DISASTER AUTHORITARIANISM:
An Ethnography of State and NGO Responses in the Aftermath of Tropical
Cyclone Idai in Chimanimani District, Zimbabwe

By

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Abstract

This thesis examines how state and non-governmental organization (NGO) responses to the March 2019 tropical cyclone Idai in the Chimanimani district of Zimbabwe inform our understanding of the processes and practices through which disasters create opportunities for the state to extend and reinforce its structures and systems of authoritarian power. I offer "disaster authoritarianism" as a concept to describe the inner workings of state authoritarianism and the ways in which state authoritarian power is produced and reproduced in the daily practices of NGOs and disaster survivors. Disaster authoritarianism describes the processes and practices through which state authoritarianism produces disaster vulnerability and how authoritarian power is reproduced during emergency relief, recovery, and reconstitution operations. The concept reveals the nature of collaborations, conflicts, and contestations that emerge when external agencies become entangled in the daily lives of survivors.

The tropical cyclone Idai disaster became an entry point for the state to reassert its structures and systems of authoritarianism, and this had major implications on its overall response to the disaster, including interactions with NGOs, and survivors. Although NGOs played a critical role as "brokers" through which aid could be channeled to survivors, their depoliticization strategies and factors such as the lack of coordination, and lack of transparency and accountability, created conducive conditions for the production and reproduction of state authoritarianism. Diminished survivor agency, compounded by the inequitable access to disaster relief aid, triggered individualized complaints, resentment, and non-compliance among some survivors, and opportunism among others. These individualized survivor responses reduced the possibility of survivors mobilizing and challenging the state and NGO actions they perceived as not complying with locally constructed interpretations of the disaster.

These results are based on ethnographic fieldwork that I carried out in Chimanimani from November 2020 to December 2021. During this period, I volunteered as a Program Management Advisor for a local NGO (which I call NJIVA Trust) implementing post-Idai response initiatives in the district. I participated in meetings and events involving the state and NGOs and I held interviews with senior state officials, NGO employees, and the survivors. The thesis concludes that long-term disaster response can be achieved through adopting a holistic approach that addresses vulnerability factors that predispose vulnerable communities to disasters as well as incorporating local systems of meaning-making rather than imposing interventions based on superficial assumptions and political interests.

General Summary

This thesis is about collaborations, conflicts, and contestations that surface as external humanitarian agencies, specifically the state and NGOs become entangled in the day-to-day lives of survivors following a major disaster. The research setting is Chimanimani, a rural district located in the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe, which was severely impacted when tropical cyclone Idai made landfall in Zimbabwe on the 15th of March in 2019. The post-Idai response interventions implemented by the state and NGOs contributed to further reinforcing the structures and systems of state authoritarianism. At the same time, these state and NGO-led interventions impacted the survivors differently and triggered individualized survivor responses, which included complaints, resentment, non-compliance among some survivors, and opportunism among others. The inequality in the distribution of benefits from the interventions of external agencies created conditions that favoured the reproduction of state authoritarianism.

The results are based on ethnographic fieldwork that I carried out in Chimanimani from November 2020 to December 2021. I volunteered for a local NGO implementing post-Idai recovery and reconstruction initiatives in the affected communities. I participated in meetings and public events involving the state and NGOs. I also directly supported the field activities of my host NGO and carried out interviews with senior state officials, leaders of local and national NGOs, and the survivors. The research concludes that for disaster response initiatives to be durable, they should aim to address the conditions that render communities vulnerable to disasters and incorporate what survivors feel are the best approaches to deal with their situation rather than imposing programs based on assumptions and political interests of external service providers.

Acknowledgments

Lastly, I would like to thank my family, especially my wife, Charity Ophelia, and children Taropafadzwa Dean, Ethan Takudzwa, and Tinaye Trish, who travelled this journey along with me. Their encouragement and prayers kept me in high spirits during this process.

Declaration

I did it to fulfill the wishes of my parents – Monica and Robinson Dedurai Kudejira - who until

they departed from this earthly existence in 2005 and 2009 respectively, had toiled to get me

through the prime phases of my education!

… REST IN PEACE LOVED SOULS ...

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List of Acronyms

Agritex	Department of Agricultural Extension Services
BfW	Bread for the World
CAFOD	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
CBO	Community-based Organization
CHC	Community Health Committee
CHWs	Community Health Workers
CPC	Civil Protection Committee
CRDC	Chimanimani Rural District Council
DCP	Department of Civil Protection
DCPC	District Civil Protection Committee
DDC	District Development Coordinator
DJ	Disc Jockey
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
EU	European Union
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FACT	Family Aids Caring Trust
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FTLRP	Fast Track Land Reform Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action
HLLM	Holistic Land and Livestock Management
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDUAI	International Day for the Universal Access to Information
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MC	Master of Ceremonies
MLG	Ministry of Local Government

MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOHCC	Ministry of Health & Child Care
MP	Member of Parliament
MSD	Meteorological Services Department
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organization(s)
NCPC	National Civil Protection Committee
OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
PDC	Provincial District Coordinator
PRFT	Poverty Reduction Forum Trust
PVO	Private Voluntary Organization
RINA	Rapid Impact and Needs Assessment
RTGS	Real-Time Gross Settlement
SI	Statutory Instrument
TPF	Timber Producers Federation
TTL	Tribal Trust Land
NVG	NJIVA Village Group
UN	United Nations
UNCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNESCO-ROSA	Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Regional Office for Southern Africa
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNISDR	UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UK	United Kingdom
VSO	Voluntary Services Organization

WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
ZEC	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission
ZimParks	Zimbabwe Parks & Wildlife Management Authority
ZIRP	Zimbabwe Idai Recovery Project

Chapter 1   Introduction

1.1 Tropical Cyclone Idai: Trajectory, Intensity, and Impact

On the morning of 15 March 2019, the world woke up to the news of a painful tragedy and the most devastating meteorological phenomenon in the modern history of Zimbabwe. Local social media platforms became jam-packed with images and videos of heavy winds blowing off roofs of school blocks, villagers using ropes to rescue people from roof-tops and trees, mountains and escarpments denuded by mudslides and floods, huge trees falling on severely damaged roads, people scavenging through the mud and huge boulders in efforts to save their missing relatives or recover their dead bodies, women and children weeping in desperation, and tens of dead bodies lying in makeshift shelters. All these visuals were a result of the destruction caused by tropical cyclone Idai in Chimanimani.

The tropical cyclone initially developed as a tropical depression on the 4th of March 2019, and for several days, the depression pounded north-central Mozambique and the southern districts of Malawi, depositing torrential rains which caused floods in many low-lying areas (Charrua et. al., 2021). It then veered back to the Mozambique Channel on the 11th of March where it strengthened into a moderate storm and rapidly intensified into a tropical cyclone (Dube et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2019). With winds of up to 294km/hr, Idai persisted at the Mozambican Channel, making landfall in the northwest of Madagascar before tracking back into Mozambique and then westward into Zimbabwe on the 15th of March (Dube et al., 2021; Kai et al, 2021; Charrua et. al., 2021). By the time the tropical cyclone reached Zimbabwe, its wind speed had weakened to less than 10 km/h while still depositing huge amounts of rain along its path. Some weather stations in Chimanimani for instance, recorded between 400 mm and 1000 mm of rainfall in 24 hours (Nhamo & Chikodzi 2021), and as Dube et al. (2021) further show, these

torrential rains resulted in heavy soil soaking which subsequently triggered catastrophic landslides, rock falls and flash floods. The flooding, rockfalls and landslides which hit Chimanimani and parts of Chipinge districts peaked in the middle of the night on 15 March when many people were unprepared and asleep and had little reaction time to evacuate to safe places. The heavy rains, accompanied by heavy foggy conditions, persisted up to the 20th of March, thereby delaying rescue efforts (IFRC 2019).

Tropical cyclone Idai caused extensive socio-economic, environmental, and infrastructural damage, and claimed many fatalities in the affected countries (Kolstad 2021; Charrua et. al., 2021; Yu et al., 2019). Altogether, the tropical cyclone accounted for over 1000 fatalities, directly affected at least 2.98 million people, and resulted in a combined economic loss of at least US$2 billion in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi (Yu et al., 2019). More than 258,000 houses were destroyed, leaving at least 761,000 people in need of shelter assistance in the three countries (Yu et al., 2019). In Zimbabwe, tropical cyclone Idai marooned nine rural districts (Bikita, Buhera, Masvingo, Mutare, Mutasa, Makoni, Nyanga, Chipinge, and Chimanimani), with Chimanimani being the most affected (Nhamo & Chikodzi 2021). A Rapid Impact and Needs Assessment (RINA) initiated by the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) in April 2019 to assess the impact of the tropical cyclone revealed that the country incurred damages amounting to between US$542 million and US$616 million across the nine districts, with almost half of the damages concentrated in Chimanimani and Chipinge (GoZ 2019). The tropical cyclone directly impacted more than 270,000 people in the country and claimed at least 344 casualties while more than 300 people went missing (Nhamo & Chikodzi 2021; Dube, et al. 2021; Munsaka, et al. 2021; Chanza, et al. 2020; Yu, et al. 2019). In addition, over 17,715 housing units were damaged, displacing more than 60,000 people, and in total, at least 115,000

people were affected in the Chimanimani district alone (GoZ et al. 2019). The tropical cyclone also caused massive destruction to public facilities such as roads, health facilities, electric power transmission facilities and water and sanitation infrastructure (GoZ 2019). Based on estimates from the RINA, the tropical cyclone damaged 865 kilometers of road and 20,354 meters of bridge worth US$163.7 million; 1.4 million hectares of arable land formerly utilized by nearly 50,000 farming households; 1.17 million hectares of forest including 104,620 hectares of protected areas; a total of 294 health facilities worth US$14.7 million; and 971 education facilities worth US$6.3 million and impacting more than 60,000 school children.

In response to its unprecedented devastating impact, tropical cyclone Idai was declared a state of disaster by the President of Zimbabwe, Emerson Mnangagwa, on 18 March 2019 (IOM 2019). The declaration paved way for the Department of Civil Protection (DCP), the national institution mandated with disaster management responsibilities, to activate emergency response mechanisms in partnership with other state agencies, United Nations bodies, and NGO partners.

1.2 The Post-Idai Humanitarian Response Landscape

The disaster declaration triggered many external agencies to immediately embark on mobilization to support the survivors. The affected areas witnessed a massive influx of UN agencies, international and national NGOs, churches, and the private sector working alongside the state to provide emergency relief and implement post-disaster recovery and reconstruction initiatives (Nyahunda, et al., 2022; Chari, et al. 2020). Some humanitarian agencies went directly to the survivors whilst others channelled their support through the state (Nyahunda et al., 2022). This thesis particularly focuses on the involvement of the state and NGOs during the post-disaster response processes.

A survey conducted by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) revealed that at least 8 UN agencies, 53 NGOs, and 1 Red Cross Movement had an operational presence in the affected districts as of June 2019. The interventions of these agencies covered a wide range of socio-economic sectors which had been impacted by the tropical cyclone: shelter, food security, health, education, child protection, nutrition as well as water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). For instance, NGOs like World Vision International (WVI), Care, Plan International, worked together with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe. Likewise, the state Department of Social Welfare (DSW) collaborated with UN agencies and NGOs like the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), GOAL, Trocaire, Family Aids Caring Trust (FACT), World Education, Childline, and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), on protection issues. Most of the disaster response activities were concentrated in Chimanimani and Chipinge, the two districts that were most impacted by the tropical cyclone (UN 2019).

Media stories, institutional reports, and more recently, academic publications, abound regarding the relief, recovery, and reconstruction aid rendered to survivors of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. Despite this growing literature, we know little about how pre-existing relations between the state and humanitarian agencies shaped the post-disaster response, the assumptions and theories of change upon which external agencies designed and delivered disaster aid interventions in Chimanimani, and how survivors interacted with providers of humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai. This thesis aims to address these gaps. More broadly, I examine how responses to the March 2019 tropical cyclone Idai in the Chimanimani district of Zimbabwe inform our understanding of the processes and practices

through which the state sought to extend and reinforce its authority over citizens, and how NGOs and survivors challenged and/or accommodated these efforts by the state. Specifically, I ask: what forms of support did the state and NGOs provide to communities impacted by tropical cyclone Idai? How and to what extent did this support reflect the institutional cultures of the state and NGOs and underlying assumptions about what survivors need? What forms of collaborations and alliances emerged as NGOs worked alongside state agencies to implement disaster emergency response, recovery, and reconstruction activities? Finally, how has the support provided by the state and NGOs been contested within and among all the stakeholders involved in the process?

I adopt the term "disaster authoritarianism" as a concept that helps to describe the inner workings of state authoritarianism in disaster response contexts and the ways in which state power is reproduced and sustained in the daily practices of NGOs and survivors. Specifically, disaster authoritarianism describes the processes and practices through which state authoritarianism produces disaster vulnerability and how authoritarian power is reproduced during emergency relief, recovery, and reconstitution operations. Drawing on 14 months (from November 2020 to December 2021) of ethnographic research in Chimanimani, I argue that the tropical cyclone Idai disaster created an opportunity for the state to reassert its structures and systems of authoritarianism, and this had major implications on its overall response to the disasters, including interactions with NGOs, and survivors. While NGOs played a critical role as alternative brokers through which aid could be channeled to survivors, their approaches had to be accommodative of state authoritarianism while also complying with the socially constructed legitimate practices defined by the survivors. Furthermore, the post-Idai response interventions implemented by the state and NGOs negatively influenced survivor agency by reducing the

possibility of collective action. As we will see, by promoting the inequitable distribution of benefits to the survivors, these state and NGOs interventions triggered individualized complaints, resentment, and non-compliance among some survivors, and opportunism among others. Resultantly, the combination of a lack of collective mobilization and individualized survivor responses contributed to the reproduction and sustenance of state authoritarianism.

My thesis draws upon theoretical concepts from two bodies of literature, namely, the anthropology of disasters and the anthropology of NGOs and development.

1.3 Anthropology and the Study of Disasters

Scientists started to engage with the study of disasters as early as the beginning of the 20th century. Among the pioneer scholars was the social scientist Samuel Prince whose ground-breaking doctoral dissertation explored the implications of the 1920 Halifax harbour explosions in Nova Scotia (Gaillard 2022; Oliver-Smith & Hoffman 2020). Since then, the field of disasters has progressively gained scholarly attention, with studies focusing on the contested meanings of disasters, their causes, and impacts on communities as well as aspects of response and recovery (Albris 2022; Oliver-Smith & Hoffman 2020). Alongside its genealogical evolution, the term disasters has attracted varying, and at times conflicting meanings and interpretations based on specific contexts, interests, disciplines, and agenda of its usage (Mullick & Das 2014; Quarantelli 1995). As Gonzalez & Faas (2016, p. 100) explicitly state, "the objectives and the perspectives of the person doing the defining influences the meaning it is accorded." These varying interpretations and meanings have also been reflected in how anthropologists conceptualized and approached the field of disasters ever since it became a distinct area of academic inquiry.

Since Samuel Prince's seminal work, research on disasters has primarily focused on specific hazards or agents of destruction and their impact on communities (Oliver-Smith &

Hoffman 2020). In other words, the definition of a disaster was construed as more or less synonymous with that of a hazard. The scope of analysis was limited to the area affected by a hazard and the period in which the event occurred (Oliver-Smith 2009). Furthermore, this hazard-centric early scholarship relied on the assumption that disasters were essentially natural accidents whose destructive impacts could only be explained by people's proximity to the sources or paths of hazards (Faas 2016). Scholars treated the occurrence of disasters as independent from human influence (Perry 2007). A disaster, according to Van Bavel et al. (2020, p. 11), was understood to be an event or "a short rupture of normalcy", and as Oliver-Smith & Hoffman (2020, p. 15) add, scientists believed that recovery from the destructive events "was to return as quickly as possible to the pre-disaster status quo." The hazard-centric paradigm continued to hold until the 1950s when scholars began to generate evidence that linked the occurrence of disasters to social systems. Academic attention shifted to focusing on the behavioural responses of individuals, organizations, and institutions during the disaster moments (Hoffman 2020; Oliver-Smith 2009). This research tradition, which came to be known as the behavioural approach, considered extreme destructive events such as fires, cyclones, and earthquakes as disruptive to the structure, organization and functioning of society, and thus scholars became interested in how people reacted to these events and their impacts (Van Bavel et al. 2020, Oliver-Smith 1996). The primary focus of the analyses, as Oliver-Smith & Hoffman (2020, p. 15) further observe, was still on the actual event, and "little historical perspectives and scant sociocultural patterns were considered". A popularly cited text in this regard is the work of the anthropologist Anthony Wallace who studied individual and community behaviour following the Tornado which struck Worcester, Massachusetts in 1953 (Albris 2022; Oliver-Smith & Hoffman 2020; Faas & Barrios 2015). Wallace is often credited for developing the psycho-

cultural or the disaster syndrome model which assumed that survivors of a disaster "proceed through states of isolation, euphoria, altruism, criticism, and normality as events unfolded" (Faas & Barrios 2015, p. 288). The major gap in the framework, according to Faas & Barrios, was that it did not seriously engage with human-environment relations and could not be applied globally as it was "too rooted in the particular American context" (Faas & Barrios 2015, p. 288).

The late 1970s witnessed a major turning point in the study of disasters. Scholarship shifted from the reductionist behavioral approach, which considered disasters as mere events, to a more elaborate conceptualization of disasters as being events and processes located within the social domain. Through the work of O'Keefe, et al. (1976) for example, disasters began to be understood as being the results of socially constructed historical conditions and structures of vulnerability and inequality. From this vulnerability perspective, disasters are considered "the result of human-environment relations that enhanced the socially disruptive and materially destructive capacities of geophysical phenomena and technological malfunctions" (Barrios 2017, p 154). Furthermore, from the vulnerability perspective, disasters are considered as processes that stretch in time and space, and which "involve some form of aftermath that prolongs the experience of the disaster beyond the triggering event" (Albris 2022, p. 36).

Since the postulation of the vulnerability concept, major scholarly contributions have been published with scholars refining the definitions of disasters to include the historical construction of vulnerability and how they shape culture and society, which are the major concerns of the discipline of anthropology. Key theoretical contributions to the vulnerability paradigm are found in Wisner et al.'s (2004) *At Risk: Natural hazards, people's vulnerability and disasters* (first published in 1994), Hoffman & Oliver-Smith's two edited volumes - *Catastrophe & Culture: The Anthropology of Disaster* (published in 2002) and *The Angry Earth:*

Disaster in Anthropological Perspective (first published in 1999 and revised in 2020) and recent

monographs and reviews by scholars like Kelman (2020), Barrios (2017), Faas & Barrios (2015)

and Faas (2016). Although the meaning of disasters remains contested, Hoffman & Oliver-Smith

have contributed toward a working definition that has widely gained traction in contemporary

disaster studies. They defined a disaster as:

> a process/event combining a potentially destructive agent/force from the natural,
> modified, or built environment and a population in a socially and economically produced
> condition of vulnerability, resulting in a perceived disruption of the customary relative
> satisfaction of individual and social needs for physical survival, social order, and
> meaning (Hoffman & Oliver-Smith 2002, p 4).

The definition above draws upon Wisner et al.'s (2004) disaster pressure and release (PAR)

model which conceptualizes the risk of disasters as being a result of the interaction of

vulnerability and hazards. Wisner et al. (2004) define vulnerability as the characteristics of an

individual or community that influence their capacity to deal with a hazard. They further

describe hazards as the catastrophic events that may affect different places at any given time. For

Hoffman & Oliver-Smith (2002, p. 4), hazards can be thought of as sources of harm that can

result in social or physical damage.

Wisner et al.'s (2004) The PAR model suggests that a disaster happens at the intersection

of two opposing forces, namely, the underlying processes that generate vulnerability on one

hand, and the destructive hazard on the other. Based on the PAR model, disasters ought to be

explained as a product of a series of causal factors embedded in ideological, socio-economic and

political systems which generate dynamic pressures that transform into unsafe conditions for

specific groups of people, and which upon intersecting with a natural hazard, produce a disaster

(Jerolleman 2019; Oliver-Smith 2009).

Faas (2016) explains three ways through which approaching disaster studies through the vulnerability framework has contributed to the discipline of anthropology. Firstly, the notion of vulnerability provides a basis for anthropologists to reimagine the roles that humans play in the production of disaster risk and the factors that lead to the disproportionate distribution of vulnerability and disaster impact across populations and spaces. Secondly, the concept has been employed to interrogate the temporality of disasters. It has equipped anthropologists with a theoretical basis to be able to trace the processes and conditions that existed before major catastrophic events. Thirdly, by locating the causal factors of disasters within ideological systems and power structures, the vulnerability concept has politicized disaster analysis, thereby challenging anthropologists to employ a holistic approach to understanding the socio-economic and political contexts within which disasters occur.

Nonetheless, as researchers generate new evidence, worries have emerged regarding the continued application of the vulnerability framing in disaster studies. Among the major pitfalls is the concern that constructing vulnerability as a characteristic of survivors involves "a process of otherizing and essentializing," which perpetuates stereotyping and marginalization (Marino & Faas 2020, p. 1). Further, by subsuming affected people into large aggregates, the vulnerability framing tends to conceal human agency (Oliver-Smith 2009, p. 26). Since the late 1970s, political ecology emerged as an alternative analytical framework to understand how the combined interaction of socio-economic, political, and environmental processes produce disasters (Oliver-Smith & Hoffman 2020; Oliver-Smith 2009; Faas 2016). The following section explores how this interdisciplinary analytical model evolved within the field of disaster research.

1.4 Political Ecology and the Anthropology of Disasters

Rooted in the sub-discipline of ecological anthropology, political ecology emerged alongside the concept of vulnerability as scholars began to draw human-environment linkages in disaster research (Robins 2012; Oliver-Smith & Hoffman 2002). As scholarly work linking disasters to both the human and environmental dimensions expanded throughout the late part of the 1970s, political ecology became a useful framework to explain these linkages. The major task for scholars was to demonstrate that the environment should be perceived as constitutive of and shaped by society and its culture (Koons & Trivedi 2021). Since then, political ecology has rapidly expanded its usage as an analytical framework in many disciplines and sub-disciplines, and along the way, articulating salient aspects critical to understanding human-environment relations, and bringing in new definitions, methods, and interpretations. Broadly, the political ecology framework examines how and why socio-economic structures and power relations are linked to environmental issues and changes (Roberts 2020). Its interdisciplinarity is reflected in how it has been embraced in a wide range of subjects as a framework for understanding the human-environment nexus, including in agriculture and land reform studies (Kinkaid 2019; Rahimzadeh 2018), peace and conflict studies (Le Billon & Duffy 2018), conservation studies (Feingold 2021; Bormpoudakis 2019), extractivism and archaeology research (Prieto & Valenzuela 2019), health research (Pathak 2020; Turshen 2018), migration studies (Radel, et al., 2018) and religion (Scheid 2021). Because of its adaptability to different academic fields, political ecology has remained a loosely defined concept. For instance, it can be viewed as being "concerned with the use, access, management, allocation, and control of natural resources and how cultural, socioeconomic, political, and ecological factors shape these practices" (Carroll 2015, p. 11), or as a "study of uneven distribution and control over 'natural resources' in

structural hierarchies of political and economic power" (Rocheleau 2015, p. 70). Notwithstanding the wide range of definitions, there is consensus that political ecology allows us to decipher how human-environmental interactions are influenced by complex structural and power relations that shape human vulnerabilities (French et al., 2020; Mavhura 2019; Gibb 2018; Bryant 1998).

A political ecology framework thus provides a means through which inequalities and marginality in respect of exposure and vulnerability to environmental hazards can be analyzed (Faas 2016; Fabinyi, et al., 2014). As the previous section has shown, disasters occur at the interface of a vulnerable population and physical hazards and they are influenced by such factors as location, sociopolitical structure, and production patterns (Oliver-Smith & Hoffman 2020, Wisner et al. 2004). For Faas (2016), a political ecology framework, therefore, directs our attention to the fact that poor and marginalized members of society are more likely to live in hazardous places where they are less prepared to deal with the hazards they encounter. Faas further argues that by employing a political ecology framework, it becomes explicitly logical to examine the factors that lead to the poorest and most marginal members of society being disproportionally affected by disasters. In Oliver-Smith & Hoffman's (2020) view, a political ecology perspective facilitates the important task of analyzing and documenting features that are necessary to understand people's vulnerability to disasters, including their modes of production, demographic features, local dispossessions, and the state of the environment. By offering such an expansive and holistic way of understanding the relationship between humans and their environment, political ecology differs from the traditional cultural ecology approach whose focus is limited to studying how humans use culture to adapt to their environment (Sutton & Anderson 2020; Faas 2016). The advantage of employing a political ecology perspective in disaster studies

is that it incorporates both political economy and human ecology, including power dynamics, wealth distribution, marginalization, and coping strategies to explain the causes of vulnerability and response to disasters (Koons & Trivedi 2021; Sun & Faas 2018; Pulwarty & Riebsame 1997).

Political ecology has enabled scholars to study the role of the state in disaster governance, and how precarity is produced through processes of resource distribution (Tierney 2012). As Marchezini (2015) argues, the state ought not to be viewed as a monolithic entity, but as an ensemble of institutions and actors with differing agendas and logics. Citing Miliband (1969), Trouillot (2001, p. 127) posits that the "institutions" that constitute the reality of the state "interact as part of what may be called the state system." As such, political ecology helps to articulate questions about access to and control over resources within the state system, how the resources are ultimately distributed to communities, and the implications of this distribution chain on the capacity of communities to respond to disasters. The destructive impact of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, for instance, typifies how the politics of resource distribution are linked to vulnerability. The hurricane mostly affected communities that had experienced a longstanding history of social marginalization (Ballard, et al., 2020; Dietrich 2020). Applying Wisner et al.'s (2004) PAR model, Oliver-Smith (2009, p. 23) notes that the main socio-economic factors that contributed to the vulnerability of New Orleans included a condition of endemic economic crisis and a political system that favored corruption while undermining "its capacity to cope with an array of serious problems." To further reinforce his argument, Oliver-Smith observes that while as many as 120,000 residents exposed to Katrina did not own cars, local officials failed to provide adequate transportation to facilitate timely evacuation before the hurricane struck. Likewise, an investigation of the contemporary institutional context for disaster

management in Peru attributes the root causes of people's vulnerability to El Niño events to socio-political and institutional factors, including "high levels of centralization, lack of functional articulation between political sectors, and widespread corruption" (French et al. (2020, p.10). In view of the examples stated above, my thesis seeks to explore the process of resource distribution within the context of state authoritarianism in Zimbabwe and explain its implications on the production of vulnerability to disasters.

A major theoretical argument that the vulnerability framework stresses is that disasters involve processes that continue to impact communities beyond the occurrence of a catastrophic event, such as an earthquake, a cyclone or flood (Albris 2022). Disaster aftermath also creates an environment in which not only historical patterns of vulnerability manifest, but where new forms and dimensions of vulnerability are produced, especially in respect of access to emergency relief as well as recovery and reconstruction support systems. Zhang (2016, p. 90), for instance, argues that historical inequalities and institutionalized forms of structural violence result in disaster survivors being viewed within the trope of good vs. bad victims. Such framings, according to Zhang (2016), render certain groups invisible, and lead them to being bracketed out of disaster recovery assistance. A classic example to demonstrate this paradox can be drawn from the Hurricane Harvey responses in Houston, Texas. The Hurricane, which hit Houston in 2017, further increased the vulnerabilities that minority communities, and especially undocumented migrants faced. Even before the hurricane, the undocumented migrants had always remained invisible to the state because of the fear of deportation, and this invisibility had always curtailed their access to social services provided by the state. Because of the historical condition of social exclusion, the undocumented migrant families could neither leave dangerous conditions after Hurricane Harvey nor utilize official reconstruction support mechanisms offered by the state

(Azadegan 2020). In the Chimanimani context, survivors became subjects of international sympathy, compassion, and attention, with donors swiftly moving in to help with relief aid following the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. However, the recovery and reconstruction process had not only been slow, but was also mulled with concerns about discrimination, politicization of relief aid as well as unfulfilled promises from both the state and NGOs (Tevera & Raimundo 2021; Mutizwa 2021; Mucherera & Spiegel 2021). This thesis, therefore, expands on the notions of marginality, visibility/invisibility, and social exclusion by investigating the geophysical, socio-economic, and political factors that could have prevented individual survivors or specific socio-economic groups in Chimanimani from accessing emergency relief and recovery and reconstruction aid in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai.

The historical production of inequalities and institutionalized structural violence are linked to the post-colonial discourse, which has become a major subject of concern in anthropological scholarship. The post-colonial critique of disasters locates the genesis of modern-day forms of vulnerability in the colonial processes of invasion and dispossessions "that subsequently provided the structure for later development models and social hierarchies in postcolonial societies" (Sun & Faas 2018, p. 626). Along this postcolonial thesis, Oliver-Smith (2016), for example, concludes that the earthquake that hit Peru in 1970 and killed more than 65,000 people was an outcome of episodes of colonial events that the country suffered from over 500 years earlier when the Spanish colonizers implemented social control and indoctrination policies that led to the concentration of native people in poorly planned settlements. He also observes that in addition to these policies, "the colonial institutions' assiduous extraction of surpluses" left the Peruvian population both destitute and in a state of precarity (p. 32). With its history of close to a century under British colonial rule, Zimbabwe renders itself an ideal case to

further pursue and expand the postcolonial critique of disasters. In this thesis, I draw linkages between the colonial processes of forceful land dispossessions and capitalist accumulation and the destructive impact of tropical cyclone Idai in Chimanimani.

A political ecology perspective has also motivated scholars to treat disasters not only as mere localized processes and catastrophic events but rather, as being connected to hegemonic global processes that contribute to the production of vulnerability and influence response and recovery processes. Since the rise of global neoliberalism in the 1980s, for instance, political ecology has offered a methodological framework for scholars to interrogate how global economic developments and aid policies influenced local human-environment relations (Roberts 2020; Barrios 2017). An example of a disaster that is commonly attributed to neoliberal policies is the 2010 earthquake that devastated the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince and claimed more than 300,000 fatalities (Oliver-Smith 2015). The disaster occurred against the backdrop of an influx of subsidized United States (US) rice together with United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded privately-owned agro-processing facilities, which disenfranchised rural economies and displaced poor farming households, forcing them to seek residence in slums and poorly serviced shanty towns around the capital. Families in these unregulated dwellings became primary casualties of the 7.0 magnitude earthquake that hit the capital in 2010 (Oliver-Smith 2015). This thesis draws upon the discipline of political ecology to explain how the neoliberal policies adopted by the Zimbabwean state since the early 1980s influenced preparedness and responses to the tropical cyclone Idai disaster in Chimanimani. By its nature, neoliberalism constitutes elements of authoritarianism, especially since it involves the imposition of certain market logic and at times the implementation "of authoritarian measures through the state machinery" (Adaman & Akbulut 2021, p. 283). In this thesis, I adopt the

concept of disaster authoritarianism to analyze how neoliberal-induced authoritarian measures have contributed to the vulnerabilities of communities in Chimanimani to floods.

Alongside the rise of the neoliberal project has been an increased interest by states to agree on frameworks and strategies to tackle disasters and respond to new challenges posed by climate change. Besides generating new terminology and concepts, these global trends have created new approaches and avenues for scholars to engage with the field of disasters. An important recent curvature in the anthropology of disasters is a focus on resilience, which mainly draws from climate change studies (Quinn et al. 2021; Manyena 2012). I elaborate on the paradigm in the section that follows.

1.5 The Disaster Resilience Approach

The resilience paradigm gained footing in the 1990s when the UN spearheaded initiatives that shifted global focus on disasters from humanitarian assistance to a broad disaster risk reduction (DRR) institutional framework (Oliver-Smith & Hoffman 2020, p. 5). The concept was popularized through international initiatives such as the creation of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) in 1999 (later changed to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction – UNDRR, in 2019), which serves as the UN focal point for disasters. Specifically, the term resilience became fashionable in global debates on disasters following the adoption of *The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters by the World Conference for Disaster Reduction*, which was agreed upon during the 2005 Conference on Disaster Reduction that the UN convened in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan (UNISDR 2005; Oliver-Smith & Hoffman 2020; Oliver-Smith 2016). The HFA was the first ever global initiative to develop concrete guiding principles and priorities of action for achieving disaster resilience for vulnerable communities (Manyena 2006; UNISDR

2005). The resilience-oriented thinking was further elevated and given special attention during the 2015 Global Conference held in Sendai, Japan, and that resulted in the adoption of *The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030*, a successor to the HFA (Mayer 2019; UNISDR 2015). Through this revised instrument, world leaders reiterated the building of resilience as an urgent priority to address DRR and achieve sustainable development (UNISDR 2015).

While the definitions of resilience vary, central to its formulation is the emphasis on the capabilities of individuals, communities, and states to deal with disasters (Mayer 2019; Manyena et al., 2011; Manyena 2006). Scholars have mostly relied on the UNDRR (2015, p. 4) definition, which is

> the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform, and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management.

Because of its broad application, which ranges from questioning individual capacities to cope with stressors to interrogating the entire social-ecological systems upon which communities depend, the concept of resilience offers a window through which systemic change and adjustments over time can be studied (Mayer 2019; Hsu, et al., 2015). In addition, the resilience approach's emphasis on capabilities makes it a useful model to study recovery and reconstruction processes in communities that disproportionately suffer the impact of disasters due to historical and ex-ante vulnerability factors.

In applying the resilience approach alongside the concept of vulnerability in my study, I take cognizance of current debates about how these two concepts are linked. Manyena (2006, p. 443), for instance, realized that some scholars regard "disaster resilience and vulnerability as factors of each other, while others see them more as separate entities". More than a decade after

he made these observations, debates on whether resilience is an antonym of vulnerability or a factor of vulnerability still endure, prompting some scholars to come up with alternative descriptive models (Vázquez-González et al, 2021). A typical example of these alternative models is the "vulnerability-plus (V+) theory" that Zakour & Swager (2018, p. 45) recently formulated, which is premised on the argument that "disaster vulnerability and resilience perspectives are complementary rather than being unrelated or competing approaches." The V+ notion is, therefore, an attempt to demonstrate how two perspectives can be integrated. My intention in this thesis is not to add to the theoretical confusion and complexities around linking vulnerability to resilience. Instead, I investigate the extent to which support systems provided by the state and NGOs to communities affected by tropical cyclone Idai facilitated the recovery of survivors, and how these support systems addressed the factors responsible for causing the disaster. In pursuing this agenda, I depend on Jerollman's (2019, p. 11) argument that, "truly resilient recovery must effectively mobilize community resources and capabilities, increasing access to resources and seeking wellness as the desired outcome". This dissertation, therefore, draws upon literature on the role of the state and NGOs in disaster management and that demonstrate how individuals and communities exercise agency during, and in the aftermath of disaster. I articulate these topics further in the sections that follow.

1.6 Disasters and State Authoritarianism

As the field of disaster research continues to grow, gaining theoretical propositions and analytical tools from the resilience paradigm and the other approaches discussed before, scholars have become increasingly interested in documenting the link between disasters and the political culture and structures of the state. Citing several scholars, Mullick & Das (2014, p. 390) put forward the argument that, "disaster can transform political consciousness, dissolve power

arrangements, create political solidarity, activism, new agendas and may develop new power relations." From this assumption, anthropologists have increasingly become interested in understanding how disaster governance unfolds within different political regimes, particularly, within authoritarian states (e.g., Desportes & Hilhorst 2020). Such inquiries have been premised on two main pathways: the first being an interrogation of the extent to which state authoritarianism contributes to the production of vulnerability (Desportes & Hilhorst 2020), while the second focuses on generating evidence on how disasters reproduce state authoritarianism (Barrios 2017). For the purposes of this thesis, I adopt the following definition of state authoritarianism, as formulated by Parker & Towler (2019, p. 504):

> a regime type in which the power to govern is concentrated in a single party or run by a single figure … [and] characterized by, among other things, weakened institutions, the unregulated use of executive power, repression, and patronage with its concomitant loyalty to the ruler or ruling party.

My research approaches the domain of state authoritarianism from two axes, namely, the *causal sphere,* which focuses on how state authoritarianism contributes to disaster vulnerability and the *aftermath sphere*, which looks at how disaster aftermath exposes and perpetuates state authoritarianism.

I use the analytical concept of disaster authoritarianism to unpack the ways in which the state is implicated within these two spheres. This concept is closely related to what Klein (2017) calls "disaster capitalism" in her critique of neoliberal disaster responses. Based on her investigations of how disaster responses were rolled out when the US federal government entrusted much of the disaster recovery processes to the private sector in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Klein argues that neoliberalism has given rise to a disaster-capitalism complex in which disasters are socially produced and reproduced for corporate and elite gain. Klein (2017, p. 413) laments how contractors who had been hired to implement

different reconstruction projects avoided hiring local people, and how the survivors "were

expected to watch as contractors created an economic boom based on easy taxpayer money and

relaxed regulations." My use of the term disaster authoritarianism shifts the focus to how the

state seeks to reproduce its authority in the aftermath of disaster, and the relations of power that

emerge as the state interacts with survivors and other actors in disaster response processes.

In developing the concept of disaster authoritarianism further, my analysis is not only

limited to the state, but I also lean on Cleary's (1997) work, which implicates the structures and

actions of non-state actors in aiding state authoritarianism. I critically examine how the activities

and structures of NGOs operating in Chimanimani have legitimized state authoritarianism in the

aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai. Desportes & Hilhorst (2020) contribute to this form of

interrogation though their approach did not consider the two spheres. From their work in what

they term low-intensity conflict[1] countries, including Ethiopia, Myanmar, and Zimbabwe, the

pair analyzed power framings in disaster governance involving the state and non-state actors.

Their study focused on the aftermath sphere following the 2016 drought disaster in Ethiopia, the

2015 floods in Myanmar, and the droughts and protests that hit Zimbabwe between 2016 and

2019. They found that the authoritarian regimes in the three countries deployed everyday modes

of control, including bureaucracy, information management, and instilled a culture of uncertainty

and fear to influence disaster responses. In addition to creating a culture of distrust, Desportes &

Hilhorst (2020) also found that the strong and opaque government structures that characterized

these everyday modes of control contributed to the production of restrictive and uncertain

regulations, which hampered the operations of non-state disaster responders. These findings are

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[1] Low-intensity conflict (LIC) is a political-military confrontation between contending states or groups below conventional war and above the routine, peaceful competition. It ranges from subversion to the use of armed force. Low intensity conflicts are often localized, and often waged by a combination of means, employing political, economic, informational, and military instruments (Chaudhury et al. 2005, p. 69).

buttressed by Tierney & Oliver-Smith's (2012) and Gill's (2000) observations that the work of NGOs and other non-state actors is largely perceived as threatening the hegemony of the ruling authority in authoritarian states. Similar to Desportes & Hilhorst's (2020) aftermath sphere-centered approach, Zhang (2016) drew upon the case of disaster reconstruction of Southern Honduras after Hurricane Mitch to discuss how politicians created a clientelist culture by using state resources as gifts to secure political power.

Apart from these studies, very little attention has been directed towards analyzing state authoritarianism from the perspective of vulnerability construction and disaster response. Existing studies have generated evidence of state authoritarianism in one sphere (either the causal sphere or the aftermath sphere) while hiding the other. The analytical framework that this thesis adopts aims to close this gap. By attending to both the causal sphere and the aftermath sphere, within the trope of disaster authoritarianism, my research seeks to provide a holistic and alternative way of deriving and ascribing meaning to the theory of state authoritarianism in the context of disaster management. In addition to analyzing the role of the state, I am also interested in understanding the ways in which non-state actors, and especially NGOs, become entangled in the lives of disaster survivors, a subject that I now turn to below.

1.7 The Role of NGOs in Disaster Management

The proliferation of NGOs, at least in the Global South, is linked to the drive toward the global neoliberalism which started during the early 1980s and which was promoted by the Bretton Woods Institutions – the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Saad-Filho & Johnston 2005). The neoliberal agenda emphasized economic growth based on prescriptive structural adjustment programs, which entailed a combination of "deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of provision" (Wacquant 2012, p. 69). As states

withdrew from driving the social development sector, NGOs became increasingly important channels for donor funding (Knodel 2021; Rutherford 2004; Hilhorst 2003; Gill 2000). Tied to the proliferation of the NGOs movement, a lot of ground has been covered with respect to academic scholarship on the category of NGOs, traversing many disciplines, including development studies, development anthropology (and its sub-discipline, the anthropology of NGOs), peasant studies, and sociology, to mention a few. Academic projects have focused on diverse themes, ranging from the definitional contestations around the category of NGOs (Lewis & Schuller 2017; Hilhorst 2003), NGO structures and functions (Lu et al 2021; Knodel 2021; Sampson 2017), political and cultural spaces that they occupy (Lewis & Schuller 2017; Bornstein 2003 & 2017; Fassin 2012), NGO cultures and practices (Desportes & Moyo-Nyoni 2021; Mertz & Timmer 2010; Vannier 2010; Gill 2000), to NGO collaborations and coordination in disaster response processes (Nyahunda et al. 2022; Lu et al., 2021; Rouhi et al., 2019).

Of interest to this thesis is an investigation of how NGO structures, cultures and practices influence their involvement in disaster emergency response, recovery, and reconstruction processes. Specifically, I draw upon the evidence from my fieldwork in Chimanimani to answer two questions: first, how does the support offered by NGOs in the aftermath of disaster reflect their institutional cultures and underlying assumptions about what survivors need?; and second, what forms of collaborations and alliances emerge as NGOs work alongside state agencies to implement disaster emergency response, recovery and reconstruction activities within an authoritarian context? These two questions emerge from a backdrop of contemporary debates about the role that NGOs play in disaster response, the challenges that they face and how their role shapes or is shaped by the perceptions of other providers of disaster aid and the affected communities. There is enough evidence pointing to the commitment of NGOs to achieve their

moral obligation of doing good in disaster response contexts (Borstein 2017; Sampson 2017; Fassin 2012). The quest by NGOs towards achieving this moral obligation manifest in their involvement in sourcing and distributing relief aid, participating in rescue operations, arranging temporary shelters for the displaced, and providing medical and psychosocial support as well as supporting recovery and reconstruction activities (Park & Yoon 2022; Lu et al 2021).

Nonetheless, as they endeavour to fulfill the obligation of doing good, NGOs have been confronted with various institutional and operational challenges that at times compromise their delivery of humanitarian assistance. Commonly cited challenges include the lack of adequate financial resources, ineffective coordination systems, little training or professional experience in disaster management, and duplication of services (Nyahunda et al. 2022; Lu et al., 2021; Rouhi et al., 2019). From their recent study of the role of NGOs in disaster management and governance in South Korea and Japan, Park & Yoon (2022, p. 10), for instance, locate the challenges that NGOs face within three domains, namely, "financial unsustainability, lack of high-quality human resources, lack of legitimacy, and conflicts among [the] NGOs". Lu et al. (2021, p. 2690) contend that due to these shortcomings, NGOs' involvement "can result in secondary damage that can add to rather than relieve the problems being faced by the [survivors]."

Nyahunda et al. (2022), Desportes & Moyo-Nyoni (2021), Desportes & Hilhorst (2020), and Borstein (2017) go further to contextualize and discuss the challenges that NGOs face while operating in authoritarian governance systems. Specifically, Borstein (2017, p. 184) laments that even though NGOs operating within authoritarian contexts seem to "inhabit highly moralized zones that at times may appear immune to critique," they suffer insurmountable political bottlenecks that curtail their operations, including being labeled foreign agents. Borstein cites the

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examples of India and Russia where new laws were formulated to restrict NGO funding and their

political engagement and to intensify state surveillance of their operations. Gill (2000) writes

about similar antagonistic relations between the state and NGOs in Bolivia during the period of

military rule under the reign of Hugo Banzer (1971–1978) and during President Jaime Paz

Zamora's administration (1989–1993). NGOs and church-affiliated organizations that led

education and consciousness raising under the Banzer regime were often harassed by the military

and labeled "subversive" (Gill 2000, p. 139). Under the Zamora administration, Gill further

notes, NGOs critical of the state and those controlled by rival political parties were perceived as

threatening, which led the state to establish "a national NGO registry and a sub secretariat" to

coordinate and control their activities (pp. 152-153). In the context of Zimbabwe, the state had

always held an ambivalence stance towards the NGOs, and of note are the longstanding

accusations that NGOs are emissaries of regime change being funded by unfriendly Western

countries to destabilize the country (Kabonga & Zvokuomba 2021; Moore & Moyo 2018;

Sachikonye 2011). Subsequently, the state has over the years put in place strict measures

(including the requirement to submit operational plans and reports to the state) to regulate the

operations of NGOs. Nyahunda et al. (2022) note that these hostile NGOs-state relations

manifested in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai in Chimanimani. From the interviews that

the researchers conducted with NGOs in the district, they were told that NGOs could not easily

get access to the affected communities due to strict regulations that had been imposed by the

state. The rigorous vetting process, they learned, "brewed some confusion and delays in the

execution of efforts that were meant for disaster recovery and restoration" (Nyahunda et al. 2022,

p. 5). In addition, by relying much on the security sector, the institutional disaster response

architecture of the Zimbabwean state did not only impede the recognition and acknowledgement

of NGOs, but also weakened the latter's role in providing support to survivors of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster (Nyahunda et al. 2022; Chari et al. 2021). These concerns form the primary subjects of discussion in Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis.

Desportes & Moyo-Nyoni (2021) discuss the depoliticization tactics that NGOs have employed to continue to deliver the good work in the context of state authoritarianism. The term depoliticization has its roots in political theory and is construed as "strategies employed by various social actors to either open up or close down the appearance of an issue as being political" (Feindt et al. 2021, p. 512). Ferguson (1994) adopts the concept of depoliticization in his investigation of projects implemented by development agencies in Lesotho. Based on a detailed case study of a development project in the country, Ferguson argues that by suspending "politics even from the most sensitive political operations", development apparatuses in Lesotho became strategically instrumentalized, forming what he calls "the anti-politics machine" (p. 256). The development projects became instruments that the state could deploy to accomplish strategic political goals, including, "the expansion of institutional state power" (Ferguson 1994, p. 256). Desportes & Moyo-Nyoni (2021) demonstrate the ways in which depoliticization offers a framework to understand the institutional structures, systems, and processes that NGOs operating in politically volatile contexts need to put in place to neutralize state hostility and gain legitimacy. Along these lines, this thesis uses the example of a local NGO, NJIVA Trust to demonstrate the depoliticization strategies that NGOs that responded to the tropical cyclone Idai disaster in Chimanimani adopted to circumvent the restrictive measures put in place by the state. It also looks at the implications of these strategies on the agency of survivors. I will elaborate on this topic in Chapter 5. In the meantime, I proceed to discuss the notion of survivor agency, which is one of the key analytical domains for this research project.

1.8 Disaster Aftermath and the Concept of Survivor Agency

I employ the concept of survivor agency in this thesis as an analytical framework to understand the socio-cultural aspects of disaster response, and more importantly, the perceptions of survivors towards the involvement of the state and NGOs. In the context of disasters, Jerolleman (2019, pp. 45-46) defines survivor agency as "an individual's full control over one's actions, including control over the determination of the purpose of the actions and the degree of effort to be expended." Jerolleman (2019, p. 46) notes that survivor agency is about individuals' ability to participate in public spheres and to be able to take appropriate actions to reduce future risks. In addition, Jerolleman points that collective solidarity and mutuality are important ways through which survivors can exercise agency during disasters. This position is supported by Browne et al. (2020 p. 297) who believe that supporting the agency of local people "enhance(s) a form of resilience that is collective, enduring, and sustainable." Jerolleman is, however, concerned about state disaster response policies and programs as well as NGO interventions that lead to the loss of agency. She maintains that inequitable access to resources and programs can eliminate solidarity and mutuality among survivors by creating a corrosive environment in which families are set to fight each other and fail to work together for sustainable recovery. Limitations upon survivor agency, Jerolleman (2019, p. 52) argues, "prevent, and eliminate the possibility that adaptive capacity can be harnessed for risk reduction." The concept of survivor agency, therefore, allows for an in-depth and multi-scalar interrogation of how disaster response policies and programs of external agencies impact the survivors' capacity to exercise agency.

In exploring the concept of survivor agency, I also anchor my analysis on the idea of indigeneity, which I believe is of much utility in understanding survivors' behaviour and attitudes in the context of disaster aftermath. I adopt Li's (2010, p. 384) definition of indigeneity

as "the permanent attachment of a group of people to a fixed area of land in a way that marks them as culturally distinct." Specifically, evoking the concept of indigeneity alongside survivor agency will help to answer the research question: What perceptions do survivors of tropical cyclone Idai in Chimanimani hold about the role of humanitarian agencies and the state, and how do these perceptions influence their involvement in disaster response processes? The relevance of the concept of indigeneity in responding to this question is that it helps to explain the local construction of meaning about the tropical cyclone Idai disaster in Chimanimani. As Bongo et al. (2013, p. 1) argue, each society has "its own unique and localized way of interpreting disaster, which comes in the form of a "script", that needs to be deciphered, read, analyzed, and understood within local priorities and knowledge systems." These authors' understanding of the link between disasters and culture draws us to the task of revealing the varied interpretations that survivors ascribed to the tropical cyclone Idai in Chimanimani. Furthermore, the concept of indigeneity provides an analytical basis upon which the extent to which disaster response interventions implemented by the state and NGOs addressed the ethical or moral expectations of communities affected by tropical cyclone Idai can be densely explored.

To further diagnose the issues of ethical disaster response and moral expectations, I use the concept of moral economy provided by Thompson (1971). For Thompson, the notion of moral economy implies "the cultural values, attitudes, norms, and obligations, agreed through popular consensus, that is legitimized by society as the proper functions of individual parties within the community" (p. 79). He invoked this concept to explain the rebellions and food riots of eighteenth-century England. Thompson argued that the riots were triggered by the deviation of millers, marketers, and bankers from the moral assumptions of legitimate practices expected by

society. Notwithstanding the distant time and space that Thompson's work is situated, the notion of moral economy is still as useful as ever, more specifically, in the context of disaster research.

In the publication – *A House of One's Own: The Moral Economy of Post-Disaster Aid in El Salvador*, the anthropologist Sliwinski (2018) mobilizes the concept of moral economy to examine power relations, modes of humanitarianism and issues of morality that emerged when NGOs provided relief and reconstruction support following the January 2001 earthquake in El Salvador. Sliwinski investigated the lived experiences of 50 disaster-stricken families who interacted with humanitarian aid agencies in Lamaria after this catastrophic event. Specifically, she looked at the different gestures of the various actors who were engaged during the recovery and reconstruction process, including those "on the side that provided aid [and] on the side that received it" (p. 4). By analyzing the collaborations, frictions, and ambivalent relations that surfaced, her research concluded that "different moral economies may very well coexist" in disaster response processes (Sliwinski 2018, p. 204). For Maldonado (2016, p. 57), this coexistence arises from the fact that disaster reconstruction occurs "within cultural webs where moral economies are given and articulated along inadvertent or even overtly racist, classist, sexist, and ethnocentric lines." Maldonado (2016, p. 57) cites the example of the recovery planning process on the US Gulf coast post–Hurricane Katrina, which according to her, "received awards for being participatory, yet residents did not have veto power."

Guided by the texts above, this thesis investigates the various moral economies that surfaced when the state and NGOs interacted with survivors in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai in Chimanimani. It reveals how, in one way or another, the tensions, agreements, contradictions, and entanglements that arose contributed to creating opportunities that enabled the state to expand and reinforce its authoritarian power. Besides its immense theoretical

contribution to the anthropology of disasters, this research also has practical social relevance, which I articulate in the next section.

1.9 Social Relevance/Practical Importance of the Research

In his 1975 seminal publication, *The "Xhosa" in Town, Revisited Urban Social Anthropology: A Failure of Method and Theory,* Magubane wrote:

> The vast array of concepts that have been used by social anthropologists of change, as well as being tools to describe objective reality, are concepts emerging directly from the investigator's concern with what he considers acceptable moral and social trends produced by the colonial situation; that is, the social anthropologist of change often uses "subjective" judgment when he selects what concepts and words to use to describe colonized subjects (Magubane 1975 p. 1709).

His was a critique of how principles, values and theories brought by Western anthropologists shaped their understanding of the socio-cultural context of the "other." Boswell (2015) further argues that the fact that "the discipline is still dominated by people of European descent, many of whom received their training in Europe, the United States, or Canada … encourages the propagation of theories and analytical paradigms drawn from these contexts (and not others)" (p. 761). Other advocates of scholarship decolonization are concerned that although almost half a century has passed since critical voices like Magubane started to challenge the colonial production of knowledge, contemporary anthropological scholarship of Southern Africa is still dominated by western academics who travel to study local communities and cultures (Williams 2018). My project, therefore, comes at the most appropriate moment when calls for knowledge decolonization are becoming louder. Through approaching the fieldwork as a native ethnographer, this research contributes valuable and organic perspectives, which draws upon my rootedness in the cultures and context within which the anthropological knowledge has been produced.

Crucially, since the tropical cyclone Idai disaster is a relatively recent phenomenon, and no disaster of such intensity has been experienced in the modern history of Zimbabwe, there is still a small but growing literature that reports on the efficacy of disaster response processes. Nonetheless, the literature is still much focused on stating and describing the specific forms of humanitarian assistance that affected households received from the state and NGOs. Such simplistic presentation masks innate issues that could have influenced the disaster response processes, and which need to be accounted for to improve future disaster management. Rather than merely looking at questions like "what has been the impact of the tropical cyclone?" or "what has been done and by whom?" which have been the focus of many recent studies, my research looks at how responses to the disaster have been coordinated, the structures of power that the disaster has revealed, and the perceptions that shaped the interaction of various players involved in the disaster aftermath.

Such a holistic approach enables this research to address policy issues. The fate of tropical cyclone Idai survivors has become a major subject of debate among policymakers and social justice promoters in Zimbabwe. Some decry the slow pace with which the state and other stakeholders have implemented post-Idai emergency, recovery, and reconstruction initiatives (Nyahunda et al., 2022; Munsaka et al., 2021). Others blame the survivors for the tragedy that befell them (ZimEye 2019). And some blame the cyclone itself for not following a trajectory that could have allowed communities and responders to adequately prepare (Dube et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2019). The thesis goes beyond these views by shedding light on factors that hinder effective disaster response and suggesting approaches that can be adopted to ensure that the interventions of external disaster responders are responsive to the needs of affected communities. These issues

are articulated in the Concluding Chapter of the thesis. Below I provide an overview of how the thesis is organized.

1.10   Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 2 presents the ethnographic techniques that I employed to gather data for this research. By their nature, disasters cause internal displacements, facilitate the establishment of new temporary and permanent settlements, and call upon players from varied geographical locations to attend to the site of devastation (Quinn et al. 2020; Hoffman & Barrios 2020; Oliver-Smith 2016). An in-depth understanding of disaster response cannot, therefore, be achieved by only concentrating on the actual site of disaster impact. Rather, the most appropriate approach is to bring together all the key elements, including spaces, places, and stakeholders, into the center of analysis. Along these lines, I employed a multi-sited ethnographic approach to generate a broad, yet deep and inclusive, understanding of the ways that the state, NGOs, and survivors interacted in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai. I spent 14 months, from November 2020 to December 2021, working as a volunteer for a small NGO, NJIVA Trust, based in Chimanimani. During this period, I visited communities that had been directly affected by the tropical cyclone, engaged with the employees of the NJIVA Trust and other NGOs operating in Chimanimani, met families sheltered in temporary camps after they had been displaced by the tropical cyclone, and visited and talked to families around Runyararo Village, a new settlement where a housing scheme was initiated by the state to permanently move the displaced families. The part of Chimanimani district where this research took place is mostly inhabited by the Ndau sub-group of the Shona speaking Zimbabwean society. I also spent time in Mutare where I interacted with NGOs that were operating in Chimanimani but had their offices in the city. Mutare is the main city of Manicaland, the province that houses the Chimanimani district, and it is located about 143 Km to

the north of the district. Because of relatively better services, including internet access, banking and electricity supply, many NGOs operating in the Manicaland province have their main offices in Mutare.

Chapter 3 uses a political ecology approach to link the destructive impact of tropical cyclone Idai to the historical production of vulnerability in Zimbabwe. Specifically, the chapter implicates colonial strategies of capital accumulation, including land dispossessions, and ineffective postcolonial redistributive policies, to the destructive impact of tropical cyclone Idai in Chimanimani. Linked to the colonial and postcolonial discourses, the chapter investigates how the vulnerability of communities in Chimanimani was ideologically and politically constructed through the adoption of neoliberal policies as well as the FTLRP. The Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) that the country adopted in the 1990s resulted in widespread job losses, forcing many people to desert urban life and return to the already overpopulated communal areas for farming. The pressure for land has forced many families to occupy dangerous locations, which put them in harm's way. The FTLRP that the state implemented since the early 2000s failed to address these challenges, instead, high levels of corruption and political elitism widened the inequality gap, thereby reproducing and exacerbating the vulnerability of communities in the rural areas. The chapter also looks at how the increased production and marketization of high-value fruits, especially bananas, further expose communities occupying fragile areas in some parts of Chimanimani to hydrometeorological hazards, including floods, landslides, and cyclone storms. Overall, the chapter allows us to understand how pre-existing inequalities in the distribution of vulnerabilities created the conditions that facilitate disaster authoritarianism in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai.

In **Chapter 4**, I build on the evidence from Chimanimani to develop the concept of disaster authoritarianism. The chapter aims to show how the post-Idai context provided opportunities for the state to mobilize and deploy disaster response resources in a way that favoured the ruling party and further asserted the state's authoritarian control over citizens and NGOs. To achieve this aim, I first describe the disaster management institutional framework for Zimbabwe and explain how it was deployed in response to the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. The disaster management framework, which is administered by the Department of Civil Protection, under the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works & National Housing (hereinafter referred to as Ministry of Local Government – MLG) was not designed to address pre-existing conditions of vulnerability, but rather to administer relief and recovery aid after a catastrophic event. The state has a history of using humanitarian aid as a vehicle for consolidating authoritarian power. Additionally, the institutional framework centralizes disaster response responsibilities and resources, thereby creating a long chain of bureaucracy, which leads to delays in reaching out to affected communities and facilitates the politicization of disaster aid. Lastly, the chapter discusses the tools and methods that the state deployed in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai to reinforce authoritarianism, including the involvement of senior politicians from the ruling party and security forces during the distribution of aid.

Chapter 5 focuses on NGOs and how they navigated state authoritarianism during the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai. The chapter starts by describing the ambivalent relations that existed between the state and NGOs before the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. The major defining moments include the decade beginning in 2000 when NGOs, just like western researchers, were accused of siding with the opposition movement. I draw upon the example of my host organization, NJIVA Trust, to show how NGOs operate and legitimize their work within hostile

political environments through the process of depoliticization (Desportes & Moyo-Nyoni 2021; Ferguson 1994). Using NJIVA Trust as the main locus of analysis, the chapter then proceeds by looking at the forms of support that the NGOs provided to survivors of the disaster and the nature of relations that emerged as various types and sizes of NGOs interacted in the post-Idai arena. The chapter also demonstrates that by filling the gaps created by the state's lack of capacity to deal with the disaster, NGOs were seen by the state as allies. Yet, the example of NJIVA Trust and other NGOs also shows how the latter can be regarded as rivals whenever their activities seemed to deviate from the expectations of the state. As the chapter will show, the depoliticization approaches that NGOs employed directly and indirectly contributed to reinforcing state authoritarianism.

Chapter 6 draws the reader's attention to the survivors of the tropical cyclone. It looks at the perceptions that survivors had towards the disaster and the relief and reconstruction support provided by the state and NGOs that followed. The chapter invokes the concepts of indigeneity and moral economy to reveal how local construction of meaning about the tropical cyclone Idai disasters shaped communities' perceptions of the support provided by external agencies. I argue that state and NGO-led disaster relief interventions diminished survivor agency. Inequalities in the distribution of disaster aid benefits generated individualized responses from the survivors, which included complaints, resentment, non-compliance among some survivors, and opportunism among others. Consequently, the potential for individual and collective mobilization among survivors to significantly contest or reconfigure the state and NGO interventions was limited.

I wrap up the thesis with a concluding **Chapter 7,** which summarizes the main takeaway messages based on the evidence presented in the rest of the other chapters. The conclusion also

discusses the policy implications of the research and guides the reader to gaps, themes and topics that warrant further investigation.

Chapter 2   Methodology

2.1 Sketching the Field – Motivating the Research

> "Do you know that you can conduct an interesting ethnography of the cyclone Idai disaster for your PhD dissertation?"

The question above was directed to me by Professor Peters, a Senior Lecturer in International Development at the University of Edinburgh, when we were together at a workshop hosted by NJIVA Trust at the Bronte Hotel in Harare, Zimbabwe from the 3rd to the 4th of July 2019. The purpose of the workshop was to plan for multi-disciplinary research that the NGO was going to launch in Chimanimani to interrogate the causes and impacts of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. I had hinted to Professor Peters that I was finalizing my PhD proposal and making plans to travel to South Africa where I was going to study the living and working conditions of undocumented Zimbabwean migrants working on the border farms of Limpopo province. Although the suggestion by Professor Peters of conducting an ethnography of tropical cyclone Idai's aftermath lingered in my mind throughout the workshop, it did not occur to me at the time that I would eventually pursue this direction of research – neither did I envisage spending the 14 months of my fieldwork working for NJIVA Trust as a full-time volunteer.

I was born and raised in Chimanimani, thus umbilically attached to the cultures, concerns, tribulations, and all other dimensions of that society. The news about the devastating tropical cyclone Idai, which made waves on social media platforms and news channels across the world on the morning of the 15th of March in 2019, reached me when I was in the middle of preparing my reading list and writing my comprehensive exams – all oriented towards migration and agricultural labour in South Africa. Nonetheless, hearing about familiar places and people who had been directly affected by the disaster did not only unsettle me, but also propelled me to think of ways that I could contribute to the emergency response, recovery, and reconstruction

efforts. Since my ability to contribute financially was limited, I felt that the best way I could assist was by offering my skills to agencies that were already responding to the post-Idai situation. Hence, before travelling to Zimbabwe for a three-month break in June 2019, I emailed the Executive Director of NJIVA Trust and asked if I could volunteer my time and contribute to the organization's disaster response activities in Chimanimani. NJIVA Trust is a local NGO based in Chimanimani, which focuses on empowering rural communities to engage in sustainable and profitable agriculture based on proper natural resource management in the district. I had worked with this NGO when I was still an active development practitioner in Zimbabwe before embarking on my PhD journey. As such, I had a good appreciation of NJIVA Trust's work. In 2015, for instance, I supported the NGO to secure funding from the German Embassy for the rehabilitation of infrastructure at two schools in the district. Due to its strategic positioning as a Chimanimani-based NGO, I was sure of NJIVA Trust's potential role in spearheading disaster relief, recovery, and reconstruction actions in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai.

Following a thread of emails with the NGO's Executive Director, Mr. Brian Moyo, I received an invitation to participate in a research planning meeting that was to be held in Harare in July 2019. NJIVA Trust was leading a multidisciplinary study in collaboration with donors, local and international research institutions, and individuals, to analyse the impact of tropical cyclone Idai, identify multiple causes of the disaster and recommend options for mitigation, adaptation, and emergency response in case of potential future tropical cyclones of a similar nature in Chimanimani. The need for the research emanated from internal discussions within NJIVA Trust and recommendations provided by its funding partners and individual experts. The research project was important to NJIVA Trust because, as a hands-on and farmer empowerment

organization, the NGO would use the findings to come up with appropriate strategies and programs to address the needs of families that had been impacted by the tropical cyclone. The two-day planning meeting in July 2019, therefore, brought together scholars from universities based in Zimbabwe, South Africa and the UK, donor agencies, local government officials as well as individual experts to develop a common understanding of the scope of the research, which included identifying thematic areas to be covered, and agreeing on roles and the methodological approach to be adopted. Six thematic areas of focus for the research were agreed upon – *Humanitarian impact; Climate change & environment; Agro-ecology; Political economy, livelihoods and governance; Topography, infrastructure and settlement; and Disaster risk reduction, recovery & management* – and the participants were going to form research teams covering all the six themes depending on qualifications (NJIVA Trust 2020). Based on my previous experience coordinating humanitarian activities in the Chimanimani district, I joined the first theme of *Humanitarian Impact*. Methodologically, a common data collection questionnaire was going to be developed, which would allow for the collection of data across all the themes. NJIVA Trust intended this to be a short-term research project.

The idea of an ethnographic approach premised on extended fieldwork with cyclone survivors and response efforts were ruled out by the research team from the start. The study aimed to collect quantitative and qualitative data and generate recommendations upon which NJIVA Trust's immediate disaster response interventions could be developed. In addition, the findings were expected to inform the short-term and long-term funding priorities of donors supporting the research initiative. At the same time, academics present during the planning meeting, mostly from the disciplines of geography, agricultures, public health, development studies, and sociology, were interested in quickly traversing the post-Idai field while it was still

fresh and adopting the research findings for publications in scholarly journals – indeed, just under a year after the research was done, a surmountable number of journal articles had been published by academics who were involved in the research. Because of the timing, I felt I could not contribute much to the actual fieldwork for the research as I was already preparing to come back to Canada for the Fall Semester, hence I offered to help with developing and reviewing the data collection tool. I was also concerned about the research design which was largely quantitative and made little effort to closely engage with the survivors and communities afflicted by the disaster.

It is when we were discussing the methodological deficiencies in the research that NJIVA Trust had initiated, and the advantages that an anthropological approach could offer in understanding the post-disaster situation in Chimanimani, that Professor Peters posed the suggestive question to me, quoted at the opening of this chapter. On the same day of the discussion, I found myself scribbling, on a piece of white paper, a sketch of what has metamorphosized into the title of this dissertation, which is *"Disaster Authoritarianism: An Ethnography of State and NGO Responses in the Aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Idai in Chimanimani District, Zimbabwe."* I had no idea, however, that my hotel room notes would become a topic for my PhD thesis since I was already at an advanced stage with plans to do my research in South Africa at the time of my pre-fieldwork visit to Zimbabwe.

Thus, my PhD research ended up being entirely different from what I had initially proposed for my dissertation. As stated earlier, my original plan was to conduct an ethnography of a group of Zimbabwean migrant farmworkers in the Limpopo province of South Africa. I wanted to understand their relationship with humanitarian agencies that were providing them with social services. Specifically, that proposed research aimed at identifying the obstacles that

external agencies confronted in their attempts to assist undocumented Zimbabwean migrant farmworkers, and the barriers that the farmworkers themselves faced in their quest to access essential social services. At the time of the pre-fieldwork visit to Zimbabwe, I was already in the process of applying for a research visa from the South African High Commission in Ottawa. So even though Professor Peters's question during the research group planning workshop was suggestive that I could do an ethnography of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster, I never thought that I was going to change the focus of my research until I came back to Canada during the summer of the same year. As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to wreak havoc across the world, it increasingly became very difficult for me to obtain the research visa application for South Africa[2]. South Africa had closed its borders to visitors, which further complicated my situation. Towards the end of July 2020, I reflected on the tea break discussion that I had with Professor Peters about doing an ethnography of tropical cyclone Idai, and scanned through the hotel room notes that I had jotted down in the evening following the research planning meeting deliberations, and decided that instead of conducting my PhD research in South Africa, I could still investigate issues of humanitarianism and service provision, but now in the context of disaster response. So, I shifted the site of my research to the post-Idai Chimanimani district in Zimbabwe. Although Zimbabwe had also imposed COVID-19 travel restrictions, which included closing its national borders for international travelers, at least as a citizen I could enter the country without as many obstacles.

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[2] For instance, since I did my Master of Arts degree at Brandeis University in the USA, I was required to obtain a clearance letter from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which I had to send together with the other required documents to the South African High Commission in Ottawa. For me to get that FBI clearance, I was supposed to submit paper fingerprints by courier, but all fingerprinting facilities in St John's had been suspended in compliance with physical and social distance protocols to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus

2.2 Positionality: Negotiating Access with NJIVA Trust, Other NGOs and the State

The overarching goal of my research was to bring to the fore, and from an ethnographic

perspective, the day-to-day entanglements and contestations that manifested as survivors of

tropical cyclone Idai in Chimanimani interacted with providers of emergency relief, recovery and

reconstruction assistance, specifically, state agencies, and NGOs. By pursuing this line of

interrogation my research sought to make theoretical contributions to the study of disasters and

to generate practical recommendations to guide the development of holistic, inclusive and

disaster policies that consider the socio-cultural context within which the disasters occur. As

such, I decided to immerse myself in an organization that was already working with and

supporting tropical cyclone Idai survivors. At the time of developing the research proposal, I was

aware of many NGOs that were providing humanitarian assistance to the survivors, and I could

have approached and asked them for a volunteer position. Also, since my research was

concerned with studying state and NGO interventions, I could have approached state agencies

operating in the district, but the process of applying for a volunteer position within government

departments was going to be long. Pursuing these possible options was going to be taxing in

terms of time and building relations. Therefore, since I had known NJIVA Trust and its

operations in Chimanimani for some time, I felt that there was no need to tread into uncharted

waters, which could either frustratingly be long or head into brick walls.

