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Evaluating and Managing NGO-Private Partnerships in Micro Contexts during Disasters: Implications for Social Work Responses and Communication in KwaMashu 2022 Floods

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Abstract

The devastating 2022 KwaZulu-Natal floods exposed the vulnerabilities of micro contexts like KwaMashu township. Effective disaster response in these

environments requires a multifaceted approach, often relying on collaboration between Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and private companies. However, this collaboration presents a complex tapestry of challenges and opportunities. This paper explores the potential of collaborative disaster response models through the lens of small, community-based NGOs in KwaMashu. Drawing on recent literature grounded in network governance theory and resource mobilization theory, this paper examines the following key areas: Nature of Collaborative Interventions, Navigating the Rapids: Evaluating Disaster Response through a Small Non-Profit Lens (KwaZulu-Natal Floods 2022 Case Study), Navigating the Divide: Disaster Management in Townships, Power Dynamics in Partnerships, and Opportunities for Small NGOs/NPOs. The paper proposes three research questions: What are the perceived benefits and challenges of collaborative models for small NGOs in KwaMashu (2022 floods)? How do power dynamics affect resource mobilisation and allocation in NGO-private company partnerships (focusing on social work interventions to address disparities)? and strategies employed by small NGOs in KwaMashu to build community trust and capacity for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery? The paper mobilised a desktop secondary data approach to mine text from search engines like Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, and Scopus. Over 30 articles were downloaded, but over 15 were selected based on the inclusive criteria of the themes and keywords. The Network Governance Theory and Resource Mobilisation Theory were used as the theoretical framework to discuss the study and concluded that there was need for small NGOs to foster long lasting relationships with the community so as to assist in resource mobilization, and also develop a comprehensive communication plan that will empower them on how to navigate during disasters.

Keywords: NGOs/NPOs, *KwaZulu-Natal, Floods, Micro contexts, Disasters, KwaMashu2022 floods, NGO-Private Partnership, NGO-Private partnerships, Communication, Social Work, Social Work*

Introduction

For the purpose of this study, "NGO" (Non-Governmental Organisation) is not a legally defined term, while "NPO" (Non-Profit Organisation) is a legally recognised term. NPOs in South Africa are registered with the Department of Social Development and are governed by the Non-Profit Organisations Act of 1997. The term "NGO" is commonly used to describe organisations that operate independently from the government, but in South Africa, it lacks legal standing and is often used interchangeably with NPO. Therefore, this paper will use them interchangeably.

Devastating floods struck KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, in 2022, highlighting the weaknesses of small-scale environments like townships. In these kinds of situations, disaster response calls for a multimodal strategy that frequently involves private industry cooperation with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Hearn & Kennan, 2017). Although this cooperative strategy shows promise, it presents a complicated mosaic of opportunities and problems.

According to recent research, NGO-private collaborations are becoming increasingly important for disaster management (Tschakert & Weichselgartner, 2021). These collaborations present a special chance to capitalise on the individual skills of each actor. NGOs have developed a trusting relationship with locals and are frequently well-integrated into communities (Altay et al., 2017). Private businesses can provide significant financial support and logistical know-how (Hearn & Kennan, 2017). Through this synergy, disaster-affected communities' essential needs could be met and response activities could be streamlined. However, negotiating this cooperative environment calls for careful attention to several aspects. One major worry that has been brought to light in recent research is the possibility of uneven power dynamics in partnerships (Edwards & Gavron, 2020). Large businesses can unduly influence smaller NGOs, especially those that serve low-income communities, by using their large financial resources to marginalise their voices and goals. Resource discrepancies also make mobilisation and allocation difficult (Smith & Bryson, 2017). Efficient tactics are required to guarantee equitable resource allocation and attend to the particular requirements of marginalised communities.

Social work is essential in this intricate situation. Social workers can promote equitable partnerships that appreciate the competence of all actors since they are advocates for social justice and community empowerment (IFSW, 2019). Their comprehension of community dynamics gives them the capacity to foster cooperation and communication, ensuring a more inclusive reaction (Fortune, 2020; Wong & Kendra, 2018). Social work interventions that emphasise community engagement are essential for long-term recovery and resilience building, even in addition to emergency relief efforts (Reischl, 2019).

