

Country: Costa Rica

Focus of case study: Flood preparedness

Summary: Following the floods of 2002, the Costa Rican Red Cross initiated a community training program in disaster preparedness and prevention, community first aid, and psychological support. The idea of the early warning system was presented to communities with the understanding that the communities themselves would operate and follow through with the system. Building materials were distributed to support structures such as retaining walls and for repairing drinking-water pipes damaged in the landslide. Meanwhile, local authorities established an emergency committee to coordinate disaster response and rehabilitation activities. This committee convened coordination meetings and followed up on activities in the affected communities. Radio equipment was installed in four centers. Activities were coordinated with local institutions such as the Catholic church, the Costa Rican institute of electricity, the community development association, the chamber of tourism and regional private and state schools, in order to disseminate information about the risk reduction measures being undertaken. The willingness of the communities to participate in training sessions was very positive. Many female heads of households, men and children took part. Disaster awareness materials were circulated to teachers in the local schools. A training process in the communities was begun and continues. Nine months after the disaster, there was another landslide with the same characteristics as that of August 2002. The communities were able to respond, and institutional coordination and decision making was much more effective, since all participants in the control room knew one another.

Class of adaptation practice: communal pooling

External support: informational, technical, leadership, financial

Local rural institutions: collective/ social, private, public

External institutions: public

Capacity building: information exchange, coordination among groups, ability to plan and strategize, inclusion of women

Source: UNFCCC Local Coping Strategies Database: “Flood preparedness in Costa Rica.”
