



## Addressing Livelihood Vulnerability for Improved Flood Management Policies in An Giang Province, Vietnam

### Key Findings:

- In Vietnam's Mekong Delta, key plans, policies and regulations for flood management are ambiguous and often not directly applicable to the local context especially to support local people's livelihoods.
- Local-level government agencies cannot implement policies effectively due to the inherent policy ambiguity.
- Flood management efforts by state agencies are fragmented and confusing given many sectoral policies (e.g. agricultural policy, etc.) and line agency responsibilities making implementation of these policies a barrier to effective flood management.
- Proper assessment of local livelihood vulnerability remains a challenge.
- Development activities initiated for coping with flood disasters often ignore the needs of people's livelihoods and end up worsening flood-related vulnerability and poverty.

### Flood management and local livelihoods

An Giang province in the Mekong Delta is one of the most vulnerable provinces in Vietnam to seasonal floods caused by annual monsoonal rains.

In 2000 and 2011, huge floods resulted in the loss of hundreds of lives and severe damage to property. The severe floods prompted the government to initiate and implement policies for flood control and management as well as measures to prevent future flood disasters.

But despite these policies and measures implemented by both the central government and local line agencies, flood disaster management and prevention has not been effective. One key factor is the lack of understanding of how people especially the poorer sections live and make their livelihoods. There is a lack of mechanisms for assessments of local livelihoods and vulnerabilities to help people cope better with floods.



The failure of the previous flood management plans and policies has highlighted the need for future measures to be more responsive to local contexts and emphasize improving local people's livelihoods. It also underscored the need for more studies to understand and assess people's livelihoods in the flood-prone areas in the Mekong Delta to better link flood-related policies to local needs.

### **SUMERNET research to improve flood policy-making**

The SUMERNET study used a livelihood vulnerability index (LVI) to analyze five livelihood assets and differences in vulnerability patterns and develop appropriate policies at the provincial level. The assessment of livelihood assets helped to identify the key factors that caused 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 flood areas.

### **Policy recommendations**

The SUMERNET study identified some elements that emerged from the study's identification of promising livelihood practices in the province. These elements are viewed as pivotal for making policies that can be more responsive to local contexts, and enable more sustainable ways of assessing and improving people's livelihoods in flood-prone areas.

- Diversification of farming is needed to help people earn their living and help to reduce flood risks in flood prone areas. The Department for Agriculture and Rural Department (DARD) and the Committee for Flood and Storm Control need to outline measures for diversifying and improving farming practices.
- Financial support, such as interest-free loans for production activities, is needed to help people to cope with floods and livelihood risks. The Agricultural Bank and the Policy Bank should come up with suitable financial support mechanisms.

- Community-based organizations are often crucial in assisting people to cope with floods. Village authorities should assist in building up local-level groups and facilitate greater involvement of local people in community-based organizations such as Farmer's Association, Women's Union, etc.
- The key state agencies involved in flood management such as the Department for Agriculture and Rural Department (DARD) and the Committee for Flood and Storm Control (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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