

Addressing livelihood vulnerability for improved flood management policies in An Giang Province, Vietnam

An Giang province in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam is one of the provinces in Vietnam that is most vulnerable to floods. Every year, the floods caused by the monsoonal rains affect thousands of households. Despite a number of efforts by both the local and central government, flood management was not effective due to several factors of which one of the most important was the lack of tools for assessment of livelihoods and vulnerabilities to understand how people especially the poorer sections live and make their livelihoods. Other key barriers to effective flood management included:

- Current policies, guidance and recommendations for flood damages reduction are ambiguous, not specific, and not directly applicable to the local context especially to local people's livelihood. Local government agencies find it difficult to implement these policies.
- Flood disaster management is fragmented with sectorial policies (e.g. agricultural policies, etc.) and line agency responsibilities, while assessment of local livelihood vulnerability remains a challenge. Development activities in coping with flood disasters often ignore the needs of people's livelihoods and this worsens flood-related vulnerability and poverty.

Research aiding policy

In 2000 and 2011, huge floods in An Giang province in Vietnam's Mekong Delta resulted in the loss of hundreds of lives and severe damage to property. The floods prompted more government responses on flood control and prevention plans to prevent flood disasters in the future.

Moreover, the non-effectiveness of previous flood plans and policies also highlighted the need to improve mechanisms to ensure that policies are more directly applicable to local contexts and local people's livelihood.

It also underscored the need for studies to understand and improve people's livelihoods in the flood-prone areas that could assist in framing flood-related policies.



One study by SUMERNET aimed to analyze the five livelihood assets and differences in vulnerability patterns by using livelihood vulnerability index (LVI), and to develop appropriate

policies at provincial level. The assessment of livelihood assets helps to identify the factors that cause livelihood vulnerability and to understand people's living conditions in the flood prone areas. The assessment has helped in providing policy makers and community-based organizations ways to monitor vulnerability, and to evaluate potential program or policy effectiveness by introducing scenarios into the LVI model for baseline comparison in such flood areas.

Policy considerations

The SUMERNET research study reveals some common elements that can be identified as pivotal issues and considerations for policies that will enable more sustainable ways of assessing and improving people's livelihoods in flood areas. These emerged from the study's identification of promising livelihood practices in the province:



- Diversification of farming is needed to help people earn their living and help to reduce flood risks in flood prone areas. The DARD and Committee for Flood and Storm Control need to take responsibility for this.
- Support of financial mechanisms, such as loans with no interest for production activities, is needed to help people to cope with floods and livelihood risks. The Agricultural Bank and Policy Bank should come up with suitable financial mechanisms.
- Community-based organizations are often crucial in assisting people to cope with floods. Village authorities should assist in building up of local-level groups and greater involvement of local people in community-based organizations such as Farmer's Association, Women's Union, etc.
- Overall, DARD and CFSC can use the LVI approach in assessing and understanding people's livelihoods, vulnerabilities and risks. LVI is a useful tool for development planners and policy makers to evaluate livelihood vulnerability to flood impacts in order to improve people's livelihood in flood-prone areas.

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