CHAPTER 2

DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND POLICIES IN ZIMBABWE: OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The increasing frequency and severity of disasters globally and in Zimbabwe in particular requires strengthened institutional policy and legislative systems and processes to facilitate mitigation of possible negative impacts and promote national development. As noted by Ghazali et al. (2018) and also by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (2015), increase in frequency and severity of disasters is expected to continue due to climate change (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2012). Disasters can reverse development gains (Tuhkanen et al., 2018; Dube, Mtapuri & Matunhu, 2018). Strengthening disaster risk management policy making and implementation processes is thus important if Zimbabwe is to realise its 2030 vision and achieve its Sustainable Development Goals. Vision 2030 is premised on making Zimbabwe a middle-income country by 2030 through facilitating an open market and stable economy (Government of Zimbabwe, 2018b). The Zimbabwean economy fell from a high growth rate of 19.68% in 2010 to a low growth rate of 0.7% in 2016 before declining steeply to -8.0% in 2020 (World Bank, 2021). The political dispensation established in 2018 wants to reinvigorate economic performance and productivity. Developing and implementing effective disaster risk management policies and strategies remain central to realising the Government of Zimbabwe Vision 2030, considering that disasters may destroy economic assets and infrastructure that facilitate development (Botzen, Deschenes & Sanders, 2019). Vision 2030 section 854 gives credence to the importance of disaster risk management by highlighting the need to protect the environment and strengthen public health services that tend to be affected by epidemiological hazards leading to health-related disasters that include cholera. For disaster risk management, the Government of Zimbabwe Vision 2030 specifically states that government will continue to strengthen and implement the climate and disaster management policy as well as formulate and implement a comprehensive fire management framework (Government of Zimbabwe, 2018a).

Cyclone Idai made landfall in parts of Manicaland and Masvingo Provinces of Zimbabwe on 15 March 2019 and affected approximately 270 000 people, leading to extensive

damages to 347 kilometres of roads and loss of 340 lives (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2019; Munsaka, Mudavanhu, Sakala, Manjeru & Matsvange, 2021). Such disruptions bear witness to the need to strengthen disaster risk management policy making and implementation. Cyclone Idai also caused the Zimbabwean economy to shrink by 3.1% compared to the 1.6% decline before the cyclone impact (World Bank, 2019). Despite major international and regional changes to disaster risk management frameworks, as well as processes and systems that include the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), the Zimbabwe Disaster Risk Management (DRM) policy of 2011 seems to have undergone cosmetic changes. The Civil Protection Act of 1989 is still the major legislative instrument guiding implementation of disaster risk management practices in Zimbabwe. The Civil Protection Department (CPD), which is mandated to coordinate DRM in the country, has also not undergone major institutional changes to enable it to effectively execute its mandate.

The central question that this chapter addresses is how Zimbabwe's disaster risk management systems and policies have evolved and been implemented to promote development over the years, particularly after independence in 1980. The chapter explores the processes and systems in place for policy making and implementation at national and subnational level as well as the grey areas that still need to be addressed. This discourse is critical particularly in the context of the government of Mnangagwa's political dispensation that advocated for openness, transparency and the need for strengthened national and international stakeholder partnership engagement on national development issues at different levels. The policy development and implementation approach of the previous regimes of Ian Smith before independence in the 1960s up to 1979 and Robert Mugabe after independence in 1980 were highly centralised and tended to be restrictive with regards to stakeholder participation (Zhou, 2000; Keeley & Scoones, 2000).

The chapter addresses several interlinked issues on disaster risk management policy and how their design and implementation can be a pathway to sustainable development as articulated in the Government of Zimbabwe's 2030 development vision. The first section is an overview of Zimbabwe's risk profile which highlights the major hazards that have caused disasters and necessitates policy intervention if the disasters are not to reverse development gains. The overview of risks is linked to the section on disaster preparedness and policy response systems that highlights the national and subnational systems and structures that coordinate disaster risk management. The section discusses the challenges of the institutional structures in effectively addressing the changing national and subnational disaster impacts and what this means for policy formulation and implementation. This is followed by an overview of global and regional disaster risk reduction frameworks that have partially informed Zimbabwe's disaster risk management policy agenda setting. A more focused discussion and analysis of the Zimbabwean legislative systems and processes as they relate to selected sectors that tend to be significantly

impacted by disasters then follows. The final section looks at implications of yesteryear disaster policies and practices, noting that the national and local disaster landscape is worsening as can be deduced from the increasing magnitude and severity of both natural and anthropogenic hazards, which are likely to worsen due to climate change. The chapter also indicates that not much has changed in Disaster Risk Management (DRM) policy making, particularly coordination challenges in the context of fragmented policy and response systems. The chapter concludes by highlighting that more needs to be done if the political dispensation that began in 2018 after the Mugabe regime from 1980 to 2017 is to establish distinguishable landmarks in disaster risk management policy making and implementation that should contribute to sustainable development.

ZIMBABWE'S DISASTER RISK PROFILE

While Zimbabwe is not considered a country exposed to very high natural disaster risk compared to countries in Asia-Pacific, which record high magnitude and high impact cyclones and earthquakes and floods, the country is not immune to impacts of both natural and man-made disasters. These disasters have been a result of a diverse range of hazards and the major ones include hydrometeorological and epidemiological hazards. Hydrological hazards are weather-related hazards and in Zimbabwe, they have led to disasters that include droughts, floods, cyclones and heat waves. Epidemiological hazards have caused diseases that include cholera, typhoid and malaria outbreaks. The next section provides an overview of the common hazards that have degenerated into disasters affecting development and necessitating effective disaster-risk management policy formulation and implementation over the years.

Figure 2.1 shows that droughts and mid-season dry spells are the most common hazards affecting Zimbabwe (The United Nations Development Zimbabwe, 2016). Between 1991 and 2013 drought caused six of the ten worst natural disasters (Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2015). Areas mostly affected include the southern and western provinces of Masvingo, Matabeleland North and South, and the central province of Midlands. These provinces are located in Zimbabwe's agro-ecological zones four and five that are characterised by low average rainfall of below 500 mm per annum (Mugandani et al., 2012). Drought negatively impacts food security, livelihoods and water availability in both rural and urban areas. In 2018, the *El N'ino*-induced drought affected over five million people, while about six million people were affected by drought in 2001 (Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee, 2019).

Table 2.1 shows occurrences of droughts and number of people affected by drought in Zimbabwe for selected years between 2001 and 2019. Dry spells also cause extensive damage and have tended to be recurrent and widespread compared to major droughts as Figure 2.1 shows.