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Living with urban floods: A case study of Kolkata

[Abstract]

The UN Sustainable Development Goals under target 11.5 explicitly recognize the need to reduce impacts of water-related disasters in cities with a focus on protecting the marginalized. While academic research to understand, assess and reduce the overall impact of urban floods exists, there remains a gap in our comprehension of how urban flood impacts vary across socioeconomic groups residing in the same geographical area. This knowledge is essential to develop inclusive disaster risk reduction (DRR) initiatives that cater to the additional needs of the marginalized. Utilizing a qualitative exploratory approach, this study documents the diversity of flood risk experiences across socio-economic groups and identifies how individuals, specifically the most marginalized, experience urban floods. Results derived from the study indicate that while individuals belonging to higher socioeconomic strata face challenges in the form of inconvenience, reduction in income and property loss, the lives and well-being of the marginalized are severely affected particularly impacting their housing conditions, WASH, food and livelihood security and health. Based on the findings of the study, the paper argues that to attain urban resilience and sustainability, there is an urgent need to recognize this diversity of hazard experiences while conceptualizing and developing DRR policy and programmes.



[Keywords]

Urban flood, Disaster Risk Reduction, Vulnerability