

Deluge, disaster and development in Uttarakhand Himalayan region of India: challenges and lessons for disaster management.

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Review Article

Deluge, disaster and development in Uttarakhand Himalayan region of India: Challenges and lessons for disaster management

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Abstract

The Himalaya has been venerated by communities since antiquity and hence visited by a large number of pilgrims for paying tribute, annually. Uttarakhand state in the Indian Himalaya being the place of major Hindu shrines like Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri and also the place of origin of many sacred rivers including the Ganges, at present, is best known for the religious tourism. Though, the state population is about 10 million, over 25 million tourists visited here in 2011 despite the fact that the state remains under frequent natural hazards in the forms of landslides, earthquakes and flash floods mainly during monsoon. Recently, on 16 and 17 June 2013, the torrential downpour and subsequent flooding had wreaked havoc that not only swallowed vast

swathes of Uttarakhand but also took life of thousands of pilgrims and tourists. The cloudburst, heavy rainfall and subsequent landslides are the natural disasters but this disaster in Uttarakhand is mainly attributed by masses as a man-made disaster due to unregulated tourism and unplanned construction. In this background, the major aim of this study is to explore and review the factors responsible for increased intensity and scale of disaster due to flash floods in the Uttarakhand state of India. The paper also reviews and discusses various options for disaster risk reductions in the sensitive ecosystem such as the Himalaya.



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Keywords

Himalaya; Ecosystem and environment; Uttarakhand; Natural and man made disasters; Development; Disaster management

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