

Inclusion of persons with disabilities in the climate change and disaster management related rules and policies of Bangladesh: An empirical study

Morshed Hossan Molla¹, Mohammad Shahjahan¹, Prabal Baura², Rokeya Samia¹

¹Young Power in Social Action, Chittagong, Bangladesh, ²Department of Environmental Sciences, Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Submitted on: Feb 12, 2019 Accepted on: Oct 3, 2019

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to investigate the inclusion of persons with disabilities (PwDs) in the climate change and disaster management related rules and policies in the coastal belt of Bangladesh. The perceptual or field data have been collected through field survey based on semi-structured questionnaire. A total 385 questionnaires were equally distributed among five study areas. The study reviewed that nearly fifteen (15) types of rules and policies have been identified among which eight (8) types of rules and policies are directly addressing the inclusion of PwDs in climate change and disaster management issues in Bangladesh. The study found that only 20 percent PwDs are included in disaster management committee in the national, district, metropolitan, municipal, upazila and union or ward levels. Although the maximum inclusion has been identified at the union level, the reason of execution is unaware of the rules of PwDs. In these circumstances, they do not get the security at shelter level and not priority during relief and rehabilitation in emergency period. While 60% of the PwDs believe that they have the ability to play roles or give an opinion in these committees. In order to, they argued that proper participation of PwDs at every planning process could ensure their dignity, security, priority and safer livelihood in coastal areas of Bangladesh.

Keywords: Climate change, Bangladesh, disaster management, persons with disabilities, relief and rehabilitation

INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the world's globally agreed plan for peace and prosperity for all on a healthy planet. Despite the strong commitment expressed by the international community for inclusive and sustainable development, persons with disabilities continue to face significant challenges to their full participation in society. These include negative attitudes, stigma, discrimination and lack of accessibility in physical and virtual environments (United Nations, 2018). Nevertheless however, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was signed and ratified by Bangladesh in 2008 (United Nations, 2018). In line with UNCRPD, Bangladesh Government adopted Rights and Protection of Persons with Disability Act 2013. The aim of the Act was to create equal opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and their full participation in families,

communities, and countries (Government of Bangladesh, 2015). Besides, the total population in Bangladesh is 159.6 million (BBS, 2015) and more than 9.1% of the total population has been suffering from various types of disabilities (BBS, 2010a; 2011b).

Bangladesh is one of the most climate vulnerable countries in the world and will become even more so as a result of climate change and it has been ranked as one of the world's most disaster-prone countries, with 97.1 % of its land area and 97.7% of its population at risk from multiple hazards (UNICEF, 2011). Floods, tropical cyclones, storm surges and droughts are likely to become more frequent and severe in the coming years (MoEF, 2009). The coastal zone of Bangladesh hosts over 35 million of people who are exposed to cyclones, storm surges, rough seas, salinity intrusion and permanent inundation due to sea level rising. In Bangladesh, coastal area has been divided into three distinct regions, namely, western, central, and eastern coastal zones (Ali, 1999; Islam, 2001). The coastal zone of Bangladesh constitutes of 19 districts with an area of 47,201 sq. km which is about one third of the total area of the country. Sixty-two percent of the land of the coastal zone has an elevation of up to three meters and 86 percent up to five meters (MoSW, 2009). During natural disasters, persons with disabilities (PwDs) suffer not only from the same impact of the

*Corresponding Author Email: prabalims@gmail.com

Cite as: Molla, M.H., Shahjahan, M., Baura, P., Samia, R. (2019). Inclusion of persons with disabilities in the climate change and disaster management related rules and policies of Bangladesh: An empirical study. *Journal of Disability Studies*. 5(1),11-15.

