



GLOBAL  
RESILIENCE  
PARTNERSHIP



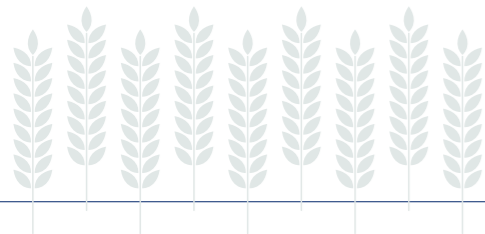
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# The Water Window Challenge 2016 - 2019



## Contents

- 3 Introduction
- 6 Summary of project support to beneficiaries
- 8 Creating impact in many ways
- 10 Lessons learnt – enablers and challenges



## Introduction

Over the course of 2016-19, the **Z Zurich Foundation** invested **USD 10 million through the Global Resilience Partnership's Water Window** to enhance community resilience to floods. This report highlights the achievements of the projects that together positively impacted more than half a million people.



Gardening on a bodyke to provide protection and additional livelihoods with Practical Action in Bangladesh.



*GRP aims to create a nurturing environment that enables great innovations to thrive, be tested and scaled when ready. The Water Window provided grants to consortia of organizations working to strengthen resilience among the world's most vulnerable people.*

### The Global Resilience Partnership

The Global Resilience Partnership (GRP), launched at the U.S. African Leaders' Summit in Washington DC in 2014, was set up by The Rockefeller Foundation and USAID to help transform how development and humanitarian actions are undertaken to benefit hundreds of millions of people living in developing countries. Born out of an idea that a new type of partnership was needed to support a new way of working across public, private, humanitarian and development sectors, GRP was setup to work with, and through its partners to be:

- An **'Ideas Lab'** – identifying and incubating locally driven, high impact, innovative solutions and collaboration mechanisms among both private and public partners capable of building resilience, accomplished primarily through a series of Challenge rounds and specific activities pursued against five Programmatic Features: Innovative Finance and Markets, Technology and Infrastructure, Measurements and Diagnostics, Policy and Influence and Learning;
- A **'Deal Broker'** – positioning promising innovations for scale by facilitating connections and leveraging resources via its network, accomplished primarily through an Incubation Hub; and,
- A **Policy Influencer** – shaping and engaging with policy from local to global scales, engendering resilience thinking within decision makers and opening new pathways to ensure resilient solutions have substantive impact.



Using mangrove restoration to train women on new livelihoods through Seacology/Sudeesa in Sri Lanka.

**Challenge Rounds**

To help identify innovative ideas and extend them to more people, GRP commissioned three Challenge rounds during 2015-19: a general resilience round, also called Round 1 and primarily funded by USAID, and a Water Window round, with a particular focus on resilience to flood-related issues funded by the Z Zurich Foundation (the Foundation).

Through these Challenges, GRP worked with 22 projects and 21 grantee consortia in 16 countries across sub-Saharan Africa and South and Southeast Asia.

**Zurich Insurance Group's (Zurich's) Involvement**

Recognizing that floods affect more people and cause more losses than any other natural hazard, Zurich and the Foundation launched the Zurich Flood Resilience Program in 2013. This program started with an initial five-year phase running until 2018, which was then extended to a second phase. *You can read more about the program here.*

In 2015, to accelerate impact, Zurich started discussions with GRP on the idea of a flood-focused resilience Challenge, which was developed into the Water Window Challenge. The Challenge had two aims – supporting innovative and experimental ideas, and helping expand out tested ideas to new areas or new scales. The Z Zurich Foundation board agreed to fund this proposal, working in partnership with Zurich.

The total investment from the Foundation over a two and a half year period was USD 10 million.

