



COMMUNITY-LED RESILIENCE LEARNING BASED ON PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES OF CBOS, CSOS, DISTRICT ACTION TEAMS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS



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1 ABBREVIATIONS

CBO	Community-Based Organization
CFHD	Civic Forum on Human Development
CIS	Community Initiatives Strengthening
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAT	District Action Team
MoHCC	Ministry of Health and Child Care
RDC	Rural District Council
ISAL	Internal Savings and Lending Scheme

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3 BACKGROUND

The CFHD is implementing an EU-funded four-year project titled “Strengthening Civil Society Capacity for Scaling – up Social Accountability in Rural Local Authorities of Zimbabwe”. This project is jointly implemented by CFHD and its partners including the Lower Guruve Development Association (LGDA), Centre for Community Development Solutions (CCDS), Nyahunure Community Trust (NCT) and the Association of Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe (ARDCZ). The project implementation is three provinces of Mashonaland East: Chikomba, Goromonzi and Murewa RDCs, Mashonaland Central: Guruve, Mbire and Muzarabani RDCs: Mashonaland West: Chegutu and Makonde RDCs.

The project aims to enhance the meaningful participation of civil society and community-based organizations (CBOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) in demanding and monitoring inclusive, accountable and resilient governance and service delivery in rural local authorities of Zimbabwe. One of the project’s key deliverables includes the development of knowledge products that reflect on the emerging lessons and experiences emanating from the implementation of the project. The 4th result area of the project entails increasing the capacity for civil society-driven partnerships in the implementation of resilience-building initiatives within their local communities. The project has implemented a wide range of activities that have contributed to the achievements of set targets under result 4 that includes Training of DAT, CSOs and CBOs on gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting monitoring and community-led resilience implementation monitoring using a multi-layered approach, learning platforms between CBOs and CSOs and prioritization of resilience initiatives which emerged from the Community based Planning (CBP) process. This discussion paper seeks to highlight some of the best practices that have emerged from the implementation of the project.

4 PURPOSE OF THE BRIEF

The main purpose of the brief is to promote community-led resilience-building initiatives that are informed by jointly identified risks/hazards, existing initiatives and lessons. The learning paper is also informed by the insights, lessons, and experiences of members of the targeted communities, and duty-bearers.

3.1. The specific objectives of the brief are:

- ❖ To highlight the significance of community-led resilience systems and the role of CBOs and CSOs in strengthening resilience at the community level in a rural context.
- ❖ To draw lessons and identify good practices from community-based disaster response mechanisms to hazards such as floods and drought.
- ❖ To provide practical recommendations for informing improvements in the design and implementation of community-led resilience interventions in the eight target local authorities targeted by the EU-funded social accountability project and future learning on governance issues.

5 INTRODUCTION

The Civic Forum on Human Development commenced the implementation of the project aimed at training local CSOs and CBOs and local Governance Officials in the principles of community-based resilience-building processes based on CBP priorities under the Social Accountability project. The input from these implementing CBOs and CSOs informed the contents of this brief. The key findings and monitoring observations gathered through this project have largely informed and supported the position that the use of community initiatives and structures is key to building community-led resilience in rural areas of Zimbabwe. CBOs and CSOs have a substantial role to play in supporting and building resilience at community and even individual levels. Their position both physically and relationally within the community means they have access to some of the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach population groups. CBOs also hold considerable social capital within networks, necessary for recovery and resilience building. Thus, CBOs play a crucial role in supporting vulnerable individuals, families and communities to build resilience with the services they provide comprising a critical component of community social infrastructure. This paper intends to promote dialogue in learning and reflection workshops, address the crucial gaps that were identified, identify some of the critical characteristics of CBO resilience and offer lessons to enhance CBO and CSOs resilience. Effective actions to build community resilience focused on growing the capacity of communities and relevant stakeholders to bounce back from disruptions, induced by natural phenomena and man-made activities.

6 CONCEPTUALIZING COMMUNITY-LED RESILIENCE BUILDING

There is a wide range of terms and concepts that are used in literature and programming in addressing strategies to prevent and reduce disaster risks and manage residual risks. Some of the terms and approaches are summarized below as follows:

- ❖ **Community-Led Resilience:** is the ability of communities to prepare for anticipated hazards, adapt to changing conditions, and withstand and recover rapidly from disruptions
- ❖ **A hazard:** is a dangerous phenomenon, substance, human activity, or condition. It may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, loss of livelihoods and services, social and economic disruption, or environmental damage
- ❖ **Community initiatives:** are community-led structures and mechanisms through which community members and community-based groups interact, coordinate and deliver their responses to the challenges and needs affecting their communities.
- ❖ **Disaster:** serious disruptions to the functioning of a community that exceeds its capacity to cope using its own resources. Disasters can be caused by natural, man-made and technological hazards, as well as various factors that influence the exposure and vulnerability of a community
- ❖ **V2R Approach:** is a framework for analysis and action to reduce vulnerability and strengthen the resilience of individuals, households and communities

