

GDIN2001 – ‘Scoring Goals’

The Conference attracted 173 full-registration participants, 23 day registrations and 13 exhibitors. Their feedback indicates that GDIN2001 was a great success and “exceeded expectations.” This report considers whether the GDIN2001 conference achieved the goals which were set prior to the Conference.

THE GOALS OF GDIN2001

The goals of the GDIN2001 conference were to:

- ◆ share information about achievements in disaster information management - ‘the goals that have been scored’;
- ◆ progress the development of GDIN;
- ◆ build closer relationships among users and providers of disaster management information; and
- ◆ identify further projects that will have a global impact in saving lives and property and in protecting the environment.

The report of Conference achievements against these goals follow.

1) share information about achievements in disaster information management - ‘the goals that have been scored’

- ◆ **Demonstration of Pilots Projects Forum**
 - The session demonstrated some of the projects either completed or under way by members of GDIN in the field of information management. Two highlights were PEACEWING (an unattended aerial vehicle which can be used to complement, not replace, satellites in monitoring disasters), and the Unique Disaster Identification Number Project (proposed by Mr Murata of the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre). The ADRC/CRED Unique ID Project was adopted by GDIN at the conference.
- ◆ **Regional disaster information networks** (Americas, Mediterranean & Asia-Pacific), and the **national disaster information networks** (Australia, US, overview of Asia, India).
 - GDIN2001 underscored the importance of the regional and national networks as building blocks of GDIN. Reports indicated that MEDIN had made significant progress in bringing key people together to set strategic directions. The Asia Pacific Regional Working Group had focused on developing a small number of projects which aim to enhance information sharing among and within countries in the region. Presentations indicated that a number of countries, particularly in Asia, had established disaster information systems. AUSDIN was recognised as an innovative initiative, using available portal technology to facilitate access to data and information.
- ◆ **The AusDIN Meeting**
 - In the meeting of the Australian Disaster Information Network, it was resolved that:
 - EMA will call a meeting of Commonwealth agencies to advance the Disaster Information Network concept within Australia. This meeting will be held in May 2001; and

- EMA will facilitate the creation of a State/Territory emergency management strategic committee to guide development of information management projects within the emergency management sector.

2) progress the development of GDIN

◆ Business Plan

- There was much discussion about the GDIN Business Plan during the conference. On the third day a revised version, designed to be marketable and manageable, was agreed to by conference delegates. The Business Plan identifies the future directions of GDIN and a range of services for sharing disaster information that GDIN will implement over the forthcoming year such as:
 - a detailed database of GDIN participants;
 - a network of disaster information specialists; and
 - easier Internet-based access to national and regional information networks.

◆ Canberra Statement

- The conference:
 - recognised “the need for increased international cooperation” requiring the “active participation of governments and their agencies”.
 - confirmed GDIN as a politically neutral and an independent public-private partnership.
 - emphasised the need for development of regional and national disaster information networks
 - Significant developments of the conference outlined in the Canberra Statement were:
 - ◆ the adoption of the ADRC/CRED Unique ID system; and
 - ◆ the launch of the ReliefWeb Asia Office to be situated in Kobe, Japan which will provide improved coverage of disasters in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Extracts from the Canberra Statement:
 - “The 2001 conference marks a watershed in this process of maturity, and provides a clear demonstration of the performance and the potential of GDIN in improving the ability of disaster managers to prepare for and cope with a very wide range of emergencies. This is especially important for countries for countries that need significant support from those who need it.”
 - “This successful Conference provides the platform for a challenging year ahead focused on implementing the Business Plan which calls for progress in many fronts including sponsorship, relations with governments, cooperative partnerships and the effective use of technology and its simple application to reduce the impact of disasters on communities in every part of the globe.”

◆ 2002 conference

- It was agreed that the next GDIN conference would be held in Rome in June 2002.

◆ The emphasis on **Working Groups** during the Conference proved very successful. Highlights from their discussions were as follows:

- Executive Committee/Policy
 - The implementation of GDIN products and gaining funding are the two key concerns of this working group.

