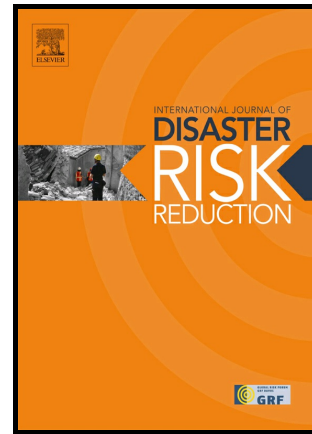


# Author's Accepted Manuscript

Public perceptions of living with flood risk from media coverage in the small island developing state of Mauritius

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PII: S2212-4209(16)30078-4  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2016.07.007>  
Reference: IJDRR380

To appear in: *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*

Received date: 22 February 2016  
Revised date: 9 July 2016  
Accepted date: 27 July 2016

Cite this article as: Anoradha Chacowry, Public perceptions of living with flood risk from media coverage in the small island developing state of Mauritius *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2016.07.007>

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## Public perceptions of living with flood risk from media coverage in the small island developing state of Mauritius

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### Abstract

In Mauritius, there is a recent change in public perception about flood occurrences which were associated mostly with cyclones. It is now perceived that floods may occur with increasing frequency and intensity in the absence of cyclones. In view of the lack of official records and the paucity of published studies on flood disasters, the media coverage of the events was used as an alternative source of information on flood occurrences and their impacts on society. Using content analysis of interviews of flood victims as reported in a local newspaper over the period 2003 to 2011, this paper explored the public perceptions of flood risk. The results highlighted several issues that were grouped into socio-economic, infrastructural/environmental and institutional themes. *Socio-economic* issues were perceived as having significant impacts on the vulnerability of the people, their health and on their living conditions. Concerning *infrastructural/environmental* issues, the public perceived that the environmental problems and the inadequacy or poor maintenance of flood drainage systems were among the main causes of frequent flooding. The key *institutional* issues were perceived to arise from insufficient assistance for emergency relief and rehabilitation purposes. Other factors included inadequate flood warnings, the lack of environmental ethics and the poor enforcement of legislation. Recent newspaper interviews confirmed that the public perceptions of these issues had remained largely unchanged since 2011. The findings of the study could be used to illustrate flood-related issues and to contribute to a national flood disaster risk management policy and implementation strategy.

**Keywords** flood hazards; media; public perception of risk; vulnerability; flood disaster risk management

### 1. Introduction

Mauritius is a small island developing state (SIDS) situated in the subtropical zone of the South-West Indian Ocean [1]. During the summer months that extend from November to

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