

Mozambique: A case study in the role of the affected state in humanitarian action

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Introduction

This is the first in a series of case studies examining the role of the affected state in humanitarian action.

Key research questions for the project are:

- What role should governments play in the coordination of humanitarian actors, and how do state coordination roles relate to international actors?
- How do international humanitarian actors assess the capacity of the state to respond to disaster and make decisions about when it is appropriate to substitute for the state?
- What is the appropriate role of non-governmental actors in influencing the state to fulfil its responsibilities to assist and protect citizens affected by disasters?
- What are the perceptions of government officials involved in particular disaster responses about international humanitarian actors, and vice versa?
- What capacities do states have to respond to disasters and legislate for and coordinate international actors at both national and local levels?
- How can tensions between the desire of states to ensure the accountability of humanitarian organisations and the concern of humanitarian actors to maintain independence be resolved?

The report is based on a visit to Mozambique carried out in late May/early June 2007 to examine the response to floods and a cyclone that struck the country at the beginning of the year.

During the early months of 2007, Mozambique suffered a double disaster of severe flooding in its central region river basins and a category four cyclone that devastated coastal districts in one of its southern provinces. Between 300,000 and 500,000 people are believed to have been affected by the two disasters through the loss of their homes or livelihoods.¹ These simultaneous catastrophes seriously stretched the capacity of the national authorities and humanitarian agencies based in the

¹ These figures are discussed in more detail later in the report.

country, and highlighted a number of issues related to coordination and communication between them.

The emergency response was coordinated by the government of Mozambique's Instituto Nacional de Gestão de Calamidades (INGC). It succeeded in evacuating up to 200,000 people from the flooded area without loss of life. Its emergency preparedness measures undoubtedly also reduced the number of deaths and injuries from the cyclone that struck around the same time. The two largest UN agencies in Mozambique, UNICEF and WFP, played the leading role in providing emergency relief along with the Mozambique Red Cross and a number of international on-governmental organisations (INGOs). Within two weeks of the declaration of a 'Red Alert', WFP had distributed food aid to some 33,500 flood victims.² UNICEF had provided water and sanitation supplies, including plastic sheets, chlorine, water tanks and latrine slabs.³ Other agencies ensured that emergency medical supplies were being provided and that people's basic life-saving needs were being met.

Over 100,000 people spent between one and three months living in the temporary accommodation centres before the flood waters receded. There were no major outbreaks of disease or any indications of serious excess morbidity rates in the centres. A subsequent evaluation of the international relief effort concluded that 'the real needs for emergency relief were largely met' by the operation.⁴ These findings are discussed in more detail later in the report.

² UN World Food Program, *WFP helps Mozambique flood victims, as a second tropical storm brings heavy rain to Central provinces*, 20 February 2007,

<http://www.wfp.org/english/?ModuleID=137&Key=2374>

³ UN News Centre, *Mozambique: UN agency to buy food locally for flood victims to help economy*, 20 February 2007,

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=21617&Cr=mozambique&Cr1=>

⁴ John Cosgrave, Celia Goncalves, Daryl Martyris, Riccardo Polastro and Muchimba Sikumba-Dils, *Inter-agency real time evaluation of the response to the February 2007 floods and cyclone in Mozambique*, Inter-Agency Humanitarian Standing Committee, Humanitarian Country Team, Mozambique, April 2007.

International agencies in Mozambique responded to the emergency through the adoption of the UN's 'Cluster Approach' system. The decision to adopt this system was taken without formally consulting the national authorities. The UN Country Team carried out a rapid needs-assessment of the affected areas and issued a Flash Appeal in March 2007 for \$24 million of additional assistance.⁵ The response to this appeal was disappointing. Although \$21.5m had been paid or pledged by mid-April 2007, over half of this was from the UN's own Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF). Other funds included in the figures were not a direct response to the Flash Appeal and, according to one assessment, the appeal itself only raised about \$1.5m.⁶

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) also issued a fundraising appeal, which performed poorly. Most international NGOs did not make financial appeals in response to the crisis.

The INGC had prepared a detailed contingency response plan for the emergency, but this had never been tested in practice before the 2007 crisis. During previous disasters, international humanitarian agencies had largely substituted for the role of the national authorities. On this occasion, the government made a deliberate decision not to issue an emergency appeal for international assistance. Consequently, international donors probably provided less support than they might otherwise have done. The consequences and implications of this are discussed in more detail later in this report.

The most striking feature of the research trip was the near unanimity with which people assessed the way in which national and international agencies had responded to the disaster and the mutual respect shown by both sets of actors. While not glossing over problems, respondents gave a generally positive evaluation of the government's disaster preparedness arrangements and praised the political leadership shown by the INGC. The government for its part welcomed the assistance

⁵ UN OCHA, *Mozambique, 2007 Flash Appeal, Floods and Cyclones*,

[http://ochadms.unog.ch/quickplace/cap/main.nsf/h_Index/Flash_2007_Mozambique/\\$FILE/Flash_2007_Mozambique.doc?OpenElement](http://ochadms.unog.ch/quickplace/cap/main.nsf/h_Index/Flash_2007_Mozambique/$FILE/Flash_2007_Mozambique.doc?OpenElement).

⁶ Real Time Evaluation, 2007, p.40.

provided by the international humanitarian community.

Both national and international organisations spoke frankly about some of the difficulties that had arisen in coordinating their responses, and both highlighted the same issues as proving most problematic. There was a general consensus that the national authorities had responded far better to this disaster than to previous ones. This view was even shared by the displaced people who were interviewed. Many international agencies held up Mozambique as a potential model for the development of disaster response strategies by other countries.

From the perspective of the humanitarian actors, the most important issue in responding to a natural or man-made disaster is how to alleviate human suffering and prevent large-scale loss of life. Although most statements of principle start with a reaffirmation of the primary responsibility of states for action within their own borders, in practice, faced with a large-scale, fast-moving complex emergency, many international agencies often feel that it is simpler and more effective to implement projects directly than to trust the national authorities to do so.

International donors and relief agencies rarely have detailed information about national capacities and how these can best be supported during an emergency. Many international agencies make a decision to intervene on the basis that they think that local capacities have been overwhelmed. However, without a detailed knowledge of what these capacities actually are, they may end up duplicating or substituting for them. This is often wasteful, in terms of resources, and means that emergency humanitarian responses may undermine support for long-term development. Deluging a country with resources, which bypass national structures, may weaken existing capacity and make it more dependent on external assistance in the future. However, denying support to a government on the grounds that it 'appears to be coping' could 'penalise' a national authority for its effectiveness and lead to preventable suffering amongst the affected population.

The following sections of this report provide a brief overview of the disaster itself and place this within the context of Mozambique's recent history,

particularly in relation to its capacity to deal with previous humanitarian emergencies. The report then looks at some of the institutional arrangements that have been developed for dealing with emergencies, by both national and international actors in Mozambique, and discusses how these actually worked in practice in the most recent case. The purpose is not to carry out a detailed evaluation, but to draw out lessons that may have a wider applicability to issues that concern the appropriate role of the state and how it relates to international humanitarian actors in responding to disasters.

Methodology

The trip included interviews with government officials and representatives of national and international aid agencies, including the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), WFP, the Mozambique Red Cross, Save the Children, Oxfam, Médecins Sans Frontières (Switzerland), CARE, the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO), the World Bank, the German Embassy and the Canadian High Commission.

Several meetings were held with staff of the INGC, at national and regional level. This included one-to-one discussions with its director, Paulo Zucula, and with Wolfgang Stiebens, who has been seconded to the INGC as a special advisor by the German international cooperation agency, GTZ. There was also an opportunity to sit in on an inter-departmental meeting of the government's Technical Council of Disasters Management (CTGCN), which included representatives of all the government's lead departments on disaster responses. The author also attended a meeting of the UN Country Team and Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), which had been specially convened to coincide with an ECHO delegation to the country. A number of temporary accommodation centres were visited during the field trip, which provided an opportunity to talk to the people who had been displaced by the flooding as well as with the INGC's field staff.

Floods, droughts and cyclones

Mozambique is one of the poorest countries in the world and few would disagree that it has been 'battered by colonial rule, civil war and famine'.⁷ It is more frequently and severely affected by natural disasters than virtually any other country in Africa.⁸ Throughout its recent history it has had to cope with a succession of floods, droughts and cyclones, which have had a devastating combined impact. The worst droughts were recorded between 1980 and 1983, which affected up to six million people. The two worst floods were in 2000 and 2001, which affected up to four and a half million. It has also been hit by a number of cyclones, the worst of which was in 1994, which affected two and a half million people.⁹

The country has a tropical climate with two seasons: its wet season is from October to March, and its dry season is from April to September. The Zambezi River, which runs through central Mozambique, is the fourth-largest river basin in Africa and drains water from parts of Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Angola, Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe, as well as from Mozambique itself. As the 'last stop' before the sea, Mozambique is highly vulnerable to changes in the water levels that occur further up the main river and its tributaries. Towards the end of the 'wet season', in January, February and March, the river often swells to over twice its average size (in terms of water flow), while by the end of the 'dry season', in August and September, it can shrink to as little as a fifth of its average.¹⁰

As a predominantly agrarian society, Mozambique's population are extremely vulnerable to drought and, although they have not suffered from a severe one in recent years, many people regard this as the

country's biggest potential problem when it comes to natural disasters. More than 75% of the population engages in small-scale agriculture, which still suffers from inadequate infrastructure, commercial networks and investment. Partly due to poor irrigation, the vast majority of Mozambique's arable land remains uncultivated. The most fertile land tends to be located close to rivers and other natural sources of water.

Before the construction of the Kariba Dam, in 1959, there was an annual flood in February or March. A second dam was built at Cahora Bassa, in 1974, to further control the water levels. The new dams halted these annual floods, which encouraged many people to move into the lowlands around the Zambezi, where the soil is more fertile. However, while the dams can control the flooding in normal years, they do not have the spill-way capacity to cope with the very large floods that occur on the river every five to ten years. At best, the dam operators can slow down the sudden rise in water levels by phasing the spillage of water over a period of a few days, which gives the people living downstream a little more time to evacuate their homes. The 'early-warning system' and 'community-preparedness' will, therefore, be crucial in determining to what extent the flooding results in loss of life.

Mozambique has a long coastline and tropical cyclones are also a recurring hazard. Cyclones that hit Madagascar may gain momentum as they cross the Mozambique Channel, reaching speeds of over 300km per hour. The high winds damage buildings and can kill people with flying debris. They also bring very large amounts of rain, which can cause widespread flooding. All three of these natural calamities – floods, droughts and cyclones – are likely to be exacerbated by climate change and global warming. Rising sea levels threaten coastal towns and many inland areas that are below the water line. Warmer seas will also probably bring more, and more severe, tropical cyclones, while rising inland temperatures increase the probability of droughts.

