

## Local Coordinators for Risk Reduction

# COLRED

Community Organisation for Resilience with an Integrated Approach



"It is an average day, but unlike the others...

Dinora Xum heads to school, they are having a special activity, she will plan her work for the next year..., She is an elementary school teacher in the EORM Tzamabaj, Nahualá Rural School, she will teach 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders next school year; it is a multi-level classroom... It is 7 November 2012 and it is 10:35 am when an earthquake measuring 7.2 in the Richter scale hits... She sees her colleagues and neighbours run out of their homes..."

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Editor: Fabiola López Barbero<sup>2</sup>

The active participation and organisation of everyone in a community are vital steps leading towards resilience.

Starting from this premise, the Partners for Resilience (PFR) in Guatemala develops actions to achieve one of its main objectives: **facilitate the creation of Local Coordinators for Disaster Reduction (COLRED)**. COLREDs are self-managed community organisations for disaster risk at a local level. The participation of PFR seeks to build capacities locally in nine municipalities in the Departments of Zacapa, Chiquimula, Quiché and Sololá to give COLREDs have an integrated approach to link and relate Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Adaptation and Ecosystem Management and Restoration (DRR/CCA/EMR).

### Strengthening the Model and Work Structure

It is necessary to describe the multi-level organisational structure in the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction (CONRED) to better understand the approach to Disaster Risk Reduction in Guatemala. CONRED includes community, local and national levels and acknowledges the autonomy of the authorities in each of these levels as well as the hierarchy of the institutions, according to their jurisdictions.

According to Legislative Decree 109-96, CONRED is organised in a vertical system of ascending and/or descending tiers, starting at local level (COLRED), municipal (COMRED), departmental (CODRED), up to the national level (CONRED)<sup>3</sup>. See Figure 1

According to its jurisdiction, this structure allows each Coordinator to make decisions on how to manage information and emergency services, how to serve the population and develop actions to organise, educate and train the civil society and other participating organisations. The connection for each level within the system is related to information management, assistance during emergencies and request for

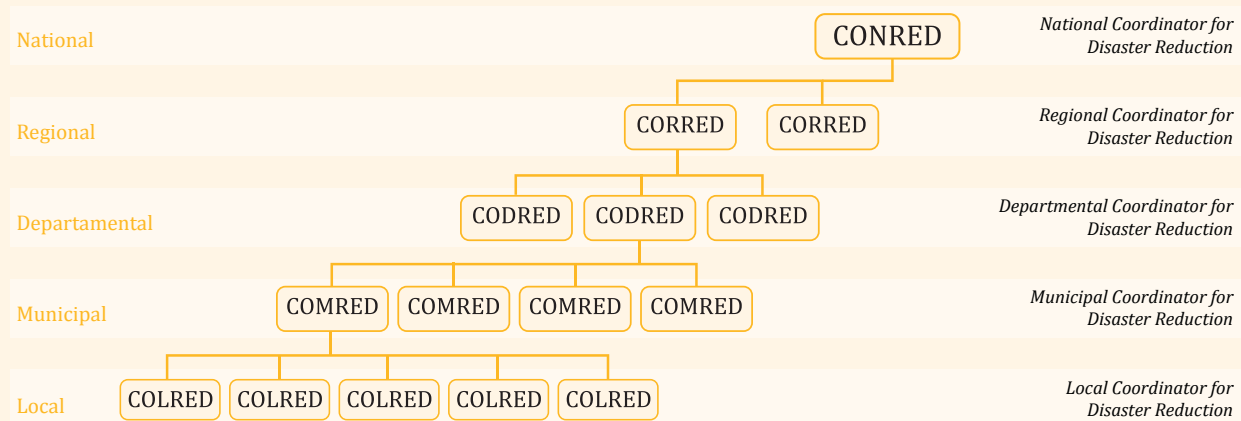
*The November 7 earthquake has demonstrated the response capabilities of COLREDs to natural threats. In this case, the communities assessed the damages in their community and reported them to the Red Cross. Also, in late 2013, during the rainy season, the COLREDs activated and monitored the increased levels in the bodies of water.*

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3. More information: <http://conred.gob.gt/www/documentos/secretaria-ejecutiva/Manual-de-Organizacion-Nacional.pdf>

**Figure 1. CONRED Multi-Level Organisational Structure**



Source: CONRED

humanitarian aid, and it is managed by the Executive Secretariat of the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction (SE-CONRED) in two directions: ascending to request and send information and descending to coordinate aid or collaboration from the immediate higher level

Considering that the institutional nature of each coordinator is primarily focused on providing response and aid during emergencies, PfR has implemented mechanisms to strengthen the COLREDs<sup>4</sup> with an integrated approach. It means it addresses the topics of climate change and ecosystem management and restoration via training and field exercises, including: drills, reforestation and participation in micro projects.

