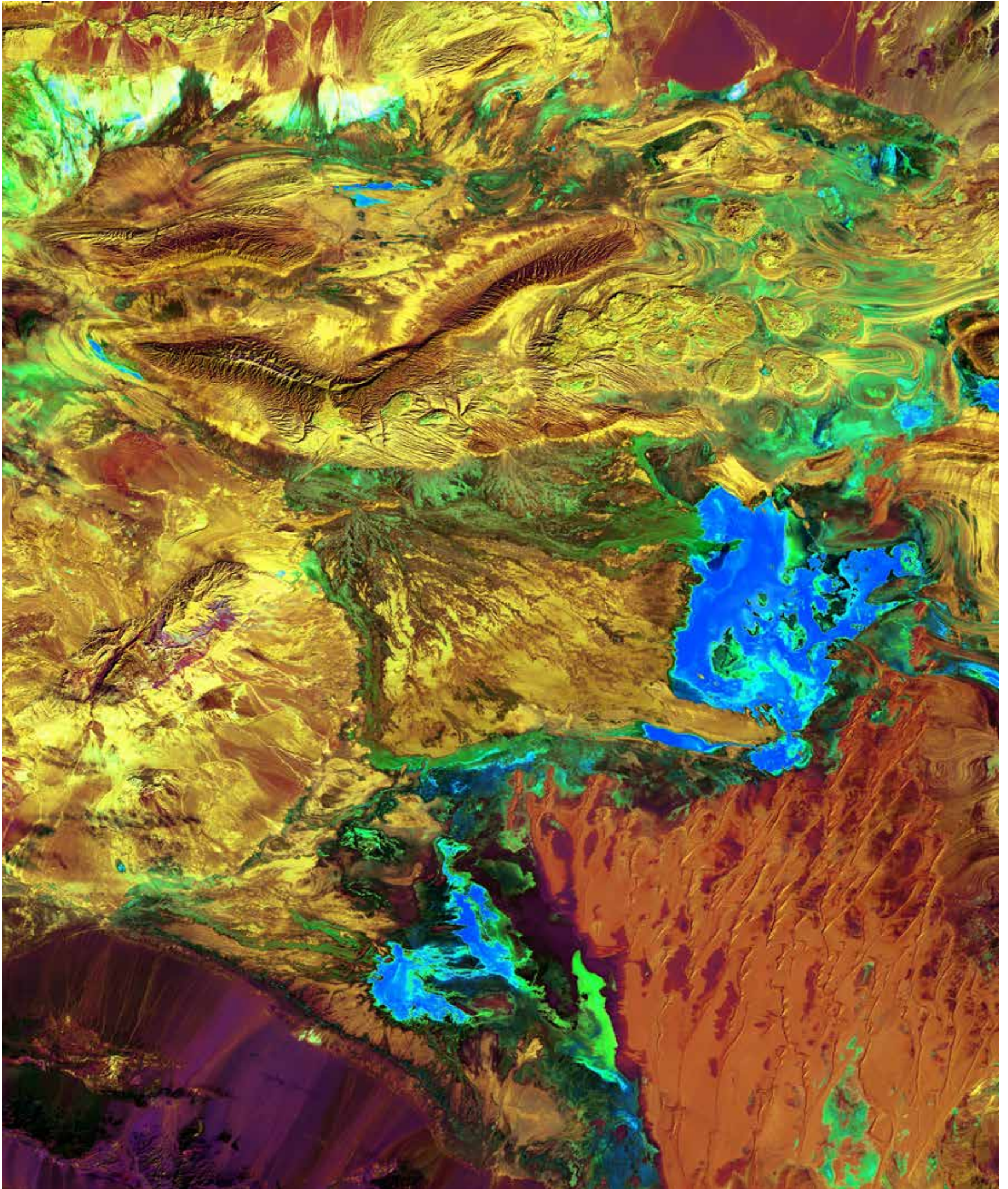


**Dhaka Tribune** | SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2020

# Climate Tribune





EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear readers,
With the aim to make Climate Tribune more accessible, we are moving to a new format. This format, as opposed to a separate magazine, will reach the general readership of Dhaka Tribune directly and gain new readers.
As the awareness of climate change grows among the general population, it is, we believe, a necessity to make research-based knowledge available to a broader public. And Climate Tribune can serve that purpose to a significant extent, reaching an increasing number of English language reading audience.
This issue covers a number of different topics. The road from scientific research world to the world of decision making is not a defined path. But nothing could be more crucial right now for making and implementing effective and planet-saving climate change policies. As progress gets made, there is much more that need to be done at this front, as we cover.
We also look at how climate resilience without women empowerment is not possible. The vitally important issue of landlessness is covered with important insights into the situation in Bangladesh.
Finally, while adaptation is inevitable, the best way toward that might be reshaping the human eco-system according to how nature intended it. Read about nature-based solution as adaptation in the following pages.
As always, we look forward to any feedback, criticism and appreciation, from our readers. Please send them to us on email or by post.

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The system of knowledge relay

Translating climate research into policy

Shababa Haque and David Lewis

The issue of climate change, is widely recognized as a global threat, and is still continuing to reveal all of its facets. In order to better understand the impacts and uncertainties associated with a changing climate, there is a growing research agenda surrounding the topic that is constantly being updated. Climate change is already impacting on many countries. It is therefore important that national plans and policies for strengthening climate resilience are continually informed by ongoing science and research.
The process of knowledge exchange between producers and users is crucial for successful facilitation of climate governance but is never straightforward. Relationships between academic researchers and policymakers are anything but simple.

Moving beyond the 'mind the gap' approach?



This complexity has led us to the idea of the 'science-policy gap', where universities are perceived to be isolated in their intellectual 'ivory towers', while the policymakers work within their 'real world' networks. However, it is perhaps unhelpful to continue with this outdated notion because it suggests these groups operate in distinct silos rather than ap-

CONTENTS

SCIENCE-POLICY GAP	2
CLIMATE RESILIENCE	4
LANDLESSNESS	6
NBS	8

precipitating that they also have shared values and interdependencies.

This brings the need for 'knowledge brokers' that specifically focus on linking knowledge, power and action around issues related to climate change. The task of the climate knowledge broker is, therefore, to highlight and circulate climate relevant information amongst those concerned with policy, and to help establish systems that allow scientific knowledge to be discussed, contested and used in the development of local, national and international policies.

