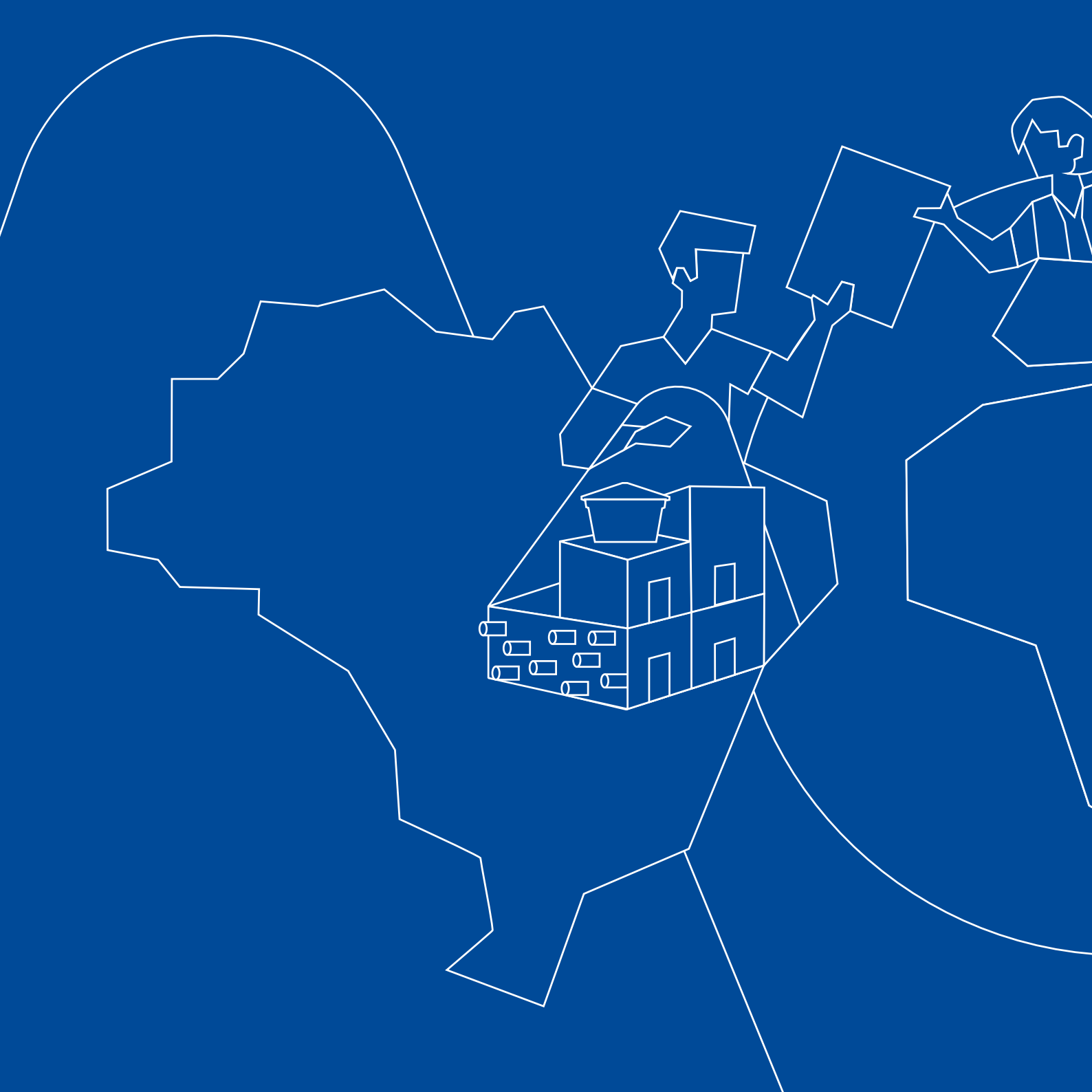


COMMUNITY PLANS FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

A FRAMEWORK FROM BRAZIL TO THE WORLD







COMMUNITY PLANS FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

A FRAMEWORK FROM BRAZIL TO THE WORLD



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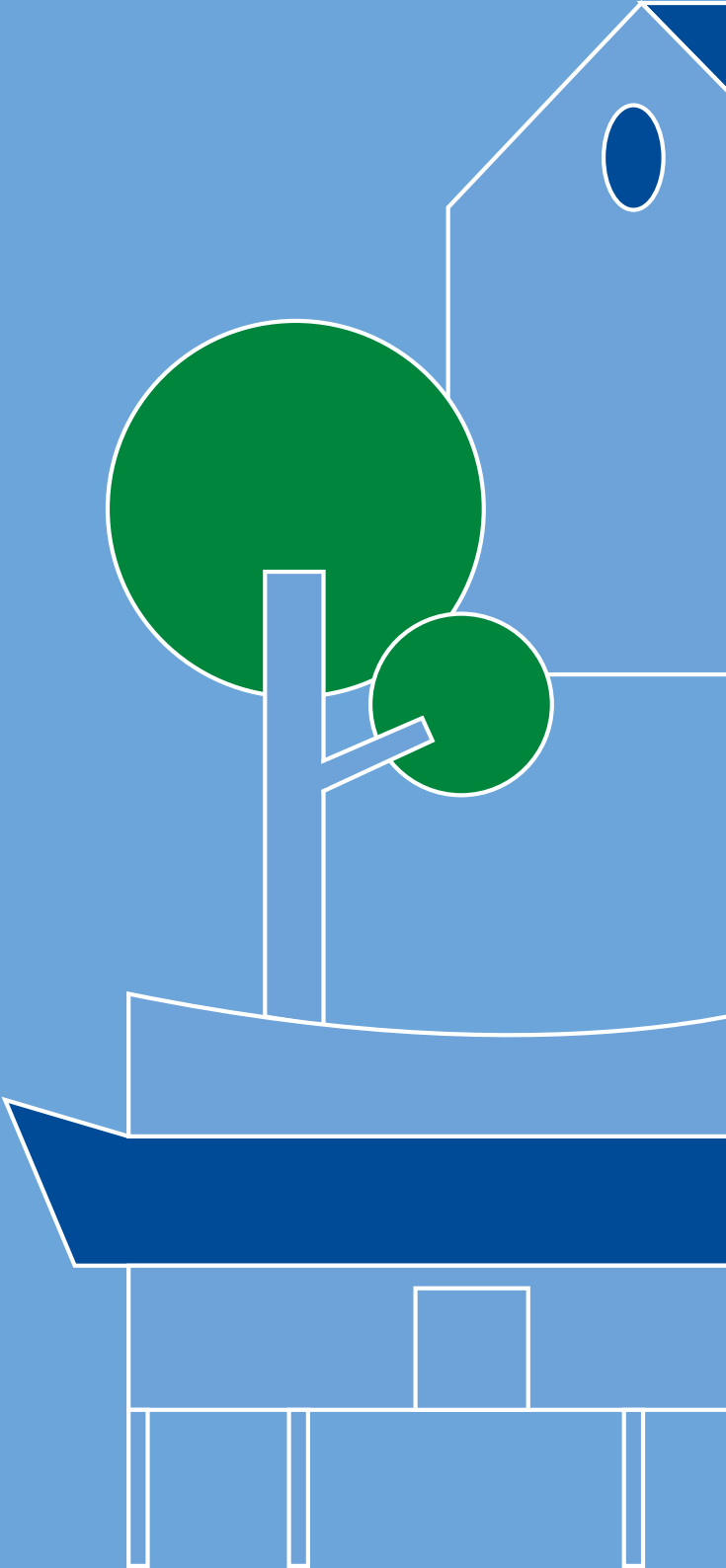
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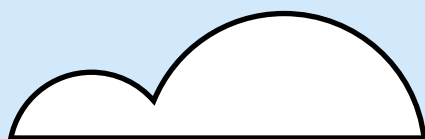
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FROM BRAZIL TO THE WORLD

How to use this publication

This publication presents a framework for community-led disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation that was developed in Brazil and is now offered as a resource for policymakers, practitioners and communities worldwide.

Known by its Portuguese acronym **PCRA**, for ***Planos Comunitários de Redução de Riscos e Adaptação Climática*** (**Community Plans for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation**), the framework was developed by the National Secretariat for Peripheries (SNP) of Brazil under the Ministry of Cities and piloted across 12 territories in 2024. It places community leadership, participatory risk analysis and territorially grounded climate action at the centre of urban resilience.

Building on this experience, the SNP has been rolling out new PCRA across all five regions of the country since 2025, with a federal government target of reaching 100 territories and training 1,000 territorial agents¹ by the end of the current government cycle.

This publication presents the conceptual foundations, methodological architecture and strategic lessons of PCRA in a form intended for adaptation in other national and local contexts. It is structured in three main parts:

- The first part, **From Brazil to the World**, situates the PCRA framework within its national origins and explains its practice and policy relevance for disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and urban development.
- The second part, **Methodological Foundations**, walks through the four core components of the approach: territorial analysis as a collective process; territorial agents, governance and sustainability; moving from diagnosis to action; and legacy and transformation.
- The third part, **Final Reflections and Supporting Materials**, draws together key messages for the different audiences of this publication and offers guidance for adapting the PCRA framework to different contexts.

1. Community members who are equipped through the PCRA process to lead ongoing risk monitoring, mobilization and dialogue with public authorities.



The primary audience of this publication includes national and local policymakers, civil society organizations, technical advisory teams and international agencies working on disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and urban development. It may also serve networks of low-income and informal settlements, community leaders and territorial agents.

The publication can be used in three ways:

- It can inform **the design or adaptation of public policies and programmes that integrate community-led disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation** into broader urban, climate and sustainable development agendas, providing public authorities at municipal, state and federal levels not only technically grounded proposals but also structured community diagnostics that identify local capacities, priorities and demands that conventional top-down risk assessments rarely capture.
- It can support non-government organizations, technical teams and communities in **structuring participatory processes, producing territorially grounded analysis and reinforcing community-led claims** for rights, resources and long-term resilience.
- It may also serve as a **reference for training and capacity-building for territorial agents,** strengthening community-led risk governance and dialogue with public authorities.



This publication complements the official implementation guidebook published by the Brazilian Ministry of Cities in Portuguese, which provides detailed procedural tools appropriate to the Brazilian institutional context.

Origins of PCRA

In Brazil, the historical combination of social inequality, structural vulnerability and environmental degradation has produced a context in which extreme events, including floods, landslides, droughts and heatwaves, increasingly exacerbated by climate change, frequently result in both economic and non-economic losses and damages². These impacts disproportionately affect communities living in “**peripheral territories**” (Box 1, pages 16–18): low-income and informal settlements that have long been underserved by urban planning and development, infrastructure investment and environmental protection policies. As a result, climate risks often reinforce and deepen pre-existing social and spatial injustices.

Recognizing this structural challenge, the Federal Government of Brazil created the SNP in 2023, within the Ministry of Cities. Mandated to formulate integrated and cross-cutting policies for peripheral territories across all urban and social policy domains, the SNP was established to address inequality in cities by acting as a bridge between peripheral communities and the State, recognizing these territories not only as spaces of vulnerability but as spaces of knowledge,



2. Economic losses and damages refer to harm to resources, goods and services that are commonly traded in markets, such as property or infrastructure (UNFCCC, 2020). Non-economic losses and damages refer to harm to human lives, health, culture, indigenous knowledge, ecosystem services and psychological wellbeing that cannot be readily expressed in monetary terms (UNFCCC, 2024).



agency and innovation. Among other things, this mandate led the SNP, through its Department of Risk Mitigation and Prevention (DPR), to prioritize disaster risk and climate change adaptation through a territorial, integrated and equality-focused approach, moving beyond conventional disaster management practices to centre prevention, preparedness and anticipatory action linked to community-led adaptation as pillars of public policy. It is within this institutional and policy framework that PCRA were conceived and developed.

The PCRA approach responds to a central question: how can disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation be effectively integrated through community-led processes?

