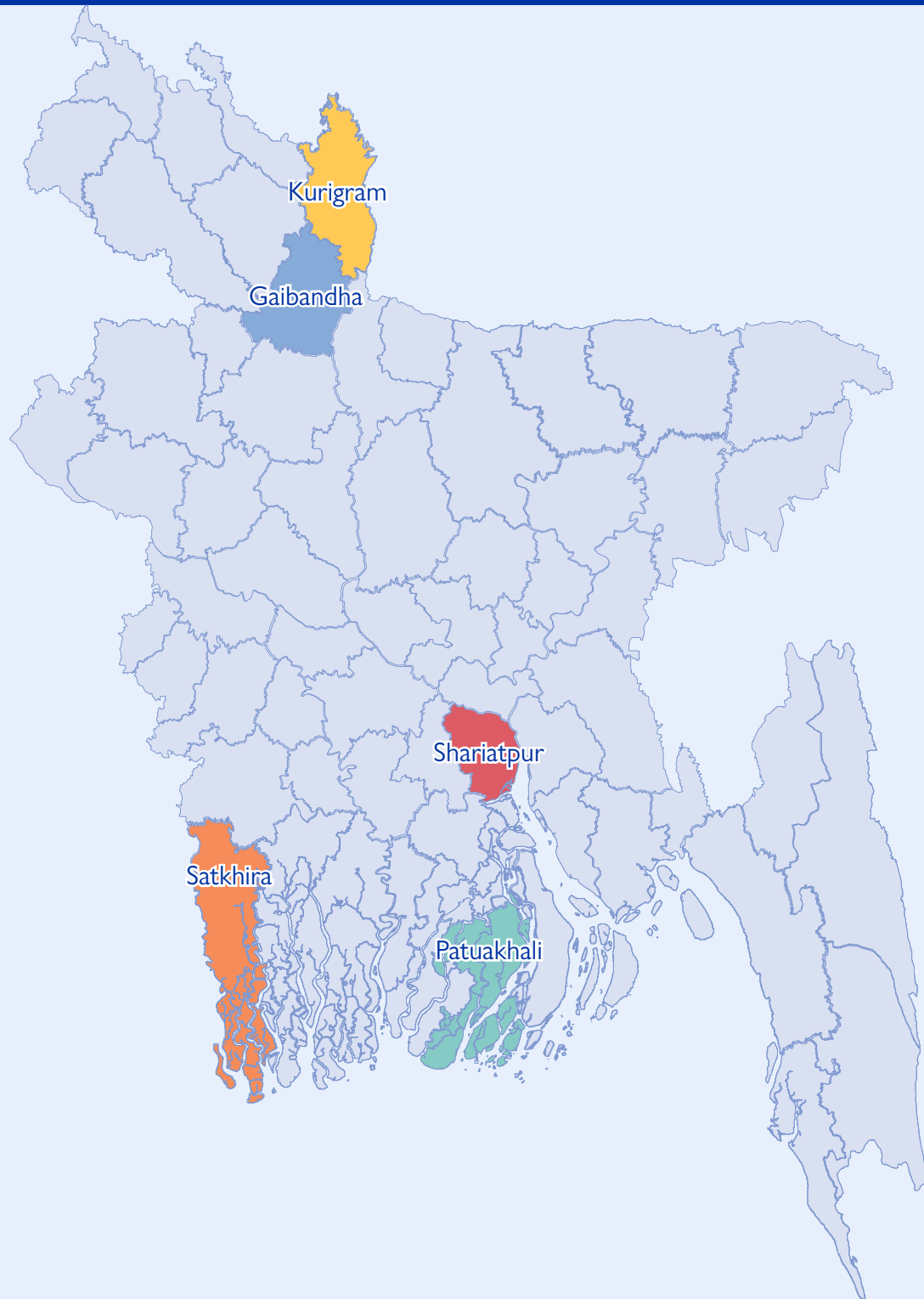


Voices of IDPs in Bangladesh

Consultation Report from Five Districts



Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs) in Bangladesh	1
2. METHODOLOGY	1
2.1. Contextualizing the tools	1
2.2. Planning for data collection	1
2.3. Data collection	1
2.4. Transcription and Translation of the data	2
2.5 Data Analysis and Reporting	2
3. KEY FINDINGS	2
4. DISTRICT LEVEL FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS	2
4.1. Durable Solutions	2
4.2. Prevention	3
4.3. Participation and Accountability	3
4.4. Protection	4
4.5. Coordination	4
4.6. Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding Nexus	4
4.7. Specific Needs and Capacities	5
5. CONCLUSION	5

