

## Assessing the Role of Local Institutions in Reducing the Vulnerability of At-Risk Communities in Búzi, Central Mozambique

**Location:** Buzi, Central Mozambique

**Date:** October, 2003

**Sector focus:** Flood

**Spatial focus:** Provincial

### Organization

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The Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (DiMP) is part of the Department of Environmental and Geographical Sciences at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. Through collaborative research, policy advocacy, education and training, the programme encourages the integration of disaster mitigation strategies with sustainable development programmes, particularly those targeted to economically vulnerable communities.

Website: <http://www.egs.uct.ac.za/dimp/>

### Bibliographical details

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Matsimbe, Zefanias., DiMP, *Assessing the Role of Local Institutions in Reducing the Vulnerability of At-Risk Communities in Búzi, Central Mozambique Part 4, Lessons Learnt and Recommendations*, DiMP, University of Cape Town, 2003.

### Language availability

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This publication is available in English.

### Abstract

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From December 1999 to March 2000, Mozambique recorded the highest rainfall rates since 1951. These were associated with twelve meteorological systems, and triggered massive flooding in the southern and central regions of the country, with disastrous consequences, including human, physical and economic losses. This event, reported as a flood event, with more people affected by flooding than directly by the rain, had a considerable impact on the livelihoods of over a million

people. This publication presents what actions were taken, lessons learned as well as recommendations for future events.

The Búzi catchment in central Mozambique was one of the most affected areas due to water released from the Chicamba Dam. This caused rising levels in the Búzi River with consequent flooding. Most communities in Búzi Province were declared disaster-affected. With limited resources to respond to such an event, the Mozambique government sought assistance from the international community. This study aims at understanding the role of local institutions and organizations in reducing people's vulnerability to natural hazards.

## **Intended users**

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This research paper would benefit **government, donors, NGOs** and workers in emergency aid programmes, particularly where coordination among acting agencies is critical for an effective, coordinated response.

## **Background and context of country, location and project**

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In 2000, there were similar floods to those studied in the current publication. The Mozambican Red Cross (CVM) and the Instituto Nacional de Gestão de Calamidades (National Institute for Disaster Management- INGC) coordinated the reception and distribution of assistance; however, some organizations ignored these entities and their legitimate role, deciding, on their own discretion, which communities were in need. The result was that assistance was distributed outside of coordination with the Mozambican government. In certain instances the government had to intervene to stop this process of distribution.

High level of corruption and misuse of the millions of dollars of development funds that are provided to the country every year further impact on development of the country. Ongoing civil war has had lasting negative impacts on institutions such as roads, bridges and social infrastructure.

In terms of disaster prevention and mitigation, the Mozambique government recognized that strategies and programmes for addressing issues are still far from reaching the necessary efficiency, and policies and programmes for addressing extreme poverty are still inadequate. The extent of the impact was due not only to the intensity and magnitude of the event, but also to the high levels of vulnerability within rural communities, compounded by HIV/AIDS and chronic food insecurity. While conducting the study, there was famine and drought going on, as well as a malaria and measles epidemic. Many interviews were interrupted for interviewees or team members to attend funerals. By the end of the study all the team members were infected with malaria.

This research was conducted by a member of DiMP from the University of Cape Town. It was co-financed and supported by the Rural Institutions and Participation Service of the FAO, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ). Intellectual and logistical support was provided by individuals from the Geographic Information Unit at the Catholic University of Mozambique (CIG-UCM) and GTZ.

## **Technical description**

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**Hazard/risk type:** floods, droughts and cyclones leading to food insecurity

**Type of assessment:** Vulnerability Capacity Assessment (VCA)

## CRA process

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Communities that have poor coordination of institutions are more likely to be **vulnerable** than those with effective coordination. This study considers the social context and coordination of institutions as the source of vulnerability, rather than the naturally occurring hazard itself. The findings of the study show that government, institutions and existing emergency plans did not take into account a disaster on the scale of the 2000 rainfalls. Lack of coordination, poor communication, centralized decision making, and poor definition of roles represented some of the vulnerabilities considered through this study.

**Capacities and resources available:** Informal social networks based on neighbourhood, kinship, friendship, and church ties were identified as important capacities that replaced formal institutions in reducing the impact of the disaster in places where these institutions were limited or altogether absent.

**Limitations to capacity:**

- Bureaucracy and administrative requirements for letters of permission.
- Municipal elections and the perception that study members were members of a political campaign.
- Raising false expectations in the communities due to famine and drought.
- Physical inaccessibility of the sites and the impact of malaria and measles epidemics.

The research methodology and **analytical methods** involved a multidisciplinary approach. Preparatory meetings to discuss the research design and methodology were held with the Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (DiMP) of the University of Cape Town. Following the initial meetings, a profile of the study site was prepared and submitted to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The assessment was conducted on two levels: an *institutional assessment* of national and local government, international agencies and community leaders, and *community assessment*. Documents were collected throughout the study for secondary review.

At the *national level* several government departments, UN agencies and NGOs were contacted, including the INGC, UNDP, FAO, Save the Children (UK), UNICEF, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the National Directorate for Water Management, Eduardo Mondlane University and the Land Studies Centre at Eduardo Mondlane University.

At the *local level*, ten households were interviewed to understand in-depth the livelihood aspects of activities, assets, strategies, opportunities and the impact of natural hazards in the context of household coping mechanisms. Interviews were also conducted with members of different organisations working locally such as teachers, church members, and rural agrarian extension officers, to assess their role in emergency response and risk reduction.

**Tools** used include: semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, meetings, and secondary data analysis of reports and documents were conducted with these national-level institutions. At the local level, household interviews were conducted.

## Notes on Methods and Tools

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This study examined the relationship between actions that were taken, their impact and made recommendations for future actions; the community did not necessarily devise the actions. There were two broad categories of recommended actions proposed: Emergency Management of an Extreme Event and Reducing the Vulnerability of At-Risk Communities. Sub-actions proposed include: assessing economic, physical infrastructure and social cohesion capacity in the community, using the Búzi Community Radio as a means for an early warning system, and integrating long-term rehabilitation activities into clean-up activities.

Livelihoods were considered in terms of the agricultural socio-economic base of the Buzi region. This was particularly taken into account for female headed-households who may not have very

diverse livelihoods and are affected more acutely by droughts, cyclones and floods. Direct recommendations are made to address livelihood concerns.

## **Lessons learned**

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- ◆ Work with existing institutional structures and where these are lacking, work with Informal social networks based on neighborhood, kinship, friendship, and church ties
- ◆ Government should strengthen local institutions
- ◆ Consult with community
- ◆ Government should establish mechanisms for facilitating the emergence and maintenance of grassroots organizations with the capacity to become valid coordinating partners with international agencies in the case of an emergency
- ◆ Internationally the Mozambican case was considered one of the most successful in terms of international coordination of assistance, but at local levels this was not always the case.

In terms of lessons for policy or practice at the national level, the government acknowledged through the course of this study that its policies, practice and programs are still far from reaching the necessary efficiencies to address extreme poverty, disaster mitigation and prevention.

## **Key words**

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Sustainable development, community consultation, institutional, government and donor coordination, food insecurity, famine, drought, cyclones, floods,

## **Resource people**

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## **Author of Explanatory Note**

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The ProVention Consortium contracted Stephanie Bouris to author this explanatory note.

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