A WALK TOWARDS
COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

COMMUNITIES BOUNCING BACK

Report on
Disaster Resilience Cafe
2014

christian aid

BDPC

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Mesbah ul Alam
Secretary
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A Message from Secretary, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief

Bangladesh is considered to be one of the countries, most vulnerable to climate change. The consequences of climate induced hazards have significant adverse impact on the lives and livelihoods of the communities at risk. Under such circumstances, I am deeply impressed by the Disaster Resilience Cafe, a new initiative taken to address 'Resilience' from the perspective of the underprivileged people. The free and open environment of the Cafe, not only provided an opportunity for the different stakeholders of disaster management from Government and Development Partners to interact with the people from the grassroots level, but also created a platform for the community people to lay out their daily challenges.

I believe this report of the Disaster Resilience Café will create awareness among all the actors in the field of disaster management and help them identify the major loopholes in achieving resilience at the community level.

Mesbah ul Alam
Secretary

15 December 2014

Dear Colleagues,

Greetings for Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre (BDPC).

It is with great pleasure that I present you the Report on Disaster Resilience Cafe, which was "A Walk towards Community Resilience", held in April 2014. Different stakeholders engaged in the field of disaster risk management, including government ministries and departments, development partners and community representatives participated at the Cafe. The objective of the event was to create an opportunity for the policy and decision makers to look at community resilience through the lenses of the poor and the disadvantaged people. The Cafe has not only identified the root causes of the problems of the vulnerable communities, but also provided recommendations to overcome the challenges.

We strongly believe that the lessons learned from this event will have a positive and sustained impact on empowering disadvantaged people to have access to the public resources and also in making the public service agencies more responsive to the needs of the poor and the marginalized communities. After all resilience is more than just bouncing back when the situation goes haywire, it is about getting stronger than before. The Cafe should not be seen as an end in itself, rather a significant step towards a long journey.

Let us start, today.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the key actors and the participants from the national and local levels who played very important roles in making this initiative a grand success.

Muhammad Saidur Rahman
Director

Acronyms

BDPC	Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre
CA	Christian Aid
CC	Citizen Charter
CDMP	Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme
CPP	Cyclone Preparedness Programme
CSC	Community Scorecard
DDG	Deputy Director General
DDM	Department of Disaster Management
DFID	Department for International Development
DM Act 2012	Disaster Management Act 2012
ECHO	European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department
EU	European Union
FD6	Foreign Donation 6
MoDMR	Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPD	National Project Director
PHM	Public Hearing Meeting
PIO	Project Implementation Officer
PSP	Participatory Selection Process
RTI	Right to Information
SOD	Standing Orders on Disaster
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer
VDP	Village Defense Party
WB	World Bank

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1 Executive Summary

Background

The Global Assessment Report-2011, published by UNISDR, revealed that in terms of number of people exposed to floods, Bangladesh ranks first out of 162 countries. This statement is borne out by the statistics that 34 million people were affected by the floods of 2004. The worst hydro-meteorological disaster in the recorded history of the world was the cyclone of 1970, which killed over half a million people in Bangladesh. The devastating cyclone of 1991, which claimed more than 138,000 lives, is still fresh in our memory. The root cause for high vulnerability of the poor and disadvantaged communities living in disaster risk areas is poverty. They are trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty and disaster. In fact, disasters push them further down and make their poverty perpetual.

Bangladesh has put in place an elaborate system for disaster management, and is equipped with policies, guidelines and instruments such as SOD for effective preparedness and response. The country is proud to have established its flagship Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) with a cadre of approximately 50,000 volunteers responsible for the dissemination of early warnings against approaching cyclones. But if we are to maximize the resilience of the vulnerable communities, enabling them to absorb the shock of a disaster and to bounce back into shape, we still have a long way to go.

Under these circumstances, Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre (BDPC) organized a National Level Advocacy Programme, based on two of its right-based disaster risk reduction projects, funded by UKAID through Manusher Jonno Foundation and Christian Aid.

34 million

people were affected by the flood of 2004.

Global Assessment Report-2011

The Cafe

Disaster Resilience Cafe, the first of its kind, was held in Dhaka on 22 April 2014. It was organized by BDPC with funding support from Christian Aid. The objective of the event was to examine the issue of resilience through the lens of socio-economic analysis, focusing on poor and disadvantaged communities.

The Cafe was very carefully designed with the participation of different stakeholders engaged in the field of disaster management. A total of one hundred and sixteen participants, from 53 organizations, represented two broad categories:

1

National Level Participants

Policy and decision makers, both from the Bangladesh Government and a number of Development Partner Agencies took part at the event, all of them in positions to make a substantial difference to the status quo. The café was proud to host twenty six officials from the Government of Bangladesh, representing ten different ministries and departments (including the Prime Minister's Secretariat), plus fifty-four delegates from various development partners including UNDP, WB, EU, ECHO and NGOs.

2

Representatives from disaster prone areas

Thirty six men and women came from high risk areas of Sirajganj, Bagerhat and Cox's Bazar Districts, representing three different stakeholder groups:

a) Service providers: This group comprised of the field level staff members of central and local government service providing agencies. They included Upazila Nirbahi Officers, Project Implementation Officers and officers from different government departments such as Agriculture, Fisheries, Livestock, Health, Education etc. Elected Chairmen from two Union Parishads were also included in this group.

b) Beneficiaries: Fourteen people from the lowest economic stratum of society, who live in high disaster risk areas not by choice but by compulsion, represented the Beneficiary Group. They are constantly being affected by disasters, both natural and man-made and are fighting everyday for their survival.

c) Change agents: This category includes trusted community workers such as teachers, social workers, imams of mosques and so on, who are motivated by the spirit of volunteerism to help people in need within their own communities.

