



Enhancing Gender Visibility
in Disaster Risk Management and
Climate Change in the Caribbean

Country Assessment Report for The Dominican Republic



Prepared for the UNDP by Leith L. Dunn Ph.D

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List of Acronyms

AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
BCPR	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (UNDP)
CDERA	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CRMI	Caribbean Risk Management Initiative
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (United Nations)
GDP	gross domestic product
GDMP	Department for the Advancement of Women
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
INSTRAW	United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MUDE	Mujeres en Desarrollo Dominicana Inc.
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
ONFED	La Oficina del Ordenador Nacional para los Fondos Europeos de Desarrollo (Office of the National Authorising Officer for the European Development Funds)
PAHO	Pan American Health Organisation
SEM	Secretaría de Estado de la Mujer (State Secretariat for Women)
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation



1. Introduction

The Dominican Republic is a signatory to the several international commitments that support the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women as well as the integration of gender in development policies and programmes. Among these is the Hyogo Framework for Action from the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2005. This framework as well as other international conventions that promote the rights of women, children and vulnerable groups, commits the Government and people of the Dominican Republic to integrate gender into disaster risk management policies and programmes.

The human rights framework to support the integration of gender in disaster risk management and climate change strategies is also supported by other related United Nations conventions and consensus agreements to which the Dominican Republic is also a signatory. These include: the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and consensus agreements such as the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals, as well as the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) among others.

This report presents the results of the country assessment of the Dominican Republic. It is based on data collected from a field visit and consultations with eight institutions as well as a review of relevant literature. The latter helped in providing a socio-economic, political and environmental overview of the country, to identify pre-existing vulnerabilities associated with gender inequalities that make both males and females in various contexts at risk for disasters, as well as the geographic factors that increase the vulnerabilities of some areas of the country to hazards. The review also provided more detailed information on the institutions and their programmes.

Table 1: Agencies surveyed by mandate and sex of Head

Name of Agency	Area of Responsibility	Sex of Representative of Agency
The National Commission for Emergencies	National Emergency Centre responsible for overall coordination and management of disasters	Male
The Office of Civil Defense for Disaster Prevention and Preparation in the National Commission	Implementation of the programme of the National Commission for Emergencies	Female
The Secretariat for Women. The national government machinery responsible for women and gender affairs	Promoting women's rights and gender equality	Female

Name of Agency	Area of Responsibility	Sex of Representative of Agency
The National Climate Change Project	Research on climate change and documentation of lessons learned	Male
Mujeres en Desarrollo Dominicana Inc. (MUDE)	Umbrella NGO responsible for promoting Women's rights	Female
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Human development and disaster coordination	Male
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	Promoting reproductive health and rights, population and development strategies and gender equality	Female
United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)	Research, training and publications on women and gender issues to influence policy	Female

Source: Compiled from interviews conducted for this study and web resources.

Of the institution leaders consulted, five were female and three were male. However the head of the main disaster risk management agencies were male, and from the military. This reflects the tradition of the military (which is male-dominated) being responsible for disasters, which is consistent with the gender role of the male having responsibility to protect the vulnerable.

2. Background and context

2.1. Geographic profile

The land

The Dominican Republic is part of the island of Hispaniola in the northern part of the Caribbean. It is situated between 17 and 20 degrees West, and 68 and 72 degrees North in the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea to the South near to Puerto Rico. The country occupies two thirds of the eastern part of Hispaniola and shares a border with Haiti. The surface area is approximately 48,671 sq km.

Politically and administratively the country is divided into three regions and seven subregions, which make up 31 provinces and the National District. More than 60 percent of the population lives in urban areas. The population density is 197 persons per sq km.

Disasters

The country lies in the path of hurricanes, with the south and north-east being the most affected; the annual hurricane season runs from June to November. The climate is hot and humid and the terrain is mountainous with higher concentrations of the population on coastal areas. This makes the country vulnerable to the effects of climate change such as storm surges, more intense hurricanes and flooding.

The main natural hazards affecting the country are hurricanes, tropical storms, droughts, heat waves, lightning, landslides, floods, dams bursting and forest fires.¹ While the country is vulnerable to hurricanes, flood events occur with the most frequency. The most vulnerable regions are close to watersheds of the Yaque del Norte, Yaque del Sur, Yuna and Soco rivers, as well as the riverbanks of the cities of Santo Domingo and Santiago.

The disasters that have had the greatest impact on the country are:

- **Hurricanes:** San Zenon (1930); Flora and Edith (1963); Inés (1966); David (1979) and Georges (1998) and **Jeanne (2004)**;
- **Floods:** in Puerta Plata/Santiago (2004); in Jimaní from the Blanco River (2004);
- **Tropical storms:** Frances (1961); Frederick (1979); Isabel (1985); Debby (1994); Mindy (2003); Odette (2003); Alpha (2005); **Olga (2007)**; **Noel (October 2007)**.²

Information on the economic cost of selected disasters are provided in Table 3.

¹ Antonio Cocco Quezada (2007). Desastres Naturales del Siglo XX en la República Dominicana. In Boletín Informativo PPD Jan 2007. (<http://www.acqweather.com>)

² UNFPA/INSTRAW (2008). *Evaluación rápida sobre salud sexual y reproductiva, violencia contra las mujeres y situación de las personas vulnerables afectadas por la tormenta Noel en la República Dominicana*. (p. 5). See also 'Hurricanes in the Dominican Republic'.

Examples of the impact of disasters

The country's experience with natural disasters is not new. Antonio Cocco Quezada (2007) provides a detailed historical account of the country's natural disasters in an article which is entitled *Desastres Naturales del Siglo XX en la Republica Dominicana* ('Natural Disasters of the 20th Century in the Dominican Republic' when translated - <http://www.acqweah.com>).

There have been severe earthquakes in some parts of the country as well as droughts, caused by poor watershed management, deforestation and global climate change. The risk to the general population is high, as close to 70 percent of the population lives in high risk areas vulnerable to emergencies and disasters (PAHO, 2007).

The passage of Hurricane Georges in 1998 resulted in a major disaster in the Dominican Republic. Data from the State Secretariat for the Armed Forces indicated that the death toll was **283 persons** and the largest number of deaths occurred in the South (202). Some 595 persons were injured, 64 persons disappeared, and 85,420 persons were dislocated. Damage from Georges was estimated at US\$2,193.4 million. In addition to the damage caused to infrastructure, the productive sectors, energy and communication, the disaster reportedly exposed the extreme poverty of the country, poor coordination between the various agencies, and provided valuable lessons to be learnt to manage future disasters.

Hurricane Noel was even more disastrous than Hurricane Georges. CEPAL (2008) notes that over 6 million people (70 percent of the population) were affected. The death toll was **87 persons**, 34,172 persons were displaced, 20,000 houses were affected, and 42 persons disappeared. Table 4 summarises the economic impact of Tropical Storm Noel on major sectors.

