

CYCLONE AILA-DISPLACED PEOPLE in the Southwest Coastal Region of Bangladesh A Case Study of Climate-Induced Migration

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Abstract

This study is actually a preliminary work to track down the displacement of people following the flooding disaster 'cyclone Aila- 2009' in the southwest coast of Bangladesh. Objectives were set to identify the number of people who are displaced and locations where they were displaced from including identifying the reasons of such displacement and explore the social-economic whereabouts of these people who are displaced and taken refuge in various regions of the country.

The study estimated the number of displaced people is about 123,000 from 13 unions of 4 Upazilas. The destinations of the migrated people include Khulna, Satkhira, Jessore, West-Bengal (India), Dhaka and Chittagong, based on priority. These displaced people feature forced change of occupation and found to be in chaos due to lack of skills in the newly adopted jobs. Most of these people have taken day labourship and rickshaw pulling as primary occupation and inhabited the old slum areas of the cities. Some new temporary slums also have been reported. Potable water and sanitation coverage has been found a minimal or nonexistent in the reported slums. Housing and education facilities have also been found as absent. However, the study found a correlation between the displaced peoples' education and wealth with relocated living conditions as refugees or temporary migrants. The higher the education and income level the higher the living status of the displaced people in relocated regions. Relatives in distant regions have become handy for these people.

Of the displaced people, the bulk of them came from Koyra and Dacope Upazila. This displacement was triggered by loss of homestead due to prolonged water logging and lack of job opportunities followed by potable water and sanitation facilities. Almost of 90% of the displaced people were from low to very income group (i.e., BDT 5000 per month). Migration was found to have lesser extent in the wealthier groups. It has been found that about half of the displaced people (40%) are still unemployed. Most of the forced migrants are depending on govt. facilities for drinking water (roadside tap establishments, govt. owned tube wells etc.). Education and health services in the slum areas (where the migrants are living) were found to be minimum or absent. The recent trend of migration shows that the pace of migration is slowing down but hasn't stopped yet.

To ensure basic human rights of the climate induced displaced peoples, a national policy of resettlement and capacity building is essential. Besides, a new protocol for Climate Migrants recognising them as Universal Natural Person

Keywords: *Climate Change, Displacement, Cyclone Aila, Southwest Coastal Region, Bangladesh*

Climate Change and Migration: Bangladesh

Bangladesh is one of the Most Vulnerable Countries of the world for climate induced hazards. According to the Climate Risk Indexes of Germanwatch, World Bank, Maplecroft and Dr. Caroline Sullivan, Bangladesh is the top sufferer of climate induced disastrous hazards¹. Research reports show that numbers of sea depression and cyclones have been increased in Bay of Bengal due to increased Sea Surface Temperature².

As a consequence of frequent cyclone and storm surges at least 20 million Bangladeshis may be forced to displace with ramifications for food and water supplies as well as disease epidemics³. Other reports estimated that the number of people may be more than 30 million⁴.

It is predicted that 17% of the coastal area of Bangladesh may be inundated by 2050 if global warming cannot be reduced. In that case, the migration scenario might be worsened⁵. International organisation Oxfam projected that in the light of Bangladesh's extreme impacts may displace 600 thousand people per year⁶.

Since being an LDC, Bangladesh is quite unable to take resettlement measures due to shortage of finance and land resources (which is much more valuable for food security). A mammoth amount of money needed for building civic infrastructures like housing, electricity, water and sanitation facilities which are quite difficult for Bangladesh.

However, UN Systems have been failed to address the issue which may create national and regional insecurity. Considering the situation, the environmental activists, policy makers, climate advocates, indigenous peoples' representatives and fishermen groups demanded a different UN protocol on Climate Induced Migration⁷.

The Government of Bangladesh is duly concerned about the future consequences stressed adequate measures in BCCSAP 2009⁸. The national leaders including Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Finance and Minister of Environment and Forests several times called called for formation of an International Body and sufficient support from the rich countries⁹.

Cyclone Aila: Blaze beneath the Ash

The cyclone Aila hit the southwest coastal zone on 25th May 2009 when the people was trying to recover their normal life and livelihoods from the damage of super cyclone Sidr which attacked just before 18 months of Aila on 15 November 2007¹⁰.

The death toll of cyclone Aila was 193¹¹, which is comparatively very low in Bangladesh perspective. But the loss of infrastructures, houses, institutions, cultivable land and crops, and livelihoods were simply destroyed the affected areas.