Negotiating with NJIVA Trust

I utilized the cordial relations that I had already established with Mr. Moyo, the Executive

Director, to negotiate a volunteer position for the duration of my fieldwork – from November

2020 to December 2021. He in turn was very excited to have me on board as he felt that my

expertise in managing development programs would add value to his organization. We agreed

that I would help to strengthen the work of the NJIVA Trust by providing technical support,

which included assisting in building the capacity of the NGO's employees in program

management through training, supporting fundraising initiatives (mainly through writing grant

proposals), and undertaking field monitoring visits to communities where the NGO was

implementing disaster response activities. I was also expected to contribute to the institutional

strengthening of the NJIVA Trust through reviewing existing internal policies and spearheading

the development of new internal policies and strategies, including a Child Safeguarding Policy

and an Advocacy and Communication Strategy. At the time of negotiating the volunteer position,

I only knew about the NGO's work as an outsider and was not completely familiar with its

internal processes. The volunteer opportunity was, therefore, going to help me acquire an in-

depth understanding of its operations while also allowing me to gain rapport with its employees.

I received the confirmation of acceptance to work as a volunteer at NJIVA Trust in August 2020.

Conducting research as a "native ethnographer"

I entered the field as a native ethnographer, that is, to study and write about my own native

country and cultural group (Meyers 2019; Narayan 1993). The concept of native ethnography,

now popularly referred to as insider anthropology, evolved as a curvature from the traditional

and oriental role of conventional anthropology, which mirrored the images of Western

anthropologists seeking "to study Others whose alien cultural worlds they must painstakingly

come to know" (Narayan 1993, p. 671). My interest to undertake the research within my own

cultural group thus emanated not only from the concerns that the dominance of Western

anthropologists in scholarly representations and discourses of native cultures often relegates

"natives to the mere status of informants or useful tools for gathering information" (Tsuda, 2015,

p. 14), but also from my conviction of the potential native anthropology holds in "reshaping the

power relations and politics surrounding the production of anthropological knowledge" (Uperesa 2010, p. 294).

My positionality as a native researcher was, therefore, important in two respects: Firstly, having grown up in the Chimanimani district, I am intimately linked to almost all the cultural aspects of the society. Although I was not present when tropical cyclone Idai made landfall in the district, I possess a broad and deep understanding of the socio-cultural context within which the disaster happened. I have familial ties with some of the households who lived in the villages that were directly impacted by the tropical cyclone. I was kept abreast of the destructive impact of the tropical cyclone, and state and NGO responses in its aftermath, by closely following the news and social media platforms as well as through regular updates from my family and friends. My rootedness in the district, as I have highlighted above, aroused in me the moral obligation to contribute in some way, toward post-Idai recovery and reconstruction initiatives. Hence, the PhD research became a conduit for me to reconnect with the community and engage survivors in defining pathways for reducing their vulnerability to future disasters of a similar nature.

Secondly, before I started pursuing my graduate studies, I had spent the bulk of my professional career working within the NGO sector in Zimbabwe. My motivation and passion for conducting my PhD research within an NGO setting, therefore, came out of my first-hand experience with the community challenges that development NGOs have to confront. I worked for Practical Action from 2004 to 2007, which is an international organization based in the United Kingdom (UK) and has its regional office for Southern Africa in Harare, Zimbabwe. My role involved coordinating community livelihood projects in the rural communities of Zimbabwe, including in Chimanimani. In 2010, I assumed the position of Project Coordinator at Africare (A US-based international organization which had a country office in Zimbabwe) where

I managed a disaster response project involving the provision of emergency humanitarian relief to drought-afflicted communities in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. The project was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). Through this project, I directly interacted with government agencies, and the donor and beneficiary communities, and provided technical support (including program management training) to the project team. Between 2010 and 2013, I worked for a local NGO which focused on research and advocacy, the Poverty Reduction Forum Trust (PRFT), based in Zimbabwe's capital, Harare. Specifically, my role involved coordinating research, policy analysis, stakeholder engagement and policy advocacy activities as well as organizing engagement meetings with government agencies and other NGOs at national, provincial, and community levels. My last job in the sector was with an international donor agency, the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), which is based in the UK and has a regional office in Harare. I was responsible for managing relations with local NGOs who were receiving CAFOD internal grants and those that were receiving funding from institutional donors like the European Union (EU) through CAFOD. Apart from strengthening the capacity of these NGOs in areas like project monitoring and evaluation, project design and management, and fundraising, I also offered accompaniment support to ensure that they complied with CAFOD requirements and those of the institutional donors. Hence, having spent more than a decade in the NGO sector I was deeply familiar with the culture of NGOs operating at various levels in Zimbabwe. The other facet of my native ethnographic approach, therefore, was that I entered the field as a native ethnographer within the cultural world of the NGOs.

I was conscious of some ethical considerations that I had to account for as a native ethnographer, which I will elaborate on later in the chapter. Nonetheless, my experience of

society's cultural fabrication, as well as personal reflexivity, allowed me to pursue the transformative autoethnographic research approach. Ellis et al. (2011, p. 273) define "autoethnography" as "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience". As scholars like Adams & Herrmann (2020), Reed-Danahay (2019) and Khosravi (2016) confirm, utilizing the autoethnographic approach does not only link one to the world of the participants, but it unearths additional meanings of cultural symbols which could have been hidden from a more foreign ethnographer. This approach, Ellis et al. (2011, p. 273) add, "challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act." Employing autoethnography, and in line with the texts above, allowed me to use my intuitive knowledge and experience of growing up, living, and working in Chimanimani to generate a dense description and interpretation of the cultural aspects associated with tropical cyclone Idai disaster response processes in the district.

Whenever I introduced myself to the research participants, especially to survivors of the disaster, and during meetings that involved the community, I always emphasized my rootedness in the community. Oftentimes, I started introducing myself by saying, "My name is Denboy Kudejira, I come from Chayamiti, Ward 6 ….", and then proceeded to introduce myself as a graduate student attending a University in Canada. Chayamiti is the community where I grew up and is Ward 6 of Chimanimani's 23 administrative wards (see Chapter 3). By first introducing the community that I come from, I assured the participants that I was of their own, thereby erasing any scepticism that they could have towards my research. This approach worked very well for me. My father's elder brother was a well-known Priest of a local Apostolic Church – *Jekenisheni*. Before his death in the early 2000s, he always hosted people from across the district

who came for healing or to attend church gatherings (*Magungano*). He also travelled across the district on his preaching and healing expeditions. In one instance, when I met and introduced myself to an old man in one of the communities, the question that came from him was, "are you related to Kudejira the famous prophet?" - then a warm conversation continued from there. In another case, when I introduced myself to Gogo[3] Chihera, who will feature in the chapters that follow, she told me that, at some point, she spent a week at my uncle's homestead with her daughter who was sick and was being treated. She even thanked me for the healing of her daughter as if I was the one who was responsible. As these two cases show, the autoethnography approach triggered moments of remembrance for some of the research participants, which connected me to their past, thereby helping in building rapport and trust.

While conducting my fieldwork as a native ethnographer in Chimanimani, I was aware of the elements that could negatively influence the reliability and validity of my findings, and I took every effort possible to eliminate these threats to validity. Specifically, I noted the challenges that Chawla (2006) encountered as a native ethnographer studying urban Indian women in Hindu arranged marriages. Chawla admitted that as a Hindu woman herself, she found it difficult to reveal insider secrets about arranged marriages, without being considerate of the community. "… I would be inadvertently insulting myself, because, after all, it was also my community", Chawla (2006, p. 14) says. In my case, there could have been some elements of the Shona society in Zimbabwe, and particularly the Ndau people, that I could have taken for granted as not very important to my analysis, and which could have been exposed by an outsider to the local culture. Nonetheless, although I had spent all my entire childhood, and part of my professional life living and working in Chimanimani, my moving to Canada in September 2018 was a major game

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[3] Gogo is a Shona term which means grandmother. However, it is also used to generally to refer to an elderly woman.

changer for me. During the first 3 years of my PhD program, I thoroughly engaged with the work of Western ethnographers whose work have focused on various aspects of the Zimbabwean society, including labour migration (Addison 2019; Bolt 2015; Van Onselen 1976), land reform (Rutherford 2017) and environmental management (Hughes 2003). Through engaging with these works, and after the exposure to anthropological theories during the period of my course work, I began to think critically about the Ndau society and started to question some of the cultural practices and processes that I unconsciously followed before I began my PhD journey. When I returned to Chimanimani in 2020, my thinking had, therefore, changed as I began to be critical about some aspects of the Ndau culture. Furthermore, the Chimanimani society dramatically changed because of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. New settlements had been created, including the displacement camps and the Runyararo Village, and there were new social structures following the flooding of UN agencies and NGOs who came to provide humanitarian assistance to survivors. These developments made the post-Idai arena an unfamiliar field to me though I still held a strong cultural attachment to the society. Subsequently, my analysis of the post-Idai responses was informed by what I knew about the community, the social and physical changes induced by Idai, and the insights that I obtained from reviewing the work of Western ethnographers.

I used both Shona and English during interviews with the participants. The literacy level in Chimanimani is fairly high, and while the predominant language is Shona (Ndau dialect), people often use a mix of Shona and English in day-to-day conversations – what linguists call code-mixing or code-switching (Bhatia & Ritchie 2016; Veit-Wild 2009). The code-switching in Zimbabwe is mostly attributed to the legacy of British colonialism when English was used as a medium of communication between white employers and their black employees (Bernsten 1994).

Today, it is still mandatory to learn the English language in schools, which remains the official transacting language in the country. Thus, even though the interviews, especially with the survivors of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster, were predominantly in Shona, the conversations always incorporated English terms and statements. Likewise, while the interviews that I conducted with NGO employees and state officials were in English, Shona statements and terms always popped out, especially when the participants wanted to emphasize certain points.

Broadly, my positionality as a native ethnographer allowed me to situate and approach this research from a "vernacular values" perspective (Illich 1980, p. 47). Illich derives the definition of the term "vernacular" from its Latin origins, which means "the language that we have acquired without paid teachers." The author further designates "vernacular values" as any homebred and homemade values that are derived from the commons, which shape people's everyday lives, and which cannot be obtained through exchange on the formal market (Illich 1980, p.61). The author further decries how, through the process of colonialism, the vernacular has progressively been degraded and replaced by taught elite languages as the medium of exchange and knowledge production. My approach as a native ethnographer is to contribute towards the debate around decolonizing knowledge production. Situating my research within the vernacular domain allowed me to fully embed myself in the everyday aspects of tropical cyclone Idai survivors in Chimanimani. I was able to carry out interviews in and write about a language that constitutes the everyday speeches of the research participants, without the need of a translator. This position was important as it prevented any loss in translation or interpretation. On two occasions, I encountered NGO employees who were not conversant in Shona, and interviews with them were exclusively in English.

Negotiating with the state

By the time I travelled to Zimbabwe for fieldwork in October 2020, intending to start my fieldwork the following month, the tropical cyclone Idai disaster response environment had evolved from being an exclusively humanitarian situation to a strictly securitized field. Before my fieldwork, researchers could just get into Chimanimani district and interact with survivors without having to deal with many restrictions and bureaucracy on the part of the state. However, after reports of widespread misappropriation of donated disaster aid by senior state officials and politicians started to filter into national and international media platforms (Bulawayo24 News 2019; Muponde 2019), tight restrictions had now been imposed for research-related work in the affected communities. I had to seek approval from three bureaucratic layers of the state before I could interview the survivors – the MLG; the Provincial Development Coordinator (PDC); and the District Development Coordinator (DDC)[4]. I first sought clearance to talk to survivors from the PDC's office in Mutare but I was advised to lodge my application directly with the Permanent Secretary of the MLG in Harare, who would, upon reviewing my application, send the approval letter to the Mutare-based PDC. According to the procedure, I would then collect the approval letter from the PDC and present it to the DDC in Chimanimani. Although I initiated the process in November 2020, I only got the official approval letter towards the end of April 2021 after going through several episodes of frustration (Appendix 1). For instance, when I first sent the application package to the MLG Permanent Secretary, she referred me to a Director in the Ministry who subsequently referred me to an Officer in the same Ministry. I later learned the Officer was an intern attached to the Ministry on a short-term contract, and no one could account

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[4] Until August 2019, the DDCs and PDCs were called District Administrators and Provincial Administrators respectively. They are tiers of government which are responsible for coordinating government and local government activities at provincial and district levels (Zimbabwe Legal Information Institute 2022)

for the application materials when he left the Ministry a few weeks after I had submitted my request. I was asked to resend the application documents to another Officer, but after weeks of following up, she told me that she could no longer find the application materials in her emails. I was advised to bring hard copies of the required documents (comprising my application letter, a letter of support from Memorial University, and the research proposal) to someone in the PDC's office in Mutare who would then transmit the documents to the MLG in Harare via courier and make follow-ups on my behalf. I finally got the approval letter after dozens of phone calls, emails, and WhatsApp messages.

The delays and the obstacles that I encountered in the process of obtaining clearance from the state were a blessing in disguise. On one side, the delays were raising my anxiety as I was keen to meet and hear the stories of families and individuals who survived the tropical cyclone. On the other side, the process of moving from one office to another in the government building in Mutare to follow up on my request, calling individuals, and writing WhatsApp messages, many of which were not responded to, helped me to appreciate the political context that, not only individuals, but also NGOs, had to endure while working with the state. These experiences shaped the focus of my project. I particularly developed an interest in exploring how issues of accountability, transparency, authoritarianism, capacity and bureaucracy manifested as state agencies and NGOs became entangled in the lives of tropical cyclone Idai survivors.

Negotiating with NGOs

In meetings between NJIVA Trust and other stakeholders, I always first introduced myself as a volunteer for the NGO, followed by stating where I come from in Zimbabwe, and then the focus of my research as a PhD student at Memorial University. Introducing myself as a NJIVA Trust volunteer and a resident of Chimanimani, did not only help to position me as a part of the NGO world, but I also used this sequence of self-introduction as a strategy to convince the

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humanitarian agencies that I was a member of the community that they were serving. This approach smoothened my interaction with employees of the NGOs and facilitated my connection to the NGO world. However, to my amusement, I encountered more layers of bureaucracy within the NGO world as a researcher than with state officials, a situation that I had not expected. I will give two instances of how these bureaucratic procedures influenced my fieldwork.

Firstly, I visited the offices of The Psychology Trust, a national NGO based in Harare, which established an office in Chimanimani following the disaster. This NGO was providing psychosocial support, including trauma counselling, to tropical cyclone Idai survivors. I wanted to hear more about the NGO's work, including how it worked with survivors during the trauma counselling process as well as the forms of collaboration that it had established with other stakeholders. At the time of my visit in March 2021, the Chimanimani office only had one employee - Shella. I introduced myself and asked if I could schedule an interview with her. Shella told me that I could only talk to someone in the NGO's Harare office who was responsible for handling external communications regarding the Chimanimani project on behalf of the organization. She took my cell phone number and promised that she would set an appointment for me with Catherine, the Coordinator and contact person for the Chimanimani project. According to the NGO's policy, an employee was not allowed to share another employee's contact details with people outside the organization. So, I could not get Catherine's number, but Shella gave me hers. When I followed up with Shella after a day, she told me that Catherine had agreed to meet and that she was going to be in Chimanimani the following day. I followed up with Shella again the day that Catherine was supposed to arrive, but she did not respond to my WhatsApp messages and phone calls. Despite my repeated attempts, Shella never returned my calls, and I eventually gave up on the idea of meeting with The Psychology Trust.

In the second instance, I wrote an introductory email to Memory, the Programmes

Director for a Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction project that World Vision International

implemented in Chimanimani after tropical cyclone Idai. I found her contact details, including

her email address on an online document that was uploaded onto the NGO's website. Memory

responded to my email by requesting "proof of enrolment at the said University" so that she

could direct me to the person who was responsible for the project. I enthusiastically attached all

the relevant supporting documents for my research, including the enrolment verification, in my

follow-up email, but she never got back to me (despite many attempts to follow up). Again, I

terminated plans to schedule an interview with World Vision International. I was expecting such

resistance from state officials, but somewhat surprisingly, I found most state employees easier to

arrange interviews with as compared to NGOs like Psychology Trust and World Vision

International. I was initially disappointed with the attitudes of the employees of these two NGOs,

but later, these engagements became important in my analysis as they helped me to understand

how NGO employees interacted with communities affected by the tropical cyclone Idai disaster.

For instance, common concerns that cropped out during my interviews with the survivors were

about NGOs transparency and accountability - it was only after reflecting on my own experience

trying to set up interviews with these NGOs that I realized how critical these issues were in the

context of post-disaster recovery and reconstruction.

2.3 Engaging with and Learning from the Survivors

For the greater part of my fieldwork (from April to December 2021), I stayed with a family (the

Dube Family) which narrowly escaped the cyclone Idai disaster, and whose house is in Ngangu,

a Chimanimani township which was most impacted by the tropical cyclone Idai disaster (Nhamo

& Chikodzi 2021; Munsaka et.al., 2021). I knew this family from my previous development

work in the district – I used to visit them when I was coordinating donor-funded community development projects in Chimanimani from 2004 to 2007. Initially, I did not have any intentions of moving in with the Dube family for my field research, but it was through their persuasion and my calculation of potential benefits, that I gave into the idea of staying with them during the period of my fieldwork. When I visited their house in November 2020, a few weeks after arriving from Canada, I explained to them the scope of my research and asked if they could assist me to look for accommodation in Ngangu for the duration of my fieldwork. The family, however, insisted that I live with them and use one of the vacant bedrooms in their house. The wife, Jane, was a nurse at the local clinic, and she was directly involved in rendering emergency healthcare to survivors of the tropical cyclone. She participated in the search and rescue, treated the wounded, and in her own words, "sometimes watched in desperation as some survivors succumbed to injuries after the clinic ran out of medication." The husband, John – who I always referred to as *Mukwasha*[5] (brother-in-law), was working for a state-operated telecommunications company as a technician. Besides witnessing the destruction and participating in rescuing survivors and retrieving dead bodies, he was also involved in the disaster recovery and reconstruction processes, particularly in repairing communication infrastructure that had been destroyed by the tropical cyclone winds. Their three children aged between 7 and 14 years were all attending local schools, the elder being in secondary school while the other two siblings were in primary school. They all witnessed the physical and social impact of the disaster.

My main motivation to stay with them during my fieldwork was that this family represented a microcosm for knowledge production with regard to tropical Idai response

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[5] I shared the same totem with Jane - so culturally she was my sister. In Shona culture "It is taboo for people of the same totem to marry except after a ritual to sever the relationship (*cheka ukama*) has been performed" (Mahohoma 2020, p. 8). So, according to Shona tradition, John became my brother in law (*Mukwasha*)

processes. Firstly, as both Jane and John were civil servants, I could learn from them how state employees were affected by tropical cyclone Idai, how they were involved in the response processes, and how their attitudes and behaviour towards work were shaped by the working conditions in their respective state departments. Almost every day after dinner, we spent time together chatting about the ups and downs that each one of us would have encountered during the day in our respective workplaces. For instance, our daily conversations were often characterized by the couple's expressions of frustration over poor remunerations, complaints about inadequate resources like vehicles and medicines in their respective jobs, and allegations of abuse of power and corruption by senior state officials. These conversations enlightened me on the experiences of state employees as they participated in the recovery and reconstruction processes post-Idai.

Secondly, the family was a kind of anthology of survivors, who conveyed rich narratives that allowed me to gain a deep and holistic understanding of the socio-cultural aspects of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. From the daily conversations, I learned about their experience during the tropical cyclone disaster, including the worries and fears that they still had as a family. For instance, Jane always made fun of the broiler chickens that she lost during the night of the cyclone. She had a fowl run at the back of the house which had more than 200 chickens that she was intending to sell locally, but only woke up on the fateful day of the disaster to find out that the fowl run, and the chickens had been swept away by the tropical cyclone floods[6]. On more than three occasions during our after-dinner conversations, Mukwasha tried to imitate the 'mysterious' roaring sounds that came out of the floods as they rumbled down a stream which is less than 50 meters from the back of their house. On many occasions, he recounted the 'sparks of

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[6] Such small-scale income generating activities are common in Zimbabwe, even among professionals who are not full-time farmers. They are considered important sources of food and supplementary income by many low- and middle-income earners (Tawodzera & Chigumira 2019).

fire' that he observed coming out of the flooded stream, in the middle of the night, as huge boulders were rolling down the stream. Their eldest daughter, Chipo, lost a classmate and close friend to the cyclone, and she always reflected on that fateful day. They had been together the previous evening and only woke up the following day to hear that her friend had drowned and was missing. On other occasions, Jane reminisced about how they could not sleep in their house the day after the floods fearing that more floods would return. Through such stories, I came to understand the nature of physical, emotional, social, relational, and cultural impact of tropical cyclone Idai. They also revealed some of the socio-cultural and political aspects that defined the post-Idai context within which recovery and reconstruction processes were taking place.

2.4 Data Collection Techniques

My fieldwork took place from November 2020 to December 2021, and it was based on a multi-sited ethnographic approach. According to Marcus (1995), multi-sited ethnography allows for the study of social phenomena that cannot be understood by just focusing on a single site. For him:

> Multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography (Marcus 1995; p. 105).

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the research participants, and the various spaces that they occupied, applying the multi-sited ethnographic approach was the most appropriate strategy for this research. Along with Falzon's (2009, pp.1-2) observations, the approach allowed me "to follow people, connections, associations, and relationships across space," which helped to create a clear and comprehensive picture of the entanglements and contestations that emerged as the state and NGOs provided support to survivors of tropical cyclone Idai in Chimanimani. I, therefore, carried out my fieldwork across a range of sites and spaces in Mutare city and

Chimanimani. In Mutare, I interacted with government employees and carried out interviews with employees of NGOs based in the city but with field operations in Chimanimani. Since my family was based in Mutare, I also frequently visited the city to re-unite with them and to access facilities like banks, libraries and other public services which were not available in Chimanimani. Most of my fieldwork was based in Chimanimani where I used NJIVA Trust offices as my research base while living with the Dube family. From my research base at NJIVA Trust and through the facilitation of Jane and Mukwasha, I visited and interacted with survivors in the communities, and in the displacement camps where some of the internally displaced families were temporarily sheltered. I also frequently visited the West End Farm (which was later renamed "Runyararo Village"), located about 63 km to the west of Ngangu township, where the government had initiated a housing project to provide permanent homes to the displaced survivors (Bande 2021). As I will explain later in this chapter, I also utilized the digital space, including social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter to enrich my dataset. In the paragraphs that follow, I will explain in detail the procedures that I followed during data collection.

Data collection in Mutare

During the time that I was pushing for my application to hold interviews with the survivors to be approved by the MLG (from November 2020 to April 2021), I was primarily based in Mutare, about 143 km to the north of Chimanimani. I fruitfully utilized the time to establish contacts and hold interviews with employees of NGOs operating in Chimanimani but who had their offices in the city. This operational setup is typical of many NGOs implementing development interventions in the Manicaland province. For instance, during the time that I was coordinating community development projects in Chimanimani while working for Practical Action between 2004 and 2007, the NGO had its office in Mutare, and we usually drove to Chimanimani twice or

thrice a week to visit community groups and monitor field activities. NGOs use Mutare as their base for easy access to public resources and services such as banking and communication facilities like the internet and uninterrupted cellular networks.

Establishing connections with the NGOs in Mutare was not that difficult. I already had contacts with people within these NGOs who I used to interact with when I was still working in the development sector in Zimbabwe. Specifically, I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with directors of two Mutare-based NGOs – Mr. Peter Moto of The Catholic Association and Mr. Samuel Garwe who was heading The Mutare Community Development Trust. I purposively selected these NGOs because they had been actively involved during the emergency response phase, and they were also implementing recovery and reconstruction activities in Chimanimani during the time of the research. In addition, these NGOs represent the different classes of NGOs (in terms of their levels of operation and size) that responded to the humanitarian situation in Chimanimani following the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. The Catholic Association was part of a network of Catholic development agencies with a national office in Harare and six other field offices in the towns of Bulawayo, Gweru, Masvingo, Gokwe, Chinhoyi and Hwange. The organization had been implementing development activities across the whole country since 1972. The Mutare Community Development Trust on the other hand was a relatively young and small organization. Formed in January 2011, this NGO only had one office in Mutare and less than five full-time employees.

I asked the directors about their respective organization's approach to development, the forms of support that they were providing to the survivors of tropical cyclone Idai in Chimanimani, and their experiences of working in collaboration with other agencies, including the state. I also asked about the challenges that they faced while implementing disaster response

activities in the communities. These preliminary interviews helped me in two ways: firstly, by

asking questions about the NGOs' modes of work, I gained a general appreciation of the role that

NGOs were playing in the aftermath of the tropical cyclone disaster. The interviews helped me to

identify and think further about specific themes which I could pursue during the rest of the

fieldwork. Secondly, the input of the research participants during these early stages of my

research prompted me to reflect on the interview guide that I had prepared beforehand and to

adjust and reformulate the interview questions where necessary. For example, one of the

questions that I had included in my interview guide was: *'how is funding important to the*

support that you provide to communities?' When I posed this question to Mr. Moto, he could not

hide his disapproval of the question. He expected me to appreciate that all NGO activities were

dependent on donor funding. Yet the original intention of the question was to solicit views about

whether NGOs were able to continue to operate and accomplish their mandates of serving the

communities without financial support from external donors. It became clear from these

preliminary engagements that the question was too obvious and seemed to annoy the NGO

representatives. Subsequently, I reformulated this question to focus on the strategies that NGOs

used to maintain relations with their donors.

While in Mutare, I also met and hung out with state officials who were involved in

coordinating disaster management at the provincial level. I spent a lot of time with Mr. Farai

Shoko, a Provincial Agriculture Specialist in the Department of Agricultural Extension Services

(Agritex). I knew Mr. Shoko before I started the fieldwork as he resided in the same

neighbourhood as my family in the Chikanga suburb of Mutare. However, I developed a closer

relationship with him during the fieldwork. He often asked me for assistance to use my car to

deliver his agricultural inputs (fertilizers and maize seeds) to his farm in Odzi, almost 60km to

the west of Mutare, and we frequently had drinks together whenever I visited Mutare. As a senior state employee, he was a member of the provincial Civil Protection Committee (CPC), a committee of the DCP constituted in terms of The Civil Protection Act (Chapter 10:06 of 1989), to coordinate disaster management activities at the provincial level. I will provide a detailed description of the CPC structure and its roles in Chapter 4. The interaction with Mr. Shoko helped me to understand disaster management coordination systems at the provincial level and how the provincial level CPC interacted with other state agencies and NGOs at the district and community levels. I also learned about internal challenges within the provincial CPC, and those that emerge as the committee engaged with its lower-level structures. My relationship with Mr. Shoko also bore fruit in that he linked me up with Agritex employees based in Chimanimani who I later followed up with when I moved to the district for more data collection after my application had been approved.

Apart from Mr. Shoko, I also spent a lot of time with Brian Shumba, who at the time was working for the Zimbabwe Parks & Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks), a state parastatal mandated with the role of ensuring the sustainable conservation of wildlife and natural resources. Brian and I pursued the same Bachelor's degree at the Bindura University of Science Education from 2000 to 2004, and since then, we have remained close friends. He was part of the state search and rescue team that was deployed to Chimanimani immediately after the tropical cyclone, and as such, he had first-hand information about the experiences of first responders. He told me of the logistical challenges that they faced during the search and rescue period, which included the lack of proper coordination between the state and NGOs and the failure to quickly get to the most affected places as the road infrastructure had been destroyed. Through interacting with Brian, I also got to know about some of the positive aspects that helped to reduce the

magnitude of the disaster. In one of our informal discussions, for instance, he explained how the presence of the media helped to spread the news about the disaster, and which enabled the state to mobilize national and international assistance quickly. In another discussion, he praised the survivors and local traditional and church leaders for the spirit of oneness that they exhibited during the rescue period. I drew upon these discussions to come up with interview questions on stakeholder collaborations which guided the interviews with other employees of state agencies and NGOs when I later moved to Chimanimani in April 2021.

Data collection in Chimanimani

(a) Direct observation

When I first visited Chimanimani in November 2020 to check in with NJIVA Trust and to make accommodation arrangements, Jane took me for a tour around her neighbourhood and showed me the damage that had been caused by the tropical cyclone floods. For the four months that followed (November 2020 to April 2021), during the period that I was waiting for clearance to interview other survivors of the disaster, I usually spent time driving to different places that had been affected by the tropical cyclone. I toured the four displacement camps, namely Arboretum, Garikai, Nyamatanda and Kopa, where families displaced by the tropical cyclone had been provided with temporary shelter by the state in partnership with UN agencies like the IOM, The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), The World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF as well as international NGOs like CARE, CAFOD and World Vision International. The first three camps were less than 3 km apart – Garikai was located in the Ngangu township, Nyamatanda at a private farm, about 1 km from the NJIVA Trust offices and Arboretum was established about 100 meters in front of the Chimanimani business centre. The Kopa displacement camp was established behind the Kopa business centre, in the far south of Chimanimani, near the border with Chipinge district. In addition, I visited Runyararo Village

where the government had initiated the housing scheme. While walking and driving through the affected areas was heart-breaking, it was necessary and enriching for my research. Unlike following the news while in Canada, I could now clearly draw comparisons on how some places which were familiar to me looked like before, and what they had become following the damage caused by the tropical cyclone. From these observations, I gained an in-depth understanding of the impact of the disaster from the survivors' perspective, a position that allowed me to relate to the issues that came out when I later held interviews with the survivors.

(b) Role as a Volunteer: Participant Observation at NJIVA Trust

Throughout the fieldwork, I worked as a volunteer at NJIVA Trust. In this capacity, I participated in several internal and stakeholder engagement processes, which helped me to understand the NGO's interventions in Chimanimani district both before and post-tropical cyclone Idai. I spent time with program staff in the office and participated in general staff briefings and program-specific planning meetings. These platforms allowed me to observe internal dynamics as the NGO implemented its programs. They also offered me the opportunity to participate in internal planning and decision-making processes and to learn from individual employees.

Building rapport with NJIVA Trust employees at all levels was imperative for the success of my research. As such, apart from participating in strategy and program planning meetings, I also engaged employees through my participant-observation in the office's social spaces. For instance, since its inception in 1999, the NGO has inculcated a culture of eating together for the employees and visitors. During the period of my fieldwork, NJIVA Trust had one full-time kitchen worker, but they would hire two or three other casual helpers when there were workshops with a huge number of participants. Thus, almost daily when I was at the office, I

could socialize with ground-level employees, middle-level managers, and senior managers during tea and lunch breaks. Furthermore, the NGO's boardroom is equipped with a pool table, and during lunch, and at times after we finished work around 4:30 pm, I joined other employees for social pool tournaments. Apart from helping me to build trust, these social spaces allowed me to observe how the organization functioned and provided insights into the day-to-day modes of interactions which shaped the work environment at NJIVA Trust. It was also through informal and unstructured interviews that I had with employees during these social spaces that I heard of their encounters with state employees and politicians, experiences working with communities, their own frustrations over working conditions within the NGO, and other details which could have slipped out of my attention if I had only used a formal guided interview questionnaire for the research. However, these informal and unstructured interviews were rather ad hoc, and they quite often generated disjointed responses, which took me time to consolidate. To buttress the evidence from these informal engagements, I held seven semi-structured interviews with the NGO's employees drawn from different classes and levels. I interviewed one support employee in the administration departments, four program employees, one middle-level manager, and one senior manager. These semi-structured interviews were particularly important because they enabled me to gather more systematic, organized, and wholesome responses to the interview questions that I had developed beforehand.

I also capitalized on the community social events that NJIVA Trust employees regularly organized, and which brought the NGO's employees into conduct with members of the community to collect data. On 8 June 2021, for instance, the NGO organized outdoor games including athletics, soccer, and netball when the NJIVA Trust employees competed as a team against other teams from the nearby Ngangu township. Furthermore, the NGO's soccer team had

agreed on a regular soccer tournament schedule with a team of youths from the Ngangu

township. Although the schedule was discontinued due to persistent disruptions caused by the

COVID-19 pandemic, the two teams had agreed to play every Wednesday, either as opponents or

intermingling. Sometimes I played, but in many instances, I participated in these events as a

spectator, which allowed me to converse with other spectators and jot down notes to enrich my

research. Besides learning about some of the hidden elements that connect NJIVA Trust to the

world of disaster survivors, I was also able to draw lessons on how the employees of the NGO

positioned themselves within the community in which they worked.

As part of my volunteer responsibilities, I offered capacity-strengthening support to the

NJIVA Trust programs team. I facilitated two training workshops in June and August 2021 on

Fundraising and resource mobilization, and social advocacy, respectively. The need for the

fundraising and resource mobilization training emanated from a meeting that I held with Mr.

Moyo, the Executive Director, when we were discussing NJIVA Trust's funding portfolio,

including the donors that the NGO had at the time, and funding opportunities that it could

potentially pursue. He was concerned that the NGO was missing out on funding opportunities

because of a lack of internal capacity. Although NJIVA Trust has a Quality Management

Department which was responsible for leading the writing of project proposals and ensuring that

donor reports from other departments complied with internal quality requirements, Mr. Moyo did

not have confidence in the capacities within the department. I completely understood his

concern. Based on my experience in the development sector, I learned that while individuals may

study grant writing and proposal development as taught courses at colleges or universities, they

acquire practical skills and become more effective through on-the-job training. All 4 employees,

except the manager, in the Quality Management Department, were fairly new, just coming out of

university, and had not had much exposure to proposal development. Based on these gaps, Mr. Moyo suggested that as part of my volunteer work, I could facilitate a three-day fundraising and resource mobilization training. In my past career in the development sector, I had offered such training to employees of local NGOs that used to get donor funds through CAFOD. I had also previously led successful proposal development initiatives, from major institutional donors like the EU, USAID, and the UKAid.

As I interacted with the programs team, I learned that one of the NGO's major donors asked NJIVA Trust to include a social advocacy component in the food security project that the donor had funded. The NGO was supposed to develop a detailed communication strategy and advocacy materials like policy briefs, fact sheets and position papers, and share them with the donor as a condition for accessing the next grant disbursement. At the time that I first heard about these requirements around August 2021, the advocacy materials together with the project progress report were due for submission to the donor in a month. No one in the NGO had either implemented a policy advocacy action plan before or was involved in the development of advocacy materials. Under this tight timeline, I facilitated a two-day training for the NJIVA Trust employees during the first week of September 2021. Besides equipping the employees with basic knowledge in social advocacy, I also provided technical assistance (through reviewing and commenting on drafts), which helped the NGO to meet its donor obligations. Throughout the fieldwork, I assisted in reviewing donor reports and providing backstopping support during the development of project proposals and advocacy materials. Beyond broadening my understanding of capacity gaps that existed within NJIVA Trust, and many other NGOs operating at the local level, participating in these activities directed my research to look at the extent to which expectations set by external donors influenced local NGOs' disaster response approaches. My

understanding of advocacy, for instance, is that it is a continuous engagement process in which NGOs push for their visions of social progress, and the advocacy materials should, therefore, be part of the toolkit upon which these visions of social progress are communicated and advanced (Valentinov et al. 2013). But having participated in the development of the advocacy strategy, policy briefs, and position papers for the food security project at NJIVA Trust, I realized that the NGO was only producing these to fulfil donor requirements, and not necessarily to inform its work in the community. Although NJIVA Trust was in some way, and unknowingly, implementing advocacy activities (for example, through activities like promoting the growing of indigenous crops), the NGO had neither incorporated policy advocacy as something integral and consistent to its identity nor deliberately considered advocacy as critical to its wider work in the community. These observations motivated me to interrogate more about how local level NGOs sought to manage donor expectations in the designing of post-Idai response actions in Chimanimani.

During the period of my fieldwork, two large meetings involving district-level NJIVA Trust structures were held: the first was an Annual General Meeting' of the NJIVA Association, which was held in May 2021; and the second, which brought together representatives of ward-based NJIVA Trust committees (known as NJIVA Village Groups - NVGs) was held in June 2021. As I will discuss further in Chapter 5, NJIVA Trust operated as a voluntary smallholder farmers association (NJIVA Association) since 1999, and although it legally registered and changed its name to NJIVA Trust in 2009, the NJIVA Association structures still existed and worked alongside the new structures of NJIVA Trust. Through participating in the two meetings, I became aware of how this dualism created internal conflicts as some members of the Association felt that they were being side-lined from NJIVA Trust activities in the communities

while others complained that they were losing control of an organization that they founded. These hidden and intrinsic dynamics influenced the NGO's operations in the field. Follow-up interviews and informal discussions with some of the NJIVA Association members helped me to understand in more detail the nature of these internal dynamics and the implications that they had on the NGO's post-Idai operations in the communities.

In addition to engaging with the internal processes, I participated in several meetings between NJIVA Trust and its external donors, which enlightened me on the nature of their relationships. Two meetings were between NJIVA Trust and one of its donors, the Voluntary Services Organization (VSO). Following the tropical cyclone, VSO supported NJIVA Trust to implement a project that equipped twenty youth volunteers from across the district with skills in disaster management. The first meeting was a training session held on 5 May 2021 when a senior manager from VSO trained NJIVA Trust employees and the youth volunteers on how to use a monitoring approach that VSO developed to assess progress during the implementation of disaster management activities. The second meeting involved two experts from VSO – the Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist and the Resilience Specialist. They had come to monitor the youth initiative. This meeting, which I attended together with NJIVA Trust employees in the Quality Management Department, focused on reviewing the project implementation plan and budget, identifying actions that were lagging, budget lines that had been overspent, challenges that were being encountered during the implementation of the project, and discussion on activities that were going to be prioritized moving forward.

The other meeting was between NJIVA Trust, and the Germany-based Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World - BfW), which was held in October 2021. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss terms of reference for a summative evaluation of a project that NJIVA Trust had

implemented with funding from BfW. Among the participants were NJIVA trust employees in the Quality Management Department, the BfW Officer responsible for the project and a team of consultants who had been selected from a pool of applicants by NJIVA Trust to undertake the evaluation. The meeting provided an opportunity for the consultants to explain how they were going to deliver on the assignment, for NJIVA Trust to state logistical arrangements that had been put in place, and most importantly, for the BfW Officer to emphasize what he expected to come out of the evaluation.

The last meeting that I attended was held in November 2021 between NJIVA Trust and Welthungerhilfe, another German-based aid agency that was supporting post-Idai humanitarian work. Welthungerhilfe had secured funding to expand its disaster recovery and reconstruction work in Chimanimani and had identified NJIVA Trust as a potential local implementing partner. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the budget and project implementation modalities.

Through attending the above meetings, I gained a deeper sense of how NJIVA Trust engaged with its donors. Specifically, I intimately observed the body language, choice of words, and postures that the NGO's employees exhibited in the presence of the donors. I also observed informal discussions as NJIVA Trust employees commented on their encounters with the donors during the meetings. At times they expressed their disapproval of suggestions provided by the donors, after the latter had left. The donor meetings, together with the employees' feedback helped me to draw parallels and identified convergencies with regards to donor interests and expectations visa-vis those of the NGO.

I also took part in events that were either organized by NJIVA Trust or by other district-level stakeholders. For instance, in early October 2021, I participated in the fifth edition of the annual district-level seed fair and seed marketing day (*Hurudza Seed Market Day*) that the NGO

hosted to promote the production and marketing of indigenous crop seeds among small-scale producers in Chimanimani. Running under the theme, *"Reconstructing Local Seed Systems After Disasters"*, the 2021 edition of the Hurudza Seed Market Day, which I will discuss in detail in Chapter 5, was meant to facilitate the sharing and trading of diverse local seed varieties, especially following the tropical cyclone Idai when many local farmers lost their valuable indigenous crop seeds. Fifty-five smallholder farmers, drawn from across the district, exhibited and sold indigenous seed varieties during the event[7]. Besides observing the varieties of seeds that the farmers brought, and holding informal discussions with some of them, I also took note of the stakeholders who attended the event, including the DDC, national NGOs, private seed producers and marketers as well as state and private media agencies.

During the same month of October, I attended the commissioning and official handover of beehives to local farmers whose beekeeping and honey production activities had been disrupted by the cyclone Idai disaster[8]. This event was organized by NJIVA Trust, and it was part of a "Beekeeping for resilience project" that the NGO had been implementing since 2019 with funding from two external donors – Apimondia and Bees for Development. Through this project, NJIVA Trust supported at least 2000 honey-producing farmers to recover through training in apiculture and providing hives and honey processing equipment. The commissioning and the official handover of the beehives event was more of a visibility and marketing stunt, if not a public relations exercise. Notable delegates in attendance included officials from the office

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[7] Number of exhibitors provided by Mrs Erica Muti. The Officer responsible for organizing the *Hurudza* Seed Fairs at NJIVA Trust

[8] Honey production is a very important source of income for communities in Chimanimani, with average earnings ranging from $2 to $3.50 per kilogram. During the cyclone an estimated 682 beekeepers in Chimanimani were affected, losing 2,912 beehives.
https://www.ilo.org/africa/media-centre/news/WCMS_558490/lang--en/index.htm. Accessed 03 May 2022
https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/bees. Accessed 03 May 2022

of the Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution, state officials based in Chimanimani, NGOs, district level leaders of the ruling party, the local farmers as well as private and state media agencies. In addition to helping me understand the nature of collaborations that existed among the various humanitarian agencies in Chimanimani and the ways in which NJIVA Trust was collaborating with the state, I also learnt about some of the innovative ways that local farmers were coming up with to enhance their resilience following the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. I observed honey products that farmers displayed during the handover ceremony, including honey wine, candles, and soap (Chapter 6). Following these observations, I became interested in pursuing the theme of survivor agency, and specifically to investigate the strategies that survivors employed to deal with the losses and damages that were induced by tropical cyclone Idai. processes in Chimanimani.

(c) Participation in district-level public events

In addition to the above events that directly involved NJIVA Trust, I participated in district-level events organized by other stakeholders. On 27 September 2021, I attended the official handover of equipment for a new community radio station – The Chimanimani FM - which was to be established in Chimanimani. The equipment, which included audio mixers, monitors, microphones, editing software, FM antennas and transmitters, was donated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Regional Office for Southern Africa (UNESCO-ROSA) as part of a multi-sector World Bank-funded Zimbabwe Idai Recovery Project (ZIRP). The ZIRP, with a four-year budget of $72 million, was managed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and consisted of a consortium of other UN agencies – UNICEF, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO), WFP, IOM, and The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). From the project

website, this "One Project – One Team" approach was employed in order to "bring together expertise in each sector to fully deliver the project outcomes for Cyclone Idai recovery" (ZIRP 2022). The component of the community radio station was part of the work that UNESCO – ROSA doing under the ZIRP to will help build capacity for flood monitoring and early warning systems. By supporting the Chimanimani FM project, UNESCO-ROSA aimed to enhance the dissemination of life-saving and real-time messages and to facilitate early warning systems that improve disaster preparedness at the community level (UNESCO 2021).

The handover ceremony, which coincided with the 2021 International Day for the Universal Access to Information (IDUAI) commemorations, was held at the Chimanimani business centre and was presided over by the Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services in collaboration with the Ministry of Information Communication Technology, Courier Services. Among other respected delegates were traditional chiefs from chiefdoms within Chimanimani, leaders of state and private companies in the Information and communications technology (ICT), and representatives of the UN agencies. I listened to speeches by the invited dignitaries, observed sitting arrangements during the processions, reviewed information from brochures that were distributed by some of the agencies who displayed and marketed their work during the event, and I also joined the queue for food at the end of the ceremonies.

As part of the handover proceedings, a management Board of Chimanimani FM was introduced, and what struck me was that the Board Chairperson happened to be the wife of the Member of Parliament (MP) for Chimanimani East constituency (who belonged to the–ruling party - ZANU–PF). She was also actively involved in the party as an executive member of its women's league. I had gathered from an interview that I held with an employee responsible for

the radio station project at UNESCO-ROSA a few weeks before the event that Chimanimani FM would be run by an independent board selected by the community. I, therefore, became very curious to understand how the board running the community radio station was constituted after learning that the MP's wife was its leader. I also became interested in understating how the structure of the management board was going to influence the objectivity of Chimanimani FM in disseminating information to the public. I explore this example in more detail in Chapter 5.

Participating in this event, and those hosted by NJIVA Trust, allowed me to explore the nature of collaborations that develop, and contestations that emerged as humanitarian agencies of different types (government departments, UN agencies, donors, and NGOs) worked towards the same goal of reconstructing the physical, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of communities that had been fractured by the tropical cyclone Idai disaster.

(d) Interviews with other NGOs and state employees in Chimanimani

During the time that I was based in Chimanimani between April 2021 and December 2021, I utilized the opportunity of being a volunteer at NJIVA Trust to build relations with employees of other NGOs and state agencies that the NGO directly worked with. I also followed up and connected with state employees whom Mr. Shoko, my neighbour, and friend based in Mutare, had introduced me. Subsequently, I engaged many of the state and NGO employees in informal discussions and arranged structured interviews with a surmountable number. I held semi-structured interviews with five state employees from Agritex, DSW, the Chimanimani Rural District Council (CRDC), as well as the Registrar General's office. I also interviewed employees of six NGOs that I purposefully identified on the basis that they were working closely with NJIVA Trust. The interviews helped me to understand the work that these agencies were

implementing, including their modes of operation and how they were collaborating with others in response to the post-Idai humanitarian situation in Chimanimani.

I first became aware of the World Bank-funded ZIRP initiative during the time that I was touring the affected areas, and when I was still waiting for authorization to talk to survivors, between November 2020 and April 2021. The project was highly publicized on billboards along major roads and on project sites that were being implemented or had been completed by the various UN agencies involved. Seeing these iconographic representations during the early days of my fieldwork, I was intrigued to learn more about this initiative. I scheduled semi-structured interviews with two experts from UNESCO-ROSA and IOM in early September 2021 through which I learned about the Chimanimani FM initiative.

Interviews with the state officials, NGO employees, and UN agencies were insightful in the sense that they revealed the underlying assumptions that drove their respective approaches to disaster response and humanitarianism. Questions like how is the agency represented in the communities, how does the agency mobilize resources for disaster response, and who does the agency work with – helped me to have a glimpse of their operational systems, which then became central to my analysis.

In December 2021, I was asked by another community-based NGO, Budiriro Trust, which worked closely with NJIVA Trust, but whose size and scale of operation was smaller, to facilitate a three-day fundraising training for its Board of Trustees. The training, which was attended by 11 participants, contributed to my research in many ways. With their permission, I was able to capture challenges that they faced as a Board in their endeavour to provide strategic direction to the Budiriro Trust management and employees. I also learned from them how Budiriro Trust was positioning itself, particularly within the post-Idai NGO landscape. The

interaction uncovered major issues, some of which I had heard before during interviews with employees of other NGOs. These issues included concerns about limited financial resources, competition among NGOs as well as "big-brother" tendencies which were being exhibited by larger NGOs and donors. As these concerns frequently came out during the interviews and informal discussions that I held with the NGO employee, they eventually became part of the analytical themes upon which the thesis is anchored.

(e) Interviews with survivors of tropical cyclone Idai

I conducted interviews with survivors from May to November 2021. Living with the Dube family from April to December 2021 helped me to reach out to other survivors within their locality as well as within their kinship network. They introduced me to their neighbours, some of whom I later followed up and interviewed. In addition, Mukwasha had three siblings who also lived in the Ngangu township with their families. The siblings often exchanged visits, during the evenings for dinner, or when anyone of them was hosting a special event. I frequently participated in such gatherings, and as the fieldwork progressed, I became very closely knitted to the entire kinship network. Two major family get-together events took place when I was in Chimanimani. First was a birthday party for Mukwasha's son (Tino) who had just turned eleven years. At least fifteen people attended the party, including Mukwasha's siblings and their families as well as Tino's friends. Besides eating, drinking, and dancing to local music, the event was also punctuated by informal conversations about social issues in Chimanimani. The second event was a dinner to welcome Mukwasha's mother who had visited Ngangu township from her rural home in the Chipinge district. The dinner was hosted by one of Mukwasha's siblings and we were all invited to attend. Again, alongside the feasting, there were moments of discussing social issues, and just like in many informal conversations that I had with other survivors, the

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tropical cyclone Idai topic featured prominently during the discussion. These family gatherings contributed to my understanding of the local interpretations of the causes and impact of tropical cyclone Idai. I captured perceptions of the families with regards to the support that was being offered to survivors by the state and NGOs, and how families assisted each other during the search and rescue period.

My incorporation into Mukwasha's kinship network facilitated the recruitment of participants for the research. In addition to the insights that I obtained during family gatherings, I recruited 5 participants from the Dube kinship network for formal semi-structured interviews. I also followed up and scheduled interviews with participants who I met when I visited the affected communities with NJIVA Trust employees. At times I initiated my own connections, by approaching and introducing myself to people who I met people in public places like in bottle stores and at public events. Almost every day after work, Mukwasha and I visited a local drinking outlet, popularly known as Green Bar, because it was painted in green colour. During these occasions, I met with residents and held informal discussions about social developments within the community, including issues concerning tropical cyclone Idai. More than two years after it had occurred, tropical cyclone Idai remained a topical subject in daily informal discussions throughout my fieldwork. Among other things, residents were always reminiscing on their miraculous escapes from the disaster, expressing their heroic acts during the search and rescue period, joking about how their colleagues were rescued (for instance when some people were rescued naked), and others venting their frustration over the failure by the responsible authorities to properly deal with the post-disaster situation. The disaster was still very fresh in people's minds such that almost all discussions, be they political, economic, or social, would include some aspects of "tropical cyclone Idai." I always interjected and probed more during

these informal discussions, which helped me to have a clearer picture of how survivors coped with the disaster and its aftermath.

My approach to sampling was purposive and intended to show the full range of people affected by the cyclone, ranging from survivors who had been internally displaced, small-scale farming households, women and youths, the middle class (such as Mukwasha's family) to the elites (traditional authorities and business operators). In total, I held 43 semi-structured interviews with survivors, and their ages ranged from 18 years to over 75 years. The sample included 3 traditional leaders (2 chiefs and 1 headman), 19 people who resided in the communities that were most affected by the disaster, 9 participants in the community adjacent to Runyararo Village where the state initiated a housing scheme, and 7 participants who had been internally displaced and were living in the temporary shelters in the displacement camps (all of these 7 displaced people were housed at the Arboretum camp). I was first introduced to residents in this camp by a participant who I had interviewed in May, and who became a very close associate of mine throughout the fieldwork. As I engaged with the residents that I initially interviewed, they also linked me to their peers in the camp who were willing to tell me their stories. As such, I did not find it necessary to interview survivors in the other camps as residents of Arboretum were providing me with rich data, and I was convinced that the issues that they raised were common to the other camps. Out of the 43 participants with whom I held in-depth interviews; the majority (28) were men. Beyond helping me to understand how the well-being of the survivors changed because of the tropical cyclone, the interviews also enlightened me on how the survivors perceived and exercised their agency in the context of post-Idai response processes.

Further, my interest to explore survivor agency was triggered by the sentiments that I frequently heard in public while interacting with the research participants. I could hear statements like – "*Anoshanda ku Idai* (S/he works at Idai)" – referring to someone working at the Runyararo Village housing scheme, "*Akapfeka hembe dze Idai* (S/he is wearing Idai clothes)" – referring to clothes donated by humanitarian agencies' and "*Tiri vanhu ve Idai* (we are the people of Idai" – mainly expressed by some survivors in the displacement camps who now seemed to claim entitlement to much of the disaster aid. From these sentiments, I deployed the concept of "survivor agency" to understand the various moral economies that emerged as different socio-economic classes interacted in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai, and as the survivors came into conduct with providers of humanitarian assistance.

One dilemma that I had to deal with while interviewing the victims is that some people were often suspicious of my movements during the fieldwork. On one rare occasion, I got into a situation that almost endangered some of the research participants. During my first visit to the Arboretum displacement camp, I drove into the camp and parked in front of the tent where Rasta and his wife, Chipo, were residing. I was introduced to the family by Taurai, who I had recruited through social media, and we later became more like friends. As it will become clear in one section below which highlight the digital ethnographic techniques that I employed, Taurai was one of the survivors who responded to an invitation to participate in the research, that I posted on Facebook. NJIVA Trust did not have any projects in the camps, so Taurai became very instrumental in connecting me with the camp residents. I interviewed Rasta and his wife and left for Mutare the same day. I went back to the Arboretum camp the following week because Rasta had invited me to see some of the income-generating projects that his family had initiated. They were running a small poultry project, a backyard garden from which they harvested vegetables

for sale, and a small tuckshop in front of their tent. I had missed the opportunity of seeing these initiatives during our first meeting because it was already dark by the time we finished our interview, and I had to drive to Mutare the same day. During this second visit, I parked my car at the Chimanimani Village (almost 500 meters away) and walked down to their tent in the Arboretum camp. Chipo indicated to me that she was happy that I did not drive into the camp, because after my visit the last time, the camp leaders came and asked them about me and what I had brought. According to Chipo, they suspected that I was a donor who had brought food and other goodies for Rasta and his family. This would mean a breach of the protocol in the camp, which required all donations to be logged or registered with the camp management committee, a camp structure that I will elaborate on in Chapter 6. Although such suspicions were not common, and even though Rasta downplayed the allegations, I became more cautious about how I engaged participants in the camp.

Data Collection in Runyararo Village

Located about 63 km to the west of Ngangu township, Runyararo Village was a formerly white owned farm called West End Farm. The farm was expropriated by the state in the early 1980s as part of newly independent Zimbabwe's land reform program, but the farm was never officially allocated to anyone although several families from the surrounding communal areas had moved in and occupied some parts of the farm as squatters (De Bruijn & De Bruijn 1991). Following cyclone Idai, the MLG identified the farm as the most suitable location for a housing scheme to accommodate families that had been displaced by tropical cyclone Idai. The state had a target of building 224 permanent houses to accommodate the displaced survivors. The location's name was changed from West End Farm to Runyararo Village. Runyararo is a Shona word for "peace", and proponents of this new name for the location found it a befitting one, as it resonated well with the new setup where they expected the survivors "to have a place of peace and

consolation after [they] went through during the tropical cyclone" (Bande 2021a, par 3). I first toured Runyararo Village in November 2020 when I was on the way to my rural village, which is about 8 Km westwards. I held informal discussions with some of the employees who were working on the housing project as well as families in other villages adjacent to this relocation site. I knew most of the families, having spent all my childhood in the community, and regularly returned there as a development practitioner when I was working in the NGO sector in Zimbabwe. From the informal discussions, I wanted to understand what the housing scheme meant to the locals, including the opportunities that it had created for them and the fears that they had about it.

At the time of my first visit to Runyararo Village in November 2020, only 2 housing units, out of the targeted 224 had been completed. I returned to this relocation site in December 2021 when the displacement camps had been decommissioned and the survivors had now been moved into their new houses. By this time, 28 units had been fully completed (Bande 2021b), while others were at various stages of construction. Some families had been moved into fabricated temporary structures, specifically wooden cabins roofed with corrugated iron sheets, while the state was proceeding with the construction of their permanent houses. During this last visit, I followed up with two research participants that I had interviewed when they were still accommodated at the Arboretum displacement camp to capture their feelings about the relocation and how they were adjusting to the new physical and socio-cultural context.

Data collection through digital ethnographic techniques

My research also employed digital ethnography, which Goralska (2020: 47) defines as a "method used to study societies and cultures in the digital space – on the Internet, online, without a necessity to travel." I made use of social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook to

initiate and maintain connections with some of the research participants. Furthermore, I participated in virtual meetings through platforms like ZOOM, Skype, and Microsoft Teams. Although I mostly used these techniques when I was stuck in Mutare and could not travel to Chimanimani due to COVID-19 lockdown travel restrictions, they became valuable data collection tools for the rest of the fieldwork. These digital ethnographic techniques offered me at least four distinct benefits. Firstly, I could gather data from interviews, workshops, and meetings without necessarily being physically present in the research sites. I conducted interviews with Harare-based NGOs through Skype and Microsoft Teams, and I participated in stakeholder meetings through ZOOM. Furthermore, I got updates about NJIVA Trust's work and initiated group discussions through WhatsApp. The NGO's Facebook page was always updated to include information that was relevant to my research.

Secondly, the digital ethnographic approach helped me to obtain dense, expansive, and real-time information about the post-Idai humanitarian landscape in Chimanimani, which I could not have obtained if I had only focused on in-situ data collection methods. For instance, I sometimes posted specific questions on NJIVA Trust WhatsApp groups asking about progress on the work that the NGO and other agencies were implementing, and in many instances, the NJIVA Trust employees could respond with photos, short videos, or audio files from the communities as evidence. These artifacts helped me to appreciate post-Idai recovery and reconstruction activities that were being implemented in communities that I did not have an opportunity to physically visit.

Thirdly, due to the multi-sited nature of my research, digital ethnography enabled me to engage participants from different parts of the district. For instance, since 2014 I have been a member of a Facebook group – *Zviri Kuitika Mu Chimanimani* (What is happening in

Chimanimani) - which by the time of my research, was subscribed by more than 1000 members. It was a public and open group where people could post anything about development initiatives and any other matters that concerned Chimanimani. When I posted on the group in May 2021 that I was looking for research participants, I received overwhelming responses from people who were willing to tell their experiences of the tropical cyclone disaster. I followed up and scheduled in-person interviews with some of the participants, including Taurai, whom I introduced in one section above. I always monitored the *Zviri Kuitika Mu Chimanimani* Facebook page for news and updates on various recovery and reconstruction projects which were being undertaken in the district. The comments that people posted on the Facebook page helped me to understand the general feelings of residents towards the interventions of the state and NGOs. I then fleshed out and expanded on these social media posts during semi-structured interviews and informal discussions with survivors in the field.

Lastly, as Seligmann & Estes (2019) observed, digital tools offer the advantage of hyperconnectivity with interlocutors. Anthropologists, the authors argue, "increasingly find that their fieldwork does not end when they depart from their field sites ..." (p. 7), and as such, digital ethnographic techniques enhance that continuous engagement. This was true in my case. Although I officially ended my fieldwork in December 2021, I remained in touch with many of my interlocutors through social media and other digital platforms. Even while writing this thesis, I often bounced back to them whenever I got stuck trying to interpret a concept or an act and made use of social media platforms to update my dataset of post-Idai recovery and reconstruction activities in Chimanimani.

As the section below shows these digital ethnographic techniques became particularly useful to my research in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. It is imperative at this point to

highlight that I conducted this research on the tropical cyclone disaster in the middle of another disaster - the COVID-19 pandemic. While local and international travel restrictions associated with the pandemic presented major logistical challenges for the research, conducting ethnography within such a context presented an opportunity to question and test the contribution of new techniques available to ethnographers as the discipline of anthropology engages with what many public health experts and global leaders called the "new normal."

2.5 Doing Ethnography in the Middle of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Challenges, Lessons, and Opportunities

During the period that I was conducting my fieldwork between November 2020 and December 2021, the government of Zimbabwe imposed two total lockdowns in response to surging cases of COVID-19. Following the detection of the Alpha and Delta COVID-19 variants in May 2021, the President of Zimbabwe announced on the 29th of June 2021, that the country was reverting to Level 4 total national lockdown measures for two weeks. The first Level 4 total national lockdown was imposed under Statutory Instrument (SI) 83 (The Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) Order, of 2020) in March 2020. Among the restrictions, residents were not allowed to leave their homes except to buy necessities such as food, fuel, and medicines – such movements were limited to a radius not exceeding five kilometers from one's home. Only employees in essential services were allowed to travel beyond this distance, but they had to always carry with them letters and other evidence as proof. All intercity travel was prohibited, and public gatherings were limited to "not more than 2 individuals" except at funerals where a maximum of 50 people was allowed (Public Health Order 2020).

By the time I started my fieldwork in November 2020, the country had moved to Level 2 of the COVID-19 lockdown measures in which most of the restrictions had been relaxed. However, in response to the discovery of the Alpha and Delta variants, the country moved back to the Level 4 restrictions, though with adjustments to the original March 2020 measures. During this second round of restrictions, which were effected through SI 189 of 2021, businesses were required to operate from 0800hrs to 1500hrs, intercity movements were banned, and a national curfew was imposed from 1800hrs to 0630hrs. Public transport operations were suspended, and as previously, all citizens were required to stay at home, except for employees in essential services, or in respect of essential movements related to seeking health services, or purchasing food (Public Health Order 2021). The security forces mounted checkpoints on major roads, and one had to provide evidence that they were essential workers or to justify why they were travelling. In December 2021, another two weeks lockdown was imposed following the discovery of the Omicron variant. A revised curfew from 2100hrs to 0600hrs was imposed and public places like nightclubs and bars were restricted to vaccinated patrons.

In these conditions, I had to rely largely on digital ethnographic methods to maintain contact with the research participants. Whilst NGO activities were suspended during the lockdowns, NJIVA Trust continued to provide virtual support to the communities through social media. The NGO had created several WhatsApp groups with which its employees could interact and provided technical support to community groups involved in specific initiatives. For example, there was a WhatsApp group on Agroecology (which comprised farmers involved in agroecology activities) and another group on holistic land and livestock management (HLLM), which comprised farmers participating in the donor-funded HLLM project. Internally, NJIVA

Trust also created WhatsApp groups that catered for the various classes of employees within the organization. I was subscribed to the following five internal WhatsApp groups:

1. *NJIVA Trust Programs group* – in which all program employees participated

2. *Program Management Team group* – which comprised Program Managers

3. *NJIVA Trust Evaluation group* – which was set up specifically for the BfW-funded project which was being evaluated and the group comprised NJIVA Employees in the Quality Management Department who were coordinating the evaluation process, and external consultants who had been engaged to conduct the project evaluation

4. *Funding/Grants for NJIVA group* – comprising NJIVA Trust employees in the Quality Management Department and Managers from other departments who were involved in fundraising; and

5. *Policy Briefs group* – comprising NJIVA Trust employees whom I had trained in advocacy and were tasked with developing advocacy materials for the organization.

Besides using these platforms to share expert knowledge and advice on specific issues, my involvement in the groups helped to keep track of internal developments within the NGO and to receive regular information concerning NJIVA Trust and its collaborating partners. Information about donor reporting deadlines, the DDC's request for progress reports, and funding opportunities were usually shared through these social media platforms. Meetings between NJIVA Trust and other stakeholders were held virtually through ZOOM during the lockdowns.

2.6 Ethics Considerations

Despite the advantages that I gained by being a native ethnographer, my positionality as a researcher, studying at a foreign university for that matter, and as a development expert, presented some ethical issues that I had to confront. Firstly, my volunteer tasks at NJIVA Trust,

which included providing training to employees and reviewing reports and proposals, affiliated me with the organization's senior management employees. While I was still able to develop rapport with lower-level employees, they tended to regard me as being more senior, and always used the prefix "Mr." whenever they were calling my name. Moreso, some employees were trying to find their way out of the organization through seeking opportunities elsewhere, and they were determined that I could help them find alternative work or scholarships to also study out of the country. For instance, Tawanda, a Program Officer at NJIVA Trust, frequently complained to me about the bad treatment that he was getting from his manager and how he wished to get another job outside the NGO. He could at times plead with me to help him find a job. I took his perspective into account and served as a listening ear for his problems, but I was also very clear to him that I was not in a position to find him a job.

Secondly, because of my affiliation with NJIVA Trust, some participants were hesitant to discuss issues that seemed to portray the NGO negatively. I observed this on two occasions. On the first occasion, I asked a senior official working for the local authority, the CRDC to describe the council's relationship with NJIVA Trust. He was very clear about the benefits that the CRDC obtained from working with the NGO, including the fact that the council sometimes asked for vehicles to use in the field, and that the NGO was always available to provide technical expertise during district-level planning processes, which included the development of district strategic plans and policies. When I then asked him to state some of the challenges that the CRDC faced while working with NJIVA Trust, he became elusive and asked that I should not record the discussion about the negative aspects of their collaboration. I complied with his request to stop the recording and promised that the things that we had discussed were solely for my academic purpose and would never be shared with anyone within the NGO. His fear, as he put it, was that

"the information could end up in the wrong hands." I later learned, during the fieldwork, that many state employees at the district level derived personal benefits from participating in NJIVA Trust activities. For instance, each time that a state employee was invited to participate in an activity that the NGO organized such as a field visit or workshop, they received participation allowances between US$30 and US$75 per day. The actual amount depended on the budget allocated for "stakeholder allowances" within specific projects. He feared that if he badmouthed NJIVA Trust I could transmit the information to employees of the NGO who, in turn, could potentially not invite him to participate in the NGO activities in the future.

On another occasion, Mukwasha (my host in Ngangu) and I had joined a group of young men at our usual drinking place, Green Bar, after we had come home from work. He introduced me to the group and stated that I was doing academic research while volunteering with NJIVA Trust, and I was conducting interviews to understand people's experiences of the cyclone. One of the men exclaimed, "We are tired of these NGOs. They are just coming here to collect information from us for their own use, but they give us nothing."

While this man was particularly vocal in his objection to the NGO work going on in the aftermath of Idai, this was a shared position among many survivors of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. This was an expression of fatigue, which I call survivor fatigue, by those who were directly affected by the disaster, and who felt that their plight created opportunities for external agencies to market their names and make money. As I will show in Chapter 6, this was a widespread perspective that I continuously ran into throughout my fieldwork. Soon after the disaster, NGOs of different types and sizes, and working on different issues flooded the post-Idai field. Quite a number of these NGOs conducted assessments (in most cases targeting the same people), either to inform their responses to the disaster or to capture stories for fundraising

purposes. For instance, a gender-focused NGO could visit a family and ask questions about how the cyclone impacted women and girls; on the same day an agriculture-focused NGO would visit the same family to inquire about the number of livestock or acreage of land that had been swept away, then a different NGO would come the following day with another set of questions. I gathered that most of these NGOs never went back to the communities to implement tangible activities – in cases where they did, the people who participated during the assessments almost always became invisible in the NGOs' interventions. On this fateful day, the young man who commented after I had been introduced to the group regarded me as representing those NGOs who came to extract information from the community and never came back to implement tangible activities. This encounter reminded me that I was supposed to be very cautious when approaching the survivors for interviews. As such, besides providing detailed explanations that my research was purely academic and that my dissertation would be publicly available, I also took time to build trust with the participants through, for example, engaging in informal discussions, and joining them when they watched soccer games on the television at Green Bar before I could ask for in-depth interviews.

Further, most survivors who lost family members and friends during the tropical cyclone Idai disaster had not yet fully recovered from the trauma that they experienced. I encountered some moments filled with emotions, which forced me to adjust my interview schedules and approaches. For instance, I visited Gogo Chihera in the Rusitu Valley of Chimanimani in June 2021. Rusitu Valley, is a communal area located in the south-eastern part of the district along the Mozambican border, and it is one of the areas that was most impacted by the tropical cyclone. I had previously met Gogo Chihera in May 2021 when she came for a meeting at the NJIVA Trust offices as a NJIVA Village Group (NVG) member, and it was from this meeting that she

accepted my request for a visit to her home in the Rusitu Valley where I would spend a week. When I finally visited her in the middle of June 2021, she offered to accompany me for a tour of Kopa Growth Point together with her two grandsons who were in their early 20s. Kopa Growth Point was the epicenter of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster in the Rusitu Valley and where a whole settlement was washed away by the floods. Gogo Chihera was determined to show me the evidence of the destruction that she had highlighted during an in-depth interview that I first held with her on the same day of my arrival at her home.

We walked down behind the shops at the Kopa Growth Point, towards the confluence of Nyahode and Rusitu rivers, Gogo Chihera in front, while her two grandsons and I were following behind. The place used to have more than 70 modern houses but had now been reduced to a sea of boulders. All the houses, and most of the occupants, were washed away by the floods, and many bodies were never recovered. As we were touring the place, Gogo Chihera showed me sites where some people that she knew personally used to have their houses. Then, as we got to a certain site where the homestead of her best friend used to be located, she broke down and indicated that she could no longer continue with the tour. Her friend was killed by the floods together with her husband, and they were among those declared missing persons. Whilst we had to immediately terminate the tour, from that experience, I came to appreciate the emotions and sense of loss that survivors still held more than two years after the devastating tropical cyclone. Although Gogo Chihera indicated that she did not need specialized counselling following the tour, I took the initiative of comforting her and diverting her mind from thinking much about what had happened during the tour. I drove her back to her homestead and spent the latter part of the day focusing our discussions much on what excited her most when we first at the NJIVA Trust offices, which was her experience when she stayed at my uncle's homestead during her

daughter's sickness. Given the devastating impact of the tropical cyclone, I anticipated emotions like those of Gogo Chihera to be common, especially during interviews with survivors who directly experienced losses. So, in all the interviews, I avoided posing direct questions about the participants' losses, and instead focused more on the support systems that were accessible to them in the aftermath of the cyclone. Some survivors were, however, open enough to tell me about the family members and properties that they lost, and in such cases, I followed up with probing questions that helped me to understand how they were coping with the situation.

