■ VISUAL METHODOLOGIES

CONTENTS

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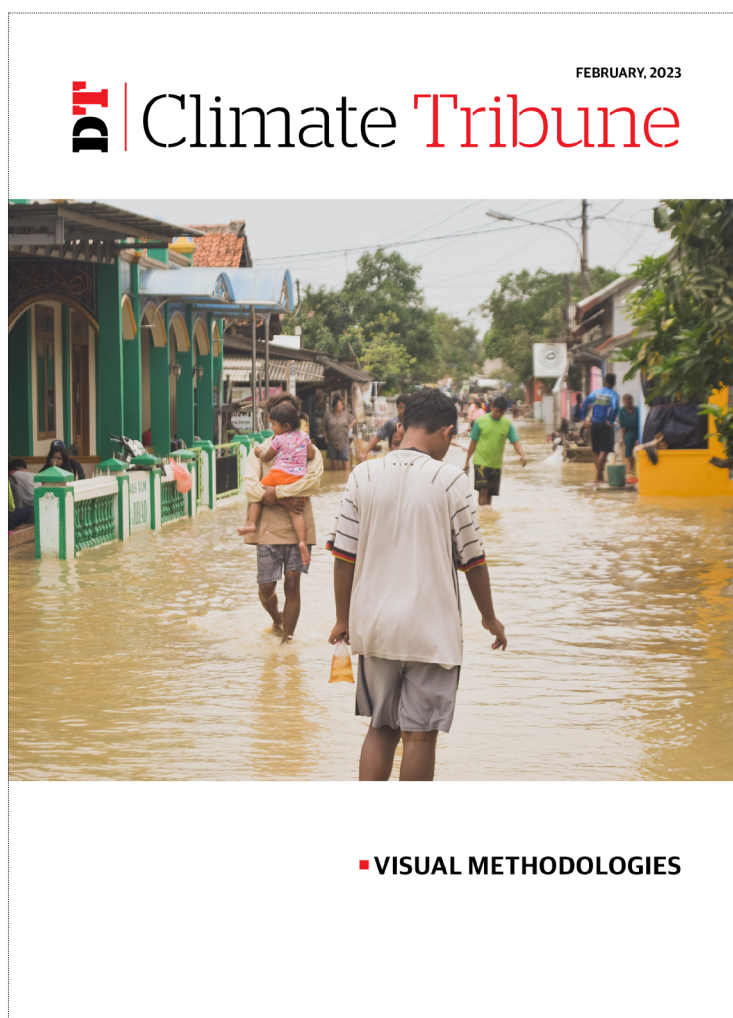■ **VISUAL METHODOLOGIES**

Photo voice Participant-clicking picture showing her means of self-employment   **PHOTO: COURTESY**

Knowledge creation within participatory visual methodologies

Sumaiya Binte Anwar

Climate change adversely affects coastal Bangladesh; unpredictable rainfall patterns continue to make traditional crop production difficult for farmers. Moreover, the ecosystem is being adversely impacted by significant increases in salinity due to sea level rise as well as reductions in freshwater flows to the delta. Rising sea levels place more pressure on agriculture as land continues to be lost to the sea. Habitable lands have disappeared under the sea, necessitating human relocation. Residents express concern that the frequency and intensity of

storms and cyclones have increased over time in the region. Over the past few decades, there has been an explosion of participatory researches and documentaries that seek to investigate such 'lived experiences' representing climate change, uncertainty and transformative actions in Bengal delta which. Though seldom it so happens that, the process of visually documenting often brings an unfamiliar 'outside' person and an individual or group of 'inside' people who use data sets or visual media to jointly explore a topic of shared concern like climate change.

Participatory visual research methods have been developed as an attempt to decrease the power differential between the researcher (outside) and the researched (inside)

> **"You might want to consider using visual methods if you want your research participants to show you how they perceive their world"**

people. You might want to consider using visual methods if you want your research participants to show you how they perceive their world, rather than just tell you in a focus group, interview or survey. These methods are designed to bring these relationships between 'inside' and 'outside' more in line with one another, ceding power to research participants. This process has served not only to create a more ethical research situation, but also to generate new forms of knowledge, which cannot be developed any other way.

Participatory visual research is research that asks research participants (or subjects) to develop visuals – drawings, photographs, murals or videos – as part of the research process. Participatory visual methods include different creative forms of communication and expression, such as photo voice exploration, digital photo diaries, methods like children's painting - any method, in fact, which produces data in material visual form. Using collaborative processes, participants and facilitators work together to produce powerful stories. Data is derived through the lens of the communities into the social process of their lives and livelihood and the relationship with nature.

