

## Collaboration with V&TCs for Libya and Japan

On 1 March 2011, OCHA called a meeting with several major Volunteer & Technical Community (V&TC) entities and began collaborating in our responses to Libya. Over the course of March, our collaboration included the Libya Crisis Map production, 3W collection, Baseline Indicators collection, and Japan C.O.D. data collection and consolidation. On 15-June, OCHA convened a wash-up meeting with these V&TCs to discuss these two responses.

### Key Lessons Learned

1. Volunteer Management is a key issue involving the treatment, tasking and recognition of volunteers;
2. Data Preparedness and Pre-planning are critical. Yet, OCHA still needs to be able to quickly define its needs and priorities at the beginning of an emergency;
3. Collaboration with the V&TCs requires a sustained dialogue (both during and outside an emergency) and acceptance of the use of non-standard UN tools;
4. When volunteers respond, OCHA must to be prepared for an "around the clock" response effort from these volunteers;
5. We will not get everything right quickly, but rather we need to improve over time. There are several thematic *Communities of Interest* that need to be advanced.

### Categories of Lessons:

The lessons learned were categorized into seven groups:

1. Data
2. Liaison
3. Meetings
4. Products
5. Staffing / Volunteers
6. Tasking
7. Tools

### Communities of Interest:

10 thematic areas were identified to advance forward:

1. Volunteer Management
2. Cross Training
3. Preparedness & Prioritization
4. Data Licensing
5. Data Scramble
6. Decision Makers' Needs
7. Humanitarian SBTF
8. Transition
9. Impact Evaluation
10. Overall Coordination

The lessons learned and *Communities of Interest* listed on the following pages were collected from 1-March through the 15 June wash-up in New York.

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**29 June 2011**

## Communities of Interest

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During the 15-June wash-up meeting, 10 thematic Communities of Interest were identified which should be established and set in motion by the larger community. Although OCHA has an interest in all of these areas, it will not be able to lead all of the communities. In that regard, OCHA has asked the meeting participants if they could volunteer to lead or co-lead any of the groups. It is envisioned that the call for leadership in these groups will be opened beyond the select group of V&TCs who participated in the meeting.

- 1) **Volunteer Management.** This group would focus on producing guidance and materials for the community on various aspects of volunteer management. It is expected that this material would range from general volunteer treatment protocols, to tasking-related recommendations, to volunteer motivation and recognition.
- 2) **Cross Training.** Training across entities would help broaden the understanding and abilities of the various entities. There is also a need to incorporate the V&TC community in simulations including the inception and design.
- 3) **Preparedness and Prioritization.** Preparedness is a recognized benefit, but V&TCs lack the suggested countries for humanitarian prioritization. This group would leverage a priority list from OCHA and collect relevant datasets and websites. It is envisioned that this group would also suggest guidelines on how to prioritize data requirements at the beginning of a new sudden on-set emergencies.
- 4) **Data Licensing.** All entities involved in the humanitarian response have various licensing requirements over their data sets. These licenses can cause conflict during a response. This group would bring the various entities together with licensing experts to find appropriate solutions to help advance data sets in the humanitarian response.
- 5) **Data Scramble.** At the beginning of each emergency, various entities scramble looking for data sets to aid in their response. However, it would be beneficial to have these entities virtually coordinated during their respective scramble efforts so as to avoid duplications of efforts.
- 6) **Decision Makers' Needs.** Defining what the various levels of decision makers need, in terms of information and products, during the various phases of an emergency would help entities develop appropriate products and services. Categories of data (for a crisis map) and types of analysis are two examples of topics that would need to be discussed in this group.

