

TOWARDS BUILDING A CLIMATE-RESILIENT COMMUNITY



WEBINAR REPORT

Prevention of Increasing Disaster Risks: Government Management and Youth

WAVE Foundation has been working for building a strong climate-resilient community in Bangladesh for a long time. Towards this end, WAVE engaged women and the youths, building their capacities to respond to disasters and risk reduction through various activities. With the support of Oxfam in Bangladesh, the organization has started a recent project named 'Asia Community Disaster Preparedness & Transformation-(ACT)' aiming to reduce vulnerability of the community people and mitigate suffering among disaster-prone communities. In this connection, a national level webinar was organized on "Prevention of Increasing Disaster Risks: Government Management and Youth" to share the learning about disaster preparedness, response & recovery. A significant number of stakeholders from diverse backgrounds including government agencies, youth, women organizations, NGOs, co-partners, environmentalists and academicians participated in the webinar. Dr. Md. Enamur Rahman MP, State Minister for Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief graced the occasion as chief guest whereas Dr. Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad, Eminent Economist and Chairman of Palli Karma Shahayak Foundation-PKSF chaired the webinar. Professor Dr Mahbuba Nasreen, Pro-Vice- Chancellor (Education), Bangladesh Open University and Mr. Gauhar Noim Wara, Prominent Writer and Researcher were present as guest of honor. The keynote was presented by Mohsin Ali, Executive Director, WAVE Foundation. Mosammat Saida Begum, Program Officer-Public Health Promotion, Oxfam in Bangladesh shared the ACT project brief. Aniruddha Roy, Coordinator, WAVE Foundation moderated the session. The event was divided into 02 sessions i.e., the Plenary Session and the Learning & Sharing Session. The webinar seeks out to discourse few issues, for instance i) sharing the learning of youth engagement in disaster risk reduction and challenges faced in mitigation actions; ii) showcasing the best practices; iii) connecting the local disaster management structures and iv) exploring recommendations and way forward.



The welcome speech focused on natural catastrophes, especially recent cyclones hit in Bangladesh and its impact in the coastal areas. In the discussion, natural catastrophes, especially Cyclone which hit Bangladesh recently were shared along with the impact of these disasters in coastal areas and how the local community including youth engaged in response and mitigation process. Building social-capital in combination with youth leadership and scientific knowledge is crucial to structuralize disaster management in the local areas, as mentioned by the speaker.

Subsequently, the project brief was shared by Mosammat Saida Begum, Program Officer, Public Health Promotion, Oxfam in Bangladesh. She highlighted the project major areas i.e., establishing and strengthening community-based networks, promoting leadership with active youth engagement, generating, sharing and learning the knowledge on the response, recovery and disaster preparedness. Moreover, capacity enhancement, disaster risk reduction, livelihood and asset protection and practice of learning and knowledge sharing will be seen as immediate results at the end of the project, she said.



“Our government has been promoting youth volunteerism and their participation in every sector. As such, around 4 million youths have been registered as volunteers and working with various government and non-government organizations in crisis management and risk reduction actions. Hence, we will bring notable changes in the policy level to increase youth engagement in the local institutions.”



Dr. Md. Enamur Rahman, MP
Honorable State Minister for Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief

The video shows how the youth community in Bakergonj Upazila of Barishal district has been engaged in myriad activities related to disaster preparedness, response and recovery actions. It also reflects how they built capacities with the support of WAVE and engaged in mitigating challenges caused by natural disaster in the intervention areas.



Throughout Bangladesh, a total of 72 participants attended the webinar. Majority of the participants, especially youth leaders, spontaneously shared their experience-based learnings. Local actors including women were informed about the DRR challenges and limitations which they confronted over time. Government representatives, researchers and DRR experts, CSOs, NGOs demonstrated how highly vulnerable communities are affected by the recurrent disasters, DRR management mechanism and recovery practices sustained in coordination with local authorities. Also, recommendations and way forward of the issue were proposed by the participants which clearly reflected in the key-note presentation. Following is the discussion brief high-lighting the key points:

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Youth groups are widely embedded in every sphere of Bangladesh. Around 4 million youth leaders have been collectively engaged in disaster risk preparedness, response and recovery actions across the country. For example, in the recent cyclones i.e., SIDR, Fani, Amphan, a pro-active response made by the youth groups was noticed, especially in the areas of disaster preparedness, rescue and recovery actions. Likewise, local youth leaders are still continuing their actions in the small-scale crisis under ACT project intervention areas. Aiming to enhance youth capacities, effective trainings, support based safety measures, acknowledgement of effort and knowledge sharing are crucial. For creating a strong and vibrant youth community in future, transformation and mobilization of experience-based learning is important.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION MANAGEMENT IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES

In the policy and practice, numerous interventions have been taken at national level on DRR management. However, community as well as ward level disaster management committees under Union Parishad are not established yet according to Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD). To build inclusive disaster management structures at the local level, collaboration between the government organizations, civil society organizations, and non-government organizations is crucial. Thus, local actors and the youth community could get acknowledgement to be the official volunteer, and have easy access to safety measures to combat natural disasters.

