



DRR IN
ACTION
CASE
STUDY

What is an Urban ‘Community’? – New ways for local DRR actions in cities

Theme of the Case Study

Community/local action
for resilience

Country

Nepal

Case location

7 municipalities in Nepal:
Kathmandu,
Bhaktapur,
Mhadhapur-Thimi,
Godavari,
Bhudhnilkantha,
Dhangadhi,
Pokhara-Leknath

Background

The SURE (Strengthen Urban Resilience and Engagement) programme is implemented by the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) in partnership with the British Red Cross (BRC) focused on multiple hazards, natural and man-made. Heavily emphasising participatory-led approaches to engage urban populations, the programme uses citizen voices of the 840 target vulnerable group ‘champions’ to create bottom-up demand to local governments for improved disaster resilience. SURE moves away from geospatially-defined programme interventions and uses a network-based approach. SURE also works with the ‘missing middle’ or local government (municipalities) to provide technical disaster management support and create linkages between government and ‘hard to reach’ and vulnerable populations who are most affected by disasters.

How did SURE define ‘community’ in an urban context?

Former urban and rural disaster risk management interventions both in Nepal and regionally have highlighted that the geographical classification of communities is deeply challenging⁽¹⁾. In an urban context this only becomes more complicated by large heterogeneity populations, lack of social cohesion and difficulties in engaging with ‘community’ members.

SURE uses six types of urban community⁽²⁾ to help identify and engage with vulnerable populations and subsequently testing a new model of working in urban communities that identifies and works with target vulnerable groups, looking at how they organize themselves and capitalizing on the networks which they use, instead of relying on artificial geographic groupings. The six types of urban community used are: communities of places, communities of interest, communities of culture, communities of practice, communities of resistance, and, virtual/digitized communities.

Photo: Target vulnerable urban groups; People living on the river bank in Kailali. | NRCS

What did the action seek to change?

Municipal governments are disaster risk management (DRM)-responsive to active and engaged citizens and a strengthened and better-positioned NRCS to engage with communities means that municipalities are better able to respond to multi-hazard risks.

What were the key actions taken to achieve this change?

SURE has developed an urban citizen engagement framework to reach and better engage 'hard to reach' populations in the urban area. This approach separates the population into three categories: general urban populations, schools and, specific groups who are vulnerable to disasters (known as target vulnerable groups – based on the six types of communities) to achieve depth by reaching the most vulnerable and breadth by supporting urban populations to raise their voices to the local and municipal government levels.

SURE works with four target vulnerable groups in each of the seven municipalities (listed on page 4 of the SURE programme overview). Each of these target vulnerable groups have nominated 30 champions who NRCS will work with over the five years of the programme, to build their confidence and ability to advocate for their disaster priorities for years to come. SURE has created new innovative processes such as Participatory Campaign Planning that engages citizen voices, working with target vulnerable groups to tailor disaster messages for each group, based on their own concerns and recommendations to ensure actions being advised are both relevant and achievable.

Learning from the previous Earthquake Preparedness for Safer Communities programme, experience from the 2015 earthquake response and the SURE Urban Assessment, it is clear that **vulnerable populations in urban context do not often engage with or rely on local disaster management committees in the event of a disaster**. Instead they organize themselves around their own networks, both informal and formal, such as family, temples, markets, service-providers, employment. As information, knowledge and goods often flow across these networks, affecting communities' ability to access resources and processes, and to take action to prepare and respond to disasters⁽³⁾. The SURE programme is using these networks to share information through the 30 champions from each target group.

What were the essential steps taken along the process to bring about this change?

Step 1	Identify, through BRC / NRCS Urban Assessment (VCA), vulnerable groups to disasters
Step 2	Narrow down target vulnerable group selection through identifying skills and capacity of the National Society, interest from target vulnerable group in being involved in urban disaster resilience building.
Step 3	Identify 30 champions of each target vulnerable group to work with over the course of the five year programme, who have wide networks and are interested and able to influence those networks with new / improved behaviours on disaster resilience.
Step 4	Extensive engagement and capacity building of champions through advocacy training, identify advocacy asks, skills building such as first aid training, and partnership identification of who can support them such as government and other local actors.



Target vulnerable urban groups;
Single-women's group in Kailali.
| NRCS

What SFDRR principles¹ were applicable to this change process?

- Principle 1 Empowerment of local authorities and communities through resources, incentives and decision making responsibilities as appropriate.
- Principle 2 Decision-making to be inclusive and risk-informed while using a multi-hazard approach.
- Principle 3 Accounting of local and specific characteristics of disaster risks when determining measures to reduce risk.

What were the Achievements and the Impacts?

