



“Constant learning and re-learning from a wide range of stakeholders and embedded changemakers in communities, research and government is central to long term resilience building.”

How have you been affected by flooding?

Flooding has become an increasingly urgent issue for informal settlement communities. Over the past four years, since returning to my home town of Durban from the UK where my research focused more broadly on disaster risk reduction in African cities, I have increasingly focused on the impacts of flooding in informal settlements in eThekweni, working in partnership with UKZN, eThekweni Municipality and others. Our collaborative work aims to support preparedness and resilience-building efforts, while also amplifying community voices and local resilience practices to inform and influence policy.

Key actions and impact

At ICLEI Africa, a core part of my role is co-leading research, with an emphasis on supporting practical solutions, and playing an intermediary role by helping to bring diverse state and non-state actors together to address resilience challenges and opportunities across scales. Some highlights of the collaborative INACCT Resilience project have been learning more about the community-based flood early warning system developed and implemented by our project partners, and exploring how to scale this across the city. Bringing informal settlement communities together for learning exchanges has been critical to this, and have been strengthened by our innovative and inclusive approaches such as using arts based methods (e.g. photovoice and playdough modelling) to facilitate such exchanges.

Challenges and lessons learned

The inspiring communities I have worked with have taught me that strengthening flood resilience in informal settlements requires long-term collaboration and trust building, integrating locally grounded knowledge into decision making, and that there are multiple examples of innovative resilience practices adopted by such communities that have great potential for upscaling. There are many barriers such as inadequate financing, and real change in both practice and policy is slow, but working together and supporting incremental change can lead to bigger change.

Call to action

We must centre community voices and co-create resilience. Effective adaptation depends on recognising diverse risk experiences and supporting co-produced, context-specific solutions. Prioritising local knowledge systems and ensuring plans and actions align with community-identified priorities and institutional processes are critical for inclusive resilience building.

MEET THE CHANGEMAKERS

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This is part of an infographic series profiling key role players who are working with the INACCT Resilience project in supporting resilience building.