EVALUATION REPORT

- **Project number:**
  EC/DIP/BUD/2006/02017

- **Title:**
  Increasing Impact: Harmonising Community-Based and Institutional Disaster Management Materials, Methods, and Tools

- **Project location:**
  Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama)

- **Total cost:**
  416,905 €

- **Amount provided by ECHO:**
  305,000 €

- **Evaluating team information**
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- **Period of evaluation:**
  June 20th – August 30th
Executive Summary

a. Action evaluated

“Increasing Impact: Harmonising Community Based and Institutional Disaster Management Materials, Methods and Tools” – Regional Project of the International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) in Central America under the V DIPECHO Action Plan

b. Date of evaluation

June 20\textsuperscript{th} – August 30\textsuperscript{th}

c. Evaluation team identification

Consultant: Adriana Bonilla Vargas,
Nationality: Costa Rican

d. Purpose and methodology synthesis

The purpose of this evaluation is to analyzed the main achievements, the efficacy and the impact of the harmonization process of methodologies, materials, and tools developed by the International Federation of the Red Cross Disaster Risk Reduction Programme.

The central points studied were the coherence between project objectives and results achieved, the project sustainability, based on the approach amongst the key stakeholders of the process and the obvious links of the projects formulated.

In order to complete the process, the consultant undertook the following tasks and methodology:

- A preliminary critical desk-top review of relevant documental materials which was schematised and analysed. These included mid term and final term reports and the last versions of modules and handbooks available
- Based on the above, a set of questionnaires was prepared for interviewing of those linked to project formulation, coordination and execution. The criteria to be used on project assessment were effectiveness, ownership and impact and based on them the questionnaires were design.
- An interview round was undertaken with a total of 44 people in six countries of Central America
- A basic timetable was prepared according to the number of participants expected to be interviewees, the amount of documents to review in support of this evaluation process, and the FICR deadlines for the submission of the evaluation results.\footnote{This had to be adjusted according to the availability of those selected to be interviewees for this evaluation process}
- Based on the results obtained from this process, lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations were identified and this final report of evaluation was prepared.
According to the findings of this evaluation, and based on proposed objectives proposed and targeted results, the following are the main lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations:

**Summary of lessons learned**

- The new set of guidelines, handbooks and modules produced by the Regional Centre of Reference for Community Education for the Prevention of Disasters (CRREC) and the Regional Centre of Reference for Disaster Preparedness (CREPD) proved to be useful while being applied in many training activities but at the same time, were described by the users as suitable of improvement.

- Throughout the several workshops with vulnerable communities, the operative personnel and volunteers using those materials have identified new needs in order to target specific groups that must feel included and involved in activities and programmes of CBDM.

- Due to the complexity of the subject or the lack of appropriate didactic techniques, some of the modules are more challenging and still require further training to be implemented. Some of them were described as too complex or “less communitarian” by users.

- The NS are not taking advantage of training opportunities from RCR on an equitable basis. This is not due to the approach of the RCR, which have to respond to every NS request for trainings. In fact, the trainings depend on the initiative and proactivity of the NS themselves and, so far, not all of them have shown a similar commitment in that regard to their own personnel and volunteers in order to provide them with as much training opportunities as they may wish to have.

- The addition of an evaluation component as a requisite for passing every course for NS or other organisations attendants was requested by some of the interviewees.

- All of those participating in the survey admitted that the instruction received was unabridged and proved to be useful once they needed to apply this new knowledge or were required to use it as part of their ordinary work at a NS or non-Red Cross organisation.

- The authorities of NS and non-Red Cross organisations expressed their satisfaction with the instruction received by their volunteers and subordinates, as well as they themselves, when applicable, since they have experienced an increase in their knowledge in CBDM and Disaster Preparedness.

- To capitalise on project accomplishments, future joint regional will be able to take advantage of the synergies created during the present project implementation regarding institutional capacity building and the establishment of strategic bonds with communities in all Central American countries.

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2 More details on this can be found in page 23

3 In this document this acronym will always refer to the Central American National Societies of Red Cross
- The IFRC\(^4\) and the RCR have increased their exposure regarding risk reduction and disaster preparedness. On a national level, the NS are more closely identified with this topic and their staff is better prepared to deal with the impact of disasters.

- This project was able to achieve positive results due to the identification of a common purpose and benefits to be gained that was shared among all personnel and volunteers.

- The approach taken by this project was unprecedented within the IFRC in Central America in that it expanded the topics that NS, IFRC and RCR can raise in the region, and enhanced their overall capacity to undertake specific objectives as part of ambitious processes.

**Summary of principal conclusions and recommendations**

- This project has shown that the IFRC is currently the most important NGO in the region producing tools and materials to foster CBDM. Although it has enhanced the image and influence of NS and IFRC among governments and potential partners, the IFRC must learn to also draw upon expertise of the latter to capitalise on future joint projects agreements.

- The NS have developed a sense of ownership regarding the Regional Centres which this project contributed to consolidate. However, the IFRC began promoting such bonds years ago, through activities based on programmatic objectives standing beyond DIPECHO’s Action Plans. This is the way they have identified as the best to keep involving the NS into the Regional Centres meaning and means and must be seen by the former ones as an opportunity to pursue the consolidation and enhancement of well-qualified and skilled human resources, as well as a chance of obtaining more support from them for the Regional Centres, particularly regarding the availability of trainers for future training workshops on risk reduction and disasters preparedness. To keep this approach is recommended in order to hold and increase the cohesion and mutual support amongst these actors in the regional level.

- The Red Cross’ most interested partners in this project, including UNICEF, EIRD, PLAN, CARE and the National Education Secretaries or Ministries, are all intending to develop future projects with the Red Cross. It is imperative that the organisation carefully consider what is to be gained in each case, given that in current and recent activities all the training materials and workshops have been provided by the IFRC, NS and the RCR. It is necessary to look for a balance in that relationship, and to establish some priorities according to the plans and programs to be accomplished.

- During the V DIPECHO Action Plan several products for training were prepared by the Nattl. DIPECHO teams of the NS and some non-Red Cross organizations, based on the materials, methods and tools from the IFRC and the CRR and NS. They were used to approach population with special needs, as illiterate adults and children within CBDM activities in vulnerable communities. It is strongly recommended to collect and

\(^4\) From now on, the acronym IFRC will always refer to the Secretariat of the International Federation of Red Cross – Regional Representation for Mexico and Central America
systematized the materials produced by the CARE teams, in Honduras, PLAN Int., El Salvador, Red Cross’s DIPECHO Natl. Teams from Guatemala and Nicaragua, and the AVC & Response and Contingency Plans Guidelines exercise developed by the Natl. DIPECHO Team of the El Salvador Red Cross. All of them could be lost after a while, and some may require to gather the performers in order to obtain the details on the procedures they have followed from a methodological perspective. That will be the case for the latter one. For the others, they prepared a sort of leaflets, manuals, drawing pieces and other instruments, all of them of a great value for this project’s experience.

- Nevertheless, such adapted resources for community training have not yet being collected or systematize by this project coordination, in spite of their high value for this project record, and as validated instruments to be used in future trainings. It is strongly recommend that, before those resources may get lost or be forgotten, the IFRC submit the proper requests to those NS and organizations who have prepared them and proceed with their collection. CARE - Honduras, Plan Intl - El Salvador, the Natl DIPECHO teams of Guatemala and Nicaragua (with many of the modules of the series “Better Be Ready”) and the one from El Salvador, which implemented a combined methodology based on the VCA and the Response and Contingency Plans Guidelines, are amongst the actors who produced these alternatives materials.

- Although the high quality of the trainers from the RCR is widely acknowledged and their work is deeply appreciated, is strongly recommended to provide an official certification for them.