Considering that universities act as repositories of potentially useful re-

searchers included the heavy teaching hours and lack of research grants available to younger faculty members, especially in the context of universities in the 'global south'. There is also the issue of academics and policymakers not occupying shared spaces, as a result of which when academic research findings are disseminated it still remains within the same circle of academics. In addition, it is also important to acknowledge that even within university faculty members there will be differences in disciplines, preferences and personalities; while some academics want to contribute to policies but struggle to form connections others are genuinely

hosted at the Bangladesh Pavilion of the Conference of Parties (COP 25) in Madrid, highlighting the findings of an ongoing study funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and the LSE's Institute for Global Affairs (IGA) that aims to shed more light on how university-based researchers in the general field of climate change are currently engaging with worlds of policy in order to bring their research findings to the attention of policymakers.

The session ended with a discussion on an array of approaches that could be employed to make the process of knowledge relay between the different agencies more fluid. Some of the possible strategies that came out of the study include, hosting multi-stakeholder events within universities and creating more spaces for networking opportunities, as well as putting more effort into engaging external agents (such as research centres, think tanks etc.) as brokers between universities and policy worlds. The discussion concluded with the idea that the language used by both academic researchers and policymakers should be made more understandable for all, and

searchers included the heavy teaching hours and lack of research grants available to younger faculty members, especially in the context of universities in the 'global south'. There is also the issue of academics and policymakers not occupying shared spaces, as a result of which when academic research findings are disseminated it still remains within the same circle of academics. In addition, it is also important to acknowledge that even within university faculty members there will be differences in disciplines, preferences and personalities; while some academics want to contribute to policies but struggle to form connections others are genuinely



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search, they are in a unique position to also act as climate knowledge brokers who can convey research findings to policymakers. As part of efforts to maintain and strengthen the relevance of universities to the wider society, there is an increasing focus on the need to strengthen the relationship between university-based researchers and policymakers.

#### Talking it out at COP 25

In view of the above, a session was

experiences. For the purpose of the session, the definition of the 'policy world' goes beyond government officials and includes civil society, public sector, and private sector entities, thereby acknowledging interaction with all parties that have any influence in the process of policymaking. Policy is influenced by many interests, not just by government.

