

SYRIA CRISIS

# HUMANITARIAN INFORMATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT: ZAATARI REFUGEE CAMP, JORDAN

DRAFT REPORT  
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SEPTEMBER 2012



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**“Communication [with refugees] is close to zero at this point in time.”**

DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS FOR AN INGO  
IN JORDAN-LEBANON  
AMMAN, SEPTEMBER 10, 2012



Syrian refugees in the Zaatari camp in northern Jordan are living in an information void, left in the dark about what is happening in Syria and around them in the camp. This void affects their capacity to access aid services and increases their level of frustration and discontent. This is one of the main conclusions of the rapid information and communication needs assessment among Syrian refugees conducted by Internews in the Zaatari camp in September 2012.

The vast majority of refugees who participated in this assessment affirmed that there are no sources of information available to them, and/or that they don't know of any information sources. Interpersonal networks of communication are critical for exchanging information, and an important number of camp residents depend on other refugees, particularly those who have been in the camp longer, to find out what is going on.

“We have no sources of information at all,” said one refugee interviewed for this assessment. “We don't know what is happening in Syria, what is happening to our families, we don't even know if it is Friday or Thursday.”

These information and communication gaps, if not properly addressed, could lead to operational challenges for humanitarian organizations that may potentially cause their access to, and acceptance with, camp residents to become gradually limited.

Internews presented its preliminary findings to humanitarian actors in Zaatari and Amman, after which UNHCR agreed that a multi-sectoral, coordinated information and communications strategy in the Zaatari refugee camp and, equally important, for refugees in urban areas, is urgently required.

UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations are already working to set up a coordinated mechanism to communicate directly with camp residents and to provide effective channels for feedback, and are eager to find ways to strengthen their efforts through some of the recommendations provided in this brief report.

Internews surveyed more than 120 Syrian refugees in Zaatari camp, asking a set of 30 questions about information needs, sources, and trust levels. Additionally, 20 in-depth key informant interviews were conducted with humanitarian workers and media professionals in Jordan and in Beirut, Lebanon.

As per the rapid assessment, many refugees in the camp are frustrated by their increasing ignorance of their current situation, the lack of adequate access to news and information about the situation in Syria, the quality of services available in the camp, and the lack of information about the very same services available.

First and foremost, refugees demand news and information about Syria. This is followed by the need to know how to access basic services particularly with regard to water, food and new shelter (i.e. caravans). Residents also want to know information about their general situation in the camp.

The overwhelming majority of refugees affirmed satellite TV was the source of information they trusted the most when there were at home in Syria – *Al Jazeera Arabic* and *Al Arabiya* being the preferred channels. In Zaatari, TV is the source refugees would like to access for news about Syria as well as for entertainment. After TV, mobile phones and Internet were ranked among the three most trusted sources.

Camp residents don't have access to radio transistors except for those with FM receivers in their mobile phones. While many didn't listen to radio in Syria, camp residents affirmed they would attend listening groups and that a regular radio program about the camp and services available would be useful.

When asked about the method for providing feedback to aid providers, camp residents cited personal interaction as the preferred and most trusted means of communication. However, refugees expressed that humanitarian workers are difficult to find and often unable to answer questions. Additionally, most of the respondents stated they feel uncomfortable interacting with the police inside the camp, citing them as an untrusted source.

Access to mobile phones is high among refugees families. 3G service is available on the site, and scratch cards with phone credit and even mobile phones are available through small shops set up inside the camp premises. However, lack of electricity to charge phones is a clear source of discontent for camp residents.

"People are running from a horrible situation to a terrible one," said Saba Mobaslat, Director of Save the Children's Jordan office to the *New York Times* in late August 2012<sup>1</sup>. As pointed out by a senior Jordanian humanitarian worker interviewed during this assessment, an effective information and communication intervention could be a game changer: "[The lack of] information is still the number one stress factor for Iraqi refugees [living in Jordan since 2003] to date."

Indeed, the lack of timely, accurate and well-targeted information for communities affected by crisis and

their lack of voice and representation in humanitarian operation is, unfortunately, neither new nor exclusive to Zaatari<sup>2</sup>. Affected populations have a right to know what is happening, to ask questions about their concerns, and to become active agents in their own relief and recovery.

A brief draft version of this document with the preliminary findings of the assessment was presented to UNHCR and agencies at an inter-agency coordination in Zaatari on September 6. A soft copy of the same document was shared with UNHCR in Geneva, Amman and Beirut on the following days, and discussed more in detail with UNHCR in Amman and Beirut before the completion of the field mission on September 11.

As part of this assessment, and as per UNHCR's request, Internews contributed to the Syria Regional Response Plan (RRP) for Jordan and proposed to set-up a Humanitarian Information Service (HIS) to provide essential life-saving information to Syrian refugees in the camps and outside the camps in Jordan. The Jordan HIS will assist the humanitarian community to be more effective, transparent and accountable by enabling communities to better understand aid operations, access relief services and communicate with aid providers.