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION IN STRENGTHENING LIVELIHOOD

Strengthening local people's livelihood is one of the preconditions to combat small or large-scale natural disasters. For instance, local authorities including NGOs could initiate water hyacinth-based products making and creating business opportunities for them in the local market and onwards. So that they could absorb the shock, build resilience against the calamities. Simultaneously, proper utilization of local resources and protection of the asset are equally important for the local DRR actors.

EVIDENCE-BASED KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Dissemination of proper and updated information helps local actors to perform well in disaster risk preparedness, response and recovery actions. For example, Chambal trees are frequently found in coastal areas which are not human-friendly. Local authorities, NGOs and CSOs need to mobilize the local community by providing proper information on tree plantation, scientific ways to use safety equipment and so on.



1

To build disaster resilient infrastructure including increased navigability of the rivers, integration of river basin governance with construction of sustainable embankments, re-excavation of canals, retrofitting of cyclone shelters along with carpeting the roads leading to the cyclone shelters to cope up with devastating cyclones and tidal-surge.

(ঘূর্ণিঝড় ও জলোচ্ছ্বাসের প্লাবন থেকে রক্ষা পেতে নদীর নাব্যতা বৃদ্ধি, নদীশাসনসহ স্থায়ীভাবে বেড়িবাঁধ নির্মাণ, খাল সংস্কার এবং সাইক্লোন শেল্টার সংস্কার ও শেল্টার সংশ্লিষ্ট সংযোগ রাস্তাসমূহ পাকা করাসহ দুর্যোগ সহিষ্ণু অবকাঠামো নির্মাণ করা)

2

To make provisions for youth engagement in the local Disaster Management Committees (Ward, Union, Upazila and District) and ensure the effectiveness of the committees according to the Standard Orders on Disaster (SOD) 2019.

(দুর্যোগ বিষয়ক স্থায়ী আদেশাবলী (SOD) ২০১৯ অনুযায়ী, স্থানীয় দুর্যোগ ব্যবস্থাপনা কমিটিসমূহে (ওয়ার্ড, ইউনিয়ন, উপজেলা ও জেলা) যুব প্রতিনিধিদের সংযুক্ত করার ব্যবস্থা করা এবং কমিটিসমূহের কার্যকারিতা নিশ্চিত করা।)

3

To increase youth engagement with the volunteers working under the 'Cyclone Preparedness Program' (CPP) by the Government and Red-Crescent towards addressing the rising risk of disaster.

(ক্রমবর্ধমান দুর্যোগ ঝুঁকি মোকাবেলায় সরকার ও রেডক্রিসেন্ট এর যৌথ উদ্যোগে পরিচালিত 'ঘূর্ণিঝড় প্রস্তুতি কর্মসূচী (সিপিপি)' ভলান্টিয়ারদের সাথে আরো বেশী করে যুবদের সম্পৃক্ত করা)

4

To provide necessary trainings (especially early warning announcement, first aid, search and rescue, disaster management, etc.) to all members of Disaster Management Committees at grassroot level so that they can play active role during disaster, pre-disaster and post-disaster period.

(তৃণমূল পর্যায়ের দুর্যোগ ব্যবস্থাপনা কমিটিগুলির সকল সদস্যকে প্রয়োজনীয় প্রশিক্ষণ (বিশেষত সতর্ক সংকেত প্রচার, ফার্স্ট এইড, সার্চ এন্ড রেসকিউ, দুর্যোগ ব্যবস্থাপনা ইত্যাদি) প্রদানের ব্যবস্থা করা, যাতে তারা দুর্যোগপূর্ব, দুর্যোগকালীন ও দুর্যোগ পরবর্তী সক্রিয় ভূমিকা পালন করতে পারে)

5

To provide adequate financial assistance to all the affected families whose resources, properties along homes are damaged due to river erosion and tidal-surge and compensate fishermen and farmers against their damages caused by breakage of embankment during disaster.

