

Community Participation in Disaster Management: Role of Social Work to Enhance Participation

Md. Anwar Hossain*

Abstract

Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable areas to natural disasters in the world. Almost every year different types of natural disasters occur in Bangladesh and destroy many lives and resources of people. Although it is not possible to prevent the occurrence of disasters influenced by natural causes, proper plan, management and human collective participation may minimize the natural disasters occurred. Bangladesh is no exception in this regard. However, the government of Bangladesh has adopted disaster management plans and programs with especial emphasis on community participation in disaster management cycle since her independence. Based on literature review this paper analyzes the approaches to disaster management and its institutional framework in Bangladesh, and also discusses the role of social work to ensure or enhance community participation in disaster management that may contribute to both anthropology and social work disciplines.

1. Introduction

Bangladesh is crisscrossed by a strong river network of three major rivers – the Padma, the Brahmaputra, and the Meghna – and their tributaries, numbering about 230. Climatically it is situated in humid tropical zone. Although the country is a beauty of nature with cultural heritage, it is highly vulnerable to natural hazards such as flood, cyclone, drought, tidal surge, cold wave, earthquake, river-bank erosion, arsenic contamination of ground water, water and soil salinity and various forms of pollution due to her geographical location, land characteristics, multiplicity of rivers and monsoon climate (Disaster Management Bureau, 2008, p. 3). Since the independence in 1971, the country has experienced 200 natural disasters causing loss of more than 600,000 lives, millions of livestock and leaving prolonged damage to property, quality of life and livelihoods (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006, p. 7). Hence, disaster event should be faced with proper plan and programs through which active participation of affected people has to be ensured in an attempt to reduce the damages of property, and to shorten the pains and sufferings of people as well as enhance the sustainable development process. In so doing, the government of Bangladesh adopted Draft National Disaster Management Policy (NDMP) in 2008 and prepared the National Plan for Disaster Management (NPDMD) 2010-2015 in 2010, emphasizing on capacity building as well as on promoting livelihood of the disaster-prone community in accordance with philosophy of alternative perspective of disaster management. It is considered as a bottom-up approach. This paper discusses the concepts and approaches to disaster management, policies, institutional arrangement, disaster management practices and role of social work to make disaster management fruitful with special reference to Bangladesh.

2. Objectives and Methodology

The main objective of this paper is to analyze the policies and practices of disaster management in Bangladesh. It also highlights reasons behind adopting bottom-up approach and community-based disaster management

* Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, Jagannath University, Dhaka-1100, Bangladesh. Email: ahossainsw@yahoo.com

(CBDM) practices in rural Bangladesh, and locates the limitations of community participation. The paper also sheds light on role of social work to enhance community participation to make disaster management a success. This paper is qualitative in nature and document analysis method has been used as a research approach. Data have been collected from secondary sources such as government document, research reports as well as journal and newspaper articles to analyze the research issue.

3. Conceptual Framework

Disaster and Disaster Management

Disaster management is concerned with preparing for, ameliorating of the impact and reducing the risk of disasters occurred. It involves both the emergency operation in a disaster as well as the rebuilding the society in aftermath of disaster (Tan, 2009). It is connected with multifarious factors. Over a decade there has been a profound discussion of social and economic issues related to disaster. During this period some important concepts and terms have been introduced to the field or issue that leads to what is commonly understood as disaster. Therefore, it is necessary to have clear idea about disaster before going to explain the concept of disaster management. Disaster is, generally, described as combination of hazard and vulnerability. Ariyabandu (2003, p. 28) explains these concepts distinctly in the following way:

“hazard is defined as the probability of the occurrence of a dangerous phenomenon at a given place within a given period of time. ... On the other hand, vulnerability is defined as the degree of susceptibility to a hazard, or the lack of capacity to absorb the impact of a hazard and recover from it.”

Vulnerability also refers to a set of prevailing and consequential conditions which adversely affect the ability of a person, group or community to prevent, mitigate, prepare for and respond to hazardous events and recover from impact of natural hazards (Bhatti, 2003, p. 58; O'Brien, et al., 2006, p. 70). It is related not only to physical factors, but also to a range of social, economic, cultural and political factors (Ariyabandu, 2003, p. 28). Some contemporary studies suggest that hazards might have their origin in nature but these turn into disasters through societal process. For example, climatic hazards like flood, cyclone, drought, tidal wave etc. are meteorological risk but these turn into disasters when the structural and non-structural infrastructures of affected area are too shabby to cope with these risks (Bhatti, 2003, p. 58). Therefore, a disaster is an outcome of a hazard impacting on vulnerable populations. In this situation hazard by itself is not a disaster unless there are vulnerable populations who do not have the capability to combat it and who are unable to cope with it. UNDP (2007, p. 2) analyzes this issue more substantially. It defines disaster as a function of the risk process. It results from the combination of hazards, conditions of vulnerability and insufficient capacity or measures to reduce the potential negative consequences of risk. Natural hazards become disasters if they induce a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses, which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources.⁷

