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DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE IRONY OF FIRE FIGHTING APPROACH TOWARDS NATURAL HAZARDS

Abstract:

The continuous distraction of rural livelihoods activities, loss of lives and displacements of large numbers of rural populations has brought about questioning the applicability of risk and disaster mitigation and management approach implementation in most of developing countries in Southern Africa. The fact that floods are still rendering a huge impact every year in Mozambique, Malawi and even South Africa for example, explains the inadequacy in terms of the ability of these countries to deal with natural hazards. The common explanation of disaster is that its impact causes human, material, economic and environmental losses in such a way that such exceed the ability of the affected communities to cope using their own resources. In other words if the communities which are affected by a natural event has the ability to cope in the aftermath of a hazard, such event would not be regarded as a disaster. That is the occurrence of a hazard does not necessarily lead to a disaster, thus risk and disaster mitigation and management should focus on how communities can be prepared to cope independently during and after a natural hazard has occurred. This paper argue that until appropriate measures are formulated to empower communities to deal with the risk and natural hazards independently, government will always been required to apply a fire fighting approach towards disaster. This paper explores the systems of disaster management in South Africa, looking at its appropriateness, suitability, application and effectiveness. The paper conclude that there is a dare need to formulate proper strategies which are proactive in nature towards dealing with natural events such as drought, heat waves and floods in developing countries such as those Southern Africa.

Keywords:

Disaster Management; Natural Hazards, Fire-fighting Approach; South Africa

JEL Classification: R11, I30, O13