



The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

Status:

Laureate

Year:

2013

Organization Name:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Luxembourg

Organization URL:

www.emergency.lu; www.mae.lu

Project Name:

emergency.lu

Please select the category in which you are submitting your entry:

World Good

Please provide an overview of the nominated project. Describe the problem it was intended to solve, the technology or approach used, how it was innovative and any technical or other challenges that had to be overcome for successful implementation and adoption. (In 300 words or less.)

2010 Haiti – Tens of thousands of Haitians died within minutes, with thousands more left wounded under the rubble of collapsed buildings when an unprecedented earthquake of a catastrophic magnitude of 7 struck the island. Government facilities were destroyed, infrastructures shattered, army and police overwhelmed and all telecommunications were down. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Luxembourg emergency response team rapidly agreed to deploy two Search & Rescue teams from the Red Cross and the Civil Protection. Our teams arrived among the first international responders in Haiti, knowing that there are only 72 useful hours after a disaster to save lives. However, telecommunications were down and the consequent lack of coordination hampered their efforts. No network, no connectivity, no coordination, no effective aid. After debriefing the teams, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided not to leave it at that: a mobile solution to restore telecommunication services within hours after a disaster had to be found. Set up as a public-private partnership between the Luxembourg government and three

companies, Hitec, SES, Luxembourg Air Ambulance, this innovative solution has been developed and operated in close collaboration with WFP and with technical partners Ericsson Response and Skype. Emergency.lu is a satellite-based telecommunications platform, airborne two hours after an alert. Once delivered to the disaster zone, it takes less than an hour to hook up a telecom terminal to its inflatable antenna, to point the antenna to a satellite in geostationary orbit and provide high-speed Internet connectivity, for voice, data and image transmission. Wireless local networks allow aid workers on the spot to register their laptops, tablets and cellphones and use the satellite capacity at no cost. Thanks to full public funding, emergency.lu is a global public good that has improved the response capacity of the international humanitarian community.

When was this project implemented or last updated? (Please specify month and year.) Has it incorporated new technologies and/or other innovations since its initial deployment? (In 300 words or less.)

Emergency.lu is a multilayer platform consisting of satellite infrastructure and capacity; communication and coordination services; satellite ground terminals for long-term (NoSaCo® Regular and transportable antenna) and rapid deployment (NoSaCo® Rapid and inflatable antenna); and transportation of equipment to the disaster area within the first 12 to 20 hours. The 24/7 basis of the emergency.lu platform is an innovative end-to-end service for the international humanitarian community. This pioneering platform will improve the effectiveness of rapid response. The Luxembourg-initiated solution is unique in flexibility and performance. The technical development and setup of the emergency.lu equipment took almost 2 years (2010-2011). In January 2012, emergency.lu deployed the first four stations, followed in close coordination with WFP in its role as Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) lead in South Sudan (Maban, Renk, Juba and Yida) followed by Mali and Nepal. Since December 2012 an emergency.lu regular deployment kit is online in Venezuela close to the Columbian border upon request of UNHCR. Currently, emergency.lu is on standby and prepared for deployment upon request of the ETC to be sent to Syria, Lebanon or Jordan and to Myanmar (UNHCR). Emergency.lu collaborates with UN agencies for integration of the solution into existing communications infrastructures used in humanitarian operations to be in line with the requirements of the Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Community. An initial partnership has been established with the UN World Food Programme as global lead of the ETC to integrate Emergency Preparedness Integration Centre (EPIC) and emergency.lu into one humanitarian communication platform. EPIC is an inter-agency innovation programme to support improved disaster preparedness and enable fast, effective and more cohesive emergency response. Leveraging the latest developments in information technology, EPIC can provide solutions to assist all levels of life-saving operations.

Is implementation of the project complete? If no, please describe the project's phases and which phase the project is now in. (In 300 words or less.)

The development of the solution is complete and the system is operational since 1st January 2012. A total of 15 deployment kits (9 Regular and 6 Rapid) have meanwhile been deployed in the field or pre-positioned in Dubai, or stand ready for deployment by Learjet in Luxembourg. The private-public partnership is always keen to explore new ways and opportunities to better serve the humanitarian actors in the field. For example, globalepic.lu could become THE humanitarian communication platform where all



humanitarian actors, UN agencies, NGOs, etc. could synchronize their data for a better coordination and work in the field in a harmonized way and to avoid duplication of efforts.

Please provide at least one example of how the technology project has benefited a specific individual or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work. (In 300 words or less.)

Here a few testimonies of humanitarian workers in the field and of Heads of UN Agencies: "The Internet Service has had a positive impact on our job here. Earlier we had difficulties sending reports. In need to be able to send security reports to HQ and to get quick decisions from there. It also helps me to contact all people on the ground here in Pibor. Before we only had cellphones to rely on. It is also very good to be able to send feedback to my family, so they know I am OK. I have even been able to communicate with my bank back home so I am not isolated anymore. I am in a global village." – Elias (UNDSS). "I have no words to thank your good office for the provision/sharing of the Internet service with all NGOs as well for RI. [We are] using the Internet for our daily activities (work and to communicate with our families). If this is not around I don't know how we can manage the current situation. So I would like to thank you so much for your generous gift and support for RI as well other NGOs. Thank you!" – Berneet (Relief International). "The deployment of the global multi-layer telecommunications platform emergency.lu is starting to be a vital leading-edge solution for the humanitarian community at large." – Josette Sheeran, Former Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme, 27 March 2012. "... I would also like to convey my appreciation for your support of the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster, which WFP leads on behalf of the international humanitarian community, in particular for the cutting-edge assistance delivered by the platform emergency.lu." – Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme, 23 May 2012.

Would this project be considered an innovation, a best practice or other notable advancement that could be adopted by or tailored for other organizations and uses? If yes, please describe that here. (In 300 words or less.)

Yes, emergency.lu is an innovative solution that is open and accessible to any humanitarian organization in the field where emergency.lu is deployed. The solutions could also be purchased by other organisations, as CDEMA (Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency) is about to do. Globalepic.lu on the other hand could be considered a best practice and a global humanitarian communication tool for all humanitarian organisations, where individual applications/tools can be tailored to the needs of each organization with the option to share the data with other actors in the field.

If there are any other details that the judges should know about this project, please note them here. (In 300 words or less.)

It is important to stress that this solution can rely on a 24/7 global satellite coverage, so that it can be deployed anywhere in the world at any time. It is also innovative in the sense that it is used in chronic situations, in very remote areas, for example in South Sudan, for longer periods so that humanitarian workers can get used to it and thus know how to use it in case of an emergency. In 2012, 3.539 users have registered from 253 NGOs and agencies.