Flood Resilience Alliance

Full Report

# Foundations for Change

## How the Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance is building ecosystems for advocacy

### Lessons and case studies from Year 4

**learning** /ˈlə͡ɹnɪŋ/

**noun**

1 the activity or process of gaining knowledge or skill by studying, practicing, being taught, or experiencing something: the activity of someone who learns

2 knowledge or skill gained from learning

Year 4

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Flood Resilience Alliance

The Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance is a multi-sector collaboration between the humanitarian sector, academia, and the private sector focusing on shifting from the traditional emphasis on post-event recovery to pre-event resilience. As an Alliance, we work to achieve our objectives through long-term flexible programming; we are nine years into an eleven-year program that has been delivered in two Phases (Phase I from 2013-2018; Phase II from 2018-2024). As of 2021, we operate in over 250 communities in 24 countries, where we are delivering community programming; local, sub-national, and national advocacy; and generating knowledge to improve flood resilience practice, spending, and policy. The Alliance's goals are to increase investment into pre-event resilience building by USD 1 billion and to help make 2 million people more resilient to flooding.

Find out more: https://floodresilience.net/

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# Contents

*People moving to safer locations with their belongings, Nepal 2021* © Mercy Corps International

# 1.0 Introduction

*"Advocacy is a series of deliberate actions to influence those who make decisions, with the goal of changing government policies and practices that directly affect people's lives."*

– Mercy Corps

The goal of development funding has always been to improve the lives of the vulnerable. To improve the lives of the vulnerable beyond the project level, however, you need to engage in local, national, and global advocacy. The Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance (Alliance) is funding advocacy and community programming in parallel in a way that is not typical of development programming, providing an opportunity to understand how this work can be combined to maximize impact. By combining advocacy, community programming, and knowledge generation, the Alliance has successfully:

- Leveraged Alliance community projects to influence government investments in, and scaling of, resilience good practices;
- Linked and layered advocacy across scales to influence attention to, and financing for, local-level resilience needs;
- Supported communities, civil society, and local government with the knowledge, skills, and data to advocate for their needs; and


- Pioneered the provision of resilience data to inform and shape government decision-making.

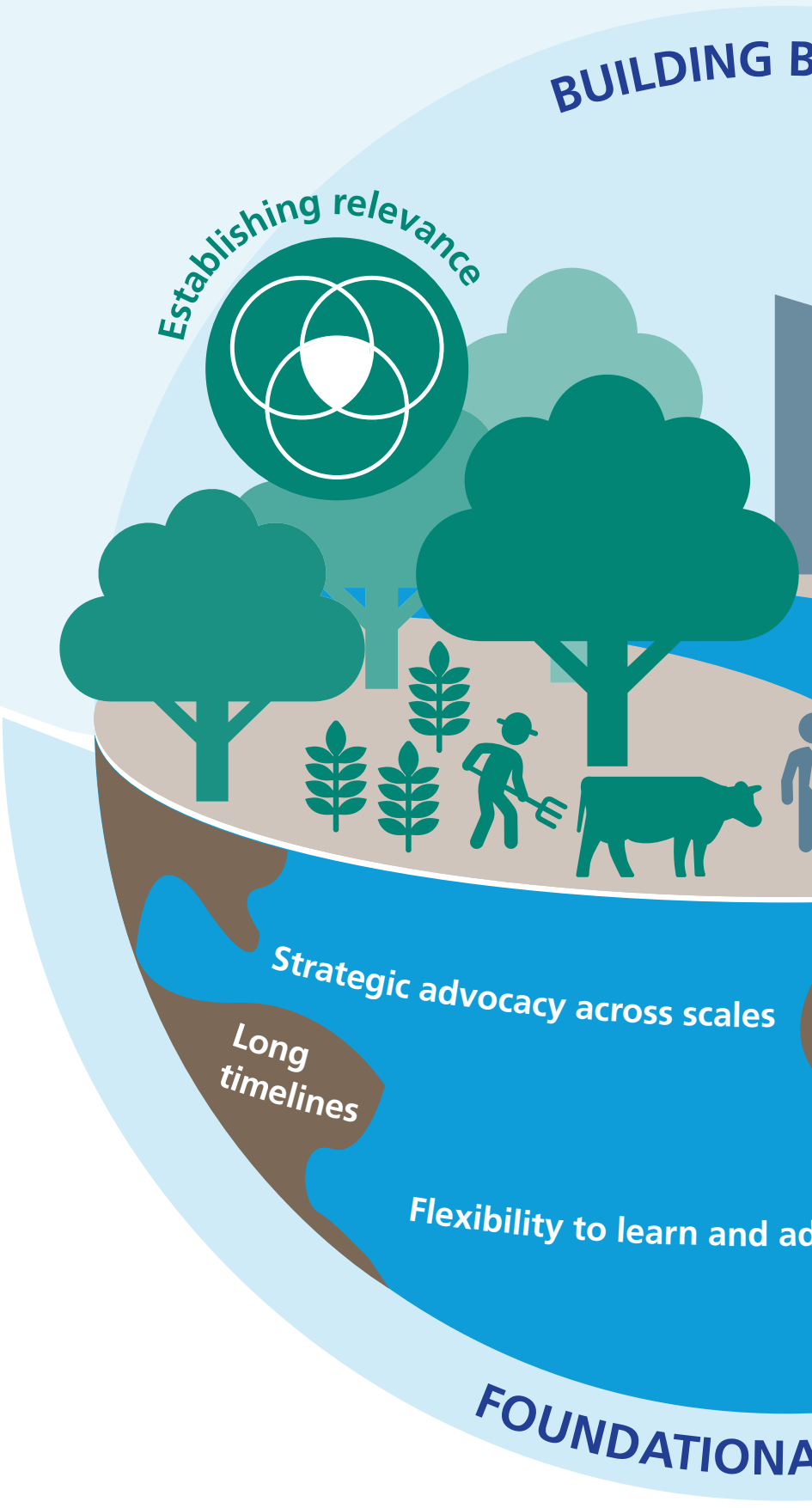
This report — presenting lessons from Year 4 of Phase II of the Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance — consists of a tip sheet and supporting case studies for conducting successful advocacy. We find that strategic advocacy, combined with evidence of local risk, needs, and ways forward, can support the uptake of new practices, approaches and policies that support local resilience. The tip sheet, drawn from reporting on what Alliance teams are doing and achieving, lays out the building blocks and tactics for advocacy for achieving significant changes in flood resilience policy, spending, and practice - the Alliance's three objectives.

These case studies also illustrate how the teams delivering the work have evolved with the work. Not all of the teams showcased in these case studies began with the intent to conduct advocacy. For these teams, their stories show how development-focused work can deepen in impact when organizations are provided with both long program timeframes and the funding, flexibility, and collaborative environment needed to learn and adapt programs.

# Building an ecosystem for successful advocacy

**Tactic 1:**
Align with the policy environment.

**Tactic 2:**
Be demand driven.




TACTICS

**Tactic 3:**
Build relationships with government.

**Tactic 4:**
Connect key actors across sectors.

**Tactic 5:**
Fill evidence gaps for decision-making.

**Tactic 6:**
Demonstrate tangible good practices.

Year 4

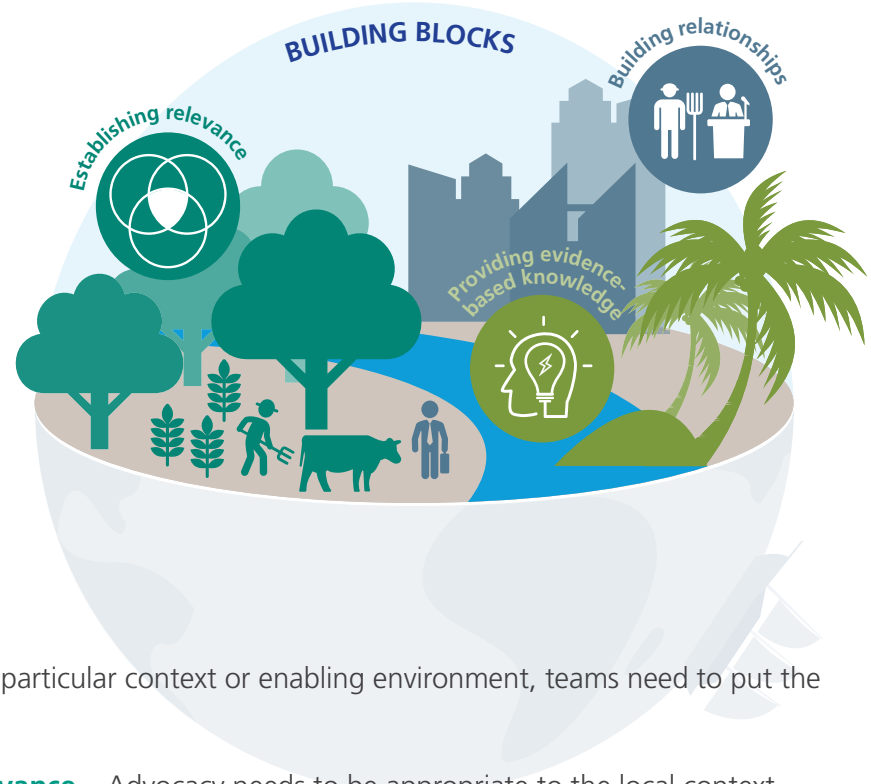
# 2.0 An ecosystem for successful advocacy


## Layer 1: Foundational elements

The Alliance was intentionally set up to engage with communities and develop improved resilience practice as well as to actively work to improve the policy and funding landscapes for flood resilience and influence the uptake of improved practice. In application, this has meant combining community-level work and local-level research with advocacy.

The success and selection of appropriate advocacy tactics to achieve a defined advocacy goal depends on the local to national enabling environment. The foundational elements of an enabling environment include:

- **A navigable policy environment** – It is hard to achieve change without government engagement and buy-in. This may, for example, be due to perceived misalignment between the change sought and current government priorities. The case studies show how teams have navigated a variety of political contexts to influence the adoption of better resilience policy, funding, and practice.
- **Long time lines** – Change takes time. Recognizing this, the Z Zurich Foundation has funded the Alliance on 5-year, overlapping funding cycles. Subsequent cycles are developed with enough lead time to maintain critical continuity and momentum in advocacy and community programming work.
- **Flexibility to learn, adapt, and seize opportunities** – Advocacy is a balance between strategic positioning and opportunity. The Alliance's operational and funding structures are designed to support and encourage active learning and regular re-evaluation and adjustment of activities to respond to emergent or unexpected advocacy opportunities and maximize impact.
- **Established credibility** – Alliance teams are highly credible and trusted in their contexts due to the strength of their past and current community programming and/or advocacy work. This has enabled access to decision-makers and policy dialogues. Establishing and maintaining credibility and trust is an ongoing process that requires a combination of good knowledge, good relationships, and good work.
- **Strategic advocacy at all levels** – Though not all of the Alliance teams intentionally established multi-scalar, community-to-national-level advocacy at the outset, the teams that are achieving the greatest impact are working on comprehensive policy, spending, and/or practice change across scales. Teams that have not yet begun strategically engaging at the national level have identified doing so as the next step.




## Layer 2: Building blocks

To conduct successful advocacy within a particular context or enabling environment, teams need to put the following building blocks in place:

**Establishing relevance** – Advocacy needs to be appropriate to the local context and needs. After setting a clear advocacy goal or objective (including determining precisely what policy needs to be targeted and what success looks like), that goal or objective needs to be aligned with the policy priorities of local government or actors to produce the desired policy, spending, or practice change. Given that the context is constantly shifting due to social, political, environmental, physical, and economic factors, establishing and maintaining relevance of your advocacy requires staying abreast of contextual shifts and having the flexibility to adapt to or leverage those shifts while staying true to your program's overall goal.

**Building relationships** – Advocacy fundamentally happens through relationships. Relationships with decision-makers provide a space for accessing policy opportunities and processes. Building trust and relationships between and with key actors across sectors and levels can help ensure that decision-making is based on a shared understanding of issues and how to address them over the long-term. Deciding who to build relationships with requires exploring the policy environment to identify the actors with both formal and informal power to shape policies, spending, and practices for a given issue.

**Providing evidence-based knowledge** – Decision-makers often seek strong evidence and evidence-based recommendations to support their decision-making and implementation of policies and plans. As a part of the Alliance program, teams collect baseline and thematic data to shape their community programs and advocacy. This approach produces strong evidence to justify advocacy recommendations and has helped build Alliance and organizational credibility and strengthen relationships with key actors. Teams also provide governments with technical expertise to fill knowledge gaps in decision-making and implementation.

All three of these building blocks are required for successful advocacy. However, the ways in which Alliance advocacy teams have operationalized these elements has varied, depending on their advocacy goals, their program setup (i.e., whether they are primarily an advocacy program or a community implementation program), and the context, including existing policy opportunities and needs, capacities, and networks.

## Layer 3: Tactics and activities

Layer 3 is the operational layer, or what you need to do to generate and transform relevance, relationships, and evidenced-based knowledge into successful changes in policy, spending, and practice. Each tactic is followed by activity suggestions. Which tactics and activities you choose and how you layer and sequence them ultimately depends on what you are trying to achieve and the enabling environment in which you are operating.

*Community members establishing forest nurseries for the protection of the natural environment in Playones, Nicaragua, 2022* © Walther Mendoza, Plan International

### Establishing relevance


#### **Tactic 1:** Align your advocacy strategy with the policy environment.

- **Identify and leverage existing and emerging policy opportunities.** To find entry points for advocacy, Alliance teams have conducted baseline research to understand:
  - The political environment (i.e., whether the political context is amenable to the change you want to influence).
  - The governance structure (i.e., the level or levels at which you can feasibly access decision-makers and decision-making processes to advocate for change).
  - Existing and emergent policy opportunities (i.e., the decision-making processes relevant to your advocacy goal or objective that you can influence).

  This type of research helps teams develop an advocacy strategy and message, identify the type of evidence and knowledge needed to influence decision-making, and target specific decision-makers for influence (Mercy Corps Nepal case study).

- **Reframe advocacy goals and messages to align with government priorities.** Alliance teams have seen government interest, collaboration, and uptake where they have been able to:
  - Align flood resilience advocacy with broader government development agendas and government commitments around climate change and disasters. This has required teams to step back from the specifics of building flood resilience and

instead find how development, climate change adaptation (CCA), and disaster risk reduction (DRR) priorities can be influenced to also build flood resilience (Mercy Corps Indonesia case study). This has also required teams to revise their advocacy recommendations in response to shifts in baseline conditions, such as the occurrence of disasters (Honduran Red Cross case study).

- Use government language to describe good practices and policy recommendations. One example is using government-preferred terminology and defined priorities for early warning systems to build government buy-in (Practical Action Peru case study).


