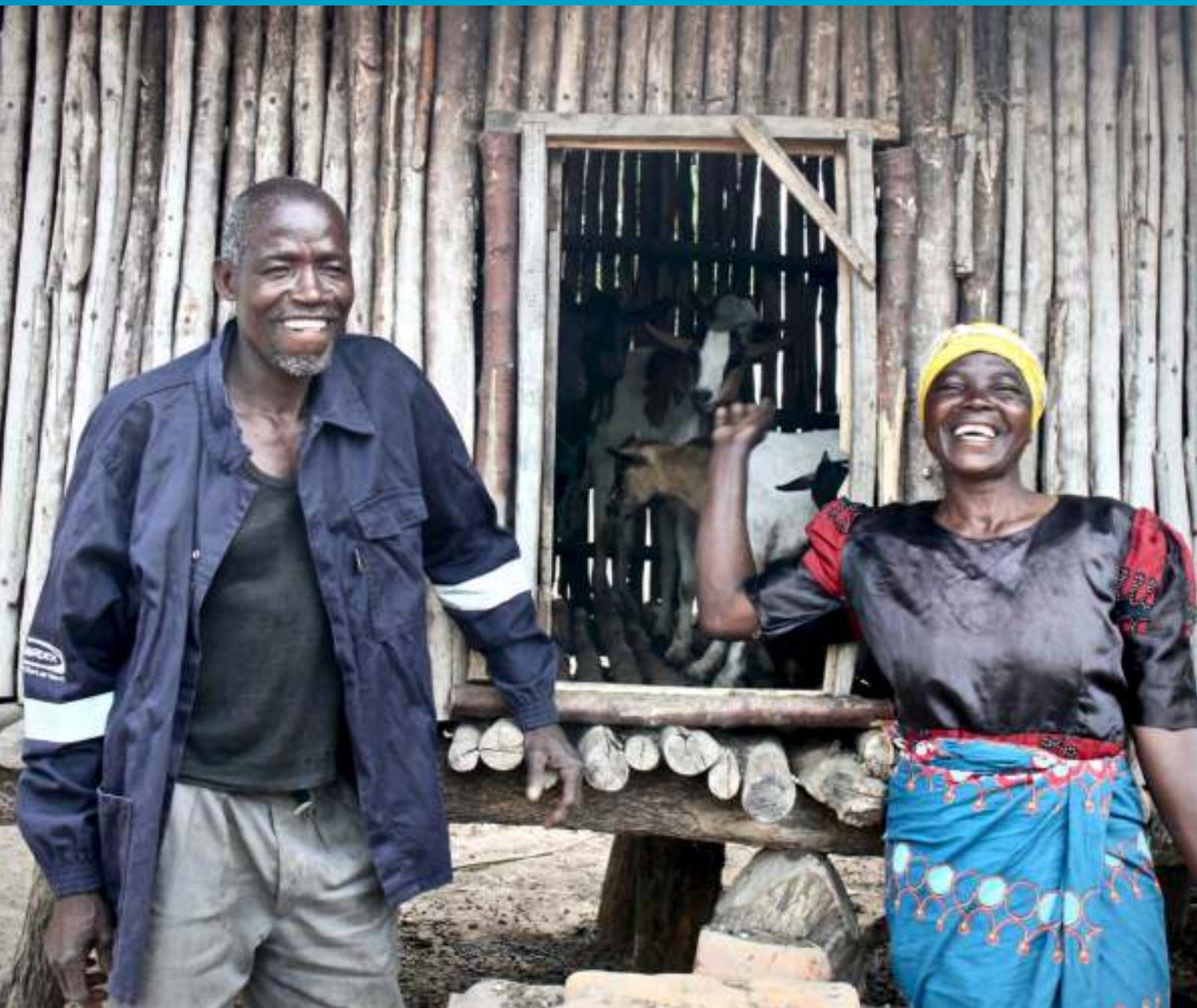


LESSONS LEARNED

FROM RESILIENCE
PROGRAMMING IN
MALAWI & ZIMBABWE



trōcaire

TRÓCAIRE AND RESILIENCE

Trócaire as an agency has made a commitment to resilience programming, specifically through our work related to *Resource Use and Rights* and *Humanitarian Preparedness and Response*.

