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Alliance

Flood Resilience Project
Joint Planning Meeting of
and CRAG on Agriculture Sector
19.05.21
Microfinance Office, Sundarganj, Gaibandha.
Organized by Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK)
Supported by Concern Worldwide



SOLUTIONS BRIEF

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Concern Worldwide

Community resilience action groups to strengthen climate resilience

Summary

In Hatibandha and Sundarganj upazilas, Bangladesh, community resilience action groups (CRAGs) were established to improve community flood resilience by mobilizing communities and facilitating joint planning with government agencies. The CRAGs' advocacy led to the inclusion of community-identified priorities in union budgets and annual development plans, which in turn enhanced access to climate-smart agriculture, improved early warning systems and early response, and strengthened flood-resilient infrastructure. By addressing structural and socio-economic vulnerabilities through a multisectoral, community-led approach, the CRAGs strengthened local governance and promoted sustainable, long-term community resilience in these highly flood-prone districts.

Our approach

With support from Concern Worldwide, inclusive CRAGs were established to help identify climate and social vulnerabilities, prioritize and coordinate community-led disaster preparedness and response planning, and advocate for improved services in education, health, water, and livelihoods. Each CRAG is composed of 17–21 trusted residents, of whom at least 40 per cent are women, and representing youth, persons with

disabilities, and diverse professions. After receiving training on leadership, advocacy, and climate vulnerability, CRAGs facilitated joint planning meetings with government departments, successfully integrating community-identified actions into official sub-district development and preparedness plans.

Facts and figures



Costs:

BDT 300,000/US\$2,450 for training and orientation, materials and equipment, and volunteer support



Time to set up:

Two to three years



People reached:

Approximately 40,000 people



Easy to replicate?

Yes, these are community-led groups made up of volunteers from communities who want to advocate for improved community services and disaster preparedness planning



Bangladesh

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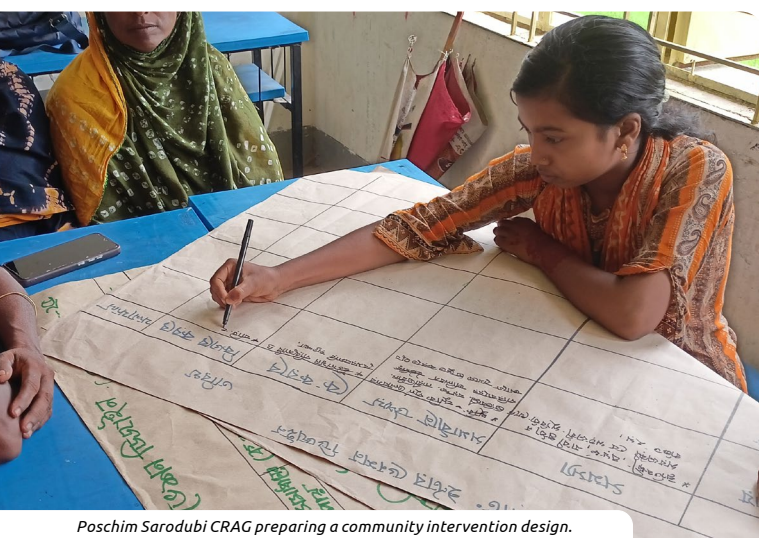
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What was the problem?

The remote *char* areas (riverine islands and flood-plain sandbars) are highly vulnerable to flooding, erosion, and displacement. The Climate Resilience Measurement for Communities (CRMC) assessment indicated that communities living in *char* areas faced chronic challenges, such as limited access to education, healthcare, safe water, and climate-resilient livelihoods, which were worsened by frequent floods, weak infrastructure, and political marginalization. These communities were isolated from public services and early warnings due to poor connectivity and a lack of effective communication systems. The absence of flood protection, essential services, and government support left communities ill equipped to prepare for, respond to, or recover from repeated flood events. With no formal channels to voice their needs, communities' vulnerabilities remained unaddressed.

What was the solution?

Concern Worldwide provided targeted training to CRAGs in advocacy, negotiation, and awareness-raising to support their participation in a structured community-led advocacy process. Equipped with these skills and using data from the CRMC assessments, the CRAGs identified key gaps in preparedness and the urgent need for greater inclusion of community priorities in government services, especially for communities living in remote, flood-prone *char* areas. To address these needs, the CRAGs organized joint planning meetings with key government departments, including the Department of Agricultural Extension, the Department of Livestock Services, the Department of Public Health Engineering, and the Department of Primary Education. These meetings led to the inclusion of community-identified priorities in union budgets and annual development plans.



Poschim Sarodubi CRAG preparing a community intervention design.
Photo: Md. Shofiqul Islam, Concern Worldwide



Dalalpara CRAG preparing a community intervention design.
Photo: Md. Robi Ul Hassan, Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK)

The joint planning process created a formal space for communities to voice their needs and hold local governments accountable, particularly advocating for the most marginalized. This collaboration ensured that government resources and support were directed to the most vulnerable households.

How does it increase resilience?

