



CASE STUDY:
LOCAL HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP IN EL SALVADOR
OUTCOME HARVESTING



OXFAM

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACAPS	Assessment Capacities Project
ADESCO	Community Development Association [Asociación de Desarrollo Comunitaria]
AMS	Salvadoran Women’s Association [Asociación de Mujeres Salvadoreñas]
APROCSAL	Association of Salvadoran Community Promoters [Asociación de Promotores Comunales Salvadoreños]
APRODEHNI	Association for Children’s Human Rights [Asociación para los Derechos Humanos de la Niñez]
ARPAS	Association of Participatory Radio in El Salvador [Asociación de Radiodifusión Participativa de El Salvador]
ASPRODE	Guidance for Development Projects and Programs [Asesoría a Programas y Proyectos de Desarrollo]
COCIGER	Citizen Convergence for Risk Management [Convergencia Ciudadana para la Gestión de Riesgo] (Guatemala)
CODITOS	Integral Development Committee for Sustainable Organizing Transformation [Asociación Comité de Desarrollo Integral para la Transformación Organizativa Sostenible]
COEN	National Emergency Committee [Comite de Emergencia Nacional Republica de El Salvador]
CONASAV	National Council on Environmental Sustainability and Vulnerability [Consejo Nacional de Sustentabilidad Ambiental y Vulnerabilidad]
CONGCOOP	Coordinator of Non-Governmental Cooperative Organizations [Coordinadora de Organizaciones no Gubernamentales y Cooperativas] (Guatemala)
CORDES	Foundation for Cooperation and Community Development in El Salvador [Asociación Fundación para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Comunal de El Salvador]
CPDPML	Civil Protection and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Law in El Salvador
CRGR	Regional Coordination for Risk Management [Concertación Regional para la Gestión de Riesgo]
CRIPDES	Association of Rural Communities for the Development of El Salvador [Asociación de Comunidades Rurales para el Desarrollo de El Salvador]
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DIGESTYC	General Statistics and Census Department [La Dirección General de Estadística y Censos]
DIPECHO	Disaster Preparedness Program of the European Union Humanitarian Aid Office
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EFSVL	Emergency Food Security and Vulnerable Livelihoods
ERIC	Rights In Crisis Team



FCV-UV	Vulnerable Central America United for Life Forum [Foro Centroamérica Vulnerable, ¡Unida por la Vida!]
FECORACEN	Federation of Agrarian Reform Cooperatives, Central Region [Federación de Cooperativas de la Reforma Agraria Región Central]
FRGR	Regional Risk Management Forum [Foro Regional para la Gestión del Riesgo]
FUMA	Maquilishuat Foundation [Fundación Maquilishuat]
FUNDASAL	Salvadoran Foundation for Development and Basic Housing [Fundación Salvadoreña de Desarrollo y Vivienda Mínima]
FUNDASPAD	Salvadoran Foundation for Democracy and Social Development [Fundación Salvadoreña para la Democracia y el Desarrollo Social]
FUNDECOM	Foundation for Community Development [Fundación para el Desarrollo Comunitario]
FUNDESA	Foundation for Development [Fundación para el Desarrollo]
FUNSALPRODESE	Salvadoran Foundation for Social Promotion and Economic Development [Fundación Salvadoreña para la Promoción Social y el Desarrollo Económico]
GAH	Humanitarian Action Group
GAR	Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction
ICCO	Inter-ecclesial Organization for Development Aid [Organización Intereclesiástica para la Cooperación al Desarrollo]
ICT	information and communication technology
IMU	Institute for Women’s Research, Training, and Development [Instituto de Investigación, Capacitación y Desarrollo de la Mujer]
ISDEMU	Salvadoran Institute for Development of Women [Instituto Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo de la Mujer]
JPIC	Commission on Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation
LHL	local humanitarian leadership
MARN	Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources [Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales]
MINEDUCYT	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology [Ministerio de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología]
MNGR	National Roundtable for Risk Management [Mesa Nacional de Gestión de Riesgos] (Nicaragua)
MNIGR	National Advocacy Roundtable for Risk Management [Mesa Nacional de Incidencia para la Gestión de Riesgo] (Honduras)



MPGR	Permanent Roundtable for Risk Management [Mesa Permanente por la Gestión de Riesgos]
MPHS	Multi-Purpose Household Survey
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
OI	Oxfam International
ORMUSA	Organization of Salvadoran Women for Peace [Organización de Mujeres Salvadoreñas por la Paz]
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PCGIR	Central American Policy for Integral Disaster Risk Management [Política Centroamericana de Gestión Integral de Riesgo de Desastres]
PFC	Oxfam International Capacity-building Initiative
PROCOMES	Association of Community Projects in El Salvador [Asociación de Proyectos Comunales de El Salvador]
PROVIDA	Asociación Salvadoreña de Ayuda Humanitaria ProVida
PRRD	Regional Disaster Reduction Plan [Programa de Reducción de Riesgos de Desastres]
REDES	Salvadoran Foundation for Reconstruction and Development [Fundación Salvadoreña para la Reconstrucción y el Desarrollo]
RIC	Rights in Crisis
RM	Risk management
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSI	School Safety Index
UCA	“José Simeón Cañas” Central American University
UN	United Nations
UNES	Salvadoran Ecological Unit [Unidad Ecológica Salvadoreña]
UNISDR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, sanitation, and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

CONTEXT

Since the case study was completed, COVID-19 has swept across the world. In El Salvador, local actors from civil society and communities have been key to the coronavirus response. Their contributions to the speed, capacity, and coordination of the work reflects the great strides forward on local leadership that the country has taken in recent decades. Salvadoran NGOs have demonstrated the ability to execute effective programs, and their capacity to mobilize resources from the Gates Foundation, the Start Fund, the United Nations, and aid agencies from individual countries like Spain indicates that some have earned the trust of the international community. The government was, unfortunately, relatively new when the crisis struck. Personnel transitions translated into loss of response capacity; further, the new authorities lacked experience with and appreciation of existing policies,

and they centralized decision making in ways that diminished the roles of civil society organizations. This points to the need to continue strengthening local leadership, including the capacity of local groups to hold government authorities accountable.

While local actors are moving to center stage in this emergency, in El Salvador and around the world, they face many of the same obstacles as before. International actors are still reluctant to provide them with money for overhead expenses, and still willing to transfer risks to them without providing compensation—issues that require fair, sustainable solutions, without delay. Tracking the humanitarian sector’s progress in these areas could be the subject of a future case study.



The National Roundtable for Risk Management (MPGR) conducts a disaster simulation in San Salvador. "We have worked for a long time on developing local humanitarian leadership," says MPGR project coordinator Miguel Cerón. Photo: Elizabeth Stevens/Oxfam

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document examines the factors that have led to local humanitarian leadership (LHL) in El Salvador, where a unique process within the humanitarian sector has integrated community work, social organizations, and institutional action.

Using a participatory technique known as outcome harvesting, the study organized group discussions in which participants identified the scope of the main outcomes—key positive or negative events—that had occurred over a 20-year period (1998-2019).

Three discussion questions were used to guide the process:

- 1 What are the achievements and key moments for generating LHL in El Salvador?
- 2 How has LHL evolved at the community level?
- 3 How has women's participation in LHL evolved?

Working from these questions, focus groups made up of community leaders, technical staff from local and international NGOs, and municipal representatives of the National Civil Protection System developed timelines.

This process identified the following main outcomes:

- 1 Capacity building occurred thanks to community training led by domestic NGOs, training for the NGOs themselves led by international agencies, and capacity building for representatives of the National Civil Protection System.
- 2 Community-level coordination spaces, such as community committees, opened. Communities also engaged more with NGOs through, for example, the Permanent Roundtable for Risk Management (MPGR) and Regional Coordination for Risk Management (CRGR), which advocate for stronger public policies on risk management. An additional example of this sort of coordination is the SPHERE Group, which seeks to improve humanitarian assistance through the application of the Humanitarian Charter.
- 3 Advocacy processes were developed through training for leaders, improved coordination and communication among different social organizations, and support and funding from external organizations. These efforts enabled significant changes in country norms and standards for risk management.

4 Norms and policies were developed to improve both emergency response and resilience-oriented prevention efforts. One example was the recent approval of the National Policy for Civil Protection, Risk Prevention, and Disaster Mitigation, which represented a step forward in disaster preparedness and response capacity. The policy was drafted through efforts made by the Civil Protection Department and the MPGR, and the process of building the policy involved representatives from public institutions, the private sector, civil society, universities, local communities, and the National Civil Protection System, demonstrating the importance of integrated civil society spaces for national humanitarian efforts.

5 Driven by greater capacity at all levels, knowledge was generated through research conducted by technical experts in El Salvador. Through collaboration with universities, specialized training courses on topics related to risk management have been developed.