Lastly, as highlighted in the above section, I conducted this research in the middle of a global public health crisis, which called for me to adhere to all the national COVID-19 protocols and regulations. However, the need to observe these protocols, like maintaining social distancing and masking, introduced a new culture, which I, as a researcher and the communities, had to jointly learn to adapt. Having grown up in Chimanimani, I was aware of some cultural aspects that defined personhood and sociability within the society. For instance, practices like shaking hands, followed by a clap, when greeting people are embedded in the cultural framings of the Ndau society as a form of respect. I found it strange, as much as the research participants did, to drop some of these cultural elements because they did not conform to the COVID-19 protocols and regulations. I will use an example of one incident to demonstrate how at times I was entangled in between society's cultural and moral expectations and the ethical obligation to keep the people that I interacted with safe.

As far as I understand the Shona culture and specifically the Ndau customary norms, a funeral gathering is such an important occasion that enables friends and relatives to pay their last respects to the deceased. I lost a close relative during the time that the country was under the revised Level 4 lockdown measures when funeral gatherings were limited to only 50 people. I

drove to the village for the funeral. It was easy to pass through police checkpoints because I had a copy of the burial order for the deceased which I always produced as proof that I had good reasons for travelling during the lockdown. Upon arriving at the funeral, I found that the villagers were in their hundreds contrary to the lockdown orders. The superintendence of the control measures in the village was not as tight as in the towns. I observed during the funeral gathering that some people had their masks correctly put on, others had the masks dropping down their chins and others had them tied around their arms like bracelets. There was no one to ensure that COVID-19 protocols were observed. This presented a huge ethical challenge to me because culturally, I was expected to stick around and commiserate with others (which would define my personhood in the eyes of the villagers), and at the same time, I had to respect the national COVID-19 protocols as a researcher and ensured that I did not endanger community members that I came into conduct with while at the same time ensuring my own safety. Subsequently, I decided to stay at the funeral, but as much as I could, I avoided close contact with people and always had my mask put on.

Similar ethical complications surfaced throughout the research period when I visited other communities for interviews. On many occasions, I had to carry 2 to 3 people in my car who I met along the roads or after attending meetings. Refusing to give them rides could be interpreted as a serious affront and could have closed many doors to engaging with the participants. As such, I always kept extra masks in the car and ensured that all passengers had their masks properly put on. I also kept the car sanitized and kept a bottle of alcohol-based sanitizer which I applied to everyone entering the car. By taking the above precautionary measures I successfully completed the 14 months of my fieldwork in Chimanimani without any COVID-19 incident.

Having laid out the methodological approach and described the conditions of my fieldwork, the next chapter sets up the context for my study. It provides a more detailed account of why tropical cyclone Idai caused so much destruction in Chimanimani. The chapter adopts a political ecology approach to reveal the root causes of vulnerability and to explain the reasons why the impact of the cyclone was disproportionally distributed across different socio-economic groups even though they were equally exposed to the tropical cyclone Idai hazard.

Chapter 3   **The Political Ecology of Tropical Cyclone Idai in Chimanimani**

3.1 Introduction
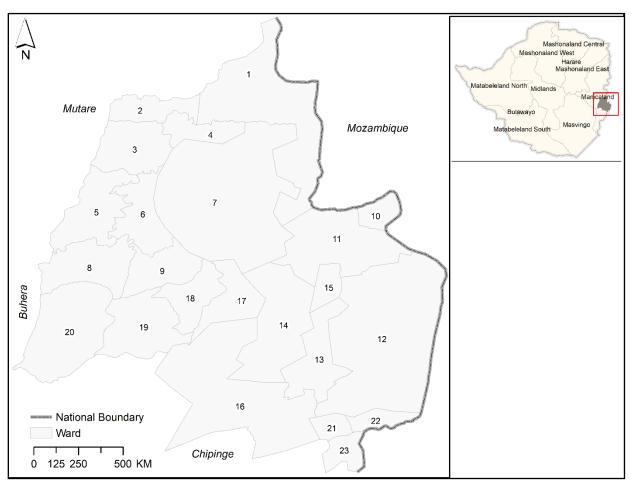
Tropical cyclone Idai is by far the deadliest rapid-onset environmental catastrophe that has been recorded in the modern history of Zimbabwe. After claiming more than 340 lives, destroying properties worth millions of dollars, and with more than 300 people still unaccounted for (Nhamo & Chikodzi 2021; Dube, et al. 2021; Munsaka, et al. 2021; Chanza, et al. 2020), questions remain as to why the tropical cyclone caused so much unprecedented destruction. In particular, why certain socio-economic groups of people in the district were affected more than others? Following the disaster, Chimanimani became an important site of academic research, and at the time of my fieldwork, a handful of scholarly work had been published covering a wide range of subjects, including institutional responses to the disaster (Samutereko 2021; Munsaka, et al., 2021; Gwimbi 2021), the impact of the tropical cyclone on agriculture and livelihoods (Chikodzi, et al., 2021; Kabonga, et al., 2021), how it affected biodiversity and natural resources (Kunedzimwe, et al., 2021; Chari, et al., 2021), impact on health and nutrition (Chingombe & Musarandega 2021; Mutonhodza 2021), gender issues which emerged or manifested as a result to the disaster (Chitongo et al., 2019), tourism (Nhamo, et al., 2021), the destruction caused to the built environment (Chatiza 2019), as well as challenges faced by agencies assisting survivors (Nyahunda, et al., 2022). The research works, however, limited the causal factors of the extensive destruction of tropical cyclone Idai to the ecological characteristics of the Chimanimani district (NJIVA Trust 2020), hydro-meteorological aspects of the cyclone itself (Dube, et al 2021) and to some extent, anthropogenic factors, which include poor settlement planning and population pressure (Chatiza 2019; NJIVA Trust 2020).

No research had critically investigated the root causes of the vulnerability of communities that were directly affected by the disaster. As such, this chapter contributes toward filling this gap by employing political ecology to interrogate why and how tropical cyclone Idai impacted families in Chimanimani unevenly. It also interrogates how the pre-existing inequalities weakened the community's capacity to effectively respond to the disaster and encouraged disaster authoritarianism by creating a population of survivors that had to rely on external agencies, including the state and NGOs, for emergency disaster relief, recovery, and reconstruction support. To this end, I trace the historical production and reproduction of vulnerability, and how this has led to the exposure of communities in the district to environmental hazards like tropical cyclones. Specifically, the chapter looks at how capitalist colonial land dispossessions and the process of proletarianization of native Africans influenced their relations with the environment. I also deal with postcolonial land reform processes and their implications on the production and reproduction of inequalities. Furthermore, the chapter looks at how post-independence economic reforms, which include the adoption of neoliberalism during the 1980s, and the implementation of economic adjustment programs in the early 1990s, have deepened the vulnerability of communities in Chimanimani. Lastly, I show how the impact of the cyclone is linked to the intensified production and marketization of high-value fruits, especially bananas, in some of the areas that were most impacted by the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. From a political ecology point of view, I argue that the severity of destruction caused by tropical cyclone Idai is traceable to a web of conditions of vulnerability that has been produced, reproduced, and sustained for years before the cyclone occurred. These pre-existing conditions of vulnerability were responsible for producing a population of survivors, which had to rely on

external agencies, including the state and NGOs, for emergency disaster relief, recovery, and reconstruction support.

3.2 From Peasantry to Proletarianization: Production of Vulnerability in Chimanimani

Known during the colonial period as "Melsetter", Chimanimani is one of the seven districts of the Manicaland province of Zimbabwe. The district occupies approximately 354,805 ha of land in the southern part of Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands. The Chimanimani district borders Mozambique to the east, Chipinge district to the west, and Mutare to the north (Map 1).

Map 1: The Location of Chimanimani District[9]

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[9] Map created by David Gwenzi

The name Melsetter came from Thomas Moodie, the leader of the pioneer settlers, who on his

way from the Orange Free State in South Africa to Gazaland in 1892, discovered a beautifully

sited land, in the hills facing the Chimanimani Mountains, with evergreen vegetation and rich

soils, and suggested to the British South Africa Company[10], that the place assume the same

name, Melsetter, as his grandfather's estate in the Orkney Islands, Scotland (Ndumeya 2015;

Sinclair 1971). Moodie's grandfather "was the last laird of Melsetter in the Orkney Islands [who]

came to South Africa in 1817" as the colonization project unfolded (Sinclair 1971, p. 1).

Moodie's trek finally settled in the south of the Chimanimani Mountain range in 1893, which the

settlers named South Melsetter, and which covers today's Chipinge district. Moodie's trek was

followed by the Marthinus Jacobus Martin and Henry Steyn wagons of 1894, which also trekked

from the Orange Free State and settled in a place that they named Melsetter (now Chimanimani),

while other trekkers proceeded further north, and settled in North Melsetter, which was later

named Cashel (Bolding 2004; De Bruijn & De Bruijn 1991; Sinclair 1971).

Up until 1945, these three areas, South Melsetter, Melsetter and North Melsetter, were

administered by one Native Commissioner[11] and were later divided into Melsetter (including

North Melsetter) and Chipinga Districts (Ndumeya 2015; Sinclair 1971). The two districts,

Melsetter and Chipinga, became Chimanimani and Chipinge districts respectively upon

independence in 1980 (Ndumeya 2015; Bolding 2004). The scope of this thesis is only limited to

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[10] The British South Africa Company (BSAC) was a mercantile company based in London that was incorporated in October 1889 under a royal charter at the instigation of Cecil Rhodes, with the object of acquiring and exercising commercial and administrative rights in south-central Africa. (Source: https://www.britannica.com/topic/British-South-Africa-Company. Retrieved 22 April 2022).

[11]The colony was divided into native districts, with a Commissioner in each. These Commissioners were responsible for tax collection, for the settlement of native disputes, and for the trial of civil cases below a certain standard of penalty (Jollie 1935, p. 975)

the Chimanimani district although I will at times refer to Chipinge, when discussing the socio-cultural aspects of the people who lived in these areas before the arrival of white settlers.

Topographically, the Chimanimani district has a highly rugged terrain and has the highest mountain ranges and the lowest valleys in the country. The mountainous eastern plateau rises to about 2440m above sea level (NJIVA Trust 2020; CRDC 2017), while the western part, which slopes down into the lowlands of Save Valley, lies at an altitude ranging from less than 250m to about 550m above sea level[12].

The district has all the five agro-ecological zones, or natural regions, found in Zimbabwe (FAO 2006). These agro-ecological boundaries were initially set in the 1960s during the colonial era on the basis of the rainfall regime, elevation, soil quality and vegetation type and other climatic characteristics, and they became an important foundation upon which the racial segregation of land between the white settlers and native blacks was defined (ISRIC 2005). The purpose of setting up the zones was to facilitate rural land-use planning by separating areas with similar sets of characteristics for development. However, as evidence was already showing shifts in the boundaries of the natural regions due to increased variability of rainfall and the impact of climate change (Mugandani et al., 2012; Chikodzi et al., 2013), the zones were recently reclassified in September 2020 to help farmers plan better and be responsive to the changing climatic conditions. Table 1 below shows the characteristics of the five natural regions.

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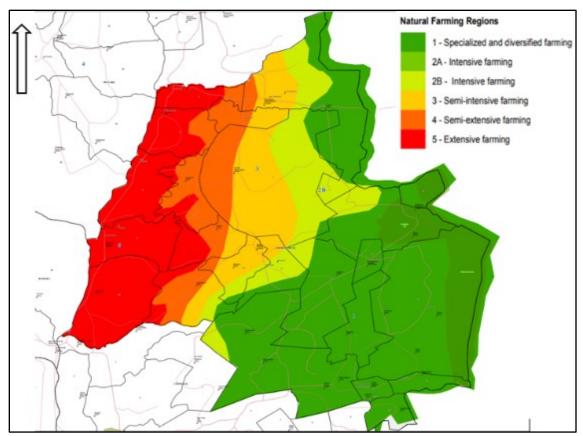
[12] https://en-gb.topographic-map.com/maps/iyzu/Chimanimani/. Retrieved 22 April 2022

Table 1: The Agro-Ecological Regions of Zimbabwe

Agro-ecological region	Annual rainfall (mm)	Farming systems
I	>1000	Suitable for dairy farming forestry, tea, coffee, fruit, beef and maize
II	700-1050	Suitable for intensive farming, based on maize, tobacco, cotton and livestock.
III	500-800	Semi-intensive farming region. livestock production, cash and fodder crops.
IV	450-650	Semi-extensive region. Suitable for farm systems based on livestock and resistant fodder crops. Forestry, wildlife/tourism.
V	<450	Extensive farming region. Suitable for extensive cattle ranching. Zambezi Valley is infested with tsetse fly. Forestry, wildlife/tourism.

Source: ZIMFACT (2020)

The gradation of the landscape of Chimanimani, from very high rainfall receiving highlands to the low veld, is such that the district covers all the five natural agro-ecological regions of the country. The highlands are characterized by cool temperatures, high rainfall (averaging 1114 mm per annum), rich soils and they are the sources of major rivers like Nyanyadzi and Umvumvumvu that flow to the west, mouthing into the Odzi River, as well as Haroni, Musapa and Rusitu rivers which flow eastwards into Mozambique (Ndumeya 2015; Bolding 2004). As one moves westwards from the plateau, annual rainfall gradually drops to between 500mm to 700mm around the middle veld, and further to less than 450mm at the lower reach of the Save Valley (Map 2).

Map 2: The Agro-ecological Regions of Chimanimani
Adapted from (UN OCHA 2012)[13]

The lower veld is characterized by deep sandy soils and sparse forest cover dominated by

drought-resistant trees like baobab (Ndumeya 2015; Bolding 2004).

Demographically, the Chimanimani district has witnessed a steady population increase

over the past few decades. In 1992 the district had a population of about 110,836 inhabitants

(CSO, 1994, as cited in Bolding 2004, p. 28). By 2012 the population had increased to 133,810

people, representing an inter-census growth rate of 2.3% from 2002 (Zimstat 2013). The CRDC

estimated that with a projected annual growth rate of 1.15%, the population exceeded 140,000 as

of 2016 (CRDC 2017). As it will become clearer in this chapter, the increase in human

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[13] A map of Chimanimani agro-ecological regions after the September 2020 reclassifications could not be obtained
during the research hence, I had to rely on the UN OCHA 2012 map. The map is for illustrative purposes, and it is
not according to scale.

population coupled with historical conditions of inequality were among the factors that worsened the destructive impact of tropical cyclone Idai in the district.

Having provided an overview of the Chimanimani district, I now turn to a more detailed discussion of the historical sources of vulnerability. First, I shall explain how the inhabitants of Chimanimani related to their environment before encountering European settlers during the last decade of the 19th century, and specifically, I discuss pre-colonial food production systems and how these enabled early inhabitants of Chimanimani to maintain a relative balance with their natural resources. Secondly, I venture into the discussion of how colonial processes of accumulation and land dispossessions contributed to the production of vulnerability to disasters that we witness in Chimanimani today.

3.3 The Pre-colonial Inhabitants of Chimanimani

The pre-colonial history of Chimanimani is not well documented. Details about settlement patterns, political organization and governance systems of the early societies are mainly located in records of observations by the early European settlers and from carvings, paintings, and physical structure studies by archaeologists. Archaeology work, for instance, shows that the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe were occupied by hunter-gatherers as far back as the Pleistocene times (Mupira 2013; O'Flaherty 1997). The rock paintings identified in the Chimanimani Mountains provide evidence that the early communities survived on hunting and killing animals like elephants, buffalos, elands, and other small game animals (Sinclair 1971). The hunting and gathering communities are believed to have continued to inhabit this area until "the arrival of ethnically distinct Bantu-speaking early farmers around 100 to 200 AD" (Mupira 2013, p. 195). These early farmers, predominantly the Ndau, inhabited the land between the Indian Ocean, Sabi (now Save) River, and the Buzi River, covering the present-day Chimanimani and Chipinge

districts, and some southern parts of the Manica and Sofala provinces of Mozambique (Rennie 1973, p. 35). Among other things, the early Ndau society kept livestock, including cattle, goats, sheep, and fowls, and grew and traded a variety of crops, such as sorghum, groundnuts, finger millet *(Eleusine coracana)*, known as *rukweza* or rapoko, bulrush millet *(Pennisetum typhoideum)*, pumpkins, melons and cucumbers (in the semi-dry and dry regions) and rice and sugarcane (in the wetter areas) (Rennie 1973, p. 46; Sinclair 1971). Farming techniques involved a combination of shifting cultivation, land rotation, and slash and burn cultivation. Clans moved to newer and more fertile lands regularly when the land was used up, a system that worked well given the plentiful land and low population density (Mupira 2013). As noted by Palmer (1977, p. 15), rotation cultivation was the native Africans' "concession to the nature of the soil … It was an adaptation to the environment … which allowed the soil ample time to recover its fertility and prevented soil erosion." In addition, they also traded gold, ivory, and other commodities with neighbors from southeast Africa, such as Muslims from the Swahili coast, and Portuguese within the region (MacGonagle 2007).

Access to and use of natural resources were regulated through cultural beliefs that connected the Ndau society to the supernatural world. Early studies by scholars like Junod (1934) found that one way that the Ndau people related to nature was through totemism. Each clan claimed descent from one ancestor and the clan's identity was defined through a distinctive totem *(mutupo)* (MacGonagle 2007). The *mutupo* was usually a specific sacred animal, which members of the clan were prohibited from eating. Although the totem was never a plant or other elements of nature, Junod (1934, p. 26) observed that these became "taboo when they [had] been touched by the animal totem." Apart from the totems, the Ndau people designated certain areas as *rambakutemwa*, *rambakutsva* and *rambakurimwa,* where cutting down of trees, burning and

cultivation were prohibited, respectively. Such areas, O'Flaherty (1997, pp. 52-53) learned, "were grave sites of the dominant lineages or sacred grove in which the ancestors of the dominant lineages (*mhondoro*) were contacted". Through communication with the *mhondoro*, the chiefs ensured that their territories were well-nourished and protected while neglecting them was tantamount to inviting curses or misfortunes. It was in the sacred places, including the forests, where rainmaking ceremonies and other rituals were conducted (Ndumeya 2015; MacGonagle 2007).

Although the Ndau societal boundaries were not clearly defined, they were marked by well-known landmarks and visible boundaries such as rivers (Hughes 2001; Rennie 1973, p. 75). The territory *(Nyika)* was under the control of the chief (*changamire/mambo*) who was assisted by "agnatic or nonagnatic assistants, the headmen (*maSadunhu*)" (Mupira 2013, p. 202). These two male authorities were responsible for the allocation of land for individual use to both agnatic kin and agnatically unrelated families, but the chief remained the formal custodian (Rennie 1973, p. 76). Although the chief had overall oversight over *Nyika* and the land, the economic system ensured equality of access to resources, as "[t]he whole population engaged in essentially the same kinds of subsistence activities" (Rennie 1973, p. 53). Agricultural operations, such as planting, weeding, and harvesting were carried out communally, a labour mobilization system locally known as *Nhimbe*, with the head of the household providing food and beer as an incentive to the work (Mahohoma & Muzambi 2021; Palmer 1977). Since the Chimanimani valleys were sparsely populated, family lineages had relative freedom to choose their own settlement patterns if they remained within the jurisdiction of the chiefdom (Mupira 2013).

The size of the Ndau community inhabiting the Chimanimani area when the first European settlers arrived is difficult to ascertain. Records collected by Sinclair (1971) estimate

that a total local population of around 5,000 inhabitants, with no real settlement or indications of permanency, was living in the area. This seemed to the trekkers that the land was "neglected and underutilized and to some extent justified the implantation of new social, economic and political orders" (Mupira 2013, p.203). Nonetheless, tax records analyzed by Rennie (1973, p. 194) show that the African population in the district of Melsetter rose from about 13,000 inhabitants in 1897 to around 40,490 in 1948. As we will see below, the African population was now fast increasing alongside heightened restrictions on access to productive assets due to colonial dispossession.

In January 1897, the Portuguese East Africa (now Mozambique) – Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) boundary was established by colonial powers (Sinclair 1971). Not only did the artificial border divide some of the newly acquired farms, but the *Nyika* as well (MacGonagle 2007). As Sinclair (1971, p. 23) admits, "it took time for everyone to know just where the boundary was." The demarcation, Ndumeya (2015: p. 3) adds, "left the Ndau people, sharing a common culture and even blood bonds, across both sides of the border" (Ndumeya 2015, p. 3). Such were the beginnings of a crusade of white capitalist accumulation, and forceful dispossessions and dislocations of the native Ndau people, which occurred throughout the colonial period, and upon which the destructive impact of tropical cyclone Idai was rooted.

3.4 Accumulation by Dispossession and the Production of Vulnerability

On the 3rd of November in 1894, the Marthinus Martin's Trek, which had set out of Orange Free State on 10th April 1894 with 24 wagons and 104 members, and which grew as other families joined along the way, finally arrived at Lindley[14] in Chimanimani. "… after a few days there each said farewell to his fellow-trekkers to settle on the farm of his choice" (Sinclair 1971, p. 16). Thereafter, the settlers benefited from exclusionist ordinances and laws that facilitated the

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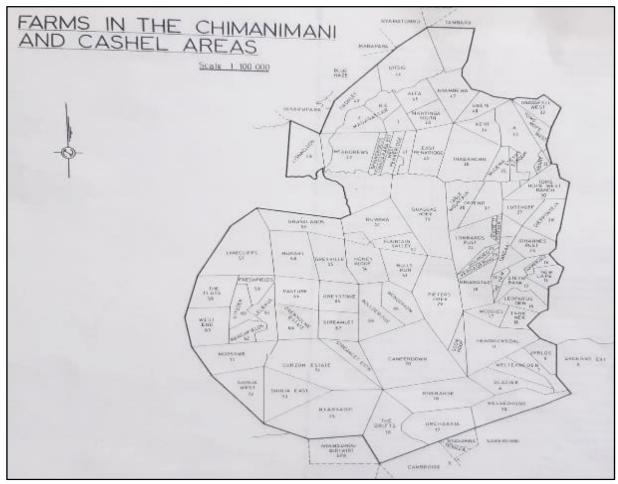
[14] Lindley Farm sits on about 395ha of land on the eastern side of the Chimanimani business centre (Chatiza 2019). It was allocated to Abraham Olwage who was among the trekkers (Sinclair 1971).

recission of ownership rights from the native populations. The sparse distribution of Ndau clans in the Chimanimani area was interpreted by the newcomers to mean the absence of "any form of administration", which the settlers capitalized on "to establish land claims and control over resident Africans which later administrators found difficult to change" (Bolding 2004, p. 24). Rennie (1973, p. 44) suggests that the Ndau clans did not have a clearly defined group identity, a situation that allowed the settler accumulation process to succeed without much resistance.

As Maposa et al. (2010) write, the land expropriation process progressed gradually and did not mean an immediate restriction of the native Ndau people from their land. This was so because the land was still abundant, and the settlers required labour, which during the time, was in short supply. The main challenge that the settlers confronted during these early years of conquest was of persuading the natives, who were historically self-sustaining, to work for them (Hughes 2006). The settlers, Maposa and his colleagues (2010, p. 191) further state, initially instituted a "semi-feudal" system, comprising tenancy labour, "to cut down on the operational costs" and "as a short-term answer to the labour problem." As time progressed, the native blacks were forced to pay rent or commit to providing free labour to the colonial enterprises through an organized but involuntary system locally known as *chibharo* (Maposa et al. 2010; Hughes 2006; van Onselen 1976). Through the *chibharo* system, natives were compelled to provide at least three days per week of free labour to white enterprises, failure of which would invite sanctions, including flogging (Hughes 2006). Hughes (2006, p. 55) further categorized this labour mobilization system as a "kaffir-farming" strategy through which the settlers violently "harvested the human resources on their farms, forcing blacks to work for them." Local cultural institutions were allowed to continue functioning, and although they were left out of the formal settler planning system (MacGonagle 2007), the chiefs, in particular, became the vehicles

through which the settlers mobilized native labour and indirectly governed the native people (Hughes 2006).

With colonial legislations like the Native Reserves Order of 1898 and the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, Native populations were alienated from the fertile and well-watered plateau and pushed into congested Native Reserves established in the low-lying semi-dry, hilly, and less fertile areas to the west and east of the Chimanimani plateau (Mupira 2013; Maposa et al., 2010; Hughes 2006; Bolding 2004). Effectively, Bolding (2004, p. 25) claims that native Africans' ownership and occupation rights of fertile lands located on latitudes above 900 meters "were extinguished." The reserves, later renamed Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs) through the Tribal Trust Lands Act of 1967, served as sources of cheap labour for the settlers' farming, construction, and mining enterprises (Hughes 2006; Bolding 2004; van Onselen 1976). The costs of labour reproduction were born by the reserves (O'Flaherty 1997). Individual white farmers accumulated as much as "3,000 hectares of land per family while communal area holdings" were limited to an average of three hectares per family for cultivation and grazing (Bratton 1987, as cited by O'Flaherty 1997, p. 8). The map below shows that until 1980, the Chimanimani area was almost wholly demarcated into white settler farms (Map 3). However, most of the farms located in the marginal and dry regions in the west, including West End Farm discussed in chapter 2, were never physically occupied but set aside as cattle ranches (De Bruijn & De Bruijn 1991; Palmer 1977).

Map 3: Farms in the Chimanimani and Cashel Areas
Source: (De Bruijn & De Bruijn 1991, p. 154)

The dislocations and dispossessions transformed the Ndau people of Chimanimani from being

self-sustaining farmers to wage-dependent labourers who no longer had claims of ownership to

the land (Mlambo 2014). Although subsistence farming remained an important part of people's

livelihoods, wage labour became increasingly more important due to the demands by the colonial

system for hut taxes, and as pressures over limited land and other resources piled up in the native

reserves. Unlike during the pre-colonial period when the chiefs were the custodian of the land,

their functions in the TTLs had now been reduced to just maintaining discipline and order, while ownership of the land was now vested in the High Commissioner[15] (Jollie 1935, p. 979).

The role of the chiefs became that of bolstering colonial governance while at the same time undermining their authority locally. They became incorporated into the settler governance system through personal rewards and sanctions, including removals and demotions to those who resisted colonial rule (Mapedza 2007). Having been incorporated into the settler governance and education system, Chief Ngorima of the Ngorima TTL, for instance, became the first traditional leader to be elevated to a Senator in the Rhodesian Senate in the 1960s (Sinclair 1971). Mapedza (2007, p. 186) argues that personally rewarding the chiefs made them "more malleable to the interests of the colonial power in terms of local taxation, land administration, and control of the black constituencies." To further reinforce their allegiance to the colonial rule, chiefs were now being paid allowances at a rate fixed by the colonial state. Before the arrival of the white settlers in Chimanimani, chieftaincy was the most superior power, but this changed during the colonial era when the some chiefs lost legitimacy of their own and had to seek recognition from the colonial government (Rennie 1973, p. 158). The Native Commissioner was now responsible for recommending the removal or demotion of chiefs unlike during the pre-colonial era when this role was assumed by the *mhondoros* (Mapedza 2007). Overall, the role of the chiefs in allocating and controlling land had now been depleted and most land administration affairs were now in the hands of the white settlers.

Although the Southern Rhodesia Order in Council of 1898 authorized Africans with the necessary financial resources and expertise to purchase freehold land just like the white settlers,

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[15] The High Commissioner was responsible for governing all native affairs and British possessions in Southern Africa, and in the protectorates of Basutoland (now Lesotho), the Bechuanaland (now Botswana) and Swaziland (Source: https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C6163. Accessed 26 April 2022).

only three applications for land from non-white farmers were recorded in the whole colony by 1914 (Palmer 1977). The prevailing colonial system did not allow Africans to acquire enough capital to buy land. By 1969, the population in the TTLs in the Chimanimani had increased to approximately 60,000 from about 5,000 inhabitants who inhabited the whole district when the Europeans first arrived (Sinclair 1971). Overgrazing and competition for farming land became a major ecological problem in the TLLs, and with the best land appropriated by the European settlers, black inhabitants were forced to subsist through cultivating in disaster-prone areas such as on hill slopes and along water channels (Ndumeya 2015). While the native Africans suffered starvation due to the lack of cultivation and grazing land in the TTLs, the white settlers saw it as an opportunity to mobilize cheap labour for their farming enterprises.

The main challenges faced by white farmers in Chimanimani, especially those who ventured into horticulture and dairy farming, was the failure to get their products to the markets in Salisbury (now Harare) and Umtali (now Mutare) in time because of the distance and poor road network (Hlongwana 2021; Timberlake et al., 2016; Sinclair 1971). As such, by the 1940s many farmers sold their land to the state and purchased new farms nearer to the market in Salisbury and Umtali (Hlongwana 2021; Sinclair 1971). This challenge was compounded by the continual recurrence of livestock diseases such as East Coast Fever, which made dairy ventures uneconomic, resulting in some parts of the Chimanimani plateau being recommended by the Veterinary Department to be set aside as cattle-free zones, and converted to forestry, tea, and coffee plantations (Hlongwana 2021; Ndumeya 2015). During this time, some individual farmers already had small private plantations of pines, eucalyptus, cypresses, and poplars (Sinclair 1971). These flourishing private plantations of exotic species motivated the decision to expand forestry production in the eastern highlands as a large-scale enterprise. As Sinclair shows, the mid-1940s

witnessed an influx of private companies like the Rhodesian Wattle Co. Ltd, Border Forests (Rhodesia) Ltd, which was later changed to Border Timbers Ltd. in 1957), and Natal Company starting to buy large tracks of land for forestry production from the farmers who were relocating to places near Salisbury and Umtali (Sinclair 1971; Hlongwana 2021). The native Africans who had remained on the farms as labour tenants were now expected to adapt to the plantation economies by staying and becoming full-time plantation labourers, or else their continued stay was illegal and punishable by eviction (Ndumeya 2015). Ndumeya (2015, p. 15) adds that a series of evictions from forestry plantations took place from the mid-1940s to the late 1950s including the eviction of at least 346 African "squatters" who were moved off the Melsetter plateau and resettled into the Muusha and Ngorima reserves in 1952. The evictees were being relocated into reserves which were already overcrowded and in hot and dry areas that could not support meaningful agricultural activities. In a similar case, the establishment of the Martin Forest to the east of the Chimanimani plateau in the 1940s led to the displacement of the whole Saungweme dynasty under Chief Chikukwa, who were left with no land of their own after being relocated to pave way for the forest plantation and forced to "leave behind many historic places of symbolic and spiritual importance" (Mupira 2013, p. 204). The plantations, as Hughes (2006) further shows, did not require as much labour as the horticulture and dairy farms. The repercussions, therefore, were that many of the former labour tenants were forced to join other natives in the crowded reserves.

The expansion of forest plantations was followed by the establishment of secondary industries such as sawmills (Timberlake, et al., 2016). By the mid to the late 1960s, almost "half (49%) of all timber planted in Rhodesia was grown in Chimanimani" (Bolding 2004, p. 27). The development of the forestry industry did not only further push off the native people from their

land, but also affected the symbolic, cultural, and spiritual attachment that they had with the

forests (Mupira 2013; Bolding 2004). As O'Flaherty (1997, p. 206) notes:

> To establish the forest plantations of the Eastern highlands, for example, rich–indigenous
> forests … not simply stands of trees but entire ecosystems rich in plant and animal life …
> were liquidated and replaced with exotic timber species. Through much of the colonial
> era, indigenous woodlands were seen as unproductive and indigenous use as wasteful.
> This false picture served to justify the European expulsion of Africans from the land and
> the liquidation of woodlands and forests to meet the needs of settler agriculture, herding,
> exotic timber plantations and mines.
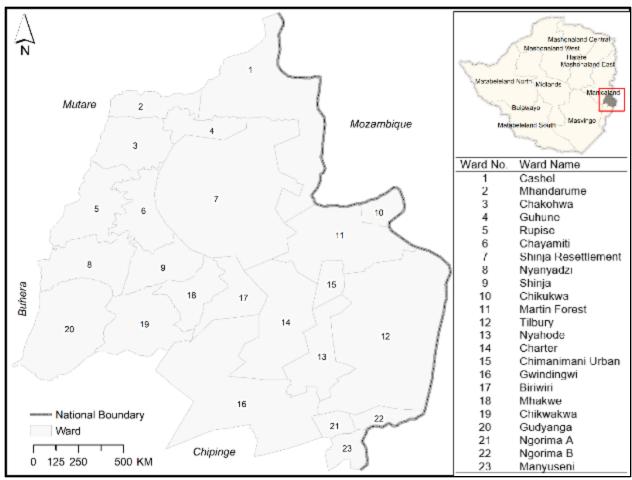
The unfounded assumption that "indigenous use was wasteful" was asserted in 1949 when about

8,186 ha of land along the Chimanimani Mountains range were set as a national park – the

Chimanimani National Park (Timberlake et al., 2016). While conducting research in the Rusitu

Valley during the early 1990s, Hughes (2016), for instance, found that despite the original

boundaries, the National Park had been continuously expanded into the native reserves. In his

case, Hughes worked directly with communities in the communal areas of the Ngorima chiefdom

whose land had been annexed and incorporated into the Chimanimani National Park. Because of

such dispossessions, native people became concentrated in the marginal and environmentally

fragile reserves prone to hydrometeorological catastrophes like droughts, floods, cyclones, and

landslides, among others.

It was because of these inequalities, and the quest by the native Zimbabweans to have

equal access to natural resources that the war, which ultimately liberated the country in 1980 was

waged. However, as we will see in the sections that follow, the post-independence period has not

necessarily achieved social equality, rather some socio-economic and political processes adopted

by the postcolonial authoritarian state have further widened the gap between the haves and have-

nots, leaving certain social groups more vulnerable to the destructive effects of disasters like the

tropical cyclone Idai than others.

3.5 Continuities and the Reproduction of Vulnerability in Postcolonial Zimbabwe

At the time of independence from colonial rule in 1980, land ownership and environmental governance in Zimbabwe were vested in state institutions, an arrangement that had already interrupted the traditional system which previously defined the intrinsic relations between humans and the environment (Moyo, 2005). At the same time, the new Zimbabwean government inherited a dualized system in which about 6,000 white commercial farmers had access to over 15.5 million hectares of the best arable land, 8,500 small-scale African farmers had 1.4 million hectares, and the majority of black Zimbabweans occupied a mere 16.4 million hectares of mostly communal land – much of it in arid areas with poor soils and highly fragile areas (Sithole et al., 2003; Sachikonye 2003). In this section, I look at how political processes aimed at redressing these imbalances, and other factors outside the purview and control of the new government, including the effects of global neoliberalism, reproduced the vulnerabilities that increased the exposure of communities in Chimanimani to the destructive impact of tropical cyclone Idai.

The Melsetter district was renamed Chimanimani following independence in 1980 and was divided into 23 administrative wards **(**Map 4**)**. Each ward is headed by an elected ward councillor. Eighteen of the wards cover communal lands, one is located in a resettlement area, three are in commercial farming areas and one covers an urban and peri-urban area (NJIVA Trust 2020, p. 2).

Map 4: The Administrative Wards of Chimanimani District[16]

The new administrative borders do not in any way correspond to the chieftainship divisions or territorial demarcations which existed during the pre-colonial era. Currently, the Chimanimani district lies within 5 Chiefdoms, Chief Ngorima, Chief Chikukwa, Chief Saurombe, Chief Muusha and Chief Mutambara. In many cases, the administrative ward boundaries overlap into two or three chiefdoms. The authority of the chiefs is still very much circumscribed, and the postcolonial state seemed to have further decimated their functions and powers through instituting legislations that facilitated the transfer of power over "land and judicial processes to bureaucratic and party functionaries" (Nkomo 2021, p. 47). Nkomo interpreted the further

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[16] Map created by David Gwenzi

decimation of chiefs' powers after independence as a punitive response by the postcolonial state

against the chiefs' allegiance and patronage to the colonial state, which contradicted the spirit of

African nationalism. As such, the traditional roles of chiefs were minimally considered in

agrarian reform and redistributive processes that the postcolonial state spearheaded. The

following section looks at the agrarian reform and redistributive processes and examines the

extent to which they have addressed the inequalities and conditions of vulnerability created and

left by the colonial system.

3.6 Postcolonial Agrarian Reforms and Vulnerability to Disasters in Chimanimani

The tone for postcolonial land redistribution and governance was set during the December 1979

Lancaster House Agreement in London when Zimbabwe's independence was negotiated, and a

new constitution agreed upon. The Lancaster House conference, which was chaired by Britain's

Lord Carrington and attended by Zimbabwe nationalists and the Rhodesian government's

representatives, opened on 10 September, and ended on 15 December, following 47 intensive

and heated plenary sessions. The conference was held following the invitation of the British

government to discuss and reach an agreement on the terms of an independence constitution and

to enable the Rhodesian government and the Zimbabwean fighters to settle their differences by

political means (Lancaster House Agreement, 21 December 1979). Not only did the delegates

come up with a compromised framework on how the country was going to transition to majority

rule, but they also deliberated on how the land issue, which was the major trigger of the war of

liberation, was going to be addressed.

To redress racial and class inequalities between the white minority and the black

Zimbabwean population, the new government has implemented a series of agrarian reform

processes since the early 1980s. The TTLs were renamed "communal areas", and the white-

owned land, "commercial areas" (Alexander 2006, pp. 111-2). The first phase of land reform,

which was implemented within the first decade of independence, entailed the settling of people

by the central "government on land acquired from large-scale commercial farmers on a 'willing-

seller, willing-buyer' basis" (Sachikonye 2003, p.229). The crux of this first phase, which was

implemented within the 1981 Growth with Equity Policy framework, and through the 1985 Land

Acquisition Act (Bolding 2004; Sachikonye 2003), was to redefine territoriality by decongesting

the communal areas and removing "the territorial and social segregation of communal areas from

former large-scale commercial farming areas in terms of local administration and land tenure

regulation, and enable the free flow of people, goods, services, and livestock between them"

(Moyo 2011, p. 496). Under the Lancaster House Constitution, Zimbabwe and Britain agreed on

a 10-year land acquisition plan in which:

> the [Zimbabwean] government could acquire any land on a "willing seller, willing buyer"
> basis, only under-utilized land, which was required for resettlement or other public
> purposes, could be acquired compulsorily, and in such cases, compensation had to be
> adequate (i.e. based on the full market value of the land), it was payable promptly and it
> was remittable abroad (Coldham 1993, p. 82).

The state had initially set an ambitious target of settling 162,000 landless black families on nine

million hectares of land nationally (Sachikonye 2003; Moyo 2011). However, under the 1985

Five Year Plan, the target was revised downwards to "15,000 families per year over the 1986-

1990 period" after the state realized that it was impossible to acquire enough land for

redistribution (Alexander 2006, p. 113). Notwithstanding the revised figures, only about 48,000

households had been resettled by mid-1989 (Sachikonye 2003), and by 1990, only 52,000

landless black Zimbabweans had been allocated land on 3 million ha, representing 16% of the

land formerly owned by the white farmers (Alexander 2006). The slow pace of land

redistribution was spread across the whole country, including in the Chimanimani district.

Besides the lack of political will and lack of financial resources, the other major reason for the failure to reach the target was that the reform processes faced resistance from the white commercial farmers (Sachikonye 2003; Moyo 2011). The Lancaster House Constitution, according to Cliffe (1988), as cited in Sachikonye (2003, p. 229) "tied government's hands by entrenching property rights so that only under-utilized land could be compulsorily purchased and only then by immediate payment of the full value in foreign exchange." The redistribution process was also marked with scandals as elite black politicians allocated the newly acquired land amongst themselves, thus reproducing social and class inequalities (Moyo & Chambati 2013).

Following the expiry of the Lancaster House agreement in 1990, the national Constitution was amended to allow the postcolonial state to acquire any land for resettlement purposes without the obligation to "prompt market value" compensation, but instead to acquire land based on "fair compensation to be paid within a reasonable time" (Coldham 1993, p. 83). The state also came up with the National Land Policy, which promised to distribute 5 million hectares among 110,000 families within the decade starting in 1990 (Alexander 2006) and was to be implemented through amendments to the 1985 Land Acquisition Act (Coldham 1993). However, as Sachikonye (2003, p. 231) laments, "although two legal developments in the form of a [revised] Land Acquisition Act (1992) and the 14th constitutional amendment were passed during this period, there was still little political will and momentum for land reform". The demand for land continued to increase as the majority of landless Zimbabweans remained crowded in the communal areas.

In contrast to other districts, a distinctive feature of Chimanimani had been its forestry-driven economy, which remains central even to this day. As highlighted before, many farms

previously owned by the whites had been acquired by the colonial government and sold to

private forestry companies. Hence, at the time that the country gained its independence, almost

half of the land in Chimanimani was under forestry, tea and coffee plantations as reflected in

Table 2 below. Most of the remaining freehold farms were expropriated and redistributed by the

state during the 1980s and only a few were left by the mid-1990s (Bolding 2004). The majority

of the rural population still lived in the marginalized, ecologically sensitive, and depleted

communal areas where livelihoods are mostly sustained through subsistence agriculture, and

which are prone to hydrometeorological disasters, especially droughts, floods and landslides.

Table 2: Land Use Categories in Chimanimani as of 1995

Natural Region	Communal Area (Ha)	Resettlement (Ha)	Forestry and Commercial (Ha)	National Park (Ha)	Total (Ha)	Proportion (%)
I	23,970	0	122,109	14,500	160,579	53
II	12,040	15,110	9,286	0	36,436	12
III	12,040	18,885	0	0	30,925	10
IV	29,400	3,775	0	0	33,175	11
V	43,680	0	0	0	43,680	14
Total	121,130 (40%)	37,770(12%)	131,395(43%)	14,500 (5%)	304,795	

Source: Bolding (2004, p. 27)

This second phase of land resettlement, which started in the early 1990s, coincided with the

period that the government implemented the World Bank and IMF-supported ESAP (Moyo

2004). Besides hampering the land reform process, ESAP created deep socio-economic

challenges that further worsened the situation of poor communities. The following section shows

how the ESAP created vulnerability conditions that exacerbated the destructive impact of

tropical cyclone Idai in Chimanimani.

3.7 ESAP and the Reproduction of Disaster Vulnerability

In addition to the imbalances in access to land whose origins were situated in the colonial modes

of capitalist accumulation, neoliberal economic policies and programs that the postcolonial state

adopted also contributed to creating the conditions that have resulted in the disproportionate distribution of vulnerability. As Wisner et al.'s (2004) PAR model suggests, these economic policies form part of the causal chain upon which the impact of the tropical cyclone Idai in Chimanimani can best be articulated. The prominent neoliberal policy that this section tackles is the ESAP, which apart from creating a national economic crisis destroyed major livelihood levers for the poor and pushed many to subsist through overexploitation of the land and forest ecosystem goods and services.

In 1991 the country joined the bandwagon of other southern countries that were persuaded by the IMF and World Bank to implement economic structural adjustment programs. Why the nation adopted ESAP remains a subject of debate and many reasons have been put forward[17]. Nonetheless, despite diverging views about the reasons for adopting it, the Zimbabwean ESAP resulted in grave economic hardships for the poor and mid-income earning households.

The ESAP package centered on austerity measures which included currency devaluation, trade liberalization, reductions in public spending to levels below 5% of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and removal of government subsidies (Nyandoro & Hatti 2019; Meisenhelder 1994). As if the 1991/2 drought had not inflicted much pain on the communities, a nationwide downsizing of government departments was set in motion (Bolding 2004), and major

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[17] Some argue that the adoption of ESAP came after the postcolonial state abandoned "socialism" as its economic blueprint when the country faced a financial crisis and drought in the 1980s and was persuaded to adopt ESAP as a condition for accessing financial support from the World Bank and IMF (e.g., Nyandoro & Hatti 2019). Others argue that the country's economy was performing well throughout the 1980s under the socialist ideological orientation and its adoption of ESAP in the early 1990s was not triggered by economic crises as was the case with many countries in the Global South (e.g., Meisenhelder 1994; Moyo 1992). Meisenhelder (1994, p. 87) further alleges that the decision to adopt ESAP originated from a "technical interpretation of the performance of the Zimbabwean economy by a group of "technocrats" mobilized by the then Minister of Finance, Bernard Chidzero to guide how the economy would move forward. The technocrats then convinced the state that adopting ESAP was the best strategy.

retrenchments in the agriculture, textile, clothing, leather and construction industries were effected. Urban employment, which had risen from about 454,000 in 1980 to 620,000 in 1991, fell back to 590,000 by the end of 1995 (Bond 2000, p. 179). Overall unemployment rate increased from 22% in 1991 to 35% in 1996 (AFDB 1997). The retrenched workers flooded into the communal areas, which were already over-populated, leading not only to land struggles but overexploitation of the land (Potts & Mutambirwa 1998). With its focus on privatization and liberalization, the ESAP policy gave rise to the elite capture of land by politicians, as exemplified by the leasing "of state land to cabinet ministers, parliamentarians, judges, senior army officers and civil servants" at the expense of the majority of poor families who still occupied congested communal areas with depleted soils (Sachikonye 2003, p. 232). Due to the combination of the sluggish approach to the land issue by the government, resistance by the white farmers and the effects of ESAP, only 71,000 families had been resettled nationally on 3.3 million hectares of previously white-owned farms by the end of the 1990s (Njaya & Mazuru 2010; Moyo 2005).

By creating incentives for privatization, including trade liberalization and lower tariffs for the importation of inputs and agricultural equipment, the ESAP policy favoured large-scale (predominantly white) farmers, who already enjoyed the disproportionate advantage of access to such resources. As a result, the land issue increasingly became a contested one as "demand for land from various newly-formed indigenous black farmers' interest groups grew" (Moyo 2000, p. 12). Throughout most of the 1990s, including the period of ESAP, which effectively ran up to 1995 (Nyandoro & Hatti 2019), political pressures for land reform were significant but not as intense as they would become (Sachikonye 2003). It was only through political events that happened towards the end of the decade that the government state was forced to change course

and employ a more radical approach towards land redistribution, which culminated in the launching of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) in 2000.

3.8 Land Redistribution Through the FTLRP

From 1997, pressure had started to mount on the government to prioritize land redistribution for land-hungry people in the communal areas. Feeling that the government was failing to fulfil its promise of distributing land, ordinary people and fighters of the liberation war (locally known as war veterans), resorted to spontaneous vigorous protests and "illegal land occupations. A popular case is that of the pioneer "black land invaders", consisting of villagers in the Svosve communal areas of Mashonaland East Province who, in June 1998, occupied four farms in Marondera citing poor soils and congestion as the causal factors for the occupation (Matondi 2012; Alexander 2006; Sachikonye 2003). Similar and widespread occupations happened in other provinces, even before the 1980s, although the occupiers were, during that time "removed forcefully by the state or had moved voluntarily with promises that the land acquisition issues would be addressed in the new constitution" (Matondi 2012, p. 20). For instance, soon after Independence, some communities under Chiefs Chikukwa and Saurombe in Chimanimani returned to their ancestral lands, which had been expropriated by the colonial state and converted to forestry plantations, but their move was seen as "illegal" as the postcolonial state now claimed authority over and responsibility of allocating land to people. The people who had moved back to their ancestral land were now defined by the postcolonial state as "squatters" who could only be dealt with through "(re)eviction" (Mupira 2003, p. 208).

The episodes of these spontaneous land occupations that occurred in the late 1990s coincided with the launching of a new opposition political party, the MDC in 1999. Within its ideological orientation on poverty reduction and the backing of trade unions, the MDC became a

major threat to the continued existence of the ruling party, ZANU-PF, which had always comfortably won elections since independence (Cliffe, et al., 2011; Sachikonye 2003). At the same time, the land issue had become topical during consultations for a new constitution which was to succeed the Lancaster House constitution (Matondi 2012; Makumbe 2002). Opposition forces, mobilized under the National Consultative Assembly campaigned for a no vote on the Constitution on the grounds that it reinforced state authoritarianism by providing the president exclusive powers (Alexander 2006). The overwhelming no vote during the constitutional referendum in February 2000 signaled to ZANU-PF that its popularity as a revolutionary party was wading off. It is at this juncture that the land reform process took a radical turn. The state's response to "illegal land occupations" suddenly changed. The land occupiers were now receiving political support from the state, and in July 2000, the FTLRP was formally launched to legitimize compulsory land acquisition without compensation (Matondi 2012; Alexander 2006).

The FTLRP was implemented through two resettlement models – Model A1 and Model A2 – to try to decongest the communal areas while also creating a cadre of black commercial farmers (Moyo & Chambati 2013). Model A1 had a villagized and self-contained variant and was designed to cater for the generality of native landless people. This model was based on the organizational structure of the communal areas whereby production was primarily for family subsistence. Families from adjacent communal areas were allocated small plots for cultivation and grazing on the newly acquired farms (Mkodzongi & Lawrence 2019). On average A1 households in the wetter agroecological regions (Regions I to III) were allocated farms between 12 and 30 ha and the size increased up to 70 ha in the drier regions (Matondi 2012). The A2 Model resettlement scheme was designed as a commercial land use model for small, medium,

and large-scale commercial farming enterprises (Chingarande 2012; Matondi 2012). Ideally, the A2 model was targeting new and emerging black farmers who were equipped with both know-how and skills to "farm profitably, reinvest and raise agricultural productivity" (Mkodzongi & Lawrence 2019, p. 1). In addition, unlike in the A1 Model, the A2 farmers received 99-year leases, which could be used as collateral for accessing loans from financial institutions (Matondi 2012).

Though characterized by irregularities, the FTLRP saw the compulsory acquisition of over a 7,7million hectares of land nationally and benefited more than 384,000 families by the mid-2000s (Chitiga & Chigora 2010; Njaya & Mazuru, 2010). By 2010, at least 10 million hectares of land, which was previously occupied by around 4,000 white Farmers and about 200 black large-scale farmers in 2000, had been distributed to 145,000 peasant families through FTLRP (Moyo & Chambati 2013). Table 3 below shows how the FTLRP had changed land ownership patterns by 2011.

Table 3: Land ownership patterns as of 2011

Farming sectors	Area (ha)	Number of plots/ Beneficiaries	Notes
A1	5,759,153.89	145,775	1. Land that was not legally gazetted for acquisition and remains in the hands of its 'original' owners holding their title deeds.
A2	2,978,334.08	16,386	
Communal areas	16,000,000.00	1,200,000	
Old Resettlement Areas(Phase 1 and 2)	3,667,708.00	75,569	2. These farms are owned under a Deed of Grant, and were known as the Native Purchase Areas before independence. Blacks were allowed to trade in land in these areas, which were a buffer between the large-scale commercial farms and the communal areas. They became small-scale commercial farming areas after independence in 1980.
Large-scale commercial farms (unacquired)[1]	1 648,041.27	1,154	
Small-scale commercial farms[2]	1,400,000.00	8,000	
Conservancies	792,009.00	-	
Institutional farms[3]	3 145,693.42	113	
Unsettled gazetted land	757,577.51	517	3. Land owned by parastatals, churches, schools, colleges, universities and mines.
Total	**32,148,517.17**	**1,447,523**	

Source: Matondi (2012, p. 9)

A Presidential Land Review Committee, which was set up by the former President, Robert Mugabe, revealed that only 108 farms had been acquired and distributed to 1,956 families under

the AI Model, and 103 under the A2 Model as of 2003. Popularly known as the "Utete Commission", The Presidential Land Review Committee was instituted in May 2003 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Charles M. B. Utete to conduct a nationwide assessment of progress achieved in the implementation of FTLRP during the period between 2000 and 2002, and to recommend policy interventions and other measures necessary to increase productivity in the A1 and A2 farming units. The Utete Commission found that the FTLRP process in Chimanimani was hamstrung by the extensive forestry industry such that land acquired for resettlement during the FTLRP was inadequate for the 62,400 households who were on the official waiting list requiring land at the time of the assessment. Based on the assessment, the Commission's findings echoed the point that I addressed earlier that the bulk of farms formerly owned by the white farmers in the district, measuring approximately 588 689 hectares, had already been acquired and redistributed by the year that the FTLRP was initiated. Furthermore, the Commission established that since the eastern highlands districts of Nyanga, Chipinge, Chimanimani, Mutasa, and parts of Mutare and Makoni are mostly covered by mountains and rock out-crops, the farms acquired for redistribution were of much smaller sizes, measuring at most 150 ha, and subsequently, only a few people benefited (Utete, et al., 2003).

While the FTLRP was has been both criticized and lauded, research has established that the land redistribution process has on the other hand re-shaped social relations among the native communities and redirected the patterns of class formation in the rural areas (e.g., Scoones, et al., 2012; Cousins & Scoones 2010). For instance, a new class of black capitalists emerged, which, in addition to accumulating large tracks of land, the acquisition has given rise to contestations around claims of belonging between the new farmers and farmworkers who had considered the farms home for decades and had depended on the farms for employment and livelihoods. The

plight of the farmworkers abruptly changed during the FTLRP. They became the target of evictions as they were believed to be siding with their white employers (Rutherford 2017; Moyo 2005; Sachikonye 2003). A 2002 Human Rights Watch (HRW) report quoted the UN as having estimated the number of farmworkers who had been displaced during the FTLRP to be around 30,000 as of January that year (HRW 2002). By 2004, the figure of displaced farmworkers had exceeded 70,000 nationally (Thomas & Marongwe 2021). In Chimanimani, the displacements pushed the former farmworkers into adopting livelihood strategies that were not only destructive to the environment but also exposed communities to natural hazards. A typical example is that of at least 1,000 farmworkers who were evicted from Charleswood Estate in April 2003 after the farm was invaded by the war veterans and members of the security forces, including the police and the dreaded Central Intelligence Organization (Jakachira 2003). The farm was owned by Roy Bennett, a white farmer who was also serving as a Member of Parliament (MP) in Chimanimani under the banner of the opposition, MDC. It is said that the invaders loaded the farmworkers into trucks and dumped them in Chimanimani town without any food, shelter, or toilet facilities. Duri & Marongwe (2021) narrate the story of a 72-year Vasco Roberto who hailed from Mozambique and had been living at the Charleswood Farm since 1968. Roberto had retired as a farmworker, but he continued to live there with his son who was also employed as a farmworker. After they had been evicted, Roberto's family had nowhere to go. They sought shelter in a squatter settlement on the outskirts of Chimanimani town. During their first days of staying in the squatter camp, Roberto's family survived on the proceeds of begging by his three grandchildren before his son joined others for "illegal gold-panning" in the nearby mountains (p. 20). Indeed, the gold panning activities in the Chimanimani mountains have caused a lot of ecological damage. Nhamo & Chikodzi (2021), for instance, found that the intrusion into the Chimanimani

Mountains, Forestry plantations (such as Tarka) and part of the Chimanimani National Park by illegal gold miners, has resulted in extensive degradation of the biodiversity, which includes pollution of water bodies, deforestation, and the destruction of cultural and traditional sites. Such activities contributed to the devastating impact of tropical cyclone Idai in the district.

3.9 The Timber Industry and Land Redistribution in Chimanimani: A failed redistributive process?

Hlongwana (2021) and Hughes (2006) describe the post-independence land reform processes in Chimanimani as a huge policy failure. The postcolonial agrarian redistributive processes have focused on the distribution of arable land and ignored the peculiar situation of the Ndau people in Chimanimani where over 50% of their ancestral land had been converted to privately owned forestry estates and the Chimanimani National Park. Bolding (2004, p. 29) suggests that the failure to address the plight of the Ndau people rested on the perceived contribution of the timber industry to the country's GDP, especially under the Growth with Equity ideological framework that the postcolonial state pursued during the first decade of Zimbabwe's independence. The forestry estates in Chimanimani have contributed to the economic growth of the country by serving as sources of income and employment. Between 2005 and 2010, the timber industry contributed at least 4% of the national GDP and employed an average of 14,600 people (Hlongwana 2021). Just like Bolding (2004) before him, Hlongwana concluded that it was because of the economic benefits derived from the timber industry that the postcolonial state did not consider expropriating privately owned forestry estates. The state, he adds, was more interested in maintaining "sound relations with the multinational companies" than rectifying racial imbalances (2021, p. 65). Today, the majority (about 73%) of people in the Chimanimani district still reside in communal areas. The current "settlement patterns may be categorized into

forestry estates (42 %), communal areas (34 %), resettlement areas (17 %), national parks (5 %), commercial farming areas (1 %) and semi-urban settlements (1 %)" (CRDC 2017, p. 7).

However, the postcolonial state's interest to protect the interest of multinational companies resulted in conflicts as the people in the timber districts of Zimbabwe felt that they were being left out of the FTLRP. The Timber Producers Federation (TPF), a body that represents plantation companies[18], claimed that by 2014 the timber industry had regressed 25 years due to the government's FTLRP which made some plantations ungovernable. In an act of resistance to the continued deprivation to access to land due to the operations of timber companies, about 18,000 hectares of forest in the eastern highlands were burnt down by land occupiers in 2009 (New Zimbabwe 2018). Apart from drastically reducing forest cover and exposing the bare ground to environmental hazards, the clearing of forests negatively affected the productivity of the timber industry. The TPF estimated that in 2014, timber production in Chimanimani "declined by 24% below 2013 figures and 4% below 2012 figures and this is because companies are failing to meet proper plantation objective management" (New Zimbabwe 2018, par. 7). Exports earnings from the timber industry declined to US$21m in 2016 compared to US$130m in 2011 (TPF 2018). In a news article, the TPF further revealed that at least 20,000 hectares of forestry land in the eastern highlands had been illegally occupied by 2017 (Mambondiyani 2017), and the then Minister of State for Manicaland Provincial Affairs, is quoted as having labeled the occupiers as a "menace", who, in Chimanimani alone, "were responsible for the wanton destruction of trees over nearly 5,000 hectares." (Mambondiyani 2017, par. 18). The occupiers are cited in the news article as having vowed to stay put reclaiming

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[18] The TPF is an association of timber growers and sawmillers in Zimbabwe. As of 2018, the federations had a total of 15 members, and although it is a national body, its members are concentrated in the eastern highlands of Manicaland (TPF 2018)

the timber companies "stole" the land from their forefathers (Mambondiyani 2017, par. 10). The

question of balancing the economic gains from the timber industry and the land redistribution

agenda in Chimanimani has therefore left the government in a catch-22 situation but the local

communities are the most disadvantaged as they are forced to remain in the congested communal

lands.

The situation of the Ndau people under Chief Saurombe helps to shed light on the

prejudices that local people in Chimanimani encountered and which brought them into conflict

with timber-producing companies. Chief Saurombe's jurisdiction lies in the dry, and rocky

Saurombe communal areas and extents into forestry plantations owned by The Border Timbers.

This private company owns at least 47,886 hectares of forestry land in the eastern highlands of

the Manicaland Province (Border Timbers 2022). I visited Chief Saurombe in October 2021, and

according to his calculations, almost 75% of his ancestral land was being used by this timber-

producing company. In 1996, the company acquired a group of farms under the chief's

jurisdiction for forestry expansion. These farms lay in the wetter regions of the chiefdom and had

been gazetted for resettlement, but at the time of Border Timbers' acquisition, "the government

had strangely signed a letter of no interest in the properties even though demand for land by the

local communities was known" (Mupira 2013, p. 210).

Despite the somewhat slight improvements towards attaining equitable land distribution

at the national level, either through the resettlement schemes that happened between 1980 and

1999, or the FTLRP from 2000 onwards, the land issue continued to be controversial. New forms

of land dispossession have emerged in recent years targeting both communities in the communal

areas and black beneficiaries of the postcolonial land redistribution initiatives. On one hand,

these new dynamics have been influenced by and responsive to the volatility of the political

environment within which the land redistribution processes had been framed. On the other hand, they reflected the postcolonial state's lack of interest in decisively addressing the plight of landless people in the communal areas. In 2013 for instance, Headman Chikware of Matumbu village in the Cashel Valley of Chimanimani was evicted from his land by the war veterans for being a member of the opposition. The headman was the organizing secretary of MDC for the area and his wife served as a polling agent for the opposition during the 2013 general elections (The Zimbabwean 2013). Another typical example is the continuous encroachment of the Chimanimani National Park into the communal lands of Chikware and Mapombere villages in Vimba, along the Zimbabwe-Mozambique border (Hlongwana 2021; Hughes 2006). The boundaries of the park "have continuously been redrawn since the 1990s, leaving the community, who mostly depend on banana production for a living, surviving on fewer and fewer natural resources" (ActionAid 2019). From interviewing the affected communal farmers during his research in Chimanimani, Hughes (2006) was told that surveyors from ZimParks deliberately extended the boundaries of the park to encroach upon smallholders. In a case that spilt into the courts in 2017, at least 300 members of the communities had been served with 72 hours eviction notices by ZimParks. Following these initial threats, armed ZimParks officers visited the community, arrested some of the community members, "and threatened to burn houses and destroy crops if the families didn't leave" (ActionAid 2019, par. 4). The communities were only saved through the intervention of The Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association, a local environmental justice NGO, which took the matter to the courts. In its November 2018 ruling, the High Court rejected the threats and evictions as unlawful and arbitrary (ActionAid 2019).

Reflecting on the destructive effects of the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, late medical anthropologist, Paul Farmer (2011, p.32) had this to say: "In the dim reaches of misery, insomnia

is a constant companion, especially when twenty-first-century people die of nineteenth-century afflictions." The same can be said about the situation in Chimanimani. Evictions and threats of eviction happening now are a manifestation of a legacy of imbalances created by the colonial system and reproduced in the postcolonial present. These imbalances have set poor communities in harm's way by increasing their exposure and vulnerability to disasters. Furthermore, institutional failures, including lack of internal capacity and corruption involving senior state officials have been implicated for exacerbating the destructive impact of tropical cyclone Idai.

3.10 Institutional Failures and the (Re)production of Vulnerability

A history of institutional failures, including high levels of corruption and lack of internal capacity, had become endemic within state agencies at the district level. For instance, a common concern that was raised by most of the survivors that I interacted with was that the Chimanimani Rural District Council (CRDC) had become so corrupt that it was now allocating residential stands in unsuitable locations. The Kopa growth point, which is one of the areas most affected by the cyclone, was said to have been prohibited from settlement by the colonial government since it sits on a floodplain. Yet, the CRDC went on to peg the area and issued residential stands (Munsaka, et al., 2021; NJIVA Trust 2020). This concern was clearly articulated by Gogo Chihera when she accompanied me to the Kopa growth point in June 2021 to appraise the destruction that had been caused by the tropical cyclone.

As I was negotiating the steep, rugged, and muddy curves towards the Kopa business center from the east, Gogo Chihera instructed me to find somewhere to park the car just before the Nyahode river bridge. The bridge had recently been reconstructed after it had been destroyed by the cyclone floods. On the south-east, a few kilometers from the bridge lay Ndima High School, one of the big secondary schools in the Rusitu Valley, which unfortunately lost some of

its students and teachers to the cyclone. To the west, was the Kopa business center, with some buildings showing visible fractures from the floods. Nyahode river ran down the bridge, between Ndima High School and the business center, into the Rusitu river on the south, about 1 km from the bridge. Gogo Chihera and I walked over the bridge and stood at a point that offered us an unimpeded view of the whole area that was damaged by the cyclone. Using her fingers to point and mark imaginary boundaries along the boundary fence of the Ndima High School and behind a building that was partly destroyed by the floods, Gogo Chihera started reminiscing her experience under the colonial Ian Smith's administration [19], "Do you know that people were not allowed to build houses from there to there?" Her delineation covered the flood plain that extended from the bridge towards the confluence of Nyahode and Rusitu rivers, which had been turned into a residential location but was now covered by mud and boulders as the settlement was destroyed by the tropical cyclone. Gogo Chihera claimed that while the colonial Smith administration did not permit people to build homesteads as the area lies within a floodplain, "they (referring to the CRDC) said we can't follow Smith's advice, we want to have our residential stands here". She also told me that some families who used to cultivate small plots in the floodplains were threatened when they tried to resist the CRDC's plans to convert the plots into residential stands. What Gogo Chihera presented here was a postcolonial authoritarian state which has shown not to be open to alternative views, but rather impose decisions to serve its purposes, an approach that contributed to creating the vulnerabilities that exacerbated the destructive impact of tropical cyclone Idai.

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[19] Ian Douglas Smith was the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) from 1964 to 1979, and was an ardent advocate of white rule, who in 1965 made the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) of Rhodesia and its subsequent withdrawal from the British Commonwealth.

In recent years council officials have allegedly resorted to taking advantage of people who are desperate to get places to build their homes to corruptly sell residential stands in flood plain areas (Nhamo & Chikodzi 2021). This pressure is stemming from an increasing demographic population that is competing for limited land (as was explored in the previous chapter). I learned more about the increasing demand for land through my interaction with Mukwasha's younger brother, Tinei.

Tinei was in his early forties but looked much older and wasted because of heavy drinking and smoking. Married and with two kids, Tinei's family was renting two rooms in a four-roomed house in Ngangu township. They used one of the rooms as a kitchen and sitting room, while the other served as the bedroom. Tinei did not have a full-time job, he was often called up at Mukwasha's state-run telecommunication company whenever there was the need for casual manual labour like digging trenches. During the period of my research, the telecommunications agency was in the process of installing fiber optic internet in Ngangu, which required manpower to dig trenches for the internet cable, and this provided him with an opportunity to work for the company on a relatively long-term contract.

Tinei regularly came over to Mukwasha's house in the evenings and at times he joined us for drinks at our local drinking outlet, Green Bar. It was through these regular interactions that we became very close. On one occasion, he told me how he used to make a lot of money when he accompanied other colleagues to pan for gold panning in the valleys of the Chimanimani mountains, along the Mozambican border. His dreams to build an urban house from the money that he made from gold panning had now been shattered because he was put on the waiting list for the past 5 years and he had no hopes of being allocated one soon. He was worried that his family was growing and soon needed a bigger space that the two rooms that they were

occupying. Tinei's predicament reflected the general postcolonial situation in the country. Due to the lack of livelihood opportunities in the communal areas, there has been a tendency by people, especially the young and middle-aged, to gravitate into the urban areas where they seek employment and better living conditions. However, not many are as lucky as Tinei whose brother (Mukwasha) at times arranged casual jobs for him. The influx into towns has created high demand for urban residential stands, and hence people like Tinei who were desperate to get stands to build their own residential structures became targets of extortion by the corrupt senior council employees. Vulnerability considerations became less important than the personal benefits that these senior state officials could derive.

In the section that follows, I will discuss how a quest for economic development, through the intensive production and marketization of high-value fruits, especially bananas, has further rendered some of the communal areas in Chimanimani vulnerable to disaster. Fruits like Navel oranges *(Citrus sinensis)*, Late Valencia oranges *(Citrus sinensis)*, Indigenous Naartjies *(Citrus reticulata)*, Mangoes *(Mangifera indica)*, pineapples *(Ananas comosus),* Avocado *(Persea americana*), and bananas are widely grown, in Natural Regions I and II of the districts, especially in areas within the Rusitu Valley, under Chief Ngorima (Musasa, et al., 2015). As early as 1980 the state, NGOs, and private sector have supported various initiatives, such as value addition (fruit processing) and facilitating market linkages, to promote the increased production of fruit trees by households in the communal areas of Rusitu Valley. The idea was that fruit production would increase household income and contribute toward economic strengthening at the household level (Hughes 2006, p. 163). However, as we will see below, the turn towards high-value fruit production has had unintended consequences and contributed to the destructive effects of tropical cyclone Idai.

3.11 High-value Fruits and the (Re)production of Vulnerability: The Case of Bananas

The picturesque landscape that meets one's eye when driving into the communities of the Rusitu

Valley in Chimanimani is that of banana piles hipped along the mud roads awaiting

transportation, trucks loaded with bananas or roaring down and up the hills to collect their loads,

and banana groves surrounding homesteads, and mostly located on steep mountain slopes,

foothills and flood plains. The production and marketization of bananas have played a major role

in sustaining the livelihoods of native Ndau people under Chief Ngorima, who had been

dislocated from their ancestral land, which today is under the Tilbury forestry plantation, and

forced to occupy the hilly and sloppy Ngorima communal land (Hughes 2006; Sinclair 1971).