The Cafe started with a welcoming address by the Anchor. Then the Director of BDPC gave a very brief presentation to set the scene. Citing case studies of two economically poor families living in flood and cyclone prone areas, he focused on the clear linkage between disaster and poverty. The most important part of the Café was the intensive interaction between the two categories of participants, mentioned above. The national level participants were divided into three separate groups, which were led by high level professionals such as Mr. Mohammad Abdul Qayyum, the National Project Director of Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP), Mr. Colum Wilson, Team Leader for Climate Change and Disaster Resilience in DFID and Dr. Md. Aminul Islam, a Senior Advisor for UNDP. The Facilitators were assisted by Co-Facilitators and interpreters. Each interpreter assisted three expatriates for their easy interaction with people from the community.

The community groups, i.e. service providers, beneficiaries and change agents, sat separately in three corners of the hall, which represented three different small Cafes. The national level participants moved around in groups from one Cafe to another in order to listen to what the people from the grassroots had to say, and establish a dialogue with them. It was a two-way interaction in the truest sense of the term. The different groups of national level participants from Dhaka were able to look at the issues of resilience through different perspectives – those of beneficiaries, service providers and change agents.

After the interaction session, which lasted almost for two hours, everybody came back for a plenary session, where the group Facilitators made powerpoint presentations on their findings. They focused on current scenarios, challenges and recommendations. Samples of the issues raised are presented below.

List of Common Prioritized Scenarios and Challenges

The nature of disasters has been changing over time, due to ongoing changes in climatic conditions and demographic characteristics. New and multi-faceted hazards and risks have emerged, which led to more actors working to respond to disasters. As a result, the service providers, recipients and facilitators do not have adequate awareness regarding the management of this new and complex situation.

It became clear that while poor people know very well about the high risk involved, they continue to live in vulnerable areas because they have no other place to go. They live there simply in order to earn a living and survive.

Inadequate linkage exists between the poor and the service providers. The existing gap between service providers and recipients has been created mainly by the attitude of the service providers and lack of awareness of the receivers. As a result, synergies between local level expectations and provision of services are missing.

Coordination mechanisms in local government are very weak, despite the presence of the policies and instruments such as SOD.

There is a lack of transparency and accountability in the services delivered by the service providers

Good governance and social accountability tools, such as Right to Information (RTI), Public Hearing Meeting (PHM), Participatory Selection Process (PSP), Community Scorecard (CSC) etc, are not used by the public service providing agencies.

There is a chronic lack of community participation in the management of basic services and facilities.

The processes used to select beneficiaries are not transparent, meaning there is a possibility of inefficient and/or unfair allocation.

After the presentations made by the Facilitators of all the three Groups, over an hour was spent on questions, answers and discussions on the issues identified during the interaction session with the representatives from the field and general issues related to disaster resilience in the country.

Ms. Pauline Tamesis, Country Director of UNDP Bangladesh and the Special Guest at the event, praised BDPC for its role in providing a unique opportunity for interaction among government agencies, development partners and the vulnerable communities from remote areas. She emphasized the importance of community empowerment and added that resilience does not result from striving to resist changes and disturbances but from accepting uncertainties and working effectively in difficult situations. She mentioned that harder issues need to be addressed collectively and everyone needs to come together to continue the dialogue and build actions to strengthen resilience.

Key Recommendations

The people for whom the services and facilities have been created should come first within the service provision.

It is essential to recognize local people's strengths, potentials and ability to innovate and utilize these to manage disaster risks.

Resilience is like a spider's web in which every household is a node. There is a need for connectivity between institutions and households for increased resiliency. This connectivity is the web which helps to make each household resilient.

We need to increase the number of change agents and enhance their capacity and knowledge base so that they can influence others and ensure proper delivery of public services to the people most in need in remote areas.

Common people should be made aware about their basic rights, privileges and entitlements.
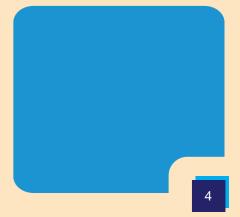
Transparency and accountability of service provider agencies should be ensured through social accountability tools such as PHM, CSC, CC, etc.

Participatory Selection Process should be used to ensure fair and efficient utilization of resources while selecting beneficiaries.

Efforts should be made to ensure delivery of development support (public services) to the targeted beneficiaries. Mapping exercise at national and local levels is needed for proper decision making.

The Chief Guest, Mr. Mesbah ul Alam, Secretary of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, also thanked BDPC for gathering such a unique assembly of people from every level and offering opportunities for them to interact openly. He emphasized the need to change the mindset of public service providers. He added that local leaders and people must focus more on preparedness for disaster and less on post disaster activities. Mr. Alam suggested creating social leadership so as to improve community capability, enhance the capacity of service providers and ensure maximum utilization of public resources. In conclusion he said he was confident that the knowledge sharing which had taken place within the Cafe would enrich disaster preparedness activities at every level.

A Walk Towards
Community Resilience

The key finding from the Café was that a holistic approach should be adopted to ensure disaster resilience at community level. The answer lies in the socio-economic development of the vulnerable communities living in high disaster risk areas. Public resources are available to make their lives better but are not reaching the beneficiaries to the extent desired. The primary cause of this phenomenon is that the poor are not aware of their rights and entitlements and are not conscious of their power as a class. Another reason is the huge gap between the service providers and the receivers created by the mindset of service providers. Social accountability tools such as Public Hearing Meeting and Community Scorecard should be used more often to foster transparency and accountability in services. Resilience can only be achieved through effective coordination from national level right down to household level. A two way approach is required to establish community resilience in a country like Bangladesh: bottom up and top down.

Bottom Up Approach

The Bottom Up approach would include, but not be limited to, development of organization of the poor, making them aware of their rights and entitlements, empowering them as a class to gain access to and control over public resources. It would also mean developing the capacity of disadvantaged communities to participate in the decision making process, starting from the local level.

