July 2024

# Resilience amidst the river

**Project evaluation:**
Reinforcing rural resilience (RRR) through a strong National Society


Swiss Red Cross

# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| **AA** | Anticipatory Action |
| **ANC** | Ante-natal care |
| **BDRCS** | Bangladesh Red Crescent Society |
| **BDT** | Bangladesh Red Taka |
| **CCA** | Climate change adaptation |
| **CC** | Community clinic |
| **CCHST** | Community Clinic Health Support Trust |
| **CG** | Community group |
| **CRV** | Community resilience volunteer |
| **CSG** | Community support group |
| **DDM** | Department for Disaster Management |
| **DRR** | Disaster risk reduction |
| **EAP** | Early action protocol |
| **EVCA** | Enhanced vulnerability and capacity assessment |
| **EWS** | Early warning system |
| **FGD** | Focus group discussion |
| **HH** | Household |
| **IFRC** | International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies |
| **JMT** | Joint monitoring team |
| **KII** | Key informant interview |
| **NRM** | Natural resource management |
| **NRP** | NGO Resilience Platform |
| **NSD** | National Society development |
| **PNC** | Post-natal care |
| **PNS** | Partner National Society |
| **PPS** | Probability Proportional to Size |
| **RCY** | Red Crescent Youth |
| **R2R** | Roadmap to Community Resilience |
| **RRAP** | Risk Reduction Action Plan |
| **RRR** | Reinforcing Rural Resilience |
| **SDC** | Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation |
| **SRC** | Swiss Red Cross |
| **SSNP** | Social safety net programmes |
| **ToR** | Terms of reference |
| **UDMC** | Union Disaster Management Committee |
| **ULO** | Unit-level officer |
| **VDMC** | Village Disaster Management Committee |
| **WASH** | Water, sanitation, and hygiene |
| **WDMC** | Ward Disaster Management Committee |

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# Executive summary

**This evaluation is a powerful case study of efforts to strengthen community resilience. With holistic programming and integral aspects to enhance the functions and connections of communities, the 'Reinforcing Rural Resilience (RRR)' project contributed to substantially raised levels of resilience of its target communities.**

**On the resilience radar, the overall resilience score increased from a medium-level 0.493 in 2021 to a high-level 0.795 in 2024.* The most significant improvements were noted in terms of disaster preparedness (+160.2%) and connectedness (+108.0%). All social dimensions of resilience — (community capacity, connectedness, social capital, and inclusiveness) are now rated as very high, representing a strong foundation that communities can build on.**

**Given the dramatically evolving climate crisis and and high exposure and sensitivity to hazards and stressors typically found in rural communities, the RRR project is a powerful case of what can be achieved in a relatively short timeframe.**

Implemented between July 2021 and June 2024, the RRR project was the third iteration of community resilience programming by Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) and Swiss Red Cross (SRC). The project focussed on Gaibandha and Kurigram districts of Bangladesh and reached a population of 235,200 across on 88 communities.

The evaluation was based on a mixed-method approach that included a resilience radar survey, eight resilience star exercises in selected communities, a staff reflection workshop, and numerous key informant interviews. An additional part of the study covered the baseline for the new project (see Jamuna baseline report).

## Relevance

The RRR project delivered well-targeted and needs-based interventions. It retained several aspects from preceding iterations and added new features to address issues that had been identified in the 2021 baseline (such as high levels of food insecurity). The broad RRR approach was contextualised through community-based planning, and the team was responsive by addressing locally identified and specific needs (such as the repair of roads). Process ownership was strong and inclusive. The requirement of local contributions (typically 10% of costs for structural measures were required of beneficiaries and 20% of local governments) acted as a relevance check and was a smart tool to instil cooperation between communities and governments.

Project-supported measures were highly relevant in addressing gaps and reducing exposure as well as sensitivity to hazards. The project aligned its delivery with local governments and other actors, notably through 'common investment plans' and joint monitoring teams.

## Effectiveness

The level of resilience of target communities was dramatically raised, and the improvement was chiefly attributed to the RRR project. On the resilience radar, the average score increased by 61.3% — a gain almost twice as high as that achieved by the previous project. The strong resilience scores were mirrored in all eight resilience stars that were conducted on the basis of focus group discussions. Importantly, positive changes were overwhelmingly attributed to the RRR project.

Five aspects shall be highlighted. *First*, **disaster preparedness** is greatly improved. Early warning coverage is now almost universal (99.5%, up from 36.2%). The formation of elevated homesteads with 8-9 households each (equipped with latrines, tube wells, vegetable gardens and space for livestock) is seen as a particularly effective measure to reduce flood-related damages and losses.

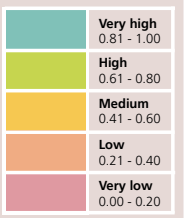
*Second*, in terms of **health**, the upgrading or construction of community clinics that was underpinned by community groups supporting their operation and outreach did greatly improve access to health services.

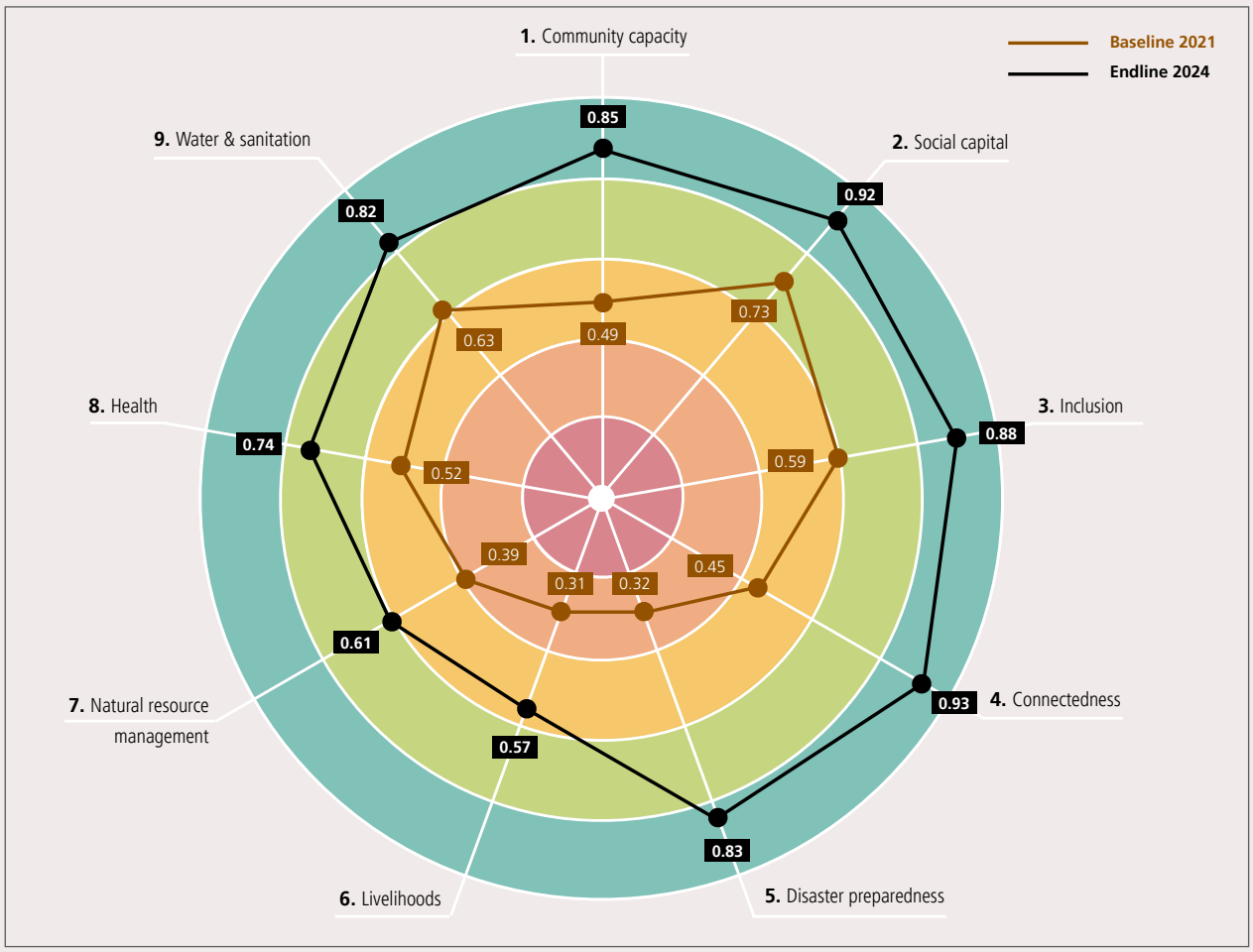
*Third*, regarding **water & sanitation**, the project supported virtually universal coverage with sanitary latrines (98.5%, up from 23.8% in 2021). Handwashing practices improved drastically, with the index now reaching 0.82 (up from 0.42).

*Fourth*, the project investment in **livelihood** as well as **food & nutrition** was comparatively modest, it nevertheless yielded gains in several aspects, notably in terms of food security. The utilisation of social safety nets, amongst those eligible, increased from just 6.9% in 2021 to 55.6% in 2024.

*Fifth*, the project deployed a sound mix of **enabling actions at scale** (running more than 20,000 awareness sessions on DRR, health, or WASH) and **targeted tangibles** (construction of latrines, tube wells, clinics, raised homesteads). While this helped to elevate conditions across the several resilience dimensions, the project also laid the foundations for further follow-up.

*** Resilience scores**
In this report, we refer to scores that range from a minimum of 0.00 to a maximum of 1.00 (see levels to the right). These scores are based on the resilience radar survey and have been calculated for each resilience dimension as well as the average. See further details in chapter 2.






The greatly improved connections between communities and local governments as well as the advances in terms of communities' internal capacities are a strong base to advance resilience further and to address further needs (for instance, through replication of the raised homestead model).

Out of the 22 logframe indicators assessed by this evaluation, the project reached or exceeded 16 target values.

## Efficiency

The evaluation found the RRR project to be highly efficient, due to four factors. *First*, it benefitted from economies of scale (proportionally small overhead costs to support a large population of 235,200 in a contiguous target area).

*Second*, it had an effective and efficient team structure. The integration of 121 trained volunteers at community level enabled deep and on-going engagement.

*Third*, the team comprised members who had gained and retained lessons from the previous DRM project. Staff turnover was minimal.

*Fourth*, the consistent requirement for local co-funding increased the leverage of project funds (typically, around 30% of the costs for structural measures were contributed by local sources).

## Sustainability

The project outcomes are seen as mostly sustainable, thanks to a strong level of process ownership, needs-based interventions, and a strong focus on capacity development and connectedness. Almost all survey respondents (99.0%) said that benefits would continue to prevail for at least the next five years.

## Lessons

The approach applied by the RRR project is seen as an effective way to reinforce resilience, and should be retained and replicated: holistic, community-based programming that is centred on connectedness is seen as an effective way to strengthen community resilience.

The combination of branch development and community-centred efforts is sensible — after all, branches have a lot of potential leverage in networking with governments, and advocating for communities. However, the dual objectives of (centred on branches and communities) must be managed carefully to ensure that both objectives are attained.

The Jamuna baseline report that was prepared as part of the overall study contains 21 specific recommendations for future programming that are grouped in five categories: replicate what works, support adaptation to climate change, tweak implementation modalities, localise core capacities, and monitor to manage (see the Jamuna baseline report: pp. 19-21).

# Introduction

Afsana Moni drops a pumpkin. As it lands on a tyre, the tyre is brought down but quickly bounces back. Laughter and bewilderment ensues amongst the villagers in Pashim Lakhir Para, a community in north-western Bangladesh.

The 'pumpkin drop' shows how resilience works. Eleven villagers hold elastic ropes, each representing a dimension of resilience. The tyre represents the community, the pumpkin a hazard. If all ropes are held tightly, the tyre bounces back (it doesn't if some or all ropes are loose).

For this study of resilience, we played this game at the start of resilience star exercises. It shows how the two perspectives of resilience are related: the outcome perspective (the vertical bounce-back) depends on the functional perspective (the tightness of the horizontal ropes). In essence, measuring resilience is checking how tight the ropes are.

In 2017, Afsana Moni was amongst the first trained in resilience measurement through resilience star and resilience radar — the two key tools utilised for this study.[1] Seven years later, she is Gaibandha's leader of Red Crescent Youth, and excels at facilitating the resilience star.

The engagement of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) and Swiss Red Cross (SRC) in the Jamuna basin[2] started in 2013. In three consecutive projects, the two partners sought to raise resilience of remote communities. A fourth project is in the making (see Jamuna baseline report).

The third iteration — the 'Reinforcing Rural Resilience (RRR)' project — is the focus of this study. To what extent did it help tighten the ropes, and what can be learnt from the project's experience?

The second iteration, implemented between 2017 and 2021, had set a high benchmark. The 2021 evaluation illustrated that communities had been left more resilient and better connected.

