LARRA 2017-2019

Lessons Learned Workshop

June 10 – 12, 2019
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GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Organizer: American Red Cross (ARC).
B. Location: Bogotá (Colombia).
C. Participants.
   - Colombian Red Cross. (CRC)
   - Salvadoran Red Cross (SRC)
   - Honduran Red Cross (HRC)
   - American Red Cross. (ARC)
   - IFRC
   - USAID/OFDA
   - Community Leaders from Honduras and El Salvador
D. Facilitator: Jorge Menendez. Email: menendezmjorge@gmail.com

OBJECTIVES

PRIMARY WORKSHOP OBJECTIVE

To evaluate successful accomplishments, improvements needed, and recommendations identified as action points for implementation, in accordance to lessons learned from the LARRA Project 2007-19.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

- To identify the main challenges and problems encountered during the operation; thus, leading to identification of required improvements.
- To identify best practices or actions which must be applied in future interventions; these overflowing from evaluation of what went well.
- To draft Declaration of Bogotá.

METHODOLOGY:

Two-and-a-half-day workshop focused on the following activities:

- LARRA Project Results Presented by National Societies (CRC, HRD, and SRC).
- Conversations with communities’ leaders.
- Conversations with community volunteers.
- Conversations with participants from Leadership Skills Development (LSD) training.
- Workshop Activities Per Working Groups:

Working groups (WG).
   - WG 1: Presidents, DRM Directors, IFRC and OFDA
Facilitators: Ingrid Saito and Roberto Brito.

- WG 2: CEO and Financial Directors.
  Facilitators: Roy Castro and Javier Vargas
- WG 3: Local and National Project Coordinators.
  Facilitators: Ana Huapaya and Carlos Aquije
- WG 4: Community leaders plus community volunteers.
  Facilitators: Juan Vázquez and Johnny Gómez

Working Groups Divided and Designated for Evaluation of Specific Objectives

- To analyze the degree of implementation regarding recommendations identified in RITA 2017 lessons learned.
- To identify the main challenges and problems encountered during the operation, with the aim of determining specific improvements needed.
- To identify best practices or actions that should be considered in future interventions, in alignment with evaluation of what went well.
- To draw major conclusions in response to lessons learned (WG 2, 3 and 4)
- To draft Declaration of Bogotá (WG 1)
CONCLUSIONS TO CONVERSATIONS WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS

Primary conclusions drafted:

• Community leadership must be strengthened
• Community leaders must be supported in the areas of advocacy and awareness training
• Feedback and complaint mechanism should be implemented in their communities (e.g. Use of suggestion-boxes)
• Effective leadership requires replication of learning to augment community impact
• Projects should include accountability actions
• In the formulation and design of projects, the opinions of community leaders must be considered and integrated
• Vulnerable communities must be trained in Fist Aid, CPR, and effective operation of airway obstructions techniques

CONCLUSIONS TO CONVERSATIONS WITH COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS:

Main Conclusions of LARRA Project:

• It is imperative to know project details and to give participants significant training and feedback.
• Volunteer skills must be identified according to individual abilities prior to allotting project tasks.
• NS should provide for meaningful opportunities for volunteer professional growth.

• Objectives of Project are best met by training volunteers according to their capacities.
• The LARRA Project should foster the development of incentives and the design recognition policies for volunteers.
• LARRA Project team concludes that in the formulation and design of projects, the opinions of volunteers must be carefully considered and integrated.
• Dynamics of LARRA’s team initiatives encouraged identification of needs and capacities of volunteers who engaged in support of the project.
CONCLUSIONS TO CONVERSATIONS WITH PARTICIPANTS OF LEADERSHIP SKILLS DEVELOPMENT TRAINING (LSD)

Leadership Skills Development (LSD) training:

- Started in 2012.
- The number of training: 23.
- More than 600 people trained.
- Next training sessions:
  - Nº 24 in El Salvador.
  - Nº 25 in Mexico.