Acronyms

DMC: Displacement Management Cluster

FGD: Focus Group Discussion

HCS: Host Communities

HDN: Humanitarian Development Nexus

HLP: High-Level Panel

IDPs: Internally Displaced Peoples

IGAs: Income Generating Activities

KI: Key Informant

KII: Key Informant Interview

MoDMR: Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief

MoFA: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

PwD: Persons with Disabilities

1. INTRODUCTION

International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Act Alliance conducted consultations with internally displaced people in Bangladesh during September and October 2020. This exercise was done to support the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel (HLP) on Internal Displacement¹ in their pursuit of capturing IDP voices from around the world. This joint piece of work is also crucial to inform the interventions of the recently launched Displacement Management Cluster (DMC) in the country, which is co-chaired by the Ministry of Disaster Management & Relief (MoDMR) and IOM.

1.1. Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs) in Bangladesh

Internal displacement in Bangladesh dates back to the country's independence in 1971 when almost a third of its population was displaced. However, since then, climate change and ethnic conflict have also contributed to internal displacement. Bangladesh currently places seventeenth out of countries with largest number of IDPs. As of 31 December 2019, there were a total of 427,000 IDPs in Bangladesh as a result of conflict or violence and approximately 88,000 IDPs as a result of disasters². In the first half of 2020, there were 210 new displacements associated with conflict and violence and 2,520,000 as a result of disasters². Today, much of this internal displacement has been due to natural disasters, particularly large-scale flooding, as well as violence and conflict, which often determines how long people are displaced for.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Contextualizing the tools

IOM and ACT Alliance jointly reviewed the tool proposed by HLP for the consultation. In coordination with the Government of Bangladesh, IOM and ACT Alliance prioritised displacement due to natural disasters. IOM and ACT Alliance mutually agreed on five districts; these districts were Kurigram, Satkhira, Patuakhali, Shariatpur and Gaibandha, as IOM and ACT Alliance have field teams in these districts. A tool was contextualised for the selected districts and was translated into Bangla for easy reference for the field team. During the consultations, the Government deemed certain questions to be less relevant to the context of Bangladesh and as a result, questions related to forced displacement, peace building and safety and security were dropped from the questionnaire.

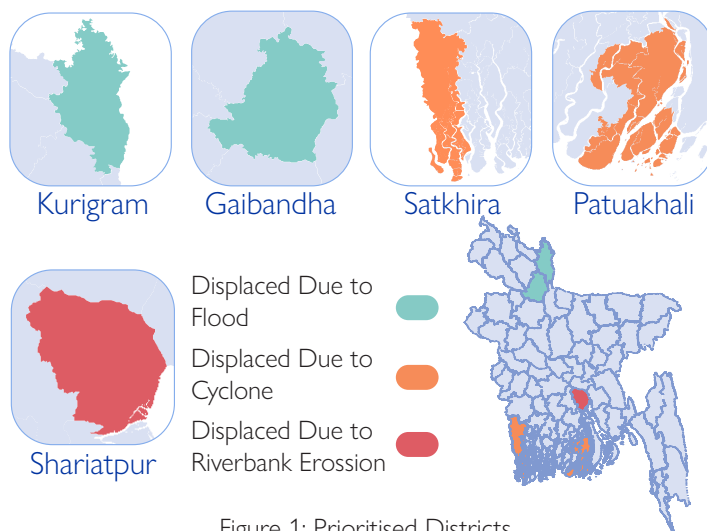


Figure 1: Prioritised Districts

2.2. Planning for data collection

According to the category of IDPs in the selected districts, eight Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and six Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were planned. Five teams were mobilised and trained on using the tool and were deployed for data collection. IOM collected the data in Kurigram and Satkhira, ACT Alliance collected the data in Gaibandha, Patuakhali and Shariatpur.



