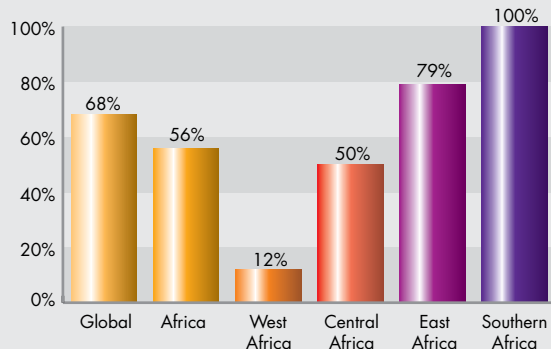


Well Prepared National Societies

The “Well Prepared National Societies” (WPNS) assessment and analysis helps the National Societies to assess their preparedness status and identify areas for improvement. WPNS also provides National Societies with practical indicators for their overall planning and monitoring. It offers a global baseline and gives opportunities for benchmarking and comparison on a regional and global level.

The tool is based on the Characteristics of the Well-Prepared National Society, a two-page guideline and checklist. The origin of the characteristics came about through the desire to help the National Societies find a simple tool for Disaster Preparedness (DP) Planning. These characteristics were developed during 2001 in consultation with National Societies.

Response rate to questionnaire



WPNS is a sub-section of the National Society Self-Assessment. While the Self-Assessment covers DP and Disaster Management (DM) it does not cover the issue in detail. The WPNS questionnaire therefore enables us to get a more comprehensive picture of the status of DP and DM. By July 2004, 124 out of 181 National Societies (27 out of 48 in Africa) had responded to the WPNS questionnaire. This represents an overall response rate of 68 per cent.

Objectives

The objectives of the WPNS assessment and analysis are:

- To assist the National Society in assessing its preparedness status, identifying strengths and weaknesses and to “prioritise actions in line with *Strategy 2010*”;
- To provide a baseline and indicators, relating to the effectiveness of global, regional and national DP support initiatives, which can be compared over time;

- To highlight the key areas for global, regional and national DP support within annual and emergency appeals planning;
- To use as an advocacy tool with PNSs and other donors/potential partners;
- To identify National Societies and regions with specific expertise that can be learned from and knowledge and resources shared;
- To establish short to long-term trends in relation to DP;
- To enable National Societies to compare their status to the global, regional or sub regional trends.

Methodology

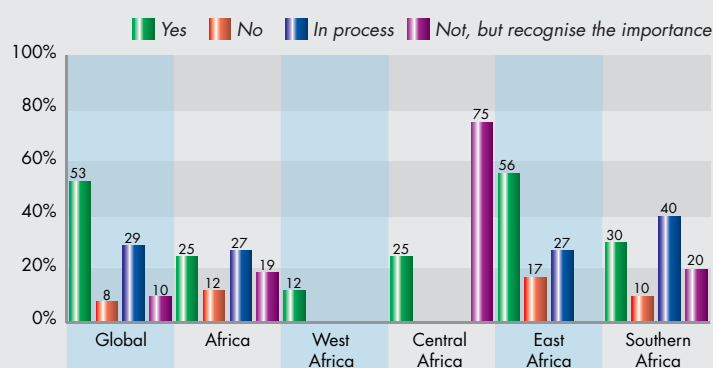
The questionnaire was sent to all National Societies through DM delegates between 2001 and 2003. The questionnaires were provided in the four International Federation languages and DM delegates assisted in facilitating the process of completion in many cases.

The questionnaire is divided into six sections relating to Planning and Policy, Structures and Organisations, Relevance, Human Resources, Financial and Material Resources, Advocacy, Monitoring and Evaluation.

