

Communication and community engagement in the Libya floods response

A round-up of social media listening,
media analytics and resources for practitioners

February 2024



On 11 September 2023, Storm Daniel hit the northeastern coast of Libya, with the ensuing floods causing catastrophic destruction and loss of life.¹ In a crisis of this magnitude, actionable information and continuous dialogue that helps people make crucial decisions, access aid and cope with challenging realities can make a life-changing difference. However, coordination and access challenges continue to impede two-way communication between affected people and aid providers.² The lack of transparency about aid delivery and the active production of mis- and disinformation have contributed to negative perceptions and confusion about the role of aid agencies.

As aid actors transition to an early recovery response, prioritising clear communication with communities will be crucial. This bulletin provides insights from social media listening, media analytics and relevant guidance to support ongoing communication and community engagement efforts.

1 OCHA (2023) [Libya situation reports](#).

2 CDAC Network (2023) [Urgent call to response leadership: advance communication and dialogue in Libya](#), 13 October.

1. Pre-existing community health networks have enabled rapid risk communication and community engagement

Strong community engagement pathways established during the COVID-19 response have been a key communication channel for the dissemination of awareness materials and training to promote positive health seeking behaviours in flood-affected areas, particularly for the prevention of water-borne diseases. Religious leaders in nearly 100 mosques helped disseminate key messages on methods of prevention to more than 10,000 people during Friday prayers. Schools, street-to-street sessions targeting labour workers, and other locations including gas stations, bakeries, barbershops and banks maximised the reach of the campaign.



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Read more: [Libya Humanitarian Situation Report No. 7](#) – UNICEF

What is the value of leveraging existing networks for effective communication and engagement?

- **Rapid information dissemination and resource mobilisation:** Existing networks have established communication channels that meet people where they are listening, allowing for faster and more efficient information sharing. It also saves time and resources needed to establish a new system.
- **Cultural sensitivity and local knowledge:** Established networks often have a deep understanding of local cultures, preferences and languages. This knowledge is essential for culturally appropriate communication.
- **Trust and credibility:** Pre-existing relationships built within communities foster trust and credibility. When communication comes from familiar and trusted sources, people are more likely to listen and actively participate.
- **Community engagement:** Using familiar and trusted networks encourages active community involvement in decision-making processes and provision of feedback.
- **Increased sustainability:** Building on existing networks contributes to long-term community resilience.



ALI NUR SALAAD/IMS-RADIO ERGO

Read more: [The role of collective platforms, services and tools to support communication and community engagement in humanitarian action](#) – CDAC Network (in Arabic and English)

2. Limited information-sharing is contributing to confusion and negative attitudes towards international humanitarian actors

In the immediate aftermath of the flooding, there was a **high demand for timely information on healthcare, food availability and water**. In past disasters, **over one-quarter of affected populations in Libya were unaware of the availability of humanitarian assistance**, suggesting accessible information remains a chronic gap. Ineffective or limited information sharing can contribute to an erosion of trust and negative perceptions of a response. **Social media monitoring conducted by Insecurity Insight in November 2023** indicates that many Libyans view the international humanitarian community as being indifferent to the suffering of Libyan people with only a few highly visible local NGOs being favourably received.

What is social media monitoring?

Social media monitoring tries to understand how the aid sector is perceived among social media users. It involves 'listening' to conversations about aid programmes as they are discussed in social media posts or comments on mainstream newspaper articles. Social media monitoring classifies views and opinions by negative or positive sentiment towards the aid sector. It can use quantitative and qualitative approaches to understand the expressed opinions and beliefs.

For more analysis on Libya, see:

Social media monitoring and aid in the context of the Libyan flooding disaster & Libya's reconstruction efforts: understanding public perceptions through social media monitoring – Insecurity Insight

How can communication help build trust?

Trust is built and nurtured when people can access clear information and feel heard through ongoing dialogue. Limited information sharing can contribute to an erosion of trust and confidence in a response, as well as the spread of misinformation and harmful rumours, which could harm service delivery and impact future collaborations with communities. Sound communication and engagement also enables communities to participate in decision-making, and seeing how their input is being used creates further trust in the process.

