

The 6th ADRC International Meeting

Session Summary

4 February 2004

15:30-16:50 Session 2

Theme : “Sharing best practices in disaster reduction”

Flooding has been a recurring problem in the region and water, as a resource in excess or lack, has become a major concern. This problem area has been addressed by countries such as Viet Nam and Laos, where best practices have existed. This session aimed at presenting and sharing these best practices on water resource management and flood control, highlighting current disaster reduction systems and strategies, particularly in the Mekong River areas, including effective ways of collaboration and cooperation among the affected countries. The session presented also an initiative underway to establish an international research and training center for water hazard and risk management that will address the emerging concerns and problems brought about by water-induced disasters.

***Facilitator:** Mr. V. P. Pasrija, Ministry of Home Affairs, India

***Rapporteur:** Mr. Emmanuel de Guzman, Consultant, Asian Disaster Reduction Center

***Speakers:**

- Mr. Dang Quang Minh of the Department of Dike Management and Flood Control in Viet Nam
- Mr. Phetsavang Sounnalath, director of NDMO in Laos
- Mr. Tetsuya Ikeda of the Public Works Research Institute in Japan

Summary:

Water Resource Management and Flood Control in the Mekong River Delta of Viet Nam

Mr. Dang Quang Minh of the Department of Dike Management and Flood Control in Viet Nam, described the water resource management and flood control system in the country. He cited various government measures for mitigating the impact of floods, which included building residential clusters, flood proof housing, embankment, shifting of crop calendar, and improving flood release capacity, among others. He also discussed some lessons learned from flood incidents. These included quality infrastructure investments, social and infrastructure facilities, public awareness and participation, the poor as target group, integrated coordination planning in lower Mekong basin, child care center model as a cost effective non-structural measure, improvement of flood forecasting system, cooperation among concerned countries, and the promotion and implementation of flood mitigation program. He recommended the establishment of the Regional Flood Management Mitigation Center, a disaster self reliant fund for poor households, application of disaster resistant building regulations, use of ICT for early warning and information sharing, and the improvement of hydrological data sharing with upstream countries. As regards water resource management, Mr. Dang cited the laws and ordinances that comprise the legal framework and the organization and structure for water management. He also discussed several attendant issues and problems and cited the following needs to address them: strengthening

infrastructure for regional socio-economic development; investing in water resources infrastructures; improving master plans for water resource system, including flood discharge; and integrated construction of local irrigation system, among others.

Flood Control and Water Resource Management in Laos

Mr. Phetsavang Sounnalath, director of NDMO in Laos, presented the various flood control work in the country, citing prevailing government policies and the challenges at hand. The government policy has been to minimize the detrimental impact of floods and to translate the hazards into possible benefits for the people. This policy has been exemplified in the pursuit of improved networking among meteorological organizations, early warning dissemination, capacity building for government agencies and communities. He cited population growth, flash flood occurrences, inadequate funds, different donor perceptions, and the changing work profile of NGO partners as among the concerns and challenges faced today. As regards, water resources management, Laos is considered to benefit most from hydropower. Mr. Phetsavang cited the existing laws and policies on water resources management and the roles and mandate of the Water Resources Coordination Committee.

Preparation for the establishment of UNESCO International Center for Water Hazard and Risk Management

Mr. Tetsuya Ikeda of the Public Works Research Institute in Japan, discussed the initiative and efforts to establish the said center. He explained the rationale for the center, citing the increasing trend of water-related disasters and the serious concern over climate change. In recognition of water hazard as a major challenge at hand, the center shall undertake research, training, capacity building and information networking as integrated activities. He further informed on the accomplishments and substantial milestones towards the establishment of the center.

Open Forum:

The following issues were raised and discussed:

- (1) Mechanisms for sharing best practices
- (2) Integration of water resources management and flood control and inter-agency coordination
- (3) Role of women in disaster reduction

Transfer of Live Lessons of Catastrophic Disasters.

Mr. Yoshinobu Fukasawa, deputy executive director of the Disaster Reduction and Human Renovation Institute in Kobe, Japan, introduced the Disaster Reduction and Human Renovation Institution, the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake Memorial, and the Disaster Reduction Alliance established in Kobe, Japan. He briefly described the initiatives of the institution and activities underway, including the transfer of live lessons of disasters, in preparation for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction to be held in Kobe, Japan in January 2005.

Conclusion:

The presentations had described the extent flooding can be controlled and water as a natural resource could be managed for socio-economic development. They highlighted the possible

integration of efforts on flood mitigation and water resource management for a more holistic approach to the emerging concerns on water-induced disasters. The presentation conveyed also the importance of enacting policies and laws governing water resource management and flood mitigation at the country level and the coordination and collaboration among stakeholders at various levels and among the concerned countries.