overseas. Face-to-face community meetings and visits were preferred, once access became possible.

12/ Interview DARCI

13/ GroundTruth see round reports 1-3 for full details



LESSON: When disaster strikes there can be a period when it is impossible to communicate with all communities. If information isn't already available at the community level and where there is a lack of appropriate emergency communications channels CCE becomes impossible.

The Government Approach

Initially, communication by the Government focused on outward information provision, which took the form of a daily press releases, delivered by the Prime Minister (PM). These were shared on Facebook, radio, twitter and Utube, and were popular with those who had access to these media. Information provision was largely related to situational updates from around the country, with humanitarian organisations able to contribute information for inclusion. At the community level, some limited information sharing was possible through visits, occasionally facilitated by helicopters, boats and by foot. The Ministry of Health staff, said for example, that they had been able to tag along on food distributions and provide some hygiene promotion messages. Some limited information was shared during assessments visits.

Once mobile networks had been re-established network companies facilitated text 'blasts' for issues such as hygiene promotion messages. Staff said they didn't take paper or posters to communities initially, as they felt it was inappropriate when people wanted aid. As the humanitarian presence on the ground began to increase after 3-4 weeks, ministry staff said they felt that the quality of messages improved, as they responded to feedback and specific needs, and messages became better targeted as a consequence.

Good Practice: The Government involvement in the sectorial cluster meetings and CCE was felt to have been beneficial for staff, helping in the provision of accurate and relevant information to communities. It enabled cross checking and verification, improvements to the quality and design of messages. The FAQs developed for the shelter sector, by CDAC were considered to have been very helpful.

The importance of providing information in advance and through children was recognised; the Ministry of Health worked with the Ministry of Education and schools to incorporate emergency health and hygiene promotion messages into the school curriculum through 'Health and Family Life Information'. School visits were also planned by family practitioners.

The DDO and Parl Reps played a key role in facilitating information provision at the community level, passing information through the VCs and DMC. They also functioned as gatekeepers for humanitarian actors, identifying households, making introductions and arranging meetings.

Given the size of the island and proximity of actors in Roseau, humanitarian organisations felt they had good access to government ministers and to cabinet; information sharing increased over time as the value of information both parties had was increasingly recognised.

Figure 8: The challenges of government communications after the disaster

Ministry staff felt **overwhelmed and often unsupported** in their roles, they weren't always given specific and accurate information to communicate to communities. They felt bypassed by humanitarian organisations who didn't always include them in community consultations and assessments. They did not get feedback on findings from assessments and were not able to provide information to communities when asked.

There was some criticism that the government information focused on large-scale plans such as Build Back Better and climate resilience, without providing any details of what that meant in practice, and how people would benefit at the community level.

LESSONS: The added value after the hurricane of Ham radio has shown that in times of disaster it may be necessary to revert to older, simpler and more robust technologies. It illustrated the vital role played by volunteers and enthusiasts and demonstrated opportunities for a network of Ham radios across the island and for linkages to social media, radio, email globally.

Emergency communication channels tend to prioritise national security, emergency responders and were used for maintaining government business. Facilitation of community level communications becomes a secondary objective. Existing networks should have become state assets in case of an emergency a unified network can be created to allow cross-network roaming at no charge¹⁴. This facilitates communications when one network is down and another still functioning. This did not occur in the case of Maria, but interviews suggested that it could have enhanced community level communication, and communication with diaspora.

14/ In interview at Ministry of Information

Media organisations

Initially, information was received by the media through daily press releases. These were said to be a 'one stop shop for news' which were popular with some of the media, who broadcasted the information on more widely with limited analysis. It was felt to have been difficult to get information directly from the EOC as there was limited communication with humanitarian organisations; media representatives said they did not know how to contact them until much later in the response.

Journalists had limited ability to travel around the island; there was pressure from larger media houses and editors for their staff to 'bring in a story', which focused on news. Independent journalists were hampered by lack of transport and funds. Media organisations said they were initially unaware of humanitarian architecture; the main actors and the language of the cluster system, sectors and working groups. Humanitarian organisations were considered to work with and speak through the government. The media said they didn't follow up with humanitarian organisations, or ask questions following press releases.

Good Practice: The citizen journalist, Emeline, was one of the first media representatives to get out and about around the island. She established the page book page EMONEWS, quickly making a name for herself and gathering a large following. Even now, she is uploading information and live feeds from around the island on the current situation and gathered details of families and news on relatives, all using her phone and a US sim. Her information was picked up around the world, and often disseminated back to communities through messages. Unrestricted by any affiliation to an organisation, she felt free to go anywhere she chose. Initially, she found it hard to get information from humanitarian organisations, but did do some interviews on the ground, and developed close links to CDAC, joining CCE working group and WhatsApp group. She has increasingly posted information relating to the humanitarian effort, posting live coverage of agency visits, community workshops, meetings and training events. Her viewing numbers and comments have provided useful feedback; showing the popularity of posts relating to humanitarian content and from communities. This in turn was said to have encouraged interest from other journalists in such stories and analysis of comments posted.

Initially radio was considered to be the best way of spreading information, through the two main stations are DBS and Q95. Although these did not reach the whole island, the stations provided a key way of sharing key messages more widely through their Facebook pages. Call-in shows allowed questions to be asked and issues to be discussed. Radio was popular as it allowed actors to repeat the same information, overtime information was able to be better presented and more sophisticated, with both comedy and jokes being used. People sometimes said waiting for information from the radio was frustrating, they preferred being able to access information immediately through Facebook, and said they wanted better WIFI to be able to search and access information themselves. There were very few examples of humanitarian organisations approaching the media with stories and to share information, later in the recovery phase.

As the response developed, interviews were undertaken by media with humanitarian organisations to find out details of what they were doing. Media staff attended community meetings and reported on humanitarian visits and training events. CDAC helped to strengthen linkages through the CCE working group and relationship building at an individual level. They helped to increasing awareness of the potential role of the media in CCE and accountability of the humanitarian response and particularly in reporting gaps and duplication and raising questions. There was a suggestion from some that focusing more

on the humanitarian response, was helping the media overcome issues around perceived politicisation. Their role in explaining beneficiary criteria was helping to dispel some of the rumours around possible bias in targeting.

Figure 8: The challenges of government communications after the disaster

The **lack of dedicated communications staff** within humanitarian organisations was both a challenge and opportunity for the media. Agencies were not developing stories themselves but there was no focal point within agencies to link to. The need for some agencies to obtain clearance from their regional offices in order to carry out interviews, delayed stories. Organisations working as government counterparts needed approval from the ministry, and all other counterparts before a press release could be authorised, which was said to take over 4 weeks.

The media is not a unified group. Journalists from larger media house needed to convince editors of the worth of a story before committing their time, freelance journalists need to be paid for a story, and had limited means of transportation. Citizen journalists often need to get some kind of revenue for a story (even by way of phone credit) and have limited experience in developing stories. The lack of understanding between media and humanitarian organisations and a reluctance to pay for stories affected the quality of engagement. As one journalist commented 'she can tell whether a story had been paid for directly by its quality'.

Citizen journalists and untrained staff do not have a full understanding of their potential role in information provision during disaster. There is a lack of knowledge of what information is needed and wanted by communities and what is available from humanitarian organisations 'you can't share something if you don't know it exists'. There was said to be a limited capacity for analysis and a reluctance to 'report bad things', within the media.

Humanitarian actors

Many of the response agencies arrived following the hurricane and had limited staff, roles focused on technical delivery, for example UNICEF had one staff member per sector. There was no awareness of either CDAC or H2H, even among network members at the start of the response. Agencies did not have staff with CCE in their terms of reference, or CCE focal points within their agencies. There was limited support to leading the CCE working group in the absence of CDAC. Later in the response several agencies said based on the evidence provided by H2H they had been able to lobby for dedicated funds and staff for some CCE activities.

Immediately after the hurricane, information provision with most communities was only possible through direct visits, occasionally facilitated by helicopter, one local NGO representative said she got a boat and then swam to speak to project beneficiaries. Organisations had so few staff that physically reaching communities was a challenge. Agencies were very reliant on the VCs to provide information on their behalf. Some information was provided during assessment visits, but staff said there could provide little information about their activities at the initial stage, as the situation was so fluid, and they could not offer people the assistance they needed. Information was posted on agency Facebook pages, (mostly regional pages) and in Ham radio announcements, and was passed to community members by diaspora, who could access Facebook from overseas. Agencies shared information on their general sector of activities, plans and activities completed in the daily governmental press briefings.

