

# Everyday Humanitarianism in Disaster Response

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## **Everyday Humanitarianism in Disaster Response**

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### **Overview**

Disasters significantly impact people's lives, leading to loss of lives, livelihoods and property. These challenges are consistent across disaster cycles. While the government promotes disaster awareness efforts through local authorities and other stakeholders, such as the Red Cross, the auxiliary role of local government actors complicates effective disaster preparedness and risk reduction.

Moreover, there is a mismatch between the responsibilities assigned to local government actors and the resources they have available to implement necessary actions and provide assistance. This imbalance leaves affected communities and the general population uncertain about what support they can expect from the government. This is basically due to the ban on direct giving and the expectation that individuals should help themselves.

Although there have been recent policy and legal reforms in disaster management (Disaster Management Act and Regulations, 2022; National Disaster Management Strategy, 2022-2027), awareness of these frameworks is limited among ordinary citizens and some government officials. Additionally, the stakeholder space is sometimes constrained, limiting broader involvement in disaster management efforts.

Research has established that policymakers often lack a comprehensive understanding of the livelihood choices that influence communities' disaster exposure and vulnerability. For instance, there are rational reasons why some people choose to remain in condemned buildings or areas

prone to flooding. However, disaster management policies frequently fail because they are developed without a nuanced grasp of how local communities and vulnerable populations assess and manage their livelihood risks and vulnerabilities.

### **The Way Forward**

#### **The Government of Tanzania should:**

- Initiate reforms of the disaster governance structure to be proactive and specific to disaster management.
- Engage more with researchers and community members to understand the underlying reasons why people remain in disaster-prone areas. This will assist in formulating effective policies and strategies.
- Recognize, promote, and disseminate good practices of indigenous knowledge systems.
- Create more awareness of the relevant laws and translate them to the community.
- Ensure that disaster management committees at the lower levels have adequate resources to meet their responsibilities.

#### **The Local Governments should:**

- Contribute to building resilience in local communities.
- Focus on disaster preparedness despite the auxiliary nature of disaster management roles.
- Support the reinvigoration and rediscovery of indigenous knowledge systems for disaster management and prevention.

### The International Humanitarian Actors should:

- Promote clarity and raise awareness on the importance of engaging local humanitarian actors (everyday humanitarianism).
- Work with the local government disaster management committees rather than creating a parallel structure.
- Build on and support indigenous knowledge systems for disaster risk reduction and responses.
- Familiarize themselves with the legal framework for disaster management.

#### ABOUT THE PROJECT

Everyday Humanitarianism in Tanzania (EveryHumanTZ) is a joint research project being conducted by researchers from public universities from Denmark and Tanzania aiming to explore and understand the practices of everyday humanitarianism and the attitudes that ground them. The project is based at Copenhagen Business School and at the University of Dar es Salaam, also includes researchers from Danish Institute for International Studies, Roskilde University, University of Copenhagen and London School of Economics. Find out more at <https://www.everydayhumanitarianismintanzania.org/>