

Stories of Impact

A series highlighting achievements in disaster risk management initiatives

Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction in Niger



RESULTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

- Teams rapidly completed a baseline assessment of pre-project preparedness and capacity, providing a benchmark for long-term project goals and accomplishments.
- Nearly 3,000 people have been trained in disaster risk management under the project, including 943 women.
- In the first year of the project, teams have successfully integrated disaster risk management into 10 community development plans, ensuring sustainable and resilient growth.
- The Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction Project is part of nearly \$113 million in ongoing climate change and disaster risk reduction programs funded by the World Bank, Global Environment Facility, and GFDRR.

REGION: AFRICA
COUNTRY: NIGER
FOCUS AREA: PREPAREDNESS

In the Sahel, the climatic and geographic transition into the Sahara desert creates enormous and unpredictable risk for drought and water scarcity. This often translates into food insecurity in surrounding countries, including Niger, which is almost 80% covered by the Sahara desert.

More frequent and intense natural disasters are hampering the recovery of vulnerable communities as new crises aggravate the lingering effects from older ones. To help mitigate these and other risks, the World Bank and the Africa Caribbean Pacific – European Union Natural Disaster Risk Reduction Program (ACP-EU NDRR), an initiative of the ACP Group funded by the EU and managed by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), have financed an almost \$1 million disaster risk reduction project in Niger to build capacity of local communities for early warning and response.

Context

Governments and international development organizations are becoming increasingly interested in building resilience throughout the Sahel as a changing climate threatens to create even more volatility in rainfall patterns and the availability of water. Supported by GFDRR and the ACP-EU NDRR Program, the Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction Project is mainstreaming disaster risk management practices into development activities to prevent droughts and other disasters from upending social progress and economic growth.

Approach

As a capacity and resilience building initiative, the Oxfam-implemented project first worked to understand existing local coping mechanisms for disasters for potential systemization and leveraged investments. Along with providing technical support, advanced seminars and guidance for documentation, and information gathering, the project also:

- Conducted extensive communal interviews along with focused capacity assessments that revealed inefficiencies and critical needs in dozens of existing weather monitoring stations.
- Improved the functioning of five sub-regional committees to help streamline communication between local and other levels, in order to better incorporate locally-informed and targeted responses.
- Trained thousands of community members in disaster risk reduction, and reactivated 10 municipal-level monitoring observatories along with 20 community early warning systems.

LESSONS LEARNED

Inter-organizational communication is essential for effective disaster risk mitigation. Often, top-down approaches to disaster risk reduction can overlook the existing knowledge and resources of local communities. The project made streamlined communication between various organizational levels a priority, putting in place feedback mechanisms to better incorporate communal strengths in policy and capacity building efforts. Overall, the project encountered enthusiasm and high levels of participation among communities given a voice in the project, especially with regard to gender and sustainability concerns.

Outdated equipment can create information and communication bottlenecks. World Bank teams found that inadequate or outdated hardware and capacity in existing monitoring stations throughout the region were preventing easy access to previous disaster and management records, slowing project efforts and constraining the effectiveness of existing systems. This prompted an overhaul of 23 offices to modernize monitoring equipment and digitize records, enhancing communication between sites and rendering disaster risk data more readily available.

Next Steps

GFDRR will continue to scale up the project, ultimately training more than 7,000 people and supplying a population of over 1.2 million with updated monitoring systems, risk reduction training programs and further capacity building in 2014. These fundamental measures will help enable other disaster risk reduction and humanitarian efforts throughout Niger.

“This project’s actions will contribute to Niger’s resilience and will have a positive impact on agricultural growth, which is the principal source of food and income for more than 80% of Niger’s population including rural and urban residents.”

— Richard James, Task Team Leader, the World Bank

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*All figures in US Dollars