

How disaster risk reduction lays the foundation for resilience

Many communities around the world face chronic poverty and food insecurity caused by severe weather events, conflict, a scarcity of natural resources and a breakdown of social cohesion. To make communities more resilient, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) uses a variety of interventions, including disaster risk reduction (DRR), to build on people's capacities and support communities as they become better equipped to withstand crises.



CRS' APPROACH TO DRR

CRS believes people are agents of their own development and should decide which capacities and assets to use and how to engage with systems and structures on their pathway to resilience. By focusing on programming that shifts donor funding from post-disaster humanitarian spending to pre-disaster preparedness, CRS helps build resilient communities that can bounce back and recover from crises. The foundation of our DRR approach is rooted in bringing people together to plan their pre- and post-disaster responses through collective community action. Mutual trust is built through activities designed to ensure that all members of a community have access to information, resources and decision-making opportunities.

Our approach has three stages composed of ten processes that lay the foundations for inclusive, transparent and sustainable DRR planning and implementation.



STAGE 1: ENGAGE

1. Build inclusive foundation for Community-Led Disaster Risk Management (CLDRM) process
2. Reach out for buy-in



STAGE 2: ASSESS RISK

3. Understand cycles and trends
4. Understand our past, present and future
5. Understand the geography of risk
6. Prioritize community challenges



STAGE 3: CREATE ACTION PLAN

7. Deepen understanding of challenges
8. Agree on solutions
9. Develop a CLDRM action plan
10. Track progress to learn

DRR APPROACH: SNAPSHOT OF SUCCESSES

\$1

spent on disaster preparedness saves \$7-\$10 in disaster response

35K

tree saplings were donated by the Government of Timor-Leste based on a CRS-supported community action plan

66%

of households at midterm felt capable of coping with disasters vs. 0% at baseline (DRR project in Timor-Leste)

STAGE 1

The first stage uses community meetings, events, public notice boards, community radio, civil and religious networks, and house-to-house visits to explain the planning and implementation process. It is also when government authorities are informed and engaged. CRS understands that successful disaster risk management depends on community members' awareness of the risks they face and their motivation to manage and reduce them. This understanding sets the stage for a Community-Led Disaster Risk Management (CLDRM) process, supported by CRS but led by a community-elected DRR committee. Following the establishment of the committee, a diverse mix of community members, elders and leaders, especially those who are connected to supporting institutions, are encouraged to strengthen those relationships, effectively becoming bridges between the community and local authorities.

STAGE 2

The CLDRM process then supports participants to analyze which people, structures and aspects of their community are most vulnerable to hazards and what assets and capacities they may utilize for mitigation. This culminates in a "past, present and future" calendar that emphasizes climatic trends and highlights when risk management actions could be carried out throughout the year. The process creates a shared understanding of how the community has changed and stresses the need for

planning to manage that change while jointly acknowledging the frequency of disasters. Next, the CLDRM process encourages the committee to explore why some geographical areas are more at risk than others, and what resources can be managed to reduce risk. This exploration ends with a map of the community's environmental and natural features, and highlights hazards, vulnerable areas and available resources and capacities.

STAGE 3

In this stage, conversations are held to identify solutions and develop a plan of action. Having deepened their understanding of the challenges, the community is able to explore existing capacities and mechanisms, and determine which solutions they can implement themselves versus which will need outside intervention. The activities in the plan include nature-based solutions such as tree planting to protect against landslides or mangrove restoration to protect against flooding and storm surge, as well as emergency planning such as developing hurricane evacuation routes and holding evacuation drills. Funds for these actions often come from the government, or from the community itself. If necessary, CRS can help to facilitate funding by linking the community with outside resources. The DRR action plan also identifies tasks needed to complete the action, places them on a timeline, designates who is responsible for them, and indicates if external support is needed.

PLANTING TREES TO PREVENT LANDSLIDES



In Timor-Leste, CRS is implementing DRR interventions within a project funded by Margaret A Cargill Philanthropies. Using the CLDRM process, CRS supported communities in the Viqueque and Baucau districts that were experiencing severe natural resource depletion due to intensive deforestation, forest degradation, loss of soil and heavy rains. The process guided DRR committees in developing community action plans that were used to identify landslides as a major disaster risk and prioritized tree planting as a possible solution.

The project was then able to support the community's transition from preparedness planning to developmental action by leveraging a previously established relationship with the Forestry Department's Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. CRS' Transforming Rural Livelihoods through Adaptation and Carbon Capture (TRACC) project worked with the ministry in the same districts to support climate mitigation strategies and community behavior shifts leading to improved forest management. By presenting a strategic and actionable disaster management plan that overlapped with TRACC objectives, the communities were able to tap into existing government funding to secure DRR resources. The ministry provided them with almost 35,000 tree saplings for the express purpose of reducing the risk of landslides, improving soil health and conserving water in their communities.

CRS also facilitated an agreement with the ministry to provide training on how to prepare the land for planting, as well as sapling protection, water management and pruning. With support from CRS, the ministry began campaigns to sensitize district community leaders to the national policy on forest management, thereby increasing awareness of the importance of both planting and protecting the trees, as well as highlighting the communities' responsibility to support those activities. At baseline in the TRACC project, none of the households reported feeling capable of coping with heavy rains, landslides and strong winds, while 63% reported feeling capable at midterm.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: crs.org | CRS Headquarters, 228 West Lexington Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21201, USA | info@crs.org

PHOTOS:

Banner: Rifa Akhter is a member a CRS-supported Union Disaster Management Committee in Ukhiya Upazila, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Through its SOKKHOMOTA Project, CRS and Caritas Bangladesh work closely with government agencies to form, reform or reactivate local-level disaster management structures. *Amit Rudro for CRS*

Stage 1: Markus Angin belongs to a CRS-supported Village Disaster Preparedness Group on Adonara Island, Indonesia. *Laura Elizabeth Pohl/CRS*

Stage 2: Community members in Juba, Sudan, work on a map as part of an emergency preparedness plan that will enable better disaster responses. *CRS staff*

Stage 3: Members of CRS' EMPOWER project in Brazil meet with Vila Cachoeira locals to identify disaster risks and threats. *Felippe Thomaz for CRS*