


## UNDERSTANDING AND IMPROVING DISASTER RISK REDUCTION GOVERNANCE IN COSTA RICA

Costa Rican Red Cross 



### IMPACT BRIEF ON THE FLOOD RESILIENCE PROGRAM

2019 - 2022

As part of the Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance, the Costa Rican Red Cross and the [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies \(IFRC\)](#) collaborated to strengthen flood resilience through an analysis of the flood-related Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) legal framework in Costa Rica and to develop concrete recommendations and collective strategies for its improvement.

The [Costa Rican Red Cross](#) is a voluntary, private, and public interest humanitarian institution dedicated to alleviating human suffering in all circumstances and promoting mutual understanding, cooperation, and lasting peace among all people. The IFRC [Disaster Law](#) Unit provided technical support by sharing expertise on disaster risk management laws and helping to strengthen Costa Rica's disaster governance and legal framework. IFRC Disaster Law is an expert unit that engages with Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies and governments around the world on policy development across many areas of comprehensive disaster risk management, including anticipatory actions, early actions and early warnings, prevention and mitigation, preparedness and response, recovery, international response, protection and inclusion and public health emergencies.

About 60 percent of disasters in Costa Rica are flood-related, with severe impacts on livelihoods, agriculture, the economy, infrastructure, and public health. The Flood Resilience Program targeted seven flood-prone municipalities including four in Guanacaste on the Pacific coast and three in Limón on the Caribbean coast.

A multi-faceted approach was implemented whereby the Costa Rican Red Cross engaged with key stakeholders in municipal, regional and national government to prepare a study on Costa Rica's DRR legal framework and to develop local capacity for advocacy through workshops and shared strategy development. [Humanitarian diplomacy](#) is the Red Cross movement's methodology to pursue advocacy, negotiations, partnerships and agreements with key decisionmakers whilst protecting the movement's fundamental principles, including independence and neutrality.



## Evaluating and improving governance for Disaster Risk Reduction

Through a participatory process, the Costa Rican Red Cross applied the IFRC'S Checklist on Law and Disaster Risk Reduction in collaboration with key actors from the National Risk Management System and municipal representatives. The resulting Study on the Costa Rican Legal Framework on Flood Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) included key policy and community recommendations that were shared and discussed with key stakeholders at the national and municipal levels.

Recommendations, best practice, and opportunities were shared via regional forums with local authorities, universities, research centres and other actors. Furthermore, the insights of the study were disseminated to the public through a large-scale social media campaign with key messages.

Future policy changes emerging from the recommendations of the study have the potential to positively impact over

**300,000 people**



Improved understanding of Disaster Risk Reduction concepts.



Clear commitment from municipalities to take action to improve flood resilience policy and practice.



## Advocacy workshop and shared strategies

The Costa Rican Red Cross worked to ensure key recommendations could be pursued by local actors through advocacy and influencing. An advocacy workshop was held using IFRC's Legislative Advocacy Toolkit to strengthen local stakeholders' skills.

Three advocacy strategies were collaboratively developed providing a pathway to address gaps and strengthen flood resilience in Costa Rica:

- Strengthening the Technical Capacity and Disaster Risk Management Processes of Municipalities.
- The Application of Standardized Concepts on Disaster Risk Management and its Situation in Each Municipality.
- The Characterization of the Vulnerable Population in Each Municipality.

*The program taught us to develop an advocacy strategy, giving us important recommendations for the national risk management system where we can integrate municipal, institutional and governmental efforts to improve emergency management. Thanks to this program we have been able to learn about the links of the entire regulatory framework.*

Dyanne Segura, Municipality of Cañas



# INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING

As part of the Alliance, the Costa Rican Red Cross has undertaken a process of institutional learning, resulting in new capacities, relationships and ways of working.

- Relationships with diverse stakeholders at the national, regional, and municipal level were developed and strengthened.
- The Costa Rican Red Cross increased its visibility and reputation as a key resilience-building actor at the local level and auxiliary to the government, both in community interventions and influencing policy.
- The program adapted to external challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic and limited in-person activities. As meetings and events were held online or in a hybrid format, the program supported training for Red Cross staff and volunteers as well as municipal partners in software such as Teams. This has set a foundation for new, effective ways of working that can be employed even outside of the pandemic context.
- The program was able to achieve all objectives while the Costa Rican Red Cross continued to respond to crises that occurred during the lifetime of the project.

## Our impact

*"The program was an excellent opportunity for us because we heard a neutral perspective from the Red Cross on how to approach the issue of floods. Floods are something we in Santa Cruz suffer from every year. The program allowed us to strategize and decide what we will work on regarding risk reduction and to use the national standardized terminology."*

Geissel Gutiérrez, Municipality of Santa Cruz

*"The program allowed us to identify where we can make changes to correct and strengthen risk management. These modifications are urgently needed because we are at the first line and must be able to answer to communities. More knowledge and constant learning are important for the people and for us in the municipal emergency committee."*

Helen Acuna, Municipality of Siquirres



# RECOMMENDATIONS

The successful development of the Flood Resilience Program in Costa Rica has marked a pivotal step towards greater flood resilience. However, as climate risks continue to grow it is important that our approaches remain dynamic and innovative; leveraging the lessons learned from previous experiences.



Collaborate on the development of resilience assessments and establish shared advocacy priorities and strategies.

- Bring together a diverse group of stakeholders and facilitate a space for dialogue and knowledge exchange.
- Discuss and validate the findings of the resilience assessments or DRR policy reviews with stakeholders to ensure ownership of the results.
- Build collective advocacy strategies to provide a pathway towards taking action on the priority areas for strengthening flood resilience.
- Promote gender-sensitive approaches in flood resilience planning and legal frameworks to ensure equitable access to resources and support.



Build relationships with stakeholders and maintain regular communication.

- Ensure the continued interest of stakeholders by maintaining regular contact and communicating the relevance and importance of the program activities.
- Leverage diverse methodologies to engage with key partners, including online platforms such as Teams and Facebook Live.
- Establish a monitoring system that provides a regular mechanism for reviewing progress across all actors and making decisions to ensure the program stays on track.



Leverage different ways to disseminate key information.

- Engage national, regional and municipal stakeholders in workshops and forums that include spaces for dialogue.
- Share key resources in both print and online form, as appropriate.
- Extend the reach of the program by disseminating key messages on social media.



The Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance is a multi-sectoral partnership focusing on finding practical ways to help communities in developed and developing countries strengthen their resilience to flood risk.  
Find out more: [www.floodresilience.net](http://www.floodresilience.net)



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