

Internews, CSIS Host Event on Media's Critical Role in Emergency Response

Broadcasting information about sources of water and food or helping refugees reunite with family members are some of the ways that media can assist in emergency response and conflict situations. Speaking from their experience working in Indonesia, Sudan, Rwanda, Chad, Somalia, Bosnia, Iraq, and other countries, Mark Frohardt and Kathleen Reen discussed the constructive role that media play in disaster situations at an event hosted by Internews Network and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) on February 25 in Washington, DC.

COMMUNITY RADIO PROJECT IN REFUGEE CAMPS IN CHAD

Mark Frohardt, Internews Regional Director for Africa, recently returned from visiting Sudanese refugee camps in Chad where he is developing a community radio project to meet critical information needs. He touched upon issues that refugees must face in conflict situations such as whether to remain in place or flee a location, and whether to separate from or remain with their families.

EMERGENCY MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS FOLLOWING TSUNAMI IN INDIAN OCEAN

Following the Indian Ocean tsunami, Kathleen Reen, Internews Regional Direc-



A radio repairman in a refugee camp in Chad.

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tor for South and Southeast Asia, spent much of this year in the Indonesian province of Aceh, working with local journalists and international relief agencies to establish emergency media communications. She discussed issues affecting distressed populations there, including access to information about food, shelter and potable water.

LOCAL MEDIA PROVIDE CONTEXT AND CREATE DIALOGUE

“Engaging local media in the gathering and dissemination of critical information ensures an active and informed participation of affected populations in their own recovery,” said Frohardt.

The speakers emphasized that working through local media in relief operations is a key factor to ensuring timely and effective delivery of life-saving assistance,

as international or regional broadcasters may lack detailed or well-timed local information.

The speakers highlighted the virtues of local media, as journalists can provide a point of view appropriate to the local context in a local voice and language. Furthermore, local journalists can create an interactive dialogue, within the affected population and between the affected population and relief efforts, thereby mitigating effects of the information void created in emergency situations.

The discussion was moderated by Bathsheba Crocker, Co-Director of CSIS's Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project, which explores the needs of societies emerging from armed conflict, identifies gaps within current capabilities of the international community, and works to improve the efforts of key actors involved in post-conflict operations.



Local journalists participate in a video conference in Aceh.

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