

International Search and Rescue
Advisory Team – INSARAG

Americas' Region



Capacity assessment of USAR teams in the Americas region

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I. Introduction

In order to have an overview of the current USAR Teams situation, The Americas Region decided the carrying out of diagnosis to identify the teams' preparedness and response capacities. Thereafter, a short-term, medium-term and long-term development strategy could be established.

This diagnosis of the USAR Teams is taken as an opportunity to identify the political and operational support that they receive, the policies that support them, their development level, the involvement of the emergency national services, their funding, the knowledge about the Handbook and Methodology of INSARAG and its application level.

In addition, this diagnosis is a guidance tool for the country's Political and Operational Focal Points to emphasize their efforts to the consolidation and development of these USAR Teams at a national level.

Having a wide point of view in relation with the development and implementation level of the USAR Teams, and knowing the interpreting for each team, make you become a USAR Team and make you know how this must be developed. As a result, this work shares knowledge of the INSARAG Handbooks and different development subjects of the teams.

The results show that there are processes to be strengthened and actions to be implemented in order to make all the teams understand that this process is part of the Government authorities. The process must be organized in close coordination with the National Emergency and Disaster System and it must have policies that support it and human and financial resources that make it sustainable.



The team must develop and implement integration processes within the five components (administrative, Logistics, research, rescue and medical), through process and characteristics previously developed, approved and tried. To meet this target, the team must be immersed in a solid process of preparedness and planned training, and in a constantly development to determine the actual technical and technological changes.

The next step is to raise awareness in people with political and technical power of decision that can provide positive conditions for the strengthening and perseverance of the teams' consolidation. All this must be done with the constant support of the INSARAG Secretariat and the Americas INSARAG Presidency, creating planned and perseverant processes and assuring the continuity and development of the USAR Teams.

The support of the certified teams from our country and any of the continents is essential for understanding and assisting which the scope of the constitution and development of the national USAR Teams is. It is also important to learn from all its experience in the building of all those crucial parts and to glimpse that establishing USAR is more than research and rescue. Actually, the idea is to create a process in close relation with the national organizations, in order to work together for the same target: saving lives when required.

This document has three parts: (1) the explanation of the methodological process used to carry out this report; (2) the diagnosis results, analyzing each aspect with its respectively questions and answers (see tool for diagnosis. Annex 1); (3) conclusions and recommendations.

II. Background

The America's INSARAG Regional Team discussed and approved, in their annual meeting of 2012 in San José – Costa Rica, the proposal of carrying out a diagnosis of the Americas' USAR Teams capacity. In the executive board – Costa Rica, the Presidency; Peru, the first Vice-presidency, and Chile, the second Vice-presidency – pursuing this requirement was agreed and the process needed for the diagnosis was decided.

The idea of working on a diagnosis tool arises from the necessity to answer many questions, such as, how many USAR Teams are in the Region? How much we know about INSARAG and its Handbook? Which is the political support for these teams? These questions result after the new challenge of changing the Presidency of the Americas' Regional Team.

The official nomination from the countries of the majority of national and operational focal points of the Region enable a closer relation between the INSARAG Secretariat and each country, keeping an official way of communication. This latter allows to us identify and promote the INSARAG methodology, which in turn consents to start the best way for creating operational and organizational guidelines for National USAR teams, as pointed on chapter G, page 69 of the INSARAG Guidelines.

The INSARAG Guidelines and its chapter G are essential for analyzing the diagnosis information, focusing on the importance of operational and organizational guidelines for National USAR teams, as well as, how USAR Teams are following the recommendations given in this chapter.

The diagnosis tool has nine important aspects for the disclosure of information, development and consolidation of the Americas' USAR Teams:

1. General Questions (information shown in the INSARAG directory)
2. Aspects related to the political management
3. Aspects related to the normative framework and national system
4. Issues related to the INSARAG Focal Points of the country
5. Issues related to the INSARAG Guidelines
6. Aspects related to each USAR team
7. Institutional aspects of each team
8. Aspects related to training
9. Aspects related to collaboration through the INSARAG network

III. Methodology

As a result of the different actions developed since having the necessity of a regional diagnosis, the methodological process was divided in five steps:

1. ***Preparation, consultation and validation of the assessment tool***
2. ***Collection and compilation of the information***
3. ***Information processing***
4. ***Information analysis***
5. ***Presentation of the results***

Now, each step is developed:

Step 1: The **preparation, consultation and validation of the diagnosis tool** is the first step to assure the coherence of questions and their interrelation regarding what was needed to know from the current Regional USAR Teams. Even the preexisting limitations of this kind of tools, the main target was to compile information, as much as possible, of the national systems and USAR Teams. The tool sampling was taken in Chile.

Step 2: Due to the tool's characteristics, the **collection and compilation of the information** caused many doubts that were answered and clarified during the completion process.

Most of these doubts were related to who must fill out the diagnosis tool and how it must be filled out, such as: Do we need a compilation for each country? Do we need a compilation for each USAR Team? Who must fill out the tool? Which are the conditions for been taken in consideration? The tool must be filled out only by those who comply with the requirements of the INSARAG Handbook or those who are part of certified or national accredited teams? This situation extended the time for compiling the diagnosis tools duly completed but, it also allows us to have more samplings for the analysis.

Step 3: For the **information processing**, a tool was prepared leading us to join the different questions for each aspect (see Annex 2). This was done to duly graph the results for its interpreting and analysis regarding the diagnosis targets previously established. Two types of questions were arisen from the different kind of questions: questions answered by the National USAR Process (NATIONAL COMPILATION) and others answered by each USAR Team (USAR TEAMS). Therefore, the information processing was divided in these two types of questions, thus analysis processing is coherent with this distribution.

In chart 1, first and second columns show aspects and questions of the diagnosis tool, and the number of answers in the national compilation and the USAR teams.

The answers regarding each USAR Team was not constant in each question (see fourth column). There are countries that take in consideration the teams, but they do not show the diagnosis tools. Therefore, the information processing was developed in coherence with the answers.

Due to the difference on answers, we take in consideration the answers of USAR Teams in the presentation of the results for each aspect.

Step 4: The **information analysis** is coherent with the nine essential aspects of the diagnosis tool, based on the analyses of the INSARAG Guidelines and its chapter G, "Establishing a National Search and Rescue Capacity". Additionally, there is an analysis regarding the country compilation and each USAR team.

Chart 1: Number of primordial aspects, number of questions of the diagnosis tool and number of answers for the national compilation and USAR Teams.

Section	Question	Consolidated figure by country	By number of USAR team
1	1.1	12	
1	1.2		84
1	1.3		73
2	2.1	12	
2	2.2	12	
3	3.1	12	
3	3.2	12	
3	3.3	12	
3	3.4	12	
4	4.1		19
4	4.2	12	
4	4.3	12	
5	5.1		53
5	5.2	12	
5	5.3	12	
6	6.1		58
6	6.2		47
6	6.3		57
7	7.1		58
7	7.2		58
7	7.3		58
7	7.4		58
7	7.5		58
7	7.6		58
7	7.7		58
8	8.1		58
8	8.2		58
8	8.3		58
8	8.4		58
8	8.5		58
8	8.6		58
9	9.1	12	
9	9.2	12	

Step 5: The submittal of the results was done for each essential aspect of the diagnosis tool, including a small paragraph of the analysis and its corresponding graphic. In some cases, graphics could be more than one because of the number of questions.

IV. Diagnosis results

Each aspect was analyzed in order to determine the scope and results. Then, some strategies are established and introduced into the Executive Board of the Americas region for the subsequent years.

1. General Questions (information to be shown in the INSARAG directory)

These questions allowed us to know the number of current teams, compile the information of the teams and the experience in national and international missions, and update the data base of the INSARAG Secretariat with the contacts of these teams.