In southern Africa, Trócaire's resilience programmes aim to ensure that vulnerable rural communities have resilient livelihoods and are food secure, namely through the adoption of agroecological practices of food production, improved household nutrition and through improved access to markets.

This approach ensures that individuals, households, communities, civil society and institutions within a system have increased their ability to prepare for, withstand and recover from adversity, shocks and stresses (such as floods, storms, drought, food insecurity and economic instability).



Seed saving of small grains
Photo: Caritas Bulawayo
Zimbabwe

Understanding resilience

The topic of resilience has become a study catchall for a variety of approaches involving sectors such as Food Security, Livelihoods, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) among many others. The general goal of resilience is to increase capacity of individuals and communities to recover from and improve their conditions relating to shocks and stresses they face. Fostering learning around the topic of resilience presents a challenge for communities, governments, NGOs and other actors. In order to truly see if communities' conditions are improving, learning cannot be captured until another shock or stress occurs in the target communities where resilience building activities took place. When disasters do occur in resilience programme areas, it is imperative to follow up with target communities to see how communities and overall conditions have been impacted in a negative or positive way. With this background in mind, Trócaire and implementing partners conducted a qualitative study in Malawi and Zimbabwe following the El Niño induced drought (Zimbabwe) and Cyclone Idai (Malawi and Zimbabwe). Two extensive learning papers were developed from this study: *Building Resilience and Shaping the Future: Malawi* and *Striving for Resilience: Zimbabwe*. This document summarizes the overall findings and reflects on general trends involving Trócaire's resilience programming.

Storms and floods in southern Malawi

Starting in January 2019, Malawi experienced a series of heavy rains and subsequent floods which inundated large areas including Blantyre, Chikwawa and Nsanje Districts. By the time that Cyclone Idai made landfall in March 2019, many communities were already facing displacement due to the flooding. Cyclone Idai exacerbated this problem and brought it to other areas in the southern part of the country including Zomba and Machinga. Communities which participate in Trócaire's resilience programming (located in Chikwawa District) were impacted by the flood and storm events as many people in the

communities were displaced, lost assets and in some cases suffered injury and loss of life.

Threefold challenges in Zimbabwe

In 2019, Zimbabwe faced a series of natural disasters (drought and Cyclone Idai), which, when put against the backdrop of the ongoing economic crisis increased vulnerability in many communities. The economic crisis resulted in a rising inflation rate as of April 2019, which significantly damaged overall consumer spending power. High import demand, especially for food items such as maize meal and the importing of electricity further aggravated the situation. The El Niño induced drought began in November 2018 and has resulted in less than 50% of average annual maize production and a depletion of the national grain reserve. The 2019 Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee estimated that 5 million people in the rural areas are food insecure. Of this population, further analysis estimates that over 3.5 million people (roughly 38 % of the rural population) need urgent humanitarian action between October to December 2019. While Zimbabwe did not have the overall death toll or number of people displaced as Mozambique, Cyclone Idai did impact the eastern part of the country; the provinces of Manicaland, Masvingo, Midlands and Mashonaland East all experienced heavy wind, rains, flooding and landslides. 270,000 people were affected and over 50,000 were displaced. Homes and household items were both washed away and destroyed. In addition, the agriculture sector, which makes up most of the economy in the four provinces felt significant damage: with numerous damages to crops, livestock and agricultural infrastructure. While Trócaire's resilience programming in Matabeleland South and Masvingo Provinces were more designed to build vulnerable communities' capacity toward drought, there were interesting conclusions and unforeseen benefits which came out of the experience with Cyclone Idai (for Masvingo Province) as well.

