

REAL-TIME EVALUATION

of
**World Vision Zimbabwe's Response
to Cyclones Idai and Kenneth**

September 2019





Executive Summary

Heavy rains triggered by Cyclone Idai in mid-March caused catastrophic damage and inundated areas of Manicaland and Masvingo provinces of Zimbabwe. Widespread flash flooding claimed at least 634 lives and affected an estimated 270,000 people. A reported 329 people remain missing and 50,905 people were displaced. Chimanimani and Chipinge districts were heavily affected, with 95% of critical infrastructure, including roads, bridges and housing severely damaged or fully destroyed. At the time of the cyclone, World Vision, which has been present in Zimbabwe since 1973, was running three Area Programmes (APs) in Chimanimani district. The World Vision Zimbabwe Category 2 National response operates under the umbrella of the World Vision Southern Africa Floods & Cyclone Emergency Response (SAFCER), which was declared on 21 March as a Category 3 Global Response. To date, World Vision has projects in food assistance, livelihoods, nutrition, protection, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and education.

The objective of the response is to meet the immediate life-saving and early recovery needs of up to 131,000 people affected by the cyclone in Chimanimani, Chipinge and Buhera districts, 75,000 of which are to be reached in the initial 90 days. Key sectors identified at the onset are 1) food & cash assistance 2) WASH 3) child protection & safeguarding 4) health & nutrition and 5) education. The total budget for the 90-day response was US \$5,322,276. To date, encompassing early recovery efforts, the response has met its expanded funding target of US \$10 million.

To date, World Vision has reached approximately 79,000 affected people; 17,200 beneficiaries were reached in the first 30 days with food and non-food items (NFIs). In addition, World Vision has reached 43,675 people with lean season assistance, 4,900 people with food for assets projects, 5,800 people through poultry production assistance and 6,720 people with community gardening. World Vision has also carried out hygiene promotion activities, water point rehabilitation and water point management training, reaching a combined 12,974 people. Through World Vision's temporary safe learning spaces, 10,391 children were able to continue their education, and 5,121 children under five were actively screened for malnutrition. Finally, 362 children are participating in child-friendly spaces activities.

The real time evaluation (RTE) of World Vision Zimbabwe's response to Cyclone Idai took place in July 2019. The purpose was to assess the response against four criteria (programme effectiveness, organisational efficiency, coordination & influence, and relevance) and culminated in a workshop comprising World Vision staff and partners. Participants validated the findings, refined and prioritised recommendations, and developed action plans around five items for immediate improvement.

Main Findings

Programme effectiveness:

Decisions were based on needs assessments, remained strategic and flexible, despite limited information at times. The initial declaration decision group (DDG) calls were timely and standardised, while decisions were made, they were ultimately incorrect. An initial Cat 1 NO response declaration to Cyclone Idai was made; however, the impact of Cyclone Idai was underestimated and downplayed resulting in a delay of the Cat 3 Global declaration until five days after landfall. WV declined to declare a response to Cyclone Kenneth, received negative feedback from partners, changed its decision and ultimately declared a Cat 1 NO response seven days after landfall.

The response has exceeded its initial beneficiary targets. Sectoral priorities have shifted in line with the changing context and programming opportunities. World Vision's initial distributions were timely despite accessibility challenges immediately following the cyclone, particularly with regard to provision of food and NFIs. The 90-day response strategy was contextualised and informed by needs identified through clusters and World Vision assessments, World Vision's pre-existing organisational footprint, and donor interest while remaining flexible enough to respond to new or emerging trends. Resource mobilisation has been prioritised from the onset of the response, and staff have consistently won grants, ensuring a sustainable and diverse funding base that includes significant investment from the private sector. Following hiring of adequate monitoring & evaluation (M&E) staff, M&E is now a strong component of the response, carrying out multiple assessments and monitoring activities.



Beneficiary

"As a household head, assistance from World Vision helped to relieve the burden that cyclone had brought upon my household; I had a starting point."



However, early recovery planning has not been formalised and a transition strategy into long-term development and drought mitigation does not yet exist; District Disaster Preparedness Plans did not take into account such severe flooding and as such, the organisation was caught largely unprepared: Education and Child Protection in Emergencies programmes, including psychosocial support, were hindered by a lack of existing technical capacity amongst staff, and shelter interventions were slow to be considered in the response, despite being a priority need. Flexible funding is inadequate to meet programme support needs.



WV Staff

"We have our technical programme managers and even our Response Director participating in cluster meetings, interagency meetings, helping to set up standards, helping to set up minimum operating standards and procedures. We have also been getting feedback in terms of progress. Almost 2-3 times per week we are attending meetings."



