

BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS



EVIDENCE FROM OXFAM'S RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO

OXFAM

Partnerships are at the core of Oxfam's work to bring about sustainable and transformative change. Oxfam is working in partnership with governments, civil society and the private sector to build the resilience of poor women and men in the Asia-Pacific region. Investment in these partnerships is delivering positive impact, ensuring locally-relevant and innovative approaches to resilient development. Partnerships are most effective when they are grounded in a shared understanding of resilience, and future programs should invest more in strengthening long-term capacity of local partners to advocate for change at national level.

KEY LESSONS FOR RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT

1. Leveraging relationships with national civil society, government actors and the private sector helps to achieve resilient development outcomes.
2. Engaging with the private sector in resilience building, helps to broker fair access to products and services, and supports the resilience of small-medium enterprises.
3. Working in partnership with civil society organisations increases inclusive approaches to building resilience at scale.
4. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are most effective when they are grounded in a shared understanding of resilience, create spaces for reflection and learning and innovation, and build both implementation and influencing capacity of partners.

INTRODUCTION

Oxfam has been implementing resilience-building programs across the Asia-Pacific region for more than a decade. Evidence from research and evaluations demonstrates how these initiatives support women and men, as well as governments and communities, to build resilience at scale.

Oxfam defines resilience as the ability of women and men to realise their rights and improve their wellbeing despite shocks, stresses and uncertainty.¹

This Evidence Brief synthesises evidence of how Oxfam is working to strengthen multi-stakeholder relationships, alliances and networks to build resilience into its programs.

It is one of a series commissioned by Oxfam Australia to identify where, how and why Oxfam's approach to resilient development has created impact. The findings and lessons are intended to influence discussions among Oxfam staff, Oxfam partners, and the broader development community (in particular, development partners) about how to achieve resilient development outcomes.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

Building partnerships and alliances lies at the core of how Oxfam works to achieve change. The **Oxfam International Framework for Resilient Development** recognises the need for effective multi-stakeholder relationships to work toward resilient development. These include relationships between women and men, communities, civil society, the private sector and different levels and sectors of government. These partnerships and relationships contribute toward just, locally appropriate action that increases capacity of women and men in communities.



Philippines: Women in the Women's Rural Improvement Club make use of a small piece of land which they use to grow new vegetables and crops. All profits from the sale of produce goes back into a communal pot and is used to initiate the next crop. Photo: Hamish Pattison/Oxfam

FINDINGS

Key finding 1: Using a range of approaches, Oxfam has leveraged relationships with civil society, government actors and the private sector to achieve more resilient development outcomes.

Oxfam has built relationships with stakeholders from community to national levels across the region, working in partnership to achieve resilience. Oxfam works closely with local civil society organisations, as well as government agencies in all resilience projects. Together

with partners, Oxfam has also worked with private sector players to support better access to products and services. Table 1 presents the seven strategies that Oxfam has used in partnering to achieve resilient development outcomes.