7 OPERATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

Zimbabwe is one of the southern African countries that is prone to a variety of hazards. The country's complex climatic and varied geological conditions result in virtually every type of known hazard. Some of the natural hazards are seasonal and regional but the human-induced hazards occur at anytime and anywhere in the country. The major hazards are hydro-meteorological (droughts and floods), geologic (earthquakes and landslides), biological (gastro-intestinal tract infections and HIV and AIDS), technological (road traffic accidents) and land degradation (deforestation, veldt fires and gold panning)¹. The increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters, including drought, are placing enormous pressure on the different rural areas of Zimbabwe. This affects everyone in the rural areas and calls for approaches that strengthen social capital and create room for innovation and ground-up solutions, especially in remote, rural regional communities. Disaster-related shocks such as floods, drought, and diseases constantly threaten the lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable populations in the rural areas of Zimbabwe. In the context of increasing stresses like the negative effects of climate change, population growth, and social inequality, these disasters are expected to increase in their frequency, intensity, and impact. Increased disaster resilience is essential to reduce the adverse impacts these shocks have on the poorest communities, who are most often disproportionately affected, and to ensure that hard-won gains in development and well-being are preserved in the face of these shocks. The project has managed to address some of the hazards through different capacity-building training workshops.

8 DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN ZIMBABWE

Planning for emergencies in Zimbabwe is done at various levels namely sectorial level, local authority, and district, provincial and national levels. As provided for by the Civil Protection Act, all these levels are required to produce operational emergency preparedness and response plans which they activate during emergencies/disasters. The National Civil Protection Plan forms the overall framework for the promotion, coordination and execution of emergency and disaster management in Zimbabwe. The localized plans should dovetail into the national plan of action. The plans highlight among other things the alert mechanisms/procedures, evacuation procedures, stock of resources available both material and human, contact details of focal manpower, etc., and should be reviewed regularly at least once a year. The plans are being used as and when emergencies occur and sectors also carry out regular simulation exercises to practically review the plans.

¹ https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/10.1142/9789813207950_0024

The Structure of the Zimbabwe Civil Protection System

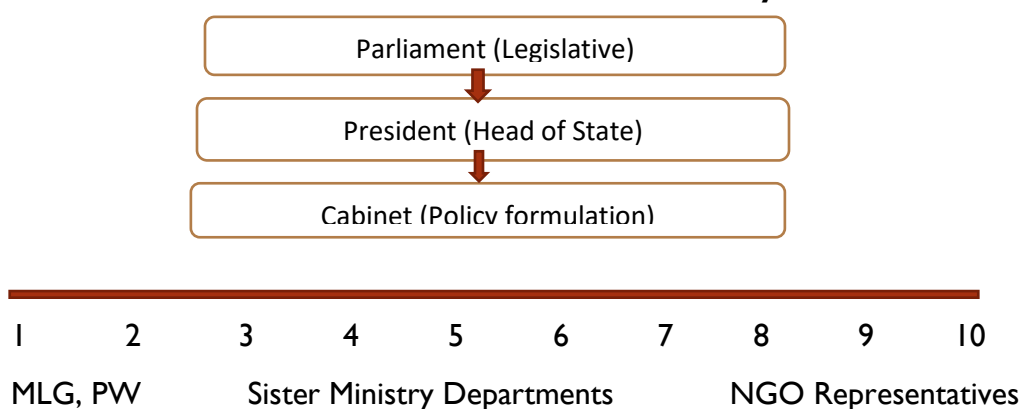


Figure 1. Structure of the Zimbabwe civil protection system

The major priority components of the current Act that enable its implementation include the organizational structure of civil protection in Zimbabwe from the Local Authority level to the National level, the formation of the National, Provincial and District Civil Protection Committees and their subsequent sub-committees, the component of planning for emergencies/disasters, the establishment of a Civil Protection Disaster Fund, procedures of declaring a State of Disaster, etc.

9 RESILIENCE BUILDING STRATEGIES WITHIN THE COMMUNITIES IN THE TARGETED DISTRICTS

9.1 COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING APPROACH TO RESILIENCE

Growing recognition of the necessity of community participation for sustainable disaster reduction was translated into actions to realize community-based disaster management. Parallel efforts were made in the targeted 8 districts along the Community-Based Planning (CBP) Approach. The CBP process seeks to engage all sectors of communities in a participatory process which results in identified community-resilience outcomes from each district. Through a range of PRA and Appreciative Inquiry tools, community members identify their challenges, strengths, and weaknesses and propose strategies that incorporate disaster risk reduction and which will ultimately achieve their vision. Once formulated these development plans will be integrated into the local authority (Rural District Development Committee) plans and subsequently into the central government budgeting cycle. While the planning process does not exclusively focus on hazards and disasters only but rather focuses on wider development initiatives, there is a need to identify and be aware of potential stresses and shocks that can impede development progress. Building resilience necessitates the inclusion of hazard mitigation strategies which ensure that development efforts are disaster-proofed

During the CBP process, some of the projects that were identified directly tackled identified hazards and were selected to be worked on. (For example, where assets are threatened by increasing erosion, gully reclamation was prioritized as a project, also in Murewa District activities that mitigate risk were chosen based on the hazard profile of the area. Where livelihoods are at

risk, mitigation activities tended to focus on activities that strengthen or diversify livelihood strategies. Communities choose to adopt new technologies (water harvesting to counter the impacts of drought, nutrition gardens to supplement poor diets, the planting of drought-resistant crops (small grains), planting woodlots to lessen fuel scarcity and the resultant deforestation, or improved livestock husbandry, including pasture management, supplementary feeding, and disease control).