In participatory visual methods, we find various elements: images (still and moving), words, painting and stories. When people are asked to tell a story, they are encouraged to reflect on some aspects of their lives, to confront them, to take a position, and to present it to others. The way a person or a community decides to tell her/his story, choosing what to include, what to exclude, what to show, what to say and how, reveals a lot of thoughts going on with themselves and stimulates discussion within the community.

When stories from participatory visual research techniques are told from the standpoint of women, youth, and children, it will open the pathway to look into the unvarying stories of locally-led adaptation (LLA) experienced in everyday lives of the community members that are at the forefront of climate change and climatic uncertainty. The visual tales will talk about the knowledge for basic survival and reflect the collective perceptions of marginalized groups fighting the climate crisis. Visual communication has the ability to engage a wide cross-section of society directly. For example, visual posters can be displayed in public places and videos can be uploaded to social media. The stories by the marginal communities, through visual methods like children's paintings, photo voice and digital photo diaries will facilitate an engaged process of building knowledge and thereby facilitating a shared responsibility for taking climate action. It will enable these marginal communities to contribute experiential knowledge, spread and exchange ideas between communities, as well as with researchers, decision-makers, and policy makers. Thereby support a strong public and civil society engagement that can eventually encourage positive social change. These stories are also fundamental in building the shared vision of resilience and transformation at the local level in the face of climate change. As the adverse impacts of climate change become more severe, the opportunities to strengthen resilience and adaptation become limited. In these cases, it is recognized that the communities are facing loss and damage because of climate change. Unfortunately, community dynamics can often hold back women and marginalized community members from participating in or benefiting from assessment processes, resulting in under-reporting of their losses. Participatory processes such as the visual technique can be an effective tool for communities and marginalized groups to gather, understand, analyze and act on information about the climate impacts that they are experiencing. Outsiders can often miss the things and changes that people observe around them. Sometimes people ask questions thinking that they already know the answer.

Instead, through images, one can engage with alternative perspectives and find unexpected answers. It will enable to explore the perceptions of people who face uncertainties, in contrast to the viewpoints of experts or official agencies.

Visual methods can actually aid participation because images are often more accessible to people than dense academic text, and they are likely to keep people stimulated and engaged in the research process for longer. In many places, people cannot read and write well, so visual documentation of local issues means that people are able to express themselves more easily. It can help to elicit ideas, reflections, experiences, embodied knowledge, that may be hard for people to express verbally. In addition, it can help to promote more relaxed and aware participation. This can be empowering which gives confidence to people to make changes to their situation.

The entire process will foster skills of the local participants in technology, communication and visual methods. It encouraged them to be creative and to put their own experiences, imaginations, and emotions into their stories. They stated that the entire process of taking photographs, discussing issues in front of others and taking decisions on what to present to the decision makers, was an empowering experience, especially for those who had never stepped beyond their courtyard. Rupai Rani, from Shyamnagar, a participant of the photovoice exploration states that-

'Before, only my daughter knew how to use a smartphone. Now I am able, too.'

Participatory visual methods rely on storytellers putting their opinions, experiences and feelings into their stories. For many participants learning to tell personal stories can be one of the biggest challenges of the process. For trainers, it is crucial to create a safe space and relaxed atmosphere, with mutual levels of trust between facilitators and participants.

Many studies use quantitative research designs in order to generate statistically representative data. Qualitative methods such as focus group discussions are also relatively common in this field, but the use of visual research tools is still rare. The ultimate purpose of any development intervention is to achieve positive impact. Relying solely on scientific and rational techniques without capturing people's feelings and emotions rarely provides the spark for catalyzing change. Considering that, a picture is worth a thousand words, visual forms of participatory research can provide that spark. It will be insightful to explore whether such visual tools can have a considerable potential to unravel additional insights into how local people relate and adapt to climate change. ∎

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❝ Participatory visual methods rely on storytellers putting their opinions, experiences and feelings into their stories ❞

Shilpi's story; water water everywhere

■ Lutfor Rahman, Md. Juel Mahmud

"I reside close to the Pashur river. Being a widowed woman, I have to earn a living by fishing and taking care of my young son and daughter, who is a special children. Despite being surrounded by water, obtaining clean drinking water is a challenge for me. The nearest source of rainwater is located more than an hour away from my home. Although water vendors do exist, their fees are too high for me to afford."-Shilpi (30 years), resident of Signal Tower Colony, Mongla.

Silpi, a community of climate-induced migrants

The Inclusive Urban Infrastructure (IUI) research project studies access to basic services, such as water, in informal settlements in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, and Somaliland. The project is collecting data through various methods, including comics, to help audiences globally understand the challenges faced by marginalized communities in accessing water.

