

CLIMATE CHANGE: PEOPLE, POLICY AND PRACTICE

2022-2023



Foreword

Last year on a beautiful spring morning, I was on the Shibsra River. It was high tide and the boat advanced steadily. Suddenly my attention was caught by a slim strip of land dotted with makeshift houses that started to emerge over the horizon: Kalabogi. As we got closer, I noticed the water tanks, the small boats clinging on the eroded shore, women cooking, children playing. I could not help but thinking about the fragility of this community. What would happen next time a cyclone hits? How long will it take for this strip of land to be swallowed up forever by water? Where will all those people go then?

Although, I was well aware of these impacts of climate crisis, for the first time I could truly picture what it means living at the forefront of such a crisis.

In Bangladesh, as in many countries around the world, the communities most affected by a changing climate are those forced to live on the margins: families with precarious livelihoods, the frail, elder, and people with disabilities, and those relying on land most exposed to natural hazards.

Climate change is a complex, multifaceted problem, inextricably linked to economy, politics, way of life. It requires an array of solutions from mitigation to adaptation measures, from loss and damage compensation to migration policies. Helvetas strengthens the resilience of the most vulnerable communities in Bangladesh with a clear commitment: those who bear the brunt of climate change shall take part in the decisions that determine their future. We support people to raise their voices and advocate for their rights in their own communities, and we engage in national dialogues and international fora to make those voices heard.

That's why our team and partners organisations' members regularly share insights and findings from our intervention in the media. We want to foster a better comprehension of what's at stake in Kalabogi, Paikgacha, Morrelganj, and many other areas of Bangladesh, and stimulate a meaningful debate on the challenges posed by climate change and the need to promote solutions envisaged at community level.

This booklet collects one year of media articles, I hope you'll find it useful.

Ben Blumenthal
Country Director, Helvetas Bangladesh

What is this booklet about

Since 2003 Helvetas Bangladesh is working with communities in the Southwestern coastal areas of the country to improve their resilience to climate change. Together with civil society organisations, networks, local authorities and the private sector we promote systemic solutions to address climate risks and increase the adaptation capacities of the most vulnerable populations.

Our Water food and Climate programme uses a Human Rights-Based approach, to ensure inclusive access to water and sanitation and climate resilient livelihoods. We foster the involvement of the most affected communities in the development of climate related policies, invest in local capacities and promote climate justice through policy dialogue and advocacy.

As part of Helvetas' advocacy efforts, the team of Water, Food and Climate programme together with partners, shares insights, learnings and analysis of our work. This booklet collects a series of articles published in Bangladeshi press and online in 2022 and 2023, with the intent to raise awareness and contribute to the debate among practitioners, academic community, policymakers and wider audience on climate justice, loss and damages, climate induced migration, food security and other relevant climate related issues.

CLIMATE JUSTICE

Addressing loss and damage finance: It's more than money

Developed countries have finally agreed to compensate for their contribution to global warming through the finance facility for loss and damage due to climate change

by **Ashish Barua**

The main objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is to stabilize greenhouse gas (GHG) concentration in Earth's atmosphere. Over the last three decades, it has achieved the opposite because of our indifference and disregard for the millions of climate-vulnerable people in the Global South, now extended to the North as well, who are suffering the adverse impacts of climate change. The UNFCCC started with a focus on mitigation and gradually moved on to adaptation. It is evident that those are not enough and **tackling "loss and damage" is a must-do now.**

The 19th climate conference, held in Warsaw, Poland in 2013, established the **Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM)**, which works as a policy framework on the issue of loss and damage. Then the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage (SNLD) at COP25 started as a technical assistance provider in addition to knowledge and resources. However, the financial mechanism has remained a big question for a long time.

The good news came ahead of COP27 when issues related to funding arrangements to respond to loss and damage caused by human-induced climate change were incorporated as a sub-agenda under finance-related matters. After having different opinions, debates, and negotiations throughout the two-week-long climate conference in Egypt this year, the parties found a common ground and agreed on the finance mechanism for loss and damage during the extended period.

So COP27 decided to establish a new funding arrangement to assist developing countries regarding loss and damage, which is "new and additional." It also decided to establish a fund and a **Transitional Committee** to operationalise the new funding arrangement. The committee has been suggested to make recommendations to operationalise the funding arrangement at COP28 due to be held in Dubai next year, which will be a critical outline for how the funds are mobilised and utilised.

To make the fund operational, the parties also agreed to establish institutional arrangements, modalities, structure, governance, and terms of reference; define the elements of the new funding arrangements; identify and expand

funding sources; and ensure coordination and complementarity with the existing arrangements.

There will be critical challenges for the Transitional Committee, such as who will provide the fund or how the new fund will be generated, and how it will be utilised. etc.

Beyond the UNFCCC process, there has been good news. The **Scottish government, the pioneer in loss and damage funding**, has come forward with its enhanced pledges. The **Wallonia province of Belgium and Denmark were also there with their commitment; Austria and New Zealand also came forward**, creating peer pressure on Global North to come out of their backsliding mindset.

They came forward with their actions on two fundamental principles. The first one is climate justice, challenging the unjust impact on climate-vulnerable nations who are not responsible for the crisis. The second one is moral obligations, and the responsibility of the developed countries.

The solidarity of the global community must be at the centre of the loss and damage finance facility. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has presented enormous scientific evidence, enough data and information on the table. The gravity, scope, and frequency of loss and damage are growing all over the world. Hence, the parties to the climate change convention must take an informed political position and enhanced pledges. The developed and developing countries' accountability now is to keep the positive spirit up so that the empty promise of USD 100 billion every year for adaptation is not repeated.

Most importantly, climate-vulnerable nations and communities live amid the effects of climate change; they act, respond, and know how to address loss and damage on the ground. They do it with their best efforts and the least resources – they need support to do it right. And here comes the question of solidarity and empathy, which is more valuable than money.

As the loss and damage funding arrangement is already agreed upon, the fund mechanisms are critical as community needs are urgent and need to be grounded. For developing countries, this will work only if the fund is accessible, flexible, and fast to deliver to the affected communities, unlike other funding facilities such as the **Green Climate**

Fund and Global Environment Facility. It is essential to determine how much funding is reaching the affected communities and, with this, how fast they can address the loss and damage issues in their lives and livelihoods.

Climate-vulnerable countries can take a proactive role in feeding the Transitional Committee with their actions on the ground so that the committee can go ahead with the right information and inputs. For example, Bangladesh has earmarked its fund from the Climate Change Trust Fund, which can put real-life learning to use. Helvetas Bangladesh, Young Power in Social Action, and

the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) are partnering with the Scottish government and Climate Justice Resilience Fund, which can help put actions forward in both economic and non-economic sectors of loss and damage.

This article was published in [The Daily Star](#), on 23 November 2022



Paikgasa Bagerhat. Photo: KM Asad

A climate justice approach to address loss and damage in Bangladesh

With funding from the Scottish Government, Helvetas Bangladesh helps families make informed choices about climate-induced migration

by Climate Justice Resilience Fund

Sea level rise, powerful cyclones and devastating floods are some of the few climate-related events that are destroying the lives and livelihoods of the poorest people in Bangladesh.

The severity of the climate-related impacts often requires families to move away from their homes.

This form of migration has economic and emotional implications. It forces primary caretakers to learn new skills so that they can provide for their families. It also results in the loss of traditional knowledge as they distance themselves from their homelands to make a living. This is the hard reality of loss and damage.

Through its **Panii Jibon project**, Helvetas Bangladesh works alongside these families to support them as they examine their migration options. This support involves skill development and training so families can earn a living without migrating.

