**IT Think Paper #8
Humanitarian Development and ICT**Edward G. Happ, Global CIO

Here are some thoughts to consider for the Federation paper on development from an ICT perspective. I believe that the increasing *democratization of information* will turn upside down a number of avenues of development services that will have significant impact in how we, the Federation, conduct our business.  Strengthening NSs through appropriate application of ICTs will therefore be essential to allow them to fulfil their continuing role in their communities.

These are trends I am anticipating which also require deeper discussion and debate. Some will prove wrong, but if some are right, we need to take proactive action—which I’ve suggested for each—in order to maintain our leadership position in the world.

1. We will need to reach people where they are, with information they are seeking and with means of communication with which they are familiar. Increasingly emerging country citizens are becoming connected with each other and with information relevant to their livelihoods irrespective of immediate geography. The explosion of mobile phones—about to reach the 5 billion mark—is reaching the vulnerable in ways we did not expect even five years ago. *Action:* Our development programs will need to include a proactive mobile ICT strategy.
2. The vulnerable will be information partners rather than recipients. They will be requesting information services of us, participating in information dissemination and gathering, and evaluating our performance as partners with increasing power. They will have information about disaster relief assessment and needs before we do and will quickly navigate who has what among the NGO relief community. *Action:* We need to invite citizens to join our information networks.
3. Survivors and vulnerable citizens will mobilize into connected advocacy groups faster and with more impact to make their needs known.  Technology is already empowering the communities in which we work.  We need to anticipate how this might transform the way we work from assessing needs to being accountable on the quality of aid delivery. *Action:* We need advocate *with* our beneficiaries and join *their* information networks.
4. The vulnerable will look to procure from us rather than us for them.  We need to develop means (such as DR kiosks) for survivors to order what they need.  Citizens as well as survivors will increasingly become consumers of our services, with the demand consumers bring to a market and those who serve that market. *Action:* We need to invite survivors into our supply chain as partners.
5. Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) are playing a growing role in NGOs as a means for delivering programs far beyond internal information about programs.  One of the significant opportunities for building capacity in our program delivery is using technology to allow the same people and investment resources to reach more people in need.  In addition—as has occurred in most every industry—new services will develop that we have not even conceived.  *Action:* We need a growing sense of paying attention and partnering with those who bring early innovations.
6. Technology corporations will be asking us to join and support their development efforts rather than the reverse.  We saw evidence of this in Katrina relief efforts in the US.  As corporations are changing to make Corporate Social Responsibility a strategic initiative that is required for attracting and retaining knowledge works, and as the for-profit sector shifts to more skills-based philanthropy, they will naturally branch out into programs that leverage their expertise.  Organizations that have world class Supply Chain Management and the delivery of relief goods comes to mind. *Action:* We need to partner *side-by-side* with corporations in the delivery of programs.
7. Citizens from the developed world will increasingly connect and partner directly with vulnerable citizens in the emerging world.  The primary example for this in the US is kiva.com, which has grown by more than 30% per year connecting individual projects with donors on-line.  As networks of cell phone communities grow, we will see survivors reach out to donors more directly, and donors connecting with survivors and other vulnerable citizens who are increasingly becoming connected to the broader on-line world via cell phones. *Action:* We need to partner with non-traditional innovators who delivery assistance in more direct and connected ways.

In short, our traditional ways of reaching and serving the world’s vulnerable is ripe for disruption as new technologies become more common throughout the world. By putting the beneficiary and innovators in the center of our work as partners in all we do, along with the openness and agility to change, we will ride the wave of disruption as a force for positive change.

I’m happy to debate these points and welcome your feedback.