Top Down Approach

The Top Down approach should comprise intensive engagement with public service providing agencies and motivating them towards good governance and the use of social accountability tools such as Public Hearing Meeting, Citizens' Charter, Community Scorecard and Participatory Selection Process. Emphasis should be placed on changing their mindset and attitudes in favor of the vulnerable communities and facilitating their linkage with communities at risk. Strategies should also be established to ensure that the voices of local communities are heard within the programmes and policies of the Government.

The Café identified an immediate need to scale up the embryonic initiatives already in place in order to promote resilience at community level. Pilot projects should be initiated with full participation and ownership of the Government of Bangladesh. If this is done successfully it will have a positive impact on poverty alleviation and help nascent democracy put down firm roots.

Introduction

Bangladesh has made steady progress in achieving the MDGs, secured progress for different socio-economic indicators and in infrastructural development. Despite this progress, the World Risk Report 2012 identified Bangladesh as the fifth most natural disaster prone country among 173 countries in the world, bearing the disastrous combination of extreme exposure and high vulnerability [1]. The report is carried out by assessing four components:

Exposure towards natural hazards such as cyclones, flooding, drought, earthquakes and sea level rise.

Coping capacities depending on governance, disaster preparedness & early warning, medical services .

Vulnerability depending on infrastructure, nutrition, housing situation and economic framework conditions.

Adaptive capacities relating to forthcoming natural events, to climate change and to other challenges.

Findings show that Bangladesh scored 31.7% against exposure, 63.78% against vulnerability, 43.47% against susceptibility, 86.84% against lack of coping capabilities and finally 61.03% against lack of adaptive [2] capabilities . The bottom-line is that Bangladesh is a high-risk country and should be treated accordingly. The 2011 Global Assessment Report of the UNISDR revealed that in terms of number of people exposed to flood, tsunami and cyclone, Bangladesh is ranked first out of 162, third out of 73, and sixth out of 89 countries respectively; translated into 14% GDP exposed to disasters per year – the highest ranking in the world.

The root cause of the vulnerability of the people living in disaster risk areas is the poverty. The poor are trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty and disaster. In fact disasters push them further down and make the poverty perpetual. Although the Government has the intention and plan to provide them with services and aids for making their lives better but there is a huge gap between the service provider and recipient.

Against this background, Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre (BDPC) is running two

right-based disaster risk management projects in high disaster risk areas (Kutubdia in Cox's Bazar, Chowhali in Sirajganj, Morrelganj in Bagherhat districts) funded by UKAID through Christian Aid and Manusher Jonno Foundation. Using Right to Information Act (RTI) and Social Accountability tools such as Public Hearing Meetings, Community Score Card, Participatory Selection Process etc. the disadvantaged communities are made aware about their rights and empowered to have access to public resources. On the other side, through continued and serious engagements, the Public Service Provider Agencies (Agriculture, Health, Livestock, Education and other relevant Departments of the Government of Bangladesh) are encouraged to provide services to the people in need. The combination of these bottom up and top down approaches are contributing greatly to disaster resilience and ultimately to poverty alleviation.

In an attempt to flag the issue of resilience to draw perspective and experiences from different segment of the society, particularly communities and service providers who live and deal with disasters, BDPC organized The Disaster Resilience Cafe.

1. The World Risk Report 2012 (Focus: Environmental degradation and disasters)
2. http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/habitats/oceanscoasts/howwework/world-risk-report-2012-pdf.pdf

3 The Cafe Structure

The Disaster Resilience Cafe was organized in Dhaka on 22 April 2014. Partially funded by Christian Aid through a right-based project, the Café was attended by one hundred and sixteen people. Thirty six people, engaged in the process of implementation of the projects mentioned above, came to Dhaka to share their stories. They represented three different stakeholder groups i.e. the Beneficiaries, the Service Providing Agencies and the Volunteers.

From Dhaka, decision makers and practitioners in the Government, Development Agencies and NGOs participated at the event. Several communications were made with them, well in advance, with the background and the objectives of the Café so that everybody knew how to contribute to and what to expect from the Café.

Mr. Mesbah ul Alam, Secretary of the Ministry of Disaster Management Relief and Ms. Pauline Tamesis, Country Director of UNDP-Bangladesh were the Chief Guest and the Special Guest respectively. Ms. Dilruba Haider, former Additional Director of BDPC and currently working as the Gender and Climate Change Coordinator of UN Women, anchored the event.

The Director of BDPC giving his presentation to set the scene of the Café

3.1 Objective of the Cafe

Ms. Dilruba Haider started off with the welcome address and mentioned that the poor people of Bangladesh have rich set of experience and strengths to struggle and survive in disaster situations. She explained the objective of the Café, which was to look at the issue of resilience through the lenses of poor and disadvantaged communities. BDPC is contributing to achieve community resilience through right-based disaster management projects by promoting right to information, accountability and participation. Emphasizing on the rights of the community, the poor is much more empowered, leading to access to public resources and participation in the service delivery process. She said that combination of bottom-up and top-down approach can ensure significant achievements in disaster resilience as well as poverty reduction.

3.2 Setting the Scene

Mr. Muhammad Saidur Rahman, Director of BDPC, gave a brief presentation on the objectives and background of the Café. He gave an example of the disproportionate impact of hazard of the same intensity in two different countries and mentioned that institutional, infrastructural, social, economic and political factors are the ingredients for vulnerability, rather than the intensity and magnitude of the hazard. Through his presentation, the following areas were addressed: (i) the relationship between poverty and disaster; (ii) available options for addressing poverty-disaster nexus; (iii) the way forward; and (iv) the key challenges of achieving community resilience.

