



ZURICH FLOOD RESILIENCE ALLIANCE

Mercy Corps impact brief

DECEMBER 2024

This brief summarizes Mercy Corps' work and impact as part of the Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance (2018–2023). Funded by the Z Zurich Foundation and consisting of nine partner organizations, the Alliance aimed to enhance the resilience of flood-prone communities by increasing funding, improving policies, and advancing best practices in flood resilience. During this five-year period, the Alliance set out to help 2 million people become more resilient to flooding and mobilize US\$ 1 billion for resilience initiatives. As part of the Alliance, Mercy Corps implemented activities designed to advance resilience in Indonesia, Jordan, and Nepal, as well as at the global level.

By the end of 2023, the Alliance had exceeded its targets, positively impacting 3.14 million people and influencing US\$ 1.26 billion in resilience investments. Building on its success, the initiative has now evolved into the **Zurich Climate Resilience Alliance** to address broader climate adaptation challenges and drive systems change. Mercy Corps continues to play a key role in the Alliance, leading on climate resilience influencing and implementing programs in Indonesia, Jordan, and Nepal.

This impact brief covers the main successes of Mercy Corps in its implementation of the Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance and provides an overview of the program as it enters its next phase.




Summary

The Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance was a multi-sectoral partnership focused on finding practical ways to help communities strengthen their resilience to flood risk. To achieve this, Mercy Corps implemented the Flood Resilience Measurement for Communities (FRMC) assessment and worked to increase funding for flood resilience, strengthen global, national, and subnational policies, and improve flood resilience practice, to support those most vulnerable to floods.

Project dates	2018–2023
Impact	Through our community programming and policy influencing activities, Mercy Corps impacted more than 1,750,000 people in Indonesia, Jordan, and Nepal, in addition to our advocacy work at the global level
Funding	CHF 7,423,313
Donor	Z Zurich Foundation

At the global level, the Alliance brought together nine organizations: Mercy Corps, Concern Worldwide, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), the Institute for Social and Environmental Transition (ISET), the London School of Economics (LSE), Plan International, Practical Action, and Zurich Insurance Group.

Where did we work?

	Indonesia	Six communities in Pekalongan, Central Java
	Jordan	Four communities across the country
	Nepal	Fourteen communities in Sudurpaschim Province

Program impact

Through this program, Mercy Corps achieved considerable progress in climate resilience. For example, in **Nepal** our community advocacy efforts led to increased local budget allocations for resilience, enabling lifesaving interventions. In **Indonesia**, the team strengthened climate-resilient livelihoods for women, men and children affected by coastal flooding, while flood resilience was embedded in national climate resilience policy and local development plans. In **Jordan**, community-led advocacy led to improved infrastructure and early warning systems. These efforts directly benefited those at the frontlines of the climate crisis.

These accomplishments were driven by **community-led prioritization of interventions, evidence generation, and advocacy at a local, national, and global scale**, influencing policies and funding, and elevating community voices in global discussions on climate finance and equitable climate action. As we move into the next phase of the program, Mercy Corps will deepen its impact through a systems change approach, as well as expanding its interventions to address not only flood resilience but also resilience to extreme heat, ensuring a more comprehensive response to climate risks.

Indonesia

As climate change accelerates, communities around the world are increasingly threatened by coastal flooding and inundation, disrupting lives and livelihoods. This is particularly evident in Indonesia, where rising sea levels and extreme weather events have caused persistent flooding, land erosion, and economic disruption, affecting women, men, and children in coastal areas. In response, Mercy Corps Indonesia took a comprehensive approach to strengthen resilience against these threats by working at local, national, and international level.

At community level, Mercy Corps trained farmers in the upstream areas in conservation techniques that improved soil stability and reduced erosion, while providing alternative, climate-resilient crops. In the downstream aquaculture areas, the team introduced adaptive technologies, such as biofloc systems and floating nets, to help fish farmers mitigate the impacts of flooding, while supporting women in coastal communities to maintain revenue during the low season. Together, these interventions significantly increased productivity despite recurring floods, and helped restore local ecosystems.

At the national level, Mercy Corps contributed to the development of Indonesia's Nationally Determined Contribution's Adaptation Roadmap and Climate Resilient Development Policy Framework, ensuring they reflect the flood resilience needs of coastal populations. At the local level, the team worked closely with Pekalongan City and Regency and with Central Java's provincial governments to embed climate resilience into their development plans, addressing the specific needs of vulnerable communities through a transboundary approach. Mercy Corps also highlighted the urgent issue of loss and damage, particularly the impact of slow-onset events like coastal inundation, both within Indonesia's policy framework and at global climate negotiations.

By combining policy influence, local engagement, and adaptive solutions, Mercy Corps not only improved livelihoods but also ensured that the realities of those most affected by climate change are better represented in national and global climate resilience frameworks.



