

Politics in Disaster Management in Bangladesh

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Abstract: There are huge difficulties of proper disaster management policy implementation that is portrayed in Bangladesh. Therefore, the objective of this study is to explore some political factors and issues that negatively affect disaster management in Bangladesh. This research intends to analyze the extent of implementation of disaster management and its challenges in the coastal areas. In the findings, in general, it is the lack of proper political conditions which are challenging for effective disaster management in Bangladesh. These issues have been the focus throughout the whole article.

Keywords: politics, disaster, management, Bangladesh, challenges

INTRODUCTION

Recently, Bangladesh has been mentioned as the fourth vulnerable country to extreme natural events resulting from climate change [1]. According to a report, Bangladesh experienced a high number of natural disasters in the world during the period of 1991-2011. Bangladesh has experienced 50 dreadful cyclonic storms since 1584. These took a toll of 672,000 people [2]. In world Risk Report published by Upper Iowa University (UIU) and Nature Conservancy, Bangladesh is in the 5th position of a 15-country list that are at highest risk of natural disaster. However, the risk index was based on exposure, vulnerability, susceptibility, coping capacities of the natural disaster affected people.

Traditionally, disaster management approach in Bangladesh has been to respond to disaster in the aftermath of the events. The growing problems of political conditions have raised serious questions about such approaches, although the government of Bangladesh has undertaken a lot of programs and policy for disaster management[2].

This article will discuss in details on how political conditions affect disaster management in Bangladesh.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In my study, one particular theoretical framework will not be able to define all the influential factors and issues to explain disaster management. Therefore, I was intended to borrow different views of the institutions and ideas from individual scholars on disaster management. Therefore, this study has

illustrated that no single theoretical viewpoint is able to explain disaster management.

Political Conditions: The *'interactive model'* of Thomas and Grindle implies that implementation process may be influenced by the actors at any stage [3]. Thomas and Grindle suggest that implementation is the most crucial stage of any policy process. This process is interactive and ongoing, which involves policy elites and managers, which create an opportunity of numerous potential outcomes. Thomas and Grindle differentiate two main resources; namely political and bureaucratic resources. The authors argued that political resources are needed to be analyzed for introducing and sustaining a reform. The author also highlighted the importance of bureaucratic resources as an important factor for successful implementation of a new policy. So, these resources have to be mobilized in order to sustain the reform and achieve expected results in disaster management.

Lack of political will, political instability and uncertainty always hinders the effective execution of government policies at the local level [4]. The government is supposed to initiate reform policy for eradicating the malpractices from the administration and making the system more effective. Hence, the successful continuation of policy largely depends upon the support of the public representatives or policy makers.

Another important aspect is the nature of the political system and ideology in any country where policy implementation takes place. This aspect

corresponds to the political conditions in the Van Meter and Van Horn's model of policy implementation [5]. Political condition variables emphasize the importance of sufficient resources to be accessible to implementers for successful implementation. They also emphasize the need to know the nature of public opinion and whether elites favor or oppose the implementation of the policy as well as the extent to which private interest groups are mobilized to support the policy.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

Hypotheses are tentative statements that show a relationship between variables. In this study, they are the assumptions on how successful implementation of disaster management (dependent variable) initiatives in Bangladesh is influenced by political factors and actors (independent variables). The hypothesis of this research is about disaster management policy implementation in Bangladesh is dependent on the political conditions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As Creswell defined; "*qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem [6].*" In particular, I wanted to observe the extent to which political commitment and conditions contribute to influence to the implementation of disaster management policy in Bangladesh. Due to my intention and an in depth study of the subject matter, I used qualitative approach as well as a case study strategy to explore the situation. Questions like how participants understand disaster management, what challenges they face in the disaster period, also asked the participants to enable the researcher understand the broad meaning of the situation and what is government role in their critical situation. The qualitative approach also enabled me to understand how different bodies of government interpret their motive on disaster management and problems and their views on implementing policy.

Yin argues that the multiple case study approach increases the validity of research, since it allows for replication, and replication procedures lead to the development of a well-founded theory [7]. Multiple case study design is in line with the positivist philosophy of multiple experiments. If carefully selected, multiple case studies allow for literal (prediction of similar results) and theoretical replication (different results for predictable reasons). The study area in my study is the six (6) western coastal zones in Bangladesh as highly cyclonic affected area in the country.

