

Urban Resilience: Managing disaster risks for a safe Central America

Regional project with the Central American Integration System (SICA)

The challenges

Central America is one of the world's most vulnerable regions to natural phenomena such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, as well as to (hydro)meteorological hazards such as torrential rains and hurricanes, which have been aggravated by climate change. Between 1950 and 2020, more than 30,000 disasters were recorded in the countries of the region, and every year there are about five disasters that impact three or more countries.

Central American cities are the most affected. Informal settlements, where almost 30 per cent of the population lives, suffer significant damage and losses, for example from floods and landslides. This exacerbates the already precarious situation of the resident population, especially women, who struggle with high rates of violence and a lack of social and economic prospects.

In the context of climate change and projections that 70 per cent of the Central American population will live in cities by 2050, the member states of the Central American Integration System (SICA) have developed key regional strategies for disaster risk management (DRM) in urban areas. However, in most countries, the focus has laid more on improving disaster response rather than on prevention and early planning.

At regional and national levels, there is a lack of efficient networking and coordination among relevant and cross-sectoral actors, which is necessary for comprehensive urban DRM. Disaster risk information and exchange platforms are not always up-to-date or sufficiently used. Furthermore, actors often lack the necessary technical capacities and financial resources to develop forward-looking solutions to local problems and target groups that mitigate disaster risks.

Project name	Improvement and harmonisation of disaster risk management with a special focus on metropolitan regions of the member countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA) (<i>Urban Resilience</i>)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	SICA, with pilot activities in El Salvador and Honduras
Lead executing agency	Central American Secretariat for Social Integration (SISCA)
Duration	01.04.2021 – 31.03.2024

Our objective

To improve the resilience of metropolitan regions in the SICA countries, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, through the regional project *Urban Resilience*, supports the Central American Secretariat for Social Integration (SISCA) and the Central American Council of Ministers of Housing and Human Settlements (CCVAH) in strengthening the regional support framework for a prospective and urban DRM.

Urban Resilience will work in **San Salvador, El Salvador, and Tegucigalpa, Honduras**, as pilot metropolitan regions to ensure that they are **better prepared to minimise climate change risks in their urbanisation** and urban planning processes.



L. to r.: Aerial image of San Salvador (El Salvador); staff of the Planning Office of the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador (OPAMSS) and GIZ analysing land-use plans.

Our approach

The regional *Urban Resilience* project works along three lines of action to promote capacities, networks and synergies so that metropolitan regions in Central America can profit from technical, financial or human resources at the regional level and minimise disaster risks.



Photo: © Javier Kaffie/GIZ

Improving regional support for DRM in cities

Together with CCVAH and SISCA, the project works to provide an enhanced regional support framework for effective and resilient urban development in the context of increasing disaster risks. Throughout the three years of implementation, experiences and examples of DRM from within and outside the region will be collected and discussed in various exchange formats. This joint work will serve as an opportunity to reflect on the potentials and needs for support in Central American countries, as well as to strengthen cooperation and coordination mechanisms between levels and sectors. A key aspect is the sensitisation of the population and public relations on this topic. In addition, regional organisations will develop joint positions and present them jointly in international fora, putting the region's DRM efforts on the global agenda.

Tackling urban DRM across all sectors

In cooperation with the national governments of the pilot countries, El Salvador and Honduras, the project will develop instruments for urban DRM, which will be coordinated across sectors and systematically take into account cross-cutting issues such as gender equality. The project will involve ministries with mandates in housing and human settlements, as well as environmental policies and natural resources or finances, civil protection organisations and civil society to define processes for integrated DRM in metropolitan regions. Guidelines for the implementation of regional strategies will also be developed and coordinated.

Mitigating disaster risks

At the local level, the project will strengthen the capacities of relevant actors in the DRM field in the municipalities, planning offices and civil society in San Salvador and Tegucigalpa. They will get trainings on the identification and use of risk information, as well as in the management of projects and processes. The focus will lie on developing joint risk analyses and interpretations, especially those related to floods and precarious settlements. Proposals for risk mitigation projects will also be developed and possible avenues for funding identified. The needs and concerns of different genders, the different life realities of men and women, and dynamics of violence, will be taken into account.

All project activities contribute to the implementation of the **Regional Plan for the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda (PRINAU-SICA)**. Developed by CCVAH and SISCA, the PRINAU-SICA is the regional agenda to promote sustainable urban development for a more resilient, equitable and green society. It stresses the need to shift towards a new urban paradigm that considers cities as a public good, and inclusive urban and spatial planning as the way to achieve it.

Published by Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Registered offices in Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

GIZ Office El Salvador
P.O. Box 755
Bulevar Orden de Malta, Casa de la Cooperación Alemana,
Urbanización Santa Elena, Antiguo Cuscatlán,
La Libertad, El Salvador
www.giz.de/en/worldwide/391.html

Photo credits List of photographers in alphabetical order
Javier Kaffie: pages 1 and 2

Text Lisa Brinkmann

GIZ is responsible for the context of this publication.

On behalf of German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation
and Development (BMZ)

In cooperation with Central American Integration System (SICA)