



## Partnerships for the goals (SDG17)

*Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development*<sup>116</sup>

Sustainable Development Goal 17<sup>117</sup> is all about the importance of partnerships for delivering the goals. Partnerships are a major theme of the Voices from the Frontline stories, too. Partnerships with external actors are particularly vital when communities seek to move from ad hoc, short-term survival and self-help operations (such as individuals donating their own salaries or food supplies to others, over a few days or weeks) into more systematic initiatives, which often have a longer-term character, and which may be called ‘social protection’ (see box).

### Social protection

Social protection is “the set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion throughout the life cycle. Social protection includes nine main areas: child and family benefits, maternity protection, unemployment support, employment injury benefits, sickness benefits, health protection (medical care), old age benefits, invalidity/disability benefits, and survivors’ benefits. Social protection systems address all these policy areas by a mix of contributory schemes (social insurance) and non-contributory tax-financed benefits (including social assistance).” (ILO, 2017: 194)<sup>118</sup>



Saleshni Wati and her family in lockdown. Residents of Nanuku settlement in Suva, Fiji contended with both Covid-19 and Cyclone Harold.  
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### Challenges to partnerships – local community perspectives

When partnerships are lacking or have appeared ‘blocked’ because of the Covid-19 pandemic, community members’ wellbeing and longer-term development prospects have worsened. Sometimes government or external partner interventions are ill-designed or insufficiently delivered. For instance, community organisations complain of cash transfers, micro-loans or relief from both government and NGOs being improperly targeted and missing the poorest and most vulnerable, as in The Gambia.<sup>119</sup>

Non-cooperation from government has been echoed in many stories. In Bangladesh, the local administration refused to cooperate regarding community proposals for a Covid-safe, makeshift vegetable market.<sup>120</sup> In Fiji, the government halted training programmes<sup>121</sup> for running small business for an indefinite period, without exploring alternatives.

There have been instances (e.g. in Nepal) where emergency financial or material help, such as cash transfers and food relief have back-fired due to lack of support for and integration with local actors – often due to a lack of coordination with and adequate resourcing for the local government and/or for local civil society organisations, which would have been well placed to help. For example in a Dalit [lower caste] community in Nepal, far away from the capital city, relief and financial resources hardly reached households, as the local municipality was not interested in travelling a great distance to distribute packages. Moreover, there were cases of rotten food being distributed that communities refused to take. Furthermore, the Nepal government imposed the so-called ‘One Door’ policy, restricting organisations other than the government from distributing relief.

Such non-cooperation has further complicated the struggle to advance all aspects of wellbeing and development and secure progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, in the context of Covid-19.

## Partnership solutions to multi-hazard risks: across actors and scales

**Partnership with government for service delivery.** One of the most prevalent and successful forms of partnership in the stories is between community activists and the various offices and agencies of government when they work together to identify those people most in need of services and to connect them with services, such as health, food and nutrition and social protection.

In [Rafiq Nagar, the informal settlement of Mumbai, India](#),<sup>122</sup> Shamimbanu Salim Sheikh said that many external actors typically refuse to enter the slum. “Nobody outside the community, whether it’s the police, doctors or [municipal corporation – local government] officers, dares to come inside this area. They are scared that they will get infected and diagnosed with various diseases if they enter this slum.” Despite this, Shamimbanu reported that there exists cooperation and accountability between the Member of the Legislative Assembly representing Rafiq Nagar and the residents. The Member has taken the responsibility of ensuring basic services, including water supply and proper drainage facilities, in addition to building a small hospital for residents, providing them with access to medicine and contacts for emergency services. Furthermore, the Member arranged for a medical camp in the Rafiq Nagar area to check people for Covid-19 symptoms.

The leaders of an [informal settlement in Pune, India](#),<sup>123</sup> coordinated with local government officials and helped them distribute food packages. Together with the municipal corporation, they installed speakers on the main roads and gave instructions at different times of the day. The team also helped the ward officers in tracking patients, encouraging isolation and carrying out rapid household tests to reduce the community spread.

