

Reducing water risk and increasing resilience with insights from the Mekong countries (WRR2):

Organisers: SEI-IWMI-SUMERNET

Chair/moderator: Dr. Louis Lebel (llebel@loxinfo.co.th)

1. Floods and flood-related disasters have been governed as if they were purely technical, engineering, challenges separate from other processes of development; but they are not. Dealing with institutional fragmentation, poor coordination, and lack of participation are often as crucial as new investments in dikes, drains, diversions, recharge basins, dams or pumps.
2. Vulnerability to floods often differs among social groups, for example, with respect to wealth, gender and ethnicity. Vulnerability indices can help decision-makers identify vulnerable groups and drivers that should be targeted in programs. Proper consideration should be given to the vulnerability of sites of cultural importance in addition to conventional concerns with homes, farms and factories.
3. While successful risk communication does not guarantee people's behavior change and adoption of good practices it is often a practical starting point. More effort and innovative approaches are needed to better communicate risks, climate change and uncertainties effectively.
4. Floods also bring benefits; institutional and physical interventions should take these into account. For example, significant volumes of floodwater reaching the sea can be harvested through managed shallow aquifer recharge. Management of floods must also consider implications for water shortages in the dry season.
5. Improvements in flood governance are needed and are achievable by: Expanding public participation, building adaptive capacities at multiple levels, integrating disaster management into development planning, linking knowledge and practice, considering benefits and costs, who wins and who loses, and prioritizing the disadvantaged and most vulnerable.