



SWAZILAND

Building Capacity of the National Disaster Task Force

Disaster Context

Swaziland is prone to a range of natural and man-made disasters that have occurred sporadically since the 1980s. The most notable disasters in recent years have been a cholera outbreak in 1982, Cyclone Domonia in 1984, the 1992-96 drought, a foot-and-mouth outbreak and torrential rains in 2000. The rate of HIV/AIDS infection has reached an alarming level and has only recently begun to receive adequate attention from the government. The compound effects of HIV/AIDS, poverty and governance during the most recent regional drought event in 2002/2003 have caused yet another severe food crisis. With HIV/AIDS infections having reached alarming levels, the disease is now looked upon as a disaster in its own right.

A majority of Swaziland's rural population are at high risk and are extremely vulnerable to most of the disasters listed above. Food insecurity, high population growth rate, and declining employment opportunities will further increase vulnerability. Pressure will also increase on the use of available land and natural resources because of negative effects on the environment.

Until 1992, Swaziland had dealt with individual disasters on an ad-hoc basis. A National Disaster Task Force (NDTF) was then set up in response to the severe drought that affected the entire Southern African region during this period. It was staffed by a small secretariat under the coordination of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

There was no institutional mechanism in place to administer the relief programme operation. As a result, the government had to rely heavily on NGOs to distribute relief materials to the affected communities.

Project Title

- Sustainable Disaster Management Structures and Systems
- Small Grants Recovery Activities

Sectors

- Policy development
- Public awareness and sensitisation of policy makers
- Training and capacity-building of the NDTF Secretariat
- Disaster preparedness and mitigation
- Recovery

Funding

- UNDP contributed an initial \$ 165,000 to this activity, and provided additional \$ 78,000 from TRAC 1.1.3 to strengthen government's ability to respond to the current food crisis. In response to the 2002/2003 food crisis, UNDP provided \$ 80,000 for small-scale recovery initiatives.
- The Government of Swaziland made in-kind contributions.

Partners

- Government of Swaziland

Programme Activities

For the project "Sustainable Disaster Management Structures and Systems", UNDP supported the following activities:

Culminating from discussions between UNDP and the Government of Swaziland, the first Country Cooperation Framework for Swaziland was agreed upon. It covered the period 1997-1999 and formed the basis of cooperation between the two partners. Disaster management was identified during this process as one of the priority areas for Swaziland.

Two disaster management workshops were held at a national level for Members of Parliament to raise the legislature's awareness of disaster prevention and

mitigation. The government formulated and approved a National Disaster Management Policy Framework with UNDP support. The objective of this policy is to set the requirements for the institutionalization of disaster management in Swaziland.

Approval of the policy paved the way for the concurrent formulation of the National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP) and the Legislation Bill.

The objectives of the NDMP are to:

- Outline measures to reduce vulnerability to disasters
- Build capacity at national, regional, and community levels to withstand the impact of disasters
- Outline disaster management structures and their respective responsibilities;
- Outline structures for dealing with disaster emergency
- Outline requirements for education, training, public awareness, and other capacity-building programmes

The Legislation Bill provides a framework for allowing regulations and directives to spell out the roles of the respective players within the Government, NGOs, and other institutions. Both the Bill and the NDMP were due to be tabled in Parliament before the end of 2001. UNDP also helped develop a Contingency Plan for Floods that aims to provide timely relief to affected communities and groups, thus minimizing the impact of a disaster, particularly in the case of floods. UNDP has also assisted the government with strengthening capacity of the national focal point and the NDTF Chairman by sending them to attend training courses and various conferences. The main constraint has been the lack of human resources within the Disaster Task Force Secretariat.

UNDP Country Offices as part of UNDP's "Southern Africa Food Crisis Sustainable Recovery Preparatory Assistance" implemented the small grants recovery initiatives.