Enhancing National and Local Capacity in Disaster Risk Reduction in Malawi

**Background**

Malawians, particularly the poor, are vulnerable to the impact of natural hazards, such as droughts and floods. Although the likely impacts of climate change cannot yet be specified, forecasts for Southern Africa indicate that it is likely to be affected by extreme weather events in the future. Malawi's dependence on natural resources, the sensitivity of maize to rising temperatures and erratic rainfall, makes the country particularly vulnerable. These factors underline the need for pro-poor plans considering current and future risks, in order to achieve the national Millennium Development Goals.

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) is considered within Theme Two, ‘Social Protection and Disaster Risk Management’ of the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS). The Disaster Risk Management (DRM) component of the MDGS is however yet to be elaborated, and as a consequence disaster management continues to be primarily reactive rather than proactive, with an emphasis placed on the coordination and implementation of emergency response.

**Project Summary**

Consequently, the project strategy aims to build the capacity of national and district level authorities to improve DRM, with the objective of both reducing future hazard impacts and ensuring effective humanitarian response. During the period 2007-11, UNDP supports the elaboration of a national DRM strategy, including the development of an engendered DRR policy, emergency and preparedness plans and institutional frameworks at both national and district levels. Integral to this strategy is the appropriate reflection of DRR in other government policies, programmes and training. The strategy also includes the development of gender-disaggregated information management systems which reflect both the impact of past disaster events and the risks associated with climate change.

**Activities**

- Document economic impact of disasters and increase DRR knowledge;
- Develop and launch DRR road map;
- Implement DRR/DRM road map;

**Key Objective**

- To strengthen the DRM systems of Malawi and manage effectively the impact of disaster risks within the context of sustainable development.

**Expected Results**

- Support to DRR legal and institutional systems.
- Sensitization to DRR and the development of a DRR ‘road map’ based on local application of the Hyogo Framework for Action.
- Strengthening of the recovery, preparedness and contingency planning process in selected vulnerable districts.
- Capacity development and training, based on the identification of capacity development needs, particularly with regards to the coordination of response, preparedness and mitigation activities.
- Analysis of climate change related impacts and development of a climate risk management strategy.

**Total Budget:** USD 660,250.00

**UNDP/BCPR:** USD 495,850.00

**UNDP (Regular):** USD 164,400.00

**Project ID:** 00060060

**Period:** January 2008 – December 2011

**Partners:** Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA), Office of the President and Cabinet
• Develop DRR Framework and Flood Risk Management Strategy
• Strengthen emergency preparedness and contingency planning process in selected vulnerable districts; and conduct a climate risk assessment.

Achievements to date

Legal and institutional systems for DRR

• A draft DRR framework has been developed which aims at pursuing a proactive and integrated way to reduce risk through sustainable, innovative and realistic strategies, with stronger partnerships among all stakeholders. The framework is for five years (2010-2015). It is a combination of conceptual, results and institutional frameworks.
• A situational analysis of disaster management policies was undertaken. The situation analysis objective was to assess the current status of disaster preparedness, prevention, relief, recovery and reconstruction in Malawi. It determined the extent to which DRM is mainstreamed into development policies and practices of all sectors. The situation analysis is used in elaborating and contributing to the development of a National DRM Policy and Strategy.
• A draft Flood Risk Management Strategy has been developed. The strategy identifies and examines short-, mid- and long-term strategies for flood risk management. It also identifies interventions that take into account existing opportunities and constraints, including those for integration of DRM into development planning at national and district level.

Recovery, preparedness and contingency planning

• The development of a National Contingency Plan was finalised and is under review.
• Seven districts received assistance in developing their District Contingency Plans. These plans are yet to be reviewed.
• Operational guidelines for DRM were developed which stipulate the roles of various stakeholders in Malawi.

Capacity development and training

• Six DoDMA officers and eight District Commissioners have undergone training in DRR at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. The officers have been trained in disaster risk and DRR, urban risks with focus on informal settlement fires and floods; extreme weather, drought and climate change/adaptation. Further, two officers from DoDMA participated at a training course in Emergency Management in Singapore and one officer from DoDMA attended a training programme on Adaptive Watershed Management and Climate Change in Japan. The department also participated in workshops both locally and internationally on DRR and climate change.

Knowledge Management

• A study on economic and financial decision-making in DRR has been finalized and is awaiting approval by the National Disaster Relief and Preparedness Committee. The study explores how economic and financial information could be better used to secure greater commitment to DRR and influence related policy decisions. The findings will support the development of a DRR policy and the integration of DRR into development plans.
• A study on economic vulnerability and disaster risk assessment in Malawi has been drafted. It analyses and quantifies the impact of floods and droughts, and provides the average and potential direct losses caused by such disasters. The aim is to inform stakeholders on how vulnerable the national economy is to disasters.

Contact information:
UNDP Country Office Malawi
Website: http://www.undp.org.mw/

For further information:
Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) Progress Monitor
Website: http://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/progress/reports/?pid:222&pil:1

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