- Closer contact and follow up is needed between the local branches, the NS and the highest coordination of the National DIPECHO teams, according to operational officers of some DIPECHO Natl. projects. These officials also suggested that a more flexible design should be considered to involve and engage particular populations like children and the elderly.

- Through this project the NS were able to increase awareness at a local level and to engage key actors from communities and governments throughout this region. Now the NS and the IFRC must help generate ongoing interest through the local branches of NS so that progress achieved in CBDM will not be lost in the future, but will instead be the basis for new activities and processes.

- The harmonisation of tools and methods must be a permanent task for the NS and the IFRC/RCR, since there remain some concerns to be addressed in many of the modules and handbooks. Before any further new materials are produce, it is essential that the existent modules and handbooks first disseminated during this project be reviewed, corrected, and validated.

- The lessons learned and best practices identified for specific tools, materials and methods in project result 4, should be reviewed for relevant suggestions by those who used these resources in their communities on a daily basis during the implementation of this project

- The fluency of communications within the permanent administrative/technical hierarchies of NS and the temporal staff of DIPECHO National Teams must be a top priority from day one. As expressed by the interviewees, the communication
established between the NS, PNS and IFRC and RCR was as a key factor in project sustainability which helped to develop and reveal complementarities and synergies amongst national and regional projects.

- As for the sustainability of Project achievements, since the coordinators based the intervention in the empowerment and ownership of communities through training on CBDM and as well, the co-execution of several activities with other agencies who will keep developing their work in these countries and communities, both conditions are expected to provide for the lasting of what has been accomplished so far by this process.

- Project formulation has to be more realistic and accomplished according to existing capacities to fulfil the commitment with ECHO in only 15 months. Although this regional project of IFRC was successful, it is generally acknowledged that having four goals to achieve along this process, each one of them involving several activities, while supporting every DIPECHO National Team, required an enormous effort from the IFRC and RCR. The other agencies and partners involved, and the Natl. DIPECHO teams themselves, were as well supportive to the former ones, especially regarding the internships for tool development. Under that scenario, some frictions showed up from time to time, since everyone had his one schedule and tasks to be accomplished. The operative capacity of Red Cross was quite relevant to fulfil this as proposed.

- This project provided the opportunity for training the personnel while practicing every subject learnt in this process. This is a relevant point as this experience demonstrated that only one training experience can not proved the volunteers and personnel with a full knowledge of the subject. Therefore, it was quite useful this project’s contribution on creating so many occasions for training and exercising different topics in such a short period. Internships, courses, workshops, were some of the formats applied to satisfy the needs of those within the organization. This must be a permanent objective of IFRC and NS, since personnel and volunteers need to be added to the latter ones, under a human resource follow up scheme to keep improving the technical assistance IFRC provides and the leadership of those in the position of supporting NS, communities, RCR and other organizations.

- Given that the objective of promoting the Regional Centres has been achieved, a new effort must be given to focus on the regional outreach of the RR-IFRC and the enhancement of its relationship with the national societies in general if new projects and processes are to be held. In the future national societies must be better advised of the role played by the regional representation of the secretariat in the success of the Regional Centres.

I. Evaluation Report

Basic Project description

The International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) has over 15 years of experience in Central America working on disaster and risk management with vulnerable communities as the target. The current project is a new phase of this objective, and is framed into the
Regional Program for Disaster Reduction, led by the Regional Representation of the IFRC for Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean based in Panama.

- **Project Objectives**

  **Principal:**

  To reduce risks by better preparation of vulnerable populations in the areas most prone to disasters in Central America through increasing operational capacity and strengthening cooperation of Red Cross and partner organisations as a result of the exchange, documentation, and application of experiences, best practices, and lessons learned.

  **Specific:**

  To apply standardised, high-quality, community-based disaster management methodologies, materials, and tools developed by the Federation’s Regional Centres of Reference through dissemination to and training of staff and volunteers in all Red Cross National Societies and participating non-Red Cross organisations in Central America. This will be done taking into account the norms set out by the individual country National Disaster Management Agency and the Federation with the goal of institutionalising these resources.

- **Expected results**

  *The results of the project which were to be assessed by this evaluation are as follows:*

  1. The Red Cross National Societies in Central America, along with other non-Red Cross organisations, *are using the four existing standardised Red Cross community-based disaster management modules* (materials, methodologies and tools) and the interactive CD, with the 8 new modules being piloted.
  2. The CBDM operational and training capacity of Red Cross National Societies in Central America as well as participating non-Red Cross organisations and institutions *is strengthened.*
  3. A stronger “culture of prevention” *is created* in conjunction with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), UNICEF and the Coordination Centre for Natural Disaster Prevention in Central America (CEPREDENAC) in all target communities participating in CBDM projects through the development and implementation of a regional disaster preparedness communication strategy and implementation package, and through the demonstration of Community Early Warning Systems.
  4. Lessons learned and good practices from CBDM activities *are identified and disseminated.*

- **Project Length**

  15 months

  **Methodology of evaluation**
Because of the project nature and subject, as well as the type of stakeholders involved, this evaluation process required a wide range of activities, including the review of project materials and the formulation of questionnaires to be used as systematisation instruments.

In order to complete the process, the consultant undertook the following:

- **A preliminary critical desk-top review of relevant documental materials including:**
  
  o Regional and National Societies’ Disaster Management policies and strategies
  o IFRC programme updated prior assessments
  o Project reports, amongst others to be provided by the IFRC.
  o Guidelines and handbooks related to the tools applied during the project and developed by the regional centres for reference on risk and disaster topics

- **As a way of ensuring that key information be included, several tasks were pursued based on the documents provided by the contractor, as follows:**
  
  a. Identification of project approach, objectives and main components
  b. Listing and review of the tools used for these project activities
  c. Analysis of the process implemented for tools harmonisation regarding the entire package of guidelines and training modules available, the performance of the regional reference centres, and the results of the interviews given
  d. Systematised notes on meetings related to the project execution phase were used in order to support the writing of this report and analysis

These first stages lead to the development of a record of data and information to be used later to formulate the questionnaires for the interviews.

- **Based on this range of documentation, the information related to the project was schematised in tables that provide the following elements:**
  
  a) The main criteria underlying the project process and the IFRC organisation priorities
  b) The axes to define the contents of the consultancy report document and the evaluation analysis
  c) The specific conditions of each NS in regarding their Project experience, ways of approaching and estimation of impact, base don Project indicators impact and with the purpose of outlining a regional perspective which will include the most important suggestions/observations/comments regarding the national scale of implementation
  d) The elements to prepare the questionnaires for the phase of interviews addressing this project’s accomplishments

- **The interview round**

Several meetings were held in the region to collect relevant information through interviews with a total of 44 people in six countries of Central America, including:
- National Society HQ (staff and volunteers) of each country visited
- Regional Representation Office staff
- Regional Centres of Reference staff
- Representatives from the targeted countries’ Disaster Management Agencies, as well as with non-Red Cross organisations who participated in the action, such as ISDR-UNICEF, CEPRE DENAC, PLAN International, CARE
- A basic timetable was prepared according to the number of participants expected to be interviewees, the amount of documents to review in support of this evaluation process, and the FICR deadlines for the submission of the evaluation results.⁵
- The names of those included in the survey appear in a list as Annex I.
- If available, the comments of the interviewees on the projects of NS and IFRC for this DIPECHO V Plan of Action were confirmed through physical evidence of what has been done in each case, including pictures, maps, and the mid-term and last term reports available while preparing this evaluation.
- A set of questionnaires was prepared, addressing the three criteria to be assess in this evaluation: effectiveness, ownership and impact. Based on them, lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations were identified.
- The tasks to develop the final stage of this evaluation in addition to the abovementioned included the following:
  o The review of mid term and final term reports and the last versions of modules and handbooks available
  o The list and information obtained from the interviews performed
  o A synthesis of results to be used to provide the information to complete the requirements according to the “Guide for the evaluation”.
  o The preparation of the final report of evaluation

**Evaluation background and purpose**

**General Objective of evaluation:**

To obtain the necessary information to improve the Red Cross Disaster Risk Reduction activities carried out by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The purpose of the evaluation is to analyse the main achievements, the efficacy, and the impact of the harmonisation process of methodologies, materials, and tools developed through the International Federation of the Red Cross Societies Disaster Risk reduction programme.