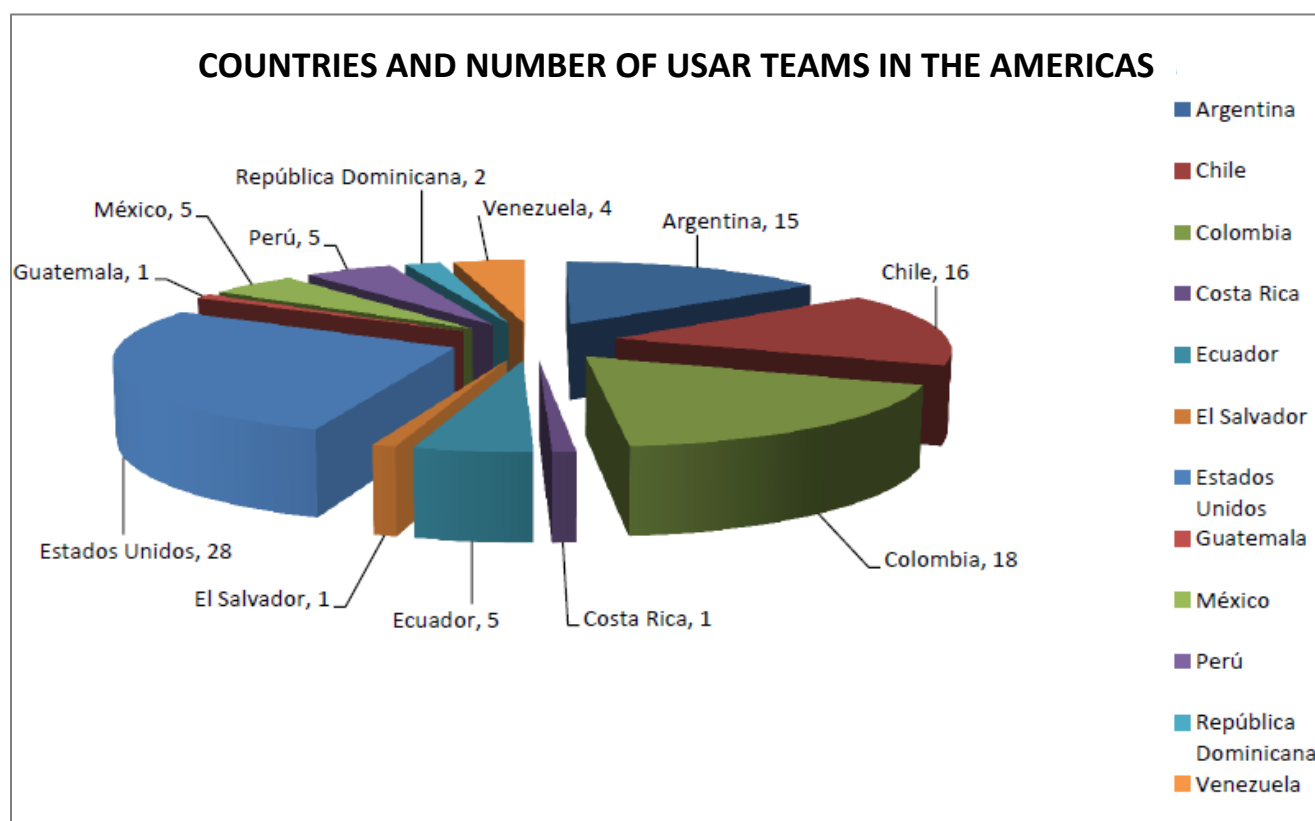
1.1. Number of current Regional USAR Teams

From the 12 countries that fill out the survey (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, United States, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, Dominic Republic and Venezuela), 101 USAR Teams were identified: 2 in the sub-region of the Caribbean, 3 in Central America, 33 in North America and 63 in South America (see Graphic 1 and 2).

From the 101 USAR Teams identified, two countries (Argentina and Chile) do not submit the complete diagnosis tool of 17 teams (Argentina has 7 teams and Chile, 10). Below you can read the literal expressions they used:

- Argentina states: “there are 8 formal teams linked in an official way and 7 are in process of formation; they are very different in their development process”.
- Chile indicates: “3 teams accredited by the National System of Operations, 3 teams in the final stage of accreditation of the National System of Operations. There are also 10 USAR teams subscribed to the *Process of USAR National Accreditation*, they are in different emerging steps and their little background does not allow us to certify their capacities. Thus, they were not included in this compilation; nevertheless, these 10 teams were counted since they are part of the national capacities building, as stated in resolution 57/150 of UN General Assembly and the INSARAG Hyogo Declaration-2010.

United States identified 28 teams but they filled in two diagnosis tools in addition to the information of all the teams; Virginia USAR Team is more detailed.



Graphic 1: Countries that participated in the diagnosis and number of USAR teams for each country.

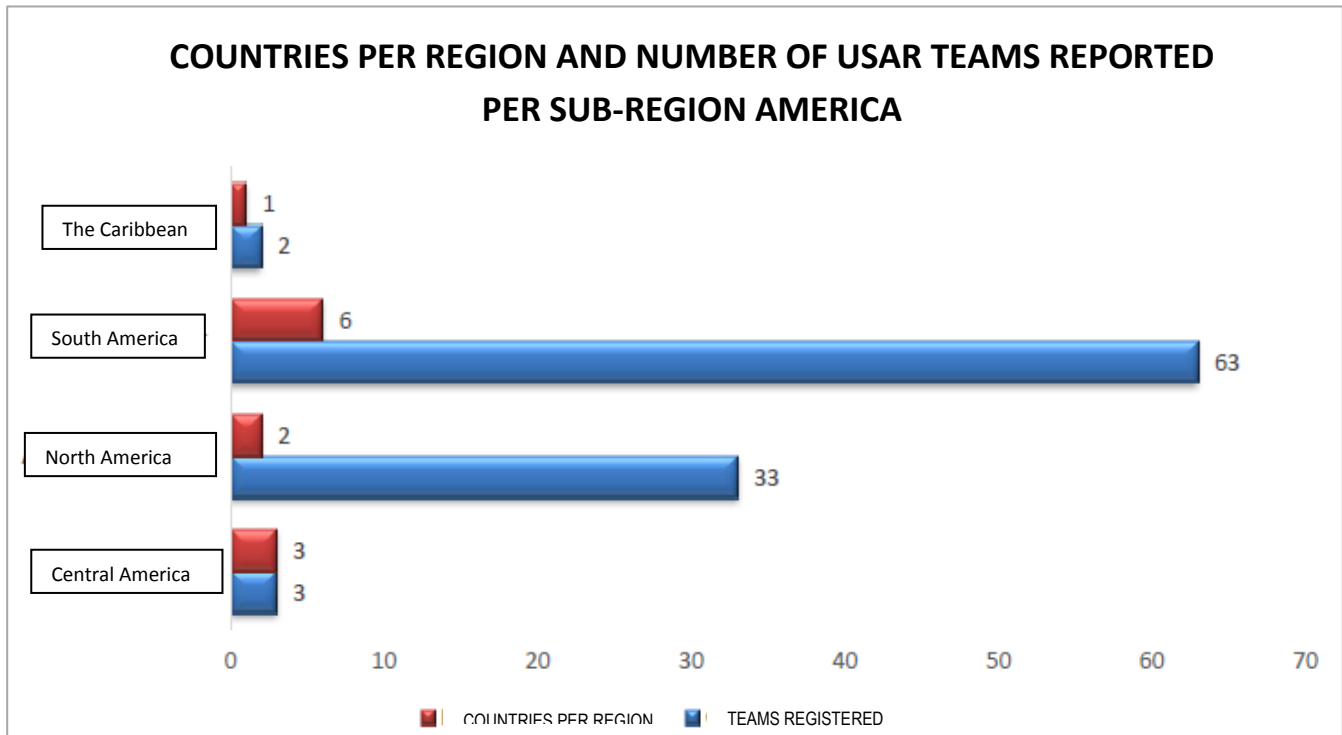
Meanwhile, Colombia identified 18 teams, each one in a different stage of development according to USAR. In this regard, this country states: “Even though we do not receive any information from *Bomberos de Pasto* (Fire Brigade of Colombia) Bogota, Pereira and Medellin, it is known that they are getting some work done in relation to this process. Additionally, Red Cross is doing its process in different cities, but Bogota was the only team ahead in the process”. For this document, 18 teams were identified by Colombia.

Of noting is that Graphic 1 shows the total of teams identified by each country. Therefore, each of them was counted even if they did not fill in the tools for all the teams.

In connection with the distribution of the teams in sub-regions, there are 34 countries in Americas’ Regions; from these, only 12 countries filled out the diagnosis tool, which represents 35.29% of the total of countries. At the same time, these 12 countries represent 68% of the total of people in the Americas¹.

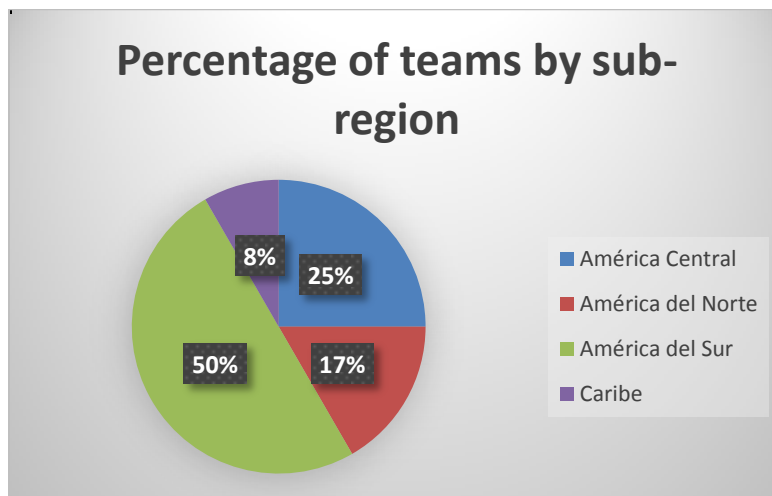
According to the Graphic 2, teams divided by sub-regions, an important presence of teams in South America (63), North America (33), and Central America (3) and the Caribbean is shown (2).