A community-based planning approach to resilience emphasizes engaging and empowering local communities in building their capacity to withstand and recover from shocks and stresses. This approach recognizes that communities possess unique strengths, resources, and knowledge that can be harnessed to build resilience more effectively than top-down strategies and resilience outcomes were mapped in each district

There are some key features of a community-based planning approach to resilience that were included during the process which include:

Emphasis on participation: Community members were actively involved in all stages of the planning process, from identifying risks and vulnerabilities to designing and implementing interventions. This ensures that the solutions address the specific needs and priorities of the community.

Focus on local knowledge and assets: The planning process draws on the traditional knowledge, skills, and resources that exist within the community. This includes things like local disaster response strategies, indigenous agricultural practices, and social networks.

Adaptive and flexible: The approach recognizes that risks and vulnerabilities can change over time. It therefore relies on flexible and adaptive strategies that can be adjusted as needed.

Benefits of a community-based planning approach to resilience:

- Increased ownership and sustainability: Communities are more likely to own and sustain solutions they have been involved in developing.
- Cost-effectiveness: Local knowledge and resources can be harnessed to build resilience cost-effectively.
- Empowerment and social cohesion: The process can empower communities and strengthen social cohesion.
- Greater effectiveness: Local context and specific needs are considered, leading to more effective interventions.

Challenges of a community-based planning approach to resilience:

- Time and resource intensive: It takes time and resources to meaningfully engage with communities and build trust.
- Power dynamics: Addressing unequal power dynamics within communities can be challenging.
- Sustainability: Ensuring the long-term sustainability of community-based initiatives requires ongoing support and commitment.

Overall, a community-based planning approach to resilience offers a promising way to empower communities and build their capacity to withstand and recover from shocks and stresses. However, it is important to be aware of the challenges involved and to implement such approaches in a way that is culturally sensitive and respectful of local contexts.

9.2 VULNERABILITY TO RESILIENCE APPROACH (V2R)

Communities are prone to multiple shocks and hazards/ stresses which tend to increase their vulnerability. From vulnerability to resilience (V2R) is a framework for analysis and action to reduce vulnerability and strengthen the resilience of individuals, households and communities which the project used to reduce communities' vulnerability. The V2R framework enables local authorities, CBOs and CSOs to engage more systematically with community resilience issues emerging from ward-based community planning and profiling of socio-economic groups, CBOs and various Civil Society Organisations that are active in these communities. It sets out the issues and principles of the community-led resilience process and CBOs, CSOs and local government staff and other stakeholders can be more meaningfully involved in the community-led resilience building process. (CLRBP).

The role of community initiatives is significant and urgent, particularly in disaster-prone areas. Community-led initiatives provide readily accessible, less costly access to emergency response support, promote ownership and development of locally led solutions, and have a direct impact on the success and sustainability of programs. For example, in Muzarabani district, some of the CBO groups such as Chibanze group are practicing destocking of livestock through lending to relatives due to drying of pastures and death of livestock. Furthermore, climate change is aggravating the situation because of erratic temperatures which are causing incidences of diseases for the livestock. So, in this case, they embrace social capital by lending their livestock to their relatives and friends located where there are better grazing lands through the system called *kuronzera*. Extrapolating from the above, the *kuronzera* system is regarded as the most effective practice because the owners would not lose their valuable assets. The importance of social capital is evident where people capitalize on relationships and social networks to rescue one another from disasters. Thus the insulation of livestock from drought through lending to relatives is a food security mechanism because livestock serves as a means of farming, milk, meat, and a source of financial income. Another strength of the strategy is that it saves the livestock as compared to destocking through slaughtering. Most of the identified Hazards, Vulnerability, Capacity and Early warning signs from the 8 targeted districts are shown below in a Vulnerability and Capacity Matrix

Table I.

Hazard	Vulnerability	Capacity	Early warning signs
Gullies	People Livestock Agricultural land Water Roads Buildings	Dam construction and rehabilitation Borehole drilling Gully rehabilitation Digging field contours Fire guards	Erosion Sledges Overstocking Overgrazing an area Indiscriminate cutting of trees Veldt fires

	Water bone diseases Communication lines Power lines	Capacity building training	
Drought	Livestock People Vegetation Wild animals old age and the disabled	Paddocks Establishment of irrigation schemes Fodder banks Seed multiplication Capacity building training	Low rainfall Lack of inputs Lack of Draught Poor grazing Quelea birds
Stock theft	People especially those old age and the disabled	More security Ensure no strays	Increase of crime Livestock Reduction
HIV and AIDS	Productive age	More HBC training Training the communities in HIV and AIDS	Illness, high death rate Increase on OVC
Outbreak of animal diseases	Animals	Dip tanks construction Rehabilitation of the damaged dams Vaccination and treatment programmes Capacity building programmes	Uncontrolled movement of animals Overstocking

