

GUIDE FOR ESSENTIAL RESEARCH



To inform disaster risk
communication plans to support
early warning and early action



A companion to the Pocket Guide for planning disaster risk communication
September 2024

This guide was produced by BBC Media Action under the Risk Communication for Early Action (RiCA) project. The project ran from November 2023 to June 2024, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and in partnership with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).

By creating resources and forging connections among practitioners from across government, the media, technical backgrounds and civil society, RiCA aimed to increase the ability of actors to communicate about risk more effectively to support early warning and early action.

BBC Media Action is the international development charity of the BBC. It works with partners around the world to provide impartial, impactful, trustworthy media to people in need so that they can make informed choices to transform their lives. In a world of disinformation, distrust and division, we share the BBC's values, skills and experience to bring people together, and foster greater understanding and trust.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)
- World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)
- International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
- Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP) secretariat and members:
 - » Clear Global
 - » GSMA
 - » Practical Action
 - » UCL Warning Research Centre

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This practical guide aims to help you gather essential research data to underpin effective and relevant disaster risk communication plans to support early warning and early action. It is not designed to be completed in full, but rather to give a range of areas for investigation, depending on your needs.

It outlines key considerations, resources, approaches and sample questions to develop a deep understanding of target population groups, underlying societal problems and media environments in your planned operating context.

This contextualised and nuanced understanding will enable you to reach and engage target populations with relevant, timely, reliable and trusted information through their preferred channels. Crucially, it will also help you tailor your disaster risk communication plans to fill current gaps and serve as a vital form of public interest media.

This guide proposes a consistent process of conducting desk research, then carrying out or commissioning qualitative and/or quantitative primary research to fill any remaining knowledge gaps required to develop a comprehensive disaster risk communication plan.

Key research areas to consider include the following (based on Brofenbrenner's Socio-ecological Model and Barton and Grant's Human Ecology Model):

- **The natural and built environments**, Eg physical geography, climate, biodiversity, and human-built structures and areas.
- **Individuals**, including
 - **Demographics of at-risk groups**, Eg their age, gender, location, education, income, occupation, faith and language
 - **Vulnerable groups** – what are the specific characteristics and needs of population groups who face different levels of risks and vulnerability to natural hazards
 - **Risk knowledge and perceptions** – what people in your target population know, feel and do about disaster risks and disaster prevention and preparedness
 - **Personal interests and motivations** – what interests them in everyday life?
- **Interpersonal networks** – who people in your target population share information with, are influenced by and rely on in relation to disaster risk knowledge, attitudes and practices
- **Community networks** – key local structures, forums, decision-making processes and influencers
- **Organisations** – across the public and private sector
- **Societal beliefs and norms** – what influences people's perceptions and actions (or lack of) in relation to disaster risk
- **Governance, including disaster risk governance** – local decision-making processes and structures and issues related to social cohesion and conflict, and disaster risk structures

and systems in place

- **The media and communication ecosystem** – how various actors, processes and structures contribute to media content and how it is accessed and used
 - **Individuals: Media use and preferences** of target groups, eg the media platforms and content they access, and how this varies between demographic groups
 - **Interpersonal and communities: Focus on mis- and disinformation** – local sources of, and patterns in, accessing and sharing false or misleading content relating to disaster risks
 - **Organisations in media** – the diversity, viability, resilience, reach, quality and skillset of media actors in your target operating context
 - **Governance of media** - key considerations in terms of media independence, freedom and obligations in relation to disaster risk communication

INTRODUCTION

Natural hazards are becoming more intense and more frequent because of climate change.¹ At the same time, people are increasingly exposed to hazards because of population growth and increased urbanisation in hazard-prone areas. More than half the global population lives in cities – and 2.5 billion people are likely to join them by 2050.² Human exposure to hazards is compounded by poverty and inequality, which limits people's ability to invest in preparedness measures and resilient infrastructures.³

An important tool to improve disaster risk management and resilience are multi-hazard, people-centred early warning systems.⁴

Media and communication is critical for supporting disaster risk communication and early warning in several ways. This includes informing, engaging and inspiring timely action among people who are at risk of disasters, enabling dialogue between at-risk people and other stakeholders, and facilitating accountability of decision-makers to populations.

Using media to its full potential in disaster risk communication requires a clear and nuanced understanding of the local context – including which population groups are more vulnerable to disasters and where they receive information from; what they need to prevent and prepare for disasters, and how well the media are fulfilling their role.

To reach and engage people in ways that meet planned objectives, disaster risk communication plans must be rooted in research data. **This guide will help you to identify, conduct and analyse research data to ensure that your disaster communication plans are effective and impactful.**

By enabling you to reach and engage people with relevant, timely, reliable and trusted information, this guide aims to support early warning and early action. In turn, that will help at-risk people to prepare for, prevent and recover from disasters in timely and appropriate ways, which will ultimately help save lives.

¹IPCC, [Sixth assessment report](#)

²UN Climate Change (2017) [Rapid Urbanization Increases Climate Risk for Billions of People](#)

³UNDRR (n.d.) [Underlying disaster risk drivers](#)

⁴EWEA systems are relatively cheap to set up and provide more than a tenfold return on investment. See: World Meteorological Organization (2022) [Early Warnings for All Action Plan unveiled at COP27](#)

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide will support disaster risk reduction stakeholders and media and communication practitioners to develop more effective and relevant disaster risk communication plans, based on a contextualised and nuanced understanding of at-risk populations, underlying problems, and the media environment.

It covers the information you need to know, where to find it, and how to gather new data when necessary.

Specifically, it aims to:

- Illustrate the basics of what you need to understand in relation to disaster risk reduction
- Build your understanding of media and communication environments and how they can inform disaster risk communication plans
- Indicate where you might find existing data on key factors
- Help you identify data gaps and how to develop a more complete picture
- Provide tips and tools to support your own research into specific topics