Some of the key points of concern that were raised during the discussion that inhibit engagement by re-

indifferent and are primarily interested in staying within the academic world.

#### Establishing a new common language?

Despite the differences between researcher and policymaker positions and the enormous challenges of the process, it is vitally important to do more to ensure that climate research is now made more available both to those being impacted by climate change as well as to those that are in charge of the governance of climate action.

so there is a need to instil more creativity when it comes to communicating climate science to a wider audience. ●

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# Women's empowerment is vital for climate resilience – but the burden of survival in Bangladesh should not rest on their shoulders alone



COURTESY

Basundhara Tripathy Furlong and Isobel Talks

As we all know, Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Partly this vulnerability can be attributed to the physical characteristics of the country, such as the flat, low-lying topography and climatic features which render it highly susceptible to floods, droughts, cyclones and earthquakes. However, socioeconomic factors also leave Bangladesh vulnerable in this time of climate emergency. The country has a very high population density, with many living below the poverty line (Pouliotte, Smit and Westerhoff, 2009). Social risks – such as gender inequality, social discrimination, unequal distributions of resources and power at the intra-household level and limited citizenship – have been important factors in pushing and keeping households in poverty. Additionally, the country has suffered a long history of weak political governance, and many livelihoods here rely on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture and fishing (Huq and Ayers, 2008).

Gender inequality has also been

highlighted as a key barrier to climate resilience. In Bangladesh, unequal power relationships between men and women have resulted in a greater number of women experiencing poverty than men (Kabeer, 2003). The patriarchal system prevalent in mainstream Bengali society perpetuates oppressive gender roles. Alongside having unequal access to resources, women tend to have responsibility for care giving and the provision of food and fuel in the household. These tasks are highly affected by climatic disasters. All of these factors make it more difficult for women to recover from flooding and drought, as they are more reliant on climate sensitive resources than men and thus cannot adapt as easily as men can. Women are also less well represented than men in decision making processes at both national and local levels, so it is hard for them to advocate for changes to this inequality.

However, there has been a pushback in recent years against this 'men-versus-women dichotomy' in climate change studies, as some argue that this "feminisation of vulnerability" reinforces a "victimization discourse" (Djouidi et al, 2016: 248). In fact, wom-



However, there has been a pushback in recent years against this 'men-versus-women dichotomy' in climate change studies

en are often proactive agents of adaptation, and the causes of vulnerability are multifaceted and dependent on political relations beyond gender alone. It is this complexity that the panelists in the 'Embedding Gender Equality in Climate Action' session at the 4th CSD conference on October 18, 2019 sought to address.

The first presentation from Dr Anastasia Seferiadis, Dr Oliver Scanlan and PhD scholar Basundhara Tripathy-Furlong aptly demonstrated the intricacy

of gender and power, and inaptitude of the simplistic 'women as climate victims' discourse, in Bangladesh. Drawing on case-studies of a female centred micro-credit organisation in Jessore, a women's informal 'bondhu' group in Satkhira, and women's key role in the AchikMithik Samity in Madhupur they showed that women in Bangladesh are amassing and strategically deploying social capital, acquiring habits, skills and capacities to enable them to renegotiate their position, and appropriate elements of various projects in a DIY fashion as best suits them and their situation. However, due to the patriarchal environment of Bangladesh they are unable to dramatically rupture social ties, but instead are incrementally 'reweaving' them. The second presentation from Nasrin Siraj, PhD student at the University of Amsterdam, also disrupted the notion of a straightforward male and female divide, as her paper explored ethnic tensions in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in relation to inter-ethnic marriage. Expanding on our understanding of ethnicity within

cosmopolitan sociability, this paper reflected on marriage practices (love marriage and arranged marriage) in shared neighbourhoods of Indigenous people and Bengali-muslim migrants. Through examples of inter-ethnic marriages from her ethnographic fieldwork, the presenter demonstrated shifting identities within the hill tracts of indigenous communities and their interaction with the mainstream Bengali population.