- 7) **Humanitarian Standby Task Force.** The Standby Task Force noted that they are not exclusively a humanitarian response entity and that consideration should be given to creating a dedicated Humanitarian SBTf for the purpose. This group would initially review the possibility of establishing such a group. If deemed feasible, then this group would work on its creation including the definition of its structure, SOPs, activation criteria, etc.
- 8) **Transition.** As the V&TCs phase out their work, the longer-term responding entities need to find ways to transition the work from the volunteers into their regular programmes and staffing. This group would discuss the challenges, opportunities, and suggested approaches. It is expected that relevant guidance and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) would be developed in a manner for any entity to customize for their own use.
- 9) **Impact Evaluation Framework.** Determining the actual impact of the V&TC groups can be challenging to determine. In that regard, it has been suggested that an Impact Evaluation Framework be established. This group would review various models, compare them against past V&TC responses, and propose a general framework that could be used in future responses.
- 10) **Overall Coordination.** The wash-up meeting recognized the need for a regular virtual coordination-like meeting to keep everyone up-to-date on various initiatives/activities, future plans, and emergency response. This group would organize and chair the overall coordination meetings and keep overall stock of the work of the above communities.

## Lessons Learned

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Given the nature of the items listed below, many could be placed in multiple categories. An attempt has been made to place them in only one category to both help avoid confusion and align them best for OCHA's internal learning.

### Data

- 1) OCHA needs to make it clear that the sponsor, as outlined in the IASC Guidelines on Common Operational Datasets (CODs) in Disaster Preparedness and Response<sup>1</sup>, will select the "best available" data and promote its use as part of the CODs. However, we are very willing to switch data sources during an emergency if one supersedes the other. In the context of Libya, the issue was related to the use of Google Map Maker data which is bound by Google's Terms of Usage which is not suitable to some actors. It should be noted that such limitations put on data are not exclusive to Google, but apply to other involved entities.
- 2) Although it is already known that Data Preparedness is a critical activity, several V&TC groups have expressed interest and willingness to support these activities. For example, OSM and Google have asked about priority countries and Crisis Commons has suggested Crisis Camps focused around high risk areas. With open, strategic partnerships, OCHA could significantly augment humanitarian preparedness efforts.
- 3) The security of data on the Libya Crisis Map proved to be a very serious concern to the SBTF and related volunteers. The use of a public and private site worked well to protect information yet provide operational partners access to all data elements. Still, it would be ideal to find an approach where these could be one platform. In conflict settings, it would be best to simply not solicit or store any information which could be personally compromising. Only for internal requests, governed with clear rules and procedures, should identities of contributors be shared with anyone. The protection of individual identities is paramount.
- 4) All data solicited and recorded for complex emergencies must focus on the humanitarian consequences of conflict events and not military reconnaissance. While the storage and visualization of basic data on where conflict events occur is permissible, data on the movements of troops or other such data which could be utilized by belligerents must not be collected.
- 5) OCHA should always aim to collect information under the "do no harm" principle and should consider providing a simple statement outlining that fact and a terms-of-use for this data [i.e. cannot be used to do harm']

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<sup>1</sup> [IASC Guidelines on Common Operational Datasets in Disaster Preparedness and Response](#) [endorsed November 2010],

- 6) Deployments of crisis maps need to be done based on pre-defined categories and criteria related to clearly defined scenarios. These scenarios include slow-onset emergencies, rapid-onset emergencies and complex emergencies.
- 7) Management of 'event' data presents a new set of challenges (and opportunities) for the humanitarian community. In connection with point 5 above, in relation to category definition, OCHA needs to review how event information can be managed and integrated with information collected through traditional methods.
- 8) Over time, the data from "old" media decreased yet the data from new media sources increased. In the final month of the site's deployment, new media made up more than 70% of the new content being added. Such statistics highlight the need for robust verification protocols to be in place to help ensure only credible information is included [e.g. [avoiding impersonations](#)]
- 9) Data during an emergency can be thought of in terms of three levels of which OCHA is traditionally involved in (a) and (c):
  - a. Common Operational Datasets,
  - b. Community Level Indicators [private sector information such as open stores, phone charger locations, etc.], and
  - c. Crisis Data / Humanitarian Profile.
- 10) The speed and willingness that the V&TC are willing to collect and compile information is extremely impressive. They helped collect more information for the 3W and CODs in 48 hours than we usually do in the first week. Such ability has a huge potential impact for OCHA's responsibilities in information management.
- 11) It is hard to get data to people after they have deployed for a response. Procedures to move large amounts of data over narrow channels are needed. This requirement could be addressed by deploying USAR teams with tools like Google Earth Portable and/or a drop-box like solution [with only one person in the arena receiving content].

