

DISASTERS



PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION IN THE AMERICAS



Issue No. 67

News and Information for the International Disaster Community

July 1996

WHO Issues New International Guidelines for Drug Donations

An Initiative to Reduce Waste in Emergencies

The World Health Organization (WHO) released new international Guidelines for Drug Donations, which are designed to improve the quality of this assistance both in acute emergencies as well as in development aid programs. Experience in emergencies over the years has shown that donations of pharmaceuticals often prove to be more harmful than helpful. They may not be relevant to a particular emergency situation, or may not comply with local drug policies and standard treatment guidelines. Many donated drugs have arrived unsorted, or labeled in a language which is not easily understood in the recipient country.

The problem is not limited to the Americas. In the former Yugoslavia, of all the donated drugs destined for the region that were received by WHO's Area Office in Zagreb, 15% were completely unusable and 30% were not needed.

The 12 articles of the Guidelines for Drug Donations are based on four core principles:

- A drug donation should benefit the recipient to the maximum extent possible;
- a donation should be given with full respect for the wishes and authority of the recipient, and support existing government policies and

administrative arrangements;

- there should be no double standards in quality; if the quality of an item is unacceptable in the donor country, it is also unacceptable as a donation; and
- there should be effective communication between the donor and recipient.

The Guidelines were developed by WHO and represent the culmination of efforts to standardize drug donations begun in the early 1980s by orga-

nizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Christian Medical Commission (CMC) of the World Council of Churches. They reflect a consensus among the major international agencies which are active in humanitarian emergency relief (WHO, UNHCR, UNICEF, ICRC, IFRCRCS, MSF, CMC and Oxfam) as well as consultations with more than 100 humanitarian organizations and individual experts.

For more information, please contact Margaret

Helling-Borda, Director, WHOAction Programme on Essential Drugs, Fax (41-22) 791-2300.

All WHO press releases, fact sheets and features are available on the Internet on the WHO Home Page <http://www.who.ch> □



WHO's Guidelines are designed to reduce the problems associated with the donation of pharmaceuticals — problems that arise in many disaster situations

Photo: PAHO/WHO (Acosta)

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News from PAHO/WHO



Regional Disaster Documentation Center
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San Jose, Costa Rica
Fax: (506) 231-5973
E-mail: cddcor@paho.org

The Regional Disaster Documentation Center Six Years of Distribution

Access to information is key to the decision making process and consequently, to the development of disaster management plans. Many sectors have documented their experiences—both successful and otherwise. There is much to be learned by studying what has worked and learning from past mistakes. The Regional Disaster Documentation Center (CDD), a PAHO/WHO/IDNDR Center, serves as a central reference point for the collection of all kinds of disaster information.

PAHO created this Center at the beginning of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction in response to a clearly-defined need in the region: to collect and catalog information that *already* exists on disaster preparedness, mitigation, prevention and management in Latin America and the Caribbean and provide it free-of-charge to disaster professionals in this region. The government of Costa Rica has provided space for the Center at the Comisión Nacional de Emergencia.

In the six years since its creation, the Center has indexed almost 9,000 documents, 250 audiovisuals and 300 periodical titles into a database called *DESASTRES*. An average of 150 new documents are added monthly. Information on what is available in the database is published in several forms: the comprehensive index *DESINDEX*; a series of selected bibliographies called *BIBLIODES*; and on the Internet (see following stories).

The demand for information is growing—the CDD currently handles some 500 requests each month. The Center also participates in national and international conferences, provides technical assistance to other regional documentation centers, and serves a large number of users on-site in San Jose. The capacity to meet these demands, however, is reaching its limits, and the CDD must now implement several new strategies if it is to continue providing the quality and quantity of services to the growing disaster community:

- share the *mailing* costs of sending documents (particularly bulk orders.) In special cases in Latin America and the Caribbean, exceptions may be made if circumstances warrant it. In most cases, the first two documents will be sent at no cost.
- promote the creation of information networks in the countries. This strategy is operational in Peru and Ecuador through national health networks (coordinated by BIREME, PAHO's Regional Center on Health Sciences Information) and will, most likely, be extended to the rest of the Americas. The Center also collaborates with a network of social sciences documentation centers organized by ITDG.
- use, to the extent possible, the Internet for searches, requests and transfer of documents. The Center has begun to collect selected documents in electronic format and will give priority to this strategy in the future.
- enlist other partners at regional or subregional level who will not only share costs but can also take advantage of the Center's infrastructure and thus serve the disaster community of the Americas more effectively.



