



Staff Spotlight

CARE Guatemala: Enri Charles Maldonado

OVERVIEW The CARE USA Water+ Team celebrates the amazing staff that have helped CARE to transform communities over the years. Many of our staff have been leading teams on community-level change, essential advocacy and policy influencing, and strong partnerships with other NGOs, the government and the private sector, for decades. In this brief we outline the efforts of one person who has contributed to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) systems change in Guatemala.

Enri Maldonado

Background and Experience

Enri Maldonado has worked on CARE Guatemala's WASH team for over 20 years. Unlike other posts, CARE Guatemala's definition of "WASH" is potentially broader than its typical characterization. WASH work includes, but is not limited to: conservation, water resource protection, watershed re-charge, risk management, emergency response, government capacity-building, and of course "traditional" WASH programs in communities and schools related to water and sanitation access and behavior change.

When Guatemala experiences an emergency, Enri is one of the first people to respond. He helps ensure people have safe potable water, showers, latrines and other basic needs. Although he is currently coordinating the 'WASH in Schools' project for CARE Guatemala's [Nourishing the Future](#), he continues to work on other CARE initiatives that need his assistance – particularly involving local governments on WASH capacity building workshops.

“The topic of water is beautiful. I love it. I have been involved in this for many years. It is interesting. The benefit water can bring to families is amazing, but it is very complex. It is not arriving, doing a project, and leaving.” Enri Maldonado

Interview

What is necessary for sustainable WASH?

COLLABORATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES:

Enri asserts, *“Opening the doors with authorities...this is the key to any project. Whether it is on water, or other projects.”* Before CARE, Enri worked at the Ministry of Health as a Technical Specialist on community health. There, he realized the necessary link between government and communities on water quality and services.

COORDINATING WITH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES:

Enri advocates that involving community development and management committees is another key piece to building sustainability. *“We need the support of the local community leadership. We must rely upon the participation of both men and women.”* He also finds it is imperative for community committees to be aware of project features and requirements to fully support activities.

COMMUNITY WASH OWNERSHIP: In order to promote community ownership, we need to recognize people’s contributions - whether in time, labor, or material. CARE Guatemala views community contributions as an essential aspect to their success. Enri stresses to communities that all efforts, big or small, are valuable and valued. *“When communities contribute, they take better care of the project, of the water system. People become more aware of water’s importance and how difficult it is to develop and maintain systems that bring water down from the mountains.”*

TARIFFS—INSTILLING WATER SYSTEM SUSTAINABILITY :

Tariffs, or payments for water services, are essential to sustainability. CARE Guatemala has always stood by this—even going so far as to leave areas where local governments overturned water tariffs.

Communities need to understand the value of their monetary contributions in order to maintain successful water systems; and Enri teaches this through an activity called ‘Investment Cost’. During community assemblies, he asks participants to calculate the costs that they spend daily; e.g. electricity, cell phone credit, soda, sweets. Afterwards, he takes the average community expenditure and compares it to how much is being asked for water contributions. This

usually is quite insignificant in comparison, demonstrating that water investment is a rather small portion of a household’s monthly allowance. Enri highlights that, unlike soda, water is a sustainable investment. He finishes the activity with a proposed budget to determine how much the water committee will earn from individual contributions and set a fixed monthly or yearly amount. CARE Guatemala recognizes that communities are different and carefully approaches each context with a sensitive, strategic mind set.

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What does CARE WASH programming do differently than other NGOs?

CARE Guatemala has always worked on integrated projects: water source protection, strengthening water committees, behavior change of users. Enri notes other NGOs do not always implement capacity building at the level CARE provides. He asserts that when CARE Guatemala works with local communities, they are trained on the importance of water, basics of funds management, operations and maintenance, gender and water protection resources. Enri elaborates, *“Many other organizations do not train water committees on this whole packet. Now, we are promoting this model of intervention alongside [other NGOs like] Water for People and Helvetas.”* CARE strives to have this WASH model formally adopted into municipal policy.

What is “gender” in WASH programming?

Enri stresses the value of women’s participation in WASH projects. *“From our first interactions with the government and community committees, we discuss the importance of including women in the process. Not just including them, but encouraging them to take positions of power within water*





committees.” Thanks to Enri’s continuous efforts to include women, female leadership across CARE Guatemala programs has consistently grown.

Exchange Visits

Enri’s knowledge of WASH programs extends well beyond Guatemala. He is a lifelong learner and is eager to find out how other countries handle water and sanitation issues. He affirms that “[*knowledge*] exchange within country and in other countries are important for people to expand their knowledge and share experiences.”

Recognizing the significant information sharing and quality improvement that can be garnered through exchange visits, Enri has gone to Mexico twice (as a consultant) to look at programs and share his advice and observations. As a champion for systems strengthening, he has also prioritized travel to Honduras on a few occasions to monitor and evaluate program performance for a local NGO.

Accomplishments

Although Enri has had many accomplishments during his time at CARE Guatemala, most notably is his relationship with community members and government officials. There is a high level of trust and confidence in his technical expertise and his ability to humbly explain technical concepts for easy understanding by various audiences. This takes a special talent.

Enri has been core to the Water+ work of CARE Guatemala for more than two decades. With Amilcar Miron and Adolfo Ochoa and additional colleagues at CARE and other institutions Enri has contributed to convincing nearly 100% of municipalities in the department of San Marcos to establish Municipal WASH Offices. In a recent evaluation conducted with government beneficiaries at the local and national level, there was an overwhelmingly positive response to the work of CARE. At last count, 117 Municipal WASH Offices across the country, out of 340 municipalities. CARE Guatemala is continuing advocacy work to maintain focus on incorporating gender and sustainability into government strategies for increasing WASH coverage.

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