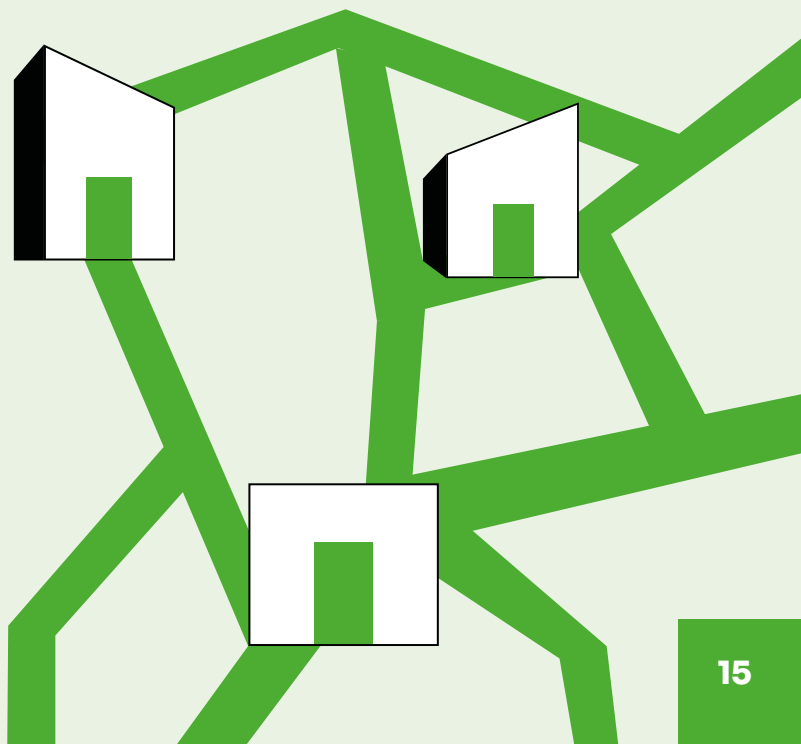


The answer lies in how the plans are designed. They recognize risk as the outcome of interactions between society and nature, and understand risk management as a shared effort that needs sustained policy support, institutional coordination, articulation across scales and community leadership.

PCRA are structured as strategic instruments for preventive planning and climate change adaptation in low-income and informal settlements. They operate at an intra-urban scale and aim to reduce vulnerabilities through participatory risk identification, collective analysis of causal processes and co-design of adaptation measures.

In 2024, the SNP piloted 12 PCRA across diverse Brazilian regions, testing the methodology in

territories with different socioenvironmental risk profiles (Ministry of Cities, 2025a). In 2025, based on this experience, the methodology and lessons learned were systematized into an official public policy guidebook, consolidating the PCRA framework as a structured federal strategy (Ministry of Cities, 2025b). From 2025 onwards, with the aim of implementing PCRA as a public policy at greater scale and with greater methodological rigor, the SNP has been rolling out plans in sequential waves across multiple states. The federal government has set a target of reaching 100 territories and training 1,000 territorial agents for climate change adaptation in vulnerable urban areas by the end of the current government cycle.



Box 1. Peripheral territories

In Brazil, the term *territórios periféricos* (peripheral territories) has been adopted by the SNP to designate urban areas historically shaped by social exclusion, spatial segregation, multidimensional vulnerability and limited access to public investment. Importantly, “peripheral” in this context does not refer strictly to geographic location at the edge of a city. It denotes conditions of marginalization (economic, political, infrastructural and symbolic) that may also be present in centrally located low-income and informal settlements. Over time, *periferia* has become a term of political identity and collective affirmation in Brazil. In everyday language, many residents use the word to describe not only where they live but shared experiences of struggle for rights, culture production and resilience (D’Andrea, 2020). The SNP’s approach reflects this dual meaning, recognizing peripheral territories as spaces of knowledge production, social organization and autonomous practice, and seeking to foster and incorporate these community capacities into public

policy rather than treating peripheries solely as objects of intervention.

For international audiences, however, the expression “peripheral territories” may not carry the same resonance. In English-language policy debates, more commonly used umbrella terms include “low-income settlements”, “informal settlements” or “underserved urban areas” (UN-Habitat, 2025). While none of these terminologies fully capture the political and symbolic dimensions embedded in the Brazilian notion of *periferia*, the concept itself has

broader relevance: in many cities across the Global South, and increasingly in the Global North, communities living in marginalized urban territories are similarly reclaiming their identity and asserting their “right to the city”³ against narratives of deficit and disorder. In this sense, the Brazilian experience of *periferia* offers not just a terminological choice but a political model worth engaging with internationally. For operational clarity, this publication uses “**low-income and informal settlements**” as its primary umbrella term, while acknowledging that local equivalents – from *villas* or *barrios populares* in Argentina to *katchi abadis* in Pakistan – carry their own histories of struggle and agency.

Low-income and informal settlements emerge from diverse processes of

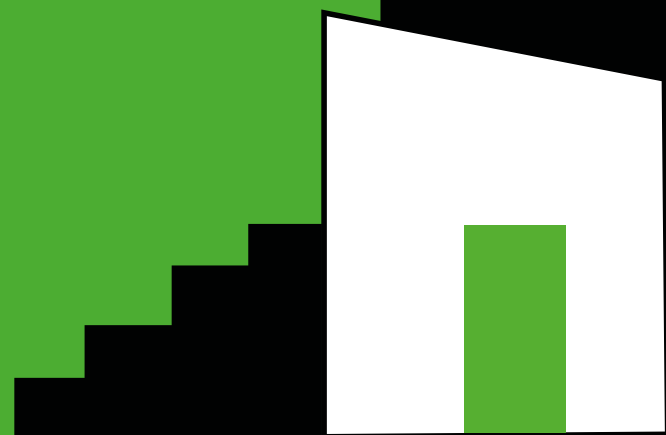
urbanization such as rural–urban migration, housing deficits, displacement, land market exclusion and inadequate public planning. These territories vary widely in size, consolidation level, tenure status, hazard exposure and internal organization. Some are long-established neighbourhoods with strong social networks and incremental infrastructure and service improvements; others are recent occupations facing acute precarity. Some are primarily exposed to floods or landslides; others experience chronic heat stress, drought, water scarcity or environmental contamination. Social composition is equally diverse, encompassing different age groups, gender dynamics, migrant populations, racial and ethnic communities and varied forms of leadership.

3. Coined by Henri Lefebvre, the ‘right to the city’ refers to the collective right to shape, access and inhabit urban spaces in inclusive and democratic ways (Lefebvre, 1968). It has since evolved into an influential concept in urban theory and a global social movement.

Box 1. Peripheral territories

Despite this diversity, they tend to share a set of structural characteristics (Schmid et al., 2017), which may be present to varying degrees:

- Limited or unequal access to improved water or energy services.
- Limited or unequal access to improved sanitation and drainage systems.
- Housing that does not fully comply with building codes or durability standards, including constraints in living space or construction quality.
- Insecure land tenure, situated along a continuum of land rights.
- Partial or complete non-compliance with spatial planning, land use or zoning regulations.
- Disproportionately high exposure to climate and socioenvironmental risks, compounded by inadequate infrastructure and limited access to basic services.



The PCRA framework thus considers low-income and informal settlements as dynamic territories shaped by historical patterns of exclusion, but also by agency, solidarity networks and collective capacity. Using an umbrella term enables policy coherence at national and international levels, while acknowledging that effective risk reduction and climate change adaptation depend on context-sensitive, territorially grounded analysis.

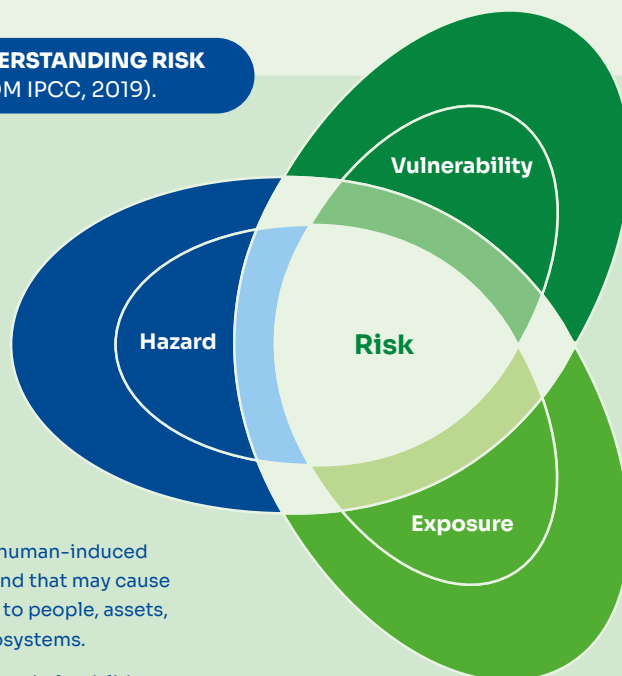


What is the PCRA framework?

The PCRA framework constitutes a methodological approach that integrates technical and scientific knowledge with community-based knowledge, fostering participatory governance arrangements and integrated forms of community-led risk management and climate change adaptation.

Through a technical-community analysis of the territory, PCRA enables the identification of risk and its three components: hazards, vulnerabilities and exposure (**Figure 1**), while simultaneously strengthening local capacities and reinforcing community leadership in understanding and addressing the risks they face.

FIGURE 1. UNDERSTANDING RISK
(ADAPTED FROM IPCC, 2019).



Hazard: a natural or human-induced physical event or trend that may cause losses and damages to people, assets, infrastructure or ecosystems.

Examples include: floods, landslides, heatwaves, droughts, sea-level rise.

Vulnerability: the propensity or predisposition to be adversely affected, encompassing sensitivity or susceptibility to harm and lack of capacity to cope and adapt.

Examples include: housing conditions, limited mobility, income instability, insecure tenure.

Exposure: the presence of people, livelihoods, ecosystems, services and resources, infrastructure or assets in places that could be adversely affected.

Examples include: location in hazard zones; can be forced by socioeconomic conditions.

The PCRA methodology is grounded in the recognition that technical risk assessments alone are insufficient. Understanding risk requires understanding territory not merely as physical space, but as a complex and dynamic social entity, shaped by historical processes, power relations, collective memory, cultural identity and ongoing struggles for rights. It is the accumulated practices and meanings that communities attach to a place that give territory its social and political character.

Communities are neither homogeneous nor free of internal tensions. They are composed of diverse social and economic groups with different priorities, interests and forms of organization, and different groups experience risks in distinct ways. At the same time, as organized social groups, communities may share common activities, collective values and sense of belonging to a territory.

While PCRA do not seek to resolve the conflicts that shape territories, they identify different groups, power relations and tensions in order to foster practices of collective and solidarity-based self-protection in the face of shared climate and socioenvironmental threats. By doing so, they create conditions for inclusive representation and the construction of common agendas around risk reduction, climate change adaptation and urban resilience.

Knowledge production within the PCRA framework is collective and situated. It is built from the lived experiences of communities that are exposed to and resist risks on a daily basis,

integrating narratives of extreme events, local memory and direct observation of the territory with scientific information and technical data. Therefore, **the territorial analysis promoted by PCRA is multi-risk and multi-level, addressing localized processes such as drainage failures or slope instability, as well as broader dynamics related to urban development patterns, infrastructure provision and investment.**

Participatory risk mapping plays a central role in this process. More than a technical exercise, it also functions as a pedagogical and political tool for the co-production of knowledge. Its effectiveness depends on careful preparation, inclusive mobilization and methodologies that encourage critical observation and community leadership. While the process is community-led, technical advisory teams play a key role in supporting quality territorial analysis, formulating guiding questions and helping to identify warning signs, critical processes and their structural causes.

Beyond strengthening shared responsibility and resilience in low-income and informal settlements, the formulation of PCRA also generates valuable territorially grounded information that can feed directly into urban and national climate change adaptation strategies. In this way, the approach operates across scales simultaneously, building community-level capacity while contributing to broader societal and institutional resilience. This vertical coherence, linking neighbourhood-level action to higher-level policy, is essential for durable outcomes.

The PCRA methodology was developed through experiences in diverse Brazilian contexts and is structured around sequential and complementary modules. The detailed procedural guidance for each module is available in the official implementation guidebook published by the Brazilian Ministry of Cities. **This publication focuses on the four core methodological foundations that give the PCRA approach its coherence and transferability, and that any adaptation to other contexts should preserve (Figure 2).**



FIGURE 2. PCRA METHODOLOGY.