Table 1: Oxfam’s ways of working with others to increase scale and impact

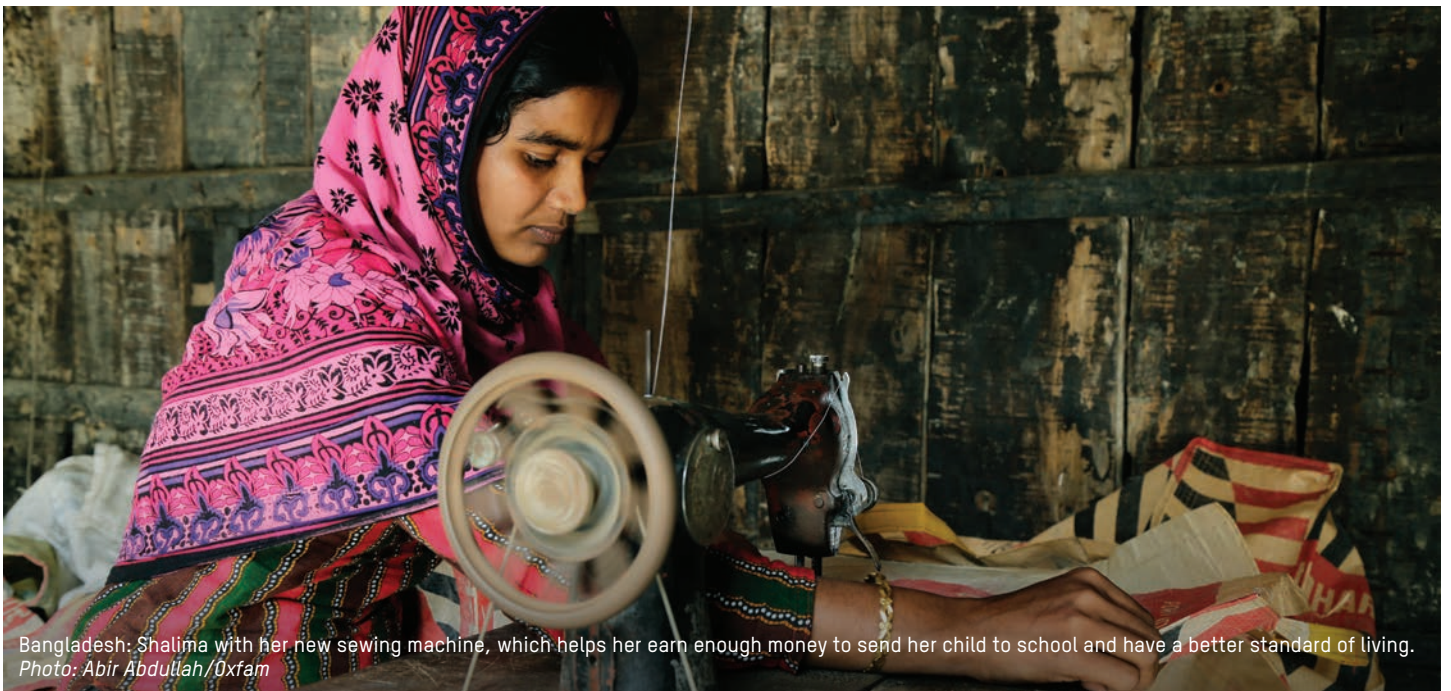
<p>1. DEVELOPING LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANISATIONS</p>	<p>Oxfam has worked with existing community organisations, and facilitated the formation of a range of groups, including: community disaster management teams, water management committees, women’s empowerment groups, farmer and business collectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Vanuatu, Oxfam supported the formation of community disaster and climate change committees that have played an active role in reducing disaster risk and responding to disasters.²
<p>2. PARTNERING WITH, AND BUILDING CAPACITY OF NATIONAL NGOS</p>	<p>Most local implementation of Oxfam projects is carried out by national NGOs. Support to national NGOs includes core funding, project and staff funding, and coaching and mentoring by Oxfam staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Indonesia, Oxfam supported local partner Jemari Sakato to lead work in engaging small and medium enterprise in disaster resilience. Jemari Sakato have subsequently been recognised by government as experts in small business resilience.³
<p>3. WORKING IN CONSORTIA, AND SUPPORTING NATIONAL PLATFORMS AND ALLIANCES</p>	<p>Oxfam has led consortia of national and international NGOs to implement resilience initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Vanuatu, Oxfam supported international and national civil society actors to work together and achieve greater impact.⁴ This laid the foundation for effective collaboration in subsequent initiatives, including national scale emergency response in Vanuatu.^{5,6}
<p>4. BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH NATIONAL AND SUB-NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS TO IMPROVE RESILIENCE OUTCOMES</p>	<p>Oxfam has used a range of effective strategies at sub-national and national level to build relationships and engage with government.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Sri Lanka, Oxfam-supported women’s disaster management committees have obtained additional funding for risk reduction and city governments are more committed to the needs of communities.⁷
<p>5. PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIP – BROKERING ACCESS TO PRODUCTS AND SERVICES FOR RESILIENCE</p>	<p>Oxfam has brokered relationships between farmers, small business owners and financial service providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Sri Lanka, Indonesia and the Philippines, these partnerships supported vulnerable households’ access to equitable financial services including savings, loans and insurance^{8,9} and the use of prepaid debit cards for use in disaster relief.¹⁰
<p>6. CAPTURING EVIDENCE THROUGH RESEARCH</p>	<p>Oxfam has partnered with Australian, British, Indonesian and Sri Lankan universities on research into the impact of their work, and to engage students in resilience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Vanuatu, Oxfam partnered with the Stockholm Environment Institute to better understand community perceptions of vulnerability, knowledge and power for community-based adaptation programming.¹¹
<p>7. STRENGTHENING ENGAGEMENT AND CAPACITY OF LOCAL AND SUB-NATIONAL GOVERNMENT</p>	<p>This forms a major part of Oxfam’s strategy and includes support to sub-national governments to develop climate change and disaster risk management (DRM) policies and plans, secondment of staff to sub-national government agencies, supporting participation of government staff in community activities, and supporting communities to advocate for their priorities in sub-national planning and budget processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Indonesia, Oxfam’s projects strengthened the capacity of government agencies with a DRM mandate, and also built DRM networks with multiple actors as a logical and relevant extension to address disaster risk comprehensively.



