



Distributed emergency shelter kits and household kits 750 Rai-affected families. Photo credit: Jomari Guillermo.

## Learning brief: Integrating Social Cohesion and Justice into Disaster Risk Reduction in the Philippines

Within the framework of the [SHAKE project](#)<sup>1</sup>, [CRS Philippines](#) embarked on a year-long learning initiative throughout 2022, aimed at exploring how the integration of Social Cohesion and Justice (SC&J) activities could elevate the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) programming component. This initiative was conducted in close collaboration with [CRS's Strategic Change Platform 1: Fostering Just and Cohesive Societies](#) with the explicit goal of introducing the SC&J component and highlighting its relevance to various stakeholders engaged in DRR implementation.

This case study explores the integration processes that underpin commitment to fostering a more inclusive and community-driven approach to DRR programming. The work involved engaging different teams in social cohesion and justice workshops, informative training sessions, and encouraging collaborative initiatives. Its core objective was to cultivate a profound understanding and hands-on application of SC&J principles. In doing so, it empowered a diverse range of stakeholders to comprehensively address the complex challenges of

disaster risk while simultaneously nurturing resilient communities.

### Mainstreaming the integration process

To enhance the SC&J integration process, besides working closely with DRR teams to equip them with the knowledge and skills on integrating social cohesion and justice, the Philippines Team organized the following actions:

- **Social Cohesion Orientations and Workshops for CRS Staff and Partners:** The CRS Philippines designed and conducted customized training sessions that emphasized the importance of SC&J in DRR efforts. These sessions went beyond theory, enabling participants to apply SC&J tools practically and identify effective ways to integrate SC&J into components like Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC), Livelihood, and Protection.

<sup>1</sup> SHAKE II is a two-year project supported by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) aiming to build the planning capacities of LGUs and households' risk awareness and preparedness planning for earthquake events.

- Promotion of Social Cohesion Integration.** To address the awareness gap, the initiative emphasized the importance of promoting social cohesion within the DRR framework, an integral part of the community-based DRRM<sup>2</sup> training series. Utilizing a promotional video to effectively convey the definition of social cohesion, explain horizontal and vertical linkages, introduce the 3B methodologies<sup>3</sup> for strengthening social cohesion, and highlight the significance of participatory governance, it garnered increased support from relevant stakeholders. This innovative approach deepened the understanding of partners and government units regarding the critical role of representing vulnerable actors in various facets of community development. It encouraged their active involvement in entities such as development councils, child protection committees, and DRR management councils. By addressing this awareness gap, the initiative significantly contributed to the creation of more inclusive and resilient communities.
- Harmonizing the Implementation Approach through Community Organizing and Social Mobilization Trainings.** Community organizing and social mobilization trainings played a pivotal role in enhancing horizontal engagement within specific areas of focus. These trainings clarified the distinction between community organizing, which centers on civic organization establishment, and social mobilization, which encourages cross-sector interactions at different levels. In the multifaceted SHAKE II project, where components like DRR, SILC, and Livelihood required tailored strategies, this differentiation was crucial. As a result of these trainings, partners were better prepared to craft individualized social mobilization plans for each project component, ensuring a cohesive community engagement approach. Furthermore, the training aimed to reinforce vertical social cohesion links in DRR by stressing the importance of inclusivity and representation of civil society groups and vulnerable populations within local DRR councils. This holistic approach equipped stakeholders with the tools to foster stronger community bonds and promote resilience effectively.
- Community Mapping and Social Cohesion Assessment (CRA).** To guide integration efforts, especially in shaping horizontal and vertical social cohesion activities during the DRR project's implementation phase, the initiative conducted two phases of community mapping within the ten covered

barangays of the SHAKE II project. This assessment involved qualitative and quantitative analysis, including focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and the use of CRS's Social Cohesion Barometer<sup>4</sup>. The results revealed positive community connectedness, opportunities for authentic interactions, improvements in community organization and engagement, addressing livelihood disparities, and increasing trust in local officials. These insights strategically inform ongoing integration processes, aligning with the subsidiarity principle and promoting the development of more resilient communities.

- Crafting Social Mobilization Plans Aligned with SC&J Principles.** Partner and CRS staff jointly developed social mobilization plans for the DRR, SILC, and Livelihood components. Beginning with envisioning desired outcomes, participants identified connectors and dividers within the community. Following the 3B framework, these plans aimed to boost awareness and commitment among government and civil society organizations. They facilitated participatory planning, implementation, and monitoring of government services and SHAKE II deliverables. These comprehensive plans ensured deep integration of social cohesion principles into the project, promoting effective collaboration and community engagement.
- Safe and Dignified Programming.** The training session focused on safe and dignified programming placed significant emphasis on intentionally involving vulnerable and marginalized groups, providing them with opportunities for active participation in DRR planning and response efforts. A notable result of this training was the decision to undertake a review of the existing DRR councils at the Local Government Unit (LGU) level, with an aim to advocate for the inclusion of representatives from these vulnerable and marginalized groups. This step represented a significant milestone in the pursuit of more equitable and inclusive DRR initiatives.

The Philippines' experience highlights that effective SC&J integration in DRR demands:

- Customized Training:** Offering tailored training emphasizing practical SC&J application within program components.
- Inclusivity and Equity:** Ensuring civil society and vulnerable groups' representation for stronger vertical cohesion.
- Principle Alignment:** Creating SC&J-aligned social mobilization plans for distinct components.
- Ongoing Assessment:** Periodic mapping and cohesion assessments for adaptable strategies.
- Flexibility:** Adapting to evolving needs, maintaining subsidiarity for resilient communities.

<sup>2</sup> Disaster Risk Reduction Management

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/mini-social-cohesion-barometer>

<sup>4</sup> CRS' 3Bs (Binding, Bonding, Bridging) peace-building approach