

Local volunteers work in monitoring the Volcano of Fire in Guatemala.

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Volunteer networks are mobilized to monitor Guatemala's volcanic eruptions

Community organization is key in post-disaster recovery and in the creation of early warning systems in Guatemala. José Rolando Herrera, national UN Volunteer, Responsible for Territorial Post Disaster Recovery, is part of the UNDP Guatemala team that works together with the Executive Secretariat of the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction and the National Institute of Seismology, Volcanology, Meteorology and Hydrology of Guatemala. Together they monitor, respond, and provide early recovery mechanisms for areas affected by volcanic hazards.

The eruption of the Guatemala's Volcano of Fire occurred on June 3, 2018, causing the death of more than 300 people and the evacuation of more than 4,000 inhabitants in the surrounding areas. José Rolando Herrera, national UN Volunteer Responsible for Territorial Post Disaster Recovery, is part of the UNDP Guatemala team that works together with the Executive Secretariat of the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction and the National Institute of Seismology, Volcanology, Meteorology and Hydrology of Guatemala, in the response and early recovery derived from the emergency, and in the design of the early warning systems for volcanic hazard and lahars.

“ One of the main challenges is the monitoring of the Volcano, and several alliances have been achieved at institutional and local levels that work together on this”- says José Rolando Herrera, national UN Volunteer

From the institutional level, José Rolando has been part of the creation of a coordination board with governmental and civil society organizations to overcome challenges in early warning and damage mitigation. At the community level, he works with the members of the Local Coordinators for Disaster Reduction -COLRED- as well as the vigilant radio operators of the Volcano of Fire.

Local volunteering has been fundamental to improvement, since the people who monitor by radio are volunteers that have created the local networks at the service of their communities. Through joint work between governments, organizations, volunteers and the United Nations, visits with experts are made to the basins that descend from the Volcán de Fuego and constitute the means by which avalanches, being a constant threat for the surrounding communities.

“During the rainy season the risk of lahars in the Cenizas river basin increases. From this joint work, a site has been identified that can be used by the populations in case of need for evacuation”- states Herrera.

Although this work has a greater impact on climate action and SDG 13, it has also stimulates important progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Guatemala in general through the participation of women has been highly promoted, specially on decision making of the COLRED, and from the radio operators in the Monitoring and Surveillance System. 29 radiocommunication and alarm systems have been installed using solar energy as the main source, contributing also to affordable and clean energy.



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