COURSE; ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

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QUESTION: REPORT 3000 WORDS ON ANY PARTICULAR COMMUNITY ABOUT IMPROVING DISASTER RESILIENCE IN THE COMMUNITY.

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**Abstract**

The people who live in the arid and semi-arid areas of the Horn of Africa are subject and vulnerable to many risks, the most obvious one being drought and floods. Whenever a disaster strikes, emergency appeals will lead to a coordinated effort to respond to the situation to try and save lives. Conventional responses to disaster are not always sufficiently effective though, and it is often observed that development initiatives and emergency responses in a certain area are treated as separate issues and that development activities are halted, while there are costly delays in putting the disaster responses in place. It is more effective to combine development and relief and thus plan for long-term investment to reduce risks and at the same time protect people's acute needs when necessary (international strategy for disaster reduction. United nation. Geneva, June 2007).The report described below has targeted community and local government representatives over a certain period in the kilifi county part of the Kenya. In the community, "rural disaster teams" and "school disaster teams" were formed and supported in their development through a simple and transparent process. The local disaster teams underwent theoretical and practical training on disaster management, preparedness, risk reduction and disaster resilience improvement. This enabled them to raise community members' awareness of existing and potential hazards and disaster risks. After an early warning system was developed, and the team members trained in first aid and on how to respond to emergency situations, they were able to plan community response to disasters.

**Introduction**

Disaster resilience is the ability of individuals, communities, organizations and states to adapt to and recover from hazards, shocks or stresses without compromising long-term prospects for development. According to the Hyogo Framework for Action (UNISDR, 2005), disaster resilience is determined by the degree to which individuals, communities and public and private organizations are capable of organizing themselves to learn from past disasters and reduce their risks to future ones, at international, regional, national and local levels.

No person or place is immune from disasters or disaster-related losses. Kilifi county has been prone to disasters like Infectious disease outbreaks, acts of terrorism, social unrest, or financial disasters in addition to natural hazards can all lead to large-scale consequences for the nation and its communities.in this report we are going to expound on how to disasters resilience can be improved in the community.

In Kilifi, unpredictable weather conditions have discouraged farmers to plant maize since the crop rarely grows to maturity and even if it does, the yields are very low. Farmers have therefore shifted to other drought resistant crops like cassava, sorghum, chili and millet. However, drought and floods also affect production of these seemingly resistant crop varieties. Consequently, farmers have adopted early maturing crops like pigeon and cowpeas, dry land hybrid maize (PH4, DH04, DH02) and green grams (GOK, 2016).In cases of extreme drought and flooding impacts, there is total crop failure and/or damage and loss of livestock as well, leading to serious issues of food insecurity and loss of livelihoods in the county. Individuals have therefore resorted to seeking employment in urban areas to diversify their household income (GOK, 2016).

In terms of social impacts, water scarcity during drought seasons in arid and semi-arid lands of Kenya forces women to walk for long distances to look for water and men spend more time looking for water and pasture for livestock. These changes have resulted in social disturbances and family instabilities (GOK, 2016). Men move to towns in search of more stable jobs as women remain at home looking after the children. Additionally, the uncertainty of food and livelihood security created by extreme weather events leads to an increased rate of school dropouts as children look for work to supplement their families’ meager income (GOK, 2016).

The following ways can be used to improve disaster resilience in such community;

1. **key connections**

That County, emergency services, and local community services, continue to network and partner in ways which recognize and utilize the capability of each organization within the community, through adopting strategies which promote a paradigm shift from a top-down approach to emergency planning, response and recovery to being inclusive of community at every level. This would be evidenced through a re-visioning of the community as active agents in the emergency management process through:

* A genuine integration of local community service providers, especially county disaster management team, Red Cross, Nyumba kumi and all stakeholders into all levels of disaster management processes within the county.
* Initiating new partnerships, such as local community services representation on the Local Emergency Management Committee.
* Fostering the continuation of existing partnerships, such as the Disaster and Resilience Working Group, including a commitment from county government and Family and Community Services to have their disaster and welfare representatives attend regularly as core members of the Kilifi county disaster management and Preparedness Committee.
* Resourcing of emergency and community services to undertake community engagement and education around readiness and preparedness in high season, when the messages most resonate with the community.
* The implementation of inclusive language, such as the use of local dialect rather than English, in all multiagency communications.

