

CHALLENGING DOMINANT IDEOLOGY AND PRACTICE IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT: PARTNERSHIP DYNAMICS IN COMMUNITY BASED DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN A ZIMBABWEAN CONTEXT

Dr. Paradzai Pathias Bongo

Practical Action Limited (Southern Africa), Zimbabwe

paradzayib@practicalactionzw.org

Disaster Studies Working Paper 23

Aon Benfield UCL Hazard Research Centre

February 2009

This paper is part of a series on “Making communities safer: challenges of creating effective disaster risk reduction partnerships”. The series arose out of a panel on this theme at the World Conference of Humanitarian Studies in Groningen, The Netherlands, 4-7 February 2009 (www.humanitarianstudies2009.org). It includes papers given at the panel and those of others who submitted papers but were unable to attend the conference.

List of abbreviations

AGRITEX	Agricultural Technical and Extension Services
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
CBDRR	Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction
CBO	Community Based Organization
CBP	Community Based Planning
CDF	Community Development Facilitator
CFT	Core Facilitation Team
CHF	Conflict and Humanitarian Fund
CPU	Civil Protection Unit
DFID	Department for International Development
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DTT	District Training Teams
EMA	Environmental Management Authority
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi Arid Tropics
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
JMT	Joint Management Team
LCP	Local Capacities for Peace
MYDGEC	Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NUST	National University of Science and Technology
ORAP	Organization of Rural Associations for Progress
PADET	Patriots Development Trust
PME	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RDC	Rural District Council
TBT	Tchinyunyi Babili Trust
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
VCA	Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis

Introduction

*The world was once thought to be flat, then proved
to be round. Now it is quite definitely web shaped!*

— Anonymous

This paper is based on a DFID-CHF (Department for International Development – Conflict and Humanitarian Fund) funded project on Disaster Risk Management being piloted by Practical Action Limited (Southern Africa) in a semi-arid rural region in southern Zimbabwe. The project is entitled ‘Mainstreaming Livelihood-Centred Approaches to Disaster Management’, and covers 12 wards in three Districts of Matabeleland South Province, namely Gwanda, Bulilima and Mangwe Districts. This paper analyses the complexity of Disaster Management partnerships where some partners focus on risk reduction, others on development, others on emergency response. The most common hazard in the project area is drought, and there has been controversy about whether it should be the focus of Disaster Management or Development programming.

The project grapples with ‘selling’ DRR, which focuses more on ‘intangible’ and future benefits, in an inter-agency playing field largely dominated by ‘tangible’, immediate benefits to at-risk communities such as drought relief interventions. Donor demands and agency core values and mission also contribute to partnership challenges. The fragmented nature of disaster management (including multiple pieces of disaster related legislative instruments housed under different Government ministries), as well as agency staff capacity challenges are contributing to partnership challenges. The current socio-economic and political environment in Zimbabwe also adds to the partnership dynamics, considering the promulgation of tighter regulations governing the operation of civil society. This context also adds a man-made hazard, with the runaway inflation paralyzing the effectiveness of donor agencies in both development and relief. Practical Action, World Vision, the National University of Science and Technology (NUST), Northumbria University and local CBOs are nevertheless exploring innovative ways of partnership in promoting Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRR).

Project background

The Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) pilot project runs for an initial five years from January 2006 to December 2010. The project is based initially in four countries (Bangladesh, Peru, Zimbabwe and Nepal), with a project co-ordinator based in the UK. The project is managed through a core team consisting of the project co-ordinator, project managers from participating countries and a disaster mitigation specialist from Sri Lanka. This team meets at least once a year to review progress and agree on outputs and workplans for the coming months. It is partly premised on the Hyogo Declaration and Hyogo Framework of Action 2005 – 2015.¹

In implementing this project in Zimbabwe, Practical Action is working in partnership with two local NGOs, Organization of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP) and Hlekweni Friends Rural Service Centre, which has a strong Quaker grounding. The project focuses on the roles and linkages between vulnerable communities, district and national level government institutions and humanitarian agencies in regard to disaster preparedness and mitigation. It examines how these agencies can be made more responsive to the needs of poor people by adopting a livelihood-centred approach to disaster management. There are four main aims:

1. To establish models in at least 3 locations (Bangladesh, Peru, Zimbabwe) where livelihood-centred approaches to disaster management are combined with other methodologies such as participatory action development planning in order to link communities better with wider institutional structures involved in disaster and development planning. The locations selected encompass areas and communities with exposure to a mixture of disaster risks including drought, flood, disease and conflict.