Figure 2: Methodology

2.3. Data collection

Five teams completed the data collection in the five districts within three days. Different age and gender groups within displaced communities were consulted. The details of the consultations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Details of Consultation

Displaced Due to Flood	FGD 1(Person with Disability), KII 1(NGO) in Gaibandha	FGD 3(Men, Women and the Elderly), KII 3(NGO) in Kurigram
Displaced due to Cyclone	FGD 1(Men), KII 1(NGO) in Patuakhali	FGD 2(Women) in Satkhira
Displaced Due to Riverbank Erosion	FGD 1(Elderly People), KII 1(NGO) in Shariatpur	

¹ The United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement was established to identify concrete recommendations for Member States, the UN system and other actors on how to more decisively prevent, respond and achieve solutions to internal displacement.

² Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Bangladesh. <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/bangladesh>

2.4. Transcription and Translation of the data

The field notes were transcribed and then translated into English. Both IOM and ACT Alliance completed the transcriptions and translations for their respective districts.

2.5 Data Analysis and Reporting

The translated data was analysed, and the district level findings were validated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). The report presents consolidated key findings from all the consultations as well as district disaggregated findings for better targeted programming.


3. KEY FINDINGS

- IDPs in Bangladesh have faced diverse conditions and experiences due to different types of events and socio-economic and geographical backgrounds. Some are displaced temporarily due to disasters, while some are displaced for the long-term. Similarly, the consultation revealed that IDPs originating from the same event are scattered and may not be found in a confined geographic location(s) like in other countries. In some districts, for example in Kurigram, IDPs can be found within the same unions as the event³.
- The government of Bangladesh does not have an IDPs database. The KIs revealed that responses to IDPs' needs are not targeted because of a lack of a database.
- There is no complaints and feedback mechanism⁴ for the IDPs in the districts where consultations were held. For example, there is often no electricity supply/connection for the IDPs for more than six months. Even if IDPs were able to direct their complaints to their respected authority or local representative, it would take time to receive feedback.
- Findings indicated a gap in coordination among the response organisations and a need for HDN programming.
- IDPs expressed a need for land reforms and land redevelopment.
- IDPs who are displaced for the long-term seek long-term solutions for shelter, WASH, education and support for/access to income generating activities (IGAs).
- Response programmes are not targeted towards the specific needs of the different IDP groups – women, the elderly and persons with disabilities (PwD) expressed concerns.
- IDPs emphasized the need for preparedness including the construction of bank and building reinforcements, proper drainage, floodbanks along river embankments and the construction of resilient shelter.
- In some cases, IDPs expressed concerns related to possible eviction as they are situated on private land. In some of the districts, women expressed safety and security concerns in their current location.

4. District Level Findings and Observations

4.1. Durable Solutions

In general, IDPs choose to settle permanently in the areas in which they are temporarily displaced to; however, they expressed the need for improved shelter, access to education, improved water and sanitation facilities and access to IGAs.

District	District Level Durable Solutions
Gaibandha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDPs in Gaibandha want to settle in the same area or be relocated to a new and better place. • Quality of shelter should be improved and should be cyclone proof. • IGAs and education were prerequisites for future settlements. • Social cohesion initiatives such as IGAs for HCs and IDPs were highlighted. • Acceptable levels of sanitation and water provisions should be ensured.  <p>Improved Cyclone Shelter and Relocation</p>
Kurigram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDPs in Kurigram preferred the option to settle in their current location. • Shelter, WASH, job security and educational needs were mentioned. • IDPs in Kurigram want greater involvement of the union leaders to resolve differences/disputes.
Patuakhali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settlement in the current location is preferred with IGAs and resilient shelter (e.g. raising plinth level). • The need for a national database to track IDPs in Patuakhali and respond to their needs was highlighted. • Greater engagement of IDPs and HCs in the decision-making process and better social cohesion is needed.

³ Unions (otherwise known as Union Councils or Union Parishads) are the smallest rural administrative and local government units in Bangladesh. With 4,562 unions across Bangladesh, the bodies are mainly responsible for the agricultural, industrial and community development of the union.

⁴ An effective complaints and feedback mechanism could allow the IDPs to place their issues to the concerning authorities with confidentiality and receive immediate feedback/service/solution.

