gef **URBAN SH/FT** **C4O CITIES**

eThekwini, South Africa:

Open Data Crisis Map

Model: Enabling Innovation

In the midst of extreme flooding, the eThekwini municipality partnered with two local tech start-ups who had created a **digital mapping tool** connecting residents to humanitarian relief resources. With 1,600 daily users at the time, this map helped the **city's crisis response** and contributed towards its climate preparedness efforts.

THE CHALLENGE

In April 2022, unprecedented floods and landslides devastated the municipality area. With this additional pressure, access to **real-time disaster- related information** became challenging.
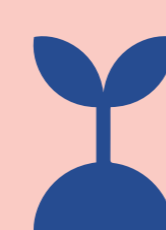
HOW IT WORKS

Local companies Black Box and Pista Ventures rapidly built a digital map that allowed individuals to log their location and indicate if they needed or could provide aid or assistance.

The municipality had previously worked with these companies and, seeing the map's reach, city officials invited them to join its **'nerve centre'**, made up largely of government agencies. The map provided the real-time data crucial for the municipality's ability to **coordinate its response**.

From within the centre, they worked together to **collate and improve that data**, while identifying gaps and necessary adjustments to the map.

While the companies worked on the disaster response pro-bono, the experience helped them to **start pursuing further private investment** for related projects. Meanwhile, the municipality has since developed various dashboards with current information on climate preparedness, such as flood vulnerability.

LESSONS

During a crisis, local companies can often respond quickly and usually do not have lengthy procurement procedures to follow. **Cities can enable these rapid innovations** through non-financial partnerships and facilitating access to city-based structures that are coordinating responses.

As with eThekwini's subsequent dashboards, these partnerships can also help cities **strengthen their future preparedness**. Such tools can be used for different purposes - real time information about floods, flood relief, violence mapping, or vulnerability mapping, provide a way for cities to **visualise and connect** with challenges on the ground.