Four Upazilas (i.e., Dacope and Koyra under Khulna, and Shyamnagar and Assasuni under Satkhira district) are the worst affected by the cyclone Aila and following storm surge. 711 kms embankments out of 1,200 kms of this region has been damaged fully or partially by the storm surge¹² and 13 Unions out of 40 under these 4 Upazilas has been flooded by the storm surge; 228 Villages damaged. Due to elevation of the areas are below the mean sea level, whole the areas including agricultural and homestead land, roads and paths, educational institutions, local markets everything has gone under salty water just after collapsing of

Map 1: Path of Cyclone Aila on 25 May 2011



Source: NASA (2009)

the embankments¹³.

243,191 houses fully and 370,587 houses partially damaged¹⁴ and 97,000 acre of Aman paddy, 14,653 acre of shrimp farm and 1074 acre of freshwater fishes has been submerged and damaged¹⁵.

More than 500,000 people among 800,000 of these areas directly affected by the cyclone Aila and more than 297,000 people took shelter on the embankments, educational institutions, other buildings and cyclone shelters.

The local inhabitants of southwest coastal region of Bangladesh usually use surface water in daily lives from large village pond reservoirs due to extreme salinity in ground water and open water sources. Almost all of the reserved ponds have been submerged by the storm surge following cyclone

Aila and contaminated with salinity and massive water scarcity spread out.

Thousands of people were seen gathered in front of any boat or truck which supplied water for the Aila victims. People in some areas were trying to survive by collecting water from tube-wells which are 15-20 kilometres far from their community.

Table 2: Cyclone Aila affected areas

District	Upazila ¹⁶	No. of Total UP ¹⁷	No. of Affected UP	No. of Affected Village	No. of Seriously Affected People ('000)
Khulna	Dacope	7	6	112	141.47
	Koyra	10	2	46	61.53
Satkhira	Assasuni	13	3	41	67.69
	Shyamnagar	10	2	29	26.58
Total: 2	4	40	13	228	297

Source: Ministry of Food and Disaster Management 2009, and Banglapedia 2006

Cyclone Aila Migrants

As a result of these consequences, a large number of people had to leave the areas for livelihoods security. It is estimated that, at least 88,000 people left the areas during May-June 2009¹⁸. But the national and local newspapers reported that at least 125,000 people had to migrate to the cities including the neighbouring countries due to the disaster¹⁹.

The people had firstly migrated to the nearby urban areas like Satkhira, Paikgachha, Dumuria and Batiaghata town to survive. After a few days (7-15 days) they migrated further to the bigger cities like Khulna and Jessore. On the third step, some of them migrated to the capital city Dhaka, the commercial city Chittagong or to the cosmopolitan city Kolkata of neighbouring country, India. Even some of them migrated to CHT²⁰ for selling labour as they could not secure their livelihood in the areas.

Table 3: Number of Aila Migrants as per Upazila

SL	District	Upazila	No. of Union	No. of Migrated People
1.	Khulna	Dacope	2	34,000
		Koyra	6	42,000
2.	Satkhira	Shyamnagar	3	36,000
		Assasuni	2	11,000
Total:	2	4	13	123,000

Source: FGDs conducted by Humanitywatch

Among the total Aila refugee about 15,000 people took shelter in KCC²¹ and involved in odd jobs like

rickshaw pulling, daily labour, temporary wages and agricultural labour. Most of the migrated people are concentrated in the Sonadanga area which is a terminal for inter-district bus transport.

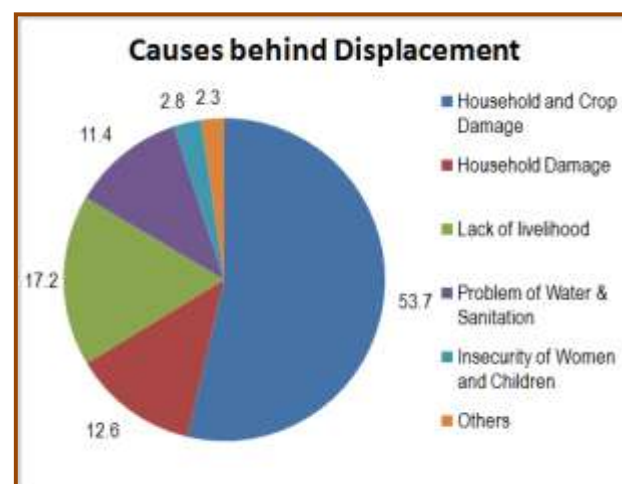
During the study the people from Aila affected area found in 41 slums and localities in KCC and the peri-urban areas of the city. The peri-urban areas are mainly in the jurisdiction areas of 3 Upazilas namely Batiaghata, Rupsa and Dumuria Upazila under Khulna district and adjacent to the city. Other areas are under 5 Thana (Police Station) of Khulna Metropolitan.

