

Case study:
Enhancing
Livelihoods in
Emergencies
Response Capacity

Nicaraguan Red Cross

Pilot: Enhancing capacities to deliver livelihoods in humanitarian responses



IFRC, Nicaraguan Red Cross, a participant in the livelihood project to improve and diversify the agriculture production.

Introduction

Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries in Latin America according to a 2014 World Bank report, about 30% of the population live below the poverty line. Most of the poorest people's livelihoods and economic development are heavily dependent on its natural resources, especially of the exploitation of the dry forest ecosystems.

Over 80% of the population is concentrated in the dry corridor "corredor seco", 116 out of 156 municipalities. This is a vast territory covering 36% of the area of the country and characterized by moderately low rainfall and a long dry season. It is highly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

The multi-threat scenarios developed in the country show seven natural phenomena with the greatest potential impact: earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, droughts, floods and landslides. The Nicaraguan Red Cross (NRC) is part of the national system for disaster prevention, mitigation and response (SINAPRED) led by the government. Most CRN programs have a strong community based approach, especially those related to disaster management and risk reduction (RRD).

The NRC main programmatic areas are on disaster management and response as part of their auxiliary role to the government, also RRD, health care and first aid, economic development, food security, education, WASH, infrastructures and community care.

Las principales áreas de intervención de la NRC son preparación y respuesta a emergencias en su rol de auxiliar del estado, reducción de riesgos, salud y primeros auxilios, desarrollo económico, soberanía alimentaria, mejora de la educación de agua y saneamiento, atención en salud, infraestructura y de la atención comunitaria.

This pilot was part of the IFRC Livelihoods Resource Centre (LRC) global initiative, funded by ECHO, consisting of eight pilots implemented in different countries. The NRC implemented this pilot aiming at strengthen its livelihoods in emergencies capacity and operational readiness with support from IFRC LRC between July and December 2015. The LRC managed this pilot and provided technical support.

The learning and recommendations from these pilots informed the development of a step by step guidance on how to strengthen livelihoods in emergencies response capacity. This guidance document is available on the LRC website.

Livelihoods experience of the NRC

The NRC has a livelihoods technical advisor within its infrastructure and some capacity built implementing mainly recovery and development programmes. Relevant examples include:

- **Hurricane Mitch recovery operation (1998-2002):** livelihoods restoration and diversification support
- **Economic development programmes** implemented between 2004-2006:
 - **Training:** Supporting the creation and strengthening of micro economic initiatives

- **Business plans:** Support the development and implementation of business plans including: production, market mapping and linkages, organizational structures, financial literacy.
- **Funding:** Financial support to 60 new business.
- **Research and analysis:** Market assessment and analysis to identify business opportunities

▪ **Food security and livelihoods projects (2007-2015):**

- Livelihoods protection, diversification and strengthening achieved by improving agricultural productivity, diversification of crops and income generating activities, promotion of environmentally friendly and sustainable agricultural practices, support to new business, etc.
- Strengthening the institutional livelihoods capacity across the organization.



Nicaraguan Red Cross, participants in the NRC livelihoods capacity self-assessment workshop. Managua, July 2015.

Planning stage

As soon as the institutional support for the pilot was achieved, one of the key pilot activities was implemented: the NRC livelihoods capacity self-assessment workshop. To analyse the existing livelihoods capacity and operational readiness of the Nicaraguan Red Cross.

This workshop was facilitated by a LRC technical expert, deployed to the country to support and guide this process. The workshop had a high level of participation from a wide range of NRC representatives based at national HQ and field branches. Including members of the national and branch executive committee, management team, disaster management team and other areas and

technical departments coordinators and staff. The wide participation enabled a thorough

analysis of the key livelihoods capacities and gaps from multiple perspectives.

The NRC livelihoods capacity baseline was prepared during the workshop and the groups also identified priority actions for strengthening Strengthening the livelihoods capacity and operational readiness of the NRC.

A diagnostic and baseline tool was specially designed by the LRC for this pilots and is included in the LRC toolkit and available to all on the LRC website.



Nicaraguan Red Cross, a participant in the livelihood project to improve and diversify the agriculture production.

Implementation

This pilot was complemented by livelihoods and cash transfers capacity building activities included in other DRR projects implemented at national and regional level that received also LRC support.

