

ReliefSim: Computer-based simulations for training humanitarian workers

Forced Migration Online (FMO) at the Refugee Studies Centre, together with Technology Assisted Lifelong Learning (TALL), both at the University of Oxford, and the Columbia Centre for New Media Teaching and Learning (CCNMTL) at Columbia University are currently undertaking a two year joint pilot study to develop simulation models for training humanitarian workers in the procedures needed for the management of complex emergencies, in particular in refugee situations. One of the key areas being targeted is nutrition.

These models will provide practitioners and students with the opportunity to solve problems, analyse situations, recommend future actions and deal with complex environments such as establishing new relief camps.

ReliefSim is the first of its kind to apply complex modelling technology to relief settings. It will both adhere to best pedagogic practice in eLearning and support the minimum standards as described in existing publications such as the Sphere Project, MÈdicins Sans FrontiÈres' Refugee Health and the UNHCR's Handbook for Emergencies.

ReliefSim Digital Library

One of the innovative developments in the production of ReliefSim will be the digital resource bank to be produced as part of the simulation package. This will include annotated, navigable ebook versions of the major standards publications described above, as well as relevant full text documents from the FMO digital library. On the CD ROM version, these will be provided with a free ebook reader and search facility. For users with Internet access, ReliefSim will become a front end to the FMO digital library and portal, guiding users to the resources they need quickly and easily.

Progress so far

An advisory group of practitioners and academics from key organisations in the field has been helping the ReliefSim team to build content and create scenarios for the simulation. The learning technologies at TALL in Oxford are investigating the pedagogic and training issues, and the building of the simulation models is being led by CCNMTL with input from the whole team.

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