Comics are a form of visual storytelling, and they are often used to explore complex themes and ideas in a way that the

There's a rainwater harvest pond... but it's more than an hour away

reader can easily understand. It has been used to explore the human experience and to provide insight into social issues. Comics can also help to break down language barriers and provide a platform for marginalized voices to be heard. It can provide insight into different cultures and ideas, giving readers a better understanding of the world around them.

Shilpi's story is a metaphor to access to water for the residents who are living in the Signal Tower Colony of Mongla. This colony is known as an informal settlement that has struggled to access safe drinking water despite being located near the Pasur River. The lack of drinkable groundwater and

Water collection point and long queue

the high cost of setting up rainwater harvesting tanks has forced residents to rely on vendors or saline and contaminated water sources. The local government and NGOs have provided some rainwater harvesting tanks and water points, but these are not enough for the total number of people residing in the settlement, and the supply is limited to certain hours of the day. Legal water connections are also unaffordable for many residents who lack land ownership. Due to the tenure security issue, they formed a mass movement rising up and demanding that the municipality mayor protect them from eviction. But the safe water crisis remains worst and unsolved, mostly for the prolonged dry season.

The colony residents suggested that to solve this problem, the local government or municipal authority could charge less for connecting the community and for the monthly water bill or provide assistance in setting up rainwater harvesting ponds or tanks. Alternatively, the community could separate into smaller groups and share the cost of setting up their own rainwater harvesting tanks. Another solution could be to provide each individual with their own tank, with the government and non-government services covering most of the cost.

Access to clean, safe water is a basic human right that should not be denied to anyone, and comics can help raise awareness about the challenges that marginalized communities face in accessing this resource.

Mass movement Rising up and demanding

One of the solutions could be like a common water collection point

Safe water is a human right that no one should be without

to find an audience and gain recognition for their work. Additionally, comics have to compete with other forms of entertainment, such as movies and television, which can make it difficult to attract readers.

Despite these challenges, comics offer numerous opportunities for creators and researchers alike. Comics provide a unique way to tell stories and connect with readers, potentially reaching new audiences and engaging them in a fun and entertaining way. Moreover, comics can be used to educate, inspire, and promote a product or service, concluding with either a happy ending or a plot twist. Overall, the benefits of visual methods such as comics outweigh the challenges, making them valuable tools for research and storytelling. ∎

Visual methods such as comics can be valuable tools for research purposes, including qualitative interviewing, data collection, and data analysis. Comics are useful in illustrating the stories of individual participants and expressing complex ideas in a visual format. Furthermore, comics can facilitate the analysis of qualitative data and create a relaxed atmosphere for participants, making it easier to gain insights into their experiences and perspectives. One way to utilize visual methods is by creating a comic book that reflects the research topic, as in Shilpi's story. It is crucial to ensure that the characters and dialogue accurately reflect the research to provide valid and reliable data. Once completed, the comic book can be shared with the research community, used in a classroom setting, or published online.

However, comic creators face challenges due to limited resources and recognition in the art world. Comics are often produced on a tight budget, making it difficult for creators to maximize the impact of their work. Furthermore, comics are frequently overlooked as a valid art form, which can make it challenging for creators

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Artist: Mehedi Haque, is a Publisher & Editor: Dhaka Comics, Executive Editor: UNMAD and Senior Cartoonist: DAILY NEW AGE.

PHOTO: UNSPLASH

Beyond the surface

Understanding the challenges and constraints of visual methodologies in research

■Madiha Chowdhury

The importance of all the senses can be recognized through the different types of methodologies employed for capturing and disseminating information. The ones primarily defined through sights, such as photo elicitation, photovoice, participatory mapping, and visual ethnographies, are known as Visual Research Methods (VRM). These encompass a wide variety of visual elements in the form of drawings, maps, photos, videos, graphics, etc. VRM is relatively recent in the field of qualitative research and is increasingly being used with the advantages of enriched, more impactful data and for overcoming gaps in non-verbal communication. They are increasingly being used in the realm of climate change research, which dives into the grassroots and most vulnerable people. Their losses and damages due to climate change and impacts and various adaptation methods used by them can be powerfully depicted through visuals. However, the method is not exempt from limitations and challenges which need to be accounted for while choosing VRM as a study tool.

> ❝ VRMs are undeniably indispensable in the field of social research, which is closely associated with climate change and powerfully depicted through visuals ❞

Subjectivity: Visuals are created from the perception of the creator. Translation of that perception can and will vary from recipient to recipient. Albeit researchers employed a VRM with a specific research subject and expected findings in mind, there still remains a risk of interpretation bias or narrowed lens. Significant information may be missed out or vice versa, and misinterpretations may be derived, leading to increased differentiated opinions among researchers.

Inclusivity: Ironically, inclusivity is both an advantage and a limitation of VRMs. While VRMs allow for communication gaps in terms of language barriers or literacy to be overcome, they may also be difficult or impossible to be employed by physically and mentally differently-abled persons, thus increasing the chances of exclusion of the excluded.

