

CASE STUDY

PRACTICAL ACTION NEPAL



Strengthening locally-grounded resilience planning and practice

This case study shows how community-defined priorities can be institutionalized and operationalized in ongoing local level planning processes.

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Key Alliance terminology

Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance (Alliance):

The Alliance is a multi-sector collaboration between the humanitarian sector, academia, and the private sector focusing on shifting from the traditional emphasis on post-event recovery to pre-event resilience. We are nine years into an eleven-year program that has been delivered in two Phases (Phase I from 2013-2018; Phase II from 2018-2024).

Flood Resilience Measurement for Communities (FRMC):

Created by the Alliance in 2013, the FRMC is a framework and associated web-based data tool/app which conceptualizes flood resilience as a function of social, human, natural, physical, and financial capitals. The FRMC is implemented at the beginning of Alliance work to assess resilience strengths and gaps. This information is used to shape community programs and advocacy.

The win

Building on the credibility of its community programming work since Phase I of the Alliance, Practical Action Nepal (Practical Action) has influenced significant local and national policy changes that will support local resilience-building.

At the local level, Practical Action:

- Supported institutionalization of evidence-informed climate resilience priorities into Local Disaster and Climate Resilience Plans (LDCRPs) and annual fiscal plans in five municipalities in Nepal.
- Supported government to increase local budget allocations and spending toward disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience in each municipality.
- Helped local government in each municipality identify locally applicable good practices to address community resilience priorities. As a result, Practical Action flood resilience practices such as bio-dykes, raised granaries, and safe shelters are being implemented and financed by government.



Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) mapping in Madhuwan, Bardiya District, to inform their Local Disaster and Climate Resilience Plan (LDCRP) © Practical Action/CSDR

As of October 2021, almost USD 450,000 has been spent across the five municipalities on activities that contribute to flood resilience. And, because the government has been so open to understanding and addressing community resilience priorities, communities now feel more empowered to advocate for their needs.

At the national level, Practical Action:

- Successfully advocated for Disaster Preparedness and Response guidelines to recommend/require local hazard assessments be conducted and the results used in local planning processes.
- Advocated for the inclusion of resilience-building provisions — including development of multi-hazard early warning systems (EWS) and public weather advisories, the establishment of a Climate Information System, and the development of disaster risk and gender-sensitive Climate Resilience Plans for all local governments — in Nepal’s National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Though these plans are still in development, the expectation is that they will result in increased national investment in local resilience.

How the win was achieved

An appropriate enabling environment

Practical Action Nepal has been part of the Alliance since the beginning of Phase I in 2013. In its early Alliance work, Practical Action was the first organization to introduce flood EWS to Nepal; this work built relationships and credibility with key government authorities across the country.

Starting in 2015, the political system in Nepal began rapidly shifting, opening new windows for influence. Federalization led to decentralization and the creation of 753 local governments and seven provincial governments. With decentralization, local governments now have the power to make decisions and create locally grounded policies and plans.

At the same time, there has been a growing awareness of climate change. At the national level,

Nepal committed to creating NAPs and NDCs. To support development of these plans, the federal government released guidelines for municipalities on how to streamline the previously required Local Disaster Risk Management Planning and Local Adaptation Plans of Action into one plan, the LDCRP. Though there is both the mandate and will to do this work at the local level — particularly because local officials are seeing flood patterns change — there is low capacity and few resources to support the work.

In response to the changing political and policy landscape and given its credibility and strong relationships with sub-national and government actors, in 2018, Practical Action expanded its Phase II Alliance work beyond EWS to more broadly influencing DRR and climate change adaptation (CCA) policies and spending. For Practical Action, the LDCRPs present a key opportunity for supporting local government needs while also strengthening community DRR and CCA.

Practical Action's influence opportunity was not limited to the three municipalities — Tikapur,

Rajapur, and Geruwa — it had worked with since 2013. Because the LDCRP is required, local governments in areas that Practical Action had not worked in before — Janaki and Madhuwan — were eager to receive the organization's support to produce evidence of resilience needs and options for addressing those needs.

Practical Action also further built its credibility during the COVID-19 pandemic by supporting local governments to manage the pandemic while also maintaining a focus on flood resilience and the ways that communities and governments would need to address both in tandem. Practical Action's demonstrated flexibility and reliability helped further build trust and linkages with government at the local, provincial, and national levels.

It is in this enabling environment of credibility, relationships, an appropriate governance structure, and relevant policy windows that Practical Action has been able to employ a successful advocacy strategy that connects across multiple scales in support of local flood resilience.



A Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) at community level as part of the Local Disaster and Climate Resilience Plan (LDCRP) © Practical Action/CSDR



The ward chair closing a ward-level workshop in Madhuwan, Bardiya District. © Practical Action/CSDR

Local-level advocacy

Though Practical Action’s advocacy strategy is multi-faceted, the foundation of its work is to be demand-driven and problem-oriented. Practical Action works with communities to identify gaps and address those gaps using participatory approaches and solutions-oriented research and data. At the local level, Practical Action has empowered communities to identify and advocate for their resilience needs using the FRMC process. Practical Action was intentional about involving the most marginalized groups in the community in this process to ensure that their needs would be recognized and resilience activities wouldn’t just focus on the priorities of the most powerful. This broad community participation and buy-in has resulted in ‘emergent’ advocacy where community members share their knowledge with their families and neighbors, building broad support around FRMC-defined priorities.

