



World Conference on Disaster Reduction

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ECHO/ISDR good practices for resilient communities

Jamaica Red Cross DIPECHO IV Community-Based Disaster Management Project

The Jamaica Red Cross DIPECHO IV Project is an educational venture aimed at sensitizing and preparing communities in key elements of disaster preparedness and response. Through funding provided by the European Community Humanitarian Organization (ECHO) and general support from the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), 6 communities were selected due to their extensive vulnerability to natural disasters and were educated in elements of disaster management. The communities are Cedar Valley and White Horses in the parish of St. Thomas, Malvern and Balaclava in St. Elizabeth, Ewarton/Mount Rosser in St. Catherine and Smithfield/Hatfield in Westmoreland. A Memorandum of Understanding signed by the national Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), the Social Development Commission (SDC), the Jamaica Red Cross and IFRC, fostered even greater local support on the national and parish levels.

Using participatory learning methods spearheaded by the IFRC tool of Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA), community members learned to recognize their own hazards and risks and were soon able to identify and mobilize critical resources that would increase their capacities to respond to disasters. VCA training facilitated community residents' development of spatial, hazard and resource maps, and enhanced their analytical and leadership skills using user-friendly methodology such as visual aids and the development of community-specific seasonal and historical calendars. Due to the efficiency of the training methods and community ownership of the programme, two additional communities, Russia and Santa Cruz in Westmoreland and St. Elizabeth respectively, were included in the activities.

An important development of the project was the creation of Community Disaster Response Teams (CDRT); the result, 8 teams comprised of 57 members. The CDRT training included light search and rescue, emergency first aid, basic logistics and evacuation procedures. Their training was put to the test with the passage of Hurricane Ivan. Team members were lauded by their fellow residents and parish organizations for the assistance they gave to their communities and Red Cross Branches in pre-hurricane warnings, evacuation and shelter management. Their efficient reporting during the first

72 hours after the hurricane provided valid information that enhanced response mechanisms in their areas.