



INACCT Resilience

*Designing Inclusive African
Coastal City Resilience*

Practitioner Briefing

**Practice based insights: Planning and facilitating
cross-border peer-to-peer community learning
exchanges**

This resource distils practical lessons and insights from the INACCT Resilience Capacity Strengthening project's cross-border peer-to-peer learning exchange which took place between informal settlement communities in Beira, Mozambique and Durban (eThekweni), South Africa. Delegates from each city engaged in reciprocal city exchange visits focused on resilience building and strengthening community led early warning systems. It is intended to function as a hands-on planning guide for practitioners organising similar exchanges.





BEFORE THE EXCHANGE: STRATEGIC DESIGN AND PREPARATION

1.1 Co-developed purpose and scope

A successful cross border exchange begins with a clearly articulated purpose beyond the general goal of 'sharing knowledge'. Exchanges that begin with community-identified questions — not researcher-defined agendas — tend to generate richer insights and higher participant investment. Pre-exchange focus groups in both cities should be used to surface what communities actually want to learn and what they want to share regarding resilience building experiences, challenges and opportunities.

1.2 Conduct pre-exchange community focus groups/workshops in both cities

Before any travel occurs, hold dedicated preparation sessions in each city so that delegates represent a collective mandate, not individual views.

- Use focus group to identify the key issues, questions, and lessons.
- Ensure preparatory sessions are gender-balanced and include youth, elderly residents, and people with disabilities.
- Provide training for delegates on workshop facilitation and hosting, to support community members in leading interactive engagements.
- Collaboratively establish consensus across the delegation, especially where multiple neighbourhood committees may have different priorities.

1.3 Select representative delegates who travel to city exchanges to represent their community with care and accountability

Delegate selection should be deliberate and transparent.

- Prioritise people who are already active in community structures (e.g. disaster risk committees) and who can carry learning back to those structures.
- Apply gender and diversity criteria: aim for a gender-balanced group and include younger members, older community leaders, and if possible someone caring for a person with disabilities or with lived experience of disability.
- Use agreed criteria openly: discuss nominations and selection criteria with community members. Practical considerations are also key (e.g. passports, availability to travel with employment and family commitments).
- Avoid selecting only the most 'vocal' or institutionally connected members
- Brief delegates clearly on their agreed role: exchange experience is focused on their role as community representatives and will be expected to report back to their communities on return and support uptake of resilience initiatives identified.

1.4 Prepare all materials in advance and in local languages

- Translate all printed materials (e.g. agendas, infographics, maps) into the local language(s) of both delegations before the event, not on arrival.
- Use plain language and visual formats (maps, diagrams, photographs) to supplement written text.
- Prepare a printed programme in each delegation's language. Relying on verbal interpretation alone creates confusion and inequality.
- Prepare community-facing outputs (e.g. risk and resilience profiles, photo stories) as printed handouts, not just digital files, so they remain accessible after the event.



1.5 Co-ordinate with local authorities and institutions early

- Notify and engage local government counterparts (e.g. municipality, disaster management departments) in both cities ahead of the exchange. Their endorsement and participation lends legitimacy and encourages institutional uptake of lessons.
- Request that relevant authorities attend at least part of the exchange, especially sessions where community members present evidence or make recommendations. Their presence encourages meaningful knowledge integration and signals institutional valuation.
- Seek letters of support or official stamps where relevant for participants' reporting back to their institutions.

LOGISTICS AND VENUE

2.1 Programme sequencing

The order of activities matters as much as the content.

- Where possible, schedule site visits before indoor workshop, learning lab and other sessions. Experiencing case study locations first-hand gives delegates a concrete frame of reference for all subsequent discussions, and prevents abstract theorising.
- Build in 'unstructured time' after site visits for informal exchanges. Some of the most valuable learning happens in conversations over tea, not in facilitated sessions.
- Avoid packing too many activities into a single day. Fatigue reduces the quality of reflection and exchange. Two or three substantive sessions per day is generally more effective than five.
- Allow time at the end of each day for collective reflection and journaling. Observations are freshest when recorded immediately.
- Allocate time for dedicated debrief/ reflection sessions throughout, as well as at the end of, the exchange to capture insights while memories are fresh.

2.2 Venue selection

- Choose a venue that is accessible by public transport to community members and does not require crossing major barriers (e.g. toll roads, long distances from informal settlements).
- Ensure the venue is accessible to people with mobility difficulties.
- Prioritise venues perceived as 'neutral ground' rather than institutional spaces (e.g. municipal halls) that may create power imbalances.
- Check in advance: Does the venue have reliable power, outdoor space suitable for interactive activities (e.g mapping), and sufficient wall space for large maps and infographics?
- For multi-day events, consider whether the venue can accommodate meals and breaks, and whether food aligns with participants' dietary needs and cultural practices.