Referring to the long history of disasters in Bangladesh, Mr. Rahman informed that Bangladesh is quite often cited at the global and regional conferences as the "Supermarket of Disasters. Due to inadequate physical infrastructure and poor socio-economic conditions, the cyclone of 1970 (the worst hydro-meteorological disaster in the recorded history of the world) killed half a million people in one night and the floods in 2004 affected 34 million people. It is the poor who always lose their lives and livelihoods. They manage disaster emergencies through their indigenous coping mechanisms and survival techniques.

In relation to his micro analysis of the situation Mr. Rahman presented two case studies of disaster vulnerable people.

The Story of Mr. Shorno Kumar Jolodas

Shorno Kumar Jolodas of Chakaria under Cox's Bazar District is a fisherman through generations. Like most of the other fishermen in the country, Shorno Kumar does not own the fishing gears e.g boat, net etc. These are rented to groups of fishermen (10 to 20 in a group) by 'mahajans', who are not fishermen but have social, political and economic power. The fishing gears are rented on condition that 50% of the catch will have to be given as the rent and the rest 50% will have to be sold to the 'mahajans' at the rate fixed by the 'mahajans' themselves. The fishermen have no freedom to sell even a part of the catch to any third party at market rate.

To meet the financial needs created by any medical treatment or social obligations, quite often they borrow money from the 'mahajans' at unbelievably high rate of interest. It is the fishermen who go out in the sea in cyclone season and risk their lives just to earn a living. So, cyclone is not the hazard for thousands of fishermen like Shorno Kumar Jolodas, but social and economic exploitations are.

The Story of Ms. Halima

Mrs. Halima, in her 60s, lives in a riverine char of Faridpur District. She lost her homesteads and adjacent land several times due to river bank erosion. Now being a popper, she lives on somebody else's land. Her daughter was deserted by the husband as Halima could not pay the dowry that he demanded. Leaving the two children with the mom, the daughter moved to Dhaka and nobody knows where she has ended up.

Working as domestic aid, Halima is not in demand because of her age factor. The day she does not get work and cannot buy food for her grandchildren, is a disaster for her. She is managing such disasters quite often. For Halima, today floods and river bank erosion are no more disasters, but unemployment and poverty are.

Presenting case studies of this poor woman and the exploited fisherman living in flood and cyclone-prone areas respectively, Mr. Muhammad Saidur Rahman drew the linkage between disaster vulnerability and poverty, the available options through understanding the nature of the risks, types of hazards and the need for empowerment of the people at risk. Most of the humanitarian support is now focusing on managing disasters, rather than improving resilience through reducing vulnerability and enhancing capacities. Sustainable Livelihood Support is the first and most important vehicle to ensure social and political empowerment, access to the public resources and ultimately to establish good governance. In addition to providing relief and rehabilitation support, humanitarian actors should empower the community at risk through building awareness, promoting social network and economic capacity.

Defining resilience, Mr. Rahman said that resilience is the ability of the community to absorb the shock and bounce back immediately after the emergency survival phase. He mentioned several challenges including (i) changing the mindset of the key actors, (ii) appreciating potential power of the poor as a class, (iii) integration of disaster resilience into life and livelihood of the poor and disadvantaged communities and (iv) development of social, moral, ethical and religious commitments of the policy and decision makers.

The National Level participants were given files with red, blue or yellow stickers during registration in order to divide them into groups. In the picture, the participants are raising their files to form groups. Each group was led by a Facilitator and assisted by a Co- Facilitator and Interpreters.

3.3 Interaction with the Community People

All the invited guests and participants, the policy and decision makers in the Government, Development Partners Agencies and other Institutions were divided into three groups by the Café Anchor as pre-planned. Each group was led by a Facilitator, Co-Facilitator and two interpreters whose responsibilities are presented below. They got maximum 25 minutes to interact with each of the community stakeholder groups.

Facilitator

Coordinate and encourage the group members for proactive and interactive discussion.

Steer the discussions in the groups and guide preparation of the presentation.

Present the group findings at the Plenary with the recommendation for the future direction for disaster resilience in the country.

Co-Facilitator

Support facilitation in group discussion.

Support development of presentation with the guidance of the Facilitator.

Interpreters

Support interpretation to the expatriates.
Support interaction among the designated expatriates and people from the field.
Interpret the issues related to the theme, process, hopes, aspiration and commitments

The Director of BDPC had one on one meetings with all the key actors of the Groups, mainly the Facilitators and the Co-Facilitators, who were highly professional in the field of disaster risk management and climate change e.g Mr. Mohammad Abdul Qayyum, National Project Director of Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme, Mr. Colum Wilson, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Cluster Head of Department For International Development (DFID), Dr. Aminul Islam, Senior Advisor of UNDP. On the day of the event, all the actors had a preparatory meeting over breakfast to ensure coordination and harmonization between the groups.

After the formation of the Groups, the Facilitators sat with their respective group members and introduced the actors, explained the structure and modalities of interaction with community people, limitation of time etc. They also discussed the broader questions to be asked to the community groups and then they joined the people who came from the high disaster prone areas e.g. Kutubdia, Cox's Bazar (cyclone-prone area), Chowhali, Sirajganj (flood-prone area) and Morrelganj, Bagerhat (impact of climate change). There were three stakeholder groups from the community.

1 Service Providers

They are responsible for delivery of public services to the people in the field. They included Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), Project Implementation Officer (PIO), Officers of Agriculture, Livestock, Health & Family Planning, Education Departments etc. There were Chairmen of two Union Parishads in this group.

2 Beneficiaries

There were fourteen beneficiaries, including women from lowest economic strata. Most of them are engaged in agriculture, fishing, and petty business.

3 Volunteers

Unlike other NGOs, BDPC engages local volunteers, termed as Change Agents, who are respected and trusted by the poor communities. The groups include professionals such as teachers, Imams, midwives, social workers and others.

The objective of having the engagement of volunteers is to develop a resource base at the community level so that the social development and community empowerment activities are continued even after the donor funded projects are phased out. There were 11 Change Agents from the areas mentioned above.