In my study, selection of participants for the interview was determined on the relevance of their contribution to the understanding of the research problem. The group of respondents is from the professional groups and common people in the field on disaster management so that the researcher can

generalize the findings. However, the prominent personalities from different walks of life were invited for interview. During my field visit I met with a wide range of knowledgeable persons in Bangladesh, and also interviewed affected people in the coastal area.

Sampling should aim at covering adequate data to address the research question. Total number of respondents in my study is 105, randomly selected from household to different professions, and from concerned government officials at central and field level, were selected as respondents for the study.

Political Conditions

Political factors and issues in disaster management means the knowledge associated with operation of political organizations on the activities of disaster management. Disaster politics is slowly becoming a prominent academic subject. Without a doubt, political considerations are a significant factor in disaster events [8].

The following section discusses about the effects of political conditions on disaster management in the coastal areas in Bangladesh.

Absence of Sound Planning in Disaster Management

The scope of disaster management is wide. It embraces decisions made at all levels, from central government to the local level. But plans for disaster management in Bangladesh tend not to be made at the local level. They are made in Dhaka by the concerned ministries. Disaster management plans begin with a national disaster-preparedness plan. In many disaster-prone countries of the South including Bangladesh, a national disaster plan is often inherited, or copied directly, from the former colonial power, though governments are improving and modernizing their disaster plans. Actually update on disaster plan is being done in the light of lessons painfully learned in the aftermath of extreme disasters [9].

Hence, changing mindset of political actors is an important issue in terms of disaster management. It is commonly found that political culture of partnership in disaster management has yet been established in Bangladesh. Divisive partisan politics and the lack of good governance prevent partnerships among public and private stakeholders. Hence, government agencies need to understand the perspectives of cyclone disaster in the coastal communities. To fulfill this requirement, it is needed for more action oriented research involving coastal communities and scientists from different disciplines and greater awareness about the cyclones among the government agencies [10].

Many cases political considerations disregard the criteria of fund allocation for implementing disaster preparedness plans. The disaster risk reduction fund in

Bangladesh, established in 2004, could be shown as an example. The risk reduction fund has a) limited decentralization and devolution of power and resources to the local government to implement their local plans, b) perspective of (response led), leadership by, and commitment of government officials and politicians concerning disaster reduction, and c) limited capacity and resources at various levels [11].

Criticisms of Disaster Aid Provisions

There are many criticisms to the government agencies about disaster relief in Bangladesh. In most cases, criticisms are focused on the distribution of disaster relief, which has suffered from widespread corruption and large-scale irregularities. There is also a common allegation to the disaster affected countries that relief does not reach and benefit all disaster victims equally [12].

While there are some differences, such as the political ecology paradigm, concede that government agencies are responsible to systematically discriminate against marginal groups (e.g., poor, women, elderly, children, ethnic or religious minorities, and immigrants) in the disaster assistance [12]. Bangladesh is also not exception to that. Because of inequitable resources, disaster victims in the coastal areas belonging to vulnerable groups benefit the least from relief efforts. This situation further promotes the divide between marginalized and non-marginalized groups in the coastal areas in Bangladesh.

Apart from distribution issues, another challenge is that relief goods are not sufficient in quantity. There are also many research findings at the global level that provide evidence of useless and/or redundant aid disbursed to disaster victims [13]. For example, after the 1976 earthquakes in Guatemala some drugs sent by foreign donors had an expiry date of August 1934. Autier *et al.* reported that after the 1988 earthquake in northern Armenia, which killed some 25000 people, foreign donors sent 5000 tons of drugs and consumable medical supplies [12]. Less than one-third of these medicines were immediately usable; 11% of the remaining was inappropriate, 8% had expired and much of the remaining was inadequately labelled in as many as 21 different languages. Additionally, few medicines appropriate for treating earthquake victims were sent. In the aftermath of the 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh, the country received a massive amount of drugs and medical supplies from foreign donors. Unfortunately, many of these supplies were not needed, while some drugs that were required but were not supplied [14].

Disaster relief is generally offered by foreign private citizens, organizations and even governments. These bodies are not always familiar with the cultural and religious norms of the disaster affected countries.

As a result, the unwanted items may often be distributed among victims of disaster by foreign NGOs and less experienced private volunteers from developed countries. The fact is that these bodies may not have clear ideas regarding the values and norms of the countries involved. There is no doubt that distribution of inappropriate relief items in such a way hurts the feelings of disaster victims [15]. Hence, this can be detrimental to the victims' feelings. The distribution of copies of the Bible, for example, among Muslim victims of the 2004 tsunami in Indonesia by several foreign Christian NGOs created tension in the disaster relief effort [15].