**The background of this process**

⁵ This had to be adjusted according to the availability of those selected to be interviewees for this evaluation process
After hurricane Mitch, the IFRC and the National Societies of Red Cross in Central America pursued a closer collaboration with national and local governments, communities, and organisations on the implementation of an integrated risk management strategy supported by the response capacities of the National Societies of Red Cross and aiming to reduce future damage due to disasters.

Additionally and as a result of several assessments related to strategies and projects on Community-Based Disaster Management (CBDM), specific subjects were prioritised:

1. The imperative is for any NS Disaster Management programme to become part of the respective disaster management system in every country in the region.
2. Communities must be considered part of the overall system for CBDM by taking into account their capacities.
3. There is a need to increase the CBDM capacity of the NS, specifically in their ability to work directly with communities.
4. Given the wide range of national and international agencies that have developed CBDM educational materials, there exists inconsistency in the quality of some of the projects being implemented in communities as well as a need to harmonise CBDM materials, methodologies, and tools within the NS.

In response to these concerns, the NS with the support of the Regional Delegation of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), created two disaster management Regional Reference Centres:

a) The Regional Centre of Reference for Disaster Preparedness (CREPD) focused on institutional preparation of the NS
b) The Regional Centre of Reference for Community Education for the Prevention of Disasters (CRREC) focused on community disaster education activities

Both were given the mandate of developing new and creative methodologies that will allow the NS to offer better projects through constantly updated research, methodologies, and materials. They form part of the Federation’s disaster management system and seek to serve the NS region through specific technical advice and support.

This is the context within which the evaluated project took place, led by the Panama Regional Delegation of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in cooperation with the National Societies of Central America and several participating organisations in the region. They have undertaken a major Community-Based Disaster Management (CBDM) capacity-building exercise over the last 15 months, based on their own programmatic guidelines, the V DIPECHO Action Plan, and the specific proposal submitted, approved, and funded.

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6 Created in 2005 and based in El Salvador
7 Created in 2002 and based in Costa Rica
Evaluation results (analysis)

- Examination of the implementation and management of the support provided by the Regional Representation Office and the two Regional Reference Centres (RCR)

**Criterion 8: EFFECTIVENESS**

Examination of the implementation and management of the support provided by the Regional Representation Office and the two Regional Reference Centres (RCR)

The EFFECTIVENESS criterion was assessed by answering the following questions and based on the project information and interviews performed.

1. Has implementation of the activities accomplished the expected results?

The expected results have been accomplished according to the success of project implementation, determined by results linked to the following achievements:

a) The use and piloting of previous and new materials for community education on CBDM (12 printed modules in total) by the NS and organisations, and by holding respective training activities.

- Instead of 12, there were 14 modules in the series “Better Be Ready” to be disseminated and used for training during this project execution period.
- A number of 31 training activities and meetings were held in order to support NS and other institutions in learning the procedures and taking advantage of the new materials available for community education on disasters produced by the CRREC.

b) The enhancement of operative and training capacities of the NS and their partner organisations on methods and tools for disaster preparation and the approach and training of vulnerable communities, both supported by the RCR

- This component involved all the training activities of the RCR – courses, workshops, internships – including those addressed to the agencies and non-Red Cross Organizations in the region, many of them looking to enhance their personnel knowledge in CBDM under the methods and tools of the IFRC.
- Several tools were produced through this project, especially under the scheme of internships amongst NS, RCR, IFRC, but others were already developed under previous processes of the IFRC and NS, or even within other IFRC entities. These latter ones were reproduced and disseminated during and immediately after this DIPECHO regional project.

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8 Each of the criterion pondered in this analysis were pointed out in the TORs of this consultancy as the ones to be weigh through this evaluation
- In total, 12 totally new handbooks of tools and methods were produced through working meetings and validated in workshop activities.
- A total of 113 internships were held with NS personnel, volunteers, and representatives of Non. Red Cross organizations in order to produced or validate new materials produced by the RCR.

c) **The development and implementation of a communication strategy to promote the reduction of risks and the establishment of a disaster-prevention culture**

- A complete communication and visibility strategy to achieve the above-mentioned purpose was developed that included the following:
  
  - Printed educational material, magazine articles, stickers, promotional materials and press releases on CBDM and disaster preparedness through local and national radio stations were prepared, disseminated and broadcasted, sharing to the public the support of ECHO for this project execution.
  - Public events and activities to promote the identification of the beneficiary communities to the Project and personnel & volunteers were held in several locations.
  - IFRC Webpage special section for this DIPECHO project including both regional and national activities.
  - The purchase of a digital camera equipment were used to keep the track of this project’s evolution and supported the production of reports, printed materials and press releases.
  - A digital kit CD with the information and resources of this campaign to be disseminated amongst users in several of the public activities attended by this project representatives.

d) **The identification, compilation, and dissemination of best practices and lessons learned stemming from the implementation of this project**

A document including the best practices based on the experiences using the three tools and modules for CBDM, and the lessons learned from their implementation as well as those from the cases of study experiences.

*The following are the cases of study prepared as a component of this result*

- The Regional Centre of Reference for Disasters Preparedness (CREPD). An innovative experience of the IFRC with demonstrated results.
- The Early Warning System of the “Río Escondido”. A successful community – based project in the Caribbean region of Nicaragua.
- The strengthening of local capacities for risk management in the educational system of Honduras. Implementation of the tool “Safe School”.
- Social Micro-projects for Local Risk Management in rural communities of Guatemala.

In addition to all the above, the overall accomplishment and specific achievements of this project implementation were valued by those who were part of it, including representatives from partner NGOs, from NS and from the IFRC. Their comments in that regard were summarised as follows:
The interviewees acknowledged the achievement of objectives as proposed or even beyond what was expected in some cases, for example:

- More personnel than expected from institutions and NGOs were trained in CBDM workshops and courses
- More schools and children than expected participated in the painting contest, co-organised with ISDR and UNICEF

In spite of the previous details, some activities did not reach the expected numbers, as shown in the table attached, section entitled “Brief assessment and analysis of project achievements”

The standardisation of training approaches during this project was described as a major achievement and a great contribution to the previous processes undertaken within IFRC for several years and pursuing the same purpose.

The RCR obtained their own identity as entities within the whole IFRC organisation. Those interviewees were totally capable of differentiating them from the IFRC, despite their very close relationship based on funding and programmatic and coordinational bonds. Although the current success of the RCR is partially due to this relationship, this fact is not obvious to some of the NS and DIPECHO personnel. The reasons for this derive from the high appreciation of the RCR coordinators and the intention of the IFRC to foster such a perception so that the RCR could gain a greater projection within the NS in the region, so they may enhance this relationship, increase the trust and mutual support to the RCR.

As the best evidence of such position achieved by the RCR and their tools, the materials from the series “Better Be Ready” have transcend to the Caribbean Region and South East Asia, through the adaptation of some cultural features and translation to several languages as English and many others. In the meanwhile, to enhance the use, training, communication skills of trainers are amongst many different activities, the current objective of the personnel at the RCR.

