



Honduran Red Cross: Ready to respond and look after the most vulnerable communities

Red Cross is prepared for effective and localized responses to help the most vulnerable in local communities.



Yamalack Porter, HRC volunteer

Community needs

Honduras is one of the poorest countries in Latin America. While the country has experienced some economic growth since the 2008-2009 financial crises, much of the population continues to live in poverty. Every year, the Honduran Red Cross assists populations affected by small and larger-scale crises: flooding on both Pacific and Caribbean coasts, tropical storms, drought and sociopolitical instability.

How Canada helps

The Canadian Red Cross has been supporting the Honduran Red Cross in different capacities for almost two decades. The National Society has undergone comprehensive work to standardize training, emergency plans and procedures to equip and strengthen volunteer teams at the local and regional levels. This case-study demonstrates the impact of two projects where the Canadian Red Cross provided training, equipment and

technical assistance to support the Honduran Red Cross, thanks to funding by Global Affairs Canada: Capacity Building in Emergency Response in the Americas (CERA) and Strengthening Global Emergency Response (SGER).

Our collective impact

Honduran Red Cross is prepared to respond quickly and efficiently to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable communities during local, regional and national crises.

► *“When the Red Cross is prepared, we have the confidence that we can respond appropriately to help the most vulnerable. Those who need it most in our community also have the same assurance: when the next crisis strikes, they will get quality assistance that responds to their needs.”*

- Yamalack, volunteer from San Lorenzo Valle who received training through CERA

CERA Overview

The CERA initiative is a five-year project to strengthen the emergency response capacities of Red Cross National Societies in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua and Jamaica, enabling them to better prepare for, respond to, and recover from crisis situations and lead humanitarian response efforts. This initiative is made possible thanks to financial support of the Government of Canada.

SGER Overview

This five-year project, which is made possible thanks to financial support from the Government of Canada, aims to save lives, reduce suffering, and maintain human dignity in communities experiencing humanitarian crises by providing effective and timely support to crisis-affected population. The project focuses on improving CRC's ability to provide surge support to Red Cross Movement (RCM) emergency operations and to help improve the RCM response system for emergencies.

Local teams, rooted in their communities, with the training, autonomy and resources to respond quickly



Yahely Serrano, HRC volunteer

Stronger together: Honduran Red Cross, a key player in emergency response

Training

The Honduran Red Cross, with support from the Canadian Red Cross, invested in trainings in various areas.

▶ *“Many migrants from all over the world come through our region. When I started volunteering with the Red Cross, I had the will to help, but there are language barriers and I didn’t feel I had the right tools to understand their reality and their needs.”*

– Yahely Serrano, who works in a team providing shelter, first aid and a way to contact family members to migrants travelling through Central America.

Our impact: Branch-level volunteers who received these trainings put them into practice during recent emergencies and are sharing the learnings with other volunteers to strengthen their branches’ preparedness. These trainings included restoring family links, logistics and psychosocial support, which was particularly useful during the Red Cross response to the recent sociopolitical unrest.

Yahely participated in the first Restoring Family Links course for National Intervention Teams (NIT) in the Americas region, thanks to support from the Canadian Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

▶ *“Now, I feel more prepared and able to understand and respond to the needs of migrants. The skills gained in this training will also be useful to me in the next emergency, such as an earthquake or sociopolitical tensions. I will be leading a workshop in my region to share this knowledge more widely.”*

– Yahely Serrano

Autonomy

The Canadian Red Cross provided the Honduran Red Cross with support to develop a new organizational plan and implement its regionalization strategy.

▶ *“Before, things were centralized in the capital, Tegucigalpa, and we lacked direction. As community members, local volunteers know the threats our communities face, which vary from one region to the next.”*

– Rosario Fernandez, Regional Vice President

Our impact: Through trainings, technical support and equipment at the regional level, community-level branches

feel more supported and confident in their ability to respond effectively to emergencies.

▶ *“Now, local teams have access to specialized training, prepositioned material, management and fundraising guidance which can be adapted to suit the needs on the ground. We feel empowered: we know that when crisis will strike, we will be able to act quickly and efficiently to help those in need.”*

– Rosario Fernandez, Regional Vice President

Equipment and technical assistance

A SGER-supported assessment of the logistics capabilities of the Honduran Red Cross provided the roadmap for improvements at the national and regional levels which were partially funded by CERA.

▶ *“Before, the central warehouse was in a state of disrepair and was not conducive to supporting an effective emergency response. In addition, in the case of localized emergencies, kits had to be mobilized to the community in need from the central warehouse, thus making it difficult to mobilize a rapid response.”*

– Gerardo Machado, Honduran Red Cross Preparedness Advisor

Our impact: Improved security, inventory management and infrastructure of one central warehouse and equipment for regional warehouses make it possible for the right assistance to reach those in need.

