



**DISASTERS
EMERGENCY
COMMITTEE**

Humanitarian Communications Plan 2022~2023

COMMLD 538A

Jay Koh

INTRODUCTION

The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) stands as a coalition of fifteen prominent UK-based aid charities, committed to delivering swift and effective emergency aid to individuals affected by disasters and humanitarian crises worldwide. Rooted in the mission to "save, protect, and rebuild lives through effective humanitarian response," DEC places a premium on raising funds promptly and efficiently during overseas crises. Over the years, DEC has successfully garnered over £1.4 billion through 76 appeals, providing vital aid in response to a range of major disasters, including earthquakes, conflicts, famines, and more, spanning over forty countries. As a longstanding member of the global Emergency Appeals Alliance since 1963, DEC has consistently maintained its distinct identity within humanitarian coalitions. Leveraging the Rapid Response Network (RRN) for partnership and outreach, DEC endeavors to amplify its message through an extensive network that includes major UK broadcasters, corporate partners, and influential figures in the digital media sphere. Despite DEC's undeniable accomplishments in generating tangible outcomes, there remains room for improvement in its approach to collective appeals to better serve the broader humanitarian society.

While DEC's mission is rooted in the noble endeavor of providing assistance to those in need or suffering, the organization has faced criticism for what has been dubbed as 'poverty porn' campaigns. This issue came to light during the East African Appeal in 2017, where concerns were raised about the ethical implications of its narrative. Even after successful fundraising efforts, which generated £66 million, DEC's storytelling approach tended to prioritize the emotional impact on viewers at the potential expense of the dignity of the victims. Although DEC has made efforts to diversify its messaging and tone, there has been a persistent issue regarding inherent biases in video storytelling, which was only recently addressed in the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal. For the first time, individuals from Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Moldova were depicted as self-sufficient, with smiles and a sense of hope for the future. However, the subsequent appeal for Pakistan reverted to the previous tactic, portraying individuals in a more disempowered light, waiting for assistance from helicopters. This stark contrast in the portrayal of victims and the overall narrative tone in the appeals for Ukraine and Pakistan, which incidentally represent whites and people of color (POC), underscores the need for a shift in DEC's approach. To effectively address the diverse array of global crises, DEC must evolve its narrative to better align with its vision of a humanitarian society. This communication plan outlines steps toward this transformation.

It is recommended that DEC align its messaging with its stated values to effectively convey a coherent and enduring message. Notably, the organization places a strong emphasis on immediate impact, swiftly delivering aid to those in need. DEC's significant contributions in providing essentials like shelter, medical aid, and even cash support are commendable. Moreover, the organization maintains commendable transparency by keeping stakeholders informed about the latest updates on aid delivery and follow-up actions. However, DEC should strive to extend its impact beyond the scope of individual appeals. This plan proposes an alternative approach to video narratives in developing countries, one that emphasizes constructive efforts toward community rebuilding rather than relying on distressing imagery or emotionally charged appeals. Given the organization's substantial influence and global reach as a prominent charity, this plan seeks to achieve a lasting impact that contributes to an authentically humanitarian society. This transformation begins with a fundamental shift in values, which should guide every narrative in DEC's appeals moving forward.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Mission, Vision, & Values	3
Stakeholders	4
Communications Infrastructure Needs	5
Problem Statement	6
Theory of Change	7
Organizational Goal	7
Communications Objectives	7
Key Messages	8
Objective [Raise Awareness & Increase Donation]	8
Calendar - Jan 2023 - Dec 2023	10
CONCLUSION	12

Mission, Vision, & Values

MISSION

To safeguard, shield, and reconstruct lives through proficient humanitarian response.

VISION

A world where nations lacking the capacity to respond are spared from life-and-death scenarios during large-scale disasters.

PROPOSED VISION

A world where diverse communities, threatened by large-scale disasters, rebound with hope, fostering a culture of humanitarianism.

