

2022 FLASH FLOOD EVACUATION CENTRE ASSESSMENT

FINDINGS FROM SYLHET AND SUNAMGANJ DISTRICTS, BANGLADESH



2022 FLASH FLOOD: EVACUATION CENTRE ASSESSMENT

(FINDINGS FROM SYLHET AND SUNAMGANJ DISTRICTS)

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List of Acronyms

1. D-form (Damage and Loss Assessment Form)
2. DMC- Disaster Management Cluster
3. GBV- Gender-based Violence
4. IDPs- Internally Displaced Persons
5. IOM- International Organization for Migration
6. KIs- Key Informants
7. MoDMR-Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief
8. NFI- Non-food Items
9. NPM- Needs and Population Monitoring
10. SOS Form (Save Our Souls)
11. WASH- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

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1. Introduction:

Following the devastating flash floods in May and June 2022 in the districts of Sylhet and Sunamganj, the Displacement Management Cluster, Gender Based Violence (GBV) Cluster, Shelter Cluster and Education Cluster collaborated to assess the flood evacuation centres through partners currently active in the affected areas. Information was collected on the situation in the centres during the flood, the present conditions of the centre and the challenges. In Bangladesh, evacuation centres are known as cyclone centres and/or flood shelters (depending on the geographical location) where displaced people take shelter during disasters, and they are usually multifunctional. Support for the assessment was provided by the IOM Needs and Population Monitoring (NPM) team who has expertise in data collection and information management through FGDs with KIs (Key Informants).

2. Summary of Key Findings:

- 1. Most of the evacuation centres (86%) assessed were primary and high schools.** Overall, 60% of the centres were assigned by the government, whereas 40% were informal centres.
- The average capacity of each centre was approximately 200-250 people, however, **on average 300-350 took shelter in these centres resulting in cramped and uncomfortable conditions.** Over 51,000 IDPs were evacuated to 159 centres.
- Number of days stayed at the centre varied by location and individual. **Respondents in the majority (67%) of centres reported that IDPs had stayed from two weeks to a month.**
- Respondents in majority of the evacuation centres **(67%) reported that there were no committees in place to manage them,** especially at Sunamganj where respondents in 87% of the assessed centres informed absence of any management committees. Furthermore, the committee members reported having received no training in terms of shelter management.
- Most of the evacuation centres were accessible during the flooding, though for the most part the roads leading to the centres were flooded. This meant that the **majority of IDPs accessed the centre by boat or by swimming or wading through the water.**
- During the flooding, the **priority needs of the IDPs in the centres were food, water, health and sanitation services and access to electricity.** Respondents also mentioned that protection and women-friendly spaces were missing during their stay at the evacuation centres.
- Due to the impact of the floods on the electricity grid, **almost all centres experienced blackouts that lasted for up to two weeks until the flood waters receded, and transmission lines could not be repaired.** The loss of electricity also meant that mobile devices and telecommunication lines were disrupted, leading to a communication blackout between the Union Parishad and the centres that were supposed to be operated by them.
- Over **half of the assessed evacuation centres needed immediate repair work.**

3. Background:

Flooding is normal during the monsoon season in Bangladesh. However, the scale and the occurrence of the flood in 2022 in the northeastern region of Bangladesh were unprecedented. In May and June 2022, two flash floods affected the districts of Sylhet and Sunamganj (and to some extent the neighbouring district of Netrokona) on a massive scale. Reeling from a flash flood that occurred in May, the suffering of the people intensified manifold as the second, more devastating, flash flood

hit them in the middle of June. In the course of a single day, over 1.6 households were either partially or fully waterlogged, with over 7.2 million people being affected.¹ Over 480,000 people faced sudden, rapid displacement as their homes flooded and for many of them, the only option was to take shelter in the evacuation centres.

¹HCTT's Flash Flood 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) July 7, 2022

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Displaced individuals residing in communal settings face specific challenges such as overcrowding, lack of access to basic services and protection risks including gender-based violence (GBV). Noting that there is a significant gap in information regarding the conditions in evacuation centres and the key needs and vulnerabilities of those living in these sites, the Displacement Management Cluster, Gender Based Violence (GBV) Cluster, Shelter Cluster and Education Cluster collaborated to assess the flood shelters through partners currently active in the affected areas. Information was collected on the situation in the shelters during the flood, the present conditions of the shelters and the challenges.

Over one hundred and fifty-nine evacuation centres located in forty-five unions spread out over sixteen Upazilas of Sylhet and Sunamganj were assessed by partners. This report encompasses the findings.