As a very tiny area of Dumuria Upazila is adjacent to KCC, a very few found there though a large number of migrated people temporarily resettled in the adjacent villages of Dumuria Upazila headquarter. To find-out a destination affected homeless people took support from their relatives and friends. For that reason, houses of the migrants are scattered and not concentrated in an area.

Shyamnagar under Satkhira district is one of the most victimised Upazilas affected by cyclone Aila. But the migrated people in Khulna from this area are less than Dacope and close to Batiaghata which was very mild affected by the cyclone. Distance between Shyamnagar and Khulna may be the most possible cause of less concentration from Shyamnagar.

Causes behind Displacements

Among the migrated people 74.4% respondents main living houses had destructed. Their homestead and cultivable lands were also inundated by saline water of storm surge while 11.6% had only homestead lands and those were totally damaged.



Besides 7.9% have no homestead land of their own.

Lion share of the migrated people expresses that they had to migrate due to loss of houses, belongings and cultivable lands while 12.6% left their localities due to damage of houses and homestead lands, as they have nothing more than those. 17.2% left their areas as there were a very few opportunity of work or getting food and water support. Some of the respondents (2.8%) also left their areas due to insecurity of women and adolescent girls when they started living on the embankments.

Who had been migrated?

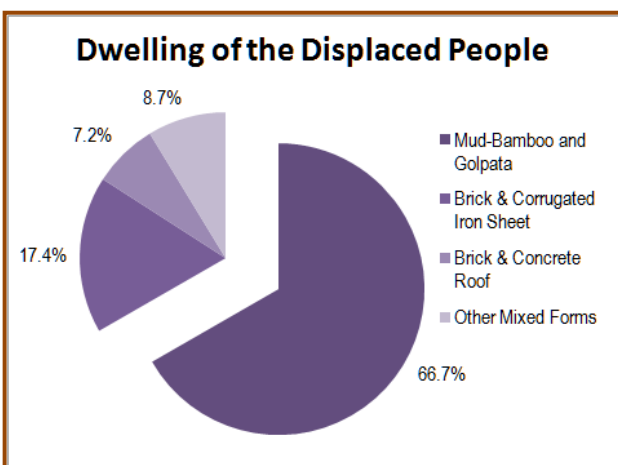
Among the migrated people 48.7% are from extreme poor backgrounds while 29.4% from poor, 8.3% from lower middle class, 6.1% from middle class, 5.7% from higher middle class and only 1.8% from rich family backgrounds.

The severe situation was faced by the middle class who lost their belongings and had to spend last penny of savings as they could not reach any food or other relief for cultural rituals and social dignity. They are found 20.1% including the higher and lower middle class.

Dwellings of the Migrated People

Most of the displaced people lived in the slums with very limited citizen services. More than 50% migrants live in mud-made houses against a rent of 200-300 taka (US\$ 3-5) per month. One-fourth of the household's foundation made of bricks/concretes and roof made of corrugated iron sheet.

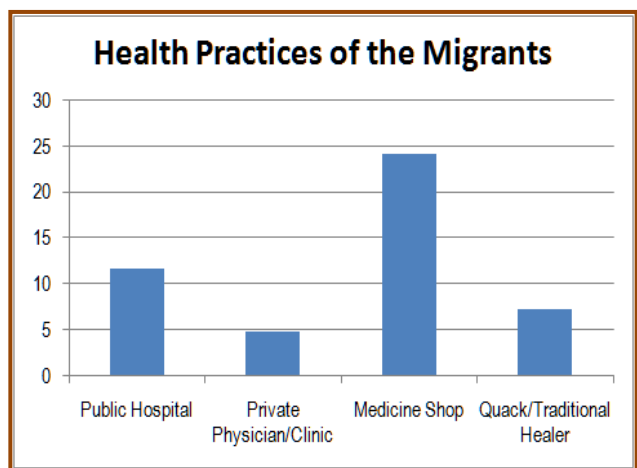
Only 7.2% displaced people live in brick-made houses with concrete roof. 93.6% dwellers have access in electricity for only light and they pay 100 taka. Usually the owners of the slums switch off the light after 10:00 PM at night.



Livelihoods of the Displaced People

Higher than 80% of displaced people took livelihood of their known relatives who has given the shelter also. It is found that 39% of the migrant people are workless. Besides 37% displaced people are working only 3-4 days a week.

Among the respondents 23.8% Aila migrants are rickshaw/van puller, 21.3% are day labour, 13.8% are housemaid, 11.3% are rice-mill labour, 8.8% are agro-labour, 5.0% are mason helper, 3.7% are hawker, 2.5% are temporary labour of factory, and 2.3% are small vegetable seller. Besides other sector livelihoods contributed to 8.6% of the migrants.