¹ This is a reference document which underscores disaster-development linkages, pledging that “We build upon relevant international commitments and frameworks, as well as internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, to strengthen global disaster reduction activities for the twenty-first century. Disasters have a tremendous detrimental impact on efforts at all levels to eradicate global poverty: the impact of disasters remains a significant challenge to sustainable development.” (ISDR, WCDR, 2005)

2. To develop guidelines and training materials on livelihood-centred disaster management for use by local and national service providers, planners and humanitarian agencies.
3. To learn lessons from experiences in implementing this approach, including an analysis of best practice in building consensus amongst stakeholders on how to link most effectively with and support communities' own disaster planning in a sustainable way. We are also reviewing how the approach can be applied in different contexts, e.g. in fragile states where institutions are weak and where community/state relations may be antagonistic. We will undertake peer reviews and share learning on risk reduction interventions with other NGOs active in disaster risk management.
4. To influence policy makers at all levels involved in disaster management and development planning to adopt a livelihood-centred approach to disaster risk management. This will be done through:
 - Providing evidence of the positive impact of a livelihood-centred approach to disaster risk management on the livelihood assets of poor people through collation and analysis of past and current projects;
 - Working in partnership with regional networks, such as Duryog Nivaran and LaRed, and international networks such as ALNAP to disseminate project findings and provide a platform for policy discussion and advocacy;
 - Forming strategic alliances with other NGOs active in disaster management to promote joint actions in support of regional or international policy developments.

The area of operation (Matabeleland South Province of Zimbabwe) is plagued with recurring droughts and is the province with the highest levels of food insecurity. It falls in the driest region in the country (Regions IV and V)², where the major viable livelihood is cattle ranching. Rain

² Zimbabwe has been divided into five main natural regions according to differences in effective rainfall. Rainfall patterns and crop production progressively deteriorate from Region I to V. Annual rainfall is highest in Natural region I. Natural region II covering 15% of the land area, receives lower rainfall than region I. **Natural region III is a semi-intensive farming region. Natural region IV is a semi-extensive farming region. Natural region V is an extensive farming region covering about 27% of Zimbabwe. Rainfall in this region is too low and erratic for the**

fed agriculture is not profitable and is often not an option in many locales. The situation is further compounded by the fact that there are few water reservoirs. Many people have therefore diversified out of agriculture into harvesting forest products for both subsistence and commercial purposes. The project area also has occasional flash floods. Like any other province of Zimbabwe, Matabeleland South also has been plagued with HIV and AIDS.

Apart from the natural hazards mentioned above, man-made hazards have also taken their toll in the three districts. The current hyperinflationary environment in Zimbabwe has impacted negatively on livelihoods and survival strategies. Inflation stands at more than 231 000 000 % (August 2008) and this has resulted in many people being unable to afford the basic commodities for survival, let alone school fees and other important household needs. Even those who are trying to start small income earning activities are hard hit by the high inflation and other macro-economic maladies (Bongo, 2007).

The DRR project in Zimbabwe stands on five pillars, into which all project initiatives feed to varying degrees, and these are as follows:

1. Provincial stakeholders (influencing stakeholders at provincial level)
2. Community-based planning and risk mapping
3. Practical demonstrations and capacity building for evidence-based influencing
4. Development of training materials and guidelines
5. National engagement and policy influencing initiatives

Project synopsis

The project undertook a rigorous process of awareness raising and project entry involving stakeholder consultations and assessments at provincial, district and community level, with

reliable production of even drought resistant fodder and grain crops, and farming is based on grazing natural pasture. Extensive cattle or game ranching is the only sound farming system for this region.

ORAP and Hlekweni staff (Field Officers) based in the rural area wards responsible for implementation of activities on the ground. One provincial, three district and twelve ward inception meetings were held, streamlining the role of each stakeholder, which created space for buy in and assisted the project team in strengthening and adding value to existing and newly identified Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and food and livelihood security initiatives. The awareness workshops have identified strategic implementing partners who have been given the mandate and support to effectively implement the identified initiatives. To this effect, a number of NGOs, extension and other development agencies have supported project initiatives, notably World Vision, SNV, TBT (Tchinyunyi Babili Trust), AREX (Department of Agricultural Research and Extension), Department of Veterinary Services, Matopos Research Station, ICRISAT (International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics), NUST and the PME (Provincial Monitoring and Evaluation) unit, among others.

A Provincial stakeholder brainstorming workshop on DRR that saw participation from a wide spectrum of players, was conducted in November 2006. The workshop demonstrated the central role played by ‘disaster-proofing’ development initiatives. Some of the identified initiatives included strengthening soil and water conservation, exploring more livelihood strategies away from agriculture, hazard awareness education and other forms of DRR so as to guard the gains made in food and livelihood security.

