ReliefWeb: A Global Information Resource for Disaster Management

ReliefWeb is a project of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA). The purpose of this effort is to strengthen the response capacity of the humanitarian relief community through the timely dissemination of reliable information on prevention, preparedness and disaster response.

Objectives

The ReliefWeb project is aimed to provide:

1. Wide array of sources
2. Open architecture (upwards and downwards compatible with legacy and future software)
3. Easy navigation (well organized)
4. Multi-lingual support
5. Multi-platform compatibility (Macintosh, Windows, Unix, 386, 486, Pentium, color, black-white)
6. Continuous utility-assessment (usage monitoring, feedback and search success-rate)
7. Sustainability
8. Management of time-critical information
   - timely dissemination
   - text searching
   - meta-data searching (see below)
   - portability
   - assured 24-hour access and monitoring
   - personalization (remembers individual user's language preferences, etc.)
   - immediate acquisition
   - geo-referencing (place, name, latitude, longitude)
   - field level access
9. Spring-board for background information

Implementation

The system distinguishes between emergency/time-critical information and background data.

Emergency/Time-Critical Information

The emergency component is comprised of: Information Acquisition: via e-mail, the WorldWideWeb (WWW), telex, etc. In case of necessity faxes can be incorporated, but the leveraging of existant technical capacity to transmit digitally is strongly encouraged.

Information Management and Treatment

This module makes use of Lotus Notes to handle various stages of internal work-flow, to manage meta-database and to facilitate the division of labor between the DHA Geneva and the DHA New York.

Dissemination

Via WWW, e-mail, CD ROM, and appropriate technology for the field. The Bulletin, The Latest, various personalization techniques and the meta-data search engine together assure timely alerts and easy navigation of the information store. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has been contracted to provide WWW hosting and e-mail listserv services. ITU is also providing 24-hour access to modem pool, which will ensure access to ReliefWeb should the Internet prove unstable or slow.

Information Sources

ReliefWeb contains:

Meta-Database. A bibliographic record is maintained for every document, whether textual or multimedia. This collection of bibliographic records, known as meta-database, facilitates:

- the automation of publishing and dissemination
- concept searching in addition to free-text searching.

Meta-database fields include:

- Source
- Emergency (Great Lakes, Caucasus, etc.)
- Document: Title-full, Title-Short, date
- Format (Situation report, Appeal, Analysis,

http://www.reliefweb.int