

An assessment of the integration of food security and disaster risk management policies: A case of South Africa

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1. Introduction

- Disasters are increasing in frequency and intensity globally. This is of major humanitarian concern that poses a threat on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially the goal of halving hunger by 2015.
- Disasters are defined as “a serious disruption of the functioning of a community that leads to human, material, economic or environmental losses and the impacts of these disasters exceeds the ability of the affected community to cope using its own resources” (Israel and Briones, 2013).
- Food security is the state achieved when food systems operate so that all people , at all times , have physical and economic access to nutritious, safe and sufficient food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO,1996,).

2. Global impacts of disasters on food security

- Disasters tend to have positive and negative impacts on food security.

(a) benefits that can be brought by disasters to food security are;

-floods can improve soil fertility as they deliver nutrients from the uplands to the lowlands

-floods can also create a larger water habitat for inland fish and other aquatic animals as well as provision of fresh water for irrigation and consumption

-typhoons increase the supply of water for agriculture as they usher in rain.

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(b) *Negative impacts of disasters on food security*

- disasters such as droughts and floods can damage farm inputs, facilities and infrastructure;
- can increase the cost of agricultural production;
- Can cause a drastic fall in the food supply; and
- Increase the food prices
- Can lead to death of people

NB- the ultimate assumption of the impacts of disasters on food security or any development endeavour is mostly negative. However, the argument of this paper is that, if measures that are put to address food security are incorporated with those of disaster risk management, the negative impacts of disasters on food security can be reduced.

3. The history of disasters and food security

- The deadly disasters that have happened over the centuries had a greater impact on food security, for example,
- The great Irish famine (occurring in 1845-1852). Approximately one million died of starvation, two million people migrated and farming structures were altered.
- North Korea Famine and Floods (occurring in 1995-1998). 16.5- 45 million people died of starvation
- the Yangtze, Yellow and Huai River Floods (occurring in 1928-1931)
- Chinese Famine (occurring in 1959-1961); and
- African Drought (occurring in 1981-1984);
- (Disasterium, 2011-2015 & (Guha-Sapir, Hargitt & Hoyois, 2004: 13).

Conti- (3)

- These disasters, and many others not mentioned here, had such an impact on the global community that in 1989, through collective effort of its member states, the UN, by means of General Assembly Resolution (UNGAR) 44/236, declared the last decade of the 20th century the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (UN, 1989).
- Though disasters have happened globally, but their significance to food security has less impact than they have in the African countries because the population in Africa is highly dependent on agriculture for their food security and livelihoods.
- Disasters that have happened in the African continent have led to a lot of deaths of people, increased malnutrition, destruction of the agriculture systems to the extent that, hunger is now the order of the day, such as:

Conti- (3)

- drought in the horn of Africa that has occurred in Ethiopia in 1976;
- drought in Sudan (occurring in 1984);
- drought in Mozambique (occurring in 1985);
- drought in Zimbabwe (occurring in 1992/3); and
- the recent floods in Malawi that has affected a lot of people in January 2015 whereby most farm crops were destroyed.
- South Africa has also been affected by disasters like any other African country such as;
 - floods in the Western Cape Province in 1994;
 - the floods in Limpopo and Mozambique in 2011;
 - flooding along the lower Orange River in 2011/2012;
 - the frost damage along lower Orange River in September 2013
 - severe drought in the North West province in October 2013.

Conti- (3)

- The prevalence of disasters that are affecting food security around the world including South Africa has prompted the need for the integration of disaster risk management into development practices to assure future of agricultural production, access to food and water by the world's most vulnerable people (FAO, IFAD & WFP, 2004).
- Yodmani, (2001: 1) argued that, traditionally, disaster risk management has not been a priority for development agenda'
- The lack of integration has interrupted the achievement of the desired goals of food security whereby when developmental programmes for food security were put in place, disasters would interrupt and undermine the achievements.
- Traditionally, when disasters occur, countries had to wait for the international community such as the UN to step in with the relief services (such as food aid) because most countries did not have internal policies that address DRM as an integral part of development

Conti- (3)

- The paradigm shift from disaster response to disaster risk management has influenced the establishment of policies and programmes by most governments including the South African government to reduce the risk on vulnerable people.
- However, the problem that is still haunting nations including South Africa is that, the disaster policy areas that were established (disaster risk management and food security) are working in parallel or as separate entities thereby leaving the problem of food security unsolved.
- Van Zyl (2014: 27) suggested that, the integration of policies of food security and disaster risk management in South Africa has been long overdue, and the need for a holistic approach to address this issue to solve food security problems is needed.

4. Measures that addresses food security and disaster risk management in South Africa

- From a legal perspective South Africa has taken the issue of food security seriously. The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996 provides under section 27 (1) (b) that everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water.
- Section 28 (1) (c) also provides that every child has the right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services.
- Another initiative is the Integrated Food Security Strategy (IFSS) that was developed in 2002 with the aim to streamline, harmonise and integrate diverse food security programmes in different state departments.
- Some success has been achieved in different priority areas of the strategy such as achieving food sufficiency through combination of own production and food imports. However, Earl, (2010: 14) argued that, "producing more food does not necessarily lead to a better access to food or improved nutritional status.

Conti- (4)

- Another measure is the Food Security and Nutrition Policy for South Africa (FSNP) of 2014 which promotes “ access to and control over the physical, social and economic means to ensure sufficient, safe and nutritious food at all times, for South Africans, in order to meet the dietary requirements for a health life” (Maxwell, 2006: 158 & RSA, 2014: 8).
- FSNP’s strategic goal is to ensure the availability, accessibility and affordability of safe and nutritious food at national and household levels.
- FSNP also aims to serve as a key pillar in achieving the objectives set in the New Development Plan (NDP) with a vision of 2030, which aims to eliminate poverty, reduce unemployment and inequality (UNSCN, 2013: 7-8).

