Flood Resilience Alliance

Progress Report Year 4

Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance Phase II

progress /ˈprɑːɡres/

noun

1 the process of improving or developing, or of getting nearer to achieving or completing, something

2 movement forward or toward a place

Contents

The Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance is a multi-sectoral partnership which brings together community programs, new research, shared knowledge, and evidence-based influencing to build community flood resilience in developed and developing countries. Our vision is that floods should have no negative impact on people's ability to thrive.

This report presents progress-to-date as of Year 4 of Phase II of the Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance - highlighting the impact and change we are seeing as a result of our community engagement, learning, research, and advocacy work.

Students at school in Bardiya, Nepal, whose school building serves as safe shelter during flood © Practical Action

1.0 Introduction

In 2021, the Alliance made significant progress towards our goals to improve flood resilience spending, policy, and practice. Since 2018, we have impacted 602,000 people, influenced over USD 420 million of funding for flood resilience, and Alliance teams are engaging in policy dialogues and processes that are resulting in a broad range of advocacy wins. Teams have achieved uptake, replication, and scaling of Alliance good practices. We are excited both with our current success, and to see how our 16 new 'expansion' teams – additional Alliance teams funded by the Z Zurich Foundation in 2021 – help deepen our impact globally. To see where the Alliance is now working, please visit https://floodresilience.net/countries/

Community programming achievements

In the fourth year of Phase II, the Alliance nearly doubled the number of people impacted from the previous year, through our programs globally, and continued to deepen our impact on people's lives in ways that help them cope better with both flood and compound risks. This will increase with the ongoing expansion of our community programming, the extension of the program through the end of 2024, and the growing impact of our advocacy and policy work.

602,000
people

2 million
people

Impacted **to date**
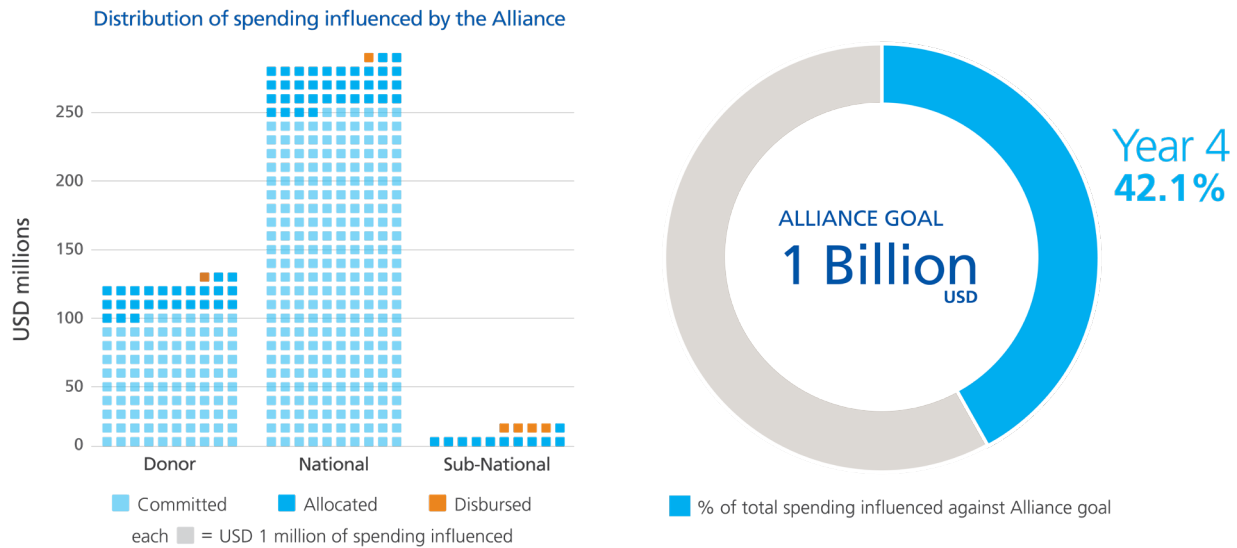
 impacted
through our work

 target impact

Policy and Spending Achievements

The Alliance is advocating for an additional USD 1 billion from public and private sources toward climate-smart, risk-informed development. To determine our spending influenced, we weight individual spending wins by the estimated Alliance role in influencing that spending.

