

ACHE Lifeline Learning Brief Three

HOW CAN MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION HELP AUDIENCES AFFECTED BY HUMANITARIAN CRISIS?

Summarising BBC Media Action's research from Nigeria, Somalia and Ukraine

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This brief brought together learnings from formative research and research studies evaluating the effectiveness of the project in Nigeria, Somalia and Ukraine, undertaken by our researchers in those countries. The brief was written by Sanjib Saha, Anu Mohammad, Hodan Ibrahim, Olena Vypirailenko and Sophie Steele. The writers would like to thank Janet Conqueror in Nigeria, Guled Ahmed Hashi in Somalia, and Tania Nikitina in Ukraine, for their outstanding contribution in designing and conducting research studies, as well as analysing data and interpreting findings. The writers would also like to extend their gratitude to Storm Lawrence for designing the set of learning questions that informed the brief and to Nicholas Rao and Sonia Whitehead for reviewing the brief.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a small, makeshift camp in the North-East of Nigeria, a 35-year-old man describes the realities of his daily life: "*We are really facing hardship. The time we came here, we were getting free food and water, and we were happy. Now things have changed, we do not have any support for food anymore.*" For the millions like him who have been uprooted by conflict, natural disasters, or other crises, access to reliable information is not just a need – it is a lifeline.

In the face of a crisis, from Nigeria's conflict-ridden northeast to Somalia's climate-induced displacements, and Ukraine's war-torn landscape, the Advancing Communication in Humanitarian Emergencies (ACHE) project played a critical role in empowering crisis-affected communities. Funded by USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs (BHA), the project ran from September 2021 to May 2024 and was designed to strengthen the capacity of local media and humanitarian actors to deliver practical, relevant, and inclusive information to those in need. The research underpinning the ACHE project included surveys, focus group discussions, and interviews conducted with internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities in targeted areas of Nigeria, Somalia, and Ukraine. This brief focuses on the effectiveness and impact of this Lifeline content on target audiences and assesses whether the project positively affected people's ability to cope with and/or recover from crises.[1]

Informed by formative research, the project tailored Lifeline content to local contexts and bridged critical knowledge gaps, facilitated communication between communities and humanitarian actors, and encouraged community cohesion. The project's Lifeline radio programming reached more than half of IDPs surveyed in the IDP camps and their surrounding neighbourhoods in North East Nigeria. In Ukraine, 670,000 people watched Lifeline content on Suspilne TV and were viewed on social media for more than 500,000 times. IDPs in Somalia have also listened to the Lifeline programming on radio, however reach numbers were not calculated due to challenges in conducting research in IDP camps.

The Lifeline content significantly enhanced knowledge of crisis-affected communities in all three countries, but the learning was context-specific. In Nigeria and Somalia, 87% of participants reported gaining new insights on topics like water sanitation, hygiene (WASH), and girls' education. *"We are now careful of the food and drinks we take,"* noted a Nigerian participant from Adamawa. However, in both contexts, the relevance of the information was sometimes overshadowed by more immediate concerns such as unemployment and income insecurity, highlighting a gap between content delivered and community priorities. In Ukraine, where media saturation is high, the project's communication strategy was more about reinforcing existing knowledge and countering misinformation.

[1] The other two learning briefs produced under this programme can be found at the following link – https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/publications-and-resources/research/briefings/somalia/nigeria/ukraine/ache/

While the Programmes improved understanding and encouraged communication with humanitarian actors, challenges remained. In Somalia, 88% felt better informed about their rights to access services and encouraged direct communication with aid agencies as 42% IDPs engaged with aid agencies for more information on aid and cash and voucher assistance (CVA). Similarly, in Nigeria, Lifeline radio programming helped dispel fears and build confidence to engage with humanitarian actors, direct communication was reported by 37% IDPs and host communities. However, many reported difficulties in reaching the aid workers and government officials, constrained by factors such as logistical hurdles and lack of accessible contact points. *"No one listens to us in the government because we are poor immigrants"* lamented a respondent from Borno in Northern Nigeria, underscoring the systemic barriers to effective dialogue.

Lifeline content enabled participants to take action. In Nigeria, 55% of listeners reported taking concrete steps, such as adopting new WASH practices and sending girls to school. *"When I listened to the lecture [radio programme] on Peace FM, it changed my mind, and now all of the girls are in school,"* a Borno participant shared. In Ukraine, smaller actions were reported, such as improved water purification practices, but broader actions were restricted by ongoing conflict and infrastructural challenges. In Somalia, a smaller proportion (18% of respondents) acted on the information provided, this was low due to resource constraints and time limitations. Host community members were notably more likely than IDPs to report having taken action (28% versus 4%, respectively).

Media content and Lifeline radio programmes foster community cohesion and social harmony. Somalia Lifeline radio programme listeners said they took resource-independent actions more to **foster cohesion and social harmony between IDPs and host communities**. Similarly in Nigeria, Lifeline programmes fostered community cohesion. Listeners talked about how they were now part of the youth sports leagues as a result of listening to the radio, and how these activities helped bridging gaps between the displaced and host communities, enhancing empathy and mutual support. Media Content in Ukraine brought up life and struggles of the displaced people which triggered empathy among the wider communities on them, and effort to understand their issues more.

The evaluative findings demonstrate the significant role that tailored communication can play in supporting community resilience in times of crisis. While the contexts in Nigeria, Somalia, and Ukraine are vastly different, a common thread is the necessity of providing accurate, relevant information that can help people cope with their situations. In places like Nigeria and Somalia, where other media may not be widely available or trusted, local radio becomes a vital tool for both communication and community-building. In Ukraine, ensuring that people have access to clear, reliable information amidst a flood of news and misinformation is critical.

