

## **Political Impact on Natural Disaster Management and the Influence of Civil Society: Cases of Two Cyclones in Bangladesh**

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### **ABSTRACT**

If we analyze the history of natural disasters relating to political impacts, we can see that there are many direct or indirect impacts of disaster management, including the aid distribution in the political arena. The political scenario concerns how the government is handling the aid distribution and how the other significant actors are reacting to the situation. Do different political situations create differences in disaster response? Here the facts of the Bhola cyclone of 1970 and the 2007 Sidr cyclone in Bangladesh have been engaged to analyze these questions. These two cyclones occurred during two different political situations in two different times but at the same land area. This research will help to understand natural disaster management relating to political aspects, which will then contribute to better natural disaster management for Bangladesh. The method is qualitative with secondary data and various published scholarly articles reviewed for this research. The findings suggest that politics has a significant role in managing natural disaster. And the natural disaster management pattern leaves an impact on the government and current political context. In the case of the Bhola cyclone, the mismanagement of the government impacted the 1970's voting outcome. On the other hand, in the case of the Sidr cyclone, the caretaker government impacted natural disaster management in the country in a different way. Through these historical impacts the author identifies from a political perspective the challenges of natural disasters and relief distribution, and then recommends the necessary directions to support the government for better management.

**Keywords:** Bhola Cyclone, Cyclone Sidr, Politics, Government, Relief

### **Introduction**

Bangladesh is often at risk for natural disasters. Maplecroft's Climate Change Vulnerability Index projects that by 2025 for climate change Bangladesh can come under "extreme risk." As per the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Bangladesh is the most "climate vulnerable country" (Diya and Bussell, 2017). And, in the list of natural disasters of Bangladesh cyclones have a significant role historically. There were many deadly cyclones affecting Bangladesh in many years (e.g., 1970, 1991, 2007, 2009). But the Bhola cyclone of 1970 (hereafter Bhola) and the Sidr cyclone of 2007 (hereafter Sidr) can be analyzed to understand the impact of natural

disasters on national politics and vice versa. The national historical and political situation of these two specific cyclones are examined here, since these two cyclones are related to two different political scenarios, they can be compared for a better understanding of national disaster management. Bhola and Sidr both occurred during the military-run government, but the countries were not same and not the time as well. As for Bhola Cyclone it held at East Pakistan, but the cyclone Sidr in Bangladesh, though both are the same land area. [hrase this last sentence; not clear what you mean] In the case of Bhola the impact of cyclone management in the electoral result was prominent. And, in the case of Sidr, the military-run government and the political situation impacted the disaster management in various ways. So, the political context of these two cyclones is especially useful to analyze the political aspect of natural disaster management.

Bhola is regarded as the deadliest cyclone of history. Returning from the cyclone affected areas, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman said, “In many areas of Patuakhali, Bhola, and Noakhali, barely 20% to 25% of the total population has survived” (Francis, 2019). From this cyclone, the lives of millions of people were highly affected and “between 200,000 and 500,000 people” died (Biswas and Daly, 2020). On the other hand, Sidr affected nine million people (Aase, 2020), making the humanitarian situation in coastal areas vulnerable. Bhola occurred during the time of United Pakistan (West and East Pakistan) and influenced the partition of the country. And, Sidr occurred during the military-backed Caretaker Government, which governed the country after their legitimate period.

### *Research Question*

The research's central aim is to analyze natural disaster management from a political perspective. How does the political context and government affect natural disaster management, and how does natural disaster management impact the government and the political context? Along with finding the answer to this central question, the research's aim is to evaluate the role of aid distribution and civil society in this arena. Taking two historical cyclones of Bangladesh from two different political periods, the author has tried to find the answers to these questions.

