Shocks and Politics: The Political Economy of Natural Disasters in Africa

Jennifer Bussell & Adam Colligan - September 28, 2012
Background

• Third course-based research initiative in CCAPS program

• Goal: to evaluate the causes of variation in African governments’ efforts to reduce the risk of, prepare for, and respond to natural shocks
Existing Research

• Rich literature on incentives to invest - in development generally and natural shocks in particular
  – Large number of potential explanations for variation

• Empirical testing re: hazards typically:
  – Relies on questionable quantitative data
  – Focuses on a single case study
  – Rarely considers interactive hypotheses

• Limited comprehensive evaluation of arguments
Medium-N Case Study Approach

• Five paired case studies of African countries
• Qualitative research, including fieldwork, conducted by graduate students at the LBJ School of Public Affairs
• Evaluation of a wide range of potential explanations for variation in national capacities to respond to natural hazards
Case Studies
## Capacity Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>H1: Political Priority</th>
<th>H2: Assessment/Monitoring</th>
<th>H3: Culture of Safety</th>
<th>H4: Risk Reduction</th>
<th>H5: Response Preparedness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypothesis Categories

- Perceived risk
- Economic strength
- Electoral incentives
- Political development
- Moral hazard
## Overall Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence to contradict mechanism</th>
<th>Ethiopia</th>
<th>Kenya</th>
<th>Gambia</th>
<th>Senegal</th>
<th>Malawi</th>
<th>Mozambique</th>
<th>Ghana</th>
<th>Togo</th>
<th>Zambia</th>
<th>Zimbabwe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence to support mechanism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed evidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Perceived Risk

- Ethiopia: +
- Kenya: -
- Gambia: +
- Senegal: +
- Malawi: +
- Mozambique: +
- Ghana: +
- Togo: -
- Zambia: +
- Zimbabwe: +

### Economic Strength

- Ethiopia: -
- Kenya: -
- Gambia: +
- Senegal: +
- Malawi: +
- Mozambique: +
- Ghana: +
- Togo: +
- Zambia: +
- Zimbabwe: +

### Electoral Incentives

- Ethiopia: -
- Kenya: +
- Gambia: +
- Senegal: +
- Malawi: +
- Mozambique: +
- Ghana: +
- Togo: +
- Zambia: +
- Zimbabwe: +

### Political Development

- Ethiopia: +
- Kenya: +
- Gambia: +
- Senegal: +
- Malawi: +
- Mozambique: -
- Ghana: +
- Togo: +
- Zambia: +
- Zimbabwe: +

### Moral Hazard

- Ethiopia: -
- Kenya: +
- Gambia: -
- Senegal: -
- Malawi: -
- Mozambique: -
- Ghana: -
- Togo: -
- Zambia: -
- Zimbabwe: +
Perceived Risk & Economics

• Countries with high perceived risk are more likely to invest in DRM, even if poor

• But a lack of resources constrains most African states

• And some with economic resources have failed to invest
Democracy, Elections & Political Development

• Politics matters, but democracy often supports response over preparedness

• Political development matters regardless of democracy...

• ...and helps to explain otherwise puzzling cases
Moral Hazard

• This may be a risk in theory...

• ...but there is little evidence in practice

• Active focus on preparedness by international actors may explain why
Conclusions

• Comprehensive, qualitative assessment of African government capacities in DRM

• Evidence to support a number of dominant arguments...

• ...but more compelling is the interaction of multiple variables

• Moral hazard findings highlight importance of IOs and donors in ensuring DRR and preparedness
This material is based upon work supported by, or in part by, the U. S. Army Research Laboratory and the U. S. Army Research Office under contract/grant number W911NF-09-1-0077.