Effective Disaster Preparedness is a Perquisite for a Guaranteed Right to Life in Disaster Prone Areas

Case Study of GVH Magoli

"The most memorable incident I will never forget due to climate change is the loss of my child."

While climate change related disasters continue to be on the increase, the cost that comes with it is even greater. With the National Disaster Risk Management Policy (2015-2019) having expired and with inadequate disaster risk management frameworks much has not been done in terms of sustainable response. When disasters from hazards such as floods strike, home is no longer as sweet as some houses tend to fall, crops and livestock are washed away leading to hunger. Although displacement is the only option, Malawi does not have standardized Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) to house disaster victims.

Limbikani Banda (real name withheld) was one of the victims of the 2019 floods that struck Zomba District particularly, GVH Magoli's area, one the communities that is benefitting from the Climate Challenge Programme Malawi (CCPM) which is being implemented by CISONECC in partnership with CADECOM Zomba with support from Scottish Government through Trōcaire, and SCIAF. His ordeal with climate change impacts and associated disaster management response claimed the life of his child.

In 2019, Setumbe River flooded and the flood water damaged houses and led to falling of the same in GVH Magoli, Traditional Authority Mwambo. People's crops and livestock were also washed away.

Banda disclosed that about 63 families were affected with a total of 263 people falling victim to the floods. The people had to move to Maligo nursery school, an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) identified by the community. However, the EOC was not only small to house the population but it was also substandard. Issues of sanitation were not well met as there was congestion in the rooms that led to Banda's child being infected with Malaria which led to his demise.

Maligo nursery school that was used as a temporary emergency shelter when the disasters hit GVH Magoli,, Zomba District in 2019

In one of stakeholder's engagement meetings on DRM issues organized by CISONECC, DoDMA's DRM Officer, Daniel Mandala, admitted that enough has not been done to build standardized EOCs highlighting that only Karonga, Salima and Mangochi are the some of the few districts with such centers. However, he disclosed that plans are still in the pipeline to build more EOCs with Zomba also being earmarked.

CISONECC with support from Scottish Government through Trōcaire, and SCIAF under the Climate Challenge Program Malawi-Climate Justice Advocacy Project (CCPM-CJAP) has been advocating for and lobbying the Malawi Government to put in place an enabling environment to support implementation of community-led climate change adaptation actions which is to be incorporated in the area specific Malawi National Adaptation Plan (NAP). Through this project, CADECOM Zomba, CISONECC's partner in implementing the CCPM was able assist the communities to construct a somewhat dyke along Phalombe River, which causes Setumbe River to flood, in order to curb prospective flooding. The community members were also given bamboos to plant along the river.