9.3 COMMUNITY-BASED DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

The local communities which include Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) are taken as the primary focus of attention (in disaster reduction) since that is the common unit that is affected by disaster and, more importantly, responds to deal with the event. Community and CBOs participation has been recognized as the additional element in disaster management necessary to reverse the community trend of exponential increase in disaster occurrence of any loss from small- and medium-scale disasters, build a culture of safety, and ensure sustainable development for all. They are all exposed to hazards, shocks and stresses in their day-to-day lives, but the resource-poor with few assets are least able to protect themselves or respond effectively. A small group of CBOs in Murewa District who are into goat rearing and are also now growing maize as the group 's main crop is unlikely to be able to recover from a long-lasting drought. Their livelihood is most likely destroyed. Yet a richer farmer with access to a borehole, several milking cows, poultry, a plough to cultivate more land and a vegetable garden, is more likely to survive and recover from the same drought. Their diversity of income-earning options (livelihood strategies) means that despite losing most of his maize crop, his sorghum survives and the small income from eggs and vegetables tides them throughout hardship. They can recover. More so some of the CBOs are into:

Economic Livelihoods and often employ a number of strategies which include:

- **Diversification:** income sources through activities like poultry rearing, fish farming, small-scale businesses, and eco-tourism.
- **Climate-smart agriculture:** Practicing drought-resistant crops, water-saving techniques, and soil conservation practices.
- **Microfinance:** access loans and financial services for starting and expanding businesses from the Ministry of Women Affairs small medium and enterprises

Natural Resource Management:

- Sustainable land management: Implementing practices like terracing, contour farming, and reforestation to prevent soil erosion and improve land productivity.
- Water resource management: Construction of rainwater harvesting systems, promote water conservation techniques, and manage watersheds sustainably.
- Ecosystem restoration: Participate in activities like tree planting and land rehabilitation to restore degraded ecosystems and enhance biodiversity.

Disaster Risk Reduction:

- Early warning systems: Developing and implementing effective early warning systems for floods, droughts, and other hazards.
- Disaster preparedness plans: Create community-based plans for evacuation, resource mobilization, and post-disaster recovery, for example in Murewa the project have managed to help the district to come up with district civil protection plan.
- Infrastructure development: Investing in resilient infrastructure like stronger buildings, flood protection measures, and improved sanitation facilities.



CBOs and CSOs participating in community-led resilience training workshop in Murewa

It was also noted that CBOs are also acting as a mechanism of resilience building through paying school fees for some of the children who are vulnerable in communities. These initiatives will foster opportunities through investment in human development through protecting vulnerable children from different impacts of economic shocks. Social safety net programs increase resilience in the short term by improving the capacity of vulnerable households to cope with idiosyncratic and covariate shocks such as natural disasters, man-made crises and economic shocks by providing cash, food, and other means to smooth income. Social safety nets have also the potential to play a significant role in minimizing the impacts of natural disasters and man-made conflicts once they occur if programs are scaled up or introduced rapidly.

When combined with complementary interventions, social safety nets increase resilience in the long term by promoting human capital development and income-generating activities. Building social protection systems that are more inclusive and equitable, and that help make the poor and vulnerable more resilient to shocks (both idiosyncratic and covariate), ensures long-term challenges to eradicating poverty are addressed.

10 RESILIENCE MECHANISMS IDENTIFIED IN THE COMMUNITIES

At first, the project managed to conduct community resilience mapping outcomes during the CBP process. Mapping is a powerful tool for understanding and measuring the impact of initiatives aimed at building stronger communities. It utilizes a participatory approach that actively involves community members in the process, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes. Conducting a Community Resilience Outcome Mapping Process is a valuable approach to assess and improve a community's resilience to various challenges which was conducted by the project. Here are key steps of the process that were undertaken by the project during the CBP process which include the following:

1. Define the Vision and Scope:

- Vision: The project has managed to clearly articulate the desired long-term change for the community in terms of increased resilience during the CBP process.
- Scope: it also established clear boundaries for the intervention and the communities involved.

2. Identify Boundary Partners:

- It recognizes individuals, groups, or organizations interacting with the initiative and potentially influencing outcomes.

3. Analyze Influences and Outcomes:

- More so it also conducted an analysis of existing socio-economic, political, and environmental factors affecting the community's resilience through the V2R approach.
- Identify potential intermediate and ultimate outcomes linked to the vision, considering gender perspectives and diverse needs within the community.

4. Develop the Outcome Map:

- Visually represent the relationships between activities, outcomes, and boundary partners using symbols and connecting lines.
- It also ensured the map reflects the theory of change for how activities contribute to desired outcomes.