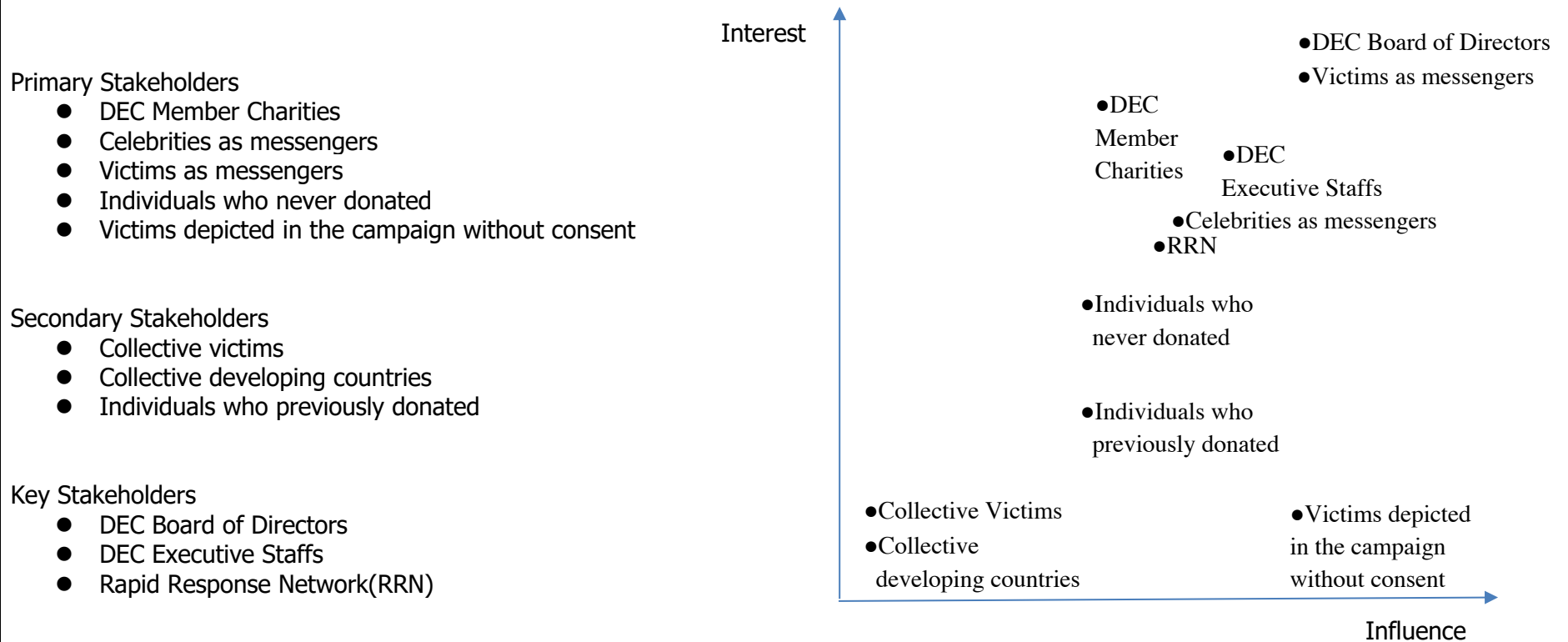
VALUES

Agility, Efficiency, Partnership, Transparency

PROPOSED VALUES

- 1) Authenticity: We encourage the audience's genuine engagement for sound connections.
- 2) Inclusion: We respect victims' rights and their unique cultural identities, without compromising humanitarian principles.
- 3) Hope: We believe in a brighter future, even amidst emergency disasters, with constructive recovery efforts that instill fundamental empathy and enduring resilience across society as a whole.