Community Plans for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation (PCRA) modules



M0

Proposal for the
development of
a PCRA



M1

Technical-
community analysis
of the territory



M2

Monitoring and
anticipatory
actions



M3

Designing structural
and non-structural
measures for
adaptation to
climate risks



M4

Sociotechnical
workshops



M5

Conclusions
of the PCRA

Cross-cutting module: Territorial Climate
Adaptation Unit & tactical actions

Methodological foundations of PCRA



1- Territorial
analysis as a
collective process



2 -Territorial agents,
governance and
sustainability



3- From diagnosis
to action



4- Legacy and
transformation



Box 2. Why PCRA are innovative

Community-based disaster risk reduction, participatory urban planning and locally led climate change adaptation are well-established fields of practice (Rahman et al., 2023; Ravazzoli et al., 2025). Over the past two decades, research and policy debates have consistently emphasized the importance of local knowledge, participation and social organization in reducing vulnerability and strengthening resilience (Archer et al., 2014; IPCC, 2022; Ziervogel et al., 2022). International organizations and development agencies have also promoted community risk mapping, inclusive planning processes, early-warning systems and nature-based solutions across diverse contexts (Shand and Ndezi, 2025).

Within this broader landscape, the Brazilian PCRA methodology does not claim novelty in any single tool. Its innovation lies in the structured integration of multiple elements within a coherent territorial and institutional framework. Five features distinguish the PCRA approach:

(1) Bridging disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation

PCRA deliberately integrate disaster preparedness, risk reduction and climate change adaptation within a single territorial process. They adopt a multi-risk perspective that reflects the lived realities of low-income and informal settlements, where structural vulnerabilities reinforce the impacts of compound or cascading risks and where addressing those vulnerabilities creates direct entry points for climate justice.

(2) Moving from community-based to community-led

Communities are not “consulted”, they lead in defining priorities, interpreting risks and shaping and



implementing action agendas. The process strengthens community leadership⁴ and agency, rather than positioning residents as beneficiaries of externally designed interventions.

(3) Applying a granular territorial lens for mutual learning

PCRA operate at fine spatial scale, recognizing that exposure and vulnerability vary within neighbourhoods. Risk analysis is grounded in detailed territorial analysis, combining technical assessment with situated knowledge to capture uneven and differentiated risk patterns. Communities and technical actors learn from each other while collectively building strategies for action.

(4) Connecting analysis to a layered portfolio of actions

Plans are directly linked to a graduated portfolio of measures: low-cost collective actions, anticipatory and preparedness mechanisms, and higher-complexity structural proposals that inform public investment agendas. This reduces the gap between planning and implementation.

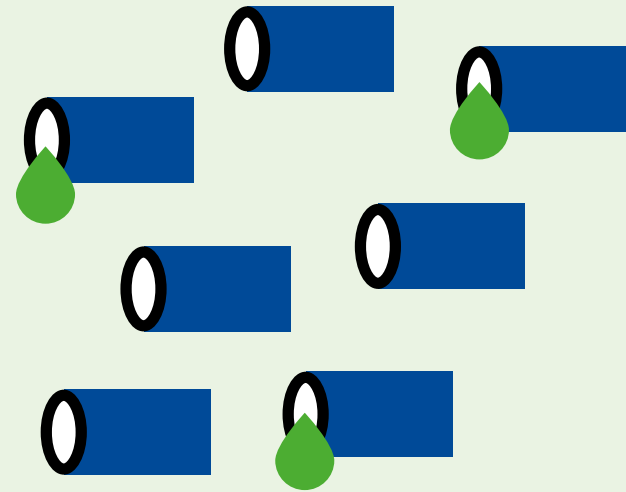
(5) Ensuring institutional anchoring and legacy

PCRA are designed to leave behind strengthened community organization, trained territorial agents and structured channels of dialogue with public authorities. The objective is not only to produce a plan, but to embed risk governance capacities that endure beyond project cycles.

4. This is what the Brazilian PCRA framework calls *protagonismo territorial*: a concept with no exact English equivalent, but one that insists communities are the primary authors of their own risk governance, not simply participants in it.



Practical and policy relevance



While PCRA emerged from a specific national and institutional context, the challenges they seek to address are not unique to Brazil. Across regions and continents, urban territories are increasingly shaped by the convergence of multiple and interrelated crises. Climate change is intensifying existing hazards and fuelling new risks while long-standing vulnerabilities, including inequality, informality and spatial segregation, continue to affect certain population groups disproportionately. These dynamics are further exacerbated by conflict, forced migration, organized crime, political polarization and the global rise of authoritarian and exclusionary agendas. Recent disasters associated with floods and landslides, heatwaves, prolonged droughts and water scarcity, wildfires and coastal erosion have revealed the vulnerability of urban systems and communities

to phenomena that exceed historical patterns.

Amid the climate emergency and broader polycrisis, community-led approaches to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation have gained renewed relevance. International debates increasingly recognize that resilience cannot be built solely through infrastructure, technology or top-down planning. It also depends on social organization, preparedness, trust and the ability of communities to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from shocks. Locally led adaptation principles emphasize the importance of devolving decision-making power, resources and knowledge to those who are most at risk, and are closely linked to climate justice, as they seek to address the structural inequalities that shape exposure, vulnerability and adaptive capacity (Coger et al., 2022).

The PCRA framework contributes to this international agenda through a structured, yet flexible methodology built around four interconnected components:

- The **Territorial Analysis as a Collective Process** component addresses one of the most persistent structural gaps in urban risk governance: the invisibility of low-income and informal settlements in official data systems. By combining participatory risk mapping with technical assessment at fine spatial resolution, PCRA generate the granular, community-validated information that national and subnational climate change adaptation strategies frequently lack – and that is essential for prioritizing action in the most vulnerable and exposed territories.
- The **Territorial Agents, Governance and Sustainability** component extends this further. By building durable community-based governance structures such as trained territorial agents and permanent territorial adaptation units, PCRA create lasting institutional anchors that maintain the interface between communities and public authorities beyond individual project cycles.

- The **From Diagnosis to Action** component ensures that analysis translates into practice, combining non-structural measures implemented directly by communities with structural proposals that form a collective advocacy agenda, and classifying measures by complexity, cost and institutional responsibility to make cross-sectoral coordination legible and actionable.
- Finally, the **Legacy and Transformation** component addresses the central challenge of vertical integration. This consists of establishing clear pathways through which community diagnostics and local advocacy plans can inform higher-level policy, investment programmes and development frameworks.

For governments, investing in community-led approaches such as PCRA is not an alternative to institutional disaster risk management or climate change adaptation policies. PCRA complement and strengthen the effectiveness of national and municipal action by enhancing early detection of risks, fostering shared responsibility between institutions and communities and connecting local priorities to national and subnational strategies for disaster risk reduction, climate action and urban development. They are particularly relevant in contexts where state capacity is uneven or constrained, as they extend the reach of public policies through partnerships with civil society organizations, technical advisory teams and community networks.

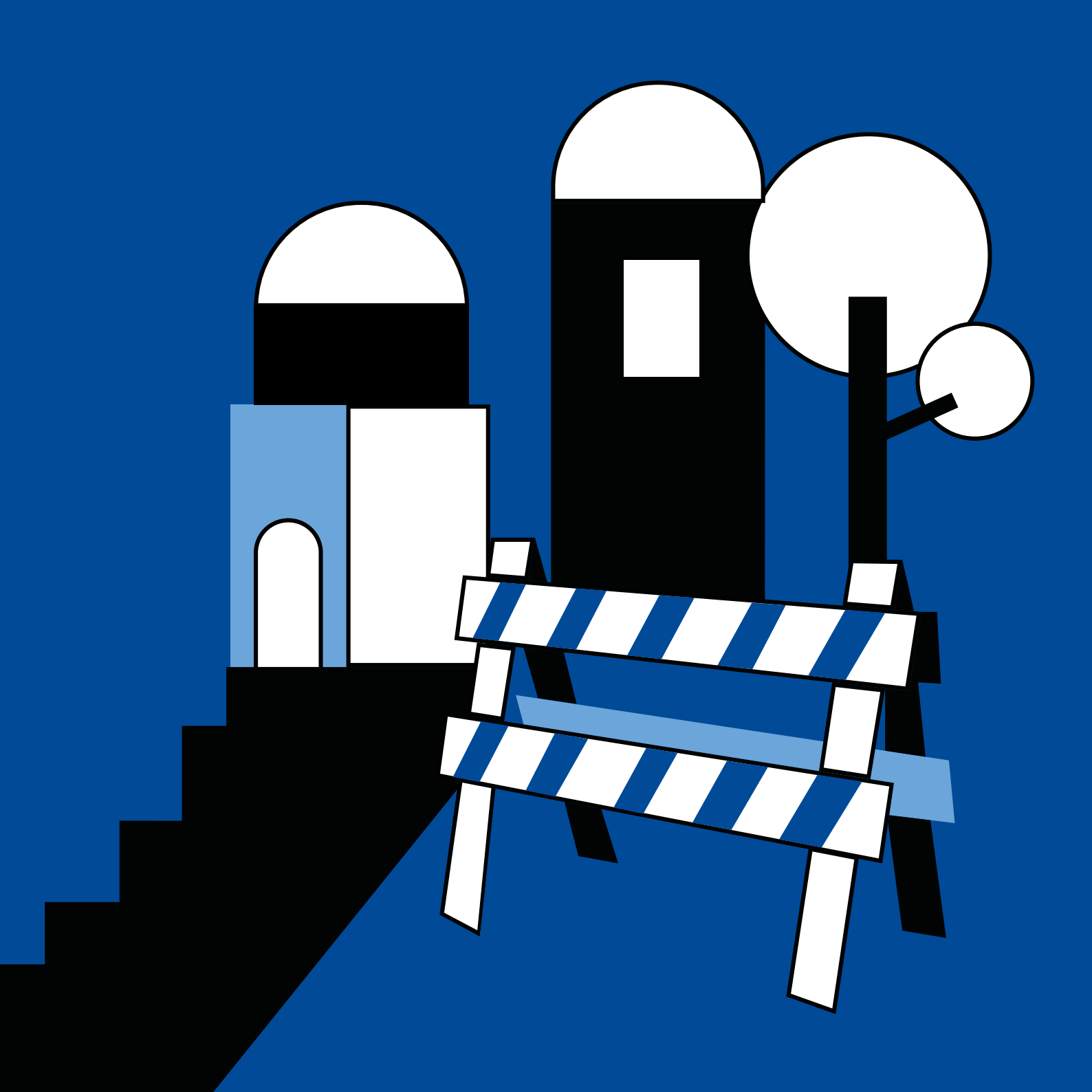
The PCRA approach is also aligned with key global frameworks. Its focus on prevention, preparedness and community participation in risk management directly supports the objectives of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (UNDRR, 2015), while its emphasis on climate resilience contributes to the implementation of both National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement (United Nations, 2015). PCRA also advance several Sustainable Development Goals of the

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UNGA, 2015), particularly those related to climate action, sustainable cities, reduced inequalities and inclusive institutions. PCRA processes also contribute to the Global Goal on Adaptation by generating the granular, disaggregated, community-level data on vulnerability and adaptive capacity in low-income and informal settlements that effective and just adaptation requires.

This publication is therefore part of a broader effort to reframe disaster risk management and climate action, both in Brazil and internationally, by valuing the local scale, collective intelligence and community leadership. By linking PCRA with public policies on upgrading informal settlements, housing, sanitation, land regularization and environmental protection for example, the approach presented here can contribute to more just, resilient and sustainable cities, where risk reduction and climate change adaptation are understood as integrated social, territorial and deeply democratic processes of city-making.