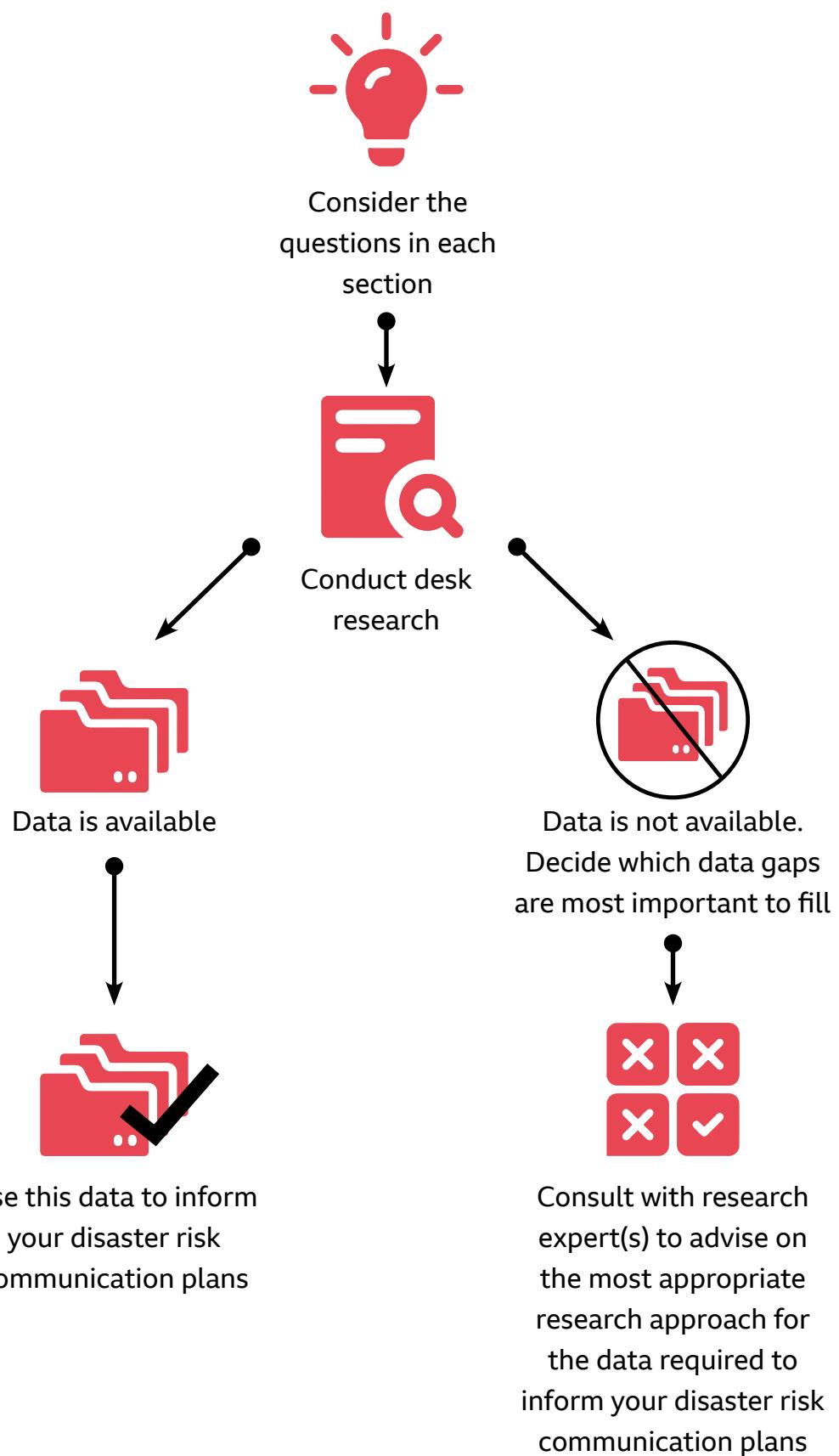
The guide is not designed to be completed from beginning to end – collecting all types of data profiled here is impractical. You will prioritise areas you think are most practical for your aims.

This is a companion to the Pocket Guide to Disaster Risk Communication, which outlines how to design effective disaster risk communication plans. A copy of the Pocket Guide and its companion, the RiCA Guide for Essential Research, can be found on the [BBC Media Action](#) website. In addition, both guides, including an online version of the Pocket Guide, can be found on the [PreventionWeb](#) website. The research methods outlined here are explained in more detail in the Pocket Guide (IMPROVE section). The appendix to this research guide includes a research methods resource and example research studies.

How to use this guide

USER	KEY SECTIONS
Higher-level decision-makers in disaster risk management	<p>The executive summary will provide you with an overview of the necessary insights and processes that underpin effective disaster risk communication plans. Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research is critical to inform a nuanced understanding of people, problems and media environments• Investment in disaster risk communication provides strong returns• Research has shown that if content is engaging and specifically designed on a platform that the target audience uses to address barriers and leverage drivers of behaviour rooted in people's lived experiences and realities it is more likely to have impact
Managers and communicators in disaster risk reduction from sectors including government, civil society and media, who can build a shared understanding of how to improve disaster risk communication	<p>All sections will help you consider what kinds of information you need to plan disaster risk communication, specifically about at-risk people, the problems they face, and local media and communication environments</p> <p>All sections will direct your desk research, indicating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where you can access existing data• How to use existing data• How to identify data gaps• How to commission additional research
Researchers gathering data to fill knowledge gaps	<p>The deep dive sections on pages 10 – 48 will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guide you in consolidating existing data• Suggest which research methods to use to collect new data• Provide example questions to ask research respondents• Guide you on how to develop a nuanced understanding of at-risk people, the local context and the media and communication environments

Figure 1: Using this guide



UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE AT RISK, UNDERLYING PROBLEMS AND LOCAL CONTEXTS

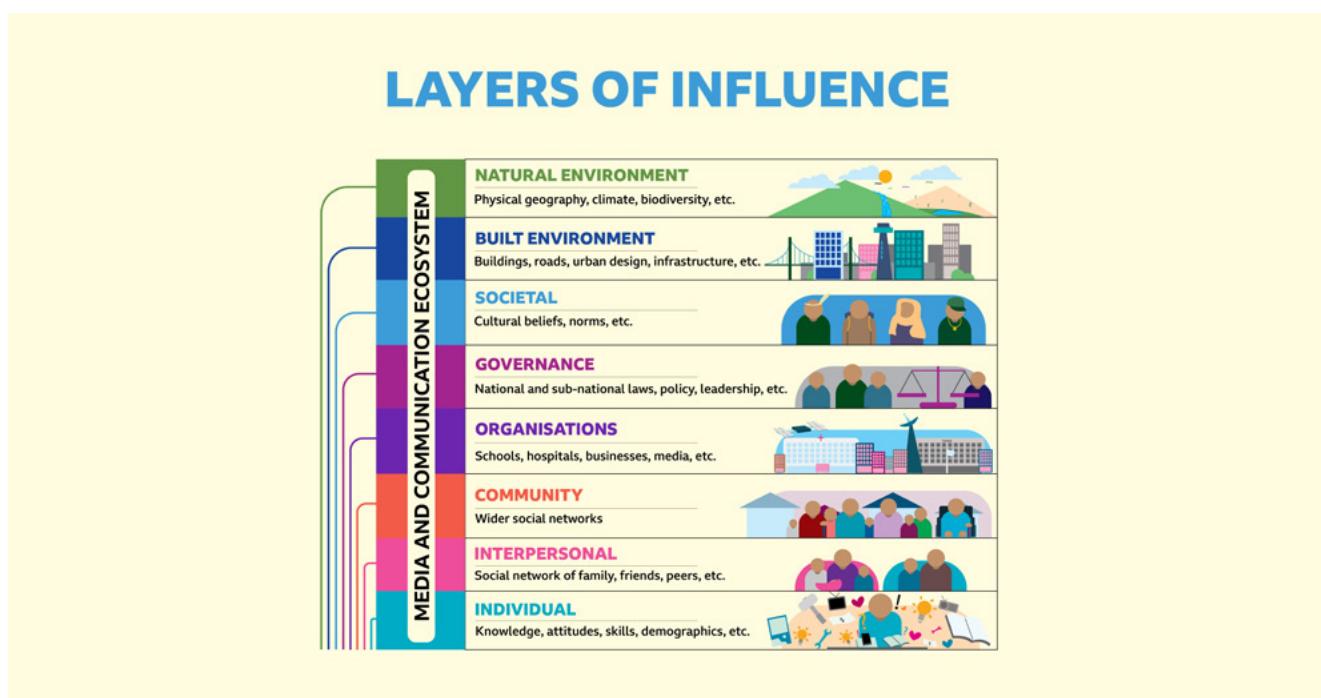
Effective disaster risk communication focuses on a clearly defined issue or problem. But narrowing down that focus can be challenging because disaster risk reduction involves many interconnected factors.

It is vital to develop a good understanding of the problem or issue you want to address through disaster risk communication. It might be a symptom of a much larger issue and/or have several contributing factors. Individual behaviour, social networks, government policy, and norms and beliefs may all interact to drive the problem – or drive positive change.

The socio-ecological model (see Figure 2) is a useful framework to support your problem analysis as it will help you to explore how the complex interplays between factors can drive certain outcomes. Examining a problem through the categories in this model can help you to identify different influences, and where your interventions might be most effective.

Alongside these considerations, disaster risk communication plans require you to understand the local media and communication environment, including key actors, drivers, information flows and preferences across the population and among at-risk groups.

