



# 2021 PUBLIC FORUM

**Digital Communication  
and Accountability:  
Is technology tipping the  
balance of power in aid?**

**October 7 & 8**

## PROGRAMME

Thursday October 07: Public forum session one: 14.00-17.00

Friday October 08: Public forum session two: 08.00-11.00

All times UK time

**CDAC PUBLIC FORUM MODERATOR:** Sangita Myska, Presenter, BBC News and Current Affairs

### **SESSION ONE: THU OCT 7: Digital communication and accountability in action**

- 14.00-14.02: Opening **Marian Casey-Maslen**, Executive Director, CDAC Network
- 14.02-14.07: Welcome, housekeeping: **Sangita Myska** Presenter, BBC News and Current Affairs
- 14.07-14.27: Keynote: How do we not lock people into future harm, indebtedness, or future inequity? **Aarathi Krishnan**, Tech and Human Rights Fellow at Harvard Kennedy Carr Centre; Affiliate at Berkman Klein Center at Harvard University
- 14.27-15.30: Discussion one: Listening vs ceding: changing the decision-making table. The humanitarian system has spent years grappling with the challenges of effectively and actively listening to disaster-affected communities. Access, language, technology, socio-cultural norms, inequality, divides, conflict- all of these things and more make inclusive communication, feedback response and participation difficult to deliver and further squeezed when resources run thin. Digital technologies are bringing new opportunities to address these challenges. Yet, the conversation continues to be primarily around how to better listen to communities so this can inform the decision making of humanitarians. But how can technologies enable disaster-affected communities to make decisions?

#### **SPEAKERS:**

**Fernanda Baumhardt-Grojean**, Advisor Accountability to Affected People and Community Engagement (AAP/CE), Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean – ROLAC

**Bahana Hydrogene** Group Leader - Kakuma Refugee Camp, StepUp.One; Meaningful Participation Task Team Assistant, UNHCR

**Khin Ohmar**, Founder, Progressive Voice Myanmar

- **15.30-15.50: BREAK - NETWORKING**
- **15.50-17.00: Discussion two: How data collected by digital channels can be used to inform decision making and increase accountability to affected people.** The use of aggregate data collected from digital technologies can support decision making by providing humanitarians with quantitative data on issues encountered by disaster affected communities. It can help organisations to identify key trends and react quickly to the needs of communities and different groups of people. Humanitarian organisations are increasingly using digital technologies to communicate and provide remote services to affected communities. There are considerable data management, analysis and visualisation challenges for humanitarian organizations when it comes to effectively processing and using data generated through digital channels and its application in humanitarian accountability mechanisms. Digital channels create significant volumes of data, at velocity and with variety. The complexity of this data – including resourcing requirements to manage and analyse the significant volume – is often overlooked by agencies, resulting in underutilization or incorrect use of feedback data. This can create an echo chamber and contribute to feelings of community disenfranchisement.

**SPEAKERS:**

**Anahi Ayala Iacucci**, Digital Inclusion and Participation Consultant, UNHCR

**Sophie Tholstrup**, Head of Tech for Development Policy Unit, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change

## **SESSION TWO: FRI, OCT 8: Is technology tipping the balance of power in aid?**

- **08.00-08.05: Opening, welcome, housekeeping:** **Sangita Myska** Presenter, BBC News and Current Affairs
- **08.05-08.25: Fireside chat:** **Dr Agnès Callamard**, Secretary General of Amnesty International
- **08.25-09.30: Discussion one: Localisation from afar?** With limited movement, increased digital access and growing awareness of the ecological footprint of flying humanitarians around the world, a lot of humanitarian agencies have pivoted their work online, with some increased reliance on local partners, but also a lot of community engagement shifting to the online world. But is social media monitoring really listening? Are dashboards showing the full picture? And are decisions still taken in cubicles in Geneva, New York and, increasingly, at kitchen tables of mid-management around the world effective? Is it a blessing in disguise for local actors around the world? Or have we undone some of the progress on community engagement as a way to be more approachable in the last 5 years?

**SPEAKERS:**

**Stijn Aelbers**, Senior Humanitarian Advisor, Internews

**Khadiga Agab**, Sudan CDAC Senior National Coordinator

**Khandokar Hansanul Banna**, Humanitarian Project Manager, BBC Media Action  
Bangladesh

**Samuel Kapingidza**, Regional Programme Officer for Social Protection and Inclusive  
Growth, UNDP Regional Service Centre for Africa

- **09.30-09.50: BREAK - NETWORKING**

- **09.50-11.00: Discussion two: The limits of technology for accountability: how to ensure that the digital divide doesn't silence the most vulnerable.** Meaningful accountability requires all people to have equal access to relevant mechanisms and platforms. Many people affected by humanitarian crises live in areas where ICT infrastructure is weak. Even where the infrastructure exists, reliance on mobile phones and internet technology excludes those who don't have the means (financial or social) or ability (due to language, lack of skills or disabilities) to use these channels.

**SPEAKERS:**

**Sulemana Braimah**, Executive Director of the Media Foundation for West Africa  
(MFWA), Ghana

**Dr Gaya M Gamhewage**, Director a.i., Prevention & Response to Sexual Exploitation,  
Abuse and Harassment, WHO

**Caroline Vuillemin**, Chief Executive, Fondation Hironnelle

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