¹ Information taken from Wikipedia webpage on May 27, 2014,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_in_the_Americas_by_population



Graphic 2: Number of countries and teams reported in Americas' Region

Graphic 3 says that the majority of Americas' teams are located in South America (50%) and North America (17%); then, Central America (25%) and the Caribbean (8%).



Graphic 3: Percentage calculation for USAR Teams per sub-region of The Americas.

1.2. Information of the teams

In the processing of the teams' individual information for question 1.2, the data from only 84 teams was considered, corresponding to those ones that submitted the required information (see Chart 2).

All the required information of the diagnosis tool chart was used but the following points are important to be mentioned:

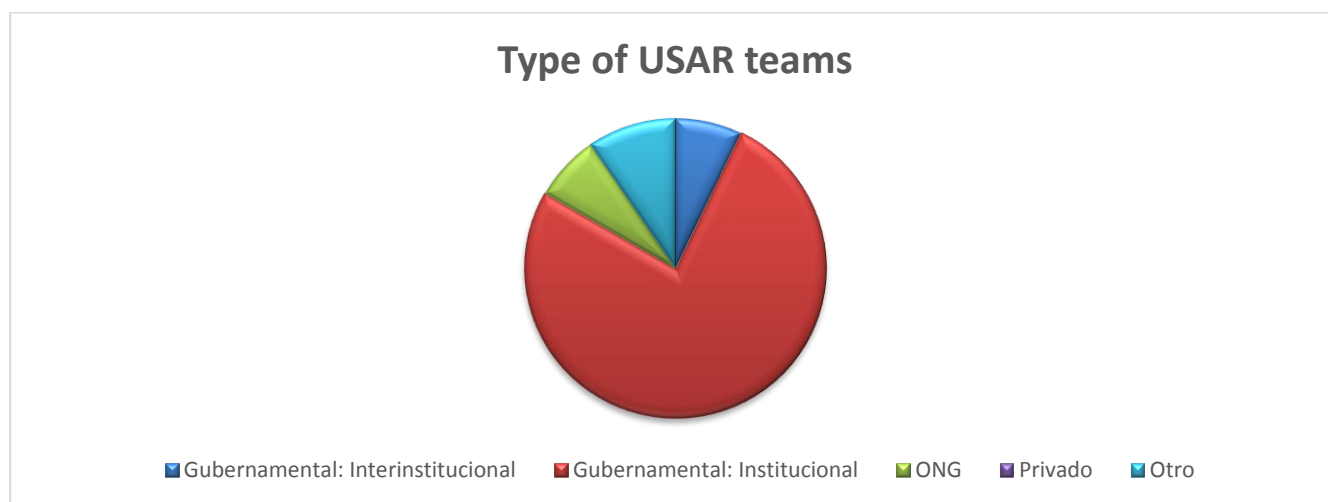
- Type.
- Sponsor or support from a national authority or the Government.
- Number of persons or members of the team.
- Self-sufficiency, as stated in the INSARAG Guidelines.
- Existence of an accreditation, certification or national standardization system.

Teams that reported information	
Country	Number
Argentina	8
Chile	6
Colombia	18
Costa Rica	1
Ecuador	5
El Salvador	1
United States of America	28
Guatemala	1
México	5
Peru	5
Dominican Republic	2
Venezuela	4
Total of teams	84

Chart 2: When processing teams' individual information for question 1.2, only 84 teams were taken into consideration.

1.2.1. Type

The type of teams shows that 76% of the teams are *governmental and institutional*, 7% of them are *governmental and inter-institutional*, 7% are NGO and 10% are classified as *Other*, which are teams that are part of the Fire Brigade of Chile, one from Cali-Colombia and one from Argentina (see Graphic 4).



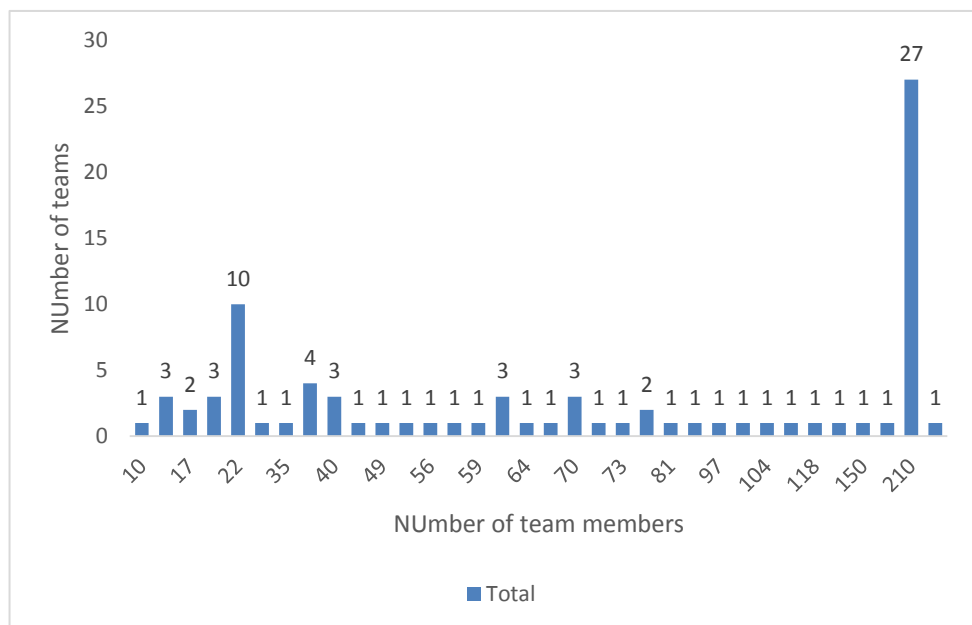
Graphic 4: USAR Teams Classification in each country.

1.2.2. Sponsor or support from a national authority or the Government

From the 84 teams that answered this question, the majority (76) indicates that they have support from national, regional and local authorities. Only 8 teams indicate that they do not have this support or they are in the process of obtaining it.

1.2.3. Number of persons or members of the team

The number of persons of each USAR Team is essential for developing its operational capacities. Chapter G suggests having at least 38 members for medium-size teams and 55 members for bigger teams. Graphic 5 teaches that 25 from the total of USAR Teams have less than the 38 members required, inferring that their capacities are not as strong as supposed.



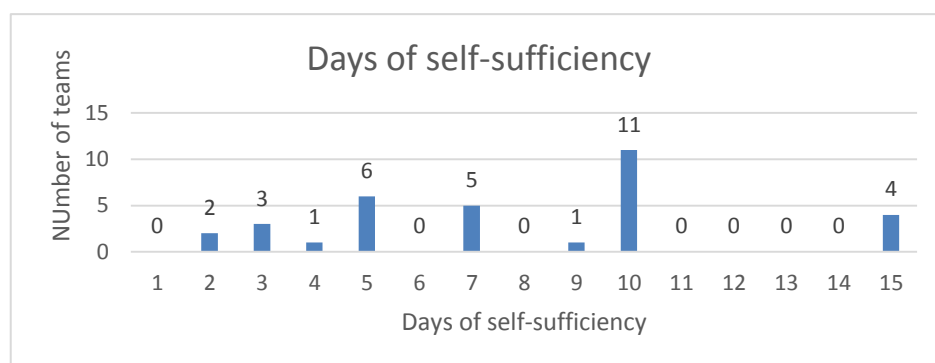
Graphic 5: Total of persons that are part of each USAR Team registered

1.2.4. Self-sufficiency, as stated in the INSARAG Guidelines

The questions were: “Is the team self-sufficient as stated in the INSARAG Guidelines? – Yes/No/DO NOT ANSWER, length expressed in days of self-sufficiency”. The answers allowed us to develop three different analyses regarding that some teams (51) only answered YES/NO and NA (No Answer). 7 teams answered YES, 16 answered NO and 28 did not answer this question.

The second analysis is focused on the teams that answered NO since they are National USAR Teams that do not need self-sufficiency as they are located in their own country. Nevertheless, in countries with great extensions, a national team mobilization would need self-sufficiency capacity.