Figure 2: Socio-ecological model categories



Adapted from the Socio-ecological Model (Brofenbrenner) and the Human Ecology Model (Barton and Grant)

NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

Key research questions

Define the location of your work to help draw boundaries for your research.

- What **geographic area** are you focusing on? (Eg, national, sub-national, a precise location.)

Understand how the natural environment interacts with the built environment to create risks for people and assets.

- What are the **key hazards** in the area that will affect, or be affected by, the built environment? E.g. flooding that might affect sewage systems, landslides that might block roads or earthquakes that could lead to building collapse.
- **Media & Communication:** Do the natural and built environments pose any major considerations for media and communication systems? E.g. Are remote areas cut off from broadcast or mobile signals? Are undersea cables vulnerable to geohazards?

RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

DESK RESEARCH

Useful starter sources to find out the key hazards for your area of operation:

- UNDRR [Hazard Information Profiles](#)
- UNDRR [Country and Continent DRR profiles and resources](#)
- World Bank [Climate Change Knowledge Portal](#)
- World Bank and Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) [Think Hazard!](#)

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Consult National Disaster Management Organisations, Met Offices and physical scientists. This specialist area is not likely suitable for your own primary research.

How to use this data

Determining which locations are at high risk of specific hazards can inform your decisions about how to prioritise and how to support at-risk populations with a multi-hazard lens.

Demographics of at-risk groups

Who is at risk of disasters and their impacts? Demographic information helps you to create targeted disaster risk communication plans that address the specific needs, languages and cultural contexts of different population groups.

Key research question

- What is the breakdown of the population in your chosen location?

Common demographic groupings include:

- Age (usually broken down into ranges)
- Gender
- Ethnic background
- Location (urban, rural or peri-urban)
- Highest level of schooling (primary, secondary, tertiary or higher education)
- Household income level (low, medium or high, based on locally appropriate ranges)
- Main language spoken at home
- Literacy level (ability to read and write in a specified language)
- Marital status (single, married, separated, divorced, widowed)
- Number of people living in the household
- Primary occupation
- Religion
- Disability (see the [Washington Group on Disability Statistics Questions](#))

RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING DEMOGRAPHICS

DESK RESEARCH	PRIMARY RESEARCH
<p>Look at the population census data for your chosen area. This is usually held by the national statistical office or census bureau. If the population census data is not available, out of date or believed to be unreliable, those institutions may be able to advise you on what population data is available or when the next census will be conducted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DHS Program Demographic and Health Surveys • World Population Review • Language maps and data 	<p>Consider hiring an agency to conduct a quantitative survey using survey sampling techniques in the location of interest to understand the population demographic breakdown.</p> <p>Surveys allow you to collect data from a representative sample of the population using pre-determined questions. You can work closely with a research agency to prepare the right questions to answer your overall research questions.</p> <p>The Washington Group on Disability Statistics' Questions on Functioning are useful for survey questions to assess people's disability levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating language data

How to use this data

Once you have this data, you can conduct further research with specific demographic groups to tailor your disaster risk communication plan to their needs, on platforms that they use. For example, reaching a population with a low literacy rate may require a specific approach such as visual or audio communication.

NATURAL AND
BUILT ...

INDIVIDUALS

INTERPERSONAL
NETWORKS

COMMUNITY
NETWORKS

ORGANISATIONS

SOCIAL
BELIEFS ...

GOVERNANCE

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RESOURCES

Vulnerable groups

To be effective, disaster risk communication should be as inclusive a process as possible. You need to understand the specific profile and needs of vulnerable groups because citizens living in vulnerable circumstances are often left out of national data and statistics even though they often face greater risks and impacts.

In this context, vulnerability means “The conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes which increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets or systems to the impacts of hazards.”⁵

Key research questions:

- Who is most vulnerable to natural hazards in the area?
- What makes them vulnerable?
- What are the impacts of that vulnerability?

Many factors can contribute to people’s vulnerability. Groups that need special consideration regarding physical, social, mental, emotional and economic factors are:

- Children and elderly people
- Women (pregnant women and those responsible for caring for others)
- People living with a disability, including mobility-impaired people (such as those in care homes or health centres)
- Indigenous groups, ethnic minorities, and minority language speakers
- Economically vulnerable people (such as poorer households and homeless people), including those living in informal settlements
- Travellers or tourists
- Internally displaced people, refugees and migrants
- Gender identity and sexual orientation
- Widows, single parents, orphans
- People located in high-risk areas and especially those who have been affected by disasters before.

Consider who is at risk due to:

- **Physical factors**, eg poor living conditions
- **Social factors**, eg poverty and inequality, marginalisation, discrimination
- **Economic factors**, eg workers in informal sectors or with precarious livelihoods

⁵UNDRR [Vulnerability](#)

RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING VULNERABLE GROUPS

DESK RESEARCH	PRIMARY RESEARCH
<p>Conduct a literature review to understand what data is available on vulnerable groups in your location of interest.</p> <p>Guidance on Vulnerability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GSMA Human-centred design in humanitarian settings: Methodologies for inclusivity • Practical Action Gender transformative early warning systems: Experiences from Nepal and Peru • Practical Action Towards disability transformative early warning systems: Barriers, challenges and opportunities • UNDRR Vulnerability • World Health Organization Vulnerability and Vulnerable Populations: Community Disaster Risk Management <p>Data sources with dimensions of vulnerability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Bank, World Development Indicators, Databank • Lloyds Register Foundation World Risk Poll, Dataset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and interview key stakeholders working in local disaster risk management and local advisors who can highlight known vulnerable at-risk groups in the area. • Conduct qualitative research with members of those vulnerable groups (or organisations that represent them) to better understand their needs, resources, views and media consumption habits. • Conduct research with key informants and people from vulnerable groups to understand their access to information, risk perceptions, and ability to prepare for hazards. You can also explore perceptions of how the natural environment affects people, eg such as people's views on the structure/robustness of housing, or the availability of social protection for vulnerable persons to help manage risk. <p>Resources for research on vulnerability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical Action The Missing Voices Approach Manual • UNICEF, UN WOMEN Gender and age inequality of disaster risk

How to use this data

Understanding the context and nuances of vulnerability in your specific location will help to improve the impact of your disaster risk communication among all relevant segments of the population. It will enable your communication plan to address the needs and challenges of specific vulnerable groups.

Risk knowledge, perceptions, attitudes and actions

Understanding people's knowledge, perceptions, attitudes and behaviour towards different hazard risks will help you to develop disaster risk communication plans that address people's concerns, ensure that they understand and trust information about disaster risks, and motivate them to take appropriate preventative action. This can be a long and complex area to study and will require specialist insight.

Key research questions:

What do people KNOW about disaster risk?

- Do people know about potential disaster risks in their area?
- Do they understand the likelihoods and the potential impacts they may cause?
- Do they know what actions can reduce the risk and impact of disasters?
- Do they know about services in the area that can help them take action?
- Are they aware of any early warning systems that exist? Do they understand and trust them? Do they know what actions to take in response?
- Do they understand how actors at different levels of society can contribute to these actions? (E.g. government vs. community vs. household actions)
- How is this understanding shaped by local/knowledge?

How do people FEEL about disaster risk?

- How vulnerable to hazards do they feel?
- How much of a risk do they think these hazards pose to lives, livelihoods and assets?
- Do they feel the impacts are inevitable?
- Do they feel they are able to take action to reduce disaster risk? (self-efficacy)
- Do they feel that any actions they take will make a difference?
- What cognitive biases (mental shortcuts) are shaping their risk perceptions?

What ACTIONS do people take to manage disaster risk?

- What actions – do people take to prevent, manage, or prepare?
- Are these actions sufficient? Are they maladaptive? Could they be doing more or take different actions?
- How do actions range across individuals, households, and communities?
- Do actions protect needs of groups across society, including the most vulnerable?

RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE'S RISK KNOWLEDGE, PERCEPTIONS, ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS

DESK RESEARCH	PRIMARY RESEARCH
<p>Find relevant risk perception surveys for your location of interest and aim to understand how these perceptions differ between demographic groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lloyd's Register Foundation World Risk Poll is based on over 125,000 interviews conducted by Gallup in 121 countries <p>Understand how cognitive biases (mental shortcuts) impact risk perception:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meyer and Kunreuther The Ostrich Paradox • UNDRR, Global Assessment Report 2022: Our world at risk <p>Search for academic research, including anthropological studies, that provide insight into how individuals and groups have experienced disaster risk and relate to different hazards.</p>	<p>Conduct qualitative or quantitative research with your target population to understand people's levels of knowledge about disaster risks, their direct and indirect experiences with disaster, risk perceptions, and any plans that they have to prepare for a particular hazard.</p> <p>Analyse and understand different responses among demographic groups.</p> <p>Sample questions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you experienced a disaster before? • How at risk do you feel from hazards (insert as relevant or refer to a multi-hazard situation)? • How can people reduce the risk of a hazard (insert) turning into a disaster? • How can people prepare for hazards like (insert)? • If an event such as a (insert) happened in your local area, how prepared do you think you would be? (Eg very prepared, slightly prepared, not at all prepared)? • Which actions are you currently doing to prepare for a (insert)? • How likely are you to do these actions in the future? (Very likely, possibly or unlikely) • Why do you think some people do not prepare for (Insert extreme weather example or hazard)?

How to use this data

Together, qualitative and quantitative data can provide a holistic picture of your target population's level of knowledge around disaster preparedness, enabling you to target their specific needs and gaps. For example, if people know about a risk of local hurricanes but do not feel strongly motivated to prepare for hurricanes, your communication plan could strengthen their risk perceptions and motivations to take action.

Personal interests and motivations

The success of your communication plan depends on providing content that engages people with issues that they care about and are important to their lives.

Key research questions:

- What issues matter to people? What do they care about?
- What challenges do people face? What aspirations do they have?
- What is important to them and who influences them?

RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE'S CONCERNS, NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS

DESK RESEARCH	PRIMARY RESEARCH
<p>Examples have been included on the importance of conducting research to understand audiences needs and concerns, in order to produce content that engages and resonates with their lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• BBC Media Action data portal: Understand People for Effective Change• BBC, Engaging Audiences with Sustainability<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hearing authentic climate conversations from 'people like me' can help motivate audiences to discuss climate issues.• Audiences need to see solutions that feel good, and reflect their personal interests, aspirations and anxieties.	<p>Conduct focus groups with different demographic groups to understand what matters to them most. General questions:</p> <p>Can we start by people telling us a bit about your lives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who do you live with?• How many family members do you have?• How many children do you have?• Do you work?<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can you tell us about what type of work or business you are doing?• What do you like to do in your spare time?• In your opinion, what are the main challenges affecting people in your community at present?• What topics or issues do you currently care about most?• What, if anything, are you most worried about in your life?• Who inspires you in your community and why?

The research can help you identify people's priorities and concerns, and their interests. Your risk communication strategy can then aim to create content that is engaging.

INTERPERSONAL NETWORKS

Networks of friends, relatives, neighbours and other social ties can influence how people understand and perceive disaster risk. They can also be an effective way of engaging people to take action. How much local support a person has, or how isolated they are, can lead to different outcomes.

Marginalised communities often rely on interpersonal networks or community connections to receive information about risk and/or act upon it. People with less access to technology and people with disabilities are among the most reliant on networks.

Understanding who people interact with, trust and rely on can help you to exchange information with at-risk groups in ways that support disaster risk reduction.

Key research questions:

- Who do people share information with?
- Who influences their knowledge, feelings and actions relating to disaster risks?
- What role can networks play in reducing disaster risk and responding to hazards?
- Who are the socially isolated groups/individuals that can be better supported through disaster risk communication?

RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING INTERPERSONAL NETWORKS

DESK RESEARCH	PRIMARY RESEARCH
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• International Rescue Committee Social Network Analysis Handbook• Lloyds Register Foundation World Risk Poll, Dataset• Schwartz, G in Domestic Preparedness Community Preparedness for the Socially & Civically Isolated• World Bank, Gender Dimensions of Disaster Risk and Resilience: Existing Evidence	<p>Consider what type of households you would like to better understand Eg. Nuclear, multigenerational, single parent.</p> <p>Conduct interviews with families or parents to better understand any power or gender dynamics within the household. Questions to ask:</p> <p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who makes important decisions in the household?• Who controls the finances in the household?• What roles and responsibilities do family members have?• What TV programmes do you watch? Do different family members watch different things? What about radio programmes? Do you listen together as a family?• How do family members discuss issues? Who dominates the

conversation?

Disaster risk

- Who in your family would decide whether to prepare for a hazard (such as a flood or storm) in your family?
- Who would make the decision on whether to evacuate and why?
- Who would decide on whether to send a child to school?

[The Duke Social Support Index](#) provides a list of questions to measures people's connectiveness and satisfaction with their networks.

[The Lubben Social Network Scale](#) assesses social networks and their size and structure.

Questions adapted from the Duke Social Support Index:

- How many people in your local area do you feel you can depend on or feel very close to?
- How many times in the past week did you spend time with someone outside your home?
- In the past week, about how often did you go to meetings of clubs, religious or other groups that you belong to?
- Are there individuals who you could rely on in an emergency?
- If you had to evacuate, who could you turn to for help or support?
- In an emergency, who would voice your concerns to?

How to use this data

Understanding the size and composition of people's social relations and networks may help you to encourage effective information sharing, collaboration and support. Your communication plan could also consider demographic groups that may be more likely to be socially isolated (for example, elderly people or single parent households).

NATURAL AND
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COMMUNITY NETWORKS

A key principle of inclusive disaster risk management is fostering community participation and citizen engagement to achieve more sustainable and resilient outcomes. Disaster risk management activities organised at the grassroots level are more effectively tailored to address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of a specific community.

Key research questions:

- What community structures are in place?
- Who are the key influencers in the community – community leaders, religious leaders, teachers, NGOs, civil society organisations?
- How are decisions made in the community?
- How do these influence how a community reduces risks and prepares for hazards?
- Who is not a part of the community networks? Why?

RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY NETWORKS

DESK RESEARCH	PRIMARY RESEARCH
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• GFDRR <u>Community Participation and Citizen Engagement</u>• Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction <u>Community-based disaster risk management</u>• UNDRR, <u>Community-based DRR on PreventionWeb</u>	<p>Consider using participatory processes like community mapping. Transect walks can be done at the start of a research study with a key member of the community (a community leader/ village chief) who is very familiar with the community to get an overview of the community – the livelihoods & living environment, understand areas of risk / vulnerability that have been affected in the past, and build trust and get help selecting the focus group participants.</p> <p>Conduct separate focus groups with men and women to understand community decision-making structures and power dynamics. Consider separate focus groups with other excluded groups.</p> <p>Suggested questions for focus groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What structures are in place in the

community to make decisions and take actions when there is a hazard warning?

- Are there local community meetings to discuss issues like what to do following floods?
- Who participates in these meetings, and what languages are used?
- What decisions are made? Who makes these decisions and how?
- What roles do women and men play in these meetings?
- Are any groups or voices unrepresented in these meetings?

How to use this data

It can help you to understand the important influencers to involve in your communication plan, and what local community mechanisms you can use to share information, discuss challenges and concerns, and resolve issues. Consider what community meetings, religious activities, school meetings and other events involve community members. Would these gatherings be suitable for discussing risk and early warnings?

ORGANISATIONS

Understanding which organisations are already communicating about risk, for what purposes, and how they might do so better, can inform your plan.

