



SOUTH AFRICA

Building Capacity of the National Disaster Management Authority

Disaster Context

Although South Africa is generally not regarded as a country at high risk to disasters, it is beset by many risks and hazards both natural and human-made. The majority of South Africa's population is living in fragile and vulnerable conditions as a result of high levels of poverty, low standards of living, high levels of unemployment, lack of access to resources, unequal patterns of asset ownership and distribution, environmental degradation, and slow economic growth.

The institutional arrangements and capacities to respond to these disasters were extremely limited in the past, and are still minimal in underdeveloped parts of the country. Until recently, disaster management in South Africa was purely a reactive response system of a traditional civil protection structure that was geared towards protecting the white establishment and its economic systems. The disparities within South Africa's society led to the majority of its population being denied access to national resources that would make them better prepared for disasters.

Project Title

Building Capacity of the National Disaster Management Authority for South Africa

Sectors

- Public awareness, training, and sensitisation
- Policy development
- Disaster preparedness and mitigation
- Institutional strengthening

Funding

UNDP contributed \$250,000 from TRAC 1.1.1 funds. The Government of South Africa made contributions in-kind.

Partners

- Department of Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development
- Disaster Management Association of Southern Africa
- Technikon Southern Africa
- Cranfield Disaster Management Centre, UK

Programme Activities

After the historic elections of 1994, ushering in the first truly representative democracy in South Africa's history, the government applied for and received recipient status within UNDP. As a result of consultations with the government, the first Country Cooperation Framework for South Africa was agreed upon, which covered 1997-2001. It was during this process that UNDP's support in the area of disaster management was identified as a priority.

Between 1997 and 1998 the following activities were undertaken:

- National policy development
- Establishment of a National Disaster Management Centre; business plan and a proposal were prepared and submitted to Parliament for approval
- Training and capacity-building; one-day provincial workshops were held in eight of the nine provinces to raise awareness and sensitise government officials to the new developing disaster management paradigms; training needs were also identified, as well as provincial focal points
- A four-week comprehensive training course was implemented for 29 government officials and some NGO and academic institutions; the course contents included hazard, risk and vulnerability assessment, disaster mitigation, disaster preparedness, disaster response, linkages between

disasters and development, site management, technological hazards and training of trainers; South African regional and international case studies were included as part of the training material

- A community awareness and preparedness programme was launched in October 1998 in all nine provinces as a fire risk reduction strategy.