ADAPTATION FUND

Adaptation Story

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Vulnerable communities in the rural Province of San Cristóbal of the Dominican Republic have been facing intense climate impacts and rainfall variability in recent years that risk water and food resources, while also potentially disrupting people's lives, health and livelihoods.

A climate change adaptation project implemented by the Dominican Institute of Integral Development (IDDI) and funded by the Adaptation Fund is empowering communities to change course.

With direct community participation, the localized project is implementing transformative actions while building capacity and knowledge to foster resilience in the face of these climate challenges.

Given that the Dominican Republic is a vulnerable small island developing state (SIDS), the project aims to increase resilience capacity to flooding and drought impacts to the various river and water basins in the area by directly empowering local beneficiaries through their own participation in targeted adaptation measures.

"With the support of the IDDI/Adaptation Fund project, I have managed to harvest a higher quality of cocoa and I sold it at a better price, which generated a good income for my family." *– community member from rural village of El Fundo.*

Through integrated water management approaches, the project is improving water supply and access, water storage and infrastructure, sanitation services and reforestation activities aligned with sustainable land use, as well as diversifying livelihoods of vulnerable communities while enhancing gender equality. It is also building institutional and local adaptation capacity along the way.

About 25 percent of the water supply of the capitol city Santo Domingo comes from the micro-watersheds in the Province of San Cristóbal where the project is located, thus increasing the importance of preserving the eco-systems that exist in these areas.

The project is increasing coordination at all levels (public, private, business, civil society, academia and community) through these integrated water management approaches.

In total, more than 24,000 people are expected to benefit from improved water supply and storage – half of them women. Others are expected to benefit indirectly through technical assistance in areas such as Mucha Agua and La Cole, and it is expected the project will also benefit the trade industry by increasing demand for goods and services from the investments.

The adaptation initiatives are conditioned to the local context, and backed by analyses and strategies to strengthen the capacity of vulnerable people to the efficient use of water, risk management, protecting the local ecosystem and ensuring food security for families.

Transformative Actions

Disseminating knowledge of climate change and its impacts is a key aspect of the project. Raising awareness among the communities of the importance of improving the environment, conserving water resources and adopting adequate sanitation measures is crucial to its success.

A communications strategy was designed that includes training, information and message dissemination to enable beneficiaries to understand the importance of their participation as agents of change, especially highlighting the role of women and turning around rigid gender norms and power imbalances as a means of increasing resilience in people.

One of the activities focuses on strengthening capacities to ensure drinking water service while promoting sanitation, with direct community participation. Through the

PROJECT details

Direct Access project

AF Funding: US$ 9.9 million

Project Objectives:

- Improving water security and food security
- Promoting a sustainably built environment and climate-proofed infrastructure
- Promoting healthy and resilient communities
- Increasing the resilience of ecosystems, biodiversity and forests
- Enabling competitiveness through environmental sustainability and climate resilience

Project staff member supervising tomato and cocoa cultivation in the community of El Fundo, Province of San Cristóbal. (All photos courtesy of IDDI)

Water pumping test to measure flow provided to feed water storage tank being built for aqueduct of Loma Verde Community, one of several designed to supply water to rural areas.

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Left: Topographic survey and drone flights for design of water supply systems. Right: Leaders of Castaño and San Francisco communities lead design of agroforestry modules promoting native and endemic species to generate economic benefits while maintaining forest cover, carbon capture, cocoa and coffee cultivation under shade and beekeeping.

formation of Community Associations for the Management of Rural Water (ASOCAR), the project has designed a participatory social approach to strengthen the capacities of beneficiaries in communities served by the project, for managing environmental and rational use of water.

"Strengthening communities with tools that allow them to understand and be able to carry out adaptation measures in the face of climate change is a challenge that must be part of a comprehensive transformation process with the participation of each and every one of the actors, especially promoting the participation of women as agents of change," said IDDI Executive Director in the Dominican Republic, David Luther.

Beyond infrastructure, ASOCAR aims to strengthen management services through water and sanitation committees, commercial management operators, and directly in communities served in order to guarantee the sustainability of the services. It is training local technicians who can maintain the new water systems, and the National Institute of Drinking Water and Sewerage (INAP) has further made available its technical staff to support the training and supervision of operations.

A key water conservation measure within the project is the ecological restoration of 2,722 hectares. These areas were prioritized from research and design of reforestation schemes in water basins of the study areas.

The project also generated important information from a study of the social, physical and economic factors of the region and a geographic analysis using satellite images and drone surveys. By analyzing the images to detect changes in soil coverage, level of disturbance of forests and structural features of the landscape, priority actions are being identified. Additional field information is being obtained through on the ground surveys and vegetation inventories – through which detailed data will emerge on local production systems and appropriate use of natural resources.

Aerial surveys conducted through drones have enabled the project to further target its interventions, with at least 28 flights completed at heights of 75 meters covering large 300 by 300-meter areas to capture quality images.

Based on these diagnoses, interventions will be designed with a water basin-level approach to support three forms of natural resource management: sustainable use of the territory, **passive regeneration** strategies; and for areas with high deterioration, **active restoration** actions to accelerate the recovery processes of ecosystems. These activities will include reforestation, soil enrichment, and recovery of landscape connectivity, among others.

BY THE NUMBERS

DIRECT BENEFICIARIES: AT LEAST

24,300

24,300 PEOPLE BENEFITING FROM IMPROVED WATER SUPPLY AND STORAGE (50% WOMEN)

30

HIGHLY VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES (4,860 HOUSEHOLDS) WITH IMPROVED INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS FOR WATER SUPPLY AND STORAGE

2,722

HECTARES WITH RESTORED ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

WATER COVERAGE, SERVICE AND POTABILITY MAINTAINED ABOVE

95% **IN TARGETED COMMUNITIES**

Training workshops aimed at directors of Rural Aqueduct Community Association (ASOCAR) for managing water supply systems being built in the project.

Community members from El Fundo managing cocoa harvest.

Although the Dominican Republic has endured a prolonged state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which slowed some project activities for several months during 2020, the project has managed to move ahead with its goals to improve adaptation capacity and resilience for thousands of vulnerable people on the ground.