Joseph Mwale, Lead Farmer, demonstrating multi-cropping and agroforestry. Farmers are able to harvest different crops at different times of the year – increasing family food security – while enhancing soil fertility.

Photo: Jeannette Wijnants/Trócaire

Malawi



LESSONS LEARNED

Trócaire programming did have positive impact on vulnerable communities

In comparison to non-programme participants, Trócaire programming did generally reduce vulnerability of communities towards droughts, floods and cyclones. This was seen through consultation with programme and non programme participants in both Malawi and Zimbabwe who discussed the impacts of the shocks and stresses they faced. Several strategies promoted by Trócaire which led to increased resilience include:



Promotion of small grains (finger millet, pearl millet and sorghum) as an alternative to maize in Malawi and Zimbabwe were relatively successful to cope with both drought and floods/storm events. While these crops were not able to withstand the drought and flood/storm events fully, they did prove to be more resilient to both hazards, allowing many farmers who diversified their crops to have some harvest as opposed to others relying on one crop (maize) to be left with virtually nothing.

Learning and messaging around the promotion of small grains was facilitated through agricultural extension officers, lead farmers and through demonstration centres which community members could receive training.



Many of the most positive resilience strategies highlighted by communities are longer term interventions and occurred prior to the flood, cyclone and drought events. Specifically, communities highlighted the importance of natural resource management and its connection to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) to withstand the impacts of drought and flood/storm. In Malawi, communities emphasized the importance of planting vegetation in flood prone areas. Tree planting helped absorb excess water in some areas, reducing the impact of floods. In Zimbabwe, the use of agroecological methods for water and soil management including infiltration trenches, contour ridging, pot holing, mulching and manuring proved to be essential techniques used by small holder farmers to retain moisture during a year of erratic rainfall.



Functioning Village Civil Protection Committees (VCPCs) in Malawi were able to assist in evacuation by providing evacuation messaging and assisting those with the highest needs (elderly, persons with disabilities and children) to reach safe areas and evacuation centres. Many communities did not have functioning committees, providing them with more challenges during the response phase of Cyclone Idai.





Members of a Village Civil Protection Committee (VCPC) participate in a focus group discussion
Photo: Cosmos Chakalamba/Trócaire
Chikwawa District
Malawi



Government and local leadership are critical to build resilience in vulnerable communities

It almost goes without saying, but building resilience and reducing vulnerability requires an enabling environment. This was equally the case in Malawi and Zimbabwe where it was critical that government (both national and local) develop and promote best practices to ensure safety of citizens. Similarly, buy-in from community leadership can help ensure the protection of vulnerable groups.



As mentioned above, there is a paradigm shift occurring throughout Zimbabwe that maize is not needed as the only household crop. Part of this could be attributed to failure of maize as a result of perennial mid-season dry spells and droughts, a general embrace from agricultural extension officers for agroecological techniques and promotion of small grains, much improved from previous years. However, the new National Agricultural Policy Framework of Zimbabwe: 2019 – 2030 has created an enabling environment. The buy-in of government extension staff is a major component of this and helps highlight these approaches which are also promoted in Trócaire activities.



The floods and storms which impacted Malawi in 2019 was not a new situation faced by communities living in the southern part of the country; these events occur nearly every year. With these past experiences in mind, starting in 2015, some community leaders worked with community members living in low-lying areas to relocate permanent structures in areas that are not as vulnerable, while still cultivating fertile land in low-lying areas. Although many people were still impacted by the flood/storm event, communities reported that this relocation of many permanent structures helped reduce the impact and prevented loss of lives in many flood-impacted areas. It took strong community leadership to negotiate areas for community groups to have permanent structures along with buy-in from the upland community.