Urban populations and targeted vulnerable groups in the seven municipal areas:

- have increased awareness of disaster risk management and are able to advocate to municipal government for actions to increase resilience
- are more resilient to disasters

What were the key Lessons Learnt?

- New approaches such as working with target vulnerable groups has taken longer than expected to be implemented as the National Society needed time to become confident in new working modalities, and identifying 'champions' from target vulnerable groups has required many discussions with communities.
- Adapting rural-based community-based disaster risk management tools and processes to an urban context has taken a lot of time and energy but resulted in a better understanding and more participatory approaches being included in the programme implementation. Advocacy strategy has been specifically designed that targets both the vertical and horizontal stakeholders that is needed for inter-connectedness of the programme across multiple scales.
- In order to use a network approach, an in-depth understanding is needed of people's networks and how people organize themselves, with M&E systems then needing to be designed to track how people share information and develop their skills
- Livelihoods repeatedly comes up as a key driver for disaster resilience, both in the Urban Assessment (VCA), focus groups and with NRCS district chapter. As a result the SURE programme has included economic security component in its programming focusing on how to link target vulnerable groups into existing systems and support.
- Complexity of working in urban systems continues to create challenges; multiple actors to engage with, the movement of people, boundaries being arbitrary, the scale of the SURE programme only able to address specific needs and not able to address larger infrastructure deficiencies.
- Engaging with partners continues to be challenging including:
 - Complexities of managing Government interests,
 - Willingness of stakeholders such as community-based organizations (CBO) to collaborate,
 - Importance and challenges in understanding who, what, where in each municipality.

¹ e.g. Primary responsibility of the State, Shared responsibility, Protection, All-of-society-engagement, coordination mechanism, empowering local-decision makers, Multi-hazard approach and inclusive risk-informed decision-making, Sustainable development, Local and specific risks.

What were the Good Practices arising from this action?

Good Practice 1	Understand how 'communities' organize themselves and work within these existing systems, and not imposing 'community' onto vast urban areas
Good Practice 2	In order to make the programme and its deliverables relevant, populations need to identify and work on disaster management issues that are relevant to them, that means being flexible about the type of hazards the programme focuses on – from man-made to natural hazards.
Good Practice 3	In order for an approach to have traction and be meaningful to populations it needs to be contextualised and the programme needs to be able to recognize and adapt to these demands; recognizing that even groups within the same municipalities have different risks.

Policy Relevance to DRR in Action

This DRR in action relates directly to the Sendai Framework Priority 3 – Investing in DRR for resilience, and acts on:

- Importance of moving from information dissemination model of DRR, to behavioural change models for longer term impact and ownership of risk reduction behaviours; and,
- Supporting the mobilization of vulnerable populations to have the confidence and capacity to engage with government and stakeholders who have the resources to improve their disaster resilience.

Key Messages from this Case Study

- A meaningful DRR intervention in urban communities must first recognize what defines an urban community and how they are organized to guide specific engagement with participatory-led approaches for each type of urban community.
- A behavioural change DRR model for longer term impact and ownership of risk reduction behaviours for an urban community, in which the populations identify and work on disaster management issues that are relevant to them, is more effective than an information dissemination model.
- Recognizing and working within the realities of how people network with one another, where traditional power dynamics influence results, identifying and investing capacity development of vulnerable target group champions to build their confidence and ability to advocate for their disaster priorities will address specific needs and sustainability.

The target group and network-based approaches are innovations in how to conceptualise and organize an urban disaster resilience programme. Aiming to build confidence and skills of local (urban) communities to own and strengthen their resilience and DRR efforts, this is a new way of working that provides a depth in terms of focusing on behaviour change and breadth of coverage.

References for this Case Study

1. BRCS, 2015, 'Earthquake Preparedness for Safer Communities After Action Review'
2. Hamdi, 2004: 'Small Change: About the Art of Practice and the limits of Planning in Cities' (published by Earthscan) and Kupp, 2016, cited in ALNAP (2016), 'Stepping back: understand cities and their systems' (Campbell)
3. UCL City Leadership Lab, 2016, 'Informal Governance Networks for DRR'
4. SURE Programme overview
5. SURE Urban Assessment overview
6. Defining 'community' in the urban context – SURE Programme, Nepal
7. SURE Summary of Urban Assessments 2017
8. [SURE Urban Assessment guideline](#)
9. [SURE Urban Assessment tools](#)

Target vulnerable urban groups;
People living on the river bank in
Kathmandu. | NRCS



Collaborators for this Case Study:

Nepal Red Cross Society,
British Red Cross,
Municipal Governments of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur,
Mhadhapur-Thimi, Godavari, Bhudhnilkantha,
Dhangadhi, and Pokhara-Leknath

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