**We're working
on it!**

Beginning in September, disaster professionals will be able to use a new online search feature to locate documents in the database *DESASTRES*. An interface has been developed for the Microis-based database on the Internet's World Wide Web and users will be able to search the database electronically by topic, title of the document, author, or key word.

In addition, you will also be able to perform other operations long distance such as submitting requests for material and sending documents electronically. Users who do not have access to the WWW's graphic environment will be able to use the same services by electronic mail.

Complete instructions will be available in the next issue of the newsletter. Contact the Regional Disaster Documentation Center in Costa Rica <cddcor@paho.org> or PAHO headquarters <disaster@paho.org> for more information.

Other Organizations

IDNDR Day 1996

Cities at Risk Featured as Topic of World Day

By the year 2000, 17 of the 20 largest cities in the world will be in developing countries (as compared to 7 of 20 in 1950). Most of these are in areas where earthquakes, floods, landslides and other natural disasters are likely to happen. IDNDR Day, celebrated on 9 October, will promote awareness of the factors that place cities at risk and measures that can be taken to reduce them. However, as in past years, the focus is on making this and the other important topics the subject of year-long public awareness campaigns. For an information brochure on ways to celebrate IDNDR day contact the IDNDR Secretariat at Palais des Nations, 1211, Geneva 10, Switzerland; fax: 4122-733-8695; e-mail: indnr@dha.unicc.org. Readers in the Caribbean can contact the IDNDR Regional Office at Apartado Postal 3745-1000, San Jose, Costa Rica; fax: 506-257-21-41; e-mail: pedcor@sol.racsa.co.cr. □

Internet Conference on Solutions for Cities at Risk

The IDNDR Secretariat and the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean will organize a conference on the Internet, running from August through mid-October 1996, on solutions for Cities at Risk. Papers will be presented on issues such as planning, organization, health, training or early warning. Participants are invited to comment and share their experience. The goal is not to discuss scientific or technical solutions in depth, but to exchange practical solutions that city authorities and concerned citizens can adapt to their own realities. The Conference will be hosted by Quipunet, an NGO which promotes education via the Internet. It will be held in English and Spanish at: <http://www.quipu.net>. Even if you only have e-mail access, you will still be able to participate. Contact the IDNDR Secretariat (indnr@dha.unicc.org) or their Regional Office in Costa Rica (pedcor@sol.racsa.co.cr) for instructions on how to do this. For more information on the virtual Conference and the mailing list they will create, contact Quipunet by e-mail at delgado@bach.aisei.co.jp. □

News from PAHO/WHO (from pg. 2)

Biblio-des

BIBLIO-DES is the bibliographic series extracted from the database. This series makes it easy for users to locate all documentation in the database related to a specific topic. Presently there are 21 BIBLIO-DES available (see list at right).

Coming in July, Issue 22: **Safer Hospitals**. In this issue, references to the documents from the International Conference on Disaster Mitigation in Health Facilities (Mexico, 26-29 February) have been assembled, together with a bibliography of related material on disaster mitigation and hospital disaster plans.

Coming in September, Issue 23: **Cities at Risk**. This special issue will contain references to documentation on what makes cities vulnerable to disasters, and will mark the celebration of the 1996 IDNDR Day. □

DESINDEX

DESINDEX is the comprehensive, chronological listing of the complete database DESASTRES. Each time 1500 new documents are added to the database, a new issue of DESINDEX is published. Issue No. 6 of DESINDEX is now available and includes documents 5001-6500.

It is necessary to have the complete set of volumes to search properly on a particular subject.

