Session Outcome Document

Communication is Humanitarian Aid

World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) and Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities Network (CDAC)

Thursday 10 July 2025 1600-1645

https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/224

Key Issues discussed: Looking Beyond 2025 (5–8 bullet points highlighting achievements, emerging trends, challenges in 20 years, figures, success stories and opportunities for WSIS beyond 2025)

- **Infrastructure:** Communications infrastructure is essential, especially in times of crisis and conflict. However, telecommunications infrastructure is routinely targeted and significantly impacted and left without support through humanitarian aid initiatives. When addressing humanitarian crises, access to communication infrastructure must be regarded as essential services.

- **Content**: There has been a proliferation of both information vacuums and increased disinformation, particularly in times of crisis. This content has negative implications for those experiencing conflict or natural disasters, as it is more difficult for them to access trustworthy and culturally relevant information to address the challenges they are facing.

- **Funding Challenges:** Community-led media is essential to provide humanitarian aid, agency and opportunity in times of crisis. However accessibility to funding is limited and challenging in the current geopolitical context.

- **Agency**: Promoting communication justice in times of crisis is a two-way street. In order to promote information as a fundamental right, there must be a focus on the development of information ecosystems where community actors are given the agency and opportunity to meaningfully contribute. Promoting agency will subsequently lead to an increase in trust

Tangible Outcomes of the session

- **Commitment to work together as civil society to address communication in times of crisis:** There were discussions of how different civil society groups such as WACC, APC and CDAC have addressed communication and information needs in Sudan, Palestine, Venezuela, Colombia, Myanmar, Syria, and Ukraine. These approaches coming from civil society focus on

building localized trust and working to empower communities, challenging the extractive model of aid.

- **Discussion with participants about how connections can grow beyond civil society:** participants and panellists discussed the potential collaborations beyond civil society by examining the role of the private sector in disaster response through funding, the provision of infrastructure, and advocacy.

Key Recommendations and Forward-Looking Action Plan for the WSIS+20 Review and Beyond (2–5 bullet points presenting concrete actions and guidance to inform the WSIS+20 Review by UNGA and build the multistakeholder vision of WSIS beyond 2025)

- **Disaster Response:** Need to focus on a crisis not only when it happens, but also on the need for sustained support. A mix of civil society and institutional support is needed to achieve a sustainable approach to communication as humanitarian aid. While civil society is working creatively to address the challenges discussed above, a lack of sustained funding and support demonstrates the need for greater institutional support in long-term disaster response

- **Multiple stakeholders within the WSIS community (governments, regulators, technical communities) need to push more strongly for methods to address communication in times of distress.** The panel identified many silences from the WSIS community, and reiterated the importance of re-examining humanitarian law to better address the risks posed to communication infrastructure and content related to conflict or natural disaster

- **Multistakeholder approach must incorporate meaningful participation of civil society organizations that provide accounts of these conditions.** Incorporating civil society organizations that are on the ground helps to address the imbalance of power that occurs in disaster response

- **The WSIS action plan must address the importance of locally led initiatives.** As seen in civil society work, locally led responses can build trust, foster agency, and lead to sustainable models for communication that can counter disinformation and provide communities with reliable and safe information in times of crisis.