A participatory household DRR and food security and livelihoods baseline survey was conducted in the three Districts, from mid to late August 2007. The major challenges identified by communities in order of severity were: shortages of food and water (largely located in recurrent droughts), transport, unstable prices, sanitation and health problems (HIV and AIDS). The project needs to take these challenges into consideration when designing future livelihood protection and DRR interventions. A strong partnership involving Practical Action, Hlekweni Friends Rural Services, ORAP and World Vision has been created through mutually agreed dialogue and communication processes. Harmonization of rural development experiences, approaches and financial management practices has been achieved through joint institutional planning and technical support meetings. Joint Management Team (JMT) meetings involving

project managers take place every three months to review operations and the Steering Committee involving Directors of the three organizations meets every four months to provide strategic direction to the project.

Facilitation skills training for 40 District Training Team members was successfully conducted in 2007, preceding the community-based planning (CBP) trial run process carried out three months later. The CBP trial run was an important opportunity for testing the CBP manual and training District Training Teams (DTTs) from other districts to enable them to go and facilitate the production of community-based plans for their wards. Adopting a multi-stakeholder approach and creating space for other organizations such as World Vision and government departments was an effective strategy to spread knowledge on the CBP process.

Community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) Planning

CBP was piloted in Zimbabwe's Gwanda and Chimanimani Rural Districts in 2002. The CBP planning system seeks to engage poor and vulnerable groups in communities to improve community visioning of their future development priorities, improve the quality of services and influence resource allocation. These development plans will be integrated into local authority plans and subsequently into the central government budgeting cycle.

The benefits of conducting CBP in Zimbabwe are;

- Opportunities for promoting community empowerment and ownership in the development process.
- A reliable method for obtaining realistic and focused plans at ward level.
- Potential for integrating ward (micro) and local authority level (meso) plans.
- Harmonization and integration of plans of various actors at ward and district level.
- Identification of additional sources of revenue for implementing local plans.
- Opportunities for capacity building for institutions operating at sub-district level.
- Transparency in the selection and prioritization of projects at all levels.

- Opportunities for improved accountability during project and programme implementation. (Gumbo, 2007)

Stages in CBDRM planning

1. The first step was to conduct community leadership briefing meetings in the 12 wards. The meetings were held a week or two before the actual planning week. The CFT first met the community leadership and the ward committee. The objective was to explain the CBP process to the community leadership and get them to mobilize the different sections of the community. Full community participation enhances community ownership as people realize this is their process that demands local action and not only resources from outside.
2. The second step was community briefing. Here village heads called for village assembly meetings. The aim was to mobilize representatives of many different sections of the community. Two or three villages would attend one debriefing meeting whose duration ranged from 2-3 hours; therefore the CFT in each ward could do up to two debriefing meetings per day.

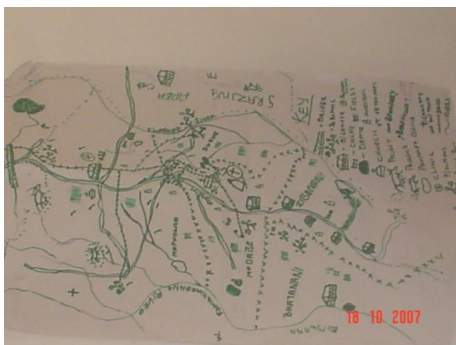
By the end of this meeting:

- The broad community in each village understood the background information on CBP, its objectives, the planning process and expected outputs
 - The broad community was committed to supporting an inclusive planning process (which prioritized the needs of all people including marginalized/vulnerable groups)
 - The main socio-economic groups were identified and each socio-economic group selected a representative to participate in the intensive planning process.
3. The third step involved collection of background information on the ward. This background information was collected by the CFT members between preplanning and the

actual planning week and pooled together at the beginning of the planning week so that it could be validated and updated in the planning sessions or any gaps in it could be identified and filled. Examples of information collected included:

- Basic statistics on the people who live in the community (number of people, number of households, number of people in different age groups, different ethnic groups).
- Infrastructural information: number and location of boreholes, number of houses with and without pit latrines, etc.
- Health records: disease patterns, understanding the main diseases/illnesses that people suffered from and when (e.g. malaria risk factors, pattern of infection, morbidity patterns in the rainy season and the health of the under 5s)
- Understanding soils and land capacities, understanding the main crops and varieties that people grow and the diseases they suffer from.
- Information on the service providers in the ward (government and non governmental organizations), their future focus, their direct community investment and finding out whether they would be present at the intensive planning .

