

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN NICARAGUA



Mitch - 1998: Mitch was Central America's worst storm in the 20th century, affecting more than 6.5 million people. Nicaragua was after Honduras the worst hit country with 2447 people killed and 885 missing, 730.000 people affected, 36.000 houses destroyed and a damage to the infrastructure of US \$ 1 billion.

CONTEXT

Due to its location, natural disasters are a well known phenomenon in Nicaragua. Hurricanes occurred frequently during the last decade, but the disaster with the highest impact on the country's recent history was hurricane Mitch in 1998. Hurricane Mitch sent many people in the country into abject poverty. Climate scientists project that the Central American region will be confronted with higher temperatures and a remarkable decrease of rainfall. The Nicaraguan society is yet not well prepared to counter the negative effects of climate change.

PROJECT'S OBJECTIVE

To improve the capacity of vulnerable communities to confront disasters related to climate change in particular in the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

1. Development of information materials on climate change and disasters.
2. Awareness raising amongst local communities and decision makers.
3. Capacity building of the Nicaraguan Red Cross on climate change and disaster preparedness.
4. Vulnerability assessments and improvement of natural resources.
5. Popular campaigns on disaster preparedness and climate change.



INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS / RED CRESCENT CLIMATE CENTRE

The Climate Centre is the Red Cross' answer to one of the main global issues of the 21st century: climate change, which has been projected to lead to, amongst others, an increase of extreme weather events - like floods and droughts, vector borne-diseases and sea level rise, affecting tens of millions of people every year.

The Climate Centre supports National Red Cross / Red Crescent Societies (RC / RC) to reduce the loss of life and the damage done to the livelihoods of people affected by the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events.

The Climate Centre is based in the Netherlands, and serves the whole Red

Cross / Red Crescent Movement, in particular in developing countries. There is a close co-operation with the secretariat of the International Federation of the RC / RC Societies in Geneva.

Mission:

To decrease vulnerability of people hit by negative consequences of climate change and extreme-weather events caused by climate change.

Main Objectives (triple A-principle):

- To raise **A**wareness on impact of climate change through education and information.
- To establish concrete **A**ctions to support development of climate adaptation activities and projects.
- To **A**dvocate the dialogue on climate

change and the humanitarian consequences with policy makers on all levels.

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2002 Remarked the 10th anniversary of the World Disasters Report (a publication of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies).



TARGET GROUPS

1. Communities vulnerable to disasters, to which the Nicaraguan Red Cross focuses its efforts on: preparation, education and intervention in communities at risk, assisting with the drafting of emergency plans, community health programmes, and the execution of mitigation, recuperation, and rehabilitation projects.
2. Ethnic and indigenous communities, reinforcing their capacities for disaster preparedness and response, supporting the recognition of their rights and duties, promoting the insertion of these communities to municipal development plans, and integrating them to Red Cross programmes and services.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

1. A scientific study about climate change and disasters in Nicaragua will be completed in co-operation with a number of national institutes who deal with climate change and/or Disaster Risk Reduction.
2. The first Regional Central American Conference on Climate Change and Disasters.
3. The secondary and university educational systems of the Northern and Southern Autonomous Regions (RAAS and RAAN) will have integrated climate change and Disasters in their educational curricula.
4. A range of public activities like school contests, discussion fora and other, targeted at the youth.
5. The Nicaraguan people, mainly communities of the Atlantic region, will be made aware of the severity of climate change. A public information campaign will be designed and executed using popular communication tools like broadcast radio stations.
6. Taking advantage of the role assumed by the Red Cross in the Local Emergency Committees, concrete training activities will be carried out for the members of these committees. In addition, climate

change and disaster preparedness will be included as an area of discussion and action in the Local Health and Development Committees.

7. Regional Mitigation Maps adapted to disasters related to climate change and extreme weather events.
8. The response capacity of the communities of Bluefields and Puerto Cabezas will be improved through training, basic emergency equipment, communications equipment, and community alarms. This will be executed by the branches of the Nicaraguan Red Cross in these regions, and will be integrated to present municipal emergency plans. Community Response Groups will be promoted, deriving its membership from the most vulnerable neighborhoods and areas. These will be organized and trained by the Red Cross.
9. The Nicaraguan Red Cross Headquarters will strengthen its response capacity to respond to disasters, improving its communications with the Bluefields and



Puerto Cabezas branches, the training of its volunteers, and the provision of basic response equipment. These branches will receive the project's support to repair and update their radio communications infrastructure and transportation. They will also have an adequate Contingency Plan adapted to climate change effects.

PARTNERS

Among others: Nicaraguan Red Cross, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment, Nicaraguan Institute for Territorial Studies, the National System for Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Attention, the Humboldt Centre, the Red Cross Pan-American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU), the Netherlands Red Cross.

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