

**REPORT ON FINAL EVALUATION**  
**of the Project “Institutionalization of Disaster Risk  
Reduction Processes and Tools in Central America”**

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on behalf of UNDP Regional Hub for Latin America and the  
Caribbean**

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## Evaluation of the Project: “Institutionalization of DRR Processes and Tools in Central America”

The final evaluation of the Project “Institutionalization of DRR Processes and Tools in Central America” was carried out from November – December 2015 by independent consultant Nana Gibradze. The Evaluation was commissioned by the UNDP Regional Hub for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Evaluation was conducted in Panama, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador and involved Project beneficiaries and stakeholders based in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

The Evaluator would like to express gratitude to all interviewed persons for their time and consideration, also for their qualified and honest opinions. The Evaluator is grateful to the respondents from CEPREDENAC, CONRED, COPECO and DGPC for their time and availability for interviews, as well as valuable information provided to the Evaluator.

The Evaluator is grateful to Mr. Luis Gamarra, Project Coordinator and Ms. Laura Lodesani, Project Assistant, for their continuous support and guidance throughout the consultancy and to Ms. Noemi La Grotta for logistical support and organization. The Evaluator is particularly grateful to Messrs. Frank Rojas, Diego Gutierrez and Alexander Valle, National Project Coordinators in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, for accompanying the Evaluator during the country visits and organizing the encounters with the beneficiaries and stakeholders. The Evaluator extends her gratitude to National Project Coordinator Ms. Marta Emilia Alvarez for her inputs on Project implementation in Nicaragua.

The Evaluator expresses her particular appreciation to the representatives of UNDP and ECHO for their availability for interviews and their useful insights to the analysis.

Except for the opinions of the respondents consolidated in Chapter 6. *Findings*, all opinions expressed in this report are those of the Evaluator and do not represent the official views of UNDP, ECHO or any stakeholder involved in the Project.

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ASB	- Workers’ Samaritan Federation
CENICAC	- National Center for Contingency Research and Training
CEPRENAC	- Central American Disaster Prevention Coordination Centre
CODEL	- Local Emergency Committee
CODEM	- Municipal Emergency Committee
COMUPRED	- Municipal Disaster Prevention Commission
CONRED	- National Coordination for Disaster Reduction
COPECO	- Permanent Contingency Commission
DAC	- Development Assistance Committee
DGPC	- Civil Protection General Directorate
DIM	- Direct Implementation Modality
DIPECHO	- Disaster Preparedness Programme of ECHO
DRM	- Disaster Risk Management
DRR	- Disaster Risk Reduction
ECHO	- European Commission Humanitarian Office
ENPC	- National Civil Protection School
EWS	- Early Warning Systems
FPRV	- Permanent Forum on Vulnerability Protection
GIS	- Geographic Information System
HFA	- Hyogo Plan of Action
IFRC	- International Federation for Red Cross and Red Crescent
LAC	- Latin America and the Caribbean
MNDGRD	- National Dialogue Roundtable on Risk Management
NGO	- Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PCGIR	- Central American Policy for Integrated Disaster Risk Management
PDNA	- Post-Disaster Needs Assessment
PEGIRH	- State Policy for Integrated Risk Management
PNGR	- National Disaster Management Policy
PNRDN	- National Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction
POA	- Plan of Action
PVF	- Permanent Vulnerability Forum
RHLAC	- Regional Hub for Latin America and the Caribbean
RRF	- Results and Resources Framework
SBAA	- Standard Basic Assistance Agreement
SECONRED	- Executive Secretariat of CONRED
SICA	- Central American Integration System
SINAPRED	- Executive Secretariat of the National System for Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Response
UNDP	- United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	- United Nations Evaluation Group

## CHAPTER 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of the terminal evaluation of the Project “*Institutionalization of DRR Processes and Tools in Central America*” was to identify the Project outputs, contributions to outcome level results, positive and/or negative changes, including unplanned results, key lessons learned, limitations and strengths. The *purpose* of the Evaluation was to provide UNDP and ECHO with findings and recommendations for improving their future DRR interventions and to inform future efforts to institutionalize DRR tools in Central America. The primary users of the Evaluation results are UNDP Regional Hub for LAC, UNDP Country Offices in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador and Nicaragua, and ECHO.

National counterparts of the Project included the National Coordination for Disaster Reduction (CONRED) of Guatemala; Permanent Contingency Commission (COPECO) of Honduras; Civil Protection General Directorate (DGPC) of El Salvador; and, Executive Secretariat of the National System for Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Response (SINAPRED) of Nicaragua.

The Project was implemented through Direct Implementation Modality by the UNDP Country Offices in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador with the support from the Regional Hub for LAC, in coordination with the national Disaster Risk Management (DRM) systems and national DRR platforms including DIPECHO partners. Output 4 was implemented through National Implementation Modality (NIM) by UNDP Nicaragua. The Project was co-financed by ECHO and UNDP. The Project total budget is EURO 1,415,115.06 (US\$ 1,748,104.7<sup>1</sup>) of which EURO 1,200,000/US\$ 1,486,988.85 has been contributed by ECHO and EURO 214,115.06/US\$ 261,115.93 – by UNDP. The Project duration was 14.5 months.

The principal objective of the Project was to strengthen the capacities of the national DRM systems and platforms by means of the institutionalization, joint appropriation, training and dissemination of packages of DRM tools in target countries. The Project had five outputs each corresponding to each of the four target countries and regional support. Each output contained three activities: 1. Appropriation and dissemination of tools; 2. Strengthening of coordination platforms; and 3. Strengthening the capacities of technical personnel.

At the corporate level, the Project was aligned with the DIPECHO Action Plan IX; UNDP Regional Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean; and, UNDP Strategic Plan for 2014-2017. At the national and regional levels the Project was aligned with the National Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction of Guatemala (PNRRD), State Policy for Integrated Risk Management of Honduras (PEGIRH), National Disaster Management Policy (PNGR) of Nicaragua; and, the Central American Policy for Integrated Disaster Risk Management (PCGIR).

The Evaluation reviewed more than 60 documents, websites and visual materials and interviewed 51 respondents through 38 individual, 2 group (2-3 persons) interviews and 2 focus group meetings. The Evaluation used a *Purposive* sample comprised of 3 categories: a. National/regional Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Systems (18

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<sup>1</sup> Exchange rate = 0.807.

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respondents), b. National DRR Platforms and DIPECHO partners (14) and c. UNDP/ECHO (19).

The Evaluation concluded that in light of the complex political and legal settings, institutional shortcomings and initial delays, the UNDP Project was *successfully implemented and has achieved observable, tangible and largely measurable results with a significant potential impact*. The Evaluation considers that the Project has been highly *relevant* due to its focus on national ownership and participatory nature. The Project was particularly *relevant for UNDP and ECHO*, as it helped consolidate the existing DRR work in the region and identify gaps in institutional capacities and coordination mechanisms.

The Project has achieved high *effectiveness and efficiency* in the delivery of expected results, exceeding initial expectations and obtaining *unplanned* results with utmost efficiency and prudent use of available resources. The Project has successfully developed, disseminated and institutionalized DRR tool packages and strengthened coordination with national DRR platforms. Without the sudden cessation of Project activities in Nicaragua, the Project would have achieved at least *98% of implementation* and execution of funds.

The *key factors of the success* were the multi-country participatory approach, which helped *consolidate and strengthen the leadership, analytical and coordination capacities of national DRR entities* and enhance their ties with national DRR *platforms*. It has improved the *knowledge and awareness* of national stakeholders on the available DRR tools and has installed processes in national DRR institutions for future replication and follow-up. Other key factors included the *diversity* of tools and approaches in participating countries and strong support and technical assistance from the Project Team at both regional and national levels.

The Project has achieved a *reasonable sustainability of the results*, through institutionalization of processes and products. The Project has been *innovative* through its focus on national leadership in prioritization and decision-making, *and catalytic* for triggering institutional changes and political incidence. The Project has created a *solid base for replication* through a multi-country implementation modality. While it is not possible to speak of the Project *impact* given its short duration, the Project has a potential for generating impact through the processes and knowledge it helped install.

Given the 14.5-month timeframe of the Project, its multi-country nature and different political and institutional settings it would have been *unrealistic* to expect the completion of the institutionalization process. However, the Project has met the minimum expectations for *institutionalization* and established important *mechanisms for sustainability and future replication*.

Challenges affecting the sustainability of the results include insufficient technical capacity and political profiles and leadership of national DRR systems; lack of solid legal and financial guarantees to translate tools into actions at public policy level; mostly response-oriented nature of national DRR systems and need for a stronger political incidence to promote DRM processes and tools; limited understanding and

knowledge of gender mainstreaming among national DRR systems; limited outreach to national entities and civil society organizations especially at the local level.

Due to the initial Project design, the Project lacked a regional component, which would have provided the regional vision to national priorities and challenges. Instead, the involvement of the Regional Hub in Panama was limited to the provision of coordination support, technical assistance and quality control. Likewise, involvement of CEPREDENAC was limited to overall coordination and backstopping of select activities, given the decidedly non-regional nature of the Project.

The Project received the following ratings from the stakeholders: Relevance – 4.4 (out of 5); Effectiveness – 4.1; Efficiency – 4.0; and sustainability 4.1. The overall average rating of the Project was 4.2.

Based on the findings, the Evaluation recommends the following:

For continued *relevance*, to maintain the country-led approach, whereby national stakeholders are actively engaged in the definition of priorities, intervention logic and activities, expanding the outreach to include sectorial ministries and civil society organizations in the permanent consultative process; to complement the multi-country approach with the regional component to consolidate national efforts under the regional umbrella, better align national policies and plans with the regional DRM policy and strengthen capacities for the implementation of the Sendai Plan of Action

To increase the *effectiveness*, to consider back-up scenarios in countries with difficult political settings, e.g. Nicaragua and invest in a longer preparatory process to secure the engagement and ownership of stakeholders. When circumstances call for supporting the implementation capacities, the Evaluation recommends installing Project Focal Points<sup>2</sup> in the beneficiary institutions to provide technical advice, improve the communication and support the implementation process.

For better *effectiveness*, and institutionalization, to complement the country analysis with institutional capacity assessments; to complement stakeholder trainings with induction sessions and practical testing of the tools; to accompany the newly institutionalized tools with user manuals; to diversify tools selected for institutionalization; and, ensure proper institutionalization and utilization of previously selected tools creating new or updating the existing ones.

For the improved *effectiveness and efficiency* to enhance coordination, and communication with partner organizations; provide partner institutions with the basic principles of UNDP administrative and financial procedures; and to establish formal agreements stipulating the responsibilities and obligations of each partner.

For increased *sustainability* and appropriation to secure stronger legal and financial guarantees from the beneficiary institutions through inclusion of the tools in operational and strategic plans; engagement of senior decision-makers of national DRR systems in the consultation and dissemination processes; and to increase the visibility and awareness and generate commitment at different levels of the society.

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<sup>2</sup> The Project had contemplated installing the Focal Points within national institutions, however, with the exception of COPECO, national DRR systems rejected the proposal.

The Evaluation recommends fostering the coordinating role of CEPREDENAC by supporting its stronger involvement in consultations and promoting exchanges and coordination with the national DRR Systems (CONRED, COPECO, DGCP and SINAPRED). The Evaluation suggests using the CEPREDENAC platform for fostering regional knowledge exchange and capacity development and recommends stronger engagement of UNDP Country Directors in the initial consultations and dissemination of the results. As part of stakeholder accountability, the Evaluation suggests improving the reporting frequency and communication.

Finally, the Evaluation strongly recommends strengthening the gender component and including the gender components in the institutional capacity assessments for better design of gender sensitive interventions.

## CHAPTER 2. INTRODUCTION

### *Purpose and Timing of the Evaluation*

The terminal evaluation of the Project “*Institutionalization of DRR Processes and Tools in Central America*” (hereinafter referred to as the “Project”) was carried out from November – December 2015 by an independent consultant Nana Gibradze. It was commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Hub for Latin America and the Caribbean (RHLAC) in Panama on behalf of the EU Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO).

