

BANGLADESH: A LAND HIGHLY VULNERABLE TO NATURAL HAZARDS

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Bangladesh, a land of 147570 sq. km. having 127 million people, lies in the foot-hill of the Himalayas of NE South Asia. It is bounded on the west, north and northeast by India, south-east by Myanmar and on the south it opens to the Bay of Bengal. Except the Tertiary hilly regions in the northeast and southeast and some areas of Pleistocene high land in the north and northwest, the entire country, which is a part of Bengal Basin, is covered by Recent unconsolidated sediments. Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to natural hazards as it is located in between Indian plate and Burma sub-plate, the earthquake-prone areas, and also as it lies at the confluence or lowermost reaches of three mighty river systems - the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna. About 24140km. of the country is covered by a network of these rivers and their tributaries, which flow down to the Bay of Bengal.

Due to low altitude of the country, the heavy monsoon rainfall along with snow melting from the Himalayas is one of the major factors responsible for frequent flood in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is also affected by tornadoes, cyclones, water surges, river erosion, drought, earthquakes. These calamities along with flood cause loss of life and properties and deteriorate the environmental ecosystem which retards the country's economic development.

In addition to the above hazards, high population and their activities such as abuse of landscape, unplanned urbanization, destruction of vegetation, excess withdrawal of groundwater make Bangladesh much more vulnerable to natural hazards. Necessary steps should be taken to mitigate the hazardous effects by constructing disaster-proof houses; wise-using of landscapes, vegetation and other resources and, as a whole, maintaining a balanced environmental ecosystem. Public should be motivated to cooperate in this regards through mass education otherwise, it will not be possible for a small group of people to cope with this situation, as it is a national problem.