

Abstract

This article examined the contribution of indigenous knowledge to disaster risk reduction activities in Zimbabwe. The current discourse underrates the use of indigenous knowledge of communities by practitioners when dealing with disasters', as the knowledge is often viewed as outdated and primitive. This study, which was conducted in 2016, sought to examine this problem through analysing the potential contribution of indigenous knowledge as a useful disaster risk reduction intervention. Tsholotsho district in Matabeleland, North province of Zimbabwe, which frequently experiences perennial devastating floods, was used as a case study. Interviews and researcher observations were used to gather data from 40 research participants. The findings were that communities understand weather patterns and could predict imminent flooding after studying trees and clouds, and the behaviours of certain animal species. Local communities also use available local resources to put structural measures in place as part of disaster risk reduction interventions. Despite this important potential, the study found that the indigenous knowledge of disaster risk reduction of the communities is often shunned by practitioners. The practitioners claim that indigenous knowledge lacks documentation, it is not found in all generational classes, it is contextualised to particular communities and the knowledge cannot be scientifically validated. The study concluded that both local communities and disaster risk reduction practitioners can benefit from the indigenous knowledge of communities. This research has the potential to benefit communities, policymakers and disaster risk reduction practitioners.