The *timing* of the Evaluation is related to the completion of the Project. The *general objective* of the Evaluation is to identify the outputs produced by the Project, its contributions to outcome level results, positive and/or negative changes produced, including possible unplanned results, key lessons learned, limitations and strengths. The *purpose* of the Evaluation is to provide UNDP and ECHO with findings and recommendations for improving their future Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) interventions, project management and accountability and to inform future efforts to institutionalize DRR tools in Central America.

### *Primary Audience of Evaluation*

In line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms for Evaluation in the UN System, the present Evaluation will contribute to general accountability, knowledge building, and organizational improvement by sharing the findings and lessons learned with all concerned stakeholders.

The primary users of the Evaluation results are UNDP Regional Hub for Latin America and the Caribbean (RH LAC), UNDP Country Offices in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua, and ECHO. The results and the lessons learned from the Evaluation will be shared, *as necessary*, with the key Project stakeholders, which include:

- National and Regional Disaster Risk Management Systems;
- Members of the National DRR Platforms;
- DIPECHO Partners;



The final report of the Evaluation will serve as a learning document, which will help focus UNDP’s work in the region and intervening countries and foster innovative mechanisms and policies to support sustainable development. Key conclusions, recommendations, and lessons learned of the Evaluation will be used by the main parties to assess their approaches and design future interventions at the local, national and regional levels.

#### *Structure and Contents of the Report*

The report follows the recommendations of the Evaluation Report Template of the *Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results*. The report contains nine chapters and five annexes.

Chapter 1 offers the readers a 3.5-page executive summary of the Evaluation with the key findings, lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 2 introduces the objective, the purpose and the timing of the Evaluation, describes its primary audience and outlines the structure and contents of the report.

Chapter 3 presents the basic background information about the Project, explains key Project objectives and expected results as stipulated in the Single Form for Humanitarian Aid Actions, links them with corporate priorities and strategic plans and outlines the Project strategy. It also identifies the beneficiaries and strategic partners, describes the implementation arrangements and funding situation.

Chapter 4 explains what the Evaluation intends to achieve and how, pointing to the issues not covered by the Evaluation, defines its scope, objectives, criteria and type of generated information.

Chapter 5 describes selected methods of analysis and rationale for their selection, defines data sources, data collection procedures and methods, describes the sampling methods applied and identifies limitations of the selected methodology. The chapter also describes what type of data was collected, how this data was processed and identifies challenges of data analysis.

Chapter 6 offers the findings of the Evaluation based on the revision of the primary and secondary data. The chapter describes the achievement of the Project outputs in accordance with the RRF, Project relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, gender and vulnerability. It also describes the strengths and limitations of the Project, which have influenced the achievement of the outputs.

Chapter 7 consolidates the Evaluation conclusions drawn as a result of the analysis and triangulation of the findings, following the guiding questions of the Evaluation Terms of Reference.

Chapter 8 offers a brief list of lessons learned during the Evaluation.

Chapter 9 offers a list of recommendations for UNDP and key project stakeholders.

### **CHAPTER 3. INTERVENTION DESCRIPTION**

#### *Subject of Evaluation*

## Evaluation of the Project: “Institutionalization of DRR Processes and Tools in Central America”

The subject of the Evaluation is the Project “*Institutionalization of DRR Processes and Tools in Central America*”, which is currently in the last stage of implementation. The Project was implemented by the UNDP Country Offices in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua, with the support from the Regional Hub for LAC, in coordination with the national Disaster Risk Management (DRM) systems and national DRR platforms including DIPECHO partners. The Project was co-financed by ECHO and UNDP.

The principal objective of the Project is to strengthen the capacities of the national DRM systems and coordination bodies in Central American countries. This is to be achieved by means of the institutionalization of DRR processes and tools through joint appropriation, training and dissemination of packages of DRM tools by the corresponding national systems and coordination bodies in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua. The Project builds on the achievements of previous DRR interventions carried out in the region during the last years with the support of UNDP, DIPECHO and DIPECHO partners.

The Project has been constructed along the 3 main axes: 1. Appropriation and dissemination of DRM tools within the National Systems; 2. Strengthening of DRR institutional coordination mechanisms within the respective country level national platforms; 3. Training of technical staff in key institutions and stakeholders on the use of appropriated tools. These three axes unify the intervention lines and activities in each country and emphasize specific needs of each country.

The Project has five outputs:

Output 1: Institutionalization of the DRR processes by means of joint ownership, capacity development and dissemination of DRM tools by CONRED and coordination bodies in Guatemala;

Output 2: Institutionalization of the DRR processes by means of joint ownership, capacity development and dissemination of DRM tools by DGPC and coordination bodies in El Salvador;

Output 3: Institutionalization of the DRR processes by means of joint ownership, capacity development and dissemination of DRM tools by COPECO and coordination bodies in Honduras;

Output 4: Institutionalization of the DRR processes by means of joint ownership, capacity development and dissemination of DRM tools by SINAPRED and coordination bodies in Nicaragua;

Output 5: Institutionalization of the DRR processes by means of joint ownership, capacity development and dissemination of DRM.

### *Geographic Scope and Beneficiaries*

The Project was implemented in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The direct beneficiaries of the Project are approximately 418 public and private institutions/organizations selected according to their relevance in the implementation of DRR strategies:

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- Honduras: COPECO, Sectorial institutions, SINAGER and Humanitarian Network members, DIPECHO partners, departmental Commissions;
- El Salvador: Vulnerability Affairs Secretariat and DGPC, Sectorial Technical Commissions, National Commission of Civil Protection, members of the Permanent Forum on Vulnerability Reduction (FPRV), DIPECHO partners, departmental commissions;
- Guatemala: Executive Secretariat of the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction – SECONRED, members of the National Dialogue Roundtable on Risk Management (MDGRRD), ministries and other public institutions, national and local authorities, DIPECHO partners' organizations;
- Nicaragua: Co-directorate of the SINAPRED and SINAPRED members, UN system, non-governmental and civil society organizations, DIPECHO partners, Institutions at departmental and local level, Municipal Disaster Prevention Commission - COMUPRED.

Estimated number of individual beneficiaries is 3,276<sup>3</sup>.

### *Implementation Phases, Strategic Lines and Programmatic Linkages*

The duration of the Project was 14.5<sup>4</sup> months. The Project was implemented in one phase from 15 October 2014 to 31 December 2015. The Project has received a no-cost extension till 31 March 2016 for mandatory reporting.

The Project is aligned with a number of corporate and national/regional/global frameworks and strategies: a. DIPECHO Action Plan IX; b. UNDP Regional Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean Outcome 4: *Countries are able to reduce the likelihood of conflict and lower the risk of natural disasters, including from climate change*; and its respective Output 4.3: *Effective institutional, legislative and policy frameworks in place to enhance the implementation of disaster and climate risk management measures at national and sub-national levels*; c. UNDP Strategic Plan for 2014-2017 Outcome 5: *Countries are able to reduce the likelihood of conflict and lower the risk of natural disasters, including from climate change*; and its respective output 5.2: *Effective institutional, legislative and policy frameworks in place to enhance the implementation of disaster and climate risk management measures at national and sub-national levels*.

At the national level the Project responds to the priorities and needs stipulated in the national Disaster Risk Management policies and plans such as National Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction of Guatemala (PNRRD), State Policy for Integrated Risk Management of Honduras (PEGIRH), and National Disaster Management Policy (PNGR) of Nicaragua. The Project logic and actions also respond to the main strategic lines of the Central American Policy for Integrated Disaster Risk Management (PCGIR).

### *Project Resources*

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<sup>3</sup> 4 individuals per organization (an average number of persons to be involved from each one) plus the number of personnel of the DRM national system (COMUPRED members in the case of Nicaragua) and the number of technical staff to be trained in the ToT courses.

<sup>4</sup> The Project had a no-cost extension of fifteen days till 31 December to complete the implementation. The last three months of the Project from 1 January-31 March are for winding-up activities such as reporting, including the present Evaluation.

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The Project was co-financed by ECHO and UNDP. The Project total budget is EURO 1,415,115.06 (US\$ 1,748,104.7<sup>5</sup>) of which EURO 1,200,000/US\$ 1,486,988.85 has been contributed by ECHO and EURO 214,115.06/US\$ 261,115.93 – by UNDP.

**Table 1. UNDP contribution per Country Office (in EURO/US\$)<sup>6</sup>**

GUATEMALA		EL SALVADOR		HONDURAS		NICARAGUA		REGIONAL	
Euro	US\$	Euro	US\$	Euro	US\$	Euro	US\$	EURO	US\$
302,943	374,342	299,598	370,197	299,713	305,061	297,861	368,045	214,000	265,180

Source: Project

*Institutional Context*

At the *national* level, implementation was carried out in close partnership with national governing entities for disaster risk reduction and respective national platforms.

In *Guatemala*, the main Project counterpart was the National Coordination for Disaster Reduction – CONRED, the governing national entity in charge of disaster prevention, reduction of their impact on societies, coordination of relief efforts, and participation and implementation of rehabilitation and reconstruction activities. CONRED is responsible for the assessment of potential risks of disasters and declaring the alerts. The CONRED is comprised of the National Disaster Reduction Council and the Directorate and Executive Secretariat for Disaster Reduction– SECONRED. Under the National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy (PNRRD) CONRED promotes and leads National Dialogue Roundtable on Risk Management (MNDGR), which is the national disaster risk reduction platform. The main legal framework for disaster risk management is the National Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction of Guatemala (PNRRD), approved in 2011.

In *Honduras*, the main entity responsible for disaster reduction is the Permanent Contingency Commission COPECO, whose mission is to adopt policies and measures oriented at response, rehabilitation and reconstruction in areas affected by natural phenomena and to plan and carry out diverse activities to prevent negative consequences in areas with high prevalence of such phenomena. COPECO is responsible for emitting alerts at national level, which are channeled on the national territory through departmental, municipal and local emergency committees. The Law of National Risk Management System (SINAGER) of 2009 is the main legal framework, which defines risk management as the permanent state policy and obligates the governmental and non-governmental entities comprising the National Risk Management System to integrate risk management in their plans, strategies and programmes. The State Policy for Integrated Risk Management of Honduras (PEGIRH), has been in place since 2013, however, elaboration of the National Implementation Plan is still pending.

In *El Salvador*, disaster risk reduction is the task of the Civil Protection General Directorate (DGPC), under the Law on Civil Protection and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation. The DGPC is in charge of managing and coordinating activities for

<sup>5</sup> Exchange rate = 0.807.

<sup>6</sup> All decimals have been rounded up to the nearest whole.

prevention and mitigation of disasters and emergencies in the country, in coordination with the institutions of the National Civil Protection System, composed of the members of the Council of Ministers, 3 NGOs and one representative of private sector. The Council of Ministers has the authority to approve all decisions related to disaster risk management in the country. The Director of the DGPC simultaneously acts as the Secretary of the Secretariat on Vulnerability Issues of the Presidency of the Republic, which coordinates the Permanent Forum on Vulnerability Reduction (FPRV). There is no national policy on disaster risk management.

In *Nicaragua*, the Executive Secretariat of the National System for Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Response (SINAPRED) is in charge of implementing the National Disaster Response Plan of Nicaragua (PNRDN). According to the Law on the Creation of SINAPRED, the role of SINAPRED is to define the policies and plans of the system and to approve the annual budget directed to the national fund for disasters. The Executive Secretariat of SINAPRED is in charge of coordinating the members of the National System as well as the Sectorial Working Committees and serves as the liaison between national institutions that formulate national policies. SINAPRED members comprise the National Platform for Disaster Risk Management of Nicaragua, together with the SINAPRED Executive Secretariat, Disaster Operation Center, Nicaraguan Institute of Territorial Studies and sectorial ministries.

