

Policy Brief Four: Improving Natural Disaster Management in Vietnam



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On behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude for GIZ's valuable support in improving the policy framework for natural disaster management in Vietnam. This support helps the people most affected by the annual natural disasters in Vietnam such as typhoons and flooding.

Key Points:

- Natural disasters occur in all regions of Vietnam and cause great human and asset losses, as well as significant damage to infrastructure and the environment. To improve resilience to these disasters the government established a comprehensive legal and policy framework including Decision No. 1002/QĐ-TTg on community-



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I very much appreciate the close partnership that has developed between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and GIZ. Our cooperation has produced many significant results, and most importantly a proposed new decision to improve the disbursement of international aid and an investment framework for natural disaster management in Vietnam.

based disaster risk prevention, mitigation and management. The Law on Disaster Prevention and Control took effect on 1st January, 2014 and the Government promulgated Decree No. 66/2014/ND-CP detailing and guiding a number of articles of the law.

- However, factors such as climate change, and the increased occurrence of severe drought, salinity and

typhoons in Vietnam has resulted in gaps, inconsistencies and overlaps in the legal and policy framework.

- The Flood Proofing Programme (FPP) supported the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to help resolve some of the critical issues in the legal and policy framework for natural disaster resilience. This support improves the impact of international aid, establishes coordinated donor and government investment and strategic planning for the sector, and improves the safety of people most affected by natural disasters.



Introduction:

This policy brief aims to inform policy makers in the Government of Vietnam and development partners about critical areas of reform in the natural disaster development sector. In 2017, natural disasters caused the deaths of 363 people and 1 Bill USD in economic loss. Hundreds of thousands of houses were damaged or collapsed and thousands of hectares of rice and other crops were destroyed. Thousands of boats were damaged or sunk. Production and livelihoods of significant numbers of

people in every region were negatively affected¹.

This policy brief is the summary of GIZ's Flood Proofing Programme (FPP) activities in support of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) to improve the legal and policy framework for natural disaster management. FPP is funded by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, the Government of Vietnam and the Government of Germany. In 2017, FPP carried out an extensive assessment and analysis of the legal and policy framework for natural disaster management, and after consultations with the Vietnam Disaster Management Authority (VDMA) in MARD decided to support the sector in four key areas: the preparation of a Prime Minister decision on the organisation of received and disbursement of international aid to respond to natural disasters in Vietnam; the development of an investment plan for natural disaster management in Vietnam; the establishment of a Strategic Plan to 2020 for the Centre for Natural Disaster Policy in VDMA; and an assessment of community based disaster risk management in the Mekong Delta. Experiences and lessons learnt from implementing activities in 16 provinces in Vietnam form the basis of FPP's policy advocacy and communication efforts at national level. The main results of FPP assistance included participation in drafting documentation and legislation, the organization and implementation of review meetings, consultations and

¹ Report by Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc to the National Assembly on 18/11/2017.

roundtable discussions for the four activities, and provincial field visits.



The four key areas FPP supported VDMA include the following:

1. A Prime Minister decision on the organisation of received and disbursement of international aid to respond to natural disasters in Vietnam.

In 2017, natural disasters caused an unusually high loss of life and extensive damage to infrastructure across all regions in the country. Of special significance was Typhoon Tembin that caused havoc in South Vietnam during December. The United States, Russia, China, JICA and the UN committed considerable urgent aid to help Vietnam respond and recover from the disaster but barriers caused by problems in institutional arrangements in Vietnam prevented the received and timely disbursement of the aid. The result was extensive delays in the disbursement of international aid during a time of crisis.

The Law on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control outlines that the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is the lead agency for international cooperation on natural disaster prevention and control and responsible for the communication of natural disasters to national and

international aid organisations². The Law also indicates that the National Fatherland Front and the Vietnamese Red Cross Society are responsible for the mobilization and allocation of resources to urgently help people affected by natural disasters. However, the law is unclear about what constitutes aid. For example, in practice aid includes resources such as money, equipment, and technical assistance but these resources are outside the jurisdiction of these organisations and this aid needs to be administered by state management agencies. The Law on the Operations of the Vietnamese Red Cross Society issued in 2008 also specifies regulations on emergency and humanitarian aid distribution³. This includes the establishment of enabling conditions and quickly carry out immigration and customs procedures for people, money and equipment for Red Cross activities in case of natural disasters and hazards⁴; tax exemptions for goods and services for the purpose of Red Cross activities⁵; and transparency in promoting fundraising and receiving, managing and using funds and assets for Red Cross activities⁶.

Based on Decree No. 66, circulars and regulations were issued on the mobilization, fundraising and distribution of resources for relief and support to respond to the consequences of natural disasters. The decree outlines the rights and obligations of foreign organizations and individuals providing aid for natural disasters in Vietnam. However, the regulations did not define the mechanism

² Article 39 of the Law on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control

³ Article 7 Law on Red Cross Operations

⁴ Article 18.

⁵ Article 20.

⁶ Article 21.

for receiving emergency aid in natural disaster prevention and control.