Good Practice: CDAC's work supported the development of a number of communication products: sector FAQ and key messages, design of information and posters, it played a strong role in technical messaging within the WASH and Shelter sector and development of communications strategies. The CCE calendar of events that is used to share opportunities for joint activities such as community meetings, radio interviews which was thought to be very helpful but could have included more actors and media representatives. The presence of CDAC at the Inter-sectorial meeting helped to champion information and communications across all the sectors. Training undertaken by CDAC helped strengthen an understanding of CCE, although agencies had limited capacity for implementation.

Research conducted by H2H agencies highlight gaps in information provision: CDAC was able to work with organisations to strengthen and better target information sharing. Several organisations responded by recruiting dedicated staff, with Caritas and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) developing specific field teams, tasked with providing project specific information to communities.

Successive rounds of the GT surveys identified gaps in information on shelter provision, building techniques and access to finances. Discussions within the CCE meeting led to the roll-out across 4 districts of **multi stakeholder community meetings**. These were held jointly with humanitarian organisations and the DDO and included builders, contractor associations, microfinancing for small households and credit cooperatives. The meetings provided interactive information and demonstrations about building techniques, materials, credit and financing options, allowing discussions with community members, and largely focus on information provision. The use of WhatsApp groups for information provision was appreciated and considered effective.

During the recovery phase, organisations became better able to arrange and hold their own meetings in communities and were less reliant on the DDO and VC. It was felt that this helped strengthen perceptions of their independence and allowed better targeting of more detailed and relevant information, although it was still a challenge to reach the household level. Community meetings became the most important channel for information provision. The use of mobile phones, social media, WhatsApp and text to provide information increased and continues to increase as services are restored. Information provision plans for the coming weeks include posters, fliers and leaflets, and adverts in the print media. Some working groups are developing joint designs and materials, such as for the beneficiary selection criteria.

Good Practice: During IOM's recovery shelter project activities, staff contacted the village councils to introduce themselves; they explained what they were doing, who they were and when activities will start. They then organized a village meeting and announced their activities via leaflets, poster, radio messages and a vehicle with a large speaker. During the village meetings they explained what they will do and how they will select vulnerable households, through village representatives. They check that the community think the village representatives was suitable for the beneficiary selection process. During the meetings they also explained "technical" roof construction and the feedback mechanism that could be used. IOM asked for feedback on the community session and explained the use of the feedback form and promoted their new hotline. In the coming weeks they are planning to organize community events to provide preparedness information and receive feedback from communities on their needs. Mostly, the information that is shared is technical and related to shelter rehabilitation.

Hotlines have proved to be an important channel of information provision, and to have facilitated direct responsiveness to specific questions and requests for more information. There is a need for more direct communication at the household and individual level, according to staff and some agencies are using WhatsApp groups to communicate directly with households. The opportunities to disseminate information more widely through children and young people, has been recognised. Some agencies such as Samaritans Purse are working with schools, teachers and children's clubs, to provide specific hygiene promotion messages. One local NGO said they worked with the Girl Guides. The church is considered to be a useful channel for information dissemination as most families have one member who attends, although some agencies said they prefer not to work through one religious group.

Dominica Amateur Radio Club (DARCI) and role of Ham radio

The first on the ground reports to reach the outside world after the hurricane were through Ham radio operators. Ham radio played a critical role in relaying information remotely around the world. Information received was posted on the DARCI Facebook pages and further shared on social media, webpages, WhatsApp, radio stations and TV. The DARCI Facebook page was established just before the hurricane and was instantly flooded with messages from family members from around the world and aid agencies. Over 60,000 views the first live feed and it quickly became an online bulletin board reaching over 226, 000 people the week after the hurricane. There are currently five operators spread around the island and plans to establish a network of sets and trained operators, across the island.

Initially, information focused on requests for emergency assistance, the work of first responders and on maintaining government business, it quickly focused on updates on the safety and whereabouts friends and family and conditions of houses. Humanitarian organisations and government staff such as the DDO were able to use it to pass information, along with the VCs and DMC.

The Diaspora, regionally and globally

The literature on the effectiveness of the Diasporas role in humanitarian response and the linkages they create to humanitarian actors is very limited as is their role in information and communication provision following disaster. Most of the research focuses on their role in provision of remittances and immediate financial support¹⁷. Several studies have shown that the diaspora play a role in improving communication and information in a response through the financing replacement of lost communications equipment and access to electricity, at the household level, such as in Haiti¹⁸. Research in Ghana and Burkina Faso set out to test how remittances impacted on household recovery after disaster, and found they played a role in strengthening communication, through improved access to electricity, telephones and mobiles¹⁹. David Aldrich in his paper suggests providing communities and community groups with communications devices such as cell phones and e-mail connections can help them stay in contact with diaspora during disaster, and that policy-planners should think carefully about the ways that they can facilitate the maintenance of social networks²⁰.

It was evident in Dominica that the diaspora played a significant role in directly facilitating humanitarian information sharing and communication after Maria²¹. They played a role in

17/ Bostrom, Andrew, Dayna Brown, and Sarah Cechvala. *Humanitarian Effectiveness and the Role of the Diaspora: A CDA Literature Review*. Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2016.

18/ See ref 17

19/ Sanket Mohapatra, George Joseph, Dilip Ratha (2009) *Remittances and Natural Disasters Ex-post Response and Contribution to Ex-ante Preparedness*, World bank Policy Research working paper 4972

20/ Aldrich, D (2008) *The Crucial Role of Civil Society in Disaster Recovery and Japan's Preparedness for Emergencies*, Purdue University

21/ In interviews 9/13 young people said they had received information from diaspora after Maria

Figure 10: Challenges and gaps in communications by humanitarian agencies

Given the size of the country it was imperative that messaging is coherent and well-coordinated to avoid confusion and equity issues. Not all agencies want a single mechanism for beneficiary selection for example, which some considered to be problematic.

There was a need to focus on the information gaps and to ensure that information was adapted for the context; in some sectors the Ministry coordinated messages and selected what information was sent out and how, with some Ministries developing their own key messages and FAQs. There was limited opportunity for NGOs to engage in messaging beyond some assistance in design. For example, water repair work was carried out by the private sector company DOWASCO, which shared information directly with communities. There is a need for information to be accessible in simple formats for ease of receiving and sharing at low bandwidth, and by non-humanitarians.

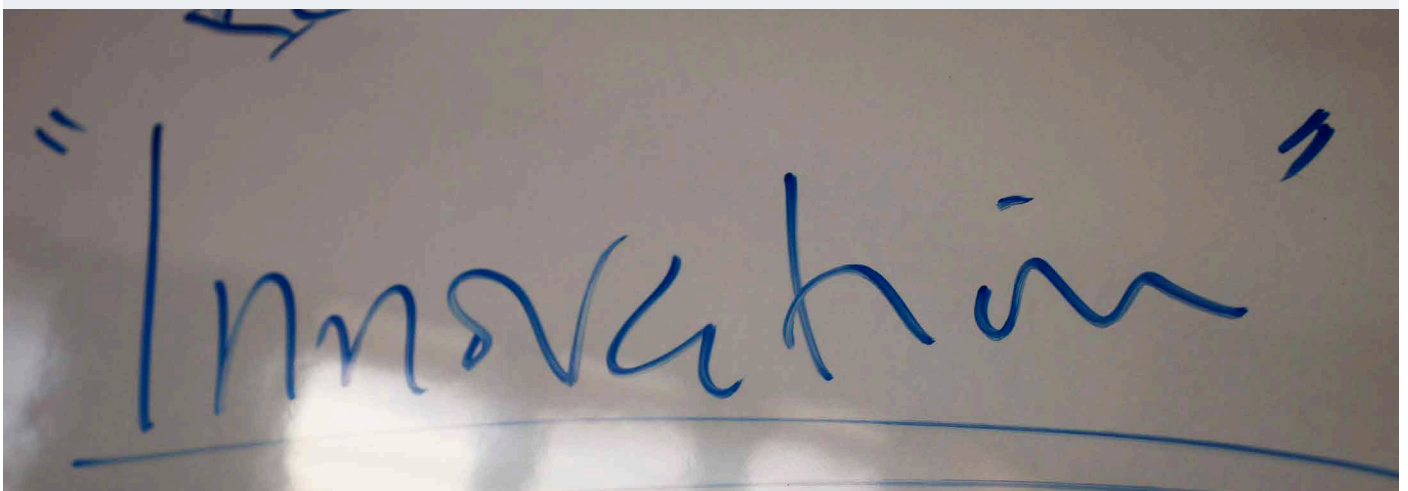
Agencies found it difficult to provide accurate information when working in partnership with others, and were dependent on others to provide information. Plans were changed by other partners with little warning and without explanation, leaving field staff from Ministries or agencies having to address community frustrations and questions, without knowing the full picture. There was a reluctance to use social media such as Facebook for information provision, partly due to the time required to update and post current information.