4. The next step was the intensive community-based planning process. Crucial at this juncture was to present the findings of the pre-planning meeting concerning the different socio-economic groups identified by in the community. These were discussed and amended to develop a final list.



Community hazard risk mapping,
Madabe Ward, Mangwe District



Community hazard risk mapping, Natane
Ward, Bulilima District.



Technical backstopping... Practical Action
International DRR Project Coordinator
Pieter Van Den Ende closely following a CBDRM
planning workshop in Mangwe rural area, Zimbabwe.



Video case study during Livelihoods and DRR
training for DTT and CFT, Mangwe and
Bulilima Districts.



Participatory vulnerability and capacity
assessment in session, Madabe Ward.



Group work during livelihoods and DRR
training for the DTT and CFT, Gwanda District.

5. The community plan then took shape through the use of a variety of PRA tools. It was then compiled by a team chosen from the CFT, after which it would be presented back to the community for comments and revision. The plan would then be submitted to the Rural District Council and ready for implementation.

Community-based disaster risk management plans

Communities in the 12 wards, with the support of Practical Action, World Vision, Hlekweni and ORAP staff, as well as officials from the various government technical departments and relevant

RDCs, drew up 12 ward development plans that incorporated DRR initiatives. Among the livelihood initiatives identified in the plans, the following were prioritized by the community to receive support under the DRR project:

- Integrated nutrition and herbal gardens
- Fodder bank and stock feed initiatives
- Rehabilitation of three silted weirs
- Carpentry project
- Fence making project
- Drilling of 6 boreholes
- Jatropha woodlot project
- Reclamation of three gullies
- Local seed production and extension initiatives
- Rehabilitation of 12 water points
- Three goat breeding schemes, one in each of the three wards

Other initiatives selected by the communities included:

- DRR awareness raising campaigns, disaster management competitions in schools
- Drafting of 12 community-based emergency response plans
- Three District Disaster Risk Management plans
- Participatory VCAs (Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments)
- Exchange visits to other Districts in Zimbabwe where there is chronic drought.

Partnership dynamics in project implementation

Experience with the project has demonstrated the existence of, and the potential for, partnerships in at least five aspects/levels:

1. agency to agency (e.g. NGO to NGO)
2. NGO to Government Department
3. intra-agency partnerships between different units e.g. Relief and Development (World Vision), Reducing Vulnerability and Access to Infrastructure (Practical Action), etc.

4. agency to community/beneficiaries
5. community-level partnerships (community to community; household to community; household to household)

Several lessons have been learnt about partnership dynamics.

One of the key partnership issues arising from implementing the project has been the variance in core values, mission and vision of partners especially with regard to core partner business. For instance, NUST appears to be placing more emphasis on staff and curriculum development in DRR, Practical Action on action research, practical demonstrations and testing of DRR theories, whilst Northumbria University focuses more on staff development, outreach and academic research partnership with NUST. RDCs also appear to place emphasis on resource leveraging, community improvement and gaining mileage in implementing successful, innovative livelihood enhancement initiatives. Practical Action is well known for promoting self-reliance and community empowerment (rather than giving out handouts, which in some cases arguably promotes dependency).

Some partners are more relief and emergency response oriented, and this makes joint planning problematic, particularly with regard to choosing and prioritizing disaster management initiatives. When the project was launched, communities were heard asking what Practical Action would 'give' them in the project, as was happening with other agencies. Project and partner staff capacity has been a major challenge and this applies even to RDCs and government departments' staff. It has been apparent that most partner agency professionals involved in the project have only had development training, experience and exposure, without having zeroed in on disaster risk management. As a way of addressing this, the project has run first-time training sessions in DRR, livelihoods and VCAs for partner agencies, RDCs and relevant government extension staff. Village and ward level traditional leaders like chiefs, councilors and headmen have also received this training.

The legislative environment has also created partnership challenges, as different government ministries and departments have been mandated to preside over units that cover DRR, natural resource management, civil protection, national parks and wildlife, tourism, climate change, etc. For instance, the Civil Protection Unit (CPU), the highest ranking central government department dealing with disasters, is housed under the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and Housing Development, whilst the Environmental Management Authority (EMA), which also coordinates climate change issues, is housed under the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. Even though the CPU is given powers to coordinate emergency response initiatives, it has staff drawn from different agencies and is under-staffed to respond to hazards affecting the country. It also has staff capacity challenges in DRR that need redress.