©IS Publications ISSN: 2454-6623 <http://pubs.iscience.in/jds>



disaster as the general people, but also are less able to cope with the deterioration of the environment as a result of socioeconomic conditions, empowerment and access to resources (UN, 2011). In the southern coastal region, nearly 32% dwellers are not concerned about natural disaster and climate change issues and 64.1% partially concerned about an existing cyclone warning system (YPSA 2015a). In reality, approximately 60%, 79% and 52% inhabitants respectively expressed that pre-cyclone disaster preparedness activities, during cyclone disaster activities and post cyclone disaster activities are not suitable for Persons with Disabilities. They claimed that 97% PwDs do not know about the participation of PwDs in disaster management committees. Besides, 65.5% PwDs are directly involved with the natural disaster management and climate change related activities, but 90% PwDs are not involved in disaster management oriented laws and policies in the southern coastal belt of Bangladesh (YPSA 2015a). Although, YPSA (2015b) reviewed the existing laws, policies, strategies, plans of Bangladesh Government related to climate change and disaster management addressed disability issues as per article 11 of UNCRDP in Bangladesh. The review prescribed that nearly fifteen (15) types of laws, policies, strategies, plans has existed and those were operated through different ministerial and autonomous bodies. Moreover, these types of laws, policies, strategies, plans strictly emphasize on the participation of PwDs in climate change and disaster management issues. The reviewed studies recommended that proper participation of PwDs at every planning process could ensure the safe livelihood of PwDs in coastal areas of Bangladesh (YPSA 2015 b). To advance the 'Rights & Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013' and accelerate the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities on disaster and risk reduction issues. YPSA has started an initiative for "Disability Inclusive Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Management (DICCAD) supported by Disability Rights and Advocacy Fund" with the support of the "Disability Right Fund project" from 2014 in Bangladesh.

Objectives of the Study

The prime objective of this study was to investigate the current status of inclusion of PwDs in disaster management and climate change related updated rules and policies in the coastal belt of Bangladesh, besides, explore their implementation status and involvement and also find out the gaps regarding this inclusion.

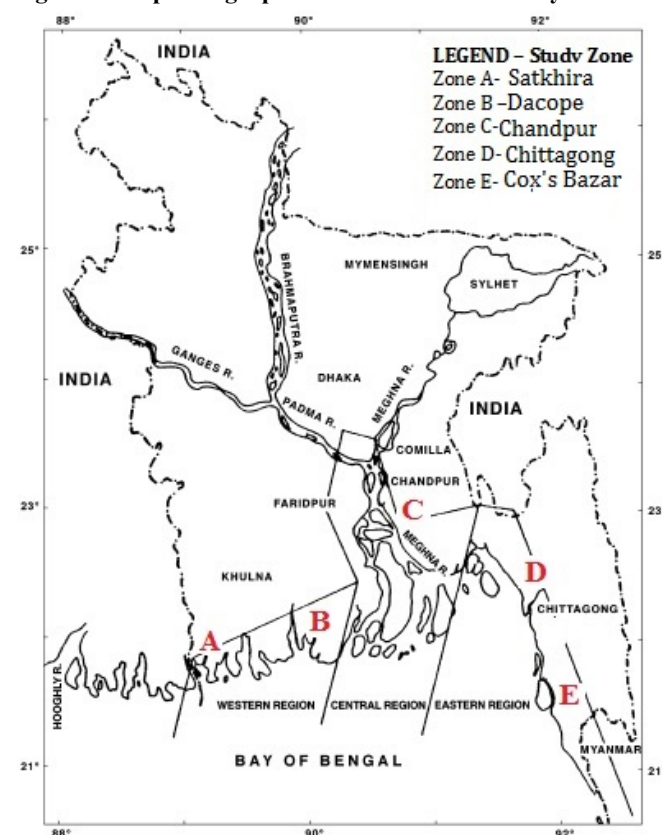
MATERIALS AND METHODS

RESULTS

Selection of the Study Area

To conduct the current study, whole coastal area of Bangladesh has been considered. For the convenience of the survey, the whole coastal area has been divided into five study zones such as Zone A- Satkhira, Zone B - Dacope, Zone C- Chandpur, Zone D- Chittagong, Zone E- Cox's Bazar respectively.

Figure 1. Map: Geographical Location of the study zones



Source: Ali, 1999 modified by YPSA, 2017

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were adopted for conducting the survey. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through quantitative survey, particularly questionnaire survey. A semi-structured or open-ended questionnaire was developed and total 385 using the formula

$$n_0 = \left(\frac{z^2 pq}{d^2} \right)$$

n_0 = desired sample size.

z = standard normal deviate usually set at 1.96, which corresponds to the 95% confidence level.

p = assumes proportion in the target population estimated to have a particular characteristic.

q = proportion of the estimation of population

d = allowable maximum error in estimating a population proportion.

questionnaire survey was conducted. Along with convenience sampling was applied to data collected from five different zones respectively.