Lack of statistical rigor: With any qualitative research method, there always stands the question and challenge of statistical rigor and causal inferences. In the case of VRMs, statistical validation is a more pronounced limitation due to the aforementioned challenges. Additionally, the lack of standardization, difficulty in replication, and scaling visual representations also reduce rigor, leaving large rooms for queries.

Dependency: All the above-mentioned challenges sum up to the conclusion that singularly selecting VRM for a study will require larger efforts to close the gaps and establish facts. Thus, it is best to either employ VRM as a supplementary method or supplement the VRM selected with additional elements such as text or data.

Ethical and legal issues: Visual methods call for confidentiality and informed consent which may require either manipulated photos or videos through blurring or voice disguising. Even then, if the risks of identification of being located are high, they may completely need to be discarded. In other cases, if the individual(s) in the visuals cannot be reached out for consent later on, they must be discarded too; such ethical issues need to be abided by researchers using VRMs and sometimes lead to loss of resources and valuable information which cannot be shared. Again, from a legal perspective, the copyrights are owned by the generator of photographs. However, in cases of pseudonyms being used for confidentiality purposes, attributing ownership becomes difficult.

Practical difficulties: VRMs usually require technologies such as cameras and recorders and the technical knowledge to use them. In the VRMs, such as photo voices, where the target groups are asked to capture the visuals, the added challenges include delivering easy-to-understand instructions to the locals about the subject that needs to be captured and the requirements that need to be met, such as not including any faces. Furthermore, there are always chances of losing the resources and devices provided.

VRMs are undeniably indispensable in the field of social research, which is closely associated with climate change and powerfully depicted through visuals. And first-person narratives are always more effective and impactful than third-person narratives. No method or system comes without its limitation and challenges. Thus, this article only intends to function as a reminder of the ones faced by VRMs so that they can be better accounted for while designing research methods surrounding visuals. There is room for a lot of work in this area. ■

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PHOTO: UNSPLASH

Digital storytelling for translating non-economic loss & damage realities

A glimpse from the north-central part of Bangladesh

▮Rawnak Jahan Khan Ranon and Afsara Mirza

Climate visualization is a nascent research area with several new projects/interventions unfolding climate imagery in its many forms, and digital storytelling is one of its forms. Digital storytelling can potentially increase public consciousness of climate change adaptation, mitigation, and loss and damage challenges and their interlinkages with broader environmental, social, political, and economic issues.

Everyone's story is different, and one has the authority to share their own stories and the stories of their community.

Digital stories can facilitate the dissemination of local communities' realities, victories, and hopes in the face of the climate crisis, mainly in the loss and damage arena.

When people cannot sufficiently adapt to climate-related disasters, losses, and damages arise. Losses and damages can be both economic and non-economic. Economic losses have a monetary value as they are commonly traded in markets, such as losing goods and services. Whereas non-economic losses include is not monetary value as they are not commonly traded in markets, such as loss of local and indigenous knowledge. This also got prominence at COP27-where countries finally decided to establish a funding

> **Increasing loss and damage from climatic catastrophes is the new norm that exacerbates the existing social and economic inequalities faced by marginalised communities residing in the climate-vulnerable hotspots of Bangladesh**

mechanism for addressing loss and damage. However, now is the time to increase the evidence-based research on non-economic loss and damage, as this is still under research and a nascent study area. In turn, this will feed into negotiations and aid decision-makers in understanding what addressing non-economic loss, and the damage looks like. This is when digital storytelling comes into the picture.

A recent field visit to the north-central part of Bangladesh, Netrokona, made us realize the necessity to utilize the hidden power of digital storytelling in connecting/empathizing with the experiences of local communities related to non-economic loss and damage. This was part of a research study on value-based non-economic loss and damage (led by Douwe van Schie, a visiting researcher at ICCCAD from the Netherlands who focuses on non-economic losses and damages from climate change).

Rohit, a 51 years old community leader, photographer, and father, lived in an embellished house surrounded by trees in Gaokandia, a sub-district of Netrokona. The flash floods of 2022 in July, washed away his house, along with all of his valuable belongings and memories, which he still cherished. In addition to Rohit's story, there are a lot of similar stories which we tried to capture through digital storytelling where we had them on camera and asked them questions about their losses and damages, their responses to these losses, their emotions attached to it; and their following plans of hope and frustrations associated with their losses. It kept us thinking about how well researchers can portray the stories of loss and damage in a way that accurately reflects the extent that climate change affects people's lives and livelihoods.

Being climate change researchers, we clearly observed the emotions and pain in the interviewees' eyes when they were speaking about their loss due to flash floods. The losses

were related to the destruction of pictures hung on the walls; children's books swept away; the ruin of their homestead flowers which held religious values, etc.