The third paper, presented by Ms Sayeda Karim, Research Associate at

ULAB, investigates female leaders in Bangladesh and their perception of climate change. Her research discovered that not only do women need to be given leadership opportunities so that their perspectives can be heard and needs met in climate strategies, but also that current leaders need support and opportunities to network so that they can develop an understanding of how climate change is affecting sectors beyond those that they specialise in. Finally, the fourth paper from Pi-

nashAkter, Project Officer at OXFAM, and Anushree Ghosh, MSc Student at Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science & Technology University, explored OXFAM's PROTIC project, a participatory initiative that has trained local women in how to use mobile technology to gain knowledge on climate adaptation strategies. The paper highlighted the role of gender in building climate resilience through the PROTIC project implemented in Dimla, Nilphamari. The main aim was to understand the function of the



**The paper highlighted the role of gender in building climate resilience through the PROTIC project implemented in Dimla, Nilphamari**

mobile phone for climate change adaptation led by women farmers.

In the discussion that followed the presentations it was reiterated, as the papers had made clear, that the solipsistic 'women are climate victims' rhetoric should be avoided. But it was also raised that there are risks to only emphasizing women's role as climate agents too. As one discussant Saydia Gulrukh, a journalist with New Age, noted; "We need to interrogate gender as a social construct. In Bangladesh micro-enterprise has sought to empower women with knowledge, but infact women end up burdened with more work and responsibility on top of their rigid domestic roles ... so when we talk about women's role in climate resistance and how women can work towards climate adaption I worry that in the name of inclusion we may burden women with more unpaid work". In relation to the last paper, an-

other discussant, Dr. Samiya Luthfa, Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology in the University of Dhaka, questioned whether giving women mobile phones with climate adaptation information was enough to break through the societal and cultural barriers in rural areas of Bangladesh. As gender is a binary, it must not be forgotten that we need to redefine masculinity, and engage men in that process, in order to also dismantle fixed notions of femininity.

The WID (Women In Development) approach, which arose in the 1970s within international development, was roundly criticized for utilizing a "just add women and stir" approach (Harding, 1995). Proponents of this school of thought hypothesized that bringing women into capitalist modes of production would increase prosperity all round, but they neglected considering how unequal gender relations had led to women being confined to the domestic sphere in the first place. The GAD (Gender And Development) approach that was formed in response to these critiques instead specifically focuses on the power relations between women and men, rather than on women alone (Plewes and Steurt, 1991:127).

In the debates on climate adaptation in Bangladesh, it will be vital for this critical approach to gender to be applied so as to avoid over burdening women with the work of survival, rather than addressing the power imbalance between men and women, so that communities can become more resilient as a whole. ●

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# No solution to climate change without addressing land issue



MEHEDI HASAN

Shazzad Khan and Oliver Scanlan

**S**ince the advent of International Development, the need to alleviate the plight of smallholders globally has been a stubborn spectre at the ODA feast. From Walt Rostow in 1959 to the present day, the issue of land rights has been difficult to keep on the agenda of both Aid Agencies and Governments. A combination of the subject's extreme technical complexity, its political sensitivity in "neo feudal" contexts like Bangladesh, and the still discernible whiff of being "radical" or "ideologically suspect" (this a hangover from the Cold War), have all contributed to the consistently haphazard and partial engagement with the subject by development actors, albeit with a few honourable exceptions. This is in spite of many decades of research that demonstrate how important rights

to land are in solving a swathe of key development problems in agrarian and semi-agrarian contexts.

It is twenty-eight years since Bina Agarwal made the seminal case for women's rights to land as the prerequisite for gender equality in South Asia (Agarwal, 1992). The relevance to Bangladesh, where only about 4% of 20 million holdings are owned by women, could not be plainer. The general link between poverty alleviation and equitable access to land has been demonstrated in a number of studies, not least by the World Bank in 2003 (Deininger, 2003). In Bangladesh, where 22 percent of rural agri-dependent families are completely landless, and more than 40 percent are "functionally landless" as per the Government's definition (owning 10 decimals or less) the potential of land reform to address poverty is similarly clear, particularly thorough imple-

mentation of national laws concerning Khas land distribution (Islam, 2011).