Table 2: Population in the Dominican Republic affected by Tropical Storm Noel

Category	Number	Percentage
Population affected	6,037,871	70.69
Population directly affected	75,305	0.88
Total persons displaced	34,172	0.40
Total deaths	87	0.001
Total Disappeared	42	0.0004
Total Population of the country (2004)	8,541,149	100%

Source: Comisión Nacional de Emergencia y SEEPYD. Cited in Evaluacion CEPAL (19th December 2008)

Table 3: Economic cost of major disasters

Disasters in the Dominican Republic	Millions US \$ ³
Hurricanes David and Federico, 1979 ⁴	2,654.7
Hurricane Georges, 1998 ⁵	3,116.1
Flooding 2003 ⁶	49.3
Hurricane Jeanne, 2004 ⁷	331.5
Tropical Storm Noel, 2007	439.0

Table 4: Summary of economic impact of Tropical Storm Noel (Millions of Dominican pesos)

	Damages	Losses	Total
Total	8,533.30	6,174.35	14,707.65
Social Sectors	2,236.04	495.81	2,731.85
Housing	1,704.38	368.93	2,073.31
Education	473.55	15.9	489.45
Culture, etc.		0.26	0.26
Health	58.12	110.72	168.83
Productive Sectors	2,102.36	5,170.84	7,273.20
Agriculture	2,054.64	3,446.60	5,501.24
Industry and Commerce	28.11	1,683.00	1,711.11
Micro enterprises	19.62	41.24	60.86
Micro enterprises of men	8.59	18.69	27.28
Micro enterprises of women	11.03	22.55	33.57
Infrastructure	4,078.90	507.70	4,586.60
Transportation	1,354.00	70.00	1,424.00
Sanitation and drainage	777.40	30.10	807.50
Risk (including damage to agricultural infrastructure)			
Energy	1,866.00	401.60	2,267.60
Telecommunications	81.50	6.00	87.50
Environment	116.00		116.00

Source: CEPAL (2008)

³ Figures represent inflation adjusted value for 2007, in order to facilitate comparison.

⁴ CEPAL (1979). Dominican Republic: The impact of hurricanes David and Federico on the economy and social conditions. Mexico.

⁵ CEPAL (1998). Dominican Republic: Evaluation of the damage caused by hurricane Georges, 1998. Mexico

⁶ CEPAL (2004). Dominican Republic: Evaluation of damage caused by floods in Yaque del Norte and Yuna, 2003, Mexico.

⁷ CEPAL (2004). Socioeconomic effects of Hurricane Jeanne in the Dominican.

Impact of Tropical Storm Noel on Women

Table 5: Impact of Tropical Storm Noel on women in micro-businesses in affected zones
(in Dominican pesos)

Province	Type of damage				Losses
	Business	Production	Services	Total	
Santo Domingo	908,687.5	160,800.0	96,480.0	1,165,967.5	2,456,082.5
Distrito Nacional	397,477.5	442,200.0	42,210.0	881,887.5	1,082,097.2
San Cristóbal	2,479,837.5	442,200.0	265,320.0	3,187,357.5	6,742,781.4
Peravia	288,435.0	50,250.0	30,150.0	368,835.0	783,982.3
Barahona	1609,842.5	286,425.0	171,855.0	2,068,122.5	4,376,957.7
San Juan	132,492.5	23,450.0	14,070.0	170,012.5	359,789.8
Monseñor Nouel	573,352.5	102,175.0	61,305.0	736,832.5	1,559,840.1
La Vega	232,155.0	40,200.0	24,120.0	296,475.0	631,811.5
Duarte	1,100,977.5	195,975.0	117,585.0	1,414,537.5	2,993,187.5
San José de Ocoa	573,352.5	102,175.0	61,305.0	736,832.5	1,559,840.1
Total	8,296,610.0	1,845,850.0	884,400.0	11,026,860.0	22,546,369.9

Source: *Estimaciones de CEPAL Cited in Evaluation CEPAL (2008)*

Increased risk from the impact of Climate Change

While the Dominican Republic has historically experienced disasters related to natural hazards, the situation has become worse in recent years. The Dominican Republic has recently been cited as one of six Caribbean countries in the world's top 40 climate "hot spots" by the Germanwatch Global Climate Change 2009 Risk Index.⁸ The country was ranked 12 out of 150 countries based on an analysis of weather events between 1998 and 2007. Two factors were cited: the impact of global warming on rising sea levels which increase the risk of storm surges, and secondly the increase in the strength of hurricanes.

CEPAL (2008) estimates that 170 percent the normal amount of rain fell during Tropical Storm Olga which was attributed to climate change. Table 6 provides a summary of the impact of Tropical Storm Olga which cost US\$105 million.

2.2. Socio-economic overview

Demographic profile

Characteristics of the population provide insight into gender inequalities that contribute to vulnerability. The population was 8,562,541 at the time of the 2002 census and was estimated at 9,507,133 in

⁸The Daily Observer, [6 December 2007, p. 3] (Panos).
www.jamaicaobserver.com

2008⁹ (ENDESA, 2002 in Alba and Luciano, 2008, p.14). Women comprised 49.5 percent of the total population according to the World Bank Group of Gender Statistics. The Annual population growth rate is 1.495 percent. The Net Migration Rate is -2.4 migrant(s) per 1,000 persons.

Life expectancy at birth is 70.8 years; the World Health Organisation (WHO)¹⁰ indicates that life expectancy for males is 66 years, and for females it is 74 years, indicating that women live longer than men. Other estimates suggest that in 2008, life expectancy at birth for the total population was 73.39 years (males: 71.61 years; females: 75.24 years). The Total Fertility Rate was 2.4 births per woman (2.3 urban and 2.8 rural) (ENDESA, 2007). The contraceptive prevalence rate in 2007 was 72.9 percent (ENDESA, 2007).¹¹

The Mortality Rate is 5.7 deaths per 1,000 persons. The Total Infant Mortality Rate was 26.93 deaths per 1,000 live births (males: 29.01 deaths/1,000 live births; and females: 24.78 deaths per 1,000 live births). For the period 2005-2010, the Infant Mortality Rate was estimated at 29.4 per 1,000 live births. The Maternal Mortality Rate was 159 per 100,000 live births (ENDESA, 2007, p.29).

Table 6: Population in the Dominican Republic affected by Tropical Storm Olga

	Number	Percentage
Total population affected	5,965,297	69.84
Total persons displaced	49,720	0.58
Total deaths	33	3.86
Total persons disappeared	0	0
Total Population (2004)	8,541,149	68

Source: National Emergency Commission and SEEPYD. Cited in Evaluating the impact of storm Olga in the Dominican Republic. 2008

The majority of the population is Roman Catholic (95 percent) while other denominations account for 5 percent. The racial profile of the population is: mixed 73 percent; whites 16 percent; and blacks 11 percent.

The population is young with a median age of 24.7 years: (24.6 years for males and 24.8 years for females). The social and economic realities of men and women vary in relation to age, class and region among other factors, and these realities impact on their vulnerability and their ability to cope with risks and some of these features are described in the following section.

⁹ Source: http://www.exxun.com/DominicanRepublic/e_ec.html.

Retrieved September 22 2008

¹⁰ Source: World Health Organisation <http://www.who.int/countries/dom/en/>

¹¹ ENDESA (2007).

<http://www.clavedigital.com/ktmllite/files/uploads/Salud/Informe%20ENDESA%202007.pdf>

Retrieved December 18 2008

Socio-economic profile

Socio-economic and gender inequalities increase vulnerability and risk. The state of the national economy has a direct impact on the social and economic status of men and women. In the last two decades, the economy of the Dominican Republic had undergone major changes which reduced its capacity to adequately address the needs of its citizens.

In the 1970s, there was a shift from traditional agricultural crops which accounted for 60 percent of the total value of exports to the services sector (tourism and export processing zones). By the 1980s, the services sector accounted for more than 70 percent of exports.

Structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s and 1990s reduced spending on social services such as health, education and resources and redirected investment into infrastructure. This had a negative impact on the health and education status of the population. Structural adjustment also resulted in increased rates of inflation, high debt servicing, and high unemployment rates. These neo-liberal policies also expanded the informal economy as well as increased levels of poverty.

Migration increased in response to the economic crisis, and remittances from relatives overseas have become a survival strategy for many poor households. However, poverty is still a major issue. An estimated one third of the population was unable to meet their basic needs but the rate is higher in some regions than in others. Most of the very poor communities are in the south-eastern and north-eastern regions on the border with Haiti.

The current economic status of the population continues to highlight gender inequalities that increase the vulnerability of women as a demographic group. Data for 2004 show that the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was US \$8,813 and 42.2 percent of the population was below the poverty line. Wide economic disparities exist. The household income or consumption by percentage share was: lowest 10 percent: 1.4 percent; and the highest 10 percent: 41.1 percent (2004). The Gini Index was 51.6 (2004) indicating wide disparities in the distribution of family income. The estimated inflation rate for 2007 was 6.1 percent (consumer price index).

In 2007, the labour force was estimated at 4.027 million and data from the World Bank indicate that females comprise 35 percent of the total labour force. The Employment Rate was 47.3 percent (males: 62.8 percent; and females: 32 percent). Data from the Central Bank of the Dominican Republic indicates that for 2007, the total labour force participation rate was 56 percent (males: 69.3 percent; females: 43 percent). The total unemployment rate was 15.6 percent (2007 est.) but the rate was higher for women than for men.

Analysis of data on the labour force by occupation shows that the majority of the population is employed in the services sector, as previously noted. The current major industries are: tourism; sugar processing; ferronickel and gold mining, textiles; cement; and tobacco. Data from the 2000 census on labour force indicators by occupation show that women are concentrated in the following sectors:

- wholesale/retail trade;
- general government services;
- commercial/social/personal services;
- tourism.

More women are employed in the informal sector, services sector and in community work. These sub-sectors are lower paid and more precarious in terms of stability of employment and working conditions. Women also do the majority of unpaid domestic work that enables the productive sectors to operate.

The country's vulnerability to disasters is also linked to its debt burden. The public debt is high at approximately 40.6 percent of GDP (2007 est.). This limits the resources available to provide social protection to the poorest and most vulnerable citizens, and to recover from disasters.

Poverty is therefore a factor that increases vulnerability and more females than males are poor. The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Monitor¹² indicates that a significant portion of the population is poor and that the country is unlikely to meet its MDG #1 target to reduce poverty. The disturbing analysis in the MDG Monitor is that the country is unlikely to meet most of its MDG targets. However, some progress has been made in the goals for MDG #3 (gender equality and the empowerment of women), and MDG #4 (reducing child mortality).

The Dominican Republic is currently ranked 94 out of 177 on the 2008 Human Development Index.¹³ The population living on less than US\$1 per day was 2.8 percent. Poverty rates vary across regions as indicated in Table 7.

Table 7: Social indicators for selected regions

Region	NBI (%)	Poverty (%)
Enriquillo	83.9	70.4
Valdesia	62.1	47.3
Cibao Nordeste	53.5	40.9
Cibao Sur	41.0	37.6
El Valle	61.7	66.7
NBI = necesidades básicas insatisfechas (Basic Unmet Needs)		Source: SEEPYD. Cited in Evaluation CEPAL (2008)

¹² http://www.mdgmonitor.org/factsheets_00.cfm?c=DOM

¹³ By comparison, in 2005 the Dominican Republic was ranked 79 out of 177 countries.

Vulnerability is also linked to the health status of the population and the major types of infectious diseases affecting the population were:

- Food or waterborne diseases: e.g. bacterial diarrhea, Hepatitis A, and Typhoid Fever;
- Vector borne diseases: Dengue fever and Malaria;
- Water contact diseases: e.g. Leptospirosis.

There is an increased risk of contracting these diseases during hurricanes, tropical storms and floods, because of mosquitoes breeding in stagnant water, or water being contaminated with the bacteria from human and animal waste. An increase in diseases implies an increased workload for women who are mainly responsible for the care of the young, sick and the elderly.

One of the major health challenges is HIV and AIDS. The pandemic is a major concern and ENDESA (2007) reports that prevalence rate among the age group 15-49 years was 0.8 percent (same for males and females). The prevalence rate among females between 15-19 years was 0.2 percent - twice the rate for males (0.1 percent) in the same age cohort. Among the age group 35-39 years, the rate for females was 1.4 percent and for males 1.3 percent. According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) the prevalence rate is 1.02 percent, taking into account the sentinel surveillance.

Gender profile of household headship

Female households are also more vulnerable than male households to disasters. Data show that **38 percent** of households are headed by women but the pattern varies across the country. Female-headed households tend to have a larger number of persons, to have less income and are likely to be among the poorest quintile.

Table 8: Percentage of female heads of households in selected provinces

Province	Female-headed households (%)
Azua	27
Barohuco	29
Barahona	29
Duarte	30
La Vega	32
Peravia	27
San Cristóbal	27
Monseñor Nouel	32
San José de Ocoa	27
Santo Domingo	34

*Source: Labour Force Survey (LFS) of April 2007.
Secretary of the Economy, Planning and Development*

Table 8 includes data from the 2007 Labour Force Survey conducted by the Secretariat for the Economy, Planning and Development (translated).

2.3. Literature review

A review of the literature on **gender** and disaster risk management in the Dominican Republic highlighted a growing body of literature. Several studies and reports pointed to the general impact of disasters, but few highlight the **gender dimensions**, underscoring the importance of the CRMI Initiative. The few studies that focus on gender, point to gender differences that create pre-existing social and economic vulnerabilities, which increase the risks of specific population groups including males and females to natural hazards (see Kumar-Range (2001); ECLAC; UNDP).

The 2008 UNFPA/INSTRAW study¹⁴ the translation of which is entitled *Rapid Assessment on Sexual and Reproductive Health Violence Against Women and the Situation of Vulnerable Persons Affected by Hurricane Noel in the Dominican Republic* by Wendy Alba and Dinys Luciano (May 2008) was a very valuable resource. It provided information on gender, vulnerabilities and risks associated with disasters in the country, and data on reproductive health and violence in particular.

Among the factors identified as associated with vulnerabilities and risks in that publication was geographical location. This makes people in some specific communities across the country more vulnerable to disasters than others. People on coastal communities are particularly vulnerable to tropical storms and hurricanes. Many of these communities depend on tourism for their livelihood. Disasters that result in the destruction of property result in loss of jobs and wages. Many women work in the tourism sector as housekeepers and many are single female heads of households. Similarly men and women living in low-lying communities near rivers are also very vulnerable to floods.¹⁵

The UNFPA/INSTRAW study provides a comprehensive list of ‘vulnerable groups’. These include: children (girls and boys); adolescent and young males and females; women of all ages; pregnant women, persons living with HIV and AIDS; older and disabled persons; as well as ethnic minority groups (Alba and Luciano, 2008, p.6). Among the latter are Haitian women who are particularly vulnerable because they tend to be less educated, and work in situations that make them very socially and economically isolated. Language barriers also make them more vulnerable as some speak only Haitian Creole.

