ICT INSIDER

information & communications technology division

quarterly newsletter

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IN THIS ISSUE

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EDITORIAL

FROM RUDY SANCHEZ

This issue of ICT Insider pays tribute to the colleagues we lost as a result of the recent tragedy in Haiti and the many personnel who worked together to advance relief efforts in its aftermath.

The main Communications and Information Technology Section (CITS) office for MINUSTAH was destroyed in the earthquake, along with the rest of UN headquarters in Port-au-Prince. It thus became crucial to restore ICT infrastructure that was necessary to support ongoing mission operations and facilitate disaster relief efforts.

The Information and Communications Technology Division (ICTD) played a leading role in responding to this challenge. Individuals from CITS teams around the globe were among the first personnel on the ground. As the articles in this issue reveal, working with MINUSTAH personnel, CITS teams re-established broken communication lines and put in place information and technology infrastructure vital to the rebuilding of mission operations. Among their many accomplishments was also the restoration of radio broadcast and production studios in conjunction with the Department of Public Information (DPI).

Moreover, they played a central role in establishing a liaison support office for MINUSTAH in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. In addition to providing back-up support to MINUSTAH, the office was necessary to coordinate the relief efforts of arriving administrative staff and personnel from areas such as finance, procurement, and counseling.

Originally a tier two back-up site for mission data, Santo Domingo became a hub for ICT disaster recovery efforts. Due to proactive measures supported by ICTD prior to the earthquake, and the hard work of CITS teams in Port-au-Prince and Santo Domingo, MINUSTAH suffered no loss of mission data.

The multi-mission response and dedication of personnel show that MINUSTAH operations can be renewed and strengthened. We can continue its mandate and honor the memories of those in our UN family who lost their lives supporting the mission. To this end, we encourage you to read their stories and support them with your feedback.

FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM:

In gathering information for the ICT Insider tribute to Haiti, the newsletter team was struck by the genuine altruism of every personnel member who contributed to the stories involving relief efforts. Each testimonial focused mainly on the work that needed to be done, irrespective of the difficult conditions to which they were exposed.

We hope that this issue of the newsletter recognizes the efforts of all personnel involved in the relief efforts in some small way, along with the members of the UN family whose memories they worked to honor. As always, we look forward to receiving your feedback and comments. Additionally, we welcome your participation in the ICT Photo Contest; your submissions will help us to improve and diversify our stories and content.

HAITI: WORKING AGAINST THE ODDS

Shortly after the earthquake hit Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on 12 January 2010, and while heavy aftershocks were still being felt, MINUSTAH CITS personnel gathered at the mission logistics base and got to work. Located just outside the city limits, the logistics base suffered only minimal damage. It had already been announced that the main UN Headquarters, situated in the middle of the bustling city center at the Christopher Hotel, had crumbled with the force of the earthquake.

IMAGE: UN MULTIMEDIA

IMAGE: UN MULTIMEDIA

The main CITS office for MINUSTAH was destroyed in the Christopher Hotel.

IMAGE: UN MULTIMEDIA

Mission and HQ personnel that went to Haiti were given key objectives to advance disaster recovery.

The CITS team knew that the mission was dependant on ICT services to effectively continue its operations and support rescue activities. "We assumed that all systems would be down, and we were right," said Thad Anglin, Chief CITS, MINUSTAH. "The goal was to just start working because without the communications and IT up and running no one else would be able to do their work."

The main CITS office for MINUSTAH was destroyed in the Christopher Hotel, including vital ICT equipment, as well as the repeaters and satellite dishes that supported essential mission communications. Personnel were therefore forced to work with limited resources in order to bring mission ICT services back to life. "We were up and running to get the place up and running," said Ida Trivunovic, Administrative Assistant, MINUSTAH. "We took strength from each other, and put aside our stress to restore communications."

On the same night the earthquake struck, the CITS team re-established important radio and microwave links, which allowed them to restore some communications services to the mission. They also coordinated ICT services for the agencies and NGOs that were streaming into the logistics base. "Other organisations had lost their offices and were facing security challenges, so we had to provide communications and IT support to them too," said Ms. Trivunovic.

MOBILIZING RELIEF EFFORTS

Within hours of the earthquake, ICTD at UN headquarters began worldwide mobilization of personnel to help with relief efforts. An appeal for volunteers familiar with disaster recovery was sent to CITS personnel, while the DFS ICT rapid deployment team, iDart, located at the United Nations Logistics Base (UNLB) in Brindsi, Italy, was immediately deployed to Port-au-Prince. To reinforce these efforts, several members of ICTD's headquarters team, including Chief ICTD, Rudy Sanchez, also traveled to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic to facilitate the establishment of a MINUSTAH liaison and support office.

Mission and HQ personnel that went to Haiti, including the iDart team, were given key objectives to advance disaster recovery efforts. "The direction from Rudy was to fulfill a set of priorities, which first and foremost included relieving MINUSTAH staff," said Naeem Awan, Ra pid Deployment Unit, Deputy Coordinator. Personnel were further charged with: ensuring continuation of ICT services, assisting in the establishment of a MINUSTAH support office, increasing the capacity of the logistics base, and helping to expand ICT services in Santo Domingo.

"The first day we set up a strategy to tackle the priorities,"

said Mr. Awan. "We merged with current staff and sought their direction, using their institutional knowledge to find out exactly how things were working—I think it helped them to know we were there for them."