### *Significance of the Study*

As mentioned, natural disasters are a hot topic in the current global situation relating with climate change. This topic has had a great influence on the national context of discussion, undeniably. There are many studies regarding natural disasters. Natural disasters are being studied not only for development studies or humanitarian studies, but also for their influence on literature, political science, history, etc. There are studies on the political concerns of natural disaster management. But, the impact of natural disaster management in political shifts needs more in-depth analysis, relating especially to post-disaster relief distribution and the role of civil society. This research has tried to focus on these issues to support current and future disaster management studies. As the research concerns two cyclone situations in Bangladesh, it may help policy makers and the

government of Bangladesh to take further actions, learning from the historical impact of these cyclones.

## **Literature Review**

The article “‘Cyclone Not Above Politics’: East Pakistan, disaster politics, and the 1970 Bhola Cyclone” by Sravani Biswas and Patrick Daly (2021) characterized Bhola as a “new dimension” for the “already simmering political crisis.” They tried to determine the connecting knot among natural disasters and governance from this cyclone. The argument is whether Bhola was a “critical juncture” for the political shift. The researcher in the article dealt with the model and disaster-politics framework of Pelling and Dill (2010). From this framework, Biswas and Daly identified Bhola as a “tipping point” for political transformation. But their research denied that Bhola was a critical juncture for political change. Explaining the pre-existing political situation, the authors opine that, as Bhola did not bring any new political actors onto the scene, so it can be seen as a “form of an accelerated status quo.” The researchers mention that the definition of status quo as used in Pelling and Dill’s model does not fully suit the Bhola case, since the cyclone did not benefit that time’s extant political power, but rather undermined it. The authors find that while Bhola did not create any new political leaders or actors, it created an extended demand for the extant political actors who were established already. The authors captured the political impact of Bhola very well, but mostly they focused on the extent of impact and how to define the impact. The article, “The final straw? Bhola cyclone, 1970 election, disaster politics, and the making of Bangladesh” by Islam, Chatterjee and Basar (2023) has discussed the impact of Bhola on the general election of then United Pakistan. The authors argue that the politico-environmental perspective is largely missed when liberation war scholars explain the partition of Pakistan.

The articles of Biswas and Daly along with that of Islam, Chatterjee and Basar point out the significance of Bhola in shaping the national political transformation. But, through their research they have focused on the ecology and environment for politico-historical analysis. The article expresses that “this ‘natural disaster’ turned out also to be a ‘political disaster’.” Both the articles on Bhola explained the importance of Bhola in national politics. But, in distinction from those review, the author here tries to express the impact of Bhola and Sidr together and comparatively.

Bimal Kanti Paul, in his article “Why relatively fewer people died? The case of Bangladesh’s Cyclone Sidr” (2009) has compared the death rate along with other factors between Sidr of 2007 and the Gorky cyclone of 1991. To compare the cyclones, the author presented some data of both cyclones as per his research and from previous research on the subject. He argued that both cyclones were Category IV, even though very less people died during Sidr than in Gorky. To describe this, he upholds the initiatives taken as disaster preparedness since Bhola in 1970. He also pointed to the government initiative, ecological factors, low tide factor, timing, and duration factor,

etc. The political factor of Sidr was not discussed, but the government initiatives undertaken in response to Sidr were discussed in the article.

Through review of the relief lists, Maren Aase (2020) showed the relief politics in the article entitled “Listing for change? Exploring the politics of relief lists in Bangladesh after Cyclone Sidr.” The author commented on the elite dominance over the poor in rural areas, relief list economy, the vulnerability of the relief needed by the people, etc. The role of government and other non-state actors (including the international actors) in relief politics were discussed. These two articles have shown research from two perspectives, one to explain the less death rate and the other the politics of relief lists. But the research being reported here shows the vice versa connection between national politics and natural disasters.

### **Research Methodology**

The approach of this research is qualitative. As the research was targeted to identify the political impact on natural disasters, which needs more in-depth understanding rather than merely statistical data, the qualitative approach fits the research more than does quantitative or the mixed methods approach. The research has been conducted by mainly collecting secondary data from related research papers and websites and news articles which were accessible. The data collection focused on the two most important historical cyclones of Bangladesh: Bhola and Sidr. The author went through an in-depth literature review for the secondary data, before analyzing the data for the research findings presented herein.