Humanitarian actors engaging with communities should remember to:

- Review and understand the communication channels that affected people use and trust. Engage with the full spectrum of these channels, including public and mass media and non-digital forms of public information, with the right languages and formats.
- Work with diverse and trusted actors to share information, including community influencers, religious leaders, diaspora organisations and other community-based networks to disseminate messages widely including hard-to-reach communities.
- Continuously engage with and support media actors to build resilient communication and engagement strategies.

Read more: How-to guide on collective communication and community engagement in humanitarian action – CDAC Network (in Arabic, English and six other languages)

3. Media is an underutilised resource in two-way dialogue between citizens and decision-makers

Decades of authoritarian rule and ongoing insecurity have curtailed civil and media freedoms, and the media remains an underutilised resource for communicating with communities. The Libya Media Landscape Guide dashboard indicates that 84% of citizens believe the media should provide a platform for the public to communicate their concerns and needs, suggesting demand for greater two-way dialogue between citizens and decision-makers.

Social media in particular could represent a vital channel for two-way communication between citizens and aid actors, with approximately 95% of the population reporting access to a smart phone, whilst 86% indicate that they never access print media, over half never accessing radio and one-quarter never accessing TV. An estimated 88% of online content related to the humanitarian crisis is already communicated on social media platforms.



ICRC/MOHAMMED ABDIKARIM

Explore the dashboard here: [Libya Media Landscape Guide](#) – BBC Media Action (in English)

What is the role of media actors in humanitarian response and recovery?

Media actors can enable effective humanitarian responses. They have a unique and critical understanding of which channels are used and trusted by whom, and can rapidly reach millions of people and hard-to-reach areas with life-saving information and two-way communication in a way that humanitarian responders may struggle to in an emergency context. Media actors can also expose sensitive issues like sexual abuse and misconduct within a response, acting as an important feedback mechanism. The presence of independent media and resilient information ecosystems also serves as a protective shield for civic spaces and human rights.



BBC MEDIA ACTION

Read more:

[Lifeline production manual for journalists](#) – BBC Media Action (in Arabic and English)

[Guide for humanitarian on working with media](#) – BBC Media Action (in Arabic and English)



Key resources and trainings for strengthened communication and engagement

Resources

- [لتواصل هو المساعدة \(Two-way communication is aid\)](#) – CDAC Network (in Arabic)
- [How-to guide on collective communication and community engagement in humanitarian action](#) – CDAC Network (in Arabic, English and six other languages)
- [Rumour has it: a practice guide for working with rumours](#) – CDAC Network (in Arabic and English)
- [Guide to community engagement and accountability](#) – IFRC and ICRC (in Arabic, English and seven other languages)
- [The role of collective platforms, services and tools to support communication and community engagement in humanitarian action](#) – CDAC Network (in Arabic and English)
- [Libya media landscape guide](#) – BBC Media Action (in English)
- [Lifeline production manual for journalists](#) – BBC Media Action (in Arabic and English)
- [Guide for humanitarians on working with media](#) – BBC Media Action (in Arabic and English)
- [Capacity decision framework for CCE/AAP](#) – CDAC Network (in English)
- [Information management guidance for CCE/AAP](#) – CDAC Network (in English)
- [Glossary of 208 key PSEA terms](#) – CLEAR Global (in Arabic, English and 27 other languages)

Training

- **Upcoming:** RedR is running four training workshops on communication and community engagement in early 2024. Training is free and targeted towards aid actors working on the flood response. [Register here](#)
- **CDAC Communication is Aid training: A free, self-guided and introductory course** (in English) on how communication and community engagement can enhance humanitarian and development work



CDAC is a network of more than 35 of the largest humanitarian, media development and social innovation actors – including UN agencies, RCRC, NGOs, media and communications actors – working together to shift the dial on humanitarian and development decision-making – moving from global to local.

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CDAC Network (2024) ‘Communication and community engagement in the Libya flood response: a round-up of social media listening, media analytics and resources for practitioners’ (www.cdacnetwork.org/policy-briefs/communication-and-community-engagement-in-the-libya-flood-response).

Cover photo: Derna, Libya, September 2023. Credit: SN/ICRC