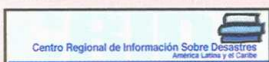


Disseminating Information is as Important as Generating it



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ONE OF THE GOALS OF THE IDNDR IS TO "...SPREAD EXISTING AND FUTURE INFORMATION ON DISASTER REDUCTION.." IN FACT, THERE IS A WHOLE LOT OF INFORMATION BEING PREPARED AND ORGANIZED ON NATURAL HAZARDS, POLICIES, TRAINING, COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES, ETC. DISASTER COORDINATORS, UNIVERSITIES, RESEARCHERS, SCIENTISTS AND PROFESSIONALS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS HAVE ALL AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN GENERATING INFORMATION THROUGH PROMOTION, DISASTER IMPACT ANALYSIS, THESIS, STUDIES, WORKSHOPS AND RESEARCH PROGRAMS.

But does all this information reach the ones that need it to take accurate decisions? Or the ones that work in the field with community organizations and development work to reduce vulnerability and respond adequately to reduce disasters?

One of "the missing links" is frequently the lack of access, processing and dissemination of the information available to achieve disaster reduction. In this sense the IDNDR should make a difference. There are many ways of improving the access to useful information. A "modern" way is to make the information available on the World Wide Web and Internet. However, still remains the need to manage printed and audiovisual documents.

This article describes how a couple of organizations – most with international or regional outreach – is developing a system to collect, process and disseminate existing written documentation and audiovisuals produced locally or internationally. The first step was the conformation of a multi-organizational Regional Disaster Information Center for Latin America and the Caribbean (CRID) based on the experiences of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) / IDNDR Regional Disaster Documentation Center in San José, Costa Rica. The overall umbrella for CRID is provided by the IDNDR Secretariat through the regional representative in San José. Member organizations are: PAHO/WHO, CEPREDENAC, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Regional Emergency Office of Médecins Sans Frontières and the National Emergency Commission of Costa Rica, who hosts the Center. Another important partner is LA RED, the Network for Social Studies in Disaster Prevention for Latin America.

A second step is to create a Regional Disaster Information Network, where universities, research centers, NGOs and national organizations form part of an interactive information exchange, through bibliographic and Internet services.

Partnerships and Networking

Sharing information and spreading it is a task for many. It requires resources and is therefore best accomplished by building on partnerships among a wide range of interested organizations, that will benefit by the availability of their own and others documents.

The CRID was born as a multi-organizational project after a Regional Meeting on Disaster Information Strategy and Dissemination, held in San José, February 1997. The conclusions issued by the meeting, convened by IDNDR-DHA, were twofold:

a) To strengthen the Regional Disaster Documentation Center (PAHO-IDNDR) in San José and to widen it into a multi-organizational Regional Disaster Reduction Information Clearing House. Interested organizations then further developed the idea and finally signed, in May 1997, a Letter of Understanding to create the Regional Disaster Information Center.

b) To create a Regional Disaster Reduction Information Network (Sistema Regional de Información sobre Reducción de Desastres) where all existing Documentation