At the *regional* level the Project collaborated closely with the Central American Disaster Prevention Coordination Centre (CEPREDENAC), which is a specialized, inter-governmental secretariat of the Central American Integration System (SICA). Comprised of the representatives of national disaster risk reduction systems of Central American countries <sup>7</sup>, CEPREDENAC promotes activities, projects and programmes aimed at the reduction of disaster risks and coordinates international efforts and exchange of technical and scientific knowledge and practice in the area of disaster prevention, mitigation, attention and response. The strategic vision of CEPREDENAC, spelled out in the “strategic Framework for the Reduction of Vulnerability and Disasters in Central America” is operationalized through the Regional Disaster Reduction Plan (PRRD), which incorporates risk management tin policy initiatives at national and regional levels.

The Central American Policy on Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management (PCGIR) is the framework for inter-institutional coordination and establishes guidelines and commitments based on comprehensive multi-sectorial and territorial approach to risk management and serves as regional guide for designing country-specific DRM strategies. The PCGIR also serves as the guiding framework for past and current international commitments such as Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015 and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. A comprehensive revision of the PCGIR, planned for 2016, will incorporate the lessons and knowledge accumulated in the two years since Sendai.

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<sup>7</sup> Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

### *Project Design*

The Project Document is coherent, contains most of the essential components required by UNDP and provides adequate background information and contents. The Project does not have the Theory of Change, however, the Results and Resources Framework (RRF) allows understanding the logic of intervention.

The Project has five outputs of which four correspond to the activities implemented by UNDP Country Offices of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua in their respective countries. The fifth output corresponds to the activities carried out in support of the national activities by the Regional Hub in Panama in coordination with CEPREDENAC.

Four out of five outputs are formulated adequately and indicate the result expected upon their achievement. The fifth output lacks precision and definition. The outputs do not have baselines, while indicators are formulated as targets. The latter can be explained by the fact that following the custom of UNDP-implemented DIPECHO projects, the Project Document draws heavily on the ECHO Single Form for Humanitarian Action, which has its specific formats for indicators and targets, different from UNDP standards. Both indicators and targets are mostly quantitative, specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound.

The Management Arrangements are well defined. The Project document provides the general description of the structure and the functions of the Project Board and the Project management structure. The roles of the Country Offices, Regional Sustainable Development Team and Project Assurance are well defined and clear. The Project document also clearly defines the role of the Project Team members and overall administrative and coordination procedures and mechanisms.

The signed Project document contains a monitoring and evaluation framework, a detailed component “*Quality Management for Project Activity Results*” and an offline risk log, which are well developed and detailed. The Project document contains comprehensive situation analysis, which provides the full context of the intervention. The RRF and the Annual Workplans provide the detailed breakdown of activities/costs per donor/implementing agency. The Project document contains costing by cost category per Project activity as stipulated in the RRF. Throughout the document, costing is provided in Euro, whereas the implementation was carried out in US Dollars.

The Legal Framework component of the Project document makes reference to the Standard Basic Assistance Agreements (SBAA) signed with the participating countries. The Regional Centre signed Horizontal Cooperation Agreements with UNDP Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. Instead of a similar agreement, UNDP Nicaragua confirmed its approval of the Project coordination arrangements by email. Additionally, all four national governing entities (CONRED, DGPC, COPECO and SINAPRED) signed letters of approval of the Project.

The Project document does not contain a specific exit strategy, however it stipulates conditions of termination of the Project.

### Implementation Modalities

The Project was directly implemented (DIM) in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador by the UNDP Regional Hub in Panama under one Award. UNDP Nicaragua implemented the Output 4 through National Implementation Modality (NIM). Given the multi-country nature of the Project, each of the four participating UNDP Country Offices was responsible for the implementation of each specific output under a corresponding Department ID in ATLAS.

The Project was managed by the Project Team, which consisted of the Regional Project Coordinator, a Project Assistant and four National Project Coordinators. The Regional Project Coordinator provided overall coordination and technical assistance to UNDP Country Offices. National Project Coordinators in each Country Office provided technical advisory services to the national stakeholders as well as direct operational support for Project activities, which included processing and obtaining documentation, submission of requisitions and purchase orders for Project implementation, procurement and logistical support. All requests were reviewed by the Regional Project Coordinator, and approved by the Country Offices. The Regional Disaster Management Advisor acted as the Project Assurance.

The Project had a Project Board, comprised of a representative of RH LAC senior management, a representative from CEPREDENAC Executive Secretariat, UNDP Programme Officers from participating countries and an ECHO representative. The board met once at the start of the Project; two more attempts to convene the Board failed due to incompatible agendas and closure of Project in Nicaragua in September 2015. Instead, the Project carried out regional meetings: two meetings with CEPREDENAC to present progress and one internal meeting between the RH LAC Director and UNDP Resident Representatives of the participating countries, to review implementation and delivery. In addition to its regular monitoring visits, ECHO conducted one monitoring visit to the Regional Hub in February 2015.

Funds received from the ECHO and UNDP were distributed between the Regional Hub and Country Offices in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua according to the outputs spelled out in the RRF (See Fig. 2).

**Table 2. Initial Funds Allocation (in EURO/US\$)<sup>8</sup>**

<b>BUDGET SUMMARY PER OUTPUT (EURO/US\$)</b>			
<b>OUTPUT</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>ECHO</b>	<b>UNDP</b>
Output 1: GUATEMALA	302,943/374,342	249,413/309,062	53,530/65,280
Output 2: EL SALVADOR	299,598/370,197	246,071/304,920	53,527/65,277
Output 3: HONDURAS	299,713/305,061	246,184/305,061	53,529/65,279
Output 4: NICARAGUA	297,861/368,045	244,332/302,766	53,529/65,279
Output 5: REGIONAL HUB	214,000/265,180	214,000/265,180	0
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>	<b>1,414,115/1,748,104</b>	<b>1,200,000/1,486,989</b>	<b>214,115/261,116</b>

Source: Project

<sup>8</sup> All decimals have been rounded up to the nearest whole.

Given the cessation of activities in Nicaragua due to the decision of the Nicaraguan Government, the balance of US\$, 156,621 of Output 4 was distributed between the remaining Outputs.

#### *Strategic Partnerships*

The Project has been successful in fostering partnerships developed by UNDP and ECHO in the course of previous Disaster Risk Reduction interventions in the countries. The Project built on strong coordination and partnership arrangements with national stakeholders existing in four participating countries, such as CONRED/SECONRED, COPECO, DGPC and SINAPRED and strengthened coordination and communication with the CEPREDENAC. The Project has also succeeded in fostering coordination with the DIPECHO partners, such as the International Federation of Red Cross, Goal, Spanish Red Cross, OXFAM, ASB, and the like.

The Project has explored possibilities for Public-Private Partnerships in El Salvador and Honduras, where awareness-raising breakfast forums were organized for private companies. As a result of these meetings, COPECO has committed to following up on the initial expressions of interest in Honduras, whereas in El Salvador, the DGPC included the private sector as a variable in the municipal vulnerability assessment tool.

#### *Implementation Constraints*

The most significant implementation challenge was the closure of the Project activities in Nicaragua in September 2015, following the decision of the Nicaraguan Government. Other important challenges included a) the delay of initial funds transfer from ECHO, which shortened the already limited timeframe of the Project and, b) human resource limitations, related to turnover both internally (Project team) and externally (national counterparts). Changes in ECHO management had to certain extent affected monitoring and follow up of Project implementation.

More detailed description of challenges and limitations is provided in Chapter 6. Findings.

## **CHAPTER 4. EVALUATION SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES**

### *Evaluation Objectives and Scope*

The *overall objective* of the Evaluation is to provide a comprehensive and systematic account of the Project performance by assessing its design, the implementation process and the achievement of the planned and unplanned results. On the other hand, the objective is to extract lessons learned in the implementation process, especially related to the processes triggered by the Project, intervention strategy and methodology, limitations and strengths and to offer recommendations for the strengthening and replication of Project activities and results in similar initiatives.

In this context, and in line with the Evaluation Terms of Reference, the *specific objectives* of the Evaluation are to provide external analysis of:

- Achievement of Results;
- Implementation of activities;



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- Impact of the results of achieved objectives;
- Sustainability of the triggered processes (ownership by the counterparts);
- Replicability of the tools in other environments;
- Formulation of recommendations and lessons learned.

The unit of analysis is the Project “*Institutionalization of DRR Processes and Tools in Central America*” in its entirety. The Evaluation covered all aspects of the project included in the period of 15 October 2014 – 31 December 2015. The Evaluation focused on the achievement of outputs and their contributions to the achievement of the Outcome 4 and Output 4.3 of UNDP Regional Programme Document for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Evaluation assessed the relevance and adequacy of the baselines, indicators, and targets using the SMART criteria, the effectiveness of Project interventions and the efficiency in the use of financial and human resources.

The Evaluation assessed the likelihood of sustainability of the Project results, including implementation, coordination and communication arrangements and its potential impact. The Evaluation specifically assessed the existence of political will and the level of ownership of the Project results in the recipient governments to evaluate the sustainability of the initiative.

The Evaluation assessed strategic partnerships, inter-institutional coordination, and communication and the support provided by the RH LAC and UNDP Country Offices of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua. The Evaluation also assessed the knowledge management mechanisms and products, their relevance, applicability and replicability, and their contribution to the advancement of the disaster risk reduction and sustainable development agenda in the country.

The Evaluation collected the lessons learned in the course of the Project implementation, including those learned by the stakeholders, beneficiaries, and the Project Team.

The Evaluation evaluated the visibility of the Project, especially the measures taken to ensure the visibility of the donor in the participating countries.

The Evaluation did **not** assess the financial management of the Project, however, it reviewed the administrative management implementation modalities, financial and administrative arrangements and financial and human resource capacities to the extent they affected the achievement of Project outputs and implementation of planned activities.

The Evaluation did **not** assess the technical quality of the knowledge products, methodological guidelines, and tools. These were evaluated in terms of their utility and relevance for the achievement of the objectives of the Project.

The Evaluation **did not** assess the specific contributions of the Project to the achievement of the objectives of the national and regional DRM policies; however, these were evaluated with regard to the sustainability of the Project results.

The Evaluation **did not** assess the impact of the Project given its short duration and pending activities. Instead the Evaluation assessed the potential impact of the Project results.

The cost of Evaluation is US\$ 15,599.10, which represents less than 1% of the total Project budget, approved in October 2014.

#### *Evaluation Criteria and Questions*

The Evaluation criteria are based on the four principles described in UNDP’s *Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results* as well as in the norms of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC):

- *Relevance* – to which extent the evaluated development initiative and its outputs and expected outcomes respond to national and local priorities and policies, the beneficiary needs and human development goals;
- *Effectiveness* – to what extent the initiative has obtained the expected results (outputs and outcomes) and the extent of progress towards their achievement;
- *Efficiency* – whether project resources (human and/or financial, time, experience) have been converted into the results in the most economic way;
- *Sustainability* – to what extent the obtained results continue to have benefits after the project has ceased its activities.

Additionally, the evaluation assessed the quality of activities addressing gender and vulnerability.

Interviews and focus group questions were constructed on the basis of the above evaluation criteria and on the respondents’ particular role and involvement in the Project. The questions comprised overall relevance of the Project activities in the national and local context, relevance and sustainability of implementation mechanisms and tools, quality of interventions and services provided by the Project, major achievements, limitations, lessons learned and replicability of results, institutional coordination and strategic partnerships, and the like.

Specific questions related to the Project design, the relevance of outputs, activity indicators, baseline data and targets, administrative and financial management arrangements and the like were directed to the respondents directly involved in the Project implementation, which are presented in Annex 3. List of Evaluation Respondents.

A consolidated list of indicative questions is given in Annex 2. Evaluation Matrix.

## **CHAPTER 5. EVALUATION APPROACH, METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS**

### *Data sources*

The Evaluation used the following data sources: UNDP strategic and programmatic frameworks; methodological guides and manuals; national and regional strategic

documents and policy documents; institutional and legal maps and frameworks; project documents, revisions, plans and budgets; project reports; stakeholder information; knowledge and communication products produced by the Project and stakeholders; and financial information.

The full list of the data sources is given in Annex 4: Data Sources and Bibliography.

#### *Sample and Sampling Frame*

The type and methodology of the Evaluation were determined by the: nature of the project; scope of the Evaluation; and quality of the available data and sampling method.