In April 2007, the head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Southern Africa warned that global warming had

⁷ BBC News Africa, country profile, Mozambique, 7 March 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1063120.stm

⁸ *Mozambique: Gestao de Risco de Calamidades ao longo do Rio Buzi, Estudo de Caso sobre os Antecedents, o conceito e a Implementacao da Gestao de Risco de Calamidades no Ambito do Programa de Desenvolvimento Rural (PRODER) da GTZ*, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, December 2005.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Real Time Evaluation, April 2007.

already brought noticeably heavier rains and more cyclones. This year alone:

Close to one million people in the region have been either displaced by flooding or lost their crops and will face food shortages within a matter of months. With global warming, we can expect to see more of the same in coming years ... Governments and the international community have to be even better prepared, which requires that more time and money be spent on prevention and preparedness activities. This needs to be our primary focus in the coming year.¹¹

Clearly, it is beyond the power of Mozambique's government to influence the level of climate change, so the main question must concern its ability to cope with the consequent effects. In the long term, this means strengthening the country's flood and cyclone defences and early-warning systems, improving its irrigation systems and cultivating crops that can survive in Mozambique's varied climatic conditions. In the more immediate term, it must involve looking at how the country will cope with its current level of resources, facing similar, and possibly worse, disasters over the next few years.

In 2001, the government of Mozambique adopted an Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty (PARPA I),¹² which was revised for the period 2006–2009 (PARPA II).¹³ Drawn up with the assistance of the World Bank and international donors, it is intended to outline 'the strategic vision for reducing poverty, the main objectives, and the key actions to be implemented, all of which will guide the preparation of the Government's medium-term and annual budgets, programs, and policies'.¹⁴ It sets a series of strategic goals including improving education, health and good governance, the development of basic infrastructures in rural and

¹¹ IRIN News, 'Southern Africa: Extreme weather threatens over a million people', 5 April 2007,

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=71204>

¹² *The National Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty, 2001-2005 - Final draft approved by the Council of Ministers, April 2001*, Government of Mozambique (PARPA), (2001).

¹³ *Republic of Mozambique Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty, 2006-2009, Final Version Approved by the Council of Ministers on May 2, 2006*, Government of Mozambique (PARPA II) (2006).

¹⁴ World Bank, Country Brief, Mozambique, 15 June 2007.

urban areas and better macroeconomic and financial management. It also has a target of reducing the incidence of poverty in Mozambique from 54% in 2003 to 45% in 2009.

The PARPA II is organised around three pillars – governance, human capital and economic development – which are supported by international donors and provide a useful structure within which assistance can be provided. As discussed below, this structure was effectively ignored by international humanitarian actors during the 2007 disaster.

In October 2006, the government adopted a Master Plan, which provides a comprehensive strategy for dealing with Mozambique's vulnerability to natural disasters, covering issues ranging from the need for re-forestation and the development of a national irrigation system to the development of crops that can survive prolonged droughts.¹⁵ The Master Plan also argues that Mozambique needs to reduce its dependence on agriculture as the main source of livelihood in rural areas, through, for example, the development of its tourist industry, while setting out a clear strategy for emergency management.

According to the Master Plan, a major weakness in the past has been the development of a 'dependency culture' in the country. It notes that many people have grown up in conditions of war and disaster, where 'begging has become almost a way of life'.¹⁶ It argues that the 're-establishment of self-esteem, self-confidence and dignity' are a basic precondition for 'combating extreme poverty and reducing the country's vulnerability to natural disasters'. For this reason, the government is determined to avoid 'running to international donors without first exhausting national capacities'.¹⁷ The strategy that it laid down for emergency responses was first tested by the floods of 2007.

Humanitarian aid workers often treat such documents with considerable scepticism. There can be a very large gap between the aims outlined in an official document, produced with donor assistance

¹⁵ *Master Plan: Director Plan for Prevention and Mitigation of Natural Disasters*, Approved by the fifth session of the Council of Ministers, Government of Mozambique, 14 March 2006.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

in a country's capital city, and the realities experienced by its poorest and most vulnerable people during a humanitarian disaster. However, in Mozambique there appears to have been a genuine attempt to turn these reports into actual working documents, and at least some of the measures outlined do seem to have been used as a guide to action during the recent humanitarian crisis.

The 2007 disaster

During the course of January 2007, it became clear that there was an imminent threat of severe flooding in the Zambezi River basin valley. On 20 January the INGC, which had been monitoring the situation, began to call daily coordination meetings to plan its response. On 26 January, OCHA issued a regional flood warning which covered Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. On 30 January, the INGC deputy director briefed the UN Country Team on preparations for potential flooding.

On 4 February 2007, the INGC issued a formal 'Red Alert' warning that large-scale flooding was anticipated along the Zambezi River basin. The following day the INGC briefed the government's Council of Ministers. However, partly due to reports that the situation appeared to be stabilising, the government did not declare a national emergency at this point. On 6 February, the INGC wrote to WFP requesting support to respond to additional flooding needs.

On 7 February Mozambique's prime minister visited the Zambezi River valley and reported that in-country protocols, actors and resources were being effectively mobilised. She stated that the government, in cooperation with its in-country partners, including the UN, would be able to respond adequately to the flooding. The following day, she ordered the army to forcibly evacuate any people who had continued to defy instructions to leave the affected area. No formal appeal was made by the government for support from the international community although, on 13 February, the INGC set out the resources it believed would be necessary to assist affected communities.

On 8 February, the UN Country Team decided to approach the other humanitarian actors in-country to form an ad hoc Humanitarian Country Team. It was also decided to make a Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) application for the expected floods, and to adopt the 'Cluster Approach' in its humanitarian response.¹⁸ The team asked for assistance from OCHA in Geneva to establish the necessary systems, and an official was immediately dispatched from its Humanitarian Reform Support

Unit. International donors also began to gear themselves up for an emergency response.

On 16 February, the IFRC issued its own emergency cash appeal, which it followed with a second appeal a month later. INGOs began to bring in additional staff and mobilise resources.

On 22 February, Mozambique was struck by a second disaster when cyclone Favio hit its southern coast in Vilankulus, killing nine people, injuring 70 and causing extensive damage. The cyclone brought rains and more flooding. It damaged 17 health centres and an estimated 332 classrooms and 38 public administration buildings. It also destroyed drug stocks and medical equipment and affected safe water and sanitation facilities. An estimated 20,800 hectares of crops were destroyed.¹⁹

Although the two disasters were geographically distinct they clearly stretched the capacity of all the humanitarian actors involved in the relief effort. Estimates of the number of people affected range between 300,000 and 500,000. DFID stated that 163,000 people had been forced to leave their homes due to the flooding, and that an additional 134,000 had been affected by Cyclone Favio.²⁰ WFP claims that the floods affected 285,000 people, and the cyclone 150,000 more.²¹ It reported that 140,000 flood-affected people had been placed in temporary accommodation centres in the Zambezi region, and that an additional 55,500 had moved to expanded resettlement sites established after previous floods. Tens of thousands of people lost their crops, less than a month before the harvest, and essential infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, was badly damaged.²² USAID estimated

¹⁸ Both of these measures are further discussed below.

¹⁹ UN OCHA, *Mozambique 2007 Flash Appeal*, 12 March 2007, Executive Summary, [http://ochadms.unog.ch/quickplace/cap/main.nsf/h_Index/Flash_2007_Mozambique/\\$FILE/Flash_2007_Mozambique.doc?OpenElement](http://ochadms.unog.ch/quickplace/cap/main.nsf/h_Index/Flash_2007_Mozambique/$FILE/Flash_2007_Mozambique.doc?OpenElement).

²⁰ UK Department for International Development, Mozambique flood relief update, 6 March 2007, <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/news/files/mozambique-floods-update.asp>.

²¹ WFP Mozambique, *2007 Post-Emergency Report*, World Food Program, 28 May 2007.

²² Ibid.

that 331,500 people had been affected by the flood and 162,770 by the cyclone.²³

Nevertheless, the government still did not issue an international appeal for funds, which implies that it believed that it had the situation under control. This had a number of implications which are discussed more fully below. The two most important were that international donors did not know when or whether to trigger their own mechanisms for releasing funds, and international humanitarian agencies faced the usual impediments in importing emergency relief supplies and logistical equipment, which could have been removed in a full-scale emergency.

The government's preparedness measures were, however, soon being widely praised by many observers as it became clear that no one had been killed during the flooding and that the evacuation of both affected areas had proceeded smoothly and efficiently. The INGC officially declared its 'Red Alert' preparedness at an end on 10 March 2007. It then moved into the recovery and resettlement phase of its operations.

A poor country

The government's response to the 2007 disaster needs to be seen in the context of Mozambique's recent history, which is particularly important in understanding both its ability to cope with such disasters and the political strategy that it has adopted in relation to them. Mozambique was classified by UNDP as the poorest country in the world in the late 1980s and, although its economy has grown in recent years, it remains heavily dependent on international assistance. The UN Human Development report for 2003 placed Mozambique in one hundred and seventieth place in its index of 177 countries. In 2006 it had risen to one hundred and sixty eighth.²⁴

Mozambique was first colonised by Portugal in 1505 as part of its expansion into the former Arab sultanates on the East African coast. The Portuguese took over the Arab commercial and slave trading settlements and then penetrated the interior regions in search of gold and slaves. The Portuguese

maintained a system of forced labour in Mozambique, as in Angola, and resisted demands for independence until 1975, when a coup by left-leaning army officers overthrew the dictatorship in Lisbon. The new Portuguese government agreed to hand over the country to the main liberation movement Frelimo (the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique), which had conducted a guerrilla war for the previous ten years, with limited success. As in Angola, independence led to the flight of many Portuguese settlers, which created a skills shortage for the new government. Little attention had been paid to educating the native population under colonial rule, so its national capacity was weak.

Frelimo established a one-party state, allied to the Soviet bloc, outlawed rival political parties and sought to undermine the influence of the traditional authorities and religious groups. The new government also gave shelter and support to the liberation movements of neighbouring South Africa and Rhodesia. These governments, in turn, supported an armed rebel movement called the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo), which conducted a campaign of devastation in central Mozambique. In part, this was a simple act of retaliation, but it also supported the racist belief that black Africans are incapable of self-government, one of the central tenets of apartheid ideology. Renamo targeted what it claimed were symbols of government rule, such as schools and clinics, and destroyed a great deal of infrastructure in rural areas. Its base of support was in the centre and north of the country, including the areas most affected by the recent flooding.

An estimated one million Mozambicans perished during the civil war and millions more were either internally displaced or took refuge outside the country. The government was soon unable to exercise effective control outside urban areas, many of which were cut off from the capital. The country suffered a total economic collapse and droughts in the early 1980s led to a series of devastating famines.

In 1990, Mozambique adopted a new constitution providing for a multiparty political system, a market-based economy and free elections. The civil war ended in October 1992 with the Rome General Peace Accords and the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force called UNOMOZ. By mid-1995 more than 1.7m Mozambican refugees had returned

²³ *USAID Mozambique – floods and cyclone*, US Agency for International Development, 22 March 2007.