In 2010 the then Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier de Schutter, laid the cause of continuing global hunger and malnutrition firmly at the door of increasing landlessness, going so far as to argue that the Right to Food is coming to imply a Human Right to Land (de Schutter, 2010). This has obvious implications for Bangladesh, where the absolute number of landless people has tripled since the Liberation War. Turning to inequality, Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) and associated organizations highlighted the obvious point that in Bangladesh inequality cannot be addressed without due attention to land rights in a joint submission to the National Consultation concerning the High-Level Political Forum 2019 Report on SDG 10. This is of particular relevance in view of the grim fact that



In Bangladesh inequality cannot be addressed without due attention to land rights



inequality is getting worse in Bangladesh, a trend labelled as both ‘disquieting and overwhelming’ by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) in 2016, when the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics revealed that the income share of the poorest five percent of our population was 0.23% of overall income, a sharp fall from 2010 when it was 0.78% (Manusher Jonno Foundation, 2019). Eagle eyed readers will have noted that that is now four SDGs covered (1, 2, 5 and 10), which some would argue should be more than enough to ensure the prioritization of land rights by all concerned stakeholders. Emerging research suggests that we can now safely add another SDG into the mix, with huge implications for the country’s future: SDG 13, “Climate Action”. In November of last year, the New York Times ran a profile of Narasimha Rao, a Professor at Yale University whose work focuses on how eschewing aggregate GDP growth targets in favour of meeting the minimum needs of the poorest has significant implications for mitigating climate change (Schlossberg, 2019). Simply put, by focusing efforts on ameliorating inequality within and between countries, we stand a better chance of both achieving mitigation outcomes and also create societies that are truly resilient to those physi-

cal changes in the environment that are already taking place. It has long been accepted that equity is a key concern when addressing climate change, in that poorer countries and poorer people are more vulnerable to its effects. This direct link between addressing inequality as a means to combat climate change is new and poses the unavoidable public policy challenge that Bangladesh has to tackle its inequality problem in order to become climate resilient and it cannot do this while dodging the land issue. Land rights for the poorest and most marginalized are essential if the worst impacts of a changing climate are to be avoided. The advocacy agenda for realizing these rights is not new. Rather, it is the result of decades of painstaking and diligent work by scores of dedicated Bangladeshi NGOs and concerned civil society figures, including MJF and its partner NGOs like Uttaran, Nijera Kori, COAST, VERC, etc. This long-standing agenda includes the distribution of Khas land to the landless according to sensible, existing national laws (Barkat et al, 2001); the return of Vested Property to the vulnerable minorities from whom it was taken (Barkat et al, 1994); the recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples to their ancestral land; careful work with communities to real-

ize the benefits of a Uniform Civil Code (Pereira, Huda and Hossain, 2019), and the reform of land administration to make it more transparent, accessible and accountable to the citizens of the country (Khan, 2013).

There is another side to this coin for development practice. Until the land issue is resolved, donor-funded interventions have the potential to make things worse. Consider any intervention regarding agriculture; insofar as this “improves” the land it will disproportionately benefit the land-owner, which under present conditions will most likely exacerbate inequality rather than reduce it. Conservation is another major issue; while conflicts remain between the Forestry Department and forest dwelling communities, including many indigenous peoples, donor-funding for conservation initiatives will most likely continue to entrench exclusionary policies that further the marginalization and exclusion of such groups. Evidence from other contexts around the world supports the argument that recognizing the land rights of forest dwellers can actually improve conservation outcomes, countering the dominant and colonial-era narrative that the latter are responsible for deforestation.

Our intention here is not to engage in



**Land rights for the poorest and most marginalized are essential if the worst impacts of a changing climate are to be avoided**

the proven folly of selling silver bullets, but rather to argue that land represents the “limiting factor” across a number of key public policy agendas including climate change resilience. Progress has obviously been possible in spite of the continuing absence of land rights, but it will be impossible for Bangladesh to build sufficient resilience to a changing climate unless this issue is comprehensively addressed. To put it another way, as stated by the United Nations’ OHCHR, land rights constitute the essential precondition for the realization of other human rights.