The present Evaluation is a *non-random process and result* evaluation at the *output level*.

The size and the structure of the sample were directly related to the specific task at hand: to test the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the Project results and to identify lessons learned for future interventions.

The Evaluation used a *Purposive* sampling method, whereby the respondents were *intentionally* selected from the population of the Project beneficiaries and stakeholders on the basis of their association with and knowledge of the Project. The sample was tentatively divided into 3 categories: a. National/Regional DRR Systems (18 respondents), b. National DRR Platforms and DIPECHO partners (14) and c. UNDP/ECHO (19).

#### *Basic Statistics*

The Evaluation reviewed more than 60 Project-related documents and reference materials, including audio-visual and multimedia products and conducted field visits to three Project sites (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador). All selected sites provided evidence of different types of activities carried out by the Project.

The Evaluation interviewed 51 respondents through 36 individual and 3 group (2-3 persons) interviews and 2 focus group meetings. The majority of the interviews were conducted in person, whereas 8 were carried out by telephone/Skype. For more details about the respondents, see Annex 3. List of Evaluation Respondents.

#### *Data Collection Procedures and Instruments*

Given the design and the scope of the Evaluation (terminal evaluation of the results of a finishing project), the Evaluation did not apply experimental methods, which involve controlled variables and random sampling for treatment and control groups. The Evaluation worked with a non-random sample constructed from the population of project beneficiaries and stakeholders from participating institutions. The Evaluation used the pre-post methodology for measuring the change towards the achievement of the results.

Given the characteristics of the sample, the Evaluation applied predominantly *qualitative* data collection methodology. The selection of a qualitative analysis method was determined by the *type* of the Evaluation, that is, *ex-post non-experimental process and results evaluation*. In those cases when the sample is not

randomly selected, but pre-determined (purposive), quantitative methods are difficult to apply. Furthermore, quantitative methods are best suited for measuring levels and changes in impacts and for drawing inferences from observed statistical relations between those impacts and other covariates. They are less effective, however, in understanding *process*—that is, the mechanisms by which a particular intervention instigates a series of events that ultimately result in the observed impact<sup>9</sup>. The current Evaluation was a *process* (output) evaluation as it evaluated the delivery of results, effectiveness, efficiency, etc. rather than an outcome or an impact.

The *primary qualitative* data was comprised of the knowledge, opinions and commentary of the stakeholders/beneficiaries. This information was gathered through a combination of the evaluators’ observations and inputs received from the semi-structured interviews and focus groups. See Annex 3. List of Evaluation Respondents for more information about the mode of interviews/focus groups.

The *secondary qualitative* data was comprised of the information generated by the Project, UNDP Country Offices, and national/local stakeholders and included methodological instruments, manuals, reports, audio-visual materials and the like. See Annex 4. Data Sources and Bibliography for the list of data sources.

The proportion of the weight of the primary and secondary qualitative data in the final analysis is approximately 60:40.

In addition to the qualitative data, the Evaluation also applied *quantitative methods* by rating the four basic evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability). The rating was applied during the interviews and focus groups. The respondents were requested to rate the four evaluation criteria on a scale from 1 to 5, the latter being the highest. In view of the varied understanding of the above criteria by the respondents, the Evaluation provided the definitions to facilitate the rating and ensure relative homogeneity and comparability of the responses. Given the different level of engagement in the Project, not all participants were able to rate the Project according to the four established criteria. Altogether, 46 respondents provided ratings<sup>10</sup>. The Evaluation tried to minimize the response bias by wording the questions without suggesting the leading opinion. The share of quantitative data in the final analysis is approximately 20%.

To increase the credibility of data and its internal and external validity, the Evaluation applied the methods of methodological and data triangulation, cross-analyzing qualitative and quantitative information obtained from different data sources. The Evaluation cross-examined the primary data obtained from the three categories per each output and then referenced the findings with the secondary data sources. Afterwards, the Evaluation triangulated the findings with the quantitative ratings described above.

### *Methodological Limitations and Challenges*

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<sup>9</sup> Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches in Program Evaluation, (with Michael Woolcock), in Francois Bourgingnon and Luiz Pereira Da Silva (edited) *Tool Kit for Evaluating the Poverty and Distributional Impact of Economic Policies*, World Bank and Oxford University Press, 2003

<sup>10</sup> 5 respondents did not provide ratings of one or more criteria. The average ratings were calculated accordingly.

Given the qualitative nature of the analysis and the process-oriented focus of the Evaluation, the main methodological challenge encountered by the Evaluation was obtaining *quality primary data* to analyze the Project according to the evaluation criteria.

In general, the *quality of the sample*, selected through the Stratified Purposive Sampling method had limited statistical value, as it is not representative of the entire population and does not allow for the generalization of the findings, posing challenge of *external validity*. To increase the external validity, the evaluator should aim at constructing relatively homogeneous subsets of the population of the Project beneficiaries and stakeholders, selecting the participants on the basis of a specific set of criteria, to better illustrate the tendencies within the subsets and facilitate comparisons between them.

In the case of the Project, the challenge of external validity was exacerbated by the small size of the sample and a significant difference between the number of respondents per output. With the exception of Honduras where 22 respondents were interviewed, the number of respondents for the remaining outputs ranged from 2-10<sup>11</sup>. This posed challenge in terms of the validity of *analysis of output results* given that each output corresponded to one beneficiary country.

To address this methodological challenge, the Evaluation to the extent possible applied the methods of methodological and data triangulation explained on p. 20. In the case of Output 4, the Evaluation relied heavily on the secondary data given the minimal number of respondents for this output.

#### *Other Evaluation Challenges*

The most significant evaluation challenge was related to the availability of respondents in the target countries, given that the timing of the Evaluation coincided with the end of the year and related business and holiday travel. This complicated the access to the primary data for analysis. The Evaluation did not experience major challenges related to the lack of secondary data and/or financial resources, which were readily available for proper planning and carrying out the Evaluation.

#### *Stakeholder Participation*

The Evaluation was guided by the fundamental premise of transparency and consultation with the major stakeholders, which are essential features in all stages of the evaluation process. As defined by the UNEG, consultation during the evaluation process “improves the credibility and quality of the evaluation, [it] can facilitate consensus building and ownership of the findings, conclusions and recommendations”<sup>12</sup>. *UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results* states, that “... key partners and stakeholders must play an integral part in the evaluation from the outset to ensure national ownership of the results.”

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<sup>11</sup> Given the particular situation related to the Nicaraguan segment of the Project, the Evaluation could only interview two respondents: one representative of UNDP Nicaragua and one representative of DRR platform.

<sup>12</sup> Standards for Evaluation in the UN System, UNEG

In line with these provisions, the Project management made important efforts to engage relevant stakeholders and informed them of the purpose and the objective of the Evaluation. The majority of contacted stakeholders made themselves available for interviews.

#### *Ethical Considerations*

In line with the *UNDP Evaluation Policy* and the *UNEG Norms for Evaluation in the UN System*, the Evaluation was based on the principles of independence, intentionality, transparency and ethical integrity. The Evaluator briefed the respondents about the Evaluation scope and objectives before each interview. On those occasions when the interviews were recorded, the respondents were requested the permission to record.

#### *Background Information*

The Evaluation was conducted by an independent consultant Nana Gibradze, identified from the *ExPress Monitoring and Evaluation Roster* and selected on the basis of the technical/financial proposal submitted by the candidate. Please refer to Annex 7 for the brief biography of the Evaluator.

## **CHAPTER 6. FINDINGS**

This chapter presents the findings based on the *evidence* obtained from the interviews and the revision of Project-related documentation. The findings are structured along the evaluation criteria and include the description of strengths and limitations that affected the achievement of the results as well as activities addressing gender and vulnerability. Within each criterion data is analyzed by output.

#### *Relevance*

Analysis of the primary and secondary data points that the *intervention logic* has been relevant both at national and regional levels at the moment of inception and closure. The Project was considered *innovative* in that it has changed the paradigm of ECHO interventions to a country-led logic and allowed each country to identify and focus on its own priorities. It has also introduced the innovative methodology to collect and analyze local vulnerability data by means of the web application, developed at the request of the DGPC. The Project has been considered relevant from the corporate perspective as it responded to the mandate of UNDP to strengthen institutional capacities in target countries, ensure the sustainability of UNDP-supported interventions and foster knowledge generation and exchange on issues related to disaster risk management in Central America. The Project also contributed to further strengthening the positioning of UNDP Offices in target countries, fostering coordination with national entities and DIPECHO partners.

Respondents from *Guatemala* considered the Project relevant for fostering national leadership and responding to national necessity to classify, streamline and institutionalize the existing DRR tools. It also responded to the need to revitalize the dormant national DRR platform and enhance coordination and communication between the national systems and platforms. Respondents from *El Salvador* emphasized the relevance of the Project for addressing the awareness gaps about the

existing tools and for focusing on national ownership and appropriation through institutionalization of the tools. Respondents from Guatemala rated the Project relevance as 4.6, while the El Salvador rating was 4.0.

In *Honduras*, the respondents considered the Project timely and relevant and rated it 4.6. According to the respondents, the Project complemented the ongoing review of the SINAGER Law and responded to the institutional needs identified by national DRR systems. It has been considered particularly relevant for giving increased visibility and leadership to national DRR systems and for responding to the need for strengthening COPECO’s capacities and knowledge. For *Nicaraguan* respondents, the relevance of the Project also was in its emphasis on institutionalization and formalization of tools and the focus on national ownership. While not statistically valid, the rating provided by the Nicaraguan respondents was the highest at 4.8.

Respondents at the regional level coincided with the national respondents in valuing highly the country-led, national ownership-focused approach of the Project. Regional respondents highlighted the proliferation of DRR tools in each country and the need to streamline them in accordance with the national priorities. The regional rating of Project relevance was 4.2.

Not all respondents considered the intervention relevant. While agreeing on the relevance of the tools, several respondents expressed doubts about the urgency of their institutionalization in view of other pressing national DRR needs. At least two respondents considered that the intervention was not critical and was not developed on the basis of an in-depth analysis and consultation, due to a short duration of the Project, which was insufficient to carry out all necessary activities imperative for proper institutionalization of the tools. One respondent considered that the project was not relevant as it attempted to do the work of the Government. Several respondents considered that the Project was not relevant given that the weak institutional capacities would jeopardize institutionalization efforts.

Despite these observations, the Project’s overall relevance was viewed as high and the intervention as timely. The average rating of Project relevance is 4.4 with the predominant rating being 5 and the lowest rating 2 allocated by one respondent.

### *Effectiveness*

Based on the analysis of RRF targets and indicators contained, by the time of the Evaluation, 98% of the Project activities have been implemented, and Project products produced. The change in the output has been positive and largely measurable. Analysis of the data obtained from reports and interviews confirmed the significant level of satisfaction with the Project results, overall increase in the stakeholder awareness on national DRR priorities, improvement of national institutional capacities and increased national ownership of DRR tools and processes.

The Project implementation has been relatively stable, with delays during the initial phase, due to the late transfer of project funds and delays in hiring project personnel in Honduras. Hiring delays were later experienced in El Salvador, due to a sudden demise of a project consultant and extended selection process. The most significant obstacle to full effectiveness has been the cessation of activities by the Government

of Nicaragua, which did not permit the completion of the planned results. Please see *Strengths and Limitations* on p. 32 for a more detailed description of obstacles affecting the implementation.

The quality of the interventions has been considered high. The data analysis, which includes respondents’ opinions and observations, confirms the overall quality of technical advice provided by the Project, quality of training materials and sessions, public awareness and advocacy tools and processes, knowledge products and practices.

The Project has been effective at the corporate level as well, contributing to the Regional Programme Outcome 4 and output 4.3 by strengthening national institutional capacities and policy frameworks for effective DRR and increasing the awareness on DRR tools and practices among the national DRR Systems and platforms.

Analysis of the primary and secondary data indicates that the majority of the output results have been achieved, albeit in different formats. In each of the countries, national stakeholders chose the number and format of products to be produced in view of the national priorities and needs.