The following partners of the Displacement Management Cluster, GBV Cluster, Education Cluster, and Shelter Cluster were involved in the assessment:

- Action Aid
- Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS)
- Care Bangladesh
- Christian Aid
- CRS/Caritas Bangladesh
- FIVDB
- IDEA
- IFRC (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies)
- IOM
- Islamic Relief Bangladesh
- Save the Children
- World Vision Bangladesh

Data collection and information management for this assessment was supported by IOM's Needs and Population Monitoring (NPM) team. NPM also led the development and piloting of the tool as well as coordinated data collection through partners at the field level.

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) is a system that tracks and monitors displacement and population mobility. As a part of its regular activities, IOM's NPM team regularly conducts surveys to gather specific information through sampling from the population of interest, regarding return intention, displacement solutions, community perception, and other thematic areas. For this exercise, the NPM team was actively involved in the training of the partners' designated officials on the tools and supervising the actual assessments.

4. Methodology and Data Collection:

The study followed a quantitative approach by conducting FGDs in which the participants were key informants in the community, selected based on snowball sampling. In each FGD, every question was asked to all participants, and they discussed among themselves to select the most accurate option from the close-ended assessment tool.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted at each of the 159 evacuation centres, and included representatives of the local government, headteachers,² internally displaced persons (IDPs), local NGO workers and other relevant members of the community. The FGD participants had either taken shelter at the centres or had helped manage them or, in many cases, both. The breakdown of the designations of the participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Number and Designation of Representatives Who Formed Focus Groups Discussions

Designation of FGD Participants	Male	Female	Number of Participants
1. Internally Displaced People (IDP) Representative	59%	41%	262
2. Teacher/ Staff	69%	31%	201
3. Headmaster/ Principal	77%	23%	124
4. Elected Local Union Parishad Member	100%	0%	115
5. School Management Committee (SMC) Member	87%	13%	88
6. Others ³	69%	31%	73
7. Religious Leader	100%	0%	53
8. Community Based Organizations (CBOs)	76%	24%	44
9. Elected Women Union Parishad Member	0%	100%	41
10. Ward Disaster Management Committee (WDMC) Member	81%	19%	27
11. NGO Representative	50%	50%	18
Total			1,046

The assessment was rolled out in both districts, covering forty-five unions in sixteen upazilas. A total of 159 FGDs were conducted involving 1,046 individuals at 159 different evacuation

² Principal teacher of primary school

³ which included businessmen, health workers and other respectable people from the community

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centres that were used during the flood. A total of one hundred and fifty-nine evacuation centres were assessed between August 12th - August 26th. Among them, 77 centres were situated in Sylhet district and 82 in Sunamganj.

The tool used was a structured questionnaire jointly developed by the Cluster leads with support from partners. The tool was further refined and re-designed by IOM's NPM experts after consultations with partners. The questions were focused on WASH, gender issues, utilities/services, structural damages, accessibility, key assistance received and needed etc. The questions were designed with the aim to provide a quick and concise assessment of the evacuation centre's current state as well as the scenario during the flood. Interested partners of DMC and other clusters were also interviewed to identify the areas they were active in.

