

**WHAT ROLE
DOES LIFELINE
PREPAREDNESS
PLAY IN ENABLING
EFFECTIVE
COMMUNICATION
IN A CRISIS?
CASE STUDIES
FROM MYANMAR
AND NEPAL**

What role does Lifeline preparedness play in enabling effective communication in a crisis?

Case studies from Myanmar and Nepal

This study evaluates to what extent BBC Media Action's preparedness work has built its own capacity and that of its partners to produce Lifeline broadcasts that meet audiences' information and communication needs in a crisis.

It presents case studies of Lifeline responses during two humanitarian crises in 2015 – the Nepal earthquakes and flooding in Myanmar. It draws research insights from both case studies, and presents the key findings on what worked to help prepare BBC Media Action and partners to respond effectively in these crises.

It concludes that knowledge and skills gained during Lifeline preparedness training enabled BBC Media Action staff and other media practitioners to produce programmes that audiences considered relevant and valuable. Preparedness work, including the Lifeline training, was effective in building relationships between media, government and humanitarian practitioners. When disaster struck, these relationships led to collaboration between these actors and enabled important, accurate information to be broadcast quickly to people affected by the crisis.

What is Lifeline programming?

In the aftermath of humanitarian disasters, lack of information can exacerbate suffering and reduce the likelihood of survival. People need answers to basic questions such as “What happened?”, “Where can we find food, shelter and water?” and “How can we protect ourselves?”¹

Mass media and other communication interventions can provide life-saving information and guidance amid chaos and confusion, helping communities to understand what is happening and what they can do to help themselves.²

BBC Media Action's Lifeline programming is special media programming for people who are facing humanitarian crisis. It aims to alleviate people's suffering and assist with their recovery. It differs from conventional news reporting because it is created for people affected by crisis, rather than to inform wider audiences about the crisis. It provides timely, relevant and practical information on issues such as sources of food, shelter and medical care, and can provide psychological support. It also gives affected people the opportunity to voice their needs, tell their stories, ask questions and share solutions.

BBC Media Action responds to humanitarian emergencies in different ways, according to the context. Projects usually involve broadcasting emergency programmes (with partners such as community, commercial or state broadcasters, or the BBC World Service language services) and working with the wider humanitarian relief effort.

BBC Media Action's emergency preparedness and response activities connect closely with the broader emergency context in each case, recognising that communication is a cross-cutting theme in the humanitarian sector. These projects are led by people with in-depth knowledge of the local emergency context and media landscape.

Example objectives of a Lifeline programme

- Provide timely, practical and actionable information that crisis-affected people can use to improve their lives
- Be clear, accessible and engaging to affected people
- Provide a channel of communication for affected people to make their voices heard
- Provide information that is accurate and verified, distinguishing between rumour and fact
- Work with the relief effort to obtain and share information that will be useful to affected communities
- Motivate people to take action to improve their situation and that of their community
- Create a sense of community and connectedness among affected people, by sharing stories of how others are coping
- Be a source of encouragement and hope among affected people

How BBC Media Action prepares for crises

Since 2012 BBC Media Action has carried out different levels of emergency preparedness work in 13 countries vulnerable to rapid onset emergencies, as well as with BBC Media Action head office staff and BBC World Service colleagues in London. This has been funded by a Global Grant from the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

BBC Media Action's Lifeline preparedness work seeks to equip humanitarian, government and media practitioners, as well as BBC Media Action staff, with the knowledge, skills and processes to meet the information and communication needs of people affected by humanitarian crises. One major aspect is training, which aims to build relationships with the ultimate goal of improving co-ordination between media, government and humanitarian responders during a sudden onset emergency. Training and scenario-based activities aim to prepare BBC Media Action staff and other media practitioners to produce Lifeline programmes in an emergency.

The Lifeline training modules draw on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) criteria³ of humanitarian aid, wider sector learning on what is effective in crisis situations and good communication practice. For example, training participants have to create engaging content that is accurate, relevant (useful, practical and timely) and effective in giving people affected by crisis a voice and enabling them to take action.⁴ These criteria also inform BBC Media Action's research to understand the effectiveness of Lifeline broadcasts in meeting people's needs.⁵

Beyond training, BBC Media Action country offices in disaster-prone areas have developed preparedness plans that map hazards, key response actors and response options. Preparedness also includes developing tools and resources such as a manual to guide local media in producing Lifeline broadcasts, and pre-prepared messages to broadcast immediately after a rapid onset emergency.

In the event of a humanitarian crisis, BBC Media Action's Lifeline preparedness team, based in London, also supports country offices with mentoring and guidance.

