

Cyclone IDAI Oxfam learning

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OXFAM

Oxfam response

Oxfam in Southern Africa responded to cyclone IDAI in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe through:

1. Food and livelihood support (provision of food packs, rehabilitation of irrigation systems, dip tanks, provision of agri inputs)
2. Water, sanitation and Hygiene (hygiene promotion and water point construction and rehabilitation and latrine construction)
3. Gender and Protection (provision of dignity kits, training of protection committees in promotion of safe programming)
4. Governance and policy: policy brief: The Impact of and Responses to Cyclone Idai in Zimbabwe: An Analysis of Policy Implications for Post-Disaster Institutional Development.



Mitigation

1. There is limited investment in risk mapping and disaster planning
2. Physical infrastructure designs need disaster proofing
3. There is need to consider the relocation of some communities within the Shire Valley so that they are in safer zones in the event of another flood episode of this magnitude.
4. Need to consider low cost solutions for mitigation of disaster on coastal infrastructure.



Preparedness

- Meteorological information is now available in a format that is usable to the community, useful for preparedness and response. Timeline for dissemination important to effect early action.
- Non resourced contingency plans and or functional disaster management plans that are suited to the scale, magnitude and nature of Idai.
- Need to explore the question of risk insurance at national and community level. Amplify the utility of the African Risk Capacity for insurance, resilience and Building Back Better.
- Poor budget provisioning to disaster preparedness and response. Disaster Management function is weakened by competing priorities.
- Climate Change understanding amongst communities still limited, and remains forgotten as a factor in the planning process. There is need to raise awareness for it and its implication for the magnitude and frequency of current and future crisis. National Disaster Management plans need to reflect that.



Preparedness

- Listening to the locals. There is strong evidence that in the 3 weeks before Cyclone Idai, local communities were already reporting increased water levels in rivers and other natural receptacles. Action to evacuate could have been taken at this point.
- Need to invest in better hydrological surveillance (scientific and traditional) and climate information for short term and long-term decision making.
- Contingency plans should be realistic in projecting likely scenarios. Although here is a contingency plan in place at national level, it did not factor in the scale and magnitude of the flood crisis.



Preparedness

- Improve Early Warning Systems from Central to local level so that its is effective. Critical Early Warning and Early Action processes were hindered because communities did not believe the information or when they did, they just did not react.
- The absence of pre-defined exit and evacuation areas is a hindrance to planning and response.
- Evacuation and relocation sites need to factor in ease of access to jobs, services and education, as part of a Sustainable Relocation Model.



Response

- Reactive approaches visible but well coordinated
- Questions about data reliability (missing, displaced deaths)
- Response funds were not readily available at the time of the crisis
- Ill-provisioned to respond to the psycho-social impact of the Cyclone especially in cases of death, displacement and loss of personal belonging.
- Donors and aid – There will never be enough donor funds to service the needs of the population. Therefore, there is need to invest in the internal response mechanisms that are provisioned locally.



Response

- Reliable data makes for a good response plan. Questionable data on impact and location affects the quality and speed of a response in the start-up phases.
- It is important simplify coordination mechanisms so that they are not a hindrance but actually allow for aid to get to where it is needed the most in the shortest possible time.



Recovery and rehabilitation

- Recovery will be long and protracted and will require a lot of investment in rebuilding. This presents an opportunity to update and improve designs and plans and make them more resilient against shocks. There will be need to Build Back Better and Build to Last.
- As the recovery and rehabilitation phase proceeds, there is probably going to be another shock or setback and the national and partner contingency plans need to prepare for this. A plan is as good as the resources and understanding by implementers.



Governance and Policy

- Are regional and African bodies (SADC and AU) ready to respond to a crisis of this magnitude?
- What do we do when climate change affects the poorest?



Governance and policy cont'd

- A strong/capable state at all levels is critical to anticipating and managing disaster risks, leading disaster responses, and overseeing recovery and development.
- Key agencies of the state tasked with disaster risk management need adequate capacity and resources, including for research and core equipment to gather the knowledge necessary to understand and prepare for the disasters to which countries are prone.
- Participatory hazard profiling helps build local preparedness and capacity, and anchors sustainable (hazard-resilient) development.
- Communities across social, economic and political contexts have shown that they can unite in responding to disasters.



Governance and policy

- A dedicated fund for disaster responses is only useful if it is viable, ring-fenced and transparently run.
- Building the local capacity necessary to ensure ongoing psychosocial and material support is critical for dealing with the long-term effects that disasters have on specific social groups.
- Disaster risk reduction (DRR) requires the transformation of settlements and ensuring compliance with appropriate building codes that local people are familiarized with and/or receive practical training on.
- The technical staff of key departments and agencies that respond to disasters require psychosocial support during and after the response.
- Relocation of people who have been displaced by disasters or who live in risk-prone areas is an important and growing response.