**Partnership with NGOs for building people’s adaptive capacity.** In the context of longer-term adaptive capacity and resilience building (in this case, to recover from the pandemic and create resilience to climate risks), community partnerships with international NGOs and their national chapters are proving successful when framed and driven by the priorities of diverse members of the local community, including women, youth and people with disabilities.

This is evident in the [story from Kurigam, Bangladesh](#),<sup>124</sup> where the Nari Associate for Revival and Initiative (NARI), a women’s community-based organisation, is training women to seek alternative livelihood opportunities. In this process, they link them with the private sector to market their products. They seek to support divorced women and widows, and prevent violence against women and early marriage for girls.

Initially, NARI received technical and financial support from Practical Action and the Jute Diversification Promotion Centre (JDPC) for needs-based training on handicrafts, sewing, and livestock rearing. Now, they have their own trainers. “The journey that began with one sewing machine has come a long way. Now we have a factory with 78 looms and, over the years, about 700-800 women have acquired skill in making handicrafts,” shared Farida Easmin, Executive Director.

NARI’s members help each other by providing resources during natural disasters, and distribute whatever they receive from different donors. They also collaborate with other women-headed organisations and offer them training on alternative livelihoods.

Adaptive capacities go beyond just the assets and income at people’s disposal and is also about “recognising the importance of various intangible processes: decision-making and governance; the fostering of innovation, experimentation and opportunity exploitation; and the structure of institutions and entitlements.” (Jones et al, 2010)<sup>125</sup>



A women-headed organisation, Nari Associate for Revival and Initiative (NARI), distributes food and hygiene kits in the Kurigam district of Bangladesh. © NARI

**Partnership on public engagement.** Government authorities and community members have also forged partnerships to disseminate information about the Covid-19 pandemic very effectively. These forms of collaborative work could easily be replicated and scaled up for other forms of disaster risk reduction and preparedness, including around climate risks (see climate, above).

In [Satkhira district, Bangladesh](#),<sup>126</sup> Jannatul Mawa and her team conducted courtyard meetings in the communities to demonstrate proper ways of wearing masks and washing hands, as per the guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health in Bangladesh. In addition, they distributed leaflets, posters and implemented awareness campaigns in local language about the nature of the virus.

To cater to a wide audience, Jannatul also collaborated with a local radio station known as Nalta, to disseminate information and important guidelines. She has facilitated the formation of a local network called the “Corona Expert Team”, consisting of local men, women, youth, social workers and community journalists. The network works to foster relationships between the community and local government. Together with the local government, the network has hosted training workshops for local youth volunteers on emergency response measures during Covid-19.

In [Moulvibazar, Bangladesh](#),<sup>127</sup> the community added value to the government’s public health campaign by translating it into local languages. “They wanted to start off by sharing leaflets with important information and precautionary measures related to Covid-19. But since many of them do not understand Bengali language, they decided to run awareness campaigns in the local language (Khasia) instead,” Sohanur Rahman reported.

In Kenya, indigenous [Masaai women worked as community health workers](#)<sup>128</sup> and disseminated information on home-based care approaches in a vertical manner, from government to local communities. They also developed a community-led Covid-19 information strategy that involved collaborating with and mobilising women groups, local churches, community health workers, and village elders.

## Enabling actions to support partnerships

- Provide recognition for and legitimise community-based organisations. Community-based organisations have invaluable sources of data, trusted planning, decision-making and knowledge translation, and dissemination processes that are crucial during times of crisis. If given proper recognition and legitimacy, such trusted networks can be critical in fostering strong relations between vulnerable groups and local authorities.
- These recommendations not only extend to national governments – many of which also face fiscal crises in a pandemic – but also to external development partners and aid actors who have an opportunity, in coordination with governments, to bolster local capacities.
- Through partnering with external agencies, grassroots organisations can augment and amplify existing efforts as well as co-create sustainable solutions.
- Stronger collaboration between government and community-based organisations to coordinate relief efforts can be instrumental in tackling social marginalisation and exclusion and ensuring everyone has access to assistance.



A young boy from the Khasia community in Moulvibazar, Bangladesh, plays behind a fence erected during lockdown. Community leaders enforced strict restrictions to protect lives during the pandemic. © Gdision Prodhan Suchiang, headman of Magurchhara punji and the president of Khasi Social Council.