## Liaison

- 12) Continued communication over time will prove to be one of the key success factors in the UN's partnerships with the V&TCs. We need structures/agreements in place before an emergency to help reduce the amount of required communication (e.g. agreeing on simple matters). Once the processes and partnerships are established, a virtual coordination platform, hopefully made up of existing tools, to support the response may prove useful.
- 13) When OCHA is the requesting body (of such) and calling the V&TC meetings, these groups look to OCHA for prioritization. They will expect OCHA to take the lead in this area from the very beginning of a new emergency.
- 14) The V&TCs often need feedback or guidance on serious issues and they expect it to come quickly. Examples such as the security of information on Libya Crisis Map, how volunteers represent themselves, which datasets outside the CODs would be useful, what are the priority areas to be mapped, etc. all need quick and concise answers during an emergency.

- 15) A large majority of the V&TCs are technical in nature so they are almost always connected to the internet. Most of these entities are geographically dispersed around the world so can work “around the clock” as a group. If OCHA is going to truly partner with them, our staff also needs to be connected.
- 16) The interest of volunteers can wane over time if appropriate tasking, supervision, and real-time feedback are not provided. OCHA must set a vision at the appropriate time(s), provide appropriate management, and offer both process and output feedback to help ensure that they remain inspired.
- 17) Skype chat groups worked really well to help keep responders up-to-date when many people were contributing. However, these groups need to be supervised, dedicated and layered to specific, well-defined task to ensure we are not overwhelmed and that they remain effective.
- 18) OCHA must recognize that the V&TCs can really open up available networks as well as provide influence in places we never expected. For example, Crisis Commons [noted on their blog](#) that they recommended FEMA’s Situational Assessment Planning team to review the IASC Common Operational Guidance.
- 19) Training across entities would likely prove to be very beneficial for all involved. OCHA needs to include V&TC in simulation exercises (from the definition stage) including Triplex, FIRST, IHP, etc.
- 20) Traditional entities are hesitant to re-engage if they have been “let down” by volunteers in the past. This attitude is one that needs to change. The ultimate responsibility during a response is with the traditional entities and not the volunteers. Any lack of capacity, and thus reason to collaborate with the volunteer entities, is not the fault of the volunteers. At the same time, as volunteer groups model themselves to become more predictable and push traditional organizations to engage with them, a certain level of responsibility will be required from their side.

## Meetings

- 21) The first-ever real-time coordination meeting held on 1-March-2001 via Skype worked quite well to understand what each entity was doing. However, participation needed to be expanded to include a few more operational partners (e.g. MapAction).
- 22) After our first OCHA-V&TC emergency coordination meeting, one participant noted that s/he would have “let the debate go on” as it is a “norm in our community to debate issues”. OCHA needs to recognize this yet find a way to ensure that the discussions do not drag on and remain useful to all participants.
- 23) There is a need to have overall coordination meetings during non-emergency times. It is envisioned that these meetings would occur either once each month or once every other month.
- 24) The wash-up meeting on 15-June was very beneficial to both OCHA and the V&TCs involved.

