

Disaster, Environment and Climate Change Programme

Frequent climate change induced natural disasters as well as manmade disasters have been affecting the lives of millions of Bangladeshis that threaten to hinder or even reverse the progress achieved so far in poverty alleviation. BRAC's disaster, environment and climate change programme (DECC) was established in 2008, as a response to helping communities manage the devastating effects of cyclone Sidr in November 2007.



Facing trauma together: Psychosocial counselling women's group

Objectives

- Enhance BRAC's institutional capacity to proactively respond to natural disasters
- Build capacity at the community level to face natural disasters due to climate change
- Increase adaptability and coping ability to natural disasters by conducting predictive research, information transfer and education in relation to environment, climate change and natural disasters

Three tier approach

1. Adaptive measures:

- Community awareness and education
- Disaster resilient habitat
- Predictive research

2. Preventive measures:

- Preparedness training on disaster management
- Simulation exercises
- Updated weather forecasting using iCRESS

3. Post-disaster measures:

- Relief and rehabilitation support
- Psychosocial counselling
- Alternative livelihood opportunities
- Water and sanitation support

- Initiating SOP for BRAC International countries (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tanzania, South Sudan, Liberia, Uganda, Sierra Leone)

Food security, social protection and health

- Alternative livelihood opportunity to women to ensure food security
- Disaster resilient habitat
- Basic healthcare, hygiene education, access to safe water and sanitation facilities

Initiatives

Comprehensive disaster management

- BRAC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for emergency response
- Disaster preparedness training, refreshers and community awareness

Capacity building and institutional strengthening

- Disaster management training, workshops and seminars
- Professional courses on disaster management
- Trauma management and psychosocial counselling

Infrastructure and knowledge management

- Disaster-resilient houses and school
- Updated weather forecasting system
- Desalination plant

Mitigation and low carbon development

- Tree plantation to build household resilience in exposed areas for vulnerable community
- Initiatives to develop BRAC's environmental policy; integration of ecological and social sustainability in decision-making processes amongst BRAC community by promoting eco-friendly behaviour and aiming to achieve low carbon footprint within the organisation

Technology and innovation

- DECC is working with social innovation lab (SIL) in two projects using technology to improve post-disaster relief activities. One project is being explored to create a digital voucher system to provide relief items and medical support to affected individuals quickly following a disaster. The other project is using mobile money as new platform for crowd funding; a transparent mechanism for the public to easily and directly donate towards relief activities

Achievements

- 112,000 blankets were distributed among cold wave affected people
- Over BDT 150,000 was raised through public donations for warm clothes during winter
- Six district wise action plans on climate change were developed
- 34,000 tree saplings were distributed among 16,000 women living in disaster prone areas to encourage social afforestation
- 16,000 women were oriented on psychosocial counselling for trauma management
- Establishment of a BRAC emergency response system through the SOP
- Preparation of a ready taskforce to handle emergencies through disaster preparedness training and professional degrees provided from BRAC University
- Development of an updated weather forecasting system using advanced web and mobile-based application system and construction of five weather stations in various agro-ecological zones
- 3200 women received seed funding grants for alternative livelihood options to reduce their vulnerability affected by climate change with skills-based training. This project covers 40 upazilas of 10 disaster-prone districts by forming 16,000 group members who are women, thereby increasing their risk resilience, coping ability and social mobility
- Reaching out to Rana Plaza victims; supporting them through health protection scheme, fixed deposit, skills development training for different livelihood followed by seed funding as investment to begin new life and psychosocial counselling to cope with post- traumatic stress disorder
- Five Rana Plaza victims received surgical and medical support following a health assessment; regular monthly check up for 12 prosthetic limb recipients.
- Safe water and sanitation facilities in disaster prone areas through dewatering ponds, tube wells with platforms and elevated sanitary latrines
- Refurbishment of 43 disaster-resilient houses and one disaster-resilient school for an entire village in southern Bangladesh along with livelihood improvement measures through duck rearing and vegetable farming
- 372 *gononatok* (popular theatre) performances on disaster preparedness and climate change issues for rural communities
- Development of rapid reader or children's book and other IEC materials on disaster management, climate change and capacity development including disaster preparedness flyers for BRAC school teachers, *shasthya shebika* (health volunteers) and the community