The results of the workshop formed the basis for the pilot's plan of action. The plan of action had two main outcomes:

- Raised awareness of livelihoods approach and emergency livelihoods programming
- Improved capacity and operational readiness to plan and implement timely and pertinent (relief and recovery) livelihoods humanitarian responses

Main activities implemented

- **Set up of the livelihoods working group** with representation of the national executive committee, management, DM team, plus livelihoods and other areas technical experts. The group guides the pilot implementation acting as decision making body and makes recommendations to the leadership. Nominate a livelihood in emergency focal point.
- **Livelihoods sensitization:** Develop and adapt sensitization materials, and train the field teams responsible for sensitization sessions to internal and external audiences to

promote the livelihoods approach across the organization.

- **Livelihoods in emergency advocacy by high level NRC representatives** Leadership trained in livelihoods, with support from technical experts can have access and influence over SINAPRED decision makers and its counterparts.
- **Livelihoods and cash transfer training**, to internal and external participants (NGOs, Civil Defence, etc.), that become allies in the promotion and advocacy efforts.
- **Training of Trainers (T.o.T.)**. The vice-president and a Project technical advisor became certified livelihoods trainers. Contributing to the sustainability and multiplier effect, while reducing dependency on external support and reducing costs.
- **Livelihoods emergency assessment workshop**, to improve existing tools by incorporating livelihoods and cash transfer considerations into the NRC emergency assessment tools (EDAN)
- **Participation in the OXFAM training** for the **48hours tool**. Use of this tool in a real time response implemented the months after.
- **Development of a livelihoods in urban context diagnosis methodology and tools, under the leadership of NRC**. Used in a livelihoods baseline diagnostic in Ciudad Sandino done jointly by the NRC, members of the SINAPRED and municipal government.
- **Lessons learned workshop**, to evaluate progress, document challenges, learning and recommendations.

All these activities strengthened the NRC capacity to provide more efficient, sustainable and pertinent livelihoods emergency responses that meet the needs of vulnerable population affected by disasters.



IFRC, Nicaraguan Red Cross, a participant in the livelihood project to improve agriculture production.



Nicaraguan Red Cross, beneficiary registration using Mega V technology.

Achievements

- **Significant mind shift change** among the NRC leadership, management, and emergency response teams after being sensitized and trained. Now actively supporting the mainstreaming of livelihoods in emergency responses.
- **Strengthened preparedness and operational capacity** to provide timely and pertinent responses to address the livelihoods needs of disaster affected people.
- The Nicaraguan Red Cross became the referent organization for livelihoods in emergencies in the country. Growing interest and increased requests for promotion and training requests received from the SINAPRED and its partners (Civil Defence, municipalities, etc.).
- Livelihoods and cash transfer human and material resources developed. Enabling the organization to replicate capacity building effort across the country without external technical support.

Weaknesses and challenges

- **Sustainability** of this initiative after the end of the pilot, when funding and technical support are finished.
- **high turnover of emergency response staff and volunteers** makes the institutionalization of livelihoods knowledge and skills difficult.
- **Limited capacity and resources to respond to all internal and external livelihoods capacity building requests received.**

- **Short implementation time** to achieve some of the more ambitious pilot outputs; such as the integration of livelihoods in the NRC Strategic Plan, and also the inclusion of livelihoods interventions into the SINAPRED National Disaster Response Plans, which are not being revised until next year.



Nicaraguan Red Cross, school children participating in a NRC activity.

4. **Invite external actors**, especially SINAPRED and its partners, **to the activities**. This facilitates coordination and the use of a common language with regards to livelihoods in emergencies.
5. **Identify and request well in advance external technical support** for key activities of the pilot, Advocacy to leadership, self-assessment workshop, training, lessons learned workshop, etc.
6. The **plan of action outputs** must be aligned with the priorities, resources and existing technical capacity available, as well as with the implementation timeframe.
7. The **timeframe for implementing** should be **at least 12 months**, to achieve some degree of integration and institutionalization of livelihoods in emergencies
8. It is important to **develop a training strategy** and selection criteria for participants at the beginning of the project. Both should be shared widely across the organization at national and field level.