Due to the very high cost of publishing and distributing DESINDEX, the complete sets have been primarily restricted to libraries, documentation centers or disaster offices at the national level where they will reach a great number of users. However, the online search interface that is being developed will make access to the database available to many more, and reduce the cost of printing substantially. □

BIBLIO-DES available on:

- Earthquakes
- Environmental Health
- Disasters-Health Effects
- Technological Disasters
- Education and Disasters
- Mental Health
- Volcanoes
- Schools
- Hospitals
- Floods
- Social Aspects
- Hurricanes
- IDNDR 1990-2000
- Chemical Accidents
- Disasters and Environmental Health
- Natural Disasters and Vulnerable Communities
- Public Information on Disasters
- Legislation for Disaster Reduction
- Women and Children in Disasters
- Construction and Disasters
- Economic Aspects of Natural Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean



Member Countries

Civil Defense and Protection Agencies Pledge Joint Activities

At a U.N.-sponsored meeting in July on Space Technology in Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, representatives of Civil Protection Organizations issued the Iberoamerican Declaration, prepared and signed by the Directors of Civil Defense and Protection of Bolivia, Chile, Peru and Spain. The declaration called for developing cooperation programs to share information and experiences, facilitate planning and improve contacts with other civil defense organizations, all using electronic communications technology such as the Internet. During the next two years, Chile's National Emergency Office (ONEMI) will serve as the Secretariat. Beginning in 1998, Spain's Civil Protection Agency will assume this role. For information, contact Dr. Alberto Maturana, ONEMI, Av. Beaucheff 1637, Santiago, Chile; fax: 57-1-696-1899; e-mail: onemi@reuna.cl. □

Barbados: Training in Disaster and Emergency Medicine

In June, 57 participants from throughout the English-speaking Caribbean attended intensive three-week training in disaster and emergency medicine, organized by the University of West Indies and PAHO in association with the Barbados Defense Force (BDF) and Barbados Health Foundation. This year's course coordinator was Lt. Col. Florence Gittens of the BDF. For more information on this annual training, contact the Emergency Preparedness Program, c/o Caribbean Program Coordinator, PAHO/WHO, P.O. Box 508, Bridgetown, Barbados; fax: (246) 436-6447; e-mail: vanalphd@paho.org. □

Bolivia: University Creates Disaster Training Unit

In the process of incorporating the topic of disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness into the curriculum, the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés created a Disaster Training Unit in the Department of Public Health. This unit has already trained 12 professionals representing civil and chemical engineering; architecture; geology;

nursing and medicine —from three important national universities.

Simultaneously, training was provided to 25 medical professionals from major hospitals in three provinces where these Universities are located. The objective is to strengthen the Departmental Disaster Committees. For information contact Dr. Manuel Nasif, OPS/OMS, Casillas Postales 9790 y 2504, La Paz Bolivia; fax (591-2) 391-296. □

Ecuador: Attention to Victims of Cotopaxi Quake

The earthquake in March, which affected the province of Cotopaxi in Ecuador, caused serious damage to housing and water and sewerage systems. Several NGOs and PAHO/WHO provided financial and technical assistance, particularly in the following activities:

- A mental health program focused on providing emotional assistance and strengthening the organization of affected communities.
- Antibiotics were purchased to treat pneumonia and other acute respiratory diseases, and prevent potential bouts of shigellosis.
- Drinking water systems were repaired in two communities affected by the earthquake. □

Ecuador: Hospital Vulnerability Analysis, Design and Retrofitting

The Hospital Velasco Ibarra in Tena, 200 kilometers from the epicenter of the 1995 earthquake, sustained damages mainly to nonstructural elements (cracks to retaining walls, broken glass, elevator malfunctions and damages to oxygen and water pipeline systems). The hospital occupants and personnel had to be evacuated and its services suspended. As a result, the Ministry of Public Health developed a project on vulnerability analysis, design and retrofitting. Financial assistance for this project is being provided by the government of Belgium. The vulnerability and design stages have been carried out by the School of Engineering of the Catholic University of Guayaquil (IIFIUC). Retrofitting is scheduled to begin in July and last six more months. □

(cont. on pg. 5)