A mother and daughter walking through the flooded streets of their village in Central Java.
Photo: Ezra Millstein, Mercy Corps.

RESILIENT LIVELIHOODS

Tarudi and his family on Java's north coast faced devastating income loss due to flooding that swept away their milkfish stocks. Mercy Corps introduced innovative solutions to build resilience: now, floating nets protect fish from floods and inland ponds reduce risk, while farmers receive training to manage these systems. Mercy Corps is also supporting women like Tarudi's sister Muriah to preserve the fish, which adds value and gives them access to much larger markets, creating stable year-round incomes. By supporting communities with tools, training, and market access, the program helps families adapt to climate challenges and secure their livelihoods. See [this video](#) for more information.

Jordan

Mercy Corps' team in Jordan focused on building resilience in communities facing flash floods, a growing threat exacerbated by climate change. These sudden floods, which often occur with little warning, endanger lives, cause severe damage to livelihoods and infrastructure, and strain local resources. The flash floods highlight the need for adaptive flood management strategies to better protect people living in the affected areas. Mercy Corps' approach centered on community-led advocacy and interventions to enhance resilience to these risks.

The program trained women and men in Azraq, Wadi Musa, Sweimeh, and Ma'in to advocate on behalf of community committees and develop climate advocacy action plans. These plans successfully influenced local decision-makers, who pledged increased support for flood resilience measures. For example, the Azraq community committee's advocacy led to the Governorate Council prioritizing the need for an early warning system, a critical step toward reducing flood risks.

The advocacy efforts were complemented by capacity-building and policy dialogues. These dialogues, held with local authorities and community leaders, created platforms to present policy briefs and the recommendations of those most affected by the impacts of flash floods. The result was a noticeable shift in the recognition of flood resilience needs at both local and national level.

Mercy Corps further strengthened community resilience through targeted interventions, based on the results of the FRMC, including training in evacuation protocols, first aid, and flood mitigation practices like valley cleaning and tree planting. The program's interventions also led to significant improvements in flood-related infrastructure and flood management in the communities.

Beyond the program's direct impacts, one of its most significant successes was the sustained commitment of community members to continue flood mitigation efforts. This proactive engagement extends the program's impact and further increases the community's long-term resilience.

The program also gained national visibility, contributing to Mercy Corps' growing reputation in the climate change sector in Jordan, which the team will build on in the next phase of the program.



Um Karam reviewing policy papers in Sweimeh, Jordan.
Photo: Ezra Millstein, Mercy Corps.

COMMUNITY-LED ADVOCACY

In Sweimeh, a village located in the Southern Jordan Valley, Mercy Corps trained community leaders such as Um Karam. She successfully advocated for studies on flood risk, budget allocation for prevention, and community clean-up campaigns. Her efforts inspired collaboration between residents and authorities to enhance community resilience and sparked a sense of unity and volunteerism among the residents of Sweimeh village. More on Um Karam's story can be read [here](#), while [this video](#) shows our broader impact in Sweimeh, Ma'in, Azraq, and Wadi Musa.

Nepal

Nepal's Terai plains face annual flooding that severely impacts lives, livelihoods, infrastructure, and agriculture. Climate change intensifies these risks, making floods more frequent and destructive. As part of the Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance, Mercy Corps' team in Nepal adopted a community-driven approach to strengthen flood resilience and reduce vulnerabilities in this high-risk region.

Mercy Corps worked with six communities to develop community advocacy plans and trained men and women as community advocacy champions. These champions effectively conveyed community needs to local decision-makers, securing critical funding for flood resilience initiatives worth NPR 5.3 million (~US\$ 40,000). In Patarkhalla, advocacy led to the installation of lifesaving hume pipes, which ensured safe evacuation during the July 2024 floods and prevented potential casualties. Mercy Corps also worked to enhance the collaboration between disaster management committees at the community and local levels and set up open dialogues so that communities could influence decisions and secure support for flood resilience measures.

To enhance disaster preparedness, Mercy Corps implemented activities such as flood simulations, evacuation drills, and infrastructure improvements, which directly enhanced safety and reduced flood risks. These efforts were based on the results of the FRMC and strengthened community cohesion, improved knowledge of evacuation protocols, and enhanced safety measures.

Advocacy efforts resulted in the allocation of funds for essential projects, such as drainage works, road improvements, and electricity infrastructure, which addressed flooding, ensured better access to essential services, and improved safety. These outcomes demonstrated the impact of local-level advocacy, showing how communities can influence local government decisions and drive long-term resilience.



Two men crossing a flooded river in the Kailali District, Nepal. Photo: Mohan Bikram Basnet, Mercy Corps.