Could the RRR project repeat this feat of lifting the communities 'a level up'? Its baseline had shown very high levels of vulnerability across target communities in Gaibandha and Kurigram districts. Notably, people were recovering from the devastation caused by four consecutive floods in mid-2020.

Most of the 88 communities supported by the RRR project are on *chars* — small islands within the river that emerged from sediment accretion. They are remote and hard to reach — in the words of the BDRCS Secretary-General, who visited the project area in 2023, "one can't imagine how remote and vulnerable these villages are from being in Dhaka."

Floods, erosion[3], and other hazards are great risks for char communities, especially as government services and support tend to be severely limited. The accelerating onset of the climate crisis already adds stressors and makes hazards more frequent and severe. Reinforcing resilience is an urgent task.

This report is structured in three sections, covering the background, findings, and implications of the research.

**Section A** contains a brief overview of the RRR project *(chapter 1)* and presents the objectives and approach of the evaluation *(chapter 2)*.

**Section B** presents the findings along the lines of the evaluation criteria. It first looks at the extent to which the project and its components were relevant *(ch. 3)*. In chapter 4, we turn to effectiveness: what are the logframe indicator values, and — more broadly — how has the level of resilience changed?

Chapter 5 analyses the project in terms of efficiency: in how far were management set-up and coordination efficient? The section ends with a focus on sustainability *(ch. 6)*: to what extent are outcomes likely to be sustained over the long term?

**Section C** offers reflections. What are the lessons that can be learned from the RRR project experience *(ch.7)*? Which aspects should be replicated, which ones amended? Additional strategic considerations are the focus of *chapter 8*. The section ends with RRR-specific recommendations for follow-up *(ch. 9)* and ends with concluding remarks *(ch. 10)*.

The **appendix** contains all key tools (such as questionnaires and facilitation sheets), as well as raw data and data analysis.

The sister report — the baseline study for the new Jamuna project (see here) offers additional insights, especially in terms of a stronger focus on climate change adaptation.

1. The resilience radar is based on a survey, while the resilience star is based on focus group discussions. See chapter 2 for detailed descriptions.

2. The Jamuna river is part of the Brahmaputra system and refers to the 280 kilometre passage between the points where it joins the Teesta in the north and the Ganges in the south.

3. While the erosion of riverbanks is a largely natural phenomenon that is an innate feature of the dynamic Brahmaputra river system, it poses major challenges for local communities and is thus seen as a hazard. Residents of chars typically move homes several times in their lives, as chars erode and new ones emerge as a result of accretion.



SECTION A | **BACKGROUND**

**Resilience star**: Facilitator Afsana Moni counts down before she drops a pumpkin at the start of the resilience star exercise inPaschim Lakhiar Para (Haripur union).

Photo: P. Bolte

## 1. Project overview

Entitled "Reinforcing Rural Resilience (RRR) through a strong National Society", the project was implemented from mid-2021 to mid-2024. Its outline featured four outcomes, with the first two focussing on communities and the latter two on branch development *(see fig. 1 overleaf)*.

The RRR project built on experience from two preceding projects in the Jamuna basin:

- **2013-2016**: The initial disaster risk management (DRM) project covered 24 communities in **Gaibandha district** — specifically, the upazillas[4] of Gaibandha Sadar (Karmajani and Mollar Char unions) and Shaghata (Haldia union).
- **2017-2021**: The second iteration continued in **Gaibandha district** but shifted to Fulchari upazilla, where it covered 77 villages across four unions.

The RRR project targeted the two districts of **Gaibandha** (5 unions in Sundarganj upazilla) and **Kurigram** (3 unions in Char Rajibpur upazilla). The contiguous target area is located at the confluence of the Teesta and Jamuna rivers, and covers both the western bank (Gaibandha) and the eastern bank (Kurigram) of the Jamuna *(see map overleaf)*.

The project reached a population of 235,229 across 48,280 households in 88 communities, and was thus the largest iteration in the BDRCS-SRC series, as well as the largest community-centred project of BDRCS.

As will be illustrated in this report, the RRR project also applied lessons from the preceding projects. In particular, it retained the holistic approach towards community resilience (as opposed to single-issue interventions) and connected communities with local governments and their agencies.

To enable broad coverage, the project had a team of technical and management staff in Gaibandha city, as well as one field officer for each of the eight unions.

Furthermore, community resilience volunteers (CRV) were trained in all communities to support implementation. Management and support was provided from BDRCS headquarters (project manager, M&E officer) and Swiss Red Cross.

In terms of the overall outline, the RRR project combined **enablers** with **tangibles**.

Under **outcome 1**, which focussed on disaster risk management, livelihoods and food security, activities included:

4. An upazilla is equivalent to a sub-district.

Fig. 1 | **Project overview**

**Impact** Rural communities are more resilient.

**Outcome 1** Rural communities have reduced disaster risk and increased livelihoods and food security.

- **Output 1.1** DRM capacities and instruments are developed and risk mitigation supported.
- **Output 1.2** Sub-national DMCs are enabled to fulfil their mandates.
- **Output 1.3** Communities are linked to improved livelihood systems, SSNP and sustainable NRM.

**Outcome 2** Rural communities have improved access to enhanced quality basic health care and WASH services and demonstrate changed health and hygiene behaviour.

- **Output 2.1** Target communities have improved access to quality health services and demonstrate improved health behaviour
- **Output 2.2** Rural communities have universal access to safe and sustainable WASH facilities and demonstrate improved hygiene behaviour.

**Outcome 3** Financial self-sufficiency of BDRCS and selected branches has improved

- **Output 3.1** BDRCS resource mobilisation strategy is reviewed and finalised.
- **Output 3.2** BDRCS including selected branches establish diversified income sources through strong domestic and international partnerships.

**Outcome 4** Selected branches have improved organisational and service delivery capacity.

- **Output 4.1** Branches are governed and operated by standard manuals and guidelines.
- **Output 4.2** Branches improve their volunteer management and service delivery capacities following their branch development plan.

Enablers:

- Formation and training of Village Disaster Management Committees (VDMC);[5]
- Formulation of Risk Reduction Action Plans (RRAP);
- Connecting communities with local governments (planning and promotion of social safety net programmes (SSNP), promoting ward shavas and open budget sessions;[6]
- More than 5,500 community awareness sessions on disaster risk reduction (DRR); and
- Multiple types of training and support on livelihoods, food security, and natural resource management (NRM).

Tangibles

- Elevated grounds (raised plinths) for clustered homesteads encompassing 453 households, as well as 8 schools;
- Raising and repairing roads;
- Establishing early warning systems (EWS);
- Constructing vegetable collection and storage centres; and
- Support to nutrition houses, use of eco-friendly cook stoves, and fruit tree planting.

Under **outcome 2**, which focussed on water & sanitation and health, activities included:

Enablers:

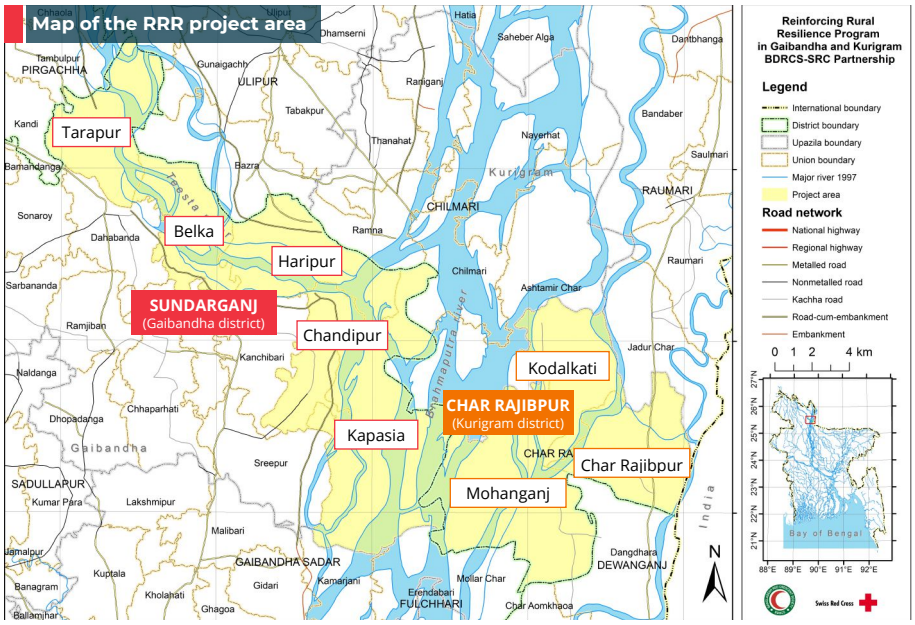
- Training health service providers and supporting groups;[7]
- More than 2,100 health education sessions;
- Training of school teachers in WASH that enabled 13,300 WASH sessions for school students; and
- the formation and training of water safety committees.

Tangibles

- The construction or upgrade of 33 community clinics (CC);
- Construction or upgrades of 10,900 sanitary latrines and construction of 22 community WASH blocks;
- The construction or upgrade of 58 tube wells; and
- The delivery of assistive devices for persons with disabilities.

In addition, the project entailed the support to BDRCS branches under **outcomes 3 and 4**. The new office building of BDRCS Gaibandha branch, for instance, is a result of the project.

For most tangible outputs, the RRR project required co-funding from communities and local governments (typically around 30%). This aspect will be discussed in detail in chapter 5 on efficiency.




5. These VDMCs were reformed to Ward Disaster Management Committees (WDMC), bringing them in line with the stipulations of Standing Order on Disasters (2019).

6. Ward shavas and open budget sessions are legally ordained processes at local level that enable grassroots inputs and accountability.

7. Applying the national model of community clinics, as supported by the Community Clinic Health Support Trust (CCHST), each community clinic was accompanied by one community group (CG) in charge of management and maintenance, as well as three community support groups (CSG) that are in charge of health education.

# 2. Study approach

This study was commissioned to evaluate the RRR project in terms of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency (coordination, project management, human resources).[8]

This evaluation was one of two components of an overarching consultancy (the other component was the baseline for the new Jamuna project). Both components were carried out in May and June 2024.

The evaluation objectives were to review the performance of the RRR project, and to elicit lessons that can be learned for future programming. The terms of reference (ToR) for the overall study provided detailed questions and guidance (see appendix E).

Note that the approach and findings related to the baseline are provided in the sister report (see Jamuna baseline report), and that the baseline covers different target areas (new target areas within Gaibandha and Kurigram districts, as well as in Bogura and Sirajganj).

## 2.1 Research tools

The overall evaluation design was based on a mixed-method approach. It featured the resilience radar on the quantitative side of the toolkit, and resilience star, staff reflection workshop, key informant interviews, and document review on the qualitative side *(see figure 2)*.

### A. Resilience radar

This tool is based on a household survey and was used to measure community resilience. It consists of a standard questionnaire that covers multiple dimensions of resilience and converts survey responses to index scores.

Ultimately, this reduces complexity and culminates in the generation of a resilience pattern with just nine index scores. This pattern can then be compared between two datasets and visualised in the resilience radar chart *(see page 11)*.

**Re-calculating baseline data:** The resilience radar was used during the RRR baseline study in 2021 — however, in two separate data sets. While this consultant had overseen the survey in Gaibandha, another consultant replicated the approach in Kurigram.

Unfortunately, the two datasets had never been collated towards a valid baseline for the whole RRR target area. Therefore, a first step for this study was to prepare the actual baseline dataset. Because the sample size in Kurigram was greater than in Sundarganj, the weighted average was used.

**Sampling:** To enable a valid longitudinal comparison between base- and endline, a robust sampling framework was devised to reflect a high level of precision (confidence level of 95%, with a 5.0% margin of error).

Noting the very different target population sizes of Gaibandha (110,300) and Kurigram (44,500) and considering that both districts should be adequately reflected in the sample, one strata was prepared for each district.[9]

Using the Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) technique and a pre-defined number of clusters (a total of eight village visits), the villages shown in *fig. 3* overleaf were selected (both for the resilience radar and the resilience star).[10] The planned sample size of 396 was slightly exceeded (actual size: 410).

**Questionnaire review:** The original baseline questionnaire from 2021 was used as a basis for the endline. To ensure comparability, the

8. In addition to these criteria as stipulated in the terms of reference, the project was also evaluated in terms of sustainability (see chapter 6).

9. Sampling was done twice. The original basis included 152 villages from the 2021 list. The project team then provided a list of 79 villages, which represented the main focus of RRR programming. These 79 villages were used as a sampling frame.

