

Achieving information safety in a disaster environment: the way forward for Africa

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Abstract

Rationale of Study – Disaster incidents are becoming common globally. When they occur, disasters are known to cause great havoc resulting in high numbers of human fatalities and injuries; massive damage and destruction of property; and high degrees of strain on environmental resources. In most cases, people only associate Africa’s disasters with humanitarian consequences while completely ignoring other forms of damages and losses caused therein. The impact of disasters on records and information in Africa is generally ignored.

Methodology – Based on a desk review of secondary data, this descriptive study explored the information capabilities, potentials and risks that Africa has which can be threatened by disasters.

Findings – The findings of the study indicate that although records management in Africa is still largely paperbased, electronic records management is picking pace across the continent in line with current global practice. However, the limited use of digital document signing technologies means that official signed records still have to be kept in hard-copies. This poses threats to records during emergencies.

Implications – The author recommends that a more holistic approach should be taken in discourses regarding Africa’s disasters and their management. Most importantly, there should be meaningful disaster management focused on ensuring information security before, during and after disasters. This is considering that even disaster recovery efforts are largely hinged on the safety of these records.

Originality – Although it used secondary data, this study was original in terms of its scope and coverage. It emphasises that emerging technologies that enable records to be processed, signed and stored without Printing should be used to ensure environmental and information safety during disasters.

Keywords Information security, disaster management, development, Africa

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