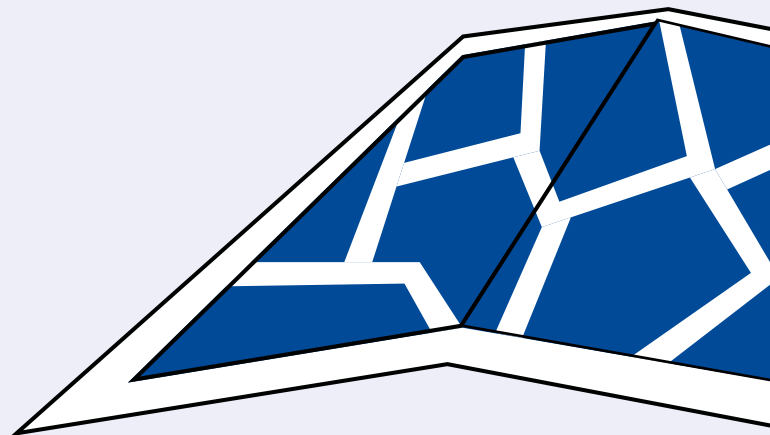




METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF PCRA

This chapter presents the principles and key design choices that underpin the PCRA methodology. It does not replace the detailed step-by-step guidance available in the original Brazilian guide and complementary materials. Instead, it clarifies the conceptual and methodological architecture that makes PCRA effective and adaptable across contexts.

1 Territorial analysis as a collective process



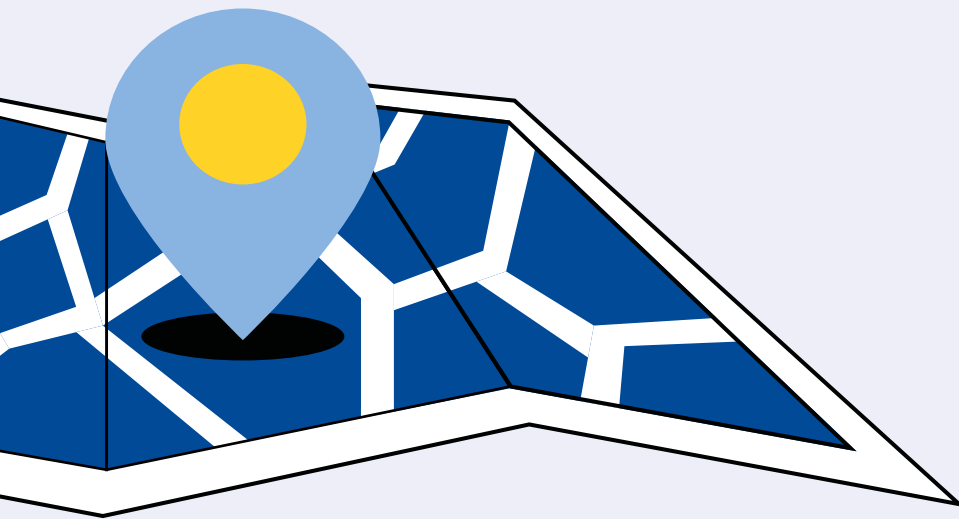
Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation are most effective when they begin with a grounded understanding of territory. For PCRA, this is not a technical step but a political and organizational choice: risk governance must be rooted in the lived realities of communities and structurally connected to public policy.

In many countries, low-income and informal settlements face a double disadvantage: they bear disproportionate levels of risk shaped by high hazard exposure and deep structural vulnerabilities, while remaining underrepresented in the official data systems meant to inform risk governance and risk reduction actions. Risk maps may be outdated, generalized, incomplete or non-existent. Informal housing and infrastructure often remain invisible in official maps and registries. Socioeconomic vulnerabilities, informal coping mechanisms and internal territorial dynamics are rarely captured in technical assessments. As a result, public policies are frequently designed without

a granular understanding of how risk is actually produced and experienced in these territories.

PCRA address these structural knowledge gaps. Risk is understood as the interaction between hazard, exposure and vulnerability (**Figure 1**, page 20). Yet exposure and vulnerability are not static, nor purely technical concepts. They are shaped by historical patterns of exclusion, insecure tenure, precarious infrastructure, unequal access to services and environmental degradation. These structural conditions are spatially expressed and must therefore be analysed territorially.

Generating this understanding requires deliberate design. Before the territorial diagnosis can begin, **minimum conditions for engagement** must be in place. Territories selected for PCRA should present identifiable risk situations – that is, contexts where communities are exposed to hazards, whether rapid-onset events such as floods and landslides, slow-onset processes such as prolonged droughts or sea-level rise, or the everyday, cumulative and less visible



climate impacts that often shape life in low-income and informal settlements. Structural vulnerabilities, including housing conditions, infrastructure, tenure security and access to services, amplify these risks and must be considered from the outset, recognizing that **significant drivers of disaster are embedded in the fabric of daily life as much as in extreme or catastrophic events. The task is therefore less about establishing whether risk exists than about understanding how it is configured, experienced and driven in each particular context.**

Territorial delimitation is not simply a cartographic exercise. It must reflect how residents themselves define their community. Administrative boundaries rarely coincide with social, ecological and functional realities. A community plan that ignores these lived boundaries risks undermining participation and legitimacy.

For policymakers, this means that territorial selection must be negotiated, not imposed.

This preparatory phase is also where the foundations of legitimacy are laid. Early engagement between technical teams and the community, for example trust-building conversations, collective walks through the territory and structured listening sessions, helps determine whether the social conditions exist for a participatory process. This is when expectations are aligned and when the first assessment of internal dynamics, leadership structures and prior relationships with public institutions takes place.

A preliminary workplan is often required for resource mobilization but within PCRA it is treated as a living document. As territorial analysis deepens, the workplan must be revised collectively. This reinforces transparency and signals that the process is responsive to community-defined priorities rather than externally predetermined timelines.

Assemblies and collective agreements are moments in which the community formally endorses the PCRA process and establishes shared commitments. Documentation of these agreements reinforces transparency and accountability.

With these foundations in place, the territorial diagnosis can begin in earnest.

The territorial analysis promoted by PCRA seeks to produce a **comprehensive diagnosis of the territory and its risks**. It identifies hazards, such as floods, landslides, heatwaves or droughts, but also examines who and what is exposed, any particular vulnerabilities and why certain groups are more vulnerable, and what capacities already exist within the community. Vulnerabilities may include for example physical conditions of housing, limited mobility, health constraints or income instability.

Women, elderly residents, youth, persons with disabilities and marginalized populations may face distinct vulnerabilities. A meaningful diagnosis must therefore move beyond aggregate categories and adopt a fine spatial resolution. In the Brazilian experience, this has often required micro-scale “house-by-house” analysis, allowing the identification of priority scenarios and the characterization of risk in terms of magnitude, spatial extent and causal processes. Generalized zoning and aggregate data are insufficient for guiding concrete action.





**GOOD PRACTICE
FROM BRAZIL**

This community plan offers an example of what granular, community-led territorial analysis looks like in practice. At its core was a participatory risk mapping process built on the co-production of knowledge between technical teams and residents, combining technical analysis with the direct perceptions and lived experiences of community members regarding the risks they observe in their everyday lives. The diagnosis was conducted at house-by-house scale,

PCRA Vila Joantina

📍 DIADEMA, SÃO PAULO

allowing the team to identify differentiated risk scenarios across the territory instead of relying on generalized zoning or aggregate data. This enabled the characterization not only of the nature and extent of hazards, but also the specific exposure conditions and structural vulnerabilities of individual households and their causal processes. The result was a territorial assessment that neither technical surveys nor community knowledge could have generated alone.

Low-income and informal settlements rarely face isolated hazards but rather systemic risks. Flooding may trigger landslides; heatwaves may coincide with water scarcity; extreme rainfall may collapse already fragile infrastructure. For this reason, PCRA adopts a multi-risk approach that examines how hazards, exposure and vulnerabilities interact, accumulate and amplify one another's impacts.

A **multi-risk diagnosis** reveals structural drivers that single-hazard assessments often miss. Upstream urban development choices, soil sealing for instance, can increase surface runoff and worsen flooding in downstream communities. Chronic infrastructure deficits, themselves the result of decades of planning exclusion, leave low-income and informal communities with little capacity to cope when heatwaves strike. Understanding these connections enables governments and communities to design integrated strategies rather than fragmented, single-hazard responses.

Equally important is the mapping of community capacities and creative potential. These include the ability to organize, reinvent and create, expressed through cultural production, community mobilization, local leadership, solidarity networks, popular participation and organized struggle for the right to the

city. Collective spaces such as community centres, cultural venues and open gathering areas may function as shelters or coordination points during crises, but they are also the everyday infrastructure of social cohesion and collective agency. Recognizing these potentials is analytically essential because they are genuine risk governance resources. This recognition is also politically significant, directly challenging the stigmas that reduce low-income and informal settlements to sites of poverty, violence or passivity.

A defining feature of PCRA methodology is the **co-production of knowledge.** Technical data, including rainfall records, geotechnical assessments or municipal risk maps, provide essential information about physical processes. Local knowledge contributes historical memory of past disasters, informal warning signs, everyday coping strategies and nuanced understanding of territorial dynamics. Through participatory mapping workshops, diagnostic transect walks and iterative discussions, these forms of knowledge are combined and critically examined. The aim is neither to romanticize local experience nor to privilege technical expertise, but to build a shared and robust understanding of risk.

This process inevitably surfaces internal conflicts: political divisions, competition for

resources, disputes over land or representation. PCRA do not attempt to eliminate these tensions. Instead, the PCRA process recognizes that collective reflection on shared threats can foster solidarity. When residents jointly analyse risks and their causes, they often identify common agendas that transcend internal divisions. In this sense, **the diagnosis**

is already an intervention that strengthens collective identity, builds shared language and enhances the community's organizational capacity to negotiate with public authorities.

The result is more than a technical map;

it is a collectively validated territorial

assessment that integrates participatory

insights and technical analysis. Validation

through assembly at the community level reinforces legitimacy and ensures that the diagnosis becomes a shared reference point for subsequent action. Importantly, insights from this process may require revising the initial workplan, aligning activities and priorities with the challenges and opportunities revealed through collective analysis.

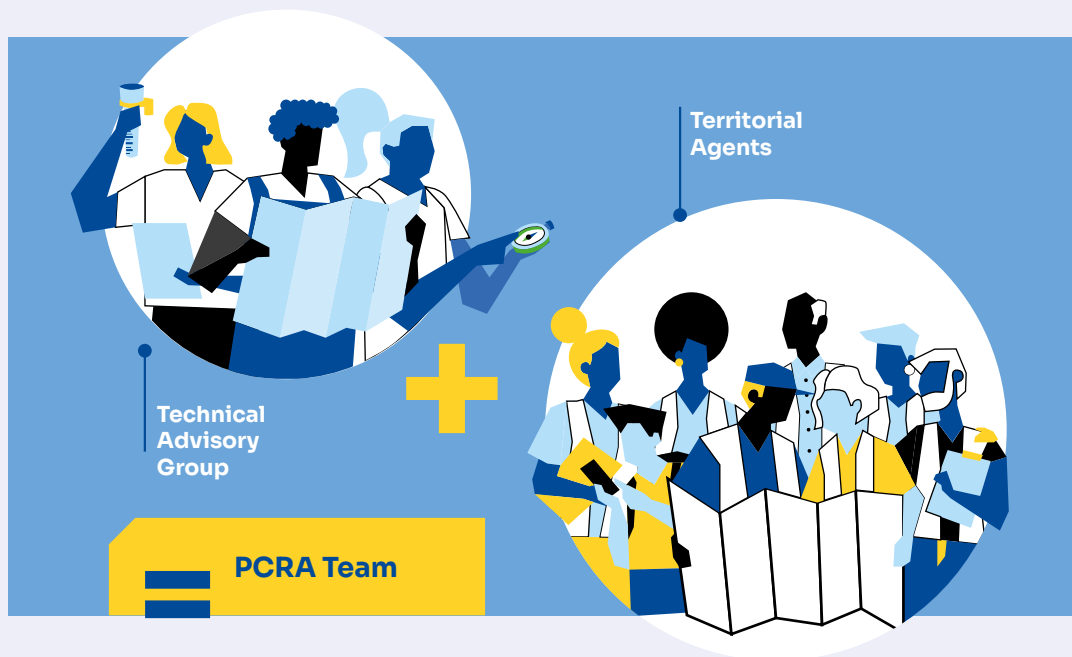
Key messages: territorial analysis as a collective process

- Risk governance must be grounded in a territorial analysis that integrates physical, social, political and historical dimensions.
- Work at the smallest meaningful territorial scale, namely neighbourhood, or even street level where necessary, to capture differentiated vulnerabilities and capacities.
- Analyse multiple interconnected hazards and vulnerabilities across different timescales.
- Build legitimacy early through transparent agreements and collective validation.