For households who choose to relocate, Helvetas Bangladesh offers these same services so that they can find employment once they arrive in a new place. Helvetas Bangladesh's loss and damage approach also includes helping households make more informed and economically successful decisions about migration through the smart use of remittances.

Supporting migrants to be more strategic about these payments ensures that those left behind – often women and children – can address the loss and damage they have already experienced and the future loss and damage they will encounter.

This summer, the **Climate Justice Resilience Fund** – thanks to funding from the Scottish Government – granted US\$250,000 to support Helvetas Bangladesh's loss and damage work.

In addition to the economic support that the organisation will provide, Helvetas Bangladesh will use the funding to collect data on the social and economic well-being of the families supported by the Panii Jibon project. This study will examine factors that lead to loss of well-being including property sales, increased debt, and child labor.

This data collection effort will also lead to a gender-segregated database of seasonal or temporary migrant workers. Collecting this type of data will allow other organisations to use the information as a starting point for advocacy

around migration at the regional and global levels. Ashish Barua, program manager at Helvetas Bangladesh, says this data collection is critical as the program focuses on supporting those who understand the reality of loss and damage.

"We are advocating for people who are suffering. Having this baseline data will tell us what's happening," Barua said. "Strong evidence from the ground will help us influence the government and other relevant stakeholders to take action. We hope the data will also support global negotiations on loss and damage both inside and outside the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change processes."

Connecting with those most harmed by loss and damage is an important component of how Panii Jibon operates. For example, this past July, the organisation held a planning workshop to better understand the impact of loss and damage, bringing in community members to explain what they have lost as the climate changes.

"One of the principles of our project is 'most affected, most participated,'" Barua said. "Our planning workshops start with a design that will engage the community. This way, whatever we do in our design, implementation, monitoring, or evaluation, we can do our best to provide the space for project participants to make decisions."

Community participation allows organisations like Helvetas Bangladesh to recognise their limitations when trying to address loss and damage.

"In most cases, organisations cannot understand the full reality of the most climate-vulnerable people," Barua said. "A climate justice approach to loss and damage requires opening space for the most affected people to make meaningful decisions."

Barua says this bottom-up approach allows for true solutions to emerge. "When the community contributes, they bring their experiences and can create solutions that work for them."

"Loss and damage" is a term used in United Nations climate negotiations to refer to the consequences of climate change that go beyond what people can adapt to. The term also refers to situations when options for adaptation exist, but communities do not have the resources to use them. Loss and damage often results in a loss of traditional knowledge, livelihoods, or culture—priceless aspects of identity.

This article is part of a three-part series that highlights elements of how organisations are addressing loss and damage across the globe. First, we examine the loss and damage efforts of Helvetas Bangladesh, which is part of a network of independent development organisations working to implement humanitarian projects, including those related to climate change.

“ A climate justice approach to loss and damage requires opening space for the most affected people to make meaningful decisions.

This article was sponsored by the Climate Justice Resilience Fund and published on [Climate Home News](#) on 8 September 2022



Meeting of Health Village Group in Paikgasa, Bagerhat. Photo: KM Asad



Budget of some municipalities are published on billboards, Koyra, Bagerhat. Photo: KM Asad

Our shifting climate of policies

Despite the complex interconnectedness of the systems in a policy cycle including the human ecosystem, policy system, and implementation system, Bangladesh is advancing well



Paikgasa, Bagerhat Photo: KM Asad

by Ashish Barua

Environmental and climate change policy-making is a comparatively newer area with little experience. Designing policies and institutions appropriately balancing economic growth and environmental protection is one of the defining challenges in this 21st century. Most importantly, the non-climate frames have been observed as important as, or more important than the climate frames in decision-making for the sector which has been a growing concern. Specifically, decision support for impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability is expanding from science-driven linear methods to a wide range of methods drawing from many disciplines.

Globally, to mitigate climate change and adapt to climate change impacts, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the basis for coordinated action among the 189 Parties. And, in recent years, the sustainable development goals and Paris Agreement, often termed a monumental success for the planet and its people have also been valuable additions in policy formulation and implementation.

Developing nations, such as Bangladesh often experience challenges in achieving the targeted outcomes as those aim to adapt to the adverse impact of climate change. In the sector of climate change, the journey of policies in Bangladesh started with the National Action Plan of Adaptation (NAPA) in 2005. And, then in 2009, Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) was released. After three years, under the framework of disaster management, the government of Bangladesh launched the Disaster Management Act and the Standing Order on Disaster, while the latter was revised in 2019 again. Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 has been another milestone in the sector published in 2018, and now the development of the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan (MCP) and National Adaptation Plan (NAP) is going on which are already public for consultation.

Despite the complex interconnectedness of the systems in a policy cycle including the human ecosystem, policy system, and implementation system, Bangladesh is advancing well, especially by making the policies in a coherent manner and making them complementary to each other. For example, MCP, the first of the Climate Vulnerable Forum and V20 to launch

a decade plan, does not replace any existing plan but aims to supplement and accelerate the existing plans and programs, including the 8th Five-Year Plan, Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100, and Perspective Plan 2021-2041. The plans are supported by and well-organized in line with the directions outlined in the Climate Fiscal Framework.

It is well-known that Bangladesh has limitations in data availability and adequate resources. In addition, keeping a balance between climate change dynamics and the development goal always leaves the policy-makers on the fence. There is also a challenge in balancing the fronts of climate change adaptation, mitigation, and loss and damage. Climate change adaptation has always been the priority, and loss and damage are evident on the ground which is managed by its own fund to date. Mitigation was also a concern that was reflected in Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) and NDC.

In addition to the existing challenges in the context, there are also issues around the development process and its application. For example, the main criticism of NAPA and BCSSAP is the non-involvement of the affected communities. This has been a very common issue while decision-making also has different dynamics, as there is evidence of participatory exclusion, tokenism, and agency initiatives in the country. In the sector of climate change, there are also missing dots in the nexus among academicians, policymakers, and practitioners which is also true.

The lack of information and data availability often results in making less effective decisions and sometimes unrealistic plans and targets. Bangladesh targets “zero climate-induced migration by 2030” in its draft MCPP which brings the question of the baseline to the table. It is not that clear where Bangladesh stands now in terms of the data regarding climate-induced migration. And the target also contradicts the anticipated global and national scenarios for the upcoming decade as well. On the other hand, it sounds like a sudden jump into the said issue while the number of significant relevant policies in the sector of climate change does not address climate-induced migration that much specifically. So, such issues must be looked at carefully as Bangladesh has a good reputation in policy formulation.

In the area of Public Choice Theory, it is often argued that politicians are casual as they spend taxpayers' money, not their own. So, why they should have incentives to promote frugality and efficient policies is a question frequently raised. In the same way, the bureaucrats prefer also maximizing the budget and making big projects demonstrating power and prestige. There is also an inherent challenge of rewarding budget based on utilization which encourages that. We experience the same in the draft design of MCPP, around \$65 billion out of the estimated investment of \$75bn upto 2030 goes for infrastructure.

An informal criticism of the businesspersons turning into policy-makers in the country also might have an influence on such types of policy-making -- no one is sure about

the potential of such types of policies in climate change. This has been a major challenge as the non-climatic factors such as social aspects play a big role in policy formulation of environment and climate change. IPCC 6th Assessment reported that changes in socio-cultural factors will contribute largely in addition to infrastructure design and use and end-use technology adoption to achieve demand-side mitigation by 2050. But sadly, this is a missing part of several policies in the country.