In Lebanon, also as per UNHCR's request, Internews also contributed to the RRP and proposed to deploy a humanitarian communications expert to assist UNHCR to design, develop, promote and pro-actively lead a comprehensive multi-sectoral, coordinated information and communications strategy with refugee communities.

2 SEE *WHEN INFORMATION SAVES LIVES*, THE 2011 ANNUAL REPORT OF INTERNEWS' HUMANITARIAN INFORMATION PROJECTS: [WWW.INTERNEWS.ORG/OUR-STORIES/NEWSLETTERS/INTERNEWS-RELEASES-WHEN-INFORMATION-SAVES-LIVES-2011-ANNUAL-REPORT-HUMANITARIAN-ANNEX-1-LANDMARK-PUBLICATIONS-AND-EVENTS-IN-THE-EVOLUTION-OF-THE-HUMANITARIAN-COMMUNICATIONS-SECTOR](http://WWW.INTERNEWS.ORG/OUR-STORIES/NEWSLETTERS/INTERNEWS-RELEASES-WHEN-INFORMATION-SAVES-LIVES-2011-ANNUAL-REPORT-HUMANITARIAN-ANNEX-1-LANDMARK-PUBLICATIONS-AND-EVENTS-IN-THE-EVOLUTION-OF-THE-HUMANITARIAN-COMMUNICATIONS-SECTOR), PAGE 71.

1 TORRENT OF SYRIAN REFUGEES STRAINS AID EFFORT AND REGION, *NEW YORK TIMES*, SEPTEMBER 24, 2012, [WWW.NYTIMES.COM/2012/08/25/WORLD/MIDDLEEAST/REFUGEE-NUMBERS-SWELL-AS-FIGHTING-IN-SYRIA-INTENSIFIES.HTML?\\_R=3&PAGEWANTED=ALL](http://WWW.NYTIMES.COM/2012/08/25/WORLD/MIDDLEEAST/REFUGEE-NUMBERS-SWELL-AS-FIGHTING-IN-SYRIA-INTENSIFIES.HTML?_R=3&PAGEWANTED=ALL)

## ABOUT THE ZAAATARI CAMP

Jordan's Zaatari camp, officially inaugurated on July 28, is currently home to over 30,000 Syrian refugees, including many children unaccompanied by parents. These refugees are mostly former residents from the southern Daraa Governorate, where artillery and air attacks still continue.

Built on a barren 9km<sup>2</sup> desert plain about six miles from the Syrian border, Zaatari camp offers no protection from the sun, the wind and the dust and now, with winter approaching, the rain.

The Jordanian Gendarmerie, the Police, and the Army control the perimeter of this closed-camp;

people's movements are also restricted. The living conditions in the camp are improving but are still certainly precarious. Basic services like food, water or electricity provision and access to health and sanitation facilities are getting better by the day.

Zaatari's maximum capacity is 80,000 refugees, and with more than 100,000 expected before the end of the year, one or two more camps are expected to be built soon nearby. If humanitarian forecasts prove correct, Zaatari could become the third largest city in Jordan before the end of the year.



According to the Jordan Times, in response to Amman's "closed camp" policy, Syrian activists and concerned citizens have formed underground "smuggling networks", assisting the flight of Zaatari residents and housing them in a series of so-called safe houses stretching across the northern region.<sup>1</sup> The Interior Ministry policy restricts the movement of refugees within Zaatari, granting only a handful of permits to leave the compounds for "exceptional" cases. JACOBO QUINTANILLA/INTERNEWS

1 FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES FLEEING VIOLENCE, ZAAATARI CAMP 'ANOTHER HELL', *JORDAN TIMES*, AUG 23, 2012, [HTTP://JORDANTIMES.COM/FOR-SYRIAN-REFUGEES-FLEEING-VIOLENCE-ZAAATARI-CAMP-ANOTHER-HELL](http://JORDANTIMES.COM/FOR-SYRIAN-REFUGEES-FLEEING-VIOLENCE-ZAAATARI-CAMP-ANOTHER-HELL)

## 1 BACKGROUND

“The [Syria] crisis is dangerous and getting worse, and it is a threat to the Syrian people, the region and the world,” said Lakhdar Brahimi, the Algerian diplomat who replaced Kofi Annan as UN envoy to Syria earlier in September.<sup>1</sup> Brahimi, who met President Bashar al-Assad of Syria in Damascus on September 15, warned afterwards that any progress would be slow given the big gap between government and opposition.

In this context, the 18-month violence in Syria and the alarming increase of Syrian refugees across the region is creating a broader humanitarian crisis that could further destabilize the Middle East, according to analysts.

In March 2011, thousands of Syrians took the streets, initially in Daraa, in the south of the country, to demonstrate against the five decades of Ba’ath Party rule, asking for the end of it and for the resignation of President Assad.

