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“Strengthening Capacities to Enhance Coordinated and Integrated Disaster Risk Reduction Actions and Adaptation to Climate Change in Agriculture in the Northern Mountain Regions of Viet Nam”



**Institutional Needs Assessment
for Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation
in the agriculture sector at provincial level
for Lao Cai, Phu To and Yen Bai Provinces**

Hanoi, 2011

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Introduction

Vietnam is located in the tropical monsoon zone. As such, it is considered highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The country frequently faces multiple hydrometeorological disasters, including storms, heavy rains which cause mass floods and droughts. These hazards are only added to the constraints poor rural communities face every day.

According to GSO, in the first semester of 2011 disasters caused 66 deaths and damages amounted to about 2,200 billion VND. Although the Vietnamese disaster risk management (DRM) system proves effective to respond to disasters, there is a need to shift towards a more proactive management of hazards, focusing more on increasing the resilience and coping capacities of local communities, in particular those located in rural areas.

Agriculture and fisheries remain the main economic activities in Vietnam, and are closely linked to climate and environmental conditions. The rate of poor households in disaster prone area is increasing, and more than 70% of the population lives in rural areas where the public utility and infrastructure are usually precarious. The Vietnamese government adopted some policies to develop the infrastructure and public utility; however, they are still not comprehensive and consistent enough. Particularly, there are some policies on the new construction and maintenance of transportation and irrigation infrastructure as well as public utilities such as school, hospital, office, etc. All the above constrains have hindered the response capacity to natural disaster and caused the vulnerability of communities.

In this context, the role of institutions is key in addressing the underlying causes that impede adaptation and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change. This institutional needs assessment analyzes the technical gaps and key issues in agriculture disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation at provincial level for the northern mountain regions. This document is the result of consultations, review of documents, past institutional responses and assessment at national, provincial and local levels. The result of this analysis will feed into the project's activities to strengthen strategies and action plans at the national level and institutional and technical capacities at national, provincial and local levels.

1. The Vietnamese DRM System

One of the major concerns in disaster risk management is to ensure the monitoring of natural disasters with high levels of likelihood, such as the case for severe droughts and risks threatening coastal areas, so that concerned actors (in the case of Vietnam, the Government) implement prevention and mitigation measures in a coordinated and efficient manner. Such a proactive approach is being widely recognized, acknowledging the higher costs of response to disasters compared to those of prevention and mitigation.

In Vietnam, the disaster risk management system is rather well-established. However, considering the increasing unpredictability and intensity of events, strengthening the capacities of institutions and population to cope with these events is of outmost importance. While storms and cyclones represent an important part of threats to the country, it is in the northern mountain areas where the most vulnerable part of the population seats.

The Government, lead by the Ministry of Resources and the Environment and the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control is currently working in estimating all potential risks of disaster. This task adds to the work of the Government on disaster risk management, which includes:

- [Law on Water Resources](#). Passed in 1998 as a result of growing demand in management issues dealing with the utilization of water resources and prevention of adverse consequences of water related disasters. This law, with proper and flexible implementation, greatly improves the country's ability to plan, develop and manage the quantity and quality of surface, underground and coastal waters; within the basin or hydrologic unit, but consistent with the administrative structure of the country and policy of decentralization.
- Ordinance on Emergency
- Law on Dyke Management
- [Ordinance on Flood and Storm Control](#). Passed in 1993 to In order to enhance the responsibility of authorities, state institutions, economic organizations, social organizations and citizens in the matter of preventing and controlling as well as overcoming the consequences of floods and storms.
- Law on Forest Fire Control
- [Law on Forest Protection and Development](#). Passed in 1994, this law provides for the management, development and use of forests; and forest owners' rights and obligations. This includes state rights over forests, owners' rights, and prohibited acts. The Law also states that forest protection and development activities must ensure sustainable economic, social, environmental, defence and security development; and be in line with the socio-economic development strategy and forestry development strategy.

As already mentioned, the disaster risk management system in Vietnam is well established. Whenever a natural disaster occurs, the deployment of timely and efficient forces to respond to the emergencies is very strong due to the participation of the Army and the civil society under the “four on the spot” motto, used by the Government to socialize disaster risk management among the population, making it a sustainable process because it is based on the communities’ resources and leadership: “leadership on the spot, human resources on the spot, materials on the spot, logistics arrangements on the spot”). In fact, when compared to countries with similar socio-economic conditions, there are fewer casualties in Vietnam and more resilience, as reconstruction is prioritized

However, there are some aspects of the system which need improvement, as the system focuses mainly in responding to emergencies, and remains passive during prevention and mitigation phases. Due to several reasons, disaster responsive capacity in localities remains weak, especially in the case of the northern mountain regions, where access is more difficult. While reconstruction of infrastructure is quick, it is poor, leaving weak and vulnerable structures that are most likely to be rebuilt after the next disaster.

