AN ANALYSIS ON DISASTER PREPAREDNESS OF DISTRICT CIVIL PROTECTION UNIT IN DEALING WITH VELD FIRES [A CASE STUDY OF BULILIMA DISTRICT: JANUARY 2010 – DECEMBER 2012]

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ABSTRACT

The study evaluated the level of preparedness of Bulilima District Civil Protection Unit (BDCPU) in dealing with veld fires. The objectives of the study were: to investigate the main causes of veld fires in the communities; to assess the impact of uncontrolled veld fires on the communities and the natural environment; to find out the level of expertise in rank and file of the BDCPU members, viz-a-vis disaster preparedness in relation to veld fires; to investigate the effectiveness of the current intervention strategies being employed by the BDCPU in trying to prevent and minimise the effects of veld fires; and to recommend other possible intervention strategies to be used by the DCPUs for dealing with veld fires. A descriptive survey was employed in gathering valid quantitative and qualitative data for the topic under study. The population of the study fell into two categories namely: 80 community leaders of Bulilima district and 100 members of the BDCPU, community leaders and members of the BDCPU. A sample size of 20 community members and 20 community leaders was used by stratifying the community members according to their respective wards. Random selection was then conducted in each stratum so as to get the desired number. The same procedure was done to members of the BDCPU and community leaders to come up with 20 respondents respectively. Questionnaires were used to solicit information from community members and from BDCPU members. The findings were presented using tables, pie charts and bar graphs. The study established that most veld fires were human induced. Although the institutional framework of disaster management was in place this was not fully utilised. It was established that there was a general increase on the number of veld fires and their impact in Bulilima district, despite the knowledge, structure framework of the BDCPU and the intervention strategies to reduce veld fires incidences. Recommendations were that BDCPU need to conduct regular campaigns and rehearsal of emergency drills at least once a month. Stiffer and deterrent penalties should also be imposed on those who deliberately destroy the natural environment through veld fires. This would result in community being educated, deter the would-be culprits and improves the state of preparedness by BDCPU in dealing with veld fires. In conclusion, the study reveals that BDCPU is not fully prepared to deal with veld fires.