

Multimedia



CRID:

Towards the consolidation of information networks for risk

For more than a decade, the Regional Disaster Information Center for Latin America and the Caribbean (CRID) has been working on the creation of specialized disaster information centers, and on implementing networks for strengthening the capacity required to systematize information resources. This process was given more importance after the devastating impact of Hurricane Mitch on several Central American countries in October 1998. At that time, several organizations decided to join efforts to strengthen the meager existing information services and resources specializing in disaster management in Central America.



This effort led to the creation of the Central American Network for Disaster and Health Information (CANDHI) in 2000. Made up at first by the two countries that had been the most affected by Hurricane Mitch—Honduras and Nicaragua—the network later expanded to include the entire isthmus. The National Library of Medicine of the United States (NLM), the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), and the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) contributed with resources to this initiative.

In the last year and a half, a new network of information centers has taken shape in the Andean region: the Network of Virtual Libraries for Disaster Prevention and Response (BiVa-PaD). This network is operating in an equally vulnerable region with the same goals and methods to make information available to professionals and users who need it to formulate policies, provide documentation for initiatives or projects, or simply improve their own knowledge on the issue.

Creation of Specialized Information Networks for Risk Management

In the process of developing specialized networks, CRID's primary role has been to provide technical assistance. As these networks have been created and strengthened, CRID has been able to find its own niche in the area of disaster information management. CRID is not only a center for collecting specialized resources on this issue; it is also a unit that provides assistance and expertise, thus contributing to the development of a model to create information centers, which can be replicated in many countries of Latin America. It is clear that there is a need for this type of role. While there are many institutions working on risk management, they continue to face significant limitations in the area of selecting information, organizing it, and making it available to the public.

CRID is taking significant steps towards the creation and strengthening of these information structures, which are clearly a value added for participating countries. In the framework of the BiVa-PaD¹ project, one example of these steps is a workshop held in Ecuador last February, where computer programmers and

information management personnel from the institutions that lead the Disaster Response and Prevention Systems of the Andean countries were brought together to discuss a number of issues in parallel sessions. The goal of the workshop was to strengthen the information management mechanisms and resources of these institutions.

II Sub-regional Workshop for the Creation of the Virtual Libraries Network of the Andean Region: the BiVa-PaD Network



CRID continues to lend support to the centers that participated in the project that contributed to establishing the CANDHI network, and would like to increase it in the months to come in order to improve the network's information services.

The CRID initiative is sustained by the ongoing support provided by the National Library of Medicine of the United States (NLM), since the time the CANDHI centers were established. The NLM is now providing new assistance to each center, in order to improve their services and information products on health and disasters. CRID—which will support all these centers along the process—will also receive financial support from NLM to improve and create new information services and products (a specialized portal on health and disasters, updated CDs on health and hurricanes, health and volcanoes, and the avian flu). CRID also contributes to building information management capacity in all CANDHI centers through virtual training.

Furthermore, CRID is engaged in technological innovation initiatives to strengthen national capacities of participating countries and their information centers. For instance, the Controlled Vocabulary on Disasters (CVD) has been revised and adapted to Wiki tools. This will make on-line collaboration between all the centers possible for the first time, and will allow for revisions and updates.

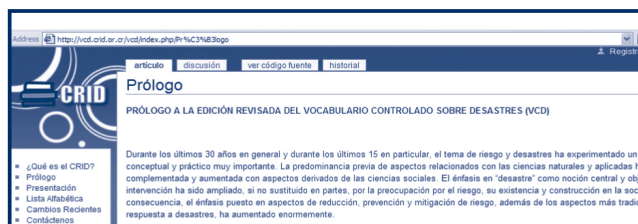


Image of the Controlled Vocabulary on Disasters (CVD), on Wiki

At the same time, CRID already has Metadoc, a tool that allows digitized documents to be managed by storing metadata in an XML file, which also helps to better manage, store and retrieve information included in these electronic documents. This tool also increases the possibilities for presenting the content of the documents in multiple formats (RSS, PDAs, Web services, etc.)