As MINUSTAH staff departed for a mandatory break, mission and HQ personnel took up where they left off. Sifting through the rubble, they recovered servers, computers, digital senders and other equipment from the Christopher Hotel. The equipment was then moved to the logistics base, to begin recovery of data that was vital to mission operations. The mission had two primary data centers: one at the Christopher Hotel and one at the logistics base, while the secondary data center, to which all data was replicated daily, was located in Santo Domingo.

"MINUSTAH lost an entire tier 1 data center, but fortunately the data was going through the logistics base on its way to tier 2 locations," said Steve Falces, Disaster Recovery Officer, ICTD. "It did take a lot of work and sweat from the CITS team to recover it."

Using servers collected from the debris, and data retrieved from the logistics base and Santo Domingo, CITS personnel were able to restore all mission data. "Not only was there minimal downtime, there was also zero data loss," said Osama Matalka, Chief IT Officer, United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), who was among many of the personnel deployed to support the efforts. Coupled with efforts of ICT personnel in the wake of the earthquake, this success is also due to the disaster recovery safeguards put in place prior to the earthquake. "Data was being replicated on a nightly basis, in accordance with standards set by ICTD," said Mr. Falces.

In addition to complete data recovery, personnel were able to accomplish full replacement of Christopher Hotel operations at an alternate location, and extend ICT capacity to Santo Domingo. "All ICT services were up and running by the time the iDart team left on 26 February," said Mr. Awan.

MEANWHILE, IN SANTO DOMINGO...

Previously acting as a secondary site for data recovery, Santo Domingo became a full-fledged hub for relief efforts. "Rudy wanted us to establish a liaison office that would both facilitate disaster recovery in MINUSTAH, and ensure that essential administrative and other services

Personnel assisting with relief efforts recovered ICT equipment from the Christopher Hotel.

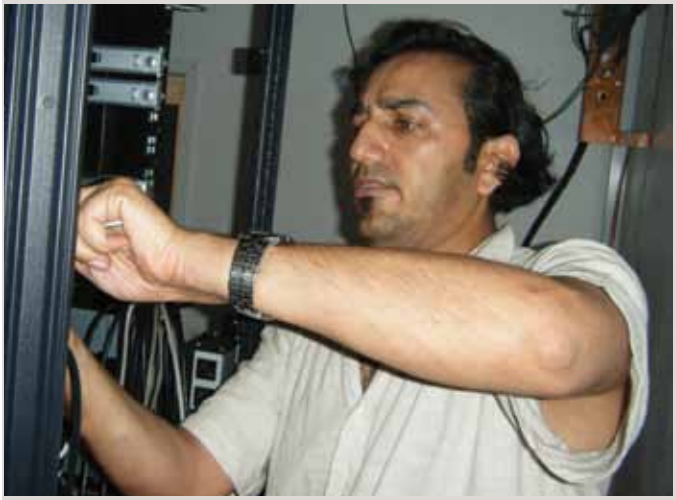

IMAGE: STEVE FALCES / ICTD

Personnel were able to replace Christopher Hotel operations at the MINUSTAH Logistics Base.

IMAGE: STEVE FALCES / ICTD

were supported," said Henry Thompson, Chief, Integrated Support Service, UNIFIL.

In addition to administrative concerns, the office addressed logistics and CITS activities integral to the success of the relief efforts. "Travel Unit people were involved in the repatriation of remains for deceased personnel, support officers from the staff counselors' office were working with injured staff members in hospitals and families of earthquake victims, and Finance was setting up payments and handling costs," said Paul Smith, Supervisor, Billing Unit, MONUC. "They could not just sit in an office with a pen and paper, they needed the IT infrastructure to hit the ground running."

Another immediate task was the receipt, inspection and asset management of large amounts of ICT equipment that was being sent from UNLB headquarters to replace damaged equipment in Haiti and support the Santo Domingo liaison office. "We had a lot of gear to move, which involved hard physical labour, but everyone wanted to get things done," said Martin Egglesfield, Chief Communications Officer, UNOCI. "The teamwork was pretty incredible, a lot of people worked outside of their normal tasks."

Offices were established in Santo Domingo to handle administrative services, in addition to a disaster recovery and business continuity activities for MINUSTAH. "We got the offices set up ahead of expectation—it was estimated that it would take 36 hours to establish ICT services and we did it in 12 hours," said Mr. Egglesfield.

Keeping in mind bandwidth constraints a separate email domain was also created to accommodate the growing personnel numbers. Additionally, microwave and fiber optic communications links were established to widen the existing communications infrastructure. "We connected one satellite link from Santo Domingo to Port-au-Prince and another from Santo Domingo to Brindisi," said Mike Hakizimana, Network Technician, UNIFIL. "In terms of responsibilities, it was like setting up a new mission."

Altogether, the efforts of ICT personnel during the crisis reinforced disaster recovery efforts and worked to ease the burden of MINUSTAH personnel, whose commitment withstood the pressure of their circumstances. "The largest diversity of staff that came to assist was from CITS—they were the trailblazers, the only communications in town. It's a testament to their commitment," said Mr. Thompson.

Materials were sent from UNLB to replace damaged equipment in Haiti and support operations in Santo Domingo.

IMAGE: LILIANA OCEGUERA/ ICTD

Rooms were established in Santo Domingo to handle administrative services and disaster recovery efforts.

IMAGE: SERGIO GOMEZ / DFS

RESTORING RADIO COMMUNICATIONS IN HAITI

As a result of the earthquake, the Department of Public Information (DPI) broadcast and producti vvv on studios and its communications links collapsed in the rubble of UN headquarters. DPI serves a vital broadcast radio function, delivering news and informational programming within the country, and through the MINUSTAH website. As such, an important public communications avenue was lost.

