



January 2017

Assessment of Kenya's preparedness to disasters caused by natural hazards

Floods, drought and disease outbreak

Briefing note

In March 2016, Development Initiatives was commissioned by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) to conduct a political economy study on Kenya's preparedness for three natural disasters: droughts, floods and disease outbreaks.

The aims of this study are to: 1) provide evidence on DFID's preparedness in the wider context of El Niño preparedness; 2) compare this with the wider system of preparedness to flood, drought and disease outbreaks in Kenya; and 3) make a political economy analysis of decision-making on emergency preparedness in this context.

This briefing note summarises the findings from the assessment of Kenya's preparedness to natural disasters: floods, droughts and disease outbreaks.

This research has been funded by UK aid from the UK government. However, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

Summary

This briefing note summarises key findings from a report on Kenya's preparedness for three types of natural disasters: droughts, floods and disease outbreaks. It brings together documentation and feedback on how Kenya is prepared for these natural disasters on a governance, legal and financial level. We assess preparedness at the subnational level through case studies in two counties: Mandera and Migori.

This study began in March 2016 and forms part of a study that assessed the Department for International Development's (DFID's) response to El Niño 2015 in Kenya. It ties in with an analysis of the political economy of decision-making on emergency preparedness in the country.

Through key informant interviews and focus group discussions, we spoke to 111 respondents at the national (46) and subnational levels (65). These ranged from Members of Parliament (MPs), Members of the County Assembly, national and subnational government employees, donors, United Nations (UN) agencies, international non-governmental organisations, academia, local organisations, research institutes, media, community leaders, women groups and members of the community.

Key findings

- **Legal framework and political will.** There are no existing legal frameworks in place guiding the country's disaster preparedness. There appears to be lack of political will to prioritise this. With the lack of guiding principles, coordination of preparedness across the different disasters is not strong. We found one recent standard operating procedure (SOP)¹ for disaster preparedness at the national level but could not ascertain its usefulness or uptake.
- **Culture of preparedness.** The country lacks a culture of preparedness: preparedness is much more reactive than proactive.
- **Multiple coordination platforms.** There are multiple coordination platforms across the various actors that are perceived as useful but rely only on good relationships to work. We find indications of political competition for power among these agencies. That said, drought preparedness appears much better coordinated than flood and disease preparedness.
- **Budget allocations for disaster preparedness.** Budget allocations for disaster preparedness appear to be increasing, particularly at the international level (through aid). There are amounts of allocations at the national and subnational budgets though these could be increased to meet demands. Kenya contributes the highest annual premium (US\$ 9 million/KES 900 million) to the Africa Risk Capacity (ARC), which is an insurance cover against drought. Though it has not received any pay-out yet, this investment should be better promoted. We found little understanding of ARC among our respondents.
- **Disaster preparedness at county-level.** In counties (23 out of the total 47 counties) where the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) operates, disaster preparedness is much better coordinated.
- **Community preparedness at the subnational level.** There are examples of community preparedness at the subnational level. In Mandera, the county management disaster risk reduction (CMDRR) process enables beneficiaries to inform preparedness processes. In Migori County, communities have organised themselves to build resilience through women self- help groups, community drills, community disaster champions, flood management Committees, and community awareness meetings.
- **Gender inclusion and participation in disaster preparedness.** In the two case study counties, there is demonstration of gender inclusion and participation in preparedness. In Mandera County, it is a requirement that CMDRR has 30% women representation. In Migori County, women in flood prone areas have formed self-help groups to build their resilience by de-silting the rivers and selling the sand to constructors.
- **Data and early warning information.** Access to data on disasters, risks and weather information does not seem to be a key challenge in Kenya. The existence of various systems such as (Famine Early Warnings System Network, INFORM Index for Risk Management and meteorological information and services from Kenya Meteorological Department help to address the existing data gaps.

Key recommendations

- A multi-stakeholder approach should be adopted in promoting the draft disaster risk management law. This should include representatives from human and animal health, academia, beneficiaries and the media. Donors should invest in advocacy towards putting the law in place. While some UN agencies like the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) are investing in this, more support will help fast-track and strengthen the process.
- Develop a strategy with suitable timelines to build the political will among decision-makers and policy implementers to prioritise disaster preparedness.
- Adopt an NDMA-like approach for all the common disasters that will feed into a higher level coordinating institution. These disaster-specific agencies will have systems that respond to the national and subnational level.
- The Government of Kenya together with implementing agencies should develop SOPs for the different types of natural disasters, which should be updated on a regular basis. Besides this, sensitisation and awareness will contribute to promoting preparedness culture
- An assessment of how the different financial instruments funding preparedness interact and which instruments would have greater impact on preparedness planning. These instruments would need to be promoted as fit for purpose under a 'no-regrets' approach. Government and development partners should increase awareness of the ARC.
- At the subnational level, better government budget allocation and timely disbursement will ensure better preparedness and response. This will also help substitute allocations from the national government and non-state actors.
- County government officials should benefit from knowledge strengthening on: disaster and resilience measurement, climate change dynamics, modeling, disaster response triggers and thresholds. This would typically fall under capacity building provided by UN agencies.
- Disaster preparedness institutions at national and international levels should explore ways of further strengthening women's participation in disaster preparedness at policy level.
- Joining-up timely data from the national surveys with what NGOs and other non-state actors collect will help to make data and accessibility to data more interoperable and more up to date for use.

Endnote

¹ The NDMU developed this in 2014. SOPs are useful in: providing a list of major executive actions involved in responding to disasters and necessary measures needed for preparedness, response and relief; indicating various actions that should be taken and by which actors within their sphere of responsibilities – linking up with their contingency plans; ensuring that all concerned actors and agencies know the precise actions required of them at each stage of the response and that all actions are closely and continuously coordinated.

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