Stakeholders



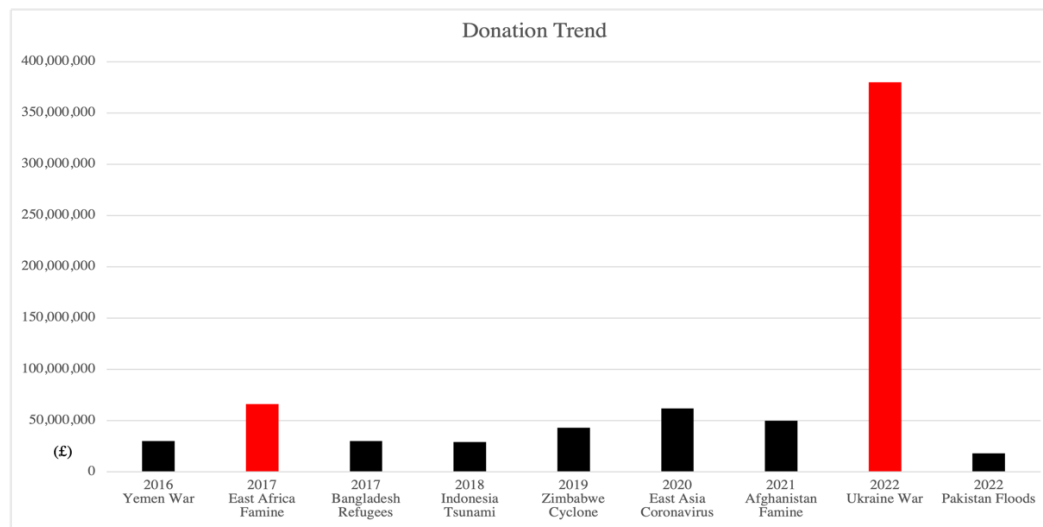
Communications Infrastructure Needs

1. The thumbnails on DEC's website, representing videos for each appeal, require refinement. Rather than exclusively featuring distressed backgrounds and sorrowful imagery, alternate appeals could present a more optimistic image with a brighter tone. For instance, akin to the Ukraine Appeal, where a cheerful girl with a bright smile makes hand hearts.
2. The DEC website, while addressing global crises across a wide array of countries, is currently only available in English. To cater to a more diverse audience, it is imperative to introduce translations in two additional languages: Chinese and Spanish, both of which are widely spoken and can better represent a broader demographic.

Problem Statement

DEC's persistent reliance on poverty porn narratives not only undermines its long-term effectiveness but also raises serious ethical concerns.

- Long-term Effectiveness



Despite the pre-existing global awareness of humanitarian issues, the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal, notably devoid of the poverty porn narrative, has garnered the second-highest donations (£380,000,000) in DEC's history of appeals. While it's important to note that the surge in donations may not solely be attributed to marketing campaigns, there appears to be a reasonable correlation, especially when comparing to the stagnant donation trends of previous appeals (ranging from £30,000,000 to £62,000,000) following the infamous poverty porn incident in 2017 (£66,000,000). Additionally, a significant drop in donations (£18,000,000) in the subsequent appeal may be linked to the continued use of this tactic.

- Inherent Ethical Concerns

DEC's reliance on the collective poverty porn approach portrays crisis victims as mere tools to elicit donations, potentially compromising the organization's commitment to providing urgent aid. This approach tends to homogenize diverse ethnic backgrounds into an underdeveloped narrative, inadvertently perpetuating stereotypes and reinforcing polarized worldviews rather than upholding true humanitarian values.

Theory of Change

If DEC adopts narratives featuring victims in a developmental context, infused with a sense of hope and progress, **then** it has the potential to engage a more genuine audience. This approach not only enhances the impact of donations but also inspires citizens to actively participate in sustainable humanitarian efforts. **Therefore**, the organization can play a pivotal role in fostering a humanitarian society capable of effectively responding to global emergencies.

Organizational Goal

To deliver timely emergency aid and relief to individuals affected by crises worldwide, ensuring an effective humanitarian response

Communications Objectives

1. Raise awareness of crisis appeals by generating heightened public interest and engagement
2. Increase donations from consistent supporters

Key Messages

Communicating through the lens of the victims fosters a sense of community within our humanitarian society.
Each victim possesses a unique story and remarkable resilience, deserving a future filled with hope.
Your contribution plays a crucial role in making their hopeful futures a reality.

Objective [Raise Awareness & Increase Donation]

Tactic 1A

Tactic Description A series of 1-minute videos featuring narratives from volunteers or donors who were once victims of past crises and are now helping victims in the present appeal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Volunteers on location sharing narratives from victims' perspectives while interacting with current appeal victims. ● Remote donors providing concise, encouraging comments. 	Audience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Disengaged donors who may have lost interest or motivation. ● Individuals with prior experience as victims of crises. ● Individuals who perceive themselves as potentially vulnerable to global crises. 	Message <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anyone can find themselves in an emergency crisis. ● We provide support to victims with both resources and hope. ● Assistance is a two-way street; victims can become donors, and donors can become victims. ● Donors can glean valuable lessons from victims.
Messenger A diverse group of DEC volunteers and donors who were formerly victims themselves.	Distribution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social Media (YouTube, Instagram) 	Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Donate £10 towards our shared future. ● Share this video and tell your story using the hashtag #anyonecanhelpeveryone.