### **Bhola Cyclone and Its Political Impact**

Bhola was a tropical cyclone that occurred in the East Pakistan (which is now Bangladesh) on 12 November 1970. As per World Bank data, 4.8 million people were affected by the cyclone (Hossain, 2018). For the high death rate and long-term damage, the cyclone is considered worldwide as one of the deadliest cyclones of recorded history. But, from cyclone intensity scales, it was not the strongest cyclone that was ever recorded. The circumstances of the place and time had an impact (Islam et al., 2023). That is why the cyclone is not remembered only for its deadliest nature, but also for the great political impact it left.

#### *The Existing Political Unrest*

To analyze the political impact of Bhola, we need to know that the political situation was critical from the beginning of the journey of United Pakistan. Pakistan was born after the British division of India and Pakistan, the two separate territories together forming one country only for the religious similarity. But, in these two lands, not only were the territories different, but also the culture and traditions were different. This was the result of British colonialism. So, the United

Pakistan was divided between East and West Pakistan. West Pakistan led the government, though the East Pakistanis (Bengalis) had the higher population. Just after the birth of United Pakistan, there was a conflict regarding the national language. The Pakistan Government wanted Urdu as the national language even for the Bengalis. So, the Language Movement of 1952 took place from that time. From 1948 to 1970 there was a series of events and evidence of neglect and exploitation of successive Pakistan Governments of East Pakistan in every sector. The divided land of United Pakistan was divided politically as well. Awami League, led by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, had announced a 6-points program, which is regarded as the “charter of freedom” of East Pakistan from West Pakistan’s exploitation. A conspiracy case was filed by the government against Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The Awami League leaders were put in jail and there was then a movement in East Pakistan against the oppressions of the Pakistani government. In 1969, there was a Mass Uprising by the Bengali people, known at the time as a democratic political uprising.

During these periods of movement, many East Pakistanis lost their lives. So, the political situation was one of continuing unrest. The Bengalis of East Pakistan were strongly disappointed in the Pakistani Government because of their long-term exploitation, whereas Awami League was gaining huge popularity throughout East Pakistan. So, the cyclone happened in the turbulent political time of West Pakistan and East Pakistan tensions.

### *The Failure and Negligence by the Pakistani Government in Managing the Cyclone*

During the 1969 mass uprising the “All Party Students Action Committee” was formed by the Students of East Pakistan. This action committee published “11 points” based on the 6-point demands developed by Sheikh Mujib. Among these 11-point demands, the 8-number point clearly mentioned the need of the West Pakistan government to take flood control measures in East Pakistan. It states, “To take steps towards flood control measures in East Pakistan, and to ensure overall utilization of water resources” (Banglapedia, 2012).

Gordon Dunn, National Hurricane Center Specialist in Miami, was engaged after the 1960 cyclone for advising the government regarding the cyclone issue, and he recommended embankments and cyclone shelters in the rural areas of East Pakistan. This recommendation was not followed by the Pakistani Government. The Flood Action Plan (FAP) in East Pakistan was a failure, as the allocated funds were not provided by the government. Pakistan’s Meteorological Department before Bhola Cyclone failed to provide enough signals and warnings for the coastal districts (Biswas and Daly, 2020).

The government not only failed to take precautions before the cyclone; they failed in providing relief to the flood-affected people in a timely and effective manner. Even ten days after the cyclone, in some remote areas no government response was to be had, e.g., in Monpura, Hatiya

and Chittagong (Biswas and Daly, 2020). Almost half of the population of Tazimuddin Upazila of Bhola district died in the cyclone. The Pakistani Administration did not sanction helicopters which were essential for relief distribution. The relief distribution was remarkably slow and did not reach many rural areas. There were 200 relief planes from many countries, but only one of those was from Pakistan (Hossian, 2018). There was a lack of relief and even the international relief efforts were not reaching the affected people and areas. In Lahore Airport the reliefs were piled up for distribution even twelve days after the cyclone (Biswas and Daly, 2020).