Ultimately, the ACHE project illustrates that while communication alone cannot solve all the problems faced by crisis-affected communities, it is a critical part of the solution. It helps to bridge gaps, build trust, and provide the knowledge that enables people to take actions that improve their chances of survival and recovery. For the millions displaced and affected by war, conflict and disaster, having access to the right information at the right time can be life-changing – and, sometimes, lifesaving.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACHE	Advancing Communication in Humanitarian Emergencies
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CAPI	Computer-assisted personal interviewing
CSO	Civil society organisation
FGD	Focus group discussion
IDI	In-depth interview
IDP	Internally displaced person
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements 1
Executive summary 2
Abbreviations and acronyms 4
1. Introduction 6
1.1. The project 6
2. Research methodology 7
3. The project contexts 9
4. Key findings 13
4.1. Communication content 13
4.2. The communication impact 18
5. Conclusion 23
6. Recommendations 25

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE PROJECT

This learning brief summarises selected findings from BBC Media Action's endline evaluation of the Advancing Communication in Humanitarian Emergencies (ACHE) project in Nigeria, Somalia and Ukraine. Specifically, this brief focuses on audiences, and how communication and participatory approaches supported crisis-affected people including internally displaced people and members of host communities.

The project was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) and ran from September 2021 to May 2024.

Comprising training, mentoring and network/relationship building for media and humanitarian actors delivered by BBC Media Action, the project aimed to strengthen the capacity of humanitarian and media actors to communicate with people affected by crisis.

This capacity strengthening was designed to ensure they have access to practical information they can use to survive and cope, and are able to participate in dialogues at the core of humanitarian decision-making. Ultimately, the project aimed to improve the relevance, accessibility and inclusivity of humanitarian response.

Formative research conducted for this project identified a need for media outlets to produce more informed programming that is relevant and effective for crisis-affected communities, and to work more collaboratively with the humanitarian organisations providing support on the ground. As such, the project engaged local actors, including local media partners, humanitarian responders, relevant local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs) and government agencies, in capacity strengthening workshops and sessions to improve communication, participation and accountability strategies and services for crisis-affected communities in each of the three countries.

The primary tools for delivery were training workshops with media and humanitarian actors, mentoring sessions for media outlets, identified and selected through a needs assessment process, and roundtable discussions with key response actors. Overall, the project supported 337 media, humanitarian and government actors across the three implementation countries. The project also provided key equipment and software for media outlets to keep, alongside technical training to use these resources effectively. Resources and funds were also provided during the project to help media outlets reach crisis-affected communities. Throughout the project, media partners co-produced Lifeline content to provide local crisis-affected communities with critical humanitarian information. In Nigeria and Somalia, local radio programming supported both IDPs and host communities on the issues they have been facing in their lives. In Ukraine, mass programming (digital/radio) aimed at two regions to support

people in war (many of audience not directly affected currently). Different media platforms and formats were developed to deliver Lifeline content in each context.

Three learning briefs were commissioned to help inform existing and future work and build knowledge of best practice. This brief focuses on the effectiveness and impact of this content on target audiences and assesses whether the project positively affected people's ability to cope with and/or recover from crises. The first brief (***ACHE Lifeline Learning Brief One***) examines the enablers and barriers in delivering "Lifeline" communication and participatory approaches with crisis-affected populations. The second learning brief (***ACHE Lifeline Learning Brief Two***) focuses on the relationships between different actors, and BBC Media Action's role in facilitating partnerships and collaborations to support communication with crisis-affected people.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This briefing focuses on findings from the ACHE project's endline evaluation but it also incorporates findings from research conducted throughout the project, including formative research and monitoring activities.

Guided by extensive desk research, qualitative and quantitative formative research studies were carried out in all three countries during the first half of 2022. These studies aimed to inform the project's strategies and approaches for different contexts, as well as to guide the design of training curricula for humanitarian and media practitioners, and the development of media Programmes and content. Additional research was conducted throughout 2022 to monitor the training activities and gather early feedback on the media Programmes and content.

The endline research was specifically designed for each country context and used surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs). To evaluate the impact of co-produced media content on crisis-affected populations, the research was designed to assess the effectiveness of the content according to the key parameters of engagement, trust, relevance and usefulness, as well as the impact on audiences' knowledge, perceptions and actions. The research also explored audience members' perceptions of their access to information about, and participation in, efforts to address humanitarian issues.

The research methodologies used in each of the three countries differed slightly, based on the local context and related challenges.

In **Nigeria**, 300 participants aged 18 years and above responded to a quantitative survey using computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) in March 2024. The survey was administered face-to-face among crisis-affected populations in urban and rural locations in the two project states, Adamawa and Borno. The survey was complemented by eight qualitative FGDs with crisis-affected people who had listened to the project radio programmes produced by partner radio stations. All research participants were IDPs living in camps or host communities in the target states.

In **Somalia**, a quantitative survey sampled 222 participants aged 18 years and above in Baidoa, South West State in February and March 2024. Survey participants comprised 112 IDPs living in the Tawakal and Lidaale IDP camps and 110 host community members living in and around Baidoa. All survey participants had listened to the local partner radio stations and reported listening to at least one of the radio programmes produced as part of the project. The qualitative research element included six FGDs with IDPs and host community members who had listened to the radio programmes.

In **Ukraine**, participants aged 31–55 years old participated in four online FGDs with IDPs and local residents living in Dnipro and Zaporizhzhia oblasts. Each focus group was shown five individual pieces of "Lifeline" content (see text box) before the discussion. In total, 10 individual pieces of Lifeline content were tested across the four groups. Complementing this, an independent researcher analysed 56 individual items of media content produced as part of the project, including those items shown to the FGD participants.

BBC Media Action definition of Lifeline communication:

Special media programming for people affected by humanitarian crisis. It aims to give them a voice and provide timely, relevant and practical information to help alleviate their suffering and assist with their recovery. It can play an important role in strengthening community engagement and accountability of relief providers.

