

THE VOICE OF THE COMMUNITIES OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

TOWARDS THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT (WHS)



Report of the Survey under the Consultation with the Affected Communities of Latin America and the Caribbean - February and March 2015

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The consultation with communities affected by any kind of emergency or crisis was carried out in 634 communities across 13 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean region (Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Haiti and Dominican Republic). The size of the survey for this consultation was determined according to the capacity of each country office, therefore in some countries like Haiti the number of interviewers reach nearly 45%. The methodology included the selection of the communities affected by any kind of crisis; identification of persons of both sexes including the physically disabled between 10 and 85 years old that were willing to share their experiences and opinions; survey were provided in Spanish and French; selection of the data collection tool: Kobo (software); creation of a database, data processing, systematization, analysis and report. The interviewers of both organizations: the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and World Vision (WM) used Kobo for the first time which enhanced their knowledge on data collection. In addition this tool served to decrease the costs and time of the survey.

2071 respondents were consulted who had the following characteristics: 56% were female; 17% adolescents and youth (between 10 and 24 years old), and over 50% adults. At the time of the interview 40% said to be unemployed and more than one third worked independently. 73% were community members and 5% indicated to have some type of physical disability. 56% declared to have been displaced. As of now, the majority of the respondents had returned to their place of origin or residence, however 14% remains displaced. The largest number of displaced persons was found in Peru, Mexico and Haiti. The major threats for the affected communities were identified per sub regions; in South America: flood, draught, epidemic, violence and earthquake; in Central America: drought, landslide, earthquake, violence and flood; and in the Caribbean: earthquake, epidemic, conflict, flood and violence. 23% identified violence and conflict as major threats in Latin America and the Caribbean region.

The majority of the people surveyed endured a crisis between one and five years, including displacement. 40% of respondents said that they did not receive any assistance after a crisis. Those who received assistance said that it materialized only after four days and most of them received it in their communities. The level of information about emergency preparedness is very low and the involvement of communities in the emergency preparation activities is limited. They considered that young and elder people could play a better role in the preparation of risk reduction and disaster management if they are offered training and a platform to share their experiences. The majority of consulted people have access to telephones which could be most practical way to disseminate key information on emergency prevention. The response related to basic needs such as food, shelter, water, and health had more coverage than the protection services against sexual abuse and human rights.

The majority of respondents who received assistance expressed their satisfaction with the humanitarian workers' work. They suggested more involvement of the communities in risk reduction and disaster management, increased attention on education for children, young people, and adults, and access to the employment.

2. CONTEXT OF THE CONSULTATION WITH COMMUNITIES

As part of the preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), a survey was carried out with individuals of affected communities during February and March 2015. The regional consultation process in LAC was carried out within the scope of the International Mechanisms for the Humanitarian Assistance (MIAH), which was established in 2008. This initiative was supported by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance of the United Nations for Latin America and the Caribbean (OCHA-ROLAC). The purpose of the consultation was to expand the range of actors in this consultative process and have direct participation of the affected communities, whose contributions will be incorporated in the topics of the regional discussion for MIAH VII meeting and the regional Conference for the World Humanitarian Summit which will take place in Guatemala City from 5 to 7 May 2015.

The report is structured in five parts: 1) methodology, 2) geographic coverage, 3) general findings, 4) specific findings by thematic areas defined for WHS, and 5) conclusions. Three themes defined for WHS were included in the survey: a) Humanitarian effectiveness, b) Reducing Vulnerability and Management Risk, and c) Transformation through Innovation. The topic of "Displacement and Violence" was added due to the specific and serious problems that are affecting the region, contributing to the discussion on humanitarian response. The fourth theme defined by WHS on "Serving the Needs of People in Conflict" was not included in this survey because the countries of Latin America and Caribbean with the exception of Colombia are not facing ongoing conflicts.

