

Bridging the divide

Lessons from disaster risk reduction, development and humanitarian approaches to Cyclones Idai and Kenneth

Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance

This brief presents lessons drawn from a Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance (ZFRA) Post Event Review Capability (PERC) study of the 2019 Cyclone Idai and Cyclone Kenneth impacts in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi. Based on over 100 key informant interviews and background research, the study identifies opportunities to strengthen humanitarian and development approaches to dealing with increasingly dangerous natural hazards. An electronic copy of this brief and other materials from the study are available at: [i-s-e-t.org/perc-cyclone-idai-2019](https://www.i-s-e-t.org/perc-cyclone-idai-2019). Additional information about the PERC can be found at floodresilience.net/perc and additional information about flood resilience at floodresilience.net



In Zimbabwe, washed out roads and bridges rendered some communities completely inaccessible after the storm. Ezra Millstein/Mercy Corps

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Key messages and recommendations

- Extreme weather events, like Cyclone Idai, are predicted to become more frequent, more intense, and more unpredictable.¹ **We must do more**; if we do not, these events will destroy the lives, assets, and livelihoods of more and more people.
- There were important successes within the humanitarian response to the cyclones. But **humanitarian responses alone are not enough**. Waiting for major shocks to identify areas at risk is too late.
- **Proactive engagement in risk reduction is needed** to prevent the extensive loss of life, loss of development gains, and costly humanitarian response experienced following Cyclones Idai and Kenneth. Support for disaster risk reduction (DRR) is required both in areas previously affected by extreme weather and in areas where climate change is creating new risk.
- Development and humanitarian **responses need to be climate-smart**. To support affected countries and communities to 'build back better', humanitarian responses need to be fully funded and coupled with significant long-term investments in risk-informed, climate-smart development, particularly for poor and climate-vulnerable communities. More actively incorporating risk reduction, climate risk information, climate adaptation principles ² and nature-based solutions into humanitarian and development programming would help address this risk. But this requires donors to fund these activities, including through funding requests in humanitarian appeals for early recovery and resilience.
- **Investments, including early warning systems (EWS), must reach local levels** and address the needs of the most vulnerable. If systems ignore the 'last mile' this leaves the lives and livelihoods of communities effectively unprotected. Local communities should be actively and meaningfully included in planning and designing interventions and hydrometeorological investments. All projects should include local partners in design and implementation phases to ensure policies, practices and investments are directly informed by local knowledge and lived experience.
- **DRR approaches can serve as a useful bridge** between the humanitarian and development sectors and help ensure all relevant sectors incorporate longer-term thinking about risk and climate change. Governments should ensure domestic investments along the same lines, supported, as needed, by enabling legislation.
- **Common problem definitions, objectives, and funding modalities between humanitarian and development actors should be developed and followed**. Joint development of objectives for climate resilient communities by humanitarian and development actors and communities can help incentivize greater coordination and planning, which is needed to avoid gaps in service delivery.

¹ IPCC, 2018: Summary for policymakers. In: Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty [Masson-Delmotte, V., et al.]

² Key principles include sustainable engagement and investment; engagement that is flexible and adaptive to local need and timescales; working in partnership with affected actors at all relevant levels; regularly reviewing the actions being taken and decisions being made for effectiveness, efficiency, equity, and legitimacy; and striking a balance between climate and non-climate risks in ways that also address current needs.

Introduction: Impact of Cyclones Idai and Kenneth

In March and April of 2019, Tropical Cyclones Idai and Kenneth devastated communities across Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. Strong winds, severe flooding, and landslides resulted in humanitarian disasters impacting over 3 million people, causing at least 1,300 deaths and over US\$2 billion in damages. A year later, the impacts of the disasters are far from over and basic humanitarian needs, including shelter and food assistance, are still pressing. Unfortunately, the attention of the international community has moved elsewhere.