Good Innovation/Practice: The network of volunteer Ham operators provided wide coverage for information provision by amateur radio. DARCI operators were based at the EOC, and supported the National Disaster Plan and government communications plans, ensuring credible information was shared. They relayed live radio traffic to friends and family around the world. The ability for transmission to be fed from other countries onto a computer program, (via ECHOLINK) allowed it to be accessed around the world and traffic was retransmitted via Facebooks live feed function. Apps on smartphones can be used to upload documents which can be sent through the radio system. It is anticipated that Ham radio will be a key part of future emergency response and preparedness. CDAC is currently in the process of providing three sets of equipment and supporting the training of DMCs on HAM operations. There is a wider commitment to provide additional sets along with the ETCs deployment of approximately 60 VSAT sets to enhance emergencies telecommunication.

Figure 11: Challenges and gaps in communications by Ham Radio

Information sharing via Ham radio requires two skilled operators and is limited due to its requirement that someone has to be available to type messages to pass on information, which is often supported from overseas. At the community-level a system of runners is required to pass information from the operator to community members. Some radio sets were damaged during the hurricane, and operators moved and were unavailable during the response. Communication is open and so is not confidential. Communities without a Ham radio set were cut off and unable to communicate their needs, or request emergency assistance. There is an ongoing challenge of ensuring any emergency communicate is accessible to community members and developing a meaningful role in CCE.

gathering and collecting information from communities and websites, sharing it on social media platforms, and passing information back to communities in Dominica. In interviews, people said friends and family members abroad had been very active in gathering information from local news updates, radio reports, social media, and Facebook pages and then messaging the details to community members. One interviewee, said she checked relief web every day and posted information on the DARCI webpage, this included maps and detailed of what humanitarian resources were being provided and by whom. Interestingly, local listenership to radio dropped significantly due to constraints around electricity, inability to listen online and its coverage, but overseas listing increased during this phase. Comments on social media sites, show they are being read around the world. The diaspora also played a significant role in fundraising for specific communities, as evident on many of their websites and Facebook pages. They raised over \$33,000 specifically for communications equipment such as Ham radios, batteries, solar and generators in the last few months. In the days following the hurricane they played a key role in transferred credit directly to the phones relatives and friends in Dominica, when they had no access to it in country, allowing them to maintain mobile connectivity.



LESSONS: The importance of maintaining and facilitating communication between communities and diaspora to help them stay in touch and for access to support. Diaspora wanted updates on humanitarian activities, distributions, beneficiaries, communications infrastructure, road conditions and key contacts, so that they could pass the information to their friends and family in Dominica. To meet these needs, humanitarian information needs to be presented in a simple way and made more accessible to non-humanitarians, in one place and ideally placed on a dedicated platform.

In some communities **only one person had access to a functioning cell phone** to receive texts, messages and WhatsApp. People were keen to conserve batteries and often did not have bandwidth to access webpages or download reports, or Facebook. Family members overseas would know what information was needed, search social media and websites including DARCI and provide the information needed to friends and families in simple messages via WhatsApp. Diaspora with a contact in one village would post on a Facebook page offering to ask for information about other people's relatives from that village.

A wide range of humanitarian information was shared through the diaspora; there were several stories of people calling friends overseas and asking them to post messages about emergency needs on social media which were then responded to locally in Dominica. During the research, an example was given of the use of these channels to get a fire truck to respond to a fire in Roseau, and another of an ambulance being sent to someone with a broken leg.

3.2 The type of information received, community preferences, needs and gaps

The categories of information needed before, immediately, during recovery and for preparedness were developed during community consultations, and the main information needs said to be;

Figure 12:Categories of information required

Categories of the type of information needed (from consultations with affected people)

Advance

- Shelter locations, when to go and what to take
- Simple weather forecasting and predictions
- Emergency contacts and how to access communications
- Rights and entitlements in a disaster

Immediately after the hurricane

- Updates from family and friends, and how to make contact (in country and overseas)
- General Country news and situational updates
- Technical hurricane/weather related, and forecasting
- How to access to aid (Food and water), what is was available, eligibility, targeting, locations and timings
- Survival and recovery messages to provide lifesaving information
- Access to mental health support to address trauma and stress (for adults and children)
- Support behaviour change (how to keep damage houses and shelters clean and safe)
- Response timelines and plans; advance details of response plans and activities (including government plans and policies)
- Information about humanitarian providers, contacts, names, their plans, activities/ sectors, their principles
- Special support to specific groups; the elderly, sick and with specific health/special needs and most vulnerable

Recovery

- Plans and timelines for restoration of infrastructure and services
- House reconstruction, livelihood and employment assistance plans

Preparedness

- Key contacts for emergency responders/humanitarian agencies and who is responsible for aid provision
- Location of shelters and what to take
- How to access water, and other hygiene and health messages

The immediate priority for affected people after the hurricane was information about the situation in the island and news about family and friends, and how to communicate with them. People wanted to know what was happening around the island, and to receive news from home areas, weather predictions and risks. They wanted help to find missing people and needed to communicate with others. Posts on Facebook were largely related to requests for information about the safety of family members. The needs at this stage largely related to information and communication, rather than food, or aid as people had saved or taken what they initially needed and where able to find things around them. Once communication was established people that were interviewed highlighted the information that they received and gaps (see figure 13).

Figure 13: The main types of information received by communities

Main information provided

General news
Country Situational updates
Technical hurricane/weather related
Restoration of mobile
Overview of government policies, sector activities
General news on humanitarian assistance

Main gaps

Rights and entitlements
Access to aid, specific timings, type, criteria
Response timelines and plans
Details of humanitarian providers, contracts, who is doing what
Disaster preparedness planning
Support to specific groups; young people, elderly and disabled
Restoration of infrastructure (mobile, electricity, water, roads)
Restoration of mobile services

A few days after the hurricane, people wanted to know how to get access to aid; food and water. Frustration was expressed at initial contact with humanitarian organisations, when they came to do assessments, and ask questions. It was felt this failed to provide anything useful and left communities feeling ignored. Information about humanitarian assistance took many weeks to filter through and the only information that was received initially was said to be hygiene promotion messaging. People said the lack of information had eroded their faith and trust in the DMC and the EOC. Communities said they needed more specific information about what agencies were doing and not doing, the timings of when aid would be provided, who would benefit and the purpose of visits to manage their expectations. People said they lacked advance notice and exact details with communities reporting that 'things just arrived'. They complained that they heard what had been done in another area, with another community, rather than the plans for their community, and it was unclear why some people received assistance and others did not. There was a particular need for information about shelter and how needs would be addressed and what help would be available to rebuild homes.

People were not given information about their rights and what they could expect which added to concerns about preparedness and led to frustration and unrealistic expectations. Some shelter residents reported feeling 'forgotten' not because they failed to receive the assistance they sought, but because they did not get attention and did not feel listened to. People wanted to know who to contact, so they could be proactive and seek assistance themselves. They felt contact was often limited to the DDO and Parl Rep, and they wanted to be able to contact NGOs directly and so were keen to have their phone numbers or office addresses.

In the current recovery phase, people are desperate to know the timelines of activities, so they can make informed decisions and choices. Some people said that if they knew what the government was planning to do and was not planning to do, they could start to help themselves. People complained that information tended to be non-specific and grand in scale; about relocations, provision of new homes and commitments to climate change resilience. However, it lacks the details of how the changes were going to be achieved, and

Good Practice: the GT surveys included questions about how people received information, barriers to information and their preferred channel of receiving information. There was a lack of such information from assessments

Figure 14: Challenges and gaps in the information received by communities

People wanted **more specific details of humanitarian activities** shared with them in advance; which agencies were doing what activities where, when and for whom. This would help them to plan.

Information needed to be **adapted with time and made more relevant to the context**; hygiene promotion messages on the radio could have been refreshed, and some messages could have been dropped as they became outdated. People got fed up with hearing messages they already knew. Assessment data was poorly coordinated and shared, with some assessments being undertaken late which this hampered provision of clear information.

People had **limited awareness of the importance of feedback, and of how to raise concerns** and complaints, although improved through the response. It was felt that hotlines and formal systems of lodging feedback were not familiar with people culturally, with many unaware of national numbers such as Crime Stoppers. Gaps in assessment information, poor coordination of assessments and the lack of any initial data in some sectors meant it was challenging for organisations to design appropriate and detailed responses.