▶ *“Now, we have regional warehouses that are strategically located to be closer to the people who are most at-risk of being affected by disasters, to allow for a much faster response. For example, last year, we were able to use items from the northern warehouses to provide 70 families affected by floods with what they needed.”*

– Gerardo Machado, Honduran Red Cross Preparedness Advisor



Gerardo Machado, Honduran Red Cross Preparedness Advisor



Together, we can help the most vulnerable: working with civil society, government and communities

Community-level branches were provided with support to assess their strengths and weaknesses, build action plans, and better mobilize resources.

Our impact: With support from the Canadian Red Cross, local branches are becoming more autonomous through raising funds, mobilizing local resources and collaborating with local and regional emergency response actors, such as government agency COPECO.

Oscar Mencia, Director of Preparation and Response, Permanent Contingency Commission of Honduras noted that the Honduran Red Cross regionalization process has strengthened the collaboration between emergency response actors at the local level. For example, he noted that in preparing for massive mobilizations for religious or cultural gatherings, local plans were activated and it was much easier to coordinate between regional representatives and the Honduran Red Cross regional response teams. Overall, this led to a much more effective and appropriate response.

Providing support in emergencies to neighbouring countries

In addition to improving emergency preparedness and response in-country, key investments through SGER by the Canadian Red Cross in regional capacity building has improved the Honduran Red Cross’ ability to support and respond to crisis in neighbouring countries.

▶ *“It is important that countries like Honduras contribute to the regional system because many of these countries are the most impacted and have therefore built complimentary expertise in sociopolitical emergencies and natural disasters. They also have gained experience in institutional development, capacity building, and disaster response, which strengthens the region and the international Red Cross as a whole.”*

– Felipe del Cid, Emergency Operations Coordinator for the Americas at the International Federation of the Red Cross

Our impact: The Honduran Red Cross has contributed their expertise to regional emergency responses, with personnel being deployed to Peru, Puerto Rico, Panama, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Paraguay.

▶ *“Contributing to response in neighbouring countries has been very valuable for us. When personnel come back from deployments, they bring back new experiences, tools and skills to the Honduran Red Cross.”*

– Alexei Castro, Director of Programs, Honduran Red Cross

For example, HRC staff Melvin Martinez completed the Regional Intervention Team (RIT) training and later participated in three regional deployments, bringing back valuable experiences.

▶ *“While the IFRC regional trainings are very useful, now it is possible for Honduran NITs with many years of experience working on domestic emergencies to deploy in the region even if they haven’t completed the RIT course. This is how one of our WATSAN delegates was able to deploy to Nicaragua in 2017.”*

– Melvin Martinez, Honduran Red Cross



Accessing the system

When Red Cross National Societies, such as the Honduran Red Cross, face large disasters their capacity to respond may be overwhelmed. At times like these, National Societies can request support from the Red Cross' surge systems to respond efficiently and effectively to communities' needs. Through SGER, the Canadian Red Cross has built capacity regionally and globally so that countries like Honduras have effective and timely support from the Red Cross Movement in times of emergency.

By the numbers

- In Honduras, CERA has trained roughly **500 people** for emergency preparedness and response through **25 trainings** to date.
- In Honduras, the SGER-supported regional Reference Centre has provided technical support for the development of **8 emergency plans/procedures** through CERA.
- SGER has trained more than **120 regional responders** in the Americas, including personnel from Honduras.
- **Two SGER-funded Regional Emergency Disaster Managers** in the Americas have supported the Honduran Red Cross in preparedness and response.
- **Twenty-six branches were supported** in Honduras to analyze their strengths and weaknesses, and develop action plans.

Methodology

This document was elaborated using the outcome harvesting methodology following a week-long field mission to Honduras which included eight focus groups with HRC staff and volunteers from three of the HRC's four regions. Data was triangulated through interviews with nine IFRC representatives and document review.

Next steps

While support to the Honduran Red Cross from the Canadian Red Cross has resulted in the important advances illustrated above, HRC staff and volunteers indicated that work remains to be done in emergency preparedness and response. Branch volunteers explained that they need to invest more time in mobilizing local resources to ensure the sustainability of their branches, as well as participating in regular simulations to practice and refine their response skills. The placement of regional warehouses is an important step, but HRC Logistics staff and volunteers hope to improve the organization of stocks in the regions, as well as in the central warehouse and integrate the finance and logistics system to make aid distribution more efficient.



This project is made possible thanks to financial support from the Government of Canada.

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