Therefore, managing disaster entails managing vulnerabilities that include five basic phases: prevention, preparedness, emergency response, recovery and mitigation (Bhatti, 2003, p. 59). *Prevention* includes the measures taken to impede the occurrence of a disaster. But it is not possible to prevent the occurrence of natural disasters fully, though the extent of its damages can be reduced (Ahmed, 1994, p. 33). *Preparedness* covers the activities designed in anticipation of a disaster to ensure that appropriate and effective action is taken earlier. These actions include the disaster plans, the training of responders, the maintenance of human, material and financial resources and the establishment of public education and information system (Kreps, et al., 2006, p. 19). *Emergency response* covers the indispensable services and activities that are undertaken during the initial impact or in the aftermath of a disaster including those to save lives and to prevent further damage to property (Bhatti, 2003; Kreps, et al., 2006; Kapucu, 2008). *Recovery* is the action or process of getting back something that has been lost (Hornby, 2000, p. 1063). Recovery, in disaster management, refers to the activities that are taken after the initial impact to develop socio-economic and environmental conditions that are destroyed by disaster aimed at achieving return to normality (Kapucu, 2008, p. 244), that is, disaster recovery activities are related to the reestablishment of pre-disaster social and economic routine provision of financial and other services to the victims, as well as repair of destroyed properties (Kreps, et al., 2006, p. 20). *Mitigation* involves the measures that can be adopted to minimize the destructive effects of hazards and to lessen the magnitude of disaster. These activities can occur before, during and aftermath of disaster and overlap of all phases of disaster management (Fernando, 2001, p. 2). In this paper, therefore, flood, cyclone, drought, tidal surge, tornado, cold wave, river

erosion, arsenic contamination of ground water are considered as disaster when it turns into hazardous event and affects a given place and the vulnerable people of that area who are not able to cope with it. On the other hand, disaster management is considered as an approach combination of prevention, preparedness, mitigation, emergency response and recovery to cope with hazardous situation created by above-mentioned natural hazards.

Community Participation

Community participation, generally, refers to the involvement of people in any project to solve their own problems or to develop their socio-economic conditions. They participate in setting goals, and preparing, implementing and evaluating plans and programs. The United Nations (1970) defines participation as the collective action by the various strata of people or interest groups. Basically, it is a dynamic group process in which all members of a group contribute, share or are influenced by the interchange of ideas and activities toward problem-solving or decision-making (Banki, 1981, p. 533 cited in Samad, 2002, p. 53). The crux of community participation is the exercise of ‘voices and choices’ of the community and the development of human, organizational and management capacity to solve problems as they arise in order to sustain the improvements made over the time (Sastry, 2001, p. 2). Community participation motivates people to work together where people feel a sense of community and recognize the benefits of their involvement. In this paper community participation is used as the process of people’s involvement in setting goals, and preparing, implementing and evaluating plans and programs in every phases of disaster management program where ‘voices and choices’ of the community are addressed adequately. This paper reviews whether people have active participation in disaster management process in Bangladesh.

4. Theoretical Underpinnings

The government of different countries, international, national and local (also voluntary) agencies have adopted comprehensive disaster management plans and programs, emphasizing on community participation with an intention of reducing the pains and sufferings of victims, shorten the number of loss of human lives and livestock (Mehta, 2009; United Nations, 2010). But a few decades ago, disasters were viewed as one-off events and only responded by governments and relief agencies without taking into account the social and economic implications and causes of these events. Initiatives were driven by outside experts that popularly known as a dominant approach (Allen, 2006; Heijmans and Victoria, 2001).

Previous literature related to disaster management (Islam, 1995; Heijmans and Victoria 2001; Murshed, 2003) showed that dominant (top-down) approach did not bring fruitful result in disaster management. Top-down intervention alone in disaster management was insufficient because such intervention often paid little attention to addressing community dynamics, perceptions and needs, ignored the potential of local resources and capacities that in some cases increased people’s vulnerability (Murshed, 2003, p. 146). The case of Central Luzon of the Philippines may be an example in this regard. The external aid agencies distributed nutritious astronaut’s biscuits in 1995 after typhoon *Mameng*. The people did not know the use of this biscuits. Therefore, many children became sick and suffered from headaches (Heijmans and Victoria, 2001, p. 16). Since the program was being implemented without considering the food habit of that area it did not bring positive result rather created health hazard to the children. This approach was also followed in Bangladesh and did not bring positive result in managing disaster (Islam, 1995, p. 239).

Considering the backdrop of dominant approach, for the last few years, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) has been holding regional and national training program on ‘community-based approaches to disaster management’ (Yodmani, 2001, p. 5) and philosophical notion has been shifted from dominant approach to alternative perspective (Ariyabandu, 1999). The ultimate goal of alternative perspective is to introduce community-based disaster management (CBDM) program. CBDM can be seen as risk reduction programs designed primarily by and for the people in certain disaster-prone areas where participation of the entire community is necessary. CBDM is a promising model in disaster management that incorporates the principles of community mobilization and organization. This method endeavors to reform the top-down approach that has failed to meet the needs of vulnerable populations and ignored the potential of local resources and capacities (Victoria, 2001 cited in Pyles 2007, p. 325). Proponents of the community-based approach believe that these are ‘suitable strategies’ for grasping the dynamics and complexity of vulnerability, addressing vulnerability and strengthening local capacities’ as vulnerability is manifested at the local level (Eynde and Veno, 1999, p. 171 cited

in Pyles 2007).