6 Progress was made in strengthening humanitarian leadership at the community level. Community leaders moved from operating individually to organizing communities, participating in training, and building their own channels for coordination and communication. This organizing fabric has produced a strong grassroots base with its own capacity to advocate,

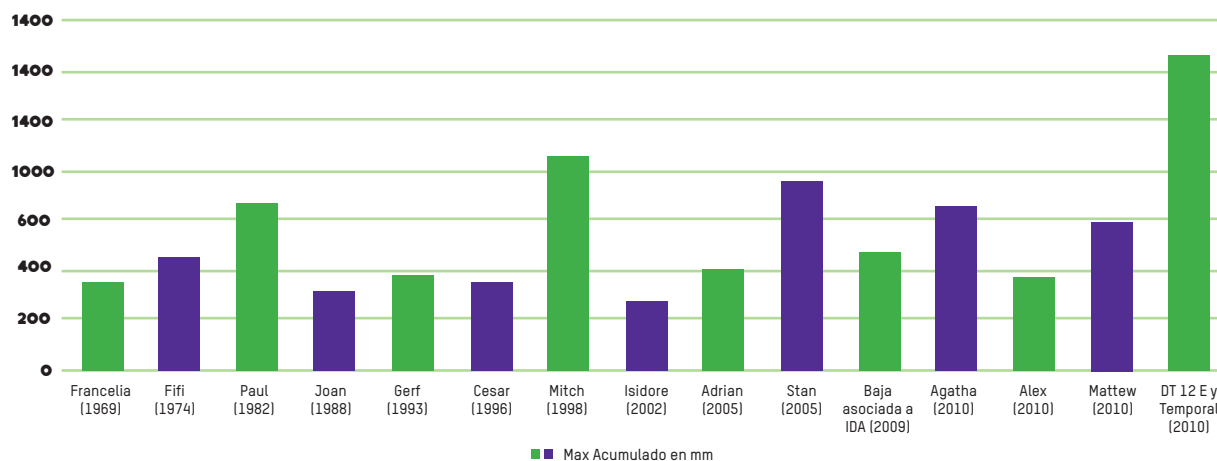
to find solutions for the situations communities face, and to demand that the state uphold their rights as citizens and address the social causes that make the Salvadoran population more vulnerable.

This analysis reveals the importance of continuing to conduct training and capacity building on risk management in communities throughout the country, as well as for NGO technical teams, to prevent any reversal in this important progress.

Community-organizing processes, which may include NGO participation, must be supported and sustained. National and regional coordination networks among NGOs should be improved to maintain spaces for learning, exchanging experiences, and supporting effective advocacy and funding.

Finally, public policy advocacy must continue to underscore that state institutions are ultimately responsible for the well-being of the population and must commit to these efforts for national social transformation.

Figure 1. Rain from tropical storms or severe events affecting El Salvador from 1960 to 2011



Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2011.

Note: Produced with data from DGOA-MARN as of 7:00 am, October 17, 2011

Any discussion of the humanitarian situation in El Salvador must address the topic of violence. Although the roots of this violence and potential solutions to it are hotly debated, it is an essential element of the context in which the majority of Salvadorans live. According to a report from the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS, 2014), El Salvador is the second most violent country in the world, with a murder rate of 41.2 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants—much higher than in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo or Afghanistan, where conflicts or wars are ongoing. As the report states, this violence has far-reaching effects, including internal displacement, migration, and negative impacts on health, education, and the economy. This situation shapes the reality in which disaster preparedness and response work in El Salvador must take place.

Given these characteristics and factors, El Salvador has made progress in its efforts to address vulnerability, developing a unique process that has positioned community leaders as key change agents for disaster preparedness and response. The assessment undertaken in this document uses the outcome-harvesting methodology to focus on the outcomes achieved by local humanitarian leadership (LHL) in the country.

This methodology compiles outcomes produced at different levels of a complex intervention. Documenting and organizing these outcomes helps to tell the story of the changes and transformations produced by local humanitarian leadership in this case. This study focuses on the outcomes or effects produced by the intervention, as well as the limitations of the actions, as identified by the stakeholders themselves.



Luisa Margot Lovo wields the megaphone during a disaster simulation in the town of San Antonio (San Miguel). “Women used to be afraid to lead in their communities, but now they are prominent in the community civil protection commissions,” says Grisel Guadalupe Batres, director San Antonio’s Gender Unit. Photo: Elizabeth Stevens/Oxfam

METHODOLOGY

Unlike some evaluation methods, outcome harvesting does not measure progress toward predetermined outcomes or objectives, but rather collects evidence of what has been achieved and works backward to determine whether and how the project or intervention contributed to the change. This methodology was chosen because it is rooted in an interpretation of the events that contribute to an outcome or consequence.

STEP 1: DESIGN THE OUTCOME HARVEST.

Outputs:

- 1) Definition of the questions that will guide the harvest exercise.
- 2) Description of the experience from which outcomes will be harvested.
- 3) List of agents involved in the experience, classified by their role in the harvest exercise.

Table 1. Step 1 activities

N°	ACTIVITY	CONTENT/METHOD
1	Review of the proposed methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the documentation roadmap (steps) • Agreement on the outputs for each step • Definition of the roles for Oxfam personnel accompanying the exercise
2	Initial meeting with stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of the experience from which outcomes will be harvested (timeline, description of actions, context, etc.) Date: February 12, 2019. Tools: timeline, identification of milestones, phase description. • Identification of relevant stakeholders involved and their roles (social actors, change agents, corroborators, etc.) in the harvest exercise.
3	Meeting to define the scope of the harvest exercise with the Oxfam team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of the questions to guide and set the scope of the harvest exercise. • Definition of the ways that outcomes will be described, the required level of detail (format), data sources, and classification of outcomes for analysis.
4	Workshops with social actors to identify and describe outcomes	Formulation of (a) who changed what , when , and where , and (b) how the change agent contributed to this outcome, with sufficient specificity and measurability to facilitate actions and decisions for the harvest exercise users.

Some of the specific concepts within the methodology are defined as follows:¹

- Change agent: Individual or organization influencing the outcome.
- Social actor: Individual, group, community, organization, or institution that changes as a result of an intervention by a change agent.
- Harvest users: Individuals who use the findings from the outcome harvesting study to make decisions or undertake actions. These users may be one or more individuals within the change agent's organization, or third parties, such as donors.
- Harvesters: Persons responsible for managing the outcome-harvesting exercise, usually internal or external evaluators.

¹ See Annex 2: Stakeholder analysis within LHL in El Salvador.

STEP 2: DATA COLLECTION AND DRAFTING OF OUTCOME DESCRIPTIONS

Outputs:

Database of appropriately described and documented outcomes with secondary or primary data, and questions about missing information.

To offer supporting evidence for each outcome identified in step 1, information was collected on the changes that occurred

in the social actors and on the change agents' contribution to this transformation. This information was compiled through a documentary review or through field visits, interviews, surveys, and other primary information sources. Six focus groups were held with community leaders from three municipalities in different areas in the country during this step, along with a focus group with representatives from national NGOs and important local structures for humanitarian work.

Table 2. Step 2 activities

N°	ACTIVITY	CONTENT/METHOD
1	Defining data sources per outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying appropriate sources Developing data collection tools (observation sheets, interviews, etc.)
2	Documentary review	According to the consultant's judgment
3	Primary data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visits Interviews Focus groups

STEP 3. ENGAGEMENT WITH CHANGE AGENTS TO FORMULATE OUTCOME DESCRIPTIONS

Output:

Database of outcomes validated and enriched by direct contributions from the change agents.

The consultant worked with the change agents to review the outcomes descriptions

that had been developed up to this point, to gain greater detail. The group also had the opportunity to identify and formulate new outcomes. In this step, a focus group was held with representatives from NGOs and important local structures in humanitarian work, and a separate focus group was conducted with municipal-level representatives from the National Civil Protection System.

Table 3. Step 3 activities

N°	ACTIVITY	CONTENT/METHOD
1	Review workshop with harvesters and change agents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of outcomes described Validation and contributions from change agents Identification of new outcomes Classification of outcomes (if needed)

STEP 4. SUBSTANTIATION

Outputs:

Document with the final description of the identified and validated outcomes.

Step 4 used new interviews or additional document review to elicit opinions and outlooks from key individuals with broad knowledge of the described and validated outcomes, as well as to gather greater detail regarding how these changes came about. This triangulation among data sources ensures the credibility of the outcomes

identified over the course of the harvesting process. In this particular case study, these key individuals had been engaged with the LHL world for more than 20 years, participating in different structures and NGOs as well as the National Civil Protection System, and had not participated in the previous steps of this methodology. Specifically, an interview was held with a representative of the Red Cross, and a meeting was held with the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) promotion team, a structure that brings together response organizations and local and international NGOs.

Table 4. Step 4 activities

N°	ACTIVITY	CONTENT/METHOD
1	Substantiation workshop with social actors and/or change agents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of outcomes described • Substantiation of the outcomes and deeper examination of the way that the change agents produced these outcomes

STEP 5. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Outputs:

Preliminary report responding to the key questions for the harvest study, according to the outcomes identified and the outcome scope diagram.

To respond to the key questions from the harvest study as defined at the start of the exercise, the harvesters organized the outcome descriptions using a database to understand, analyze, and interpret outcomes based on evidence, linking them to the harvest questions.

STEP 6. SUPPORTING THE USE OF FINDINGS

Outputs:

Agreements to follow up on the use and dissemination of the harvest study findings. Using the harvest findings and discussion of the key questions, harvesters proposed points for discussion with users to identify how findings and outcomes can be disseminated.

For this step, a workshop was held with everyone who had participated over the course of the process, and conclusions and next steps were developed through presentations and break-out groups.

Table 5. Step 6 activities

N°	ACTIVITY	CONTENT/METHOD
1	Workshop to discuss follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of harvest findings • Identification of follow-up actions

LIMITATIONS

The main limitations of this methodology concern the difficulty of convening participatory discussion groups and of coordinating interviews with different key actors in the process.

The number of people who participated in the process was high, given that the study attempted to analyze 20 years of experience across all levels of LHL. In particular, one of the greatest difficulties was finding opportunities for interviews or discussions with representatives of national government institutions. Given the short timeframe available to conduct this research, it was difficult to arrange meetings with institutional actors, who already had busy work schedules.

