

Success Story

GUATEMALA: SE-CONRED CAPACITY STRENGTHENING PROGRAM

Increasing Resilience through Preparedness and Gender Mainstreaming Actions

By Brenda Hernández

The United States Agency for International Development's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA)-funded SE-CONRED Capacity Strengthening Program (SCSP) was implemented by Global Communities from July 2021 to July 2024, with the primary objective to strengthen the capacity of Guatemala's Coordinating Agency for Disaster Reduction to reduce disaster risk and prepare for and respond to emergencies. SCSP worked collaboratively with the Executive Secretariat of the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction (hereinafter, SE-CONRED), the national institution for the coordination of disaster risk management in Guatemala.

SCSP conducted a series of interviews with key SE-CONRED staff. The following narrative highlights the collaboration, SCSP's impact and the challenges faced by SE-CONRED, all within the framework of disaster risk management.

GENDER IN RISK MANAGEMENT

The project has contributed to improving the work of the SE-CONRED Gender Unit by participating in updating the Institutional Policy on Gender Equality and Equity (PIEG) and the creation of a committee and support group¹ to implement the PIEG action plan. The committee and support group have applied a participatory, open-door methodology, where members can express their opinions, strengthening the collaborative nature of this plan. The committee and support group also have received training from SE-CONRED staff on time management, gender inclusion in risk management and teamwork. They have helped to institutionalize the gender approach in SE-CONRED and execute activities to propel the institution to obtain the gender equality seal for public institutions in the near future.² Although Global Communities has been part of this process, SE-CONRED must meet other requirements to obtain the gender quality seal.



For this type of project, it is important to strengthen human capital to have sustainability in the medium and long term."

—Marlyn Cano, Former head of the Gender Unit



¹ CONRED. (2023) *Confirmation of the Committee and Support Group*. Retrieved from: <https://conred.gob.gt/category/genero-en-la-reduccion-de-riesgo-de-desastres/page/3/>

² CONRED. (2023) *CONRED initiates gender equality seal program*. Retrieved from: <https://conred.gob.gt/secretaria-ejecutiva-de-la-conred-inicia-con-el-programa-del-sello-de-igualdad-de-genero/>

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Together with the Gender Unit and SE-CONRED's Social Communication Department, SCSP created SE-CONRED's Inclusive Communication Plan, which serves as the foundation for SE-CONRED to generate in the medium term a gender-sensitive institutional strategy for internal use. In the long term, they plan to have liaisons at the territorial level who can join the support committee to mainstream the gender approach in the regional headquarters of SE-CONRED. The remaining challenge is to train the staff to replicate the knowledge with municipal and community partners.

In the words of Marlyn Cano, former head of the Gender Unit, *"The work done with the project has allowed the strengthening of the work with the substantive directorates of the institution. ... For this type of project, it is important to strengthen human capital to have sustainability in the medium and long term."*

FOCUSING ON PREPAREDNESS

SCSP also worked with SE-CONRED on updating the Conformation and Operation Guide of the Municipal Offices for Integrated Disaster Risk Management (hereinafter IMGIRD Guide). The IMGIRD Guide is a strategy formulated by SE-CONRED in 2019 that aims to strengthen municipal leadership in the implementation of planning, prevention, preparedness, mitigation, response, recovery and reconstruction actions after a disaster with the purpose of reducing vulnerabilities and timely management of hazards in the territories. By February 2024, 152 municipalities had adopted the IMGIRD Guide and have formed a Municipal Office for Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management (IMGIRD) in its various modalities. Municipalities form an IMGIRD office by political will since there is no law in Guatemala that obligates the municipal authorities to adopt the IMGIRD Guide, even though Guatemala is highly exposed to disaster risks.

The updated IMGIRD Guide helps to guide municipalities on the processes that technical personnel should carry out to strengthen disaster risk management strategies. For example, the IMGIRD participates in spaces to discuss specific problems and solutions that affect Guatemalan territory; now, the IMGIRD Guide is more indicative, easier to understand and comprehensive. SE-CONRED plans for 340 municipalities of Guatemala to adopt the IMGIRD Guide and form an IMGIRD.

Irasema Magaña, Director of Integral Management of Disaster Risk Reduction, mentions the relevance and importance of the IMGIRD Guide: *"It allows more people to be reached and municipal technicians to have an instrument for reference on the process of forming an IMGIRD and its functions in the territory. The IMGIRD Guide also helps to strengthen governance within the municipality and allows processes to be systematized for planning, management and execution of projects within the municipality with its own resources or managed through international cooperation — all of which allows risk management processes to be aligned with development planning at the municipal level."*

SE-CONRED is working on a strategy to socialize the IMGIRD Guide, including with the regional headquarters of SE-CONRED, the Municipal Coordinators for Disaster Reduction (COMRED), municipal officials and existing IMGIRD personnel. The strategy also involves transferring knowledge to strengthen the capacities of municipal personnel. Training will be provided on the IMGIRD Regulatory Framework, Territorial Intervention Manual and Disaster Reduction Standards, which are tools to be used prior to an emergency to provide a timely response and for post-disaster recovery.

Success Story

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Training event on the EIE Manual, with staff from the SE-CONRED Response Directorate, May 2024

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During emergencies in Guatemala, experience has shown that it is of utmost importance to have systematized, timely and accurate information that allows adequate decision making at all levels (municipal, departmental, regional and national). For this reason, SCSP worked collaboratively with SE-CONRED on updating the Strategic Intervention Teams Manual to have teams prepared for the optimal management of data collection tools that can be activated during risk, emergency or disaster situations.

The Strategic Intervention Teams (SIT) Manual was updated through participatory workshops and by applying USAID's Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) Methodology. Updates in the SIT Manual provide SE-CONRED staff with clear and precise guidelines for the formation and activation of the Strategic Intervention Teams, which are deployed in the eight regional headquarters of SE-CONRED. The SIT Manual also establishes the structure of the teams, their work methodology and the functions of each member. Another aspect to highlight is that an ongoing training program has been established so they can better perform their functions.

Based on the workshops conducted with SCSP, the staff of the Response Directorate "has developed workshops with the technical teams at the national level and the regional headquarters of SE-CONRED to replicate the methodology used by the project," according to Liseth Peña, Head of the Strategic Intervention Teams.

The workshops mentioned above have been designed considering the updated contents of the manual and focus on teaching the use of tools in risk, emergency or disaster situations. For example, training has been provided for the preparation of the Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis (DANA), Situation Chart and Strategic Operations Report. Response management faces the challenge of staff turnover, so it is crucial to continuously train the team, so SE-CONRED's leading team is currently distributing the SIT Manual and training staff of Response Directorate with the updated manual.

Interviews were conducted in February 2024 to capture the experiences of SE-CONRED staff regarding the implementation and impact of the project. Informed consent was obtained from the interviewees.