²⁴ See The Human Development Reports, UNDP, <http://hdr.undp.org>.

from neighbouring countries, and an estimated 4m internally displaced persons (IDPs) returned to their areas of origin in what was, at the time, the largest repatriation ever witnessed in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Mozambique has enjoyed a period of rapid economic growth since its return to peace. According to the World Bank, it achieved an average annual growth rate of 8% between 1996 and 2006. As a result, the poverty headcount index fell by 15 percentage points between 1997 and 2003, bringing almost 3m people out of extreme poverty (out of a total population of 20m). From the human development perspective, this has meant a 35% decrease in infant and under-five mortality, and a 65% increase in net primary school enrolment. Inequality remained relatively low by regional standards, and progress has been made towards the key Millennium Development Goals of infant mortality and primary enrolment.²⁵

In 2000, Mozambique was devastated by floods, which cost an estimated 20% of the country's gross national product, and this slowed its economic growth to 2.1% in that year. However, the economy recovered in 2001 with growth of 14.8%, despite suffering another flood in the same year. Since then, the economy has continued to expand at the rate of 7–10% a year. Future expansion hinges on several major foreign investment projects, continued economic reform and the revival of the agriculture, transportation and tourism sectors.²⁶

Fiscal reforms, including the introduction of a value-added tax, reduced import duties and reform of the customs service, have improved the government's revenue collection abilities. More than 1,200 state-owned enterprises have been privatised, and the government has actively encouraged private foreign investment. The government has also amended its commercial code and started to reform the judiciary and civil service. However, many of these reforms are in their early stages and the country still faces daunting social and economic problems.²⁷ According to a USAID assessment, published in 2005:

*Government institutions are weak but generally improving. They suffer from a shortage of skilled personnel due to low salaries and the country's extreme shortage of trained citizens. A legacy of Portuguese colonial and post-independence command-and-control economic systems is gradually giving way to a more private-sector friendly environment, although much remains to be done to control corruption.*²⁸

Mozambique remains dependent on foreign assistance for much of its annual budget. Donor support for Mozambique has grown since the 1980s, and now represents around 14% of the country's gross domestic product. Foreign assistance finances about 49% of the state budget.²⁹ Much of this is in the form of direct budget support to the government, rather than being tied to specific projects implemented through other agencies. This has been accompanied by measures to tackle corruption, which are generally regarded as having been moderately successful. Mozambique was rated ninety-ninth in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index for 2006. This still places it in the bottom half of the global league, but significantly higher than other African countries which face similar social and economic conditions.³⁰

Since the peace agreement, Mozambique has held three presidential and parliamentary elections. Although some aspects of these polls were criticised by international observers, they concluded that the irregularities would not have changed the overall result.³¹ Frelimo has won each election by a comfortable majority, but Renamo gained around a third of the popular vote and has won control of several local administrations, including Beira, which was visited during the research mission.

²⁵ World Bank, Country Brief, Mozambique, 15 June 2007.

²⁶ See Country Profile, Mozambique, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozambique>.

²⁷ GTZ Country Profile, Mozambique, <http://www.gtz.de/en/presse/18805.htm>.

²⁸ USAID, *Mozambique, the Development Challenge*, 19 January 2005, http://www.usaid.gov/mz/development_challenge.htm.

²⁹ *Republic of Mozambique Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty, 2006-2009, Final Version Approved by the Council of Ministers on May 2, 2006* Government of Mozambique (PARPA II) (2006).

³⁰ See Transparency International, <http://www.transparency.org>.

³¹ Carter Center, *Mozambique: 2004 Presidential election, international observer missions*, Carter Center, April 2007.

Considering the bitterness of the civil war, Mozambique has a relatively tolerant political culture, particularly compared to neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe. Reporters without Borders, an international NGO, rated Mozambique 45 on its index of 168 countries, which puts it amongst the top five countries in Africa in terms of freedom of speech and political expression.³²

During the research mission a number of observers expressed concern about the fragility of Mozambique's civil society, and warned that its present system of political pluralism could be under threat. There were concerns that it could be 'moving towards a *de facto* one party State'.³³ In its annual report for 2007, Amnesty International raised a number of concerns about the behaviour of Mozambique's police, and cited two cases of journalists and opposition politicians being arrested.³⁴ However, these concerns are considerably less serious than those reported amongst all its immediate neighbours (including South Africa), and the organisation's last official mission to the country was in 2004.³⁵

The significance of the debate about these political and economic reforms should not be underestimated in discussing Mozambique's response to the recent natural disaster. It is often argued that famines do not occur in democracies,³⁶ and Mozambique's experiences also show that there is a direct relationship between good governance and political leadership in responding to crises. Evaluations of responses to natural or man-made disasters that only focus on technical or organisational mechanisms are also missing an important lesson when it comes to promoting good

³² *Worldwide press freedom ranking of countries*, Reporters Without Borders, 2006, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reporters_Without_Borders

³³ Interviews conducted during research visit and comments expressed on the first draft of this paper.

³⁴ Amnesty International Annual Report 2007, Country page Mozambique, <http://thereport.amnesty.org/eng/Regions/Africa/Mozambique>.

³⁵ Mozambique: Amnesty International delegates visit, AI Index: AFR 41/002/2004, 1 April 2004.

³⁶ See Amartya Sen, *Autobiography*, http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/economics/laureates/1998/sen-autobio.html.

humanitarian practice. This point is discussed further in the conclusion.

Comparison with previous disasters

Obtaining accurate figures for the total number of people affected by a humanitarian crisis is notoriously difficult, and this makes it hard to compare Mozambique's disaster in 2007 with previous ones that have struck the country.³⁷

The number of people affected was certainly lower than previous disasters, as discussed above. During February–March 2000, Mozambique was also hit by a severe flood of the Zambezi River and cyclone Eline, which deluged the south, killing between 700 and 800 people. The following year, another flood killed around 100 people and displaced over 155,000. There was a cholera outbreak in the temporary accommodation centres, which led to an estimated further 150 deaths.³⁸ In comparison, only nine people died in the 2007 cyclone, while a further 70 were injured. The evacuation of people from the flood areas was accomplished without any loss of life.

This, of course, cannot be the basis for a comparison of the effectiveness national responses between the disasters, since it does not take account either of the severity of the climatic conditions or the scale of the international response. It is generally accepted that the floods and cyclone in 2007 were less severe than in 2000 and 2001.

The floods and cyclones of 2000 and 2001 attracted a great deal of international attention, and large amounts of foreign aid. International humanitarian agencies took the lead in responding to the crises, because they doubted that the government had the capacity to do so itself. The international effort was generally regarded as being well coordinated at the time, although subsequent reforms, at both the

³⁷ See *Mozambique: Gestao de Risco de Calamidades ao longo do Rio Buzi, Estudo de Caso sobre os Antecedents, o conceito e a Implementacao da Gestao de Risco de Calamidades no Ambito do Programa de Desenvolvimento Rural (PRODER) da GTZ*, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, December 2005.

³⁸ Interview conducted with Paulo Zucula, Director of the INGC, May 2007. Other estimates put the death from these floods at 81 people.

national and global level, have changed the way in which the humanitarian community responds to such emergencies. By contrast, the government made a deliberate decision not to issue an emergency appeal for international assistance in 2007. Consequently, international donors provided less support than they might otherwise have done.

The national response mechanisms

It is generally recognised that the single most important difference between the response of Mozambique's national authorities to the 2007 floods and cyclone and its response to previous disasters lay in the functioning of the INGC. This was created by the government in 2000, although its present structure was only put in place in 2006.

The INGC's current director, Paulo Zucula, was appointed at the end of 2005, as part of this restructuring, and he has a direct reporting line to the prime minister during emergencies. Unanimous praise was expressed during the research trip for the political lead shown by Zucula and the INGC during the 2007 response. Indeed, the biggest note of caution expressed by a number of people interviewed was the extent to which the INGC's effectiveness was solely due to his leadership, and there were concerns about what might happen to it after his departure.

The origins of the INGC lie in the mechanisms created during the war to distribute emergency relief. The Natural Calamities Prevention and Combat Department was mainly a logistics structure consisting of 'some trucks and a building, but with virtually no office equipment'.³⁹ It basically functioned as a national implementing partner for UN agencies. When the war ended, this structure was transformed into the Natural Calamities Management National Institute, which was responsible for drawing up an Annual Contingency Plan included in the general budget. In 2000, this became the INGC. When the INGC was created it was initially based in the government's Ministry for Foreign Affairs, since most of its interactions were with international donors, and its role was mainly operational.

³⁹ Interview conducted with Wolfgang Stiebens, seconded into the INGC as a special advisor by the German international cooperation agency GTZ, May 2007.

The INGC was established in response to the floods of 2000, and it attempted to play a coordinating role during the floods of 2001. According to Mozambique's news agency, it organised meetings with international agencies and British and French military specialists in October 2000 to 'assess what could be done in the event of a repeat of the flooding'. It was also reported to have 'run training exercises, including simulations, particularly for the areas most vulnerable to flooding'. It stated that 'enough food will be available to supply the 160,000 or so people in areas believed to be at risk of hunger until the next harvest, in March/April 2001', basing this on a letter of understanding signed with WFP.⁴⁰

However, most observers agree that the actual response was weak and the international agencies took the lead in coordinating their own operations. One international aid worker said that the only visible national government presence during both disasters had been that of the Mozambique armed forces.⁴¹ These were supported by military aid from a number of other countries, including South Africa and Britain, who lent military equipment and personnel to their Mozambique counterparts to help with the evacuation.⁴²

The creation of the INGC was strongly supported by international donors, who have helped to fund the employment and training of 285 staff and the equipping of a national headquarters and several regional offices. The INGC is now located in the Ministry for National Affairs and has built a number of regional centres for managing emergency operations. These are intended to coordinate the activities of everyone involved in disaster management, from the central government to the regional and local administrations, down to the population itself. Its biggest single donor is the German assistance agency GTZ, which has contributed just under 2m euros to Mozambique's disaster preparedness activities.⁴³ GTZ has

⁴⁰ *Mozambique News Agency, AIM Reports*, INGC Prepares for further flooding', 23 October 200, <http://www.poptel.org.uk/mozambique-news/newsletter/aim193.html#story6>.

⁴¹ Interview conducted with an international aid worker in Mozambique, May 2007.

⁴² See Robert Guest, *The shackled continent, Africa's past, present and future*, Pan Books, 2005, pp. 4-6.

⁴³ GTZ, 'Mozambique: Disaster Preparedness Works!', 5 March 2007. This states that the German government has

seconded several staff members into the INGC and also paid for a number of its projects, such as training and simulation exercises and equipping the emergency response centres.⁴⁴

The INGC has not conducted its own evaluation of its emergency response, but is hoping to do so in the future. Clearly this could be a very useful process, both for its own purposes and for helping international humanitarian agencies get a better understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The two factors that Zucula believes were most important in contributing to the effectiveness of the response were the political support that the INGC received from the government, and the early warning system that was put in place. According to Zucula:

*Our President and Prime Minister understand that disasters cannot be allowed to stop development, they are part of it and we must learn how to respond to them. Having that strong political backing was fundamental to what we accomplished. That is what enabled us to prepare everyone and everything else.*⁴⁵

Zucula stressed that there were many areas which he believed should be improved in the future and that, while the actual evacuation of people threatened by the floods had gone well, there were many lessons to be learned about the overall management of the crisis. He stated frankly that the INGC had not been sufficiently prepared for the running of the temporary accommodation centres, and that there had been some problems regarding food distribution, water and sanitation and health care. 'We were very lucky that there was not an outbreak of cholera', he commented.⁴⁶

Zucula believes that the international community could have done more to support the relief effort, and that there was also a need for investment in the general preparedness measures laid out in the

supplied Mozambique with EUR 1.75 million in direct assistance and that a German company has supplied an additional EUR 200,000 to support its early warning system.

