

CHALLENGES IN MAINSTREAMING ICH INTO DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN VIETNAM

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Natural Hazards in Vietnam

Vietnam is a disaster-prone country that is suffered from multiple hazards such as typhoon, flooding, flash flood, landslides, drought, coastal/river erosion, saline intrusion, forest fire, and earthquake, etc. (Figure 1). These hazards have caused significant human and material losses for the country. According to the Central Committee for Natural Disaster Prevention and Control of Vietnam, more than 2,000 people lost their lives and 2,200 people were missing due to natural hazards during the period from 1997 to 2007. In the same period, Vietnam lost nearly 1 Billion dollars per year in term of economic damages. This situation will likely worsen as natural hazards are becoming more and more severe and unpredictable (MoNRE 2016).

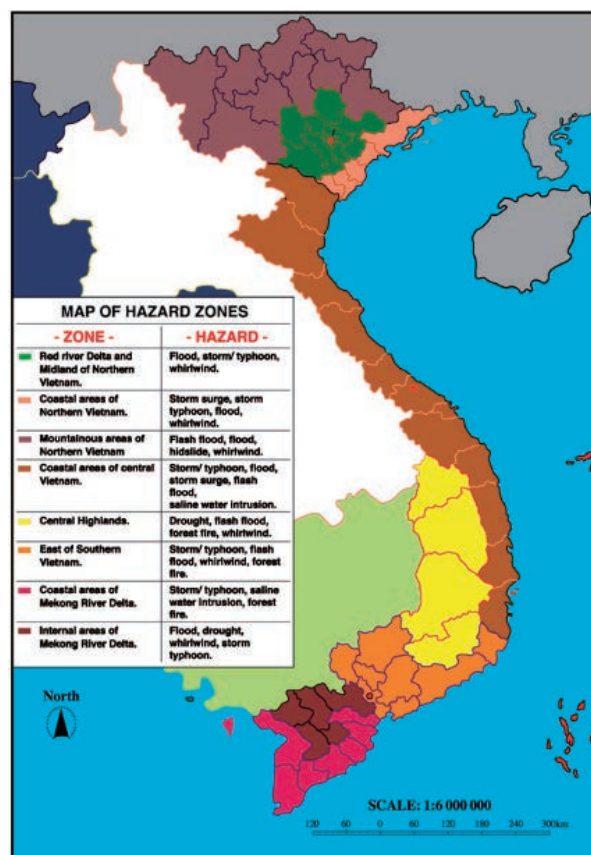


Figure 1 Map of hazard zone in Vietnam. (Source: SRV 2004)

Disaster Risk Management (DRM) in Vietnam – Organizational Structure

Vietnam has a long tradition of responding to natural hazards. The country has set up a comprehensive government system on disaster risk management (Figure 2). At the national level, the Central Steering Committee for natural disaster prevention and control (NDPC) led by the Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) with members coming from all national ministries including the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Sport (MCTS) and other organizations such as the Vietnam Fatherland Front, Vietnam Red Cross, Vietnam Television and Radio provides directions for and make important decision on disaster risk reduction activities. MARD is the standing agency of the Central Steering Committee for NDPC. A similar structure is applied at the provincial, district and commune levels. The only difference is that, at the local level, the chairman of People’s Committee takes the lead of the NDPC committee. A committee for NDPC is also established in each ministry.

While the NDPC committee’s responsibility covers all aspect of DRR, the Central Committee for Incidents and Disaster Response, and Search and Rescue is mainly in charge of emergency activities.

Although MCTS is also a member of the NDPC national Steering Committee, their role is rather small. In addition, the ministry has been not very active in DRM/DRR activities especially in relation to ICH.

