

Community Risk Assessment Haarlem, Uniondale, Eden District

Location: Haarlem, Western Cape, South Africa

Date: 19-21 September, 2007

Sector focus: Community Risk Assessment

Spatial focus: Rural community

Bibliographical reference

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Abstract

This report was compiled following a three-day workshop on Community Risk Assessment (CRA) in Haarlem in 2007. The Department of Local Government and Housing (Provincial Disaster Management Centre) in the Western Cape organized the workshop which was funded by the Development Fund of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA). There were 28 participants, the majority of whom were community members and from different government departments, such as fire services, Emergency Medical Service (EMS), environmental health and South African Police Service (SAPS).

The aim of the CRA workshop was to explore in a participatory way the priority risks and at the same time it helps participants to gain understanding of what CRA is about and how they can use the skill for further assessing their risks within the community.

Technical description

Hazard/risk type: fire, hailstorms, flooding, environmental health, crime

Type of assessment: Community Risk Assessment (CRA)

CRA process

Methods used: General assessment methods included capacity analysis, vulnerability assessment, hazard analysis, institutional analysis and using participatory tools to assess and prioritize risks and better understand CRA.

Tools included: risk mapping, seasonal calendar, historical profiling, focus group interviews, Venn diagram, community mapping, problem tree, semi-structured interviews, and household wealth surveys.

Was livelihood analysis used? Yes, livelihoods were examined in relation to the impact of flooding on animal husbandry and farming.

Vulnerability analysis

There were 4 main vulnerabilities prioritized in the community:

- ◆ Flooding
- ◆ Environmental health (such as solid waste treatment, pesticides, polluted water, and unhygienic slaughtering)
- ◆ Fire (due to arson, unsafe home cooking practises, burning solid waste and overloading circuits)
- ◆ Crime

Capacity analysis

The research team and community members used household surveys to identify areas or households within the community that show best practice coping with risk. The aim of this exercise was to focus on the positive aspects of the community, to show the values of local knowledge and local coping mechanisms in order for these strengths to feed into future risk reduction in Haarlem. One example of these community strategies was that some households dug furrows and cleaned drainage areas around their residence to reduce the impact of flooding.

Action planning and implementation

What actions were actually planned? The community was very enthusiastic about the project and asked for training on fire fighting and fire prevention, First Aid and environmental health. There is also a need to train community on policing and other areas that affect their community.

What actions were actually carried out? People were trained to help themselves in a crisis situation. First Aid training was conducted with positive outcomes.

Have these actions turned out to be sustainable? Yes

Were there any unanticipated additional benefits of the actions? The community attended First Aid courses and the outcome was positive. The people in the community are eager to learn and to help themselves.

Were there any unanticipated negative consequences of the actions? No. All the community members helped each other and are committed to building their skills in CRA.

Indicators: Haarlem is a community that is willing to learn and go the extra mile. An achievement is the positive working relationship established between the community and the Provincial Government. The government has asserted that they will continue to work sustainably with the community. Indicators for future activities include: decrease in number of human and livestock lives lost and impact on livelihood due to floods, fire, crime and environmental health; improved economic security; decreased crime rate; and improved health indicators such as rate of illness and substance abuse.

Contextual notes

Existence/role of prior or contemporaneous conflict? The community of Haarlem is a farming community in rural settlements and is situated 30km outside Uniondale. There is a high rate of unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse and low levels of education which are seen to contribute to a high crime rate. Women, children, the elderly, farmers and business people are the most vulnerable.

Role of prior disaster & prior recovery attempts? The community of Harlem has experienced disasters such as hailstorms and small-scale disasters such as bush (veld) fires and house fires. These generally only affect one house at a time as the houses are spaced far apart. The entire community is affected by flooding since drainage pipes get blocked with dirt and plastic bags, and the low bridges get washed over. There is only one paved road in the community, the rest are dirt roads, which makes transportation very difficult during the rains. The houses and fields built on the flood plane are damaged and animal husbandry is affected. The floods set up a cycle as they wash away nutrients and cause soil erosion which affects the agricultural productivity of the soil. There are no informal houses and few Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses.

Strategic notes

How has this practice of CRA influenced change in policy and practice at the national level? The direct or indirect change in national policy and practice as a result of this CRA are not known. Through the exercise, those involved were able to assert that the Community understands how the Provincial Government links into the NDMC (National Disaster Management Centre).

How has this practice of CRA influenced change in policy and practice at local level? The Disaster Practitioner in Haarlem explained her role and function with links from the district municipality up with to the Provincial Government.

How has this practice of CRA influenced the level of organization and solidarity in the locality where it was carried out? Through its participatory research methods, the CRA aims to identify the priority risks of the settlement, thus ensuring locally appropriate outcomes using local knowledge. Moreover, the CRA made the community more aware of the shortcomings and the positive impacts of the role of government.

Less divided along class, gender, age, ethnic lines? Regardless of age, community members were treated equally through the risk assessment. Through their participation, community members built an understanding of each other and gained core skills in disaster risk assessment.

Are the people living in this area more able to speak out on issues that concern them? Yes after this CRA they were able to.

Have new civil society organizations been created directly or indirectly because of this practice of CRA? Although no specific organizations have been formed, there is a noted increase in participation of community members at talks and people make their own community more aware of shortcomings.

Lessons learned

- Participants realized that in order to cope and change their vulnerability, there needs to be unity
- Participants increased their knowledge of the role of institutions in their community
- The community and institutions that play a role in Haarlem have to work as one force
- Communication is the key to success

Conclusion

The CRA participants realized that in order to cope and change their vulnerability, they need to be united. One example is the puzzle tool which taught participants that in order to achieve success, every player in the community and institutions that play a role in the community of Haarlem, has to work as one force and communication is the key to making this happen. Through the CRA, the participants gained a greater understanding of the role of each and every department and institution within Haarlem. Unity and commitment were greater exemplified through the strong participation of community members and active government officials in the area through the CRA.

The community members learnt the role and responsibility of government representatives, departments and institutions in Haarlem. They also appreciated that they have to work as one force and that communication is the key to success. The community was very enthusiastic about the CRA and the workshop was well attended by community members and active government officials.

Keywords

Fire, hailstorms, flooding, environmental health, crime, soil erosion

Resource person(s)

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