## Tactic 2: Be demand-driven in defining your advocacy focus and approach.

- **Respond to government needs and constraints.** Alliance teams have found several ways to support government capacity gaps and needs while also addressing changing baseline conditions. These include:
  - Supporting emergent government priorities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Alliance teams found it necessary to pivot and support government with managing the pandemic; this allowed teams to demonstrate their reliability and kept doors open to advocate for building flood resilience (Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance Y3 Learning Report).
  - Providing technical and financial support to fill capacity, resource, and knowledge gaps. Teams have provided co-financing in resource-constrained contexts to support government uptake and replication of resilience good practices (Concern Worldwide Bangladesh case study). Teams have also provided governments with ongoing technical expertise on policy topics such as loss and damage (Mercy Corps Indonesia case study) and to support the implementation of new spending and practices (Plan International Nicaragua case study).
- **Engage in community-centered advocacy.** Because the goal of building resilience is to improve the lives of individuals and communities, resilience advocacy at all levels needs to be grounded in community priorities. Alliance teams have achieved this by:
  - Working with communities to co-generate resilience priorities and good practices and by empowering communities with data that they can use to advocate to the government and articulate their priorities and influence political processes, including budgeting (Concern Worldwide Bangladesh case study).
  - Showing government that policy and practice recommendations will directly impact the lives of people. Doing so has led to significant changes in government policy, spending, and practice (Practical Action Nepal case study).
- **Bridge top-down and bottom-up priorities.** Ultimately, while resilience advocacy is grounded in community-based priorities, it needs to also align with government priorities, commitments, and ongoing policy processes. Alliance teams have bridged between community and government priorities and enabled community inclusion in decision-making by:
  - Showing government how addressing community priorities will help them fulfill their mandates (Concern Worldwide Bangladesh case study).
  - Targeting government policy processes that are directly relevant to addressing community priorities (Mercy Corps Nepal case study).

## Building relationships


**Tactic 3:** Build and maintain relationships with government actors who are instrumental for shaping relevant policies, spending, or practice related to your advocacy goal or objective.

- **Involve the government in program conceptualization, design, and implementation.** For the Alliance, engaging government in baseline data collection and analysis, joint program planning and implementation, and frequent program progress updates has helped teams to build government buy-in and ownership over good practices. Governments are now providing communities and programs with needed technical and research support (Concern Worldwide Bangladesh case study), and using Alliance data and knowledge to improve their own practices, policies, and advocacy (LSE case study).
- **Consistently engage with and provide knowledge and expertise to government.** As the credibility of Alliance teams has grown, they have increasingly been invited to contribute to and provide technical expertise for ongoing and new decision-making processes and implementation of new practices. The willingness of Alliance teams to fulfill these requests and their consistent provision of program

*A boy crosses the remains of a bridge, one of the 14 destroyed when the Nyahodi river burst its banks and washed away an entire market full of stalls, vendors, and customers, Chimanimani, Zimbabwe, March 2019* © Ezra Millstein, Mercy Corps

updates, knowledge, and policy insights has helped to build trust and strengthen relationships with government (Mexican Red Cross case study).

- **Develop strategic partnerships to access otherwise difficult-to-access decision-makers and policy processes.** Sometimes, it is difficult to build relationships with decision-makers and government institutions without an 'in'. In such cases, Alliance teams have built strategic partnerships with other stakeholders that have access to their target stakeholders (Mercy Corps Nepal case study) or found 'champions' in government to build relationships with larger government institutions (Mexican Red Cross case study).


## Tactic 4: Connect key actors across sectors to develop shared understandings of your target advocacy issue.

- **Establish community-government linkages to support more inclusive decision-making.** Alliance teams have built community-government linkages by:
  - Convening communities, civil society, and different levels of governments to build a shared understanding of community issues, government constraints and opportunities, and ways forward, and connect vulnerable groups to political processes (Honduran Red Cross case study).
  - Establishing community-based groups that work with government counterparts to deliver DRR, preparedness, and response in communities. This has built trust between these groups and a willingness to continue to work together (Plan International Nicaragua case study).
- **Establish government-government linkages to support greater coordination around multi-departmental/-sectoral issues.** Government departments often work in silos even when they are addressing the same issues. Resilience, in particular, requires government departments to work together to enable comprehensive and coordinated decision-making. Alliance teams have strengthened government-government linkages by:
  - Facilitating partnership agreements between government departments that lay out the roles, responsibilities, and ways of working around a particular issue (Plan International El Salvador case study).
  - Convening different departments and levels of government together to build a shared understanding of governance constraints, gaps, and needs (Mercy Corps Nepal case study).
- **Leverage multi-stakeholder coalitions to support coordinated advocacy.** Advocacy is more effective if decision-makers are hearing the same messages from diverse stakeholders. Alliance teams have both developed and leveraged multi-stakeholder coalitions by working with them to co-generate knowledge, advocacy messages, and advocacy strategies. These coalitions have led to strategic partnerships between coalition members and opened new influence opportunities (Honduran Red Cross case study).

## Box 1. Flood Resilience Measurement for Communities

*A discussion at a community gathering near Birathnagar, Terai (Nepalese lowlands), Nepal.* © Michael Szoenyi

### What the FRMC is

The Flood Resilience Measurement for Communities (FRMC) framework and tool was created by the Alliance in 2013 and allows users to generate evidence on how a given area or community is already resilient to floods, as well as providing a guide to further build this resilience.

The FRMC process is designed to be part of a wider community DRR program and does not stand alone. The process involves collecting data to assess 44 indicators, or sources of resilience, that represent what we understand to generate resilience. The 44 sources of resilience are structured using the five capitals (5Cs) of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework: human, natural, physical, social, and financial. The gathered data is analyzed through a number of different lenses, including the 5Cs, to identify: (1) community resilience weaknesses and strengths; (2) interconnections and dependencies between sources of resilience; and (3) how community strengths can be harnessed to improve weaker aspects. This systemic and multi-dimensional insight supports identification of interventions that effectively build resilience.

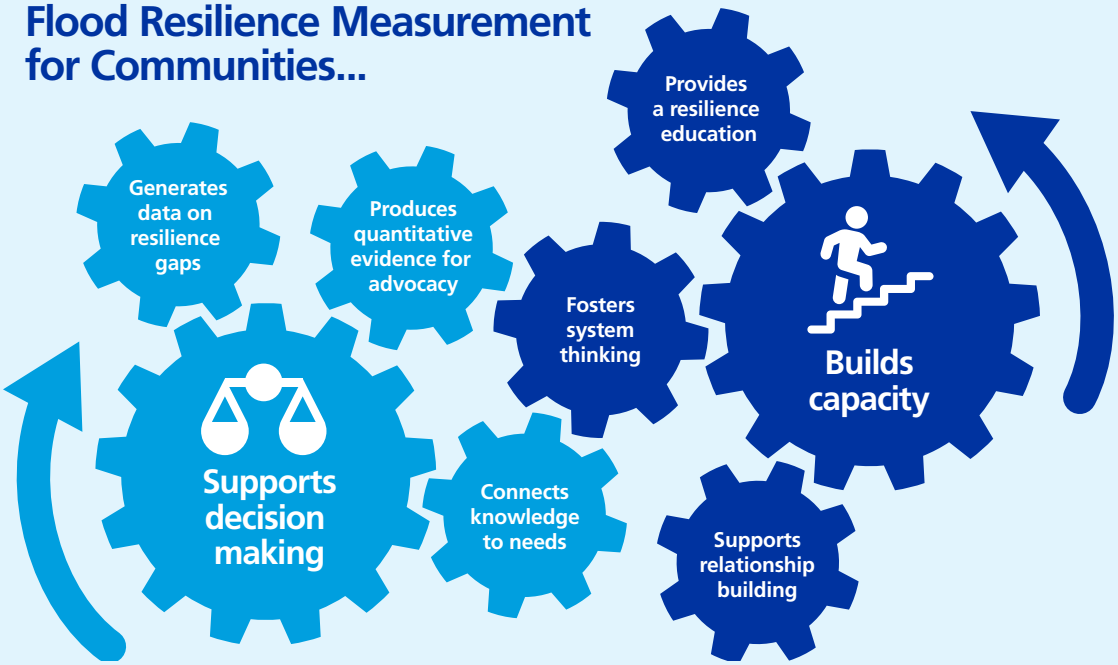
The FRMC process is supported by a web-based tool and an app for mobile devices that allow for smooth and seamless data collection and analysis.

### How we apply the FRMC

Alliance community work begins with running an FRMC baseline measurement. This entails introducing the FRMC framework and conducting a participatory process to collect community-level resilience data using the FRMC tool, and grade, analyze, and validate the data with the community and other local stakeholders. The validated results are used to develop and prioritize actions to build community resilience.

If, during the program, the community experiences a flood, a post-event study (PES) can be conducted. The PES is an opportunity to compare the assessment of flood resilience sources with what happened, and can be used to inform post-flood recovery activities and advocacy.

The FRMC tool is run again as an endline measurement — identical to the baseline — after resilience building activities in the communities have been completed to assess how resilience in the community has changed.




## FRMC as a foundational approach for building resilience

The FRMC's role as a foundational support tool for the Alliance's resilience building process has manifested in multiple ways including:

- As a decision support tool for both community programming and policy change. The FRMC supports a deeper and systems-level understanding of community resilience gaps and strengths and provides evidence that can be shared with decision-makers to shape policy and action.
- As a capacity development tool. Through the exploration of the sources of resilience, the FRMC cultivates a foundation for shared understanding of flood resilience and relationship-building between communities and government. It also fosters systems thinking and supports stakeholders to understand what it means to engage in a holistic resilience process.

Implementing the FRMC is resource and time intensive. However, the data and knowledge produced via the FRMC approach is proving foundational to many of the Alliance's advocacy wins. The FRMC concretizes the otherwise 'fuzzy' concept of resilience and builds stakeholder capacity to engage in and sustain the right resilience choices.

## Providing evidence-based knowledge

**Tactic 5:**
Fill evidence gaps for decision-making.

### **Tactic 5:** Fill evidence gaps to support decision-making related to your advocacy goal or objective.

- **Generate and package needed data to maximize uptake.** Alliance teams have conducted both baseline and thematic research to generate evidence for decision-making. Thematic research has focused on topics like local climate risk impacts (Mercy Corps Indonesia case study) and local government expenditure on DRR and CCA (Mercy Corps Nepal case study). In community programs, community resilience strengths and weaknesses have been identified via the FRMC and other tools. Data also should be presented and disseminated in ways that enable uptake by the actors you are trying to reach. Alliance teams have used data to:
  - Convene cross-sector discussions with decision-makers on holistic and coordinated resilience planning (LSE case study).
  - Justify to decision-makers why certain resilience issues or priorities should be addressed in plans (Practical Action Nepal case study).
  - Justify why certain resilience good practices should be invested in (Concern Worldwide Bangladesh case study).
- **Develop resilience tools that enable key actors to collect and analyze needed data.** Alliance teams have developed tools for decision-makers and other key actors that fill knowledge gaps in planning, such as a budget tracking tool for use in places where annual budget expenditure data is lacking. Alliance teams pilot these tools as a proof of concept and then hand them off for continued use (Mercy Corps Nepal case study).


*Community planning for flood resilience in Capaina, San Buenaventura, Bolivia.* © Mónica Cuba, Practical Action

*Damage from flooding in Piura, Peru, 2017* © Rodrigo Rodrich

**Tactic 6:**
Demonstrate tangible good practices.

## **Tactic 6:** Develop and document tangible good practices that address local resilience needs and support your advocacy goal or objective.

- **Demonstrate successful pilots, good practices, and resilience approaches.** Alliance teams have found that governments are more likely to take up new practices and approaches (e.g., systems thinking via the FRMC five capitals framework, data collection tools, etc.) if they can see a 'proof of concept' that shows that practice or tool leading to better outcomes. Teams have largely provided decision-makers with this proof of concept via:
  - Sharing knowledge on the benefits of specific interventions through bi-lateral meetings, presentations, and knowledge products (including briefs, videos, and infographics). This has been useful for broadly promoting and justifying uptake of resilience good practices (Mexican Red Cross case study).
  - Exposure visits, such as inviting government officials to tour community programs and observe good practices. These are a particularly effective way for building relationships between communities and government, developing a shared understanding around local vulnerability and risk, and showcasing resilience good practices and their benefits for communities (Concern Bangladesh case study).

## Conclusion

Alliance teams have successfully influenced flood resilience practice, spending, and policy in diverse contexts due to a combination of their ability to leverage or create new advocacy opportunities through relationship-building, establishing credibility, and generating knowledge, and the flexible, long-term funding provided by our donor, the Z Zurich Foundation. Below, we present ten case studies that show how Alliance teams have tailored, linked, and layered the tactics outlined in this tip sheet in their different contexts to achieve their specific advocacy goals and objectives

Flood Resilience Alliance

CONCERN worldwide

ISET International

# CASE STUDY

## CONCERN WORLDWIDE BANGLADESH

# Empowering communities to advocate for their own resilience

This case study shows how simultaneously providing communities with hard evidence of capacities and needs and strengthening community-government relationships can lead to local government investment in resilience.

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### Key Alliance terminology

**Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance (Alliance):**

The Alliance is a multi-sector collaboration between the humanitarian sector, academia, and the private sector focusing on shifting from the traditional emphasis on post-event recovery to pre-event resilience. We are nine years into an eleven-year program that has been delivered in two Phases (Phase I from 2013-2018; Phase II from 2018-2024).

**Flood Resilience Measurement for Communities (FRMC):**

Created by the Alliance in 2013, the FRMC is a framework and associated web-based data tool/app which conceptualizes flood resilience as a function of social, human, natural, physical, and financial capitals. The FRMC is implemented at the beginning of Alliance work to assess resilience strengths and gaps. This information is used to shape community programs and advocacy.

## The win

By brokering community-government relationships, co-producing evidence-based knowledge on community flood resilience needs, and building community capacity to manage flood risk and advocate for themselves, Concern Worldwide Bangladesh (Concern) has:

- Supported 21 char communities in Bangladesh to overcome the mindset that "floods are a regular event that will happen and we have to suffer".
- Influenced local government investment in community flood resilience activities. Institutes, including the Department of Public Health and Engineering (DPHE), Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), Department of Livestock (DLS), and the Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA), have started investing in activities such as installing flood-resilient tube wells, providing livestock vaccination and treatment, distributing climate-tolerant seed, elevating and protecting roads, and repairing bridges.

*Community Resilience Action Groups receive Napier Grass cuttings from the Department of Livestock, Hatibandha, November 2021* © Noor Islam

## How the win was achieved

Communities living in the floodplains of Bangladesh have always been vulnerable to flooding and erosion, and that vulnerability is increasing as development and climate change result in intensified flooding. This is particularly true for char communities — communities that live on highly exposed, vegetated islands in the rivers on the floodplain. For these communities, recurring floods regularly devastate livelihoods, assets, and access to basic services. The communities are aware of their flood risk but lack both strategies to address that risk and sufficient external support to address their needs; consequently, they heavily depend on relief to survive and recover. Concern has been working since 2018 with 21 char communities to increase their flood resilience both locally and by strengthening their connection with local government.

### Building initial government engagement

Concern used several approaches to engage local government and other government officials, but the FRMC process was a particularly powerful element because of the multiple entry points it provides for engagement and building understanding. As part of the FRMC data collection, interviews and focus group discussions were used to directly engage with key government stakeholders and build relationships. The FRMC validation process — triangulating between community FRMC results, the communities themselves, and government officials — involved most of the relevant departments and stakeholders, supported the credibility of the results, and raised awareness and buy-in among local flood resilience actors.

The FRMC approach is also powerful because of how it takes a broad, systems thinking approach. In areas where Concern is working, there are no other organizations or projects working directly on resilience, either conceptually or in practice; the closest related work is water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) work and plinth raising. Even preparedness efforts have only happened sporadically or at the individual level — not with


*Health Camp Vati Kapasia, Sundarganj, Gaibandha, May 2020 © Sofura Khatun*

the whole community. But when communities see the FRMC results, they understand that the whole context is coming out through the survey. This, in turn, has inspired community members to come forward; the FRMC results validate their existing knowledge and package it into a format that helps them communicate their situation and needs to government officials.

