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Case study summary - Dominican Republic

Legislation and disaster risk reduction at the community level



A flooded lake at the border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti

The forthcoming full report was commissioned by the IFRC and prepared by Maria-Clara Attridge Abente, disaster risk management consultant. It is one of several case studies the IFRC is undertaking to learn about how legislation can support (or impede) disaster risk reduction, particularly at the community level. For more information about the project and various case studies as they become available, please visit our website at <http://www.ifrc.org/idrl>.

Risk profile

The Dominican Republic is the second most vulnerable country in the Caribbean after Haiti, being exposed to tropical storms, hurricanes, floods, droughts, wild-fires and landslides, as well as being at considerable risk from seismic events and tsunamis. Moreover, escalating rates of urbanisation and increasing rates of migration from Haiti have led to the development of often unregulated communities living in high-risk areas.

Snapshot of the legislative framework

In 2002, the Dominican Republic adopted a Disaster Risk Management Act (DRM Act) that provides a comprehensive and overarching framework for action to address disaster risk reduction (DRR). The Act incorporates core criteria promoted by the international community in relation to the prevention, mitigation and response to disasters. Moreover, a number of other national laws also regulate a range of directly related matters, such as the protection of the environment and natural resources, building and construction, education, health and water management.

Work is currently on-going in the drafting of the country's DRR policy, as well as initiatives to support the development and financing of the National Fund for Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Response, in the revision of the national Disaster Risk Management Plan, and in the development of local-level plans.

Selected best practices

- The DRM Act provides for the participation of community-based and civil society organizations, including the Red Cross Society, in the various decision-making bodies for DRR at the national, regional, provincial and municipal levels.
- Principal responsibilities for disaster risk reduction have been decentralised and an increasing focus has been placed on the need for the continued development and strengthening of governance systems at the local level through targeted projects in selected high-risk areas.
- Pursuant to the General Education Act, which specifically refers to the role of the education sector in DRR, the Ministry of Education has included key DRR aspects in

its ten year education plan and also a specific Strategic DRM Plan, which ranges from the protection of schools to teaching about hazard awareness.

- Under the Environment Act, the Environment Ministry is empowered to define the value of environmental services that communities may provide (e.g. for carbon fixation) and pilot projects are underway to pay locals to preserve forests and ensure adequate management of water resources.

Key remaining gaps

- While legal provision has been made for a fixed percentage of governmental income to be provided to municipalities for services including DRR, this rule has not been fully observed in recent years' budgets.
- While the DRM Act refers to citizens' rights with regard to DRR, it leaves unclear what mechanisms citizens might use to enforce them.
- There is lack of adequate sanctions -- and of the means for their enforcement -- at the local level, in particular regarding land-use, construction and environmental management.



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