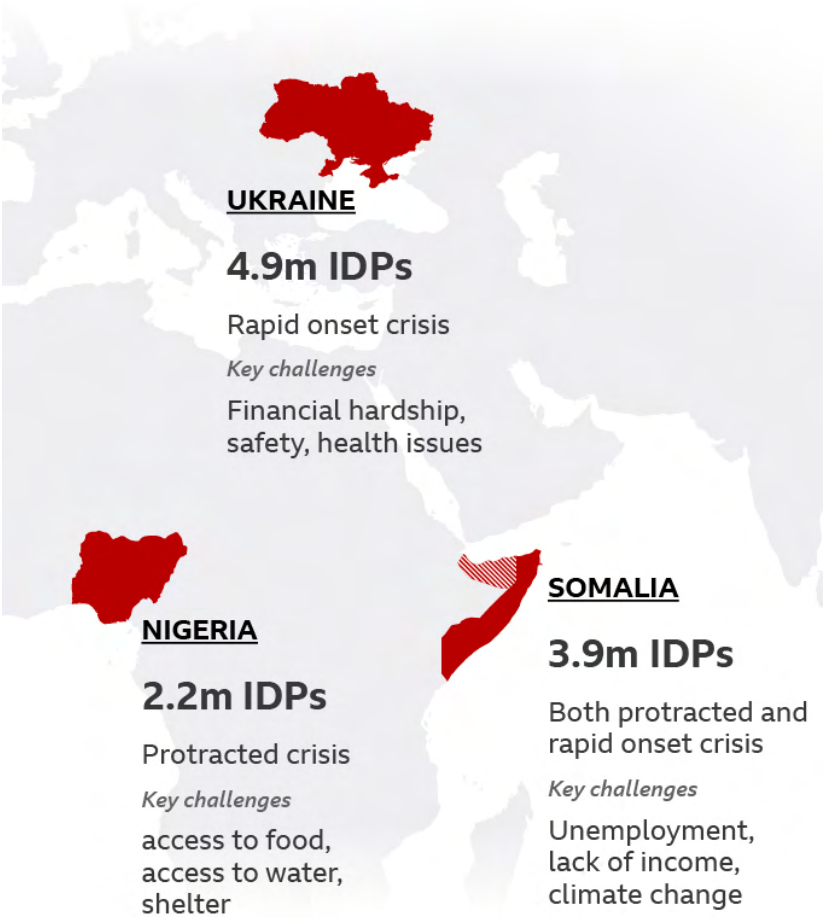
See this website for further information – *Lifeline Programming*

3. THE PROJECT CONTEXTS

Conflict and both rapid-and slow-onset disasters all continue to have devastating effects across the world, resulting in millions of people being displaced, and many more lives and livelihoods being destroyed.

By the end of 2023, 75.9 million people around the world had been internally displaced, forced from their homes by conflict or violence, severe weather events and other disasters.[2] Many of these people have lived in internally displaced person (IDP) camps or communities for years, unable to return home and without a durable solution. Crisis-affected communities face practical and psychosocial challenges associated with trying to survive and rebuild their lives after being displaced. For many, support from humanitarian and aid agencies is critical to their survival.

The three focus countries for the ACHE project (Nigeria, Somalia and Ukraine) were selected because they are each host to large numbers of IDPs and have a high level of need at the population level. These include the need for humanitarian support, access to information, participation of crisis-affected people in decision making related to humanitarian response, and humanitarian accountability to crisis-affected people. Alongside this, an assessment of humanitarian communication and participation, and existing co-ordination mechanisms, identified key areas where capacity strengthening activities could add significant value to humanitarian communication with crisis-affected communities.



[2] According to Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2024) Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024. Available at: https://api.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/IDMC-GRID-2024-Global-Report-on-Internal-Displacement.pdf

Nigeria

> *"We are really facing hardship. The time we came here, we [were] getting free food and water, and we were happy. Now things have changed. It's been almost two years now, and we have no food."*
>
> — Male aged 35-44, rural, Adamawa, Nigeria

Nigeria's north-east region has experienced protracted conflict and humanitarian crisis since the Boko Haram insurgency escalated in 2009. While the conflict continues some 15 years later, a relative peace has been achieved in some towns across Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states. These areas host an estimated 2.2 million people who have been displaced as a result of the conflict.[3]

Conflict for resources between farmers and herders, and climate factors such as floods, exacerbate the vulnerability of conflict-affected populations and increase their dependence on humanitarian aid for survival. The resources and capacities of aid organisations face increasing pressures to meet IDPs' ongoing needs effectively. At the same time, factors including the adverse effects of climate change are limiting access to livelihood opportunities and restricting the ability of displaced people to return to their original homes.

Endline research participants described life in the IDP camps and host communities as very difficult. Every day, many struggled to feed and care for themselves and their family – 71% of participants reported that their main concern was not having enough to eat. Many relied on humanitarian and aid agencies for support, with 65% of participants reporting having reached out to humanitarian or aid agencies in the preceding 12 months. Despite the high level of need, participants largely felt informed about humanitarian responses, with 85% reporting that they had the information they needed.

At the time of endline research, both Adamawa and Borno state governments had announced the planned closure of IDP camps and begun the process of relocating families into more permanent housing. This meant that humanitarian support in camp settings was decreasing.

Somalia

> *"I am worried about the lack of job opportunities in our community. Many people are struggling to make ends meet and provide for their families because there are not enough jobs available."*
>
> — FGD with males aged 45+ in Howlwadaaq Village, Somalia

The South-West state of Somalia has faced three decades of humanitarian crisis, with severe droughts, flooding and lingering conflict forcing hundreds of thousands of people from their homes. Baidoa town, the capital city of Bay region, faces significant challenges due to the influx of IDPs, making it one of the main centres of the displacement crisis. As of 2024, the city

[3] UN Migration/Global Data Institute Displacement Tracking Matrix (2023) 'Nigeria — North-east — Mobility Tracking Round 46 IDP and Returnee Atlas'. Available at: https://dtm.iom.int/reports/nigeria-north-east-mobility-tracking-round-46-idp-and-returnee-atlas-december-2023

was host to around 600,000 IDPs, swelling the urban population and putting increased pressure on already scarce resources, settlements and livelihood options.[4]

In November 2023 torrential rains and flash floods caused by the El Niño weather system heavily affected Baidoa town, destroying 384 IDP sites and severely damaging shelters, roads and infrastructure.[5] The floods also forced a further 1.2 million people to leave their homes and settle in already overcrowded IDP sites,[6] exacerbating the challenges faced by the IDPs, who were already facing limited access to basic needs.