Yahia Khan, the President of Pakistan, returning from China, reached the disaster-affected areas two days after the cyclone passed, and he stayed for only two days. He visited the affected area only from aircraft, which were “over ten thousand feet” above ground level. Even regarding the flood situation, he was heard saying, “It didn’t look so bad” (Islam et al., 2023). Thus, the Pakistani Government’s reluctant attitude and negligence toward the huge suffering of the people in East Pakistan created a permanent scratch mark on the heart of the people. It intensified the existing antipathy toward the Pakistani government.

If we consider the four phases of natural disaster management (mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery), the Pakistan Government failed in response to Bhola. They not only showed inefficiency and ineffectiveness; the disinterest and negligence made Bhola an important factor of analysis for its political impact.

### *Opportunity for Awami League*

Due to Bhola damage in East Pakistan, all other political parties except Awami League demanded the postponement of the election of United Pakistan. But Yahia Khan took the decision not to postpone the election. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, for publicity before the election, described the the Pakistani government’s severe negligence as a “crime” and as “betrayal to people’s cause” (Biswas and Daly, 2020).

At the press conference of 26 November 1970, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman described how his Awami League leaders and volunteers faced challenges while supporting the survivors in cyclone response. He said, “West Pakistan has a bumper wheat crop, but the first shipment of food grain to reach us is from abroad. We have a large army ployed in West Pakistan, but it is left to the British Marines to bury our dead.” In one of Awami League’s posters it was written, “*Shonar Bangla Shoshan Keno?*” (“Why is Golden Bengal a Crematorium?”) (Islam et al., 2023).

Awami League and their 6-point demand already received the support of East Pakistan’s people, as it was the voice against the exploitation they were facing for many years. But, the the

Pakistani Government negligence in the disaster management of Bhola, made Awami League closer to the general people.

### *Role of Non-state Actors Including Media and International Community*

After his visit to the affected areas, Awami Muslim League founding president Maulana Bhashani had condemned the negligence of the Pakistani government in the cyclone response (Islam et al., 2023). His speech at the rally against the government's negligence was covered by a photojournalist with the headline: "*Ora keo ashe nai*" ("none of them came") (Biswas and Daly, 2020).

There were some newspapers in East Pakistan that were pro-government or anti-Awami League, but Bhola erased the differences among the news agencies. Most of the newspapers started an anti-government campaign for the cause of East Pakistan (Islam et al., 2023), which undoubtedly supported Awami League to win the election. East Pakistan journalists continuously condemned the Pakistan government for their failures to manage the cyclone, including for their vivid negligence. The slow and late relief distribution, the spread of various diseases in the affected areas, the photographs of the dead bodies from the cyclone, the damage, etc. were reported in the media (Islam et al., 2023), highlighting the government's irresponsibility to East Pakistan. This media reporting helped to shape public opinion, which impacted the election as well.

Just after the great disaster all spheres of people voluntarily went to the affected areas with basic reliefs, while the government response was highly delayed. In the 1970 disaster, some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were established. Fazle Hasan Abed, who supported the affected people voluntarily, and feeling the need from what happened in 1970, he later founded BRAC (Hossain, 2018).

The international community was more responsive than the West Pakistani governmental authority. Iran announced a day of mourning (Hossain, 2018); Shahshah of Iran asked for *zakat* from his citizens to support the cyclone-affected people of East Pakistan (Biswas and Daly, 2020). The Red Cross collected aid from 16 countries. India offered 50 mobile hospitals, which aid was refused by the Pakistani military government. Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE), The Pakistani Red Cross Society, Save the Children etc., stopped working with the Pakistani military authority due to their negligence and lack of cooperation regarding the disaster. Some of the agencies started working independently (Biswas and Daly, 2020).

On the other hand, the international community took time to initiate their support at the primary stage due to the Pakistani Government (Francis, 2019). Officials of the allies of that time's Pakistani Government, i.e., the USA and UK, also admitted through confidential letters the West

Pakistan administration's negligence in the Bhola cyclone response. However, for political purposes they did not publicly say so (Biswas and Daly, 2020).