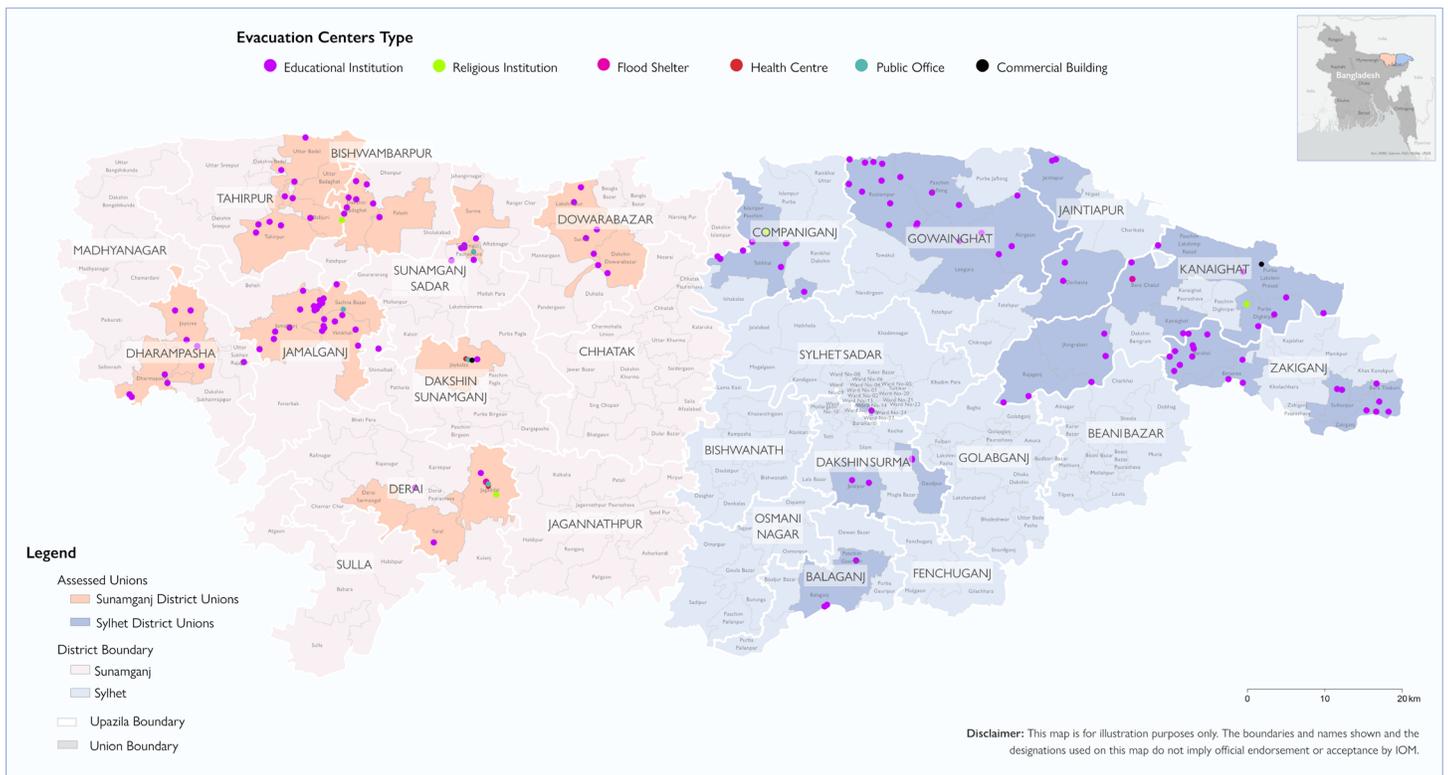
5. Limitations:

1. Although the initial plan was to conduct the assessments while the areas were still flooded, the study had to be initiated a bit later since fund mobilization required more time and securing necessary government approvals to conduct the study was quite challenging.
2. At the field level, partners reported difficulty in reaching some of the evacuation centres due to damaged roads, and a shortage of human resources resulting in a lesser number of centres assessed.

6. Assessed Location:

NORTH EAST REGION FLOODING I LOCATION MAP OF ASSESSED EVACUATION CENTER

NORTH EAST REGION, BANGLADESH



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7. Major Findings:

The Focus Group Discussions revealed that most of the centres assessed were operating beyond their capacity and a majority of the centres (67%) did not have any shelter management committee present. Furthermore, a few centres with management committees mentioned that they are unaware of their roles and would like to have training related to shelter management.

Respondents in most of the centres (81%) mentioned that those centres were accessible for all but the IDPs had to reach them by boat or swimming since access roads to those centres were flooded. Most of the respondents reported that IDPs stayed at the centres for a period of two weeks (39%) to a month (28%). During this period the IDPs received major support from nearby communities followed by support from the Government and NGOs in the form of food and non-food items. Beyond the assistance provided, the major needs identified by displaced households during their stay in the centres included food, drinking water, medical care as well as hygiene and sanitation facilities. The lack of ability to cook in the centres was also reported as a significant difficulty they faced. Disruption of telecommunication was cited as one of the biggest challenges during the flooding. Needs and gaps could not be communicated in a timely manner due to mobile network issues in those areas.

7.1 WASH

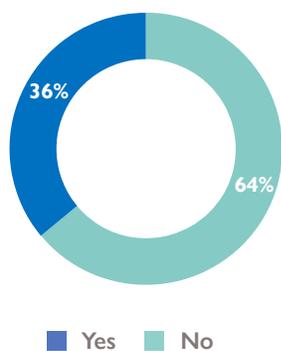
7.1.1 Water

- During the flood, 64% of the evacuation centres did not have a reliable safe drinking water supply within or near the centre.

- Half of the water sources (50%) were never tested, while 37% are tested once a year by concerned authorities.

