F2F 2015: Integrated floods management: Acting locally, linking beyond!

Evaluating Disaster Risk Reduction Projects; experiences with participatory approaches

Country/Region: Evaluations performed in Mexico (Chiapas) and Honduras (Olancho, Choluteca and Valle)
Institution: Innovabridge Foundation
Time Frame: 2011 - 2014
Partner(s): Commissioning parties: Caritas Schweiz, Swiss Red Cross
Beneficiaries: Rural communities
Key words: Beneficiary Assessments in DRR project evaluations
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1. Context and rationale

Increasing natural disasters have lead to growing recognition of the need to 'mainstream' disaster risk reduction into development. Many development organisations have started to include disaster risk reduction in their programme strategies and the project designs.

Evaluating disaster risk reduction initiatives contributes to the successful mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into development policy and practice.

The aim of this poster is to share experiences with participatory approaches in the evaluation of three DRR proyects: "Implementación del plan de emergencia tras el huracán Matthew en Chiapas, Mexico" (2011) and External evaluation of two projectos for DRR, ACC and community health in Honduras. (2014)

2. Description of the approach

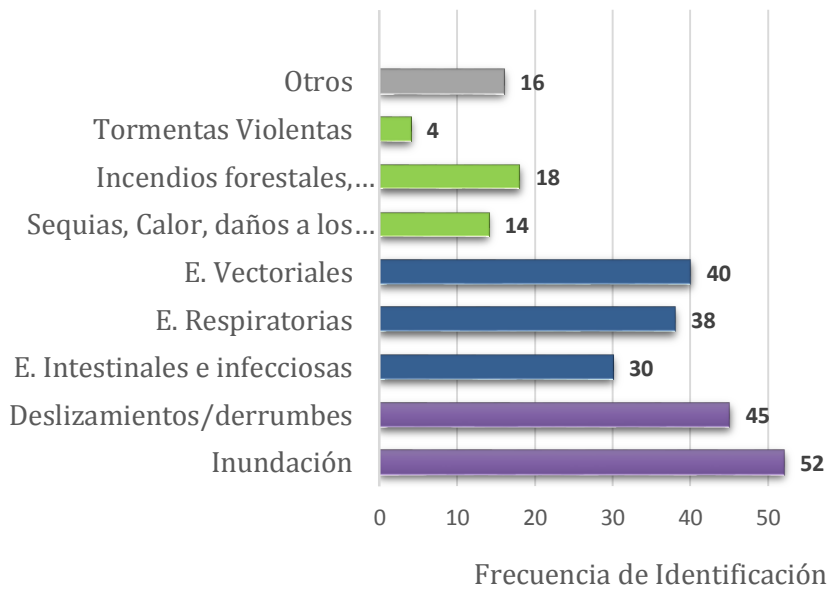
The **Beneficiary Assessment (BA)** approach is focused on gaining insights into community perspectives through interviews and group discussions at community level, by working with members of similar communities (peers) as primary field researchers. BA was used to assess the viewpoints of communities in Honduras on the effects and impacts of sponsored DRR projects. We have enriched the BA method by using peers from other communities to conduct the evaluation interviews according to a generic guide, seconded by students who kept the minutes. This variant was chosen to reduce the bias imposed by interviewers from the outside. Parallely, small groups made drawings comparing the situation of before the projects and at the moment of the evaluation. By dividing the respondents between office holders at municipal level and project-induced DRR committee members in the communities, it was possible to discern convergences and divergences.

The "**group-based assessment of change"** uses open questions about the changes for households after the projects implementation and produces unexpected but important information. We used this method in Chiapas comparing beneficiary communities of the project and communities which were not involved in the project. It was evident, that the awareness of the importance and potential to reduce vulnerability, the degree of organization in prevention committees and progress on concrete measures to make better use of natural resources in the communities involved in the process of reducing vulnerability had grown.

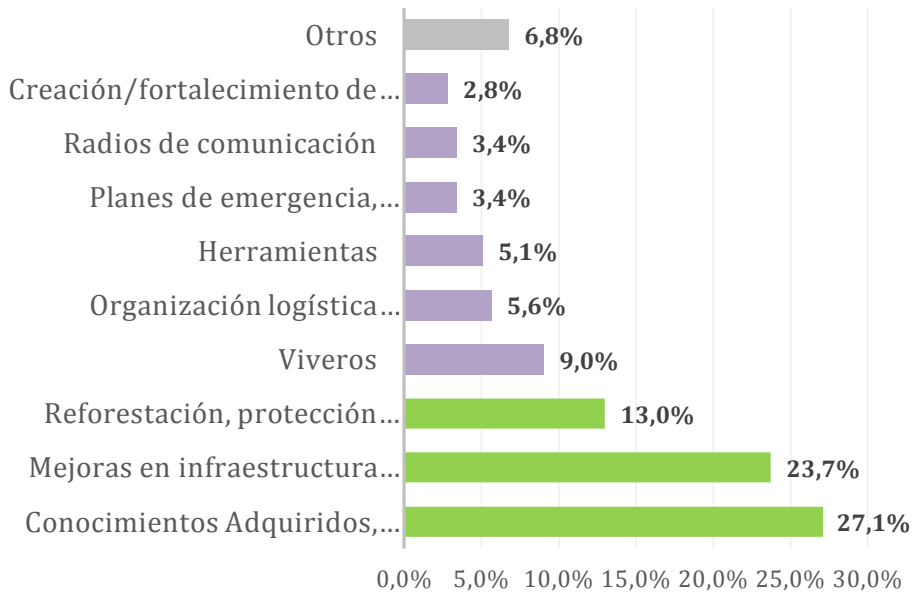
3. Lessons learnt

- The insight gained by BA was revealing. It was possible to measure frequencies of replies and to compare them between the interviewed groups of project actors. The risk assessment by community members allowed to gauge the project's rationale against the perception of the local beneficiaries.
- The BA exercise allowed to find out, in which areas the beneficiaries identified the most prominent changes due to the project. Surprisingly, immaterial benefits (capacity building) fared relatively better than the material assets obtained.
- Participatory approaches allow to make the role of women leaders visible and empower them in their comunities.
- Being interviewed by peers from neighbouring communities puts the respondents at ease. A major challenge is the preparation of a simple interview guide and the adherence to it.

Esquema 1. Principales Riesgos Identificados



Esquema 2. Principales Beneficios Reconocidos



The drawing exercises were particularly popular. They constitute a mean of non-verbal communication that may be helpful in detecting factors that would possibly have remained hidden.

4. Entry points for enhancing quality of impact evaluations

- Evaluation is an important learning moment for the communities, raising awareness of the benefits of DRR interventions.
- Participatory approaches in evaluations give voice to the beneficiaries and to their priorities and concerns. They increase their ownership of the evaluations results.
- Use of mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative data
- Use of participatory approaches as BA, most significant change, participatory social mapping, ranking and comparison) combined with conventional approaches (secondary data, project reports, questionnaires).