The third analysis refers to the teams that answered YES to self-sufficiency but did not mention which one could be this one. This subject depends on the self-sufficiency for the international teams and the guidelines of chapter G on the INSARAG Guidelines. This chapter demonstrates that medium-sized teams must be self-sufficiency for at least 7 days and the bigger ones, for 10 days. Therefore, those who answered having an international reference is assumed, and those ones who did not answer are national teams.



Graphic 6: Days of operational self-sufficiency for the Teams in the Americas' Region.

From the 33 teams that answered having self-sufficiency and indicated the days, 11 of them answered having it for 10 days; 6 of them, for 7 days; 4 of them, for 15 days. The self-sufficiency capacity of the other 12 teams is below the suggestion for working as international team, but they could work as national USAR teams (see Graphic 6).

1.2.5. Existence of an accreditation, certification or national standardization system

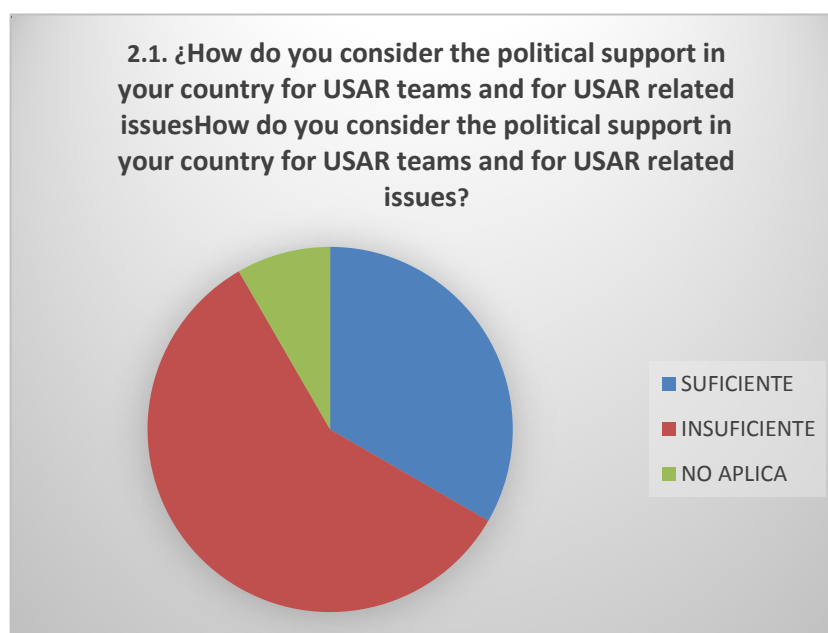
From the teams taken into consideration for this section (70), 2 teams answered being certified before INSARAG and being part of the United States (Team Fairfax Co. Fire & Rescue Dept. and LA County Fire Dept.), 36 answered being certified by its national system, 8 are in process of obtaining a national accreditation and 24 do not have any accreditation system.

2. Aspects related to the political management

The political management plays an essential role in the line-up and foundation of the USAR Teams; it is in charge of the policies, financings and operational conditions required for its strength. The answer to the question arising from this section is shown in Graphic 7. It indicates that from the 12 countries that answered, 7 thinks that political management is insufficient (58%), 4 believes that it is sufficient (34%) and 1 do not answer (8%).

Chart 3 demonstrates the priority order of the points considered as important for the countries, such as compromise ratification, political support and improvement of the current process regarding this subject and the USAR teams themselves.

There is as constant in the results, even though there is a difference in terms of political support, financing, training, practice, equipment and fulfillment of agreements.



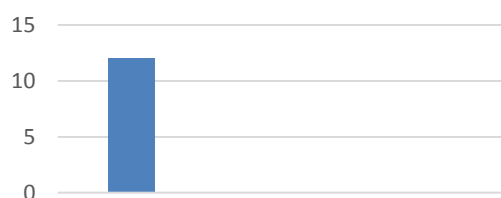
Graphic 7: Political support of the country to USAR Teams.

Items in order of importance shown by the countries		
IMPORTANCE 1	IMPORTANCE 2	IMPORTANCE 3
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Real political support provided to the thematic management. 2. Governments' assigning budget. 3. Providing support and follow-up from the local governments and national government. 4. Identifying authorities and economic support. 5. Being recognized as open-door associations before the region countries. 6. Providing political support to complete interagency protocols. 7. Implemented USAR national process. 8. Providing institutional support in personnel management. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technical support and training. 2. Institutional financing to sustain personnel. 3. Assignment of full-time technical team for being strengthened. 4. Economic and financial support programs. 5. Providing equipment. 6. Providing funds. 7. Socialization of the National Operation System before ONEMI and the Emergency Committee of the Civil Protection System at regional level. 8. Training and providing equipment to the teams. 9. Acquisition of equipment, tools and accessories. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economic support for financing. 2. Institutional support for preparing a reference framework. 3. Fulfillment of interinstitutional agreements. 4. Training and homogeneous operation process. 5. Regulating the USAR framework in the country. 6. International training opportunities. 7. Training exercises. 8. National assessment and certification. 9. Providing equipment and training with electronic equipment.

Chart 3: 2.2. Which are the three most important points/issues on which the political support and commitment depend for the USAR issues in your country?

3. Aspects related to the normative framework and national system

Does the normative framework of your country's risk management/emergency management system foresee the need to have a USAR capacity?



Graphic 8: In your country, is it considered the necessity of having USAR capacity?

The emergency system and the policies of each country are linked to the development of a national USAR system; therefore, USAR Teams development is also involved. The questions arisen from this section are related to know how this process evolves in each country. For the first question, does this system considers the necessity of having USAR capacities? USAR Teams answered that they do need to have USAR capacities (see Graphic 8).

For the second question, is there a national process that guides a USAR Team? From the 12 countries that answered this question, 7 teams affirm that there is a process developing in its country. The other teams are not in the middle of any process (see Graphic

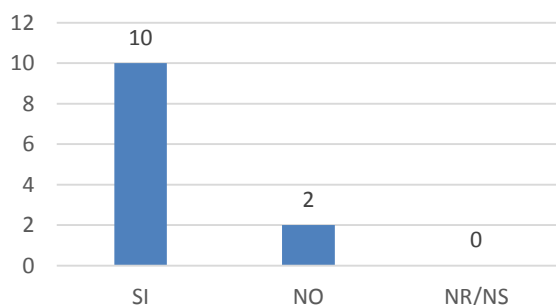
9).

The countries that answer YES means that they have a national authority and a policy document that support the USAR Team establishment process. There are different types of such document, such as, plans, agreements, protocols, decisions; but they have not been compiled in an appropriate and unique document for USAR Teams.

For the third question, regarding the national system of emergency service, are there mobilization mechanisms for the national USAR teams? From 12 USAR teams, 9 teams affirm

having a mobilization system for emergencies.

Are there any mechanisms and national capacity to receive and integrate international USAR teams with national USAR teams and other national resources when requested?



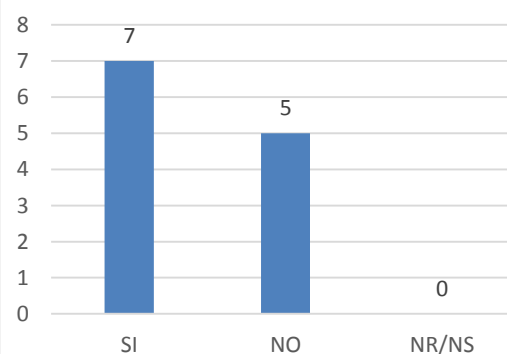
Graphic 10: National mechanisms and capacity for receiving and integrating international USAR teams with national USAR teams when requested.

This mobilization is supported by a national coordination or authority. At the same time, these ones are supported by policies based on national preparedness and emergency response regulations and they do not have policies related directly with the USAR Teams.

Regarding the subject of joining international capacities with national USAR Teams capacities (see Graphic 10), 10 countries, from 12, affirm having the capacity to join them. The remarks are essentially related to the importance of joining the international assistance to the response national system. The other two teams affirm having specific mechanisms for USAR issue.

In general, this aspect shows that the countries are interested in having national USAR teams directly linked to

Is there a process at the national level that governs the establishment of a USAR team?



Graphic 9: National process that guides the constitution of a USAR team.

