

The Joint Advocacy Network Initiative (JANI)

**FOUR ON-THE-SPOT MOTTO IN
DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

Key contents and actual application

Hanoi 2010



Preface

The Joint Advocacy Network Initiative (JANI) is a joint project involving 14 NGOs and agencies with experience in community based disaster risk management (CBDRM), including the Disaster Management Center of the Department for Dyke Management and Flood and Storm Control (DDMFSC). The project is funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department and is coordinated by CARE International in Vietnam. One of the objectives of the project is to compile, document and develop basic concepts related to CBDRM, and to share these concepts with partner agencies and communities at the central and local levels. To date, the project has compiled and published a number of important documents, including: "Good practices in natural disaster prevention and mitigation," and a "Community based disaster management framework."

Over the past few years, the four on-spot motto (leadership on-spot; human resources on-spot; means on-spot; and logistics on-spot) have proven to be efficient when applied in dyke management and flood and storm control activities in disaster-affected provinces. However, the basic content, rules of application and lessons learnt from the practical application of these principles have not been widely documented, nor the difficulties and challenges of using them in different provinces.

In order to study and share knowledge relating to the four-on-spot motto, JANI has produced "The four on-spot motto in disaster prevention and mitigation." This booklet is available in both Vietnamese and English and has been shared as a common reference material with government staff and the general public throughout Vietnam. As the number of reference documents from which we have drawn our information is limited, there will invariably be some mistakes contained within this booklet. With this in mind, we very much appreciate and welcome all comments and contributions from readers to improve this booklet.

All comments and suggestions should be directed to:

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On behalf of the JANI Project, I would like to express our sincere thanks to all JANI implementing partners and other related organizations, along with local and government agencies that provided vital support and information; our consultant Mrs. Nguyen Hoang Yen, who developed the booklet; and Mr. Nguyen The Luong, Head of the Division of Flood and Storm prevention at the DDMFSC, who has edited this document.

Yours sincerely,

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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 Disaster context

Vietnam is a country that suffers from frequent natural disasters. The most common types of natural disasters experienced are storms, floods, landslides, storm surges, salinity, drought and forest fires (hereinafter referred to as floods and storms) which occur every year, causing serious loss of life and property. Over the past 5 years, natural disasters have killed an average of 400 people each year, and have caused an estimated loss of 1% to 1.5% of GDP¹. In 2009, Storm No. 9 (Typhoon Ketsana) seriously affected 15 provinces in the central and Central Highlands regions of Vietnam, killing 174 people and causing damage of over 14,000 billion Vietnam Dong².

In disaster preparedness and response, Vietnam has learnt many valuable lessons from practical experience. One of such lessons is the introduction and application of the “*four on-the-spot motto*”. This motto was developed from the experience in protecting and strengthening the dyke system in the Red river delta and in the north of Zone 4 in the early 1970³. This experience showed that careful and cautious work was required in order to ensure the safety of the dyke system and the prevention of flooding for the plains. The work required the leader to be able to organize, coordinate and mobilize all necessary resources from the society as a whole and from the existing political system. All actors were required to be on high alert and be proactive in taking a specific role at any stage or at any point in time during the protection of the dyke systems. Since then, this idea has been gradually developed and consolidated into the motto called “Four on-the-spot which includes leadership on-the-spot, human resources on-the-spot, means and materials on-the-spot, and logistics on-the-spot”.

The actual practice of the “*Four on-the-spot motto*” has demonstrated its strengths and effectiveness in disaster management. The application of the motto has helped overcome several incidents such as the historic floods in the Red river delta in 1971, Nghe An and Ha Tinh area in 1978, Thanh Hoa in 1980 and the Noi Doi - Bac Ninh incident in 1986. The dyke systems of these areas were eventually protected and were not broken⁴.

¹ Data from Disaster Management Center, 2009.

² Speech of Deputy Prime Minister Hoang Trung Hai at the National forum on Natural Disaster mitigation and climate change adaptation October 07, 2009 in Hanoi.

³ Mr Luong The Nguyen, Head of division of management of flood and storm control, Dyke management and flood and storm control Department – Ministry of Agricultural and Rural development

⁴ Dyke management and flood and storm control Department – CCFSC.

Following its application in dyke protection, the motto has been now expanded into all aspects of natural disaster preparedness and response. The practice of the motto has been stipulated in detail in legal documents since 2006.

1.2 The concept

According to the Vietnamese Language Dictionary, the word ‘*motto*’ indicates a common orientation, strategy, leadership and response to a problem, situation or event⁵ (which is storm and flood control in this field). It can also be understood as the guidelines given by central Government authorities or a central responsible agency to vertical line agencies at the province, district and commune level. The phrase ‘*on-the-spot*’ can be understood as to be at one specific local administrative unit lower than the central level, which can be provincial, district or commune level, or it may simply mean in a certain area (in household or certain place-name).

The “Four on-the-spot motto” used for natural disaster management generally means:

Each household or locality should prepare all essential items to prevent or respond to natural disasters, which may occur at the locality at any time. The prepared items should meet the emergence relief demands of the household or its locality, and ensure they are ready to provide support to other households or other localities before external forces are asked to provide support.

1.3 Legal rationale

The *four on-the-spot motto* was included in two legal documents issued by the Government. Item D, Section 7, Article 10 in Chapter III of Decree No. 08/2006/ND-CP, dated January 16, 2006, stipulates in detail some articles of the revised Ordinance on Flood and Storm prevention. It states clearly that in areas where natural disasters occur frequently, People’s Committees (PC) should “organize training and simulation exercises for agencies directly engaging in flood and storm prevention and rescue; develop preparedness plans, and mobilize all local resources under the motto “*four on-the-spot: leadership on-the-spot, forces on-the-spot, means and materials on-the-spot, and logistics on-the-spot,*” in order to teach them to respond to the consequences of floods and storms, and promote rehabilitation.

