

CASE STUDY

A catalyst for strengthening local risk governance

Impacts of the Municipal Disaster Risk Governance Assessment (MDRGA) Tool in Nepal



MDRGA: what is it?

The **Municipal Disaster Risk Governance Assessment (MDRGA) Tool** is a simple, user-friendly, and contextually relevant self-assessment tool that allows municipal authorities and stakeholders to better understand their roles and responsibilities related to Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and to identify resources, strengths, gaps, and priorities within their local context.

The MDRGA Tool is made up of **65 indicators** across six thematic areas:

1. Policy Legal and Regulatory Framework
2. Institution and Organizational Structure
3. Planning, Budgeting, and Monitoring
4. Coordination, Partnerships, and Collaboration
5. Resources and Capacities
6. Cross-cutting issues

The primary purpose of the MDRGA Tool is to catalyse intentional and impactful action to strengthen disaster risk governance at the local level, ultimately having positive flow-on effects to vulnerable communities that increase resilience and minimise the negative impact of disasters on wellbeing and ongoing development. Further, the Tool allows stakeholders to better understand the need for effective disaster risk governance and sets a baseline for existing local DRM governance.

“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

“The Local Disaster Risk Governance Assessment Tool has helped in strengthening disaster risk governance by assessing the actual state of disaster risk of the municipalities, guiding policy and planning reforms, ensuring accountability and transparency, supporting capacity building and community participation and cooperation, prioritizing resource management and investment, supporting the Sustainable Development Goals.”

“The ministry has given priority in collaborating for trainings and workshops by preparing guidelines, conducting pilot projects, adopting effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems, in line with national goals and international commitments, adopting scientific incentives and reward systems. The Ministry also plans to collaborate with appropriate development partners to carry out all these works.”

Mr. Mohan Kumar Ghimire
Under Secretary, Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration

Resilience gap?

Nepal is a relatively small, landlocked country in Asia, located between India and China, characterised by diverse topography, ranging from a minimum of approximately 60m above sea level in the Tarai plains to the Great Himalayan Range, home to the highest point on Earth, and climate that varies from sub-tropical climates in the south to extreme cold in the North. This geographical diversity, along with the geological context and other factors such as informal settlements and rapid urbanisation, means that Nepal is exposed to multiple hazards, including earthquakes, floods, landslides, droughts, heat waves, cold waves, avalanches, and storms. Disasters have devastating impacts in Nepal, including fatalities, significant loss and damage to houses, infrastructure, and livelihoods, severe flow-on effects on the economy, and displacement.

In 2017, a new federal structure came into effect in Nepal, following the endorsement of the revised constitution in 2015, triggering the development of a series of new legal frameworks and institutional arrangements that redefined the distribution of powers and responsibilities between federal, provincial, and local governments. This national restructure emphasised the importance of localisation and added disaster risk reduction and management to the remit of local governments. At the time of this change, the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA) immediately identified a capacity gap related to DRM knowledge and capacity at the municipal level and requested support to develop tools to facilitate knowledge transfer and capacity building.

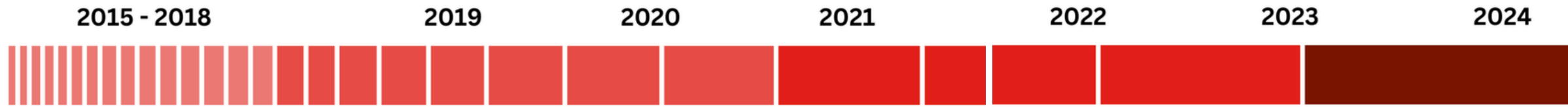
Who are we?

The **Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS)** is Nepal's largest humanitarian actor, with a network of 77 district branches and thousands of volunteers. The NRCS is legally recognised as a critical stakeholder in disaster risk management and response, acting as an auxiliary to public authority.

In Nepal, the **International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** supports the NRCS in advocating for the nationwide scaling up of community resilience-building efforts, mainly through engaging in policy dialogue with national stakeholders and disseminating knowledge and tools that promote best practices in community disaster resilience.

IFRC Disaster Law provides support and guidance to National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and governments on policy development related to 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. The Municipal Disaster Risk Governance Assessment (MDRGA) Tool draws inspiration from several IFRC Disaster Law tools, including the Checklist on Law and Disaster Risk Reduction.

The development of the Municipal Disaster Risk Governance Assessment (MDRGA) Tool has been led by NRCS, IFRC, and the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA), with the support of the Zurich Climate Resilience Alliance (formerly the Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance), 2019–24.



Institutional and enabling environment

Constitution of Nepal 2015 establishes federal structure and leads to development of:

- Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Act 2074
- Local Government Operational Act 2074
- National Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2075
- Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategic Action Plan (2018-2030)

Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) platform convened.