2 Territorial agents, governance and sustainability

The effectiveness of PCRA depends on its governance architecture. Central to this architecture is the **PCRA team** composed of a multidisciplinary **technical advisory group and territorial agents** drawn from the community (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. THE PCRA TEAM.



The technical advisory group ideally brings together complementary expertise in urban planning, engineering, environmental sciences, social sciences, public health, climate science, disaster risk management or other relevant disciplines. Its role is to translate technical information into accessible formats, support risk analysis, strengthen local capacities and help connect territorial demands to institutional frameworks. At the same time, technical advisors learn from the situated knowledge of territorial agents, incorporating local experience, historical memory of hazards and everyday risk management practices into the analytical process. Technical authority must therefore be exercised with transparency and accountability to the collective process.

Territorial agents are the backbone of the PCRA methodology. They are community members who mobilize participation, document territorial knowledge and processes, facilitate dialogue between residents and technical advisors and translate in both directions: making technical information accessible to communities and translating territorial realities into structured proposals that institutions can act on. They are co-producers of knowledge and co-managers of the PCRA process, ensuring that both community perspectives and technical analyses inform decision-making.

The selection of territorial agents is therefore a critical design decision. Representation must reflect the diversity of the territory: different risk areas, gender groups, age groups and social segments. Concentrating representation within a single association, political faction or family network undermines legitimacy and weakens long-term sustainability. Transparent criteria and collective validation are essential to avoid reinforcing existing power imbalances.

Training territorial agents is central to sustainability. Training typically includes basic concepts of hazard, exposure and vulnerability and how they shape risks; participatory facilitation techniques; mapping and documentation tools; communication strategies and emergency procedures. When relevant, it may also include practical training linked to small-scale risk reduction or climate change adaptation measures through sociotechnical workshops.



Capacity development within PCRA is intentionally bidirectional. While territorial agents strengthen their technical and organizational capacities, technical advisors also deepen their understanding of local dynamics, social networks, historical hazard patterns and community-based coping strategies. This exchange enriches risk analysis and helps to ensure that proposed measures are socially grounded, feasible and responsive to local priorities.

As territorial agents gain skills and confidence, the locus of expertise gradually shifts. Communities become capable of updating risk information, organizing anticipatory actions and engaging more confidently with authorities. This reduces dependency on external consultants and strengthens long-term governance capacity.

Effective governance requires multiple participation spaces operating at different intensities. **Working meetings** between technical advisors and territorial agents allow for operational alignment. **Thematic workshops** bring together residents affected by specific risks. **General assemblies** function as formal legitimacy moments, where workplans are approved, teams are presented, risk classifications are validated and agreements are documented.

Assemblies are especially important in contexts marked by political fragmentation or distrust. They create collective visibility, ensure transparency and reinforce the idea that decisions are made publicly and collectively. If participation is uneven or unrepresentative, additional mobilization efforts are required. Inclusion must be actively constructed.

Beyond the community, governance also involves building bridges with public institutions. PCRA processes often unfold in low-income and informal settlements with long histories of neglect or conflict with authorities. Institutional dialogue must therefore be approached strategically. The aim is not to replace state responsibility with community self-management, but to strengthen community leadership while positioning PCRA as legitimate inputs into formal planning processes and instruments.

The PCRA approach promotes the creation or strengthening of a permanent community-based structure to sustain the process over time. In Brazil, this is called the **Territorial Climate Adaptation Unit** (*Núcleo Territorial de Adaptação Climática*, NUTAC). The specific name and institutional form will vary across countries and contexts but the principle of durable territorial organization is fundamental.





The NUTAC-equivalent is built progressively during the process, frequently emerging from the group of territorial agents and other engaged residents. It functions as the institutional memory of the PCRA process and may assume responsibility for:

- coordinating anticipatory actions and sustaining preparedness activities;
- conducting community-based risk monitoring and early warning and updating risk assessments;
- overseeing monitoring, evaluation and learning of implemented actions;
- maintaining dialogue with municipal and regional authorities;
- leading advocacy efforts for structural investments.

Governance structures must outlive project cycles. Participatory processes often falter when funding ends or political administrations change. Sustainability therefore refers not only to the continuity of specific actions but to the persistence of organizational capacity and

collective agency. Beyond the formal recognition of the NUTAC, PCRA integrate strategies to ensure this continuity, including systematic documentation of the process and public dissemination of results that make community achievements visible and harder to ignore.

Key messages: territorial agents, governance and sustainability

- Effective PCRA processes require structured roles, transparent decision-making and shared responsibilities.
- Treat scientific data and lived experience as equally valid and mutually reinforcing sources of knowledge.
- Foster inclusive selection and capacity development of territorial agents to anchor the process and ensure continuity.
- Durable territorial structures are essential for sustaining risk reduction and climate change adaptation in low-income and informal settlements.

3 From diagnosis to action

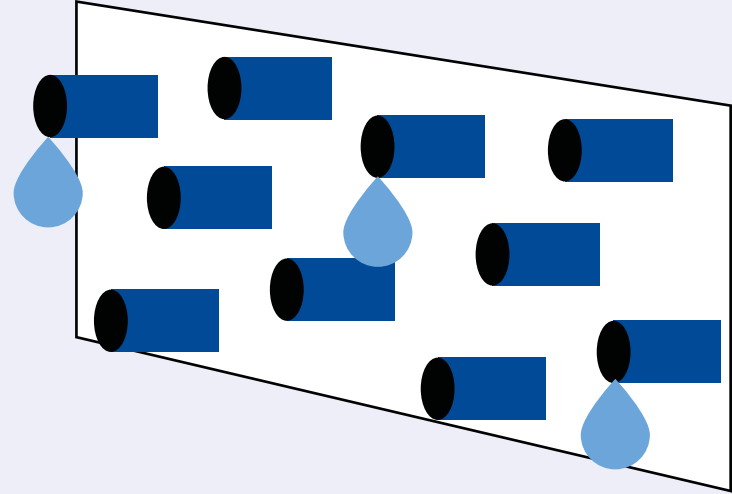
A defining feature of PCRA is their insistence that diagnosis must lead to practice. In low-income and informal settlements where distrust toward planning instruments is common, often due to delayed or unfulfilled public works, participation cannot rely solely on promises of future investments. Engagement must be built through visible improvements and tangible actions from the early stages.

For this reason, PCRA include three complementary action pathways:

(1) Tactical actions.

(2) Risk monitoring and anticipatory actions.

(3) Structural and non-structural proposals.



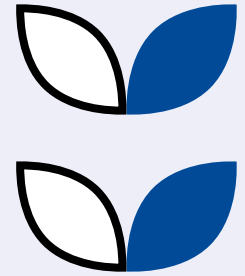
Tactical actions⁵ are small-scale, low-cost interventions that can be implemented collectively and rapidly. They do not require complex engineering studies and are typically executed through collective work (*mutirão*⁶) or sociotechnical workshops. Examples may include cleaning and restoring degraded drainage channels, improving steps and access paths, installing simple rainwater diversion systems, painting roofs white to reduce heat stress, planting vegetation to stabilize slopes or marking evacuation routes. They are intended to be permanent community improvements, not symbolic interventions.

5. In the English-language urban planning literature, similar approaches are often referred to as tactical urbanism.

6. *Mutirão* (pl. *mutirões*) derives from the Tupí-Guaraní Indigenous languages of Brazil, where it refers to collective communal work in planting or construction. Deeply embedded in Brazilian culture, the concept was adopted by social and labour movements in the mid-twentieth century as a symbol of grassroots mobilization and collective action. Today, *mutirões* are organized by communities, civil society organizations and governments alike across rural and urban contexts, retaining their core meaning: voluntary, solidarity-based collective effort to address shared challenges (TUC, 2024).

Tactical actions serve four purposes:

- Generating visible change, countering scepticism toward planning processes.
- Demonstrating that risk is not inevitable and can be managed and reduced collectively.
- Serving as training spaces where technical and local knowledge converge in practice.
- Strengthening solidarity networks through collective work.

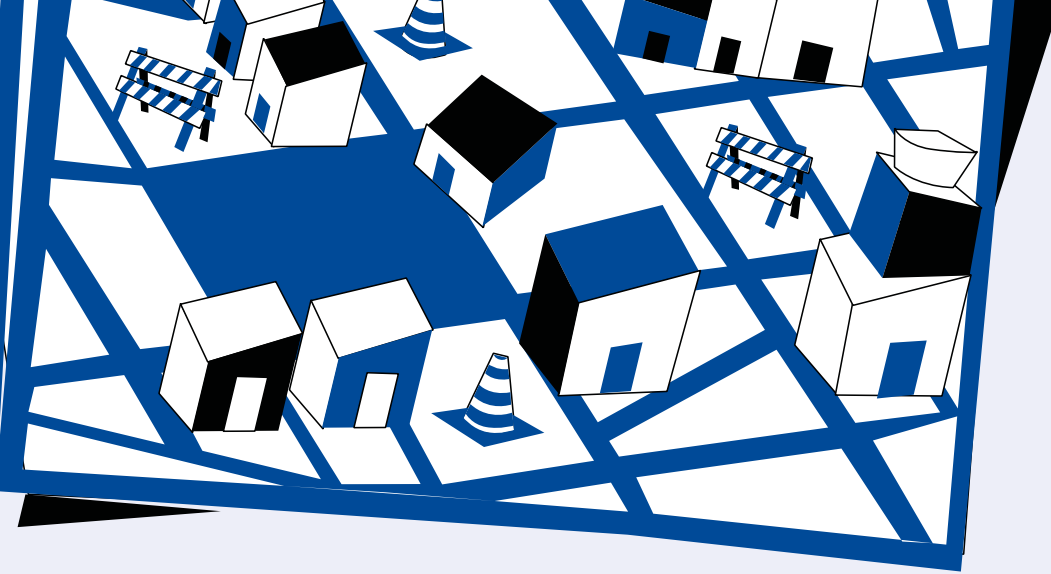


A distinctive feature of the PCRA approach is the incorporation of **community-based risk monitoring procedures and anticipatory actions**. Traditional disaster management systems focus primarily on post-disaster response. PCRA shift communities from passive recipients of emergency response to active agents of prevention and early action.



Once risks are mapped and causal processes understood, communities work collectively to define:

- What signals indicate increasing risk (critical thresholds).
- How these signals will be monitored.
- Who is responsible for monitoring.
- What actions will be triggered when thresholds are reached.



These monitoring systems combine technical indicators such as rainfall levels or river height with locally recognized warning signs. Simple instruments such as river gauges, rain gauges, thermometers or visual crack monitoring tools can be installed through participatory workshops.

Community-based risk monitoring complements rather than replaces official meteorological, hydrological and civil protection systems. Its distinctive contribution lies in capturing fine-grained, real-time territorial information, such as localized drainage failures, slope movements, heat stress in specific micro-locations, that institutional networks rarely reach at the required spatial resolution. Where official early warning systems exist, community monitoring strengthens the last mile of alert dissemination and response.

Equally important is the definition of solidarity-based emergency procedures. These include identifying families with higher vulnerability,

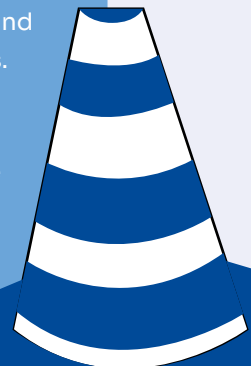
mapping temporary shelters, establishing safe routes and defining collective responsibilities during crises. The process transforms risk management from an individual burden into a shared territorial responsibility.

This anticipatory dimension reinforces a core principle: while hazards may be beyond community control, the exposure and vulnerability that transform them into disasters are largely shaped by social, economic and political conditions – and are therefore amenable to collective action. Understanding the physical and socioeconomic processes that generate risk strengthens community autonomy and negotiation capacity with public authorities.

