

## **Minute for Missions**

WRDF is gratified to hear that Disaster Preparedness training with our partners at the Episcopal Church of Cuba is paying off. Originally designed with climate-related disasters in mind, two years of training community members in disaster risk reduction has helped the diocese and its communities prepare for the COVID-19 crisis and communicate effectively with each other.

In March 2020, the communities' Disaster Management Committees and their Risk Reduction Plans were approved at the Convention of the Episcopal Church of Cuba, including the Diocesan Committee for Disaster Management, based in Havana.

In the meantime, COVID-19 was beginning to spread and by March 14, it was declared a pandemic. From March 9 to March 20, the COVID-19 Risk Reduction plan was being initiated. Local Community Promoters carried out activities benefitting 8,040 people (1,206 women) from 36 communities. Particular attention was given to the care for vulnerable people, especially the elderly.

In just 11 days, 2,680 information materials were produced with funds by the Disaster Management Committees and were distributed among temples, schools, medical offices, shops, homes and bus stations. These flyers and posters included alert messages and informed the local population about the pandemic.

Twelve of the communities kept their murals updated with educational messages. Clergy and community promoters shared many educational and health messages via emails, Facebook and WhatsApp, a new innovation from previous disasters. Clergy and promoters also visited at least 82 elderly people with compromised health conditions, and where needed provided emotional support and pastoral care.

Newly graduated community promoters gave 71 educational talks, some of which were supported by hygiene and epidemiology specialists, family doctors and local experts. Community members also donated their own fabric and thread to seamstresses in the church congregations, who then sewed face masks with the sewing machines already on hand.

When partners inform PWRDF on the ways their programs have contributed to the wellbeing of the communities they serve, we respond with gratitude and congratulate them on their results. However, when partners share good news about how their timely response and immediate actions ensured the safety, protection and wellbeing of people, that is cause for even more celebration!

Congratulations and thank you to PDM-ECC, particularly their 22 Disaster Management Committees, for putting your training to use and making a world of difference in Cuba!

