

A Pioneering Approach to Building Disaster Risk Management Capacity



Saving Lives in High-Risk Communities in Honduras

Overview

Through the Natural Disaster Mitigation Project, Honduras – one of the most vulnerable countries in the world – has substantially built disaster risk management capacity from the local to the central level through an innovative and participatory approach. The project supported the implementation of disaster risk management (DRM) programs across 81 of the country's most vulnerable municipalities (about a third of total municipalities), benefiting approximately five million people. At the same time, the project helped to improve national capacity for early warning, monitoring, and the forecasting of disaster events, particularly floods.

Challenge

Honduras' growth and poverty reduction efforts have been hindered by natural disasters. In addition to its location in the path of hurricanes and tropical storms, the country's vulnerability has been intensified by environmental degradation, rapid population growth, inadequate infrastructure, and high poverty levels. In 1998, Hurricane Mitch – considered the worst disaster experienced by the country in recent times – highlighted to the government and its development partners several urgent priorities. These included the need to move from a reactive to a pro-active approach to disaster risk, and from an over-centralized, weak national system to building capacity and strong partnerships at the local level.

Approach

The project was part of the World Bank's post-Mitch strategy for Honduras, focusing on disaster risk management capacity building from the central to the local level in order to reduce overall vulnerability. At the national level, the project worked to consolidate the legal and institutional DRM framework and to foster a culture of prevention. It also sought to improve forecasting capacity, disaster risk knowledge, and the dissemination of information and early warnings.

Simultaneously, the project supported DRM programs at the local level by relying on an innovative, participatory methodology that included completion of risk and vulnerability analyses, emergency response plans, municipal risk management plans and municipal territorial development plans. It also identified and prioritized small structural and non-structural mitigation measures and provided financing of

More Results



18

municipalities adopted a monitoring system for droughts

6,000

people were actively engaged in local emergency committees

500,000

people benefited from the completion of structural mitigation measures in 58 municipalities

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Project Details:

COPECO. June 2011. "Informe Final de Implementación – Proyecto de Mitigación de Desastres Naturales."

selected works.

Results

The Honduras project helped to improve national capacity for disaster risk management and to reduce local disaster vulnerability in participating municipalities. Specific results include:

- **The legal and institutional framework for DRM was improved** through the preparation and passage of the 2009 SINAGER Law that established a formal DRM system for Honduras. The new law also led to the strengthening of key agencies such as the Disaster Preparedness and Response Agency (COPECO) and the Ministry of Environment (SERNA), and the implementation of a disaster awareness campaign. All these activities have helped to promote a culture of disaster prevention in the country.
- **National capacity for hydro-meteorological and geophysical monitoring, and for flood forecasting was improved.** Steps taken included the consolidation of the original old and small-scale flood early warning system, covering four of the main watersheds in the country that were destroyed during Hurricane Mitch; the adoption of early warning systems for landslides in eight municipalities; the adoption of a monitoring system for droughts in 18 municipalities; the establishment of community-based early warning systems in seven municipalities; and production of detailed geospatial information.
- **Local vulnerability was reduced** through the establishment of 95 municipal disaster emergency committees and 375 local emergency committees that actively engaged a total of 6,000 people. The project also aided in the completion of participatory DRM programs in 81 municipalities, and the preparation of engineering designs for priority structural and non-structural mitigation measures in 61 municipalities. It also helped with the completion of structural mitigation measures in 58 municipalities, benefiting more than 500,000 people. Finally, the project also helped undertake drought mitigation measures in eight municipalities.

The World Bank. June 2011.
Implementation Completion and Results Report (ICR) for the Natural Disaster Mitigation Project. Report no. ICR00000089.

- » General disaster risk management in Honduras
- » General information on the Project

Bank Contribution

The total cost of the project, including additional financing, was US\$22 million, of which IDA financed 94 percent or US\$19.9 million, and the Borrower US\$2.2 million.

Partners

The Honduras Natural Disaster Mitigation Project was complemented by a series of grants. A grant of nearly US\$2.0 million came from the Japan Social Development Fund, which made it possible to add a DRM program for vulnerable neighborhoods in Tegucigalpa, the country's capital city. In addition, specialized technical assistance was provided through two Bank-executed trust funds (from the Bank-Netherlands Water Partnership Program) totaling over US\$1.1 million, and two Country-executed Japan Policy and Human Resources Development Fund (PHRD) grants from the Government of Japan totaling US\$821,000.

Moving Forward

This project helped to establish a solid basis for DRM in Honduras. Focus on disaster risk reduction will continue through regional initiatives, such as the development of the Central American Probabilistic Risk Assessment (CAPRA) platform, as well as specific country efforts financed by other agencies and potentially the Bank. These include the ongoing Disaster Risk Prevention and Mitigation Project (US\$19 million), financed by the Inter-American Development Bank.

Beneficiaries

The country's experience in responding to recent disasters demonstrates considerable improvement in disaster risk management. For instance, when tropical storm Agatha hit Honduras in June 2010, the country was able to evacuate people in the affected areas thanks to the early warning systems and emergency evacuation procedures already in place. A World Bank mission happened to be in the country when the national emergency was declared and its members witnessed firsthand how the inter-ministerial council dealt with the crisis and made coordinated decisions. The inter-ministerial group met at the National Emergency Response Center in COPECO's headquarters and followed the procedures that had been established through the SINAGER law. Honduras was able to avoid a significant number of deaths because project-supported early warning systems and the SINAGER law meant thousands of people were evacuated from areas subsequently flooded by the storm, especially from among the poorer population living in vulnerable informal settlements (12 people died in Honduras, while 160 died in Guatemala).

Source: <http://www.laprensa.hn/Ediciones/2010/05/30/Noticias/12-muertos-en-Honduras>

The mitigation works have also proven to be effective. One specific example is the riverbank protection measures built in the municipality of Ajuterique. Although the mitigation work was damaged by the flood caused by Tropical Depression 16 in 2008, it likely helped to protect the lives of close to 3,000 people. The mitigation works have since been rebuilt by the municipality, with support from the central government.

A 2010 beneficiary survey revealed that overall satisfaction with the Bank-backed project is high (83 percent), and that 94 percent of those surveyed consider that the vulnerability of the municipality has been reduced, and that this reduction is considerable (78 percent).