

Increasing Resilience to Environmental Hazards in Border Conflict Zones

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Background

The Hindu Kush Himalaya region has many hazards and a diverse population with different cultures, lifestyles, and languages. With such rich diversity among people and environments, there is an opportunity to share and learn from our neighbours to protect our communities and be more resilient when a disaster occurs. The aim of this work was to understand community perception to environmental hazards in border conflict areas. As a case study, Turtuk, the northernmost village in India was selected (index map). It is located 3,000m above sea level in Leh district in Jammu and Kashmir. India took control of this village from Pakistan during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971. The villagers in Turtuk observed another major conflict with Pakistan during the Kargil War in 1999. Turtuk is also frequently affected by flooding and landslides. It is predominantly a Muslim village with a total population of around 3,400. Turtuk is a perfect example where the community people are severely affected by both environmental hazards and conflicts and wars. These all have the potential to increase community vulnerability as they disrupt social relations. A Forensic Workshop was held from 6–7 July 2017 bringing together the interdisciplinary team of natural, social and historical scientists together with members of the community.



Turtuk Village (34.847°N & 76.827°E)



Workshop Participants

Methodology and Results

A total of 36 adults from the village attended the workshop who were divided into four groups namely local men, women, politicians and administrative. Three community based participatory rural appraisal tools were applied – timeline diagram, hazard and dream mapping. The activities focused on historic hazard events in the understanding of social capital, vulnerabilities and their development. The local people and concerned key informants shared ideas, defined problems, mapped risk zones, determined priorities, suggested solutions within their remit and talked about their future aspirations relevant to environmental hazards in the context of border conflicts through active focus group discussions.



Hazard Map – Women Group



Dream Map – Women Group

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