And there are also issues of governance at the implementation stage, often termed as operational factors in policy formulation. But truly, that is lighter something at the top of the iceberg which is always on the table while the bigger part under the water is kept either hidden or untouched. In the same way, people remain busy with the governance at the implementation stage while key concerns remain at the planning, design, and development stage. There are different theories, practices, and efforts of people engagement, participatory decision making, and involvement of influential groups to ensure governance on the ground while we often ignore the in-built unjust system and model which is part of the system. The disempowering environment and limited space of civil society are contributing to the design and application of policy and plans while the exclusion of the marginalized, ignorance of the voiceless, and lack of diversity are remarkable.

Bangladesh must work on the policies including the draft NAP, MCPP, and revision of BCSSAP aligning with the development milestones in the front. And, again as the country is stepping toward UMICs by 2041, it must be future-looking to address the embedded challenges. This is important to consider that the comparator countries are ahead and advancing fast in such sectors which can make a huge gap between us. Overall, Bangladesh as a low emitting country is in a better position to place itself and to be rightly on the track chasing the potential challenges if the policies are developed considering the driving forces and international influences in a balanced way.

LOSS AND DAMAGE

COP27: The time for negotiation over loss and damage is over

Climate-vulnerable countries should not be asked to address loss and damage. It was never their actions that caused it

by Ashish Barua

The Sixth Assessment Report by Working Group I of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) shows that the sea level has increased by 0.20 metres over the last 120 years and continues to rise fast. The report also anticipated more severe food security risks due to climate change, leading to malnutrition in South Asia, one of the global hotspots of high human vulnerability, at 2°C or higher global warming. This does not necessarily mean the world will have to wait for a 2°C or higher global warming; the impact is already there and is evident in the climate-vulnerable community in countries like Bangladesh. We can critically look at two of the latest impacts on the ground in Bangladesh.

The first one is high tide during the full moon and new moon. It is, of course, not new. But the new element is the higher level of high tide, influenced by sea level rise because of thermal expansion, glacier ice loss, and ice sheet loss. The second one is the changed rainfall pattern. Bangladesh experienced the least rainfall this year over the last 41 years.

How is it affecting the people on the ground?

They are experiencing a loss of livelihoods and agricultural products, including crops, fisheries, and livestock. And it is happening, even in the case of adaptation practices. For a long time, to sustain themselves in the changed context, **vulnerable people have been adapting to their best, which has limits.** And, because of the high tide and low rainfall this year, the climate-vulnerable communities are failing to adapt - the level of high tide was beyond expectation, and it continued for three cycles in the months of June, July, and August. On the other hand, the low rainfall was also for three months during the monsoon period. So, the agricultural products failed - either fully or partially - from area to area.

What is next, then?

The climate-vulnerable community is sandwiched in the existing socio-economic conditions, including poverty and other embedded factors. **Because of their limited coping capacity and loss of livelihoods, they get trapped in the vicious cycle of loans and installments.** They must make the repayment every week -- so how to deal with it? They step out and migrate immediately to the nearby urban settings for income. They are the

evidence of climate-induced migrants, the worst victims in the context of climate change impacts. In most cases, this internal migration is neither planned nor systemic. They are making an immediate decision and moving with low or no connectivity. There is another story at the destination - the lower opportunity of livelihood due to limited skills and thus a lower pay and stressed life - ultimately, a "sub-human" lifestyle.

How much is this loss and damage issue recognized and addressed on the ground?

There is no straightforward answer, but we are sure there is hardly any action. We are still debating on drawing a line between classical and climate-induced migration. The government of Bangladesh recognized it partially and committed to addressing it at the destination end, considering it only as a pull factor. There is no discussion on the non-migrant people -- those with the aspiration to stay in the local area but with the minimal capability to do so.

What actions can be taken?

Community leaders and community-based organizations must bring the agenda to the table for discussion at the local level. The civil society organizations working on the ground must make an evidence base, place the information, and influence the agenda of the policymakers. The local government must be sensitized to respond to this through social safety net programs. This climate-induced migration demands comprehensive action as it is a governance issue. It must include the government and private sector to ensure reskilling of the community and offer alternative livelihood opportunities. Above all, it requires rigorous actions considering the scale and dynamics, ultimately resulting in informed and systemic decisions benefiting the climate-induced migrant.

Will the problem be solved, then?

We find an alarming estimation of **displacement of around 35 million people from only the coastal districts in Bangladesh by 2050.** The scale is relatively high to be managed by the effort of an individual country. How much can Bangladesh and other least-developed countries afford it? What will be the situation in the middle of the century then? This is an unjust question to ask vulnerable countries. Why will they be asked for their actions to address loss and damage - it is not happening because of their actions. **The 47 least-developed countries emit a maximum of 3% of the carbon globally while they**

are the most vulnerable. So, this is the time to raise a strong voice for just actions, for example, addressing loss and damage by the nations responsible for it.

There is no more time for negotiations, processes, and dialogue - people are dying in the global south because of the lifestyle of the developed nations. The LDCs must immediately negotiate for just decision-making in finance, technology transfer, and capacity building. Most importantly, the LDCs and developing countries should raise their voice for just accountability of the emitting nations -- their commitment to finance and other support. The vulnerable nations have demonstrated their responsibility through actions with their fund, higher ambitions, submissions, and reporting. Hence, this **is the time to challenge the developed countries for their inward accountability to the commitment as part of the UN-FCCC process**, Kyoto Protocol, and Paris Agreement. The civil society organizations from Bangladesh participating in COP27 should aim for more space in the side events and exhibits to bring the evidence of loss and damage as

much as possible so that it influences the discussion - to inform the negotiation and ultimately advocate for positive action for loss and damage funds. They can also participate in the climate campaigners' movements, which was quite significant in COP26. Bangladesh, as the chair of the V20, should lead the agenda of these negotiations urgently. COP27 is the right place to do so, capitalizing on the different forums and networks. It can bring evidence of loss and damage on the ground and why the finance must be directed in addressing loss and damage. It can also capitalize on the initiatives from individual states such as Scotland and Denmark -- but the critical point is that it must be in the institutional mechanism, both in UNFCCC and Paris Agreement.

Whatever it is, it must be now and be just for all.

The article was published in [Dhaka Tribune](#) on 4 November, 2022



Millions are at risk of displacement in Bangladesh. Photo: Franca Roiatti

Climate loss and damage are clearly visible in southwest Bangladesh

Tidal surges during full moon and new moon in southwestern districts of Bangladesh, which were higher than ever due to sea level rise, caused much loss and damage to the local communities in terms of food production, farming and other livelihood options

by Ashish Barua; Sawkat Chowdhury

The Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) by Working Group I of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) shows that the sea level, over the last 120 years, has increased by 0.20 metres, and continues rising fast, caused by thermal expansion, glacier ice loss, ice sheet loss, etc. The sea level rise in Bangladesh estimated using gauge data shows varying in different parts of the coastal zone, while the coastal areas along the Sundarbans are highly vulnerable.

A higher level of tides during full moon and new moon has become a regular phenomenon in the coastal districts in Bangladesh – mainly in Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Patuakhali and Barguna – over the last couple of years. This is impacting climate-vulnerable communities at scale and in multiple sectors. **During the full moon in July and August in 2022, hundreds of villages were flooded twice daily, at least for a week in each round.** It resulted in economic and non-economic losses and damages with both short- and long-term impacts. Kamala Begum from Uttar Satalori village in Bagerhat's Morrelganj upazila was surprised at the level of the tide. "I got my new house last year as support from an NGO as my old land and house were lost to river erosion. Now my new house is also inundated, and it was built high," she said. In both the months, the community was almost waterlogged for around seven days. They could hardly cook at home, and dry food items were not available either as the local markets were shut down; only the households owning boats could manage their food from faraway markets. Daily wage earners remained jobless, and the fisherfolk could not go outside for regular fishing. Sufia Khatun, a 42-year-old woman from West Baharbuniya village in the same upazila said the tidal surge was waist-high, breaching the road that connects the community to the upazila, which also acts as an embankment for Paanguchi River that flows near Baharbuniya.

