

Community based flood risk management: experiences and challenges in Malawi

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Introduction

Community-based disaster risk management (CB-DRM) presented a shift from a traditional ‘command and control’ approaches to more ‘people-centred’, participatory approaches. They have proven to be especially important in the developing world.

The PhD study was originally designed to examine **community-based flood risk management (CB-FRM)** approaches in **Malawi**. In order to refine the objectives of the proposed PhD study, a **scoping field visit** to the **Lower Shire Valley in Malawi (Chikwawa and Nsanje)** was made in April 2016. The visit was undertaken with the **aims** of **understanding** the **current** (CB-FRM) practices in the Valley, **establishing trust** with local stakeholders and **scoping** the PhD research.

This poster describes the progress achieved over the past year, provides the **current status of CB-FRM in Malawi** and outlines **the area of focus** for the remaining time of the PhD period.

Methods & Fieldwork

The fieldwork was based on **qualitative research methods**, where following the **decentralised institutional structure for disaster management**, researchers organised **11 FGDs** (focus group discussions). In addition, **field observation** and a **short survey** was done.

The consulted **stakeholder groups** were:

- Local government: District Civil Protection Committee (DCPC)
- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)
- Local communities: Village Civil Protection Committees (VCPCs)

Preparedness



Response



Mitigation

Relief

Figure 2: Examples of community based projects
(Source: author’s own, April 2016)

Fieldwork findings

- High awareness of vulnerability and range of coping mechanisms
- Numerous challenges for CB-FRM (e.g. ownership, participation, sustainability, funding, quality, cooperation)
- Empowerment for sustainability
- Decentralised institutional system needs improvement
- Consulted stakeholder groups have different views of the existing CB-FRM
- Still areas affected by hazards that are not beneficiaries of projects
- Inadequate participation

Future focus on local knowledge

The fieldwork demonstrated that **local knowledge (LK)** is a **valuable, largely untapped source** for CB-FRM. The current research is largely oriented towards documentation of available knowledge, **without further specifications on how its use could be enhanced in practical approaches and policies**. Furthermore, there is an **increased call for building evidence base for LK by coupling it with scientific methods**.

Hence, this PhD **aims** to:

- Identify the range of LK in the Lower Shire Valley
- Develop an understanding of the current use of LK by different stakeholders
- Build the evidence base for LK by using available scientific tools
- Explore barriers and opportunities for the enhanced use of LK

Flood
experience?

Your
capacity?

Your
resource?

Your
needs?



What
problems?

What
solutions?

Who helps
and how?

Who’s
responsibility?

Figure 1: FGDs in Nsanje and Chikwawa District
(Source: author’ own, April 2016)

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