



***REPORT ON THE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER MEETING ON THE
USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGIES (ICT) IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT: SAVING
LIVES***

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From 28-30 November 2011

The Multi-stakeholder meeting on the use of ICT in Disaster Management: Saving Lives, which was co-organized by the Postal and Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (POTRAZ) and the International Telecommunications Union's Telecommunications Development Bureau, was held from 28 to 30 November 2011. The Workshop was officially opened by Honourable MP Nicholas Goche, Minister of Transport, Communication and Infrastructure Development. Opening remarks were also made by Eng. Charles Sibanda, Director-General, POTRAZ and Dr. Cosmas Zavazava, Chief, Project Support and Knowledge Management Department, Telecommunication Development Bureau, International Telecommunication Union.

The workshop was attended by Institutions and organizations that deal with emergency planning and coordination, and response, in Zimbabwe and attracted participants from Government ministries and institutions, Private Sector, Non-Governmental Organisations and Public research institutions.

A number of speakers made presentations addressing issues ranging from emerging technologies, policy, legal and regulation (spectrum, licensing, etc.), and ICT applications and services such as telemedicine as they relate to public safety.

The following are some of the key issues that were identified by the meeting:

1. Participants called on government to put in place appropriate policies and telecommunications regulations that will pave way for the active participation of all stakeholders such as ITU, the Private Sector, Non-Governmental Organizations and the government. In this respect, government was urged to ensure the following:

- **Institutional Strengthening:** The need to have collaboration with ITU aimed at ensuring the availability of well-trained people in government, telecommunication operators, and other stakeholders. This would result in better preparedness that would facilitate the mobilization of both human and material resources at a faster pace when disasters strike.
- **Legislation and Regulatory Readiness:** The need for clear legislation and regulatory guidelines that support the ratification by the government and implementation of the Tampere Convention to facilitate the cross-border movement of telecommunications equipment during emergencies.
- **Technical Support:** Need to have adequately trained telecommunications personnel who are capable of operating and maintaining the necessary equipment or disaster kits and for disaster relief/response. Every effort must be made to ensure that the telecommunications network can cope with network congestion in the immediate aftermath of disasters.
- **Financial Standby Fund:** Highlighting the need to set aside an adequate budget that can be used in emergencies without having to take last minutes measures such as embarking on an impromptu fund raising for relief and reconstruction in the aftermath of disasters.
- **National Emergency Telecommunications Plans:** The need to develop a comprehensive national emergency telecommunications plan for better preparedness including the setting up of early warning systems. The plan should be supported by clearly written and easy to understand Standard Operating Procedures (SOPS).
- **Emergency Operation Centre (EOC):** The government should establish well defined National Operation Guidelines that will define the role of the EOC and guide the establishment of an Emergency Operation Centre.

2. THE WORKSHOP:

- a) Expressed the need for the ITU to provide assistance in developing the national emergency telecommunications plan.
- b) Urged the government to work closely with all stakeholders that are involved in disaster management to take advantage of existing and emerging telecommunications/ICT technologies for purposes of saving human lives.
- c) Urged the government to study and ratify the Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations.
- d) Requested information from the ITU on ways the country could receive assistance in emergency situations.
- e) Requested ITU/Telecommunications Development Bureau (BDT) in accordance with the 2010 World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-10) Resolution 34 and the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference of 2010 (PP-10) Resolutions 36 and 136 to assist Zimbabwe in the on-going efforts to put in place early warning systems, and to ratify and implement the Tampere Convention.
- f) Requested ITU/BDT to explore additional innovative ways and initiatives in assisting Zimbabwe in using telecommunications/information and communication technologies for monitoring, detecting, predicting, and responding to disasters.
- g) Identified the need to mobilise resources aimed at assisting stakeholders involved in humanitarian work through capacity building (institutional and human) such as Local Authorities, telephone operators, Met Office(to be completed).

3. ACTION PLAN

The Workshop adopted an Action Plan constituting the following components that will be implemented between December 2011 and December 2014 when a detailed review/stocktaking will be undertaken. The Action Plan outlined:

- a) The need to develop guidelines on how stakeholders could more effectively work together in using existing and emerging telecommunications/ICT technologies for purposes of saving human lives.
- b) The importance of developing and adopting an Telecommunications/ICT Policy and regulatory framework that favoured emergency telecommunications. Zimbabwe needs to develop a national emergency telecommunications plan that is regularly reviewed. The plan could be discussed and adopted at a follow-up national workshop that would bring together stakeholders that are involved in disaster management and in the provision of telecommunications/ICT resources.
- c) Need for ITU/BDT to guide Zimbabwe in the development of an Emergency Telecommunications Plan as part of the country's preparedness which would incorporate network resiliency and redundancy. The plan would provide for periodic exercises/drills and simulations to test both system and people readiness.
- d) The urgency of developing National Operation Guidelines that will define the EOC and its operations.
- e) Need for adequate budgetary allocations to finance the emergency operation centre and act as a standby fund at the national level in case of disasters.
- f) The need and importance of developing and establishing a functional national database on personnel and material resources that would support the EOC.
- g) Need for an Emergency Coordination Centre to be established to help POTRAZ coordinate activities and relevant entities in the domain of telecommunications/ICT.
- h) Urgency in the implementation of emergency response plans by each Emergency Responding Agency and to directly link them to the National Emergency Operational Centre.
- i) Need for Zimbabwe to study and ratify the Tampere Convention through the incorporation of its provisions into relevant national telecommunications/ICT legislation and regulations and could seek assistance from ITU if needed.
- j) The availability of ITU Telecommunications/ICT resources such as easy-to-transport satellite terminals, mobile base stations, etc. that are available at no cost to disaster

affected countries, and noted that Zimbabwe could benefit from these resources as in the past.

- k) Need for Business Continuity Plans (BCP) for the telecommunications/ICT Sector which could ensure continuity of service when disasters disrupt or destroy terrestrial networks.
- l) Need for a study that could pave way to the establishment of a single emergency number.

This document was adopted during the closing session of the Workshop on “Multi-stakeholder meeting on the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Disaster Management: Saving Lives from 28 to 30 November 2011 – Rainbow Towers Hotel, Harare, Zimbabwe.

List of participating organisation: See Annex 1