There was a lack of information about people's rights and entitlements following a disaster, from the government or humanitarian agencies. This led to high expectations and of people waiting before helping themselves. There was a gap in information on preparedness planning and emergency communication strategies.

when and how they would benefit individual households. Some people found the lack of information paralysing and said that it was prohibiting them from moving on.

There was limited information in advance about restoration of services, about plans for people still in shelters and how gaps in education would be addressed. People said they were told about health services, clinics times and dates and opening dates for schools and the college. Information about mental health, counselling services and its importance were considered to be strong, as there had been a programme of training government workers, teachers, and first responders that had trickled down to communities. There was limited discussion about rumours and the need for information to dispel them, and people specifically mentioned the challenging of vetting information initially. It was suggested that more information on selection criteria for assistance and explanations about the source of aid and of humanitarian organisations may have helped dispel rumours of political bias. Currently there is no specific information about preparedness planning, other than some recent articles on the government's plans for strengthening emergency telecoms. People are concerned that they did not know what the government should provide to them in an emergency and what assistance they should realistically expect. People wanted to know where the shelters were, what their state of repair was and how they were going to be fixed, what would be provided at shelters and what items they should take. They wanted to know what would be put in place at the community level to improve emergency communication.

3.3 Adaptation of information to specific groups and vulnerable households

There was felt to be such limited information, particularly initially, that little or none was specifically adapted to any one group, and it was all very general in nature. It was very hard for agencies to track specific individuals as people moved and there was often no way of contacting people. National NGOs found it hard to find previous beneficiaries. There were a few examples of information being adapted to specific groups; IOM said they adapted

their information in order to explain their programme in a school for children, which was considered to be very successful and something they would like to do again. One local NGO worked with specific groups and adapted the way they presented information to the elderly and peoples with disabilities. Organisations said they tried to ensure information was presented in different formats, most often verbally, and that visual demonstrations had helped include all groups from the community. Some specific services continued after the response; nurses visited some people and there were special clinics for people with diabetes and other health issues, with information being provided in relation to these. Several organisations had direct contact with specific beneficiary group via WhatsApp groups, which had been established before the hurricane.

People with disabilities such as sight and hearing impairment said they had been totally reliant on family and neighbours to inform them of crucial safety information, as warnings had only been provided in text blasts and by radio. Increasingly, there were targeted activities for specific groups such as safe play spaces for children, with specific information being to be provided to communities by IsraAids and at schools. People at the shelters were very unclear about what the future held for them, what plans there were for relocation or in the event of a future disaster. It was felt that more needed to be done to understand the specific information needs of groups within communities, and how they wanted to receive information. There are concerns that elderly people and those with disabilities had been left out. Young people felt they had been bypassed by information and opportunities to engage in the response, compared to the situation during the Irma response. They wanted to be involved individually and through youth groups and clubs such as uniformed groups.



Section 4: The approaches used for two-way Communication; feedback and complaints handling

When people have the opportunity to voice their opinions, it enhances their sense of well-being and helps them adapt to the challenges they face, enabling them to take a more active role in their own recovery. Specific feedback on the level of satisfaction on activities and suggestions for improvement plays an important role in improving quality and effectiveness of projects. Listening to affected people improves the quality of response and contributes to more effective programmes. People have the right to complain to an organisation and to receive an appropriate and timely response, with a complaints mechanism and a system for providing resolution being a key component of CCE. Effective communication needs to be two-way, and include feedback on satisfaction levels, concerns and complaints.

Opportunities for communication and feedback from communities were limited just after the hurricane but increased dramatically during the recovery phase. The most effective way for communities to provide feedback was face-to-face, through home visits and meeting in the community. Social media played a critical role in two-way communication and was frequently facilitated by diaspora. Feedback from communities mostly took the form of raising questions and requests for information and assistance. Communication by humanitarian organisations has focused largely on feedback on specific activities and collection of technical and sector related information. It is hampered by staff capacity and limited number of staff and field presence of agencies. Most organisations feel they are increasingly responsive to the feedback they receive, although it is still considered to be a challenge. Some changes to programmes, humanitarian and government approaches and activities, were seen as a direct result of feedback from communities.

4.1 Initial approaches used for communication with communities

The main approach for communicating with communities after the hurricane was during house-to-house visits, with occasional community meetings being held. Face-to-face communication was considered the most effective way of obtaining feedback from communities. The DDOs were considered to be key in facilitating communication between humanitarian organisations and communities and they helped to identify households and to arrange meetings. Some feedback was received via VCs and key community stakeholders. There were some examples of the use of radio 'call in shows' which were linked with shelter sector activities. They allowed community members to call in, ask questions and obtain answers. The main ways of obtaining feedback from communities in the early stages after the hurricane are listed below (figure 15)

Figure 15: Early approaches to obtain feedback from communities

Home visits	High
Meetings with commiunities	Low
Assessment surverys	Medium
Via village council	Medium
Via key stakeholders	Medium
From collective sites	Low
Text	Low
Facebook	Low
Online comments	Low

Communication was focused on people's needs, requests for assistance and asking of questions, with limited examples given of wider communication for accountability purposes, or complaints. Community members felt that not enough effort was made in the early stages of the response to go out and speak and listen to communities, one interviewee said, 'agencies were all at Fort Young in Roseau'.

The diaspora has played an important role in facilitating two-way communication at the community level and creating links to social media. They facilitated affected people by posting comments and questions and directing their feedback via social media. Assistance by diaspora members in responding to questions, providing contacts for aid organisations, posting details of assistance and the timing of distributions and making requests for emergency assistance have all allowed people to articulate and voice their concerns. The analysis of the comments on social media, and online articles indicates the extent of the involvement of the diaspora in facilitating communications. The comments themselves were an important source of feedback from communities, to which organisations were able to provide response and answer questions immediately. The content of comments was analysed for trends and gave an indication of the popularity of stories. Social media feedback and comments initially focused on people's current situation; responses and requests for information on the safety and whereabouts of family members, and some emergency requests. This quickly broadened out to include requests for assistance, concerns about gaps in assistance and duplications, questions on the humanitarian activities, timings and beneficiaries. One citizen journalist said she actively went out from day one to collect feedback from communities to post on her social media page.

Where Ham radio operators were present, community members and DMC representatives were able to go to them to ask questions, which could then be relayed to the EOC through the radio, or more widely via social media and the DARCI websites. They were considered to have created a critical communication link to social media, through allowing questions to be posted and answered and creating contacts with humanitarian providers. The government set up feedback channels under its EOC; through the three phone numbers²² acting as hotlines provided by the mobile networks, an email-address and a help desk at the lobby of the Financial Centre. People said they received few responses from the EOC and from the hotline initially. NGO/UN hotlines were established only later in the response.

4.2 Approaches used for communication with communities during the recovery phase

The main sources of feedback during the recovery phase were community meetings, hotlines, Facebook and online comments, and during assessment surveys and after specific project activities. Humanitarian organisations said that the main ways of obtaining feedback from communities, during recovery were as follows (figure 16).

Community meetings permitted concerns to be raised, information to be clarified and questions to be asked. The Beneficiary Selection Committee were said to have played a key role in collecting and addressing feedback related to targeting, closely supported by agencies.

Good/Innovation Practice: The CDAC workshops had reinforced the importance of complaints mechanisms and informing communities how and how they can make complaints to. CDAC helped humanitarian organisations develop their communication strategies and they facilitated specific community meetings to collect feedback. Feedback was fed into the CCE and sector working groups for discussion and response.

Figure 15: Early approaches to obtain feedback from communities

Home visits	low
Meetings with communities	high
Activity feedback forms	medium
Assessment surveyers	medium
Phone calls	low
Hotlines	high
Radio Interactive shows	low
Via village council	low
Via key stakeholders	low
Whatsapp	low
Text	low
Facebook	high
Online comments	medium
Help desks	low
Feedback boxes	low

Good Practice: GT surveys asked whether people were aware of how to make complaints and whether people were satisfied with how they were consulted.

The CDAC training conducted with agency staff on how to communicate with communities and on complaints mechanisms was considered to have been very useful. WFP felt that CDAC had helped strengthen their reporting of communications from communities, they were able to compare approaches to their own monitoring and adapt monitoring activities. CDAC was considered to have been instrumental in raising the need for better communication with communities and for facilitating multi stakeholder community meetings and encouraging them to be used for information dissemination and as broader communication platforms.

