

## Nicaragua, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Colombia

Latin America is visited by floods, hurricanes and droughts on a regular basis. When disaster strikes, the poor especially have little or nothing with which to protect themselves – and here “the poor” make up more than half the population. Massive deforestation increases their vulnerability to strong winds and heavy rainfall. Additionally, climate change is expected to exacerbate things further by creating more extreme-weather events and a rise in sea level.

In Nicaragua, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Colombia, the Netherlands Red Cross is involved in building people’s capacity to cope with weather-related disasters. It does so in cooperation with an unusual partner: the Dutch media organization Free Voice, which supports independent media in developing countries.

Together with the National Societies, the two started a project in 2006 that seeks to educate communities about climate risks and the protective measures communities can take. To get their message across, they develop popular yet informative radio programmes such as soaps to be widely broadcasted by local and regional stations. When extreme weather arrives, the radio serves as an early warning mechanism as well.

Next year the Red Cross will also help communities take small-scale measures to reduce the threats they face. It will support them in organizing and training local disaster committees, developing disaster plans, building shelters, planting trees, strengthening houses and constructing dams. In addition, it sets up alliances with, for instance, government institutions and universities to effectively work together in raising awareness, reducing risks and preparing communities for possible disasters.

In 2006 the project entailed mostly preparations: qualified staff have been hired, volunteers have been trained in setting up and conducting Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments, and the target communities have been asked to join in and provide their input. The Red Cross of Nicaragua in particular took further steps already. It has been educating people through meetings, conferences and educational campaigns at the school, community, municipal and national level.

### The Climate Centre’s contribution

The project in Central America is financed by the Nationale Postcode Loterij (NPL) – a Dutch lottery supporting 53 non-governmental organizations. The Climate Centre was responsible for obtaining the NPL’s support. The project was chosen from four by the Climate Bureau, the coordinating office of the HIER-campaign (box 4), to be visited by a well-known Dutch documentary maker who will generate publicity in the Netherlands and raise awareness of the impacts of climate change for developing countries. The actual visit will take place early 2007 but the Climate Centre provided full support in the preparation phase, by selecting the area, writing a script, discussing the programme and overall coordination.

Available funding	€ 480,000 (between January 2006 and December 2007, of which 107,367 was spent by the Netherlands Red Cross in 2006)
Donor	Nationale Postcode Loterij
Partner organizations	Free Voice, Red Cross societies of Nicaragua, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Colombia

**Responding to climate change in Latin America: how many people will benefit?**

	From radio programmes and general education	From small scale disaster risk reduction measures
Nicaragua	17,911	11,355
Guatemala	61,000	11,635
Costa Rica	11,669	4,090
Colombia	74,489	5,250

**NPL supports climate risk reduction in Latin America by financing HIER-campaign**

The Nationale Postcode Loterij NPL is the Netherlands' largest charity lottery. In 2005 it decided to grant a total of €16.3 million to finance the HIER-campaign: a multi-party response to climate change and the risks involved. The Latin American climate change project of the Netherlands Red Cross and Free Voice is one of the many initiatives run in the context of this campaign.

HIER ("Here" in English) is an initiative of more than 40 civil-society organizations concerned by the effects of global warming. They include Unicef, Oxfam, WWF and the Netherlands Red Cross, which all have developed projects to reduce the negative impact of climate change –including health, drought, safety issues, water-resource conflicts, desertification and disasters.

All participating organizations recognize that both mitigation and adaptation are essential elements of the risk reduction strategy climate change demands. At the heart of their campaign approach lies the conviction that these two complement and reinforce each other.

Under the HIER-umbrella, Free Voice and the Netherlands Red Cross have also joined forces in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Their activities are similar to those in Nicaragua, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Colombia, yet programme responsibility lies not with the Red Cross but with Free Voice. Information on the activities can be found at [www.freevoice.nl](http://www.freevoice.nl).

For more on HIER: [www.hier.nu](http://www.hier.nu).