B7 Welfare, *Clothes

B.8 Community vigilance

C.1 Rapid monitoring and

observation, *Distress selling.

*Damage assessment, *Migra-

tion, *Coping methods/inno-

vation, *Ecological, *Damage/

opportunities, *Recording

human adjustment and

Productive Time Use: *Employ-

ment, *Self Management, *Counseling,

*Extension/education, *Social

visit by volunteers to monitor

sponse, *Estimation of Loss and

compensation with profes-

sional assistance, Rehabi-

litation plan at the national

and local levels with proper

sectoral prioritization,

*Integrating Lessons from dis-

aster management in the devel-

opment thinking as central el-

ement, *Create revolving fund

for disaster management, *View

Concluding Observation

disasters as great educators.

.C.5 Long Term Response:

(Redesigning annual budget.

C.4 Medium Term Re-

the adjustment process.

C.2 On Camp Activities:

Off Camp: Regular

Post-Disaster Period

*Shelter *camps*, *Counseling if

*Patrolling, *Networking.

*Public awareness campaign,

*Focal point for better coordi-

mental stress.

nation.

Activities

heroism.

Development.

Disasters are Also Great Educators

Atiur Rahman

As it normally happens people, especially policy makers tend to forget disaster once it is over. They hardly maintain any institutional history of coping with disaster and when it comes back they either over react or put emphasis on wrong ends.

ANGLADESH is once again procuring food from abroad and should not 'over react' in decidin crisis. Two-thirds of the ing imports under pressure country is under water. from any commercial quarter. This year's flood is At the same time the famine unprecedented in the sense that risk reduction' strategy of the the water is not receding fast. government should also be Apparently the deluge will be taken seriously while making with us for another two to three any estimate. weeks at the least. The The flood losses are likely to prolonged flooding has serious be more severe in non-agriculimplication in terms of direct, tural sectors particularly in the indirect and multiple losses in residential and commercial

the economy and society which sectors. The loss to poultry, are yet to be estimated. livestock and vegetables etc., We have some ideas about could indeed be colossal. The the nature of losses of a short income loss to those involved duration but devastating flood like that of 1988. I do not think in non-farm income-generating we can apply clinically the esactivities supported by various timates of losses of 1988 flood micro-credit organizations should also be kept in mind to capture the dimensions of the havoc which has been unwhile estimating the flood loss. There has to be some adleashed on us this year. We may, justments between the private however, get some cues from 1988 experiences. I am sure appropriate authorities may have already started calculating the losses of this year's long lasting

flood. However, these can at

best be termed as 'guestimates

for quick policy actions.
If will be only proper if a

group of knowledgeable experts

are alerted right at this stage to

get ready for a more in-depth

professional job of estimating

the losses within the fold of an

institutional initiative. BIDS

can be requested to take this

initiative. There are a number

priate skills in estimating flood

losses and as well as compensa-

tion through human responses.

Besides interesting reports on

economic effects of 1988 flood,

human responses to disaster, a

Ph.D. thesis on flood losses is

also now available at BIDS. If

they do not have technical ex-

pertise on any particular field

they can easily draw upon oth-

ers' services from other rele-

vant organizations. BIDS may

have already initiated some

moves in this direction. A coor-

dinated move from policy mak-

ers may yield better results in

Basics of Flood Loss

Estimation

multi-disciplinary experts in-

cluding the ones already indi-

cated could have also provided

credible estimates of the flood

losses which can be used by im-

portant stakeholders including

government and the develop-

ment partners. Whichever may

we go for estimation of this

year's flood losses, we may have

to remember the following ba-

sics of understanding flood

flooding is crucial in any kind

of estimation for flood dam-

The loss estimates must in-

tiple dimensions.

chains.

value) losses.

up and doing.

clude direct, indirect and mul-

look the multiple efforts of the

people and organizations in

sectors must not lose sight ei-

ther. For example, the stagnant

wholesale business centres and

retail commercial units will

have for reaching impact on in-

dustrial production, inflation

and income of many people in-

volved in the commercial

solute and proportional (to

Aman will be colossal in the

flood affected areas. But there

could be some late harvest and

re-transplanting as well. The

unaffected areas may have

higher production if agricul-

tural extension department is

mentation through extensive

flooding the soil quality will

surely improve leading to

bumper harvest in winter. Pol-

icy makers should keep this

possibility in mind while

Because of increased sedi-

It is better to look at both ab-

It seems the loss of Aus and

compensating the losses.

