

PROJECT IMPACT EVALUATION

**Urban Community-Based Disaster Prevention and Mitigation
(Central America)
by Luc Mougeot**

Subject: 92-0024 "Urban Community-Based Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (Central America), part of LA RED consortium

Based on interviews with project coordinator Allan Lavell at FLACSO in San Jos□ on 16Jun95 and with LA RED exec secretary Andrew Maskrey at ITDG in Lima on 4Jul95

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FUND LEVERAGE

1. Overall, around 122 500 USD since IDRC project inception
2. The US National Science Academy granted 25-30 000 USD to FLACSO which allowed 92-0023 to co-host with the University of Delaware's Disaster Research Institute a major conference in Costa Rica in Nov92, of which proceedings became LA RED's second book.
3. A FLACSO-CEPREDENAC agreement enabled 92-0024 to access 55 000 USD in Aug93 to: (a) organise an international conference on community-based disaster prevention and mitigation in Honduras, with coop of OFDA, COPECO-H and CEPROD (IDRC recipient), (b) publish a LA RED book "Viviendo en riesgo", which contains IDRC's program statement on support to disaster research (copy with LM); and (c) fund doctoral research of Eugenia Molina at Louvain on perception of physical and social causes of disasters - she has published materials in local newspapers.
4. Through its participation to LA RED-level research initiatives, 92-0024 accessed a further 25 000 USD from ODA and ECHO (European Community Humanitarian Office)*:
 - (a) for the 92-0024 network's four national teams to study the evolution of national systems for prevention and mitigation and community response. Noteworthy is that data generated so far thanks to this and previous IDRC grants enabled 92-0024 teams to do their share of the regional study at half the cost incurred by other LA RED member institutions;

(b) for 92-0024 to assist with developing a software (DESINVENTAR), collecting time series of disastrous events on record in Guatemala, Salvador and Costa Rica (in add to six other L.A. countries) and processing these using the software;

(c) for 92-0024 to assist with inventorying and evaluating teaching and training materials on community participation in disaster prevention and mitigation in Central America, also part of a LA-RED-wide research initiative.

5. Other LA RED resources from which 92-0024 has benefited, though difficult to quantify at time of interview:

(a) Italian technical cooperation approved 30 000 USD (released 5000 so far) for the preparation of a methodological guide on prevention and reduction of disasters at local level. Part of this fund will go to 92-0024 recipients to cover their share of the work.

(b) Publication of 92-0024 results through LA RED has meant cheaper, wider and more effective dissemination than would have been possible through project institutions alone. The success of LA RED publications (newsletter, periodical and books both aesthetically and substantively very good - some copies on shelf in Mougeot's office) suggests they are responding to a viable public demand for information on this specific subject; they likely have concurred to modify, if not influence, at least part of an educated readership's perception of or interventions in disaster management. This however has not been fully documented. The success of LA RED publications is noteworthy: more than 700 copies of the first issue of the LA RED periodical sold in Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela alone in the first six months of its publication; more than 800 copies of the LA RED's first book sold so far. The editorial fund of LA RED, based in Colombia, now has a balance of 4500 USD, will become self-replenishing as of 1995 and is expected to continue to grow and generate profits. Maskrey said that the publication program of LA RED has been more cost-effective than conventional training.

(c) LA RED's gopher space on Internet will become operative in Aug-Sep95 and will provide an additional informational interactive vehicle to Central American and other LA RED components. Subscription has been paid, the line installed and site structuring and uploading is underway. Initially, bibliographical listings generated by LA RED will be made retrievable through common descriptors; the PAHO-FLACSO directory (see above) will also be updated regularly on the LA RED gopher.

(d) USAID supplied 10 000 USD for a workshop on environmental degradation and disasters in Quito during the VI Meeting of LA RED in May95, in which project 92-0024 members were actively involved.

(e) Similarly, 92-0024 has benefited indirectly from financial support secured domestically by other components of LA RED to hold meetings and seminars in their respective countries to which 92-0024 participated (e.g.: Gobernacion of the City of Mexico and UNAM funded 100 percent of seminar in Feb94 attended by 350 people; the Cartagena meeting in Mar94 was defrayed by the Colombian Government, excepted for 7 airfares covered by LA RED.) Maskrey estimates that LA RED members now defray 70 percent of real cost of the research they conduct with local funds.

* Funding to secretariat of the LA RED consortium, ITDG-Lima, has been to the tune of 200 000 USD/year from ODA and ECHO; the ODA grant ends Mar96 and ECHO's in Oct97. ODA may renew core-funding, given achievements, although Maskrey would like to see more aggressive external fund leverage by several consortium components beyond this initial 2.5-year period.

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

6. In the context of 92-0024, several university students participated in evaluations of geological risks and architectural designs in communities studied by the project in Salvador and Costa Rica. Also, two Dutch master's students in geography did fieldwork with the project component in Costa Rica. At LA RED's and in national events, workshops and short courses have assisted large numbers of participants (not quantified at time of interview).