During this paradigm shift there has been growing realization that disaster mitigation is immensely effective at the community level (Murshed, 2003, p. 145), because the community people themselves are the first victims as well as responders (Ritchie, 2003, p. 102). So, disaster-prone community should be empowered with proper training and necessary information. The government of Bangladesh has also realized this fundamental belief in community-based disaster management and formulated disaster management policy, plans and programs inspired by philosophical notion of alternative perspective (MoFDM 2007 and DMB 2010).

5. Major Disasters in Bangladesh

Bangladesh, a low-lying deltaic country formed by the major river (the Padma, the Brahmaputra, and the Meghna) system with long coastline, is highly exposed to different types of natural disasters. Since the independence in 1971, the country has experienced 200 natural disasters causing loss of more than 600,000 lives, millions of livestock and leaving prolonged damage to property, quality of life and livelihoods (MoFA, 2006:7). The nature of major natural disasters occurred in Bangladesh after independence is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The Types of Natural Disasters Occurred in Bangladesh

Year	Types of Disaster	Number of Deaths
1985	Cyclone	11,069
1987	Flood	1,657
1988	Cyclone and Flood	7,457
1991	Cyclone	1,38,868
1997	Cyclone	550
1998	Flood	1050
2000	Flood	36
2004	Flood	800
2007	Cyclone	3406
2009	Cyclone	503

Source: Compiled by author from different sources

The table 1 shows that the people of Bangladesh have been frequently affected by different types of natural disasters. Though the number of casualties caused by the disasters occurred in 1985, 1988 and 1991 was very high but the disasters of other years (such as 1998, 2004 and 2007) caused prolonged damage.

6. Disaster Management Policy, Plans and Practices in Bangladesh

Although the government of Bangladesh prepared a Draft National Disaster Management Policy in 2008 (DMB, 2008) it has not yet been finalized (DMB, 2010). But the National Plan for Disaster Management 2010-2015 has been prepared in 2010. The plan has been developed in tune with the GoB Vision and MoFDM mission to reduce the vulnerability of the people, especially the poor and the disadvantaged, by bringing a paradigm shift in disaster management from traditional response and relief practice to a more comprehensive risk reduction culture. The main aspects of Draft Nation Disaster Management Policy and the National Plan for Disaster Management 2010-2015 are as follows:

1. Strengthening mechanism to build capacities for the community and institution at all levels;
2. Enhancing professional skills and knowledge of key personnel and strengthening capacities for risk assessment;
3. Community-based programming for preparedness, mitigation and risk reduction;
4. Promoting livelihood strategies and options for poor that incorporates disaster management and risk reduction practices; and
5. Addressing the issues of vulnerable groups i.e. the issues of women, children, disabled and other marginalized groups.

6. Developing partnership approach to disaster management involving all stakeholders – the government, local communities, NGOs, media, private sector, academia, and donor communities.
7. Mainstreaming disaster management and risk reduction into national policies and development processes (PRSP, MDGs).

The vision of disaster management of the GoB has intense relation with the Millennium Declaration of September 2000 that determined, among others, to protect the vulnerable. GoB is also determined to provide assistance and protection to children and all civilian populations that suffer disproportionately from the consequences of natural disasters so that they can resume normal life as soon as possible (MoFDM, 2007, p. 32). Though GoB has prepared National Plan for Disaster Management in 2010 disaster management activities have been being operated for long days under different projects. The GoB introduced disaster management program under a project “Support to Comprehensive Disaster Management” in 1993. After completion of this project in 2001, with the intention of continuing this effort, the government launched the comprehensive disaster management project (CDMP) in 2003 in the purpose of reducing unacceptable risks and improving response and recovery activities.

Disaster Management Plans

The Government of Bangladesh has adopted draft National Plan for Disaster Management (2007-2015) in 2007 and finalized it in 2010 as National Plan for Disaster Management 2010-2015 emphasizing on community participation in disaster management activities. It is a strategic document as well as an umbrella plan which provides the overall guideline for the relevant sectors and the disaster management committees at all levels to prepare and implement their area of roles specific plans. The Ministry of Food and Disaster Management being the focal ministry for disaster risk reduction and emergency management takes the leading role in disaster risk reduction and emergency management planning. In addition, there are a few hazards specific management plans, such as Flood Management Plan, Cyclone and Storm Surge and Tsunami Management Plan, Earthquake Management Plan, Drought Management Plan, River Erosion Management Plan, etc. Moreover, there is a detailed Disaster Management Plan for each district, *upazila*, union, and *paurashava* and City Corporation of the country. A district disaster management plan (DDMP) is the compilation of the *upazila* disaster management plans of the district. Similarly an *upazila* disaster management plan (UDMP) is the compilation of the union disaster management plans of that *upazila* prepared by the union DMCs. Therefore, DMCs at union and *paurashava* levels are mainly responsible for conducting the risk assessments and prepare the field level plans (DMB, 2010, pp. 48-52).

