

Climate Change Roundtables: Valuable Encounter Platforms towards Resilience



As a result of the socio-economic situation and the high level of environmental deterioration, Guatemala has been classified as one of the countries in the world with a high risk of multiple natural and anthropogenic threats, exposing its population, infrastructure, and services to disasters. To make matters even worse, climate change is threatening to change the country's overall climatic conditions, leaving Guatemala dryer in 2050 (IARNA-URL, 2011).

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Government institutions have voiced their concern regarding this issue; therefore, Climate Change Roundtables (MCC) have been created with the purpose of reaching consensus and implementing policies, strategies, and laws to take measures against the effects of climate change. From the outset it has been a goal of the Partners for Resilience (PFR³) programme to support the **Climate Change Roundtable**, to address issues related to the integrated DRR/CCA/EMR⁴ approach; in other words: not only to be a point of encounter, but also the necessary vehicle towards resilience.

Roundtables: an integrated approach to climate change adaptation

Prior to the Partners for Resilience programme, the National Climate Change Roundtables (MNCC) already existed in Guatemala as an effort to reach consensus and approve National Climate Change Policy; however, there were no networks to address the Climate Change issue that included DRR and EMR in a comprehensive manner. With regard to roundtables on Disaster Risk Reduction, there was a central platform headed by SE-CONRED⁵, which had not yet been extended to departments; the only roundtable that came close to addressing the EMR issue were the CONAP⁶ Co-managers Roundtables, but their work was limited to protected areas..

The Partners for Resilience decided to rely on Climate Change Roundtables because they were considered a **valuable platform where organisations that have the same approach could converge**, and where dialogue and partnerships could enhance the decision-making process. These moments were also seen by PFR as an opportunity to continue projects already initiated, and to promote and replicate their integral approach.

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2. Student, Network of Humanitarian Assistance partnership (NOHA), and researcher, Partners for Resilience.

3. In 2011, five humanitarian, development, and environmental organisations, with the support of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, formed a consortium called "Partners for Resilience" (PFR, www.partnersforresilience.nl) in order to reduce the effects of risks on vulnerable communities in different countries and generate knowledge for the strengthening of community resilience. The programme, which has the participation of 9 countries, 3 continents, and 70 partner NGOs, manages a budget of 40 million euros, which makes it the largest and most important program in its kind. In Guatemala, partners include Cáritas Zacapa Diocese/Cordaid, the Guatemalan Red Cross, CARE/Vivamos Mejor Association, Wetlands International and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre.

4. DRR/CCA/EMR - The PFR integrated approach combines Disaster Risk Reduction /Climate Change Adaptation/ Ecosystems Management and Restoration in order to strengthen community resilience. In our consortium, we use the UN definition of resilience: "The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to, and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic functions and structures."

5. SE-CONRED - Executive Secretariat of the National Coordinator of Disaster Reduction.

6. CONAP - National Council for Protected Areas.

In 2011, the Guatemalan Red Cross initiated contact with the MNCC and a workshop was held in August 2012 with the support of Wetlands International. During the workshop, issues of common interest between MNCC and Partners for Resilience were identified. One of the main aspects was the creation and/or strengthening of departmental roundtables. More specific collaboration between PfR and MNCC was formalised through a National Forum entitled “Towards a Comprehensive Approach for Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Adaptation, and Ecosystem Management and Restoration with National and Regional Stakeholders,” held in January 2013, where the initiation of Climate Change Roundtables was agreed upon with the strategic stakeholders of the Partners for Resilience in the five departments⁷.

Climate Change Roundtables at full throttle

To ensure that no overlapping efforts were undertaken, and to comply with local stakeholders’ requests, priority was given to reinforcing the already established networks, including the representation of institutions with which collaboration had not yet been brought about. Nevertheless the geographic scope of each future roundtable was agreed, as well as their operational and strategic purposes. With the approval of Decree 7-2013⁸, the opportunity was seized to give more relevance to these local efforts.

Today, in addition to becoming a **space for dialogue** where members identify common



processes to achieve complementarity and synergies, roundtables are becoming **platforms to address and manage needs identified locally**. The fact that DRR/EMR issues are also addressed is what makes these MCCs organised by Partners for Resilience innovative. In addition, in the Joint Eastern Roundtable the gender issue is specifically included.

Diverse structures and geographic approaches

Although the Regional CC Roundtables are a joint PfR activity, work is carried out on a bilateral basis. The work of Wetlands International stands out as it facilitated all of the Groups and acted as a liaison with the MNCC coordination. Each Roundtable consists of several sectors ranging from governmental, non-governmental, to academic, private, civil society, and indigenous peoples, as explained in Table 1.