The KwaZulu-Natal floods of 2022 are the subject of this study, which focuses on the experiences of small public NGOs working with private businesses in KwaMashu. We will examine effective partnership management by referencing current research on network governance and resource mobilisation theories. The study will look at methods for

promoting fair cooperation, making sure that resources are mobilised effectively, and ultimately helping the KwaMashu community recover in a fair and sustainable manner.

Therefore, this paper seeks to address the objectives and answer the question as to what are the perceived benefits and challenges of collaborative models for small NGOs in KwaMashu (2022 floods)? How do power dynamics affect resource mobilisation and allocation in NGO-private company partnerships (focusing on social work interventions to address disparities) and strategies employed by small NGOs in KwaMashu to build community trust and capacity for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery?

Literature Review

The disastrous floods of 2022 in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, brought to light the weaknesses of micro settings, especially low-income townships such as KwaMashu. An effective disaster response in these situations requires a multimodal strategy that frequently depends on an intricate web of cooperative interventions. The experiences of small, locally based Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) in KwaMashu are the main subject of this literature study, which explores the complex dynamics of this tapestry. "Nature of Collaborative Interventions," the first strand of this review, examines the theoretical foundations of collaboration in disaster response. The study looks at the possible advantages and difficulties of collaborations between various parties, such as non-governmental organisations and private enterprises. After that, we follow small NGOs' perspectives as we traverse the "Rapids" of disaster response. Using the KwaZulu-Natal floods of 2022 as a case study, we examine the particular difficulties and opportunities that these organizations encounter while leading the front lines of relief operations. The complexity of "Navigating the Divide" between official disaster management organisations and the realities of townships is the subject of our discussion. This section looks at the unique vulnerabilities that these communities face and how small NGOs can help close the gap between the demands of the local community and top-down tactics. Power dynamics in partnerships are an important factor to take into account. The section "Power Dynamics in Partnerships" examines how uneven power structures might cause tiny non-governmental organisations to be marginalised. The tactics for making sure that partnerships are fair and bringing out the best in each participant are discussed in this section. "Opportunities for Small NGOs/NPOs" concludes the review by

emphasising the vital role that these groups perform in responding to disasters. To guarantee a more equitable and long-lasting recovery for KwaMashu, we investigate methods to strengthen small NGOs and capitalise on their special advantages. This literature review seeks to shed light on the intricate web of disaster response in micro contexts and the critical role small NGOs play in fostering resilience through these interconnected threads.

The Nature of Cooperative Interventions

According to recent research, cooperation is becoming more and more crucial when responding to disasters (Tschakert & Weichselgartner, 2021). Interventions in KwaMashu most likely utilised a mix of strategies. The provision of emergency subsidies and temporary shelters was probably facilitated by the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). For vulnerable groups, social work services would have been coordinated by the Department of Social Development (DSD) (Department of Social Development, n.d.). Food boxes, water purification kits, and hygiene goods may have been supplied by well-known NGOs such as the Gift of the Givers Foundation and the South African Red Cross Society (SARCS) (Gift of the Givers Foundation, n.d.; South African Red Cross Society, n.d.).

According to Hearn and Kennan (2017), national corporations may have supplied financial support, while local businesses may have contributed logistical help or donated goods. There are particular difficulties for NGO-private cooperation in KwaMashu because it is a microenvironment. Unequal power relations between local NGOs and big businesses can lead to the marginalisation of community voices (Edwards & Gavron, 2020). Large-scale relationship management may be beyond the capabilities and infrastructure of small NGOs (Smith & Bryson, 2017). Ensuring that public and private entities are held responsible for the provision and calibre of assistance is crucial (Pelling & Pelling, 2022).

Social workers are essential to disaster response efforts in micro contexts. Social workers can guarantee that vulnerable populations' needs are met and that their views are acknowledged in collaborative efforts (Fortune, 2020). The knowledge and skills of social workers can be very helpful when performing needs assessments and encouraging cooperation and communication among many stakeholders (IFSW, 2019). By putting flood victims in touch with mental health providers, skill-development initiatives, and social support systems, social workers

can aid in the long-term healing process (Reischl, 2019). To provide flood victims with immediate assistance, collaborative actions between public and private organisations can be successful. However, in small-scale settings such as KwaMashu, managing NGO-private collaborations effectively necessitates paying close attention to power relations, resource constraints, and accountability frameworks. To guarantee that partnerships are successful, community needs are satisfied, and the recovery process is fair and long-lasting, social workers are essential.