Institutional Framework of Disaster Management

The Ministry of Food and Disaster Management of the Government of Bangladesh is responsible for coordinating national disaster management initiatives across the country. In January 1999 the ministry issued the Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD) to guide and monitor disaster management activities in Bangladesh. The SOD describes the detailed roles and responsibilities of committees, ministries and other organizations concerned in disaster risk reduction and emergency management. A series of inter-related institutions, both at national and sub-national levels, have been created to ensure effective planning and coordination of disaster risk reduction and emergency response management (MoFDM, 2007, pp. 49-50) that are as follows:

Institutional framework at the national level

1. National Disaster Management Council (NDMC) headed by the Honorable Prime Minister to formulate and review the disaster management policies and issue directives to all concerns.
2. Inter-Ministerial Disaster Management Co-ordination Committee (IMDMCC) headed by the Honorable Minister in charge of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management (MoFDM) to implement disaster management policies and decisions of NDMC /Government.
3. National Disaster Management Advisory Committee (NDMAC) headed by an experienced person having been nominated by the Honorable Prime Minister.
4. Cyclone Preparedness Program Implementation Board (CPPIB) headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management to review the preparedness activities in the face of initial stage of an impending cyclone.
5. Disaster Management Training and Public Awareness Building Task Force (DMTATF) headed by the

- Director General of Disaster Management Bureau (DMB) to coordinate the disaster related training and public awareness activities of the government, NGOs and other organizations.
6. Focal Point Operation Coordination Group of Disaster Management (FPOCGDM) headed by the Director General of DMB to review and coordinate the activities of various departments/agencies related to disaster management and also to review the Contingency Plan prepared by departments concerned.
 7. NGO Coordination Committee on Disaster Management (NGOCCDM) headed by the Director General of DMB to review and coordinate the activities of NGOs concerned in the country.
 8. Committee for Speedy Dissemination of Disaster Related Warning/ Signals (CSDDWS) headed by the Director General of DMB to examine, ensure and find out the ways and means for the speedy dissemination of warning/ signals among the people.

Institutional framework at sub-national levels

1. District Disaster Management Committee (DDMC) headed by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) to coordinate and to review the disaster management activities at the district level.
2. *Upazila* (Sub-district) Disaster Management Committee (UZDMC) headed by the *Upazila Nirbahi Officer* (UNO- chief executive officer of *Upazila*) to coordinate and to review the disaster management activities at the *Upazila* level.
3. Union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC) headed by the Chairman of the Union *Parishad*¹ to coordinate, review and to implement the disaster management activities of the union concerned.
4. Pourashava Disaster Management Committee (PDMC) headed by Mayor of Pourashava (municipality) to coordinate, review and to implement the disaster management activities within its area of jurisdiction.
5. City Corporation Disaster Management Committee (CCDMC) headed by the Mayor of City Corporation to coordinate, review and implement the disaster management activities within its area of jurisdiction.

Disaster Management Practices in Bangladesh

Disaster management program in Bangladesh is the combination of both the development of physical infrastructure and non-structural practices (Asian Disaster Reduction Center n.d.:68-69). Development of physical infrastructure covers the activities such as construction of cyclone and flood shelters for emergency resort, and erection of flood protection embankments, drainage channel, sluice gates and regulators as safety measures against inundation by tidal waves, storm-surges and flooding, and establishment of emergency operation center. On the other hand, non-structural practices include preparedness action and strategies, and coordination among the actors involved (GoB, voluntary agencies, civil society, and affected community). Broadly it is concerned with adoption of disaster management legislation, national disaster management policy, disaster management plan; arrangement of training program and workshop, and introduction of institutional framework of disaster management with the establishment of Disaster Management Bureau, establishment of councils and committees at the national, district, *upazila* and union levels. The GoB has already taken initiatives for the development of physical infrastructure and non-structural practices. The notable actions of GoB are construction of cyclone and flood shelters, erection of flood protection embankments, adoption of disaster management plan, development of institutional framework, development of strong, simple and understandable warning system that is linked to local, regional and national information system, awareness raising campaign, training program in disaster preparedness, community first aid, and cyclone shelter maintenance, installation of drinking water and food storage facilities. The GoB also operates social safety net program to combat disaster situation (MoFDM, 2007, pp. 57-58).

Practice of Voluntary Agencies

Apart from these government policies, strategies and actions, voluntary agencies play pivotal role in disaster management in Bangladesh. For example, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BRCS) operates community-based

1 Union *Parishad* (Council) is the lowest tier of the three-tier rural Local Government System in Bangladesh. A Union consists of 10-15 villages with an average combined population of 24,500. The number of members in UP is fixed and does not depend on the size of the population in the Union. The UP consists of one chairperson, nine general members and three women members in reserved seats, for a total of 13 persons.

disaster preparedness program in Cox's Bazar district, a natural disaster-prone area of Bangladesh, of which coastal areas and off-shore islands are frequently affected by cyclone and tidal bore. The objective of this program is to enable the community to deal with natural disaster by strengthening the self-help capacities of community that is also the objective of International Decade (1990-2000) for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) (Sastry, 2001). The strategies of this community-based program are: the formation of Village Disaster Preparedness Committees (VDPCs), development of awareness raising campaign, training program in disaster preparedness, community first aid, cyclone warning signals, cyclone shelter maintenance, installation of drinking water and food storage facilities and construction of raised poultry sheds (Yodmani, 2001, p. 6).

CARE-Bangladesh also operates community-based disaster management programs. It used food-for-work strategy to help communities with community flood-proofing after the devastating flood of 1998. This strategy includes raising the plinth of house to a 5-year flood level, schools and community centers to a 20-year flood level, raising hand pump as well as village level saving scheme that are used as safety net during disaster to meet urgent humanitarian needs (ibid). Khatun (2001) found in a study that many plinth levels of houses were raised in cyclone-prone area as per their requirements.

Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) such as Grameen Bank, Proshika, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Association for Social Advancement (ASA) etc. also operate microcredit program that act as social safety net during disaster. Despite the strong debate regarding impact of microcredit on poverty alleviation, its role in risk management and vulnerability reduction has been acknowledged more conclusively. Zeller (2001) identified two major pathways through which access to microfinance services can help the poor to manage their risks and smooth their livelihoods. Pathway 1 leads to income smoothing through *ex ante* measures. It involves the provision of credit and savings services that enhance the level of productive capital and smooth income of the household of target groups. Pathway 2 leads to consumption smoothing through provision of consumption credit, withdrawal of savings, and insurance claims. Different studies show that microcredit services provided by NGOs/ MFIs helped their members to cope with natural disasters (Khatun, 2001; Islam, 2008; Siddika, 2008; Pender, 2010). On the contrary, commercial bank or cooperative bank provided any financial support to the victims (Islam, 2008:56). Hence, multiple use of microcredit could help the poor households better in dealing with disasters and climate change.

Other attributes of microfinance which are very much helpful in dealing with large-scale disasters are loan forgiveness in the areas affected by disasters, operating relief programs through microfinance networks, flow of information among the clients of microfinance organizations, and empowerment of women. Nevertheless, at the institutional level, MFIs offer a number of services at different stages of post-disaster rehabilitation such as provision of temporary loans, rescheduling of loan payment, asset replacement and housing loans, and loans for starting new activities, which can help clients in coping with the impact of natural disasters (Nagarajan, 1998).

People of Bangladesh use their indigenous knowledge, methods and strategy to cope with disaster for long days. They try to combat disaster situation with the help of their own resources, knowledge and experiences. They take shelter in comparatively better place during disaster (Nahar, 2001, pp. 399-400). The better shelter is also offered by other people during disaster as social responsibility (Sastry, 2001, p. 4) that are core aspect of Bangladeshi culture. Relatives, friends and neighbors offer their assistance with each other to cope with this situation that is the excellent instance of community feeling. For example, the case of *Sunamganj* district and comment of *Sofeda Begum* could be an excellent example. She said that they do not wait for the assistance from outside during disaster. They help each other to fight crisis. But the training received from NGO plays important role to secure them from disaster (Islam, 2008, p. 45). Another example of collective action of community is that the people of coastal area plant trees around their houses and beside the road as preparedness action that reduce the disaster risk during tidal surge by reducing wind and water speed (Hasan, n.d., pp. :11-12).

However, women also play additional role along with men during disaster over their regular duties. Women prepare mobile ovens, stock the firewood and dry food (Nasreen, 2001, pp. 318-319) and male take the responsibility of security and protection (Sastry, 2001, p. 4). People also announce the warning of cyclone or tidal bore through loud speaker of religious institutions (mosque, temple, pagoda etc.) or by beating drum so that people could take preparation to combat disaster. Evidence shows that preparedness can reduce the casualties and damages of disasters. For example, damages of devastating cyclone *Sidr* of 15 November 2007 in Bangladesh were, to some extent, reduced with early warning through electronic media and remarkable job of volunteers in warning the people and help evacuating them earlier. Data show that 3363 people were killed in *Sidr* of 2007, where as the cyclone of 1991 caused death of 1,38,000 people (DMB, 2008, p. 3). Therefore, it might be said that better preparedness enhance effective response to disaster. Although there is available

evidence of community participation in preparedness and response phases but data is not available relating to community participation in policy cycle.

7. Barriers to Community Participation in Disaster Management

The previous section shows that people of disaster-prone area of Bangladesh, in some cases, response to disaster in effective manner. But different studies show that because of traditional thinking of community, bureaucratic attitude of government officials, scarcity of resources and prevalent socio-cultural norms and values, community participation in disaster management was not possible to achieve at desired level (Ahmed, 1994; Rahman, 2008). The barriers to community participation are discussed below:

1. Old-aged thinking of distributing relief materials during disaster is existed among the people of Bangladesh. Many of them think that it is the responsibility of government and/or voluntary agencies to provide all the facilities to the disaster victims. Therefore, to introduce the risk reduction culture and practices takes time to replace the longstanding relief culture (Rahman, 2008).
2. The entrenched hierarchical administrative set-up is not eager to accept the opinion of illiterate but wise and experienced local people in policy cycle (Ahmed, 1994, p. 37). The reluctance of most of the officials of local level administration to take into consideration of people's perception about disaster, leave little scope for inputs to decision-making for participatory approach to disaster management.
3. Availability of financial resources is a vital component of disaster management program. Although the Government of Bangladesh approved annual allocation of US\$ 12 million (Rahman, 2008), it is far from adequate demand in the highly populated country with multiple hazards. Furthermore, the national and local voluntary agencies have lack of adequate financial resources to operate community-based program. Due to scarcity of resources the people could not repair disaster shelter, road or culverts by themselves.
4. Relationship between men and women is institutionalized in rural society of Bangladesh. At the heart of this system of social arrangement is the institution of *purdah* or female seclusion. Practice of *purdah* inhibits the mobility of women (Kabeer, 2000, p. 34). Even during disaster women do not want to leave their residence and take shelter in the public buildings. Therefore, prevalent norms and values remain a challenge to community participation in disaster management.
5. Limitation of sanitation facilities for women in public buildings is another barrier (Nahar, 2001) to implementation of CBDM program. The disaster affected people very often take shelter at school, college or other academic institutions when they do not get refuge at disaster shelters where sanitation facilities are not available for women that discourages them (women) to take shelter in these places. Therefore, lack of facilities remains a challenge to effective implementation of CBDM.