Figure 1: How BBC Media Action's preparedness activities aim to contribute to an effective communications response

The diagram illustrates how preparedness activities could help to strengthen the capacity of organisations and practitioners to create Lifeline programmes that help audiences to survive and cope in a crisis. BBC Media Action acknowledges that all of these activities sit within, and are affected by, the broader emergency context and environment.



Research methodology

The evaluation focuses on the two countries where BBC Media Action has completed Lifeline preparedness work and subsequently responded to crises – the Nepal earthquakes in April–May 2015 and flooding in Myanmar following Cyclone Komen in July 2015.

It is intended to contribute to broader assessments and reviews of BBC Media Action's emergency preparedness and response work, in order to improve its current and future efficiency and effectiveness.

This evaluation does not include analysis of the broader emergency contexts and environments.

The study aims to answer:

1. What role did preparedness activities play in building BBC Media Action's capacity (at practitioner and organisation level) to respond to these humanitarian crises?
2. What role did preparedness activities play in building other Lifeline trainees' capacity to respond to these crises?
3. How effective were the subsequent Lifeline radio programmes at meeting the needs of audiences affected by these crises?

It uses the indicators in table 1 as a framework for evaluating the impact of preparedness work at practitioner, organisation and system levels, and to examine the impact of Lifeline programming on audiences.

Although BBC Media Action's preparedness work did not specifically aim to achieve change at the system level, these indicators are included because system level constraints can influence the effectiveness of BBC Media Action's work; and because – in some cases – preparedness work did achieve change at system level.

Key definitions

Practitioners include local and international humanitarian agency staff, government officials and media practitioners (predominantly journalists and producers) as well as BBC Media Action staff (including production, programme and research staff).

Organisations refer to humanitarian agencies, media organisations, government departments and BBC Media Action.

System refers to the wider environment within which organisations and practitioners work. In a humanitarian crisis, this incorporates government, humanitarian and media organisations and how they interconnect.

Table 1: Indicators for Lifeline preparedness work

 Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have better understanding of the role of media and communication to meet the information and communication needs of populations affected by crisis• Have confidence, skills and knowledge to launch Lifeline programming in a sudden onset emergency• Are willing to work with other actors in a humanitarian response to meet communities' information and communication needs• Apply knowledge and skills learned in Lifeline training in a crisis response
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 Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrate Lifeline communication into organisational strategy• Establish and use systems and tools to address rapid onset emergencies• Build effective partnerships with other organisations• Have funding strategies for emergency response• Ensure that all staff understand key roles, responsibilities and procedures during a response (BBC Media Action staff only)
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 System	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Co-ordination mechanisms are in place between government, humanitarian and media agencies to communicate effectively with people affected by crisis• Communication questions are integrated into agency and joint needs assessment tools• Communication platforms are in place for information sharing between affected communities and agencies during emergencies
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 Audiences⁶	Relevance and appropriateness of the programmes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are able to access the programmes• Find Lifeline programmes useful, practical and easy to apply to their situation• Trust and engage with the programmes• Have a channel of communication to make their voices heard
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	Effectiveness of the programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are encouraged and motivated by the programmes• Have confidence in themselves and others to cope with the crisis• Feel a sense of community and connectedness among other people affected by the crisis• Share and discuss the programmes with others• Learn helpful and useful information from the programmes to help them cope with the crisis• Are motivated to take action to improve their situation and that of their community
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In both countries, research had been conducted during the Lifeline projects to obtain audience feedback and evaluate the programmes' effectiveness

in meeting audiences' needs. The study draws on this existing research, as well as new primary research undertaken for this purpose (see table 2).

