



Global Forum on Emergency Telecommunications (GET-19)

*Innovating together to save lives
Using technologies in disaster management*

6 to 8 March 2019
Balaclava, Mauritius

PRE-EVENT: CAP WORKSHOP

REPORT

5 March 2019



Introduction

The pre-event, Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) Workshop took place on 5 March 2019, on the eve of the 3rd Global Forum on Emergency Telecommunications (GET-19) *Innovating together to save lives: using technologies in disaster management*, in Balaclava, Mauritius.

This workshop highlighted the benefits of CAP and shared best practices and lessons learned on how to create an enabling environment for leveraging CAP. Panelists demonstrated that regardless of the type of hazard, CAP emergency messages can quickly and efficiently be disseminated to warn people in harm's way, using all available communication technologies.

Tuesday 5 March 2019

Opening session

Ms. Vanessa Gray delivered the welcome remarks on behalf of ITU and thanked all the participants for making the effort to attend the workshop. She mentioned the need to ensure that all ICT technologies and services, as well as existing standards, be used for disaster management and risk reduction. She also provided an overview of all activities that ITU is undertaking on emergency telecommunications making emphasis on the Common Alerting Protocol.

Mr. Jerome Louis, Officer in Charge of ICTA and Director of Engineering delivered the welcoming remarks on behalf of ICTA. Mr. Louis noted that climate change arising mainly from human activity increases the risk of disasters in a number of ways and highlighted the necessity to alert the population in the most effective and efficient manner in order to reduce damage and loss of life. He also noted the importance of the Common Alerting Protocol defined in Rec. ITU-T X.1303 in providing a general format for exchanging all-hazard emergency alerts and public warning over all kinds of networks.

Session 1: CAP Introduction and Implementation Showcase

This session, led by **Mr. Eliot Christian**, provided a complete overview of the Common Alerting Protocol, mentioning how alerting authorities had long relied on commercial media, such as broadcast radio and television, to help disseminate public warnings. However, this text information was not formatted to enable automated processing. Use of CAP enables simple tools to get critical messages delivered to people in harm's way: wherever they are and whatever they are doing.

Mr. Christian also provided information on a range of CAP implementations at a national level. He noted that half of the world's people live in a country that already issues CAP alerts, and a further quarter are in countries actively implementing CAP today. Yet, the remaining quarter live in countries that have yet to implement CAP, and these are almost all least-developed or developing countries. He emphasized that closing this gap does not require new funding, since many free tools are available. Enabling all countries to benefit from CAP requires serious commitment to outreach and education.

Cell Broadcast, as a telecommunications technology to disseminate alerts was also discussed. This cellular phone technology allows messages to be broadcast immediately and efficiently to all mobile

devices within the alerting area. This maximizes the number of people receiving warnings in a timely manner. Cell broadcast systems do not consume bandwidth, which is a key feature when networks are potentially congested and degraded due to the hazard event. About 20 countries are using Cell Broadcast for emergency alerting today.

Session 2: Best practices and lessons learned

This session provided an overview of practices and lessons learned on the development and implementation of CAP.

Ms. Elysa Jones, from the OASIS Emergency Management Technical Committee, gave an overview of the origin of the Common Alerting Protocol and described the OASIS Emergency Management Technical Committee (EM TC) in its standards role. She also presented other specifications which the EM TC has developed in support of all phases of disaster management. She highlighted that resilient ICTs are necessary for disaster risk reduction and management and provided an update from the CAP Subcommittee as well as a reference page to their work to include practical guides for CAP implementation.

Mr. Darmen Ellayah, from the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Centre of Mauritius, presented how Mauritius has implemented CAP at a national level giving concrete examples on how private and public partnership were developed with the Mauritius Telecom sector in order to ensure that messages are delivered to the general public in a timely manner. He also mentioned that CAP provides a flexibility for geographic targeting, multiple channel, different language and audience messaging and it is easy to use.

Mr. Darmen Barker, from the Department of Disaster Management of Anguilla, provided a real life example of how CAP has been implemented in Anguilla, how it works, its challenges and opportunities. He presented the website that Anguilla is using for creating the alerts that are disseminated to the public. He also emphasized the need for capacity building in the use and implementation of CAP and mentioned that it is important to centralize the warning alerts in order to avoid any confusion. He made emphasis on involving citizens and leaving decision making processes, when appropriate, in the hands of the responsible authorities.

Ms. Kim Mallalieu from the West Indies University, provided a real life example on CAP implementation in FEWER, which is an ICT-based Early Warning and Emergency Response tool for small-scale fishers. She outlined the localization of CAP for a particularly vulnerable community in the Caribbean. Her intervention provided recommendations based on the FEWER experience for compatibility and validation support tools for CAP development and implementation in the region.

Session 3: Enabling environment

Ms. Jessica Robbins from the Global Disaster Preparedness Centre (GDPC), provided an overview of the Universal App Programme, which was developed to allow Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies, to customize and release First Aid and Hazard apps within their countries. The Multi-Hazard app ingests CAP feeds applicable to the countries covered by the app, and allows national societies to provide access to their alerting agency partners to generate and send CAP alerts. She also introduced the WhatNow Service, which was developed by GDPC in partnership with Google, providing localized action messages to accompany and complement CAP alerts. WhatNow messages are available via an API to be ingested into apps or other CAP-compliant dissemination mechanisms.

Mr. Cao Zhyu from the National Early Warning Centre of China, presented an overview of how the Centre leverages CAP to disseminate warning throughout all of China. The National Early Warning Release System (NEWRS) gathers information from emergency command sectors and uses CAP to get warnings to the public and emergency management personnel nationwide. NEWRS may be the world's most extensive CAP-enabled warning system comprised of one national, 31 provincial, 343 municipal, and 2,015 county centers. He gave real life examples of where CAP has been used to issue warning alerts in a timely manner when disasters strike. He also noted that alerts are issued in a range of local languages and disseminated using a wide range of media.

Mr. Saurabh Basu from the Centre for Development of Telematics (CDOT) of India, provided an overview of the CAP compliant integrated early warning platform that India has developed and implemented nationally. He highlighted the need to modernize and integrate existing alerting and warning systems at the national and local levels, using a single cohesive platform. Mr. Basu mentioned that India is integrating all existing technologies including digital and analogue to disseminate alerts. The EWS have been developed in different languages to cope with the needs of the population of the country. GIS based platforms have also been developed and incorporated into the system to consolidate and centralize information in order to provide better response during disasters situations.