10. The sampled communities are in seven of the eight RRR project unions.

Fig. 2 | **Evaluation research tools**

Primarily geared to assess **change & effectiveness** ⟷ Primarily geared to identify **lessons & insights**

**Resilience radar**
- Survey-based tool, covers 9 dimensions of resilience.
- Longitudinal comparison with 2021 baseline
- Sample size of 410, reflects confidence level of 95% and margin of error of 5.0%

**Resilience star**
- Tool based on focus group discussions, covering 11 dimensions of resilience
- Applied in 8 communities (4 in Sundarganj, 4 in Char Rajibpur)
- Allowed for exploration of trends and issues

**Staff reflection workshop**
- Conducted at start of the review to engage RRR project team in the review
- Elicited reflections on all review aspects (success factors, challenges, lessons)

**Key informant interviews**
- Selected BDRCS and SRC staff and volunteers
- IFRC and Partner National Society (PNS) representatives
- Government representatives at various levels

**Document review**
- Study of progress reports and other key programme documents, work papers, strategic plans, reports from PNS

Fig. 3 | **How relevance is relevant**

| District | Gaibandha | Kurigram |
|---|---|---|
| **Project upazillas** | A. Sundarganj | B. Char Rajibpur |
| **Project unions** (# of supported villages) | A.1 Kapasia (21)<br>A.2 Belka (6)<br>A.3 Haripur (11)<br>A.4 Tarapur (4)<br>A.5 Chandipur (13) | B.1 Mohanganj (7)<br>B.2 Kodalkati (7)<br>B.3 Rajibpur Sadar (10) |
| **Villages and population** | 55 villages<br>142,214 (29,189 households) | 24 villages<br>93,015 (19,051 households) |
| **Sampled villages** | A.1.17 Kajiar Char (Kapasia)<br>A.2.8 Purba Belka (Belka)<br>A.3.9 Paschim Lakhiar Para (Haripur)<br>A.5.4 Madarer Vita (Chandipur) | B.1.4 Kritaniar Tari (Mohanganj)<br>B.2.1 Uttar Kodalkati (Kodalkati)<br>B.2.9 Sajaj Natun (Kodalkati)<br>B.3.29 Kalapani (Rajibpur Sadar) |
| **Sample size** | 202 actual<br>(196 planned, 49 per community) | 208 actual<br>(196 planned, 49 per community) |

formulas to calculate scores for sub-indices and resilience dimensions were maintained. However, several questions were added to the original questionnaire (these were not counted towards scores). Three types of questions were added:

- questions to assess logframe indicators: since the RRR logframe was developed after 2021 baseline, questions for several indicators had to be added.
- questions to assess engagement: these were added to gauge the community engagement in the project, both in terms of breadth and depth (e.g., what share was actually trained or received support from the project?).
- questions on attribution: since the mere comparison just shows change but not necessarily change due to the project, attribution questions were added.

For more details on the resilience radar, see the questionnaire/data analysis sheet in appendix B.1 (this includes the ascriptor values and formulas behind the scores), the raw data (appendix B.2) and the Kobo version of the questionnaire (appendix B.3).

## B. Resilience star

This qualitative sister tool to the quantitative radar was applied in all eight sampled communities — thus providing both village-specific measurements. It is based on a focus group discussion with participants, who discuss capacities and vulnerabilities for each dimension, and then agree on an overall score for each dimension.

As during the 2021 baseline, the updated version (from 2019) of the resilience star was used, which features eleven resilience dimensions that are different to the original nine dimensions used in the radar *(see fig. 4)*.[11]

Due to the different designs of star and radar, it is prudent to point out that the results are not directly comparable.

In the 2024 application of the star, the system for scoring was updated and improved. Whereas in 2021, participants had to merely gauge the score on the basis of the preceding discussion, in 2024 standard indicators were used, thereby allowing for more consistent scoring.

The resilience star discussions were facilitated by trained staff and volunteers (assistants helped with documentation and writing up of cards), and included at least 8 women and 8 men (often, many more).

For more details on the resilience star, see appendix C, which includes the summary results, individual stars for all eight villages, guidance for facilitators, and the documentation sheet.

## C. Staff reflection workshop

This workshop aimed a) to harness the experience of the programme team for the review process, and b) to identify influencing factors and lessons learnt.

11. The original resilience radar was created in 2017 by Banyaneer, featuring 10 dimensions. This version, minus the shelter dimension, was used for the RRR base- and endlines.

In 2019, new versions of resilience radar and star were created for IFRC — both featuring the same eleven dimensions. The 2019 version of the resilience star was used both for the RRR base- and endline.

Fig. 4 | **Resilience radar and star compared**

| **Resilience radar** (Banyaneer 2017) | **Resilience star** (IFRC 2019) |
|---|---|
| 1. Community capacity | n.a.[1] |
| 2. Social capital | Social cohesion |
| 3. Inclusiveness | Inclusion |
| 4. Connectedness | Connectedness |
| 5. Disaster risk management | Risk management |
| 6. Safe shelter | Shelter |
| 7. Livelihoods | Economic opportunities |
| 8. Natural resource management | Natural resource management |
| 9. Health | Health |
| 10. Water & sanitation | Water & sanitation |
| n.a.[2] | Food & nutrition security |
| n.a.[3] | Infrastructure & services |

**Comparison of the dimensions of resilience radar** (the Banyaneer version was used both in the 2021 baseline and the 2024 endline for the endline, ensuring a valid longitudinal comparison) **and the resilience star** (IFRC version, which was used both at base- and endline).

**Notes**

[1] No direct equivalent in the resilience star

[2] Food security is included under the livelihood in the Banyaneer version of the radar

[3] No direct equivalent in the Banyaneer version of the radar.

This tool pays tribute to the fact that the project team knows the project best. Tapping into and incorporating this knowledge is therefore sensible - especially considering the review's strong focus on learning (and implications for the new Jamuna project).

The workshop was conducted at the start of the research process, and included 28 staff and volunteers that had worked on the RRR project. Over the course of a full day, four main areas were covered:

- quick reflections (what worked well, what not? why?)
- engagement (internal flows, interactions with communities and stakeholders);
- impact (dimensions of resilience, and the difference the programme made); and
- lessons (summarising lessons for future programming).

This workshop was appreciated by participants, and the reflections are featured throughout this report, notably in chapter 7. See appendix D for the structure of the workshop.

### D. Key informant interviews

Several semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants related to the RRR project. These included interviews with:

- **BDRCS** (Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General, Directors Disaster Response, Disaster and Climate Risk Management, Planning & Development; RRR project manager, secretaries of Gaibandha and Kurigram branches);
- **Swiss Red Cross and Movement partners** (German Red Cross, Danish Red Cross, Swedish Red Cross, IFRC);
- **external partners** (Department of Disaster Management (DDM), Community Clinic Health Support Trust (CCHST); and
- **local government** at upazilla and union level, as well as of the NGO Resilience Platform in Sundarganj.

## 2.2 Research process

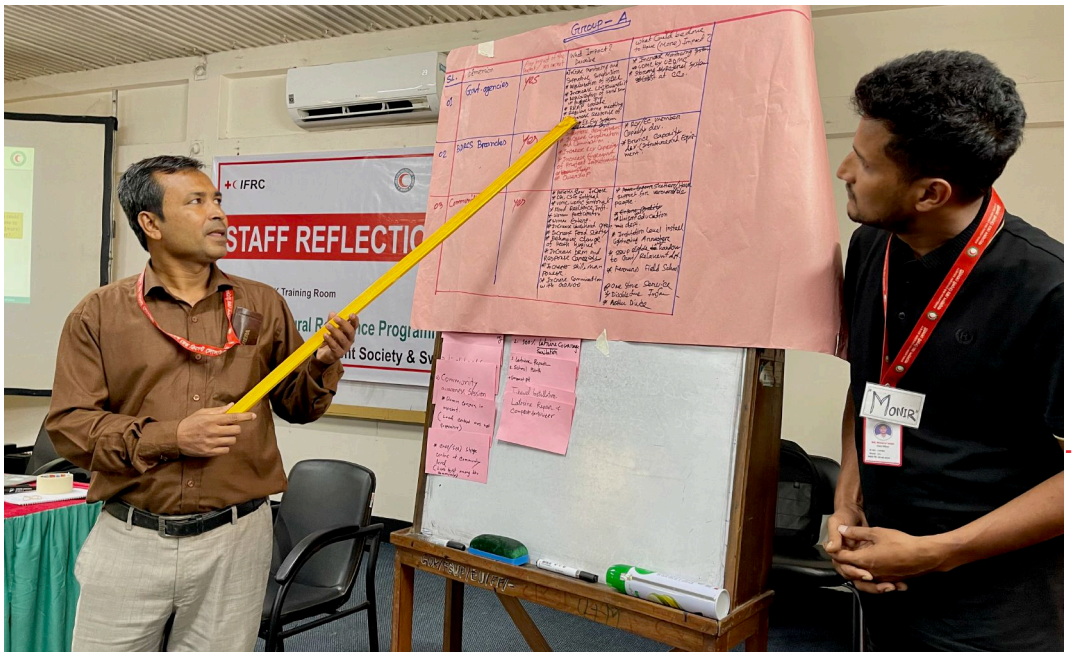
Red Crescent Youth (RCY) members with prior experience in surveying were recruited by the project team to work as enumerators and facilitators.

Enumerators were trained by the consultant over two days, and training included the basics of surveying (behaviour, safety, sampling), the use of the Kobo Collect smartphone application, and familiarisation with the RRR endline (and CCA baseline) questionnaires.

Enumerators had paper copies to study the full questionnaire, and then practiced interviewing each other during the training. The training also served to test the questionnaire; the final versions were prepared incorporating enumerators' feedback.

Field data collection for the RRR evaluation was completed in just four days, with two teams working in parallel. In addition to the tools listed above, community visits also included inspections of specific sites, such as home-steads with raised plinths, a community clinic, wells and latrines.

Despite scorching heat, thanks to enumerators and project team, data collection proceeded smoothly.




Saiful Islam (Project officer DRR & Livelihood, left) and Monarul Islam (filed officer) present results during the staff reflection workshop.

Photo: P. Bolte

SECTION B | **FINDINGS**

Entrepreneur Hosni Ara at her shop: Following finance training and with a start-up grant from the RRR project, she runs a shop and looks after the food storage in Velamari (Kurigram). Diesel is her main business, which she sells to boat owners and tractor drivers in the area.

Photo: P. Bolte

## 3. Relevance

The question of an intervention's relevance is more important than often acknowledged, given that relevance is interlinked with effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. *Fig. 5* opposite shows how these aspects are related to each other. For instance, an activity that is based on needs of the target group stands a higher chance of being effective and sustainable (and thus to generate impact) than one that is not.

Let us assess the extent to which the RRR project was relevant by answering four questions: a) were activities needs-based, b) were the communities and stakeholders meaningfully engaged in planning, implementation and monitoring, c) were activities aligned with priorities of local governments, and d) to what extent was gender, diversity and conflict-sensitive management mainstreamed?

### 3.1 Needs-based interventions

Following the baseline in 2021, the project team recognised specific needs (see SRC 2021: 25-26) and created an adjusted project outline in response. While some aspects of the preceding DRM project were retained, new features were added. In response to the high levels of food insecurity that had been identified in the baseline, for instance, the RRR project incorporated elements such as vegetable production, nutrition houses, and food storage.

Similarly, the project addressed other gaps that had been identified in 2021: the massive roll-out of new or upgraded latrines, the construction or upgraded community clinics, support to enhanced early warning and disaster preparedness more generally, and efforts to render livelihoods less sensitive to extremes, are all examples of how the project responded to identified needs.

Furthermore, the RRR project added new models to reduce risk further. The construction of clustered homesteads on elevated ground, which typically encompasses 8-9 households and features wells, latrines, space for livestock and vegetable production, is the most prominent case in point. These homesteads are highly relevant to reduce direct and indirect losses, and unsurprisingly, the model was adopted by others with their own funds or the support of others.[12]

Furthermore, specific needs were identified at village level, and the project was responsive to

12. While the raising of plinths is a common practice in flood-prone areas of Bangladesh, the clustered approach is a particularly effective measure to reduce flood exposure and sensitivity.

The RRR project supported 453 households with plinth-raising of one meter above historical flood levels. Inspired by the concept, another 394 households applied it. Plinth-raising was also applied to markets and school compounds.

the locally identified needs. For instance, the repair or upgrade of roads had not been planned initially but was added in response to communities expressing the need.

### 3.2 Process ownership

The RRR project did well in combining enablers and tangibles: it supported training and the formation or strengthening of community groups[13], and then supported processes towards community-driven planning. These plans were inclusive and involved whole communities — 97.1% of survey respondents feel familiar with the local risk reduction action plans (RRAP).

In terms of tangibles (such as latrines, tube wells, and raised plinths), the RRR project required contributions from local governments and beneficiaries. These local contributions of around 30% not only increased the leverage of donor funding *(see chapter 5)*, it also facilitated a greater sense of ownership, while acting as a check for relevance: after all, few would invest in a something they do not need.

The structure of technical staff, field officers, and community resilience volunteers enabled close and ongoing interaction with communities. The survey shows that 82.4% of respondents interacted with the project team at least three times over the past six months.

### 3.3 Aligned actions

In addition to a palpable sense of process ownership by communities, the RRR project also managed to align its activities with the local government agencies and non-government organisations (NGO) operating in the area.

