

Murambadoro, Miriam Dudzai. Experience and exposure to fire risk: A comparison of Langa/Joe Slovo residents in hostels and those in wooden emergency houses. (BSc Honours thesis in Disaster Risk Science, 2005)

This paper compares the exposure to fire risk of residents living in two settlements in the Joe Slovo/Langa area of Cape Town: Intersite's wooden houses and the hostels section. The field research methods used included household, institutional and focus group interviews as well as empirical observations. Langa is an old township situated along the N2 highway. Joe Slovo is an informal settlement that has emerged fairly recently due to both an overspill of people from Langa and in-migration from the Eastern Cape. Informants, when asked what factors they perceived to increase their exposure to fire risk, cited the use of candles, flame stoves, traditional heaters, and open flames as contributing factors. Residents were also asked whether they felt safer living in the wooden emergency houses and requested to motivate their answers. Their perceptions and experiences were compared with those of the nearby hostel residents. MANDISA's (2005) database was used to compare fire statistics with people's actual experiences of fire risk. Root causes, dynamic pressures and unsafe conditions were identified for both study sites and analysed using Blaikie's (1994) Pressure and Release Model. The study suggests that an understanding of the different factors that increase people's vulnerability would help in achieving sustainable development.