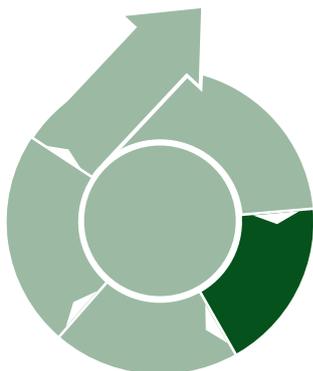


## Thematic Brief 7: Establishing systems that provide timely information – Early-warning/early-action and disaster response

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Timely and accurate information on hazards, exposure and vulnerability is essential for institutions to plan for disasters and roll out an efficient response, and allows individuals to react properly to dangerous events. Communication and information management systems that take into account the capacities of local institutions and communities, and which allow coordination between the affected population and concerned authorities, enable better risk identification and more efficient responses.

### Actions

- ▶ Establish scientifically sound systems to monitor foreseeable hazards (e.g. storms and droughts) and gather and analyse data on exposure and vulnerability.
- ▶ Establish the use of tools that contribute to the gathering of timely and accurate information on population displacement during crises in preparedness mechanisms and disaster management training programs (e.g. by using the Displacement Tracking Matrix). (See thematic brief 9)
- ▶ Use hazard and risk (including risk of displacement) data to inform EWEA systems.
- ▶ Incorporate communication systems into EWEA systems that are able to convey hazard warnings to the most isolated communities and individuals (e.g. by using multiple channels such as mobile phones, television, radio and sirens). *Example: Haiti.*
- ▶ Make sure people are aware of the risk they face and how they should react to warnings, and that everybody is able to understand alerts and take action as expected, by considering possible hindering factors (e.g. linguistic and cultural barriers; obstacles to mobility linked to physical status and social roles; and the lack of trust). *Example: Pakistan.* (See also thematic brief 4)
- ▶ Establish two-way communication and information systems that allow communities to communicate with authorities in charge of risk reduction and disaster management, in order to expose existing needs and gaps and to allow for better institutional response and support. *Examples: Haiti and Pakistan.*

**CASE STUDY 10: Two-way communication in Haiti<sup>10</sup>**

In Haiti – a country exposed to a multitude of different hazards – communication is hindered by language and education barriers. Some 50 per cent of the population is illiterate, and Creole is the language most commonly spoken, which makes much of the available information on hazards and risk – published in either French or English – inaccessible to much of the population.

In order to overcome these challenges, IOM developed a comprehensive two-way communication strategy, based on a set of different media, which greatly expands the number of Haitians who can access information before, during and after a disaster (e.g. awareness campaigns, alerts and warnings), and who can reach out to risk reduction and emergency management institutions.

Radios broadcast locally produced educational programs in Creole on public transportation networks; and videos and comic strips in Creole target low-literacy individuals with information on preparedness and hazard mitigation measures and procedures. In addition, SMS transmission campaigns, public service messages, community suggestion boxes and a dedicated call centre allow for information on the population's concrete situation to feed back to the authorities. The system is complemented by opportunities for one-to-one communication between individuals and disaster management workers at the field level.

**CASE STUDY 11: The Humanitarian Communications Project in Pakistan<sup>11</sup>**

The Humanitarian Communications (HComms) Project of IOM supports the humanitarian community and the Government of Pakistan by providing timely, accurate and relevant information to affected populations and highlighting the gaps and needs of aid providers. The HComms Project has designed and implemented numerous disaster information campaigns for flood-affected and conflict-stricken populations across the country. It has managed to fill the knowledge gap during emergencies, by collecting and sharing information with government departments (e.g. the National Disaster Management Authority and the Provincial Disaster Management Authority) and UN agencies (e.g. OCHA, WHO, UNICEF and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees).

The HComms Project provides real-time, two-way communications to and from the field, enabling governmental and humanitarian actors to better target their activities and receive accurate feedback from affected communities. In collaboration with technical experts, information specialists from IOM issue and translate public service messages that are then disseminated through formal (e.g. radio and TV broadcasts, newspapers, leaflets and banners) and informal (e.g. awareness sessions for community leaders and spontaneous information circulation, such as word of mouth) channels. The project also produces guidance documents on thematic topics and/or concerns raised by affected populations and updates its humanitarian service directory on a regular basis. The dedicated, toll-free "Humanitarian Call Centre," dozens of field staff deployed countrywide and a human network of volunteers ensure that feedback from the field reaches the concerned parties as quickly as possible and allows for an effective communication cycle.

<sup>11</sup> For more information about the HComms Project in Pakistan, visit <http://hcomms.iomapps.org>.

## ISSUE 2: Participatory processes

IOM considers participation as a key element of every stage of its DRR programming and operative intervention. By involving a multitude of stakeholders throughout the migration management cycle, participatory approaches allow for more informed decision-making and more efficient implementation of projects. They also allow for better protection of the weakest, less represented individuals and for the design and implementation of more equitable interventions. They enhance the beneficiaries' ownership of activities and foster collaboration and trust among community members, institutions and external actors.

Participation has a specific relevance in risk identification and risk management processes at the local level, as it can contribute in revealing small-scale exposure and vulnerability patterns, and in designing risk reduction measures and systems that give adequate consideration to the situational specificities of individuals and households. Similarly, when managing displacement, tailoring

protection interventions according to the actual needs of affected populations is essential, and this is best achieved when beneficiaries are adequately consulted.

Participatory approaches can help design durable solutions to displacement situations, by allowing for a better understanding of the priorities and expectations of the displaced. In addition, such approaches can contribute to reducing conflicts between mobile people and their host communities in displacement, relocation, local integration and return contexts. Participation can help inform both groups on how to minimize risks and take advantage of opportunities stemming from mobility, and can help authorities to better enforce land use planning and development measures. By improving participation in decision-making processes, IOM tries to improve access to representation and raise the quality of local governance in the longer term, *ipso facto* tackling one very significant driver of disaster risk.

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