

Zanner, Richard. A. The role of information in rural livelihoods. (BSc Honours thesis in Disaster Risk Science, 2004)

The current era is often referred to as the "*information age*", recognising that the production of good, relevant and timely information is essential for effective decision making. An enhanced information domain can broaden the boundaries within which rational choices are taken. This thesis examines the role of information in a rural southern-African locale where poverty is manifested through meagre material possessions, widespread disease, deficient food availability, and strained social networks. Research was conducted in the Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality in South Africa, where the application of FIVIMS, a global information management system initiated in South Africa by the Department of Agriculture, was tested. An initiative such as FIVIMS has three primary functions: to facilitate the exchange of information by the poor necessary for sustainable livelihoods; to improve communication within and between the institutions responsible for decision-making that affects livelihood options; and to empower poor communities to participate in decision-making processes. Through an analysis of vulnerabilities, capacities and activities of the studied population the research demonstrates how a strengthening of information sources could contribute positively towards empowering marginalised people to enhance their livelihoods outcomes.