Table 1: Desired sample size for questionnaire survey from PWDs

Selected Zone	Name of Area	Sample Size
Zone A	Satkhira (Western coastal Belt: Jessore)	77
Zone B	Dacope (South Western coastal Belt: Khulna)	77
Zone C	Chandpur (Central Coastal Belt: Chittagong)	77
Zone D	Chittagong (South Coastal Belt: Sitakunda to Banskhali Upazila, Chittagong)	77
Zone E	Cox's Bazar (South Eastern Coastal Belt: Chittagong)	77
Five Zones	Total three coastal belt (Western, Central & Eastern)	385

Source: Compiled by YPSA, 2017

For qualitative survey the tools of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Informant Interviews (KII) were utilized. Total five FGDs and fifty KIIs have been conducted among stakeholders, particularly the law enforcing agency, relevant government and local government institutions, experts, professionals, policy makers/public representatives. Collected data were disaggregated on the basis of geographical location among coastal belt and age structure of PWDs. Qualitative data were analyzed with the help of 'Narrative Analysis' and quantitative data were analyzed by The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS, version: 20).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The comprehensive desk review collecting existing laws, policies, strategies, plans of Bangladesh Government related to climate change and disaster management that supposed to be addressing disability issues as per article 11 of UNCRDP. The finally selected documents for review were as follows:

1. The Environment Policy (1992)
2. Coastal Zone Policy- 2005
3. The National Adaptation Programme of Action (2005)
4. Bangladesh National Building Code 2006
5. The Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (2009)
6. The Standing Orders on Disaster (2010)
7. The Perspective Plan of Bangladesh (2010-2021)
8. The National Plan for Disaster Management (2010-2015)
9. Cyclone Shelter Construction, Maintenance and Management Policy 2011
10. Disaster Management Act, 2012
11. Rights & Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013
12. Flood Response Preparedness Plan of Bangladesh, 2014
13. Disaster Management Rules (committee formulation and functions), 2015
14. National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh, 2015
15. National Disaster Management Policy, 2015

From the reviews, nearly fifteen (15) types of rules and policies have been identified among which eight (8) types of rules and policies are directly addressing the inclusion of PWDs in climate change and disaster management issues in Bangladesh such as:

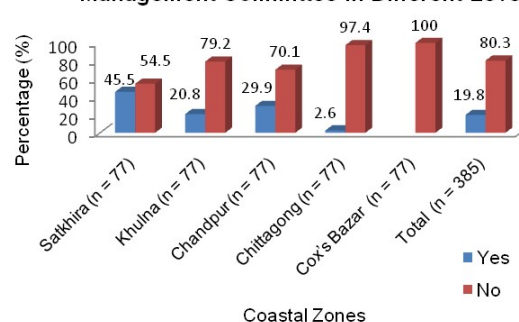
1. Bangladesh National Building Code, 2006
2. The Standing Orders on Disaster, 2010
3. Disaster Management Act, 2012
4. The Perspective Plan of Bangladesh, 2010-2021
5. Rights & Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013
6. Cyclone Shelter Construction, Maintenance and Management Policy, 2011
7. National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh, 2015
8. Disaster Management Rules (committee formulation and functions), 2015

Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities by Disaster Management Committee in Different Levels

Most of the PWDs (80.3%) were not included in disaster management committee in national, districts, metropolitan, municipality, upazila and union/ward level as persons with disabilities (figure 2). All the PWDs in Cox's Bazar were seen to

have no inclusion by the disaster management committee at any level. Only about 19.8% of the PWDs said to be included in such committees. Among them the higher number of inclusions was seen in Satkhira district (45.5%).

Figure 2: Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities by Disaster Management Committee in Different Levels



Level of Inclusion of PwD

Among the few PWDs who claimed to be included in the disaster management committee, most of them (10.1%) were found to have inclusions in union level Disaster Management Committee (Table 2).

Table 2: Level of Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

Disaster Management Committee	Satkhira (n = 77)	Khulna (n = 77)	Chandpur (n = 77)	Chittagong (n = 77)	Cox's Bazar (n = 77)	Total (n = 385)
Not Applicable	53.2	79.2	74.0	97.4	100.0	80.8
Upazila or paurashava level	2.6	-	-	2.6	-	1.0
Union level	16.9	15.6	18.2	-	-	10.1
Ward level	2.6	-	2.6	-	-	1.0
Upazila, Union, Ward level	20.8	-	1.3	-	-	4.4
Union, ward level	3.9	5.2	-	-	-	1.8
Upazila and union level	-	-	3.9	-	-	.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Reasons of Exclusion of Persons with Disabilities in the Committee

The Disaster Management Committee was not interested to include persons with disabilities in the committee because of their unawareness about the ability of persons with disabilities (33.2%), unaware about of the rules (29.9%), unavailability of information (13.8%) and political influence (3.4%) (table 3).

