

The *Reality of Resilience* (RoR) initiative explores what “resilience” to climate extremes such as floods, droughts and tropical cyclones, looks like in Africa and Asia.

News articles and literature that follow extreme events typically report on casualties, and property damage, but miss the opportunity to talk about what coping mechanisms were actually effective during the event. RoR brings together all three areas of disaster risk: the hazard, exposure, and resilience of a population, to build case studies for learning about what anticipatory, adaptive and absorptive measures are most effective during actual floods and droughts. These case studies can inform the work of resilience and adaptation practitioners as well as influence policy decisions.

The hazards are monitored using near real-time tools, such as the University of Maryland's Global Flood Monitoring System which incorporates TRMM Multi-satellite Precipitation Analysis rainfall (TMPA) data into a hydrological runoff and routing model to highlight areas where flooding is likely taking place. Based on this objective information about the hazard, we notify our partners on the ground about areas that may be flooding. Our partners subsequently interview people on the ground about the adaptive or resilience activities and policies were in place, and how effective they were during the event.

This can include information about the services available before and after the event, whether or not there was an early warning of the event, and if people acted on that warning, as well as more difficult questions like “what could have gone wrong, but didn't?” These interviews are integrated into news stories, and blog posts for local and international media. In some cases, we may find that no one was impacted at all, despite the occurrence of climate extreme. By highlighting why this occurs, *Reality of Resilience* will shed light on events that normally would not have made the news as opportunities for learning.

For example, parts of Dakar, Senegal experienced over half their total monthly rainfall in one day on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 2015, leading to flash flooding in many low-lying neighborhoods. On some streets a resilience project called "Living with Water" had implemented a rainwater evacuation and harvesting system that diverts rainwater into a large drainage basin for other uses. After the extreme rainfall adjacent streets without the project remained impassable affecting local businesses and livelihoods, whereas the streets with the project were clear the next day allowing residents to quickly return to their daily activities. This provided an excellent example of a mechanism that was effective during an actual extreme event.

Reality of Resilience is currently in the pilot phase. Additional case studies and more information about the extreme events will be collected to form a complete narrative on what is effective (or ineffective) for strengthening resilience during real extreme events in the coming months.