District	District Level Durable Solutions
Satkhira	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDPs in Satkhira would stay put in the current location if they had access to IGAs. • For permanent settlement in the current location, IDPs in Satkhira highlighted a need to have a database on IDPs in Bangladesh. • Basic services, such as WASH and education, are some of the required preconditions for long-term settlements. • HCs and IDPs in Satkhira should both be involved in decision-making processes to ensure a positive relationship between the communities.
Shariatpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Key Informants (KIs) and IDPs in Shariatpur have different opinions on durable solutions for the IDP situation in the district. KIs think that IDPs in Shariatpur should be relocated somewhere permanently, whereas IDPs hope to stay in the same area permanently with support from the government. • Income generating activities or rehabilitation support for IDPs could strengthen the social relationship between IDPs and HCs.

4.2. Prevention

Most of the respondents believed that the government and/or others could take steps to enable the IDPs to remain safely in the sites they are displaced in and also in the areas they are displaced from. For example, massive infrastructure development is needed to prevent disasters and build economic and social resilience.

District	District Level Prevention
Gaibandha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The IDPs in Gaibandha believe that the government/response organisations should work more on measures related to disaster prevention. • The group was ready for effective and transparent relocation to the new area. • Land development and land reforms for resettlement purposes came out strongly in the consultation.
Kurigram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended that the government and response organisations provide boats to navigate the regular/annual/seasonal flooding/floods. • Highlighted need for increased employment in the areas in which they have been displaced from.
Patuakhali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building initiatives around disaster preparedness and response are required. • More infrastructure development around river embankment to mitigate river bank erosion. • Permanent shelters in safe areas are specifically needed in the areas where IDPs are displaced from.
Satkhira	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of dams to prevent floods and high-rise concrete shelters for permanent settlement.
Shariatpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on building emotional and social resilience among the IDPs in Shariatpur.



Resettlement

4.3. Participation and Accountability

The responses regarding accountability of government and other organisations are mixed. In some districts, IDPs have the opportunity to safely raise complaints or provide feedback about the government, response organisations and/or other entities. Local government along with the participation of IDPs are in need of an interactive communication mechanism to resolve their concerns and demands.

District	District Level Participation and Accountability
Gaibandha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently there is no effective feedback mechanism in place. • An effective climate displacement monitoring mechanism was recommended.
Kurigram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women, men and the elderly have the space to express their issues, but they are not always acknowledged by the local authorities or the response organizations. • Many highlighted the need to increase the local government's involvement in resolving IDP issues. • Many IDPs in Kurigram cited a lack of response by the government when they voiced their concerns.
Patuakhali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDPs in Patuakhali lack organisation among themselves to raise a collective voice. • Organisations do not take cognizance of IDPs' voices due to limited coordination with the government. • Participation of IDPs in decision-making should be ensured alongside government and response agencies. • IDPs in Patuakhali need local forums to file complaints or to provide feedback.
Satkhira	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDPs in Satkhira expressed that there were limited opportunities to voice their concerns. • IDPs in Satkhira would like to participate in the decision-making process by joining union councils and participating in development programmes. • Many highlighted the need for a feedback/complaint mechanism in the area.
Shariatpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The feedback mechanism is partially functional. • The voices of IDPs in Shariatpur need to be better presented to the government or response organisations. • Need to develop a database on IDPs in Shariatpur to capture floating/mobile IDPs.



Participation

4.4. Protection

In terms of safety, protection and the relationship between IDPs and HCs, the responses varied. In some areas, men, women and elderly people are facing safety problems because of water logging and other environmental challenges as well as increased vulnerability due to tensions/conflict with HCs. In some districts, IDPs are facing the risk of being evicted by the local authority or the HC particularly if they are situated on a private land. In some areas, IDPs felt that they are more vulnerable than the HCs and this affects their relationship with the HCs.

