



**Freedom Fone for Emergency Data Exchange Pilot Project  
(FF4EDXL)  
Sarvodaya Provincial and District Coordinator Planning Workshop  
REPORT**

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Date: 2011 August 03



Sarvodaya



FREEDOM ★ FONE  
IT'S FOR YOU

## Abstract

First we introduce the FF4EDXL project objectives to Sarvodaya provincial and district coordinators. This was done through a demo of the Freedom Fone (FF) system with situational reporting work flows. Second, we used that as a basis to engage the Sarvodaya Section Heads, Provincial, District, and Divisional Coordinators in to discussing the ways and means of which they had communicated incident information during past flood<sup>2</sup> (2011), war<sup>3</sup> (2009), and landslide<sup>4</sup> (2010) related national disasters. Sarvodaya and LIRNEasia agreed to pilot the FF4EDXL in Colombo, Matara, Nuwaraeliya, and Ratnapura Districts. Sarvodaya has no formal report for supplying incident information. There are delays in receiving any kind of situational reports from. The objective of the Sarvodaya Hazard Information Hub (HIH) is to feed summaries of the the field observation information directly to the donors and media to request for aid and rapid response. The pilot will evaluate the feasibility of sending voice-based field observation reports that can be transformed in to standardized situational information for deriving the resource response. This project is made possible through a grant from The Kubatana Trust of Zimbabwe.

## Introduction

Sarvodaya in partnership with LIRNEasia organized a *planning workshop* in relation to the “Feasibility study to enable FF for voice-based emergency data exchange<sup>1</sup>” (termed as FF4EDXL). A major part of this meeting was held on 28 July 2011, to engage in discussions with Sarvodaya Provincial Coordinators. On 29 July 2011, the project introduced the project to the Sarvodaya District Coordinators to gather further requirements.



<sup>1</sup>The project description is posted on this website - <http://lirneasia.net/projects/2010-12-research-program/ff4edxl/>

<sup>2</sup>Flood- Eastern Province (2011)- <http://www.rosesrilanka.info/archives/408>

<sup>3</sup>War (2009)-[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri\\_Lankan\\_Civil\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri_Lankan_Civil_War)

<sup>4</sup>Land slide (2010)- <http://reliefweb.int/node/380436>

The aim of the FF4EDXL pilot is to send and receive emergency information through telephone (mobile or fixed phone) voice platform. Before a disaster strikes HIH would send voice-based messages to Sarvodaya first-responders in the relevant areas. For instance an alert issued may inform that a flood situation is escalating and Sarvodaya needs to prepare temporary shelters and start evacuating people. After a disaster, Sarvodaya emergency coordinators can send voice-based situation reports to HIH such as the damages, rescue needs, supplies required, etc. Then Samana-Thetha can consolidate the information to effectively plan the response activities and resources allocations.

Problem that the FF4EDXL project promises to solve is build an interactive voice-based system for sending and receiving information in Sinhala and Tamil languages. In addition, understand the design requirements for integrating the system with the Sahana disaster management system for alert and incident management.

The main research focus is understating whether voice-base FF tool can be used for incident reporting during a crisis in Sri Lanka. If it can be used, then we need to identify the challenges and find best solutions to overcome those challenges. One of them is automating the Sinhala and Tamil speech to text transformation. Another aim of this project is to identify other Sarvodaya daily uses of this tool beyond disaster situations.

The intent of the meetings with Sarvodaya Provincial and District Coordinators was to gather their past disaster related emergency information communication experiences. Using those past experiences as a basis to discuss Sarvodaya's incident information communication needs that would be documented in the form of software requirement specifications.

## Summary of the discussions

### Project Overview



Following a disaster Sarvodaya community members (mainly victims or associates) call the Sarvodaya District Office or Head Office to report of incidents. The persons reporting the incidents are instructed to fax a summary through the Sarvodaya District or Divisional office. Monthly summaries of operations and expenses are report through the post. The Hazard Information Hub maintains a set of incident information reports with consolidated information of, mainly, resource requests. There is no standard incident report template and standard way of collecting situation information and processing them for Sarvodaya's needs.

When incident happens, Sarvodaya receives disaster related information from both government and it's district or divisional coordinators. Government data is unusable because:

- Sarvodaya jurisdictions are not the same as the government's administrative divisions.

- Government situation <sup>2</sup>reports give statistics on district aggregates; hence, Sarvodaya cannot determine the situation of Sarvodaya member villages.
- Delays in getting information from Government sources
- There is no commonly agreed data exchange standard.

If accurate disaster information comes to Sarvodaya in real-time,

- Relevant rescue and relief operations can be initiated without delay
- Can relayed incident statistics to aid agencies for a helping hand and for other rescue/relief organizations to engage.
- Relief and rescue operations can be channeled to targeted locations
- Accuracy of the information can be guaranteed through an independent communication channel

## Demonstration

Incidents of various devastating magnitudes occur in our daily life. Some of them need immediate attention and must be managed to save lives. An incident may require multiple resources. We may request for immediate resources and support from others for response. The demo shows the proposed work-flows using the FF voice-base incident reporting system.