Navigating the Rapids: Evaluating Disaster Response through a Small Non-Profit Lens (KwaZulu-Natal Floods 2022 Case Study)

Collaboration is essential for disaster response, as demonstrated by the severe floods that struck KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, in 2022. Using a modest, public non-profit organisation (NPO) and its collaborations with other private enterprises as a lens, this investigation looks at how effective such solutions are. We may learn a great deal about the benefits and drawbacks of cooperative disaster management in small-scale environments by investigating their experiences. Tschakert and Weichselgartner (2021) have highlighted the efficacy of teamwork in disaster response in recent years. This strength can be better understood by looking at the activities of a small public NPO in KwaMashu. According to Bebbington et al. (2018), small, public non-profit organisations frequently have a thorough awareness of local requirements and can quickly mobilise resources because of their adaptable organisational structure. Their agility enables them to respond quickly during an emergency, giving vital support in the early aftermath. Collaborations with a variety of PNPOs can provide access to a greater pool of knowledge and resources. A PNPO with an emphasis on healthcare, for instance, might work with a public NPO to offer medical services in makeshift shelters (Hearn & Kennan, 2017). A wider spectrum of community needs is addressed by this resource pooling. Public non-profits frequently have ties to the community already established. Amid and after the disaster, this can promote trust and make communication more efficient (Altay et al., 2017). Participation from the community can help guarantee that opinions are heard and can guide decision-making during the response.

Although working together has many benefits, there are obstacles in small settings. According to Smith and Bryson (2017), small non-profit organisations may not have the infrastructure, personnel, or resources needed to handle extensive disaster response. While partnerships with

PNPOs can aid in bridging these gaps, unbalanced power dynamics resulting from resource differences may cause the public NPO to become marginalised (Edwards & Gavron, 2020). For a response to be expedited, varied partners must effectively communicate and coordinate (Wong & Kendra, 2018). However, with so many NGOs involved, it can become difficult to exchange information and ensure that all of the efforts are coordinated difficult (Pelling & Pelling, 2022). Disaster response goes beyond providing aid right away. Public non-profit organisations (NPOs) can be really helpful in long-term recovery efforts by connecting with social services and fostering resilience because of their continuous presence and community linkages (Reischl, 2019). For a lasting effect, teamwork must continue after the emergency has passed. Small public NPOs in KwaMashu that have cooperated with private NPOs share their experiences, which provide insightful information about cooperative disaster management. The optimisation of efficacy in these collaborations is contingent upon the resolution of resource imbalances, communication problems, and long-term sustainability. In the end, learning from these experiences can help public non-profit organisations (NPOs) to more steadily and fairly rebuild the community by enabling them to manoeuvre through the rapids of disaster response.

Navigating the Divide: Disaster Management in Townships, Power Dynamics in Partnerships, and Opportunities for Small NGOs/NPOs

Vulnerabilities in South Africa's townships' disaster response and preparation were made evident by the floods in KwaZulu-Natal in 2022. The vital role that small NGOs/NPOs play in low-income areas is highlighted in this analysis, which also looks at townships' and municipalities' preparedness for disaster management, the power dynamics in NGO-private sector collaborations, and the prospects and lessons for post-disaster management.

Recent research exposes gaps in vulnerable populations' catastrophe preparedness (Wisner et al., 2020). Potential areas for development are revealed by analysing the KwaZulu-Natal floods. Townships are more vulnerable to floods due to weak early warning systems, inadequate drainage systems, and inadequate dwelling constructions (May & Wrathall, 2020). Long-term investment from municipalities working with the federal government is necessary to address infrastructural vulnerabilities (Pelling & Pelling, 2022).

