

Olivia Kunguma



Dr Olivia Kunguma holds great interest in science communication because she believes it is futile to develop the best scientific knowledge and not share it with the public or non-experts. She also thinks research should be grounded in policy or challenge policy to foster sustainable societal change. In addition to this view, any research not grounded in policy or challenging policy is fruitless because for change to come to fruition, policy must be developed and implemented. These two are Dr Kunguma's school of thought, and her views are observed in her [peer-reviewed publications](#) and opinion pieces.

Dr Kunguma holds a BA and Honors degree in Integrated Marketing Communication, a Master's Degree in Disaster Management, and a PhD in Disaster Management. Her work has focused on disaster information management and communication systems in provincial disaster management centres and reviewing and improving disaster governance. Her PhD focussed on challenging the South African Disaster Management legislation. It is perceived as one of the best in the world but has encountered challenges with implementation.

She is a lecturer at the University of the Free State – Disaster Management Training and Education Centre for Africa (UFS-DiMTEC), teaching Management of Media Relations and Strategic Communication, Strategic Disaster Management, and Legal and Institutional Arrangement in Disaster Management.

In her academic career, she has graduated more than 400 postgraduate diploma students in disaster management, supervised and graduated more than 20 Masters of Disaster Management research students, and one PhD candidate whose work was on establishing effective Flood Early Warning Systems as guided by the Namibian Disaster Risk Management Act. She has presented her research at local and international conferences like the World Conference on Disaster Management in Toronto, Canada. Dr Kunguma is a registered professional member of the Disaster Management Institute of Southern Africa (PrDM08) and the South African Communications Association (SACOMM).

Her research interests include analysing disaster management legislation and policies and their implementation, Strategic Disaster Management, Disaster/Risk Communication, and institutional arrangements in disaster management.

Dr Kunguma has worked on several research projects as part of her contribution to engaged scholarship, such as developing the Integrated National Drought Management Plan for South Africa, where she led the development of the Drought Information Management and Communication Plan; Review of the eThekweni Disaster Management Plan project; Developing a crisis communication plan for Frances Baard District Municipality; Development of National Drought Information Management and Communication Systems; Review of the Disaster Management System in South Africa; Efficiency and gap analysis of the South African National Disaster Management Framework of 2005; Review of the disaster management institutional arrangements and coordination modalities for COVID-19 response and several other projects.

Disaster management is a new and fast-evolving profession. Some countries, such as South Africa, Lesotho, and Namibia have made great strides with the change from Civil Protection to Disaster Management or Disaster Risk Management. With the challenges encountered in moving from civil protection to implementing disaster management policies, Dr. Kunguma intends to make significant contributions to improving disaster management policy and its implementation in South Africa and Africa.