ANNEX 10G

Radio Ishinomaki - Ishinomaki City, Miyagi, Japan

*"When the power goes down, community radio stations are essential lifelines, particularly in the early stages of a disaster. Sadly in normal times it is not acknowledged and funding is very limited" -* Masahiko Konno, Technical Director, Radio Shinomaki

Radio Ishinomaki is a well-established local commercial radio station in Ishinomaki City, Miyagi. The city was badly damaged in the March 2011 disaster and all power was lost. But the broadcast continued here using generators, which powered the station and its antenna on a hill. The power cut meant petrol station pumps were not working so the only option was for technician, Masahiko Konno, to ask locals for gasoline from their cars. After collecting about 20 litres, enough for one day's broadcasting, the tsunami struck. This meant roads were blocked, which meant, in turn, that the station ran out of fuel for its generators - it went off the air for a day and a half. While it did, the Hibi Shimbun's "wall paper" was the only operative media in the city.

On 13 March, much of the city was still submerged under almost a metre of water. The Self Defence Force transported survivors to safety on the same hill as the antenna and although Masahiko tried to get on one of the evacuation vehicles, emergency services staff thought he was a journalist looking for a story and refused. After explaining that the radio station was transmitting lifesaving information, a soldier allowed him to travel. With a microphone, camera and gasoline tank Masahiko went to the antenna, restarted the generator and began broadcasting on the hill, in the bitter cold. For over a fortnight there was no electricity; car shop owners donated extra gasoline from the tanks of unsold cars.

Eventually a temporary studio was set up in Ishinomaki's city hall so that official information could be broadcast. The city's mayor was on air regularly for over a month. The presenters took turns to read out 5,000 to 6,000 names each day, from lists of the deceased and missing persons; this saved people the effort of going to each evacuation centre searching for their loved ones. The radio station asked people with information to come directly to the studio and many locals, keen to help or to share their experiences, arrived with memos that were read out on air. The station donated 30 radios to the Ishinomaki Red Cross hospital.

The radio station is funded by commercials but the need to transmit lifesaving information was so great that no commercials were aired for weeks. As a result, the station had no revenue. Ishinomaki authorities later helped with the station's running costs, but the station has already had to make cutbacks. Ishinomaki's city authorities have decided that future disaster warnings and announcements must be transmitted by radio, not just on the public address system. And Radio Ishinomaki is taking part in local government drills for broadcasting announcements.

This case study is from "Connecting the Last Mile - The Role of Communications in the Great East Japan Earthquake", a report by Internews.

The full report may be found via the following link: <http://www.internews.eu/News/Japanreport>