Because of the continuous tidal flow for around a week, the seedbeds for Aman paddy were inundated. Farmers have no hope of recovering the seedlings, so they need to make the beds again, which leads to additional seed, fertiliser, and cultivation costs. Those who cannot afford these additional costs will have to purchase seedlings at a higher price later. "There is no support to cover this type

of loss; no one even talks about it. This has been our fate. If we can manage ourselves, then it is fine. Nonetheless, we remain hungry. But who cares?" said Khalil, one of the farmers who lost his Aman seedbed to the tidal surge.

The standing water damaged the vegetables, resulting in lower household food consumption and income for a couple of months. Vegetables that are not water-tolerant were almost lost. They had to root many plants prematurely and ate whatever was not saleable in the market. This loss of food and income is irreparable, as they cannot reproduce some of the vegetables at the end of the monsoon. On the other hand, July, the driest month in the last 42 years in Bangladesh, had minimal potential to reproduce the crops. This has impacted the overall earnings of families in the community, impacting their food intake and access to other essential commodities.

The fish-farming ponds were inundated, and the owners lost almost all their production. **Those who are not financially capable of recovering from this loss are at risk of falling into the vicious cycle of loans, loss of assets, and migration in the short run.**

Abdus Sabur leased a pond with three others for shrimp farming using a loan from a local NGO. Their entire shrimp production got washed away during the high tide, and they have no way of recovering from the losses. They don't know how they will repay their loan and manage their families' daily expenses in the coming days.

Most importantly, the damage to the roads is not getting noticed either by the government or the development agencies, said Esken Khan, member of the union parishad for this area and the panel chairman. The road construction has been a long-demanded and long-awaited project, but there is no action. Hence, they hardly expect any repair and maintenance work for the damage.

The spectrum of loss and damage also includes non-economic factors. Most of the schools there remain closed (unofficially) during heavy rainfall as the students can't go to school due to the poor conditions of the roads. As the roads were inundated during the last high tidal flow, most students could not go to school. "When I was on my way to school on July 10, there was water on the road almost up to my knee. But the point near the market was damaged, the water was deeper there, **I was trying to cross, but I slipped. I couldn't go to school for the whole week because the road remained under water,**" said

Lamia, a sixth grader in the area.

The infrastructural damage is usually counted as a part of economic losses and damages, while the list of non-economic losses and damages is too long.

These include the immediate health impact of drinking unsafe water from open sources, having limited to no access to sanitation facilities, and menstrual hygiene mismanagement for adolescent girls and women of reproductive age. The saline intrusion in the minimal sweet water sources because of this high tidal flow has been a grave concern that will take a long time to recover, especially since there has been very little rain this year.

There are many more sectors to explore where people often lose their income and livelihood opportunities. People living in the climate-vulnerable areas are already experiencing massive losses and damages because of the intense and frequent cyclones, tidal surges, and floods, which are gradually increasing because of climate-induced factors. Moreover, the higher level of tidal flow has steadily been

becoming another concern. This year, they have been sandwiched between high tidal flows and scarce rainfall, which severely affected their crop production and in turn their livelihoods. This must be documented and reported for in-depth research. Most importantly, the government must ensure immediate support to these climate-vulnerable communities so that they can recover from the losses and damages they have suffered, and strongly negotiate in the global arena for the loss and damage fund, which is also a critical agenda for the upcoming climate conference COP27.

This article was published in [The Daily Star](#) on 10 September 2022



Losing land to rivers and sea, Paikgasa, Bagerhat. Photo: KM Asad

CLIMATE INDUCED MIGRATION

Just actions and accountability

Responding to economic loss and damages in climate-vulnerable communities

by **Ashish Barua, Musrat Hasan Emon, and Kazi Tobarak Hossain**

The adoption of the UN resolution on climate justice during the general assembly on March 29, 2023, was a historic moment as it is expected to make it easier to hold the polluting countries legally accountable for the current climate breakdown. On the same day, the transitional committee on loss and damage fund and funding mechanism ended with their first round of meetings, seemingly agreeing to operationalize a new fund alongside assessing and strengthening funding arrangements. The world eagerly awaits what the workshop outputs at the end of April- especially regarding the debates on the arrangements.

But time is running out ...

Badurtola, a remote village at Morrelganj Sadar union of Bagerhat district in Bangladesh, is in itself evidence of "loss and damage." There are many cases of climate-induced migration, the worst scenario of loss and damage.

Even two decades ago, the scenario was completely different - the villagers lived in agriculture and were rich in crops, fisheries, poultry, and livestock.

The story changed after cyclone Sidr in 2007 and cyclone Aila in 2009.

Both water and soil salinity changed the agricultural practices and the traditional livelihood options in the area. The communities living in an agriculture-based economy had to gradually recover over the next three to five years because of the number of adaptation practices at the local level.

However, they experienced adaptation limitations, mainly because of factors influenced by climate stresses such as sea level rise and erratic rainfall. The former increased the salinity making the land unsuitable for farming, while rainfed crops and other livelihood opportunities were also limited because of the latter. They could only produce one round of paddy with a low yield in the rainy season.

Having lost their livelihood, many villagers had to take seasonal migration to different areas of the country as an option, despite needing adequate capability, including resources, skills, and connectivity. **A survey in 2020 shows that around 24.42%** of the households in the village (179 households out of a total of 733) had **one and more members migrate** (seasonal and extended) in the last two years.

There are mixed migration experiences that were devastat-

ing during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many migrants were forced to return to their village. Around 167 people out of 197 migrants returned to their homes and had to remain for a long time, despite having minimal income opportunities. A percentage (86.22%) of returnee migrants who engaged as skilled labour at the destination could return when the situation improved slowly.

Unfortunately, the worst among the most affected - the vulnerable groups of people with inadequate capability, despite having an aspiration to move, and people having the ambition to stay in the community, but with the low capability to do so-could not recover. These groups are often termed as "trapped people" and "non-migrants."

Empowering the worst of the most affected

Five climate-induced (non-)migrants in this village, as exceptions, have been examples of rebuilding their livelihood in Morrelganj. Ali Akbar, Jamal Shikari, Sontosh Dhali, Shah Alam Gazi, and Ibrahim Sheikh came across the first-ever institutional funding on "loss and damage" by the Scottish government, channeled through the **Climate Justice Resilience Fund**.

They participated in a **pre-decision orientation on migration organized by Helvetas, Shushilan, and DORP**, which ignited them to come up with an idea -- they explored potential livelihood opportunities at the local level, diagnosed its risks and challenges, and finally stepped in.

They are now running integrated farming in 2.5 acres of fallow land, initially starting only around one acre. It ensures them both food security and livelihood opportunities, securing a good earning for their families for around six to seven months while they can grow paddy in the same land during the monsoon period.

Now they are increasing seasonal crops, mainly vegetables. In February 2023, the field was full of spinach, coriander, red amaranth, sweet pumpkin, long bean, eggplant, green chili, ladies' finger, bitter gourd, etc. There were also field crops such as corn and bungi (muskmelon) -- interestingly, these are all saline-tolerant varieties.