The highest incomes from these types of livelihoods are not more than 75.57 taka per day. Considering average household member-size, the daily average income estimates only 14.82 taka per head. Highest income has gained by rickshaw/van pulling which is daily average 143.79 taka per-head and lowest income has shown in housemaid which is daily average 27.13 Taka per-head. Mill/factory labour is the most recognized formal worker but their daily average income is daily 32.73 taka per-head, much lower than non-recognized sectors.

Water and Sanitation

As KCC has no additional mechanism of water supply and sanitation to the migrated people, only 2.7% of the migrants get safe water which is supplied by Khulna WASA. A large portion of displaced people (32%) collect their water from common tube wells or taps by the roads.

Within the forced displaced people by cyclone Aila, 1 latrine is used by every forty person in their settlements. 58% latrines are found unsafe for personal health and hygiene. 21 percent latrines'

water seals have been broken and flies found over the pan and slabs.

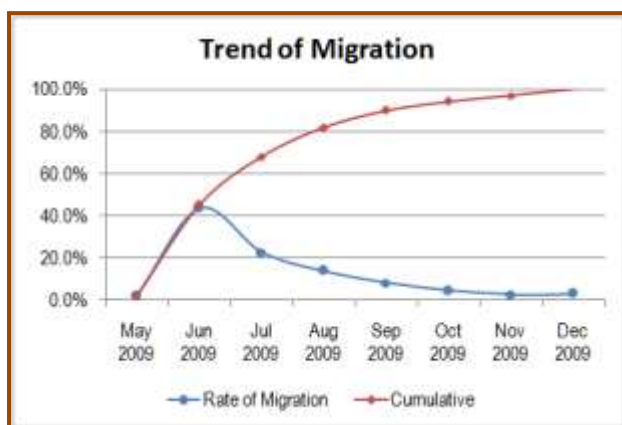
Basic Health Services

Only micro-credit organizations have visited those slums and other shelters to realising the instalments. Only the health workers of Extended Programme for Immunization (EPI) have made connection to the settlements for given vaccine.

According to the survey, among the migrants only 11.6 percent get health services from government hospitals, 4.9 percents from private clinic and physicians and 24.1 percents from pharmacy and medicine shops. In addition, 7.2 percent of the respondents take treatment from quack or traditional healers.

Trends of Displacement

Displacement and insecurity of life and livelihoods are interrelated with each another. The people, especially the extreme poor and vulnerable people, tried to sustain in the affected areas. The survey shows that 1.9% of total displaced people migrated to KCC within 5 days after cyclone Aila while 43.4% migrated between 15-30 days after the cyclone. Another 46.4% migrated to KCC between 1 and 2 months after the disaster. The rest of migrants (18.3%) took shelter in the city after 3 months of the cyclone.



If the situation remain unchanged or recover slowly, the trend of migration may be increased. After September 2009, the displaced people started to back home at a very minimum level. The trend continued as some incentives i.e. house building grants from Prime Minister's office²², Agricultural support from FAO²³ and other livelihoods support from local and international NGOs²⁴ encouraged the forced migrants to go back home. But the

embankments were remaining breached and people have no choice but stay in the city slums and embankments²⁵.

The southwest coastal region of Bangladesh is subjected to face several natural disasters i.e., cyclone, tidal surges, extreme salinity, severe water logging, flash flood and changed weather pattern. Observing historical data of displacements forced by these adverse impacts of climate change, it can be predicted that the number of displaced people will increase at an alarming level every year if necessary infrastructural and other adaptation measures will not be taken by public and private sector.

Conclusion

This inhumane situation will remain unchanged if some national and global measures will not be taken by the Government and the international communities. The recommendations of this paper focus on climate change, CIDPs and resettlement measures:

1. Policy formulation and review for resettlement and livelihood security with proper human dignity of the CIDPs;
2. Adequate measures including training for skill development of the vulnerable people so that they can be efficient citizen of the country. Additionally, bilateral and multilateral negotiations with developed countries are important for safe migration of the CIDPs in abroad;
3. Reducing carbon foot print of Annex-1 and industrialised rich countries to minimise the adverse impacts of climate induced disastrous weather events;
4. Organising a different convention under UN system to recognise the CIDPs as 'Universal Natural Person' and to provide proper legitimate support for free movement across the border;
5. Allowing the CIDPs to resettle in industrialised rich countries as their fundamental rights derived from ecological credits;
6. Providing enough financial and technological support from the Annex-1 countries for LDCs and MVCs like Bangladesh to foster resettlement and capacity building activities and to ensure essential services for the CIDPs;

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