The CRAGs play a central role in strengthening flood resilience, as they fill a critical gap in marginalized communities' ability to voice their needs in a structured and effective way. The CRAGs play a pivotal role in advocating for improved services, facilitating local participation, and bridging the gap between isolated *char* communities and authorities. The initiative strengthened collaboration between communities, government agencies, and service providers through targeted engagement with key stakeholders.

The CRAGs strengthened local leadership and forged lasting institutional linkages, ensuring that marginalized communities can continue to adapt and scale resilience efforts well beyond the project's duration. By aligning

Climate Resilience Measurement for Communities (CRMC)

The Climate Resilience Measurement for Communities (CRMC) is a data-driven process, complemented by a web-based tool and mobile app, which helps communities to evaluate and measure how resilient they are to climate hazards. Using the results, they can identify and implement resilience-building interventions and run additional measurements to track improvements.

Find out more: ZCRAlliance.org/crmc

communities' flood resilience strategies with local policies through policy advocacy with government departments, the initiative ensures that interventions and policy changes are designed for long-term impact and prioritize the needs of marginalized, climate-vulnerable communities.

Through consistent engagement, the CRAGs built local leadership and strengthened relationships with government stakeholders. Despite being informal bodies, the CRAGs earned recognition by effectively mobilizing community-driven resilience actions and bridging service delivery gaps, leading to lasting improvements in governance and preparedness.

Other benefits:

- There is stronger collaboration and deepened trust between the CRAGs and relevant government departments, enabling collective planning and action.
- The CRAGs laid the foundation for increased community engagement and empowerment in climate resilience planning.
- The CRAGs' advocacy went beyond the original scope of flood preparedness and response, leveraging improvements in access to health services and sanitation, education continuity, and better access to livelihood services such as support from agricultural institutions for winter cropping seeds.

Common conditions for success:

Q: *Is this intervention appropriate for other communities?*

A: Yes, the intervention is appropriate for other vulnerable and marginalized communities with limited access to essential services and weak government engagement.

Q: *What conditions are needed for the interventions?*

A: While active community participation is critical for the CRAGs to function, there also needs to be strong facilitation from partner organizations, reliable data on hazards and services, willingness of local government to collaborate, adequate resources, and clear communication channels between communities and government.

Q: *Was there anything special about the communities where this was most effective?*

A: The solution was effective due to strong local leadership, a shared sense of urgency amongst community members from repeated disasters, cohesive community dynamics, and responsive local government support.

Success story

Jahanara rebuilt her life after repeated river erosion and her husband's illness. With support from the CRAG and the Bangladesh government, she received seeds and fertilizer, earning enough income from maize, jute, and sesame to expand her farming.

"If the CRAG had not connected with the Agriculture Office, I would never have received the seeds. The CRAG has helped form a farmer group of 20 people here, and the Sub-Assistant Agriculture Office meets with us twice a month at the CRAG office"

Jahanara, Vati village



Jahanara Begum, Vati Kapasia, Sundarganj.
Photo: Md. Abadullah Mondal – Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK)

Expert view

The Zurich Climate Resilience programme demonstrates a best-practice model in community-led resilience, leveraging the CRAGs for sustained advocacy, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and resource mobilization. Its structured, joint planning approach ensures vulnerable communities access essential services, thus fostering long-term sustainability and climate-adaptive development"

Md. Rashidul Kabir,

Upazila Agriculture Officer, Sundarganj, Gaibandha



A CRAG group convenes its monthly meeting to discuss and reflect on community issues.
Photo: Saikat Mojumder, Concern Worldwide

Lessons learnt

- Sustainable resilience-building requires a community-driven, multi-stakeholder approach.
- Investing in training and communication enhances group effectiveness.
- Engaging stakeholders in joint action planning fosters collective ownership of initiatives.
- Collaborative planning processes strengthen stakeholder coordination, reduce duplication of efforts, and lead to more efficient and sustainable use of resources in disaster risk management.

Get in touch

If you have any questions, contact:
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For more resilience solutions, visit:
ZCRAlliance.org/solutions

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Further reading

ZCRA (2026) 'Community-led drainage construction to reduce prolonged flooding'.

<https://zcralliance.org/resources/item/community-led-drainage-construction-to-reduce-prolonged-flooding-solution-brief/>

ZCRA (n.d.) 'Bangladesh'.

<https://zcralliance.org/where-we-work/our-impact/bangladesh/>

ZCRA (2021) 'Community resilience action groups build flood resilience'.

<https://zcralliance.org/blogs/community-resilience-action-groups-build-flood-resilience/>

ZCRA (2025) 'Community advocacy champions'.

<https://zcralliance.org/resources/item/community-advocacy-champions/>



The Zurich Climate Resilience Alliance is a multi-sectoral partnership, powered by the Z Zurich Foundation, focused on enhancing resilience to climate hazards in both rural and urban communities. By implementing solutions, promoting good practice, influencing policy and facilitating systemic change, we aim to ensure that all communities facing climate hazards are able to thrive. **Find out more at ZCRAlliance.org**

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