⁴⁴ Interview conducted with Wolfgang Stiebens, seconded into the INGC as a special advisor by the German international cooperation agency GTZ, May 2007.

⁴⁵ Interview conducted with Paulo Zucula, Director of the INGC, May 2007.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Master Plan. He singled out the support provided by GTZ as a model for other donors. The most urgent issues to be addressed are information management systems and the meteorological network. Zucula concluded that:

*This was one event that went well. If one more river had flooded a little more we could have lost control. We still have not consolidated the systems that we have put in place. We are looking at a planning process that will take 10 years to complete. That is the perspective from which we need to look at things.*⁴⁷

One of the INGC's most interesting innovations was the creation of a National Emergency Operations Centre, the Centro Nacional Operativo de Emergência (CENOE), located on a military base next to the airport in Maputo. CENOE will also have three centres around the country to serve as the operations rooms for emergency responses. The centre for the central region is in Caia, which was established in January 2007. Another is located in Vilanculos for the south, and a third is planned for Angoche in the north. The CENOE's in Caia and Maputo were visited during the research trip.

The CENOE's are modelled on similar centres in Guatemala, and the INGC has drawn heavily on the experiences of a number of Latin American countries. According to Zucula, 'we wanted to learn from countries which face similar problems to our own, not just in terms of climatic conditions, but also issues like poverty, inequality, official bureaucracy and a lack of national capacity. These can teach us more than models developed in Europe or North America'.⁴⁸ A number of Latin Americans with experience of disaster management have been brought to Mozambique, and the INGC has sent some of its staff to Latin America. The countries which INGC wishes to learn more from are Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Cuba and Brazil.

The CENOE's are well-equipped, with computers and communication equipment. The CENOE in Caia had six computers and a wifi internet connection. An aerial placed on a nearby mountain enabled the staff to communicate with their counterparts throughout the Zambezi river basin during the 2007 floods, which the INGC's regional staff regarded as

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

the single most important technical innovation during the crisis.

At a more basic level the CENOE's have significantly improved communication and coordination during emergencies because they ensure that a core group of people are sitting in the same room at the same time, where decisions are taken. This includes representatives of relevant government departments and the military. According to Mozambique's disaster preparedness planning, when an emergency occurs personnel drawn from the national level of INGC and from the governments of the affected provinces base themselves in the CENOE to plan the official response. It is widely recognised that a rapid flow of information is the essence of disaster prevention, and many people interviewed noted that this had been a strength during the 2007 crisis.

The national and regional CENOE's held daily conferences during the emergency. These processed and assessed information received from the field on the unfolding nature of the crisis and on where and what aid was needed. The CENOE's are tasked with planning the evacuation and setting up emergency reception camps. Ministerial representatives were at hand throughout the crisis, which was intended to speed up decision-making. It also gave them a direct insight into the scale of the problems faced, and a sense of involvement in the response. According to the INGC regional staff in Caia, the presence of these high-level national and local government officials in the affected provinces significantly improved the prioritisation of the disaster. One staff member commented that: 'They were sitting with us every day and sharing the same experiences so they could see what the people were going through and how important the relief effort was'.⁴⁹

The choice of physical location of the regional CENOE's proved to have been right, since Caia was an effective location to coordinate the response to the flooding and Vilanculos was strategically located to deal with the cyclone. The INGC also made the right decision about where to preposition relief supplies, which it started to do from November 2006 onwards. It also began to move key staff to Caia, from January 2007. These preparations are generally

⁴⁹ Interview conducted with group of INGC regional staff in Caia, May 2007.

regarded to have greatly improved the effectiveness of the response, as did the simulation exercises which are described further below.

Another notable aspect of Mozambique's emergency response was the involvement of local people. The population itself is directly involved in disaster preparedness. For example, local people gauge water levels at regular intervals and form committees trained to carry out evacuation smoothly and professionally. The aim is to establish a committee in every village and, although this has not yet been achieved, there is a network of organisation that can reach most of the larger population centres in rural areas through a combination of field trips, radio broadcasts and mobile telephones. According to Zucula, one of the reasons for the effectiveness of the evacuation in 2007 was the involvement of local people. 'We only had five boats and four helicopters at our disposal, but the local people had 1,000 fishing canoes and they carried out over half the evacuations themselves. The image that everyone remembers from the floods in 2000 was foreign military helicopters rescuing people from the trees. We only evacuated about 100 people by helicopter this time.'⁵⁰

In the run-up to the disaster the INGC carried out village-by-village consultations using its own staff. 'We did not tell people that they had to evacuate, but we negotiated with them and asked them what their capacity was to move people should it become necessary. Then, once it became clear that there was going to be a disaster we started telling people to "run away while you can". Finally, in late January, we just told people that they had to go. By the end of the third week we announced that, as of midnight, we were not going to do any more search and rescue missions. Anyone who chose to stay after that was on their own.'⁵¹

The INGC also coordinated the activities of the Mozambique military during the crisis. The police and military attended all planning meetings and are permanently represented on the government's Technical Council of Disasters Management (CTGCN). While in previous disasters the military had taken the lead role in coordinating the national

⁵⁰ Interview conducted with Paulo Zucula, Director of the INGC, May 2007.

⁵¹ Ibid.

response, they willingly participated in a broader planning structure under civilian leadership during the 2007 disaster. The Ministry of Defence played an active role in the CTGCN meeting, which was observed during the research mission, and gave an extremely positive assessment of the INGC's role during a one-to-one interview.

Other countries whose armed forces helped during the operation included South Africa, Malawi, Portugal, Germany, the US and UK. A number of these forces had helped in previous crises, most notably the floods of 2000 and 2001. UNDP hired a number of retired South African army officers to help deal with civil–military relations, and Zucula felt this had been extremely useful at the regional level. 'People with military backgrounds are much better at communicating with the military than civilians.'⁵²

The INGC was also effective in its outreach work with communities, through appointing a network of volunteers who provided it with information about rising water levels. 'This was a simple task, but it gives people some prestige in their own villages.'⁵³ It also required considerable pre-planning. Disaster preparedness has been made a standard subject in school curricula so that as many people as possible are qualified for emergency tasks. This project was supported by GTZ.⁵⁴ It was implemented directly by the government, and did not involve international agencies.

The simulation exercises, which were carried out in October and November 2006, were also widely praised as having made a significant contribution to the smoothness of the eventual operation. A delegation from Guatemala helped with the organisation of the first exercise, which involved representatives of the local community. All of the participants who were interviewed agreed that the simulations had helped different organisations to work together, as well as highlighting the weaknesses of the plans, which had previously only existed on paper. A key lesson from the first simulation was the need to improve communications, and participants claim that this

did subsequently improve. The simulations also fed into the process of drafting the disaster response Master Plan, and participating agencies said that this helped to give the document a wider sense of ownership.

The simulations were run by the INGC and included representatives of various government departments, two UN agencies (UNICEF and WFP) and the Mozambique Red Cross. It did not include any other national or international NGOs and one question which was put to various organisations during the research trip was whether it would make sense to include some of these in the future. There was no clear agreement on this point. On the one hand people argued that it could have helped to promote greater cooperation before the emergency, and so avoided some of the disagreements that took place during it, but it was also acknowledged that the simulations are extremely labour- and time-intensive to organise and participate in.⁵⁵

One INGO, CARE, did participate in the simulation that took place in the south of Mozambique, and was subsequently involved in the response to the cyclone there. However, other INGOs cited time constraints as a severe restriction on participation, and the INGC also indicated that it would have been problematic to include greater numbers of organisations, from a logistical point of view.

The general view expressed by the international agencies interviewed was that it was best for national organisations to coordinate amongst themselves using their own structures, while international organisations worked through the structures that have been developed at a global level. The INGC also seemed to prefer to work with a limited number of international agencies and let them interface with others. However, other organisations, particularly some international donors, questioned whether it was right to bypass national coordination mechanisms in this way.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ GTZ News, 'Mozambique: Disaster Preparedness Works! GTZ promotes coordination and participation of the local population', 5 March 2007, <http://www.gtz.de/en/presse/18805.htm>

⁵⁵ This question was put to all the INGOs interviewed and also discussed at a number of round-table sessions involving donors and international agencies. It was also discussed with the INGC's staff at a national and regional level.

Relations with humanitarian NGOs

INGOs such as MSF and Save the Children UK have long records of working with government departments in Mozambique, but also see a need to maintain independence, which makes it easier for them to make occasional constructive criticisms where necessary.⁵⁶ Save the Children provided substantial support to the INGC during the crisis, helping its staff with transport, fuel and telephones and making its pre-positioned supplies available. MSF also worked directly with government officials, mainly from the Ministry of Health, at the district and provincial level.

During the emergency itself UNICEF, WFP and the Mozambique Red Cross effectively acted as interface organisations between the national and international response mechanisms. Although some INGOs said that they felt that they sometimes could have been a little more critical of the government, the general working relationship seems to have been constructive. There was one occasion where the INGC objected to the activities of a German medical NGO, and the German Embassy intervened by asking the organisation's staff to adopt a more collaborative approach. There was no indication from anyone interviewed during the visit that the activities of INGOs are subject to unnecessary restrictions or prevented from engaging in political advocacy.

One specific criticism which a number of organisations, including MSF and the Red Cross, made was that it took too long for them to obtain the necessary authorisation to import supplies, such as medical equipment and vehicles. This was partly because the government did not declare a national emergency, which would have resulted in humanitarian goods being exempted from duties, tax and bureaucracy, but also points to the need for a clear law relating to national emergencies, which could help to clarify other issues. Through its International Disaster Response Law (IDRL) Project,⁵⁷ the IFRC has argued for the development of a model code that governments should adopt during an emergency:

⁵⁶ Interviews conducted with both INGOs, Mozambique, May 2007.

⁵⁷ *What is the IDRL Project?*, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, IDRL Fact Sheet number 01, June 2002.

*Laws and regulations should, among other things, waive import, export and transit restrictions and duties for relief goods; waive over-flight and landing restrictions and duties; grant landing rights and facilitate telecommunications in emergency situations, and waive visa and other immigration restrictions. They should provide for the right to exercise medical and other professions directly benefiting disaster victims.*⁵⁸

All INGOs in Mozambique are currently required by law to register with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and their permission to work in the country can be withdrawn. However, no one interviewed during the research mission expressed any concern that this could be used to inhibit the work of INGOs in Mozambique or restrict their independence.

Zucula also voiced his disagreements with the positions that some INGOs had taken over issues related to camp management, which is discussed further below. His view was that 'INGOs must play by the rules if they want to be part of the process', by which he meant they should adopt a constructive approach towards sharing information and coordinating responses.⁵⁹ The INGOs were specifically invited to attend meetings in the regional CENOs and to use the internet facilities.