Ineffective disaster response plans and exercises may be caused by residents' low participation (Tschakert & Weichselgartner, 2021). Municipalities may empower township populations and increase capacity through participatory risk assessments and awareness programmes. To effectively respond to disasters, partnerships between NGOs and commercial businesses have promise, but power relations must be carefully considered (Hearn & Kennan, 2017). Compared to small NGOs, large corporations frequently have access to substantially more resources (Smith & Bryson, 2017). According to Edwards and Gavron (2020), this may result in uneven influence within partnerships, which could marginalise the priorities and voices of NGOs, especially those incorporated within low-income communities. It is imperative to establish mechanisms that ensure transparent decision-making and hold private and governmental actors responsible for the allocation and quality of help (Pelling & Pelling, 2022). Small NGOs can promote collaborations that are well-defined in terms of roles, duties, and accountability frameworks. Notwithstanding difficulties, small NGOs and NPOs can learn a lot from the KwaZulu-Natal floods. Promoting community-based risk reduction techniques, such as early warning systems and evacuation exercises, can be a crucial part of small NGOs' pre-disaster preparation efforts in low-income communities (Altay et al., 2017). Small NGOs can promote sustainable investments in township infrastructure and social services, collaborating with the national government and local governments to address underlying vulnerabilities (Bebbington et al., 2018). For more complete disaster response and recovery, Hearn and Kennan (2017) suggest that strategic collaborations with academic institutions, private firms, and other NGOs can be formed to utilise different expertise and resources.

Small NGOs must be cautious when forming these alliances to ensure openness and maintain authority over their primary goals. These observations have led to the following suggestions for small NGOs/NPOs that work in low-income areas. Build partnerships that provide complementary resources and expertise while preserving autonomy and community focus; prioritise building residents' capacity and empowering them through training and information sharing; ensure open lines of communication with other stakeholders for a seamless and effective response; and advocate for the development of infrastructure and social safety nets to address chronic vulnerabilities. Small NGOs/NPOs can significantly improve disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts in low-income communities by encouraging community engagement, fighting for long-term solutions, and forming

strategic collaborations. The floods in KwaZulu-Natal serve as a sobering reminder of the need for improved power and resource distribution within disaster management partnerships, as well as for bridging the gap between townships and municipalities.

Theoretical Review

The KwaMashu floods in South Africa in 2022 serve as a reminder of the necessity of efficient disaster response on a small scale. The cooperation of commercial firms and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is essential. Important insights into this relationship can be gained from two important theoretical vantage points.

Network Governance Theory

Network governance theory emphasises the importance of partnerships and collaboration in addressing difficult societal issues. It was first proposed by Erik-Hans Klijn and Joop Koppenjan in the early 2000s (Rhodes, 2007). NGOs and commercial businesses establish makeshift networks in the wake of a disaster to tend to immediate needs. According to this theory, a variety of actors must each capitalise on their capabilities to provide an effective response (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2016). While private firms may offer resources and logistical experience, NGOs bring local understanding and community trust. Network governance isn't always fair. Large corporations may be more powerful than smaller NGOs due to their financial resources, a situation that could marginalise the views and agendas of the latter (Edwards & Gavron, 2020). The emphasis of network governance is on dependency. While corporate enterprises may provide resources and logistical experience, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) add local knowledge and community confidence. This cooperation makes it possible to address the effects of the flood more effectively.

The KwaMashu flood disaster offers the same opportunity and coordination from partners. The collaboration of the NGO-private partnership with the municipality and provincial government speaks to the network governance Theory where it is imperative for this network to be mobilised in the disaster management efforts for the purposes of delivering support to the people.

Resource Mobilisation Theory

According to McCarthy and Zald's (1977) resource mobilisation theory, organisations use resources to accomplish their objectives. This theory provides insight into how NGOs and commercial businesses exchange resources to accomplish common objectives in the KwaMashu environment. A company may provide financial or logistical help, while an NGO may grant beneficiaries access (Smith & Bryson, 2017). Resource mobilisation is affected by the partnership's features. Formalised collaborations with explicit agreements have two benefits: open communication and improved access to resources (Hwang & Kim, 2018).

To address immediate needs following the floods, NGOs and private businesses trade resources. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) may facilitate access for beneficiaries, whereas corporations offer financial or logistical assistance (such as lodging, supplies, and transportation).