*Output 1: Institutionalization of the DRR processes by means of joint ownership, capacity development and dissemination of DRM tools by CONRED and coordination bodies in Guatemala.*

According to the analysis of the available data, Guatemala had exceeded the expectations and thus, had the highest achievement rate at 110%. Activity results have been carried out and planned products have been produced: a package of 10 tools for municipal training has been reviewed and approved by the CONRED and uploaded to the CONRED webpage for access to national stakeholders and DRR Platforms. A document with guidelines for institutionalization of tools developed on the basis of the Project experience. Members of the CONRED and national DRR platform have been trained on the use of the tools and have started piloting experiences at national level; the revised and approved tools have been disseminated at national and regional events. The dormant National DRR platform has been reactivated through its four commissions and actively engaged in the discussions on prioritization of DRR tools. Instead of a DIPECHO Country Document, CONRED, in consultation with the partners opted for a strategic report on national DRM priorities – *Strategic Guidelines for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management and National Geographic Prioritization* - that were reviewed and updated through a series of consultations within CONRED and in partnership with DIPECHO partners. The document is intended to serve as a regulatory framework for CONRED and as guidelines for all actors involved in DRR. In preparation for the III PCGIR Consultative Forum, the Project carried out an inter-institutional meeting on prioritization of national DRM priorities in light of Sendai.

The Project strengthened the capacities of CONRED to lead similar processes in future and provided necessary methodologies and techniques for the review and validation of DRR tools in the future. The Project has strengthened internal coordination and decision-making capacities by creating and strengthening an intra-institutional



committee, comprised of the 8 CONRED Directorates, which led the consultation and review process. As an unplanned result of the Project, the Committee is fully operational and meets on a monthly basis to discuss pertinent issues.

The available data suggest that the Project exceeded expectations in Guatemala and achieved more than initially planned. Instead of one planned tools transfer workshop, the Project organized two workshops with 80 participants instead of the initially planned 50. Additionally, the Project organized a Knowledge Fair in collaboration with the SECONRED, which is currently in the process of replicating it with the country humanitarian team. After the elections, the Project reached out to municipal authorities organizing a forum of tools transfer for more than 300 mayors.

The respondents for Output 1 rated the effectiveness and achievement of results as 4.6.

*Output 2: Institutionalization of the DRR processes by means of joint ownership, capacity development and dissemination of DRM tools by DGPC and coordination bodies in El Salvador;*

Based on the available primary and secondary data, El Salvador has achieved 90% of outputs due to the delays in implementation mentioned on pp. 35: National Training Plan for Civil Protection has been elaborated as the basis for the establishment of the National Civil Protection School (ENPC); Community Training Programme and Community Training Manual developed as a first component of the National Training Plan and the ENPC; 7 tools on Community Risk Management Training selected and accompanying user guidelines designed for DGPC Training Department, which will be available through the DGPC virtual library and document center. The library and the document center are expected to host and disseminate all current future tools developed in the country and approved by the national DRR System and partners.

In line with its priorities, instead of a Country Document, the DGPC commissioned a web-application for measuring DRM indicators at the municipal and community levels, according to reference standards, which include risk awareness, legal and institutional frameworks, preparedness and response processes and mechanisms, resources available for response, other social and economic parameters. Information inputted through a matrix with prevention indicators is compiled through the web-application and will feed country documents and reports.

In consultation with the members of the Permanent Vulnerability Forum the Project carried out activities for the definition of national priorities for integrated risk managements in light of Sendai Framework of Action. Simultaneously, the Project supported a Knowledge Fair. Within the PVF, a smaller group of public institutions (Grupo CEPREDENAC), created by the DGPC carried out two events: national workshops in preparation for the III Consultative Forum on PCGIR; and PDNA workshop.

Despite the existing institutional challenges, the Project succeeded in generating the interest and support from the DGPC, primarily through aligning the intervention with the existing priorities and ongoing efforts. The Project has contributed to the

enhancement of the national DRR training plan rolled out by the DGPC, which aims at developing uniform criteria and capacities at national, municipal and local levels.

The respondents rated the effectiveness and achievement of results as 3.4.

*Output 3: Institutionalization of the DRR processes by means of joint ownership, capacity development and dissemination of DRM tools by COPECO and coordination bodies in Honduras;*

Based on the primary and secondary data, Honduras has achieved 98% rate of implementation. Of the initially short-listed 5 tools, 3 tools (*Flood Early Warning Systems; Measuring the Community Resilience; and, Manual for Defining Safe Sites*) were prioritized, reviewed and updated<sup>13</sup> in close collaboration with COPECO, its training center CENICAC and other COPECO departments and entities. Tools on *Drought Early Warning Systems* and *Organization of Local and Municipal Emergency Committees* (CODEL and CODEM) are currently being revised. The tools are available through the COPECO web platform together with the respective training courses for trainers developed with the support of the project. This platform, constructed prior to the intervention, was enhanced with the support of the Project to host the tools and the training courses. The courses are currently for COPECO staff and are expected to be available to public shortly. Additionally, the COPECO platform hosts a virtual course on the use of GIS for DRR. National DRR platform – SINAGER – was closely involved in the prioritization and dissemination of the approved tools and in respective trainings.

In consultation with COPECO, several activities were changed. The Project did not start with the compilation of the DRR tool inventory, since COPECO already counted with a shortlist of instruments for review and institutionalization. Likewise, during the Project formulation process, instead of a full-scale Country Document, the COPECO chose to develop an executive document for decision-makers on national priorities and processes in light of Sendai Plan of Action. The document was elaborated in collaboration with DIPECHO partners who validated the methodology and draft reports. The document was presented during the National Consultative Workshop to SINAGER members and at the regional meeting in Panama.

The Project contributed to strengthening institutional capacities of COPECO staff through training sessions organized by CENICAC, which improved their capacities to identify gaps and develop recommendations for the improvement of the tools and their adaptation for internal and external use. The Project also strengthened the capacities of COPECO staff to train others and to supervise and coordinate activities of other national DIPECHO projects. The *Workshop on the Analysis of Sendai Framework of Action for DRM and National Priorities* helped COPECO define and present national priorities in light of Sendai agreements. The Project has contributed to strengthening the capacities of SINAGER on the use of the tools and disseminated the information to the Humanitarian Network. As an unplanned result, the Project also contributed to strengthening the trainer capacities of the staff of its partner, Goal through participation in Project activities.

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<sup>13</sup> The review of the *Manual for Defining Safe Sites* identified errors and obsolete information, which was compiled and submitted to COPECO for further corrections and updates.

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The Project had other unplanned results as well: A workshop was carried out in collaboration with the Agriculture and Livestock Secretariat on the use of the three institutionalized tools; the Project supported partnership with the Ministry of Education, which delegated staff to COPECO trainings to train educators as DRM trainers.

The respondents rated the output effectiveness and achievement of results as 4.2.

*Output 4: Institutionalization of the DRR processes by means of joint ownership, capacity development and dissemination of DRM tools by SINAPRED and coordination bodies in Nicaragua;*

According to the available data (mostly secondary), prior to the unexpected cessation of activities by the Government, the Project had achieved approximately 90% implementation rate in Nicaragua and was on track to full achievement of the planned results. A package of tools on *Community Sensitization* comprised of six tools and an accompanying methodological manual, was developed and reviewed, however, due to the cessation of the Project activities in Nicaragua, by the time of the evaluation none of these products have been formally approved by SINAPRED<sup>14</sup>. As for the national DRR platform, at least 80 members have been reported to actively participate in the prioritization of the tools and the definition of the final package.

The Project has been instrumental in involving the SINAPRED in the elaboration of the Country Document and its executive version. The latter was traditionally developed by DIPECHO partners, but did not have wide dissemination and was not considered useful by SINAPRED. With the support of the Project, the Country Document was reshaped to suit the needs of SINAPRED and an executive summary was developed with active support and involvement of SINAPRED.

In general, respondents reported fruitful collaboration between UNDP, National DRR systems and platforms and DIPECHO partners.

The respondents rated the output achievement and effectiveness as 4.0.

*Output 5: Institutionalization of the DRR processes by means of joint ownership, capacity development and dissemination of DRM*

The analysis of the primary and secondary data suggests that the output results have been achieved at a rate of 110%, given that the Project carried out a series of activities beyond the initially established target. The regional Project team provided technical assistance and coordination services to national teams in four countries, assisting in the identification, review and dissemination of tools; technical assistance for strengthening of national DRR platforms; coordination support with CEPREDENAC and national DRR systems; review and technical advice on training programmes; technical support with gender-focused review of products and mainstreaming advice; administrative and monitoring support to the activities carried out in four countries.

The multi-country nature of the Project did not contemplate regional interventions other than coordination and technical assistance, and the role of the Regional Team

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<sup>14</sup> The Evaluation obtained indications that there is an informal appropriation process of the tools among the technical staff within SINAPRED, which participated in the Project.

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from UNDP Regional Hub in Panama was limited to the provision of technical and coordination assistance and quality control. Despite this limitation, the Project was able to carry out a series of regional activities and achieved two significant unplanned results: a. Upon request of and in collaboration with CEPREDENAC and IFRC, the Project supported the preparation of the III Consultative Forum carried out in June 2015 in El Salvador. The Forum defined the priorities for the regional disaster risk management policy PCGIR in light of Sendai agreements and culminated in the declarations of Heads of National Systems and of Heads of States of the participating countries. b. As a follow up to the Forum, the Project supported the organization of a Regional workshop on the implementation of DRM priorities and a Knowledge Fair in Guatemala, which operationalized the priorities of the Forum.

Despite its decidedly non-regional nature, the Project had achieved certain regional political incidence by boosting discussions on Sendai priorities two months after the Sendai meeting. The discussions, supported by the Project and IFRC were carried out prior to the Forum and helped national DRR systems and platforms arrive to the Forum with inputs for PCGIR review.

In addition to the collaboration with DIPECHO partners in participant countries, the Project further fostered synergies with DIPECHO regional projects joining the DIPECHO Drought Project in the review of the COPECO *Flood Early Warning Systems* tool. Information from the assessments carried out by Ayuda en Accion – contributed to the review of the Nicaragua and Honduras Country Documents.

The average rating of Project effectiveness is 4.1. The lowest rating obtained in this category is 2 assigned by 2 respondents. The most frequent ratings – 4 and 5.

### *Efficiency*

Analysis of the primary and secondary data indicates that the Project financial resources *have been mostly sufficient* for the planned results. The funds have adequately planned and *efficiently used* in accordance with the Project workplan. The overwhelming majority of the respondents considered the available financial resources as adequate for the achievement of the results and properly allocated. By the time of the Evaluation, the total had executed 80% of funds due to the closure of the Project activities in Nicaragua. By the end of the Project, 95% delivery of is expected.

**Table 3. Delivery by Output**

Output	ALLOCATION		DELIVERY		PENDING	
	EURO	US\$	EURO	US\$	EURO	US\$
Output 1	249,412.61	309,061.47	281,339.41	348,623.81	12,425.62	15,397
Output 2	246,070.86	304,920.52	275,526.85	341,421.13	12,772.03	15,827
Output 3	246,184.42	305,061.24	225,654.47	279,621.40	20,529.95	25,440
Output 4	244,332.11	302,765.94	119,742.89	148,380.28	0.00	-
Output 5	214,000.00	265,179.68	224,685.31	278,420.46	27,323.41	33,858

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TOTAL	1,200,000.	1,486,988.85	1,126,948.93	1,396,467.08	73,051.01	90,522
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Source: Project

The respondents considered the available human resources mostly sufficient and adequate, however, select respondents highlighted the necessity to have dedicated focal points in national counterpart institutions to improve coordination and monitoring of the implementation and ensure timely completion of activities. Respondents in Guatemala noted the implementation challenges due to the shortage of CONRED staff during emergencies and difficulties to contract Project staff.

The analysis of Project expenditures points to an efficient use of human resources. The cost of a 2-person Project Management Unit represents 9% of the total Project cost.