## Documenting needs in local plans

After completing and sharing the FRMC baseline information, Concern began working with the communities on using FRMC data to develop Community Action Plans. The plans determine which interventions are most needed and identify relevant departments and government officials to engage with. However, the Community Action Planning process was, whenever possible, done independently of government officials so communities could speak freely and discuss pros and cons of existing government interventions.

Once complete, each Community Action Plan was presented to the entire community and the community chose representatives to lead the advocacy process. These representatives presented the community's plan to government officials and shared areas where close collaboration would be needed to make the community more prepared and less vulnerable to floods. Thereafter, communities and government officials worked together on Joint Action Plans to plan out specific activities and interventions. For example, in collaboration with agriculture departments, it was determined that flood tolerant seeds could help farmers cultivate certain crops through the flood season and maintain their livelihoods. Accordingly, DAE provided training on flood tolerant cropping, coupled with post-flood support such as seeds, fertilizer, seedlings, etc. BINA agreed to provide flood tolerant rice varieties. Where tube wells were installed to provide safe drinking water during floods, but were compromised by flood water, DPHE thought to modify the design to protect these sources of water from floods. Similarly, the DLS agreed to provide vaccinations and deworming tablets for livestock. Where communities have been successful in their asks of government, the successes become self-reinforcing; the communities

*Bambo Bridge set up by Community Resilience Action Group at Nichsekhsundar, Hatibandha, July 2022 © Ohidul Islam, FC Concern Worldwide*

are motivated to take increasing responsibility, recognizing it will generate mutual benefit.

## Expanding government buy-in through demonstration, co-financing, and technical support

As part of the Joint Action Planning process, exposure visits were organized to bring government officials to these remote char areas to bear witness to the challenges and understand why certain services and interventions were requested. Government interest in addressing issues in the char areas had been built through the FRMC, knowledge-building, and project update processes that Concern implemented from early on in the program. Exposure visits continued through the implementation phase and still take place twice a year for progress reviews. Ongoing visits have kept government officials engaged in the project, connecting the community with government departments, services, and facilities.

Concern has also used co-financing to maintain government interest, engagement, and investment. With financial support from Concern and in-kind support from communities, a 1000-foot section of road was constructed in one community, giving approximately 1000 households who had previously regularly been cut off by floods more reliable road access. Community members said construction of this road addressed 20 years of suffering. The community is now independently planning the road's management and maintenance and demanding additional support from the Union Parishad to complete the road. The Union Parishad Chairman visited and committed to support the community's efforts.

Similarly, advocacy from government departments is also gaining momentum. For example, after working with the communities on modified tube wells, DPHE recognized that the updated design could be replicated and scaled up to other flood prone and char areas. DPHE is now interested in

influencing national government to take up the model and fund its scaling. In the process, it has requested support from Concern for project data and joint advocacy to push this forward and get national government to take up outside-the-box solutions and pilots.

Due to growing interest in national-level advocacy, Concern has increased its engagement with national government to build buy-in to their local work and the need to close funding and policy gaps. With Practical Action, Concern organized a national workshop where communities and local government presented their local efforts, constraints, and needs to national-level policymakers, NGOs, and donors. This has resulted in Concern's inclusion in the Local Governance Support Project, funded by the World Bank and the Bangladesh government; this is an opportunity to influence a local enabling environment for better risk governance.

## Empowering communities to become their own advocates

Concern's model of empowering communities and brokering relationships between communities and government — rather than Concern advocating on behalf of the communities — provides a blueprint for building long-term sustainable change that contributes to flood resilience. Concern has:

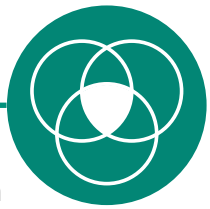
- Strengthened local relationships and knowledge by bringing together communities and local government to develop a shared understanding of local flood risk and resilience and collaborate in joint planning.
- Organized 'exposure visits' for government officials, allowing those officials to experience and understand for themselves the benefits of flood resilience interventions to communities.
- Empowered communities to directly approach government to advocate for their flood resilience priorities and suggest practical investments and activities.

As communities take the initiative and ask for support, local governments become more invested in these remote, vulnerable areas. Empowered by their experiences, these communities are now self-organizing to better protect themselves from floods and advocate for government support to continue building resilience and investing in preparedness.

*Rescuing cattle and households from flooded chars, Kanicharitabari, June 2021* © Mijanur Rahman FF, FRP, ASOD

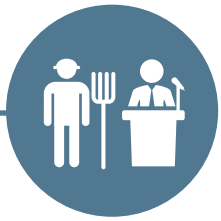
# Why Alliance advocacy was successful

## ESTABLISHED RELEVANCE



- Generated community buy-in to the program and program advocacy goals by measuring and sharing comprehensive resilience data that validates community priorities and needs.
- Encouraged government investment in resilience good practices by providing co-financing and technical support in a resource- and capacity-constrained context.
- Connected community needs to government priorities by developing community resilience solutions specific to the mandates of local government institutions.

## BUILT RELATIONSHIPS



- Built pathways for influence by directly engaging decision-makers in program planning focused on community resilience needs and opportunities.
- Improved community access to government by bringing communities and governments together during program planning and via exposure visits.

## PROVIDED EVIDENCE-BASED KNOWLEDGE

- Built government knowledge of community resilience needs and issues by engaging them in community resilience data gathering and analysis.
- Empowered communities to advocate for their resilience needs by co-developing with them quantitative data on their resilience gaps and opportunities.

### Additional resources

- "Seed distribution to poor farmers in Sundarganj" (source in Bangla)
- "Government officials visited the project in Sundarganj" (source in Bangla)
- Blog post on local level media campaigns

# CASE STUDY

## LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

# Integrating resilience into decision-making in the UK and Germany

This case study shows how, in higher-resource contexts, comprehensive resilience data can be used to spur more coordinated and systems-level decision-making.

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### Key Alliance terminology

**Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance (Alliance):**

The Alliance is a multi-sector collaboration between the humanitarian sector, academia, and the private sector focusing on shifting from the traditional emphasis on post-event recovery to pre-event resilience. We are nine years into an eleven-year program that has been delivered in two Phases (Phase I from 2013-2018; Phase II from 2018-2024).

**Flood Resilience Measurement for Communities (FRMC):**

Created by the Alliance in 2013, the FRMC is a framework and associated web-based data tool/app which conceptualizes flood resilience as a function of social, human, natural, physical, and financial capitals. The FRMC is implemented at the beginning of Alliance work to assess resilience strengths and gaps. This information is used to shape community programs and advocacy.

## The win

Researchers from the Grantham Research Institute – London School of Economics (LSE) are supporting the shift toward forward-looking, holistic flood risk management from the local to national levels in Germany and the United Kingdom (UK).

### In the UK, LSE advocacy supported:

- National flood and coastal risk management policies and strategies to go beyond hard infrastructure and consider broader resilience and adaptation measures. The UK government used the FRMC five capitals as one of the frameworks for defining flood resilience in its Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy and the new GBP 150 million Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme.
- The East Suffolk Council (ESC) to win a GBP 8.4 million grant from the Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme to build resilience into the Norfolk & Suffolk Coast Transition Programme.

*Flooding on the Rhine River, Germany, January 2018* © Jost, StEB

- Uptake of the FRMC by neighboring municipalities. Great Yarmouth will be using ESC grant money to run the FRMC and inform its own resilience program.

### In Germany, LSE advocacy supported:

- Cross-sectoral dialogues on flood resilience among local decision-makers in Cologne and Remscheid that go beyond hard infrastructure.
- Cologne's use of flood resilience data (via the FRMC) to inform community members on how to enhance their own flood resilience.
- Remscheid to improve its flood risk management practices for surface water flooding, in part based on FRMC results.
- LSE to receive an invitation to provide inputs to the expert group on flood resilience for the German Water Association's flood resilience rule book ("Themenband").

## How the win was achieved

### Linking advocacy across scales

LSE researchers are engaging at both local and national levels to support comprehensive policy change for local flood resilience action. However, LSE uses different approaches in the UK and Germany. In the UK, LSE conducted influence simultaneously at the local and national levels, whereas in Germany, work at the local level opened opportunities to engage at the national level.

In both contexts, LSE's role as researchers — generating evidence to understand local resilience gaps, and opportunities to directly support planning processes — has been critical for ensuring uptake of resilience thinking among decision-makers. While the FRMC is not the only tool these officials use to support decision-making, it has provided new insights. Municipalities have found the FRMC process particularly valuable as a means to convene multi-sectoral decision-makers, build a shared understanding of the 'big picture' of resilience,

and discuss how to address cross-sectoral resilience opportunities such as nature-based solutions.

## The UK case

At the national level, LSE has responded to public policy consultations, such as from the Environment Agency, for policies relevant for local risk management and resilience. In these national consultations, LSE has focused on using insights and findings from: (1) the Alliance on the multi-dimensional aspects of flood resilience and the importance of participatory decision-making, working with local communities, and forward-looking and proactive disaster risk reduction activities; and (2) FRMC data from Lowestoft that backs up LSE recommendations to consider floods holistically and systemically. LSE also uses frameworks and approaches such as the FRMC and the Triple Resilience Dividend as proofs of concept as to why a holistic approach is important, noting that these tools are open-access and freely available to decision-makers to support more holistic planning.

LSE policy inputs carry weight due to their credibility arising from:

- The Grantham Institute and LSE's national reputation in climate change adaptation and resilience.
- The Alliance's unique multi-sectoral partnership and access to influential private sector entities (e.g., Zurich Insurance Group's UK business unit), enabling coordinated advocacy and messaging.
- Use of FRMC data and LSE's insights by local authorities to advocate for national policy change.

LSE researchers have successfully leveraged their national credibility to advocate for national policy changes that support their local-level resilience efforts. Namely, the national grant program that they influenced — the Flood and Coastal Resilience

*Flooding in Lowestoft, UK, 2013* © Paul Nichols

*FRMC workshop in Lowestoft, UK, November 2019* © Sara Mehryar, LSE

Innovation Programme — is now a key source of funding for Lowestoft's resilience-building efforts.

At the local level, LSE researchers have worked with the Lowestoft local government to use the FRMC to assess local flood resilience and use the data for decision-making. They have built trust and strong relationships with their local partners through their credibility as researchers and the support they have provided to decision-makers. For authorities, the Alliance project came at a time when there was significant national momentum for improving flood risk management. Furthermore, despite a recent flood walls and barrier project in Lowestoft, local authorities have always known that relying on flood protection alone does not solve the problem and so were looking for a broader set of measures for improving their flood resilience.

Local authorities found the FRMC's ability to provide baseline and endline data, highlighting changes in local resilience as a result of actions taken on the ground, compelling. As a result of their credibility and salience, in 2021, LSE was named a partner in the Norfolk & Suffolk Coast Transition Programme and helped shape the program's grant proposal using the Lowestoft FRMC data. The proposal highlighted the need to build human and natural capitals based on FRMC data. Having observed the utility and power of FRMC data, Great Yarmouth will be implementing the FRMC to develop its own data for resilience work. Moving forward, LSE and their local partners will be co-producing policy briefs that leverage FRMC evidence and resulting local resilience efforts to influence national-level policy.

## The Germany case

Unlike in the UK, in Germany, LSE is a foreign academic institution. To achieve initial buy-in to its work, the LSE team framed the FRMC project as a research project and leveraged the personal networks of their researchers. This resonated in Cologne, where local officials had prior experience

operating at the science-practice interface in partnership with researchers and already had a specific flood risk management program that LSE could contribute to.

While the Alliance has found the provision of evidence on resilience gaps and opportunities paired with possible resilience solutions and options a powerful tactic for influence in many contexts, in Germany, LSE used the FRMC to help local officials adopt resilience thinking. The local authority consists of sector-specific experts who were well equipped to develop solutions based on data, but needed support on planning and developing solutions under a holistic yet structured framework (as provided by the FRMC). Local authorities have found the FRMC so useful that they have published an article in a practitioner journal with the LSE team, presenting FRMC implementation and results and promoting the benefits of the FRMC approach in strengthening the flood resilience of communities.

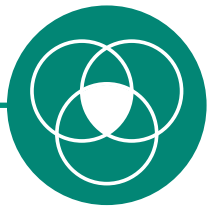
For LSE, working with local partners in Germany has been an important entry point into flood resilience dialogues at the state and national levels. Cologne has a national reputation and significant credibility in Germany's flood risk management arena. Cologne's endorsement of LSE led the German Water Association — the main national body for setting flood risk management standards in Germany — to invite LSE researchers to contribute to its ongoing discussions on how to build flood resilience.

## Additional resources

- Submission to the Environment Agency's consultation on the Draft National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England.
- Submission to Call for Evidence on Flooding and Coastal Erosion by Defra.
- Flood and coastal resilience innovation fund.
- Call for evidence on flooding and coastal erosion policy. Summary of responses.
- Evidence Review of the Concept of Flood Resilience.
- Flood resilience requires more than concrete walls.
- Neues tool liefert neue Erkenntnisse.

# Why Alliance advocacy was successful

## ESTABLISHED RELEVANCE



- Encouraged uptake of LSE policy insights into existing national- and local-level policy processes in the UK by leveraging their credibility as a national research institution.
- Accessed national-level influence opportunities in Germany by leveraging both Cologne's reputation in resilience-building and the success of LSE's collaboration with local decision-makers.
- Created an enabling environment for local-level flood resilience action in the UK by strategically layering local-to-national advocacy (e.g., by getting the FRMC's five capitals incorporated into the Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme and then working with local governments to access funds from that program.)
- Established the relevance of advocacy recommendations in the UK by aligning advocacy across partners so the national government was repeatedly hearing the same messages.

## BUILT RELATIONSHIPS

- Broke down planning silos by using community resilience data and knowledge — generated via the FRMC and Triple Resilience Dividend approaches — to convene planners from across sectors.
- Accessed relevant policy opportunities to strengthen flood resilience by leveraging partnerships with local-level flood risk management actors and influential private sector entities (e.g., Zurich Insurance Group's UK business unit).

## PROVIDED EVIDENCE-BASED KNOWLEDGE

- Built local government knowledge of community resilience needs and issues by engaging them in community resilience data gathering and analysis.
- Supported the government to think about flood resilience differently (and move away from solely hard engineering solutions) by providing them with frameworks (i.e., the FRMC and Triple Resilience Dividend) around which to structure their thinking.
- Justified policy recommendations at the local and national levels, such as the need for holistic flood risk management, by sharing validated community data and providing resilience tools to decision-makers.

Flood Resilience Alliance

Mercy Corps Indonesia

ISET International

# CASE STUDY

## MERCY CORPS INDONESIA

# Influencing multi-scalar policy change to enable local resilience action

This case study shows how locally-grounded evidence regarding climate risk and projected impact can be used strategically and consistently at multiple levels to influence comprehensive policy change that supports local action to build resilience.

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## The win

### At the local and sub-national levels, Mercy Corps Indonesia:

- Supported the development of holistic and long-term water resource management policies and land-use plans that address the root causes of flood risk in Pekalongan City, Pekalongan Regency, and the Central Java Province.