Since result four of this regional project discussed best practices and lessons learned, there was considerable anticipation of the final report in that the interviewees wanted to find out how this Project experience has contributed to enhancing the organisation’s general skills regarding the piloted and the validated tools and modules for risk reduction and disaster preparedness used extensively during the execution of all four national projects and the regional project of the NS and the IFRC in this V DIPECHO Action Plan for Central America.

According to the aforementioned, the expected results were accomplished

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9 For specific numbers on these, see the comparative table for reference, page 23
10 The use of this word in singular in this document will always refer to the IFRC and the NS
2. Do beneficiaries feel that the expected results have been achieved?

No local or community beneficiaries were interviewees for this evaluation since they were identified as indirect beneficiaries for the purposes of this regional project. Therefore, the evaluations of the DIPECHO National Projects are the means of establishing their perception of those national initiatives. Nevertheless, the direct beneficiaries of the regional project were the volunteers and the technicians from the NS, for whom the training activities of results 1 and 2 were directed. Based on the interviews performed, representatives of these personnel and volunteers have offered the following comments:

**Regarding the training and new materials:**

- As a Regional Project targeting NS through the training of the local volunteers and personnel, this process managed to put in place several training activities, and deliver new and revised materials on Disasters Preparedness and CBDM.
- The fulfilment of the above was described as well as performed, including logistics and contents, by those who attended the workshops and courses held during this regional project execution.
- Representatives from NS and National DIPECHO project teams have acknowledged the multiple efforts undertaken through training actions during project execution by the CRREC and the CREPD.
- The RCR personnel were satisfied with NS performance when any of the latter were coordinating training activities to be held in their country.
- Regarding the harmonisation of CBDM tools and methods, those interviewees have stated the need to acknowledge how challenging this task is if, like in this case, must be developed for a whole region and even more, if it is to be permanently pursued. Nevertheless, there was real progress as a result of this project with regards to methods, the subjects to be included in each module, and the use of a common language that can be adapted as required by any NS for cultural reasons if needed.
- Most of those interviewees are expecting to enrol in new training cycles or events and are recommending as a regular activity the establishment of alternative spaces for the exchange of experience and ideas.
- In addition, during the DIPECHO process both RCR were focused on delivering new modules/tools for training. However, some of the materials were not available until the end of the period of project execution. This left no time to develop a proper in-depth process of study and skills practice for the newest modules and materials, a task now being undertaken by RCR technicians.
- The new modules, handbooks, and materials are as follows:

  **By the CREPD:**

  1. Security during Operations
  2. Emergency Assessment Guide\(^{11}\)
  3. Volunteers at Emergencies\(^{12}\)

\(^{11}\) This and the number 10 on Food Security, were sent totally developed for printing and release from the IFRC HQ in Geneva
5. Emergency Operations Centres
7. Basic NIT Training Curricula
8. Contingency and Response Lessons Plans
9. First Specialized Guide on Water and Sanitation for ENI Teams\textsuperscript{13}
10. General Guide for Food Security Assessment

\textit{By the CRREC (modules 5-14)}

1. Education, Organization and Community Preparedness in Risk Reduction (including Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment)
2. Safe Schools
3. Family Preparedness Plan
4. Community First Aid
5. Psychological First Aid (with support from RedCAMP and health networks)
6. Healthy Homes
7. Community Maintenance of Schools
8. Floods
9. Community Dialogue on Water and Climate
11. Management of Temporary Shelters
12. Early Warning System for Floods in Small River Basins
13. Social Micro-Projects
14. Community Disasters & Risk Reduction Teams\textsuperscript{14}

\textit{Regarding work with regional/local partners:}

- From the perspective of the NS, working together with other organisations from the field of CBDM is very well regarded if based on programmatic similarities. However, more benefits are also expected for the IFRC and the NS as such partners could provide many suitable skills applicable to CBDM activities.

3. \textit{¿Do involved institutions feel that expected results have been achieved?}

The institutions involved, including Plan Intl., CARE, ISDR, UNICEF and some local NGOs, amongst others, consider that the expected results were accomplished and are pleased with what was achieved in the following ways:

\textit{Regarding the training workshops:}

- The process in calling for meetings and workshops was sufficiently open such that many of the international and local NGOs for social development based in the region, as well as other partners, were able to attend these activities.

\textsuperscript{12} This one has gone under further revision and by the end of the project has not been distributed yet, but will be in the coming months

\textsuperscript{13} Developed during Project execution and available in the web site. Not published yet due to a validation and correction last round, included in the Regional Project activities under DIPECHO VI.

\textsuperscript{14} Delivered around project finalization and available for dissemination while this evaluation was in course
- It was also acknowledged that the IFRC and its RCR have provided partner organisations with tools, training, and experiences unknown to them before this project.

- This project provided these organisations with the opportunity to be part of a strong, well-designed training programme on CBDM, allowing them to gain knowledge on the use of different tools and to adapt them, as needed, to each organisation’s particular goals and purpose.

Regarding partnerships established for this project:

- This project has enhanced the interaction between NS and IFRC and similar organisations in the field of risk management based on mutually developed activities.

- Furthermore, the resulting alliances established with NS and IFRC-RR were identified by these organisations as a direct and highly relevant benefit. Although it was not originally anticipated that this outcome would turn out to be as successful as it has been, joint future initiatives on CBDM led by the IFRC have now become a priority.

- The interviewees stated that they were able to achieve greater dissemination of the message of risk management and disaster reduction at local, national, and regional levels through this IFRC initiative under the DIPECHO framework.

- This project provided to the Red Cross the opportunity for collaborating, sharing and supporting activities on CBDM with other organizations, which was a useful experience for NS and IFRC on how to deal with different routines and dynamics under the pressure of a project execution situation. A great effort of openness to all the partners and non-Red Cross Organizations took place and must be kept as well in the future. The representatives of the latter ones said they would like to have more chances of a bilateral or “two ways” exchange with the Red Cross regarding their knowledge on methods and techniques on CBDM. They asked for a systematic approach amongst them, the exchange of each one expertise according to the needs of other partners and mainly, the collection of learning lessons and best practices on methods and tools on CBDM, so those resources could be kept for systematisation and sharing in the near future.

- The operational culture that pervades the IFRC and NS is an advantage they can offer, and is one major reason that other organisations seek to establish a partnership with them.

- The development of a common approach, knowledge of each other’s goals, and the continuation of coordinated action are considered by the partners’ representatives as a strategic and worthwhile endeavour whose greatest beneficiaries will be the vulnerable communities of Central America.

- Several partners, such as CEPREDENAC, have requested to be considered for future participation as a result of the positive results obtained.

Regarding the harmonisation of tools:

These organisations see themselves as beneficiaries of the tool harmonisation process enhanced by this project.

4. Were there actual coordination processes amongst the actors/stakeholders participating in the project’s implementation?
The coordination processes in this project have shown how the region has achieved a level of maturity when it comes to undertaking co-managed activities within the execution of specific projects. In that regard, this effort exhibits a qualitative development when contrasted with preceding periods and processes in this region. This experience demonstrated that UNICEF, ISDR, Plan, CARE, IFRC and NS, and many other actors that not only help people to cope and recover from disasters but also promote risk reduction can work together and accomplish remarkable results. Hence, coordination was intense and, especially with regards to result 3, was the main factor in the communication strategy proceeding as expected. Accordingly, several activities were co-organised as follows:

*With ISDR, Plan International, and UNICEF:*

- A painting contest for children of primary schools was co-organised by UNICEF, ISDR and Plan International, with a total of 6,629 children participating throughout the region.
- A presentation on implementation of the campaign “Disaster Reduction begins at School” was held during the Regional Fair of Knowledge held in El Salvador with approximately 40 people participating and a total amount of 150 people visited the stand of the IFRC and RCR in 2 days of Knowledge Fair

In addition to the above mentioned partners, CEPREDEMAC\(^{15}\) received the Communication Strategy for Risk Reduction.