Although CITS personnel in MINUSTAH were able to set up a make-shift radio desk for DPI personnel in a corner of the UN Logistics Base a few days after the earthquake, a more concrete rebuilding of radio lifelines became a pressing necessity. "Radio went off the moment the earthquake hit," said Walter Mulondi, Deputy Head of Radio Unit, MINUSTAH. "There was panic, it was a critical moment because people were in need of information."

IMAGE: UN MULTIMEDIA

A request was sent to ICTD HQ and the iDart team in Brindisi for support to re-establish a strong radio communications capacity, as well as equipment and containers that would house new studios. "When I arrived a week after the earthquake, radio communications were operational locally through a make-shift set up that was exposed to all the noise of the office," said Robert Bowe, Field Broadcasting Coordinator, ICTD. "However, nothing was going out to the remote transmitters, and three other sites were down."

The first task was to re-establish a network connection for MINUSTAH FM radio and then rebuild DPI broadcast and production studios. A temporary studio was constructed using containers recovered from the Christopher Hotel, while the team waited for new containers to arrive from Brindisi. "Two production units were created, and a small FM studio system including a broadcast link," said Emil Blakaj, Broadcasting Systems Engineer, iDart. "The satellite link was also damaged so a new link had to be made."

Within three days of the arrival of ICT reinforcement, new production and broadcast studios were set up and ready to go on air. "We worked like crazy and got immense support from technicians on the ground," said Emil.

Radio programming on MINUSTAH FM is now broadcasting 24/7. Prior to the earthquake it was on the air for six hours a day Monday through Friday and two hours a day on the weekend. It has now taken on the load of partner radio stations that were also destroyed in the earthquake. "This was possible thanks to the commitment of personnel despite the odds," said Walter.

IMAGE (Steve Falces, ICTD): Radio communications tower at UN Logistics Base, Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

REMEMBERING SATNAM SINGH (1965 -2010)

Satnam Singh, employed by Trigyn Technologies Inc. as part of the CITS Help Desk team in MINUSTAH, died on 12 January 2010, as a result of the earthquake in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. He was at UN Headquarters in the Christopher Hotel when the earthquake struck.

Known as "Sunny" amongst his friends and colleagues, Satnam Singh went out of his way to celebrate any event, large or small. "I remember the day I told him I got a promotion," recalls his wife Pordeguine Singh. "He organized a party right away—he loved to celebrate life."

Just shy of his two year wedding anniversary, and the proud father of a five-month-old baby girl, Santam had much to rejoice. His daughter Sarisha, unmistakably resembles her father, and according to Satnam's mother, Daljeet Kaur, shares the rosy cheeks, that earned him the nickname "Lalji", (Punjabi for red) in his childhood. "Satnam always had his head in his books when he was young," she said. "He was ambitious and strived to do his best."

A native of India, Satnam grew up in a small village near Jalandhar, Punjab. In 1989 he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics, political science, and computer science from Guru Nanak Dev University. He then began a 15-year career in the IT industry as a computer instructor, programmer, and network/systems administrator, earning designations as a Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer and Cisco Certified Network Associate. "His main goal was to support his family," said his brother, Subhash Singh. "He wanted to become somebody but also help others."

In pursuit of this vision, Satnam left India with the intention to expand his skill base and gain some diverse experience. In 1998 he accepted a position in Haiti as an IT Specialist with Alpha General Assembly, a textile assembly company. He spent the next ten years with this company and made many friends, including MINUSTAH personnel based in Port-au-Prince. "Sunny was a very healthy, optimistic and special guy that gave us the motivation to keep going on those hard working days," said Mario Godoy, UNIFIL, CITS who met Satnam whilst working in Haiti in 2004, when MINUSTAH was first established.

Satnam's contact with UN personnel during his time in Port-au-Prince, allowed him a view into humanitarian work, which matched his own charitable nature. He was thus encouraged to seek out a position with MINUSTAH. "He always wished to join the UN family," said Mr. Godoy.

Shortly after immigrating to Montreal, Canada with his wife in Summer 2009, international contractor, Trigyn Technologies, Inc. offered him the chance to work in MINUSTAH as part of the CITS Help Desk team. "We decided to move to Canada so that our daughter would have better education and better opportunities," said Pordeguine, a native of Haiti. "I told him not to go back, but he wanted to properly support us, he insisted it was the best thing he could do for his family."

Satnam's UN friends also remember him as a kind man, who not only had a passion for living, but also for people. "He enjoyed life in the present and liked to have a get together at least twice a week where he prepared delicious food for his friends," said one colleague.

Satnam will always be remembered as "Sunny" amongst his family, friends, and colleagues because of his easy ability to make others smile. "His warm character, quick laugh and genuine care for people are the things I will cherish most," said Pordeguine.

FIELD SUPPORT SUITE

DELIVERING UNIFIED IT SOLUTIONS

As mission personnel from all over the world streamed into Haiti and Port-au-Prince to aid in relief efforts, and United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) personnel departed for a mandatory break, it became critical to streamline reporting for their arrivals and departures— to expedite this process it was decided that the new web-based Check-in/Check-out (CICO) application should be implemented.

Field Support Suite

Delivering Unified IT Solutions

CICO is part of the Field Support Suite (FSS), a group of applications that is currently being rolled-out to missions around the world by the United Nations Logistics Base (UNLB) Field Systems Team and local CITS focal points.