Indonesia: After a water pipeline was destroyed by fire, the Village Disaster Preparedness and Response Team distributed clean water to the community. Photo: Yusuf Ahmad/Oxfam



Vanuatu: Obed is an active member of his village water committee and participated in training to increase his skills in water, sanitation and health as part of Oxfam's program. Photo: Arlene Bax/Oxfam



Bangladesh: Shalima with her new sewing machine, which helps her earn enough money to send her child to school and have a better standard of living. Photo: Abir Abdullah/Oxfam

Key finding 2: Oxfam is engaging the private sector in resilience building, brokering fair access to products and services, and supporting the resilience of small-medium enterprises.

Oxfam has been successful in engaging the private sector in resilience programming. This includes supporting poor women and men to establish businesses and cooperatives and gaining market access. This has resulted in increased income and ability to save. Oxfam and partners have also brokered products and services with private sector providers, such as new savings and insurance schemes. This engagement with the private sector is contributing to individual, community and small businesses capacity to absorb shocks.

Finding 2a: Supporting cooperatives and small-medium enterprises is an effective strategy for increasing income, with business continuity planning a tool for sustaining these gains.

Small-medium enterprises (SMEs) and cooperatives play a critical role in many developing country economies. In Indonesia, for instance, SMEs employ 89 per cent of the private sector workforce.¹² Through resilience building programs, Oxfam is supporting the development and resilience of small businesses and cooperatives in Bangladesh and Nepal, and connecting communities and small businesses to insurance and financial services in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Nepal.

- In Bangladesh, Oxfam and partners have supported vulnerable community members to establish collective enterprises. These provide employment in which the extreme poor can participate. By providing business training, mentoring and linking these small businesses to markets, the program has supported increased income and opportunity for saving, providing a baseline for absorptive capacity.¹³
- In Indonesia, Oxfam and Jemari Sakato supported the establishment of small-medium enterprises predominantly owned by women, resulting in increased income. The project went one step further, by facilitating business continuity planning, and supporting access to insurance and savings (see finding 2b and box 1). These measures mean that small business owners are more confident of a quick recovery after disasters.¹⁴
- In multiple countries, Oxfam has supported community-based savings and loans groups. Savings are an important strategy for building resilience, as they leave households better able to manage shocks.

Finding 2b: Oxfam has successfully brokered products that support poor families to build resilience and recover from disasters.

In Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines, Oxfam and partners have brokered equitable access to products and services from private sector providers. By working with existing networks of small businesses, farmer groups and households, projects were able to demonstrate a market and secure favourable access to products and services.