Table 2: Research that informed this study

Research question	Research study and methodology	Date
1. What role did preparedness activities play in building BBC Media Action's capacity to respond to these crises?	<p>Primary research conducted for this study</p> <p>In-depth interviews with three BBC Media Action staff members in Nepal, three in Myanmar and four at the London head office. All staff had been Lifeline trained and/or involved in preparedness activities, and were then involved in one of the Lifeline responses evaluated here.</p>	June–August 2016
2. What role did preparedness activities play in building Lifeline trainees' capacity to respond to the crises?	<p>Nepal Lifeline: <i>Milijuli Nepali (Together Nepal)</i> interim qualitative evaluation</p> <p>This study uses data from in-depth interviews with four media trainees, two humanitarian trainees and two BBC Media Action staff. All participants were Lifeline trained in 2013 and were involved in the 2015 Nepal earthquake response.</p>	August 2015
3. How effective were the subsequent Lifeline programmes at meeting the needs of audiences affected by crisis?	<p>Myanmar Lifeline radio programme evaluation – <i>Shin Than Chin Kan Lan Mya (Linking Hands to Keep Living, referred to in this report as Linking Hands)</i></p> <p>In-depth interviews with 16 listeners who contacted the Linking Hands hotline during the emergency response.</p> <p>In-depth interviews with three humanitarian experts who participated in the show and the two Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV)⁷ trainees involved in producing the show.</p>	December 2015
	<p>Nepal Lifeline evaluation <i>Milijuli Nepali</i> for Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)</p> <p>Qualitative evaluation in three of the most affected districts – Rasuwa, Nuwakot and Gorkha, including, in each district:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two focus group discussions • Two in-depth interviews with key humanitarian professionals • One in-depth interview with a key media professional • Five in-depth interviews with humanitarian professionals and five with media professionals participating in the Lifeline training 	January–June 2016
	<p>Nepal nationally representative quantitative survey</p> <p>A survey of 4,000 people in 25 districts in Nepal was carried out with the main objective of measuring the reach, impact and outcome of BBC Media Action's media programmes, including <i>Milijuli Nepali</i>. Five districts out of those 25 sampled districts were severely affected by the earthquake.</p>	December 2015



Myanmar July 2015: Communities displaced by flooding needed to know how to source safe drinking water. Ye Aung Thu/AFP/Getty Images

Case study: Lifeline radio programming for flood-affected communities in Myanmar

What preparedness activities took place before the 2015 crisis?

BBC Media Action has been carrying out preparedness for Lifeline activities with the government, media and humanitarian community since 2014. These activities include:⁸



Practitioner level

- Lifeline training for BBC Media Action staff (June 2014)
- Two Lifeline trainings, with a total of 70 participants, including broadcasters, representatives of humanitarian clusters⁹ and government ministries, covering how to communicate with people affected by humanitarian crises (June 2014 and July 2015)
- Earthquake simulation in partnership with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), involving 140 humanitarian and government actors. This included training six MRTV journalists to produce a Lifeline radio programme



Organisational level

- Having a BBC Media Action country preparedness plan in place
- Having an emergency fund for Lifeline responses available at BBC Media Action head office since early 2015
- Lifeline production manual translated and shared with media stations in Myanmar
- Lifeline introduction workshop with 10 MRTV assistant directors (December 2014)



System level

- Consultation with 20 participants including representatives from relevant government departments, MRTV, Myanmar Red Cross Society, Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group and the humanitarian clusters, resulting in 25 agreed essential messages for earthquake or cyclone affected communities (March 2015). Audiences from five areas vulnerable to disaster pre-tested the messages, which were launched at a second phase of Lifeline training days before the flooding

What happened when the crisis hit?

When Cyclone Komen hit on 30 July 2015, it caused widespread flooding and landslides in 12 of Myanmar's 14 states, killing 125 people and displacing 1.7 million.¹⁰

On 2 August, when the extent of the disaster became clear, BBC Media Action approached its long-term partner MRTV about broadcasting a Lifeline programme on its national radio station. By 3 August, a BBC Media Action team had relocated to MRTV offices and the radio magazine show *Shin Than Chin Kan Lan Mya* (Linking Hands to Keep Living) was on air.

Emergency programmes in the first two weeks focused on how to access safe drinking water and hygienic sanitation practices, how to stay safe if evacuated and how to protect family health. Two five-minute radio programmes were repeated six times a day on MRTV, as well as a two-minute Lifeline bulletin that was translated into five local languages and broadcast on MRTV's ethnic FM radio stations. Linking Hands transitioned from a production centre in a remote location to MRTV's Yangon bureau, to enable closer connections with humanitarian actors and the BBC Media Action office.

After two weeks, as people's communication needs changed, the format changed to a bi-weekly, 15-minute programme focused on how flood-affected people could recover their livelihoods and deal with the destruction in and around their homes. After its first month, Linking Hands was reduced to a weekly programme. At the end of October it came off the air.

What did Lifeline preparedness work achieve at different levels?



Practitioner level

Staff gained confidence, knowledge and skills to produce appropriate Lifeline programming

BBC Media Action staff said that the confidence, knowledge and skills gained through the Lifeline training enabled them to launch a Lifeline programme soon after the onset of the crisis. They reported employing techniques learned in the training, such

as sourcing and sharing practical information and sharing listeners' stories on air. They felt the training gave them a strong understanding of the principles and value of Lifeline, which helped them get buy-in from MRTV and humanitarian staff.