8. Role of Social Work to Enhance Community Participation

Social Work intervenes in disaster management in different ways that affect individuals, families, organizations and community as well. Hence, Social Work practice could take the form of casework, group and community work, or social policy and planning (Tan, 2009). Areas of concern of Social Work in disaster situation include coping with traumatic stress, resource mobilization for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and coordination of various intervention systems (Zaour, 1996 cited in Pyles 2007, p. 321). Although Social Work is involved in psychosocial interventions in disasters, the profession could play more attention to social development (Pyles 2007:321) employing participatory approach.

It is stated earlier that enormous emphasis has been given on community participation in disaster management programs in Bangladesh. But to ensure spontaneous participation of community remains a challenge due to socioeconomic factors that are mentioned in previous section. Social Work could play vital role to enhance community participation by using its method and techniques as it devoted to enhance human well-being and help

to meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed and living in poverty (Mathbor 2007, p. 1). Social Work could enhance community participation through community organization that brings about and maintains adjustment between social welfare needs and resources of community. Function of community organization includes planning, fund raising, training, evaluating and so on (Dunham, 1957). Basically, it is such a critical intervention that restructures power, develops alternative institutions and maintains or revitalizes neighborhoods (Fisher, 1994). But effectiveness of these interventions varies according to socio-cultural situation of a particular community. Then what happens in Bangladesh? In this paper I aim to shed light on this issue, that is, how does social work address the above-mentioned barriers to community participation in community-based disaster management programs?

Social workers could create awareness among illiterate and ignorant rural people about their duties and responsibilities as a member of a particular community during crises moment and motivate them to participate in collective actions. They can make the people aware about the notion of self-help is the best help and motivate them to take shelter in safe place before beginning the hazard, and to stock dry food, drinking water and medicine for primary health care. By adopting these measures social workers can play vital role to reduce the damages and sufferings of people affected by disaster and make CBDM programs a success as well as play key role in paradigm shift from culture of relief to preparedness and mitigation.

Success of CBDM programs mostly depends on how the officials of different agencies treat the community people. But the member of bureaucratic organization is not eager to accept the participation of rural people in policy cycle (Ahmed, 1994, p. 37). Social workers could make awareness among bureaucrats about acknowledging the social dignity of people and treat them with respect in policy making process. Social worker also can enhance community participation by using several assessment and research tools. One such example is participatory rural appraisal (PRA). PRA, as an action research tool, involves community members in defining and working to solve local concern (Chambers, 1999). Social worker could empower the community to build social capital and mobilize the community. Furthermore, they raise fund from community chest, rich man of the community, and donors, use the money appropriately by preparing proper budget, and keep record for ensuring financial transparency.

However, social workers arrange training for imparting knowledge to the volunteers and member of a particular community in order to ensure their meaningful participation in community development programs. Social workers' active involvement is also pivotal in imparting knowledge among the community about consequences and possible preventive measure of disaster so that the member of UDMC at local level could prepare disaster management plan properly. They could also disseminate information about climate change, and role of community to face the climate change to enhance people's participation in CBDM programs. Social workers may use the folk media in disseminating message to large number of people (Mathbor, 2007, p. 366). To stage street drama; to show film, documentary, and video show, and informal discussion may be the important means of disseminating information among the villagers.

It should be noted that every member of a particular community is not equally intelligent, efficient and experienced. Therefore, it may not be possible for each and every member of the affected community to contribute in disaster management program equally. On the other hand, each and every member of a particular community is not equally affected. So, the social workers have to assess who are mostly affected, with whom the program will be operated and who will contribute more to implement. Social workers can provide a comprehensive and multi-dimensional assessment and intervention in this regard through Strength Approach (Saleebey, 2006).

Social workers also play vital role in preventing/reducing disaster by encouraging people to develop mangrove forest in coastal areas (Sastri, 2001, p. 6) that will be also helpful for environment conservation. They may share their ideas with local people to protect this forest too. It is stated earlier that contamination of ground water is an environmental threat and a serious health risk in Bangladesh (MoFDM, 2007, p. 25). Social workers could play pivotal role in arsenic mitigation by creating awareness among the people of arsenic contaminated area about the consequences of using arsenic contaminated water and arsenicosis; importance of collecting and preserving arsenic free water, and maintaining and protecting the source of arsenic free water (Sarker, 2008, pp. 122-123). They can also motivate the people to use arsenic free water for everyday work and to harvest rain-water. It should be noted that poor people are most vulnerable to natural disaster (DMB, 2010, p. 26). So, social workers could introduce multiple livelihood system for economic survival of poor people after disaster. They could also suggest the people to adopt substitute occupation rather than depending on single occupation (Laird, 2008, p. 145). These occupations may include combining farming with small business, fishing, wage-labor, services or

producing commodities for sale.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

