



CAPABILITY STATEMENT

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Established in 1999, BBC Media Action is the international development organisation of the BBC. We reach more than 100 million people each year, working with creative communication and trusted media to achieve positive change. We ensure people have access to information they can trust, bridge divides and challenge prejudice. We enable people to have their say, understand their rights and take action to transform their lives. Working with mass media, interpersonal communication and community mobilisation, we achieve impact at scale across our focus areas of governance and rights, health, resilience, humanitarian response and gender equality. We have expertise in fragile, conflict-affected societies, and post-disaster environments where political, security, geographic or other factors mean that media is one of the few options available to reach and engage marginalised groups.



We work in 23 countries

Asia

Afghanistan
Bangladesh
Cambodia
India
Indonesia
Myanmar
Nepal
Solomon Islands

Africa

Ethiopia
Kenya
Nigeria
Sierra Leone
Somalia
South Sudan
Tanzania
Zambia

Middle East and North Africa

Algeria
Libya
Tunisia

Europe and Caucasus

Armenia
Georgia
Moldova
Ukraine

The Importance of Media and Communication During a Crisis

BBC Media Action has been supporting humanitarian communication initiatives since 2001. Through systematic research across our programmes, we have found that media and communication in a crisis can:

Provide life-saving information about:

- ▶ **Services** available: medicine, shelter, food, water and family reunification
- ▶ **“Self-help”**: what to do in the absence of services
- ▶ How to distinguish between **rumour and fact**

Provide emotional support through:

- ▶ Psychological first aid and addressing the universal need for **comfort and reassurance** in crisis
- ▶ **Connecting people** and helping them to feel part of a community

Amplify the voices of people affected, enabling them to:

- ▶ **Share their stories and their solutions**
- ▶ Act as **positive role models** for coping
- ▶ Express their needs and preferences, and have **a say in delivery of aid**
- ▶ **Hold decision-makers to account** and highlight what needs to be improved

Strengthen aid efforts, providing a platform to:

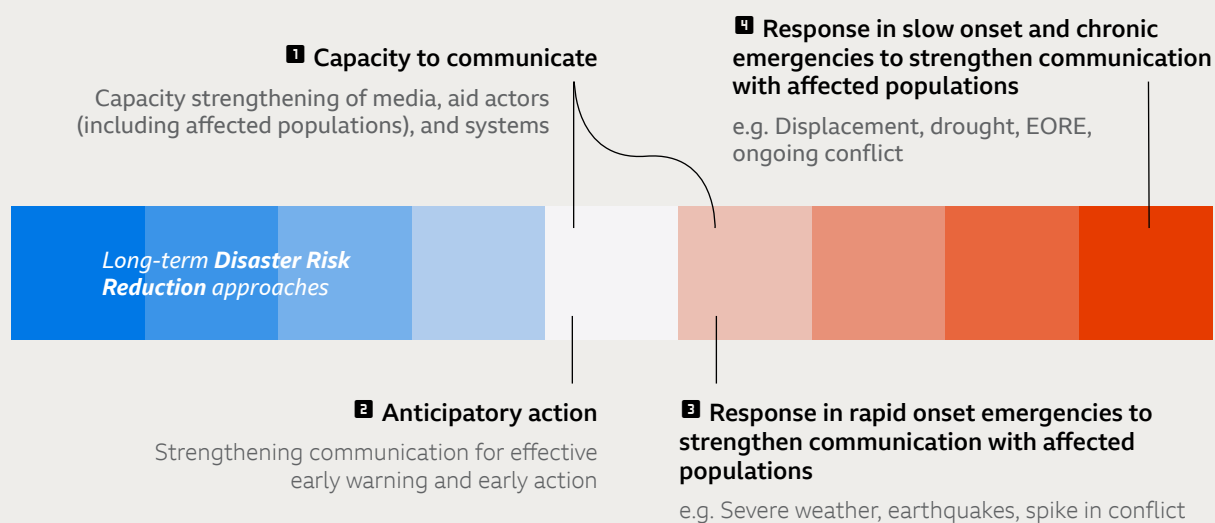
- ▶ Elicit the emerging and evolving **needs and opinions** of people affected, to inform how relief is best delivered and thereby support accountability to affected populations (AAP)
- ▶ Deliver timely, factual and useful humanitarian information from expert sources to millions of people at once, sidestepping gatekeepers and **avoiding distortion** that may occur via word of mouth
- ▶ **Increase reach**, including to people who cannot be accessed by traditional services and/or when physical access is obstructed
- ▶ Enhance impact, by **building understanding of how goods and services can be used** and **encouraging coordination** between humanitarian actors