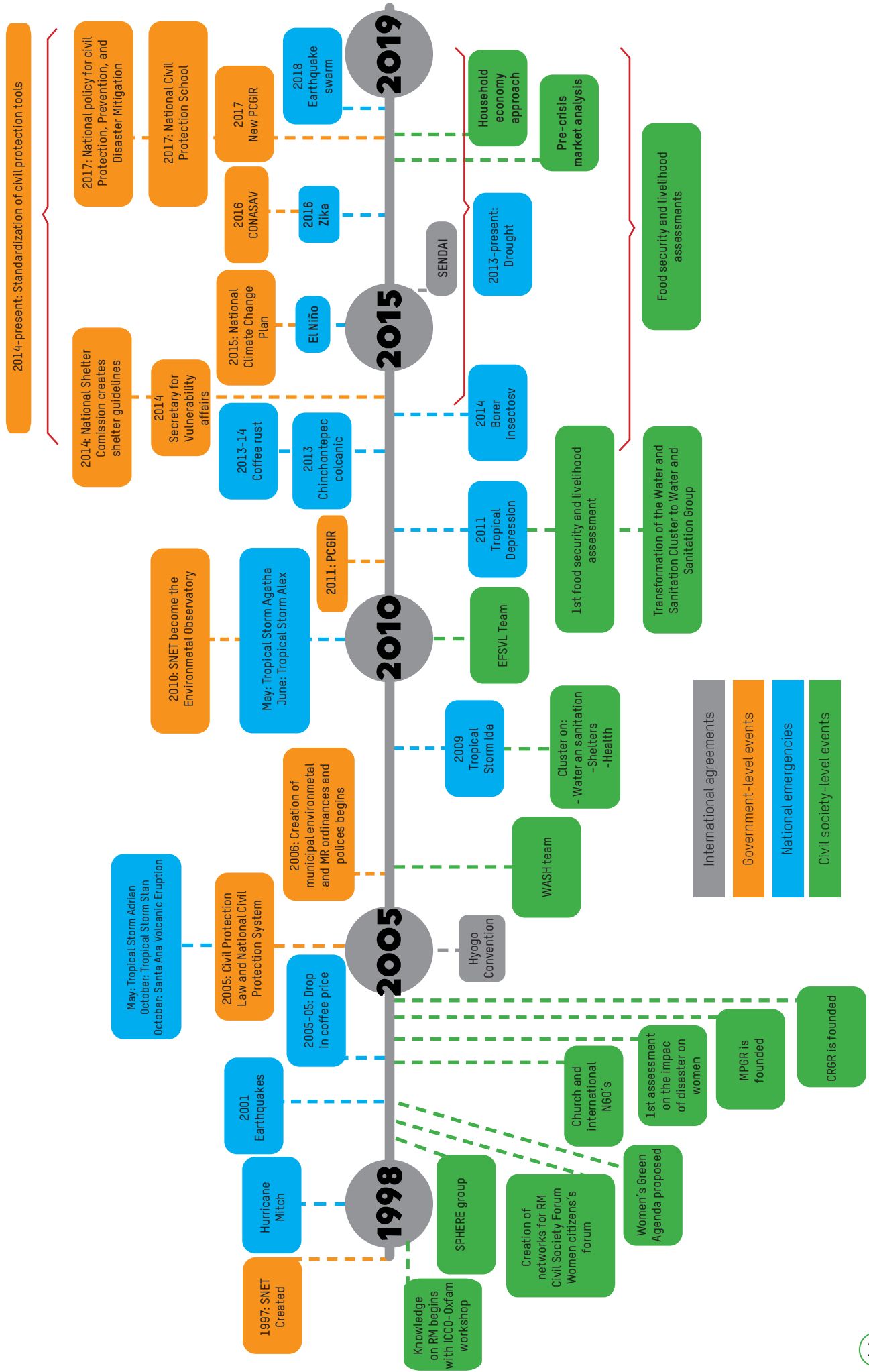
FOCUS GROUP METHODOLOGY

For each focus group, a timeline was developed to identify the key moments in LHL evolution. The first step of this process was to draw an axis and mark the most important disasters that the participants remembered along this line since 1998—the year when Hurricane Mitch hit Central America and the starting point for this case study.

The milestones marked on the timeline helped trigger participants' memories. Participants were asked questions about the government's actions as well as about the work of NGOs and the community in making LHL what it is today. This exercise took several hours. As a result of this activity, in addition to locating key moments on a timeline, participants were able to have a deeper discussion that provided additional input for the study. Figure 1 shows a sample timeline produced by a focus group.



Figure 1. Sample timeline produced by a focus group



OUTCOMES

As part of Step 1, after the initial planning meetings, three questions were defined to guide the study:

1. What are the achievements and key moments for generating LHL in El Salvador?
2. How has LHL evolved at the community level?
3. How has women's participation in LHL evolved?

All of the outcomes presented in this document attempt to answer these questions. To enable a shared understanding from the start, it was important for the study to have its own definition of and consensus around LHL for the particular case of El Salvador.

These concepts would then be reviewed and validated with the process participants. To this end, the Oxfam definition of LHL was used as a starting point for debate among the different actors who participated in each phase to validate, change, complement, and produce a country definition.

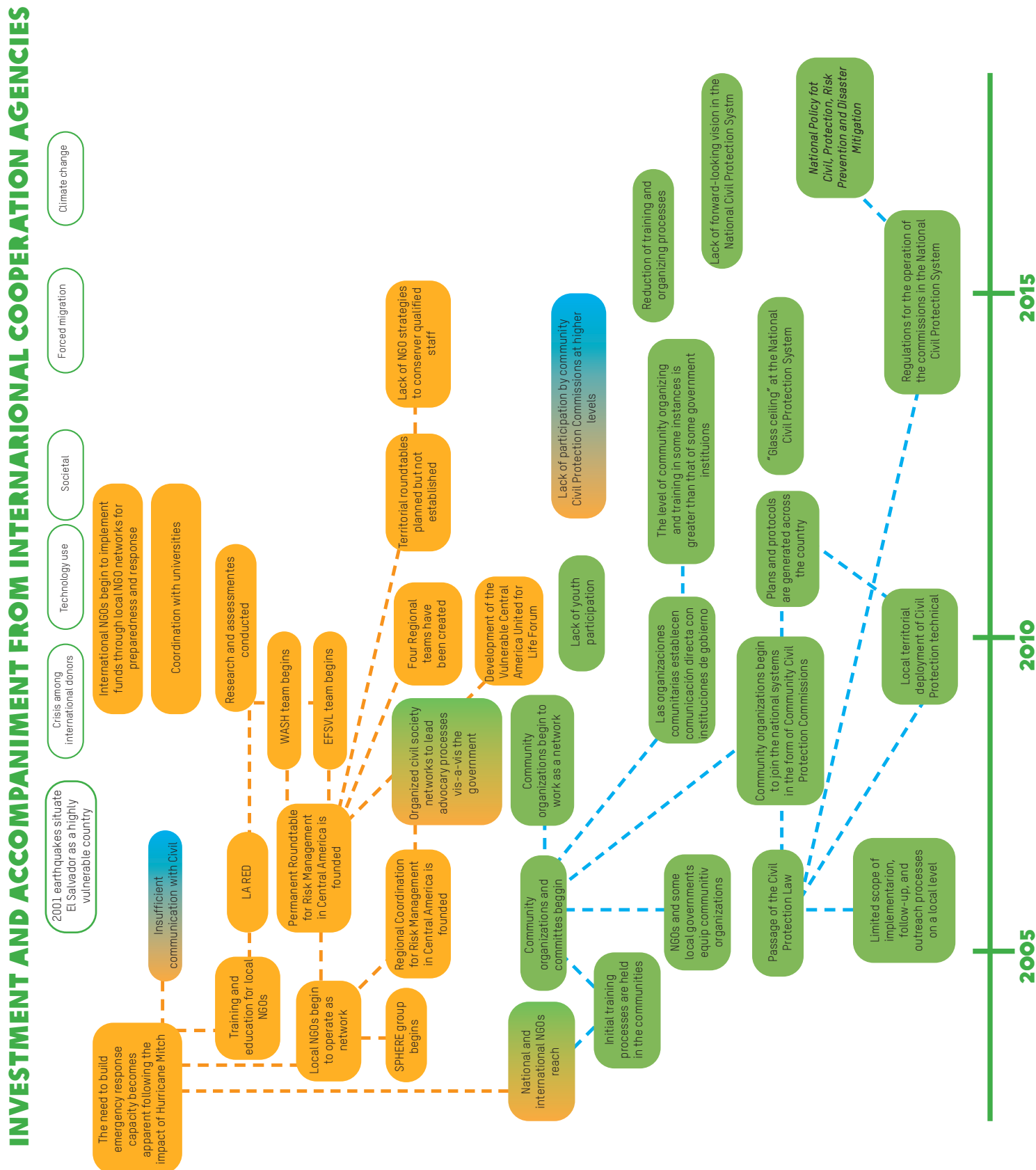
LHL was defined as a dynamic, solidarity-focused, and committed approach to local transformation processes to build resilience in the context of multiple hazards and vulnerabilities in El Salvador.

To simplify the definition, a list of principles was drawn up to help clarify the scope and main characteristics of LHL according to participants in El Salvador:

- 1 Capacity building
- 2 Local organizing (communities, NGOs, governments)
- 3 Gender justice
- 4 Fundraising
- 5 Transparency and accountability
- 6 Relationship building with international actors (development agencies, private institutions)
- 7 Humanitarian advocacy (changing policies, laws, and guidelines)
- 8 Human rights-based approach
- 9 Political party neutrality

Figure 2 presents the complete outcome harvest organized on the timeline from 1998 to 2019. It identifies relationships or linkages between outcomes and highlights transformation processes and changes for LHL. Outcomes are grouped in three main areas: community-level outcomes, outcomes among NGOs, and institutional outcomes. Additionally, Figure 2 looks at the external factors that have influenced the outcomes, and thus the processes and changes in LHL in El Salvador.

