ITU-D Study Group 2, Q5/2
Webinar on Enabling Policy Environment for Disaster Management

Session 2: Focus on Policies that Enable Communications During COVID

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FCC Guiding Principles

1. Set Clear Priorities

- Ensure that as many as possible have Internet access and that service is not disrupted

2. Try Markets Before Mandates

- *Keep Americans Connected Pledge* – voluntary commitment from over 700 broadband & phone providers
- Three core commitments: (1) no consumer would have their service cut off over the next 60 days; (2) no one will be charged late fees; and (3) Wi-Fi hotspots will be opened up to anyone who needs them
- Broadcasters use their platforms for Covid-19 related public service announcements

FCC Guiding Principles

3. Use Every Tool Available, Including Existing Programs

- Much easier to scale up existing programs than start from scratch during an emergency

    - Highlights importance of having pre-existing programs to close digital divides - these are the communities most vulnerable during emergencies

- FCC made additional USD 42 million available through Rural Health Care Program; experience with existing program helped us get a new USD 200 million Telehealth Program established quickly

- We relaxed rules for existing programs to extend services to connect schools, low-income households, persons with disabilities

FCC Guiding Principles

4. During an Emergency, Act like it's an Emergency

- Make decisions as quickly as possible

  - Grants of temporary authority for mobile providers to use additional spectrum to meet increased demand
  - Creative solutions to address regulatory bottlenecks – for example, expedited historical preservation review

- Warn and protect consumers from scams

  - We've moved quickly to identify and warn consumers about new scam robocalls and text messages offering free home testing kits, promoting bogus cures, selling health insurance, and preying on virus-related fears.