Report of World Bank Mission to the Dominican Republic

by

Israel Matos

Institutional Strengthen Component:

The country of the Dominican Republic was severely impacted by the direct hit of Hurricane Georges. This natural event led to a significant disaster that has greatly affected the entire country, including destroying all meteorological sensors and equipment as well as most of the hydrological sensors and equipment. The damages to the infrastructure, agriculture, forests and many others sources of income establish a precedence. The significant amount of deaths (269) mainly due to floods, drew the attention of the government and that of the international Community

The government of the Dominican Republic requested financial assistance from World Bank in order to restore the economy and bring back essential services to the population. The World Bank put together a mission to the country to make a general assessment and coordinate with the government the establishment of priorities as they deemed necessary. In coordination with the Government of the Republic it was decided that the institutional strengthening of the Meteorological and Hydrological Services as well as from the Office of the Civil Defense needed high attention. In addition it was considered as high priority the implementation of measures for disaster prevention, mitigation, and preparedness. The communication and coordination of all these efforts, including those dealing with the information to the public and their responses were also included in the action item list to received financial assistance.

The framework for institutional strengthening in response to disaster is the so called concept of Integrated Warning System. This concept is widely used in the USA and is based on three basic components: Detection and assessment of the event; Communication to emergency managers and response; Warning dissemination and response. The first component is basically carried out by the NMSO, its Hydrologic support by the INDRHI and in case of Tropical Cyclone the support of the US National Weather Service thru its TPC/National Hurricane Center. The second component is carried out by the OCD and the Comite Nacional de Emergencia (CNE) and the third component is carried by all government institutions including the NMSO, OCD, CNE, ETC. In order for the public to respond properly efforts must be made well ahead of time in educational campaigns on disaster preparedness, prevention and mitigation. There are various projects addressing this subject within the reach of the Dominican Republic government.

The Dominican Republic National Meteorological Service Office (NMSO) provides weather forecasts and warnings for the whole country. St. Kitts and Nevis. The NMSO is also responsible for collecting hourly and synoptic weather observations at the Santo Domingo Airport and 5 other regional airport and for the issuance or Terminal Aerodrome Forecasts (TAFS) for these Airport. The office also collect data from and issue forecast for the Agricultural Sector and the marine community. There are several networks of data acquisition; a Climatological Network (30 stations), a Synoptic Network (7 stations) and Agricultural Network (5 stations), Aeronautical Network (5 Stations) and a Hydrological Network (30 Stations). Except for the Hydrological network all are managed by the NMSO. These observations are critical information for the weather forecast and warnings process but particularly the hourly and synoptic observations from the Aeronautical Network which are used for aircraft traffic approaching and departing the airports.

The NMSO is also responsible for disseminating forecasts and warnings to alert appropriate government authorities, the media and the public of adverse weather conditions to provide for the protection of life and property. The ability to collect weather observational data and disseminate warnings on a continual and timely basis will provide inhabitants with lead time to take measures to significantly reduce the loss of life and minimize property damages.