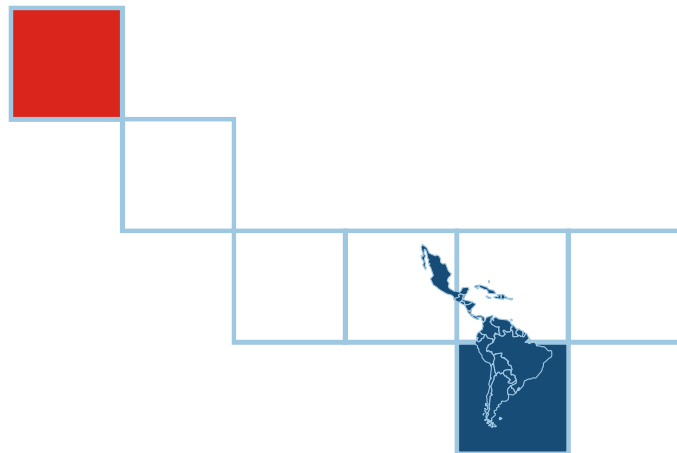


## Let knowledge be known:

### Some examples of socializing research and expertise in Central America



By Dave Paul Zervaas (CRID and UN/ISDR)  
At the WCDR - Kobe  
January 2005

# Central American Network for Disaster and Health Information

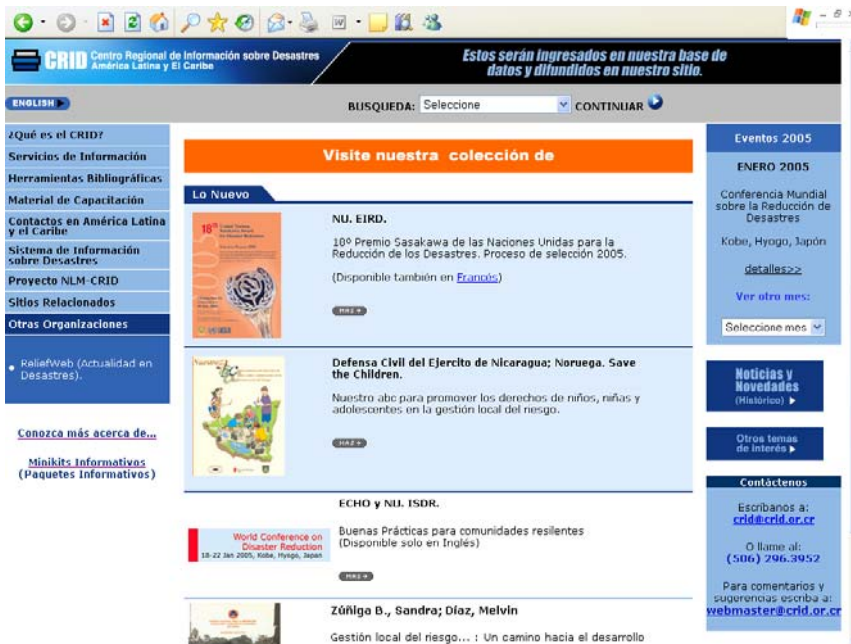
**CANDHI**

# Achievements and Perspectives of the Project

- ... Facilitates the access, exchange and diffusion of information that may help in decision making processes aimed at reducing risks and disasters.
- ... It promotes inter-institutional cooperation in order to make better use of existing resources and to create new capacities, training programs and technological resources.
- ... In short, the project creates those capacities that are needed to make centers act as reliable information providers for a large variety of users in the Region.

## Project is supported by

The US National Library of Medicine (NLM) is the main project funder. ISDR and PAHO/WHO also contribute financial and technical resources.

A screenshot of the CRID website interface. The page is in English and features a search bar at the top with the text "Estos serán ingresados en nuestra base de datos y difundidos en nuestro sitio." Below the search bar, there is a navigation menu on the left with categories like "¿Qué es el CRID?", "Servicios de Información", and "Herramientas Bibliográficas". The main content area is titled "Visite nuestra colección de" and lists several articles, including "10º Premio Sasakawa de las Naciones Unidas para la Reducción de los Desastres" and "Defensa Civil del Ejército de Nicaragua; Noruega. Save the Children." The right sidebar contains sections for "Eventos 2005", "Noticias y Novedades", and "Contáctenos".

Nine Information Centers make up the local nodes. One of these, CRID, acts as the main hub and capacity builder.

