

CONCEPT NOTE

DEVELOPING A VIRTUAL INFORMATION COMMUNITY

Introduction

Information sharing is a key component in the PDR-SEA-2 project. Its purpose is to increase access to information on:

- best practices
- experiences
- methodologies

We began the process of sharing during the period August 15- September 15, 2003 with an E-discussion. The discussion was based on water related disasters and had over 10 postings from our partners and experts in the field of disaster management.

A questionnaire was sent out afterwards to all partners asking for responses and views regarding the E-discussion. Feedback listed a number of constraints to participation, including:

- time
- information overload
- poor internet connectivity
- difficulty in writing
- difficulty in sharing with people unknown to participants

Based on these responses we have decided to change to a monthly posting service. The service will aim to provide better access to information for all those who choose to participate. It will be a first step towards the development of a “virtual information community”, as described below.

What is a “Virtual Information Community”?

A community is defined by commonalities among individuals with regard to cultures, language, location, interests, problems, professions etc. There has to be something common in order for individuals to be unified together to become a community. The PDR-SEA “virtual information community” will be bound by not just the project or the location but by our common vision and commitment for safer communities and disaster reduction.

The virtual information community will be a forum for all our partners and other interested persons who wish to discuss, meet, share and communicate with each other. It will offer access to:

- a means to post notices about events, job openings, etc
- disaster updates for the month
- information on new publications and interesting links
- relevant information and learning
- insights, issues and concerns
- specific thematic discussion areas
- donor news, interviews, and also fun corners/spots.

The virtual information community will be more than a discussion group. We expect it to generate interest, learning, information sharing and a kinship among our partners.

Of course, the information posted may or may not meet all the needs of each individual. In a region with such diverse needs, priorities and issues we would not expect to be able to do so. Yet it is hoped that this service will provide most of us with a better opportunity to pose our concerns, share what we have and know, and listen and learn from other experiences.

How will it work?

Like many services, the virtual information community will work best if there is active participation and commitment from the community members. With widespread use and ongoing feedback it can be regularly modified to become even more responsive to members' needs.

Information will primarily come from the members and partners in the different countries and organizations. ADPC will process the contributions and present them as short news items so that they can be read quickly and easily. This should also help to generate interest for readers. There will be links for more information should the reader wish to learn more on specific issues.

Postings will be made each month and will be sent directly via email to avoid login and password issues. Emails will be sent through the pdrsea-network@yahoogroups.com address.

Membership of the virtual information community is voluntary and absolutely free. All that is required is a desire to be part of the community and the willingness to participate and be committed.