*With CARE and Plan International:*

- The set of modules for CBDM was distributed to the national office of both organisations in Honduras to be used as part of their institutional programmes on community-based disaster reduction

*With CARE, CODEM, COPECO and the Francisco Morazan Education Secretariat in Honduras:*

- An agreement to use the VCA methodology and the “Safe Schools” module for the design and implementation of a risk reduction theme area at educational centres at the Francisco Morazan Department in Honduras

Finally, all of the partners of DIPECHO V Action Plan received a set of materials, guidelines, handbooks and modules produced by the RCR. They were all invited as well to participate on the several activities on CBDM coordinated by the NS and the IFRC, as the training workshops for the use of tools, the internships for tools design and courses.

**Criterion: OWNERSHIP**

*The assessment of this criterion was based on the following:*

*The extent to which NS accepted the overall aims and delivery of the programme*

\(^{15}\) The Coordination Centre for Natural Disaster Prevention in Central America
NS not only accepted but endorsed each of the fourth national projects and the regional project as well, all of them under the V DIPECHO Action Plan for Central America.

The extension of this endorsement was expressed through:

- Support for the formulation of each of the national project proposals for the DIPECHO V Action Plan
- Attendance at regional coordination meetings to support the aforementioned proposals, where representatives of the NS, the PNS and the IFRC, including the RCR, participated
- The coordination of activities, when required, with the respective DIPECHO National Team
- The accommodation, when room was available, of each of the DIPECHO National Teams at NS facilities

- NS interviewees considered this process as constituting a national and regional opportunity to foster the enhancement of an institutional framework on CBDM within the organisation in Central America.
- The NS increased their receptivity to the type of processes represented by DIPECHO, and proactively assumed the project’s general purpose. Nevertheless, certain more conservative positions on risk and disaster management as core subjects to be undertaken in depth by the NS in training activities of CBDM prevailed in a couple of NS.
- The RCR, NS, and DIPECHO National Team personnel have pointed out that the few difficulties that emerged were not unanticipated given that five different projects of IFRC and NS were taking place simultaneously under the same DIPECHO Action Plan. Despite the difficulties, these personnel have concluded that working together intensively is possible and that there are resulting benefits for both groups (NS and RCR).
- It should be noted, however, that the significance and purpose of CBDM and Disasters Preparedness is not yet a core subject at the same level for all of the NS directions in Central America.

The level of NS ownership of the Two Regional Reference Centres and the materials they produce

- The NS ownership of the RCR is unquestionable and partially due to the success of this project. This must be seen as a window of opportunity to be taken advantage of regarding the enhancement of a more effective incorporation of human resources and management support from the NS to the RCR.
- This project was considered an opportunity for the enhancement of well-qualified and skilled human resources in the NS. It was also seen as an opportunity to obtain more support from the NS for the RCR, as in the availability of trainers for future training workshops on risk reduction and disaster preparedness.
- The harmonisation of tools and methods was itself a key to increase the ownership of the RCR and the materials they produce by the NS, since it provided:
  
  i. A reason for meeting regularly to plan and develop activities related to CBDM
  ii. A common subject for collaboration in the creation of new resources for training on CBDM and Disasters Preparedness
iii. An opportunity to work with the RCR and take advantage of its resources and expertise as a means of increasing the skills and capacities of the NS personnel and volunteers through training.

iv. This helped increase NS awareness regarding the necessity of their cooperation in maintaining RCR functions, which the RCR could not manage alone and of which NS is the primary and most important beneficiary.

- One of the conditions characterizing the accomplishment of this “Ownership” criterion was the regular call for internships to prepare to validate CBDM materials. This procedure is not only suitable to create cohesion within the organization but to contribute to achieve that seeking of ownership based on a collective building of knowledge to be reflected on the tools and resources to be use by the NS and other organizations. Hence, volunteers and personnel can formulate, discuss and produce themselves the materials they will use to get trained and to involve communities into CBDM processes.

- As it was described in the specific project objective, the harmonization has been the core of this process. However, some modules of the series “Better Be Ready” are considered by the users as more complex than the others. They suggested that a deeper knowledge is needed on the personnel responsible of training volunteers and personnel within and beyond the Red Cross, in relation to these specific materials:

  - Community Dialogue on Water and Climate
  - Community Manual for the Prevention of Disasters on Rural Water Systems
  - Early Warning System for Floods in Small River Basins

The Contingency and Response Lessons Plans was another handbook stated by the interviewees as more difficult to use than expected, due to its extension and some of the concepts and products. They acknowledged it is quite useful, but more study and practice is required to properly apply it.

- This appreciation regarding those materials is addressing their technical level, the reason why some of the interviewees described them as “not suitable enough for a communitarian approach”. In addition, they are some of the last modules to be delivered and more specific training on them is needed, as some of the interviewees expressed during this survey.

- Amongst the handbooks produced by the CREPD, The Response and Emergency Plans Guide, although being already used in many activities of this regional and some of the national projects as well, was mentioned as the only one requiring revision and improvement for being too complex and as needing further clarification in some sections.

- The “Social Microprojects” module has had the highest demand amongst the new tools presented as part of the series “Better Be Ready”. It was intensively used by three of the four NS DIPECHO projects, but some users are not totally comfortable with its complexity degree. The designers did a significant effort to simplify this tool while under design and validation phases, but the subject itself demands some basics on project formulation. This is why this module was meant to be used not by
the communities themselves but by the trainers, to guide the former ones on the design of specific community projects.

Criterion: IMPACT

The assessment of this criterion was based on the following:

- Assess the extent to which the objectives of the programme have been achieved, and whether it has fulfilled its purpose

The objectives of this programme were:

**Principal objective**

Risks are reduced by better preparing vulnerable populations in the areas most prone to disasters in Central America through increased operational capacity and strengthened cooperation between Red Cross and non-Red Cross organisations as a result of the exchange, documentation, and application of experiences, best practices, and lessons learned.

- It is difficult to arrive at a detailed determination of the potential scope of a 15-month project when one considers the local/community scale of CBDM achievements. Outcomes for current transformation and vulnerability-reduction initiatives might not become evident for months or even years. Despite this, and using indirect means to draw conclusions in this context, the interviews of representatives and actors in this process reveal that a genuinely effective programme has been pursued through formal and objective methodologies. Furthermore, this project endeavoured to establish basic elements so that vulnerable communities could actually see how their capacities to face disasters can increase, and how they themselves might take such steps in the future to reduce risks.

- This approach has been reasonably fruitful in that some of the more delayed communities were targeted during the project once synergy emerged between the regional and national projects. Although the results were not equally or uniformly intense or accomplished, in all cases an acceptable minimum level was achieved. A number of findings regarding best practices and lessons learned are highlighted in the subsection on “Effectiveness” in this report\(^\text{16}\).

- In addition, in the subsection on “Effectiveness”, question 3, regarding the “coordination processes amongst the actors/stakeholders participating in the project’s implementation”, the operational capacity and strengthened cooperation of Red Cross and non-Red Cross organisations was increased as a result of the exchange, documentation, and application of experiences, best practices, and lessons learned.

**Specific objective**

\(^{16}\) The details of lessons learned & best practices, result 4, can be found in the corresponding consultancy report
The application of standardised, high-quality community-based disaster management methodologies, materials, and tools developed by the Federation’s Regional Centres of Reference is institutionalised through dissemination to and the training of staff and volunteers in all Red Cross National Societies and participating non-Red Cross organisations in Central America, taking into account the norms set out by the individual country National Disaster Management Agency and the Federation.