⁵ Vietnamese Dictionary, National University Publisher, 2007

The third guiding principle of the National Strategy on Natural Disaster Prevention and Mitigation until 2020, which was approved by the Government in 2007, also states clearly that: “natural disaster prevention and mitigation should be implemented using the four on-the-spot motto (leadership on-the-spot, forces on-the-spot, materials on-the-spot, logistics on-the-spot), in order to assist people to actively prevent, respond in a timely manner to, and promptly and efficiently recover from natural disasters”.

1.4 Purpose

No matter who initiated the motto, its common purpose in natural disaster management is to achieve the highest possible level of effectiveness in preparedness, response and rehabilitation of disasters using the available resources on the spot, which will contribute reduction of losses of life and damage to public and private property.

1.5 Underlying ideology

The ideology underpinning this motto is based on fostering the capacity of local communities and government (on the spot) to solve local problems. Generally, it is in line with the motto of relying on people and recognizing the power of the public⁶. The key point is to know how to rely on people and to mobilize the power and resources of local people and local government in the spirit of “self protection and self rescue”. In current situations, disaster preparedness needs to be socialized, decentralized, and associated with the responsibilities of all levels of government, mass organizations, enterprises and the people⁷. Below are some examples of the above ideology:

- o Using people as the basis by which to ensure public security at the local level.
- o Mobilizing community power to strengthen temporary houses.
- o Using the principle of the State and people working together (to construct bridges, sewage systems, roads, schools, health clinics. etc.)

At present, the four on-the-spot motto has been expanded into other areas of Vietnamese society:

- o Four on-the-spot motto in fire protection, promoted by the Ministry of Public Security’ and the Forest Protection Department.
- o Controlling dangerous diseases such as influenza A, bird flu, cholera, etc, as promoted by the Ministry of Health.

2. TARGET AUDIENCE

The main target groups that need to apply this motto are local authority leaders, Party committees, mass organizations, shock brigades, and armed forces present in the area, who participate in the steering committee in charge of annual natural disaster prevention and mitigation, and emergency situations.



This steering committee can provide close and direct leadership to residential groups; has good knowledge of their local social and environmental conditions, and therefore can devise specific, timely, relevant and effective plans for natural disaster prevention and mitigation.

In addition to the above steering committee, the motto is also useful for commune households. The application of “four-on-the-spot” in commune households is described as follows:

Leadership on-the-spot from: heads of households like fathers, mothers or other experienced people in good health.

Human resources on-the-spot are: Healthy family members who can help other family members in disaster preparedness and response so as to ensure life safety.

Materials and means on-the-spot: households can prepare measures to assist ‘self rescue’ and evacuation such as boats, rafts, floating devices or other necessary safety items life-jackets and temporary shelters.

Logistics on-the-spot: households can be active in stocking essential household items such as food, medicine, water and lamp oil of sufficient quantity for household use over a period of time (equal to the length of flooding experienced at the local level).

⁶ Ho Chi Minh ideology, National Politic Publisher. 1995

⁷ Lieutenant general, Dr. Nguyen Huy Hieu, Application of the four on-the-spot motto in natural disaster prevention. People’s Military Publisher. Hanoi 2009

3. TYPES OF DISASTERS

The *four on-the-spot motto* may be effectively applied in preventing and mitigating damage resulting from different types of natural disasters, including storms, floods, landslides, storm surges, salinity, drought and forest fires that frequently occur in Vietnam.

The *four on-the-spot motto* is useful for all phases in disaster management such as before, during and after disasters.

Before disaster:

The implementation of this motto means we have to develop disaster preparedness plans and anticipate the possibility of disaster occurring at the local level so that we can undertake the necessary preparedness measures for response and rehabilitation purposes. A good application of the *four on-the-spot motto* will help us to be active in organizing disaster prevention activities such as the strengthening of the houses, anchoring of boats, cutting down of trees, trimming of branches and evacuation of affected people.

During disaster:

To ensure the timely and proactively evacuation of affected communities, the effective preparedness of means and human resources on-the-spot should be taken in advance. Furthermore, it helps us to effectively undertake rescue work, provide emergency aid to the injured people and save property. Damage to houses and property will be reduced if they are reinforced and strengthened before the disaster.

After disaster:

A good application of the *four on-the-spot motto* will help people with rapid rehabilitation and will ensure they do not wait for external support. In reality, unforgettable lessons learnt were drawn from no preparedness of essential household items. In many places, helicopters had been used in providing foods to those affected people just right after the disaster happening as they were suffered from hunger. This kind of support by helicopters was costly sometimes ineffective in certain areas. While in some places, people took a good preparedness of sufficient foods before disaster therefore their life was secured and not suffering from hunger even they were completely isolated from the outside areas for a length of time due to the road was blocked.

However, flood and storm control board officials at both the national and local level, who participated in the survey and discussions, said that the *four on-the-spot motto* is most helpful before and during natural disasters.

4. PRINCIPLES IN APPLICATION

In order to achieve the best results, the *four mottos* must be implemented simultaneously and together. If one motto is neglected, the desired effect will not be achieved.

Some examples in organizing rescue and evacuation of affected communities:

- o *In rescue activities:* if a steering apparatus has a capable leader but local human resources lack adequate means and materials, then the committee cannot organize a timely response.
- o *In evacuation activities:* if means and materials are available to evacuate people to safe places, a lack of food, medicine and other necessary items will undermine the ability to provide support to those affected and even when means, materials, food, medicine and other necessary items are available, lack of good leadership will hinder the evacuation.

In short, among the four mottos, one motto should not be emphasized and prioritized over all others, because they are equally important and no motto can replace the others.