2**. Shared responsibility**

In order to promote a shared understanding of the responsibility we each have towards ourselves, our neighbors and our community we need to:

* Clarify roles and responsibilities of all residents and services during periods of natural disaster and emergency
* Reframe the current thinking around individual responsibility for preparedness and readiness, to ensure that those who are unable to implement plans or engage in such activities are supported by neighbours and, when appropriate, the service system
* Involve community groups and individuals in local risk assessment.
* Use various community development strategies to ensure household awareness and generate a sense of shared responsibility within neighbourhoods, e.g. Know your Neighbour, Meet your Street, Be your brothers safety.
* Identify and develop community leaders who can be supported to develop awareness and promote participation by residents
* Provide information, training and education to community members in local neighbourhoods regarding how to support their vulnerable neighbours
* Address the issue of transport for the more vulnerable, disable and isolated within our communities, especially in relation to emergency meetings and evacuations.
* Advocate for change in policy to ensure that in times of declared natural disaster or emergency, Kilifi county members with pets can access public transport without fear of penalty
* Ensure local government, via its community services section, continues to work with vulnerable people and groups.

3. **Recognise the role of community organisations**

The Community Connections research demonstrates that vulnerable people typically relate to various community services and Non-Government Organisations in the first instance, rather than friends, neighbours or family. It is therefore imperative that existing community services and NGOs are maintained and resourced appropriately within the county Government Area. To support enhanced approaches to accessing and supporting vulnerable people within the community, Neighbourhood Centres need greater recognition as trust builders with vulnerable residents through:

* A commitment in policy and strategic direction from community organisations to build stronger links and integration across a range of community groups and services to strengthen a collective and sustainable capacity to respond to the needs of vulnerable residents in daily living and in periods of natural disaster and emergency
* A wider net cast to ensure that vulnerable individuals who are not currently connected with a community service are nevertheless reached
* more specific advertising and marketing of services targeting vulnerable residents
* Assisting local community and NGO services to build capacity and develop skills within neighbourhoods and neighbours to support spontaneous community participation and reduce an overreliance on government agencies and services
* Working on innovative strategies with Council to provide incentive and support for local communities/neighbourhoods/streets engaging in community focused self-help initiatives that enhance civic responsibility
* Functional partnership models with mainstream service providers such as health, to ensure that vulnerable people within our community are referred appropriately to community focused services able to promote community connection and social inclusion.

4. **Ageing in community**

Due to a larger than National average ageing population, Kilifi county needs to move fast and continue working towards an Ageing Strategy, and as such:

* Resources must be identified and developed to support people over the age of 75 because their community connections are less viable as they age
* It is essential to utilise appropriate methods of communication which are accessible and relevant to the over 75s, regarding the various services available to them for social support and community engagement
* Health and providers of specific health care services to the aged within the community must begin formal partnerships and dialogues with general community services such as Neighbourhood Centres, to ensure that all possible opportunities are provided for the aged to link with their communities and improve their social connections.

5. **Formal strategy for vulnerable people**

 Due to the identified issues of younger people living with a disability and chronic illness, Kilifi county needs to review the potential for a formal strategy to address these needs within the community, and as such:

* Council needs to consider developing a strategy that can better address the needs of the vulnerable, and those living with a disability or chronic illness
* Council may consider providing consultation with, and programs in partnership with, services that assist the 40-65 age group who have a disability and/or chronic illness, in keeping with the Disability Inclusion plan
* Providers of specific services to this group within the community must begin formal partnerships and dialogues with general community services, such as Nyumba kumi, as policy, to ensure that all possible opportunities for the 40 to 65 age group to connect with their communities and improve the social connections are afforded them.

6. **Enhance community connections and resilience of vulnerable people**

 We need to recognise the existing strengths and capacities of vulnerable people, and acknowledge, through providing assistance, their self-identified needs. These may be as diverse as irrational fears, worry over lack of finances to meet emergency disaster needs and transport for daily living. Recommendations to enhance the community connections and resilience of vulnerable people are:

* The provision of community based programs which aim to integrate, or at the very least encourage, inclusion in wider community activities; the community sector requires resourcing to meet these needs as personnel, equipment and location are resource intensive
* Re-envisage vulnerable community members from socially marginalised people to contributors to social and cultural diversity, with unique strengths and abilities e.g. some may have time available to volunteer as well as knowledge of who else is vulnerable and in need
* Nyumba kumi and private sector are best placed to advocate on behalf of vulnerable community members and groups. They must be sufficiently resourced otherwise the voice of the marginalised and vulnerable will fade rather than strengthen.

In conclusion, the county government in collaboration with key partners should identify all stakeholders then conduct trainings targeted at vulnerable regions, to build the capacity of households on disaster resilience. The trainings should focus on sustainable strategies for coping with disasters. They should also be participatory and tailor-made for various groups such as female headed households, children and low literacy individuals. Furthermore, both men and women should be included in the trainings for sustainability.

 In addition, the county government and other organizations that offer support to communities in the event of a natural disaster should conduct rapid needs assessments and consultative meetings prior to the intervention aimed at mitigating hazard impacts. This will avoid duplication of efforts and offer more targeted forms of support to affected households.

**Reference**

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