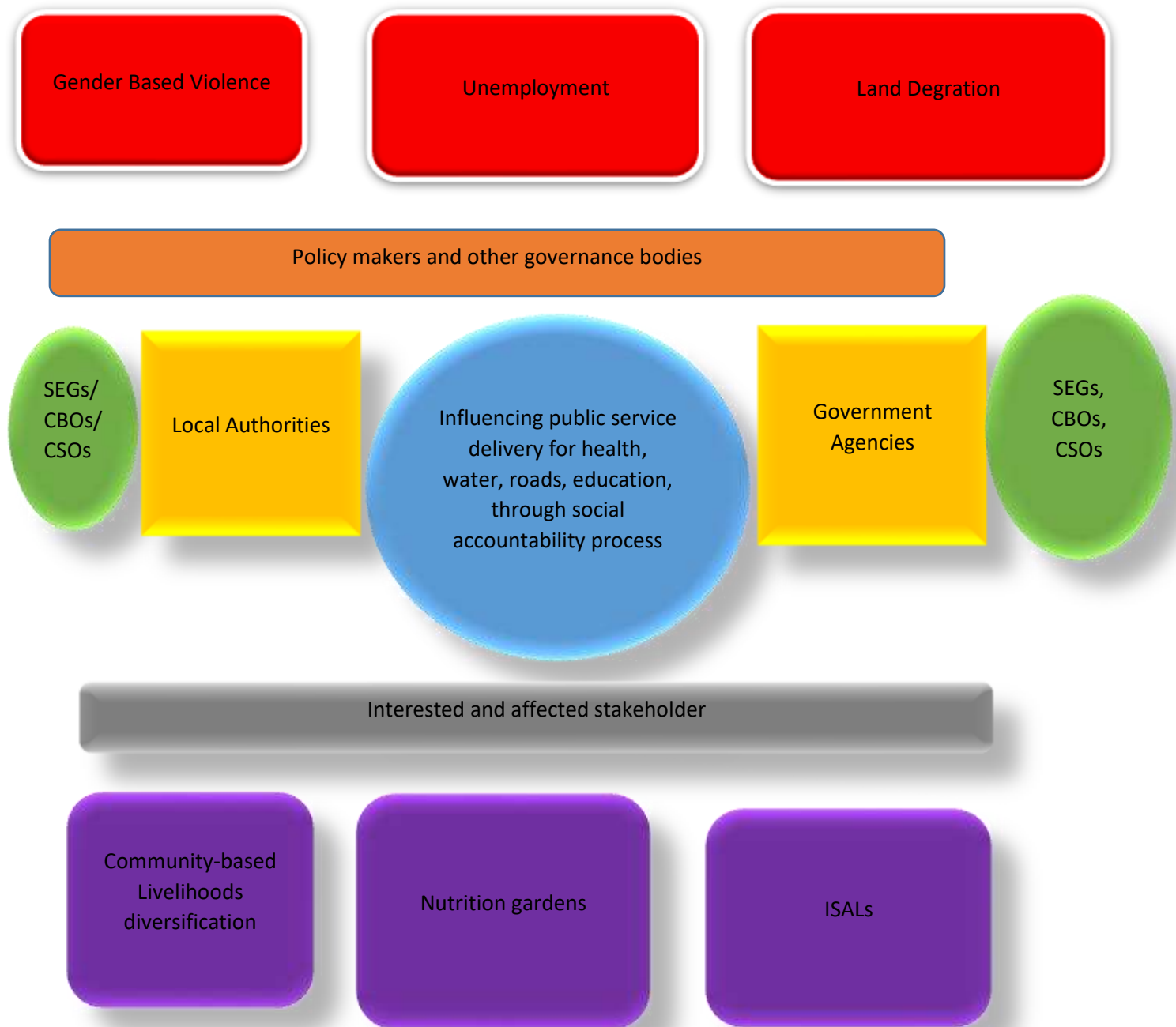
5. Monitoring and Evaluation:

- The project has managed to do its Monitoring and evaluation through the social accountability monitoring tools which include scorecard and perception audit tools to track progress towards outcomes at different levels, considering resilience-specific indicators.
- The project regularly analyzes data and adapts the initiative based on learnings and changes in the context.

Benefits of Community Resilience Outcome Mapping:

- Clarity and Focus: Provides a shared understanding of goals and impacts.
- Participation and Ownership: Empowers community members and fosters ownership of the initiative.
- Adaptive Management: Enables flexible adjustments based on data and emerging needs.
- Accountability and Transparency: Tracks progress and demonstrates impact on stakeholders.

Resilience outcome Map for Murewa district:



The eight targeted rural districts under this project possess a wealth of existing resilience mechanisms that communities have developed and adapted over time to cope with various challenges. While specific mechanisms may vary between provinces and communities, here are some common examples that were identified during the process which include:

- **Diverse cropping systems:** Communities often cultivate a variety of crops with different drought and pest resistance, ensuring some harvest even in difficult years.
- **Indigenous water management:** Techniques like sand dams and infiltration pits capture and store rainwater, improving water availability during dry periods.
- **Social support networks:** Families and communities provide mutual aid and share resources during times of hardship, offering emotional and practical support.
- **Traditional coping mechanisms:** Communities have developed strategies for dealing with stress, trauma, and loss, promoting psychosocial resilience.
- **Information and communication technology (ICT):** Access to information through radio, smartphones, and community centers helps communities prepare for and respond to challenges

Challenges and limitations:

- **Climate change:** The increasing severity and frequency of droughts, floods, and other climate shocks can overwhelm traditional coping mechanisms.
- **Limited resources:** Poverty, lack of access to education and healthcare, and weak infrastructure hinder communities' ability to build resilience.
- **Policy and governance:** Unstable governance, unclear land rights, and limited social safety nets can exacerbate vulnerabilities.

