ANNEX 2B

First Response Radio

Introduction

First Response Radio delivers critical information, via radio, to affected communities in the immediate aftermath of disasters. <http://firstresponseradio.org/>

First Response Radio is a network of radio broadcasters, NGOs and government partners. Our members have been working in disaster areas since the Tsunami of 2004, providing critical information via radio, as aid.

In times of disaster, radio not only saves lives, it can also bring hope and critical information to the affected community. When the 2004 tsunami struck Banda Aceh, Indonesia all the radio and TV stations went off the air. During the 2005 South Asian earthquake the only radio station near the epicentre lost its tower and went off the air. In times like these, people are in desperate need of news, information on how to get to safety and how to survive. The unfortunate trend seen recently is that when radio is so important, many times it goes off the air and does not come back until well after the emergency is over. A trained team or Rapid Response Radio Unit is able to begin broadcasting within 72 hours, sending out critical information.

After the Asian Tsunami it took several weeks for any radio station to get back on the air. Our first Rapid Response Radio Unit took 4 weeks to get on air – a good effort, but which highlighted the obvious need for the radio community to learn how to respond faster. Following the lead of humanitarian and rescue organizations, First Response Radio has taken the same challenge; the goal is to have a radio station on the air within 72 hours of a disaster. To meet this goal requires preparation in several areas: equipment, programming, training and practice.

Since 2004 First Response has responded to the following disasters:

– 2013: Central Aceh, earthquake, Indonesia

– 2012: **Uttarakhand flooding, India**

– 2012: Assam Flooding, India

– 2010: Mt Merapi Volcano, Indonesia

– 2010: Pakistan flooding

– 2009: Pangasinan flooding, Philippines

– 2009: South India flooding

– 2009: Earthquake, Padang, Sumatra, Indonesia

– 2008: Flooding, Bihar, India

– 2005: Earthquake, Northern Pakistan

– 2004: Tsunami, Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

Equipment

The "Radio in a Suitcase" kit is described below. We find it helpful to have the studio and transmission equipment in separate cases. This keeps the weight of each suitcase below 23 kg, and also allows for deployment of just the pieces that are needed in any given disaster.

With the 600W FM transmitter and single dipole antenna mounted at 20 m, we find that the coverage is up to 15 or 20 Km. If the station is positioned in the centre of the affected community, this can reach a very large group and would, for example adequately serve the 500,000 refugees in Dadaab, Kenya.

Some other "Radio-in-a-Box" kits have all items in one box and cannot be easily transported. Airlines will refuse equipment over a certain weight and "all in one" box solutions cannot be checked as luggage, but must be sent as air freight. While good equipment is essential, we also learned it was the easiest problem to solve and next we looked into critical information and training.

**Rapid Response Radio Unit - "Radio in a Suitcase"**

Standard equipment kit includes the following:

Studio in a suitcase (20 kg):

– Everything needed to record or broadcast live radio programs

– 7 channel mixer, CD player, digital recorder and laptop (play-out and recording software included)

– Fits into standard wheeled Samsonite suitcase

– I ncludes spare laptop and extra field recorder.

600 W FM transmitter (20 kg):

– Packed in a rugged 4 rack unit wheeled Gator flight case

– Single dipole antenna and cables included in separate padded case

– Able to cover up to 20 km.

Optional equipment:

– 2 kW Honda Generator.

Stockpile of Radios:

– 1000 wind-up radios

– Has AM/FM/SW bands

– Includes built-in flashlight.

Critical information

*Information IS humanitarian aid. Fear grows in a vacuum of information.*

"You did not distribute food, not clothes, nor any other materials to the flood victims, but what you have done for the flood victims is greater than others did (SMS message received by a First Response Radio team after the floods in Bihar)".

First Response Radio has developed the Critical Information Matrix to ensure they provide the right humanitarian information at the right time.

The first phase of a disaster is the most crucial for delivering life-saving information. This information needs to cover all the following UN cluster group categories: Disaster News, Shelter, Water, Sanitation & Hygiene, Food & Nutrition, Health (Physical and Mental), Protection, Livelihood and Education.

First Response Radio teams do not aim to remain for the long term. Usually they will stay on-air for about a month, in the emergency phase and into the second phase of the disaster.

Training

While Broadcasters are already skilled at their job, they need to learn to work within the humanitarian community to be truly effective. In the same way, government and humanitarian volunteers need to learn the basics of radio.

