Freedome Fone for Emergency Data Exchange Pilot Project (FF4EDXL)
Sarvodaya District Training Workshop
REPORT

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2011 September 14

SRI LANKA

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to document the training and awareness workshops conducted with the Sarvodaya district/divisional coordinator and other Sarvodaya members in the four pilot districts: Colombo, Matara, Nuwara-eliya, and Ratnapura. These members had responded to past Sri Lankan disasters in the capacity of Community Emergency Response (CERT) Team members.

Introduction

Sarvodaya in partnership with LIRNEasia organized a **training workshop** in relation to the pilot project: "Feasibility study to enable Freedom Fone (FF) for voice-based emergency data exchange" (termed as FF4EDXL). The training programs were held on 5 September 2011 in Ratnapura, 6 September 2011 in Nuwara-Eliya, 8 September 2011 in Matara, 9 September 2011 in Colombo. The objective was to introduce the FF voice-based telephone system for disaster alerting and situational reporting. The FF system was demonstrated to the participants and they were exposed to the intended alerting and situational reporting work-flows. This part of the exercise was to get a consensus on the usefulness of FF for exchanging crisis information.

The project used the workshop to engage the participants in an exercise that involved them in supplying information on their past disaster communication experience. They were given a set questionnaire and were asked to supply the information through the FF system. The answers to the questionnaire would supply information on the ways and means in which they had communicated incident information during past flood, tsunami, landslide, cyclone related national disasters.

Outcome of the survey exercise

Sarvodaya did not have a formal structure for supplying incident information. Survey results show that phone calls were the main source of exchanging disaster response information between Sarvodaya head office and the CERT field operatives (Figure 2 and Figure 3). There are delays in receiving and processing the ad-hoc situational information for planning the response actions such as supplying relief goods and services to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

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.

A total of 70 attempts were made by the participants to supply their answers to the questionnaire through the FF interactive voice system. Given that this was their first exposure to FF, 19 of the 70 attempts were repeated; i.e. those 19 responses were quick hangups or the participant was not ready to supply the information.

Following the exercises in the four districts, the research team went through each voice recording to transform those information to text and document them in an spread sheet. Each participant was required to provide answers to 10 questions (Appendix A). Figure 1 shows the percentage of clear "responses" that could be documented, the percentage of empty responses (i.e. "no-response" given to that question), and the percentage of "unclear" answers.
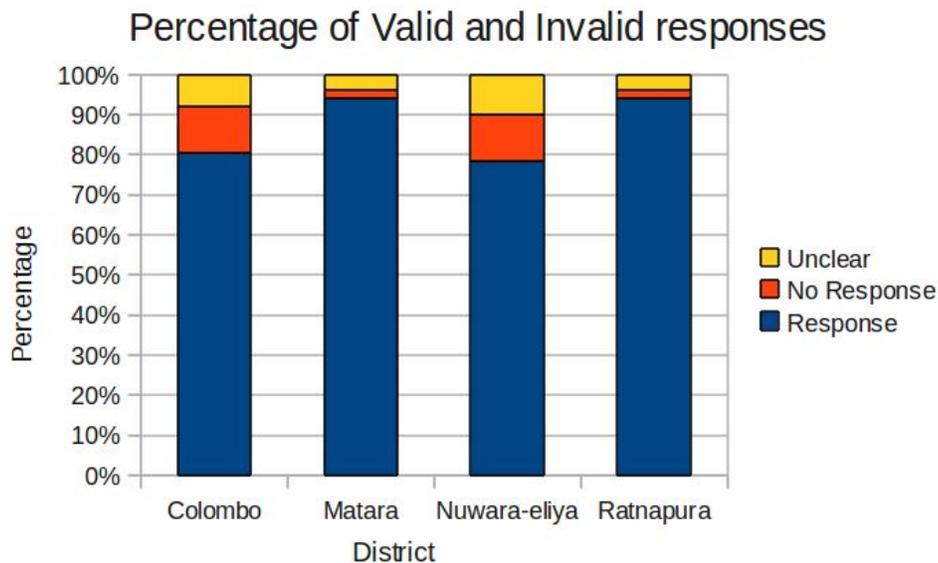

Figure 1: percentage of clear, unclear, and empty responses

Every voice recording had some kind of noise that was caused by the electronics (mechanical sound) or background interference (human voices and other environmental noise). This made it quite cumbersome to extract the information from the recordings. In several occasions the researchers had to listen to the audio recording more than once to determine the answer the participant had provided.