Supporting existing mechanisms:

- **Empowering communities:** Recognizing and building upon existing knowledge and practices empowers communities and ensures solutions are culturally relevant and sustainable.
- **Investing in local organizations:** Strengthening CBOs and local leadership enhances resource mobilization and project implementation.
- **Bridging knowledge gaps:** Providing access to relevant information and training can help communities adapt traditional practices to address new challenges.
- **Addressing policy bottlenecks:** Advocating for policies that support sustainable development, climate adaptation, and equitable access to resources can create an enabling environment for resilience building.

Understanding and supporting these existing mechanisms is crucial for effective and sustainable resilience building in rural Zimbabwe. By combining traditional knowledge with new technologies and strengthening community-based solutions, we can help these communities thrive in the face of adversity.

11 CSOs, CBOs AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUPS LEADING CHAMPIONS IN COMMUNITY-LED RESILIENCE BUILDING IN TARGETED 8 RURAL DISTRICTS OF ZIMBABWE

CSOs, CBOs and Socio-economic groups are already leading resilience-building initiatives in the targeted districts, which means partnerships with local communities must be the cornerstone of solutions. These CSOs and CBOs are strategically linking with key institutions in carrying out their activities and even getting support from different government stakeholders and other NGOs which include AGRITEX, Women's Affairs, National aids council, Council, etc. For example, in Murewa community-led resilience-building initiatives are mainly supported by ADRA whilst in Chikomba being supported by Hand in Hand Zimbabwe and the Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development with loans and other livelihoods projects such as horticulture. These main activities include Horticulture production, Disaster risk reduction, Solarized gardens and market linkages. In Mbire district communities, took a leading role in supporting the RDC in response to floods that affected the district during the 2021-2022 rainy season playing a critical role in the fight against poachers and protection of natural forestry in support of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC; In Muzarabani district it was highlighted that CBOs are taking a leading role in community-led resilience initiatives such as community response to the flooding cases in the lower part of the district.

The project has managed to create some synergies through the project as it has managed to make some engagement with the community through a community-based planning approach which resulted in identification of some key resilience-building initiatives and stakeholders for strengthening their support to community-resilience building priorities. This was followed by demand-driven capacity building and resource mobilization and linkages through the creation of digital platforms such as WhatsApp groups which led to increased interaction horizontally and vertically.

Strategic resource linkages have been made by linking emerging community resilient initiatives as shown by allocation to boreholes and other infrastructure projects receiving finance from the devolution process in Zimbabwe.

Case Study: Devolution for community-led resilience building in Murewa district

The Government of Zimbabwe has set a target to train 1.8 million farmers in Conservation Agriculture through the Pfumvudza concept. Pfumvudza is a crop production intensification approach under which farmers ensure the efficient use of resources (inputs and labour) on a small area of land in order to optimize its management. In Murewa rural district, the concept has been successful in helping farmers to produce grains including maize, sorghum and millet, while it also encourages the rotation of legumes such as beans, ground nuts or cowpeas. Gogo Matilda, an elderly widow, is testimony to the impact of Pfumvudza. After receiving training on Pfumvudza from FfF she implemented the practices and managed to harvest enough maize to feed herself and her grandchildren for a whole year. Implementing Pfumvudza transformed Gogo Matilda's household from one that was vulnerable and food-insecure, to one that is food secure and able to produce its own maize.

By implementing Pfumvudza, farmers like Gogo Matilda save time, land and money as a result of a reduction in inputs and labour. This allows them time to invest in other commercially viable income generating activities and develop new streams of income, which can be used to meet basic needs and purchase a variety of food items to ensure a balanced and nutritious diet.

Overall, knowledge and skills on climate proofing and other innovative adaptations were learned across the 8 local authorities involving 380 women and 250 men through local support services by CBOs, CSOs and other service providers including members of the DAT. As most districts such as Murewa, managed to integrate community-led resilience in their district resilience plans through the development of Civic protection unit plan. In Makonde and Chegutu, the ISALs have been supporting orphans and vulnerable children and also making financial contributions in times of need such as funerals. At the community level, several impacts have been evidenced through the following:

- Synergies established through the community planning and CSO/CBO mapping process as a foundation for resilience building.
- Women-led CBOs that are embarking on income-generating initiatives immensely contributing towards community-led resilience building. For instance, in Chikomba ISALs are contributing to the school feeding programmes
- In Muzarabani and Mbire districts communities took a leading role in supporting the RDC in response to floods that affected the district during the 2021-2022 rainy season.
- The project has shown dedication to one of the primary instruments for achieving the Paris Agreement goals that is the Nationally Determined Contributions (also known as NDCs) to climate action plan. Since climate change is key to the plans, the project has ignited a transformative shift to development through social inclusion through rapid inclusion of women and youths projects through the 3+ 2 approaches during the community-based planning which emphasized 3 priorities for the general ward level top priorities and 1 for women and the other for youth.
- Additionally, the project continued to support the relevant authorities in the fight against poachers and the protection of natural forests in support of Nationally Determined Contributions in Muzarabani rural district through the empowerment of a girl child as a game ranger.