Among endline survey participants, 58% had moved from their home, village or town within the previous year due to violence, threats, flooding or drought. The survey identified the key needs and concerns of both IDPs and host communities as unemployment, lack of sources of income, climate change and climate crisis (flooding and drought), and access to water and food. Notably, only 42% of endline survey participants reported having communicated with humanitarian or aid agencies in the previous 12 months, and just 24% of participants reported trusting these organisations as a source of information.

Ukraine

> *"We are used to the fact that we live more or less comfortably, but let's think about what is happening now. How many blows were inflicted on our energy structure? Will we have water tomorrow?"*
>
> — Male aged 40, IDP, Zaporizhzhia

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, approximately one-third of Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes. In total, so far, around 4.9 million people were displaced within Ukraine since 2014, including 3.6 million since the start of the war in 2022.[7] The humanitarian needs inside Ukraine continue to grow as the war continues – an estimated 14.6 million people in Ukraine will need humanitarian assistance in 2024.[8] Attacks by missiles, rockets and drones continue to pose a risk to the safety and security of millions of Ukrainians, while civilian infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, disrupting the supply and access to gas, electricity and fuel.

Formative research for this project found that 73% of respondents reported a worsening of their financial situation after the invasion, with a more significant impact on IDPs (85% of IDP respondents noted a deterioration). In addition to financial challenges, other key vulnerability

[4] Relief Web (March 2023) *Baidoa City Strategy 2023* [online]. Available from https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/baidoa-city-strategy-2023 [Accessed 30 August 2024].

[5] ReliefWeb (April 2024) *Addressing the humanitarian needs of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Somalia* [online]. Available from https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/addressing-humanitarian-needs-internally-displaced-persons-idps-somalia [Accessed 30 August 2024].

[6] Ibid

[7] According to the Ukraine Ministry of Social Policy (n.d.). See: https://www.msp.gov.ua/timeline/Vnutrishno-peremishcheni-osobi.html & https://www.msp.gov.ua/news/23612.html

[8] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2023) *Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan Ukraine*. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/38/2024/01/Ukraine-HNRP-2024-Humanitarian-Needs-and-Response-Plan-UA-20240110.pdf

factors for people affected by the crisis in Ukraine include safety concerns (including a lack of bomb shelters or potential heating issues), health issues (such as chronic illnesses or disabilities), and job losses and psychological factors like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). For IDPs, a widespread problem was being separated from their family, while 6% of participants reported having lost loved ones due to the war.

Participants reported that they mainly relied on support from their family, friends and acquaintances – just 6% of participants said that they counted on support from humanitarian organisations. While Ukrainians predominantly receive support from their immediate circle, they still look for useful information "outside", primarily through online social networks. Three in five respondents (62%) felt confident that they had sufficient access to the necessary information during the war.

4. KEY FINDINGS

4.1. COMMUNICATION CONTENT

It is widely recognised that effective communication with people affected by humanitarian crisis requires information that is **relevant, appropriate, efficient and effective**. These parameters formed a core element of the ACHE project capacity-strengthening and training with media partners and humanitarian organisations. As such the audience-focused endline project evaluation sought to assess the project's co-produced media outputs against these key parameters.

Radio programmes in Nigeria and Somalia, and examples of content produced in Ukraine

SOMALIA

Hindisaha Nolosha (Planning Lifeline)

Bogtaal (Lifeline)

Rajo (Hope)

NIGERIA

Kwaryar Kira (The Panorama)

Lafiya uwar jiki (Health is wealth)

Kenengalam tema dajumba (If there is life, there is hope)

Me Ke Faruwa (What is happening?)

In both Somalia and Nigeria, the format of media outputs were Lifeline radio programmes – the magazine radio programmes contained different segments such as expert interviews, folk songs, public service announcements (PSAs), discussion, and voices from crisis-affected areas.

UKRAINE

Range of Lifeline Social Media and TV outputs

In Ukraine, outputs included short audio-visual content featuring people who are affected by the war, and the use of story-telling to provide vital and useful information on different areas of aid operation. Content covered areas including useful tips to support lives in displacement, humanitarian support programmes, reconstruction aid and psychological support.

The project's radio programming reached more than half of the IDPs surveyed in Nigeria, while in Ukraine project Lifeline content reached 670,000 people on TV and achieved more than 500,000 social media views[9]

Respondents surveyed in Nigeria and Somalia stated that radio was their most accessed and used medium. They also considered radio to be a trusted source of information on humanitarian issues. For example, in Nigeria, just over 71% of participants had listened to the

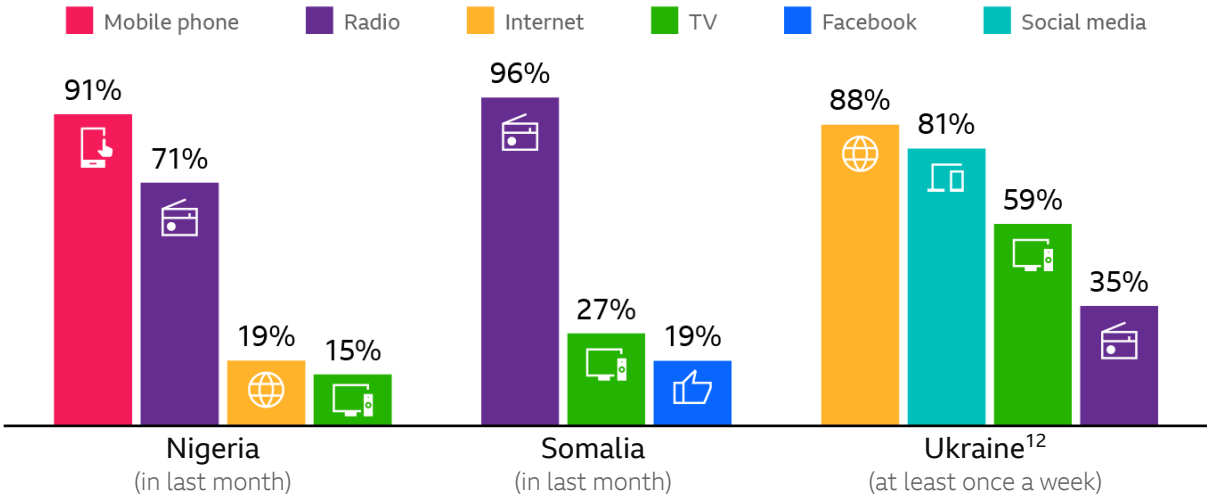
[9] Reach was not evaluated in Somalia, as survey respondents were selected based on having listened to at least one of the radio programmes in the last three months.