Tactic 1B

Tactic Description A 3-5 minute educational video highlighting the positive trend in crisis management based on past global appeals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Showcase victims with diverse backgrounds, sharing their unique ways of life, culture, and offering individual tips for handling emergencies based on their experiences (if applicable). ● Provide narration supported by factual data and trends in global crisis response. 	Audience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individuals with limited knowledge of crisis management and apprehensions about potential dangers. ● Parents seeking safety education for their children. 	Message <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Donors can gain insights from victims and previous appeals. ● Diverse victims possess their own unique qualities. ● The world is progressively moving towards a more hopeful vision.
Messenger <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Narration: DEC Staff Member ● Visuals + Interviews: Diverse victims who have made a recovery with the support of previous DEC appeals worldwide. 	Distribution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facebook and DEC website 	Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share this video with those you care about for emergency preparedness. ● Stay updated with our latest information on our website: https://www.dec.org.uk/site-search?query=latest+updates

Outcomes

Outcomes Enhanced awareness and engagement with appeals via social media platforms and the official website	Metrics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of visits to the official website ● Count of video views, shares, and associated hashtags on social media ● Rapid Response Network's public opinion poll assessing interest levels and frequency of volunteer participation or contributions
---	--

Increased donations	<p>Targeting a 20% rise in the percentage of repeat donors among the total donor pool</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conducting offline and digital polls during the donation process to gauge the number of appeals they have contributed to
---------------------	--

Calendar - Jan 2023 - Dec 2023

JANUARY

Determine the launch schedule for an upcoming appeal and outline the filming plan.

Conduct research on appeals from the past 5-10 years to identify 3-4 countries that have successfully overcome crises.

FEBRUARY

Communicate the plan to executive staff members from past appeals and seek their assistance in connecting with previous victims willing to volunteer and share their stories in the videos.

Once the schedule for the current appeal is confirmed, coordinate with volunteers for their participation.

MARCH

Select 3-4 volunteers for each video series and initiate contact. Hold virtual meetings to collaborate on developing narratives, discussing their personal stories, locations, and shooting schedules.

Commence the search for a video creator.

APRIL

<p>Hold virtual meetings with the videographer to review and adjust the plan.</p> <p>Begin the search for consistent donors worldwide who were previous victims and are interested in sharing their stories through virtual interviews.</p>
MAY
<p>Travel to the crisis site for the current appeal along with the volunteers.</p> <p>Seek consent from current victims and capture their interactions, as well as document basic charitable efforts such as resource distribution.</p> <p>Identify messengers for remote donors and record virtual interviews for short comments.</p>
JUNE
<p>Edit the videos comprehensively and be prepared for the appeal's launch period.</p>
JULY
<p>Translate the videos into Chinese and Spanish.</p> <p>Select appropriate thumbnails.</p>
AUGUST
<p>On DEC's launch day for the current appeal, release the series of videos on the official website, YouTube, and Instagram platforms.</p>

CONCLUSION

The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) envisions a world where people are spared from life-threatening situations when large-scale disasters strike countries lacking the capacity to respond. To realize this vision, DEC must not only provide immediate material resources but also work towards establishing robust social infrastructure, fostering resilience among citizens in the aftermath of emergencies through humanitarian approaches.

This communication plan takes into account DEC's values, stakeholders, organizational structure, and key messages to bring about the desired transformation outlined in its theory of change. It addresses the inherent ethical issues in DEC's campaigns, emphasizing the importance of respecting victims' dignity and ethnicity, while instilling hope for a united global community. In essence, the plan urges DEC to expand its mission from solely "saving and protecting lives" to also "rebuilding lives through effective humanitarian response" as a cohesive entity.

By implementing a shift in campaign narratives, DEC can effectively engage audiences, leading to increased awareness and donations, in line with its communication objectives. It is my hope that this plan sets a constructive course for envisioning DEC's broader mission for a humanitarian society.

For any further inquiries or suggestions, please feel free to reach out via email at jaykoh@uw.edu.