

ITU Telecom World Young Innovators Competition

Challenge Brief on Open Source Technologies for Disaster Management

The Young Innovators Competition seeks for 18-30 year old entrepreneurs from around the world with social start-ups which use open source technologies for disaster management. This could include disaster preparedness, early warning, emergency communication and response, and recovery from natural disasters.

Often, the most vulnerable areas and communities which have the hardest time preparing for and recovering from natural disasters are also the poorest parts of a country. For these areas, open source technologies can prove the ideal solution in disaster and emergency situations, as they are inexpensive, adaptable and scalable across different circumstances.

Natural disasters, floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, storms and epidemics, and other forms of natural disasters pose a growing threat in terms of both frequency and the levels of damage associated with them. Disasters, in addition to causing death and injury, can destroy infrastructure and shatter communities, displacing people and devastating economies. As human populations rise in numbers and density, and as the effects of global warming cause more frequent and powerful natural disasters, these risks are only set to increase.

We urgently need new tools to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters on this increased scale. The tools we need could include communication technologies, teaching tools, new equipment to save lives during a disaster, and new tools to help clean up, recover and rebuild after the event.

Open source technologies such as 3D printing, UAVs, Raspberry Pi, Arduino, and other open source computer programs and systems could hold the key to providing solutions in the poorest and most vulnerable areas, and are already a crucial element of the emergency management systems of many countries, as they strengthen the capacities of communities threatened by disaster.

The current generation of young social entrepreneurs, with their ambition, creativity and innovative mindset is perfectly placed to develop these ideas. Plus, a focus on open source tools is a call to a new tech-savvy generation since the technology is created as a collaborative effort in which programmers improve upon the code and share the changes with the community.

In addition, we are also looking for innovators who have ideas for taking the iconic technologies of the community of do it yourself inventors, creators and designers known as maker culture and applying them to saving lives, in combination with low cost, low entry barrier technologies to help reach the most vulnerable communities around the world.

The closing date for entries in this challenge is July 31st 2014.

Two winners will be selected per challenge, and will receive up to USD 10,000 of seed funding, in addition to mentorship, dedicated workshops and an opportunity to showcase at the InnovationSpace of ITU Telecom World 2014 in Doha, Qatar.