Nicaragua

Nicaragua is threatened by many kinds of disaster: the country has repeatedly been afflicted by earthquakes, seaquakes, volcanic eruptions and tropical cyclones. The entire Pacific coast of the country up to 60 kilometres inland is at extreme risk from earthquakes. Because the epicentres of the quakes are often at sea, tidal waves or so-called tsunamis can also occur.

A chain of some 30 volcanoes stretches through the country, parallel to the Pacific coast. This region is home to over two thirds of all Nicaraguans, who are hence extremely vulnerable to the ravages of this natural phenomenon.

In 1993, almost half of the Nicaraguan population were affected by the consequences of Hurricane Brett.

Nicaragua – general information

Capital	Managua
Area	130,000 km²
Population	4.4 million (1995)
Projected population	5 million (2000)
Per capita GDP	380 US dollars (1995)

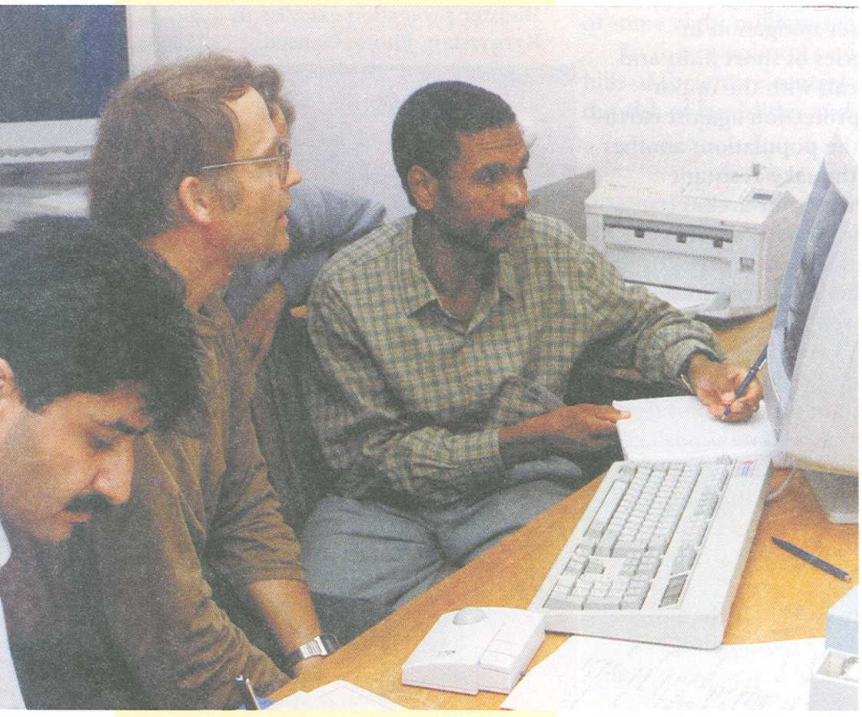

Photo: GFZ

Projects

The German IDNDR Committee has been closely involved in the organisation of a project on "Establishing decentralised disaster protection structures through training and information and experience-exchange sessions by experts as well as public information campaigns in schools and public health institutions", which was run by the German Society for Technical Co-operation with a total budget of some DM 3 million. The project is a regional one and focuses on the six countries in Central America, namely Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama and El Salvador, whose vulnerability to disaster is, to a certain extent, very similar.

Moreover, with the support of the German IDNDR Committee and the Geo Research Centre in Potsdam, satellite photos can be interpreted enabling seismic activity to be mapped. In seminars and training courses on disaster management and seismology and seismic risk analysis, Nicaraguan experts have been able to learn more about mitigation in the event of natural disasters.

Maghreb

Floods, drought and forest fires are the kinds of disaster that particularly threaten North Africa.

Risks caused by lack of water are likely to increase drastically in the future: The population in this region is expected to grow from around 65 million to 130 million people in the year 2025. Moreover, scientists assume that global climate change is likely to make water resources even scarcer. This would constitute an enormous threat to the existence of the population of the Maghreb.

Project (in planning)

The Potsdam Institute for Climate Change Impact, a member of the German IDNDR Committee, intends to investigate the potential consequences of climate change on the environment and society in the Maghreb region. The aim of the project is to establish how natural resources – primarily water – can be utilised and protected in order to conserve them for the future. In this respect, land use, water distribution and water management for industry are crucial, as are threats from soil erosion and desertification.

Tunisia

This North African country is particularly at risk from floods, drought, forest fires and plagues of locusts. Moreover, Tunisia is also situated in a region that is prone to earthquakes. In the last century, however, it has been spared.

Since 1956 some 1,400 hectares of forest have burned every year. In 1994 the figure was as high as 5,000 hectares. Between the end of the nineteenth century and Tunisia's independence in 1956 it lost three quarters of its forest stock. Partly, this is also due to deforestiation.

Projects

The German IDNDR Committee is supporting the co-operation between the Technical Relief Organisation and Tunisian disaster protection authorities that is intended to improve disaster protection in Tunisia, by for example, establishing voluntary disaster protection units. Voluntary commitment to disaster management, as is found in German organisations such as the German Red Cross or the Technical Relief Organisation, is thus far unknown in Tunisia.

The German IDNDR Committee has commissioned two experts to draw up plans for training rescue dogs in Tunisia. With the help of these plans the dogs are to be taught search techniques, tracking, following scents and obedience in order to get the Tunisian rescue dog team ready for deployment as quickly as possible.

It is intended that future co-operation between the Committee and Tunisia will focus more on disaster protection in connection with dangerous chemicals. A German chemicals concern has pledged the assistance of its works fire brigade.

Training rescue dogs in Tunesia
Photo: Schulze

Tunisia – general information

Capital	Tunis
Area	165,000 km²
Population	9 million (1995)
Projected population	10 million (2000)
Per capita GDP	1,820 US dollars (1995)

Largest natural disasters since 1960

1969	Floods
1973	Floods
1982	Floods
1990	Floods, Locust plague
1994	Severe forest fires

Burned forest in Tunesia,
Photo: Johann-Georg Goldammer