7. A major HR development impact has been the initiation to the subject matter of three out of four national team leaders, who are leading regional thinkers in related areas but had little, if any, previous direct expertise on the subject prior to 92-0024.

8. Maskrey expressed the concern that more resources will need to be assigned to coordinating personnel to keep up the consortium than has been the case initially, given the dramatic growth of workload. LA RED is not an institution but a coordinating facility; so far LA RED has not paid salaries to anybody and has depended on the good will of key individuals to do its work. Maskrey thinks this will have to change given the dramatic growth of coordinators' workload and that more resources will need to be assigned to key personnel to keep the consortium running smoothly.

INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

9. Thanks to reputation of national team leaders such as Mario Lungo and Sonia Baires, the national press has disseminated articles, the subject matter has been incorporated to university programs, El Salvador's National Development Foundation (FUNDE) has defined the issue to be of program interest. In Guatemala, Gisele Hellert coordinates FLACSO's urban program which now has established disaster management as its main area of work.

10. Since the 1994 meeting in Tarapoto, Peru, a number of changes have taken place within several member institutions (COMECSO in Mexico, ONADE in Colombia and FLACSO in Costa Rica) which, according to Maskrey could affect the institutional effectiveness of LA RED, despite founding professionals' enduring commitment. In Costa Rica in particular, FLACSO, otherwise a fairly strong regional institution, recently has entered a period of managerial instability, according to Lavell; he has been offered a one-year visiting researcher position at the Federal University of Paraiba to work with the 93-1001 project, the Canada-Brazil component funded by CIDA-IDRC. This should contribute to strengthen considerably the research capacity of the Brazilian personnel. Back in Costa Rica, CEPREDENAC could be approached as a replacement to lead the Central American network but the director who has been actively involved with LA RED ended his mandate recently and LA RED will have to see how relationships develop with CEPREDENAC's new administration.

11. At the May95 VI Meeting of LA RED in Ecuador, LA RED reacted promptly to the aforementioned changes through modifying the structure of LA RED.

This now stands as follows:

(a) committee of trustees: individuals who created LA RED in Limon, Costa Rica, back in Aug92;

(b) management group representing LA RED: CIESAS in Mexico, FLACSO in Costa Rica, OSSO in Colombia, Equilibrios and CIUDAD in Ecuador, ITDG in Peru, CENTRO in Argentina, UFPB in Brazil. All these are consortium nodes and lead networks within their respective countries;

(c) participating institutions: those associated with LA RED projects;

(d) sponsoring institutions: IDRC, Italian Tech Coop, ODA, CEPREDENAC, etc.

PARTNERSHIPS

12. Although difficult to quantify at this time, the impact of the Central American network on minds and actions of stakeholders at regional, national and local levels, has probably been magnified beyond credentials earned through 88-0277, under 920024 and through its association with LA RED since mid-1992. In turn, the partnerships between 92-0024 and such players have benefited LA RED's work. For instance, largely thanks to initial achievements of the Central American network (see 92-0024 PS, sections on Initial Impact on Research and on Initial Contributions to Policy of 88-0277), CEPREDENAC has become a close associate of FLACSO and LA RED, has been very ably represented at LA RED's recent meetings. In addition to activities referred to in par 3 above, under 92-0024 CEPREDENAC funded a PAHO/FLACSO-executed Directory of Researchers, Institutions and Projects on Disasters and Society in Latin America. PAHO's Disaster Documentation Center also has dedicated several issues of its newsletter Biblio-Des to selected bibliographies on disasters, prepared in collaboration with LA RED.

13. Members of 92-0024 have performed a number of services for other institutions in the region (e.g.: evaluation of PAHO's program of disaster preparedness for Latin America (1993); evaluation of UNDP-Disasters and Humanitarian Assistance's world program on training in disaster management in Latin America and Asia, in collab with IDRC 93-1001 researchers).

14. Two 92-0024 national team leaders, Manuel Arguello and G. Molina (formerly supported by IDRC in CEPROD), now in senior advisory positions in their respective national governments are promoting, the first as principal advisor to the second vice-presidency of Costa Rica, a community approach to risk management by emergency commissions working on poverty alleviation in 16 selected communities, while Molina is introducing a similar approach for the prevention and mitigation of floods in the valley of Sula, Honduras.

SCIENTIFIC/TECHNICAL ADVANCES

Highlights since 1994 Tarapoto meeting:

16. The practical guide on local disaster prevention, funded by Italian Tech Coop, will discuss principles, concepts, mapping, measures and role of local actors. It also will contain an annotated survey of national training materials. The draft is to be completed by end of 95, then validated through national consultations before its publication. The guide will be

aimed at mayors, community leaders, etc.

17. Initial findings of the ongoing inventory of small and mid-sized disasters in Latin America is calling into question the assumptions and strategic effectiveness of international agencies, policies of assistance to disaster-stricken nations in the region.