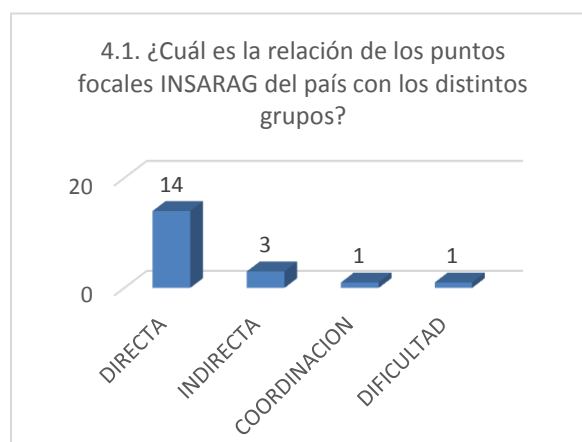
the National Emergency System, and supported by the system policies. There are teams doing great efforts for developing the policies and organizational conditions in order to consolidate this effort for each USAR Team.

4. Issues related to the INSARAG focal points in your country

Knowing the relationship between the INSARAG Focal Points and USAR Teams allows us to develop strategies and improvements in the information exchange and its updating. In this diagnosis, the communication mechanisms and the progress during the last years is revised, since the designation of the focal points.

For analyzing this aspect, the answers of the USAR Teams regarding the classification (governmental and institutional, governmental and inter-institutional, NGO, and Other) were considered. The focal point for this aspect is part of the governmental designation. Therefore, knowing the relation between the focal point and each USAR Team in the country is the important target of this diagnosis.

From the 19 teams that were considered for analyzing this question, 14 have a direct relation with their focal point (see Graphic 11), 3 do not have a direct relation, 1 has a coordinating relation and 1 has a difficult relation. For the last team, this difficult relation might be the result of having the same focal point at the middle stage and the national system, and no having a close relation with USAR Teams. This is also the explanation for another team that did not answer the relation level it has, but affirms the same as the previous team.



Graphic 11: Relationship between INSARAG countries' focal points of the country and many other teams.

Regarding communication mechanisms between the INSARAG focal points and USAR teams, the existence of meetings and regular assessment was mentioned. The most important analysis of the USAR teams is the introduction of focal points promoting the improvement of this relation.

The progress of USAR teams regarding the focal points goes from taking decisions in order to follow INSARAG Guidelines to establishing an accreditation national system (see Chart 4).

Chart 4: Which is the main progress in USAR issues since the nomination of INSARAG focal points in your country?

Progress in the area of USAR since designation of INSARAG focal points

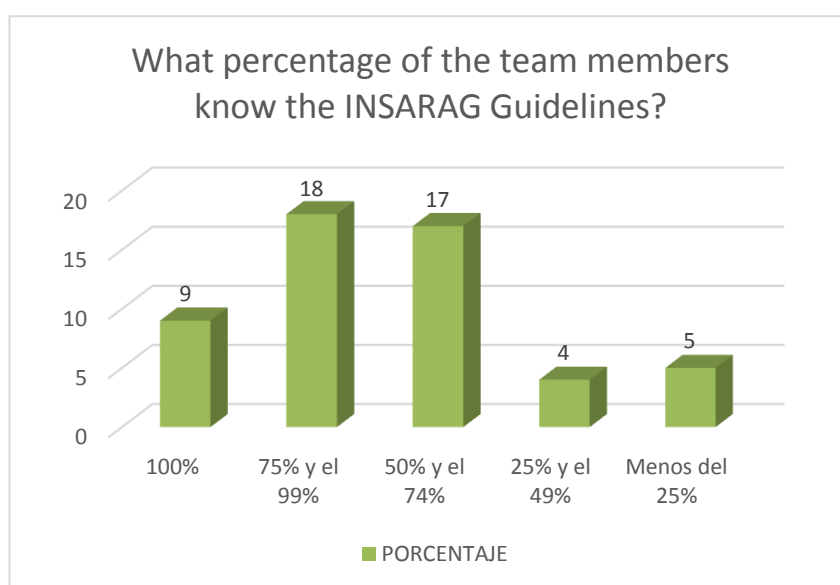
- Decision for carrying out the process according to the INSARAG Guidelines.
- Strengthening teams and creating political agreements.
- Integrating different institutions to be part of the team.
- Providing initial equipment to the team.
- Consolidating technical teams to produce work competence standards and USAR national accreditation systems.
- Consolidating of the USAR process
 - To develop national accreditation guidelines.
 - To systematize national resources.
 - To reactive the national committee for land search and rescue services.
- Constituting USAR teams and the need for moving forward to a National System by means of meetings with political authorities.
- To become updated in connection with INSARAH and UNDAC issues.
- Intertwining the USAR work with the international community.
- Establishing the National Operations System consisting of a written protocol.
- Design, development, start-up and execution of a national accreditation process for national USAR teams in order that only these teams would be officially recognized by the emergency authority and thus avoiding the confusion caused by improvised and personalized teams, without procedures and institutionalization.
- Emergency coordination and management required by USAR teams.
- Construction of national process, , designation of political and technical focal points, platform design in order to manage this capacity.
- Training institutions' officials who are members of the USAR teams and building capacities at institutional level.
- Handbooks of protocols and procedures, and of Response, Logistics, Preparedness and Equipment capacities.
- Sharing the methodology stated in the INSARAG Guidelines, having regional teams for the development of local USAR teams, having consultancy teams dedicated to guide the constitution of USAR teams, knowing the progress related to INSARAG at global and regional level, developing classification systems for national USAR teams, in accordance with internationally-accepted standards, and keeping inventories (registration) of technical teams duly specialized in USAR issues and work, among others.

5. Aspects related to the INSARAG Guidelines

INSARAG Guidelines are an ensemble of experiences gathered from experts in this issue; they guide USAR teams and keep them away from making mistakes from the past when providing their assistance. It is important that all the teams in development identify, know and put into practice their different aspects. Achieving a balance of knowledge and application level of the Guidelines is very important for the Executive Board of the Americas and this diagnosis.

From the three questions done in relation to the knowledge level of INSARAG Guidelines, the percentage for each team is different depending on the answer. From the total number of USAR teams that submitted the diagnosis tool, only 53 USAR teams answered something related to this issue.

In the question about the percentage of team members that knows the INSARAG Guidelines, 9 teams affirm that their members know the Handbooks at 100%; 18 teams, between 75% and 99%; 17 teams, between 50% and 74%; 4 teams, between 25% and 49%; and 5 teams affirm that less than 25% of its members know the INSARAG Guidelines (see Graphic 12).



Graphic 12: Percentage of teams' members that knows the INSARAG Guidelines.

In relation to the hardest difficulties identified for knowing INSARAG Handbooks, the following aspects were mentioned: necessity of having more samples of the physical document, difficulty to access technology, lack of goodwill of people related to the issue, lack of adjustment at a national stage, necessity of an informing and release process, effectiveness of its application and a constant training process on the subject.

In relation to the weaknesses of USAR Teams, considering INSARAG Guidelines, the following aspects were mentioned: lack of way to make official things, resources availability, lack of process institutionalization, policies and continuity in the initiated process. More details on Chart 2 (Results of the capacity assessment).

6. Aspects related to each USAR team

This aspect is referred to each USAR Team, so all the diagnosis tools submitted by the countries were analyzed (see Chart 1, teams that answered questions in relation to this sixth aspect).

The questions for this aspect are related with the principles of strengthening USAR capacities, which support Decision 57/150 of UN General Assembly and INSARAG Hyogo Declaration-2010 that states:

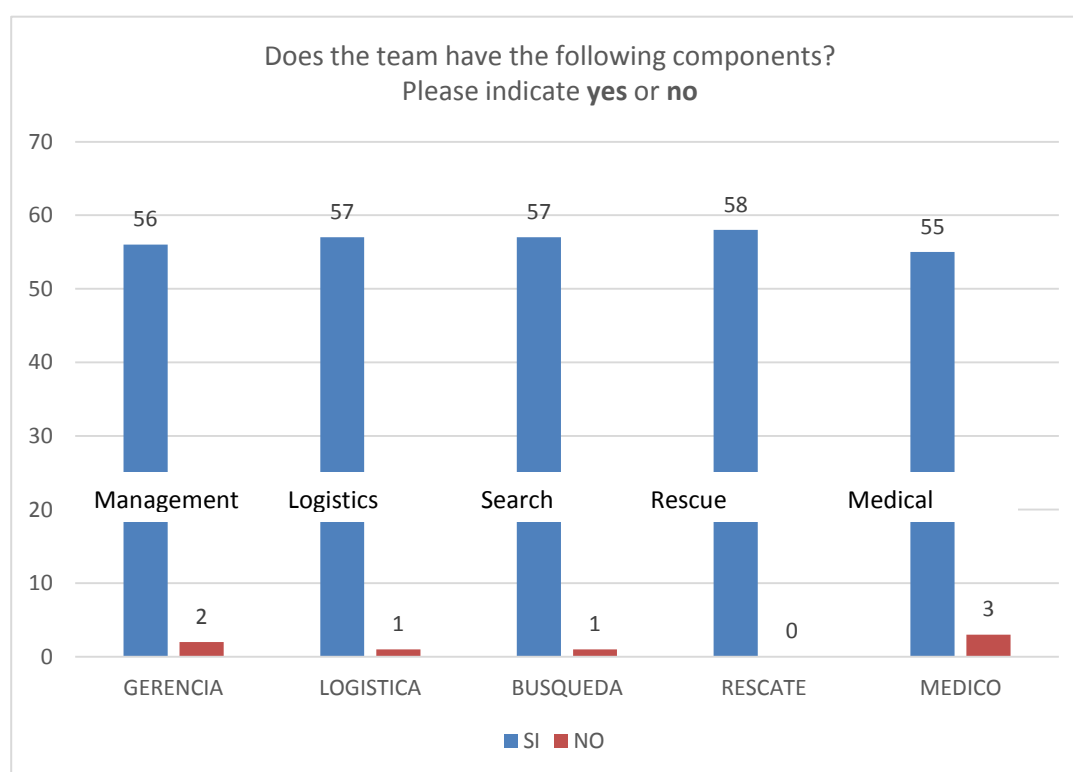
“The building of capacities must meet five USAR capacity elements (Research, Rescue, Medical, Management and Logistics), and it must meet other needs that go from developing community rescuers to developing strong USAR resources” (Chapter G2, page 97).

