

Mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in Rwanda's Country Assistance Strategy (2009-2012)

Rwanda has historically suffered from periodic natural disasters, mainly in the form of droughts and floods impacting the agrarian economy and the country's efforts towards sustainable development and poverty reduction. Vulnerability to periodic natural disasters, mainly in the form of droughts and floods is a long term concern. It is estimated that during 1974-2007, about 4 million Rwandans were affected by droughts and 2 million by floods. Given this high level of exposure of the country's economy to natural disasters, it is important that national development strategies of the country recognize natural disasters as a challenge and propose ways to move forward.

To this regard, as a part of its ongoing effort to mainstream disaster risk reduction in development strategies, GFDRR—through the World Bank's corporate process—engaged in a dialogue with the Task Team preparing the World Bank Country Assistance Strategy. GFDRR requested that the CAS identifies natural disasters, floods and droughts in particular, as a risk factor for the implementation of the CAS. As a result of this dialogue, the final version of the CAS recognized natural disasters as a major developmental challenge that impacts the economy.

The Country Assistance Strategy for Rwanda (2009-2012) highlights as key challenges the need for reducing dependence on rain-fed agriculture, and addressing the twin issues of disaster risk management and climate change. As a policy response to the challenge, the CAS intends to help the government mainstream disaster risk reduction in national programs through planned support from the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery. This will be an important step for Rwanda as this effort will directly support implementation of the National Disaster Management Policy (2003) which aims to mainstream disaster risk management in national programs including poverty reduction and community development amongst others. Moreover, this policy response aligns well with the country's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) which points at some of the impacts of natural disasters on the country's economy, and proposes to develop strategic plans for disaster preparedness, risk analysis and mitigation measures.

Several CAS outcomes outlined depend on the ability of Rwanda to reduce the risks from natural disasters, for example, raising agricultural productivity in a sustainable manner and improving access to and quality of key infrastructure services. On the other hand other CAS outcomes, such as strengthening capacity to manage public resources at the central or local level, and mitigating social risks faced by vulnerable groups, will help reduce the risks from natural disasters.