Beyond tactical and anticipatory actions, PCRA facilitate the collective design of broader climate change adaptation measures. These are typically categorized as structural and non-structural, and further differentiated by level of complexity.

Non-structural measures focus on processes, governance, regulation and capacity-building. They may include community awareness campaigns, training and simulation exercises, development of contingency plans, creation of local risk monitoring systems or integration of risk reduction into municipal planning instruments. While often less visible than physical works or modifications to the built environment, they are fundamental for building long-term resilience.

Structural measures involve physical interventions that act directly on hazard dynamics or exposure patterns. In low-income and informal settlements, priority is often given to small- and medium-scale interventions that can be implemented locally or with modest institutional support such as improved drainage systems, slope stabilization using bioengineering techniques, permeable surfaces, rain gardens or reinforcement of vulnerable housing structures. While modest in scale, these interventions can deliver significant protective functions. Periodic maintenance of drainage channels, for instance, can prevent flooding that larger infrastructure alone cannot address. Larger scale works such as major drainage infrastructure, large retaining structures or river channel modifications are typically beyond the scope of community implementation and become part of an advocacy agenda directed toward government institutions. When small- and medium-scale community interventions are designed in conjunction with these larger works, their protective functions are further enhanced. Upstream slope stabilization and rain gardens, for example, reduce the runoff load on downstream drainage systems, while reinforced housing structures increase the safety margin that larger flood defences provide.



A key methodological contribution of PCRA is the collective classification of proposed measures by complexity, cost, time horizon and required institutional articulation **(Figure 4)**. This prevents unrealistic expectations and clarifies which actions can begin immediately and which require sustained political mobilization.

FIGURE 4. EXAMPLES OF NON-STRUCTURAL AND STRUCTURAL MEASURES BY LEVEL OF COMPLEXITY.

Complexity	Non-structural measures	Structural measures
Low	Awareness campaigns, basic evacuation training, environmental education, emergency drills and the production and distribution of educational materials on risks and self-protection measures.	Periodic cleaning and maintenance of ditches and storm drains, small-scale surface drainage interventions, installation of gutters or channels, restoration of slope stabilization using bioengineering techniques and bank protection through vegetation.
Medium	Development of municipal risk reduction plans, specific regulations (such as building codes and ordinances), training of municipal technicians and establishment of community protection and civil defence centres.	Installation of storm drains, paving with adequate drainage, stabilized slopes, small retention basins and retaining walls at the community level and implementation of nature-based solutions (NbS).
High	Master plans integrating risk management, legal frameworks for land use and occupation, national or state risk monitoring and early warning systems and intersectoral public policies on climate change adaptation.	Construction of dams, large-scale drainage projects, river channelling, installation of dikes, flexural walls, soil nailing, tensioned curtain walls and hybrid infrastructure (e.g. grey-green, blue-green).

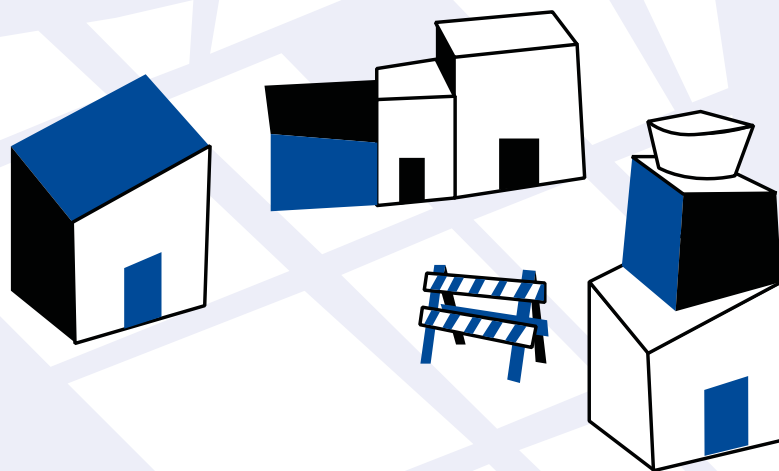
When feasible, lower-complexity measures are implemented through sociotechnical workshops that integrate training and practice (learning by doing) to reduce risks and adapt to climate change. Residents, local construction workers and cooperatives and technical advisors collaborate to design and implement practical interventions, often **nature-based solutions**⁷ adapted to low-income and informal contexts (IIED-AL, 2025).

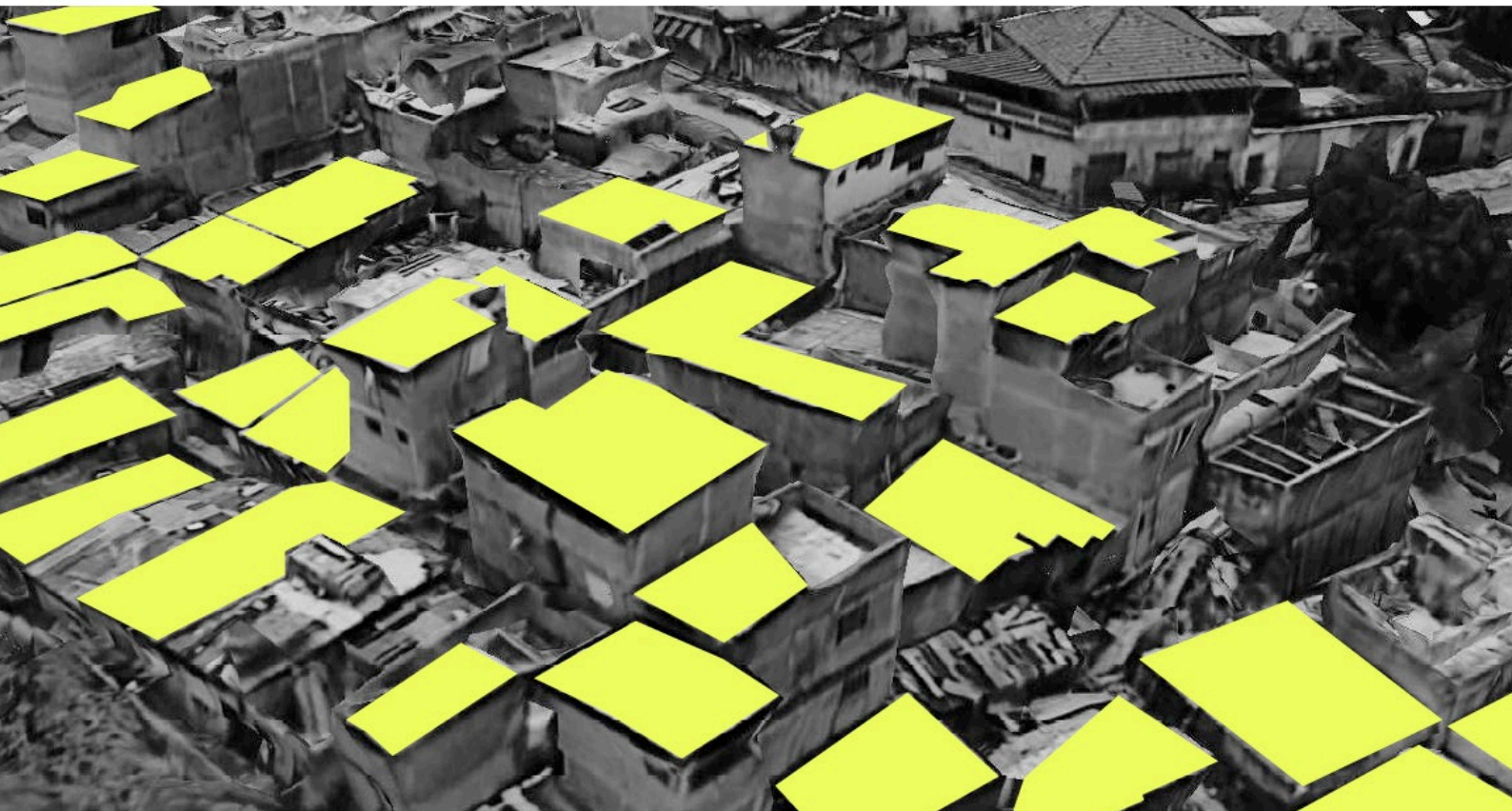
Sociotechnical workshops are embedded within the broader organizational strategy of PCRA and contribute directly to the strengthening of local climate change adaptation structures. Through the interventions they produce, they serve multiple purposes: transferring technical skills, fostering replicability and reinforcing the understanding that adaptation and risk reduction are not solely dependent on external actors. Where appropriate, small stipends or logistical support may be provided to ensure inclusion of socioeconomically vulnerable participants.

7. Nature-based solutions (NbS) are “actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services, resilience and biodiversity benefits” (UNEA, 2022).

Key messages: from diagnosis to action

- Diagnosis must lead to visible, early community-led actions that strengthen trust, skills and solidarity.
- Embed risk monitoring and anticipatory actions into everyday community life.
- Plan for a combination of structural and non-structural measures for comprehensive risk reduction and climate change adaptation.
- Classify measures by complexity, cost, time horizon and required institutional articulation.







**GOOD PRACTICE
FROM BRAZIL**

PCRA Vira-Lata

📍 SÃO PAULO

The community plan developed in the Vira-Lata community illustrates how a house-by-house territorial diagnosis generates a specific and varied portfolio of climate change adaptation measures. Proposals emerging from the process addressed multiple risk dimensions simultaneously: painting rooftops white to reduce heat stress, installing handrails on steep access paths, improving lighting in narrow alleyways,

applying drainage and anti-slip surfaces, stabilizing retaining walls and formalizing connections to official water and sewage networks. Each proposed measure is traceable to a specific vulnerability or hazard pattern identified through the participatory process, illustrating how granular territorial analysis enables targeted, socially grounded solutions rather than generic infrastructure responses.

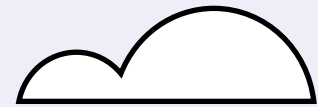
4 Legacy and transformation

In the Brazilian experience, PCRA processes have typically unfolded over 1 year. However, their ambition extends far beyond the project cycle. The goal is not only to produce a community plan but to leave behind durable capacities, structures and political leverage that persist long after the initial process concludes.

Legacy is expressed through both processes and tangible products: strengthened territorial governance through the territorial adaptation unit (NUTAC or equivalent); trained and recognized territorial agents; a collectively validated territorial analysis with accessible summaries; and implemented tactical actions that demonstrate what community-led climate change adaptation looks like in practice. These are not incidental outcomes; they are deliberately designed products of the PCRA methodology, built progressively throughout the process rather than delivered at its end.

The final phase of the development of PCRA thus marks a transition rather than an endpoint. The





public launch of the NUTAC, presentation of the popular summary of the community plan and formal recognition of territorial agents serve symbolic and practical functions. Symbolically, they consolidate collective learning and signal to the broader community – and to public authorities – that the process has produced something durable and legitimate. Practically, they activate the governance structures and communication channels that will sustain the work going forward.

This moment is also an opportunity for accountability. By publicly presenting the territorial analysis, the action portfolio and the advocacy agenda, communities create a shared reference point that is difficult for institutions to ignore and difficult for internal actors to revise without collective agreement.

While many measures within the PCRA action portfolio can be implemented locally, structural interventions depend on municipal, regional or national investment. The PCRA process therefore culminates in the formulation of a **Local Advocacy Plan**, a technically and socially validated agenda that systematizes priority structural works, identifies responsible institutions, maps possible funding sources and outlines strategies for negotiation and mobilization.

