MANAGING FLOODING RISK IN VIET NAM

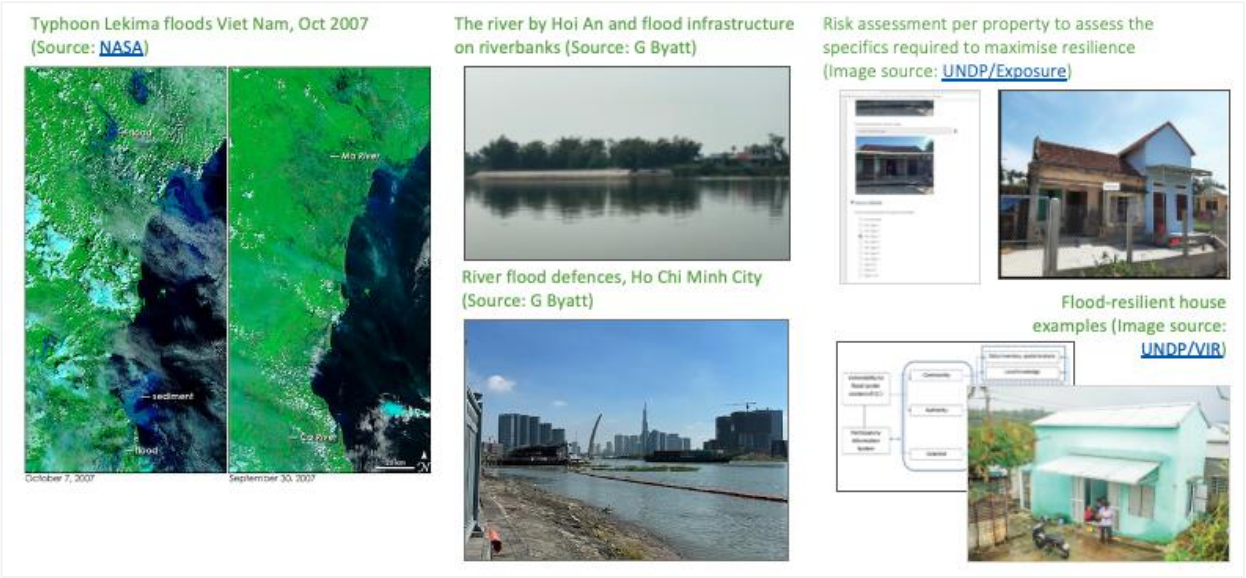
Avoiding flooding disasters by many partners working together

- Good national to local government links exist, with good governance a key focus.
- Earth observations provide data and forecasting for people to take proactive action.
- Local community groups ensure key information and data are reviewed and acted upon.

Author: Gareth Byatt

Funded by NASA.

Flooding in Viet Nam, and work to avoid flooding disasters (Images collage: various)



Brief general context:

- Viet Nam has a high exposure to riverine, flash, and coastal flooding.
- The country's coastline is 3,200 km long with approximately 11.8 million people in coastal provinces exposed to flooding.
- One estimate is that over 35% of settlements in the country are located on eroding coastlines.

The right mindset:

- The country is tackling its flood vulnerabilities and focusing on minimising the threat of flooding to its people.
- Stretching back a few decades, people in a wide range of capacities and roles have been diligently working on practical and pragmatic ways to avoid disasters and save lives.

The right investment / funding:

- The national government continues to invest in pragmatic flood resilience measures, as part of its economic development strategy.
- Ongoing investment in technology to monitor flood risk is reaping economic, financial and social benefits.

Good governance:

- Measures at the national and local government levels, working with communities and businesses, have been pursued for many years to address flooding risk and to be ready for floods.
- The government has focused since 1986 on strengthening disaster prevention and control by maintaining and developing 'four-on-the-spot' strategies (FOTS, Bốn Tại Chỗ in Vietnamese). FOTS requires each household to prepare to prevent and respond to disasters occurring in their locality.
- The Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (MONRE) looks carefully at what is happening across the country and what is happening elsewhere in Southeast Asia and other parts of the world. Lessons learned are integrated into their processes.

Good data:

- Earth observations are used to monitor land use, trends, and specific events.
- The Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is assisting Viet Nam with funding for a new satellite, VNREDSat-1, to provide Earth observations for disaster prevention and avoidance.
- Local data collation on flood risk assessments provides valuable information for decision-making.

Meaningful inclusion:

- Good community communications and engagement, for example in flood resilience projects and programmes, ensures the public understands measures being taken and that they are involved in the design and testing of resilience measures.

Meaningful targets:

- JICA has assisted a technical cooperation project, Strengthening Capacity in Weather Forecasting and Flood Early Warning System, since May 2018 which was agreed to run until December 2023.
- As an example of a focused project that is stitched into a broader portfolio, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Green Climate Fund (GCF) have been working towards meaningful targets on a collaboration project in central Viet Nam (see point below).

Examples of action to avoid disasters:

- Supporting people with flood-resilient housing and livelihoods is key. A United Nations Development Programme / Green Climate Fund UNDP Viet Nam / GCF project (with other stakeholders) is a 5-year coastal resilience project. 4,000 houses are being built, linked to and supporting a central government program. Mangroves are being carefully restored to protect coastlines. A process to prioritise those who are to receive houses is conducted, risk assessments for each property are undertaken to agree specific design requirements, and a collaborative approach to construction is then followed.
- In late 2019, storm Matmo struck the area of Quang Ngai and destroyed many houses. Houses from the UNDP/GCF project kept people safe and safeguarded farming. Word-of-mouth by locals promoted the value of flood-resilient housing. Households rely on rice production from two crops a year – with an average annual income of US$260, or US$22 per month, just one crop failure has a huge impact on their livelihood.

Sources:

- Managing Flooding Risk in Viet Nam – Case Study Supporting Paper (contact author).
- UNDP/GCF coastal resilience project.