Relationships built between media, humanitarian and government practitioners led to collaboration during the emergency response

BBC Media Action staff said they felt confident about contacting humanitarian and government trainees they had met during training and were able to share these contacts with MRTV. MRTV was then able to include humanitarian experts as guests and provide up-to-date information from these agencies on Linking Hands.

Local media practitioners created and broadcast their own Lifeline content

BBC Media Action staff affirmed that local radio trainees incorporated Lifeline content into their everyday programming after the flooding, broadcasting their own content as well as using pre-agreed messages from the Lifeline manual.

Humanitarian practitioners gained an understanding of what information was useful to communities

This enabled them to prioritise sharing practical and audience-centred information with the radio production team.

Limited resources at the partner station meant that the staff assigned to the Lifeline programme were not trained, and were working on other projects

The two MRTV staff members assigned to the radio programme were not the MRTV staff who had participated in Lifeline training, so they had to learn about the Lifeline approach during the response. Staff from both BBC Media Action and MRTV felt the MRTV Lifeline team was under-resourced, so could not dedicate all of its time to the Lifeline programme.



Organisation level

Preparedness plans were used in the response

BBC Media Action had completed its emergency preparedness plan and collated all relevant

humanitarian cluster contacts before the flooding, both of which were used in the emergency response. Interviews highlighted that BBC Media Action staff involved in preparedness planning had a greater understanding of key responsibilities and procedures than others.

Access to an emergency response fund facilitated a quick emergency response

BBC Media Action staff said that being able to access the emergency fund before external funding was found enabled a decision to respond as soon as the government of Myanmar declared a state of emergency.

A long-term partnership with MRTV led to a quick collaboration

BBC Media Action staff felt the organisation had a positive, long-term relationship with MRTV, which – coupled with MRTV’s commitment to media intervention in a crisis – led to a quick collaborative response.

Addressing audience queries that challenged the government was difficult

The radio programme evaluation highlighted that it was difficult for MRTV to broadcast content that challenged the government. Consequently, some audience questions and concerns were impossible to address on air.

Lack of support from some government departments made finding accurate information on some issues a challenge

BBC Media Action staff said that some government departments were not open to being interviewed for the programme, as they had not attended Lifeline training and did not understand the role of Lifeline programming in sharing useful information with communities.

System level

Preparedness work led to full and proactive engagement from the humanitarian sector

Before preparedness work was carried out, BBC Media Action had been denied access to cluster meetings (such as during Cyclone Mahasen in 2013). Despite explanations about its activities and the role of communication in emergency responses, BBC Media Action was viewed as part of the conventional “news” media, and therefore perceived as unable to play a part in helping with the response. BBC Media Action staff felt that subsequent emergency preparedness work had built relationships that led to strong engagement as soon as the 2015 crisis hit.

“When we asked whether there was any plan for the ministry to give loans to local people, they said they didn’t have any. But they said not to broadcast that.”

MRTV Lifeline trainee, Myanmar

What BBC Media Action staff in Myanmar said:

“Because of the training, relationships were there and we could contact the humanitarian specialists really easily as they knew we weren’t like normal journalists – we were not strangers.”

“The training helped me to understand what content was important to the affected community, and why. It helped me to feel confident to produce the content and support MRTV with it.”

“I know the translated Lifeline manual was being used by different radio stations. One of the media trainees was using it and broadcasting Lifeline public service announcements from her station.”

“We couldn’t work very well with the health ministry – it was a challenge. They didn’t want to answer our questions or give us information. But then, they had not done the training.”

Agreeing key messages led to greater awareness about Lifeline within the relief sector

BBC Media Action staff felt that the consultation over common messages promoted awareness about the role of Lifeline programming among government departments and humanitarian agencies, who were consequently willing to be interviewed for the radio programme. This also ensured that all actors (local media, humanitarian agencies and government departments) knew what to communicate to communities as soon as the crisis started.

Relationships built during Lifeline training enabled BBC Media Action staff to influence decision-making

BBC Media Action was able to insert questions about information and communication needs into the joint agency needs assessment thanks to relationships built with humanitarian practitioners during Lifeline training. This resulted in new data on communities' information needs, which helped production teams tailor the content of Lifeline programming.

Limited co-ordination between humanitarian agencies and the media

Humanitarian experts felt that co-ordination between humanitarian agencies, and with media, was limited and in some cases led to contradictory information being shared.

Did the Lifeline programme meet audience needs?

The findings outlined below have been selected from the Linking Hands evaluation as they examine audience perspectives¹¹ of the show, in relation to the audience level indicators in table 1.