Figure 2. Diagram of positive and negative outcomes in LHL in El Salvador among communities, NGOs, and institutions, including external factors



The impacts of Hurricane Mitch in the country were the starting point for this research. An initial analysis of this event was conducted to launch the study.

Six years after the signing of the 1992 peace accord in El Salvador, the country was receiving important injections of external aid and development cooperation for national reconstruction. El Salvador's social fabric was still deeply conditioned by the war, as a result of people's direct participation in the conflict or their experiences as victims of violence.

Communities were repopulating and resettling, often in areas other than their places of origin. Community organizing processes also began to emerge based on constitutional reforms that ordered the creation of community development councils (ADESCOs). This was the context in which Hurricane Mitch hit Central America in 1998.

Hurricane Mitch was one of the greatest catastrophes in the region, causing enormous loss of human life as well as social, economic, and environmental losses. The hurricane also deepened poverty levels and revealed the region's high level of vulnerability.

In El Salvador, Hurricane Mitch especially affected the communities on the Pacific coast and along the Lempa River and Rio Grande in San Miguel. The National Emergency Committee (COEN) reported that 240 people were killed and more than 10,000 families lost their homes.

Over 84,000 affected people were lodged in 107 shelters. Most of these hurricane victims, from both urban and rural areas, lived in communities in extreme poverty that were prone to annual landslides, flooding, cave-ins, and other hazards. In the eastern region of the country, three out of five people who lost everything in the hurricane were children.

Losses from the storm totaled 1.088 billion colones² (approximately US\$125 million) in

damage to crops, housing, and basic and social infrastructure. In the agriculture sector, losses exceeded 472 million colones (approximately US\$54 million), as flooding affected thousands of hectares of land sown with sugarcane, basic grains, vegetables, coffee, and other crops. These losses represented 15 to 20 percent of domestic agricultural production.

In terms of basic grains, the hurricane destroyed 250 million pounds of maize (worth 194 million colones, or US\$22 million), along with 35 million pounds of beans (93 million colones, or US\$10.6 million) and 9.8 million pounds of rice (6.5 million colones, or US\$743,000). The amount of food lost would have fed the population for nearly two months. Steep losses were also reported in export crops such as coffee (57 million colones, or US\$6.51 million) and sugarcane (56 million colones, or US\$6.5 million). Losses of vegetables amounted to 16 million colones (US\$1.82 million).

In addition to crop losses, 1,697 head of cattle died, along with 1,161 pigs and 20,000 poultry.

With regard to infrastructure, 1,308 kilometers of paved roads and 2,644 km of unpaved road were damaged. Ten bridges were washed away in the flooding, including the two most important bridges over the Lempa River, which connected the eastern region to the rest of the country and to the southern part of Central America.

The Ministry of Education reported that Hurricane Mitch affected 818 public schools, including damaging 326 schools and leaving 229 at high risk and 263 cut off from road access. The education system overall experienced serious setbacks, as many schools were used as shelters for displaced families. Damage was also reported to 15 health clinics.

This hurricane highlighted the need to rethink how disaster responses were coordinated at all levels, making it a useful starting point for our analysis of LHL in El Salvador.

²Exchange rate of ¢8.75 = US\$1.

WHAT ARE THE ACHIEVEMENTS AND KEY MOMENTS FOR GENERATING LHL IN EL SALVADOR?

This question will be answered over the course of the general outcome analysis process and serve as a through line for all of this research. In broad strokes, however, the findings can be summarized to say that the generation of LHL in El Salvador has to do with:

- Disaster response training for communities, social organizations, and public institutions.
- Generation of community-level coordination spaces (emergency committees and community civil protection commissions), and coordination among social organizations (MPGR, CRGR, SPHERE Group, etc.).
- Advocacy to improve national norms and legislation for disaster preparedness and response.
Local territorial organization of the
- National Civil Protection System deployed across the country.

The following sections present the outcome analysis in more detail. This section does not refer to community and individual participation in the process, as these stakeholders will be addressed more specifically in subsequent questions.



OUTCOMES AMONG NGOS

1. TRAINING PROCESSES

For NGOs or humanitarian aid institutions, the first main outcome for LHL development came in the form of training for these organizations, led by other international NGOs such as Oxfam or the Inter-Church Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO). These first trainings following Hurricane Mitch helped build skills and capacities in these organizations' technical teams. The teams began to address concepts of risk management, although that term had yet to appear formally in their work. Conceptual discussions of risk management would come nearly 10 years later.

2. NETWORKING

Another outcome was the start of networking among local NGOs. One example of these efforts was the creation of the SPHERE Group in the country in 2003. “The SPHERE Group is a network of national and international organizations present in El Salvador and committed to the dignification of humanitarian action, comprehensive risk management, and development through the implementation of the Humanitarian Charter, Core Humanitarian Standards, and Minimum Sphere Standards, using capacity-building, advocacy, and accountability processes.”

The creation of this group helped establish a theoretical framework around the need to change emergency response behavior. The SPHERE Group facilitated reflection on how disaster responses had been conducted in the past and promoted an analysis of compliance with humanitarian standards to uphold the dignity of the population served after disasters. The SPHERE Group in El Salvador is made up of 10 development cooperation agencies, 9 national NGOs, and 1 university, all of which are interested in and committed to dignifying humanitarian aid from a rights-based approach, rooted in international humanitarian standards (Sphere Project). This group has conducted trainings and workshops to share knowledge and information with NGOs and national leaders, disseminating best practices for humanitarian work that responds to the population’s needs with dignity.

Hurricane Mitch clearly demonstrated how the lack of communication and coordination among the actors prevented an appropriate emergency response for the population. Following this event, NGOs began to create more spaces for coordination and joint

work to improve internal communication and organizing. This was the start of networking efforts among the NGOs. Some examples of these spaces include

- the Civil Society Forum;
- the Women Citizens’ Forum; and
- the Regional Forum for Risk Management (FRGR).

In addition to building bridges among NGOs and promoting joint work, these fora also opened spaces for advocacy. In fact, these fora produced some of the first proposals that grew into the current National Law for Civil Protection and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (hereafter, Civil Protection Law).

The Permanent Roundtable for Risk Management (MPGR) was founded in 2002 as a network of civil society organizations committed to bringing a risk management approach to working with the country’s vulnerable communities in their organizing, education, and communication efforts. The MPGR also leads research and political advocacy processes for comprehensive risk management, seeks to foster participatory and equitable political advocacy to transform drivers of risk, and pushes for the empowerment and mobilization of the most vulnerable population.

The MPGR is made up of 23 organizations: APRODEHNI, APROCSAL, ARPAS, Asociación Bálsamo, Asociación Madre Cría, Asociación PROVIDA, CODITOS, Comandos de Salvamento [Rescue Brigades], CORDES, CRIPDES, Cruz Verde [Green Cross], FECORACEN, FUMA, FUNDASPAD, FUNDECOM, FUNDESA, IMU, JPIC, OIKOS, PROCOMES, REDES, Salvadoran Lutheran Church, and UNES.

³Términos de referencia del grupo ESFERA.

The MPGR uses advocacy as an essential strategy for action. In recent years, it has advocated for the creation of the National Policy for Comprehensive Risk Management. This policy fits in the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and refers to international, regional, and national agreements to implement an inclusive and comprehensive approach to risk management (including risk prevention, mitigation, and forecasting, and a local view of risk), from a rights-based perspective with a gender lens, a generational view, and respect for ancestral knowledge.

Other sub-outcomes fit under this outcome:

- The MPGR planned the creation of local roundtables across the country, although the plans never came to fruition because of lack of funding.
- The MPGR created four regional teams (in the eastern, central, paracentral, and western regions) to extend the roundtable's work. Trainings on different topics are currently underway for these regional teams.

A few years after the emergence of the MPGR, another regional structure began: the Regional Coordination for Risk Management (CRGR). The CRGR was preceded by the Regional Forum for Risk Management (FRGR), which operated as an advocacy arm for the regional network known as Central America in Solidarity (Centroamérica Solidaria) in 2001.

The CRGR was established with participation from national organizations in the respective countries, including the Civil Coordinator for Emergencies and Reconstruction in Nicaragua, Interforos in Honduras, the Forum for Reconstruction in El Salvador, and the Coordinator of Non-Governmental Organizations and Cooperatives (CONGCOOP) in Guatemala. These organizations led the

creation of national roundtables for risk management, which subsequently became the basis for the establishment of the CRGR.

The CRGR members that make up the regional assembly are

- the National Roundtable for Risk Management (MNGR), Nicaragua, established in 2001;
- the Citizen Convergence for Risk Management, Guatemala, established in 2002;
- the Permanent Roundtable for Risk Management (MPGR), El Salvador, established in 2002; and
- the National Advocacy Roundtable for Risk Management, Honduras, established in 2005.

The national roundtables formally bring together nearly 170 local organizations, including NGOs, social organizations, church groups, universities, and municipal organizations. The main objective of the network is to promote citizen participation in public policy advocacy to transform the causes and drivers of vulnerability.

In 2010, the Vulnerable Central America United for Life Forum (FCV-UV) was founded. This forum is a space for coordination and engagement among different social movement organizations in Central America that aim to influence climate negotiations to benefit the peoples of the region.

