

## Chapter 07

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# Rural Communities Understanding of Flood Disaster Risk: A Case Study of Tsholotsho District, Zimbabwe

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## Introduction

Natural disasters are a growing threat to human livelihoods, especially with the unfolding climate change whose effects have indirectly resulted in the loss of human life, injuries and destruction to property and infrastructure (UNISDR, Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction, 2009; WCDRR, 2015; Berg & De Majo 2017; UNOCHA, 2019). The world has recorded a marked increase in the occurrence of natural disasters and, of these, flooding is the most prevalent (UN/CRED, 2015; World Economic Forum, 2016).

In response to the above natural disaster-related challenges, the UNISDR coordinated the global agreement known as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction: 2015-2030. The global agreement is a 15-year, voluntary, non-binding agreement which recognises that the state has the primary role in reducing disaster risk. It was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly and was ratified by 137 states, including Zimbabwe. The framework is underlined by the understanding that effective disaster risk management begins with understanding the risk itself, and in Tsholotsho District it is flood disaster risk, through joint assessment involving experts and at-risk communities (CADRI, 2017). The framework aims to achieve a substantial reduction of risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health, as well as in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries. It has four priorities for action, namely, (i) understanding disaster risk (ii) strengthening disaster risk governance (iii) investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience (iv) enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and building back better (UNISDR, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015).

The purpose of the study was to analyse rural communities' understanding of flood disasters in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction: 2015-2030. The study employed a descriptive case study research design. Data was collected using a survey questionnaire, and key informant interviews were used to solicit information from the affected communities, as well as the District Civil Protection Unit. A disaster risk understanding model was developed, which shows the three main factors that influence understanding of disaster risk. Opportunities for disaster risk reduction in Tsholotsho District lie in the villages' organisational structure, the presence of non-governmental organisations as well as departments like the President's Office, the Environmental Management Agency, Agritex, and the Forestry Commission. All these are channels that can be used for communication and dissemination of disaster information, thereby enhancing the locals' understanding of disaster risk. The chapter seeks to assess the extent to which the Sendai Framework's first priority area is being implemented in the context of Zimbabwe in general and Tsholotsho District in particular.