

Chapter 7.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

7.1 Overview

It is not possible to make a definitive judgment on the effectiveness and impact of the recovery processes after the 2000 floods. A wide range of agencies undertook lessons learned exercises looking at their responses to the 2000 and 2001 floods. After the 2000 floods the DEC agencies undertook a major evaluation of their relief and early rehabilitation work (Cosgrave 2001). Remarkably little evaluative activity has been done for the recovery period. An exception to this was the independent evaluation of the USAID cash relief scheme (Abt 2002). There has been little effort by any agency to pull together the documentation on recovery.

However, Mozambique's recovery from the 2000 floods appears to have been broadly effective and generally well handled. Recovery programs have provided an opportunity for investments in upgraded services and infrastructure (Cosgrave 2001). Evidence from the community survey illustrates many ways in which some affected populations have been assisted, albeit somewhat passively, to resume their livelihoods. Increased social capital was the most important positive aspect for affected populations and was achieved through the rehabilitation and construction of social infrastructures giving access to schools and health facilities. There are some indications that some of the new social structures created, associations, community committees and resettlement areas, will strengthen the safety net for future disasters, but it is too early to state categorically that this will be a lasting effect of post-emergency intervention.

On the negative side, asset depletion has been neglected in the post-emergency period. This is a serious problem due to the fragile nature of the rural economies.

The 2000 floods in Mozambique demonstrated clearly that it is possible to make an impact and carry out extensive recovery activities when the disaster is high profile and the amount of money donated to the affected populations is large. In lower profile emergencies, all the donated money is usually absorbed during the expensive relief period, leaving little room for maneuver in the recovery period. This was not the case in Mozambique where resources were pledged and continued to arrive over the two-year post-flood period.

In terms of Mozambique's development of its disaster preparedness and mitigation plans, much will depend on the level of government and donor commitment. The importance of this area is shown when there is a devastating disaster of the kind experienced in 2000, but institutional memories can be short and other priorities may dominate, particularly in economic and political areas. It is also a question of whether disaster management issues can be maintained as priorities when government budgets are likely to be under increasing pressure.

7.2 Lessons from the community survey

The NGOs best placed to carry out effective recovery programs were those already working in an area. If "new" international NGOs can establish relationships with agencies already active in an area, the likelihood of the interventions having a sustainable impact is much higher. Time should be taken in the recovery period to identify partners, establish relationships with the local authorities, and identify key capacity building needs. The laying of firm groundwork will pay dividends in terms of the quality of the intervention.

Opportunities for capacity building were missed both within communities and with local authorities. Agencies' output-driven agendas focused on the houses, the health center, or the wells. By not involving local authorities in budgetary and planning processes, many of the District Administrations emerged from the floods with little or no knowledge of how to face the next disaster. These issues need to be seriously addressed by agencies intervening in post-emergency situations and should become part of a standard package of interventions.

Although asset loss is recognized as one of the major problems faced by households post-emergency, there is still reluctance among agencies to replace capital items for individual households. Capital items were distributed to associations or groups of households but generally not to individuals. The one example where capital was replaced directly, e.g., cash distribution in Chokwe, the results were positive and households were able to restart businesses and repay loans. There needs to be further discussion about the barriers to asset replacement.

Recovery interventions should take into account the importance of social capital and explicitly work towards enhancing social capital in affected communities. Positive examples were seen during the field work; in the new resettlement areas of Marracuene where resident committees were beginning to organize the "new" communities; in the associations formed by Vukoxa to guarantee the care of the elderly within the community; and, in the farming associations formed in Nova Mambone to encourage innovation in farming practices. These measures may change and improve the social safety nets available to households, if they are sustained after the initial input from external agencies. The building of schools and health posts with recovery money also positively reinforces social capital in previously under-resourced areas.

The lack of transparency and sharing of information created a culture of passive acceptance and a climate of misinformation. During the 2000 floods this did not result in major conflicts, but could become an explosive situation in the future. Agencies involved in post-emergency interventions should explicitly recognize the need for improved communication with beneficiaries and take measure to promote a culture of openness.

Breaking the isolation of the rural communities through the provision of roads and bridges may be judged at a later date to be the single most important, long-term achievement of the post-emergency interventions. The importance of infrastructure construction and rehabilitation should not be underestimated when preparing contingency plans and developing a set of interventions to be considered post-emergency.

In isolated areas, the influx of new ideas introduced during a stressful period seems to have changed some of the social behavior patterns, due probably to increased exposure to other ideas and to the external agencies' insistence of specifically targeting women. New patterns have been generated. In rural areas exposure to outside ideas was seen as fundamental to change.

Although asset loss was a serious blow to households, the improvement in the houses of people displaced through the floods has had a lasting, positive psychological effect on the beneficiaries. Without fail people were appreciative of the improved living conditions.

In the recovery period there was more time to allow for consultation. Consultation improved the nature of the interventions in this period, but participation leading to empowerment was rare, mainly due to the lack of transparency and equity between negotiating bodies. Government and the agencies held the balance of power and were not willing to openly discuss development needs and the resources available to carry out the interventions.