Another relevant part of the structure involved in coordinating actions for resilient communities is the Community Development Council (COCODE). It is responsible for community project management, mostly dealing with infrastructure<sup>5</sup>, and religious committees (Church-related); churches have considerable influence in the lives of the population.

PfR has contributed with its integrated approach to SE-CONRED for the creation of the COLRED<sup>6</sup>, when it started operations officially in 2012. Each local stakeholder, depending on the project area, has developed a series of steps along the process that correspond to the specific needs of

the communities. See Table 1.

The process has evolved differently in Cáritas Zacapa, because the Disaster Risk Management Committees were created first. These committees are currently in the accreditation process with SE-CONRED to become COLRED because the approach for this community required a preliminary process. For instance, in the Santo Tomás community (one of the most remote communities), Cáritas Zacapa had to help organise and train the community. This effort was beneficial and helped legitimise PfR in the field.

Training contents for COLREDs are created according to CONRED's guidelines for Local Response Plans, which include a DRR conceptual and legal framework. The topics included are: basic first aid services, temporary shelter management, psychosocial support, basic risk management concepts, safe water and practical exercises such as evacuation drills during earthquakes.

PfR supported the process by providing information and capacity building trainings to strengthen the inclusion of the integrated approach of the COLREDs. The following table shows the list of topics presented by the local partners as part of the new approach and as required by SE-CONRED.

4. Local Coordinator for Disaster Reduction, COLRED.

5. More information:

[https://www.mineduc.gob.gt/portal/contenido/menu\\_lateral/programas/conred/documentos/PNR.PDF](https://www.mineduc.gob.gt/portal/contenido/menu_lateral/programas/conred/documentos/PNR.PDF)

6. COLRED creation and accreditation:

<http://conred.gob.gt/www/documentos/secretaria-ejecutiva/PLR.pdf>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDtEMGqbXvo>  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2vpugN3D7E>



*“... The community has been involved and we have created the COLREDs where many young people participate. It means that young people are interested in the community wellbeing”.*

Local authority on the importance of having COLREDs in the community.

## Local Coordinators with a youthful and an integrated knowledge

PfR is collaborating with the work done by the COLREDs and with the communities undergoing the disaster risk management process. This

effort contributes to the vision and the integrated approach that includes topics such as climate change, ecosystem management and restoration, placing special emphasis in being inclusive: men, women, elderly, adults, youth and children. They all have a role to play and are important in the process of creating resilient communities.

Another important contribution by PfR is the inclusion of youth in the COLRED process. In an interview with a local authority, he spoke of the important role played by youth in the search and rescue activities during emergencies. Joint efforts with community leaders developed actions on preparedness, mitigation, reforestation, and participation in development projects.

## Partners for Resilience's Contribution to Build Resilience

The Partners for Resilience (PfR) has been working with local partners to implement actions in the field that help communities not only to respond to an emergency or disaster but to participate actively in anticipated processes –such as mitigation measures– that will contribute to the reduction of risks and, therefore, vulnerability.

The process that lasted until March 2014 resulted in the creation and accreditation of 12 COLRED and 12 Disaster Risk Reduction Committees (currently in the process of accreditation by SE-CONRED to become COLRED):

- Cáritas Zacapa, 8 DRR committees, including one in Santo Tomás (to be accredited by SE-CONRED as a COLRED)
- Cáritas Zacapa in Chiquimula, 3 DRM committees
- Guatemalan Red Cross in Quiché, 6 COLRED
- Vivamos Mejor Association in Sololá, 6 COLRED