“This is a very useful programme for us. It is like opening our eyes and ears. The information is useful, especially about how we can purify water and about sanitation.”

Female listener, Ayeyarwady

Audiences reported that Linking Hands provided relevant, practical, useful information that audiences trusted

Flood-affected communities said that the programme was a key source of relevant, practical and useful information, which was clear and easy to understand. Listeners particularly valued information relating to health and hygiene, as it was easy to implement. A minority of interviewees struggled to recall information they had heard on the programme and some felt there was sometimes too much information in each episode.

Audience members said that interviews with experts from the government and humanitarian sector, as well as the voices of other listeners, helped to build their trust in the programme.

Linking Hands gave audiences an opportunity to hear the voices of other flood-affected people

Listeners said that they appreciated the opportunity to voice concerns and ask questions through the programme's hotline.

Linking Hands facilitated conversations between flood-affected communities and the relief effort

Linking Hands successfully brought listeners, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), experts and the government into one conversation, bridging the gap between affected communities and humanitarian responders.

“I like the programme because it's related to flood-affected people. I like it because I talked about what happened here and then they aired it – that's remarkable.”

Young male listener, Rakhine

However, phone-ins to Linking Hands sometimes raised callers' expectations that the broadcaster could resolve specific issues

While a Lifeline team can encourage discussion of issues on air, it cannot resolve them directly.



Nepal earthquakes 2015: Connecting people with missing loved ones is one role Lifeline programming can play. Roberto Schmidt/AFP/Getty Images

Case study: Lifeline radio programming for earthquake-affected communities in Nepal

What preparedness activities took place before the 2015 crisis?

BBC Media Action had carried out Lifeline preparedness work in Nepal from 2012–2014. Many of the trainees were involved in the response to the 2015 earthquakes. The preparedness activities comprised:

 Practitioner level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four training sessions on how to communicate with people affected by disaster. The 75 participants included BBC Media Action staff, humanitarian actors from different UN clusters, telecommunications providers, government officials from the National Emergency Centre, the army and the police, and broadcasters including the BBC World Service and national and local radio stations (January and May 2013) • Further training of 49 media and emergency relief providers in locations prone to flooding (July and September 2013)
 Organisation level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BBC Media Action and the BBC Nepali Service had a joint preparedness plan in place since early 2013 covering human resources, translated messages ready to be broadcast in the event of an earthquake and technology back-up plans in case of power or equipment failures • An emergency fund for Lifeline responses was available at BBC Media Action head office • Lifeline training with 23 army representatives was carried out (August 2013)
 System level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops with 30 media and relief providers developed common messages to use in a crisis (January and May 2013)

What happened when the crisis hit?

A 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal on 25 April 2015, followed by a 7.3 magnitude earthquake on 12 May, collectively affecting 14 of Nepal's 75 districts. In total, almost 9,000 people died, over 20,000 were injured and more than 3.5 million people lost their homes.¹²

BBC Media Action and the BBC Nepali Service started broadcasting Lifeline messages within eight hours of the earthquake in the latter's daily news bulletins. The day after the earthquake a special Lifeline programme was broadcast in the time-slot and under the name of the long-running radio debate show *Sajha Sawal* (Common Questions), providing life-saving information via approximately 270 radio stations through the BBC Nepali Service and the Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (ACORAB). On 4 May the Lifeline team launched radio magazine show *Milijuli Nepali* (Together Nepal), with 15-minute episodes broadcast twice a day, six days a week across the entire country as a result of partnerships between BBC Nepali Service, British Forces Broadcasting Services and 400 other radio stations.

Milijuli Nepali was informed by continuous needs assessments and audience feedback, incorporating secondary data sources and primary research conducted by BBC Media Action through Facebook and mobile app surveys in the most affected districts. This information was shared with humanitarian actors through online dashboards¹³ to help them tailor their communication to meet communities' needs.

“The Lifeline training helped me to understand the role of media. Before this, I was totally blank. This training has brought us confidence to achieve 100% good results with collaboration.”

Humanitarian Lifeline trainee, Ramechhap

What did Lifeline preparedness work achieve at different levels?



Practitioner level

Staff understood the role they could play in the earthquake response and were confident in their ability to provide life-saving information

Lifeline training gave BBC Media Action staff the confidence to produce a programme that would provide life-saving information to affected communities. They understood the role and principles of Lifeline programming, particularly the need to share actionable information in the most appropriate formats, and said they felt committed to contributing to the response by producing quality programmes.

Relationships built up before, during and after the Lifeline training were critical to producing the programme

Staff felt that new relationships with humanitarian and government actors, as well as with BBC Nepali Service staff, were critical in helping them to acquire useful information to produce the programme.