The international humanitarian response mechanism

During the research mission a number of interviewees specifically mentioned the strength of a number of UN agencies in Mozambique as having made an important difference to the quality of the international response. Such praise, particularly from representatives of national and international NGOs, is quite rare at field level. It does, however, make it difficult to assess the structural response of international mechanisms, as many people commented that the real key to the successes had been good working relationships that had

⁵⁸ *International Review of Red Cross and Red Crescent*, 'The Federation promotes the development of International Disaster Response Law', June 2001, ICRC publication No. 842, pp. 546-548.

⁵⁹ Interview conducted with Paulo Zucula, Director of the INGC, May 2007.

developed over time within Mozambique. A high proportion of the international staff working for agencies in Mozambique are on long-term postings. Most speak Portuguese and know the country well. This seems to have been at least as important in fostering good working relations between the national authorities and international agencies as any organisational model adopted.

The UN Country Team's decision to coordinate their response through the adoption of a 'Cluster Approach' was not formally discussed with the government. It created a system that effectively bypassed the government's own mechanisms. The cluster system has been adopted at a global level as part of the UN's humanitarian reform agenda. Together with the creation of a Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), it is an attempt to improve coordination between different agencies, and the speed and efficiency of disaster responses. Both initiatives are still in their early stages and they are in the process of being rolled out in various countries. Eleven clusters were established in Mozambique, as follows:

- Nutrition – UNICEF
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) – UNICEF
- Health – WHO
- Shelter – International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC)/ UN Habitat (from 21 March)
- Camp Coordination – International Organisation of Migration
- Protection – Save the Children/UNICEF
- Early Recovery – UNDP
- Education – Save the Children/UNICEF
- Food Security – WFP
- Logistics – WFP
- Telecoms – WFP

These clusters were not aligned thematically with the pillar structure created by the government's Poverty Action Plan (PARPA). PARPA creates three basic pillars, governance, human capital and economic development, which are supported by the international donor community and are now well-established mechanisms for coordination between the national authorities and the international community. According to the Action Plan:

The element common to the three pillars is the building of the Mozambican nation [emphasis in original], consolidating national

unity, developing each citizen's human potential, creating a functioning institutional system, and increasing the ability to create national wealth. A fundamental condition for success in the formation of this Nation is ensuring that investments are made in basic infrastructures and maintenance thereof. We need to foster efficient communications from north to south of our territory and between rural and urban areas for people, goods, and information ... The multi-sectoral coordination among the different State institutions, organizations in civil society, the business community, and other development partners is the touchstone that will ensure the harmonious and multifaceted development of this country.⁶⁰

No attempt was made to integrate the cluster system into the PARPA pillars or to adapt it to the specific Mozambique context, although, at least on paper, there would appear to be a considerable overlap between a number of the above clusters and the governance and human capital pillars of the PARPA.

Most international agencies interviewed reported that coordination had been generally good, but it was not clear whether this was because of the cluster approach or simply because the main agencies in Mozambique have already established a good working relationship among themselves and with the national authorities. By contrast, UNICEF, WFP and the Red Cross all specifically mentioned their participation in the simulation exercises as having made a positive contribution to collaborative working arrangements.

Prior to the introduction of the Cluster Approach in Mozambique, most coordination of international agencies had been organised on a thematic basis, and this would not have been appropriate for a disaster response. The Disaster Management Team had established a Technical Working Group (DMT TWG), which had held some preliminary discussions about the Cluster Approach in the second half of 2006. WFP had also convened a meeting in May 2006 to discuss how the common logistics service would work in an emergency, and this helped

⁶⁰ Republic of Mozambique Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty, 2006-2009, Final Version Approved by the Council of Ministers on May 2, 2006 Government of Mozambique (PARPA II) (2006), paras 21–23.

different organisations to obtain a better understanding of one another's capacities.⁶¹ Had the cluster system not been adopted, this might have evolved into a coordination mechanism for the response.

The Cluster Approach was adopted for the Zambezi valley floods, but it was not used on the ground for the response to Cyclone Favio in the south, where the INGC managed the field-level coordination using its own pillar structures. None of the people interviewed mentioned any difference between the two responses.

It was generally agreed that the WASH and Logistics clusters had been the best coordinated. Some cluster leads did not have a field presence, and most clusters in the field had too few partners to justify holding separate meetings. However, where they did meet, the clusters were felt to have coordinated better in the field than at headquarters. Several people said the system led to a much greater sharing of information, and that this was its biggest benefit. One INGO, Save the Children, said that it had led to a greater sense of partnership, and appreciated being asked to co-lead two of the clusters.⁶²

Several organisations noted, however, that the newness of the Cluster Approach took some time to understand. The UN Country Team itself asked for assistance from OCHA in setting up the system. Save the Children also specifically asked its headquarters to send it someone with experience of the cluster system elsewhere, and felt that this had proved extremely useful.⁶³ As the Real Time Evaluation notes: 'Clusters are demanding in terms of the administrative and financial load that they place on the cluster leads'.⁶⁴

The evaluation concluded that: 'Overall, the introduction of the cluster approach was a success in Mozambique'.⁶⁵ In the interviews conducted during the research visit, however, several people were more equivocal. Some INGC staff expressed scepticism about the point of the system in a

country like Mozambique, with an effective existing national coordination mechanism. Some international agencies and donors also stated that INGC staff rarely made their presence felt at cluster meetings, where proceedings were dominated by the international agencies. The general view was that there were too many different clusters, leading to unnecessary duplication. This seriously stretched smaller organisations that did not have enough staff to attend all of the meetings. It is planned to merge the existing clusters into the INGC's pillar structure in the future.⁶⁶

A number of people also commented on the specific problems related to the deployment of OCHA staff. Although the first OCHA coordinator arrived within days of being requested, he was only able to stay in the country for a few weeks. Three different OCHA team leaders were deployed over the two-month period, and there was a similar turnover of field staff. OCHA was criticised for failing to deploy sufficient numbers of staff in sufficient time and with sufficient language skills to operate in a Portuguese-speaking environment. It was also noted that the staff OCHA deployed were recruited through *ad hoc* arrangements, rather than using the surge mechanism, and that some had only managed to arrive on time by paying their own airfares because the UN's official logistical arrangements were too slow. While this is not a criticism of the cluster system *per se*, it was argued that the introduction of the clusters further complicated an already complicated situation, and that OCHA was not sufficiently geared up to support it.

The Mozambique Red Cross, which was initially designated as the cluster lead for shelter, felt that there should have been more discussion about this at both the global and country level.⁶⁷ It was generally recognised that the Mozambique Red Cross did not have the resources to lead this cluster effectively, and leadership was handed over to UN-Habitat from 21 March. The IFRC mobilised to support the Mozambique Red Cross, but this also brought increased administrative work for the national society. 'People were coming from all over the world, which was difficult to manage and we were also receiving donated goods, which we

⁶¹ Real Time Evaluation, 2007, p. 23.

⁶² Interview with Chris Mclvor, Country Director Save the Children (UK), Mozambique, May 2007.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Real Time Evaluation, 2007, p.26.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Information supplied by UNICEF Mozambique, May 2007.

⁶⁷ Interview with Fernanda Teixeira, General Secretary Mozambican Red Cross, Mozambique, May 2007.

sometimes lacked the capacity to distribute’, said Fernanda Teixeira, its general-secretary. Teixeira argued that there was no point in having lots of supplies in their warehouses without the money to pay for petrol to distribute them. It would have also made more sense to develop a regional roster for emergency deployments ‘rather than flying people in from the other side of the world’.⁶⁸

MSF brought in six new international staff to work during the emergency, the majority of whom were redeployed from its operation in Angola, which was winding down. Other international agencies also drew in extra staff using a variety of ‘surge’ and ‘roster’ mechanisms. Several agencies commented that they had no difficulty finding people prepared to deploy at short notice because Mozambique is considered an attractive place to work. All of the people interviewed during the research mission were from organisations that had a presence in Mozambique before the 2007 crisis, which they scaled up in response to it. Some INGOs arrived fresh in the country in response to the crisis, but the only two ‘new’ international agencies which played a significant role in the crisis response were UN-Habitat and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

Although present in Mozambique, UN-Habitat had no field presence in the affected areas and was only able to take on the cluster lead role for shelter after obtaining funding from the CERF. IOM was designated as cluster lead for camp management, but likewise did not have the resources to take on this role. IOM had no delegation in Mozambique prior to the disaster and its presence consisted of one consultant working on separate issues. It was able to expand its presence after receiving CERF funding, but it is debatable whether either IOM or UN-Habitat had the resources to take on a cluster lead role.⁶⁹

There was also some discussion about how seriously the international community should have treated Mozambique’s 2007 emergency. While everyone interviewed agreed that international support had been needed, and was generally well-

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Unfortunately, it was not possible to meet representatives of either IOM or UN-Habitat during the research mission and so these comments are based on information received from second-hand sources.

provided, a question remains as to whether the humanitarian response model that has been adopted elsewhere was necessarily appropriate for Mozambique, given both the size of the emergency and the effectiveness of the national response. Although the Real Time Evaluation concluded that it was, it also noted, slightly equivocally, that:

*The floods in Mozambique are at the bottom end of the scale of disasters at which using a cluster approach is justified in a country with a functioning government. Even in small emergencies, use of the cluster approach may be justified in terms of preparing humanitarian actors to respond to larger-scale emergencies.*⁷⁰

The question this poses is whether the Cluster Approach was justified on its own terms, as the most effective way of providing support to the government and people of Mozambique, or whether its main benefit was to provide another ‘road test’ for a new approach to managing complex emergencies by the international community. If the latter answer is a substantial part of the justification then it could be legitimately asked whether the government and people of Mozambique should have been given any say in whether they wished to be used in this experimental manner.

Camp management

The main area which almost all interviewees stated had been the weakest part of the emergency response was the management of the temporary accommodation centres. There was general agreement that the health care facilities had been inadequate, and that the issue of health care was the most serious deficiency in the whole response to the 2007 emergency. Although staff from the Ministry of Health were sent to the districts very quickly, they often did not have sufficient equipment. The medical supplies in the centres were also often rudimentary. A number of people interviewed said that it was mainly luck rather than preparedness which prevented an outbreak of cholera.

The clearest disagreement between the national authorities and international humanitarian agencies arose over the number of people who were actually in the centres. The INGC’s initial assessment was

⁷⁰ Real Time Evaluation, 2007, p. 26.

that they contained 101,000 people, and this figure was repeatedly cited by its officials during the research visit. However, according to the rapid needs-assessment carried out by the UN Country Team in March:

*Initial assessments indicated that 137,000 people required needed to be placed [sic] in the accommodation centres due to the floods, where they required emergency shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene, health, protection and education.*⁷¹

In subsequent reports, the international agencies revised this figure upwards. In May 2007 WFP reported that '140,000 flood-affected people had been placed in temporary accommodation centres in the Zambezi region, and that an additional 55,500 had moved to expanded resettlement sites that had been established after previous floods'.⁷² During the research mission, international agency staff repeatedly stated that they thought the INGC had under-estimated the numbers in the centres, although they conceded that the figures had considerably varied.