Agencies such as Caritas and IOM have recruited teams of social mobilizers. Although their main focus is on information provision related to their sector of activity, they also play a role in gathering feedback from communities, addressing it where possible, referring it to the feedback/hotline systems and passing it back to managers. Feedback was obtained at the end of specific activities such as training, through feedback forms, questionnaires and WhatsApp groups. Caritas has found that feedback boxes at project sites to be successful, especially for obtaining feedback on beneficiary lists and selection processes. Feedback often took the form of ‘telling tales’ on other community members but was considered to be a useful means of cross checking beneficiary lists. Surveys and assessments tended to be focused on technical and project related questions, with limited scope for feedback on wider CCE issues. Many had large coverage and including; the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) undertaken by IOM with displaced people in over 143 collective centres, and over 4 time periods, the Vulnerability Needs Assessment which expects to survey 19,000 households (approx. 75% of the population). CDAC was able to help in the development of some of the questions for the GT surveys, and there was inclusion of broader accountability questions in the later rounds. These surveys provided critical information on the views of communities, and how they wanted to receive information and be consulted, filling a gap in assessment data.

22/ one of each service providers – Flow, Digicel and Epic

LESSON: The reach and effectiveness of the DTM and VNA in obtaining information from affected people presents a key opportunity for wider CCE accountability communication with communities. Questions such as; 'what means of communication are available to you', 'what your most trusted and preferred channels of communication are', 'what the main barriers are to accessing information' and what are the current information needs'. Given the culture and peoples' willingness for verbal communication, it was suggested that information could have been gathered by organising specific events and festivals.

The DDOs were actively involved in listening to and understanding the needs of communities. They felt humanitarian organisations could have engaged more with them in order to be more responsive to the needs of communities and to ensure their activities were appropriate and relevant. For example, they said 'the focus of hygiene promotion on hand washing missed the frequently voiced request for help with other sanitation needs in communities; such as garbage bags, toilet cleaning materials, cleaning material for shared shelters and if agencies had asked we could have told them this'.

The Ministry of Health has just put in place a system of surveillance to allow communities to continuously report their concerns, via calls to hotline numbers, radio ham, forms and email. It is anticipated this will focus on technical health-related information, with a view to increasing efficiency and effectiveness of services. Given that prior to this, issues were only captured during surveillance visits, this will now permit continuous feedback and will help refine strategies and to identify specific needs in different locations.

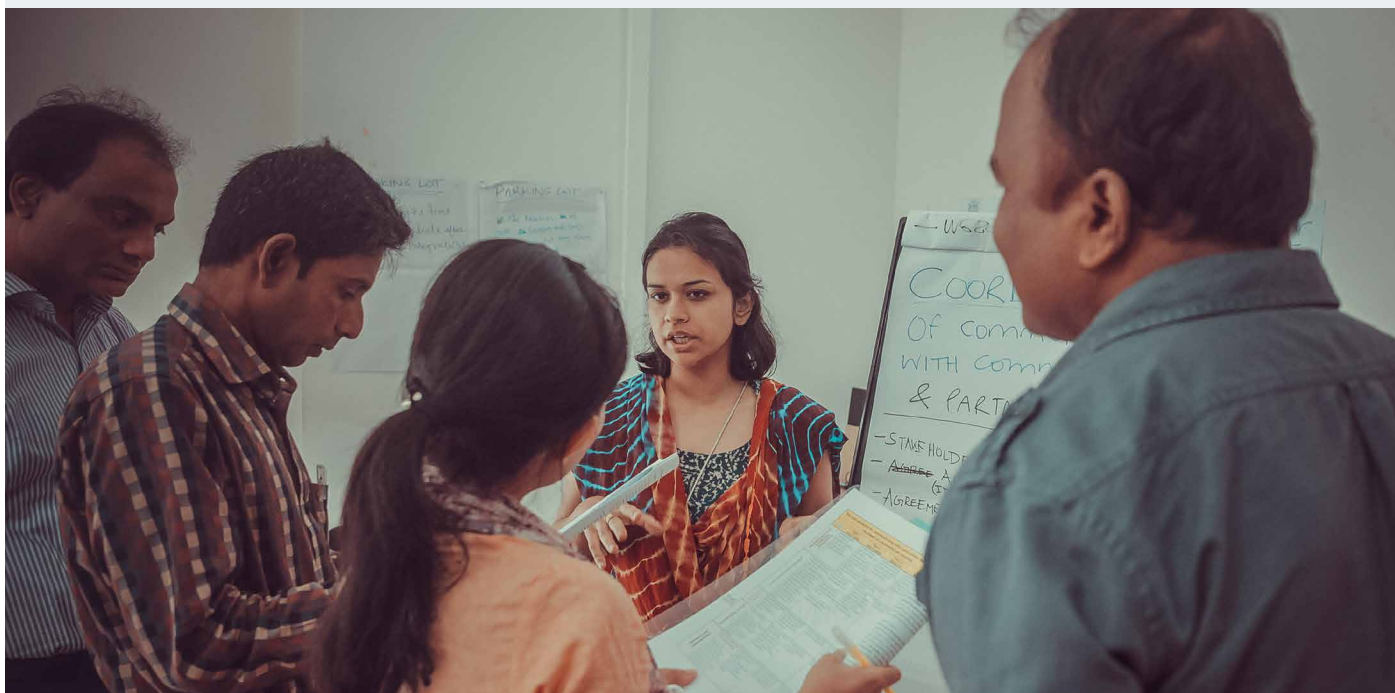
Hotlines

Currently, there are a total of 12 hotlines, operating with various levels of responsiveness across the country. Humanitarian hotlines are seen as 'communications hotline', rather than complaints hotlines, and are largely used for asking/answering questions, seeking clarification and raising gaps in programming. Few complaints are made through the hotlines, as these tend to be made verbally through the VC and Beneficiary Selection Committees. It has been challenging to refer issues on to the government, outside of sector meetings and to follow up and receive redress. The number of calls being made to hotlines has meant that there may be a need in the future to increase staff capacity; WFP has received 300-400 calls since their hotline has been established. The majority of communication via the hotline related to questions about the beneficiary selection process and asking for more information on the amounts of cash assistance.

Good Practice: IOM's newly-established hotlines was considered to be playing a key role in enhancing CCE and responsive to community views and questions. People can call a dedicate number, use WhatsApp, email or verbally lodge an issue during face to face field and office visit. The contact numbers are beginning to be actively promoted during community meetings and through texts blasts. A feedback form is used which states 'we would like to hear from you' and categorises feedback into 'information needs, complaints and comments'. All issues are fed into the online database, and staffs response documented. Issues are referred to staff internally, to other agencies or ministries and followed up directly. Commonly occurring issues are analysed and referred to the management for consideration. All action taken is documented and a response provided to the community members within several weeks. Both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries use the hotline and common issues that have been raised include requests for assistance and materials, questions about beneficiary selection, and targeting criteria.

4.3 Responsiveness to feedback

Feedback should be responded to in a timely way, any complaints should be resolved, and the outcomes should be fed back to the complainants. This is necessary both to address specific problems, and to improve programme quality more broadly. There is a need for flexibility in adapting projects to accommodate changing needs and shifting contexts, and for organisations to learn from the feedback they receive. There have been some examples of both, substantive changes and minor adaptations being made to activities and programmes as a result of community feedback. Agencies have been aided in their responsive to the needs of communities through the evidence provided by GT, and feedback collected and analysed by CDAC.



Good Practice: The Interim Roof Solution came about following feedback from communities on their lack of access to building support and lack of their suitability of their existing structures for the Build Back Better building techniques. Concerns were raised to agencies and discussed in the CCE meetings, in the presence of government representatives. They were then able to address the issue with an interim building solution.

The CCE working group was said to have been a very useful platform to discuss concern raised by communities and develop solutions. Discussions occurred across all the sectors, with issues being referred on to the sector groups and appropriate government representative. This was particularly useful in addressing issues relating to beneficiary selection, identification of problems with water systems in some locations.

Community feedback during meetings had highlighted gaps in information and the need for posters emerged. GT surveys highlighted gaps in information on shelter which were able to be addressed. The surveys were considered to be invaluable in helping agencies understand community concerns and gaps in their programming. It was considered by some to have acted as a 'trigger', providing evidence they could take to their managers, to lobby for resources and develop improved tools to respond to specific feedback. CDAC was further able to support them in CCE, developing TORs for staff and training CCE mobilizers. In turn, this has enabled them to respond to some of the issues raised by GT and directly strengthen CCE activities.

Community members reported feeling some frustration that the process with government meant that the questions and concerns raised to the DDO in the field had to be passed back to the relevant Ministry, and as a consequence, the response from government was slow. DDO did not feel sufficiently empowered to answer questions and did not have the information to do so. Community members reported feeling a sense of abandonment, because they did not feel they had been listened to, and that they were not getting any answers to their questions, or responses to concerns they raised. Over time, it is said that the DDO and government Ministries became increasingly aware of the value of some of the data and feedback collected by NGOs. This encouraged them to work more closely with NGOs and to find solutions and be more responsive.