The most crucial component of a story is an emotional narration, which is challenging to convey in words. Hence, digital storytelling is the skill of showcasing and transmitting key messages, emotions, storylines, and information. Digital storytelling can be bolstered by providing infographics, blog posts with photographs, and other digital materials and being a catalyst to bring a story to life. These methods can add a human perspective to technical conversations. They simply serve as a representation of reality.

In our fieldwork at Netrokona, we also did a digital storytelling piece with a woman who values and appreciates the Pitha culture but was worried about climate-induced hazards impacting it. Pithas are a type of sweet or savory food, generally made from a dough or batter, which is then steamed, fried, or griddled. This 'pitha' culture is slowly disappearing due to intensified drought, reducing their crop yield. Although her words can be described through writing, no one can ever really comprehend her emotion, affection, or attachment to making and sharing Pitha amongst her relatives and neighbors unless they see her talking about it.

Stories like this show the urgency to uptake more interventions/projects, which will delve into the nitty gritty of digital storytelling and see it as a communication medium for transmitting human emotions shaped by loss and damage. It will also help to illustrate how these consequences affect the day-to-day life of local communities that are at the frontline of the climate crisis.

Increasing loss and damage from climatic catastrophes is the new norm that exacerbates the existing social and economic inequalities faced by marginalised communities residing in the climate-vulnerable hotspots of Bangladesh. It impacts not only their social fabric but also cultures, mental health, local knowledge, etc. In that context, digital/visual storytelling can be a critical approach to making information simple to understand and remember. This can continue to demonstrate to the decision-makers what is actually happening at the grassroots level. Additionally, this effort will urge immediate humanitarian assistance and increased financial flow in a climate-vulnerable area where local communities struggle to cope or adapt to climatic shocks fully.

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Engaging communities through participatory visual methods

A pathway towards empowerment and collaboration
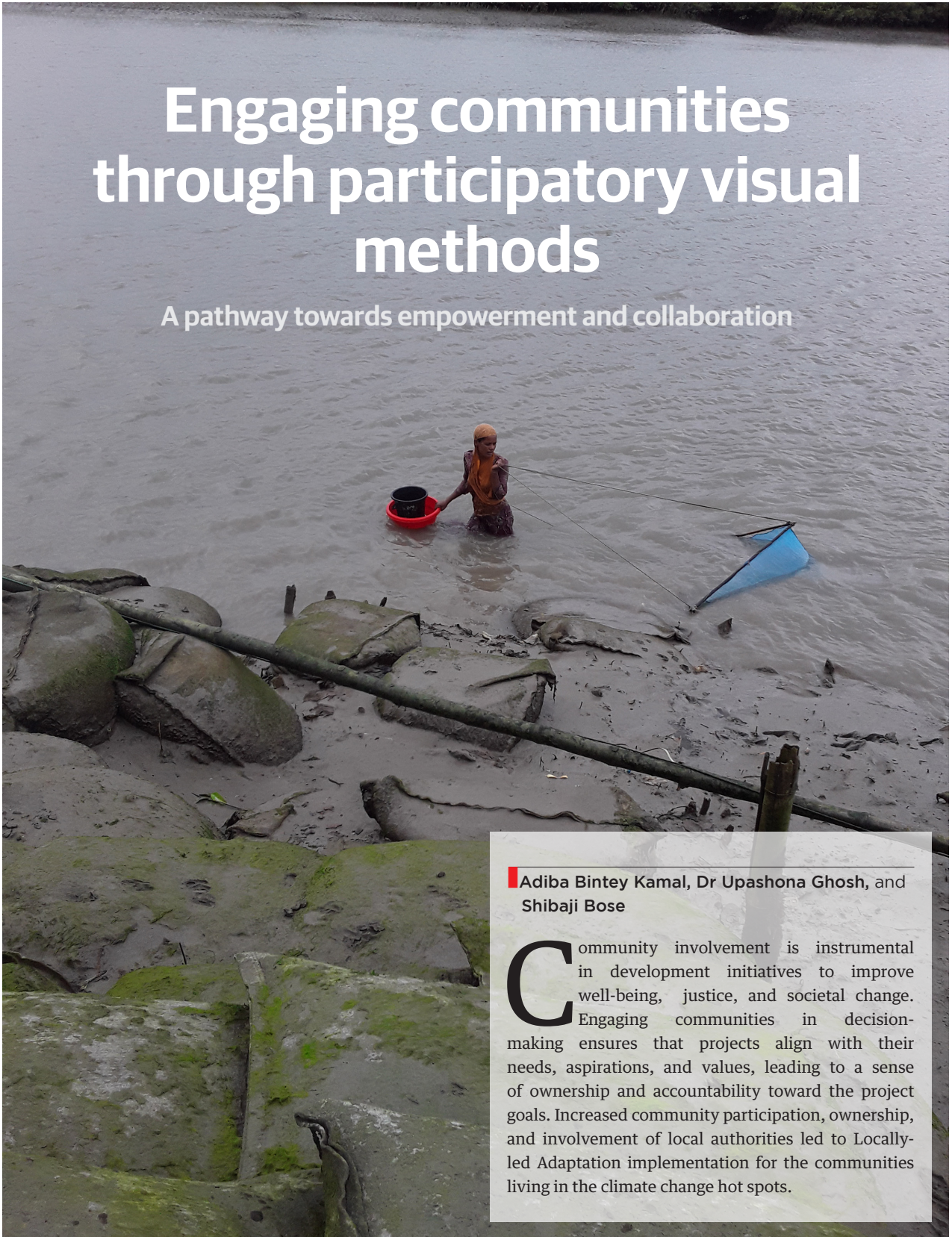
Adiba Bintey Kamal, Dr Upashona Ghosh, and **Shibaji Bose**