The study also noted factors that increase vulnerability for some groups. These included:

- **The restricted access of some groups to early warning systems.** The study notes that some groups in the population do not have access to the media through which early warnings are given. In addition, the specific information provided on the imminent natural hazard may be incomplete, and not adequate to guide their decision-making regarding the most appropriate course of action to take to protect their life, family and property.

¹⁴ At the time of the research, the document was only in Spanish, but there were plans to translate it into English.

¹⁵ UNFPA/INSTRAW (2008)

- **Limitations that are socially constructed or biologically determined.** Socially constructed limitations include gender roles and norms that may limit women's involvement in some of the physical work required for preparation and their reproductive needs. The biological limitations cited included the fact that women who are menstruating may be weak because of the loss of blood. Women may also have nutritional deficiencies that translate into physical disadvantages. Age and disability were also recognised as possible vulnerabilities. They noted that older persons or disabled persons may not be able to move quickly which also increases their vulnerability and risk.
- **Groups with limited social participation.** Social exclusion, they note, also contributes to vulnerability. For example, the study notes that women's limited participation in emergency committees represents a barrier as they are unable to use relevant information or respond accordingly.
- **Socially disadvantaged groups.** The writers observed that persons who fall into these groups have an increased vulnerability that is cumulative and interactive. For example, when there is a disaster, people who have limited access to social services or education, have poor quality housing or inadequate food supplies, have limited access to work or suffer discrimination in the family and community, are more vulnerable than those unaffected by these factors.
- **The sexual division of labour.** This was also noted as a vulnerability factor because of the unequal position in which women are placed in relation to men. Being assigned the role as primary caregiver for the young, sick, elderly, and disabled increases stress on women and affects their health. Women's domestic responsibilities also limit their freedom to seek work after a disaster and as a result more men migrate in search of work leaving a large percentage of women as heads of households.¹⁶

In examining the impact of the disaster on sexual and reproductive health the authors noted the following:

- Damage to infrastructure, supplies and human resources limited the range of services offered at hospitals and this contributed to an increase in maternal mortality during pregnancy.
- Difficulty in moving because of a lack of transportation and the destruction of roadways, restricted access to medical services and general help to mothers and children. Post traumatic stress associated with the hurricane also produced spontaneous abortions.

¹⁶ Gender and natural disasters OPS/OMS Washington D.C (quoted in UNFPA/INSTRAW report p.8).

In the context of the crisis caused by natural disasters, sexual violence including sexual abuse increased significantly. The report also noted the increase in intimate partner violence when there is a disaster. Access to contraceptives (including condoms) was also reduced as a result of damage to goods, deterioration of the commodities or delays in taking the family planning method. Access to anti-retroviral therapy for persons living with HIV can be adversely affected, as a result of damage to the health system. Physical and social services to prevent violence against women were not given priority as part of disaster preparedness. Facilities may be damaged or destroyed, including the services of the police, courts and health services. Loss of social and family support can make women and children more vulnerable to exploitation (Alba and Luciano, 2008, p. 8-9).

The Evaluation of the Impact of Tropical Storm Noel published by CEPAL and the Secretariat for the Economy, Planning and Development also provides a comprehensive analysis of that disaster. Details have been cited previously. Similarly the evaluation of the impact of Tropical Storm Olga by the Secretariat for the Economy and Planning was also very valuable as were publications by ENDESA (2007).

3. Institutional assessments

3.1. Office of Civil Defense and the National Emergency Commission

Interviews were conducted with the President of the National Emergency Commission – General Paulino, and with Dr. Tactuck the National Coordinator of the Office of Civil Defense which is the main government mechanism responsible for disaster risk management. Results of these two interviews and documentary research provided responses to the CRMI questionnaire which are reported below.

Legislative framework

The legislative framework for natural disaster prevention, mitigation and response is well developed in the Dominican Republic. Various laws and decrees establish the relevant institutional framework as well as clarify the mandate and operations of the various agencies as outlined below:¹⁷

- Law No 257 dated 17 July 1966 established the Office of Civil Defense (Oficina de Defensa Civil), which is the government mechanism responsible for disaster risk management.
- In addition, Decree No. 2045 (GO No 9083 of 5 June 1968) established the Commission of Civil Defense (Comision de la Defensa Civil), which oversees the Office of Civil Defense.
- Decree No 2784 of 6 October 1981 created a National Emergency Plan for the National Commission (G.O. No. 9566 of 15 October 1981).
- Decree No 159 of 13 April 2000 modified Article No 3 & 4 of Decree No 2784.
- Decree No. 360 of 14 March 2001 created the Centre for Emergency Operations.
- Decree No 361 of 14 March 2001 named permanent representatives of institutions for the National Emergency Commission.
- Decree 487 of 1 May 2001 established the status of the National Emergency Commission as part of the Civil Defense Agency.
- Decree No. 715 of 5 July 2001 created the National Office for the Evaluation of Seismic Evaluation and Vulnerability of Infrastructure and Buildings.
- Law 147 of 22 September 2002 created an Emergency Budget.
- Decree No 932 of 13 September 2003 approved the regulations to apply Law No 147-02 for the Emergency Budget
- Decree No 1080 of 24 September 2003 declared 22 September of each year as the day to promote disaster prevention and emergency response.

¹⁷ Moreno, W. A. Marco Integral de la gestion de riesgos de desasteres naturales. Quoted in UNFPA/INSTRAW study (2008) p.6.

Leadership and staffing

There is a staff of 35 persons in the main office of whom eight (33 percent) are women and 27 are men (67 percent).¹⁸ Males also dominate in the agency's workforce deployed across the country, accounting for 70 percent of technical and other workers while women account for approximately 30 percent. The majority of the staff of the national disaster response agency is therefore male.

The National Coordinator of the Office of Civil Defense¹⁹ provided further details on the gender breakdown at various levels of the organisation. She noted that the top four leadership positions are held by males; most members of the administrative staff team are males in a ratio of 4:1 in favour of males; the majority of the technical assistance team (85 percent) is also male. Trainers and District Representatives, most of whom are military personnel are all male. In addition, an estimated 70 percent of the volunteers are males. The large number of males is perhaps linked to the origins of the agency in the military which is male dominated.

Gender and risk configuration

Main types of hazards in the Dominican Republic

The response of the two officials concurred with the information provided earlier and they noted that the main hazards affecting the Dominican Republic are: hurricanes, tropical storms, droughts, floods, landslides, and earthquakes.

Most vulnerable and at-risk groups

Consistent with the National Disaster Plan, the interviewees identified the five priority groups who were most vulnerable and who therefore received priority attention when there is a disaster: elderly persons, children, women, as well as pregnant and lactating mothers. This was consistent with the country's commitment to the Constitution of the Dominican Republic, national laws, and the rights of children as under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Men are also vulnerable. The interviews indicated that some men refuse to go to shelters when instructed to do so by the Office of Civil Defense as they prefer to go to their farms to protect their crops and animals against theft, or prefer to stay and protect their family. These choices sometimes expose them to risks associated with flooding. These were good examples of how the male gender role of provider and protector increases the vulnerability of men to risk when there is a disaster.

Rural populations, especially rural women and single female-headed households. People in the north-east and south on the frontier with Haiti and single female-headed households were identified as particularly vulnerable by the National Coordinator of the Office of Civil Defense.

¹⁸ Interview with General Paulino. 21 July 2008.

¹⁹ Interview with Dra. Miguelina Tactuck, 21 July 08.