They follow the application of relay crops to ensure maximum land utilization -- one crop is growing up while another is being harvested on the same bed. Bed methodology helps them with intercultural operations, such as saving other crops from specific pests and diseases, and protecting the wider spread. Vertical and horizontal gardening ensures maximum use of space and isles and fallow land. Tower gardening and sac bag methods have been popular

in the context of soil salinity and water logging. This piece of land has been a demonstration plot of climate-smart agriculture as it runs the production of bio-fertilizer and indigenous technologies, for instance, sex pheromone traps reducing the use of chemical fertilizers, insecticides, and pesticides.

Although a few of these five champions still think about migration during the monsoon period, this shift from permanent migration to a temporary one has resulted from the actions responding to the loss and damage and generating learning to scale up.

Actions to respond to economic loss and damage

It starts with recognizing the loss and damage of livelihood opportunities in different sectors because of the slow-onset disasters and emerging issues in the context of climate change, resulting in climate-induced (non-)migration.

Then comes the identification of the migrants and non-migrants in the community, with particular attention to the latter group, keeping the issue of classical migration aside. To respond to loss and damage, support for rebuilding livelihoods was critical to this case -- capacity building support, input support, alternative technologies, matchmaking between service providers, linking them with the market system, and facilitating a cooperative system to keep them out of the vicious cycle of loan and interest.

Broadly, support for alternative livelihoods, reskilling the climate-vulnerable, planned relocation, and informed migration can work out, at least for the short run, complemented with other required factors.

Seeing the big picture

To respond to the large scale of the problem, the government of Bangladesh must look at the agenda critically and expand its bandwidth of **recognition of climate-induced migration, both at the source and destination.**

Establishing information provisions regarding this at the local government structure might be one step in mapping and responding to it through social safety net programs and additional interventions - these are mandatory to reach the goal of limiting climate-induced migration outlined in the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan.

Moreover, it must be placed firmly at the center of global negotiations, capitalizing on international migration as an adaptation. While outlining the loss and damage fund and funding arrangements, the transitional committee must respond to this evidence on the ground. It is not a single case in a specific country - **it's an enormous global issue.**

They must analyze the broader dimension of this economic loss and damage beyond the coverage and design of the insurance mechanism and humanitarian actions, coming as suggestions within and beyond the UNFCCC. Here lies the accountability of the transitional committee to base on the most affected people at every corner of the globe and design just actions to be placed at COP28 in the UAE.

The article was published in [Dhaka Tribune](#) on 25 April 2023



Climate migrants, Morrelganj (Bagerhat). Photo: KM Asad

Another way to live

Offering skill development opportunities for climate-vulnerable households and migrants is integral in providing them a new and secure livelihood



A youth group providing information on safe migration, Morrelganj (Bagerhat). Photo: KM Asad

by Ashish Barua, Musrat Hasan Emon and Dipali Biswas

Loss and damages are already significantly evident on the ground, especially in climate-vulnerable areas such as the southwest coast of Bangladesh. The most affected people in this community require immediate action. But the policymakers, negotiators, and researchers are still busy debating, negotiating, writing, and publishing.

Hence, the practitioners are the only hope as the first adapters, in the conditions of a faulty and failing system of the UNFCCC mechanism -- though it shows the light of the “loss and damage fund and funding mechanism” at the end of the climate breakdown.

The tale of two survivors

Md Saimun and Md Helal, two 22 year old youths, work at Pollimangol bazar in Morrelganj Sadar union, of the

Morrelganj upazila in the Bagerhat district of Bangladesh. Both their families have experienced the devastating impacts of climate change for the last couple of decades. Both families were uprooted from their origins and were displaced several times, when they lost almost everything during cyclone Sidr in 2007.

The cyclone destroyed their standing crops and agricultural land, their houses, and their livestock, leaving them without a single source of income. They sustained their life and livelihood with emergency reliefs and early recovery support, which gradually dried out during the recovery phase.

Over time, climate change impacts are a threat multiplier.

Because of shrunk livelihood opportunities in the traditional sectors such as crops and fisheries, their fathers tried limited opportunities in alternative sectors, such as van and rickshaw pulling, and daily unskilled labour, but

ultimately they failed to manage. They also tried to initiate income-generating activities with loans from different sources. Still, it failed and trapped them in the vicious cycle of loan repayments with interest. Thus, the only option - not a choice - was migration.

Md Saimun and Md Helal grew up in families left behind by their fathers. They experienced their mothers' struggle for livelihood in the broader context of social and economic perspectives. Their families had only a few investment-intensive options left, which they did not try in order to recover from the situation. Their efforts at alternative opportunities, such as homestead gardening and other varieties failed yearly in the context of climate change and its emerging effects.

Both of their households - even to this date - get flooded regularly during the full moon and new moon, and they have been experiencing a higher water level for the last few years. Back in July and August 2022, they experienced the highest water level during the high tide.

Hence, their adaptation effort is failing, losing even the minimum livelihood options. In addition to that, disasters with increased **intensity and frequency because of climate change, such as tidal surges and coastal floods, often damage and bring their efforts down.**

Helal already experienced migration a couple of years ago. He found it to be a lost project as an unskilled labourer and sought other opportunities.

Empowering those most affected

They both got in touch with an ongoing loss and damage pilot project funded by the Climate Justice Resilience Fund in their community. This was the first-ever institutional funding by the Scottish Government on loss and damage as well as by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation.

Shushilan and **DORP**, the local organizations in charge of implementation, are creating **local-level awareness and discussion sessions on climate-induced migration, and supporting skill development opportunities** at the local level. In the event of losing livelihood opportunities among crop, fishery, and livestock sectors because of climate change impact, they support alternative livelihood options.

Through the support of this project, both Helal and Saimun learned valuable technical skills in the last quarter of 2022. They are now engaged in their employment, having secured an alternative livelihood that will sustain them even with further climate change impacts. They now feel less vulnerable to the prospect of climate-induced migration.

We must dig into the process and principles to learn the essence of loss and damage actions. **The most important is identifying the climate-induced migrants, the biggest victims of loss and damage.** A youth-led initiative facilitates this at the union level with support from

community-based and civil society organizations at the local level. It also develops a database to influence loss and damage actions at the local level and social safety net programs.

Moreover, it brings a new dimension to non-migrants who aspire to remain at their birthplaces despite having no or lower-level capacity to adapt to the changed environment. Sadly, however, they remain more vulnerable than those with the aspiration and capability to migrate.

As for the most affected people in the community, development efforts differ from classical migration and capacity-building initiatives.

There are different government and non-government initiatives, either formal or non-formal, for capacity development. However, these tend to only reach the more skilled group of people in the community, because of the criteria for eligibility, such as literacy level. If we look at the financing institution, the same situation persists. The poor and hard-labourers cannot afford to meet the criteria.

Challenging conventions

The loss and damage project addresses and challenges these existing norms and practices.

The project facilitates an apprenticeship model to support alternative skill development opportunities for the most affected migrants and (non)-migrants. It is based on the interest and support of local employment opportunities, where the project takes the role of matchmaking in between.

It does not end at capacity building; it reaches out to the employers as critical stakeholders to generate employment opportunities and play an influential role as local actors.

The conventional capacity-building initiative in the country should be revisited through the lens of loss and damages, and revised to address economic loss and damage. Moreover, the government of Bangladesh must establish a system to map and monitor the flow of climate-induced migration, as it has outlined a vision to end it in the draft of the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan.

Globally, such initiatives can be an influencer as more northern governments are coming forward with funding commitments for loss and damage actions. The bilateral funds, already committed, can scale it up to reach the most vulnerable immediately. Such evidence can be a good input for the 24-member transitional committee for loss and damage fund and funding mechanism in their upcoming meetings to outline actions before COP28 in the UAE.

