

WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION
COORDINATION GROUP FOR METEOROLOGICAL SATELLITES

VIRTUAL LABORATORY MANAGEMENT GROUP

SIXTH SESSION

SAO JOSE DOS CAMPOS, BRAZIL, 8-11 OCTOBER 2012

VLMG-6/Doc.

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ITEM: 5 – RFG Presentation and
Discussion

Regional Focus Groups

(Submitted by US, Barbados, Costa Rica, South Africa, Niger, Australia)

Summary and Purpose of Document

Many Regions have initiated and have been running focus groups for a number of years. Other regions have yet to initiate sessions. This document highlights experiences of the focus groups with regard to tools used, positive outcomes, difficulties, and suggestions for others.

DISCUSSION

The Focus Groups (FG) of the Americas and the Caribbean have been conducting regular monthly sessions for 8.5 years and the South Africa Focus Group has been conducting somewhat regular monthly sessions for 2+ years. In each region we can already see many benefits: the sharing of information is very beneficial and it helps build community by encouraging communication across physical, institutional, and social boundaries. We measure success in that we are still conducting session and getting positive feedback on them. We share information about real time imagery and products as well as discuss climate monitoring products. We are also able to deliver timely information to users as in the event of satellite problems.

Keys to a good FG include good viewing of slides and imagery and good voice. What tools are used to accomplish this often reflect what is freely available to the organizers as well as how well they perform for countries that have low bandwidth internet connections. The tools used by the various groups include VISITview, GoToWebinar, Elluminate, and Centra software as well as utilizing Satrep Online and RAMSDIS Online. As the member list grows for the groups, a list group is set up to distribute information about the sessions.

One of the main difficulties for all is when there is poor internet connection. The Focus Group of the Americas and Caribbean address this by keeping the voice and imagery separate: viewing imagery through the VISITview software and using the voice of GoToWebinar. Other difficulties include network permissions. Suggestions are to test software beforehand, identify issues, and get permissions

It is sometimes difficult to attract new participants. Suggestions are to be patient, look for "local" advocates to engage offices to participate, and wherever there is a face-to-face training, include a Focus Group session. We encourage two or more persons to share the workload for each session. One focuses on technological issues and the other is the lead for the session. Over time, as the focus group builds trainers and community, others can step in when the lead is not available.