The following networks and organizations currently sit in the forum:

- Central American Indigenous Council;
- Meso-American Campaign for Climate Justice;
- Regional Coordination for Risk Management;
- Honduran Alliance against Climate Change;
- Nicaraguan Alliance against Climate Change;
- National Association of Non-Governmental Organizations of Honduras; and
- Observatory on Latin American Sustainability.

Since it began in October 2010, the FCV-UV has organized nine yearly regional gatherings in the different Central America-4 (CA4) countries. The most recent gathering was the “IX Regional Central American Conference on Water, Climate, and Conflict: Weaving Alliances for Sustainability,” held in El Salvador in September 2018.

In addition to improved capacity and networking connections among the social organizations, another significant outcome was produced: international NGOs began to invest funds through local partners. This shift had an important catalytic effect on entities such as the MPGR and the CRGR.

3. CREATION OF SPECIALIZED TEAMS

In 2007, the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Promotion (WASH) Team was created in El Salvador. The precursor to this group was the Capacity-Building Program (PFC) launched by Oxfam International (OI) in 2005, with the aim of improving technical, political, and management skills and promoting OI and its partners in Central America. The end

result of this program was to create the Humanitarian Action Group (GAH-CAMEXCA), which transitioned into the Rights in Crisis (RIC) team, focusing on regional humanitarian promotion work.

The vision behind these iterations was important, but when emergency response trainings were provided, after many regional meetings and workshops that lasted for only a few days each, partner staff and teams would return to their countries with minimal knowledge about how to respond to a real-life emergency in which they would need to provide water, sanitation, and hygiene in affected communities. Despite good intentions, partners with no previous experience in WASH were often unable to meet Oxfam or SPHERE standards for emergency response. Without appropriate follow-up, people forgot most of the key information they had learned in training or they lacked the practical experience needed to faithfully replicate these concepts in real life.⁴

In August 2007, after one of these WASH workshops with partners and allies, local partners in El Salvador contacted Oxfam America (OA) to request help creating a national WASH Team that could truly function in an emergency. The team began with 17 volunteers from different partner organizations (AMS, Comandos, CORDES, CRIPDES, FUNDESA, ORMUSA, PROCOMES, PROVIDA, REDES), municipal personnel from the cities of San Salvador and Santa Tecla, and volunteers (Red Cross). Oxfam spent two years training this team to be specialists in water, sanitation, and hygiene for emergencies. The training included topics such as the installation of water tanks after an emergency, water quality monitoring, cleaning of contaminated latrines and hand-dug wells, fumigation, waste management, pest control, and hygiene. In the two subsequent years, the team visited 150 vulnerable communities and

⁴WASH Team experience documentation, 2014.

passed this training along to local volunteers. By expanding the base of WASH knowledge in El Salvador, the team has become a national-level entity with members that can be deployed on demand. The team operates independently from the national government, although it coordinates with local and national governments as well as the National Civil Protection System during emergencies. Another outcome in this category—going hand in hand with the previous outcome—was the launch of the Emergency Food Security and Vulnerable Livelihoods (EFSVL) Team. This team emerged informally in 2010 when Oxfam began a dialogue and coordination process with its local partners to work on issues of food security. These discussions ultimately led to the creation of a specialized team on this topic.

This group has been able to respond to emergencies with food distribution in collaboration with the World Food Programme (via general distribution or food-for-work) and offer cash for work or agricultural rehabilitation.

In 2013, based on the success of the WASH Team and the mandate to provide emergency food security as well, the team was formalized. Oxfam conducted trainings on different types of responses, rapid assessments, and other interventions. In its recent activities, such as the creation of the team-strengthening plan in 2017, the team included members from AMS, CORDES, FECORACEN, FUMA, FUNDESA, FUNSALPRODESE, IMU, Mangle, PROVIDA, and REDES.

The lack of funding means that this team depends on grant projects to operate, a situation that prevents sustained processes over time.

4.DEVELOPMENT OF ADVOCACY PROCESSES

The building of capacity, skills, and knowledge, and the creation of organizing structures and networks in the country and across the region, has led to strong pressure on governments to find appropriate solutions for the people and to design public policies to bring these solutions to life. This advocacy has also pushed for opportunities for dialogue with citizens. Spaces for ongoing work with the government were also created to pursue changes in standards and policies (especially in terms of national and local planning norms).

Capacity-building efforts have been focused on local NGOs and communities themselves, and as a result of this learning and experience, advocacy processes have gained technical sophistication. The Civil Protection Law limits community participation in municipal commissions, but local political advocacy has enabled greater participation by community leaders in these spaces.

Another result of this process has been that working documents generated by the MPGR have been considered as inputs in the proposed National Law for Civil Protection and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, as well as the proposed National Policy for Civil Protection, Risk Prevention, and Disaster Mitigation.

5. KNOWLEDGE GENERATION

One important outcome is linked to the development of research and assessments. Increased local technical capacity has allowed NGOs and specialized national teams—such as the WASH and EFSVL Teams—to lead studies on topics such as water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion and the impact of events on food security and livelihoods. One such study is a series of impact assessments on the effects of drought on food security and livelihoods, conducted each year by the EFSVL Team to study the continual appearance of this phenomenon in Central America over the past decade.

Engagement with universities is another outcome that has expanded training and knowledge on humanitarian issues, producing a formal academic basis for knowledge generation. Higher education institutions are key actors in providing training through the National Civil Protection School. The CRGR, working through the MPGR, periodically organizes a certificate course on humanitarian leadership and resilience backed by a framework agreement with the University of Washington and the Central American University (UCA) in El Salvador to oversee the course.

In conjunction with the University of El Salvador, the Metropolitan Observatory for Risk Management was launched in 2014. The project, supported by Oxfam Belgium, uses field observation and interviews with local inhabitants to provide real and up-to-date information for public policy-makers and academic researchers.

Another important outcome is improved access to scientific information on the humanitarian world for the Salvadoran population, thanks to the Network of Social Studies in Disaster Prevention in the Americas (LA RED). This network has a virtual structure driven by a Promotion Group at its center. The Promotion Group is currently made up of 31 researchers

from Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, the United States, and Venezuela. The structure is complemented by the involvement of numerous specialists from different fields and organizations, who bring in various streams of research, training, information, education, practical applications, and policy formulation. This organization stands out as an essential actor in conducting research across the continent, and especially in El Salvador, as well as a driver of educational processes following Hurricane Mitch. It has provided Salvadoran society with access to scientific analysis of issues related to disaster vulnerability, as shown in our research on the early part of this study period. Some examples of the relevant work for El Salvador conducted by this network include the following:

- Iniciativas de coordinación y sinergia entre las convenciones multilaterales ambientales en la República de El Salvador [Initiatives for coordination and synergy among multilateral environmental conventions in the Republic of El Salvador], 2003
- Desarrollo sostenible y reducción de riesgos en el Bajo Lempa, El Salvador: Experiencias con la participación local [Sustainable development and risk reduction in the Lower Lempa of El Salvador: Experiences with local participation], 2003
- Gestión de riesgos a nivel local: Conceptos y experiencias en Centroamérica [Local level risk management: Concepts and experiences in Central America], 2003
- Algunas notas para la reflexión a propósito del terremoto de El Salvador [Notes for reflection around the earthquake in El Salvador], 2001
- Desastres y desarrollo: Hacia un entendimiento de las formas de

construcción social de un desastre: El caso del huracán Mitch en Centroamérica [Disasters and development: Toward an understanding of the social constructs around disaster: The case of Hurricane Mitch in Central America], 2000.

6. NEGATIVE OUTCOMES AMONG NGOS

Social organizations reported that communication with the civil protection authorities after Hurricane Mitch was insufficient and not fluid. This reality gradually changed over the course of the different training processes, networking efforts, and passage of the Civil Protection Law.

Another negative outcome has been the lack of sustainable engagement on professional growth and research on comprehensive risk management between universities and El Salvador's humanitarian coordination and risk management mechanisms. Interviews and workshops conducted for this research reveal that stakeholders view this challenge as an essential area for growth.

The reduction of international development cooperation for El Salvador, with a notable drop in funds allocated to NGOs, has led to diminished capacity to conserve qualified staff. Fewer grants are being made for risk management topics, affecting the organizations' local territorial capacity. The main donor countries for projects and social initiatives drastically cut back their funding on these topics.

OUTCOMES AMONG INSTITUTIONS

1. NATIONAL CIVIL PROTECTION AND DISASTER PREVENTION AND MITIGATION LAW, 2005

The impact of Hurricane Mitch forced state institutions to rethink how they intervened and acted with regard to emergency preparedness, and especially disaster prevention (Geólogos del Mundo, 2010). In 2000 the first legislative bill proposed in consensus with the then-called National Emergency Committee (COEN) was submitted. "It was only in 2005, however, that the proposed legislation came to the floor once again, thrust forward by the threat of Hurricane Adrian. The bill's core content was reformulated, leading to the creation and passage of the Civil Protection and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Law in El Salvador in that year" (Geólogos del Mundo, 2010).

The objective of the law is to "effectively prevent, mitigate, and address natural and man-made disasters in the country, and deploy public civil protection services as needed, which must be widespread, compulsory, ongoing, and regular to ensure the lives and safety of people as well as the security of private and publicly held goods" (Government of El Salvador, 2005).

In workshops conducted with technicians from the National Civil Protection System, participants reported that after the passage of the law, the enforcement, monitoring, and territorial implementation of the law were limited. This began to change little by little, and in 2010 civil protection technical staff were deployed into the territories.

Thanks to the establishment of the legal framework, the deployment of local technicians, and ongoing NGO support, numerous community-planning processes were conducted, including risk-mapping exercises, the development of service protocols, and work plans. Overall, disaster responses were documented and monitored more systematically.