Instruments for collaboration included agreements with all eight union parishads, participation in Joint Monitoring Teams (JMT) at upazilla level, and involvement in the NGO Resilience Platform (NRP).[14] Government representatives at upazilla and union level who were interviewed for this study recognised the efforts of the RRR project team in a coordination and commended its work in communities.

The activities were highly relevant and in line with priorities — the only issue being that the scale was not enough. In Haripur for instance, Union Chairman Md. Mozaharul Islam highlighted that in his union, the project had supported plinth-raising for 42 households, and 100 more than raised their plinths independently. "But about 2,000 homes are under water when it floods", Islam pointed out, appealing for an extension and further support.

In addition to the direct coordination mechanisms, the project fostered linkages between communities and local governments.

This included links between disaster management committees at different levels (WDMC, UDMC), the sharing of RRAPs, and the promotion of ward shavas and open budget sessions. The project requiring co-funding from *both* local governments *and* communities was an inherent impetus for coordination.

### 3.4 Inclusion & conflict management

The RRR project treated gender mainstreaming and inclusion as cross-cutting aspects, and featured activities specifically targeting women (such as promoting female entrepreneurs). Promoting greater female participation in public affairs made some headway, as *fig. 9 on page 12* illustrates. Yet, as the chart also shows, decision-making remains a mainly male domain.

As such, the community-based instruments such as RRAP likely reflect gendered priorities. Future projects would benefit from greater sensitisation to fundamental issues of cultural gendered norms and their questioning, as well as more diversity in the (nearly all-male) team to facilitate greater advances towards gender-equitable roles and decision-making.

The project achieved advances towards greater inclusion of persons with disabilities, and provided assistive devices and built ramps for improved accessibility.

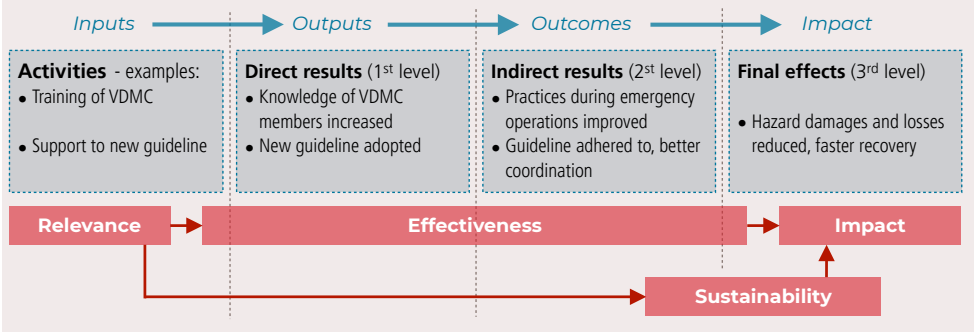
In terms of conflict-sensitive project management, no major conflicts were reported to the study team. Beneficiary selection was based on clear and well-communicated criteria, and handled sensibly by the project team.

Haripur Union Chairman Md. Mozaharul Islam pointed out many benefits of the project in his union. "In previous years, many cattle died in the floods. Now they are kept on elevated grounds before the flood arrives."

13. Community-based groups included VDMC/WDMC for risk management, water safety committees (WASH), and community groups (CG) and community support groups (CSG) for health.

14. The JMTs conducted several visits to RRR project areas, gaining first-hand insights and community feedback. The NRPs are sound coordination tools that facilitated 'common investment plans' to avoid overlap and duplication.

Fig. 5 | **How different aspects relate to the logical chain**



# 4. Effectiveness

The overarching objective of the RRR project was to strengthen resilience — to what extent was this achieved? In this chapter, let us first look at the logframe indicators *(part 4.1)* and then have a broader exploration as to how the level of resilience was changed *(part 4.2)*.

## 4.1 Indicator tracking

In terms of the logframe, four comments are due. *First*, at the outset of this study, consolidated baseline values were not yet available. While this consultant had conducted the baseline in Sundarganj (Gaibandha) in 2021, another consultant then replicated the survey in Char Rajibpur (Kurigram). At the outset of this evaluation, the results of these two separate surveys were collated. Since the sample sizes different substantially between the two sub-surveys, a weighted average was used.

*Second*, following the original baseline, the project team adjusted the original logframe, which meant that some of the newly added indicators had no baseline value. These were elicited through a further study.

*Third*, it is noted that base- and endlines were conducted in different seasons (baseline: January, endline: May) and, more importantly, in different circumstances: whereas the baseline followed a year with four devastating floods, no major floods affected the project area in the preceding year.

*Fourth*, it should be noted that not all of the logframe indicators could be assessed through this study.

The longitudinal comparison *(see fig. 6)* shows strong improvements, and 16 of the 22 assessed indicators were achieved. Most significantly, the average score of the nine resilience dimensions increased from a 'medium' value of 0.493 to a 'high' 0.795 (indicator I1). This represents an increase by 61.3%. We will return to a more detailed discussion of community resilience shortly.

Communities are better prepared to address **disaster risk** (with well-functioning and connected committees (OC16) and improved early warning (OC11 and OP11d). They have greatly improved **health access** thanks to newly added or improved community clinics (OC17), better health knowledge (OC22) as well as health and hygiene practices (OC26), while coverage of **latrines** has become almost universal (OP22a).

With the use of community resilience volunteers (CRV), the project conducted more than 21,000 sessions related to disaster risk management, health, water and sanitation. More than 97% say they participated in the various types of sessions (OP11b, OP13c, OP13d, OP21e). The project provided both broad and deep engagement. Almost three-quarters (72.4%) of survey respondents say they have been in contact with the project at least three times over the past six months.

One outcome indicator could not be assessed (OC17 on risk mitigation measures) — however, a strong positive trend was noted.

## 4.2 Community resilience

The level of community resilience has drastically improved, as can be grasped quickly from the resilience radar in *figures 7 and 8 overleaf*.

The average resilience score has increased from 0.493 (medium) to 0.795 (high).

Significant improvements were identified on all nine dimensions. The greatest gain was noted in disaster preparedness, which advanced by three levels from 'low' to 'very high'.

The scores for three of the social dimensions advanced two levels (community capacity, inclusiveness, connectedness). This is critical, since these social dimensions can be seen as the foundation for community resilience (social capital was already 'high').

With the exception of livelihoods, all dimensions now fall into the 'high' or 'very high' bands. The radar results are roughly in line with those of the resilience star[15], which has all dimensions in the 'very high' band except for livelihoods (which is 'high').

In terms of gender-disaggregated results, the endline radar scores are almost identical for women (0.797) and men (0.804). The variation is less than 0.05 points for any of the nine dimensions.

While the longitudinal comparison between base- and endline illustrates dramatic change, the question is whether this can be attributed to the RRR project. It can, is the short answer. In the radar survey, we asked about the overall trend for each of the nine dimensions.

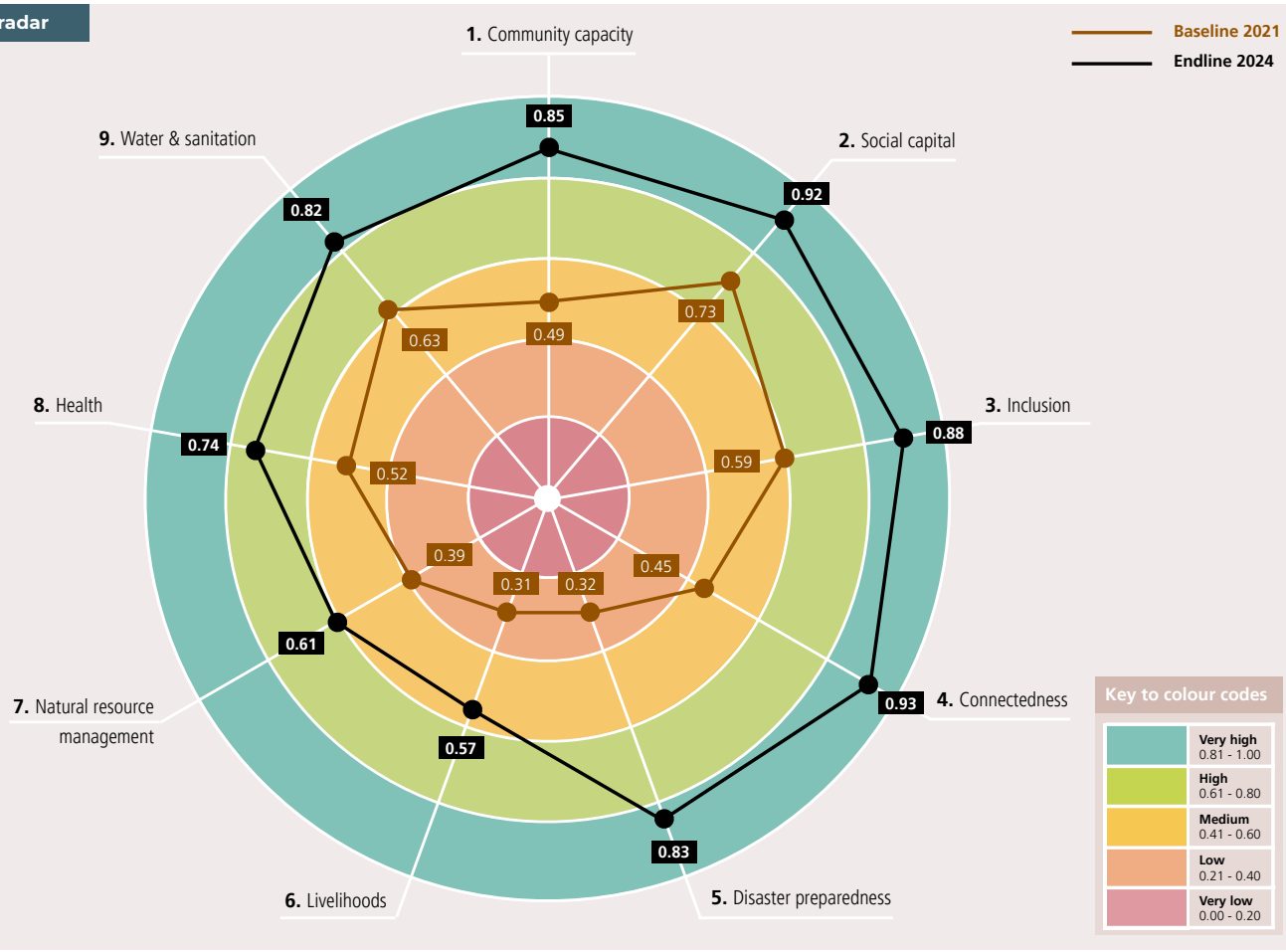
The overwhelming majority saw positive trends (90.9% as an average for all dimensions). We then followed up by asking about

15. The resilience star uses different dimensions and metrics (see chapter 2) and is based on focus group discussions. The livelihoods dimension is called economic opportunities on the resilience star.