During the field work, I observed that there is no clear-cut policy of the government of Bangladesh how and what criteria will be taken to distribute relief and rehabilitation in the affected coastal areas. Inappropriate distribution of relief efforts resulted from the government's inability to properly distribute relief goods to those genuinely affected people. The efforts of the government were ineffective because of irregularities, and widespread corruption by government authorities involved in implementing relief and rehabilitation programs [12].

The above situation compelled the international donor community including foreign NGOs to look for alternative means of channeling disaster assistance to those in need [16]. On the other hand, NGOs working in Bangladesh proved that they were more competent in the disbursement of disaster relief compared to government agencies [12]. This situation led to a strategically change of external disaster assistance away from government agencies and toward NGOs during the mid to late-1970s. By the mid-1980s, NGOs began receiving an increasing share of external disaster assistance.

It is also observed that faulty criteria for fund distribution leading to insufficiency of resources when and where it matters. It has already been mentioned that in the relief and response period, many irregularities took place. Apart from that, there was poor integration of disability sensitivity in disaster management in relation to need-based relief provision during the Sidr cyclone response in 2007 in Bangladesh. The above findings was echoed by Rahman and Mallick (no date) that there were no special programs targeted at the needs of disabled people in pre- and post-relief operations. It is also sad to note that there were no attempts to address the special needs of the disable people [17].

Divisive Politics

Since the government is involved in disaster management programs, disasters may be less severe in countries with efficient and accountable governments. The efficiency of the government is positively related to

civil liberties and a free press [18]. In a comparison across states within India, Besley and Burgess found that disaster relief has been more responsive to needs in states where more people read newspapers. For this reason, it is easy to believe that disasters are less severe in those countries that are more democratic, having a free press, as argued by Sen [19].

Print media is almost wholly in the private sector in Bangladesh. There is a plurality of views expressed in the print media. But it often lacks impartiality during the cyclone period. Individuals connected to particular political parties own some newspapers. The problem is that these newspapers tend to reflect particular political views. Akhter points out that major daily and weekly newspaper is owned by private owners, thus it has direct or indirect connections with the major parties in Bangladesh [20]. Therefore, print media very often provides misleading information/messages to the people after the disaster recovery in Bangladesh.

In case of disaster management, all the corporate bodies, banks, offices and institutions donate generously to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund during and after the disaster for the purpose of relief and rehabilitation of the victims to the affected people in Bangladesh. However, these donations, received personally by the Prime Minister have some political motives. The Prime Minister's Relief Fund has not been functioning in a transparent manner in the country.

Apart from the above, information such as how much fund and relief goods and services have been raised through this informal means and how they are spent have never been publicly disclosed by the Prime Minister's Office. The Prime Minister at her will administer relief from this fund. This raises the question of management of this fund without any transparency in its efforts.

The above situation indicates that partisan politics prevail in Bangladesh. Relief and rehabilitation programs are used as a political instrument. This goes against any well functioning disaster management. For example, it is commonly found that all small and large rehabilitation projects are contracted out to ruling party politicians. There is also a common perception that these projects are used as an instrument of vote-buying by the party in power. This statement is supported by the fact that most of the government resources are directed to electoral constituencies that intend to support to the ruling political party members.

While individually or collectively through CBOs/NGOs, the larger citizenry actively participates in the relief and rehabilitation work. This demonstrates the significant strength of Bangladesh to cope against the cyclone that hit the country almost every year, either

on a small or large scale. This is a value strongly embedded in the Bangladesh society. But a major challenge seems to be the absence of documentation and public disclosure of information, particularly to allocation for disaster relief.

However, NGO activity in Bangladesh increased after independence. At that time, there was an acute need for large-scale organized efforts to provide shelter, clothing and food to many displaced and war-ravaged people [21]. Because of a lack of resources and experience, it was impossible for the government of the newly independent country to undertake such a massive task by itself. Foreign NGOs joined the relief operation and local NGOs were formed to contribute to the post independence reconstruction efforts [12]. Growth of NGO activities in Bangladesh occurred after the devastating flood of 1974, when the Bangladesh government failed to successfully operate and manage relief efforts.

Poor Perspective and Commitment of Government

Maintaining political commitment is an important factor for successful disaster management. Developed nations do not reflect casualties during the cyclone as heavily as developing nations. Vulnerability of developed nations is lower because of their political commitment to employ greater resources effectively. The wealth of developed nations allocates a significant amount of funds for disaster mitigation and preparedness measures. As an example, disaster studies are often funded in the developed countries to identify disaster prone areas and recommend appropriate policy measures for disaster management [22].

