

Dealing with Disasters

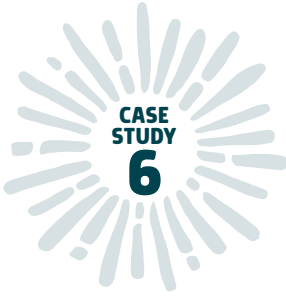
Capacity Building Toolkit for National Civil Society Organisation Platforms



**CASE
STUDY**

6

**Case study 6. Uganda:
linking disaster
response from
local to government
level through
partnerships**



Case study 6. Uganda: linking disaster response from local to government level through partnerships

Organisation(s): UNNGOF (Forus member), and DENIVA (GNDR VFL Platform), Humanitarian Platform for Local and National Organisations.

In Uganda, positive relationships between government and civil society have led to coordinated response to intensive disasters. In the case of extensive disasters examples show the importance of strengthening local knowledge and local capacities

Context

Uganda experiences a complex mix of intensive and extensive hazards. In city slums residents suffer the effects of persistent flooding due to bad drainage and garbage management. Inward migration to the informal communities increases overcrowding, drug use, alcoholism and prostitution are consequences. Rural communities face persistent drought sometimes followed by heavy rains, floods and landslides, leading to poor agricultural productivity and food insecurity. Deforestation for fuel destabilises the land further. Districts bordering D.R. Congo and Rwanda suffer intertribal and ethnic conflict. A majority of impacts on lives and livelihoods result from small-scale 'everyday disasters' and that these are a multi-hazard mix of social, economic and environmental [factors](#).

Contributors

The Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA) is established

as an NGO in Uganda and is structured as a network of member organisations across the country. It is the National Coordinating organisation for Views from the Frontline (VFL) linking partner CSOs collaborating on the VFL study who are locally based.

Website: <http://www.deniva.or.ug/>

The Ugandan National NGO Forum (UNNGOF): a Forus member. The platform was established in 1997 as many NGOs recognised the need to engage the Government and donor community on policy issues and poverty concerns. The government in turn found it increasingly important to involve CSOs in design and implementation of policies and programmes. The Office of the Prime Minister coordinates humanitarian response, collaborating with UNNGOF and other organisations.

Website: <http://www.ngoforum.or.ug/>

In addition, the recently established Humanitarian Platform for Local and National Organisations (under UNNGOF) provides coordination and communication in the case of intensive disasters. These organisations also interact with the Prime Minister's office when a disaster occurs, and much resource mobilisation is undertaken by the Uganda Red Cross.

Website: <https://www.humanitarianplatformuganda.org/>

Focus on : Uganda

The multi-layered structure of civil society organisations in Uganda interact in different ways in an intensive disaster, where all actors need to be tightly coordinated, and in less visible everyday disasters, where local knowledge and mobilisation are key elements:

Government collaboration with CSOs in response to intensive disasters:

- In the case of an intensive disaster such as large-scale flooding rapid and comprehensive coordination is required. The 'first responders' are local communities and local CSOs exposed to disaster impacts. They apply their local knowledge and capacities to tackle the disaster.
- At national level the Disaster department, hosted by the Prime Minister's Office, declares a national emergency. This triggers national level mobilisation.
- In the case of weather related disasters such as floods and landslides the meteorological authority sends warnings.
- The Humanitarian Platform disseminates information to regional actors via regional platforms.
- Funding is managed through UNNGOF. For larger disasters the Uganda Red Cross coordinates resource mobilisation and works with donors and directs them to the disaster zones.
- The Humanitarian platform (HP) helps get things together, (materials, food, etc.) to help victims.
- CSOs coordinated by UNNGOF and the Humanitarian Platform, undertake local level response and recovery operations.

In Uganda, the role of CSOs is recognised and valued and as a result structures for coordination and communication between government, national and local organisations have developed and are mobilised in response to intensive disasters.

CSO responses to everyday disasters

VFL studies show that a majority of impacts on lives and livelihoods locally are from smallscale everyday disasters, which do not trigger emergency response. DENIVA engages with local communities to address these disasters. Two examples of this are VFL and 'Neighbourhood Assemblies':

Views from the Frontline

VFL is an action research programme. As well as generating evidence to be employed in advocacy nationally and globally it produces recommendations for action. In the study 3 reported above respondents were asked to prioritise actions that could be taken. The top five priorities were as follows:

- Advocacy
- Awareness raising of DRR
- Community awareness raising
- Community agriculture
- Community reforestation

These priorities reflect a concern to communicate priorities and needs through advocacy, and also to develop awareness and action at local level. Communities are often driven into inaction and passivity and these priorities, reflecting broader findings from the VFL and accompanying [AFL programmes](#) show that a critical response to everyday disasters is community mobilisation. The example of 'Neighbourhood Assemblies' reflects this insight:

Neighbourhood Assemblies

DENIVA has supported the establishment of Neighbourhood Assemblies, or 'Community Parliaments', since 2012. These enable local people to articulate their needs and concerns and to prioritise these, and they can then communicate to the relevant institutions and press for action. Deniva stand in the background to back this up. For example, if there is a mudslide they can discuss and decide who should take action. The groups also run other projects such as revolving funds for local loans. The structure creates a connection between local knowledge and other scales. The concept was shared with DENIVA by Kenyan CSO groups.

Conclusions

The Ugandan case shows the development of coherent response between government and civil society in the case of intensive disasters. In

the case of everyday disasters examples such as the VFL programme and the establishment of Neighbourhood Assemblies show the importance of developing local knowledge and local capacities.