Main Strengths of LSD Training:

- Use of the DISC Assessment tool
- The availability of a competent group of psychologists, equipped to support participants. As a case in point, facilitators and co-facilitators in 2019 received psychological first aid training.
- LSD definitively improved collaboration and support among participants.
- Coaching by LSD trainers is currently being implemented for participants after the training.

Participants’ Predominant Comments:

- “The training taught me to listen and support my peers. After the training, my family relationships have improved, and I am more focused on my job.”
- “The training provides tools to know yourself better. It is crucial to understand yourself so that you can support your peers.”
- “LSD training teaches you the importance of carrying out activities by consensus.”
- “LSD training helps you to find your weaknesses and strengths.”
- “LSD training is a life process that allows us to know ourselves and live as ourselves.”
- “We cannot lead others if we cannot lead ourselves.”
- “To do good things, you have to do it well. That purpose is only achieved through professional development; we have to have values and principles.”
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM RITA 2017 LESSONS LEARNED

Key Recommendations evaluated.

1. **Resilience must be part of the National Society strategy.**
   
   All working groups have considered resilience as a fundamental part of the National Society and IFRC strategies.

2. **The projects have to be formulated in a participatory and integral way.**
   
   All the working groups agreed that involvement of every actor is fundamental. However, it is not always possible because of lack of funds and/or time.
   
   The working groups recommend:
   
   - To include specific funds in the projects.
   - The community should identify a focal group to be involved in the project’s formulation.

3. **Engage and build alliances with other actors.**
   
   Establishing alliances with external actors is an important achievement of the LARRA Project, which allowed synergies and more significant impact on the communities. As a recommendation, it would be very positive if these alliances were documented and socialized.

4. **Institutional strengthening of National Societies.**
   
   The strengthening of the National Society has been considered a fundamental part of the project. A needed point for improvement proposes that a diagnosis of the branch should be made during the formulation of the project, which would allow developing a strengthening plan based on the main priorities identified in the diagnosis.

5. **To socialize methodology and achievements with boards and management bodies of National Society.**
   
   The working groups considered that the political and management bodies at the national level are involved in the project, but not at the branch level. For this reason, the working groups recommend the support of the American Red Cross in carrying out awareness-raising activities with management and political bodies of the branches.

6. **Develop technical guides for the development of programs and projects.**
   
   Currently, there are many technical guides and supporting documents for the development of the projects, which are well-known and used by project coordinators and management bodies, but not by volunteers and community members. Dissemination activities with volunteers and the community are recommended.

7. **Transition and sustainability strategies.**
   
   The implementation of transition and sustainability strategies is an essential part of projects, and if projects have not included funds for these activities, some National Societies finance them.
8. The involvement of beneficiaries as Red Cross volunteers in the project is essential.

Project Coordinators invite the members of the communities to become Red Cross Volunteers during the implementation of the LARRA Project; since the Project’s implementation, several members have become volunteers. The current assessment of RITA 2017’s recommendations is that it is most important to continue to encourage participation and development of specific plans that are corresponding and consistent with branch activities involving volunteers, particularly once the Project is over.

EVALUATION OF SUCCESS: WHAT WENT WELL

Although the working groups identified positively achieved many the pre-established objectives, the following ten points were considered to be the most relevant:

1. **Methodology and Tools Used for the Formulation and Induction Processes**

   The methodology and tools applied for the LARRA Project were suitable and allowed the teams to achieve the proposed objectives. The participants highlight the induction processes, which allowed the team to know in detail how to implement the project.

2. **Support Manuals**

   The support manuals were also considered very useful for the correct implementation of the Project. It is important to note that the lack of manuals and guidelines was considered a weakness in the lessons learned from RITA 2017.

3. **Reporting Process Simplification**

   LARRA Project procedures and processes have been simplified, compared to previous projects (RITA and DPI).

