

**Case Study:** Urban Profiling in Vietnam

**Location:** Quang Ngai City (Quang Ngai Province), Tam Ky City (Quang Nam Province), Ha Tinh City (Ha Tinh Province), and Ha Noi

### **Project or program**

The “*Building Resilience to Natural Hazards in Central Vietnam*” project has been implemented in Central Vietnam since 2011. The project comprises three phases. The first phase was implemented in 36 communes in Ha Tinh, Quang Nam and Quang Ngai provinces. The second in three wards of the same provinces, plus a ward in Hanoi. The third and current phase, starting in October 2015 and running to March 2017, is led by American Red Cross in a Consortium with five partners: Vietnam Red Cross (VNRC), Save the Children, Plan International, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and HelpAge International (HAI). It is implemented in four provinces of Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Ha Tinh, and Quang Tri. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> phases, the project aimed to develop effective and sustainable community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA) measures to reduce the potential impact of climate related disasters and strengthen crucial services and infrastructure in communities in targeted provinces. Specifically, the project will develop the disaster risk reduction (DRR) and CCA capacity of a range of stakeholders and seek to add value to the Government of Vietnam (GoV) community based approaches to DRR.

This urban profiling was conducted for phase 2 of the project as ARC/VNRC was interested in moving into the urban context for DRR.

### **Time period**

First 2 weeks in Dec 2014 (two thirds of the way through current project at the time)

### **Implementing agency and the partners**

- The VNRC is our implementing partner in Vietnam.
- Urban Rural Solutions (URS) is a Vietnamese company which provides professional consultancy and training services in urban and rural development for international organisations, local government agencies, and national and international investment corporations and businesses.

### **Profile of the assessment coverage**

#### Ha Noi

The most characteristic problem of Ha Noi is its population growth (around 3.5 percent per year) and the territorial expansion, which is increasingly straining the city’s antiquated infrastructure, some of which dates back to the early 20th century. From a small city core of some hundreds of hectares and less than 50,000 inhabitants at the beginning of the 20th Century, the city has grown to 1,000 km<sup>2</sup> with more than two million inhabitants in 1998. Ha Noi’s expansion in August 2008, which tripled the size of the city, while a positive step for the growth and administration of the city, this added to the urgency and complexity of developing a comprehensive disaster preparedness and response system. The population of Ha Noi is expected to grow from nearly 6.5 million people today to 10 million people by 2030. Urbanization is happening in and around the city centre, especially to the north and south, which face challenges (and advantages) posed by migration and the changing of the urban structure. The historical areas of the city have experienced most changes. From the peripheral zones, the Hoang Mai, Long Bien district represent areas that have changed the most in the city. With the expansion, Ha Noi is vulnerable to all kinds of natural hazards, including earthquakes, windstorms, river floods, extreme precipitation, droughts, landslides, and extreme temperatures, which are expected to worsen as a consequence of climate change and environmental degradation. Of the hazards, inundation is the most urgent problem.

Ha Noi is more vulnerable to extreme temperature and precipitation changes than to changes in sea level. Extreme temperatures affect health care facilities (since they cause an increase in diseases), transportation, water management, tourism and recreation. Extreme precipitation change may affect all sectors. In general all sectors, except industry, have a low level of natural hazard preparedness and response capability.

Compared with other small cities, Ha Noi in general has less incentive to deal with improving resilience. There are almost no projects addressing climate change issues in Ha Noi.

#### Ha Tinh City

Ha Tinh City (as some other provincial cities) is an example of where political aspirations for urban planning dominate, due to the administrative function of the city. A huge area is foreseen for urban development, all in low areas that will require massive landfill. Therefore considerable environmental shifts and changes will be expected, with unpredictable consequences. Specifically, new development in the suburbs, south of the river will involve significant cost at least in the coming decades. This proposed development includes the hard embankment of the river on both sides. The expansion north of the city is the most risky part, because here is the lowest land and subject to tidal and local flooding. All this proposed development is problematic, since the economic strategy of Ha Tinh province is to concentrate in the Vung Ang industrial zone. When Vung Ang develops its own administrative and service centre in Ky Anh and Ky Trinh, the importance of Ha Tinh City could potentially be reduced. Ha Tinh City is one of the cities with the highest climate risk in the Ministry of Construction (MoC) list. It is affected by all major natural hazards, such as flooding, storm, sea level rise, drought, heat and salinization.

The local RC of Ha Tinh seems to have the largest capacity of the RC in the three provincial cities studied. The chairman, was a former director of the Department of Health of Ha Tinh province, so he has good contacts with the provincial and city level as well as in the field of public health and similar services. The provincial RC also has a relatively professional website with all the information related to RC activities.

#### Quang Ngai City

Up to 2005, the city has eight urban wards and two communes in the suburbs with a total natural land area of 3,717ha and about 120,000 Inhabitants. Since April 2014, the city has extended to more than 14,000ha, with nine urban wards and 14 communes in the suburb and more than 260,000 inhabitants. This orientation is politically so strategic and important for the city, that it dominates all other considerations. From the standpoint of climate hazards and climate change, this positioning is extremely risky, since all the planned expansion will be into areas that are low and flooded annually. However, despite the wished for development and the administrative expansion of the city that has already happened, for the few next years, only the areas close to the existing city centre will be subject to development. In other areas, only some major infrastructure could be built, also with major impacts on the surrounding areas. Those infrastructure projects could be subject for intervention.