- This specific objective was achieved for every proposed component through an intervention lasting 15 months. The implementation of this project led to contributions that have been shown to meet objectives, which can be summarised as follows:

v. The personnel and volunteers of NS and non-Red Cross organisations were effectively trained and their capacities regarding CBDM and Disaster Preparedness were enhanced.

vi. Analyses were conducted on communities’ environment and living conditions that considered their vulnerabilities and capacities to cope.

vii. The formulation of a local project to provide safer conditions to communities in case of disaster was undertaken, including the delivery of training and tools for the development of future projects with the same purpose.

viii. In some cases, communities were targeted through primary school students as part of a process to make schools safer and to involve both teachers and families.

- Assess the impact that modules, guidelines, material, and methodologies have had on the manner in which the NS and non-Red Cross organisations address CBDM programming and their effectiveness in working with communities

- This was assessed by interviewing operative personnel working with communities as part of the activities of the National DIPECHO projects in rural and urban areas and representatives of non-Red Cross organisations using the IFRC materials for their programmes on CBDM. They expressed the following on this subject:

- Most of the materials were easily understood, and provided basic didactics and a logical structure to approach communities and effectively help them successfully analyse their situation, including not only considerations of risk and disasters, but also their livelihoods and the ordinary difficulties they collectively face on a daily basis.

- The final part of this process focuses on maximizing programme impact by means of addressing local risk-related situations and creating a less vulnerable environment in a variety of ways. Examples include supporting communities in designing their own plan of action for a disaster or emergency, or by improving the physical conditions of a key local facility related to water resources availability, or local roads, bridges or schools. The final outcome depends on the tools and modules used in each case and the particular objectives of each community.

- The entire series of “Better Be Ready” has the same logical structure and is therefore suitable for adaptations in the order of use, the public to be addressed, and the time available as determined by the conditions of each community approached. This flexibility specifically contributes to making the series much more useful and applicable to different training situations, regardless of whether these vulnerable communities are rural or urban.
- Due to the complexity of the subject or the lack of appropriate didactic techniques, some of the modules are more challenging and still require further training to be implemented. However, all of the tools were used at least as reference pieces for consultation, mainly in those training processes with greater technical contents, as when communities were interested in the matter of water resources, floods, or even the Social Micro-projects module itself.
- The latter module, although used extensively, necessitates the comprehension of terms and processes related to the formulation of local and small projects. Even if presented using simple language, the subject cannot avoid a level of intrinsic complexity. Addressing community expectations regarding each micro-project mitigated this situation somewhat, along with thorough explanations regarding precisely what contribution each micro-project would make.

- **Assess the quality of the training provided by the Reference Centres and how it increases NS capacities.**

- The users who attended training activities expressed that they felt confident about the contents and methodologies received and about the quality of the trainers from the RCR.
- Furthermore, the addition of an evaluation component as a requisite for passing every course for NS or other organisations attendants was requested by some of the interviewees. This evaluation requirement is currently compulsory for the ENI courses only.
- All of those participating in the survey described an improvement in their knowledge and increase in their capacities regarding the corresponding materials covered in the course or workshop attended, whether it was based on the CRREC or the CREPD emphasis.
- All of those participating in the survey admitted that the instruction received was unabridged and proved to be useful once they needed to apply this new knowledge or were required to use it as part of their ordinary work at a NS or non-Red Cross organisation.
- The authorities of NS and non-Red Cross organisations expressed their satisfaction with the instruction received by their volunteers and subordinates, as well as they themselves, when applicable, since they have experienced an increase in their training in CBDM and Disaster Preparedness.

- **Assess the degree to which the use of the guidelines and modules increased National Society capacity, especially related to branch and volunteer development, and the engagement of leadership at all levels**

  Several elements described as key by the interviewees regarding the aforementioned conditions are as follows:

- The coordinated formulation of the projects fostered the discussion and identification of the opportunities to benefit personnel and volunteers at every one of the NS participating in this process under DIPECHO. This allowed the enrolment of local personnel at all levels from those participating branches.
- Some volunteers attending this DIPECHO process became leaders in their own communities and local branches as a result of their sense of empowerment on the subject of CBDM and the training provided by this DIPECHO –NS – IFRC initiative.
- In each case there were many opportunities to attend training events, even for those countries not directly benefiting from the implementation of a DIPECHO project.

- This experience provided the opportunity to take advantage of the simultaneous execution of four NS projects and one regional project funded by DIPECHO and several others funded by DFID and Provention and housed by the same NS. This contributed to a significant synergy based on the exchange of expertise and support through feedback and processes validation on the use of new tools. The regional knowledge on CBDM was greatly enhanced while several vulnerable communities, NS local branches and the ordinary processes of NS on CBDM were and keep being beneficediated, as the latter funds and projects are still on going.

- **Assess the applicability of the modules for use by non-Red Cross organisations and government**

- The representatives from every one of those organisations have expressed that they were first interested in becoming part of this process due to the quality of the modules and the option for joining the training activities available as part of the implementation of this project.

- Additionally, they have expressed that:
  
  - The modules and materials are appropriate for the type of intervention they practice in rural and urban vulnerable communities.
  
  - The modules are relevant for them from a programmatic perspective, due to the link with their own plans, terminology and methodological base.
  
  - They are pleased with having access to these materials and training activities, and the results they have achieved in their work with communities ever since. Additionally, they have expressed how the guidelines and modules are flexible enough to be adapted to each particular focus or age group they deal with at CBDM events and projects.
  
  - They also expressed their intention of joining future IFRC processes related to CBDM.

  - This project demanded an intense lobbying to the Nations Agencies for Disaster Management and Risk Reduction. This served for the sharing and dissemination of the Red Cross' tools and materials on a regional scale through different kinds of projects of the Red Cross and Non- Red Cross Organizations, including Ministries of Education, Civil Defence Systems and other entities in most of the Central American countries, all of them pursuing a greater involvement of CBDM resources and activities. In fact, currently and since this project began, the governments in this region have become as some of the most important users of materials and tools and actors of CBDM processes.

- **Determine the level of impact of the project on the community work capacity of National Societies**

- Based on what has been described so far regarding the training component and new materials, modules, methods, and tools provided to the NS personnel and volunteers, this project as whole has became a milestone in the IFRC and the NS institutional process for communities’ capacity enhancement by contributing specific activities and outcomes in order to achieve an effective reduction of communities’ risk to disasters.
- According to the interviews performed and the reports reviewed, all of the communities approached by the National Projects achieved the outcomes initially proposed. This represents the highest impact level attained by NS through this regional project, and reflects the project’s utility as a means for communities to take advantage of the training resources and opportunities proved by the RCR and their modules, methods, and materials.

- This process was particularly important because it allowed a new group from the NS to be part of a coordinated system of training while developing national projects with local results. Therefore, all the scales were reached at the same time that CBDM capacities were increased from a theoretical and pragmatic perspective.

- Assess the degree to which the lessons learned/best practices workshops impacted the revision of modules.

- Cannot be assessed – This activity is pending implementation

- Examine the linkages and applicability between the DM modules and processes with other NS activities at the local level, (e.g. health and social services)

- The NS projects sought to foster an increase in community interest a range of matters linked to risk and disasters by using the AVC methodology.
- The AVC’s purpose is to better know and correctly identify the most urgent needs to be solved in a community, while at the same time promoting specific measures to reduce vulnerability and increase disaster awareness.
- The insight born of experience by NS and IFRC has allowed them to more accurately identify what communities desire, their receptivity to activities and programmes coming from outside.
- The NS acknowledge that given the characteristics of Central America’s vulnerable communities, this population will be most receptive to initiatives that can show a genuine attention to the issues they must struggle with on a daily basis.
- More important, the most vulnerable communities are also usually poor and have chronic deficiencies in the provision of basic and social services. That is why every programme, plan or activity of the NS is based on an integrated analysis in order to link activities to come and those already set at the local level.
- The DM modules and processes implemented during these projects and within the framework provided by DIPECHO are linked to different structurally related subjects the NS have tried to promote, from a local intervention scale to the accessibility to water resources, the inclusion of educative institutions in the prevention of social problems, the creation of safer spaces for the children, and the engagement of all community stakeholders for better social development conditions at the local level. Although the IFRC and the NS have influence all of those subjects in different ways, this project was the first unabridged initiative which, collecting previous institutional experiences could bring them back under a pragmatic approach and only one regional process.

