Sharing Knowledge: the experience of the Field Library for Disaster Reduction

Knowledge investment is a vital element for disaster reduction
Objectives: • to enhance greater access to information and increase knowledge on disaster reduction among various target groups in hazard-prone countries through active partnerships with disaster reduction practitioners, researchers, educators, national and local leaders, regional institutions, local communities, libraries, NGOs, UN and other international development agencies;

• to support on-going effort in creating a culture of disaster prevention that ultimately will result in communities more resilient to the effects of natural, technological, environmental and biological hazards.

Audiences: • National Disaster Management Offices
• National Platforms for disaster reduction and focal points for the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA)
• Local authorities and community leaders
• Regional institutions
• Key educational institutions
• UN organizations and agencies
• Non Governmental Organizations

Contents: A blue metal trunks on wheels contains a collection of:

• 180 books and journals on disaster risk reduction and related subjects such as sustainable development, environment, urban risks, health, gender, community action, climate change, micro-finance, early warning systems, education, governance, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Islands Developing States (SIDS)

• a Catalogue on the collection together with a set of Guidelines

WHY a Field Library?
The Needs: • Lack of knowledge to support practitioners, researchers, students
• Lack of financial resources
• Difficulty in using internet
• Insufficient equipment and literature on Disaster Risk Reduction in universities

Dispatch: The Field Library for Disaster Reduction is prepared by the ISDR Library and dispatched to the beneficiaries by UN Pouch and carriers.
PHASE ONE

During the past few years, the UN/ISDR Library for disaster reduction (based in Geneva, Switzerland) received increased demands for academic, technical and scientific information from various governments, disaster reduction centers, scientific institutions, NGOs, local authorities and universities. Considering that investing in knowledge is a vital component of disaster risk reduction, the secretariat of UN/ISDR took an initiative in 2005 to develop and disseminate small field libraries comprising books and documentation produced by scientific and other institutions, UN agencies and other partners around the world, educational materials and multimedia covering various aspects of disaster risk reduction.

The recipients
African organizations (IGAD, African Union, SADC, SADRC) and the following countries: Bangladesh, Indonesia, India, Iran, Kenya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar, Oman, Seychelles, Somalia (Somali Embassy in Nairobi), South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, Yemen and Madagascar (French version).

PHASE TWO

The project has been reviewed by the UN/ISDR secretariat in consultation with its partners and with recipients of the first dispatch. It has been agreed that it would be more appropriate to organize the information in the libraries in the form of modules by type of hazards and other aspects of disaster risk reduction. In future, a UN/ISDR inter-agency committee will list the most relevant literature and decide on the “Best 10/5/… titles” for each module, after consultation with networks (ex: Gender, Drought, Landslides, etc.), practitioners, experts, UN partners, and NGOs. The project fits within the secretariat's overall strategic goals that are drawn from the principles established in the Hyogo Framework for Action, in particular the first three:

- Make disaster risk reduction a priority
- Know the risks and take action
- Build understanding and awareness

It is a far-reaching endeavour to disseminate relevant information to communities at risk, through the constitution of libraries or resource centres, ensuring that this information reaches the target populations in a timely and intelligible way. In doing so, UN/ISDR will build dynamic partnerships with local organisations and invest in local competences and resources.

UNIC, Myanmar

Madagascar

SEEDS, India

The Field Library was exhibited at the International Disaster Reduction Conference in Davos, August 27th – 1st September 2006 and very well received.

26 December 2006: a Field Library was officially handed over to the Ministry of Disaster Reduction and Human Rights of Sri Lanka, during a commemorative ceremony of the Indian Ocean tsunami.

Village Knowledge Centre, Brindaban

The Library has become popular among local students and researchers.
Elaboration of the first Field Library for Disaster Reduction in French

Project: Bibliothèque de terrain - Prévention et aléas naturels
UN/ISDR - GIAN/RUIG (Réseau Universitaire International de Genève)

Case Study: Madagascar

Madagascar is a land of extremes: extreme beauty, extreme biodiversity, but also extreme poverty and above all extreme weather.

The first Field Library in French results from a joint project undertaken by the UN/ISDR with the generous financial support of the Geneva International Academic Network (GIAN/RUIG).

