



Photo: Mercy Corps

CLIMATE RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT CASE STUDY SERIES | **INDONESIA**

# A Governance Approach To Building Urban Climate Resilience

The Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN) is a multiyear, \$59 million initiative funded by the Rockefeller Foundation to strengthen the capacity of more than 50 rapidly urbanizing cities in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, as they survive, adapt, and transform in the face of climate-related shocks and stresses. In 2009, Mercy Corps launched the \$6.32 million ACCCRN initiative in the Indonesian cities of Bandar Lampung and Semarang.

This brief highlights lessons learned from the ACCCRN program and offers insights for other Urban Climate Change Resilience (UCCR) programs.

## PROBLEM

In Asia, the world's most rapidly urbanizing region, 64% percent of the population will live in cities by 2050. Climate change poses special concerns for these rapidly growing cities, where large populations, accelerating urbanization, extensive poverty, and social marginalization—as well as an already high level of exposure to climatic extremes—create risks for large numbers of people. The impacts of climate change are particularly severe for poor and marginalized populations whose livelihoods are more dependent on the environment and who have fewer resources and less capacity to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

### What does 'building urban climate change resilience' mean?

**Strengthening** systems to reduce their fragility in the face of climate impacts and the risk of cascading failures.

**Building** the capacities of social agents to anticipate and develop adaptive responses, as well as access and maintain supportive urban systems.

**Addressing** the institutional factors that limit effective responses to system fragility or undermine the ability of agents to take action.



In Indonesia, the urban population is estimated to account for more than 50% of total population, and is projected to increase to 65% by 2025. In light of rapid urbanization, efforts are underway to meet the challenge of mainstreaming UCCR into local and national policy. However, many of Indonesia's urban-related laws and regulations were designed for a time when most of society was agrarian. Thus, in the case of Indonesia, building UCCR is a governance issue rather than a technical issue; work needs to

focus on dealing with complex power dynamics behind urbanization, and on mainstreaming climate change resilience into policy.

As new and more appropriate systems are being developed, Mercy Corps and its partners are supporting the government to ensure that new policy on building and implementing UCCR is inclusive and fair in terms of reconciling competing needs and interests, through efforts focused on transparency and open access to information.

## OUR APPROACH

Mercy Corps believes that successfully building UCCR should enhance the capacity of urban actors and institutions to incorporate resilience thinking, including climate considerations, into city planning and budgeting, as well as overall systems to manage the process of urbanization. To achieve this, Mercy Corps took a governance approach to ACCCRN that aimed at building new knowledge, fostering experimentation, and deepening political discourse and engagement around climate challenges and urban governance.

Mercy Corps' strategy revolved around learning-by-doing and shared-learning methods as reflected in the Climate Resilience Framework (CRF) developed by the Institute for Social and Environmental Transition (ISET), a key ACCCRN partner<sup>1</sup>. The framework's shared learning approaches allowed local planners to work through issues themselves, so as to build urban resilience on their own, and generate practical strategies for local action with strong local commitments. Although the implementation of individual projects provides some degree of climate resilience, the broader goal of ACCCRN has been to build the capacity of city agents, institutions, and systems to prepare for the longer-term impacts of climate change and introduce broader concepts of resilience building.

Shared Learning Dialogues (SLD) are essentially the backbone of ACCCRN and take place throughout the program. SLDs engage local stakeholders in the resilience planning process and integrate knowledge of climate change from outside experts with local knowledge of development issues and planning priorities. These cyclical, iterative engagements took place at the international, national, and local levels, and ranged

from large-scale public meetings and homogenous focus group sessions, to medium-sized multi-stakeholder gatherings and one-on-one meetings. Mercy Corps strategically planned and deliberately facilitated the SLDs to promote socially inclusive climate adaptation and development.

Mercy Corps began work on ACCCRN Indonesia by first reviewing the existing policy, mapping city's stakeholders, and reviewing power relationships within the existing system. A multi-stakeholder City Team<sup>2</sup> was consequently established by mayoral mandates to lead program implementation or collaborate with existing influential working group/platforms. The City Teams, facilitated by Mercy Corps, utilized the SLDs as a platform to engage collectively and learn-by-doing the following processes:

### **Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA):**

Mercy Corps partnered with local research institutes to develop a simple methodology that enabled the City Team to develop and conduct the VCAs themselves. This resulted in lower costs, greater ownership, and better comprehension of vulnerability and risk amongst stakeholders. The VCAs were an ensemble of city wide community-based vulnerability

1. The framework presents a practical way of systematically translating the growing body of natural and social scientific knowledge regarding resilience into applied planning practice, while being simple enough for local practitioners to apply in their own context.

2. The City Team was comprised of the government, NGOs/CSOs, university and research institutions, community representatives, the private sector, and other relevant institutions in the city.

assessments and governance capacity assessments that identified vulnerable areas and communities, current capacity and needs, and future climate risks.<sup>3</sup>

**Identification of analysis units and sector studies:**

Through the VCAs, City Teams identified specific populations, sectors and systems or geographic areas, and time scales for historic and future analysis. Relevant and capable organizations and individuals were selected to conduct detailed sector studies as determined by the City Teams.

**City Resilience Strategies (CRS):**

The City Teams formulated intervention steps based on their context, as indicated through SLDs, VCAs, and sector studies. The teams then conducted quantitative and qualitative cost-benefit analyses to prioritize and strategize short and longer-term activities.

**Based on the priorities in the CRS, pilot intervention projects funded by The Rockefeller Foundation:**

These projects were not meant to have a large-scale impact. Instead, they were conceptualized to be simple enough to embody effective engagement and learning experiments for the stakeholders, and to embed resilience thinking, including climate considerations, into city planning.

