

Jàmbá

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Letter from the Editor

2012 has been an exciting year for disaster risk reduction on the African continent. Not only have we seen a number of disaster risk reduction policies and plans being published by governments, we also see heightened political commitment and attention given to matters of continental concern. Southern Africa, in particular, has had an eventful year. We saw the establishment of the Southern Africa Society for Disaster Reduction as well as the First Biennial Conference of the Society held in Potchefstroom, South Africa from 10 to 12 October 2012. It was also at this conference that *Jàmbá: Journal of Disaster Studies* was officially handed over to the Society by the African Centre for Disaster Studies. Not only does the journal add significant value to the research focus of the society, the journal has already benefited from wider exposure. One of the main focuses of the editorial team was assistance to younger researchers to give them an opportunity to publish their work. This edition of *Jàmbá* is an example of the younger and upcoming research talent we have in the region.

In this non-themed edition, we have contributions from east, west, and southern Africa, all different in their focus and topic. Evaristo Haulle (<http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v4i1.44>) provides an insightful focus on earthquakes as hazards in the Rungwe Volcani Province in Tanzania. The author focuses on peoples' attitudes to earthquakes and finds that ignorance remains a significant risk driver in vulnerable communities. Amoani, Appeaning-Addo and Laryea (<http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v4i1.45>), from the Department of Oceanography and Fisheries at the University of Ghana, share their research into short-term shoreline retreat assessment. They employ a number of field, GIS, GPS and laboratory assessments, and in doing so find a significantly high rate of erosion in Glefe, Ghana.

Gideon van Riet (<http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v4i1.52>) adopts an environmental justice perspective in his assessment of recurrent drought in the North-West Province of South Africa. He finds that discourses in disaster risk management and legislative compliance have not been very useful in framing issues of disaster and drought and suggests that environmental justice discourses might be a more useful tool for disaster risk reduction purposes.

Sakijege, Lupala and Sheuya (<http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v4i1.46>) from Ardhi University in Tanzania contribute a paper on urban risk in an informal settlement in Dar es Salaam. They find that the main causes of urban flooding are poor maintenance of infrastructure and poor development planning. The most common coping strategies at household level are the use of sandbags and tree logs; raised pit latrines and doorsteps; provision of water outlet pipes above plinth level; construction of embankments, protection walls and elevation of house foundations; seasonal displacement; and boiling and chemical treatment of water. They also make recommendations for future action at household, community and city level.

Makala Ngaka (<http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v4i1.47>) brings the focus back to South Africa in his study on drought preparedness, impact and response by farmers in the Eastern Cape and Free State provinces. He finds that the decision to reduce livestock during drought was influenced by access to land and by race.

Since 2009, southern Africa has been involved in the Views from the Frontline project driven by the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction. Terry Gibson (<http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v4i1.48>) has contributed an insightful paper on the collaboration and shared actions of the Network. He provides a reflective practitioner's perspective on the development of the Network and its actions and suggests a framework of 'communities of praxis' for future network development.

Following the theme of the Global Network by Gibson, Gaston *et al.* (<http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v4i1.56>) reflect on local governance in disaster risk reduction actions since the inception of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) in Cameroon. In their paper, they provide empirical evidence of the implementation of the HFA at local government level. Unfortunately, their research shows that Cameroon still needs to make significant strides in disaster risk reduction governance at local level.

Admire Nyamwanza (<http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v4i1.55>) gives a critical conceptual review of livelihood resilience and adaptive capacity. He argues that resilience and adaptive capacity have gained ground in ecology, climate change, disaster risk reduction and related discourses, but that there is a lack of common understanding and a clear definition of the concepts.

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Drawing on literature from various disciplines, the paper traces the roots of resilience and adaptive capacity and suggests indicators and pillar processes towards their integration into livelihoods thinking.

Rambau, Beukes and Fraser (<http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v4i1.61>) from the University of Pretoria, South Africa, investigate the integration of disaster risk education into school curricula in South Africa. Interestingly, they find a heightened awareness of the types of hazards and risks present in the target groups, but that teaching about hazards and disasters still remain lacking, although vital.

In their theoretical study, Coetzee and Van Niekerk (<http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v4i1.54>) trace the evolution of the disaster management cycle. They employ a general systems theory approach and find early traces of the cycle from literature dating back to the 1920s. They also find that the disaster management cycle is concurrent with terms such as emergency response, relief, recovery and rehabilitation, and is thus not very applicable to disaster risk reduction thinking.

The last paper in this edition comes from Kenya. Kioko and Obiri (<http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v4i1.49>) investigate

household attitudes and knowledge about safe drinking water in peri-urban communities in western Kenya. Safe drinking water is a significant health disaster risk reduction measure but it remains a major challenge in urban Africa. They find that although there is sufficient knowledge of safe practices for drinking water, not many of the respondents practiced these appropriately. They recommend integrated training and awareness as one way to ensure safe drinking water in peri-urban areas.

Lastly, *Jambá: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies* has moved over to a new, online management system with the assistance of AOSIS OpenJournals. Not only was the transition almost seamless, but we have received very good feedback from authors using the system. Our thanks go to the AOSIS team, and in particular Mr Duncan Hooker, Ms Trudie Retief and Ms Suzanne Taylor for their professional assistance in this transition period. I would like to encourage you to keep submitting your research on disaster risk reduction and related issues and help us build the body of knowledge in this very important field.

In conclusion, I trust that you will find the papers in Volume 4, No.1, interesting and valuable.