



# The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

## Final Copy of Case Study

**LOCATION:**  
*Seattle, WA, US*

**ORGANIZATION:**  
Microsoft Corporation

**YEAR:**  
*2011*

**ORGANIZATION URL:**  
<http://microsoft.com>

**STATUS:**  
*Laureate*

**PROJECT NAME:**  
Microsoft Disaster Response

**CATEGORY:**  
*Collaboration*

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

When natural disasters occur, the ability to coordinate the relief efficiently and effectively is critical. Responders are faced with a challenging environment that includes increasing complexity of inter-agency coordination, damaged and limited communications infrastructure, outdated or paper-based mapping/topography information, and difficulty in disseminating information quickly (both between the various response participants and the public). These challenges have been compounded by the increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters as well as deepening global inter-dependencies occurring in the last decade. Microsoft considers disaster response and humanitarian assistance an integral part of global corporate citizenship and an important expression of our corporate mission of using information and communication technology (ICT) to enable people and businesses throughout the world to realize their full potential. What distinguishes Microsoft's approach to disaster response is the company's focus on our core competency, ICT, and long history of partnering with leading humanitarian, government and response organizations to develop joint solutions. For examples, Microsoft has partnered with NetHope, a membership organization of some of the world's largest humanitarian relief organizations, which ensures organizations have the technology they need to react quickly and effectively. One thing we have learned is that establishing strong partnerships in advance of a disaster greatly reduces response times and the ability for relief organizations to deliver aid. To lead and facilitate our disaster response work, in 2008 Microsoft formed a disaster response program. This unified our corporate, partner and local field resources to work proactively to increase the organizational and technological capabilities of governments, inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in disaster response, and to provide aid and support during actual response efforts. The company applies its resources and core competencies in the following ways:

- Information and Communications Technology Solutions & Expertise: By enabling fast and efficient communication, collaboration and enhanced situational awareness for the lead government, non-government, and intergovernmental response

organizations and customers and partners, ICT can help save lives, reduce personal and economic impact and minimize the recovery time. For example, a hosted SharePoint collaboration portal allows non-profit organizations to compile data where impacts have been assessed, what needs have been identified, shelter locations, real-time shelter capacity reports, and relief supply stock for distribution in a format that can be viewed by responders and coordinators at a variety of locations simultaneously. • Global Partnerships: Before, during and after a disaster, Microsoft partners closely with governments, non-governmental organizations, response agencies and technology partners to enhance disaster response by establishing coordination methods and enabling discussion of critical technology needs. Microsoft is also able to tap into its global network of 800,000 technology partners to provide a comprehensive set of disaster management-specific solutions. • Community Involvement: Microsoft increases resources available to disaster response efforts by raising awareness for volunteer and donation opportunities. We promote awareness to the public and employees by featuring special content and placements on Microsoft's online social media resources (i.e. Microsoft.com, MSN.com, Live.com and internal communications vehicles).

## **SOCIETAL BENEFITS**

At Microsoft, we believe that communication and information management plays a critical role in rapid and effective disaster management. Our goal is to extend Microsoft's core competencies, global resources, and partner relationships to increase responder and citizen capability for disaster response, and recovery; and ultimately, to help save lives.

## **PREVIOUS PROJECT UPDATED/EXPANDED?**

The Microsoft Disaster Response program formally started in 2008 and has been actively supporting response to natural disasters and evolving the program since then. The operational framework and resources were implemented in 2008, with training and awareness rolled out in 2009 to field subsidiaries. Now the program is in run-mode while making constant improvements based on lesson's learned from each response. Since 2008, the Microsoft Disaster Response team has responded to five major and eleven moderate disasters including the 2008 cyclone Nargisin Myanmar, earthquake in China, and Hurricanes Gustav and Ike in the US; in 2009, the Victoria, Australia brushfires, Fargo, ND floods, Italy earthquake and H1N1 flue outbreak, and in 2010 Haiti earthquake and Pakistan flooding. By coordinating with our local and regional subsidiaries, the corporate-based Microsoft Disaster Response program is able to support responses worldwide on on-going basis.

## **PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION COMPLETE?**

Yes

## **PROJECT BENEFIT EXAMPLE**

Microsoft's work with and support for NetHope is in the form of consulting and grants. Based on the partnership and level of preparedness established prior to the earthquake in Haiti, NetHope was able to respond quickly and efficiently to the disaster. The Microsoft Disaster Response and NetHope Emergency Working Group was activated the day the earthquake happened in Haiti, and NetHope able was able to establish temporary telecommunications infrastructure to enable humanitarian agencies to communicate and speed relief to victims within a few days of the disaster. "ICT is the electricity that lets humanitarian staff conduct assessments, communicate requirements and speed relief in the form of shelter, healthcare and food to those affected by natural disasters," says William Brindley, CEO



of NetHope. "We could not do what we do without Microsoft." NetHope – a collaboration of 32 NGOs working in more than 150 countries – launched the NetHope Academy training initiative in September in partnership with Haitian organizations, other humanitarian groups and large tech companies including Microsoft. The NetHope Academy provides IT skills training and on the job work experience to unemployed Haitians, to build in-country technical expertise. NetHope Academy interns spend three weeks in intensive boot camp-style classroom trainings, and then they're placed within IT teams of NGOs working to rebuild devastated areas of Haiti. In the first two months after the earthquake, Microsoft also helped launch a web site for inter-agency collaboration; cloud computing solutions for Haiti's government and for organizations working in the country; had Bing and MSN each set up pages where people could donate to Haiti; and had the Microsoft Translator team add Haitian Creole to the translator's languages so it could be used by aid workers. Microsoft employees found unique ways to apply their expertise, and to collaborate inside and outside the company to help rebuild Haiti by infusing technology and the benefits it can provide. The success of our collaboration with NetHope led us to reach out to and develop even more partnerships with NGOs and make sure they had the software needed to be better prepared for disasters.

## **IS THIS PROJECT AN INNOVATION, BEST PRACTICE?** Yes

### **ADDITIONAL PROJECT INFORMATION**

Microsoft is passionate in its belief that information and communication technology can make a significant difference in reducing the impact of natural disasters, and we are firmly committed to continuing our partnership investment of resources and expertise in efforts to make communities more resilient and to strengthen disaster management capabilities worldwide. When disasters strike, Microsoft works with partners to provide first responders with technology support and helps to create or deploy on-the-spot solutions that improve response coordination, reunite families, and drive donations and public awareness. In addition, Microsoft and its employees donate generously to humanitarian relief organizations responding to natural disasters, and Microsoft employees often serve as trained volunteers. The company supports its employees' compassionate response to natural disasters around the world through a variety of programs that vary from country to country, such as granting employees time off to volunteer or matching their donations or volunteer hours with an equivalent cash contribution to the appropriate charity. For more information about Microsoft Disaster Response efforts please visit: [www.microsoft.com/humanitarianrelief](http://www.microsoft.com/humanitarianrelief)  
[http://blogs.technet.com/b/microsoft\\_blog/archive/2011/01/05/haiti-one-year-later-technology-lessons-for-disaster-response.aspx](http://blogs.technet.com/b/microsoft_blog/archive/2011/01/05/haiti-one-year-later-technology-lessons-for-disaster-response.aspx)  
<http://www.microsoft.com/showcase/en/us/details/ed1d948f-5dfb-45f1-9c39-20050b7d752c>