Fig. 6 | **Logframe indicators**

| Logic | Indicator | | Baseline | Target | Endline | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Impact** Rural communities are more resilient | I1 | Average value of resilience radar dimension scores | **0.493** | 0.593 | **0.795** | Achieved. Increase by 61.3%. The strongest gains were noted in the connectedness and disaster preparedness dimensions. |
| **Outcome 1** Rural communities have reduced disaster risk and increased livelihoods and food security. | OC11 | % of residents in flood-prone areas receiving early warning messages with 5 days of lead time from at least one source | **1.6%** | 100% | **12.0%** | Notably, the share of respondents who received early warning messages has increased from 36.2% to 99.5%. The lead time was greater than 24 hours for 69.8%. (Source: E.16, E.17) |
| | OC12 | % of households at risk that implement at least one new appropriate disaster risk reduction or climate change adaptation measure | **n.a.** | 100% | **85.8%** | Overall, 86.8% took such measures, and most of them were deemed appropriate. (E.19-E.21) |
| | OC13 | % of eligible people enrolled in / receive SSNP | **6.9%** | 70% | **55.6%** | Based on BDRCS outcome monitoring. The radar survey also showed that the overall social safety net score more than doubled from 0.09 to 0.19. (G.7b) |
| | OC14 | % of people reporting food security around the year | **21.1%** | 40% | **66.3%** | Achieved. Notably, the share reporting chronic food insecurity has fallen from 46.7% to 2.0%. At endline, 29.5% reported seasonal food shortages. (G.9) |
| | OC15 | % of people reporting use of chemical fertilizers | **40.3%** | 30% | **66.8%*** | At endline, 66.8% reported a mix of organic and chemical fertilisers (0.0% reported exclusive use of chemical fertilisers). Overall, the score has improved (0.45 to 0.66). (H.6) |
| | OC16 | % of communities at risk with a functional emergency committee (OCDRM1) | **0.0%** | 70% | **100.0%** | Achieved. At endline, all 8 samples communities had a fully functioning committee (100% - Rstar indicator 1A); none had at baseline. 96.1% (up from 17.5%) of survey respondents were familiar with the Committee. (E7a) |
| | OC17 | % of persons with disaster risks reduced to an acceptable preparedness and coping level (OCDRM4) | **25.9%** | 75% | **n.a.** | This indicator is not sufficiently specific and could not be assessed. 85.8% took appropriate measures to reduce their risk (OC12). This includes 1.7% who raised their plinths. |
| **Outcome 2** Rural communities have improved access to enhanced quality basic health care and WASH services and demonstrate changed health and hygiene behaviour | OC21 | % of people reporting satisfaction with Community Clinic (CC) services | | 70% | **97.5%** | Achieved. The share represents those who visited a community clinic over the past 3 years and were satisfied (I.16, I.17) |
| | OC22 | % of people knowing about danger signs of pregnancy | **1.8%** | 40% | **80.0%** | Achieved. The share represents those who knew at least 3 of the 6 danger signs (I.18). The baseline value was captured by a separate survey arranged by the project team. |
| | OC23 | % of elderly people reporting ease of access and preferential treatment in health facilities | **49.3%** | 75% | **98.2%** | Achieved. Based on questions I.20-I.22. The baseline value was captured by a separate survey arranged by the project team. |
| | OC24 | % of people using safely managed sanitation facilities (OCWH4) | **23.8%** | 100% | **97.5%** | Almost achieved. Based on questions J.6 and J.9a. The baseline value was captured by a separate survey arranged by the project team. |
| | OC26 | % of people from whom soap and water is available on premises at commonly used handwashing station (OCWH9) | **14.7%** | 80% | **76.8%** | Almost achieved. Source: question J.5 |
| **Output 1.1** DRM capacities and instruments are developed and risk mitigation supported. | OP11b | # of people reached with awareness sessions on DRR and CCA (OPDRM1) | **n.a.** | **200,000** (85.0%) | **229,583** (97.6%) | The endline value (97.6%), based on radar question E.18 was multiplied with the target population. |
| | OP11d | # of persons covered with early warning systems (OP-DRM7) | **36.2** | **203,864** (86.7%) | **234,052** (99.5%) | Achieved. Source: E.16 |
| **Output 1.3** Communities are linked to improved livelihood systems, SSNP and sustainable NRM. | OP13a | # of target households reporting strengthened livelihood opportunities | **n.a.** | **600** (0.2%) | **234,052** (99.5%) | Achieved. Source: G.11 |
| | OP13b | # of HHs with access to food security options | **21.1%** | **107,920** (45.9%) | **155,956** (66.3%) | Achieved. Source: G.9 |
| | OP13c | # of people reached through SSNP awareness raising sessions | **n.a.** | **1,514** (0.6%) | **230,524** (98.0%) | Achieved. Source: G.10 |
| | OP13d | # of people reached with natural resource management activities (OPDRM10) | **n.a.** | **22,720** (9.7%) | **231,700** (98.5%) | Achieved. Source: H.12 |
| **Output 2.1** Target communities have improved access to quality health services | OP21e | # of people reached with health/hygiene education (OPRH2) | **n.a.** | **213,000** (90.6%) | **230,053** (97.8%) | Achieved. Source: I.19 |
| **Output 2.2** Rural communities have universal access to safe and sustainable WASH facilities and demonstrate improved hygiene behaviour. | OP22a | # of people who gained access to toilets (OPWH14) | **(72.6%)** | **235,229** (100%) | **232,876** (99.0%) | Almost achieved. These values represent the share of respondents with a toilet. Source: J.6 |
| | OP22b | # of people who gained access to hand washing facilities (OPWH15) | **(14.7%)** | **16,800** (7.1%) | **180,655** (76.8%) | Achieved. These values represent the share of respondents with a handwashing facility and soap. Source: J.5 |

Fig. 7 | **Resilience radar**




the reasons for these improvements, and 93.0% of respondents attributed improvements fully to factors related to the RRR project.

### Dimension 1 | **Community capacity**

Baseline 0.49 | Endline 0.85

This index is based on questions A.1-A.13 and includes aspects such as leadership, trust in public officials, availability of general services, resources, the ability to reflect on past performance and set priorities, collective action, and access to information. At **baseline**, the question scores ranged from 0.44 (community-based planning, A.10) to 0.66 (effective local leaders, A.1). At **endline**, all scores were in the 'very high' band, with scores of at least 0.89.

Fig. 8 | **Longitudinal comparison**

| Dimension | Baseline (2021) | Endline (2024) | Variation (EL-BL) | Change (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Community capacity** | 0.490 | 0.847 | 0.357 | **72.8%** |
| **Social capital** | 0.732 | 0.923 | 0.191 | **26.1%** |
| **Inclusiveness** | 0.595 | 0.883 | 0.288 | **48.4%** |
| **Connectedness** | 0.447 | 0.930 | 0.483 | **108.0%** |
| **Disaster preparedness** | 0.319 | 0.830 | 0.511 | **160.2%** |
| **Livelihoods** | 0.311 | 0.574 | 0.263 | **84.6%** |
| **Natural resource management** | 0.392 | 0.608 | 0.216 | **55.1%** |
| **Health** | 0.524 | 0.738 | 0.214 | **40.8%** |
| **Water & sanitation** | 0.628 | 0.820 | 0.192 | **30.6%** |
| **Average score** | **0.493** | **0.795** | **0.302** | **61.3%** |

On the resilience star, there is no perfect equivalent for this dimension. However, infrastructure & services, which is an aspect covered under this star dimension, scores 0.90 (up from 0.33 at baseline).

### Dimension 2 | **Social capital**

Baseline 0.73 | Endline 0.92

This index is based on questions B.1 to B.6a and covers aspects such as sense of belonging, mutual support, collective action, aspirations, and conflict resolution. At **baseline**, all question scores were in the 'high' band, with the exception of sense of belonging (0.88).

At **endline**, all question scores were in the 'very high' band. On the resilience star, the roughly equivalent 'social cohesion' dimension scored 0.93.

### Dimension 3 | **Inclusiveness**

Baseline 0.59 | Endline 0.88

This index is based on questions C.1 - C.8 and includes three sub-indices: general, disability, and gender inclusiveness. In terms of **general inclusiveness** (absence of discrimination and of conflicts/tensions based on personal attributes), the sub-index rose from 0.65 to 0.91.

Regarding **disability inclusiveness** (equal access for persons with disabilities and equal standing of them as valued contributors), the score increased from 0.63 to 0.92.

Concerning **gender inclusiveness**, the radar survey focused on the extent to which men and women are involved in community-level decision making. The score increased substantially from 0.51 to 0.81. *Figure 9 below* demonstrates how dramatically the gender pattern in community-level decision-making has shifted.

The **resilience star** exercises (which featured a gender balance among participants) showed similarly high scores for inclusiveness (at 0.89, these were slightly lower than the respective radar score).

Fig. 9 | **Gender: Balance and power**

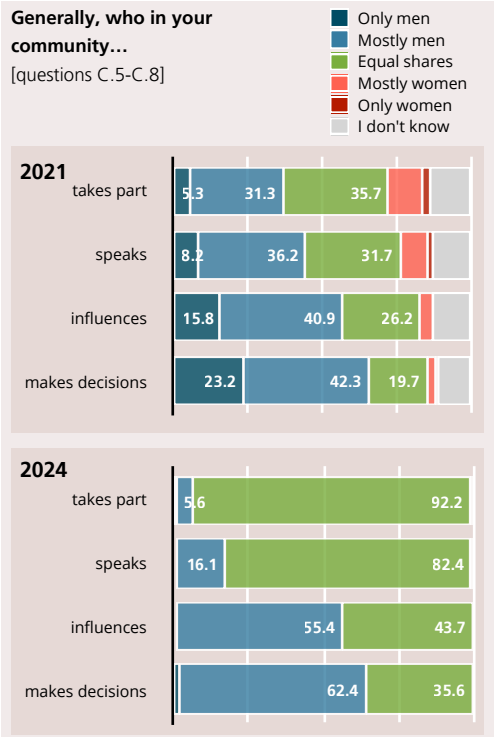
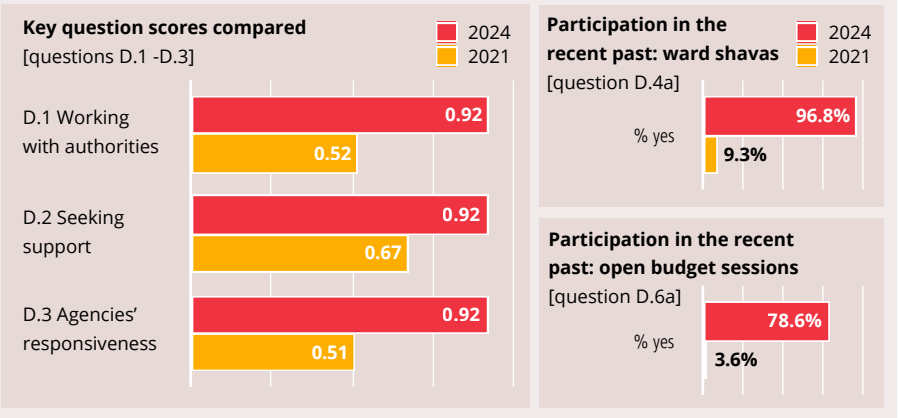



Fig. 10 | **Well-connected**




## Dimension 4 | **Connectedness**

Baseline 0.45 | Endline 0.93

The connectedness index assesses the links between communities and next-tier agencies and actors. It is based on questions D.1-D.3 (general links) as well as D.4a - D.5a (participation in and perceived effectiveness of ward shavas) and D.6a-D.7a (budget sessions - participation and effectiveness). The key results are illustrated in *figure 10*.

The various aspects of connectedness have improved: Communities are seen as reaching out more to authorities to seek support (D.2), government agencies are more responsive (D.3), and there are generally closer relationships with external actors.

Community participation in ward shavas and open budget sessions has grown dramatically, with almost all who participated finding these legislated fora effective. In addition, most survey respondents (92.9%) also engaged with the UDMC.

The **resilience star** discussions echoed and illustrated the tremendous improvement towards well-connected communities — the average score is 0.95 and thus very close to its radar equivalent.

## Dimension 5 | **Disaster preparedness**

Baseline 0.32 | Endline 0.83

This index is based on a total of 20 questions (E.1 - E.17)[16] that are grouped under the two sub-indices of community and household-level preparedness.

The overall dimension score has seen the greatest increase of all 9 indices, and jumped up three levels from 'low' to 'very high'. The increase by 160.2% shows that the multi-faceted efforts of the project in DRR have benefitted the wider communities.

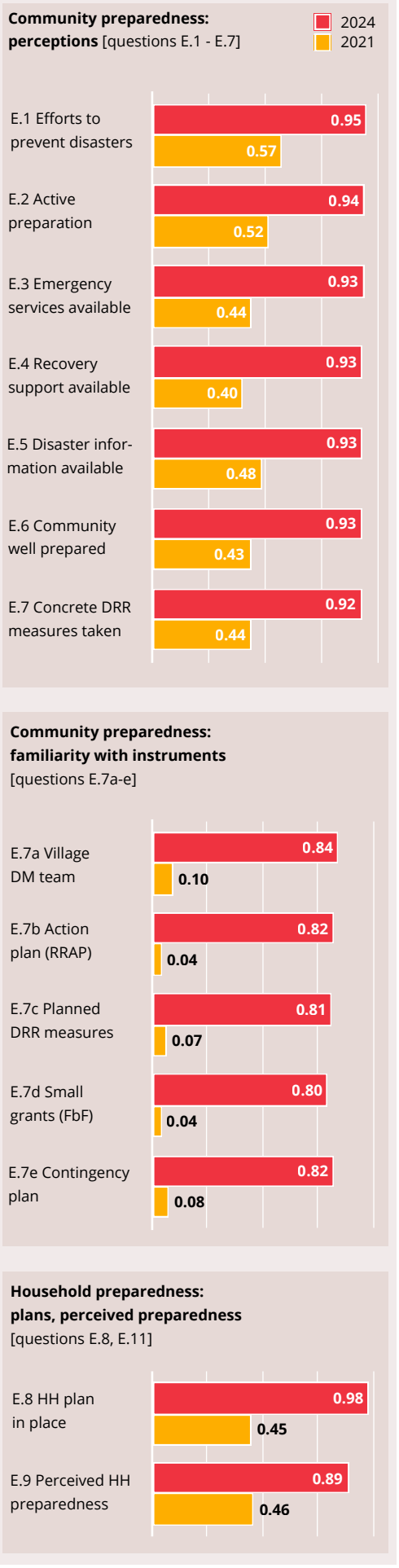
As the comparison in *fig. 11 overleaf* illustrates, the level of **community-level preparedness** is widely seen as substantially higher than at baseline. This includes both perceptions as well as familiarity with instruments (it should be noted that many of these instruments were not common at baseline and were only created with project support). The sub-index has increased from 0.30 to 0.89.

In terms of **household-level preparedness**, it is noted that almost all respondents (98.3%) now have a HH plan in place, compared to just 43.0% at baseline. The sub-index has more than doubled, from 0.37 to 0.78.