### At the national level, Mercy Corps Indonesia:

- Built awareness around the issue of land subsidence and helped influence the national government to prioritize Pekalongan City and Regency for watershed management and coastal and agricultural resilience (via the Climate Resilience Development Policy 2020-2045) and pilot interventions to address land subsidence.
- Influenced the Ministry of National Development Planning to adopt Mercy Corps Indonesia's proposed approach for aligning the top-down national policy framework with local-level needs assessments.
- Helped shape the development of the Roadmap for Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) on Adaptation to ensure its relevance for local and sub-national governance and its alignment with existing climate resilience policies.
- Provided an evidence-based climate rationale for Mercy Corps Indonesia's nationally-selected Green Climate Fund (GCF) concept note on

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*Tidal flooding slowly submerges the community's aquaculture area* © Denia Aulia Syam - Mercy Corps Indonesia

strengthening livelihoods while preserving ecosystems across watersheds.

### At the global level, Mercy Corps Indonesia:

- Informed the official Indonesia statement for COP26 by providing empirical evidence to shape policy recommendations; Mercy Corps Indonesia influenced recommendation that a new financial instrument for loss and damage should better account for climate-induced displacement, slow-onset events, and non-economic losses was incorporated in the G77+China group's position on loss and damage.

The combination of these policy wins is expected to lead to evidence-based investment and action to build resilience to land subsidence in Pekalongan.

## How the win was achieved

### Building the evidence base for land subsidence

Creating good climate change policy that will benefit localities requires strong, contextual data that reflects the local experience of climate change. Globally, such data is lacking. The Indonesian government has risk analysis tools that it uses to inform its policies; however, these tools rely on historical data or analyze climate risk at a regional rather than local level. Mercy Corps Indonesia saw the opportunity to focus its Alliance program on using evidence of local climate risk and impact to incorporate locally-grounded climate information into policies from the local to national levels. It also wanted to use this work as a demonstration for how forward-looking risk analysis can be better incorporated into decision-making around climate change more broadly.

In 2019, Mercy Corps Indonesia conducted scoping studies and discussions with local, sub-national, and national governments to inform its advocacy focus and strategy. These studies and discussions allowed Mercy Corps Indonesia to develop an understanding of the political cycle, current government interests and needs, and the situation of local government with regard to climate change governance. Mercy Corps Indonesia already had significant credibility at the national level due to previous policy development support it had provided to the national government. However, to continue to open doors, especially at the sub-national and local levels and in areas it had not yet directly engaged, Mercy Corps Indonesia positioned itself as a think tank partner that would provide information useful for strengthening policy.

*Undeterred by floods, children use an inundated road to attend school* © Arif Gandapurnama, Mercy Corps Indonesia

Based on these scoping activities, Mercy Corps Indonesia chose to focus on Pekalongan City and Regency, located in Central Java Province. The selection of location was influenced by the fact that the local governments were about to review their 20-year spatial plan and start developing a new local development plan. This was a policy window that Mercy Corps Indonesia could influence within the timeframe of the Alliance program. Furthermore, the Pekalongan area has high flood risk due to land subsidence. Despite the prevalence of land subsidence issues along the coastline of Java, in 2019, land subsidence had not been officially recognized by Indonesian government actors as a priority hazard. Government actors felt that the existing flood protection infrastructure would continue to protect the Pekalongan area from flooding for the next 15 years, despite increasing flood risk; Mercy Corps Indonesia had already observed issues of overflow.

Because land subsidence was not on the sub-national or national radars, Mercy Corps Indonesia needed to build the evidence base to show that land subsidence, which leads to tidal flooding and permanent inundation, was an issue that needed to be addressed by decision-makers. To do this, it commissioned the development of the Climate Risk and Impact Assessment tool (CRIA), with the ultimate goal of showing the government how the combination of climate change (e.g., changes in precipitation patterns and sea level rise) and non-climatic factors (e.g., land subsidence) contributes to and intensifies another kind of hazard that government already understands well — floods.

More broadly, the aim of the CRIA is to help integrate climate vulnerability, risk, and impact information into local and sub-national decision-making, and amplify the evidence in national policy discussions focused on climate-resilient development. CRIA is a methodological assessment using computer modelling that connects three models:

- a land subsidence, tidal flood, and river-flooding model;
- a model of how water moves through the built landscape, particularly in response to changes in large-scale flood protection like sea walls and dikes, and includes how water movement is being affected by land-use change; and

- a model that estimates the economic and non-economic impacts associated with flood protection and flooding.

Recognizing the need to build the capacity of local institutions to identify local climate risks and feed its knowledge into decision-making, Mercy Corps Indonesia intentionally sought to build partnerships with both the Bogor Agricultural Institute, a prominent national academic institution known for climate change research, and Diponegoro University, a local university. Together with these partners, Mercy Corps Indonesia piloted the tool in Pekalongan City and Regency and collected evidence on potential flood risks, the root causes of flooding, and the economic and non-economic impacts of current and projected flooding. Mercy Corps Indonesia intentionally aligned its climate risk and impact analysis timeframe with the targeted policy cycle and its milestones (e.g., use of 15-year climate projections to inform a 15-year plan) to ensure its relevance to ongoing policy opportunities.

To further build government buy-in to the data from CRIA, Mercy Corps Indonesia engaged government stakeholders in shaping the analysis and prioritizing indicators for the vulnerability analysis, and kept them abreast of findings from the analysis as they evolved.

## Using evidence-based knowledge in multi-scalar advocacy

Mercy Corps Indonesia used evidence from CRIA to inform policy discussions, improve policies related to climate and flood resilience under the framework of integrated water resource management, and ensure greater understanding and prioritization of local climate risks across multiple levels and departments. To do this, it tailored the data based on the type of information needed for each policy target and the best approach for presenting this information to ensure its uptake in development and land-use planning processes.

Mercy Corps Indonesia used data from CRIA to show:

- High flood risk areas in Pekalongan — analysis on the spatial distribution of floods allowed the identification of hotspot areas.
- Root causes of flooding — government actors had widely perceived that tidal flooding was being caused solely by rainfall and sea level rise, both climatic factors. Using CRIA, Mercy Corps Indonesia was able to show that the main driver of tidal flooding and permanent inundation was actually the land subsidence caused by unsustainable groundwater extraction combined with sea level rise and rainfall.
- Impact of flood losses on the government's existing economic targets — Mercy Corps Indonesia used the language in government policies to communicate and thus contextualize the flood impacts revealed by CRIA. For example, Mercy Corps Indonesia was able to show that flood losses in 2020 would amount to half of the combined Pekalongan City and Regency budgets; in 2025, flood losses would be up to three times the combined budgets.
- Key contributors to economic losses — CRIA showed that the main contributor to economic loss during floods is the loss of income for communities. This is not something that can be addressed through continued or greater investment in flood protection infrastructure; rather, solutions need to focus on strengthening ecosystems and addressing socio-economic challenges.

Data from CRIA, particularly the novel impact analysis, has been impactful as it enabled 'storytelling' about the situation on the ground. Mercy Corps Indonesia paired its data analysis with potential recommendations and solutions for government to consider.

## Sub-national and local levels

Mercy Corps Indonesia used the data from CRIA to help government actors understand why and how they need to move beyond hard infrastructural flood protection measures and toward preventative actions that address the root cause of flooding. Mercy Corps Indonesia's messaging on how government economic losses from floods would increase if current development pathways are maintained — that the existing situation is beyond their fiscal capacity — was a powerful eye-opener

*Communities were forced to abandon their houses due to permanent inundation* © Denia Aulia Syam, Mercy Corps Indonesia

for governments. Local government actors are starting to understand that flood risk reduction is not just a disaster management issue; it is also a development planning issue.

As a result, not only has CRIA data shaped local land use plans, it has also led otherwise siloed local and provincial decision-makers from the Regional Development Cooperation to convene and discuss options for maintaining the regional water supply. Using knowledge from CRIA and Mercy Corps Indonesia's resilient livelihoods model development process, they are exploring application of water conservation principles, including using alternative water sources, that will relieve pressure on groundwater sources while also securing livelihoods.

## National level

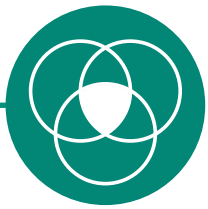
Mercy Corps Indonesia has used CRIA at the national level to support government to rethink its traditionally top-down decision-making and place greater emphasis on integrating data on local needs and climate risks and impacts into key climate policies and policy implementation strategies. The following examples illustrate how Mercy Corps Indonesia has leveraged CRIA to achieve this shift in thinking:

- Mercy Corps Indonesia used CRIA to showcase local evidence on the land subsidence phenomenon, namely its main drivers and how it leads to secondary impacts and hazards. This supported the national government to recognize the need to address land subsidence and prioritize Pekalongan for resilience action.
- Mercy Corps Indonesia developed intervention models to show government how gaps identified via CRIA can be filled, as demonstrated in its nationally-selected GCF concept note focused on building resilience through livelihood improvements and ecosystem preservation.

The credibility that Mercy Corps Indonesia has built at the national level through its consistent provision of data in support of evidence-based decision-making has opened new opportunities for influence. For example, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry has also asked Mercy Corps Indonesia to present its impact analysis as part of a wider effort to identify existing tools and data to support the government's upcoming loss and damage assessment. Additionally, Mercy Corps Indonesia was invited to co-lead the development of the official Indonesia statement for the COP26 Presidency with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry. Here, too, Mercy Corps used the CRIA to demonstrate a local case and provide empirical evidence for how funding loss and damage at an equal level to climate mitigation and adaptation can support integrated climate action (e.g., transboundary action that addresses the social, economic, political, and environmental factors that exacerbate flood risk and vulnerability and lead to significant loss and damage).

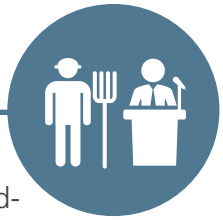
# Why Alliance advocacy was successful

## ESTABLISHED RELEVANCE



- Aligned program advocacy goals with government priorities by leveraging existing policy windows relevant to climate change governance.
- Generated government buy-in by engaging government stakeholders in the data gathering and analysis processes and providing frequent updates on new learning.
- Creating an enabling environment for local-level flood resilience action by strategically layering local-to-national advocacy.

## BUILT RELATIONSHIPS



- Engaged with local, sub-national, and national government stakeholders by using Mercy Corps Indonesia's knowledge, connections, and overall credibility from prior work.
- Supported coordinated watershed-level decision-making by convening local and provincial government stakeholders around evidence of the regional implications of local practices.

## PROVIDED EVIDENCE-BASED KNOWLEDGE

- Increased knowledge of decision-makers on local-level climate risk and impact by developing and implementing a locally-contextualized data tool and presenting evidence, recommendations, and intervention models.
- Influenced government to rethink top-down decision making by illustrating the value of local-level data in informing locally grounded policies and implementation strategies
- Shifted perceptions on climate risk and encouraged uptake of recommendations into policies across levels by tailoring the data to the specific advocacy target.

### Additional resources

- Loss and damage case studies from the frontline: a resource to support practice and policy.
- Climate Risk and Impact Assessment of Pekalongan, Indonesia

# CASE STUDY

## MERCY CORPS NEPAL

# Establishing local financing for resilience

This case study shows how filling data gaps in data-deficient contexts supports the development of new policy and investment.

**Authors**: Mercy Corps Nepal – Sajan Neupane (saneupane@mercycorps.org); ISET-International – Kanmani Venkateswaran, Karen MacClune, Rachel Norton, and Atalie Pestalozzi

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## The win

After three years of targeted data provision and advocacy by Mercy Corps Nepal (Mercy Corps) in partnership with the UNDP:

- Sudurpaschim Province endorsed the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) plan (2020-2025), which includes a clause for 5% of municipal budgets to be allocated to disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) activities. This represents a consistent source of financing for resilience for five years. In the 2020-2021 fiscal year, approximately USD 4.4 million was spent from this budget, and for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, USD 7.2 million was allocated. Over 2.5 million people are estimated to have indirectly benefited from this new government spending.
- Mercy Corps is now working both to track spending to understand how this money is spent, and to understand resilience needs, gaps, and strengths, and identify interventions directly with communities. It plans to use this data to advocate on how to best use local

*Community contribution for flood protection measures* © Khagendra Bhattarai, Dadeldhura

financing for DRR and CCA to build resilience in the context of a changing climate.

## How the win was achieved

### Establishing a local financing mechanism

DRR and CCA, both critical for building resilience, are inherently local endeavors, but are significantly constrained by a lack of local financing. Mercy Corps has been working in the Sudurpaschim Province, Nepal to establish a local financing mechanism for DRR and CCA. In Nepal, the 2015 federalization of the government opened up new opportunities and mandates for provincial and municipal governments to improve their policy and fiscal frameworks related to DRR. Mercy Corps saw an opportunity to work with the Sudurpaschim Province — where it had been working since 2013 on community programming and supporting disaster response and recovery — to create and build local capacity to execute budgets for DRR and CCA.

Mercy Corps partnered with UNDP, which was supporting the development of the Sudurpaschim DRRM plan. Together with UNDP, Mercy Corps conducted a series of discussions with provincial authorities to understand where authorities needed support. They found that sub-national governments needed technical support to develop plans that were aligned with the National Policy and Strategic Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management 2018-2030 — there were federal mandates but no guidance on how to structure DRRM plans and establish financing mechanisms. They also found that, though DRRM requires local financing, there is little to no local budget data to help understand what level of financing there has been, what that money has been spent on, and what level of financing is required.

To fill this gap, in 2018, Mercy Corps commissioned a budget study and the development of a budget tracking tool to track municipal DRR and CCA investments. It found that local DRRM investment hovered between 1.2% to 3% of the annual local government budget and was largely spent on protection infrastructure and response. There

was little investment in preparedness and non-structural DRR solutions. Mercy Corps conducted a series of bilateral conversations and convened workshops with provincial and local authorities to present these research findings. It also presented Alliance messaging that investing USD 1 in DRR would save on average USD 5 in future losses and that preparedness and non-structural DRR solutions can be more cost-effective than large-scale structural solutions. This was important framing for municipal governments which are responsible for implementing DRRM activities identified in provincial plans despite the lack of resources. Based on the evidence presented, Mercy Corps was able to generate commitments from provincial and municipal governments to create DRR and CCA budgets and thus work toward closing the financing gap.

Subsequently, in 2019, Mercy Corps and the UNDP facilitated a two-day workshop in which ministry officials came together to write Sudurpaschim's DRRM plan, which included a new budgetary clause for DRR and CCA. In addition, a large proportion of the budget was directed toward addressing climate change. After this plan was finalized and endorsed, further advocacy led to verbal commitments from municipal governments to invest in DRR and CCA with the support of provincial governments.

## Supporting policy implementation

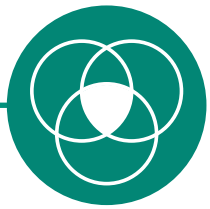
Much of Mercy Corps' engagement with provincial and municipal government since the finalization of the provincial DRRM plan has consisted of bilateral discussions (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) to support and influence implementation, tracking, and evaluation of DRRM financing. In particular, Mercy Corps is tracking the annual budget to determine how much money has been spent relative to what was budgeted and what DRR and CCA activities it has been spent on. It is also working to understand how DRR and CCA expenditures have shifted since 2019. Eventually, Mercy Corps will present this evidence back to the provincial and municipal governments.