Version 1: Development and piloting

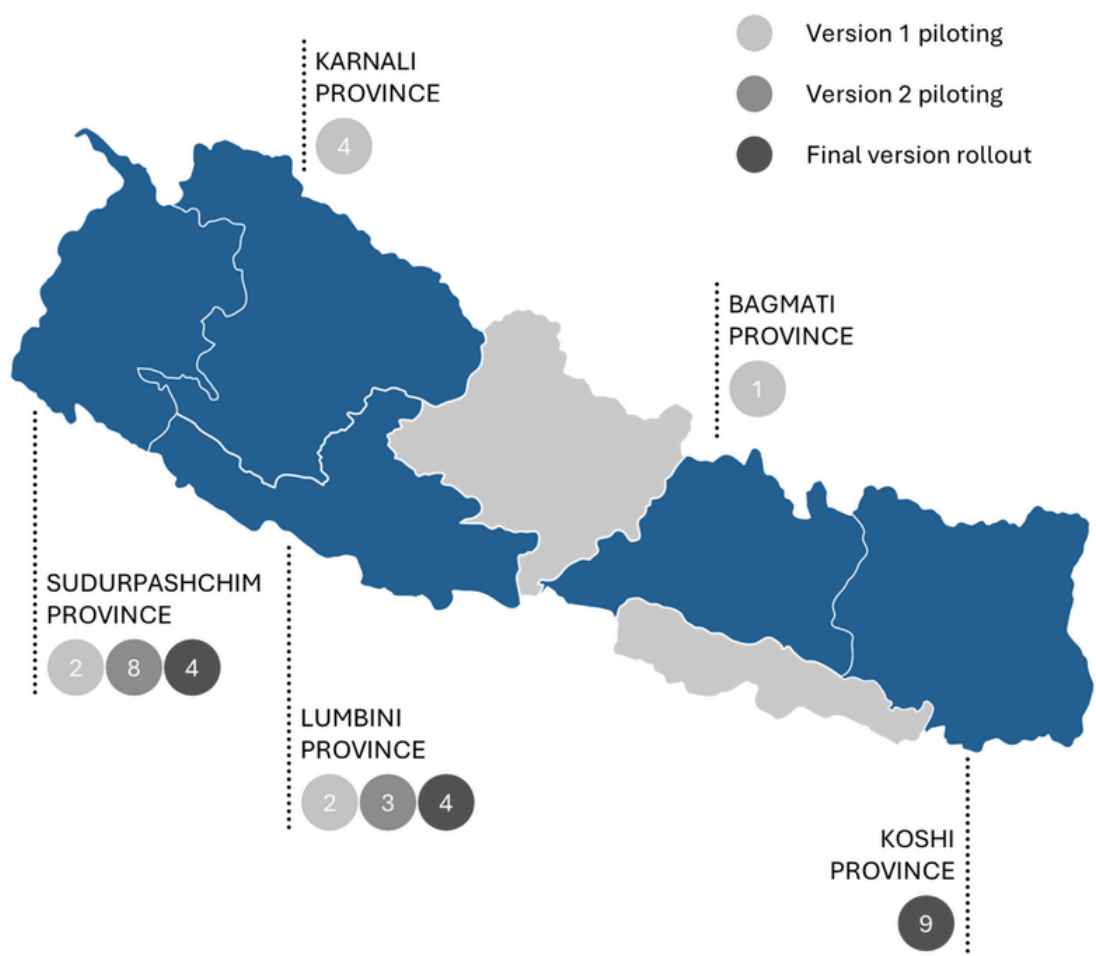
Version 1 of the Municipal Disaster Risk Governance Assessment (MDGRA) Tool is drafted, with input from over 50 organizations from the CBDRM platform. Despite delays due to the Covid-19 pandemic, version 1 of the MDRGA Tool is piloted in 8 municipalities with the support of Nepal Red Cross Society, Practical Action and Mercy Corps.

Version 2: Development and piloting

Version 2 of the MDRGA Tool is developed incorporating feedback from the first version, including a reduction of the number of indicators. The MDRGA Tool is piloted in 11 municipalities, led by Mercy Corps and NRCS, with the support of the Danish Red Cross and the Finnish Red Cross (FinnRC). The MDRGA Tool is translated into Nepali and submitted to MoFAGA for review and endorsement.

Endorsement and rollout

The Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA) endorses the MDRGA Tool in March 2024. The rollout of the MDRGA Tool begins in 26 municipalities, with the support of NRCS, IFRC, MoFAGA and other CBDRM partners.



CBDRM platform

The MDRGA Tool was co-created in collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including federal and provincial governments, UN agencies, and international and local NGOs, including Mercy Corps and Practical Action, to ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives and promote broad acceptance and implementation of the methodology. The Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) platform was a key mechanism that facilitated co-development.