Yet, the economic and livelihood opportunities created by the banana industry have generated

detrimental environmental conditions that the communities have to live with for generations to

come.

The history of banana production in Chimanimani

The history of how bananas became an important cash crop among smallholder producers in

Chimanimani is not well documented. It is worth noting, however, that by the time the white

settlers first arrived, the fruit was already being grown and traded among the Ndau inhabitants

(Ndumeya 2015). As early as 1942, bananas were being encouraged by the colonial authorities as

an attractive crop to protect the edges of plots, and furrow banks of irrigation schemes that were

developed in TTLs in the dry regions of the district (such as Mutambara and Nyanyadzi

irrigation schemes) during the 1930s (Bolding 2004, p. 136). The idea of growing bananas could

also have originated from a government survey of the 1960s, which recommended that the land

in the high rainfall receiving areas of the Rusitu Valley be put down to high-value special crops

to support the local agricultural industry (Hughes 2006; Brown 2001). These submissions are

echoed in Sinclair's (1971) observations. According to her, the colonial regime had, by the late

1960s, already put in place supportive mechanisms to enhance intensive banana production in the

Ngorima the TTL. In her chronicling of the story of Melsetter, Sinclair notes the following

developments as evidence of the colonial state's drive towards promoting high-value fruit

production and marketization:

> There is also a big population pressure, and it is impressive that the 26 000 acres of
> Ngorima and Ndima support a population of approximately 10 000, who are moving very
> fast into a cash economy. Government assists with the establishment of councils and co-
> operatives, and through Agricultural Extension the crops best suited to the area and which
> will bring in the best returns are being established. Farmers have done very well with a
> variety of crops including coffee, pineapples, bananas, grains, vegetables and spices: one
> farmer has succeeded in educating his children and has sent one to university in England
> out of his profits (Sinclair 1971, p. 174).

Further support to the fruit industry in Chimanimani was provided through the Lomé

Convention[20] loan facility which was implemented under the Smallholder Coffee and Fruit

project in Manicaland in the early 1980s and targeted individual farmers in the Communal Areas

(Brown 2001, p. 155). Although this program managed to transform several household backyard

orchards into viable small-scale enterprises, it was not until the early 1990s that the banana boom

became more visible (Musasa et, al., 2015) following state and NGO interventions, including the

introduction of new varieties, training, and market linkage support, which promoted the

intensification of banana production and marketization in the Rusitu Valley (Roth & Gonese

2003; Hughes 2001). Since then, banana farming in Chimanimani has often made national and

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[20] The Lomé Convention was a partnership agreement between EU member state and countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific islands (ACP). The origins of the Convention lay in the attempts to manage the transition from a colonial relationship to a postcolonial one, with the setting up of new, formalized arrangements covering aid and trade. The Convention was a legally binding agreement and covered the provision of aid to the ACP, preferential trade access to EU markets, stabilization of export earnings of the ACP and commitments to deal with a whole range of development co-operation issues. Although Zimbabwe expressed the wish to join Lomé immediately after independence, it formally acceded to the Convention in March 1982 (Brown 2001).

international headlines as a success story of high-value horticulture and fruit production. In a report of a market analysis that was jointly supported by Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) and ActionAid Denmark in 2015, for instance, the authors introduced the report by asking a question; "How can smallholder communities seize opportunities for prosperity and climb out of poverty in a sustainable way?", which they followed up with a bold claim, "Smallholder communities in the Honde and Rusitu valleys of Zimbabwe … managed to achieve this goal. They turned what used to be a free time, small-scale banana production into a profitable cash crop" (Zaal, et al., 2015, p. 71). According to the authors, the success was because of the technical expertise and market linkage assistance that the communities had received from NGOs, including the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV). Specifically, SNV linked the banana farmers with huge agro-processing companies like Matanuska Private Limited, and smaller ones such as ZN Fruits, Kutapira Produce, City Market, Favco and Sunspan.

Despite the damage that was caused by the tropical cyclone Idai, which I will attend to later in this chapter, the technical support provided by the state and NGOs has made the Rusitu Valley stand out as one of the major banana producers in the country. Out of the 36,975 tonnes of bananas (representing 81% of the national tonnage) that came out of Manicaland in 2017, Rusitu contributed 5,000 tonnes (14%). Other huge quantities came from Burma Valley with 13,425 tonnes (36%), Honde Valley with 4,100 tonnes (11%), Chipinge with 9,050 tonnes (24%), and Mutema and Chibuwe combined 5,400 tonnes (15%). The lucrative banana yields in the province were attributed to the "introduction of world-class banana farming techniques" as well as the availability of funding to out growers' farmers from international organizations such as the FAO (New Zimbabwe 2018, par. 3). A study on food security conducted by Chingarande, et al. (2020) in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai revealed that the banana industry continued

to contribute to the livelihoods of families directly affected by the disaster. The research team established that in some instances, local small-scale banana producers in Chimanimani were realizing significant incomes from selling bananas, which keep them above the poverty datum line of $1.90 a day and their average earnings were much higher than the salaries of "ordinary civil servants" (p. 11). Nevertheless, these economic returns are often not commensurate with the labour that households invest. In most instances farmers are paid between US$0.10 per kg to about US$2 per bunch (on average, 1 bunch weighs 15 kg) by middlemen who come from major cities like Mutare and Harare (Chitamba et al., 2016, p. 1124), forcing them to intensify their banana cropping, albeit on small plots. A study commissioned by SNV showed that while local communities in the Rusitu Valley try to maximize banana production on household plots by overcrowding the banana plants, this has negatively affected their outputs as the size of bananas harvested is becoming smaller (Mudyazvivi 2010). Besides, the heavy reliance on bananas had environmental consequences creating fragile environmental problems that amplified the destructive impact of tropical cyclone Idai. I will now attend to these environmental conditions in the section below.

Banana production and exposure to environmental hazards

The combination of increasing human population growth and increasing demand for bananas has resulted in a rapid land-use change in the Rusitu Valley. The communal households no longer practice ecologically sensitive farming practices, instead, the landscape has been modified and geared toward satisfying the external informal and formal produce markets (Nhamo & Chikodzi 2021). Mountains have been cleared and it is now common to see homesteads and banana plots on steep mountain slopes and even on mountain tops, which outsiders may describe as inhabitable. Indigenous forests were cleared to pave way for the fruit, which is destined for the

urban market in Mutare, Harare, and beyond. The photo below shows a section of a mountain slope that I captured during my fieldwork. The mountain rises from the Rusitu River, and it already had scars of bare land as the natural vegetation was being cleared for settlement and household banana production.
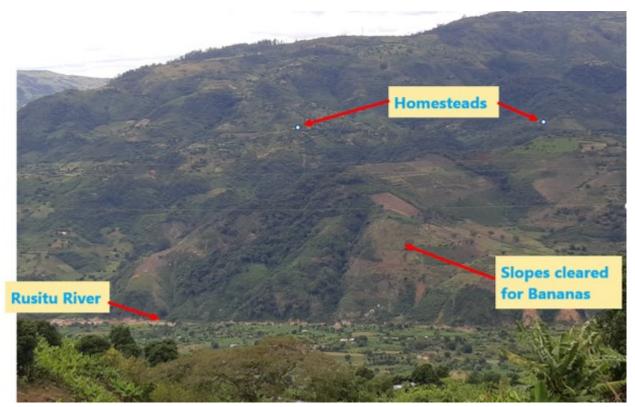
Photo 1: Deforestation associated with banana production in the Rusitu Valley
Photo by D. Kudejira

The increasing rate of deforestation, as shown above, is directly linked to the increasing role that the banana industry plays in enhancing the economic wellbeing and livelihoods of local communities. After being decimated from their land by the colonial system, the Ndau people of Rusitu Valley have found solace through actively participating in the cash-crop economy. Yet the environmental consequences of this newly found niche have rarely been considered in policy and planning discussions by both the state and NGOs working with the farmers.

Gogo Chihera, whom I referenced earlier in this chapter, had her homestead located in the Muchangazi village under Chief Ngorima. In her late 70s, she had a fair recollection of how the people relocated into the Ngorima communal lands used to survive under the colonial regime. She remembered that people used to grow a variety of crops, including maize, rice, sugar beans, yams, and sweet potatoes, but the production system completely changed as many families became involved in the cash banana economy. Traditionally, maize had been the staple crop for the families in the Rusitu Valley, but many families can no longer grow maize together with other crops since the space on most homesteads has been converted to banana plantations.

Gogo Chihera told me that she had been growing bananas since the mid-1990s. She was lured into the venture by the promise of good monetary returns. During the time that she planted her first banana seedling, she had a large plot of yams (*Madhumbe*), which she decided to intercrop with the bananas (*Mahombo*), a decision that she regretted during our conversation:

> Did I know that bananas and yams don't co-exist? I no longer have space to cultivate yams or even maize. So, if I crave *Madhumbe*, I will have to buy them from elsewhere. It's no longer like the previous years when I used to grow my own yams.

In Grossman's (1993) view, "the declines in food production in banana-producing areas", as evidenced in Gogo Chihera's case above, reflects "the contrasting political-economic contexts of producing and marketing local food crops and bananas produced for [the external market]" (p.347). Communal farmers, especially those located in the Rusitu Valley, have now earned the identity of being a "banana-dependent community" (Chitamba, et al., 2016), and this banana-dependence has been linked to depleting soil fertility through monoculture and not applying proper pest control measures. From a sample of 105 farmers (about 10% of the total population of Rusitu Valley) that this group of researchers interviewed, they found that 61.9% of the farmers were growing "bananas under monoculture compared to 38.1% who intercropped the
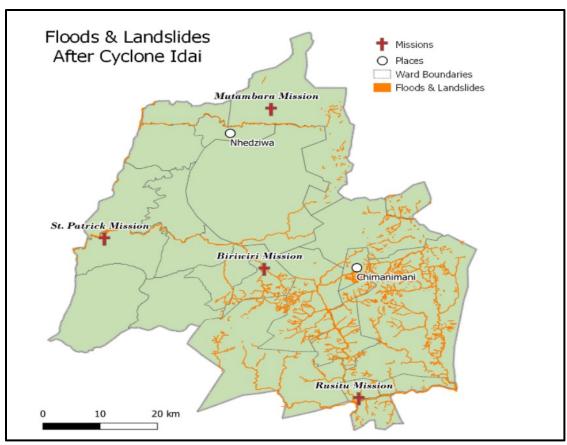
fruit trees with other crops like pineapples, sugarcane, and yams" (Chitamba et al., 2016 p. 1122). At least 11.4% of farmers from the same research reported that they were applying fertilizers. Both monoculture and the application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides have proven to be detrimental to the environment. As the soil fertility becomes depleted due to monoculture, farmers are forced to apply chemical fertilizers which, instead of restoring soil organic matter, leads to pollution of water bodies that local communities draw water for consumption. Studies of small-scale banana investments in Northern Laos, for instance, revealed that the destruction of forests and the mechanical tilling of the plantations expose households to severe land degradation including erosion and chemical pollution (Friis & Nielsen 2016).

As we have seen in the previous sections, the susceptibility of the banana industry to environmental hazards (resulting from depletion in soil fertility, monocultural practices, and use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides) in Chimanimani is linked to the historical control over land which favored the colonial settlers. The land rotation practices that characterized the pre-colonial Ndau society are no longer amenable as the land has become overpopulated and restricted. In addition, rapid population increase and market pressure, are forcing communities to clear indigenous forests for banana production, thereby exposing their homesteads to environmental hazards such as floods and landslides.

Another way of understanding the "banana boom–vulnerability" paradox is to look at how the banana economy redefined the "indigeneity" of the local native people (Li 2010), and how this redefinition resulted in severe destruction when tropical cyclone Idai hit the district. As we have seen before, the indigeneity of the traditional pre-colonial society in Chimanimani mainly derived from their relations with places of symbolic, cultural, and spiritual importance, which included sacred mountains, specifically burial sites, and forests (Mupira 2013; Bolding

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2004). However, with the increasing contribution of the banana industry to household incomes, the communities in the Rusitu Valley are now bound to the hazard-prone communal lands by the economic activity more than the land's cultural significance. Unfortunately, these communities are among those most affected when tropical cyclone Idai made landfall in the Chimanimani district.

The tropical cyclone Idai heavily impacted areas in the South-East of the district (Map 5), with wards 10 (Chikukwa), 12 (Tilbury), 13 (Nyahode), 15 (Chimanimani Urban), 16 (Gwindingwi), 23 (Manyuseni), 21 (Ngorima A) and 22 (Ngorima B) being the most affected (NJIVA Trust 2020). Except for Ward 15, which mostly covers Chimanimani Urban and Ngangu township and nearby peri-urban locations, most of the wards that were heavily affected by the cyclone lie in the region that contributes much of the banana tonnage that comes out of Chimanimani.

Map 5: Areas that were most affected by cyclone Idai induced landslides and floods
Source: NJIVA Trust (2020, p. 70)

A rapid impact and needs assessment that the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) conducted in

April 2019 in collaboration with the World Bank and UN agencies revealed that tropical cyclone

Idai caused extensive destruction to the banana plantations in the Chimanimani district (GoZ

2019). The figure below compares the extent of damage across the major fruit trees grown in the

district.
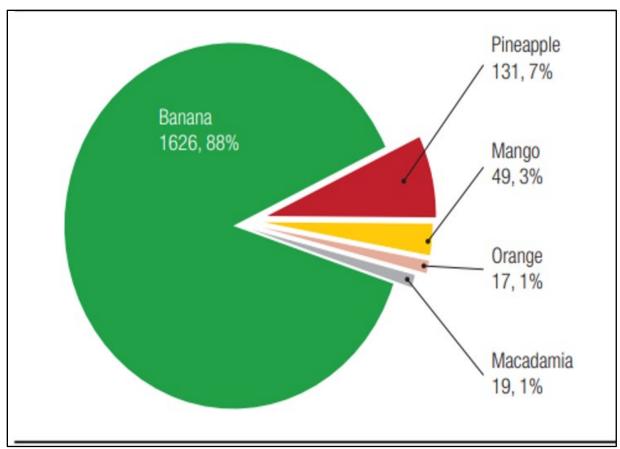
Figure 1: Estimated Ha of Fruit Trees Affected by Tropical Cyclone Idai in Chimanimani
Source: GoZ (2019, p. 70)

The destruction of fruit plantations resulted in major economic losses, especially for the "banana-dependent households." As Table 4 below shows, the loss of fruit tree plantations amounted to millions of dollars, with bananas having the biggest monetary value loss of about $US10,988,250 in the seven most affected wards.

Table 4: Fruit Trees Monetary Damage Loss, in US$

Ward	Banana	Pineapple	Mango	Orange	Macadamia
Manyuseni	2,294,250	360,000	40,800	100,000	50,000
Ngorima A	2,992,500	164,000	36,000	90,000	75,000
Ngorima B	2,331,000	168,000	43,200	70,000	75,000
Gwindingwi	2,520,000	124,000	24,000	10,000	112,500
Nyahode	656,250	24,000	2,400	—	37,500
Tilbury	162,750	—	16,800	—	—
Chikukwa	31,500	—	—	—	—
Totals	**10,988,250**	**840,000**	**163,200**	**270,000**	**350,000**

Source: GoZ (2019, p. 22)

The banana plantations became more susceptible to the cyclone Idai-induced landslides and floods because of their locations along stream banks, mountain foothills and steep slopes, a situation rooted in colonial land dispossessions and forced displacements. As we have seen, national post-independence land reform processes have not done much to address the issue of landlessness for the people of Chimanimani. As a result, tropical cyclone Idai can be viewed as a socially constructed disaster whose effects were manifested in the intense and disproportionate distribution of destruction. The affected communities were not only "victims of poor judgment and negligence or omission of duty by those in charge such as town planners and local authorities" as Munsaka, et al., (2021, p. 695) would say, but their predicament also reflects the outcome of processes that generated inequalities throughout the colonial and postcolonial history of Zimbabwe.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter has traced the root causes of the factors that led communities in Chimanimani to settle in locations and apply livelihood strategies that increased their vulnerability to disasters. Through the lens of political ecology, the chapter has shown why tropical cyclone Idai was so devastating in Chimanimani, and why certain groups of the community were affected more than others. The occurrence of the disaster should not be interpreted as an event that just started when

tropical cyclone Idai made landfall in Chimanimani in March 2019 but as an outcome of processes and events that entrenched social inequality and produced vulnerabilities since the turn of the 20th century when the Ndau people of Chimanimani first encountered white settlers. The social inequality and vulnerability created by the colonial system were further reproduced and sustained by the postcolonial state through the adoption of neoliberal economic adjustment programs and the implementation of poorly crafted land reform policies. In addition, while initiatives targeting the marginalized communities, such as banana production and marketing, contributed significantly to their economic strengthening, the chapter has shown that practicing such initiatives in ecologically sensitive areas further expose local farmers to hydrometeorological catastrophes such as landslides and floods.

The factors that led to the extensive destruction of effects of tropical cyclone Idai, can also be located within the current national institutional disaster response framework. Histories of institutional failures in Zimbabwe – including high levels of corruption, state authoritarianism, and lack of internal capacity that has become endemic within government agencies – are also crucial factors in the analysis of why tropical cyclone Idai caused so much damage, and why the recovery has been so slow and problematic. The chapter that follows focuses on the disaster management institutional framework in Zimbabwe and describes how the various state disaster management apparatuses were deployed in response to the tropical cyclone Idai disaster.

Chapter 4   ***"Kuipa Kwezvimwe Kunaka Kwezvimwe":* The State's Responses to the Tropical Cyclone Idai Disaster in Chimanimani**

4.1 Introduction

The statement *"Kuipa kwezvimwe kunaka kwezvimwe"* ("bad events bring with them good things") was expressed by the President of Zimbabwe, Emerson Mnangagwa, while addressing survivors of the tropical cyclone disaster in Chimanimani on the 4th of April 2019. In the speech, which was decoded with dismay by the survivors, and with praise by his political supporters, the President bragged:

> Do you know Trump? President from which country? … America. Eheeee. He imposed sanctions on us. But yesterday he sent his ambassador with US$2, 5 million eheeeeeee…US$2, 5 million from their country. Not these RTGS[21]. I mean real hard currency from their country. Hey things do change. *Kuipa kwezvimwe kunaka kwezvimwe* ... You know one thing, our relationship with the British turned sour over the land reform program. This cyclone has brought good things. Let me tell you what happened. Queen Elizabeth herself sat down and wrote a letter to Zimbabwe, saying she had heard about Cyclone … Her child, Prince Charles … also wrote his letter and we received it … Even Prince William and his wife also wrote a letter to us. Three letters came from the Royal family and that has never happened in a long time to receive such letters from the Royal family paying condolences to Zimbabwe. The letters also mentioned that the relationship between Zimbabwe and Britain should be strengthened (New Zimbabwe 2019, par. 5).

This expression, *"kuipa kwezvimwe kunaka kwezvimwe"*, became an important one in constructing the meanings of day-to-day politics of interaction between the state and other stakeholders who were involved during the post-Idai response processes. Its interpretation

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[21] The RTGS (Real Time Gross Settlement) is originally an electronic money transfer system which was introduced by authorities following acute cash shortages in the country. In 2019, it was adopted as a new currency, comprising balances in banks and mobile platforms, bond notes and coins. The currency was introduced with the intention of stripping the US dollar as a medium of exchange and serve more as a reserve currency. The RTGS dollar was expected to assume all other functions of a domestic currency. However, since its adoption, the RTGS Dollar has continuously lost value against the US Dollar at a pace of, on average, approximately 1% per day (Source: http://www.zimtreasury.gov.zw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=183:clarification-notes-on-the-introduction-of-zimbabwean-dollar&catid=92&Itemid=762. Accessed 06 May 2022)

differed across the different socio-economic classes of survivors and other audiences. For some, it reflected the state's commitment to addressing issues that had been of concern for long, and which were exposed by the disaster, including lack of housing and landlessness, and for others, *"kuipa kwezvimwe kunaka kwezvimwe"* was an acknowledgement that the state was interested more in the opportunities that the tropical cyclone Idai disaster created than on ways to find lasting solutions to deal with the vulnerabilities of the residents of Chimanimani.

The implications of the President's statement will become clearer later in this chapter and in others that follow. However, I invoke it here to emphasize two aspects of the state's response to the disaster, which I will pursue throughout the chapter. Firstly, it allows us to appreciate how the state took advantage of the occurrence of the disaster to reflect on what went wrong and tried to implement corrective interventions to reduce the vulnerability of affected communities to future disasters. These interventions included the restructuring of settlements by implementing the Runyararo Village housing scheme and enhancing disaster preparedness by supporting the setting up of a community radio station in partnership with non-state actors. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, "*kuipa kwezvimwe kunaka kwezvimwe"* is a symbolic expression of how state authoritarianism, specifically, "disaster authoritarianism" unfolded as the state consolidated its social control of NGOs and survivors in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai. I argue in this chapter that the disaster response interventions initiated by the state, either of its own volition or in partnership with other agencies, achieved little in building the resilience of survivors nor strengthening their capacity to prepare for future disasters. Instead, the state interventions helped to revamp and strengthen the local level structures and systems of the authoritarian state in a way that placed the ruling party, ZANU-PF, in a position of advantage in electoral processes. The disaster response apparatuses deployed by the state were to be used by

the ruling party as tools to craft its campaign messaging and voter mobilization approaches for the upcoming 2023 national harmonized elections and other elections that follow.

To elaborate on my argument, the chapter proceeds by addressing several components. Firstly, I provide an overview of the political environment that prevailed at the time that tropical cyclone Idai made landfall in Chimanimani, and within which tropical cyclone Idai emergency response, recovery and reconstruction interventions were being undertaken. Secondly, I discuss the legal and institutional framework that guides disaster management activities in the country. By looking at this latter component, I hope to shed light on how the key institutions mandated with the responsibility of planning and managing disaster response initiatives in Zimbabwe operate within the context of state authoritarianism. Thirdly, I use evidence from my fieldwork to show the contestations and entanglements that emerged as the state disaster management apparatuses were deployed in post-Idai Chimanimani. I now turn to the first task of discussing the pre-Idai political context.

4.2 The Pre-Idai Political Context in Zimbabwe

The tropical cyclone Idai disaster occurred exactly 16 months after the former president Robert G. Mugabe was toppled from office on 19 November 2017 through a military coup, which was locally referred to as a "military-assisted transition" or "operation restore legacy" to avoid regional and international condemnation (Hodgkinson 2019; Magaisa 2019). The military-assisted transition happened on the backdrop of severe factional fights that had emerged within the ruling party, ZANU-PF, as two factions were vying to succeed the nonagenarian leader who had been at the helm since the country got its independence in 1980. The first group, so-called "Team Lacoste," rallied behind the former Vice-President, Emmerson Mnangagwa, and had strong links with the military and the war veterans. The second group, Generation 40 or G40,

was associated with the First Lady, Grace Mugabe, and had the backing of young politicians who were pushing for generational change by replacing the older politicians in the party, and behind this faction were cabinet ministers like Professor Jonathan Moyo, Saviour Kasukuwere and Patrick Zhuwawo (Mwatwara & Nyakudya 2022; Magaisa 2019; Southall 2017). Operation restore legacy, therefore, became a vehicle through which Mnangagwa's Team Lacoste faction gained control of ZANU-PF by removing their factional rivals who they accused of being "counter-revolutionaries" and "criminals" who had infiltrated the ruling party to cause socio-economic suffering for Zimbabwean citizens (Mwatwara & Nyakudya 2022, p. 207). After successfully ousting Mugabe, Mnangagwa was subsequently inaugurated as Zimbabwe's new president on 22 November 2017 and the Army General, Constantino Chiwenga, who had aided the transition, was later incorporated into the presidium as one of the two Vice Presidents (Southall 2017). At the time, Mnangagwa's and Chiwenga's ascension to the echelons of power were widely welcomed by Zimbabweans as the duo presented themselves as reformers who would ensure that the "new dispensation" pursue an agenda to make the economy more attractive for foreign investment while also creating a democratic political environment. By referring to the outcome of the November events as "a new dispensation" and "the start of a new era", Mnangagwa and his team "sought both to distinguish themselves from ZANU-PF's record of repression, corruption and economic mismanagement" (Hodgkinson 2019, p. 981).

Nonetheless, the initial joy of a reformist "new dispensation" was short-lived following the results of the country's contested July 2018 harmonized elections. Out of the 21 candidates who were vying for the presidency, the two dominant figures in the election were Mnangagwa representing ZANU-PF and Nelson Chamisa, a charismatic and young politician who was now leading a faction of the main opposition party, MDC – Alliance, after the death of its founding

president, Morgan Tsvangirai, in February 2018 (Magaisa 2019). By delaying the announcement of the results of the presidential polls in which Mnangagwa ultimately claimed a controversial victory of 50.8% of the national vote over Chamisa's 44.3%, the electoral management body, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), was accused of manipulating the votes in favor of ZANU-PF (Magaisa 2019). The ruling party had always exploited state resources and manipulated national institutions including the electoral authority, police, and judiciary to serve its interests. The delays triggered a citizens' protest on 1 August, which led to the killing of six people by the military and police, and a massive "crackdown on opposition and civic activists soon followed" (Hodgkinson 2019, p. 982). As Magaisa (2019) observed, while most citizens were expecting a more democratic political system following the fall of Robert Mugabe, events surrounding the July 2018 harmonized elections were a clear indication that the regime had reverted to its default approach of retaining power. The continuity of the Mugabe authoritarian legacy, or *Mugabeism*, has manifested itself through the bullying of NGOs, and the continued arrests and torture of perceived political opponents by the Mnangagwa administration (Mwatwara & Nyakudya 2022).

When the tropical cyclone Idai made landfall in Chimanimani on the 15th of March 2019, just 7 months after the killings that were perpetrated by the army and police, many people still had bad memories of these security institutions. Hence, even though involving the security forces in the post-disaster emergency response in Chimanimani was important, the mere presence of the army and police, with their history of force and violence, generated mixed feelings in the communities. Throughout my fieldwork, the security forces, and especially the army, were perceived by the survivors either as embodying a threat to their freedoms, or an arm of ZANU-PF that was facilitating partisan distribution of donated humanitarian items, or a conduit through

which senior members of ZANU-PF were looting donations. Furthermore, since the narrow victory of its presidential candidate in the 2018 elections, the ZANU-PF-led government remained in an election mode, such that it was exploiting every opportunity to campaign for the party and the incumbent in preparation for the next round of harmonized elections in 2023. As such, I noticed during my fieldwork that in one way or another, public gatherings involving state agencies, including those that were organized by NGOs like NJIVA Trust were strategically exploited as campaigning platforms by the ruling party. I will provide detailed examples later to demonstrate the ways in which the activities of NGOs created entry points for the state to reinforce its local structures and systems of authoritarianism. In the meantime, I provide an overview of the legal and institutional framework that guides the deployment of disaster management apparatuses in Zimbabwe.

4.3 The Legal and Institutional Disaster Management Framework for Zimbabwe

Throughout the first decade of independence, the country neither had a roadmap for disaster management nor a clear definition of the term disaster. Disaster management was broadly defined in terms of civil protection, which according to the Civil Defense Act of 1982, involved "any service provided, or measure taken for the purpose of preparing for, guarding against and dealing with any actual or potential disaster" (Chikoto & Sadiq 2012, p.8). The 1982 Civil Defense Act was repealed by the Civil Protection Act of 1989 (and subsequently amended in 2001) (Bongo et al., 2013). The Civil Protection Act sets out an elaborate definition of disaster, as, "(a) natural disaster, major accident or other event howsoever caused; or (b) destruction, pollution or scarcity of essential supplies; or (c) disruption of essential services; or (d) influx of refugees; or (e) plague or epidemic of disease; that threatens the life or well-being of the community" (The Civil Protection Act 2001; Part I, Section 2). It also provides for the operation

of civil protection services at the state and local levels in the country by establishing the Department for Civil Protection (DCP) under the MLG and established the National Civil Protection Fund to finance disaster response activities. Guided by the Civil Protection Act, the DCP defines its overall functions as "to coordinate and promote strategic planning for emergencies at the individual, community, sectoral, local authority and national levels through regulatory mechanisms to provide for and ensure optimal emergency preparedness and disaster prevention in Zimbabwe" (The Department of Civil Protection, n.d.). Among other key tasks, the department is expected to disseminate disaster information, develop the capacity of other actors to deal with emergencies and disasters and mobilize resources in response to major emergencies and disasters (Mavhura 2016; Chikoto & Sadiq 2012). To achieve its mandate, the DCP coordinates its activities through multi-level Civil Protection Committees (CPCs) which are constituted by state and non-state actors, including line ministries, members of the security forces and NGOs. Figure 2 below provides a simplified structure of the national disaster management institutional framework.
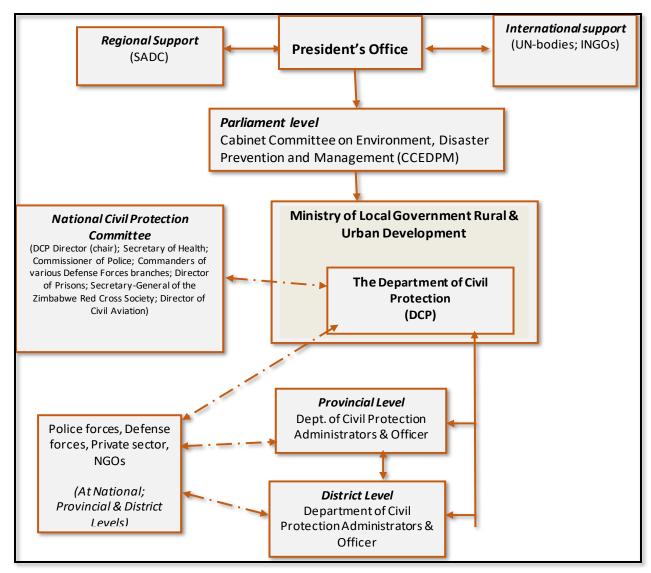
Figure 2: The Structure of Zimbabwe's Disaster Management System
Adopted from: (GoZ 2019, p. 79; Chikoto & Sadiq 2012; p. 9).

At the national level is the National Civil Protection Committee (NCPC), which was chaired by

the DCP Director and is multidisciplinary and intersectoral, comprising representatives of the

security forces, local authorities, NGOs and other relevant stakeholders (Civil Protection Act,

1989). As Figure 2 shows, the NCPC is advised from the President's Office through the Cabinet

Committee on Environment, Disaster Prevention and Management (CCEDPM). Decentralized

committees similar to the NCPC are constituted at the provincial and district levels. At the

provincial level, the committee, the Provincial Civil Protection Committee (PCPC) is chaired by

the Provincial Development Coordinators (PDCs) while the District Civil Protection Committee (DCPC) at the district level is chaired by the DDC (The Department of Civil Protection n.d.). In the paragraphs below, I am going to discuss some structural challenges that have compromised the DCP's effectiveness to coordinate national disaster management initiatives.

The DCP institutional effectiveness in national disaster management

Investigators have found the legal and institutional disaster management framework put in place by the postcolonial state to have ushered a major turning point from the colonial system which had treated disasters in terms of civil defense (Bongo et al., 2013). During the colonial period, the authors add, "the concept [of disaster] had a militaristic connotation because it was designed during the war of liberation to serve the interests of a minority white population" (Bongo et al., 2013, p. 1). Nonetheless, despite the expanded definition of disaster that had now been included in the Civil Protection Act, the legal framework is still focused on ex-post disaster activities, including, the mobilization of relief to support communities affected by disasters, with little attention on the causes of disasters. The operations of the DCP and its substructures are financed through the National Civil Protection Fund, which is only accessible for ex-post disaster management activities (Mavhura 2016). In addition, the legal and institutional framework does not provide for support to activities that promote research and disaster preparedness at the local level, thus ignoring ex-ante risk factors tied to inequalities in the distribution of vulnerability (Mavhura 2020; 2016).

To address the above gaps, the state had since 2011, been working on a draft Disaster Risk Management Bill to supersede the Civil Protection Act. Among other provisions, the Bill provides "for integrated, coordinated and mainstreaming of disaster risk management that focuses on preventing or reducing the risk of disasters, mitigating the severity of disasters, emergency preparedness, emergency fire services, rapid and effective response to disasters and

post-disaster recovery" (Disaster Risk Management Bill, 2011). However, the Bill has remained under parliamentary consideration and has not been enacted into law. As such, disaster management interventions have continued to be reactionary rather than dealing with the conditions of chronic vulnerability and precariousness within which disasters take place. For instance, the CPCs are mainly active following major catastrophes such as droughts, floods, or cyclones like Idai. Furthermore, because of the ex-post orientation of the disaster management institutional framework, the DCP is not well equipped, in terms of human resources and equipment, to effectively deal with rapid-onset disasters like tropical cyclone Idai.

When I traveled to Zimbabwe for the fieldwork towards the end of 2020, the DCP had seven technical employees in its Head Office in the capital city, Harare - the Director, Executive Assistant, Deputy Director, and four officers responsible for administration and liaison, Operations, Research and Training. These were supported by one accountant and a driver (The Department of Civil Protection n.d.). Due to this lean structure, the DCP is not able to deliver on its roles of disseminating disaster information, developing the capacity of other actors to deal with emergencies and disasters and mobilizing resources in response to major emergencies and disasters across the whole country (GoZ 2019).

The shortage of employees at the DCP is reflective of the state of affairs in many state departments across the country which derived from a policy stance that the state has been implementing since 2016. Whereas the Civil Protection Act does not prohibit the DCP Director from recruiting more personnel to support nationwide disaster management activities, the state had since 2016, been implementing a "job freeze" policy, which entailed the suspension of recruitment in state agencies, except in the essential services departments. The policy came out of the 2015 Civil Service Audit which revealed massive overstaffing and duplication of duties in

the state departments (Dzirutwe 2016). This overstaffing was evidenced by the civil servants' wage bill which accounted for almost 83% of the 2015 National Budget (GoZ 2014). In response to the recommendations from the Audit, the state then froze the employment and promotion of civil servants. Special dispensation to recruit for critical posts was only granted on a case-by-case basis. In 2017, for example, the state unfroze the general recruitment of 2 000 unemployed nurses to meet the growing demand for health services (Ndlovu 2017), and the same was applied to the education sector in 2020 to counter the high number of pupils per teacher ratio (Nyarota 2020). The recruitment freeze was accompanied by other austerity measures, like downward reviews of salaries, which did not only lead to high employee turnover but also drastically reduced the morale of low-level and middle-level state employees (Dzinamarira & Musuka 2021). I gained a deeper understanding of how employees responded to the austerity measures that the state had employed from the regular discussions and observations that I made while staying with the Dube family in the Ngangu township.

For instance, it was on a Saturday morning, the 18th of September 2021, when I was at in Mutare that I received a call from Jane. We usually had casual conversations through the phone when we could ask each other how our respective families were doing, or when I checked in to let her or Mukwasha know that I had travelled safely from Chimanimani to Mutare. As such, I was not surprised when her name accompanied the melodious ringing tone that came out of my cellphone that fateful Saturday morning. After our casual exchange of "how are you?", and "how is your family?" rituals, Jane told me that she had just bought a batch of 25-day-old broiler chicks and she wanted me to buy her 25kg of broiler starter crumbs from Profeeds, a stock feed manufacturing company with a retail outlet in Mutare. She was aware that I was going to be in Chimanimani the following day, and hence she would refund me as soon as I got to her house.

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According to her, she could not get the feed from retail outlets in Chimanimani because they were very expensive. I drove into town soon after our call and bought the 25kg broiler crumps for about US$23. I had to buy the feed on the same day because the Profeeds retail outlet did not operate on Sundays, the day that I was going to travel to Chimanimani.

Upon arriving at the Dube family's house in Ngangu township, I noticed that major changes had happened since I left a few days before. The dining section of the house looked so different. I was greeted by the chirping sounds of the broiler chicks. The dining table had been moved from the middle of the room into a corner to accommodate a small, meshed chicken brooder measuring about 1.5m in length, 50cm in width, 50cm in height, and standing on 2 metal legs. Inside the brooder were the 25 broiler chicks feeding and drinking from 3 troughs made of empty 2 litre cooking oil containers – 2 troughs were used for food while one was for water. A few small rocks were placed in the water trough to prevent it from tipping off and dampening the grass bedding. This brooder was going to be the chicks' home until they were ready for sale in the following 6 weeks. Expressing her gratitude for the feed that I had brought, Jane told me that she was now determined to resuscitate her poultry project which had been disturbed by the tropical cyclone. Before the cyclone floods destroyed their small-scale poultry venture, the Dube family had depended on it to complement the meager salaries that they were earning from their respective state agencies. As a nurse, Jane was earning an equivalent of about US$150 per month as of December 2021, while Mukwasha's monthly take-home salary was about US$180. Their eldest daughter was attending boarding school, which at the time was charging around US$400 fees per term (1 school term has 12 weeks). Each of the younger 2 siblings required US$30 per term for their primary school education. In addition to the school fees, the family incurred other expenses, which included utilities for their house and food – Jane estimated their monthly

expenses to be around US$200. There was no way that the family could meet its monthly expenses even with Jane's and Mukwasha's earnings combined. Hence, the poultry project served as a very important source of supplementary income. During the time of my fieldwork, the average chicken prices in Chimanimani ranged from US$6 to US$7 per bird, depending on size. The small-scale poultry project was, therefore, a very important income-generating initiative for the Dube family. The 200 birds that Jane lost to the cyclone floods, which she always complained about during our evening conversations, could have earned the family a net profit of between US$800 and US$1,000.

The Dube family case presented above shows the predicament that many mid-level state employees were going through - and it was even worse for employees in lower paid positions. They were generally frustrated over low renumerations and had to find ways to be innovative in identifying alternatives to generate additional income for sustenance. Other state employees expressed their frustration by leaving their jobs and seeking employment elsewhere, either within the country or abroad. Upon joining NJIVA Trust as a volunteer, I discovered that 3 of the NGO's employees were formerly employed by the state. I often engaged these employees to understand the reasons why they left state employment.

For instance, I gained much insight from an informal discussion that I had with Danai Chitsa on the 18th of May in 2021. Danai was in his mid-50s. He had spent over 30 years working as a Mental Health Officer for the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MOHCC) but he left the position just after the tropical cyclone Idai disaster in March 2019 and joined NJIVA Trust as a Field Officer in the Community Health Department. The discussion took place during lunch when Danai and I were talking about our life journeys. There were not so many people around the office that day as most Officers had gone out for routine field monitoring visits.

Danai and I were sitting on opposite sides on one of the wooden outdoor tables with attached benches while the other few employees occupied other tables. There were about 8 of these wooden tables, arranged in no particular order outside the NJIVA Trust main offices, and as if by design, the two of us occupied a bench that allowed as much confidentiality as possible.

Danai was very curious to know how I made it from Chayamiti to Canada, since, according to him, he "had never heard of anyone who has made it to Ph.D. from that small community". Chayamiti (Ward 6) is the community that I grew up in, and as Danai rightly said, it had not produced many graduates. The community lies between natural ecological regions III and IV, and it is one of the communal lands that were set aside as reserves during the colonial period. It has 2 primary schools (Chayamiti and Dokotoko) and 1 secondary school (Chayamiti) which generally lack adequate resources. I was one of the only two students who proceeded to Advance Level (A-Level) and ultimately to university from the 1996 Ordinary Level ('O' Level)[22] class of more than 30 students at the Chayamiti Secondary School. Although there have been improvements over the years since I left, as evidenced by the installation of electricity at Chayamiti Primary and Secondary Schools, installation of community solar pumped water systems, and improved road networks, the community remains marginalized and poorly developed. Thus, Danai was so eager to know how such a poor community could have produced a Ph.D. student. I narrated my professional and academic journey to him, highlighting my involvement with various NGOs in the Chimanimani district, and how I have utilized every opportunity availed to me to further my education.

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[22] The "O-level (Ordinary Level)" is a subject-based qualification comparable to UK General Certificate of Education (GCE), which is awarded after 4 years of secondary school education. Students spend another 2 years of more in-depth and academically rigorous A-level (Advanced Level) studies before proceeding to university (https://zimfact.org/factsheet-where-does-zimbabwes-education-stand/. Accessed 19 May 2022)

I could read some sense of self-blame when I invited him to tell me about his own

professional journey after I had finished narrating mine. His opening statement, "I wasted a lot of

time working for the government," was a clear signal that the rest of his submission was to be

centered around the poor working conditions similar to those that I always learned about during

the period of my stay with the Dube family in Ngangu. While Danai could not hide his

frustration over the poor working conditions he experienced during the time that he worked for

the government, I also learned from him the reasons why some people continued to work for the

state despite the meager remuneration. Here is how Danai explained the reasons and their long-

term implications:

> The government would promise workers that we are increasing your remuneration, just to
> persuade and keep you on the job until you realize that it is a lie. Another way that the
> government keeps you on the job is to offer you a promotion, which makes you feel that
> you are powerful in the Ministry. The problem is that if you are a high-ranking person,
> you die of hunger because you cannot do anything else during working hours. You
> become the main contact person, and each moment you dash out of the office, your
> absence will be felt … you are given free tea, and at times lunch. So you won't think of
> leaving. By the time you retire, you would realize that you are far behind other colleagues
> that you trained with, and even some of your subordinates. So, I left because I felt that I
> would die with nothing.

Both Danai's case and the Dube family example that I gave before highlight employment

conditions that characterize the general civil sector employment conditions in Zimbabwe, which

have contributed to the loss of morale, and the subsequent increasing employee turnover. Due to

the exodus of employees, and the employment freeze that was imposed by the state, many

ministries and state departments, including the DCP, have been hamstrung and cannot deploy

enough personnel to effectively deliver on their mandates.

The concerns raised by Danai above also came up during a similar casual discussion that

I had with another NJIVA Trust employee, Tanaka Sibanda, during the first week of August

2021. Tanaka came to my desk in the "Old Boardroom" office during tea break. This office used to be the main boardroom of the NGO before a new Boardroom was constructed, and the "Old Boardroom" had now been converted into a shared office for the Quality Management Department. It was the most spacious populated office; besides the Quality Management Department (comprising of 4 full-time employees) the office also housed 3 to 4 interns at any given time. It also seemed to be the most open office and a preferred space for employee informal discussions, even during work time.

Seeing that I was alone in the office, Tanaka grabbed a chair and sat about 2 meters on the opposite side of the desk with his nose mask covering almost half of his face in respect of the COVID-19 protocols. He used to work for the same MOHCC as Danai, and coincidentally they were working in the same department, the Community Health Department, at NJIVA Trust. Unlike Danai who worked for the MOHCC as a Mental Health Officer, Tanaka served as an Environmental Health Technician, so he was very conscious of the COVID-19 masking and social distance rules. Tanaka and I were already very close. Just like mine, his family was also based in Mutare, and we used to travel together in my car on occasions when I travelled there. As such, besides this Old Boardroom encounter, I always depended on him for information about the community health activities that he was coordinating at NJIVA Trust and his experience working for the state.

On this fateful day of August 2021, Tanaka joined me in the Old Boardroom to seek advice on examinations that he was preparing for. With a somewhat concerned tone, Tanaka told me that he was anxious about his upcoming examinations because he had not adequately prepared for them, and he wanted me to help him with some tips. The examinations were for a Postgraduate Diploma in Water Supply and Sanitation which was offered by the Institute of

Water and Sanitation Development, and they were going to be written during the last week of August.

As we discussed the examinations, Tanaka told me that he never regretted the decision that he took to leave the government. Instead, he expressed excitement about the achievements that he had attained since he joined NJIVA Trust as a Field Officer in 2014. Besides pursuing further studies, he was happy that he was taking care of his elderly widowed mother. During another casual discussion, he showed me a link to a peer-reviewed journal article on public health that he had just published in collaboration with researchers from a local university, and which derived from the community health promotion work he coordinated at NJIVA Trust. According to him, he could not have attained all these accomplishments if he was still a state employee.

Despite the state remaining the biggest employer, working conditions have increasingly become deplorable, forcing employees to seek alternative employment in non-state agencies like the NGOs as in the case of Danai and Tanaka, or to venture into extra income-generating activities, like the Dube family. During our 'after-supper' conversations, Jane always expressed her envy of the working conditions of NGO employees, especially the better remunerations, which at one point she colloquially described as, "*Vanohora ne heti* – their salary can fill a hat". *Vanohora ne heti* is an expression commonly used when referring to people who receive huge salaries. The salaries of NJIVA Trust Field Officers ranged from US$600 – US$800 per month during the time of my fieldwork, and although this NGO's salaries were less than those offered by bigger NGOs that were operating in Chimanimani, the conditions were still much better than in the state agencies.

Overall, economic policies adopted by the state, including freezing recruitment and cutting employment benefits have had the negative effect of reducing the capacity of state departments to function well. The DCP is among the many state departments drastically affected by these policy positions as evidenced by its failure to properly discharge its disaster management duties post-Idai as we will see later in this chapter. Yet it also has to be appreciated that the DCP is a creation of the postcolonial authoritarian state, and as such, its functions are bound by the latter's authority. Subsequently, as I discuss in the paragraphs below, the DCP's reliance on the structures and systems of the state has in many instances put the department into conflict with other non-state stakeholders and disaster-stricken communities that its activities were supposed to serve.

The DCP as an extension of the authoritarian state

The structure and functioning of the DCP and its sub-structures have attracted a lot of attention as scholars sought to understand its effectiveness in responding to disasters that have become more recurrent and deadly over the past few decades than in the past. Mavhura (2016, p. 613) specifically reveals how the disaster management structure reinforces systems of state authoritarianism by employing a top-down approach where "key decisions or policies are taken at the higher levels and enforced downwards following the hierarchy". Within such a structure, the involvement of other stakeholders, including the communities, is limited to being passive recipients of programs and decisions designed by technocrats at the national level (Bongo & Manyena 2015, p. 5). The lack of involvement of local communities became a source of contestation in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai in Chimanimani. I learned of these contestations when I visited Chief Saurombe towards the end of my fieldwork in October 2021.

The chief was a particularly interesting character during the fieldwork. Besides his role as a traditional leader, he was also employed by NJIVA Trust as a full-time Mobilization Officer,

and as I will show further in Chapter 5, he was among the founding members of this NGO. A charismatic, middle-aged, and always cleanly dressed man, Chief Saurombe was very active in community and district events, either those organized by NJIVA Trust or by other stakeholders. His chiefdom lies in the Biriiri area to the west of the Chimanimani plateau, and as we have seen before, the bulk of his land is under forestry plantations operated by Border Timbers. Although there are four other chiefs in Chimanimani, Chief Saurombe seemed to represent and speak on behalf of all the others during public events, including those that were held in communities outside his jurisdiction. In all the community and district events that I attended, and where he was present, he always stood up to give speeches, votes of thanks, or speak to the media, on behalf of the traditional leaders.

Before I visited his residence, we had numerous informal discussions whenever he was around at the NJIVA Trust offices, and it was from these casual encounters that we agreed to schedule a more formal and guided interview. Besides, from prior interviews that I had conducted with other research participants during the fieldwork, Chief Saurombe had been presented to me as a rich fountain of ethnographic data with respect to the post-tropical cyclone Idai emergency response, recovery, and reconstruction processes. For instance, a young man who was among the first responders and who I interviewed during the early stages of my fieldwork referenced Chief Saurombe as being one of the key witnesses who could attest to his acts of heroism during the rescue and emergency response period. The young man told me that he worked alongside the chief to search for missing persons and to deliver food to stranded families. In another instance, a reference to Chief Saurombe constituted part of Chengetai Marimo's response to my question about the relations between state agencies operating in Chimanimani and traditional leaders. Chengetai was working for the local authority, CRDC, as a Director for

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the Community Development Department. I had scheduled an interview with him to understand how his department was involved in the post-Idai response processes. I will elaborate on my encounter with him later in the chapter. Suffice to say, he portrayed Chief Saurombe as the only traditional leader who had a comprehensive and factual account of the interventions which took place post-Idai. When he was concluding his remarks on how his department was working with the traditional leaders, he directed me to talk to the Chief because, in his words, "*Chief Saurombe vanoziva zvese* – Chief Saurombe knows everything". Based on my regular informal engagements with him, his active appearance in public spaces, and because his name always came out during interviews that I had with other research participants, I became interested to schedule a more structured discussion with him. I was particularly keen to understand how his role as a Mobilization Officer at NJIVA Trust was linked to his responsibilities as a traditional leader.

I drove from Mutare to the Saurombe Business Centre, which was the main shopping center under his jurisdiction, comprising about 4 small and nearly empty grocery shops. I had not been to the chief's residence before, but I was sure I would get my directions from anyone that I found at the business center. Coincidentally, as I pulled to the front of one of the grocery shops, the chief's van, a Toyota Hiace, emerged from the back of the shops. He had just come out of a planning meeting facilitated by a local NGO. The NGO had secured funding to support livelihoods in the communal area, hence, the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the implementation modalities for the project. I followed behind his car as we drove along the rocky and dusty road that led to his homestead.

Upon arrival, I noticed a huge difference between the chief's homestead and those that we had passed along the way in this marginal communal area. It was in early October and most

people were starting to clear their lands in anticipation of the first rains that would normally come between mid to end of November - but as I drove into the chief's fenced yard, I saw a portion close to an acre with healthy and almost ripe green mealies. Two taps, from which the family drew water for household use were planted in front of the main house. Such easy access to water is unusual in this community as most households draw water from wells and communal boreholes. Painted in blue (with a strip of black at the bottom), and roofed with iron sheets, the main house looked very modern. About 20m in front of it was a nicely grass-thatched round kitchen and a chicken run made from brick and mesh wire and measuring about 10m x 5m lay next to it. The chief told me that his wife used to run a layers poultry project but she temporarily stopped it to focus on green mealies. The communal area did not have electricity, but as I entered the sitting room of the main house, I was treated to a glass of cold water from a deep freezer which stood next to a medium-sized TV mounted onto the wall and connected to a DSTV decoder. The chief had drilled a borehole and installed a solar system to pump tap water and supply electric power to his homestead.

What struck me most during the interview with the Chief was that despite his lifestyle of modernity as evidenced by the technological advancements at his homestead, he expressed strong disapproval of how the state disaster management apparatuses were deployed in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai, which he said were influenced by "modern" English culture. When the chief said, "*havachazivi chinyakare chedu, vave kuita zvechirungu* – they no longer follow our tradition, they are now following English culture", he was expressing his anger that the chiefs' role as custodians of culture was seldom recognized in the national and subnational disaster management institutional framework.

Because of this exclusion, the post-Idai disaster response activities implemented by the state did not comply with the Ndau culture. For instance, he told me that due to the lack of consultations, bodies recovered from the debris following the tropical cyclone floods were not buried as per Ndau custom. "It was not proper to bury people who were not related, who did not share a totem, in one grave", Chief Saurombe decried. His point was based on the fact that during the search and rescue period, bodies recovered from the debris were hurriedly buried because the mortuary at the local clinic could not accommodate more than 5 corpses and also because electricity infrastructure had been destroyed and there was no power to cool the mortuary. There was insufficient labour to dig graves for the recovered bodies, as many people were scavenging through the mud and boulders searching for their missing family members and this resulted in 2 or 3 bodies being buried in one grave. He was also not happy that the state sent rescue helicopters before the chiefs had performed "traditional rituals to appease the ancestors." For the chief, tropical cyclone Idai was not just an ordinary disaster triggered by meteorological systems, but it had cultural meanings. He likened the disaster to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Bible. According to him, "*marombo enyika* – spirits of the land (or army of the ancestors)", had been infuriated by the wrongdoings in the community, and therefore caused the destruction. Below is Chief Saurombe's explanation of how *marombo enyika* operate:

> when the rains are about to come, water spirits *(njuzu)* travel along main water channels, especially the rivers, and as they travel along the rivers, they meet *marombo enyika and* ask if everything is fine. Then *marombo enyika* would say "everything is fine". But if they say the opposite, *njuzu* would ask *marombo enyika* to help clean the wrongdoings in the society.

This is what happened in the case of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster, according to the chief, and in such a case, a ritual was supposed to have been held first before undertaking any ex-post

response operations. In the chief's view, "if that had been done, the bodies of all the people recorded as still missing could have been recovered."

Chief Saurombe's concerns here show that by not providing for the effective participation of traditional leaders, the DCP-led disaster management institutional model failed to account for important socio-cultural aspects of the communities, including the culturally ascribed meanings of disaster. The DCP-led model has a systemic and rigid top-down structure, which is not flexible enough to respond to the differences in socio-cultural contexts within which disasters occur. Chiefs seldom participated in the district CPC planning meetings, which are mostly constituted by technocrats from the state departments and NGOs. Due to this lack of cultural sensitivity, the DCP-led disaster management model attracts resentment and resistance from the traditional leaders who feel that they are being sidelined yet has jurisdiction in the communities where the disasters occur and in which the disaster response activities take place. Besides the challenges associated with the top-down approach, budgetary limitations is also a major challenge influencing the operations of the DCP and its substructures.

Budgetary allocations for disaster management

Using Myanmar and the Philippines as case studies, Howe & Bang (2017) show how the unequal distribution of resources, especially budget allocations, influences national-level disaster responses. From political economy analyses of the two countries, Howe & Bang found that disaster management suffered from such factors as the regimes' prioritization of security expenditure over social development, corruption and political clientelism. These experiences in Myanmar and the Philippines paralleled what I found through my ethnographic work with respect to the DCP's capacity to respond to disasters in Zimbabwe.

The issue of resource allocation for national disaster management came out in separate interviews that I had with employees of two NGOs, Simba Bako, the Humanitarian Coordinator

for an international NGO based Harare, and Peter Moto, the Director of the Catholic Association based in Mutare. I interviewed the two in March and April 2021, respectively. I scheduled the interviews to understand how their NGOs were involved in the post-cyclone Idai recovery and reconstruction processes in Chimanimani. The work of these two NGOs will become clearer in the next chapter. In the meantime, the discussion here centres around how Simba and Peter were personally involved in state disaster management processes, and their perceptions of how the state responses to the tropical cyclone Idai disaster were shaped by the architecture of the institutional disaster management framework. Simba engaged with the state at the national level as an NGO representative in the NCPC, while Peter participated in disaster management planning processes at the provincial level where he represented his NGO on the PCPC. Hence, their participation in the research helped to reveal some of the underlying institutional factors that negatively influenced state responses to the Chimanimani disaster.

When I interviewed him, Simba passionately talked about some of the institutional issues that he said were often raised by NGOs during NCPC planning meetings. One of the major concerns, according to him was that the state was not prioritizing disaster management during national budget allocations, and as such, the DCP was not adequately resourced to effectively deliver on its mandate. Simba was worried that the shortage of employees directly impacted the DCP's capacity to deliver. The DCP, he told me, did not have full-time employees in the provinces and districts but the CPCs were constituted by volunteers from various ministries and NGOs who were not necessarily obliged to participate in the meetings. He also lamented how the only four functional cars that the DCP had at the time, and all stationed in Harare, were expected to be used to coordinate disaster management activities countrywide. Simba's worries echoed Dube's (2015) findings from an examination of the effectiveness of the DCP in managing veld-

fire-induced disasters in Mangwe, a rural district located in the Matabeleland South Province of Zimbabwe. Dube found that the department could not easily attend to fire emergencies because it lacked resources like rescue and firefighting equipment as well as enough vehicles.

While Simba was more concerned about the failure of the DCP to deliver at the national (macro) level, Peter Moto articulated how these national (macro) complexities manifested at the provincial (meso) level, especially in the aftermath of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. Peter was the Director of The Catholic Association, a national NGO affiliated with the Catholic church, which had a national office in Harare and one of its provincial offices in Mutare. He was sitting on the provincial CPC together with other NGO leaders, and hence, he was intimately intelligible of meso-level disaster management planning processes. Here is what he said when I asked him about his experience participating in disaster management planning at the provincial level:

> We have the worst CPC set-up, and there is a need for a complete overhaul. At the provincial level, there is no clear CPC coordination … The PDC just brings together a few people – the army, some NGOs and a few other organizations, and calls this grouping a CPC. There is no clear structure. If you go to the Government Complex and ask for a disaster office, you won't find it. There should be a clear secretariat which then reports to the PDC. That secretariat should have its own resources, including vehicles and a budget allocation so that when a disaster strikes, the resources would be easily deployed to the affected areas, and not just waiting for donations.

Peter's concerns about the lack of coordination and clear structure corroborate Simba's submission that since the DCP did not have decentralized offices with full-time employees it relied on volunteers drawn from line ministries and other stakeholders. Although the CPCs are multi-sectoral, participants are invited to sit on these committees as representatives of specific state departments, NGOs or sectors, and not according to the skills that they possessed. In Peter's view, this is problematic in the sense that there are always new people each time he attended the

PCPC planning meetings. In agreement with Simba, Peter suggested that it could be sensible if there is a DCP office at the provincial level dedicated to specifically coordinated disaster management initiatives.

A common characterization of the state that featured during my interviews with Simba and Peter is that of a state which emphasizes the centralization of disaster management resources rather than decentralizing them, and a state which is not investing in strengthening the institution responsible for disaster management. This characterization had two implications. Firstly, by not capacitating the DCP, the national institution responsible for disaster management, the state has sustained, reproduced, and amplified the vulnerability of disaster-prone communities. Secondly, the centralization of resources has helped to reinforce the structures and systems of the authoritarian state in the communities affected by tropical cyclone Idai. I shall further elaborate on these processes later in this chapter. In the meantime, I turn to a discussion of how, by not decentralizing disaster response resources, the DCP-led institutional framework negatively influence local-level planning processes.

Resource centralization and effects on local level disaster management processes

How the centralization of resources influences local-level planning by district-level state agencies – and their subsequent failure to effectively deal with the tropical cyclone Idai disaster – became apparent through my engagement with employees of state agencies in Chimanimani. The challenge of resource limitations, and the lack of operational vehicles specifically, frequently came out during my engagement with district-level participants who were directly involved in the post-Idai response processes. For instance, Mr. Mike Chibuwe, who was a Senior District Officer for the DSW under the Ministry of Public Service, Labour & Social Welfare explained to me during a semi-structured interview how the DCP sub-structure at the district

level, the DCPC, could not immediately organize emergency support to survivors due to a lack of resources.

My interview with Mr. Chibuwe was by chance. I visited the DSW offices in Chimanimani on the 15th of June in 2021 to introduce myself and my research and intending to schedule a future day for an interview with someone at the office. At the reception was a lady, Mrs. Mubaiwa, who according to my estimates, was in her late 40s. She was employed in this state department as a Community Development Officer. Mr. Chibuwe was not in the office at that time, who according to the office protocols, was the most senior person to whom I was supposed to talk. For the twenty-plus minutes that I waited for Mr. Chibuwe, I was responding to questions from the inquisitive Mrs. Mubaiwa, who was very curious to know about my studies in Canada, and especially why I chose anthropology as a field of study. She told me that she could not imagine herself studying anthropology even at Master's level as she failed an introductory module that she took when she was studying for her undergraduate degree in Social Work at a local university. Mrs. Mubaiwa also talked about her role as a Community Development Officer, which included facilitating poverty assessments in the rural communities, identifying beneficiaries of humanitarian relief, and distributing disaster relief items sourced by the state and NGOs.

While the tempo of our conversation was getting more cordial and interesting, a muscular and youthful lad, dressed in jeans and a t-shirt branded with an insignia of a local NGO dashed into the reception area. I estimated his age to be between 25 and 30 years. In response to "*mangwanani ambuya*[23] – good morning mother-in-law", a polite "good morning, sir" from Mrs. Mubaiwa, signalled to me that it was Mr. Chibuwe who had arrived – and my guess was on

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[23] '*Ambuya*' means mother-in-law, but it can also be used when addressing an elderly woman as an expression of respect

point. Following brief introductions, Mr. Chibuwe ushered me into his office and closed the door behind him. I was hoping to utilize this initial engagement with him as a rapport-building opportunity, through which the two of us were to agree on a later date for a structured interview. When I brought up the subject Mr. Chibuwe responded:

> I am not like the *madhara*s (old men) who tell you to come next time. Let us have the interview now. I know it is important for your degree. I may also request information from you in the future for my own research. So why should I make it difficult for you to get information?

Mr. Chibuwe's gesture signified a major deviation from the bureaucracy, which is characteristic of most state processes, including the dilly-dallying that I encountered when I was seeking clearance with the MLG during the early stages of my fieldwork. By saying "I am not like the *madhara*s" he was not only divorcing himself from the behaviour of the old generation of state employees, but as I later learned, it was also an expression of frustration over the way the national government was responding to development issues at the district level. Mr. Chibuwe defined himself as both a survivor of the disaster and a responder. He was living in the Ngangu township when tropical cyclone Idai made landfall and he counted himself very lucky to have survived. He also led emergency response and reconstruction activities, which included participating in the DCPC planning meetings as a senior state employee and coordinating the distribution of disaster aid as part of his role in the DSW. He perfectly switched between these two positions throughout the 75 minutes of our interview.

Although this was our first time to meet, Mr. Chibuwe assured me that he would comfortably respond to any question that I had about the planning and response processes that happened in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai in Chimanimani. I capitalized on his openness and welcoming gesture to extract otherwise sensitive information about his experiences

coordinating disaster management activities at the district level. Expressing dismay as a survivor, and remorse as a representative of a service provider, Mr. Chibuwe said:

> We had to rely on the goodwill of NGOs and donors because we did not have any funds to respond to the disaster at the district level. We did not even have transport to deliver donated items to the communities.

He added:

> We could not do anything on our own. We were on the receiving end of the chain. We just accepted any donations that we received and then tried to share them to the affected families.

Mr. Chibuwe even showed me two huge bales of donated clothes that were supposed to have been distributed to the disaster survivors but were still laid against a wall in his office. He told me that these had not been delivered to the communities for distribution because his department did not have a vehicle. Mr. Chibuwe's claims were in congruence with the findings of a special audit that had just been undertaken by the Auditor-General, and which attested to the logistical challenges linked to the distribution of disaster aid. The special audit was carried out to assess the disaster preparedness and distribution of relief items by the DCP[24]. Among the findings, the audit revealed that a total of 33,403 kg of goods at one of the distribution centers - Machongwe Forward Distribution Centre (FDC) – "had expired in stock while 52,027 people affected by the cyclone and some whose houses were destroyed were in dire need of the supplies" (Chiri 2020, p.33). In the same report, the Auditor-General highlighted that the lack of coordination and liaison among government agencies and ministries resulted in delays in the release of donated

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[24] The audit also focused on the recovery activities that had been undertaken as at September 15, 2019. The aim included evaluation of the systems that were put in place before, during and after the Cyclone Idai disaster (Chiri 2020, p. iii)

funds that were meant to support the survivors[25]. Furthermore, the state did not deploy enough equipment like excavators to clear roads and execute the search and rescue operations in places where homesteads had been buried under boulders and in the mudflows (Mavhura 2020), and instead, much of the search and rescue mission was accomplished through helicopters and sniffer dogs provided by the South African government (Mavhunga 2019). Furthermore, the process of accessing funds for disaster response from the National Civil Protection Fund has been clouded with bureaucratic bottlenecks (Bongo & Manyena 2015). To channel resources to communities affected by a disaster, the DCP has to apply for funding from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, a process that often takes time. During my interview with Mr. Chibuwe, he highlighted that since state agencies at the district level did not have budget allocations for disaster management activities, his department and others, had to rely on the support of NGOs.

District disaster management activities in the districts are coordinated by the DDCs who also chair the DCPC planning meetings. But these roles are more ceremonious than obligatory. In other words, there are no clear binding codes or operating procedures upon which the DDCs have to abide when presiding over disaster management initiatives in their respective districts. The unavailability of dedicated offices at the district levels was cited as a major set-back for effective disaster management during my research. Because of the absence of a DCP office specifically responsible for coordinating disaster aid activities at the district level, there was no one who could take up the initiative of demanding resources, including budgetary allocations from the central government. When tropical cyclone Idai hit Chimanimani, disaster aid from the

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[25] Following the launching of the International Appeal for humanitarian assistance, a new Fund, the National Disaster Fund, was created to receive donations for Cyclone Idai and it was administered by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (Chiri 2020).

national and provincial level stakeholders could not be immediately delivered because major roads leading into the district had been destroyed by the floods. The delays in delivering aid to the affected communities were especially felt by survivors who had lost their food reserves, household properties, and shelter. The impact according to Mr. Chibuwe, could have been lessened if the district had a standalone disaster management department with its own budget to support directly affected households and vehicles to quickly deliver the aid. Apart from the challenges that emerged from resource distribution, some of my interlocutors complained about the lack of proper coordination which had a bearing on how post-Idai responses unfolded.

Coordination of disaster response activities

The lack of proper coordination was rooted in the national legal framework that did not provide for a clear institutional structure, except the CPCs, to guide national disaster management. Under The Civil Protect Act, the DCP did not have the autonomy and power to coordinate national disaster management activities. The DCP Director was accountable to the Minister of the MLG and yet he was expected to coordinate a committee, the NCPC, comprising members from other state agencies, NGOs, the private sector, and others, who at times had their own interests and priorities (GoZ 2019). My day-to-day informal conversations with Mr. Shoko, the Provincial Agriculture Specialist in the Agritex Department helped me to understand how the centralization of authority in the Minister, and the lack of autonomy my the DCP, influenced the coordination of CPC activities at the provincial level.

(a) Disaster response coordination at the provincial level

Aged around 50 years, Mr. Shoko had been working for Agritex for over 20 years, and he often sat in the PCPC planning meetings representing his department. He joined the department as an Agribusiness Economist and had been progressively promoted through the years until he

assumed the current position of Provincial Agriculture Specialist, which is the second senior position in the Department at the provincial level after the Provincial Head. The Department is under the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), and its mandate involved "promoting sustainable, competitive, and viable agricultural production by providing technical, extension, advisory, and coordination services" (MOA n. d.). The Department has its provincial offices in the Government Composite Office Block, a nicely constructed multistorey complex building lying towards the eastern end of Mutare city. Besides Agritex, the Government Composite Office Block also houses other ministries and most state departments based in Mutare.

Before joining Agritex, Mr. Shoko was employed in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education as a Teacher together with his wife, but he decided to leave because Agritex offered better working conditions than the Education Ministry. At the time of my fieldwork, his wife was still employed as a teacher at a local high school. I often joined Mr. Shoko and used a spare desk in his office as my workstation whenever I was in Mutare. Besides enjoying the free and stable internet connectivity while in the office, I also became deeply involved in his daily work activities. For example, on many occasions, he could ask me to help with the simple formatting of word documents on his computer, and to provide my personal views on complex workplace issues in which he was involved. At times I joined informal conversations that he held with other state employees who occasionally visited his office when I was there.

Through these interactions, I became aware that most of the senior government officials operating from the Government Composite Office Block (including Mr. Shoko himself) were allocated A2 Farms under the highly politicized and radical land acquisition and redistribution process, the FTLRP. At times their newly acquired social class as farmers influenced how these

senior state employees delivered on their duties as representatives of the state at the provincial level, including participating in disaster response planning activities. I learned from Mr. Shoko that most of the senior government employees rarely spent time in the offices because they were busy with their agricultural ventures. From my interaction with Mr. Shoko and based on observations that I made while sticking around the Government Composite Office Block, I noted two elements with regards to the attitudes of the state officials at the provincial level which contributed to my understanding of the institutional complexities around disaster response coordination.

Firstly, while my hosts in Chimanimani, the Dube family, and the former state employees who were now working for NJIVA Trust (Tanaka and Danai), had complained to me about the conditions of work in the state departments, I found these complaints did not apply to most senior state officials that I interacted with at the provincial level in Mutare. These provincial employees capitalized on their seniority to first benefit from any state-led initiatives which they were tasked to implement at the provincial level and those they were expected to cascade down to the districts.

During the period of my study, two significant national agricultural support schemes had been initiated by the state, which the senior state officials at the provincial level were coordinating – the Presidential Input Scheme/Pfumvudza, and the Command Agriculture Scheme. These schemes were designed to support local farmers with free agricultural inputs, including fertilizers and seeds (Chapter 6). Although the schemes were meant to assist resource-constrained small-scale farmers with agricultural inputs, senior officials in government had been taking advantage of their positions to enrich themselves. The Command Agriculture Scheme, for

instance, had been rocked by major corruption scandals which did not only make newspaper headlines but also became a topical issue during parliamentary debates (Matenga 2022). Secondly, the province-based senior employees' attitude could be interpreted as an expression of disgruntlement toward the state's working conditions. I sometimes accompanied Mr. Shoko to his farm during workdays. On one occasion, I asked him if he was not afraid that he will lose his job if his supervisor finds out that he was doing personal business during work hours, and here was his response: "The livestock (cattle and goats) that I keep on my farm and the tobacco crop give me much more returns than the peanuts *(nzungu)* we are getting as salaries." Mr. Shoko told me that this was a shared attitude amongst all government employees working from the Government Composite Office Block, including his own boss. Because of such attitudes of the senior government officials, it was extremely difficult for the PDC to convene PCPC meetings. This challenge was confirmed by Mr. Shoko when he informed me that on one occasion the PCPC failed to hold a scheduled feedback meeting on the implementation of tropical cyclone Idai response activities because "all the bosses did not turn up." Unfortunately, the legal framework as provided for in the Civil Protection Act did not give the PDC any legal powers to compel employees from line ministries and other agencies to participate in PCPC planning meetings.

