



Media roles in empowering citizens in the Czech Republic

Media can play an important role in empowering citizens with respect to natural hazards. The Crisis map of the Czech Republic had been deployed during regional floods in May 2013 by the Czech public television. It brought some practical lessons on the use of social media to crowdsource crisis data from the citizens as well as on the use of traditional TV broadcasting to feed curated citizen reports back to public. As a context element, we have to consider that Czech Republic is a mid-size country with standard emergency response mechanisms in place and working. Therefore, normally, disasters usually do not cause the whole system to collapse. Having received feedback that such project did help to save property, it has been an opportunity to test the hypothesis of the need to close one of the gaps in emergency reporting and information sharing. In the summer of 2012, the Czech television's (public broadcaster) new media division team met with official responders and humanitarian organizations for the first time. The aim was to explore the possibility of collaboration on a crisis mapping project where public plays critical role in reporting. In this case, it has been clear from the very beginning that the map prepared with an active citizens' role was not a replacement but a complement for the emergency system or any other official mechanism, on the basis of the following assumptions: People share and will share pictures, videos, on an increasing level. Crisis map can become the interface, where such information will be curated and verified to the possible extent. Through intense social media monitoring, we can manage to catch emerging hoax faster and therefore use the power of TV broadcasting to disperse it from the very beginning. People are not addressed as victims but as partners in reporting. It is clearly stated on the map itself – "Become a crisis-reporter, tell us what you see around you" – and TV emergency broadcast is repeatedly used to explain what the map is for and what it means to be a reporter. This improves the situational awareness of population given that media crews cannot be everywhere, official responders make only part of information public and responsible authorities don't use all possible channels to inform citizens in an effective manner. The map is a first go-to place for wannabe volunteers to go if they want to help effectively. By displaying the locations of volunteer coordination centres, contact info as well as actual material needs of humanitarian responders we streamline the process into coordinated manner. The feedback was rather cold and negative from expert/authorities, who thought to have already reliable systems in place. The feeling was that maps of that kind would just add unreliable noise, spread hoaxes and induce volunteers to show up in an uncoordinated manner. As responders simply put it: "The second disaster that comes after the first one are volunteers".

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Local knowledge](#)

Disaster Phases: [Response](#)

Types of Actors Concerned: [Media](#), [National civil protection body](#), [Active citizens](#)

Hazards: [Natural hazards](#)



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Recommendations:

- [Inform citizens about the risk they may face and about possible actions and measures. they can take to reduce vulnerability and better prepare themselves](#)
- [Foster the adoption of a culture of disaster prevention and resilience by informing and motivating citizens to take action](#)
- [Use cultural factors to improve the effectiveness of disaster communication](#)

Source

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