- 1 in Costa Rica
- 2 in Honduras
- 2 in Nicaragua
- 3 in El Salvador
- 1 in Guatemala

## Areas of work

### Technological infrastructure

- Networks, servers, connectivity and internet, operational systems



### Training in a variety of themes

- Information management, website development, thesauri, digitization, training for trainers (for local training), toolkit to set up information services



### New information products

- Databases on line, websites, CDs



## Areas of work

### Inter-institutional cooperation

- Communication, shared strategies



### Provide added-value services to other sectors

- Respond to emerging needs, give information to assist in decision making processes, provide assessment on information management

**CRID** Centro Regional de Información sobre Desastres  
Regional Disaster Information Center

**La percepción y las estrategias de análisis de información dependen mucho del contexto >>**

Tiempo de procesamiento: 47s

donde a es el tiempo de procesamiento por unidad (cuadrado) y n es el número de unidades (cuadrados) que se procesa en un momento.

1 17 22 25 27 segundos

Tiempo de procesamiento: 475s

donde a es el tiempo de procesamiento por unidad (cuadrado) y n es el número de unidades (cuadrados) que se procesa en un momento.

2 35 202 225 segundos

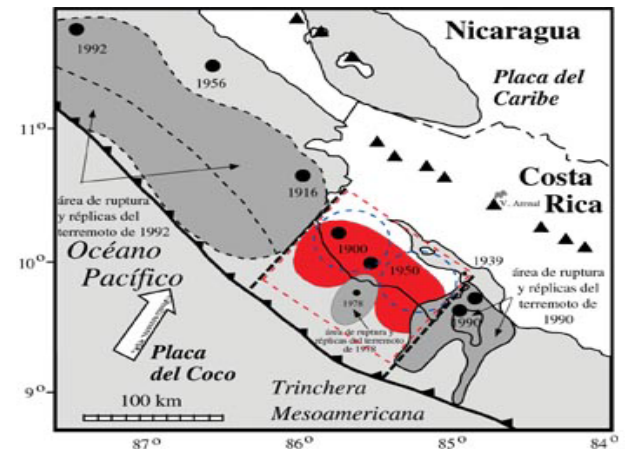
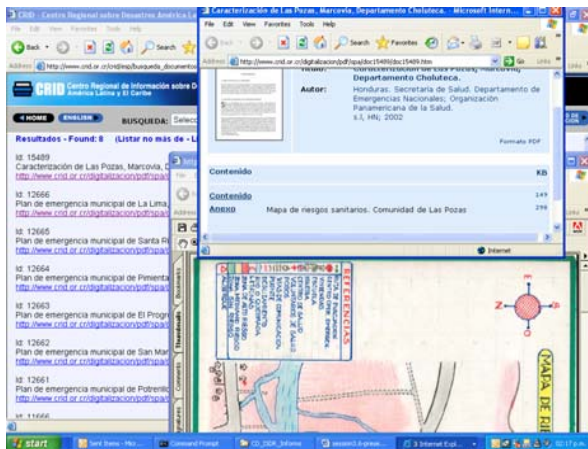
Busque la persona X', quien está en un grupo de otras personas, vestimenta desconocida.

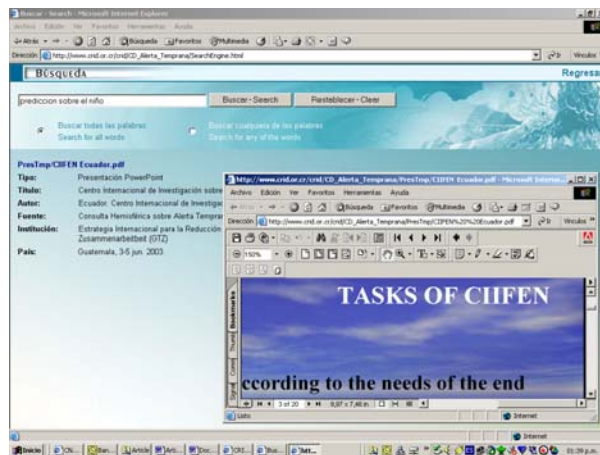
Busque la persona X', quien viste sombrero grande azul.

> Conocimiento sobre el contexto puede facilitar la captura de significado o el descubrir un patrón.

**R**esearch, its applications and good information management are necessary (albeit not sufficient) inputs to successful disaster prevention and mitigation.

