

Rebuilding homes and livelihoods in Grenada after Hurricane Ivan

Background

On 7 September 2004, Hurricane Ivan wreaked havoc on Grenada. Of the nation's 100,000 inhabitants, there were 39 deaths and approximately 90 per cent of houses were damaged or destroyed. According to government estimates, some 50 per cent of the population was left homeless as a result of the category 4 storm.

Government buildings, the main prison, hospitals, schools and churches did not escape and many government ministries and public services, including the Red Cross, were paralysed for several days immediately following the hurricane. Water, power and telecommunications services were severely disrupted.

Two and a half weeks after the disaster, meeting basic needs was still a major challenge, with many people lacking food, water and medical care. An important part of Grenada's food basket consists of rice and beans, and stocks of these ran extremely low.

To make matters worse, the agricultural sector was nearly completely destroyed. Of particular concern was the destruction of nutmeg plantations, a crop that accounts for 80 per cent of all agricultural exports. It takes at least seven years for nutmeg trees to grow and bear fruit. This grim picture extended to the fishing sector, with a significant number of boats, equipment and icemakers either lost or damaged. Fishermen found themselves in dire need of assistance. There was also a major environmental disaster with many forested areas destroyed, with a negative impact on watershed management.

In the early stages of the response, the International Federation worked closely with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), and Oxfam under the coordination of UN agencies and the National Emergency Response Organization (NERO), since renamed National Disaster Management Agency. Oxfam took responsibility for providing emergency water and sanitation assistance with the International Federation carrying out complementary activities where needed.

Red Cross representatives actively participated in weekly inter-agency coordination meetings and distributed



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Hurricane Ivan caused widespread destruction of shelter and livelihoods.

monthly operational reports in order to share information with other national and international agencies operating in Grenada.

The recovery programme

The Grenada Red Cross Society and its partners collaborated on a number of housing reconstruction and livelihoods assistance projects targeting the social and economic recovery of those households most affected by Hurricane Ivan.

Mindful of the damage to the agricultural sector, the Grenada Red Cross Society and British Red Cross developed a livelihoods project to help re-establish household food security and stabilize prices in the local food economy. The project targeted 450 small-scale vegetable farmers, with land size of between 150 m² and 1 acre, through the provision of seeds, tools and fertilizer. The project provided support to those dependent on subsistence farming to meet immediate household needs and to those engaged in small scale production for local markets. All agricultural inputs were distributed from central warehouses in time for planting during the rainy season.

An evaluation of 10 percent of the beneficiaries revealed that most of the beneficiaries worked on between .25 and 1 acre of land, with agriculture the primary source

of livelihood for 70 percent of respondents. Most were also engaged in part time work when available, although many continued to live below the poverty line. Within a month of receiving the seeds, the majority of farmers were able to plant and felt that the quality and quantity of inputs were appropriate. With vegetable prices increasing in the aftermath of Hurricane Ivan, over 80 percent of farmers anticipated selling the majority of their harvest on the market and were expecting to earn approximately 150 US dollar per month. The respondents were overwhelmingly satisfied with the Red Cross staff interactions, information and services received.

In addition to the livelihoods project, the Grenada Red Cross Society implemented a long-term housing reconstruction programme with the support of the International Federation, the French Red Cross and the British Red Cross. The level of support evolved over the course of two years as conditions improved and Red Cross teams became more experienced.

From the outset the identification of beneficiaries proved challenging with over 27,000 homes needing repairs and a wide range of partners committing to build new houses, including a promise of 120 houses from the Venezuelan government and 2,000 from the Chinese government.

Donors progressively allowed for greater flexibility in the type of repairs, from the short-term distribution of galvanized sheeting for roof repairs to longer term complete house reconstruction. However, early funding constraints meant that the Grenada Red Cross Society had to focus on those households whose homes were damaged and had no roof. Whenever possible, the builders worked their way around this by building frames and roofs to hurricane standards, leaving the homeowners to install flooring and walls.

The Grenada Red Cross Society introduced a number of innovative measures in the reconstruction programme. A strong emphasis was placed upon strengthening the disaster resilience of houses and on public information. The Grenada Red Cross Society provided advice at community level on fitting hurricane-resistant devices and distributed hurricane straps to homes with sufficiently sturdy roofs.

The training of building instructors in hurricane-resistant construction techniques also played a key role in ensuring the sustainability of building work. The builders in turn trained community members and provided materials for housing repair. Community

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Replacing productive assets, such as boats and fishing nets, helps to re-establish livelihoods and local markets.

members were then able to develop the necessary skills to rebuild their own houses with the materials provided.

The Grenada Red Cross Society succeeded in mobilizing extensive support from many different organizations. The French Red Cross and British Red Cross provided a range of expertise, USAID donated building materials, the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO) gave funding for reconstruction and disaster preparedness programmes, and the Australian government funded 14 new homes.