This is why Manusher Jonno Foundation and the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh’s Centre for Sustainable Development are partnering on a new research project on land rights, funded by the Jean Monnet component of the European Union’s Erasmus+ framework. With a wide network of partners from the international level to the grassroots here in Bangladesh, including Dublin City University, Wageningen University and Research, Uttaran, Nijera Kori, COAST, VERC and Mukti Foundation, this marks another step forward in MJF’s mission, alongside its dedicated and courageous partners, to protect the rights of the smallholder and the landless. We hope that the project will provide more evidence to support our case that land rights are essential for the country’s progress, not least in the looming battle against a changing climate. ●

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MAHMUD HOSSAIN OPU

# Shifting adaptation towards nature-based solutions

Danielle Falzon and Tasfia Tasnim

**A**t COP 25, everyone was talking about a new approach to climate action: Nature-based solutions (NbS). Nature-based solutions (NbS) was endorsed in both recent IPCC Reports and is one of several keys “action portfolios” at UN Climate Summit in New York in September 2019. At least ten side events - where researchers, civil society members, and policymakers come together to discuss pressing issues and innovate solutions - included NbS in their titles.

This included: “Nature-based solutions and Global Climate Action - strengthening synergies beyond 2020”, “Ocean Frontiers: Addressing Global Climate Challenges through Nature-based Solutions”, “Nature-Based Solutions for Negative Emissions, Global Tree Potential and Landscape Restoration” and many more.

## But what does NbS actually mean?

NbS recognizes explicitly the risks posed by biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse and the need for nature-positive business solutions. It is emerging as an integrated approach that can reduce trade-offs and promote synergies among the Sustainable Development Goals. The new term NbS encompasses previously used term such as - Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EBA), eco-disaster risk reduction (Eco-DRR), and Green Infrastructure (GI). However, the new thing about NBS is that it involves working with and enhancing nature to help address societal challenges while also providing conservation and biodiversity benefits.

NbS involves a wide range of actions, such as the protection and management of the natural environment, the incorporation of green and blue infrastructure in urban areas, and the application of ecosystem-based principles to agricultural systems. Hence, on the one hand, it is considering the spheres of development in the changing climate, while keeping natural conservation at the heart of it. This concept is grounded in the knowledge that natural and carefully managed ecosystems produce a diverse range of goods and services on which the well-being of the human depends.

Looking to nature for solutions is a decisive turn in our approach to building resilience. Many of the impacts of



ANNABELLE AVRIL

climate change stem from a conflict between the organization of human societies and emerging natural hazards. While in the past, we have attempted to overcome nature through technology to build our societies, now we must learn to utilize nature to make our communities sustainable.

Technologies can only get us so far. In fact, technological solutions that attempt to control the impacts of climate change potentially have new and unforeseen environmental impacts and maladaptive effects. Unstable human activities from farming and mining to infrastructure and industry are under-

mining the productivity of extensive farmlands, forests and other ecosystems and protected areas - for which we are facing a planetary emergency for nature, climate and humanity. This degradation is threatening food security, water supplies and the biodiversity upon which human development depends. Instead, by following nature's lead, we can develop long-term solutions that do no further harm to the environment.

## NbS in Bangladesh

NbS is, therefore, a welcome change in how we think about climate action, but like many trends in the climate arena, it

risks being reduced to a buzzword. Fortunately, there are already numerous examples of NbS in Bangladesh that can help guide future work.

The “Governance for Climate Resilience” (G4CR) project was presented at the Bangladesh Pavilion at COP 25. Led by the Center for Natural Resource Studies and the International Centre for Climate Change and Development, the project began by conducting a problem census with local community members in Satkhira to identify the challenges they were facing. Based on this census, they decided to restore a canal that had been encroached upon, allowing the community to use the canal for fishing. Also, utilizing saline-tolerant rice varieties and innovative planting methods, they worked to rebuild agriculture in desalinized lands. Working with the natural context, rather than against it, the G4CR project managed to enhance the lives and livelihoods of villagers.

We need to follow nature's examples and learn from natural processes, imagining nature as a solution rather than a hindrance to development and resilience. For which, the development decision-makers in public and private sectors need to understand this much broader concept. Capacity building of policymakers and practitioners has to be enhanced in order to widespread recognition of the NbS. Massive investment efforts to conserve and restore the ecosystems and biodiversity is required to unlock its full potential. Hence, both public and private sectors should recognise the necessity of protecting the ecosystem and biodiversity, and encourage themselves to incorporate low-cost and low-risk NbS tools into their interventions rather than expensive high engineering approaches. Therefore, in other words, we need to explore and invest in what nature does best: self-healing - which we can call the nature-based solutions (NbS). ●

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