Community involvement is instrumental in development initiatives to improve well-being, justice, and societal change. Engaging communities in decision-making ensures that projects align with their needs, aspirations, and values, leading to a sense of ownership and accountability toward the project goals. Increased community participation, ownership, and involvement of local authorities led to Locally-led Adaptation implementation for the communities living in the climate change hot spots.

PHOTO: COURTESY

The participatory visual methods use peer-to-peer learning and beyond, challenging existing power dynamics and dominant narratives. Methods such as drawings, photographs, videos, and maps facilitate two-way communication, understanding, and engagement between community members and external stakeholders. These inclusive methods enable everyone, including marginalized groups, to participate actively in adaptation processes, relevant planning, decision-making, and actions. By using visual tools, the participatory methods help individuals to express their thoughts, ideas, and feelings, which might be challenging to articulate using traditional qualitative tools.

With this message Tapestry project of ICCCAD took the visual method approach to capture people's perspective on one of Bangladesh's climate change hot spots, Shymnaagar,

" This method opened the avenue to collaborate more with a heterogenous group within heterogenous the community "

Sathkhira, and Khulna, as a means of community engagement, thereby enabling communities to express their ideas and concerns in a participatory manner through visuals and accompanying. In this article, we explore how participatory visual methods can provide a voice to the voiceless community and empower them. This method opened the avenue to collaborate more with a heterogenous group within heterogenous the community. Women, youths, farmers, fishermen, and honey collectors participated in this process of co-production evidence. Relevant training was shared with the participants to conduct the visual method approach on the ground. Local NGO Caritas Bangladesh, a project partner, supported the participants with smartphones to take photos. The following narratives and photos reflect the perception of the community people at the field level.

Framing the impact of uncertainties
This picture was taken after Cyclone Amphan 2020 to show how destructive impact of cyclone Amphan and the resulting uncertainties. This family almost lost everything when the

deadly cyclone hit the region. The recovery process, in all likelihood, will be agonizingly slow by taking loans with high interest with no certainty of another climate shock in the near future. As a result, there will be a never-ending debt cycle will arise for the family. This story represents the stories of many families within the local community.

Water Water everywhere, nor any drop to drink
The people of this region are surrounded by water, but saline water. The drinking water issue is one of the common and

alarming issues here. If the community people would like to collect drinking water, they need to travel a long distance to access water from PSF (pond sand filter). However, that water source is not hygienic as well, as that is coming from the pond source, which eventually hinders the process of getting fresh water. A rainwater harvesting system is a community adaptation technique to cope with the situation. But in this case, most people do not have enough containers to store this water. Currently, some NGOs and INGOs provide water tanks to families to store water for themselves. On rainy days they can meet the demand for water with whatever container they have at home. During summer, the communities face scarcity of saline water again. This water issue also leads to health impacts, as women's cervical cancer is now a common disease along with diarrhea, fever, and others in the coastal region of Bangladesh.

Impact of climate shocks on livelihood

The increasing frequency of extreme weather events such as cyclones, floods, and droughts have severely impacted the livelihoods of the people living in this region. The agricultural sector, the primary income source for most people, have suffered significant losses due to these climate shocks, leading to increased poverty and food insecurity. Then they started to do crab and shrimp farming in this region. But then again, the flood after the cyclone washes away all the fish, crabs, and shrimp. The situation calls for urgent and

sustained efforts to address the impact of climate change on the lives and livelihoods of the people in Sathkhira.

Regarding solutions, most people are migrating from one place to another in search of work in that region. In this case, migration destination leads to cities where they have relatives who can help them to find a job.

Health is wealth!

