

**Global Consultation Meeting
on Disaster Information Centers**

**San Jose, Costa Rica
18 to 20 November 1998**

Final Report



**World Health Organization
Pan American Health Organization**

In collaboration with the



**International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction
Regional Disaster Information Center**

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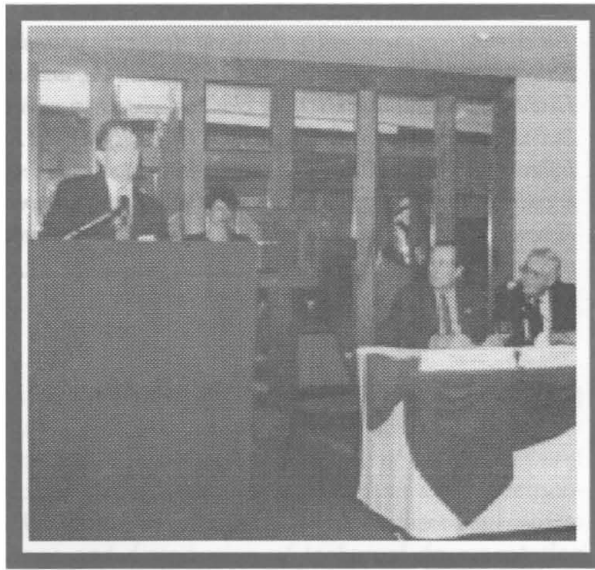
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Introduction

***F**rom 18 to 20 November 1998, a technical consultation meeting was held in San José, Costa Rica, on the subject of networking among disaster information centres. The consultation meeting followed recommendations of the second WHO/EHA Inter-regional Meeting held in Geneva in December 1997, and the II Regional Meeting on Disaster Information for Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Costa Rica in March 1998.*

The meeting was organized by the World Health Organization, Department of Emergency and Humanitarian Action (WHO/EHA), and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), in close collaboration with the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) and the Regional Disaster Information Center (CRID). Its purpose was to identify strategies to share knowledge and information, stimulate collaboration, improve cost-effective dissemination of information, and explore options for on-site information services to humanitarian actors in the field.

Through discussion and analysis of current experiences, the meeting aimed to establish permanent contact among documentation centers worldwide. Plans to create a global network of compatible and common resources were to be developed, based on current technologies and work procedures. Recommendations were expected to improve exchange and distribution of technical documentation among those responsible for managing emergencies, and to obtain support from governments, donors and development agencies.

A wealth of technical documentation is available to the users, particularly in industrialized countries. At the same time, it is often slow to arrive to those who need it most. The technical capacity to properly manage information and knowledge can be used by professionals in specialized centers to meet the needs of users. The use of new technologies should be combined with traditional services, and collaboration among centers should be promoted. In this way, documentation centers will be able to contribute to the prevention, mitigation and effective management of disasters.