The training starts with a 5 day classroom-based workshop which combines background knowledge about radio with the unique environment experienced in disaster relief work. Participants, (from broadcast, NGO and government backgrounds) , are taught about making radio programmes specifically geared to disaster, about the phases of disaster and the effects it has on those involved. They are trained in setting up and using the "Radio in a Suitcase" equipment and advised about ways to stay safe in the field. The training is practical and hands-on. There will be daily homework and assignments where the participants put into practice what they have learned.

This is followed by a 3 day Field Trial when participants are taken to an area which has suffered a recent disaster. It is designed to provide students with an experience as close as possible to a real disaster, where they will produce live, disaster related radio for 72 hours.

First Response Radio training provides a team with the experience necessary to travel to a disaster area to set up a radio station and broadcast essential information to the affected community. Trained teams have the confidence and ability to work in field conditions and record radio messages that help provide critical information for a community that is recovering from a disaster/emergency.

Regulatory issues

Access to terrestrial broadcast licenses is required. For FM this would be a low power license up to 600W. In some countries, where community radio stations are common this can be an easy process – in other countries there is no process possible to get an FM license at short notice. Indonesia is very open and the Philippines National Telecommunications Commission has been very supportive to First Response Radio. In India a longer process is involved, but once we begin cooperating and negotiating with government ministries, then solutions tend to present themselves. USA and the UK both seem to have tight FM restrictions, so there is no possible route to get a short term or temporary license in a timely manner. The goal of the Rapid Response Radio unit is to get on the air in 72 hours, so we need to get a frequency cleared or approved in about 24 hours.

These negotiations need to be conducted at a country by country level, but it is our recommendation that the emergency licensing procedures be collected and shared amongst ITU member countries, even to provide awareness of the issues and possible solutions.

When First Response went to the Bihar floods in North India, we were not able to negotiate an FM license. In this case we used the SW radio bands. To begin with, our network partner used their normal frequency for North India and replaced the program with emergency programming. Many times this is not possible or additional air time is needed to adequately inform the public. In this case we used a SW broadcast broker to buy the airtime for us. The challenge then is to get a clear

frequency coordinated at very short notice. Due to the importance of the content it is essential to have +/- 10 kHz clear at a minimum. How could the HFCC - International Broadcasting Delivery (HFCC) tackle this issue, to ensure that clear SW frequencies are available for different disaster-prone countries?

Key case studies

Every disaster is different, as shown by the wide range of responses below:

– Bihar, India 2008. SW radio, 1 hour/day for 6 weeks

– Padang, Indonesia 2009. FM radio on air within 5 days on community radio frequency, 24 hours a day, for two weeks

– Uttarkhand, India 2013. SW on air in less than 72 hours, before team went into the field

– Central Aceh Earthquake, July 2013. Radio distribution and support of local FM radio.

Coordination

Any broadcaster can provide helpful, critical information to their audience, if they know where to find the information and are coordinated with other agencies. First Response Radio has found it most helpful to join the Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network that focuses on these issues. The CDAC Network can connect media organizations and humanitarian agencies together. It would be very useful for the HFCC, and any of its interested members to join and participate in the CDAC Network, as it is the de-facto central coordination point for media use in disaster areas.

Radio distribution

Sometimes people escape disaster and have taken their radios with them, but in most cases they will have lost most of their possessions. The assumption is that the humanitarian community will need to provide radios for the affected communities. We keep a stockpile of 1000 wind-up radios, but this is only enough to get started. In Haiti the US Army distributed 50,000 wind-up radios. There is a need for global and regional stockpiling of radios, ready for distribution. This is a task that should be shared between governments and NGO/humanitarian organizations. First Response has drafted radio distribution policies and guidelines.

Video Links:

<http://youtu.be/_GCJGoySf3E> - p**ublished on** 15 August 2013.

A complete introduction to the world of First Response Radio and 72 hour disaster response, in 72 seconds.

<http://youtu.be/F96UaXwhyGA> - **uploaded on** 18 August 2011.

"Radio in the Ring of Fire" - a short documentary video about FIRST Response Indonesia's Rapid Response Radio Unit. This team deployed their "Radio in a Suitcase" station into the Sumatran Earthquake in Padang in October 2009.

<http://youtu.be/b29Mi3ts1zE> - CDAC Network preparedness workshop.

Mike Adams, FIRST Response Radio.

<http://www.frontlinesms.com/2013/06/19/first-response-radio-life-saving-information-in-disaster-2/>

Using FM radio and frontline SMS together, to allow listeners a way to feedback to the programs.