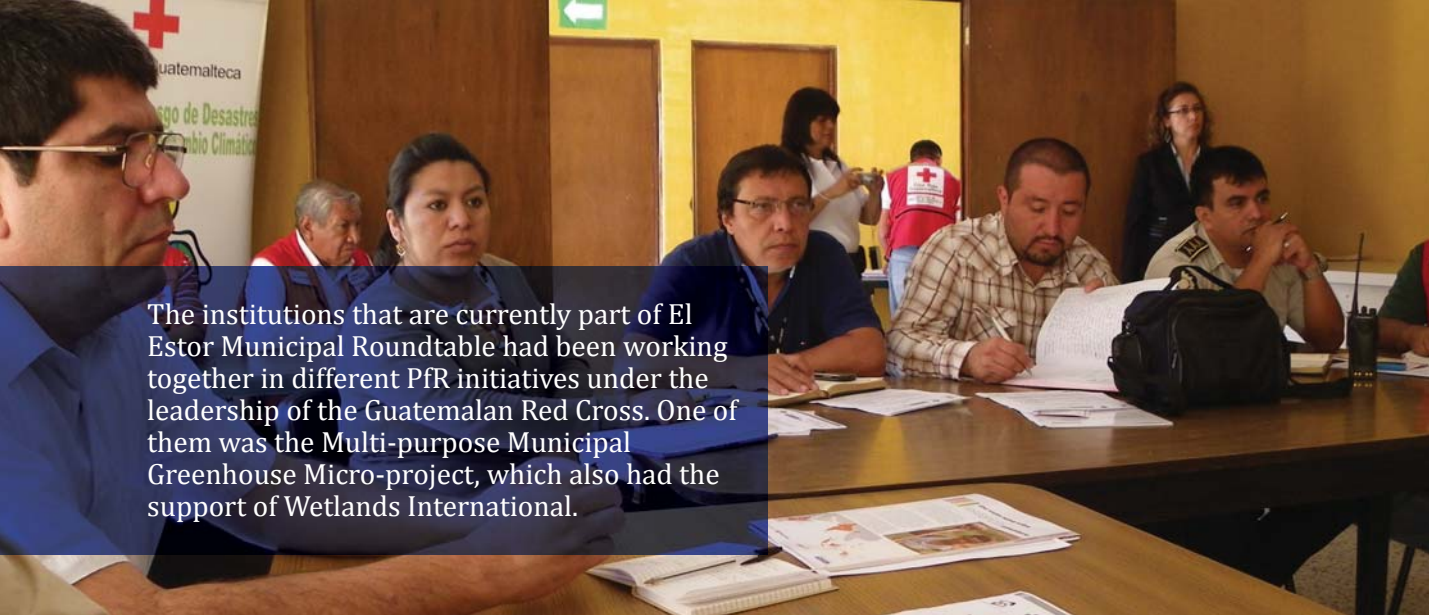
An unexpected achievement in the process of creating the Roundtables was that through the incorporation of the two Commonwealths of municipalities (Northeast and Montaña el Gigante) in Zacapa and Chiquimula, a three-departmental Roundtable was created (including El Progreso, which is not part of the PfR work area).

Table 1: structure of PfR Climate Change Roundtables

Area	Level	PfR member	Umbrella organisation
El Estor	Municipal 14 organisations	Guatemalan Red Cross Wetlands International	Inter-institutional group supporting the Municipality
Quiché	Departmental 16 organisations	Guatemalan Red Cross Wetlands International	Department Environmental Commission
Sololá	Departmental 8 organisations	CARE/Vivamos Mejor Association Wetlands International	Departmental Development Council
Zacapa Chiquimula El Progreso	Regional 21 organisations	Cáritas Zacapa Diocese/Cordaid Wetlands International	Commonwealth of municipalities of the Northeast and Montaña el Gigante

7. The 5 departments where PfR is working are: Quiche, Sololá, Izabal, Zacapa and Chiquimula.

8. Framework Law for the Reduction of Vulnerability, Mandatory Adaptation to the Effects of Climate Change, and Mitigation of Greenhouse Effect Gases passed by the Guatemalan Congress.



The institutions that are currently part of El Estor Municipal Roundtable had been working together in different PfR initiatives under the leadership of the Guatemalan Red Cross. One of them was the Multi-purpose Municipal Greenhouse Micro-project, which also had the support of Wetlands International.

The leadership and ownership levels have been different for each Roundtable. To achieve a greater impact and long-term sustainability, it was agreed that Roundtable would not merely be established, but also well organised and strengthened through planning tools, such as Annual Operational Plans (AOPs) and Strategic Plans. Efforts are also being made in order to have representatives of the three governing bodies of the PfR integrated approach in each meeting of the assembly: MARN¹⁰, SE-CONRED and CONAP. Thus Roundtables are linked and incorporated into the framework of the Strategic Inter-Institutional Agenda (AEI)¹¹ national initiative, and into one of the specific outcomes of its Action Plan which covers all levels - national down to local.