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE CONSULTATION WITH COMMUNITIES

The thematic content of the survey was approved by the co-leaders of each theme supported by OCHA. A small committee composed by OCHA, IOM and WV refined the survey in Spanish (proposed by IOM). This survey was transferred to Kobo (software) application by WV and used for data collection utilizing smartphones, tablets and laptops; a guide to use Kobo was developed and shared with all interviewers and additional support was provided to assist with the installation of the software. OCHA facilitated the translation of the survey into French. The size of the survey was estimated to be 1170 interviews (90 interviews per country) but it was left to country offices' discretion and capacity. The methodology consisted of: identification of the communities affected by any disaster or crisis; identification of people who are living in different areas of the affected communities and are willing to provide information; and interviewing the person face to face to ensure confidentiality. The data was collected in two modalities: entering information directly into the mobile devices or recording in already printed forms. In both cases the data was collected with the Kobo software and submitted online to the database installed in the server in Panama; the collected data was processed, analysed and systematized in a report.

4. GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE MAP OF THE CONSULTATION

The survey was conducted in 634 communities across 13 countries of Latin America and Caribbean.

South America: Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador and Peru.

Central America: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico.

Caribbean: Haiti and Dominican Republic.



5. GENERAL FINDINGS OF THE CONSULTATION WITH COMMUNITIES

The general findings of the survey are related to socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the respondents such as gender, age, occupation, current living area, population category (i.e. returnee, displaced, or resident) and position in the community, and the respondents' experiences and opinions regarding threats and crises.

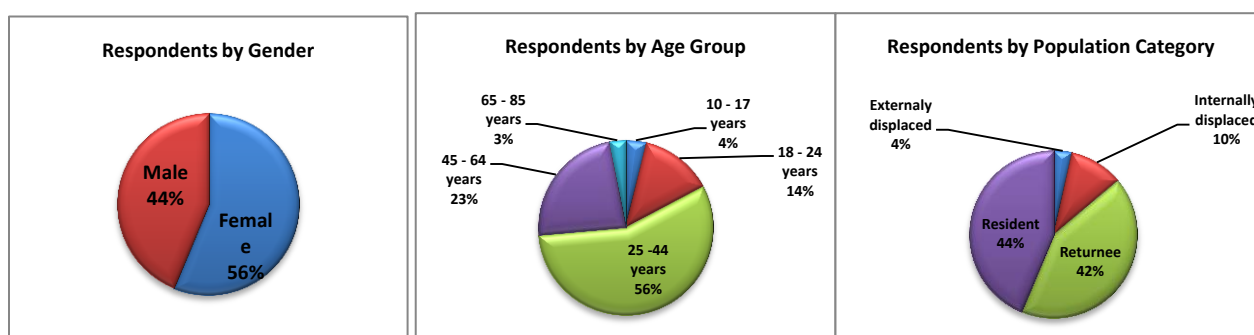
5.1. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Characteristics of 2071 respondents:

By Gender: 56% are female and 44% male. Women and girls showed more willingness to participate in this consultation.

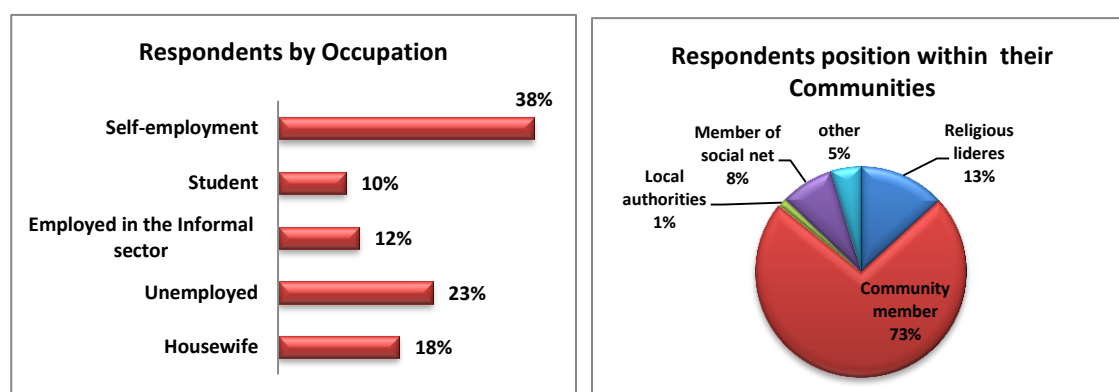
By Age Group: 56% are between 25 and 44 years old, 23% are between 45 and 64 years old, 14% are between 18 and 24 years old, 4% are between 10 and 17 years old, and only 3% are between 65 and 85 years old.

