



## **Climate Displacement and Resilience Roundtable**

Outcomes Report  
May 2023, Dhaka, Bangladesh

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## **I. Executive Summary**

Bangladesh is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world and it is expected to be severely impacted by climate change in the coming decades. Rising sea levels, frequent and severe natural disasters, and unexpected changes in weather patterns are all likely to contribute to displacement in Bangladesh. The panel discussion, hosted in partnership with the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) of North South University was held on May 2, 2023, at the Syndicate Hall, North South University. This event framed major issues related to climate induced displacement and provided some way forward to resilience. Proper data and evidence-based interventions, community-based and people-centric approaches, climate-resilient sustainable agriculture, and a sensitive approach for the diverse and marginal people were some of the major recommendations from the expert panelists.

## **II. Background**

Bangladesh is expected to be severely impacted by climate change. Rising sea levels, more frequent and severe natural disasters, and changes in weather patterns are all likely to contribute to displacement in Bangladesh. As sea levels rise, a larger area of the country will be at risk of flooding and coastal erosion. This will force people to migrate to higher ground, or other parts of the country. The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that by 2050, up to 18 million people in Bangladesh could be displaced by sea-level rise alone. In addition, climate change will also cause severe water scarcity, which will have an impact on the food security of the country. The government of Bangladesh and other organizations are taking steps to prepare for the consequences of climate change, including displacement. These efforts include building sea walls and other coastal defenses, developing early warning systems for natural disasters, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. But still, it's a huge challenge for the country, and much more needs to be done to protect citizens.

In 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration, which recognizes the significance of challenges related to migration and climate change. The Government of Bangladesh took the lead in creating the narrative for vulnerable nations and was elected to serve as the Climate Vulnerable Forum's (CVF) president. This forum was established in 2009 and its members are among the lowest-emitting and most climate-vulnerable countries in the world with the mission to advocate for increased support for adaptation and mitigation efforts. As Chair, Bangladesh has emphasized the importance of bold and urgent action to address the impacts of climate change which includes advocating for the rights of people displaced by climate change.

In the upcoming years, climate change will lead to significant displacement. The most vulnerable communities and individuals, such as the poor, ethnic minorities, and women, are likely to be disproportionately affected by this displacement. Global platforms like the COP can shed light on and help minimize these effects.

### III. Objective

The major objective of the proposed policy discussion was to engage climate migration experts and interested professionals under a common platform to participate in a solution-oriented discussion on Bangladesh's actions and responses to climate change induced displacement. Another objective was to inform policy decisions at the local and national level and shape understanding of the climate debate in Bangladesh prior to COP28.

### IV. Key Findings from the Roundtable

The key findings of the event focused on framing the current climate displacement issues in Bangladesh and expert recommendations on how to create resiliency and sustainability at the local and community level.

#### a. Framing climate induced displacement in Bangladesh

- *Bangladesh is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world:* Bangladesh is severely vulnerable to both natural disasters and climate change and currently ranks as the seventh most extreme disaster risk-prone country in the world.<sup>1</sup> Close to 20 million people in the country could be displaced due to climate change by 2050 if no preventative action is taken.<sup>2</sup> However, Bangladesh is actively building frameworks and policies such as the National Adaptation Plan (2023-2050) and Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 to counter the impacts of climate change.
- *The “trapped population” concept is arising* Climate-affected communities face significant barriers to relocation or adaptation due to socio-economic constraints, lack of resources, limited access to alternative livelihoods, and inadequate infrastructure or support systems. These factors can leave them with few options but to remain in areas with worsening environmental conditions, thereby becoming trapped in a cycle of vulnerability and limited resilience. In the context of Bangladesh, this concept is particularly relevant due to the country's geographical location and susceptibility to climate change impacts.
- *People adapt to climate displacement in different ways:* The pressures of climate change can lead to multiple scenarios: 1) Displaced communities are forced to move repeatedly; 2) They permanently relocate; or 3) Try to adapt to the changing conditions and stay in the same location. While people in previous decades used to move due to pull factors such as the search for a better livelihood, they are now being pushed to move because of unexpected changes in the climate and its impact on their livelihoods and wellbeing. As one of the panelists said, “Migration is also an adaptation strategy”.
- *New crises are emerging, and old crises are exacerbating due to climate change:* Rising temperatures and heat waves are becoming a new crisis for Bangladesh.

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<sup>1</sup> The Global Climate Risk Index 2021

<sup>2</sup> The Groundswell Part II report of 2021

This will directly affect land and water resources, leading to drought and reduced agricultural productivity. In turn, this can become a new reason for displacement in the future. Coastal and riverbank erosion and increasing intensity of floods are also displacing communities every year.

- *People who suffer from the impacts of climate change are not a homogenized group:* Marginalized people such as women, children, and persons with disabilities face some of the highest vulnerabilities in climate induced displacement, such as increased unpaid work, gender-based violence, inadequate access to reproductive health services, and child marriage.<sup>3</sup>

#### **b. Reliable, up-to-date displacement data is the first step towards creating informed interventions**

- *Displacement data and reliable evidence are key to understanding the extent of the crisis:* There is very little reliable data about the number of people who have been displaced, those who are currently on the move, and what the future trend could be. Up-to-date and relevant data can not only indicate the current situation of the country but also better predict future trends and cycles. IOM is creating a data ecosystem to provide a baseline scenario of the climate displaced people and inform future interventions and initiatives based on it.
- *Accurate disaggregated data can help formulate evidence-based policies and interventions:* Since the current climate displacement data is unknown, the interventions cannot accurately and effectively reach the affected people. Moreover, the needs of the people are not monolithic, therefore disaggregated data is needed to understand the nuances within displaced communities. Only evidence-based interventions and policies will be able to address the needs of the people on the ground.

