

HUMANITARIAN INNOVATION FUND

Final Report

- Please try not to exceed 5 pages (Arial, 12pts) excluding attachments –

Reference Number	HIF/L/2011/2-123
Organisation Name	Internews Europe

Project Title	Integrating Local Media and ICTs into Humanitarian Response in CAR
Location	Central African Republic (CAR)
Start Date	February 1, 2012
Duration	7 months (including 1 month No Cost Extension, up to August 31, 2012)
Total Funding Requested	GBP149,565

Partner(s)	Ushahidi, UNOCHA
Total Funding	GBP149,565

Innovation Stage	
Type of Innovation	Interactive communication between local communities and international humanitarian organizations
One sentence description of the innovation	An innovative system that will foster a bounded network of trusted local media organisations to gather real-time first-hand information from affected populations to create a two-way communication flow with humanitarians that improves emergency response, community participation & community resilience.
Project Impact Summary	Designing and introducing an interactive crisis map that provides real time information on humanitarian intervention and needs of the local population in Central African Republic. The map is part of a two ways communication system between vulnerable people and humanitarian agencies, and puts information as a humanitarian tool in the picture.

Reporting Period	Final report (until August 31, 2012)
Total Spent	149 595 GBP

ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT

CAR Crisis Map: Humanitarian Liaison

- Design, launch and promotion of the CAR Crisis Map in partnership with Ushahidi and UNOCHA:** www.cartehumanitarire-rca.org. As part of the roll-out of the crismap this work also included a **special session** to present the map at the main **humanitarian coordination meeting** in Bangui; bi-lateral **training sessions on information administration/input** to the Crisis Map to strategic humanitarian partners (e.g. OCHA, MSF etc.); and an “**official barbeque**” to celebrate the launch of the crismap with key local and international actors including OCHA, Ministry of Communication, ICRC, WFP,

FAO, BINUCA, ICC, UNICEF, CRS, Merlin, Mercy Corps, War Child, US Embassy and other local partners.

- 2 Constant and proactive **advocacy** through a dedicated Humanitarian Liaison Officer (HLO) on the nature, use and added value of the CAR Crisis Map, the overarching issue of “communication as aid”, and the vital role of local media in disaster preparedness and response.

This includes 48 bilateral meetings with International Organizations, NGOs, embassies and partners to explain nature, goals and technical aspects of the project. The advocacy work also included presentations of the HIF project to clusters in Bangui (e.g. Protection, Logistics, Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Health); and the organisation of a round-table discussion between local humanitarian actors and local journalists on how they can improve collaboration.

Documenting innovation

- 3 Publication of **14 blogs and 4 reports** with field research as part of the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) efforts.
- 4 **Partnership with independent evaluator Patrick Vinck Ph. D.**, Researcher and Lecturer at the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI). Patrick has worked extensively in CAR before (check www.peacebuildingdata.org/car/map). He trained and partnered with Jean-Pierre Dushime, Internews M&E Officer for this project.
- 5 Preparation, planning, and conducting of a 14-day **field trip to southeastern CAR (Obo)**, where our local M&E officer interviewed 400 members of the local population.
- 6 Preparation, planning, and conducting of a 14-day **field trip to southeastern CAR (Zemio)**, where our local M&E officer interviewed 400 members of the local population.

Working with local media

- 7 **Training sessions** on journalism, mobile phone reporting and the crisismap: 1/ (April 23-May 4) of 20 community correspondents on basic reporting techniques in Bambari. These reporters actively contributed to with reports to the crisis map; (July 23-27) of 20 community correspondents on basic reporting techniques and humanitarian/human rights reporting (training included presentations by Human Rights Observatory Central Africa, International Criminal Court and professional photographers). The correspondents are actively sending information for the Crisis Map; (July 16-20) to local media actors on crowdsourcing and journalism.
- 8 Draft of [Media Landscape Guide](#) for CAR, including description of newspapers, radios, TV, Internet and mobile phone providers with contact details.
- 9 **Field trip to Obo** (April 27-30) to assist local media partner with international media delegation visit, including Al Jazeera, BBC, New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- 1) The crisis map www.cartehumanitaire-rca.org has been introduced and explained to all international humanitarian actors in CAR – several times and with several techniques and actors. All INGOs and UNOCHA, MSF and ICRC were

provided with access to help them to insert information in humanitarian interventions

2) During the sensitizing tours (see 1) Internews used the occasion as well to explain the importance of information as part of humanitarian intervention to the INGOs and UN-agencies and to tens of local NGOs as well. Internews is convinced that information can save lives and an efficient, real-time information tool like the crisis map can and will serve humanitarian agencies their daily work.

3) At the end of the project it became clear that 7 on a total of 23 humanitarian agencies used the crisis map regularly

4) Appr. 16 of the humanitarian agencies have questions and/or concerns on the importance of information for humanitarian work; most of them don't know yet the crisis map or confuse these interactive information tool with the static maps of UNOCHA CAR published on the [Humanitarian and Development Partnership Team](#) (HDPT) website.

5) Local communities provide information and express their needs on intervention and are using local community radios.

6) The tool 'Frontline SMS' that has been provided to local community radios to help the local population in sending quick, secure and cheap text messages has not been used as expected. Local population are not used to send SMS because it's not easy and not for free; phone numbers of the local radios are often unknown; local radios are not familiar with Frontline SMS due to a lack of more training and infrastructure (i.e. power, internet).

