

The Vulnerability of Low-income Communities to Flood Hazards, Missionvale, South Africa

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ABSTRACT This study reports on the vulnerability and coping strategies of low-income communities living in Missionvale in dealing with severe floods in Port Elizabeth. The data for the study was obtained by conducting structured face-to-face interviews with ninety local people consisting of Missionvale residents, government and non-government officials who were selected by a snowball sampling. The fieldwork was complemented by field observations on the relief, drainage and settlement locations. The findings indicate that the vulnerability of the Missionvale community to flooding is high, owing to weak social resources, insufficient institutional support, poorly built houses and limited infrastructure. Insecurity, crime and a lack of disease control have become negative spin-offs in this situation. With climate change likely to exacerbate floods and disasters, it is recommended that the policy directions should effectively respond to severe flooding by improving service delivery, providing structural flood measures in housing and storm-water drainage, supporting the flood victims with the needed resources, strengthening community participation, acknowledging indigenous knowledge on flood management, and providing effective early warning systems.