GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

As officials and aid providers rushed to support those impacted by Super Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines much of that response was visible in Social Media. With 33 million of its 92 million population using the Internet the Government of the Philippines has adopted a broad use of open source reporting and encouraged the use unified hashtags for official response activities.[1]

SITUATIONAL INFORMATION

While traditional aid providers prepared to deploy disaster response teams and relief, the nontraditional online communities and organizations were actively supporting those responding by collecting situation information. The Digital Humanitarian Network was activated by UNOCHA for the Philippines and its member organizations and teams were active in many areas of support for situational information including publishing a social media crisis map[2]

A local tech community in Cebu launched BangonPH.com which is a community based crowd sourced collection of situational information from communities heavily impacted. This local initiative received support by local media outlets.

HUMANITY ROAD RESPONSE

The information collected and analyzed by Humanity Road was received and used by organizations such as UNOCHA, U.S. Military via the APAN portal, Americares and other traditional relief organizations via ReliefWeb and HumanitarianResponse.info.

As a participant in response activities, we also observed an unprecedented level of global collaboration that included providing access to imagery and mapping datasets and cooperative engagement between civilian and military, local and international, formal and informal aid responders.

This broad and open collaboration of information and requests for information, requests for assistance as well as reports of relief provided were for the most part completed in open source platforms. Using open source for reporting relief efforts facilitated transparency across aid response organizations and afforded a view into areas of coverage and areas needing additional relief efforts. The magnitude of need created by the size of the impacted population, the extent of communications infrastructure damage and the challenges with the logistics was as unprecedented. The response was equally enormous with a multi-national response team of both military and civilian disaster response organizations. A large task requiring a large level of collaboration.

On November 13, Secretary to the Cabinet Rene Almendras commented "Please understand, there has never been anything at the magnitude of what we are trying to do now—not in size, not in volume, not in even the breadth of it. The logistics alone, we discussed over two and a half

---

[1] http://www.gov.ph/crisis-response/reliefph/
[2] http://giscorps.maps.arcgis.com/apps/OnePane/basicviewer/index.html?appid=cf6031322a334cc3bfe3f9a74f23b384

hours last night talking about how to move goods, where to move goods, how many trucks you need. Even from the packing center to shipping center, it's not a small amount of work that needs to be done," he said.

URGENT NEEDS

Humanity Road support for the Philippines focused on providing information and requests for aid for locations that were emerging as underserved or not visible at all in social media but had populations impacted that needed to be assessed by aid providers because the community may have been unable to communicate their need to response organizations.

The use of emerging tools and the analysis of information performed by volunteers on emerging data in open source reporting and social media (both the presence of information and the absence of information) directly increased the number of lives saved and the number of people receiving access to life saving food, water, medical supplies and transport. We add though that this was only possible because we were able to relay these needs directly as a request to aid providers who could fulfill the need and then report that the need was fulfilled.

Within its operations, Humanity Road volunteers performed such tasks as data mining, translations, triage of emerging data, requesting clarifications, documenting local contact information, routing urgent needs and resolving geo-location discrepancies. Also used were emerging tools to aggregate, filter and triage urgent needs.

EMERGING TOOLS

Members of the Data Mining and Machine Learning Lab[3] at Arizona State University used a tool known as TweetTracker to aggregate and analyze a timeline of the volume of tweets which indicated a decline in volume of tweets over time from within impacted areas (this was noted as occurring at the same time as requests for generators and fuel across the impacted footprint were increasing). Also used by Humanity Road is a prototype tool known as SMAT (SBIR N121-092) developed by Progeny Systems that provides critical filtering capabilities that eliminated much of the noise and allowed volunteers to focus on the less than 1% of the volume of tweets which contained the highest concentration of actionable information.

Also of critical value was support provided to Humanity Road by Translators without Borders in translating emerging social media such as YouTube videos, Facebook postings and Tweets. Throughout the past month, this operational model of Aggregate, Filter, Triage, Export, Report has become a repeatable process for this particular event. While finding hard statistics regarding the success of the use of social media during any disaster response is difficult, we have confidence in sharing an order of magnitude of XXX people were rescued, XX,XXX people received direct aid and X people were reunited through the operations support provided by Humanity Road to aid providers in the Philippines.

---

[3] http://dmml.asu.edu/

It takes a whole community to recover from disaster. We are honored to have provided assistance to those who truly have been saving lives every day – neighbors, family members, military and civilians, officials, traditional and non-traditional responders.

Prepared by Humanity Road
Inquiries about this report please contact Support@humanityroad.org