



**PASSA in Nicaragua**

## **DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: Rolling out the Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness (PASSA)**

The Habitat for Humanity International Latin America and the Caribbean area office (HFHI-LAC) is working with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to strengthen the capacity for disaster risk reduction in communities. In the LAC region, Habitat is now implementing PASSA, the IFRC's Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness.

Habitat for Humanity and IFRC co-facilitated a PASSA training workshop in Montelimar, Nicaragua from January 15-21, 2012. The workshop was attended by six national Habitat for Humanity organizations (Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Trinidad and Tobago), as well as representatives from the Adventist Disaster and Relief Agency (ADRA) from Jamaica.

PASSA is a methodology that focuses on safe shelter and settlements and disaster risk reduction. In PASSA, community groups carry out eight steps to assess their community and create an action plan to increase shelter safety:

1. **Historical Profile:** a timeline that registers the events (including disasters) that have affected the community, as well as those events that have benefited the population.
2. **Community mapping and visit:** a baseline map that reflects the location of the houses, community infrastructure, livelihoods, etc. within the community, and locates the hazards.
3. **Frequency and impact of hazards:** a matrix in which the community identifies the frequency and level of impact of each hazard identified in the two previous phases.
4. **Safe and unsafe shelter:** a matrix that identifies the conditions of the houses and the settlement in terms of construction methods, materials, etc. and what is safe and what unsafe.
5. **Options for solutions:** the identification and prioritization of the most feasible solutions to overcome unsafe situations in the houses and the settlement.
6. **Planning for change:** a definition of an action plan to implement prioritized solutions.
7. **Problem box:** the identification of problems and their solutions and possible changes needed in the plan for its effectiveness.
8. **Monitoring plan:** a procedure for checking progress in shelter safety.

Five of Habitat's national organizations have rolled out PASSA: Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. As a result, community baselines and action plans have been produced to be used in the preparation of project proposals for donors in the region.

PASSA action plans work to make shelter and settlements safer, and more prepared to resist a disaster. For example, action plans could call for repairs and retrofits on vulnerable houses, using geographic information systems (GIS) to strengthen land use planning and monitoring, mitigation actions at the settlement level, developing construction skills in safe housing (for communities, municipal governments, masons and carpenters), and strengthening disaster preparedness and response capacities (i.e., early warning systems and community emergency plans and drills).

Through PASSA, Habitat is helping communities help themselves.





State of Guerrero

## EARTHQUAKE IN MEXICO

A strong earthquake damaged hundreds of homes in southern Mexico on March 20 at 12:02 p.m. local time and rattled residents hundreds of miles away in the nation's capital. The quake had a magnitude of 7.8 according to the Mexican National Seismological Service, and its epicentre was located about 15 miles (25 kilometres) east of Ometepec, Guerrero. Various aftershocks were recorded, the largest at a magnitude of 5.3. The earthquake principally affected the states of Guerrero, Oaxaca and Puebla, as well as the Federal District – all areas with a high concentration of people living in conditions of poverty.

Initially, Governor Angel Aguirre told reporters that 500 homes had been damaged in the southern coastal state of Guerrero. However, as time passed it was confirmed that close to 30,000 homes were affected in

Guerrero and as much as 6,000 in the neighboring State of Oaxaca, where Malia Obama, 13, was on vacation with a school group in the capital city. The earthquake injured at least 11 people, Mexican Interior Minister Alejandro Poire told reporters, nine of whom were in Oaxaca State. Evacuations of public buildings and schools were carried out in the Federal District, Guerrero and Puebla, and there was damage to small bridges in Oaxaca and the area surrounding the Federal District.

The Mexican National System of Civil Protection (SINAPROC) has responded to the emergency, and notified the international community that it will not require the activation of the international humanitarian assistance mechanisms. Habitat for Humanity Mexico is gathering information on the impacts of the earthquake and, after an analysis, will decide if it will provide support to the existing response from its focus on shelter and human settlements.



305 schools were damaged



## REDLAC: Coordination for disaster risk reduction and disaster response in the Americas

The Regional Network for Risk, Emergency and Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean (REDLAC), is an interagency network created in 2004, with the aim of humanitarian reform that reflects the structure and composition of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. REDLAC is formed by United Nations organizations with a humanitarian mandate, international non-profits and donors. It assembles monthly in Panama City, Panama, and its working groups are focused on disaster risk reduction, information management, disaster preparedness and response, and logistics.

Habitat for Humanity International, through its regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean, joined REDLAC in June of 2011. Habitat is now a member of REDLAC's Shelter Working Group, which is chaired by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Habitat has also participated in REDLAC's steering committee, which is responsible for determining the network's annual plan and other key decisions. The group is chaired by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Habitat for Humanity has also collaborated in several REDLAC events, including the launch of the 2011 Edition of the Sphere Handbook. The event was held on July 26, 2011 in Panama City, and represented the official launch of Handbook in the Americas. Some 300 people attended, with another 200 joining via internet. The event was coordinated by OCHA, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), the World Food Program (WFP), IRFC, Habitat for Humanity International, Oxfam UK, CARE International, World Vision International, Plan International, Doctors without Borders and the Sphere Project.

## HFH CYCLE of RESPONSE



## Building Readiness And Capacities for Emerging Disasters

BRACED. A good strong name for Habitat for Humanity's Latin American and Caribbean disaster response program. Our aim is to not only repair damage, but to help prevent it in the first place.

To that end, BRACED works to strap roofs down, weatherize homes, construct strong rooms, build safe facilities and train communities – all to prepare families to resist disasters.

But when disaster strikes, as it often will in the Caribbean, there is inevitably damage. In conjunction with its local partner organizations – who are on the ground ready to go – BRACED aims to help as many people as possible. Emergency shelter kits are distributed, roofs are fixed and homes are repaired. BRACED has assisted 101 people thus far in Jamaica, Haiti and Trinidad & Tobago, and conducted 4 community disaster risk reduction trainings.

Would you like to join us? When you donate to BRACED (Project Code 8209002), you designate how you'd like your funds used. Would you like to help out pre-disaster by funding ongoing construction and repair projects? Do you want to support community training? Or, should your money go toward the Disaster Fund that facilitates rapid response when disaster strikes? And, it's not all about money, either. Habitat is happy to accept your generous offer of in-kind donations – or your donated time and skills.

Let us know how you'd like to help keep a community BRACED.

Would you like to support one of the countries highlighted in this issue?

Visit us at [www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org) where you can select your country of choice.

Or email us at [LacDRR@habitat.org](mailto:LacDRR@habitat.org) to find out how to donate to BRACED.