2.3 Travel, accommodation, and practical support

- Issue all participants with printed travel itineraries in their home language. Do not assume digital access is reliable.
- Ensure all travel documentation - passports, vaccinations and so forth is in order well in advance.
- Ensure arriving delegates are met at the airport or station by a familiar face from the host team. Arriving in an unfamiliar city alone is disorienting and signals a lack of care.
- Provide accommodation that is appropriate to the context.
- Confirm allowance payment logistics before travel, not on arrival. Uncertainty about allowances causes stress and undermines trust.
- Prepare a simple welcome information pack for arriving delegates: local emergency contacts, the programme, key venue maps, names and photos of the host team.

LANGUAGE, TRANSLATION, AND COMMUNICATION

3.1 Professional, contextually suited translation

- Use professional translators who are familiar with both local dialects and the technical vocabulary related to your exchange (climate risk, disaster management etc.). A general interpreter may lose critical nuance. Brief translators in advance so they are prepared.
- Build translation time into all session schedules. Presentations delivered through interpretation typically take 1.5–2x as long as the content alone.
- Where possible, use bilingual facilitators who can catch nuance that translators may miss.

3.2 Inclusive communication practices

- Prepare all visual materials in both languages and ensure they use icons and images, not only text.
- Check whether any participants are deaf or hard of hearing, and arrange appropriate support (sign language interpreter, written summaries) in advance.
- During plenary sessions, ensure speakers stand or sit where everyone can see them and that microphones (where used) are passed between speakers, not fixed.

FACILITATION AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Community-led facilitation

Peer-to-peer exchanges work best when community delegates lead facilitation, rather than researchers or NGO staff acting as key leads throughout.

- Train community delegates in facilitation skills before the exchange (as part of pre-exchange workshops). This builds confidence and ensures facilitated sessions are led by the people with the most relevant experiential knowledge.
- Assign community members as session leads for the activities they are most familiar with (e.g. their neighbourhood's EWS, local mapping work).
- Researchers and project staff should play a supporting role during exchanges – providing logistics, prompting reflection, documenting – rather than directing discussions.
- Welcome informal, unscripted moments of peer exchange: these often generate the most genuine insight.



4.2 Participatory and tactile methodologies

Abstract topics become accessible and equalising when approached through hands-on methods. Below is an overview of some examples, all of which are explored in greater detail.

- Plasticine or playdough modelling: Use three-dimensional modelling to help participants visualise flood scenarios, evacuation routes, and the specific needs of vulnerable groups. This method equalises power dynamics since it does not require literacy or technical expertise, and it generates tactile empathy for the challenges faced by elderly residents, people with disabilities, and children.
- Participatory mapping: Community-led risk mapping, carried out on large printed base maps, enables residents to identify flood hotspots, drainage needs, and evacuation routes in ways that draw on their local knowledge. This simultaneously builds capacity and generates data that can be used in municipal planning.
- Community-led site visits: Residents from the host community act as expert guides, taking visiting delegates through settlement areas. This builds facilitation and leadership skills while grounding visiting delegates in the lived reality of the host community.
- PhotoVoice: Participants use photography to document their own experiences with climate risk. This builds agency, produces an evocative evidence base, and ensures community narratives are self-authored rather than described by outsiders.
- Diary reflections: Ask delegates to record daily observations during the exchange. These provide a rich qualitative dataset and help delegates consolidate learning for later sharing with their home communities.

4.3 Managing power dynamics

- Be explicit about the purpose of the exchange as a horizontal learning process. Both delegations are learners and teachers.
- Avoid formats that position one city as a 'model' and the other as a 'recipient' of best practice. Frame the exchange around mutual challenge and comparison rather than replication.
- Encourage quieter or less confident participants to contribute. Use small group discussions and paired conversations to give everyone a voice before returning to plenary.
- When researchers or university partners are present, create space for community members to affirm, correct, or contest academic findings. This signals that community knowledge is authoritative.
- If government officials attend, facilitate structured dialogue rather than leaving community members to navigate institutional power informally.

