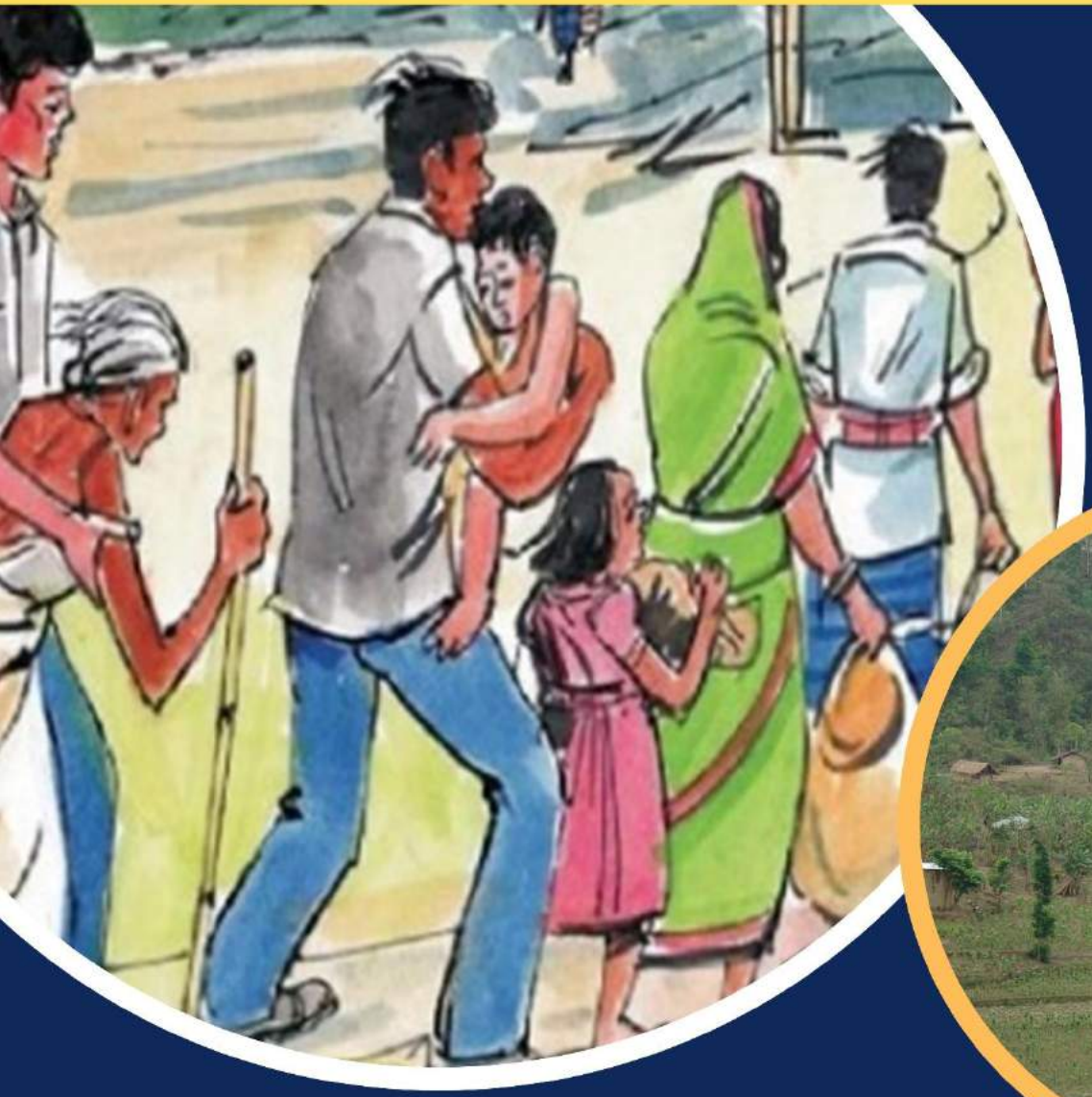
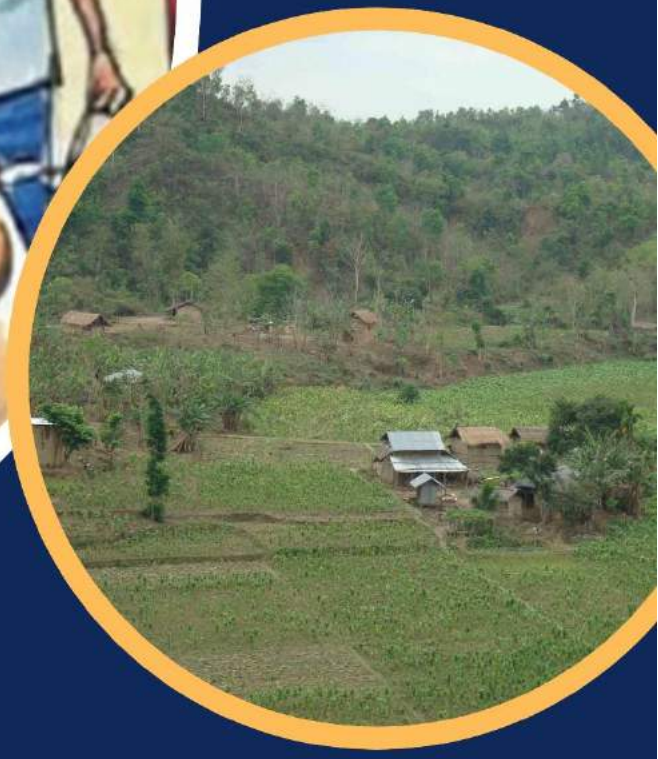