We respond **quickly**, as we did in Nepal when we were on air immediately after the Gorkha earthquake, **comprehensively**, as we have done over several years through our multi-stranded response to the displacement of Rohingya people in Bangladesh, and **creatively**, through communication content that is locally relevant, practical, engaging and delivered in languages that affected communities speak and through channels and intermediaries that they trust. Throughout our work, we place strong emphasis on building relationships between media and humanitarian responders, enabling them to work together more effectively to improve communities' access to relevant and timely information they can use.

We leverage our wider portfolio to address critical drivers of humanitarian need, particularly climate change and conflict. We work across a continuum, from preparedness, through early warning and anticipatory action, to rapid onset and chronic emergencies.

Humanitarian Response: When we intervene and what we deliver



How we do it: Four Mutually Reinforcing Activity Sets



Research

Local researchers seek to understand audiences' **access to information and feedback channels, their information and communication needs, barriers and influencers**. This works alongside gender and power analysis to inform our programming. Programmes are monitored and evaluated to ensure they are conflict sensitive, remain relevant and have maximum impact.



Outreach: Community Mobilisation and Interpersonal Communication

Following a crisis, many people have limited or no access to media due to their location, circumstance, gender or age. We use a range of **outreach activities**, such as discussion groups, live recordings or community events to engage with excluded audiences.

We also use **face-to-face and online communication strategies** to stimulate the household and community level discussion that is critical to empowering populations to communicate their needs and hold humanitarian stakeholders to account.



Capacity Strengthening and Sector Support

We strengthen the ability of local and national media organisations and humanitarian actors to work with media and communication to meet the needs of people affected by crisis. This includes facilitating **stronger collaboration between the media and humanitarian sectors**, which is vital for sustainability.



Production and Dissemination of Media and Communication Content

Creative, informative and engaging communication outputs are at the heart of our work. We use **TV, radio, online and mobile platforms** and produce a range of factual and entertainment formats (such as dramas, magazine shows, discussions and spots) to engage with audiences on the platforms most relevant to them.

We **combine these platforms and formats** to achieve greatest regular reach, engagement and impact.



Communication as Aid

We have worked with local media partners and humanitarian actors all over the world to deliver “Lifeline” programmes and other humanitarian communication, including in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Guinea, Haiti, India, Iraq, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Palestinian Territories, the Sahel, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Ukraine. Lifeline communication can take different forms ranging from public service announcements (PSAs) and bulletins, to magazine programmes and phone-ins for radio or TV, to drama and short films as well as creative content and toolkits for use during face-to-face outreach activities or through existing community spaces. This method is particularly useful in camp settings (where traditional media may not be used or accessible) and complements the delivery of other humanitarian services.

After [synthesising research](#) across humanitarian emergencies, we found that our communication content assisted listeners’ survival and recovery by:

Increasing knowledge and understanding

We have produced lifeline radio programming in Afghanistan since the regime change, with focus on food security, broadcasting on 40 local radio stations and on the BBC Afghan Service, which reaches 87% of radio listeners across the country. Our programmes have addressed a variety of topics, from providing information on food and cash distributions, to effective food storage systems to prevent waste and tips for nutritious meals made with locally available products. Particularly vulnerable groups, including IDPs, reported learning how to prepare nutritious food with very limited resources. Also in Afghanistan, our radio and TV content focused on explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) reached approximately 30% of adults across the country, providing potentially life-saving information on how to identify and mitigate the risks of landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW). Among audience members in our research panel, 57% demonstrated increased knowledge about safe and unsafe practices and 66% demonstrated an increase in their ability to identify signs of potential explosive ordnance (EO) and ERW.

Providing psychosocial support

People affected by the Gorkha earthquake identified psychosocial support as a key need in their recovery. Listeners felt our radio programme *Milijuli Nepali* (Together Nepal) contributed to a sense that they could do something to improve their situation. Reasons included the programme name, its practical and accessible information, its focus on solutions, and its inspiring stories of others affected by the earthquake who had overcome problems. In Bangladesh, Rohingya communities living in camps reported that listening to audio programmes created by BBC Media Action made them feel happier, because they heard Rohingya voices and songs, and helped to reduce their pain. We are currently sharing a popular drama series, *Aa'rar Kissa* (Our Story), through 150 listening groups across the camps. Storylines include a strong focus on mental health – role modelling what people can do to improve their psychological wellbeing, how to seek help when needed, and ways to support others showing symptoms of mental health issues.

