

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION EFFORTS IN ZIMBABWE

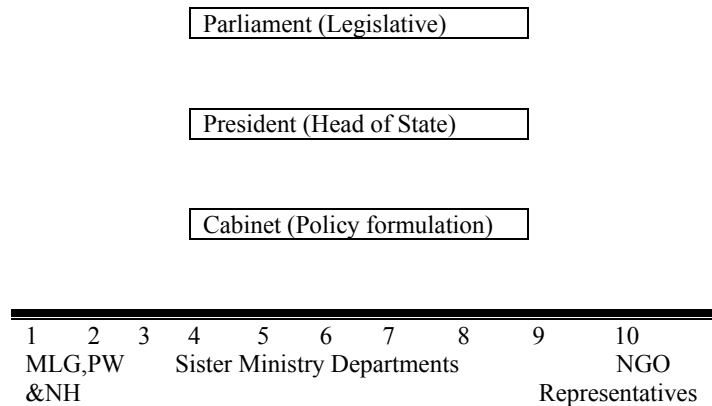
GOVERNANCE - POLITICAL COMMITMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS

In Zimbabwe, political will is amply demonstrated by the existence of the legal enabling statute, which creates the conducive environment in which a dedicated disaster management department was spawned. The institutional framework, appropriate policy development and legislative codes all flow from the corporate commitment.

It is National Policy for Civil Protection that every citizen of this country should assist where possible to avert or limit the effects of disaster. As provided by the Zimbabwe Civil Protection Act of 1989, central government initiates hazard reduction measures through relevant sector Ministries with the local administration taking the responsibility for implementing its effectiveness.

The Department of Civil Protection is a national organ, which is housed under the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing. The Department was established to carry out the overall co-ordination of all relevant disaster management stakeholders. The Department is headed by one Director, one Deputy director, supported by officers and secretaries / typists and a driver. The current system uses the existing Government , private, and NGO organisations whose regular activities contain elements of disaster risk prevention and community development.

The Structure of Zimbabwe Civil Protection System



The major priority components of the current Act that enables its implementation include the organisational structure of civil protection in Zimbabwe from the Local Authority level to the National level, formation of the National, Provincial and District Civil Protection Committees and their subsequent sub committees, the component of planning for emergencies / disasters, the establishment of a Civil Protection Disaster Fund, procedures of declaring a State of Disaster etc.

The country has engaged in a process to review its legislation since 1995 in an effort to strengthen disaster risk reduction. All relevant stakeholders were consulted during the review process and the process has culminated in a Bill for consideration by parliament this year, 2004.

The major priorities for the Bill include include among others;

- Repeal of the current Civil Protection Act and to be replaced by the Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Management Act.
- Establishment of an Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Management Authority whose major functions include developing a risk reduction strategy in order to minimize vulnerability to both natural and man made or technological hazards
- Establishment of an integrated early warning system for emergencies and disasters,
- Promotion of training and research in matters relating to disasters,
- Integration of disaster risk reduction into all developmental initiatives
- Standardised training for emergency services
- Establishment of a funding mechanism for disaster risk reduction at both the local and national levels.
- Capacitating of local authorities to manage emergencies and disasters at the local level.

In terms of funding, the Department of Civil Protection administers the National Civil Protection Fund which receives money from the Central Government. The fund is applied to the development and promotion of Civil Protection activities through out the country.

RISK IDENTIFICATION

Through the Department of Civil Protection the country has in the past conducted a multi sectoral hazard and vulnerability mapping exercise throughout the country. The exercises created the foundation for the development of sectoral emergency preparedness and response plans which are currently being operationalised by the respective sectors / government departments as directed by the National Crisis Committee of Zimbabwe. Again the findings of the hazard analysis exercises guide the stakeholders in their endeavours in developing Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) programmes, which include among others public awareness campaigns and community based early warning outreach programmes.

The county carries out regular vulnerability and capacity assessments especially during periods of shocks to collect baseline data for intervention. The methods used include community and household interviews particularly in the rural areas where the most vulnerable people are. Vulnerability assessments have also been carried out in the urban areas with similar objectives of identifying the most vulnerable groups in terms of food access and availability, vulnerability to diseases and the impact of HIV/AIDS.

Zimbabwe has made attempts to integrate lessons learnt from past major emergencies and disasters such as droughts, cyclones and major public transportation disasters to examine the extent of damage caused, and to come up with lessons strategies on same. The disaster review / lessons learnt seminars resulted in the improved early warning system of the country's hydro- meteorological disasters such as flooding, cyclones and droughts. The Meteorological Services Department closely monitors the weather

and is mandated to regularly give updates and warning information through the laid down channels of communication. The general public is informed of any threatening events through the pre-set channels of communication

All Disaster Preparedness and Response activities in the country are done through the National Crisis Committee and its sub committees with assistance of technical experts who also constitute a sub committee

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The Government of Zimbabwe has not yet developed a database on disaster risk reduction. Information is still being managed at institutional level through sharing reports, minutes, newsletters, and email facilities. However, some UN agencies have developed Web Sites and are working towards the development of databases to enable real-time information sharing with interested partners.

