



# **Children's Experiences of Participation and Resilience to Flooding: Insights from Muzarabani, Zimbabwe**

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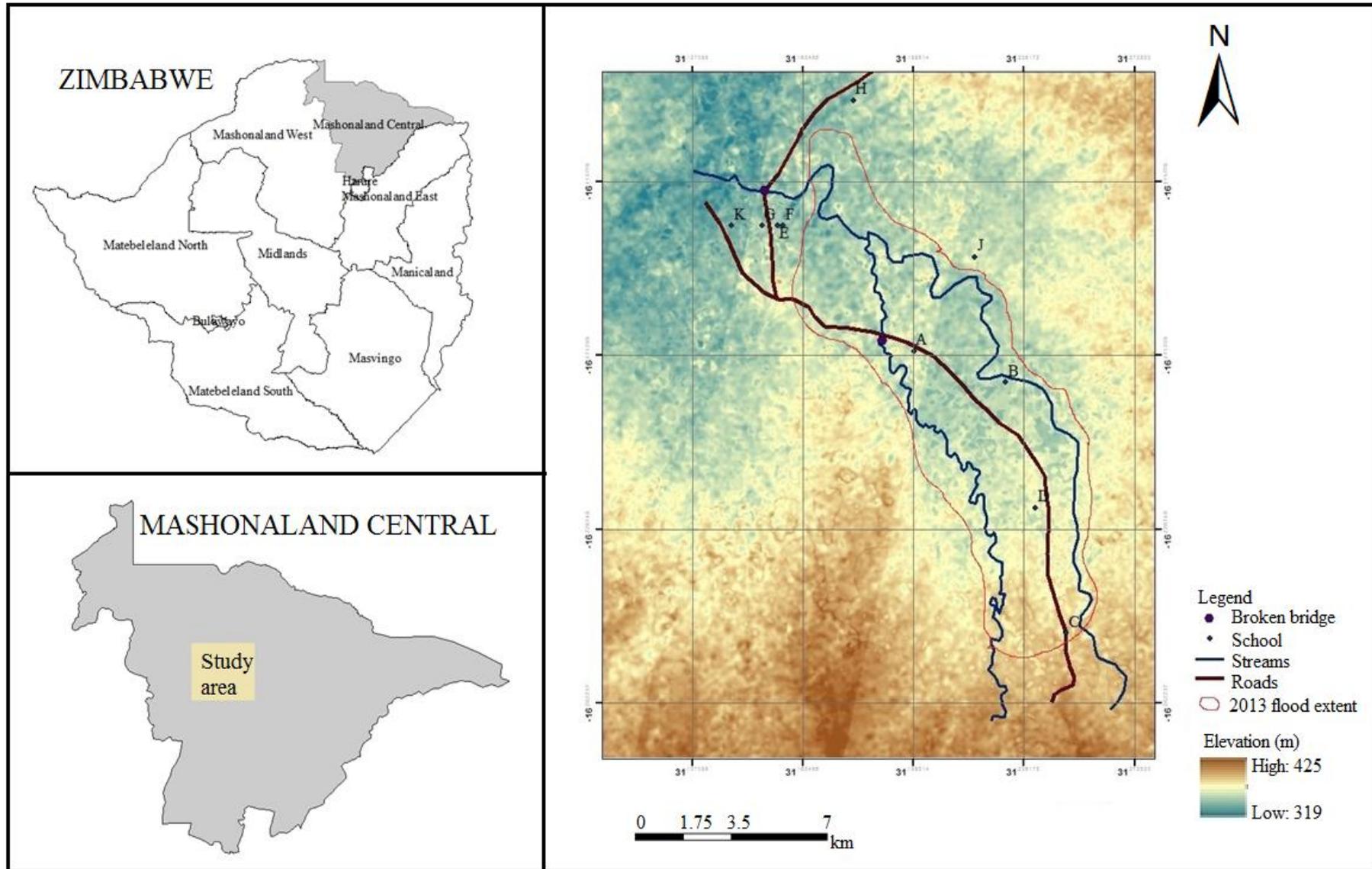
# *Introduction*