Haitian migrant workers. These were identified as a specific ethnic minority group that is particularly vulnerable when there are disasters. Sharing information from two disaster management projects with Haitians near the Frontier, the General noted that most of the Haitians were males (95 percent) who worked in construction, agriculture, cleaning jobs, and hard-labour maintenance work, while others were itinerant vendors and they have a low social and economic status. Both factors increase their vulnerability. As a result of their illegal immigration status as temporary undocumented workers, many ran and hid in the mountains when asked to evacuate and go to shelters because they thought they were being rounded-up to be returned to Haiti. The precarious housing conditions of Haitians in the *bateyes*²⁰ and shacks on hillsides also contributed to a higher number of Haitian than Dominican casualties from flood waters near the Frontier.

Gender & culturally-related vulnerabilities: The General stated that women are more vulnerable than men in disasters, especially those who are refugees and those who have children. Citing specific vulnerabilities related to gender roles, he noted that women were responsible for the care of small children and spend considerable time cleaning, care giving, providing food and medicine, which they still have to do when there is a disaster. On the other hand, men are responsible for helping to restore agricultural production, to repair houses, and to make arrangements to recover furniture, etc. The cultural reality of the Dominican Republic as a very ‘macho’ society in which patriarchy (male domination) is the norm, also results in some men not wanting women to share the associated risks when there is a disaster.

Geographic and sectoral vulnerabilities: The Office of Civil Defense team also noted that vulnerability also depends on the type of disaster and the areas affected. For example disasters in an agricultural zone make rice farmers, coffee farmers, and agricultural workers vulnerable because the main source of their livelihood is destroyed. Most of these farmers are males.

Sex-disaggregated data

The representatives reported that the Office of Civil Defense collects sex- and age-disaggregated data on deaths, damage and losses, and the information is used to guide the disaster response of various government institutions. Data on marital status and household headship is also collected.

Disaster risk management strategies

The Dominican Republic has a comprehensive National Disaster Plan which is decentralised. It includes Municipal Plans, and the Plan is supported by committees, laws and statistics to guide interventions and public education programmes. The National Coordinator of the Office of Civil Defense noted that with the country’s commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, there was an increased focus on gender and on disaster risk management.

The National Plan is not guided by a gender policy. The interviews however revealed that work is in progress to promote greater gender sensitivity. Post-disaster assessments are conducted across

²⁰ Bateyes are very poor communities in which Haitians live usually located in agricultural zones.

various sectors and the reports are used to identify and map risks for specific groups, communities, and regions and to guide recovery and reconstruction programmes more effectively. National macro- and micro-data are collected from various sectors and stakeholder groups. The latter include workers, self-employed persons in micro-enterprise, trade unions, NGOs, etc.

The representatives also revealed that there is a division of responsibility among the various agencies that comprise the national response mechanism. The experience of their disaster response in the north-east of the country was considered a good model. There, the Red Cross, Police and Trade Unions had a clear division of responsibility at the municipal level and collected data, arranged shelters and distributed food, amongst other tasks.

The interviews also revealed that the national recovery and reconstruction programme includes the provision of loans through government and commercial banks. Government loans have a grace period of three years before the repayment of capital and interest. Although there is no gender policy, the interviews revealed that special consideration is given to displaced persons in shelters whose rented accommodation was destroyed. The representative reported that 60 percent of these persons are women. Funds for housing rehabilitation are provided by the 2007 Petro Vivienda Programme, funded by the Government of Venezuela.

The interviewees also noted gender differences in how men and women cope with disasters. They were of the view that females cope better than males and are more emotionally stable than men during a hurricane. Generally men need more psychological support. The General also noted that some Dominican men face stress from having to cope with the needs and demands of several girlfriends, which is facilitated by mobile phone communication.

Gender differences were also reported in the coping strategies of families in the north and south based on data from recent disasters. In the North, women stayed at home while men migrated in search of work. In the South, it was the women who migrated in search of work and the men stayed home and cared for the house. These women tended to migrate to Europe to work as domestic servants in family homes, while others worked in beauty salons, or in the adult entertainment industry.

Gender focus

While the National Coordinator of the Office of Civil Defense confirmed that the agency does not have a gender policy or strategy to guide disaster risk management, the examples provided and the perspectives shared by the National Coordinator indicated sensitivity to gender issues. The interview also revealed efforts made to promote gender equality when disasters occur. These include:

- **Evacuation:** Women and children are given priority for evacuation when there is a disaster.
- **Separation in shelters:** Males and females in temporary shelters are accommodated separately even when whole families have to be evacuated. Women and children are always kept together and males are kept separately. The Police, Army and Red Cross personnel that manage shelters have been trained accordingly to maintain security.
- **Gender-Sensitive Dignity (Hygiene) Kits:** After Hurricane Olga, gender-sensitive dignity kits were made available by UNFPA for both sexes. This included soap and toothpaste. However, sanitary napkins were added to the kits for females and condoms were added to the male dignity kits.
- **Emergency birth delivery equipment:** In the north-east of the country, emergency birth delivery equipment was made available by UNFPA as part of a national policy to improve maternal health and to reduce maternal mortality. This is considered a 'best practice'.
- **Early warning systems:** Mobile phones and radios are used but early warning systems are not gender sensitive. Many women work in their homes and many men work outside the home so have different access to information on early warnings.
- **Disaster communication:** Radio dramas (novelas) on hurricanes are used for public education on disaster prevention and awareness, and are widely disseminated with support from sponsors. These radio programmes are gender-sensitive as women are the main listeners. Early warnings given on the radio when there is a disaster are not gender-sensitive.
- **Evacuation procedures:** Priority is given to women and children when there is an evacuation but there is no written policy.
- **Reconstruction and rehabilitation:** There are no specific policies to manage this phase of a disaster but as previously indicated; priority for loans is given to women who are single female headed households.

Awareness of CDERA's Action Plan

The Office of Civil Defense representatives were generally aware of CDERA's Action Plan and other frameworks to promote gender in disaster risk management. However, it was recognised that in addition to positive expressions of commitment to gender equality by the country's leaders and decision making bodies, more action was needed to ensure that gender is consistently integrated into disaster risk management policies and plans. It was also noted that civil society groups had become more active and involved in disasters since Hurricane Georges in 1998. Since then, Law 147-02 was passed, the National Disaster Plan was developed and the Commission and Centre were established. The General also noted that women's organisations in the Dominican Republic had also become increasingly active in demanding their space and rights.

Mechanisms to interface with the National Office of Gender Affairs & other entities

The Office for Civil Defense collaborates with several partners: other government agencies, (health, education, security), municipalities, the Office of the First Lady, governors of the various provinces, the private sector and civil society (including churches). This collaboration however is not specific to gender and disaster risk issues. There is also some collaboration with the National Machinery for Women/Secretary of State for Women but they are not part of the main national disaster response network.

Conclusions

The assessment of the institution indicates that there is general awareness of the international framework on gender and disasters and some awareness of CDERA's Action Plan. However, there are no specific laws and policies to ensure that gender is consistently integrated across the board in all facets of disaster prevention and response programmes. In practice however, there is evidence of awareness of the differential impact of disasters on men and on women. There is evidence that pre-existing gender inequalities in socio-economic and political status predispose women to certain kinds of risks and men to others.

The interviews and review of documents of the institution generally indicate that there is agreement that women as a group are more vulnerable than men as a group. The vulnerabilities of Haitian male migrant workers and the smaller number of female Haitians in the country were also highlighted as an issue that needs more attention. The other conclusion is that there is a strong network of disaster response agencies in the Dominican Republic which includes United Nations agencies especially UNDP, UNFPA and INSTRAW and other institutions. These work with key agencies of the state established to address disasters. Together they provide an enabling environment to strengthen gender mainstreaming and to reduce the risks and casualties associated with climate change.