The estimates must not over-

The 'ripple effects' across the

The depth and duration of

damages and compensation:

A Task Force involving

this matter.

of experts in BIDS with appro-

loss and societal gains. For example, the fish lost from private ponds may have ended up in the ecological reserves like beels, haor with some access to the poor.

There will be both structural and inventory damage in the residential sector.

The commercial sector will experience damages which can be categorized as: i) structural, ii) machinery and equipment, iii) stock, iv) production and v)

linkage effects. The loss of stock in godowns pledged to the banks should get special attention of the flood loss estimators. The banks could be in real danger if all borrowers in the flood affected areas ask for respite in the form of exemption of interest or part of principal or whole scale rescheduling. The income base of the nationalised banks is already very thin due to massive default. A disaster like this may make banks even more vulnerable. So there should be a sincere effort at capturing the actual loss before it is too late. Otherwise everyone will ask for his/her share of 'compensation' irrespective of the actual

The garments sector is already in doldrum. They are facing cancellation of orders as the Chittagong port has been disconnected due to flood. The garments workers too are in great difficulties. The estimators must give special focus to this thrust sector.

Dr. Nabiul Islam (1997) of BIDS estimated per square metre total damages to office and public enterprise, industry, business and residential unit as Tk. 416, Tk. 1217, Tk. 4323 and Tk. 213 for 0.61 meter deep and 7 days duration flood of 1988. The per Km damage to pucca highway road was estimated as Tk. 84,800. That for a Pourasava road this was estimated at Tk. 242,000. This year's flood is much more se-.. vere and of longer duration. The above estimates need to be adjusted in the light of the longer duration.

The flood damages can be differential for different socioeconomic classes. The poorer groups are more vulnerable and experience more losses. According to Islam (ibid) while 26 per cent of the assets of a low cost house was lost in 1988 flood the proportion was only 7 per cent for the highest cost house. It was also noted that lower the costs of construction, higher were the structural damages to the values (28 per cent as against 5 per cent for the two contrasting house types). This year the urban poor living in low-lying slums have been particularly affected. A participatory need assessment by a group of investigators of Shamunnay' (a non-profit private research organization reveals that the urban poor have lost their household assets like chowkis (wooden bed), utensils, reading materials for the kids etc. All these losses need to be

taken into consideration while

On an average at least 10 per cent of the total assets (amounting Tk. 19,000) of an average urban households was country.

lost in 1988. This year this could be much more because of the longer duration of the flood. As discussed above, the proportion of loss could be much higher for the affected slum dwellers. The inventory damage con-

stituted 43 per cent and structural damage 31 per cent of total damage of assets of a residential unit in 1988 flood in urban areas. This year this may be much higher.

Among the commercial units, the small sized, low capital-intensive ones lost the most. This year this trend is much more distinct. There is a need for a special effort in capturing the flood losses of the small and informal sector which provides bulk of the value addition to our industrial and commercial economy.

In 1988, 17 per cent of the industrial asset value and 31 per cent of business asset value

form of relief activities by various organizations and individuals in different parts of the

These include political, social, cultural, professional organizations, associations. The NGOs, though more competent to respond to such a crisis, have not yet been showing their edge over others. However, they are already in the fields and will probably do better during the recovery and development phase. Last time they did wonderful jobs in devising innovative housing structure, microcredit programme, health programme etc. I am sure they will make best use of those lessons in coping with this year's disaster as well. Indeed we have been constantly making good use of the lessons learned from the coping mechanisms of the earlier disasters while responding to new crisis.

In that sense, the disasters are also great educators. They change our mindset. They inspire us to come together. They unleash social capital which

remains normally dormant

among us. They force us to be

adaptive, innovative and

courageous in difficult times.

