CRISIS MAPPING

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DIGITAL TOOLS WHICH ENABLE THOSE ON THE GROUND TO ASSEMBLE AND RESPOND TO CRUCIAL INFORMATION IN REAL TIME IN A CRISIS.

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- Economic Empowerment
- Data
- Geolocation
- Internet
- Mobile
- Open Source
- Social Software

The fear of nuclear attack and the impact that the fallout would have on infrastructure was the negative inspiration for the creation of the internet in the first place: a distributed system that could survive and reconfigure itself after nuclear attack. Perhaps it should be no surprise that the internet has proven itself time and time again in a crisis.

Several projects now provide ways for people in a natural or man-made crisis to coordinate and cope.

During the post-2008 election fallout in Kenya which saw violent outbreaks across the country, a platform called Ushahidi (meaning 'testimony' in Swahili) was developed that could aggregate texts, tweets, photos and descriptions from mobile phones, smartphones and desktops, yielding crowdsourced maps that made incidents of violence, election fraud, and abuse plainly visible on a broad scale. The website quickly grew to 45,000 users in Kenya. Since then,

Ushahidi has grown into a mapping platform used in crises across the world, supporting 35,000 maps in 30 different languages.

Google's suite of Crisis Response applications allows people at the heart of a crisis to start assembling better information, in real time, as the disaster and the response to it unfolds. The Person Finder application was widely used after the tsunami in Japan, for loved ones to search for missing relatives. Google Earth was used by organisations such as Doctors Without Borders to find places in the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti. An interactive Crisis Map was used after the devastating floods in Thailand in 2011.

Platforms like Ushahidi and Google Crisis are enriched and developed by communities like Crisis Commons, a dedicated and global group of techies, programmers, geospatial and political experts, and data visualisation designers who act as first responders to new natural and humanitarian disasters. They use open data and volunteer technology communities to come up with innovative solutions to crisis management and to document lessons learned and best practice to share with the wider community.

Since 2009, Crisis Commons has coordinated crisis event responses such at the Haiti, Chile and Japan earthquakes and the floods in Thailand, Nashville and Pakistan. Over 3,000 people have participated worldwide in over 30 cities across 10 countries including France, the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, Chile and Colombia.

Earthquakes and floods, famine and drought, political unrest and injustice rip through people's lives but also damage the communication infrastructures that connect them to sources of aid. Government agencies are often too distant and sometimes too slow to get a clear picture of what is needed and where, and even then it is usually lacking in detail. New technology coupled with social innovation has helped us to create a new army of first responders.

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