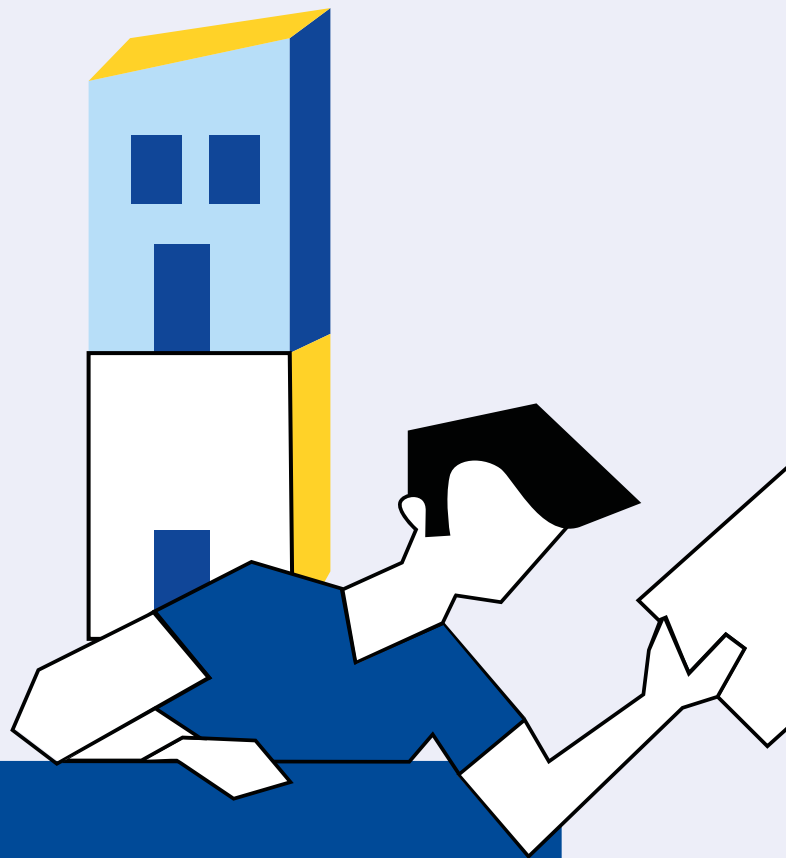
The advocacy plan is not a generic list of demands. It is grounded in the collectively

produced territorial analysis and expressed through visual materials like maps, sketches and simplified project proposals that enhance the community's capacity to participate effectively in public hearings, funding calls and institutional dialogues. This translation of technical content into advocacy tools is itself a form of capacity-building: communities that can present their priorities in the language of planning and finance are better positioned to hold institutions accountable.

Long-term impact depends on connecting these local advocacy agendas to the instruments and cycles of public policy. PCRA outputs should inform municipal development plans, disaster risk management strategies, climate change adaptation policies and housing or infrastructure programmes. Without this articulation, community efforts risk remaining isolated and underresourced. Achieving it requires identifying the specific entry points available within a given context and timing advocacy efforts accordingly. This could be related to a municipal planning review process, a national risk management or climate adaptation plan consultation or an international climate finance mechanism.

Risks evolve as climate conditions change, as urban development alters exposure patterns and as communities develop new capacities

and vulnerabilities. The NUTAC therefore integrates ongoing monitoring mechanisms from the outset. Two distinct but complementary monitoring functions are embedded in the PCRA process: risk monitoring, which tracks hazard signals and triggers anticipatory action, and monitoring, evaluation and learning, which tracks the effectiveness of implemented measures and informs revision of the action portfolio and advocacy agenda. Regular updating of risk information, participatory review of implemented actions and structured reflection on successes and limitations ensure that the community plan remains a living instrument for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation rather than a static document.



Popular communication is the connective tissue of this sustained process. Information about risks, monitoring procedures, early warning signals and planned actions must circulate widely through accessible and culturally resonant channels. This may include community radio, messaging platforms, local influencers, posters, audiovisual materials and neighbourhood gatherings. This is not simply dissemination. It reinforces the message that disasters are not purely natural phenomena but the result of socially produced vulnerabilities that can be collectively addressed, and that the community possesses the knowledge, organization and tools to address them.



Key messages: legacy and transformation

- A Local Advocacy Plan must translate community priorities into a technically grounded agenda for negotiation with public authorities, timed to align with relevant policy and funding cycles.
- PCRA outputs should inform municipal plans, climate strategies and investment programmes to avoid isolated or under-resourced efforts.
- Ongoing risk monitoring and participatory review of implemented actions ensure that the plan evolves as risks, capacities and contexts change.
- Popular communication is essential for sustained engagement, ensuring that risk knowledge circulates widely and remains actionable.



GOOD PRACTICE FROM BRAZIL

PCRA Baracela

📍 SÃO PAULO

The community plan developed in Baracela showcases the governance and legacy dimensions of the methodology in practice. The process culminated in a final community assembly, marking a formal moment of collective validation in which the plan and its products were presented to and endorsed by residents.

Two outcomes from the Baracela PCRA process are particularly instructive for international practitioners:





GOOD PRACTICE FROM BRAZIL



(1) The preparation of a *resumo popular*, a plain-language summary of the community plan designed to make technical content accessible to all residents, not only those directly involved in the process. This kind of popular communication tool is essential for sustaining community engagement and ensuring that risk knowledge circulates beyond the core team.

(2) The formalization of postal addresses for streets within the settlement that had previously lacked official recognition. This may appear administrative but it carries significant implications for residents' access to public services and visibility in official systems. It is also a direct expression of the PCRA principle that community-led processes can produce durable territorial gains that extend beyond risk reduction alone.

The experience concluded with the community collectively defining the next steps for advocating structural improvements, based on the Local Advocacy Plan.



Box 3. Institutionalizing PCRA as national public policy

One of the most significant lessons from the Brazilian PCRA experience is that community-led approaches require sustained institutional commitment to reach their transformative potential. From the outset, the SNP designed PCRA not as a pilot project but as the foundation of a long-term public policy, making deliberate choices to embed it within the Federal Government planning and financing architecture.

Several features of this institutionalization process are instructive for international practitioners and policymakers. First, the SNP has built a broad partnership architecture spanning public universities, municipal and state governments, social movements, civil society organizations and international bodies. Formal cooperation agreements with the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz-DF) provided the financial continuity needed to sustain and expand the programme. Also central to this network were partnerships with the United Nations University Institute for

Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS), under the Transformative Urban Coalitions (TUC) project, and the Center for Favela Studies (CEFVELA/UFABC). Together, these partnerships brought rigorous research and community-based knowledge into the PCRA framework and contributed directly to the development of the official public policy guidebook published in 2025. That methodological guidebook transformed PCRA from a ministry-led programme into a structured public reference in Brazil that other institutions, municipalities and states can use and adapt independently. This publication represents the next step in that collaboration, adapting the framework and its lessons for an international audience, and extending its reach beyond Brazil.

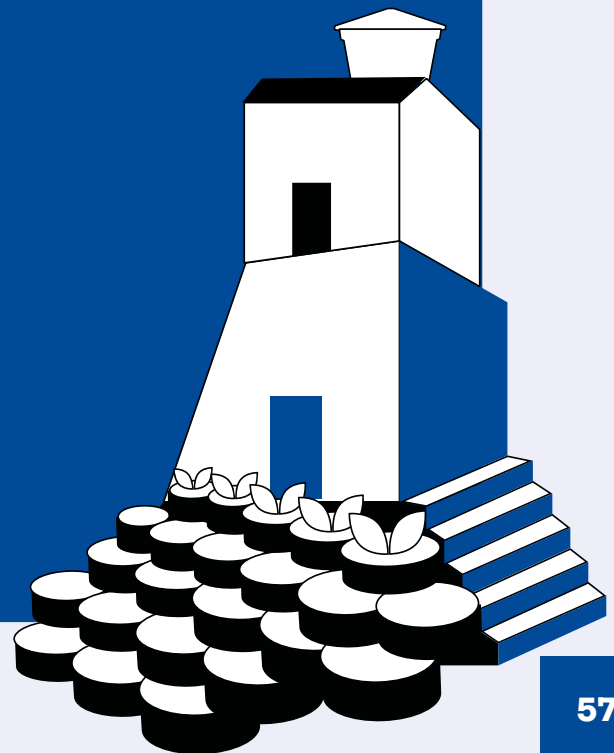
Second, the approach has been progressively scaled in Brazil with clear national targets: 100 PCRA and 1,000 trained territorial agents for climate change adaptation in vulnerable urban areas across the country. This scaling was



designed to reach territories with diverse socioenvironmental risk profiles, ensuring that the methodology is tested and refined across a range of contexts rather than replicated uniformly. Reaching these targets required mobilizing funding beyond the SNP's own budget. A cooperation agreement signed in June 2025 between the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, the SNP and Fiocruz-RJ, with support from the Diffuse Rights Defense Fund, illustrates how multi-source financing can reduce dependence on any single budget line and help insulate a programme from political or fiscal disruptions.

Third, the SNP pursued deliberate cross-sectoral integration, connecting PCRA to other public policy instruments including housing, health, sanitation and social assistance. This articulation is not merely administrative: it amplifies results, avoids overlaps and gaps between programmes, mainstreams the climate agenda and ensures that risk reduction addresses the multiple dimensions of vulnerability rather than treating them in isolation.

Together, these choices illustrate that the sustainability of community-led risk reduction and adaptation depends not only on what happens within territories, but on the enabling conditions created at institutional level such as stable financing, reliable partnerships, cross-sectoral coordination and methodologies designed to outlast any single government cycle.





FINAL REFLECTIONS



The PCRA framework shows that disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation can be organized as collective territorial processes. When communities, technical teams and institutions work and learn together to assess risks, set priorities and implement solutions, risk reduction and climate action become more tangible, legitimate and sustainable.

In this sense, PCRA contribute to a broader shift in how urban resilience is approached: from fragmented interventions toward integrated, locally led and justice-oriented adaptation and disaster risk reduction embedded within territorial development and urban planning.

Around the world, cities, civil society networks, international organizations and research institutions are advancing participatory methodologies, toolboxes and policy frameworks that place communities at the centre of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. As climate risks intensify, exchanging experiences across cities and countries becomes increasingly important. Through this dialogue between local experimentation and global learning, the PCRA framework can continue to evolve and strengthen collective capacities for prevention, preparedness and adaptation in vulnerable urban areas.

Key messages for national and local governments:

- **Treat community plans as policy inputs, not just community outputs.**

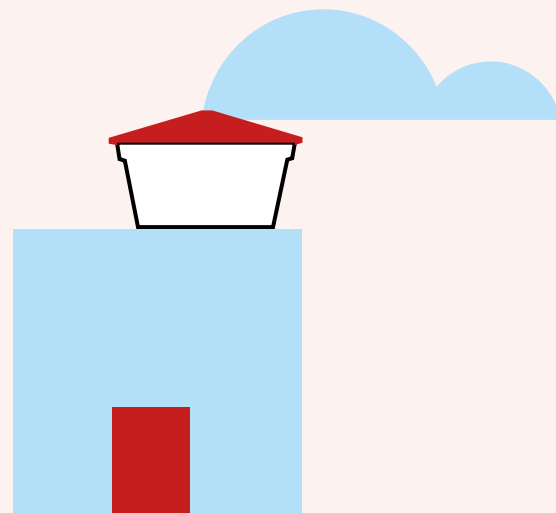
PCRA diagnostic and advocacy agendas contain territorially grounded evidence that municipal plans, investment programmes and disaster management strategies rarely capture and that can significantly strengthen public decision-making when systematically incorporated.

- **Invest in the governance structures PCRA leave behind.**

Territorial adaptation units and trained territorial agents are durable public assets. Recognizing and resourcing them beyond individual project cycles is what transforms a community plan into lasting risk governance capacity.

- **Connect PCRA to cross-sectoral agendas.**

The full potential of community-led risk reduction and climate change adaptation is realized when housing, sanitation, land regularization, environmental protection and social assistance are coordinated around shared territorial diagnostics rather than operating in parallel.



- **Fund anticipatory action alongside disaster response.**

The low-complexity measures identified through PCRA processes (e.g. drainage improvements, slope stabilization, early warning systems) deliver the greatest cost-benefit ratios when implemented before extreme events occur.

- **Ensure long-term continuity.**

Climate change adaptation requires reliable public and institutional support that extends beyond political cycles and short-term projects. This includes securing stable financing, whether public, international or private, and ensuring communities are included in the governance schemes and decision-making processes that shape risk reduction and adaptation investments.

Key messages for community organizations and technical advisory teams:

- **The territorial analysis is the foundation – invest in its quality.**

Participatory risk mapping delivers its full value when it builds on existing data and community knowledge while systematically filling gaps left by previous assessments. The depth and care invested in the diagnostic phase determines the quality of everything that follows.