The responses to the ways in which the CERT supply information to Sarvodaya HIH and the ways in which they receive information from Sarvodaya are predominantly through telephone calls (Figure 2 and 3). Some information is supplied through Fax. Figure 4 and Figure 5 shows that these emergency information are exchanged on a daily and weekly basis. These communications experiences are from the tsunami, flood,

landslide, and cyclone hazard events that they had responded to in the past decade (Figure 6).
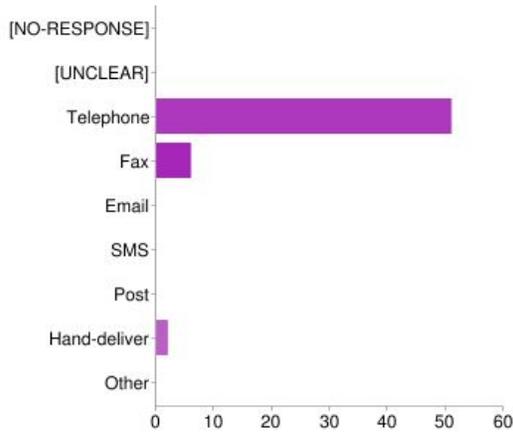
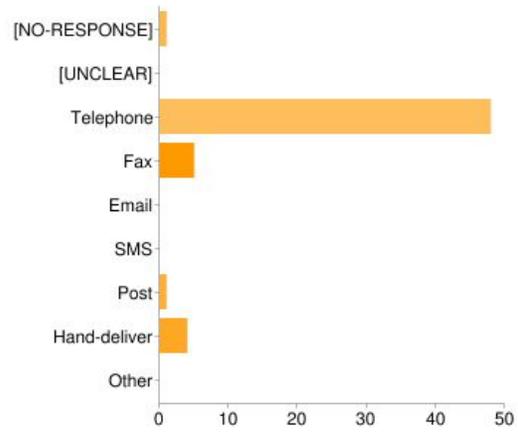Figure 2: Method of submitting information

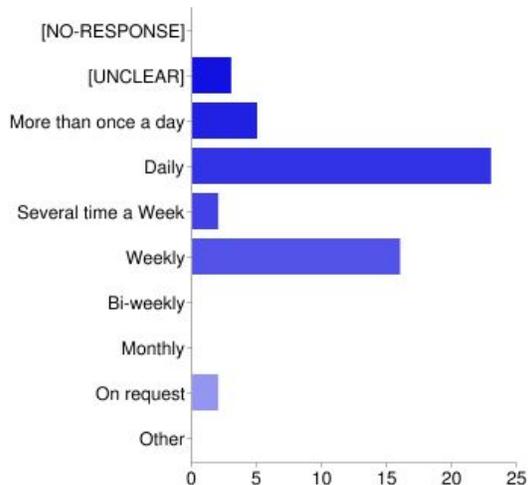Figure 3: Method of receiving information
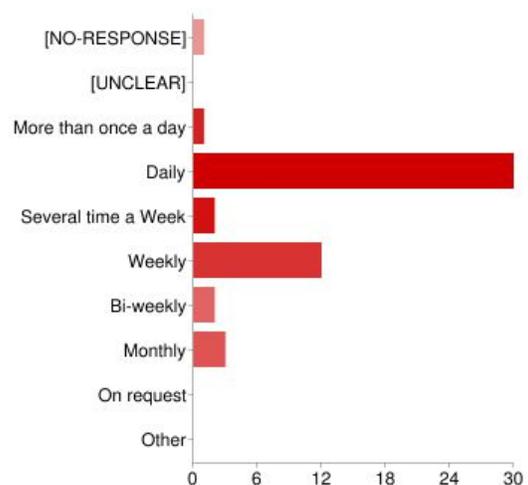
Figure 4: Frequency of submitting information

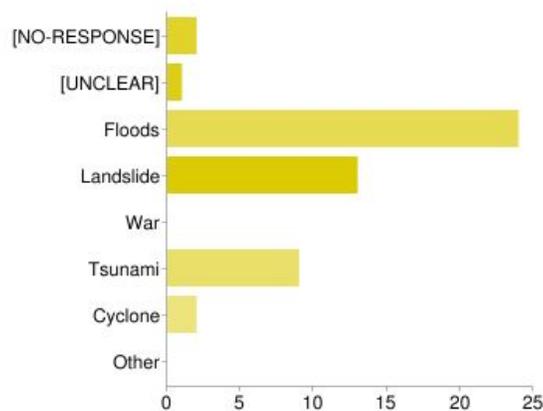Figure 5: Frequency of receiving information

Figure 6: The types of disasters the participants had responded to in the past decade

Questions raised by Participants

Ratnapura District

- Connection to the FF system through the Dialog mobile network SIM card on the 2N modem for receiving phone calls failed. Thereafter, we sued the Airtel mobile network. The modem had to be reset to reactivate the Dialog SIM for receiving calls.
- The participating CERT users proposed that the amount of instructions be reduce to minimize the time taken for voice instructions. This is to save both their time and call charges. The instructions can be provided during training or a small training manual.
- The participants in Ratnapura questioned the sustainability of this project and whether they could actually use the FF system for reforging incidents in the future.

Nuwara-Eliya District

- The CERT participants inquired whether they should remember the hotline numbers for future use.
- In addition to the two phone numbers from Dialog and Airitel telephony service providers, the participants wanted to know whether there were other numbers.