- Children represent the largest segment of the population in developing countries and are often the first victims of natural disasters
- Throughout the world, about 66 million children are affected every year by disasters
- they form the most photographed and vulnerable groups when disasters occur but are the least listened to members of the society.
- Little attention is being paid on building capacity of children to deal with disasters

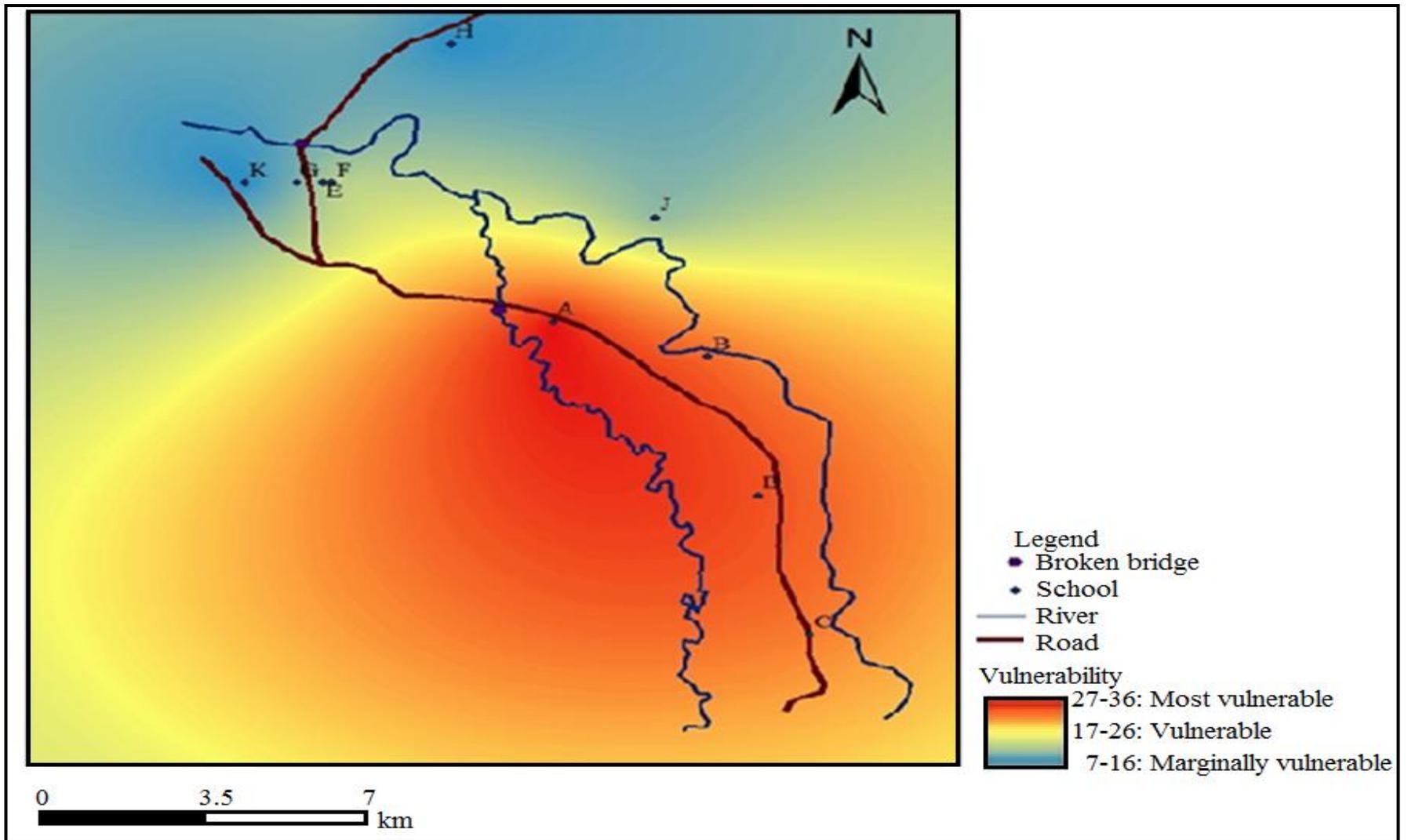
- *However, the recognition of the need to involve children in DRR has gained momentum following the adoption of the HFA (2005-2015) replaced by the SFDRR (2015-2030) and the UNCRC (1989) but, there is lack of children's participation and evidence to support it.*
- *Understanding children's disaster and participation experiences, their level of involvement in DRR and factors that affect their participation is of particular significance if we are to strengthen resilience*