- **Technical expertise should sharpen community analysis, not substitute it.**

The role of technical teams is to help communities ask better questions about their own territory, identify warning signs and structural causes, and translate findings into actionable proposals, working alongside residents rather than on their behalf.

- **Design for legacy from the start.** The NUTAC, the popular summary, the advocacy plan and the trained territorial agents are not outputs to be delivered

at the end. They are built progressively throughout the process and should be planned for from the outset.

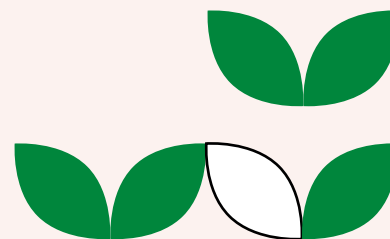
- **Be intentional about inclusion as a methodological choice.**

Gender, age, disability and social marginalization shape who is most exposed and vulnerable to hazards, whose knowledge is most valuable to the territorial analysis and whose participation most needs to be actively enabled. Inclusion must be addressed both in how the process is designed and in what the assessment captures.

- **Document and communicate what works and why.** Systematic documentation and communication of process decisions, community responses and implementation outcomes strengthen the methodology, support advocacy and contribute to a growing body of practice that benefits all who come after.



Key messages for territorial agents in training:



- **Contextualize and enrich co-produced knowledge.** You bring an understanding of everyday dynamics, social relationships and local history that technical teams cannot replicate. This is not about privileging one form of knowledge over another, but about ensuring that technical findings are interpreted in light of territorial realities.
- **Your role is to connect, translate and sustain.** Between community members and technical teams, between the PCRA process and public institutions, between the plan as a document and the plan as a living practice – you are the bridge that keeps all of this working. This includes mobilizing inclusive participation from the outset, ensuring that the diversity of the territory is reflected in who takes part and whose knowledge shapes the process.
- **Strengthen collective organization and preparedness.** Use community meetings and other participatory spaces to coordinate risk monitoring, maintain early warning systems and promote collective understanding and responses to emerging risks.
- **Ensure that community priorities remain visible within planning and investment processes.** Understanding municipal planning cycles, budget processes and the institutional entry points available in your context is what turns community priorities into investment.
- **Record and share what you learn.** Contribute to documenting process decisions, community responses and implemented actions, and share results widely so that achievements are visible and knowledge is not lost within or beyond your territory.
- **The PCRA process is ongoing.** Risks evolve, communities change and new vulnerabilities emerge. Keep it alive through the territorial adaptation unit and other local structures. Your role continues as long as the territory faces risks and injustices.

The PCRA framework is a methodological approach, not a finalized model. Rooted in diverse real-world experiences, it will continue to evolve as new territories adapt, test and innovate. This publication invites governments, practitioners, researchers and community organizations to build upon the principles presented here and tailor them to their own contexts.

Across regions, urban areas and their surrounding territories face similar challenges: fragmented institutions, limited territorial data and communities already navigating overlapping risks. PCRA offer one pathway to connect these realities through participatory, territorially grounded and policy-relevant processes. Future adaptations will introduce new tools, institutional arrangements and forms of collaboration. Each experience contributes to a growing body of practice aimed at building more inclusive, democratic and effective responses to climate-related risks.

Stakeholders interested in developing PCRA-inspired processes are encouraged to document innovations, share lessons and contribute to the collective advancement of locally led climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.



Box 4. Adapting the PCRA approach: Checklist for practitioners

The PCRA framework is flexible but several core elements must be present in any adaptation: community leadership and agency, multi-risk and multi-scalar analysis, co-production of technical and local knowledge, integration of tactical, anticipatory and structural actions, articulation with public policy and the creation of a durable

organizational legacy within the territory. Other aspects, including spatial scale, institutional coordination, funding arrangements or timeline should be adapted to local conditions. The following questions are intended as a practical checklist for governments, technical teams and community organizations designing a PCRA-inspired process.

PART A – DESIGN QUESTIONS

To be discussed and agreed before the process begins. These questions do not have fixed answers. They require deliberate choices that should be documented and revisited as the process unfolds.

- Who leads the process (community, government, non-government organization or a shared arrangement) and how is this agreed?
- At what spatial scale is the process most effective given available resources and territorial complexity?
- What data already exists, including municipal risk maps, census data, prior assessments, and what spatial, temporal or other gaps need to be filled?
- How will technical data and local knowledge be systematically combined?
- How will community safety, inclusion and autonomy be protected throughout?
- How will risk information and plan outputs be communicated accessibly to the wider community?
- What coordination mechanisms will bridge national policy frameworks and local implementation?
- What structures will guarantee the long-term legacy of the process beyond the initial project cycle?



PART B - PROCESS CHECKPOINTS

To be verified at each stage of implementation.

1. Territorial analysis as a collective process

- ☐ Have territories been selected based on **identifiable risk situations**, considering both rapid-onset and slow-onset hazards?
- ☐ Does the **territorial delimitation** reflect how residents themselves define their community, rather than administrative boundaries alone?
- ☐ Are **minimum conditions for engagement** in place, including community trust and willingness to participate?
- ☐ Does the diagnostic process operate at **fine spatial resolution**, capturing differentiated vulnerabilities at household or street level?
- ☐ Are structured methodologies in place to **systematically combine technical data and local knowledge** (e.g., participatory workshops, transect walks)?
- ☐ Does the analysis map community **capacities and creative potential** alongside vulnerabilities?
- ☐ Are multiple **interconnected hazards, vulnerabilities and exposures** addressed across different timescales?

2. Territorial agents, governance and sustainability

- ☐ Does the **selection of territorial agents** reflect the diversity of the territory in terms of gender, age, risk area and social background?
- ☐ Are **capacity-building** processes bidirectional, strengthening both community and technical team capacities?
- ☐ Are there multiple **participation spaces** operating at different intensities (e.g. working meetings, thematic workshops, general assemblies)?
- ☐ Is **inclusion** actively constructed, with additional mobilization efforts where participation is uneven?
- ☐ Are **durable territorial structures**, such as a territorial adaptation unit, being built progressively throughout the process?



3. From diagnosis to action

- ☐ Does the process include **early tactical actions** that generate visible improvements and build community trust?
- ☐ Have **community-based monitoring systems** been established, combining technical indicators with locally recognized warning signs, and articulated with official meteorological and civil protection systems where available?
- ☐ Have **emergency procedures** been defined, including identification of vulnerable households, safe routes, temporary shelters and other solidarity-based support mechanisms?
- ☐ Does the action portfolio combine **structural and non-structural measures**?
- ☐ Have **proposed measures** been collectively classified by complexity, cost, time horizon and required institutional articulation?

4. Legacy and transformation

- ☐ Has a **Local Advocacy Plan** been formulated and communicated, translating community priorities into a technically grounded agenda for negotiation with authorities?
- ☐ Are PCRA **outputs connected** to municipal development plans, climate adaptation strategies and investment programmes?
- ☐ Have **entry points** into relevant policy and funding cycles been identified?
- ☐ Have **monitoring, evaluation and learning** mechanisms been defined and integrated into the territorial adaptation unit to track the effectiveness of implemented actions and inform revisions of the plan?





Alphabet chart with letters and corresponding words: S (SABETE), Tt (TELEFONE), Uu (UVA), Vv (VACA), Ww (WAPLE), Xx (XICARA), Yy (YOGA), Zz (ZEBRA).

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CEP: 02190-214

PCRA Baracela

SUPPORTING MATERIALS



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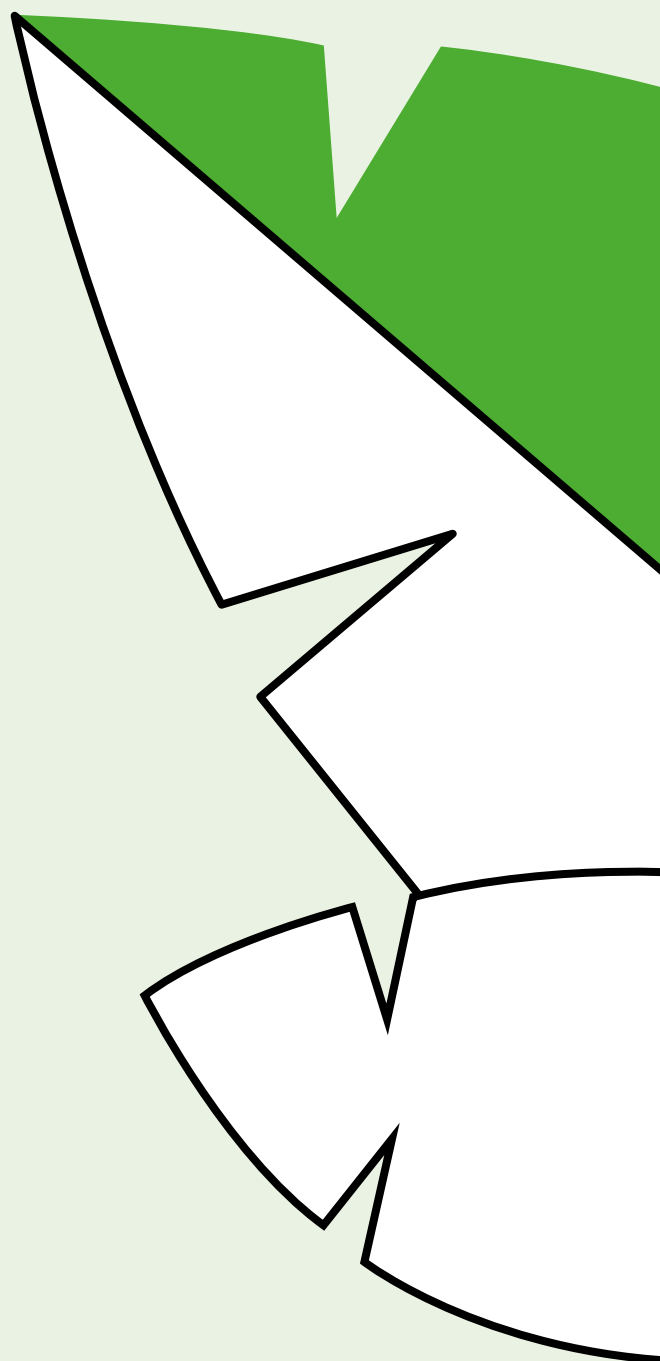
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Further Resources

This publication draws on and adapts the following resources. Readers seeking detailed procedural guidance, complementary methodological frameworks and tested tools are encouraged to consult them directly.



Guia para Planos Comunitários de Redução de Riscos e Adaptação Climática

Secretaria Nacional de Periferias /
Ministério das Cidades, 2025

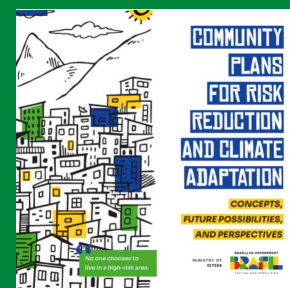
The original Portuguese-language implementation guide that this publication draws on and adapts. It provides detailed procedural guidance, module-by-module tools and context-specific materials for policymakers, practitioners and communities working in Brazil.



Community Plans for Risk Reduction and Climate Adaptation: Concepts, Future Possibilities, and Perspectives

Secretaria Nacional de Periferias /
Ministério das Cidades, 2024

An introduction to the concepts, potential and policy perspectives of Community Plans for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation (PCRA). Available in Portuguese, English and Spanish.





Weaving Urban Futures

UNU-EHS /
Transformative Urban
Coalitions (TUC), 2026



A guidebook for practitioners, local governments and community organizations seeking to build more just and climate-resilient cities. Drawing on six years of experience across five Latin American cities, it offers a conceptual framework and five-step methodology for building place-based coalitions, developing shared territorial understanding and co-designing strategies for urban transformation.

Tools to Weave Urban Futures

UNU-EHS / Transformative
Urban Coalitions (TUC), 2025



A practical companion to the Weaving Urban Futures guidebook, bringing together the participatory methods and activities developed and tested through the TUC Urban Labs. The tools are organized around the five steps of the guidebook and designed to be adapted to different contexts and scales.









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