- We can use 4 sim cards to connect preferred network with officeroute.
- Four sim cards allow user to get the advantage of minimum call/sms charges and connect easily to FF when other connections are busy
- FF provides a two-way communications service that overcomes the hurdles of cost, distribution, and access which print, broadcast and Internet based communications face.
- We don't need internet to activate this system.
- This technology can be used in a cost free to caller' context where users could dial a toll-free number to access the service or tickle a number that records the user's phone number and calls them back, connecting the user to the IVR menu content. In a low cost to caller' context users can SMS in for a call back.



When authorized person calls FF he/she can choose their native language. There are three languages included currently: Tamil, Sinhala, English. After choosing language he/she can listen to the system and respond by speaking or selecting the information relevant to that question. Then FF stores the voice recording as a .wav file in FF.

After recording a new incident, FF should send an SMS text to the Sarvodaya District or Divisional Coordinators requesting verification . Once verified, the HIH Operator will fill in the remaining situation information and prepare the response resource report. These reports will be updated from time to time.

<sup>2</sup> Disaster Management Center published situation reports: <http://www.dmc.gov.lk/situation%20report.htm>

## User Requirements

- Sarvodaya, Government Agencies and Divisional Secretary are part of the District Disaster Management Committee. They convene immediately following a disaster to discuss the response requirements.
- After a disaster, district and divisional coordinators inform of the damages to HIH to get assistance from Sarvodaya.
- Ampara floods happened during the holidays as a result they couldn't contact HIH. They found their own ways and means with local aid to support the victims. The HIH should be operational every day including holidays.
- Historic incident information will be valuable to prepare for disasters. Most of the time disasters come periodically. With that data, we should be able to estimate peak incident season that may happen at a particular time of the year.
- The system should be accessible at the district level; then they can autonomously manage local small scale disasters, independent of the HIH
- After the a field or village member submits an incident report, the district coordinator should verify the report. Thereafter, FF should send an acknowledgement SMS text to the member telling that the incident report was verified by the district coordinator.
- Must simplify the voice-based FF system; reduce the steps and instructions; better to include any standard instructions in the user training and guides.
- Although the incident information is communicated to Sarvodaya, no donations or goods are sent. The system must highlight or flag those requests that are getting postponed.
- Selected locations for the pilot project; Colombo, Rathnapura, Mathara, and Nuwaraeliya districts.

## Sarvodaya Concerns

- After the field coordinator, has supplied the incident information to the system, the district or divisional coordinator has to confirm the information. If the District or Divisional Coordinator is unaware of the incident then, how can they confirm the information?
- How will the confirmation process flow with the telephone calls and SMS alerts?
- If telephone networks are victims of the disaster and are not working, there is no way to feed the information to the system. In some areas certain mobile operator networks are not working; e.g. there may be no Mobitel coverage in some area.
- Incident information changes periodically. System should cope with the dynamic information change.

## Acknowledgement

We deeply appreciate Mr. Manoj Silva's (Head HIH Sarvodaya Samana Thetha) contributions. They are drawn from the most recent floods (2010) and war (2009); then deriving the HIH information needs. Mr. Indunil (Sarvodaya Colombo Divisional Coordinator) shared his knowledge from the community's perspective. We thank the Sarvodaya Heads in sharing their field experiences, information needs, and resource requirements.

# Appendix – Workshop program

## Participants

Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya

- Provincial Coordinators
- District Coordinators
- Invited Sarvodaya Heads
- Samana Thetha staff

LIRNEasia

- Mr.Nuwan Waidyanatha
- Mr.Kasun Perera
- Mr.Tharaka Wilfred

## Program, Event Location and Contact Details

**Meeting Venue:** Damsak Mandiraya, Sarvodaya - Moratuwa

**Contact:** Mr. Manoj Silva

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Email: [manoj@sarvodaya.org](mailto:manoj@sarvodaya.org)

**Table 1- Program Schedule Session 1**

PROGRAM	Thursday 28th July, 2011	14:30 - onwards
<b>SESSION I – Provincial Coordinators</b>		
Welcome address	<b>Mr. Subasena De Silva</b> (Sarvodaya)	
Project overview	<b>Mr. Manoj Silva</b> (Sarvodaya)	
Freedom Fone demo	<b>Mr. Tharaka Wilfred</b> (LIRNEasia)	
Knowledge extraction	<b>Mr. Nuwan Waidyanatha</b> (LIRNEasia)	
Mapping Information needs	<b>Mr. Nuwan Waidyanatha</b> (LIRNEasia)	
Instructions for recording past experiences	<b>Mr. Kasun Perera</b> (LIRNEasia)	
Selecting Pilot area	<b>Mr. Manoj Silva</b> (LIRNEasia)	
Closing remarks	<b>Mr. Subasena De Silva</b> (Sarvodaya)	
Tea/Coffee		

**Table 2- Program Schedule Session 2**

<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>Friday 29th July, 2011</b>	<b>14:30 - onwards</b>
<b>SESSION II – District Coordinators</b>		
Project overview	<b>Mr. Manoj Silva</b> (Sarvodaya)	
Freedom Fone demo	<b>Mr. Tharaka Wilfred</b> (LIRNEasia)	
Instructions for recording past experiences	<b>Mr. Tharaka Wilfred</b> (LIRNEasia)	
Closing remarks	<b>Mr. Manoj Silva</b> (Sarvodaya)	