

Community perception of flood preparedness: A case study in Devalegama GN Division in Rathnapura DS Division

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Abstract

Natural hazards such as floods, landslides, hurricanes have tremendously increased in the past few decades over the world and Asia has become the most disaster affected region. It is well documented that the most frequent natural hazard in Sri Lanka, is flood. According to the existing literature, 354 flood events have been reported with 7.2 million people been affected within the period from 1997 to 2017 in Sri Lanka. In this period 18,691 houses had been destroyed while 78,978 houses were partially damaged. The number of deaths reported due to floods was 321 in 25 districts. Though there are no properly established database, a considerable amount of properties, infrastructures and crop damages could have occurred. The government of Sri Lanka has made expenses of Rs.1406 million to provide foods, other necessary relief and recovery services for flood victims in the country, spending government funds within the period of 2007-2011. In order to develop a proper flood management mechanism in the country, the author aimed to look into the current practice of flood risk management in the country. Secondary data, downloaded from the websites were used to identify the flood hazard in Sri Lanka and the primary data were collected through a questionnaire survey from the Devalegama Grama Niladari Division (GND) in Rathnapura Divisional Secretary Division (DSD) regarding the community preparedness for floods. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. This study found that, 52% of respondents were following enough flood preparedness activities while 48% of respondents were in view that not enough flood preparedness activities are functioning. At the same time, 30% of respondents expressed that they used to evacuate to safer places when flood early warnings were given while 70% of respondents said they were not used to and 65% of respondents said that there were village level disaster management committees while 35% of respondents said that there are no such committees. Meanwhile, 72% of respondents said that they were not members of village level disaster management committees while 28% of respondents said that they were members of the committees. Based on these findings, it is clear that the flood vulnerable communities should be well equipped with preparedness activities and local level flood management strategies should also be enhanced.

Keywords: *Early warning, Flood management, Mitigation, Preparedness, Vulnerability*

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