National and local radio stations broadcast their own Lifeline content

Lifeline training resulted in national and local broadcasters incorporating Lifeline content into their programmes and facilitated their interactions with humanitarian agencies. Local media stations found that humanitarian actors were open to talking to journalists, as they now understood the value of Lifeline programming, which was not the case before the training.

Getting information verified by humanitarian and government sources was challenging

Despite relationships being in place, getting accurate information was challenging, as government officials and humanitarian agencies were busy and in high demand. Pre-prepared messages were useful, but only in the immediate aftermath of the response. After that, people needed information that was more specific to the changing situation.



Organisation level

Having a joint preparedness plan in place across organisations facilitated a quick, effective, co-ordinated response

BBC Media Action and the BBC Nepali Service's¹⁴ joint preparedness plan specified emergency contacts, co-ordination points and directions for next steps. BBC Media Action staff felt that this facilitated a quick and effective response between the two organisations, with a clear division of labour after the earthquakes. Co-ordination between the organisations was considered critical, as staff worked together in London and Nepal to create and get Lifeline content broadcast on the BBC Nepali Service as quickly as possible.

The Lifeline preparedness plan included a set of life-saving messages that were immediately broadcast in the relevant language directly after the earthquakes.

Access to the BBC Media Action emergency fund meant a Lifeline team could be employed quickly

BBC Media Action staff said that this was helpful as the organisation could quickly decide to employ two former staff members who were Lifeline experts.

Mentoring support was mobilised quickly to support the Lifeline response

Project management support and Lifeline expertise from London, as well as from BBC Media Action offices in neighbouring countries and the wider BBC, helped get the Lifeline project off the ground quickly.

Lack of information on the status of broadcast partners made it difficult to estimate how many people were listening

BBC Media Action staff explained that, although they were in contact with most partner stations, it was difficult to contact some partners and therefore to be confident of what the full coverage of the programme was.



System level

Relationships built during preparedness work facilitated the response

BBC Media Action staff felt that because organisations involved in the UN cluster system, and other relevant humanitarian and media organisations, understood the role of Lifeline programming, collaboration and information sharing went more smoothly than it would otherwise have done. A Communication with Communities working group was in place, which helped BBC Media Action to work in a co-ordinated way with other humanitarian actors.

“Being trained in Lifeline resulted in us immediately sitting together and discussing how we could incorporate Lifeline elements into our programming.”

Media Lifeline trainee

The influx of humanitarian agencies unfamiliar with BBC Media Action led to competition for the best broadcast slots

Although relationships had been built at local level, during the earthquake response there was an influx of international humanitarian staff who were not familiar with Lifeline programming or the role of BBC Media Action. Competition for broadcast slots increased, as different humanitarian agencies pitched to broadcast a programme. BBC Media Action research participants felt this led to *Milijuli Nepali* being broadcast at a time when some rural audiences were working or sleeping.

Challenges with co-ordination at system level highlighted the importance of establishing strong personal and individual contacts

Although the Communication with Communities working group played an important role in co-ordination, BBC Media Action staff felt that it struggled to be effective in terms of information sharing. This was also referenced in a sector-wide study on the Nepal response.¹⁵ For BBC Media Action staff, this heightened the importance of establishing strong personal and organisation-level contacts to call on for up-to-date information.

What BBC Media Action staff in Nepal said:

“The most important thing we learned in training was to show local role models coming up with their own solutions. This really worked – these stories really motivated other affected people.”

“Journalists from other media organisations started Lifeline programmes. When they tried to contact ministries and humanitarian agencies it all went smoothly as they knew media would be contacting them for precious Lifeline information. This would not have happened before.”

“It’s not as easy following the office plan when you have to look after your own family.”

“The challenge was that it was difficult to get information – everyone was in need of it but no one knew who had it. BBC Media Action saw it as their role to consolidate information and broadcast it to the people, but even we had trouble finding it.”

“The actual situation was very different to the ‘simulated’ scenario. More scenarios (in training) and a checklist about what to do in different scenarios would have been very helpful.”

“It is no good just doing the training once – you need follow-up, otherwise when something happens people have forgotten everything!”



Did the Lifeline programme meet audience needs?

These findings have been selected from three evaluations of *Milijuli Nepali*. They examine audience perspectives of the show in relation to the audience level indicators in table 1.

Almost all audience members (97% of those reached by *Milijuli Nepali*) felt that the information provided was relevant, practical and easy to implement

Milijuli Nepali reached 14% of the Nepali population living in the most affected areas, according to a quantitative survey conducted seven months after the earthquakes.

