Stories of Impact

A series highlighting achievements in disaster risk management

Identifying Risks and Guiding Recovery Efforts in Malawi

REGION: AFRICA
FOCUS: RISK REDUCTION,
            RESILIENT RECOVERY
COUNTRY: MALAWI

RESULTS:

- Strengthened the GFDRR–supported open source Malawi Spatial Data Platform (MASDAP) GeoNode by adding additional datasets, in partnership with Malawi's Department of Disaster Management Affairs and other government departments. Data from this GeoNode was used during the 2015 flood recovery efforts and to estimate the disaster's impact on poverty.

- Improved risk information through community mapping exercises, including mapping nearly 450 residential areas and collecting more than 15,000 waypoints in Nsanje alone.

- Following the severe January flooding, a GFDRR–supported post–disaster assessment helped inform $80 million in World Bank financing to help restore agricultural livelihoods, reconstruct critical public infrastructure, enhance food security, and improve disaster response and recovery capacity.

In January 2015, Malawi experienced some of the most devastating flooding in its history. In the aftermath, the Government of Malawi conducted a post–disaster needs assessment (PDNA), with support from the European Union (EU), the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), the United Nations (UN), and the World Bank.

Armed with the assessment's findings, which estimated damage and loss from the January flooding at approximately $335 million and recovery and reconstruction needs at approximately $494 million, the Government of Malawi is now preparing a recovery framework to help prioritize and implement recovery and reconstruction investments, with support from the EU, GFDRR, the UN, and the World Bank. Funding has been provided for both the PDNA and the recovery framework through the African Caribbean Pacific–European Union Natural Disaster Risk Reduction Program.

GFDRR
Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery

CONTEXT:

Malawi frequently suffers from heavy rains and storms that result in flash floods, which devastates livelihoods and set back development gains. GFDRR has supported the country to identify and mitigate disaster risk, including flooding hazards.

In January 2015, Malawi experienced some of the most devastating flooding to ever hit the country, with the government declaring a state of disaster in 17 out of 28 districts, primarily in the southern region. Assessments project the flooding could impact GDP growth, as well as the potential for up to 21% more people driven into poverty.

APPROACH:

Aiming to identify disaster risks and strengthen disaster risk management efforts in Malawi, in 2014, GFDRR worked with Malawi's Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA) and other partners to strengthen the MASDAP GeoNode by adding additional datasets.

GFDRR also facilitated local community mapping activities in Nsanje and Chikwawa. Missing map data was collected to identify at-risk infrastructure and other assets for future flood preparedness and response. This data was uploaded onto OpenStreetMap and made available on the GeoNode to inform disaster preparedness efforts.

After the January 2015 flooding disaster, DoDMA conducted a comprehensive assessment of damage, loss, and recovery needs, with support from GFDRR and partners. Following on the PDNA's findings, the government is now preparing a recovery framework, which:

- Draws on the model and methodology in the Disaster Recovery Framework guide, prepared in partnership by the EU, UN, and the World Bank, with support from GFDRR;
- Serves as a single recovery planning platform;
- Prioritizes short, medium, and longer-term recovery investments; and
- Aligns donor contributions and other partner programs to financial needs.

NEXT STEPS:

Malawi's recovery framework has become the focal point of the Government of Malawi's multi-sectoral recovery planning and implementation efforts. The framework will be launched in October 2015, and with continued GFDRR participation, a robust monitoring and evaluation system will be established to track and update recovery priorities. Upon completion, the recovery framework will serve to prioritize interventions, steer investments toward financial gaps, and inform the government's recovery budget allocations. In addition, the World Bank, with GFDRR support, will continue to implement the four-year Malawi Floods Emergency Recovery Project, which was informed by the PDNA.

"To operationalize the findings and recommendations of the post-disaster needs assessment, the government is aligning recovery planning and implementation processes through the development of a coordinated Recovery Framework."
– Saulos Klaus Chilima, Vice President, Malawi

LESSONS LEARNED:

Coordinating national, district, and local priorities is essential for effective recovery. Following a disaster situation, it can be difficult to coordinate recovery across national, district, and local levels. To prevent this, the DoDMA convened a series of workshops, with support from GFDRR and the World Bank, to define a central recovery vision, objectives, and funding priorities for all 17 flood-affected districts.

Identifying risks prior to a disaster can speed up recovery efforts. Recognizing how open data and community mapping exercises can reduce Malawi's vulnerability to natural hazards, GFDRR launched the open source MASDAP GeoNode in 2012. These efforts paid off when the data from this GeoNode, strengthened in 2014, was used during the government's 2015 flood recovery.