- Assess the level of strategic coherence and co-operation with IFRC (IFRC, PNS, NS) and relevant external actors (government, PLAN International, ISDR-UNICEF, CEPREDEMAC)
- During this project a significant level of cooperation based on a high strategic coherence and co-operation with IFRC (IFRC, PNS, NSs) and relevant external actors (government, PLAN International, ISDR-UNICEF, CEPREDENAC) took place. 
- The extent of participation depended on each organisation’s profile and its level of engagement throughout implementation of the regional project and its core subjects regarding the reduction of risk and vulnerability of communities. This was evident in the presence, support and effective co-partnership demonstrated through specific activities as it was summarized in subsection “EFFECTIVENNES”, question 3. 
- Based on the information provided by the survey of actors and related documents, the cooperation and coherence proved to be greater among NGOs than governmental/official institutions at the regional level. 
- At the national level, certain highly productive results were achieved that reflected considerable capacity among NS for coordination, specifically in the case of INETER (Nicaragua) and the Secretariat of Education for the Region “Francisco Morazan” (Honduras)- A good relationship with positive national and local results was established with the national institutions for civil protection and risk management in most of the countries. While this may be beyond the scope of the regional project, the RCR and the IFRC supported NS in the establishment of inter-institutional cooperation in their countries.

**Brief assessment and analysis of project achievements** - *Relation of some proposed activities and their performance of achievement within this Project’s implementation and most remarkable figures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Indicator Proposed&lt;sup&gt;17&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Real achievement</th>
<th>% of performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training of non-Red Cross organizations’ staff</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training of NS volunteers and personnel</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>1,452</td>
<td>69.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS attendance of Training of trainers courses</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS Participants of cooperation activities</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of people reached through lessons learned dissemination activities</td>
<td>120&lt;sup&gt;18&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>312&lt;sup&gt;19&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People benefited from the capacity building activities</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRREC modules to be delivered within the timeline of project</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>108.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CREPD modules to be delivered within the timeline of project</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10&lt;sup&gt;20&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population reached by the communication strategy</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to those figures, 31 workshops and courses were held and 113 attendants from Red Cross and Non-Red Cross organization participated of internships.

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<sup>17</sup> This and the next column are referred to people attending each of those activities
<sup>18</sup> This figure was originally assigned to the number of people who may attend the workshops on lessons learned, result 4, which are to be implemented in a new stage of the institutional programme on CBDM.
<sup>19</sup> Total of users benefited by the dissemination of results on lessons learned and best practices
<sup>20</sup> The module on “Community Disasters & Risk Reduction Teams”; because of its contents and emphasis on local stakeholders and approach, was derived from the CREPD to the CRREC, this is why the former has one less than expected and the latter achieved 14 in the end.
As shown above, there were figures with less achievement than proposed. However, given the dynamics of the project, the NS, IFRC and RCR manage to compensate those insufficient figures by a greater involvement of other actors, such as the children participating in the painting contest – with a total of 6,629 – and those from non-Red Cross Organizations.

According to the findings of this evaluation, and based on proposed objectives proposed and targeted results, the following are the main lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations:

Lessons learned

Regarding tools, materials and training

- The new set of guidelines, handbooks and modules produced by the CRREC and the CRPED proved to be useful while being applied in many training activities while at the same time those suitable of improvement could be identified by the users.
- Throughout the several workshops with vulnerable communities, the operative personnel and volunteers using those materials have identified new needs in order to target specific groups that must feel included and involved in activities and programmes of CBDM. Those needs are as follows:
  - More playful or ludic resources to involve the children coming with their mothers to the CBDM workshops
  - New materials properly designed for aged people that may consider the usual role of leaders they have, mainly in rural communities
  - A specific set with alternative didactic resources for illiterate population in urban and rural communities.
  - The specific needs of certain groups as those of people with any sort of handicap must be addressed as well since most of the personnel and volunteers of NS are not trained in these matters.
  - An entire new module or an appendix to the existing ones focused in providing the users, with a set of didactic resources suit and ideas, suitable to be adapted according to the kind of public they may find in communities. This should be elaborated keeping in mind mainly those less skilled in training techniques for communities, like new volunteers.

- Due to the complexity of the subject or the lack of appropriate didactic techniques, some of the modules are more challenging and still require further training to be implemented
- The interviews proved the different interpretations users at NS and DIPECHO Natl. teams have of the several tools and methods for training, regarding the concept and the purpose of each one as well than their limitations, which is a consequence of the many modules and handbooks available and the little time in this project for an extensive and detailed revision of all of them

- The NS are not taking advantage of training opportunities from RCR on an equitable basis. This is not due to the approach of the RCR, which have to respond to every NS request for trainings. In fact, the trainings depend on the initiative and proactivity of the NS themselves and, so far, not all of them have shown a similar commitment in that
regard to their own personnel and volunteers in order to provide them with as much training opportunities as they may wish to have.

- The addition of an evaluation component as a requisite for passing every course for NS or other organisations attendants was requested by some of the interviewees. This evaluation requirement is currently compulsory for the ENI courses only.

- All of those participating in the survey admitted that the instruction received was unabridged and proved to be useful once they needed to apply this new knowledge or were required to use it as part of their ordinary work at a NS or non-Red Cross organisation.

- The authorities of NS and non-Red Cross organisations expressed their satisfaction with the instruction received by their volunteers and subordinates, as well as they themselves, when applicable, since they have experienced an increase in their training in CBDM and Disaster Preparedness.

Regarding the process of project implementation as a whole and the relationship with non- Red Cross organizations

- To capitalise on project accomplishments, future joint regional will be able to take advantage of the synergies created during the present project implementation regarding institutional capacity building and the establishment of strategic bonds with communities in all Central American countries.

- The use of new training materials did prompt the submission of an extensive list of suggestions for their improvement by project participants that are described in result four of this regional project.

- Too many tools were piloted under the current project. Even when outcomes were good, it was clearly difficult for the RCR to support the Natl. DIPECHO teams by providing them with more resources and techniques for those modules described as too complex or “less communitarian” by users.

- The IFRC and the RCR have increased their exposure regarding risk reduction and disaster preparedness. On a national level, the NS are more closely identified with this topic and their staff is better prepared to deal with the impact of disasters.

- While the low number of personnel available at the RCR could be seen as a problem for some when considering the increasing demand for their services, in the case of DIPECHO processes this may have helped to forge closer relationships among them and the NS and this can be perceived as an advantage addressing capacity building with the collaboration of all the NS in the region.

- This project was able to achieve positive results due to the identification of a common purpose and benefits to be gained that was shared among all personnel and volunteers.

- This approach taken by this project was unprecedented within the IFRC in Central America in that it expanded the topics that NS, IFRC and RCR can raise in the region, and enhanced their overall capacity to undertake specific objectives.

General conclusions stemmed from the evaluation analysis

- This process led to the creation of key synergies that can provide a basis for regional initiatives that will bring benefits for all the NS.

