

Stories of Impact

A series highlighting achievements in disaster risk management

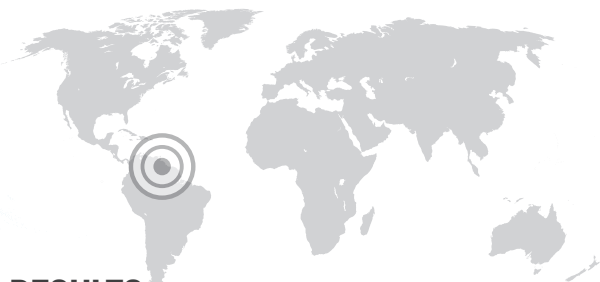
Communicating Flood Risk Along Guyana's Coast



REGION: LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

FOCUS: RISK REDUCTION, PREPAREDNESS, RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

COUNTRY: GUYANA



RESULTS:

- A targeted risk communication strategy, including animated videos and key publications, ensured that policy-makers, stakeholders, and local communities were fully informed of disaster risk measures in case of catastrophic rainfall events.
- The project contributed to a \$123 million package of critical flood risk management investments from the World Bank and other partners.
- Workshops were held to share information from the Conservancy Adaptation Project and disseminate technical information, facilitating information exchange and improving coordination within and between ministries and stakeholder groups.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

In January 2005, heavy rainfall caused catastrophic flooding along Guyana's coasts, affecting 290,000 people – almost half of Guyana's population. Total flood damage was estimated at \$465 million, or nearly 60 percent of the country's GDP, prompting the government to work towards increasing its capacity to manage flood risk.

The government of Guyana, working with the World Bank, initiated the GEF-funded \$3.8 million Conservancy Adaptation Project (CAP) to address catastrophic flood risks in Guyana's coastal areas. The project strengthened understanding of the coastal drainage system and water conservancy, improved drainage infrastructure, pinpointed key strategic interventions to reduce flood risk and built institutional capacity.

Funding of \$260,000 for the technical assistance project was provided by the European Union (EU) in the framework of the Africa Caribbean Pacific (ACP) – EU Natural Disaster Risk Reduction (NDRR) Program, an initiative of the ACP Group of States managed by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR).



GFDRR
Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery

ACP-EU Natural Disaster Risk Reduction Program

An initiative of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group, funded by the European Union and managed by GFDRR

CONTEXT:

Guyana's heavily populated and economically important coastal areas are often threatened by flooding from extreme precipitation events. The CAP effectively enabled the government of Guyana to take action to understand the coastal drainage systems and strengthen flood control infrastructure. However, to maximize risk mitigation efforts, policymakers needed to be informed of developments so that they could effectively engage in the process. It was also important to raise awareness of ongoing flood risks, mitigation strategies and project developments with policymakers, stakeholders and the general public to improve emergency preparedness and response.

APPROACH:

As the CAP progressed, the government worked closely with the World Bank team to interpret, package and disseminate relevant project material that was both technically accurate yet easy to understand for non-experts. The information also served to inform policymakers in capacity building activities and provided the information necessary for good decision-making.

The project:

- Presented a holistic view of the East Demerara Water Conservancy (EDWC) and East Coast drainage systems, including steps taken to understand and strengthen existing flood prevention infrastructure, and develop new flood mitigation measures;
- Raised awareness through a multi-media approach that included technically-accurate videos, printed brochures and publications, and workshops;
- Enhanced government knowledge and capacity to manage the EDWC and coastal drainage systems, resulting in a \$123 million package of investments critical for flood risk management.

NEXT STEPS:

Various new flood-risk management investment projects are currently underway to improve the EDWC dam and EDWC and East Coast drainage systems following the strategic investments identified under the CAP. Consultation with stakeholders and communication of these new developments to relevant bodies and the general public is an important and ongoing process.

This awareness, coupled with the development and maintenance of flood control infrastructure in the EDWC and coastal areas, will enable Guyana to better manage and mitigate the future effects of climate change.

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*ALL MONETARY VALUES IN USD



LESSONS LEARNED:

Good communications and outreach is an important part of disaster recovery and prevention efforts. An approach that regularly disseminated the results of the project facilitated awareness, improved coordination and led to strong public support for the CAP.

Awareness raising and capacity building of policymakers can help avert future disasters. The 2005 and 2006 floods demonstrated that any system can have unknown vulnerabilities. Without good communications, messages about preventative measures can be lost. Public awareness can also influence decision makers to take action.

Coordination among stakeholders can be improved with better communications. The government of Guyana worked closely with the World Bank team throughout CAP implementation. The transparency resulting from effective communications of CAP activities significantly contributed to the smooth working relations among stakeholders, particularly encouraging coordination amongst the government ministries, donor communities and other stakeholders.