RESILIENCE THROUGH LEADERSHIP

Mercy Corps supported Tek Bahadur Sunar's journey from flood survivor to community leader in Kutiyakabar, Nepal. After the 2008 flood, Tek became determined to help his village prepare for future disasters. Mercy Corps helped him guide his community in building resilience, including constructing a safe shelter for disaster survivors. Tek is also advocating for sustainable farming practices that better withstand the changing flood patterns. His leadership exemplifies the transformative power of local action in building safer, stronger communities.

Global influencing

At the global level, Mercy Corps led the Alliance's advocacy efforts, focusing on better resilience policies and increased funding for adaptation and resilience for communities most affected by floods. The team engaged donor countries and global funds to advocate for equitable resource allocation to climate-vulnerable communities. Central to this work was creating evidence to inform policy discussions on climate finance, loss and damage, and climate-resilient recovery.

Mercy Corps produced several influential publications for policymakers.¹ The [*At What Cost*](#) report analyzed the extent to which adaptation funding reaches the world's most fragile countries, highlighting significant gaps in equity and accessibility. The [*Falling Through the Gaps*](#) report introduced an influential framework for loss and damage, based on evidence from the countries we work in.

Addressing the challenges of recovery, the [*Towards Transformative Action*](#) publication offered recommendations for inclusive, climate-resilient recovery, drawing on case studies from Alliance programs. Finally, the [*Fair Share*](#) series, developed with ODI, assessed developed countries' progress toward meeting their fair share of global climate finance commitments.

Using this evidence, Mercy Corps influenced donors, multilateral funds, and key policy processes, ensuring that the Alliance's expertise and the voices of impacted communities were central in global discussions on climate finance, adaptation, and loss and damage.

Notably, Mercy Corps, in collaboration with other stakeholders, contributed to the decision to double adaptation finance and the establishment of the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage – critical milestones in global climate policy.



Woman watering sweet potato plants in Kilgile, Kenya.
Photo: Ezra Millstein, Mercy Corps.

THE FAIR SHARE SERIES

Mercy Corps has worked in partnership with ODI for over four years on the Fair Share series, co-published by ODI and the Alliance. These annual reports track developed countries' progress in meeting their fair share of international climate finance. These reports have become a key resource for policymakers in both developed and developing countries, as well as international organizations. The Fair Share reports have been used to hold governments accountable and shape discussions and engagements around climate commitments, ensuring transparency and action from the world's largest emitters. The Fair Share series can be found [here](#).

¹ Members of the Zurich Climate Resilience Alliance are funded by the Z Zurich Foundation, with the exception of Zurich Insurance Group. However, the views expressed in publications

do not necessarily reflect the official position of either the Foundation or the company.

What's next?

The Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance is now the **Zurich Climate Resilience Alliance**

The Zurich Climate Resilience Alliance builds resilience to climate hazards, including floods and heatwaves, through community-centered programming, evidence generation, and system-level change, connecting local, national, and global efforts. We aim to enable communities to thrive in the face of climate risks, while embedding gender equality and social inclusion in all our activities.

Project dates	2024–2035, with funding allocated per four-year cycle
Impact	Through our community programming and policy influencing activities, Mercy Corps is aiming to impact more than 6 million people in Indonesia, Jordan, and Nepal by 2035, in addition to our advocacy work at the global level
Funding	GBP 8,971,187 for 2024–2027
Donor	Z Zurich Foundation

At the global level, we continue to work with Concern Worldwide, IFRC, IIASA, ISET, LSE, Plan International, and Practical Action.

Where do we work?

From 2024 to 2035, our community-level activities will focus on the following areas:



Indonesia

21 communities, including upstream and downstream areas, in Central Java



Jordan

Six communities across Jordan including Wadi Musa, Azraq, Mlaih, Dieban, Ash Shuna Ashamalya, and Shobak



Nepal

21 communities across seven municipalities in Sudurpaschim and Madhesh provinces

Intended impact

This phase of Mercy Corps' work in the Alliance focuses not only on flooding but also on extreme heat, through systems change approaches. Mercy Corps will continue to combine resilience measurement ([using the ZCRA Climate Resilience Measurement in Communities tool](#)) and interventions at community level with policy engagement at local, national, and international levels. The **Nepal** team focuses on enhancing investments in flood and heat resilience, while strengthening early warning and early action. In **Indonesia**, efforts will empower communities with landscape-based policies and climate-resilient measures to address coastal flooding, integrating local evidence into national and international policies. In **Jordan**, the focus will be on enhancing the implementation of climate adaptation policies to foster and mainstream climate risk-informed development. Together, these efforts aim to create lasting climate resilience at scale.

CONTACT

Debbie Hillier
Head of the Zurich Climate Resilience Alliance for
Mercy Corps
dhillier@mercycorps.org

About Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action—helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.

Photo on page 1: Two women in rural Nepal. Alexandra Bingham, Mercy Corps.



45 SW Ankeny Street
Portland, Oregon 97204
888.842.0842
mercycorps.org