El Salvador and Costa Rica: Training for Foreign Affairs Personnel

Whether a major disaster strikes at home or abroad, diplomatic staff have to deal with international appeals or offers for assistance; provide information for nationals, expatriates, or foreign citizens; and ensure the safety of their own facilities. High-level officials from Costa Rica and El Salvador's Ministries of Foreign Affairs attended separate workshops to review responsibilities in disaster situations. In Costa Rica, a Commission on Disaster Mitigation and Response was created with representatives from nine Ministries to prepare guidelines on managing humanitarian assistance. In El Salvador, earlier guidelines were reviewed and updated, and will soon be published as a Procedures Manual for Ministry personnel. For further information contact Emergency Preparedness Advisor, PAHO/WHO, Apartado Postal 3745-1000, San Jose, Costa Rica; Fax: (506) 257-2139; e-mail: pedcor@sol.racsa.co.cr □

Guatemala: Disaster Newsletter Published

The Ministry of Health of Guatemala has published a new newsletter on disaster preparedness and mitigation in Guatemala. Plans are underway to distribute the text via e-mail, particularly among the Central American discussion group (which has grown to include participants from other regions; see page 7). For more information contact Dr. Angel Ruben Manzano, Jefe, Unidad de Desastres, DGSS, 9a. Avenida 14-65, Zona 1, Guatemala, Guatemala, Fax: (503) 51-82-77. □

Jamaica: UWI Sponsors Course on Geological Risks

A six-week intensive course on Analysis and Management of Geological Risks is underway at the University of the West Indies. The Department of Geology, in conjunction with the United Nations University, University of Geneva and Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne, organized the course to develop expertise in risk evaluation and practical applications in disaster prevention and reduction. During July and August

Central American Emergency Agencies Meet

The status of national emergency management agencies in Central America was the topic of a two-day workshop in Panama in May. CEPREDENAC (Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de los Desastres Naturales en América Central) organized the workshop to review national and regional projects, the role of CEPREDENAC's national committees in the six Central American countries, and the relationship between national agencies and international organizations.

CEPREDENAC, founded in 1988, is an association of technical and scientific centers, national emergency agencies, and universities that evaluate and monitor natural phenomena, coordinate emergency response, and promote exchange and cooperation in disaster reduction efforts among Central American countries. In 1996, CEPREDENAC moved its headquarters to Panama. For more information on their activities contact Mr. Rolando Duran, Acting Executive Secretary, CEPREDENAC, Apdo. 6-3232, El Dorado, Panama City, Panama; fax: (507) 236-1341. □

classroom sessions on seismic and hydrologic risks will be complemented by field work in Montserrat. Students will follow the coursework by conducting a one-month project applying knowledge gained to problems in their own countries. For more information contact Dr. Barbara Carby, Dept. of Geology, University of the West Indies, Mona, St. Andrews, Jamaica; Fax: (809) 927-1640; e-mail: bcarby@uwi.mona.edu.jm. □

Peru: Risk Assessment in Hospitals of the Peruvian Social Security Institute

This project was designed as part of a larger project on Prevention and Attention to Disasters in Hospital Facilities sponsored by PAHO/WHO and IPSS (Social Security Peruvian Institute). The goal of this project is to perform a hospital risk evaluation and to develop specific projects for the prevention and mitigation of disasters in four hospitals of Peru situated in areas of high seismic activity.

Different studies applying methodologies developed by PAHO throughout the years, were conducted. Training in the application of such methodology was also provided to a team of members of IPSS. □

Review of Publications

The material referred to in this section has been abstracted from review copies sent to the Editor of this Newsletter. Except where noted otherwise, none of the books is available from PAHO. The publisher and the list price (when available) are included for readers who are interested in obtaining the books.

STOP Disasters Magazine Seeks Correspondents

STOP Disasters, the quarterly magazine of the IDNDR Secretariat, is building an international network of correspondents to let its readers know what's going on in disaster mitigation and prevention around the world. If you want to participate, send a one-page description of who you are, how you can contribute, your fields of interest and your telephone, fax, postal or e-mail address to: STOP Disasters, IDNDR Secretariat, Palais des Nations, CH-1211, Geneva 10, Switzerland; e-mail: dhagva@dha.unicc.org. □

The Quito, Ecuador School Earthquake Safety Project: Investing in Quito's Future. (Available in an English and Spanish edition from Geohazards International, Stanford Univ., Stanford CA, 94305-2215, USA ; Fax: (415) 723-3624; e-mail: geohaz@pangea.stanford.edu)

A recent assessment of Quito's earthquake risk concluded that many of its 700 public schools are vulnerable to collapse during major earthquakes. In response, GeoHazards International, a nonprofit corporation, collaborated with Ecuador's National Polytechnic School and the University of British Columbia in designing affordable means of

strengthening certain of the most vulnerable schools. The project focused on a sample of schools that are in high use, are highly vulnerable to earthquakes, and representative of the three prevalent construction materials (reinforced concrete, steel, and in older schools, unreinforced masonry). Funding has been committed to retrofit 10 of the buildings evaluated.

