A cellphone can provide a lifeline during an emergency, but it can also help build resilience, according to findings by two Tulane University associate research professors.

Principal investigator Nathan Morrow from Tulane Law School’s Payson Graduate Program in Global Development and Nancy Mock from the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine received three grants to serve as a learning partner for a project that explores resilience building in Somalia.

That country has had an ongoing drought and famine and intermittent conflicts and security issues
over the past 25 years. Not much was known about how people in such conditions foster resilience.

“The greatest learning is how fast savings can add up from savings groups even in difficult times. Social pressure to save money really helps people build assets. Empowerment and some resources from savings together can make real change in communities and build their resilience,” Morrow said.

The project was a finalist in USAID’s CLA Case Competition. USAid is now using Morrow’s model across Somalia. (Listen to USAID’s podcast.)

“These is very much seen as a leader in international resilience-building project learning,” Morrow added.

The project was a cooperative agreement between the U.S. State Department, the Office of Food for Peace and the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. Tulane’s partners were CARE, World Vision International and Catholic Relief Services.

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