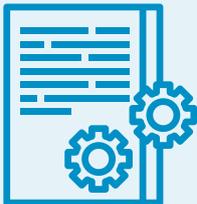
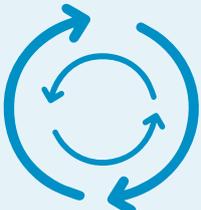
Agroecology helps in ways that are not always promoted



Trócaire resilience programmes in Zimbabwe were designed and implemented with drought as the main hazard faced by vulnerable communities. The agroecological methods such as pot holing, contour trenches and runoff pits all help to conserve water and are therefore seen as a great strategy for farmers to implement to prepare for drought. However, it was found that during the floods from Cyclone Idai, these same methods for water conservation also helped with issues of drainage in areas inundated with excess water.

CHALLENGES REMAIN

While many successes were identified during the study, there are challenges which remain for both Trócaire’s current and future resilience programming. The table below highlights several key challenges identified throughout the study in both countries, along with recommendations for how Trócaire and other stakeholders can address them:

Challenges	Recommendations
<p>Protection issues, such as the prevalence of transactional sex was identified as a common issue in several villages in both countries.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · There is a need to mainstream protection with all partners and targeted community groups · Focus of mainstreaming protection should be on information sharing, staff behavior, mapping and referrals · Reach out to women’s empowerment and protection actors, including from local Government to facilitate risk analysis, enhance prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) before, during and after an emergency
<p>Resilience programming addresses many challenges vulnerable communities face, however there are many underlying issues in the communities such as education, reproductive health and government policy.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Link with other actors to address some areas not addressed in resilience programming · Map out key challenges and look for entry points to address through advocacy at the national level · Engage in the development of District-level development plans so that resilience programming is complemented by other interventions
<p>Ensuring the sustainability of the farmer’s groups and learning centres once programme ends.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Map out income generating capacity (through selling of produce, livestock, etc.) for the learning centres to identify if they can support their costs without financial inputs from Trócaire · Close partnership with local and national government, along with other stakeholders to ensure realistic phase out plan

Challenges	Recommendations
<p>Youth are not directly targeted in Trócaire’s resilience programming.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Develop new ways to engage youth in innovative ways – such as working on the marketing of products and targeting young women who remain in the communities when their male counterparts leave their communities for neighbouring countries to look for employment · Engage with other actors who specialize in youth in rural areas of southern Africa to develop new approaches
<p>There is far greater focus on emergency responses without a corresponding strategy on long-term hazard prevention and preparedness. Various actors including government, donors and NGOs effectively collaborate during emergency responses, however these are isolated interventions in the same districts prior to a disaster occurring.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Actors should collaborate prior to disasters to increase Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) focused on hazard prevention in addition to awareness raising activities · Channel hazard prevention activities through existing groups and structures who are already functional in the communities (watershed management committees, dam management and borehole committees, garden and irrigation committees)

CONCLUSION

Trócaire’s commitment to resilience programming across Malawi and Zimbabwe and all our target regions (including Africa, Asia Latin America and the Middle East) requires enhanced learning to improve our resilience approach. It is never a complete process; therefore, Trócaire, as an agency will continue to promote learning around resilience as a means to ensure that individuals, households, communities, civil society and institutions within a system have increased their ability to prepare for, withstand and recover from adversity, shocks and stresses.

Cover image Fanny Chigamba and Wyson Kalembo's family are one of forty-four families who benefited from an irrigation scheme providing ten water pumps to their community in Machinga District, Malawi. They also received two goats in November 2017 and training in how to care for them. Since then their goat breeding has gone from strength to strength. Part of the Irish Aid-funded Trócaire and CADECOM Mangochi programme **Photo** Karen McHugh/Trócaire

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Members of the Learning Review team include Matthew Sarsycki (Technical Advisor, Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience), Olive Moore (Head of Programme), Deirdre McArdle (Humanitarian Manager – Operations), Nelly Moande (Regional Humanitarian Advisor), Phillip Nyasulu (Climate Justice and Disaster Risk Management Officer in Malawi), Edward Makoni (Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods Programme Advisor in Zimbabwe).

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