Baseline Survey on

USAID's Multipurpose Disaster Shelter Support Activity

Conducted by

Human Development Research Centre

humane development through research and action

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Baseline Survey

On

USAID's Multipurpose Disaster Shelter Support Project

SUBMITTED BY

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Abbreviations

BDT	Bangladesh Taka
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CFW	Cash for Work
CPP	Community Preparedness Program
DPE	Directorate of Primary Education
EPI	Expanded Programme on Immunization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FI	Field Investigator
FS	Field Supervisor
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GRAUS	Gram Unnayon Sangathon
HDRC	Human Development Research Centre
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IR	Intermediate Results
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGED	Local Government Engineering Department
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MPDS	Multipurpose Disaster Shelter Support
NGO	Non-government Organization
NYP	National Youth Policy
PEDP4	Fourth Primary Education Development Program
PPS	Probability Proportional Sampling
PSU	Primary Sampling Unit
SC	Save the Children
SMC	School Management Committee
SOD	Standing Orders on Disaster
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SSU	Secondary Sampling Unit
UDMC	Union Disaster Management Committee
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer
UP	Union Parishad
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UzDMC	Upazila Disaster Management Committee
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WDMC	Ward Disaster Management Committee

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Executive Summary

Background: Bangladesh is a well-known and one of the most at-risk countries to be affected by various natural hazards due to its vulnerable geographical location, low-lying terrain, active monsoon, and tropical cyclone basin. Within Bangladesh, the Chattogram division of Bangladesh emerges as the most vulnerable. Seven of the top 10 hotspot districts are in the Chattogram division. The deforestation in the hill tracts has led to major landslides, property damage, and damage to water sources. Against this backdrop, with funding from USAID, Multipurpose Disaster Shelter Support (MPDS) Project has planned to construct 25 new MPDs in 7 Upazilas of Cox's Bazar and Bandarban district. The MPDS will be based on a 'para center' approach that acts as a hub for basic social services in the community centers.

Objectives: The objective is to carry out a baseline survey for MPDS Project at two project districts (Bandarban & Cox's Bazar) to assess the baseline situation of project indicators. Overall, this baseline aims to produce credible benchmarks for seven indicators to measure project achievements at a later stage.

Methodology: The survey adopted a mixed-method approach. The quantitative survey took place at the household level using a structured questionnaire. The surveyed households were adjacent to the MPDS shelters. The survey adopted a two-stage sampling strategy and surveyed 470 households from 11 MPDS sites (out of 25). Besides, the survey obtained qualitative information through 20 KIIs with different stockholders and 14 FGDs with the WDMC, UDMC, UzDMC, local volunteer groups, and community people (men and women). The survey also assessed the functionality of 14 UDMCs and WDMCs. The quantitative data and qualitative information analysis were independent, and their findings were triangulated.

Study findings

Demographic Characteristics: The average size of the households is 4.7, and the dependency ratio is 65%. Overall, 29% of HH members are engaged in labor, and another 29.2% are housewives. Involvement in farming activity is higher in Bandarban (18.5%).