¹This effort has been developed in line with the Project to Support Disaster Prevention in the Andean Community (PREDECAN), which is co-financed by the European Union, the Secretary General of the Andean Community, and representatives of the Andean Committee for Disaster Response and Prevention (CAPRADE). The following organizations have also supported the implementation of the BiVa-PaD Network: the Pan-American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), with financial and technical support, and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR). The Regional Disaster Information Center for Latin America and the Caribbean (CRID) is responsible for the technical execution of the project.

The toolkit for managing disaster information will be updated in the next few months to include new content material. The format of the product will also be adapted so that it can be an Internet-based tool that all the countries are able to use.

The creation and development of this concept of information center networks draw on the use of the same information management model (based primarily on low cost tools, many of them created by BIREME² and used by different centers in Latin America) in the common search for technological and information management solutions that allow the proposed working model to be continuously refined, in order to better meet the needs of the users. This effort has relied on the support and collaboration received over the years through a number of synergies established with many institutions and organizations, such as the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), the Andean Community's Project to Support Disaster Prevention (PREDECAN), the National Library of Medicine of the United States (NLM), and the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO).

All these efforts have allowed for the creation and strengthening of the networks, which not only make it possible to decentralize information collection, but also to create a structure with various hubs that can become national reference points for providing information, as well as strategic partners for the ongoing refinement of the working model.

In addition to the challenge of continuing to develop an information management model that is useful for the countries of the region, CRID is devoting efforts to address another equally important challenge.

The big challenge: Turning Information into knowledge

So much information is being generated and produced today that the process of turning information into knowledge has become very complicated. A great deal of information exists all over Latin American on risk management-related issues. In fact, in the last few years, many initiatives have placed emphasis on the information issue by creating specialized portals and collecting experiences and tools.

Most of the time, however, it is difficult to turn information into knowledge, as well as to ensure that information is a basic part of the infrastructure for supporting the processes that are being

planned or implemented in the areas of disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation, response, and reconstruction. The great challenge we face is that of connecting theory to practice, extracting ideas that not only help us understand what is being done on the issue, but also provide guidance for new activities, policies, solutions, projects, and initiatives.

Bearing in mind this need, CRID has begun to take steps in this direction through several lines of work. One of the things we are doing is developing closer relationships with specialists and experts on the various areas related to risk management. These relationships should facilitate that connection needed between information management specialists and those who produce and generate the information, especially those who are key for transforming this information into knowledge.

In this sense, last May, CRID invited a number of recognized professionals and experts in Costa Rica to its first working breakfast on the issue of climate change and risk management.

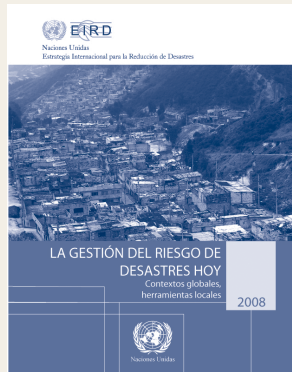
There are two primary goals for developing a closer relationship with these experts: 1) to create regional networks of specialists on CRID's work areas; and 2) to help CRID be able to better support, and provide information to the sectors targeted by its efforts (institutions dealing with risk management, the Ministry of Health's focal points for disasters, etc.), through greater ownership of its products, resources, and information services.

At the same time, CRID is also focusing on improving the way information resources are compiled on certain issues that represent a priority, defined by common agreement with CRID's most important partners (the Pan-American Health Organization and the UN's International Strategy for Disaster Reduction).

These are just some of the most important challenges that CRID will be facing in the near future and where it is already taking steps to address them. The ultimate goal is to improve its performance and recognition at the regional level as a high-level center specializing in the collection and distribution of risk management information, as well as to consolidate its role as an institution that provides countries of the region with technical assistance on information management, going beyond the paradigm of simple information collection and centralization, in order to turn information into knowledge through consolidated information centers in every country.

For more information please contact:
www.crid.or.cr

² BIREME is the Latin American and Caribbean Center for Information on Health Sciences. Its free access information management tools are used widely throughout the Latin American region.



Disaster Risk Management Today: Global Context, Local Tools

A new publication from the United Nations, secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) Regional unit for the Americas, "Disaster Risk Management Today: Global Context, Local Tools" is now available in print, web and CD versions. The publication provides state-of-the-art information on a series of themes in the area of disaster risk reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean.