4. **Project Monitoring by ARC**

   The constant monitoring by the ARC focused on supporting the NSs has been considered fundamental to achieving the proposed objectives.

5. **Volunteers’ Motivation, Training, and Involvement.**

   The role of the volunteer was essential to achieving the objectives. Volunteers were highly motivated and involved in all activities.

6. **Coordination, Country Representatives, and Collaboration with other NS.**

   The LARRA team (National Societies and ARC) encouraged knowledge sharing and joint activities, such as Cash Transfer Programme and Leadership Skills Development training.
7. **Provision of Training and Equipment to Branches and Community to Improve their Response Capacity.**

The training of volunteers and communities allowed knowledge to be transferred to the first responders, resulting in a better response to emergencies. The equipment delivered to the community was considered to be of high-quality. It was mentioned that it is necessary to provide more equipment to the volunteers (e.g., raincoats).

8. **Transition Systems through Seed Capital.**

Providing seed capital to implement activities that allow the sustainability of actions in the community has been considered innovative.

9. **Leadership Skills Development Training**

In general, the participants valued the LSD training very positively, specifically highlighting a strength of LSD is the fact that the selection process and the training contents are always updated.

10. **Branches Involved in the LARRA Project have been Strengthened**

The branches involved in LARRA Project have been strengthened, thanks mainly to the approach of transferring skills through the training of volunteers.
EVALUATION OF IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED: WHAT REQUIRES CHANGE – AREAS TO IMPROVE

Improvements are needed, mainly:

1. To Strengthen Work Teams
   Teams should be strengthened as a result of practicing consideration of their current overload, and the existence of some staff salaries that are lower than the NS salary scale. It is evident that the workload is too high for the project coordinators. For example, in one NS the salaries of coordinators were significantly lower than the NS salary scale.

   ![Photo: Working Group 2](image)

2. Volunteers
   It is necessary to:
   - Reduce high volunteer turnover.
   - Provide adequate equipment for the volunteers, such as raincoats.
   - Expand training of volunteers in administration, procurement, and finance.

3. Activities’ Schedule
   As had happened in the RITA project, it was identified that one point for improvement is to determine which specific schedules are appropriate for the community, for volunteers, and for workers.

   The human resources department must be flexible and permit workers to adapt to the schedules of the community, and volunteers, but always having as a priority to ensure the safety of teams.

4. Country Representative in Honduras
   The work done by the country representatives is crucial, and it is necessary to have one in Honduras. During the workshop, an agreement was reached between ARC,
SRC, and HRC that the country representative in El Salvador should also cover Honduras; the conclusion was that he will spend 15 days per month in each country.

5. To Communicate Results and Activities to Stakeholders

It was considered necessary to have a communication strategy so that the stakeholders (especially the Government) are aware of the actions and results that have been achieved with the project.

6. Project Database

Because there is no historical project database, it is difficult to access information to learn from past experiences.

7. Procurement Plan

Although this is a requirement in some National Societies, no procurement plans were made, resulting in higher costs and delays in the receipt of goods.

8. Project Formats

It is very complicated for National Societies to manage all the different formats that each PNS has, so it was considered necessary to try to standardize them.

9. Increase the Number of Community Members Involved

More members of the community should be involved in the implementation of preparedness activities. The projects have to be more focused on community needs, and also to work toward the introduction of tools for climate change.

10. Accountability

Accountability mechanisms in the community should be a priority within the project.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The participants have identified the following recommendations:

1. **Formulation of the projects in a participatory way**
   
   It must be ensured that all the necessary actors participate in the formulation and that the funds are available to carry it out. A chief priority was identified, that the community has to be involved in all phases of the project.

2. **To systematize the methodologies for their socialization and use.**
   
   Although this recommendation is not exclusive to this project, it has been considered very relevant that the PNSs, NSs, and IFRC systematize the best methodologies, standardize the formats, and share them with the rest of the National Societies.