These capacity elements that appear in the INSARAG Handbook are treated as components, as well as in the diagnosis tool.

6.1. Components of USAR Team capacity

The first question (does the team have all these elements?) was only answered by 58 USAR teams; 98% of them have almost all the elements (Research, Rescue, Medical, Management and Logistics), and 2% do not have all the elements.

This 2% is represented by 1 or 3 teams, but any of them mentioned no having any element (see Graphic 13).

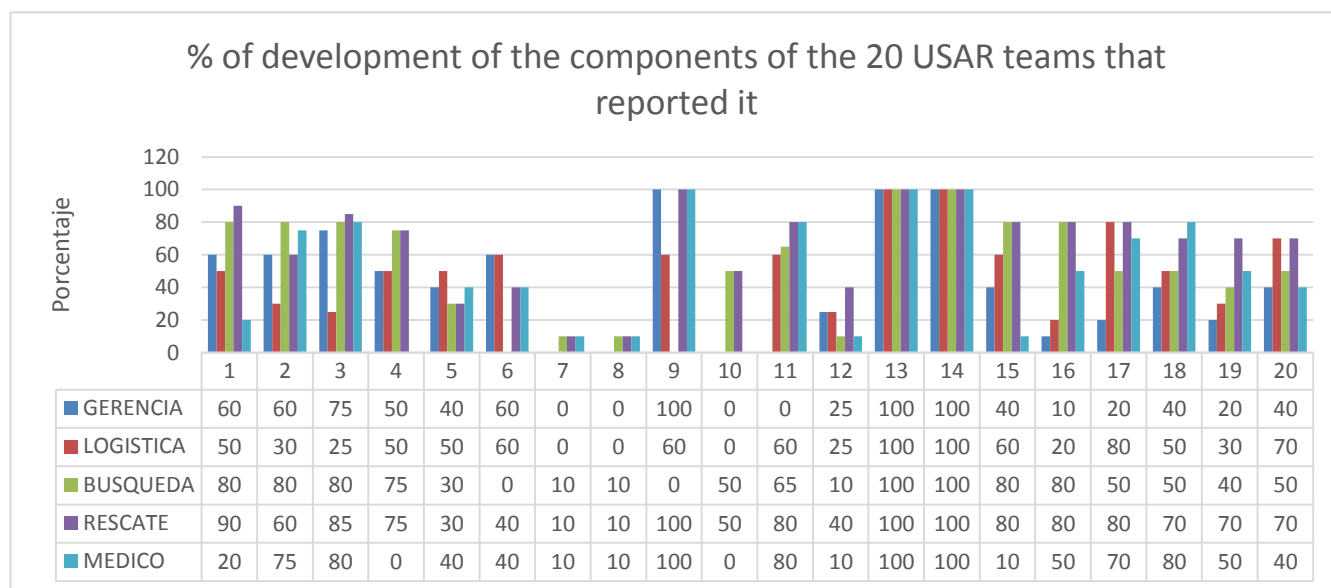


Graphic 13: The team has these components.

It is important to remark that from the 58 teams that answered having the elements; only 20 teams indicate the percentage development of each component.

In Graphic 14, each component has a different percentage of development; and some teams have no development on Management and Logistics elements.

The following Graphic shows that Management, Logistics and Medical are the elements with less development level.



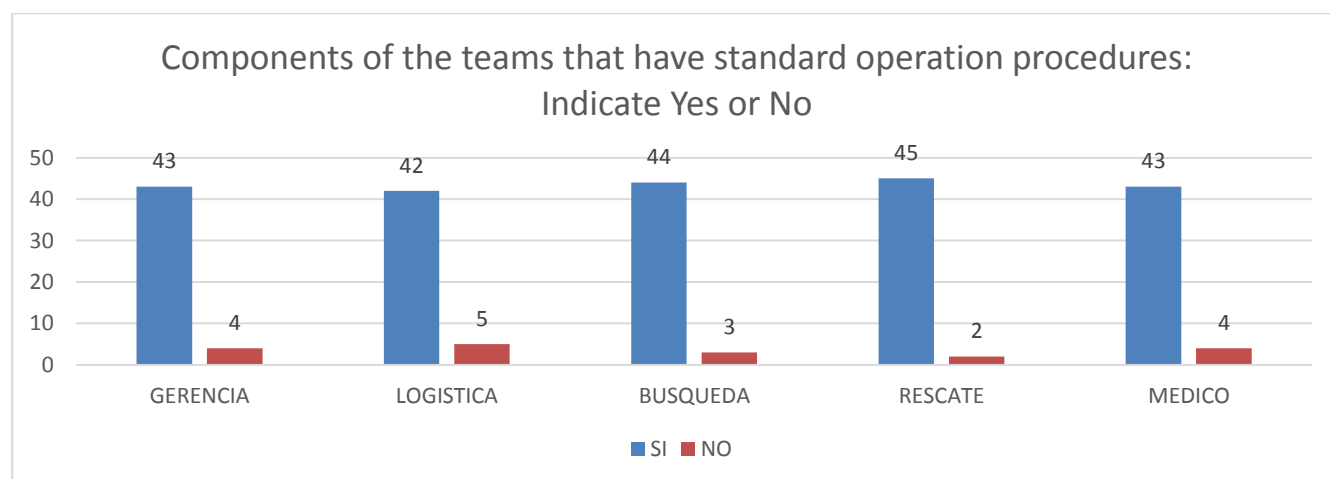
Graphic 14: see the graphic shows the answer of 20 teams that additionally included the progress of each element in its answer.

6.2. Standard operation procedures or guidelines of the USAR team components

The question refers to the USAR Teams that have work procedures and guidelines for the Research, Rescue, Medical, Management and Logistics elements, and it was answered by 47 teams, from which only 8% said no having any of these, and 92% have these procedures.

In Graphic 15, each element is analyzed separately, and the number of teams that answered either having or not these procedures. Then, it is inferred that 3.6% said no having these procedures.

From the teams that answered having the procedures, only 21 teams indicated the percentage of development of the procedure (see Graphic 16).