Table 3: Reasons of Exclusion of PwD in the Committee

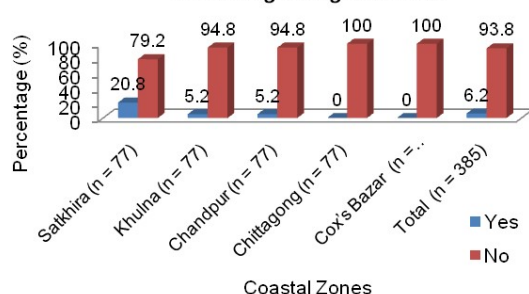
Reasons of Exclusion	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not applicable	46.8	23.4	26.0	2.6	100.0	19.7
Unaware of rules	6.5	9.1	29.9	3.9	-	29.9
Unaware about the ability of Persons with Disabilities	23.4	9.1	40.3	93.5	-	33.2
Political influence	3.9	9.1	3.9	-	-	3.4
No information	19.5	49.4	-	-	-	13.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

1. Satkhira (n = 77), 2. Khulna (n = 77), 3. Chandpur (n = 77), 4. Chittagong (n = 77), 5. Cox's Bazar (n = 77), 6. Total (n = 385)

Ensuring Security for Persons with Disabilities in the Sheltering during a Disaster

The study explores that persons with disabilities (93.8%) were not ensured security in the sheltering during disaster.

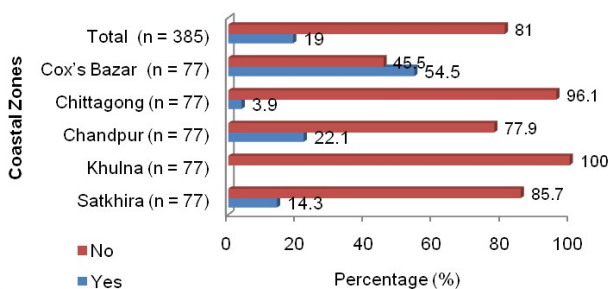
Figure 3: Ensuring Security for Persons with Disabilities in the Sheltering during a Disaster



Getting Priority for Persons with Disabilities in Relief and Rehabilitation during and after the Disaster and Emergency Period

The study found that a majority of the PwDs (81.0%), including all the PwDs of Khulna, said that they did not get such priority. Only 19.0% PwDs said that they got such priority (figure 3).

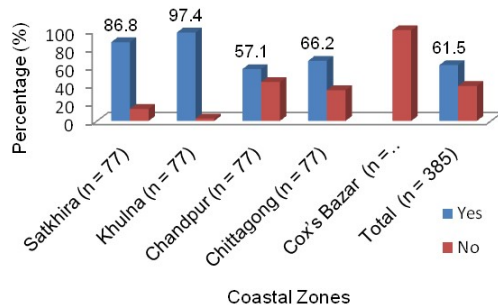
Figure 4: Getting Priority for Persons with Disabilities in Relief and Rehabilitation during and after the Disaster and Emergency Period



Ability of Persons with Disabilities to Play Roles or Give Opinion in the Committee

About 61.5% of the PwDs stated that they had ability to play their role or give their opinion in the Disaster Management Committee as persons with disability. Another good portion of the PwDs (38.5%) was non affirmative regarding this. Here, it has been found that all the respondents in Cox's Bazar were negative in portraying their role or give their opinion in the committee.

Figure 5: Ability of Persons with Disabilities to Play Roles or Give Opinion in the Committee



CONCLUSION

The majority of the PwDs reported to have lower levels of inclusion as persons with disabilities by disaster management committee in different levels. The reasons for exclusion were mostly unaware of the ability of persons with disabilities, rules along with political influence. However, most of the PwDs also stated to have expressed the ability of PwD to play roles or give an opinion in the committee. Although Bangladesh signed and ratified the UN convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and adopted several disability related rules and policies, including the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disability Act 2013, there are so many more issues are left to work on reducing the gap between adoption and implementation. A base for providing equal opportunities for the persons with disabilities can be ensured by the participation and activity of PwD in families, locality, community and country. Such initiatives could also trigger the appropriate disaster management application and prioritized for the persons with disabilities as well.

