



Integrated Flood Management

Summary of the Concept Paper

Settling on flood plains has enormous advantages, as is evident from the very high densities of human settlement in, for example, the Netherlands and Bangladesh. Disaster mitigation by restricting the occupation of flood plains and wetlands limits the potential of these lands for socio-economic development.

Integrated Flood Management (IFM) integrates land and water resources development in a river basin, within the context of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), with a view to maximizing the efficient use of flood plains and minimizing loss to life. Thus, occasional flood losses can be accepted in favour of a long-term increase in the efficient use of flood prone areas.

Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), which, as defined by GWP, is “a process which promotes the co-ordinated management and development of water, land and related resources, in order to maximise the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems”, is based on the recognition that a single intervention has implications for the system as a whole. More positively, integrating management means multiple benefits may be achieved from a single intervention.

For flood management to be carried out within the context of IWRM, river basins should be considered as integrated systems. Socio-economic activities, land-use patterns, hydro-morphological processes, etc., need to be recognized as constituent parts of these systems. A consistent approach needs to be applied to all forms of possible intervention. The entire hydrological cycle is considered rather than differentiating between floods and droughts when planning water resources development.

The aim of IFM is to put in place well-functioning integrated measures for flood management. For this, the linkages between various relevant sectors become very important. Thus, the most important key will be co-operation and co-ordination across institutional boundaries, noting that the mandates of many institutions will either cover only part of the river basin or extend well beyond the basin boundary. At the core of integration is effective communication across institutional and disciplinary boundaries, which can take place only if there is a perception of common interest. Emphasis shall be on the adoption of flexible strategies tailored to each flood-prone region (characterized by their various physical, social, cultural and economic aspects) - recognizing the importance of evaluating differing options and their relative advantages and disadvantages.

A participatory and transparent approach which includes a representative range of stakeholders in the decision making process is another key component of IFM. The degree of public participation can differ from region to region. However, it should not be assumed that such stakeholder involvement will necessarily result in a consensus. Therefore, a methodology for managing conflicts, possibly a formal system of conflict resolution, needs to be developed. In this context, a major challenge will be how to develop a consensus on the question of funding of overall activities when flood management is one of the main objectives, and to do this through dialogue among stakeholders – particularly in places where such practices are not commonplace.