When health is recognized as wealth, the people from this region face a huge burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases. Most of the women living on the shores of the Sundarbans depend on fish for their livelihood. They go to small channels in the deep forest to catch these fries. But to get there, they need a pass which is not always available. This pass is closed for about 5 to 6 months of the year. They must catch fish by pulling nets near the river during

this time. There is insufficient fry along the river, so they must work for hours in salt water. As a result, many people suffer from various skin diseases, including uterus infections. Perhaps health is wealth, a myth for this region's people.

Well-being is an unachievable dream

The miserable condition of the roads makes the journey to any doctor or nearby cyclone centers quite hard, as vehicles can not be used on those roads. Pregnant women suffer the most in case of emergency to commute to doctors. The poor sanitation system scenario is also common in this area. This situation ultimately leads to health issues and worsens when an uncertain event occurs.

> **When health is recognized as wealth, the people from this region face a huge burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases**

The similar approach is taken in the Indian part of Sundarban as a part of the project to understand the impact of climate change, and homogeneous evidence is received from the team. The participant responded that the impact of climate change is similar to borders; rather, the impact is more when the community is not well prepared. As participatory visual methods enable more collaboration, the tapestry research findings also lead to more transboundary collaboration in the Sundarbans to exchange the existing practices such as rainwater harvesting system.

From the project's research findings, the transboundary Sundarbans team focuses more on implementing the findings with a new project phase. Building pathways between local people, governing bodies, and policy formulation will be emphasized in the new phase. However, the funding opportunity still needs to be secured. To learn more about the project, follow the link- https://tapestry-project.org/ ∎

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A typical room in Korail Slum. Usually, this size of the room is used by 5/6 members of the family (Snap by one of the respondents)   PHOTOS: COURTESY

Perception of Korail slum dwellers on displacement

■ Sumaiya Binte Selim

The story of displacement and Korail slums are deeply related to each other in many terms. Korail is one of the oldest and most populated slums in Dhaka city, and it has diverse aspects from the view of people's work, life, livelihood, displacement, and the issue of migration.

In Korail, almost all residents have come for some issue of displacement, whether climate change or economic reasons. While studying the issues related to displaced people who have moved to Korail for some climate-induced issues, it is often noticed that people love to reminisce about the days they lived in their native place.

Using a visual method for people connecting their roots and the displacement stories, the emotion and how they adapt to the new place are captured perfectly. In this specific study of the coping and adaptive strategies of displaced people, they were served with a smartphone to take some pictures of their daily life, which reflected both positive and negative measures of their life. The living status, structure of the housing, sanitation, and waste management have all been reflected in the pictures. The pictures disclose day-to-day life narratives.

> **The draft resolution, as released, is mainly concerned with the questions relating to the adverse impacts of climate change**

A corner for storing gas cylinder in Korail slum (Snap by one of the respondents)

The residents have shared that the narrow lane and foggy corner of the slum are not anything that they have dreamt of. But they admitted that they actually had no choice except to move to Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, where thousands of people come to set their live and livelihood. Some of them talked about a lack of livelihood options, where some people faced issues with salinity intrusion, some faced land loss, and so on. Most of the stories ended in helplessness and a deep sigh.

When they captured their present life, researchers showed some visualizations of the recent pictures of their native place. They compared the local lanes, environment, fresh air, and spaces of their village life. The Korail slum has provided them with shelter and, in some cases, also with livelihood options. They now own the Korail slum as their own at some point, but the eviction possibilities didn't allow them to actually owning of the place. Many of them even have built their hatch in a specific land, even with the fear of eviction.

Capturing photos of their life not only allows them to show the present state of their lives, but rather it opens a window to compare their past and present life. In the photo voice workshop, when asked about the reason behind capturing photos, they explained those very well from a different lens.

Narrow lanes inside the slum (Snap by one of the respondents

Some photos were interpreted differently when it was described by the person who took that and the people who are seeing that. Even staying in the same community, they don't have a similar mentality and opinion on a single thing.

But there are some common grounds, such as? where community people think alike. They understand that they have to make compromises as they have to leave their native place and ownership. They are adapting in this regard; also, they are kind of set-in mind that they are floating, and they have to move and make nests in other places if there is any eviction.

Even if the uncertainty and fear of eviction, they try to settle down. The inhabitants appreciate the initiative to get them involved in capturing their daily life. This version of storying is new to us, which attracts them. And all of the people from the photo voice workshop agreed that they found the medium much more interactive and connecting. On the other hand, it is a great tool for the researcher to get more observations and issues and for rapport building if they want to continue the research in the long run. ∎

Sumaiya Binte Selim is a researcher at ICCCAD and managed the project "Environmental Refugees," under which the reflection has been studied.