(দুর্যোগকালে নদীভাঙ্গন এবং জলোচ্ছ্বাসে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত পরিবার যাদের ঘর-বাড়িসহ সহায়-সম্পদ ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয় এবং বেড়িবাঁধ ভেঙ্গে যাওয়ায় ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত মৎস্য চাষী ও কৃষকদের ফসলের ক্ষতি অনুযায়ী সকলকে পর্যাপ্ত আর্থিক সহায়তা প্রদানের ব্যবস্থা করা)

6

To ensure proper conservation and development of the environment, biodiversity, trees and wildlife of the Sundarbans and strictly suppress any harmful activities. To create green belts through extensive tree plantation in other coastal areas and utilize local indigenous knowledge to deal with disasters in a scientific manner.

(সুন্দরবনের পরিবেশ, জীববৈচিত্র্য, বৃক্ষরাজি এবং বন্যপ্রাণীর যথাযথভাবে সংরক্ষণ ও উন্নয়ন নিশ্চিত করা এবং ক্ষতিকর যেকোনো কার্যক্রম কঠোরভাবে দমন করা। অন্যান্য উপকূল অঞ্চলে ব্যাপক বৃক্ষ রোপণের মাধ্যমে সবুজ বেষ্টিনী তৈরি করা এবং স্থানীয় লোকায়ত জ্ঞানকে বিজ্ঞানসম্মতভাবে দুর্যোগ মোকাবেলায় কাজে লাগানো)

7

To ensure short term, medium and the long-term plan and timely budgetary allocation from government and its proper utilization to combat disaster in a sustainable manner in the disaster-prone areas, especially in the coastal belt.

(দুর্যোগপ্রবণ এলাকায় বিশেষত উপকূল অঞ্চলে দুর্যোগ কেন্দ্রিক সরকারি বরাদ্দের পাশাপাশি স্থায়ীভাবে দুর্যোগ প্রতিরোধে স্বল্পমেয়াদী-মধ্যমেয়াদী-দীর্ঘমেয়াদী যথাযথ পরিকল্পনা প্রণয়ন এবং পরিকল্পনা অনুযায়ী যথাসময়ে সরকারি বরাদ্দ প্রদান ও এর যথাযথ ব্যবহার নিশ্চিত করা।)

8

To ensure proper monitoring of activities of assigned officers and contractors by the ministry for implementing all measures of disaster preparedness including building resilient embankments prior to the onset of disaster every year and ensure accountability in case of any lapse are identified in their works.

(প্রতিবছর দুর্যোগের পূর্বে টেকসই বেড়িবাঁধ নির্মাণসহ সকল প্রতিরোধ পরিকল্পনা বাস্তবায়নে মন্ত্রণালয়ের পক্ষ থেকে দায়িত্বপ্রাপ্ত কর্মকর্তা ও ঠিকাদারদের কার্যক্রম যথাযথভাবে মনিটরিং এবং সে প্রেক্ষিতে কোন গাফিলতি দেখা দিলে সংশ্লিষ্টদের জবাবদিহিতার আওতায় আনা নিশ্চিত করা।)



To what extent youth are contributing to build local disaster preparedness and support recovery process during and post disaster in collaboration with DMCs and Communities?



Youths are the pride of community resilience building in disaster prone and coastal areas: It has been proved that the youth groups always at the forefront of any natural disasters and other emergencies. S.M. Eamdad, the youth group member from Bakergonj, shared recent experience regarding how youth community supported the vulnerable people during recent crisis. For instance, there was extreme pressure created on the local hospitals due to water-borne diseases. The youth leaders made door-to-door visit to distribute oral-saline, information sharing about communicable diseases and conducted courtyard sessions on how they could get remedy from these types of diseases. Borhan Khan, a youth leader from SKS Foundation also shared about youth group's engagement in the pre-disaster, post-disaster and during the disaster in supporting the vulnerable people in the village. They are constantly ready in disaster preparedness actions i.e., flood, flash-flood, cyclones, droughts. The youth community arranged regular monthly meetings as they can combat these disasters altogether. During the flood in last few months, the platform in Gaibandha, supported affected people by providing relief, shelter and provision of medical services in coordination with the local Disaster management Committees (DMC), and other actors including CBOs and NGOs.



What is perception of UDMCs in engaging youth (of all genders, disabilities etc) as part of disaster response and how they utilize them?



