

Zimbabwe



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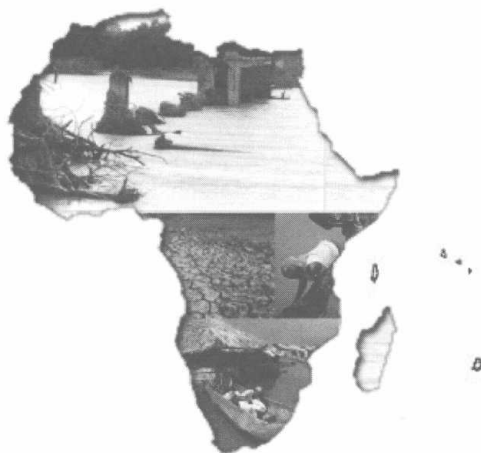
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SYMPOSIUM NOTES



**Southern African Research
and Documentation Centre**

**Strengthening Regional Capacity in
Disaster Management**



Lessons Learned

INTRODUCTION

Southern Africa Research And Documentation Centre (SARDC) is an independent regional information resource centre which seeks to enhance the effectiveness of key development processes in the region through the collection, production and dissemination of information, and enabling the capacity to generate and use information. There is a wealth of information about how disasters have been handled in the past and SARDC has collected such literature and compiled a Disaster Management Bibliographic Database. The World Bank Disaster Risk Reduction project was undertaken to in an effort to consolidate initial effort.

This document presents the context within which disasters occur in the African region as well as the southern Africa sub-region. It presents the regional and sub-regional policy frameworks as they relate to disaster management. The document seeks to highlight the lessons learned and makes recommendations based on experiences. This report suggests areas for further intervention based on experiences in Africa rather than import ideas.

BACKGROUND TO DISASTER RISK IN AFRICA

The African continent is vulnerable to a wide range of natural and other disasters which have adverse effects on societies, national economies and development objectives, as well as on critical human and material resources. In this context, communities at risk across Africa find themselves even more vulnerable because of several aggravating factors, including poverty, environmental degradation, inadequate exchange of data and information among countries and organizations, and inadequate co-ordination of information flow from various levels.

Africa faces serious humanitarian crises with severe long-term consequences affecting all regions. Erratic rainfall, floods, cyclones, poverty, unsustainable debt, failing agricultural policies, household vulnerability, unfair international trade regimes, civil conflicts and internal and cross-border displacement of people have all contributed to the current situation. The HIV and AIDS pandemic has exacerbated the situation.

The continent is prone to various recurring climatic events, including drought, floods, storms, cyclones and resultant impacts on health, education and infrastructure. Some of these need not be human disasters if appropriate information is available for planning and preparation. Events such as cyclones in Madagascar and Mozambique, floods across eastern and southern Africa, and droughts in the horn of Africa and the Sahel underline the vulnerability of communities across Africa and the need for long term risk reduction activities including early warning, contingency planning, information sharing and technology transfer as well as disaster preparedness and response systems.

Apart from their immediate consequences on the environment, disasters have long term impacts on society and economic advancements which in many cases provoke serious setbacks in national development programmes. Poverty contributes significantly to the vulnerability of communities at risk, and is also made worse by the effects of disasters.

A well-designed system for disaster management is crucial to Africa and to the success of its development plan, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). This is recognized among the key responsibilities assigned to the new Commission of the African Union in its Statutes. The continent lacks a central institution responsible for capacity

building in disaster risk management, although there are a wide network of organizations involved in disaster management initiatives. There is lack of coordination of activities and dissemination of information and best practices among organizations involved in disaster management work, and yet information is an essential tool in disaster management.

Cooperation among African countries in the domain of disaster prevention and risk reduction can be strengthened by adopting regional, sub-regional and national mechanisms to improve the exchange of information, sharing of experiences and knowledge, and technology transfer.

Disaster reduction is an essential element of regional and government policy, and must be included in development plans and strategies at all levels due to its multi-disciplinary and inter-sectoral nature. This requires information access and sensitization work about the impact of disasters and disaster reduction on the results and achievements of all sectors.