Audience members trusted *Milijuli Nepali* information and felt that it was provided in a timely and accurate way

Participants in the qualitative survey¹⁶ attributed their high trust in the programme to the fact that its production team travelled to meet people in earthquake-affected areas. Some said that they felt the programme was not long enough and did not cover certain issues in adequate depth.

“Many women did not have an idea what they should do after the earthquake, how to be safe. The programme included stories from different places, which motivated us to work together and copy the things they practised.”

Female listener, Gorkha

Milijuli Nepali stood out because it focused on solutions, and because stories from affected people made the programme relevant and appealing. The programme had a strong focus on including voices from affected villages, with people sharing the challenges they faced and how they dealt with them. Audience members felt that these stories, the language, presentation, dialects and people included in the programme made it relevant and appealing. They felt that the programme stood apart from others because it focused not on damages, casualties or destruction, but on how people managed to survive and address the challenges they faced.

Audiences felt that *Milijuli Nepali* provided an opportunity for them to get their voices heard through face-to-face interaction with the radio team. Many had heard their community members' voices in the programme, or seen the team recording in their community, and therefore perceived *Milijuli Nepali* as an opportunity to share their stories.

“I like the programme very much, so I shared it with one of my neighbours and asked her to listen to the programme. The programme cares for us.”

Female listener, rural Nuwakot

Some audience members reported taking action as a result of hearing a solution to problems they were facing, and many recommended the programme to others. However, some said that the programme was aired too late for many people in rural areas, and audiences felt that it was not adequately marketed, so they didn't know when it was airing.

A focus group in a village revealed that local people had been having problems with dew dripping from the ceiling in their temporary shelters. This made the shelters cold and damp, making children and the elderly ill. After listening to an episode of *Milijuli Nepali* giving advice on how to stop this (by putting old cloth and fabric over the top of the roofs), a few villagers came to the village committee suggesting they try this approach. Focus group participants explained that it proved very successful and the whole settlement started doing this.

Key findings: what worked?

Lifeline training built staff confidence

Training a critical mass of BBC Media Action staff in Lifeline principles enabled them to lead the Lifeline communication response and support others who had not been trained.

Lifeline leads in each country kept staff up-to-date with Lifeline preparedness and maintained relationships with partners.

Crisis simulations were very effective in giving staff confidence to produce Lifeline programmes, although some said refresher training and the opportunity to work through more scenarios would also have been useful.

Understanding the humanitarian system and the role of Lifeline programming helped staff to communicate effectively with external partners.

Building relationships led to timely, effective and far-reaching communication responses

Strong relationships with trusted media partners sped up the emergency communication response, as decisions were made quickly about collaborations and broadcasting Lifeline content.

Training humanitarian partners gave them awareness of the role BBC Media Action and media can play in a crisis, helped them to understand what information would be useful to audiences and meant they were open to working with media.

Training local media practitioners stimulated a wider-reaching emergency communication response, as they incorporated Lifeline content in their programmes. Lifeline training gave local stations the ability to switch from “normal” journalism to a Lifeline approach during the crisis, and to incorporate audience voices in programmes.

Training different organisations together and collaborating in preparedness forged useful relationships between media, government and humanitarian practitioners and enabled media practitioners to contact others for information during the crisis.

Dedicated resources enabled quick decision-making

Having access to an internal emergency fund facilitated quick Lifeline communication responses, as decisions could be made without needing to wait for donor funding.

Having a dedicated Lifeline team at BBC Media Action’s head office ensured that staff could support country teams with preparedness planning, developing and updating useful tools, and then mentor and support them through Lifeline programming during an emergency.

Having key tools and plans ready sped up programme production

Country-level preparedness plans provided humanitarian contacts for information, provided key messages to broadcast and guided staff through post-crisis safety procedures. Having a joint preparedness plan with a national partner led to a quick, collaborative response.

Having ready-to-use messages that were appropriate to the context, in the right languages, agreed between different actors and tested with communities, was useful in the initial stages of the crises, as it enabled life-saving information to be broadcast to audiences quickly.

Media practitioners used Lifeline production manuals, translated into appropriate languages, as guidance when creating their own Lifeline content.

How effective were Lifeline programmes at meeting audience needs?

Interviews as part of BBC Media Action programme evaluations showed that audience members in both Myanmar and Nepal felt that the Lifeline programmes produced in 2015 were relevant to their lives, provided valuable support and addressed the most important issues for them. Audience members felt that the information shared was accurate and useful, and people took action individually and collectively as a result of the programmes, which provided solutions to problems they faced.