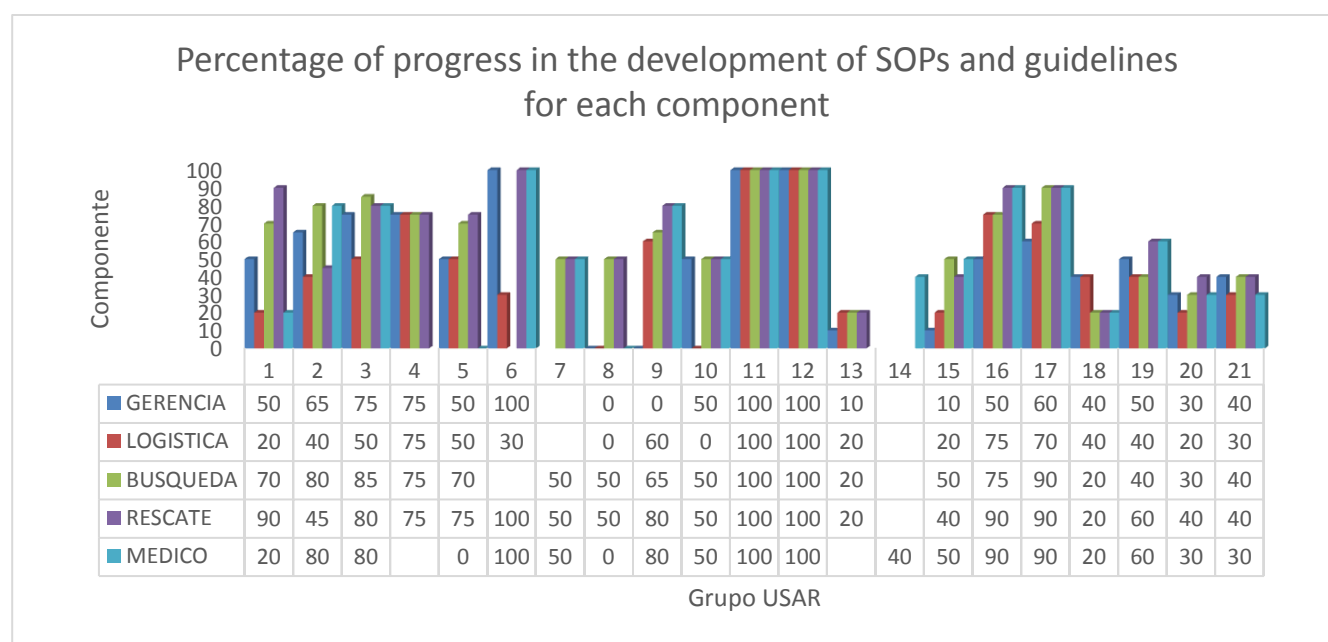


Graphic 15 Components with standard operating procedures. YES or NO.

In relation to the USAR Teams that indicated the development percentage of the work procedures or guidelines on their answers, Graphic 16 shows that percentages are different, and that there is no a constant in any of the elements' percentage.

The majority of teams did not meet the total of the components and only 2 of 21 teams have 100% of the element.

The elements were classified in order of development. Thus, those ones with higher percentage are on top of the chart: Rescue, Research, Medical, Management and Logistics. The elements with less percentage are Management and Logistics.



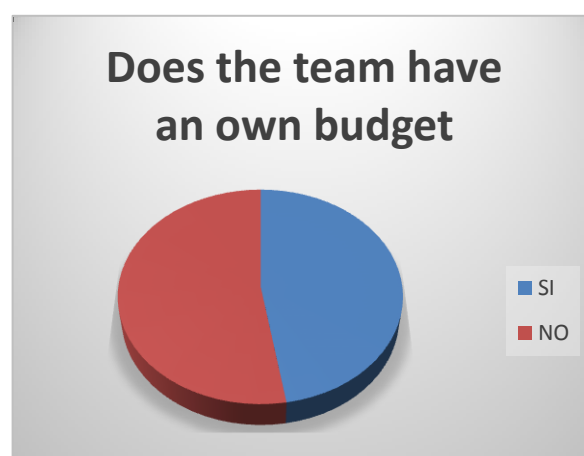
Graphic 16: Percentage of progress in the development of SOPs and guidelines for each component.

6.3. USAR team self-funding (budget)

From the 57 teams that answered the question related to funding, 27 teams have self-funding and 30 do not have it. Therefore, 47% have funding and 53% do not have it (see Graphic 17).

From the 27 teams that have self-funding, 2 teams have only 50% of the required funding and 2 other teams have the entire required funding.

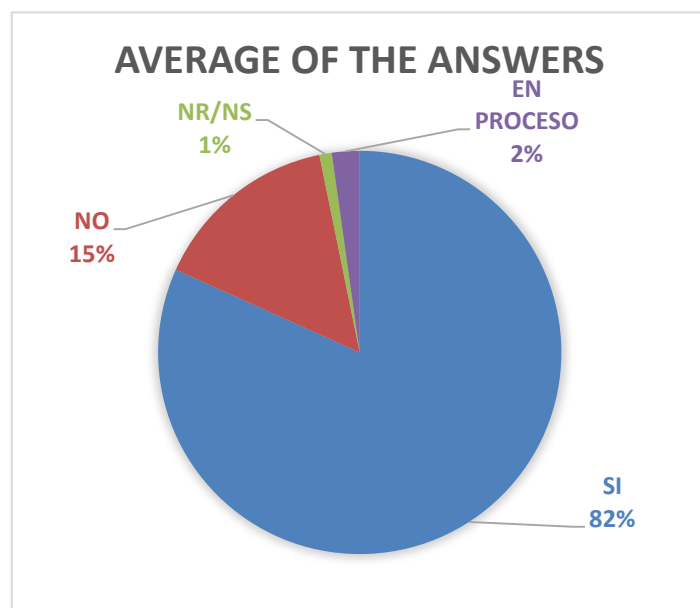
Of noting is that 2 teams indicated that the funding they referred to is only available when an immediate intervention of USAR Team is needed.



Graphic 17: Does the team have self-funding?

7. Institutional aspects of each team

Institutionalization aspects are essential for the consolidation and development of USAR Teams, they must be perseverant with people and assure a constant preparedness of the personnel for responding quickly and effectively when needed. To meet this, some essential aspects must be assured: annual working plan, permanent determined and committed personnel – voluntary or paid, appropriate infrastructure coherent with the teams' permanent needs for developing training and constitution processes, equipment and tools for training and in constant preventive and corrective maintenance, working policies, and an organization chart that meets the teams' needs and the operational, administrative and financial structures. All this is essential for the management and administrative infrastructure development of the national USAR Teams, as indicated in Chapter G, number G4 of the INSARAG Guidelines.

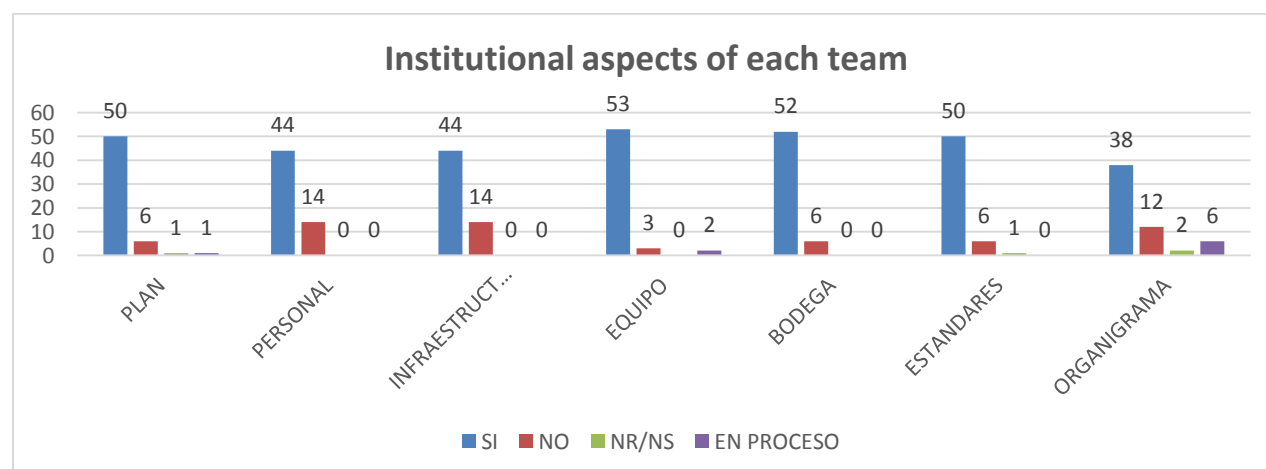


From the 58 teams that answered about the teams' institutionalization aspects, approximately 82% considers these aspects, 15% do not consider them, 2% are in the process to consider them and 1% do not answer (see Graphic 18).

Graphic 19 shows the number of teams that answer YES/NO DO NOT ANSWER/DO NOT KNOW and IN PROCESS for each institutionalization aspect. USAR teams' organization chart is the aspect with less percentage.

