



Media Minutes

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TRANSCRIPT

CrisisCamps for Haiti Match Tech Expertise with Human Need

After the massive earthquake in Haiti destroyed much of its capital city, Port au Prince, help was thwarted by the destruction of phone lines and TV and radio stations and mountains of rubble blocking roadways. As responders struggled to find those who were trapped underneath the crumbled cement and survivors who were injured and in need of food and water, CrisisCommons.org began working on technological tools that would help them find people, supplies and more aid.

Crisis Commons is a network of professional tech developers, communications specialists, first responders, project managers and others who collaborate on helpful projects to help mitigate disasters and crises around the world. When disaster strikes, they form "CrisisCamps" to create technological tools specifically tailored for the needs of the moment.

Eric Johnson, a Web developer, joined a CrisisCamp for Haiti that was held in Washington a few days after the quake.

Eric Johnson: *Everybody sits in about as big a room as is possible, introduces themselves – the idea is very quickly to get a notion of what skills we've got in the room and who can sort of help with what. Typically, the organizers have got a list of projects to be focused on ahead of time. Folks use those very big stickynotes, you know the wall-sized stickynotes and sort of list up calls for action, you know, who can help with what. And at that point, it's basically a free-for-all – folks walking around with laptops, looking around, "hey can I help you, who can I help, can I help you, can I help?"*

About 200 people showed up for the D.C. crisis camp. That same day, camps were being held in Silicon Valley, Los Angeles, Denver, Brooklyn and London. The next week, camps were held in Boston, Boulder, Los Angeles, Portland, Seattle, Miami, New Orleans and Toronto.

Camp organizers reach out to responders in governments, NGO's and other organizations seeking tech support. Projects range from mobile applications that translate English-Creole text messages to real-time digital maps showing blocked roadways and collapsed

buildings. Johnson says that, thanks to open-source software, tech tools can be built quickly.

Eric Johnson: *When you talk about software and computer programs, they're complicated and it takes lot of time to put together a program that's going to work reliably and successfully. But over the past years, largely with the rise of the Internet business, there's a ton of software out there that's free to use and free to improve and build on. You can do an awful lot of very, very fancy things in a relatively short period of time.*

More CrisisCamps for Haiti are scheduled to occur in the coming weeks. For more information, go to crisiscommons.org.

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MAG-Net: Local-to-Local Organizing for Media Justice

The Media Action Grassroots Network – or MAG-Net, for short – brings more than 100 organizations from across the country together into what MAG-Net national coordinator Amalia Deloney describes as a local-to-local advocacy network. With eight anchor organizations spread out across the United States, MAG-Net is comprised of grassroots, social justice and community media organizations

Amalia Deloney: *Our mission is to build a transformative movement for media justice that's effective, integrated and sustainable. And we're working to advance racial justice, economic justice, gender equity and human rights. Both the majority of groups that we have in our network but also those that we are actively seeking typically probably don't define themselves as a media organization, but they see media as a tool for social and economic justice. So the groups that we work with are community based, they're active in their region, and they're those that represent historically marginalized communities. Specifically poor communities, working class communities, queer communities and communities of color.*

MAG-Net's major focus right now is a campaign for universal broadband and strong Net Neutrality rules, and the alliance is connecting local organizations to the policy developments happening in Washington over the future of the Internet.

Amalia Deloney: *Each of the MAG-Net organizations are in the process of securing or have already done in-district visits with their local elected officials (Congress people in particular). We're also in the midst of a large pledge campaign that we just kicked off and we're looking to collect 300 pledges -- unique pledges -- from across the country specifically from groups that represent poor people and people of color.*

The pledge drive is in early stages but already has many organizations signed on, including the League of Rural Voters, community media groups like People TV in Atlanta, and labor organizations like the Southwest Workers Union from San Antonio.

MAG-Net is also building toward a National Day of Action on February 15th in partnership with their eight regional anchor organizations.

Amalia Deloney: *Those cities will all be holding some sort of event, whether it's a direct action, a creative action, or a community event.*

For more information about MAG-Net visit www.mediagrassroots.org.