*A call was made in May 2016 for projects, which attracted 290 applications. Through a rigorous selection process 11 consortia were chosen to implement 12 projects in South and Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Five of the projects received around USD 1 million each to scale existing ideas, while the other seven projects received up to USD 250,000 to test new ideas. Work started in early 2017 and ran to mid-2019.*



**Over half a million people supported**

Grantees were motivated by an ambition to improve people's resilience to floods and other shocks and stresses. They measured the number of people supported by their projects across their implementation period. **Overall, the 11 grantees reported supporting 507,354 people.**<sup>1</sup>

There is variance across grantees in terms of the types of support they provide and progress towards their own targets. While some have fallen short, others have considerably exceeded their own expectations.<sup>2</sup>



Looking after mangrove seedlings with Seacology/Sudeesa in Sri Lanka.

**Total number of people supported by Water Window grantees**  
(% in brackets indicates grantee contribution towards the total)

PEOPLE SUPPORTED BY GRP:  
**507,354**



| Indicator ID | GRP indicators                     | Unit | Total progress |
|--------------|------------------------------------|------|----------------|
| GRP 1        | People supported by GRP            | No.  | 507,354        |
| GRP 2        | Net dollar benefit per person      | USD  | 499            |
| GRP 3        | People more resilient <sup>3</sup> | No.  |                |
| GRP 4        | End users satisfied with support   | No.  | 88%            |

*Grantees were motivated by an ambition to improve people's resilience to floods and other shocks and stresses*

<sup>1</sup> According to GRP indicator reporting guidance, 'support' is defined as assistance from the project or activity, with the intention of helping people become more resilient. There is a wide range of support types across the WW portfolio, but reporting was restricted to high- and medium-levels of support.

<sup>2</sup> This number represents 68% of the portfolio-wide target for this indicator, which was 744,107. This shortfall owes partly to delayed guidance provided to grantees, resulting in over-targeting by those who included indirect, low-intensity beneficiaries which were not included in final progress reporting.

<sup>3</sup> Some, but not all grantees, attempted to measure changes in resilience. However, there was no requirement for them to do so, and the methods employed were extremely variable. Indicator GRP3 has therefore not been possible to measure consistently.

## Summary of project support to beneficiaries



Lutheran World Relief (LWR) aimed to strengthen Early Warning Systems (EWS and disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies on the **India–Nepal border**. LWR has **supported 96,790 people** through the formation and strengthening of Community Disaster Management Committees (CDMCs) and cooperatives; provision of emergency flood equipment; flood drill exercises; introduction of an EWS; agricultural and business development support; and various other smaller-scale interventions.



Inspiring Excellence

BRAC University approached flood risk by developing **innovations in flood-resilient housing**. Their three floating homes and extensive training around them has directly supported **132 people in Bangladesh**. The multi-functional homes have introduced technologies of rain water harvesting, biological waste recycling, aqua- and hydroponics, and renewable (solar and wind) energy to a remote community in the Shariyatpur district, 95km south of Bangladesh's capital Dhaka, near to the Padma river.



MetaMeta's 'Roads to the Rescue' project **installed new culverts (structures that direct water under roads) to relieve drainage issues in Bangladesh**. Insufficient water crossings in the polder causes frequent waterlogging and leads to crop failures, to which this intervention provides a solution. With six of the eight drainage bottlenecks addressed during project implementation, **it is estimated that MetaMeta has supported 11,380 people (75%) of the polder population**.

## Practical Action

Practical Action tackled **crop resilience in flood-prone Bangladesh**, reaching **30,272 people** by providing technical advisory services, trainings and marketing support. Beneficiaries were equipped with the materials and knowledge to adopt innovative and climate-smart technologies such as vertical gardening, sack gardening, aquaponics and vermicomposting. A dedicated call center was also established to provide agricultural information to farmers.



University of Potsdam's ResilNam project aimed to **support both urban and rural populations through two projects in Vietnam's Thua Thien Hue province**. Combined, the projects **supported 6,220 people**. In both projects, training (on ecosystem-based adaptation, flood resilience and DRR), advocacy, environmental improvement and mangrove planting have helped demonstrate the value of ecosystem-based adaptation and strengthen the role of women in flood management.