Alternative perspective of disaster management, of which main principle is to incorporate people's opinion and ensure community participation in every stage of policy cycle, emerged on the backdrop of dominant approach. Bangladesh has given priority on community participation in disaster management inspired by main principle of alternative perspective. But it is found in this paper that there are some limitations of community participation. Social workers could play constructive role to enhance community participation as they have extended networks in communities, they are familiar with community resources and potentiality of local leaders and are equipped with necessary knowledge for addressing complex situation resulting in emergency at local and national levels (Mathbor, 2007, pp. 366-367; Yanay and Benjamin, 2005, pp. 2007:330). They play their role during and post-disaster situation to operate relief work, coordinate the chaotic situation of disaster, and create access to resources for vulnerable population. They also provide services for reducing traumatic situation. Therefore, we need more efficient and trained social workers as the propensity of natural disaster is increasing day by day because of climate change (Ariyabandu, 2003, p. 26). In the purpose of producing skilled, trained and efficient social workers, universities and academic institution have to incorporate the disaster management issues in their curriculum so that the new generation of social workers handle the disaster situation efficiently. In addition, the government has to allocate more funds in disaster management sector, government officials have to give-up bureaucratic attitude and have to be more people friendly to make CBDM program a success.

References

- Abrar, Chowdhury R. and S. Nurullah Azad (2004). *Coping with Displacement: Riverbank Erosion in North-West Bangladesh*. Rangpur: RDRS.
- Ahmed, Salehuddin (1994). "Key-note Paper on Disaster Preparedness and Management. *SAARC Workshop Report*. Edited by Fazlul Bari, Kamaluddin Ahmed and Begum Nurun Naher. Comilla: BARD
- Allen, Katrina M. (2006). "Community-based disaster preparedness and climate adaptation: local capacity-building in the Philippines". *Disasters*, 30(1):81-101.
- Ariyabandu, M.M. (1999). *Defeating Disasters: Ideas for Action*. ITDG: Duryog Nivaran, Colombo.
- Ariyabandu, M.M. (2003). "Brining together Disaster and Development – Concepts and Practice, Some Experiences from South Asia." In Pradeep Sahni and Madhavi Malalgoda Ariyabandu (Eds.), *Disaster Risk Reduction in South Asia*. New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India.
- Asian Disaster Reduction Center (n.d.). *Total Disaster Risk Management – Good Practices*. On-Going Disaster

- Mitigation Practices in Bangladesh. Retrieved from http://www.adrc.asia/publications/TDRM2005/TDRM_Good_Practicies?PDF/PDF2005e/chapter3_3.3.2-2pdf on 25.04.2009.
- Banki, Evan S. (1981). *Dictionary of Administration and Management*. Los Angeles: System Research Institute.
- Bhatti, Amjad (2003). “Disaster Risk Reduction through Livelihood Concerns and Disaster Policy in South Asia.” In Pradeep Sahni and Madhavi Malalgoda Ariyabandu (Eds.) *Disaster Risk Reduction in South Asia*. New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India.
- Blanco, Ana V. Rojas (2006). Local initiatives and adaptation to climate change. *Disasters*, 30(1):140-147.
- DMB (2008). *National Disaster Management Policy*. Ministry of Food and Disaster Management. Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh.
- DMB (2008). *National Plan for Disaster Management 2010-2015*. Disaster Management & Relief Division. Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh.
- Dunham, Arthur (1957). *Community Welfare Organization: Principles and Practices*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
- Fernando, W.B.J. (2001). Disaster Mitigation. In Pradeep Sahni, Alka Dhameja and Uma Medury (Eds.) *Disaster Mitigation: Experiences and Reflections*. New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India Private Limited.
- GoB (2008). *Bangladesh Economic Survey 2008 (in Bangla)*. Department of Finance. Ministry of Finance. The People’s Republic of Bangladesh.
- Hasan, Mohammad Tareq (n.d.). *Surviving Cyclone: the Indigenous Wisdom*. Dhaka: Unnayan Onneshan.
- Heijmans, Annelies and Lorna Victoria (2001). *Citizenry-Based & Development-Oriented Disaster Response. Experiences and Practices in Disaster Management of the Citizens’ Disaster Response Network in the Philippines*. Centre for Disaster Preparedness retrieved from www.proventionconsortium.org on 20.01.2011.
- Hornby, A S (2000). *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English*. Sixth edition. Edited by Sally Wehmeier. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hossain, Md. Anwar (2008). *Women’s Participation in Social Change Decision: A Study of Two Union Parishads in Bangladesh*. Unpublished M.Phil. Thesis, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway.
- Ikeda, Keiko (n.d.). *How Women’s Concerns are shaped in Participatory Planning: A case study of community-based disaster management in Bangladesh*. Retrieved from http://homepage2.nifty.com/devgen/siryu/contents/ikeda_paper_e.doc on 11.02.2009.
- Islam, M. Aminul (1995). *Environment Land Use and Natural Hazards in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: University of Dhaka.
- Islam, Sirajul (2008). *Role of Microfinance Tools in Disaster Risk Reduction: A Study in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka*. Bangladesh Country Report. Dhaka: INAFI Asia & Bangladesh.
- Kabeer, Naila (2000). *The Power to Choose: Bangladeshi Women and Labour Market. Decision in London and Dhaka*. London: Verso.
- Kapucu, Naim (2008). “Collaborative emergency management: better community organizing, better public preparedness and response”. *Disasters*, 32: 239-262.
- Khatun, Hafiza (2001). “Survival of Disaster Affected Women: Rehabilitation of Nalchira Widow Colony,

