

CASE STUDY

ZIKA.CS.1. STRENGTHENING NATIONAL SOCIETY CAPACITY IN GUYANA

Date of Publication: 7 October 2019

Date of initiative:	01/03/2018 - 30/09/2019
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Beneficiary country:	Guyana
Donor agency:	USAID
Related thematic fields:	Community Engagement & Accountability Strengthening External Collaboration Strengthening our Commitment to Communities Strengthening our Commitment to Volunteers
Organisational objectives:	Objective 1: Risk communication Objective 4: Learning and knowledge sharing with volunteers and partner agencies

TITLE OF CASE STUDY

Strengthening the Capacity of the Guyana National Society

OBJECTIVES OF INITIATIVE

This project intervention relates to the following objectives of the Zika Project:

Objective 1: Risk communication

Objective 4: Learning and knowledge sharing with volunteers and partner agencies

Through objectives 1 and 4, we aimed to:

- (i) increase the number of volunteers within the National Society in Guyana and
- (ii) strengthen the partnership between the National Society and the Health Sector to improve our response to the influx of migrants in Guyana in a manner that is consistent with the humanitarian character of the Red Cross.

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TOTAL NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES ASSISTED THROUGH THE PROJECT INTERVENTION

Six thousand persons were affected prior to the project intervention. The intervention assisted 2500 males and females.

BACKGROUND

Guyana, which is 214,970 km² (83,000 sq miles) is located on the northern coast of the South American continent bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the north, Brazil to the southwest, Suriname to the east and Venezuela to the northwest. As a result of the country's porous borders, Guyana has been facing an influx of Venezuelan nationals and many other migrants from various countries.

The Guyana Red Cross Society was offered an opportunity through the Zika Caribbean Project to work with various communities in Guyana to train community members in eCBHFA, the Enhanced Community Based Health and First Aid Course. This was a prime occasion to sensitise, train and empower communities on ways in which they can strengthen their response to health care.

The Guyana Red Cross Society led capacity building activities for community members in the country, during which participants were equipped with the skills and knowledge to undertake the role of health advocates for their communities and volunteers with the National Society - key resource roles that inform Red Cross Teams in the event of a disaster. We also worked with the national health officials who are located in Mabaruma, Region 1.

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ACHIEVEMENTS

Mabaruma is an area that has a greater number of migrants from Venezuela, as it is a main entry point for Venezuelans into Guyana. Working with health officials has strengthened the relationship between the Guyana Red Cross and the health sector, enabling both entities to work effectively with locals and migrant communities.

The officials received training on the Red Cross Movement and the Organisation's Fundamental Principles, which enables the officials to respond in a manner consistent with the IFRC's humanitarian spirit and mission.

OUTCOMES: DESCRIBE THE IMPACT OF THE PROJECT. HOW DID THE INTERVENTIONS HELP TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT? (IE: REDUCE VULNERABILITY OR INCREASE CAPACITIES OF THE BENEFICIARIES?)

Before the project, the Guyana Red Cross Society had approximately 200 active volunteers. The Guyana National Society realised that this number would not allow us to efficiently undertake our projects and decided to find ways to actively increase the number of the cadre of volunteers.

After the recruitment drive project, the volunteer membership increased by 160 volunteers across all ten regions in Guyana.

We increased the cadre of volunteers by first approaching the representatives of the community and introducing them to the Zika project.

Once we gained their trust and buy-in, we then approached community stakeholders and groups who already had a presence in the community, such as the Ministry of Health and Environment, Youth Groups and Schools.

We also developed and disseminated flyers and posters in communities to announce the initiative.

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We recruited persons who were recommended by the leaders of the communities, drawing on their extensive networks and vast knowledge of the communities and inhabitants.

We ended up with 10 groups, with each group having 10 to 23 persons from each community, representing a balanced mixture of persons from various sectors including health, environment, religion, educational, sports, youth as well as housewives.

These groups have been working closely with the Health Sectors in each of the communities and they will continue to do so.

These groups of persons were trained in eCBHFA in each of the ten Regions in Guyana.

There were positive changes noted in the communities through activities implemented by the Groups that were trained in eCBHFA. An increased number of person became aware of the Red Cross Movement and of the Fundamental Principles of the Organization, whilst gaining an in-depth knowledge of the eCBHFA course, which aims at empowering communities to identify and address health concerns.

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eCBHFA is a comprehensive training programme that is adept at dealing with the humanitarian situation that Guyana is currently facing.

The eCBHFA training programme:

- is based on a Methodology for community engagement and health action
- is based on behaviour change, Psychosocial Support, Protection, gender and inclusion and is also aimed at easily targetting persons with low reading levels
- aims to reduce death and illness by injuries and diseases by developing community resilience through health through community volunteers

CHALLENGES: HOW DID THE PROJECT OVERCOME CHALLENGES? WHAT CORRECTIVE ACTIONS WERE TAKEN?

We encountered some challenges during the volunteer recruitment exercise, namely:

- 1) The project being monopolized by one group,
- 2) Persons being unable to fully commit,
- 3) Persons being interested in one aspect of the work and not all aspects.



PHOTO CAPTION: Volunteers undergoing eCBHFA Training

In order to overcome these challenges, we held firm to having a wide representation from the community and tried our best to reinforce the principles of the movement and the Volunteer Programme, including full commitment to all aspects of volunteer work.

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CHALLENGES: HOW DID THE PROJECT OVERCOME CHALLENGES? WHAT CORRECTIVE ACTIONS WERE TAKEN?

The Guyana Red Cross has observed that community members have an increased sense of responsibility for the health of themselves, their families and communities. In addition, persons, including health officials, are aware of the Red Cross Movement and its principles.

DESCRIBE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROJECT. HOW WILL YOUR TEAM ENSURE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THESE LESSONS LEARNED?

Our approach in increasing the volunteer membership ensures wide representation from the community and a thorough screening process that ensures volunteers' full commitment to the cause, thereby reducing the likelihood for a high turnover rate.

The sharing of knowledge and information on the eCBHFA course to volunteers and health officials across Guyana, and more specifically, in Mabaruma, has contributed to a heightened sense of caring and technical competence, thus increasing the number of humanitarians in Guyana who will be better prepared to give assistance to vulnerable populations.

The involvement of the officials from the Ministry of Health also contributes to knowledge transfer of the skills gained, thereby guaranteeing the existence and continuation of institutional memory throughout various sectors of the country.