

## Cover page

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### *Title*

"Climate campaigns as development: On the convergence of development and climate resilience in Bangladesh"

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# Climate campaigns as development: On the convergence of development and climate resilience in Bangladesh

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## *Background*

Bangladesh has repeatedly been singled out as the world's most vulnerable country to climate change, most recently in Maplecroft's Climate Change Vulnerability Index 2015 (Maplecroft, 2014). As a low-laying coastal area the country is frequently hit by tropical cyclones from the Bay of Bengal as well as prone to flooding stemming from the three major rivers that form one of the world's largest delta systems: Ganges, Meghna and Brahmaputra. As a Least Developed Country, and one of the world's most densely populated nations, Bangladesh has few resources to face the risks and consequences of climate change (Lewis, 2011).

While Bangladesh has always been experiencing flooding (Schendel, 2009), a surge in extreme weather will further increase risks of river erosion as well as health problems in urban slum areas (IPCC, 2012, pp. 79, 254; Mahmood, 2012, pp. 229–230). However, the most serious risk comes from rising sea level. According to “more severe climate change scenarios, rising seas would (...) inundate 18 percent of Bangladesh's land” (World\_Bank, 2010, p. 28). Although Bangladesh is often praised for its early warning system (IPCC, 2012, p. 308; World\_Bank, 2010, p. 105), cyclones, coastal flooding and other climate related disasters are already impeding progress and development (World\_Bank\_Group, 2010).

These challenging conditions are the background for both national and international programmes aiming at reducing the impact of climate change in Bangladesh. Frequently, these programmes take the shape of development campaigns, reflecting the recognition that climate resilience and development is inseparable in most developing countries.

Bridging development and climate change, however, possess a number of challenges. For instance, climate objectives may be considered hampering development if e.g. coastal areas or hillsides are decided *not* to be developed (OECD, 2005, p. 18), illustrating how development and climate project often work on different time scales.

Combining climate change and development campaigns also raises communicative questions. Presenting and communicating climate resilience as development, for instance, carries important implications in terms of responsibility and agency. Whereas climate change is a truly global problem – to which Bangladesh has contributed little – development issues are caused both by global, regional and local problems. Thus, Bangladesh is already suffering from lacking development; and increasingly from climate change. But whereas the latter is an over-national and indeed over-individual problem the former is very much bound to local structures and decisions.

### *Research design*

This study looks at how national and international programmes present development as a means to adapt to climate change (and vice versa). It investigates how climate change and development is presented and communicated as two sides of the same coin, and the implications this carry in relation to both climate change and development:

RQ1: To what extent are national and international climate campaigns in Bangladesh presented as development?

RQ2: What are the implications, in terms of responsibility and agency, when development campaigns are communicated as climate resilience?

The study draws on two sources of data. The first consists of national and international programme descriptions, such as The Bangladesh Climate Resilience Fund (which is supported by EU's Global Climate Change Alliance) as well as two UNDP programmes in Bangladesh: (a) *Costal Afforestation* and (b) *Poverty, Environment and Climate Mainstreaming*.

Framing analysis (Borah, 2011; Entman, 1993) is employed to unravel how these programmes and campaigns are discursively constructing (Fairclough, 2003) climate change as development, and development as climate change resilience.

The second kind of data is based on semi-structured (Kvale, 1997) expert interviews with national and international aid/climate workers.

### *Analysis*

Preliminary interviews with aid workers point in two directions. Firstly, that climate resilience and development is inseparable and mutually dependent. For instance, road construction in the costal Char region (low-laying island in the river basin) serve as a means of disaster management by allowing people quick access to cyclone shelters. The number of cyclones is expected to increase as a consequence of climate change. However, road construction is also an obvious example of development, facilitating greater mobility and access to public services such as schools and health centres (while also, inadvertently, contributing to population increase in an already overpopulated region).

However, some development workers express concern over how questions of development are communicated and addressed as climate resilience. The main worry is that it blurs questions of responsibility and agency. For instance, salinization is a major problem and concern in Bangladesh. It is estimated that approximately 13% of Bangladesh's southern provinces are already affected by saline intrusion (BCCRF, 2013). However, climate change is not the only cause of salinization. Deforestation and cash crops are also contributing to the problem. If salinization is communicated as primarily climate related it might have adversary effects in terms of making the local population understand the consequences of their own actions.

A similar problem arises in mountainous areas such as the Hill Tracts (on the border to Myanmar) where development problems are primarily related to soil erosion. While climate change may increase soil erosion due to increased precipitation, the main problem is cultivation patterns (e.g. slash and burn). Soil

erosion thus has to be addressed, that is to say, communicated by national and international aid workers as mostly self-inflicted rather than stemming from over-individual climate change.

These examples illustrate the complexities surrounding climate change communication, especially in vulnerable areas where climate change and development is intrinsically linked. Thus, the aim of the study is to throw light on the dynamics and complications that emerge when climate change campaigns are presented as development.

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