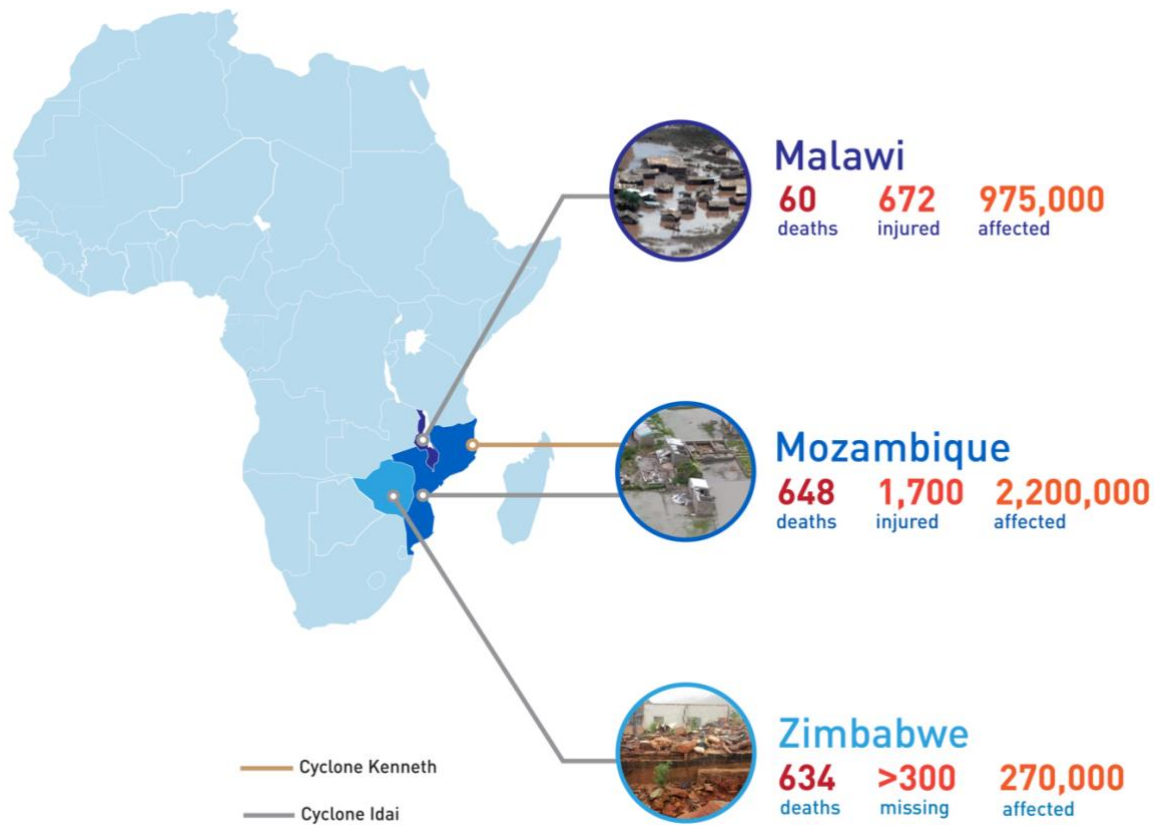


Figure 1: Impact of Cyclones Idai and Kenneth

International donors quickly provided \$194 million (all figures in USD) to the Idai and Kenneth humanitarian appeal – but this was only 43% of the funds requested.³ Humanitarian appeals for Mozambique and Zimbabwe were revised over the summer to

³ UN OCHA's FTS Tracker. Cyclone Idai and Kenneth UN appeal: <https://fts.unocha.org/emergencies/808/summary/2019>.

reflect continued repercussions from the cyclones, as well as other shocks, including a devastating drought that has dramatically increased food insecurity.⁴ These revised appeals are currently funded at 47% in Mozambique and 51% in Zimbabwe.⁵