Together with the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA), the IFRC and NRCS co-chair the CBDRM platform. The CBDRM platform is an inclusive multi-stakeholder forum for DRM coordination and policy development. Around 35 partners from the humanitarian and development sectors meet regularly to share experiences on policy-related work as well as community-based interventions. The [CBDRM website](#), available in English and Nepali, hosts a series of tools and reports developed by the partners.

In 2024, the MDRGA Tool was endorsed by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA) following an extensive process of participatory and technical consultative meetings with representatives of line agencies and related government Ministries and divisions. Endorsement was key to ensuring the alignment, credibility and sustainability of the MDRGA Tool:

1 Alignment

Endorsement confirms that the MDRGA tool complements and enriches existing DRM processes and resources available to municipalities, such as the Local Government Institutional Capacity Self-Assessment (LISA) tool.

2 Credibility

Endorsement increases the credibility of the tool and encourages greater buy-in of the tool by municipal authorities and other organizations working in Nepal. As a 'go-to' resource, this represents an opportunity to systematize this type of assessments across different programs and projects.

3 Sustainability

Endorsement is a recognition of institutional ownership of the MDRGA Tool. MoFAGA is positioned to lead and promote the implementation of the MDRGA Tool throughout more municipalities in Nepal.

Impact

As of the end of 2024, approximately 5% of municipalities in Nepal have carried out the self-assessment process using the MDRGA Tool, either as part of the piloting phases or initial rollout, to identify resources, strengths, gaps, and priorities related to Disaster Risk Management. As a decision support tool aimed at spurring action to strengthen disaster risk governance, there is already evidence of the flow-on effects including paradigm shifts, local planning and budget changes, enhanced partnerships and coordination and investment in capacity building and community organisation.

5%
of
municipalities
in Nepal have
carried out the
MDRGA Tool.

This sample of impact stories come from four municipalities where the IFRC and NRCS supported local authorities in implementing the MDRGA Tool: Tikapur Municipality and Punarbas Municipality in Sudurpashchim Province and Kerabari Rural Municipality and Belbari Municipality in Koshi Province.

The MDRGA Tool supports a paradigm shift towards proactive risk management before, during and after disasters.

A vital paradigm shift has been observed as a result of the implementation of the MDRGA Tool whereby local government representatives have broadened their understanding of their roles and responsibilities to take action at all stages of the disaster risk management cycle. This has significantly changed how they approached disaster management in previous years.

"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 realised that distributing relief is the last step. Our main responsibility is early action and setting up a warning system."

Nirmala Chaudhary, DRR focal point for Tikapur Municipality

This new perspective has permeated areas beyond DRM actions. Omnath Khanal, DRR focal point for Punarbas Municipality, explained that the MDRGA Tool provided a new way of looking at construction and infrastructure development. He now believes every new community project, including infrastructure, should be designed with disaster preparedness in mind.

In the Kerabari Rural Municipality, the MDRGA Tool has been instrumental in identifying vulnerabilities which has led to a shift from primarily response-focused work to a holistic approach that also invests in preparedness and broader resilience. *"Thanks to the MDRGA tool, we've been able to visualise our vulnerability, educate the community about the risks, and develop effective plans for the future,"* explained Chandra Basnet, Head of the Kerabari Disaster Department. The tool provided valuable insights into both strengths and areas for improvement, allowing the municipality to plan strategically and prioritise key areas that need attention.

The MDRGA Tool leads to prioritisation of DRM in local plans and budgets.

Sample MDRGA indicators:

- 3.2: Are sufficient activities and adequate funds allocated to the implementation of disaster risk reduction and management policies, plans and systems?
- 3.8: Is the participation of vulnerable communities ensured in the disaster risk reduction and management planning process?

The Tikapur Municipality addressed one of the key gaps identified through the application of the MDRGA Tool by establishing a DRM budget, amounting to more than one lakh, at the ward level. This budget has been utilised to purchase rescue materials and to organise community first-aid training. Nirmala Chaudhary, DRR focal point for Tikapur Municipality, reflects that *"the municipality considers disaster management as its top priority work and has demonstrated its commitment to disaster resilience by establishing a dedicated disaster fund"*. Toya Prasad Sharma, Mayor of Punarbas Municipality, added that *"previously, there was no dedicated budget for disaster management, but now we have allocated funds specifically for this purpose"*.

The tool has also encouraged municipalities to adopt more inclusive practices by establishing Gender, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) guidelines. These guidelines ensure that the needs of marginalised groups, such as women, people with disabilities, and socially excluded communities, are considered in local governance and planning processes.

