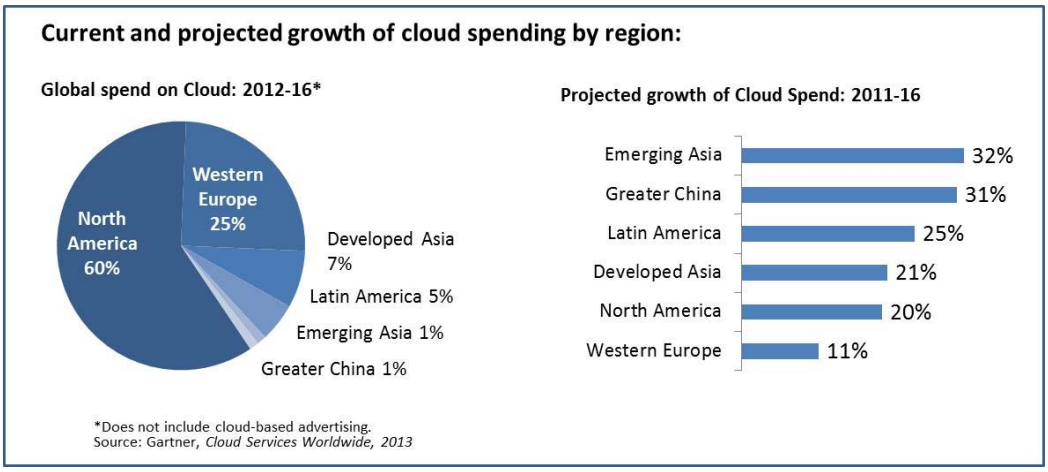
The Economist Intelligence Unit

## CLOUD COMPUTING – A TECHNOLOGY PLATFORM FOR THE NGO

Much has been written about how cloud computing is impacting private enterprises, large and small. But another story is being written – how forward-thinking NGOs and humanitarian organizations are using cloud to fight disease, educate remote populations, and support economic development in the poorest societies.

One of great challenges to the growth of cloud has been the absence of supporting infrastructure – particularly in less developed regions. This is in the process of being resolved. Governments and private entities are aggressively building out broadband and wireless networks – with annual growth of approximately 30% projected in emerging economies.




*While developing markets are starting from a smaller infrastructure base, they are experiencing higher growth rates.*

Beyond their higher growth, cloud networks may be particularly suited to the situations and missions of NGOs. The following are some of the reasons:

1. **Cloud computing provides low-cost computing:** Non-profits are often starved of cash. The cloud model provides access to low-cost computing power without big capital investment. *An example is Rwanda- based Kepler Kigali, which offers poor Rwandans an American-accredited college degree for about $1000 per year.*

2. **Cloud can help the small organization to scale up:** Cloud forms a ready platform for going global. *The NGO Phandeeyar (which means creation place in Burmese) organized a series of low-cost hackathons to globally crowd-source solutions for health problems in Myanmar.*

3. **Cloud enables a non-profit to access advanced data analytics:** Using a software-as-a service model, *The Chennai-based National Institute of Epidemiology is able to use big*

*data to conduct epidemiological surveillance on the transmission of leprosy in rural India.*

4. **Cloud connects all the other technologies:** Cloud enables the seamless experience between multiple devices, data, and content. *M-Pesa, which provides an alternative payments and micro-finance system for Kenyans, uses cloud to knit together its mobile apps, customer transaction data, and social media outreach. These innovations allow previously underbanked Kenyans access to financial services.*

Finally, the evolution of cloud infrastructure may accelerate cloud deployment in developing societies. The emergence of mobile and wireless networks enables rapid cloud development, while bypassing the need to build out expensive copper wire networks. This can accelerate the delivery of cloud solutions to poor and remote populations around the globe.

Many development organizations are in the exploration stages in determining how cloud and other technologies can support their humanitarian mission. NetHope, a private NGO, has partnered with the UN Foundation and private companies such as Intel Corporation and Microsoft to publish a practical playbook on the use of Information and Communications (ICT) for humanitarian purposes. You can access the document *From Innovation to Impact* here.