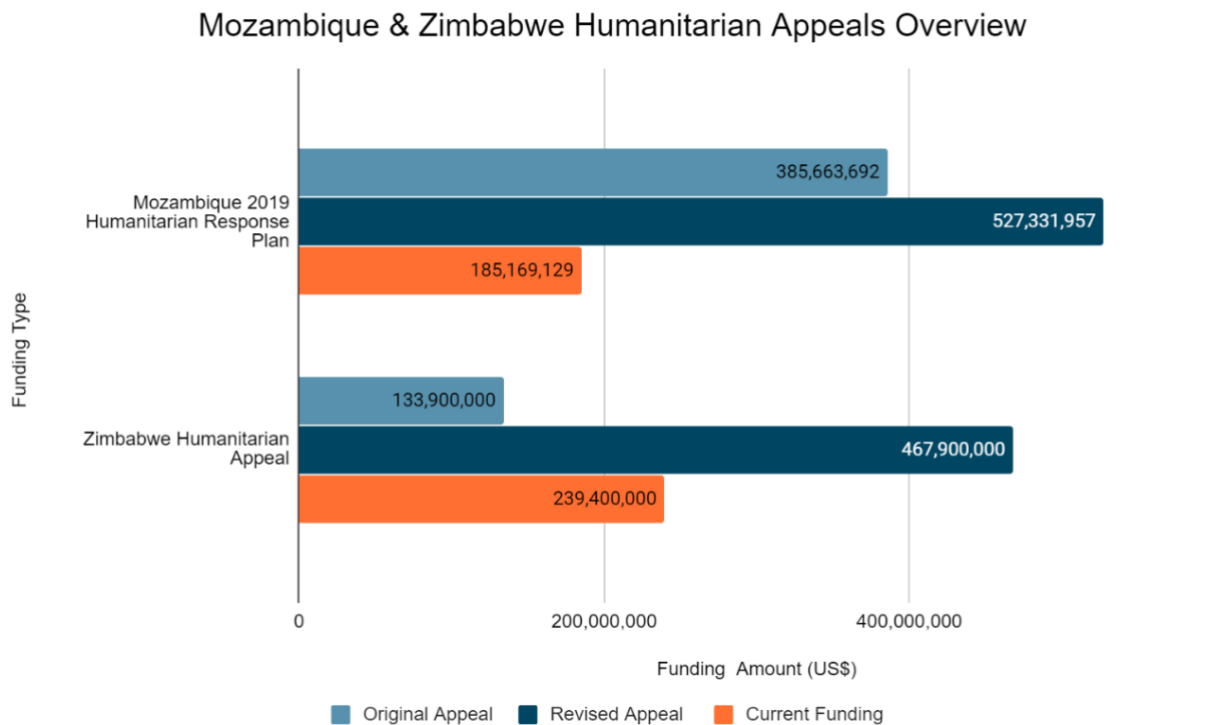


Figure 2: Overview of the total humanitarian appeal for Mozambique and Zimbabwe vs. what had been raised as of August 2019.

Recovery needs are massive. Through joint assessment and collaboration with the governments of Zimbabwe and Mozambique in April 2019, the World Bank estimated the total cost of recovery to be about \$640 million in Zimbabwe and \$3.2 billion in Mozambique due to damage from both Idai and Kenneth. At a pledging conference in June, only a little over one third of this funding, \$1.2 billion, was committed to recovery and reconstruction in Mozambique⁶ and only one fifth of recovery needs or \$137.6 million

⁴ Data compiled from Mozambique Revised Appeal (August 2019)

(https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ROSEA_20190911_Mozambique_Response_Plan.pdf and Zimbabwe Revised Appeal (August):

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ROSEA_Zimbabwe_HumanitarianAppealRevision_06082019.pdf

⁵ The World Bank also contributed \$700 million in May: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/05/03/world-bank-scales-up-emergency-support-for-mozambique-malawi-and-zimbabwe-in-the-wake-of-cyclone-idai>

⁶ UNDP (June, 2019), Cyclones Idai and Kenneth: International partners pledge support for reconstruction and resilience building for Mozambique. www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2019/Cyclones_Idai_Kenneth_International_partners_pledge_support_reconstruction_resilience_building_Mozambique.html.

