

Munnik, Oliver. The progression of vulnerability to informal fire risk: An Imizamo Yethu case study with a specific fire risk comparison between informal freestanding dwellings and backyard dwellings. (BSc Honours thesis in Disaster Risk Science, 2008)

The severity and frequency of recurrent 'everyday' urban risks experienced predominantly by socio-economically deprived residents in sprawling urban areas have been largely under-researched by disaster risk specialists. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the vulnerability to 'everyday' environmental hazards such as localised flooding, informal fire and exposure to degraded and polluted environments is routinely and increasingly threatening the livelihood security of impoverished households, exacerbating already high levels of poverty. In Cape Town's informal settlements, residents are at risk from recurrent hazards, such as informal fire, due to prevailing social, political, economic and environmental conditions. This generates situations of increased vulnerability, manifested as severe overcrowding, low levels of fire education as well as a lack of access to basic services, such as water and electricity. This study investigates disaster risk in the urban settlement of Imizamo Yethu in Hout Bay, exploring the differentiated risk profiles of informal housing types. The use of Pelling's model of vulnerability is found to be constrained by its inherent assumption that residents are able to reduce exposure through private investment. The research illustrates that hazards triggered at the household level can potentially inflict catastrophic outcomes at the settlement level due to the high levels of transferred risk.