Six FSS applications have been completed and more are on the way. They tackle common mission business processes including: check-in and check-out, movement of personnel, cargo movement requests, passenger booking, ID card issuing, and training management.

The aim of FSS is to address the common field-specific business needs of all missions by using a centrally hosted, fully integrated set of web-based applications. "This initiative supports the principles of the ICTD vision document—to standardize and centralize solutions in order to become more efficient, cost-effective, and field focused," said Amedeo Micelli, UNOPS Programme Manager, UNLB.

Together, FSS applications leverage a central solution to standardize business processes, while allowing the flexibility to accommodate mission-specific needs. "FSS takes a modular, workflow driven approach to problem solving," explained Suzanne Shanahan, Administrative Management Officer, ICTD. "The modular components of the FSS applications are like building blocks that each form a piece of an application—these same blocks can be reused to create other applications, including those with more complex workflows."

The Check-in/Check-out application for example, as applied in MINUSTAH, is based on a newly re-engineered process designed to reduce the time required to check-in and out of a mission. This process engages several business units in a series of administrative tasks such as asset assignment and return, information briefings, and data collection.

Typically there is no central oversight of the process and personnel must shuttle between multiple offices to complete the requirements, which can be time consuming and frustrating. On the other hand, as part of FSS, CICO standardizes, streamlines and automates administrative actions on a single platform.

The system triggers and routes information and requests, including approvals and confirmations, for incoming/departing personnel via automatic e-mails. The application is also integrated with Galileo and therefore, tracks the assignment and return of assets to the Self Accounting Units, ensuring all outstanding financial obligations are met and entitlements are received. Information gathered by CICO - specifically identity information - can further be transferred across FSS and other applications such as the ID Card system, iSECT and FPMS, eliminating duplication of effort.

Hosted at UNLB in Brindisi, Italy, FSS applications are accessed by users through a standard web browser. This set-up simplifies deployment and support by eliminating the need

DEPLOYED FSS APPLICATIONS:

CHECK-IN / CHECK-OUT (CICO)

All mission personnel must "check-in" to a mission prior to beginning work and must "check-out" upon mission service completion. This process involves several business units in a series of administrative tasks, assets assignment/return, and informational briefing/debriefing, as well as data collection. In the past, each mission managed its own Check In/Out system using different solutions for different categories of staff (civilian staff, UNV, UNPOL, military and contractors). FSS CICO standardizes, streamlines and automates the administrative actions related to personnel check in/out on a single platform and supports a centrally managed process for all categories of personnel. This supports a global view of mission strength ensuring the quality of identity information. The system triggers and routes information, asset and service requests for incoming/departing personnel via automatic e-mails, including approvals and confirmations. The CICO Unit can monitor the progress of each individual and intervene as necessary. CICO maintains a central record of all official documentation and procedures ensuring standards are adhered to.

to install software on individual workstations and mission servers. Additionally, the operational costs of training, administration and maintenance are reduced and simplified.

"Users who move from mission to mission will encounter the same system, so we reduce overall training costs," said Mr. Micelli. "User support is also consolidated through a centralized help desk; this further reduces overhead costs for IT operations."

The FSS development strategy is field-focused. Focal points from mission business units are involved in requirements gathering and acceptance testing. The majority of the development however, is handled by a central, dedicated Field Systems Team. This practice introduces a fundamental change to the past approach of developing software solutions in individual field missions, where missions relied on in-house developers to create solutions for routine business tasks.

"This distributed model for solutions development comes out of the pre-Internet model of local hosting that was applied to ensure applications could perform in the field," said Ms. Shanahan. "Years back there was no reliable centralized hosting model for systems initiatives, so development and support took place in the mission."

Additionally, variations or "flavors" of solutions surfaced, as missions often shared or recreated similar applications. The result was a multitude of systems, interfaces, and data management tools, which counterproductively addressed the same business processes across missions. Rather than being able to share information, these applications were largely disconnected. "In most missions Lotus Notes became the standard for developing applications," said Mr. Micelli. "However its ability to centrally consolidate data, transfer and reuse information is limited."

Recognizing that this practice also reduced efficiencies in the organisation as a whole, ICTD set out to change it. A new model of service delivery was envisioned to match global technology trends and internal transformation. "At the same time an entire ICT infrastructure and operations capacity was being established in Brindisi while Internet use was exploding worldwide," said Ms. Shanahan.

As such, a conscious effort was made to start looking towards a different way to develop, host and support applications. "The idea behind FSS was to create a flexible and reusable platform to address mission automation needs today and to establish a foundation to enable DFS strategic direction," said Salem Avan, Chief, Field and Security Operations Service. "FSS creates a set of complimentary software solutions that can be deployed quickly, that are intuitive and can grow within missions with minimal effort."

Drawing from this trend, the FSS hosting and deployment scheme is based on a cloud computing model where the suite is hosted and supported in UNLB, and centrally delivered to mission users worldwide over a standard browser. "Now because everyone is agreeing to use the same solution," said Ms. Shanahan. "We will not only reduce costs by eliminating the hosting infrastructure at the mission level, we will also increase the security and safety of information."

Responsibility for developing the FSS building blocks involves two interlocking teams for development and data management services that are centralized in UNLB in Brindisi. This duo now correspondingly works to standardize solutions across missions, and consolidate mission data into one centralized hub.

The end result is an infrastructure that supports business intelligence and global reporting. By centralizing data, FSS makes it easy to compare data across missions, manage performance, report information and incidents, flag patterns and make comparisons.

