TELECOMS SANS FRONTIERES
+33 (0)5 59 84 43 60 - +33 (0)5 59 84 43 58
communication@tsfi.org
www.tsfi.org

Humanitarian Aid
and Civil Protection

Communications for life

PRESS RELEASE

TÉLÉCOMS SANS FRONTIÈRES AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Information and Communication Technology training
for emergency responders in Asia

Télécoms Sans Frontières, thanks to the financial support of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO) will train **100 international emergency responders in telecommunications and information technology.** This **year-round training** program targets **humanitarian organizations on 3 continents: Asia, America, and for the very first time Africa**.

The first session has begun this week in **Bangkok, Thailand**, on the campus of the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) where the TSF regional base is located. **From 18th to 23rd of March 2013, TSF is training 25 participants from 18 different international organizations working in emergency response in 9 beneficiary countries in Asia:**

Afghanistan : *Concern, International Medical Corps (IMC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Save the Children,* **Bangladesh** : *Action Aid, Action Contre la Faim*; **Inde** : *Adventist Development and Relief Agency India (ADRA); Indonésie : Mercycorps, Croix Rouge;* **Népal** : *CARE, Plan, Save the Children*; **Pakistan** : *ACTED, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Médecins du Monde, UNHCR, Save the Children;* **Philippines** : *Plan, Save the Children;* **Sri Lanka** : *Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC);* **Myanmar** : *International Rescue Committee (IRC), Solidarités International*.

The participants were selected in close collaboration with the **regional experts** from the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO), considering their **profile**, their **technical background** and the relevance of their **position** within their organization. By participating in this training, they commit themselves to sharing the skills acquired with the members of their own teams as well as with other partner organizations.

In emergencies, **information management and sharing has become critical for an effective humanitarian response**. When crisis strikes, teams on the ground need to assess the situation and communicate vital information as fast as possible, stay connected with headquarters and other emergency responders in the country, but also mobilize donors and assure visibility and advocacy.

Following an emergency – where the need for telecommunications is greatest – telecommunications are often unavailable (telecommunications services are disrupted or over-saturated), slowing down the ability of local organizations to communicate, share information and assist affected communities. **The challenge for Télécoms Sans Frontières and its partner the European Commission is to reinforce humanitarian capacities so as to optimize the global response and thus contribute to saving lives.**

Six days of intense training to prepare a group of specialists in emergency telecommunications

Further strengthening of institutional capacity during humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations is required to ensure effective implementation and functioning of the cluster approach and other coordination mechanisms, especially in support of the functioning at field level.

The purpose of TSF trainings is to strengthen the collaboration with, and further build the capacity of, the emergency responders in a particular region. Participants are trained on emergency **ICT solutions and emergency mechanisms**, including the United Nations system and methodology. The aim is to prepare them for **rapid deployment to sudden-onset emergencies**, and prepare them to **assist the national authorities and United Nations** in-country thanks to a **better understanding of the regions' evolving disaster preparedness, risk reduction and disaster response trends**.

Content of the training program

- The **management of crisis telecommunications** module includes elements such as the environment of the emergency response and emergency telecommunications and how to organize the telecom response, cost management and the preparation of a telecom budget.

- The module concerning **ICT equipment used in emergency situations** aims to train participants in the use of ICT equipment and the services available in emergency response.

- The final phase of training consists of a **practical simulation exercise** of a deployment of emergency communications in a humanitarian crisis.

At the end of the training session, the participating organizations will have acquired **the skills necessary to deploy modern telecom technologies** in order to establish fast and reliable Internet and phone connections. In this way, all participants will be able to pass the skills they have acquired back to their own organization and their local partners, **thus optimizing the efficiency of their response and their interventions for the benefit of affected populations**.

Since 2009, TSF has already organized multiple training and capability building sessions in the field of emergency response through ICTs. **More than 600 representatives of NGOs, UN agencies or local authorities have benefited from these programs.** Their success has demonstrated the need to develop and expand training in emergency telecommunications to other regions.

About Télécoms Sans Frontières

Télécoms Sans Frontières: the leading humanitarian NGO specialised in emergency telecommunications
Thanks to its 24-hour monitoring centre and particularly its operational bases in Europe, Central America, Asia, and its representation in Washington, Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF) crews of IT and telecoms specialists can intervene anywhere in the world in less than 24 hours. After a sudden onset disaster or conflict, they can set up in a matter of minutes a satellite-based telecoms centre offering broadband Internet, phone and fax lines. These centres enable emergency NGOs, the United Nations and local authorities to communicate right at the heart of a crisis. They also facilitate the coordination of aid efforts. In parallel, TSF runs humanitarian calling operations to offer support and assistance to affected civilians, giving them a link with the outside world from which they would be otherwise completely cut off.

Beyond emergency response, TSF is also engaged in ongoing prevention and development programs, including technology centres for local populations, and support to projects in collaboration with stakeholders from multiple sectors (health, agriculture, education…). TSF also organizes general training sessions in emergency telecommunications for other relief organizations and national disaster response agencies in order to reinforce the efficiency of humanitarian action worldwide. Emergency kits are provided to regional offices, comprising satellite communications and IT equipment and including power supplies, so that when commercial infrastructure is cut off, offices can stay connected, report and coordinate with the central agency. These long-term education and training projects lead to positive impacts in economic development as well as capability building of humanitarian organizations.
TSF is partner of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO). In 2006, TSF was designated "First Emergency Telecoms Responder" within the United Nations Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) and became a partner of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Télécoms Sans Frontières is also a working group member of the United Nations emergency telecoms body (WGET) and a member of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA).

Since its creation in 1998, TSF deployed to more than 60 countries on 5 continents and assisted more than 700 relief organizations and hundreds of thousands of victims.

For more information, consult: www.tsfi.org

About the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO)

The European Union (Commission + Member States) is the world's largest provider of funds for humanitarian aid operations. Since 1992, the Commission has provided billions of euros for humanitarian projects in more than 140 countries, funding relief to millions of victims of disasters outside the European Union.

Operations include assessment of humanitarian needs in disaster areas, appropriate allocation of funds for goods and services such as food, shelter, medical provisions, water supplies or sanitation and evaluation of the impact of the aid provided. Disaster preparedness projects in regions prone to natural catastrophes are also among the life-saving activities financed through its specialised programme DIPECHO. By preparing the communities at risk to respond by themselves, DIPECHO aims at reducing the impact of natural disasters on the most vulnerable populations through simple and inexpensive yet effective preparatory measures developed and implemented at community level. Examples include the development of simple local early-warning systems, awareness-raising and training sessions, or small-scale mitigation works. The Commission is also committed to integrating disaster risk reduction components into its humanitarian relief operations.

Assistance is channelled impartially to the populations concerned, regardless of their race, ethnic group, religion, gender, age, nationality or political affiliation, through our operational partners. The Commission works with about 200 partners, including European non-governmental organisations, the Red Cross movement and United Nations agencies.

For more information about the Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission, consult: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm

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