Regarding the disaster situation, Archer Blood, the US Consul General to Dhaka, noted, "it was almost as if they (West Pakistan) just didn't care" (Islam et al., 2023). The international media started to publish the photos of dead bodies and severe damage from the disaster. This made the government of Pakistan to start initiatives, but even then, that was not only late but also not enough (Islam et al., 2023).

### *The Landslide Victory of Awami League in Election*

A democratic election was the long demand of East Pakistan's people. In July 1970, the first democratic general election was scheduled. But, due to excessive floods in East Pakistan, the election was postponed to December 1970. But again, then Bhola, the deadliest cyclone, occurred (Hossain, 2018). So, there were demands of again postponing the election by the other political parties except Awami League. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman agreed to postpone elections in the disaster affected constituencies only. On 27 November Yahia Khan confirmed a decision not to postpone the election. After that National Awami Party, National League, Jamiat-Ulema-e-Islam, East Pakistan-National Awami Party, and Krishak Sramik Party boycotted the election through a united public announcement (Islam et al., 2023). These parties were against holding the election during the cyclone-affected people's misery and protested the irresponsibility of the military government for the affected people. But their decision for the East Pakistani voters left the only voting option to be Awami League.

On 7 December 1970, Awami League won 167 seats in East Pakistan out of 169. In the Provincial Assembly Election, among 310 seats Awami League won 298. On the other hand, Pakistan People's Party won 83 seats in West Pakistan out of 138 (Biswas and Daly, 2020). Thus, Awami League had a landslide victory in the first general election of United Pakistan, and it was ready to form a central government. After that, there's again a long political history of events. But it is evident that the existing military government lost massively, the Bhola Cyclone having its impact in the voting in the national election.

Now it is not possible to measure the numerical impact of Bhola on the total votes cast. Even before the cyclone the political situation was also favorable for an Awami League victory. But, the cyclone in all probability undoubtedly added extra value to that victory.

### *Bhola Cyclone and Government of Bangladesh*

In 1971, after 9 months of a war of liberation for the freedom and rights of the people of East Pakistan, the country of Bangladesh was born. The impact of the Bhola cyclone was not only on



the Pakistan Government; it impacted the new government of Bangladesh to be conscious for the preparedness for natural disasters.

As a result of the category III Bhola Cyclone of 1970 most of the cyclone preparedness programs (CPP) were started in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MDMR) and the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) established CPP in 1972 together. The programs focused on early warning systems, cyclone shelters for the public for evacuation before disaster,s and shelters to save cattle from the disasters (Paul, 2009). Although the initiatives had many drawbacks in implementation in the newly born war-devastated country, these initiatives are important to Bangladesh. Bhola had motivated and informed the new government's strategy toward natural disasters.

### **Political Impact on Cyclone Sidr Management**

Cyclone Sidr was a tropical cyclone that hit Bangladesh on 15 November 2007. It was a category IV storm. Around 3,400 people died in this disaster. The death toll is much less compared to other cyclones Bangladesh has experienced, especially compared to Gorky of 1991, which was also a category IV storm. Gorky killed approximately 140,000 people. However, Sidr is a remarkable cyclone for Bangladesh for having caused US\$1.7 billion in financial losses (Paul, 2009).

The political situation during Sidr is quite different from the situation during Bhola. But interestingly, in both times the government was led by the military. And, after both cyclones, there were elections where the Awami League won. However, during Sidr a Caretaker Government led by Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed had taken power at the beginning of 2007. The Caretaker Government was assigned to hold elections within 90 days of the dissolution of parliament. But the Caretaker Government did not held election within 90 days rather was in power to run the country for long which was not according to the caretaker government system.

