**Cities Alliance Innovation Programme**

Stronger Partnerships: Local Innovations for
New Climate Realities in Cities

# Cities Alliance
## Cities Without Slums



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## CLIMATE RESILIENCE PLANS DEVELOPMENT WITH DIGITAL MAPS IN BAY OF BENGAL'S CITIES

Engaging youth volunteers, educating local communities, and shaping policy for climate resilience

# Project overview

### What is the problem?

Densely populated coastal cities and informal settlements in Bangladesh are highly vulnerable to frequent cyclones, erosion, and sea-level rise, and other climate-induced impacts. Saline intrusions have damaged soils and freshwater supplies, and seawater has flooded homes and damaged livelihoods.

### Where is it?

Kuakata and Mongla port municipalities in the Bay of Bengal belt in Bangladesh

### Who does it affect?

Urban poor indigenous (Rakhine) communities and women-headed families in informal settlements

### What are the causes?

Vulnerable communities lack understanding of climate risks. They have not engaged with authorities on data, information, and mapping for informal settlements nor participated in municipality development plans and projects. Municipal authorities lack climate resilience plans as well as tools and methods to engage these vulnerable communities in designing and developing integrated climate resilience plans with the assistance of databases and digital mapping.

### Approach

The project is organising a series of formal and informal community meetings, consultations, and learning sessions to orient residents and elected bodies on the importance of climate resilience plans and advantages of using digital mapping and databases in their creation.

Local youth volunteers have been selected and have received training in digital mapping and using apps on Android mobile devices with Open Data Kit (ODK) for collecting and uploading data in the field.

The geospatial maps and databases produced by the project will be used by local residents and elected bodies to develop climate-integrated resilience plans for the informal settlements. The databases may also be used to help resolve land tenure issues for indigenous and women-headed families.

Educational billboards will be designed and installed in both municipalities, and an impact story involving the project beneficiaries will be produced. The project is also expected to influence policymakers in the process of annual budgeting and the implementation of resilience measures for such vulnerable communities.

## Achievements so far

- Inception meetings, consultations with local authorities and residents, and two orientation meetings have been conducted to educate communities on climate risks, and a series of meetings, sessions, and consultations are planned, with a special focus on indigenous (Rakhine) and women-headed households.

- A total of 32 youths, including 18 girls, were selected for training on data collection using ODK apps, and 12 of this group have been trained thus far, and geo-data and household information have been collected and uploaded on the platform for 770 households in informal settlements.

- A draft map of three informal settlements in Mongla port municipalities has been prepared, and a community led Climate Resilience Plan Development Committee has been formed in order to verify the data and map.

- Consultations with Rakhine and women-headed households are ongoing to identify needs and issues for incorporation in the climate resilience plan.

## Lessons learned

COVID-19 is impacting both communities and the project, yielding new lessons:

- Amid the pandemic, vulnerable communities expect relief and food.

- Some people have been targeted by hate speech or stigmatised as spreaders of COVID-19, especially women who work as cleaners in towns and hospitals.

- In Kuakata municipality areas, fishing is prohibited, and income and demand have dropped. Early marriage has increased due to insecurity of adolescent girls in lockdown. Both domestic and gender based sexual violence against women have increased. Informal job holders in project areas have lost their jobs amid COVID-19 and are trying to find other income generating activities.

- Most of the women-headed households and Rakhine families lack ownership documentation and information, making geo-location data harder to collect.

- Connecting roads within slums are informal and not mapped by municipality, but doing so would be helpful for new walkway and sanitation planning.

- With an upcoming municipality election, potential candidates and existing elected bodies are busy maintaining relationships with political parties and have less time for development planning and implementation.

## Moving forward

- The project team has helped communities be included in government COVID-19 relief schemes by facilitating continuous lobbying with public authorities.

- Courtyard sessions and other meetings on COVID-19 health and hygiene practices have also included discussion on non-hate speech towards women who are engaged in cleaning jobs. In addition, anti-early marriage messages were included in the discussion. With the assistance of a legal aid programme, the project continues to support survivors who are affected by the violence.

- In order to engage local authorities of municipalities, the project team has maintained helpful relationships with officials and elected bodies.

- The creation of a map with household boundaries and connecting roads for planning will be proposed in the next climate resilience plan.

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**Badabon Sangho**
(A Women's Rights Organisation)

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