

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.

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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

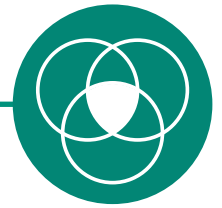
perceived nationally. Throughout its history, the Mexican Red Cross has promoted humanitarian aid in emergencies and disasters. Beginning with the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City, the institution focused on organizing disaster response planning and training staff and volunteers in risk reduction. However, 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.