ANNEX 3A

BBC Media Action - Use of emergency equipment

BBC Media Action has a suitcase radio on standby in Nepal which can be used to set up an emergency radio station in conjunction with the government and local broadcasters in the event of a major earthquake in Kathmandu. Used in conjunction with a small petrol-driven generator, the equipment can be used to put an FM radio station on-air within hours of a disaster occurring. The idea is usually not to set up a completely new radio station, but to operate a special Lifeline radio service on the FM frequency and broadcasting licence of a local partner station that is no longer able to broadcast from its own studios and transmitters.

BBC Media Action is considering the deployment of suitcase radios as back-up equipment to provide emergency broadcasting facilities in other strategic locations where existing broadcasters may be shut down by the sudden collapse of infrastructure in an emergency. The existing suitcase radio in Kathmandu may also be deployed to emergencies in other Asian countries, if required.

BBC Media Action also has several satellite telephones and Broadband Global Area Network (BGAN) satellite modems which can be deployed to support emergency broadcasting in locations where the local telecoms infrastructure has collapsed. They could provide emergency telephone and internet links for a radio station in a disaster zone that had no other telecommunications links to the outside world. The satellite phones are used exclusively for voice communication. The BGANs, which are similar in size and weight to a laptop computer, may be linked to a telephone handset to provide voice communication. However, in practice BBC Media Action mostly uses them to send and receive email messages. The BGANs may also be used to access websites on the internet. BBC Media Action has not so far deployed this equipment in support of a radio station transmitting Lifeline programming from inside a disaster zone, but it is ready to do so at any time should the need arise.

BBC Media Action has acquired small quantities of solar/wind-up radios to equip listening groups that form part of our outreach activities in non-emergency media projects. However, it does not keep a stock of solar/wind-up radios for distribution in humanitarian disasters. BBC Media Action is not geared up to handle sophisticated logistics. We would normally expect one of our aid agency partners to handle the transport and distribution of any radio sets acquired for distribution to the affected population following a disaster.