radio in the month before the survey, either through traditional radio sets or mobile phones. And 42% of respondents cited radio as their preferred channel of communication to receive information related to humanitarian issues and services.

This was reflected in the listenership of co-produced Lifeline radio programming in Nigeria's Adamawa and Borno states, where the four radio programmes produced during the project reached 58% of the adult IDPs surveyed.[10] In Somalia, radio was identified as the primary source of humanitarian information for both IDPs and host community members. Survey participants cited radio as their trusted source of information across a range of issues, including relocation, reporting complaints, registering for aid, and accessing food, water, healthcare and education.

In Ukraine, a wide range of Lifeline content was produced and disseminated across the state broadcaster *Suspilne*'s platforms, including TV, radio, websites, social media and Telegram channels, maximising the potential reach across the target regions. Estimates based on media analytics indicate that Lifeline content produced by the project media partners in Ukraine achieved a total of 1.6 million views. This includes 1.05 million TV views (670,000 unique TV reaches) and 505,000 views on digital platforms.[11]

Media Access reported by the project's endline survey respondents



[10] "Reach" is defined as the percentage of respondents who reported that they had listened to at least one of the four radio programmes in the three months before the endline survey.

[11] The total views figure is an estimate based on combining digital and TV views. Digital views include page views on websites, views on Telegram, Facebook and Instagram impressions and YouTube views. This was calculated using internal digital analytics of *Suspilne* platforms. These views are not unique and cover the whole of Ukraine. TV views were calculated using Nielsen TV Panel Data, which measures audiences aged 4+ in cities with a population of 50,000 or more residents. It does not measure people in rural areas.

[12] Data based on survey conducted for BBC Media Action by Info Sapience in September to October 2023. This comprised 1,200 telephone interviews (CATI) with residents of Dnipro and Zaporizhzhia oblasts (non-occupied territory of Ukraine) – 600 interviews in each oblast.

The project's radio programmes and Lifeline content engaged and resonated with audience members by reflecting their everyday reality

To be effective, communication with crisis-affected communities needs to get and hold people's attention, and to be clear and simple to understand. The need to create engaging content is widely recognised, as is the understanding that people are best engaged by experiences that resemble their own. The capacity-strengthening workshops with media partners and humanitarian actors reiterated that when communicating with crisis-affected communities it is best to tell the stories of real people whose lives are affected by the crisis, not just officials or NGO workers.

Formative research in each country identified key information needs and sought to understand the lived experiences of people living in the crisis-affected communities. This knowledge directly informed content production.

The radio programmes produced by Nigerian partner stations successfully embedded key humanitarian information in an engaging format, with FGD participants describing the programmes as "interesting", "educational", "entertaining" and "enlightening".

Participants reflected on topics covered by the programmes that resonated with them, noting that they recognised their lived reality in the programmes' storylines, characters and discussions. They appreciated the format of inviting guests for discussions, the use of multiple local languages (such as Kanuri, Hausa and Babur), and the opportunities for audience members to call into programmes. Reflecting this, almost all survey respondents (96%) agreed that the information presented in the radio programmes was relevant.

> *"Kwariyar kira (The Panorama) is entertaining, honestly, as it has to do with things that happen every day."*
>
> — Female, aged 18–24, rural, Adamawa, Nigeria

In Somalia, 84% of survey respondents felt that the radio programmes covered topics relevant to them. The most frequently cited topics of interest included causes of malnutrition in children and pregnant women (cited by 30% of respondents), humanitarian agencies delivering aid to affected people (25%), and the benefits of hygiene and sanitation (23%). FGD participants reported that the programmes covered topics that resonated with them, stating that coverage of humanitarian interventions in their community and small business initiatives for IDPs were the most engaging.

In Ukraine, audience members appreciated the perceived social benefits of the Lifeline content, even if some content was not directly relevant to them at the time of viewing. They also reflected on others for whom the information would be useful, recognising that as the war continued, they themselves may one day require this information.

> *This was interesting because it is relevant for every IDP, even if today someone has a whole house – like me – but tomorrow it may be destroyed. …So there is at least an understanding in which direction to move.*
>
> — Female aged 36, Vilniavsk IDP, camp, Ukraine (referring to content about damage to property)

The apparent difference in the perceived relevance of the Lifeline content to audiences across the three contexts may, to some extent, reflect the differing levels of localisation among the media partners engaged in the ACHE project.

In Ukraine, the national broadcaster, Suspilne, produced the Lifeline content to broadcast across multiple platforms across the two targeted oblasts (regions). As such, the content was aimed at both a broad audience and very targeted groups experiencing specific problems (such as people facing acute water shortages). In this context, research participants did not feel that all Lifeline content was directly relevant to them at the time but they appreciated its broader social benefit.

Conversely, the project media partners in Nigeria and Somalia were local broadcasters, and the content they produced was more localised, specifically addressing the current needs of the local communities and featuring local voices and dialects. Consequently, audience members felt that the programmes closely reflected their lives and experiences.

The project's radio programmes and Lifeline content inspired discussion at varying levels

Discussion of media content is not only an indicator of strong engagement and a way to deepen understanding of key information, but it also extends the reach of information beyond people with direct access to the media content.