Another major weakness in DRM system is disaster forecasting and early warning systems, which are not sufficient or do not meet the technical requirements, especially for flashfloods, landslides, tornadoes, and cyclones. Search and rescue action are also limited due to the lack of equipment and coordination across forces and community's participation

Table 1 (page 4) describes the general coordination functions in the Vietnamese DRM system, distinguishing the responsibilities of State agencies and local agencies in case of a disaster.

2. Institutions and policy requirements for climate change adaptation and DRM

Institutional analysis is an important feature of public policy. As Hodgson defines it: institutions are "the established and popular social system of rules that make social interaction".¹ Any institution responds to the following characteristics: i) There are laws to distinguish the insider and outsider (member or non-members); ii) Clarification of who the decision maker is; iii) There are rules about the order of directing the allocation of responsibilities.

Institutions play a key role in the operational phases of disaster risk management, enabling coordinated, timely and efficient actions. Provincial and local level institutions

In recent years, local level institutions (including provincial, district and commune) have developed and implemented many policies including economic, environmental and social security policy. They not only specify the laws and policies of the higher level but also the local aspects. The sound and success of the policy at this level has an important role in ensuring the success of the central level policies.

¹ <http://www.geoffrey-hodgson.info/user/image/whatareinstitutions.pdf>

Table 1: General coordination functions in Vietnam

General coordination functions	State agencies	Local agencies
Identify the emerging risks of a natural disaster	No new type of natural disaster – there's only the existing system to cope with natural disasters that have happened in the past with specific rules	Not available
Evaluate the possibility of potential risk occurrence (Observation/ Monitoring of the natural system)	Scattered allocation and have no function of identifying what new system need observing	Not available
Assess the vulnerability: (3 parts) a) Normalize "asset" price determination in order to make comparison and decision b) Determine the assets need protecting (human lives and other type of assets) before natural disaster, this process plays a role as a planning stage); c) Estimate the potential cost of risk for each asset,	a) Not available b) Not available – General Statistic Office lacks of capacity but have these functions; the Central Committee for Flood Storm Control can undertake this responsibilities but there's no specific regulation c) No	These functions can be executed by the People's Committees at all levels, but it was not declared and technical capacity is limited.
Identify the responsible agency for insurance	Not available	Not available
Administrative management of the Government's responsibilities relating to natural disaster a) Assign responsibilities for each type of emergency response to ensure effective and fair treatment measures (the relationship between natural disaster risk management systems with other systems) b) Build reduction capacity for all management levels (Coordination of impact analysis, refinement of criteria, and identification of missing functions and authority in disaster risk management based on the administrative concerns); c) Implement financial allocation quickly (response stage)	a), b) Ministry of Home Affairs, Government, and National Assembly have the role but there are no experts in this particular field; The CCFSC has representatives of most ministries / sectors; National Committee for Search and Rescue has representatives of various ministries / sectors to determine the specific responsibility infected with specific ministries / sectors and work closely to coordinate; c) Prime Minister, Ministry of Planning and Investment and Ministry of Finance	a) Not available b) Committee for Flood Strom Control- Search Rescue provide guideline and training to the member agencies c) Chairman of People Committees of province and district
Legislative functions:		
Approve and decentralize the impact analysis and inter-ministry criteria screening (such as policy)	Prime Minister, Ministry of Home Affairs.	Not available
Identify the lacking functions and authority in the field of disaster risk management of the Government	Prime Minister, Ministry of Home Affairs,	Chairman of People Committee of province and district

3. Conclusions

In general, the natural disaster management system of Vietnam is a risk management response system. The specific characteristic of this system is based on responding to past experiences instead of reducing the potential risk in the future. Focus is on storm and flood responses and priority is given to rescue and relief operations in the short term rather than on strategies, plan targets and structural measures in the medium and long term.

Integrating the perspectives of disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change into socio-economic local development plans will increase the sustainability of production, reduce risk, increase income and stabilize the lives of people.

Adapting to climate change is a long term commitment, to be achieved strategically acting in all development activities and embodied in a disaster risk reduction/ sustainable development/poverty reduction strategy.