- In Indonesia, Oxfam and Jemari Sakato negotiated better access to insurance and financial services for small businesses, which alongside other measures, support quicker recovery after disasters.¹⁵
- In Sri Lanka, Oxfam and partners worked with the Sanasa Insurance Company to develop a weather index insurance, which simplifies claims processes for farmers.¹⁶
- In the Philippines, Oxfam partnered with VISA to develop an electronic cash transfer scheme to people affected by Typhoon Haiyan. USD \$500,000 (AUD \$650,000) was distributed to 154,000 families through direct cash transfers for the scheme.¹⁷

In these cases, Oxfam and partners demonstrated the profit potential for developing new products and entering a new market. In part, this was because Oxfam was working with existing networks of potential customers. In other areas, however, remote geography and stigma can present an additional barrier:

- In India, there have been obstacles for village disaster committees who want open bank accounts. Banks are unwilling to provide services in riparian floodplain areas because of the perceived difficulties in accessing the area.¹⁸

These opportunities create win-win opportunities for multiple stakeholders, opening new markets and improving access to services. However, care also needs to be taken to monitor the on-going accountability of private companies who sell products and services to poor communities.¹⁹



Indonesia: Village Disaster Preparedness and Response Team (VDPRT) members make carrot snacks to self-finance their operations. Photo: Rodrigo Ordonez/Oxfam

RESILIENT SMALL-MEDIUM BUSINESSES IN INDONESIA

Oxfam and partner Jemari Sakato identified a niche for building the resilience of SMEs in West Sumatra, Indonesia. They supported vulnerable women to access capital to start and grow their businesses, as well as providing training and support to improve business resilience. This included supporting individual and group-based SMEs, to develop business continuity plans and access insurance and financial services.

The program built on Jemari's considerable community facilitation experience, but also worked with private sector providers to develop services that were appropriate for building resilience of SMEs. These included ACA, an insurance provider, and Kasiga Bank, to provide increased access to business insurance and access to savings accounts with reasonable terms, which can be used to save for disasters. The project also partnered with the Department of Industry and Trade to establish a volunteer-run "SME clinic". This links SMEs with access to capital, capacity building and training, and marketing and support.

An evaluation of the project found that average income for SME owners has increased by 167% over the course of the project due to increased savings, insurance and measures in their business continuity plans, SME owners feel that they can recover faster following a disaster.

"In my own disaster preparedness savings, I now have 13 million rupiah (AUD \$1,230) ... If we need it for family needs, we can take it too. The best part of this kind of savings is the bank staff come to us to take a deposit or withdrawal. It is simple for us! This is for Jemari members and is special for our program." – Pak Zarwirman, Selatan Tikau

Close engagement with district and provincial governments has supported sustainability. SME resilience is included within district government mid-term planning from 2016–2021. Jemari and Oxfam anticipate that the district government will support the SME clinic in future.

The evaluation found that both Oxfam and Jemari played a critical role in enabling these outcomes, by combining technical knowledge of SMEs and resilience, as well as their capacity to broker relationships between the private sector, government and communities.²⁰

Key finding 3: Working in partnership with civil society organisations has resulted in effective, inclusive approaches to building resilience at scale.

Oxfam sees the engagement of local civil society as crucial in the development of lasting, locally owned solutions to resilience.²¹ Many local achievements are the result of long-term partnerships with local organisations, and Oxfam has supported networks of civil society organisations to advocate for inclusive approaches to resilience at scale.

Finding 3a: Effective partnerships can leverage the skills and local knowledge of partners, creating a bridge to local communities.

All Oxfam projects are implemented in partnership with local civil society — both NGOs and community-level organisations. This creates a bridge to communities and plays an important role in developing locally relevant approaches to building resilience.