Since then, over 18,000 people have been killed, and over 260,000 have fled Syria into neighboring countries, according to UNHCR. There are 2.5 million people inside Syria requiring urgent humanitarian aid, including 1.2 million internally displaced people hosted in schools and public buildings.

### REFUGEES REGISTERED AND/OR ASSISTED

COUNTRY	
IRAQ	25,508
JORDAN	86,940
LEBANON	67,960
TURKEY	80,104
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>260,512</b>

SOURCE: UNHCR, 14 SEPTEMBER 2012. FIGURES ARE BASED ON ESTIMATES AND MAY VARY

1 IRAN CONFIRMS IT HAS FORCES IN SYRIA AND WILL TAKE MILITARY ACTION IF PUSHED, IAN BLACK, SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 16, 2012, WWW.GUARDIAN.CO.UK/WORLD/2012/SEP/16/IRAN-MIDDLEEAST

Over the last three months, the number of Syrian refugees has tripled, with an increase of 100,000 refugees during the month of August alone. More than half of registered refugees are children.<sup>2</sup> According to UN estimates, Syrian refugees could total 600,000 by the end of 2012 if outflows continue at the current rate.<sup>3</sup>

“This begins to give you a sense of the scale of the tragedy that is unfolding, and the fact that it’s escalating, rather than dissipating,”<sup>4</sup> said John Ging, the Director of the Coordination and Response Division of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), at the launch of the revised Syria Humanitarian Response Plan presented at the Syria Humanitarian Forum<sup>5</sup> in Geneva on September 7.

### JORDAN AND TURKEY, HOME TO THE LARGEST NUMBERS

The most significant increases in numbers of refugees are in Turkey and Jordan. Jordan now hosts the largest number of registered Syrian refugees in the region with more than 89,000 being registered or awaiting registration in the country.<sup>6</sup>

In Jordan, daily arrivals average between 1,000 and 1,500 people. At this rate, the number of Syrian refugees in Jordan would reach 250,000 by the end of the year. According to the Jordanian Government there are already more than 200,000 Syrians in the country.

About 30,000 refugees, an important number of whom are women and children, are housed at the Zaatari camp, a closed-camp opened on July 28 in the northern part of the country, near Mafraq.

2 HUMANITARIAN BULLETIN SYRIA, OCHA, ISSUE 8 | 1 – 14 SEPTEMBER 2012.  
3 IBID.

4 UN RAISES HUMANITARIAN APPEAL TO \$347 MILLION TO HELP GROWING NUMBER OF SYRIANS IN NEED, SEPTEMBER 7, 2012, UN DAILY NEWS FROM THE UN NEWS SERVICE.

5 SYRIA HUMANITARIAN FORUM BROUGHT TOGETHER OVER 350 PARTICIPANTS FROM MEMBER STATES, REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (INGOS) AND UN HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES TO MOBILIZE THE NECESSARY RESOURCES TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO THE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE UPROOTED BY THE CONFLICT.

6 UNHCR - SYRIA REGIONAL REFUGEE RESPONSE. INFORMATION SHARING PORTAL, HTTP://DATA.UNHCR.ORG/SYRIANREFUGEES/COUNTRY.PHP?ID=107, ACCESSED ON SEPTEMBER 17, 2012.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

An Internews team visited the Zaatari refugee camp from September 2-4, 2012 to conduct a rapid information and communication needs assessment among Syrian refugees.

From August 30 to September 11, Internews met with a number of humanitarian organizations in Amman and Zaatari, attended various coordination fora and met and visited local media organizations in Jordan. Internews also met with a selected number of humanitarian organizations in Beirut, Lebanon, to get a sense of the humanitarian dimensions of the refugee crisis and share the preliminary findings and recommendations from the rapid needs assessment conducted in Jordan.

The assessment in the Zaatari camp in Jordan aimed to:

- 1 Understand the information and communication needs of camp residents and the most effective channels to reach them with actionable and useful information about humanitarian services available, and for them to share information, feedback and concerns with aid providers.
- 2 Provide recommendations for immediate action to improve communications with camp residents based on Internews’ experience assessing and operating in similar and other refugee environments.
- 3 Explore the feasibility of collaboration with humanitarian agencies in the development of programming for dissemination to, and participation of, the refugee community in partnership with local media organizations and other relevant channels.

This report describes the methodology and approach for the assessment, and identifies key findings to inform the design and development of a Multi-Sectoral, Coordinated Community Communications Strategy.

Despite the fact that this rapid assessment exclusively looks at Zaatari camp, it is of critical importance to



In Zaatari, over 800 children have registered to enter Jordanian schools, under an on-going registration effort. More than 4,500 children have also received vaccinations in a campaign led by UNICEF. JACOBO QUINTANILLA/INTERNEWS

According to UNHCR, more than 80% of recent arrivals originate from Daraa governorate.

