Disaster Response

GSMA Disaster Response: Key Messages for Policy Makers

In the last 40 years, the proportion of the earth affected by drought has doubled[1]. In 2010, more than 69 million people were exposed to floods[2]. In 2011, the crisis in the Horn of Africa escalated with over 13 million affected[3]. Recent flooding in Thailand is projected to have set global industrial production back by 2.5%, and the Japanese earthquake and Tsunami killed almost 16,000 people, and cost $210 billion (USD)[4].

The frequency and magnitude of disasters is accelerating as a result of population growth, urbanisation and climate change. Mobile's role in disaster response will only grow, and there is a need for the mobile industry to collaborate and integrate more effectively with national governments, civil society organisations and international humanitarian agencies, before and after disaster strikes.

Communication and information are just as critical as food, water and medical aid. Mobile networks are a crucial keystone of basic emergency infrastructure at a national level. National policies that recognise this, and foster the ability of mobile to decentralise information and facilitate two-way communication are essential.

Mobile networks are uniquely positioned to play a role across the disaster risk reduction cycle, from preparedness, early warning, disaster onset, immediate aftermath and recovery. Communication needs differ during stages of a disaster, as does the contribution of mobile. Policies and strategies should be designed with these distinctions in mind.

One of the first things people pick up after disaster strikes is their mobile phone - the ability to communicate immediately and reunite with loved ones is essential. Increasingly, information from the mobile network can be used to improve the targeting of humanitarian relief and predict affected population needs and movements. Understanding the role of mobile data for social impact will be important for regulators and telecoms or communications authorities.

The first 72 hours after a disaster are critical. The GSMA will lead in providing a blueprint for optimal co-ordination and collaboration between ecosystem members in order to build the resilient, quickly restorable networks that these communities need. Disaster response protocol and policies should be shared between Mobile Operators and governments in advance of disasters as a key component of preparedness.

As dependence upon mobile grows, the industry must learn how to meet these demands. This necessitates a better understanding of what does or doesn't work. Regional and national meetings to convene the mobile industry and governments to share best practice and coordinate efforts will be launched in 2012.

Crisis-affected states play a primary role in initiating, coordinating and implementing humanitarian assistance. The GSMA will support the operator and wider mobile community to work more effectively and efficiently together, and with national disaster response committees, government agencies, regulators and humanitarian partners. The new Disaster Response programme underlines and embodies this commitment.

When you restore the mobile network, you rebuild the human network

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1. **US National Centre for Atmospheric Research** (2010) http://www2.ucar.edu/news/2904/climate-change-drought-may-threaten-much-globewithin-decades
2. **United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (NISDR)** (2011) 'Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction', Geneva: NISDR.
3. **OXFAM.** "Crisis in a New World Order" http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/crises-in-a-new-world-order-challenging-the-humanitarian-project-204749
4. **The Economist, The Daily Chart: Natural Disasters** http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2012/01/daily-chart-4