- Hatia.” In Nasreen Ahmad and Hafiza Khatun (Ed.) *Disaster Issues and Gender Perspectives. Conference Proceedings*. Dhaka: Bangladesh Geographical Society and CARE Bangladesh. pp. 403-418.
- Kreps, Gary A. et al. (2006). *Facing Hazards and Disasters: Understanding Human Dimensions*. Washing, D.C.: The National Academies Press.
- Laird, Siobhan E. (2008). “Social Work Practice to Support Survival Strategies in Sub-Saharan Africa.” *British Journal of Social Work* 38:135-151.
- Mathbor, Golam M. (2007). “Enhancement of community preparedness for natural disasters. The role of social work in building social capital for sustainable disaster relief and management.” *International Social Work* 50(3):357-369.
- Mehta, Manjari (2009). “Reducing Disaster Risk through Community Resilience in the Himalayas.” In Elaine Emerson and P.G. Dhar Chakrabarti (Ed.) *Women, Gender and Disaster. Global Issues and Initiatives*. New Delhi: Sage Publications. pp. 57-74.
- MoFA (2006). *Disaster Management in Bangladesh*. External Publishing Wing, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh
- MoFDM (2007). *National Plan for Disaster Management. 2007-2015*. Draft National Plan v.6. Ministry of Food and Disaster Management. The Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh.
- Morshed, Monzu (2007). *Indigenous Coping Mechanisms in Combating Flood*. Unpublished Master’s Thesis. BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Murshed, Zubair (2003). “Community Capacity Building for Risk Reduction in South Asia.” In Pradeep Sahni and Madhavi Malalgoda Ariyabandu (Eds.) *Disaster Risk Reduction in South Asia*. New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India.
- Nagarajan, Geetha (1998). *Microfinance in the wake of Natural Disasters: Challenges and Opportunities*. Microenterprise Best Practices. Posted on <http://www.mip.org>.
- Nahar, Nazmun (2001). “Coping with Cyclone Disasters: A Study in Two Coastal Locations in Bangladesh.” In Nasreen Ahmad and Hafiza Khatun (Ed.) *Disaster Issues and Gender Perspectives. Conference Proceedings*. Dhaka: Bangladesh Geographical Society and CARE Bangladesh. pp. 389-402.
- Nasreen, Mahbuba (2001). “Coping Mechanisms of Rural Women in Bangladesh during Floods.” In Nasreen Ahmad and Hafiza Khatun (Ed.) *Disaster Issues and Gender Perspectives. Conference Proceedings*. Dhaka: Bangladesh Geographical Society and CARE Bangladesh. pp. 311-324.
- O’Brien, Geoff; Phil O’Keefe; Joanne Rose and Ben Wisner (2006). “Climate change and disaster management.” *Disaster*, 30(1):64-80.
- Pender, James S. (2010). *Climate Change, Its Impacts and Possible Community-Based Responses in Bangladesh (2nd Ed.)*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Church of Bangladesh.
- Pyles, Loretta (2007). “Community organizing for post-disaster social development. Locating social work.” *International Social Work* 50(3):321-333.
- Rahman, Muhammad Fazlur (2008). *Interim national progress report on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for*

Action. Dhaka: DMB.

Ritchie, George N. (2003). “Disaster Risk Reduction by Education, Information and Public Awareness.” In Pradeep Sahni and Madhavi Malalgoda Ariyabandu (Eds.), *Disaster Risk Reduction in South Asia*. New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India

Samad, Muhammad (2002). *Participation of the Rural Poor in Government and NGO Programs*. Dhaka: Mowla Brothers.

Sampath, Priya (2001). “Vulnerability Reduction at Community Level: The New Global Paradigm.” In Pardeep Sahni, Alka Dhameja and Uma Medury (Ed.) *Disaster Mitigation. Experiences and Reflections*. New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India Private Limited. pp. 200-210.

Sastry, K.R. (2001). *Improving Community Participation and People’s Awareness in Disaster Reduction*. The paper is prepared as a contribution to the first edition of the Global Blueprints of Change and for use in conjunction with the International Workshop on Disaster Reduction convened on 19-22 August 2001 in Reston VA.

Siddika, Zubayda (2008). *Women’s Livelihood Resilience and Adaptation Options for Climate Change*. Unpublished Master’s Thesis. BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Tan, Ngoh Tiong (2009). Disaster Management: Strengths and Community Perspective. *Journal of Global Social Work Practice*, Vol. 2, No. 1.

UNDP (2007). *Human Development Report 2007/2008. Links between Natural Disasters, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Risk Reduction: A Critical Perspective*. UNDP Human Development Report Office.

United Nations (1970). *Social Change and Social Development Policy in Latin America*. New York: ECIA.

United Nations (2010). *Local Government & Disaster Risk Reduction: Good Practices and Lessons Learned*. Geneva: UNISDR.

Yodmani, Suvit (2001). *Disaster Risk Management and Vulnerability Reduction: Protecting the Poor*. This paper delivered at the “ Social Protection Workshop 6: Protecting Communities – Social Funds and Disaster Management” under the Asia and Pacific Forum on Poverty : Reforming Policies and Institutions for Poverty Reduction, held at the Asian Development Bank, Manila, 5-9 Feb. 2001.

Zeller, Manfred (2001). “The Safety Net Role of Micro-Finance for Income and Consumption Smoothing.” In Nora Lustig (Ed.) *Shielding the Poor: Social Protection in Developing Countries*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution and the Inter-American Development Bank.