If it is looked at the policy of Australia, Sweden, and the United States that are examples of developed nations. These countries have established disaster management institutions. Australia's national government has a disaster management program that focuses heavily on using education to reduce disaster vulnerability. The United States is now requiring that communities develop disaster mitigation action plans to address increasing disaster losses and it is giving special attention to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) preparedness. The Swedish Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) takes responsibility to effectively coordinate their society's ability to respond to disaster crises [22].

In comparison to developed countries, developing countries typically lack education, funding, and equipment to reduce their disaster vulnerability. Bangladesh is vulnerable to cyclone because of impoverished living conditions in the coastal areas. Furthermore, building codes are rarely established or enforced, although on paper Bangladesh has developed quite an elaborate framework for disaster preparedness and response mechanism.

Hence, empowering the affected coastal people in the disaster-prone areas is important. The fact is that in the field of disaster management there has been a gradual realization that democratic participation in decision-making is essential to success [23]. In other words, participation in decision-making is a key to disaster management. As Handmer and Dovers noted in a seminal book on this topic, “*Policies emerge through complex and variable policy processes that include both government and non-government players*” [24].

Apart from the above issues, in Bangladesh no policy guidelines are followed to determine damage as well as selecting beneficiaries in the coastal areas. In theory, all families affected by disaster should be covered by disaster relief. But in reality, need of all families are not equal and similar. Therefore, it is stressed that considering differences in relief demand should be applied to the affected people. In such a way, beneficiaries could be selected, under this method, considering loss and damage and ability of the families.

There is another challenge that almost all disaster relief activities in Bangladesh are solely donor dependent. Hence, resources sometimes are not adequate compared to the demand. Furthermore, priority list is not prepared based on the need of an affected coastal family. In most of the cases, the need is defined following own rules of donor agencies and/or relief distributing organization.

Problems of Institutional Expertise and Memory

There are still many lessons to learn about disaster management. At the same time there is also required a certain willingness to learn them. However, it is evident that disaster management field is very common with lessons ignored, archived and forgotten. At the end results, it is generally not learned. There is also a tendency both to repeat past mistakes and ‘*reinvent the wheel*’ by trying to innovate in ways that have already been well tried elsewhere. It is argued that the lessons learned are that they must be utilized and incorporated into the current practice of disaster management. The fact is that lessons learned have some influence upon the solution to the problem at hand [24].

The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) and Department of Disaster Management (DDM) are manned by government officials, particularly the senior bureaucrats. But the problem is that these jobs are transferable when government changes. As a consequence, it becomes a serious problem of maintaining institutional memory to carry out the disaster management process forward once someone leaves. Furthermore, it is observed that the leaderships of these organizations come from the administrative service, and have limited knowledge on disaster management. Last but not least it is found that

there are also few technical expertise among the officials in the DDM and the MoDMR.

The strengths and capacity of the Fire Service and Civil Defence Department has also been put to questions for the slow recovery of trapped living, injured and dead persons after disaster. Fire Service and Civil Defence members, volunteers and others, is not being trained in an appropriate way. During the rescue operation, there are deficiencies of simple equipments like helmet, hacksaw blades (rod cutter), hand gloves, safety goggles, torch lights and gumboots are not in sufficient quantity. If these materials are abundant in the hands of Fire Service and Civil Defence members and volunteers, they could have rescued more people alive. This situation always happens during and after the disaster in Bangladesh.

Political unrest in Bangladesh led to delay starts for Phase I of Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP). Cumulatively, Phase I only ran for two and a half years. The implementation of Phase II was also delayed. After Phase I ended in 2009, the Ministry of Planning took five months to officially approve Phase II. This delayed the recruitment of staff members and led to the loss of several staff members working for the program, including the national project director. Whilst backstopping and interim management plans were put in place, it was not until the last quarter of 2010 that implementation really progressed. Civil society groups raised concerns that the delays had led to institutional memory loss and the potential reinvention of certain program by new staff.

Absence of a Functioning Partnership

The current mechanism of disaster management is not based on partnership approach in Bangladesh. The government of Bangladesh documents and the NGO literature indicate that there is a wide recognition that effective disaster management in the coastal areas are not possible by government agencies alone. Hence, the cost of disaster management needs to be shared by different stakeholders. Still, the major problem in the institutional framework continues to be a lack of functioning partnerships among the stakeholders [25]. The massive casualties of cyclone showed that there were no partnerships functioning in the coastal areas in Bangladesh.

