



EORE GAME CHANGERS

MARIO QUIÑONES



Mario Quiñones's journey into Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) began in 2009, by chance. An unexpected encounter at a peacebuilding conference in Cúcuta, Colombia, triggered not only his curiosity, it changed his life. The dangers of explosive ordnance he discovered in his home region, Norte de Santander, inspired him to take action. More than that, mine action became his mission. Since that day, Mario has dedicated his career to empowering local communities and creating innovative, sustainable solutions. His relentless commitment to localization, capacity building, and integrated approaches has helped shape the future of risk education, ensuring its long-term impact in conflict-affected areas.



With the DRC EORE teams, after a day of awareness sessions in communities affected by explosive ordnance in Maiduguri, Nigeria, 2019 © Mario Quiñones.

From chance to calling, there is only a step — or perhaps an opportunity waiting to be seized. At least for Mario. Confronted with the reality of the devastating effects of explosive ordnance in his country, he felt naturally compelled to make a difference when he was recruited by the national advocacy and mine action organization, Campaña Colombiana Contra Minas (CCCM). Little did he know then that he would soon meet his mentor, the advocate, Luz Estela Navas, and find his bliss. Mario was not only taught the technical aspects of risk education but also the importance of connecting with communities. Luz Estela's

passion for supporting those affected by conflict inspired him, shaping what would become a transformative approach to risk education. He would focus on localization and integration to maximize impact. Mario understood there and then that he would work for and with the people.

Feeling he had been part of a constructive change in Colombia, Mario moved to Nigeria in 2019, embracing his first international role. Although the countries are different in many ways, he felt that he could adapt and apply what he had learnt to a new context. With the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), he refined his approach, focusing on practical solutions

that made risk education more accessible and efficient. He worked with volunteers, local teachers, students, and community leaders to ensure that risk education reached even the most remote areas, rarely accessible for formal teams.

“Our goal was to empower communities to protect themselves,” Mario explains. “By working with people on the ground, we were able to deliver EORE in ways that were relevant to their daily lives.”



When Mario transitioned to DRC's Yemen program, he was faced with a new challenge: underfunding. As EORE is rarely considered a priority, he saw the constraint as an opportunity to innovate. By integrating risk education with other essential activities, such as protection services along migration routes, Mario and his team ensured that risk education reaches those who need it most and framed EORE within an educational context, focusing on the safety of children on their way to school. This approach not only led to a fully funded project but also positioned risk education as a critical component of broader humanitarian efforts.

For Mario, localization is key to long-term success. In Yemen, he spent the past three years mentoring his colleague Faten, who has now taken over his role as NTS/EORE Manager. This is the first time, a Yemeni national holds this position, a milestone that reflects Mario's commitment to building local capacity.

“ We are very proud of this process, she is a very qualified woman that has all the expertise, experience, accreditation, she deserves to be in this position.”

“ I would like the donors to be able to see those new initiatives made by volunteers in the local contexts that are now under development”

Mario stresses, “they are working and they are approaching the communities that are in need.”

Sharing thoughts with fellow EORE/NTS Officer and Assistant colleagues after a training Mario gave. In the photo appear the two gender focal points that helped promote the concepts of gender and mainstreaming in mine action. 2023, Mocha, Yemen. DRC. © Mario Quiñones.



Having breakfast with community leaders from Taiz, Yemen, before starting an EORE session. Adapting the EORE to local contexts is essential for building trust and community liaison. 2023, Taiz, Yemen. DRC. © Mario Quiñones.

With Faten leading the way, Mario feels happy to move to the next step in his journey: Ukraine.

Reflecting on his work, Mario takes pride in the progress achieved in each country he's served, yet his focus remains firmly on the future and the next steps ahead. His strong belief in the possibility for change is contagious.

Mario's journey is a testament to the impact of practical, community-centered solutions. More than that, his work has saved lives, built local capacities, and shaped the future of risk education in ways that go beyond borders and budgets. Through his efforts, he has shown that with the right approach, even the most complex challenges can be met with lasting results.

“ The only way we can innovate in the sector is by sharing experience and committing.”

“ Reinforcing advocacy is key. Let's be the echo of its benefits.”