Outside of the main government disaster management agencies, met offices, and media organisations (see below) - seek to understand if and how a range of public and private organisations communicate about risk. This could include schools, health care facilities, transport companies, small, medium, and large businesses.

Key research questions:

- What remit and responsibilities do different organisations have to communicate about hazards and issue early warnings? To whom?
- What policies do they have in place to do so?
- What skills and resources do staff have to communicate effectively?
- How successful have they been in the past?
- How joined up are the separate organisations in their communication?

RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF ORGANISATIONS

DESK RESEARCH	PRIMARY RESEARCH
<p>Public sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consult government websites to understand details about organisations that support disaster management, met services, education, health, transport, etc. <p>Private sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The local chamber of commerce might help you identify businesses in the area that already communicate about disaster risk or could help you do so.	<p>Speak with stakeholders from different industries to understand how the sector communicates about disaster risk and with whom.</p> <p>Suggested questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What processes do you have in place for communicating about hazards and early warnings?• How do you implement these processes?• Who is responsible for communicating about risk, in your organisation?• What capabilities or limitations does your staff have to deliver effective risk communication?• Does your staff receive training to implement this work?• What challenges do you face in implementing this work?• What has worked well in the past?• How do you coordinate with other organisations?

How to use this data

Use this knowledge to ensure you are including the most relevant organisations in your efforts and supporting their capacity to communicate risk where relevant.

SOCIETAL BELIEFS, NORMS, AND STRUCTURES

Understanding the deep-seated accepted beliefs and norms in a society or its sub-groups are an important element in understanding how a society functions and knowing what influences people's perceptions around disaster risk and the actions they take in response.

Religion

Key research questions:

- What **religious beliefs** do people hold? How do these relate to disaster risk?

RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING BELIEFS AND NORMS ABOUT RELIGION

DESK RESEARCH	PRIMARY RESEARCH
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Global Religion 2023 (Ipsos)	<p>Conduct separate focus groups and/or in-depth interviews with people who follow each of the key faiths practised in your target location to understand their beliefs related to risk perceptions.</p> <p>Example questions could include:</p> <p>General/introductory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How important is your religious faith to you?• In what ways do you practice your religion? <p>Beliefs on disaster risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why do you think climate change happens?• Why do natural hazards such as floods or droughts happen?• What role can religion play in protecting you from natural hazards? <p>Religious practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has your religious community organised any events or activities focused on hazard preparedness and risk reduction? If so, can you share some examples?• How do you view the guidance provided by religious leaders on preparing for natural hazards?

How to use this data

Use this knowledge to ensure that your disaster risk communication respects cultural perspectives on natural hazards, while helping to tackle any barriers to change, encouraging people to consider actions themselves alongside trusting in their religion to resolve an issue.

Nature

Key research questions:

- What beliefs do people hold in relation to **nature and the land**? How do these relate to disaster risk? (This may be related to questions about religion above.)

RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING BELIEFS AND NORMS ABOUT NATURE AND THE LAND

DESK RESEARCH	PRIMARY RESEARCH
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Australian Government, Climate Resilient by Nature, Indo Pacific Knowledge Hub• FAO, Family farming knowledge platform• UNDRR, Traditional and indigenous knowledge	<p>Consider who you can help you to understand local knowledge, skills and practice in relation to the land and nature, eg interviews with local farmers, fisher folks, nomadic people, Indigenous elders or community people living in different environments such as close to rivers, coastal areas, mountains or hillsides.</p> <p>Conduct key informant interviews with indigenous/cultural/ traditional leaders or elders:</p> <p>Example questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What community-based knowledge, beliefs, skills and traditions are used to identify future hazards such as floods, droughts, storms?• How does local people's knowledge, beliefs help them to adapt or reduce the risk of hazards such as floods?• What cultural practices are in place in relation to the land and hazards• How do local people interpret the meaning of disasters?• What are the traditional land areas that need to be considered/respected for disaster risk reduction strategies (heritage sites, ancestral burial sites)?• How do communities pass on their deep understanding of natural hazards? (folksongs, stories)

How to use this data

Use your knowledge of people's cultural beliefs to enhance your disaster risk communication, by acknowledging or building on traditional practices and sayings.

Gender

Key research questions:

- What beliefs do people hold in relation to **gender**? How do these relate to disaster risk?

RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING BELIEFS AND NORMS ABOUT GENDER

DESK RESEARCH	PRIMARY RESEARCH
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action Aid and Economist Intelligence Unit South Asia Women's Resilience Index• UNDP, Gender Inequality Index	<p>Consider the gender roles, expectations and power dynamics locally and within families, and how decisions relating to preparing for, responding to and coping with natural hazards and disasters are made.</p> <p>Consider using Georgetown University Institute for Reproductive Health's Social Norms Exploration Tool to explore local gender norms, including how entrenched they are, sanctions for breaching them, and any opportunities for change.</p> <p>Conduct separate focus groups with men and women, different age ranges, sexuality, faiths, ethnicity, and language to understand how gender norms may vary by demographic groups. Consider using vignettes (stories) to uncover perspectives that may not be revealed through direct questioning.</p>
	<p>Questions can cover a wide range of gender issues that relate to disaster:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Household gender roles, including caring responsibilities• Any gender-based differences in incomes and livelihoods• Any gender-based differences in

access to the media, technology, and information

Example questions include:

- Who makes most of the decisions in your household?
- Who has control over how family money is spent?
- Who in your family would make decisions on preparing for extreme weather events?
- Who would decide whether to move away due to flooding, droughts or another disaster?
- What roles and activities do men and women do before and during emergencies? How does this impact their risk levels?

How to use this data

Disasters can affect men and women differently due to their social roles, responsibilities, and access to resources and information. Recognising these differences can ensure that disaster risk communication is inclusive and effective for everyone.

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GOVERNANCE

Government agency staff carry the remit to communicate with the public about policy decisions and actions intended to keep people safe. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030 calls for:

“Priority 2: Disaster risk governance at the national, regional and global levels is of great importance for an effective and efficient management of disaster risk. Clear vision, plans, competence, guidance and coordination within and across sectors, as well as participation of relevant stakeholders, are needed. Strengthening disaster risk governance for prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery and rehabilitation is therefore necessary and fosters collaboration and partnership across mechanisms and institutions for the implementation of instruments relevant to disaster risk reduction and sustainable development.”

Providing disaster risk governance is especially challenging in conflict-affected societies. Conflict undermines both the government and societal coping capacities, exacerbates the impacts of disasters, heightens uncertainty, and hinders effective disaster risk governance¹.

Violent conflict can take various forms, including interstate war, armed conflict, civil war, political and electoral violence, and communal violence, and can involve many actors, including states and non-state parties, such as militias, insurgents, terrorist groups and violent extremists².

¹Peters (2019) *Disaster risk reduction in conflict contexts*.
²OECD (2022) *States of fragility*.

Governance and risk governance

Understanding local disaster risk governance structures and processes will indicate gaps and opportunities for improvement in public dialogue around risk governance and how media and communication could support this.

Key research questions:

- How is the area governed?
- How is disaster risk governed, managed and coordinated?
- Who is involved (and excluded) from these processes, and why?
- What is communicated about these processes, how, to whom and when?

RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING GOVERNANCE OF THE AREA AND DISASTER RISK GOVERNANCE

DESK RESEARCH	PRIMARY RESEARCH
<p>Governance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• World Bank, Worldwide Governance Indicators• Bertelsmann Stiftung, Sustainable Governance Indicators• International Crisis Group, Global Conflict Tracker <p>Search online or consult agencies operating in your area of interest. Often research and analysis has been done, but may not be published online.</p> <p>Risk Governance:</p> <p>Visit government websites for information on departments, services and remits. Use these sites to understand early warning systems and how they operate, including national meteorological and hydrological services and disaster risk reduction or management websites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• United Nations Climate Change, National Adaptation Plans• UNDRR, Country risk and governance	<p>Research options on broad governance could be similar to other areas – you could do stakeholder interviews/consultation, qualitative research with communities, or large-scale survey work.</p> <p>Refer back to questions proposed in the community network section and consider additional questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the key decision-making processes in place at the household, community, local, regional and national level?• Are there parallel/competing systems of power and decision-making (e.g. traditional clan systems vs modern government)? What inter-play exists between these systems? What issues are decided under each system? Are those with power in each system the same or different? What about those who are excluded?

- [profiles](#)
- UNDRR, [DRR Policies and plans](#)
- UNDRR, Sendai Framework [monitoring by country](#)
- UNDRR, Sendai Framework [Focal Points and National Platforms](#)
- UNDRR, [Words into action on DRR national strategies](#)

- Who are the key decision makers/power-holders?
- Who is included and excluded from these processes and structures? Why (e.g. traditional and gender hierarchies, attitudes and norms)? What impact does this have on them?
- What role, if any, does the media play in covering and facilitating public participation in these processes and structures? What barriers are in place to them play this role?

Speak to key stakeholders to locate any additional national/regional multi-hazard early warning systems and plans, including government agencies involved in disaster management, weather forecasting and emergency services.

If your target location is small or remote, you may want to contact the local leader to understand what local-led early warning systems (eg. weather forecasting or flood warnings) are in place (if any).

Example questions include:

Early Warning systems:

- What early warning systems exist?
- How do they operate? (Eg who is in charge of them, when are they triggered, what communication channels, formats, and languages do they use?)
- Do they involve two-way communication? (If so, how?)
- How do they draw on local

knowledge?

Risk communication initiatives:

- What longer term disaster risk communication plans are in place?
- How does the government communicate with the public about their disaster risk reduction plans and investment?

Monitoring and evaluation:

Research to pre-test, monitor and evaluate the early warnings or risk communication strategies can be conducted with different segments of the community to understand the strengths and weaknesses and areas for improvement. See BBC Media Action's Pocket Guide for further information, which can be found on the [BBC Media Action](#) and [PreventionWeb](#) websites.

Research questions can include:

How effective are these early warning systems or risk communication initiatives at:

- Reaching the at-risk population
- Are they relevant, timely, useful, trusted?
- Do they help people to understand the risk, believe there is a risk, and lead to people taking the recommended actions?

How to use this data

Use your knowledge of existing local, regional and national early warning systems and other disaster risk reduction initiatives to tailor your disaster risk communication, to reach any under-served population groups, avoid duplication of effort and harmonise your talking points. Co-ordinating or including governmental experts in your disaster risk communication plans can help ensure that your content is based on the best expertise and builds trust among the population.

Conflict

Understanding how conflict impacts disaster risk management will inform how you can communicate appropriately.

Key research questions:

RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT AND DRR

DESK RESEARCH	PRIMARY RESEARCH
<p>It is possible that a conflict analysis will be available online from another organisation – search online. It is also worth reaching out to various agencies to ask if they have a recent conflict analysis they could share. However be mindful of the scope of any analysis you find and how recent it is. Conflict dynamics can change quickly so do not assume older analyses are still relevant.</p> <p>Conflict analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Search for Common Ground, Conflict scan methodology• SIDA, Guidance on conflict analysis – a technical note• SIDA, Peace and conflict toolbox• UNICEF, Guide to conflict analysis <p>Conflict and DRR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• UNDRR, Disaster risk reduction in conflict contexts: An agenda for action• UNDRR, Disaster risk reduction strategies: Navigating conflict contexts	<p>For conflict-related areas: If no conflict analysis is available, or you are concerned it is not recent enough or has gaps in the analysis, you could consider conducting or commissioning a conflict analysis. There are various levels of investment you could make into this, and a range of methods, however it would, at minimum, require a range of stakeholder interviews. Various guidelines are included in the 'resources' section.</p> <p>Examples of questions to consider for a conflict analysis include:</p> <p>Conflict profile</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there a history of conflict in this area? What is that history?• What is the wider political, economic, social and cultural context?• What are the key conflict issues?• Where are the conflict-affected/prone areas geographically located?• Who is affected by this conflict, and in what ways? <p>Causes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the root and proximate causes of conflict? Root causes are

the real issues at the centre of the conflict (whether violent or latent) that need to be resolved. Proximate causes are factors that increase the possibility of conflict becoming violent or further escalating, such as the availability of small arms or financial resources to buy them, or the support of scattered groups and external supporters.

- What are the structural causes of conflict? Structural causes are built into the policies, structures and fabric of society, and may help create the preconditions for violence. For example, discriminatory policy, inequitable resource allocation, and lack of opportunity for political participation and representation in government.
- What are the triggers of conflict? Triggers are specific acts or events (or anticipation of them) that raise tension and set off or escalate violence. For example, assassination or imprisonment of a key figure, sudden key commodity price increases, electoral periods and culturally significant dates.
- What emerging trends are contributing to conflict? For example, radicalisation of conflict parties, development of a war economy, discovery of new natural resources or mass migration.
- What factors currently contribute to peace? For example, communication channels between conflict parties, shared cultural events/practices or local peace initiatives.

Actors

- Who are the main actors in the conflict? How are they interlinked? Which are opposed and which are allied or have common cause?
- What are their main interests, goals, positions, capacities and relationships?
- What actors support capacities for peace? (these could be institutions, groups or individuals)
- What actors are or might become spoilers who could undermine a peace process?

Dynamics

- What stage is the conflict at? What are the past and current conflict trends? How has violence changed over time? At what times does it escalate/de-escalate and why?
- What are the windows of opportunity? Are these being utilised?
- What impact would a disaster have/ is disaster having? What impact might DRR plans have?

How to use this data

Governments, donors, policymakers, and practitioners are increasingly urged to consider the intricate interplay between natural hazards and conflict. This includes dealing with issues such as displacement, food insecurity, and political instability.

A risk communication strategy could identify how to share ideas, knowledge and practices that are sensitive to fragile contexts. It can also recognise the multiple pressures on complex governance systems and know that singular solutions may not be feasible.

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION ECOSYSTEMS (AND OVERVIEW)

Media ecosystems are the dynamic systems of relationships between various actors, processes and structures that influence how media content and information are generated, shared, consumed and used. They can be considered at different scales and may extend beyond nation states.⁶

The interdependent components of a media and communication ecosystem include:

- **People** who access, share and act upon media content and information
- **Dedicated content producers**, such as media outlets, journalists and bloggers
- **Formal bodies and networks** that monitor and defend media
- **Cultural, legal and power structures and actors** that influence the media/communication operating environment.
- **Physical infrastructures**

Understanding media ecosystems requires gathering data about a range of spheres within a location that intersect with and influence the media, notably the following points. This guide will help you assess these points in the sections that follow:

- **Political bodies and governance structures**, including legislative frameworks and regulatory institutions that might govern or influence media practices and outputs. Eg, freedom of expression and access to information laws, broadcasting regulators and media self-regulatory mechanisms that influence the types of media content and information that can be produced.
- **Media financing**, including private and public sector support for the media at national, local and grassroots levels and user generated/funded mechanisms such as social media platforms and websites. Funding can influence the media's coverage (or non-coverage) and framing of events and topics.
- **Information integrity systems** to maintain the quality, consistency, traceability and reliability of media content. The ideal is a free flow of information from diverse sources to allow free and open discourse and help people to make timely and appropriate choices and hold leaders to account.
- **Media and digital literacy levels among the population**, including their media access and consumption habits, their trust in the media and critical thinking skills in relation to how they engage with information. This will vary between different demographics, eg based on their gender, location, language, education, socio-economic class, and level of marginalisation/vulnerability.
- **Communication technologies and technological access** available to different types of media practitioners, content creators and media users. This will vary between groups

⁶BBC Media Action (2021) [Supporting Healthier Media Ecosystems: Our Approach](#)

and over time, including during times of crisis when communication networks may be limited to radio, satellite and/or interpersonal communication.