GENDER, EQUALITY, SOCIAL INCLUSION (GESI) AND SAFEGUARDING

5.1 Apply GESI principles throughout

- GESI principles should be embedded in every aspect of exchange design, from delegate selection and facilitation methods to outputs and follow-up.
- Be explicit in pre-exchange planning: which voices are missing? Whose experiences will not be captured without deliberate effort?
- Use tactile and visual methodologies (e.g. plasticine modelling, photography) to ensure participation is not contingent on literacy or formal education.
- Discuss GESI themes directly, including the gendered dimensions of evacuation, shelter safety, and caregiving during floods. These are not peripheral issues; they are central to understanding how communities experience and respond to climate events.



5.2 Recognising and documenting differentiated learning

- Beira delegates noted that seeing women leading rescue teams and performing manual maintenance challenged assumptions about gendered roles in disaster response. Document these cross-community comparisons explicitly.
- Ensure post-exchange documentation reflects the perspectives of diverse participants - women, men, people with disabilities, the elderly, youth etc. Review drafts to check whose voices are represented.

DOCUMENTATION AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

6.1 Document in real time

- Assign at least one person from the organising team to documentation as a primary role throughout the exchange — not as a secondary task alongside facilitation.
- Use multiple formats: written notes, photographs, short video clips, participant diary entries. Different formats capture different dimensions of experience.
- Photograph key outputs (maps, plasticine models, flip chart notes) immediately after sessions, before they are taken down or packed away.
- Hold a brief 'documentation debrief' at the end of each day to capture key insights while fresh, and to flag anything that needs clarification the next day.

6.2 Data sovereignty and intellectual ownership

- Be explicit with all participants about how the knowledge generated during the exchange will be used, who owns it, and how it will be credited.
- Develop and share a Data Sovereignty Agreement at the start of the project. This ensures that data collected by external partners (researchers, NGOs) is legally owned by the municipality or community, and is not lost when a project cycle ends.
- Where possible, leave copies of all produced materials (maps, profiles, toolkits) with community participants and local institutions before departing.

6.3 Participant certificates and official recognition

- Issue all participants with official certificates of attendance bearing institutional stamps (from the municipality and/or the organising institution). This is not merely symbolic; it supports participants' legitimacy in future engagements with local leaders, government bodies, or funders.
- Where participants are accountable to supervisors or public institutions, provide a brief official letter confirming their attendance and contribution.



ENSURING IMPACT AND CONTINUITY AFTER THE EXCHANGE

7.1 Structured feedback and reporting processes

- Before delegates travel home, agree on a clear plan for how they will share learnings with their communities. This should include a specific date, format, and venue.
- Provide delegates with simple, printed summary materials they can share with community members who did not attend.
- Support delegates to lead a community session on return, rather than simply reporting back verbally. This builds facilitation capacity and signals that the knowledge belongs to the whole community.
- Ask delegates to identify one or two concrete practices they intend to adopt or adapt based on the exchange, and to commit to these publicly within their community.

7.2 Connecting exchange insights to institutional processes

- Map the exchange outputs explicitly and where the exchange has generated specific recommendations, produce a short, clearly formatted key messages document that can be shared with municipal officials, provincial authorities, and international partners.
- Follow up with authorities who attended the exchange. A brief thank-you note and a summary of key recommendations keeps channels open and signals professionalism.

7.3 Sustaining peer networks

- Cross-border community relationships, once established, have significant potential for sustained mutual support. Identify practical mechanisms for ongoing contact.
- Consider virtual exchange sessions as a lower-cost complement to in-person visits, particularly for communities with internet access.
- Build in a follow-up conversation 3–6 months after the exchange to ask: what has changed? What has been implemented? What support is still needed?
- Avoid framing the relationship as project-dependent. Peer networks are most durable when they are community-owned, not project-managed.

CHECKLIST FOR PRACTITIONERS

	Action	
Before	Hold pre-exchange workshops in both cities to surface collective priorities	
	Select delegates using transparent and diversity-inclusive criteria	
	Translate all materials into local languages before travel	
	Brief and prepare translators with specialist terminology	
	Notify and engage local government counterparts in both cities	
	Confirm allowances, itineraries, and welcome packs for arriving delegates	
During	Start with community-led site visits before indoor workshops	
	Use tactile/participatory methods (plasticine, mapping, photovoice)	
	Allocate unstructured time for informal peer exchange	
	Assign documentation as a dedicated role, not a secondary task	
	Photograph all produced materials (maps, models, flip charts) daily	
	Issue certificates of attendance with institutional stamps	
	Apply GESI principles throughout: check whose voices are missing	
After	Develop a structured community reporting-back plan with delegates	
	Produce a clear key messages document from exchange outputs	
	Share outputs with attending authorities and follow up	
	Identify mechanisms for sustained peer network beyond the exchange	
	Plan a follow-up conversation 3–6 months later to track implementation	

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