**Nurturing new networks:**

Across all of these activities, Mercy Corps facilitated the development of networks within and between cities at both national and international levels to provide opportunities for exchange and shared learning. The networks continue to provide city governments a “direct line” to the national government through which they can express concerns, request support, and ask questions on initiatives of the national government.

---

**OUTCOME**

ACCCRN Indonesia resulted in eight pilot intervention projects in the cities of Bandar Lampung and Semarang, which generated a variety of models that tested its diverse range of approaches, processes, and practices around UCCR. The ACCCRN process has already been scaled out and replications within Indonesia are already underway.

The integral impact of ACCCRN is that it is influencing policy on both local and national levels, as well as building capacity and knowledge of critical stakeholders. This stems from ACCCRN partners having gained a deeper understanding of their city, complex system, and having made connections across scales and underlying drivers of vulnerability. In Semarang,<sup>4</sup> ACCCRN has helped to create new state-civil society coalitions that are more effectively demanding state accountability on issues ranging from environmental management to urban services. Climate change regulation is progressively gaining momentum within the Ministry of the Environment and Forestry, and a guideline for local governments

allocated funds to local governments' budgets for programs and events on climate change adaptation implementation or replication. A Climate Center that disseminates data and information on climate change to the public has also been established to cater to the needs expressed by CSOs, universities, and research institutions.

As such, the project introduced new ways of generating and sharing data that allow it to be used more widely and effectively.

Since the inception of the program in 2009, Mercy Corps has expanded ACCCRN programming in more than 15 additional cities.

to mainstream climate change into spatial planning is underway.<sup>5</sup> The Indonesian government has

---

3. VCAs included trend analysis of past, present, and future data to understand how economic development, urban planning, and rural-to-urban migration have affected the cities' structure, operations, and current vulnerabilities and capacities.

4. The pilot projects include: integrated solid waste management plan, groundwater conservation through bio-pores, climate adaptation curriculum development, flood forecasting and early warning system, and a pre-feasibility study on rainwater harvesting, urban mangrove ecosystem restoration and alternative livelihoods, health early warning and information system for vector borne diseases, trash management feasibility study.

5. Ten cities and West Java province (nine cities and 11 regencies), representing 6.1 million people, have demonstrated an interest in replicating the ACCCRN program. One city has signed an MOU; five cities have signed Letters of Intent to replicate the ACCCRN program.

---

## LESSONS LEARNED

The following lessons learned through the implementation of ACCCRN reflect principles that Mercy Corps believes should be considered by others developing climate resilience strategies:

### **1. Governance is central to climate resilience.**

Enhancing governance is much more than supply-side only, institutional-level “capacity building.” The capacity of key stakeholders and institutions to understand climate change, learn, and adapt to new information are fundamental to resilience. Equally important are the capacity of the voice and social capital of civil society and political champions to influence decision-making processes that impact urban resilience. New information and advocacy approaches have helped to expand debate, dialogue, and mobilization around critical development decisions. As dynamic constituencies are now in place for institutions to serve, governing capacities increase.

### **2. Transformational change requires time and flexibility.**

Successfully building UCCR means mainstreaming it into government policy and less tangible products like trust and local engagement and empowerment to create a productive and durable space for transformational change. All of the above require consistent, long-term efforts. Our experience through ACCCRN recommends a minimum of six years as the time required to influence agendas across different levels of government.

### **3. Process is more important than projects.**

Indicators for success in the development arena continue to favor quantitative and material deliverables. This model needs to change. UCCR should be considered as more than a catalogue of projects; programs should move away from discrete, technical approaches to addressing complex challenges, to processes that support an understanding of investments and trade-offs for long-term trends and future scenarios. Given the degree to which the success of discrete adaptation projects is dependent upon local context, approaches to facilitated learning will hold the most potential for replication and success across contexts.

### **4. Facilitation should be valued as if it were a material output.**

Initiatives aimed at building climate resilience must place primacy on facilitating learning and networking among stakeholders in order to understand systems and options. Mercy Corps recommends a shift away from compliance indicators and towards impact indicators that meaningfully increase the adaptive, absorptive, and transformational capacity of communities and the systems within which they live.<sup>6</sup>

### **5. Consider power dynamics and provide space for advocacy.**

Climate change is often framed as a technical issue in such a way that it marginalizes the political drivers of vulnerability. Engagement of marginalized stakeholders is essential for challenging underlying assumptions and power structures, and to ensure resilience is being built equitably. This can be achieved through the development of advocacy networks, opening spaces for public dialogue, and increasing access to information. ACCCRN's SLDs have helped move the framework away from a climate hazards narrative, while shedding light and opening up dialogue on major governance and urban development challenges for climate resilience.

---

6. Some examples of possible meaningful resilience indicators include: Individual and community-level behavior change, spontaneous replication of activities, and non-externally financed interactions between citizens and governments.



This project was supported by the  
Rockefeller Foundation's Asian Cities  
Climate Change Resilience Network



45 SW Ankeny Street | 888.842.0842  
Portland, Oregon 97204 | [mercycorps.org](http://mercycorps.org)



**CLIMATE RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT  
TEAM CONTACTS**

Eliot Levine  
Senior Climate Adviser  
[elevine@mercycorps.org](mailto:elevine@mercycorps.org)

David Nicholson  
Director, Environment,  
Energy and Climate  
[dnicholson@mercycorps.org](mailto:dnicholson@mercycorps.org)

Ratri Sutarto  
ACCCRN Network Director  
[rsutarto@id.mercycorps.org](mailto:rsutarto@id.mercycorps.org)