District	District Level Protection
Gaibandha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDPs in government resettlement and relocation sites should be protected against forced eviction or should be supported to relocate to better locations. • New sites or improved shelter will improve the protection of IDPs. • Sensitization and community awareness programmes on displacement and protection of IDPs are required. • Mutual respect and support exists between IDPs in Gaibandha and HCs.
Kurigram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women, men and the elderly expressed concerns about their safety due to water logging. • Vulnerability is increased because IDPs do not own the land. • A need for further support from the local government was highlighted. • There is a cordial relationship between IDPs in Kurigram and HCs however, men expressed that at times they face discrimination. • Women expressed an inability to move freely, as there are cultural barriers pertaining to gender.
Patuakhali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location of resettlement is very important to keep the IDPs in Patuakhali safe from natural disasters like cyclones. • In case of problems, though IDPs in Patuakhali have access to local government representatives, one-stop complaint or a feedback mechanism should be established. • The relationship between the HCs and IDPs in Patuakhali is not very cordial because neither groups are engaged in the decision-making process.
Satkhira	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDPs in Satkhira do not feel safe if they are situated on private land because they regularly face conflict/disputes with the host community. Often, the host community considers the IDPs as a burden on their local resources, especially if the IDPs settle in a place meant for the host community. • IDPs in Satkhira go to local community leaders in the case of a conflict/dispute. • The relationship between IDPs and the HCs was initially bad but has improved over time.
Shariatpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response organisation observed that IDPs in Shariatpur feel safe in their current location on a temporary basis, but they are at risk of being evicted by the local authority or HC. • IDPs in Shariatpur feel that they are more vulnerable than the HCs, which affects their relationship with the HCs.



Protection

4.5. Coordination

The findings indicate that the coordination and communication between the response organisations are not effective and has resulted in the duplication of efforts and some groups being underserved as a result of faulty/spot selection of beneficiaries.

District	District Level Coordination
Gaibandha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination among response organisations is an area of concern.
Kurigram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of coordination and a heightened competition for resources among the response organisations came out very clearly.
Patuakhali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDP community in Patuakhali felt that the coordination between response organisations needs further strengthening to avoid duplication, faulty selection of beneficiaries and to ensure a targeted response.
Satkhira	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of coordination among the response organisations was highlighted. • No proper planning and execution of emergency assistance or other interventions.
Shariatpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of coordination among the response organisations was highlighted.

4.6. Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding Nexus

There is a lack of balance between the emergency assistance IDPs receive (e.g. food and shelter) and the assistance or services aimed at longer term recovery and development (e.g. reconstruction and livelihoods). The former is prioritised over the long-term programmes. Respondents highlighted the need for long-term recovery programming during the consultation.

District	District Level Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding Nexus
Gaibandha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HDN responses are inconsistent and need more focus. For example, a greater focus on services for PwD is needed.
Kurigram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of balance in emergency response and long-term interventions.



District	District Level Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding Nexus
Patuakhali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It depends on the type of rehabilitation response/programmes. • Both KII and IDPs in Patuakhali felt that more HDN types of programmes are needed.
Satkhira	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HDN programming does not exist. Need for long-term recovery programming was highlighted during the consultation.
Shariatpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of balance in emergency assistance and long-term measures. • IDPs in Shariatpur should participate in planning and programming.

4.7. Specific Needs and Capacities

The findings suggest that responding to the needs of the most vulnerable IDPs should be prioritised. Programming should be adapted/developed to take into account the specific needs of women, the elderly people, PwD and unaccompanied minors.

District	District Level Specific Needs and Capacities
Gaibandha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted interventions are lacking and therefore, specific needs of PwD are not met.
Kurigram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women complained about their safety and security. Men and the elderly felt that their needs are not met.
Patuakhali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group of men observed that the response is not targeted and does not address the needs of different groups.
Satkhira	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different groups have different needs, but programmes are not targeted towards the diversity of needs (e.g lack of sanitation facilities poses a greater safety risk for women).
Shariatpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for a robust database to cater to the specific needs of the different groups.

5. CONCLUSION

The consultations revealed that while IDPs in Bangladesh are diverse, there were similarities across their various needs. Although many IDPs prefer settlement in their current location, they expressed a need for shelter, IGAs, education, WASH facilities, as well as targeted programmes aimed at vulnerable groups such as women, the elderly, PwD and unaccompanied minors. Many also emphasized the need for greater long-term recovery assistance and increased coordination and communication between response organisations. In addition, IDPs expressed the need for government improvements in infrastructure development to protect them from natural disasters. Likewise, in many districts, IDPs felt that there was no effective feedback mechanism in place and limited opportunities to safely voice their concerns about the government, response organisations or others. Lastly, due to issues such as water logging and eviction, IDPs in some areas felt more vulnerable than HCs, which complicated the relationship between the two groups.



actalliance