Vertical expansion of the slum (Snap by one of the respondents)   PHOTO:

Barriers faced by people with disabilities and older people during climate-related disasters

■ Farhin Rahman Reeda

People with disabilities and older people often face substantial societal barriers and need special care and attention. This is also true for older people, who may face barriers based on their age. Their fundamental rights are not always met globally, including in developing countries. During times of humanitarian crises and disasters, this cohort of people is disproportionately affected as the barriers they need to overcome to avail the necessary services get exacerbated.

The research project "Messaging for Inclusion: Co-creating disability and age inclusive disaster preparedness messaging in Bangladesh" led by Leonard Cheshire in partnership with Christian Aid, Kurigram Protibandhi Kallyan Songstha (KPKS), and International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) was designed to explore the perceptions and experiences of people with disabilities, older people, and older people with disabilities in Kurigram District, Bangladesh, through the use of a visual research

PHOTOS: COURTESY

method - Photovoice. Photovoice is a qualitative action research method used in community-based participatory research, where participants take and select photographs. Through the accompanying narratives, the participants share why they thought the picture necessary according to their worldview and explore the emotions and experiences behind these choices.

The workshop participants face many issues in their day-to-day lives due to various disabilities and old age. The participants captured the above pictures during floods to underline the challenges for people with physical disabilities to make their way to the shelters in the area. If they can go, they are usually met with further issues at the shelter itself as they are not very disability friendly.

"There is only one shelter in the area, which is the school. It is hard to make my way to the shelter once the area has already been flooded. And it seems pointless since the shelter will already be crowded with people. They will not make any space for me."

(Man with a physical disability)

With climate change over the years causing weather extremes, Kurigram faces harsh, cold winters with scarce water availability and wet, dry monsoons with very heavy flooding. The participants of the workshop spoke of the challenges they face with the daily activities they must partake in, which get exacerbated due to a lack of inclusiveness during times

> **"People with disabilities and older aged people do not have access to the necessary support such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, etc "**

of disaster. Simple tasks such as collecting water are difficult for them on regular days, but they become almost impossible when disasters strike. People with disabilities and older aged people do not have access to the necessary support such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, etc. Furthermore, finding good job opportunities is especially hard for people with disabilities. Some participants spoke of how they could not find proper

> **The participants disclosed that they also had trouble with obtaining any donations for themselves when there were donations being made in the area**

jobs due to their disabilities and had to resort to very low paying odd jobs such as street cobblers and day laborers.

Despite being faced with disadvantages owing to their age, the older participants of the workshop mentioned facing barriers in their daily lives regarding their work opportunities too. When working day labor jobs, they are unable to perform as well as the younger, healthier employees as they are of much older age. For this reason, the older aged workers are not provided the same income opportunities, as they are not able to get the same amount of work done in a day. This, in turn, raises further issues as the participants were mostly from poverty stricken communities who must rely completely on their daily income sources to be able to properly prepare for climate hazards.

The "Persons with Disabilities' Rights and the Protection Act in Bangladesh", established in 2013, includes taking necessary steps towards ensuring the safety and security of persons with disabilities in the case of natural disasters, humanitarian emergencies, and occurrences of violence. However, the participants of the photovoice workshop revealed that the disaster preparedness management in Kurigram was not very inclusive of people with disabilities and older people. While there were public service announcements before certain climate disasters such as floods, there were no specific steps taken to make sure that the persons with disabilities and older people in the area were accommodated.

"Sometimes we are unable to hear or understand the announcements so we are unable to prepare for the time the flood will hit, and we face many issues."

(Older woman with hearing disability)

In addition to this, the participants disclosed that they also had trouble with obtaining any donations for themselves when there were donations being made in the area. They mentioned that when trucks came in with rations or donations, they were distributed haphazardly to large crowds. When this happens, the people with disabilities and older people are unable to make their way to the location in due time to obtain any donations for themselves. Moreover, if they are able to get there in time, they are still usually unable to attain any donations due to the excessive crowding and the high numbers of people trying to get the donations for themselves. Due to this, they are further affected disproportionately during times of climate risks and hazards.

"It is very difficult for me to go to the donation site when the area is flooded. By the time I am able to get to the site, most of the donations have already been handed out. It is difficult even if I get there early as I may get injured in the big crowds".

(Older woman)

In recent years, the "National Plan for Disaster Management" act noted a national task force under the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, comprising representatives of concerned Ministries, Departments, Persons with Disabilities, Disability and Disaster Risk Reduction Organizations to implement and monitor disaster risk management activities including disability. It also included that evacuation boats are being constructed by the ministry so that all the flood-affected people, including people with disabilities, can transfer their houses and livestock during the floods. Although such a policy exists, it is yet to be implemented in the Sadar and Ulipur sub-districts of Kurigram, Bangladesh. ∎

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