

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

Engaging women-headed households, indigenous slum dwellers and youth volunteers, and shaping policy for climate resilience

INNOVATION PROGRAMME

Stronger Partnerships: Local Innovations for New Climate Realities in Cities

GRANT RECIPIENT

Badabon Sangho

GRANT AMOUNT

USD 29,669

DURATION

10 Months

YEAR

2020-2021

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?

Residents of vulnerable communities in two cities are not aware of climate risks and are not engaged with development planning, especially climate resilience planning. Municipal authorities lack climate resilience plans, as well as tools and methods for engaging with these communities in building awareness of climate risks and designing and developing integrated climate resilience plans.

Approach

Badabon Sangho used a three-part approach to build community awareness of climate risks and capacity for resilience planning:

1. Social mobilisation

- Organised formal and informal community meetings, consultations, and learning sessions to orient residents and elected bodies on the importance of climate resilience plans.
- Formed community-based Climate Change Resilience Plan Development Committee for plan preparation.
- Facilitated consultation, budget review, and dialogue to strengthen partnerships among community members, local elected authorities, and government officials for planning.

2. Innovative technology training

- Trained local youth volunteers in digital mapping and collecting data with Android mobile device apps and Open Data Kit (ODK) technology.
- Volunteers collected household information, including on the specific needs and constraints of women-headed and indigenous (Rakhine) households.
- Produced geospatial maps and validated them with residents and local authorities.

3. Engagement and planning

- Committee members used maps and databases to develop climate-integrated resilience plans for informal settlements.
- Printed and displayed resilience plans with settlement maps on billboards in both municipalities.

FINAL REPORT

ACHIEVEMENTS

"Climate change risks and its impact on our livelihoods was not discussed before. Now we understood why resilience plan is important"

- Khadiza Begum,
Woman resident of 5 ward,
Mongla Port municipality

Engagement and planning

A Climate Change Resilience Plan Development Committee was formed through the project, with residents and civil society members in both municipalities. Committee members included local journalists, women leaders, youths and business people. The committee conducted inception and orientation meetings and consultations with local authorities and residents to educate and build awareness on climate risks and the importance of resilience.

Because local elections occurred during the course of the project, there was an opportunity to orient both old and new elected officials on climate risks, raise awareness on the importance of resilience planning, and engage them in planning. Elected officials visited slums, attended meetings with the committee, and shared existing plans and budgets and their opinions on resilience plans.

Women were an active part of the Climate Change Resilience Plan Development Committee. Women committee members shared their experiences and described the needs and constraints of women-headed and indigenous (Rakhine) households, particularly for structures such as women's bathrooms, toilets, and safe spaces. To empower women-headed and indigenous households, the project held meetings, consultations and workshops that included awareness building, as well as coaching for women's leadership development. After participating in these workshops, women were empowered to share their opinions regarding resilience plans.

Further meetings, sessions and consultations are planned with a special focus on indigenous and women-headed households.

Action and implementation

Youth volunteers (32 girls and 18 boys) from local communities were trained in digital mapping and data collection with Android mobile device apps and ODK. After training, the volunteers collected data for 770 households, including information on the needs and constraints of women-headed and indigenous households; analyzed the data; validated and corrected geospatial location maps in consultation with residents and city authorities; and prepared and presented the maps. The data and maps were used in climate change resilience planning. Four of the ten maps completed for informal settlements were printed for billboards installed in the communities.

By the numbers

- 1,152 women-headed and indigenous households in informal settlements in two cities gained awareness of climate change risks and the importance of climate resilience planning through 72 courtyard meetings, as well as consultations and learning sessions.
- 26 elected bodies and 32 government officials of two cities engaged in and prepared climate resilience plans through meaningful consultation with residents.
- 42 civil society actors of two cities, i.e., human rights activists, women leaders, journalists, and business people engaged in and developed resilience plans.
- 50 youth volunteers and 12 women leaders in two cities were actively involved in climate resilience planning and have committed for long-term follow up for its implementation.
- 10 maps and resilience plan of informal settlements were created, with 4 printed and placed on billboards.
- 45-member Women Fisher-folk Association formed, which is a value-added component of the project.