Group Facilitator orienting the group members before interaction with the community people

Participant Groups are interacting with the Service Providers

The three stakeholder groups from the community sat in separate areas of the Cafe, which were decorated with festoons, posters, photographs relevant to the specific groups. Group works were very interactive with vibrant participation from almost all the members. Facilitators of the groups briefed the members and guided them to be proactive in raising questions and making suggestions on community empowerment, access to public resources, sustainable livelihood and good governance, which will contribute to and ensure community resilience. Open and congenial environment at group discussions enabled the participants to share their experiences freely and frankly.

Community people sharing their stories with the participants from the National Level

Participant Groups are interacting with the Change agents (volunteers)

The Service Providers from the field are sharing their stories with the National Level Participants

4 Findings & Recommendations from the Participants' Groups

After the interactions with the people who came from disaster-prone areas, the participants returned to the plenary session where the group facilitators made powerpoint presentations, followed by brief questions and answers. Questions were raised by several participants including the Chief Guest (Secretary of MoDMR), Director General of Prime Minister's Office, representatives from Development Partner Agencies etc.

Group 1: Service Providers Group
Findings and Recommendations

Mr. Mohammad Abdul Qayyum, National Project Director (NPD), Facilitator of Group 1, made a lively presentation on the issues, challenges and recommendations for community resilience from the perspective of service providers. His presentation focused on the supply side of the services and facilities to reduce the risk of the community people.

List of prioritized scenarios presented from the supply side perspective

Nature of the traditional and historical disasters has been changing due to continued changes in the demographic characteristics and climatic conditions. New and multi-facetted hazards and risks emerged which led to more actors working to reduce the risk and impact. As such, the service providers, recipients and facilitators do not have adequate awareness regarding the management of this new and complex situation.

Magnitude and intensity as well as the consequence of disasters are increasing on the lives and livelihood of the people. The poor and the disadvantaged groups become worst victims and fall in the vicious cycle of poverty and disaster.

On the other hand, rising of national income increases people's expectations and demand for services and facilities.

However, establishment of rights and access to information is still a challenge for the country.

Major challenges and constraints from the perspective of service providers

Scarcity of adequate resources and services for the vulnerable communities.

Inefficient distribution process resulted in inappropriate allocation of resources and delay in service provision to meet the community needs.

Lack of participation of the community in the management of basic services and facilities.

Lack of accountability of the service providers.

Increasing rate of corruption and lack of transparency in the service provision.

Lack of sustainability and replication or up scaling of good practices and initiatives like public hearing meeting, community scorecard, and participatory selection process.

Lack of networking between the service providers and the recipients which increases the gap between supply and demand of the community.

Identification and prioritization of the right target group for whom the goods and services should be delivered.

Key Recommendations

People, for whom the services and facilities are created, should come first within the service provision

Understanding people's strength, innovations and potentialities and utilizing them to manage disaster risks.

Utilizing the existing services for awareness raising and capacity building of the community people and ensuring the establishment of their rights.

Ensuring coordination among different service providers from government agencies and departments and non-government institutions to reduce the duplication and increase the coverage.

Promote accountability of the service providers to the recipients.

Creation of enabling environment to provide services

Scaling up the good practices by different actors.

Compliance of Right to Information Act and following of Government approved Social Accountability Tools (Public Hearing Meeting, Community Scorecard, Citizen Charter, Participatory Selection Process etc)

Empowering the community to have access to public resources.

Group 2: Beneficiary Group
Findings and Recommendations

"I started life this morning as a development worker. But I have been recast as a 'Supermarket Manager", expressed **Mr. Colum Wilson, Team Leader for Climate Change and Disaster Resilience in DFID** referring to Mr. Muhammad Saidur Rahman's earlier comment on Bangladesh being the 'Supermarket of Disasters'. His presentation focused on the demand side of the services and facilities to ensure community resilience.

> " I started life this morning as a development worker. But I have been recast as a 'Supermarket Manager.' "
>
> - Colum Wilson

Mr. Colum Wilson, Team Leader for Climate Change and Disaster Resilience in DFID presenting the scenario from the demand side perspective

List of prioritized scenarios presented from the demand side perspective

Current situation revealed that though the beneficiaries believe that they have some information about what their rights are and how they can be better prepared to absorb shocks and stresses, the scenario is quite different. So when they were subjected to the question, "what are your rights?" the message that came across was a bit flakey from their partial understanding.

The platform for finding information was not there. There was no centralized place.

The service providers have a huge number of demands but very few resources to do it with. It needs to be understood that the system does not have many resources and the distance that needs to be covered between the demand and supply is huge.

Major challenges and constraints from the perspective of service recipients

Although we are talking about community empowerment, but voice from the grassroots level is not conveyed to the top most decision makers. Therefore, the gap is created between expectation and supply of services and facilities.

Sometimes the service providers themselves may not be aware of what people are entitled to.

No mechanism exists to ensure functional coordination. Though Standing Order on Disaster (SOD) provides mechanism from national to local level to act before, during and after disaster, but coordination mechanism is still very weak, particularly at the field level.

Key Recommendations

Resilience is like a spider's web in which every household is a node. It's an idea of connectivity between institutions and households, NGOs and households and donors and households. That entire web is a relationship that makes each household resilient.

Although social agencies can contribute to resilience, ultimately all depend on the power of people. We are merely the helper. We help raise people up, just that they should realize they are capable of doing things.

Effective governance need to be promoted. Development partners and humanitarian actors need to provide technical advice and work together to build and help sustain the spider's web.

Coordination should not happen only in ministry but also in local level administration and institutions. Functional coordination across all levels needs to be ensured.

Community voice needs to be reflected into the national level plans and strategies for disaster management.

Holistic approach should be adopted. It can only be achieved by listening to the community and hearing what they have to say.