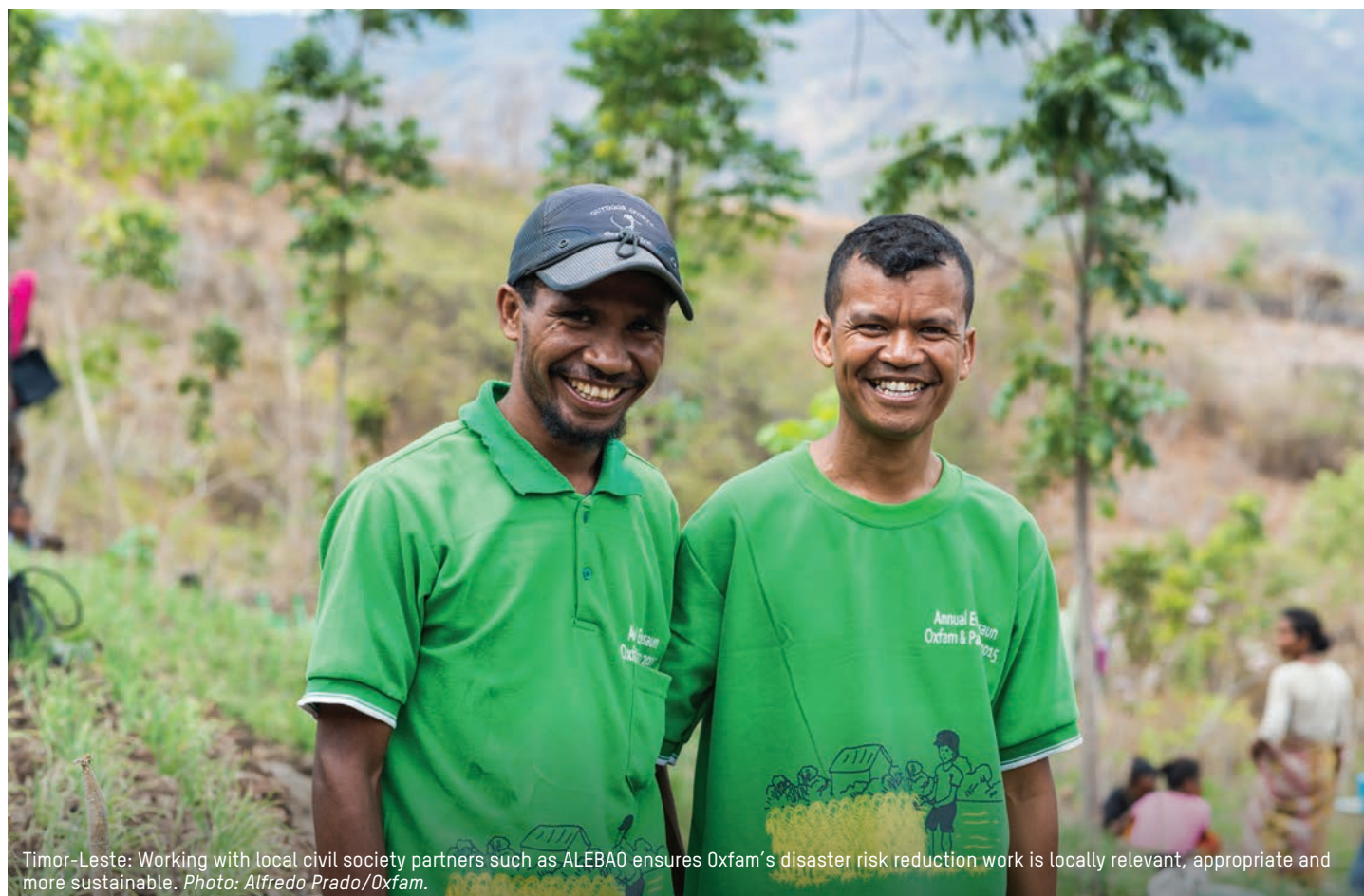
- In Pakistan, Oxfam worked with the Doaba Foundation and the Help Foundation. They were able to quickly build trust with women and men in participating communities, and foster a discussion about risk, establish early warning systems with multiple stakeholders and support local institutions for disaster risk management. This meant that when floods hit in 2010, project communities had a much more effective response than comparison communities — even though the project had only been underway for 18 months.²²
- In Timor-Leste, Oxfam worked with a consortium of INGOs, 15 local NGOs and 132 community organisations in five districts. The local NGO partners had both in-depth understanding of local context and language, and technical skills in environmental and water resource management. The consortium allowed the program to have reach across a range of agro-ecological zones

and to operate through established local relationships within an agreed program framework.²³

Finding 3b: When matched with contingency planning, partnerships also support fast, locally appropriate responses to disasters.