LESSONS LEARNED



"This is first time, we able to speak about our needs to the city authorities. We demand women's safe space, bathroom and toilet in the plan"

- Nupur Begum,
Woman resident of 6 ward
Mongla port municipality

Pandemic related lessons

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on both the communities and the project are yielding new lessons about the impacts of global crises on poor people:

- Vulnerable communities expect relief and food. The pandemic has substantially increased vulnerability, especially for informal communities. Community-based projects need to engage with the crises communities are facing and the realities of the situation in a holistic way, even where these are beyond the original scope.
- Informal workers in project areas have lost their jobs amid the pandemic and are trying to find other income-generating activities. In Kuakata municipality areas, fishing is prohibited, and income and demand have dropped. As a result, fishing communities have been striving for food and other emergency needs.
- Discrimination has worsened, particularly against barbers, shoemakers, plumbers, and cleaners who are stigmatized as possible carriers of COVID-19. The fear of stigma can even keep frontline workers, such as those striving to keep health centers clean, from disclosing a positive COVID-19 status. And if anyone did disclose a positive status, then the entire community would start avoiding the *Dalit* households.
- Both domestic and gender-based sexual violence against women have increased. Economic insecurity has increased early marriage for girls. Law enforcement agencies are unavailable to combat this problem.

Project specific lessons

- Because most of the women-headed households and Rakhine families lack ownership documentation and information, it was harder to collect geo-location data and to use the map for women's land tenure security.
- A gap in communication between government officials and elected bodies can cause the needs of women and indigenous peoples to be overlooked. In Kuakata municipality, government officials shared schemes for city development, but elected bodies were not aware of schemes for embankment and drainage systems, and residents were not consulted on plans. The project helped close this gap by conducting a series of consultations prior to development map preparation.
- The municipalities do not have the financial capacity to implement their planned schemes. They depend on the political leadership to bring in funds from the national annual development plan budget.
- Connecting roads within slums are informal and not mapped by municipalities, but doing so would be helpful for new walkway and sanitation planning.
- Building capacity in public speaking can enhance the ability of vulnerable women and indigenous peoples to talk about their needs, even in front of political leaders.
- With upcoming municipality elections, current elected bodies and potential candidates are busy maintaining relationships with political parties and have less time for development planning and implementation.

MOVING FORWARD

"It is unique resilience plan engaging all stakeholders and will continue to follow up for its implementation and budget allocation in future."

- Noor Alam Sk,
President, Climate Change Resilience
Plan Committee, Mongla port
municipality

Building partnerships and awareness

Through engagement on climate change resilience, the project team, community members, local authorities, elected officials, and other stakeholders have built relationships that will be helpful for future city planning, as well as in other areas. For example, Badabon Sangho has continued to assist communities in their response to the pandemic by helping them advocate for inclusion in government COVID-19 relief schemes.

Newly elected bodies of both cities better understand how they can support the implementation of the climate resilience plan in the future and have become especially aware of the needs of urban poor and vulnerable communities.

The participation of private companies, particularly tourist agencies and hotel owners, is anticipated as part of the development process for future city resilience planning.

The billboards and maps are seen as key tools for public awareness of the climate change resilience plan. Youth volunteers can further facilitate the awareness process, which they have already begun to do. In addition, these maps will be considered in the next budget and future plan.

Empowering women for climate change resilience

A key strength of the project is its gender sensitive plan and rights-based approach. Half of the members on the Climate Change Resilience Plan Committees are women, and they will continue to work with the government and monitor the implementation of the plan. The project databases also have potential for helping resolve land tenure issues for women-headed and indigenous families.

Residents of informal settlements have become aware of their rights, as well as of the roles of city authorities. Similarly, city authorities are more aware of the needs and constraints of these communities, which can improve city governance going forward.

Women have also gained capacity in public speaking, which will help them better advocate for women's issues and their communities. In addition, a Women Fisher-folk Association has been formed, which is a value-added component of the project. It will receive maximum support going forward.

Badabon Sangho will continue to engage with vulnerable communities through courtyard sessions on critical areas. For example, meetings on COVID-19 health and hygiene practices have included discussion on non-hate speech towards women who are engaged in cleaning jobs, as well as anti-early marriage messages. With the assistance of a legal aid programme, the project also continues to support survivors affected by violence.

FINAL REPORT



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