Hearing stories and solutions from other people affected by the crisis inspired audience members in both countries. They appreciated the opportunity to make their voices heard, raise concerns and ask questions.

What role did preparedness work play in meeting audience needs?

These case studies present evidence to suggest that BBC Media Action's preparedness work played a role in meeting the needs of audiences affected by crises in two key ways:

1. BBC Media Action staff and other media practitioners applied knowledge and skills they had learned in Lifeline training to produce programmes that audience members found relevant to their lives, useful and supportive.
2. Relationships built with government and humanitarian practitioners led to timely and accurate information being broadcast, which helped to establish trust with audience members affected by crisis.

Implications of these findings

This study demonstrates the value of preparedness work in preparing media and humanitarian practitioners and organisations to respond quickly and effectively to meet communities' information needs in a crisis. It provides a number of key learnings based on research into BBC Media Action's experiences and outputs in Myanmar and Nepal. These could be useful to other organisations involved in preparing practitioners and organisations to communicate with communities affected by disaster, such as the benefit of training media, government and humanitarian actors to increase collaboration in crisis responses and to enable useful information reach crisis-affected communities.

For more information and resources on Lifeline preparedness, see:
www.bbcmidiaactionilearn.com/lifelineprogramming

About BBC Media Action

BBC Media Action, the international development organisation of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), uses the power of media and communication to support people to shape their own lives. Working with broadcasters, governments, other organisations and donors, BBC Media Action provides information and stimulates positive change in the areas of governance, health, resilience and humanitarian response. This broad reach helps us to inform, connect and empower people around the world. We are independent from the BBC, but share the BBC's fundamental values and have partnerships with the BBC World Service, and local and national broadcasters that reach millions of people.

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Endnotes

- ¹ For more information see BBC Media Action policy briefings: *Left in the dark: The unmet need for information in humanitarian responses* (October 2008), available from: http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/pdf/humanitarian_response_briefing.pdf [Accessed 29 September 2016]; and *Still left in the dark? How people in emergencies use communication to survive – and how humanitarian agencies can help* (March 2012), available from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/publications-and-resources/policy/briefings/policy-still-left-in-the-dark> [Accessed 29 September 2016].
- ² For research on the role mass media can play in a crisis see BBC Media Action (October 2015) research report: *Humanitarian broadcasting in emergencies: a synthesis of evaluation findings*. Available from: <http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/pdf/research/humanitarian-broadcasting-in-emergencies-2015-report.pdf> [Accessed 29 September 2016].
- ³ OECD/DAC (1999) *Guidance for Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies*. Paris: OECD [online]. Available from: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/2667294.pdf> [Accessed 29 September 2016].
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ For more information see endnote 2.
- ⁶ These indicators are based on the research questions BBC Media Action uses to evaluate its Lifeline work, which are based on OECD/DAC criteria. See endnotes 2 and 3.
- ⁷ Myanmar Radio and Television is the broadcast radio and television network owned by the government of Myanmar's Ministry of Information.
- ⁸ BBC Media Action (December 2015) *Myanmar Lifeline flood response – internal narrative report* [not published].
- ⁹ Clusters are groups of humanitarian organisations, both UN and non-UN in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action (e.g. health, water), designed to co-ordinate the provision of humanitarian relief. For more information about the UN cluster system see: <http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/about-clusters/what-is-the-cluster-approach> [Accessed 29 September 2016].
- ¹⁰ According to the National Natural Disaster Management Committee (NNDMC).
- ¹¹ This data comes from in-depth interviews with a sample of audience members who called into the programme when it was live on air, and whom the research team was able to contact. It is not representative of the wider audience.
- ¹² Nepal Disaster Risk Reduction Portal. See: <http://drrportal.gov.np> [Accessed 29 September 2016].
- ¹³ The dashboards can be found at: <https://www.bbcmediaactionilearn.com/mod/page/view.php?id=349> [Accessed 29 September 2016].
- ¹⁴ BBC Nepali is one of the 27 language services provided under the BBC World Service's foreign-language output. BBC Media Action's country office in Nepal produces its own programmes that are broadcast on partner stations, including BBC Nepali.
- ¹⁵ Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network (May 2016) *Are you listening now? Community perspectives on communicating with communities during the Nepal earthquake response*. Available from: <http://www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-and-resources/i/20160811085949-qjzug> [Accessed 29 September 2016].
- ¹⁶ Qualitative evaluation for OFDA in January 2013, with two focus groups with audiences in each district (Rasuwa, Nuwakot and Gorkha).

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