

## Increased access at the local level to global sources of disaster and risk reduction information.

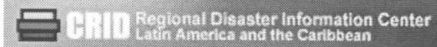


As in previous years, the mission of the Regional Disaster Information Center (CRID) continued to expand beyond its original mission to gather and disseminate disaster-related information. In 2004, CRID consolidated alliances with several external partners including the National Library of Medicines (NLM), DIPECHO, the Caribbean Disaster Information Network (CARDIN), the University of West Indies, the Regional Health Sciences Information Center (BIREME), and Ministries of Health and National Emergency Commissions in the Americas, all of which allowed CRID to expand its distribution network at relatively low cost.

One of the key new strategies developed by CRID in 2004 is the preparation of several informational kits to support training and preparedness, mitigation and response activities. Six kits were developed in 2004 and others are expected to be finalized in 2005. These kits were electronically distributed to PAHO offices and other organizations in Haiti and the Dominican Republic during the 2004 floods.

By December 2004 the number of documents available electronically through the CRID had increased to 5,200, from 3,000 at the end of 2003. It is estimated that with the additional support received from ECHO, this number will double during 2005. This is extremely important, as CRID has noted that access to computers and the Internet is becoming more and more available to most organizations in the Region. In addition, the easy, immediate, and free access to the information encourages users to increase utilization of the resources available through CRID, as web statistics have shown that satisfied users return. Finally, digital documentation is readily available beyond the Americas, increasing CRID's user base. However, to be realistic CRID continued to deliver information by regular mail when other means of communication were not available.

As recommended by the external evaluation carried out in 2003, CRID has increased its promotional and training activities. Within the training activities, CRID co-organized a workshop in Lima, Peru to develop institutional capacities. This activity was attended by professionals from the Andean region along with professionals from Costa Rica and Cuba. In Honduras CRID carried out a workshop for the training of trainers in health disaster information resources. The CARDIN coordinator spent a week in CRID's offices training in information management. Following this training, the University of West Indies



### **CRID becomes major producer of information products**

An important achievement in 2004 has been CRID's reduction in its external technical and technological dependence on sources as it has developed its capacity to produce many of its products in-house.

The new series of information packets is one example. With packets currently covering topics such as drought, risk maps, community participation, hurricanes, floods and earthquakes, these kits package together general information about the topic, training materials, contact information, web site links, recommendations and even information for special groups.

CRID's increased institutional capacities have helped the Center attain leadership in the disaster information 'market' in the Region as they devise new methods of organizing

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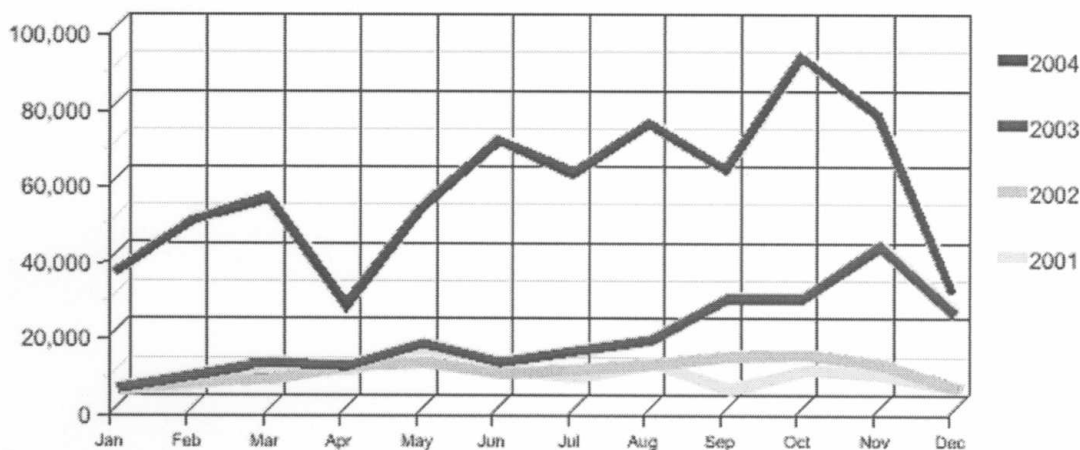
has enhanced its relationship with CRID to share information and request assistance in the preparation of material related to health and disaster information. CRID has also responded to many requests for technical assistance in the development of materials. Participation in forums and training sessions has also become a standard CRID activity.



The Central American Health and Disaster Information Network continued its activities and added Guatemala as a new partner. A training activity was carried out in Guatemala with instructors from CRID, PAHO, ISDR and NLM. The activity helped to strengthen the national capacity in access and management of technical information on health and disasters. The impact of this network can be seen in the quality and quantity of new products and services provided, and the request of replicating this experience in the countries of South America. The centers of Honduras and El Salvador are already providing training activities at local level without direct involvement of CRID.

The web site on Health and Population Displacement has been a key strategic component of this multi-country project. As the graphic demonstrates, there was a steep rise in the number of visitors to the site in 2004 (674,233).

**Visits to the webpage "Health and Displacement" 2001-2004**



Measurement tool: <http://www.webstat.com>

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The increase was due to improvements in tracking the actual interior consulted as well as to stepped-up efforts to expand the documentation offered, which includes technical documents, legislation, and reports on public health aspects of population displacement. The site has been reorganized and is now easier to navigate, thanks to an improved search engine. It has also been more widely publicized throughout the international community.

Because of the multiple humanitarian actors and efforts underway in Colombia to address issues related to health and displacement, a Humanitarian Action Plan was developed in 2004. The plan is a joint effort among the government in Colombia, civil society humanitarian groups, donors, and the UN system to contribute, in a coordinated manner, to the response to the health needs of the at-risk population living in these conditions. The health committee, chaired by PAHO and the Ministry of Health, is made up of national and UN agencies and civil society. Donor agencies have entrusted the committee with the task of reviewing funding proposals prepared by local institutions and identifying those that address priority health needs. The web site has improved coordination and access to information about these projects. The database of institutions, which was revamped in 2004, offers extensive information on all actors working in issues related to the health of the displaced population in Colombia and neighboring countries. This institutional database was the most utilized area of the web site in 2004, followed by the section on maps, the section on occupational health training of a French Red Cross manual, Ministry of Health guidelines on the psychosocial response and nutritional standards.