

Policy and Institutional Aspects of Tornado Risk Management : Case of Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT: Tornadoes are identified as one of the unpredictable localized hazards in Bangladesh. Although localized in its climatic interpretation yet it has wider implication in policy terms. The existing disaster management framework of Bangladesh and the information system reveals the fact that the tornado is one of the neglected severe disasters which is becoming more frequent under the emerging climate change scenario. Tornado risk reduction could be more effectively be managed through strengthening the capacity of local disaster management entities like Union Disasters Management Committee (UDMC) and Upazila DMC. As being part of the community, UDMCs are in better position to respond at first but these local entities are not equipped appropriately. Moreover, Standing Order on Disaster Management (SoD) of Government of Bangladesh (GoB) explicitly identifies the role of the UDMC for tornadoes as it does regarding other disasters. However, tornado as a hazard draws little attention as elaborations are bias to floods and cyclones mostly. The popular perception on roles and responsibilities of different disaster management committees are equally affected with the similar mindset. Therefore, tornadoes are mostly dealt from a traditional response approach in absence of an early warning system and a dissemination framework. A community friendly early warning mechanism might help UDMCs to prepare for and respond to tornadoes more effectively than ever. Tornado being localized disaster poses an ‘add-on’ effect on vulnerability for people living at disaster risk. Thus, there is a need as well as scope to devote further policy and institutional strengthening attention to a localized disaster including tornadoes.

KEYWORDS: Standing Order on Disaster, Disaster Management Committees and localized.

Tornadoes: local disaster but a national concern!

Tornadoes are identified as one of the common hazards in Bangladesh. Although localized in its climatic interpretation yet it has wider implication in policy terms. Because, people who suffer due to fragile livelihood, unpredictable and limited access to life saving services and lower level of institutional preparedness become even more vulnerable when a sudden on-set disaster like tornado strikes. In cumulative terms, local disasters, such as tornadoes, could be seriously damaging to development gains and exacerbating poverty when added to the impact of national

ing to development gains and exacerbating poverty when added to the impact of national scale disasters. Similarly, communities those are devastated by a sudden local disaster are surely less prepared for a bigger and regular disaster. Local disasters pose an ‘add-on’ effect on vulnerability for people living at disaster risk. Thus, there is a need as well as scope to devote further policy attention to a localized disaster including tornados.

Policy, Legal and Institutional Context

The Government of Bangladesh recognized the significance of shocks caused by natural disasters. The first Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in 2005 contained a discrete policy matrix on comprehensive disaster management as a contributing factor towards poverty reduction. The current planning for the second PRSP, for 2009 to 2011, has also recognizes recurrent natural disasters – accentuated by climate change – as a major vulnerability.

While it is highly vulnerable to natural hazards, Bangladesh also has a long history of coping with major disasters. Its government and people have a wealth of experience in preparing for, and responding to, disaster events. In recent years, Bangladesh has been increasingly recognized as a leader in adopting a more holistic approach to risk reduction. In line with the global shift in thinking on approaches to disasters, and most specifically with the strategic priorities of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), the stated vision of the GoB is to "reduce the risk of people, especially the poor and the disadvantaged, from the effects of natural, environmental and human induced hazards, to a manageable and acceptable humanitarian level. Bangladesh is actively committed to achieving the strategic objective of the HFA.

The only current legal frameworks addressing disaster risk reduction in Bangladesh are:

The Standing Orders on Disasters (January 1997)

SOD provides a detailed institutional framework for disaster risk reduction and emergency management. It outlines detailed roles and the responsibilities of ministries, divisions, departments, various committees at different levels, and other organizations involved in disaster risk reduction and emergency management. The SOD created a series of interrelated committees, at both national and sub-national levels, to ensure effective planning and coordination of disaster risk reduction and emergency response management at all levels.

The existing disaster management framework of Bangladesh could respond to such necessity by continuously strengthening the capacity of local disaster management entities like Union Disasters Management Committee (UDMC). As being part of the community UDMCs are in better position to respond at first. Moreover, Standing Order for on Disaster Management (SoD) of Government of Bangladesh (GoB) explicitly identifies the role of the UDMC for tornados as it

does regarding other disasters. However, tornado as a hazard draws little attention as elaborations are bias to floods and cyclones mostly. The popular perception on roles and responsibilities of different disaster management committees are equally affected with the similar mindset. Therefore, tornados are mostly dealt from a traditional response approach in absence of an early warning system and a dissemination framework. A community friendly early warning mechanism might help UDMCs to prepare for and respond to tornados more effectively than ever.

The SOD was revised in 2008 through a consultative process lead by the Disaster Management Bureau and CDMP and referred to MoFDM for finalization of the revised version. The revision includes earthquakes and urban hazards, and revises some of the roles and responsibilities of the Disaster Management Bureau and other key bodies under SOD.

The Allocation of Business

For the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management (MoFDM) setting out the mandate and roles for the ministry in relation to all tasks pertaining to ensuring food security and disaster risk reduction. With the Standing Orders on Disaster issued in January 1997, the GoB created a well-defined disaster management institutional mechanism. The MoFDM is the institution with overall responsibility for coordinating national disaster management efforts across all agencies. The MoFDM is responsible for setting policy and planning for issues relating to the overall food system, food policy, disaster risk reduction and emergency response management.

Concluding Remark

Bangladesh as it is one of the most hit countries in the world, behind the United States and Canada¹, tornado risk reduction needs special attention which is mostly dealt from a traditional response approach in absence of an early warning system and a dissemination framework. A community friendly early warning mechanism might help UDMCs to prepare for and respond to tornados more effectively than ever. The SOD was revised in 2008 through a consultative process lead by the Disaster Management Bureau and CDMP and referred to MoFDM for finalization of the revised version. The revision includes earthquakes and urban hazards but tornado related issues could be added, and revises some of the roles and responsibilities of the Disaster Management Bureau and other key bodies under SOD.

¹ Edwards, Rodger. "[Tornado FAQ](#)". [NOAA](#). Retrieved 2008-08-23