(b) Disaster response coordination at the district level

I later learned from interviewing state employees at the district level, especially from Mr. Blessing Mashonga that similar coordination challenges were experienced by the Chimanimani district CPC in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai. I got to know him through Mr. Shoko, who, at the time of initiating the connections, had assured me that I would not regret interviewing Mr. Mushonga as he had been directly supporting communal farmers in the

Chimanimani district for decades. I was, therefore, motivated to make every effort to track him down and not miss the opportunity of learning from him. Besides his involvement in coordinating disaster response activities post-Idai, Mr. Mushonga had experience with previous tropical cyclone disasters which pounded on Chimanimani in the past, specifically tropical cyclones, Eline and Japhet, in 2000 and 2003 respectively. Based on his experience dealing with tropical cyclone disasters in Chimanimani, he was the best person to enlighten me on coordination issues peculiar to the DCPC.

Although it was initially taxing to schedule a meeting with him as he was always busy, and at times cancelling scheduled meetings at short notice, our eventual encounter was very enriching. I gathered more insights into the vertical relations that existed between the district and provincial institutional disaster management structures and how the centralization of authority and resources influenced local-level coordination and planning. He narrated the struggle that he went through the morning of 15 March 2019 when he tried to reach out to the provincial level CPC to mobilize resources to assist during the tropical cyclone Idai emergency. Here is how Mr. Mushonga recounted the events of that fateful morning:

> I tried to mobilize members of the district for an emergency meeting when I received a phone call notifying me that a whole family in Ngangu had been killed by the floods, but no one came for the meeting. Even NGOs were not forthcoming. We were not on the 'high-alert' side. I then called the CPC contact person in Mutare and told him that the NCPC needed to be on high alert as the situation seemed to be deteriorating. From that hour, phone calls from the province were flooding until my phone died down and people could no longer get in touch with me because there was nowhere to charge my phone.

Mr. Mushonga's statement above contributes to the understanding of district-level coordination challenges in two ways. Firstly, it shows how the district-level CPC's reliance on provincial and national bureaucratic structures was problematic. The fact that vertical coordination between the PCPC and DCPC was interrupted when Mr. Mushonga's cell phone battery died is evidence

enough that local level actions could have been negatively affected by delays in transmission of decisions, orders, and instructions from bureaucratic structures above. Secondly, his experience demonstrates the challenges of bringing together multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary stakeholders to participate in DCPC planning meetings under the framework provided for in the Civil Protect Act. According to Mr. Mushonga, there were 23 state agencies based and operating in the district and while all these agencies were expected to be represented during the DCPC meetings only a few were participating. He also told me that a handful of NGOs and other stakeholders were forthcoming. As I will show in Chapter 5, the NGOs in turn blamed the state for politicizing such important planning platforms.

The issue of coordination also came up during my interaction with other district-level state employees. For instance, Mr. Chibuwe, who I introduced earlier in this section, invoked the 2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction to emphasize how tropical cyclone Idai taught him the importance of coordination at the local level. The Sendai Framework, according to him, "brings out the importance of coordination in disaster situations ... if I go that way, while John is going the other way, we are not doing justice to serve disaster survivors …" This acknowledgement by Mr. Chibuwe, and the testimonies that I heard while interviewing other state employees, demonstrated a general appreciation of the importance of a coordinated and multi-stakeholder approach to disaster management. However, negative attitudes by other senior state officials at the district level, including the DDC, hindered proper coordination and the subsequent deployment of disaster management apparatuses to communities affected by tropical cyclone Idai. Applying the disaster authoritarianism analytical framework, I categorized the state employees into three broad classes based on the attitudes and behaviors that they exhibited as they became enmeshed in power relations at the district and provincial levels.

Subsequently, the employees' attitudes and behaviors shaped public perceptions about the state's overall response to the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. The three classifications that I identified, and which I will elaborate in detail below, are: (a) active enablers of authoritarianism, (b) passive enablers of authoritarianism, and (c) detached enablers of authoritarianism.

The active, passive, and detached enablers of state authoritarianism

I found that many senior government officials with political connections were not concerned much about the services that the state offered to survivors. Rather, they seemed to be contended with the status quo as it allowed them to utilize their political positions and connections to derive personal benefits. To me, these employees constituted the "active enablers" of the authoritarian state. The second category comprised the "passive enablers", which was constituted by employees who, while unhappy and not politically connected, could neither directly challenge the status quo nor leave their positions. Instead, they took advantage of their connections and closeness to NGOs to continue to offer support to survivors while also personally benefiting from allowances and other opportunities that these NGOs provided. My hosts, Jane and Mukwasha, also fell into this category. They always complained about the poor employment conditions in their respective departments during our evening conversations, but they could not confront their employers because of the fear that they would lose their jobs. As a result, they inadvertently continued to promote the authoritarian system by continuing with their jobs while pursuing alternative income-generating initiatives, like small-scale poultry projects, to supplement their incomes. The last class, "detached enablers", comprised employees who challenged the authoritarian system by withdrawing their services from the state and seeking employment opportunities elsewhere. Some of them, for instance Danai and Tanaka, ended up working for NGOs. The attitudes of senior state employees like the Chimanimani DDC fit into the category of "active enablers" of the authoritarian state as I will demonstrate below.

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The Chimanimani DDC and the abuse of power

Throughout my engagement with Mr. Mushonga, the senior Agritex employee in Chimanimani,

he presented himself as the lead CPC player insofar as the coordination of tropical cyclone Idai

emergency response activities in Chimanimani was concerned. For example, besides proudly

narrating how he coordinated with the PCPC contact person and requested assistance and his

heroism in mobilizing other members of the DCPC for emergency meetings, he also chronicled

how he organized emergency shelter and food supplies for survivors who were stranded after

their houses had been destroyed. These actions were contrary to the perception that I had when I

started my fieldwork - I was expecting to hear of a more rigid and linear structure (as presented

in Figure 2) in which the DDC assumed the overall coordination authority at the district level. I,

therefore, became very curious to understand why Mr. Mushonga, an Agritex employee, and not

the DDC, was keen on leading CPC activities during the emergency response period.

When I asked Mr. Mushonga how he came to be the lead person in DCPC activities,

particularly in the response to tropical cyclone Idai, he said:

> I was responsible for coordinating disaster aid activities when cyclone Eline (2000) came.
> I also witnessed cyclone Japhet (2003). I think I am the only government employee who
> have survived all these cyclones. Everyone knew that I could use my experience with
> previous cyclones to lead the planning of Idai activities. I was also receiving calls
> directly from the CPC in Mutare.

While Mr. Mushonga's justification seemed valid, I later learned from interviews and informal

discussions with NJIVA Trust employees and other state employees that it was not necessarily

the case. The major reason was that the DDC had shown no interest in leading tropical cyclone

Idai response processes. He could not be located during the night of the disaster when he was

most needed to coordinate DCPC planning meetings, as he had visited his girlfriend in Tilbury

(which is about 25 km away from the government offices in Chimanimani). I was told that he

only returned to the office and joined others during the search and rescue phase after 2 days because the access road had been cut off by the floods. The DDC story was narrated to me by Mrs. Portia Mutema, a Senior Development Officer in the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender, and Community Development (hereafter referred to as The Gender Ministry), and Tinotenda Mbeu, a NJIVA Trust Project Officer in the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department.

Mrs. Mutema was participating in DCPC planning meetings representing The Gender Ministry. She was also a very popular state employee within the corridors of NJIVA Trust offices. During my fieldwork, she participated in almost all public events that were organized by the NGO, including the official handover of bee-keeping equipment event which was held in September 2021, and the district Hurudza seed marketing day in October the same year. She was always engaged in these public events either as a facilitator or master of ceremony. In addition to these, she directly supported NJIVA Trust's activities at the community level. Besides her background in business development and entrepreneurship, Mrs. Mutema was also a skilled public speaker, which I presumed was the main reason she was always engaged by NJIVA Trust and other NGOs operating in the Chimanimani district to facilitate their meetings. While my hosts, the Dube family, supplemented their income through poultry projects, and the Mutare-based senior government officials took advantage of free government inputs, Mrs. Mutema created personal relations with NGO employees who subsequently facilitated her participation in the NGOs' activities. She was guaranteed a minimum of US$30 in allowances for each day that she attended an activity organized by the NGOs. For Mrs. Mutema however, the involvement with NGOs did not constitute a deviation from her roles in the ministry because her position as a Development Officer encompassed working directly with communities.

On two occasions, Mrs. Mutema, Tinotenda and I traveled in the same car when we were visiting community groups working with NJIVA Trust, and it was when we were having an informal discussion during one of the trips that the DDC's story came up. We were visiting two community groups that were working with NJIVA Trust in the Nyanyadzi and Gudyanga communal areas, located in Save Valley to the west of the Chimanimani plateau. NJIVA Trust had secured funding to procure three livestock feed production kits which were to be distributed to three community groups to promote community-level economic strengthening. A total of five groups had expressed interest in receiving the kits. As such Mrs. Mutema and I were tasked to visit each of the potential beneficiary groups who would pitch their business ideas to us, and with Mrs. Mutema's background in entrepreneurship development and my skills in project management, we were supposed to rank the groups against set criteria, and objectively recommend to NJIVA Trust the three groups that were supposed to receive the livestock feed production kits. Tinotenda was only accompanying us as a driver and leading us to the groups during this exercise. He had been working with the groups for decades, hence he distanced himself from the selection process as he feared that his assessment was going to be biased.

The topic of the DDC's behavior came up when Mrs. Mutema and Tinotenda were telling me about their experiences supporting tropical cyclone Idai survivors during the search and rescue and early recovery phases. Commenting on the DDC's behavior, Mrs. Mutema said:

> He knew the cyclone was coming but decided to visit a girlfriend. At first, we did not know what to do as CPC members. There was no one to lead us. We then agreed that Mr. Mushonga should lead the emergency planning meetings because he was the most senior person around. He (the DDC) only turned up three days later and started to toss us around as if he was there in the beginning.

The quotation from Mrs. Mutema above demonstrated the general weaknesses in the architecture and operations of the DCP sub-structures at the district level, which in this case were worsened

by the DDC's somewhat "I don't care" attitude. The disaster management framework as provided for in the Civil Protect Act emphasized political authority while ignoring important aspects of accountability and responsibility. There has been no political commitment to put in place systems that improve accountability as evidenced by the Disaster Risk Management Bill which has remained a draft law since 2011. Although the DDC knew that tropical cyclone Idai was coming, he did not convene CPC planning meetings that could have enabled other stakeholders to implement urgent actions to save families in the communities that were most exposed to the cyclone. Yet he was not held to account for the failures because he was politically connected to the ruling party. By starting to "toss [people] around as if he was there in the beginning", the DDC's behavior conveyed the way that authoritarianism was asserted by senior state officials during the response to the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. As I will elaborate more in this chapter, some senior state officials, including the DDC, misused their positioning as key political figures in the district to misappropriate donations meant for the tropical cyclone Idai survivors. By the time I started my fieldwork in November 2020, a new DDC had taken over and the incumbent was reassigned to another district after his involvement in the massive looting of donations was published by the media published. To the naked eye, the DDC's reassignment appeared as if the disaster management system had some way of ensuring accountability, but this was not necessarily the case. The failure to institute any legal actions against him reflected an authoritarian system where the ruling party has in effect captured the state such that prominent politicians view themselves as being untouchable.

The DDC's actions, especially the failure to convene planning meetings could, however, be viewed in the context of the district's past experiences with tropical cyclones. Although Zimbabwe has had to deal with disasters like droughts and tropical cyclone storms (such as Eline

and Japhet) in the past, they were not as disastrous as Idai. As such, no one expected that the cyclone was going to cause much extensive damage, especially in the uplands of the Chimanimani district. Estimation of the severity of tropical cyclone Idai and anticipatory actions were thus shaped by their memories of past disasters. For instance, when I asked Mr. Mushonga about the district CPC's state of preparedness toward the cyclone, he said:

> Yes, we were receiving information about the cyclone … we were getting information from the NCPC command center in Harare. Even the Meteorological Services Department (MSD) was disseminating information … But the instructions were that we should warn people in low-lying areas to move to the highlands ... From previous experiences, floods mostly affect low-lying areas …

No one took heed of the weather advisory because forecasts about the trajectory of the tropical cyclone were not localized and specific, and this lack of specificity made it nearly impractical for residents in Chimanimani to appraise the severity of the tropical cyclone. For instance, a weather report and forecast issued by the MSD at 1600hrs on the 14th of March, just a few hours before the tropical cyclone made landfall stated that:

> The tropical cyclone Idai is moving progressively towards the eastern borders of Mozambique and rain [has] already been witnessed in some parts of Manicaland … Cloudy and windy conditions, with morning rains are expected over Mashonaland East and Central, Manicaland and Masvingo provinces … The Meteorological Department will continue to monitor the trajectory of Tropical Cyclone Idai and keep the public informed of any developments (MSD 2019).

The above message was widely disseminated through the national television station of the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), national radio stations and MSD's social media handles (Twitter and Facebook). Further, in a newspaper advisory published on 15 March 2019, the same day that the cyclone hit Chimanimani, the DCP warned:

> This particular weather system is expected to give rise to significant rainfall over Masvingo, Manicaland, Mashonaland East and Mashonaland Central provinces and may result in an increased risk of flooding and damage to homes and infrastructure.

Accordingly, all communities in Masvingo, Manicaland, Mashonaland East and Central and other parts of the country that may be affected must maintain vigilance and are advised that every effort must be made to access weather updates and pay particular attention to the information needs of people with disabilities and those with chronic illnesses (Tshuma 2019, par. 7).

Instead of being specific, the above pre-disaster advisories from the MSD and DCP were too generalized such that they failed to arouse fear and motivate communities to adopt appropriate precautionary measures. It is, therefore, presumably justifiable that by deciding to visit his girlfriend during the night of tropical cyclone Idai, the DDC had judged the scale of the disaster not only based on the weather advisories but also embedded remembrance of previous tropical cyclones. Nonetheless, his case demonstrates the role that senior state employees played in promoting and sustaining state authoritarianism during the implementation of tropical cyclone Idai response activities. I will use the example of the launch of the Chimanimani FM event to show how the process of "enabling" extended to include non-state actors who supported post-Idai recovery and reconstruction interventions.

4.4 The Chimanimani Community Radio Station – Chimanimani FM

On the 27 of September 2021, I attended the official handover of equipment for a new community radio station, Chimanimani FM, which was held concurrently with commemorations of the 2021 IDUAI. Just after the official proceedings of the event had ended, and as most delegates were trickling down the hill, towards the Chimanimani hotel to join the queue for lunch, I overheard an interesting discussion between the ZANU-PF Chairperson for the Chimanimani District and a journalist who was working for a provincial state-owned newspaper, *The Manica Post*. The two had just walked from the main VIP tent, moving away from the disruption of the loud music that was now being played, and took seats on two chairs in my front. With my ears closely tuned to the conversation, and eyes casting a spontaneous and uninvited

stare at the two, I could read fear and hesitation on the part of the youthful journalist while the Chairperson seemed to be very authoritative and demanding. In the encounter, the Chairperson demanded to know why the work that the CRDC was doing to support the survivors of tropical cyclone Idai was not making headlines in the Manica Post, "as if ZANU-PF is doing nothing to the people". I heard the journalist explaining to the Chairperson, in a very polite tone, frequently punctuated with the salutation, "Comrade", that he had been sending articles to the newspaper's editor. The prefix "Comrade (Cde)" is commonly used to address ZANU-PF party officials and war veterans (Bratton 1987). I saw the two even fumbling through the journalist's phone, extracting communications between the latter and his editor, including some of the news articles he had sent for publication. The Chairperson concluded the conversation by promising that he would get in touch with the editor to make sure that "ZANU-PF activities are visible in the media."

I first became aware of the community radio station (Chimanimani FM) during my interview with Abraham Arib on the 8th of September 2021. Abraham was the Communications Expert at UNESCO-ROSA based in Harare. This new community radio station initiative was part of a package of other disaster response interventions led by UNESCO-ROSA under the World Bank-funded tropical cyclone Idai recovery initiative, ZIRP. As I highlighted earlier in this chapter, this project aimed to enhance the dissemination of life-saving and real-time messages and facilitate early warning systems to improve disaster preparedness. The need for a community radio station in Chimanimani arose from concerns about marginality which came out during the rapid assessment of the impact of tropical cyclone Idai which was conducted shortly in the aftermath of Idai (GoZ 2019). Some areas in the district were still socially and geographically marginalized such that they neither received radio or TV signals nor had stable

mobile phone networks. For such communities, the tropical Idai disaster became what Hsu et al., (2015 p. 10) call a "disaster of marginalization." For instance, during the week that I spent in the Rusitu Valley, I had to walk to strategic spots on a hill to access a cellphone network. Thus, under such conditions of marginality, many people had to rely on word-of-mouth for information about the looming tropical cyclone Idai disaster. With the support of the state, the Chimanimani FM project was, therefore, initiated to strengthen community early warning systems to reduce the impact of future disasters. The community radio station was going to be connected to a solar grid to ensure that if future storms destroy public communication and electricity infrastructure, the station will remain powered and continue to serve as a communication hub for the communities. I was also told by Abraham that the station would have a special facility for individual community members to power their mobile phones and transmit critical information in case of future disasters.

As a communications expert, Abraham talked very highly about the new radio station during our conversation, expressing his pride to have been the lead technical expert coordinating its establishment. To him, the most important aspect of Chimanimani FM was that it was going to be run by the members of the community through a Board of Directors agreed upon by the residents. The following quotation captures the vision that he had regarding the radio station:

> The communities are the biggest stakeholders and UNESCO is going to hand over the project so that the community takes full ownership of it … The community radio will be organic and will be run by a Board of Directors. There has never been a community radio in Zimbabwe. The ones we currently have are centralized and not managed by the communities. This is the first of its kind in the whole country and we negotiated with the government that the project is piloted in Manicaland since the province had experienced many disasters before.

Abraham was very confident that the community radio station would succeed because as an international communications expert he had acquired extensive experience coordinating similar

projects in other countries around the world. I was excited when Abraham told me during the interview that his organization was organizing a public official handover of the last batch of the radio station equipment which was going to be held in Chimanimani on the 27th of the same month. This event was going to be an opportunity for me to obtain first-hand information and understand more about the radio station's operational modalities.

The handover and 2021 IDUAI commemoration ceremonies were held at the Chimanimani Village Grounds – an open space behind the main business centre, and just in front of the government complex where most district-level state departments were housed, including the DDC's office. When I arrived at the venue around mid-morning, I was greeted with loud music coming out of huge disco speakers planted at various positions of the Village Grounds. A relatively small crowd of about 200 people, comprising mostly young people, with some standing, some sitting on the ground and the speakers, and in a semi-circle formation, was being entertained by popular Disc Jockeys (DJs) who worked for provincial and national radio stations, including Diamond FM, Radio Zimbabwe and Capital FM. The DJs invited volunteers to come to the middle of the semi-circle to dance to the music of popular local musicians. They would intermittently stop the music and asked the rest of the crowd to judge the best dancers, who were then awarded small prizes like branded t-shirts, caps, and masks. Facing the semi-circle on the other side were two VIP tents, one for senior state and UN officials and one for low-level state employees and NGO representatives. The local people, who mostly came from the nearby Ngangu township and peri-urban communities surrounding the Chimanimani business centre, were to either stand or sit in the open ground.

Surrounding the perimeters of the venue were promotional banners, gazebos and beach flags branded with the logos of major state and private information and ITC companies,

including Netone, Econet, Telecel, Diamond FM, ZarNet, ZBC and the Postal &

Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (POTRAZ). The scene generated by these colourful

banners and tents made the Chimanimani Village Grounds look completely different from its

usual appearance. At the time that I arrived, the VIP tents were still almost empty as most of the

delegates had not arrived. Some of the few who were around were standing under the shed of

huge eucalyptus trees behind the tents having informal chats, others were enjoying the skilful

dances from the crowd, while others were moving around perusing through pamphlets and

publications that were displayed by the ICT companies. Running up and down the field,

maintaining order, and directing VIP delegates into the tents was a heavily built man, who I later

learned was the ZANU-PF District Chairperson for Chimanimani. As I was also moving around

looking at the ICT displays, I bumped into a long-time friend, Chengetai Marimo, who was

employed by the CRDC as the Director for the Community Development Department and who

kept me company throughout the event.

Officially, the ceremonies were supposed to commence at 10 am but it was not until after

mid-day that the Guest of Honor, the Minister of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting

Services, arrived. Also present were heads of the state ICT companies, directors of private ICT

players (e.g., Econet), representatives of UNESCO-ROSA and other UN agencies, the Member

of Parliament for Chimanimani East[26], traditional leaders, and church leaders. I joined Chengetai

in the other tent which was meant for ordinary civil servants and NGO delegates.

As a ritual, the official proceedings kicked off with the singing of the national anthem

followed by the introduction of VIP delegates and speakers. As if reading from the same script,

state officials who presented during the event, including the new DDC, the Guest of Honor, the

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[26]Chimanimani district is divided into two electoral constituencies (Chimanimani East and Chimanimani West).
Both constituencies were led by MPs elected on the ZANU PF ticket

MP, and directors of state-owned companies, would start by praising the "good work" that the President and the new dispensation were doing, followed by praising the district ZANU-PF leadership, and concluding their speeches by thanking the president for "remembering Chimanimani." In her presentation, for instance, the Guest of Honor, Monica Mutsvangwa, who was also the Minister for Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services, implored the community to appreciate the good work that the new dispensation, "which is being led by our beloved president" has done. In her speech, she portrayed the President as a blameless and very caring fatherly figure who came to Chimanimani on "innumerable occasions" to commiserate with the community in the aftermath of the cyclone. The President's care, according to the Minister, manifested through the initiative that he took to "bring these agencies to provide a community radio to the community." The message that she was trying to communicate to the crowds in attendance was that it was through the wisdom of the ruling party, specifically the President, that the community radio was being set up and not necessarily the initiative of UNESCO-ROSA. This was in total contradiction to what I learned from Abraham who had told me that the role of the state in this project was only to provide the legal framework, but the actual implementation was being led by the UN agencies.

Following the Minister's and other delegates' speeches, it was now time for the official handover of the Chimanimani FM equipment. The Master of Ceremonies (MC) took over the microphone, blew into it, and tapped the mouthpiece several times, not only to signal the crowd to keep quiet but also to ensure that the *"bu bu bu bu bu"* sound coming from the huge speakers planted around the open ground would help him attract people's attention. Then he said excitedly:

tave kuda kukuzivisai hutungamiriri hwe Community radio yedu asi tisati tadaro toda kuti timbo pembera (we now want to present to you the leadership of the community radio station, but before we do that let us celebrate).

Then he asked the DJ to play "very good music." A handful of youths popped out of the crowd and followed the rhythm of the song as they moved nearer to the delegates, in the space between the VIP tents and the crowds before they got into serious dancing business. It was not clear if they were excited about the news of the community radio station or by the melody that was coming out of the speakers. After about 10 minutes of music, the MC signaled the DJ to stop the music and asked the crowd to ululate and whistle (very few people, however, responded in the affirmative) as he was now inviting another senior state official to introduce the leadership Board of Chimanimani FM who were going to receive the radio equipment on behalf of the community.

The introductions followed a systematic process. All the Board members were sitting in the VIP tent and after a name had been called, the corresponding member stood up to be seen by the public, wave his or her hand several times, and then took their seats. As the name of the Chairperson was announced as "Mrs. Mercy Sacco," a delegate sitting next to me exclaimed, "*Ahhh!*" He looked at me as if he was expecting a reaction and shook his head disapprovingly. Realizing that he had gained my attention, he murmured in a very low but anger-laden tone and making sure that no one else besides the two of us could hear, "*haa, vanhu veZanu hauvagoni chokwadi* - haa, Zanu people are difficult to deal with surely", he said.

I did not know what the statement implied until Chengetai later told me that Mrs. Mercy Sacco was the wife of Joshua Sacco, the ZANU-PF MP for the Chimanimani East constituency in which the community radio station was being set up. Besides being the MP's wife, she held a very senior national position as a member of ZANU-PF's Women's league, an executive decision-making wing of the ruling party. Among the other board members is a well-known local

businessman who was running a pharmaceutical business in Chimanimani. Overall, the leadership represented an elite class and no one among my interlocutors knew how the members were selected. When Abraham, told me that Chimanimani FM was going to be "organic with a Board of Directors selected by the communities", I envisioned a structure that comprised members drawn from the local communities that were directly affected by the disaster. My definition of an organic Board of Directors was completely different from the meaning that was ascribed to this structure by Abraham. The Board of Directors appeared to me as an "elitist structure" divorced from the social world of the local communities – it represented a transposition of the structures of national state agencies onto the local where leadership positions are based on one's loyalty to the ruling party. The exclamation *"Haa, vanhu veZanu hauvagoni chokwadi"* by my neighbour in the tent when the MP's wife was called out implied that ZANU-PF had found an opportunity to strengthen its grassroots structures and extend control of the public media by unilaterally imposing the Women's League member as the Director of Chimanimani FM. Such political rent-seeking, Yamamura (2014, p. 403) argues, often "sacrifices direct benefits to disaster-hit areas in favour of self-interest." In the past, "the ruling party has exploited state resources in election campaigns and has ensured that state-media coverage is heavily biased in its favour" (Magaisa 2019, p. 147). Thus, while the Chimanimani FM radio project was, on the one hand, going a long way towards improving disaster preparedness in the district, on the other hand, it added to the toolbox of the apparatuses that the authoritarian state could employ to exercise social control over citizens and NGOs.

Following the handover of the Chimanimani FM equipment, the procession proceeded with another official activity which had not been announced beforehand and reading from the faces of my neighbours in the tent, it seemed to have been introduced as a "sweet surprise" to

most of the delegates but ended up being a "sour encounter" to many. It was the official handover of 132 laptop computers and thousands of exercise books. It became a sweet surprise to the 10 schools across the whole province of Manicaland that shared the laptops and a selection of schools in the district that received exercise books. The computers, according to the ICT Minister, Dr. Jenfan Muswere, were a "gift" from the President, and his Ministry had been sent to deliver the gift on the promise that the President had made when he visited communities affected by the tropical cyclone in the district. Yet the computers were not necessarily a presidential gift but part of a state initiative to promote the use of ICT which had been going on since the Mugabe era. This part of the processions was a sour encounter for delegates who did not hear the names of schools in their communities being called among the beneficiaries.

No one knew how the list of the schools to receive the donations was drawn. The distribution of laptops demonstrated some of the ways that the state was actively reproducing inequalities in Chimanimani. As far as I knew, most of the schools which received the donations, including Ndima High School, Nyanyadzi High School and Chimanimani High School were already well resourced - while schools in already marginalized communities neither received the computer donations nor the exercise books. I jokingly asked Chengetai later why the schools in my community (Chayamiti) did not receive anything from the President, and his response was, "*Hameno, vanongozviita kuHarare kwavo uko* - I don't know, they just make arrangements on their own in Harare." This response from him revealed some of the fundamental characteristics of the state which had implications on local level planning processes in Chimanimani. Most schools in Chimanimani fell under the CRDC, except a few mission schools that were being run by churches like the United Baptist Church, Roman Catholic, and the Methodist Church. Given that many of the schools belonged to the local council, Chengetai, as the head of the Community

Development Department should have known about the computer and exercise books donations. His ignorance provided evidence that the local government was not involved in making decisions about the presidential donations. Such lack of consultation potentially demoralized district-level state employees, forcing them to push back on critical district-level issues and not take proactive action when there was a need.

In concluding the official handovers and the IDUAI celebrations at around 4:30 pm, all delegates were asked to proceed to Chimanimani Hotel, which was about 600 meters to the east of the Village Grounds, for lunch. The VIP delegates, specifically the senior state and UN officials from Harare and the local traditional leaders were to go first and had their lunch inside the hotel while the rest of us were to stand in a queue outside the hotel building, which according to my calculations stretched for almost 500 meters and get our food in plastic take-out containers. The food was served from huge pots, and after being handed a container, one had a choice to find a space within the hotel yard or take the food away with them. While in the queue, waiting for my turn to be served, I observed that most people seemed to be much more excited about the food than the proceedings at the celebrations. This excitement could have been because we were all very hungry and some people had gotten to the venue as early as 8 am anticipating that the event was going to start early.

In summary, the Chimanimani FM case has shown how the interventions spearheaded by non-state stakeholders provided an opportunity for the state to expand and further strengthen its authoritarian structures and systems. I will pursue this topic further by looking at other forms of opportunism that they state exploited in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai.

4.5 State Opportunism in Post-Idai Response Processes

The interview with Abraham and what unfolded during the ceremony helped me understand the

various facets of state opportunism and authoritarianism that emerged in the aftermath of tropical

cyclone Idai. Notwithstanding the potential negative implications of the Chimanimani FM

initiative, this project demonstrates one of the ways in which the disaster created opportunities

for collaboration between the state and other stakeholders to mobilize resources and implement

actions that address some of the conditions of vulnerability that had contributed to the destructive

impact of tropical cyclone Idai. Apart from the Chimanimani FM, whose focus was to improve

disaster preparedness by facilitating the dissemination of real-time information, the state also

implemented a housing project at Runyararo Village for the displaced survivors. This project

served two aims: firstly, by implementing it, the state was responding to the immediate housing

needs of displaced survivors who were accommodated in temporary shelters at the Arboretum,

Garikai, Kopa, Nyamatanda displacement camps. Secondly, the project was an opportunity for

the state to address some of the pressures responsible for the disaster, which it had failed to

address before the disaster. Through the housing scheme, the state was going to decongest the

communal areas by providing at least 224 families affected by the tropical cyclone with

permanent houses at Runyararo Village, formerly West End Farm. Each family was going to be

allocated 6 000 m^2 to cater to their livelihood activities (Bande 2021). I have dedicated a section

in Chapter 6 where I will discuss in detail the Runyararo Village housing initiative.

For Chengetai, who I formally interviewed a few days after our encounter at the handover

of Chimanimani FM equipment and the IDUAI celebrations, the disaster presented a great

opportunity for the CRDC to strengthen its disaster management systems. According to him, the

disaster occurred at a time when the council was in the middle of developing a new 10-year

strategic plan, and it became a "wake-up call" to integrate disaster management activities which had not been included during the initial drafting of the district plan. The following statement from Chengetai shows how the local authority had to realign its strategic direction in response to the disaster:

> Our strategic plan ended in 2018. We had just conducted our last consultative meeting at Chimanimani hotel to come up with a new strategy which was going to run from 2019 to 2028 when cyclone Idai hit the following day. From there we could not do anything for almost a year. We were concentrating on assisting people who were affected by the cyclone. Then this year (2021), we retrieved the drafts that we had come up with in 2019 and started to consolidate the district development plan. We have now included disaster risk reduction activities which had been omitted in the original draft.

This statement from Chengetai suggests that before tropical cyclone Idai, disaster management was seldom considered a priority issue in the CRDC's plans, a factor that could have derived from the embedded remembrance of past disasters, but which contributed to the severe destructive impact of the tropical cyclone. Lessons learned through responding to tropical cyclone Idai, therefore, helped the district-level state agencies to self-introspect and come up with proper plans to enhance the disaster preparedness of vulnerable communities.

The "positive opportunities" as exemplified by the establishment of the Chimanimani FM, initiation of the housing scheme and restructuring of the CRDC Strategic Plan, were however soiled by the "negative opportunism" involving the state. In addition to using platforms and initiatives provided by responders to strengthen state authoritarianism and to advance the interests of the ruling party, the de jure and de facto impunity surrounding high-profile state officials and politicians facilitated corruption and the looting of humanitarian donations meant for survivors.

Corruption and looting of donated items

In her report following the September 2019 special audit of cyclone Idai response activities, the Auditor General noted that:

> goods in stock at Charter Forward Distribution Centre were transferred from the Village warehouse in Chimanimani without documentation, hence it was difficult to verify the quantities of stock transferred from the Village warehouse to Charter (Chiri 2020, p. 36).

She further listed the goods that were not documented, which included huge amounts of sugar, beans, and mealie meal, and concluded that the missing records of stocks provided evidence of possible misappropriation of some of the donated items. These revelations triggered my interest to find out how the misappropriation happened and who were the people behind the shenanigans.

I learned that one strategy used to loot donated items was that politicians and senior employees of state agencies drove to the distribution centers with vehicles branded with ZANU-PF logos and pretended as if they wanted to assist to take donations to the affected areas. At face value, this seemed like a gesture and expression of care by the ruling party as the DCPC did not have vehicles dedicated to disaster response. The officials even came to the distribution centers clad in ZANU-PF campaign regalia to ensure that the media would not misidentify the caring ruling political party - in one of the media articles, the gesture was headlined "ZANU-PF vehicles assist distribution of relief aid" (Dhewa 2019). In many cases, however, the donations that the ZANU-PF vehicles assisted in distributing never reached the intended beneficiaries. I also learned about how the former DDC, and security forces were involved in the looting spree during the informal discussion that happened when Mrs. Mutema, Tinotenda and I were visiting NJIVA Trust groups in Gudyanga and Nyanyadzi. The topic had shifted from discussing the drama which occurred when the DDC could not attend DCPC emergency meetings after visiting his girlfriend (see Section 4.3) to the corrupt activities that he was involved when he eventually joined others during the emergency response period.

Apart from sitting on the district DCPC planning meetings representing her Ministry, Mrs. Mutema was also actively involved in the emergency response, especially in distributing disaster relief items. She was tasked to coordinate the distribution of donations at one of the distribution centers at the Chimanimani business center. Tinotenda on the other hand told me that he was managing the donations warehouse that NJIVA Trust had set up at its premises in the Ngangu township.

Mrs. Mutema started by saying: "Most of the things you see in the flea markets at the Chimanimani Village are cyclone donations and I know the people who were involved." The flea markets that she was talking about were located about 50 meters from the Chimanimani Village Grounds where the handover of equipment and the IDUAI celebrations took place behind a block of the main shops at the Chimanimani business center. Most of the flea markets were wooden structures roofed with iron sheets or black plastic and they sold a variety of goods, ranging from clothes, kitchenware, electronic gadgets and other things. I had visited the flea markets several times before the tropical cyclone Idai disaster, and admittedly, I noticed that the place had grown and became congested when I went there after the disaster for my research. Although it was nearly impossible to verify Mrs. Mutema's claim which seemed to relate the growth of the flea market site to the looting that occurred, I considered her statement to be a metaphoric representation of the huge scale of looting that she witnessed.

She recounted the confrontation that she had with the former DDC when she tried to resist his plan to loot donated items from the distribution center that she was managing but she ended up giving in to the pressure, fearing that she could be charged with insubordination:

> Our distribution center was based at the (Chimanimani) Village, and I was the one managing it. We were receiving everything from donors, bales of blankets, food, everything …The other day, because the DDC wanted to get rid of me, he said, "I know you are good at computers, can you go and work with computers on administration and

statistics issues at the Ngangu Centre" ... He wanted to get rid of me. I first resisted but he continuously pressurized me until I gave in because I was now fearing that I could be charged with insubordination … I just felt that I should leave. I rushed home to pick up my laptop and the moment he heard that I was not at the site, he sent someone with a truck. When I was walking back from home, I received a phone call from a colleague telling me that the truck had just left with bales of blankets. Within a very short space of time, the people had disappeared, they were gone.

Mrs. Mutema told me that she worked in data entry for the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) during the 2018 elections and this is how the DDC knew that she was good at computers. According to her, the people sent by the DDC to collect the bales could not have done that if she was around because she did not allow anything to be dispatched without her signature. I was told that each bale contained approximately 30 blankets. What pained Mrs. Mutema most, however, was that while she never took "even a packet of sugar for personal use", she never received recognition like other state officials. Instead of being arrested, the DDC was reassigned to another district when his involvement in corruption and looting was exposed.

Mrs. Mutema's concerns about public recognition also arose from the fact that more than 20 people in Chimanimani were, together with some corporate representatives, religious organizations, and diplomats invited to attend the 2021 National Heroes Day[27] commemorations in Harare where they were conferred with awards for their contribution in assisting affected communities during the emergency response period (Maguta 2019). Among the awardees was the ZANU-PF MP for Chimanimani East, Joshua Sacco, whom many of my interlocutors accused of having neglected the community when they needed him most during the search and rescue period. They alleged that he fled the district when he heard that the tropical cyclone was approaching, and as such, he did not deserve recognition, but he received the Heroes Award

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[27] National Heroes Day is held on the second Monday in August each year in remembrance of liberation war fighters in Zimbabwe,

because he was an "enabler" of the authoritarian state. By rewarding failure, either through the conferment of the Heroes Award to the MP or the reassignment of the DDC, the state contributed to the low morale of otherwise committed employees, which could lead to them withdrawing their commitment to future disaster management initiatives or also become involved in corrupt activities. Mrs. Mutema pointed to these probable outcomes when she regrettably wished she had "also looted" because nothing happened to those who were apprehended.

Tinotenda's account of looting centered around his encounter with the security forces while he was managing the NJIVA Trust warehouse where donations provided by NGOs who did not want to utilize the state-managed distribution centers were kept. He remembered an incident when he instructed the security guard to lock the warehouse upon seeing an army truck heading towards the NGO's offices in the middle of the night. The occupants of the truck asked the security guard to release food items from the warehouse so that they could be used to feed employees who were manning the state distribution centres.

Tinotenda went on to narrate the threats that his team had to endure after they lied to the army guys that the Director who could authorize the dispatching of donations from the warehouse was not around. With his hands glued onto the steering wheel as the car roared down the curves of the Chimanimani plateau, Tinotenda cracked out a giggle, connoting his triumph over the army, before he continued with his story:

> They waited for a long time and started to demand that we give them the Director's phone number. But we told them that we didn't have the number. Then we secretly phoned the Director who instructed us not to give it to them.

Although on this occasion the army was blocked from looting the goods, it was a pervasive problem that was widely reported in the media (Bulawayo24 News 2019). It was when these looting sprees were exposed by the media that the DDC was reassigned, while other senior state

officials were dragged to the courts (Muponde 2019), but no one was prosecuted for having been involved in the misappropriation of donated goods. On the contrary, the state sought to hide the corrupt activities from the gaze of the public by threatening journalists who were exposing the corruption, including the arrest of the Mutare-based freelance journalist, Sydney Saize, while he was investigating allegations of looting and partisan distribution of disaster aid in the district (Nyangani 2019)

Apart from demoralizing the committed employees of the state, including people like Mrs. Mutema, diverting disaster aid from where it was needed most into the hands of a few political elites created a huge trust gap between the state and the survivors. The corrupt state employees were now viewed as embodying a state that capitalized on the people's suffering to achieve political and individual gains. The trust gap was further widened by the cases of disaster aid politicization which implicated the ruling party.

The politicization of disaster aid

There is now a surmountable amount of literature, largely located in the political economy of disasters, which provides evidence of how relief aid can be used as a weapon of warfare against political enemies (e.g., Howard-Hassmann 2016; Cohen & Werker 2008). Howard-Hassmann (2016) specifically draws upon the cases of North Korea, Zimbabwe, Venezuela, and the West Bank and Gaza to describe what she calls "state food crimes." She uses this phrase to describe contexts where the state denies its own citizens the right to food by taking decisions "that benefit political elites at the expense of the populations whose well-being is entrusted to them" (p. 3). My interest in this section is to localize this literature and show how the food-as-a-political-weapon discourse manifested in post-Idai Chimanimani.

From its history of dealing with disaster response activities, especially handling droughts, the state has always been accused of employing clientelist approaches to distributing relief aid in

such a way to benefit the ruling party (Mutizwa 2021; Desportes & Hilhorst 2020). These allegations, imagined or real, became a basis upon which state-survivor relations were defined and negotiated during the response to tropical cyclone Idai in Chimanimani.

The long-established conflation of the state and the ruling party acted as a barrier for some survivors from accessing disaster aid. Some survivors who had been denied relief aid on the basis that they supported the opposition before the disaster were reluctant to claim their share of aid from the state in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai. They feared that their allegiance to the opposition was going to be used as a criterion to exclude them. For instance, my discussion with Mrs. Sekai Taruona, who I met during my visit to the Rusitu Valley in June 2021, revealed the skepticism and trust gap that came out of the ruling party-state conflation. I will discuss more about my encounter with Sekai in Chapter 6 but my interest at this point is in her perception of the state. I asked Sekai if she had received any state assistance following the disaster, and in response she stated: "I did not even care to go to the distribution center because I am not a member of ZANU-PF. What if they humiliate me there?"

Sekai further stated that her name had been excluded from the list of beneficiaries of relief aid provided by the state before because she was an active member of the opposition. Experiences similar to hers had been observed in other parts of the country where leaders of the ruling party simply turned their internal membership registers into beneficiaries' lists, thereby excluding other members of the community from accessing state-sponsored aid (Zenda 2019). This time around, she found no reason to go to the distribution center, because the people who had denied her relief before, were still the same people involved in the post-Idai aid distribution processes. Her construction of the post-Idai emergency response context was that of a state, synonymous with ZANU-PF, providing emergency and recovery assistance to its members who

had been affected by the disaster, and not to members of the opposition. As a non-member of the ruling party, she considered herself not to fit the category of the social-group deserving state-provided assistance.

The state's strategy of involving supporters clad in the ruling party's campaign regalia in the distribution of donations served as an exclusionary strategy in that it scared off other survivors who did not want to be associated with the ruling party. Besides, some senior politicians employed aid distribution strategies that directly discriminated against survivors who did not belong to the ruling party. In one instance, the MP for Chimanimani West, Nokuthula Matsikenyere, was caught red-handed distributing goods provided by UNICEF only to ZANU PF supporters "during the night without the knowledge of most of the villagers" (New Zimbabwe 2019, par. 6). In justifying her actions, the MP is said to have openly told the survivors that "they deserved to be deprived of the disaster relief because they did not vote for her during last year's elections" (New Zimbabwe 2019, par. 7). The MP's attitude conforms to Zenda's (2019, par. 7) reporting in the immediate aftermath of Cyclone Idai, which he found to have presented an opportunity for the ruling party "to settle scores with those who oppose it" – an analogy that fits well with the food-as-a-political-weapon discourse, and subsequently, the metaphor "*kuipa kwezvimwe kunaka kwezvimwe.*"

Discontent over the ZANU-PF's involvement in the distribution of aid, compounded with increasing allegations of looting involving senior officials of the party and state during the emergency response period, propelled the Zimbabwe National Army to issue an order to stop the interference. Following the order, officials of the ruling party were removed from the distribution centers and the army claimed total control of the distribution of the disaster relief aid (Chirisa 2019). Nevertheless, with the tainted image of the security forces following the August 2018

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killings, the body of the army, mirrored that of an "insensitive" and "abusive" state which

claimed jubilation out of the tears and anguish of the survivors.

The security forces and abuse of authority

The presence of the security forces around the distribution centers for humanitarian aid was in

theory meant to ensure the security of donated disaster relief items. This presence however

reinforced state authoritarianism, which manifested in the silencing of NGOs and the security

agencies' opposition to the tenets of accountability. Simba Bako, the Humanitarian Coordinator

of the Harare-based international NGO who I introduced earlier in this chapter recounted his

experience while working alongside the security forces at the Skyline Distribution Center[28].

Simba accompanied a consignment of goods that his NGO had sourced from Harare to the

distribution two days after the cyclone made landfall. As soon as he delivered the goods, the

army took over control of everything. According to his narration, Simba and other NGO

employees who had also brought donations were reduced to "mere spectators". He told me that

they witnessed suspicious nocturnal loading of disaster relief aid items into ZANU-PF vehicles

and trucks belonging to the security agencies, but they were powerless to stop such activities.

Simba said: "they could just load their vehicles and say we are delivering these items to such and

such places. We knew that was not the case but where could we report?"

Indeed, Simba's observations corroborated with what I also heard from Mrs. Mutema and

Tinotenda during our trip to Nyanyadzi and Gudyanga. In addition to impeding "the recognition

and acknowledgement" of non-state actors (Nyahunda et al., 2022, p. 7), the military factor

introduced widespread fear, while also compromising transparency and accountability in the

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[28] The Skyline Distribution Centre was the main centre where helicopters and trucks dropped donations for
forward distribution. It is located about 20KM from Chimanimani business centre.

disaster response processes. The fear as well as the lack of transparency and accountability influenced survivors' attitude toward the state, which I will explore further in Chapter 6.

Cases of women's sexual abuse involving the army did not only make newspaper headlines during the emergency response (New Zimbabwe 2019), but they remained talking points up to the period of my research. Women and girls desperate for food and other basics suffered sexual exploitation mainly perpetrated by the army personnel. While I heard about aspects of these abuses from many of the research participants that I engaged, I got more first-hand insights from Mrs. Mutema and Tinotenda during the Nyanyadzi and Gudyanga trip. The informal discussion touched on many topics, including the theme of sexual exploitation.

Drawing links between the morality of the security forces involved in aid distribution and the vulnerability of women and girls, Tinotenda described what he said was "another mission" of the army other than that of rescuing survivors. Here is how he described the other mission:

> You could hear one saying 'I have slept with five, another would say, I have slept with three, and they would be pointing at the women that they would have slept with. It was more like competition … You could see the women, some with familiar faces, and some with toddlers on their backs, getting in and out of the soldiers' tents even in the middle of the day. At Kopa, the army commander ended up imposing a curfew between 6 pm and 6 am on his subordinates but it didn't work …

Tinotenda witnessed these sexual activities when he had left the warehouse at NJIVA Trust offices and had been assigned to the Kopa Distribution Center, which was located at the Kopa Business Centre in the Rusitu Valley. From his statement, the leaders or commanders were aware of the sexual abuses but did nothing to the perpetrators except imposing a curfew, which did not work. When I asked Tinotenda whether he took any initiative to report the cases, he laughed the question off: "Where do you think I could have reported the cases? The bosses were aware and that is the reason why they imposed the curfew". According to him, the imposition of the curfew

was an attempt by the army leaders to restrict officers from getting into the villages at night, but this did not achieve the purpose of addressing the sexual abuse of women and girls.

I heard similar stories of sexual abuse involving members of the security forces in respect of other distribution centers such as the Chimanimani High School Distribution Centre. Adding to the trauma that the women and girls endured during the cyclone Idai disaster, the sexual predation was not only dehumanizing but also exposed the victims to other disastrous catastrophes, including the possibility of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS. Crucially, the sexual predation demonstrated inequities of power in the post-Idai response processes. Within the notion of *"kuipa kwezvimwe kunaka kwezvimwe"*, the disaster created unique gendered vulnerabilities whereby male representatives of state agencies could abuse women and girls with impunity.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that the prevailing political context when tropical cyclone Idai made landfall in Chimanimani influenced the state's response to the disaster. Framed within the metaphor *"kuipa kwezvimwe, kunaka kwezvimwe"*, the state took advantage of its control of disaster management apparatuses to redress some of the pre-existing conditions of vulnerability, for instance, by reviewing the CRDC Strategic Plan and initiating the Runyararo Housing Scheme. Nevertheless, the disaster became a "blessing in disguise" for the ruling party as it facilitated the mobilization and deployment of resources in a way that reinforced state authoritarianism and advanced the interest of ZANU-PF.

The centralization of authority and resources and a lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities under the current disaster management framework did not only affect the proper coordination of post-Idai response activities but also created a fertile ground for opportunistic

tendencies. In addition, due to limited resources, including budgetary allocations and human resources, the DCP has not been able to effectively deliver on its mandate of disseminating disaster information, developing the capacity of other actors to deal with emergencies and disasters and mobilizing resources.

The de jure and de facto impunity surrounding high-profile state officials and politicians facilitated corruption and the looting of humanitarian donations meant for survivors. By failing to deal with obvious cases of corruption and the looting that were exposed during the responses to Idai, the state set a bad precedence for future disaster management. State employees who showed dedication and commitment during the tropical cyclone Idai responses, will likely withdraw their commitment in the future or also join and become enmeshed in the corrupt activities.

The role of the security forces, while important in emergency disaster responses, was tainted by the history of violence and abuse, especially following the events of 1 August 2018 when the military and police arbitrarily killed six innocent people on the streets of Harare. As such, their involvement in tropical cyclone Idai response processes was perceived with cynicism, which created a huge trust gap between the state and survivors of the tropical cyclone. The trust gap further widened when the security forces began to be involved in looting disaster aid and sexual abuse.

In such instances, the work of NGOs became critical to complement the state's efforts and address some of the shortcomings that emerged as the state interacted with other stakeholders in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai. The chapter that follows, therefore, specifically looks at how the NGOs were involved in the post-tropical cyclone Idai emergency response, recovery, and reconstruction processes. It investigates the nature of relations, alliances

and conflicts which emerged as NGOs of different sizes and types worked together with the state

to provide humanitarian assistance to survivors.

Chapter 5 **Allies or Rivals? NGOs and the Post-cyclone Idai Reconstruction Processes in Chimanimani**

5.1 Introduction

> The government was overwhelmed, and many people could have died if it was not for the support provided by NGOs. But some of these NGOs were very mischievous … we could not understand if they were real or just bogus people masquerading as NGOs …

In the above statement, Danai Chitsa, the Field Officer in NJIVA Trust's Community Health Department was reflecting on his experience working with NGOs while he was still employed by the MOHCC. During the time that he worked for the MOHCC, Danai was a mental health specialist and was among a team of experts deployed by the Ministry to offer emergency mental health assistance to survivors soon after the tropical cyclone Idai catastrophe. He then joined NJIVA Trust towards the end of March, a few weeks after the disaster, where he was now responsible for coordinating mental health activities in the NGO's Community Health Program. Danai's sentiments reflect how many people perceived NGOs during the response to the tropical cyclone Idai disaster in Chimanimani. In addition, his viewpoint conveys the ambivalent relations that emerged as NGOs of different sizes, cultures and approaches worked alongside state agencies to provide humanitarian assistance to survivors.

From Danai's comment, two questions emerge that this chapter aims to answer. First, what kinds of support did NGOs provide to survivors of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster in Chimanimani? Second, in what ways did the involvement of NGOs in the post-Idai response process shape, or was shaped by, the relations that they had amongst themselves and with other stakeholders? To answer these questions, the chapter explores the nature of relations that manifested and were created as NGOs of different sizes and types interacted in post-Idai Chimanimani. Further, it looks at the extent to which pre-existing ambivalent relations between

NGOs and the state influenced the latter's involvement in post-Idai emergency, recovery, and reconstruction processes. Elaborating on this latter point, the chapter investigates how NGOs working in Chimanimani positioned themselves in ways that enabled them to offer humanitarian assistance within the context of state authoritarianism. The main argument that the chapter advances is that while the depoliticization strategies that NGOs employed helped to circumvent state authoritarianism and enabled them to continue to do the "good work" of helping survivors, these strategies, directly and indirectly, helped to sustain state authoritarianism. That is, the NGOs' depoliticization approaches created avenues and platforms for the state to expand and strengthen its authoritarian grassroots structures and systems to the advantage of the ruling party (and limited the possibilities of resistance and critique), which inadvertently widened the inequality gap among survivors.

Following a general overview of NGOs' role in social services provision in Zimbabwe, this chapter proceeds by zeroing in on their operations in the context of post-Idai Chimanimani. Although with the help of evidence generated through interviews with employees of other NGOs, I will use NJIVA Trust as the main unit of analysis to interrogate the above-mentioned themes in greater detail.

5.2 "Wolves in Sheep's Clothing": The Contested Meaning of NGOs in Zimbabwe

Just like its biblical application, the idiom "wolves in sheep's clothing" implies the image of NGOs within the sociopolitical context of Zimbabwe, especially as perceived by the state. The meanings of the role of NGOs have been greatly influenced by, and continuously re-defined through an evolving socio-political trajectory. Given the controversies surrounding the radical land distribution program, the FTLRP, of the 2000s and the push for democratization which mainly came from the opposition and other groups backed by Western sources of funding, the

NGOs have often been portrayed in state narratives as agents of imperialism masquerading as humanitarian agencies (Aljazeera 2017, par. 1). If not agents of imperialism, they were regarded by the authoritarian state as posing a direct threat by being part of a regime change agenda, accused of working in cohort with the opposition MDC and hostile Western countries to topple the Mugabe (and now Mnangagwa) regime (Zimudzi et al. 2013, p. 55). Despite such perceptions, NGOs have, more than ever, become important institutions in Zimbabwe given the widespread poverty and the ever-growing frequency and intensity of deadly disasters vis-a-vis the questionable commitment by the state to address vulnerability factors that make the disasters more destructive.

As elsewhere around the world, the increasing role of NGOs in social development and disaster management is situated within and closely interlinked to their proliferation since the late 1980s. This proliferation was in response to the forces of the global neoliberal economic policy reform agenda, which pushed for "privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of provision" (Wacquant 2012, p. 69). NGOs, thus, became important private intermediaries or brokers to fill the vacuum and had since then served as conduits through which donors channel funding for social development (Knodel 2021; Rutherford 2004; Hilhorst 2003; Gill 2000).

Nonetheless, with the inscription of being agents of imperialism or arms of a regime change agenda, new and existing NGOs have had to adapt to the socio-political arena by positioning themselves and their approaches in ways that enable them to navigate the hostile political environment. Desportes & Moyo-Nyoni (2021) characterize the strategies that NGOs in Zimbabwe adopt as the depoliticization of humanitarian aid. For these authors, NGOs achieve depoliticization through one or more of the following three avenues: negotiating strategic collaborations with the perceived enemies (strategic depoliticization); suppressing community

initiatives perceived as suspicious (coerced depoliticization), or directly providing financial and human resources to support state initiatives in line with the NGO's work (routine managerial depoliticization). Desportes & Moyo-Nyoni found that these depoliticization strategies have enabled NGOs operating in Zimbabwe to defuse sensitive issues as they worked with state agencies to respond to the drought disaster that overlapped with the political crisis between 2016 and 2019. In this chapter, I apply this multi-layered understanding of depoliticization to the post-disaster arena in Chimanimani. Using NJIVA Trust as a case study, I use the depoliticization concept to argue that the tropical cyclone Idai disaster re-defined relations between NGOs and the state. That is, NGOs had to put in place operational modalities, including designing post-Idai emergency, recovery, and reconstruction projects, in a way that did not set them into conflict with the state.

5.3 "The Wise Dove of the Territory": NGO-ing and the Depoliticization of Disaster Response

The case of NJIVA Trust demonstrates how NGOs have strategically adapted to the hostile socio-political context in Chimanimani to achieve their organizational missions and objectives. In fact, the NGO is an ideal microcosm through which the meanings and politics of "NGO-ing" can best be articulated. By NGO-ing, I draw upon Hilhorst's (2003, pp. 4-5) actor-oriented argument that NGOs are not to be treated as distinctive objects, "but as open-ended processes." For her, defining NGOs as features and structures is limiting as it does not address "how the claims and performance of NGOs acquire meaning in practice" (p. 5). Hillhorst adds that the reductionist definition of NGOs as features or structures overlooks multiple realities that characterize them, including the overlapping networks that are in constant change as well as the everyday practices of actors within and peripheral to the NGOs. Therefore, she argues, "instead

of asking what an NGO is, the more appropriate question then becomes how NGO-ing is done"
(Hillhorst 2003, p. 5). In this chapter, I pursue Hillhorst's suggestion further by looking at how
NJIVA Trust has been doing its NGO-ing in Chimanimani. Specifically, my analysis reveals that
NJIVA Trust's NGO-ing relied on depoliticization, which has enabled the NGO to operate and
provide disaster aid to survivors of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster.

The history of NJIVA Trust

I investigated the history of NJIVA Trust through three main sources. Firstly, through an
informal interview that I had with Leonard Chikukwa during a tea break at the NJIVA Trust
office in May 2021. Leonard was working as a driver and his late father was among the founding
members of the NGO. Secondly, from the interview that I held with Chief Saurombe in October
of the same year. Besides being a traditional leader, and a full-time Community Mobilization
Officer for NJIVA Trust, he was also a founding member of the NGO. The last source was a
detailed document, *"The Story of NJIVA"*, that I received from Mr. James Hill, and which
chronicles, year-by-year, the NGO's major milestones from its founding in 1999 up to the period
after the tropical cyclone Idai disaster in 2019. Mr. Hill, an elderly man of European origin, was
the brains behind the formation of the NGO, and yet neither in the document nor during my
regular interactions with him, did he present himself as its leader, but as "NJIVA Trust Advisor".
As will become clearer in this chapter, this was a creative and strategic institutional
depoliticization technique that has enabled the NGO to survive and legitimize its operations in
Chimanimani up to this day.

The name of the NGO, NJIVA Trust, was decided upon by the founders to reflect its
process of NGO-ing over the years. In the Shona language, Njiva is a "dove", and in local
folklore, it symbolizes wisdom and love. At the time of its founding, the organization had the
name NJIVA DzeDunhu Association (the Doves of the District Association), which began as an

association of a small group of people in one of the Wards, Chikukwa (Ward 10), before spreading to the rest of the district. Then, the term NJIVA was used to depict a "loving" community in the Chikukwa Communal Lands of Chimanimani that decided to do something about the management of their natural resources after witnessing "the devastating effects of a particularly heavy storm on their soil" (The Story of NJIVA 2019, p.1). The institutional genesis of the NJIVA DzeDunhu Association can thus be situated within the broad anthropological literature of NGOs which shows how individuals and groups creatively formulate NGO visions and objectives based on identified community needs, challenges, and opportunities (Knodel 2021; Vannier 2010; Hilhorst 2003). Leonard explained to me in detail the process of translating community needs in Chikukwa into an institutional structure, NJIVA DzeDunhu.

Most employees had gone out for regular community monitoring visits that Wednesday morning when Leonard and I discussed the history of NJIVA Trust. As a driver, he was always out in the field, but he was around the office on this fateful day because the vehicle that he was supposed to use had been taken for regular servicing. We grabbed our cups of tea and plates of bread and took seats on one of the outdoor wooden tables in front of the main office. The routine was that the NGO's cook would prepare tea in one or two teapots (the number and size of teapots depended on the number of employees around) and lay the teapot(s) on one of the wooden outdoor tables outside the office together with a bucket of cups and plates. At times we were served the tea with bread and boiled or scrambled eggs, butter, or peanut butter, and at times with indigenous foods such as yams or sweet potatoes. After washing hands from a handwashing station containing a plastic bucket with a tap, employees would proceed to serve themselves from the bowels of food laid on the food table and either sit on one of the 8 outdoor wooden tables or take the food to their offices. The same process applied to lunch as well. As I

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have explored among Zimbabweans elsewhere (Kudejira 2021), besides the utility of food's physical matter as a necessity to satiate hunger, it also has a deeply embedded social meaning through which relations and modes of belonging can be expressed. The food sharing ritual at NJIVA Trust, therefore, catalyzed social relations among the various classes of employees to the extent that, in some cases, those relationships became almost familial. Such was the prevailing familial atmosphere within which my discussion with Leonard took place as we sat on opposite sides on one of the wooden outdoor tables.

According to Leonard, while working as a school head at a local school in Chikukwa, Mr. Hill was impressed by permaculture techniques, including water conservation and soil management, that a local farmer, *Baba*[29] Phiri, was applying at his household. The Chikukwa Communal Area (Ward 10), under Chief Chikukwa, lies on the far eastern side of the Chimanimani plateau, along the Mozambican border. Following their displacement by the white settlers, the Chikukwa people had been concentrated on a small area on the foot of the Chimanimani Mountain and could not reclaim their land after independence as it is now under the Martin Forest plantation (Mupira 2013). In addition, Chief Chikukwa's people were divided when the Portuguese East Africa (now Mozambique) – Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) boundary was agreed upon in 1897, with some of his followers on the Portuguese territory, and others on the other side of the boundary (Sinclair 1971). Baba Phiri was believed to have been among the Chief Chikukwa's followers on the Mozambican side. But after spending decades in the Portuguese territory, he decided to cross the boundary and settle on a piece of land in the Chikukwa communal area where he was now practicing water conservation and soil management activities. According to Leonard's account, Baba Phiri learned about these initiatives during the

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[29] Baba is the same as Father. It can also be used as a prefix, substituting Mr. to show respect to an elderly man. I am applying it here to express the later.

time he was on the Mozambican side. Besides Leonard, I did not hear any other personal accounts of how Baba Phiri ended up being in Chikukwa, and this background information does not appear in the history book that was prepared by Mr. Hill, *The Story of NJIVA*. Nonetheless, Leonard's account of events corroborated with major events and milestones contained in the book, including the people that Mr. Hill worked with to mobilize communities, how the permaculture concepts were cascaded to other wards in the district, and when the organization was officially registered as NJIVA Trust.

Leonard's version continued like this: After being impressed by the permaculture techniques that Baba Phiri was practicing, Mr. Hill then sat down with two of his friends from the local community who were passionate about environmental conservation and decided to popularise this "wise" permaculture concept. He then approached his other friends and connections in Europe, where he originated from, who helped him to mobilize funds to support the piloting and scaling up of this initiative, first within Chikukwa and later in other wards in the district. From 1999, Mr. Hill and his friends went around the wards in Chimanimani, convincing local farmers to join their permaculture association, and the farmers who agreed to adopting the technology were colloquially referred to as "passionate farmers of district (dunhu)", to indicate their love and passion to save the environment. The association of all these passionate farmers was then called *NJIVA DzeDunhu* Association. It was officially launched in 2000. Initially focusing on sustainable agriculture and natural resources management, the scope of the association progressively expanded to cover other areas, including community-based agro-processing and marketing, and community health and nutrition (The Story of NJIVA 2019). It was during this process of expansion that Chief Saurombe began to be involved.

Chief Saurombe attributed his incorporation into the NJIVA DzeDunhu Association structures to the environmental activism and practical natural resources management activities that he used to spearhead in his chiefdom. He told me that he met Mr. Hill in South Africa in 2000 when he was attending a donor conference funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. He was chosen by the local authority, the CRDC, to represent traditional leaders at the donor conference because of his passion for the sustainable use of forests, and because he was advocating for the proper and sustainable use of local public infrastructure, including boreholes, clinics, and schools. "I met Mr. Hill for the first time during that 5-day donor conference", Chief Saurombe said. He claimed that it was through his active participation during the proceedings of the conference that Mr. Hill discovered him:

> I was participating very well during the donor conference and that's when Mr. Hill discovered me. So, after the workshop, we came back home. A few days later he came here and said "Mr. Saurombe, I heard about your initiatives to protect natural resources and the environment". He asked if I was willing to join them. Then I said you are welcome.

Since then, Chief Saurombe was incorporated into the association as a representative of traditional leadership. According to the chief, as soon as he became part of the association, he started to be actively involved in mobilizing community members to join the NJIVA DzeDunhu Association. The passionate farmers from the villages across the district who accepted to join the association were encouraged to form community farmers groups which came to be known as NJIVA Village Groups (NVGs). The NVGs were trained and provided with technical support to spearhead sustainable ecological farming practices in their respective communities. The NVGs members paid annual affiliation fees to the association, which were used to cover operational and administrative costs of the association. In addition to the NVGs, NJIVA DzeDunhu Association had Ward Facilitators whose role was to coordinate the NVGs, and these reported to a District

Executive Committee. Further, to legitimize its operations in the district, the Association held its first Annual General Meeting (AGM) in 2003 where its first Executive Director was appointed. The Executive Director was selected from among the founding members of the District Executive Committee.

How NJIVA DzeDunhu Association came into being is evidence of the depoliticization of NGO-ing in response to an authoritarian and volatile political context. The NJIVA DzeDunhu Association formation occurred during a major turning point in the socio-political context of Zimbabwe. It coincided with the founding of a major political party MDC, which, besides being a serious threat to the ruling party, was largely perceived by supporters of the latter as a party comprising traitors, sellouts, and puppets who were being fronted by hostile countries in the west to achieve a regime change agenda (Asuelime & Simura 2014; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012). These allegations heightened after the announcement of the March 2002 presidential election results where the newly established MDC proved to be a real threat to ZANU-PF's rule. Mugabe's main challenger, a former trade unionist, Morgan Tsvangirai of the MDC, refused to accept the results of the elections in which Mugabe was declared winner citing allegations of rigging and violence against his supporters and called for a new election to be supervised by the international community. The elections were also condemned by local civic groups and international observers, including the Commonwealth Observer Group, and the Parliamentary Forum of the Southern African Development Community who argued that "the state and ruling party had created a climate of violence and fear" (Makumbe 2002, pp. 87-88). The damning reports of fraudulent elections and violence against the opposition resulted in the country being suspended from the Commonwealth Council and the imposition of sanctions on Mugabe and 70 of his close associates (Makumbe 2002). NGOs were, therefore, being accused of working with the

opposition and countries that had imposed sanctions on the Mugabe-led regime. NGOs were specifically perceived by the state as being "conduits or instruments of foreign interference in [Zimbabwe's] national affairs" (Mashumba & Maroleng, p. 1).

The formation of the NJIVA DzeDunhu Association also coincided with the period of the radical land reform process, the FTLRP, when white farmers and NGOs were the primary targets of state-sponsored violence. At the time, Western donors and NGOs consistently criticized the disorderly manner of the FTLRP process. In response to the perceived external intervention, the state heightened its authoritarian rule by pitting sections of the NGOs, trade unions and the opposition as being "against the land occupation and wider liberation movement" (Moyo & Chambati 2013 p. 38). The political context did not only pose challenges for existing humanitarian civic groups to operate, but it also created an extremely harsh environment for the formation of new NGOs due to the state's imposition of restrictive legislation as well as administrative interference.

Incorporating Chief Saurombe was one of the strategic depoliticization approaches that Mr. Hill and the other founders of the NJIVA DzeDunhu Association adopted to diffuse tension with the state. In addition to being the heart of custom and culture, traditional leaders, and especially chiefs, still hold a very powerful position in the day-to-day politics of Zimbabwe, and as such are treated dearly by the ruling party. In addition, recognized traditional leaders also receive salaries and other benefits from the state, and they have control and influence over their subjects in the rural areas. While the constitution provides for the institution of traditional leadership to operate alongside modern state structures, albeit neutrally, they have been used as campaign agents by the ruling party (Kurebwa 2020; Chigwata 2016). With Chief Saurombe within its membership structures, NJIVA DzeDunhu Association legitimized its institutional

existence and thus sought to defuse possible backlash from the authoritarian state. At the same time, the chief's interests in natural resources conservation and skills in community mobilization were important for the success of the association. NJIVA Trust also allowed its resources, especially vehicles, to be used by the state agencies based in Chimanimani.

Crucially, at the center of the NJIVA DzeDunhu Association was a white man, Mr. Hill, of European origin, who at the time of forming the association could easily fit the category of regime change agent. While most founders become the Directors or Coordinators of their NGOs (Knodel 2021), this was not the case with the NJIVA DzeDunhu Association. In the public eye, Mr. Hill distanced himself from the leadership of the association by defining himself as a "NJIVA Advisor". Nowhere in the history book, *The Story of NJIVA,* does he identify himself as the founder of the association. Nonetheless, while the 2003 AGM appointed an Executive Director – a retired teacher – from the community, Leonard told me that this position was largely ceremonious. In practice, Mr. Hill was the leader of the association – he was leading all institutional management responsibilities, which included handling all the external communications, liaising with donors, recruiting personnel, signing off payments, writing and reviewing reports, representing the organization at the national and international platforms, and all other functions that could be associated with the Executive Director position. With Mr. Hill driving from backstage, an approach that perfectly fits Desportes & Moyo-Nyoni's (2021) definition of depoliticization and Hilhorst's (2003) idea of NGO-ing, the association navigated the political turmoil that engulfed the country throughout the 2000s.

In 2010 NJIVA DzeDunhu Association changed its legal status, from an "Association" to a "Trust", but this shift started during the mid-2000s. The accounts that I heard from Leonard and Chief Saurombe of how the process of changing its legal status unfolded demonstrate the

ways in which the organization's strategic NGO-ing allowed it to respond to the hostile and changing socio-political context. Although the NJIVA DzeDunhu Association already had several donors supporting its work by 2004, including the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Church Development Service (Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst - EED), and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), it needed to be legally registered to tap into other diverse institutional funding opportunities.

