Communities at the Center: Why People Make or Break Flood Management

Floods do not discriminate. They are the most common disaster risk on the planet, affecting every segment of society regardless of income, location, age or ethnicity. And they are getting worse. A changing climate, the conversion of land for expanding agriculture, and growing cities that pave over open space are combining to make disastrous floods more frequent and more severe everywhere.

For generations, the answer has been to build - dams, levees and culverts designed to hold water back. Too often these hard-engineered solutions bring unintended consequences—disrupted river ecosystems, flooded land of cultural and economic value, the loss of nutrient-rich sediment, and even new flood risk in places that never had it before.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) champions a different approach: working with nature, not against it. Nature-based flood management reduces disaster risk for communities while delivering the many co-benefits that healthy rivers, wetlands and floodplains provide.

The Missing Ingredient: Communities

Even the best-designed project can fail if the people who live with the river are left out. Community engagement is fundamental to the success of any flood risk management project. Communities know how water moves through their landscape, they live with the consequences of every design decision, and their support determines whether a project endures. Yet involving communities in setting objectives, shaping designs and evaluating results remains undervalued and underfunded by politicians, government water management agencies and donors alike.

What This Session Will Cover

- The challenges: why community engagement is so often overlooked, and what it costs when it is.
- The opportunities: how meaningful participation leads to better designs, stronger local ownership and longer-lasting results.
- The tools and techniques: practical approaches for involving communities from objective setting through design and evaluation.

Who Should Attend

Flood risk managers, government agency staff, engineers and planners, donors and funders, NGO practitioners, and community leaders who want flood management projects that work—for people and for nature.

World Wildlife Fund

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has a vision to build a future in which people live in harmony with nature. WWF advocates for the use of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for climate mitigation as well as to limit the harmful impacts of climate hazards.

The Environment and Disaster Management (EDM) program collaborates with humanitarian and development organizations, government agencies, the United Nations, and academic institutions to integrate environmental considerations into disaster recovery, reconstruction, and risk reduction programs and policies. The initiative was formed during the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. In partnership with the American Red Cross. WWF's EDM team created the UN award-winning *Green Recovery and Reconstruction: Training Toolkit for Humanitarian Aid* (GRRT), setting the industry standard for greening disaster management. In partnership with the US Agency for International Development Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA), WWF also developed *the Natural and Nature-based Flood Management: A Green Guide.*

Discover more about WWF's Environment & Disaster Management program at: https://envirodm.org/