Following disputed harmonized presidential and parliamentary elections held in March 2008, the government suspended field activities by NGOs for 7 months, during which the project lost vital partnership opportunities in implementing the livelihood initiatives identified by communities in the 12 community based plans. For instance, Practical Action, UNDP, UNOCHA, NUST and the University of Northumbria had planned to host a national DRR stakeholder workshop in Harare to discuss the state of disaster management in Zimbabwe and chart the way forward with regard to discussing the introduction of Disaster Management into the education curricula at all levels. The suspension saw the workshop postponed twice. By the time it was lifted in November 2008, all the different agencies were in a hurry to catch up with lost time by focusing on their primary or core business, and this derailed plans for the national workshop.

In the wake of tight government monitoring and policing of NGO and donor agency activities, a major partnership challenge is the association dilemma. In our project fact finding meetings with District and Provincial level authorities, we were thrice questioned about the choice of one of our implementing partners, ostensibly based on that agency's past political association. It later became apparent that this association had earned that agency a bad image with the authorities. As a result, agencies end up treading cautiously as they implement activities and choose partners. In some cases, they leave out critical aspects of their initiatives, even if such initiatives may be the most effective in addressing certain challenges faced by communities. For instance, in DRR training, one needed to

be very careful when talking about man-made disasters like those related to economic maladministration and political policies that entrench and reinforce vulnerability. On the other hand, such a tight environment also provided an opportunity for agencies to enmesh themselves in a mosaic of alliances, associations and partnerships that would enable them to implement more robust and innovative operational strategies.

Inter-agency partnership in DRR is resulting in the blending of approaches, ideas, expertise and implementing strategies, thereby bringing more insight and enhanced visioning for DRR livelihoods programming. For instance, in the DRR, livelihoods and VCA training for World Vision's Community Development Facilitators (CDFs) in Mangwe District, the facilitators were drawn from different sources: World Vision (2), Practical Action (2), NUST (1). At previous District and Provincial training sessions, staff from local CBOs and NGOs (EMA, PADET (Patriotic Development Trust), BBDA (Bulilima Business Development Association), TBT (Tchinyunyi Babili Trust), RDC and SNV) facilitated. The wealth of facilitation approaches enabled trainees to grasp the subject matter better and also to improve on their own facilitation skills as they later on went to train communities and groups involved in various livelihood strategies like gully reclamation, local seed multiplication and sand abstraction. There is also a partnership arrangement at inter-country level in which Practical Action's DRR Project Managers from Peru, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal meet every year to discuss progress towards attainment of project outputs. The first international project managers' meeting was held in Nepal (January 2007), the second in Sri Lanka (November – December 2007) and the third in Bangladesh (November 2008).

There have also been experiences of some agencies motivated primarily by organizational marketing in their attempts to forge collaborative arrangements with the project. Such instances have had potential to create tensions and conflict to the detriment of beneficiary communities. One agency proposed that the DRR project be twinned to their environmental management project in a different location in Zimbabwe. However, such an arrangement could not go through because of different goals being pursued and more so when it became clear that the agency's primary motive was marketing of its activities.

Pursuing a DRR thrust is not such an easy thing to do, even when dealing with some development practitioners and donor agencies. During one of the DRR training workshops, one of the participants quizzed how a risk reduction project could be of immediate benefit to thousands of families that were currently caught in the 2007-8 drought. This made it imperative for the project to set aside resources for emergency response as an extension of community-based plans that had been drafted. The current VCA data collection process is expected to yield information for use in drafting ward based and District Disaster Management plans that will also incorporate emergency response. What has also been coming out of frequent interactions is the need for us to consider how community-based approaches can be integrated with other approaches being used by other agencies.

It is government policy in Zimbabwe for every NGO to be assigned a parent Ministry under whose auspices it works. Practical Action has been assigned to the Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation (MYDGEC). This makes it potentially challenging since Practical Action is a technology-based NGO. Arguably, the organization could have been assigned to a more relevant technology-based Ministry, e.g. Science and Technology, in order to better follow and preserve the technology connection. Much however remains to be seen as this pairing unfolds; it could possibly provide some hidden opportunities to learn from new partnership experiences.

The project facilitated DRR competitions in 36 schools in Bulilima and Mangwe Districts. This was a first in the country and as such, there was hesitancy on the part of some agencies that were not clear about the link between Disaster Management and the DRR school competitions. The good thing is that school heads and coordinating teachers from the participating schools went through DRR training as well as joint competition planning workshops with Practical Action, ORAP and Hlekweni. One benefit of mutual partnership in this project was demonstrated during the government ban on NGO field activities, which happened when the schools and Practical Action had already set dates for the ward-level competitions, slated for mid-June 2008. Despite the ban, the 36 schools went on to conduct the DRR competitions, which generated a lot of interest in other Districts and with Ministry of Education authorities at Provincial level.