At the same time, the implementation of the *four on-the-spot motto* should be attached to the local annual disaster preparedness plan. Most communes make and disseminate this plan every year, usually before the beginning of the disaster season. Within this plan, there are specific options and measures for preventing floods and storms throughout the entire commune, or highly vulnerable areas. The mottoes should provide guidance for making and implementing that detailed plan.

When mobilizing forces and materials for use in disaster preparedness (such as expenses for mobilising means from the community or subsidized payment on a daily rate for people), the financial policy should be clear. Although disaster preparedness is a common goal, people should be provided with adequate subsidies to support their living. If their living is not guaranteed, the mobilization of forces and facilities on site will not be successfully executed in subsequent disaster seasons, as people will choose not to participate or will instead concentrate on other economic activities to earn a living.

5. CONTENTS OF THE MOTTO

5.1 Leadership on-the-spot

a. For the local level authorities

The first requirement is to set up a leadership apparatus to direct all disaster prevention, response and relief activities. Typically, the core members of the apparatus are the local authorities, agencies, political organizations or political-society organizations. Armed forces and other military teams on site are core human resources. Among these members, the leader is the one assigned by the local authorities, mass organizations, or community to undertake the task of directing the implementation of disaster prevention and response and recovery activities. The purpose of establishing the on-the-spot apparatus and appointing a leader is to ensure that all activities are done in a timely and efficient manner⁸.

The Chairman of the People's Committee (be it provincial, district, or commune) is the most senior leader in this apparatus. In Vietnam, apparatuses at all levels generally perform their tasks and functions well in coordinating the execution of disaster prevention plans. Some tasks of the leadership on-the-spot include:

- Coordinate with related sectors and institutions to regularly check the progress of the implementation of flood and storm prevention and disaster mitigation plans at the local level, and to solve difficulties when necessary.
- In the event of a disaster, the Chairman of the People's Committee at district, commune and town level issues a statement of emergency and mobilizes all resources on-the-spot to respond to the disaster.
- Depending on the disaster situation, the leader may issue the response measures and directly lead their implementation.
- Take the lead in investigating the extent of damage and overcoming the consequences of natural disasters.

b. For household level

Before disasters occur, the head of each household should anticipate disaster issues which could effect his/her family; check and make an inventory of the essential means, materials and household items which are available or which need to be brought; and assign preparedness tasks and duties to each family

member. During the disaster, the household leader should the family's response by, for example, undertaking rescue work or providing emergency relief support to family members.

5.2 Human resources on-the-spot

a. For the local level authorities

When natural disasters occur, the fastest and most effective way to provide rescue and support is to use forces available on-the-spot. In effect, this motto means that people should save themselves first before saving other people nearby, and that the government should rely on available resources (people) to rescue those in trouble. As one proverb says: "*distant water cannot put out a fire close by*"⁹. On-the-spot forces are often night-watchmen, Youth Union members, armed forces, or local military standing units and police on site. These forces are often available before, during and after natural disasters, and receive direct orders from the leader (the chairman of the People's Committee or the head of Unit).

Some tasks of the human resources on-the-spot include:

- Actively coordinating with the local armed forces and additional higher level forces; mobilize on-the-spot forces in order to help people reinforce their houses; trim down tree braches; assist with evacuating people from risky areas to safe shelters; protect key areas and major works; participate in search and rescue work; and provide assistance in the maintenance of flood and storm works.
- Ensuring the provision of logistics services, in which the first and foremost necessities are food, clean water, electricity, medicine, health care, sanitation, disease prevention, and security for the elderly, pregnant women and children; providing rehabilitation support after a disaster such as environmental cleaning, disease prevention; ensuring public and social security at locality and temporary shelters; rescuing and providing assistance to affected families.

b. For household level

Human resources at the household level are household members who are key laborers, are healthy and active, who can take a role in response, search and rescue to ensure the safety family members and are ready to support the local authorities when required.

12 ⁸Lieutenant general, Dr. Nguyen Huy Hieu, Application of the four on-the-spot motto in natural disaster prevention. People's Military Publisher. Hanoi 2009

13 ⁹Lieutenant general, Dr. Nguyen Huy Hieu, Application of the four on-the-spot motto in natural disaster prevention. People's Military Publisher. Hanoi 2009

5.3 Materials on-the-spot

a. For the local level authorities

The idea of this motto is that local communities have an active plan to ensure that adequate local materials and supplies are available for the sake of prevention and rescue when the need arises. This requirement is to ensure that the consequences of a natural disaster¹⁰ are minimized through a rapid and timely rescue.

In addition to the means and materials prepared and provided by the Government in its annual budget allocation for different sectors (transportation, health, education, agriculture etc.), the local authority or local steering committee for flood and storm control (CFSC) should mobilize people to carry out actions co-funded by the Government and people (people use their own funds to buy materials for reinforcing houses and contribute other materials such as piles, soil, sacks... to maintain and repair dykes, allow their houses to be used as childcare centers during the flood season, lend craft such as junks and other boats to pick up students and evacuate people, etc.)

b. For household level

Each household should prepare adequate means for self rescue and self evacuation, such as boats, rafts, floating devices etc., along with safety measures such as life-jackets, temporary shelters etc.

5.4 Logistics on-the-spot

a. For the local level authorities

For this motto, the local authority should actively prepare adequate stocks of food and medicine to support first aid and relief activities when disasters occur. The general principle is to ensure the safety of injured people or vulnerable groups such as the elderly, pregnant women and children before transferring them to safer places, and to ensure people have enough food to eat until external relief arrives¹¹.

b. For household level

Each household should prepare adequate quantities of essential items such as food, medicine, clean water and lamp oil for family's use as long as possible (quantity sufficient to last the period of flooding) or at least sufficient to last until external relief arrives.