The targeted CBOs and CSOs have adopted resilience-building initiatives agreed upon through the CBP processes. During the learning and reflection workshops that were conducted across all the targeted 8 districts, the CBOs attested to the point that they were there to complement local authorities' development strategies. The 20% of the CBOs that are still to adopt jointly agreed resilience-building initiatives have been due to limited capacity to comprehend the action plans, limited resources to implement priorities in the action plans and institutional gaps and challenges which were followed up during the social accountability monitoring process.

Emerging community-led resilience priorities from the 8 targeted district

Resilience Priorities	Actors	Issue being addressed
Goat rearing	Local Authority , CSOs and CBOs	To address Gender based violence through women empowerment
Devolution Funds	National Government	Improve Service delivery (Access to safe water to avoid diseases such as cholera)
Capacity Building on GBV and DRR	Local Authority and CSOs	Gender based violence and disasters such as floods
Construction of Dip Tanks	CBOs, CSOs and Local Authority	Diseases for cattle as it is their source of wealth and resilience mechanisms
Awareness campaigns on deforestation	Local Authority and CSOs	Deforestation as it causes climate change
Galley reclamation	Local Authority, CBOs, CSOs,	Floods and erosion control to reduce land degradation and loss of livelihoods and assets.
One stop Centre	Local Authority , CSOs	To help victims of GBV in at risk communities such as medical attention, legal support, counseling, or safe shelter.
Livelihoods and nutrition gardens projects such as pig rearing, bee keeping, broiler keeping, fish farming, horticulture, Baking,Floor polish making, Sewing	CBOs, CSOs	To promote local economic development and reduce poverty and vulnerability in rural areas.

The sustainability of emerging resilience-building initiatives is being strengthened through a number of multi-layered strategies:

- ❖ Commitment by the CBOs to use social accountability monitoring tools in tracking and assessing the progress being made in the implementation of agreed resilience-building action plans.
- ❖ Mobilization of members of the community in the implementation of agreed community action plans. For instance, in Muzarabani the Zimbabwe Action in Focus (ZAIFO) and the Mbire Farmers Association have been playing a key role in the mobilization of community participation in gully reclamation activities.
- ❖ Local communities vulnerable to climate change and disasters can be empowered to lead action on strengthening household and community resilience. CBOs, including grassroots women-led CBOs, are already leading local solutions to manage climate change and disaster risks through livelihood projects.

- ❖ There is substantial evidence demonstrating that collaboration between governments and CBOs is mutually beneficial in advancing climate and disaster resilience. When working with Local Authorities, CBOs offer practical knowledge, skills, and practices that emerge from their strategies to overcome everyday stresses. Partnerships with CBOs make Local Authority programs more efficient, effective, and responsive to the priorities of poor communities. Local authorities can offer policy support, technical assistance and resources financial and/or nonfinancial to effectively scale up and sustain community-led initiatives for strengthening resilience. Such collaborations are also key in aligning climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction efforts with the principles of good governance, particularly downward accountability, citizen participation, and transparent decision-making

12 LESSONS AND EXPERIENCES FROM THE COMMUNITY-LED RESILIENCE

BUILDING PROCESS

The training process helped to engage all sectors of communities in a participatory process which results in the production of development plans that improve the quality of their lives, and their access to services and influence resource allocation. Through a range of PRA and Appreciative Inquiry tools, community members identified their challenges, strengths and weaknesses and proposed strategies that incorporate disaster risk reduction and which ultimately achieved their vision. Once formulated these development plans were integrated into the local authority (Rural District Development Committee) plans and subsequently into the central government budgeting cycle.

While the planning process does not exclusively focus on hazards and disasters but rather focuses on wider development initiatives, there is a need to identify and be aware of potential stresses and shocks that can impede development progress. Building resilience necessitates the inclusion of hazard mitigation strategies which ensure that development efforts are disaster-proofed” for example in Murewa , protection of schools and hospitals from hazards, all new schools and hospitals are located and constructed to ensure that high-hazard areas are avoided and that special provisions are made to reduce the potential for damage by natural hazards. In addition, existing school and hospital buildings are surveyed to determine their levels of resistance to relevant hazards. Strenuous efforts should be made to strengthen facilities that would fail in a disaster.

