

Building City Coalitions for Community Resilience

What can your National Society do and what are the benefits?

Focusing on urban resilience

More than half of the world's population lives in cities. And this number is increasing.

The pressures upon our city systems and communities are compounding through urbanization and increasing climate instability. Sea level rise is an additional concern for cities that are located on the coast.

The Red Cross Red Crescent movement can be a catalyst

to support city populations to prepare, mitigate and adapt to the risks and threats they face. By synchronizing and aligning Red Cross Red Crescent work with stakeholders such as government agencies, NGOs, community organizations, research institutes and the private sector, real impact can be achieved at the city level.

Facilitating a collaborative approach to resilience with urban stakeholders may feel daunting. However, the recent experience of Red Cross National Societies who piloted this approach in three coastal cities in Indonesia and Vanuatu demonstrate what can be achieved and how National Societies can grow their confidence, skill base and networks in the process.



What are the benefits for a Red Cross Red Crescent National Society?

Strengthening National Society capacity

The program involves National Society staff and volunteers across many parts of the organization – from planning to community level action. It can provide encouragement for city branches to grow their activities and their organizational systems.

- Vanuatu Red Cross has built a strong and skilled volunteer base to carry out community risk assessment and disaster risk reduction awareness building in Luganville.
- Red Cross SIBAT Community Based Preparedness Teams have been strengthened in Semarang.

- Red Cross Branches have increased and broadened their activities in Ternate and Luganville and have stronger relationships with communities and stakeholders.
- Staff and volunteers have increased confidence and skills for working in new areas – facilitating a collective approach, working in urban communities and focusing on preparedness.

“We learned how to assess, how to collect data, make connections. We can now involve stakeholders. It strengthened how we worked, but it also helped us prepare to work with others in disaster.” - Rusihan Ismail, PMI Head of Office North Maluku Province

Moving into new territory

Internationally, Red Cross Red Crescent and other NGOs are largely focused on addressing vulnerability in rural areas. The city-wide risk assessment process highlighted the opportunities for Vanuatu Red Cross to support urban communities.

The project helped Palang Merah Indonesia (Indonesian Red Cross) widen their expertise from disaster response to preparedness and risk reduction, especially in the urban context.

"This project helps us to come together to come to realize the stress and shocks of a city and the main systems." – Shirley Johnson - Sanma Branch Manager, Vanuatu Red Cross

Better networks and communication

Working in a coalition built strong working relationships between Red Cross Red Crescent and other stakeholders. The benefits, such as improved information sharing, have continued beyond the project.

"Volunteers and staff can now talk with the mayor and others. All the stakeholders have a WhatsApp group and can share information quickly." – Herry Fimansyatt, Palang Merah Indonesia (Indonesian Red Cross Society).



Building relationships with local authorities

Local government support was crucial to the success of the three pilot projects, and local authorities have recognized and endorsed the role of Red Cross Red Crescent as a convenor and facilitator. It has increased the ability of Red Cross Red Crescent to advocate with authorities at the city level and influence local government planning.

EXAMPLE: Vanuatu Red Cross has supported the municipal government in Luganville to create a Standard Operating Procedure for disaster response.



Bigger impact

The collaborative approach led to a greater combined impact when working on issues at both the community and city level, and less duplication between stakeholders while allowing replication and scaling up of successful interventions.

At the community level, an impact was made through:

- Training in first aid, water, sanitation and hygiene, disaster risk reduction.

- Taking action to reduce vulnerabilities – e.g. disaster preparedness planning, early warning systems, installing flood walls.

"The Government of Semarang would like to thank Palang Merah Indonesia and American Red Cross who have helped in three communities. These communities will be able to anticipate and respond to disasters by building SIBAT [Community Disaster Management Committees]". Hevearita Gunaryanti - Vice Mayor of Semarang

Raising the profile of Red Cross Red Crescent

In the pilot cities there is increased stakeholder awareness of the capabilities of Red Cross Red Crescent to work in urban resilience, and the profile of Red Cross Red Crescent has been raised through awareness campaigns and working directly with communities on program activities.

"The program helped to show urban areas what Vanuatu Red Cross is all about." – Jeff Ngwele, Project Coordinator, Vanuatu Red Cross

Tools for targeting risk

Working in an urban environment is complex. The [City-wide Assessment Toolkit](#) helped the National Societies to understand hazard and risk, and to prioritize issues and communities. They then carried out Vulnerability and Capability Assessments with the target communities to create a customized community plan.

For more information about the Coalition Building in Cities program, visit: <https://www.preparecenter.org/activities/coalition-building-coastal-cities>