Policy Implications

A number of policy outlined and illustrated below are based on the study findings, FGD and KII findings, study review and opinion by the PwDs.

• Implementation of "Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013"

The "Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013" is a landmark for all the disability related rules and policies in Bangladesh.

• Finding out the Obstacles to Receive Early Warning System

The Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD) by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) highlights on the special facilities for the persons with disabilities during alert and warning stage.

• Ensuring Social Safety Net for all PwD Living in Coastal Belt

Although Vision 2021 in Bangladesh recognizes the strategic formulation of social protection, including the persons with disabilities, the implementation rate is still unsatisfactory. So, ensuring social safety net with the help of local government in coastal divisions for persons with disabilities could give them the protection needed.

• Strengthening DPOs

Organization of Persons with Disabilities (DPOs) should be consolidated in the government plans to strengthen the capacity and resources of Organization of Persons with Disabilities (DPOs). Strong and active involvement of DPOs in all stages of disaster management cycle would culminate in the inclusive preparedness measures, rescue operations, relief and rehabilitation process.

• Incorporating Roles and Responsibilities towards the PwD in the National Curriculum

It is required to include and discuss the roles and responsibilities towards the persons with disabilities in the National Curriculum and Text Books to raise awareness for

helping PwD during pre disaster, disaster and post disaster period.

- **Appropriate Dissemination of the Information about the Term “Accessibility”**

As the term ‘accessibility’ refers to the opportunities to make all the facilities accessible to the persons with disabilities without any obstacles, it stresses on the equal access of all social services including infrastructure, communication and information and so on.

- **Effective Participation of Persons with Disability in Disaster Management Committees**

According to the disaster management rules, effective participation of persons with disabilities should be ensured at all levels of disaster management committee. Their voices need to be heard substantially in community based disability inclusive disaster risk management system. Such involvement could contribute in the inclusive disaster management and planning.

- **Developing Special Code of Conduct for Persons with Disabilities during the Disaster Period**

Special Code of Conduct should be developed and incorporated in the existing policies/plans to deal with persons with disabilities during the disaster period aligned with the provisions discussed in national level disaster related rules and policies.

REFERENCES

- Ali, A. (1999). Climate change impacts and adaptation assessment in Bangladesh. *Climate research*, 12(2-3), 109-116.
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. (2011a). Report of the Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2010. Dhaka. Retrieved 5 October 2019, from <http://www.bbs.gov.bd/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/LatestReports/HIES-10.pdf>
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. (2011b). Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 2011. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. Statistics & Informatics Division (SID), Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. (2015). Statistical Year Book of Bangladesh 2015. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Government of Bangladesh. (2015). Rights & Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013. Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Islam, S. M. (2001). Sea Level Change In Bangladesh: The Last Ten Thousand Years. Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. pp. 7-8, 13.
- MoEF (2009). Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2009. Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- UNICEF. (2011). Bangladesh Country Programme Document 2012-2016. New York: United Nations. Retrieved 5 October 2019, from https://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/Bangladesh_final_approved_2012-2016_20_Oct_2011_.pdf
- United Nations. (2011). Enable – disability, natural disasters and emergency situations. New York: United Nations. Retrieved 5 October 2019, from <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1546>
- United Nations. (2019). Disability and Development Report Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities 2018. New York: United Nations. Retrieved 5 October 2019, from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2019/07/disability-report-foreword.pdf>
- YPSA (2015 b). Review the current legislation and policy for addressing disability inclusive climate change and disaster management in Bangladesh, Federation of DPOs Sitakund and Coastal DPO Alliance, Knowledge Management for Development (KM4D) Department, YPSA (Young Power in Social Action), Chittagong, Bangladesh.
- YPSA (2015a). Accessibility and contemporary situation of persons with disabilities in eastern coastal belt of Bangladesh in relation to climate change and disaster management, Knowledge Management for Development Department, YPSA (Young Power in Social Action), Chittagong, Bangladesh.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are thankful to all the Persons with Disabilities in the coastal area of Bangladesh for their cordial responses, willingness and thoroughfulness during data collection. We also thank to YPSA-IRCD center for working to Persons with Disabilities and provide their essential devices.

Source of Funding: None

Conflict of interest: None