

The Environmental Attitudes of Floodplain Residents

Experience from Dhaka East

by Dr Md Rashed Chowdhury

This article, extracted from a research carried out by the writer in 1997, examines the importance of environmental factors in the choice, motivation and decision-making of the floodplain residents arising from the proposed flood defense schemes in the eastern part of Dhaka.

In my last two articles entitled 'Floodplain Occupation in Dhaka: Natural Hazards Perspectives' and 'Factors Affecting Floodplain Encroachment: Experience from Dhaka East' published on the issues of 'The Daily Star' on October 09 and 27, respectively, I tried to describe the reasons of floodplain occupation from macro as well as micro perspectives. This article examines how social and environmental factors influence individuals' decision-making for floodplain occupation. While a structural flood defense scheme might be recognized as possibly leading to disruption of environment, this would be somewhat broadly defined concern to most residents to the way the flood scheme would impact on the view from a house, increase safety against future flooding, or change the appearance of the area.

This study used qualitative methods of analysis and was based on long structured questionnaire administered by interviews. The survey population was defined as householders living within the 50 years floodplain. The sampling error that affected the selection of study sample was 5 per cent (sampling error at a 95% confidence level for a stratified random sample was 5%).

Environmental perception:

Environmental perception can

new-comer (74.9%) of which about 70 per cent have been resident for less than 10 years. Among the new-comer settlers, 73.8 per cent bought land from the farmers.

Respondents were in the lower middle (25-34) to middle age group (35-54), and their education level ranges from primary to secondary. The number of small businessmen was significantly high (37.3%), followed by salaried men (33.55%). Only 29.2 per cent were farmers in the study sample. The mean length of residence is 16 years old and 25 per cent of the respondents have been resident long enough to have witnessed major floods. Among the respondents, 49.2 per cent have their houses made of concrete (Pucca), 50 per cent reported about 5 to 8 persons in their households, 73.4 per cent of the sample live within 5 km of embankment. The median distance of nearest road is 1.25 km. The average income of the study sample varies from 2000 to 5000 Taka. About 82.4 per cent of the respondents have experienced extremely serious flooding in their houses, 25 per cent experienced flooding in their locality. Most of the respondents agreed 1988 flood as the worst flood that they have experienced during their lives.

Attitude to environmental change: Respondents were

asked to rate a number of items of social perception which, at its simplest, is concerned with the effects of social and cultural factors on the individual's cognitive structuring of the physical and social environment. Thus perception is dependent on more than just sensory data but is related to past experience, psychological set, context, role and personality of the individual, and operation and cultural forces.

How people perceive the environment was hypothesized to affect their attitude to proposed structural flood defense scheme in their area. An important indicator of such attitudes is likely to be the relative importance of environmental values within respondents' total value system. This survey, however, concentrated on the environmental component and tested attitude statements related to nature conservation, environment, and society. There was considerable agreement with the majority of the statements suggesting widespread environmental awareness and concern. Statements like 'I like to be in the open of the countryside' attracted about 66 per cent of the respondents. Certain statements showed a divergent response to scheme attitude. Only a very few showed a negative attitude to flood scheme. The statement 'flood protection scheme will only bring more development in this area' attracted general agreement (83%) while statement 'there is no need of flood scheme here because flood risk is low' attracted general disagreement (55%). Respondents were uncertain about the technical statement 'a flood embankment would be preferable to raised flood embankment in this

area', with large number (75%) opting for moderate response. The statement 'flood protection scheme should be carried out regardless of cost' and 'anything designed to reduce flooding' attracted more than 60 per cent of the study sample. Conversely, statements that 'there is no need of flood scheme and spending money on flood scheme is a waste' have been disagreed by about 50 per cent of the study sample.

Conclusion: How people perceive the environment was hypothesized to affect their attitude to proposed structural flood defense scheme. There were considerable agreement with majority of the statements suggesting widespread environmental awareness and concern. However, certain statements showed divergent response when respondents had to choose between industrial growth and environmental preservation. Scheme attitude statements attracted similar attention from the study sample. Findings have supported the importance of environmental factors in flood hazard mitigation in principle but not at the expense of scheme. Rather, their attitudes were highly influenced by the introduction of proposed structural flood embankments which might increase perceived safety against future floodings.

