



Evolution of a Disaster Risk Management System: A Case Study from Mozambique

Throughout the 1980s, Mozambique's economy and infrastructure was decimated by civil war. The signing of a peace accord in 1992 and the resulting political stability facilitated a process of recovery and reconstruction. However, Mozambique is prone to a range of natural disasters, such as cyclones, drought, floods, epidemics, pest infestations and landslides occurring regularly. The country has lost over one million lives due to war and disasters, which affected over six million people over the last two decades. The devastating floods of 2000 resulted in the loss of about 800 lives and the damage was estimated at over USD 450 million. Like in many other countries, poverty in Mozambique is considered the key source of vulnerability and exposure to disaster risk.

Positive Impacts

Mozambique has had a comparatively long experience with managing disasters, and the evolution of disaster management structures in Mozambique has been praised as a good practice. As early as 1981, Department for the Prevention and Combating of National Calamities was established with the objective of promoting early warning and mitigation activities. In the 1990s, a variety of mitigation measures were instituted. UNDP supported this transition from emergency response to a more comprehensive and integrated disaster risk management approach through the establishment of the National Institute for Disaster Management (INGC).

The INGC has the role to coordinate all phases of disaster risk management, even though its functioning has been constrained to some extent by the fact that disaster management legislation is still pending for approval. Also established were an inter-ministerial council for coordinating disaster management bringing together about 15 ministers; and a multi-sector technical committee for Disaster Management chaired by the National Director,

ensuring a coordination and collaboration in multi-sector planning of mitigation and response activities.

Also Mozambique's practice with annual contingency planning has become a model in the SADC region, hosting numerous missions from other countries in the continent to learn from its experience. The National Contingency Plan is a yearly, multi-sector and multi-level plan carried out in a participatory and consultative manner. The process begins at the sub-regional level with the establishment of a consensus on climate outlook for the coming seasons. Early warning information is then gathered from communities, districts and provinces with technical support from UNDP, other UN agencies and NGOs, and finally processed at the national level by the INGC. The analysis feeds into the National Contingency Plan which is carried out every year beginning of October simultaneously by different sectors and affected districts and provinces.

Lessons Learned

The Mozambique case shows that the creation of comprehensive disaster risk management structures requires time and experience and may sometimes follow an almost 'evolutionary path' from a focus on response to a more pro-active risk reduction oriented approach. The example also illustrates the need for basic stability in order to enable governments to move out of the 'emergency mode'.

Even though there is high commitment within government towards the democratization process and decentralization of decision making to local authorities, progress with decentralization of disaster management functions has been slow. Provinces lack resources and technical capacity; communication between the centre and provinces needs strengthening; and structures at the district and community level remain relatively under developed. Also the situation at the central level requires further investments in human resource

capacities and financial resources to enable implementation of plans and policies already in place.

The national execution modality of UNDP has been the appropriate framework for this capacity building programme.

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