

PfR Guatemala country factsheet

Country: Guatemala

Project Area: Solola

Organization(s): CARE

Key data about the project area (area of the beneficiaries):

Population: 424,068

Geography: Mountainous, Masa watershed. The sub-basin of the River Masa has an approximate area of 4,981.25 hectares, the forest cover in this area is 1,566.84 hectares of mixed forest and 0.56 acres of hardwood forest, representing approximately 31.4% of the total area of sub-basin, as referenced in the study of risk and the map provided by Vivamos Mejor.

Main livelihood sectors: cultivation of Maxan leaf, coffee (?), wood for household consumption.

Beneficiaries #: The 7 communities have a population of 424 families representing a total population of 2.544 people. The selected communities are: Pakim, Pasaquijuyub, Pakib, Tzamabaj, Chuituj, Pacanal II or Channel II and Xesacabaj.

Beneficiary groups: Indigenous groups. 100% of the population in the territory is originated from the Maya K'iche'. Focus on women and youth.

What types of hazards occur in project site?

Communities identified the following: landslides, mudslides, hurricanes, soil erosion, floods and forest fires.

Examples: 2010 landslide San Antonio Palopo, many deaths, damage to houses, electricity lines and roads. In Nahuala (CARE), as a result of heavy rains on Wednesday, October 12, 2011, the Municipal Coordinator for Disaster Reduction (COMRED) Nahuala, declared an emergency in their territory, both in the highland and coast regions of the municipality, including the PfR working area.

loss of crops, destruction of piping distribution systems of water, and landslides mainly in the paths that led to the region due to which the communities were cut off for 10 to approximately 15 days resulting in shortage of food for the whole population.

How are these hazards exacerbated?

By human activity? (ecosystems degradation)

The CVCA identified that the level of vulnerability in the communities is very high and most families have built their homes on the slopes in a "cascade" without the necessary mitigation measures and with houses and constructions of wood and adobe. Similarly, the basic community infrastructure is built in gorges and rolling hills which increases their susceptibility.

Overall local capacity is weak, except the community Pasaquijuyub where a Local Coordinator for Disaster Reduction (Colred) is formalized. In other places there is no emergency response organizations. Most of the participants say that they do not know what to do with the increased effects of climate change. Women have no participation in decision-making spaces. There is a high level of poverty. In the region there is limited signal of the media (radio and television). The communities Pakib, Xesaqabaj and Tzamabaj do not have electricity.

The degradation of forest cover is mainly due to two factors: the advance of agricultural frontier for growing mainly leaf of "maxam" and consumption of wood for household consumption. 100% of households use wood and in average each family (6 members) consumes 3 cubic meters of wood per month.

Cultivation of Maxan leading to erosion and flooding.

(?) Politics?

Regarding the political and institutional context, the governmental and non-governmental organizations do not have direct presence in place which contributes to increasing the vulnerability.

Solutions to the above problems are complicated by high levels of illiteracy among indigenous groups, low of access to health services, imbalance in gender relations, and a dysfunctional legal system that is unable to protect the cultural, economic and social rights of indigenous groups.

Governance at national, local and community levels is deficient and there are no programmes for DRR and conservation of biodiversity in agro-forestry systems, forests and wetlands. Government policies encourage the production of commercial crops, and do not favour the production of staples. The government institutions responsible for livelihood development, disaster risk reduction and ecosystem management do not have the technical, financial and human capacity to implement government policies. Coordination between these institutions is quasi-absent.

(?) Economics?

The globalized economy favours the expansion of monocultures for agro export, and prevents indigenous cultural autonomy in planning agricultural production and the control over water sources and other basic resources. The traditional products of peasants and indigenous people are not marketed nationally or internationally. Domestic trade is a "paperless" and without formal contracts. The majority of the population has very few opportunities for generating an economic surplus to be reinvested in their own human and social development.

Climate change?

Projected changes for Central America show that unusually warm days and nights are likely to increase while unusually cold days and nights are likely to decrease. Heat waves and heat spells are also likely to be more frequent and longer in most of the region.

Models predict a median annual average temperature increase of 3.2°C for Central America, with a range of 1.8 to 5°C possible by 2080-2090 (A1B scenario). Rainfall is predicted to decrease at an annual median average of 9% with a range of -48% to +9% possible by 2080-2090 (A1B scenario). Extreme rainfall events have also become more frequent in recent years and tropical cyclones' intensity is expected to increase.

IPCC global projections also predict an increase of 0.18 to 0.59m in sea-level rise by 2200 but several other sources indicate that it could rise by as much as 1 meter.

How are people's livelihoods affected?

Human

Social

Physical

The threats posed by landslides hurricanes and floods encourage the destruction of water systems, road, houses, forests, and crops, and provoke the migration of farm families in the south coast, triggering food shortages and extreme poverty.

With the passage of hurricanes and storms two major problems are generated: 1) the inhabitants are cut off, alienated from the municipal and 2) they are left without water, food and medicine. This can be attributed to multi causal and structural conditions.

In the upper half of the sub-basin in which the 7 involved communities are situated the contamination of water sources is low, while the lower sub-basin, the pollution level is high, mainly because these affluents become recipients of gray and black water generated by the population living in the center of Xejuyub.

The main sources of water in the region have been identified, both from the river Masa' and other smaller tributaries that are used for daily consumption by the population of the communities through distribution systems. However, some of them are suffering from constant damage during the rainy season.

financial

Natural

What are the solutions offered by the alliance?

Preparedness

Early warning

Mitigation

development