Coordination and influence:

World Vision Zimbabwe successfully coordinated with partners at both local and national level in its response to Cyclone Idai, despite the chaotic coordination environment; participation in cluster meetings was exceptional at district level. Partners overall feel that World Vision works transparently and openly. Nationally, World Vision Zimbabwe successfully engaged the private sector to raise financial resources and together with other international non-governmental organisations advocated for safeguarding and accountability mechanisms, resulting in their implementation. Though this operational-level advocacy has been successful, as a whole, advocacy activities have been ad-hoc and not carried out in a strategic manner. Despite efforts by National Office (NO) Communications, staff feel that more could have been done to showcase the extent of the disaster and the impact of World Vision's work; the absence of a response-dedicated communications staff on the ground resulted in low coverage of interventions. Limited feedback from field teams following activities and assessments was a point of dissatisfaction for certain partners.

Organisational efficiency:

Strong staff cohesion and open, honest communication among the various entities of the World Vision Partnership support organisational efficiency responds to emerging needs. An innovative response coordination structure, the Cyclone Coordination Group, facilitated rapid decision making, though exclusion of key functions like M&E has at times hindered information dissemination and consultation. NO support services have generally been available to support the response, while the World Vision Partnership has provided commendable support, though at times it was noted as sporadic as priority was given to Mozambique. The Southern Africa Regional Office was noted as deeply supportive.

Gaps in staff capacity in rapid-onset emergencies were noted. Though senior management approved waivers to speed up internal processes like procurement, support service staff were not immediately aware of or did not fully understand their existence and application. Inadequate pre-positioning of goods and slow procurement have at times delayed project implementation and there is a need to explore creative solutions for supply chain management in the face of known economic challenges.



Partner

"World Vision worked with other partners to avoid duplication of response activities."



WV Staff

"I haven't seen any advocacy narrative coming out of the response."



WV Staff

"We saw the response was struggling to gain momentum or traction. I thought this might be because Zimbabwe staff themselves are not equipped or do not have capabilities to respond to rapid-onset disasters. Most disasters there are slow-onset, chronic, like drought."



WV Staff

"At district level, we also have a Cyclone Coordination Group. We sit in meetings because in the district where I work, there are 3 APs, the cyclone response team and the different departments within that response, and another US funded grant. When it comes to responding, we're responding - we want to sit and discuss areas where we can complement each other, where we can integrate activities."



Beneficiary

"Most of WV's activities are tailored for the needs of women and children vulnerable groups."

Relevance:

Staff, beneficiaries and partners feel that World Vision response activities are appropriately tailored to meet the needs of the affected persons and staff have been trained in key protection and safeguarding issues in emergency responses. World Vision has accountability systems and mechanisms in place that ensure the participation of communities and feedback and complaints mechanisms exist, particularly for food interventions, and are being utilised by the beneficiaries. However, implementation of these mechanisms was delayed. Beneficiaries and staff note that the need for further anonymous reporting mechanisms, and beneficiaries report receiving limited feedback from World Vision. Despite this, key government stakeholders have commended World Vision for its strength in ensuring accountability as well as safeguarding policies, and staff have been asked to share World Vision systems with partners.

Initially, World Vision mainly focused on existing APs, and this bias towards targeting registered sponsored children led to the exclusion of other deserving beneficiaries and most affected areas. World Vision now targets interventions based on need, ensuring the most vulnerable persons in the response, particularly children and pregnant and lactating women, benefit from assistance. Nonetheless, communities express concern over the lack of verification done by World Vision, citing competing local interests and manipulation of assistance by their local leaders. Communities further expressed concern that the scope of the interventions was too small, creating tension between households within the same communities over limited resources.





Beneficiary

"Households with arrears in development levy [tax] are not allowed to come to receive assistance even though they deserve."



WV Staff

"The safeguarding policy has been made clear to everyone."



WV Staff

"I actually feel that support [from the Partnership] has improved from the past. I think the support we received for this response as compared to our last response was commendable."



WV Staff

"We have different [accountability] mechanisms for different projects, depending on population and accessibility. So for some we have helpdesks, and others prefer to do suggestion boxes. So others you can do both. We also found that in other areas, communities prefer to have what we used to call accountability focal point persons - trained to collect information outside help desk, but resident within the communities."

Prioritised recommendations:

The five recommendations prioritised by workshop participants are:

1. Staff capacity: Facilitate deployment of National Disaster Management Team staff to other rapid-onset emergencies [within the World Vision Partnership]
2. Programme Funding: Mobilise resources under a comprehensive recovery funding acquisition plan, considering engagement of the private sector, local partnerships, vehicles/fleet management, CP and safeguarding, consortiums, and expansion of National Emergency & Preparedness Response Fund
3. Coordination and Influence: Revise and implement a robust communications plan that includes traditional and social media, and makes use of stories of impact from the field, considering budgeting for and purchasing adequate comms equipment
4. Strategy and Planning: Continue to provide support to children outside the sponsorship programme
5. Accountability: Improve accountability mechanisms generally, and in particular expand implementation of child-friendly accountability mechanisms (e.g. suggestion boxes at schools)

Following prioritisation, action plans were developed for each recommendation through group work.