Regarding the population category, 42% declared to be returnees, 14% displaced, and 44% are resident.



In regards to occupation at the time, 23% of the respondents were found unemployed, 38% self-employed, 18% were female heads of households, and 10% are students. Only 12% were employed in the informal sector. This shows that around half of the respondents are economically dependent.

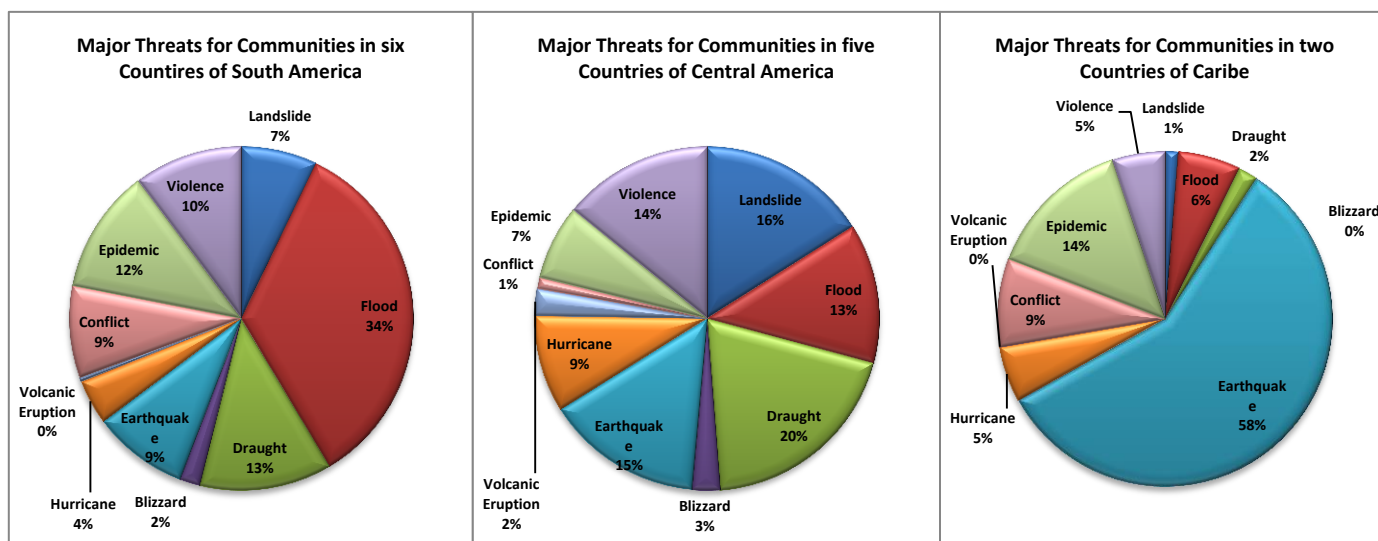
Within their communities 73% of the respondents are community members, 13% are religious leaders, 8% are members of the social network, and 1% was local authorities.



5.2. EMERGENCIES: THREATS AND CRISIS IN THE COMMUNITIES

The most frequent emergencies in the region are related to natural adverse events exacerbated by climate change. The disasters are associated with the poor conditions of the dispersed populations exposed to the persistent or repeated risks of low or moderate intensity, which can lead to a very debilitating cumulative impact of disasters. Although these threats affect all countries in the region, there is a variation in the identification of the major threats for the communities by sub regions:

- In six countries of South America (Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru) among the major threats identified are: flood (34%), draught (13%), epidemic (12%), violence (10%) and earthquake (9%).
- In five countries of Central America (Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico) among the major threats identified are: draught (20%), landslides (16%), earthquake (15%), violence (14%) and flood (13%).
- In two countries of the Caribbean region (Haiti and Dominican Republic) among the major threats identified are: earthquake (58%), epidemic (14%), conflict (9%), flood (6%) and violence (5%).
- Violence and conflicts are the major threats for the communities in the sub regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, both of social origin and which deserve not only discussion but preparation and response.