#### **c. The mismatch between national policies and the needs of the people at the local level would have to be addressed**

- *National policies can be localized with the support of regional stakeholders:* The mismatch between national policies with local needs usually renders any interventions unfruitful. Hence, support and coordination with regional stakeholders can be one of the effective ways to localize the efforts. Expert knowledge of local conditions can inform policies and help successfully implement interventions.
- *Focus on sustainable solutions:* “Climate-smart agriculture” is a prominent intervention of the government that was not accepted by most of the farmers due to low profitability and complex mechanization. Therefore, this approach can be changed to climate resilient sustainable agriculture (CRSA), which

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/the-impact-of-climate-change-on-gender-inequality-in-bangladesh/#:~:text=Climate%20disasters%20disproportionately%20affect%20women,reproductive%20and%20other%20health%20care.>

proposes to overcome the gaps of contemporary mitigation and adaptation programs in agriculture by bringing to the fore the actual priorities, needs, and knowledge of farming communities.

**d. Strengthening infrastructures and building capacity would create long-term changes**

- *Sustainable skills development:* Usually rural people are most vulnerable to climate change so their skill development and capacity building can make them self-reliant to secure a sustainable livelihood. It can also prepare them to face risks and reduce their chances of being completely displaced or severely vulnerable.
- *Proper infrastructure and urban planning can sustain the displaced people:* Many of the displaced people generally seek refuge in urban areas but these places are already overcrowded. So, they end up living in slums which provide a very low quality of life. It is important that we strengthen the infrastructure of the urban areas and create interventions that focus on the well-being of displaced people.

**e. Enhancing climate investment potential to strengthen resilience**

- *Expand the climate fiscal space:* Bangladesh faces a substantial financing requirement to tackle climate change challenges, as current annual government spending on climate-related matters is below 1 percent of GDP, whereas 3 to 4 percent of GDP financing is needed over the next 15 years. The country needs to play a crucial role in expanding the fiscal space to fund prioritized initiatives outlined in the Bangladesh Delta Plan (BDP2100) and the National Adaptation Plan (NAP). To achieve it, the government needs to attract additional financing, replace more costly domestic funding, and alleviate balance of payments pressures caused by import-intensive climate investments.
- *Mobilize climate finance from private sources:* In mobilizing private climate finance, financial institutions hold a crucial position; however, they encounter notable physical and transition risks. As a result, the Bangladesh Bank (BB) needs to take steps to formulate and implement guidelines that focus on the reporting and disclosure of climate-related risks for banks and financial institutions.

**f. Both global and local partnership is paramount for sustainable change**

- *Partnerships between South Asian countries can mobilize collaborative efforts:* South Asian countries can coordinate efforts to address the issues of climate change. South-South collaboration will create a strong partnership for facing future changes.

- *Partnerships between national and local stakeholders will promote sustainable change:* Different stakeholders such as government organizations, NGOs, and INGOs must work together to mobilize their efforts. As climate change is rapidly and unexpectedly progressing, the interventions would have to be agile and adaptive. This is only possible if all the stakeholders collaborate harmoniously with the needs of the affected people.

## **V. Moving Forward**

The roundtable called for addressing the needs of the most vulnerable people due to climate-induced displacement and creating a community-based, people-centric approach. Bangladesh already has many comprehensive policies such as the National Adaptation Plan, and interventions related to it at various levels. There should be an alignment between the policies and how they cater to people at the grassroots level.

## Appendix

### a. Panelists

- Professor Shahidul Haque - Senior Advisor, Globesight
- Ashfaqur Rahman Khan - Program Associate, IOM
- Professor Dr. Md. Jakariya - Department of Environmental Science and Management, North South University
- Farah Kabir - Country Director, Action Aid, Bangladesh

### b. Organizers & Supporters

#### Globesight

[Globesight](#) is the leading strategy advisory firm and partner for institutions seeking to scale development impact in the Global South, with a primary focus on the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa. Globesight develops strategies, investigates complex issues through relevant research, cultivates insights in data-scarce environments, and aims to reframe the conversation to challenge assumptions on advancing change. Headquartered in Dubai, Globesight operates with a distributed structure. Globesight was the organizer of the “Climate Displacement and Resilience” event.

#### South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) of North South University (NSU)

South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) of North South University (NSU) is the only pioneering institute with a regional focus on policy and governance in Bangladesh. The institute started its journey in 2008 as a Public Policy and Governance Program (PPG) at North South University intending to cater to knowledge in the broader field of policy, governance, and public administration. In 2018, after a decade, the PPG program upgraded to a full-fledged institute as SIPG to facilitate the academic program and regional research on various issues related to policy regimes, governance challenges, and discourses in the context of South Asia. SIPG runs a two-year thesis-based International Master’s Degree Program known as the Master in Public Policy and Governance (MPPG). Till 2022, from 10 batches more than 170 students have graduated with MPPG degrees who are young civil servants and professionals from Bangladesh and other South Asian and South East Asian countries like Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia. In 2021 SIPG also commenced the one-year Executive Masters in Policy and Governance (EMPG) for professionals from Bangladesh.





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