6. APPLICATION OF THE MOTTO IN DIFFERENT STAGES OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT AT COMMUNE LEVEL

Most interviewees said that all plans for flood and storm prevention at district and commune level should apply the four on-the-spot motto. For example, the 2009 plan of Tam Tra commune, Nui Thanh district, Quang Nam Province stated that:

In order to cope with strong storms and floods, as well as other types of natural disasters which can directly affect Tam Tra commune of Nui Thanh district, Quang Nam Province, the principle of "**actively prevent, timely respond, and promptly and efficiently recover**" should be applied. Within this principle, prevention is key and should be emphasized, meaning that the commune should develop active preparedness plans using the "five on-the-spot" motto: *leadership on-the-spot, human resources on-the-spot, materials on-the-spot, logistics on-the-spot and self management on-the-spot*¹².

Source: People's Committee of Tam Tra Commune, CFSC. August 2009.

6.1 Before disaster

For the motto "Leadership on-the-spot"

- Ensure all sectors and groups fully understand the roles and functions of the steering committee and contribute to strengthening its structure.
- Develop, review and adjust the detailed annual natural disaster prevention plan.
- Direct adequate budget allocation to the disaster prevention plan and to activities that particularly deal with each type of disaster experienced in the area.
- Organize simulations for all relief and recovery agencies as outlined in the natural disaster prevention plan.
- Actively monitor and track disaster situations, as well as natural and social conditions at vulnerable residential clusters or populated areas within the commune.

¹² Based on experience of Quảng Nam and Thừa Thiên Huế provinces, the steering committee for flood and storm control at all level carried out the 5th motto of "self management on the spot" in the light that households self manage their family members after disasters in order to save life and minimize life losses.

- Assign specific tasks to each affiliated relief and recovery agency.
- Ensure active and clear coordination with higher level authorities, as well as armed forces in the area.
- Organize communication and knowledge dissemination activities on natural disasters and prevention measures that target the public.
- Instruct, develop or review evacuation plans – including means, time and logistics – to prepare for emergencies.



For the motto "human resources on-the-spot"

- Make a list of core relief and recovery agencies that will participate in natural disaster prevention and rescue, along with a reserve list of back-up agencies that can be utilised when necessary.
- Assign specific tasks to each relief and recovery agency, including the area of which they are in charge, the number of team members, necessary equipment and materials.
- Ensure the frequent practice of skills for natural disaster prevention, especially necessary rescue skills.

For the motto "Materials on-the-spot"

- Based on the local natural disaster situation, ensure necessary equipment and materials are available.
- Make a list of equipment and materials available to the steering committee and prepare additional plans if necessary.
- Make a list of households, businesses, organizations, etc. who own relevant materials and equipment matching the local natural disaster context, which can be temporarily borrowed and mobilised during a disaster.
- In vulnerable areas, individuals should increase their contributions of necessary equipment and materials, such as engine boats, junks, cars, bamboo, soil, rocks, etc.
- Check whether all equipment is operational, and put in place a contingency plan for their repair as required.

For the motto "Logistics on-the-spot"

- Encourage people to reserve food, medicine, water, lamp oil and other necessary household supplies.
- Allocate funds for stockpiling necessities needed at evacuation points.
- Sufficient drinking water and food should be available for at least 7 days in emergency cases.

According to a number of elderly people in the poor and mountainous Tam Tra commune of Nui Thanh district in Quang Nam province, storm number 9 (Typhoon Ketsana) – in which gusts of level 11 and 12 were experienced – was the worst they have experienced in a number of decades. Commune officials said that: *"The wind was so strong that it blew away the long wooden frame that secures the roof of the Commune People's Committee office to the front yard. The metal roof was also blown off and was found 500m away near the commune health station. Our commune was completely isolated due to the rising river water and fallen trees that blocked the road to the district"*.

However, the loss of life and property in Tam Tra was significantly reduced thanks to the good general level of preparedness of the local authorities under the four on-the-spot motto, and particularly thanks to the leadership of the Chairman of the Commune People's Committee. Only one person was killed in Tam Tra; the result of carelessness when climbing the roof to rearrange sacks of sand.

"To be frank, some of our staff are still negligent. The last time we were affected by storm so directly and seriously was during the French colonial period. However, thanks to the leadership and understanding of the chairman of the People's Committee, we have successfully implemented our prevention activities under the four on-the-spot motto," said commune officials.

Leadership on-the-spot: Under the guidance of the steering CFSC in Quang Nam province and Nui Thanh district, the commune steering committee was consolidated and strengthened in early August 2009. The commune PC assigned specific tasks to members of the steering committee, with key members including leaders and heads/vice heads of departments taking charge and undertaking the direct monitoring of villages (8 villages in the commune). In the event of storms and floods, these leaders will direct preparations in their village.

Before the storm, commune staff met with heads of villages to develop alternative arrangements for flood and storm prevention, while at the same time communicating appropriate strategies for preventing natural disasters to the community. As the majority of village houses are of temporary construction with corrugated iron roofs, they showed residents how to reinforce their houses and doors using aids such as sand sacks and fastening ropes. They also advised households to stockpile food, cassava, potatoes, rice, instant noodles, flashlights, oil (can be used within 5 -7 days) and charge cell phones. They provided direction and support to households (8 households) in villages 1 and 7 that are located near the river bank and vulnerable to landslides, encouraging them to evacuate to higher ground; therefore ensuring their safety. Many houses within the commune have also been protected from collapse through the cutting down of trees, the trimming of branches, and the use of sand bags.