Further work on disaster management should review the continent's response to crises, prospects for the rainfall season as it may affect the food security situation, as well as the continent's general state of preparedness to face any other potential disasters from a multi-sectoral perspective. Such efforts in turn, enhance sustainable use of natural resources and environmental protection, and promote poverty reduction and sound governance practices in Africa.

A demographic analysis of worst affected communities would reveal that women and children, being the most vulnerable in African society, bear the greatest burden, and their needs must be an essential ingredient in disaster management and reduction planning. This should be supported by an appropriate information base.

Furthermore, lack of information about the multi-sectoral impact leads among other things to short-sighted policies and misdirected media coverage which in turn leads to a vicious cycle of lack of appropriate information and policies, and fear.

Due to the immediate humanitarian needs associated with disasters in Africa, a wide range of organizations get involved, especially at the national level, and efforts have inadvertently been duplicated. Similarly, a lot of conflicting information, including statistics, have been published with varying intentions and meaning. All these issues point to the need for a coordinated regional network of organizations

that are involved in the generation, analysis and dissemination of information on disaster management, using parameters that have relevance to the region. Capacities need to be built, strengthened and maintained for this purpose, especially at sub-regional level.

One of the major problems encountered in disaster mitigation world-wide is lack of coordinated information flow and lack of access to the right kind of information at the right time, by those who can use it, for instance in policy planning. Harmonized information, benchmarks and indicators used by NGOs, media, parliamentarians, governments and the private sector would help stakeholders involved in the same area to work towards common solutions, common policies and ultimately common objectives.

There is a need to

- better reflect and incorporate national perspectives and priorities in sub-regional international policy settings,
- strengthen institutional capacities of sub-regional organizations to carry out policy relevant integrated assessments on disaster management;
- strengthen sub-regional institutional capacities for the generation and dissemination of a wide range of response-related products to support the interpretation and comprehensive assessment of disaster management at national and sub-regional levels;
- work in partnerships at all levels to achieve this.

Disaster Management and the African Regional Development Context

NEPAD is a pledge by African leaders, based on a common vision and a shared conviction, that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development. NEPAD, as an agreed agenda of the African Union (AU), is anchored on the determination of Africans to extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and is rooted in the belief that a historic opportunity exists for a sustained effort to advance human development and poverty eradication.

What stands in the way of poverty and prosperity, and creates challenges for the NEPAD initiative, is the fact that the African continent is prone to disasters,

natural and human-made. This can negatively impact on the expected economic growth, setting back education and health goals, and especially the planned advances through the development of infrastructure. Three cross-cutting, multi-sectoral challenges must be confronted and overcome if the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) contained in the NEPAD strategy are to be met. These are the challenges of conflict, of HIV/AIDS and of disaster management.

This project document addresses the challenges of disaster reduction through information management and access.

The SADC Sub-Regional Context

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) recently came up with a long term visioning document the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP). The RISDP, whose core focus is on poverty reduction, is a regional integration and development framework setting the priorities, policies and strategies for achieving the long-term goals of SADC. It is intended to guide member states, SADC institutions, regional stakeholders and international cooperating partners in the process of deepening integration to turn the community's vision into a reality.

In line with commitments made by member states under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and NEPAD, the RISDP identifies the following priority intervention areas for sectoral cooperation and integration.

- Trade, economic liberalization and development;
- Infrastructure support for regional integration and poverty eradication;
- Sustainable food security; and
- Human and social development.

The SADC Policy Framework for Health provides a comprehensive coverage of all the key aspects of health and health services delivery in the region and proposes policies, strategies and priorities in areas such as health research and surveillance; health information system; health promotion and education; HIV and AIDS and disaster management.

Article 25 of the SADC's Health protocol proposes that member states shall

- a) co-operate and assist each other in the co-ordination and management of disaster and emergency situations;

- b) collaborate and facilitate regional efforts in developing awareness, risk reduction, preparedness and management plans for natural and man-made disasters; and
- c) develop mechanisms for co-operation and assistance with emergency services.

Southern Africa is a region prone to various disasters, the commonest of which are drought, floods, storms, cyclones and epidemics. In the past the region has been subject to high levels of both internal and cross-border displacements of people, mainly as a result of conflicts in Angola, The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mozambique, and former apartheid South Africa.

