

STRENGTHENING FLOOD RESILIENCE THROUGH LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN HONDURAS

Honduran Red Cross



IMPACT BRIEF ON THE FLOOD RESILIENCE PROGRAM

2019 - 2022

The Honduran Red Cross is a key actor in crisis and disaster response, driving local and national action through a network of 53 local branches and more than 6,000 volunteers. The IFRC [Disaster Law](#) Unit provided technical support by sharing expertise on disaster risk management laws and helping to strengthen the Honduran 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.

As part of the Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance (the Alliance), the Honduran Red Cross and the [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#) (IFRC) collaborated to strengthen flood resilience at the local level as well as in coordination with authorities and policymakers.

Flooding affects almost 15% of the country's territory and, together with tropical storms, represents one of the most destructive hazards. The Flood Resilience Program targeted the municipalities of San Pedro Sula, Choloma, and Villanueva in Cortés, representing collectively around 1.5 million people. Historically, the Ulúa and Chamelecón rivers have caused enormous negative impact to livelihoods and food security, especially during the rainy season. In these areas, the impact of flooding is further exacerbated by existing vulnerabilities including high levels of poverty.

A multi-faceted approach was implemented whereby the Honduran Red Cross engaged with local populations to promote community participation in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) activities focused primarily on flood risk while simultaneously employing humanitarian diplomacy to improve the legal framework related to DRR. The latter involved a review of DRR policies and the enhancement of coordination and collaboration between key actors.



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Multi-sectoral coordination was enhanced.

The program set up a multi-sectoral collaboration network, the 'Alliance for Flood Resilience in Northern Honduras', consisting of municipal governments, private companies, the regional risk management authority, and others. As a cross-sectoral space for facilitating dialogue and knowledge exchange and strengthening coordination for risk management and resilience-building, the Alliance for

Resilience became an important mechanism in the Sula valley in response to COVID-19 scenario and the impact of tropical storms in November 2020. Given the success of this network, the Alliance was extended to two neighbouring departments. All involved parties were committed to institutionalizing this network for continued coordination and collaboration beyond the duration of the program.

Enhanced flood resilience knowledge, skills and coordination in San Pedro Sula, Choloma, and Villanueva, Cortés, can potentially provide positive impact to over

1,000,000 people



Increased local knowledge of flood risk management, legal frameworks related to DRR and capacities for building resilience.



Strengthened partnerships and coordination between diverse actors for a holistic flood resilience approach.



Study of legal frameworks related to flood resilience and DRR.

One of the key interventions led by the program was the development of a study of flood disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies, plans, guidelines, and legal frameworks, highlighting gaps and strengths and generating a stronger understanding of DRR policy and practice. The study, available in Spanish [online](#), was based on the [IFRC's Checklist on Law and Disaster Preparedness and Response](#). The study included recommendations

for seeking improvements in the legal framework and an advocacy strategy was developed collaboratively to determine the objectives for influencing policy change. Three municipalities also developed disaster risk reduction investment plans highlighting DRR priorities including both structural and non-structural measures. The specific results and recommendations of the study were socialized via multiple in-person and online events.



Building capacity and knowledge.

Numerous DRR workshops and training sessions, based on the IFRC's Disaster Law Unit's Legislative Advocacy Toolkit, were provided to local communities and partners in order to raise awareness for DRR and empower local stakeholders to advocate for their needs, including increased funds and improved policies for flood resilience.

These sessions also facilitated the development of a shared understanding of priorities and opportunities. The program also worked with local authorities to develop municipal strategies for risk reduction, identifying and aligning the strategic development pillars of each municipality with the National Risk Management Policy.

INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING

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

- Local volunteers understand disaster risk, flood resilience and the global, national and local legal frameworks related to disaster risk reduction.
- Local volunteers are trained in advocacy and influencing to push for changes beyond the capacity of the Red Cross.
- The Red Cross in the Sula Valley is more connected and integrated with key stakeholders across diverse sectors.
- Through the development of participatory studies on the existing legal framework related to disaster risk reduction, the Honduran Red Cross was established as an expert on DRR policy and was invited to support policy development at the national level.
- The program employed adaptive management to ensure activities were undertaken to meet the program objectives throughout the context of Covid-19 and the impact of Hurricanes Eta and Iota.

“ *One of the objectives of the program is to identify legal gaps and strengths that exist in the Sula Valley to carry out effective prevention and response to disasters, emergencies and crises ... we managed to have an excellent gathering of the different sectors to discuss what we have, what we don't have, and what we can do.* ”

Nelson Aly Rodriguez, Head of Central America Cluster Delegation, IFRC

Our impact

Marlene Sosa is from a small community in the Sula Valley called Chamelecón. Chamelecón is a flood-prone community of approximately 300 families where infrastructure is basic, including limited access to safe drinking water. Marlene belongs to a local group of women who have pioneered important community projects, including a community nursery and small park for children. In 2021, Marlene participated with other community members in a workshop led by the Honduran Red Cross focused on strengthening advocacy skills. Based on the IFRC's [Legislative Advocacy Toolkit](#), this training aimed to empower local communities to advocate for their needs related to flood resilience and other issues.

In Chamelecón, the population has identified the need for flood protection infrastructure, such as a dike, to reduce the impact of flooding on lives and livelihoods. Marlene expressed that the legislative advocacy tools allowed her and the other women in her community to prepare a plan which outlined the community context, defined the problem, clarified a request and offered a solution.

“ *The community knows their needs and they applied the tools from the training, which shows how they can take ownership of their advocacy to help solve a problem.* ”

Rebeca Muñoz, IFRC Disaster Law Officer in the Americas

RECOMMENDATIONS

The successful development of the Flood Resilience Program in Honduras 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.



Establish relevance of program objectives by aligning with evolving local needs and priorities.

- Understand and communicate how the program activities provide added value to the existing priorities and challenges faced by key stakeholders.
- Ensure program work is not isolated from the real time context, particularly in the case of major crises during the lifetime of the program.
- Carefully consider new opportunities for advocacy and influencing during election periods where key stakeholders are shaping priorities and proposals.



Build strong relationships and facilitate mechanisms for cross-sectoral dialogues and coordination.

- Convene a diverse and cross-sectoral coalition of actors to participate, lead and sustain program activities over time.
- Provide opportunities for private enterprises to participate to strengthen their understanding of the role that DRR can play in Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives.
- Ensure coordination mechanisms are flexible and can shift to meet the changing needs of its membership, for example to coordinate response activities when the impact of disaster is imminent.



Strengthen awareness and capacities and support the development of evidence-based knowledge.

- Undertake participatory activities to produce knowledge on the status of flood resilience and the possible entry points and opportunities.
- Promote gender-sensitive approaches in flood resilience planning and legal frameworks to ensure equitable access to resources and support.
- Empower stakeholders to conduct sustained advocacy by providing relevant evidence on the DRR policy landscape, developing shared advocacy strategies and building capacity for influencing.



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



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