The UNHCR Regional Response Plan, which was revised and presented in June 2012, planned for 185,000 Syrian refugees till the end of the year. The regional refugee plan is currently being revised in close coordination with UN agencies and NGO partners with the view of presenting the revised plan in Geneva on September 27, 2012.

take into consideration and equally address the information and communication needs of refugees staying with host communities (i.e. urban refugees). There is already extensive experience through UNHCR, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), UNESCO, International Relief & Development (IRD) and others, in doing so.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

The approach used for this assessment in the Zaatari camp was designed to capture key information, provide preliminary findings, and make recommendations in a short space of time.

Data collection took place over one-and-a-half day period and included administration of a simple questionnaire of 30 close-ended questions by the Internews field team. Questions included basic demographic information; key information sources; trusted information sources; information needs; modes of information exchange and communication; and effective communications with aid providers.

Refugees were interviewed in groups and individually and, although formal random sampling was not undertaken, care was taken to interview a diverse range of groups and individuals with different demographic profiles based upon an AGDM (Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming).

A total of over 120 respondents were interviewed in 15 groups. The team took approximately 20-25 minutes with each group. The questionnaire was designed in English and administered by a native Arabic speaker.

While the data presented in this short draft report are not statistically representative of the entire refugee population at Zaatari camp, there are clear and compelling findings that point to possible and effective information and communication strategies.

### 4 KEY FINDINGS

*“Nobody knows anything in the camp. Unless someone comes to our tent and tells us about some food distribution, by the time we know, there may be no food left”,*

SAID A 50-YEAR OLD MAN FROM DARAA WHO REACHED ZAAATARI WITH HIS FAMILY AND HIS COUSIN’S FAMILY IN MID-AUGUST.

Preliminary findings from a rapid information and communications needs assessment conducted by Internews highlight that:

» Overwhelmingly, camp residents currently live in an information void. Many refugees are unhappy and frustrated by their increasing ignorance of what is happening in the camp and particularly about what is happening in Syria.

» **SOURCES:** The vast majority of respondents affirmed that **there are no sources of information available** and/or they don’t know of any.

» **Interpersonal networks of communication are critical.** An important number of people depend on other refugees, particularly those who have been in the camp for longer, to find any sort of information.

*“If we see people going to the east [in the camp], we go to the east. If we see people going to the west, we go to the west.”*

» **TRUSTED CHANNELS:** Satellite TV is the source of information refugees trusted the most when at home in Syria, by far - *Al Jazeera Arabic* and *Al Arabiya* were the preferred channels. In Zaatari, TV is the source they would like to access for news about Syria as well as for entertainment. After TV, mobile phones and Internet were ranked among the 3 most trusted sources.

*“We have phones but no electricity... We can only talk to Allah right now. Allah is the only one we can complain to.”*

MALE CAMP RESIDENT

*“Each district in Daraa has a Facebook page and we know how many people have been killed and where.”*

SAID A 20-YEAR OLD MAN, WHO WAS STUDYING IT ENGINEER BEFORE HE HAD TO FLEE.

*“Mobile phone is the only way we have to communicate and Facebook the best way we have to know what is happening because there is a page for our village.”*

SAID HIS FATHER. BOTH COMPLAINED OF THE LACK OF ELECTRICITY TO AT LEAST CHARGE THEIR MOBILE PHONE AND BE ABLE TO BE IN CONTACT WITH THEIR FAMILY BACK IN SYRIA.

» **MOBILE PHONE ACCESS: Access to mobile is high but a lack of electricity to charge phones is a clear source of discontent for camp residents.**

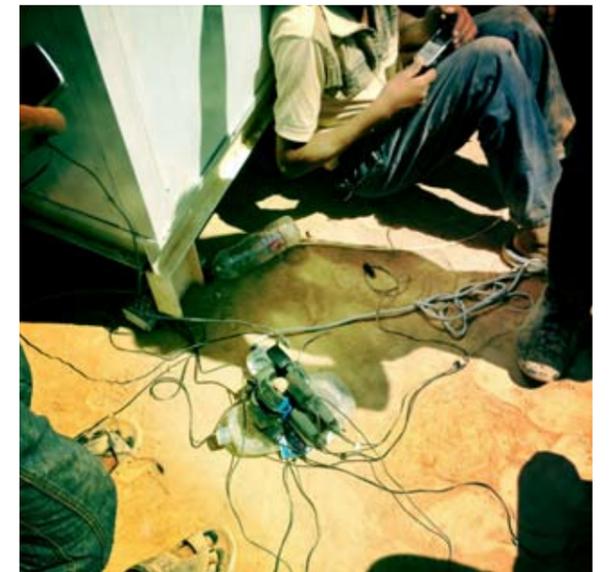
» Most of the respondents interviewed have their own phone or have access to one through their families using a Jordanian and/or Syrian SIM card. Connectivity is good with 3G accessible across the Camp. Residents can buy scratch cards and mobile phones inside the camps in a few shops and individual vendors.