In 2017, under this law, the operational regulations for National Civil Protection commissions were developed. These regulations aim to establish and oversee the terms and conditions for operating the commissions under the National Civil Protection System, created by Article 7 of the National Law for Civil Protection and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation. The regulations also describe the support that the commissions should receive from the General Civil Protection and Disaster Mitigation and Protection Department to ensure coordination, effectiveness, and efficient action for prevention, mitigation, response, rehabilitation, and reconstruction.

2. SECTOR-SPECIFIC TECHNICAL COMMISSIONS

Under the National Civil Protection Plan, these technical commissions are mechanisms created by the National Civil Protection System to coordinate with different sectors and actors (civil society, donors, private companies, and government) during emergencies. There are eight sector-specific technical commissions:

- Technical-scientific
- Emergency services
- Security
- Health
- Infrastructure and basic services
- Logistics
- Shelters
- 8 ● International humanitarian aid

Each technical commission is led by the institution charged with overseeing this sector or by institutions with the necessary experience and capacity.

3. CENTRAL AMERICAN POLICY FOR COMPREHENSIVE DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT (PCGIR)

The genesis of the Central American Policy for Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management (PCGIR), formally approved in 2010, is a series of regional efforts that began in 1999 with the approval of the Strategic Framework for Vulnerability and Disaster Reduction in Central America. This framework represented a leap forward, moving from a reactive approach toward a vision of sustainable development.

In 2015 the previous risk policy was used as a reference and working document to review and adjust the PCGIR and harmonize it with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015–2030. The new PCGIR “faces the challenge of building a resilient region for present and future generations, in harmony with the environment for full development of life and reduction of poverty and inequality, as well as advancement toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a holistic, integrative, and multi-dimensional vision. The policy seeks to provide guidance and a framework for action for comprehensive disaster risk management in the region and for each of the countries” (CEPREDENAC and SICA, 2017).

4. REGIONAL DISASTER REDUCTION PLAN, 2006–2015 (PRRD)

The Regional Disaster Reduction Plan (PRRD) was developed in 2006 as a guide for local, municipal, territorial, national, and regional planning to reduce socio-natural disasters. This plan facilitates the creation and identification of internal policies, priorities, and actions to reduce disaster risk in the context of sustainable development. It has enabled national and regional institutions, as well as civil society groups, public and private investment programs, and others in the region, to apply strategic and operational objectives to their planning processes.

5. NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND VULNERABILITY (CONASAV)

In 2016 the Salvadoran government launched CONASAV with the goal of producing and signing short-, medium-, and long-term environmental agreements and commitments. According to Decree No. 8

The Council will be made up of representatives from different sectors of Salvadoran society: academia, finance, municipalities, business, transportation, indigenous communities, churches, political parties, media outlets, international organizations and donors, think tanks and research centers, nongovernmental organizations working on environmental sustainability and vulnerability, and individuals with capacity, experience, and/or specialties in the field of environmental sustainability and vulnerability. Additionally, representatives or authorities from each of the executive branch agencies and autonomous official institutions will sit on the council (Government of El Salvador, 2016).

One important action taken by this council was the launch of the Sustainable El Salvador Plan (CONASAV, 2018), which proposes a working agenda with 28 core agreements and 131 targets spread across four main areas: comprehensively managing risk for disaster reduction and climate change, generating knowledge and a culture of sustainability, fostering productive transformation, and strengthening public institutions. The MPGR was able to procure a government commitment to enact the National Civil Protection Policy as part of this planning process.

6. NATIONAL POLICY FOR CIVIL PROTECTION, RISK PREVENTION, AND DISASTER MITIGATION

The National Policy for Civil Protection, Risk Prevention, and Disaster Mitigation was passed in 2018 with the following objective:

To promote improved conditions for human security and development for the Salvadoran population through the adoption of a holistic approach to disaster risk management and reduction by the Salvadoran state, with the goal of correcting the structural causes and drivers of risk and preventing, reducing, and/or avoiding the generation of new risks. Additionally, the policy will implement the needed measures to optimize preparedness, response, rehabilitation, and reconstruction in disaster scenarios (Government of El Salvador, 2019).

This document was produced in harmony with the international requirements under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 21–Paris) accords, and the Central American Policy for Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management (CEPREDENAC and SICA, 2017).

The approval of this policy is a significant achievement, as it creates a normative structure that overcomes the reactive vision that runs through the Civil Protection Law and recognizes the importance of a more comprehensive approach to risk. One example of this shift in thinking is that the policy recognizes inclusion as one of its key principles, opening the door to a human rights framework.

7. MINEDUCYT AND RISK MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MINEDUCYT) has been a key stakeholder since the 2001 earthquakes. The social vulnerability left by the earthquakes brought the need to improve prevention and risk management in schools to the attention of education authorities. As a consequence, the ministry created a risk management plan and began to include these topics in the curriculum. In 2009 the school curriculum adopted a comprehensive vision for risk management, putting it a step ahead of the other state institutions.

El Salvador became the second country in Latin America to officially adopt the school risk management planning tool. In two years, the method reached 90 percent of the country's student population. Additionally, El Salvador has conducted national simulations in each of the past four years, testing the risk plans and the incorporation of risk management into the school curriculum. Multiple simulations are also held in selected schools.

School safety indexes (ISEs) have also been implemented as one stage in the school protection planning process. These indexes help detect infrastructural, social, and ecological hazards that could affect the school and educational community.

HOW HAS LHL EVOLVED ON A COMMUNITY LEVEL?

1. TRAINING PROCESSES

On a community level, the arrival of NGOs in local territories to work with the civilian population and improve their skills, knowledge, and capacity for disaster preparedness and response was the first outcome that represented an inflection point for LHL development. Different local NGOs, with support from international NGOs and donors, offered a wide range of training and capacity-building opportunities for community leaders. Some of the organizations that were mentioned in community focus groups in the three municipalities where this research was conducted are listed below, although it is not an exhaustive list; many more organizations were also involved in these efforts across the country:

- Fundación Maquilishuat [Maquilishuat Foundation] (FUMA);
- Fundación para el Desarrollo [Foundation for Development] (FUNDESA);

- Asociación Fundación para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Comunal de El Salvador [Association Foundation for Cooperation and Community Development in El Salvador] (CORDES);
- Organización de Mujeres Salvadoreñas por la Paz [Organization of Salvadoran Women for Peace] (ORMUSA);
- Asociación de Proyectos Comunales de El Salvador [Association for Community Projects in El Salvador] (PROCOMES);
- Asociación PROVIDA;
- Cruz Verde Salvadoreña [Salvadoran Green Cross]; and
- Fundación Salvadoreña de Desarrollo y Vivienda Mínima [Salvadoran Foundation for Development and Basic Housing] (FUNDASAL).

These trainings were a launch point for what is now known as risk management. Initially, the trainings focused specifically on disaster response rather than addressing prevention and resilience building more broadly through ongoing assessments of the social, political, and geographic conditions that increase the population's vulnerability. Topics included in the trainings initially included

- first aid;
- shelter coordination;
- citizen participation;
- health;
- emotional support; and
- community organizing.

Over the years, the processes became more specialized and covered a greater breadth of topics to develop comprehensive risk management in the country.

2. COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

Community organizing was an essential component in this capacity building. Focus groups of men and women highlighted that one main problem during Hurricane Mitch was that each person or family attempted to find

a way to meet their needs individually. The consequences of the disaster were enormous owing in part to the lack of community organizing and cooperation.

After these trainings, thanks to the group identity built among the participants, some of the first community emergency committees were created with support from NGOs. The formation of these committees was another important outcome in building LHL, as it sparked organizing processes around the country and enabled a deeper understanding that one of the vulnerability factors that had to be addressed was the lack of cooperation within the population.

In addition to this organizing process, NGOs supported committees in their planning processes. These initiatives meant professionalizing the work of the civilian population by building capacity and allowing communities to put these capacities into action, fostering awareness around the importance of organizing, and planning risk management work through documented tools. Subsequently, the NGOs and some municipal governments began to equip community committees with more physical tools such as shovels, pickaxes, and first-aid kits. This allowed community organizations to feel like truly functional teams for disaster scenarios. This equipment also built community responsibility; the committees would be the key actors responsible for maintaining and taking care of these resources.

Capacity- and skill-building for community organizations has had a clear evolution: at times institutions themselves have handed over part of their disaster response to these groups, as their capacities outpaced the institution's own. One example of this dynamic was shelter coordination during the impact of Tropical Storm 12E in 2011.



3. LEADERSHIP BY ORGANIZED COMMUNITIES

Community organizing has produced a series of results. The first effect has been the establishment of direct channels for communication with public institutions. This engagement has promoted the empowerment of organized civil society groups, which have seen their influencing capacity grow. Each focus group held for this study highlighted this point. Community needs are now communicated to public institutions in a clearer and collective way, lending more strength and weight to these demands.

Municipal governments have also recognized this positive change, which allows institutions to directly understand the problems in each community and determine how to prioritize needs, considering inhabitants' opinions. Focus groups identified a number of community improvements as a result of advocacy activities, but one point stands out above the rest: organized communities, NGOs, and humanitarian response institutions all intervened to urge approval of the National Policy for Civil Protection, Risk Prevention, and Disaster Mitigation, which will be discussed further in the following sections.

Another important effect of community organizing has been the integration of community commissions into the National Civil Protection System. When the National Law for Civil Protection and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation was passed in 2005, the understanding was that community organizations would be an essential part of the humanitarian structure enacting civil protection efforts on a local level. The law outlined a national system made up of

1. the National Commission for Civil Protection, Prevention, and Disaster Mitigation;
2. Departmental Commissions for Civil Protection, Prevention, and Disaster Mitigation; and
3. Municipal and Community Commissions for Civil Protection, Prevention, and Disaster Mitigation.