- **Media infrastructures that can support critical information flows during crises** – understanding physical infrastructural strengths and weaknesses, and investing in business continuity/resilience, will enable media and communication to continue to reach people when they need it most.
- **Media practitioners' knowledge of disaster risk**, which affects the media's ability to cover related concepts such as climate change, poverty, urban development and forecasting.
- **Types of media content that are available to at-risk people**, including public interest versus commercially-driven content, a range of formats from news to entertainment, and professionally-produced versus user-generated content – and how key discourses come through each.

Understanding each of these areas in your operating context will inform how best to engage with media professionals and invest in media content to enable more effective disaster risk communication. The following sections will consider components of the media ecosystem along the model above.

Individuals: Media use and preferences

The success of your communication plan depends on providing content that both reaches and engages people. This includes disseminating content on the channels that target population groups use, in the formats and at the times that they prefer.

Key research questions:

- Who in the area has access to different **media platforms** (eg, local or national TV, radio, internet, social media, mobile phones)?
- How do media access, consumption habits and preferences vary by demographic group (eg, age, gender, income, education, location, etc.)?

RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING MEDIA USE AND PREFERENCES

DESK RESEARCH	PRIMARY RESEARCH
<p>Look at available media reports to understand the target population's access to various media channels and content.</p> <p>Contact key media outlets to see if they have data on audience shares/figures.</p> <p>Data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• BBC Monitoring Essential Media Insight guides• Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities (CDAC) Network Media Landscape guides• Datareportal – Digital trend insights• European Journalism Centre Media landscapes report <p>Guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• GeoPoll Audience Measurement• Messaggio Worldwide multichannel messaging• Reporters without Borders Journalism Trust Initiative reports	<p>If you have the time and budget you can consider commissioning an agency to conduct a quantitative representative media landscape survey to generate up-to-date information on the media access, usage and preferences of different demographic groups.</p> <p>With a smaller budget and/or with less time, consider conducting qualitative focus groups or interviews with specific target segments of the population (male/female, different age groups etc) to further understand key media consumption habits or barriers to accessing media content.</p> <p>Example questions:</p> <p>Source of information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is your main source of information?• Where do you get information about local and national news?• Where do you go to try to find information about emergencies?

- What language do you prefer to receive information in? Is that different from what language you prefer to share information in?
- What sources of information do you trust the most? What sources do you trust the least?

Access and use:

- Do you have access to... a TV, radio, internet, mobile phone, or newspaper?
- How frequently do you... watch TV, listen to radio, use internet, use a mobile phone, read print newspaper?
- Where do you get information about local and national news?
- If you have internet, what connection speed do you have?

TV:

- What time are you most likely to watch TV?
- Which TV channels you usually watch?
- What types of TV programmes do you usually watch? For example – news, drama, comedy, discussion?
- What are your favourite programmes? Who are your favourite presenters?

Radio:

- What time are you most likely to listen to the radio?
- Which radio stations do you usually listen to?
- What types of radio programmes do you usually listen to? For example – news, drama, comedy, discussion?

- What are your favourites programmes? Who are your favourite presenters?

Social media:

- Which social media platforms do you use regularly?
- What pages or people do you follow?

Newspapers:

- What newspapers do you read?

How to use this data

Your disaster risk communication plan should consider how to reach different demographic groups on their preferred media platforms to increase your chance of reaching and engaging them. For example: young people may prefer social media engagement while older people may listen to the radio.

Consider which population groups do not have access to the media platforms or channels, and where mechanisms such as outreach activities may be more effective.

Interpersonal and communities: Focus on mis- and disinformation

“**Misinformation**” is misleading or inaccurate information shared by mistake, eg if people believe it to be accurate, whereas “**disinformation**” is created and spread deliberately to harm a person, social group, organisation or country⁷. Disinformation can become misinformation when those spreading it believe that it is true. A **rumour** is unverified information and could be true or not.

Misinformation and disinformation can pose significant challenges for media and communication. The rapid spread of false or misleading information, online or in person, can severely undermine disaster risk reduction communication. This can include creating and sharing content that misleads people about effective safety measures, local emergency procedures or the severity of a disaster. The resulting confusion and mistrust can hinder response efforts, delay critical actions and ultimately exacerbate the impacts of disasters.

Key research questions:

- What (or who) are some of the sources of mis- and disinformation around weather and hazards - or the political response to them? What communication platforms do they use?
- What mis- or disinformation content/narratives are circulating locally? What ‘manipulation techniques’ are being used by those spreading disinformation?
- What impact is mis- or disinformation having and with whom?
- When is mis- or disinformation most prevalent? Does it increase around certain types of disaster events (eg in relation to natural hazards before or after they occur)? How long does it remain in circulation?

⁷ Journalism, ‘Fake News’ and Disinformation: [A Handbook for Journalism Education and Training \(UNESCO\)](#)

RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING MIS- AND DISINFORMATION

DESK RESEARCH

Conduct desk research to find reports that identify the primary channels, sources and type of narratives associated with mis- and disinformation.

Consider what sort of misleading or inaccurate information has spread in the target location before, during or after a disaster.

Do any credible reports highlight the sources of this mis- or disinformation, or who was impacted by them?

Do they provide details of the tactics used to spread disinformation and what the prevalent narratives have been?

If you struggle to find context-specific information, you could look at patterns of mis and disinformation around similar instances in other locations/countries. This might give you an idea of some of the inaccurate narratives and impacts that could happen and could inform further primary research.

Useful sources for searching by country:

- BBC Monitoring, [Media Reports](#)

Guidance:

- BBC [Beyond Fake News](#)
- BBC Media Action, [Tackling information disorder](#)
- Meta [Digital Literacy](#)
- OECD, [Facts not fakes: Tackling disinformation, strengthening](#)

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Monitor unverified, false or misleading information circulating within different population groups, perhaps via some sort of ongoing feedback mechanism with affected people. This could be done using a range of methods, eg interviews, social media interactions, a telephone panel, or suggestion boxes.

Use social listening tools to identify what mis- or disinformation narratives are prevalent related to particular topics or issues (e.g. a disaster), and identify which accounts/actors are responsible for creating and spreading such information.

Conduct interviews with key informants such as media, government, and other disaster risk communication practitioners.

Example questions include:

- What false information has circulated during previous disaster responses?
- Was there a lack of information from official and credible sources at the time (an information vacuum)?
- What level of uncertainty was there? Eg Fast moving situation, unclear communication, various narratives)
- Has mis- or disinformation impacted your work in the community?
- What impact did these have, and with whom?

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information integrity

- Pesa Check [Decoding the numbers that shape our world](#)
- UN Policy Brief, [Information Integrity](#)
- University of Cambridge, BBC Media Action, Jigsaw, [A practical guide to pre-bunking misinformation](#)

- What strategy(ies) do you use to combat mis- or disinformation?

Conduct focus groups with people from different demographic groups as well as media, government and other practitioners.

Example questions include:

- How concerned are you about the level of false and misleading information locally?
- How frequently do you think you have come across false or misleading information?
- Where have you come across this (in person, in traditional media, on social media)?
- How confident are you in your ability to identify false or misleading information?
- Have you ever shared information that seemed accurate at the time, but you later realised was false or misleading (If so, did you share this in person, through messaging apps or on social media)?
- What steps, if any, do you take to check accuracy of information you come across? What about information you share with others? Does this differ for information you share in person or through apps/online?
- What actions, if any, do you take if you encounter false or misleading information online or in person?