3.2. State Secretariat for Women (Secretaría de Estado de la Mujer) - SEM²¹

Interviews conducted with representatives of the State Secretariat for Women (SEM) based at the Secretariat in Santo Domingo provided insight into the organisation, its history and its involvement with natural hazards and disasters. Information on the organisation was also provided through literature and the website.

The State Secretariat for Women was established by Act 86-99 on 11 August 1999 to promote gender equality and equity for women in the Dominican Republic. SEM reports to the President of the Republic through the Secretary of State for Women, Gladys Gutierrez.²²

²¹ See SEM website: <http://mujer.gob.do/SobreNosotras/Qu%c3%a9eslaSEM/tabid/64/Default.aspx>

²² SEM's Budget is reportedly less than 10% of the budget of other Secretariats (Ministries).

The Vision of SEM is to be a leader in social transformation by promoting gender mainstreaming in public policies, building capacity in different sectors and promoting gender equality between women and men. Its Mission is to support public polices to achieve equality and equity in the rights of all citizens including women, by integrating a gender perspective in state institutions, creating awareness, changing social values and collaborating with national and international agencies. Values that guide SEM's work include: a commitment to a gender perspective; equality and equity; solidarity; integrity; respect for diversity; and responsibility and work in equity.

Guided by the theme 'Working for Equality and Equity'; the Secretariat is responsible for establishing standards and coordinating the execution of policies, plans and programmes at the sectoral and inter-ministerial levels, and with civil society to achieve gender equity and the full exercise of citizenship by women.²³ SEM resulted from a government reform and modernisation project in 1997 and is the successor to the former Department for the Advancement of Women that was established in 1982. The agency is decentralised with a network of offices for women, in many of the country's 30 provinces and 125 municipalities. Each office has a staff of at least five persons: a chief; an attorney; a sociologist or psychologist; a secretary and a receptionist.²⁴ At the time of the interview in July 2007, the Secretariat has a staff of 435 persons: 378 females and 57 males.

The Secretariat has a new Strategic Plan – the National Plan II on Gender Equality 2007-2017 which focuses on strategic and methodological approaches to promote a culture of gender equality and equity and the rights of women as citizens, economic empowerment to overcome poverty; promoting leadership, participation as well as social and political representation of women in the context of gender equality; promoting women's access to and control over high quality services; eradication of violence against women and promoting the full participation of women. The major challenges to implementation are resource constraints: SEM reportedly receives 10 percent of the value of other Secretariats and many of its programmes are funded by international agencies.

SEM's programmes currently focus on: legal reform which includes a proposal to reform the Civil Code from a gender perspective (July 2008); gender mainstreaming; capacity building; violence prevention through the Department of the Counsel for the Defense of Women against Violence; women, gender and HIV and AIDS; production and income generation through credit training and technical assistance for women in micro, small and medium sized enterprises; empowerment of rural women; and dissemination of information on women's rights. SEM also provides services to the Public Prosecutors Office in psychological evaluations of survivors of violence, training and sensitisation programmes on gender, as well as a national programme to reduce violence against women.

²³ CEDAW Report 2003 and Ley No 86-99 (2005). Dominican Republic Secretaria de Estado de la Mujer.

²⁴ The CEDAW Report of the Dominican Republic (CEDAW/C/DOM/5) indicates that there were 37 such offices in 2001 (25 provincial and 12 municipal).

Gender and risk configuration

Perceptions of differences in how women and men are exposed to disaster risks

The interviews revealed that the Secretariat is not part of the National Emergency Commission and their programme does not specifically address gender and disaster risk management. However, they reported that the agency has been involved in related work.

The Secretariat's involvement in disaster response began after Hurricane George in 1998 and the agency has supported response during the last two disasters: Hurricanes Noel and Olga in October and December 2007. These experiences sensitised them to the different ways in which women and men are exposed to disaster risks.

In view of the representatives, women's gender roles give them primary responsibility to care for young children, which means that many women work inside rather than outside the home. They indicated that with over 38 percent single female-headed households, women's higher rates of unemployment, lower rates of participation in the paid labour force, higher participation in the informal sector, lower incomes, and gender based violence, they are more vulnerable to disaster-related risks. When there is a hurricane or other natural hazard, women have to make decisions on whether they should stay at home or evacuate to a shelter.

Challenges with moving to a shelter were identified as the non-suitability of locations used, as shelters do not often consider special needs of women and their families. For example: pregnant and lactating women; women with children; elderly persons and those with disabilities. Safety and gender-based violence emerged as a specific concern. Consistent with the analysis of Alba and Luciano (2008), they also mentioned Haitian women as vulnerable because of their poor housing and low socio-economic status. The SEM team noted that while the public policy position is that there is no discrimination in the treatment of persons in shelters, the practice may vary.

The SEM team also indicated that the psychological impact of the disasters on women was significant. Particularly challenging were the decisions women had to make on whether to stay home or evacuate, and what to do in the first few days after the disaster. Single female heads of households (est. 35 percent) were especially vulnerable. The main role of SEM in disaster management was education, promotion and special interventions. Their responses focused on:

- a **addressing the needs of vulnerable groups in shelters** (women; girls and boys; pregnant and lactating women; elderly; disabled). They identified more convenient locations for pregnant and lactating mothers. Mothers and small children were kept together and there was special outreach to women to advise them on what to take to shelters (e.g. sanitary napkins, food, water).
- b **promoting health, sanitation and the prevention of sexual violence.** They had produced information leaflets on women's health and rights with the support of UNFPA, as well as brochures on protection from malaria, dengue, and leptospirosis given the increased risks from the floods.

SEM reported that they work with UNFPA and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to promote the rights and welfare of women and children.

The interviews showed that SEM's position as a government agency promoting women's rights, their mandate, and the experience reported and information shared in discussions, makes the agency strategically placed to play a very important role in promoting the integration of gender issues in disaster risk management. They plan to mainstream gender issues in the public sector as part of the public sector modernisation programme and the New National Plan for Gender Equality 2007-2017. **This provides a good opportunity to ensure the integration of gender in disaster risk management.**

They also indicated that national consultations are planned to prepare the country's sixth report to CEDAW which is due in 2009. This process also provides opportunities to give more strategic focus to the integration of gender in disaster risk management policies and programmes. It was noted that the issue could be a component of SEM's existing programmes of: capacity building; legal reform; violence against women; and the economic and political empowerment of women. Together, it was felt that these strategies can reduce the vulnerability of women associated with natural hazards. This focus would also strengthen the work of the agency.

The Secretariat has a good national infrastructure as well as strategic institutional linkages with agencies such as UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP (and others) to support their work. The focus on gender and disaster risk management could also be integrated into SEM's programme of **gender indicators and statistics.**

The Secretariat reported that they collaborate with the Office of the First Lady on issues related to health and rural women. On health, the priority is promoting sexual and reproductive health and reducing teenage pregnancy. Support to rural women includes promoting their economic rights.

3.3. Mujeres en Desarrollo Dominicana Inc (MUDE)

Interviews were conducted with a team lead by the Executive Director; the leadership and membership are predominantly female. They also provided documentation on the organisation which indicated that their mission is to raise the quality of life of persons with limited resources especially Dominican women and their equal participation in the society, offering them sustainable and efficient services and products that will enable them to develop fully.