In these municipalities, the MDRGA Tool has also increased awareness among local authorities of the plans, policies, and strategies related to DRM that they are responsible for. This has resulted in a cascade of local DRM planning, for example through the creation of Disaster Risk Reduction Strategic Action Plans (DRRSAP), Risk-Sensitive Land Use Plans (RSLUP), Disaster Preparedness and Response Plans (DPRP) and Local Disaster and Climate Resilience Plans (LDCRP).



The MDRGA Tool promotes shared responsibility and collective action.

Sample MDRGA indicators:

- 2.13: Has a local Emergency Operation Centre been established?
- 4.2: Is there coordination, partnership and collaboration with the key stakeholders of disaster risk reduction and management?



Coordination, partnership, and collaboration is a key thematic area emphasised in the MDRGA Tool. This focus has inspired municipalities to engage with more stakeholders and combine or align resources and efforts for effective disaster management. *"Coordination with the police, community, disaster management team, and the people's representatives are equally important. It is not about the budget. It is about coordination and co-working"*, stated Chandra Basnet, Head of the Kerabari Disaster Department.

Representatives and leaders within these municipalities recognised that the MDRGA Tool had promoted collaboration among stakeholders, local authorities, and community members, viewing it as a catalyst for teamwork and cooperation in tackling complex disasters. This coordination plays a key role in the effective use of limited resources. *"This tool has helped municipalities avoid duplication"*, said Binayak Poudel, Program Coordinator for Punarbas Municipality, *"for instance, if any organisation or agency offers to support the creation of a local disaster and climate resilience plan, municipalities can guide them on which areas need funding"*, he added.



Municipalities have now established a Local Emergency Operation Centres (LEOC) to manage local disaster response and coordinate efficiently between actors, addressing key gaps highlighted by the MDRGA Tool. In Punarbas Municipality, the LEOC has also established a strategic coordination mechanism with other levels of government: *"We are now closely coordinating with the District Emergency Operations Centre (DEOC) and Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PEOC)"*, shared Toya Prasad Sharma, Mayor of Punarbas Municipality.

The MDRGA Tool prompted the appointment of DRR focal points and motivated investment in increasing public risk awareness and strengthening community organisation.

Sample MDRGA indicators:

- 2.5: Has the thematic-specific Unit/Division/Department or Focal Point regarding disaster risk reduction and management been designated?
- 5.2: Have capacity building activities on disaster risk reduction and management and climate change adaptation been carried out in communities?

One of the key changes brought about by the implementation of the MDRGA Tool is the appointment of municipal focal points to oversee and streamline all DRR activities. With this role in place, the municipalities have been able to focus more effectively on building local DRM capacity and resources.

Municipalities have taken steps to increase risk awareness in the local population, especially as a low cost intervention accessible to most local governments. Nirmala Chaudhary, the DRR focal point for Tikapur, noted that it was previously believed that every DRM initiative required funding, the municipality now recognizes that knowledge is a powerful tool. Chaudhary shared, *"sometimes, our knowledge alone is sufficient. So, we go to community schools and share knowledge about disaster preparedness with students"*. Chandra Basnet, Head of the Kerabari Disaster Department, echoed the importance of awareness and preparation: *"Disaster can befall anyone at any time, so awareness and early preparation are the only solution to cope in such a situation"*.

DRM was strengthened in the Belbari Municipality through increased community organisation. Members of local communities have been trained in skills related to disaster preparedness and response, resulting in the formation of well-prepared local teams that can support municipal actors in case of disaster. Further, this work fostered a more inclusive and community-driven approach to disaster management. Mayor Dil Prasad Rai of Belbari Municipality noted that implementing the MDRGA Tool had significantly improved the municipality's confidence in its disaster management capabilities.



What's next?

Following the endorsement from the federal government of Nepal, the Municipal Disaster Risk Governance Assessment (MDRGA) Tool is being rolled out in municipalities across the country, with the support of IFRC, NRCS, and other partners. The examples outlined in this case study demonstrate the potential of the MDRGA Tool to support local leaders in understanding their role in disaster risk management and triggering action to address gaps and priorities, resulting in tangible changes that bring positive impact to vulnerable populations.

"The MDRGA tool has sparked self-motivation in all of us working in disaster management. It has made us realise that every plan and action we take is for the benefit of the community. Fighting against disasters is a shared responsibility", said Nirmala Chaudhary, DRR focal person for Tikapur Municipality.

Acknowledgements

The Zurich Climate Resilience Alliance is a multi-sectoral partnership, powered by the Z Zurich Foundation, focused on enhancing resilience to climate hazards in both rural and urban communities. By implementing solutions, promoting good practice, influencing policy and facilitating systemic change, we aim to ensure that all communities facing climate hazards are able to thrive. Find out more: www.ZCRAlliance.org

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