More than 60% of respondents recall a crisis in their communities between 1 and 5 years caused by events of geological origin (earthquake, volcanic eruption), by climate change (floods, drought, landslides and hurricanes) and of social origin (violence, conflict). 56% of respondents said that the crises caused mainly internal displacement. 24% of the displaced spent a maximum of 3 months at the centres for internally displaced persons (IDP). In the case of Haiti, the displaced people spent more than 12 months in the centres. This situation would be associated with the structural conditions of the government institutions and their capacity to meet the basic conditions (housing, services and employment) important for the return to their places of origin

6. SPECIFIC FINDINGS ABOUT HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The following part will present the findings of the three themes defined for WHS and one additional subtheme on displacement and violence defined for Latin America and the Caribbean region.

6.1. THEME 1: HUMANITARIAN EFFECTIVENESS

- In many of the countries consulted the humanitarian aid arrived at least four days after the occurrence of the event. On many occasions there was not enough aid and distribution was not well organised, causing conflicts among the affected people. Particularly in Haiti, corruption during the arrival and distribution of the humanitarian assistance was an important factor to consider. Assistance was provided up to a month in most countries, except in Peru where aid was extended for three months and in Haiti where aid was provided for more than 12 months. The above situation should reflect the lack of coordination between humanitarian organisations and government institutions responsible for emergency response, sometimes resulting in duplication of action in some places and absence of assistance in others.
- The majority of respondents who received humanitarian aid recognized it as positive action because it was provided directly to their respective communities without them having to walk or travel to other areas.
- Most respondents did not receive warnings regarding the occurrence of adverse events. However those who did receive warnings found them satisfactory because:
 - Any information before the emergency is valuable and helps to prevent.
 - Families can be alerted and have time to prepare and find a safe space.
 - Clear information through radio, events, workshops, etc., can be instrumental in assisting in community preparation.
- 52% of respondents acknowledged that they were asked for their opinion before receiving humanitarian aid. To improve the humanitarian assistance they suggested the following:
 - Directly communicate with the affected people about the type of assistance that the community needs through surveys and consultations.
 - Face to face dialogue with families informing them about the assistance provided through meetings or home visits.
 - Coordination with affected families and communities to established the type and logistics of assistance (i.e. delivery time).
 - In order to reach those most in need, interventions require a people-centred approach.
- In order for humanitarian assistance to be perceived positively by the affected communities, aid workers should try to maintain a friendly, respectful and emphatic approach in dealing with communities and their needs. Respondents suggested the manners of humanitarian workers could improve with the following suggestions:
 - On the ground support from humanitarian workers who are trained to handle these situations in both an emphatic and professional manner.

- Qualified and specialised humanitarian workers who can understand the situation of the victims and provide them with information and explanations.
 - Prioritise the needs of children.
- Argentina, Colombia and Peru show some of the highest numbers of affected people who were excluded from humanitarian aid and assistance. Frequently mentioned reasons for this are:
- Lack of information
 - Fear of losing their belongings
 - A census of affected people was not carried out
 - Difficulties to move to the assistance centres
 - Internally displaced persons in the camps
 - Recipient was not old enough to receive assistance
 - Not enough aid to distribute
 - Absence during the distribution of aid
 - Absence during registration
 - No registration card
 - Refusal to go to the IDP sites
 - Lack of identification.