» Many mobile phones also have FM receivers. However, certain respondents noted that some mobile phones have difficulty receiving a good FM signal so people walk around the camp until they find good reception.

#### MOBILE PHONE CHARGING TENT

Six refugee committees representing the Zaatari camp population have now been established to contribute to the management of the camp. One of the refugee communities will run a mobile phone charging tent. The community tent, currently being set up by UNHCR, will help ensure that all refugees can keep in touch with relatives back home.

SYRIA REGIONAL REFUGEE RESPONSE - JORDAN, LEBANON, IRAQ, TURKEY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2012



While an important number of refugee families has access to a functioning mobile phone, the lack of electricity and opportunities to charge mobile phones was creating anxiety and frustration among Syrian refugees in Zaatari. In the picture, a group of young boys await for their mobile phones to be charged by the main entrance of the camp in September 6, 2012. JACOBO QUINTANILLA/INTERNEWS

*“We don’t see anybody to complain”*

*“They [humanitarian workers] send you from one person to another”*

#### FEEDBACK CHANNELS:

» **Personal interaction is the preferred and most trusted means of communication.** Camp residents interviewed would prefer face-to-face meetings with humanitarian workers as the main way to ask questions, access and share information and also complain.

» Phone calls, call-in to radio/TV programs were other mentioned channels.

» **Humanitarian workers are difficult to find and often unable to answer questions.** The vast majority of respondents stated that they find it difficult to locate humanitarian workers around the camp and when they do and ask them questions, they are re-directed to 2-3 different people leaving their question unaddressed. Many also stated that

more humanitarian workers who spoke Arabic were required.

- » **Police are not a trusted communication channel.** Most of the respondents feel uncomfortable interacting with the police inside the camp.
- » **RADIO:** Residents don't have access to radio transistors. They didn't listen to radio in Syria but they affirmed that they would attend listening groups and that a regular radio program about the camp and services available would be useful.
- » **LITERACY LEVEL:** Critical to consider when thinking of information/communication channels is the fact that a very important percentage of respondents didn't finish primary school and/or has difficulties in reading.

#### POSTERS AND FLYERS

To support parents in Zaatari camp and transit sites in dealing with the stress their children are experiencing, UNICEF printed 1,000 information sheets to be distributed to parents, and 450 posters to be displayed in the sites, on how to support children in situations of crisis. This will help parents to assist their children and alleviate their own stress.

SYRIA CRISIS WEEKLY HUMANITARIAN SITUATION REPORT - JORDAN, LEBANON, IRAQ AND TURKEY, 30 AUGUST 2012

## 5 WHAT INFORMATION DO REFUGEES WANT AND NEED?

- » **First and foremost, refugees demand news and information about Syria.** This is followed by the need to know how to access basic services particularly with regard to water, food and new shelter (i.e. caravans). Residents also want to know information about their general situation in the camp.

- » Camp residents interviewed complained of the lack electricity to charge their phones; access to cold and clean water 24/7; the quality of the food and the lack of awareness of distribution times; and how to access medical services and new shelter (i.e. caravans).
- » Ignorance of what is happening inside and outside the camp is raising the level of irritation of residents. This is compounded by a feeling of impotence, not knowing whom to complain to, or how to access services and meet those needs.

*"There is not enough food and water and we are scared to go out in the camp and fetch for ourselves because there are many people looking for them too. Access to services, that's the information we need."*

## 6 FILLING THE GAP: RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO REFUGEES & ESTABLISH 2-WAY COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Participants expressed overwhelming interest in information developed specifically for them about camp news. It is clear that any information intervention will generate a great deal of interest and goodwill.

The mode of delivery and the channels are important as they will determine how many and how people participate in and benefit from any community communications intervention.

Based on its extensive experience in similar settings, Internews advocates for multi-platform/multi-channel approaches using local media, non-mass media communication channels (e.g. community volunteers), traditional/indigenous channels (e.g. religious leaders), or mobile technology and social media, always based on a good understanding of the



"There is not enough food and water and we are scared to go out in the camp and fetch for ourselves because there are many people looking for them too. Access to services, that's the information we need," affirmed a refugee father of 4 in Zaatari. In the picture, a food distribution takes place. Only men and boys are by the track. JACOBO QUINTANILLA/INTERNEWS

local information ecology. There is no silver bullet or solution that fits all.

The following section briefly discusses the issues of coordination and a series of tools for information dissemination that UNHCR and implementing partners may want to consider as per discussions with UNHCR and others agencies.

### 6.1 COORDINATION

UNHCR and partners are already working on setting up a coordinated mechanism to communicate directly with camp residents and set up effective channels for feedback. As a key initial step UNHCR is collecting key messages and information about services provided in the camps by individual agencies. These 1-pagers with messages and actionable and useful information will be updated regularly and will constitute the initial cornerstone for an effective community communications strategy.