These commissions were mandated to coordinate their risk prevention work and act in concert in case of a disaster (Government of El Salvador, 2005).

4. NEGATIVE OUTCOMES OR AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT ON A COMMUNITY LEVEL

One possible area for improvement concerns work arrangements. The work performed by community leaders is exclusively on a volunteer basis, a situation that makes it difficult for these leaders to participate in every activity planned. Other responsibilities may interfere with these leaders' volunteer activities, or the volunteers may lack funds for travel. Youth participation is also in short supply. The intergenerational knowledge transfer needed to sustain these processes does not appear to be underway.

Often the different groups and commissions (such as the community civil protection commission or the health committee) are made up of the same individuals, concentrating the workload and preventing greater decentralization of responsibilities in the community. These dynamics mean that the committee members cannot always participate in all of the activities or fulfill all of their responsibilities.

Participants also cited a reduction in funding and donations from NGOs, which has produced cutbacks in training and equipment for the community commissions.

Finally, community civil protection commission members have limited participation within the broader national structure. Only one community leader participates in a municipal-level commission, and no community representatives are included in the higher-level entities. This gap complicates direct communication between the authorities and local territories.

HOW HAS WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LHL EVOLVED?

FROM MALE-DOMINATED PARTICIPATION TO WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT ON A COMMUNITY LEVEL

The question of men's and women's participation in evolution of LHL over the past 20 years was a topic of debate in the focus groups. At the start, participation was male-dominated: it was imagined that only men had the strength required for work during emergencies and that women should stay back to take care of the rest of the family.

When NGOs arrived in the territories for disaster prevention and response work, most of the community committee members were men. Over time and with ongoing training

processes, however, women's participation has grown exponentially. Now, in many community civil protection commissions, women are in the majority.

Although women's participation has also continued to grow in other community-organizing spaces, a patriarchal culture persists in the country: when women hold positions of power, their capacity to perform these roles is often called into question. This dynamic demonstrates the need to continue to work on issues of equality and gender equity to overcome bias and prejudice, empower women, and raise men's awareness of the realities of machismo in society and its negative effects on people's lives, regardless of their sex.

SLOWER PROGRESS IN GENDER EQUALITY ON A TECHNICAL LEVEL

In the consultations with technical actors conducted for this research, when discussions turned to gender equality, researchers were met with a resounding silence. This response reveals the need for further progress on this issue: while certain attitudes and thoughts have indeed changed, other dynamics have emerged. Men have remained silent out of fear of being judged, suggesting that they have not truly taken ownership of the discourse around gender equality and equity.

Discussions with women working in the humanitarian field uncovered multiple situations in which respondents reported feeling undervalued because of their identity as women. These respondents shared accounts of meetings in which women were in the minority and in which one of them would share an idea that seemed to gain no traction among the participants, only to have

a man repeat the same idea minutes later, restating the ideas and proposals that the woman had raised, to widespread praise from his colleagues. This is just one example of the different treatment that women face when working in the humanitarian world.

An additional worthwhile document is Women's Leadership in Humanitarian Settings in Central America, by Seigneur and Chacón (2017) from Oxfam America, which analyzes women's participation in the humanitarian field and the daily challenges they face.

FAILURE TO FULLY ADDRESS GENDER ISSUES BY THE NATIONAL CIVIL PROTECTION SYSTEM

This study also found the need to promote equality and a gender lens within the National Civil Protection System. Despite laws on the books to protect women, such as the Special Comprehensive Law for a Life Free from Violence Against Women (Government of El Salvador, 2010) and the National Equality Plan, data on gender inequality in El Salvador make it clear that the fight for equality must still be a priority (DIGESTYC, 2019).

The report on the situation and condition of women for 2017, published by the Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women (ISDEMU), shows that women's participation is on the rise in all levels of the state. Nonetheless, this growth is not consistent across all state structures. In the executive branch, women's representation has grown from nearly 8 percent in 2014 to 23 percent in 2019, demonstrating the need for more progress in this area.

ISDEMU (2017) identified a series of tasks for improving risk management while promoting gender equality:

- Include the principles of equality and non-discrimination in environmental and comprehensive risk management mechanisms and instruments.
- Raise awareness and train personnel in institutions to make strides toward substantive equality.
- Incorporate women into environmental and comprehensive risk management processes.
- Enhance information and monitoring systems by including and generating data for gender indicators in the field.

An analysis of the National Civil Protection Commission showed that only 3 of the 15 institutions are represented by women, revealing the lack of a gender lens in the institution's work. The Civil Protection Law itself uses exclusively male-gendered language around the constitution of the civil protection commissions. These signals, along with information on women's participation in state institutions, reinforce the need to continue training and capacity building for gender equality and to make progress toward parity in national structures.



Members of the community civil protection commission in San Antonio (San Miguel) take part in a disaster simulation. International, national, and local NGOs have helped train communities in disaster management.
Photo: Elizabeth Stevens/Oxfam

EXTERNAL FACTORS



This section describes factors that are not recognized as outcomes in the LHL process in El Salvador but should be considered to gain a full understanding of how the landscape has evolved.

Investment and support from international development cooperation agencies

Financial and technical support from international actors has been a key part of LHL development. Some important examples are listed below:

- **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation:** The foundation has financed multiple interventions to build local disaster preparedness and response capacity since 2012, with Phase I of a project that is currently in its third iteration. These interventions are based on the idea that investing in local humanitarian response capacity helps reduce social vulnerability.
- **European Union:** The European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations office (ECHO) was created in 1992 as an expression of European solidarity with people in need around the world. ECHO currently works with 226 partners, including 18 United Nations agencies, 201 NGOs, and 3 international Red Cross and Red Crescent organizations, as well as 4 specialized organizations from the EU member states. The first projects, which focused on preparedness actions for organizations and vulnerable communities, were implemented in 1996. Following these initial projects, the creation of the Disaster Preparedness Program of the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Office (DIPECHO) was formalized, instituting community-based projects to limit disaster losses and save lives in disaster-prone areas. Ten DIPECHO grants have been issued in El Salvador, the

latest in 2017. The goal of the program was to undertake risk management initiatives in four main areas of the country, together with four partners (Oxfam, Save the Children, Plan International, and the Spanish Red Cross) and in coordination with the Vulnerability Secretariat.

- **Italian Agency for Development Cooperation:** This cooperation agency has been working in the country for more than 30 years, with multiple investments and processes for local capacity building. One important example of this aid is the Local Organizing Manual for Emergency Situations (PAHO, 1992) in El Salvador.
- **United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA):** Since 2003 USAID/OFDA has responded to multiple disasters in El Salvador, including flooding, volcanic eruptions, droughts, pests, and tropical storms. Its disaster aid has contributed to emergency efforts led by local and international NGOs and to support for the Government of El Salvador. In addition to direct assistance in the event of disasters, USAID/OFDA supports ongoing disaster risk reduction activities and capacity-building initiatives for disaster response in El Salvador.
- **United Nations and the country humanitarian team:** This humanitarian team is made up of 15 UN agencies, 15 international NGOs, 5 international cooperation agencies, and 5 representatives from the Red Cross. The team was established in 2012 with the intention of generating more effective and coordinated humanitarian responses.

REDUCED INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

The Reality of Aid page for Oxfam and Intermón explains that Spain's development cooperation budget fell by 73.5 percent from 2008 to 2015. Spain allocated only 1.261 billion euros (0.13 percent of its GDP) to international aid in 2015 (Oxfam Intermón, n.d.).

Although Spain is the member of the OECD Development Assistance Committee that has cut its aid contributions the most (it is now ranked 26th out of 28), this dynamic has been repeated in many countries as a result of the 2008 economic crisis. It has had a direct negative impact on LHL development in El Salvador. The lack of grant funding has led to a decline in all sorts of processes around the country, including training, community organizing, and equipment allocation.

TECHNOLOGY USE

The development and democratization of technology have had enormous effects on LHL in El Salvador. Each interview subject and focus group mentioned that, early in the process, the use of radio for early warnings was a great change that helped prevent disasters. For example, when men or women went to the river to collect water or wash laundry and noticed heavy rains in the upper watershed, there had been no way to alert inhabitants downstream. Flash flooding in the lower watershed would come without warning and cost human lives. With the arrival of radio communication, people on higher ground could quickly warn the downstream population to stay away from the river. Over time, other technological tools have become widespread. Actors now communicate and coordinate through free applications such as WhatsApp.

SOCIETAL VIOLENCE

In 2018, for the fourth year in a row, the homicide rate in El Salvador exceeded the

levels in Guatemala and Honduras, the other countries that make up the Northern Triangle of Central America (Dalby and Carranza, 2019). El Salvador had about 51 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2018, five times higher than the threshold set by the United Nations for epidemic violence. Seven to ten people go missing every day in El Salvador, especially in the municipalities that report the highest homicide rates. Youth between the ages of 19 and 29 are at the greatest risk.

These circumstances hamper LHL development in El Salvador, and especially efforts to work more with young people. Many families do not want their young members to leave their homes because of fear of the disproportionate violence. As a result, few youth participate in coordination and training spaces for humanitarian action. It should be noted that violence forces not only international migration flows; internal migration is also prevalent.

Societal violence generates new humanitarian scenarios and thus the entry of new actors into this world: organizations that have historically focused on human rights are now involved in humanitarian processes such as shelter management. It is important to recognize these new stakeholders as humanitarian actors, to enable and begin learning processes about the work in this field.

