

**RESILIENCE OF RURAL COMMUNITIES TO THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN  
THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

By

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## ABSTRACT

The effects of climate change are felt throughout the world, especially in rural communities of Africa. Often, they fail to adapt due to high poverty rates, lack of access to government resources, dependence on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture and fishing, and lack of relevant education. Although this is the case, conventional conceptualisation of this challenge and understanding of resilience to climate change lacks the rural community voice. Thus, this study was undertaken to assess the resilience of rural communities to the effects of climate change in Ward 40 of Thulamela Municipality in Vhembe District of Limpopo Province. Community-perceived definition of climate change, its causes and effects were explored. Moreover, the characteristics of communities that are resilient to the effects of climate change were investigated. The various strategies that communities in Thulamela Municipality used to cope with the effects of climate change were explored. Lastly, possible solutions for mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change were recommended.

A mixed methods approach was used. Data were collected through focus group discussions and questionnaires that required responses on a scale of 1-4 (strongly disagree) to 17-20 (strongly agree). Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 for Windows (SPSS Inc: Chicago, IL, USA). Chi-square tests were carried out to determine whether distance from urban service centres affected community resilience to the effects of Climate Change (CC).

Rural community members were found to be aware of the weather variables considerably affected by climate change. Some of them admitted that they were not aware of the causes of climate change. Perceived causes were embedded in traditional beliefs such as human wickedness, breakdown of tradition and not performing rain-making rituals or ceremonies. Perceived effects of CC included destruction of crops, shortage of water to drink and death of cattle and even people. The various coping strategies used included selling livestock, firewood and home-brewed alcohol. Community perceptions of the effects of distance on resilience were grouped into four themes namely access, affordability, support and diversity. In general, the perceptions of the youth, adults and the elderly were the same ( $P > 0.05$ ) except with respect to "Food is cheaper in the city", "Government intervenes faster for instance, in providing temporary tents in urban areas during disasters compared to where we live (rural communities)", and "They get water easily, so they can do gardening and water their plants". The results revealed that the youth, adults and the elderly were of the view that the further a community was located