Prompting discussion

Our research shows that people are more likely to take action if they discuss our programmes with others. In Afghanistan, encouraging discussion about safe behaviour was a key aim of our EORE programming. The evaluation found that 75% of audience members had discussed explosive ordnance with others after listening to the programme, and the more episodes participants were exposed to, the more likely they were to have those discussions with family members and neighbours. Among the Rohingya refugee community in Bangladesh, listeners to our Lifeline programmes *Begunnor Lai* (For Everyone) and *Shishur Hashi* (Children's Smile) said they shared what they had learned with their family members and neighbours, especially on hygiene, and encouraged them to take action. Evaluation of our *Aa'rar Kissa* drama found that it had stimulated discussion amongst listeners on intimate partner violence.

Inspiring positive action

Audiences consistently give examples of action taken as a result of our programmes. In our Rohingya response, this has included key health behaviours such as handwashing, treatment of diarrhoea and pregnancy care. We were actively involved in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in humanitarian settings. For example, 66% of those regularly reached by our national radio programme in Somalia mentioned handwashing with soap and water as a step they took to prevent COVID-19, compared to 53% of those not regularly reached. Rohingya community members in Bangladesh were prompted to take action to prepare for the cyclone season as a result of the communication materials produced through our project, and audiences of *Aa'rar Kissa* reported learning the importance of discussion to reduce intimate partner violence.



Supporting Improved Community Engagement and Accountability within Humanitarian Responses

We conduct research with communities affected by crisis and share our insights into people's needs and priorities with aid agencies so they can engage with communities more effectively, improve their delivery and hold themselves to account. Since the beginning of the Rohingya refugee crisis in 2017, we have been collating community feedback from humanitarian partners and carrying out regular research in camps in Bangladesh to understand people's needs and priorities. We share our insights with humanitarian partners through regular bulletins and **short research reports**, to ensure communities' perspectives are being heard and to help humanitarian partners understand how best to pitch their communication. In Afghanistan, we conducted monthly research in six provinces to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and shared the insights through the **COVID-19** and Community Voice (CCV) publication. Local journalists said the newsletters were useful sources of information on what prevention measures community members were taking, attitudes and rumours around COVID-19 vaccines, and people's concerns about future waves. Humanitarian workers described the bulletin as the *"eyes and ears of the risk communication group"*, and appreciated that it was based on work by local researchers, so they could be sure there were no language or cultural barriers in the interpretation of data. Despite the challenging context since the Taliban returned to power, we have conducted similar research on broader health needs across 10 provinces, feeding insights on people's changing needs and concerns both into our own health lifeline programming as well through a **Community Voice** bulletin for the wider humanitarian community.

BBC Media Action contributes to country-level **humanitarian coordination** and seeks to foster collaboration between aid agencies to streamline communication with affected populations. For instance, in Bangladesh, we developed a wide range of audio communication products and visual materials to be used by aid agencies working with Rohingya refugee communities, particularly through listening groups. These outputs provided consistent content on highly complex topics including registration, repatriation, early marriage, vaccination campaigns and cyclone preparedness. Humanitarian practitioners reported that this helped to ensure communication to communities was consistent across camps and agencies, and lessened the risk of misinformation being shared. Evaluations consistently found that Rohingya audiences appreciated the timeliness of the content and that it was made specifically to meet their needs and represent their lives in the camps.

BBC Media Action is also active in supporting **increased accountability** within aid responses. As part of a consortium with other humanitarian communication partners, BBC Media Action led the implementation of the *'Common Service for Community Engagement and Accountability for the Rohingya Refugee Response'* in Bangladesh. Alongside the communication activities previously outlined, the Common Service also included strategies specifically focused on strengthening humanitarian agencies' accountability. This included a **collective feedback analysis service**, which collated and analysed data from agencies' feedback databases. These data sources informed the production of a fortnightly [What Matters?](#) bulletin, which practitioners reported highlighted new issues that agencies had not identified through their own feedback mechanisms.