F10

The F10 Claims application automates the workflow and approval for the reimbursement of mainly travel expense claims for field personnel across all missions. It permits all field personnel staff categories to submit expenses for approval and initiates the reimbursement process through an automated chain of approval that limits the need for each section to repeat the process, therefore avoiding duplication of efforts.

eMOP

The Electronic Movement of Personnel application automates the workflow and approval of requests for the Movement of Personnel inside and outside the mission area. It permits all field personnel staff categories to submit a travel itinerary for approval and initiates an automated chain of approval and security clearance to accelerate the request.

FSS is being implemented in phases, starting with the Great Lakes missions and proceeding to West Africa, the Middle East, and remaining missions. Focal points have already been assigned to each mission; regional training sessions are underway, both as a means to cut costs and give implementation ownership to field personnel.

Moving forward, plans are underway to create more applications to add to the suite, as well as to strengthen the integration of FSS capabilities with other existing applications. "In keeping with the vision under which FSS was created, we are constantly engaged in offering strong integration points—so that information can always be shared, and multiple applications can be accessed through one seamless framework," said Mr. Micelli.

For more information on FSS and a detailed implementation timeline, please visit the ICTD website: [http://ictd.dfs.un.org/Documents/Overview.aspx]

ePBS

The Electronic Passenger Booking System gives MOVCON a web-based electronic interface for passenger air booking for authorized Movement of Personnel (MOP). ePBS will be integrated with the Electronic Movement of Personnel (eMOP) Application and will replace the existing manual process currently used by MOVCON.

eTMS

The eTraining Management System is a web based application developed for the Integrated Training Unit (ITU) to manage field mission training courses, the training cycle and training records. It is designed to ensure peacekeeping personnel in all categories have adequate ITU training for their assignment, as well as opportunities for ongoing training that are relevant to their professional development. The platform centralizes training data, and streamlines training cycle operations by fully automating processes.

PRODUCT RELEASES

REPORTING AS A SERVICE (RaaS) / PoC

The Reporting as a Service, Proof of Concept advances an ICTD initiative to create an integrated portal for the Reporting and Business Intelligence services of DFS. It provides a single channel for users to access reports, dashboards and analytics on mission data and information, and provides users with customized content that serves their specific needs. *Project launch date: February 2010.*

ELECTRONIC MOVEMENT OF PERSONNEL (eMoP)

A key module of the Field Support Suite, eMoP standardizes and automates the MOP request and approval process for all categories of staff for inter-mission travel on a single platform. eMOP has cross-mission flexibility built-in and criteria defined by the local mission, such as variations for diverse staff categories, or conditions on travel to certain destinations, can be incorporated. *Project launch date: February 2010.*

DPKO/DFS STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (SMS)

The DPKO/DFS Strategic Management System provides decision makers with an integrated view of mission activities to support operations planning, preparedness, and management. Using a combination charts and graphs on a dashboard users can access validated, up to date information about current mission activities. *Project launch date: March 2010.*

TIPS FROM EXPERTS

ROY JOBLIN REGIONAL COOPERATION

Regional cooperation (or regionalism) is a hot topic as DFS embraces regional service centres as a new model for service delivery. Much can be accomplished locally and informally with a regional approach. Geographically proximate missions should seek to collaborate— the sharing of successes and failures, and sound information management practices can create an environment of camaraderie, and benefit everyone. Missions should try to standardize, if possible, so users can enjoy the same ICT experiences (look and feel) as they move between missions. Regional cooperation can also help eliminate duplication of effort and produce economies of scale i.e. tangible results. The positive results of regionalism, should be reported to higher management.

ANTHONY O'MULLANE MOTIVATING PERSONNEL

Managing and motivating personnel is key to running any operation, regardless of size. The principle focus should always be achieving work objectives, which must be clearly communicated. Personnel who understand their role and are happy with their working environment perform well. Those familiar with the vision of their group normally find it easier to contribute, therefore any efforts put into communicating the vision to staff will reap benefits. For competent personnel, micro-management is a limitation, but sometimes focused attention needs to be applied to particularly challenging areas. We work with colleagues from diverse, multicultural backgrounds and skill sets. Although it is a challenge at times, motivating personnel is an important part of overall organizational success.

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UN Website Standard Template Platform (WebSNAP)

WebSNAP allows mission users to create websites based on predefined templates, and manage sites with ease and minimal technical support from HQ. The solution provides site hosting and a website design interface with a uniform web-building template and content management system, to ensure that mission-created websites have the same look and feel and comply with technical standards. *Project launch date: May 2010*

iNEED

iNeed provides a single standardized, integrated platform for managing service requests and delivery. It supports the tracking of incidents, service requests and projects, and standardizes business processes across multiple service desks and locations. In coordination with the OICT, iNeed was first launched in UNHQ followed by deployment in UNLB. *Project launch date: April 2010.*

UNITE

The ICTD Social Collaboration Platform, dubbed "Peacekeeping Unite" is a collaboration tool that will be closely integrated with user emails. It allows users to build profiles, engage in social bookmarking, schedule events, and use and access blogs and communities. A pilot test group has been engaged for initial roll-out. *Project launch date: May 2010.*

TIPS FROM EXPERTS

DAVID WILKINS WIRELESS TECHNOLOGIES

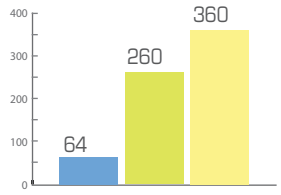
As the world of wireless and broadband technologies continues to evolve rapidly, the birth of Cloud Computing and advancements in Smartphone (blackberry, iPhone etc.) mobile, voice and data communications has suddenly become standard practice. As CITS professionals we must develop new solutions for our highly mobile customers, keeping in mind that such services must be accessible in real-time. We must also constantly make available all systems and official data while ensuring every security protocols is met. As technologies such as voice (VOIP) and data converge, it is very apparent that we will be pushed to the forefront of this maturing evolution of mobile access. We must evolve with the times. May we all travel safe, as too our data.