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- With the increasing of disasters in South Africa, a Disaster Management Act (DMA) (No. 57 of 2002) was promulgated in 2002.
- The objective of the DMA is to provide an integrated and coordinated disaster management policy that focuses on preventing or reducing the risk of disasters, mitigating the severity of disasters, emergency preparedness, rapid and effective response to disasters and post recovery (RSA, 2005: 1).
- According to van Niekerk, (2006) the establishment of the DMA was a huge step by the South African government to make the country safe from disasters which reduce food production

Conti- (4)

- Following the DMA, a National Disaster Management Framework (NDMF) (GN 654) was developed in 2005 to address disaster issues for consistency and transparency across multiple interest groups (section 7 (1) of the DMA No 57 of 2002).
- The NDMF gives priority to developmental measures that aims at reducing vulnerability to disaster prone areas, communities and households thereby putting more emphasis on disaster risk reduction concepts (mitigation and prevention) (RSA, 2005: 2).
- Petak, (1985: 3), also supports a proactive stance specifically when dealing with disasters, rather than the Public Administration that is historically limited to a crisis-reactive management approach.
- NB. The measures that were put to address food security and disasters risk management in South Africa had their shortcomings as well.

5. Shortcomings of the Integrated Food Security Strategy (IFSS) in South Africa

- Love, (2003: 19) argued that, the efforts by IFSS and other programmes remain ineffective due to the limited scope ie (ignoring disaster risk reduction strategies) into its practices hence insufficient to deal with the problem of food security, see also (Brand, 2007: 333).
- In addition, Earl, (2010: 7) argued that there is an absence of legislation which clearly defines the authority and responsibility for the IFSS hence the strategy fails to make a difference to food security in South Africa.
- Therefore, these limitations are presenting a complex challenge to the South African government in its attempt to provide for the socio-economic welfare of its communities.

6. Limitations of the proposed measures of the Food security and nutrition policy (FSNP) in South Africa

- The problem with the FSNP policy is that it neglects the incorporation of disaster risk reduction strategies within its practices. Therefore, it is failing to meet the immediate needs of people that have been affected by natural or non-natural disasters.
- NB. If disaster risk strategies were integrated with FSNP, the impact of disasters on food security would have been lessened thereby reducing disaster relief stress on the FSNP to meet the needs of the vulnerable people in South Africa.

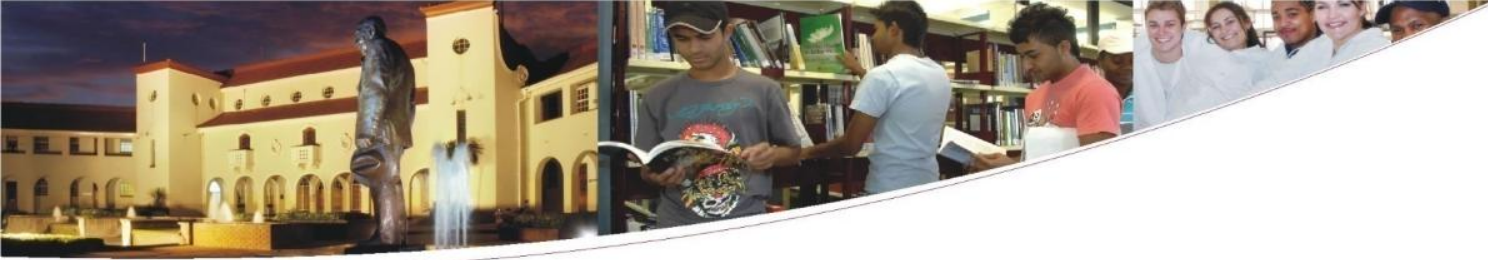
7. Other limitations of disaster risk management and food security interventions in South Africa

- Vyas-Doorgapersad & Lukamba, (2012: 774) noted some gaps in the policy process of integration of disaster risk management into development practices which are lack of expertise with specialised skills in the field of disaster management;
- the prevalence of ill-equipped personnel to handle the financial aspects of DRR;
- lack of training opportunities to equip the personnel with adequate capacities to coordinate the disaster risk reduction projects and programs.
- Though food security policy area has experts in the field but the challenges encountered are also lack of financial support in case of emergence such as disasters in South Africa.

8. Possible integration between food security and disaster risk management, recommendations and conclusion

- Schipper and Pelling, (2006: 20) point of departure is that, both policies (food security and disaster risk management) have to learn from and strengthen each other by consolidating efforts to reduce the impacts of disasters on food security.
- According to Benson and Twigg, (2007: 5) food security can be improved by the way of integrating disaster risk reduction into development practices thereby addressing the risks that emanate from natural hazards from National sphere to Municipal sphere.
- Disaster risk management policies should be incorporated into strategies and programmes that intend to improve food security in vulnerable societies through the transfer of funds, technology and knowledge to increase the resilience of the people.

- The policy process of integration requires analysis of how natural hazards can affect the performance of policies, programmes and projects that have been put in place by the South African government to improve food security.
- However, the result of ignoring the interdependencies between these policies has resulted in repetition of tasks and duties between state departments in South Africa.
- Therefore, there is a need to adopt some measures to treat disaster risk reduction as an integral part of a developmental process such as food security projects rather than treating DRM as an end to itself.



Thank You