Selection committees played an active role in obtaining feedback and resolving concerns about targeting. They were actively supported by agencies in this task. There were examples of agencies not informing communities of changes of plans or targeting of activities which were felt to undermine trust in them. There was also some criticism of agencies which weren't considered to have consulted local community effectively during their assessments, such as a recent housing assessment. People felt that this led to teams not 'seeing the whole picture', being misled and missing some of the worst-affected people out.

Feedback and likes on social media showed that visits to communities, reports on the local situation and communities concerns generated a significant number of comments and views. This was said to have provided greater incentives to the media to provide more of this type of communication, with media representatives saying they had responded to this and that they had adapted their focus accordingly. The media feel they have a role to play in accountability and assisting communities in obtaining a response to their concerns. They are increasingly being seen to facilitate this in their reporting and directly through comments and feedback on social media.

Good Practice: There are some good examples given of responsiveness to feedback and communications received from hotlines, with both WFP and IOM responding to communities with 1-2 weeks, referring issues on and trying to follow-up issues which were outside of the scope of their projects with duty bearers, and feeding back the outcomes to relevant communities.



Section 5: Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Overall conclusions on CCE

Currently, there are a total of 12 hotlines, operating with various levels of responsiveness. Communities wanted practical information relating to their survival as well as to their recovery and preparedness needs. They want to know how to better adapt to their new situation and the longer-term challenges they face, so they can make practical decisions and plans. They also wanted greater accountability from humanitarian organisations, and information to help them to communicate with them, to provide feedback on details regarding their activities, to ask questions, and to raise concerns. People were concerned about the accuracy of information and wanting to be able to cross-check and triangulate it against several sources. Although general information was provided, details were needed in order for people to act, make decisions and plan for their future and that of their families. Some messages needed to be better adapted to the context, and people expressed impatience when they received messages they already knew, such as some related to behaviour change, or information that was outdated, or which conflicted with other information.

Humanitarian information needs to be made more accessible to ‘non-humanitarians’ including the diaspora and media, who play a crucial role in passing it on to affected people. It should be better adapted to the connectivity and bandwidth challenges faced in a crisis, and provided through a range of channels. People wanted direct communication with aid providers, to ask questions and raise their concerns and they wanted to be ‘listened to’. They wanted humanitarian organisations to visit them and to have a presence in their community; they did not want to feel abandoned. The importance of face-to-face communication was emphasised throughout and the need of people to ensure their needs are understood. Communities wanted to understand who and why people are selected for assistance. The lack of information was felt to have led to rumours about the possible politicisation of aid, and a sense of abandonment for some. Importantly, people felt that their participation along with that of community representatives could have improved the effectiveness of aid and they were concerned that the lack of consultation was reducing its relevance and appropriateness.

Feedback from communities received through the GT surveys, assessments during recovery, and from community meetings has led to some of the gaps in the response being better understood. Agencies are beginning to respond much more quickly, they have designed new information sharing activities and have improved and increased staff capacity. This has gone some way to demonstrating the power and importance of community feedback.

Community members now want the government and humanitarian agencies to be more transparent about their plans for recovery and preparedness. A lack of trust was expressed about what they will receive, and so people are keen to understand what they will be entitled

Overall recommendations

More emphasis should be placed on the full accountability components of CCE; with provision of information to facilitate improved communication with humanisation agencies and the collection of wider feedback, beyond specific project related information prioritised. Time should have spent listening to what communities want to say, on their terms. Timely and detailed information should be a priority, along with follow-up with communities when plans change and in response to their feedback.

to in future disasters. Being able to make complaints was said to be a lower priority than being able to express concerns and needs, although this may be an incorrect interpretation, as many of the concerns expressed could be considered to be complaints. Importantly, people want to get a response to their concern and want them to be acknowledged, even if this does not lead to their preferred outcome.

5.2 Conclusions on Preparedness

Information and communication remains a critical challenge for preparedness and in any future response across all sectors. Communities are actively seeking answers to their questions and expectations. People wanted more information provided in advance, along with access to emergency communications. Given the specific challenges and unique environment there are opportunities to build on the role of the diaspora.

Essential information needs to be available in communities in advance which is accessible in communities, so that it can be adapted and disseminated as and when disaster strikes.

Recommendations for Preparedness-communications

An effective systems of disaster communication needs to be established, which should include channels for two-way communication with communities. The government should be lobbied to ensuring emergency communications network such as WIFI hotspots, and Ham radio equipment are accessible to communities and that it can play a role in CCE. Emergency communications should include;

- Equipment provided in communities such as; Amateur Radio set and loud speakers, bikes and speakers and sat phones. A generator, batteries or solar panels, chargers and credit for phones;
- Agreed established with neighbouring islands for continued radio broadcasts;
- Mobile cellular towers 'cell on wheels' used and the creation of WIFI hotspots independent of network providers at community level;
- Unified network agreed to allow cross network roaming should be created and credit for phones or a prepaid emergency phone should be provided ideally by networks and triggered in an emergency, and a free emergency hotline considered;
- Training of a network of community members in the use of equipment including members of the DMC and VC, Ham operators, shelter managers, teachers, pastors and community runners.



Recommendations for Preparedness Information

Based on the main threats, key messages and contacts could be prepared in the form of fliers, posters and audio recordings. These should be disseminated and prepositioned with the DMC, VC, or at churches, schools, health centres, shops or at collective shelters. Key preparedness information provided to communities in advance should include;

- key contacts for emergency responders, humanitarian agencies, government ministries (sector leads/specialists) and a list of who is responsible for what services;
- the rights and entitlements of people in the event of a disaster;
- availability and accessibility of shelters and what people should take to a shelter in the event of a disaster;
- safety messages, hygiene and health messages;
- messages about how to access clean water.
- Information about the protection of communications equipment in disaster should be provided, such as the need for generators and batteries to be strategically positioned to avoid flooding and the use of cloud technology amongst actors to protect important information. Specific groups within the community should be prepared in advance and informed of key messages. It should be included in the school curriculum, radio and TV shows, and disaster drills at schools (current earthquake orientated only). During an emergency a wide range of channels should be used to ensure inclusivity such as; radio and TV, and through Facebook, WhatsApp, Text/Text Blasts.

5.3 Conclusions on the role of the CCE working group

The wide participation and involvement of actors has allowed CCE to be integrated more widely within the response and has been critical for the sharing, discussing and responding directly to community feedback. The validation of messages, joint messaging and development of FAQ has been said to have improved the quality and targeting of messages, collaboration has improved the coordination and consistency of communications. Standardised approaches are now in place. In the absence of H2H, the role of the working group in information collection and sharing will become ever more critical.

5.4 Conclusions for humanitarian organisations

Humanitarian staff have become more aware of their role in CCE and the breadth of potential activities. Capacity for CCE has increased but is still limited by staff capacity and funding. CCE is beginning to extend into broader aspects of CCE and accountability, with

Recommendations to the CCE working group

The CCE working group should remain a key part of the coordination system. It should consider expanding its membership and linkages, including to the media association and Ham radio associations. CDAC members should commit to its support its leadership and assist current handover.

- to lobby for the inclusion of EEC in preparedness plans and emergency telecoms;
- facilitate making information more accessible to communities, to the media and the wider diaspora by establishing a 'multi agency information platform', web or Facebook based.
- support planned training with media organisations and Ham operators to ensure that their role is strengthened more generally but specifically that CCE forms a key component. Capacity building and training support in CCE should continue for existing and new staff;
- continue to reach out to potential CCE partners, potential new network members and champions including the new arrivals such as the World Bank and Habitat for Humanity;
- A local counterpart should be sought to work alongside the lead agency and ensure longer-term continuity and to support localisation for future handover.

an increasing focus being made on collecting, discussing and responding to feedback with programmes. Meaningful two-way communication with communities requires dedicated staff and time in communities in order to listen and respond to feedback. There was an appetite to be able to do more and there is now momentum to continue the activities of the Working Group, although there is still some reluctance to lead it. There are several champions of CCE that have emerged, which can play an important role in progressing recommendations.

Recommendations for humanitarian organisations

The Greater clarity is required concerning agencies' CCE commitments and technical support from within agencies and regional offices is required to support its full integration into future responses. CCE activities should be included within all initial project proposals. Ideally, staff should be recruited from within the local communities around the island, and/or with local communities' members playing a role in collection of information, to allow more continuous communication. Organisations need to proactively look for opportunities for localisation and develop broader local partnerships and support local entities, such as local media, individual journalists, the Ham and the media association.