The Real Time Evaluation noted that: 'Different levels of government used different figures, with INGC sticking to the numbers for its first approximate surveys. Districts often gave higher numbers for accommodation centres than those given by the national level, and the numbers given by the centre chiefs were higher still'.⁷³ This report concluded that the actual numbers at any centre varied because of movements in and out of the camps as some groups arrived late, while other left early, as well as what it described as 'opportunism by neighbouring communities'.⁷⁴

A number of INGC officials stated that 'opportunism' was the main reason for the discrepancy of the figures because many people who were not genuinely displaced by the floods and cyclone had attempted to register themselves as IDPs in order to

⁷¹ UN OCHA, *Mozambique, 2007 Flash Appeal, Floods and Cyclones*,

[http://ochadms.unog.ch/quickplace/cap/main.nsf/h_Index/Flash_2007_Mozambique/\\$FILE/Flash_2007_Mozambique.doc?OpenElement](http://ochadms.unog.ch/quickplace/cap/main.nsf/h_Index/Flash_2007_Mozambique/$FILE/Flash_2007_Mozambique.doc?OpenElement).

⁷² WFP Mozambique, *2007 Post-Emergency Report*, World Food Program, 28 May 2007.

⁷³ Real Time Evaluation, 2007, p. 40.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

obtain relief supplies. However, there was also some confusion about who should be counted as an IDP. For example, many people had moved to higher ground after the 2000 and 2001 floods, but continued to farm in the lower valley. These people lost their crops in the flooding, so were arguably entitled to food aid, but were often not registered because their homes were intact. The Real Time Evaluation noted that:

*Registration is a common problem in humanitarian emergencies. The initial registration was not thorough. A thorough initial registration would have made it easier to control later changes. This is a very difficult issue in a population without ID cards and where community officials may be open to the temptations for patronage or profit provided by controlling access to assistance. Given the lack of a thorough registration, the initial INGC survey, made before people were attracted to centres by the possibility of aid, was probably the most reasonable basis for planning overall levels of assistance. However, this did mean that some affected population got less assistance than they should have. However, the intent of humanitarian action is the prevention of large-scale suffering and avoidable death.*⁷⁵

There had also been a major disagreement between the INGC and a number of INGOs on the issue of food distribution. The INGC had proposed providing food to collective groups of IDPs and helping them to establish 'communal kitchens'. The INGOs, most notably Save the Children, argued against this on both principled and pragmatic grounds. The collective provision of food, they argued, would be susceptible to political manipulation and could mean that it failed to reach vulnerable groups. It was also not part of the culture of the affected community and would be difficult to impose on them. Most of the international agencies interviewed agreed with the INGOs rather than the government, although WFP could see the merit of the government's argument.

In the event, the proposal was not pursued, due to the resistance of the IDPs themselves. Many of those interviewed said that the discussions had been much more heated in Maputo than in the field

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 41.

centre in Caia. This appears to have been the biggest single disagreement during the entire relief operation which could, in itself, be seen as a positive development, particularly since it was ultimately agreed to abide by the wishes of the affected population.

There was another more specific disagreement between the INGC and Save the Children over the latter's proposal to pilot a cash distribution project, which DFID has agreed to back. This aims to give 2,000 families cash grants of \$100 to enable them to buy fishing equipment and agricultural goods, along with paying for school and medical fees and buying food and goats.⁷⁶ This project is going ahead, though in an interview Zucula expressed some reservations about the potential misuse of the money.

There is a growing body of opinion that cash grants help to empower people who have suffered losses during disasters, by enabling them to choose what they need rather than having an outside body determine this for them.⁷⁷ Cash grants mean that people can buy locally sold goods, including food from within the country, so many more people benefit from the grant. Cash grants help stimulate local markets and economies by infusing capital into a local area. As a new, and innovative, form of giving aid, however, cash grants still suffer from some suspicion, and this could account for some people's ambivalence about the programme.⁷⁸

Save the Children also claimed that the protection standards in the centres were 'disappointing', and that the child protection training that it had carried out had not been effective. These are issues where international agencies can genuinely add value, in a qualitative as opposed to a quantitative sense, to Mozambique's national capacity through training and the dissemination of good practice from elsewhere in the world. For example, a camp management toolkit training package has been developed by a number of international

humanitarian agencies, none of which operates in Mozambique, and such training could be useful in the future.

It was clear from visiting a number of accommodation centres that conditions were far from ideal and most centres lacked many basic services. The centres had already begun to empty at the time of the research visit as people were beginning to return home. The purpose of this project was not to carry out a detailed assessment of whether the needs of the affected population were met.⁷⁹ But, with the emergency over and no prospect of a link between the visit and any tangible aid being delivered, some were quite open about their real needs and future intentions.

Most people said that they intended to return to their homes in the river basin area because they said there 'was nothing for them' in the centres. Most seemed resigned to the fact that they were returning to an area which could flood again. Some people expressed dissatisfaction at the amount of material support they received, although this was not a unanimous view. It was generally agreed that the official response had been better than in the 2000 and 2001 disasters. Some said that the community itself had been better prepared to evacuate on this occasion and it was this, rather than the response of national or international agencies, which had prevented loss of life. Others said that the floods had simply been smaller than in previous years.

The accommodation centres were sited on higher ground, and some centres which had been established during the 2000 and 2001 floods have become settlements in the interim. Some government officials commented that the displaced people should not be provided with assistance to return to an area that is prone to frequent flooding. However, it was clear that most people felt that they had no means of making a livelihood except through returning to places where they could farm and fish.

⁷⁶ Save the Children UK Project proposal, *Emergency Cash Transfer Project for Zambezi Flood Victims*, Save the Children UK, Mozambique, May 2007.

⁷⁷ See Paul Harvey, *Cash-based responses in emergencies*, Overseas Development Institute, January 2007.

⁷⁸ Interview with Chris Mclvor, Director Save the Children Mozambique, May 2007.

⁷⁹ Three collective interviews were conducted in different temporary accommodation centres with, mostly male, camp leaders. The interviews were conducted using an INGC translator from Portuguese into local languages and were mainly conducted semi-formally while walking around the centres.

This highlighted a basic problem with trying to use the emergency humanitarian response as a basis for a long-term sustainable way to protect people from future crisis. It also raises the question whether people can be said to have a meaningful ‘right to return’ in areas at risk of natural disasters. As global warming is predicted to lead to an increase in such disasters this could become an increasing problem for the future. The only solution to the dilemma would appear to be those laid out in the Master Plan to improve Mozambique’s irrigation system and help farmers to develop crops that can be grown in different climatic conditions through longer-term development projects.

Rights, needs and standards

One of the clear problems relating to camp management was a lack of resources, and this was directly related to the government’s decision not to declare a national emergency. UN OCHA commented that: ‘While the Government of Mozambique prioritised the allocation of funds for disaster response to the floods and cyclone emergencies, national resources were not sufficient to meet the humanitarian needs of the affected populations’.⁸⁰

While almost everyone interviewed during the research mission praised the ‘political leadership’ shown by Mozambique’s national authorities during 2007, some concern was expressed about the government’s decision not to declare a national emergency and make an appeal for funds. During the research visit almost all the international aid workers interviewed stated that they thought the decision not to do so was taken for political reasons, related to the perceived need to break Mozambique’s ‘dependency culture’. Many expressed some sympathy for this position, and it is notable that no NGOs conducted public advocacy either on this issue or on the question of how many people were entitled to assistance in the accommodation centres.

Most international humanitarian aid workers who were interviewed felt that additional resources could have been used to meet real needs. One issue for humanitarians to consider, based on Mozambique’s experiences of the 2007 disaster, will be the extent

⁸⁰ IRIN News, ‘Southern Africa: Extreme weather threatens over a million people’, 5 April 2007, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=71204>.

to which a government has the right to refuse humanitarian assistance as a prerogative of national sovereignty, and in what circumstances international humanitarian aid workers, particularly INGOs, should be prepared to challenge this position.

Many international agencies argue for a ‘rights-based’, rather than ‘needs-based’ approach, to assistance, and there is now a considerable body of international law concerning what such rights mean in practice.⁸¹ Governments are clearly prohibited from using starvation as a means of waging warfare,⁸² but some humanitarian practitioners go further in arguing that a free-standing ‘right to humanitarian assistance’ can be derived from international law.⁸³ The Humanitarian Charter, drawn up under the auspices of the Sphere project in 2000, originally stated that it was:

based on two core beliefs: first that all possible steps should be taken to alleviate human suffering that arises out of conflict and calamity, and second that those affected by a disaster have a right to life with dignity and therefore a right to assistance. The Charter defines the legal responsibilities of states and parties to guarantee the right to assistance and protection. When states are unable to respond they are obliged to allow the intervention of humanitarian organisations. [emphasis added]⁸⁴

Although this wording, which is not supported by international human rights and humanitarian law, has since been modified, the idea that states are ‘obliged’ to allow the intervention of humanitarian

⁸¹ Much of this can be found in ‘soft law’ standards such as the Guiding Principles on International Displacement, various General Comments by UN bodies and in the reports of Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups.

⁸² Geneva Conventions, Protocol I, Article 54, Protocol II, Article 14.

⁸³ The Sphere Project, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*, The Sphere Project/Oxfam Publishing, Geneva and Oxford, 2000. The revised addition of the Charter, published in 2005, omitted the claim that governments were ‘obliged’ under international law to ‘agree to the provision of humanitarian and impartial assistance’.

⁸⁴ The Sphere Project, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*, The Sphere Project/Oxfam Publishing, Geneva and Oxford, 2000.

organisations, or defer to the international community's views about how assistance should be delivered, remains strong amongst many involved in humanitarian relief. While most statements of humanitarian good practice start with a reaffirmation of the primary responsibility of the national authorities to care for those within their borders, some humanitarian organisations do seem to believe that they have a 'right to intervene' to provide people with assistance.

The development of a rights-based approach to aid programming has also led many international agencies to try and develop standards of assistance based on international law. For example, if it is accepted that people have a 'right to adequate housing'⁸⁵ or the 'right to have their housing, land and/or property restored to them'⁸⁶ after a natural disaster, then this presumably provides a standard against which the delivery of aid should be provided irrespective of the wishes of the government concerned. In the aftermath of the tsunami disaster, for example, some INGOs lobbied against attempts by the governments of Sri Lanka and Indonesia to establish 'exclusion zones' in the coastal areas where aid agencies were forbidden to reconstruct people's homes.⁸⁷

The Sphere principles have been endorsed by a number of international agencies, while the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement⁸⁸ and the 'Pinheiro Principles'⁸⁹ on housing, land and property

⁸⁵ See Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the General Comment 4 of its Committee.

⁸⁶ The term *restitution*, which is commonly found in human rights and humanitarian law, refers to an equitable remedy (or a form of restorative justice) by which individuals or groups of persons who suffer loss or injury are returned as far as possible to their original pre-loss or pre-injury position.

⁸⁷ *Handbook on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons Implementing the 'Pinheiro Principles'*, OCHA, FAO, NRC, OHCHR, UNHCR, UN-Habitat, March 2007. p. 18.

⁸⁸ *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, UN Doc. E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2 (1998).