There are needs for more platforms and forums, where the right holders can meet their rights.

Group 3: Change Makers or Volunteer Groups
Findings and Recommendations

Dr. Aminul Islam, Senior Advisor of UNDP, made the presentation focusing on the connectivity between the supply and demand within the market. More specifically, the group concentrated on the disequilibrium of the supply and demand sides.

List of prioritized scenarios presented from the demand side perspective

Supply of adequate resources is one of the demands from the beneficiaries. Expectation of the beneficiaries was never considered, a demand driven approach is hardly taken and the resources are not channeled as demand requires.

Decision making level people frequently use the technical word, governance. For upholding governance, common people should know their constitutional and basic rights so that they can approach the local government service providers and bring changes in the service provision.

Attitude of the service providers are not pro-poor. Beneficiaries, who are very poor and marginalized, do not have access to the service provider's door.

Group vulnerability and gender insensitivity exist in the service provision.

Limited availability of alternative livelihood opportunities, particularly after disaster when people lose their traditional livelihood sources.

Major challenges and constraints from the perspective of the Change Makers

Inadequate linkage exists between the poor and the service providers. The synergies between the local level expectation and provision of services are missing.

Demand and supply gap created due to the traditional concepts and lack of institutional strength.

Local level agencies do not have adequate resources and capacity to meet the increasing demand of the community people.

Awareness of rights and accessibility to the public information is difficult. A large amount of information is available but not to the people who are marginalized.

Lack of mechanism to facilitate transformation of knowledge to get access to public resources.

There is hardly any mapping exercise at national and local level regarding resources and their utilization to assist decision making process.

Lack of transforming knowledge, skill, training, awareness to practice. Local resources are not made available for public skill development.

Key Recommendations

GO-NGO complementary/coordinated actions for mapping the need at local level.

Increased allocation of resources in disaster-prone areas.

Plans and designs of the physical infrastructure should take into consideration the local climatic conditions and promote the use of local resource base.

Retention of GoB officials who are already familiar with the local culture and have gained substantial knowledge on local ecosystem and biodiversity.

Attention should be given to gender and vulnerable groups as well as emphasize on sustainable livelihoods promotions.

Increase the number of Change Agents and enhance their capacity knowledge base so that they can influence other as change makers. Government institutional service structure is centralized in Upazila and most of the departments have hardly any service extension. This is where the change makers, through GO-NGO coordination or other options, can facilitate the delivery of public services to the people in need in remote areas.

Transparency and accountability of service provider agencies should be ensured.

Responsiveness of Service Providers to the needs of the poor community should be ensured.

The disadvantaged community should be empowered through good governance and social accountability tools so that they can have access to public resources.

Local resources could be mobilized and shared for replication and up scaling.

5 Open Discussion and Closing Plenaries

During the presentations made by the Facilitators of the three Groups and the Plenary Session, a number of questions were raised by the participants including the Secretary of MoDMR and DG of Prime Minister's Office. The questions, answers and discussions focused on the issues that were identified during the interactions with representatives from the communities and general issues related to disaster resilience in the country. Few of the issues raised are described below.

Mr. Mesbah ul Alam, Secretary of MoDMR, raised a question on the prioritization of the poor after the presentation of the Facilitator of Group 1. Mr. Qayyum replied that the resources are scarce compared to the demand. Mr. Alam stated that in order to ensure that the needy ones receive the goods and services first, an efficient mechanism is needed to be put in place. The solution lies in the participation of the community in the selection process of the beneficiaries. The community plays the crucial role in prioritizing the poor.

Mr. Qayyum added that there is no platform or forum for the people to know about the goods and services that are allocated for them.

Mr. Mesbah ul Alam, Secretary of MoDMR

> " There is no platform or forum for the people to know about the goods and services allocated for them. "
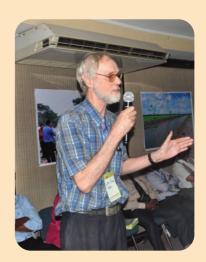>
> - Mr. Mohammad Abdul Qayyum, NPD, CDMP

**Mr. Md. Zahirul Haque
Additional Secretary and
Director General in Prime
Minister's Office.**

At this point, **Mr. Md. Zahirul Haque, Additional Secretary and a Director General in the Prime Minister's Office** pointed out the challenge from the field is to identify the actual needy people. He added that under the Ashrayan Project of which he is the Project Director, Government selects the beneficiaries through an open system where people are invited for the selection of beneficiaries. As a result, the chances of political influence are reduced. He stressed on the importance of creating a database to make sure that the same person is not being benefitted through several projects by depriving other eligible clients.

Mr. Goran Jonsson, Advisor, CDMP, UNDP Bangladesh commented that after today's interaction with the local people, it has been clear that the real disaster can be bad governance. If a country has poor governance system, every initiative will be a disaster, conversely a good governance system will lead to the road to resilience. In response to his comment, Mr. Muhammad Saidur Rahman said that he thinks lack of governance is not the disaster, it creates disaster. Mr. Colum Wilson, DFID, added that there is a middle road here. If a demand is created then it is necessary to have the resources to satisfy that demand. Therefore, it must be made sure through transparency and accountability mechanism that the material provided by the international community, which is only a small fraction of what the government itself is doing, works in a complementary manner

**Mr. Goran Johnson,
Advisor CDMP UNDP
Bangladesh**

❝ People at the grassroots level have their own coping strategies and the experts have to learn from them. **❞**

- Mr. Mizanur Rahman
DDG of Ansar & VDP

Mr. Mizanur Rahman, Deputy Director General of Ansar & Village Defense Party, mentioned that resilience means going back to the same position as even better than the original state. He thanked BDPC for creating this opportunity which brought the community people and the national level institutions on the same platform. He further added that people at the grassroots level have been sustaining with these disasters for a long time. They have their own coping strategies and we, the experts, should start learning from them. We need to be better coordinated and make the best use of the resources we already have.