Education and school enrollment: More than one-third (38.9%) of the HH members did not attend formal schooling, 29.4% completed primary education, and 9.1% completed secondary education. The school enrollment rate among children aged 6-18 is 88.6%, higher among girls (92.5%) than boys (83.8%). However, it is found that 20.3% of students drop out after primary education.

Consequences and coping mechanism of Disaster: In the project area, the majority of households are affected by heavy rain (74.5%), followed by cyclones (62.2%) and floods (24.2%). In Cox's Bazar, a high percentage of people (96.5%) are affected by cyclones, only 37.6% in Bandarban. However, 97.8% of people are highly affected by the cyclone in Naikhongchari. Landslides and wild animal attacks are unique disasters in Bandarban, affecting 17.6% and 2.9% of the HHs, respectively. These disasters primarily damaged their household wealth (65.3%) and homestead (62.2%). Apart from this, a significant number of respondents stated that disasters have a negative impact on their income. During the disaster, HHs are distressed by the loss of income (52%), the reduction or suspension of regular income (46.3%), and the loss of working days (44.6%). Due to the regional difference, homestead damage is experienced by almost double (84%) HH in Cox's Bazar compared to Bandarban (46.6%). Remarkably, 30% of household members experienced a mental shock after a disaster. On the other hand, among the disasters that occurred in the project areas, floods and cyclones take the longest period for functional recovery of HH members (on average, 100 days).

Most of the respondents (60.3%) in the project area spend their savings after being affected by floods, heavy rains, and cyclones. Nearly 40% of respondents take a loan from local cooperative groups including micro-credit organizations to overcome the hazardous disaster situation. Another 27.1% of them take support from relatives or neighbors within their community as a coping mechanism. However, the proportion of households that rely on support from relatives or neighbors within their community is much higher in Cox's Bazar (53%) compared to only 8.6% in Bandarban. It is also found that 6.05% HHs take a loan (Higher interest or mortgaging valuable assets) from local money lenders (i.e., *Mahajan*) to cope with the disaster. Larger sums of money and easy accesss to credit motivate them to take out higher-interest loans from Mahajan during an emergency.

Social Capital and Cohesion: Cox's Bazar's social capital is much higher than Bandarban's. Social capital is the lowest in Naikhongchori (3.6%) and highest in Pekua (43%). In the absence of social capital, the majority of HHs in Naikhongchari rely on expensing savings (82.2%), selling household assets (63.3%), and Mahajan loans (25.6%) to cope with the crisis. The bonding capital is consistently lower compared to the bridging capital indicating the social capital is stronger within the community. Furthermore, having adult female and male household members increases social capital.

Disaster preparedness: The majority (83%) of respondents have basic knowledge of disaster preparedness, while 26.0% have advance knowledge. It is worth mentioning that four-fifths (80%) of the respondents take shelter during a disaster. However, the quality of the shelter is questionable. Additionally, another notable portion of the respondent (70%) acknowledged that they store dry food as part of their disaster preparedness, where 67.8% preserves valuable goods and papers, and 42.8% of respondents save money in advance to manage disaster-related expenses. Overall, 72.5% of households demonstrated applying basic preparedness to mitigate disaster risk. It is worth mentioning that only 4.5% of HH members realize that people, after a disaster, may require comforting or mental health support, while 30% experience some psychological trauma. During the most recent disaster, most respondents (91.8%) received disaster preparedness information. In addition, they received information from different sources, i.e., neighborhood (73.3%), miking (57.9%), mobile/Internet (51.7%), and TV/Radio (46.4%).

Access to Services: 91.2% of respondents do not receive direct and indirect shelter-centric MPDS services. The survey found no significant gender differences in receiving benefits. Similarly, most respondents (92.7%) reported not receiving any MPDS-related direct or indirect social services due to the MPDS activities being in the construction phase.

Participation in collective Action: Around one-fifth of the respondents participated in MPDS site selection, followed by participated action (10.9%). On average, the participants in different collective actions mainly ranged between 25 and 30 people. In each community, the households could recall around 10-12 events listed as collective actions. So, around 2,000-2,500 people participated in different MPDS community actions (mostly MPDS site selection and sharing endogenous knowledge) before the survey.