Partnerships developed through disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation projects played a critical role in Oxfam's response to disasters in Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu, the 2010 floods in Pakistan, the Nepal earthquake and El Niño associated drought in Timor-Leste. Where partnerships had been developed in long-term projects, these relationships allowed for rapid delivery of emergency relief that responded to community needs.

- In Vanuatu, Oxfam's existing strong relationships with partners allowed rapid scale-up during the Cyclone Pam emergency response. This included delivering emergency food supplies and restoring water systems quickly after the disaster. The partners told evaluators that Oxfam's flexible approach allowed them to be responsive to the priorities of the affected population. Contingency planning and preparedness activities with partners were also a major factor for rapid response.²⁴
- In Nepal, Oxfam and partners had established plans and procedures for a major seismic event ahead of the 2015 earthquake. Following the earthquake, Oxfam rapidly mobilised staff, partners and contingency stocks. WASH and shelter items were distributed within one day of the earthquake, and WASH activities started up in Kathmandu within three days.²⁵



Timor-Leste: Working with local civil society partners such as ALEBAO ensures Oxfam's disaster risk reduction work is locally relevant, appropriate and more sustainable. Photo: Alfredo Prado/Oxfam.

Finding 3c: Partnering with disabled peoples organisations and marginalised groups can elevate their voices and promote inclusive approaches.

Oxfam’s partnerships extend to civil society organisations that work with or represent people living with disabilities and other marginalised groups at community and national level. While examples are limited, evidence suggests that these approaches should be replicated in other projects.

- In Vanuatu, Oxfam partnered with the Vanuatu Society for Disabled Persons (VSDP). During the emergency response to Cyclone Pam, Oxfam and VSDP brought people living with disability together to discuss immediate needs, as well as strategies for long-term coordination on climate change, disaster risk reduction

Key finding 4: Multi-stakeholder partnerships were most effective when they were grounded in a shared understanding of resilience, created spaces for reflection and learning and innovation, and built both implementation and influencing capacity of partners.

In reviewing the evidence, a number of themes emerged about what makes multi-stakeholder partnerships effective. There was limited evidence about how partnerships themselves contributed to resilience and sustainability of project outcomes. This warrants further review in future — in particular, the potential of partnerships and multi-stakeholder relationships to contribute to transformative change that reduces drivers of vulnerability.

Finding 4a: Shared understanding of resilience concepts is an important foundation for partnerships.

Some of the concepts related to climate change adaptation and resilience are unfamiliar to communities and some local partners at the start of projects. Through participatory processes that draw on both traditional, cultural and scientific knowledge, Oxfam and partners have developed shared understanding of resilience.

- In Vanuatu, Oxfam led consortium partners to come together to develop the Vanuatu Resilience Framework, which identified characteristics of a resilient community. The framework went on to guide the program implementation and has since been applied to subsequent programs. This has supported individual partner agencies to work towards common goals without being too restrictive; and has been a useful reflective tool to chart progress towards resilience across different elements of the program, including progress at a community level.²⁸
- In contrast, projects in Indonesia²⁹ and Timor-Leste³⁰ found that the lack of shared understanding between partners resulted in a superficial use of climate change adaptation and resilience, applying them as a buzzword to promote a range of activities.

The **Oxfam Framework for Resilient Development** has potential to guide discussions with partners to discuss how activities contribute to resilient development outcomes, and important social change processes.

Finding 4b: Reflection and learning processes strengthen partnerships and encourage innovation.