has been pledged for Zimbabwe.⁷ In addition to financing gaps, this PERC study revealed ongoing gaps including:

- a) Humanitarian response naturally focuses primarily on short-term humanitarian programmes. Though vitally important to save lives and alleviate suffering, these programmes had funding that was too short-term to integrate with broader DRR and development practices and programmes. As a result, time-sensitive opportunities to recover more resiliently and rebuild more robustly are being lost.
- b) Proactive investment in DRR is insufficient, particularly for poor and climate vulnerable communities, and continues to leave both cyclone-impacted communities and non-impacted communities at risk. While early World Bank investments in resilience building is a start, communities will not escape the cycle of continual response until development and humanitarian actors do more to support communities and their governments are more proactive in the face of growing climate change risks.
- c) Empowering communities at risk requires climate change adaptation, including DRR, investments to reach local levels. The majority of current investment is spent at national, regional, and provincial levels. Gaps between higher levels and the community level result in lives and livelihoods being destroyed by extreme events. Stronger roles for local communities and national and regional governments – who are often side-lined in decision-making by international actors – is needed.
- d) Climate change is making and will continue to make conditions worse – in terms of numbers of people affected, the growing costs of humanitarian responses, loss of development gains, and the impacts on lives and economies – and so stakeholders at all levels must act now.

Addressing immediate humanitarian needs in the aftermath of a disaster is critical; failing to follow up that support with longer-term solutions is short-sighted and negligent.

Donors, governments, international humanitarian and development organizations, international and national NGOs, and communities must become far more proactive about incorporating climate change adaptation and DRR thinking and programming into response and early recovery. Otherwise, people, at best, will remain in their previous vulnerable state, and at the worst, be left in a more vulnerable state – increasing the likelihood that they will need further humanitarian aid in the future.⁸

⁷ Development partners who have donated include the European Union, African Union, Southern African Development Community, the United Kingdom, the United States, UN-Contingency Emergency Response Component, and AfDB, among others. World Bank (July 2019), Zimbabwe Idai Recovery Project Document. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/493721560514239589/pdf/Project-Information-Document-Zimbabwe-Idai-Recovery-Project-P171114.pdf>.

⁸ Both in Cyclone-affected areas and globally, the stakes are extremely high. According to the IFRC's *The Cost of Doing Nothing: The Humanitarian Price of Climate Change and How it Can be Avoided*, 'The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance annually due to the climate crisis could double by 2050. Similarly, financial costs could balloon to 20 billion US dollars per year.' <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/09/2019-IFRC-CODN-EN.pdf>.

Humanitarian response: Successes, challenges, and choices

Cyclone Idai exacerbated underlying environmental and socioeconomic vulnerabilities in Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. Two of those countries (Malawi and Mozambique) are ranked in the top 40 countries with the lowest human development levels;⁹ all three are among the top 30 most climate-vulnerable countries in the world.¹⁰ Yet even given these underlying challenges, because of accurate forecasting of the cyclones, national level pre-planning, and strong coordination between governmental agencies, NGOs, and development and humanitarian organizations there were successes in the response.

One clear success, across all three countries, was water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programming, which helped to contain cholera and other diseases. This is clearly linked to donor understanding of, and commitment to, the necessity of funding and responding in this sector in a timely fashion to prevent diseases from rapidly spreading. Of the 13 sectors listed in the Mozambique Humanitarian Response Plan, for example, the most funds were raised for WASH and logistics, with slightly over 50% of identified financial needs for both sectors (\$34 million and \$15 million respectively) raised as of late February 2020.¹¹ In sharp contrast, however, only 4.3% of the funding requested for early recovery and resilience in the Mozambique Humanitarian Response Plan has been raised. This is particularly stark given that the request, \$8.3 million, was small to begin with.¹²



Photo 1 Community clean up campaigns in the aftermath of Cyclone Idai © IFRC

⁹ UNDP Human Development Report (2019) http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr_2019_overview_-_english.pdf.

