

# IRG Project Profiles



Caribbean children display the indomitable spirit of the islands in the face of disaster

## HURRICANE GEORGES RECONSTRUCTION: COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY REDUCTION PROJECT

In September 1998, Hurricane Georges left considerable damage in its wake as it passed over the Dominican Republic. The storm's effects were most evident in the low-income neighborhoods of Santo Domingo. Many of these homes, built on steep slopes and along the narrow floodplain, were highly vulnerable to wind and water damage. The U.S. Government responded to the Government of the Dominican Republic's request to provide emergency relief, recovery aid, and reconstruction assistance.

Under its Hurricane Georges Reconstruction Initiative, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) allocated \$1.8 million for a community mitigation and preparedness project to reduce vulnerability to natural disasters. The two-year, USAID-funded Community Vulnerability Reduction Project was managed by International Resources Group in collaboration with two local

partners—Dominican Association for Disaster Mitigation (ADMD) and Dominican Institute for Integral Development (IDDI).

### Objectives

The project targeted three densely populated, low-income communities of Santo Domingo-La Zurza, Los Manguitos/Capotillo, and Simon Bolivar. These communities, situated along the steep banks of the Isabella-Ozama River, have a combined population of 150,000 people. The project aimed to reduce these communities' vulnerability to disasters by:

- Strengthening local capacity
- Risk mapping of hazard-prone areas
- Creating safer living conditions
- Increasing disaster awareness
- Improving emergency response

Region: Latin America and the Caribbean  
Country: Dominican Republic  
Sector: Relief & Reconstruction  
Duration: October 1999–November 2001  
Client: USAID  
Partners: Dominican Association for Disaster Mitigation (ADMD)  
Dominican Institute for Integral Development (IDDI)



### Key Accomplishments

- ◆ Mitigation Committees established in each target neighborhood
- ◆ Risk maps produced for each pilot area
- ◆ Community disaster mitigation plans completed in all three target sites
- ◆ Safe evacuation routes created under USAID-funded infrastructure projects (\$210,000)
- ◆ Funds leveraged from the Inter-American Development Bank (\$158,000) to defray the additional costs of the infrastructure projects
- ◆ Funds leveraged from the Government of the Dominican Republic (\$333,000) for project expansion and replication

## Implementation

The project utilized a participatory process to engage local stakeholders that built on existing community resources. Sustainable community Mitigation Committees were created by bringing together representatives of existing, well-established, and respected neighborhood organizations. The Mitigation Committees then conducted flood plain and slope stability studies, supported by assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Information from these technical studies and risk mapping exercises guided the committees in making decisions on mitigation investments. Disaster prevention and response plans were then developed in conjunction with the local neighborhood associations. Training ensured that the committees had the necessary project design and management skills and community members were adequately prepared to respond to future disasters. The project also included a public education component to raise awareness about the project activities as well as other disaster prevention and mitigation topics.

One of the key mitigation measures identified by the committees was ensuring that evacuation routes were constructed in high-risk areas. The project was able to leverage additional funding from USAID to cover 60 percent of the construction needs, with the remaining work financed by outside sources, including the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

The community-based, participatory approach generated local commitment and ownership for the project and resulted in measures that will reduce the neighborhoods' vulnerability. The partnership between IRG and local organizations ADMD and IDDI not only helped strengthen the delivery of the technical services, but also enhanced the local capacity and institutional resources to continue disaster mitigation work in the target communities and replicate the approach in other vulnerable areas. The Government of the Dominican Republic and the IDB have recognized that this community-based approach could serve as a model for future community development and disaster-reduction activities.

October 2003

**International Resources Group**  
1211 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20036 USA  
202-289-0100 Fax 202-289-7601  
[www.irgltd.com](http://www.irgltd.com)