NGO registration process in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, NGOs can assume legal status through three options: registration as a Private Voluntary Organization (PVO), as a Trust under a trust deed, or as an Universitas under common law (Company Registrations n.d.). Registration as a PVO is done under the Private Voluntary Organization Act which is administered by the Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare (PVO Act 2001). The PVO registration follows a huge chain of bureaucratic procedures, which include filing dozens of required documents and forms with the Registrar of PVOs, publicizing a notice in the newspaper to ask any persons with objections to notify the Registrar, and if the Registrar is satisfied, the documents are transmitted to the PVO Board for determination. The Board, which is appointed by the Minister, subsequently recommends whether the application is rejected or accepted for registration, and the process from filing to decision-making can take up to a year Under the PVO Act, the Minister is vested with the powers to appoint anyone from the Public Service to inspect the activities of NGO as well as "their books of accounts and any other related documents" (Mashumba & Maroleng 2004, p. 3). Furthermore, the NGOs are required to submit annual audited accounts and activity reports the Minister. These legislative requirements that have enabled the authoritarian state to censor and control NGO operations (Mashumba & Maroleng 2004).

To avoid the PVO bureaucratic registration process, most NGOs operating in Zimbabwe are registered as Trusts. Registration of NGOs as Trusts is regulated by the Deeds Registries Act (Chapter 20:05), which allows the Registrar of Deeds to register notarial deeds for private benefit or a charitable cause (Munyoro et al. 2017). Unlike registration under the PVO Act, which goes through the Registrar of PVOs, the Trust form requires the services of a registered Public Notary who prepares the trust deed and other required documents and lodges the deed with the Registrar of Deeds (Laws.Africa 2016).

The third category of NGOs is called Universitas, which are derived from common law and not necessarily regulated by statute. Universitas is bounded by a constitution upon which a group of members agree "to achieve a common objective out of activities that are entirely for the benefit of its members" (Munyoro et. al 2017, p. 134). The Universitas status is limiting in the sense that organizations constituted this way cannot access donor funds which require legal registration.

NJIVA DzeDunhu assumed the form of an Universitas at its formation. Although it could operate legally under this formation, it was very difficult for the NGO to source funding, especially from huge donors, without a statutory registration. Efforts to register the association as a PVO in 2005 hit a brick wall as its application for registration was turned down by the state. The main reason for the failed attempts, as presented by Mr. Hill in the history book, *The Story of NJIVA*, was that the state cited that the proposed NGO was duplicating activities that were already being undertaken by state agencies like Agritex and the MOHCC. Chief Saurombe and Leonard believed that the grounds for rejecting the registration were more politically motivated than based on the perceived duplication of state activities, which otherwise could have made the state happy that the proposed NGO was going to complement its efforts. For the two

interlocutors, the timing of the registration process was the main issue as leaders of the association submitted the application for registration at a time when the tenets of democracy were at their lowest level in the country, and any new NGO as viewed by the state represented an additional voice against its authoritarian rule.

The NJIVA DzeDunhu Association found itself in a catch-22 situation. On the one hand, the failed registration suggested that the association appeared to the state as one of the pro-opposition formations associated with the regime change agenda – particularly in that NJIVA DzeDunhu was receiving funding from Dutch and American donors (The Story of NJIVA 2019). According to Leonard, some people alleged that the NGO oriented itself toward the main opposition party, but it was difficult to prove because Mr. Hill was not actively involved in politics and besides incorporating traditional leaders like Chief Saurombe into its leadership structures, the association incorporated known community-based ZANU-PF leaders into the NVGs.

On the other hand, the NGO's approach as presented by Mr. Hill was to turn a blind eye to the day-to-day politics of party affiliation and help "people to see the separation of party politics and development work" (The Story of NJIVA 2019 p. 4). Some community members were doubling as leaders of the association's grassroots structures, the NVGs, while also serving as active local leaders of the ruling party. For instance, during the fieldwork, I met a village Chairperson of ZANU-PF who claimed that he had been a NVG member since the association was formed. From this approach, some donors came to view the NJIVA DzeDunhu Association as an enabler of the status quo, working directly, and supporting the authoritarian regime. Mr. Hill confirmed this predicament. According to him, the NJIVA DzeDunhu Association suffered a major funding setback in 2004 when its application for funding to implement sustainable

agriculture and natural resource management initiatives was turned down at the last minute by the German government. During this period, Germany was among the EU countries that had become aggressively anti-ZANU-PF and had imposed sanctions on its leadership (Federal Foreign Office 2019). Although the German government had been funding the NJIVA DzeDunhu Association since 2000, it withheld the new grant on allegations that the organization "slanted its support towards ZANU-PF members" (The Story of NJIVA 2019, p. 5). I learned from Leonard that it was only after Mr. Hill's vehement lobbying, which included travelling and "meeting his friends in Europe" that the German government continued to support the NJIVA DzeDunhu Association in the following years. The position that the NJIVA DzeDunhu was entangled in shows the complicated operating environment that NGOs, in general, had to negotiate in Zimbabwe. Their approaches to NGO-ing had to pass the state legitimacy while also not compromising the interests and expectations of their funding partners.

After failing to acquire the PVO status, the NJIVA DzeDunhu Association was finally registered in September 2009, under the Trust form, and with the name NJIVA Trust. The new NJIVA Trust assumed a hybrid shape. It now had a clearly defined, and experts-driven NGO structure, with a Board of Directors, Program Managers, an accounts department, and Program Officers. The recruitment of the NJIVA Trust employees was now competitive and based on academic qualifications and professional experience, unlike in the association where membership was based on farmers' passion to participate in its activities. However, the NJIVA DzeDunhu Association structures, including the NVGs and Ward Facilitators were not abandoned, because, according to Leonard, the organization wanted to remain rooted in the communities. NJIVA Trust was now functioning more or less as a technical arm, sourcing funding and implementing community development projects on behalf of the NJIVA DzeDunhu Association.

There were also overlapping and complimentary roles between the two structures – NJIVA DzeDunhu Association and NJIVA Trust. The Chairperson of the District Executive Committee of NJIVA DzeDunhu Association sat as an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees of NJIVA Trust and the Executive Director of the latter reported to the Association on activities of the Trust. Chief Saurombe was both a member of the NJIVA DzeDunhu Association and an employee of the NJIVA Trust. Mr. Hill continued to serve as NJIVA Advisor, but his role was now cutting across the two entities. He officially retired from the position of NJIVA Advisor at the end of 2018 (The Story of NJIVA 2019), but continued to work directly with the organization, and during the time of my fieldwork, he was now being referred to as a "NJIVA Trust Consultant."

For an outsider, it was difficult to draw a line between the two structures - NJIVA DzeDunhu Association and NJIVA Trust, and it was not uncommon to hear survivors that I interacted with saying, "this project is being implemented by NJIVA DzeDunhu Association" when it was being headed by the NJIVA Trust Officers. Yet many NJIVA Trust employees, especially those who joined after the Trust had been registered, struggled to articulate how these two structures were supposed to be working together. As I will show below, some employees felt that NJIVA Trust and NJIVA DzeDunhu Association were different entities, an issue that created internal friction during the period that I volunteered for the organization. Nevertheless, since its registration in 2009, NJIVA Trust had been operating in 21 out of the 23 wards of Chimanimani district, focusing on four major thematic areas, namely, Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resources Management, Community Health, Community-based Agro-processing and Marketing, and Community Capacity Development (The Story of NJIVA 2019).

I observed some fissures that emerged from the hybrid institutional architecture that the NGO adopted. There were major conflicts were between members of the NJIVA DzeDunhu Association who viewed themselves as "owners" of the NJIVA Trust and the employees of the Trust. As it will become clearer in later sections in this chapter, the roots of the conflicts mainly centered around control of the NGO's activities in the communities, as well as the claim by Association members that they should be prioritized in any activity implemented by NJIVA Trust because the NGO was formed to serve its members. This claim was contrary to the new mission of the Trust, which was, "empowering the communities of Chimanimani and neighboring districts to improve their livelihoods and relationships through programs in the areas of sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, and community health, agro-processing, and marketing."[30] The claim that Association members were the rightful primary beneficiaries of projects funded through NJIVA Trust also contradicted the conditions of the donors funding this NGO who were expecting their aid to reach the most vulnerable in the community irrespective of their organizational or socio-political affiliation. Despite the internal conflicts, it is noteworthy to underline that the decentralized structures of the NJIVA Trust/NJIVA DzeDunhu Association were very instrumental in the NGO's response to the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. Because they were embedded in the communities, these community-level structures became nodes through which disaster aid provided by national and international donors could be transmitted to affected communities and, in many cases, to the hard-to-reach and vulnerable rural families. The section below now discusses the post-Idai NGO landscape in Chimanimani and how NJIVA Trust positioned itself to effectively respond to the disaster. Specifically, the section shows the

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[30] This mission statement is extracted from the NGO's Facebook page.

entanglements, relations and collaborations that emerged as NJIVA Trust worked together with national and international NGOs to provide humanitarian assistance to affected communities.

5.4 The NGO Landscape in Post-tropical Cyclone Idai Chimanimani

> You know trying to turn the internal system towards a particular direction is like trying to turn huge traffic. It is very difficult. The smaller organizations on the other hand tend to work very fast but they lack coordination. At times they don't have a united voice because their approaches are different.

The above statement by Pamela Nyama was in response to my question about her international NGO's experience working with local NGOs to provide disaster relief and other forms of humanitarian assistance to communities affected by the tropical cyclone Idai disaster in Chimanimani. I knew Pamela distantly before my virtual ZOOM interview with her in September 2021. I used to hear her voice on one of the state-owned national radio stations, Star FM, when she was a presenter of a family talk show program, and I had no idea that she was now working for this international NGO. I had written an email to the NGO's Country Representative for Zimbabwe, introducing myself and my research project. Since I had gathered that this NGO was actively involved in assisting internally displaced survivors sheltered in the four displacement camps at Nyamatanda, Arboretum, Ngangu and Kopa, I was keen to understand more about the forms of assistance that it was offering. The Country Representative then linked me to Pamela whom she introduced as the official spokesperson of the NGO. Pamela had left the state-owned national broadcaster and was now using her communication and presentation skills to handle all the external communications on behalf of the NGO. Sitting in her office in Harare, while I was in Mutare during the ZOOM interview, Pamela spoke passionately and authoritatively about the post-disaster recovery and reconstruction work that her NGO was supporting in Chimanimani.

Her comment about NGO coordination, which I used to introduce this section, helps us to appreciate the typological variation of NGOs that were involved in the cyclone Idai response processes in Chimanimani. Pamela's NGO had a cosmopolitan structure. It had its headquarters in the United Kingdom (UK) and operated in over 90 countries, but all the country operations, irrespective of context, had to abide by operational guidelines and procedures–designed at the headquarters in the UK - this is the reason why Pamela likened the system to "huge traffic" which could not be easily changed. The NGO was not directly interacting with communities on a day-to-day basis, but it was working with national and local NGOs like NJIVA Trust, as intermediaries, or "brokers", to use Knodel's (2021, p. 1) term. This cosmopolitan structure and brokerage system was the most common form of NGO-ing that international NGOs employed in response to the tropical cyclone Idai disaster in Chimanimani. The reason for employing this approach was two-fold. Firstly, since they did not have prior experience and presence in the district, they were not knowledgeable about the socio-political context of the district, and as such, the only strategy was to partner with local NGOs who were already working with the communities. Secondly, since these international NGOs were not registered to operate in the district as required by the local authority, the CRDC, the only way that they could render their support to affected communities was to go through the brokers.

The UN estimated that as of June 2019, there were at least 53 NGOs physically present and responding to the disaster in Chimanimani. However, the actual number could have been double or triple this figure. Many international NGOs channeled their resources through local NGOs while others were operating without registering with the local authority. Also, local NGOs that I know were involved, including for example NJIVA Trust, the Chikukwa Ecological Land Use Community Trust (CELUCT), and the Participatory Organic Research Extension and

Training Trust (PORET) - did not appear on the UN list of June 2019, an indication that many more could have been missing and/or later included as the list was regularly updated. Regardless, the UN listing shows the diversity of NGOs that flooded the Chimanimani district post-Idai. The projects that the NGOs supported varied in scale and type, covering socio-economic sectors like shelter, food security, health, education, child protection, nutrition as well as water, sanitation, and hygiene. Eight UN agencies (UNESCO, UNFPA, UNCHR, WFP, FAO, UNESCO, WHO, and IOM) had an operational presence in the district (UN 2019). In addition to these UN agencies, there was also a huge number of international NGOs, including World Vision International, Care, Plan International, GOAL, CAFOD, Oxfam, Mercy Corps, MSF, Trocaire, and World Education. These worked with local and community-based NGOs like Childline, Musasa, Family Aids Caring Trust (FACT), Caritas, Jekesa Pfungwa, NJIVA Trust, Simukai Trust.

During the time of my fieldwork, some NGOs were still supporting emergency relief while others were now focusing on recovery and reconstruction through funding initiatives such as infrastructure rehabilitation, housing construction, income generation and health services delivery. The international NGOs hired a few experts, either stationed in Chimanimani or who regularly visited from their national offices, to serve as advisors to the local NGOs. For instance, a few months before I finished my fieldwork, the VSO had placed a Youth Advisor at NJIVA Trust to provide technical support for a youth empowerment project that the former was funding.

As a representative of her international NGO, Pamela was expected to speak to external audiences about the shelter initiative that her organization was supporting in Chimanimani. However, from my interview with her, I could tell that she was not very well acquainted with the actual disaster response activities that were taking place in the district. On several occasions

during the interview, she could not immediately respond to my questions about the specifics of the project. Instead, she promised to come back to me in a few days after she had confirmed with the implementing partners on the ground, understandably because her organization was not directly implementing but channeling its funds through local NGOs based in the district. Her case, however, helps to understand the structures of power and influence that manifested as NGOs of different sizes interacted in the post-Idai response arena. From my research, I identified two themes to describe and characterize the relations among the various NGOs that responded to the tropical cyclone Idai disaster in Chimanimani, namely, big brother – small brother relations, and claims to recognition. I will unpack these themes in the rest of this section.

Big brother – Small brother relations

Samuel Garwe defined the relationship between his NGO and the international NGO that was funding their work in Chimanimani in paternalistic terms. For him, the funding international NGOs acted like "big brothers" exercising total control over their "local NGO subjects". Samuel was the Founder and Director of The Mutare Community Development Trust, a relatively young and small organization, formed in 2011. His NGO only had one office in Mutare and less than five full-time employees, two of whom were Field Officers based in Chimanimani. As a small NGO, The Mutare Community Development Trust was still struggling to mobilize resources to rent a bigger office and scale up its work in the communities. During the time of my fieldwork, the NGO was implementing only one project which focused on providing psychosocial support to elderly people affected by the tropical cyclone disaster.

Located on the western outskirts of Mutare city, Samuel's NGO was renting one room, in a two-roomed cottage, as its office. The office was of medium size, with two desks and three or four chairs. One desk was for him as the Director while the other was a shared space for the rest of the employees. I visited the office on several occasions during the period of my fieldwork.

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Samuel and I worked for the same NGO from 2004 to 2005 and we have remained very close since then. I also introduced him to potential donors when he was in the process of registering his new NGO in 2011. In January 2021, Samuel invited me to his office because he wanted assistance with reviewing a donor report. We sat under the shade of a building next to the cottage that housed his office. It was not conducive to discuss the report inside the office because it was crowded, and most importantly because the discussion was going to touch on how the report that his colleagues had produced did not meet the donor requirements.

Samuel opened the discussion by expressing his disapproval of the way his NGO was treated by an international NGO that funded some of its disaster response activities in Chimanimani. He fumed: "you know these guys treat us like small kids … they have a big-brother syndrome." Prior to Cyclone Idai, the Mutare Community Development Trust had implemented other small-scale projects focusing on human rights and democracy in Chimanimani and had a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the CRDC. The funding that it received from this international NGO was, therefore, important to expand its work and increase organizational visibility in the district. At the same time, it allowed the international NGO to render its aid to affected communities. The main issue that Samuel was complaining about was that the relationship between his NGO and the international NGO was like that of a parent-child or younger sibling. The Mutare Community Development Trust had to use templates, procedures and guidelines imposed on it by the former, but it could not resist because it was in dire need of funding. For Samuel, this big-brother attitude, and especially the imposition of tools by the donor, erased the possibility for The Mutare Community Development Trust to be creative and employ psychosocial approaches that were best suited to the socio-political context within which the NGO was operating. For instance, his NGO was given

modules to follow when conducting psychosocial sessions in the field and reporting templates that it was supposed to use to document the progress and successes of the project. My role then was to assist in the review of one of the reports to make sure that it was presented in the format that the international NGO expected.

Samuel's formulation of the big-brother analogy resonated with what I later observed at NJIVA Trust. With funds channeled to it by one of the international NGOs, VSO, NJIVA Trust was implementing a Capacity Strengthening of Youth Volunteers in Chimanimani project whose aim was to equip 20 youths across the district with skills to lead disaster management initiatives in their communities. By the time I joined the NGO as a volunteer, the youths had gone through a series of training workshops covering topics like hazards mapping, vulnerability and capacity assessments as well as the use of ICT in disaster preparedness. They were expected to apply the knowledge acquired during the training workshops to spearhead community awareness-raising campaigns on disasters, participate in local level disaster preparedness planning processes and train others in their respective communities. I attended one of the youth capacity strengthening workshops on 5 May 2021. In this workshop, the VSO Program Manager, who had travelled from Harare, was training the youth volunteers and NJIVA Trust employees on how to use a monitoring and evaluation tool – what the VSO called "The Battery Process" – that VSO had adopted for use by local NGOs to monitor projects that it was funding. Step by step, the VSO Program Manager took us through the process of measuring community attitudes and understanding of hazards – from level 1, when the battery is nearly empty (representing a less knowledgeable community), to Level 10, when the battery is fully charged (representing a community fully equipped with information). We were all asked to pay attention, copy the Battery diagram from his flipchart into our notebooks and remember all the steps. According to

the training facilitator, this was the monitoring tool that VSO expected the youths to use to track the progress of the project. Although NJIVA Trust already had monitoring and evaluation systems in place, together with a dedicated Program Quality Management Department responsible for designing monitoring and evaluation frameworks for the organization, for this particular project, the NGO was supposed to use the battery monitoring tool provided by the donor. How NJIVA Trust reported on the implementation of this donor-imposed tool was going to be the yardstick upon which the project's success and NJIVA Trust's institutional capacity were going to be measured.

My description of the NJIVA Trust–VSO relationship above, and The Mutare Community Development Trust case before it, demonstrates how international NGOs operating in post-Idai Chimanimani had little faith in the levels of capacity within the local NGOs that they were channeling funds. The big brothers viewed themselves as proprietors of development expertise while framing the smaller and local NGOs, the "small brothers" as tabulae rasae and vulnerable partners who required handholding and accompaniment to effectively reach out to vulnerable communities impacted by the tropical cyclone. This notion became meaningful to me when VSO placed its Youth Advisor to be based at the NJIVA Trust offices. By deploying its own Youth Advisor, the donor assumed that NJIVA Trust did not have the internal capacity to effectively deliver on the project, and, therefore, required the accompaniment of an "expert" from VSO. In addition, a few months after the youth training, VSO sent a team from its Monitoring and Evaluation Department who spent almost half a day with us reviewing project budgets, work plans, and activities, and telling us what to drop and what to add - something that could have easily been done by NJIVA Trust program employees without external assistance.

I realized that while international NGOs had templates and approaches that they claimed had worked elsewhere, and imposed them onto the local NGOs, these did not necessarily produce the best results in the context of disaster response in Chimanimani. The example of Abraham, the UNESCO-ROSA international communications expert, whom I discussed in the previous chapter, demonstrates the dangers associated with homogenizing development approaches. While Abraham was self-congratulatory for having initiated community radio stations around the world and believed that he was going to achieve the same in the case of Chimanimani FM, his reasoning failed to account for the deep-rooted political culture within which the radio station was going to be operational. Consequently, unbeknownst to him, the leadership structure of the Chimanimani FM was appropriated by the ruling party to further its interests.

The "big brother – small brother" relations also had the effect of pushing local NGOs to implement disaster management activities outside their normal ways of working in order to satisfy donor needs. This donor-driven approach became a major source of conflict between NJIVA Trust and its mother body, The NJIVA DzeDunhu Association. I became aware of these conflicts when I participated in the AGM of the Association, which was held at the NJIVA Trust offices in May 2021. During the meeting, the Chairperson of the Association presented a long list of complaints against the NJIVA Trust management that she said were submitted by the Ward Representatives of the Association. Among the issues she highlighted was that the NJIVA Trust had deviated from the agreed ethos of working in which the Ward Representatives and NVGs of the NJIVA DzeDunhu Association were supposed to be involved in the identification and selection of beneficiaries of all the projects that the Trust implemented. Reading from her notebook, she expressed one of the grievances as follows:

At times we hear that our officers work with Agritex in the communities to mobilize people and distribute project donated items, yet we have NVGs and Ward Facilitators who are supposed to be working with the officers. We want to know if this is now the new mode of working.

The NJIVA Trust Programs Coordinator, who was responsible for providing overall oversight over the NGO's projects, was at pains to explain and convince the Association members how the Trust was at times forced to follow the instructions of the donors. Strategically avoiding personal responsibility, and in a statement that seemed to me like he was throwing the blame to his subordinates, the Programs Coordinator responded:

I am very sorry to hear that this is what is happening. You know I have worked with you for so many years and nothing like that has ever happened. The problem is that we recently hired new officers and they are not very familiar with our working culture … but I should also point out that at times we are forced by our donors to follow certain channels, and these are not always in line with the structure of our organization. For example, if a donor says we are giving you aid for the disabled, we can only get to the disabled by working with relevant agencies like the Department of Social work …

Although some of the AGM attendees seemed to understand the Programs Coordinator's explanation that, in some instances, NJIVA Trust had to use beneficiary selection criteria developed by the donors which excluded the Ward Representatives and NVGs, many of the participants were disgruntled and felt that they were now being side-lined from the Trust's activities. NJIVA Trust's NGO-ing had to be adaptive to the changing funding landscape. It would lose out on donor funds if it had restricted its approach to complying with the internal structural and operational arrangements of choosing beneficiaries.

For both NJIVA Trust and The Mutare Community Development Trust, they were forced into such complicated marriages with international NGOs because they needed funds to expand and sustain their work. Rejecting offers for partnerships would have compromised the opportunities presented to them to grow their grant portfolios while also closing doors for

potential future funding. Yet, an important element of this complicated marriage was the attribution of success, an issue that I now turn to below.

Mutuality or perpetual dependency? The contradictory relations among NGOs

When Pamela told me that her organization delivered support to communities affected by the tropical cyclone through local NGOs, it implied that the latter was more involved in the day-to-day lives of the survivors. According to her, the advantage of partnering with local NGOs was that: "They have knowledge of the district, and they understand the main challenges that confront communities and, they are the ones who know specific projects appropriate for the survivors …" Pamela's understanding of the importance of local partners perfectly concurred with how NGOs like NJIVA Trust defined their work. For instance, in *The Story of NJIVA* (p. 4), Mr. Hill highlighted that NJIVA DzeDunhu Association dedicated the first two years of its founding, to learning "about working in a politically volatile district and came out clearly with a non-partisan approach to its work, which it worked hard to enshrine." Due to their longstanding presence in Chimanimani, local NGOs did not only have experience working directly with the community but have also acquired an extensive understanding of the pressures that caused the destructive impact of tropical cyclone Idai. This local knowledge and experience were important for international NGOs like Pamela's to channel resources where they were most needed, and to ensure that post-Idai recovery and reconstruction initiatives that they supported were organic and responsive to the needs of affected families. However, contestations emerged over which NGO - the local NGO like NJIVA Trust or its international partner – were to claim the results from implementing these post-Idai recovery and reconstruction projects.

At the micro-level, the funding and technical support that small and local NGOs received from their international NGO partners helped them to expand their work and increase their visibility in the communities. In the case of NJIVA Trust, the support from international NGOs

elevated its name and reputation at the district level. The NGO was now regularly featured in the

local media, showcasing for instance how its agro-ecology and promotion of indigenous foods

projects have helped survivors to recover from the disastrous effects of tropical cyclone Idai. In

addition, the NGO would present these projects in district meetings as its success stories.[31] The

increased visibility and evidence of success, as presented in the media and during district

stakeholder meetings, helped NJIVA Trust to mend its relations with the state, a subject that I

will explore in further detail in the last section of this chapter. Besides, the technical and

financial support that NJIVA Trust received from international NGOs somehow helped it to

strengthen internal systems, such as monitoring and evaluation and financial management

systems and allowed the NGO to expand its work in Chimanimani. This expansion was

accompanied by major recruitment of technical staff and volunteers, enabling the NGO to

contribute towards reducing local unemployment, which has been of major concern in the

district. In September 2021, NJIVA Trust received an award at the 2021 Manicaland Responsible

Business Awards Celebrations which were hosted by the Corporate Social Responsibility

Network Zimbabwe in Mutare. The award, under the Environmental Stewardship and Social

Impact category, was in recognition of the NGO's work towards promoting environmental

sustainability following the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. Local small NGOs leveraged the

improved visibility and popularity to solicit more funding to support their post-Idai field

operations.

At the same time, the international NGOs rode on the smaller local NGOs to assert

legitimacy at the community level. For instance, in all the three funding proposals that I helped

to develop during the time that I was volunteering with NJIVA Trust, the proposal guidelines

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[31] During the period of my research, the DDC was convening monthly development partners meetings where NGOs were supposed to present their activity reports and work plans

specifically asked us to explain procedures that we were going to employ to ensure that the funder became visible in the communities. The expected visibility methods included inserting the logos of the funders on all materials that were going to be distributed to the communities, publicly acknowledging the assistance of the funders during stakeholder meetings, pitching banners with the funders' logos at all public events, or inviting representatives of the funders so that they could be publicly seen by the communities. In all the public events that I participated in at NJIVA Trust, the NGO's employees always displayed banners with the names and logos of the international partner funding the event. For NJIVA Trust, and many other local NGOs operating in Chimanimani, this was an indication of a mutually supportive relationship. Indeed, such visibility activities were meant to signal to observers, including the state and communities, that achievements by the local NGOs were a result of the contributions from partnering international NGOs, even though the latter were not physically present in the district.

My interlocutors in the local NGOs were, however, concerned that while they were presenting the international NGOs as equal partners at the local level, the international NGOs did not reciprocate this gesture when they represented their organizations globally. Samuel, the Director of Mutare Community Development Trust, was particularly concerned that most international NGOs appropriated the successes of local level projects for their own benefit. According to him, the international NGOs would consolidate project reports submitted to them by two or three local NGOs, synthesize them into case studies and success stories, and disseminate these around the world as evidence that they were positively impacting vulnerable and poor communities. The vital work of the local NGO would be erased. They would no longer be viewed as lead implementing agencies, a definition that they assumed when interacting with stakeholders locally, but bundled together with the local communities that they work with as

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beneficiaries of donor funding. For Samuel, the results of community development projects were now being attributed to the hard work of the international NGOs and not to the local NGOs like NJIVA Trust and The Mutare Community Development Trust who had an operational presence in the communities.

Besides getting insights into this problematic situation from Samuel, I also observed the same when I reviewed websites and newsletters of some of the international NGOs that were supporting NJIVA Trust's work in Chimanimani. Common statements that I came across while reviewing marketing materials produced by the international NGOs included claims like, "We reached out to xx number of survivors through the financial and technical support we gave to NJIVA Trust", or "We spearheaded xx projects in partnership with NJIVA Trust, a local NGO". By being imagined beneficiaries of technical and financial assistance, the smaller NGOs remained in a position of perpetual dependency upon the goodwill of the "big brothers," a worry that Samuel unapologetically expressed when he said, "*Vanowana mari yese ivo votipa mafufu*" ("they get a lot of the money but they give us crumbs"). By this statement, Samuel implied that while partnering with international NGOs opened up funding opportunities, his NGO could not equally access huge amounts of funding like the bigger international NGOs due to restrictive eligibility requirements of most of the big donors, which included evidence of experience in managing huge budgets and co-financing requirements. A report, "Situational analysis of the state of localization in Zimbabwe" written by Mutsaka & Takaedza (2021) confirmed that these bottlenecks were common to national and local NGOs that were involved during the post-Idai response processes in Chimanimani. The study found that some institutional donors did not have mechanisms that local and national NGOs could use to access humanitarian funding. For instance, they learned from some donors that:

they could only fund organizations domiciled in the European Union due to policy and legislative reasons, whilst another donor stated they do not have the administrative capacity to handle multiple small grants (Mutsaka & Takaedza 2021, p. 16).

Due to the policy restrictions and the need to reduce the administrative burdens, these (mostly European) donors could not directly fund local and small NGOs like NJIVA Trust and The Mutare Community Development Trust. Instead, they channeled their funds through international NGOs with headquarters in the EU and through the UN agencies who would then sub-contract the local NGOs. For Samuel, these restrictions curtailed the growth potential of the local NGOs because they often received "crumbs" from the "big brothers". He also raised the concern that at times the "big brothers" expected huge victories from the smaller NGOs and yet they would have invested little resources.

I observed that the requirement for co-financing had huge implications on the operations of NJIVA Trust. In some instances, the NGO would receive funds to implement specific projects on behalf of the international NGOs, with the stipulation that the funds would only be used to cover project costs, while NJIVA Trust was expected to co-finance operational costs such as administrative expenses and salaries for Program Officers who were expected to deliver the projects. The NGO could not deny these offers as they were important for its expansion and visibility in the district, yet they added to the financial pressures that NJIVA Trust was already experiencing. During the period of my fieldwork, the NGO was being funded by more than 10 donors but only one donor was funding staff salaries for its 23 full-time employees. Because of the heavy reliance on one donor for salaries, although NJIVA Trust employees' earnings were higher than those in state departments, they were much lower than the average salaries of NGO employees in Chimanimani. NJIVA Trust employee were not getting additional benefits like medical insurance, as in other NGOs. Furthermore, NJIVA Trust would hire interns from local

universities to help its full-time employees to implement the various projects. The extra projects did not only lead to employee burnout, but they also negatively affected employee morale as the extra effort that they put in was not commensurate to their remuneration. It also created instability within the workforce and resulted in conflicts between management and the rest of the employees. Three of the NGO's employees left the organization within the last quarter of 2021, citing poor working conditions, especially the remunerations, as the main push factor. At times the NGO's major donor delayed disbursing funds, which resulted in employees going for up to two months without being paid salaries, yet they continued to work on the other projects that did not have provisions for salaries. I will use evidence from an incident that I observed to demonstrate how these issues manifested at NJIVA Trust.

Three months without salaries

I arrived at the NJIVA Trust office for work around 8:30 am on the 7th day of June in 2021, and as a routine under the organization's COVID-19 control protocols, I headed straight to the guardroom, which was located at the main entrance, had my hands sanitized and temperature checked by the Security Guard and joined colleagues in the Old Boardroom where my workstation was located. A few minutes later, the Office Administration came into the room and announced that there was an urgent meeting which had been called by the Finance Department. Since there was no internet connection at the office, announcements like these were usually shared through the WhatsApp platform, or the Office Administrator moved from office to office spreading the word. The meeting started at around 10 am and as the norm, it started with a devotion song, followed by a prayer from a volunteer. On this occasion, the Office Administrator volunteered herself to lead the prayer. It was very unusual to interrupt a prayer, but on this day, most employees seated in the new boardroom burst into laughter when, in the middle of the

prayer, the Office Administrator emphatically and pleadingly asked God to "keep the hearts of his servants calm during the deliberations of the meeting as we are one family doing God's work." The laughter aside, to me the pleading with God for calmness was a signal that the meeting was going to touch on a very sensitive subject.

Following the prayer, Daniel Rekayi, the Finance Manager, stood up with a bunch of papers in his hands and proceeded to the front where the pool table was located. The pool table was multi-functional. We used it as a sports facility during lunch and after working hours, and as was the case on this day, it also served as the main table for presentations during meetings. James began by acknowledging the good work that employees were doing to raise funds and implement impactful activities in the communities. He particularly expressed gratitude for the efforts that his colleagues had put in to increase the number of donors supporting NJIVA Trust's disaster response initiatives. He then cracked the bad news – the organization was running into deep trouble, "and it is likely that employees will not receive salaries for the next three months." As highlighted above, although NJIVA Trust had grown its donor portfolio, most of the donors were only funding project activities without provisions for employee salaries. Only one donor, out of the more than 10 funding agencies, allowed NJIVA Trust to include remunerations for its 23 full-time employees. The funds were, however, disbursed in bi-annual tranches, after NJIVA Trust would have submitted financial reports and audit reports to the satisfaction of the donor. The financial audits were done by an external audit firm approved by the donor. When the staff meeting took place in June, the tranche which was due had not been disbursed because the finance department was still working with the auditors, and it was going to take a few more months before the audit report could be finalized and shared with the donor.

Accusations and counter accusations were traded days and weeks after the meeting, with program employees blaming the Finance Department for incompetency while the latter blamed Program staff for not providing documents required for the audit trail in time. The root of the problem, however, was not about incompetency or failure to provide documents, but could be traced to the complicated marriage that NJIVA Trust entered with the international NGOs. If the various donors that NJIVA Trust had cultivated were providing funding for administration and other operational costs, the NGO could have set aside a contingency budget to cover the salaries.

Eventually, the employees ended up getting half their salaries for the 3 months that they were waiting for the disbursement from the donor. Essentially, the finance department "stole" the money to cover the half-salaries from the project budgets of funders who did not have provisions for staff salaries and administrative costs. I use the term "stole" here to underscore the fact that procedurally, NJIVA Trust was not allowed to use the project funds to finance activities outside the donors' budgets. It could have been a major due diligence issue if this violation was discovered by the donors. The delay in full payment caused a lot of discomfort among the employees. Several employees in the NGO confided with me how unhappy they were working under such conditions, and I was not surprised to learn that three of the program employees left NJIVA Trust between September and December 2021 to join bigger and national NGOs working in the district which offered better employment conditions. During my discussion with Samuel, he also expressed anxiety over the future of his NGO as he was finding it very difficult to raise funds for staff salaries at The Mutare Community Development Trust. Other employees of national and local NGOs whom I interviewed believed that instead of creating a win-win situation, the international NGOs were taking the advantage of having unlimited access to donor

funding to gradually push their local partners out of relevance. I will elaborate on these
assertions below.

Relations between local and International NGOs

In Section 5.2, I used the metaphor "wolves in sheep's clothing" to demonstrate the ambivalent relations that prevailed between the state and NGOs, which were shaped by the political context of the early 2000s. The same phrase can be figuratively applied to explain the perceptions that local NGOs had as they worked together with international NGOs during the responses to the tropical cyclone Idai disaster in Chimanimani. Local NGO leaders who I interviewed, including Peter Moto of The Catholic Association, believed that the disaster created an opportunity for the international NGOs to strategically position themselves and claimed operational space in Chimanimani while elbowing the local NGOs out of relevance.

The NGO that Peter Moto was leading, The Catholic Association, was part of a group of NGOs owned by the Catholic Church, reporting to a central national office in Harare but with semi-autonomous Provincial Offices in the towns of Mutare, Bulawayo, Gweru, Masvingo, Gokwe, Chinhoyi and Hwange. This NGO operated in many ways like NJIVA Trust although there were also major differences. Firstly, just like NJIVA Trust, it had a physical presence in the Chimanimani, including in the villages and wards. Apart from expert Program Officers based in Mutare, and who visited the communities on regular basis, The Catholic Association had parish-based volunteers who led the delivery of community project activities. Because of its large network of parishioners across the district, the NGO had representation in almost every ward in the district, though areas for specific project interventions depended on the availability of funding. Secondly, The Catholic Association had a long history of implementing development projects in the district – Peter told me that it had been supporting a range of community development interventions as part of the Catholic church since 1972. Thirdly, as a church

organization, the NGO operated as an Universitas, with more than 7.3% (CIA Factbook 2022), of the national population of Zimbabwe who belong to the Roman Catholic church fitting the category of primary beneficiary members of the NGO's activities. Lastly, the NGO was semi-autonomous in the sense that although it relied on budgetary allocations from the national office, provincial offices could source funding and directly implement field activities on their own. Thus, it could shift the way it defined itself from being a local to a national NGO, and vice versa, depending on the context. I knew Peter from the time that I was involved in the NGO sector in Zimbabwe. We used to interact regularly when I was working for CAFOD, which was also part of the network of NGOs belonging to the Catholic Church. As such, I did not encounter any hurdles scheduling a formal interview with him at his office in Mutare on the 2nd of March in 2021.

Peter started by providing an account of the work that his NGO had been implementing in Chimanimani before the tropical cyclone Idai hit the district, which included providing relief aid during periods of droughts, providing agricultural inputs and technical support to farmers, supporting the education sector through rehabilitating school infrastructures, and paying fees for orphans and other vulnerable children, and supporting community-based water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) initiatives. According to Peter, these interventions have not been continuous as the NGO had been experiencing its own "dry spells"." By "dry spells", Peter implied periods when the NGO ran out of donor funding and had to wait until other funding opportunities arose. In the aftermath of the tropical cyclone, Peter's NGO was actively involved in the provision of emergency humanitarian aid, mainly in the shelter and WASH sectors. During the time of our interview, Peter told me that the NGO's response was now focused on building the resilience of survivors through supporting sustainable agriculture activities.

Besides learning about the NGO's activities, the interview helped me to understand aspects of NGO competition which made him, and several other leaders of local and small NGOs I spoke with, believe that the international NGOs came into the post-Idai field as a "wolf in sheep's clothing," in that they used their more powerful position to learn about the district and compete for operational space. Peter summarised his observations of the working relations between his NGO and others as follows:

> There was a lot of competition among NGOs. You know that even NGOs compete amongst themselves, and some even fight for relevance and image-building. Some NGOs want to be seen as leading which makes it difficult to collaborate.

In addition to reaffirming the concern about image-building, Peter's comment above highlights how NGO competition became a distinctive feature to characterize the post-Idai NGO landscape in Chimanimani. Crucially, the statement reveals how tropical cyclone Idai exposed inherent struggles over resources and operational space among the NGOs on one hand, and how it reconfigured structural relations and coordination mechanisms on the other hand. These inherent imbalances and new relational dynamics created by the disaster led to the perceptions by some of the local NGOs that they were being pushed out of relevance.

Perceptions about the international NGOs being a "wolf in sheep's clothing" also came out during a discussion that I had with Brian Moyo, the Executive Director of my host organization, NJIVA Trust. On one occasion, Brian summoned me to his office. He wanted us to discuss extra tasks that I could take up as part of my volunteer work in the organization. Among the major tasks that he proposed was helping to strengthen NJIVA Trust's capacity to employ resource mobilization strategies to ensure the NGO's financial sustainability in the short, medium, and long term. Brian was worried that while NJIVA Trust was somehow benefiting from the small grants that it was receiving from big international NGOs in the short term, the

NGO could soon be "elbowed out of relevance" by these same funders who were now setting up their offices in Chimanimani following the disaster.

What made Brian apprehensive was the rapid changes in the NGO landscape in Chimanimani after the tropical cyclone. During the emergency response and early recovery phases, most international NGOs channelled disaster aid through local NGOs like NJIVA Trust, largely because they did not have a physical operational presence in the district. On one hand, this period presented an opportunity for the smaller NGOs to expand their funding portfolios in the short term, though the funds that they were receiving were usually earmarked for project costs, with little to no budgetary allocations to cover operational expenses, including employee salaries. On the other hand, the international NGOs utilized connections that they established with the local NGOs to learn about the district and to negotiate MOUs with the local authority, which could allow them to set up offices in the district and employ their own field staff. Brian expressed worries that these developments could lead to two outcomes. The first possible outcome was that the international NGOs will no longer find it necessary to channel funds for community development through NJIVA Trust and other small NGOs, but instead, they will now be directly implementing community projects with their own employees. The second outcome was increased competition for resources and recognition. For Brian, the international NGOs already had the advantages of being well resourced, connected globally and with access to substantial funding opportunities, which would allow them to implement bigger and more visible projects. He was worried that because of the advantages that the international NGOs had, they were likely going to take over the operational space, and this could eventually force some of the local NGOs to close. His sentiments corroborated the concerns that had previously been

expressed by Samuel, of The Mutare Community Development Trust, that the hegemonic tendencies of the international NGOs presented a threat to the survival of smaller NGOs.

By the time I finished my fieldwork in December 2021, two international NGOs who were funding NJIVA Trust's disaster response activities had already set up offices in Chimanimani and recruited their own field employees. Hence, when Brian asked me to help with strengthening the capacity of the NJIVA Trust employees in fundraising, he was conscious of these dynamics such that he wanted to position his NGO in a way that it became adaptive to the changing NGO landscape and avoid being totally elbowed out of relevance, if not out of existence. Following our discussion, I facilitated a three-day fundraising and resource mobilization training for the NJIVA Trust employees in June 2021. During this training, we discussed ways that the NGO could increase its funding portfolio without having to rely much on the goodwill of the international NGOs. Given my previous experience of soliciting funds from private foundations, I also shared with them the tools that they could use to identify diverse funding sources from which NJIVA Trust could apply for funding.

Nevertheless, conflicts over resources and operational space were not only between international NGOs and local NGOs but also among the local NGOs that interacted with survivors on a day-to-day basis. I will elaborate on the nature of these conflicts below.

Conflicts among national and local NGOs

Peter, the Director of the Catholic Association, acknowledged that "there was a lot of competition among NGOs" involved in the post-Idai response processes. He also stated that there was a lot of duplication of NGO activities and a lack of proper NGO coordination during the response. According to him, the NGOs did not have enough time to plan effectively because of the complexity and intensity of the tropical cyclone, and this led to NGOs failing to coordinate, and at times duplicating response activities. However, Pamela's (the spokesperson of the Harare-

based international NGO) comments that local NGOs lack coordination and do not speak with "a united voice [as] their approaches are different" reveals that the lack of coordination and competition among the local NGOs pre-existed, and the disaster only further exposed the fissures and perhaps amplified them. The pre-existing culture of work among the local NGOs helped shape how they interacted in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai.

Conflicts and competition manifested in the lack of collaboration and duplication of activities as described by Peter. Most local NGOs presented themselves as being at the forefront of leading responses to the disaster in a way that legitimized their work and that helped them to attract funding from donors. There was little motivation for collaboration. If they collaborated on specific projects, then it was going to be difficult for individual NGOs to appropriate the successes from such interventions which were necessary for them to build their images and attract donor funds. As such, relations among the local NGOs were built and delineated along the lines of jealousy and envy. Through my interaction with employees of NGOs working in Chimanimani, I discovered that in many instances the "jealousy and envy" were a creation of the "big brothers", the international NGOs. For instance, while explaining his experience during the emergency response to the tropical cyclone, Peter told me that:

> The donors made us compete among ourselves. At times local NGOs were funded by the same donor to provide food to the survivors, and yet they did not even know that they were drawing resources from the same source to do the same activities.

Peter's observations were analogous to what I later observed during my time at NJIVA Trust. I discovered that one of the international NGOs supporting the NGO's agriculture projects was also funding two other Chimanimani-based NGOs to do exactly similar activities in the same communities where NJIVA Trust was operating. Under such circumstances, the interests of the individual local NGOs were more directed toward pleasing the donor than achieving shared

impact. NJIVA Trust minimally engaged with these other two local NGOs. Compared to the

many times that the donor had been invited to visit NJIVA Trust activities, the only time during

my fieldwork when the other two NGOs funded by the same donor participated in NJIVA Trust

activities was during the October 2021 district Hurudza seed market day where many other

NGOs operating in Chimanimani were also present. The funding mechanisms that international

NGOs put in place created conditions for conflicts, including competition, jealousy, and envy

among local NGOs. As such, it was impossible for the NGOs to have a united voice or to

properly coordinate, as Pamela expected, because the local NGOs' survival was anchored on

finding a peculiar voice or implementation approaches different from others, and which set them

aside as innovative, and thus attract more funding from the big brothers.

In summary, relations among the various types of NGOs operating in post-Idai

Chimanimani were molded around a pre-existing culture of working and shaped by the post-Idai

funding landscape. The prevailing structures of power, including imbalances in access to funding

and other resources, created an operational space in which small local NGOs felt threatened.

Having presented this post-Idai NGO landscape, I will now proceed to discuss the relations that

emerged as the NGOs interacted with the state during the post-Idai response processes.

Specifically, the section below shows the ways in which NGOs challenged and accommodated

state authoritarianism.

5.5 State–NGO Relations in Post-Idai Chimanimani

On 24 August 2021, just after we had finished eating our lunch and were playing pool in the new

boardroom, *Mukoma* Solo received a call on his cell phone from the DSW. "Mukoma" is a

Shona word for "brother" and in our case, we used it as an acknowledgment of his seniority in

the pool game as he was the most skilled player around the NJIVA Trust offices. Mukoma Solo

was the Supply Chain Officer for NJIVA Trust, responsible for planning and coordinating all the logistics for the NGO, which included making sure that project vehicles were always maintained, allocating vehicles for officers visiting the communities, coordinating the procurement of items required to run community projects and facilitating orientation sessions for new employees and visitors. During the call, the Department of Social Development was asking NJIVA Trust to provide a vehicle so that its social workers could urgently attend to a child abuse case that had been reported in Biriiri, about 25 km out of Chimanimani. When Mukoma Solo indicated that all the vehicles were in the communities for project activities, the caller then asked him for fuel so that they could use the Department's own vehicle to attend the scene. Before hanging up the phone, Mukoma Solo told the caller that he was going to consult with his manager and would call back in a few minutes. After making sure that he was now disconnected from the caller, he said: "*Vanhu vehurumende vanonetsa* (the government people are troublesome), they always ask for vehicles and fuel, yet we don't have budgets for that. Where do they think we get the money from?" He shook his head and declared, "I will not call them back." After two or three minutes, perhaps after reflecting on the implications of his decision, he picked up his cell phone and called the NJIVA Trust Finance Department, instructing them to find a budget line in any of the projects to charge US$20 fuel for the state agency. Against his declaration that he would not back get back to the caller, his next call was to the DSW requesting them to send someone to pick a $20 coupon that the state agency was going to use obtain the fuel from a local filling station. What made Mukoma Solo more annoyed was that at the time that the DSW was calling and asking for a vehicle, one of NJIVA Trust's vehicles had already been borrowed by the

Agritex Department which was conducting rural livelihoods assessment as part of the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC).[32]

Four months after this incident, I held a semi-structured interview with Chengetai, who was heading the Community Development Department at the CRDC, and his interpretation of the vehicle issue was completely different from the way that Mukoma Solo took it. When I asked Chengetai about the local authority's relations with NJIVA Trust here is what he said:

> One major positive thing about NJIVA is that it is our local NGO. That's a big advantage. They are always ready to assist. At times we ask for vehicles when we have emergencies, and they provide us. If we request fuel, they provide it. If we ask for expertise on some issues, they are ready to assist. That is the biggest advantage that we have with NJIVA compared to the national and international NGOs.

Mukoma Solo's outburst and Chengetai's response offer insights into the contradictions and ambiguities that defined the relations between the state agencies and NGOs involved in the tropical cyclone Idai disaster response processes in Chimanimani. I will address these contradictions and ambiguities in two ways. Firstly, I will use NJIVA Trust as a case study to show how tropical cyclone Idai catalyzed the mending of relations between the NGOs and the state. Secondly, I will show the negative connotations of celebratory statements, like the one made by Chengetai above, and analyze them within the context of the politics of authoritarian power and control that characterized the post-disaster socio-political environment.

Tropical cyclone Idai as a catalyst for mending broken relations

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[32] The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) is a consortium of Government, Development Partners and Academia, which acts as a technical advisory committee, focusing on designing and implementing a national Food and Nutrition Security Information System. It was established in 2002 and is coordinated by the Food and Nutrition Council, a department in the Office of the President and Cabinet whose mandate is to promote a multi-sectoral response to food and nutrition security challenges with the vision of ensuring that every Zimbabwean is free from hunger and malnutrition. ZimVAC undertakes urban and rural Livelihoods Assessments to generate information to be used for policy formulation and programming by Government and its Development Partners. Retrieved from (https://reliefweb.int/report/zimbabwe/zimbabwe-vulnerability-assessment-committee-zimvac-2019-urban-livelihoods-assessment).

I have shown at the beginning of this chapter the hostility that defined the day-to-day politics of state-NGOs interactions in Zimbabwe before the tropical cyclone disaster. In a way, the post-disaster context became a space through which new modes of relations could be negotiated. This was achieved through joint planning between the state and NGOs as evidenced by the complementarity of disaster response initiatives. All the senior state employees who I interviewed in Chimanimani, including Chengetai, Mr. Mushonga (the Agritex senior employee) and Mr. Chibuwe (the Senior District Officer for the DSW) appreciated the advantages that their departments realized through collaborating with NGOs in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai, particularly because district-level state agencies were poorly resourced and hence depended on the support provided by NGOs.

Following the tropical cyclone Idai catastrophe, a "cluster coordination system" was agreed upon by the state and NGOs during the emergency response period to improve coordination between state and non-state actors. The following clusters were identified; Education, Nutrition, Health, Protection, Shelter, WASH, and Logistics (UN 2019), and these were co-chaired by line ministries, UN agencies and international NGOs. Local NGOs could join one or more clusters depending on their areas of focus. Beyond creating spaces for joint planning, the cluster coordination mechanism created platforms for introspection and redefinition of relations between the state and NGOs, thus reducing the trust gap between the two sectors. While Mukoma Solo, the NJIVA Trust Supply Chain Officer, was annoyed when the DSW asked for a vehicle, the attitude of the state departments could also be interpreted as a signal of its positivity towards the image of NJIVA Trust. As part of its depoliticization approach, Despite Mukoma Solo's disgruntlement, NJIVA Trust was willing to share its resources, like vehicles,

and to fund some of the state activities, for example, by buying fuel for state agencies, a strategy that helped to reduce its trust gap with the state.

NJIVA Trust also deliberately employed NGO-ing strategies that made district-level state agencies willing to be associated with its work. Besides providing vehicles and funding state activities, the NGO also invited senior state officials to visit successful community projects and to participate and talk during public events that it hosted. One such event was the annual Hurudza seed fair and market event which was held in October 2021.

The Hurudza seed fair and marketing day

The Hurudza seed fair and market day was a district-level event that NJIVA Trust had been hosting annually since 2016. The purpose of the event was to promote the production and marketing of indigenous crop seeds among small-scale producers in Chimanimani. During this event, NJIVA Trust would bring small-scale farmers across the district to one place where they showcased their indigenous seeds and sell them to each other. The 2021 edition was held under the theme "Reconstructing Local Seed Systems After Disasters," and it was meant to facilitate the sharing and trading of valuable local seed varieties that had been destroyed by the tropical cyclone Idai.

The Hurudza seed fair and market day event was a component of a large project that NJIVA Trust was implementing in the district, and its focus was on building the resilience of farmers to be able to deal with the impacts of climate change. Specifically, the project aimed to improve the food security of vulnerable rural households in Chimanimani through improving agricultural productivity and nutrition. In addition to the Hurudza seed fair and market day annual event, other components of the project included, sustainable livestock management, facilitating market linkages for indigenous crops, promotion of healthy eating by encouraging farmers to consume indigenous foods, and promotion of organic cultivation methods. Through

this project, rural small-holder farmers were discouraged from using artificial fertilizers and trained to make and apply bio fertilisers to retain and improve soil structure in their croplands. Theoretically, the project aligned very well with the state's development blueprint, Vision 2030, which emphasized "the attainment of food security and nutrition" by 2030 through, "the use of advanced technologies, including at the village level" (GoZ 2018; p. 26), but in practice, there were major contradictions which I will address later.

The 2021 Hurudza seed fair and market day was attended by more than 100 people and it was held in one of the wards where NJIVA Trust was operating. Besides the farmers who showcased their seeds, other stakeholders who participated in this event include traditional leaders, state officials, representatives of seed companies, other NGOs operating in Chimanimani, NJIVA Trust's funding partners, and members of the community. Several activities were attached to it to make the event lively. The first was a display competition where an independent panel of adjudicators, drawn from Agritex, local seed companies, and other NGOs, was tasked to judge the healthiness of the seeds displayed by the farmers, and the winners were awarded vouchers which they could use to buy seeds from the other farmers. Then there were role plays, poems, and songs performed by the farmers highlighting the benefits of producing and consuming local foods, which were followed by speeches from the guests.

In her speech during the event, Erica Muti, the NJIVA Trust Officer responsible for organizing the event, emphasized how the project was contributing to the state's efforts of improving food security in rural communities. She even referenced the project as evidence of how NJIVA Trust was contributing toward the GoZ's development blueprint, Vision 2030, by enhancing the resilience of communities affected by climate change. In his speech, the DDC thanked NJIVA Trust for implementing the project, which he said was complimenting the state's

efforts of ensuring that every family is food secure by 2030. He even called upon other NGOs to

emulate the good work that NJIVA Trust was doing. The Hurudza Seed Fair and Market Day

was widely publicized in the media as being instrumental in reviving indigenous seed varieties

that were facing extinction (e.g., Karengezeka, 2021). By organizing public events like the

Hurudza, NJIVA Trust's approach was to ensure that its activities were not viewed as opposing

those of the state.

Yet there were concerns and contradictions that the NJIVA Trust employees only

discussed internally during staff meetings or informal encounters and could not openly raise

them with the state agencies. Confronting the state agencies directly could result in the NGO

being viewed as critical to the state. The first concern was what Erica described as "the

superficial support" that the state pretended to give to NJIVA Trust.

A few days after the Hurudza seed fair and market day, I sat down with Erica for a post-

mortem of the event. I expressed my gratitude for the good work that she had done mobilizing

the farmers and other stakeholders and ensuring that the event ran smoothly. I was expecting her

to be equally excited, but instead, this was not the case. She was particularly angered by the

speech that the DDC made during the event, which according to her, appeared as if the state was

supporting NJIVA Trust, yet it was not the case. She expressed her concerns as follows:

> As NJIVA Trust we are encouraging farmers to grow indigenous crops and not to use
> inorganic fertilizers because they destroy soils. We are training them to produce bokashi
> fertilizers which improve soil quality and increase yields. The DDC stood up and said the
> state is in support of this project. But at the same time, the state is encouraging the same
> farmers that we are training to use inorganic fertilizers and seeds that are not suited to the
> local conditions.

From her statement above, Erica was worried that while NJIVA Trust's vision was to see

communities in Chimanimani benefiting from indigenous crops and organic farming methods, in

practice, the state was sabotaging this vision. She cited the Presidential Input Scheme/Pfumvudza, which she said was encouraging farmers to continue using inorganic fertilizers and promoting the growing of crop varieties which were not suited to the agro-ecological conditions of most farmers. The Presidential Input Scheme/Pfumvudza, which I will discuss in detail in Chapter 6, was a state-driven input support initiative meant to assist rural farmers with agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilizers. I learned from the survivors that the distribution of the inputs under the Presidential Input Scheme/Pfumvudza was random, and the farmers did not have choices over the type and varieties of seeds that they were going to be given. Subsequently, many families received seed varieties that they did not want or that could not grow well on their soils. The scheme has received wide condemnation from NGOs and commentators known to be critical of the authoritarian state who accused politicians connected to the ruling party of hijacking the inputs distribution and engaging in corrupt activities (e.g., Heal Zimbabwe 2021). As such, although NJIVA Trust was aware of these dynamics, the NGO could not directly challenge the Presidential Input Scheme/Pfumvudza because it needed to maintain its "apolitical" stance.

The other concern was in relation to the issue of vehicles and the requests by state agencies for NJIVA Trust to fund their activities. As highlighted earlier, the NGO was already running on a very tight budget, and it did not have free funds to support state activities. But in order to maintain its good relationship with the state, the NGO had to find a way of incorporating costs into project budgets, and this led NJIVA Trust to violate conditions set by some of its donors. For instance, among the issues raised by the external auditors, which delayed the disbursement of funds to pay employee salaries, was that NJIVA Trust had used project funds to cover costs not provided for in the budget. I did not have a chance to investigate where the

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payments were made but "soft demands" from the state for fuel, vehicle usage and other resources may have contributed to the "disallowed" expenses.

When Chengetai, the senior official at CRDC, said that the advantage that NJIVA Trust had was that "it is our local NGO," what he implied was that beyond the geographical positioning as an NGO physically located in Chimanimani, NJIVA Trust was also acquainted with the local cultural systems through which relations were made meaningful. The NGO's approach was not only to seek harmony with the state as an institution but also to deploy known cultural symbolic gestures, including the invitations to attend events, as instruments to facilitate the buy-in of influential individuals in positions of power. To build on this argument further, I will use the example of another event that I observed at NJIVA Trust, which involved a sheep.

The Sheep Gift: A symbol of peaceful co-existence

The NJIVA Trust cook prepared tea very early, around 8:30 am instead of 10 am, on that 26th day of October 2021 because it was going to be a busy morning. We had to immediately rush to the Chimanimani Secondary School grounds to make final touches on displays and seating arrangements before the guests arrived. This was a very important occasion for the organization that we could not afford to spoil. Among the guests who had been invited were; the Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution for Manicaland Province (who was going to be the Guest of Honor), a representative from the funding organization, the MP for Chimanimani East, the DDC, national and local NGOs and district level state officials. NJIVA Trust had invited these dignitaries to witness the official handover of beekeeping equipment to 120 local farmers whose honey production activities had been disrupted by the tropical cyclone Idai disaster.

As I walked down to grab a cup of tea at our usual dining place in from of the Old Boardroom, I saw Fungai, a senior Driver at NJIVA Trust, tying a sheep onto a tree next to one

of the outdoor wooden tables. Sheep are not common livestock in Chimanimani. Most families

prefer to keep goats and chickens as small livestock. As such, when I saw Fungai tying the

sheep, I thought he could have found it in the communities by chance and bought it for breeding.

As we were having tea, he told me how hard it was for him to get the sheep, but he had to find it

against all odds as per Brian's (the Executive Director) instructions. Brian had been categorically

advised by Chief Saurombe to buy a sheep which was going to be presented to the Guest of

Honor as a gift. The Minister did not turn up for the event, but a Senior Director from her office

stood in as the Guest of Honor and delivered a keynote speech on the Minister's behalf. Other

dignitaries who spoke during the event were the DDC's assistant, the donor representative,

Brian, and the MP's wife, who was also the Chairperson of Chimanimani FM and a member of

the ruling party Women's League. Mrs. Mutema of The Gender Ministry was the MC. Chief

Saurombe was invited to give a vote of thanks on behalf of the traditional leaders in

Chimanimani and to present the "sheep gift" to the Guest of Honor. As he handed over the gift to

the Minister's representative, the chief said: "We kindly ask you to transmit this gift to the

Minister and convey our gratitude to her for the support that she is giving us." In principle,

although the Senior Director stood in for the Minister, the latter was the rightful recipient of the

sheep as she was the officially invited Guest of Honor for this event.

I learned about the significance of the sheep gift, and why he had insisted on it when I

later interviewed Chief Saurombe towards the end of my fieldwork. In Ndau culture, a sheep

symbolizes peace or peaceful co-existence. As such, it conveyed two meanings when NJIVA

Trust gifted it to the Minister. Firstly, it was an expression of gratitude by NJIVA Trust for the

peaceful co-existence that the NGO has enjoyed while working with the state to implement

disaster response activities in Chimanimani. Secondly, the sheep served as a reminder or

commitment by NJIVA Trust that its operations were not to be viewed as threatening to the state, but the NGO was working peacefully to serve vulnerable communities in Chimanimani. This case of the sheep shows that through the guidance of traditional leaders like Chief Saurombe, NJIVA Trust employed a culturally sensitive NGO-ing tactic that enabled it to cultivate intimate relations with influential people within the state.

Another approach that the NGO employed to build relations with the state was to design the implementation of donor-funded post-Idai projects in a way that also created opportunities for district-level state employees to be personally involved and derive individual benefits. I elaborate on this subject below.

State employees' involvement in NGO activities

In the previous Chapter, I showed how Mrs. Mutema was actively involved in NJIVA Trust community projects. Apart from her, other state employees were often engaged as facilitators or enumerators for training workshops and assessments organized by NJIVA Trust and other NGOs. As such, the state employees at the district level, especially those who were not politically connected, regarded the NGOs as a labour market that could provide them with employment and supplementary income generation opportunities. During my interview with Chengetai, for instance, he did not want me to record our discussion of NJIVA Trust's weaknesses because, according to him, "the recording could end up in the wrong hands." By "wrong hands," he was referring to Senior Managers in the NGO who had decision-making powers on who to engage in specific activities. Just like Mrs. Mutema, Chengetai was also actively involved in the work of NGOs operating in the district, including NJIVA Trust activities. I, therefore, interpreted his sentiments as an expression of fear that my recordings

could close doors for him to be invited to participate in NJIVA Trust projects and events if they ended up in the hands of the Senior Managers.

Invitations to participate in NGO activities brought material benefits for state employees. Each time that they were invited to participate in an activity that NJIVA Trust organized, such as a field visit or workshop, they received participation allowances of between US$30 and US$75 per day. These allowances were not given when state employees attended huge public gatherings like the Hurudza seed fair and marketing day, unless they would have been asked to perform specific tasks like serving as an MC or a Guest Speaker. NJIVA Trust made sure to include these "stakeholder allowances" in all project budgets submitted to the donors. While these engagements created opportunities for the poorly renumerated state employees to supplement their incomes, they were also important for NJIVA Trust's NGO-ing. By creating such opportunities, the NGO reduced state opposition against its activities. When Ministers and senior politicians at the national level publicly attacked NGOs as being enemies and puppets of the West (Chapter 4), district-level state employees regarded the local NGOs as sources of livelihood which was not to be tempered with. This was the reason why Chengetai was calculative about badmouthing NJIVA Trust. Nonetheless, despite the reduced opposition at the individual level, the pre-existing and institutionalized inequality between the state and NGOs prevailed during the post-Idai period as the state continued to exercise authoritarian control over NGO activities. I will shed light on these power structures using evidence from my observations during the fieldwork.

State – NGOs Relations: A politics of inequality

On 25 January 2021, the NJIVA Trust Programs Coordinator shared a strongly worded circular that he had just received from the local authority, the CRDC. He shared the circular through the

several internal WhatsApp groups that the NGO had created. With a bold subject line "Suspension of all NGO Activities," it was a directive from CRDC to all NGOs operating in Chimanimani to suspend, forthwith, all field operations, failure of which was going to result in the termination of MOUs or their "expulsion from operating in the district." This circular was written after the state had imposed new restrictions on travel and meetings to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus. While the intent of the memo was appreciated, as the pandemic was wreaking havoc and there was the need to protect both the communities and NGO employees, the way that the letter was worded exposed the politics of inequality that existed as well as the authoritarian stance of the state towards NGOs. It confirmed that the state had total control of what the NGOs could and could not do, and non-state actors were superficially considered as part of the district decision-making matrix. At the time of the suspension, for instance, NJIVA Trust was running a community health project which had a component of raising awareness on COVID-19, and which was contributing to the state's efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, but it had to be temporarily stopped when the CRDC issued the directive. The NJIVA Trust project later continued, albeit on a limited scale, after the NGO's Senior Managers convinced the local authority that it involved the provision of essential services which was allowed under the new national COVID-19 prevention protocols. Still, the threats, and the fear of expulsions and other repercussions shaped the day-to-day interactions of NGOs and the state in Chimanimani.

When I met Simba, the Humanitarian Coordinator of the Harare-based international NGO, in April 2021, he narrated the bullying that NGOs were subjected to when they worked with state agencies during the distribution of emergency disaster aid. Simba accompanied donations sourced by his NGO to the Skyline Distribution Center, where donations from all other responders were initially delivered because the roads to other affected communities had been

destroyed by the tropical cyclone. During the week or so that he spent at the distribution center,

Simba participated in cluster meetings that involved the NGOs and the state. He told me that

apart from being sidelined from making decisions on how the donations that they brought were

to be distributed, NGOs experienced harassment and threats at the hands of senior state officials.

In the quotation below, Simba was narrating his encounters with the DDC who was later

reassigned after being implicated in corruption and the looting of disaster aid.

> I knew that each time we were summoned by the DDC, he would have something to say against the NGOs, and threatened to punish them. They were either allegations about not respecting him, or not following government protocol.

Simba's comments above can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, it attests to the unequal balance

of power between the state and NGOs, and the unstable insubordinate position that NGOs

occupied before the tropical cyclone Idai catastrophe were reproduced in its aftermath. Secondly,

it provides evidence that Simba's Harare-based NGO and many others that had little or no

experience of working in Chimanimani, found it challenging to navigate the prevailing structures

of power in the district after the tropical cyclone. Unlike NJIVA Trust and other local NGOs,

these external NGOs had not mastered the tactics of harnessing the socio-political context,

including the perceived DDC threats and hostility, to their advantage. Because of the lack of

understanding of the local political landscape, the external NGOs ended up employing

approaches that set them into conflict with the state. This last point became clear during my

interview with Chengetai who felt that the state needed to wield more control over the NGOs that

came into Chimanimani in response to the tropical cyclone.

In stark contrast to his positive description of NJIVA Trust, Chengetai described the

nature of relations between the CRDC and some of the NGOs as follows: "we just see their cars

running up and down, but we don't know exactly what they are doing." His statement above did

not necessarily mean that he was not aware of the NGO activities since many of the NGOs who brought their cars into the district had signed MOUs with the local authority, but rather he was comparing the approaches that these NGOs employed to NJIVA Trust's NGO-ing. He wanted all NGOs to operate like NJIVA Trust where the state was involved in almost the day-to-day activities of the NGO. Yet, the depoliticization approach of NJIVA Trust was not without problems - it perpetuated state-NGO inequalities and reinforced state authoritarianism, which is the reason why the German government saw it fit to withhold its funding in 2004.

Although they were not required to, NJIVA Trust employees always felt obliged to publicly acknowledge the presence of senior members of the ruling party whenever they attended its events, and this level of respect was not accorded to leaders of other political parties even when they attended the same events. NJIVA Trust, therefore, unwittingly rendered itself an enabler of the authoritarian state whose platforms could be used to advance the interests of the ruling party. The NGO became an enabler in the sense that although the NGO defined its NGO-ing approach as non-partisan, in practice it granted the ruling party more visibility than other political parties.

In addition, when NJIVA Trust always invited senior state officials to observe its activities, the NGO was in a way helping to cover up for the failures of the state. By always being available to assist, through providing vehicles and fuel to state agencies, for instance, NJIVA Trust helped to conceal inequalities in resource allocation within the state institutions. The central government did not prioritize equipping district-level agencies with the tools that they required to effectively deliver on their mandates because NGOs like NJIVA Trust always covered up for the gap. Chengetai hinted about this state withdrawal when he said:

> As a local authority, we are ill-equipped in terms of the tools and equipment that we need to carry over the work that was initiated by NGOs that have now left the district. Not

even a single vehicle was donated to us but so many cars were bought in the name of assisting Chimanimani … Not even one NGO bothered to say, "guys, we will be here for 3 months, after three months we will not be continuing, here is a vehicle."

From the statement above, Chengetai acknowledged that the local authority did not have enough resources, and hence expected NGOs that only responded to the emergency in a short-term way to donate their cars to the state. The comment also reveals more of the reasons why he wanted the state to wield more control over the NGOs. He was angered by the behaviour of some "fly-by-night NGOs", who according to him, just came into the district to collect information about the survivors and never came back with feedback. These concerns also emerged from the discussions that I held with the survivors as I will show in the next chapter. The behaviour of these NGOs became the grounds for suspicions that they could have a hidden agenda. In line with the concerns that Chengetai raised, the other source of conflict between NGOs and the state was described by Danai, the Field Officer in the Community Health Department, as the "piece-meal approach" that some of these "fly-by-night NGOs" employed. His perspective drew upon the observations he made when he was still employed by the MOHCC. Danai expressed very strong disapproval of NGOs that came to provide psychosocial support, including trauma counselling, in the aftermath of the disaster. According to him, some of these NGOs just attended to survivors for a few minutes and recorded in their books that they "had provided counselling to so many people," and yet trauma counselling was supposed to be a continuous process. Danai suggested that in the future, the MOHCC and DSW should lead psychosocial support activities and closely monitor the work of NGOs.

What Chengetai and Danai's concerns above tell us is that some of the conflicts that emerged in the post-Idai arena were a creation of the NGOs, and which became the basis for the state to justify its authoritarian control. The disaster opened windows for some NGOs to raise

funds without making meaningful contributions to the lives of the survivors. Their NGO-ing triggered negative responses from the state, which unfortunately affected other NGOs who were participating in the post-disaster sphere in good faith.