¹⁰ ND-GAIN Country Index (2017) <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>.

¹¹ 52.3% of funding coverage for WASH requirements as of 2/20/2020. UNOCHA Financial Tracking Service. <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/761/clusters?f%5B0%5D=destinationClusterIdName%3A%224650%3AWATER%2C%20SANITATION%20AND%20HYGIENE%22>.

¹² UNOCHA. 2019. Mozambique Humanitarian Response Plan 2019. <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/761/clusters?order=coverage&sort=desc>.

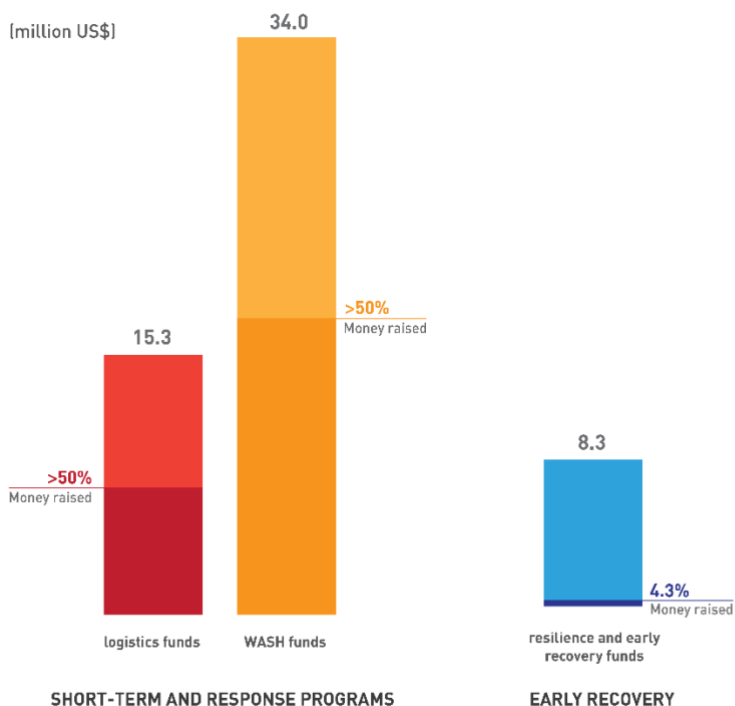


Figure 3 Data compiled from FTS/OCHA accessed on February 15, 2020.

The large humanitarian appeals for Cyclones Idai and Kenneth exemplify a growing problem: the financial costs of responses to crises are growing. Since 2011, the annual UN Humanitarian Appeals set a new historic record for humanitarian needs and costs. Yet this trend – especially as climate change intensifies – will only continue, *unless* smart and significant investments in climate change adaptation, DRR, and resilience building are made and incorporated throughout humanitarian and development response and national government planning and budgeting.¹³

Donors have made significant commitments to addressing these challenges, concretely at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit,¹⁴ and annually at high-level events like the UN General Assembly, meetings to assess progress against ‘Grand Bargain’ commitments, and ECOSOC HAS. The need for greater anticipatory financing for disaster resilience has also been highlighted in a variety of high-level forums and initiatives including the UN Climate Action Summit and the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership. An examination of the responses to Cyclone Idai and Kenneth, however, shows that though there are some hopeful signs of improved action, reform still lags, resulting in real missed opportunities for the communities impacted by disaster.

13 See, for example, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva, 2019. *The Cost of Doing Nothing: The Humanitarian Price of Climate Change and How it Can be Avoided*. <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/09/2019-IFRC-CODN-EN.pdf>.