A significant majority of the respondents considered the Project duration rather short, especially given the delayed start and obstacles related to contracting personnel in Honduras and El Salvador. The respondents considered that the project duration was not sufficient for proper *institutionalization of results* and may pose threats to the sustainability. However, the respondents considered that overall, the Project has been able to overcome time shortage through adequate planning and adaptation of the pace of implementation to emerging obstacles and active support from the Regional Team.

The Project has not attracted additional cost-sharing, however, it had secured in-kind contributions and parallel financing from stakeholders. The in-kind contributions were made in the form of venues, transport and staff time of national DRR systems and national platforms.<sup>15</sup> The approximate monetary value of in-kind contributions national stakeholders in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras is US\$ xxx.

In addition to in-kind contributions, national stakeholders and DIPECHO partners financed several parallel activities and costs, which contributed to the achievement of results. In Guatemala, the CONRED financed the production of a video for the dissemination of institutionalized tools. In El Salvador, DIPECHO partners co-financed the cost of a consultant in charge of the elaboration of the National Training Plan. In Nicaragua, the ASB financed the production of a tool on inclusive DRM for persons with disabilities, which complements the Toolkit on Community Sensitization in Nicaragua. In Honduras, Goal financed the cost of a trainer for a Training-of-Trainers event.

Efficiency ratings differed by country. Respondents from Guatemala rated Project efficiency by 4.2, El Salvador – by 3.3, Honduras – by 4.3 and Nicaragua – by 4.5. Regional respondents assigned 3.9 rating to Project efficiency. The average rating of the efficiency of the Project is 4 with 4 being the most frequent rating and 3 being the lowest, assigned by 9 respondents.

### *Sustainability*

Opinions about the degree of Project sustainability have been *mostly positive*. Evidence suggests that all Project outputs have achieved a notable degree of

<sup>15</sup> DIPECHO Partners, such as Goal, IFRC, and National DRR Systems, which provided staff as trainers of trainers.

sustainability, especially taking into account the limited implementation timeframe and existing obstacles and limitations (See p. 32 - *Strengths and Limitations*). All threats to sustainability are of exogenous nature and vary by country in view of existing institutional settings. Among the most possible threats to sustainability are the overall weak institutional capacities and legal settings in the countries; high turnover of staff (especially in leadership positions) in public institutions, especially in countries with forthcoming or recently conducted elections; and insufficient funds for the continuation of the established processes.

The majority of respondents consider that the relatively high probability of medium-term sustainability is due to the nature of Project objectives and the logic of intervention. The focus on national ownership of the process, active engagement of national stakeholders in all phases of the Project, the leading role of the national DRR entities in defining the priorities and final results is considered as the main guarantee for institutional commitment and increases the odds for sustainability of the results. Most of the respondents agree that there is sufficient political will in the participating institutions to sustain the revised and institutionalized tools.

The level of sustainability varies by country. Data obtained from *Guatemala* points to the highest degree of institutionalization of the processes and tools and hence, highest degree of potential sustainability following the formal approval of the tools by the Executive Council of CONRED in July 2015. Processes triggered by the Project, such as the establishment of the internal coordination committee within the CONRED, formal adoption of the prioritized tools, active engagement of the gender directorate in the revision process, revitalization of the national platform are considered as the necessary precursors for sustainability.

The available data points to a potential sustainability risk related to CONRED staff turnover following the elections. At the municipal levels the risk of turnover is relatively lower, since mayors have been recently elected till 2020. However, given the full autonomy of mayors in Guatemala there is a risk that the appropriation of the tools does not reach municipal levels, since CONRED does not have authority to mandate their use to municipalities.

*Honduras* has also demonstrated strong probability of sustainability of achieved results in short and medium term. Staff who participated in the Project has been up to 10 years with COPECO and have sufficient institutional memory and capacities for proper appropriation of the tools. The priorities and tools have been developed with the participation of the stakeholders, which increases the ownership and sustainability prospects. Tools and training courses developed in the framework of the Project have been validated by COPECO and will be further promoted at local levels. Due to the sudden departure of the Head of COPECO, the COPECO Directorate did not formally approve the tools in December 2015, as planned; however, COPECO has developed a Sustainability Plan for the Package of Tools, which lists concrete measures to ensure the continuity of the processes and sustainability of the products. Likewise, the Chief of the Training Department has formally solicited the Planning Department to include of the Sustainability Plan activities in the COPECO Plan of

Action (POA) for 2016<sup>16</sup>. Eventual inclusion of the tools in the SINAGER Law is also contemplated.

Members of SINAGER have started the use of the approved tools and have expressed interest in participating in future institutionalization processes. The Safe Sites tool is already in use by CODEM de Tegucigalpa, which initiated the relocation of 21 families and currently 55 families being assessed and resettled. Likewise, the Community Resilience tool is expected to be in frequent use and to be internalized faster. COPECO has expressed plans to incorporate all tools in its agreement on resilient cities.

The majority of respondents expressed confidence in short and medium term sustainability, however, long-term sustainability is considered risky. The main risk factors are general to instability of labor force, especially in view of the forthcoming elections, which may result in sweeping changes in the COPECO structure; and limited financial resources of COPECO that may jeopardize prioritization and validation processes in the future.

Data from *El Salvador* suggest that sustainability prospects are slightly lower than in Guatemala and Honduras. According to the majority of stakeholders the Project has provided the stakeholders with sufficient elements for sustaining the results. All products, including the virtual library, web application, training materials – have been developed in response to precise needs of the national DRR systems and are expected to be widely used and sustained. The involvement of the DGPC leadership in the selection and prioritization process points to the existence of a minimum required level of political will and ownership that is necessary for sustaining the achieved results. Moreover, according to the DGPC, funds for the maintenance of the virtual library, training and permanent forum have been requested in the current national budget and are awaiting the approval of the national assembly. While there has not been an official decree officializing the tools, the latter have been published in the DGPC Virtual Library, which serves as a formal approval by the DGPC.

Despite these factors, many respondents considered medium and long-term sustainability of the Vulnerability Forum and national platform risky, mainly due to complex relationships and institutional peculiarities of the DGPC. Without donor funding, prospects of sustaining the platform are rather low. Likewise, after the completion of the Project, which supported the Forum meetings and events, its activity is most likely to be reduced.

In *Nicaragua*, the sustainability of Project results depends wholly on the decision of SINAPRED, which is a highly politicized entity. While not statistically valid, data from Nicaragua suggests that there is a strong probability of sustaining the results in the long-term, if SINAPRED approves and appropriates the results in the *short-term*. This assumption is based on the active engagement of SINAPRED in the selection of the tools and strong ownership of the processes prior to the cessation of activities. The SINAPRED implements the continuous training programme, which is expected to integrate the tools and manuals, developed with the support of the Project.

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<sup>16</sup> The POA has not been approved yet, pending the appointment of the new COPECO Head.

In terms of ratings by country, respondents from Guatemala rated sustainability as 4.1; El Salvador – 3.9; Honduras – 4.2; and, Nicaragua – 5.0<sup>17</sup>. The average rating of the Project sustainability is 4.2 with 4 being the most frequent (23 respondents) rating and 2 being the lowest, as assigned by one respondent.

### *Gender and Vulnerabilities*

The Project has addressed gender mainstreaming and vulnerability issues at different levels.

Despite low gender markers included in the Project document, the Project collaborated closely with the RH LAC Gender Team to ensure proper integration of gender focus in Project activities. With the support of the RH LAC Gender advisor, gender criteria for the revision of tools have been elaborated and shared with the national DRR systems during trainings. Gender awareness raising and training events were carried out in the participating countries. Prioritized tools have been reviewed in light of the gender criteria and adjustments made where possible. Some tools, such as *Flood Early Warning Systems Tool in Honduras*, were considered highly technical for the incorporation of the gender parameters; others, such as the *Manual for Measuring Community Resilience* in Honduras were revised and updated from gender-sensitive perspective. Additionally, awareness-raising consultations were carried out with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock to include gender focus in their institutional programmes.

The Project has achieved significant political incidence in *Guatemala*. Despite initial resistance, a representative of the Gender Directorate was included in the coordinating committee, participating actively in the gender-sensitive review and updating of all tools. The Project supported the strengthening and empowerment of the Gender Directorate to continue reviewing and validation of forthcoming tools from gender perspective. The coordinating committee now counts with a set of regulations, which stipulates the obligatory review and validation by the Gender Unit of any new tool considered for institutionalization.

In *El Salvador*, the Project worked with the national counterparts on increasing the awareness on gender and DRR and contributed to the revision of the tools from gender perspective. A national NGO - Popular Education Association CIAZO - with a strong gender background was selected to review the entire package of instruments, which included Oxfam’s *Guidelines for Training on Gender Equality and Women’s Rights in Emergencies*. In *Nicaragua*, gender focus has been strongly incorporated in all tools from the very beginning as part of the National Disaster Management Policy. An inter-institutional group reviewed all proposed tools to ensure compliance with the gender-mainstreaming requirements.

In addition to gender, the Project has addressed issues of vulnerability by including different vulnerability criteria in the Community Resilience Manual of Honduras and in the DGPC web application in El Salvador, which analyzes data for children, women, elderly, disability etc. In Nicaragua, the Project collaborated with the ASB on the

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<sup>17</sup> Not statistically valid due to a limited number of respondents.



inclusion of a tool on persons with disabilities in the package of tools on Community Sensitization.

### *Strengths and Limitations*

The Evaluation has identified several contributing factors, both positive and negative, which influenced the achievement of the Project results and may affect the long-term sustainability of the Project results.

According to the primary and secondary data, the Project has demonstrated significant *strengths and assets*, which have facilitated the implementation and has laid the basis for future similar interventions.

The main strength identified by the respondents and through the analysis of existing documentation was the *country-led intervention logic* of the Project, which implied *strong national leadership* and *the participatory, consultative* nature of the *multi-country* Project. Unlike previous DIPECHO-funded interventions, the Project priorities and activities were not defined outside the countries, but entirely articulated by the national stakeholders, reflecting the needs and peculiarities of the countries. This approach allowed to start stakeholder consultations from the inception of the Project and permitted customizing the products in accordance with the existing contexts, reflecting a genuine interest of stakeholders. It also guaranteed strong engagement of the national authorities and laid solid foundations for sustainability of the results.

Respondents from *Guatemala* considered that the approach has allowed showing the institutional weaknesses and strengths of national institutions, technical capacity gaps and challenges. It was considered the among the few donor interventions that respect the institutions and seek consensus and participation. The role of the National Coordinator was particularly praised for supporting intra-institutional coordination, involving gender directorate and overall support with the roadmap for capacity strengthening of CONRED.

Respondents in *Honduras* considered that the main strength of the Project was the logic of institutional strengthening in the region with persistent governance issues and highlighted the importance of similar participatory, country-led approaches for the sustainability of donor interventions. National stakeholders considered the existence of a Project Focal Point within COPECO as a particular strength for better coordination, communication and technical support. COPECO respondents praised the approach of UNDP Honduras, whereby most of the work was done by COPECO instead of providing COPECO with ready material for approval. The respondents considered that while it implied extra work, it helped the learning process and strengthening of COPECO capacities. The respondents also highlighted the role of COPECO in ensuring the participation of staff in Project activities.

Likewise, the respondents from *El Salvador* attributed the increased sense of ownership and commitment of the national authorities to the participatory and country-oriented nature of the Project, which motivated the DGPC to get engaged in the Project and define the priorities. The respondents also highlighted the coordinating and bridging role of UNDP, which helped bringing the Government

## Evaluation of the Project: “Institutionalization of DRR Processes and Tools in Central America”

closer to DIPECHO partners after 8 cycles of relatively weak coordination through monthly coordination meetings. Overall, the participants noted the weight attached to the UN in El Salvador and its potential to incite processes.

In *Nicaragua*, as in the three countries, the Project logic was considered its main strength and asset, which focused on the national ownership as the precursor of institutionalization and sustainability. The Project provided an opportunity for engaging different actors beyond the traditional DIPECHO partners (e.g. ASB) and offered opportunity for strong leadership of SINAPRED.