When communities lead the process, they have greater ownership and commitment to initiatives, leading to sustainable outcomes. Communities possess deep knowledge of their context and needs, leading to more relevant and effective solutions. The process fosters trust, collaboration, and social capital, strengthening communities in the long run. Community-led initiatives can adapt more readily to changing circumstances than top-down approaches. Some of the initiatives lessons include:

Initiative	Lessons
Empowerment and Ownership	<i>Increased Agency:</i> Communities take ownership of their resilience journey, fostering a sense of empowerment and self-reliance. They identify their vulnerabilities and develop solutions that address their specific needs and context. <i>Improved Decision-Making:</i> Local knowledge and expertise are valued, leading to more informed and culturally-sensitive solutions. This participatory approach fosters trust and collaboration between community members, local leaders, and external organizations.
Innovation and Resourcefulness	<i>Context-Specific Solutions:</i> Communities often develop creative and low-cost solutions using locally available resources. This fosters a spirit of innovation and resourcefulness, making resilience building more sustainable. <i>Indigenous Knowledge Integration:</i> Traditional knowledge and practices are incorporated into resilience strategies, leading to more effective solutions that are grounded in the community's cultural context.
Capacity Building and Social Cohesion	<i>Enhanced Skills:</i> Community members gain new skills in disaster preparedness, risk management, and livelihood diversification. This empowers them to take an active role in building resilience. <i>Strengthened Social Networks:</i> Collaboration fosters social cohesion and strengthens social networks within communities. This sense of unity is crucial for collective action during crises and long-term recovery efforts.

These lessons and experiences provide valuable insights for future community-led resilience-building efforts in Zimbabwe. By addressing challenges and strengthening enabling factors, we can empower communities to build a more resilient future.

13 FRAMEWORK FOR ON-GOING LEARNING TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY-LED RESILIENCE INITIATIVES

Community-led resilience building involves mobilizing and empowering local communities to identify, understand, and address their own vulnerabilities and risks. This approach has emerged as a valuable strategy for fostering sustainable and impactful solutions. Here are some key lessons and experiences gleaned from diverse initiatives:

a) ***Establish a Learning Culture:***

- Prioritize learning: Emphasize the importance of learning from successes and failures to improve future efforts.

- Create safe spaces: Encourage open communication, reflection, and sharing of experiences, fostering psychological safety.
- Build capacity for critical thinking: Equip community members with skills to analyze situations, draw conclusions, and adapt strategies.
- Encourage diverse perspectives: Promote participation from different groups within the community to capture varied experiences and knowledge.

b) *Implement Learning Mechanisms:*

- Monitoring and evaluation: Regularly track progress, collect data, and use it to assess effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.
- Action learning cycles: Implement cycles of planning, action, reflection, and adaptation based on learnings.
- Peer-to-peer learning: Facilitate knowledge exchange and shared learning among communities facing similar challenges.
- Learning expeditions: Organize visits to other communities or projects for cross-pollination of ideas and practices.
- Documentation and storytelling: Capture experiences, best practices, and lessons learned through written documents, videos, or oral narratives.

c) *Utilize Learning Resources:*

- Develop a knowledge repository: Collect and centralize resources relevant to community resilience, such as reports, manuals, and research findings.
- Partner with universities and research institutions: Access expertise and support research initiatives focused on local challenges.
- Connect with existing networks: Participate in national and regional knowledge-sharing platforms focusing on resilience.
- Utilize online learning platforms: Access training modules, webinars, and other digital resources on resilience-building tools and approaches.

d) *Sustainability and Long-Term Impact:*

- Embed learning into existing structures: Integrate learning activities into regular meetings, project planning, and community decision-making processes.
- Develop institutional memory: Build documentation systems and knowledge management practices to preserve accumulated knowledge.

- Empower local champions: Identify and support individuals who can lead and facilitate learning processes within the community.
- Advocate for supportive policies: Encourage government and other stakeholders to prioritize and invest in community-led resilience initiatives and learning opportunities.
- Tailor the framework to your specific context: Consider the unique needs and challenges of your community.
- Be flexible and adaptable: Adjust the approach based on community feedback and emerging needs.
- Celebrate successes: Recognize and reward learning achievements to motivate continued engagement.
- Collaborate with external partners: Leverage expertise and resources from NGOs, government agencies, and other stakeholders.

By implementing this framework and fostering a culture of continuous learning, communities can strengthen their resilience initiatives, adapt to changing circumstances, and build a more sustainable future. Remember, this is a starting point, and your commitment to ongoing learning will be crucial for long-term success.

14 RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Community-led approaches to resilience building must be at the disaster risk planning and management stage in rural areas.
- ❖ New structures and processes for collaboration and decision-making that locate community members, disaster-risk management agencies, local government, community services organizations, CBOs, local groups and businesses as equal contributors should be established.
- ❖ Mobilization of the full range of available resources in disaster resilience building will be needed with increasingly significant disaster events.
- ❖ Shared responsibility must translate into increased and shared support for sustained community-led resilience building. Irregular support and once-off funding do not support this work.
- ❖ Communities need ongoing support to build and maintain momentum and continue to expand the inclusion of those at the margins. Place-based, long-term work on the ground in communities is required for change and impact.
- ❖ Strengthen resilience considerations from a systems approach through collaboration with other projects being implemented in similar geographical areas within the same sector and/or other sectors that will allow leveraging on the capacity and finances that may be available in other sectors to strengthen resilience.

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