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How communities' perceptions of disasters influence disaster response: managing landslides on Mount Elgon, Uganda

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to assess the role of people's perception in disaster management. It is based on a study carried out along the slopes of Mount Elgon in Eastern Uganda. People living in the study area have experienced a number of landslides, but the landslide in 2010 had the most far-reaching effects on community livelihoods and resulted in a major setback to development efforts in the area. Experiences of landslides have enabled the local people to develop a number of interpretations of the causes and effects of the phenomena. The study revealed that community members did not share uniform perceptions. Whereas some members advanced technical or physical explanations for the 2010 disaster, others believed that some form of divine power was behind it. Strengthening social networks and integrating communities' perceptions in intervention mechanisms were identified as possible ways of managing future landslide disasters.



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