6.2.THEME 2: REDUCING VULNERABILITIES AND MANAGING RISK

- 62% of the respondents are not participating in disaster risk reduction activities.
- 70% consider that the community unprepared for emergencies or disasters; however the 23% that believed that the community was prepared stated the following reasons for their response; the community is more organised to cope with disasters i.e. through the establishment of committees for emergency response; people are more prepared or trained to respond to emergencies; there is more experience to cope with emergencies; communities become more resilient with organisation and capacity building; the links within the community have been strengthened, generating reciprocity and support to cope with emergencies.
- The majority of the consulted communities do not have early warning systems.
- Community organisation and being informed about the risks and threats are the most important actions that should be taken in regards to improving emergency response.
- While some respondents responded that schools also have a responsibility in teaching children about risk reduction and disaster management, 86% of the respondents did not answer this question, which could reflect a lack of knowledge in regards to the curricula content of schools.

6.3. THEME 3. TRANSFORMATION THROUGH INNOVATION

As mobile phones are widely used, particularly among youths, respondents suggested phones as a valid alternative to disseminate information about risk reduction and disaster management.

The respondents appreciate the broader participation in the training and decision making process as a fundamental mechanism to improve the response capacity to disaster. The key words that defined the participation modalities of youths are training and preparation, while the elderly focused on sharing

their experiences. The table below highlights some suggestions to improve the participation of the young and elderly in risk reduction and disaster management activities:

YOUNG	Elderly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase preparedness for children and young people in emergency situations through trainings such as: talks, workshops, simulations, courses, etc. • Incorporating emergency preparation into school curriculums. • Participating in groups that carry out activities to support emergency relief i.e. volunteering. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing experience, ideas and knowledge for emergency assistance. • Forming support groups for emergency assistance. • Providing information through talks, workshops and trainings to children, youths and adults people. • Sharing knowledge that can address the needs in emergency situations.

6.4. SUB THEME: DISPLACEMENT AND VIOLENCE

The consultation found that the countries with the largest number of displaced people are Peru, Mexico and Haiti, of which Haiti has the largest number. This could be associated with the conditions of vulnerability of each country where the survey was carried out.

56% of the respondents said that they had been displaced of which 42% has now returned to their places of origin or residence, while 14% remain displaced.

Displacement due to adverse events caused by natural disasters is common in the region, however in this survey 87% of the respondents did not know about the displacement itself. This can be explained by the fact that 81% of the respondents live in urban areas or on the outskirts of urban areas, where the infrastructure conditions allow the earliest arrival of humanitarian assistance/aid (in comparison to rural areas).

Most of the respondents who have been displaced were displaced for more than five years and did not receive assistance. Those who received assistance stated that it covered the basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, health), but very rarely included protection against sexual abuse, especially for children, psychological support, or the protection of human rights. Protection was mainly provided by NGOs, civil defence, municipalities and churches.

The most frequent forms of violence in the affected communities are theft, murder and extortion. Other forms of violence mentioned are:

- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Domestic violence
- Gang violence
- Threats and abuse
- Street fights
- Assaults
- Intolerance
- Use of firearms

- Drug trafficking
- Kidnappings

In order to combat the violence respondents' suggested a greater presence of security forces, access to education, organisation of the communities and access to employment, which has emerged as an important element that should be considered in addressing the structural problems.

Only 4% of the respondents recognized that they had to cross an international border to return to their places of origin. 90% of the respondents did not answer the questions, suggesting that high numbers of interviews were carried out in urban areas and outskirts of urban areas where there are a significantly lower number of displaced people.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- The community consultation was an important exercise in the process of preparing for the regional consultation for the WHS in Latin America and the Caribbean because it brought the affected people closer to the humanitarian actors; both seek to improve the humanitarian response. It has been a space where communities raised their voices to express their experiences, their ideas and their opinions in a clear manner. They also expressed their willingness for more participation in the process of humanitarian assistance.
- It has been an exercise for both IOM and WV to test their ability in conducting a regional survey with limited resources while including a highly motivated field staff.
- The survey findings show the vulnerability of the affected communities characterised for high unemployment, self-employment, various forms of violence, a weak social network, etc., factors that need to be considered in the discussion of humanitarian response.
- In general there is positive recognition of the quality humanitarian assistance by the affected communities, but nonetheless also pointed out the limitations of humanitarian assistance in that it is not able to assist all affected people and communities.