But the government was praised for some of their initiatives and among those Cyclone Sidr management was one. The Caretaker Government adopted the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP). The newly elected government after the election adopted this strategy and action plan with minimal revision. The government formed the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF) and in doing so this fund received US\$490 million in total (Irfanullah, 2023). As per the Chief Technical Advisor for Disaster Program of Bangladesh from United Nations, "The lives of tens or hundreds of thousands were saved because of the early warning and mobilization." The Bangladesh Head of Oxfam said, "Bangladesh's early warning and preparation saved up to 100,000 lives." Those who died in cyclones died because they did not go with the evacuation program or returned home from shelters. Paul (2009) explained that 22% of his survey respondents informed that they did not hear the warnings for Sidr, which indicates the deficiency in the warning and evacuation process as well. Some other factors, like lack of

shelters, overcrowded shelters, distance from people's home to shelters, etc. were identified from the research (Paul, 2009). In Barguna, e.g., little of the disaster miking was conducted in city areas by the District Administration as a part of disaster preparedness, but not in the coastal areas. The Red Crescent volunteers were also inactive in this regard (Life hasn't been, 2020). But, from the available information, overall, it can be said that the Bangladesh Government that time handled the cyclone better than many previous disaster times, at least for the mitigation phase of disaster response.

In response to Sidr, the Caretaker Government had huge support from the military. That time the political activities were halted, and the Caretaker Government had no mentionable accountability, since it was not an elected government. So, compared with the previous governments the law enforcements were stricter and more effective (Irfanullah, 2023). The Geographer of the Arab World described the relief after Sidr as more well-organized than expected and emphasized national politics (Aase, 2020).

As Bangladesh's politics has been divided into two poles for many years and in 2007 as well, the political parties were unable to run their activities. The two main political party leaders were under huge pressure by the Caretaker Government. So, during the Sidr disaster, the political leaders focused on proving themselves. There was a rumor of forming a post-Caretaker Government party by the military, which acted as an incentive. But there is an argument as well. The Union Parishad chairman and members usually play a role in relief distribution by relief listing, and so on. But, after Sidr, being political leaders, they had maintained low engagement due to the political situation (Aase, 2020).

So, the military and NGO workers were the most active after Sidr in response and relief distribution. Again, the relief lists explore a lot of relief politics. Aase (2020) has provided an example of a local partner of a European NGO who prepared relief lists after Sidr and biased the lists with relatives and other people, depriving the truly needy ones. Inserting names in relief lists after Sidr in exchange of money had been reported as well. To the vulnerable, bribery for putting names on the relief lists was normal and considered common practice. Despite the malpractices and corruption, the relief reached many vulnerable people. Like one woman from Bhola said, "relief was really good," "and it did not cost [us] too much" (Aase, 2020).

International actors such as India supported many with relief efforts. But their promise to provide relief housing caused local disaster politics. People were dreaming of having houses and started to pay for their names in the relief lists. India provided the first house four and one half years after Sidr. A group working on shelters said, "The government and some national and international NGOs are keen to work on shelter issues [ . . . but] they cannot take initiative as countries like Saudi Arabia and India had expressed their interests to build houses in those areas." The lack in management and gap in bilateral coordination from both sides can be a reason for this

delay (Aase, 2020). To be noted here, the Caretaker Government was under pressure from the political parties and leaders for following the democratic process by holding elections. So, one year after Sidr, the Caretaker Government held an election and gave ruling power to the elected party.

### **Interconnections of Politics and Natural Disaster**

In the Bhola Cyclone of 1970, we found out how the cyclone affected the running political situation, the vote in the election, and finally the shift of government. But, in the case of Cyclone Sidr, we found how the political circumstances impacted the disaster management. So, it can be said that not only do natural disasters affect politics, but also the political situation affects the management of natural disasters. And, from the above analysis of two natural disasters in Bangladesh, we have also found that the non-state actors may play different roles in natural disasters in different political situations.

In the case of Bhola, we have found that there was considerable negligence of the government in the cyclone response, from all steps expected to be taken. At that time, the ruling government was the military government from West Pakistan, who were neglecting the well-being of East Pakistan from the beginning of the partition of India and Pakistan. The history and facts clearly indicate that the political division among East and West Pakistan affected the response of the government.

