People's perception of climate change and adaptation strategies: A comparative study from Bangladesh

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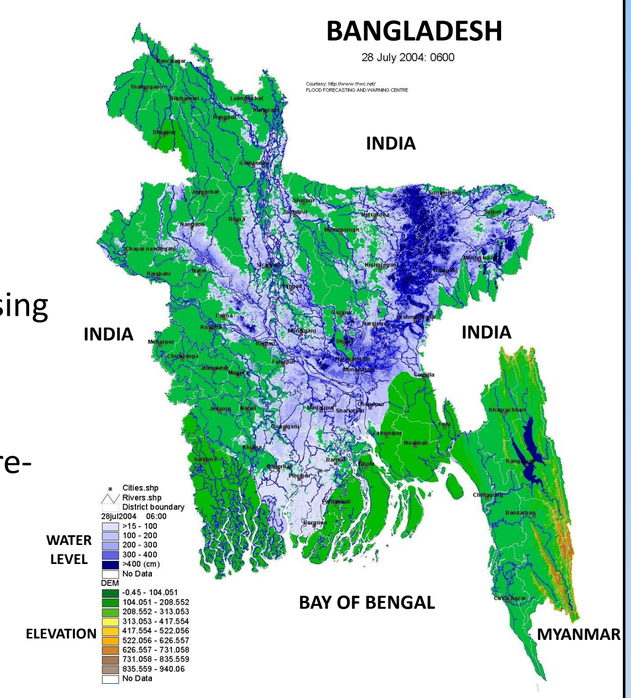
ABSTRACT

Bangladesh is one of the most disaster prone countries of the world and it is predicted that its current climate variability will be made worse by future climate change. This paper examines how local people of the country interpret the changing climate and potential adaptation strategies based on their own knowledge and experiences. The study is based on semi-structured interviews and group discussions conducted amongst different groups of people living in flood and cyclone prone areas, and with national level practitioners and academics primarily based in Dhaka. The study reports differing views as to how to measure changes in climate and how people at different levels – local and national level actors - should respond to climate change. Additionally, a mainstream view in Bangladesh is that as developed countries are often responsible for increased pace of climate change in many developing countries including Bangladesh, the developed countries should compensate by assisting developing countries like Bangladesh through resources and technology transfers for adaptation.

INTRODUCTION

- "Climate change as a change in the state of the climate that can be identified ... by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties, and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer". (IPCC, 2001, p. 21)
- "Adaptation is the adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities". (IPCC, 2001, p. 879)
- Severe floods, cyclones, river bank erosions, droughts, landslides and tornadoes are the major hazards of Bangladesh. (DDM, 2011)
- changes in climate trends, variability and extreme events including increasing average temperature, annual mean rainfall, severe floods, intensity of cyclones, frequency of monsoon depressions, salinity in estuaries and water shortages which have already been observed in Bangladesh. (Pachauri & Reisinger, 2007)



OBJECTIVES

- explore people's perception of what is climate change and potential associated adaptation strategies;
- analyse responses of different stakeholders relative to age, sex and social status; and
- compare what may lie behind any varying perceptions of climate change and adaptation strategies.

METHODS AND STUDY AREA

RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY

QUALITATIVE METHODS	STUDY AREA	Local people	Local level practitioners	National level practitioners
• In-depth interviews • Group discussions	• Flood prone areas (Bogra & Sirajganj) • Cyclone prone areas (Barguna & Satkhira) • Dhaka	• Male & female • Different socio-economic backgrounds • Local leaders	• Government officials • NGO staff	• Policy makers • High officials • Academics

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Perception of local people

- Most of the locally based people agreed that climate is changing but they could not express how it is changing.
- All claimed that environmentally related disasters remain unpredictable and that the losses they bring are economically very costly.
- Some, especially senior citizens, recognized that temperature and rainfall is currently different compared to the past.

Perception of local level practitioners

- Local level practitioners agreed that they had heard about climate change and its impacts on the local community and thought that they must disseminate knowledge to the local people.
- They are using their existing experiences to implement new projects and programmes that principally address climate change.

Perception of national level practitioners and academics

- Most national level practitioners and academics knew about climate change, its impacts and adaptation strategies which have been commonly discussed around the world over the last two decades.
- However, there were differing views as to how they can measure changes in climate and how they should react.

CONCLUSION

- Local level adaptations to climate change are therefore more possible through bridging the gap between local knowledge and practices, and scientific prediction and simulation.
- most indicate that as climate change is a consequence of the developed world those responsible should compensate by assisting developing countries like Bangladesh through resources and technology transfers for adaptation.

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