The article was published in [Dhaka Tribune](#) on 27 March 2023

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Of bottlenecks and possibilities: Integration between climate data and non-climate data

In the 21st century, data can be compared with currency in terms of value and usage. It also allows people to make effective decisions without compromising time

by M Manjurul Islam

Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries to the impact of climate change. In order to address this, there is a need to integrate climate data and non-climate data to create a comprehensive understanding of the effects of climate change. In climate change issues, the usability of climatic data is vital by which research can predict the future impacts of climate change on the planet, and in effect, on people. Recently, one question came to my mind: “is climate data enough to give us insights into climate change effects on people?” Alternatively, “is climate data sufficient to make the decision for the future?” I had no clear answer to these questions. I then explored the current practice of different organisations and reviewed scientific papers on the problem of climate data itself. I noticed something very interesting: the main problem is the non-integration of climate data with non-climate data – two critical components of information that have far-reaching implications for various aspects of our lives.

Climate data includes information about various meteorological and hydrological conditions, including temperature, rainfall, wind, and atmospheric pressure. Non-climate data, on the other hand, encompasses various socioeconomic, demographic, and land use information. Integrating these two types of data can provide critical insights into various aspects of life, including the impact of climate change, the economic and social implications, and the potential for adaptation. Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries to the impact of climate change. The country is exposed to various climate extremes, such as floods, droughts, and cyclones, affecting millions of people’s livelihoods. In order to address these challenges, **there is a need to integrate climate data and non-climate data to create a comprehensive understanding of the effects of climate change.** However, integrating these two data types is facing several challenges, hindering the effective management of the impacts of climate change in Bangladesh. Besides, access to both data is also challenged in Bangladesh, which is no exception in other developed nations due to a lack of accountability and privacy.

There are very few organisations working on climate change data in Bangladesh – some of them very well organise the climate data in detail with the precise prediction of the future impacts of climate change. But these

data are not available for all. The owner makes the data private for-profit purpose, which hinders the many types of research from other fields to access. It is a great challenge for researchers trying to put their efforts into correlating socio-economic variables with climate data. One example I can share is about a few months ago when one of my professional friends came to Bangladesh to collect data for his PhD research. But he could not get access to climate data as those are not free of cost, which left him with no other choice but to change his field. Also, he had to manage data purchase fees from his research funds, which was very costly. As a result, he failed to meet his deadline.

I think this needs to be rectified, and many other researchers might not have sufficient funds or financial capacity to purchase these data. **One of the primary challenges of integrating climate and non-climate data is the lack of standardisation in data collection and reporting methods.** Climate data is often collected and maintained by different organisations, such as government agencies, universities, and international organisations, each with its methods and protocols for data collection and dissemination. Non-climate data, on the other hand, is often collected and maintained by different organisations, each with its own data collection and reporting methods. This lack of standardisation leads to data quality, format and accuracy inconsistencies, making it difficult to combine and analyse the data effectively.

Another obstacle in integrating climate data and non-climate data is **the lack of data management and analysis capacity.** In Bangladesh, there is a lack of capacity to integrate climate and non-climate data. Many organisations and stakeholders in Bangladesh lack the technical skills and expertise to integrate climate and non-climate data effectively, including a lack of knowledge about how to use different data sets and data analysis tools and techniques. This creates a blockage in the integration of climate data and non-climate data, making it difficult for stakeholders to understand the interlinkages between different sectors and develop effective strategies for addressing the impacts of climate change. **The lack of communication and coordination between stakeholders** is another big problem in integrating climate and non-climate data. Several institutions, such as the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, generate climate data, while various other

organisations, such as the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, collect non-climate data. The lack of coordination and communication between these institutions limits the integration of the two data types and hinders the development of effective adaptation strategies. The lack of resources and funding for data integration is also a significant obstruction.

Developing and maintaining data systems and integrating data from multiple sources requires significant investments of time, money and technical expertise. Many organisations and stakeholders do not have the resources or the funding to invest in data integration efforts, which limits the scale and impact of these initiatives. Despite these bottlenecks, there are also many possibilities for integrating climate and non-climate data to support decision-making and to advance our understanding of the impacts of climate change. One strategy is to create standard data-collecting and reporting methodologies and encourage organisations and stakeholders to use them. This would improve to ensure that the information is collected and reported consistently, making it simpler to aggregate and evaluate data from various sources.

The development of data analysis tools and processes is another critical part of data integration. Climate and non-climate data integration need complex data analysis techniques such as statistical models, machine learning algorithms, and spatial analysis tools. The development of these tools and approaches may assist in unlocking the data's potential, offering insights into the effects of climate change and the possibility of adaptation and mitigation. The use of technology, such as geographic information systems (GIS) and remote sensing, is another option for integrating climate and non-climate data. These technologies may be used to collect and analyse data from various sources, including satellite data, and to generate maps and visualisations that can contribute to determining the effects of climate change and designing successful adaptation strategies. Furthermore, these technologies may be utilised to gather and evaluate non-climate data, such as socio-economic data, to provide a comprehensive

knowledge of Bangladesh's climate change consequences. One of the most important possibilities is establishing a centralised database for climate and non-climate data. This database would allow for simple access to the data while also ensuring its accuracy and reliability. This database would also serve as a platform for collaboration and communication among many stakeholders, facilitating the integration of the two data types.

Another approach is to increase the resources and funding for data integration efforts to support the development and implementation of data systems and data integration initiatives. It would help to ensure that data integration efforts are well-resourced, and that data is widely available and accessible to stakeholders and decision-makers. Developing partnerships and collaborations between different stakeholders is also possible for integrating climate data and non-climate data in Bangladesh. Partnerships between government agencies, non-government organisations, and academic institutions can be formed to enhance the integration of the two data types, which would provide an opportunity for cross-disciplinary collaboration and would lead to the development of innovative solutions for climate change adaptation.

Finally, combining climate and non-climate data can provide useful insights into the implications of climate change and support decision-making. However, significant bottlenecks prevent this information from being used effectively in real-world applications, such as a lack of standardisation in data collection and reporting methods, a lack of interoperability between data systems, and a lack of resources and funding for data integration. Despite these hurdles, there are several options for combining these two types of data, including the establishment of standard data collecting and reporting techniques, the application of data interoperability standards, and the growth of resources and financing for data integration activities.

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“ Combining climate and non-climate data can provide useful insights into the implications of climate change and support decision-making. However, significant bottlenecks prevent this information from being used effectively in real-world applications, such as a lack of standardisation in data collection and reporting methods, a lack of interoperability between data systems, and a lack of resources and funding for data integration

Pathways for Coastal Resilience

The concept of the blue economy has recently gained much traction, especially in coastal countries like Bangladesh. With the world moving towards sustainable development, the blue economy has emerged as a promising pathway for coastal resilience in Bangladesh. This article delves into the concept of the blue economy and its potential to build resilience in Bangladesh's coastal regions



Traditional livelihoods in coastal areas of Bangladesh are at risk. Photo: Franca Roiatti

by M Manjurul Islam

The blue economy is a term used to describe a sustainable ocean-based economic development model. It is based on the principles of sustainable use and management of ocean resources, which include fisheries, aquaculture, shipping, tourism, renewable energy, and coastal infrastructure development. The blue economy aims to promote economic growth while preserving the health of the ocean ecosystem.

Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and the country's coastal regions are particularly at risk. Rising sea levels, increasing salinity, and more frequent natural disasters like cyclones and storm surges have made life difficult for millions living in these areas. The traditional livelihoods of these coastal communities, which mostly revolve around fishing and agriculture, are also under threat. This is where the concept of the blue economy comes into play. By focusing on the sustainable use and management of ocean resources, the blue economy can help create new economic opportuni-

ties for these coastal communities while preserving the ocean ecosystem's health.

