Introduction to the Program Quality Digital Library

The purpose of the PQDL is not to supplant CARE International member, country office or technical/sectoral Web sites or document libraries. Rather, PQDL serves as a strategic subset of the thousands of documents produced every year, a subset that contains cross-cutting program policies, recommended good practices and cutting edge ideas (emerging good practice). It was created primarily to help field staff answer the question, "What's the basic knowledge about programming policies, practices and standards that I need to know to be successful in CARE?" It is also designed to reveal to external constituencies the heart of our program philosophy, policies and practices. Each sector continues to be responsible and authorized to maintain and make available sector-specific policy, good practice and leading edge ideas. The PQDL will link to your sector-specific material but not duplicate it.

Library Structure

When you go to the Web site - the site is best viewed with Internet Explorer 5.0 or higher -- you will notice that there are three main sections or layers to the PQDL:

1. **Core** - Policies, procedures and approaches that ensure program quality. They represent the minimum threshold of what a CARE program person should know about the program cycle. "Core" ideas and standards are not optional: We should expect every CARE project and program to exhibit them.

2. **Practice** - Guidelines and tools to help staff put into practice CARE's policies and approaches. There are also hyperlinks to Web sites where other relevant CARE International member, country office and sector programming resources are lodged.

3. **Cutting Edge** - Innovations that may influence or help shape CARE's accepted practices in the future.

Eventually there will be two additional functions related to the PQDL:

• "**Global Gallery**" - an interactive space for CARE staff to share new ideas pertaining to program quality.
• "my PQDL" - a customizable view of the PQDL that allows you to make the PQDL interface match your own interest areas. This capability will also allow for notifications of additions or changes to the library, thus keeping you up-to-date on any important changes to CARE USA's minimum program standards and innovative practices.

The PQDL In Action

We have developed the PQDL with a minimalist approach to on-screen graphics and the documents themselves. Still, we are aware that not all CARE COs or sub-offices can surf the Internet easily and that download times can be slow and maddening. Due to this, we have an alternative method of obtaining the content of the Program Quality Digital Library: Every six months, we will send a CD-ROM of the complete library contents to every country office and CARE International member. Individual staff can write to the PQDL Librarian at any time to request a CD-ROM.

On the library's homepage, you'll find information about responsibilities and

accountabilities for updating the PQDL. These procedures will help us keep library contents current, allow field staff to contribute innovative new ideas, and retire items that are out of date or no longer useful. A PQDL Steering Committee has been formed (its composition can be found in the procedures) to manage quality control of the library contents and make sure that field staff can contribute new ideas. The library will only be as good and useful as its capacity to capture and store field-driven practice - not HQ-driven theory. To that end, we will over the next few weeks be asking every country office, every CARE International member, and every CARE USA program division unit to identify <u>two</u> staff members who will have the authority to post "cutting edge ideas" to the library without needing any approval from the Steering Committee.

The Initial Holdings

You will likely ask yourself, "So, who decided that these particular documents, policies, procedures, etc., were the ones to include? Why wasn't 'X' included? Where's 'Y'?"

The initial holdings were brought together by Mary Picard, Jim Rugh and Kent Glenzer with advice and suggestions obtained from some 35 staff from around the world. We scoured existing CARE databases, made choices about what belonged, then asked staff to look at the holdings and improve them. Mary was also instrumental in helping us conceive of the library's structure and purpose and we would like to thank her for that.

There is no pretense that the library is in any way complete. It is possible that some documents should not be there. But rather than try to have an extensive, organization-wide conversation about the initial holdings, we preferred to focus our efforts on the future. If we follow the procedures laid out in the PQDL's founding documents, we have available to us a clear, transparent process for having content discussions in CARE. We thought that institutionalizing this kind of decision process was much more important than endless arguments about an initial set of core program advice.

The commitment from IMLT - we chair the PQDL Steering Committee - is to evaluate the functioning of the PQDL on a regular basis and make required changes. Our request to you, the users and key contributors, is to offer better ideas and contents, tell us how procedures can be improved, and collaborate on making the PQDL the strategic knowledge asset that it has the potential to be.

You will be hearing much more from us about PQDL. In the meantime, however, we do invite you to the library (http://pqdl.care.org/default.aspx) and to send your comments or questions to PQDL Librarian . You may also, at any time, send them to Jim Rugh, Adrienne Ford or Kent Glenzer.