14 Seven core commitments emerged from the 2016 WHS, including Natural Disasters and Climate Change: Managing Risks & Crisis Differently, Political Leadership to Prevent and End Conflicts, Uphold the Norms that Safeguard Humanity, Leaving No One Behind – A Commitment to Address Forced Displacement, Women and Girls: Catalyzing Action to Achieve Gender Equality, Changing People’s Lives – From Delivering Aid to Ending Need, and Humanitarian Financing-Investing in Humanity. www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/resources/2018/Jan/core_ommitment_afh.pdf.

Leveraging humanitarian response funding to build long-term development and resilience

With limited funding for humanitarian response and a lack of proactive planning for building resilience, key stakeholders are missing the opportunity to leverage humanitarian response programmes and link these to development programming. For example, the Disaster Emergency Committee real-time-response review of the Idai Cyclone recommended ‘Increas(ing) consideration of long-term resilience in Phase Two project design ... and set(ing) project outcomes and indicators which include resilience as a target impact.’¹⁵ Bridging response/early recovery programmes with development efforts and integrating climate change adaptation and DRR throughout humanitarian and development programmes would help to further the impact of response investments.

Cyclone Idai highlighted immediate opportunities for this type of action in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe. In Mozambique, farmers in cyclone-impacted areas lost significant resources, including seeds saved for the next planting cycle. However, programmes to provide seed to farmers encountered barriers that slowed the delivery of aid, e.g. challenges with importing and certifying seeds, in spite of having seen these issues come up in previous events. Identifying these types of administrative challenges and prepositioning solutions to overcome them (such as governments adopting laws or policies drawing on the Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance¹⁶) clearly needs to become part of ‘business-as-usual’ development work, even in the wake of a disaster. This is particularly critical because of the timing issues involved in planting cycles – if an opportunity to plant is missed, there is no harvest until the end of the next planting cycle. In an ideal world, longer-term funding, combined with better coordination and joint, agreed upon plans and objectives between humanitarian and development actors would also help solve these gaps in services and support to communities. For example, in Zimbabwe, many programmes were providing maize seed, but not the fertilizer needed to ensure adequate production and yield, virtually assuring that the seed-provision programmes would not solve the food and nutrition problems.

Ensuring climate change adaptation and DRR investment reaches the local level

At the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, donors committed to “Building Community Resilience as a Critical First Line of Response” while the UN and World Bank have committed to a “new way of working” to better “join up humanitarian-development planning and programming processes to deliver better outcomes for people by moving beyond meeting their needs in the short term to reducing them over time.”¹⁷ Key to these

¹⁵ Real Time Response Review - DEC Programme for Cyclone Idai: Mozambique Country Report. August 2019.

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/DEC%20Cyclone%20Idai%20Response%20Review_Mozambique.pdf.

¹⁶ The *Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance*, also known as the *IDRL Guidelines* helps governments strengthen their laws and policies to allow for better access of humanitarian goods. See: www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/idrl/idrl-guidelines/

¹⁷ World Humanitarian Summit: Transcending humanitarian-development divides Changing People’s Lives: From Delivering Aid to Ending Need: Commitment to Action. 2016.

www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/WHS%20Commitment%20to%20action%20-%20transcending%20humanitarian-development%20divides_0.pdf.

efforts is to ensure climate change adaptation, including DRR investments, reach local levels, yet the PERC did not find this borne out in practice at local levels.

On one hand, the World Bank did follow through on its commitment to more quickly address humanitarian challenges and rebuilding. As one example, in July 2019 the World Bank began a four-year, 72 million USD 'Zimbabwe Idai Recovery Project',¹⁸ which includes strengthening climate information services and EWS. While this is welcome, it will only truly deliver impact for the most vulnerable if the system bridges the 'last mile': early warning must reach all the way to communities and individual households, the messages it delivers must be understandable and actionable, and it should be preceded by local-level planning and preparedness so the community as a whole and individual households can act on early warnings. This understanding of what communities need in terms of early warning information (i.e. where to go that is safe; the predicted strength and impact of storm) was a gap seen in all three countries in relation to Cyclone Idai, a gap that would not have been resolved simply through more accurate national forecasting. (See Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe early warning briefs at <https://www.i-s-e-t.org/perc-cyclone-idai-2019>). Making investments in local-level community-led plans a requirement for all EWS projects would help alleviate this troubling gap.

