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Issue Status Brief: West Pokot County's Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategy and techniques to promoting community participation in decision making.

Introduction

West Pokot County is one of the 23 Counties in Kenya prone to drought as the main type of disaster. Other types include; floods, landslides, mudslides (which are naturally/nature triggered), and violent community conflicts (which are human triggered). Mainly, the impact of drought and floods (*witnessed by heavy rains after the end of the prolonged drought episodes*) are usually felt throughout the county with severe consequences on the survival, dignity and livelihood of the indigenous communities. Disaster loss has increased the exposure of persons and assets to a number of vulnerabilities[i] hence generating new forms of disaster risks. [ii] The county is vulnerable to drought especially in the lowlands. Therefore, there is need to focus efforts towards disaster risk reduction[iii] integrating these dynamics into a working county policy on disaster management. Normally, a sound policy ought to strengthen the management of disaster risk and strategies in the view of reducing poverty and preventing crisis in the long run. If and when the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) policy draft is passed as an instrument for the governance on matters disasters, resource allocation and public participation in subsequent decision making processes both at the community and county levels will be an important ingredient for success.

The current West Pokot County Integrated Development Plan (2013-2018) attempt to address DRR

The County Integrated Development Programme (CIDP) identifies the usual disasters in the county, introducing Strengths, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) analysis in relation to DRR. Under the **strength(s),** the existence of organizations like the Kenya Red cross (KRC), World Food Programme (WFP) and National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) are mapped out as important partners to assist in the implementation of DRR strategies, while the presence of an Early warning system [NDMA's] is seen as the first step towards the right direction. On **weaknesses,** the lack of effective disaster preparedness, lack of laws governing climate change and disaster management and none adherence to environment/agriculture/land laws and regulations and lack of political goodwill were all pointed out. On **opportunities,** nothing much was mention apart from the existing room to empower both communities and county government staff to engage on DRR.

There are efforts towards promoting DRR and several projects have been undertaken to enhance local level adaptation. Government ministries/ departments such as Heath, Agriculture, water and sanitation and among others have directly and indirectly put in place projects to reduce the impact of

hazards. However, resilience building in the county especially in promoting food security is still a challenge. In the agro-pastoralist and pastoralist zones for example, several projects were proposed by different sectors but are yet to kick off. The mango processing plant was proposed in Lomut, to improve the value addition as mangoes are grown in large scales within Sigor Sub County. Irrigation schemes were proposed in Weiwei, Lomut, Cherangan, Sekerr, Masol, Riwo, Endugh and Sebit to purposely improve food security and income generation. There are a number of irrigation scheme presently in these areas which have the advantage of permanent rivers amid the neighboring areas being highly prone to drought. Demonstration farms or plots were proposed in Makutano, Alale, Sigor, Kabichbich and Ortum to facilitate the transfer of innovations, technologies and knowledge to farmers. Furthermore, cereal storage facilities were proposed in Alale,Sook, Sekerr and Kasei to reduce post-harvest losses by 50%. I the same breath, sugarcane plantations were proposed along the Suam River to improve production and enhance farmers income. The budget for Agriculture and Livestock in the range lands[1] only in within the lifespan of the current CIDP was projected to be more than one billion Kenya shillings. This amount sounds scarily huge and will make more meaning ones community centered visibility and cost implication assessments are conducted before the commencement of the respective projects. The idea of putting the community at the centre is based on the fact that DRR strategies can only be noted as so, once they have the community angle. There is also need to down-scale and prioritize the projects to more realistic small projects informed by the community through their participation.

Roadmap to public participation

Effective public participation relies on the local communities themselves to define their desired processes and outcomes as they identify and understand their needs, the causes of their vulnerabilities and the most suitable plan for action. In normal disaster situations, communities and their structures are the first therefore the most effective disaster mitigation strategy.[2] Within the West Pokot Disaster Risk Management draft Policy, there are two concepts that help to illustrate public participation;

I. **Community participation**: This is illustrated by the fact that the draft policy proposes for communities to participate in key decisions to respond to disasters while the county government proposing to provide the 'how to go about it' by proposing further that she will create appropriate mechanisms and space for participation in all processes of disaster risk management. This is the biggest dilemma so far which can be solved by the adoption of the community managed disaster risk reduction strategy which outlines in most circumstances how and when community issues are discussed and implemented. This can be reinforced by other proposed policy frameworks like the national level public participation draft policy and should be aligned to take advantage of the national and county fiscal years.