During the storm, houses belonging to Mr. Tran Du and Mr. Le Van Chuc were destroyed. The commune was completely isolated from the rest of the district, and within the commune four villages were isolated from the Commune People's Committee (villages 1,2,3 and 4) building, while other villages lost their communication facilities and experienced power cuts due to the rise in water level, fallen trees, and downed telephone lines. Key commune staff were prompt in mobilising both core youth team and village Red Cross members to support the community in their efforts to protect themselves from the storm. They supported the use of sand bags to hold down roofs, thus preventing further damages, and provided needed encouragement to people.

After the storm the leader of the youth team helped residents to fix their homes, assisted in cleaning up their environment, and allocated relief goods to each household, quickly assessing their damages in order to provide an accurate report to higher level authorities.

Source: Steering CFSC of Tam Tra commune, Nui Thanh district, Quang Nam province. November 2009.

6.2 During disaster

For the motto "Leadership on-the-spot"

- During disasters, the leader should use the developed plan to make decisions which are appropriate to the actual disaster situation, and which are in line with directions received from the upper level: the so-called "leader's order".
- Actively and closely monitor the natural disaster situation, as well as that of the households and production units that are in danger and require urgent evacuation.
- Send special forces to support people who decide to stay by reinforcing their houses, trimming trees, rearranging household items and properties, etc.; organize the evacuation of vulnerable households to safe places; rescue and provide assistance to affected families; and rescue major works.
- Actively and closely coordinate with the upper levels of government and armed forces present in the area to organize the rescue work.
- Instruct the provision of food, medicine, blankets, and clothes to households at each of the evacuation points.

For the motto "human resources on-the-spot"

- Youth response teams, civil militia, and self-managed groups will provide active support to people to assist them to cope with natural disasters.
- Responsible forces such as electricity suppliers, water suppliers, schools, health units, and communication units will execute the sector plans which have been designed for disaster scenarios in their sector.
- Provide full support to evacuate people to safe places.
- Continue to patrol and guard at points around vulnerable areas, as well as actively support affected people in the event of an emergency.



After the historic flooding experienced in 1999, the authorities and people of the central provinces of Vietnam have been proactive in implementing preparedness measures, especially in their application of the four on-the-spot motto at commune level. Quang An commune has been appraised by the CFSC of Thua Thien Hue and Quang Dien district as being effectively prepared for future storms and floods. The commune develops an annual plan to prepare for floods and storms, which details preparedness measures for each type of disaster and sets priorities for each vulnerable area in the commune, in keeping with the spirit of the four on-the-spot motto. The plan emphasizes the mobilization of on-the-spot forces from the villages and communes to support the execution of the plan:

Human resources on-the-spot: Given the experience of recent years, the CFSC of Quang An commune have selected and mobilized strong young people to form pioneer rescue teams – rather than using militias – provided those young people are not their families primary bread winners. In the event of a storm or flood, they are asked to demonstrate a complete commitment to supporting the commune authority in its rescue work. Before the storm, pioneer teams helped the commune committee to make a list of households living near Tam Giang Lagoon or beside the river, and assisted these households to move to safe areas. In recent years, and especially during typhoon No. 9 (typhoon Ketsana), commune and village pioneer teams have worked very effectively in search and rescue, in evacuating people from risky areas such as parts of An Xuan village and the Tam Giang lagoon, and assisting in the recovery from the effects of disaster. Youth pioneer teams of 10-20 people have been formed in all villages. In the commune, a pioneer team consisting of 32 members has been formed under the leadership of the commune chairman and commune police. Every year, the district Red Cross provides training to the commune pioneer teams on search and rescue activities.

Source: the leaders of Quang An Commune People's Committee, Quang Dien district, Thua Thien Hue.

For the motto "Materials on-the-spot"

- Mobilize and temporarily borrow means and materials previously listed.
- Provide necessary equipment to on site forces for timely and efficient search and rescue work.

The authorities and people of Quang Tho commune, which is a low lying area in Quang Dien district, Thua Thien Hue province prone to flooding, have drawn lessons in the active preparation of on-the-spot equipments from the historic flood of 1999:

From the local authority: the Commune PC has purchased two large boats (with a combined carrying capacity of 35-40 people), while the steering committee for flood and storm control has listed and mobilised 12 engine powered boats owned by residents, which are available to use when required by the Commune PC. The commune has annual meetings with boat owners to discuss the prevention of storms and floods. Each owner is given 10 litres of gasoline so that they can be proactive in a disaster response. Boat owners frequently check their boats and life vests to ensure normal operation, while the commune has reserved 100 liters of diesel and prepared adequate life vests and life buoys for use by the rescue team (16 people). In the Niem Pho - Pho Nam A (Phe) dyke route, dyke protection forces were readied and each village prepared 200 sacks, 200 bamboo stakes, and quantities of earth in order to be active in handling any dyke breaking situation.

In their long-term disaster prevention plan for the period 2009-2015 (particularly in 2009), the commune authority has sought to upgrade disaster mitigation infrastructure, such as an effective transport system (asphalt and concrete roads managed by the province, concrete inter-village roads, and river embankments in villages such as Pho Nam Bo, Nem Pho, Tan Xuan Lai), permanent market places, electricity network and commune radio station. It plans to construct 10 new permanent classrooms in elementary schools Number 1 and 2, as well as new classrooms in the kindergartens in La Van Thuong and Ha villages. A two-storey Health Station will be constructed in the commune centre, along with one cultural house where people can take temporary shelter during storms and floods. Disaster resilient houses have been built for 30 poor households, while 50 other households have been provided with support to strengthen their houses.

From people: Most villagers created a mezzanine area in which to store their food, drinking water, lamp oil and flint. Animal stables were also raised to higher ground. In the event of a flood, households moved people and essential belongings to the mezzanine area. In addition, people also actively prepared a means of relocation - up to 95% of households had boats. In case the mezzanine was flooded, people could cut rafter and remove tiles to escape to the roof when needed as they had prepared means such as saws, large knives. Most construction workers in the villages and commune were trained on house reinforcing techniques during a project on preventing typhoon damage to housing in central Vietnam. Some houses in the villages have been reinforced with these techniques to mitigate natural disasters.