Graphic 18: Average of answers corresponding to 58 teams that fill out the diagnosis tool regarding the team institutionalization

In relation to this 82% of the teams that have these institutionalization aspects when processing data and analyzing the information, the need of deeply knowing the progress percentage in each question is shown, in order to indicate more accurately the capacity level of the teams. This is required as the answers on the previous questions of the diagnosis tool are not coherent with the results of this aspect



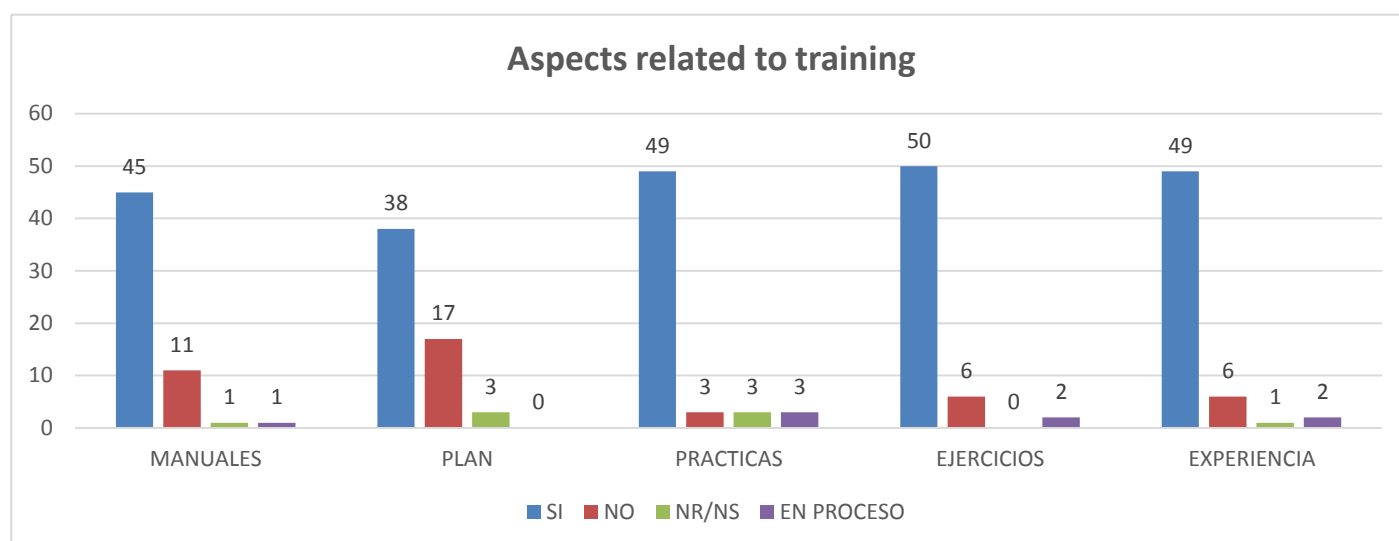
Graphic 19: The institutionalization for each team

8. Aspects related to training

The training is based on knowledge and on an essential behavior change for the USAR Teams. This diagnosis desired to know how the teams are in terms of planning and integrating process constitution for the teams' consolidation regarding key aspects, such as, training and constitution of the teams.

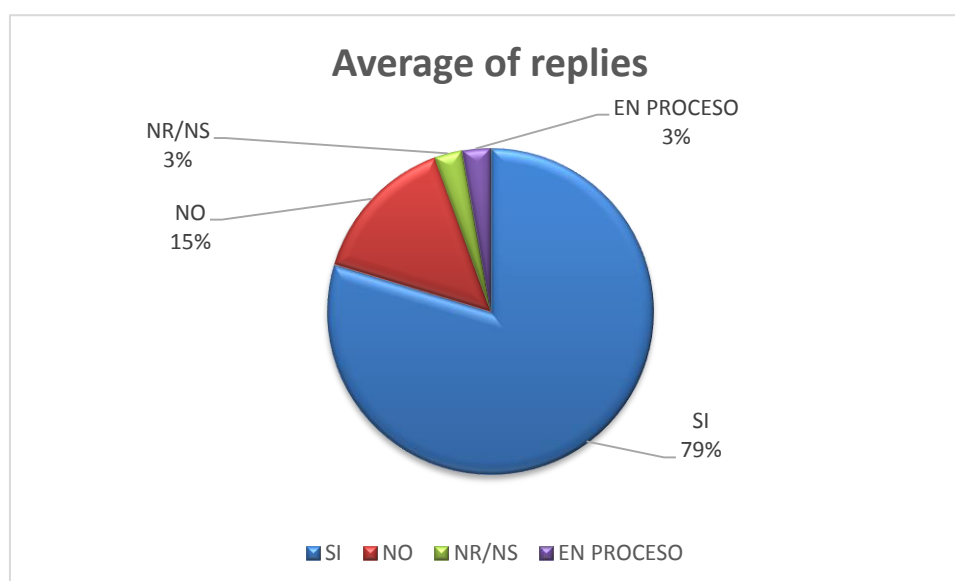
The questions arisen from this aspect were referred to identify whether the teams have their own training and constitution guidelines, whether they have an annual training plan for USAR team continuity and consolidation, whether they include monthly, biannual or annual practices, whether their preparedness exercises regarding initiation, mobilization, operation and demobilization are included in the work plan, and, finally, whether they develop experience exchanges with other USAR teams and areas wherein the personnel is focused in fulfilling with the development of the elements (see Graphic 20).

The results from 58 USAR Teams was divided in 79% that answered YES, 15% that answered NO, 3% that



answered being in process of including all these aspects and 1% that did not answer (see Graphic 21).

Graphic 20: Aspects related to training



Graphic 21: Average of answers from the USAR teams regarding training aspect

9. Aspects related to collaboration through the INSARAG network

Within the diagnosis tool this aspect was included in order to learn the USAR teams' expectations towards INSARAG, including the INSARAG Executive Board and Secretariat.

The results were divided as follows:

- Socialization of the guidelines.
- Assessment and accompaniment in national certification processes.
- Consultancy for the organizational aspect from the countries holding a certification.
- Management of a program providing training for knowing the Guidelines; to be done with the National Authorities.
- Management of the certified teams in order to assist with organizational and constitution aspects of national teams.
- Promotion of training and training exercises for other regional teams.

V. Conclusions

- The diagnosis allows us to identify the great boom for constituting national USAR teams existing right now in the Americas' Region, intending to be classified by INSARAG as international teams (INSARAG external classification process) and be able to assist other countries being more prepared in case of situations of collapsed structures.
- There is a great number of USAR teams with different operational capacities that are not duly established and/or determined by INSARAG Guidelines and Methodology; therefore, the Americas' Region must make great efforts to help in the improvement facilitation of these capacities.
- Some countries of these regions hold a national accreditation/certification system or are in the process of including one, taking USAR teams into an integration or constitution process with some operational, logistic and administrative lacks. The system of accreditation/certification of the national USAR teams must be the tool for acquiring and planning development actions. This must be considered as an essential stage in the strengthening of national capacities, before considering the classification of any USAR team as an international team.
- The national teams have a necessity of institutional and financial assistance to keep their continuity and operations. Therefore, in this diagnosis, the necessity of having more political and policies support from the government is showed in order to improve the achievements required in accordance with the Chapter G of the INSARAG Guidelines. This process of political accompaniment and engagement must be included to obtain funding and institutional recognition for the preparedness and response of national USAR teams.
- There was an important progress in the strengthening of USAR process in the countries since nomination of INSARAG focal points. But the interaction with these national USAR teams is weak in some cases due to the location of the majority of the teams that are established in the capital city and did not consider the communication mechanisms. Additionally, communication difficulties and its lack of availability could be also remarked.
- The necessity of short-term and medium-term methodological processes promoting training, disclosure and training of instructors on the INSARAG Guidelines. This will allow national USAR teams to know more about the requirements to be prepared.
- There are many real necessities about the support that is expected from the national USAR teams in the INSARAG; they could be evidenced in the involvement of certified USAR Teams by INSARAG and the development of activities regarding specific aspects about INSARAG Handbook.

VI. Recommendations

1. Strengthening, standardization and consolidation of national USAR process

- To assist the national initiatives for the creation of USAR teams with the support of the national system and the government.
- To promote the implementation and adaption of INSARAG Guidelines and methodology in each country in order to establish the national policies and standards.

- To promote and develop national accreditation processes for the USAR teams with the INSARAG Secretariat's support.
- To develop a registration and control tool that permits determining national conditions and characteristics, as well as administrating the data base and information.
- To promote the national training focused on the INSARAG Guidelines.
- To support the teams in process of development for its consolidation.
- To establish training mechanisms for the consolidation of the USAR teams elements.

2. Coordination and communication between national USAR teams

- To establish/improve the communication process between the INSARAG focal points and the national USAR teams (USAR roundtable issue).
- To establish, as a part of the national emergency response plan, a coordination process between all the national teams in case of a national response.

3. Training program of the Regional INSARAG Team

- To establish a training plan related to the INSARAG Guidelines and Methodology to train facilitators in each country.

4. Political support for the national and regional USAR processes

- To produce disclosure processes related to the INSARAG Guidelines at political level.
- To produce the political, financial and operational conditions for the consolidation of the USAR teams.
- To enhance and promote by means of the focal points an effective support to the constitution and sustainability of national USAR teams.

5. Mutual assistance between the INSARAG members, mainly the Americas' Regional Team

- To provide support (from the certified teams) to the national teams in process of development for consolidating their elements.
- To create an offer briefcase.
- To promote relationships between the teams of different countries.
- To promote experience exchange.

VII. VII. Annexes

Annex 1: Diagnosis Tool

Annex 2: Information processing document