

# Dispatches From Disaster Zones II: Communicating with disaster affected communities

 [blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2009/12/16/dispatches-from-disaster-zones-ii-communicating-with-disaster-affected-communities/](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2009/12/16/dispatches-from-disaster-zones-ii-communicating-with-disaster-affected-communities/)

2009-12-16

Here are my notes from a session of [a symposium hosted by the Red Cross](#) on how humanitarian crises are mediated by journalism. This session is called Communicating With Disaster Affected Communities. [Previous session is reported [here](#)]

Save The Children

## Jon Bugge Save The Children

We talk about giving people a voice but it can be a bit scary for an NGO to do that. New Media is a wonderful tool but we should also think about the simple steps to giving people more control over their communications.

There needs to be better agency co-ordination, so for example, not everyone is using SMS and so swamping networks.

Need to talk to international media, but also to local media. Need to listen to local community to check that you are giving them the information they really need. Information should not just tell people what to do, but how to do it, too.

## Paul Conneally (ICRC)

Information is aid. But it needs to engage and to empower as well as inform. It can help ensure that the aid that is delivered is relevant and that communities can make decisions to exercise control over what aid is delivered. It is a natural fit with both the grass-root and partnership approach to humanitarian work.

A concrete example:

Teaming up with meteorological services in Malawi to give people information to help predict and prepare for drought – 80% of natural disasters are predictable. Information packaged to make it easily understandable to local communities.

Another example from Aceh. Community outreach programme based around community radio which broadcast text, email and phone messages from locals to help facilitate connections between individuals and groups – using radio to broker information. Blending mission of the NGOs with media.

Social Media creates new ways to collaborate. We now have no excuse not to engage with genuine collaborative tools to enable people to tell their own stories. People don't just receive messages they have a conversation where they become part of the solution in a symmetrical relationship. Cameraphones, YouTube, Twitter are all being used by us in the field. But it is also about low-tech – one man with a bike and a whistle or megaphone might be the best way to get people to evacuate an vulnerable area!

## Tim Large Thomson Reuters Foundation

How can we empower people at the frontline with media? They are not hapless victims, they have skills and strengths. Great potential of new technology such as SMS. We have launched [Emergency Information Service](#) which aggregates information from local media, local authorities, blogs, social media, SMS etc around a crisis providing raw information around disasters. Thomson Reuters team of specialist humanitarian journalists from AlertNet help filter the information and then send it out – mainly by SMS – to relevant agencies such as for aid agencies, government and local media.

- Copyright © 2014 London School of Economics and Political Science