By the end of November 2008, various community groups had already started working on the livelihood initiatives identified in the community-based plans. Engagement in such livelihoods is also set to bring in varied forms of partnerships, at both community and meso levels. In this project, Practical Action and partners simply drove the DRR visioning and planning process; implementation support is open to any interested agency that is concerned with increasing the resilience of at-risk communities.

Discussion

We have seen how various actors have pooled resources and ideas to constellate around Disaster Management, even though starting from different premises. What has emerged as one of the greatest challenges to partnership in the DRR project has been the fact that the project adopts a risk reduction approach, whilst most partners are from the emergency response and relief schools. It has been a challenge to make communities see ‘tangible’ benefits of the DRR project, particularly in the earlier inception stages where the thrust was more on capacity enhancement. This does not compare favorably with, say, relief interventions, that immediately bring food and supplies to communities affected by disasters, particularly drought. As DFID (2004) has correctly pointed out, there is a perverse architecture of incentives stacked against DRR. It is generally a long-term, low-visibility activity with no guarantee of tangible results in the short term. Media interest is also very low, and getting partners to assist in this work is a tall order indeed, as agencies want a lot of credit and publicity in a world of contests over operational space and donor funding.

Considering the relatively recent nature of DRR approaches in Zimbabwe, there have been attempts to forge linkages with other DRR related projects running in the country for mutual learning and experience sharing. One such linkage has seen the DRR project representing Practical Action to the steering committee of a Government of Zimbabwe/GEF (Global Environmental Fund) project on Coping with Drought and Climate Change. This is a pilot project being implemented in Chiredzi, a District that has the same climatic conditions as the three project Districts. Whereas it looks appropriate to integrate climate change into DRR,

considering the fact that changes in climate affect the magnitude and frequency of natural hazards, there are however still technical discrepancies between DRR and climate change. As Schipper and Pelling (2006, p. 20) also observe, the time frames for reactive adaptations to climate change and disasters are distinct – disaster impacts are relatively immediate and concentrated, whereas the consequences of climate change may evolve, along with social change, over a long time scale. This creates partnership challenges, more so considering the fact that climate change policy is based on a specialized UN convention that requires global cooperation in order to function, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). On the other hand, DRR is guided by an international framework, (the Hyogo Framework for Action, 2005 – 2015), but enacted at the national or sub-national level.

On the other hand, the increasing interest in, and focus on, mainstreaming climate change has potential for development of new forms of partnership in reducing vulnerability of at-risk communities to external shocks. The uncertainty of climate change itself, perhaps better portrayed by the use of the ‘precautionary principle’³ justifiably calls for the involvement of multi-disciplinary agencies and teams to address the increasingly complex vulnerability context of at-risk communities. As part of this project’s attempts to gain more insight into the drought situation in the Districts, a year-long research has been instituted in two of the three Districts, focusing on drought coping strategies and how communities are adapting to the effects of climate change.

The complex and sensitive socio-political environment in Zimbabwean humanitarian work calls for project and partner staff capacity building in peace building and conflict management to make for more effective partnerships. This peace building and conflict management should be done at two levels: at community level and at development agency level, so that all levels or

³ The Precautionary Principle has been described as "When an activity raises threats of harm to the environment or human health, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically." Elements of the principle include taking precaution in the face of scientific uncertainty; exploring alternatives to possibly harmful actions; placing the burden of proof on proponents of an activity rather than on victims or potential victims of the activity... (The Science and Environmental Health Network, 2000).

spheres of interaction understand how their respective actions contribute to the overall context, within which they engage in their livelihoods. In relation to this, reference has already been made of how one of the project partners appeared to be under the scrutiny of the authorities for perceived past political involvement. LCP (Local Capacities for Peace) and Do No Harm training could be particularly useful, as it makes NGO staff conduct their duties fully aware of the potential of their actions to either promote peace or exacerbate conflict. One of the ways to address sensitive issues in a veiled manner has been observed in some training sessions where story codes⁴ are used in training communities on topics such as democratic leadership, the dangers of patronage and sleaze, and challenging decisions made by leaders. In some cases, interagency tensions can also be ameliorated through such training, making for improved work partnership arrangements. On the other hand, knowing *whom* to work with (for example, women, traditional leaders, or indigenous NGOs) is as important as knowing *how* to work with them. Sometimes the wrong capacities may be enhanced, or the capacities of the wrong people may be strengthened, as in the case of freelance militia in Somalia or Hutu militia in the Goma camps (Smillie, 2001).

