

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Sustainability Project

Global Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Team: Restoring Safe Water and Sanitation

In Latin America and the Caribbean, approximately 118 million persons live without improved sanitation, and 35 million get their drinking water from an unimproved source (1). These conditions become worse when natural disasters strike and threaten additional lives. In 1998, Hurricane Mitch, one of the deadliest Atlantic hurricanes, left more than 10,000 dead and some 500,000 homeless in Central America, due to catastrophic flooding. The hurricane also destroyed local infrastructure in many communities, depriving people of clean water and sanitation.



Over the past 10 years, NCEH's Global Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene team has partnered with the American Red Cross on the Central America Sustainability Project, which works in communities in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua that were affected by Hurricane Mitch. Through this partnership, the project has brought to these communities sustainable water, sanitation construction, and hygiene education, thereby producing long-term benefits to the overall health of those ravaged by Hurricane Mitch.

Partnership That Works: Our Results in Hurricane-Affected Communities

Preventing a leading killer of children worldwide

After completion of the water, sanitation, and hygiene interventions, the prevalence of diarrhea in children younger than 3 years of age decreased from 35 per 100 children to 26 per 100 children—a 26% decrease since project initiation.

Sustainability of Water and Sanitation Interventions

Even after 7 years of project implementation, households continued to see benefits from the water and sanitation project components:

- 74% of households had year-round access to an improved water source-- a 57% increase since project initiation, and
- 95% of households had access to a sanitation facility—a 76% increase since project initiation.

Sustainability of Hygiene Education

Even after 7 years of project implementation, households continued to see benefits from the hygiene education project component:

- 51% of households were using appropriate hand-washing behavior-- a 122% increase since project initiation, and
- 77% of households were using hygienic sanitation facilities-- a 114% increase since project initiation.



What Does This Mean for Communities Affected by Hurricane Mitch?

In the past 10 years, the NCEH-American Red Cross partnership has resulted in these and other improvements in long-term health. Many victims of Hurricane Mitch now have access to clean water and sanitation. Children living in affected areas are less likely to die of preventable diseases such as diarrhea, and their families will ultimately have healthier lives. And as each year passes, these interventions will create additional, lasting, sustainable effects on community health. The partnership between the Global Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene team and the American Red Cross enables NCEH to deliver its needed water and sanitation expertise to Latin America and to other areas of the world.

For More Information

CDC's GWASH: CDC at Work
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/global/programs/>
or
the Global Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Team
<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/GWASH>.

References

1. World Health Organization and UNICEF. Progress on sanitation and drinking-water: 2012 update. Geneva: World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund; 2012.

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