

A locally led drone response becomes a blueprint for future disasters

Hurricane Melissa Drone Response in Jamaica



808,000

People impacted by the project, directly and indirectly

320

Communities mapped across 6 affected parishes

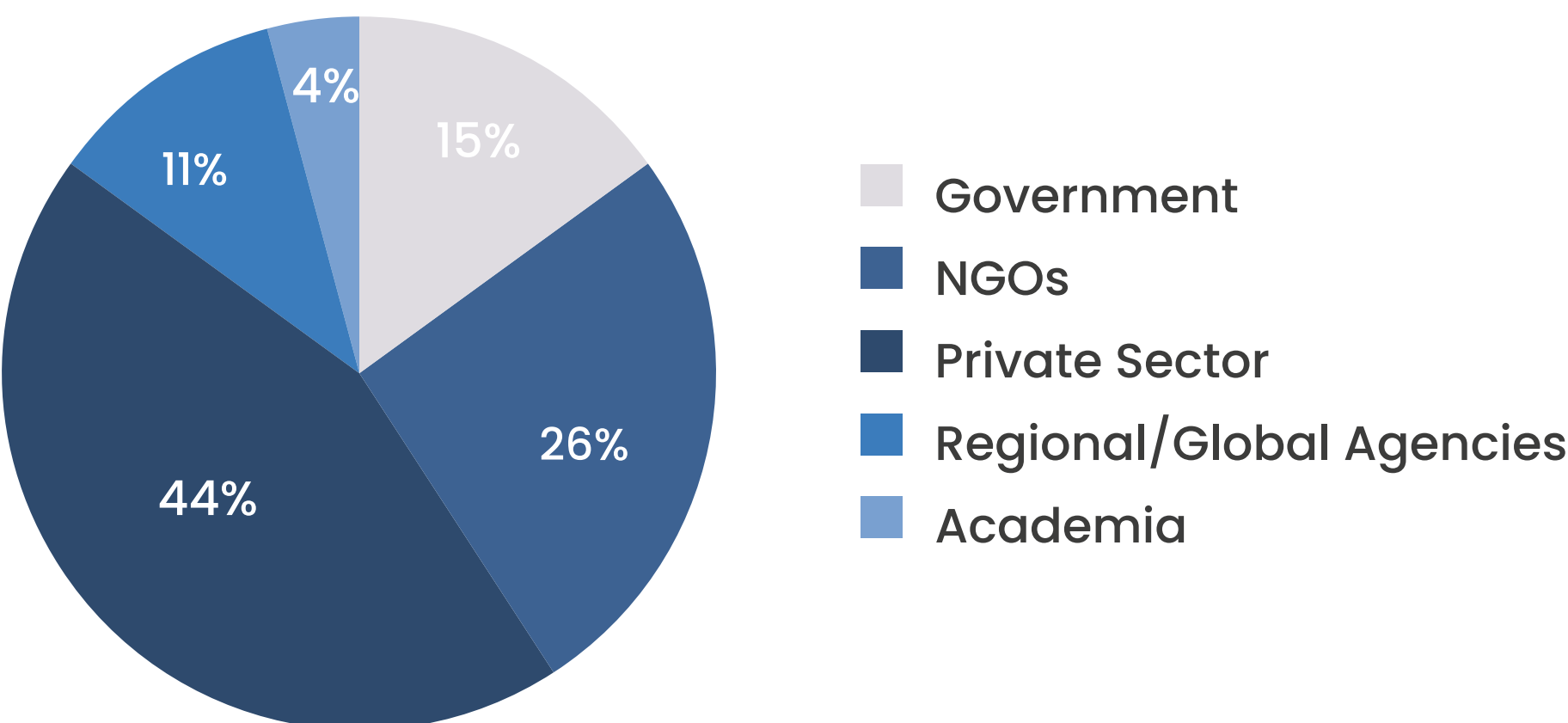
1200+

km² of priority areas covered

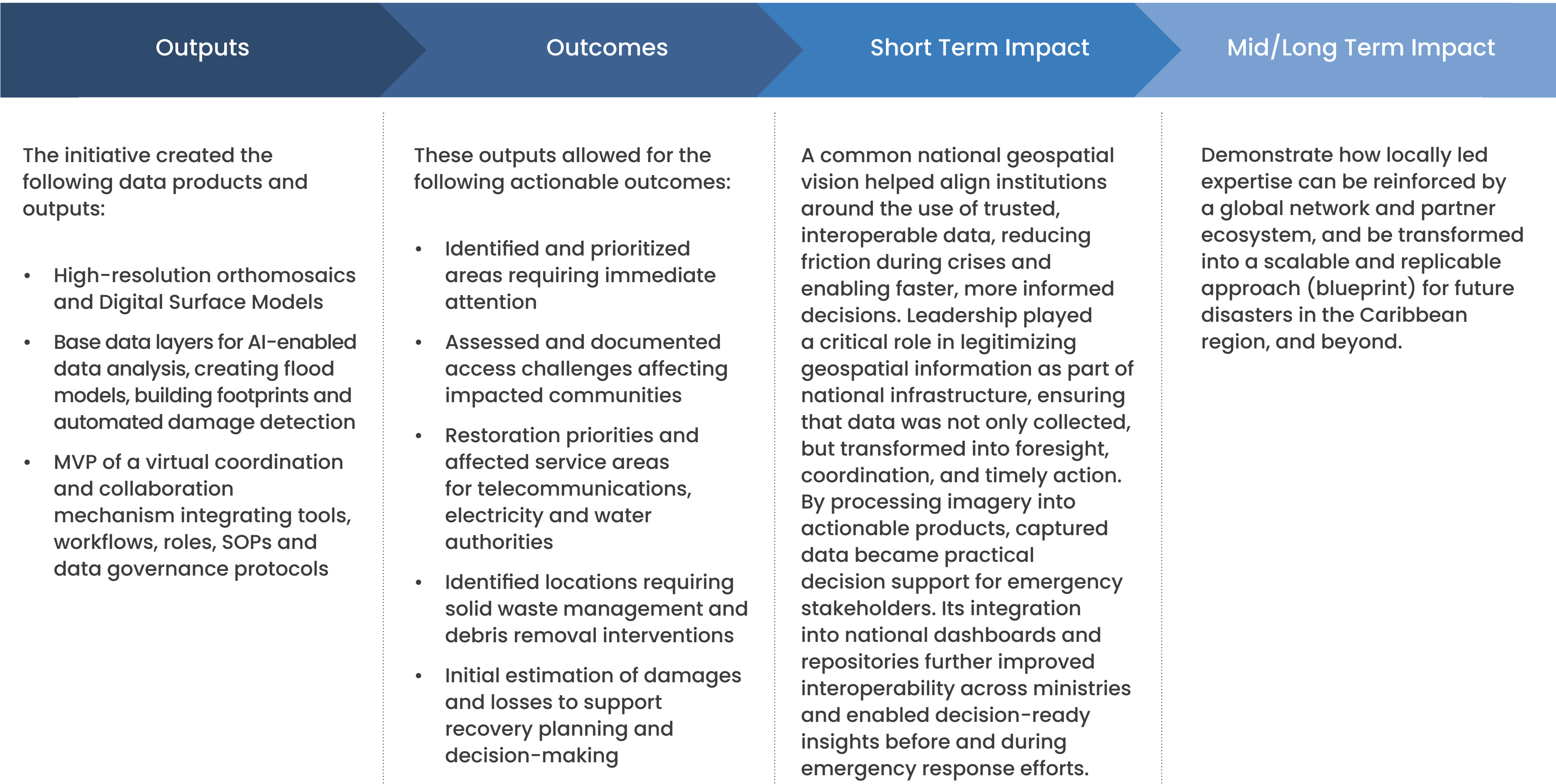
100,000+

drone images captured

Collaboration in action: 27 local, regional and global organizations contributed to the response, all coordinated through the virtual coordination and collaboration mechanism created within 48 hours by Jamaica Flying Labs, WeRobotics, Esri and NERGIST.



In addition, 26 individual local and international drone pilots joined the response for the drone data acquisition.



What collaboration helped unlock

Local leadership proved it can scale

When Hurricane Melissa changed the project’s direction, Jamaica Flying Labs was able to move from a community pilot to supporting a coordinated national response. Global partners expanded the capacity available, but the response remained grounded in local leadership, relationships, and knowledge of the country.

A crisis became a reusable capability

The project did more than respond to one emergency. The collaborative experience was translated into a Blueprint that captured the partnerships, roles, workflows, and infrastructure needed for locally led drone responses. The MVP version of this Blueprint can now evolve into a more solid version that can strengthen future emergencies in Jamaica and be replicated across the Caribbean and beyond.

The core learning: preparedness begins before a disaster

The experience showed that access to drones and technology is not enough. Trusted relationships, clear responsibilities, prepared workflows, and systems capable of handling large volumes of data determines whether information can reach decision-makers when it matters.

“ This was the first time a local nonprofit partnered with Jamaican government agencies to coordinate the country’s national drone-mapping disaster response.

– Dr. Valrie Grant, Managing Director, Jamaica Flying Labs ”

Discover the details:

- The Power of Collaboration: [Story](#) and [Video](#)
- Collaborative [Storymap](#)
- Lessons Learned: [Story](#) and [Video](#)
- Starting out the response: [Story](#) and [Video](#)
- [Newsroom Story](#) published by Esri
- Drones for Disaster Response [Solution Space](#)
- Winner of the 2026 Esri [Special Achievement in GIS \(SAG\) Award](#)

