Community leaders as gatekeepers in social networks

There are many studies which find that established and familiar social networks are heavily utilised by citizens to get information about the disaster and to access resources they need. Kirschenbaum (for literature reference see original source document), for example, talks about how community leaders act as "gatekeepers" of disaster information in social networks and thus play a vital role in determining decisions made by those affected, as well as determining their behaviours: Their position in the information chain can be decisive in affecting disaster decisions of family, friend and neighbouring networks… Depending on what information is absorbed and passed along, gatekeepers define and influence the actions of its members to disasters. This is one of the reasons why involving community leaders in relief efforts is commonly recommended. Engaging with these gatekeepers of information is one way in which DMAs can reach local citizens. They could be new or established community leaders, radio DJs, or someone with the last working television or mobile phone, among others.

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: Norms/values, Customs/traditions/rituals, Local knowledge, Social networks
Disaster Phases: Response
Types of Actors Concerned: Local authorities, Non-active citizens
Hazards: Natural hazards, Man-made non-intentional hazards or emergency situations, Man-made intentional hazards

Recommendations:

- Use trustworthy, widespread, multi-lingual, culturally appropriate and inclusive means of alerting the target population in case of disasters
- Foster social connectedness and the development of a strong sense of community, as these encourage citizens to help each other in disaster situations
- Use cultural factors to improve the effectiveness of disaster communication

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Source

Deliverable D7.3 "Report on cultural factors and citizen empowerment" (page 46)

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