CDAC member organisations must ensure staff and managers are aware of their organisational CCE commitments and encouraged to support CCE activities and participate in coordination.

CCE questions should be integrated into assessment surveys and monitoring.

Websites and social media pages should be established and regularly updated, and media partnerships considered for their management. In disaster a 'daily multimedia feed', or situational reports should be uploaded on Facebook, Twitter and a website. Creative solutions are required to overcome emergency communication challenges and lessons learnt from agencies activities elsewhere. Bicycles with loud speakers, or loud speakers and PA systems in public buildings could be prepositioned to play pre-recorded audio information.

5.5 Conclusions for media organisations

The media has a greater awareness of its potential role in broader CCE in disaster and an appetite for greater involvement. There was limited understanding of each other's roles and modes of operation initially, and individuals have found the meetings and events facilitated by CDAC, useful in creating linkages and fostering great understanding. Media organisations are clearly articulating capacity gaps and training needs, and actively seeking support for these activities. A sophisticated use is being made of social media by citizen journalists to include humanitarian information and cover activities by agencies. The media Association is keen to play a stronger role in creating links to humanitarian and communications with communities.

5.6 Conclusions for the Radio Ham Association

The Ham radio was considered to be a crucial form of emergency communications and there is a growing network of committed volunteers. There has been strong collaboration with the CCE Working Group. The association can play a key role in identifying entry points to two-way emergency communications in communities, and inform national and international actors of community needs, based on their access on the ground. Strong linkages must be developed with media and humanitarian organisations, and joint information sharing platforms/Facebook pages developed.

Recommendations for media organisations

The media should focus on ensuring the right questions are asked of government and humanitarian providers and that gaps in information are identified and filled. They should proactively suggest opportunities for collaboration with humanitarian organisations and developing joint platforms for CCE. A series of humanitarian stories on community's perspectives on recovery and preparedness should be undertaken and funding encouraged through agency project budgets. Information and pre-recorded shows should be developed in advance and positioned in communities, for uploading by Ham operators. Regular lunches, meetings, and events with humanitarian staff should be considered.

Regional partnerships with Guadeloupe and Antigua should be strengthened to ensure information can be broadcasted when local systems are down. Strategic relationships should be developed with the Ham association to better understand the technology and tools for patching information via Ham radios.

The media association should be supported and refreshed in order to facilitate sharing of stories between the media and communities. CDAC have an opportunity to continue to work with media organisations remotely to support the development of CCE material and stories. They could disseminate the recommendations of the learning review, for example, and disseminate lessons learnt from other countries.

Recommendations for the Radio Ham Association

Ensure CCE is included in all training of community operators and that the most appropriate sites should be determined for equipment to be housed to ensure greatest access by community. Establish systems for the use of Ham radio outside of disaster for CCE (given need for sets to be continually used and operator practice) and identify opportunities for collaboration with GT on collection of community views. Operators and media training in passing information from digital to analogue, from radio onto Facebook and website. Suitable platforms or Facebook pages should be established for sharing of community CCE information. The Ham association should continue to work closely with the CCE working group and lobby for 'community first use' use of the sets. Opportunities for future collaborations with CDAC and learning should be sought, including case studies on use of Ham radio for CCE and monitor of the use of the sets that CDAC provided

5.7 Conclusions for the government

The Government is an active participant of the various sector and CCE working groups, developing and improving information provision throughout the response. There is evidence of responsiveness and adaptation of activities based on feedback, but there is a need for greater information provision to communities on recovery and preparedness plans, and on responding to and addressing issues of concern.

Recommendations for the government

The government's participation within the CCE Working Group should be continued and their potential role in longer term leadership supported. Opportunities for collaboration in the collection of feedback through community meetings, discussion of feedback and its resolution should continue to be sought. Further streamlining and collaboration on issues including hotlines should be promoted among actors. Government staff at field level should continue to act as gatekeepers for humanitarian actors, and their work in facilitating CCE should be supported through the provision of timely and accurate information.

Section 6: Conclusions and recommendations to CDAC and H2H

6.1 Conclusions: H2H and CDAC approaches

The H2H agencies funded by UKAID provided a team of experts with a diverse set of capacities to collaborate in the hurricane response. Information from the different H2H agencies was considered to have filled an important gap in assessment data which was urgently needed to assist in guiding the response and considered very valuable to all actors. The evidence it provided proved to be a powerful tool for agencies to use to lobby for more dedicated resources for CCE activities and to promote changes to policies and government recovery practice. The GT, ACAPs surveys, and IRIN information were good entry points for CDAC to build on, and it played an effective role in disseminating it more widely, and in supporting organisations in using it to strengthen the relevance of their assistance. The CCE Working Group and sector meetings proved to be effective platforms for information generated by H2H agencies to be shared, discussed and responded to.

It was suggested that more support could have been provided to disseminate information via an accessible and creative platform, and there was felt to be greater scope for training local media; BBC Media Action or IRIN could have assisted in this. A collaborative platform, on social media or on a webpage for the response could have been established, as has been the practice in other countries. The timing of the activities and the funding of H2H agencies was out of sync, and greater synergy in this could have enhanced coordination and information sharing.

There was no awareness of CDAC or H2H early on in the response, even within the seven CDAC agencies that were present in the country. The limited capacities of agencies and low staff numbers, limited the ability of agencies to dedicate staff and funds to CCE and restricted the delivery of specific activities. In this context, CDAC played a key role in directly supporting agencies activities. During the response, champions of CCE began to emerge, including amongst the network members, and as a direct response to the work of CDAC and H2H.

At times the coordinators felt like 'floating clouds' as their roles were not anchored within CDAC agency programmes, which may have helped them in establishing their presence and given them greater profile. Their capacity could have been enhanced through great administrative and logistical support from network members. There needs to be stronger knowledge and understanding of CDAC, its role in a disaster and of agencies own commitments to the network. There was a lack of understanding about broader aspects of

Figure 17: The role of CDAC; briefing note to potential members

An organisation is eligible for full member if it is:

- an organisation whose core activities, or whose members core activities, work towards promoting and supporting the information and communication needs of people living in disaster prone areas or those affected by crisis.
- Members responsibilities include:
 - Chair and/or actively participate in CDAC Network Communities of Practice, Working Groups, and Task Teams;
 - Work in collaborative partnerships with other Full Member organisations;
 - Engage with the secretariat team on global and local policy issues as related to CDACs work;
 - Promote CDAC externally and fundraise for joint projects where there are synergies.

CCE amongst agency staff and commitments to CCE and AAP more generally, that could be addressed through better definition and articulation of CCE and a clearer articulation of its linkages with AAP. Responsibilities of member agencies are outlined in a CDAC briefing note - see figure 17.

Recommendations to the CDAC secretariat

The CDAC should play a greater role in encouraging members to promote its work among their staff and facilitate a better understanding of network members' commitments. CDAC should agree common definitions and ideally establish a minimum set of commitments for its members. This should include operationalisation of members' current responsibilities, and support to CDAC operationally in the field. Members commitments need to be further developed, be practical, actionable and achievable. They could include;

- active support for and participate in CDAC activities in a response;
- one member of staff should act as a focal point and have CCE within their ToR;
- a commitment to support (or lead), attend and promote the working of a CCE working group;
- the provision of dedicated funds for CCE activities, and budget lines within proposals;
- practical support to CDAC operational staff and promotion of the network and its work.

Recommendation to H2H

Operationalisation should be based on a thorough assessment of the areas of focus, and of in-country gaps, in order to determine which H2H partners are best placed to support the response. Potential local counterparts should be identified, along with opportunities and commitments of CDAC agencies to provide support to them in order to promote longer-term sustainability in CCE.

6.2 Conclusions on CDAC approach in Dominica and recommendations to the secretariat

CDACs approach in Dominica has been one of gentle encouragement and leading by example, with agencies encouraged to take 'baby steps' towards CCE. This was felt to be appropriate given the challenges on the ground, and the risk of overwhelming the limited staff capacity. Although at time agencies struggled to develop workable solutions for implementing CCE. CDAC provided critical practical support in developing messages, communication strategies and the collection and analysis of feedback.

Recommendation to CDAC Secretariat and in Dominica

CDAC should focus on both supporting existing CCE efforts by agencies and enhancing all aspects of CCE including a focus on accountability to affected people. More work is needed to promote all of these aspects of CCE, and CDAC could provide understanding and communication about the importance of both as part of its promotion of CCE to its members and within its toolbox at the country level.