The Department has no modern infrastructure that facilitates communication and networking between disaster risk reduction institutions and research centres. However, the recently developed bill has the provision to facilitate communication and networking through the establishment of a disaster management centre where relevant stakeholders would be housed and linked together. Funding for the centre need to be secured.

The Department co-ordinates quite a number of public awareness programmes tailored for both the wet and dry seasons. Awareness campaigns on flooding, drowning and lightning hazards are carried out towards and during the wet season whilst campaigns on fire hazards are done in winter. The campaigns are done using a multisectoral approach with Department of Civil Protection having the role of designing and co-ordinating the programmes. Information is disseminated through the press, by pamphlets and road shows. Budgetary constraints limit the use of the electronic media whose effect is far reaching.

The Government of Zimbabwe engages existing institutions for the execution of scientific research work that is in line with disaster risk reduction. For example technical support for scientific research can be obtained from the University of Zimbabwe and from the Scientific Institute of Research and Development Co-operation (SIRDC) both of which are parastatals. The works they are involved in include studying soil sampled eg in communities that are vulnerable to flooding emergencies and developing sustainable construction materials. They also recommend to policy makers on whether such places are suitable for human settlement or not. Their expertise has also been called for in designing rural building and low cost sewage reticulation plants.

RISK MANAGEMENT APPLICATION/ INSTRUMENT

Disaster management in Zimbabwe takes a holistic approach. It incorporates all at risk institutions / sectors of the country and the protection of each sector is supported and empowered by existing statutory instruments such as the Environment Management Act. The provisions of the Act protects / averts environmental degradation in all circles such as mining and farming communities etc. The Government of Zimbabwe is running programmes such as the Food for Work Programme or the Public Works

Programme, which promotes environmental management at community level. Able bodied community members who require government assistance in terms of food or cash respectively are engaged in programmes such as gully filling, reforestation etc and get food. or are paid in cash. Other NGOs are also into environmental management programmes.

The Department of Civil Protection in collaboration with relevant stakeholders carry out regular seasonal awareness campaigns with the use of both print and electronic media, trade fair exhibitions on fire hazards which threaten the environment.

Other risk reduction measures:-

There has been increased sectoral focus on disaster risk reduction particularly in the following areas:-

- **health** - disease control particularly HIV and AIDS. Cholera and malaria
- **environment** - strengthening of environmental impact assessment requirements and subsequent monitoring.
- **transport** - a greater awareness and focus on prevention of transportation accidents.
- **water** - general increased risk reduction efforts through water harvesting and an improved early warning system for floods and droughts.
- **food security** - greater awareness for sustainable food security measures.

There has been heightened awareness on hazards and their impacts by the general public. The media has also demonstrated a keen interest and indeed, is an effective tool of information dissemination.

PREPAREDNESS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Planning for emergencies in Zimbabwe is done at various levels namely sectoral level, local authority, district, provincial and National levels. As provided for by the Civil Protection Act, all these levels are required to produce operational emergency preparedness and response plans which they activate during emergencies / disasters. The National Civil Protection Plan forms the overall framework for the promotion, co-ordination and execution of emergency and disaster management in Zimbabwe. The localised plans should dovetail in to the National plan.

The plans highlight among other things the alert mechanisms / procedures, evacuation procedures, stock of resources available both material and human, contact details of focal manpower etc and should be reviewed regularly at least once a year. The plans are being used as and when emergencies occur and sectors also carry out regular simulation exercises to practically review the plans.

As highlighted before the Department of Civil Protection in Zimbabwe manages a Disaster Fund, which is financed by the Central Government. However, the Fund may not be able to fulfil all disaster management initiatives throughout the year. Where more resources are required in the event of major disasters occurring at any given time, the enabling legislation has a provision through which the Treasury can inject additional funding.

With the consideration of lessons that were drawn from past experiences of disasters of differing magnitudes, the overall co-ordination of disaster management in Zimbabwe has significantly improved over the past years.

The strategic grain reserve for the country is a central government responsibility carried out by the Grain Marketing board, which is a parastatal organisation. It maintains the reserve both in grain and in cash. Grain silos are situated in the northern parts of the country. However, a number of temporary sites are created to cope with emergencies. During sustained periods of droughts importation of grain takes place. Such importation may require assistance from the international community through the UN- WFP donors and their implementing partners.

SUCCESS STORIES IN DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

Development of Strategy to Integrate Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Preparedness into the education system of Zimbabwe and taking advantage of the multiplier effect by the Education system:

The strategy was developed in an effort to promote a culture of prevention. Its purpose being to contribute to greater awareness of disaster risks and readiness for emergencies in the country. It has three major areas of focus namely;

- production of a comprehensive guidelines on emergency procedures for schools and other educational institutions.
- integration of disaster risk reduction into the schools curricula.
- improve guidelines on the setting up/construction and maintenance of schools infrastructure.

The strategy was initiated in July 2003 and is one of the current major activities in the country.

Review of Civil protection Act of Zimbabwe

The review process has culminated in a Bill for consideration by parliament this year, 2004.

PRIORITIES YOU WANT ADDRESSED AT WORLD CONFERENCE ON DISASTER REDUCTION

- Capacity building – human resources, equipment and networking,
- Sub-regional and regional co-operation on disaster management,
- Policy development on synergy within the Africa Region.