- GIS/Remote Sensing
 - There is a need to build networks between GIS providers and GDIN, to create 'best practices', and raise awareness of the usefulness of GIS and remote sensing to disaster managers not currently using the technology.
- Industry
 - There is a need to build partnerships between GDIN and IT providers and also between GDIN and multi national corporations who have a large stake in disasters.
- Infectious Diseases
 - A 'needs assessment' and a compilation of epidemic intelligence will be undertaken.
- Regions
 - GDIN will continue to develop and support region working group meetings.
 - Current regional disaster organisations will be made a part of regional disaster information networks.
- Information Facilitation
 - A strategic communications plan will be developed, and the information matrices of regional working groups will be built on.
 - A small pilot facilitation service will be developed.
 - Development work on a GDIN portal will be considered.
- Standards
 - A multilingual disaster/emergency glossary/thesaurus will be developed, as will the standardisation of data collection and reporting.
- Telecommunications
 - GDIN members will foster communications interoperability and communications research.
- Academic
 - GDIN is to be promoted in academic articles, and networking among academics is to be increased.
- NGOs, Small Communities (retitled 'Communities' at GDIN2001)
 - There needs to be an increase in the participation of NGOs in GDIN. Active encouragement from GDIN is needed.
- Asia-Pacific
 - There has been a survey of existing capabilities and resources available.
 - Current active projects will be reviewed at the next meeting in September 2001.

3) build closer relationships among users and providers of disaster management information

In addition to the Exhibitions, Industry Working Group and many other examples of networking which occurred during GDIN2001, the following two activities are highlighted as examples of relationships being enhanced at GDIN2001.

◆ Media forum

- Links between disaster managers and media, increased recently through events such as Y2K, allow both disaster managers access to a larger network of information and to disseminate that information more effectively to the community.
- Websites were recognised as a great tool for the media to provide general information, but need to be updated every few hours during a disaster.

◆ **OECD Futures Project**

- This OECD project concerns the ongoing shift in the nature of major risks and in society's capacity to manage them. The project involves Government Agencies from many countries as well as businesses, international organisations (both Government and non-Government) and NGOs. The expected output of the project is international/inter-sectoral comparisons and lessons from past experience; awareness building; and recommendations for action for public and private sectors. A major substantive report will be made available at the completion of this project. The report will endorse disaster mitigation and preparedness. The recognition of the legal duty of care owed by governments and corporations will further endorse disaster mitigation and preparation.

4) identify further projects that will have a global impact in saving lives and property and in protecting the environment

Several projects were identified at GDIN2001 as having had an impact on saving lives and property and in protecting the environment, or had the potential to do so. The relevant projects identified over the course of GDIN2001 were:

◆ **VENTEN**

- Provides the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre (ADRC) with GIS functions and country specific geographical data. VENTEN allows ADRC to tailor data for the specific country and disaster.

◆ **CRED database**

- Consistent criteria are needed to record disasters in a database. Many criteria traditionally applied favour developed countries, where recovery costs are higher. Dr Shaw recommended the CRED disaster reporting system and the Unique ID Project being investigated by the ADRC.

◆ **ADRC Unique ID number**

- This project proposed easy matching data resources and rapid automatic linking by search engine. It was proposed that GDIN member organisations adopt the CRED-ID system, alter their existing databases to include the Unique ID, and open their databases on the Internet to enable automatic linking between sites. This proposal was endorsed by GDIN2001.

◆ **EMWIN**

- A one way weather information communication system, which can provide data to half the globe. EMWIN is 24-hour operation, cheap, reliable and independent of conventional links. EMWIN allows disaster managers in the South Pacific to access vital future weather forecasts, warnings and other services.

◆ **RADARSAT**

- Real time flood imaging. The need for 'better emergency management and disaster information management' was emphasised.

◆ **Remote sensing applications for wildfire management**

- The remote sensing used by the US Forest Service has allowed them improve their ability to reach fires in remote areas and contain them.

SUMMARY

The Conference achieved the following outcomes.

- ◆ GDIN was confirmed as a politically neutral organisation and an independent public-private partnership.
- ◆ The GDIN role is to improve the flow of information for those who had it to those who needed it most.
- ◆ GDIN2001 resulted in the agreement to the GDIN Business Plan.
- ◆ Over the forthcoming year, GDIN plans to implement:
 - a detailed database of GDIN participants;
 - a network of disaster information specialists; and
 - easier Internet-based access to national and regional information networks.
- ◆ There is a need for the continuing development of regional and national disaster information networks. These networks require the active participation of governments and their agencies, working with international and non-government organisations and the private sector.
- ◆ The value of working groups was confirmed. They have played a critical role in the development of GDIN and in defining its directions.
- ◆ GDIN2001's focus on Australia and the Asia Pacific region has resulted in follow up activities to enhance the management of information at national and regional levels. Commonwealth agencies led by EMA will meet on 29 May 2001 to develop strategic directions for the Australian Disaster Information Network. EMA will also co-chair with the Asia Disaster Preparedness Centre the Asia-Pacific Working Group which will meet later this year in Bangkok.

The evidence of these achievements and the enthusiasm shown by the delegates indicates that the GDIN2001 was very successful and achieved its goals. A report from the GDIN Conference organiser, which includes a financial report is expected shortly.

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