The level of discussion of the ACHE project radio programmes and Lifeline content varied across the three countries. Discussion was most common

Maximising audience engagement – findings from Ukraine content analysis

Content analysis of Lifeline content produced in Ukraine found that the most engaging content on social media successfully harnessed human interest stories, and was produced with clarity, simplicity and using strong storytelling techniques.

Content that failed to amplify the voices of the crisis-affected population and simply acted as a platform for aid providers to promote their activities was deemed less engaging. Too complex or too long information delivery seemed to diminish its value.

The optimal format of Lifeline content is:

Short – no more than 5 minutes

Specific – exclusively in essence (strictly to the point)

Well structured – in clear sections, with an emphasis on key messages

Practical and actionable – such as listing recommended actions or contacts for further information

Features trusted experts – identified with credentials, dressed appropriately, speaks confidently

among audiences in Nigeria, where 63% of survey respondents reported having discussed the radio programme(s), predominantly sharing insights with their neighbours and friends to help them improve their lives and prevent future problems.

> *"Since I heard it and it made me better, it was important for me to share it so that it could also make my friends better."*
>
> — Female aged 25–34, urban, Borno, Nigeria

In contrast, 34% of respondents in Somalia reported having discussed the radio programmes, most commonly with friends. Further research would be required to see why the programme wasn't discussed more with community members or others. In Ukraine, while FGDs were held within a day or so of participants viewing the Lifeline content, respondents shared content they deemed useful, and some had already shared and discussed content with others. Participants said they would like to discuss some content with their children to help them prepare for extreme circumstances, for example, a video that described how to communicate with returned combatants, and content that provided practical information about water purification.

> *"Last night I was only able to read and I didn't have time to share. But I especially believe that this kind of information is necessary for my two children because they don't know how to behave in such a situation – like when they see a man without a leg or with a prosthesis."*
>
> — Female aged 43, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, Ukraine (referring to content about how to communicate with returning combatants)

Audiences felt that the project's radio programmes and Lifeline content were appropriate – timely, useful, trustworthy and easy to understand

Lifeline programmes produced as part of the ACHE project were consistently rated as being relevant, timely and useful by audience members, with high levels of agreement across these measures. As mentioned, 'local relevance' was particularly high in Nigeria and Somalia.

For example, listeners in Nigeria felt that the programmes were informative, useful, practical and timely, with at least 90% of surveyed listeners agreeing on these points. FGD participants said that the timely information provided by the radio programmes addressed pressing community issues and were immediately relevant.

Similarly, 90% of respondents in Somalia agreed that the information shared through the radio programmes was timely, and 92% agreed that it was clear. The use of local dialects in the radio programmes was valued by listeners in both Nigeria and Somalia.

> *"In general, I found the information from the radio programmes to be very clear and easy to understand. The presenters explain topics well, and all of them are Maay dialect speakers."*
>
> — FGD with males aged 18+, Tawakal, Somalia

In Ukraine, FGD participants described the Lifeline content as practical and useful. For example, a Lifeline video that offered practical advice on how to communicate with returned

combatants and their families was cited by participants as having enduring usefulness and value for both themselves and the wider community, especially as the number of returning combatants increased.

Participants described other Lifeline content as giving them hope, providing positive motivation, and reminding them of the challenges people were facing – all of which they valued. The level of trust participants had in the content varied based on the perceived plausibility of the "expert" (often linked directly to their presentation on the screen), the availability of links or signposts to further help or information, and whether the information reflected their own previous knowledge and experience.

4.2. THE COMMUNICATION IMPACT

Ultimately, the goal of the ACHE project was to ensure that people affected by crisis have greater access to practical information they can use to survive and cope, and are better able to participate in dialogues at the core of humanitarian decision-making. This section outlines the impact of the radio programming and Lifeline content on members of the target audiences, as described by them.

Audiences in all three contexts felt that the project's radio programmes and Lifeline content contributed to improved knowledge, in different ways

In Nigeria and Somalia, participants reported learning new, essential information from the radio programmes, which were described as a vital source of information for crisis-affected communities. Audience members in Ukraine also cited the Lifeline content as contributing to improved knowledge. However, this was more commonly described as reinforcing or clarifying knowledge that they already had.

In Nigeria, 87% of survey participants who had listened to the radio programme(s) reported that they had learned something as a result, with 42% of this group reporting that they had learned "a lot" from the content. The most frequently cited learning related to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) issues, girls' education, and food and nutrition. Echoing this, FGD participants stated that the project media content improved their knowledge on humanitarian issues, including food security and nutrition, reporting gender-based violence, child protection, health and hygiene, and the importance of education (especially for girls).

> *"We used to drink water from a stagnant pit… We listened to this programme so that when we get back, we will avoid such waters. We are now careful of the food and drinks we take."*
>
> — Male aged 35–44, rural, Adamawa, Nigeria

Similarly, 87% of respondents in Somalia agreed that the project programme(s) helped them to understand the importance of hygiene and sanitation practices for community health. When asked, unprompted, what they had learned from the radio programmes, survey respondents most frequently mentioned learning about the effects of climate change (cited by 73%), and the benefits of hygiene and sanitation (64%).

FGD participants in Somalia reported learning about the challenges of poor hygiene and environmental pollution, particularly during the rainy season. They reported being made aware of the health risks associated with open defecation and the lack of proper waste management, and the potential for disease outbreaks such as cholera. However, these topics do not closely align with what participants cited as the most concerning issues in their community – unemployment and lack of income sources.

> *"The radio programmes we've been listening to have really opened our eyes to the serious health and sanitation challenges we face due to the lack of functional latrines in our community. They've made it clear that open defecation and using dirty water can lead to the spread of deadly diseases like cholera, as well as other gastrointestinal issues."*
>
> — FGD with males aged 18+, Horseed IDP camp, Somalia

Participants in Somalia specifically cited the radio programme(s) as a critical source of flood-related information in the wake of El Niño-related events in 2023. They reported receiving practical information on coping with floods, including storing food and water safely, using sandbags and plastic sheeting to divert floodwaters, and cited the programmes for disseminating early warning messages.

