

## Untimely Visitation of Calamity: Flash Flood in Haor Areas of Bangladesh and its Devastating Impacts on Economy

Nushrat Tashmin\* and A T M Jakaria Khan\*\*

### Abstract

The untimely flash floods have wrecked on haors spreading over seven north eastern districts of Bangladesh on the eve of the monsoon of the year 2017. The people of these affected areas were in an utter shock as the flood waters that came almost at lightning speed have caused extensive damage to standing Boro crop and fish stock. The truth is that thousands of people living in haor areas are still in severe distress as they have lost their one seasonal rice crop that they only grow annually along with fish stock. This food crop remains at the top of the list, in terms of production and it is estimated that haor areas alone produce nearly 25 per cent of the country's total annual Boro rice output. People in the flood-hit haor areas are facing extreme food-crisis as they have lost their crops, fishes, ducks and other necessities during this recent untimely flash floods.

**Keywords:** *Flash Flood, Bangladesh, Climate Change and Natural Features.*

### Introduction

The present study deals with the devastating impacts of flash floods which have wrecked on Haors spreading over seven north eastern districts of Bangladesh on the eve of the monsoon of the year 2017. The North-Eastern region of Bangladesh is unique due to its hydro-ecological characteristics. The region has special natural features called the Haors (Bhattacharya & Suman, 2012).

---

\* Lecturer, Department of Disaster Science and Management, Faculty of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Dhaka.

\*\* Lecturer, Institute of Business Administration (IBA), University of Dhaka.

Haors are large bowl-shaped flood plain depressions. During dry season haors are used for agriculture and during rainy season it is used for fisheries. Haors have profound ecological importance. Flash floods are not unknown to the people of haor areas. In fact, they have been living with this particular type of natural calamity for centuries. However, In 2017, because of abnormal rainfall during the month of April, the visitation of the calamity has been rather untimely due to climate change (The Financial Express, 2017). The floods caused by endless rainfall and onrush of water from upstream (The Daily Sun, 2017).

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study is to investigate the impacts of the untimely flood on traditional economy of the indigenous people as this area is regarded as one of the main crop supplying region of the country.

### **Methodology**

Both types of primary and secondary sources of data have been used. Primary data have been obtained through various qualitative and quantitative methods such as interview, observation, case study method and questionnaire survey methods.

### **Result and Discussion**

The people of the affected areas are still in an utter shock as the flood waters that came almost in lightning speed have caused extensive damage to standing Boro crop and fish stock. Local people did spare no efforts on their part to save their Boro crop that they would have harvested in a couple of weeks' time from the onslaught of floods.

People in the flood-hit haor areas are still facing extreme food-crisis as they have lost their crops, fishes, ducks and other necessities during the recent flash floods. Boro crops on thousands of acres have been inundated due to the flash floods caused by incessant rain and the onrush of water from upstream just days before the harvesting. Many families with little children are starving as they haven't enough food. First, it was the pre-monsoon flash flood that trashed the standing crop in the haor areas then it was the carcasses of fishes and other aquatic

species in large numbers floating ashore. In some of the most affected areas, duck farming is a major source of livelihood for the locals.

With the receding of flood water, various water-borne diseases such as diarrhea and Respiratory Tract Infection (RTI) have broken out in the flood-hit haor areas. Haor people are now suffering from acute crisis of pure drinking water. They are getting attacked with water-borne diseases due to lack of safe drinking water. Some flood-affected people said government's relief materials are not reaching every area and that the relief is too inadequate to meet the demand. Many victims said they are now busy drying up half-ripen paddy in the sun. Some paddy has been rotten while some are not mature to make rice, they added. The government allocated a total of Tk 10 crore in emergency aid for the people of these flood-hit areas.

**Table 1: Detailed Impact Scenario of Flash Flood in Haor Areas of Bangladesh, 2017**

<b>Impacts of Flash Flood, 2017</b>			
<b>Location</b>		<b>Impact on Agriculture (Hector)</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>District</b>	<b>Upazila (No.)</b>		
Netrokona	09	18,880	DDM Report; April 05, 2017
Kishoreganj	06	23,300	Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), Kishoreganj (Dhakatribune.com); April 08, 2017
Habiganj	Not available	16,500	Agricultural Authorities of Habiganj
Sylhet	13	Damage information not available	-
Moulavi bazar	Not available	12,800	DDM Report; April 01, 2017
Sunamganj	11	91,690	Report on damage of Boro crops due to excessive rain, flash flood and embankment collapse, Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), Sunamganj; April 04, 2017
Total		160,170	

Source: Nirapod, 2017

Role of climate change on flash flood in Haor areas of Bangladesh is yet to be established. It is now being evident that the pre-monsoon rainfall and its intensity is likely to increase in the future. The probability of the occurrence of flash flood like this year will likely be higher in the future due to climate change, as changes in weather phenomenon and increase in extreme weather events have already been observed in all over the world (The Independent, 2017).

### **Conclusion**

The untimely floods in these haor areas caused huge damage to the livelihood of the indigenous people. Since the area significantly contributes to the national food production, overall food security of the country may suffer negative consequences. Whatever the reason is, focuses should be on helping the affected people to cope with the losses. The situation now depends on how the government goes about tackling the situation both in the short and long terms. In the short term, it is relief and rehabilitation; and in the long-term, it is the all-important issue of ecological management of the haor areas.

### **References**

Bhattacharya, B and Suman, A 2012. Flash flood characterisation of the Haor area of Bangladesh. Research Gate.

Nirapod 2017. *Flash Flood Situation*, April 19, 2017. Dhaka: Nirapod.

The Daily Sun 2017. *Haor areas of 3 dists flooded*, April 6, 2017, Retrieved from The Daily Sun: <http://www.daily-sun.com/post/217552/Haor-areas-of-3-dists-flooded>.

The Financial Express 2017. *Flash floods in haor areas*, May 13, 2017, Dhaka, Bangladesh: The Financial Express.

The Independent 2017. *Climate change and crops in haor areas*, April 16, 2017, Retrieved from <http://www.theindependentbd.com/home/printnews/90337>.