Distribution of spending influenced by the Alliance

Legend:
- ■ Committed
- ■ Allocated
- ■ Disbursed

each ■ = USD 1 million of spending influenced

ALLIANCE GOAL
1 Billion USD

Year 4
42.1%

■ % of total spending influenced against Alliance goal

The Alliance's success to date is built on our increasing credibility, resulting from our significant and often long-term investment in relationship-building, combined with strategic production, tailoring, and dissemination of high quality, relevant knowledge. Increasingly, Alliance knowledge and expertise are being sought out by decision-makers to support policy making and program planning and implementation. Ultimately, teams have been most successful when they get the right knowledge into the right hands at the right time.

Woman and child in area affected by flooding in Thiès, Senegal, 2021 © Lydia Darby

Usumacinta River, Tabasco, Mexico © Michael Szoenyi

2.0 Advocacy

In 2021, Alliance teams were broadly successful at using their evidence on resilience gaps and successful interventions to advocate for changes in government policy and spending and policy dialogues related to flood resilience.

In terms of spending, we have achieved 42% of our overall program target of USD 1 billion (Figure 2). Most of that money is donor commitments. For example, the 2021 wins largely consisted of climate change adaptation (CCA) and resilience commitments that we helped influence at COP26. At the sub-national and national levels, spending wins are predominantly external funding to scale or replicate our good practices (particularly early warning systems), and local funding allocations towards resilience based on evidence from our research and baseline assessments. Sub-national and national spending wins tend to consist of smaller dollar amounts; however, this money is more than promised, it is being spent.

In terms of policy, the changes the Alliance is achieving are diverse. At the global level, we have seen the uptake of Alliance language in policy dialogues and have contributed to growing commitments around issues such as nature-based solutions, locally-led adaptation, and loss and damage. At the national and sub-national levels, our recommendations have been included in:

•   local-level plans and prioritization of local interventions;

•   national-level policy frameworks;

•   national inputs into global policy dialogues; and

•   the provision of private flood insurance.

Alliance teams have also seen their local-level data taken up into sub-national decision-making. As a result, this decision-making is more grounded in local needs and risks.

Alliance advocacy does not end at policy change; in 2021, Alliance teams increased their support for policy implementation. At the national level, teams have shaped strategies and developed tools to support policy implementation. At the sub-national level, teams are working closely with local governments to identify ways Alliance community work can support implementation of local policies and plans. Alliance-influenced policy priorities that have been implemented consist of highly practical and actionable good practices that have been successfully piloted in our community work.

Stories from the field

Getting local governments to fund resilience

Globally, local financing for disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) is poor. In Nepal, the 2015 federalization of the government opened up new opportunities and mandates for local governments to improve their policy and fiscal frameworks related to DRR. Mercy Corps Nepal took advantage of this policy opportunity and worked with the Sudurpaschim provincial government to create and build their capacity to execute budgets for DRR and CCA.

In 2020, after three years of targeted advocacy by Mercy Corps, Sudurpaschim province endorsed the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) plan, which includes a clause for 5% of municipal budgets to be allocated to DRR and CCA activities. In the 2020-2021 fiscal year, approximately USD 4.4 million was spent from this budget, and for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, USD 7.2 million was allocated. Over two and a half million people are estimated to have indirectly benefited from this new government spending.

In 2018, realizing there was little to no local budget data, Mercy Corps commissioned a 'budget study' and the development of a budget tracking tool to track municipal DRR and CCA investments. They shared their research findings and Alliance messaging that investing USD 1 in DRR would save on average USD 5 in future losses with local government and generated support around creating budgets for DRR and CCA. In 2019, Mercy Corps and UNDP facilitated a two-day workshop in which ministry officials came together to write Sudurpaschim's DRRM plan and included a new budgetary clause for DRR and CCA.

After this plan was finalized and endorsed, further advocacy led to verbal commitments from municipal governments to invest in DRR and CCA with the support of provincial government.

Now that local financing for DRR and CCA is institutionalized in Sudurpaschim, Mercy Corps is continuing to support and influence local governments on the implementation, tracking, and evaluation of this financing. This highlights how critical it is to not only achieve policy and spending change, but then to build the capacity of government to effectively implement new policies and spending in ways that will improve the lives of the most vulnerable.

