

NGO Initiatives in Risk Reduction

Case Study no. 5

Building capacity to deal with drought

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Name of NGO(s): Save the Children UK, Save the Children Canada

Location: Ethiopia

Date(s): Phase 1 1996-1998; Phase II 1998-2002

Hazard(s): drought, environmental degradation

Key words: food security, early warning, capacity building

Background and aims

Chronic and acute food insecurity continues to be Ethiopia's most serious problem, resulting from drought, poverty, environmental degradation and population pressure. When the present Government of Ethiopia came to power in 1991, it set up the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) to improve disaster management. The DPPC's main aim is to reduce vulnerability to disasters by addressing the root causes of famine and strengthening the link between relief and development. Its policy is to develop employment generation schemes, mainly using relief food, and to strengthen famine early warning systems. However, there is an ongoing process of decentralisation in Ethiopia, and the DPPC's capacity to manage disasters at decentralised levels is weak.

Recognizing this weakness and with an interest to address specific capacity building needs, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) approached the DPPC and Save the Children Canada and UK in early 1995 to discuss a long-term programme of institutional support to the DPPC. The result is this project.

The project's overall aim is to strengthen the institutional capacity of the DPPC, at decentralised levels, to prepare for and prevent disasters. Its objective is to 'provide a model of good practice, encourage policy debates and, ultimately, provide alternatives towards improved disaster management in Ethiopia.'

Phase I (1996-98) provided training, action research and logistics support. Phase II (ongoing) is a more intensive process of training, piloting (of employment generation

schemes and early warning systems), demonstrating, documenting, and providing further logistical inputs.

The specific objectives are:

- *Policy familiarisation*: supporting the DPPC to conduct familiarisation exercises about the National Policy on Disaster Prevention and Management among relevant institutions at decentralised levels in vulnerable areas.
- *Early warning (EW)*: demonstrating better data collection systems at community level and upwards; improving the capacity of EW units at the decentralised levels to communicate EW information in a timely and consistent manner; increasing the capacity of the DPPC to analyse EW information at decentralised levels; preparing training manuals for training with all EW-related staff.
- *Employment generation*: strengthening the DPPC in implementing employment generation schemes at decentralised levels; piloting these schemes in 16 sub-zones and developing a training programme for scaling up nationally.

The target groups are:

- DPPC staff and related line departments at decentralised levels, targeting Regions 3 and 4 (central Ethiopia), particularly East Hararghe and N/S Wollo.
- People vulnerable to food insecurity, particularly women and children, primarily in central Ethiopia.

The main partners are:

- The Government of Ethiopia's DPPC, at central and decentralised levels.
- Other line ministries, particularly the Ministry of Agriculture, which is the major implementing agency of the government at the community level.

Activities

The following work has been, or is being, undertaken:

Needs assessment

A close relationship with the DPPC since its inception enabled Save the Children to understand its capacity-building needs. Regional planning workshops with staff and donors during Phase I ensured a list of activities for each sector was analysed and prioritised by the DPPC staff themselves.

Policy familiarisation

The project is holding an ongoing series of training of trainers courses and familiarisation workshops at zonal and sub-zonal level to make staff aware of their roles and responsibilities in implementing the National Policy on Disaster Prevention and Management. Accompanying manuals are translated, published and distributed. One of the key reasons for promoting policy familiarisation is to counter the low level of co-ordination between government sectors on the ground, and to help other line departments, particularly Ministry of Agriculture staff, understand their role within the overall disaster management system.

Early warning and contingency planning

Nutritional surveillance training is given to personnel at EW units on the ground. An EW training manual has been developed and training in data collection given. Computers have been purchased and training given for analysis of data at EW units. Photocopiers have been provided to zonal EW units to help disseminate data. Radios will be distributed to improve communication of EW information, and motorcycles will be provided for data collection. The project believes that this enhanced system of EW will be extremely useful in convincing donors of the veracity of government reports – ultimately resulting in a quicker response in terms of relief supplies.

Employment generation schemes (EGS)

The project began by doing household food economy studies in two pilot sub-zones. The idea behind the piloting is to implement EGS through community participation and to further the processes of learning about EGS design and implementation, of policy feed back and of scaling up. Several EGS familiarisation and planning workshops have taken place. The peasant associations which will participate in the pilot EGS have been identified and sites for building relief food outlets (20 planned in total) have been selected. Motorbikes will be provided for planning, implementing and monitoring the EGS. Technical support for the EGS piloting is provided by four advisors seconded to zonal offices. Handtools for the proposed work have been procured for the EGS. The pilot EGS in two sub-zones will be carefully documented and then extended to 14 others.

The project has several key features. Its systems-oriented approach means it looks to strategically link systems of management with skills training and logistical support. The project's gender strategy has been developed to fully incorporate women in the process. Furthermore, the project has adopted a child-focused approach, particularly by studying the impact of EGS on children to ensure that their well-being is considered and integrated into EGS design. It is understood that the DPPC will continue implementation beyond the life of the project. This should be possible because the relevant government line departments have a specific budget line for disaster management activities.

Problems encountered so far include the difficulty of the terrain and extremes of weather. There have been delays in the delivery of vehicles and radios because of the closure of the port of Assab in Eritrea due to war between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Achievements

This is an ongoing project, but its main achievements so far are:

- Officers targeted under Phase 1 have a solid understanding of the concepts of the policy as well as roles and responsibilities in implementation.
- Over 5,000 officials have been trained to date in policy familiarisation.
- About 900 officials have been trained to date in early warning and contingency planning
- The training programme has now been finalised for scaling up the EGS, and trainers have been trained in an initial six zones.

Issues

- The project acknowledges that it is risky to work with a government in transition, such as the Government of Ethiopia, which is undergoing radical decentralisation and major policy reforms.
- The project is innovative because it is attempting to make food-for-work schemes effective by building on research which shows that conventional schemes act against the poorest, because they, by definition, lack labour. The poorest families are usually headed by women with young children.
- The project is using the Household Food Economy approach, which is Save the Children UK's methodology for analysing the impact of crop failure and other shocks on household income and access to food. It is the only comprehensive system for investigating the food economy of different populations and different groups within these populations.
- However, by its own acknowledgement, the project may find it difficult to get the balance right between keeping pilot activities small enough to be studied thoroughly, and making them large enough to ensure that scaling up can be done without needing significantly more inputs.
- Sustainability – high staff turnover is a major problem which has been dealt with largely through training twice as many trainers as needed, who train a very broad base of local staff to ensure some continuity.

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Documentation: Internal Save the Children documents.

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NGO Initiatives in Risk Reduction' is a series of short case studies designed to introduce project planners and managers to the range of NGO work in this area, and to highlight some of the issues arising. It is one of several outputs from a study carried out by a team of independent researchers, funded by the Department for International Development and managed by the British Red Cross Society. The case studies (and the project's other outputs) can be downloaded from the project's web page (<http://www.redcross.org.uk> - click on 'Our Work', then on 'International Activities' and finally on 'NGO Natural Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness Project').