

ROLE OF THE VULNERABLE POPULATION IN FACING THE RISING DISASTER RISKS OF FREQUENT FLOOD EVENTS: A CASE STUDY OF FLOOD-PRONE AREA OF RATNAPURA DIVISIONAL SECRETARIAT DIVISION, SRI LANKA

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Abstract: *The initiatives taken for disaster relief in Sri Lanka has been recurrently proven in vain due to the repeated disaster exposure which has increased the vulnerability of human beings living in the disaster-prone regions poorly addressing the disaster risk reduction. This paper investigates the potential risks confronted by flood disaster prone populations in the context of 'Population Spacing' in terms of settlement distribution and population age structure distribution following a thorough household survey covering all the housing units coming under the possible inundation area of GIS based 100-year flood return period in Ratnapura DS as the case study region. The results reveal that the present context of settlement pattern is embedded within the extreme flood prone region while population indicating a relatively aging population structure. Accordingly, Ratnapura DS needs immediate attention of community level and administration level in order to define their future roles of facing the future disaster risks which will become worsen otherwise.*

Keywords: Flood, exposure, vulnerable population, disaster risk reduction

Introduction

Sri Lanka as a tropical country faces Southwest Monsoon period which usually brings heavy rainfall for most of the regions in the southern quarter of the island. The effects of global climate change have triggered intensive rainfalls during the recent past which causes severe Flood disaster events affecting thousands of people. According to the statistics of Disaster Management Center of Sri Lanka, (2017), the flooding events occurred during May 2016 in 15 Districts were recorded that 515,313 people have been affected while 213 deaths and 77 missing people were reported by 11th June. In this event about 3, 109 houses fully damaged and 19,954 houses partially damaged. The Disaster situation caused for 73,560 people to be temporarily displaced to 354 safe locations. According to the statistics at least 150,000 women and girls of reproductive age and over 189,000 children are affected by the disaster (DMC-SL, 2017). The worst affected Districts in the situation were identified as Galle, Kalutara, Matara and Rathnapura. According to the statistics of 2017 flood disaster event, 1700 housing units in Ratnapura District and 800 in Kalutara District were severely damaged (DMC-SL, 2017). Several thousands of other households were affected due to minor inundations, restricted mobility and food scarcity. This situation has been repeated in all the recent major flood events for a long time (PDNA, 2017).

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Acknowledgement: *This research study was carried out under the Pre - Disaster Needs Assessment – 2018; Data collection for the Property Estimation of Housing and Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) affiliate with GIS mapping project provided through United Nations Development Program, on behalf of the National Disaster Relief Services Center, Ministry of Disaster Management of Sri Lanka. Authors would like to acknowledge all the dignitaries on their immense helps throughout the study. Further the Authors acknowledge the Human Settlement Division of National Building Research Organization, Sri Lanka for sharing GIS based inundation area modelling methodology for the inundation region identification.*