The blue economy can help the diversification of livelihoods; by promoting the sustainable use and management of ocean resources, such as aquaculture and tourism, the blue economy can help create alternative sources of income for these communities, thereby reducing their dependence on vulnerable livelihoods. Mitigation efforts can also have positive impacts on coastal communities in Bangladesh. For example, cultivating mangroves and other coastal vegetation can provide a buffer against sea-level rise and storm surges.

At the same time, the development of renewable energy sources, such as offshore wind and tidal power, can reduce the dependence on fossil fuels and associated greenhouse gas emissions. The development of coastal infrastructure, such as ports and marinas, can improve the resilience of communities to natural disasters. Construction of seawalls and other coastal protection measures can help reduce the impact of waves and flooding, while the provision of emergency response equipment and early

warning systems can help communities better prepare for and respond to natural disasters.

The blue economy can also contribute to preserving marine biodiversity, which is essential for the long-term health of coastal ecosystems and the communities that rely on them. By **promoting sustainable fishing practices**, such as using fishing gear that minimizes bycatch and establishing marine protected areas, the blue economy can help ensure that the ocean resources that communities depend on are protected for future generations. However, to realize the full potential of the blue economy in Bangladesh, certain challenges must be addressed. These include developing adequate institutional frameworks, capacity building, and financial resources to support de-

velopment.

Moreover, there must be a concerted effort to ensure that the benefits of the blue economy are shared equitably among all members of the coastal communities, including women and marginalized groups. The government, private sector, and civil society must work together to promote the blue economy in Bangladesh.

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Women's Economic Access: A Form of Empowerment

by **Moumita Sen and Musrat Hasan Emon**

Despite being half of the population, the women in Bangladesh are still far from equal engagement and participation in many aspects of life, and so, have little contribution to them. It cannot be expected to increase the national GDP or any economic development for a country, while half of the population is practically excluded from critical economic activities with no recognition of their expertise and contribution in cases. The social stigma about women being less capable than men in dealing with the economic matter is adversely affecting the potential of achieving long-term sustainable development goals. The number of female entrepreneurs is very low in the subcontinent in comparison to the male demography, as well as their space in the economic institutions.

In Bangladesh, lack of access to financial resources is one of the major obstacles to women's entrepreneurship, which is patronized by cultural practices and political gender biases. While entrepreneurship of women is considered as a challenging sector from individual to national scale, the concerns in Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) sector face even less attention throughout. At the individual level, where questions are raised about menstrual hygiene, women still are very hesitant to talk about these issues in public. So, becoming an MHM entrepreneur stays mostly beyond anyone's imagination. Nowadays, various development organizations are trying to break this bias, through local initiatives and platforms,

to ensure coming forward and speaking about it by individuals, yet there is a long way to go.

We all know the fact that menstruation is a natural process, which refers to the bleeding every month experienced by every female throughout her reproductive life. For this purpose, females need to use sanitary materials ensuring the absorption of the blood, and the associated facilities for disposing of these materials after use. In Bangladesh, societies act in a very conservative way toward these issues. In most cases, women cannot express their problems regarding the menstruation. For example, in the coastal belt, people are always exposed to climate effects and sudden natural disasters. During a cyclone, where regular setup is already damaged and people have relocated to temporary shelters or designated safe places, what a local girl would do if she went through menstruation? There is no specific infrastructure for this support for women in general.

At regular times, local women experience severe difficulties to maintain MHM. They use unhygienic cotton patches and reuse these by washing them over and over. In coastal region, salinization adds more difficulties and additional hygiene issues for women, as usable water becomes scarce for sanitation. Low-quality sanitary materials, the social culture related to menstruation hygiene management, inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (wash) facilities, and lack of guidance and privacy for changing and washing at school or home are common issues related to **inadequate menstrual hygiene practices** that have

direct adverse effects on education, health, and economic outcomes. In many cases, women do not know how to use advanced materials for menstruation and have inadequate access to such materials; even when she knows, she is not comfortable asking for them in the market.

Development Organization of Rural Poor (DORP) - national non-government organization has taken an initiative and **developed a sanitary pad production center called “Sanitation Bitan”** in Barguna district as a pilot project. This idea has been adopted in Khulna and Bagerhat districts, supported by Panii Jibon Project of Helvetas Bangladesh.

Amir Khasro, Program Coordinator - DORP stated, “This initial idea was triggered when we started to work with local schools, we saw that most of the girls use simple cotton patches or pieces of an old saree of their mother. This is very unhygienic and can cause serious health problems. But they were not very comfortable talking about this issue with us”. He added, “Then we approached Family Welfare Center and involved Sub-Assistant Community Medical Officer (SACMO) to orient these girls about menstrual hygiene.”

DORP has developed six production centres in Bhuyapur, Sirajganj Sadar, Ramgoti, Laksmipur, Barguna Sadar, and Bhola. The organization was also involved in supplying sanitary pads and developing a MHM corner in schools, free of cost, initially in 2018. This scheme was carried out through minimum investment. A worker gets one taka as wage for preparing one pad. **The seventh production centre has been established in Morrelganj in 2021. They targeted 14 schools in Khulna and Bagerhat in alignment with the Government’s guidelines on creating MHM corners and defining the role of SMC and teachers.** Now the schools buy the pads at the market rate.

To initiate this kind of production centre, one or two women were needed to be trained to operate such a setup. Before choosing participants for the training, several local women in Morrelganj were approached but they were not quite ready mentally. Many of them were interested in such trainings but eventually backed off considering the social taboos. So, it would have not been wise to select someone who is not willing to take the risk of facing obstacles from social stigma. Sathi Rani is the first person who was motivated by this cause and so was selected for the training. Amir Khasro said, “Initially we could not find anyone to sell or distribute the pad in this area. Around 3 months, we searched for women to train them on MHM production and develop them as entrepreneurs. We first started with Health Village group (HVG) members, local platform of women and their daughters in school. 6 women were selected after a reconnaissance of the locality for an initial discussion.”

As an initial start, DORP provided 3 days of training on MHM production to Sathi Rani and Swarna Rani from Morrelganj. Sathi Rani is also holding the position of deputy speaker of a local platform called “Mother’s Parliament”. In Morrelganj, Sathi Rani as the first entrepreneur initiat-

ed the production of sanitary pads for local girls. As the project support will not continue forever, so whoever get involve and take the charge of this initiative she/he needs to continue just not as a business, but also as a social contribution to local, marginal girls who face various health problem due to inadequate access to hygiene products.

Sathi Rani and Swarna Rani received training in December 2021, supported by the Panii Jibon Project, and started their businesses in 2022. They initially set up their production center in a room provided by the Union Parishad of Baroikhal Union, Morrelganj. Panii Jibon supported the initial capital, raw materials (for 1200 packets), and equipment with 80,000 BDT.

They prepare one packet with 10 pieces of pad, which costs 50 BDT, and a packet with 5 pieces costs 25 BDT. In the production center, 3 workers can prepare 100 to 150 pads per day. The production cost of one pad is 3.75 BDT. A worker can get 1 BDT wage per pad.

Till now, they have prepared 300 packets. Sathi and Swarna (her partner) usually go to local shops and schools to sell the pads and sold 225 packets to date. They are trying to create a link with some stores and pharmacies so that they can sell a larger amount. Individuals can also collect pads from their production center. But still, some girls are not aware of it, some stay reluctant to buy; on the other hand, some cannot afford to buy.