Since 2021, Mercy Corps has also been implementing the FRMC in communities in the province. Mercy Corps plans to use the data from the FRMC to empower community-based groups to work with municipal authorities to include interventions in local plans and leverage the 5% budget clause for funding. This highlights how critical it is to not only achieve policy and spending change, but to then build the capacity of government to effectively implement new policies and spending in ways that will improve the lives of the most vulnerable.

*Community embankment of Atthanifata* © Nabin Bhatta, Kanchanpur

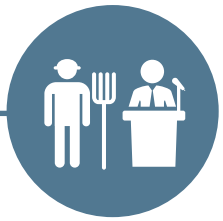
## Why Alliance advocacy was successful

### ESTABLISHED RELEVANCE



- Leveraged new influence opportunities emerging from federalization — whereby local governments have substantially more decision-making power — by supporting municipalities to fulfill national mandates on local DRR and CCA.
- Based advocacy goals and strategy on an understanding of local DRR governance gaps gained by conducting baseline research and talking with key local government stakeholders.
- Aligned program advocacy goals with government priorities by identifying and targeting a local policy process — the provincial development planning process — relevant to local flood resilience.
- Built a shared understanding of the need for local DRR/CCA financing by convening local and provincial stakeholders, which generated shared commitments.

### BUILT RELATIONSHIPS



- Engaged with and lobbied provincial and municipal government stakeholders by using Mercy Corps' knowledge, connections, and overall credibility from prior work in Sudurpaschim Province.
- Accessed the provincial development planning processes by building a strategic partnership with the UNDP, which was providing the government with technical support for development planning.
- Developed an implementable DRR/CCA financing solution by simultaneously engaging with and convening (via workshops) municipal and provincial government stakeholders.

### PROVIDED EVIDENCE-BASED KNOWLEDGE

- Increased knowledge of decision-makers on local DRR and CCA financing gaps by developing and implementing a budget tracking tool and presenting evidence of under-investment.
- Continuing to influence the implementation of new spending by monitoring and tracking budget expenditures on CCA and DRR, and collecting data on community resilience gaps and needs that could be addressed using this money.

### Additional resources

- Budget governance for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation under Nepal's new federal system

# CASE STUDY

## PRACTICAL ACTION NEPAL

# Strengthening locally-grounded resilience planning and practice

This case study shows how community-defined priorities can be institutionalized and operationalized in ongoing local level planning processes.

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The Alliance is a multi-sector collaboration between the humanitarian sector, academia, and the private sector focusing on shifting from the traditional emphasis on post-event recovery to pre-event resilience. We are nine years into an eleven-year program that has been delivered in two Phases (Phase I from 2013-2018; Phase II from 2018-2024).

**Flood Resilience Measurement for Communities (FRMC):**

Created by the Alliance in 2013, the FRMC is a framework and associated web-based data tool/app which conceptualizes flood resilience as a function of social, human, natural, physical, and financial capitals. The FRMC is implemented at the beginning of Alliance work to assess resilience strengths and gaps. This information is used to shape community programs and advocacy.

## The win

Building on the credibility of its community programming work since Phase I of the Alliance, Practical Action Nepal (Practical Action) has influenced significant local and national policy changes that will support local resilience-building.

### At the local level, Practical Action:

- Supported institutionalization of evidence-informed climate resilience priorities into Local Disaster and Climate Resilience Plans (LDCRPs) and annual fiscal plans in five municipalities in Nepal.
- Supported government to increase local budget allocations and spending toward disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience in each municipality.
- Helped local government in each municipality identify locally applicable good practices to address community resilience priorities. As a result, Practical Action flood resilience practices such as bio-dykes, raised granaries, and safe shelters are being implemented and financed by government.

*Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) mapping in Madhuwan, Bardiya District, to inform their Local Disaster and Climate Resilience Plan (LDCRP)* © Practical Action/CSDR

As of October 2021, almost USD 450,000 has been spent across the five municipalities on activities that contribute to flood resilience. And, because the government has been so open to understanding and addressing community resilience priorities, communities now feel more empowered to advocate for their needs.

### At the national level, Practical Action:

- Successfully advocated for Disaster Preparedness and Response guidelines to recommend/require local hazard assessments be conducted and the results used in local planning processes.
- Advocated for the inclusion of resilience-building provisions — including development of multi-hazard early warning systems (EWS) and public weather advisories, the establishment of a Climate Information System, and the development of disaster risk and gender-sensitive Climate Resilience Plans for all local governments — in Nepal's National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Though these plans are still in development, the expectation is that they will result in increased national investment in local resilience.

## How the win was achieved

### An appropriate enabling environment

Practical Action Nepal has been part of the Alliance since the beginning of Phase I in 2013. In its early Alliance work, Practical Action was the first organization to introduce flood EWS to Nepal; this work built relationships and credibility with key government authorities across the country.

Starting in 2015, the political system in Nepal began rapidly shifting, opening new windows for influence. Federalization led to decentralization and the creation of 753 local governments and seven provincial governments. With decentralization, local governments now have the power to make decisions and create locally grounded policies and plans.

At the same time, there has been a growing awareness of climate change. At the national level,

Nepal committed to creating NAPs and NDCs. To support development of these plans, the federal government released guidelines for municipalities on how to streamline the previously required Local Disaster Risk Management Planning and Local Adaptation Plans of Action into one plan, the LDCRP. Though there is both the mandate and will to do this work at the local level — particularly because local officials are seeing flood patterns change — there is low capacity and few resources to support the work.

In response to the changing political and policy landscape and given its credibility and strong relationships with sub-national and government actors, in 2018, Practical Action expanded its Phase II Alliance work beyond EWS to more broadly influencing DRR and climate change adaptation (CCA) policies and spending. For Practical Action, the LDCRPs present a key opportunity for supporting local government needs while also strengthening community DRR and CCA.

Practical Action's influence opportunity was not limited to the three municipalities — Tikapur, Rajapur, and Geruwa — it had worked with since 2013. Because the LDCRP is required, local governments in areas that Practical Action had not worked in before — Janaki and Madhuwan — were eager to receive the organization's support to produce evidence of resilience needs and options for addressing those needs.

Practical Action also further built its credibility during the COVID-19 pandemic by supporting local governments to manage the pandemic while also maintaining a focus on flood resilience and the ways that communities and governments would need to address both in tandem. Practical Action's demonstrated flexibility and reliability helped further build trust and linkages with government at the local, provincial, and national levels.

It is in this enabling environment of credibility, relationships, an appropriate governance structure, and relevant policy windows that Practical Action has been able to employ a successful advocacy strategy that connects across multiple scales in support of local flood resilience.

*A Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) at community level as part of the Local Disaster and Climate Resilience Plan (LDCRP)* © Practical Action/CSDR


*The ward chair closing a ward-level workshop in Madhuwan, Bardiya District.* © Practical Action/CSDR

## Local-level advocacy

Though Practical Action's advocacy strategy is multi-faceted, the foundation of its work is to be demand-driven and problem-oriented. Practical Action works with communities to identify gaps and address those gaps using participatory approaches and solutions-oriented research and data. At the local level, Practical Action has empowered communities to identify and advocate for their resilience needs using the FRMC process. Practical Action was intentional about involving the most marginalized groups in the community in this process to ensure that their needs would be recognized and resilience activities wouldn't just focus on the priorities of the most powerful. This broad community participation and buy-in has resulted in 'emergent' advocacy where community members share their knowledge with their families and neighbors, building broad support around FRMC-defined priorities.

Communities have taken their priorities to the local government via Community Disaster Management Committees (CDMCs), community-based groups trained by Practical Action to implement interventions and coordinate directly with local government. Due to their strengthened relationship with local government, CDMCs feel empowered to approach local government about addressing community needs. Because these needs are identified and documented via the FRMC and other research, governments are more receptive and responsive.

Practical Action's own government-focused advocacy involves building government understanding and ownership of community resilience gaps and needs by seeking and integrating government input into its research. Because Practical Action strategically layers its government advocacy with community advocacy around the same evidence and priorities, government now both sees and understands why

there is strong demand for addressing defined needs. This two-pronged approach has been critical for achieving institutionalization of community needs in local plans.

Practical Action has further supported local government in addressing community-defined resilience needs by providing evidence of successful Practical Action good practices, through exposure visits and sharing knowledge products, and by co-funding government implementation of good practices. Co-funding in particular has been critical as local government resources are constrained. For example, with co-funding from Practical Action, Geruwa Municipality invested in construction of a bio-dyke and also included the promotion of similar bio-engineering resilience interventions in its fiscal plan.

Now, as local governments are implementing their fiscal plans and investing in activities that support flood resilience, Practical Action is developing accountability mechanisms to ensure that government actions are addressing community needs. For example, Practical Action is co-generating, with communities, FRMC reports that contain checklists of community-defined needs. Communities can tick the priorities that have been integrated into plans and implemented, and identify which priorities still need to be met and require immediate attention.

## National level advocacy

Practical Action has leveraged its community programming experiences and credibility in the national resilience arena to change policy and secure commitments at the national level. It has targeted and worked with officials in ministries responsible for addressing floods and, more broadly, climate change and disasters. And it has connected these national officials with local stakeholders, for example by convening exposure visits and local-level workshops in which local government and communities were able to share their issues and experiences with national representatives.

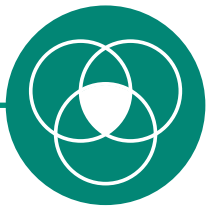
Practical Action has also leveraged the reach and clout of the Alliance partners working in Nepal — Mercy Corps, Practical Action, and the Nepal Red Cross Society (the Nepal Alliance). The three organizations coordinate strategically as a coalition to strengthen their advocacy recommendations and broaden their sphere of influence. For example, the Nepal Red Cross Society co-chairs the Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) platform with the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration. Practical Action has used this forum to increase buy-in from NGOs and government around addressing local flood issues. Where commitments have been harder to generate through direct advocacy, Practical Action has leveraged media (e.g., TV and radio) to press government officials on resilience issues and garner verbal, public commitments to addressing local flood issues.

## Additional Resources

- Key Learnings and Recommendations for creating Local Disaster and Climate Resilience Plans

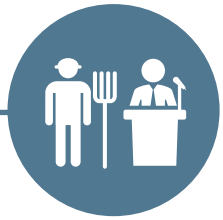
# Why Alliance advocacy was successful

## ESTABLISHED RELEVANCE



- Leveraged new influence opportunities emerging from federalization— whereby local governments have substantially more decision-making power — by supporting local municipalities to fulfill national mandates on local DRR and CCA.
- Generated community buy-in to the program and program advocacy goals by measuring and sharing comprehensive resilience data (via the FRMC) that validates community priorities and needs.
- Aligned program advocacy goals with government priorities by identifying and targeting local and national policy opportunities and processes relevant to local flood resilience.
- Established the relevance of advocacy recommendations by aligning organizational and community advocacy across multiple communities so the local government was hearing the same messages from multiple stakeholders.
- Built momentum and generated national commitments around addressing local flood resilience by leveraging media.

## BUILT RELATIONSHIPS



- Created pathways for influence by leveraging credibility from prior EWS community programming work, which is a particularly effective platform for building influence pathways as EWS require partnerships with government institutions at all levels.
- Accessed relevant national policy processes to improve local DRR management by working through existing partnerships and networks such as the CBDRM platform and the Nepal Alliance.
- Strengthened relationships with government by pivoting to support government COVID-19 management needs in ways that align with building flood resilience.
- Built relationships and a shared understanding of local resilience issues and needs by convening resilience dialogues between national government, local government, and communities.

## PROVIDED EVIDENCE-BASED KNOWLEDGE

- Built government knowledge of community resilience needs and issues by engaging them in community resilience data gathering and analysis (via the FRMC).
- Empowered communities to advocate for their resilience needs by working with them to gather data on their resilience gaps, opportunities, and needs, and to co-develop a system for tracking government implementation of local resilience priorities.
- Increased government uptake of advocacy recommendations by connecting evidence of resilience needs to actionable resilience solutions; additionally provided co-financing and technical support for government implementation of solutions.

Flood Resilience Alliance

Practical ACTION

ISET International

# CASE STUDY

## PRACTICAL ACTION PERU

# Influencing government investment in early warning systems

This case study is about using phased, long-term engagement to foster co-creation and adoption of climate-adaptive technologies by national government.

**Authors**: Practical Action – Miguel Arestegui (miguel.arestegui@practicalaction.org), Giorgio Madueño (giorgio.madueno@practicalaction.org); ISET-International – Karen MacClune, Atalie Pestalozzi, Kanmani Venkateswaran, Rachel Norton

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## The win

After 12 years of work developing and operationalizing community-based early warning systems (EWS), Practical Action Peru (Practical Action) has achieved national government scaling of its EWS approach:

- In 2021, the National Meteorology and Hydrology Service of Peru (Senamhi) allocated and disbursed USD 435,000 toward a national program to expand EWS in the Rímac Watershed. As part of this program Senamhi is adopting aspects of the EWS approach developed by Practical Action and Practical Action is supporting Senamhi with this expansion. To date, newly installed EWS are now benefiting approximately 457,000 people by alerting them of potentially dangerous flooding. Ultimately, the expansion of EWS is expected to impact the lives of over 9.3 million people living in the Rímac Watershed.
- Senamhi is working toward scaling out the EWS approach to other Peruvian river basins.


*Volunteer, Lourdes Garcia, of the Participatory Rain Monitoring Network taking a picture of her rain gauge in the community of San Miguel de Viso in Lima, Peru* © Practical Action

- The SDC regional hub for Latin America is funding a three-year regional program that aims to strengthen early warning and early action in the Vilcanota basin in the Cusco region and the La Paz and Beni watersheds in Bolivia, based on the Peruvian EWS work.

## How the win was achieved

Communities in Peru's Rímac watershed face rapid-onset floods, intense rainfall, and landslides almost annually, and these risks are being compounded by rapid land use change and climate change. Forecasting these events, however, is difficult. Rainfall in the Andes varies considerably — even from community to community — and remote communities in particular lack weather information to make informed, real-time decisions about their risk and what actions to take to reduce their vulnerability. Practical Action has been working with communities since 2011 to increase community access to early warnings.

Practical Action has been operating in Peru since 1985, addressing energy, agriculture, and disaster risk reduction. It has a strong reputation in development work with communities, and from this has built working relationships with various departments and ministries. Practical Action's work on EWS began before the launch of Phase I of the Alliance in 2013. In 2011 and 2012, Practical Action, in partnership with the National University of Cusco, developed and deployed its first prototype weather monitoring station and EWS. In Phase I of the Alliance, Practical Action continued working on EWS in response to data from community Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments. In these, Practical Action consistently saw a high community need for advance warning of and capacity to prepare for and respond to disasters, and a lack of institutional capacity for meeting these community needs.

Setting up and operationalizing EWS required a set of interlinked activities with multiple stakeholders and at multiple scales, including:

- Working with communities to establish community brigades and associated risk awareness and response capabilities.
- Iteratively developing simple, inexpensive technical solutions to locally monitor weather

so that communities would have access to the information they needed to trigger emergency preparedness and response plans. This work was done in collaboration with communities to ensure both that it addressed their needs and equipment could be operated and maintained locally.

- Developing rainfall-risk relationships relating rainfall measurements to subsequent events.
- Building relationships with local and national government, the geological service, the meteorological service, and other stakeholders in the EWS space.

