

Indigenous knowledge systems, drought, and people's resilience and responses: The case of Msinga Community in Kwazulu-Natal.

Rudigi Rukema Joseph* and Sipho Simelane Hamilton

Economic History And Development Studies, University of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa.

Corresponding author: jrukema@yahoo.com

Abstract

Because drought has numerous effects on people and environment, it has received the attention of several scholars and policy makers. It leads to the disruption of the normal functioning of society causing human, material and environmental losses which at times exceeds the ability and capabilities to cope with its effects. It is because of the magnitude of its impact and its multidimensional nature that some scholars have concluded that its management needs combined institutional and indigenous approaches. Numerous studies have demonstrated that local communities have well-developed traditional indigenous knowledge systems for disaster management, rain predictions and coping strategies, making them more resilient to environmental change and external shocks. This paper investigates and examines the application of indigenous knowledge in the management of drought. For purposes of manageability, it focusses on Msinga village in KwaZulu-Natal, paying specific attention to droughts that have been recorded and that prevail in the area and the manner in which people have continued to construct their livelihoods in the face of such drought. The paper argues for the integration of indigenous knowledge systems in the construction of strategies to cope with elements of climate change in rural communities. The utility value of these knowledge systems has stood the test of time and they are well understood by the people who practice them.