The Pacific Humanitarian Challenge

Fact Sheet

The $2 million Pacific Humanitarian Challenge is about finding new solutions and testing new technologies that will improve the way that Australia and the world respond to disasters in the Pacific.

These winning ideas will help communities, governments and humanitarian agencies to improve communications during a crisis, get relief to people more quickly, and help the people of the Pacific to bounce back after a disaster.

Ten teams which came up with the best ideas were selected from over 100 submissions. The teams came to Canberra in late March to refine and strengthen these innovations. This process, known as a design sprint, was opened by Minister Fierravanti-Wells.

An expert panel selected five winners from these ten ideas. DFAT's innovationXchange will now work with the teams to help them implement their ideas over the next 18 months.

The winning innovations are:

Firetail: An Easily-Deployed Low-Cost Unmanned Aerial System

The organisations that come to help when natural disasters strike often find it difficult to get hold of accurate and timely images that tell them where to find those in the greatest need. The Firetail is an Australian designed and made low-cost and easy-to-use unmanned aerial system, or drone, that can take high quality pictures of the situation on the ground. With pictures from Firetail, responders can quickly get help to the communities most in need.

Pacific Local Supplier Engagement Project

The private sector is often under-utilised in response to crises in the Pacific. The Australian Red Cross will work with business suppliers across the Pacific to harness the private sector to get the right relief to communities rapidly during disasters. The impact of this project will be faster, better and cheaper responses delivered through partnerships with businesses in the region.

Infrastructure-Independent Mobile Communications

Accurate and rapid communications are crucial in a crisis. This system, developed by Flinders University and the New Zealand Red Cross, will provide emergency communications in the wake of a disaster by allowing smartphones to work when normal communications fail. Using this system, communities can report their immediate needs and rapidly establish contact with responders and families.

Pacific Drone Imagery Dashboard (PacDID)

Drones are transforming the way humanitarian responders, NGOs and communities collect imagery and assess needs in a crisis. However, the flood of information can be overwhelming and more often than not remains largely untapped during a disaster. Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team will help to realise the potential of drone imagery for the Pacific. It will build an open source data system to access and share information collected by aerial drones during disasters.

Mobile SME Insurance in the Pacific Islands

When natural disasters like cyclones, earthquakes and tsunamis strike across the Pacific it is extremely expensive to rebuild communities and local markets. Yet fewer than five per cent of Pacific Islanders are protected by insurance. Mobile insurance provider, BIMA, are working with Leapfrog, an investment company, and Digicel, a mobile phone provider, to improve access to money after a disaster. The team will use mobile phones to bring low-cost insurance to the employees of small and medium enterprises. The team expects around 160,000 families to register within 24 months. This could mean over 800,000 people are able to rebuild their lives and businesses much more quickly.

INNOVATION XCHANGE   Australian Aid