- There are very few proper water purification systems in place at the centres - only 9% reported that they have sufficient water filters.

Graph 1: Reliable Safe Drinking Water Supply Available During the Flooding



7.1.2 Sanitation

- 89% of assessed centres had latrines available.

- One out of four latrines (25%) were not functioning.

- Only 10% of centres had latrines accessible to persons with disabilities.

Graph 2: Latrines Specially Designed for Persons with Disabilities

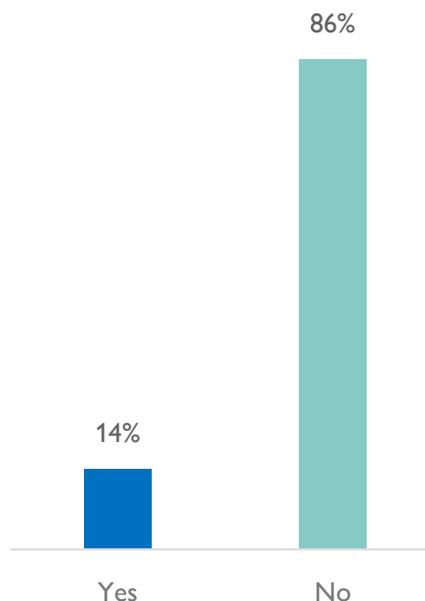


7.1.3 Bathing Facilities

- 36% of centres had enclosed bathing facilities.

- Out of those bathing facilities, 92% were not separated for men and women, and 86% did not have doors with locks to provide privacy and security for women and children.

Graph 3: Bathing Facilities Have Doors with Locks to Provide Privacy and Security



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7.1.4 Cleaning Supplies and Utilities

- Cleaning materials such as brooms, brushes, mops, and soap were available at 72% of the centres
- Less than 9% of centres had fire extinguishers available in case of a fire outbreak.

7.2 Protection

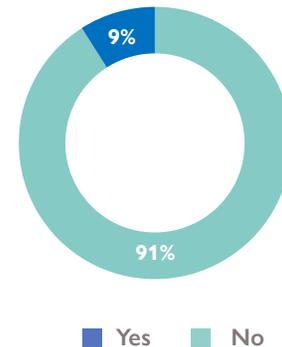
- **Lack of Electricity:** Most of the centres (83%) did not have electricity during the flooding with only 10% of centers in Sunamganj and 25% centres in Sylhet having electricity during the flood.

- 91% centres did not have any backup power supplies e.g., a generator or solar in case of electricity failures - most evacuation centres (89% in Sunamganj and 91% in Sylhet) reported not having any torch lights or batteries available during or after the flood either.

- **Lack of Gender-segregated Facilities:** More than 90% of the centres did not have separate bathing facilities for men and women.

- 81% centres in Sunamganj and 77% in Sylhet did not have locking facilities in the latrines. 57% of evacuation centres reported a lack of women-friendly spaces.

Graph 4: Backup Power Supply Available



7.3 Structural Damage

- 59% of centres had structural damage to the walls, floor or roof but could not be identified whether it was pre-existing or caused by the flood. Amongst these centres which had structural damages, 76% were in need of urgent repair.

- According to the respondents, 49% of these damages were in need of urgent repair.

Image: Evacuation Centres in Sylhet District



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8. Recommendation:

1. Develop a data collection system that systematically captures, processes and disseminates information to provide a better understanding of the movements and emergency needs of displaced populations. Therefore, the idea would be to incorporate displacement-related questions in the SOS form which is submitted within 24 hours of any disaster and in the D-Form (Damage and Loss Assessment Form) which is submitted within 21 days of a disaster. Displacement data, the collection approach must complement existing needs, damages and loss assessments facilitated through Union and Upazila Disaster Management Committees.
2. Develop a system through which the Displacement Management Cluster is able to receive data from the evacuation centres especially the priority needs of the displaced people and major gaps in service provision so that it can ensure the optimum service delivery through partners. This should try to utilize the current government system in place and not ideally develop a parallel system.
3. Evacuation centre management committees need to be formed and trained at each centre. The training provides the people in charge of the shelter guidance on practical steps that can be taken to address the challenges around protection, service delivery data collection and promoting quality of life, dignity and durable solutions for displaced communities in both long-term and short-term displacement contexts.
4. Government and non-government partners should address the infrastructural issues related to the centres including proper WASH facilities (including the availability of drinking water, gender-segregated latrines and bathing facilities, etc.), fix structural damages, install solar facilities, include women-friendly spaces, etc.

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