



INTERNATIONAL FLOOD INITIATIVE



International
Association of
Hydrological
Sciences



Floods

Flash floods and river floods, snowmelt floods, coastal floods, ice jams and mudflows are natural events that provide essential elements not only to the sustainability of particular ecosystems, but also to the development of many human activities. Floods are also the most taxing type of water-related natural disasters, affecting the livelihood of hundreds of millions of people and claiming thousands of lives each year.

Rationale

The International Flood Initiative (IFI) was launched during the World Conference on Disaster Reduction WCDR (January 2005) in Kobe, Japan, as a joint UNESCO/WMO effort based on the respective role each organization plays in mitigating the consequences of natural disasters.

The initiative is expected to help meet the Millennium Development Goals, and the objectives of the UN International Decade for Action "Water for Life 2005-2015" and the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD).

Objectives

To develop the capacity of each country to better understand and handle hazards, vulnerabilities and benefits involved with floods by applying the following principles:

Living with floods: learning to handle the unavoidable adverse flood effects.

Equity: the fair treatment of all affected parties, stakeholders and future generations.

Empowered participation: flood management is integral to social development.

Inter-disciplinarity and trans-sectorality: enhancing knowledge systems for all flood related activities.

International and regional cooperation: knowledge exchange and cooperation for trans-boundary watershed management.



Source: PWRI, Japan



Source: www.floodnet.net

Vision

The vision of IFI is to create well-informed and adequately prepared communities towards a flood-proofed society living consciously and harmoniously with floods.

Towards Integrated Flood Management (IFM)

The tasks of IFI are to:

- develop programmes for mitigating the effects of extreme water-related events;
- reduce the risks of flooding in vulnerable countries; and
- strengthen structural and non-structural measures for flood avoidance and disaster forecasting.

IFM is a holistic, rather than fragmented approach to flood management. It integrates land and water resources development, includes the institutional components of flood management, and recognizes the critical importance of stakeholder participation.

How will it work?

The achievement of the objectives will depend on the successful implementation of five interlinked strategic activities:

Research related to all aspects of flooding will be carried out in an interdisciplinary manner to promote and support the sustainable development and management of river basins, as well as serving the needs of local communities.

Training related to all aspects of flooding in support of the objectives should focus on formal and informal **education** at all academic levels or on-the-job training for professionals. The training agenda will be designed as part of the UNDESD.

Information networking will be developed among various existing networks and/or new networks will be created to provide open access to data, information, knowledge and best practices.

Empowering communities with good governance by applying network strategies for flood management and ensuring participatory approaches in all decision-making.

Technical assistance will provide help where needed and enable the needy to help themselves. Assistance will range from local support to helping national governments establish comprehensive national flood plans.

Partners, Steering Committee

The Intergovernmental Council of the International Hydrological Programme (IHP-IC) invited other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to collaborate with the joint initiative and form a steering committee. The IFI Steering Committee is comprised of elected representatives of the IHP-IC and the WMO Commission for Hydrology, the United Nations University (UNU), the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), the International Association of Hydrological Sciences (IAHS) and the International Association of Hydraulic Engineering and Research (IAHR).

The International Centre for Water Hazard and Risk Management (ICHARM) hosted by the Public Works Research Institute (PWRI) in Tsukuba, Japan, was endorsed as the global facility and Secretariat responsible for the IFI at UNESCO's 33rd session of its General Conference.

Source: Digital Globe



Specific objectives to be achieved by IFM

- Improve data collection and analysis for flood management.
- Enlarge the knowledge-base with respect to the risks and benefits of floods.
- Enhance the benefits of floods.
- Develop and improve institutional frameworks for flood management.
- Develop area-specific adaptation strategies.
- Develop approaches to assess and reduce vulnerability.
- Improve floodplain management in rural and urban areas.
- Optimize a mix of structural and non-structural approaches.
- Improve forecasting and early warning of floods for both rural and urban areas.
- Enhance the effectiveness of forecast and people-centred early-warning systems.
- Develop approaches to public participation that are appropriate for different problems and cultural settings.
- Enhance flood awareness and preparedness with a focus on rural settings.
- Include flood management aspects in school and university education.
- Improve in-service training on all aspects of flood management.
- Develop financial mechanisms for transferring the risks and sharing the losses from floods.

For further information about IFI activities and workshops, please contact:

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