In Ukraine, audience members reported learning snippets of information that were of use or interest within the broader content. For example, one audience member reported learning about the toxicity of iodine for the first time – information he considered useful.

These snippets of information and the media content overall confirmed their pre-existing knowledge, giving them confidence that the information was accurate. In some cases, the Lifeline content allowed them to consider a familiar issue from a different perspective.

> *"There was trust as half of this video contained information that we know… Personally, I know how to boil water, so with this video, it's settled."*
>
> — Female aged 31, Vilniavsk IDP camp, Ukraine

These findings reflect the information landscape in which audiences live. In Ukraine, audience members had access to readily available information from multiple sources, with broad access to, and use of, the internet (83% of respondents use it at least five times a week), social networks (used by 68% at least five times a week), as well as YouTube, news sites, podcasts, radio and TV.[13]

In Ukraine, ACHE project Lifeline content was broadcast at a regional level, across various platforms, among many other competing – sometimes contradictory – sources of information. The role that this content played in this highly competitive environment was as an effective, engaging and trustworthy source of information that reinforced knowledge, provided another perspective and gave audiences confidence that they had accurate knowledge that they may need to take action in the future.

[13] Media consumption figures are based on a BBC Media Action survey conducted in September to October 2023, which sampled 1,200 respondents living in Dnipro and Zaporizhzhia oblasts.

In contrast, audiences in Somalia and Nigeria had limited information sources, with radio being their primary source of information about humanitarian issues, alongside face-to-face interactions with camp leaders and humanitarian workers. In these contexts, the radio programmes were a source of essential, timely and trusted information. Topics addressed by the programmes were selected based on what was considered most relevant to audiences at the time. The content focused on practical steps that crisis-affected people could take, and aligned with the work that humanitarian actors were doing at the time.

The project's radio programmes in Nigeria and Somalia changed audiences' perceptions of, and attitude towards, humanitarian actors – but crisis-affected people still have limited two-way engagement with humanitarian actors

Research participants in Somalia credited the radio programmes with giving them the confidence, and helping them to understand how, to communicate with humanitarian actors. Some 88% of respondents in Somalia agreed that the programme(s) had helped them to understand their rights to access humanitarian services and agencies. In addition, 42% of respondents had communicated with aid providers or humanitarian agencies. Among those who had done so, phoning hotline numbers (cited by 55%) and directly calling specific agencies/people (32%) were the most frequently cited channels of communication. Non-functioning phone numbers were identified as a barrier to communicating with humanitarian agencies.

Audience members in Nigeria noted that listening to the project's radio programme(s) had helped to dispel their fears and distrust of humanitarian actors, and gave them confidence to communicate their needs to humanitarian agencies. However, whilst confidence was high, the opportunities to have dialogue was lower with 34% of respondents (all IDPs) reported having been involved in discussions about the type of humanitarian information and aid they received and 37% of respondents in Nigeria having communicated with aid providers or humanitarian agencies active in their community - mainly face to face (76%), through community meetings (21%) or community leaders (16%) – mostly to seek assistance or support. In contrast to the communication channels used in Somalia, just 2% of respondents in Nigeria had used hotline numbers and 12% had directly called a humanitarian agency or representative.

FGD participants in Nigeria stated that challenges in communicating with humanitarian actors included contact numbers for agencies being difficult to obtain, and toll-free lines often going unanswered. The communication gap between crisis-affected people and humanitarian actors was also attributed to insufficient outreach being conducted by NGOs, and perceived government neglect of "poor immigrants". The reduction in humanitarian services in the IDP camps in both Nigerian project states due to the formal closure of the camps is likely to be another contributor to the perceived deficit in communication between humanitarians and IDPs.

> *“There was the time these NGOs gathered us – we used to give the information and they listened to us. But for now, no one listens to us in the government because we are poor immigrants, so we don’t have the privilege to participate.”*
>
> — Male aged 35–44, rural, Borno, Nigeria

Audiences reported taking action based on what they had learned through the project’s radio programmes and Lifeline content, but the capacity to put learnings into action is limited for many.

How far audience members had put learning from the project media content into action varied across the three countries. Audience members in Nigeria were the most likely to have taken action, with 55% reporting having done something differently as a result of listening to the programmes.

The most frequently reported actions included adopting new WASH practices, establishing emergency food stores and sending children to school (particularly girls). FGD participants mentioned adopting practices from the *Me Ke Faruwa* (What is Happening?) programme to care for their environment and live harmoniously with others. Information from the *Lafiya Uwar Jiki* (Health is wealth) and *Kwariyar Kira* (The Panorama) programmes encouraged listeners to speak out against abuse without fear of stigma, and to prioritise education regardless of age or gender. They also reported feeling inspired by the programmes to start a small-scale business to improve their financial situation.

> *“We are enlightened from the programmes. We didn’t care about enrolling our children in school before… I had four children but only one of them was attending school. When I listened to the lecture on Peace FM, it changed my mind and now all of them are in school.”*
>
> — Male aged 35–44, rural, Borno, Nigeria

In Ukraine, although very little time passed between participants viewing the Lifeline content and the FGDs (several days or less), FGD participants reported already using advice from the content. For example, based on information from the water purification and disinfection video, a resident of the Zaporizhzhia oblast reported boiling water for longer while cooking, while another woman wanted to remind her friend, who uses a well, about the importance of additional water purification measures.

In Somalia, 18% of survey respondents reported taking any action as a result of listening to the radio programmes. Host community members were notably more likely than IDPs to report having taken action (28% versus 4%, respectively). FGD participants who reported taking action mentioned taking up income-generation activities, engaging in health and hygiene practices, supporting displaced families in their community, participating in agricultural training, and developing a family emergency plan.