Women's role in decision-making: Women in Bengali and Tribal households have limited decision-making power when deciding to go to a shelter center before a disaster. Only 14.2% of female respondents (Bengali: 13.4% and Tribal: 15.3%) reported making decisions independently. The decision is mainly made by the husband alone (72.4% in Bengali households and 74.5% in Tribal households). Overall, 25.9% of women have the power to influence household decision-making to go to a shelter before a disaster.

The functionality of UDMC and WDMC: The UDMCs and WDMCs are formed with very limited functionality as most committee members can not participate in meetings regularly. Also, there are

limitations in the documentation of the meeting proceedings, such as evacuation plans, meeting minutes, and contingency plans. Furthermore, they have been observed to not adhere to SOD-19 but instead implement their approaches within limited capacities during disaster scenarios for supporting victims. Therefore, none of the UDMC or WDMC is operational as per SOD-2019. The Structure of committee members, according to the SOD, needs to be reformed, as it has limited the scope for incorporating more female members. Furthermore, a limited budget is one of the prime reasons for not functionalizing the UDMC and WDMC to the respondents.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Chattogram is considered one of the most vulnerable regions in Bangladesh to various kinds of disasters, including cyclones, heavy rain, and flooding Bangladesh. Despite some progress in raising awareness about disasters, the necessary infrastructure and resources are unavailable to respond to the multifaceted impacts of disasters. This includes a lack of well-equipped shelters, services, and equipment tailored to the specific regional variations of disasters. In addition, education and school attendance during disasters should be prioritized to address these issues, and disaster response efforts should be more sensitive to gender issues. In summary, stakeholders must provide the necessary support and resources to minimize the risk of disasters. Relying solely on personal coping mechanisms is not enough to effectively mitigate the risk. The implementation of well-planned and targeted disaster response efforts is crucial. There are various local initiatives and voluntary activities related to disaster preparedness, but providing modern training in disaster preparedness strategies, including shelter management and addressing local challenges, can help reduce the risk of disasters. Based on the findings, the following recommendation has been developed:

- Consider regional variations in disaster types and impacts when formulating MPDS policies.
- Provide shelter and re-enrollment programs in MPDS to address student dropout rates.
- Offer psychological support to disaster-affected people through mental health promoters in MPDS.
- Prioritize savings and create disaster-centered funds to mitigate post-disaster losses.
- Improve accessibility and facilities in MPDS shelters to enhance preparedness.
- Ensure gender-sensitive benefits are available in MPDS.
- Rethink management of markets and other social services during disasters to ensure supply and demand.
- Promote collective action among communities for better disaster mitigation.
- Developing a gender-sensitive disaster awareness program aimed at encouraging reluctant female households satisfied with their lack of decision-making power to go to a shelter center during a disaster.
- The Structure of committee members, according to the SOD, needs to be reformed, as it has limited the scope for incorporating more female members.
- Functionalize the UDMCs and WDMCs and create funding sources to strengthen their roles in disaster preparedness activities and post-disaster recoveries.

SUMMARY OF KEY INDICATORS

Indicator	Value (in %)
Index of social capital at the household level	Overall: 23.6% Bandarban: 14.5% Cox's Bazar: 36.3%
Percentage of people who have access to improved services and benefits as a result of MPDS construction	*Access to Social Service:* 92.7% did not receive social services 94.1% of males did not receive social services 93.3% of females did not receive social services
	Access to benefits: 91.2% did not receive benefits 90.2% of males did not receive benefits 90.1% of females did not receive benefits
Percentage of community members participating in collective actions	15.9% participated in the MPDS Sites selection 10.9% participated in endogenous knowledge 5.2% participated in organizing dialogues between communities and local officials Around 2,000-2,500 people participated in different MPDS community actions before the survey
Percentage of eligible children enrolled into schools	Overall: 88.6% Girls: 92.5% Boys: 83.8% Bandarban: 86% Cox's Bazar: 90.9%
Percentage of women who are empowered to decide to go to the shelter before an impending disaster	Overall: 14.2% Bengali: 13.4% Tribal: 15.3% Bandarban: 15.4% Cox's Bazar: 12.5%
Percentage of households demonstrated preparedness to mitigate disaster risk as a result of USG assistance	Overall: 72.5% Bandarban: 76.0% Cox's Bazar: 68.2%
Number of UDMC and WDMC operationalize as per SOD-2019	None