

Session III – Connecting People and the Ecosystems That Support Them
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Flood Adaptation in Cambodian and Vietnamese Mekong Deltas: A View from Local Institutional and Livelihood Approaches

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Abstract

Annual flooding is an integral part of the nature of the Mekong River systems. Floods bring benefits to human beings. Severe floods, however, if not being well-managed, might cause tremendous damages to people's lives. Cambodia and Vietnam are located in the most downstream area of the Lower Mekong Basin and share a large fraction of the Basin's flood-prone area. Institutionally, the Committee for Disaster Management (Cambodia) and the Committee for Flood and Storm Control (Vietnam), which are set up from national, provincial, district to commune levels, take charge of flood and disaster management. Recently, the Vietnamese government has emphasized the combination of structural and non-structural measures, adaptation strategies and the role of local community in dealing with floods. The concept "*living with floods*" and the "*four-on-site principle*" have been effectively applied to flood management in Vietnam, allowing to reduce risks and damages to local inhabitants by floods and to improve livelihoods of vulnerable groups. In both countries, further improvement of institutional mechanism and human capacity at local level is of great importance, enabling the participation of local people in all processes of flood management. Policy dialogues for trans-boundary flood management between the two countries are necessary. At the household level, flood coping by households and their livelihoods are closely linked. Livelihood capitals determine vulnerability of households to deal with floods. Better-off people tend to adapt to floods while the worse-off do not cope with floods at all. Flood vulnerability mapping, which integrate information of all aspects related to local people's livelihoods, would be advisable for adaptation and mitigation strategies to floods in both Cambodian and Vietnamese Mekong deltas.