Certainly the level of con-

sciousness of the ordinary peo-

ple has been increased signifi-

cantly since 1988. But unfortu-

nately the higher level of con-

sciousness and positive dimen-

sions of the traditional coping

mechanisms of the ordinary

people and myriads of organi-

zations have not yet been ade-

quately integrated into main-

stream development thinking

of Bangladesh's policy makers.

people, especially policy mak-

ers tend to forget disaster once

it is over. They hardly main-

tain any institutional history

of coping with disaster and

when it comes back they either

over react or put emphasis on

wrong ends. As a result, the in-

terlinkage between disaster re-

sponse and mainstream devel-

opment thinking does not au-

tomatically takes place. It

needs careful nurturing and

farsighted policy move to inte-

grate the two. Otherwise, the re-

sponse mechanism remains ad

As it normally happens

hoc and often disjointed.

Bangladesh, especially its civil society has learned immensely from the earlier disasters. Though it was unusually slow in responding to this year's disaster, it cannot be denied that various organizations have now moved into the field of action. They have already started showing their strengths and innovations. If we can maintain this momentum and encourage them to flourish through better coordination, strategic policy tie-up and due appreciation, certainly we will be able to show to the world that we are a different nation which can rise like Phoenix from ashes at times of great disasters.

Disaster and Development: The Interlinkage

No doubt, Bangladesh, because of its long experiences in disaster management, has been constantly institutionalizing the mitigation efforts into its

normal development activities.

It also has developed a number

of well laid out codes of conduct

for its administrative person-

nel to guide them to respond at

different stages of disaster

strengths of Bangladesh society

in the field of disaster man-

agement, the developmen

thinking and planning could

not as yet make disaster their

key concern. As a result, policy

makers tend to forget the costs

of disasters during normal

years and over react during dis-

aster periods. Not only the op-

portunities of learning from

disasters are missed in the pro-

cess, there can be huge wastage

of public resources as well. So it

is imperative that development

planning and budgeting in a

country like Bangladesh always

incorporates and updates the

lessons of disaster management

think like a mountain," said

one contemporary social scien-

tist of India. Same is perhaps

true here in Bangladesh also. If

the disasters like this year's

"If you are in mountain

as their core elements.

However, despite all these

management.

flood or 1991 cyclone do take

ters. In fact, we will be looking forward to a development strategy which makes disaster management the core element both

away all that are accumulated over years in one stroke, the disaster management should then be the fixed variable in all our development initiatives. Can you imagine what would have been the impact on our economy and society if we kept aside say Taka 5000 million every year in the revolving disaster management fund and/or created a disaster preparedness force involving the civil society at large focusing particularly on the new generation (see the picture of the children's mock fight against major earthquake which occurred 75 years ago in

We would not have felt so helpless today and rush to the donors with begging bowls at the least. And this is not something which cannot be achievable for a nation which has been born in the ashes of 1971 and experienced so many disas-

perception can be captured. Evolving a development paradigm which looks into disasters as educators and integrates their coping mechanism

at every stage of planning. Instilling a positive image of Bangladesh in the light of the heroic experiences of people's ever increasing capacities of

fight disasters and expand space for livelihoods. In more concrete terms, we may think of a pragmatic disaster preparedness plan which can mitigate all kinds o disasters including floods which

ments: All efforts should be based on actual information rather

should have following ele-

than on myths.
Information will have to be disseminated if there is a danger of panic. The information disseminated should, however be easily comprehensible. The DP plan should be short,

justable. The plan should be able to unfold stage by stage (i.e. pre, on

concise, pragmatic and ad-

and post-disaster). It should spell only general strategy and not tactics. The tactics should evolve from grounds.

It should be able to anticipate what is likely to happen. It should be based on local strengths and response capaci-

It should make abundantly clear to all organizations (public and private) that they must change and adapt with changing circumstances.

It must have room for making transition from emergency to recovery phase.

It must be easily implementable.

The disaster management plan indicated above is a matter of medium and long term thinking. In the mean time, the flood is at our door step. How to face this disaster? We may like to indicate some elements of the coping mechanism against ongoing flood in the backdrop of the discussions which we have already done so far.

An Illustrative Plan for Coping with Flood Disaster

Pre-disaster Activities Forecasting/Early Warning: *Right information is a must in flood warning. So, information to be translated into local units and then disseminated, * Preferably information should be disseminated through an organisation network. *Information may be disseminated both vertically (upper to lower) and horizontally (village to village).