Intervention in DRR and climate change issues is happening against a background of increasing complexity of hazard risk patterns. This is what some sociologists have branded ‘life-politics’. These state that ‘life-politics’ are an evident part of a number of new social movements, each of which strives to introduce new sources of meaning to life itself, as collective disenchantment exhausts other sources of meaning, like faith in technical progress (see Offe, 1985; Habermas, 1981; Cohen, 1985). Partnerships in DRR and climate change are therefore going to be increasingly under pressure from ‘pushes and shoves’ by the various donors and social movements who are also constellating around these specific themes that are making global headlines, capturing the news and also drawing the attention of donor agencies.

⁴ A story code can be explained as use of an imaginary story like a fable in enabling trainees to identify issues that affect them on a daily basis without being confrontational or offensive, e.g. a story can be about an undemocratic kraalhead or development officer of long ago who introduced unjust practices. Participants would then be identifying bad things about that development officer’s approaches. By so doing, they are also identifying and addressing current, similar challenges that they may be facing.

Much has been written in recent years about the coping strategies that people employ in times of trouble—efforts to reduce their vulnerability and to recover as quickly as possible. Considerably less thought has been given to the coping strategies of local organizations in an emergency. They, too, have capacities and vulnerabilities that may be exploited or become exploitative as an emergency deepens. For example, outsiders frequently view the activities of local NGOs as opportunistic and donor-driven. This has implications for operationalizing partnerships in humanitarian work. Much capacity support still needs to be given to local CBOs and NGOs that the project is working with, like TBT and PADET. When local NGOs have enhanced capacity, they can be in a better position to challenge certain decisions and directives made by donors, albeit to a limited extent.

In some cases agencies may take sides or become corrupt, thereby inciting the wrath of donors, or even getting written off by donors. But it is worth considering the issue from another angle. Just as international NGOs are obliged to do things in accordance with donor demands, in some circumstances they may have little choice but to appease authorities in order to create space for themselves in their work with local communities. This is more so when an agency seeks to intervene in politically highly charged locations, though this is the exception rather than the rule. This can create conflict in partnerships where other partners are not willing to compromise or give in to authorities. In some cases, an agency that has managed to weave its way through the complicated maze of bureaucratic complexities may be labeled as being supportive of a particular political side, and this creates tension or conflict in partnership arrangements.

Reference has been made to the annual Practical Action international DRR Project Managers' meetings. Experience sharing and mutual learning during these meetings, though useful, is also bringing to light the dynamics of attempting to compare the disaster risk patterns and experiences of countries fraught with different hazards. In Zimbabwe, the project focuses on drought mitigation, in Sri Lanka flooding, in Peru earthquakes, in Nepal flooding and in Bangladesh flooding and landslides. The Zimbabwe project is benefiting a lot from the experiences of some of the countries but the major challenge to this information sharing and technical partnership is that slow on-set disasters like droughts involve relatively less visible and slow, longer-term

mitigation strategies, which, when juxtaposed against responses to the rapid-onset disasters in other countries, may not capture donor attention and media coverage.

The conducting of DRR competitions in schools was part of the disaster risk communication strategies that were open to the project. In most conventional or mainstream disaster risk management, disaster risk communication continues to be confined to formally recognized institutional arrangements like the mass media. This state of affairs therefore justifies the project's approach to attempt to establish DRR partnerships with schools, thereby enhancing disaster risk communication. Perhaps more interesting in the schools competition was the way in which other players were trying to decipher the relationship between disasters and schools. An interesting outcome of competitions brainstorming by school heads was their realization that prizes for winning schools had to be DRR related, like integrated nutrition and herbal gardens in schools, gulley reclamation initiatives, rehabilitation of water points, and drilling of boreholes. The awarding of such prizes will bring many and newer partners into the whole DRR intervention arena, such as those who drill boreholes, health (for nutrition and herbal gardens) and EMA (gulley reclamation). When a natural hazard strikes, children are among the most vulnerable population group, especially those attending school in times of disaster.

In all societies, children represent hope for the future. Schools instil cultural values and pass on both traditional and conventional knowledge to the younger generation. Protecting children from natural hazards requires two distinct yet inseparable priorities for action: disaster risk education and school safety. Making disaster risk education part of national primary and secondary school curricula, which is one of the targets for this project, fosters awareness and better understanding of the immediate environment in which children and their families live and work. For instance, on a beach in Thailand, when the December 2004 Tsunami struck, British schoolgirl Tilly Smith saved many lives by urging people to flee the shore: her geography class in Britain had enabled her to recognize the first signs of a tsunami. At the same time, Anto, a young boy on the Indonesian island of Simeulue had learned from his grandfather what to do when an earthquake strikes. He and all the other islanders ran to higher ground before the tsunami struck, sparing all but eight members of the community (ISDR, 2007).