Matara

- An issue raised by the participants was "how to handle a situation where there is no credit in the phone?". They were inquisitive of the mobile connection chargers when using the FF system and interacting with it.
- They asked which mobile networks supported the system because if the system did not support the network the mobile phone they are using and there are additional interconnectivity charges to call other another service providers number.

Colombo

- Participants questioned about the possibility of using this system other than disaster management.
- How to receive information when incident details are update (i.e. "If a CERT added a field observation of an incident, then is is updated by another member, how can the updated report be received over the FF system?")
- They want to get awareness on the standard procedure which need to be follow when reporting or updating disaster related situational reports (i.e. "when the information pertaining to an incident is updated, is the information automatically added to the original report or does the user have to repeat the information from the original report?").
- Can anyone call to the system? Is there an authorization required? Because we don't want prank callers and untrained or unauthorized personnel supplying emergency information.
- "Can we use any phone numbers to connect with the FF system?" Answer is yes.

Conclusion

Evidence gathered through the survey and the focus group discussions with the CERT members reveal that voice-based telephony is critical to their emergency information exchange during a crisis. Some operating procedures and technical issues have to be rectified before FF can be fully operational as an interface for communicating emergency information between Sarvodaya field operatives and incident management center.

Acknowledgement

We wish to thank Mr. Manoj Silva (Head at HIH, Sarvodaya) for facilitating and conducting the awareness/training workshops. Also thank the respective Sarvodaya District Coordinators in Colombo, Matara, Nuwara-eliya, and Ratnapura Districts for making the arrangements to carry out the workshops in their areas. Our gratitude to all the participants for participating in the event and supplying us with the valuable information for determining the requirements.

APPENDIX A - Questionnaire to determine Sarvodaya's Situational Reporting Needs

Freedom Fone for Emergency Data Exchange

Objective: This exercise is to gather information from Sarvodaya's past rescue, relief, and recovery operations. Then use that evidence to determine the information needs for those rescue, relief, and recovery operations to develop a telephone system for sending and receiving disaster related report.

Information requested: Tell us the types of reports, the types of information, and the method of reporting you used following the most recent disaster you engaged in. This can be information you supplied to Sarvodaya or information Sarvodaya sent to you.

The questions below will guide you in submitting the required information. Instructions for dialing and recording the information is given below.

Two step process:
Step 1: write a short answer to the questions 1 – 10 in section A
Step 2: Follow the dialing/recording instructions in section B to record the answers

SECTION A: Questions

1. What is the name of the Sarvodaya village and district you belong to?
[*Example: "Walasmulla, Hambanthota District"*]
ANSWER:

2. What is your association with Sarvodaya?
[Example: Head Office employee, Provincial, district, or divisional coordinator, District office employee, Village committee member, Village volunteer, Other _____ (write other)]
ANSWER:

3. What is the last disaster that you participated? Tell us the type of the disaster, the affected location(s), and the time period.
[*Example: "Floods in Batticaloa and Ampara Districts January 2011"*]
ANSWER:

4. What were your responsibilities during the rescue, relief, and recovery operations during the disaster mentioned in 3 above?
[*Example 1: "supplying drinking water to the IDP camps every day",*
Example 2: "provide medical assistance to the sick IDP",
Example 3: "Cooking food for the IDP in camp"]
ANSWER:

5. How did you communicate rescue, relief, and recovery operations information to Sarvodaya?
[*Example: "by phone and fax only"*]
ANSWER:

6. What information did you send to Sarvodaya? Give the name of the report or form,
        if applicable, and the information that was supplied.
[*Example 1: "food relief request report indicating the number of IDPs in camp and cooking equipment required"*
Example 2: "damage report with details of the effected Sarvodaya villages"]
ANSWER:

7. How often did you send that information to Sarvodaya?
[*Example 1: "food relief request report - once a week"*
Example 2: "once a day"
Example 3: "damage report - only when requested"]
ANSWER:

8. What reports or information did you receive from Sarvodaya? Give the name of the
report or form and the type of information you received.
[*Example 1: "food relief dispatch report - type of food items and the quantity, Dispatch date and expected delivery date*
Example 2: "relief expenses report – relief items, quantity, and cost]
ANSWER:

9. In what form or methods did you receive those information or reports from Sarvodaya?
[*Example 1: "mobile phone and fax"]*
ANSWER:

10. How   often did you receive the   information or reports from Sarvodaya?
[*Example 1: "food relief dispatch report – once a week"*
Example 2: "relief expenses report – once a month"]
ANSWER:

SECTION B: Dialing/Recording instructions

write the date and time you made the recording (write the time after completing the recording)

Date:	**Time:**

After you have written the answers to the questions 1-10, follow the instructions below to record the answers through the telephone system as a voice message
Step B.1: Dial the telephone number **0770593117**
Step B.2: Select the language {Sinhala, Tamil, English}

Step B.3: Follow the voice instructions to record your answers to the questions below. You will need to record the answers to all questions in a single message. Mention the question number before each answer.

Example: 1. Walasmulla, Hambanthota District … 2. District office employee … 3. Floods Batticaloa 2011 … (continue)