Disaster Preparedness

There are examples from all over the African continent of how communities use traditional coping mechanisms to mitigate the effects of disasters. The aim of disaster preparedness in the Movement is to support and strengthen these mechanisms. Recent work in East Africa and the Indian Ocean Islands region has shown how lives and resources can be saved through simple and

National Societies with a disaster preparedness plan



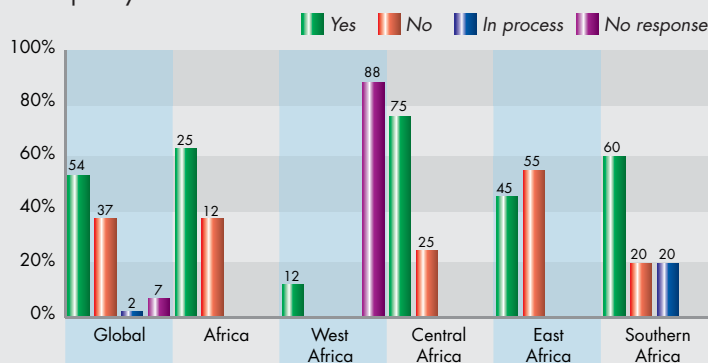
effective preparedness measures at the community level in response to flooding, cyclones and other predictable natural hazard events.

At the regional level, in Africa between 25 per cent of all National Societies that have responded to the questionnaire have a written DP plan and 27 per cent are in the process of developing one.

Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA)

VCA has been supported by the International Federation since the mid-nineties as a key DP planning tool. It is a participatory tool which is mostly aimed at communities rather than national level. In some cases VCA is a component of a community based disaster

Disaster preparedness activities based on vulnerability and capacity assessment



preparedness programmes (CBDP). Through CBDP and community VCA, communities identify their vulnerabilities, risks and hazards at a local level. These lead to small projects aimed at reducing risks and hazards that help to lessen their vulnerability. The global average for those national societies which have completed the VCA stands at 54 per cent.

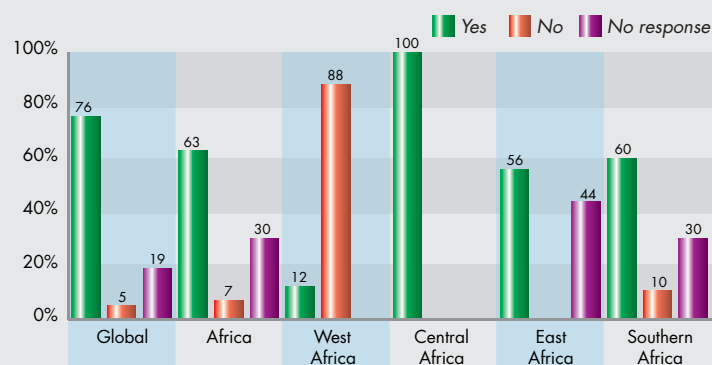
In Africa, 63 per cent of the National Societies have conducted a VCA.

Community-based activities

To be effective, DP must be rooted in communities and this respect of the importance of community VCA as part of this has been highlighted. If communities devel-

op an awareness of the potential dangers they face, they can better address their vulnerabilities and be better prepared for relevant disasters. In the aftermath of a disaster, it is the local communities that can respond to the needs immediately. A prepared community can lessen the cost of disasters both in financial and human terms. A clear-cut example of this was seen during the Mozambican floods of 2000-2001 where 96 per cent of those who were rescued were saved by the local peoples ability to respond to the disaster.

National Society's involved in community-based activities



Conclusions

Across the globe, both natural and man-made disasters continue to have a devastating impact on its people, environment and economies. Natural disasters continue to pose one of the biggest stumbling blocks in the growth of a number of developing countries. National Societies prone to disasters need to have an effective disaster preparedness programme in place which improves coping and supports development. Failure to address this leads to huge losses of investments in development and sets back growth by decades.

WPNS so far has proved to be a useful tool in DP mapping. In early-April 2004 – following the floods that hit Namibia – a profile based on the WPNS for Namibia and WPNS for surrounding countries was used in the planning phase of the emergency operation. This proved that WPNS can serve as a vital source of information and help indicate the most urgent issues to be taken into account while responding to an emergency.

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