**Table 1.** Actions developed by PfR partners in the creation of the Local Coordinators for Disaster Reduction

<b>Cáritas Zacapa Diocese</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contacts with community leaders to establish common trust.</li> <li>2. The vulnerability and capacity assessment manifested the lack of organisational skills on DRR topics.</li> <li>3. Call for a community assembly in which the community elects the Chairperson, Deputy Chair and DRR Committee brigades; they are all informed of their roles.</li> <li>4. Provide capacity building activities on specific topics.</li> <li>5. Carry out a First Aid drill.</li> <li>6. On-going process of obtaining national certification for DRR Committees to become COLREDs.</li> </ol>
<b>CARE and Vivamos Mejor Association</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Communicate with community leaders (COCODE Chairperson and Community Mayor).</li> <li>2. Presentation about the PfR programme.</li> <li>3. Call for a community assembly to follow the multi-level system in CONRED; and COLRED members were elected.</li> <li>4. Hold training workshops with a CONRED thematic approach.</li> <li>5. Apply the methodology to assess vulnerabilities and capacities; several micro projects were identified.</li> <li>6. Hold a simulation (as self-evaluation) to validate the Response Plan.</li> <li>7. Receive accreditation for COLREDs by SE-CONRED.</li> </ol>
<b>Guatemalan Red Cross</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Communicate with community leaders (COCODE Chairperson and Community Mayor).</li> <li>2. Presentation of the PfR Programme.</li> <li>3. The Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) manifested they have a community organisation different from a COLRED.</li> <li>4. Community micro projects were identified.</li> <li>5. Create a COLRED (similar to items 4 and 5 for CARE).</li> <li>6. Equip the COLRED.</li> <li>7. Carry out a drill.</li> <li>8. Receive accreditation for COLREDs by SE-CONRED</li> </ol>

An example of the actions implemented by COLRED with support from local PfR partners and an integrated approach include:

- Damage assessment after the 7 November 2012 earthquake. Since no extreme event had taken place, the community was unfamiliar with the *Evaluation of Damage and Needs* (EDAN) tool to do the assessment.
- Focus the initiative to create a “community toolkit” to serve as emergency funds. This is a community contribution resulting from identifying their vulnerability and the main risks.
- Activated the COLRED for the 7 November 2012 earthquake to implement an EDAN and convey the official information to SE-CONRED and the Guatemalan Red Cross with the purpose of informing the population nationwide.
- Actions led by the Disaster Risk Management Committee during the 2012 drought, with supporting information on the status of the community to report to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA) to coordinate actions to aid the affected communities.

## Value added by Partners for Resilience in the creation of the COLRED

The best contribution by PfR to the creation process of COLREDs by SE-CONRED is having made the integrated approach more efficient. It is visible in the change of processes that are part of their own intervention plans, for example:

- In Sololá, the COLREDs created by PfR includes members from the Maza’ river watershed Coordinator Board, and are part of the initiative to create a 1000-ha protected area called *U’tzi’ja* (“waterdog”), an indigenous community reserve.
- In Zacapa, the local Environmental and Agricultural brigades of the DRR Committee have received training on the proper use of agrochemicals, the effects of climate change and the importance of protecting the forests. They are also promoting access to the Programme of Forestry Incentives for Owners of Small Plots of Land (PINPEP) to implement systems such as the agro-pastoral, improved agriculture, and agro-forestry systems with annual or perennial crops.
- The 11 PfR communities located in Zacapa and Chiquimula have strengthened their knowledge on the effects of climate change

**Table 2.** Training content for COLREDs from a traditional approach and the added value of the PfR integrated approach.

Cáritas Zacapa Disaster Risk Management Committees	CARE   Vivamos Mejor Association COLRED	Guatemalan Red Cross COLRED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Risk assessment</li><li>• Action plans</li><li>• Contingencies</li><li>• Community organisation</li><li>• Political advocacy</li></ul>	Training contents required by SE-CONRED <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conceptual and legal framework for Disaster Risk Reduction Management (DRM) committees</li><li>• Signalling</li><li>• Community EWS</li><li>• Create risk scenarios and community maps</li><li>• Evaluation of Damage and Needs (EDAN)</li><li>• Shelter management</li><li>• Climate change and the role of forests</li><li>• COLRED commissions and roles/stakeholders</li><li>• Community response plans</li></ul>	
For fostering the integrated approach, the following contents applied as detected by the PfR partners:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Risk management</li><li>• Climate Change Adaptation</li><li>• Ecosystem Management and Restoration</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Policies and measures on climate change</li><li>• Forest valuation</li><li>• Environment, ecosystems, soil preservation and watersheds</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Solid waste management</li><li>• Reforestation of degraded areas</li><li>• Climate change and its effects</li><li>• Importance of the forest and protection of water sources, environment</li></ul>
Other topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Brigades for work topics: diseases, first aid, maternal-child health</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are micro project beneficiaries</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implement fuel-efficient stoves micro projects, reforestation campaigns, identification of degraded areas and water sources</li></ul>