In Vietnam, ISET provided the necessary equipment to improve the local flood **Early Warning Systems (EWS)**. ISET provided two communes, Dai Hong and Hoa Khuong, with life vests, sirens, generators, flashlights and megaphones, supporting the entire population of both – **23,628 people**.



Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the only grantee operating in Africa, **delivered technical solutions to refugee and host communities in Kakuma, Kenya**. Through training, Early Warning Systems (EWS) and installation of technologies such as road drifts, shade nets and trapezoidal bunds, DRC's Community Flood Resilience Project (COFREP) **supported 46,138 people**.



Seacology supported **21,617 people in Sri Lanka** with a focus on coastal mangrove protection through the formation of women-led Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). Members of **these CBOs are supported with the set-up of mangrove nurseries**, a mangrove conservation awareness program, access to microloans and other skills development trainings.



The University of Waterloo completed four amphibious houses, **benefitting 24 end-users and their neighbors who can retreat to the houses in case of severe flooding**. In addition, twenty local workers and students benefited from training, bringing the total to **44 beneficiaries**. Combining academic research and expertise with local knowledge, understanding of needs and context and local construction expertise were important drivers to the success of this project.



Mercy Corps provided the largest contribution to the portfolio's progress by **supporting over 260 thousand people (43.4%)**. Its 'Transboundary Flood Risk Mitigation' project in Indonesia aimed to build resilience through innovative and user-friendly information tools for vulnerable watershed populations. Support included pilot interventions (including tree planting, organic fertiliser production and school activities); trainings (including social media training and training on the Ecosystems Services Identification and Inventory (ESII) tool); transboundary multi-stakeholder workshops; and community group activities.

## one architecture

One Architecture's One Resilient Team, focused on **restoring mangrove and beach forests in Tacloban**, an area devastated by Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. An **estimated 5,847 people were supported**, comprising recipients of trainings and capacity building workshops associated with the restoration pilot sites, as well as those living directly on the floodplains of pilot sites and benefiting from increased flood protection.

## Creating impact in many ways

Building resilience has an impact on multiple levels. During this period, GRP defined four such levels called 'Impact Pathways' which were at the core of GRP's strategy to achieving impact. Grantees were asked to report what impact they had achieved in each of the levels.

### Impact Pathway 1:

#### Influencing improvements to policy

Engaging with and influencing local or national policy played an important role in the projects. All grantees engaged with policy and policy-makers, even where it was not a main focus of the project. The mechanisms through which they did this highlight the need to step beyond superficial engagement (e.g. simply having a meeting with someone) to finding ways of engagement that are of interest to key stakeholders and produce positive outcomes for all parties (e.g. meeting with local government to support the development of their own EWS).

| Indicator ID | GRP indicators              | Unit | Total progress |
|--------------|-----------------------------|------|----------------|
| IP1a         | Policies engaged with       | No.  | 12             |
| IP1b         | Policies proposed / adopted | No.  | 13             |
| IP1c         | Policies implemented        | No.  | 3              |



Vertical gardens was just one feature of BRAC University's floating sustainable house in Bangladesh.



Retrofitting houses so that they float in a flood helps people stay in their homes and carry on their lives. With University of Waterloo in Vietnam.



BRAC University's floating house in Bangladesh also included solar energy, aquaponic gardening and biological waste recycling.

### Impact Pathway 2:

#### Increasing funding for projects

Six of the grantees have mobilized new funds. There is a relatively large difference in activity in this area between grantees, with some having gained large new grants, while others continue to look for new investment opportunities. Obtaining new funds was enabled through demonstrating good practice, sharing of learning and creating relationships.

| Indicator ID | GRP indicators                        | Unit | Total progress |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|------|----------------|
| IP2a         | Investments mobilized by GRP grantees | USD  | 558,872        |