⁸⁹ *Housing and property restitution in the context of the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, Final report of the Special Rapporteur, Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Principles on housing and property restitution for refugees and displaced persons*, E/CN.4/Sub.2/2005/17, 28 June 2005. See principles 8 and 2 of the 'Pinheiro Principles' in particular.

restitution have also gained considerable recognition within the UN system. These standards have been incorporated into various manuals, disseminated widely and used frequently in training exercises. However, the extent to which they are actually used as a practical resource in the delivery of humanitarian assistance still varies widely. No one interviewed during the research mission mentioned either set of principles at any point or discussed whether they had any operational value.

Some agencies attempted to use the Sphere principles to guide their work, but, according to the Real Time Evaluation, 'There [were] no agreed benchmarks for the clusters, although some clusters adopted benchmarks (based on Sphere) at the field level ... The Sphere standards have their limits – they do not cover all sectors, and the Sphere indicators are not context based. Such is the poverty in Mozambique that a large part of the population do not enjoy services at the guideline values presented by the Sphere project'.⁹⁰ In practice, the international humanitarian agencies seem to have adopted a needs-based approach instead. The Real Time Evaluation noted that:

*When beneficiaries were asked whether all their needs were met the answer was always a resounding 'No!' Invariably, when the team asked beneficiaries if anyone had asked them what their needs were the answer was 'No'. Assessments of beneficiary needs were rudimentary, but the needs of the population are fairly obvious. However, many of their needs flow from their poverty rather than from the impact of the emergency.*⁹¹

According to this report, 'poverty rather than disasters is the real issue' in the affected area, and so it was not reasonable to judge the specific response to one disaster according to what the affected community wanted or felt they needed. Given the levels of poverty that Mozambique suffers it would be surprising not to have found real need and hardship amongst the population affected by the disasters, but the evaluation placed this within a wider structural context. The report stated that the population of the affected area is 'aid aware' as they have long been the beneficiaries of international

⁹⁰ Real Time Evaluation, 2007, p. 27.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

assistance. This may have heightened expectations about what they might be provided with on this occasion.

During the later years of the civil war, most of the then population from the flood affected areas were refugees in Malawi. Unlike some other populations, who started returning to Mozambique when the peace agreement was signed, a large part of this population only returned when WFP stopped distributing food in the refugee camps there. The distribution of aid after the 2001 floods was quite generous, as many agencies had large stocks of relief items that had arrived too late for distribution to those affected by Cyclone Eline in 2000. Many of the displaced received roofing sheet in 2001 to enable them to build their new houses in upland areas. Few roofing sheets were seen by the evaluation team, suggesting that a great many were sold by the recipients. The populations in the cyclone affected area had shared in the relief items bonanza that followed Cyclone Eline in 2000.⁹²

The evaluation team concluded that the affected population did need external assistance to help them deal with the impact of the flooding. 'Without external assistance, there would have been widespread suffering and some excess deaths.' It concluded that 'the real needs for emergency relief were largely met as there were no outbreaks of serious diarrhoeal disease, or indications of acute nutritional distress'.⁹³

This seems to set the standard of what constitutes 'human need' rather low, and it was clear during the interviews conducted that this remained a controversial discussion. The physical loss that people suffered was one harvest, which is calculated as being equivalent to about four months' worth of food, and their houses and any other infrastructure. It was not clear from the interviews whether food aid was provided to everyone who lost their crops, or only those who lost their homes as well, and there appeared to be an ongoing discussion about whether the flood-affected victims should receive help in reconstructing their houses in their places of origin.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 40.

During the interviews some people questioned the extent to which people who knowingly choose to live in a low-lying flood-affected area can expect to receive assistance with house reconstruction. They pointed out that people can easily make roofs from traditional materials and that supplying them with roofing sheets, as was done in 2001, was an inappropriate use of resources. Some even questioned whether the 2007 floods counted as 'an emergency' or should be seen as just another episode in a pattern of regular flooding in the Zambezi valley.⁹⁴ No one advanced the proposition that displaced people had both a right to return home and to have all of their property restored to them.

Clearly decisions will always have to be taken about the balance between meeting needs and creating dependency. The purpose of this study is not to provide a detailed evaluation of the emergency response, or its appropriateness from the perspective of the affected community, but to take a broader look at how national and international agencies worked together in managing the disaster.

One of the issues raised most frequently by international humanitarian agencies was how to develop a response mechanism that provided for an independent evaluation of the scale of needs of the affected population, while recognising that it is the government that has the primary responsibility for protection of its citizens. The imposition of a single global rule or standard is rarely effective, since it is difficult to draw up something that is precise enough to be useful, yet sufficiently unrestrictive to be applicable in all contexts. The more detailed the guidelines, or benchmarks, become in content, the less universal they are likely to be in scope. Some critics of existing standards, such as Sphere and the IDP and Pinheiro principles, have argued that they currently combine the worst of both worlds.

Funding the response

The two main sources of international funds available for the relief effort were the general budgets and contingency funds of Mozambique's international donors and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

⁹⁴ This point was made on a number of occasions by different people, but usually outside the context of a formal interview.

The total international humanitarian funding for Mozambique was \$36 million, of which CERF provided around \$11.2 million, or around 30%. The European Union (EU) provided about \$11.8 million, through various separate budget lines (including ECHO). The US provided \$6.1 million, the UK \$2.1 million, the Red Cross \$1.8 million, while other smaller donations totalled \$3.3 million.⁹⁵ None of this funding was supplied directly to the government of Mozambique, but was instead channelled via humanitarian agencies.⁹⁶ As discussed below, this is because the current rules surrounding ‘humanitarian funding’ do not appear to permit such direct support.

The Real Time Evaluation made a generally positive assessment of the CERF mechanism and concluded that it increased both the money that was made available and the speed with which it was released. According to the evaluation: ‘without the CERF grants it would not have been possible for the UN agencies to respond to the floods as they did. The knowledge that CERF funds would be available also increased the interest of NGOs in the cluster approach’.⁹⁷

CERF funding is made through the UN system, and the requesting agencies then either implement funded projects directly or via NGOs, which cannot apply for funds directly themselves. There will inevitably be a tension between the need to process applications quickly, while vetting them in a thorough manner. The Real Time Evaluation concluded that this had been handled in a reasonably effective way, while making some proposals for future reform. It argued that:

Detailed vetting prior to issuing grants would slow down grants and destroy the whole intent of the rapid-response funding window of CERF. However, some control is needed to ensure that applications for CERF funds of a higher quality than Consolidated Appeals have been in the past. One mechanism of doing so would be to introduce an automatic

*requirement for an external independent ex-post evaluation of the use of all grants provided by CERF. This type of mechanism can encourage the careful use of CERF funds.*⁹⁸

Even with the most streamlined and effective system, there will always be delays in getting funding when it is needed in a disaster response. Earmarked funding is, by its very nature, inflexible. The evaluation noted one instance of an agency, IOM, distributing plastic sheeting, although it was acknowledged that this was no longer needed, because it was a donor requirement and they could not give the sheeting back.⁹⁹

Clearly, agencies that can draw on their own funds are in a much better position to respond to emergencies, and the Real Time Evaluation noted that this was what had distinguished the effectiveness of UNICEF, WFP and the Mozambique Red Cross. These organisations had been able to spend their own money, and use stockpiled resources, in the knowledge that they would be able to replenish both from CERF funding and other sources. It recommended that the IASC should consider introducing a ‘special allowance for lead agencies [within the cluster system] that do not have large reserves – or restrict leads to those with significant ear marked funds’.¹⁰⁰ It also recommended that the IASC ‘should develop clearer guidelines for NGO access to CERF funds’.¹⁰¹ It concluded that:

*Growing local capacity is one of the best disaster preparedness measures as is demonstrated by the strong performance of the Mozambican Red Cross in the response. For capacity to grow, it needs nurturing with access to funds. In order to promote the inclusion of local civil society and NGOs, it would be useful if the Humanitarian Country Team had some funds that could be allocated to NGOs and Civil Society partners for needs that arise after the initial CERF proposal. This would allow a more inclusive response while preserving appropriate controls.*¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Real Time Evaluation, 2007, p.31.

⁹⁶ UN OCHA, *Mozambique, 2007 Flash Appeal, Floods and Cyclones*, [http://ochadms.unog.ch/quickplace/cap/main.nsf/h_Index/Flash_2007_Mozambique/\\$FILE/Flash_2007_Mozambique.doc?OpenElement](http://ochadms.unog.ch/quickplace/cap/main.nsf/h_Index/Flash_2007_Mozambique/$FILE/Flash_2007_Mozambique.doc?OpenElement).

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 33.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 33-34.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

As stated above, the IFRC issued two emergency appeals for Mozambique. The first was issued on 16 February, for \$6.0 million, and a revised appeal was issued on 14 March for \$16.9 million. However, neither appeal did well and the total money raised by 15 April was \$2.2 million. The UN Flash Appeal itself only raised about \$1.5m.¹⁰³ Most INGOs did not issue appeals for the disaster because they did not feel that it would be commercially viable from a fund-raising perspective.

The floods did not make a big international news story and the government's decision not to declare an emergency also reduced its impact. Clearly also the lack of widespread deaths or dramatic pictures of people stranded in trees reduced the disaster's 'media impact' when compared to the 2000 and 2001 disasters. Since the last of these factors were clearly positive in relation to the crisis itself, the most obvious lessons from the 2007 disaster is the importance of having flexible sources of funding, which are not dependent on media-driven perceptions about the scale of a crisis.

Bilateral donor support

Many of the same points about the response of the international agencies also apply to national actors. The government of Mozambique clearly benefited from the flexibility of its funding arrangements because it could shift around funds within its budget to respond to the emergency. This is largely due to the fact that it receives most of its funding from international donors in the form of direct budget support, rather than for specific earmarked projects.

The government of Mozambique also has its own domestically generated resources, from taxation, fees and foreign exchange reserves which it uses to both finance the overall state budget and which can be drawn when required. It also has an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to increase spending, up to a certain level, to respond to natural disasters.¹⁰⁴ In its most recent report the IMF describes Mozambique as 'a success story in Sub-Saharan Africa, benefiting from sustained large foreign aid inflows, strong and broad-based growth

and deep poverty reduction'.¹⁰⁵ In June 2007 the IMF completed a successful review of Mozambique's economic performance and approved continuing support to the government.¹⁰⁶

Mozambique is often described as a 'donor darling' and its reputation for good governance and tackling corruption has increased its credibility with international donors. The high degree to which these trust the Government to manage the funding that it is allocated has increased its flexibility in making spending decisions, creating a 'virtuous circle' when it comes to the development of national capacity.

This point was repeatedly made in discussions with various donors during the research mission, where interviewees also praised the political leadership shown by the INGC. These had interesting perspectives on both the responses of the government of Mozambique and international humanitarian agencies and also how to improve their own responses in the future. Although some aspects of the national response were criticised, donors repeatedly mentioned the government's general preparedness, its early-warning system and its community sensitisation as examples of good practice. Indeed, in their discussions following the emergency, some donors have questioned whether they should become even more flexible in responding to future emergencies in Mozambique.

