

# COMMUNITY-BASED EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS APPROACH

## An Innovative Approach to the Scale-Up of Community-Based Early Warning Systems

### What?

Prevention and resilience rather than relief and shock, are the goals of the Community-Based Early Warning System Approach. The idea in the community-based approach is for each community to collectively and independently understand what their community faces, what resources are available in the community, and to make a plan that effectively pulls together all the pieces necessary to mitigate the shocks that affect the community.

### Why?

The understanding that communities are the first line of defense to addressing vulnerability is based on the rationale that socioeconomic vulnerability, rather than physical hazards, is the largest factor in the impact of disasters. Community capacities in the economic, human and social realms play a huge role in how a community is able to respond to the destabilizing effects of HIV/AIDS, Pandemic Influenza, disease and/or undernutrition on the population and their institutions.

### Increasing Resilience and Sustainability

In order to empower local communities to sustain and maintain CEWS, community members must be involved in each stage of the implementation of CEWS, including identifying shocks, developing a response plan, and managing it, as illustrated in the graph below.

Local communities should identify conscientious volunteers who will take their responsibilities seriously



Communities must provide support and respect for volunteers who take on this important role.

Communities must identify and prioritize the problems that are most significant



Program staff should build their development activities on the priorities that the community identifies

Communities should engage in as many self-help and educational activities as possible that are targeted at mitigating the problems they face



Program staff should provide modest logistic, technical, and material support for the mitigation activities in each community

Community volunteers should collect monitoring information consistently and communicate their information to staff



Program staff should communicate appropriate information back through the community, and "up" to appropriate authorities.

### Successful community-based early warning plans address five main concepts:

- 1) **Sustainability.** Community-based risk mitigation plans must ensure the sustainability of the projects at the outset. This includes understanding suitability of projects to local capacities and vulnerabilities, community project ownership, empowerment, and equitable distribution of benefits.
- 2) **Resilience.** The plan should include specific activities to benefit the community as a whole towards increasing resilience to shocks.
- 3) **Monetarily Sustainable.** Economic viability must be addressed. Activities must be monetarily sustainable with costs of implementation smaller than profits derived from the activity.
- 4) **Start-Up Cash.** Jump starts such as grants or loans should be utilized to help establish early warning projects.
- 5) **Community Managed.** The Community must be responsible for managing the project and funds and reporting irregularities. The community as a whole shares in the consequences of project mismanagement, therefore increasing peer pressure to manage the project in a transparent and clear manner as well as to build resilience to future shocks.

### The Model for the Community-Based Approach: A Technical Leadership Best Practice

This model is a technical leadership best practice, validated through the WV Honduras and WV Mozambique Title II DAPS and related USAID Institutional Capacity Building grant, supporting the development and refinement of the early-warning systems of NEWS and GERANDO Programs in Honduras and Mozambique.



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