The existing city of Quang Ngai was not classified as a high risk city by the MoC, because compared to other places in the central regions it suffers fewer impacts from climate events. However, considering the projected expansion, the new city will be vulnerable to such hazards. The main types of hazards in Quang Ngai City are flooding and storms.

Quang Ngai RC chapter seems to have more sense for business and service in a market way. The chapter chairman and some other leaders of the city RC formerly managers in the business sector. They are most open to new ideas and new field of activities. Although in networking, fund raising, advocating, etc. they do not yet have any experience, however, with needs assessment and appropriate training, they would be able to undertake new tasks. The provincial RC seems to have less team organization. Whilst the director and vice-director work effectively together there was less cohesion with other RC members.

### Tam Ky City

Though not located in the geographical centre of Quang Nam province, Tam Ky was declared the administrative centre, due to its strategic relationship with the open economic zone in Chu Lai. In order to justify the role of a provincial centre, Tam Ky City was planned to expand from the existing city core to a large area of 9200ha. In the general planning, there are three main strategies for the development of Tam Ky City to be:

1. the administrative and urban service centre of the province
2. a touristic centre, with coastal development and cultural landmarks
3. an industrial centre.

Tam Ky City is classified by the MoC as a high risk city concerning climate threats. It is influenced strongly by all major hazards in the country in general and in 'Middle-Middle' climate zone in particular. Riverine flooding is the main hazard affecting Tam Ky City. In general, the coastal area is most affected by storms, while the old city part is more or less protected by the primary and secondary sand dunes. In the city, especially Tan Thanh ward, each storm fells almost every newly planted tree, which in turn increases the consequences of heat. Urban heat is especially felt in the newly developed Tan Thanh ward, where the street trees are still small and the roads are very wide.

### **Brief description of the assessment**

#### ***Purpose of the assessment***

The purpose of urban profiling study was identifying the most vulnerable areas and local communities as well as opportunities to recognize and amplify existing resources for the benefit of the most vulnerable. Since this study was the first urban analytical study, narrowing down from city to ward level, external technical expertise was hired through a competitive bidding process. The whole process, starting from tendering took eight months and included literature review, stakeholder consultations at the city and ward levels, capacity assessment of the VNRC and development of final reports.

#### **Accomplishments**

The urban profiling process created an opportunity to increase the knowledge and technical skills of the branches and communities in urban disaster risk reduction and resilience building as well as forming and working with city wide coalitions. The follow up workshops on urban resilience and community risk assessment helped integration of the findings of the profiling study into the project implementation.

#### **Challenges/Lessons learned**

*City-level stakeholder consultation process required a change to a convener role for VNRC:* The stakeholder consultation process as the first step proved to be necessary as it helped set up relationship with the key city level stakeholders. Many provided critical information and data about the city that are otherwise not readily available to VNRC. The convener role that VNRC undertook during the process with the help of consultants was new to VNRC and some of the chapters had difficulties to adapt.

*Access to existing data and information on disaster risk, spatial structures and resources, development plans proved to be critical and cost-effective for a city level analysis.* Choosing a consultancy team with connections and experience in urban context and with access to guarded data and information brought a huge advantage.

*The content and method of the consultations should be designed in a participatory manner to be relevant and responsive to the level of technical knowledge of the participant:* The set of questions to interview the local community members on subjects such as city planning strategy was found to be too technical. It is recommended to design the method and tools with the participation of local RC branch and local community leaders and members.

It was also recommended the criteria for the selection of the local RC branches to participate in this kind of study should be agreed on beforehand, such as selecting chapters with long established relationships and with recognized by the provincial and city government.

The final decision on identification of target wards should be made by the local stakeholders particularly by RC chapters and branches.

A preparation period for the initial engagement of the VNRC headquarters and branches are crucial not only in creating ownership of the process but also tailoring the process according to the local context. Another suggestion was a local community consultation meeting should be added where local communities and authorities can discuss and agree on the selection criteria for the branches that the profiling process would take place.

### **Tools and methodology used**

Key informant interviews and focus group discussion

### **The way forward**

#### *Value of the assessment*

This assessment was conducted in an urban context at the city level. The Government of Vietnam (GoV) is interested in transitioning their DRM strategy into urban settings. The National Community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) Program, under Decision 1002, is rural focused. However, recently, the GoV has shifted focus to include urban locations. Since the ARC/VNRC has engaged already in this type of assessment, the organizations are strategically placed to support the GoV in their urban interventions.

#### *Advice to others*

Ensure local authorities at different levels in the city are fully engaged in the process and are leading the risk assessment to maximize buy-in and commitment. Make sure the information from this assessment is shared with other relevant stakeholders so that it can also inform their activity design.

#### *Next steps*

The ARC is currently working with the Disaster Management Centre, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development – who are the focal point for the National CBDRM Program – and with ISET International, to develop urban CBDRM and DRR guidelines. Once these guidelines are developed, ARC/VNRC will trial under the current OFDA consortium project in three wards. Through this process, lessons learned will be used to refine and update the tools during the life of project. The aim is to have materials which may be used at scale in other urban areas in the future.