

Trabajo preventivo de crisis volcánicas entre instituciones y comunidad: Experiencias y lecciones

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Key words: Volcanic and landslide risks, Focus Group Discussion, billboard, Mount Cameroon

The inappropriate translation of scientific information on geohazard (volcanic, landslide and crater lake outgassing) risks to local communities leaves people with incongruent views and limited understanding of the real dangers. We report on the different stages of a 5-year multidisciplinary capacity building project in geohazard research and monitoring between the universities of Buea (Cameroon) and Ghent (Belgium). Initial workshops led to the deployment of billboards, which were requested by and designed in collaboration with local people. In a later stage we organized focus group discussions (FGD) in three towns susceptible to different types of hazards, in order to assess: i) level of preparedness to a variety of natural hazards, ii) response to emergency situations, iii) recovery from the emergency and iv) mitigation measures. These FGDs were performed with the intention to have an open discussion with the local population and its representatives in order to elicit information that otherwise might not be obtained, e.g. from a structured questionnaire. The FGD participants comprised a mix of chiefs, engineers, technicians, civil servants and government officials. In all three towns, the engineers in charge complained about the lack of strategic planning and of an elaborate strategy for disasters. There is a general awareness of national strategic planning but this does not always reach the local administrative levels. Therefore inappropriate actions might be taken by the municipalities in times of emergency, and response is often driven by community solidarity rather than by predesigned crisis management plans. At the end of the project landslide susceptibility and volcanic hazard maps resulting from the work driven by two local PhD researchers on the project were delivered and explained to local stakeholders during a public meeting.