Donors have separate funding lines for long-term projects and emergency humanitarian support. The first type can either be delivered through earmarked funds for specific projects or direct budget support in which the central government is given more flexibility in deciding its own priorities.¹⁰⁷ Humanitarian assistance, in response to a specific natural or man-made disaster, such as wars or

¹⁰⁵ See International Monetary Fund, *Republic of Mozambique – Fifth Review Under the Three-Year Arrangement Under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility, and Financing Assurances Review*, EBS/06/156, December 4, 2006.

¹⁰⁶ *IMF Executive Board Completes Final Review of the PRGF Arrangement for Mozambique, Approves US\$2.4 Million Disbursement and Approves a Three-Year Policy Support Instrument*, Press Release No. 07/135, 18 June 2007
<http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2007/pr07135.htm>.

¹⁰⁷ Funding arrangements vary and direct budget support will also usually be tied to specific projects.

¹⁰³ Real Time Evaluation, 2007, p.40.

¹⁰⁴ Currently set at 20 million Mozambique shillings.

conflicts, is subject to certain other restrictions, the most important of which is usually that it is delivered on terms of strict political neutrality.

Many donors have traditionally interpreted the latter policy as ruling out the provision of humanitarian assistance directly to support government activities. However, some have questioned whether this policy should be revised in countries such as Mozambique. As one official from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) commented:

*A competent agency of a democratically elected government should be able to deliver services while upholding the principles of humanity, impartiality, and neutrality. It may be time ... to revisit the policy of not funding national government agencies, when they have demonstrated their capacity in responding to disasters, and are best placed to respond.*¹⁰⁸

Other CIDA officials disagree with this view, while stressing that ‘in most cases of natural disaster response, we do clearly and explicitly follow the lead of the Government and work to support the priorities they identify, though with programming through independent humanitarian partners’.¹⁰⁹ According to them there is sufficient flexibility within the current funding guidelines for the ‘creative’ use of ‘various preparedness and mitigation tools that the bilateral program might support to help reduce the risk posed by these cyclical natural hazards’.¹¹⁰

The government of Mozambique has indicated its competence and willingness to take more responsibility in responding to its own humanitarian crises and it would seem a basic principle of humanitarian good practice to support it in doing so. The government has shown remarkable progress towards ‘good governance’, political pluralism and tackling corruption in recent years, and this is the main reason why the international community took such a supportive attitude towards it during the crisis. Conversely, it is not difficult to think of circumstances in which the international humanitarian community might want to adopt a more critical approach to a particular government or

to channel funding away from it. Some of those interviewed warned about the fragility of Mozambique’s civil society and ‘good governance’ reforms. Others stated that the INGC’s effectiveness was largely due to its current director and expressed concern about what will happen if he is moved to another post.

While this might seem to vindicate the argument given above about maintaining an arm’s-length relationship with the authorities, it seems perverse to believe that humanitarians should make absolutely no distinction between competent, democratic governments on the one hand and inept, corrupt dictatorships on the other. A basic principle of humanitarian good practice is that humanitarian assistance should be delivered, wherever possible, in ways which strengthen national capacity and long-term development. This requires the development of more sophisticated approaches towards the national authorities than the current rules of many donors appear to permit.

A group of international donors had already held one ‘lessons learned’ meeting in Mozambique, convened at the Swedish Embassy in late March 2007. A roundtable discussion also took place during the research visit, at the Canadian High Commission in May, which also involved officials from the UK, US and German embassies.¹¹¹

The general view of the donors was that the government had responded well to the crisis and that this was largely due to the leadership shown by the INGC and its director, as well as of a number of heads of UN agencies in Mozambique. A concern was expressed at this meeting, along with several others, about how much of the INGC’s leadership was down to the effectiveness of Zucula and what might happen if he leaves the post. However, the donors also noted other positive achievements in other ministries and pointed to the fact that the Ministry of Education had ensured that all of Mozambique’s schools were running again within two weeks of the disaster. Some criticisms were made of the quality of the initial assessments, the registration process and the management of the temporary accommodation centres, and these coincided with what almost everyone agrees were the weakest parts of the emergency response. Some

¹⁰⁸ Interview and email exchange with CIDA officials in Mozambique, May and June 2007.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ The following paragraphs are all based on notes taken at a roundtable meeting in Maputo, May 2007.

donors attended Cluster meetings, but there was a general concern that the cluster system may have undermined the government's own structures.

All the donors present at the meeting had responded to the 2007 emergency by releasing extra funds. The main bilateral donors have their own structures for meeting and discussing the support that they give to the government of Mozambique. However, these are not geared towards the coordination of emergency responses and some confusion was expressed about exactly how and when donors should have responded to the 2007 emergency. In practice there appears to have been little coordination, and the donors responded independently from one another and at different times.

The decision by the government not to issue an emergency appeal for funds was the main cause of this confusion, and meant that different donors had to develop their own 'trigger mechanisms' for when, or whether, to provide additional support. One official commented that 'our challenge was, in the absence of an appeal, what is an appropriate trigger or signal from the government upon which we can base providing support to other humanitarian actors?'

This confusion almost certainly reduced the amount of funds that were made available and meant that some of the money came quite late. CIDA, for example, did not provide its main assistance until 8 March, two days before the INGC declared that the relief effort had officially ended.¹¹² USAID also initially held back, although the amount it finally gave, around \$7 million, was the largest single contribution made by any country. Other bilateral donors, such as DFID (UK), Ireland and Germany, used the 'Red Alert' as a trigger for their response, along with 'verbal requests' originating from the government and humanitarian agencies. As stated above, this issue was less of a problem for multilateral donors such as the UN and ECHO, who took their guidance from the UN Country Team.

The German Embassy had already seconded staff into INGC, through GTZ, and this proved an effective conduit for providing additional support. Most of the other donors channelled their humanitarian assistance to UN agencies, such as UNICEF and WFP,

the Red Cross, INGOs and IOM. Some were also able to provide increased assistance to ministries such as Education and Health, with which they already had established working relationships.

A number of people present at the roundtable meeting argued that one lesson from the crisis is the need to delegate more responsibility for taking such decisions to the field. Some donors had contingency funds, either at the country or regional level, which they were able to draw on, but the process of applying for funds from their headquarters was sometimes subject to delays. There was a feeling that the global response mechanisms developed for humanitarian crises need to be adapted to allow for differences in countries such as Mozambique, which have functioning and effective national structures. It was argued that Mozambique had effectively been 'penalised' for its effectiveness in responding to the crisis and that this contradicted the principle that states have the primary responsibility for safeguarding the welfare of people within their own borders.

Another issue raised concerned staffing levels as the crisis resulted in a dramatic increase in the need for more meetings, monitoring and reports – as well as for funding applications. In some cases, donors seconded additional staff to the country for the duration of the crisis, but there appeared to be no standard operating procedure in this regard. USAID sent three people from its Office for Disaster Management (OFDA) to Mozambique for the duration of the crisis, and DFID deployed extra staff from its London and South Africa offices. However, Canada and Germany did not receive any additional support. 'It became difficult to keep up with all the meetings' was a common complaint.

¹¹² Ibid.

Conclusions

The key research questions identified for this project were:

- What role should governments play in the coordination of humanitarian actors and how do state coordination roles relate to international actors?
- How do international humanitarian actors assess the capacity of the state to respond to disaster and make decisions about when it is or is not appropriate to substitute for the state?
- What is the appropriate role of non-governmental actors in influencing the state to fulfil its responsibilities to assist and protect citizens affected by disasters?
- What are the perceptions of government officials involved in particular disaster responses about international humanitarian actors and vice versa?
- What capacities do states have to respond to disasters and legislate for and coordinate international actors at both national and local levels?
- How can tensions between the desire of states to ensure the accountability of humanitarian organisations and the concern of humanitarian actors to maintain independence be resolved?

Most international humanitarian aid agencies and international donors in Mozambique have been there for a long time and have high staff continuity. Most of the international staff are on long-term contracts, speak Portuguese and have a good understanding of the state's disaster response capacity. This means that they can make informed decisions on how to support this.

Clearly the support given to the INGC and the CENOE's was crucial in building the state's emergency response capacity to the 2007 crisis. Other long-term aid, ranging from supporting good governance reform to economic development and providing alternative livelihood opportunities to those living in areas vulnerable to natural disasters, will also be crucial in assisting Mozambique in future disasters. One question that was directly raised is whether the existing rules regarding the release of humanitarian aid should be made more

flexible to link short-term responses to longer-term preparedness. The broader question is how to coordinate better between supporting short-term humanitarian and long-term development aid.

The international humanitarian agencies scaled up their presence in response to the 2007 crisis, mainly through seconding staff from elsewhere or relying on 'surge rosters'. In most cases this was effective, although questions were raised about OCHA's ability to respond. This was particularly unfortunate due to the decision to adopt the 'Cluster Approach' in response to the crisis.

There were effectively two parallel coordination structures created to respond to the 2007 crisis: a national one and an international one. Both were newly-created and previously untested, and both were judged to have worked 'reasonably well' in the circumstances. These circumstances can be summarised as a natural disaster of limited scale in a peaceful country with effective national capacity and well-established international humanitarian aid agencies.

The combination of all of these circumstances is quite unusual for international humanitarian aid workers and perhaps the biggest question to ask is whether it was therefore appropriate to have imported a system of coordination – the Cluster Approach – which is more applicable to a 'typical' large-scale complex humanitarian emergency where the national capacity is usually much weaker. It would seem to have been more logical to integrate the coordination mechanism into existing structures like the PARPA pillars.

Despite this, one of the most striking features of the research was how good the working relationship appears to have been both between the government and the international agencies and amongst the agencies themselves. Perceptions of one another were mutually positive and the degree of trust and mutual respect was probably the single most important factor that contributed to the success of the response.

None of the INGOs complained of any arduous restrictions on their activities or threats to their independence. Their decision not to engage in public advocacy during the crisis – on the occasions

where they took a different view to the government – seemed to have been based on their own assessment as to what was in the best interests of their beneficiaries. It is worth noting, however, that the various international standards, which are designed to ensure that the state fulfils its responsibilities to its own population, seem to have been of limited utility in this particular crisis response.

Humanitarian agencies need to develop some agreed benchmarks for what actually constitutes a humanitarian emergency and what scale of response can be expected from their own headquarters in these circumstances. Ideally a tripartite mechanism should be developed involving humanitarian agencies on the ground, national governments and civil society organisations which can make judgements on the scale of the physical disaster itself, the capacity of government to respond and where international organisation can add value to efforts to help the people directly affected.

Mozambique's experiences suggest that, while it is useful to develop a broad consensus about international rules and standards, different countries and emergencies require different approaches. These should be flexibly applied based on a detailed understanding of the conditions in a country, and the nuances of existing national capacity, which only those close to the situation will be able to assess. It is, therefore, necessary to develop arrangements that devolve as much responsibility as possible to in-country decision-makers.

Most humanitarian agencies already require their country missions to produce detailed situation reports, and these should always include assessments of the capacity of the national authorities to respond to humanitarian crises. When a crisis does become imminent it is important for headquarters to ensure that their country missions are provided with sufficient administrative support to fulfil the additional reporting requirements as well as front-line support should an emergency be declared.



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