Gisli Olafsson

Emergency Response Director at NetHope

Snoqualmie, WA, US

Leading expert in the use of technology in disaster response. Expert and author in the area of crisis leadership.

Biography

Gisli is one of the leading experts in the world on the use of technology in disaster response. Gisli is a sought after speaker, trainer and advisor on the role technology can play in enhancing the response to large scale natural and man-made disasters. Gisli joined NetHope in November 2010 as the Emergency Response Director. He is responsible for coordinating information and communication technology (ICT) related emergency preparedness and emergency response activities of NetHope's 34 member organizations. They include organizations such as International Federation of the Red Cross/Red Crescent, Save the Children, WorldVision, Oxfam, Relief International, CARE, Catholic Relief Services, International Rescue Committee and 26 other world leading non-profit organizations.

Prior to joining NetHope, Gisli has over 18 years of experience in the field of disaster management and is an active member of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team, a team of experienced disaster managers which are on stand-by to deploy anywhere in the world on a 6 hour notice to coordinate the first response of the international community to disasters. Gisli also has over 25 years of experience in the IT industry, most recently working at Microsoft as a trusted advisor to international organizations and governments in disaster prone countries on the effective use of ICT to enhance response to natural disasters.

Gisli has participated in disaster field missions in connections with floods in Ghana (2007), Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar (2008), Hurricane Ike in Texas (2008), Sichuan Earthquake (2008), Pandemic Outbreak (2009), West Sumatra Earthquake (2009), Haiti Earthquake (2010), Japan Earthquake/Tsunami (2011) and Horn of Africa Famine (2011). Following the devastating earthquake in Haiti 2010, Gisli led the first international rescue team that arrived in the country.

The combination of Gisli's extensive field experience in disaster management and technology background provides Gisli a deep understanding how technology can be applied to solve the most challenging collaboration issues within disaster response. This has led him to be appointed to various advisory boards and committees, such as the US State Department's sub-committee on the use of technology in international disasters.

Gisli holds Bachelor of Science degrees in Computer Science and Chemistry. Gisli currently lives in Seattle along with his wife, 5 children and 1 dog.

Availability

Keynote, Moderator, Panelist, Workshop, Host/MC, Author Appearance, Corporate Training

Industry Expertise

Non-Profit/Charitable, Public Safety, Computer Software

Areas of Expertise

Technology Use in Disasters, Digital Volunteers, Crisis Leadership

Affiliations

IAEM, ISCRAM, ICE-SAR, UNDAC

Sample Talks

Humanitarian Response in a Time of Mass Collaboration and Networked Intelligence
Discuss how digital age technologies, like social media, are revolutionizing the way humanitarian response will be conducted in the future. He will explore the role of technology and information sharing in humanitarian response and look at how crowdsourcing, mass collaboration, volunteer & technical community self-organization, and "information to the edge" will push totally new approaches into the humanitarian response.

Event Appearances

Finding meaning in chaotic times of disaster
140conf

Humanitarian Response in a Time of Mass Collaboration and Networked Intelligence
Wilson Center

Education

Københavns Universitet
B.Sc. Computer Science and Chemistry

Háskóli Íslands
N/A Chemistry

Accomplishments

Lead ICE-SAR Urban Search and Rescue team to Haiti
I was the team leader of the first international rescue team that arrived in Haiti following the devastating earthquake.

The Crisis Leader
Published a book on crisis leadership. Available on Amazon.

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