The organisation is guided by human rights principles, the CEDAW Convention and the Beijing Programme of Action. The objectives are: the development and strengthening of community social networks; assisting in the development and capacity building of groups and individuals; improvements in the health of rural women and their families; access to drinking water, schools and improving environmental conditions; preservation of the environment and rational use of natural resources. The programme includes:

- a Rural organisation/development; education and capacity building programme targeted at children, adolescents, leadership training;
- b a community social services programme comprised of maternal and child health sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS prevention; Tuberculosis prevention; the development of local infrastructure; and project financing;
- c building and/or strengthening of income and work for women. MUDE uses gender as a cross-cutting issue in all of their programmes. Gender analysis is also used to guide decision-making and action for their development strategy and programmes.

MUDE and disasters

A review of the literature on the organisation indicates that MUDE works in 350 communities in the country's 14 provinces. Through these networks they respond when there is a disaster. The assessment also revealed that MUDE is not a part of the national disaster response mechanism. They did not see this as a bad thing, but indicated that it was sometimes better, as being outside the formal government mechanism provides greater flexibility to respond more immediately to needs on the ground when there is a disaster.

3.4. Partners in national emergency response

In addition to the agencies previously discussed, the country assessment also identified a number of other important agencies involved in disaster preparation and response. These included:

The National Emergency Commission (Comisión Nacional de Emergencia) (CNE)

The CNE operates under the Office of the Presidency of the Dominican Republic. It is an institutional coordinating body that operates under Ley 147-02. The CNE speaks on the behalf of the government during disasters and is responsible for planning, coordinating and managing activities related to protection, rescue, and rehabilitation. It also administers in-kind contributions of donors during disasters including international aid, in coordination with the external relations Secretariat. It received financial resources and counts on one permanent staff member.

The Centre for Emergency Operations (COE)

The COE is located in the Office of Civil Defense and coordinates humanitarian action as well as prevention, preparedness and rehabilitation programmes. The organisation focal point for the receipt and dissemination of information on emergencies to the public, the media, and other emergency response stakeholders. It operates under Ley 257 and its primary aim is to integrate and house key institutions involved in national emergency response and preparedness such as the emergency services. These include the army, police, civil defense, the Red Cross and other public institutions. COE also seeks to ensure coordination and coherence prior to during and after a disaster.

The State Secretariat for Public Health and Social Assistance (Secretaría de Estado de Salud Pública y Asistencia Social) (SESPAS).

This agency focuses on protecting health of vulnerable population programmes by reducing the impact of disasters on health and environmental infrastructure.

The Office of Civil Defense (Oficina de Defensa Civil) (OCD)

OCD was established in 1966 under Ley No. 257-66 and Decree No 1525. These laws give OCD responsibility for civil protection and it is therefore one of the main agencies responsible for national emergency response initiatives. The Office is directly responsible for managing shelters and the coordination of volunteers during a disaster. It is also the agency mainly responsible for humanitarian assistance during a disaster.

The Office in 1981 developed a National Emergency Plan. In 2002 a legal framework was established to integrate the general principles and definitions of risk reduction policy as well as the National System of Prevention Mitigation and Response (Sistema Nacional de Prevencion, Mitigacion y Respuesta –SNPMR).

The National Red Cross (Cruz Roja Dominicana)

The National Red Cross like its counterparts in other countries, is governed by the principles of Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality Independence Volunteer Character, Unity and Universality.

In the Dominican Republic, as in other parts of the world, it supports national institutions in providing humanitarian assistance. It is one of the first ports of call for providing immediate emergency aid during a disaster. This includes rescue, shelter food medicine water sanitation health and other services.

The Red Cross also supports preparedness and post-disaster recovery. Locally, there is a network of volunteers spread across 119 communities in different provinces.

The Pan American Health Organisation/World Health Organisation (Organización Panamericana de la Salud /Organización Mundial de la Salud) (PAHO/WHO)

PAHO's programme related to disasters includes:

- workshops on health and communications, emergencies and disasters;
- rapid assessment evaluations with United Nations agencies;
- technical assistance provided to health, water and sanitation agencies in the affected provinces;
- fundraising activities for the above-mentioned agencies;

- implementation of vaccine plans to reach the majority of population within affected provinces;
- evaluation and follow up of the net of health services and functioning;
- support to nutritional aspects and logistics and follow up to the situation among shelters and services provided in such places.

The European Commission Humanitarian Office (Oficina de Ayuda Humanitaria de la Unión Europea) (ECHO)

In 2006 a three-year project costing 6.9 million Euros, which was funded by the European Union, was implemented by UNDP and the Office of the National Authorising Officer for the European Development Funds (La Oficina del Ordenador Nacional para los Fondos Europeos de Desarrollo) (ONFED). The aim of the project is to strengthen disaster preparation and prevention in the

Dominican Republic and it has four main objectives. The project aims to improve:

- Information on disasters** to enhance communication related to early warning systems. The project has enabled communities to learn how to prepare risk assessment maps that help to identify areas that could be adversely affected by a disaster. This includes vulnerabilities linked to social, economic and cultural factors. This information empowers communities to manage risks more effectively. The project has enabled communities to produce maps of hazards, vulnerabilities and risks that now serve as guides for planning and action. The project also builds capacity to plan evacuations.

The project has facilitated the development of a model of sustainability to prevent and mitigate the effects of a disaster. This involves the preparation of territorial, sectoral and socioeconomic plans as well as recovery from disasters. The risk assessment process involves analysis of the threats, the vulnerabilities and capacity to manage the threats.
- Preparation for disasters.** In so doing, it improves assistance and response to disaster victims. This component of the project has involved decentralisation of response mechanisms to improve efficiency, and provide more timely and adequate responses to immediate needs.
- Prevention:** This area of work is aimed at mobilising the state to allocate resources to reduce the population's vulnerability and risk to natural disasters. The programme has also included reducing the risk of forest fires.
- Coordination:** The aim is to improve coordination between local and international agencies involved in disaster preparation and response. This project has created an enabling environment for cooperation, facilitated the sharing of best practice and experiences to reduce risks, and has facilitated exchanges and visits.

The CRMI research team did not meet with representatives of the European Union, but a review of relevant documents indicates that a major project was established.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is part of the Project Steering team of the CRMI. The research team interviewed a UNDP staff team led by the UNDP Resident Representative which included a consultant for gender and governance programmes, as well as from the poverty reduction, risk reduction and environment programmes.

As an institution, UNDP's main responsibility is to promote and support implementation of programmes to reduce risk and vulnerability in developing countries. It is a member of the Inter-agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction and chairs the Working Group on Risk Vulnerability and Impact Assessment. UNDP has a Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR).

In the Dominican Republic, the United Nations Emergency Team (Grupo UNETE) is led by UNDP which is responsible for the implementation of projects for disaster risk reduction, funded through the European Development Fund and other agencies. It collaborates with local and international agencies to promote and support the implementation of risk and vulnerability reduction.

UNDP's Country Programme for the Dominican Republic 2002-2006, focused on four strategic themes:

- a democratic governance;
- b poverty reduction;
- c energy and the environment;
- d HIV/AIDS.