How to use this data

Knowing what fuels rumours among specific population groups (eg emotion, fear or political bias) can help you to anticipate and counter mis- and disinformation through timely, regular and transparent communication via trusted channels.

Consider how your risk communication strategy will address mis- and disinformation.

– Sometimes you will need to counter inaccurate information if it is spreading at scale and doing significant harm, but at other times highlighting mis- or disinformation can actually draw attention to a rumour that would otherwise fade away.

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ORGANISATIONS - MEDIA

Many different kinds of organisations influence disaster risk reduction, including the private sector, schools, hospitals, faith-based groups, etc.

In this section, we will focus exclusively on media organisations and how understanding them can inform initiatives to improve disaster risk communication.

Tailoring your communication plan to the dynamics of the media environment will strengthen its impact and effectiveness. Understanding barriers and opportunities within the media and communication environment will allow you to understand what is possible, where to focus resources, and how to communicate effectively in that context. Collecting data and information to form a deep understanding of the media environment can also help to determine whether the media will be a willing and engaged stakeholder in your disaster risk communication.

Underfunded media practitioners are less likely to have the resources to co-operate with, or create an enabling environment for, your communication – media outlets that produce high-quality journalism will be better able to work with data and information sources. As a result, you might decide to include capacity strengthening for media professionals and communicators in your plan.

Consider the following in relation to all types of media organisations, eg government departments, private companies, and print, broadcast and digital media outlets.

Key research questions:

- Media sources
 - What sources of media exist in the region? (Eg state-owned, public-interest, independent, commercially run)
 - What media channels do they provide? (Eg broadcast TV, broadcast radio, digital, print)
 - What is the reach of these channels? What is the geographical reach? What kind of audiences do they reach?
 - Are they always available or only sometimes?
 - What type of content do they produce (public interest/commercial? What type of programmes do they produce (eg news and weather)?
 - What was their role in previous emergencies/disasters, risk management? How often and how well did they cover these types of topics?
 - What are audiences' perceptions of the media channels?

The following questions can be applied to individual media organisations to determine their potential role or need for support.

- Financial
 - How is the media organisation funded?
 - How well are they funded? Are they profitable and sustainable, or do they run a deficit?
 - Are they able to adequately pay their staff?
 - Are they able to pay for the technology they need?
 - Can they (and do they) properly invest in content?
 - How does the economic environment and their business model affect the media organisation's ability to support disaster risk communication?
- Infrastructure and business continuity
 - How robust is the media and communication infrastructure in the face of natural hazards?
 - What business continuity plans exist to help the media continue operating in the event of an emergency, Or any disruptive event?
 - How will media practitioners likely be personally affected in an emergency, and how might this affect business continuity?
- Skills
 - What editorial and production skills do senior staff and programme makers have to produce effective and engaging content?
 - What business management skills do staff have to maintain operations?
- Quality of content
 - What is the quality of news and current affairs programming? (Eg, are guiding editorial principles and practice fit for purpose?)
 - What is the quality of non-news content, eg entertainment?
- Diversity
 - What level of diversity exists within the media organisations? Does this differ with 'on-air' and 'off-air' staff?
 - How does this affect media content, including languages used?

RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING MEDIA ORGANISATIONS

DESK RESEARCH

Analyse the key features and dynamics of the location you are targeting, including the impact of the local political and economic environment on the media.

Check the source and date of information you gather as media environments rapidly change and evolve.

Collate the information into a report with analysis of any media gaps, challenges and opportunities.

Resources:

- CDAC Network [Media Landscape Guides](#)
- DW Akademie [Media Viability: New Indicators Show What is at Stake](#)
- European Journalism Centre [Media Landscapes](#)

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Interview key stakeholders in the location, including media owners, journalists and rights defenders, civil society organisation and non-governmental organisation (NGO) representatives, policy-makers, academics and key staff from professional bodies related to media and communication.

Ask predetermined and consistent interview questions that cover media ownership, organisational structures and practices, and how these are informed by legislation, regulations and policies (eg, governance, media reform, journalistic practices and professionalism, the media market, media monopolies or pluralism, and media freedom).

You should also discuss representation, diversity, gender and ethnicity in relation to the media.

Suggested questions (in addition to the ones above)

- How resilient do media organisations feel to environmental shocks and stresses?

How to use this data

Use your detailed understanding of the media landscape to choose potential media partners, support them to do more effective risk communication, and tailor your disaster risk communication activities and content to maximise their effectiveness.

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Governance - Media

Media outlets need to be viable and resilient to political pressures in order to maintain their editorial independence and fulfil their critical role of providing society with relevant, timely and reliable information. Governments can curtail media freedom through a variety of means - financial and regulatory pressure, public denunciation of journalists and media, and monitoring, censoring and manipulating media spaces. The ability to question and hold to account governments that are responsible for protecting their populations from disasters, is then curtailed.

Key research questions:

- How is **media and communication governed** locally?
 - How is it regulated?
 - What level of media freedom exists?
 - Does any censorship occur (self-imposed or otherwise)? Does this vary by topic?
- How is **media regulated for disaster risk management**?
 - What protocols and expectations exist between media and government? (Eg, are media outlets obliged to communicate official messages? If so, in what circumstances/on what topics?)
 - How does media freedom affect local disaster risk governance and management? (Eg, is there open public dialogue about risk governance and accountability?)
- How does media **governance and the political environment affect disaster risk communication**? (Eg, does disinformation undermine trust in disaster risk communication?)

RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING MEDIA GOVERNANCE

DESK RESEARCH	PRIMARY RESEARCH
<p>Conduct desk research to understand the freedom of the press and reports of political interference in journalists' work such as harassment, fines, imprisonment or violence from government actors.</p> <p>Aim to understand how much freedom individuals have to express their personal views on political issues without fear of retribution.</p>	<p>Conduct interviews with media practitioners and stakeholders at key media organisations serving your target location to understand levels of freedom of expression in the media.</p> <p>Example questions are adapted from the World Press Freedom Index: questionnaire 2022 (Reporters Without Borders.)</p>

- BBC Media Action, [Data Portal](#)
- [BBC Media Action media guides – Search by country](#)
- BBC Monitoring [Essential Media Insight](#)
- [Committee to Protect Journalists \(Article 19\)](#)
- Freedom House [Freedom in the World dataset](#)
- Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net](#)
- Reporters without Borders [Press Freedom Index](#)
- Transparency International [Corruption Perceptions Index](#)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [Media Development Indicators](#)
- Vision of Humanity [Global Peace Index](#)

- What challenges does the media face in being able to question the government about risk preparedness and early warnings in public?
- Is there government editorial control of state-run media outlets?
- Do journalists or media organisations often face prosecution, imprisonment or fines due to their content?
- Does the governance of media limit people's ability to access media coverage and information that reflects a diversity of viewpoints?
- Does the media have protocols in place for emergency early warning announcements? Are these protocols timely, accurate, accessible and trusted?

How to use this data

Use this data to determine how to adapt communication plans to work effectively within the governance structures. In contexts where there are restrictions on media freedoms, carefully frame your communication and consider more solution focused accountability.

It is also important to understand the challenges, barriers and restrictions that the local media are facing so that you are realistic about the role they can play in supporting DRR plans (including accountability for these). You may also need to consider whether there is any support you can provide to local media to help them tackle these contextual challenges and barriers, to improve their effectiveness.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To help you understand research methods:

1. BBC Media Action, '[Research at BBC Media Action Putting our audience first.](#)'
2. (UK) Government Social Research Profession (2022), '[A guide to inclusive social research practices](#)'