The common topics included in the Strategic Plans of all Roundtables with an integrated DRR/CCA/EMR approach are:

- Capacity building
- Development and/or land management plans
- Declaring resilient municipalities
- Socialisation of policies, strategies and laws
- Dissemination and raising awareness
- Recovery of traditional knowledge
- Priority research agenda

A difficult task, but not impossible

The lack of integration and effective coordination of DRR/CCA/EMR policies is one of the problems that needs to be addressed at a regional level, while it is also a reflection of a national problem. There are no inter-institutional and integrated instruments that translate said policies into a local

or regional planning effort. For example, “official” planning instruments, such as those of SEGEPLAN¹², are implemented at departmental and municipal levels, but fail to address the matter with an integrated approach.

Since these are Climate Change Roundtables, the departmental leadership of the climate change governing body (MARN) also needs to be strengthened and empowered. In addition, Roundtables should not be seen merely as spaces for civil society, without political advocacy or decision-making power.

In the SWOT¹³ analysis conducted as part of the diagnosis which was made to obtain the approval of local stakeholders for the establishment of the Roundtables supported by Partners for Resilience,, the limited capacity at all levels in issues involving DRR/CCA/EMR became evident and was acknowledged. In addition, the problem of lack of resources in government institutions to face important problems beyond their abilities (droughts and food insecurity, for example) was identified.

Lessons Learned

- The work premise of avoiding the overlap of spaces instilled trust for the creation of the Roundtables. It is important to understand the contexts, ranging from national to local, to avoid implementing parallel processes.
- Working more closely and in a more collaborative manner with the MARN, due to its specific mandate under the Climate Change Framework Law, may develop into an increased



10. MARN – Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.

11. Video on AEI: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVU22msH1oU&feature=youtu.be>

12. SEGEPLAN – National Secretariat for Planning and Programming of the Presidency

13. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Matrix.



The Joint North-Eastern Climate Change and Gender Roundtable strengthened coordination efforts between Cáritas Zacapa Diocese/Cordaid and MAGA ; thanks to this, some PfR communities are now beneficiaries of a food security project financed by the World Food Programme (WFP).

commitment from this institution to support initiatives from the Roundtables, which to date has not been equitable or effective in the different PfR territories.

- Increased involvement in and joint work with the MICC¹⁴ would have been translated into an interesting synergy, complementing and leveraging traditional knowledge with the integrated PfR approach.
- The leadership and (technical and financial) support of an organisation in the initial phases of each Roundtable is would be favourable, until each group achieves self-management of its respective projects and/or programmes, as established in the Strategic Plans and AOPs.
- For Strategic Plans to contribute to the replication of the integrated approach, ownership needs to be in the hands of local authorities so these can be used as the guiding framework for future initiatives at municipal, departmental, or regional levels.

Best Practices

- A good practice was valuing and respecting the consensus reached within each Roundtable from the onset, including the geographic scope for their establishment and the election of their corresponding boards of directors. This is why they have boards of directors at two levels. On the one hand, at government level are the Departmental Environment Commission (CODEMA) in Quiché, and the Departmental Development Council (COCODE) in Sololá. On the other hand, there are platforms with increased civil participation (Joint North-Eastern Roundtable and the Municipal Roundtable of El Estor). PfR members are part of said boards of directors in the case of the Guatemalan Red Cross and Cáritas Zacapa Diocese/Cordaid.

- As part of PfR, this process was linked to the umbrella of AEI; specific results within the framework of the AEI Action Plan were made apparent in the 2014 AOPs. These include: educational modules, dissemination of policies and laws, and certification programmes.
- In order to guarantee the sustainability of the Roundtable, their Strategic Plans cover the 2014-2018 period, which exceed the timeframe of Partners for Resilience. On the other hand, coordinators and sub-coordinators of each Roundtable are institutions with credibility and long-term presence in their territories.
- Roundtables have been successful in catalysing other partnerships and processes within the PfR framework. It is worth highlighting that the previous preparation work carried out by the PfR members was important, as the creation of the Roundtable would have been a longer and more complicated process without their standing and the convening influence they already had with local stakeholders.

In the past, we have witnessed the failure of several roundtables, networks and platforms. As long as there is a common interest, and this interest is converted into specific and concrete actions, the probability of achieving success is greater. All members of the Roundtable supported by PfR are seeking to reduce vulnerability in their territories and are aware that it is necessary to stop environmental degradation and to adapt to climate change; these priorities are clear in their Strategic Plans. These foundations make the Roundtable not only a point of encounter, but also a necessary vehicle towards resilience. Resilience needs to be consolidated by taking advantage of the Partners for Resilience programme activities

14. MICC – Indigenous Climate Change Roundtable

ALIANZA POR LA RESILIENCIA



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