

Geohazards Community of Practice: Engaging End Users

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The Geohazards Community of Practice (GHCP) developed out of the IGOS-P Geohazards Theme. The GHCP brings together groups and individuals involved in various aspects of geohazards, including research, monitoring and risk assessments, mitigation, and adaptation. The GHCP aims to provide a link between the broad geohazards community of practice and GEO in order to

- ensure that the needs of this community are taken into account in the development of GEOSS,
- facilitate support and participation of this community in the building of GEOSS, and
- promote the use of GEOSS for geohazards-related applications.

The GHCP also aims to provide a communication and coordinating platform for high level policy makers and the broader geohazards community.

In 2010, the GHCP drafted a road map, which details activities towards the strategic target of the GHCP:

"By 2020 put in place all building blocks for comprehensive monitoring of geohazards and the provision of timely information on spatio-temporal characteristics, risks, and occurrence of geohazards, in support of all phases of the risk management cycle (mitigation and preparedness, early warning, response, and recovery), and as a basis for increased resilience and disaster reduction.

This will be achieved

by developing a global network of very few carefully selected core sites. These core sites will provide focal points for a large geographical region, where all building blocks of a value chain from observations to end users can be linked together and applied to the phases of the risk management cycle relevant for this region. Thus, these core sites will demonstrate the concept, enable scientific studies and technological developments, provide for capacity building, and inform policy and decision making in the region."

A key activity supported by the GHCP is the "Supersite Initiative", which was initiated at the Geohazards Workshop in 2007. Supersites are now being established for every major earthquake, and these sites enjoy increasing popularity.

The above defines a rather broad group of users to be engaged in the GHCP including all stakeholders in the four phases of risk management. Up to now, the outreach of the GHCP to users with the goal to engage them has been limited to presentations at relevant meetings, promotion of GHCP workshops, solicitation of comments on the GHCP Road Map, including partners in a COST proposal, and targeted contacts to specific stakeholders. The success in engaging particularly users further away from Earth observations and involved in policy making, risk management at the administrative level, and local response and recovery has been limited. Currently, most activities of the GHCP focus on Europe and North America. On the other hand, workshops such as the CZCP Workshop on Earth observation support for sustainable tourism in small island states held in March 2011 in Puerto Rico demonstrated the relevance of all phases of risk management for end users such as operators of tourism infrastructure.

The concept of tandem centers of excellence envisioned for the implementation of the GHCP Road Map likely will help to link to end users. These tandem centers will each pair a center of excellence in a developed country with a similar center in a developing country, where they will serve as a regional nucleus for risk management.