

**Institutional responses to climate change: Case of drought in Msinga, South Africa**

Rudigi Rukema Joseph\* and Siphon Simelane Hamilton

*Economic History and Development Studies, University of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa. Corresponding author: [jrukema@yahoo.com](mailto:jrukema@yahoo.com)*

**Abstract**

Recognizing the impact of natural disasters, in 1987 the UN General Assembly designated 1990-2000 as the International Decade for Natural Disasters (IDNDR) and set a goal to reduce the loss of life and damage resulting from the growing number of disasters (United Nations, 1999). Conventions on combating the impact of natural disasters on communities have been drawn and signed by member states. South Africa as member of the UN has also been a signatory to the conventions and pledged to adhere to the conventions. This paper seeks to examine the South Africa's government's policy aimed at mitigating the effects of drought on rural communities through case study of Msinga villages in KwaZulu-Natal Province, paying special attention to droughts that have been recorded and prevailing in the area.

The literature demonstrated that on paper South Africa has the best of policy with regard to natural disaster, but hardly put into practice. In the case of drought in Msinga, the findings demonstrated that there is poor capacity in government to deal with disasters and this has serious repercussions for poor rural communities. Disaster management requires disaster reduction, planning, and capacity to reduce the losses borne by impoverished households. This process will be more effective if there is efficient mobilization of resources, rapid responses, and a long-term strategy to prevent drought and reduce the risks of vulnerable groups, rather than transferring risks and this is what is lacking in the implementation of the South Africa's disaster management. Furthermore, the new legislation, the Disaster Management Act of 200 is surrounded by long and complicated bureaucratic processes. It is important that any forms of financial and bureaucratic bottlenecks are eliminated so that assistance reaches people more quickly and is based on developing a long-term programme targeting the reduction of risks from the drought prevailing in Msinga. It is also important that NGOs in the area are empowered and involved in disaster management and are able to play their full role.