Communities have taken their priorities to the local government via Community Disaster Management Committees (CDMCs), community-based groups trained by Practical Action to implement interventions and coordinate directly with local government. Due to their strengthened relationship with local government, CDMCs feel empowered to approach local government about addressing community needs. Because these needs are identified and documented via the FRMC and other research, governments are more receptive and responsive.

Practical Action’s own government-focused advocacy involves building government understanding and ownership of community resilience gaps and needs by seeking and integrating government input into its research. Because Practical Action strategically layers its government advocacy with community advocacy around the same evidence and priorities, government now both sees and understands why

there is strong demand for addressing defined needs. This two-pronged approach has been critical for achieving institutionalization of community needs in local plans.

Practical Action has further supported local government in addressing community-defined resilience needs by providing evidence of successful Practical Action good practices, through exposure visits and sharing knowledge products, and by co-funding government implementation of good practices. Co-funding in particular has been critical as local government resources are constrained. For example, with co-funding from Practical Action, Geruwa Municipality invested in construction of a bio-dyke and also included the promotion of similar bio-engineering resilience interventions in its fiscal plan.

Now, as local governments are implementing their fiscal plans and investing in activities that support flood resilience, Practical Action is developing accountability mechanisms to ensure that government actions are addressing community needs. For example, Practical Action is co-generating, with communities, FRMC reports that contain checklists of community-defined needs. Communities can tick the priorities that have been integrated into plans and implemented, and identify which priorities still need to be met and require immediate attention.

National level advocacy

Practical Action has leveraged its community programming experiences and credibility in the

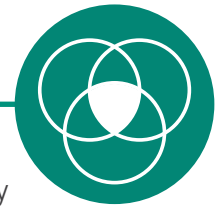
national resilience arena to change policy and secure commitments at the national level. It has targeted and worked with officials in ministries responsible for addressing floods and, more broadly, climate change and disasters. And it has connected these national officials with local stakeholders, for example by convening exposure visits and local-level workshops in which local government and communities were able to share their issues and experiences with national representatives.

Practical Action has also leveraged the reach and clout of the Alliance partners working in Nepal — Mercy Corps, Practical Action, and the Nepal Red Cross Society (the Nepal Alliance). The three organizations coordinate strategically as a coalition to strengthen their advocacy recommendations and broaden their sphere of influence. For example, the Nepal Red Cross Society co-chairs the Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) platform with the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration. Practical Action has used this forum to increase buy-in from NGOs and government around addressing local flood issues. Where commitments have been harder to generate through direct advocacy, Practical Action has leveraged media (e.g., TV and radio) to press government officials on resilience issues and garner verbal, public commitments to addressing local flood issues.

Additional Resources

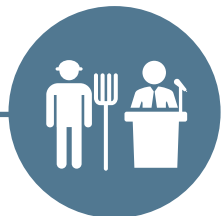
- [Key Learnings and Recommendations for creating Local Disaster and Climate Resilience Plans](#)

Why Alliance advocacy was successful



ESTABLISHED RELEVANCE

- Leveraged new influence opportunities emerging from federalization— whereby local governments have substantially more decision-making power — by supporting local municipalities to fulfill national mandates on local DRR and CCA.
- Generated community buy-in to the program and program advocacy goals by measuring and sharing comprehensive resilience data (via the FRMC) that validates community priorities and needs.
- Aligned program advocacy goals with government priorities by identifying and targeting local and national policy opportunities and processes relevant to local flood resilience.
- Established the relevance of advocacy recommendations by aligning organizational and community advocacy across multiple communities so the local government was hearing the same messages from multiple stakeholders.
- Built momentum and generated national commitments around addressing local flood resilience by leveraging media.



BUILT RELATIONSHIPS

- Created pathways for influence by leveraging credibility from prior EWS community programming work, which is a particularly effective platform for building influence pathways as EWS require partnerships with government institutions at all levels.
- Accessed relevant national policy processes to improve local DRR management by working through existing partnerships and networks such as the CBDRM platform and the Nepal Alliance.
- Strengthened relationships with government by pivoting to support government COVID-19 management needs in ways that align with building flood resilience.
- Built relationships and a shared understanding of local resilience issues and needs by convening resilience dialogues between national government, local government, and communities.



PROVIDED EVIDENCE-BASED KNOWLEDGE

- Built government knowledge of community resilience needs and issues by engaging them in community resilience data gathering and analysis (via the FRMC).
- Empowered communities to advocate for their resilience needs by working with them to gather data on their resilience gaps, opportunities, and needs, and to co-develop a system for tracking government implementation of local resilience priorities.
- Increased government uptake of advocacy recommendations by connecting evidence of resilience needs to actionable resilience solutions; additionally provided co-financing and technical support for government implementation of solutions.