

# Train communities to be resilient to disasters

July 8, 2024 @ 12:00am



Members of the MH4x4 Club pulling a car stranded in floodwaters in Penampang, Sabah, on June 30. — FILE PIC

FLOODS are threats to public health and safety. They disturb livelihoods and displace populations.

In 2020 and early 2021, Terengganu, Pahang and Johor were inundated by massive floods. In late 2021 and early 2022, the Klang Valley experienced its worst floods in over five decades.

Urbanisation, deforestation and climate change have heightened the severity of floods in recent years.

So communities must increase their resilience, particularly in flood awareness and preparedness to mitigate the impact of floods.

Advanced technology to predict the time and location of floods is crucial to provide residents with notice to move valuable goods to higher ground, and evacuate. This will prevent extensive property damage and loss of life.

Preventive measures such as sandbag levees or making structures resilient to floods such as through waterproofing and building them on stilts will also help.

The management of floods requires developing mitigation plans based on the risk assessment of an area.

Flood-prone areas should be mapped through the identification of hazards and strengths of components with real-time data, and learning about the different factors such as topography, land use and climate patterns.

Emergency kits comprising food, water, medical supplies and other equipment should be supplied to at-risk communities. Escape routes and emergency rallying points should be identified and communicated to people.

All this should be done in collaboration with the local authorities.

Neighbourhood associations should be engaged to obtain the details of inhabitants, including emergency contact numbers, to ensure response plans are detailed and efficient.

Flood education to raise awareness and encourage resilience should be conducted.

This includes organising drills to familiarise residents with emergency protocols and evacuation techniques, and educating them on preventative measures and safety precautions.

Finalised plans should get the consent of stakeholders and communicated to the community.

Additionally, residents should be encouraged to obtain insurance that covers flood damage.

Taylor's University and the Global Environmental Centre (GEC) are collaborating to create evacuation maps for two strategically important flash flood zones in the Klang Valley — Taman Sri Muda in Selangor and Kampung Kasipillay in Kuala Lumpur.

Transforming knowledge into action and enabling communities to adopt workable solutions to strengthen their flood resistance are the aims of education.

This could entail capacity-building exercises to develop to community leaders' preparedness for disasters, assessing an area's flood risk, and putting in place sustainable infrastructure initiatives that mitigate flooding.

Integrating community members in decision-making and boosting local capabilities can cultivate a feeling of responsibility and adaptability.

The above strategy, mindset and action can produce communities resilient to environmental challenges.

DR SITI NORZAINI ZAINAL ABIDIN

Senior Lecturer

School of Architecture,

Building and Design

Faculty of Innovation & Technology

Taylor's University

---

The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of the New Straits Times