

strategies calculated to reduce their vulnerability and enable them to respond promptly to disasters: firstly, by using their own resources: and, secondly, by drawing upon international aid to complement and enhance action at the local level

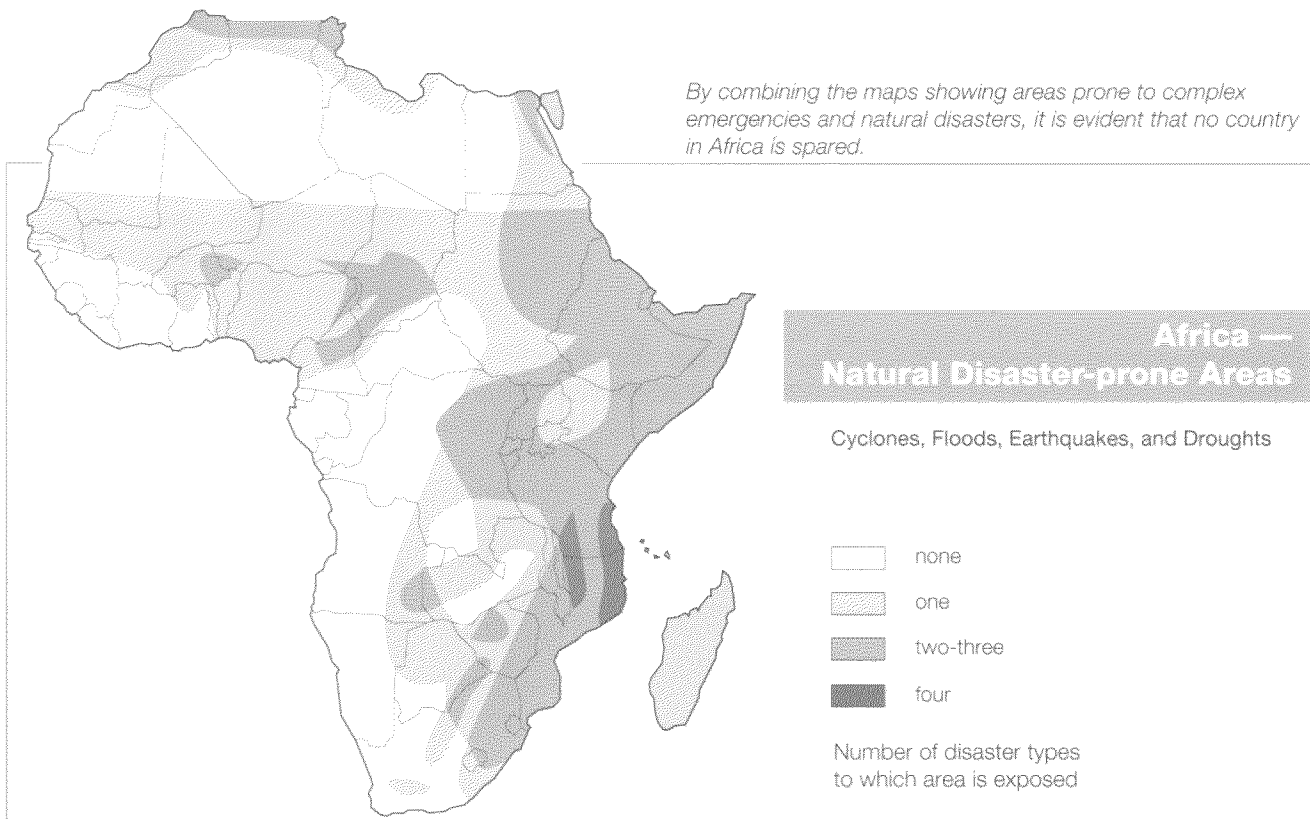
Preparation for major disasters, as an integral part of socioeconomic development, must be based on collaboration between the public sector, NGOs and other contributors to humanitarian action. Roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined, and appropriate training and public education is needed to ensure that adequately qualified and experienced personnel are available.

As regards NGOs, steps should be taken to promote their creation and their involvement during normal times, so that they can develop their expertise and strategies well in advance of crises and accordingly be able to do what is expected of them

in an emergency. Their base within the communities at risk, their operational flexibility and their mobility make them a formidable tool for providing relief, particularly in the social domain.

Raising these questions and attempting to answer them leads to a single and obvious conclusion. Even the most general line of enquiry confirms the impression that the prevention and management of disasters in Africa are left entirely to external intervention. Why should this be?

Conditioned by their culture, Africans readily come to the protection of their brothers. Their extended family system imposes the duty of support and relief to those in trouble in the absence of any system of social security. But they lack the motivation and mobilization for humanitarian assistance. They do not have a taste for risk or enlightened adventure. Not many Africans will be found tackling deserts, solo navigation or



mountain peaks. Their culture inhibits responding to complex or exorbitantly testing natural phenomena. They are led to attach great importance to the supernatural. It would be tantamount to provocation of the gods to confront or seek forcefully to control natural events. It is better to submit to the inevitability of fate.

But new attitudes and strategies have now become possible with the advances in scientific and technical expertise gained in the field of emergencies. This long desired change that is so vital and necessary for today should be based essentially on two fundamental premises:

- The incorporation of disaster prevention and reduction into the socioeconomic plans of communities, adopting the approach of community involvement in order to

promote cultural change, as well as the active participation of all components of society, including nongovernmental organizations and associations;

- The establishment of human resource development strategies that will create the expertise needed to implement disaster management programmes at local, national and continental levels.

To this end, the creation of technical and scientific reference centres throughout the continent is a step that merits priority support from the countries of Africa, from regional and international agencies and from the international community in general. ■

Recommendations / NGO_s, Public Sector

Emergency Management in Africa

- 1- Raise awareness and encourage African leaders to assume emergency management responsibilities.
- 2- Encourage the creation of NGOs for sustainable, long-term action.
- 3- Integrate disaster prevention in development planning.
- 4- Develop strategies to build local expertise.
- 5- Establish training programmes for emergency management.
- 6- Create scientific and technical centres of reference for emergency management in Africa.