Sanya in front of her raised poultry coop, Bangladesh © Practical Action

3.0 Community Programming

The Alliance's community programming approach is based on the "5C-4R" framework, which illustrates that resilience requires human, social, physical, natural, and financial capital. Program design is grounded in the Flood Resilience Measurement for Communities (FRMC) approach to assess community resilience, identify gaps, and co-design programs with communities and other local stakeholders. Activities span the five capitals and range from risk and resilience awareness raising campaigns to the establishment of community brigades to livelihoods strengthening to nature-based solutions to the development of climate adaptive technologies.

Though it is difficult to assess the overall change resulting from Alliance programs in the short-term and without the occurrence of a flood event, teams have reported promising changes within social and human capitals. Under human capital, teams reported changes in knowledge, awareness, capacity building, and community empowerment; communities are better able to advocate for themselves, and community-based groups are empowered to identify and address community needs in ways that support multi-hazard resilience. Under social capital, teams reported building relationships that resulted in increased communication, trust, credibility, and collaboration between communities and government.

Some of the most exciting achievements from 2021 have to do with scaling and replication of Alliance good practices. Habitat for Humanity in Cambodia is applying the full FRMC process in a new project, and Great Yarmouth in the UK has committed to do the same beginning in late 2022. In addition, both local and national governments are widely replicating Alliance pilots like early warning systems (EWS) and community-based DRR structures.

"This year flood water could not enter into my house because of raising the plinth whereas my neighbors face the problem of flood water inundation. We could stay at our home with our children. As I planted banana trees and grass around my house, flood water could not damage my house severely. The mud of the house did not wash away."

- Nurun Nahar of Char Nasirpur, reflecting on Concern Bangladesh's program focused on building household and livelihood resilience

Stories from the field

Empowering communities to advocate for their resilience

Communities living in the floodplains of Bangladesh are particularly vulnerable to flooding and erosion from intensifying weather events. While communities are aware of their flood risk and often navigate multiple flood events per year, they heavily depend on relief to survive and recover.

Concern Bangladesh has supported communities to self-organize to better protect themselves and advocate for government support to build and invest in resilience. As a result, the government has invested in a variety of resilience activities such as road and embankment repair, elevation of roads, flood resilient tube wells, livestock vaccination, training on livestock rearing, and climate-tolerant seed distribution. They have also provided households with loans to support income generating activities. These investments have helped communities to better cope with floods.

Concern strengthened local relationships and knowledge by bringing together communities and local government to develop a shared understanding of local flood risk and resilience and collaborate in joint planning. They also organized 'exposure visits' for government officials to understand the benefits of flood resilience interventions to communities. Relationships between local communities and government were further strengthened during the pandemic when they worked together to simultaneously manage flood risk and reduce COVID-19 transmission.

Now, armed with evidence and knowledge of resilience needs and opportunities, communities are directly approaching government to advocate for their flood resilience and suggest practical investments and activities. Having been deliberately included from the beginning, local officials can see how their support has led to visible improvements in community well-being. Concern's model of empowering communities and brokering relationships between communities and government – rather than Concern advocating on behalf of the communities – provides a blueprint for building long-term sustainable change that contributes to flood resilience.

Stories from the field

National adoption of an Alliance Early Warning Systems model

In the Rímac watershed near Lima, 9.3 million people – over one third of Peru's total population – face intense rainfall-related hazards like flash floods and landslides with no means to forecast or prepare for these events. These risks are compounded by water scarcity, rapid land use change, and high population density, and are getting worse. In 2013, Practical Action identified this as a strategic opportunity to align their work with broader policy priorities and needs, and effect long-term change.

In 2021, in large part due to Practical Action Peru's efforts, Peru's national meteorological agency, SENAMHI, funded and launched a national project to expand early warning systems (EWS) in the Rímac Watershed. As part of this program, SENAMHI is scaling out Practical Action's community-based EWS approach. Practical Action is supporting SENAMHI with this expansion. To date, newly installed rainfall monitoring stations are now benefiting approximately 457,000 people by alerting them of potentially dangerous flooding. This effort aims to provide over 9 million people with improved access to early warnings.

This win is a result of Practical Action's long-term engagement with SENAMHI. Practical Action used Phase I of the Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance (2013-2018) as a proof of concept for their EWS model and to build credibility among key national government institutions like SENAMHI. In Phase II, Practical Action focused on sharing, at the national and regional levels, their experience operationalizing the EWS model, and evidence of its success.

