

Studies on perception and attitudes are used by planners and policy makers in the developed countries in solving resource management problems. However, perception studies on flood hazard management have not been a concern to planners and policy markers in Sri Lanka. Ratnapura is the second largest town in the Kaluganga floodplain. It experienced severe damages due to recurrent flooding. Although, relocation of the town was considered as a solution for this problem, the success of the program is not commendable.

The main objective of this study to determine hazard perceptions of residents, especially flood risk and future expectancy of flooding. Main sources of information are field questionnaire survey, discussions with officials and key stakeholders and field observations.

More than 50 percent of respondents agreed that flooding is a problem to the area. About 81 percent of them considered the magnitude of the problem as severe. 11 percent considered floods damage as moderate while for the rest, floods cause less damage. Perceptions on the flood risk in the area followed a somewhat similar pattern. 72 percent respondents considered as flood risk are high. 23 percent considered the risk as medium, 69 percent of the respondents believed that flood risk will increase in the future. 17 percent expected that the pattern will remain same while 14 percent anticipated a decrease in floods.

About 80 percent of respondents believed that there will be a major flood soon. According to respondents, deforestation, river-bank erosion, and inappropriate land use planning contribute to increase flood risk in the future.

The study reveals that the level of awareness of flood hazards among urban occupants in the area is high. Therefore, policy makers should consider perception and attitudes of urban occupants when future flood mitigation programs are planned.