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<th><strong>Project title</strong>:</th>
<th>“La prévention des situations de risques et de crises: diffuser, mobiliser et saisir l’information sanitaire” (Crisis and risk reduction: mobilizing collecting and sharing knowledge in crisis or sanitation risk situations)</th>
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| **Goals**:        | - study how information on risk and risk crisis situations is collected, centralised, shared and used  
|                   |  
|                   | - transfer of academic knowledge: translation into a simplified and comprehensive language to practitioners |
| **Financial support**: | RUIG/GIAN  
| **Executive Agencies**: | ISDR/Ecole Polytechnique de Lausanne/  
|                   | Faculté de psychologie de l’Université de Genève |
| **Duration**:     | 14 months (September 2006-October 2007) |
| **Case Study**:   | National Platform of Madagascar |

The Field Library for Madagascar contains literature covering the various aspects of disaster prevention focusing particularly on the natural hazards of the country: cyclones, floods, drought, and locusts. A catalogue has been prepared for distribution. It is available at: www.unisdr.org/eng/library/field-lib/catalogue-fr/madagascar.pdf
The “Bureau National de Gestion des Risques et des Catastrophes” (BNGRC), the focal point of the National Platform of Madagascar, has been selected to receive the first library in French. On the 2nd of April 2007, the library has been handed over to the Executive Secretary of the BNGRC in presence of national authorities.

The Field Library for Disaster Reduction is a tool to build disaster risk reduction knowledge capacity in developing countries.

“Obviously we can’t avoid disasters, but nevertheless we can adopt urgent solutions to better prepare people, so they can face up to disasters in a state of calmness.”
Colonel Jean Rakotomalala, Executive Secretary, BNGRC

The National Platform produces and distributes educational material for schools’ teachers, and children as well as for communities.
Field Library in Delhi is located at the headquarters library.

Field Library in Bhubaneshwar, Orissa is located in the main reception room of the office.

In Port Blair, (Andaman & Nicobar Islands), it is currently located in the SEEDS office. Subsequently, the Field Library will move into the proposed Citizens’ Resource Centre being established with the Port Blair Municipal Council.”

Have you already organized an event to promote the field library or are you planning to organize it in the future and at which occasion?

“In Port Blair, we announced it in the Press to commemorate the international day for disaster reduction. In Delhi, we have announced the presence of the field library in a recently launched Certificate Course on Disaster Management for School Teachers”.

The librarian in charge is Ms. Shweta Banga, Designation – Junior Librarian.

The Library is under the management of the Programme Support Unit of SEEDS, headed by Ms. Lakshmi.
Comments from recipients

“Comments from recipients

For what purposes will your organization use this literature?
1. “To create and awareness in disaster management and reduction
2. and provide reading facilities to researchers and scholars at university level” – SRI LANKA

Would you recommend this initiative to other institutions?
“Yes, to the National Earthquake Center, Syria” – OMAN

Launching of the Field library for Disaster Reduction in India and Indonesia, October

A national exhibition to commemorate 1-year tsunami was held from 26 to 27 December 2005 at National Museum, Jakarta. It was hosted by the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI). Among the participating partners was Red Cross, Badan Meteorologi dan Geofisika, National Coordinating Body for Disaster Management and Refugee (Bakornas PBK), State Ministry for Research and Technology, NGOs, and the United Nations. UN Disaster Reduction Library was exhibited to become a reference point in the field of natural hazards.

Dr. Herryal Z. Anwar

“Comments from recipients

What are your comments regarding the contents of the field library?
“To promote a culture of prevention, we need to begin with education. The Field Library due to its portability and a wide range of topics being covered, appropriately fills the gap” – INDIA

“Two Disaster Management officials are utilising the literature to complete their Masters Degree in Disaster Management.”

“The majority of the Disaster Management officials are impress with the excellent sources that are available to them. This will enhance and assist them with any research that they will do in the completion of their studies.”

“We would encompass all the methodology and initiatives at our disposal in the establishment of resource centres by means of in-house advertising for the interim. The Department have a communication directorate that will assist the Disaster Management section in publishing articles in the Department’s newsletter.” – SOUTH AFRICA

International Workshop on Disaster Risk Mitigation: Potential of Micro Finance for Tsunami Recovery October 2005, New Delhi, India.
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International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

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