A.2. Rapid appraisal of Ground Truth Immediately before Disaster: "Assessment of physical infrastructure. A.3 Access to Resource

People: a. Government Officials b. NGO personnel

c. Volunteers drawn from clubs, social, political and education organisations.

> Materials: a. Buffer stock of food b. Fodder c. Medicine

nourishing ecological re-

encouraging community and

disaster management Institutional Mechanism for Better Disaster Management In order to design an appropriate institutional mechanism

every level of administration.

Evolving a participatory need assessment methodology through which people's own

basic disaster mitigation components of such a development strategy should at least incorporate the followings: special disaster preparedemergency codes

- Star photo by Anisur Rahman

national logic plan

"off-the-self" food for work/cash-for-work public works programmes cattle camps and animal

tax and debt relief seed banks and speedy secondary economic activi-

NGOs to have inbuilt plans for

for better disaster management Bangladesh needs to improve its capacities on the followings: stronger local government at

Greater civic engagements allowing all types of organizations and associations to interact and interplay for strengthening local roots of democratic

in the short and long term. The

ness fund

strengthening of local governments along with their local capacities of disaster management, particularly developing secure food reserves

protection systems movement of seedlings

serves and maintenance of wetlands

governance.

(Local/Outside)

d. Drinking water **B. During Disaster Activities**

B.I Search and Rescue/Evacuation, *Use of country boats, *Use of banana tree shafts.*Mechanised boats/transport.

As has been demonstrated this year people do show a lot of ingenuity during disaster. This year thousands of smaller boats have been constructed with iron sheets which could be recycled later. Such innovations should be documented and encouraged.

B.2 Nutritional Surveillance, *Amount of food intake, *Drinking water, *Children's food. B.3 Health, *First aid

(Access to public health care, *Childbirth facility. *Sanitation, *Immunisation, *Preventive/curative health information.

B.4 Housing, *Repairing, Rebuilding. B.5 Livestock, *Fodder,

*Immunisation, *Safety. B.6 Seedlings,

*Preparation of seedling field, *Purchase of seedling

While the ideas thrown above may have long term implications for integration of disaster management response and future development

strategy, the lessons of the past disaster management are also equally important for facing today's crisis. We can definitely make critique of what the government and others are doing in this time of crisis, but simultaneously we must also ask ourselves what we are doing as individuals and groups. You, I and we can do many things at this crucial moment.

We can raise the consciousness of our friends, colleagues, relatives to do something for the flood victims. We may postpone our luxury and conspicuous consumption and share the savings with the flood victims. We may work as part-time volunteers in any of the relief camps. We may collect some materials and pass on to a credible organization involved in relief distribution. We may request our relatives and friends working abroad to send some extra dollars for their close ones who may have been affected by flood. These are modest efforts. But

frundreds and thousands of such efforts may impact substantially in alleviating the suffering of the flood victims. We may also discourage people around us to refrain from doing or saying anything which divides the nation at this hour of tribulations. The government may also start pruning the ADP and prioritize projects which would be more relevant for post-flood rehabilitation. These should be a move for cutting recurrent expenditure in all government agencies. More people and money should be directed for post-flood rehabilitation. The universities and colleges may be closed for a month or so for rehabilitation

work by the students. Together we stand and divided we ruin ourselves as a nation. We need not be fearful about the magnitude of the crisis which has just engulfed us. We got to think that we have a strong ground under our feet (the ground which is enmeshed with vibrant social capital. Let me, therefore, end this piece with a quote from Tagore:

"একলা যে অনু খাই তাতে আছে পেট পাঁচজন মিলে যে অনু খাই তাতে আছে

আত্মীয়তা।" "When we eat alone we just

meet our appetite, but when five of us eat together we do also cultivate a relationship."

The author is Senior Research Fellow, BIDS; and former General Secretary, Bangladesh Economic Association.

