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IBM’s Global Disaster Response
Helping people, leveraging technology, skills

“IBM has a tradition of responding whenever there’s a disaster, whenever there’s a significant crisis in one of the communities where we live and work. That’s part of being a good corporate citizen and also leverages IBM’s most fundamental assets — technology and the incredible skills and volunteerism of our employees.”

— Robin Willner, vice president, IBM Global Community Initiatives

IBM responded after the earthquake in Sichuan Province, China, deploying IBM equipment and technical solutions such as Sahana.

On our planet, disasters unfortunately occur with distressing frequency. The events are always chaotic, but IBM’s response is always predictable: an outpouring of technology, resources and IBMers committed to helping their neighbors and their communities.

Whether a crisis is triggered by a localized flood, severe earthquake, or driving wind and rain from a hurricane, communities have learned to depend on IBM to respond, often with profound actions. IBM’s response to disasters is based on a belief that combining innovative technology with talented people on the ground can profoundly speed-up recovery efforts. As the planet becomes smarter, more and more objects are becoming instrumented, intelligent and interconnected — part of the “Internet of things.” And this new level of connectedness accelerates disaster relief efforts. By collecting critical data quickly and sharing it with a range of stakeholders, everyone’s input is more impactful and the time to recovery is shortened.
Since 2001, IBM has harnessed the best-available technology, engaged local and global experts and mobilized thousands of employee volunteers to provide relief assistance after over 30 disasters in at least 19 countries.

As technology advances, new disaster recovery tools are emerging. IBM has embraced and supported one prominent example called Sahana. This Web-based application was created in Sri Lanka after the cataclysmic 2004 South Asia tsunami that claimed more than 280,000 lives.

Sahana, a free, open source disaster management system, can be used to track everything from victim identification to refugee camps, relief organizations and donations of relief goods. It is an active and evolving open source project, promoted by IBM as a strategic part of disaster response efforts in developing regions.

While Sahana is most often deployed following a crisis, it is also being used in the disaster-prone nation of the Philippines as a core element of their preparedness strategy. In 2009, the National Disaster Coordinating Council participated in Sahana training which reaped benefits later that year when typhoons ravaged the country.

Providing psychological support for survivors
IBM, in cooperation with psychologists from Organizational Resilience International and the Institute for Trauma & Crisis, have produced a reference guide titled the “Global Caregivers’ Guide For Helping Child Survivors Of Disaster.”

Designed for use by a broad range of professionals, para-professionals and volunteers engaged in providing psychosocial support for children following a large scale disaster, the guide builds on work performed after the Asian Tsunami and is supplemented by a second guide, “Psychological support for survivors of disaster: A practical guide”, for supporters of adults dealing with post-disaster trauma. Both guides are available in multiple languages and are distributed freely following disaster.

IBMs Global Disaster Response

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