## Products

- 25) When engaged with V&TCs during an emergency, OCHA needs to provide a disclaimer<sup>2</sup> for inclusion in various products derived from the work done by the V&TCs. Note that the said products are often Inter-Agency in nature and not specific to OCHA. This disclaimer would be both for visibility as well as for users to understand how the data was collected.
- 26) Entities, such as [GISCorp](#), with specialized knowledge and skills are willing to help create mapping products during an emergency.
- 27) OCHA needs to ensure the volunteer generated (or supported) products are recognized in the response especially to our own response team(s).
- 28) Sites / Products like the Libya Crisis Map need to go beyond online “event” reporting if we want to integrate them into products for decision makers. For on-the-ground responders and decision makers, printable products are still more appropriate especially during the early phases of a new emergency. Efforts are needed to outline how crowd-sourced data can be integrated into traditional products so that responders are able to consume the data without having to use another system if their time does not permit.
- 29) OCHA needs to spend more time outside the emergency defining the core products that are needed to enable coordination and decision making so that V&TCs can provide the most appropriate solutions.
- 30) OCHA needs to better understand the products that result from the most commonly used tools of the V&TCs.
- 31) As part of our ongoing system integration efforts, OCHA needs to review how the various V&TC products could be integrated [into the humanitarian programming cycle] to provide an even better community solution.

## Staffing / Volunteers

- 32) Overarching Volunteer Management guidance materials need to be prepared and made available for all entities to help guide their use of volunteers in a constructive and appreciative manner. Managing people across all time zones in real time is radically different from traditional staffing methods.
- 33) For remote support to really work, OCHA needs (at least one) staff member in the field who really understands how remote support can be leveraged and how

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<sup>2</sup> This disclaimer would be similar to the one the UN uses for the administrative boundaries that we use. It is not meant as a disclaimer that would discredit the product in any way. The disclaimer used on the Libya Who’s-Doing-What-Where products: *“Some or all of the data used to create this product is from the Who-does-What-Where tool that OCHA maintains. The raw data was collected from a combination of public sources, such as agency appeals, and direct input from responding organizations. The data was collected and compiled by a combination of OCHA staff and the Standby Task Force. All efforts have been made to ensure accuracy of the data, but any corrections or new information are very welcome.”*

- to manage it. Also, we must recognize how much staff time/resources are required in HQs to manage this support.
- 34) The responding OCHA Information Management Officer (IMO) must participate in the deployment of products (e.g. crisis map) and ensure its presentation and promotion in the Information Management Working Group (IMWG) and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT).
  - 35) OCHA must evaluate the required physical location of staff members during their remote support efforts. For Libya, work began at 7 AM and ended at 11PM, but two breaks were forced – one to go to the office and one to go home – even though a vast majority of the work was done over Skype and email. Being locked to the office from 9-5 seemed inappropriate given the *new age* work we were undertaking.
  - 36) When OCHA makes an opportunity available for volunteers through the Online Volunteers program, we need to be prepared to quickly review candidates, accept/reject volunteers, and close the opportunity. OCHA received over 300 applications in the first 72 hours (170 in the first 24 hours).
  - 37) New volunteers needed more clarity in “who” they were going to work for as they were confused that OCHA advertised an opportunity on the UNV platform, but were then passed to the Standby Task Force to begin work.
  - 38) Volunteers need three core questions answered right from the beginning:
    - a. What do I do?
    - b. How do I do it?
    - c. How long do I do it for?
  - 39) Individual volunteers who were too busy to assist on Libya suddenly “found themselves with time” to help the Japan tsunami response. Such discrepancies will always exist especially when comparing a natural disaster with a conflict setting. Different people are going to be effected by different events and thus it is important to reach out to the communities most interested in helping in specific regions.
  - 40) In the Libya response, there were only problems with approximately 5 out of 500 volunteers.
  - 41) Transition of tools and services provided by the V&TCs is a critical topic. If we are going to collaborate with such groups, we need to ensure that OCHA can take over the activities and integrate them into systems established at the field level if they are expected to last more than a few weeks. If OCHA is going to take over the products (e.g. a crisis map), then it needs dedicated paid volunteer supervisors.