According to DORP, the next action from their end is to sit with Sathi and the team after 2/3 months and develop a plan on how to run their business independently and create market linkage for long-term sustainability. DORP has the plan to facilitate the process of getting a trade license as an entrepreneur for Sathi, which will give her direct access to bank loans.

Women entrepreneurs encounter severe challenges in acquiring funding for entrepreneurial activity, particularly in underdeveloped countries, resulting in lower success rates in comparison to their male counterparts. Some socio-cultural practices can be identified that add up to the existing barriers, such as early marriage, acceptance of male dominance in many fields, and often the lack of formal education.

For empowering women, we often talk about ensuring property rights, equal opportunity, individual rights, decision-making capacity, and entrepreneurship through economic independence can accelerate the process of empowerment. Strong religious and cultural beliefs restricting women’s mobility ultimately end up becoming illogical social taboos. Besides, the availability of raw materials is crucial at the local level for women MHM entrepreneurs. They usually get less support in the market system because of being women and the stigma of the menstrual process. Despite these problems, many women have established themselves as MHM entrepreneurs at different levels.

International Year of Sanitation in 2008 recognized the importance of gender issues in sanitation promotion. Still, it is neglected, when it comes to research or relief or recovery activities during or after disaster.

Government and private sector should come up with their support and subsidy to establish and grow their business. **A special loan provision and infrastructure for women entrepreneurs could lead this process to the next level where rural women and girls can get benefitted which also supports achieving the Sustainable development Goals (SGDs).** It is equally important to evaluate their business process and sustaina-

bility to extract the learning and way forward. To overcome those societal challenges, the role of both men and women are essential to bring positive changes.

This article was published in [The Daily Sun](#) on 9 January 2023



Sathi Rani (left) deputy speaker of Mother's Parliament presents a petition to Fahima Khanom vice chairman, Morrelganj Upazila. Photo: KM Asad



Sathi Rani producing sanitary pads with other women. Photo: Sawkat Chowdhury.

How erratic weather has affected our food production

The impact of climate change on day-to-day life in Bangladesh is evident. Many farmers in southern Bangladesh have turned to floating farms as climate change is causing more extreme heat and rainfall, flooding, erosion, and saltwater surges



Working in a paddy field, Paikgacha, Bagherat. Photo: KM Asad

by Ashish Barua; Jannatun Nayem

The Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) by the Working Group II of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) shows how food production is at risk because of the heat and drought. The report anticipates more severe food security risks due to climate change, leading to malnutrition in South Asia, one of the global hotspots of high human vulnerability, due to global warming of two degrees Celsius or higher. Unfortunately, it is already evident in countries like Bangladesh, especially in climate-vulnerable areas. In July 2022, Bangladesh experienced the lowest rainfall in 41 years. It has significantly affected climate change adaptation practices in vulnerable communities,

causing more loss and damage. In the short run, these impacts fuelled food price hikes and reduced household income. The health risk of malnutrition because of the low level of adaptation, in short to middle run, has been estimated as well. Aman rice, one of Bangladesh's major contributors to staple foods, is grown between June and November. Land preparation and seed germination are usually done in June and July. Then, farmers transplant the paddy saplings into the main field. **Because of low rainfall this year, most farmers could not prepare their fields and sow the saplings.** Farmers in the northern part of the country, with the opportunity to use groundwater, prepared the bed and sowed the saplings. The plants somehow matured but would have a lower yield because of such a change in rainfall and monsoon this year.

This impact on paddy crops affected not only the farmers but the day laborers as well. A vast number of agri-labourers, being unskilled, had no alternative livelihoods. Such loss and damage to livelihood opportunities forced the locals, especially daily wage earners, immediately to (mal) adapt through reduced meals and less food intake. And this, in the mid-term, continuing for almost three months, influenced migration. **The impact on women day laborers was disproportionate as they could hardly adapt to this loss and damage.** They, having limited scope for migration, must (mal)adapt through capitalizing the minimal savings (if any), reduced food intake, less access to other essential commodities, and taking on the financial burden of a loan. Ironically, such maladaptation is widely ignored and unaddressed.

The situation in the climate-vulnerable areas, such as the southwest coast, because of a change in land use patterns, especially after cyclones Sidr in 2007 and Aila in 2009, is dire. For long, coastal people have adapted to alternative crops due to increased soil and water salinity. This year, they had a different experience. For instance, there was evidence of loss and damage in growing the most common crops as farm products or homestead gardening, such as brinjal, long gourd, okra, red spinach, and climbing spinach. "I planted brinjal seedlings as it gives a good harvest at the end of the rainy season. I usually manage the expenditures of my family for around four months from these earnings. In my field, the plants are not growing right now, so I do not expect a good yield. I am unsure how I will support my family for the next few months," said Yousuf Jommaddar, from Pajakhola village in Morrelganj, Bagerhat.

They tried hard, even carrying water from distant places, but it did not help. Rijia Begum, a woman farmer from Lakshmikhola village, lost almost all of her investment of Tk 20,000. Her crops grew, but ultimately there was no yield. Her loss was greater than her investment as she took out a loan from an NGO. "I must pay the loan instalment every week, including the interest. My husband had to move to Khulna city; he is pulling a rickshaw to cover the expense," Rijia said. There are several cases of such adaptation failure in coastal areas.

For instance, farmers have been producing off-season watermelon for the last couple of years as it has a good yield and financial return. The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) has also been promoting it to ensure food security and enhance climate resilience. Watermelon takes around three months to grow and mature. A group of five farmers from Banka Paschim Para in Paikgacha, Bagerhat invested around Tk 1 lakh on a 60-decimal land to grow watermelons. Previously, they grew watermelons weighing six to seven kilograms each by the first week of August. They waited for the rain this year but got a heat wave instead. Despite their effort to irrigate the field, most watermelons that grew weighed a maximum of three kilograms. And later, in the middle of August, the green watermelon field faded gradually.

In such a circumstance, the Bangladesh government and

relevant actors should come forward with more investment in research work to understand the dynamics and impact of loss and damage in climate-vulnerable communities. The government must recognise the impact of slow-onset factors, identify the communities impacted by such loss and damage, and define how to bring them under the umbrella of social safety nets. **Most importantly, as such loss and damage are likely to increase due to global warming, a response mechanism and climate financing must be established.** And for this, there is no alternative but to strongly place the issues on the agenda of the upcoming 27th UN Climate Change Conference (COP27), and raise voices to remind the polluters about their commitment to the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement.

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"I must pay the loan instalment every week, including the interest. My husband had to move to Khulna city; he is pulling a rickshaw to cover the expense"

Rijia Begum, Lakshmikhola

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[The Climate Justice Resilience Fund \(CJRF\)](#) makes grants that support women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples to create and share their own solutions for climate resilience. CJRF puts people, their rights, and their lived experience directly at the center of climate action.

CJRF also has hosted several initiatives to promote funder learning and collaboration on climate justice, and launched a unique re-granting partnership with the Scottish Government on climate-induced loss and damage in 2021, that was provided to Helvetas Bangladesh for 2022-2023 FY.

About Helvetas Bangladesh

Helvetas is an independent organization for development based in Switzerland with affiliated organizations in the United States and Germany. For over 60 years, it has been supporting poor and disadvantaged women, men and communities in about thirty countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. In Bangladesh Helvetas started its activity in 2000, and is active in 28 districts to promote sustainable and inclusive development, resilience to climate change, safe and informed migration, and good governance. Since 2017 Helvetas has been working in humanitarian response, especially for the Rohingya refugees and host communities.

Helvetas works in partnership with civil society organisations, government actors and private sector to reinforce their autonomy and strengthen local ownership of social and economic development.



**For more information about
Helvetas' climate change programme
in Bangladesh**