This publication gives a concise overview of the project, providing a summary of the retrofit designs of nine of the school buildings evaluated. It describes steps being taken by the city to identify and retrofit other at-risk schools. □

Emergency and Humanitarian Action—1995 Activities (Published by WHO, Geneva, 1996. xix + 66 pp. Available in English from EHA/WHO 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland; Fax: (41-22) 791-4844; e-mail: fellowss@who.ch)

This is the third annual report of the Division of Emergency and Humanitarian Action (EHA) at WHO Headquarters; it gives a detailed description of WHO's participation in an unprecedented number of operations providing assistance to victims of natural disasters and civil conflict world-wide. WHO was involved in emergency and humanitarian relief activities in 60 countries in 1995.

(cont. on pg. 7)

Upcoming Meetings

September

The Central American School of Geology of the University of Costa Rica is sponsoring the IV Latin American Symposium on Urban Geohazards from 9 to 13 September in San José. Topics to be covered range from landslide and seismic risks to urban planning and pollution. For information contact Mr. Sergio Paniagua, Organizing Committee, Apdo. No. 35(2060)-UCR, Ciudad Univ. Rodrigo Facio, Costa Rica; Fax (506) 234-2347; e-mail: spaniagu@cariari.ucr.ac.cr. □

October

The Government of Venezuela is hosting the International Conference on Natural Disaster Management from 11-14 October in Mérida, Venezuela. The Conference will focus on national experiences in disaster management, search and rescue, damage and needs assessment, reinforcement of damaged buildings, emergency medicine issues, and management of temporary shelters. The final program is available from the Organizing Committee, Apdo. Postal 344, Mérida 5101, Venezuela; Tel/Fax: (58-74) 441-270; e-mail: confmer@bolivar.funmrd.gov.ve. □

October-November

The European Center for Disaster Medicine, a WHO Collaborating Center, announces its 10th International Training Course in San Marino, from 28 October to 22 November. Topics include: early health measures in pre-hospital and major emergency situations, psychological aspects, toxicological emergencies, and others. Working languages will be Italian and English. For registration information, contact CEMEC, Ospedale di Stato, Via La Toscana-Cailungo, 47031 Repubblica di San Marino; Fax: (378) 903-706. □

Changing the Way We Communicate

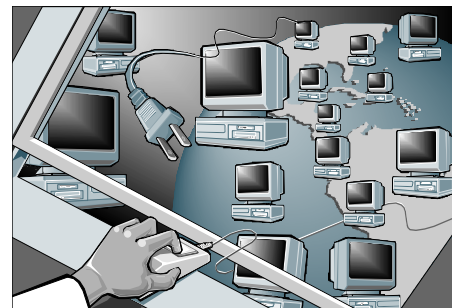
Disaster Discussion Group Grows in Central America

Changing the way we communicate doesn't happen overnight. But disaster managers in Central America are taking the first step with a new communication tool at their disposal. Several months ago, an electronic discussion group, or listserv, was created to promote a dialogue among disaster managers in this region. At first, traffic was slow, but the pace has picked up. Nicaragua and Costa Rica published situation reports on recent disasters; a member circulated tips on protecting computer equipment in disaster situations; a preliminary directory of participants was distributed to encourage people to talk directly to one another. A small number of professionals from South America and the U.S. have subscribed to the primarily Spanish-language discussion. Eventually listservs will be created for South America and the Caribbean as disaster communications projects expand into these subregions. In the meantime,

- if you have a short item of specific interest to Central America or of interest to disaster managers in general, send it as an e-mail message to <desastres-ca@ops.org.ni>
- would you like a copy of the directory? Request an e-mail version from <disaster@paho.org> ☐

