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Travel Grant Abstract

“Humanitarian Crisis and Local Capacity Building: A Bangladesh Perspective”

Bangladesh has a long history of natural disaster. In between 1980 to 2008, the country experienced 219 natural disasters including cyclone, flood and tornado, causing over US\$16 billion in total damage (UNDP, 2009). The natural disaster has also impacted to a majority of Bangladeshis in their social and human life. The main causes behind these natural disasters are high vulnerability of people (unaware), housing (dilapidated), location (coastal area), and infrastructure (lack of dam, embankment, and shelter house) (Shafiullah and Mathbor, nd). Local capacity building intervention strategies as a part of disaster management can address the country's natural disaster given a comprehensive approach before, during and in the post disaster period comprising disaster preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery (USAID, 2011). Capacity development involves broad participation by a wide spectrum of people at the local community level in determining goals and taking civic action (Rothman et al., 2007). Disaster Management can be defined as “The body of policy and administrative decisions, and operational activities which pertain to the various stages of disaster at all level” (USAID, 2011). Here, “Policy and administrative decisions, and operational activities” refer to the disaster cycles that include disaster mitigation, disaster preparedness, disaster response, and disaster recovery (USAID, 2011). Disaster mitigation is a set of programs, which are taken to limit the adverse impact of hazards. It focuses on long – term measures for reducing or eliminating the risk. In disaster preparedness phase, disaster manager develops plans of action for the time when disaster strikes. Disaster mitigation also refers to the effective readiness measures to expedite emergency action, rehabilitation and recovery. Disaster preparedness includes emergency warning, emergency shelter, emergency evacuation disaster plans, and maintenance of resources and training of personnel. The response phase includes the mobilization of the necessary emergency services and first responders in the disaster affected area. Here, necessary emergency services include search and rescue, evacuation, demand analysis, resource analysis, emergency relief (food, water, sanitation, first aid, etc.) and logistic

supply (tent). In addition, fire fighters, police, social workers, volunteers, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) work as first responders toward natural disasters. The aim of disaster recovery is to restore the affected area to its previous state. It includes a) rehabilitation (cleaning up the debris, rebuilding destroyed houses and property, re-employment, etc.) and b) reconstruction (rebuilding or repairing the essential infrastructure e.g., roads, hospital, schools, etc.). Therefore, Sultana's paper at the 2014 AIBS Pre-conference "Extreme Weather, Disasters, and Indigenous Practices in South Asia" aims to identify key causes of natural disaster and how the disaster management strategies with an emphasis on capacity building process can address the natural disaster in Bangladesh. Finally, Sultana's paper offers recommendations for effective disaster management in Bangladesh.