Source: Leaders of Quảng Thọ commune PC, Quảng Điền district, Thừa Thiên Huế province.

For the motto "Logistics on-the-spot"

- Allocate food, medicine and necessary household kits to households at evacuation sites
- Continue to keep track of the number of families in need of emergency relief, and to monitor the essential needs of local people, whether they have chosen to remain at home or relocate to an evacuation site.

Logistics on-the-spot: The reserving of food is an essential element of the disaster preparedness plan of the Steering CFSC in Quang Tho commune. According to the plan, local people are requested to reserve food and drinking water for 10-15 days, as the commune is often flooded for long periods. Thanks to this preparation, local people living in vulnerable areas have not suffered from a lack of food during flooding in recent years. Based on their previous experiences, local people now reserve drinking water in buoyant nylon bags that are able to float. Additionally, lamp oil, flint and medicine are indispensable items stockpiled before storms.

Source: Leaders of Quang Tho Commune People's Committee, Quang Dien District, Thua Thien Hue province.

6.3 After disaster

For the motto "Leadership on-the-spot"

- Prepare timely emergency responses, as well as directing the needs assessment and ensuring that urgent priorities for support – food aid, medicine, etc. – are addressed.
- Continue to provide guidance on livelihood recovery for local people, including their business and production activities.
- Provide guidance on the recovery of essential services such as clean water, power, roads, schools and health stations in the area.
- Direct the clean up of the environment, including the treatment of waste and carcasses left by disasters.
- Be proactive in coordination and in requesting external support when the need arises.

For the motto "human resources on-the-spot"

- Continue providing local people with relief items such as food, medicine, etc. when required.
- Support people to rebuild and restore their houses by repairing damage to houses, wells and livestock pens, etc.; and stabilize local people's lives.
- Ensure rapid recovery of essential services such as clean water, power, roads, schools and health stations in the area.
- Effectively treat and dispose of contaminated water, waste and carcasses left behind by the disaster.

For the motto "Materials on-the-spot"

- Use means, materials and equipment available on the spot – together with necessary external support – to recover essential services such as clean water, power, roads, schools and health stations.
- Mobilize available on site materials such as Chloramine B to treat water sources, properly dispose of rubbish, bury dead animals, etc, left behind by a natural disaster.

For the motto "Logistics on-the-spot"

- Continue to ask for relief support for food, medicine, etc, if necessary.
- Find appropriate livelihood recovery options.

In emergency preparedness and response at the commune level, effective planning and evacuation of affected communities is the result of the comprehensive implementation of the 4 on the spot motto. The following are two examples: one from the Steering CFSC of Hau Loc District, Thanh Hoa province in 2005, and one from the Steering CFSC of Quang Nam province in 2009.

Thanh Hoa Province: The effective evacuation of local people before Typhoon Damrey (storm No. 7) struck the province in 2005 provided a good practical lesson that has been learnt by the Steering committee for flood and storm control of Hau Loc District, Thanh Hoa province. When a part of the sea dyke was broken, low-lying areas of the district were inundated by water, causing heavy flooding. However, the proper evacuation of the population helped to minimise the loss of life (no deaths reported, only 4 people injured) and property.

Leadership on-the-spot: Before the storm hit, a preparedness plan was finalized with which to direct the response to Damrey. Leaders of the Steering CFSC at the provincial and district levels visited important communes (Da Loc, Ngu Loc, and Hai Loc communes) to assist in strengthening their leadership. In addition, the District Police Department and Health Centre were also directed to reinforce commune public security and to provide first aid support if necessary. The Steering CFSC were directed to strengthen coastal dykes by making earth dams, using sand bags to reinforce the dyke's foot, etc, while at the same time beginning to evacuate people. Within 3 days (from 24 to 26 September 2005), 29,000 people were evacuated to strong, multi-storey concrete buildings within villages, schools and the district. During the storm, the Steering Committee stationed village and commune response teams – along with military forces – at the coastal and river dykes, ready to reinforce them when required.

Human resources on-the-spot: A force of more than 1500 people, comprising of district youth and rescue teams along with the police and military (1200 people from the district rescue team and 300 people from the military) were mobilized to help local people to evacuate, to provide search and rescue support before and during the storm, along with recovery work afterwards.

During the storm, the response team and military forces provided support to local people in the form of evacuation and dyke reinforcement. *"Their actions were courageous, as they worked in the wind and heavy rain to reinforce the base of the dyke with rocks"*, a member of the District Steering CFSC said. In the wake of the storm, the response teams worked with the military to support local people with food aid, and rescued people who were trapped in flooded houses. Other support included the provision of emergency relief, and helping people to collect their property and repair their houses.

Materials on-the-spot: The district Steering CFSC mobilized 250 trucks and other means of transportation to evacuate 29,000 people. The evacuation process was slowed by there being only one road to the central area of the district (passing over De bridge – which has a width of only 4-5 meters – which connects Hau Loc and Minh Loc communes). The district authority also mobilized excavators from the Urban Construction Company, which operates at the Ninh Phu stone embankment, to reinforce this embankment before and after the storm. The strengthening of houses and the reinforcing of walls with sand packs was directed by the Steering CFSC and implemented by the community in the period prior to the storm hitting, thus reducing the damage to housing.

Logistics on-the-spot: In the wake of Typhoon Damrey, the Steering CFSC at both the Hau Loc district and commune level recognized the need to ensure people reserve enough food in their houses to last them for about 15 days, allowing them to overcome longer periods of flooding. According to the district and commune Steering CFSC, local people are generally requested to reserve food and essential items such as roasted rice, instant noodles, dried foodstuff, and drinking water, etc, for about 5-7 days. However, local people often still only prepare these items for 2-3 days.