*“There are so many [humanitarian] actors in the camp that people don’t know where to address their complaints, they don’t know what everybody does. I have the impression that they don’t know who we are and that they don’t access services because they don’t know what is there.”*

HUMANITARIAN WORKER IN ZAAATARI

Another important factor is the need for individual agencies to appoint a focal person for community communications to actively participate in the coordination structure that UNHCR and partners are currently setting up. This community communications working group, or similar denomination, could be chaired by UNHCR and co-chaired by an I/NGO.

## 6.2 MULTI-SECTORAL, COORDINATED COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

As stressed by UNHCR and partners in light of the initial findings of Internews’ rapid needs assessment, a multi-sectoral, coordinated information and communications strategy in the Zaatari refugee camp and, equally important, also for refugees in urban areas, is urgently required.

This will dramatically improve two-way communication and will help to continue proving the value of information and communication as a form of humanitarian assistance in itself.<sup>1</sup>

As per Internews’ experience in similar settings, refugees will gain access to important information about their situation, regain their self-agency and play a more active and positive role in the maintenance of the Zaatari camp towards their eventual exit from Jordan.

## 6.3 POTENTIAL TOOLS AND COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Based on the preliminary findings of Internews’ rapid needs assessment and also based on similar humanitarian information work done around the world, Internews shares a series of tools that have proven to work and, also to fail, in other environments.

This document is not an exhaustive list of tools, or approaches. Instead, the intention of this rapid needs assessment is to provide a *menu* for UNHCR and partners from which to select the most appropriate strategies that adequately contextualized and with extra capacities and resources, could work best to meet the information and communication needs of refugees in Zaatari.

A series of tools and channels include, but are not limited to:

### 6.3.1 FOR RECEPTION AND REGISTRATION OF REFUGEES AT THE BORDER AREAS AND IN ZAAATARI

- 1 **Welcome cards** with basic details about refugees’ new situation, the place they are and the services available to them, including contact details of community managers and other relevant useful information.
- 2 **Information boards** with visuals and snippets of relevant information. Suggestion: Identify local cartoonist to help agencies visualize content.
- 3 Include **Questions on i.e. literacy, access to functioning mobile phone and radio transistor, and write down mobile phone numbers**, to assess potential available communication channels, as part of the registration process.

### 6.3.2 FOR CAMP MANAGEMENT

#### 1 Community mobilizers/managers

- » Community mobilizers will be the face of the humanitarian community and therefore tasked with the critical role of dealing with “customer services” It is critical that community mobilizers speaker Arabic and/or relevant local languages if any.
- » Name tags for humanitarian workers/mobilizers will be useful and appreciated by refugees.
- » One of the most urgent and key tasks is to let camp residents know who is who and who does and who doesn’t do what.

#### HYGIENE PROMOTION VOLUNTEERS

UNICEF and partner ACTED will conduct more than 100 hygiene promotion sessions each day, through 22 hygiene promoters, each running at least five daily sessions. Each session reaches approximately five people, depending on the family size.

SYRIA CRISIS WEEKLY HUMANITARIAN SITUATION REPORT - JORDAN, LEBANON, IRAQ AND TURKEY, AUGUST 30, 2012

- » Adequate training, briefing and resourcing for these face-to-face workers is paramount. They will be responsible for disseminating actionable and useful information, addressing refugees questions, and equally important, listening to their feedback and complaints. These must be systematically taken back to relevant coordination fora and incorporated as required and possible, within programming and evaluation.
- » Community mobilizers should also be deployed at reception points to address information needs of refugees as they enter their new environment.
- » Consider the possibility of distribution of bicycles for community managers as the size of the camp increases.

2 **Signs** indicating lanes/streets and how to get to common facilities, including information tents, camp hospitals, communal kitchens, water points, toilets, child friendly spaces, schools, and sports areas. Boards with opening times and emergency contact details should be displayed at the entrance of i.e. hospitals, schools, for refugees’ reference.

3 **Maps** on information boards with the camp and with relevant detailed sections and services. Community mobilizers will also play a key role at explaining camp residents how to “read” those maps.

4 **One-stop-shop: Information tents** with information desks, information boards, and listening posts with larger FM/AM radios. i.e. Two megaphones should be available for announcements, though humanitarian workers should refrain from using them unless it is necessary to address larger groups –we all know that people like talking, not being shouted at.

5 **Daily/regular camp announcements:** Community mobilizers should receive accurate, timely and well-targeted information from implementing partners for them to relay to camp leaders and refugees.

6 **Public Address (PA) systems:** It can be a useful tool for important camp announcements, to be used in exceptional occasions/emergencies. The major deficiency is that they do not allow people to opt out so PA systems are not advisable for broadcast long and/or regular announcements.