**M**aking relevant (research) information available and usable for different types of stakeholders –including many non-scientists–, is also an important ingredient in the sustainable development process in many regions of the world





**I**nformation must be digestible and have meaning for different types of stakeholders, many of them with a non-specialized background but who nevertheless are important social actors and promoters of change.

**M**otivation, sense of ownership, and sense of meaning or significance will remain basic factors for making knowledge a valued, well-applied and used asset in societies.

**T**here often are large differences between developed and poor countries as far as the applications of research and knowledge is concerned.



**T**here are many reasons for this: Lack of access to information; an impoverished population with lack of resources to use or share relevant information; political agenda's that assign priorities to other issues that seem politically more rewarding on the short term; and many more.

**T**he fact that research is not produced locally, means in no way that all is lost. On the contrary, as long as relevant research from other sources is made available and adapted to local needs and duly socialized, a society can become much more resilient to disasters.



Economy, social networks, shared values, political effort and educational system all determine how much and what research is done and where and when it is socialized and put to work. Critical elements in making research happen and make it 'user-friendly' are the degree of stakeholder opportunities of having some sort of control or influence and involvement over the process.

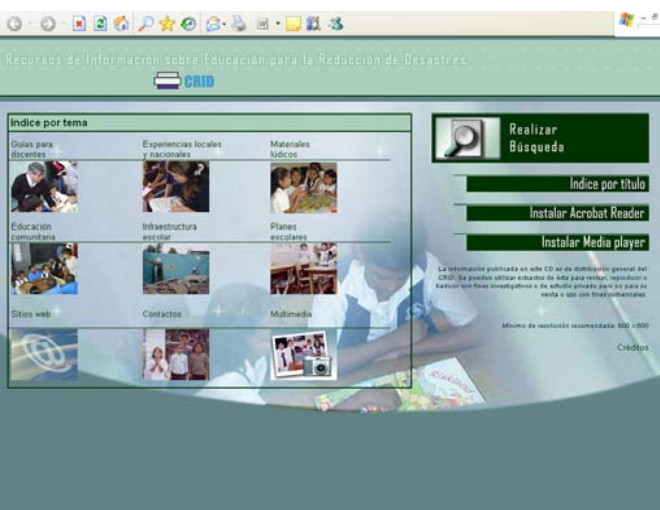
In Central America, some lessons learnt through the implementation of several projects of making research better known and more accessible (by both ease of getting to it as well as adjusting it to different needs), may give some useful hints.



**W**here applicable make sure to have stakeholders involved where they can exercise creativity and exert some control over the process of designing, doing or socializing research.

**T**ry as much as possible to use appropriate technology, combining 'low-tech' and 'high' or 'medium' tech according to local opportunities.

**S**cience and research policy should be able to feed from insights from social science, and even more so in developing or poor nations, in determining how to increase its relevance on the political agenda, how to socialize research results and insights, besides of course pure social and other science applications per se.



**Q: How to help make collaboration easier, to motivate more stakeholders to become part and to socialize research?**

**A:** Make research easily available and make sure to have something for all

**A:** Invite practitioners of pure, applied and other types of science and knowledge to share their insights. This means encouraging and making available so-called ‘gray’ data, too. (not strictly of a scientific character but that are of other practical value such as experiential data, project reports, opinions, semi-experimental designs, multimedia, etc)

**A:** The information (mostly) should be free of cost and there should be both ‘raw’ (that can be understood by experts) and ‘digested’ (for non-specialists) information.

**A:** Information centers, using appropriate and evolving technology, can be used to provide these services with quite low-cost means, as experience has clearly shown in Latin America

**A:** Make user-friendliness and variety of information the basic ingredients of your information supply. Yes, internet but not only. Also, make sure to create stand-alone, easy to use information products, too, so these can be used almost anywhere.

## **So, what types of research are deemed truly useful?**

That question is hard to answer as needs are so varied and hazards and social circumstances change from place to place. However, on the basis of the above, may I suggest the following for especially those areas with limited resources:

- ... Increase research on how to improve the chances of socialization of research (including public awareness and behavior change) and other types of relevant knowledge
- ... Research on early warning systems with appropriate and easy-to-maintain technology
- ... Make sure not to exclude groups of non-academic researchers or practitioners that can contribute to new insights and help build a bridge between theory and practice on a wider scale.