

COMMUNITIES' KNOWLEDGE, AWARENESS AND PREPAREDNESS TO FLASH FLOODS AT A SMALL CATCHMENT SCALE. CASE-STUDY: BEND SUBCARPATHIANS, ROMANIA

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The assessment of local communities' knowledge, awareness and response capacity to the effects of flash floods is of major concern for ensuring the implementation of efficient risk management actions and policies, particularly in areas affected by different types of extreme natural events (e.g. earthquakes, floods). Do to their increased occurrence and magnitude high levels of preparedness are required in order to improve response and reduce the related adverse consequences. The current research was built upon a perception-oriented survey using questionnaires and structured interviews which were carried out in 2014 and addressed to over 50 households and local authorities (e.g. local decision-makers, county Civil Protection Inspectors) from 7 rural settlements significantly affected by flash floods. The study-area is located in the Teleajen-Buzau hydrographic basin (Bend Subcarpathians, Romania), a region recognized for its high tectonic mobility and dynamics of hydro-geomorphic processes, thus showing high levels of exposure to floods and flash floods at small river catchments (generally under 200 km²). As a result, some of the most recent hydrological events (2005, 2008, 2010 and 2014) brought about significant damages and psychological effects to local communities.

The questionnaire survey provides some insight into local communities' perception and knowledge on extreme hydro-meteorological events affecting frequently the study-area (heavy rainfalls, flash floods), outlined through aspects related to: previous personal experience to such events, the post-disaster rehabilitation, awareness, worry and opinion on the prevention and protection measures aimed to mitigate the effects of flooding at community level. The survey also revealed the differences in the perception, response and preparedness measures of main respondents categories (local population and authorities) to extreme hydro-meteorological events. The local authorities showed a high interest for accessing scientific services (e.g. flash flood hazard and risk maps, local and regional climate change projections), in order to support the development of adequate flood and flash flood mitigation strategies.

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