> *"The radio programmes motivated me to take action in terms of disaster preparedness. One programme focused on creating a family emergency plan."*
>
> — FGD with females aged 45+, Idaale IDP camp, Somalia

The most cited reason for not taking action among survey respondents in Somalia was lacking the resources to do so (cited by 39%), and not having enough time (31%). However, FGD respondents mentioned taking resource-independent actions more to foster cohesion and social harmony between IDPs and host communities.

Audiences in Nigeria and Somalia reported that the project's radio programmes have fostered greater community cohesion and co-operation

Research participants in both Somalia and Nigeria credited the project programmes with contributing to better relationships between IDPs and host community members, and strengthening general community resilience and co-operation.

In Somalia, FGD participants stated that the radio programmes had inspired community members to organise youth sports leagues and tournaments, promoting physical activity and unity among the youth. Furthermore, participants recalled the programmes addressing issues related to the peaceful coexistence between IDPs and host communities, providing valuable insights on building relationships and improving interactions, and therefore encouraging community cohesion.

> *"I've learned so many new and valuable things from the programmes we've been exposed to. For instance, the Boqtaal discussions about displacement and the stories shared by our community members have really opened my eyes to the experiences and challenges faced by those who have been forced to leave their homes. I've gained a much deeper empathy and understanding for their struggles, and it has motivated me to get more involved in supporting displaced families in our village."*
>
> — FGD with females aged 18+, Tawakal IDP camp, Somalia

5. CONCLUSION

The evaluation showed that Lifeline content produced as part of the ACHE project was considered by members of the target audience to be engaging, appropriate, relevant and useful. Research participants rated the content as clear and easy to understand, while being "enlightening" and "entertaining". Audience members in Nigeria, Somalia and, to a different extent, Ukraine found the project's radio programmes and Lifeline content to be not only informative but also reflective of, and applicable to, their lives.

The perceived relevance of the Lifeline content may, to some extent, reflect the different types of media partners engaged in the project and the production of localised versus national level content. In Nigeria and Somalia, audience members felt that the radio programmes addressed pressing community issues, offering practical advice that was immediately relevant to them. In Ukraine, audience members perceived the Lifeline content to be more socially beneficial, and helpful in preparing them for potential future situations.

Lifeline programming can play a different, though equally important, role in contributing to improved knowledge of humanitarian issues in different contexts. Where audiences rely predominantly on one platform (such as radio) as a source of information on humanitarian issues (as in the project areas of Nigeria and Somalia), Lifeline programming offers essential, timely, practical and actionable information in times of acute crisis.

In contexts with a competitive media environment where audiences have a breadth of readily accessible information sources and social networks (such as in Ukraine), Lifeline content can play a role in reinforcing and clarifying knowledge around humanitarian issues. Importantly, it can also help to counter misinformation and disinformation by acting as an engaging, trustworthy and accurate information source.

While Lifeline communication can play a role in dispelling fears and distrust of humanitarian actors among crisis-affected communities (as it did in Somalia and Nigeria), barriers to achieving open and inclusive dialogue between these communities and humanitarians, and ensuring community participation in decision-making, are more challenging to overcome.

Aside from practical barriers to engagement (including unanswered hotlines and a lack of readily available contact information), the perception of humanitarian agencies' insufficient outreach, and perceived government and agency neglect of crisis-affected communities, is an area that warrants focus in future interventions. Nigerian IDP participants reported relying on camp and community leaders to represent them in decision-making. While community leaders representing their communities is one strand of engagement and a positive step, efforts need to go beyond this to directly engage with affected populations, to understand their needs and experiences, such as making direct communication channels between affected communities and aid agencies. To ensure two-way communication and participation of, and accountability to, crisis affected communities, both longer-term investment and strategic approaches are

needed to further enhance cooperation between media and humanitarian actors and embed these approaches within the humanitarian response.

The capacity of audience members to translate learning from Lifeline programming into action, including behaviour and lifestyle changes, varied between project contexts too. In Ukraine, despite having limited time to do so, some research participants had already used or shared Lifeline content and, importantly, reported feeling better prepared to act if they were directly affected by a future crisis.

In Nigeria and Somalia, participants reported barriers to taking action, including a lack of resources and time to make changes. Despite this, other participants reported taking action following listening to Lifeline programmes, such as adopting new WASH practices, highlighting the interventions contribution to communities being better able to cope with, and recover from, humanitarian crisis.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the evaluation findings, the following recommendations are proposed for future interventions of similar nature:

A. **Localise and contextualise Lifeline content:** where possible, produce or support local content, that directly addresses the specific needs and contexts of crisis-affected communities. This can be done through building local media partnerships or distributing social media content where local partnerships do not exist. The findings showed that local content that directly resonates with local communities aids engagement and impact.

B. **Ensure continuous community feedback and adaptation:** Integrate regular feedback loops with community members/audience members to ensure that Lifeline content remains relevant, effective and reflects the information needs of crisis-affected communities, including IDPs and host communities. Active engagement with communities through methods such as analysis of community feedback, regular listening groups, or social listening can help adjust strategies and improve the impact of future interventions.

C. **Strengthen communication channels with humanitarian actors:** Enhance two-way communication between crisis-affected communities and humanitarian organisations by leveraging local media and developing more accessible channels, such as community-based networks, hotlines, mobile platforms or social media channels. This can help bridge gaps between awareness and practical engagement.

D. **Adapt strategies to different media landscapes:** In contexts like Ukraine, where media landscapes are more developed, and there are fewer local media outlets, it was important to focus on concise, factual and engaging content that cuts through the noise, reinforces existing knowledge and increases people's depth of knowledge. Digital and social media strategies should be shaped to meet the diverse information needs of audiences.

E. **Leverage media content to strengthen social cohesion:** Produce local content to strengthen relationships between IDPs and host communities by sharing the voices of both groups. The findings show that Lifeline content can bridge gaps between IDPs and host communities, through helping both groups to understand each other's needs and challenges, encouraging co-operation and dialogue, and fostering a sense of togetherness and mutual support.

How can media and communication help audiences affected by humanitarian crisis?

ACHE Lifeline Learning Brief Three

Summarising BBC Media Action's research from Nigeria, Somalia and Ukraine

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