

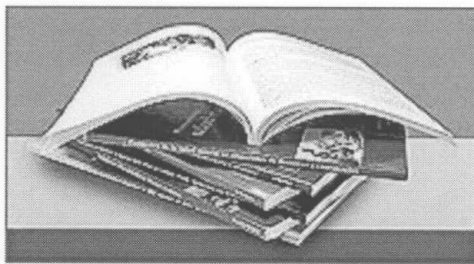
Leaders course in Jamaica in 2003. The International Training Course on Disasters and Development was organized by the South East Asia Regional Office (SEARO) of the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Program, and the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center. A former PAHO staff member served as the course facilitator, bringing with him the experience of having participated in more than seven courses in Latin America and the Caribbean. There is now an increased interest on the part of the WHO West Pacific Region (WPRO) to organize a LEADERS course in the Philippines in 2005.

The LEADERS network is an informal group of “graduates” of past courses that keeps in regular contact through a listserv, a web site, and on a one-on-one basis, in order to discuss areas of common interest and provide mutual support. It has become clear that the members of this network will require follow-up training in specific areas such as management of humanitarian assistance, project development, and management techniques if the momentum is to be sustained.

With regard to the international HELP (Health Emergencies in Large Populations) courses (México and Johns Hopkins University), PAHO’s contribution was instrumental in developing the course in Cuernavaca, México, through course planning and support, as well as the identification, selection and mobilization of instructors and participants. The health emergency module used in the English-language HELP course was developed in Baltimore, MD and presented by PED. It contributed to the dissemination of information regarding regional strategies in disaster mitigation and preparation among the participants of this course who came from other Caribbean countries, U.S. non-governmental organizations and cooperation agencies.



Fifteen new or completely revamped technical or scientific publications on all aspects of disaster management.



A list of new publications and technical materials developed in 2004 can be found in Annex 2. In some critical topic areas related to disaster preparedness and mitigation, it is not enough to simply publish manuals and guidelines. Supplementary materials must be developed in order to make the most of the publication or allow it to be used as a teaching aid. In keeping with initiatives implemented in previous years, an updated version of the *Hospital Planning for Disasters* material has been prepared. It includes a new “training of trainers” module, and all of the existing material and training aids that had been used in courses were updated. This course was the most widely offered course in 2004. Training material to support the publication *Damage and Needs Assessment in the Health Sector* (published at the end of 2003) was also finalized. The manual, *Management of Dead Bodies in Disasters*, quickly became one of the most popular publications, and in order to enhance its use, supporting material was made. A work plan/timetable was also established for the publication of new material on mental health in 2005. The most valuable aspect of this material is the support that it provides to the training of trainers, creating local capacity to handle disaster situations, and thus reducing dependency on PAHO.

PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
AREA ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND DISASTER RELIEF  
**Annual Report 2004**

---

During the second half of 2004, an **evaluation of our publications** was carried out in four Spanish-speaking countries of the Region: Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras and Costa Rica. The purpose of the survey was to gain a better understanding and in particular their level of satisfaction regarding information resources and publications. At the same time, the study was to provide a technically validated look into how the publications were used, and their influence. A copy of the Spanish version of the survey is available upon request, or on the web at [www.disaster-info.net/encuestainforme](http://www.disaster-info.net/encuestainforme). An abbreviated version in English is attached in Annex 3. Several highlights of this evaluation include:

***User satisfaction***

- ❑ People under 30 years of age (17.3% of the recipients of the newsletter) consider the contents of these materials to be innovative and well-written. Those in the 31-60 age group (71.5%) appear to have clearer ideas regarding the ability to achieve goals through the use of the publications and tend to use the publications more widely. Adults over 61 (2.9%) find publications difficult to understand and cannot identify any specific added value in them.

***Dissemination, distribution and access***

- ❑ Internet downloads seem to be the preferred method of distribution for publications, followed by individual replies, CRID, local PAHO Offices, and PAHO meetings or workshops. Even though 93% of the respondents have Internet access, it does not necessarily imply they actually use it to obtain information about publications or to consult them. In fact, 30% of the respondents visit our web page less than once a month.

***Impact***

- ❑ Professionals interested in emergencies and disaster management, technical staff of related institutions (i.e. NGOs, municipalities), and upper management officials, in that order, are the most frequent readers/users of publications for reference and research, formal and informal training, and to improve their knowledge.

Those responding to the survey made some interesting suggestions, including the need improve dissemination and distribution (i.e. to achieve greater availability), develop more publications for policy makers and managers, update obsolete publications, broaden the target audience, and produce more in-depth publications on mental health, hazardous materials, and chemical accidents.

Regarding recommendations and priority actions, it was determined that dissemination and distribution are the weakest points, and that improvement is required on several fronts. The necessary improvements include a need to improve the coordination and participation of PAHO Offices, improve focal points in the distribution process, and more regular delivery of the Disasters newsletter (i.e. need to improve quality of data in mailing list, dissemination and distribution of books with better focus on target groups).

PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
AREA ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND DISASTER RELIEF  
**Annual Report 2004**

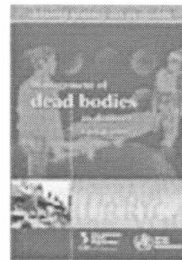
---

The new Manual on *Management of Dead Bodies in Disasters* (published in English by the World Health Organization) created opportunities for joint dissemination and training activities among several international organizations including ICRC, IFRC, and WHO. In the two months following the tsunami in South Asia in December 2004, several thousand copies of the book were distributed worldwide. PAHO's Public Information Department helped to disseminate the critical message of this book after emergencies in Haiti and the Dominican Republic and later in Asia. The manual also received unprecedented attention in the media (see box).

Applying new technologies to the learning process creates innovative training products. A case in point is the multimedia simulation exercise on volcanic emergencies that is currently being developed. The software, designed with the support of the Monterrey Technical Institute in Mexico, will enable the development of exercises on decision-making and technical coordination with the Emergency Operations Centers. Participants will "play" different roles, solving problems during a simulated emergency. This builds capacity for applying technology to solve real problems related to emergencies and disasters.

PAHO collaborates often with national and international organizations to prepare new technical materials. As an example, five new guidelines on health preparedness for volcanic eruptions were developed and are being tested with a group of operational, academic and scientific organizations working in disasters and emergencies in Ecuador and Colombia (i.e. Ministries of Health, Red Cross Societies, Civil Defense, seismological institutes, NGOs).

**Mass media's much needed contribution**



It is a well-known fact that the direst crisis offers a window of opportunity to work with the media in the dissemination of technical messages to help destroy myths and create awareness regarding certain conducts or inadequate decisions that might further increase damage or suffering inflicted to the victims. How to deal with cadavers is one of the most significant myths that, due to social and cultural sensitivities, has generated hasty decisions in the management and disposal of corpses in emergencies (unidentified bodies, mass burials, mass cremations, to mention a few).

In the days following the tsunami that devastated Asia in December, PAHO's Public Information Department published a press release based on the technical recommendations included in the book (available at <http://www.paho.org/english/dd/pin/pr050104.htm>). Some days later, we conducted an Internet search (in Google and Yahoo). The results indicated more than 550 direct references to that press release in different media around the world, highlighting the fact that, contrary to popular belief, cadavers do not pose a health risk in disaster situations. A few months before that, a scientific