This book is part of a collaborative framework of activities on local management and risk and vulnerability reduction, fostered by the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC) and the UNISDR in this region. Access the online version at <http://www.eird.org/gestion-del-riesgo/index.html> (in Spanish only)

PreventionWeb – a global information platform on Disaster Risk Reduction



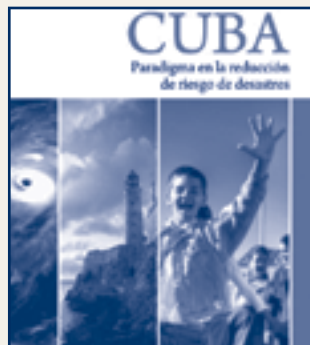
The UNISDR secretariat has launched PreventionWeb, an internet-based information portal on Disaster Risk Reduction. PreventionWeb provides an online forum for collaboration, knowledge sharing and exchange of experiences on Disaster Risk Reduction for policy makers, practitioners and the public at large.

Its primary purpose is to facilitate the work of professionals in Disaster Risk Reduction and promote an understanding of the subject to non-specialists. The site is updated daily, and contains news, initiatives, an event calendar, online discussions, contact directories, policy and reference documents, training events, jobs, terminology, country profiles, fact sheets as well as audio and video content.

We welcome contributions from partners working with Disaster Risk Reduction in the region of the Americas. You can upload documents, post events, initiatives and other Disaster Risk Reduction related content.

For more information please visit: <http://www.preventionweb.net>

Cuba: Paradigm of disaster risk reduction



Now available on CD, online and print versions the publication: "Cuba: Paradigm of disaster risk reduction".

Cuba is frequently quoted as a role model in disaster risk reduction due to its important and significant practical experience that can be shared with other countries.

The present publication facilitates the understanding of a country with scarce resources and with a strong governmental commitment to improve and preserve the social conditions of its people. Accumulating a variety of successful stories in the disaster risk reduction field within the Cuban Civil Defense System.

Author: José Llanes Guerra

OXFAM Solidaridad and the Administration of Development Cooperation of the Kingdom of Belgium. To obtain copies please write to fucadhu@fucadhu.org or access the online version at: <http://www.fucadhu.org/publicaciones/asp>

A new publication of the international research center on el niño phenomenon to commemorate its fifth anniversary

The International Research Center on El Niño Phenomenon (CIIFEN) was created in January 2003, in Guayaquil, Ecuador. More than 100 climate experts representing 33 countries 19 international organizations gathered for the opening ceremony of the Center. In order to create CIIFEN, a number of partnerships were established between the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) and the government of Ecuador. In 2005, the government of Spain joined the initiative to support the efforts of CIIFEN'S International Directorate.

In commemoration of its fifth anniversary, CIIFEN developed a publication that includes a summary of its products and services as well as its projects, both completed and underway. The publication also includes experiences, efforts and partnerships aimed at building capacity and developing climate-related products and services that could be applied throughout Latin America.

For further information, please contact Abigail Alvarado, Assistant, Information Systems.

International Research Center on El Niño Phenomenon

CIIFEN

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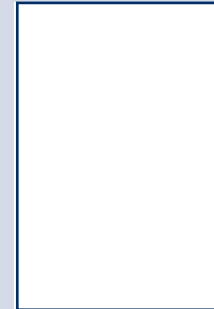
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Disaster Prevention Module

This module is prepared for basic education teachers as a support document to prepare and guide students in the disaster prevention area. The content includes information on: earthquakes, landslides, hurricanes, floods, tsunamis and other human-induced occurrences. This publication was based on a previous USAID publication and edited by the Ministry of Education of El Salvador with support from the European Union.

For more information please visit: www.miportal.edu.sl

Characteristics of a disaster resilient community

In 2006, five UK-based international development organisations plus the British Red Cross jointly commissioned a review of existing monitoring and evaluation frameworks for livelihoods and disaster risk reduction projects. The aim of the joint undertaking was to develop a better understanding of what sets of indicators could be employed at the local level to assess progress of efforts in increasing community resilience. In recent years, these agencies have received funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for disaster risk reduction (DRR) initiatives and to support the promotion of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), particularly at the local level. However, when discussing how to monitor the success of the implementation of the HFA, it became apparent that there was nothing to measure its impact at the community level.