## Tasking

- 42) OCHA needs to place our problem definitions out to the V&TC community in an open environment so that all V&TCs have the benefit of seeing the needs and understanding the process of selecting a given V&TC. OCHA cannot be seen as giving favoritism.
- 43) OCHA colleagues and partners want to get involved when they hear about what can be done. However, they do not want to put in the effort to clearly define the task and/or to manage actual process with the volunteers for that task. OCHA needs to setup clear and concise guidelines on how we will engage with the V&TCs as well as a central focal point for the liaison connection.

## Tools

- 44) OCHA needs to accept the use of tools that will be used by the volunteers (i.e. generally free or open source). We need to accept the use of these freely available (collaborative) tools. Google Docs and Skype were the most commonly used tools and worked well for the distributed work undertaken. Accessibility, interoperability, and sustainability are all key principles for the tools selected and ultimately used.
- 45) Tools used by the V&TCs may not adhere to the data standards that we required and thus we need to work with them during non-emergency time to rectify any issue. For example, the Libya Crisis Map is using 'non-standard' geographical locations which meant that OCHA had to clean the data each time that we downloaded it for analysis.
- 46) Tools or gadgets need to be developed in such a way that they can be openly embedded anywhere (e.g. [Google Gadgets](#)).

## Recommendation

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Rather than propose a long list of recommendations, it is suggested that OCHA seriously invest in helping the identified thematic *Communities of Interest* move forward as well as review each lesson learned in order to internalize and adapt as needed.

It is envisioned that a vast majority of the opportunities which can be derived from the Lessons Learned will be addressed within the *Community of Interests*. OCHA needs to prioritize which communities it can lead. Since the opportunities will provide significant benefit for other entities, it is anticipated that others will be willing to lead or co-lead some of the groups. In fact, OCHA should encourage such an arrangement as there is no way that we can lead, or even co-lead, all of the groups. OCHA should intend to be a lead within the Overall Coordination team in an effort to ensure that the overall efforts remain focused and beneficial to the entire community.

As concrete immediate next steps, it is recommended that OCHA opens this lessons learned document for comments from the community and invites entities to volunteer to lead or co-lead the various *Communities of Interest*.

## Annex 1: 15-June Wash-up

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### Objectives

While the meeting was originally called under the auspicious of reviewing OCHA's collaboration with various entities (especially V&TC related) in response to Libya and Japan, we would also like to cover future collaborations, complementarity, opportunities, and specific priority issues to address. To this end, we suggest the following objectives during our meeting.

- To review actions taken during the two responses;
- To define how our engagement can be improved during the next emergency;
- To discuss possible formation of focused discussion groups (e.g. data licensing, definition of use-cases for volunteer usage, engagement by for-profit entities, transition, trainings, etc);
- To determine how to feed the lessons learned from Libya and Japan into upcoming events, such as the International Conference of Crisis Mappers later this year;
- To discuss how/if V&TCs can support preparedness activities;
- To discuss possible tangible advancements towards recommendations from the [Disaster Relief 2.0 report](#);
- To outline concrete next steps with assigned responsibilities.

## Participants

ENTITY	FIRST NAME	LAST NAME
Crisis Commons	Heather	Blanchard
Crisis Mappers / SBTF	Patrick	Meier
Google	Pablo	Mayrgundter
Harvard Humanitarian Initiative	Jennifer	Chan
Harvard Humanitarian Initiative	John	Crowley
ICT4Peace	Sanjana	Hattotuwa
Map Action	Jonathan	Douch
Net Hope	Gisli	Olafsson
OCHA	Andrew	Alspach
OCHA	Andrej	Verity
OCHA (CISB Deputy)	Derk	Segaar
OCHA (Partnership)	Monica	Belalcazar
OCHA (Visual Media)	Akiko	Harayama
OCHA Colombia	Jeffry	Villaveces
OSM (HOT)	Kate	Chapman
UN Global Pulse	Sara	Farmer
UNOICT	Suha	Ulgen
UNV (Online Volunteers)	Elise	Bouvet
Volunteer Coordinator	Alain	Lemaire
Wilson Center	Lea	Shanley