Near the end of Phase I, in 2017, Practical Action deployed a second generation of improved weather stations and associated community structures to leverage those improvements to increase community safety and wellbeing. The timing was opportune — in late 2017 Peru experienced 'El Niño Coastal', an extremely heavy rainfall event caused by unusually warm waters off the coast. Unlike a typical El Niño, the event was caused by local winds and therefore not predicted in advance. Consequently, it took the country by surprise and resulted in catastrophic damage. The ability of the communities Practical Action had been working with to prepare and respond appropriately to the resulting flooding — informed by data from the new weather stations that the communities were operating — drew the attention of local, regional, and national officials, including Senamhi.

In particular, the demonstrated ability of communities to use low cost technological solutions to predict, act, and reduce impact built Senamhi's confidence in Practical Action's work. Furthermore, the Sendai Framework came at the right moment to further emphasize the importance of decentralized technologies, community-centered engagement, and EWS.

Given Senamhi's growing interest, Practical Action intentionally refocused its work at the beginning of Phase II of the Alliance. It strategically aligned its work with government priorities and attention and increased its engagement and focus on national-level engagement. It shifted the focus of its work to be better aligned with Senamhi's hydrological services and it located its work intentionally in

*Practical Action and Senamhi team installing a monitoring station in Arequipa, Peru* © Practical Action


*Meeting and sharing of information for the operation of a monitoring station between Practical Action and Senamhi teams in Arequipa, Peru* © Practical Action

the Rímac watershed, recognizing its importance to the national government: floods in the Rímac watershed directly affect Lima, and the location facilitated working with key stakeholders and government in the capital city. The latter was especially valuable given Peru's centralized government structure; working close to the capital allowed community interaction with high-level stakeholders.

Practical Action coupled this strategic positioning with evidence of success. It focused on sharing, at the national and regional levels, its experience not just with its low-cost weather stations but also with the way stations were embedded within communities to make the information usable. In doing this, it made sure to make its work relevant to government goals and ways of working. For example, Senamhi recognizes the value of community approaches connecting national services to community needs. But like many national institutions, Senamhi has limitations on how closely it can work with communities. Because of this, Practical Action seized the opportunity to connect the meteorological agency with the communities with whom Practical Action was working.

To maximize the sustainability of its EWS work, Practical Action sought to facilitate ownership and co-ownership by Senamhi. This meant actively using Senamhi terminology, e.g., naming the weather measurement systems 'vigilance systems' rather than 'monitoring systems'. By adopting Senamhi's language, Practical Action made it clear that it was not deviating from national regulations, and made it easier for Senamhi to work with it to push forward the same agenda.

Practical Action's Phase II work was opportunistically bolstered by another extreme rainfall event in 2019. As part of its EWS work, Practical Action has established a Participatory Rain Monitoring Network in the Rímac River Basin (MOP Rímac Network). The MOP Rímac Network works with volunteers who are trained to measure rainfall

using basic rain gauges. In February 2019, the network had 25 community members distributed throughout the basin using handmade, manual rain gauges to measure and report rainfall data. On February 25, three of those volunteers recorded a very localized, extreme rainfall event which resulted in localized flooding. Combining the data from all 25 volunteers and the Senamhi data collection network made clear to everyone involved the highly localized nature of the event, something that had previously been anecdotally reported but never empirically measured. This provided further evidence of the need for a spatially dense precipitation measurement network for accurately predicting flood risk. It also highlighted to Senamhi the potential for communities to be collaborators in meteorological measurement.

Throughout the EWS development and refinement, Practical Action's adaptability and strategic opportunism, supported by the long-term, flexible funding provided by the Alliance, enabled it to seize opportunities while staying on course toward long-term goals. For example, bigger and more formal collaborations, including the expansion of the process to other river basins, emerged from discussions at an event Practical Action co-organized with Senamhi. Practical Action has also just launched a new strategic collaboration with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and a technical knowledge transfer and exchange between Peru and Bolivia based on the Peruvian EWS work. Overall, the success of Practical Action's EWS work has been a balancing act between the strategic development and execution of plans and activities; ongoing adaptation and refinement of those plans and activities based on learning, particularly at the pause point between Phases I and II of the Alliance work; and flexibly responding to opportunities to provide knowledge and expertise.

Now, Practical Action is poised to support Senamhi with the scale out of its community-based EWS model in the Rímac watershed. This work is taking on its own dynamic, separate from the community-level work Practical Action is engaged in, and leading to new lines of research by Senamhi. This shift from community-level work in Phase I to an integrated community to nation-wide body of work in Phase II has deepened Practical Action's impact, but is also a natural evolution, recognizing that EWS require this level of integration to be fully effective.

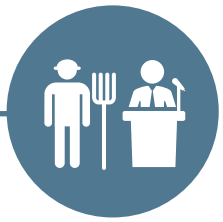

*Meeting between Practical Action and Senamhi teams in Cusco, Peru* © Practical Action

# Why Alliance advocacy was successful

## ESTABLISHED RELEVANCE

- Generated community and government buy-in to the program by measuring and sharing comprehensive resilience data (via the FRMC) that validates community priorities and needs.
- Addressed community resilience gaps by connecting national services and government priorities with community needs.
- Encouraged ownership and uptake of new approaches by adopting government language and modifying approaches to better align with government ways of working.
- Pushed forward thinking around communities as central users of climate services and integral parts of developing those systems by leveraging the impact of global frameworks.

## BUILT RELATIONSHIPS



- Built strong relationships with government by strategically aligning the work and work locations with government priorities.
- Intentionally shifted the focus of relationship building from local to national between Phase I and Phase II as it became clearer which government stakeholders would be best positioned to scale the work.

## PROVIDED EVIDENCE-BASED KNOWLEDGE

- Created a successful, low-cost, easy to use and maintain technology by collaborating with communities and iterating over time to increase usability and efficacy.
- Demonstrated not just a technical solution, but also how the technical solution had to be operationalized (through community capacity building and establishment of community systems and protocols) to be successful.
- Used EWS as a versatile tool for advocacy by demonstrating to key stakeholders its effectiveness in minimizing flood risk for communities.

### Additional resources

- Monitoring rainfall for early warning: Peru's ingenious solutions.
- Practical Action and Early Warning Systems.
- How can participatory monitoring help us better understand rainfall?

# CASE STUDY

## PLAN INTERNATIONAL EL SALVADOR

# Strengthening inter-governmental coordination to improve early warning and early action

This case study shows how involving levels of government in community learning creates opportunities for influence.

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## The win

In the context of the El Salvadorian government's recent strides toward improving forecasting through the creation of an impact-based forecasting model, Plan International El Salvador (Plan) saw an opportunity to further improve understanding and uptake of forecasts by:

- Supporting national government to strengthen forecast dissemination by improving inter-institutional communication within the national civil protection system. Plan established a formal working agreement between the General Directorate of Civil Protection (DGPC) of the national civil protection system and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN). Through this agreement, Plan has joined forces with these two institutions to support communication during emergencies and to strengthen the generation and provision of forecast information.
- Encouraging national government to integrate into the national impact-based forecasting model information on community coping

*Launch of a user-friendly guide on impact-based forecasting in San Salvador, June 2021* © Plan International

capacities and vulnerabilities beyond just exposure to hazards.

## How the win was achieved

Plan's work as part of the Alliance centers on enhancing community flood resilience. Plan has leveraged its long-term credibility from working on women, children and youth issues and Alliance flood resilience community programming to influence national government on disaster risk management (DRM) issues. Plan has focused its advocacy efforts on identifying opportunities to influence the national government in ways that both supports community resilience for target populations in the four communities in which it is working — El Majahual, San Diego, Colima, and Santa Barbara — and national DRM more broadly.

### Involving government in developing a strong community program

Initially, Plan involved the national government in its community programs to generate government buy-in and strengthen government awareness of disaster risk and resilience. It invited national government officials from the DGPC to join the Alliance's FRMC process, collect community flood resilience data, and share the results identifying resilience gaps and opportunities. National government officials found this process so useful that they requested to be included in future FRMC measurements and have since explored using the data to inform state systems and responses, signaling official buy-in.

The priorities identified via the FRMC included the need to improve the timeliness of disaster response, safeguard assets and protect livelihoods, and improve flood monitoring and early warnings. Plan realized that effectively addressing these priorities would require a spectrum of activities engaging both the communities and government institutions. Plan's action plans, co-designed with community representatives, include activities meant to strengthen the communal civil protection system, and strengthen preparedness and response by improving coordination between the civil protection system (at the municipal level) and these community-based groups. A key activity is

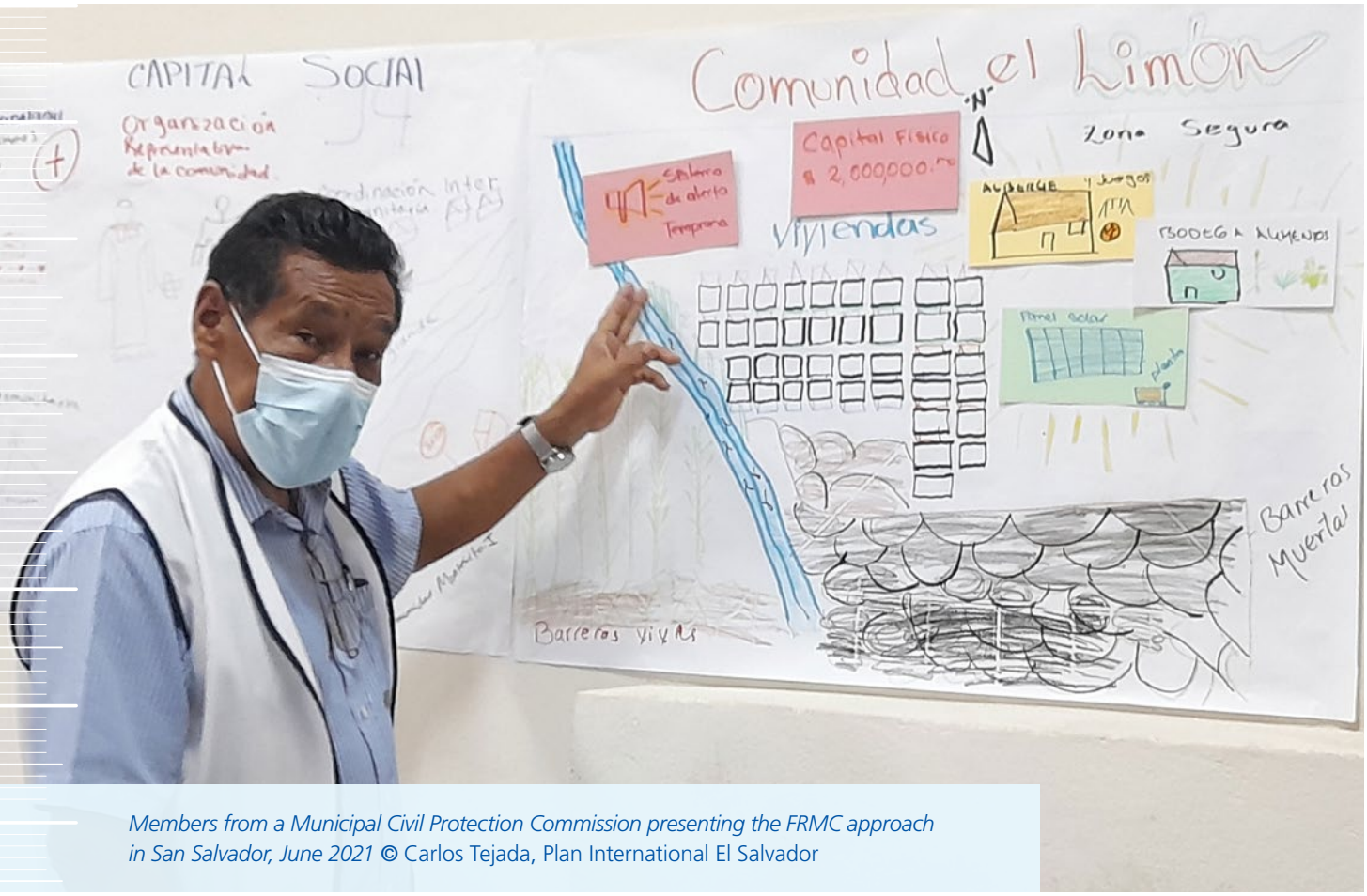
to improve the generation and provision of flood information.

Based on these action plans, Plan strengthened the Communal Civil Protection Commissions (CCPC) — community-based groups responsible for DRM and response — in all four of its program communities by providing them with training, resources, and equipment, and linking them to the wider civil protection system. Plan also built and strengthened community-based early warning systems — operated and managed by the CCPCs — and developed evacuation routes. The CCPCs supported the national government with managing the COVID-19 pandemic in their communities, which helped to strengthen community-government relationships.

## Strengthening relationships with government for advocacy

To support the government to generate and disseminate forecasts and early warnings and coordinate response, Plan built strong relationships with and between the DGPC as the head of the national civil protection system, and the MARN Observatory of Natural Hazards and Resources (DOA), which has a mandate to develop scientific technical reports and transfer information to the DGPC. Plan provided these agencies with knowledge pertinent to community information needs, and packaged this knowledge in creative and user-friendly multimedia formats to incentivize uptake and understanding.

Maintaining relationships with government staff can be a challenge because of staff turnover following elections. Plan tried to address this by developing a working agreement with the DGPC and MARN, formalizing the collaboration with these agencies over time. Plan was able to develop this agreement due to consistent relationship building, the credibility and buy-in it had established by involving the DGPC in the FRMC process, joint planning and program




*Members from a Municipal Civil Protection Commission presenting the FRMC approach in San Salvador, June 2021* © Carlos Tejada, Plan International El Salvador


*Technicians from the General Directorate of Civil Protection discussing the impact-based forecasting approach during a joint workshop in San Salvador, June 2022* © Carlos Tejada, Plan International El Salvador

implementation, and the proven success of the work Plan had shared with the respective government staff via community visits.