The share of respondents who knows any measures a household can take to prepare has increased from 55.8% to 99.3%. The share who has participated in a recent drill (past 24 months) has grown from 5.1% to 93.9%.

16. An additional five questions were asked only at endline and are not counted towards the scores.

Fig. 11 | **Disaster preparedness**

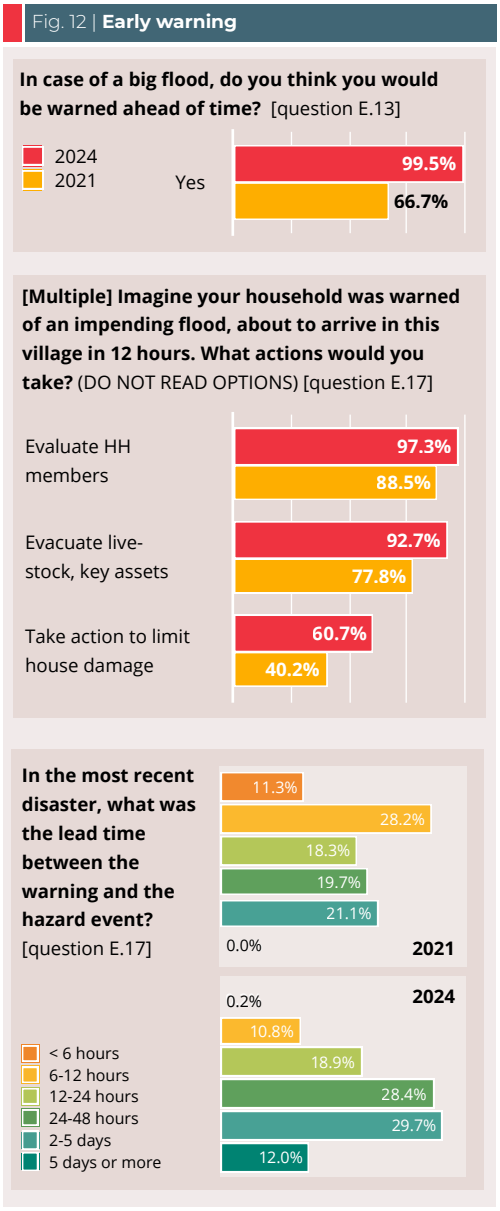



Another major advance is that **early warning systems** now have almost universal reach in target communities *(see fig.12 below)*. Thanks to increased awareness and knowledge, the share of respondents who could describe appropriate early action increased (the E.14a score is up from 0.53 to 0.75).

In addition to reaching more people, early warning messages also reach them sooner: the share reporting lead times of more than 24 hours in actual early warning messages received rose from 40.8% to 70.1%. While this trend is encouraging, only 12.0% (up from 1.6%) reported lead times of 5 days or more. Such long lead times are technically feasible and enable more comprehensive early action (such as early harvests).

The average score for risk management on the **resilience star** is 0.94, and a perfect 1.00 in five of the eight sampled communities.

Fig. 12 | **Early warning**



Dimension 6 | **Livelihoods**
Baseline 0.32 | Endline 0.57

Consisting of five sub-indices *(see fig.13)*, the livelihood index is the most complex. While the scope and scale of the RRR project was relatively smaller compared to the portfolio in disaster risk management (see chapter 1), all sub-index scores increased from base- to endline. Let us have a closer look.

In terms of the **level of diversification**, we distinguish between **type A** sources (those based on natural resources, such as agriculture) and **type B** sources (which are not based on natural resources, such as wages). The sub-index score has seen a modest gain from 0.50 to 0.58, and this is mainly driven by diversification of agricultural sources, rather than by type B sources.

For instance, the share of respondents with two or more Type A sources has gone up from 54.1% to 74.2%, while the respective trend for type B sources is 26.0% to 36.6%. The share of households without any type B source has remained almost the same (17.5% in 2021, 15.4% in 2024).

Nevertheless, the sub-index score for **natural resource dependency** has increased from 0.44 to 0.65, which means that respondents are less dependent on natural resources and thus sensitive to extreme weather events. The share of respondents whose income is primary based on type B sources has increased from 12.6% to 31.9%. If respondent estimates are accurate, this suggests that type B income has grown more than type A income.

The **income earner index** score has increased, but remains one of the lowest sub-index scores of the resilience radar. Most livelihoods remain based on single incomes (64.6%, down from 87.8% at baseline).

Concerning **resilience measures**, which captures access to credit, membership in savings groups, and insurance coverage, there has been a dramatic increase from 0.15 to 0.53. Most likely, this is not directly related to the RRR project. For instance, the greater insurance coverage (46.4%, up from 6.0%) is due to new stipulations by lenders that now require some insurance level.

In terms of **food security**, the sub-index score has more than doubled from 0.38 to 0.87. The share of respondents saying that all households members have enough to eat throughout the year has increased from 21.1% to 45.2%, while those reporting chronic food shortages has fallen from 46.7% to 2.0%.

This encouraging trend is likely attributed to a mix of project interventions (nutrition house, vegetable production) as well as comparatively benign external conditions (no major floods in 2023).

One aspect that was covered under livelihoods but not counted towards the dimension score concerned **social safety nets** (see *fig.14)*. Thanks to promotion by the RRR project, net enrolment to the programmes below increased threefold between baseline and endline.

On the **resilience star**, the dimension 'economic opportunities' scored 0.78 at endline. The key concern were high sensitivity to shocks/ stressors and limited coping capacity.

Fig. 13 | **Sowing resilience**

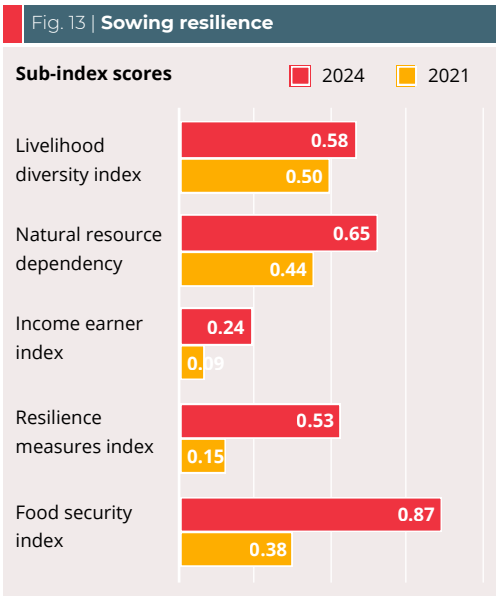



Fig. 14 | **Wider safety nets**

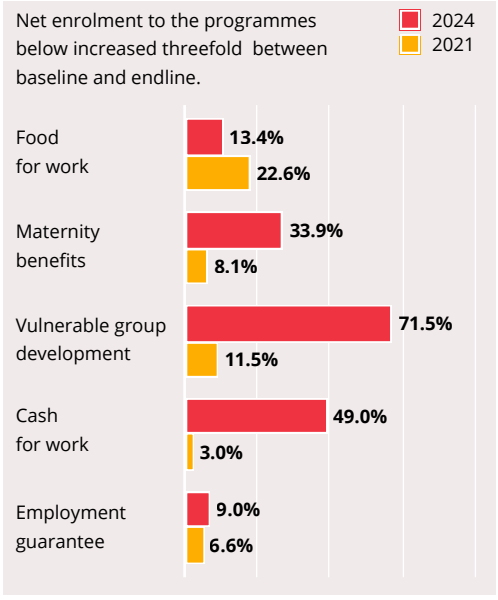


Fig. 15 | **Natural resource management**

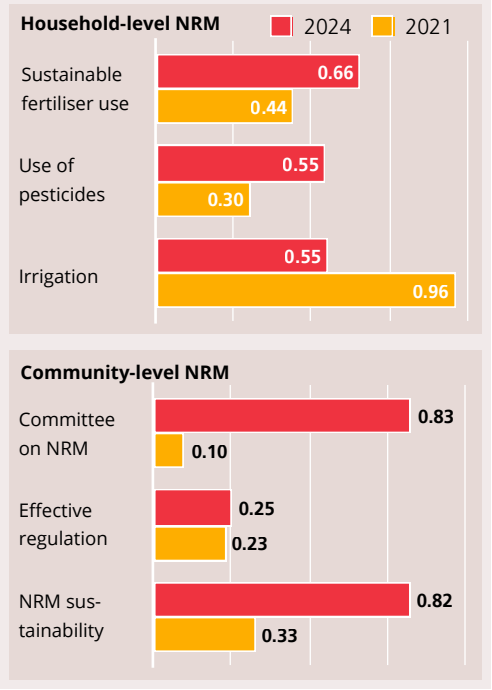
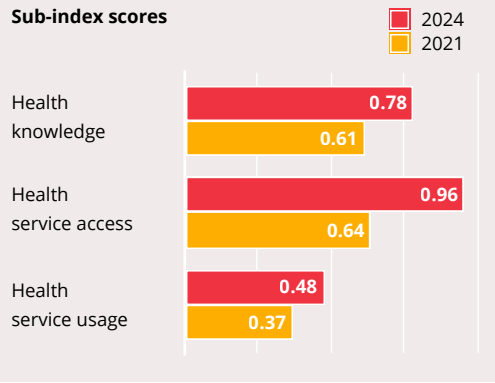



Fig. 16 | **Health**




Dimension 7
## Natural resource management
Baseline 0.39 | Endline 0.61

This index consists of two sub-indices that refer to household and community-level natural resource management (NRM).

At the **household level**, the biggest change is not about the NRM practices but about the fact that a lot more people look after gardens or fields (89.0%) than did in 2021 (44.9%). This is attributed to the promotion of vegetable gardening and nutrition houses by the project. In terms of NRM practices, there is an increase in using organic fertilisers (from 7.5% to 24.7%), and a reduction of using pesticides.

The share of respondents saying they apply pesticides never or only once per year rose from 10.8% to 56.5%.

In terms of **community-level NRM**, more respondents no say that there are committees on NRM (82.7%) than in the past (9.4%) — however, the use of natural resources remained poorly regulated. In fact, the share of respondents who say that 'every household can use as much as it wants or needs' has more than doubled (27.8% to 65.6%).

The fact that respondents are more optimistic about the sustained availability of natural resources appears at odds and indicates that NRM principles are poorly understood.

Dimension 8 | **Health**
Baseline 0.52 | Endline 0.74

The health index is based on the three sub-indices of health knowledge, service access, and service usage *(see fig. 16)*.

**Health knowledge** was tested by asking about familiarity with tuberculosis (common in the area) and its symptoms. The share of respondents who could list 3 or more symptoms tripled from 21.8% to 66.6%.

**Health service access** improved drastically, largely thanks to the construction of and improvements to community clinics by the RRR project.

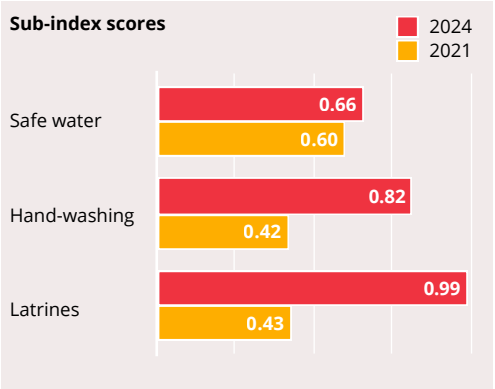
Concerning **health service usage**, there is some improvement — however, the use of health services for preventative care and check-ups remains limited. Long wait times and distance remain the two most-cited reasons for not attending health services more often.

**Resilience star** discussions pointed to many improvements related to the project, notably community clinics and improved health knowledge. The endline score is 0.95.

In one of the new community clinics supported by the RRR project, Hamidul Islam now looks after around 30 patients per day — providing ante- and post-natal care and treating many illnesses that include colds, fever, pneumonia, and skin diseases. Supported by ver active groups (CG, CSG), he says the new service is running well.

Photo: P. Bolte

Fig. 17 | **Water & sanitation**




Dimension 9 | **Water & sanitation**
Baseline 0.63 | Endline 0.82

This index is based on the three sub-indices of safe water, hand-washing, and latrines *(see figure 17)*.

In terms of **safe water**, there is now a slightly greater share using tube wells (93.9%, up from 91.4%), and more wells are within 50 metres from households. The share saying that they have sufficient water year-around increased from 80.8% to 97.3%.

In terms of **hand-washing**, households with fixed water points and soap present increased from just 14.7% in 2021 to 76.8%. Reported hand-washing practices also improved.

The most dramatic increase concerns coverage with hygienic **latrines**. While the share of respondents with any type of latrines rose somewhat from 72.6% to 99.0%, the share of households with latrines that meet hygienic standards increased much more — from just 16.8% to 97.6%.

**Resilience star** discussions attributed many advances to the project, especially the construction or upgrades of latrines. The endline resilience star score is 0.98.

# 5. Efficiency

As shown in chapter 4, the RRR project was very effective in reinforcing resilience at scale. To what extent was it also efficient?

