

Reducing Landslide Risks at Squatter Areas

Key Messages: The Government aims at reducing the landslide risks at squatter areas through the Non-Development Clearance Programme. Where there is immediate and obvious landslide danger, the occupants of the squatter structures being affected will be evacuated and rehoused, and the squatter structures will be cleared compulsorily. For squatter structures that are especially vulnerable to landslide risks, the Government will persuade the occupants to accept the clearance and rehousing arrangement. Where the occupants choose to stay put, the Government will reduce the landslide risks by systematically upgrading those government man-made slopes that affect squatter structures in accordance with the risk-based priority ranking system.

Introduction

'Squatter structures' are those tolerated structures registered by the Government under the Squatter Control Survey in 1982. Squatter structures built on hillside are vulnerable to landslides, which have claimed many lives in the past. It is Government's long-standing policy to reduce landslide risks at squatter areas by clearing the squatter structures of concern through Non-Development Clearance (NDC).

Non-Development Clearance

Squatter structures needing NDC on slope safety grounds are identified and assessed by the Geotechnical Engineering Office (GEO). For squatter structures facing immediate and obvious landslide danger, the GEO will recommend the relevant government departments to promptly evacuate the occupants of concern and clear the squatter structures compulsorily. For squatter structures that are found to be especially vulnerable to landslide risks based on risk assessment, the GEO will recommend the Lands Department (LandsD) to inform the affected occupants and persuade them to accept clearance. The Housing Department (HD) will offer rehousing to all eligible occupants affected by NDC.

The NDC Programme was launched in 1984/85, initially covering squatter areas in the urban areas of Hong Kong and Kowloon. In 1988, it was extended to cover squatter areas in the New Territories. By 2021, about 89 200 occupants of squatters structures were recommended to be rehoused on slope safety grounds, of which about 77 200 occupants accepted the arrangement while about 12 000 occupants chose to stay put. The Government has kept persuading the occupants to accept clearance and urging them to stay alert of the landslide hazards.

The GEO issues warning letters to the occupants of squatter structures needing NDC, and erects warning signs in squatter areas that are especially vulnerable to landslide risks, so as to arouse the awareness of the occupants regarding the potential hazards and necessary precautionary measures. The LandsD also distributes GEO's slope safety leaflets to occupants in squatter areas at the onset of wet season every year, reminding them to find a safe shelter if threatened by landslides (for example, when there are signs of landslides such as slope bulges, cracks or washouts). District Offices will open temporary shelters in all districts for people in need when

the Landslip Warning is issued by the Hong Kong Observatory.

Where the squatter structures needing NDC are affected by government man-made slopes and the occupants choose to stay put after persuasion, the GEO will include these government man-made slopes into the risk-based priority ranking system under the Landslip Prevention and Mitigation Programme for systematic action. Provided that construction access and working space is available, the GEO will undertake landslip prevention and mitigation works for the selected slopes to reduce landslide risks.

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