FORCED MIGRATION

Migration is a phenomenon with multiple drivers. While economic drivers are widespread (lack of employment, low wages, lack of opportunities), climate change and violence in its different forms (gang threats, extortion, crime) also carry weight in this dynamic. This migration has a direct impact on LHL. The flight of local inhabitants from their communities threatens the sustainability of local leadership processes.

CLIMATE CHANGE

In recent years, climate change has had severe economic consequences for Salvadoran households and been a driver of migration. Agricultural losses due to drought and unexpected torrential rains have been enormous. These losses can be devastating for subsistence farmers in El Salvador, and members of the affected families have begun to migrate internally or leave the country.

CONCLUSIONS

This outcome-harvesting exercise has generated the following conclusions:

- Community leaders working together with local and international NGOs have made LHL in El Salvador a special case and an example of successful practice.
 - Community organizing and training are at the foundation of the current concepts of LHL in the country. These processes are cyclical and require ongoing follow-up and iterations at all levels to maintain progress and prevent backsliding in organizing and capacity building.
 - Coordination and exchange among local communities and NGOs are key to effectively advocating for public policies that have a vision of comprehensive risk management.
 - Public policy advocacy on risk management-related issues has led to improved disaster preparedness and response in El Salvador and raised awareness among state actors, as duty bearers, of their responsibilities vis-à-vis citizens.
- Ongoing access to resources, with funding for knowledge generation, coordination, and advocacy, has made LHL possible.
 - Emergencies in El Salvador are often “invisible” and attract only modest funds compared with those in other less-developed countries. This situation has led to greater development of local capacity rather than dependence on international experts for humanitarian action.
 - Societal violence has limited youth participation.
 - Technology use is an important factor to consider in the humanitarian field; the experience in El Salvador demonstrates how technology can enable more rapid and effective progress in emergency preparedness and response.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At the conclusion of this research process, after discussion and debate around the outcomes, the following recommendations emerged:

- **Strengthen organizing and capacity-building processes and information dissemination on a community level.**

It is important to continue to build the population's disaster response capacity and to strengthen local organizing and citizen participation. While there are now trained community leaders, much of the population is still unaware of the importance of community organizing for disaster prevention and response. One finding that emerged from the workshop is the population's lack of general knowledge of the national laws and policies that protect their rights and constitute a legal foundation for community action to reduce vulnerability.

- **Promote community participation of the youth population** to spark intergenerational participation and engagement.

Young people should participate in decision-making spaces to build their awareness and responsibility. The use of information and communication tools should be considered and enhanced as a way to engage more easily with this sector of the population.

- **Use technology in risk management processes to help stimulate youth participation.** This study demonstrates that technology can improve risk management and generate tools for

intervention, information, research, and advocacy.

- **Design and implement projects with a disaster prevention approach.** It is important to continue to strengthen forward-looking processes in risk management. In this regard, building community resilience and strengthening linkages between risk management and development programs will be key. It would be interesting to create community work plans with this forward-looking vision, so that communities have their own autonomous path for development in addition to the work of the institutions and NGOs.

- **Formulate community interventions by NGOs or institutions based on real and participatory community assessments.** Interventions should not be created from behind a desk with a view only toward possible donors.

- **Study the history of organizing work in the country,** including the origins of community conscientization and organizing from the years of armed conflict in El Salvador.

- **Shift training and awareness-raising processes from a purely response-focused approach toward a more comprehensive approach to risk management at all levels.** It is especially important to conduct advocacy to expand this vision within national legislation.

- **Strengthen coordination between institutions operating in the same territories to avoid duplication of effort.** The issue of duplication, which emerged over the course of the study, merits deeper exploration. Local people complained that they are asked to repeat

the same processes again and again for each organization working in the area. Addressing this concern requires building spaces for coordination and networking.

- **Build upon the engagement with universities to continue education and research processes.**
- **Continue advocacy by communities and NGOs** to push state institutions to take responsibility as duty bearers of the population's rights. Potential topics for advocacy that emerged over the course of the study include reviews of national budgets, fiscal reform, and taxation of landholdings.
- **Fill gaps left by previous administrations.** When new actions are planned, the new government in El Salvador should seek to address such gaps. One key step will be the implementation of the National Civil Protection Policy, which will offer the government a blank slate to rewrite methods of disaster prevention and response in the country.
- **Generate a culture of documenting and systematizing evidence.** This documentation will help actors repeat and share successful experiences and will build a library of processes and experiences that other organizations may consult.

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ANEXO 1: PARTICIPANTES DEL ESTUDIO

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6	Norma Janeth Pascual	Liderazgo comunitario
7	María Esther Ramos	Liderazgo comunitario
8	Paula Ramírez López	Liderazgo comunitario
9	Brenda Yamileth Miranda	Liderazgo comunitario
10	Reyna Anabel Vega	Liderazgo comunitario
11	Máxima Lidia Jacinto	Liderazgo comunitario
12	Ester María Pascual	Liderazgo comunitario
13	Carolina Márquez Pascual	Liderazgo comunitario
14	Lidia Vega Ramírez	Liderazgo comunitario
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16	Gabina Márquez de Pascual	Liderazgo comunitario
17	Ana Daysi Vásquez	Liderazgo comunitario
18	María Dolores Deodanes	Liderazgo comunitario
19	Ana Alicia Miranda	Liderazgo comunitario
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25	Domingo Oviedo Vásquez	Liderazgo comunitario
26	Rodolfo Pérez Benítez	Liderazgo comunitario
27	Marco Antonio Ortiz Vásquez	Liderazgo comunitario
28	Manuel de Jesús Benítez	Liderazgo comunitario
29	Manuel de Jesús Deodanes	Liderazgo comunitario
30	María Genaro Mestanza	Liderazgo comunitario
31	Juan Ramón Flores	Liderazgo comunitario
32	Luis Ángel Osorio	Liderazgo comunitario
33	Rubén Darío García	Liderazgo comunitario
34	Luis Fernando Ayala	Liderazgo comunitario
35	José Antonio Jovel	Liderazgo comunitario
36	Juan Carlos García	Liderazgo comunitario
37	María Martínez	Liderazgo comunitario
38	María Luisa Portillo	Liderazgo comunitario
39	Lorena Marisela Hernández	Liderazgo comunitario
40	Evelyn del Carmen Flores	Liderazgo comunitario
41	Sara Escobar	Liderazgo comunitario
42	Paula Mendoza	Liderazgo comunitario

43	Filomena del Carmen Laínez	Liderazgo comunitario
44	Irma Araceli Iraheta	Liderazgo comunitario
45	Neftalí Romero	Liderazgo comunitario
46	Edgar Antonio Reyna	Liderazgo comunitario
47	Ana Patricia Orantes	Liderazgo comunitario
48	Catalina González	Liderazgo comunitario
49	Natalia Carolina Martínez	Liderazgo comunitario
50	Reyna Esmeralda Meléndez	Liderazgo comunitario
51	Ana Patricia González	Liderazgo comunitario
52	Efraín Arévalo	Liderazgo comunitario
53	Ingrid Yamileth Aguilar	Técnicos Protección Civil
54	Andrés Antonio Rodríguez	Técnicos Protección Civil
55	Ismael Hernández	Técnicos Protección Civil
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57	Magdalena Cortez	Secretaria ejecutiva / Directora FUMA / Socia MPRG
58	Flor Gámez	Coordinadora de proyectos de la CRGR / Socia MPRG
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60	Mercedes García	Oxfam
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63	Cristina Salazar	Equipo WASH
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65	Alfredo Benavides	UPS / MINSAL
66	Ocial Guevara García	DISAM / MINSAL
67	Fedor Paredes	DISAM / MINSAL
68	Karen Ramírez	PROVIDA
69	Xenia Marroquín	ASPRODE
70	José Nelson Chávez	World Vision
71	Verónica Ardón	UNICEF
72	Jaime Ascencio	Fundación Seraphim
73	Moisés Batres	Fundación REDES
74	Marcos V. López	MPGR
75	Miguel Cartagena	PROVIDA
76	Consuelo Lisseth Martínez	PROVIDA
77	Marga de Rodríguez	CRS
78	Eduardo Alfonso García	PROVIDA
79	César Antonio Muñoz	Comandos de Salvamento
80	Feliz Herrera	Cruz Roja

ANNEX 2: STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS WITHIN LHL IN EL SALVADOR

AGENTE DE CAMBIO	ACTOR SOCIAL	USUARIO(A) DE LA COSECHA
MPGR	University	MPGR
Oxfam	Municipal governments	Oxfam
ICCO	MPGR	CRGR
WASH and EFSVL Teams	FISDL (PFGL)	National Civil Protection System
Lutheran World Federation	Community Civil Protection	International donor
ECHO	Commissions	ADESCO
National Civil Protection System	Municipal Civil Protection Commissions	New government administration
National Civil Protection Department	Departmental governments	
Environmental observatory	WASH and EFSVL Teams	
USAID	ADESCO	
Red Cross	Community Health Committees	
Plan	MINSAL	
World Vision	MAG	
Save the Children	MOP	
Habitat for Humanity	Ministry of the Interior	
CRS	FUNDASAL	
LWR	ASPRODE	
Christian Aid	PRISMA	
FUNDASAL	MINED	
PAHO	Technical-sector commissions	
WFP	CRGR	
FAO		
UNICEF		
IOM		
CARITAS		
CESTA		
ASPRODE		
PRISMA		
Solidar Suisse		
DIACONIA		
Ayuda en Acción		
ASB		
ACT Alliance		
Gates Foundation		



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