As a convenor of consortia, and through work with partners, Oxfam has facilitated a range of opportunities for reflection, shared learning and innovation:

- In Solomon Islands, Oxfam conducted annual impact workshops with communities. These provided stakeholders with a chance to discuss project progress and were an important feedback mechanism for communities.³¹

and humanitarian response. Oxfam provided financial support for VSDP representatives to participate in emergency cluster meetings. This contributed to increasing the voices of people living with disability in national dialogue on resilience.²⁶

- In an urban resilience program in Bangladesh, volunteer youth groups have been established at ward level and in schools. They have brought together youth from slum and non-slum neighbourhoods, which is significant because slum dwellers are stigmatised by mainstream society. Together, these groups have undertaken a range of activities, as well as advocating for disaster risk reduction priorities to be implemented by school and local government authorities. In doing so, the project has broken down stigma.²⁷

- In Timor-Leste, an evaluation of a climate change adaptation program noted that the large number of partners, spanning a range of geographic areas, supported learning at scale. Cross-visits were a particularly effective strategy for supporting shared learning.
- In Vanuatu, Oxfam and partners piloted a peer monitoring approach. This involved a consortium partner accompanying another partner to their project implementation site to conduct a joint monitoring exercise. This supported first-hand learning, while providing an opportunity for independent assessment. Since the project ended, NGOs have continued to engage in peer monitoring visits.³²

Finding 4c: Supporting the advocacy capacity of partners is critical for transformative change.

Oxfam employs a range of strategies to support the organisational development and implementation capacity of partners, including planning and budget management. However, while many partner organisations come with technical skills related to sectoral interventions and community participation, they often lack advocacy and influencing skills. To build transformative capacity — the ability to change the social and political structures that create vulnerability — investment in the advocacy capacity of local partners is required. Building advocacy capacity has been a clear objective in some programs, and this has demonstrated clear results.

- In Nepal, the Oxfam provided financial support and advocacy training to the National Network of Community Disaster Committees (NCDMC). The network played a critical role in the passage of the Nepal Disaster Management Bill.³³
- In the Philippines, Oxfam provided advocacy and media training and regional support to organisations lobbying the government for the creation of a People’s Survival Fund. Creating a broad coalition of civil society organisations, academics and celebrities, the campaign contributed to the passage of legislation to create the AUD \$26.4 million fund.³⁴

Multiple evaluations reviewed for this brief recommended that capacity building for advocacy should be a central objective of both projects and partnership agreements, which requires support from governments.³⁵ However, many of the documents reviewed for this evidence brief lacked robust analysis of the contribution of Oxfam’s advocacy efforts to national and subnational policy change.



Vietnam: Giau Kim Ly uses biogas to cook food at home. Oxfam and partners supported some of the province's poorest and most vulnerable families by introducing renewable energy systems to save them time and money and help them to develop sustainably. *Photo: Tessa Bunney/Oxfam*

CONCLUSION

Partnerships are central to how Oxfam works — and this is reflected in the prominence of multi-stakeholder engagement in Oxfam's Framework for Resilient Development and in programs in the Asia-Pacific region. Oxfam has worked with a range of actors, including the private sector, local civil society and government. Examples include building the capacity of local partners and civil society to be effective implementers and advocates; and strengthening relationships between government, civil society and the private sector to achieve better outcomes for resilience.

While there were some examples of partnerships with national disabled women's organisations, more could be done to bring a gender and inclusion focus to partnerships, and allow disability and women's rights organisations to become more engaged in national platforms for climate change and disaster risk reduction. Likewise, while local partners often have effective technical capacity and understanding of participatory approaches, more needs to be done to enhance their capacity to advocate and influence government policy for sustainable outcomes. This will be critical to supporting the transformative capacity of local civil society to ensure sustained increases in resilience.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