- Risk management and the Regional Centres’ activities appear not to be the main interest of some NS initiatives in the Central American region.
- The explicit purpose of the specific objective that sought greater institutionalisation of the RCR was entirely fulfilled.
- This regional project was design to establish contact among national projects while at the same time stimulating collaboration of NS, RCR and non-Red Cross organisations. The results obtained from such coordination reveal a new regional maturity when it comes to undertaking co-managed activities within the execution of specific projects. In that regard, this effort exhibits a qualitative development when contrasted with preceding periods and processes in this region. In short, this experience demonstrated that UNICEF, ISDR, Plan, CARE, IFRC and NS, and many other actors that not only help people cope and recover from disasters but also promote risk reduction can work together and accomplish remarkable results.
- Every NGO linked to this project is pleased about the achievements and is looking forward to new opportunities for collaboration with the IFRC. Principal interests are new tools and materials that may be produced for CBDM and new training activities for their personnel.
- Many of the tools and materials for CBDM are highly regarded and all the users acknowledge their potential as suitable means to train the personnel of NS and people from vulnerable communities.
- The harmonisation of tools for CBDM was described as very positive since it provided a common language and framework for training on this subject to all the NS. In addition, it has been performed on a comprehensive basis, allowing every NS to adapt the tools as required under specific conditions (ethnics, time available, etc.), although the key basic elements have been retained for each case.
- Although a high point of this project was the development of a wide range of new tools, handbooks, and modules, some of these materials are not yet suitable for general dissemination and implementation in community activities. These unsuitable materials posed a considerable challenge to volunteers and NS and non-Red Cross personnel because of their complexity, lack of clarity, and incompleteness.
- The development of specific tools and materials dependent on the technical support and direct participation of personnel from the NS of the region has contributed to creating a positive atmosphere and to improving relationships amongst the NS, the RCR, the IFRC – RR and non-Red Cross organisations. It has produced a widespread sense of inclusion via the training process on risk reduction and disaster preparedness.

**Principal conclusions and recommendations**

- This project has shown that the IFRC is currently the most important NGO in the region producing tools and materials to foster CBDM. Although it has enhanced the image and influence of NS and IFRC among governments and potential partners, the IFRC must learn to also draw upon expertise of the latter in routine matters and to capitalise on current agreements with the former.
- Most NS have a sense of ownership regarding the Regional Centres a perception due partially to this DIPECHO regional project. This must be seen as an opportunity to pursue the consolidation and enhancement of well-qualified and skilled human resources in those NS, as well as a chance of obtaining more support from them for the Regional Centres, particularly regarding the availability of trainers for future training workshops on risk reduction and disasters preparedness.
- The Red Cross’ most interested partners in this project, including UNICEF, EIRD, PLAN, CARE and the National Education Secretaries or Ministries, are all intending to develop future projects with the Red Cross. It is imperative that the organisation
carefully consider what is to be gained in each case, given that in current and recent activities all the training materials and workshops have been provided by the IFRC, NS and the RCR. It is necessary to look for a balance in that relationship, and to establish some priorities according to the plans and programs to be accomplished.

- The NS increased their receptiveness and assumed responsibility for this project on a proactive basis and NS expressed complete agreement on the DIPECHO approach and the national teams and projects under implementation. This response, however, is not yet generalised, and some distrust regarding DIPECHO projects remains due to the particulars involved. For example, it is unusual that this project can profoundly contribute to NS interest in capacity building given that once the project finishes, the technicians tend to leave the process and the NS. Therefore, a more permanent process should be put in place in order to easily transfer capacity building in project management and the adaptation of training practices for communities from temporary teams to the permanent hierarchies of the NS, both in the administrative and technical fields.

- Although the high quality of the trainers from the RCR is widely acknowledged and their work is deeply appreciated, is strongly recommended to provide an official certification for them. This is based in the request of some participants regarding the implementation of an institutionalised certification process that would include every new module, tool, or method delivered. Hence, those involved in training all NS personnel and volunteers would be properly and uniformly prepared, a step that will help to guarantee RCR excellence. In addition, this will be useful in insuring ongoing quality and continuity, regardless of RCR leadership.

- Closer contact and follow up is needed between the local branches, the NS and the highest coordination of the National DIPECHO teams, according to operational officers of some DIPECHO Natl. projects, particularly those located far from headquarters that may face more shortages and difficulties regarding specialised human resources and material resources. These officials also suggested that a more flexible design should be considered to involve and engage particular populations like children and the elderly.

- Many of the interviewees identified the development of engaging materials specifically design for children as an important priority, given that children are always present when a training activity is being held in any community and often there is a scarcity of resources or materials designed to make them feel included.

- Through this project the NS were able to increase awareness at a local level and to engage key actors from communities and governments throughout this region. Now the NS and the IFRC must help generate ongoing interest through the local branches of NS so that progress achieved in CBDM will not be lost in the future, but will instead be the basis for new activities and processes.

- The harmonisation of tools and methods must be a permanent task for the NS and the IFRC/RCR, since there remain some concerns to be addressed in many of the modules and handbooks. In addition to the improvement of these resources from the CRREC and the CREPD, attention should be given to creating a space for the discussion and debate of issues and information in order to insure that operative personnel and volunteers are as well informed as possible.

- The lessons learned and best practices identified for specific tools, materials and methods in project result 4, should be reviewed for relevant suggestions by those who used these resources in their communities on a daily basis during the implementation of this project.

- The fluency of communications within the permanent administrative/technical hierarchies of NS and the temporal staff of DIPECHO National Teams must be a top
priority from day one. As expressed by the interviewees, the communication established between the NS, PNS and IFRC and RCR was as a key factor in project sustainability which helped to develop and reveal complementarities and synergies amongst national and regional projects, but it must be set from the earliest stages of project formulation and used this to be capitalized when the project implementation begins. In the present case, despite some breakdowns in communication and misunderstandings at first, most of these difficulties were eventually resolved as the DIPECHO National Projects unfolded. Additionally and regarding future projects the communication strategies component must be the first one introduced at the very beginning of the implementation phase because it is key to ensuring:

- The inclusion and involvement of more key actors from the NS and their engagement through their knowledge of the project purpose
- A timely preparation of those resources meant to reach local populations, authorities, national governments and non-Red Cross organisations
- The avoidance of misunderstandings amongst the DIPECHO teams at national and regional scales
- The creation of alliances to set conditions for future activities

- Project formulation has to be more realistic and accomplished according to existing capacities to fulfil the commitment with ECHO in only 15 months. Although this regional project of IFRC was successful, it is a generally acknowledged that having four goals to achieve, each one involving several activities and demanding support from every DIPECHO National Team and the RCR, required an enormous effort, and created some frictions and undesirable pressures beyond what is usual in these cases.

- Given that the objective of promoting the Regional Centres has been achieved, a new effort must be given to focus on the regional outreach of the RR-IFRC and the enhancement of its relationship with the national societies in general if new projects and processes are to be held. In the future national societies must be better advised of the role played by the regional representation of the secretariat in the success of the Regional Centres.

- The experience with the Tegucigalpa Department of Education in Honduras, was considered by regional authorities, teachers, and the NS as a milestone that should be used in the future as a basis for new cooperation processes. This Tegucigalpa model should be considered for replication within the region by the IFRC and the RCR.

- To avoid the delay in the delivery of modules, handbooks and materials to the national teams of future DIPECHO projects, it is recommended that the CRR establish a deadline for each set of tools so the requests from the countries’ teams will have to be submitted timely for required paperwork.
Acronyms

CBDM. Community Based Disaster Management
CRREC. Regional Centre for Reference on Communitarian Education in Disasters
CREPD. Regional Centre for Reference on Disasters Preparedness
IFRC - International Federation of Red Cross
IFRC – RR. International Federation of Red Cross – Regional Representation
NS. National Societies of Red Cross
PNS. Partnership National Societies
RCR. Regional Centres of Reference