Strong support and guidance from the *RH LAC* has been considered as an asset by the majority of the stakeholders, who highlighted the quality of assistance received from the Regional team in the formulation, coordination, follow-up on implementation and reporting. The respondents also valued the support to knowledge generation and dissemination, technical advisory services and quality control during the design of the Project, elaboration of the tools, training and dissemination.

The respondents have positively valued the involvement of UNDP Country Offices. In *Honduras*, UNDP Country Office provided strong backstopping to COPECO and was instrumental in placing a Project staff in COPECO for technical assistance and liaison. UNDP Honduras also provided Project management services during the hiatus left after the departure of the first Project Coordinator. UNDP *Guatemala* has been credited for forging partnerships with CONRED, especially in the creation of the SECONRED Technical Committee; inclusion of the Gender Unit in the Technical Committee and in generating political incidence in gender mainstreaming. In *El Salvador*, the respondents underlined the role of the UNDP Country Office in establishing coordination between the DGPC and the partners, noting especially the complex institutional settings. In Nicaragua, UNDP Office has been instrumental in supporting the SINAPRED with coordination, convening and reporting activities and had succeeded in establishing regular coordinating meeting between SINAPRED and partners.

The Evaluation has encountered a number of *endogenous and exogenous* factors that affected the Project throughout its implementation. The following are the examples of *exogenous* limitations of the Project identified by the respondents in four countries:

Disaster risk management is still not considered a priority, even where national policies and laws provide respective regulatory and legal frameworks. While the countries have made significant process towards integrated risk management, institutional profiles of national DRR systems still reflect the existing focus on preparedness and response. In at least two countries the respondents pointed to the emergency-oriented nature of key entities as one of the key obstacles to implementation, whereby Project activities would be completely stalled due to the unavailability of the key personnel during emergencies. The respondents also highlighted overall weaknesses of national public institutions and persistence governance challenges characteristic to countries of Central America.

Respondents in *Guatemala* noted the initial challenges due to the absence of communication and coordination between the 8 Directorates of CONRED, which affected significantly the processes at the start of the implementation. Respondents

also mentioned significant challenge of communicating with the government before the end of the electoral process in Guatemala. In general, the respondents noted the delays in decision-making and the difficulty to adapt to the Government pace of response and action, especially during emergencies.

Initially there were challenges related to engaging the Gender Directorate in the Project. While the Directorate has eventually been included in the implementation and advanced in incorporating the gender focus in the tools, it was at times excluded from Project events (e.g. dissemination of tools) unless explicitly requested by the Project Management.

In *Honduras*, the respondents pointed to the turnover of staff as one of the main challenges encountered during the implementation. Attendees of the meetings and training courses changed frequently, affecting the learning process and the continuity of training effects. As in the case of Guatemala, processes often stalled during emergencies, since most of COPECO staff was diverted to attend to disasters. In general, the respondents pointed to overall institutional weaknesses in the country. COPECO has the mandate for political incidence however, lacks qualified staff and funds to address all needs and attend to often overlapping agendas of international donors. It also lacks political weight and technical profile to ensure proper attention to processes at the policy level.

Several respondents identified the highly technical nature of some tools as a challenge to proper understanding and appropriation. Respondents noted that non-technical staff needed more time and preparation to understand the technicalities of the SAT and the resilience tools and pointed to a need for accompanying manual or induction for proper understanding.

The main challenge identified by the overwhelming majority in *El Salvador* is the highly centralized nature of DGPC, absence of coordination and communication, frequent changes of decisions and overall reluctance to commit. These characteristics have significantly affected the pace of the Project and have resulted in significant delays. Some respondents also pointed to the lack of communication between the DGPC and ECHO as a source of many delays, especially when related to contracting technical experts.

Another key obstacle was the institutional setting in which the Project operated. Disaster risk management is absent from the national agenda and disaster risk is included in the area of environmental degradation. The governance structure and decision-making is also complicated, since the DGPC is under the authority of the Ministry of Interior in the peaceful times and directly under the President during emergencies.

Prior to the cessation of activities in *Nicaragua*, the Project encountered significant challenges related to high turnover of SINAPRED senior management. During the initial 6 months, SINAPRED changed three executive directors and split the position of the Executive Secretary into two positions of co-directors. These changes significantly affected initial communication and decision-making and caused delays in the implementation. Another difficulty was related to reaching the consensus with different partners about the coordinating role of UNDP, which was gradually

overcome through regular meetings and consultations with SINAPRED, UNDP and partners. The respondents mentioned the difficulty to identify qualified SINAPRED personnel for engagement in the Project that would be acceptable to both SINAPRED and DIPECHO.

At the *regional* level, the respondents also listed a number of limitations. Some respondents noted insufficient communication with UNDP, highlighting delays in reporting and updates. One respondent noted the need for more proactivity of UNDP in coordination. According to ECHO, the Project did not inform ECHO on the closure of Nicaragua component, which ECHO interpreted as a sign that UNDP was looking for clarifications and solutions. According to ECHO, once the fact was established, UNDP was efficient in finding the solution and re-programming the released funds between the remaining outputs.

Some respondents considered ECHO involvement as insufficient. Several respondents from at least three countries noted the need for an active ECHO Focal Point to improve communication, harmonize the agendas, participate in meetings and review of Project activities.

The Evaluation encountered *endogenous* limitations, i.e. those related to corporate administrative and operational processes and norms, project design, resources.

While the official Project duration was 14 months, the net implementation time was 12 months, given the initial delay in money transfer and contracting. In *Honduras*, activities were delayed due to the change of Project coordinator and delays in contracting the replacement. In El Salvador, after the demise of a consultant and departure of another, activities were significantly delayed and ultimately affected the implementation given the indecision of the DGPC to select replacements. Respondents from several countries mentioned UNDP administrative processes were quoted as the reasons for a number of delayed payments of fees and daily subsistence allowances.

Another difficulty mentioned by the respondents from *El Salvador* was the absence of clarity regarding the roles and functions of UNDP and other DIPECHO partners, which caused confusion and delays in payment to a consultant. Several respondents among DIPECHO partners mentioned flaws in communication with UNDP, listing delays in information regarding meetings and progress reports. Likewise, several respondents mentioned the lack of engagement of and insufficient communication with DIPECHO representatives during the Project implementation. The respondents also noted as an exogenous limitation the insufficient communication and limited synergies between CEPREDENAC and national actors.

#### *Donor Visibility*

Donor visibility has been highly satisfactory, Donors and stakeholders have been properly acknowledged in all printed matter and audio and visual materials. Conference and workshop materials and venues clearly displayed donor logos as demonstrated by event photographs and recordings. All respondents were well aware of the ECHO and UNDP.

## CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are based on the analysis and triangulation of the Evaluation findings. The conclusions follow the evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability). The chapter also presents additional conclusions, which encompass wider aspects of the Project and cannot be limited to one single criterion. The conclusions of the Evaluation resonate with the overall positive rating of the Project by the respondents.

The Evaluation concludes that in light of the complex political and legal settings, institutional shortcomings and initial delays, the UNDP Project – *Institutionalization of DRR Processes and Tools in Central America* – has been *successfully implemented and has achieved notable results with a significant potential impact*. The Evaluation concludes that, considering the exogenous limitations and the standard short duration (14.5 months) of DIPECHO projects, the Project has achieved remarkable *positive and tangible change*, which is observable and largely measurable.

The Evaluation considers that the Project has been highly *relevant* as it was driven by the necessities and priorities of the countries and was customized to suit national specifics. The Evaluation considers that the Project has been particularly *relevant for UNDP and ECHO*, as it helped consolidate the existing DRR work in the region and identify gaps in institutional capacities and coordination mechanisms.

The Evaluation considers that on average, the Project has achieved high *effectiveness and efficiency* in the delivery of expected results. Moreover, the Project has exceeded the initial expectations and has obtained *unplanned* results with utmost efficiency and prudent use of available resources. The Evaluation considers that without the sudden cessation of Project activities in Nicaragua, the Project would have achieved at least *98% of implementation* and execution of funds.

The Evaluation concludes that the *key factors of the success* were the multi-country participatory approach, which helped *consolidate the leadership* roles of national DRR entities, strengthen their *analytical and coordination capacities* and enhance ties between *national DRR systems and platforms*. It has improved the *knowledge and awareness* of national stakeholders on the available DRR tools and has installed processes in national DRR institutions for future replication and follow-up. The Evaluation also considers as strength that the Project did not promote uniform methodologies but reflected the *diversity* of tools in participating countries and accommodated different approaches.

Another *key factor of success* was the strong support and technical assistance from the Project Team at both regional and national levels. The Evaluation considers the technical, mediation and coordination support provided by the Project Team as crucial for engaging and achieving consensus between different national stakeholders, consolidating internal human resources and stimulating discussions on national and local priorities.

The Evaluation concludes that the Project has achieved a *reasonable sustainability of the results*, as evidenced by the political decisions leading to the appropriation of the results. The Evaluation considers that the actual *objective* of the Project contained

strong premise of *sustainability* through institutionalization of processes and products. The Evaluation concludes that the Project has been *innovative* through its focus on national leadership in prioritization and decision-making, *and catalytic* for triggering institutional changes and political incidence. The Evaluation concludes that the Project has created a *solid base for replication* for UNDP and ECHO as well as for national and regional stakeholders through a multi-country implementation modality that can be replicated in other thematic areas.

While it is not possible to speak of the Project *impact* given its short duration, the Evaluation considers that the Project has a potential for generating impact through the processes it helped install in the recipient institutions and the knowledge and awareness it helped generate. The Evaluation considers that the level of potential impact is directly linked with the level of sustainability the Project achieves in each country.

The Evaluation considers that given the 14.5-month timeframe of the Project, its multi-country nature and different political and institutional settings in the participating countries it would have been *unrealistic* to expect the completion of the institutionalization process. In fact, no single project can be expected to obtain highly sustainable results in the environments with fragile political and institutional settings. Instead, the Evaluation concludes that the Project has met the minimum expectations for *institutionalization* and established important *mechanisms for sustainability*, by providing the beneficiaries with baselines, targets and methodologies for continuous institutionalization. The Project has identified the basic capacities to be used for future similar endeavors and provided the beneficiaries with the roadmaps for replicating and expanding the process of identification, revision and institutionalization of important DRM tools.

The Evaluation considers that there remain certain challenges affect the sustainability of the results and should be considered in future interventions:

Number of tools is not enough for incidence on DRM in countries with weak technical capacities and fragile public administration. Without the adequate technical capacity and strong political profiles and leadership, National DRR systems will be susceptible to external pressure and changes in the political landscape. Countries need stronger institutional capacities and solid legal and financial guarantees to translate tools into actions at public policy level.

National DRR systems continue to be mostly response oriented and require stronger support to shift the institutional paradigms towards integrated risk management; this is particularly important at the local level, where stronger incidence is needed to promote DRM processes and tools. In order for the DRM tools to be properly institutionalized and appropriated, national institutions need stronger support in the implementation of the national legal frameworks and policies.

Despite the progress in incorporating gender focus in the DRR tools, there was not enough time to go beyond data disaggregation and incorporation of inclusive language. There is still a lot of work needed to mainstream gender in DRR processes and tools and create the awareness and commitment in national DRR institutions. National systems and platforms need stronger donor support with methodological

guidelines and awareness workshops to integrate gender in every aspect of DRR work at both policy and implementation levels.

More efforts are needed to engage diverse actors, such as NGOs, members of humanitarian networks in the identification, validation and dissemination of Project results. National systems need support to reach local levels to ensure the application of tools among the populations permanently at risk. Likewise, there is a need for more horizontal cooperation and exchange between the countries to share best practices and models.

In this regard, the Evaluation considers that a regional component would have provided the regional vision to national priorities and challenges. While the multi-country nature of the Project has been considered the principal advantage of the Project, the Evaluation considers that the countries would have benefited from a robust package of regional activities aimed at knowledge and practice exchange between counterpart institutions and UNDP Country offices. This consideration is backed by the success of the unplanned regional activities, enriched by strong national participation and inputs from the countries.

