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## UN partners with academia to explore how technology can help in disaster response



3 December 2010 – The United Nations and the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative are launching a new research project aiming to enhance information-sharing between large aid organizations and grassroots technology groups during humanitarian emergencies, it was announced today.

The project, funded by the Technology Partnership between the UN Foundation (UNF) and The Vodafone Foundation, was announced during the Pulse Camp 1.0 conference run by the Secretary-General's UN Global Pulse initiative.

Researchers from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) and the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative – an interdisciplinary programme working to advance the science and practice of humanitarian responses – will interview experts to assess how information is and can be shared during humanitarian emergencies.

“Technology holds tremendous potential to improve global humanitarian work,” said Kathy Calvin, CEO of the UN Foundation. “Through our partnership with The Vodafone Foundation, we can work alongside OCHA and Harvard to better understand how the rapid growth of mobile and ‘cloud-based’ technologies can unlock access to information, empowering disaster-affected communities and strengthening the ability of relief workers to save lives.”

Technology Partnership has already conducted a great deal of work into how information and communication technologies (ICTs) can strengthen preparedness for responses to major humanitarian emergencies, investing \$7.4 million in such research.

Valerie Amos, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and head of OCHA, welcomed the announcement of the project, seeing opportunities for her office to have greater impact in the future on disaster-affected communities.

“With access to information, survivors of disasters can make the right choices for themselves and their families. We look forward to the findings of this report and to working more closely with the growing community of groups and individuals with whom we can harness information to better serve beneficiaries in emergencies,” she said.

The initial research findings will be presented in a report on 12 January 2011, the one-year anniversary of the Haiti earthquake, and the full report will be available at the 2011 Harvard Humanitarian Action Summit, to be held from 4 to 6 March in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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