After assessing the legal and policy framework, FPP provided technical assistance to the VDMA to establish a Prime Minister decision on the organisation of received and disbursement of international aid to respond to natural disasters in Vietnam. This decision removes the institutional barriers and establishes a practical mechanism. It provides clear definition of the different types of international aid, the principles for the government to receive this aid, the process and procedures to receive and disburse international aid, and the roles and responsibilities of relevant government offices in receiving and disbursing international aid. **The key result is that people most affected by natural disasters especially the poor will receive aid when they need it most.**

2. Investment Plan for natural disaster management in Vietnam.

The VDMA was established in MARD in 2017. An important task of the new authority was to establish an investment plan for the sustainable development of natural disaster management in Vietnam.



To ensure efficiency and the sustainability of the plan it is important that it is developed with the involvement of the government and development partners. As a result, FPP is providing technical assistance to the VDMA to conduct a comprehensive consultation process with government and development partners, carry out an assessment and analysis of the sector, establish a set of indicators and selection criteria for programmes and projects, and finally an investment framework for projects/works for natural disaster risk management up to 2025. When approved by the government, it will mean that ODA and government projects are better coordinated and integrated into **one overall plan and budget, which will improve efficiency and impact in the areas most affected by natural disasters.**

3. Strategic Plan to 2020 for the Natural Disaster Policy Management and Technology Centre

The Natural Disaster Policy Management and Technology Centre was established in 2017 and belongs to the NDMA in MARD. One of its main responsibilities is to assess the implementation of policies in the

provinces, and under the direction of the NDMA draft selected legislation for approval by the relevant state management department. The Centre needs a strategic plan to 2020 so it can effectively carry out this role.



As a result, FPP is supporting the Centre to develop the strategic plan including stakeholder analysis to identify key partners and provincial field visits to discuss and understand the needs of provincial leaders and officials regarding natural disaster management and the role the Centre should play. To ensure efficiency and the sustainability of the plan it is important that the strategic plan and budget is developed with the involvement of the government and development partners through consultations and round table workshops. The VDMA will approve the strategic plan in 2018. The strategic plan will help ensure that policy developed by the VDMA is consistent with the needs of national and provincial level and this policy will be **effectively implemented to help people and communities become more resilient to natural disasters.**

4. Improving the impact of Decision 1002 on community-based disaster risk management

Community-based disaster risk prevention, mitigation and management has been a

government priority since 2009 with the scheme, “Awareness Raising for the Community and Community-based Natural Disasters Management”⁷. The scheme has the popular slogan, “People know, people discuss, people do and people monitor”. The National Scheme presents targets to 2020 including the following:

- Improve the mechanism and policies on community-based disaster risk management;
- 100% of ministries and the levels of government that are directly responsible for disaster prevention and control are trained to enhance their capacity on disaster risk management;
- All villages, wards and communes prone to natural disasters shall have developed their disaster prevention plan, establish a communication system, set up the core group for natural disaster management with good technical capacity, and establish the network of volunteers to support the communities in disaster prevention and control.

In order to implement these targets, the Scheme comprises two components with specific activities both in terms of content and budget for each component: the community and state management. At present, the concept of community has not yet been consistently defined⁸. According

⁷ Decision No. 1002/QĐ-TTg dated 13/7/2009.

⁸ The concept of community has only been defined in the Land Law 2013: Communities, including Vietnamese communities residing in the same village, street quarter or similar residential area sharing the same customs and practices or the same family line. Other laws only define benefits, responsibilities of the communities without giving definition of community. The Civil Code 2015 defines joint ownership of the communities; the Law on Environmental Protection 2015 and the Law on Water Resources 2012 define rights and

to the targets of the Scheme, the community only covers the villages and communes prone to disaster risks while capacity building for leaders and officials covers government at all levels and improving resilience and readiness for all types of disasters. A number of ministries and agencies are involved but the Scheme is under the direction of the National Steering Committee on Storm and Flood Prevention and Control and MARD. Improving implementation of the Scheme also requires clear division of tasks and responsibilities among the relevant ministries.

The Law on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control institutionalized this policy by defining that the natural disaster management plan will include the content on “organization for information, propaganda for awareness raising for the community on natural disasters prevention and management”⁹. FPP and MARD have carried out an assessment of the programme and identified a number of shortcomings and limitations in the Scheme¹⁰:

- The development of disaster prevention and control plans at national and provincial level is still slow;
- The capacity for forecasting and early warning is still limited and has not yet met local requirements, especially for sudden rain bursts and local flooding.
- The service personnel who provide advice on disaster prevention and control take this task as additional

or part-time basis, therefore, they are not proactive and lack time;

- Many people lost their lives due to their lack of preparation, skills and care as well as their underestimation in responding to disasters. Physical and material losses also remain high, especially for agriculture and infrastructure;
- Information – Education - Communication has not reached communities, especially those in remote areas; the four on-the-spot slogan only remains formal and not put into practice;
- Facilities and work carried out for disaster prevention and control is limited. Socialization of resources to carry out this work is weak, leading to delayed investment progress and reduced investment efficiency for disaster prevention and control.

After assessing Decision 1002 on community based disaster risk management, FPP is providing technical assistance to the Centre for Policy in VDMA to assess the natural disaster response awareness of people living in urban areas in the Mekong Delta and establish a strategy to strengthen people’s awareness. This will **improve people’s safety and well-being in urban areas during floods and other disasters.**

responsibilities of the communities in protection of the environment and water resources.

⁹ Point c Provision 2 Article 15 of the Law on Disaster Prevention and Control in 2013.

¹⁰ Official Document No. 215/TB-VPCP dated 08/5/2017.