



**BBC**  
**MEDIA ACTION**

TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH MEDIA  
AROUND THE WORLD

# Lifeline programming

Communication with crisis-affected people



## ▶ What is Lifeline programming?

Lifeline programming is special media programming for communities affected by humanitarian crises. It aims to provide people with timely, relevant and practical information to alleviate their suffering and assist with their recovery. Lifeline programming also aims to give affected people the opportunity to voice their concerns, express their needs, share their stories and hold humanitarian aid providers to account.

## ▶ BBC Media Action is the BBC's international development charity

BBC Media Action uses the power of media and communication to provide reliable, timely and useful information to help people make choices to improve their lives. Around the world we work with local media and other partners to reach hundreds of millions of people in countries where mass media can be used to connect and inform. As the BBC's international development charity we are registered in England and Wales as an independent entity, entirely separate to BBC's newsgathering operations.



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“I can't see, so when my radio was destroyed in the cyclone, I felt very isolated. Now that I have a radio, I feel like I can see.”  
*Monk, Burma/Myanmar*

## ▶ How Lifeline programming differs from news coverage

News coverage of humanitarian crises tells the world what is happening. Lifeline programming goes further: it aims to help people survive, mitigate the impact of the crisis and recover from setbacks. It is created in collaboration with aid responders and local media to produce the best possible outcome for the affected population.

## ▶ How Lifeline programming helps crisis-affected communities

In the wake of a disaster, people need timely and accurate information to help them decide what to do as much as they need food, water, shelter and medical care. People need answers to vital questions such as: What happened? What should I do now?

What help is coming? Where is my family? Which routes are safe to travel on? How can I protect myself? The media can deliver this kind of life-saving information rapidly and on a mass scale. Information shared by radio, television or mobile can empower people to help themselves. Lifeline programming may reach affected communities days or even weeks before aid workers are able to do so. It can provide vital reassurance to people who are confused, traumatised and isolated. It can also help to give these people a voice.



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## ▶ How Lifeline programming helps humanitarian aid providers

Lifeline programming can communicate key messages to assist relief efforts. It can tell people what services are available, how and where to access them and what to do to stay safe and healthy.

Lifeline programming can also manage the expectations of the affected population. And by providing a platform for people to voice their concerns, it can help aid agencies to detect gaps in the response that need to be addressed.

## ▶ How we produce and broadcast Lifeline programming

Lifeline programming can take many different forms. It can range from public service announcements and short bulletins to magazine programmes and phone-ins for radio or TV. It may include elements of light entertainment as well as factual information. If the crisis is prolonged, a radio or TV drama series may be produced to discuss issues in a fictional setting. Text messages, voice messages, the internet and social media are also useful tools for reaching affected people and giving them a voice.

“Our immunisation coverage in the camps doubled after the BBC broadcasts.”  
*UNICEF Communications Officer in Darfur*

In some cases, BBC Media Action supports local media to produce and broadcast their own Lifeline programming. In other cases, we produce Lifeline programming in-house or in collaboration with one of the BBC's 27 language services. The programmes are then broadcast by partner radio and TV stations which have large audiences in the disaster zone.

## How can we work together?

### Aid providers

- You can help shape the content of Lifeline programming. You can give us information on challenges affecting the population and expert advice on what people should do to address them.
- We can help you to convey timely and important messages to the disaster-affected population about what to do and how to access your services, and help you to manage their expectations regarding any limitations in aid available.
- You can help us to extend the reach of Lifeline programming by spreading the word about the programmes and through outreach activities. For example, you can help us run listening groups or you can arrange for recordings of programmes to be played to communities with limited access to broadcast media.
- We can give you feedback from audiences about the concerns they express and gaps in the relief effort they identify. This information, along with success stories reported by the audience, can help you to adjust your operational activities so that they are more effective.



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### Media organisations

- We can help you with training, expertise and resources to provide your audience with important information they need to help survive the crisis and recover from it. We can help you to get this information across in a clear, interesting and user-friendly way. We can also facilitate collaboration with aid providers.
- If your capacity to broadcast has been affected by the disaster, we may be able to help you recover and reconnect with your audience.

### Further information

BBC Media Action is registered in England & Wales under Charity Commission number 1076235 and Company number 3521587.

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