### Impact Pathway 3:

#### Encouraging innovation and scaling up impact

Innovations are happening in relation to technology, infrastructure, organizational systems, agricultural techniques and stakeholder-led approaches in particular. Grantees report a wide range of opportunities to ensure sustainability as well as steps being taken to scale up. Common to many of these is the need for building strong relationships with others to work collaboratively, gaining the trust of communities, while building on learning to promote results that can be implemented well into the future.

| Indicator ID | GRP indicators                       | Unit | Total progress |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|------|----------------|
| IP3a         | End users engaged with the project   | No.  | 22,429         |
| IP3b.i       | People trained                       | No.  | 16,980         |
| IP3b.ii      | Uptake of financial services         | No.  | 3,592          |
| IP3b.iii     | Users of EWS or climate information  | No.  | 189,362        |
| IP3b.iv      | Users of other GRP innovations       | No.  | 9,693          |
| IP3c.i       | Area under innovations               | Ha.  | 3,668          |
| IP3c.ii      | Value of financial services provided | USD  | 373,763        |
| IP3c.iii     | Jobs created                         | FTE  | 193            |

### Impact Pathway 4:

#### Developing knowledge and promoting collaboration

These are key contributors to project delivery with knowledge sharing and project learning contributing to the development and sustaining of collaborations. Grantees use project knowledge and learning to advocate and influence as well as to support partners. Such collaborations (referred to as partnerships by GRP) are central to the delivery of successful outcomes for all grantees. Partnerships have been built with a range of stakeholders and on different levels which are all of strategic value. Grantees emphasize the importance of placing resource into developing and maintaining these partnerships.

| Indicator ID | GRP indicators                                     | Unit | Total progress |
|--------------|--|------|----------------|
| IP4a         | Knowledge products generated                       | No.  | 255            |
| IP4b         | People accessing knowledge products                | No.  | 59,193         |
| IP4c         | Organizations receiving assistance                 | No.  | 481            |
| IP4d         | Partnerships formed                                | No.  | 89             |
| IP4e         | Organizations increasing profit or self-sufficient | No.  | 183            |



The calm before the flood - community members learned how to manage their flood risks with Lutheran World Relief. before the flood - community members learned how to manage their flood risks with Lutheran World Relief.

## Lessons learnt – enablers and challenges

There are common themes emerging as to how resilience is being built.



Floating gardens can protect livelihoods in a flood in Nepal with Practical Action.



Discussing flood resilient crops in Nepal with Lutheran World Relief.



Mangrove restoration can provide opportunities for women to learn new skills with Seacology/Sudeesa in Sri Lanka.

**1 Multiple interventions building on each other:** An approach to resilience-building does not focus on one particular intervention; in most cases projects layer and sequence interventions which include activities to increase the resilience of livelihoods alongside access to information (EWS, training in DRR and preparedness) and infrastructure to decrease the impact of climatic events.

**2 Stakeholder buy-in/partnerships:** All of the grantees report that, at the center of any success in their project, is the engagement and commitment of the different stakeholders. This includes community participation and ownership, local government involvement, private sector engagement and wider government systems where relevant. The actions of these stakeholders hugely influence the outcomes of the projects, which would not be able to succeed without the commitment from key stakeholders.

**3 Creating and sustaining inclusive systems:** Many of the grantees describe an approach that focuses on women, with a focus on youth also emerging as important. They are using women's unions, creating CBOs focused on women and youth, developing approaches to capacity-building that focus on the needs of women and youth and co-creating interventions with women as the focus. The outcomes are positive, with grantees reporting good results for women in terms of involvement in projects and outcomes.

**4 Understanding how to share information:** The importance of being able to spread information relates to the achievement of project outcomes (e.g. reaching higher numbers with an easy-to-use EWS) as well as spreading information and learning about the project in order to achieve scaling. Therefore, finding ways of gathering information and sharing it successfully is an important project component. In addition to traditional methods of knowledge-sharing (papers, reports, presentations, etc.), grantees are finding that demonstration is central to success. This can mean bringing local officials to visit a project, showing private sector actors the impact of their practice or having farmers demonstrate farming without pesticides to other farmers. In addition, grantees are using new technology, helping improve local information-sharing mechanisms, creating groups to generate and share information and encouraging peer learning.

