



First Response Radio
Ready When Disaster Strikes



2020

ANNUAL REPORT

In 2020 every FRR team responded to the COVID-19 pandemic at their home stations in Pakistan, India, Indonesia and the Philippines – as well as responding to natural disasters in India and the Philippines. FRR PH was praised for getting an emergency station on the air (in Covid restrictions) in a typhoon affected community.



#COMMUNICATIONISAID

Photo credi: FEBC PHILIPPINES



Radio Distribution Strategy - putting plan into action

As a long-standing member of the CDAC Network, FRR facilitated a discussion on the CDAC Radio Distribution Strategy during the 2020 CDAC Annual Assembly.

FRR field experience has highlighted that stock piling radios for distribution BEFORE disaster strikes is a highly important aspect of disaster response. We were grateful for the opportunity to continue to advocate and raise awareness of this issue. Part of the discussion was identifying different competency areas where organisations could support the wider radio distribution strategy. These included purchase, logistics, distribution, coordination and research.

FRR was encouraged by the response as 15 CDAC Network organisations offered their expertise and resources. We look forward to working together with these organisations and continuing this collaborative effort to establish an effective radio distribution strategy during disasters.



Suitcase Radio delivered to Deutsche Welle

This year FRR delivered disaster response equipment, including the complete Suitcase Radio Station, to Deutsche Welle Akademie (DWA). DWA is running a pilot program to help to rebuild media outlets in post-crisis environments.



After delivering equipment the acceptance testing of the kit was done via Zoom due to travel restrictions. In addition to the equipment, FRR will run a major disaster radio training program for Deutsche Welle Akademie in Malawi. Originally scheduled for March 2020, we hope to reschedule to train in Malawi in 2021.

TRAIN



Evaluating FRR Training Methods



FRR teams across Asia are seeking to upgrade their training options. In a global video conference, FRR trainers expressed a desire to break down the FRR disaster radio training into smaller sections.

At present FRR training is conducted across a 5-day residential class and a 3-day field exercise immediately following the class. When a day off in between is included, participants are away from their families and jobs for 9 days. If the training was to be split into 3 separate sessions, participants will only be in class for 3 days at most.

Much of the training is very hands on. Therefore, while it would be a challenge to put the whole course online, the FRR INTL team will work to make the training as accessible as possible. We hope to roll out the new formats in 2021.

Other trainers noted that it's hard to do face to face training during the pandemic so we are looking at ways to host the first day of training online.



RESPOND



COVID-19: INFORM, ENGAGE, ENCOURAGE

The emergence of COVID-19 in early 2020 has had a huge impact on the way that FRR teams are operating this year.

The focus of the response has been:

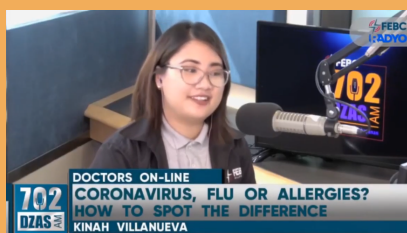
INFORM

ENGAGE

ENCOURAGE

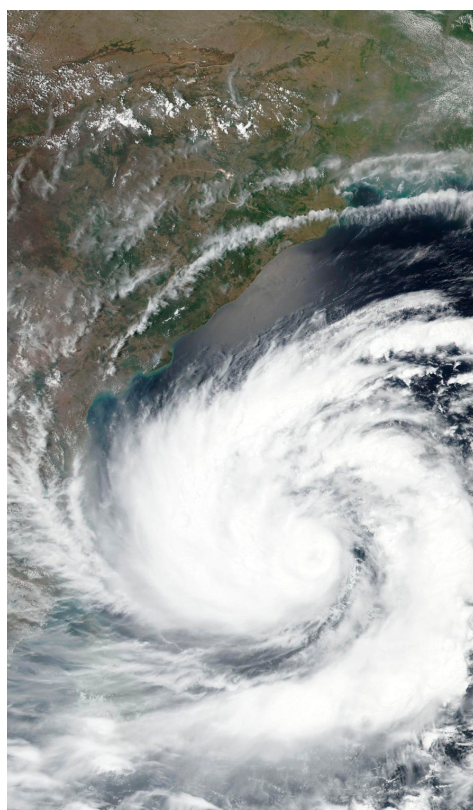
FEBC's FRR teams have developed programs that:

- Provide useful and accurate information
- Look for ways to engage local communities in discussion
- Comfort and encourage the communities



Covid response from FEBC Philippines (early 2020)

India: Cyclone Amphan strikes during COVID-19 national lockdown



In May 2020, as the global pandemic led nations around the world to adopt strict national lockdowns, the region of Eastern India was faced with a second disaster. On May 20th, Cyclone Amphan struck the coastal area of West Bengal causing devastation in several districts and bringing affected areas, including the state capital Kolkata, to a standstill.