Likewise, due to the design of the Project, involvement of CEPREDENAC was limited to overall coordination and backstopping of select activities. A strong regional component would have allowed more dynamic interactions between the national DRR systems and CEPREDENAC, contributing to the improved regional information exchange and coordination and closer linkages with the Central American risk management policy.

Overall, the Evaluation concludes that the Project has achieved the intended results in an efficient manner, is replicable in similar settings and has attained significant potential for sustainability and long-term impact.

## **CHAPTER 8. LESSONS LEARNED**

The Evaluation identified a series of lessons learned in the process of Project implementation through the analysis of the secondary data and interviews with the respondents.

- i. Flexibility of approach allows better responding to needs and circumstances of each particular country. For example, instead of institutionalizing the existing 40 tools, stakeholders in Nicaragua opted to select and combine the most relevant elements and construct a new and updated toolkit, which better serves the country. Likewise, the decision by countries to deviate from the established Country Document format and pursue alternative customized options increased the probability of using and sustaining the final products.
- ii. Multi-country approach has been the strength of the Project, but it also can be a limitation, if there is no regional consolidating component that would bind different national processes and products under a common umbrella. In the case of the Project, to the extent possible, the regional interventions ensured the linkages with the regional and global policies and frameworks; however, a stronger regional component and closer dialogue between CEPREDENAC and

- national actors would have contributed to a stronger regional knowledge exchange and increased political incidence.
- iii. Likewise, while the participatory nature of the Project has been one of its strongest assets, it can turn into an obstacle without a clear definition of roles and responsibilities and strong coordination that would ensure efficiency of consultations and decision-making, without jeopardizing consensus and ownership.
  - iv. While there is an overall lack of qualified personnel in national institutions, there is also a tendency to sub-estimate local capacities and reach out to external consultants, while overlooking the available resources (as was the case of COPECO). Initial capacity assessments of participating institutions<sup>18</sup> would improve the quality of intervention and allow identifying capacity assets and gaps at the onset of the Project, while also fostering the confidence and ownership of national actors.
  - v. Unless the tools are formalized and backed by legal and regulatory frameworks, sustainability is at risk. Interventions, which succeed to formally integrate validated tools into national policies and budgets, have higher odds for long-term sustainability, which reiterates the need to work with national governments towards formalization of commitments.
  - vi. In addition to specific institutional and political settings of each country, UNDP has a longer history of working on DRM with the Governments of Honduras and Guatemala, than of El Salvador. This may explain comparative success of these outputs, since they have been backstopped by strong tradition of collaboration in the area of Disaster Risk Reduction in these countries.
  - vii. It is important to consider different technical backgrounds of actors trained on the use of tools. As demonstrated by the case of Honduras, some tools are highly technical and may require user manuals and additional induction time for stakeholders not directly involved in their use. Some respondents pointed to the need to combining field exposure with the training courses and conducting specific trainings during emergency season (e.g. Early Warning Systems (EWS) in Honduras).
  - viii. Defining the actors’ roles and functions from the beginning is crucial for proper communication and coordination. Likewise, a brief introduction to UNDP administrative processes and rules allows for better planning and avoids delays in implementation.

## CHAPTER 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Evaluation has formulated a number of recommendations and practical tips for improving the design, implementation and sustainability of future interventions. The recommendations were based on the findings of the Evaluation and referenced with the four evaluation criteria.

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<sup>18</sup> Proposed initially, but not included due to limited timeframe of the Project.



To guarantee the *relevance* of similar interventions it is highly recommended to maintain the country-led approach, whereby national stakeholders are actively engaged in the definition of priorities, intervention logic and activities. The Evaluation recommends expanding the outreach to include sectorial ministries and agencies in the consultation and appropriation processes. The Evaluation particularly recommends strong engagement of civil society organizations in the permanent consultative process through DRR platforms to ensure diversity of the proposed approaches and tools.

While reiterating the advantages of the country-led approach, the Evaluation strongly recommends strengthening the regional component of future multi-country actions for increased regional relevance and impact. A strong regional component would help consolidate national efforts under the regional umbrella, better align national policies and plans with the regional DRM policy and strengthen capacities for the implementation of the Sendai Plan of Action without jeopardizing the country-led nature of the intervention.

In order to increase the *effectiveness* of the intervention, it is advisable, where possible, to consider alternative scenarios in countries with difficult political settings, e.g. Nicaragua, to avoid complete closure of Project activities. Likewise, in countries with challenging governance systems and complex counterparts as in El Salvador, a longer preparatory process may be needed for securing the engagement and ownership of stakeholders. When circumstances call for supporting the implementation capacities, the Evaluation recommends installing Project Focal Points<sup>19</sup> in the beneficiary institutions to provide technical advice, improve the communication and support the implementation process.

For better *effectiveness*, and for strengthening the institutionality for DRM, it is recommended to complement the country analysis with institutional capacity assessments prior to the start of the Project, in order to identify capacity gaps and improve the design of the intervention. The Evaluation also recommends, when possible, to complement stakeholder trainings with practical testing of the tools and to accompany the newly institutionalized tools with user manuals. In cases with the diverse technical background of the trainees, it is recommended to consider a separate induction for non-technical participants or to increase the duration of the workshops.

For the improved *effectiveness and efficiency* the evaluation recommends fostering better coordination with partner organizations in the participating countries and strengthening information exchange and communication. It is highly recommended to share with the partner institutions the basic principles of UNDP administrative and financial procedures to allow for proper planning and avoid delays in the implementation. It is also recommended to establish formal agreements stipulating the responsibilities and obligations of each partner.

The Evaluation suggests advising national DRR systems to diversify the tools selected for institutionalization by complementing home-grown tools and methodologies (e.g.

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<sup>19</sup> The Project had contemplated installing the Focal Points within national institutions, however, with the exception of COPECO, national DRR systems rejected the proposal.

CONRED) with those elaborated by other organizations (as was the case in Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador. The Evaluation also recommends ensuring that tools selected and revised with the donor support are properly institutionalized and in use before supporting the creation of new or updating of the existing ones.

For increased *sustainability* and proper appropriation of the results, the Evaluation recommends encouraging stronger legal and financial guarantees from the beneficiary institutions. The Evaluation recommends advocating for the inclusion of the tools in operational and strategic plans of the recipient institutions and suggests supporting the counterparts with necessary advice related to the existing legal frameworks. The Evaluation also recommends the engagement of senior decision-makers of national DRR systems in the dissemination process to increase the visibility and awareness and generate commitment at different levels of the society.

The Evaluation recommends fostering the coordinating role of CEPREDENAC by supporting its stronger involvement in consultations and stimulating interaction and coordination with national DRR systems. The Evaluation recommends promoting exchanges and coordination between the national DRR Systems (CONRED, COPECO, DGCP and SINAPRED) and suggests using the CEPREDENAC platform for fostering regional knowledge exchange and capacity development by organizing knowledge fairs and trainings for the implementation of the Sendai Plan of Action. The Evaluation also recommends improving the coordination and communication between the UNDP Senior management and CEPREDENAC by stronger engagement of UNDP Country Directors in the initial consultations and dissemination of the results. As part of stakeholder accountability, the Evaluation suggests improving the reporting frequency and communication.

Finally, the Evaluation strongly recommends strengthening the gender component in all future interventions in order to ensure proper alignment of project objectives and strengthen national capacities for mainstreaming gender in DRR. For better design of the gender mainstreaming activities, the Evaluation suggests including the gender components in the institutional capacity assessments for better design of gender sensitive interventions.

## **LIST OF ANNEXES**

- Annex 1. Evaluation Terms of Reference
- Annex 2. Evaluation Matrix
- Annex 3. List of Evaluation Respondents
- Annex 4. Data Sources and Bibliography
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Annex 3. List of Evaluation Respondents

#	Name	Title/Organization	Category	Interview mode	
<b>HONDURAS</b>					
1	Telma Cabrera	UNDP, DRM and DIPECHO Project Coordinator	UNDP/ECHO	In person	
2	Kenia Hernandez	UNDP, GIS and Remote Sensor Advisor			
3	Diego Gutierrez	UNDP, DRR Political Incidence Advisor			
4	Cincy Rosa	UNDP, SAT COPECO Technical Assistant			
5	Marco Quan	UNDP, Information Management Advisor			
6	Sandra Buitrago	UNDP, DRM Coordinator			
7	Dennis Funes	UNDP, Energy and Environment Coordinator			
8	Conrado Gomez	COPECO, Independent Consultant	DRR Systems	In person	
9	Gonzalo Funes	COPECO, Director of CENICAC			
10	Julia Witty	COPECO, Training Supervisor			
11	Odalys Bulnes	COPECO, Chief of Institutional Strengthening			
12	Dinoska Perez	COPECO, International Cooperation Directorate			
13	Liber Fino	COPECO, Trainer			
14	Moises Alvarado	COPECO, National Commissioner			
15	Dolan Castro	COPECO, Director of Preparedness and Response	DRR Platforms		Skype
16	Roque Andrade	SANAA, Technical Supervisor of Concepcion Dam			Focus group
17	Jose Ramon Anariba	CODEM Tegucigalpa, DRM Specialist			
18	Alexis Ochoa	UPEG/INSEP, Technical Analyst			
19	Neptaly Cruz	SERNA, Environmental Analyst			
20	Amalia Castillo	SAG/UPEG, Planner			
21	Vicente Aguilar	SAG/Climate Change, Coordinator			
22	Gabriela Caceres	GOAL, Technical Expert, Responsible for Resilience Tool	In person		
<b>GUATEMALA</b>					
23	Frank Rojas	UNDP, Project Coordinator	UNDP/ECHO	In person	
24	Julio Martinez	UNDP, Programme Officer		Skype	
25	Rolando Dugal	UNDP, DRM Specialist, Consultant		In person	
26	Diego Acevedo	SECONRED, DRM Directorate, Risk Management Specialist	DRR Systems	Focus group	

27	Ania Silva	SECONRED, Planning and Institutional Development Directorate, Planning Specialist		
28	Eric Uribio	SECONRED, Coordination Directorate, Deputy Director		
29	Jorge Ivan Hernandez	SECONRED, Preparedness Directorate, Academic Dep. Director		
30	Massiel Rodriguez	SECONRED, Mitigation Directorate, Professional Field Assistant		
31	Sylvia Cardona	SECONRED, Gender Directorate, Gender Specialist		Skype
32	Saskia Carusi	UNISDR, Associate Programme Officer	DRR Platforms	In person
<b>EL SALVADOR</b>				
33	Alexander Valle	UNDP, Project Coordinator	UNDP/ECHO	Group meeting
34	Carolina Dreikorn	UNDP, Sustainable Development Area Coordinator		
35	Valeria Lara	UNDP, Project Assistant		
36	Mauricio Guevara	DGPC, Deputy Director and DIPECHO Focal Point	DRR Systems	Group meeting
37	Fermin Perez	DGPC, Chief of Training Department, DIPECHO Technical FP		
38	Francisco Magaña	Spanish Red Cross, DIPECHO Project Coordinator	DRR Platforms	In person
39	Cristina Perez	PLAN, National DRM Advisor		In person
40	Carlos Saz	OXFAM/DIPECHO, Regional Project Coordinator		Skype
<b>NICARAGUA</b>				
41	Alejandro Zurita	ASB, Regional Director for Latin America	DRR Platforms	Skype
42	Marta Emilia Alvarez	UNDP, Project Coordinator	UNDP/ECHO	
<b>REGIONAL</b>				
43	Luis Gamarra	UNDP, Regional Project Coordinator	UNDP/ECHO	In person
44	Laura Lodesani	UNDP, Project Assistant		
45	Geraldine Becchi	UNDP, Regional DRR Adviser		
46	Yolanda Villar	UNDP, Gender Advisor		
47	Arlen Cordero	ECHO, Programme Assistant for Central America and Mexico		
48	Victor Ramirez	CEPREDENAC	DRR Systems	Skype
49	Mayra Valle	CEPREDENAC		
50	Patricia Mendez	Ayuda en Accion	DRR Platforms	
51	Sandra Zuniga	IFRC, DIPECHO Project Coordinator		