Very much, is the short answer. Actual expenditures of around CHF 1.2 million were used to benefit around 48,200 households — equating to CHF 24.86 per household. This is a very reasonable figure (and less than the figure of the preceding DRM project). After all, the depth and multi-dimensional scope of the engagement is considerable.

This study neither included a detailed financial analysis of project costs, nor a cost-benefit analysis (i.e., what was the ratio between ultimate benefits to overall costs?). Nevertheless, several observations are made.

***First***, the project benefited from economies of scale: with a large coverage of more than 235,000 beneficiaries across 88 communities, the overhead costs were proportionally small. The contiguous project area also helped: one central project office in Gaibandha served as the operational hub. Rather than doing a little in many places, the RRR project did a lot in one area.

***Second***, the project had an effective and efficient team structure: it maintained a small team of technical staff that supported field officers in the unions. At the community level, CRVs supported implementation. This enabled the deep and ongoing engagement, for example through thousands of information sessions on DRR and health.

Internal communication and processes were described as very effective during the staff reflection workshop. Coordination and collaboration between SRC and BDRCS were described as strong.

***Third***, much credit goes to the RRR project team itself: the team members were qualified in their area of expertise, and most had gained experience and retained lessons from the previous DRM project. Staff turnover (which is associated with considerable transaction costs) was minimal.

The team also showed a great level of dedication — working overtime on a routine basis to meet targets. While this is a positive in terms of efficiency, it also suggests that team capacity was stretched. At the staff reflection workshop, team members explained that having two instead of one field officer would

have been more appropriate to reduce the need to work overtime, to ensure more consistent coaching of CRVs, and to better monitor the results of awareness sessions.

***Fourth***, the consistent requirement for local co-funding increased the leverage of project funds. Typically, around 30% of the costs for structural measures were contributed by local sources (for household measures, 20% were contributed by local governments and 10% by beneficiaries).

This means that CHF 1,000 (70% of costs) of project funding effectively became CHF 1,428.50 (428.50 being 30% of total costs). The project could thus achieve more with the fixed amount of project funding.

**In summary** and due to the four factors above, the RRR project proved highly efficient. The representative of a Partner National Society showed surprise when hearing about the RRR's project budget and scale, expressing interest in the recipe for reaching so many with relatively small funding. His surprise appears justified indeed, in particular when considering that the RRR reach was not just broad but also commendably deep.

There is another aspect to this analysis, which is the most crucial. The most relevant measure of efficiency is arguably the ratio between *ultimate* benefits to project costs. Although this cannot be quantified in this review, this ratio is likely to be very high.[17]

The combination of a) very frequent floods, b) high penetration of project investments, such as the almost universal reach of EWS messaging, c) the likely reduction of direct and indirect losses from flood events as a result of project investments, and d) high chances of outcomes being sustained *(see next chapter)* means that avoided losses and co-benefits are likely to exceed costs multiple times.

Furthermore, the results of this study indicate that the RRR project has laid the foundation for further follow up action: stronger community capacity on the one hand and closer links with local governments on the other are the foundation for additional investments based on the needs identified by communities.

## 6. Sustainability

The sustainability of an intervention's outcomes largely depends on a strong sense of local ownership — local actors' **willingness** and **capacity** to continue running or maintaining them. Neither willingness nor capacity is a fixed given *(see fig. 18)*.

Local actors' **willingness** is a function of
a. perceived relevance (did an activity address a community concern?);
b. the perceived benefit-cost ratio (did an activity generate tangible benefits, how much input is needed to maintain these, and do the benefits justify the costs?); and
c. process ownership (did local actors invent, steer, participate, accept or reject the underlying process?).

Similarly, local actors' **capacity** can be broken down into the following aspects:
d. funds and inputs (do beneficiaries have the time and money to sustain the outcome?);
e. skills and capabilities (do they have the required technical skills?);
f. structure and routines (do solid organisational structures underpin the outcome?), and
g. organisational resilience (will beneficiaries be able to adapt after a shock, such as the death of a local leader?).

In addition to willingness and capacity, the strength of an **enabling environment** (next-tier government support, frameworks) also plays a role.

Applying this analytical frame, how did the outcomes of the RRR project fare?

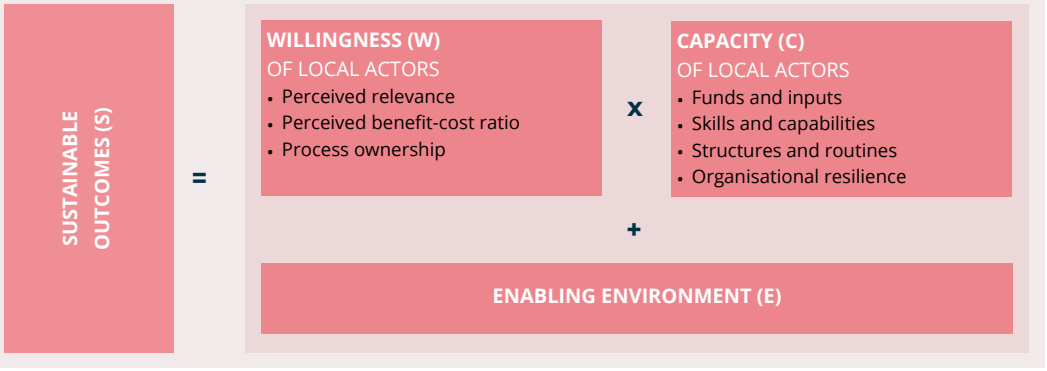
In terms of **willingness**, several aspects are noted. First, most outputs are seen as highly relevant to community concerns (as shown in *part 3.1*). Plinth-raising was in fact so relevant that many who could afford it copied the model. With frequent floods and thus high levels of accumulated losses and damages in a no-action counterfactual, the economic case for plinth-raising is clear.

The fact that beneficiaries and governments invested contributions to these measures is evidence that a positive benefit-cost ratio is recognised. The same applies to the enhanced early warning system, to latrines and tube wells, community clinics and nutrition houses. The broad roll-out of information sessions served as enablers to underscore the relevance of these measures where understanding had been hitherto limited.

17. A robust impact analysis would be required to ascertain the actual impact of the RRR project. This should be conducted after a major flood event and include project and control communities.

Even in the absence of such a study, the project team could facilitate hazard event reviews with selected communities (e.g., those with a high share of raised plinths) to review how the measures performed in an actual flood event.

Fig. 18 | **Sustainability building blocks**




One exception concerns composting and natural resource management more broadly: the link between climate change and NRM could have featured more prominently in the project portfolio.[18]

The level of process ownership by local actors was strong: RRAPs were designed on the basis of community priorities. For instance, the several measures (such as road repairs) were included due to community requests, and the responsiveness of the project team nurtured trust and collaborative spirit.

Regarding **capacity**, it is noted that community groups that are behind many outputs, such as WDMC for DRR, CC and CSG for health, and water safety committees for water & sanitation, are well-trained and functional.

They are also well-known by communities, and thanks to both broad and ongoing engagement, there is a critical mass and a public expectation that these groups will continue to perform their roles. All eight communities said that their committees were fully functional, and the resilience radar showed that 96.1% of respondents were familiar with WDMCs.

In terms of funds and inputs, there are no designated reserve funds to maintain project-supported measures. However, the fact that communities and households contributed to the their construction or set-up in the first place suggests that funding for maintenance can be secured. The improved links to government agencies — through institutional channels as well as through ward shavas and open budget sessions — offers further options to maintain and replicate project outputs.

The concept of an **enabling environment** has been an integral design feature of the RRR project: greater connectedness will enable support to communities as well as needs-based planning. These vertical connections are particularly strong between communities and unions and, to a lesser degree, with upazillas.

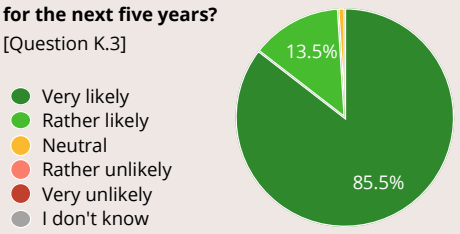
There is potential to work more closely with district-level agencies too, and BDRCS branches have could have utilised their auxiliary role and mandated inclusion in DDMCs more prominently.[19]

Involvement with agencies at the national level is not easy, since numerous agencies operate in poor coordination with local governments.[20] However, the RRR project pursued such collaboration and upgraded or constructed community clinics following a Memorandum of Understanding with the Community Clinic Health Support Trust (CCHST): this national body will continue to cover the staffing costs, and monitor their performance. As CCHST Chairman Prof. Syed Modasser Ali points out, his analysis shows that the performance of community clinics supported by NGOs and Red Crescent increases dramatically and is sustained at high levels beyond project conclusion.

**In summary**, the sustainability of the RRR project outcomes is rated as high. The communities agree: amongst those survey respondents who say they have benefited from the RRR project (99.0%), all say that these benefits still hold up. As shown in *fig.19*, almost all think that they will continue to do so for the next five years.

Fig. 19 | **Positive outlook**

**In your view, how likely is it that the project benefits will continue for the next five years?**
[Question K.3]




18. The uptake of composting was limited and described as one of the least effective measures during the staff reflection workshop. Survey results also show that the recognition of the importance of sustainable NRM remains limited (see chapter 4).

While climate change already has a substantial impact on communities in the Jamuna basin (see Jamuna baseline report), the impetus for adaptation should have been a stronger focus.

19. In the words of a senior manager of the Department for Disaster Management (DDM), the DDMCs work reasonably well during a disaster but are often dormant in the absence of a crisis. Nevertheless, the closer interaction at the district level should be pursued by branches, which may complement and support efforts at upazilla and union levels.

20. As noted by a representative of Char Rajibpur upazilla, many national projects, such as those related to the reinforcement of embankments by the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), are rarely coordinated with local governments.

SECTION C | **REFLECTIONS**

**On higher ground**: a cluster of households on raised plinths

Photo: P. Bolte

# 7. Lessons learnt

The results of the RRR project are a strong case for holistic resilience programming. The project was ambitious and bold. As shown in the previous section, it proved effective at raising resilience, efficient in its delivery, and strong at facilitating sustainable outcomes.

Much can be learnt from the RRR experience. This chapter explores lessons in three categories: concept, project management, and coordination.

## 7.1 Concept

The first three lessons refer to the overarching nature of the RRR project, an additional lens to reflect on, and the interaction between community-based efforts and National Society development.

**A.1 Holistic community-based programming, centred on connectedness is an effective way to reinforce resilience.**
Although the logframe indicators suggest otherwise, in essence, the RRR project was *not only* a DRR project, or one on WASH, health, livelihoods, or food security. Instead, it strengthened the foundations of community resilience: it ensured that communities were able to assess gaps, formulate plans, devise solutions, and communicate needs for support with next-tier government agencies. As the resilience radar shows, all four social dimensions of resilience (community capacity, social capital, inclusiveness and connectedness) now have 'very high' scores. They are the enabling foundations of resilience.

Of course, the RRR project did also invest in the sectoral aspects, and did so in an integrated manner. The clustered homesteads, for instance, feature aspects of DRR (risk mitigation), WASH (latrines and tube wells), livelihoods and food security (space for livestock, vegetable gardens).

The scores of the sectoral dimensions greatly increased — disaster preparedness in particular. The project combined enablers (e.g., the broad roll-out of information sessions) with tangibles (with investments in latrine construction leading to almost universal coverage.

The consistent requirement of local contributions facilitated ownership, acted as a relevance check, and instigated collaboration between communities and governments (both had to contribute). Refined over the course of multiple iterations in the Jamuna basin, the RRR concept is an exemplary case for work to strengthen resilience that should be applied broadly.

Many projects have resilience in their title. The RRR project also had it as its core.

**A.2 The RRR project addressed multiple lines of defence.**
The resilience concept as embodied in the resilience radar and star is related to the functional perspective: as illustrated in the game with the 'pumpkin drop', it looks at the (horizontal) ropes, and how tight they are.

There is another way to look at resilience: from an outcome perspective, we would look at the net impact of a hazard or stressor in terms of direct and indirect damages and losses. To remain with the pumpkin analogy, we could ask: can the fall of the pumpkin be prevented, its velocity be reduced, the tyre be shielded, or the bounce-back be supported?

There are many models looking at risk and resilience from this perspective.[21] As illustrated in *fig. 20 below*, the lines of defence model puts a hazard/stressor on the left, which threatens to impact the community on the right. The model proposes that four lines of defence and two foundations can be strengthened to reduce the hazard's net impact.

**Reducing exposure:** this is reducing the potential for direct effect on the community. In an ideal scenario, the hazard would not reach or affect the object at all. Practical examples include the construction of levees (floods), or mangrove afforestation in coastal areas (cyclones/storm surge). This first line of defence has the greatest potential for risk reduction but typically requires substantial investments.

Plinth-raising well above historical flood markers is a way the RRR project reduced exposure. While very effective amongst beneficiary households, many other homes remain exposed to flooding and losses.