Due to the national lockdown, the FRR India team couldn't travel to the affected area. Once local radio partners in Kolkata were on the air, FRR India worked remotely with them to help create content. The response programs provided listeners with information on safety measures, the latest rescue and relief information as well as tips on health and hygiene.

FRR Philippines praised for 72 hour response to Typhoon Rolly

On November 1st, Typhoon Rolly, later recorded as the strongest typhoon of 2020, made landfall in Bato on the island of Catanduanes. An initial disaster assessment showed the typhoon had caused widespread damage and cut off communication lines to approximately 2 million people. First Response Radio, powered by FEBC Philippines, deployed to the most affected community, the city of Virac on Catanduanes Island. Within 72hrs the team were able to set up the suitcase radio station and begin broadcasting to locally affected communities.



Initial activities of FRR included gathering critical information on basic needs and essentials for both residents relief organizations as well providing and distributing radios to local communities and disaster relief centres. The team worked with local authorities to broadcast government messages alongside their own programs to the rest of the island.



As FRR were so quick to respond and recognized by local authorities as the only station on air, the team were soon formally working with the government to be the voice of emergency recovery. FRR were tasked with providing emergency communications as part of the Incident Management Team.

After two weeks of broadcasting, local radio stations had still not recovered from the impact of Typhoon Rolly. Therefore the initial FRR team (Team Alpha) recommended that the FRR broadcasts continue. A second FRR team (Team Bravo) took over the responsibility of continuing the broadcast on the 15th November and were deployed for the next two weeks.

Throughout the rest of November, the island moved from emergency to an early recovery phase as public services began to reopen in some areas. The FRR broadcasts continued to provide information and encouragement to listeners. In total, nearly 100 portable radios were distributed. The broadcasts had enabled many families to reunite with lost relatives, some of them visited the radio station and shared their stories of resilience and gratitude with the FRR Team as a show of support to the work that they do.

After a month of disaster response, FRR closed out the deployment with a final thanksgiving program that involved many partner agencies and government officials who assisted in such an effective response.



Click to see the impact of FRR's deployment in Catanduanes



The President's Report:
Rebuilding Hope from the Rubble

FEBC Philippines



FRR's COVID-19 response resonates with local communities

Although the COVID-19 crisis is still ongoing, we are seeing the impact of broadcasts through FRR's partner stations. They indicate that people value both the information and the encouragement and hope provided. Here are a few stories that have come from our FRR partner stations.

From Manila Philippines: A listener to DZAS AM wrote "Thank you! My other has Covid 19 and is recently isolated in one part of our house. She has been alone there as we are also quarantined. She is listening to DZAS for hope, strength, and healing."

From Pakistan: "The situation in our area during the COVID-19 was worst and my family was badly affected during this strict lockdown in our area. Radio was the only source of information and comfort to us"

Disaster Risk Reduction Day

Initially formed as a way to promote risk-awareness and disaster reduction, Disaster Risk Reduction Day celebrates how communities around the world are becoming less vulnerable to disasters. On the 13th October 2020, FRR was invited to chat (virtually!) to media masters students from the Foundation University, Rawalpindi Pakistan about the importance of building Suitcase radio teams BEFORE disaster strikes to allow community engagement in disasters.

It was a great chance to share the lessons we have learned from 15 years in disaster response with the next generation!



First Response Radio (FRR) is a network of radio broadcasters, NGOs, and Government partners. Our members have been working in disaster areas since the Tsunami of 2004, providing critical information via radio, as aid. Our goal is to set up a radio station for the affected community within 72 hours of a disaster. The best way to build this capacity is to equip and train teams before disaster strikes.

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