Children Left Uncared for

THE children of Bangladesh are the most neglected L group of the society. Bangladesh, a country with a population of 120.43 million inhabitants on an area of 148,393 sq km, is remarkably the most densely-populated country of the world. The vast majority of the people are living in poverty. Bangladesh is dominated by small holder agrarian economy under extreme stress. Her total cultivated area is nearly 22.5 million acres. Production shortfalls, increasing economic polarisation and chronic malnu-

The world's challenges for the next century is the elimination of absolute poverty and its product "child labour". Nothing could be more important. The international development magazine "Development" has quoted in its 1st issue of 1998, that: "There will never be much progress in eradication of poverty if "the people" have little idea of what world poverty involves and what eradicating

it would entail." The ILO believes that there are 250 million child workers in the world among them 120 million are working full-time. Child labour has been recog-

exploitation of the child rights. There are lack of statistical information on children's economic participation in Bangladesh. The present statistics that do exist suggest that a significant part of overall labour force of Bangladesh is comprised of children. Human rights monitors of

Bangladesh indicate that child abandonment, kidnapping. trafficking for labour bondage and prostitution contagiously increasing. It is now a serious and widespread problem in Bangladesh. Absence of effective implementation of law for protecting women and children in Bangladesh, most of the days receives press coverage. Police and local government officials either ignore prostitution and trafficking, including that of children or actually they profit from it.

The connivance of officials at various levels allows the illegal human trade function. Child labour is legally prohibited in Bangladesh. The laws and rules that restrict child labour and abuse of child labour include the labour employment of Children Act 1938. The Children Act XXXIX of 1974 and the Employment of Children Rules 1955 (ILO), which is

These laws, though they do not totally prohibit the child labour, provide that children are not abused at the workplace and prohibit employment of the children in risky work i.e., factory and other hard works. Available information sug-

also applicable to Bangladesh.

gests that child labourers constitute about 15 per cent of the total labour force. A big percentage of these working children work in informal sectors including households and agricultural sectors. In rural areas a big portion of children are engaged in economic activities which prevent them from going to school. The situation of child workers in urban areas is even

Increasing poverty is one of the reasons of child labour. The child labourers even have to supplement the family income. They are bereft of education, the existing laws do not protect them. The children of Bangladesh are left uncared for and neglected.

The Institute for Inter-cultural Formation and European Studies (IFIBEU) under the auspices of Pedagogic Hochschule Freiburg, Germany has been conducting a research on "Child Labour: a threat to human rights and development".

estimating the flood losses. Chittagong Port: Role of Trade Unions

by M A Kamal

were lost. This year the loss will

surely be much higher given the

will be much higher this year as

well. The quality of construc-

tion does, of course, matters a

lot in deciding the flood loss in

this sector. But the prolonged

flooding may have affected even

into focus the level of percep-

tions among people living in

the flood plains (their re-

silience building capacity, the

local judgements and comrade-

ship, community friendliness,

kinship etc., which can have

substantial role in compen-

though late, some of these inner

strengths of Bangladesh society

have already started to emerge.

Gradually the whole society is

galvanizing into one to cope

with this gigantic and heroic

struggle for coping with this

prolonged disaster. Already we

are witnessing the unfolding of

social capital (i.e. trust, com-

radeship, civic engagements,

coming together etc.) in the

It should be noted here that,

satory and recovery activities.

However, one must also take

better quality infrastructure.

The loss to infrastructure

nature of the flood.

Inundation by flood: A market place (Barangai) in Manikganj.

HE issue of trade unions' (TU) high handedness and obstacles created by them in smooth functioning of organizations in public sector have again been put to public knowledge. This time it is in shipping sector and that in Chittagong Port. The Daily Star (DS) authorities held recently a round table conference on the problems faced by people in getting port services.

It is a matter of satisfaction to see that now there is no report of TU's high handedness in the other most important sector of the country — nationalised banks. There either TUs have been brought to discipline or the TUs have come to their realisation that there is a limit for them. After the conference DS in an editorial wrote that to move things in the port grease money was required. Some in the conference demanded banning TUs in the port. Those who work in the port or are associated with its activities know very well how the culture of giving and taking grease money developed and gained ground

day by day. Those in the conference, who demanded banning of TUs in the port are most likely not engaged in stevedoring business. Because, some of the stevedores have now joined with port TUs in demanding cancellation of MOU/Agreement the government has signed with a US company for establishing and operating a port terminal at Patenga. Stevedoring is a nice business. Dues on account of workers' wages can be kept pending without any interest falling due, port administration is nearby with money to settle dues of workers on time. The brunt of any delay in settlement of workers' wages has

There are trade union leaders who make efforts for solution of problems. There are also some who seize the opportunity to promote their leadership. The former cannot be blamed for the role of the latter.