5.6 Conclusion

The chapter has shown the pre-disaster socio-political environment in which NGOs and the state interacted in Zimbabwe. This operating environment was largely shaped by the trajectory of socio-economic and political developments in the country. Neoliberal policies that the state adopted in the late 1980s and early 1990s, such as ESAP, resulted in the withdrawal of the state from many areas of provision, prompting the need for NGOs to become private intermediaries or brokers through which donors could channel funding for social development. The heated political environment since 2000, characterized by the radical FTLRP and years of political instability, resulted in NGOs being viewed by the authoritarian state as aligning their support to the opposition and working in cohort with hostile Western nations to push for regime change in Zimbabwe, even as the government continued to depend on NGO led contributions for social and economic development. These ambivalent relations shaped state-NGO interactions during the tropical cyclone Idai responses in Chimanimani. By filling the gaps created by the state's lack of capacity to deal with the disaster, NGOs were treated as Allies, yet they became Rivals each time their activities seemed to deviate from the expectations of the state.

In addition, post-Idai Chimanimani became an arena in which relations among NGOs were exceptionally visible. I have shown how the tropical cyclone Idai disaster created spaces for NGOs to redefine relations, on one hand, while exposing contradictions inherent within the NGO world, on the other hand. The inherent structural inequalities within the NGO world manifested

as the lack of coordination, competition, and perceptions of jealousy and envy as the various NGOs coexisted in the post-Idai development space.

Using NJIVA Trust as a case study, the chapter has shown some of the depoliticization approaches the NGOs employed and which helped them to maintain good working relations with the state. Nonetheless, these approaches also enabled state authoritarianism to flourish. The state exploited spaces and platforms provided by NJIVA Trust to build its image to advance the interests of the ruling party. The perceived insincerity of some NGOs that responded to the tropical cyclone disaster in Chimanimani invited negative backlash from the state. Concerns about lack of accountability, and transparency, served as justification for the authoritarian state to tighten its censorship and control over their activities.

Having looked at the relations among and between the humanitarian agencies that provided support in the aftermath of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster, the next chapter now shifts attention to the survivors. It looks at the survivors' interpretation of the disaster and their perceptions of the support that they received from both the state and NGOs.

Chapter 6   **"*Tiri Vanhu ve Idai*"[33]: Survivors' Perceptions of the Post-Idai Recovery and Reconstruction Processes**

6.1 Introduction

It was a sunny and cool mid-morning of 20 July 2021. I pulled out a few grocery items from my car and handed them over to Chipo, or *Mai* Tanya[34], as her husband, Rasta, ushered me into their small tent at the Arboretum displacement camp in Chimanimani. Arboretum was one of the four camps that had been set up by the state in collaboration with UN agencies and international NGOs to provide temporary shelters to families that had been displaced by tropical cyclone Idai. The other three camps were Nyamatanda and Garikai, which were closely located to Arboretum, and the Kopa camp located to the far south at the Kopa growth point near the Chipinge district. As of April 2020, all the camps were hosting a total of 224 households (746 individuals), and Arboretum alone had 59 households with 309 individuals (IOM 2020). Arboretum was just a stone's throw, about 100m, in front of the main block of shops at the Chimanimani business center.

The family lost 2 of their 3 children to the tropical cyclone, and both wife and husband were left with permanent injuries. In Shona culture, if one loses a family member or a close relative, other community members who come to comfort and commiserate with the bereaved family *(kubata maoko)* would usually bring with them a small token, locally known as *"chema,"* which can be either money or non-monetary. In my experience attending community funerals in the Ndau culture, I have observed that the traditional custom of *kubata maoko* and the token of condolence, *chema*, are not only an expression of empathy and congeniality, but they also serve to invite the bereaved to let the visitors know about the minute details surrounding the death(s).

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[33] Translation: "Tiri vanhu veIdai" ("We are the people of Idai")
[34] Mai Tanya means Tanya's mother

My initial interaction with Rasta and his wife, Mai Tanya, was, therefore, framed within this cultural context. Essentially, my first visit to the family was for the purpose of *kubata maoko*, and to present my *chema* (in the form of the few grocery items that I had bought). By following this customary norm, I was presenting myself as an insider to the Ndau culture, thereby lessening inhibition that may have hindered Mai Tanya and Rasta from being open about the predicament that befell them.

As Mai Tanya and Rasta were narrating the struggle that they went through during the night of the tropical cyclone, at times interrupting each other, and at times arguing about the specific and minute details of how they tried but failed to save the 2 children, how they were pulled out of the debris by local first responders and how they ended up being accommodated at Taurai's house with broken limps, a small girl appeared at the entrance of the tent. She wanted to buy snacks from Mai Tanya's vending stall which was pitched in front of the tent. Just after Mai Tanya had finished serving the girl and re-joined the conversation, another camp dweller turned up, and she wanted to buy vegetables from a small garden that Raster and his wife had established behind the tent - and this time Rasta went out to attend to the customer.

The rest of the discussion centred around the support that the family had received from the state, their worries that the NGOs who used to help them were no longer coming to the camp, and anxieties about their future. Neither the government people nor camp leaders were providing reliable information which could help them to plan for their "after-camp" lives. They did not know how long they were going to continue living there, having resided in the camp since March 2019. One side of the grapevine had it that they were going to be relocated to Runyararo Village soon, while other rumours were saying the Runyararo Village houses were not meant for people like Mai Tanya and Rasta who did not have properties registered in their names before the

disaster. No one from the government was telling them the truth and no one was disputing the lies.

What I learned from this first engagement with Mai Tanya and Rasta sets out the framework of this chapter. Overall, this chapter focuses on survivors' understandings of the disaster and how they sought to exercise agency in the post-Idai landscape, and how this agency was constrained and/or enabled as the survivors interacted with the state and NGOs during the disaster response. I argue that disaster relief interventions implemented by the state and NGOs diminished survivor agency. As these interventions impacted survivors differently, they prompted individualized complaints, resentment, non-compliance among some survivors, and opportunism among others. While many survivors understood state and NGO interventions as not complying with local definitions of socially acceptable practices, their responses were largely fragmented and individualised, and ultimately did little to challenge disaster authoritarianism.

I develop this argument further by first providing an overview of the local interpretations that were ascribed to the disaster. These local interpretations were important in framing the survivors' perceptions about the purpose, value and impact of disaster relief rendered by the various state and non-state humanitarian agencies. Secondly, I use the concept of moral economy (Thompson 1971) to investigate how survivors interacted with the state and NGOs in tropical cyclone Idai's aftermath. An important task here is to tease out the forms of cooperation and conflict that emerged as survivors became enmeshed in the disaster recovery and reconstruction projects of state and NGO, including the identities that came to be constructed and ascribed to the survivors, and how some survivors capitalized on those identities while others challenged them. Thirdly, I show how the reductionist notion of portraying survivors "as 'victims' of a disaster or simple 'beneficiaries' of aid" (Wisner and Fordham 2014 as cited by Chandrasekhar

et al. 2019, p. 1250) was challenged in the post-Idai response arena. I will now turn to the first section which discusses local interpretations of the disaster.

6.2 Local Interpretations of the Causes and Impact of Tropical Cyclone Idai

Local understanding of the causes and destructive impact of tropical cyclone Idai in Chimanimani could be summarized in a statement that was expressed by Jane, my host, during my first visit to her house after the tropical cyclone when she said: "we don't know what actually happened." This statement characterized the tropical cyclone Idai narrative among almost all the people who witnessed and responded to the disaster – local community members, traditional leaders, state officials and NGO employees and others. It insinuated that tropical cyclone Idai was not just a hydrometeorological phenomenon, but its causes and destructive impacts were located within cultural, religious, and social systems of meaning-making as the following paragraphs will show.

Tropical cyclone Idai Disaster as a curse against inappropriate behaviors

In Chapter 4, we saw how Chief Saurombe attributed the causes of the disaster to the water spirits, *njuzu,* and the spirits of the land, *marombo enyika*. Likening the disaster to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Bible, he believed that *marombo enyika* were infuriated by the wrongdoings in the community, and, therefore, caused the destruction.

Apart from Chief Saurombe, I was lucky to interact with two other traditional leaders, Chief Chikukwa and Headmen Hlabiso. Chief Chikukwa was a youthful traditional leader. He was in his mid to late forties and we often interacted at Green Bar, the place where Mukwasha and I frequented for drinks and social conversations after work. The chief was always in the company of other young men, and one would not think that he held such a powerful position, had it not been for the state-provided Isuzu truck that he always drove around, and which became his trademark. Although his perspectives slightly differed from those of Chief Saurombe, he also

strongly believed that the disaster was caused by angry spirits, and as such, post-Idai responses were expected to put that spiritual context into consideration.

Such beliefs strongly shaped how the chiefs interacted with survivors and humanitarian agencies (including state and NGOs) in the aftermath of the tropical cyclone. For instance, on one occasion, I heard Chief Chikukwa invoking the tropical cyclone disaster as a basis for reprimanding bad behaviors. We were having drinks at Green Bar when a brawl broke out between two young men, and in his disapproval of the behavior the chief shouted: "Hey stop that! *ndizvo zvinotideedzera ma* cyclone *izvi* (this is the kind of behavior that invite cyclones)". For the chief, phenomena like the tropical cyclone Idai disaster were a result of actions and attitudes that are not acceptable within the Ndau culture, such as fighting in the public. Likewise, Chief Saurombe expressed anger that the state sent search and rescue teams without allowing the traditional leaders to first perform rituals, which further angered the *njuzu* and *marombo enyika*, who subsequently caused the disappearance of over 300 people (those who were recorded as missing). The traditional leaders, according to him, later fined the President for the failure of the state to handle the emergency response process in a way that appeased the *njuzu* and *marombo enyika*. For both Chief Saurombe and Chief Chikukwa, therefore, the tropical cyclone Idai disaster was not only to be viewed in the context of deaths and destruction that occurred in Chimanimani, but it also carried deep cultural meanings. The disaster was a manifestation of social-cultural disequilibrium. They perceived it as punishment for a deviation from the cultural and traditional norms and values of the Ndau people.

This position was shared by many survivors with whom I interacted. A common story that I heard from across all the social groups was that the disaster was triggered by members of a local Christian religious sect, the Johanne Masowe, who were now undermining the ancestors of

the land. The Johanne Masowe church was among the early African Initiated Churches which came into being as part of the African decolonization movement. Deriving its name from the founder, Shonhiwa Masedza, a Zimbabwean who changed his name to Johanne Masowe in 1931 and proclaimed himself as "John the Baptist of Africa" who had been sent to preach to Africans (Mabvurira et al., 2015, p. 426). Since then, this form of African Traditional Christianity has expanded throughout Southern Africa. The church does not read the bible but heavily relies on prophecy. Followers of Johanne Masowe, locally known as "*mapositori"*, are identifiable by their white robes, they use open space for worship, and often go to the mountains and other secluded places for cleansing and driving away evil spirits. The Johanne Masowe members were accused of setting up their shrines in sacred mountains that were traditionally used for cultural rituals (Mabvurira et al., 2015).

Other survivors attributed the disaster to the *njuzu*'s anger over the degradation of their "homes", the water bodies. For instance, over the years, Chimanimani, and especially the communal areas that were mostly hit by the tropical cyclone, have witnessed an increase in alluvial gold panning along the major water channels, such as the Rusitu river and Nyahode river. The panners search for the valuable metal by digging riverbanks, which has led to massive pollution and siltation of the water bodies. According to the survivors, the *njuzu* were angered because their homes were being destroyed, and hence they caused the tropical cyclone to wipe out all the people who were caught panning on the day that they sent their destructive agent, tropical cyclone Idai. Unconfirmed reports from the interlocutors suggest that a huge number of people who were camping in the panning sites during the night of the tropical cyclone were drowned, their bodies were never recovered, and they were not included among the people who were officially recorded as dead and missing. Other survivors, including traditional leaders like

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Headman Hlabiso, interpreted the tropical cyclone Idai differently. Although still within the spiritual realm, they viewed the destruction of the tropical cyclone as being inevitable as it was God's plan.

"Kurarama inyasha" - Tropical Cyclone Idai was God's plan

I met Headman Hlabiso in the Rusitu Valley in April 2021. His jurisdiction lies under Chief Ngorima, and it covers the south-eastern part of the Chimanimani district, along the Mozambican border. The Headman has 15 villages under him, and two of these were mostly affected by the tropical cyclone. According to his count, 8 people were killed, 2 went missing, and many properties, including houses, farmland, and banana plantations were destroyed in the 15 villages. Headman Hlabiso occupied a rather contradictory position.

Besides being a traditional leader, a position that carries with it the responsibility of safeguarding culture and tradition, he was also a leader in the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) church and did not believe in the powers of *njuzu* and *marombo enyika.* Just like Johanne Masowe, the AFM is among the African Initiated Churches, and both churches "exhibit an aggressive assault and intolerance toward certain aspects of the African culture" such as "paying homage to ancestral spirits", which they label as "tradition" (Machingura 2011, pp. 12-13). What separates the two is that: on one hand, the *mapositori* believe that their founder was sent by God to deliver the Africans. For them, "he (Johanne Masowe) to Africa as Jesus was to the Whites" (Mabvurira et al., 2015, p. 426). They believe that "they receive the word of God live and direct from the Holy Spirit" (Mabvurira et al., 2015, p. 426), and not through the bible. On the other hand, although the AFM is an offshoot of the African Initiated Churches, it is Pentecostal in nature and believes in the Holy Trinity (Machingura 2011). Unlike the *mapositori*, AFM members read the bible and do not attend church services in white robes. The AFM also have

church buildings where they worship and not in open space. For instance, Headman Hlabiso's church was using a classroom at a local school, as its worshiping place.

My meeting with the headman was by coincidence. I was driving from the Kopa shopping center to the Vimba area to meet another research participant when he stopped my car and asked for a ride as he was going in the same direction. Vimba is located to the east of Kopa and is separated from Mozambique by the Rusitu River. It was after exchanging greetings and introductions that I learnt of his position as a headman, and he accepted my request to spend more than an hour with him, a time that I effectively used to interview him and learn about his experience of working with other community leaders, and external agencies in providing humanitarian assistance to survivors of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster.

His interpretation of the tropical cyclone was quite different from that of Chief Saurombe. He did not believe in the theory that the disaster was caused by *marombo enyika* and the water spirits, but his definition of the causes and effects of the disaster were framed within a blend of contemporary scientific explanations and Christian values. He attributed the occurrence of the tropical cyclone, and the subsequent destruction, to the accumulation of gases in the atmosphere, the indiscriminate burning and clearing of forests, the building of homesteads in unsuitable places and as "God's plan."

Another facet of contradiction was that while the other traditional leaders, notably Chief Saurombe and Chief Chikukwa, believed that traditional rituals were necessary to appease the ancestors and *Marombo enyika*, Headman Hlabiso held a completely different view. Here is what he told me when I asked him to comment on the assertion that the tropical cyclone was a curse against wrongdoings:

> I don't believe in that. I don't believe in performing rituals and saying the cyclone was caused by angry spirits … Does that mean that the angry spirits in Zimbabwe were also responsible for the destruction that happened in Malawi and Mozambique?

Indeed, as the Headman's statement denotes, tropical cyclone Idai also ravaged some parts of the Southern Africa region before making landfall in Zimbabwe. In addition to the at least 344 people who died in Zimbabwe, it claimed the lives of more than 602 in Mozambique and 59 in Malawi and left more than 1,600 survivors injured across the region (Dube, et al. 2021; Munsaka, et al. 2021; Chanza, et al. 2020; Yu, et al. 2019). Thus, contrary to what Chief Saurombe said, that *marombo enyika* could have shielded the communities in Chimanimani by neutralizing the tropical cyclone hazard and preventing it from mutating into a disaster, Headman Hlabiso believed that it was only God who had reasons for its occurrence, and it was only through prayers that disasters of similar nature could be prevented in the future. When I asked him if he participated in traditional rituals that were organized by chiefs to appease the ancestors, he replied:

> there is a tug of war that we sometimes get into between traditional leaders who go to church and those that prefer cultural rituals. I just give them the chance to perform their rituals. If they believe that brewing beer for the spirits will make things better, I just let them do it. I can attend and just observe what they do or even participate in some of their activities, but personally, I follow Christian values …

Headman Hlabiso's positioning as illustrated by the quotation above reveals the dynamics and trends that have characterized the institution of traditional leadership in Chimanimani, and which have implications on the duty bearers' responses to societal issues. Although traditional leaders are expected to uphold and promote the Ndau culture and tradition, the dominance of Christian values is increasingly undermining these functions, such that for many cultural rituals and traditional ceremonies are no longer considered necessary. As Mabvurira et al., (2015) argue, although African traditional religion survived alongside other religions, its membership and

relevance suffered a sharp waning following the propagation of Christianity which accompanied the colonization project. Headman Hlabiso's church, the AFM, specifically ostracized traditional ceremonies and other cultural rituals and labelled them "tradition" (Machingura 2011, p. 13).

The interview with Headman Hlabiso was also important to understand the institutional framework of the traditional leadership in Chimanimani in the context of post-disaster responses. It revealed that the term traditional leaders did not necessarily refer to a homogeneous structure, but rather a heterogeneous group of local leaders with different belief systems, different worldviews, and thus with different, and at times contradicting, understandings of how tropical cyclone Idai responses ought to be conducted. For instance, while Chief Saurombe was upset that the state did not allow the chiefs to conduct rituals before deploying search and rescue teams in response to the disaster, here is what Headman Hlabiso said when I asked him to comment on the issue of rituals:

> Some of us (other traditional leaders) were complaining that the government did not give them time to do rituals. People were dying and they were saying the government should stop sending help. For how long? We needed help immediately and I commend the government for sending people here. The only problem was that most roads had been washed away by the floods.

The Headman did not find any fault with the way the state acted. He told me during the interview that he was happy that the state acted timely even though its operations were hampered by bad weather conditions and inaccessibility to some places as most access roads had been destroyed.

Apart from Headman Hlabiso, the view that the destruction of the tropical cyclone was "God's plan" was shared by many other survivors that I engaged with during the fieldwork. An interesting explanation that I gathered from at least three sources of how "God planned" it was that he caused the tropical cyclone to make landfall in the middle of the night so that people

could not see what was happening. This notion was explicitly put forward by Jane, my host when I first visited her house in November 2020. She said:

> We thank God that he brought the cyclone during the night when our eyes could not see. We did not see how the destruction happened. We did not see how these huge boulders ended up here and how our neighbours drowned. If that had happened during the day, we were going to live with those visions for the rest of our lives.

Jane's account corroborated with what another research participant, Frank Guyo, told me. I was referred to Frank by Paid Mano, a young woman who was working as a cashier at a grocery store at the Ngangu township center. I always bought household groceries from her, and it was during these regular interactions that I became aware of her own survival story, and when Frank's name came out. She told me that Frank was a local musician who was among the luckiest people who miraculously escaped the disaster by climbing into a fig tree and that he was now telling his survival story through music. Besides being a musician Frank was working full-time in one of the state departments. I tracked him down and successfully held three interview sessions with him between April and December 2021. The first interview focused more on his personal experiences as a survivor and the follow-up interviews to understand how the state department that he worked for was assisting the survivors. I expressed my appreciation of his music career and supported his growth in the industry by contributing a small amount of money, which he used to pay for the recording of two of his gospel songs.

A tall, slim and always jovial middle-aged man, Frank was working for a state agency under the Ministry of Home Affairs based in Chimanimani. Before the tropical cyclone, the agency had a sub-office at the Kopa growth point where Frank was stationed, but he had now been moved to the Chimanimani center because the Kopa office building was swept away by the tropical cyclone floods. Frank narrated how he narrowly escaped death during the night of the tropical cyclone by miraculously climbing up a fig tree with 4other neighbors where they spent

more than 12 hours before being rescued by their neighbors the following day. For him, the trauma that survivors experienced, could have been worse had it not been for God who hid the destruction from people's eyes.

Following our first interview, Frank handed me a single-track music compact disc (CD) titled *"Kurarama Inyasha"* ("Survival is by grace"), which I later played and listened to that day as I was reviewing and synthesizing my field notes. Below is an excerpt of the lyrics that came out of the song:

Kurarama inyasha ndazviona	Survival is by grace I have seen it …
Cyclone Idai ndiwe wakatinyadza	Cyclone Idai you devastated us …
Zvichida chaiva chinangwa chaMwari	Maybe it was God's plan …
Ndivo vanopa, ndivo vanotora	He is the giver, and He is the taker …
Zvichida mucherechedzo wenguva yaNoah	Maybe it was a reminder of Noah's time …
Zvichida imviro-mviro yemagumo	Maybe these are signs of the end times …
Kurarama inyasha ndazviona	Survival is by grace I have seen it …
Ini pachangu ndorumbidza Mwari	I praise the Lord myself …
Ndakapona nenyasha kwete kungwara	I survived by grace and not because I was clever…
Hama woye, tokutendai nerubatsiro rwenyu	Relatives, we thank you for the assistance

In the song, which has now been accompanied by a video and posted on YouTube, Frank chronicled how he survived the tropical cyclone, stated the people that he climbed the fig tree with, and identified individuals familiar to him who lost their lives to the disaster. He also supported the view that maybe the disaster was "God's plan." In addition to praising the Almighty for the survival, Frank also acknowledged the critical role that members of the local community (including neighbours and relatives) played in assisting the survivors, especially during the emergency and early recovery phases when he said, "*Hama woye, tokutendai nerubatsiro rwenyu"* in the song. Thus, apart from viewing the disaster from supernatural realms, either within cultural or religious framings, the song signalled how local support systems,

were activated, mobilized, and deployed during the disaster. As I will elaborate further throughout this chapter, the perceptions of the disaster shaped the local communities' expressions of agency as they interactant with state agencies and NGOs.

Tropical cyclone Idai impact and the efficacy of local support systems

Notwithstanding the support that later came from external agencies, and especially the state and NGOs, interviews that I held with the survivors, such as Mai Tanya, Rasta, and Frank, revealed the importance of local support mechanisms in dealing with emergencies. After listening to Rasta and his wife, Mai Tanya, chronicling their survival story, I understood why Taurai had advised me that my fieldwork would not be complete without hearing their experience of the disaster. The family, mother, father and their 3 kids were living in a rented house in the Ngangu township. Both parents were not formally employed. They bred and sold small livestock like chickens and rabbits and operated a small groceries store at a rented place in the township. In addition to losing their two kids, they also lost all sources of livelihood, and had to start a new life in the Arboretum displacement camp.

Covering an area of about an acre, the Arboretum camp stood out distinctively from the surrounding environment. It had blue and white canvas tents pitched in straight lines down the hill and the tents were inscribed on the outside with eye-catching logos of UN agencies and international NGOs who were involved in setting up the camp, including USAID, IOM, UNICEF, WFP, and the EU. When I first entered the camp in early 2021, I observed that some of the tents were collapsing due to lack of maintenance by their occupants, while others had been completely discoloured because of the red mud that blew onto them and because of the extended exposure to the sun and rains. Towards the uppermost part of the campsite were 2 5000KL green plastic storage tanks fitted onto iron bars about 2 meters above ground, which stored water from

a solar-powered borehole for gravitational supply through a few taps that were planted across the camp. Mai Tanya and her husband's tent was located on the upper end of the campsite.

I came to know about this family through Taurai Sigauke, one of the research participants whom I had previously interviewed and was already among the close acquaintances who I often had informal conversations with each time I was in Chimanimani for my fieldwork. As highlighted in Chapter 2, Taurai was one of the survivors who responded to an invitation to participate in the research, that I posted on Facebook. Apart from being a survivor, he also provided refuge and food to his neighbours who had been displaced by the disaster, most of whom were now sheltered in the camps, including Rasta's family. Since NJIVA Trust was not implementing any projects in the camps, Taurai became very instrumental in connecting me with the camp residents. I often had lunch with him during which we discussed several aspects of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. In one of our informal encounters, Taurai had advised that my research would not be complete without hearing Mai Tanya and Rasta's experiences, since, according to his calculations, they were among the families most affected by the tropical cyclone Idai disaster in the district. Rasta and Taurai called each other "nephew" and "uncle", but I was not sure if these were just substitute titles or if the two were closely related. It is common in Zimbabwe, and in the Ndau culture specifically, for people to use these titles when referring to a friend or a neighbour, even when they do not have blood relations. I capitalized on the relations that Taurai had with the family to connect to their lives. I became very close to the family and interacted with them throughout the fieldwork. In addition to the many times that I exchanged text messages and calls with Rasta over the phone, I visited this family four times during the fieldwork - two times when they were still living in the Arboretum displacement camp and two

times when they had been relocated to Runyararo Village, which I will discuss more in this chapter.

When I asked Mai Tanya and Rasta how the tropical cyclone changed their lives on the first day that we met, Rasta lamented their loss:

> What changed most is that we were a big family, but we lost 2 kids due to the cyclone. That alone has changed our lives and has affected us very much. We can hardly move forward because of the memories that we still have.

"Secondly", Mai Tanya added:

> the cyclone destroyed all our sources of livelihood, our fowl runs were swept away, and we lost all the money that we had saved and kept in the house. We lost our grocery stocks, everything! We had plans to start potato production, we had potato seeds and fertilizers and they were all swept away. None of us was formally employed and those are the things that used to sustain us … I was only left with a night dress on me. Everything had been swept away.

Both Rasta and Mai Tanya sustained deep injuries such that in addition to not being able to do the same work that they used to perform before the disaster, they now had to deal with chronic conditions that required a lot of medication. For instance, I later learned from my informal encounters with Taurai that Mai Tanya suffered a permanent mental health condition because of the injuries and trauma that she went through, and she now needed regular access to treatment. Rasta's family sought refuge at Taurai's house, where they stayed for more than 5 days, nursing their wounds, while other community members helped them to search and recover the bodies of the 2 kids who had drowned. Taurai told me that in addition to Rasta's family, he also took in 3 other families that had escaped the floods, and he remembered having to provide food and accommodation for more than 15 people for over three days following the tropical cyclone. He also added:

> Something that I appreciated most, even though we were in the middle of a disaster, was the spirit of togetherness which I observed. Everyone was trying to do something to help

another person. I used to see people just working individually, but it was different during the cyclone. There was unity among the people.

Jane, my host also told me that apart from providing accommodation to a family of three that had been displaced by the floods, she provided food and clothes to other neighbours who had lost their household properties and food reserves. "Then we have a white man whose name is Kith", Rasta reflected:

> Mmmmm, I don't know how the news was going to come out if it was not for him. That man was sent by God. He gave coffins to all the affected families to bury their relatives. Because even if you had a funeral policy, it was not going to assist. There was no way that the funeral companies could come here as all the roads were inaccessible.

According to Rasta, Kith was the first person to give food to people who had camped in makeshift evacuation camps, at a church building in Ngangu and at the Chimanimani Village business center. He also bought coffins that he gave to affected survivors to bury the bodies of their family members. As Rasta put it, those are some of the individuals who were at the forefront, and their contribution was more valuable than the assistance that later came from the state and other agencies. Kith was a businessman and among the few white people still based in Chimanimani after many, including the former MDC MP, Roy Bennett, left in the middle of the FTLRP.

During my interview with Headman Hlabiso, he also recounted how he accommodated and provided food for over 2 weeks to 5 villagers whose houses had been destroyed by the floods. When he started to describe the support that he provided to survivors by saying, "some families were even coming to stay with us as traditional leaders ...," Headman Hlabiso implied that it was his obligation as a traditional leader to provide such safety nets in times of disasters. Indeed, his view affirmed the underpinnings of the moral economy that has defined the Ndau society even during the pre-colonial era. As formal custodians of the land, the chiefs were

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responsible for organizing local subsistence systems and ensuring that their subjects had access to food in times of disasters like droughts (Rennie 1973). In line with this function, Headman Hlabiso, and the other traditional leaders, namely Chief Saurombe and Chief Chikukwa, told me that they deployed their Village Heads to assess and identify households that were most affected by the tropical cyclone in their respective areas. The identified households were to be prioritized in post-disaster aid interventions.

From the accounts given above, the concept of moral economy as propounded by Thompson (1971) can help us to understand that while the tropical cyclone Idai disaster-impacted individuals and families differently, the burden of care and support became a shared one among the community members. The disaster revealed the oneness and a culture of solidarity inherent within the Chimanimani society, which motivated neighbours, individual first responders and traditional leaders to take urgent action to assist other members who needed emergency support. Nevertheless, since the disaster meant a shared burden of care and responsibility among the community members, post-disaster response interventions that external agencies later implemented were expected to be reflective of and comply with the pre-existing oneness and solidarity. The responses by external agencies were expected to fit the community criteria of identifying who deserved to be prioritized in terms of relief support.

By distinguishing "victims" or "directly affected people" or "beneficiaries of disaster aid" from the rest of the community, the state and NGOs created social tensions, which in one way shaped the survivors' perceptions of these agencies, and in another way, became a source of jealousy and acrimony among different socio-economic groups in the community. In other words, the question of who was supposed to fit the characterization of a "directly affected

person" or "beneficiary of disaster aid" as constructed by the humanitarian agencies generated tension and conflict.

The interview that I held with Mr. Mushonga, the Agritex employee based in Chimanimani, helped me to understand the contestations around the definition of beneficiaries of aid. In addition to coordinating activities of the DCPC as a senior state employee, he also narrated to me his own heroic contribution of providing refuge and food in his house to 14 displaced people. According to him:

> Almost every household on the safe ground was accommodating other members of the community who had been displaced and providing them with shelter and food. For those that had been displaced, it means that they lost everything, including their sources of food. But by accommodating the displaced, the hosting household was also depleting its food reserves, maybe for the following 4 months or even a year. So, everyone became directly affected and required disaster relief aid but most of us did not receive it because others were more deserving.

The point that Mr. Mushonga conveyed in the statement above was that although he, together with others in his situation, failed to get disaster relief aid, he understood that there were households who were more affected and who needed the support more than him. This knowledge was based on his lived experiences of the disaster as well as local knowledge systems of defining who was most affected by the disaster, and who was not. To put it another way, the community developed implicit criteria for assessing the impact of tropical cyclone Idai. Hence, when the traditional leaders told me that they deployed their village heads to assess the situation in the aftermath of the disaster, the process entailed identifying the most affected individuals and households in a way that complied with the expected "attitudes, norms and obligations, agreed through popular consensus" (Thompson 1971, p. 79). Instead of getting into the communities with pre-defined checklists to measure who qualified and who did not qualify for aid, local

communities' judgments were based on their relational experiences of interacting with each other on a day-to-day basis.

Controversy emerged with the coming in of external humanitarian agencies. Rasta nicely packaged the roots of the conflict when he said:

> They came later after reading the news on the internet but that was not the case on the ground. They didn't know the actual problem that had affected the people ... Some of the news was fake and was not the case on the ground.

In the statement above, Rasta implies that the picture of the disaster constructed by the media, and which became a premise for state and NGO interventions, was far from the reality experienced by the survivors. The danger of depending on the "fake news", therefore, as alleged by Rasta, was that some of the response interventions disrupted the pre-existing social relations among community members. For instance, beneficiaries were now being targeted along criteria like gender, age, disability status, and as we have seen in Chapter 4, political party affiliation. As a result, the survivors had mixed feelings about the involvement of the state and NGOs in the post-Idai emergency, recovery, and reconstruction processes.

In the next section, I examine how the survivors interacted with the state and NGOs, and how the interactions shaped the attitudes of survivors towards the support that they were receiving. I will start by exploring the nature of survivor-state relations that emerged because of the disaster and which shaped the post-Idai landscape. To critically explore these relations, my analysis is mainly based on two settings, the Arboretum Camp and the state-initiated Runyararo Village housing scheme.

6.3 "Tiri Vanhu ve Idai": Survivors' Attitudes Towards the State's Response to Tropical Cyclone Idai

Rasta looked very dejected and helpless when I visited him for the second time in the Arboretum displacement camp. Arboretum was one of the four relocation camps that had been set up by the state, with support from UN Agencies like the IOM, to accommodate families who had been internally displaced by the tropical cyclone. As of April 2020, about 224 families were housed in the 4 camps, 59 (309 individuals) in Arboretum, 83 (309 individuals) in Garikai, 53 (128 individuals) in Kopa, and 29 (113 individuals) in Nyamatanda (IOM 2020). The camp dwellers comprised families who had been displaced from the Ngangu and other urban locations surrounding the township and from the Kopa settlements which had been completely wiped away by the floods. Furthermore, some of the dwellers were former property owners and landlords, while others were former tenants who did not have any properties registered in their names. Rasta (a former tenant) revealed to me that he was deeply worried about the future of his family. What was more confusing was that the state had not been consistent on how they were going to deal with camp dwellers in the same situation as Rasta. The following quotation captures how he explained his predicament:

> The cyclone hit in March 2019 and we are now in 2021 but we are still in the tents. We cannot plan. The fact is that the cyclone was declared a national disaster, which means it is now being handled by the government. Our president came here and said, "*Kunaka kwezvimwe kushata*[35] *kwezvimwe"*, and promised that we were going to be provided permanent shelter. We are still waiting for the government to guide us. The problem is that the government is not coming to update us on progress. The local leaders from the DDC's office, MP and council come to us with very different messages. There is nothing tangible that has been officially communicated.

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[35] '*Kushata*' is the same as '*Kuipa*'. *Kushata* is mostly used in the Ndau dialect while other Shona dialects like Zezuru and Karanga use *Kuipa*

I asked Rasta to give me examples of the different messages that were communicated to the camp dwellers, and according to him, they were first notified by officials from the district council that survivors who did not have properties registered in their names before the tropical cyclone were not going to benefit from the government housing scheme. Following the CRDC announcement, the MP, Joshua Sacco visited the camp and told residents that he was not aware of how the relocation of displaced families was going to happen.

Another camp dweller, Panganai, who I interviewed during my second visit to the Arboretum camp in August 2021, was more optimistic than Rasta. He believed that the state was going to deliver on its promise to provide permanent housing for them. He described the survivors-state relationship as follows: "*Isu tiri vanhu ve Idai* (we are the people of Idai). We have an agreement with the government that they are going to help us until we find somewhere to live". I learned about these inconsistencies when I interviewed Pamela, the spokesperson of the Harare-based international NGO and Chengetai, the head of the Community Development Department at the CRDC. Pamela's organization was involved in camp management and assisting the state to implement the Runyararo Village housing scheme. I asked her to comment on the issue of survivors living in the tents and her response was:

> When we ask the authorities, they say yes are we assisting everyone, but those registered with the council will be allocated space first because their paperwork is already there. They say it will take a bit longer for those who did not own properties because they need to verify if people claiming housing, were not imposters. They say the actual number of beneficiaries will depend on the outcome of the verification process. But this information is not being communicated to people in the camps directly and that is why there is a lot of speculation.

Yet, when I asked Chengetai to comment on the same question, his characterization of beneficiaries seemed to be more analogous to what Rasta said – that survivors who did not have properties in their names were not going to benefit from the state-sponsored housing scheme.

According to Chengetai, the state had defined primary beneficiaries as those people who were landlords and who had their properties destroyed by the tropical cyclone floods even if they were not residing in Chimanimani during the time of the disaster. As he explained:

> We have an individual who had property before the disaster and another individual who was renting that property. So, the property remained under the ownership of the individual who constructed or bought it. So, the expectation is that the person who was renting can move into another property because they did not own any property. But we are providing temporary shelter to everyone who was affected and allow those who were tenants time to look for alternative accommodation.

Chengetai's characterization of beneficiaries excluded families like Rasta's, who, even though they lost their beloved ones, household properties and sources of income, did not fit the criterion of being landlords before the disaster. Chengetai, however, admitted that the initial plan of the state was to provide residential stands for every family sheltered in the displacement camps. According to him, the council had planned to allocate residential stands to the survivors where they could build their own structures, with the proviso that they would pay for the stands at a later stage on an agreed payment plan. This plan was resisted by the survivors like Mai Tanya and Rasta, who lost their sources of income and no longer had the means to even initiate the construction of housing structures. The idea of initiating the Runyararo Village housing scheme, according to Chengetai, emerged from the negotiations that the state held with the survivors and UN agencies and international NGOs. Although Chengetai claimed that the survivors were involved in the discussions about housing, most of the camp dwellers that I interviewed said they were not consulted; instead, they blamed the state for creating divisions and conflicts amongst them. For instance, some claimed that the camp management committee, which comprised former landlords, was conniving with the state to come up with decisions that only benefited the former landlords.

Each of the four displacement camps (Arboretum, Garikai and Nyamatanda and Kopa) had a camp management committee whose role was to represent the camp dwellers in meetings with state officials and external humanitarian agencies. Ideally, the members of the camp management committee were supposed to be elected by the residents, but the 4 survivors that I interviewed at the Arboretum camp, Rasta, Mai Tanya, Sophia, and Panganai, were not aware of how the committee that ran the affairs of their camp was selected. They alleged that the committee was clandestinely formed by the former landlords. For instance, Panganai had the following to say about the Arboretum camp management committee: "We were nursing our wounds in the hospitals only to come back and see that the landlords had now formed a committee." At face value, Panganai's statement above gave the impression that it was only the former tenants who sustained injuries and had to be hospitalized, yet some former landlords were injured and hospitalized too. But his statement had a deeper meaning – it exposes the structures of power that emerged as the former landlords and tenants interacted and reveals the opportunistic tendencies that emerged as different classes of survivors occupied the same space following the tropical cyclone. Panganai alleged that some former landlords were not in their houses when the tropical cyclone struck, and they only came to occupy tents in the camp when they heard that the state was going to compensate people who had been displaced. According to him, these were the people who remained and formed the camp management committee when other survivors were nursing wounds in the hospitals.

This committee, according to Rasta, was now secretly holding meetings with state agencies and lobbying for decisions that only favoured them. However, as Pamela highlighted, these allegations were rooted in the state's failure to communicate to people in the camps directly how it was going to handle the accommodation issue. The lack of transparency and

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inconsistencies by the state created tensions, cynicism, and jealousy among the various classes of survivors who were housed in the displacement camps.

I was enlightened by these tensions and jealous attitudes during my second visit to Rasta's tent in the Arboretum camp. Mai Tanya was happy that I did not drive into the camp, because after my visit the last time, members of the camp management committee came and inquired who I was as they suspected that I was a donor who had brought food and other goodies for them. I also noticed during this second visit that the vegetables in Rasta's small backyard garden were almost wilting. He told me that he had been ordered by the camp management to stop the garden on allegations that he was drawing a lot of water from the 2 tanks that were supposed to be used by the whole camp community. Mai Tanya was even more worried that the jealous members of the camp management committee would stop her from operating her vending stall, which had become her major source of income. From these stories that I heard from Rasta and Mai Tanya, it became clear to me that the social organization of residents in the Arboretum camp created new hierarchies of authority with which the residents were now expected to comply. However, the camp residents devised ways of expressing their agency and challenging the decisions imposed on them by the camp management committee and the state.

The statement made by Panganai, that *"tiri vanhu ve Idai"* showed how the survivors claimed entitlement to the support pledged by the state. It also helps us to examine how these claims of entitlement helped the camp dwellers to devise forms of survivor agency to challenge decisions and programs imposed by the state. I will use the story of broiler chickens and sewing machines that I heard from Mrs. Mutema, the Senior Development Officer in the Gender Ministry to elaborate on how the agency manifested.

"They ate their chickens; the sewing machines are ours"

Did they bring the sewing machines? …

No, I advised them to bring the sewing machines …
Tell them to go back and bring those machines …
….or else we are going to have them arrested…

This was Mrs. Mutema shouting on the phone and giving instructions to the person who had

called from her office. This incident happened on 27 July 2021 when Mrs. Mutema, Tinotenda,

the NJIVA Trust Field Officer and I, were traveling together to meet community groups working

with the NGO in the Nyanyadzi and Gudyanga communal areas, and it was in the middle of a

discussion about state corruption and abuse of power (Chapter 4), that she received the call. She

then narrated the whole story to us when her conversation with the caller ended.

Her ministry was responsible for administering a special grant for development projects,

which targeted women and girls. However, when the tropical cyclone struck Chimanimani, the

Ministry decided to divert the grant to fund 2 specific projects, poultry and garment sewing, as

livelihood initiatives for households affected by the tropical cyclone, and who had been moved

into the displacement camps. As such, the Ministry officials, led by Mrs. Mutema, went around

the camps, asking the camp dwellers to form groups of between 8 and 10 people, and each group

had to choose between the two projects. If, for instance, a group chose poultry, the Ministry

provided all the start-up materials, including chicks, feed, and building equipment for the fowl

run. Likewise, a group that chose sewing would be provided with a set number of sewing

machines, cloth, and all associated accessories. Subscribing into these income-generating

projects was voluntary. The assumption was that after selling their products, the groups would

re-invest the proceeds, and become self-sustaining.

This particular case that Mrs. Mutema was shouting about happened at the Arboretum

camp. One group of 10 families had been given start-up materials for the poultry project,

including a batch of 100 chicks, as well as cement and fencing materials for the fowl run.

Another group of 10 families received sewing materials, which included 6 manual sewing machines and the cloth. According to Mrs. Mutema, her team went back to the camp about 3 months later, only to find out that no fowl run had been constructed, and no one among the families that were participating in the poultry project could account for the cement and fencing materials that were provided by the Ministry. The project participants could also not provide convincing explanations about what happened to the chicks. They claimed that the chickens had been sold to members of the group on credit who were going to pay their debts later. From the list of debtors that Mrs. Mutema obtained from the secretary of the group, she found out that the selling price that the group members agreed upon was way below the market price of the chickens. The market price at the time was about US$6 per bird, but the group members sold the chickens amongst themselves for US$4 each. She told us that she tried to follow up on the money owed by the project participants, but her efforts became futile as the beneficiaries were no longer cooperating. At the same time, the group could no longer re-stock and continue with the project, and that's how the poultry initiative died.

Likewise, nothing came out of the group that was given equipment and materials for the sewing project. Members started to personalize the materials provided. All the individuals who were given the equipment to keep on behalf of the group were no longer living in the camp. They left with the sewing machines and cloth meant for the project. Some were now living with their relatives in towns like Mutare and Harare while others joined family members in their rural homes in the district.

Mrs. Mutema had summoned those who were still in the district to bring back the sewing machines to her office before she reported the case to the police, but the recipients were resisting,

claiming that the machines now belonged to them. According to Mrs. Mutema, they were now saying:

> if the group members who received poultry equipment and materials ate their chickens and nothing happened to them, then we are also entitled to keep our sewing machines, and no one should threaten us.

On this fateful day of the phone call, the recipients had come to Mrs. Mutema's office to assert their position that they were not going to bring back the sewing machines until the Ministry recovered the money and materials that had been misappropriated by the poultry group. To complicate the matter further, Mrs. Mutema was only targeting those who had remained in Chimanimani, yet the other group members who took the sewing equipment were now living in Harare and Mutare.

These 2 cases demonstrate how the state's approach to implementing disaster recovery projects contributed to shaping the attitudes of the camp residents. The idea of the poultry and garment-making projects did not come from the expected beneficiaries. Rather, the state imposed the 2 projects without consulting the camp dwellers, and in turn, the beneficiaries' only way of expressing displeasure was to accept being enrolled in the projects, but not abide by the mode of operation as defined by the state. When I asked Rasta whether he was involved in the state-funded projects, his response was: "How do you expect 10 families to benefit from 100 chickens? It was just a waste of resources and time. It was better if they had distributed the chickens to families and not to groups." Rasta's concern suggests that by not consulting, the state viewed the camp dwellers as lacking agency, and as a result introduced initiatives that were not suited to the prevailing circumstances. As Rasta rightly pointed out, even if the poultry project was going to run for 5 years, there was no way it was going to make meaningful economic

contributions to the well-being of 10 families. Similarly, the 6 sewing machines were not going to generate any meaningful income for the 10 families participating in the project[36].

Taurai had also heard about the two state-sponsored Arboretum projects and he gave reference to them during one of our informal discussions. I asked him what he thought about the projects, and here is what he said:

> In the 1980s, the government was promoting cooperatives. Let's ask each other if there is any cooperative still operational among those that were formed during that time. None. This means that cooperatives are difficult to run. It's better to support individuals because groups have their own challenges. A person can come today but decide to leave tomorrow. So, I tell people that it is ok to support people in groups, but it doesn't go far. No one is prepared to spend a lot of time working on a corporative initiative. You will find that if it is a garden, the fences and other materials become personalized. So, it's better to empower people as individuals. If they fail, they will know that they fail as individuals.

Additionally, the state did not consider the architecture of the social structure that emerged when the survivors were moved into the camps. For instance, while the families in the Arboretum camps were coming from Ngangu township and the surrounding places, they did not have a history of knowing and working with each other, and many had just been brought into contact by the unfortunate disaster. Asking these families from different backgrounds to work together in a group was likely to fail. According to Rasta, the failure of the state to appreciate the social context implied that it "didn't know the actual problem that had affected the people," and thus, its disaster response approach had to be challenged through survivor agency.

I now turn to discuss the state-initiated Runyararo Village housing scheme in detail. I will explore the perceptions that survivors in the host community, as well as the camp dwellers, had

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[36] The Arboretum camp had 59 families with a total of 309 dwellers (IOM 2020), representing an average of 5 people per family. Each of the 2 projects was expected to directly benefit 50 people
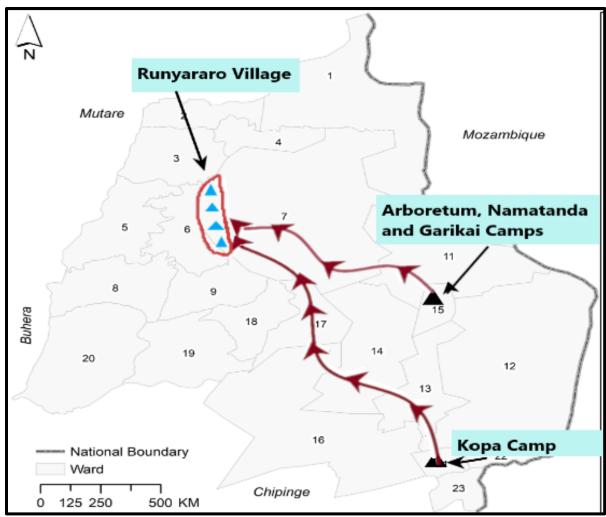
over the housing scheme. The section will unpack the moral economies that emerged as the state was implementing the housing project.

6.4 The Runyararo Village Housing Scheme

Description of the Runyararo Village

The Runyararo Village housing scheme was initiated by the state, with financial and technical support from UN agencies, international NGOs, and other donors to address the housing needs of survivors displaced by tropical cyclone Idai. The scheme was located at West End Farm, towards the western end of the district, on the boundary of Ward 7 (Shinja Resettlement) and Ward 6 (Chayamiti)**.**

The West End Farm was formerly owned by a white farmer, Mr. Abraham Olwage, during the colonial period, before it was acquired and set aside for resettlement by the postcolonial government (De Bruijn & De Bruijn 1991). It lies in a semi-arid region of the Chimanimani district, which receives less than 700mm of annual rainfall. Because of these semi-arid conditions, the former owner, Mr. Olwage, had stopped cultivating crops on it and instead used it for cattle ranching (De Bruijn & De Bruijn 1991). The farm was named Runyararo Village in August 2021 following the initiation of the housing scheme. Runyararo is a Shona word for peace. According to the MLG Minister, July Moyo, who announced the naming, Runyararo resonated with the state's plan and interest to have a place of peace and consolation after what the survivors went through during the disaster (Bande 2021). Map 6 below shows the locations of displacement camps where the beneficiary families for the housing scheme came from.

Map 6: The location of the Runyararo Village[37]

Two main factors distinguished Runyararo Village from the locations where beneficiaries of the

housing scheme were coming from. The first distinguishing element was the climatic conditions.

While the displacement camps had been in the high-rainfall receiving region of the district that

allowed for a diverse agro-based economy, including the production and marketing of fruits like

bananas, Runyararo Village was located in a semi-arid region only conducive for grain crops and

livestock. Danai, the Program Officer in NJIVA Trust's Community Health Department likened

the arid conditions at Runyararo Village to those of a desert. In addition to the aridity, most parts

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[37] Base map provided by David Gwenzi

of the farm are rocky, and not suitable for intensive cropping. The second distinguishing feature was that unlike the urban and urban-like settlements of Ngangu and Kopa where the displaced survivors used to live, Runyararo Village was completely rural, with no tarred roads, electricity, and other urban facilities.

I visited Runyararo Village on several occasions during my fieldwork. When I first toured the housing site in December 2020, I noticed that the Ministry had drilled a borehole and installed a solar-powered pump to enable the residents to access water for household use at strategic points across the village. Construction of the housing units had started. The state had a target of constructing 224 four-roomed housing units, which was equivalent to the total number of families occupying tents in the 4 displacement camps (IOM 2020). Each housing unit was sitting on a 6000m^2 piece of land to cater to all the needs of the beneficiary families, including livestock grazing, cultivation and other household uses.

I discovered during my initial visit that the housing scheme project had generated a hive of activity, and this gave the community a new look, completely different from what it looked like before the tropical cyclone. Men, women, and the youths from the surrounding communities and beyond, were now being employed as skilled or general laborers at the housing site. Commenting on how this new location had changed the landscape of the community, Sekuru[38] Zamba, an elderly man in a community adjacent to the Runyararo Village said: "*vave kuti unzira taundi* – they are bringing us a town." For Sekuru Zamba, the housing site now looked more like an urban setting than a rural one, and according to him, this was going to create problems for the community. I will discuss in the paragraphs below why he thought that way.

Perceptions of the Runyararo Village housing scheme

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[38] Sekuru means grandfather. I am using this title here to reflect Mr. Zamba's age – he was in his late 70s

Sekuru Zamba expressed the above sentiments during a group discussion in which I participated, and which involved 4 other elderly people, Gogo Zamba (his wife), his sister and her husband, and Sekuru Zamba's neighbor. The community in which Sekuru Zamba and his family lived, about 6 km to the west of the Runyararo Village was moderately affected by the tropical cyclone. No major damages occurred except for a few homesteads that were slightly damaged, and a school block whose roof was partly blown off by the tropical cyclone winds.

The discussion happened when we were seated under the shade of a huge acacia tree in the middle of Sekuru Zamba's homestead. We had just finished eating lunch, comprising *sadza*[39] and *mufushwa* (dried vegetables), that Gogo Zamba had served us, and we were now enjoying *mahewu*[40] from her huge and nicely decorated clay pot, locally known as *mbiya*. I have kinship ties with Sekuru Zamba's family. Our late fathers were blood brothers. Hence, I was not a stranger to the discussion.

When he said "*vave kuti unzira taundi*", Sekuru Zamba was expressing concerns about the high levels of immorality that they were now witnessing at the construction site, which deviated from the cultural norms of the society. Participants in the discussion told me about a growing sexual economy and cases of theft that surfaced following the initiation of the housing scheme, which according to Sekuru Zamba, are associated with urban life. Known women and girls in the community were having sexual affairs with outsiders who were coming to work at the housing site. For instance, after talking about a certain woman from the community who left her husband and eloped with a young man working at the construction, Gogo Zamba concluded her

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[39] Sadza is part of the staple diet in Zimbabwe. It is a thick porridge made from finely ground maize, sorghum, millet or rapoko mealie meals

[40] Mahewu is a fermented based non-alcoholic beverage that is one of the staple foods in Zimbabwe. The malt is usually made from millet, sorghum, rapoko and maize.

remarks by saying "*chirongwa chehurumende ichi chiri kutiparadzira dzimba* - this government initiative is tearing families apart".

In addition to the moral issues that they raised, Sekuru Zamba and the other participants were also worried that by relocating "new people" to Runyararo Village, the state was destabilizing the socio-cultural systems of the society. "What if they bring us very bad people?" asked Sekuru Zamba's sister, not expecting answers but as an expression of her disapproval of the state's initiative. Sekuru Zamba's neighbour weighed into the discussion:

> they are bringing us thieves, robbers, and a culture of prostitution … They will even poison or steal our livestock. They are coming from growth points and urban locations … We will have a mix of people - some from Buhera, some from forestry companies, and some from Mozambique.

They were concerned that the "new people" coming would not respect the locally constructed norms that regulated social interactions. Yet not all people in the neighbouring communities around the Runyararo Village saw the housing scheme in negative terms. Whereas the elderly people like Sekuru Zamba and some his family members based their perceptions of the housing scheme on its moral and cultural implications, this was not the case for many younger members of the community whose perceptions were shaped by economic opportunities. These contradictory perceptions are reflected in a comment expressed by one of the research participants, Freddy, below:

> Over 90% of the youths here are now working *ku* Idai. Our roads are now being repaired because of the construction project. No one ever thought that they would one day wake up in the morning and say, I am going to work. So, maybe the cyclone was God's plan.

Freddy was a middle-aged man, of about 45 years and married with 4 kids. He was working at the construction site as a Security Guard. Freddy and I were childhood friends. We went to the same primary and secondary schools, and we used to herd cattle together. He always visited me

when I went home during public holidays, or we met at the main shopping center where he used to spend much of his time.

Freddy had previously sought employment in Harare and Mutare to no avail and had returned to his rural home in Chayamiti (Ward 6) to focus on small-scale farming. The language of, *"kuipa kwezvimwe kunaka kwezvimwe* - bad events bring with them good things", became relevant to his situation and other community members who were now employed "*ku* Idai". The preposition "*ku"* means "at" in English. The construction site was popularly known as "*ku* Idai – at Idai", meaning a place for tropical cyclone Idai survivors. Hence, it was common to hear phrases like "*Ndinosanda ku Idai* – I work at Idai" or "*Ndaive ku Idai* – I was at Idai". Freddy confided in me that the security guard position that he got *ku* Idai was the first-ever formal job that he had had in his whole life. He estimated that the number of people employed *ku*Idai was more than 300. For him, the housing scheme at Runyararo Village has positively changed local people's lives, which could not have happened if the project had been implemented elsewhere. Many young people that I interacted with in the host community concurred with him and they were happy about the employment opportunities that this state-initiated project offered.

The Runyararo Village housing scheme thus created 2 social divisions within the surrounding communities. The first comprised people like Sekuru Zamba whose perception of the housing scheme was culturally constructed. They feared that the scheme would introduce new cultures which were foreign to the community. The second group comprised people like Freddy, who was happy about the opportunities that the scheme created. But what were the perceptions of the displaced survivors towards this Runyararo Village housing scheme? I will attempt to answer this question by returning to the camp dwellers in the following paragraphs.

Runyararo Village housing scheme and the attitudes of camp dwellers

When I returned to Rasta's tent in the Arboretum displacement camp in August 2021, Mai Tanya

showed me 2 bags of mealie meal that she said she had brought from Runyararo Village. She and

other residents in the camp, as well as others from the Nyamatanda, Garikai and Kopa camps,

had been bused to Runyararo Village the previous day to receive donations of mealie meal from

the South African Ambassador. According to Mai Tanya:

> I asked myself, why did the South African Ambassador not bring the donations to the
> camps? Why were we also invited to West End yet they say the houses that are being
> built are only for former landlords?

It was during this donation event that the official renaming of the site from West End Farm to

Runyararo Village was announced, and it made headlines in a local newspaper, *The Manica*

Post, two days later (Bande 2021). The paper quoted the MLG as having said that the decision to

have the official handover of mealie meal donated by South Africa to survivors of the disaster at

the site was deliberate because his ministry also wanted to announce the new official name and

to let the beneficiaries know that they would now be moving into their new homes soon (Bande

2021). However, because the camp residents had not been briefed as to why they were being

bused to the housing site, Mai Tanya and other survivors in her situation, felt that they were only

being used by the state for political purposes. The state, according to her, wanted to present itself

to the world as if it was providing housing for everyone displaced by the tropical cyclone Idai

disaster.

Sophia, another female resident of the Arboretum displacement camp, who travelled with

Mai Tanya to receive the donations, shared the same sentiments. She doubted the sincerity of the

state in dealing with their housing situation, and for her, the mealie meal donation event was just

a publicity stunt. In a grief-stricken comment about the event, she said:

> Honestly, I think we are just being used. Last time they bused us to West End where they
> showed the former landlords their stands and houses. This time, they bused us to

announce to the former landlords that they should be getting ready to move in, but nothing is being said of us.

As highlighted by Sophia, the state had previously bused people from the camps to Runyararo Village when some of the camp dwellers, mostly the former landlords, were shown their completed houses while others were shown the sites where their housing structures were going to be built. Sophia alleged that the decision to bus the camp dwellers came from a secret meeting that the hand-picked camp management committee, comprising only former landlords, held with people from the government.

I interviewed Sophia in August 2021 during my second visit to the Arboretum camp and I was introduced to her by Mai Tanya. She was a single mother, who used to survive on buying and selling, and was living in a rented house before the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. In addition to losing her daughter, she was also stripped of all her household properties and source of income by the tropical cyclone floods. I interviewed her from Rasta and Mai Tanya's tent. Sophia avoided taking me to her tent because, in her own words, "there are a lot of jealous and inquisitive people around my tent," so she did not want to invite any problems with them. She was related to Rasta, and they also used to live near each other before the tropical cyclone, and for this reason, she felt comfortable having the interview in Rasta's tent.

Besides doubting the sincerity of the state in handling their housing situation, she also expressed concerns that the state was creating divisions among the survivors. According to her, the interventions initiated by the state widened the inequality gap in the community by favouring the former landlords more than the former tenants. Here is what she said:

> The camp committee is made up of former landlords. They push for programs that only benefits them. They seem to forget that everyone was affected by the cyclone, landlords and tenants. They are just jealous that if we get houses, we will now be equal. They don't want us to benefit from the new housing scheme.

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I also learned from Danai, the NJIVA Trust Program Officer, how the state's inconsistencies regarding the housing initiatives influenced the day-to-day politics in the camps and shaped the attitudes of the camp dwellers. When Danai likened the agroecological conditions at Runyararo Village to those of a desert, he was also suggesting that some survivors, especially those from the high rainfall receiving areas would find it difficult to adapt to the new desert-like conditions. For him, most people in the tents were not likely going to move there, even if they would have been allocated the housing units. Danai identified 2 categories of camp dwellers.

The first category comprised survivors who were genuinely desperate and needed accommodation. From my judgment, I believe Mai Tanya and her husband as well as Sophia fit into this category, but Panagai, the other camp dweller who I introduced early in this section, did not necessarily fit this category for reasons that I will explain later. This group was prepared to move and start a new life at Runyararo Village even though the conditions there were less favorable than in the areas where they lived before the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. Many survivors in this category were the former tenants whose livelihoods were anchored on precarious sources of income such as buying and selling, and who unfortunately were not being prioritized by the state.

The second group was comprised of people who were better off, but they were still holding onto the tents in the displacement camps because they had been promised free housing. Most of these survivors had moved to alternative locations after the floods-induced displacements and were no longer permanently residing in the camps, and according to Danai, "they only came to sweep the front of their tents and go back". The survivors who disappeared with Mrs. Mutema's sewing machines could also have been part of this group but I could not confirm during the fieldwork if they were still holding onto the tents. According to Danai, these

survivors only visited the camps on occasions to make sure that their names were not struck off the list of beneficiaries of the housing scheme.

My observations during visits to the camps confirmed that some of the tents were deserted. I could see that some of the tents were collapsing, a sign that they were no longer being inhabited, although as per Danai's statement, their owners were still officially recognized as camp dwellers. An investigation conducted in December 2020 by a journalist from *The Manica Post*, revealed that some locals whose homes were not destroyed by the cyclone had also taken residence in the camps to access donations such as food, clothing, and cash payments which were being given to the internally displaced (Newsbeezer.com 2020). Given the high levels of corruption in state institutions which I discussed in detail in Chapters 3 and 4, it is fair to assume that some of these imposters ended up being on the list of beneficiaries of the housing scheme. Most of the survivors in this second category were not interested in permanently moving to Runyararo Village, they just wanted to claim the free housing units, and probably rent them out while they continued with their lives in the other parts of Chimanimani. As discussed before in this chapter, the dwellers' attitudes were rooted in the state's failure to appreciate the local social systems of interpreting disasters and defining survivors.

The displacement camps were officially decommissioned in November 2021, and with the support provided by the UN agencies and international NGOs, the state successfully moved all families from the 4 displacement camps to Runyararo Village (IOM 2021). Rasta, Mai Tanya, Sophia and Panganai were among the survivors who were relocated. I followed up with Rasta to understand how they ended up benefiting from the housing scheme – contrary to the rumors which had circulated before that the former tenants were not going to benefit from the housing scheme.

Runyararo Village: New homes, New Structures of Authority

I drove to Runyararo Village on the 23rd of December 2021 after the displacement camps had been decommissioned and the survivors had now been moved into their allocated housing units. By this time, 28 units had been fully completed (IOM 2021), while others were at various stages of construction. Rasta and his wife as well as Sophia and Panganai had been moved into fabricated temporary structures which had been constructed by the IOM to facilitate the rapid decommissioning of the displacement camps and the relocation of survivors to the new site (IOM 2021). Upon arriving at Runyararo, I noticed that there was a huge gathering at the main office, so I could not continue driving into the village. The main office was more or less the administrative center where the offices of the managers and administrators of the housing project were based. I did not want to cause any distractions to the people who were gathering at the office, hence, I parked my car about a kilometre away from the main office and signalled to Rasta by a text message that I had arrived. He was expecting me at the Village because we had communicated earlier that day. He joined me in the car about 30 minutes later when the crowds had dispersed. "*Taimbove mu meeting nevakuru vemusangano* – we were in a meeting with leaders of the party." Rasta said as he entered the car. The leaders of the party that he was referring were senior officials of the ruling party – ZANU PF, who had summoned all the residents to attend the meeting. When I asked him about the agenda of the meeting, Rasta said:

> *Taimboverengerwa mitemo ine gumi ... Umwe mutemo wemuno ndewekuti hamudiwi opposition* - They were reading to use the 10 commandments… One of the commandments is that no opposition politicking is allowed here.

Already the Runyararo Village had become a site for the state, and especially the ruling party, to control the lives of the residents and to suffocate any opposition to the authoritarian state. The way that Rasta explained the interaction with the leaders of the ruling party was suggestive that

any deviation from the set commandments was going to warrant sanctions, including being expelled from the Village.

In response to my question about how they ended up benefiting from the housing scheme, Rasta said:

> They came 2 days before and told us that the camps were going to be destroyed, and they advised us to pack our things. At first, I thought we were going to be dumped in the forest, but they told us that they were moving us here. They gave us a 2-roomed cabin and promised that they will start building our permanent houses from January next year … *ndave nema plan mahombe manje* (I now have very big plans).

Rasta appeared very happy that he had finally been allocated a permanent place. Among his big plans, he wanted to continue with the poultry project. In addition, he wanted to expand the grocery vending business that Mai Tanya initiated when they were still living in the Arboretum displacement camp.

I was surprised when I visited Chayamiti shopping center, about 5 km from Runyararo Village, that Rasta had already become a popular figure in the community even though he had been around for just a few months. He became popular for running a shebeen at his residence and supplying marijuana to the youths working at the housing scheme. In addition to confirming Sekuru Zamba's worries that the housing scheme was going to create problems for the community, Rasta's behaviour seemed to answer the question, "What if they bring us very bad people?", that Sekuru Zamba's sister posed during our lunchtime discussion. Selling marijuana was not only illegal as per the state's codified statutes, but it was also unacceptable within the socially constructed parameters that regulated individual morality in the host community. As such, people found in possession of and supplying marijuana, like Rasta, were regarded by most as "bad people." I spent the Christmas holidays in Chayamiti and visited Rasta and Mai Tanya twice. On Christmas eve, I helped Rasta to carry his groceries from Nhedziwa growth point

(about 10 km away), which he wanted to resell to other residents at the housing location. I later met the other former Arboretum camp dweller, Panganai, in Ngangu township after the Christmas holidays, and it was during this encounter that I realized that his stay in the Arboretum displacement camp was not because he was desperate for housing, but it was a ploy to be considered for the government-initiated housing scheme.

Panganai, the not-so-desperate tent dweller

While still sheltered in the Arboretum camp, Panganai appeared to be desperately in need of accommodation and as if he had nowhere to go. When I interviewed him in August 2021, he told me that he sustained serious injuries and lost all his household properties due to the tropical cyclone, but luckily, he did not lose any close family members. Just like Rasta's family and Sophia, Panganai's family was living in rented accommodations before the disaster. He informed me during the interview that he sent his daughter to his parents' home in the Chikukwa communal area following the tropical cyclone disaster and it was only him and his wife remaining in the temporary shelters at Arboretum. Just like the other camp dwellers who I interviewed, Panganai expressed frustration about the state's response to their desperate situation, and as demonstrated in the statement below, he claimed to have even personally lobbied the state on behalf of the other camp dwellers:

> I visited the council to inquire if there was land somewhere so that we could set up temporary structures there while we build permanent homesteads, but they said they don't have any land. They also told me that they don't have any plans for us as former tenants. I don't think these biased policies were set up by the government.

This statement was in stark contrast to his earlier expectations, when he told me "*tiri vanhu ve Idai*", and "we have an agreement with the government, which implied that the state would decisively deal with their situation. I later learned that although he had been displaced by the tropical cyclone, he had alternative accommodation in the Ngangu township, and was only

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holding onto the tent at Arboretum so that he could be considered for the housing scheme. Thus, he did not really fit the category of survivors who remained in the tents because they were genuinely desperate and needed accommodation.

When I returned to Ngangu Township after the Christmas holidays, towards the end of December in 2021, I met Panganai at Green Bar. Filled with excitement, he told me that he had finally been moved to Runyararo Village, and just like Rasta's family, he was allocated a fabricated temporary structure. But unlike Rasta and Sophia, Panganai and his wife moved back to Ngangu Township soon after they were allocated their housing unit, and they were now staying at a house belonging to his brother in the township. He was in the process of finding someone who would take care of the homestead at Runyararo Village while they were away in Ngangu. Also, something that he later revealed to me which had not come out during our initial interview was that he was formally employed by a local sawmilling company. He made this revelation when I asked him why he was in Ngangu when most people at the Runyararo Village were cultivating the plots that they were allocated since it was farming season. As he stated: "I need to be at work. I go there during the weekends when I am not on duty. But I have plans to find someone who takes care of the place when we are away like this." The main reason why Panganai spent over two years living in the Arboretum displacement camp, therefore, was not because he did not have alternative means. Rather, it was because of the prospects of getting free housing from the state, within the claim "*tiri vanhu ve Idai*".

This example of Panganai reveals 2 things. Firstly, it shows that the opportunistic attitudes exhibited by some survivors housed in the camps were a creation of the state. Due to the lack of transparency and policy inconsistency, survivors like Panganai ended up adopting a wait-and-see attitude. Secondly, his example shows how survivors challenged the state-imposed

categories of defining and identifying beneficiaries of disaster aid. His declaration, *"tiri vanhu ve Idai,"* was an appeal for support and inclusion within disaster relief, and an awareness of their new visibility as disaster survivors. When the state and NGOs intervened, they created *"vanhu ve Idai* – Idai people",* who were further divided along the line of home ownership and tenancy when the state initiated the housing scheme. These new definitions increased conflicts between the former tenants and the former landlords.

Having discussed Runyararo Village and how the housing scheme influenced the perceptions of survivors, I will now proceed to discuss the attitudes of communities towards the state's role in post-disaster response processes. I will show how the survivors responded to the politicization disaster aid and the conflation of state and ruling party structures.

6.5 Survivors' Responses to Disaster Authoritarianism

In Chapter 4, I used the metaphor *"Kuipa kwezvimwe kunaka kwezvimwe" ("bad events bring with them good things")* to demonstrate how the tropical cyclone Idai disaster became a vehicle through which the state reinforced its authoritarian control of the survivors and NGOs. During my fieldwork, I discovered that *"Kuipa kwezvimwe kunaka kwezvimwe"* had also become an expression of resistance and refusal. It was now commonly invoked by the survivors as a reference to justify their refusal of the day-to-day politics of the state. After his address to the families that were directly affected by the cyclone, many of which had lost their beloved ones while others had been left with permanent injuries, the statement "*Kuipa kwezvimwe kunaka kwezvimwe"* was widely interpreted to mean that the President was happy that the cyclone had occurred as it opened opportunities for the country, including potentially mending relations with countries that had been hostile to Zimbabwe. Many participants who I interacted with referenced

the President's statement to vent their anger over the state's insensitivity towards handling the post-disaster recovery processes.

For instance, during my visit to the Rusitu Valley in Chimanimani in June 2021, I met Mrs. Sekai Taruona, a widow residing on land that was under the authority Headman Hlabiso. Sekai was running a small tuck-shop in the township, selling cellphone accessories, petty electrical supplies, and some foodstuffs. Before his death, her husband had been a builder who, according to her, "had constructed most of the houses that were washed away by the cyclone at the Kopa settlement." Sekai and her husband were living in the Kopa settlement and they lost very close friends when the tropical cyclone hit Chimanimani. Although they did not lose any of their own family members, they lost all their household properties, including stuff for the tuck-shop business. Following the devastation, the family relocated back to their rural home in a place called Derera, located about 10 km from the Kopa settlement. Sekai's husband was later engaged as a builder by NGOs that came to assist in rebuilding houses following the tropical cyclone floods but unfortunately died in a road traffic accident while traveling to Mutare in January 2020, leaving her with a 7-months pregnancy for their third child. Despite these challenges, by the time that I met her Sekai had managed to resuscitate the tuck-shop business at the Derera business center.