The Youth Platform stands by along with local actors and instructions:

The youth groups promptly respond to any kind of crisis with full vigor. Inclusive team comprising young men, women and persons with disability, engaged in the community disaster preparedness, response and risk mitigation actions. For instance, there is a strong youth platform in Bakergonj Unoin Parishad, Barishal and they pro-actively play due role in disaster risk reduction actions i.e., awareness session conduction on DRR round the year, urgent warning announcement during crisis, support in shifting vulnerable families to the cyclone shelters, rebuilding affected and destroyed dwelling houses. "The volunteers with disability participate in the awareness actions via digital devices"-said by Umar Farooq, the representative in the above -mentioned union. Youth leaders work in the emergency in collaboration with the local actors, Sometimes, socially excluded youths join unofficially, especially in the urgent emergencies. Under disaster preparedness plans and actions, youth capacity development initiatives should be in high consideration because of providing scientific and innovative support according to the different types of disaster. For instance, in the last cyclone in Bakergonj Upazila, the saline water entered in the residential areas creating scarcity of safe drinking water. Under the circumstances, the youth community arranged and distributed safe drinking water among the affected households. To build the youth capacity, Wave Foundation (WF) has been providing skill training to the youth group members and developed effective communication with local authorities through ACT and other projects. UDMC tries to maintain coordination with the other public and private organization so that youth community improve skill in enhancing capacity. The youth participants in the webinar like S.M. Emdad, urged for increasing coordination with UDMC and other community actors i.e., youth groups and volunteers, CBOs, NGOs in the implementation of disaster preparedness, response and rescue actions. Because, youth groups are usually deployed more by the local actors rather than any government led organizations in the grassroots level.



To what extent youth enhanced their skill and capacity to facilitate disaster preparedness and recovery activities in collaboration with DMCs and Community?



Strong capacity of the youth is yet to enhance in disaster risk management

"The community people start to rely on youth platform and their given services in case of preparedness, response and recovery actions in natural disaster" Shared by Hedayet Ullah, a youth leader from Jago Nari, Barguna. Various organizations like Oxfam in Bangladesh have been engaged to empowering youth through providing skill development trainings on how to warn villagers regarding impending crisis and effective communication, community preparedness, disaster response initiatives and involvement in the rescue actions. The committee members and young volunteers work together to bring out people from traditional practices of adaptation and superstition during onset of crisis. However, drawing on recent experiences, youth leaders shared that skill and in-depth knowledge need to be enhanced to a large extent. Because of the strong preparedness, quick response and sustainable rescue depends on the scientific techniques in the approaches of disaster management. Thus, they asked to provide innovative and scientific and long-term capacity building trainings on strategic communication, frequent rescue drill trainings, firefighting trainings with Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defense forces, safety trainings and uses of modern and updated safety equipment. Also, frequent feedback sharing meetings need to be organized upon last crisis management as they could learn lessons and find the room for further capacity development.



How the local actors and development partners (e.g., CSO, NGO) ensure participation of youths in disaster response intervention, and whether the inclusion of youth complements localization agenda?



Collaboration and mobilization of UDMC, CSOs, NGOs and Youth platform need to be improved:

In the project intervention areas, the Youth Volunteers (YV) disseminate various information i.e., importance of the adaptation of knowledge, awareness and preparedness on the disaster risk reduction, gender and inclusion. Under emergency response actions, YVs pro-actively take necessary initiatives in every phase from warning and during crisis to post-disaster period. One of the youth leaders, shared in the webinar that, "youth engagement in the UDMC committee is very rare. The participation of youth representatives should be increased to maximum level." In DRR, another participant, Anamika Ghosh raised question regarding effective participation of the UDMC committee members in the very local and affected areas except food distribution in post-disaster period. In fact, local community, CSOs and NGOs engage YV and peer-groups combining with men and women and persons with disability in disaster risk reduction actions. According to one of the youth leader's opinions, "if they got recognition from the UDMC committee as volunteer, they could get high acceptance from the local community". Thus, acknowledgement of youth volunteer's service from the government led institutions like UDMC is very important. Hence, the collaboration, coordination and mobilization of inter-organizational initiatives need to be increased.