Hence, it is important in improving partnership approach in the current disaster management in Bangladesh. But it has been evident the absence of a functioning partnership among the stakeholders. There is also a lacking in the development of a culture of collective decision-making in planning, in resource sharing, and in implementing disaster management policies and programs in a transparent way [26]. This finding indicates that institutional partnerships are not

taking place. Therefore, in the current disaster management approach it is stressed on institutional partnerships, specifically to include NGOs/CBOs and the private sector in attaining its disaster management goals.

Government, communities at different levels, NGOs including local, national, and international levels are involved in providing their efforts with disaster response, recovery and rehabilitation activities to manage cyclonic disasters over the periods in the coastal areas in Bangladesh. Among international organizations Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE), Islamic Development Bank (IDB), United Nations UNICEF, World Food Programme (WFP) and among non-governmental organizations World Vision, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW), Oxfam Australia, Muslim Aid, Association for Social Advancement (ASA), Proshika, *Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee* (BRAC) is especially involved with relief and rehabilitation activities [27].

Many experts argued that it is important to make institutional partnerships stronger in disaster management. Comprehensive Disaster Management Program (CDMP) has designed to adopt an umbrella program approach that encompasses all aspects of disaster management. In doing so, it facilitates to move from a single agency response and relief strategy to a whole of government holistic strategy that addresses the issue of community vulnerability [28]. CDMP, with technical assistance of UNDP, is presently in operation for integration of disaster and development concept as well as for improvement in coordination between GO-NGOs' efforts in response to disasters at all levels, although the implementation of the CDMP also faced challenges. Furthermore, the program experienced several delays and disruptions that hindered implementation of its work.

Non Government Organizations (NGOs) has some programs in disaster management that also focus cyclone disaster in Bangladesh. From its birth as an independent nation in 1971, Bangladesh became a site for NGOs. Initially focused on relief and rehabilitation activities following the War of Liberation and succeeding natural calamities, International and local NGOs turned their efforts to longer term development in the absence of state capacity to deliver welfare [27]. But there are some questions about the low budget and narrow operational activities on disaster management throughout the country.

The suffering of the Bangladesh people due to a cyclone of 1970 and the political havoc led to the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent nation. Following liberation war from March to December 1971 prompted a massive response in multilateral,

bilateral and non-government aid. In addition to the outside humanitarian organizations which responded, many local organizations were created to care for orphans and widows and assist the many refugees [29] returning from neighboring India after the war ended. BRAC, the largest NGO in Bangladesh today, was formed in 1972 as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee. Its early objective was to deliver relief and rehabilitation programs for refugees returning from India to resettle in Bangladesh [30]. The Lutheran World Federation is typical of the many international NGOs which provided assistance with relief and rehabilitation [27].

During the first years of Bangladesh's independence in December 1971, humanitarian agencies and media coverage were focused on the apparently overwhelming needs of a mainly disadvantaged population living on the edge of subsistence in a disaster prone environment while the national infrastructure was still being reconstructed from the destruction of guerrilla warfare during the struggle for independence [31].

A few Bangladeshi NGOs grew very substantially in the early 1990s with the help of large-scale donor support. Most of them were involved with relief and rehabilitation activities to face cyclone disaster in 1991 [32]. NGOs' contribution to cyclone disaster management in 1991 was significant as the donors responded. The number of NGOs involved increased rapidly and the amount of international aid that came to NGOs was about US\$ 200 million in 1991 to face especially cyclone disaster [33].

In the 30 years after the 1970 cyclone, over 200 cyclone shelters were constructed in the coastal regions of Bangladesh in cooperation with both government and NGOs. When the next destructive cyclone approached the country in 1991, volunteers from the Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) warned people of the cyclone two to three days before it struck. Over 350,000 people fled their homes to shelters and other brick structures, whilst others sought high ground. While the 1991 cyclone killed over 138,000 people, this was less than the 1970 cyclone, [34] although the 1991 cyclone was significantly more destructive, causing 1.5 billion dollars in damage (2 billion inflation-adjusted) compared to the 1970 cyclone's 86.4 million dollars in damage (inflation-adjusted: 480 million) [27].