METHODOLOGY

The key findings in the final report produced by Patrick Vinck (attached as annex) are:

1. The project was **highly relevant and appropriate and the added value of Internews' work was unanimously recognized**. in the context of CAR where humanitarians lack access to quality information and media capacity development is acutely needed. The high reliance on local radio as a source of information makes it an appropriate channel to establish the type of dialogue needed.
2. At the same time, the **technology had some characteristics incompatible with the context of the CAR**, including the reliance on text messaging which is not popular among the population, and the need for connectivity.
3. The **lack of mutual trust between humanitarians and journalists** quickly emerged as a key challenge for the successful implementation of the project. While the type of changes needed need long-term involvement, the presence of Internews renewed the dialogue and opened avenues for collaborations between actors
4. **While journalists reported improvement in information collection and sharing, humanitarians took a mainly passive role**. They consulted the reports and maps, but contributed little, and the information did not directly influence decisions or actions. This is in part the result of the reliance on their own information network and mistrust of media and crowd sourced data on the ground of validity and risks.

The external evaluation reports analysis more at length these issues.

MAJOR OBSTACLES.

1. The success of establishing two-way communication relies first on **establishing trust and mutual respect between actors - Adoption of the**

crisis map. As described in the previous interim report, the appropriation process for the international humanitarian actors in CAR will take time. While many of the humanitarian actors are now aware of the map, their contribution to the information flow has been insignificant in terms of numbers of reports contributed. More dissemination, bilateral meetings and briefings to new staff will be required.

The good news is OCHA's adoption of the tool and other strategic partners such as the United Nations Special Representative for the Secretary General (SRSG) in CAR – who has expressed interest in using the Crisis Map as a means to contribute to the UN database on Resolution 1612 concerning violence and infractions of International Humanitarian Law on children. We hope that this use by key actors will have a snowball effect.

2. The problems faced during the pilot projects and **limitations to the effectiveness of the program are vastly outside of the technology** and require focusing on the relations between actors and on capacity development. Inside CAR lack of power, Internet, roads, mobile phone coverage but also the lack of knowledge ('how to use SMS?') and financial means ("SMS costs money") are serious concerns, not easy to deal with or to resolve. However, also because of the lack of basic services, humanitarian intervention depends heavily on good, reliable and actual information. The crisis map is a good example of how to connect remote areas with humanitarian agencies.

3. The processes and platform developed to generate two-way dialogue between humanitarians and affected communities through the **media have the clearest relative advantage in areas where humanitarians have little to no presence.**

BENEFICIARIES/HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS IMPACTED

The daily briefs and the humanitarian map were the most visible output of Internews project. Over the months of July and August, the humanitarian map averaged a number of 706 visits per month from 535 unique visitors. The [blog of the RJDH](#), which features the daily briefs, averaged over 4,000 visits per month – and has over 500 subscribers.

Affected communities, however, had no or little access to these outputs", according to the external evaluation. The only "observable" aspect of the innovation may have been improved information and mention of text messages in radio broadcasts. According to the journalists, not enough emphasis was put on reaching out to the population to explain the project and encourage their participation. Additionally, since humanitarians did not use the system to inform decisions or actions, there is no direct observable result in terms of intervention.

The local population gets daily information via the local radios who, in their turn, get information of the crisis map via the Association of Journalist for Human Rights – who manages the map. Via local radios and local correspondents in the huge area in CAR without radio coverage people without a voice GET a voice.

According to the external evaluation: "Considering the short time span of the project, the objective of changing behaviors (e.g. how humanitarians gather information on needs and local context) was likely too ambitious to be achieved, especially in the context of mistrust and low quality of reporting" (p.7)

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Ushahidi provided a very tailor made crisis map, in close collaboration with Internews and its local partner the Association of Journalist for Human Rights; UNOCHA underlined the importance of its collaboration with a letter of intention.

DISSEMINATION

- Internews shared a press release on the launch of the Crisis Map with over 13,000 contacts, globally. The news has also been posted on Internews and Ushahidi websites and pushed via social media..
- Internews also promotes all HIF blog posts through its networks, particularly through various social media platforms.
- Internews organised the first [C4D Network Innovation Series Event: Innovations in Humanitarian Communication](#) on September 26, 2012 in London that attracted more than 60 people from the media, information and humanitarian sector.
- Internews is planning to develop a brief legacy document to share and present key findings and lessons learnt widely.

TRANSFERABILITY

Although all circumstances, regional aspects and factors are always different, the project in CAR can be replicated anywhere. Important are the following bullets/objectives – please read them as keystones:

- Information saves lives and [Communication is aid](#)
- Create links between local population and humanitarian actors working in partnership with local media
- Assure these links are 2-way between local communities and humanitarians.
- Use appropriate communication tools and start improving from that point: on technical and financial means, on knowledge (training, sensitizing)
- Take time to implement the program, work and educate all stakeholders involved, including your own team and organisation: from start, baseline survey, implementing, training, sensitizing, technical and financial support to the final stage of the project is 1 year minimum
- Be sure information is reliable, has verified sources and the tools (maps f.e.) have tracks to rectify,

More experimentation and pilot projects are needed for the approach to become standard practice. These projects should emphasize the need for capacity development, trust building and adopt resilient platforms that offer multiple ways for affected communities to communicate with journalists. Future projects should also build on the relative advantage that technology offers in areas where humanitarians have little or no presence and/or where they cannot rely on their own field staff to establish communication with affected communities.

This will require humanitarian agencies to be willing to experiment beyond what they currently do in terms of information gathering and communication approaches. It will also require flexible funding mechanism to create learning opportunities.”

Internews is committed to keep experimenting with, capturing and sharing innovative approaches to communication from around the world; for this Internews included the [Internews Center for Innovation & Learning](#),

The Center is equally committed to capturing the innovations and technological discoveries of field offices to enrich the knowledge base of Internews and the international development community as a whole.