II. **Public Awareness and Civic Education:** The media, community leaders and other stakeholders should help to create awareness on the relevant aspects of disasters and provide the necessary empowerment spaces and environment where local and indigenous communities can participate more appropriately in disaster planning and management.

The current draft policy framework for disaster management in West Pokot attempts to look at effective public participation factors in two perspectives; "Process- based" and "outcome –based" factors. "Process-based" approach involves mechanisms to be adopted by whom and when in order to achieve a planned outcome. The main aim of this approach is to examine the quality and characteristics of the means or participation exercise, such as continued engagement of the

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[1] Rangelands are huge track of open dry lands whose topography is mountainous. Rangelands are common in Pokot South and Sigor Sub Counties.
[2] Facing the storm- how local communities can cope with disaster: Lessons from Orissa and Gujarat, Christian Aid, 2003.

community, representation of relevant stakeholders, fairness, capacity building, incorporating local knowledge, good facilitation and resource availability. There are administration and coordination structures which is a channel to enable process-based approach within the County DRM Draft policy. "Outcome-based" approach on the other hand involves a mechanism to channel community's demands to the end, illustrated by tangible and intangible benefits. There is a Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) which best describes an outcome-based approach that can be adopted by the County DRM Draft policy.

West Pokot County Disaster Risk Management Structures

Administration Structure
The proposed institutional framework indicates that the Office of the Governor-Department of Disaster Risk Management be **chaired by the Governor**, County Government of West Pokot (CGoWP). The hierarchy further streams down to the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) and Admin staff whose functions have not been outlined in the policy and hopefully, county level legislation may help to address this aspect. Structuring down to the community level, the policy proposes to employ four Sub-County DRM Officers (Pokot North, Pokot Central, Pokot South, and West Pokot) and Ward DRM officers whose roles and responsibilities have not been captured in the DRM policy draft despite the fact that, there are Sub County and Ward Administration offices that are meant to coordinate the implementation of all policies of the County Government at the respective levels of administration.

What to note:
i.   Who is in-charge of the proposed Department Disaster Risk Management Directorate? Is it the Governor, Deputy Governor, or there will be an executive members responsible for disaster preparedness and conflict management? The policy should further make this clear.
ii.   What is the role and composition of the Emergency Operation Centre? What does the admin staff do? Whose admin staff is this? The EOC and Admin staff slots in the administrative structure have been introduced suddenly and out of nowhere in the policy. There is need to explain further why they are involved in the administrative structure.
iii.   The policy proposes for there to be a County Disaster Risk Management Coordination (CDRMCO) which will comprise of three units; Disaster Risk Mitigation, Response and Recovery and Rehabilitation. The three units will be staffed with officers namely; Disaster Risk Mitigation Officer, Disaster Response Officer and Disaster Recovery and Rehabilitation Officer. The Administration Structure has only included two officers; Disaster Risk Mitigation Officer and Disaster Response Officer. *Why are the Disaster Recovery and Rehabilitation Officer not included?*
iv.   The DRM policy draft does not capture the roles and responsibilities of the Sub-County DRM Officers and Ward DRM Officers. It further introduces a Sub County Ward Administrator for each Sub-County in the coordination structure who will chair the Sub-County & Ward Risk Management Committee (SC/WDRMC) in a given Sub-County and Ward in the County. Integrating DRR into the normal County Development planning is more appropriate and will cut recurrent costs. The policy may need to ride on the availability of volunteers and one officer coordinating clusters that are similar in terms of DRR issues.
v.   There is also the need to discuss the function of different substructures under the directorate or capture the functions in an Act of the county assembly.
vi.   It will be important to have an integrated structure (Administration and Coordination Structure). Having two separate structural diagrams is very confusing.

Coordination Structure

The proposed institutional framework includes the establishment of the County Disaster Risk Management Coordination Office upon the passage and approval of the DRM policy. The County Disaster Risk Management Coordination (CDRMCO) comes with a framework that illustrates how coordination will take place within the different sectoral departments and other state and non-state actors. The coordination framework focuses more on relationships between the different interest groups and not much on the content roles and responsibilities. The CDRMCO is to also form the County DRM office.

What to note:

I. Sections especially section 4.3.1 that talks about CDRMC has been repeated on section 5.2. There is need to harmonize the functions of CDRMC as both sections differ.