The Common Service also provided bespoke accountability training, which led to humanitarian practitioners being more sensitive and responsive to Rohingya communities' feedback than previously. As one practitioner reported, *"Now, we see more and more staff understanding why we collect feedback at the household level – the training helped us bring in the human aspect and get staff to think, 'If it was me – what would I want?'"*. Practitioners also credited training and bespoke support on accountability with helping their organisations set up and maintain effective complaints and feedback mechanisms. Overall, evaluation findings suggest that by continually drawing attention to community priorities and concerns amongst humanitarian practitioners as well as the wider humanitarian sector and clusters, the Common Service contributed to improving accountability within the overall aid response to the Rohingya refugee crisis.

Strengthening Local Actors to Communicate in Emergencies

BBC Media Action's '**Lifeline Training**' is an [established methodology](#) for building capacity and relationships among local media practitioners, aid workers and government representatives to understand, plan and put into practice ways they can work together and communicate with affected populations more effectively during crises. We have trained more than 1,000 practitioners to date in 28 countries from a range of organisations including UN agencies, INGOs, local NGOs and government actors. Participants have leveraged these relationships in crisis situations, collaborating to ensure the communication of vital, accurate information to the people who needed it. We delivered **scenario-based training** with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) for national Red Cross Societies and local media across seven countries in Africa and Asia to increase their capacity to communicate with affected communities during and after public health emergencies. Participants reported that the training helped them to determine which content and information is useful to communities in a crisis and strengthened relationships between media and humanitarian actors, leading to improved access to information for communities.

In Ukraine, we have provided **mentoring, training and production grants** for three independent media outlets (Hromadske Radio, Donetsk Institute for Information and Zaborona) to produce humanitarian content. Training has addressed how to engage with humanitarian actors in ways that build trust and how to produce content that offers practical, actionable information to help audiences make decisions. We have sought to **build bridges between the humanitarian response in Ukraine and local media partners**, including regional teams of the national public broadcaster, Suspilne. Local journalists often do not understand the humanitarian aid system and coordination mechanisms and at times can be actively excluded from them for fear they will report negatively on relief efforts. BBC Media Action has held lifeline sessions that trained media partners alongside local and international humanitarian agencies, building links that resulted in collaboration on production of a broad range of lifeline content covering EORE, psychosocial support and evacuation processes for IDPs.



We are also leading a new global initiative to develop and disseminate a range of global and contextualised tools and learning to support local and national humanitarian actors and media to embed effective communication and participation practices into their humanitarian strategies. This pilot project is being tested in three very different contexts – Somalia, Nigeria and Ukraine – and involves conducting research into community needs and media preferences, connecting local humanitarian and media stakeholders and providing communication training. We are also supporting local actors to integrate more effectively within wider aid accountability and community engagement mechanisms, which often use jargon and structures which are inaccessible to local actors.

Key Differentiators

The following factors are key to our success in achieving scale, sustainability and impact:

Trust

Effective humanitarian communication must come from a **credible source**. In addition to BBC Media Action's close links with the BBC, we establish relationships with trusted local media partners, develop or leverage trusted programme brands and involve respected figures from within communities in our work.

Reach and engagement

We **reach millions** of people with our humanitarian programming, which is critical for cost-effectiveness. Our comprehensive media and communication projects are skilfully designed to ensure that we **engage people regularly** over time and use varied formats and platforms to inform, inspire and connect people in different ways.

Understanding audiences

Research is vital to understand people, their communities and the changing humanitarian context. Our local research teams use **segmentation** to understand specific audiences' needs, barriers and motivators and their key **influencers** – the people who can enable or hinder the uptake of positive behaviours and practices by our target groups. We also pay close attention to understanding the role of social norms and the perspectives of those who are particularly vulnerable and hard to reach in humanitarian crises.

Working in partnership to enable effective community engagement and accountability to affected populations

We work with local and national media as well as with governments, CSOs and humanitarian agencies. This enables our work to **go beyond mass media**, reaching those without media access and sparking household, community and society-wide discussion. We work with technical experts and academics to support the quality of our programmes and the rigour of our research. We provide **media and community spaces for citizens to participate in building a humanitarian system that meets their needs** and support aid agencies to deliver on accountability to affected populations (AAP).

Beyond messaging

We constantly seek innovative responses to complex issues, going beyond message-based approaches. Our evidence shows that, in addition to accurate information, it is also critical that **people discuss issues** with trusted others in order to increase positive action.

Creativity and high production values

We harness **talent** from local creative industries as well as from our other media partnerships and the wider BBC to develop content which attracts, entertains and inspires audiences.