The writer, an official of the Flood Forecasting & Warning Center, BWDB, is now working with the National Institute for Disaster Prevention in Japan as a STA (Post-Doctoral) Fellow.

Report Debunks Hype over "50 Years of Human Rights"

A recently created international human rights network has issued its first report, citing such countries as Afghanistan, Burma, North Korea and Iraq as in a class by themselves. Gemini News Service reports that the people who fight for human rights are themselves victims of repression. Robert James Parsons writes from Geneva

Rights defenders wronged

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders has published its first report on 50th anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Tunisia
Meticulous systemisation of harassment

Mexico
Frequent, thorough defamation campaigns

Colombia
Many human rights defenders murdered outright

Democratic Republic of Congo
Frequent, thorough defamation campaigns



Turkey
Largest number of lawsuits and criminal prosecutions launched against human rights defenders

China
Huge number of arbitrary detentions, including use of "re-education" camps

China
Huge number of arbitrary detentions, including use of "re-education" camps

Burma, Afghanistan, North Korea, Iraq
Countries with records too bad to quantify

The Observatory was created in July of last year, marking a major milestone for those who believe in the principles of the Universal Declaration. It drew together two already well established and well known NGO networks, the World Organization Against Torture in Geneva

(best known by its French acronym OMCT) and the Paris-based International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (known by its French acronym, FIDH).

Given the extent of the Observatory network, reports can be cross checked for accuracy

and detail. Given the global reach of the world's economy, the means at the disposal of multinational corporations to buy and sell whole governments and the constant implication of multinationals in human rights abuses — Shell's arrangements

and detail.

Given the global reach of the

world's economy, the means at

the disposal of multinational

corporations to buy and sell

whole governments and the

constant implication of multi-

nationals in human rights

abuses — Shell's arrangements

and detail.

Given the global reach of the

world's economy, the means at

the disposal of multinational

corporations to buy and sell

whole governments and the

constant implication of multi-

nationals in human rights

abuses — Shell's arrangements

and detail.

Given the global reach of the

world's economy, the means at

the disposal of multinational

corporations to buy and sell

whole governments and the

constant implication of multi-

nationals in human rights

abuses — Shell's arrangements

and detail.

Given the global reach of the

world's economy, the means at

the disposal of multinational

corporations to buy and sell

whole governments and the

constant implication of multi-

nationals in human rights

abuses — Shell's arrangements

and detail.

Given the global reach of the

world's economy, the means at

the disposal of multinational

corporations to buy and sell

whole governments and the

constant implication of multi-

nationals in human rights

abuses — Shell's arrangements

and detail.

Given the global reach of the

world's economy, the means at

the disposal of multinational

corporations to buy and sell

whole governments and the

constant implication of multi-

nationals in human rights

abuses — Shell's arrangements

and detail.

Given the global reach of the

world's economy, the means at

the disposal of multinational

corporations to buy and sell

whole governments and the

constant implication of multi-

nationals in human rights

abuses — Shell's arrangements

and detail.

Given the global reach of the

world's economy, the means at

the disposal of multinational

corporations to buy and sell

whole governments and the

constant implication of multi-

nationals in human rights

abuses — Shell's arrangements

and detail.

Given the global reach of the

world's economy, the means at

the disposal of multinational

corporations to buy and sell

whole governments and the

constant implication of multi-

nationals in human rights

abuses — Shell's arrangements

and detail.

Given the global reach of the

world's economy, the means at

the disposal of multinational

corporations to buy and sell

whole governments and the

constant implication of multi-

nationals in human rights

abuses — Shell's arrangements

and detail.

Given the global reach of the

world's economy, the means at

the disposal of multinational

corporations to buy and sell

whole governments and the

constant implication of multi-

nationals in human rights

abuses — Shell's arrangements

and detail.

Given the global reach of the

world's economy, the means at

the disposal of multinational

corporations to buy and sell

whole governments and the

constant implication of multi-

nationals in human rights

abuses — Shell's arrangements

and detail.

Given the global reach of the

world's economy, the means at

the disposal of multinational

corporations to buy and sell

whole governments and the

constant implication of multi-

nationals in human rights

abuses — Shell's arrangements

and detail.

Given the global reach of the

world's economy, the means at

the disposal of multinational

corporations to buy and sell

whole governments and the

constant implication of multi-

nationals in human rights

abuses — Shell's arrangements

and detail.