Recommendations and lessons learned

1. It is **critical to have the support of institutional leaders**. Identify, at the beginning of the project, relevant technical experts that have weight and respect within the organization or outside, to convince the leadership and decision makers to adopt the livelihoods in emergencies approach.
2. **Establish an open, transparent and efficient communication and decision making plan**, in consultation with the relevant stakeholders. This will reduce delays in decision making and approvals.
3. **Capitalize on synergies and cooperation with other departments of the organization** (disaster management, DRR, resilience, climate change adaptation, development, social inclusion, etc.) to promote harmonized livelihoods approaches in relief, recovery and development and to Access new opportunities for non-humanitarian funding.



Nicaraguan Red Cross, a participant in the livelihood project to improve in the case of this woman coffee production.



IFRC, Nicaraguan Red Cross, participants of a community based disaster preparedness and climate change activity.

Future plans and sustainability of this initiative in the Nicaraguan Red Cross

- **Continue working on livelihoods promotion and advocacy** to key internal and external actors **to include the livelihoods** in emergencies approach into the next NRC Strategic Plan and into the SINAPRED National Disaster Response Plans.
- **Diversify the funding opportunities** by including livelihoods capacity building and activities into the proposals developed by other departments (development, DRR, climate change adaptation, etc).
- **Put the newly acquired livelihoods knowledge into practice** by supporting disaster responses and preparedness and contingency planning livelihoods activities. Revising, testing and improving tools and systems after each emergency response.
- **Use the lessons learned and recommendations from this experience** to inform future replicas of this initiative. Share and disseminate widely.

Good practices

- ✓ Use of high level NRC livelihoods in emergencies advocates, trained and well informed and have access and influence over key decision makers of the SINAPRED and partners.
- ✓ Inclusion of livelihoods activities into different NRC department's proposals, increasing sustainability and new opportunities.
- ✓ Learning by doing: Use of OXFAM 48hours tool in a real time emergency response. Development and implementation of a livelihoods diagnosis tool for urban contexts in Ciudad Sandino.

Table 1. Main achievements of the Nicaraguan Red Cross pilot

Preparedness areas	Achievements
Enabling systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active support and participation of high-level representatives and leadership of the NRC in some of the key activities of the project (self-assessment workshop, training and lessons learned). • Identified the key steps and advocacy needed to promote the inclusion of livelihoods in emergencies into the next NRC Strategic Plan. • Updated and improved NRC Disaster Response Plan, now including livelihoods and cash transfer considerations.
Programme tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency response teams (ENIs) database, now includes livelihoods and cash transfer competencies of its members. • Improved emergency assessment tools (EDAN), including now livelihoods and cash transfers. This process was done in collaboration with the organization for emergency response capacity building in the Americas (CREA). • List of tools adapted or developed during this pilot: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Livelihoods sensitizing materials adapted ✓ Cash transfer programming sensitization materials adapted (2hours) ✓ NRC EDAN tools improved ✓ Institutional livelihoods capacity self-assessment and baseline tools adapted
Resources and capacities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focal point for livelihoods in emergencies appointed. • Livelihoods in emergencies working group established. • 30 NRC participants (leaders and decision makers from different departments and branches, emergency response teams and technical staff) participated actively in the capacity self-assessment workshop. • 200 volunteers from different branches sensitized in livelihoods. • 41 people were trained in livelihoods, participants from the NRC HQ, branches and external (Civil Defence, OXFAM, Wetlands). • 33 members of the NRC and Civil Defence, participated trained in cash transfers (FICR CaLP cash transfer level 2). • 6 NRC technical staff trained in the OXFAM 48hours assessment tool. • 7 NRC staff participated in the livelihoods Assessment Training (ERLA). • 2 NRC members certified as livelihoods trainers. • 7 NRC members participated in the urban context livelihoods diagnosis in Ciudad Sandino, Managua. • <i>Unexpected result:</i> Increased in number of proposals developed by other NRC departments that include livelihoods capacity building and activities.
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livelihoods advocacy in coordination meetings with SINAPRED and partners to include livelihoods in the next revision of the National Preparedness and Response Plans and into the SINAPRED EDAN assessment tools. • Participation of Civil Defence, NGOs and other SINAPRED partners in advocacy and training sessions, including the adaptation of the NRC EDAN assessment tools. • The Nicaraguan Red Cross became the reference organization for livelihoods in emergencies in Nicaragua.