

# Living with a river that rises; Coastal communities in Da Nang are taking measures to respond to flash flooding, but is it enough?

## Interest Story

2 April 2013

**DA NANG, Vietnam** – Ms. Nguyen’s shop sits on the edge of the small rice farming community of Truong Dinh along the banks of the estuarine Cu Đê River in the district of Hòa Liên. The town is one Da Nang’s many coastal communities in Mid-Central Vietnam.

Nguyen, 45 years old, has lived and farmed along the Cu Đê River her entire life. Flash floods, destructive coastal storms with high winds and inundation jeopardize Nguyen and her neighbour’s livelihoods as the natural disasters leave little room to compromise. She frequently loses her rice crop and often her community shop is inundated for weeks, depending on the strength of the storm that sweeps through.

“In 1999, the floods reached over 2 meters,” she explained to ADPC as she pointed to the flood marker on the outside of her door. “Since then,” she continued, “we’ve had many flash floods that allow only an hour or two to evacuate.”

Approximately 5 km inland from the sea, Truong Dinh faces disaster risks associated with annual cyclones and typhoons, as well as heavy rainfall from the hilltops that surround the community. The Cu Đê River Basin encompasses an area of approximately 500 square meters and is approximately 30 km from head to mouth. Due to its size, the basin is considered insignificant in comparison to others throughout Vietnam. With this in mind, information on the basin’s flux is not as well known; models of the basin to assist with early warnings are currently limited.

“ We just don’t have enough time to pack up our belongings before the river swallows our home, ”

Ms. Nguyen, explains



Cu Đê River Basin faces seasonal natural coastal hazards



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## Earlier warning systems could save lives and secure livelihoods

As Nguyen and her sons reported, the township notifies her community when the river is on the rise, but often, “it’s just not soon enough.”

She explained, “[They] are very good at sending the news through a loud speaker in town, which we can all clearly hear. I am not necessarily at risk, but our homes and businesses are.”

“We just don’t have enough time to pack up our belongings before the river swallows our home,” she continued.

Nguyen’s community store contributes to approximately US\$20 to her household’s monthly income. Whereas her sons provide the family’s primary source of income, loss due to floods is avoidable with appropriate early warning systems in place.



Ms. Nguyen, 45, points to where her house was inundated to in 1999

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## Responding to communities’ needs

Supported by the Royal Norwegian Government and Norway’s Meteorological Institute ADPC, together with Vietnam’s National Hydro Meteorological Services (NHMS) under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) is considering how to improve local level early warning and knowledge dissemination to make sure that at-risk coastal communities are informed in ample time.

ADPC’s and its partners’ work aims to provide technical assistance to strengthen national capacities to deal with weather related natural hazards, promote advanced methodologies for weather forecasting, and supports the dissemination of early warning at the local level.

Through this project, coastal communities such as Nguyen’s, will become more informed of early warnings and forecasts and would be able to reduce the disaster risks at her village and family.

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## Discussions identify action areas

With the aim to improve people centric end-to-end early warning systems and forecasting, officials from the National Hydro-meteorological Service (NHMS), the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), other government organizations and local stakeholders met in Da Nang on 1-2 April 2013 to discuss ways forward in local level dissemination of early warning and forecasting for coastal hazards in Vietnam.

Discussions during the 2-day session aim to arrive at a point for project implementation to move forward in 2013.



Rice farming is a main source of income and livelihood in Hòa Liên