However, the government, NGOs, people and friends around the world worked together in minimizing the impact of the cyclone calamity through preparedness as mitigation measures as well as coping with the aftermath. The government and non-government organizations (NGOs) worked together to provide relief to the suffering people [35]. The task was

too great and scope remained for improving the situation. Based on different studies and documentation it was found that the role of NGOs in disaster management in Bangladesh was significant. The study (ADB, 1999) showed that about 20% of the assistance to emergency response, recovery, and rehabilitation during 1970 cyclone disaster was ensured by NGOs both national and international and it was more than 40% in 1991 cyclone disasters [27]. Presently, NGOs are giving emphasis to work on preventive measures as a strategy of disaster risk reduction in the coastal areas in Bangladesh.

Weaknesses and Inefficiency in Managing Disasters

After more than two years of joint advocacy efforts by the ECB (Emergency Capacity Building) Bangladesh consortium, the Bangladesh Disaster Management Act (DMA) was approved by the Minister of Disaster Management and Relief on 12 September 2012 [36]. The government of Bangladesh passed a bill in the National Parliament on 24 September 2012 which known as Disaster Management Act 2012, for organizing the Disaster Management (DM) activities in an efficient way. It is claimed that this Act basically is the latest complete legislative guideline for comprehensive disaster management in Bangladesh.

In the preamble of the Disaster Management Act (DMA) 2012 provides guideline for Disaster Management (DM) activities, safety and security of the coastal people. The Act describes the responsibility of government officers of various departments regarding DM. It also mentioned the government policy how to conduct the DM activities with other stakeholders like the NGO's and private organizations. The formation of different committees for DM activities from National level to field level or last tiers of administrative unit has been specified [37].

When I contacted with professionals on disaster management, they opined that the national policies and institutional frameworks of Bangladesh are not sufficient to protect affected coastal people. The national policies concerning the climate change and environment issues such as National Environment Policy 1992, the Coastal Zone Policy 2005, and the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) 2005, Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2008 indicate the climate change problems. But there are no clear indications how population displacement problems will be addressed in these policies [38]. In addition, there are no detailed action plans with a timeframe to tackle the disaster problems.

Providing sustainable livelihood support to the affected coastal people is considered as a success criteria for disaster management. As experienced in cyclone Aila in the coastal areas, there were weaknesses and inefficiency in managing the disasters in

Bangladesh. The government could not repair the damaged embankments even after several years. Furthermore, a large number of people were displaced from their homes. But there were no proper and adequate rehabilitation programs for the displaced people. In addition, there was a lack of accountability and transparency in implementing and monitoring of disaster response and rehabilitation programs. In many cases, negligence and corruption of the local disaster management authorities were reported in relief and rehabilitation programs [37].

The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) has a corporate plan for comprehensive disaster management in Bangladesh. This is an umbrella plan that outlines a multi-hazard approach. Two key documents such as Standing Orders on Disasters (SOD) and a comprehensive disaster policy are the sources of the roles and responsibilities of the various institutions and personnel involved in disaster management in Bangladesh. Professional in my interview list pointed out that despite of these mechanisms, roles are not properly or clearly assigned and there is a lack of efficiency in and amongst the responsible institutions.

Reactive Approaches in Disaster Management

In the developed world integrated disaster management *approach* which includes both *proactive* and reactive strategies has been applied to *managing* natural *disasters*. However, making disaster management as institutional mechanism should be functional all-throughout the year. But disaster preparedness in Bangladesh has evolved and triggered by a major disaster. For example, the 1988 flood prompted the formulation of the Flood Action Plan (FAP), whereas an institutional arrangement like the Disaster Management Bureau (DMB) is one of the products of the 1991 cyclone [39]. This indicates that Bangladesh has adopted a reactive approach.

Challenges of Public Procurement

Following the cyclone of 1991, the government of Bangladesh continues to take massive initiative for coastal embankment construction for the protection of human lives. Since then, in the name of embankment construction, an ill-beneficiary group comprising of contractors, civil servants, political party leaders has emerged who in many ways are involved in looting public money.

Although embankment is not the only solution of disaster protection, but it is thought that if the embankments were constructed with a proper design criteria then these could last for a longer period and could save the people at risk in the coastal areas in Bangladesh.

In many places coastal embankments were washed out by cyclone. During the 1991, 2007 and 2009 cyclone, many embankments in the coastal areas were washed away due to poor design within 3 years of its construction. Therefore, those who are working on disaster management as a professional, there have been the proposals of construction to improve the quality of work; a) avoid of traditional lowest bid procurement system and ensure direct involvement of armed forces, b) using permanent construction rather than earth filling only, c) ensuring participation of local people in planning and implementation of disaster management process, and c) creation of forest and trees based on local and indigenous experiences [40].

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