A major issue with this project has to do with results. As Smillie (2001) also asserts, many donor agencies today are, quite rightly, placing much more emphasis on results than on inputs and outputs. For example, reducing child mortality in a camp is more important than the means used to do it. Old emphases on measuring, for example, management of an inoculation program have changed in favor of a hard look at whether the inoculations accomplished their purpose. This makes sense. But where capacity building is concerned, as is happening with the DRR project, the intended results will inevitably be long-term in nature. They will be harder to correlate with a specific intervention. Relief agencies, after all, are expected to save lives, not to build the capacity of local organizations. There has been an opinion by some implementing agencies concentrating mainly on relief and emergency response who have indicated that resources are being ‘squandered’ by running DRR, Livelihoods and VCA workshops instead of saving lives.

Conclusion

The quotation at the beginning of this paper indicates the evolution of knowledge on the nature of the earth through the centuries, reflecting how our life worlds and lenses are shaped by such evolution. Interpretations and practice in disaster management appears to have been flat, round and eventually web-shaped, owing to increasing knowledge of hazards, disasters and associated risks. Maybe someone will one day decipher a shape other than the web. The multifarious nature and increased sophistication of hazards world wide makes interdisciplinary action imperative. This requires careful study and understanding of the partnership dynamics at play, as determined by agency mandate, experiences, mission, values, the context, nature of hazard and so many other factors. Although many development players get involved in disaster management from various angles and vantage points, current developments demand that climate change be mainstreamed into development and disaster risk management initiatives. This in turn generates a mosaic of partnerships, interlinkages, collaborative actions and methods of inquiry and research in a bid to make disaster-resilient communities.

It is arguable that as more and more players come onto the disaster management platform, there is a need to innovatively manage both the disaster risk and partnership arrangements. There is

also a need to further explore how to maintain and/or build disaster management partnerships in an environment of shrinking democratic space at all levels. There is a need to determine the extent to which NGOs can involve themselves in purely ‘humanitarian work’ that does not directly or indirectly touch on ‘human rights’, which has been a hot spot with many regimes that become uncomfortable when it comes to addressing man-made hazard events and situations that contribute immensely to vulnerability, at the same time lowering community resilience to hazards.

The transboundary nature of climate change hazard risks has already started to incite a lot of actors around the notions of ‘climate change and DRR justice’, in as much as there is ‘ecological justice’ with its concomitant shifting of blame between North and South, developed and developing, industrialized and industrializing, heavy polluters and light polluters, etc. As Rajae(2000) states, in disaster management, we need the realization that our global village will not survive if we do not learn to live together and break the barriers that our particular imagined communities have created around us. What is positive about globalization is that it has made the notion of living and working together imperative and therefore unavoidable.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bongo, P. P., 2007. *Inquiry into community based disaster risk management in the context of climate change: the case of rural Zimbabwe* (chapter in e-book) NUI and Irish Aid. Available at: University of Galway <http://www.nuigalway.ie/dern/ebook.html>

Cohen, J.L. (1985) 'Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements,' *Social Research*, vol. 52, no. 4 (Winter).

DFID., 2004. *Disaster risk reduction: a development concern. A study on links between disaster risk reduction, poverty and development*. East Anglia: ODI.

Gumbo, D., 2007. *Community based core facilitation team guidelines*. Practical Action Southern Africa: Harare.

Habermas, J (1981) 'New Social Movements,' *Telos*, no. 49: 33–7.

Harries-Jones, P., 2004. The risk society: tradition, ecological order and time-space acceleration. In M. Blaser, H. A. Feit, and G. McRoe, eds. 2004. *Indigenous peoples, life projects and globalization*. London and New York: Zed books. Ch. 16.

Ingold, T., 2000. *The perception of the environment: essays in livelihood, dwelling and skill*. London and New York: Routledge.

ISDR., 2007. *Disaster risk reduction begins at school: 2006 – 2007 World disaster reduction campaign*. Geneva: UN.

Offe, C. (1985) 'New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics,' *Social Research*, vol. 52, no. 4. (Winter).

Rajaei, F., 2000. *Globalization on trial; the human condition and the information civilization*. Canada: International Development Research Centre.

Schipper, L., & Pelling, M., 2006. Disaster risk, climate change and international development: scope for, and challenges to, integration. In *Disasters, 2006.*, 30 (1). ODI: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 19 – 38.

Smillie, I. ed., 2001. *Patronage or partnership: local capacity building in humanitarian cases*. US: Kumarian Press Inc.