

Reigniting the principle of Ubuntu/Unhu in the aftermath of Cyclone Idai in Chimanimani, Zimbabwe in light of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sophia Chirongoma, Sibiziwe Shumba and Susan Dube

Abstract

In March 2019, Cyclone Idai struck Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. This paper foregrounds the extraordinary level of national solidarity exhibited by the Zimbabwean people in response to the humanitarian crisis caused by this cyclone. Drawing insights from the African ethic of Ubuntu/unhu, the paper chronicles the roles of various stakeholders who played a role in responding to the impact of Cyclone Idai. Clearly, Zimbabwe has faced natural disasters since the beginning of this millennium, for instance, Cyclone Eline in the year 2000, Cyclone Japhet in the year 2003, the Tokwe-Mukosi floods of 2014 and Cyclone Dineo in 2017. In the aftermath of these disasters, there have not been comprehensive studies exploring the role of humanitarian agents and other stakeholders foregrounding the aspect of solidarity which is an integral factor in helping affected communities to cope with their losses. Hence, this paper seeks to address this gap using the survivors of Cyclone Idai in Chimanimani as a case study to foreground how their resilience and tenacity is anchored upon the bonds of solidarity exhibited by various stakeholders. Drawing lessons from past natural disasters in Zimbabwe, particularly on the experiences of the Chimanimani communities affected by Cyclone Idai, the paper proffers practical insights on how various stakeholders can collaborate to mitigate further loss of lives and devastation of infrastructure if similar natural disasters befall Zimbabwe in future. In line with the four pillars of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) i.e. people, planet, peace and prosperity (the four Ps), this study explores how the interventions by the various stakeholders responding to the plight of the Chimanimani community affected by Cyclone Idai are conforming to the long-term goals of establishing sustainable communities. Insights from the three development frameworks; the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) framework and the People Centred Development (PCD) framework will help to assess the impact of solidarity initiatives put into place by the stakeholders responding to Cyclone Idai and other natural disasters that have befallen the Zimbabwean populace since the year 2000 and come up with propositions on how to utilize the locally available resources as a more durable measure in addressing the needs of the affected communities.

Keywords: Cyclone Idai, Chimanimani, Ubuntu/Unhu, Solidarity, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)