II. Under section 5.9, Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction should further outline the key actors/ players responsible and the mechanisms put in place to achieve the intention of the strategy. The way, policy adoption of CMDRR will be easier.

III. There is need to explain further how the DRM focal points (DRMFP) that are expected to play the lead role in mainstreaming DRR in their respective Departments will harness coordination with the DRM office especially in implementing priority activities in disaster prone areas as guided by the DRM policy.

IV. The DRM policy introduces from ***nowhere,*** the County Disaster Risk Reduction platform which is more or less a National image created at the County level. The CDRMCO can take care of the roe of such platforms.

V. There is no need to have the National and International Organizations at the top of the coordination structural diagram and have more or less the same besides the County DRM office on collaborations and partnerships. In the proposed integrated structure you will notice that the National and International Organizations have been omitted and there is an arrow indicating the interrelationship between County DRM committees and collaborations and partnerships. This will need clarification

VI. There is need to define Departments and Ministries? 'Ministries' are political terms. Perhaps the question should be, are the ministries and departments the same?

VII. There is need of having an integrated structure (Administration and Coordination Structure). Having two separate structural diagrams is very confusing.

Conclusion

It is necessary that the DRR is underpinned by a more proactive threefold approach namely: DRM policy draft sensitization, linking CIDP development with DRM as well as public participation. This approach is important in ensuring that the policy implementation is sustainable and more community centered. Additionally, establishing practices for more effective disaster risk reduction will help address the future challenges and not just those which are faced now. Community participation sums it up as a fundamental aspect that needs to be included in the DRM policy process.

Recommendation

The Issue Status Brief generates one chief recommendation despite having mentioned a number within the text. The recommendation proposed (which is the focal of DRR) is that institutional framework should have an integrated structural diagram put in place informing both administration and coordination of DRM in the county structuring down to the community level.
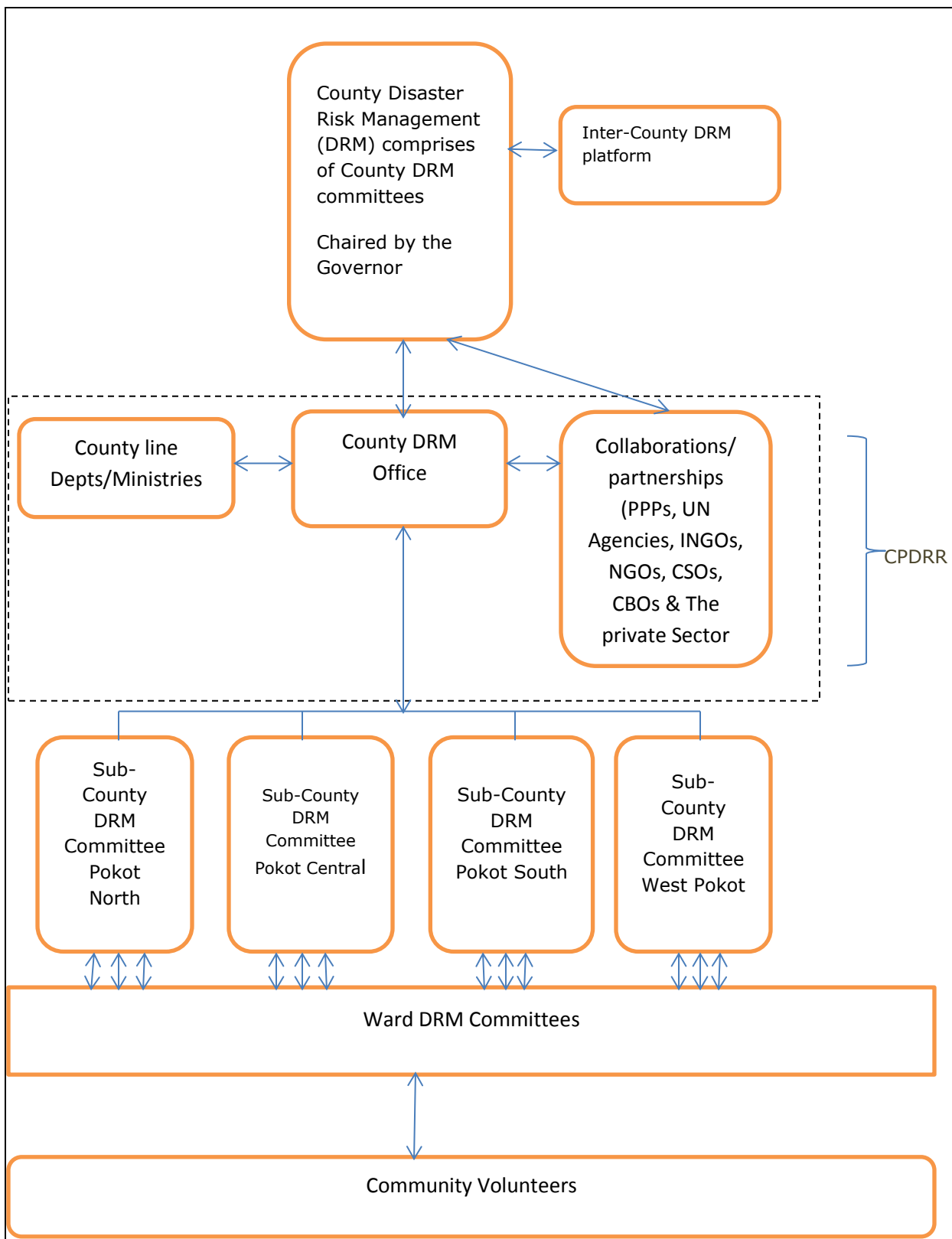
County Disaster Risk Management (DRM) comprises of County DRM committees