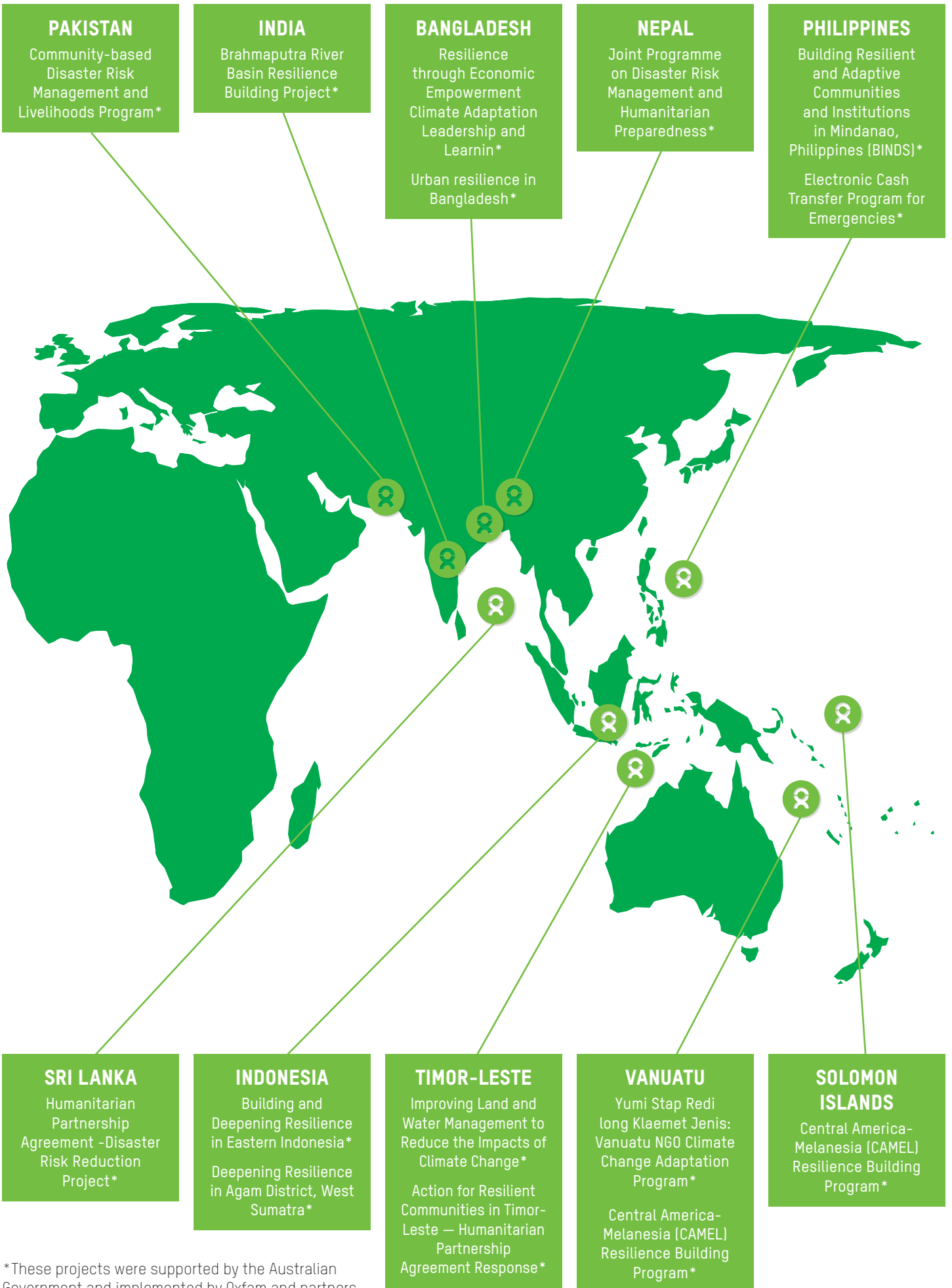
The following questions were based on Oxfam's conceptual frameworks, relevant academic literature, and discussions with Oxfam staff.

1. In what ways does Oxfam work with others increase the scale and impact of resilience projects? What are some practical examples of outcomes from these partnerships?
2. How has work in partnerships and alliances influenced government policy and practice for resilient development?
3. How has working with others, such as coalitions of women or people with disability, increased the inclusion and power of those groups in resilience projects or programs?
4. What principles and processes have been used in resilience projects that have led to effective multi-stakeholder relationships?

35 evaluations and research reports from Oxfam projects from the Asia-Pacific region were used to inform this brief. Findings were qualitatively coded against each research question and emergent sub-themes, and assessed for quality of evidence.

A detailed methodology, including limitations, is available from Oxfam.

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NOTES

This evidence brief was written by Edward Boydell, Julie Webb and Charlotte Sterrett, with valuable inputs provided by Wayne Gum, Ula Majewski, Simon Bradshaw, Liz Hogan and Elsa Carnaby.

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