FRANCIA PERALTA DATA MANAGEMENT

In 2009, our enterprise data grew dramatically, with a 57% increase compared to 2008. As the trend continues, the challenge is to find a way to manage data growth with minimum negative impact on IT operations. When data increases, so do needs for more bandwidth, servers, and storage systems. To manage this growth we have to rely on best practices: know your data by using non-expensive GUI software, make sound assessments as to why data should be stored, categorize and prioritize data, develop policy for regular deletion of unauthorized and unimportant data, apply user quotas, introduce content management to reduce internal email attachments, train users to be responsible and, my favorite, implement metrics. You can't manage what you can't measure!

VIDEO CONFERENCING: MAKING GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

The demand for VC services is growing (monthly average of VCs)



Almost four hundred videoconferences per month are managed by a small VTC Unit of the Information and Communication Technology Divisions (ICTD/DFS) in New York. Providing a wide range of videoconferencing services to UN peace operations and agencies worldwide, this team helps the UN save time and travel dollars, while allowing personnel to meet "face-to-face" for crisis management, high-level recruitment, meetings, and training.

"The first VC room we set up for the SitCentre back in 2003 was just one of the desk offices," said JJ Richards, Chief of the Wide Area Network Operations, ICTD. "The set up was basic, the equipment was very expensive and the quality poor."

Since then, the demand for videoconferencing has risen exponentially each year, from an average of two hundred sites connected per month in 2008, to one thousand in February 2010. "This steep hike can be explained by the fact that we now have twenty-four VC rooms [in HQ] equipped with state-of-the-art technology, compared to six rooms in 2008," said Christoph Pillichshammer, Video Conferencing Coordinator. "The quality of VCs has dramatically improved with better compression techniques over the same bandwidth, and with the migration from a circuit switch to an IP-based transmission." In addition to technical and service improvements, our personnel are becoming better educated to the capabilities of VC and more comfortable with the technology - which has also led to increase in requests.

Recent technological advances make it possible to exchange documents and run presentations in real-time, connect to personal computers and phone lines, or to record video conferences for later playback or sharing. In addition ICTD has developed and deployed an intranet-based tool (VCMS) [**http://vcms.dfs.un.org**] that allows HQ users to request videoconference services and facilities online.

ICTD is now working on the next generation of the VCMS tool, which will be available not only to headquarters but also to missions and external partners. The new version will tie in the booking of VC services and rooms in one application and also support greater control of VC equipment in the field to help mission technicians manage VC settings remotely when no technicians are available.

The VC unit also hopes to work together with buildings management to improve existing VC rooms. "We do small fixes ourselves: painting the walls, putting curtains up," said Mr Richards, "but bigger ones – having electrical work done or lighting changed – requires additional funding. It doesn't matter how good the technology is, if the layout and lighting of a room do not allow for faithful, distraction-free sound and video, the user experience will suffer."

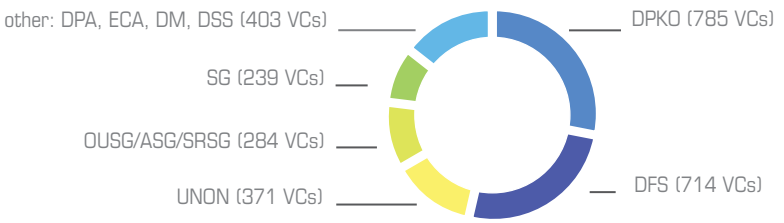
HOW TO ORGANIZE A VIDEO CONFERENCE:

1. RESERVE A CONFERENCE ROOM. Allow 30 minutes set-up time for the technician! For example, if the VC is supposed to start at 9:00, make the reservation from 8:30.

2. BOOK THE VIDEO CONFERENCE SERVICE at http://vcms.dfs.un.org
Log in with your full UN e-mail address (smith@un.org), and your UN webmail password. Select *Add Reservation*, fill in all mandatory fields and submit the request by selecting *Save*.

"The quality of VCs has dramatically improved with better compression techniques over the same bandwidth, and with the migration from a circuit switch to an IP-based transmission."

TOP REQUESTORS OF DFS VC SERVICES (2009):



OUR USERS SAY:

Tom Hojbjerg
Deputy Chief, Situation Centre
Office of the Under-Secretary-General, DPKO

"We use video conferencing mostly during a crisis, to facilitate communication between DPKO/DFS crisis response cells and missions. VTCs are the best way to communicate during a crisis, to get everyone heard and have all the key players at the table. After the earthquake in Haiti, we were able to establish a [VTC] link with the mission only few hours after the disaster. In 2006, for example, we had four crises at the same time, in Lebanon, Afghanistan, Timor Leste and DRC. That's a lot of VTCs at the same time, and all of them needed to be conducted using secure links, secure locations. The VTC unit is doing a great job. They are available at short notice whenever we have a crisis and make sure that everything is set up, so we, on our side, can come in, sit down, get a link and start working right away."

