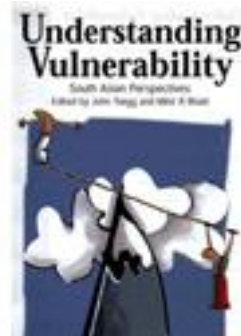


Understanding Vulnerability South Asian Perspectives

Each year more than 130 million people are affected by natural hazards such as floods, earthquakes, droughts and cyclones. Nearly all of these disaster victims live in the poorer countries of the Third World, where each year more and more people become vulnerable to hazards because of changes in their social, economic, cultural and political environment.



In recent years researchers and development agencies have begun to investigate why certain groups of people are more vulnerable to disasters than others, but relatively little work has been done on vulnerability in South Asia where more than half the world's disaster victims live.

Understanding Vulnerability breaks new ground by exploring these issues from a South Asian standpoint presented in the form of case studies and essays by experts from India, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Ela Bhatt writes about poor women in the towns and countryside of the Indian state of Gujarat who face a wide range of hazards, both natural and man-made. Ngamindra Dahal studies Nepali villagers who live under the permanent threat of mountain floods and landslides. R.B. Senaka Arachchi looks at a village society in Sri Lanka's Dry Zone which endures drought as a persistent hazard to its agricultural way of life. The final essay by Mihir Bhatt, is a thought provoking discussion of ways of understanding vulnerability by learning from vulnerable people: it is a spur to operational agencies and field workers to improve their ways of working. The lessons in Understanding Vulnerability will be of value to development and disaster planners and managers not only in South Asia but in many other regions where vulnerable people are confronted by hazards.