Source: Leaders of the Steering CFSC of Hau Loc District, Thanh Hoa Province in 2005.

Quang Nam Province: Previous evacuations in Quang Nam during floods and storms were centralized and mainly relied on regular forces (military forces). However, the evacuation process is now to be prepared on the spot, including search and rescue. Evacuation is guided by a general policy that people should be evacuated to a safer place within the commune (on the spot), which can be a neighbour's house, or public facilities nearby. This lesson was learnt from the evacuation for the storm Xangsane in 2006 and was applied during Typhoon Ketsana in 2009. The timely and effective evacuation organized by the Steering CFSC of Quang Nam Province and related districts helped minimize loss of life and property belonging to local people and authorities.

Leadership on-the-spot: The Steering CFSC of Quang Nam Province was aware that the province would be hit by Typhoon Ketsana, although the weather forecast predicted that the eye of the storm would land in Hue. From the afternoon of 28 September, high level leaders of the Provincial PC, including provincial Party Committee Secretaries, and chairmen and vice chairmen at the provincial and district levels stood on standby at vulnerable points throughout the districts and communes to direct preparedness and response activities. During the night of 28 September, the Steering CFSC of Quang Nam Province and its districts evacuated most local people living in unsafe houses to more solid and secure accommodation (in Dai Loc, Dien Ban, Hoi An, and Duy Xuyen), as well as from coastal areas (Tam Thanh) to higher land areas. This was consistent with the "on the spot evacuation" policy. By the morning of 29 September, the Steering CFSC of Quang Nam Province and related districts had already evacuated about 60,000 people (app. 16,000 households) from vulnerable areas. On-the-spot/intermix evacuation held two-thirds of the total population with effectiveness, timeliness and convenience as people were able to walk, use their personal means of transportation or their neighbors' vehicles to evacuate. As for people in Tam Thanh area, there was support from military forces to help evacuate them to schools in Tam Ky. The on the spot evacuation also promoted the spirit of "mutual support" between local people, and, at the same time, demonstrated that they could preserve their own properties and those of their neighbours'. According to the local community, as well as the provincial and district leaders of the Steering CFSC, there were no particular difficulties encountered in effecting the rapid evacuation of a large group of people within a short space of time.

Human resources on-the-spot: A force of about 2000 people, including provincial response and rescue teams and related districts and military forces and policemen (700 people from provincial, district and commune response team and 1300 people from military forces and policemen) were already mobilized to participate in evacuation support and rescue before and during the storm, as well as recovery after the storm.

Materials on-the-spot: The province mobilized government and private cars to support the evacuation. The Steering Committee had already instructed the Provincial Department of Transportation to prepare a list of available cars and to ensure their roadworthiness. In areas such as water reservoirs, important roads deemed at risk of breaking were reinforced with sand packs, steel cages filled with rocks, etc. The authorities also requested that local people prepare their 'on spot' boats to assist in disaster response and evacuations, as large motor-boats are unable to access some densely populated residential areas; a lesson learnt from previous experience. During the evacuation caused by Typhoon Ketsana, the use of vehicles was not frequent since local people had already 'self-evacuated', saving both money and resources for the Provincial Steering CFSC. Following heavy flooding in 1999, almost all households living in low lying areas bought boats, built a mezzanine area in their house to store property and in which to seek protection during a flood, or built rafts for their livestock during flood.

Logistics on-the-spot: The storing of food was conducted at the commune and village levels instead of at the district level, as has occurred in the past. In remote mountainous villages, people built small storage containers to reserve rice seed in order to raise their awareness on "self-protection". Under the direction of the local level Steering CFSC, villages and households already reserve sufficient food for 10-15 days. During Typhoon Ketsana, Tay Giang district was flooded for almost half a month. However, people in the area still had enough food. People in many areas of Quang Nam province also shared their experience in storing drinking water in big water jars (only stored two third of the jar's volume in order that the jar could float during the flood).

Source: Leaders of Quảng Nam Provincial CFSC.

7. CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS IN APPLICATION

- o Commune disaster preparedness plans usually focus on preventing storm and flood rather than other types of natural hazards such as whirlwind, tornadoes, etc. Therefore, when these types of hazards occur, the local leadership's coordination, mobilization and use of the forces on the spot is not proactive.
 - o Communities are mobilized to take responsibility for disaster preparedness through the establishment of voluntary rapid response teams (generally comprising 10-15 members). However, the members are drawn from only a very few sectors such as the village health agency, farmers association or youth volunteers. The structure does not include many other sectors, thus is unable to mobilise the power of the people in its truest sense.
 - o Government funded equipment and materials used to support disaster preparedness work are in short supply (some communes lack any). Most equipment is borrowed from within the local community in the event of a disaster. This results in a general lack of availability of materials when they are needed.
 - o The coordination between different forces, sectors and local mass organizations has not been close or frequent. Instruction and leadership from different actors sometimes overlaps, having a negative impact on its effectiveness.
 - o There is a lack of frequent training to develop skills for flood and storm preparedness among the relevant commune level forces. The application of *the four on-the-spot motto* has been at times theoretical, with commune wide simulations not practiced.
 - o In some places, local staff still lack information and specialized training, resulting in inappropriate and outdated annual disaster preparedness plans.
- o Disaster preparedness plans are not well funded. Funding from the Government is limited and commune budgets are often in shortfall.
 - o As many people remain unaware of the importance of disaster prevention activities, fund raising among local residents is difficult, and the mobilization of contributing labor and money - in addition to that offered by the Government - to undertake disaster preparedness and recovery activities is often delayed.
 - o There is still a lack of specialized means and materials for search and rescue work in some communes.
 - o As with the human resources on the spot, young people often seek employment in far away cities, necessitating the Steering Committee to resort to mobilizing armed forces.



8. LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- o The application of *the four on-the-spot motto* has been shown to be effective when Steering CFSC staff at all levels possess good skills in both planning and the development of detailed plans for each type of disaster. Therefore, the provision of frequent training to steering committees at all levels is necessary, as is the development of guidelines that apply *the four on-the-spot motto* to planning for all types of disasters, and the mobilization of community resources to assist the staff of the local committees for flood and storm control.
- o Leadership on the spot is perhaps *the most crucial motto*, requiring smart and experienced leadership as well as effective coordination to promote the strength of local forces – including the military – in preparing and responding to disasters. In disaster management, the execution of the decisions made by the leader is indeed “*order – obey only*”. In reality, the local authorities draw a lesson learnt that instruction, guidance and decisions should be made from one leader only.
- o The provision of human resources on the spot will only make a difference in search and rescue when regular training and simulations are conducted for the response and voluntary teams. A complimentary mechanism is to be put in place to encourage team spirit.



- o Mechanisms to mobilize financial resources for disaster preparedness, prevention, response and evacuation, recovery, etc, should be developed in order to promote the solidarity of local authorities and people in mobilizing forces, materials and logistics on the spot.
- o Finally, it is necessary to possess accurate weather forecasts and disaster warnings to support disaster preparedness, particularly the development and implementation of evacuation plans. Therefore, improving the quality of forecasts and early warning should be a priority in achieving more effective disaster management.

ANNEX 1: REFERENCES

1. Quang Nam Provincial Committee for Flood and Storm Control. Experiences on the four on-the-spot motto in flood and storm control and natural disaster reduction in Quang Nam. December, 2000.
2. Thanh Hoa Provincial Committee for Flood and Storm Control. Draft of training document on the four on-the-spot motto, 2008.
3. The National Strategy for natural disaster prevention and mitigation until 2020 approved by the Government in 2007.
4. Project "Improving institutional capacity for disaster risk management in Vietnam, especially the risks related to climate change" (SCDM) funded by UNDP. The draft training materials on the four on-the-spot motto.
5. Decree No. 08/2006/ND-CP of the Government dated January 16, 2006, stipulating in details some articles of the revised Ordinance on flood and storm control.
6. Lieutenant General, Dr. Nguyen Huy Hieu, Application of the four on-the-spot motto in natural disaster prevention and mitigation. People's Military Publisher. Hanoi 2009

ANNEX 2: LIST OF AGENCIES PROVIDING INFORMATION

Via Questionnaire:

- Provincial committee for flood and storm control of Yen Bai.
- Provincial committee for flood and storm control of Thanh Hoa
- Committee for flood and storm control of Hau Loc district, Thanh Hoa province
- Committee for flood and storm control of Hung Loc commune, Hau Loc district, Thanh Hoa province.
- Committee for flood and storm control of Da Loc commune, Hau Loc district, Thanh Hoa province.
- Committee for flood and storm control of Hai Loc commune, Hau Loc district, Thanh Hoa province.
- Health Division of Hau Loc district, Thanh Hoa province.
- Provincial committee for flood and storm control of Thua Thien Hue
- Committee for flood and storm control of Quang Dien district, Thua Thien Hue province
- Committee for flood and storm control of Quang An and Quang Tho commune, Quang Dien district, Thua Thien Hue province.
- Provincial committee for flood and storm control of Quang Nam
- Committee for flood and storm control of Nui Thanh district, Quang Nam province
- Committee for flood and storm control of Tam Tra commune, Nui Thanh district, Quang Nam province.
- Provincial committee for flood and storm control of Long An
- Red Cross chapter of Tan Hung district, Long An province.
- Provincial committee for flood and storm control of An Giang
- Committee for flood and storm control of Hung Thanh commune, Thap Muoi district, Dong Thap province.
- Division of Agriculture and Rural Development of Tam Nong district, Dong Thap province.

Group and individual interviews:

From ministries:

- Representatives from Steering Committee for flood and storm control of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Representatives from Steering committee for flood and storm control of the Ministry of Education and Training
- Representatives from Steering committee for flood and storm control of the Ministry of Transportation
- Representatives from Steering committee for flood and storm control of the Ministry of Health.

From provinces:

- Representatives of provincial Committee for flood and storm control of Thanh Hoa
- Leaders of provincial Red Cross Chapter of Thanh Hoa
- Representatives of Committee for flood and storm control of Hau Loc commune, Thanh Hoa province
- Representatives of Hung Loc and Da Loc commune Committees for flood and storm control, Thanh Hoa province.
- Representatives of Thua Thien Hue provincial Committee for flood and storm control
- Leaders of provincial Red Cross Chapter of Thua Thien Hue
- Commune Committees for flood and storm control of Quang An and Quang Thọ communes, Quang Dien district, Thua Thien Hue province.
- Leaders of provincial Committee for flood and storm control of Quang Nam
- Leaders of Committee for flood and storm control of Nui Thanh district, Quang Nam province
- Representatives of commune Committee for flood and storm control of Tam Tra commune, Nui Thanh district, Quang Nam province.

From International NGOs and bilateral Projects.

- Representatives from the project "Strengthening institutional capacity for disaster risk management in Vietnam, including (SCDM) sponsored by UNDP.
- Representatives from the Save the Children Vietnam.
- Representatives from CARE International in Vietnam.
- Representatives from DWF in Vietnam.
- Representatives from ADPC.



**FOUR ON-THE-SPOT MOTTO IN
DISASTER MANAGEMENT**
Key contents and actual application

Designer Mai Huong

