

Community Led Risk Assessment and Action Planning in White Horses

Location: White Horses, St. Thomas parish

Date: 2004

Sector focus: Multi-hazard risk reduction

Spatial focus: Community

Bibliographical reference

Jamaican Red Cross, *Community Led Risk Assessment and Action Planning in White Horses, Jamaica, DIPECHO IV Final Report*, Kingston, September 2004.

Abstract

This was a Jamaican Red Cross led community assessment and action planning exercise in White Horses, a community of 2,500 people in St. Thomas Parish that is one of Jamaica's 14 administrative sub-units. White Horses lies at the edge of a mountain range on the southeastern coast and is highly exposed to hurricane related hazards including wind, storm surge, and landslides.

Public meetings used a range of CRA methods to overview hazard exposure and vulnerability, and one of the most striking results is the importance of protection and repair of roads in a hurricane. The reason is that most livelihoods depend of employment outside of White Horses so that protection of transportation infrastructure and/ or its rapid repair is essential to livelihood security. The exercise gave rise to a community warning, evacuation, shelter, and post-event relief system.

Technical description

Hazard/risk type: Hurricane related landslide, storm surge, and wind

Type of assessment: Hazard analysis (Hazards were pre-identified); vulnerability assessment; capacity assessment for warning, evacuation, shelter and post-hurricane relief.

CRA process

Preliminary stages – training of Red Cross trained, volunteer Community Disaster Response Team (CDRT) and collection of secondary information; Community meetings to assess vulnerability and capacity, and to plan for hurricanes; Follow up by the CDRT.

Methods used: Secondary information sources were compiled from national and parish sources concerning available resources (capacity). Community level meeting developed, in sub groups for presentation to the plenary a series of products: hazard maps, problem trees, seasonal calendars, and maps of community level resources for shelter and evacuation.

Was livelihood analysis used? Yes (see abstract above)

Was external specialist knowledge introduced? Yes, but only to the extent that ODPEM hurricane warnings were explained and discussed.

Vulnerability analysis

Vulnerability was treated to the extent that households living in low lying, flood prone areas were identified. The Red Cross trained, volunteer Community Disaster Response Team (CDRT) seeks these households out as part of the hurricane early warning plan and makes sure they are able to evacuate to a shelter.

Capacity analysis

Resources available: *Financial:* EU humanitarian aid office (ECHO) funding through its DIPECHO program. *Human resources:* Jamaican National Red Cross trainers and Jamaican national Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) staff participated, in addition to Parish and local officials and Red Cross volunteers. At the local level there was a pre-existing Red Cross trained, volunteer Community Disaster Response Team (CDRT). It was active in the process.

Limitations to capacity: Lack of public transportation for evacuation to shelters and lack of funding for the provisioning of shelters with food and water, which tends to be done on an ad hoc manner involving the generosity of Members of Parliament and other wealthy individuals.

Action planning and implementation

What actions were actually planned? A community hurricane action plan.

What actions were actually carried out? This plan was actually carried out during the passing of hurricane Ivan in 2004.

Have these actions turned out to be sustainable? Yes, to the extent that Jamaican Red Cross continues to encourage and support its volunteer CDRT members. The plan is scheduled to be revised by the community every 6 months. This may be overly ambitious. There are also annual pre-hurricane season simulation exercises carried out by ODPEM.

Were there any unanticipated additional benefits of the actions? The Red Cross CDRT team of local people became better known and visible in the community of White Horses. They gained higher status and more credibility.

Were there any unanticipated negative consequences of the actions? N.A.

Limitations on action/ sustainability of actions: Overall economic circumstances in Jamaica provide insufficient public finance to fully fund ODPEM so that it could replicate this work, together with the Jamaican Red Cross, throughout the island. More precise mapping of landslide hazard would require human and financial resources unavailable at the community or parish level.

Indicators

No one died during hurricane Ivan in 2004. This is not a rigorous measure of the effectiveness of the action plan, but is prima facie evidence.

Contextual notes

Existence/ role of prior or contemporaneous conflict? No.

Role of displacement/ relocation? No.

Role of prior disaster & prior recovery attempts? Jamaica has suffered 30 hurricanes in 133 years. Gilbert in 1988 killed 45, left 500,000 homeless, and cost US\$ 2 billion. There is a generally high level of awareness of hurricane hazard throughout Jamaica, although knowledge of specific, local hazards such as landslides associated with hurricane may be lacking.

Significant historical, geographic, economic, political, or cultural issues that influenced this instance of CRA and its consequences? Jamaica's hazard history is significant in providing high public awareness (see above). The pattern on non-local employment is significant in structuring the pattern of economic vulnerability. Small-scale, face to face, social networks cut across government/ non-government boundaries and provide a rich basis for community based action involving schools, churches, the Red Cross, local government and local businesses.

Strategic notes

How has this practice of CRA influenced change in policy and practice at the national level? It reinforced the commitment of the Jamaican Red Cross and the national government (ODPEM) to the use of CRA as an approach to community level action planning.

How has this practice of CRA influenced change in policy and practice at local level? An action plan has been established, tested, and should carry on being revised and used.

How has this practice of CRA influenced the level of organization and solidarity in the locality where it was carried out? N.A.; however, it is reasonable to assume that this successful process has left the CDRT, local government, and other stakeholders feeling empowered.

Less divided along class, gender, age, ethnic lines? N.A.

More divided along these lines? Unlikely.

Are the people living in this area more able to speak out on issues that concern them? N.A.; however, Jamaicans are generally outspoken in their criticism of government in the first place.

Have new civil society organizations been created directly or indirectly because of this practice of CRA? No, but the Red Cross volunteer CDRT was reinforced.

Lessons learned

- ♦ Even rural, low income communities have considerable resources and capacities in the face of hazards if they can be identified and focused.
- ♦ Vulnerabilities related to livelihoods may have surprising dimensions – such as the importance of prompt repair of hurricane damage to roads because so many people work outside of White Horses.

Keywords

Hurricane, landslide, Community Disaster Response Team (CDRT), evacuation, shelter, hazard mapping, livelihood security.

Resource person(s)

Xavier Castellanos, former Regional IFRC Delegate for the Caribbean, Panama City, Panama, currently at IFRC headquarters, Geneva, email: Xavier.castellanos@ifrc.org; Barbara Carby, ODPEM, Kingston, Jamaica, email: BCarby@odpem.org.jm.