The role of international actors is also different in different political scenarios. As every country pursues their own national interest, the relationship with the government affects their reactions toward the natural disaster or the government. In the case of Bhola the stance of many international actors was as per their relationship with the military government of Pakistan or with the Awami League and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in particular.

### **Civil Society Influence on Government**

Civil society has its role in the scenario of Bangladesh in natural disaster management. Before the birth of Bangladesh, just after Bhola, civil society groups responded when the government was otherwise remarkably reluctant. As the author mentioned, Fazle Hasan Abed started BRAC from the motivation of his experience of Bhola. This NGO has its separate department named “the Disaster Management and Climate Change Program,” through which they are trying to identify climate challenges. These civil society initiatives are not only helping to cope with natural disasters, but they also put pressure on the government for effective disaster preparedness. Civil society groups as well as scholars offer critique of the lack of previous government action in disaster management, and they show a way for improvement (Diya and Bussell, 2017).

## **Policy Implications for the Government of Bangladesh**

As the study shows that the political context has a great impact on natural disaster management, so to make the natural disaster management effective and unbiased government should develop a systematic process that can manage natural disasters with less effect from the political scenario. The support of law can be taken to establish such a systematical process. More research and analysis are essential in this regard.

The relief distribution process should be analyzed thoroughly, and a policy formation is needed, from which policy the reliefs can be distributed without relief list politics or corruption. And, in this way the neediest people can be reached and supported. In the context of Bangladesh, corruption in relief distribution seems regular and normal; but this needs to be questioned and appropriate answers and solutions addressed.

Before cyclone Sidr in Barguna, the local people did not understand the warning signals properly, so many of them were unable to go to cyclone centers. Warning language for disasters should be understandable to people in the rural and coastal areas that at risk of cyclone impact. For this, training should be organized for the concerned staff and volunteers. This will also support the government to be more connected and popular to grassroot people.

As tropical cyclones and natural disasters have become common in Bangladesh, so the government should take strong initiatives to sensitize the coastal people to be prepared for the disasters and to develop the capability to face natural disasters, establishing more community radio stations in the rural areas for reaching the rural people in providing disaster warning and signals, building the embankments as per necessity, etc. For this the recommendations from the well-established researchers and policy makers can be combined and implemented accordingly.

## **Conclusion**

Many scholars argue that the Bhola cyclone was a “critical juncture” or a “tipping point” for political transformation. But the impact of this cyclone was not denied and cannot be denied in the political scenario of 1970. From this research, the author found Bhola highly intensified the existing political tensions and divisions. It was evident the Pakistani military government denied the humanitarian call as well as their responsibility. Further, the demand for freedom in the mind of East Pakistan’s people was heightened after this cyclone. The role of the media was prominent in the process. But, the role of other powerful international actors needs more analysis, as the national interest of the actors was attached to their stance.

In the case of Sidr, after almost forty years of Bhola many disaster management processes were improved. The political scenario somehow supported the management of the cyclone effects. Many malfunctions were identified, but the study did not compare the cyclone management during

Sidr with the other recent or similarly powered cyclones in Bangladesh. So, it cannot be said that the mismanagement occurred only during Sidr. Rather, the practice of relief distribution is often corrupted in the context of Bangladesh. During Sidr the death rates were not too high compared to its magnitude. Besides, the military backed Caretaker Government was strict in its law enforcement and cyclone management even though some other factors created challenges such as less involvement of UP chairmen and members or rural political leaders. At the same time, it stopped some nepotism practices in relief distribution. But again, the less involvement of the regular mass representatives brought mismanagement and nepotism from the local elite group and rural NGO representatives.

So, it is evident that while it is difficult to measure the impact precisely, nevertheless the impact of natural disasters in politics and the impact of politics in managing natural disasters are undeniable. The impact level varies from situation to situation. This connection of politics and governance with disaster events needs more wide analysis. Undoubtedly, the disaster response is very crucial from a humanitarian perspective, but also from the political perspective. Hence, the local, national, and international politics on disaster response, including humanitarian aid, distribution needs to be more organized with attention to policy analysis and implications for disaster management.

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