



Natural hazards, risks and society in Africa: developing knowledge and capacities - the HARISSA project

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The West Branch of the East African Rift is the scene of a wide range of natural disasters. Floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides toxic gas emissions, are all hazards that can have dramatic consequences. Depending on the vulnerability and resilience of populations, these situations can lead to economic damage, loss of life, population displacement or even epidemics. They can also exacerbate inter-community and intra-community tensions (e.g. land conflicts) and lead to security crises. However, the extent of the phenomena is often poorly known, partly because of the lack of expertise available to understand them, and partly because of the lack of reliable and up-to-date data. The assessment of natural hazards is of paramount importance for their consideration in development strategies.

The long-term overall objective of this 5-year project (2019-2024) is to contribute to reducing the incidence of natural hazards and associated risks in this region of Africa in DRC, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. The project aims to develop knowledge, expertise, awareness and support for local, regional and national initiatives by following four specific objectives: 1/ academic training, 2/ mapping and hazard data collection, 3/ improving awareness and risk preparedness, and 4/ consolidating previous achievements. The achievement of these objectives is based on the strengthening of key institutions in these domains with a strong link to citizen-based science. The project aims to target the wide range of stakeholders involved and/or concerned by natural risks and disasters, from academic or research groups to citizens and policy makers. The project will also look at the added value of citizen-science on development.

The actions in this project are based on more than 13 years of experience in conducting scientific research and developing knowledge sharing and capacity building activities with partner institutions in the targeted region. It builds on this experience and aims to capitalize on its results by developing and applying methodologies (ground based instrument networks, socio-demographic surveys, space borne techniques) as well as partnership networks and monitoring tools. The actions proposed are primarily based on the capacity, needs and commitment of the partner institutions.