

LWR AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



BACKGROUND: THE VULNERABILITY CHALLENGE

Natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, storms, and droughts ravage the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people each year. Each year, an increasing amount of Earth's surface is affected by severe weather, with increased frequency of events.¹ The destruction of natural ecosystems or poorly-planned economic development can increase a disaster's impact. The poor, often forced to build their homes on vulnerable hillsides or coastlines, at risk of earthquakes, landslides or flooding, or farm the land that is least resistant to drought, have the fewest resources to prepare for a crisis and the fewest resources to rebuild after the fact. **Disaster risk reduction (DRR)** programs help vulnerable populations prepare for powerful natural phenomena. The implementation of DRR programs is imperative from a life-saving perspective, and also practical. Economic losses to natural disasters can be

severe, and the amount of money spent on damages from disasters around the world has increased dramatically in recent years, depleting scarce resources and sending the poor into even deeper poverty.

LWR'S APPROACH: BUILDING RESILIENCE

LWR is committed to promoting DRR in all of its work with communities living with the risk of natural disaster. LWR is uniquely positioned to help build a culture of safety at the local level, reduce underlying risk factors and strengthen disaster preparedness.

1. Risk and Poverty in a Changing Environment, 2009 Global Assessment Report on Disaster risk reduction: http://www.preventionweb.net/files/9414_GARsummary.pdf



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LWR works at the community level with local partners to implement DRR programs and integrate risk reduction strategies into economic and agricultural development projects. These programs and strategies are customized to address unique local concerns and threats. LWR's DRR programming includes planning, training and advocacy, equipment provision, risk mapping, and the development of early warning systems.

Strengthening community capacity: Experience shows that the communities that are most resilient in the face of hazards are those who have knowledge of their risk, infrastructure to address the needs identified, and the will to make the necessary changes to create a safer environment. LWR's community capacity-building efforts include awareness-raising programs about changing environmental risks and conditions, community risk-mapping activities, and educational and leadership development programs to prepare communities to advocate with their government for policies that reduce risk.

Networking for greater impact: LWR's DRR activities and goals are designed to reinforce larger national and international initiatives, including the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005–2015. LWR collaborates with local, national, and international stakeholders to implement DRR projects which complement state and regional strategies for reaching their HFA goals. In addition, through advocacy and coordination with government bodies, LWR helps keep

DRR at the top of government agencies' agendas. Advocacy and coordination activities often lead to new alliances, make the passage of DRR legislation possible, or facilitate program implementation.

Focusing on vulnerable populations: Women play an active role in the planning and implementation of all of LWR's DRR programs. Disasters disproportionately affect women and girls who, as the primary caretakers of the family, are often responsible for caring for young children and the elderly. They are also charged with collecting water, which often forces them to travel long distances in unsafe conditions. Recovery may be a greater challenge for women due to loss of housing or means of production, exacerbated by the stress of their caretaker responsibilities. Children are also extremely vulnerable in disaster situations. LWR supports disaster planning for schools as well as disaster preparedness education for children and youth. This approach ensures safer schools and a young population that is engaged and empowered to take appropriate action in the face of natural disasters.

LOOKING AHEAD

LWR is committed to implementing DRR programs and strategies in its development initiatives as a preventative means of mitigating harm to some of the world's most vulnerable communities. By supporting local partners in areas of the world most threatened by disasters, LWR is part of the crucial process of saving lives, improving health and ensuring that livelihoods continue to support families, even in the worst of situations.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: EL SALVADOR

LWR is working in El Salvador to increase community and local government capacity for emergency preparedness in response to landslides, floods, and other events. Through a USAID-funded project, LWR is collaborating with local partners to help build resilient communities that are able to effectively monitor potential risks through early warning systems and evacuate to safer locations when conditions become unstable.