Valentina Chirica
Senior Leadership Appointments Section
Office of the Under-Secretary-General, DFS

"Our section has always opted for VTCs over phone interviews for the selection process. The personality of a candidate is very important for senior positions. They are going to be the representatives of the Secretary-General, the face of the UN in the country they will be appointed to, and video conferencing is the most suitable format to identify the qualities of these candidates. In addition, VTCs save us the trouble of flying in candidates, with all the administrative and logistical efforts – visa issues, time, money, coordination with high-level panelists…"

Michel Bergeron
Chief CITS
United Nations Logistics Base, Brinidisi, Italy

"With two video-conferences a day, we are very active users of DFS VC services. It has become an indispensable tool for communication between Brindisi and the new UN service base in Valencia as we are now in an extremely active phase and have daily VTCs with administrative and technical staff there. We also have frequent VTCs with New York as I work very closely with ICTD on operational issues. Finally, we use video conferencing for the resolution of day-to-day problems in missions. I can say that VTCs have become natural in our daily work, reducing travel, increasing communication and engagement of participants."

DFS VIDEO CONFERENCING UNIT (UNHQ):

IMAGE: J.J. Richards, Chief of Wide Area Network Operations / ICTD

SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE DFS VC UNIT:

- **Point-to-point and multi-point video conferences with up to nine participating sites**
- **Secure connection (with AES 128 Bit encryption)**
- **Video conference recording**
- **Transmit content during VCs (presentations, PC screens, TV feeds) including real-time desktop sharing**
- **Maintenance of VTC rooms owned by DFS/DPKO**

DO's AND DONT's OF VIDEO CONFERENCING

DO's

- Agree on the date and time with your endpoints (missions, OAHs or external entities) and make sure that they reserve their conference rooms.
- Reserve your conference room well in advance. If you submit your VCMS request without reserving your conference room you risk that someone else will be using it on the day of your conference.
- Inform the VC Unit beforehand, if you plan to include a Powerpoint presentation or require desktop sharing.
- Give your VC technician 30 minutes preparation time.
- If your endpoint is not listed in VCMS, please provide a technical focal point. The VC Unit will then schedule a test to ensure your video conference runs smoothly.
- Submit your VCMS request for VC services using the VCMS website at headquarters to avoid any double-bookings.
- Close the curtains or blinds for better quality pictures and audio. Make sure the door is closed too.
- Make sure the microphone is well located.
- Tell the participants when you are muting the microphone – the other site may think you have a problem.
- Introduce all the participants at all points of the VC.
- Remember that during connection you may be

VC ROOM CHALLENGE

Below is an image that was transmitted during a video conference. Can you spot what's wrong with the set up of this VC room? What could have been done better here? Check the DOs and DON'Ts of Video Conferencing for some help.

transmitting your picture and audio before you receive any.
- Organise teas/coffees for both ends simultaneously.
- Introduce or announce when someone enters or leaves the room.
- In a large meeting, always nominate a chair person. It will make it harder to interrupt in a video call and remote sites need to have the opportunity to enter discussions.
- Smile when you disconnect your call.

DON'Ts

- Do not whisper to the person next to you - everyone will hear you !!
- Do not tap microphones, move them around or bang/tap on the table. Be careful not to cover microphones with papers.
- Avoid clothing with checks, stripes or busy patterns.
- Do not use cell-phones or blackberries during conferences or leave them on the table while they are on - it can cause audio interference.
- Avoid phone participants, because it will remove the encryption of the connection.

VC CHALLENGE ANSWERS

Curtains/shades are open. The camera is focusing on the window, which is the brightest spot in the room. As a result, participants are unrecognizable because of the low brightness and contrast levels.

Ceiling lights in the camera view have a negative affect on the brightness of the transmitted image.

Door is open. Staff in the hallway might distract participants. If possible, avoid installing the camera facing a doorway. If this is not possible, keep the door closed.

Glossy surfaces (tables, frames, pictures, glass or ornaments on the wall) result in light reflection and consume additional bandwidth for transmission.

VC participants are too far away. A close-up on the speaking participant will direct attention where it is most needed.

The white wall colour does not provide adequate contrast on camera. The recommended wall colour is RAL 5014 (also called 'pigeon blue'), which helps the camera to focus accurately.

SPOTLIGHT ON ICT SECURITY

A reporting and collaboration tool introduced by the ICT Security Section boosts collaboration, while saving time and resources.

To change practices with respect to sharing information about ICT security incidents within missions, the ICT Security Section has introduced an innovative tool. The tool collects security related information and shares it between field missions and headquarters.

"Security is becoming increasingly critical and is a collective responsibility of ICT personnel," said Salem Avan, Chief, Field Support and Security Operations Service. "Therefore we wanted to create a strong community of ICT security practitioners who would collaborate and support each other."

"Before, there was virtually no information exchange on ICT security between missions and HQ," said Boris Meyer of the ICTD Security Section. "Often, we were informed about security issues only when all mission capacity or resources were exhausted - joint knowledge and experience could have helped solve the problem in less time and with less effort."

Developed as a Groove workspace, the tool provides a wide range of features for collaboration and knowledge sharing. Additionally, it is secure and is stored locally, making it independent from network availability and performance.

"This workspace is one of the most powerful and valuable tools we have," said Zoran Abraham, Head of Information Security Section. "It makes a wide range of security information available to missions, provides better visibility of current security status and activities in the field, allows us to have an overview of where improvements need to be made and helps missions to effectively respond to security incidents."

The tool supports ICT security management in three ways: it collects ad-hoc input on security incidents and weaknesses in missions, mandatory monthly reports, and provides a discussion forum for group members. "An issue with antivirus, flagged through the incidents and weaknesses section helped us raise a concern with the software provider," said Mr. Meyer.