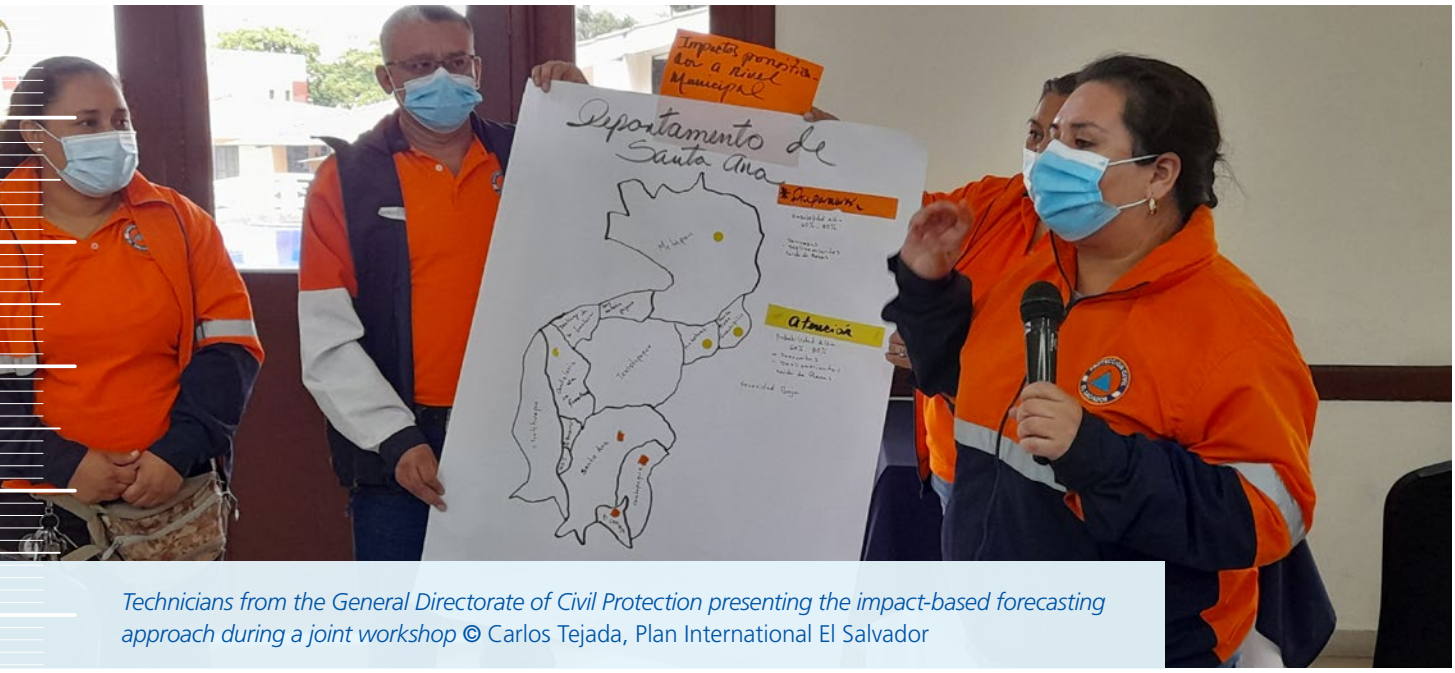
## Using knowledge to influence change

In 2020, MARN, via the DOA, released a new impact-based forecasting model. Previously, DOA had collected and used data to describe the hazard. DOA is now moving toward understanding and communicating the impacts of potential hazards. The model has enabled DOA to conduct a detailed analysis of the characteristics of a hazard (e.g., location, intensity, frequency, and probability) and potential exposure. The resulting information has been used to create and disseminate more targeted forecasts that the civil protection system and communities can act on.

Plan saw this model as an opportunity for improving inter-institutional communication to enable better forecast dissemination and associated preparedness and response. Lacking a direct entry point into what is otherwise a very technical process, Plan created an opportunity to engage by working with MARN to co-produce an animated video for intended users explaining the model and how it can be used for planning preparedness and response.

At the same time, Plan conducted an FRMC Post-Event Study in the aftermath of Tropical Storm "Amanda-Cristobal", which provided strong evidence that forecast information was not reaching people and that people lacked the knowledge to act on forecasts. To Plan, this proved that mechanisms needed to be strengthened at the national level to disseminate and communicate forecasts effectively. To reinforce its initiative for inter-institutional communication during emergencies, Plan released a series of knowledge products based on the Post-Event Study results, including infographics and an animated video, targeted at both the communities it was working in and government agencies involved in DRM.

Upon seeing the evidence presented by Plan, both DOA and DGPC understood that they needed to address gaps in forecast dissemination and uptake to ensure that both communities and government institutions are able to use the information to better prepare for and respond to hazards.




*Technicians from the General Directorate of Civil Protection presenting the impact-based forecasting approach during a joint workshop* © Carlos Tejada, Plan International El Salvador

Subsequently, Plan worked toward improving inter-institutional communication and coordination through the creation of a joint protocol that enables DGPC and MARN to maintain close communication when hazards are forecasted. Plan conducted workshops and meetings with officials and technical experts from both institutions to improve communication processes and successfully negotiate a working agreement between MARN and the DGPC to expand dialogue and define lines of joint work for improving forecast communication and supporting community-based resilience efforts. In particular, MARN and DGPC will explore the potential of overlaying the information in the model with an analysis, not just of community exposure, but of physical, social, health, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities and coping capacities that exist in communities. Such information would enable the DGPC to issue warnings, advisories, and alerts according to the expected impact of the hazard, guiding communities and institutions of the national civil protection system in determining the most effective and efficient way to prepare and respond.

In support of this effort, Plan conducted a research study on the impacts of climate change, differentiated by age and gender, and presented the results to representatives from the DGPC, MARN, DOA, and select local governments. The study was covered by the local media on TV and online newspapers. Plan will use these results to continue to influence MARN and DGPC.

- Influenced change in national DRM by leveraging an emergent policy opportunity — development of the impact-based forecasting model — that was aligned with its program

*"Why not create an inter-institutional strategy, it is the first work that is being done between both institutions to formalize a document that allows us to have articulated, standardised actions between both institutions."*

– Jaquelin Rivera, impact-based forecasting specialist, Hazards and Natural Resources Observatory Directorate, Ministry of Environment

## Why Alliance advocacy was successful

### ESTABLISHED RELEVANCE

goals of improving access to and use of forecasting information.

- Influenced more grounded national DRM by sharing evidence of community needs that should be considered in the development of new risk management approaches, including more community-centered forecasting and early warning.
- Built community-government relationships by establishing community-based groups that work with the government on DRM.
- Strengthened relationships with national government (i.e., MARN) by supporting them to communicate their government services to communities (via video).
- Improved forecasting communication processes by simultaneously engaging with and convening (via workshops and meetings) key government stakeholders to develop a working agreement.
- Built government knowledge of community resilience needs and issues by engaging them in community resilience data gathering and analysis (via the FRMC process), sharing post-disaster learning on DRM gaps, and by improving community-government collaboration in DRM.
- Continuing to influence key government stakeholders (MARN and DGPC) by conducting research to fill knowledge gaps and sharing results directly and via local media.

### BUILT RELATIONSHIPS

### PROVIDED EVIDENCE-BASED KNOWLEDGE

### Additional resources

- What is an impact-based forecast? (source in Spanish)

# CASE STUDY

## PLAN INTERNATIONAL NICARAGUA

# Creating an opportunity for influencing government resilience practice

This case study shows how early warning systems (EWS) can be leveraged as an entry point for influencing government adoption of resilience practice.

**Authors**: Plan International Nicaragua – Felix Rugama (felix.rugama@plan-international.org), Martha Emilia Alvarez (martha.alvarez@plan-international.org); ISET-International – Kanmani Venkateswaran, Karen MacClune, Rachel Norton, Atalie Pestalozzi; Plan International – Stu Solomon, Manuel von der Mühlen

### Key Alliance terminology

**Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance (Alliance):**

The Alliance is a multi-sector collaboration between the humanitarian sector, academia, and the private sector focusing on shifting from the traditional emphasis on post-event recovery to pre-event resilience. We are nine years into an eleven-year program that has been delivered in two Phases (Phase I from 2013-2018; Phase II from 2018-2024).

**Flood Resilience Measurement for Communities (FRMC):**

Created by the Alliance in 2013, the FRMC is a framework and associated web-based data tool/app which conceptualizes flood resilience as a function of social, human, natural, physical, and financial capitals. The FRMC is implemented at the beginning of Alliance work to assess resilience strengths and gaps. This information is used to shape community programs and advocacy.

## The win

By leveraging the success of its community-based EWS approach in Nicaragua, Plan International Nicaragua (Plan) influenced:

- National government institutions — namely the Nicaraguan Institute of Territorial Studies (INETER) and the Department of Civil Defense — to take up its EWS approach. INETER has proposed implementing the intervention in four additional communities in the Municipality of El Viejo.
- The scaling of EWS, including modern weather stations, on the Northern Caribbean Coast through a USD 65,000 European Commission Humanitarian and Aid Office project. Plan and INETER are jointly implementing this project.

These projects will enable communities to access timely flood forecasts and improve their ability to reduce potential loss and damage.

*Training session for members of the Local Committee for Disaster Prevention and Control (COLOPRED) in Kilaca, Chinandega, Nicaragua, May 2022* © Manuel Ulloa, Civil Defense

## How the win was achieved

### Generating buy-in to a community program

At the start of the Alliance program, the opportunity to influence government resilience practice was not immediately apparent. Plan's engagement with the government in their community program created new pathways for influencing uptake of resilience practice. Plan has operated in Nicaragua for over 20 years and over that time has established credibility and trust through long-term engagement with influential stakeholders. Though Plan's reputation is primarily based on its expertise working on gender and child protection issues, Plan's longstanding presence in the country, backed by the Alliance's global reputation on floods, facilitated its entry into discussions with INETER and Civil Defense on flood resilience.

Once Plan had identified the government institutions involved in disaster risk management at national and local levels, Plan introduced its work and shared the Alliance's resilience framework and programming approach. In parallel to conducting FRMC baselines, Plan worked to generate commitments from municipal actors — such as the Mayor's office, the municipal offices of the Ministry of Education, and the Civil Association of Firefighters — to jointly plan and implement activities on the basis of what was learned in baselines. Plan also established collaboration agreements with INETER, the institution in charge of generating, registering, and disseminating weather and climate information, and Civil Defense of the Nicaraguan Army, an institution in charge of emergency response. These agreements were expedited by Plan's over 15-year relationship with Civil Defense, which works closely with INETER.

Plan then shared the FRMC baseline data with municipal and national government actors to build a shared understanding of the context and community resilience strengths and gaps. Sharing this information increased government trust in Plan to provide them with the information and tools they need. INETER included community flood

*Discussion between staff from INETER, Plan and community representatives in Kilaca, Chinandega, Nicaragua, November 2020* © Felix Rugama, Plan International

resilience into its annual action plan based on the FRMC data and knowledge.

## Engaging government in joint planning

After gaining government support to the program, Plan conducted joint planning with municipal and national government actors. The FRMC data collection and socialization process made it evident that lfinancial resources are a major constraint to reducing the impact of floods. Therefore, strategies for the uptake of flood resilience practices need to be aligned with the government's existing goals and resources.

FRMC data showed a gap in community access to and use of early warnings. Improving community-based EWS turned out to be an important pathway for influencing government to take up and invest in better resilience practices as EWS save lives. In addition, setting up EWS that produce scientifically accurate and usable information requires

*Discussion between staff from INETER, Plan and community representatives in Kilaca, Chinandega, Nicaragua, November 2020* © Felix Rugama, Plan International

strengthening relationships and creating linkages from the community through national levels. Ultimately, Plan co-designed a community-based EWS model with government and community representatives to ensure that the system would generate the data needed to support decision-making at all levels and continue to do so beyond the project period.

To support Plan's community efforts and to honor the collaboration agreement it signed, INETER agreed to conduct a study on the availability of EWS and the impact of flooding on water and sanitation systems in the four communities where Plan is conducting Alliance programming. Based on the results of the study, Plan and INETER identified and designed activities to: (1) improve access to sanitation in normal and emergency situations and (2) gather real time data about weather in communities. For the latter, they needed modern weather stations in the communities.

## Building community-government linkages

Operationalizing community-based EWS was a highly collaborative and inter-linked effort. Plan purchased four modern weather stations (one for each of its four target communities). Though expensive, these stations include climate monitoring sensors that allow for continuous monitoring. The data they produce strengthens the decision-making capacities of community-based groups and local actors such as the Municipal Commission for Disaster Prevention and Response (COMUPRED). The data is also digitally fed into the National Hydrological Information System used by the Hydrometeorological Surveillance Network to monitor hazards that could be devastating, thus providing the national government with data to inform disaster preparedness and response.

Realizing that community voices are important to ensure the functionality and usability of the system and needed to be better incorporated into the work, Plan and the municipal government trained the Local Commission for Disaster Prevention and Response (COLOPRED) — a community-based group — to monitor the weather station data, communicate with the authorities, and coordinate actions related to disaster risk management

*The technical team from INETER installing the new communal weather station in Mechapa, Chinandega, Nicaragua* © Felix Rugama, Plan International

(e.g., evacuation, fire suppression, first aid). Such trainings have increased the capacity of the communities to communicate more effectively with government. For example, the coordinator of COLOPRED now coordinates directly with the local mayor, the delegate from the Ministry of Health, and the delegate from the Ministry of Education.

Plan has employed a number of tactics to further strengthen linkages between the communities

*The technical team from INETER installing the new communal weather station in Mechapa, Chinandega, Nicaragua, November 2020* © Felix Rugama, Plan International

and sub-national and national government institutions (in support of coordinated disaster risk management). To bring communities and government officials together, Plan organized quarterly meetings and exposure visits. These helped to: showcase the successes of the Alliance program and strengthen buy-in to the program, build a shared understanding of community needs and government constraints, encourage collaborative problem solving, and build working relationships between COLOPRED and the government, particularly national authorities. Plan also produced a video titled, "Enhancing community resilience in the face of floods," which highlights the benefits EWS provide to communities.

INETER's resulting buy-in to Plan's EWS approach has resulted in a strong mutual interest and collaboration to replicate the approach. INETER has committed to provide human resources to support replication of the EWS. Moving forward, Plan and INETER will discuss how to ensure continued maintenance and thus sustainability of the modern weather stations and EWS more broadly.

## Additional resources

- Building community-based multi-hazard resilience in Nicaragua.
- Flood-proof latrines: providing access to safe sanitation everyday.
- Expanding community resilience in the face of floods (short version).
- Expanding community resilience in the face of floods.

# Why Alliance advocacy was successful

## ESTABLISHED RELEVANCE

- Identified EWS as a pathway for influence as it supports community resilience and aligns with government priorities.
- Developed an integrated EWS by working with national government, municipal government and community-based groups to create a system that better meets local- to national-level forecasting and early warning information needs.

## BUILT RELIANCE

- Created pathways for influence by directly engaging government in program assessment and planning focused on community resilience needs and opportunities.
- Formalized partnerships with national institutions (e.g., INETER and Civil Defense) and increased national engagement around flood resilience by signing collaboration agreements.
- Built community-government relationships by engaging government in community-based trainings and strengthening the capacity of community-based groups to work with government on DRM.

## PROVIDED EVIDENCE-BASED KNOWLEDGE

- Strengthened government knowledge of community resilience needs and issues by engaging them in community resilience data gathering and analysis (via the FRMC) and conducting exposure visits and regular program planning meetings.
- Shared information on the benefits of an effective EWS with key stakeholders by developing multimedia knowledge products (i.e., videos).

Flood Resilience Alliance

IFRC

Cruz Roja Hondureña

ISET International

# CASE STUDY

## RED CROSS HONDURAS

# Building a coalition for resilience advocacy

This case study shows how to create and build the capacity of a sub-national advocacy alliance in a relatively short-term program.

**Authors**: Honduran Red Cross – Oscar Fernández (oscar.fernandez@cruzroja.org.hn); IFRC Americas Regional Office – Rebeca Muñoz Arosemena (rebeca.munoz@ifrc.org); ISET – Kanmani Venkateswaran, Rachel Norton, Karen MacClune, Atalie Pestalozzi; IFRC – Jonathan Ulrich

## The win

The Honduran Red Cross has been working in the Sula Valley to improve disaster risk management (DRM) in a way that is sustainable. The Honduran Red Cross:

- Established the "Flood Resilience Alliance in Northern Honduras" (the Advocacy Alliance) to advocate for long-term resilience and DRM priorities. The Advocacy Alliance is composed of key local actors — public authorities, community leaders, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), etc. — involved in DRM and decision-making.
- Empowered the members of the Advocacy Alliance with evidence-based knowledge on the legal landscape for disaster risk reduction (DRR) and trained them on advocacy skills to ensure that they can navigate and advocate to strengthen disaster laws. To further ensure sustainability of the group, the Honduran Red Cross is working toward formal recognition of the Advocacy Alliance as a convening space for risk management dialogue and coordination.
- Influenced municipal strategic guidelines for flood risk reduction to account for the full DRM cycle — preparedness, risk reduction, response, and recovery.
- Are now influencing national DRM decision-making regarding the rebuilding plan for hurricanes Eta and Iota and emergency response mechanisms through membership in the International Disaster Response Law working group.

