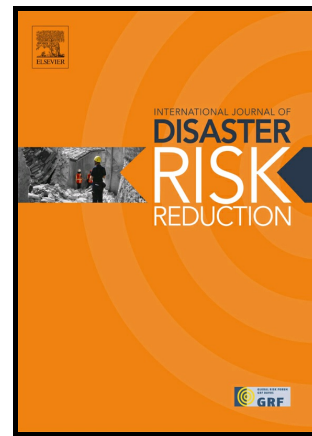


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Should I Stay or Should I Go? Mitigation Strategies for Flash Flooding in the Himalayan Communities of India

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Abstract

Post-disaster rehabilitation and rebuilding efforts are oftentimes spearheaded by government agencies rather hastily, to meet the urgent demands of disaster survivors. However in the absence of pre-planning for disaster recovery, they may increase community vulnerabilities due to a break down in social ties and livelihood needs. There is a growing recognition that adhoc top down policies should be replaced with an understanding of the preferences and needs of disaster survivors. This research is aimed at gauging the intended mitigation strategies that survivors from the Himalayan region of North India expressed, following the devastating flash flooding in 2013. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to interview 316 residents from 17 villages in the State of Uttarakhand to measure demographic characteristics, risk perception, prior flash flood hazard experience, evacuation experience, damage to home, and intended structural (relocate/ building back better) and non-structural (investing time and effort in emergency planning or raising self-awareness and knowledge of threats knowledge) mitigation measures. Findings suggest that relocation is not a preferred mitigation strategy. Rather, an overwhelming majority of the respondents are interested in emergency planning at the household and village levels. Investing in revising and updating the plans at all levels of government, reviewing the existing forecasting and warning system and creating a robust risk communication plan with local input, strictly enforcing the provisions of Flood Plain Zoning Act, 2012, improving hazard awareness programs and creating village level task forces with direct linkages to the State Disaster Management Agency are some of the recommendations made.

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