**Table 3.** Number of COLRED members, with a PfR integrated approach

	PfR intervention areas in Guatemala			
	Zacapa	Chiquimula	Quiché	Sololá
<b>Communities</b>	Santo Tomás Plan de la Cruz Lomas de San Juan Sunzapote Arenal Cerro de Piedra El Solís Los Encuentros	Rodeo El Espino Lantiquín El Volcán	Xesic II Chuiquisis Xatinap V Xoljuyup La Palma Laguna Seca	XezacAbaj Pasaquijuyup Chuituj Pa canal II Tzamabaj Paquip
<b>Total members</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>76</b>

and livelihoods. These communities have adopted another approach and have created an Inter-community Committee (with two community representatives) to design projects for the San Vicente river micro-watershed that will benefit both communities.

### Lessons Learned

- It is necessary that the COLRED local level response committees be leveraged and strengthened with an integrated approach that includes training on climate change adaptation and ecosystem management and restoration.
- At the beginning of the activities, the plans had to be adjusted and validated with the local decision-makers to adapt to the community dynamics, such as the high percentage of migrant workers who travel to other regions in the country.
- Intervention areas need more exercises, e.g. drills, to test the response and coordination capabilities of COLREDS.
- It is necessary to identify traditional authorities and community leaders and then to consider their willingness and contributions.
- It is important to make sure that methodology transfer for PfR technicians be addressed officially on topics such as DRR, CCA and EMR with CONRED, MARN and CONAP, respectively.
- Create an inter-community committee for the eight communities in the region and ensuring community empowerment. This committee will initiate the process to join the “Making Cities Resilient” campaign.
- Local institutions are involved (the health centre and Voluntary Fire-fighters of Zacapa) and there is a signed work agreement with them. This work agreement is being led by Cáritas Zacapa and includes community members and the Mayor’s office in this commitment to work together.



*“... We want to participate; we always make time to participate. There are others like me, men and women, who want to collaborate”.*

Local authority on the importance of having COLREDS in the community.

## Best Practices

- COLREDs have received training on the integrated approach to change their perception for being solely a community structure with an integrated approach for response. They are involved in activities such as reforestation campaigns, micro projects, among others.
- Training on climate change adaptation, ecosystem management and restoration has strengthened COLRED with an integrated approach and now it has added value.
- The active involvement or participation of young people in the COLRED operational actions is visible in the emergency operational actions. One experience with a local partner received a contribution from an indigenous community mayor to build the office that will be used as base.
- Women and youth have participated actively in the Disaster Risk Management Committees and in the COLRED.
- Other key institutions have participated in the process, such as health centres, fire fighters, and Zacapa municipalities. This helps to coordinate and monitor joint commitments.

approach is also new to the youth volunteers, who are being included and are participating in the ECORED<sup>7</sup>. The work done by PfR is aimed at strengthening the link with COLREDs and at increasing the community self-management efforts, making them active key players in the process. The resilience vision and approach require CONRED's support and approval to become sustainable. An agreement between Caritas Zacapa and the municipality will acknowledge the Inter-community Committee.

**With the resilience vision approach:** This case study is linked with the following resilience principles: 1) Promote community self-management; 2) Strengthen institutional resilience, 3) Integrate disciplines (multidisciplinary), and 4) Recognise geographic scales (micro watershed approach)

## Linking with the PfR Resilience Vision

PfR focused its actions to strengthen community organisations with an integrated approach and help them adapt and relate to topics on CCA and EMR; including this PfR approach in the work done by COLREDs is innovative in the way it addresses Disaster Risk Management. This new

*"... The work we see today, our community preparedness, not just thinking on the disaster but doing something to change our environment –especially with the participation of young people– that is something new..."*

Juan, speaking of his participation in COLRED

7. Community Disaster Response Team (ECORED).



ALIANZA POR LA RESILIENCIA



Cruz Roja Guatemalteca



CARE



Vivamos Mejor



CARITAS



RED CROSS/RED CRESCENT CLIMATE CENTRE



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies



Wetlands INTERNATIONAL

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