The results of this participatory review involving the agencies and their Southern partners are published under the title 'Characteristics of a Disaster Resilient Community'. The launch of the publication presents a first step in a process of piloting and testing the suggested framework that the commissioning agencies have committed to. Action Aid, Christian Aid, International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Plan UK, Practical Action and Tearfund have agreed to use these characteristics as a basis for developing monitoring indicators, structuring project evaluations, for capacity assessments and conducting wider impact analysis in a number of countries and disaster risk reduction activities.

All agencies will use the characteristics either to develop new or improve existing project monitoring indicators. The main activities monitored within this framework will be disaster risk reduction and livelihoods initiatives that aim to contribute to improving people's capacity to respond to, cope with and recover from natural hazards and other external shocks.



Online Historical Earthquake Catalogue in Venezuela



Following some three years of painstaking documentary research and database development, Venezuela has opened its catalogue of historical earthquake information to the public. This website provides systematized information on destructive seismic events that have occurred since 1530 in both Venezuela and in the regions bordering Colombia and Trinidad and Tobago.

This project is one of 28 initiatives implemented between 2002 and 2004 by the Applied Research Program on Risk Management and Disaster Reduction, of the Venezuelan Ministry of Science and Technology.

Although there are other catalogues of adverse events already online, the *Sistema de Teleinformación de Sismología Histórica de Venezuela* (Online Historical Earthquake Information System of Venezuela) is an important electronic tool that will provide quick access to a wide range of information on Venezuela's earthquake history. The catalogue has detailed data on seismic events, including their epicenters and intensity (as determined by various authors and methods). It also contains a large bibliography of documentary information on the events, including eyewitness reports, original documents in electronic format, research papers and other written and audiovisual materials. The user can access abstracts and complete documents. The team that worked on this project included seismologists, geologists, geomorphologists, historians, anthropologists, educators, engineers and programmers, all under the coordination of Dr. Christl Palme of the Regional Center for Humanities, Economics and Social Research at the University of Los Andes, Venezuela.

It is expected that the wealth of information in the database and its user-friendly design will encourage research into the history of earthquakes in Venezuela and the region. It is also hope of that it will spark the interest of students and the public at large, in order to increase their awareness that they live in a country with significant seismic hazards.

The *Online Historical Earthquake Information System of Venezuela* is available at <http://sismicidad.hacer.ula.ve>
For further information, please contact:

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A new kit for disaster risk reduction



The new material was prepared in the context of the Proyecto Escuela Amiga [Friendly School], the Project for Disaster Risk Reduction, led by Self-Sustaining, Popular Research and Education (IEPAAC) —a UNICEF implementing partner—, and the Disaster Risk Management Program, of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Children and youth from the port of Chabihau, located in the municipality of Yobain Yucatan, Mexico, actively participated in developing this material.

Its focus is on educational activities related to disaster risk reduction. In addition, the kit includes material that, would contribute to the psychological recovery of children and youth affected by the occurrence of a disastrous event.

The *Mochila para la Reducción de Riesgos de Desastres* [Kit for Disaster Risk Reduction] includes:

- A user's manual and a guide for psychological recovery.
- A manual for disaster risk reduction school plans.
- Educational games and learning activities for disaster prevention, especially in case of a hurricane (e.g. "Lotería" (a Mexican game of chance), "Seesaw with the Toloks," and "Memory").
- Support material for post-traumatic stress psychological interventions (e.g. "the Dominos of Emotions," "the Rag Family", and puppets).

Survey

An online survey has been designed to measure the perception of the magazine "ISDR Informs – The Americas" among its readership; with the aim to adapt and improve the publication according to readers' needs.

Please have a look and fill out the questionnaire, and give your opinion on the magazine.

You can access the survey online:

<http://www.esurveyspro.com/Survey.aspx?id=b40b8f1e-b4f0-4257-a9d8-b02b863bd299>