Mr. Maruf Beig from Scope Global asked Ms. Pauline Tamesis regarding the coordination among the UN agencies during the different phases of a disaster (pre, during and post). In response to his query Ms. Tamesis said that it is a well recognized challenge and UN has commitment to respond in one voice. She added that UN is putting the system in place to make sure it happens.

Ms. Michelle Cicic, Technical Expert of ECHO, stated that one of the challenges, specifically in assisting the Government to meet the demands of beneficiaries, is the long time required for the approval of FD6. Normally, it takes 45 days but in many cases it can take more than three months. There is a need to authorize FD6 much quicker than it is being currently processed. Mr. Mesbah ul Alam, Secretary of MoDMR in response to her comment said that the problem is not directly under his supervision as NGO Bureau looks after the matter. However, his stake here is that NGO Bureau usually sends projects of this type for the ministry's comment. He assured that he will check if there is any unprocessed work regarding FD6 in his ministry.

**Ms. Michelle Cicic,
Technical Expert of ECHO**

Moderated by the Director of BDPC, the session was very interactive and thought provoking and went on for an hour with several other questions. Towards the end, Ms. Pauline Tamesis, Country Director of UNDP Bangladesh and Mr. Mesbah ul Alam , Secretary of MoDMR made their deliberations as the Special and Chief Guests respectively.

5.1 Ms. Pauline Tamesis
Country Director of UNDP - Bangladesh

Ms. Pauline Tamesis thanked BDPC for this unique opportunity created to interact with Government agencies, development partners and most importantly - the people from the most disaster-prone areas of Bangladesh who are coping with disasters on a regular basis. Appreciating the discussions at the event i.e issues related to good governance and disaster resilience, she did not require anymore persuasion, justification or further explanation to be a part of it.

Ms. Tamesis, in her speech, shared a few of her reflections coming from the event. The first one was the holistic approach to disaster management. She mentioned that it is important for UNDP-Bangladesh to embed resilience in the collective work of promoting sustainable human development. Second, she addressed the challenge to change the mindset of the service providers. She said that through this meeting, the voices of the stakeholders were heard and stressed on the importance to understand the needs of people and the constraints of the service providers. It was mentioned that Public Hearing Meeting is a good practice by BDPC and this knowledge needs to be shared far more with others. She stressed on the need for better communication, coordination and recognition in order to promote accountability, transparency and engagement of people to improve the governance system.

'Empowered lives, Resilient Nations' was the third reflection she raised during her speech. She focused on community empowerment and added that resilience does not result from working towards resisting change and disturbance, but from accepting uncertainties and working effectively with them. Resilience means the ability to live with and respond to shifting and unpredictable circumstances.

She further defined the resilience briefly through UNDP's approach as 'Building resilience is a transformative process of strengthening the capacity of men, women communities, institutions, and countries to anticipate, prevent, recover from, and transform in the aftermath of shocks, stresses, and change'.

She also mentioned the contribution of UNDP towards building resilience through advocacy and synergic efforts with government and other development partners on climate change adaptation, social protection, disaster risk reduction and governance.

Lastly, she stated that she is taking all that she has learned from the event for the articulation for what resilience means to UNDP in Bangladesh. She appreciated the commitments that she has heard in the room and stated that the harder issues need to be addressed collectively and everyone needs to come together to continue the dialogue and build actions to strengthen resilience.

5.2 Mr. Mesbah ul Alam
Secretary of MoDMR

"It's all about the mindset. The local people and leaders work only after disaster and not before. Mindset should be changed", stated the Chief Guest, Mr. Mesbah ul Alam, Secretary for Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, in response to Mr. Wilson's comment on identifying the gap between supply and demand sides. He mentioned that a disaster can simply ruin the result of development, impact of which will be hard to measure.

Mr. Mesbah ul Alam recognized the advancement on having acts and policies such as SOD, DM Act to strengthen disaster management and mentioned that Bangladesh has Disaster Management Committees at the grassroots level.

He appreciated the presentations given by the three groups and how they have identified the gaps and the need for increasing capacity of the communities. He shared the same sentiment with Mr. Colum Wilson's idea of addressing 'resilience' as a spider's web.

Mr. Alam suggested on creating social leadership to enhance the community capability, capacity enhancement of the service providers, and optimum utilization of resources. He further emphasized on the importance of exchange of views among all the stakeholders. He also discussed poverty and disaster nexus by claiming "Government is in the process of establishing a poverty database to ensure transparency in beneficiary selection for different resilience programme".

> " It's all about the mindset. The local people and leaders work only after disaster and not before. Mindset should be changed. "
>
> - Mr. Mesbah ul Alam, Secretary of MoDMR

Mr. Mesbahul Alam also stated that disaster management is everybody's responsibility and everyone has a role to play. In that way a holistic and sustainable approach should be taken. Referring to Mr. Rahman's comment on risk to be addressed as the product of a combination of hazard and vulnerability, he mentioned that capacity building of the communities and increasing the country's economic ability can help reduce the risk posed by disasters. He expressed his heartfelt gratitude to BDPC for fashioning such unique composition of people from community to policy level and offering opportunities to interact openly. He concluded that the ideas that came up and the issues that were raised during the Cafe will enrich the activities at all levels.

Mr. Ram Kishan, Country Director of Christian Aid - Bangladesh, presenting the vote of thanks.

The workshop was concluded with a vote of thanks from **Mr. Ram Kishan, Country Director of Christian Aid.** In his speech, he stated that there is a direct connection among poverty, power and resilience. Referring to a famous quote "If you don't take care of changing climate, it will make poverty permanent", he underscored the importance of analyzing poverty-power-resilience structure in programme planning and shaping thoughts.

