

Floods & Sustainable Development: Needs Attention

The floods cut across many sectors of sustainable development. Some implications for Environment, Food Availability, and Health are raised below. It is important to note that the economic capacity of the people of the disaster prone areas needs to be improved to increase their ability to survive these situations.

Environmental Concerns

The floods are a combination of monsoonal rains and delta river flooding, both of which are more severe this year, in line with experts' predictions that climatic events will become more extreme as a result of climate change.

Water level rises have resulted in the eastern part of Dhaka flooding along with a large extent of the countryside.

The floods are also more severe across the entire region - 'South Asia struggles with deforestation from flooding', "freak rains" are a hallmark of climate change, dams and embankments have collapsed under the weight of floodwaters, mud houses of the poor are the first to wash away and there has been a sharp price rise in essential commodities.

Variability of rainfall and more severe climate

events have also affected other parts of the country, such as the Chandpur Irrigation project in Haimchar Upazila which is threatened by erosion. Chittagong hilly areas experienced heavy landslides due to unusual rainfall which put 120 people into death trap on 11 June this year.

Food Security Issue

The floods have seriously affected production of crops such as rice, jute, sugarcane and vegetables in a number of districts, which will lead to both shortages of crucial food supplies as well as further increases in prices, especially vegetables. A large amount of cropland is currently under floodwater, these crops will be lost if the floodwater does not disperse quickly. This will also adversely affect the planting of seeds for new crops which is usually done by August however will be delayed because of the floodwaters.

Agriculture department officials have stated that they are getting ready to recover the crop loss of the affected areas by planting early yielding varieties immediately after the floods. To further reduce the availability of crops, a fertilizer plant of the Ghorasal Urea company was destroyed by a fire this week. This com-

pounds food shortages which are both immediate because of the floods as well as the crops which were growing for the coming winter.

There will be a demand in organic fertilizer which can benefit crops, minimise chemical damage to the land and polluted water run-off, as well as importation costs.

Transferring technology to the growers level and educating farmers can lead to increased production, helping to meet nutritional demand. Considering the food shortages which are now facing Bangladesh an education program for both alternatives to chemical fertiliser and maximising crop rotations would be beneficial for future years.

Poverty elimination will be aided by introducing climate resilient crops and also education and the transfer of sustainable, environmentally friendly technology for the agricultural sector.

Health Hazards

Record numbers of people are now suffering from water and insect borne diseases now that the floodwaters have begun to recede. Many of these people were displaced by the recent slum clearing action which pushed the urban

Upcoming events:

- The Environment Conservation Act, 1995 is to be reviewed by the Ministry of Environment and Forest.
- The Australian Government has announced a \$200million funding for a Global Initiative on Forests and Climate.



Flood Waters enter Dhaka

poor to take shelter in the vulnerable zones.

The prevalence of vector borne disease through climate change related flooding means these diseases are now increasing their presence across not only Bangladesh but also the globe.

National Water Management Policy should take into consideration of the lessons learnt from this year flood to address the issues such as inadequate preparation for risk reduction, environmental health risks, threat to natural resources productivity and country's vulnerability to climate change in vulnerable zones.

Forestry Research for Climate Change

The Institute of Forestry and Environmental Sciences at Chittagong University are currently researching management techniques for different tree species considering the projected temperature rises from climate change. This project aims to identify optimal temperatures for the growth rates of different species and to also identify areas where these species should be planted in the future in line with climate change and global warming predictions. The outcomes of this project could be very relevant to the 'Community Based Adaptation to Cli-

mate Change Through Coastal Afforestation in Bangladesh' and 'Shamol Bangladesh: Greening Initiative for Sustainable Livelihood of Rural Poor and Biodiversity Conservation'



Forests in Bangladesh

Reforestation and afforestation can

also help to stabilise riverbanks thus minimising erosion which is currently severe following the flooding and now receding waters. With predictions of more turbulent weather it can be anticipated that erosion will become a greater issue to be faced by predominately rural communities in Bangladesh.



Riverbank erosion

UNDP Forestry Project

Forest cover is rapidly declining in Bangladesh at a pace which needs to be stopped and, where possible reversed. Bangladesh has the lowest forest to population ratio in the world.

There are strong linkages between Forests, Poverty, Livelihoods and Sustainable Development opportunities.

Forest destruction has the most severe impact on the people who depend on

forests for their life and livelihood. Forest destruction can generally be grouped into three categories: 1) Land use changes for crop agriculture, settlement, and infrastructure develop-

The ultimate objective of the project is to bring good governance to the forestry sector.

ment; 2) Unsustainable forest product harvests – both legal and illegal; and 3) Lack of effective governance failing to protect the forest and forest land.

An exciting element of the project is the possibility of carbon financing for both the afforestation and reforestation components. This element will be elaborated upon in the next Sustainable Development Advisory.

Framework for Sustainable Environmental Development

The Ministry of Environment and Forest is to host 'Policy Dialogue on Institutional Framework for Sustainable Environmental Governance in Bangladesh' on 24th August. Staff from the Environment and Sustainability Cluster will attend this event and will report back to UNPD staff in the weekly meeting.

The proposed framework will be discussed for national, regional (Divisional), District and Upazila levels.

Transparent leadership from Government is required to ensure that environmental concerns are addressed in an appropriate manner.