**Decreasing sensitivity** is about rendering objects more robust: while still exposed, the hazards or stressors generate fewer economic losses or physical harm. Practical examples include safer shelters (e.g. storms, earthquakes) as well as diversified livelihoods that are less dependent on natural resources. This line of defence is a key to climate change adaptation (e.g., adjusted cropping patterns, promotion of drought/flood-resilient crops).

The RRR project incurred some livelihood diversification through vocational training and its 'women entrepreneurs' component, albeit on a relatively small scale. Protected tube wells were another measure to reduce sensitivity.

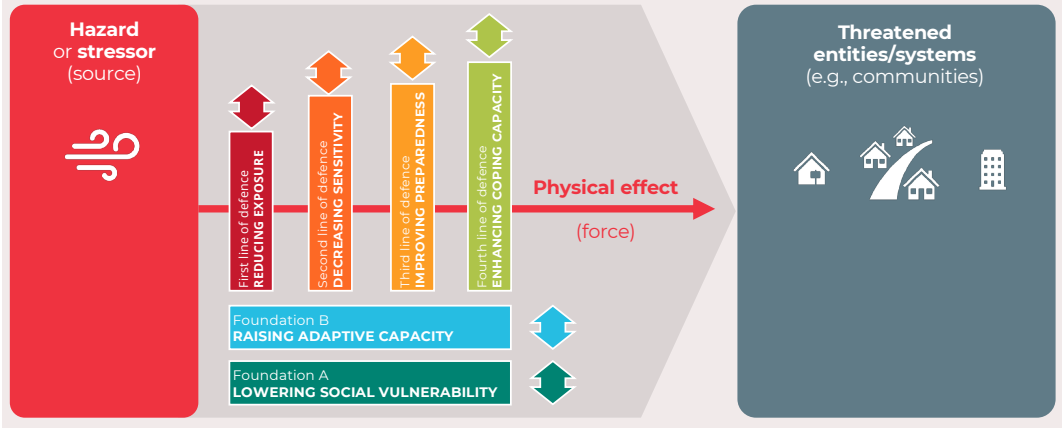
**Improving preparedness** is about early warning and preparedness measures to reduce hazard impact. The RRR project invested greatly in this area and led to substantial improved preparedness levels.

**Enhancing coping capacity** is about dealing with residual risk and includes risk transfer (insurance) and the creation of buffers. It minimises indirect damages and enables a swift post-hazard recovery. While the RRR project invested in some food storage, this line of defence could have been further strengthened through the promotion of crop and asset insurance as well as calamity funds.

**Lowering social vulnerability:** in addition to the four lines of defence, this is one of the two underpinning foundations. Lowering social vulnerability is in essence about poverty reduction and to ensure that nobody is left behind. The RRR project helped expand coverage of social safety nets. Livelihood gains (e.g., from vocational training) also reduced social vulnerability.

**Raising adaptive capacity** is about increasing information, reflective processes, and resources to enable adaptation. In this regard, the RRR project contributed to strengthened processes and better connections. It

Fig. 20 | **Lines of defence model**




21. In particular, see the Pressure and Release model (Wisner et al. 2004) and the Risk Staircase model developed by the Swiss NGO DRR Platform (see here on page 16).

demonstrated some solutions, although these could not been adopted by all. Providing more information on climate change (adapting to what?) and a broader range of adaptive measures should feature more prominently in future programming.

**A.3 Combining branch development with community-centred efforts make sense, but these dual objectives must be managed more carefully.**
The RRR project aimed for more resilient communities as well as stronger branches. In principle, it makes sense to combine these two components into one overarching effort. After all, and as envisaged in the IFRC Roadmap to Community Resilience, branches are to accompany, connect, and enable communities. Furthermore, BDRCS and its branches have auxiliary roles to the government, and harnessing this role offers great potential.

At the same time, it is crucial that both components are managed carefully. The RRR project has had a stellar performance in terms of raising community resilience, but in terms of organisational capacity gains, the track record is less convincing. Gaibandha branch, which has been supported by the SRC/BDRCS partnership for more than a decade, has little to show for it. It has a new office building and a greater network of volunteers. At the same time, it is punching below its potential weight.

Arguably, this comes largely down to person-centric structures with patron-client networks, and a limited sense of ownership. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, as is argued in the Jamuna baseline report (see in particular chapter 6 and recommendations D.1-D.4).

22. The local team included the project manager, project officers for a) DRR and livelihood, b) WASH, and c) health, a senior officer for finance and admin, as well as positions for admin support and security. In addition, the PMER officer (based in Dhaka) supported the RRR project.


The new building of the BDRCS Gaibandha branch, which was opened in early 2024 and constructed with support of Swiss Red Cross.

## 7.2 Project management

The strong results of the RRR project speak for themselves: without a strong system in project management, the RRR project would not have been able to achieve its results.

But let us have a more detailed look, and assess staffing, internal communication, and the integration of volunteers.

**B.1 The team structure was effective, but resources were stretched and compensated only by the team's dedication.**
Under the auspices of the BDRCS Director for Disaster Response and the Senior Manager for Resilience (both based in Dhaka), the team comprised eight technical and administrative roles at the Gaibandha project office, as well as eight field officers (one per target union).[22] In addition, SRC provided support (primarily through its DRM Manager (until early 2024) and the Deputy Country Representative.

At the field level, 121 CRVs supported many activities, such as the delivery of information sessions. This enabled broad and deep engagement.

The structure proved effective, and the deployment of experienced staff who had previously worked on prior iterations is seen as a major success factor. However, the size of the team did not fully reflect the thematic scope and geographical scale of the ambitious RRR project (although operating in a contiguous area, round trips to communities were often three hours or longer). Stretched capacity was compensated by team members working overtime on a rather consistent basis.

During the staff reflection workshop, it was pointed out that the allocation of field officers should have been doubled to better ensure quality and monitoring of delivery. Future programming should better reflect local workloads and also account for the significant variations in the number of target communities per union (which was between 4 and 21).

To avoid similar issues in future, the adequacy of resources at all levels should be reviewed regularly. The capacity at the SRC team appears very limited, following the loss of the DRM Manager position. Although the greater focus on localisation and BDRCS ownership in future programming is noted, there is the risk that SRC looses its added value and focus on quality if too much work is in the hand of too few. Notably, the team size is already proportionally small when compared to the structures of other Movement partners.

**B.2 Sound internal communication was a strong success factor.**
With those behind the RRR project spread out across many locations and offices (Dhaka BDRCS and SRC, Gaibandha project office, field locations), good internal communication is critical to enable effective delivery.

During the staff reflection workshop, participants highlighted that this was a strong factor

behind the project's success: information was shared quickly, and most issues were resolved with a short turn-around. The frequency of team meetings was appropriate. Regular visits from Dhaka-based staff supported a strong collaborative culture and team spirit. Team members were pulling on one string, and supported each other when needed.

**B.3 Volunteers played a vital role in project implementation.**
Volunteers are the strongest asset of any Red Cross or Red Crescent Society. Within BDRCS, Red Crescent Youth (RCY) in particular play a critical role in overall service delivery.

In the context of the RRR project, another set of volunteers assumed a key function: community resilience volunteers (CRV). These were recruited from project communities and trained in both technical aspects as well as in community engagement and accountability (CEA). CRVs should be seen as a key asset of BDRCS branches and be part of their overall volunteer management system.

### 7.3 Coordination

Another aspect of the project concerns the extent to which RRR efforts were coordinated with those of other actors.

**C.1 Effective coordination with local governments and NGOs was an important feature of the RRR project.**
The project team invested in coordination and collaboration with other actors, thereby complementing the facilitated strengthening of linkages between governments and communities. It signed MoUs with all union parishads, was part of JMT missions, and engaged with local NGOs through the NRP. Interviewed representatives of NGOs and local governments appreciated the role of BDRCS in overall implementation.

The collaboration with CCHST at the national level was another effective way to support the sustainability of community clinics and support structures.

**C.2 At the national level, coordination may benefit from more technical exchange.**
At the national level, BDRCS is supported by IFRC, ICRC, and several Partner National Societies. Strategic coordination between these Movement partners was described as working rather smoothly. However, it may be worth to invest greater effort in exchanging technical experiences: while most partners roughly know *what* each other is doing and where, there appears to be little exchange on the *how*.

For instance, the experiences from the RRR project, or the ones from the UER project in Gazipur (which featured a sustainable model for solid waste management) should be shared with others. Conversely, SRC-supported programming may benefit from insights and experiences of others.

### 7.4 Follow-up action

Looking into the future, there are many recommendations that can be applied in the upcoming Jamuna project. A set of 21 recommendations is provided in the Jamuna baseline report (pages 19-21).

The new project will expand coverage to Bogura and Sirajganj districts. It will also extend programming in Gaibandha and Kurigram districts, but cover different upazillas, unions and communities than those supported by the RRR project.

So for the RRR target communities in Sundarganj and Char Rajibpur, this is it. The communities are not without needs — far from it. However, internal capacities and better connectedness are good foundations to nurture and raise resilience further.

Nonetheless, from the perspective of the BDRCS-SRC partnership, the RRR communities should not be outrightly abandoned. At a minimum, Kurigram and Gaibandha branches should maintain its links with Community Resilience Volunteers (CRV) as part of their networks.

The continued presence of a project team (while focussing on new areas) should also be harnessed for monitoring visits. As much as capacity allows, BDRCS should continue to act as an advocate for community needs.

Future floods and crisis in particular will be critical times not only to deliver urgent relief. Their aftermath will also provide the opportunity for a reality check: to what extent did early warning systems work as intended? To what extent did plinth-raising lead to avoided losses and damages? Did the communities enact the protocols, and bounce back like the tyre from the 'pumpkin drop'?

Hazard event reviews should be conducted to reflect and improve future programming: what did *not* work? What gaps need to be filled?

SRC and BDRCS should invest in such reviews in the spirit of continuous learning and improvement, and then apply lessons in the Jamuna project and beyond.

# 8. Conclusion

'A level up', was the title of the 2021 evaluation report for the project that preceded the current RRR project. The title poignantly illustrated in three words what the project had achieved: it had raised community resilience by 31.2%, lifting the average score from the 'medium' to the 'high' band.

Three years on, this report illustrates that the RRR project raised the bar even further. The average score was lifted by 61.3% — nearly twice the rate of its predecessor. This achievement is remarkable and seen as the result of a dedicated project team and a holistic approach that is centred around connectedness.

Six of the nine dimensions now are in the 'very high' band. None were in this category when this project was launched in 2021. Crucially, all social dimensions that are seen as foundations for resilience are now in this highest band.

'Reinforcing rural resilience' was in the project's title and at its core. The RRR experience represents a strong case for holistic, community-based programming. In the picture of the resilience game (described in the introduction), the ropes have been tightened.

One may argue that community resilience programming has fallen out of fashion in humanitarian and development programming: many focus on specific contexts (e.g., urban programming), on specific hazards (e.g., heatwaves), on specific solutions (such as anticipatory action) or specific sectors. All of these aspects are valid, and finding an organisation's niche may make sense, stressing comparative advantages when applying for grants.

And yet: from a community perspective, there is only one reality. Holistic approaches that reinforce resilience are arguably best suited to strengthen foundations and address gaps as identified by communities.

With the accelerating impact of the climate crisis, risk profiles and vulnerabilities are likely to change. There is additional impetus and urgency to ensure that communities are empowered to adapt to increasing stressors (this aspect is described further in the Jamuna baseline report). The 'lines of defence' model presented in *chapter 7* may serve as an additional lens to guide programming in climate change adaptation.

BDRCS and its branches are in a unique position to raise resilience further. But to do so, branches must have both strong general capacities (such as sustainable sources of funding, administrative and management capacities, and strong volunteer management systems) as well as the specific skills for community-based programming (such as volunteers trained in community engagement). Branches can also play a strong role in networking with government partners — at district, upazilla, and union levels.

The greater focus on localisation, as envisaged in the new Jamuna project, is thus warranted.

Only with stronger systems and stronger branches can community resilience be advanced at the scale that the accelerating climate crisis requires.

The RRR project experience is an inspiration as to how much can be achieved.

## Your notes

This evaluation is a powerful case study of efforts to strengthen community resilience. With holistic programming and integral aspects to enhance the functions and connections of communities, the 'Reinforcing Rural Resilience (RRR)' project contributed to substantially raised levels of resilience of its target communities.

On the resilience radar, the overall resilience score increased from a medium-level 0.493 in 2021 to a high-level 0.795 in 2024. The most significant improvements were noted in terms of disaster preparedness (+160.2%) and connectedness (+108.0%). All social dimensions of resilience — (community capacity, connectedness, social capital, and inclusiveness) are now rated as very high, representing a strong foundation that communities can build on.

Given the dramatically evolving climate crisis and and high exposure and sensitivity to hazards and stressors typically found in rural communities, the RRR project is a powerful case of what can be achieved in a relatively short timeframe.

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