3. **To strengthen work teams and adjust their salaries to the NS salary scales.**
   
   The human resources needed to implement the projects must be clear and included in the budget. Also, salaries should be in line with the NS salary scale.
   
   It is important to strengthen the team with the training of trainers’ (ToT) courses so that NS staff can continue training volunteers after the project is finished.

4. **Motivate, train, strengthen, properly equip, and recognize the work of volunteers.**
   
   The volunteering policy must include:
   
   - Motivation strategies.
   - Training system.
   - Necessary equipment.
   - Volunteer recognition systems.

5. **To encourage collaboration and exchanges between NSs.**

   The current approach promoting the exchange of experiences between National Societies should continue.

6. **To encourage the development of leaders, both in the NS, and in the communities. (Integral Program)**

   Leadership is an essential step in the development of NSs and communities, and it is necessary to continue training leaders. Various community leaders considered that it would be very positive for them to have access to this LSD training.

7. **To make a procurement plan at the beginning of the project.**

   It is necessary to design a procurement plan at the beginning of the project; this will secure that purchases are set at the best price and at the right time. For that reason, it has been considered to include in the MoU as mandatory.
8. **To present the project to all stakeholders, especially to the Government.**

A communication plan or communication strategy should develop at the beginning of the project and should focus on informing all stakeholders about the activities and objectives of the project. All phases of the project have to include communication activities.

9. **To implement feedback and complaint mechanism within the communities.**

This mechanism should be implemented as soon as possible in the communities where NSs are currently at work.

10. **To develop innovative processes that allow a greater impact on communities.**

In order to achieve a greater impact, it is necessary to implement innovative ideas. For this reason, projects should encourage the development of new ideas and, if successful, procure their systematization and dissemination.
CONCLUSIONS

These are the main conclusions of Project LARRA:

1. The formulation and reformulation of the project has to be based on a diagnosis, and all internal (finance, logistics, and/or technical), as well as external actors (inclusive of community, government, or NGO actors) should be involved.

2. The community should be involved and informed in all phases of the project, and their recommendations and suggestions should always be taken into account.

3. To develop actions aimed at strengthening the training, equipment, and recognition of the volunteer work force.

4. Training and induction activities should always be included in the projects and should involve technical staff, volunteers, and community members.

5. The technical and financial areas must work together, to attend and respond in a concise and synchronized way to the needs of the donor and the project.

6. It is necessary to prepare a procurement plan for the correct planning of the project.

7. A monitoring team should be available to evaluate if the project is efficient, effective, and relevant.

8. To promote a program of exchange of knowledge, experiences, through peer to peer work, joint training or internships.

9. To develop a diagnosis of the needs of the branches in order to develop an appropriate strengthening plan.

10. All projects must carry out a sustainability and a transition plan to give continuity to the actions developed during the life of the project.
DECLARATION OF BOGOTA

Representatives of the governing and/or management bodies of the National Societies participating in the workshop, the Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the American Red Cross and the Director for the America of the IFRC were committed to:

- Contribute to the commitment of the initiative: “Billion Coalition for Resilience.”
- Motivate, train, equip, strengthen, and recognize volunteers.
- The communities must be involved in all the phases of the project.
- Encourage the development of leaders in communities and National Societies.
- Systematize methodologies for dissemination and implementation.
- Promote collaboration and exchanges between National Societies and partners.
- Improve procurement planning to optimize the use of resources.
- Implement accountability, feedback, and a complaints’ mechanism within communities.
- Develop innovative processes that enable greater impact on communities.
## ANNEX 1. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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<tr>
<th>INSTITUTION</th>
<th>POSITION</th>
<th>LAST NAME</th>
<th>NAME</th>
</tr>
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<td>1 Colombian Red Cross</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Moreno Carrillo</td>
<td>Juvenal Francisco</td>
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<td>Finances Coord.</td>
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<td>Navidad Martinez</td>
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<td>Guerra Solano</td>
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