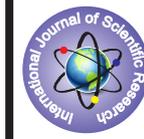


How is Chadiala Village Managing Floods? A Case Study



Geography

KEYWORDS: Flood, Management and Recommendations

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ABSTRACT

Situated on Ghaggar-bank, the residents of the village Chadiala in Tehsil Dera Bassi, District Patiala had been the victims of floods for centuries. Thanks to awareness, generated by flood-related problems, very recently the village-community stood as one man and is on the way to getting rid of the disastrous aspects of the river on a permanent basis. Through the present study, an effort has been made to analyze the flood-related management-problems of this village. The community has already got convinced that prevention is not only better than cure but highly cheaper and productive also. This study is based on both primary and secondary data. The major secondary sources used are the official publications of the Economic and Statistical Organization, Soil and Water Conservation Department and Provincial Disaster Management Authority of Punjab. Primary data was collected personally by the authors during field-work conducted in the village.

Introduction

Punjab, the predominantly riparian State and many flowing canals has witnessed regular deluges that have caused damages to the tune of billions of rupees. Beside loss of life and both public and private property, the State suffered immensely in terms of setbacks to economic development.

Chadiala village is facing floods almost every year which inundate the entire area including the households. In 1993, the disaster was perhaps the severest in history.

The causes of floods in this village in terms of geographical attributes and human factors have attracted the present researchers to undertake this analytical study.

Objectives and Methodology of the Study

The main objectives of this paper are to examine the causes and patterns of floods and to recommend steps for management of these preventable small and big disasters. As indicated above, both primary and secondary data proved instrumental.

Primary data were collected through an interview-schedule used during personal visits to the village. There are 255 households in the village, and its total population was 1,445. For collecting data 50 crucial persons were interviewed and 25 households were selected through purposive sampling. This included the households of present sarpanch, two panchs, an ex-sarpanch, a school-headmaster and opinion-leaders of the local community in the age group of 40-60.

Result and Discussion

Now situated in Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar district, the village Chadiala was earlier a part of district Patiala. However, all the records of floods were still stored by the district administration of Patiala at the time of this study. Thus, whenever floods occurred in this village after the reorganization of districts, the above-said management-bottlenecks did stand in the way.

Despite the painful fact that on 16th August, 1993, heavy and prolonged rainfall in the catchment areas of this river led to extreme flood-conditions in the village wherein the water-level rose up to three meters in the residential localities and caused loss of life of 20 cattle and collapse of 16 kuccha houses, the pressing management-steps as above had not been taken by Govt. machinery.

The people got no warning by the government, thereby very adversely affecting all the residents of this village. They lost their stored grains

and other food-items. Due to floods, some people left the village and some sent their children to the safer areas. The water remained in the village for 2 days but the mud accumulated in the houses remained for 15 days. The residents of the nearby villages provided food water and fodder for 10 days. The religious organizations also provided food and water to the affected villagers.

After the receding of water, the government came for the treatment of animals as they had contracted multiple diseases. Some financial relief was provided by the government after one year and this too was just for 16 families for the construction of houses. Other sufferers were left without any help. People were not satisfied with the government's very questionable and callous action.

There are long-term but often-ignored bad effects of floods. After the catastrophe, sudden food-shortages occur due to damage to crops and spoiling of grains and fodder. The harvest-storage facilities in homes and go-downs get submerged resulting in immediate food and fodder shortages. Floods also affect the soil-fertility. These aspects are seldom taken into consideration by Govt.

Causes

The alarming rate of deforestation of Shivalik hills also plays a key-role in increasing the volume of water in the streams. The upper catchment areas of river Ghaggar and its tributaries have been subjected to large-scale degradation of soil cover; as a result almost all the water of rainfall was available for flooding. Foothills areas invariably experience flash-floods whenever there is rainfall in the Shivalik hills.

Soil erosion in the catchment area of Ghaggar river and its tributaries cause siltation in the valleys like several other regions in India. The Shivalik hills experience soil erosion at the rate of 20 tons per hectare per year (Singh, 2000).

No embankment is constructed in the village under study, nor any management-plan has been heard because of which the village continues to suffer from floods.

Recommendations

Floods are not unavoidable. Proper steps are there to be taken. However, governments must learn lessons from each episode and take initiatives as a long-term policy.

The villagers must get timely warning by the government and should be assisted in saving their stored food and fodder.

The village Chadiala falls in district Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar which

did not have any District Disaster Management Plan; hence arrangements should be made to form DDMP at district and village levels by adopting all the mitigation and preparedness measures.

The government should devise long-term policies and action-plans for flood-control in the light of observations made above.

The flood fighting instruments should be increased and arrangements should be made for their regular maintenance. The local community should be involved as how to respond to floods. It should be trained well.

Preparation of disaster management plan: Flood management plan should be prepared so that during the floods timely and already well-defined measures could be adopted in the village by villagers and government. Constitution of committees comprising village-heads, heads of emergency-services, medical, police, transportation, etc to ensure proper coordination during the floods.

Rapid Damage Assessment: When flood management plans are made, it is very necessary that arrangements should be made to conduct rapid damage assessment survey so that badly-hit areas should be given preferences. Timely medical and other relief-measures should be afforded for the affected areas

Communication and Control Centres: For proper flood-management, advance warning-systems based on predictions should be established in time for coordination during and after floods

Training of personnel and people: For a proper flood management, it is very much necessary that the personnel and people who are supposed to perform search and rescue operations should be trained well.

Embankments: Embankments and afforestation should be done in such a manner that these allow the accumulated flood-water to flow back into the river and at it also stops the river-water to enter into the village again.

Maintenance of law and order: Unscrupulous/criminal elements taking undue advantage of the weakened and helpless people, especially women and children can commit crimes easily. Therefore, police and defense-group formation must be ready to intervene in time.

Conclusion

Chadiala village is prone to floods because it is situated in a low-lying area on the bank of river Ghaggar. It is said that that prevention is better than cure. Prevention is not only cheaper also and cure is not only uneconomical but cheaper of causing tragedies with a point of no return.

The local community should be involved as how to respond to floods. It should be trained well. The government is ready to spend funds for relief and rehabilitation but is not ready to spend fewer amounts on mitigation measures.

The proper understanding of frequency and pattern of floods in village will enable the planners to take adequate measures to control the floods. All flood control measures for future have to be based on the knowledge of the previous floods which have occurred in the recent past.

References

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