Though initially skeptical of Practical Action's EWS model, national agencies have, over time, increasingly realized its value. Practical Action's approach, in particular, builds community capacity to access, disseminate, understand, and use forecasts. This fills a critical need for national weather agencies: access and integration of communities as users of climate services. The model also aligns with SENAMHI's and international understanding of EWS and has significant potential to improve flood management and risk reduction in Lima.

Volunteer of the Participatory Rainfall Monitoring Network, Peru © Practical Action

4.0 Knowledge

The Alliance is actively producing evidence-informed knowledge on flood resilience gaps, needs, and good practices. Achieving uptake of this knowledge is fundamental to improving flood resilience policy, spending, and practice. Teams conduct targeted research to assess community baseline contexts and on relevant thematic areas (e.g., nature-based solutions, loss and damage), and document successful interventions. When relevant, knowledge is tailored and packaged so that it can be easily picked up and used by stakeholders who need that knowledge to support decision-making and practice.

These knowledge efforts are helping the Alliance to establish a strong reputation for good work and technical expertise. Our high-quality research and knowledge are sought after; the majority of Alliance teams have been invited to help develop policies related to flood resilience and our teams' policy and practice recommendations have broadly been taken up. There is also significant demand for FRMC evidence of community resilience needs, from OECD and non-OECD countries and local and national government, to inform decision-making.

We find that knowledge is most likely to be taken up if:

- it is requested to support decision-making;
- it is co-developed with target stakeholders;
- it aligns with ongoing policy processes and needs; and
- it is backed up by strong evidence.

For community programs, "demonstration" – where teams provide evidence of intervention success via documenting interventions and hosting exposure visits where government stakeholders can connect with communities and see interventions in practice – has been a particularly powerful strategy for encouraging uptake, replication, and/or scaling of good practices.

Advocacy teams have been most successful where they have been able to strategically share knowledge that presents evidence to fill knowledge gaps related to key policy issues: for example, baseline DRR budget information where budget tracking is unavailable, or evidence of local climate risk and impacts where decision-makers are grappling with how to best prioritize CCA funds. Though the production and dissemination of such knowledge requires significant resources and time, it has led to some of the Alliance's most exciting advocacy wins.

"The work being promoted through the Practical Action project seeks to implement corrective measures, prevention measures, and preparedness to deal with events that may occur… it is a clear example of what we need to do in the country…"

– Head of CENEPRED, Peru lauding Practical Action Peru's guidance on community emergency planning

Stories from the field

Influencing decision-making by filling critical knowledge gaps

Effectively addressing climate risk in policy is typically challenged by a lack of data on changing flood risk, the root causes of flooding, and the potential impacts of current and projected flooding. In Indonesia, Mercy Corps commissioned the development of the Climate Risk and Impact Assessment tool (CRIA) to integrate climate risk and vulnerability information in local, sub-national, and national planning policies, including the development plan and land-use planning policies. CRIA is a methodological assessment that connects three computer models: a land subsidence, tidal flood, and river flooding model; a model of how water moves through the built landscape, including protection infrastructure; and a model that estimates the economic and non-economic impacts associated with flood protection and flooding. The tool was piloted in Pekalongan City and Regency.

Mercy Corps has used evidence from CRIA for advocacy from the local to global levels. Evidence of the range of factors that contribute to flood risk brought together otherwise siloed local and sub-national decision-makers. The combination of relevant evidence and cross-sectoral participation has allowed Mercy Corps to influence more comprehensive and long-term water resource management policies in Pekalongan City, Pekalongan Regency, and the Central Java Province governments.

Furthermore, based on evidence from CRIA, the national government has prioritized Pekalongan City and Regency for watershed management and coastal and agricultural resilience (via the Climate Resilience Development Policy 2020-2045), and pilot interventions to address land subsidence. Finally, CRIA provided a solid climate rationale for the nationally-selected Mercy Corps Green Climate Fund (GCF) concept note on strengthening livelihoods while preserving ecosystems across watersheds.

At the global advocacy level, Indonesia's official statement for the COP Presidency consultations on Loss and Damage included the need to better account for climate-induced displacement, slow onset events, and non-economic losses in developing a new financial instrument for loss and damage. This ask, based on empirical evidence from CRIA, has since formed a part of the G77+China group's position on the issue.

Mercy Corps' success shows how locally-grounded evidence on risk can be used strategically and consistently at multiple levels to influence comprehensive policy change that supports local action to build resilience.

Flood Resilience Alliance

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