

THE ASIA COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS AND TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM (ACT) REGIONAL LEARNING EVENT

HOSTED BY OXFAM PILIPINAS | JUNE 24-26, 2025 |
THE GREENERY, BULACAN

CONVERGENCE FOR SHARED LEARNING

The Asia Community Preparedness and Transformation Program (ACT) Regional Learning Event convened participants from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines, including local partners, government stakeholders, and teams from the Global Humanitarian Team (GHT), Notre Dame University-USA, Oxfam America and Oxfam Asia. Over the three-day gathering, 42 participants collectively reflected on their experience during the five years of ACT program implementation, surfacing insights, challenges, and forward-looking strategies that inform the future of community-led disaster risk reduction (DRR).

The structure of the agenda was intentionally designed to prioritize learning and sharing, and promoting meaningful exchanges across countries. It incorporated small-group formats such as parallel sessions, Ignite stage talks, marketplace booths showcasing local practices, fishbowl conversations, pitching clinics, and panel discussions. Field visits on Day 2 further enriched the learning experience by highlighting practical examples of resilience-building and DRR strategies in both community and academic settings. These formats gave participants more space to raise questions, share experiences, and reflect together.

BEYOND PILOTS

The best news—we see DRR interventions evolving beyond pilots such as food and fodder banks in Bangladesh, adoption of climate resilient and diversified demonstration plots in Indonesia; a community managed livelihood and insurance in Nepal; women led self-help groups that expanded to include small enterprises; and various iterations of Anticipatory Actions spread out in these four countries. They are expanding horizontally, deeply and in some cases, with plans of being scaled up vertically with policy support from the national government.

A MATURITY OF PARTNERSHIPS

As a testament to the growing maturity of our partnerships, there were rich debates and fluid explosion of creative ideas between Oxfam staff and partners, also enabled by Bahasa translation for Indonesian colleagues. Penabalu is truly becoming a core member of the Oxfam family—we felt this. They are stepping into their space and power. Working as a collective, the ACT teams had a willingness to explore and discover new approaches, on how we can work well with less especially in the context of various funding cuts and humanitarian resets.





KEY INSIGHTS & EMERGING THEMES

TRANSFORMATIVE WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Women's leadership continues to emerge as a cornerstone of community resilience. Their involvement in decision-making, planning, and the implementation of DRR actions has translated into tangible community gains, including elected positions in local government, livelihood improvements, and increased trust in women-led mechanisms. Despite persistent barriers such as entrenched gender norms, limited education, multiple care burdens, and digital exclusion, women are not only participating—they are leading. The different experiences from the countries reaffirm that empowering women in DRR is both an equity issue and a practical strategy for more effective, community-rooted preparedness and response. This is currently being explored in a research partnership between Oxfam and the I-Lab Notre Dame University, USA. They were the Philippines for the ACT learning and are now in Nepal for research field work.

LOCALLY-ANCHORED ANTICIPATORY ACTIONS (AA)

Discussions with Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), local governments, and partner organizations highlighted the critical need to invest in local anticipatory systems. Key challenges and systemic issues have been acknowledged—such as fragmented access to early warning information, limited funding for anticipatory action operations, and the need for clearer institutional mandates to embed anticipatory actions into mainstream DRRM practices beyond pilot initiatives. On the other hand, promising practices such as community-based weather alerts and localized triggering mechanisms were also shared and recommended for scaling up and scaling out.

LIVELIHOOD AND DRR NEXUS TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

One of the key themes that emerged during the ACT Regional Learning Event was the strong connection between livelihoods, food systems, and disaster risk reduction (DRR) as a foundation for long-term community resilience. Discussions during the marketplace showcased practical and innovative approaches from across the region: Indonesia's demonstration plots for climate-resilient and diversified farming, Bangladesh's food bank and fodder initiatives, women-led savings groups and small enterprises in the Philippines, and Nepal's community-managed livelihood and insurance programs. Field visits further reinforced how livelihood groups not only improve economic security but also play a critical role in recovery, preparedness, and local leadership in times of crisis.

DIFFERENT FACES OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Field visits to a range of communities—including urban poor groups and people's organizations in Baseco, Manila; the seamstresses of Kababaihan sa Floodway B (or Women in Floodway B) in Taytay, Rizal; local humanitarian leaders in Donya Imelda, Quezon City; and the University of the Philippines Resilience Institute—showcased diverse approaches to building resilience. Whether through grassroots organizing, strengthening social networks, advancing climate education, or promoting care-centered advocacy, each initiative underscored the essential role of people and local leadership in shaping responsive and inclusive resilience strategies.



LOOKING AHEAD: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF ACT

The final day of the event centered on identifying key challenges and exploring forward-looking strategies. Participants shared reflections on their experiences and collectively discussed what is needed to sustain and build on the program's gains. Several common priorities emerged:

- Sustained and flexible investments in community-based systems that value local knowledge, sustain local capacity-building, recognize the significance of care work, and promote inclusive leadership, particularly among women and other marginalized groups.
- Scaling effective models and tools such as self-help groups (SHGs), locally-grounded AA mechanisms, and community-accessible forecasting systems, which have shown tangible results in enhancing preparedness and resilience.
- Institutionalizing DRR innovations by linking grassroots practices with formal structures through policy advocacy, stronger coordination with government actors, and long-term support for local implementation.

These reflections emphasized the importance of continuing the ACT Program's commitment to local leadership, inclusive practices, and adaptive approaches to disaster risk reduction and resilience-building.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Meantime, we leave you with questions harvested during the ACT learning to trigger more discussions:

With the changing funding landscapes, poly-crises and impending humanitarian reset, how can DRR work with less but ensure the most resilience and agency of our partner communities?

How do we lessen the burden on women as we expand our preparedness and DRR work and they become leaders in their communities?

Is it Oxfam's role to scale up and/or replicate or shall we instead focus on incubation of great and high impact ideas and provide proof of concept so others can scale up?

How can we support better documentation and knowledge management as our pathway to scale?

How do we sharpen our ability to mobilize resources and refine approaches like Donor Pitching Clinics and other resource mobilization techniques with Innovation Labs and other think tanks in the coming months?

