



STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SUPPORT – GUATEMALA

The remote village of Agua Zarca is located 4 km from the little town Cuilapa, in the South East of Guatemala. The town is only accessible by a small road and has a population of 373 persons. The village is yearly affected by the heavy rain seasons, flooding the river San Juan. In 2011 the community was massively affected by several earthquakes, together with flooding after the storm E12, resulting in material and human losses.

As a response, CEDEPCA, partner to ACT Guatemala, **supported the community with psychosocial support** during three months, to address the emotional and physical distress of the losses. A psychologist went to the village to address emotional crises, hold psychoeducational workshops on stress relief techniques.

CEDEPCA continued to support the village with **annual psychosocial workshops, together with workshops on risks and disaster management**, and on psychological first aid. At the same time the community was supported with personal hygiene kits, food, and a water filter. In 2013, 22 persons received training on community-based psychosocial support (CBPS). The capacity strengthening has since then continued to develop, and the village now has an emergency committee and is able to provide psychological first aid. They also have knowledge of the Sphere minimum Standards for emergency and disaster assistance.

From 2015 to date, two leaders from the community participate in CEDEPCAs annual workshop, held to update community promoters on various topics related to prevention and action in times of emergencies or disasters. After the training, the **leaders return to their communities** with the commitment to **share the new knowledge within the community**.

The accompaniment has **strengthened the capacities of the community to act in emergencies, and work on prevention**. The community now together monitors the growth of the river, conducts cleaning days, has meetings to report on threats and environmental vulnerabilities and on how to reduce the risk. Additionally, the community leaders reach out to surrounding disaster-vulnerable communities to share their learnings.



Ana Raquel 32 years:

”After having participated in the workshops of psychosocial support, and risk management, I feel more encouraged and stronger to get ahead of any difficult situation, I have learned to recognize my emotions, to solve problems without violence, and to help other people who are in crisis.”

Lessons learned

Community leadership is important in engaging the community members to develop capacities in psychosocial support. The community leaders received support over time with additional follow up after emergencies, and are now the first persons to respond to emergency in their community and to nearby communities.

ACT Regional Psychosocial Community of Practice in Latin America and the Caribbean

You have just read a good practice of Community Based Psychosocial support, from the ACT regional community of practice in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Regional Psychosocial Community of Practice (PS CoP) is a group of people joined together by common issues of working in the field of community based psychosocial support, as part of the ACT Alliance humanitarian response to emergency and disaster situations that took place in a given place in the region. Through the regional PS CoP, the aim is to strengthen the capacities and practices of community based psychosocial support of ACT members, by sharing good practices appropriate to local cultures, share expertise and experiences.

How to join or get in touch

The regional PS CoP community of practice is open to ACT partners working on psychosocial support.

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To be added to the participant list, send your contact information to Ana Paxtor.

You will receive (in Spanish):

- Informacion
- Documents
- Schedules for webinars
- Information about reference persons for the PS CoP in each country.