Incorporating climate change adaptation, risk reduction, and development into recovery

Post-Idai, there are several recovery and reconstruction initiatives that are successfully incorporating longer-term climate change adaptation, DRR, and resilience-building efforts into their strategies. For example, community members in the Buzi district of Mozambique acknowledged the need to live on higher ground and most do not wish to return to their previous homes. Hazard mapping is being used to identify safe sites for resettlement communities and resistant housing typologies are being considered (both for construction and reconstruction). In Zimbabwe, the Agromet Department is advising that irrigation schemes and gardens be rebuilt 30 to 50 metres back from streambanks, and that boreholes be surrounded by walls to improve their flood resilience and prevent future losses. Meanwhile, the government is working with international experts to evaluate potential resettlement sites for those affected by landslide hazards, to ensure communities are re-established in less vulnerable locations.

Although there are individual examples of resilient recovery from Cyclone Idai, in general ensuring adequate attention to, and resourcing for, resilient, climate-smart recovery is an ongoing challenge, particularly in terms of timing. As noted, over \$1.2 billion was pledged for the recovery in June, 2019. The speed and effectiveness with which these funds are disbursed matters significantly, however. Impacted communities know what they need to do, for example, to make their homes more resilient, and they also want and need to rebuild as soon as possible. Lacking external financial support and, in the case of most rural communities, with few to no livelihood or income-generating activities available, households are severely limited in what they can do to rebuild more resiliently. The

¹⁸ World Bank, Zimbabwe Idai Recovery Project (2019) <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P171114?lang=en>.

significant lack of available funds for resilience and climate change adaptation activities in the recovery to date is a major barrier to meeting local needs, such as climate-resilient housing, and as a result many community members have moved on and rebuilt their homes using the same vulnerable materials and designs as before.

Where we were once safe: Changing climate risks requires expanding DRR

Cyclone Idai highlighted significant gaps in coordination, community awareness, early warning, preparedness, and response structures for natural hazard events in communities that are not regularly impacted by disasters. For example, provincial- and district-level climate information systems exist in Zimbabwe, but are much stronger in areas that regularly experience extreme events. These mechanisms were found to be weak in Idai-affected areas like Chimanimani and Chipinge, where disaster declarations are rare. Even though communities in these areas received early warnings about Idai, many lacked knowledge of proper safety and preparedness actions to take in response (see *Lessons to Strengthen Climate Information Systems and EWS in Zimbabwe* at <https://www.i-s-e-t.org/perc-cyclone-idai-2019>). This is a critical and rarely discussed gap for climate change adaptation, whereby strained resources are focussed on heavily disaster-prone areas and leave other populations vulnerable to future extreme weather events.

Conclusion

Climate change makes it more likely that Idai-level or even more severe events will occur. It is clear many communities still do not have the resilience capabilities they need to face these future shocks. Donors, governments, and organizations engaged in humanitarian response, development, DRR and climate change adaptation initiatives should actively engage to close this gap. This requires not only meeting humanitarian needs, but investing in DRR and climate smart, risk informed development, coordinating better between humanitarian and development efforts, ensuring services reach the last mile and involve communities more in design and implementation. While not a minor task, closing these gaps are critical to ensuring communities are better prepared to face growing hazards and shocks now and in coming years.

The Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance PERC provides research and independent reviews of large flood events. It seeks to answer questions related to aspects of flood resilience, flood risk management, and catastrophe intervention. It looks at what has worked well (identifying best practice) and opportunities for further improvement. Prepared by Mercy Corps together with other members of the Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance – ISET-International, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Practical Action (PA), and Zurich Insurance Group– this publication is intended solely for informational purposes. All information has been compiled from reliable and credible sources; however, the opinions expressed are those of the authors. March 2020.