The Country Programme also supported implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and had the distinction of being selected as a pilot project of a 'Millennium Village' in the province of El Seibo. This project developed a methodology to calculate the needs and costs of achieving the MDGs in that province. UNDP with the World Bank and the national Planning Agency (ONAPLAN) has also developed a "Map of Poverty in the Dominican Republic" as well as a programme for the most vulnerable groups in the population (SIUBEN). These and other initiatives point to some of the population groups that are most vulnerable prior to a disaster and are therefore most at risk.

In relation to the environment, UNDP's work in the Dominican Republic has focused on supporting a programme to modernise the national system of protected areas, the decentralisation of disaster response, and collaboration with civil society groups in local communities to facilitate rapid responses.

The conclusion from the interviews and review of documents is that there is good collaboration between local and international agencies on issues related to disaster risk management and there are several resources and initiatives underway. The two specific activities focused on gender were the UNFPA/INSTRAW study and the climate change project.

United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)²⁵

The United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) is the leading United Nations institute devoted to research, training and knowledge management in partnership with governments, the United Nations system, civil society and academia to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. INSTRAW was created in 1976 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), as a recommendation of the 1975 First World Conference on Women, which recommended the creation of a research and training institute dedicated to the advancement of women. In 1983, its headquarters was established in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

INSTRAW conducts research, provides training and capacity building as well as disseminates information on a variety of topics that highlight the gender perspective in the analysis and implementation of programmes and projects. These are aimed at achieving peace, sustainable development and good governance. INSTRAW's applied research programmes seek to make policies and programmes gender-responsive. Publications share lessons learned and promote the replication of best practices. The UNFPA/INSTRAW study is one such gender-sensitive initiative.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. The programme addresses sexual and reproductive health, population and development, and gender mainstreaming.

In coordination with government agencies and other development organisations, UNFPA also:

- conducts rapid assessments of the reproductive health services situation in affected areas;
- supports the re-establishment of reproductive health services as soon as possible after disasters;
- promotes access to reproductive health services in shelters, health care centers and communities;
- provides reproductive health commodities, equipment and emergency Reproductive Health services within the primary health care system in affected areas;

²⁵ <http://www.un-instraw.org/en/instraw/about-us/mission-vision.html>

- prints and distributes educational material on disaster prevention;
- strengthens the capacity of local organisations to meet health, psychological and legal needs of the most vulnerable populations which include women and girls of reproductive age, people living with HIV and AIDS, pregnant women and the elderly;
- provides information and services to women and girls on sexual and gender-based violence, providing them with legal, medical and psychosocial information and services;
- provides basic healthcare assistance to affected populations including sexual and reproductive health, educational and informational activities to prevent gender-based and other types of violence; and psychological assistance to victims with emphasis on women and girls.

3.5. Overview of the United Nations agencies

Interviews were conducted with representatives of three of the agencies that make up the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) for the Dominican Republic. These were UNDP which leads UNCT, UNFPA and INSTRAW. These and other United Nations agencies collaborate in responding as a team but also work with their own established partners when there is a disaster. Consultations with staff of the three agencies indicated varying levels of awareness and capacity to mainstream gender in disaster risk management policies and programmes.

Leadership and staffing

The leadership of UNDP is male, and the leaders of UNFPA and INSTRAW are both female.

Awareness of CDERA's Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming

The level of awareness of CDERA's Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming varied and most agencies were aware of the Plan but were indicated that they lacked the capacity to support effective implementation.

Gender and risk configuration

Awareness of how differences in the roles and responsibilities of men and women are impacted by disasters varied. Interestingly, the perspectives of male and female respondents were starkly different. On the whole, female respondents saw women as facing greater demands than their male counterparts during a disaster strike and saw males as less responsive to threats. On the other hand, males felt that men coped better than women.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1. Conclusions

Legislative framework

The Dominican Republic has a strong legislative and institutional framework to support disaster risk management, but gender is not consistently mainstreamed in national policies and programmes. The institutional structures to deal with disaster risk management appeared well developed but it was difficult to assess how they work in practice.

The country has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and is committed to the CDERA Action Plan and the Hyogo Framework. The National Disaster Plan, institutional mechanisms, and legislation have not yet integrated gender considerations.

Leadership and staffing

Leadership of the key institutions responsible for disaster risk management was male-dominated but there were several women in powerful positions to influence decision-making. These were mainly in the Ministries of Health and Women's Affairs. In general, the staffing of the main agency reflected a pyramid structure with males at the top and females in the lower positions. As the country has a strong tradition of male leadership, it is important that special efforts be made to integrate gender and promote gender equality in the institutional structures.

Gender and risk configuration

Most of the persons consulted shared a common view of the main types of hazards that affect the country and the most vulnerable groups. The country's capacity to assess risks associated with poverty and natural hazards has been enhanced by a European Union/UNDP project which has developed vulnerability maps and poverty maps. Areas most likely to be at risk when there is a disaster have been identified.

Efforts have also been made to decentralise the management of disaster risk management through municipal agencies. However, it was difficult to determine the extent to which ordinary citizens had the requisite knowledge that would reduce their risk in a disaster.

There was also evidence that creative methods have been used to build public awareness of disasters especially among women. Among the innovations was the use of radio dramas and popular music (edutainment) to build awareness among women and youth. These innovations are good practices that can be shared as examples of gender-sensitive and youth-friendly strategies to support awareness. They could also be adapted for use in early warning systems for disaster communication, and recovery and reconstruction programmes.

Sex-disaggregated data: There were indications that some agencies collecting and using sex-disaggregated data, but this is not standardised and consistent across the board. This suggests the need to use standardised protocols to collect and share relevant data. The data can then be used to support gender mainstreaming and to guide policy making and planning.

Policy work and linkages

Despite commitments, none of the interviews suggested that there was any specific initiative to develop a specific gender policy to support the integration of gender in national disaster management policies, laws or programmes. The findings also led to the conclusion that the linkages between the national disaster mechanism, the National Gender Bureau and the main umbrella NGO for women (MUDE) were weak on the issue of national disaster preparedness and response. Even between the two government institutions the National Emergency Commission (CNE) and SEM (Women's Secretariat) there did not appear to be any formal institutional collaboration.

Gender focus

There was strong institutional support from UNFPA and INSTRAW to give visibility to gender differences in disasters and to promote strategies to mainstream gender. The UNFPA/INSTRAW study which focused on reproductive health in disaster risk management was a very positive development. This is an excellent resource that adds to the region's knowledge about management of reproductive health in a disaster. The information will no doubt be used to guide policy and should be made available for use by other countries in the region. The Climate Change Project has taken gender mainstreaming on board and provides valuable lessons to be learnt.

Some institutions had popular education leaflets to build public awareness of good health, and hygiene among women and men.

Awareness of the framework to promote gender in disaster risk management

The main disaster agencies consulted were generally aware of frameworks to mainstream gender, but reported that they lacked the requisite technical skills to integrate gender in disaster risk management

4.2. Recommendations

- 1 Engender existing disaster management laws to support the integration of gender in all aspects of the national disaster management structure. This would further strengthen the country's existing legal framework which is already well established;
- 2 Develop a gender-sensitive national disaster risk management policy and establish a mechanism to monitor implementation;
- 3 Organise a capacity building programme to mainstream gender in all institutions linked to disaster risk management;
- 4 Integrate the National Gender Bureau (SEM) and women's NGOs into the the National Emergency Commission (CNE) and the Centre for Emergency Operations (COE);
- 5 Disseminate findings of the UNFPA/INSTRAW study and use information to guide development of a national gender policy for disaster risk management.

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