

# ABSTRACT

This study sought to analyse and determine the status of Contingency Planning Systems among Disaster Management Authorities in Southern Africa. This study provides a learning point for public authorities, humanitarians and other scholars on the importance of contingency planning in the field of Disaster Risk Management. This is facilitated through the distribution of this study as a soft or hard copy.

The quantitative descriptive survey research design was found to be the most suitable design for this study capable of investigating a wider geographical area in a short period of time, capturing the respondents' views on common hazards, the status of contingency planning, the frequency of reviewing the plans, as well as their capacity to engage into contingency planning.

In this study a structured questionnaire was used to reach out to all the 14 countries that are member states to the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and a 50% response rate was achieved, giving this study a strong platform for generalising the results. To facilitate triangulation document analysis, face-to-face interviews in Zimbabwe and telephone interviews in other countries were used to follow-up on responses provided by the respondents. One of the challenges faced was on following up on the respondents considering that the study was covering all the fourteen SADC countries. The researcher had to make follow-up using electronic mailing, phoning, faxing reminders as well as making use of a network of friends in various countries to follow-up on the researcher's behalf.

Data was tabulated, coded and analysed through spread-sheets leading to the development of frequency tables, tables, graphs and pie charts that revealed trends, patterns and other salient features. The major findings revealed that Disaster Management Authorities in Southern Africa have a clear understanding of the hazards that frequently affect their countries. On the other hand, the study revealed that 71% contingency planning capacity gap existed pointing to a fragile contingency planning status. The study reveals that 29% of the respondents did not have Disaster Management Acts. Droughts, floods and epidemics were identified as the most frequently occurring, severe and common hazards in Southern Africa which have been recurring, however besides their recurrence the study reveals that only 29% had tangible inter-agency contingency plans developed in line with the compound contingency planning format from IASC (2001:12), UNHCR (2003) and IFRC (2006) which 71% of the respondents willingness to adopt.

Major recommendation of this study includes building the contingency planning capacity for Disaster Management Authorities by promoting a culture of preparedness. In view of the study findings and conclusions further in-depth research on the effects of insufficient contingency planning at country or regional level is recommended.