to be borne first by port's management. Dock workers demand to be employed directly by the port authorities, but the stevedores do not want it. Fear is looming in their mind that the US company will tap new sources of dock workers. The company has assured prospec-

tive port users that its operations will be highly modern, based on automation. These issues are agitating the minds of not only workers and but also that of stevedores. Is there any need for TU in the port? With the present management structure and its functioning system there is the need. The port is a vast area; its operations are labour intensive. Distance between the field level

workers and the top and mid level management is very wide. TUs act as a bridge to make workers feel management's demand on them for giving better performance. Then, at times due to administrative actions anomalies and inconsistencies are created which affect workers financially and morally. Then problems of labour come to surface, that is to the knowledge of top management, through TUs. There are TU leaders who make efforts to appease the aggrieved persons saying that their problems will be taken with the authorities for solution. But there are some who seize the opportunity to promote their leadership. The former group cannot be ignored or by passed due to the role of the latter. Many operational problems and bottlenecks come to the knowledge of

management through TUs. These are matters which can be understood when one is in the

field. The case of juniors superseding the seniors by promotion in nineteen eightees will bear testimony to my statement. It created a problem which turned to be worse from bad and worst from worse as days passed. Ultimately, parliamentary subcommittees had to take up the issue for solution, a solution much beyond the powers of port authorities. More than one hundred super-numerary posts were created to compensate the aggrieved persons.

In spite of these, why do sometimes TU leaders show high handedness? Where from do they get strength and support? As the country is making ef-

forts to speed up industrialisation some of us are looking at work forces as draught animals (a term introduced by Prof. M Yunus).

It is alleged that the port is carrying a number of containers on its shoulder much above the manageable level. I believe that a large part of this number is empty containers. Importers and shipping companies have left those in port area. There is not a place safer and cheaper than port's yards and sheds. There is no mechanism to levy rent for these containers and realise the same. So, it does not pinch the importers and shipping companies. Delay in customs formalities also con-

tributes to the congestion. The issue of shortage of

equipment in port came up for discussion in the roundtable conference. Local agents and indentors are powerful persons. Port authorities had foreseen long before that the days of shortage of equipment were knocking at the door. Their repeated attempts to procure four straddle carriers in 1992 against grant from Finland did not succeed partly in view of pressures of these lobbies and partly due to "meeting death by passage of time" approach adopted by a government department. In the past, similar equipment were imported from Finland against grant. Finland authorities told GOB when the grant would lapse. Ultimately the grant lapsed.

Purchase of high valued ar ticles, whether equipment or anything else, from port's fund ultimately meets rare success. There are agencies who look

into port's affairs in their own way and want to find out something of their choice. Powers of powerfuls were exercised in commercial transactions of port; port officials' actions were subjected to enquiries one after another on false accusations and instigations on these transactions. Equiry reports contained description of events built on surmise and wrong assumptions. Once the port chairman and his team members in a project were about to be chargesheeted, but could escape from it for the wisdom of shipping ministry's secretary.

The case was that the project, a project to save port's life line, was completed much

ahead of scheduled time. Certificate of completion of work of the project by the contractor was issued. The contractor's performance bond was released by port authorities without holding it till the last day of its validity. Demand for chargesheeting the officials came from a person in power then. He wanted a part of the project work to be done to the extent he desired. This and other cases are remembered by port's employees. The situation now is such

that many officials feel themselves safe if they are not required to take part in the process of purchasing high valued articles. Their thinking is "do not get much involved now and be subjected to enquiry later" In another case a high official backed out the support he first gave to recommend appoint ment of a working consultant (of international repute) chosen on the advice of World Bank. The back out was made after the consultant was requested to quote his fees which he did and also after WB segregated a sum of money for the work from the allocation of the another work. The official did it only for fear of being subjected to investigation later.

Each tier of management feels safe if decision or order comes from next higher tier. File moves from table to table for checking and counter checking. There is a great plight of dynamism in officials. I think, f port officials are granted at least benefit of doubts depending upon the nature and importance of cases, omissions and commissions made and intentions allowed by them to play, things will improve. They should not be shown the doors of courts for redress.

by Delwar Jahid

trition are the regular feature of Bangladesh's life.

nised as a source of abuse and