The Grenada Red Cross Society repaired over 750 homes and provided building materials and hurricane straps to 2,000 homes. Houses were either repaired or rebuilt using hurricane-resistant techniques to ensure the sustainability of the construction work

Partnerships

The Grenada Red Cross Society relies heavily on volunteers, who all gained valuable skills working on the projects. The National Society was also able to learn from partner Red Cross National Societies and their expertise in certain areas. The French Red Cross

provided important advice on construction techniques and training, and the British Red Cross provided capacity-building in project management.

The number of different Red Cross partners and other agencies presented a great coordination challenge for the Grenada Red Cross Society. However, with time and experience, the National Society was able to take on greater responsibility for coordination. The Grenada Red Cross Society also benefited from working closely with external regional agencies like USAID for the provision and transport of materials.

Lessons learnt

- The Grenada Red Cross Society implemented the Vulnerability Capacity Assessment (VCA) methodology in 34 communities following Hurricane Ivan. Feedback from the communities allowed the National Society to identify vulnerable households for assistance through the reconstruction programme. The VCA also made it much easier for the Grenada Red Cross headquarters to work in the same communities when Hurricane Emily hit Grenada again the following year.
- The use of beneficiary identification and selection criteria requires regular feedback from the assessment teams to adapt the process to the reality on the ground. In Grenada, the assessment teams held weekly meetings to discuss their findings and any challenges related to the identification process, including sensitive family issues.
- The Grenada Red Cross Society drew on the expertise and advice of building experts. This added value to the building assessments and strengthened the process of beneficiary identification. It also demonstrated to local communities that a robust process for decision-making was in place, in which social needs and technical factors were considered side by side. The Grenada reconstruction programme received advice from an expert from the French Red Cross, who subsequently provided expertise in Jamaica, allowing the lessons learnt in Grenada to benefit other programmes in the region.
- The housing reconstruction project was linked to a community disaster preparedness programme, which allowed for regular exchanges between housing strengthening sessions and household disaster planning. This allowed the Grenada Red Cross Society to offer long-term support to affected communities, with successive programmes including immediate relief, housing assistance, livelihoods support, training in building and construction standards, sessions in family preparedness for

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Proper documentation is essential for accountability, to beneficiaries and donors alike.

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Identifying vulnerable households for recovery assistance requires sensitivity.

- disasters, and capacity-building in community disaster planning.
- Governments sometimes have different expectations of what the Red Cross can and should do. With limited government capacity in the aftermath of Hurricane Ivan, together with a large number of agencies working in the country, the Grenada Red Cross Society found it difficult to understand who was doing what and where they would be best placed to intervene. This made it particularly challenging to work with donors, to develop plans, and agree on roles and responsibilities. Clear coordination

Linda's story

Linda Charles is in her 70s. She has nine children (one deceased) and 21 grandchildren. She has spent her whole life in the community where she was born and many of her family live and work nearby. She currently lives with two of her sons, one of whom has Down's Syndrome and is unable to work, and another who works at a hardware shop in a nearby town.

Before the hurricane, they lived in a small wooden house on the side of a steep hill. The entire house was destroyed by the hurricane and Linda was forced to move in with her daughter. This was a very difficult time for Linda. She has limited options for earning a living and does not have land for even a small kitchen garden. She is completely dependent on the government's 'poor relief' and on support from her children, who also struggle to feed their growing families.

After the hurricane, the Grenada Red Cross Society provided her with food and water. It was clear that Linda and her two sons also needed assistance with shelter. The French Red Cross secured funding from the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO) and, along with the Grenada Red Cross Society, reconstructed Linda's one-room wooden house.

Unfortunately, funding conditions required that emergency relief funds could not be used for the construction of complete houses, meaning that windows, a door and concrete floor could not be provided. In the years following Hurricane Ivan, Linda has managed to buy all but the floor. The Red Cross ensured that the house they built was hurricane resistant. Although Linda feels she should have received a complete house with windows, door and floor, she is extremely grateful to the Grenada Red Cross Society for their support.

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Local technical expertise and partner agencies can provide valuable inputs for the design of recovery programmes.

- structures and working modalities between agencies should be identified and agreed upon in advance.
- The number of different actors in Grenada also led to confusion at community level over the role of the Grenada Red Cross Society. As a result, the Grenada Red Cross Society is now much more open about its capacity when entering into partnerships. It is also more aware of the need for effective two-way communication between the Grenada Red Cross Society and communities for effective disaster relief and recovery programming.
 - Red Cross partners became involved at different points in the recovery process and with very different approaches. This made it difficult for the Grenada Red Cross Society to manage and coordinate the different activities. However, as capacity grew, the National Society was able to take on more responsibility for recovery operation management. Within a few months the Grenada Red Cross Society had the confidence of its partners to directly manage day-to-day operations and to directly manage donor funds.

This is one of three case studies, originally presented and discussed at the Caribbean Regional Recovery Workshop held in Trinidad from 29 April to 1 May 2008. This document is accompanied by a video.

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