

RELEASE IN
PART B6

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Saturday, January 30, 2010 8:22 AM
To: H
Subject: Fw: 4636 and state getting a lot of good press -- now in the Guardian

Fyi

From: Klevorick, Caitlin B
To: Mills, Cheryl D
Sent: Sat Jan 30 05:37:21 2010
Subject: Fw: 4636 and state getting a lot of good press -- now in the Guardian

From: Katie Jacobs Stanton
To: Dowd, Katie W; Ross, Alec J; Curtis, Meghann A; Adler, Caroline E; Forgerson, Luke A (PACE); Klevorick, Caitlin B
Cc: Stanton, Katie
Sent: Fri Jan 29 23:21:03 2010
Subject: 4636 and state getting a lot of good press -- now in the Guardian

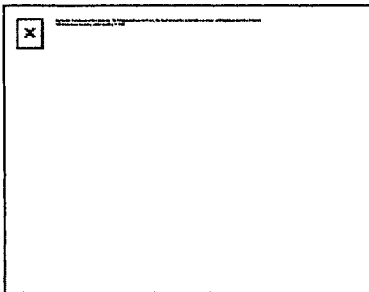
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/jan/29/haiti-crowdsourcing>

Even has a screen shot of dipnote!

How to Friday: How to build a crisis reporting system

Developers, technologists and volunteers around the world came together to build a crisis reporting for Haiti. Here's how they did it

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The Ushahidi crowdsourced crisis reporting in Haiti

Technologists around the world came together and rapidly built a system for Haitians to request help in the wake of devastating earthquake. Using the internet to organise themselves, developers, communications experts and humanitarian organisations created a system to gather emergency requests using text messages that won praise from emergency officials and support from the US State Department.

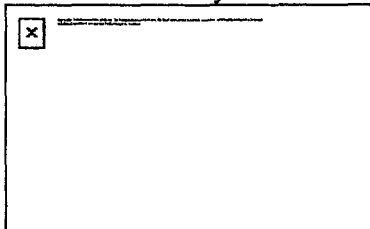
Hours after the quake, Josh Nesbit, who heads up a non-profit using mobile phones to help deliver medical care in Africa, heads sent this tweet:

Reaching out to @FrontlineSMS users in #Haiti with hopes of establishing local SMS gateway for <http://haiti.ushahidi.com>

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Ushahidi is a crowd-sourced crisis reporting platform that was developed in Kenya to gather reports of violence in the post-election unrest in 2008. Ushahidi, which means "testimony" in Swahili, has been used to gather reports about the swine flu outbreak, monitor elections in India and Mexico and to collect crime reports in Atlanta. The platform can handle reports from a number of sources, via email, the web or via SMS, making it flexible and very useful even in areas without internet access. Ushahidi worked with teams in Kenya, Uganda and teams in Boston and Washington DC in the United States.

Using Twitter, Josh got in contact with Jean-Marc Castera who was heading to the DigiCel command center, according to Erik Hersman at Ushahidi. Working with the US State Department they were able to get the 4636 SMS shortcode that had been used for weather information in Haiti. They launched the SMS-based emergency information system with the support of the Thomson Reuters Foundation and technology disaster relief organisation inSTEDD five days after the quake.



Ten radio stations still operating in Haiti helped spread the word about the emergency shortcode. They also quickly put up posters, and the US Department of State helped publicise it, announcing it via their official Twitter account and elsewhere.

They worked with 10,000 Haitian volunteers to help translate the messages and other volunteers helped to structure "mountains of data" coming into the system, Hersman wrote. The volunteers of Mission 4636 posted this on the Ushahidi blog:

We are the volunteer translators of Mission 4636. We span six time zones and seven languages on any given night. We are students, medics, stay at home mothers, archivists, firefighters, and software developers. We are the quiet force behind Ushahidi Haiti & we give a voice to the lost.

San Francisco startups, Crowdfunder and Samasource, which specialise in managing tasks for crowdsourcing, helped organise the volunteer efforts, according to Kim-Mai Cutler at VentureBeat. She also reported that Katie Stanton, an early Google employee who now works in the Office of Innovation at the State Department, "helped get emergency responders from the U.S. Coast Guard and Red Cross involved".

Since it started, Ushahidi has received nearly 100,000 reports concerning Haiti, and organisers are working to create a system, Swift River, to help filter those reports so that the most urgent ones get attention quickly. One thing that is impressive about this effort is how distributed, collaborated and organised it is, and they have blogged about how they kept this volunteer project focused. CrisisCamps to help with these projects sprung up in cities around the world, including here in London.

A decade of crowdsourced crisis projects

Developers also created an application to help collect information on missing people in Haiti. After creating several applications, they came to a decision to focus their efforts on a single app hosted at Google.

The Haiti Earthquake people finding application is actually the evolution of similar projects that started appearing after the 11 September 2001 attacks in the US and rapidly developed after the Asian Tsunami in late 2004, Hurricane Katrina PeopleFinder project in 2005, the and the earthquake in Kashmir in 2005. The projects gave rise to an XML format called the People Finder Interchange Format.

Every time a disaster like this happens, the response has gotten more sophisticated and better organised. The response in Haiti by this volunteer army has been deeply impressive, and they have built up the expertise so that when the next disaster happens, they'll have new tools to help speed aid to victims in need.