Chaired by the Governor

Inter-County DRM platform

County line Depts/Ministries

County DRM Office

Collaborations/ partnerships (PPPs, UN Agencies, INGOs, NGOs, CSOs, CBOs & The private Sector

CPDRR

Sub-County DRM Committee Pokot North

Sub-County DRM Committee Pokot Central

Sub-County DRM Committee Pokot South

Sub-County DRM Committee West Pokot

Ward DRM Committees

Community Volunteers

Figure 3.0: Proposed Integrated Structure for administrating and coordinating disaster related initiatives by the County Government of West Pokot

Case Study: Integrated Approach

For Effective public participation, sets of processes and possible outcomes have to inform each other as process-based involves the mechanisms to be adopted by who and when in order to achieve expected outcomes which are result centric and usually seen as the mechanisms to channel community's demands and reduce delay in difficult decision making (Chess&Purcell,1999).
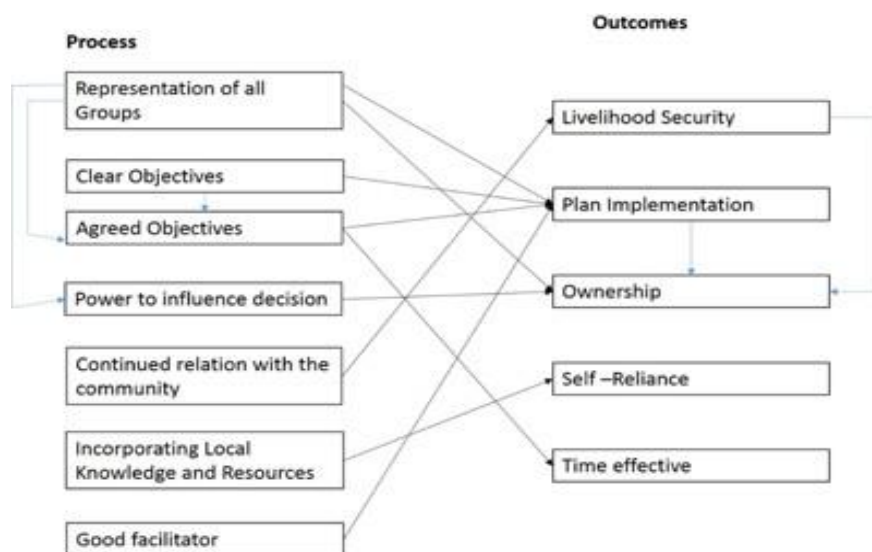
Outcome based Approach

There are six critical outcome factors that enhance effective public participation of local communities in DRM and may be included in the proposed DRM policy framework of CGoWP. These factors include; livelihood security, plan implementation, self-reliance, ownership and time effectiveness. Therefore, the CGoWP should not separate the community's likelihood needs and concerns with their disaster risk issues and preparedness hence it's advisable to design the DRR program in a way that tangible outcomes of the program would be quickly noticeable to the community this way the local community will be motivated to engage in community participation.

