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How are households contributing to flood risk management? Empirical evidence from a highly flood-prone urban region in Central Vietnam

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Flood risks are exacerbating around the globe, often exceeding capacities to adapt, thus leaving people at risk and raising critical questions on how adaptation gaps can be overcome. In response to observed flood protection gaps, a behavioural turn in flood risk management is observed (Kuhlicke et al. 2020). This turn is characterised by an increased motivation of households to engage in individual flood protection on the one hand and institutionally shifted responsibilities from public authorities towards individuals on the other. This however evokes critical social, political, and ethical questions on the role and contribution of households (and other actors) in risk management. Therefore, our research aims to explore how contributions to flood risk management are divided between households, different levels of government, and other actors on paper vs. in practice, by highlighting key empirical research findings from the case study of Hue, a flood-prone urban region in Central Vietnam. Methodologically, the study draws upon a qualitative content analysis of national and provincial legal flood risk governance documents and statistical analyses of household survey results (n=606) from March and April 2023. Conceptually, the research draws on social contract theory (Blackburn & Pelling 2018) to reveal differences between the legal-institutional, perceived, and practised social contracts for flood risk management, including underlying drivers for observed disparities.

On paper, public authorities at different levels of government (from national to local) are legally assigned a primary role in flood risk management, particularly when it comes to financing, preparedness, and response. At the same time, 60% of surveyed households perceive themselves as being the most responsible actor for flood risk management. Hence, households attribute a significantly higher level of responsibility for engaging in flood risk adaptation to themselves as opposed to local and national government authorities, civil society, foreign aid actors, and the private sector. In practice, a significant share of households (89%) has engaged in diverse temporary preparedness and response actions during past flooding incidents, such as placing sandbags in front of the house. However, only few households (16%) have engaged in permanent

actions such as elevating the house floor, and only 5% have implemented these actions proactively, highlighting a significant gap for adaptive actions compared to coping interventions. The assessment of underlying drivers of perceived and practised social contracts revealed that amongst other factors, income and risk perception particularly shape perceived responsibility to act, while past experiences and coping appraisal shape people's motivation to act. The presentation concludes with context-specific policy recommendations and avenues for future research that can contribute to closing flood risk management gaps. All-in-all, the presentation thus provides novel insights for navigating complex questions around flood risk management contribution divisions between different stakeholders, and more specifically understanding and optimising household engagement in flood risk governance practice in Hue and other cities facing similar challenges.