



VIET NAM

Disaster Reduction Programme

Disaster Context

Water is the lifeblood of the people of Viet Nam. Much of what constitutes Vietnamese society emerged from centuries of struggle to capture annual rains to irrigate rice paddies. At the same time, water is the most destructive force in Viet Nam. In the space of a few short months, the monsoon rains saturate the earth, flood the rivers, and flow onto the broad plains of the river deltas. Coupled with seasonal typhoons that batter the coasts before moving inland, flooding is an annual occurrence. As a result, Viet Nam is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. With a long coastline backed by high mountains on the one hand, and broad, flat floodplains on the other, over 70 percent of Viet Nam's population is at risk from typhoons, floods, storm surges, flash floods, landslides, or mudflows.

Non-water-related disasters, while less common, are having an ever-greater impact on the country. Viet Nam's remarkable economic growth during the past ten years has increased the risk of technological accidents. Population growth and industrialization have put severe pressure on forests. Climate change and deforestation have led to drought, increasing the incidence of forest fire. Over the past 25 years, greater than 13,000 people have been killed by disasters.

Project Titles

- Disaster Management Unit (VIE/97/002)
- Capacity-Building for Disaster Mitigation in Viet Nam (VIE/01/014)
- Sea Dyke Engineering Services (VIE/92/023)

Sectors

- Capacity-building
- Early warning systems
- Disaster communications technologies
- Training

- Structural disaster mitigation
- Grassroots disaster preparedness campaigns

Funding

- VIE/97/002: UNDP contributed \$250,000 from Special Project Resources and \$850,000 of the country programme for the first phase of the Disaster Management Unit (DMU) project
- UNDP funds for DMU's second phase total \$1,368,995, with an additional \$182,559 in co-funding from the European Community Humanitarian Aid Office and \$2,434,000 from the Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance
- VIE/01/014: \$1.4 million from UNDP, \$450,000 from the Government of Luxembourg, and \$125,000 from the Government of the Netherlands
- VIE/92/023: UNDP contributed \$1,113,635 for technical assistance (TA) in building 815 kilometres of sea dykes from the Chinese border in the north to Quang Nam Province in central Viet Nam; this TA was in support of \$39,750,687 spent by the World Food Programme (WFP) for the actual construction; the UNDP TA received \$287,790 of co-funding from the Australian International Development Aid Bureau
- Separately, during 2001-2002 UNDP source of funding (i.e. TRAC 1.1.3) for coordination of emergency relief totalled \$568,037, with additional funding from donors of \$1,327,748

Partnerships

- Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
- National Committee for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction
- Viet Nam Red Cross Society
- Central Committee for Forest Fire Prevention and Suppression

- General Department of Hydro-Meteorology
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
- WFP
- Government of the Netherlands
- Government of Luxembourg

Programme Activities

In 1992, UNDP and the UN Department of Development Support and Management Services, in association with the then-Vietnamese Ministry of Water Resources, the National Committee for the IDNDR and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), organised an International Workshop on Flood Mitigation, Emergency Preparedness and Flood Disaster Management in Hanoi. The outcome of this workshop was the production of a comprehensive Strategy and Action Plan for Mitigating Water Disasters in Viet Nam.

Based on recommendations of the workshop and contributions received from provincial and national government bodies, the plan addresses the water disasters that most affect Viet Nam:

- River floods
- Flooding from the sea
- Increased runoff
- Erosion and siltation of river beds
- Slope instability, mudflows, and landslides
- Torrential rains in combination with strong winds
- Failures of water-retaining structures
- Seawater intrusion into ground water

The Strategy and Action Plan has since served as the principal framework in Viet Nam for mitigating disasters. The strategy has three main task areas: forecasting and warning systems, preparedness and mitigation, and emergency relief.

UNDP has helped the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control to establish the DMU. The Unit has improved disaster mitigation and management of information through the use of information and communications technologies. The Unit has also helped prepare a Second National Strategy and Action Plan to mitigate and manage disasters until 2010. UNDP has

also worked with the Viet Nam Red Cross and IFRC to develop a grassroots disaster preparedness training programme, which has now been expanded to other provinces with funding from the Government of Luxembourg.

In its second phase, the DMU is using new technology to develop disaster mitigation and management programmes that are being tested for implementation throughout Asia, in collaboration with USAID and the US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. In the next four years, UNDP aims to help Viet Nam integrate disaster management into its national development and foster cooperation within national agencies and the donor community. Under the framework of the Capacity-Building for Disaster Mitigation project, UNDP, along with NGOs, the governments of the Netherlands and Luxembourg, and other donors, has played a leading role in helping the government form an important government-donor-NGO partnership for disaster mitigation. The partnership, which focuses on central Viet Nam but will eventually be extended nationwide, aims to strengthen policy formation, information sharing and coordination of resources.

Another major effort supported by UNDP in Viet Nam in the 1990s has involved the rehabilitation of greater than 800 kilometres of sea dykes in 12 coastal provinces that are hit almost yearly by typhoons and floods. Without the protection of sea dykes, such storms can bring lasting negative effects to areas that are already poor. For example, if seawater floods an area, the land may not support crops for several years unless fresh water can quickly flush salt water from the land.

Thus, linked with two larger WFP projects, UNDP has helped the Government establish a system of quality control to ensure that the reconstructed dykes stand the test of time. The UNDP project has introduced new designs, construction methods and quality-control procedures in Viet Nam. Through these efforts, UNDP and WFP have provided 830,000 people with better protection from natural disasters.