The need to promote common CCE and CCE definitions

It was felt that CCE was a helpful term to use within the response, as it captures the need for community engagement, but it is suggested that a failure to define more clearly what is meant by CCE, and the use of inconsistent, loose terminology has led to confusion and detracted from the core accountability components of CCE. It has allowed agencies to 'cherry pick' components, rather than implementing wider CCE and has led to a series of standalone activities, without a clear articulation of how they collectively enhance accountability. There is a risk that CCE activities are seen as ends in themselves, rather than a means to promoting greater accountability.

Recommendation to CDAC Secretariat

Clearer and consistent definitions of CCE should be agreed to assist agencies in implementing the full scope of CCE, allowing better monitoring and articulation of deliverables. This would facilitate CDAC in presenting and explaining its focus in the response more clearly. CCE needs to be clearly linked to AAP and agencies own systems of accountability, monitoring and evaluation.

The importance of identifying a local counterpart

The failure to identify and train a local counterpart was considered to have been a missed opportunity in Dominica and raises questions about the sustainability and future of CDACs work in the country. A key commitment of the World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain that followed is the promotion of an enabling environment for a more locally led response.

Recommendation for CDAC Secretariat and in Dominica

In its humanitarian responses, CDAC should seek to identify and work alongside a local counterpart from partners such as the media, press and Ham associations. In the absence of an agreed counterpart CDAC should support the CCE working group in developing local partnerships, including with local journalists and media representatives. In Dominica CDAC should continue to seek to support the relationship that has been developed with the local Ham and press association, and with key individuals, such as the Information Officer. This could be continued through the commissioning of articles with the media, and partnership with the Ham association on monitoring use of sets for CCE and potential use in collection of feedback and surveying, possibility with GT.

The need to consider the timeframe for CDAC's engagement

All actors would have liked CDAC to have been operational on the ground for longer and to have played an active role in ensuring CCE was an integral part of preparedness and planning for any future disaster. CDAC could have extended its presence until June 2018, in order to support the preparation of preparedness plans, to input into the planned media training, and to follow up on the training of Ham operators and installation of the equipment they have provided.

Recommendation for CDAC Secretariat and in Dominica

The timing of CDAC's operationalisation needs to be carefully considered in future responses, along with CDACs specific role in preparedness and the longer-term sustainability of its work. Following its departure from Dominica, CDAC should ensure CCE is a focus of planned media training, and preparedness planning through continued linkages to network members and the CCE working group. Specifically, it should consider facilitating a workshop on preparedness once the government plans are presented, it should monitor the training of Ham radio operators and installation of equipment.

The importance of promoting innovative Partnerships

Partnerships with Erikson Response, Google, TSF, WFP and the ETC cluster were vital in establishing communication after the hurricane. Establishment of emergency communication is a key step in CCE, as is the opportunity for greater assess for affected people.

Recommendation for CDAC Secretariat

CDAC should continue to strengthen its relationships with providers of emergency telecoms and the ETC globally, with a focus on facilitate a greater understanding of the specific needs of communities for communication after disaster. CDAC should play a key role in lobbying for access for affected people to emergency telecoms, including hotspots and mobile credit and its potential role in broader CCE.

The value of harnessing the potential of Diaspora

The role of the diaspora has been critical in humanitarian information provision and communication with affected people since the hurricane. Humanitarian providers should consider how they can support the maintenance of these critical social networks and more effectively provide them with appropriate and useful information that they can share.

Recommendation for CDAC Secretariat and in Dominica

Humanitarian organisations should lobby for the provision of access to communications devices such as ham radio equipment, cell phones, mobile credit, WIFI connections and hotspots to help communities stay in contact and communicate with diaspora during disaster. They should develop appropriate platforms for sharing up to date, simplified, language appropriate (no jargon) and locally specific and relevant humanitarian information and learn from collaborative platforms in other context such as Cox Bazar, the Philippines and current work in Fiji and Vanuatu.

Further research is needed to better understand the role of diaspora in communications and information provision during disaster and recovery, and how their role can be supported.

Recommendation for CDAC Secretariat and in Dominica

CDAC should develop its understanding of the potential role of the diaspora in CCE, through undertaking a series of case studies. H2H agencies should support the development of a 'multi agency information sharing platform' in a disaster, which is accessible to communities and diaspora for greater humanitarian information sharing.

The importance of continuing to support the media

H2H should develop their role in supporting the media and ensuring their potential role in CCE is understood and supported at the local level. Greater strategic engagement is needed and there are potential options to work with associations which should be explored. There is a reluctance amongst humanitarian actors to engage directly with media representatives and to harness the full potential of social media. CDAC could play a key role in promoting innovative practice and the use of social media, such as by citizen journalists.

Recommendations for CDAC Secretariat and in Dominica

At the outset of a response, CDAC should seek to strengthen understanding between the media and humanitarian organisations about each other's roles and identify opportunities for collaboration, modes of operations and platforms for engagement. Specifically, it should support a greater understanding of the potential role of social media and citizen journalism amongst agencies, through developing a series of case studies and articles. For greater influence there is a need to engage more strategically with media house owners, editors who often control content and in supporting press associations. In Dominica the development of collaborative material, platforms and use of informal meetings and events could be encouraged, as should leading by example and directly commissioning and working with journalists.

6.3 Looking to the future: Recommendations for a CDAC operational model

The role of CDAC in Dominica evolved from what was initially envisaged, that of the provision of coordination and technical support, to a more operational role, with activities being implemented directly. Interviews suggest this was as a result of pressure from the donor and agencies themselves, as a result of lack of capacity amongst agencies and the limited scope of CCE activities that existed to coordinate. Agencies felt that CDAC could have been even more operational; they would have liked them to play a role in sending out messages

and stories to the media, directly supplementing the communications capacity of network members, and collecting community feedback and undertaking training.

Recommendation to CDAC secretariat

CDAC needs to position itself carefully to ensure that it achieves an appropriate balance between supporting agencies own CCE efforts and direct implementation; this balance will vary according to context and agencies' own capacities within a response. Different models should be considered depending on context. The starting point for CDAC deployments should be a thorough assessment to determine the best model to adopt and which H2H partners are best placed to fulfil specific roles.

Assessment

The initial assessment and scoping mission should include identification of a potential local counterpart and opportunities for localisation and sustainable impact. Opportunities longer term support to partners and for future preparedness should be identified. Key network members should be identified along with offers of on the ground support (including financial, logistical and administrative). The areas of focus of operationalisation should be defined in order to inform the selection of the most appropriate H2H agencies, for example if support is needed to the media consider working with IRIN and BBC Media Action.

Funding and support

It has been suggested by some network members that they could fund a percentage of the CDAC operational costs for a period of time, to allow it to play a direct implementation role to complement work undertaken by member agencies. The post could be funded 25% by one members for example. Support could be in-kind, such as the use of desk space and meeting space, administrative support and assistant with banking cash transfers.

Two operational models

There is scope for CDAC to develop a model which provides a menu of operational roles which has a clearer relationship with network partners in country. There should be a clearer articulation of expectations of network members when CDAC becomes operational which includes support commitments. This could take the form of a 'pre-emergency agreement' from network members prior to a response and could even outline budget lines to support CDAC services. Technical support could be drawn from the CDAC expert pool depending on the skills and competencies required.

Two models are proposed:

- **Model 1:** Small response, with no or limited in-country CCE capacity and staff. CDAC focus on direct support and leadership; direct implementation of CCE activities, led by example on information sharing and communications with communities, leading a CCE working group, collection and analysis of community feedback and support to the establishment feedback mechanism, capacity building and handover to a local counterpart.
- **Model 2:** larger response with in-country CCE capacity and dedicated staff, CDAC focus on coordination; provision of support to leadership and coordination of a CCE working group and dedicated staff in CCE activities, strategic leadership, representation of community voices, technical support to sectors, monitoring and reporting, identifying a local counterpart for sustainability.

Acronyms

AAP Accountability to Affected People
ACAPS Assessment Capacities Project
CCE Communications and Community Engagement
CDAC Communication with Disaster Affected Communities network
CDEMA Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
CHS Core Humanitarian Standards
DARCI The Hurricane Maria Dominica Amateur Radio Communications
DDO District Development Officers
DMT Disaster Management Committees Development Officers
EOC Emergency Operations Centre
ETC Emergency Telecoms Communications
GT Ground Truth
IRIN Integrated Regional Information Network
MoH Ministry of Health
Mol Ministry of Information
MSSCDGA Ministry of Social Services, Community Development and Gender Affairs
ODM Office of Disaster Management
Parl reps Parliamentary Representative
TSF Telecoms San Frontiers
VC Village Councils
WB World Bank



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communicating with disaster affected communities

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