This feedback has already helped some missions address security weaknesses by exchanging experiences on similar issues. In November 2009, a report posted in the workspace by Alexander Diop, ICT Security Focal Point in MINUSTAH, had a follow-up call from ICT Security Team in New York. "I reported an attack on our routers, and Boris gave me some good ideas on how to handle this problem," Mr. Diop said.

He also believes that surveys, a part of the monthly report, are especially useful for large missions. "Mandatory updates on the operational environment of the mission help us maintain an overview of what's going on in a large mission with many remote locations," he said.

For headquarters, information gathered through these monthly reports is essential for the process of developing security guidance for UN missions. "These security metrics help us anticipate and shape ICT security strategy for missions," Mr. Meyer said.

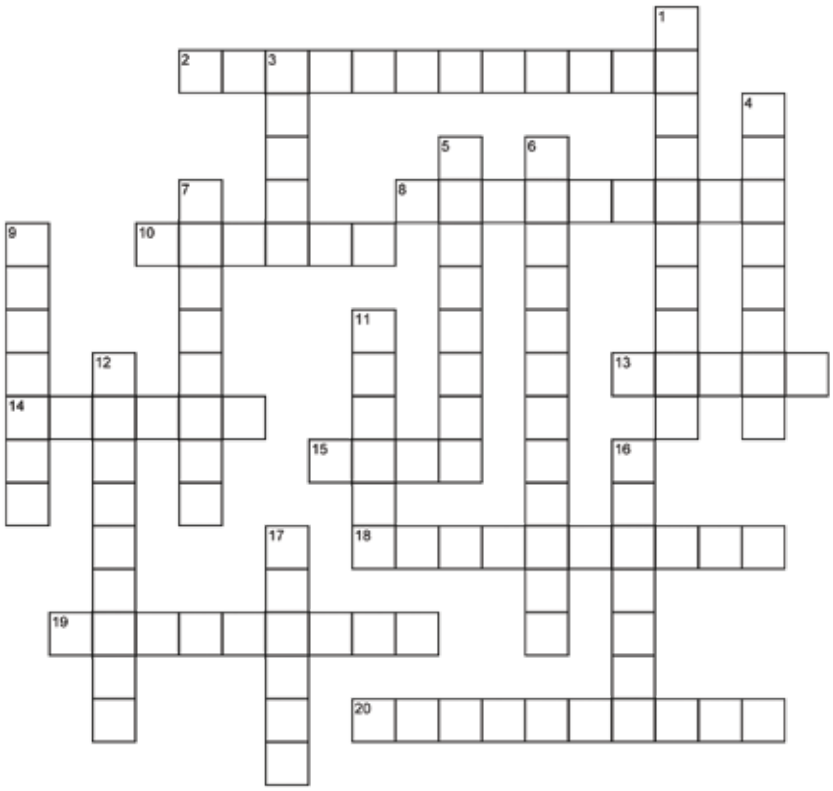
Finally, a discussion forum built in to the workspace helps security focal points share knowledge. UNMIN's experience with penetration testing shared by the mission Chief IT Officer Werner de Klerk on the discussion board proved useful for MINUSTAH in the process of upgrading the mission's wireless security network.

In another example, a presentation on ICT Security Incident Management shared by Judy Kirshner, UNTSO Network Administrator and Security Focal Point, was readily adopted as a training resource for other missions. "We are not in an isolated bubble anymore. The more we participate in information sharing the better we can protect the mission," Ms. Kirshner said.

In the next few months, Mr. Abraham hopes to see a wider adoption of the tool as new ICT security positions are introduced in missions.

For more information about ICT Security Reporting tool please contact ICT Security Section at ictd-security@un.org.

ICT CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Crossword hint: Stumped on an answer? Read this issue of ICT Insider and the ICTD website closely - all the answers lie within...

ACROSS

2 Place where MINUSTAH logistics base is located.

8 To remove malware or potentially unwanted software from a computer.

10 A temporary storage space on chips in your computer, and a another name for recalling a past experience.

13 Provides users with a single standardized, integrated platform for managing service delivery.

14 High powered computer that makes resources available to all network users.

15 An acronym for a system that allows users to book video conferencing services.

18 Type of video conference used when more than two sites are connected.

19 A user interface that organizes and presents information in a way that is easy to read; also a panel under the windshield of a car.

20 A wireless mobile device, primarily known for sending and receiving email; also a delicious fruit.

DOWN

1 A permanent connection between two points set up by a telecommunications common carrier.

3 A communications channel that becomes increasingly vital in the event of a disaster.

4 A closed or private version of the internet.

5 The transfer of information over a distance without the use of electrical conductors requires _____ communications.

6 Accessing a system via a legitimate user; also another name for being carried on someone's back.

7 Common name for the DFS Call Centre that provides 24/7 live user technical support.

9 A software program that lets you explore the World Wide Web to find text, graphics, sound, movies, games, chats and more.

11 These cameras capture a live image every few seconds.

12 A signaling method that includes or handles a relatively WIDE range of frequencies.

16 When enterprise data increases there is a need for more _____ in to preserve it.

17 Prize in ICTD photo contest.

For the answers to the crossword in the last issue of ICT Insider check the ICTD website document library.


ICT PHOTO CONTEST
WIN iPOD TOUCH
THEME: ICT WORK IN THE FIELD
SUBMIT YOUR ENTRIES BY JUNE 15, 2010
TO: ICTCOP@UN.ORG
more details at http://ictd.dfs.un.org

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