**5 Project management that adapts to changing circumstances:** Given the difficult climatic contexts within which grantees are working, the ability to be flexible and adaptive in project planning and execution is crucial. This is a key lesson relating to all projects and something to be considered in relation to resilience projects in particular. This owes not only to the climatic conditions but also to the nature of successful resilience projects, which appear to layer different interventions and work

closely with community interests, both of which bring added complexity and the need to be flexible. Time and flexibility are also needed in relation to trying out new technology, with time needed to allow for adaptation and consideration of local perspectives and alternatives as well as to work successfully with local government stakeholders.

**6 Thinking long-term and growing our reach:** Sharing of information, partnership building and stakeholder buy-in are instrumental in ensuring that projects are extended or achieve sustainability. Grantees recognize the need to invest time in these activities, but also that in the rush to deliver projects within short time-frames, and within a traditional project-management structure, the time and flexibility that should be invested is often lacking. However, they have all recognized where and how these successful partnerships have been developed and will continue to build on them going forward. In their plans for scale, most of the projects are demonstrating how they will be moving forward, hopefully building on the work they have achieved with their GRP Water Window grants.

### To what extent and in what ways have GRP Water Window grantees made progress towards building resilience? What have been the challenges and enablers to this progress?

In terms of extent, the Water Window Challenge, for which we have validated data, supported over 500,000 people across 8 countries, the vast majority of whom are in Asia. Around 51% of those reached are women. **The grantees have created at least 22 new partnerships**, have enabled at least 189,362<sup>4</sup> people to use early warning systems or climate information and trained at least 16,920 people in the use of more resilient agricultural techniques, alternative livelihoods and disaster risk reduction strategies. For many of the grantees, the timeframe of this project means these numbers will continue to rise as they develop their work further building on the approaches they have tried and tested to date.

Challenges experienced are most likely to be in relation to administrative issues, but all of the challenges described revolve around the need for time and flexibility within project planning, management and implementation. Innovation requires adaptive planning, and organizational systems often do not allow for the kind of flexibility required. This was experienced by grantees mainly in working with local government and other stakeholders.

Alongside administrative challenges, social issues are also experienced as a challenge. This is particularly interesting, as social interaction/participation/stakeholder engagement is also described as a successful outcome and also an enabler. When it works, it is of great benefit to the outcomes of the project, and this therefore reiterates the importance of ensuring stakeholder engagement is given adequate time and effort.

Enablers reported by grantees are very similar, with the most common themes relating to partnerships and stakeholder engagement. Reports from grantees once again emphasize that stakeholder buy-in helps the project from start to finish, building trust, capacity and support and ensuring the intervention is needed and makes sense to people. If this occurs, then further down the line stakeholder engagement helps sustain the project, through people's commitment to ensuring its future and positive demonstration, which helps ensure future investment and scaling.



University of Potsdam's ResilNam Project engaged women in ecosystem-based adaptation to cope with the impact of flooding in Vietnam.



Multi-purpose solutions such as bitykes can protect a community from floods and provide an alternative income. With Practical Action in Bangladesh.

#### Incubator

Part of the longer term objectives for the Water Window is to take promising ideas to even bigger scale. Throughout the work, GRP provided access to a facility known as the Incubator. The role of the incubator was to provide coaching and mentoring support to grantees which would help them develop plans for scaling. One on one mentoring sessions were supplemented by group learning events and the development of leadership skills.

Grantees continue to be partners of GRP and to benefit from shared learning.

An Investors Forum took place in November 2010 to promote the opportunities to scale. The aim of this 'Investing in Resilience' forum was to bring potential investors and scalable ideas together. [More on this here.](#)



Fostering alternative livelihoods - crab nursing in Bangladesh with Practical Action.

<sup>4</sup>This figure is based on the five grantees reporting against the indicator 'Number of users of early warning system or climate information'.

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