Executive Summary: The Open Humanitarian Initiative

Attempts by the humanitarian community to coordinate the chaotic environment that follows sudden-onset disasters such as earthquakes or tsunamis have in many cases not been very successful. Both real-time and post-disaster evaluations of large-scale disasters consistently point towards the lack of information sharing among organizations as one of the key reasons for inefficient response efforts. The "cost" is often measured by loss of life, extended human suffering and poor resource allocation.

With connectivity becoming more available and affordable in most parts of the world, and an expected increase in man-made and natural disasters, it is vital to enable information sharing immediately.
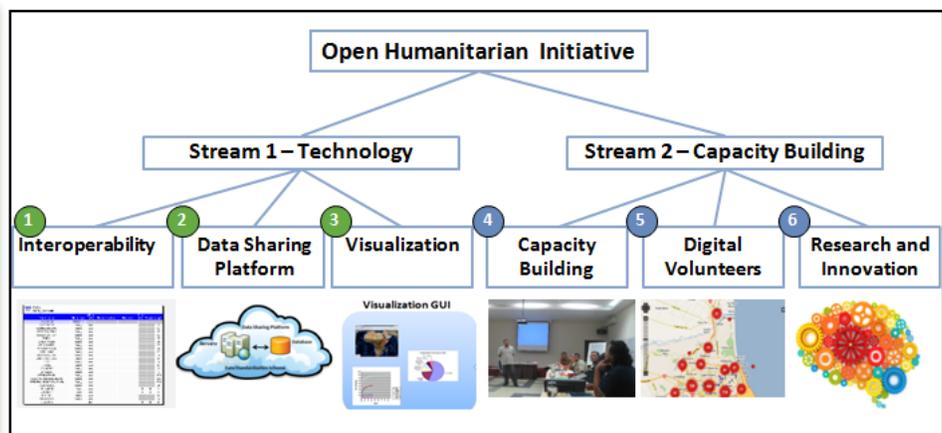
Given the track record and current trends and priorities, NetHope in collaboration with a number of humanitarian, academic, governmental and private sector organizations are launching a new program called **"Open Humanitarian Initiative" (OHI)** **focused on driving data sharing and transparency in disaster preparedness and response in the humanitarian sector.**

> *"There is an urgent need to boost significantly capacity on the ground, to improve coordination, strategic planning and provision of aid".*
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> John Holmes, head of the UN OCHA on the Haiti response
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> *"The **difficulties** encountered in establishing an **appropriate system for collecting and analyzing data in order to provide decision-makers** with information in a timely manner were one of the main reasons of **poor response"**
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> Real Time Evaluation Report on the Haiti disaster response

The initiative is split into two streams, **technology and capacity building.** Each of the streams is split into three separate sub areas that each focuses on key aspects of improving humanitarian preparedness and response through more effective information sharing.

The initiative will drive immediate benefits, as emergency responders will be provided with the information they need, when they need it:

- Enhancing situational awareness, analysis, and decision-making.
- Reducing response time and making the response more effective
- Better outcomes and reduced costs through reduced duplications.
- Enable affected communities to better plan their community-based response using openly available information.

The initiative is a collaborative effort among a large number of public and private partners and will be executed over the next 5 years. The initiative will leverage already existing investments in technology and capacity building and will help scale-up already existing projects and solutions. **Interoperability with existing systems is also a key design principle within the initiative**.

Organizations interested in participating in the initiative are welcome to join the Open Humanitarian Alliance, which will be formally launched in late May 2013.

NetHope is a consortium of 38 of the leading international NGOs around the world. You can find more information on NetHope at our website http://www.nethope.org