Theories of network governance and resource mobilisation highlight the importance of cooperation in disaster response in small-scale settings such as KwaMashu. Exchange of resources is facilitated, and the talents of multiple actors are harnessed through collaboration; yet, obstacles such as power asymmetry and ambiguous agreements necessitate careful management. Social workers may promote equitable relationships and guarantee that resource mobilisation leads to more efficient and fair disaster response in KwaMashu by being aware of these theoretical stances.

Findings and Conclusion

Three corresponding research objectives aim to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of collaborative models informed by network governance and resource mobilisation theories, develop recommendations for fostering equitable partnerships, and identify successful strategies for building community-based resilience employed by small NGOs. By examining these key areas and research questions, this paper found out and therefore concluded that a more comprehensive understanding of collaboration in disaster response, informed by theories of network governance and resource mobilisation is critical. This knowledge can be used to develop and implement more effective and equitable partnerships that empower small NGOs and ensure a two-way

communication, and a just and sustainable recovery for KwaMashu and similar communities facing future disasters.

Disaster response in micro contexts is complicated, as demonstrated by the deadly KwaMashu floods of 2022. To meet pressing demands, cooperation between Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and private businesses has enormous potential. Nevertheless, when negotiating these alliances, it is necessary to carefully analyse power relations and resource mobilisation tactics. To enable successful resource exchange and meet needs, formalised agreements and defined roles are necessary. As private businesses can provide important resources and logistical know-how, collaboration enables NGOs to take advantage of local knowledge and trust. However, the voices of smaller NGOs may be marginalised by unequal power dynamics within partnerships. When negotiating these dynamics, social workers are essential. They can guarantee an all-encompassing and efficient response by promoting fair collaborations and fostering communication.

Moreover, fostering long-term resilience requires empowering locals via community involvement. The floods in KwaMashu highlight the need for cooperation that capitalises on individual capabilities while redressing disparities. Social workers can help KwaMashu create a resilient fabric by promoting community empowerment and fostering teamwork. More lasting recovery can be attained through empowering communities, establishing equitable partnerships, and strategically mobilising resources. KwaMashu would not be able to progress towards a robust future until then with greater strength, readiness, and unity.

Recommendation

To have this greater strength that will support readiness, the need to have a clear communication plan is necessary. It is imperative to note that communication plays a crucial role in every phase of flood disaster management, from preparedness to recovery. Some strategies that this paper can employ and recommend are:

- **Risk Communication:**

- Educating the public about flood risks, including potential impacts and safety measures.
- Disseminating information on flood warning systems and evacuation procedures.

- Promoting community awareness and preparedness through public campaigns and drills.

- **Early Warning Systems:**

- Establishing and maintaining effective communication channels for issuing timely flood warnings.
- Utilising various communication technologies, such as radio, television, mobile alerts, and social media, to reach affected populations.

- **Emergency Communication:**

- Coordinating communication between emergency responders, government agencies, and affected communities.
- Providing real-time information on flood conditions, evacuation routes, and available resources.
- Facilitating communication for search and rescue operations.

- **Information Dissemination:**

- Providing accurate and up-to-date information to the public through various media channels.
- Combating misinformation and rumours that can create panic and hinder response efforts.
- Establishing hotlines and information centres to address public inquiries

The application of risk communication should be nuanced to resonate with the culture and disposition of the KwaMashu residents aiming to persuade them to respond to the emergencies that threaten them. To this end, the communication should highlight the information, experts' opinions and community leader's advisories about risks and threats. The considerations that should be mobilised to communicate to the residents are

- **Accessibility:** Communication must be accessible to all segments of the population, including those with disabilities, language barriers, and limited access to technology

- **Reliability:** Communication systems must be reliable and resilient, especially during emergencies when infrastructure may be damaged.
- **Trust:** Building trust with the public is essential for effective communication during disasters
- **Technology:** Utilising diverse technologies is very important. This includes things such as social media platforms, radio, television.

In essence, effective communication is the lifeline of flood disaster management, enabling timely and coordinated actions to save lives and minimise damage, and this is the strategy the NGO-private partnerships should employ for residents of KwaMashu while mobilising other resources to address the issues.

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