### 6.3.3 INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TOOLS

7 **Radio distribution:** As a matter of priority, (temporary) camp leaders should be trusted with managing a radio transistor for communal listening. This initiative should take place as soon as possible while relevant humanitarian actors may agree on a larger scale (wind-up)

<sup>1</sup> WATCH COMMUNICATION IS AID, A 2-MINUTE ANIMATION FILM: WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?v=UIBG0JRELDc

radio distribution. Internews will share the contact details of 3 providers with UNHCR, INTERSOS and IRD, for their reference. Depending on the context/country, Internews advocates for the inclusion of wind-up radios and/or mobile phones with credit, as part of NFI kits.

- 8 **Distribution of local newspapers:** INTERSOS is already doing it. Agencies should consider the possibility of extending this distribution and bring different newspapers in different days.
- 9 **TV screening points/Screening of movies:** Based on the findings of Internews' rapid assessment, TV seems to be the media of choice for camp residents. Agencies could consider setting up a number of tents managed by community representatives/committees around the camps with satellite TV. TVs could also be used to screen entertainment movies and other educational materials, or camp residents' own productions.
- 10 **Set-up internet cafes:** Internet has been listed as one of the three main sources of information Syrian refugees used before coming to the camp. Taking into account the important number of young camp residents, it would be interesting to explore the idea of setting up Internet cafes (i.e. containers with laptops connected to the internet) in key locations in the camp, funding allowing.
- 11 **Participatory video production:** Depending on more research to be done by e.g. community mobilizers and Community Services, digital story telling could be a great way of documenting refugee life in the camp and share it with their families and outside world.
- 12 **Town hall and community events:** Refugees need information but they also need entertainment. Regular community events featuring refugees themselves e.g. singing, dancing, theatre can be part of community services. Refugees and agencies can decide together what may work and how.

13 **Production of humanitarian radio programs with news and information about the camp, including participatory segments such as call-in shows, debates, interviews or SMS from the audience.**

» Besides and in coordination with existing radio initiatives by UNESCO and Yarmouk FM, a radio station funded by Internews in 2006 at Yarmouk University in Irbid, in the north of Jordan, one hours from Zaatati, Internews has proposed, as part of the Syria RRP for Jordan, to partner with a local radio station that reaches the camp and a local organization in the production of a regular humanitarian radio program produced by and for residents in Zaatari with useful and relevant information (i.e. Jordan Humanitarian Information Service, HIS.) As per Internews' experience in numerous similar situations, such as working with Darfur refugees in Chad, a selected number of refugees would be trained in field reporting to form a crew of camp correspondents. Ideally, refugee correspondents from urban areas will also contribute to the show. Humanitarian workers and government officials will be featured in the programs with important information and announcements and also will take part in call-in shows and other interactive programs with the audience.

*"People in Syria don't listen to radio but if you produce a program with information and complaints, we will listen."*

45-YEAR OLD MALE FROM DARAA

- 14 **Listening posts:** Boom boxes could be strategically placed and adequately secured around the camps in communal spaces (i.e. communal kitchens, information tents, water points) for people to listen to radio. Listening Groups/Focus Group Discussions could be formed around the topics of the show to gather feedback.
- 15 **SMS service:** Depending on the scale of the demands for information, a SMS service could be set up to send timely and well-targeted information and/or emergency announcement to a selected number of individuals or sectors.

- 16 **Free telephone hotlines/call in center:** Depending on the scale of the demands for information, free telephone hotline(s) or a call-in center could be set up to manage questions, feedback and concerns by camp residents and (other refugees).
- 17 **Suggestion boxes:** Despite the apparent low literacy levels among camp residents, this option could be explored as community mobilizers get a much better sense of what may work better or not.

7 CHALLENGES ACROSS THE SECTOR: PROMPTING INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

*"The people who are on the receiving end of our assistance are rarely if ever consulted on what they need, or are able to choose who helps them or how (...) Whilst this has long been recognized as an issue, too little has been done about it."*

UK DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DFID), HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY RESPONSE REVIEW (HERR), EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, MARCH 2011

As of today, despite a few significant exceptions, all too often, just a few individuals within organizations – in many cases lacking sufficient institutional support, adequate resources, and at times technical knowledge – are the only ones driving humanitarian communication efforts.

Even when they deliver important results and make a positive impact, best practices and lessons learnt are not normally institutionalized, and therefore hardly influence their own organizations and/or other humanitarian settings.

Despite the growing interest from humanitarian organizations and the important progress made to date, the obstacles to mainstreaming humanitarian communication models remain significant.

The following obstacles exist across the humanitarian architecture and hamper the realization of people's right to know, ask questions and take an active role in their own survival and recovery.

