

Town Planning and Development for Disaster Prevention: Insights from Gokwe Town, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

An increasing number of disasters across the globe have prompted the creation of strategies for disaster risk reduction and resilience to save lives and property in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda (NUA). The 2030 Agenda calls for all development planning to simultaneously tackle disaster risk reduction and inclusiveness. This paper aims to remold urban planning for upcoming new towns in developing countries so that planners can be able to include indigenous knowledge systems in urban planning. The study was conducted in a new town, Gokwe, Zimbabwe, with a population of 8,118 from which a sample size of 229 was drawn using Cochran's sample size determination formula and the 30% rule. A mixed-methods analytic case study was conducted to evaluate the potential of the town's planning processes in preventing natural and human-induced disasters. The study used questionnaires, semistructured interviews, desktop sources, focus group discussions, and remote sensing. It analyzed the strategies, scope, and relevance of Gokwe town disaster risk-reduction strategies and their integration into town planning and development using six wards, from 1992 to 2020. The Urban Disaster Reduction Index (UDRI) model was applied based on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction indicators to measure the extent to which the town council's development planning can help to reduce disaster and foster sustainable development. The UDRI was calculated for the four Sendai Framework priority areas and proved that the council's disaster management is weak. The chief cause was found to be the town's development control regulations and the national urban councils act that excludes contributions from local communities and leadership, placing new town planning in the hands of bureaucrats, technicians, and politicians only. It was concluded that for disaster management to improve requires local DRR and national urban development policies reformulation