He thanked BDPC for organizing such an event and the honorable Chief Guest and the Special Guest for their participation and commitment made at the event. He appreciated the hard work of the Facilitators in making this event meaningful and thought provoking. He specially thanked the community members, service providers and change agents for sharing their thoughts to understand the ground realities.

6 A Walk towards Resilience

The outcome of this very interactive event is a shared appreciation and belief of the key actors in the field of disaster management and climate change that the capacity of the society to achieve resilience exists among the actors, networks and institutions. Resources needed to alleviate poverty, the pre-requisite for a resilient community, is also available. What is needed now is to bridge the huge gap between the service providers and the service recipients. Functional partnership, based on trust and confidence between the two stakeholder groups, has to be extensive so it complements each other's efforts.

In developing countries where democracies are still at the state of infancy, the service providing agencies do not always adhere the principles of accountability and transparency. At the same time the poor communities at risk are not aware of their rights and entitlements. There is an urgent need for all the actors at different level to appreciate, adapt and promote a two way approach, bottom up and top down, to achieve resiliency at different levels. The vulnerable communities should be empowered as a class to have access to and control over the public resources to change their lives for better. At the same time, the service providing agencies must ensure the elements of good governance, focusing on accountability and transparency in delivering the public services. The Government approved good governance and social accountability tools such as Right to Information (RTI), Public Hearing Meeting (PHM), Community Scorecard (CSC), and Participatory Selection Process (PSP) should be used as the vehicles for ensuring full participation of the communities at risk (briefs of the tools are presented as annexure). There is a need to make an inventory of the initiatives for achieving community resilience and scaling those up.

In order for continued dialogue by engaging different actors particularly the vulnerable community, disaster resilience café concept is to be stepped up and findings of such discussions should be widely disseminated. Achieving resilience through the process mentioned above will have positive and sustained impact on alleviation of poverty, and more importantly, help democracy to take its firm root in the society.

A Walk towards Resilience

ANNEXES

Annex I. List of Participating Organizations

Government	
1.	Prime Minister's Office
2.	Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief
3.	Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock
4.	Ministry of Education
5.	Department of Disaster Management
6.	Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme
7.	Department of Livestock Services
8.	Department of Public Health Engineering
9.	Department of Fisheries
10.	Department of Environment
11.	Department of Women's Affair
12.	Flood Forecasting and Warning Center
13.	Fire Service And Civil Defense
14.	Ansar & VDP
15.	Climate Change Trust
16.	Union Parishads
17.	Upazila Nirbahi Officer

Development Partners and Others

1.	Christian Aid,UK		19.	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
2.	Department For International Development		20.	Care Bangladesh
3.	United Nations Development Programme		21.	Deshari
4.	World Bank		22.	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
5.	Australian High Commission		23.	Gana Unnayan Kendra
6.	European Union		24.	Food and Agriculture Organization
7.	United Nations Women		25.	Shapla Neer
8.	Oxfam- GB		26.	Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh
9.	International Development Enterprises		27.	Shushilan
10.	Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific		28.	University of Dhaka
11.	Austraining International		29.	Young Power in Social Action
12.	World Food Programme		30.	Dhaka Community Hospital
13.	European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department		31.	Federation of NGOs in Bangladesh
14.	Canadian International Development Agency		32.	Dwip Unnoyon Sangstha
15.	National Alliance for Risk Reduction Initiatives		33.	Manob Mukti Sangstha
16.	Royal Norwegian Embassy		34.	Shariatpur Development Society
17.	People's Oriented Program Implementation		35.	Churches of Bangladesh
18.	United Nations Volunteers			

Right to Information

Right to Information Act, 2009 is a landmark in the history of Bangladesh. This Act ensures people's right to obtain information from the government offices and other organizations. With the RTI in place, Bangladesh can enhance accountability and transparency in its journey of development. According to the Right to Information Act-2009, information means and relates to the structure, constitution or other activity related paper of any organization such as design, map agreement, log book orders, notice, letters, reports etc. The Act aims to meet the demand for a law on freedom of Information, giving people access to information of any public institutions.

Public Hearing Meeting

A Public Hearing, as the name suggests, is a unique tool that creates a platform for the public to interact directly with service providers. It is often the case that the people in a community are deprived of their rights; the services they receive from service providers are below standard and fail to meet their needs and expectations. The Public Hearing platform creates a scope for open discussions, where service recipients, can put questions to the service providers. For their part, the service providers can explain the problems and limitations they face in providing their services. The objectives of this tool are to improve the quality of services, to make service providers more accountable for their action and to build a linkage between the two stakeholder groups, recipients and providers. This tool also gives ordinary people a chance to raise their voice and change the mindset of the service providers. Public Hearing Meetings are playing a crucial role in establishing Good Governance at local level.

COMMUNITY SCORECARD

The Community Scorecard is another interesting tool which is used to measure the level of satisfaction of communities regarding the service given by the service providers. This tool also helps the later group to appraise their own performance, enabling them to address their shortcomings. The objective of this tool is to identify gaps and upgrade the quality of services. Once the scores have been given, an interface meeting is held where the two parties confront each other and discuss the reason behind the scores. On the basis of the scorecard results, an action plan is developed in which commitments and responsibilities are laid out so as to facilitate an improvement in the delivery and quality of services. The Community Scorecard has been successful in enhancing transparency, accountability and responsiveness in service providers, ensuring community's access to public resources.

PARTICIPATORY SELECTION PROCESS

Participatory Selection Process is a procedure which involves the engagement of local community in selecting beneficiaries for welfare benefit such as a Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Card or the various welfare allowance (for elderly, widowed or disabled persons) provided by the Government of Bangladesh under its Social Safety Net Programme. This process is carried out in public where the service providers select the beneficiaries. Poorest among the poor are selected by applicants themselves in front of the entire community. The Participatory Selection Process ensures accountability and transparency in the process of service delivery.