There is a wealth of information about how disasters have been handled in the past and SADC has collected such literature and compiled a Disaster Management Bibliographic Database.

A well-designed system for disaster management is crucial for disaster prone southern Africa. The sub-region lacks a central institution responsible for disaster risk management capacity-building, although there is a wide network of organizations involved in disaster management initiatives. There is lack of coordination of activities and dissemination of information among organizations involved in disaster management work.

Questions are being raised whether the disaster management strategies being used by governments and NGOs ought to be overhauled. Further work on disaster management should review the sub-regional response to the humanitarian crisis, and the prospects for the rainfall season as it may affect the food security situation, as well as the region's general state of preparedness to face any other potential disasters from a multi-sectoral perspective.

Such efforts should enhance sustainable use of natural resources and environmental protection, and promote poverty reduction and sound governance practices in the region.

Recommendations for the SADC Region

- Improvement of national and regional disaster preparedness & mitigation systems
- Setting up an early warning system for disaster management
- Coordination of activities amongst policy makers and organizations

- Dissemination of information amongst organizations involved in disaster management
- Establishment of a Central organization responsible for disaster risk management capacity building
- Support for the establishment of operational relationships among relief agencies, policy planners, governments, development agencies, academics and researchers
- Harmonization of national, sub-regional, inter-sectoral and institutional responses to disaster management

IMPACT OF DISASTERS ON DEVELOPMENT: SOME INSIGHTS

Droughts and floods are endemic to southern Africa, and often trigger serious hydrological imbalances, causing loss or damage to human life, crops, livestock and wildlife, infrastructure, a shortage of water for the people, as well as causing famine and disease. Drought exerts a severe impact on a wide range of environmental and economic activities.

As a result of drought during the 1994-1995 season, cereal harvests in southern Africa declined by 35 percent compared to the previous season, with maize harvests falling by 42% (SADC, 1996). During the 1991-2 drought, cereal production in Namibia dropped by 70 percent. Due to the massive crop failure the SADC sub-region spent about US\$2 billion on drought relief.

Over the last two decades, heavy floods have devastated parts of the SADC sub-region, resulting in massive damage to physical infrastructure, crops and livestock, loss of lives, and public health hazards due to water related diseases. In early 2000 and 2001, massive flooding and a cyclone caused severe damage with loss of life and property in Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The government of Mozambique reported that GDP grew by only 3 percent compared to 6 percent predicted before the floods. Agriculture production grew by 2 percent compared with 9 percent in 1999, and livestock production fell to 4.3 percent compared to the 21.3 percent in 1999.

Rainfall trends in southern Africa 1967 – 2003

1967-73	This six-year period was dry across the entire region. Some records show a severe drought in 1967.
1974-80	This period was relatively moist over much of southern Africa. In 1974 the mean annual rainfall was 100 percent above normal throughout the region.
1981-82	Drought in most parts of the southern Africa.
1982	Most of subtropical Africa experienced drought.
1983	A particular bad drought year for all parts of the continent
1984-85	Near normal seasons, but drought strains from the previous three years were still felt in most parts of the region.
1986-87	Drought conditions returned to the region
1988-90	Near normal season.
1991-92	Severe drought in southern Africa, excluding Namibia.
1993-94	Conditions improved.
1994-95	Many SADC countries were hit by the worst drought in living memory, surpassing effects of the 1991-92 drought in some parts of the region.
1995-96	Widespread rains in most parts of the SADC region prompted forecast of a bumper agricultural yields.
1996-97	Normal rainfall for most of the region.
1997-98	Normal rainfall throughout the region including the northeast, although impacts of the El Nino were significant.
1999-2000	Cyclone Eline hit the region and widespread floods devastated large parts of the Limpopo basin (southern and central Mozambique, south-eastern parts of Zimbabwe, parts of South Africa and Botswana)
2002-03	Significant drought in the SADC region, particularly from Zimbabwe northwards

Sources: Hirji et al 2002, Division of Water Environment and Forestry Technology CSIR, Final Report: Protection and Strategic Uses of Groundwater Resources in Drought Prone Areas of the SADC Region, Environmentek CSIR, Pretoria, 2003.