



CTPD'S MONDAY OPINION

This is a weekly column aimed at sharing CTPD's perspective and steering public debate on various issues pertaining to Trade & Investments Law, Public Finance Management, Extractives and Human Development.

TODAYS TOPIC

AN INTROSPECTION OF PRACTICAL MEASURES TO FLOOD RISKS REDUCTION



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In last week's opinion, we looked at floods and their implications on the livelihoods of communities by contextualising the impacts on local communities, actions devised to ameliorate flood risks as well as challenges of implementing these measures. This week we highlight the practical measures to implement at both individual and national level to effectively manage and reduce flood risks in Lusaka and the nation as a whole.

The National Disaster Risk Management (NDRM) Framework (2017-2030) state that the development of policy and legal instruments, as well as national and sub-national platforms, show that the country has made substantial progress toward institutionalizing Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in line with international and regional frameworks on DRR and Climate action. However, challenges ranging from institutional capacity, planning, and implementation to individual actions (mind-set change) have continued to hamper the efforts under DRR. Worth noting, flood events do not only pose a challenge and risk to livelihoods, but also present an opportunity for innovation and livelihoods enhancement.

Water conservation is essential for ensuring water security and achieving sustainable development goals as the nation and the world struggle with climate shocks caused by unexpected rainfall patterns that are causing droughts and floods in some areas. Due to population boom and excessive need of water to suit the ever-expanding modern lifestyle, water scarcity is felt all over the world. As such, adopting rainwater harvesting and recharging groundwater is one of the simplest and best measures in conserving water. This practice can efficiently be implemented in lieu of traditional water supplies that are currently on the verge of tapping out.

Water harvesting is a mechanism that can assist reducing flood risks and enhance water security. Rainwater harvesting is a simple practice by which rainfall is gathered and stored for future usage. The process involves collection

and storage of rainwater with help of artificially designed systems, that runs off natural or man-made catchment

areas such as rooftop, compounds, rocky surface, hill slopes or artificially repaired impervious/semi-pervious land surface. The collected rainwater from surfaces on which rain falls may be filtered, stored and utilized in different ways or directly used for recharge purposes.

In water scarce areas like Southern province, water can be collected in dams during flood periods and utilised during dry periods. Rainwater harvesting is unrestricted from any kind of impurity, with relatively less storage cost and no maintenance cost involved except for periodical cleaning. With depleting groundwater levels and fluctuating climate conditions, this measure can go a long way to help mitigate the adverse effects of rising water scarcity. Reserving rainwater can help recharge local aquifers, reduce urban flooding and most notably, ensure water availability in water-scarce zones.

In supporting the water harvesting initiative, simple techniques such as surface water runoff can be used to store water by diverting the flow of small creeks and streams into reservoirs on the surface or underground. It can provide water for farming, cattle and general domestic use. Surface runoff harvesting is most suitable in urban areas. Additionally, infrastructure plays a critical role in water harvesting and flood regulation overall. Most residential areas especially new ones lack adequate drainage

systems to divert the water into streams and eventually the river systems. For example, most new settlements in urban

areas like Chalala and Kamwala South lack proper planning with regard to drainage systems leading to floods and contamination of groundwater system in the area.

However, the implementation of the above measures has always faced the brick wall of lack of enforcement of building regulations by the Local Authorities. The Urban and Regional Planning Act of 2015 in Section 13 (2) (a) state that a local authority as a planning authority shall "promote and facilitate sustainable land use

in accordance with this Act and any other written law." As such, it's important that the local authority and other relevant institutions monitor and enforce building regulations as well as public health regulations to ameliorate the impacts of flood risks. Alas, the practical application of the policies and laws is opposite. For example, development of main settlement and other infrastructure have blocked water pathways or lack flood regulation systems. The interventions are intertwined and require multifaceted efforts from each play or stakeholder, that is, from individuals to the national government.

About the author

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