

CRITICAL ISSUES OF COMMUNITY BASED FLOOD MITIGATION: EXAMPLES FROM BANGLADESH AND VIETNAM

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River flooding is regarded as a natural, although chronic, disaster in many parts of Asia. A combination of soft and hard measures is required for flood mitigation. However, due to resource constraints, the efforts are mostly restricted to soft measures. Community-based initiatives are more effective in most of the developing countries in Asia, especially if they have a focus on the empowerment of local communities and link community based activities to local development policies. Community based flood mitigation programs are often faced with two critical questions: issues of sustainability and issues of scaling-up. This paper analyzes community-based approaches to flood mitigation in Bangladesh and Vietnam, two countries which have contrasting socio-political systems. The common findings in this regard are: 1) local institutions (both formal and informal) play a critical role in sustaining flood mitigation efforts, 2) integration of community initiatives into government policies and practices is important to scale-up the efforts, 3) local change agents play crucial roles in grassroots implementation, and 4) synergy of grassroots efforts with development policy is regarded as the measure of success of a project's implementation.

Key words: Community based flood mitigation, Bangladesh, Vietnam