Livelihood Security: Livelihood security ought to be considered as the prime objective of public participation exercise in DRR projects as the higher the livelihood security, the lesser the disaster risk. Many residents in West Pokot continue to do agriculture on river beds/ banks despite it being very dangerous. During rainy season, residents lose their crops to floods meaning their money, labor and time goes to waste. Despite all these, residents continuously go back there as they don't have any other alternative to earn them a living. Therefore through public participation, the county government and external agencies should create corrective environment that well continue promoting job creation, shelter and food for the local communities. For example; with a dam project, people would do farming in their own land and hence earn a living that way riverside farming will reduce.

Plan Implementation: Successfully implementations of plans are critical in addressing the expectation of the community. Once a plan has been implemented, only then will the community will realize some tangible outcomes.

Ownership: The backbone of public participation is usually considered to be ownership or ownership feeling among the participants. For example; the County Government of West Pokot or external

agencies should not be quick to realize that the community is not active when something is built and the local people cannot use it to build resilience against humanitarian crises. If the community needs a borehole and the county government gives out seeds then nobody will use them as there isn't constant supply of water to harness the growth of these seeds once planted. For ownership to be provided, project outcomes in West Pokot should first serve the collective interests of the community rather than individual interests and if and a plan is implemented accordingly.

Empowerment and Self-Reliance: Once self-reliance is achieved, the community can also help in negotiating with external or foreign agencies regarding several aspects of DRR project such as objectives and scope of the projects, who will be involved and when so as opposed to the usual norm where external or foreign agencies decide on most things in regard to the projects. The moment the community accepts to comply as they are worried that the donors will withdraw, then the problem of self-reliance crawls in. Self- reliance is also strongly advocated because during emergencies, local communities have to help each other to deal with the emergencies as other actors don't show up immediately after the event. Therefore, it is only through bettering skills and education of the community that extreme dependency on external agencies can be altered.

Time Effective: Participants can only see tangible results when the project is finished within a stipulated time. When a project takes too long, it usually diminishes the motivation of the local people to participate in public participation.

Process-based Factors
There are six process-based factors in the process-based approach that enhance effective public participation of local communities in DRM which need to be included in the proposed DRM policy framework of CGoWP. The proposed DRM policy framework should notice and strengthen the process-based factors by ensuring that community participation has the power to influence decisions.

Representation of all groups: This is very fundamental in ensuring power equality and the participation of segments and sections of the community. This is important in order to protect the interests of marginalized groups within the community such as; women, elderly and nomads. For example; before any project kicks-off in the county, residents should be allowed to voice their concerns through their various representatives in terms of what they want, what their suggestions are and how they can be helped can be put into consideration. This can also help in strengthening the community participation mechanism as contemplated in the DRM policy draft.

Clear Objectives from the beginning: A demonstration of a clear objective of the DRR project is important in order to establish the bridge between the local community, NGOs and research groups. Usually, there is distrust and confusion between NGOs and communities because of the lack of understanding of the project objectives and outcomes.

Agreed Objectives: All the stakeholders; community, county government and external agencies should agree on the objectives and outcomes of the DRR project in order for the project to be accepted by all, to achieve quality outcomes and for easy and implementation as all stakeholders are happy.

Power to influence the decision: This refers to the means of preserving community's interest while collaborating with NGOs, donors and the county government. Community's suggestion should be reflected in the actual decision as inviting communities in a joint meeting to take notes is not effective. If these suggestions are taken seriously and considered for implementation, the community would agree to the decisions made hence effective community participation.

Continued relation with the community: When the community can easily access the project staff and when the project staffs are constantly informing the community on the progress of the project only then will the project staff learn the real issues of the community, community will be clear about the progress of the project and communication and relation between the project staff and community representatives will be improved.

Incorporating local knowledge and resource: Elderly locals usually have knowledge of predicting drought and flood through watching river water and bird's movement among other techniques. This way, communities usually generate their own coping mechanism in advance. It is important to understand such dynamics and to help better such coping mechanisms.

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[i] Vulnerability is defined as: "Processes   which increase the susceptibility of a community to impact of hazards". UN/ISDR. Geneva 2004.

[ii] Disaster Risk is defined as: "Potential disaster losses, in lives, health status livelihood, assets and services which could occur to particular community or a society over some specified future time in period". Draft West Pokot county disaster risk management policy. County Government of West Pokot January 2017.

[iii] Disaster Risk Reduction is defined as: "The concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyze and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events". Draft West Pokot county disaster risk management policy. County Government of West Pokot January 2017.