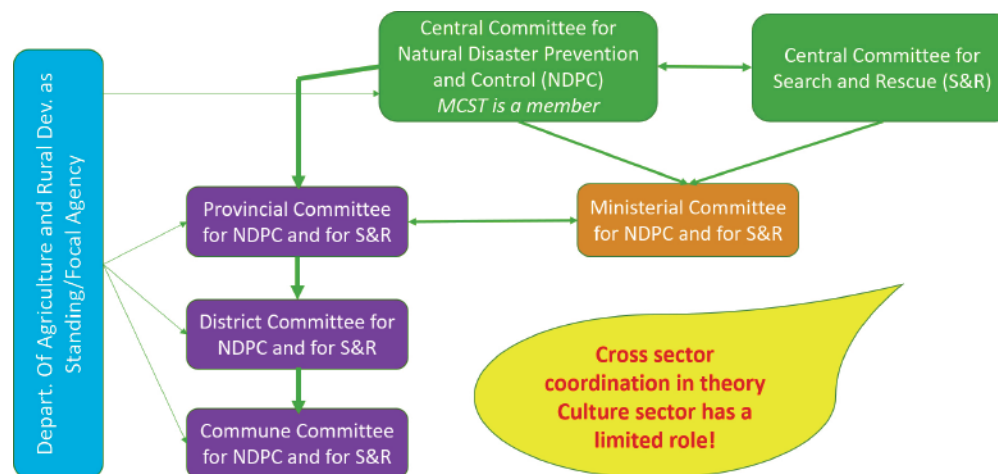


Figure 2 Organizational structure of DRM in Vietnam. (Source: Vu Canh Toan)

DRM Policies in Vietnam

In addition to a comprehensive organizational structure, Vietnam has approved and implemented a number of policies and programs related to DRM/DRR. The key DRM/DRR policies include:

- Law on natural disaster prevention and control approved in 2013
- National strategy on natural disaster prevention, response and control to 2020 approved in 2007
- 5 year and annual plans for natural disaster prevention and control are developed both at the national and provincial levels. These plans are also developed by each ministry for their own sector.
- Decision No. 1002 on community awareness raising and community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) approved in 2009
- Circular No. 43/2015/TTLT-BNNPTNT-BKHĐT guiding the inventory and assessment of losses caused by natural disaster. Human losses in general and damages related to tangible heritage are considered in the inventory list. However, damages related to ICH, ICH's holders/practitioners are not counted in the official inventory.

In addition to policies directly linked to DRM/DRR, some important climate change related policies have been endorsed and implemented including:

- The national strategy on climate change
- The national target program to respond to climate change
- The national action plan on climate change
- Sectoral and provincial level action plan to respond to climate change.

Although climate change adaptation/resilience and DRM/DRR are closely linked, these two areas are under the responsibility of two different ministries (i.e. MARD and Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment). To date, the collaboration between these ministries seems to be limited (AIT-UNEP-RRC.AP 2010).

Challenges in Mainstreaming ICH into DRM/DRR practices/policies in Vietnam

Although the Community Based Disaster Risk Management practices has been promoted in Vietnam, the dominant approach for DRM/DRR in Vietnam is still very much top-down and technocratic. This approach presents major challenges for integrating intangible cultural heritage (ICH) (local and traditional knowledge and experience) into DRM/DRR activities because:

- It favors scientist and technical experts and top leaders' views that consider natural hazards and risk as a single dimension concept. It means that problems, risks and solutions are often defined by these groups. Other actors such as communities and ICH holders who may have other views/knowledge about disaster risks have limited room to be involved.
- It often focuses on the 'nature' driver of disaster and thus relies mainly on technology and inflexible concrete infrastructures such as dykes and dams. According to a recent plan, around 91% of the budget for DRR during the period 2018–2020 is allocated for building and upgrading hard infrastructure

(MARD 2017). These solutions are often decided and designed by technical staff and experts with limited consideration of knowledge/understanding about human and social drivers of risk/vulnerability and of other options to respond to disasters (such as strengthening social capital, improving knowledge about the weather). As a result, a number of DRR interventions have transferred another disaster risk instead of reducing it.

Other challenges for the lack of integration of ICH into DRM/DRR practices and policies may also include:

- lack of collaboration between scientists and practitioners in the two fields of ICH and DRR
- ICH is an intangible concept while there has not been any appropriate tool to support its integration into DRM/DRR processes and practices
- limited understanding and capacity of ICH-related government staff and practitioner about DRR and vice versa

Need of Framework/Tools to Facilitate the Dialogue and Integration between ICH and DRM/DRR

To better facilitate the integration between ICH and DRM/DRR, the following recommendations are suggested:

- The approach for DRM/DRR should move away from top-down and technocracy-oriented ones to better engage all relevant stakeholders in all stages of DRM/DRR processes where their views, experience and local and traditional knowledge are accepted.
- Disaster risk reduction need to be seen as socially and culturally constructed concept/approach in which different forms of knowledge are accepted.
- DRM/DRR efforts need to focus on reducing damages and vulnerability and building resilience
- Problems should be defined by all relevant groups, especially the affected people, and solutions developed with consideration of their experience as well as local and traditional knowledge

A framework that takes into account the recommendations above is needed to support the integration between ICH and DRM/DRR.

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