I was introduced to Sekai by Gogo Chihera's two grandsons, the ones who accompanied us during our tour of the Kopa area (Chapter 2). After the Kopa tour, the two grandsons offered to drive around with me, showing me other places that had been destroyed by the tropical cyclone and places that had been heavily degraded due to alluvial gold panning. As we were driving around, one of Gogo's grandsons asked if we could pass through his girlfriend's place

who, apparently, was Sekai's younger sister. We found her at her sister's shop and that is when I was introduced to Sekai.

I spent almost half a day in her small tuck-shop (a wooded structure under 5 to 6 corrugated iron sheets), learning about her life and how she was coping in the aftermath of the disaster. Among all the participants that I interviewed, Sekai seemed to be fearless of openly expressing her displeasure with the state. My question about whether she had received any state assistance following the tropical cyclone Idai disaster seemed to have stirred Sekai's frustration over the president and his administration as she responded:

> Which government are you talking about? How can a grown-up man stand up in front of people mourning their relatives and say *'kushata kwezvimwe kunaka kwezvimwe'*? He is very evil. That's why he sent soldiers to kill people. He knows we don't like him here. I will never vote for ZANU PF.

Apart from signaling her anti ZANU-PF sentiment, I found her statement significant in 2 ways. First, it signified that survivor perceptions are shaped by embedded memories of how the state handled civil protection matters in the past and not solely on what it did in response to the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. By referencing the role of soldiers in the killing of unarmed citizens which happened in August 2018 (Chapter 4), and the state subsequently blaming the victims for the killings, Sekai viewed the state as not being a legitimate actor in the channeling of disaster aid. While Sekai was explicit and bold in her disapproval of the state as she said she had nothing to lose, some survivors feared openly criticizing the state.

Secondly, by linking disaster responses to electoral politics, Sekai's statement re-affirms the "state-ruling party" conflation within which the state's responses to the disaster were assessed. Because of this conflation, survivors like Sekai, were generally not happy with the way that the state responded to the tropical cyclone disaster. This could be explained by the fact that the ruling party's grassroots structures had now been involved in the distribution of donations as

we saw in Chapter 4. Survivors who supported the ruling party either praised the state or individualized blame whenever there were shortcomings.

For instance, while Panganai, the former camp dweller, did not say it openly, I suspected that he was a member of the ruling party. Like other camp dwellers, Panganai was frustrated by the slow pace in dealing with their housing situation. Yet, for him, it was not about the system, but the fault was with individuals within the ruling party who were sabotaging the state's efforts. His portrayal of the President was very different from Sekai's and as the quote below tells, Panganai was mostly concerned about the "criminals" surrounding the President:

> We saw the President on TV saying that *"kushata kwezvimwe kunaka kwezvimwe"*. He told us that America sent him billions of dollars. Did you not hear that? … But where is the money? … The President is a very good man, but his people stole the money that we were supposed to be given. Now look we are still living here in the tents, and we don't even know when we are going to be relocated

Sekai's attitudes and Panganai's comments reflect the general socio-political landscape that emerged following the tropical cyclone disaster in Chimanimani. On one hand, some supporters of opposition political parties viewed the state and all its structures as being corrupt, violent and in need of a complete overhaul. On the other hand, some members of the ruling party felt obligated to save the image of their party. Although people like Panganai did not directly benefit from the corruption and misappropriation perpetrated by senior politicians and state officials, they voiced their anger by blaming the individuals implicated in the corrupt or violent acts and avoided blanketing the blame onto the ruling party.

Yet, other supporters of the ruling party who belonged to the Mugabe faction that was dislodged in the November 2017 army assisted transition, were not happy with the current system and felt that the Mnangagwa regime was to blame for the corruption and abuse of power

that occurred in the aftermath of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. I will use the case of Baba Maphosa to develop this argument further.

I visited Baba Maphosa in June 2021. He lived under Headman Hlabiso's jurisdiction and his homestead was in the Vimba area and just a stone's throw from the part of Rusitu River that separates Zimbabwe and Mozambique. I was introduced to Baba Maphosa by another researcher who had spent time in the Vimba area, and who had directly interacted with him before. Baba Maphosa was a respected elder in Vimba and had a deep understanding of the social-political dynamics in the community. My meeting with him allowed me to learn about his experiences and interpretation of the post-disaster response processes.

Baba Maphosa fought in the liberation war in the 1970s, and he identified himself as among the founding members of the ruling party, ZANU PF – although I had never come across his name in the country's history books. Besides, he was a popular healer who employed a combination of cultural and Christian healing methods. His popularity helped me to easily get directions to his homestead from the people I met along the road, who probably thought that I was visiting him for healing or spiritual deliverance.

While Baba Maphosa did not lose close family members in the tropical cyclone, he narrated how he and other community members spent 3 days searching and managed to retrieve 2 bodies at his neighbour's homestead. The bodies were trapped under tonnes of mud and huge boulders after their house had been submerged by mudslides. He also described how he felt helpless, witnessing the ferocious tropical storm carrying household properties like sofas, from upstream, into Mozambique. The struggle that he had to be part of, providing food and blankets to families that had taken refuge at a local school, the Vimba Primary School, which had also been partly destroyed by the heavy winds, made him very angry with the state.

"Did you not steal from us?" Baba Maphosa asked emotionally as he began to ooze out his frustration against the state's response to the disaster. This was not necessarily a question. Neither was it directed to me. Rather, he posed it to express the extensive misappropriation of donations that he observed in the aftermath of the disaster, as reflected in the rest of his statement:

> Yes, people assisted but you looted all the donations. I don't know their names, but donors poured in huge sums of money - some were coming from America, others from Britain and others from Zanzibar to assist us. But the problem is that the assistance came into a society full of thieves … The issue is that here in Zimbabwe, we now have a lot of thieves.

Unlike other members of the ruling party who seemed to individualize blame, for Baba Maphosa, the whole government system had become corrupt, including the police, the Ministers, and local councillors who he accused of having shared donations meant for survivors amongst themselves. He alleged that a certain minister was given money to rehabilitate the road which links his community with the Kopa growth point, but the road remained in a very bad state because the money was misappropriated by the minister. To him, the behaviour of the minister mirrored the image of the state, which did not care about citizens, and which was different from what he witnessed under the Mugabe administration. He compared the 2 regimes as follows:

> We had Mugabe. Although he was now very old, that man worked very hard. He wanted to see everyone in Zimbabwe happy. It was unfortunate that the country was on sanctions because he was hated by the Western countries, but the man had people at heart, especially during hard times. But this new leadership! Sure, how could someone bring a sofa from Harare and sit on it in front of dead bodies and people who had been injured … don't you see that it's a lack of leadership?

His mention of the "sofa" refers to an incident that made headlines soon after the tropical cyclone. Together with the controversial statement "*Kuipa kwezvimwe, kunaka kwezvimwe*", it became a missile that opponents of the ruling party deployed to ridicule the President's

personality and to criticize the ruling party. When the President toured the affected areas in

Chimanimani for the first time on 20 March 2019, a presidential leather sofa was delivered for

him by a helicopter (some sources say it was delivered by road) to sit on while he addressed

survivors and paid condolences to families who had lost their beloved ones (Vunganai 2019).

The incident went viral on social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook, with people

criticizing the extravagant attitude as culturally inappropriate and lacking empathy for the

survivors. Baba Maphosa described what the President did as a sign of immaturity and as a

mockery to the bereaved families who deserved respect. Despite being a member of the ruling

party, he concurred with critical voices from the opposition, such as Sekai. The only difference

though was that his was a dislike of the current regime, which he said was worse than the

Mugabe administration, while Sekai viewed the whole authoritarian state, rooted in Mugabe's

legacy, as the cause of the inequality in the distribution of disaster aid. In agreement with other

survivors who I interviewed, Baba Maphosa was also annoyed that state departments were not

visible in the communities, which to him implied that the state had jettisoned its responsibility of

supporting survivors. I will discuss further the subject of state visibility below.

Visibility of state agencies in communities affected by the disaster

The responsiveness and visibility of state institutions in the communities affected by the tropical

cyclone Idai influenced survivors' perceptions of the state. In general, the participants who I

interacted with felt that state institutions were not easily accessible to provide them with the

support that they needed. This lack of accessibility is also evidenced by the complaints from

Rasta and other former dwellers in the Arboretum displacement camp who accused the state of

not coming to give them reliable information about the housing issue.

One of my key themes in discussions with survivors was their experience with state

employees following the disaster, and interestingly, most of the survivors felt that the state had

abandoned them. As discussed in Chapter 4, this disappointment could be understood in the context that the state made a lot of promises soon after the tropical cyclone hit Chimanimani, most of which were never fulfilled. For instance, when the President told mourners that he had received millions of dollars from America, these huge sums of money did not translate into expected positive changes at the community level. On the contrary, many stories about corruption involving politicians and senior state officials surfaced, following his statement. The invisibility of state institutions could also be linked to the shortage of employees and lack of resources as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively. Mr. Mushonga, the senior state employee at Agritex Head, for instance, confirmed these challenges. He pointed out that although his department had community-based Extension Officers, these could not effectively provide support to farmers in the aftermath of the tropical cyclone. They needed motorbikes to facilitate mobility from one place to the other, but his department did not have the funds to procure these.

Furthermore, the bureaucracy within the national disaster management system, which resulted in the slow disbursement of disaster aid, conveyed a different meaning to the survivors. It was interpreted as a "lack of care" by the state, especially when families in desperate need of food and shelter had to depend on the goodwill of neighbors, while the state was receiving and keeping relief items from external donors. Baba Maphosa explained to me that while it was a good thing for neighbours to care for each other by providing accommodation and food, it became a challenge when a family was hosting 4 or 5 other families because food reserves quickly became depleted. External support was needed to complement these local efforts but by keeping donations meant for distribution, the state was seen as not treating the humanitarian situation with the urgency that it deserved. This logistical failure was exposed in the Auditor

General's report discussed earlier (Chapter 4) and was also confirmed through the complaints that I heard while interacting with other survivors.

For instance, one evening when Jane and I were having a conversation about the disaster, she told me how frustrated she was seeing donated goods piled in the distribution centers and yet survivors were desperately in need. According to her:

> We could see mountains and mountains of donated items spending weeks at the distribution centers and not distributed to people, then wondered whether the government really cared for the people …

From stories of misappropriation that she had heard circulating during the emergency response period, Jane concluded that the piles of donated items were being kept in the distribution centers to facilitate looting by senior state officials and politicians.

Lastly, a bureaucratic state process that survivors interpreted as a lack of care by the state was its failure to bring closure to the case of the more than 300 people who had been reported as missing. Because these persons were still considered missing, more than 2 years after the disaster, their relatives, including children, husbands and wives were failing to access important registration documents. I interviewed a senior state official who was working at the Registry Office based in Chimanimani and he told me that a special arrangement was put in place to assist those who lost their registration documents during the cyclone, including birth certificates to access them for free. In addition, a special arrangement was made for students who lost their parents to sit for national examinations without producing identification documents. Under normal circumstances, every student had to produce a citizenship certificate in the form of a birth certificate or national identity card to be allowed to sit for examinations. The documents are obtained upon producing parents' identity documents, or death certificates if the parents were dead. As such, families could not obtain death certificates from persons who were declared

missing and not dead. The special arrangement for students was, therefore, only to help them sit for the examinations and not to get death certificates for their parents who had been declared missing.

By taking a long time to declare the missing persons dead, the survivors felt that the state was compromising their ability to access opportunities where records of deaths are required. For instance, an online newspaper article reported a meeting which involved the PDC for Manicaland and the Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC), which was held in Mutare in January 2020. In the meeting, the ZHRC reported that some people were failing to access terminal benefits for their relatives because they did not have death certificates (Nyarota 2020). The predicament of survivors with missing relatives was also explained to me by Taurai as follows:

> We hear when a plane crashes, and bodies are not located, they first announce the people as missing, but after a month or so, we hear that the government has declared all the passengers on the plane dead … It helps especially for children who want to get birth records, like birth certificates ... Some leave behind insurance policies and pensions. So, without a record of death, surviving family members cannot access those facilities. A few individuals who have connections can go to the offices and obtain the death records, yet it has to be an open arrangement for everyone who has been affected.

Taurai also narrated observations that he made while working with other survivors during the search and rescue period. A certain family lost 2 children who were sleeping in the same room during the night of the tropical cyclone. The family only received a death certificate for 1 child whose body was recovered, and the other child was still considered missing. The family had told Taurai that they were not expecting any form of financial assistance, but they just wanted the state to bring closure to their case by declaring their other child dead.

Legally, as provided by the Missing Persons Act of 1994 (Chapter 5: 14), the process of declaration of death for a missing person is lengthy. It requires relatives of the missing person(s)

to approach the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs where they would obtain forms to fill the details of the missing persons before lodging them with the administrative court, together with proof that the person is missing. Upon satisfactory assessment, the court would then send an order to the Registrar-General as a notice of death (Missing Persons Act 1994). The purpose of the meeting between the ZHRC Chairperson and the DDC was to lobby for a waiver of this lengthy process due to the national disaster. The PDC is reported as having said that the state, through the DCP structures, had completed its verification and submitted the names of the missing persons to the MLG Minister who was going to declare them dead. But this declaration had not been announced by the time I completed my fieldwork in December 2021. One research participant, Mr. Onias Bere explained the implications of the government's reluctance to survivors like him.

Mr. Bere was very close to the Dubes (Mukwasha and Jane), and according to Mukwasha, they had known each other for decades. I usually interacted with him at Green Bar, and at times he visited the Dube's house during the evenings. His rented house was destroyed by the tropical cyclone, and his teenage son went missing. During the time of my research, he was renting a room in Ngangu township, while his wife and remaining 2 kids had relocated to his rural home in the Chipinge district. While he had lost any hope of ever being reunited with his child, Mr. Bere was worried about missing out on opportunities that were likely to be availed soon. He had heard rumours that a certain donor was coming to provide a specific amount of money as compensation to people with family members who were killed by the floods, and people with no proof were not going to be considered. He further expounded the rumour as follows:

> They will require death certificates to prove that you lost a family member. Where do I get a death certificate for my child when the government says he is not dead? We are different from others who were given death certificates at the graveyard.

Based on the rumour, only relatives with family members declared dead were doing to benefit from the compensation. Although no one could substantiate the rumour, it likely emerged from impact assessments and surveys that the state agencies and NGOs undertook to determine the scale of destruction of the tropical cyclone. Some survivors thought that by having their details and those of the deceased or missing taken, they were automatically being considered for compensation. His worries could have also been based on the discriminatory approach that the state employed when it first intervened during the disaster. This discrimination was explained to be by Taurai as follows:

> When the disaster happened, families that lost their beloved ones got some financial support from the government. For a body that was recovered, a family received about $ZW3000 (equivalent to US$1,132)[41] as a consolation (*chema*) from the government. This amount was significant enough to assist the remaining family members. The money was only given to families that recovered the bodies of their dead relatives. Family members with missing persons received nothing.

The testimonies from Mr. Bere and Taurai reveal how the disaster led to inequalities between families that buried their dead relatives and those who were still struggling to find closure. Families that received death certificates at the graveyard could now access terminal benefits for their relatives, get registration documents like birth certificates for the orphaned children, and were now better placed to access future compensation opportunities. This was not the case with families whose relatives were still considered missing. Yet, by issuing death certificates at the graveyard, the state seemed to appreciate the urgency of the humanitarian situation caused by the disaster.

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[41] The official exchange rate was US$1 to ZW$2.6481 at the time (Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe 2019, March 13).

The senior official at the Registry Office in Chimanimani confirmed that his department indeed issued burial orders and death certificates at the graveyard. Normally, relatives of a deceased person would obtain the burial order by physically visiting the Registry Office, but the state had to expedite burials following the cyclone induced floods. Electric cables had been damaged and there was no electric power to refrigerate the mortuary at the Chimanimani clinic. Jane, who was working as a nurse at the clinic, told me that the mortuary was not big enough to keep more than 5 bodies at a time, and as a result, some bodies were kept in church buildings. They were moved straight from the church buildings to the graveyard, where the family members were immediately issued burial orders and death certificates. Survivors with missing family members, like Mr. Bere, felt that their concerns had not been addressed with the level of urgency that they deserved, and they perceived the state as having abandoned them. As the discussion thus far has shown, many people were not happy with the way that the state handled the post-disaster situation, and though with reservations, survivors felt that NGOs were more responsive and visible in the post-disaster response arena. The next section explores further how the survivors perceived the involvement of NGOs.

6.6 Survivors' Perception of the Role of NGOs in Post-Idai Response Processes

In my fieldwork, I found that the involvement of NGOs in post-disaster Chimanimani attracted both positive and negative sentiments from the survivors. These sentiments were largely based on the role that NGOs played during the various post-tropical cyclone Idai response phases – the emergency relief phase as well as the recovery and reconstruction phases. I will start by discussing the positive opinions.

"Dai asiri Madhona - Had it not been for the donors!"
Gogo Chihera's complimentary statement, "*Dai asiri madhona, vanhu vese taipera kufa* – had it not been for the donors, we could have all died", reflect the general opinions that survivors had

towards the interventions of NGOs in post-Idai Chimanimani. The term donor was used as a wholesale descriptive phrase for non-state actors in their various scales and classifications – individual responders, UN Agencies, national NGOs, and community-based NGOs like NJIVA Trust. In the context that Gogo Chihera invoked the term, she was specifically explaining the support that families in her village received from national and community-based NGOs during the aftermath of the disaster. Gogo Chihera's revelations of how donors saved lives, especially during the emergency phase, concurred with what I learned from communities that I engaged with while volunteering at NJIVA Trust and from interacting with research participants like Baba Maphosa and Headman Hlabiso.

Gogo expressed the compliment, *"dai asiri madhona…",* when she was telling me how the tropical cyclone Idai disaster became a disaster of marginalization for her and other survivors in her community. The only state-managed aid distribution center in the Rusitu Valley where Gogo Chihera, Baba Maphosa and Headman Hlabiso could get emergency support was located at the Kopa growth point, which was more than 10 km away from their respective homesteads. Even after the access roads had been temporarily restored to allow access, the distribution centers run by the state were not decentralized enough to allow survivors like Gogo Chihera to get emergency aid, and this gap was filled by the donors.

Initially, before the state tightened screws on NGOs' operations in the Chimanimani district for lowing the tropical cyclone, NGOs had the option of channeling their aid through the state-managed distribution centers or directly delivering the donations to the communities. For instance, NJIVA Trust set up a warehouse at the NGO's premises in Ngangu to receive donations from other NGOs for subsequent distribution to affected communities. These NGO initiatives enabled geographically marginalized communities to access emergency relief support. In the

case of Gogo Chihera, she benefited from a distribution center that was set up by "*Madhona*" at a local school, the Rusitu Mission High School, which was not more than 3 km from her homestead. The school belongs to the United Baptist Church, and as narrated by Gogo Chihera, the distribution center at the school was receiving and distributing emergency items from donors affiliated with the church. Adjacent to the school was a hospital, which was also managed by the same church where some of the survivors who were injured got treatment. In addition to setting up the distribution center, the *Madhona* brought their own people who physically delivered disaster aid hampers to the elderly people like Gogo Chihera, which was not the case with the state emergency relief aid distribution system. Likewise, in Baba Maphosa's area, *Madhona* set up a distribution center at the Vimba Primary School from where survivors like could access relief aid. Because of these decentralized initiatives, *Madhona* reached out to more, and geographically marginalized survivors as compared to the state-managed system.

Additionally, the NGOs were generally viewed as non-political, and as such the survivors believed that NGO assistance was based on the need of the recipients and not their political affiliation. Headmen Hlabiso attributed the success of NGO initiatives to the participatory process that they employed to identify beneficiaries of disaster relief aid. According to him, the NGOs worked with local leadership structures, including traditional leaders and ward councilors, to come up with lists of survivors to benefit from the disaster aid and to prioritize challenges that needed to be addressed following the disaster. There were, however, allegations of nepotism in the selection of beneficiary households, but these were rare. Baba Maphosa, for instance, alleged that the ward councilor for his area was prioritizing his family members for NGO-provided aid, but I interpreted these allegations as more a reflection of Baba Maphosa's hatred of the

Mnangagwa regime, as the councilor in question came into power as a ZANU PF after the former president, Robert Mugabe, had been dislodged.

Many NGOs went into Chimanimani to provide emergency relief and left soon thereafter, while others, as I will discuss later, continued to implement recovery and reconstruction activities. The departure of many NGOs left a huge dent for survivors who had depended on them for support. When I met Sophia in the Arboretum camp in August 2021 for instance, she was worried that NGOs like Care International, World Vision and FACT were no longer coming to the Arboretum camp. As she lost everything during the disaster, her survival had been anchored on the food and other basics provided by these NGOs, but now she had to wait for assistance provided by the state, which was neither adequate nor predictable. Sophia said: "We used to be supported by many NGOs like Care, World Vision, and FACT. But they are not coming here anymore. We don't know if they are still with us." Many other research participants who I asked to comment on their relationship with NGOs agreed with Sophia that NGOs that pulled out left a huge gap. Despite the gaps, the recovery and reconstruction activities that the remaining NGOs, and other NGOs that came later, were implementing were perceived positively. The NGOs were actively involved in the areas of infrastructure, agricultural support, community health, economic strengthening, educational support, capacity building, WASH, and environmental reclamation. I will use specific examples to demonstrate how some of these recovery and reconstruction activities shaped the perceptions of the survivors.

NGO-supported infrastructure projects

As I was driving down the last lap of the steep, rocky and curved road from Kopa to Vimba, with Headman Hlabiso recounting the destruction that was caused by the tropical cyclone Idai in his area, he pointed to a nicely constructed building, sitting on a hill, and with a beautifully designed perimeter fence.

Miracle Mission built that clinic for us. We used to travel to Rusitu Mission whenever we needed healthcare. Some people died of injuries during the cyclone as they could not easily get to the hospital. The donor heeded our prayer and built us that clinic.

Unlike Gogo Chihera, whose homestead was about 3 km from the Rusitu Mission, Headman Hlabiso's and Baba Maphosa's homesteads were located at least 10 km away, and one had to walk on very steep slopes to get to the hospital. The intervention by Miracle Missions Trust, therefore, brought relief to a community that had been marginalized for so long. The NGO was based in Harare, and in addition to building the new clinic, it provided emergency relief through NJIVA Trust, and rehabilitated classroom blocks at the Vimba Primary School which had been blown off by the tropical cyclone winds. According to Headman Hlabiso, the activities that Miracle Missions Trust supported, were the "real needs that we had identified as a community". These infrastructure and rehabilitation projects also created employment opportunities for the survivors as the case below shows.

Bernard Mare, a young man in his 30s, counted himself as among the people who economically benefited from the construction activities that were implemented by NGOs. Bernard and I come from the same community in Chayamiti and I met him several times when I visited home. He was working at the Runyaro Village housing scheme as a bricklayer. Bernard trained as a bricklayer at a vocational training center on the outskirts of Mutare city. Until the period of the disaster, and since he finished his training in 2008, he had been surviving on piece jobs - repairing, and building other people's houses, but these types of jobs had not been consistently available. Following the disaster, Bernard was among the bricklayers who were employed on a housing project implemented by World Vision International in the Rusitu Valley. The project involved repairing houses that had been partially damaged and constructing over

2000 new 2-roomed structures for families that had their houses completely damaged by the storm. He described the working conditions as follows:

> The remuneration was good. We were getting US$25 per house repaired, even if it involved just filling a crack. We spent a month there and they were taking very good care of us. They hired local people to cook for us.

The above statement from Bernard above shows the diverse employment opportunities that the post-disaster infrastructure projects created – the bricklayers, bricklayers' assistants, cooks, etc, most of whom were drawn from the local communities. Confirming these employment opportunities, Sekai also told me that her late husband was the lead bricklayer for the rehabilitation works that Miracle Missions Trust implemented at Vimba Primary School.

What differentiated the Runyararo Village scheme from the NGO-supported projects was that the former was one-sited while the latter were being implemented in all the affected communities and based on findings of needs assessments that NGOs had conducted together with the communities. Although the state also implemented macro-level rehabilitation projects like repairing roads and other infrastructures, with the support of UN agencies, the impact of these was not generally appreciated at individual household levels. As such, many people, especially those in the local communities, felt that the NGO-supported initiatives were more impactful to their needs than those of the state. The research participants expressed similar attitudes towards post-disaster economic strengthening and community resilience-building interventions, as I will discuss in further detail below.

Economic strengthening and community resilience building interventions

In Chapter 4, I discussed the two NJIVA Trust-supported community groups that Mrs. Mutema and I visited to assess their readiness to receive livestock feed production equipment (Section 4.5). Five community groups, with an average of 6 members each, had expressed interest to

receive feed production equipment from the NGO and had submitted their business ideas for consideration. The equipment was procured as part of NJIVA Trust's initiative aimed at ensuring sustainable economic strengthening opportunities for households who had been affected by the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. Before procuring the machines and asking community groups to submit business plans, NJIVA Trust had first conducted training sessions on livestock feed production for community members who were interested in acquiring the skills, such that by the time we conducted the assessments, some groups were already making livestock feed without being supported with equipment by the NGO. This strategy was very different from the approach that Mrs. Mutema and her team employed when they distributed chickens and sewing machines to the camp dwellers. As evidenced by individual testimonies from the groups that we visited, NJIVA Trust's strategy was more participatory and sustainable than the state-sponsored chickens and sewing machines project. The groups showed us the livestock feeds that they were already making and vowed that even if they lose the bidding for the equipment to others, they had acquired indispensable skills that they would continue to use either in the groups or at the individual household level.

Similarly, the 20 youth volunteers that NJIVA Trust trained in disaster management with support from the international NGO, VSO (Chapter 5) felt that the NGO had equipped them with valuable knowledge and skills, which otherwise was not offered by the state. They were now leading training sessions and disaster awareness activities and spearheading the development of disaster management action plans in their respective communities. Besides the training workshop that I attended in May 2021, which was facilitated by the VSO Manager, I also participated in two feedback meetings involving the youths and NJIVA Trust officers in which I learned more about the work of these youth volunteers. In November 2021, I accompanied Brian Moyo, the

NJIVA Trust Executive Director, to 1 of the communities where the NGO was operating, and we met some of the youths who told us how they were now sharing the knowledge that they had acquired with other members of the community. The youths told us that they were taking advantage of public gatherings organized either by traditional leaders or ward councilors to raise awareness on disaster preparedness. They also arranged community workshops where they taught other community members how to assess the community vulnerability, what to do in the case of an imminent disaster, and where they could get more information about disasters, among other things. The youths were also enrolling community members into a WhatsApp group which was established to share weather-related information and other useful messages. Besides the youth project, NJIVA Trust was also implementing other resilience-building projects across its 4 thematic areas of focus (Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resources Management, Community Health, Community-Based Agro-processing and Marketing, and Community Capacity Development). For instance, in addition to facilitating the exchange and marketing of indigenous seed varieties, the annual *Hurudza* fair discussed in Chapter 5 was also designed to allow farmers to share knowledge on how to produce certain crop varieties. Alongside the knowledge sharing, the NGO trained farmers in appropriate farming technologies, which included sustainable seed management and the production of organic fertilizers.

I visited a district seed bank that was initiated by local farmers with the support of NJIVA Trust. This seed bank was set up to allow more than 200 farmers to store and preserve seeds of a variety of indigenous crops, including okra, millet, cassava, sorghum, groundnuts, and maize (Matiashe 2022). According to the NJIVA Trust Officer who was behind the project, it was initiated in response to lessons learned from the tropical cyclone Idai disaster when many families lost important local crop varieties. The seedbank, therefore, offered some form of

insurance in case of future disasters. The research participants felt that recovery and reconstruction projects, especially in the agriculture sector, such as the seed bank initiative supported by NJIVA Trust, allowed them to be actively involved, and innovative, rather than just considered passive recipients of aid. In other words, the post-disaster recovery initiatives were premised on the notion that survivors could decide what best suited them. In effect, the NGO organized assistance created space for survivor agency.

The survivors often drew parallels between NGO-sponsored projects and the state-initiated Presidential input scheme initiative which was later called Pfumvudza under the Command Agriculture arrangement (Tsiko 2021). The Presidential input scheme was a national state initiative meant to assist local farmers with agricultural inputs, including seeds and fertilizers. The Pfumvudza program was adopted as a conservation farming technique whereby farmers were encouraged to cultivate without causing much damage to the soil (Tsiko 2021). Instead of using cattle as draught power, the farmers were encouraged to dig holes for planting with hand-held hoes. Promoters of this soil conservation technique called it "*dhiga ugute* – dig and get yields", but it became widely called "*dhiga ufe* – dig and die" in the communities, because of the labour and time required to dig. The farmers could not receive the state input unless they had a specified minimum size of acreage under *dhiga ugute* in their fields. This requirement was prohibitive to families who did not have enough labour, including the elderly and those living with chronic health conditions. This state approach was viewed as very authoritative by the survivors and not empowering as it did not allow them to employ their own farming innovations besides those imposed by the state.

The beekeeping project that NJIVA Trust was supporting also helped me to get more insights into the ways that NGOs were promoting survivor agency in the communities affected by the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. I turn to this project in more detail below.

"Tears of Idai": Survivor Agency and farmer Innovations

The photos below show some of the honey products which were displayed by local farmers during the official handovers of beekeeping equipment event which was organized by NJIVA Trust in October 2021 (Chapter 5). The beekeeping project was implemented by NJIVA Trust with the support of 2 international donors.

Photo 2: Honey products displayed by local farmers during the official handover of beekeeping equipment in Chimanimani
Photos by D. Kudejira

Through this project, NJIVA Trust trained local farmers in honey production and linked them to local and national markets, including huge retail outlets, where they could supply their honey. In addition, the NGO trained farmers to process the honey and produce various honey products, including honey wine and candles as shown in the figure above, which they could sell locally. Although the project started well before the tropical cyclone disaster, it became more important

following the destruction as it served as an important source of income for survivors, including more than 2000 farmers that were directly working with the NGO. The handover of the beekeeping equipment ceremony held in October 2021 was part of the organization's initiative to restore honey production for farmers who had been impacted by the tropical cyclone disaster. The participatory approach employed by NJIVA Trust was empowering to the local farmers. It also catalyzed intimate working relations, which resulted in the NGO gaining the trust of survivors. Nonetheless, survivors also expressed negativity about the way that NJIVA Trust, and some NGOs deployed their disaster management apparatuses. I now turn to these negative perceptions in the last section below.

6.7 Survivor Criticism of NGOs' Response to the Disaster

Some survivors expressed concerns about NGOs not complying with local cultural norms, NGOs creating their own social structures that set communities into conflict, as well as a lack of transparency and accountability. I demonstrate each of these below.

NGOs' non-compliance with local cultural norms

On Thursday, 20 May 2021, the NJIVA Trust Programs Coordinator called for a staff meeting where Field Officers and their Managers were supposed to report on the activities that they had undertaken during the month and present their action plans for the coming month. Such meetings were held every month to allow employees to share notes and to ensure that everybody within the NGO was aware of the activities that were happening in other departments. The meeting routine was, however, temporarily disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially when travel restrictions had been imposed and physical contact suspended, but employees continued to share updates through the various WhatsApp platform that employees had created. The May 20th meeting was held in the NJIVA Trust new boardroom under very tight COVID 19 management protocols that the NGO had put in place. In the meeting, Managers and Field Officers presented

the community activities, including training sessions, WhatsApp discussions they held with community groups, and media outreach initiatives that they had facilitated in June and part of May. Some employees were reading from their prepared notes, while others used the NGO's projector to show figures and pictures as evidence of the work that they had facilitated.

Then came Chief Saurombe's turn. He presented the district meetings that he had attended together with other chiefs, the mobilization work that he conducted, including raising awareness about the work of NJIVA Trust during community gatherings, and lastly, a meeting he had held with Headmen and Village Heads under his jurisdiction. "The traditional leaders reported to me that …", the chief cleared his throat as he continued:

> … there is a growing culture within the organization which does not reflect our values as NJIVA, and we are now being seen as the other NGOs that just came. The traditional leaders told me that our female employees are attending community meetings dressed in trousers and short skirts … Our dressing must reflect NJIVA values and must be in line with local customs ...

By drawing a comparison between NJIVA Trust and other NGOs who had "just came," Chief Saurombe was trying to reinforce the NGO's rootedness in the communities, and thus expecting every NJIVA Trust employee to be knowledgeable about the culturally acceptable dress code. Within the Ndau culture, women are expected to conform with local gender norms by wearing long skirts, at least below the knees or putting on wrappers, when attending public events, such as community meetings. However, the NGO recruited several field employees who came to specifically work on disaster response activities, and many of these came from outside the district with no prior encounter with the Ndau culture. These could have been the employees who were reported to Chief Saurombe by the other traditional leaders. While NJIVA Trust had traditional leaders like Chief Saurombe within its structures who could advise about these

concerns, this was not the case with the other NGOs that just came in response to the disaster, which was the basis for Chief Saurombe's comparison.

Another example that further explain concerns about NGOs' lack of cultural sensitivity centred around the usage of NGO vehicles by local communities. The issue came out during an interview with a research participant who was commenting about her experience participating in NGO-supported activities. She narrated an incident when she was walking to a school more than 5 km from her homestead to attend a training workshop which had been organized by one NGO. While she was walking along the road, the vehicle of the trainers roared from behind, she tried to stop them so that she could get a ride to the workshop venue, but they did not stop. The workshop was already in full swing by the time she arrived at the venue. The woman interpreted the attitude of the training facilitators as culturally inappropriate. For her, it did not make sense that the NGO wanted her to participate in its workshops, yet the facilitators could not allow her in their vehicle – an attitude that did not fit with the moral economy within which the modes of social interaction in Ndau culture were premised.

The reason why the trainers did not stop for her was that: according to the NGO's policy, no one, except its employees and "authorized passengers" was allowed to use its vehicles. This was a common policy for NGOs, especially the international NGOs operating in Zimbabwe. I am knowledgeable of this policy position based on my engagement in the NGO sector before my Ph.D. studies. The main reason why NGOs do this is to avoid responsibility in the case of accidents, which may involve claims for compensation in the case of casualties, or the obligation to cover medical costs of the injured. The situation would be different if it is only the NGOs' employees involved in an accident because, in most cases, they are always covered under comprehensive medical insurance. When these policy positions were put into practice by NGOs

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that responded to the disaster in Chimanimani, they often created a negative picture of the NGO employees, who became perceived by survivors as culturally insensitive. NJIVA Trust employed a very different NGO-ing approach. The NGO defined itself as part of the Chimanimani society, and thus, its resources including vehicles and any risks associated with the use of such resources were shared. Community members were also allowed to use resources at its offices if they wanted.

The examples presented above reveal some of the contradictions which emerged when NGOs and NGO employees came into contact with the Ndau culture in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Idai in Chimanimani. I will now move on to discuss the concerns about NGOs creating their own community structures.

NJIVA Trust people, World Vision people, PORET people …

NGOs were accused of setting up new structures which at times duplicated existing state structures and thereby created conflicts in the communities. I will use the example of two community structures that NJIVA Trust and other NGOs established to demonstrate this point. First, through one of its community health projects, NJIVA Trust set up Community Health Committees (CHC) in the wards where the project was being implemented. The committee members were trained to facilitate primary health delivery, including attending to minor health conditions and referring community members to nearby health centres. The work of these committees duplicated the roles of Community Health Workers (CHW) who worked under the MOHCC, doing the same activities that the CHC members were doing. The difference was that CHC members were being paid much more in allowances by NJIVA Trust than what the CHWs were being paid by the state. A CHW who raised this concern to me felt that the NJIVA Trust project could have been more impactful if it had provided resources to the existing state structures so that they could reach out to more communities than establishing new CHCs to do

the same thing in the same community. The state CHWs, according to her, had now become

demotivated as they are now comparing their working conditions with those of the CHCs which

had been set up by NJIVA Trust.

The second example concerns the NJIVA Village Groups (NVGs), which served as the

conduits through which NJIVA Trust implemented some of its activities in the communities. In

Chayamiti, where Sekuru Zamba and his family resided, for instance, World Vision and another

local NGO smaller than NJIVA Trust, PORET, had similar structures through which they

implemented their own activities. From the discussion at Sekuru Zamba's homestead, which I

highlighted in Section 6.4, I became aware of how these structures were creating conflicts in the

community. Sekuru Zamba's wife talked of a certain woman, who she accused of being a

"prostitute". She meant a "prostitute" not in the sexual sense, but in the sense that this woman

displayed "money mongering behaviour," and always devised ways to convince other

community members to vote for her into every committee that the various NGOs established. At

the time, they said the woman was involved with NJIVA Trust as a NVG Facilitator, with World

Vision Committee as a Chairperson, and with the PORET Committee as a Treasurer.

Membership in these committees always came with some form of benefits. For instance,

members could get allowances when they attend workshops or are given things like bicycles to

facilitate mobility within the communities. When I visited the Chayamiti community in

December 2021, I heard that one NGO had just wound up its activities in the community, and it

donated a grinding mill to members of a committee that it was working with as a token of

appreciation. Such committees were often called by the names of the NGOs that established

them, and people usually used identifiers such as "*vanhu ve NJIVA* - NJIVA People", "*vanhu ve
World Vision* - World Vision people", and "*vanhu ve PORET* - PORET people". This example

reveals two things which implicate the NGOs. Firstly, by establishing these structures, the NGOs have created opportunistic tendencies where community members compete for inclusion so that they could derive personal benefits. Subsequently, this has resulted in some community members being negatively characterized in gendered ways as "prostitutes." Secondly, these structures have divided communities into new NGO-defined social classes – *vanhu ve NJIVA*, *vanhu ve World Vision*, etc. – based on allegiance to a certain NGO, thereby creating friction within the communities.

NGOs transparency and accountability

As if the touting by the President that he had received millions of dollars from America to support the survivors, and his controversial statement "*kuipa kwezvimwe kunaka kwezvimwe*" were not enough, leaders of international and local NGOs were also appearing on national TV making huge pledges, ranging from hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars, towards supporting the survivors. During a meeting of the African Parliamentarians Network Against Corruption held in November 2020, the MP for Chimanimani East, Joshua Sacco, lamented that some NGOs appeared in the public media pledging "millions upon millions of dollars" towards post-Idai reconstruction, but disappeared without contributing anything to the affected communities (Open Parly ZW 2020)[42]. Peter Moto, The Director of The Catholic Association, described the publicity stunts by some of these NGO counterparts as "just relevance seeking". Relevance seeking because, in his view, and as perceived by many survivors, the huge pledges that some NGOs made were never fulfilled. Subsequently, some survivors felt that they were short-changed by the NGOs and others speculated that NGO leaders converted funds obtained from donors for personal use. In my assessment, however, I gathered that the suspicions around

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[42] Posted on Open Parly ZW Twitter page. Available
ttps://twitter.com/openparlyzw/status/1332593484071628805?lang=gu

the misappropriation of donor funds emerged due to the lack of transparency by most of the NGOs. For example, if an NGO pledged $500,000 the survivors assumed that all the money would directly go to them. However, for most NGOs, the $500,000 pledge included operational costs, including salaries of the employees involved, and the purchase of vehicles if they were required, and only about half or even less of the pledged amount remained for tangible projects in the communities. The NGOs also did not make it clear how the pledged amounts were going to be distributed. Rumours I heard circulating in Ngangu Township, and which were even propagated by Mukwasha, my host, were that all NJIVA Trust Managers bought cars and houses in town from the money that was supposed to go to survivors of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster. In one conversation, Mukwasha alleged that since NJIVA Trust had a warehouse to keep donations from other NGOs, its employees would, upon receiving the donations, select the new clothes, blankets, and other good items, and then transmitted the remaining poor-quality items to survivors. These allegations surfaced because the NGO had not been transparent enough in its disaster response approach. The NGO did not involve survivors directly affected by the disaster in managing the warehouse, a matter that is also linked to the lack of accountability.

The concerns about accountability came out when I interviewed Sophia, Mai Tanya, Rasta, and Panganai in the Arboretum camp. Sophia specifically mentioned that the NGOs who were helping them just pulled out without notifying the residents, which raised her fears as to where she was going to get the food and other basic goods for her family. In support of Sophia, Mai Tanya said:

> It is no longer like before when we used to monthly food hampers. The donors are no longer coming. The only people coming are from the IOM, but I am not so sure about their work. They are now dealing with the committee members.

Headman Hlabiso also expressed some uneasiness when he responded to my question about NGOs' involvement in the post-disaster response processes. He spoke highly of NGOs like NJIVA Trust, Miracles Mission, Jekesa Pfungwa, World Vision, and others that had helped with emergency relief and reconstruction and recovery projects for survivors in his community. But, according to him, there were NGO-branded cars which were moving around in his area, and he had no idea what these other NGOs were doing. His observations concurred with what Chengetai had told me when he said, "we just see their cars running up and down, but we don't know exactly what they are doing" (Chapter 5). The perceived secrecy of these NGOs reinforced the allegations that they had hidden agendas, including that they were using the disaster as an opportunity to make money for the NGOs' leaders without making any noticeable contributions to the lives of affected communities. These views can also be linked to concerns about stereotyping that I learned about during the fieldwork.

The construction of survivor stereotypes and homogenization of vulnerability

I will explain the topic of stereotyping and the homogenization of vulnerability and how it shaped the perceptions of survivors towards the NGOs by drawing on the case of Elias Machongwe who I first met in May 2021. I was introduced to Elias months before travelling to Zimbabwe for fieldwork by my childhood friend, Jona, who at the time was working as a teacher at one of the local schools in Chimanimani. After learning that I was going to spend time in the Ngangu, Jona put me in contact with his nephew, Elias, whom he was sure would keep me company in the township and help introduce me to other survivors. By the time I travelled to Chimanimani and met Elias physically, we had already created a very good bond - we had been communicating on WhatsApp, through which I shared with him information and kept him posted on my travel plans.

He was renting a space in a shop building that had been divided into cubicles by the owner to accommodate 3 tenants. Elias's cubicle was stocked with an assortment of electrical gadgets, including low-budget android cell phones, cell phone chargers, headphones, and the like. We were both eager to see each other on the day that I finally met him in person. He invited me to sit with him behind the counter of his cubicle, where we were supposed to briefly introduce each other formally, but it ended up being a more-than-one-hour-long encounter, which included a narration of his experience assisting other survivors during the disaster. After I provided more details about my research, Elias told me about his experience being involved in research and surveys, especially those that were conducted by NGOs in the aftermath of the tropical cyclone Idai. He conveyed a sense of being "over researched:"

> I think they thought that all the people in Chimanimani were injured or dead. They brought their own people even to count dead bodies, yet we have many youths here who are not employed … You would be visited by 5 to 10 NGO people in a day asking the same thing … I ended up asking them to pay me for information or just responded anyhow

His statement confirms a critique that has been levied against NGOs by many scholars, and which has been found to hamper the goals of NGO interventions. For example, Mertz & Timmer (2010, p. 173) argues that by homogenizing heterogeneous groups of people, NGOs contribute to creating "stereotypes that carry disadvantages." Based on Elias's experience, as reflected in his statement above, the survivors or victims title ascribed to the people who experienced the disaster led to some NGOs viewing everyone in Chimanimani as vulnerable survivors who needed to be rescued, yet the local communities have demonstrated agency, through leading rescue activities and sharing food and accommodation before the NGOs arrived. Because of the homogenization and stereotyping, some NGOs brought in people from outside to do basic enumeration work, which could have been done by youths from the local communities. Elias

thought that the NGOs could have at least engaged local youths as enumerators and in the process created some form of employment for those who had incurred losses due to the tropical cyclone.

The other facet of Elias's contribution relates to the fatigue ("NGO fatigue") that survivors experienced, especially from NGOs who were undertaking assessments and surveys soon after the disaster. Due to the lack of proper coordination, NGOs ended up duplicating activities, including making endless visits and asking the same thing from survivors who were still traumatized by the destruction that they experienced and witnessed. In turn, the survivors were now resisting these uncoordinated NGO activities by asking for payments or just "responding anyhow" as Elias stated.

Overall, it is worth noting that although survivors were critical of their interaction with NGOs during the post-tropical cyclone Idai emergency response, recovery, and reconstruction processes, they perceived NGO activities as more impactful to their needs than those that were implemented by the state. They felt that NGOs were more visible on the ground and as such, they understood survivors' needs better than state agencies.

6.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to highlight several observations from the evidence presented in this chapter. Firstly, the occurrence of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster carried various meanings to the survivors, with some defining it as punishment for deviating from culturally acceptable norms and behaviors, others interpreting it as "God's plan", while others deployed "scientific" explanations. These meanings shaped the perceptions of survivors as they became involved in the disaster recovery and reconstruction projects of the state and NGOs. Despite these various definitions, the disaster revealed how local support systems, could be activated, mobilized, and

deployed across the community in response to the disaster. The expectations of reciprocity within these local support systems influenced the survivors' attitudes towards external aid that later came from the state and NGOs.

Secondly, the survivors in Chimanimani expressed different views about their relations with state agencies and NGOs that they interacted with during the disaster and in its aftermath. Post-Idai initiatives implemented by the state and NGOs helped by providing emergency relief to stranded survivors, creating employment opportunities for survivors, and providing alternative long-term income generation and livelihood options. However, some of these initiatives deepened and exacerbated existing divisions in the community. Although the survivors at times negotiated or derailed certain interventions when these that did not comply with their local moral understandings and need, as exemplified by the case of the poultry and sewing projects in the Arboretum displacement camp, these individualized responses did not challenge state authoritarianism.

Thirdly, apart from the Runyararo Village housing scheme, which benefited less than 300 families, there were no other major state-sponsored initiatives that provided direct benefits to other affected families. As such, most survivors felt that they were being marginalized by the state during the post-disaster recovery. Survivors invoked frustrations over the state's inability to address underlying pre-disaster vulnerability factors, which manifested in some communities failing to receive emergency aid. These conditions of marginality were exacerbated by the centralization of disaster aid distribution centers, which led to some communities being cut off from state-managed emergency aid distribution initiatives. For these communities, the tropical cyclone Idai became a "disaster of marginalization" (Hsu et al. 2015, p. 10). The combination of ex-ante vulnerabilities and ex-post delays in reaching out to communities resulted in the state

being viewed as not caring. In contrast, some NGO emergency relief activities were much more decentralized and reached out to more survivors, especially those in geographically marginalized communities. Further, NGO activities, such as the apiculture and agriculture projects implemented by NJIVA Trust, targeted individual households in the affected communities, thereby allowing the survivors to have closer working relations with the NGOs than with state agencies.

Fourthly, and related to the point above, some survivors derived their perceptions of the involvement of the state in post-tropical cyclone Idai disaster response processes from memories of how the state had dealt with civil protection matters in the past. Following the August 2018 killing of unarmed citizens in Harare, which was perpetrated by the army, the survivors viewed the involvement of such state agencies in the disaster response processes as threatening, and as a manifestation that the state was not sincere in its response to the disaster. Cases of abuse of power by the security forces as well as looting of donated goods by senior politicians served as evidence that the survivors could deploy to challenge the state's sincerity. Due to the fear of negative retribution from the state, the survivors were more open to talking about and criticizing the work of NGOs in public than they could do with state agencies.

Lastly, the lack of transparency and accountability exhibited by state agencies and some NGOs widened the trust gap between the survivors and providers of disaster relief aid. Just like the state, some NGOs made huge public monetary pledges to the survivors, but the outcomes did not meet the survivors' expectations. The major missing link was that these pledges were not accompanied by clear messages about how the promised amounts were going to be distributed. The lack of accountability was evidenced by the survivors' concerns that the state was slow in responding to the needs of affected families, that some NGOs just pulled out without

notification, and that some NGOs' operations were clandestine and not publicly known. Subsequently, the lack of transparency and accountability created the perception that the disaster presented an opportunity for senior state officials, politically connected people, and NGO employees to accumulate personal benefits by intercepting aid meant for the survivors.

Chapter 7   Conclusions and Policy Implications

7.1 Conclusions

Disasters create a humanitarian situation that brings the state, NGOs, and other external agencies into interaction with survivors. These spaces of interaction do not only reveal the nature and structures of power that define the relations among the various actors, but they also become an arena within which new modes of interaction are created and operationalized as external agencies became enmeshed in the daily lives of survivors. This thesis has offered "disaster authoritarianism" as a model to unravel these entanglements. Disaster authoritarianism provides a framework for interrogating the inner workings of state authoritarianism in disaster response contexts and the ways in which state power is reproduced and sustained in the daily practices of NGOs and survivors. It reveals the nature of collaborations, conflicts, and contestations that emerge at the intersection of disaster impact and disaster responses where survivors interact with providers of humanitarian support, including the state and NGOs. Figure 3 below presents a schema of the disaster authoritarianism model.
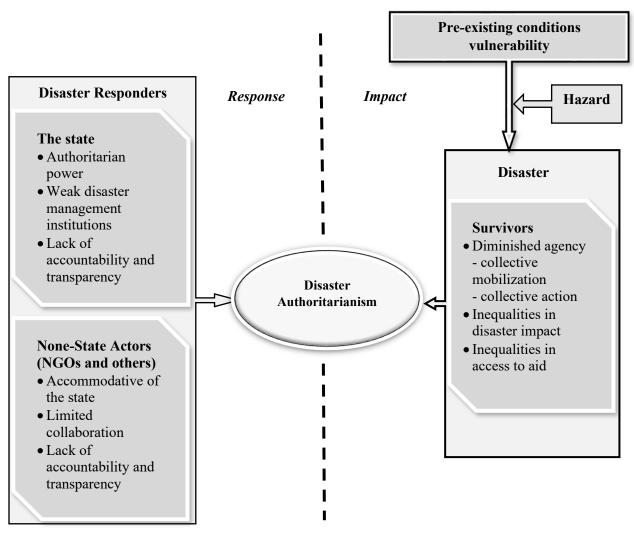
Figure 3: Components of the Disaster Authoritarianism model

As Figure 3 shows, pre-existing vulnerability conditions are necessary for producing a disaster when a hazard strikes (Wisner et al., 2004). A political ecology analysis that this thesis presents in Chapter 3 shows the preexisting vulnerability factors, including colonial land dispossessions, neoliberal policies adopted by the state, inequitable postcolonial land redistribution processes, and intensive horticultural production, that exacerbated the destructive impact of the March 2019 tropical cyclone Idai in the Chimanimani district. The tropical cyclone produced a population of survivors, which had to rely on external agencies, including the state and NGOs, for emergency disaster relief, recovery, and reconstruction support. The characteristics of the state and non-state

actors (NGOs), and conditions of the survivors, therefore, constitute the main components of disaster authoritarianism.

Firstly, disaster authoritarianism requires an authoritarian state which can exercise power and control with limited or no resistance. It also survives on weak disaster management institutions which allow for the politicisation of disaster response apparatuses, abuse of aid and survivors with impunity, and little accountability and transparency. Secondly, for disaster authoritarianism to prevail, non-state actors, specifically, the NGOs, have to be accommodative of the state. That is, their NGO-ing should be amenable with the state's interests to assert and expand its structures and systems of authoritarian power. Another pre-requisite for disaster authoritarianism is a disfranchised NGO sector which cannot collectively challenge the authoritarian power of the state. It is also nourished and sustained by NGOs' lack of transparency and accountability, which serve as justification for the authoritarian state to tighten its censorship and control over their activities. Thirdly, disaster authoritarianism prevails when survivor agency is diminished, either by the destructive impacts of a disaster or by the interventions of external disaster responders. The lack of agency reduces the possibility of survivors to mobilize and challenge the actions of disaster responders perceived as not complying with locally constructed interpretations of the disaster. Unequal access to disaster aid among the survivors prompts individualized actions including complaints, resentment, and opportunistic moves to derive individual benefits. Taken together, these individualised actions fail to build enough impetus to change the processes and practices of humanitarian agencies, and hence cannot influence how the systems and structures of state authoritarianism are deployed. Drawing upon my analysis of the interaction between survivors and the state and NGOs in post-Idai Chimanimani, I, therefore, summarise disaster authoritarianism as: disaster response processes and practices which provide

conditions that are conducive for, and which facilitate the production and reproduction of state authoritarianism.

Employing political ecology as an analytical framework, I have argued in Chapter 3 that the Chimanimani disaster was not simply a haphazard event that started when tropical cyclone Idai made landfall in the district on the night of 15 March 2019, but it was an outcome of processes and events that entrenched social inequality and produced vulnerabilities since the turn of the 20th century when the Ndau people first came into contact with white settlers. Post-Idai Chimanimani became an arena in which the systems and structures of the authoritarian state could not only be exposed, but also further extended and reinforced. State authoritarianism manifested through the bureaucratic processes, including the centralization of authority and resources, which negatively affected the deployment and coordination of disaster response apparatuses. The de jure and de facto impunity surrounding high-profile state officials and politicians facilitated corruption and the looting of humanitarian donations meant for survivors. In addition, due to the lack of budgetary allocations and human resources, the institution responsible for disaster management, the DCP, was not able to effectively deliver on its mandate of disseminating disaster information, developing the capacity of other actors, and mobilizing resources. Within the trope of *"Kuipa kwezvimwe, kunaka kwezvimwe"* ("bad events bring with them good things"), the disaster created an opportunity for the state to mobilize and deploy disaster response resources in a way that favoured the ruling party and further asserted the state's authoritarian controlling power.

The historically ambivalent relations between the state and NGOs, shaped the disaster response landscape in Chimanimani. By filling the gaps created by the state's lack of capacity to effectively deal with the tropical cyclone Idai disaster, NGOs were treated as allies, yet they

became rivals each time their activities seemed to deviate from the expected norms. Using NJIVA Trust as a case study, I have shown that while NGOs tried to depoliticize their disaster response projects, they unwittingly became enablers of authoritarianism by creating spaces and platforms that the state could exploit to further reinforce and expand its local structures and systems of power.

Lastly, survivors' perceptions of the role of the state and NGOs were framed within local cultural knowledge claims and processes of meaning-making. By promoting the inequitable distribution of benefits to survivors, the disaster response interventions implemented by the state and NGOs triggered individualized complaints, resentment, and non-compliance among some survivors, and opportunism among others. Resultantly, the combination of a lack of collective mobilization and individualized survivor responses rendered collective mobilization ineffectual, thereby creating conditions necessary for the reproduction and sustenance of state authoritarianism.

This research comes at the most appropriate moment when calls for knowledge decolonization are becoming louder (e.g. Williams 2018; Boswell 2015). Through approaching the fieldwork as a native ethnographer, it contributes valuable and organic perspectives, which draws upon my rootedness in the cultures and context within which the anthropological knowledge has been produced.

In addition, tropical cyclone Idai disaster is a relatively recent phenomenon, and no disaster of such intensity has been experienced in the modern history of Zimbabwe. There is still a small but growing literature that reports on the efficacy of disaster response processes. My research broadens the existing research by looking at various aspects of the tropical cyclone Idai disaster, including how responses to the disaster had been coordinated, the structures of power

that the disaster has revealed, and the perceptions that shaped the interaction of various players involved in the disaster aftermath.

7.2 Policy Implications and Pointers for Further Anthropological Engagement

This research has shown that the March 2019 Chimanimani disaster was a result of historical conditions of vulnerability which disproportionately exposed poor communities to the tropical cyclone Idai hazard. The Chimanimani district experienced hydrometeorological disasters, including tropical cyclones, Eline and Japhet, in 2000 and 2003 respectively, but lessons had not been drawn from these to better prepare for Idai. The institution responsible for disaster management in Zimbabwe, the DCP, had been more reactionary than proactive in coming up with practical programs and policies to address the pressures that increase communities' vulnerability to disasters. This lack of proactiveness lies in the current legal framework that does not prioritize the allocation of state resources for ex-ante disaster preparedness activities. Yet there has been no appetite on the part of the state to expedite the passing of a new law to address these gaps. The Disaster Risk Management Bill has remained under parliamentary review since 2011. Expediting the passing of this Bill into law will allow for state resources to be mobilized for both ex-ante and ex-post disaster response actions.

Further, while the institutional structures for national disaster management appear on paper to be decentralized, in the form of the PCPCs and the DCPCs, these are neither provided with the necessary resources nor equipped with the necessary skills to enable them to deal with emergency responses. The PCPCs and the DCPCs can be thought of as "volunteer" committees. Apart from its secretariat headquartered in Harare, the DCP does not have decentralized offices in the provinces and districts with employees specifically responsible for the coordination of disaster management activities. The centralization of authority and resources resulted in

bureaucratic processes which delayed the distribution of aid to affected communities and fueled corruption and the misappropriation of disaster aid by politicians and senior state officials in positions of authority. Given the increasing frequency of devastating weather-induced disasters, the state should prioritize the decentralization of the DCP offices to enable the department to effectively deliver on its mandate of disseminating disaster information, developing the capacity of other actors to deal with emergencies, and disasters, and mobilizing resources.

NGOs played a critical role in the post-Idai arena as brokers through which disaster aid could be channeled from local and international donors to the affected communities. Yet this important role was at times overshadowed by the lack of proper coordination and competition as various types and classes of NGOs interacted in the post-Idai field. The research has revealed that at times conflicts among NGOs emerged because of donor funding mechanisms that promoted competition rather than collaboration. Donor funding mechanisms should aim to promote collaboration among local NGOs as this will lead to the leveraging of resources and skills to achieve greater impact at the community level.

In some instances, the authoritarian control of NGOs which emerged in post-Idai Chimanimani was a creation of the NGOs themselves. Concerns about the lack of accountability, and transparency within the NGO world, served as justification for the authoritarian state to tighten its censorship and control over its activities. These revelations call for NGOs to come up with NGO-ing approaches that allow them to continue to do the good work and not set themselves into conflict with the state.

My study has also shown that local communities have agency and ought not to be treated as passive victims who rely on the benevolence of external agencies. Learning from the local people's knowledge and incorporating their desires rather than imposing interventions based on

superficial assumptions does not only ensure the sustainability of disaster response actions but also helps to build the long-term resilience of affected communities. In the same vein, the research has revealed that the tropical cyclone Idai resulted in social restructuring as the disaster impacted families differently. In addition, the sexual abuse of girls and women by providers of humanitarian assistance came out strongly during the fieldwork. This research did not go into detail to interrogate these disaster-induced social restructuring elements. Hence, further research should focus on exploring the processes of class formation and investigate how related intersecting identity factors like gender, religion, and age shape disaster response landscapes.

The scope of this research was limited to understanding the involvement of the state and NGOs in the lives of tropical cyclone Idai survivors. However, there were a lot of other stakeholders who became involved in the lives of the survivors, including private companies, churches, and individual responders. Some of these genuinely poured their hearts and spirits into assisting the survivors, while others invaded the post-Idai terrain for profiteering, through "disaster capitalism", to use Klein's (2017) term. Exploring further this concept of "disaster capitalism" in the context of post-Idai Chimanimani will be enriching to the discipline of anthropology.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics Approval Documentation

From:	dgulliver@mun.ca
Sent:	November 22, 2021 9:53 AM
To:	Kudejira Denboy(Principal Investigator)
Cc:	Addison Lincoln(Supervisor); dgulliver@mun.ca
Subject:	ICEHR Clearance # 20210680-AR – EXTENDED

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

ICEHR Approval #:	20210680-AR
Researcher Portal File #:	20210680
Project Title:	*Natural Disasters and Humanitarianism: A study of humanitarian responses towards the survivors of cyclone Idai in Chimanimani District, Zimbabwe*
Associated Funding:	Not Funded
Supervisor:	Dr. Lincoln Addison
Clearance expiry date:	November 30, 2022

Dear Mr. Denboy Kudejira:

Thank you for your response to our request for an annual update advising that your project will continue without any changes that would affect ethical relations with human participants.

On behalf of the Chair of ICEHR, I wish to advise that the ethics clearance for this project has been extended to **November 30, 2022**. The *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS2) requires that you submit another annual update to ICEHR on your project prior to this date.

We wish you well with the continuation of your research.

Sincerely,

DEBBY GULLIVER
Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)
Memorial University of Newfoundland

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MEMORIAL
UNIVERSITY

**Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)**

St. John's, NL Canada A1C 5S7
Tel: 709 864-2561 icehr@mun.ca
www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr

November 12, 2020

Mr. Denboy Kudejira
Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Mr. Kudejira:

Thank you for your correspondence addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) concerning the above-named research project. ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarification and revisions submitted, and is satisfied that the concerns raised by the Committee have been adequately addressed. In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, the project has been granted *full ethics clearance* to November 30, 2021. ICEHR approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research, as per Article 6.3 of the *TCPS2*. Researchers are responsible for adherence to any other relevant University policies and/or funded or non-funded agreements that may be associated with the project.

The *TCPS2* **requires** that you submit an Annual Update to ICEHR before November 30, 2021. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer involves contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you are required to provide an annual update with a brief final summary and your file will be closed. If you need to make changes during the project which may raise ethical concerns, you must submit an Amendment Request with a description of these changes for the Committee's consideration prior to implementation. If funding is obtained subsequent to approval, you must submit a Funding and/or Partner Change Request to ICEHR before this clearance can be linked to your award.

All post-approval event forms noted above can be submitted from your Researcher Portal account by clicking the *Applications: Post-Review* link on your Portal homepage. We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Kelly Blidook, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

KB/bc

cc: Supervisor – Dr. Lincoln Addison, Department of Anthropology

MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Telephone: +263 4 707615

Fax: +263 4 797706

REF: ADM/23/8

ZIMBABWE

Office of The Secretary
P. Bag 7706
Causeway,
Harare

10 May 2021

Mr Denboy Kudejira
2436 Hobhouse3
Mutare

APPROVAL OF AUTHORITY TO UNDERTAKE ACADEMIC RESEARCH: MR DENBOY KUDEJIRA: MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND

The above subject matter refers.

Please be advised that on 26 April 2021, the Head of Ministry approved your application to undertake a field research on **Humanitarian response towards the survivors of Cyclone Idai: The case of Chimanimani.**

Kindly be advised that, the research findings should not be subject to external consumption and must be solely used for academic purposes only. You are mandated to complete the Official Secrecy Act before commencement of the research project. In addition, the final copy of the research findings should be submitted to the Office of the Permanent Secretary.

It's hoped that the research findings will help the Ministry in coming up with relevant strategies in the study area undertaken.

PPChazuka.

I. Chazuka
FOR: PERMANENT SECRETARY FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Cc: The Director, Civil Protection

MIN. OF LOCAL GOVT. PUBLIC
WORKS AND NATIONAL HOUSING
HUMAN RESOURCES 1

3 MAY 2021

P. BAG 7706, CAUSEWAY
ZIMBABWE TEL: 04-793700

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Appendix 2: Interview Guide

(a) <u>Interviews with Survivors</u>

Experience with the cyclone

1) Tell me about your family situation soon before the cyclone? *Where did you live? With who? How did your family use to survive (sources of income and food)?*

2) Now tell me about your experience during the Cyclone Idai disaster. *Where were you? At what point did you realize that something was terribly wrong?*

3) What was the hardest part of the disaster? *Why? What did you do? (establish if family members, livestock, and properties were lost)*

4) Looking at where you are now, tell me how the cyclone has changed your life?

Access to humanitarian assistance

Now let's discuss your experience as a survivor of the catastrophe.

1) What specific needs do you, or other survivors require to be able to recover from the impact of the cyclone?

2) Has there been a time when you had to worry about accessing these needs? *Prompts:* What had happened? What did you do?

3) Tell me about government departments (agencies) who have been assisting people who were affected by the cyclone. *Who are they? What support have they been providing? How often have they been coming to assist? Have you personally benefited from their assistance? Are there families that you know that have not benefited? If yes, why?*

4) Tell me about international organizations and NGOs who have been assisting people who were affected by the cyclone. *Who are they? What support have they been providing? How often have they been coming to assist? Have you personally benefited from their assistance? Are there families that you know that have not benefited? If yes, why?*

5) Are there political organizations (parties) that have been assisting people affected by the cyclone? *Who are they? What support have they been providing? How often have they been coming to assist? Have you personally benefited from their assistance? Are there families that you know that have not benefited? If yes, why?*

6) Now I want to know if there have been any private sector agencies (companies/businesses) that have been providing support to survivors. *Who are they? What support have they been providing? How often have they been coming to assist? Have you personally benefited from their assistance? Are there families that you know that have not benefited? If yes, why?*

7) Let's discuss if there have been any religious groups (or churches) that have come to the rescue of the community since the disaster struck. *Who are they? What support have they been providing? How often have they been coming to assist? Have you personally benefited from their assistance? Are there families that you know that have not benefited? If yes, why?*

8) Besides the agencies that we just discussed, are there other groups/agencies/people who have been assisting affected people? *Who are they? What support have they been providing? How often have they been coming to assist? Have you personally benefited from their assistance? Are there families that you know that have not benefited? If yes, why?*

9) What other forms of support do you think should be provided by the agencies that we just discussed about to help people who survived the cyclone fully recover?

10) Comment on the accessibility of these agencies: Where are they based? How do you approach them if you need assistance or information?

(b) Interviews with Humanitarian Agencies (Other than government agencies)

Presence/Operations in Chimanimani
I want to ask you about the background of your organization/Company.
1) What is the mission of your organization?

2) How long have your organization been working in Chimanimani? *What has been the focus of your work in Chimanimani before the cyclone (if present before the cyclone)?*

3) What specific areas have your organization been supporting? *Why are these important?*

Humanitarian assistance to survivors of cyclone
Now let's talk about your response to the cyclone Idai catastrophe.
1) Can you comment on the humanitarian situation caused by cyclone Idai? *What was the extent of destruction? What can you say are the main challenges faced by survivors?*

2) In your opinion, what are the most important needs of the survivors?

3) How has your organization been addressing these needs? *Humanitarian support being provided.*

4) What strategies do you use to identify those who are in most need of support? *Comment on the effectiveness of your strategy.*

5) What do you think makes the support offered by your organization unique? *What difference do you think your services are making to the survivors of cyclone Idai?*

6) How often do you visit the affected communities? *Please commend on the relationship between your organization and the people that you serve.*

7) What support do other agencies that you know of providing that specifically meet the needs of this vulnerable group?

8) In your opinion, what other forms of support should be given to the communities, which are not currently being provided by your organization and other agencies? *Why is your organization not providing these forms of support?*

9) What do you think organizations like yours should do to ensure that they are more responsive to the issues affecting the survivors of cyclone Idai?

Internal processes

Now I need to understand the internal processes within your organization

1) How many employees does your organization have who are specifically providing humanitarian assistance to survivors of cyclone Idai? *How many are full-time? How many are part-time? How many are women? How many are men?*

2) How is the recruitment process done?

3) What do you consider to be the most important skills/qualifications that employees in your organization have to possess to effectively deliver the services that you provide to survivors of natural disasters? *How is this consideration important in your recruitment process?*

4) How is the financing of your organization important to the support that you provide? *What are the sources of funding for operational and administration costs? Are there funding conditions that the organization has to abide by? - If so how do these conditions influence service delivery by the organization?*

Collaboration with other agencies

The next set of questions will look at how you partner with other agencies working with survivors of cyclone Idai.

1) Which other agencies do you directly work with? *Why are these agencies important to your work?*

2) Based on your experience, what do you see as the main advantages of partnering with other agencies?

3) What challenges do you face while working in partnership with other agencies?

4) What changes would you like to see to make your work, and the work of other agencies supporting survivors of cyclone Idai, more effective?

(c) Interviews with Government agencies

(1) Can you comment on the humanitarian situation caused by cyclone Idai? *What was the extent of destruction? What can you say are the main challenges faced by survivors?*

(2) In your opinion, what are the most important needs of the survivors?

(3) How has your Ministry/Department been addressing these needs? *Humanitarian support being provided.*

(4) What strategies do you use to identify those who are in most need of support? *Comment on the effectiveness of your strategy.*

(5) What do you think makes the support offered by Ministry/Department unique? *What difference do you think your services are making to the survivors of cyclone Idai?*

(6) How many staff members does your Ministry/Department have who are dedicated to the programs aimed at supporting survivors of cyclone Idai?

(7) In your opinion, what other forms of support should be given to the communities, which are not currently being provided by your Ministry/Department and other agencies? *Why is your Ministry/Department not providing such support?*

(8) Which other government and non-governmental agencies do you directly work with? *Why are these agencies important to your work?*

(9) Based on your experience, what do you see as the main advantages of partnering with other agencies?

(10)   What challenges do you face while working in partnership with other agencies?

(11)   What changes would you like to see to make your work, and the work of other agencies supporting survivors of cyclone Idai, more effective?