As per Internews' experience from numerous assessments and emergency responses, the most prominent challenges within the humanitarian system, in regards to communication with affected populations, include the following:

- 1 **Lack of specific resources: conflation of humanitarian communications and public information roles:** Very often, organizations task the same individuals who liaise with international media, generally public information, media, or communications officers, to work also on humanitarian communications. These same staff, particularly in a rapid-onset emergency, are also responsible for other equally critical tasks such as acting as spokespersons, drafting press releases, or writing reports, meaning that communication with affected populations is often not prioritized.
- 2 **Lack of understanding about the difference between "messaging" and "two-way communication":** Historically, while important and good work has been done on the delivery of messages to affected populations (i.e. messaging), establishing systematic ways of listening to survivors (i.e. two-way communication) has remained a particular challenge.
- 3 **Humanitarian staff require greater orientation and skills in communications platforms and solutions to create two-way communication:** This includes training on basic understanding and skills on how to communicate with affected populations, including delivering information, engaging in dialogue, and effectively channeling feedback from communities through multi-platform/multi-channel approaches using local media, non-mass media communication channels (e.g. community volunteers), traditional/indigenous channels (e.g. religious leaders), or mobile technology and social media – whatever avenues may work.

**4 Significant staff turnover, short-term approach, and lack of institutional memory:** While staff turnover is an endemic problem in the sector, particularly in rapid-onset emergencies, poor knowledge management systems lead directly to the loss of institutional memory.

**5 Humanitarian communications coordination is lacking:** Recent reports have found, “the current humanitarian architecture is not currently geared towards addressing the issue of communication with communities, or the concept of information as a form of humanitarian assistance in itself. No agency or cluster is tasked with leading on communication, and there is no recognition of communication as a cross-cutting issue.”

The Haiti response saw the first effort to address communication with affected communities at the level of the humanitarian system through CDAC (Communications with Affected Communities) Haiti. Hosted by Internews, CDAC Haiti worked as a cross-cluster support mechanism. Delivery of this service, through the CDAC Network, however, requires funding, staffing, and support services. If this is to happen, urgent policy changes are required to ensure that communications with affected communities are part of the standard humanitarian response.

**6 Not knowing where you set your foot: Failure to understand the information ecosystem:** Information needs and the changes prompted in the information ecology in a particular country/context need to be part of early humanitarian assessments, but these issues have not yet been systematically built into most existing initial post-disaster assessment protocols and practice.

**7 Failure to utilize and partner with local media:** In emergency responses, local media tend to be vastly underutilized, and their potential to support humanitarian communications is left largely untapped. Internews always advocates for the key role that media, often radio in particular, can potentially play in emergency responses when time and resources are invested in fostering these types of partnerships.

**8 Communications efforts are not effectively monitored:** Very often monitoring of communications efforts is minimal or non-existent. This is a programmatic challenge, and the lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation of communication activities makes even more complicated to prove the cost-effectiveness of these interventions and the value for money, and thus to justify leveraging specific resources for emergency response within humanitarian agencies.

## 8 ABOUT INTERNEWS' HUMANITARIAN INFORMATION WORK

Internews is an International NGO whose mission is to empower local media worldwide to give people the news and information they need, the ability to connect and the means to make their voices heard. Internews was founded in 1982 in the US and has a sister organization, Internews Europe, based in London.

Since the 2004 tsunami in Indonesia, Internews has been supporting local media to enable people in the midst of a disaster to access life-saving information and take an active role in their own survival and recovery; building partnerships and working closely with humanitarian organizations and government agencies at all stages during emergency responses.

Internews has been present in all major humanitarian crises around the world since 2004, including the Pakistan earthquake (2005), IDP/refugee crises in Darfur and Chad (2005), post election violence in Kenya (2008), large scale displacement in South Sudan (since 2006), conflict in Sri Lanka (2007), war in Gaza (2009), ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan (2010) and the earthquake in Haiti (2010). Internews has also conducted information and communications needs assessments most recently in Ethiopia (to be published 2012), and in 2011 in Dadaab (Kenya), Libya, Liberia/Cote d'Ivoire, Tunisia and Sri Lanka.

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For more information on Internews' humanitarian information work download *When Information Saves Lives, the 2011 Annual Report of Internews' Humanitarian Information Projects*: [www.internews.org/our-stories/news-letters/internews-releases-when-information-saves-lives-2011-annual-report-humanitar](http://www.internews.org/our-stories/news-letters/internews-releases-when-information-saves-lives-2011-annual-report-humanitar).

Internews and BBC Media Action are partners in **infoaid**, a unique DfID-funded consortium focusing on improving how aid agencies communicate with disaster-affected communities. Check <http://infoaid.org/toaccessmediaandtelecommunication> landscape guides from 22 countries; a library of generic messages endorsed by the UN clusters in Geneva; and an e-learning course for humanitarian staff, among other resources.

Internews is also one of the founding members of the **Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities (CDAC) Network** ([www.cdacnetwork.org](http://www.cdacnetwork.org)), a groundbreaking cross-sector collaboration between aid agencies, UN organizations, the Red Cross Movement, and media development organizations that recognizes information and two-way communication as key humanitarian deliverables.



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