

EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES FOR ENHANCED DISASTER RISK GOVERNANCE IN NEPAL



IMPACT BRIEF ON THE FLOOD RESILIENCE PROGRAM

2019 - 2024

As part of the Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance, the Nepal Red Cross Society and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) collaborated to strengthen flood resilience through a focus on strengthening disaster risk governance and Early Warning Systems.

The Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) is the largest humanitarian actor in Nepal, with a network of 77 district chapters and thousands of volunteers. The Nepal Red Cross is recognized legally as a key player in disaster risk management and response, acting as an auxiliary to national and local government for humanitarian services. The IFRC Disaster Law Unit provided technical support by sharing expertise on disaster risk management laws and helping to strengthen Nepal's disaster governance and legal framework.

Nationally, Nepal receives around 80% of annual precipitation during the monsoon season, between June and September, causing the network of more than 6000 rivers to overflow.

Flooding has devastating impacts in Nepal, including significant loss and damages to houses, infrastructure, and livelihoods, particularly crops and livestock.

Leveraging the humanitarian diplomacy and auxiliary role of NRCS, the project engaged deeply with key disaster resilience actors at the local and national levels to support community-led actions, build capacity and strengthen the enabling environment. 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.



Municipal Disaster Risk Governance Assessment (MDRGA) Tool

The Flood Resilience Project led the development of the Municipal Disaster Risk Governance Assessment (MDRGA) Tool, a user-friendly context-relevant self-assessment tool, drawing inspiration from a number of Disaster Law resources, to empower municipal authorities to understand their roles and responsibilities related to disaster risk management and to act as a catalyst for stronger governance at the local level. Through the identification of resources, strengths, gaps, and priorities, the MDRGA Tool supports integrating Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) into local policies, plans and programs and promotes investment in risk-sensitive and DRR-friendly governance.

The MDRGA Tool was co-created, piloted and rolled out in collaboration with diverse stakeholders including federal and provincial governments, UN agencies, international and local NGOs including Mercy Corps and Practical Action, to ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives and to promote broad acceptance and implementation of the methodology.

The Municipal Disaster Risk Governance Assessment Tool is very useful to understand the current resources and need of resources, gaps and challenges in disaster risk reduction/management in the municipality. These indicators [in the tool] will be considered during planning, budgeting, and policymaking.

Senior Municipal Government Staff from Barbardiya Municipality

+140,000

lives improved

New policy that has a sustained positive impact on people's lives.

+300,000

indirect reach

Population that benefits from community interventions, scaling up and influencing initiatives.

Official endorsement of the MDRGA Tool by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration and collaboration with and buy-in from key partners lay out a pathway going forward for rolling out the tool across all



753
municipalities



Flood and Heat Early Warning Systems

Early Warning Systems related to floods and heat waves have been strengthened through national level dialogue, local policy support and training and workshops to increase capacities including developing plans.

In 2023, the Red Cross supported and participated in key meetings and workshops at the national level to bring actors together to review the current state of early warning systems in Nepal and to assess the progress in implementing the four pillars of the Early Warning for All (EW4ALL) initiative.

Further, the project carried out EWS strengthening work at the local level in eight municipalities located in Lohandra Basin and Biratnagar Metropolitan city, including participatory assessments of existing EWS components, workshops on heatwave Action Plans and trainings and drills to increase knowledge and capacities of local key actors related to Early Warning Systems, emergency response and First Aid.

INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING

As part of the Flood Resilience Alliance, the IFRC and NRCS have captured a number of lessons learned that are key to promoting institutional learning.

- Piloting is key to reviewing efficacy and making improvements to proposed policy changes.
- An approach focused on a single policy change generated targeted momentum however also represented a challenge when obstacles related governmental endorsement emerged.
- The endorsement of the MDRGA Tool required a comprehensive review and approval process from federal stakeholders, involving numerous departments and was further extended by turnover of officials and shifting priorities.
- The project closely managed risk related to programming delays and developed a new line of work related to Early Warning Systems that also met the broader project objectives.
- Findings from the implementation of the tool will help the National Society position itself and identify gaps where we can play a vital role in collaborating with local governments.

Our impact

As the Municipal Disaster Risk Governance Assessment (MDRGA) tool has been piloted and rolled out in municipalities across Nepal, a number of flow-on effects have been observed that highlight the potential of this resource, including a vital paradigm shift from ex-post to ex-ante whereby municipalities have broadened their understanding of their roles and responsibilities to take action at all stages of the disaster risk management cycle.

"The tool has shown us where our gaps are, what we've already accomplished, and what still needs to be done ... Before, we thought the municipality's main role was to distribute relief materials, but after implementing the MDRGA tool, we've realized that distributing relief is the last step. Our main responsibility is early action and setting up a warning system" said Nirmala Chaudhary, DRR Focal Person in Tikapur Municipality.

The implementation of the MDRGA Tool in Tikapur and Punarbas municipalities in the Sudurpashchim province in 2023, with the support of the Nepal Red Cross and Danish Red Cross, led to a cascade of actions to strengthen disaster risk governance, including assigning a DRR focal person, establishing and operationalizing a disaster management fund through formulating procedures, policies, guidelines and strategies, organizing relevant trainings for key actors and community members, developing plans related to preparedness, response, and risk strategy, and setting up Emergency Operation Centres.

As a result of these actions, municipal representatives noted that the impact of floods in Tikapur in September 2024 was significantly reduced compared to the previous year.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The successful development of the Flood Resilience Project in Nepal over the last 5 years has marked a pivotal improvement in disaster risk governance. However, as climate risks continue to grow it is important that our approaches remain dynamic and innovative; leveraging the lessons learned from previous experiences.



Work with others and develop alternative strategies for community engagement.

- Co-build tools and resources with partners to increase a sense of ownership and to promote a pathway for wide replication.
- Adapt materials and methodologies for virtual or long-distance training where direct community engagement is not possible.



Carefully plan for processes that depend on engagement with key stakeholders.

- Continuously develop and nurture relationships with key stakeholders and identify entry points in terms of key actors and timing to facilitate engagement with stakeholders.
- Communicate the value of the tool and co-benefits for existing objectives with key stakeholders.



Establish a risk management strategy and monitor risk regularly.

- In the face of unexpected changes, develop alternative strategies for achieving project objectives.
- Identify potential risks that may impede project progress and monitor regularly.
- Set thresholds for acceptable risk and activate programming changes once thresholds are surpassed.



Disseminate tools among different stakeholders at the local level.

- To support the uptake of the tool, integrate into ongoing initiatives led by diverse partners at the local level, i.e. programs or projects working with local authorities on Disaster Risk Management or Early Warning Systems.



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



LEARN
MORE
HERE