

Pilot in Mozambique: dealing with climate change

Mozambique is a country very prone to disasters. Hazards vary, depending on the geographical location of the provinces. Mostly, disasters are caused by phenomena or events with a social, economic, environmental, meteorological or hydrological touch. Drought, floods, cyclones, plagues, pests, burnings, landslides, epidemics (including HIV and aids) and in February a severe earthquake: the occurrence of disasters and emergency situations in Mozambique is on the increase.

For the Mozambique Red Cross Society disaster preparedness and response are therefore clear priorities. Because the capacity of communities in disaster prone areas to cope with emergencies is poor – mainly due to factors contributing to their vulnerability such as poverty and low levels of agricultural production – the Red Cross started community-based disaster preparedness projects some five years ago. In 2005, these have been complemented by a pilot project on climate change in the province of Gaza. Gaza was chosen because of its vulnerability to a diversity of climatic hazards, because monitoring of the project could effectively be guaranteed and because of the existence of another, complementary, Red Cross disaster preparedness project. Receiving financial and technical support from the Netherlands Red Cross and the RC/RC Climate Centre, the pilot focuses on developing preparedness in the face of an increasingly dangerous climate.

Achievements

The first things that have been done, were the designing of the exact content of the pilot and the drawing up of an activity plan

for the first year. Also, since linking climate change and disaster preparedness is new to the country and the national Red Cross society, several induction workshops have been conducted, facilitated by consultants from the Netherlands Red Cross and the World Bank.

Two of these were held at national level, where participants were large stakeholders such as the National Institute for Disaster Management, the Ministry of Environmental Affairs, the National Meteorological Institute and Red Cross staff members. Another three workshops were held at district level and two more at community level. Here, local government officials and Red Cross staff attended, but also members of the targeted communities such as community leaders, Red Cross volunteers and other area inhabitants.

Four people who took part in one of the workshops were later, separately, interviewed on climate change and disaster preparedness. The results of this small sample (see table below) of course are not representative, but it is interesting to see (the convergence in) the responses given. Also, the recommendations these people make on how to create more awareness, coincide with some of the activities the pilot will actually entail, such as distributing posters, pamphlets and brochures.

As far as other achievements within the pilot setting go, two Climate Change Officers have been recruited last May. One is based at the Red Cross headquarters in Mozambique, the other at Gaza's provincial branch. Both officers are also focal points for the disaster risk reduction project.

Where do we go from here?

The Red Cross is one of Mozambique's pioneers in developing community-based activities related to climate change and disaster risk reduction. This means however, that scientific knowledge is also and still insufficiently present within parts of the organisation itself, posing a challenge

that needs to be met. Other objectives for the near future are:

- to conduct a vulnerability and capacity assessment on a short-term basis (August 2006), incorporating issues that relate to climate change;
- to develop activities related to climate change, as part of an integrated approach covering also existing Red Cross programmes on for instance health, water, sanitation, HIV and aids, bearing in mind the prevalence of the various community needs as well as the current absolute poverty;
- to improve the coordination with other stakeholders and relevant institutions, which includes the sharing of experiences and ensuring scientific support from researchers and universities for actions and climate change views promoted and held by the Red Cross;
- to design awareness tools such as audio-visual materials as suggested by the target communities themselves.

Furthermore, the Mozambique Red Cross feels the need to conduct working visits to countries with a vast experience in the area of climate change and risk reduction, such as Vietnam or the Philippines, for an *in house* learning process and the sharing of experiences.

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Summary of interviews on climate change, conducted in Mozambique (Gaza province) on July 13th 2006

People interviewed ¹	When did you first hear about climate change?	What was your understanding of climate change before the workshop?	What was your understanding of climate change after the workshop?	Do you think it is possible to revert the current climate change process?	What have you done regarding the issue of climate change?	Do you think it is easy for community members to understand the message?	Could you mention things occurring that evidently point to climate change?	Do you have any recommendations to improve the current climate change activities?
# 1	At the induction workshop held in the context of the climate change pilot in August 2005; there, the scientific explanation was given	Thought it was a supernatural phenomenon	Thinks it is global warming caused by the concentration of gasses in the atmosphere	No	Has on an informal basis been sharing acquired knowledge with family members, friends and colleagues	Some people understand it immediately, others are still reluctant; they will need more information	Frequent and increasingly severe disaster emergency situations such as the 2000 / 2001 floods, and the fact that the agricultural season is changing a lot	Integrate the topic with other Red Cross programmes, to ensure more comprehensive action; also, support materials such as posters, pamphlets and brochures need to be developed
# 2	Same as above	Thought that frequent disasters only occurred on other continents, namely Asia and Europe, given the pictures seen on television	Thinks the increasing number of disasters and the fact that pests linger on longer in specific periods of the year, are caused by climate change	No, people and especially future generations should be sensitised and educated, to enable them to cope with phenomena related to climate change; this education should have a multiplying effect	Has been sharing knowledge with children encountered while participating in Red Cross HIV and aids projects: orphans and minor heads of households	Some people will consider the messages put forward, due to the real and noticeable evidence of climate change; others will not	Floods, droughts, the very 'cold weather' parts of Mozambique have been experiencing, changes in the rainy season and in April the unforeseen occurrence of hail in Chókwe district	There is need for more information on climate change by means of posters, brochures, and articles translated into local languages; there is a need to conduct more workshops also
# 3	Same as above	Thought it was a supernatural strength because there wasn't any explanation regarding the issue	The climate is changing; the pilot project provides explanations as well as evidence for this	No, there is a need for further clarification and raising awareness, for the climate will not be what it once was	Has been promoting debates on the issue during various gatherings with community members; has probably discussed the topic with more than fifty people	Believes it is easy, because of the real evidence of the phenomenon; however, there is a continuing need to sensitise people	Climate change is reflected in the quality and quantity of crops; although the interviewee, as a community leader, has been praying to the ancestors for rainfall, and although the community complies with all rituals, there is still no rain	People need to be sensitised further and need advice on measures to take in order to minimize the effects of climate change

¹ People interviewed were the president and vice-president of the district commission in Chókwe district of the Mozambique Red Cross (in Gaza province, number 1 and 2 respectively), a community leader (3) and a local Red Cross volunteer (4).

# 4	Same as above	Did not know how to interpret what was happening	It is a new phenomenon that people need to learn about	No	Has actively participated in five community meetings on climate change; in total about 125 people attended	Some understand, others do not; it is not easy to sensitise people because changes do not occur suddenly; there is a need to insist on raising awareness therefore	Rain no longer falls on a regular basis, severely constraining agricultural production	More sensitisation is required, visual materials need to be developed, scientific articles should be translated in Portuguese and knowledge needs to be shared
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