

Program development

Nicaragua

The pilot program in Nicaragua ended in 2005. The Netherlands Red Cross integrated climate change risk reduction in a new program funded by DIPECHO (Disaster Preparedness for European Commission Humanitarian Office) and in a minor program with the American Office of Foreign Development Aid (OFDA). For 2006-2007 the program will be extended with funding from Dutch Postcode Lottery program.

Nicaragua: 2003-2005

One of the first international pilot projects of the Climate Centre, in cooperation with the Netherlands Red Cross, was the 'climate change and disaster preparedness' program on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua. With the local branches of the Red Cross in the Municipalities of Puerto Cabezas and Bluefields, vulnerable communities in Betania, Wawabom and El Bluff were reached. Moreover the Red Cross set up new alliances with universities and ministries on the issue of climate change related risks.

Raising awareness on climate change and disaster risks was the key objective of the project. Many activities were implemented from national to community level. Community meetings took place where Red Cross volunteers and students from the regional university educated local people on the risks of climate change. Local authorities met, bringing together civil defense and environmental departments, often for the first time.

At national level the Red Cross organised a national seminar on 'climate change and disaster preparedness', bringing together many policy makers from ministries of environment, civil defense, health, education, universities and knowledge centres, the meteorological office, representatives of the local authorities and involved communities and international organisations, like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Building the communities capacities:

Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments (VCA) were organised during which the involved communities identified the potential risks of climate change in the context of their current situation and problems. They identified actions and activities that could be developed, some with support from the Red Cross, to reduce their vulnerability. A key improvement for the community was a process of self-organisation, and community members knowing what to do when crisis-situations like floods, bush fires or small accidents in the village occur. Also a number of micro-projects were identified, like a community shelter, a radio contact, a rain-gauge system etc. **(picture 3)**

Also clean-ups of waste were organised.

Supporting integration of climate change in the educational and scientific sector:

The educational sector is a key actor in raising awareness and therefore a range of cooperation programs were developed with the Ministry of Education and the BICU University on the Atlantic Coast. Curriculums were developed on climate change from both teachers and students and a number of students developed climate change related research proposals for their graduation

Strengthening the Red Cross capacity:

An important component of the project was the strengthening of capacities of the local branches and volunteers of the Red Cross in the program area. The volunteers of the Red Cross will maintain the continuity of the contact with the local communities and authorities. They are crucial for the sustainability of the developed program and actions.