

# 2017 Mexico Earthquake Recovery Participatory Grantmaking Pilot

## Disaster Context

In September 2017, two earthquakes struck Mexico, disrupting millions of lives across the country. First, a magnitude 8.1 earthquake struck on September 7th off the Pacific Coast of Mexico, with an official death toll of 90 --- 71 from the state of Oaxaca, 15 in the state of Chiapas, and four in the state of Tabasco. Thousands of homes were damaged and more than two million people in the country were affected. Second, a magnitude 7.1 earthquake struck central and southern Mexico on September 19th, killing more than 300 people. In total, more than 186,000 homes, 19,198 schools, 297 hospitals and health care centers and 2,340 historical buildings in 700 municipalities were damaged in the two earthquakes.

## GlobalGiving's Disaster Recovery Network (DRN)

When a disaster strikes, recovery efforts led by people who live and work in affected communities are often overlooked and underfunded. The Disaster Recovery Network at GlobalGiving is changing this reality. Since 2004, we've been shifting decision-making power to crises-affected communities through trust-based grantmaking and support. The GlobalGiving community recognizes the need for a locally driven, long-term response to natural disasters and humanitarian crises.

## GlobalGiving's Mexico Earthquake Relief Fund

Our [Mexico Earthquake Relief Fund](#) raised more than four million US dollars from 21,126 donors. Initially, the fund helped first responders respond to survivors' immediate needs for food, fuel, clean water, hygiene products, medical care, and shelter. Given our approach of supporting these communities long after the cameras have left, this fund is now dedicated to supporting longer-term recovery efforts run by local, vetted organizations across Mexico. We believe that organizations that are deeply rooted in local communities are in the best position to provide long-term support for survivors of natural disasters like these.

## Participatory Grantmaking Pilot

### Overview

In April 2019, GlobalGiving hosted a full day, in-person meeting in Oaxaca, Mexico for our nonprofit partners that continue to support the communities affected by the 2017 earthquakes. This was the second convening of GlobalGiving's Disaster Recovery Network (DRN) partners in Mexico, and was intended to allow our nonprofit partners to share information, network, and develop collaborative efforts. We decided to explore a new concept for this community with a final activity. We tested a participatory grantmaking pilot as a new resource opportunity for this group's recovery work. Participants did not know about the inclusion of this pilot prior to attending the meeting.

### Objective

GlobalGiving's aim in this pilot exercise was to experiment with ceding decision making power to our nonprofit partners, and to do so with a community that was all working towards similar ends and were embedded in long term recovery activities. We felt this exercise could demonstrate what it meant to decentralize decisions about disaster funding, shift power dynamics, and recognize our local nonprofit partners as the real experts in their own disaster recovery context.

### Eligibility

Organizations that attended the in-person Oaxaca convening, were already [vetted](#) by GlobalGiving, and had previously received a grant from GlobalGiving to support the organization's earthquake relief and recovery work in Mexico were eligible to participate in this pilot and receive the end grant.

### Voting

Voting was anonymous and done within the event itself. We allowed one vote per organization. Organizations were not allowed to vote for themselves. Participants that voted were asked to give a brief description to justify their decision.

### Amount

\$10,000 U.S. dollars as an unrestricted donation to support an organization's earthquake recovery work.

## Profile of Attendees

We were pleased to see a great diversity of attendees; from community members who worked closely with the nonprofits we were partnered with, to the directors of those same nonprofits. This variety of backgrounds and responsibilities of the attendees made for a rich and insightful participatory grantmaking exercise.

## Process

Each organization representative presented a 10 minute overview of their current work, learnings, and challenges related to its earthquake relief and recovery work. The organization representatives expressed gratitude for being able to hear from everyone else's work and saw this as an opportunity for solidarity.

## Results

After all the participants had the opportunity to present on the progress and main challenges of their disaster recovery work, each of the 14 organizations cast votes. Organizations had limited information regarding the details of each program when voting, but made efficient use of their understanding of the region and disaster context. After all participants had listened to each organization's most recent work, GlobalGiving facilitated an open discussion to allow for more questions and details on each organization's work. Centro para los Derechos de la Mujer Naaxwiin A.C. received the highest number of votes. They are a grassroots feminist organization led mainly by indigenous women in the highlands of the southern state of Oaxaca. Its earthquake recovery work is focused in the Rio Pachiñe community. The community is home to 50 families and saw eighty percent of its houses and public buildings destroyed by the earthquake. Two years after the disaster, the community still has not been able to fully start the rebuilding process or to relocate given the lack of support from local government. Additionally, lack of funding and opportunity has not allowed the local economy to reactivate. Each participant acknowledged that its decision was made by prioritizing the needs of the communities where each nonprofit was working, and asking themselves who needed the funds the most to have a higher impact.

## Feedback + Learning

GlobalGiving's participatory grantmaking pilot was successful in that it provided a safe space for nonprofits working towards the same objective to learn from each other's work, show solidarity between them, and advance a shared vision. In the post-pilot survey, 95% of participants said they felt extremely satisfied with the outcome of this exercise, and 80%



said they felt empowered to either start or continue collaborative work with other organizations working with communities affected by the earthquakes in the area.. This initial pilot exercise had the advantage that there was already a sense of community between the nonprofits that participated, and shows that they were eager to support each other and allow more funding at the grassroots level.

Organizations recognized learning about each other's common challenges and progress in the disaster context in Mexico allowed for impartial voting, as well as for gaining insight on how their relationship with funders had a direct effect in the communities where they work.

### Final considerations

We believe empowering the nonprofits we work with is key to acknowledging that the nonprofits working locally are the agents of change and allowing a participatory process was key in the advancement of equal participation.