

# **Mainstreaming Land Tenure Security in Vulnerability Reduction**

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## **SUMMARY**

This research builds upon The UN Food and Agricultural Organization's (FAO) suggestion that people with weaker tenure security will be vulnerable to loss of land after a disaster; the UNISDR's proposition that conditions such as extreme poverty, food or land tenure insecurity are often linked with vulnerability since they reduce an individual's ability to cope with or respond to an unexpected shock; and the view of many world-renowned land economy experts that land tenure security enhances investment.

The objectives of the study were to: Determine the relationship between land tenure security and vulnerability (using a Notional Typology of Land Tenure and Property Rights – modified to illustrate the suggested relationship between tenure security and vulnerability to natural hazards); and to design and test a framework for simultaneously capturing and analyzing land tenure alongside established vulnerability indicators.

The UNISDR definition of Vulnerability (2009) suggests that conditions within a given community may vary on the basis of the existence or non-existence of certain physical, social, economic, or environmental imperatives to absolute safety and security (from the damaging effects of natural disaster impact). This variation should therefore be measurable, provided that appropriate indicators – within the four categories stated – can be identified.

On December 24th, 2013, the tiny Eastern Caribbean nation of St. Vincent & the Grenadines was severely affected by adverse weather conditions that resulted in significant infrastructural damage and loss of lives.

A series of interviews were carried out within the south-western section of St. Vincent over the

period March 8 – 15, 2014 in four affected communities.

These four communities were selected on the basis of the extent of the impact of the December 2013 flash flooding; The large number of households affected; and expected variations in land tenure arrangements.

A total of 101 flood-affected households were assessed under four (4) categories, namely: Physical Environment; Local Economy; Social Relations; and Public Actions. The relative vulnerability was computed for each household using the prototype Relative Hazard Vulnerability Framework (RHVF) – developed specifically for this study.

The indicators used for the RHVF were: Signs of Mitigation; Employment Status; Levels of Income; Tenure Arrangement; and Intended Means of Recovery.

The results of the study clearly reveal a statistically significant relationship between land tenure security and vulnerability to natural hazards. The data also indicates an inverse relationship between land tenure security and vulnerability to natural hazards. Importantly, tenure arrangements identified as the most secure are associated with lower levels of vulnerability, while those identified as less secure are associated with higher levels of vulnerability.