(a) While International Red Cross's data base, often referred to as the most complete sources on disasters, reports 0.3 disaster/day on average for 30 countries during the period of 1994, LA RED's survey, processed through a LA RED designed and patented software called DESINVENTAR, revealed 15 recorded disasters/day over the same 1990-94 period in Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Colombia and Peru alone (civil unrests and accidents excluded).

(b) Red Cross and DHA's definition of what constitutes a disaster is somewhat limited: more than 100 casualties, \$ damage equal to more than 1 percent of the GNP. LA RED claims such criteria have a number of serious negative effects on disaster management:

(i) they induce civil defence policies to be remedial more than preventive, as external aid can only be requested if the disaster is officially declared as such (is big enough) as per afore criteria;

(ii) they distract attention from the small and medium-scale events which over time and space develop into large-scale disasters;

(iii) a series of small or medium-scale disasters often outdo a single large one in human and economic losses; overall, as suggested by the wide gap between their frequency and that of large disasters, the latter only make up a fraction of the costs of environmental degradation to a nation.

(c) LA RED points to the fact that its less restrictive acceptance of the term disaster only partly explains the large difference between their and Red Cross figures. Maskrey contends that even the data used by LA RED is probably on the conservative side of reality; an ongoing localised survey of events by the San Martin network in Peru, with the help of local municipalities, is pointing to disasters never reported in information vehicles from which LA RED has drawn its data; generally, the farther away from population centers a disaster occurs, the less likely it is to be reported.

(d) LA RED shortly will extend the survey in space to include Salvador, Ecuador, Brazil and Argentina and over time to cover the 1985-95 period. The database is all empirical, no estimates, and everything is georeferenced, which enables LA RED to plot spatial patterns, time sequences and correlate events with other indicators, such as urban growth and deforestation rates. To LA RED's knowledge, no other Organization currently has this capability.

POLICY UPTAKE

18. Project 92-0024 and its LA RED partners have begun to use collective results produced over 2.5 years of work to assist the international disaster attention community with fine-tuning its policies for effective prevention.

19. A major achievement was the successful inclusion of several LA RED

Research Agenda (Aug92) basic prescriptions, objectives and methods in the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World (May 94), specifically in the opening Yokohama Message, I. Principles (Basis for the Strategy, Strategy for the Year 2000 and Beyond), II. Plan of Action (at community and national, regional and subregional, and international levels):

20. An important stepping-stone for LA RED's input into the Yokohama global document was the role it played in the formulation of recommendations by the preparatory Interamerican Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, held in Cartagena in Mar94. The meeting was called by Colombia, an active member, of LA RED. LA RED held one of its annual meetings in Cartagena shortly prior to the Interamerican Conference; LA RED was charged by the Conference organisers with drafting the Cartagena Declaration which, once revised, was tabled, slightly modified and approved by the Cartagena plenary. This became the Interamerican input into the Yokohama process; LA RED published the Declaration of Cartagena in no. 2 of its Desastres & Sociedad periodical.

21. In Yokohama, while LA RED did not participate as Organization to the world conference, its executive secretary was invited by the Red Cross and the Colombian ONAD rep was delegated by his Government; the latter sat on the committee which drafted the global declaration, with the result that the Yokohama global document draws extensively on statements and prescriptions expressed in LA RED Research Agenda (Aug92) and in the Cartagena Declaration (Mar94). These refer, among others, to the relationship between natural hazards and development processes, the significance of perception, attitudes and responses by communities for culturally acceptable and appropriate prevention mechanisms, the identification and transfer of strategies which increase capacity of local organisations to prevent and mitigate disasters, the role of private sector involvement, vulnerability reduction as an explicit goal of development planning, technology transfers through regional networks, training and education tailored to needs of specific societal groups, the evaluation of efficiency of measures applied under different political models.

22. The second major achievement was discussed in par 17 and refers to the inventory of small and medium scale disasters.

23. Having built up an exceptional data base at the microlevel (DESINVENTAR georeferenced regional inventory of disaster occurrences) and having influenced considerably, at the macrolevel, regional and global policy formulation (Cartagena and Yokohama declarations), LA RED is now engaged in pressing and assisting international agencies (USAID, PAHO, DHA, ECHO, etc.) for the implementation of declared commitments for more preventive management. A Phase II being negotiated with ODA contemplates: (a) the improvement of academic and training programs in universities and training centers (10 universities at least currently offer masters' degrees in disaster management in the region); (b) new studies making use of the existing data base; (c) influence the interventions of agencies.

24. In Feb95 Maskrey visited DHA (former UNDR0) in Geneva and had eight meetings with different staff and its director general, not to seek funding but to discuss how the DHA might use the LA RED capacity to implement the Yokohama strategy. The LA RED Draft Capability Statement presented to DHA summarises the background, general objectives, main activities, structure, membership, finances and achievements for LA RED. It is a most informative

document, on 92-0024 file. I have offered to Maskrey to explore with IDRC Reports the possibility of publishing it and he has accepted.

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