### Key Alliance terminology

**Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance (Alliance):**
The Alliance is a multi-sector collaboration between the humanitarian sector, academia, and the private sector focusing on shifting from the traditional emphasis on post-event recovery to pre-event resilience. We are nine years into an eleven-year program that has been delivered in two Phases (Phase I from 2013-2018; Phase II from 2018-2024).

*Advocacy training for communities* © Honduran Red Cross

## How the win was achieved

### Building and empowering an advocacy alliance

In 2019, the Honduran Red Cross launched its Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance program with a focus on influencing DRR laws. Based on its extensive experience in risk management, humanitarian management, and community-based work, the Honduran Red Cross identified the need to create a space for DRM coordination, information, and advocacy training. It also had significant local- and national-level connections and credibility from its history of DRM work in Honduras.

As a result, the Honduran Red Cross created the Advocacy Alliance, consisting of key local actors in DRM in the Sula Valley: three municipalities that experience flood risk from the Chamelecón and Ulúa rivers (Choloma, Villanueva, and San Pedro Sula), a variety of municipal-level government departments and technical institutions involved in DRM, non-profit organizations, a legal organization, the 20 Municipal Emergency Committees of Valle de Sula, and the Honduran Red Cross.

In collaboration with the Advocacy Alliance, the Honduran Red Cross conducted a first-of-its-kind study on the strengths and weaknesses of the Honduran legal framework for DRR, titled "Study of the Honduran Legal Framework Related to Flood Risk Reduction in Light of the IFRC DRR Checklist". Advocacy Alliance members helped to shape the focus of the study, provided key data inputs, and held discussions to validate results and recommendations. The study provided the evidence base to develop an advocacy strategy focused on strengthening the policy- and law-making process for DRR in Honduras. Subsequently, the Honduran Red Cross conducted discussions on lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and hurricanes Eta and Iota and integrated these lessons into the recommendations of the legal study. The Honduran Red Cross has also socialized and validated the study findings through workshops with NGOs and relevant national and municipal institutions.

The Honduran Red Cross provided Advocacy Alliance members, municipal officials, and community leaders from local emergency committees with trainings on advocacy and the Sendai framework and risk management to build awareness on international DRR best practices. It also held 'legislative preparation workshops' to build knowledge on advocacy and its process, and how to navigate the policy and advocacy environment; how to develop an advocacy strategy and messages; and how to maintain momentum on target advocacy issues. The combination of increasing knowledge of policy gaps has helped to empower the Advocacy Alliance to conduct

advocacy beyond the Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance program period.

The Advocacy Alliance and its potential has generated significant excitement in the Sula Valley. Municipalities in the western part of the country, specifically those with links to the Chamelecón and Ulúa rivers, are interested in joining. Terms of reference are being defined for the Advocacy Alliance and will be adopted as operating regulations; this will help the Advocacy Alliance to achieve formal recognition as a platform for DRM and coordination, which in turn will allow it to access new advocacy opportunities.

## Accessing new advocacy opportunities through partnerships

The Advocacy Alliance helped to establish DRM partnerships through providing a convening space for national government actors, municipal authorities, and private enterprises. These partnerships have motivated actors to work together as a network and have provided them with access to decision-making processes.

At the local level, for example, the Honduran Red Cross was invited by the three municipalities — Choloma, Villanueva, and San Pedro Sula — involved in the Advocacy Alliance to develop municipal strategic guidelines for DRR that support disaster risk reduction, preparedness, mitigation, and recovery. It worked with the municipalities to prioritize structural and non-structural measures for DRR that reflect the technical and financial capacities of the municipalities, local development needs, and the National Risk Management Policy. These plans were shared with public and private entities to support improved DRM. Municipal leaders found the information on short, medium, and long-term interventions particularly useful for shaping their advocacy to the national government for additional resources and complementary legal provisions to support local change.

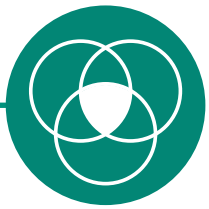
At the national level, the Honduran Red Cross has been able to leverage the recovery phase of the 2020 hurricanes Iota and Eta to influence policy change. It built credibility by ensuring that the final version of the legal study reflected on the experience of the storms and developed recommendations targeted at policy dialogues around recovery and relevant national institutions. It convened dialogues between national and municipal institutions where municipal government departments were able to share flood risk concerns, their successes and challenges in managing hurricanes Eta and Iota and the initial recovery, the risks and drawbacks of depending on response compared to taking action before disasters strike, and their ongoing capacity and technical constraints given the level of action needed to effectively manage risk. As a result of these efforts, the Honduran Red Cross was invited by the national government to work alongside municipalities, the private sector, and other civil society organizations to shape the national reconstruction plan. The draft plan reflects the priorities identified in the municipal strategic guidelines of Choloma, Villanueva, and San Pedro Sula municipalities.

## Additional resources

- Estudio del marco jurídico hondureño relativo a la reducción de riesgo a inundaciones a la luz de la lista de verificación RRD de la FICR.
- Strengthening community-level legislative advocacy in Honduras.
- Flood Resilience Alliance: Honduras Informe Nacional
- Flood Resilience Alliance: Honduras Country Briefing

# Why Alliance advocacy was successful

## ESTABLISHED RELEVANCE



- Built a shared understanding of DRR policy strengths and weaknesses by creating a space and structure (i.e., the Advocacy Alliance) for national government, local government, and civil society to convene and co-generate a baseline study.
- Based its advocacy goals and strategy on an understanding of DRM governance gaps gained by conducting baseline research and talking with key DRR actors.
- Ensured relevance of its advocacy recommendations by updating its baseline study based on lessons learned from COVID-19 and hurricanes Iota and Eta.

## BUILT RELATIONSHIPS

- Accessed relevant policy processes to improve local and national DRR policy by leveraging strategic partnerships and credibility built through the Advocacy Alliance.
- Convened a cross-sectoral coalition of regional actors involved in DRM by using the Honduran Red Cross' knowledge, connections, and overall credibility from prior work in DRM in Honduras.

## PROVIDED EVIDENCE-BASED KNOWLEDGE

- Empowered an advocacy coalition to conduct sustained advocacy by co-generating both a study on strengths and weaknesses in the DRR policy landscape and advocacy strategy, and by building capacity to conduct advocacy.
- Established the Honduran Red Cross as an expert on the DRR policy landscape by disseminating credible and timely evidence-based recommendations needed by decision-makers.

# CASE STUDY

## RED CROSS MEXICO

# ‘Emergent advocacy’ in long-term programming

This case study shows how long-term, consistent sharing of learning and experience by practitioners can result in successful advocacy outcomes.

**Authors**: The Mexican Red Cross Team[1]; ISET-International – Kanmani Venkateswaran, Rachel Norton, Karen MacClune, Atalie Pestalozzi

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### Key Alliance terminology

**Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance (Alliance):**

The Alliance is a multi-sector collaboration between the humanitarian sector, academia, and the private sector focusing on shifting from the traditional emphasis on post-event recovery to pre-event resilience. We are nine years into an eleven-year program that has been delivered in two Phases (Phase I from 2013-2018; Phase II from 2018-2024).

**Flood Resilience Measurement for Communities (FRMC):**

Created by the Alliance in 2013, the FRMC is a framework and associated web-based data tool/app which conceptualizes flood resilience as a function of social, human, natural, physical, and financial capitals. The FRMC is implemented at the beginning of Alliance work to assess resilience strengths and gaps. This information is used to shape community programs and advocacy.

## The win

After nine years of community-based work coupled with iterative sharing with local, regional, and national government actors, the Mexican Red Cross’ community brigades approach has been formally recognized by organizations and government at all levels. The following achievements represent an important shift in how local flood risk management is approached:

- In 2019, the Mexican national government awarded the Mexican Red Cross community brigades with the National Civil Protection Award.
- The brigades were included in the State of Tabasco’s State Development Plan 2019-2024. The Institute of Civil Protection of Tabasco has established community brigades in remote communities and localities, and the brigades are collaborating with the government to support communities when needed.
- In 2021, the Mexican National Strategy for Resilient Communities was launched by the National Center for Disaster Prevention

*Inter-community brigades drill in Jonuta, Tabasco, 2017* © Mexican Red Cross Archive

(CENAPRED) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

- In 2022, the Mexican national government launched a formal registration system for community committees, further legitimizing the community brigades. The official recognition implies that community brigades are part of the State Civil Protection System, facilitating the connection between communities and civil protection. The strategy includes a Local Action Plan on Risk Management and Community Resilience, which uses the FRMC to conceptualize multi-hazard resilience and draws on community brigades as a method for empowering local authorities and communities, identifying and preventing risks, and responding to emergencies and disasters in collaboration with the National Civil Protection System.
- The broader Mexican Red Cross National Society launched the National Program for Disaster Risk Reduction to develop guidelines for strengthening community disaster preparedness and resilience. The program embraces the Alliance resilience framework and community brigades approach. Given the Mexican Red Cross' role in the National Civil Protection System, the Mexican Red Cross National Society's adoption of a resilience approach will add coherence to how disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience are discussed and approached by the non-government sector at large.

## How the win was achieved

The Mexican Red Cross' success is the result of 'emergent advocacy'. The Mexican Red Cross did not have an explicit advocacy strategy at the beginning of the Alliance program. However, through a long and sometimes rocky process, the Mexican Red Cross has been able to use its long-term, phased program timeframe (2013 to 2024) to develop a community brigades approach, demonstrate its success, and promote it to influential stakeholders across Mexico.

### Establishing proof of concept

In Phase I of the Alliance program, the Mexican Red Cross began its community work with a

focus on building social cohesion and increasing community participation, with the goal of ensuring that communities could both coordinate internally and collaborate with the local government to manage disaster risk. The Mexican Red Cross did this through a series of 'sensitization' campaigns to raise disaster awareness, followed by establishing community brigades and training those brigades in various aspects of disaster risk management (DRM).

Though the Mexican Red Cross brigades achieved strong results in its communities, official government recognition took many years to achieve. The Mexican Red Cross has an auxiliary role to government in disaster response, meaning that it has considerable access to and relationships with government institutions. However, the Mexican Red Cross does not typically directly advocate to the government; instead, it would share its flood resilience program experiences and activities regularly in meetings with government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Initially, however, government largely perceived the Mexican Red Cross as solely an emergency response organization and thus not a credible voice on resilience.

Eventually, the Mexican Red Cross found an individual at the National Water Commission who began to collaborate on and champion the Alliance program. This 'champion' then moved to the Integrated Risk Management Division of the Institute of Civil Protection of Tabasco, creating a strong connection within Civil Protection.

## Achieving governmental recognition across scales

As the Alliance Phase I work drew to a close in 2017, the Mexican Red Cross shifted its focus toward ensuring the sustainability of the


*Meeting with community brigade members in Santa Rita for the organization of Post-Flood activities.*
© Gabriel Reyes, Head of Operations, Mexican Red Cross

*Meeting with community brigade members in Jonuta to coordinate flood preparedness activities* © Paulo Cerino, Community Technician, Mexican Red Cross

community brigades. It developed a sustainability plan that identified the need for the Institute of Civil Protection of Tabasco to continue collaboration with the community brigades. This led to the Mexican Red Cross signing a formal agreement of collaboration with Civil Protection. In turn, Civil Protection formally recognized the community brigades in 2018. This was groundbreaking: this kind of recognition is new in Mexico, and especially by a governmental institution.

Reflecting on the success of the community brigades and the strong state-level momentum it generated, the Mexican Red Cross focused Phase II of its Alliance program on getting the community brigades officially recognized at the national level. This work was aided by two key opportunities. First, in 2019, in response to strong evidence of the brigades' impacts, all 20 of the community brigades established in Phase I of the Alliance won the National Civil Protection Award. This dramatically increased the Mexican Red Cross' profile and credibility in the resilience arena. Second, knowledge from the Mexican Red Cross field teams was used to support development of the State Development Plan 2019-2024. This was the first time work with community groups was included in a government plan. The Mexican Red Cross trained the new brigades on DRR and related skills.

With strengthened credibility at the state and national level, and with support from Zurich Mexico, the Mexican Red Cross expanded its engagement with government and NGO stakeholders. Zurich Mexico promoted the Mexican Red Cross' flood resilience program work at the local level among the state and national governments while the Mexican Red Cross leveraged its role within the National Civil Protection System to strengthen its links at the national level. The Mexican Red Cross began presenting its activities and achievement to other institutions like CENAPRED. In turn, government and NGOs started to invite the Mexican Red Cross


*Official recognition by the Institute of Civil Protection of Tabasco to the community brigades of Jonuta, Tabasco, 2018* © Mexican Red Cross Archive

to high-level meetings on key resilience issues to talk about the brigades, how the brigades help communities, and how the Mexican Red Cross established and trained them. These efforts helped to shape both the National Strategy for Resilient Communities in 2021 and the national registration system for community committees in 2022.

## Achieving a systemic shift in the Mexican Red Cross' work

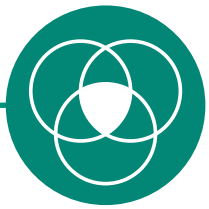
Though the Alliance program is only a small program for the Mexican Red Cross, it is fundamentally changing both the work the organization is now undertaking and how it is perceived nationally. Throughout its history, the Mexican Red Cross has promoted humanitarian aid in emergencies and disasters. Beginning with the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City, the institution focused on organizing disaster response planning and training staff and volunteers in risk reduction. However, in the past several years, projects have focused on community resilience and, in particular for the Alliance program, have provided a base of experience and lessons learned in delivering effective DRR. As a result, in 2022, the Mexican Red Cross made resilience a core part of its National Disaster Risk Reduction Program.

## Additional resources

- Inundaciones de 2020 en Tabasco: Aprendizajes para el fortalecimiento del capital social.
- Community brigades were put to the test during floods in Tabasco, Mexico.

# Why Alliance advocacy was successful

## ESTABLISHED RELEVANCE



- Achieved governmental recognition of resilience good practices and frameworks and built credibility in the DRR and resilience arena by highlighting the positive resilience outcomes of those practices and their ability to effectively fill DRM gaps.

## BUILT RELATIONSHIPS

- Co-developed a successful community-owned good practice by collaborating with communities to address community resilience gaps.
- Strengthened community-government linkages via community brigades and provided trainings and technical and logistical support to facilitate ongoing collaboration.
- Built government relationships and credibility by leveraging a champion of the Mexican Red Cross' work in government.
- Built relationships with higher and higher levels of government over time through the increasing profile of the Mexican Red Cross' work and by establishing a strategic partnership with the influential and well-connected Zurich Mexico.

## PROVIDED EVIDENCE-BASED KNOWLEDGE

- Developed a proof of concept of a good practice and then demonstrated its success to diverse DRM actors by taking advantage of 'pause points' afforded by the long-term phased programming structure of the Alliance.
- Demonstrated success of good practices through bi-lateral engagement, presentations and trainings, and exposure visits.

Flood Resilience Alliance

For more information, visit floodresilience.net or follow @floodalliance on social media.

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