How local humanitarian organizations are working to enhance learning, coordination and collaboration of youth through sharing of best examples of best practices

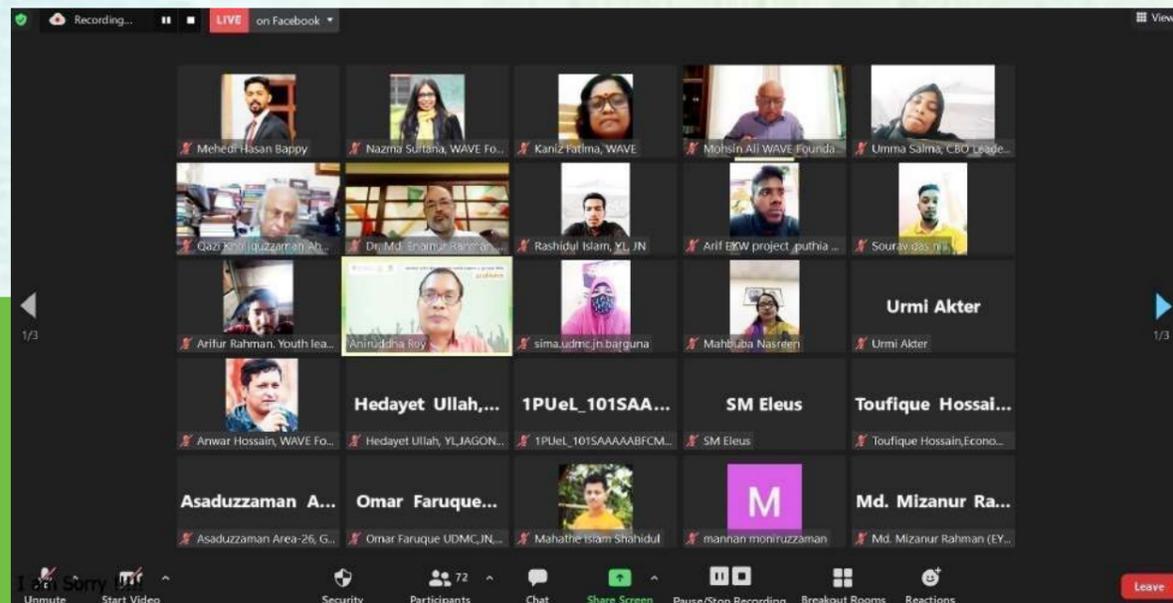


Youth community is heading the leaderboard in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) actions:

The chief guest of the program Dr. Md. Enamur Rahman, MP, Honorable State Minister for Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief shared about high engagement of youth groups in DRR. "Till date, comprising the public and private organizations, there are as many as 4 million registered youth volunteers who have been working in crisis management across the country" he informed the audience. He stated that the number of the skilled volunteers will be increased by 2041 and will strategically lead DRR management. Currently, one-third of the youth groups are functional and they are pro-actively working especially in the coastal areas, said by Hedayet Ullah, the youth leader, Jago Nari, Barguna. The front-liners have been serving not only against cyclone, flash-flood, river erosion or droughts but also tremendously serving in COVID-19 pandemic in recent years. Likewise, in Bakergonj Upazila, youth groups set examples jointly working with COVID-19 management committees in the local community through court-yard awareness session conduction and knowledge sharing on social distancing, washing hands, hygiene practice, mask wearing, enrollment for vaccination - shared by Mr. Mohammad Delwar Hossain, the Youth Development Officer in Bakergonj Upazila, Barishal. He also stated that "WAVE Foundation has established a huge youth platform here and they use to work closely with the local administration and ensure high participation in emergencies." Although there are immense number of youth participation embed in disaster risk reduction or other crisis, yet their identity of volunteerism needs to be acknowledged and promoted from local government institutions i.e., UDMC and it will bear the significance for ensuring gender justice, equality and social inclusion in the community.



In the webinar some encouraging experiences were shared by the youth leaders whereas civil societies came up with suggestions and the government representatives demonstrated their commitment. For instance, engagement of women and inclusiveness in disaster management committees put forward by the participants, already incorporated in the revised SOD (2021-2025) cited by Dr. Mahbuba Nasrin. The chief guest, Dr. Md. Enamur Rahman, MP, Honorable State Minister for Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief said "Youth are the inner-power in our society and they cover around 37% out of the total population. Our government has been promoting youth volunteerism and their participation in every sector. As such, around 4 million youths have been registered as volunteer and working with various government and non-government organizations in crisis management and risk reduction actions. Hence, to increase youth engagement in the local institutions i.e., Union Disaster Management Committees (UDMC), we will bring notable changes in the policy level. Besides if we could provide identity-card to each youth-volunteer, they would get easier access to work". This high level of commitment from policy maker shows that the government will work in increasing youth involvement in different humanitarian activities to a large extent along with providing skill trainings and supplying necessary equipment. The participants in the webinar especially the youth representatives, immensely inspired to devote themselves in disaster risk reduction actions.



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