# *Methodology*

- Forty individual interviews were conducted with 40 school children (8-18years) from the four most vulnerable schools
- four focus group discussions were conducted at children's respective schools.
- 20 adult interviews.
- 10 semi structured interviews were conducted with DRR practitioners
- Finally a two-day workshop on Disaster Education and Community Resilience: Mainstreaming DRR in the Education Curriculum was conducted with the DRR practitioners country wide.



*Map of the study area*



*Vulnerability map*

# Findings

## Impact of disasters



*Children crossing a flooded stream*



*Bridges destroyed by flooding cutting off some communities*



*School roofs blown off*



*families loosing almost all of their belongings*



# Children's participation experience in DRR

- *Relayed disaster information*
- *Children distributed disaster-related materials, food redistribution*
- *food for work programs such as gully reclamation and road maintenance*
- *Gathering of wild fruits during crisis*
- *Involved in paid labor to provide food and income*
- *Miss school tending crops*
- *Early marriages as a form of family security*

- *Although children indicated their willingness to be involved in DRR initiatives their involvement was limited to having their opinions being considered.*
- *It was the adults who make the final decision of what is in a child's best interest.*
- *Adults proved that they rarely seek children's views and do not provide space for children to participate.*

# Factors affecting children's participation in DRR

- Availability of DRR information
- Socio- economic context
- Resource availability
- Cultural factors
- Childhood conceptualisation
- Adult attitude towards children's participation
- Children's attitude towards participation
- Institutional factors

- It was also noted that most of the issues concerning children were on paper and were not being practiced.
- Most activities are tokenistic rather than genuine participation
- With some viewing it to be:
  - Time consuming as children spent time preparing for the activities and may take children away from school
  - Costly as children cannot mobilise their own resources
  - A new concept which lacks stakeholder participation
  - Difficult to implement due to cultural differences
  - Require political will

# Overcoming children's participation challenges

## *Enhancing DRR knowledge and skills*



*Academics and disaster practitioners from various institutions attending capacity building workshop at Bindura University of Science Education*

# Strengthening school capacity in dealing with disasters

- *Create a culture of safety in the schools (flood and storm resistant buildings)*
- *Development of infrastructure and rehabilitation*



Children having classes under a shade & tree

# ***School-community linkages***

- *despite the functions provided by the schools to the community, schools and communities are often disconnected in terms of DRR activities*
- *Come up with child focused CBDRR activities*

# *Institutional support*

- *There are two institutions that deal with disasters in Zimbabwe*
- *There is the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) in the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (MPSLSW) that deals with drought.*
- *Other DRR issues such as accidents and flooding are dealt with by The Civil Protection Directorate in the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and Urban Development*
- *Need to be proactive rather than reactive*
- *A separate Ministry that deals with disaster related issues*

# *Conclusion*

- *children's participation does not imply wiping away childhood, treating children as adults or pressurizing them to make choices.*
- *Rather children's participation may be a way of encouraging them to be involved in issues that concern their lives in order to reduce their vulnerabilities*

# Recommendations

- If children have access to resources and information, are encouraged to participate in DRR activities, and can have access to personal and communal support, resilience and mitigation improve
- Stakeholders can achieve this through *the provision of enough time to understand children's views, issues, and perceptions, and can make available child-friendly information on community-based DRR*

- *Laws should be implemented with legal support to encourage children to express their views freely.*
- *To facilitate children's participation, the government, working together with organizations that deal with children can educate the public on the importance of children's participation in DRR.*

- *The education sector can also consider mainstreaming DRR in the education curriculum, which could be formal or informal.*
- *Parents can also provide the emotional and intellectual resources needed for children to express their views freely.*
- *This would facilitate the identification of children most at risk; facilitate their participation and address their particular needs in order to strengthen community resilience.*

***THANK YOU!!!!!!***

