



GUATEMALA

National Programme for Disaster Reduction

Disaster Context

Guatemala is one of the poorest countries in Central America, with 56.7 percent of its population living in poverty. The majority of the rural population lives in fragile and vulnerable conditions as a result of high levels of poverty, unemployment, low standards of living, lack of access to resources, unequal ownership and distribution, environmental degradation and slow economic growth. After 33 years of civil war, a peace accord was finally signed in 1996.

The most common disasters that threaten the country are floods, landslides, hurricanes, droughts, bush fires, earthquakes, volcano eruptions, and traffic accidents. In 1976 an earthquake measuring 7.2 on the Richter scale took 22,000 lives; most deaths were due to inadequate construction.

The institutional capacities to handle disasters as a development issue are increasing. Recently the national authority for coordinating disaster reduction improved its information technology to manage disaster response. In the past, disaster management primarily focused on preparedness and response. Today, the emphasis is shifting from a traditional emergency response framework to a preventive approach that includes risk management.

Project Title

Risk Reduction Programme and Emergency Response

Sectors

- Disaster preparedness and response
- Risk mitigation and disaster prevention
- Public awareness, training, and sensitization
- Policy development
- Institutional strengthening

Funding

UNDP contributed \$110,000 from TRAC 1.1.1. funds, The Governments of UK, Canada, Switzerland, Netherlands and Malaysia provided \$311,000. Additionally, the Government of Guatemala contributed US\$ 398,000.

Partners

- National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction
- Presidency Secretariat for Planning and Programming
- Presidency of the Republic Executive Secretariat Universities

Programme Activities

- Approval of the Law for Social Development, which includes policy in dynamics and location of population in high-risk zones .
- Disaster prevention and actions to recover from the emergency caused by Hurricane Mitch
- Early warning system to prevent floods in the lower basin of river Madre Vieja on the Pacific Coast
- Forest fire prevention
- Development of system for training 142 government officials in basic course of disasters management with Universidad del Valle (Guatemala) and Cranfield University (UK)
- Risk management and disaster prevention , executed with UNV and Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, which received the UN Sasakawa Prize Certificate of Merit in recognition for its contribution to reduce disasters