ReliefWeb: Not Just Another Web Site

The U.N. Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) will announce the development of ReliefWeb, a new World Wide Web site on humanitarian emergencies, at the World Aid Conference in Geneva, Switzerland in late September 1996. ReliefWeb consolidates and organizes information produced by a wide range of sources on current humanitarian crises and natural disasters around the world. The information, in the form of appeals, assessments, evaluations, maps, press releases, situation reports, etc., is organized according to emergency situation or event. Information can be retrieved by the date of the document, the source of the information, the type of document, and can be searched by subject keywords. ReliefWeb provides one-stop-shopping to users needing information on disasters and emergencies. It also manages the problem of information overload by organizing the documents in ways that users can retrieve specific information. Check out the pilot version of ReliefWeb at the URL <http://www.reliefweb.int>. Send comments or observations to: Dennis.King@dha.unicc.org ☐



Review of Publications (from pg. 6)

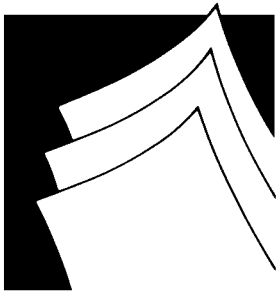


Annexes provide useful information on organizational changes that have taken place at EHA in 1995. Regional offices were assigned more responsibility in support of national emergency preparedness and disaster reduction activities. Headquarters directs global fund-raising for these programs and takes the lead in complex international crises, such as in Rwanda. There is a good bibliography, and excellent graphics complement the text throughout. ☐

Video on Hospital Mitigation Now Available

A new video, *Hospital Disaster Mitigation*, shows what is being done in certain countries in

the Region of the Americas to reduce the effects of natural disasters on hospitals and other health care facilities. The content is not technical, but is meant to introduce the topic to policy makers and others who can influence decisions affecting the safety of hospitals, and their ability to function during disasters. It addresses issues of maintenance, retrofitting existing buildings, and the importance of considering vulnerability to hazards in new hospital design and construction. The video is 14 minutes long, and is available in English and Spanish from the Emergency Preparedness Program, PAHO/WHO, 525 Twenty-third St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037, USA, Fax (202) 775-4578; e-mail: disaster@paho.org. ☐



Selected Bibliography

The articles listed in this section may be of interest to health professionals and others responsible for disaster preparedness, mitigation and relief. They have been reproduced and recently added to the collection of articles available from the Editor of this Newsletter. A complete list of reprints is available upon request. Please quote the reference code listed to the left of the publication title when requesting articles.

- S.6** Betts-Symonds, G, "Major disaster management in chemical warfare," *Accident and Emergency Nursing*, No. 2, pp. 122-129, July, 1995.
- S.7** de Boer, Jan, "An attempt at more accurate estimation of the number of ambulances needed at disasters in the Netherlands," *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, Vol 11, No. 2 pp 125-129, 1996.
- S.8** Schultz, Carl et al, "A medical disaster response to reduce immediate mortality after an earthquake" *The New England Journal of Medicine*, Vol. 334, No. 7, pp. 145-53.
- S.9** Carr, V.J. et al, "Psychosocial sequelae of the 1989 Newcastle earthquake: I. Community disaster experiences and psychological morbidity 6 months post-disaster," *Psychological Medicine*, No. 25, pp. 539-555, 1995.
- S.10** Cutts, F.T. et al, "Child and maternal mortality during a period of conflict in Beira City, Mozambique," *International Journal of Epidemiology*, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 349-356, 1995.
- T.1** Legetic, D. et al, "Health care delivery and the status of the population's health in the current crises in former Yugoslavia using EPI-design methodology," *International Journal of Epidemiology*, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 341-348, 1995.

Disasters: Preparedness and Mitigation in the Americas is the Newsletter of the Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief Coordination Program of the Pan American Health Organization, Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization. The reported events, activities and programs do not imply endorsement by PAHO/WHO, nor do the statements made necessarily represent the policy of the Organization. The publication of this *Newsletter* has been made possible through the financial support of the International Humanitarian Assistance Division of the Canadian International Development Agency (IHA/CIDA) and the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance of the U.S. Agency for International Development (OFDA/AID).

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Internet: <http://www.paho.org/english/disaster.htm>

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