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Paper No. 14
Disaster Broadcasting

Media's Role in Disaster Management in Bangladesh

By

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Introduction

A sudden 'misfortune' or an event causing great loss, hardship or suffering to many people is how the Webster Dictionary defines a disaster. Disaster consists of two elements - (a) hazard and (b) vulnerability. The Disaster Management Bureau, Bangladesh cites a UN definition of disaster in its publication as 'any event, natural or man-made, sudden or progressive which impacts with such severity that the affected community has to respond by exceptional measures'.

A disaster is thus a set of circumstances which poses serious threat to the survival of mankind and property. This sudden 'misfortune' now a days seem endemic to this part of globe in general, and Bangladesh in particular. Bangladesh has a long experience of natural disasters like flood, cyclone, draught, hurricane, etc. The flood of 1998 emerged as a 'super disaster' and perhaps became the most cataclysmic one to this country. The situation was very grim. During the last 40 years Bangladesh has faced this 'misfortune' of flood or cyclone about at least for 39 times. Of them, there were a good number of major floods—17 devastating and 5 severely devastating in nature. Disastrous floods and cyclones etc. visited Bangladesh in 1952, 1954, 1961, 1963, 1965, 1968, 1970, 1984, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1991 and recently in 1998. The people of Bangladesh experienced how these cyclone and floods' fury continued with full frenzy and some of those took severe turn wreaking havoc with unprecedented magnitude.

Disaster(s) are usually Appeared in Bangladesh

Generally the disaster is of two kinds. They are

A) Natural Disaster
   a) Geological Disaster - earthquake, fire, landslide, river erosion.
   b) Meteorological Disaster - cyclone, flood, drought.
   c) Environmental Disaster - environment pollution, deforestation, desertion.
   d) Epidemic

B) Usually the war, population boom, technological mishaps, fire, environmental degradation, artificial famine, accident etc. are known as man-made disaster.
The main disaster(s) usually appear in Bangladesh are cyclone, flood, tornado, tidal bore, drought, river erosion, land slide, earthquake, cold wave etc. Some of them are discussed as follows:

**Cyclone and Tidal-bore**

About 15 coastal districts of Bangladesh are frequently affected by the cyclone. The islands in Bangladesh territory like Hatia, Swandip, Moheshkhali, Kutubdia, Saint Martin, Manpura are among the districts that are affected very badly by the cyclone. Bangladesh experienced about 39 cyclones between 1960 and 1997. More than 0.3 million people died in the cyclone of 12 November 1970. In the cyclone of 29 April 1991 more than 0.138 million people were killed and incurred a damage worth about 2.5 billion US dollar.


Although the intensity of the cyclone of 19 May 1997 was similar to the cyclone of 29 April 1991 the tidal-bore in the 1991 cyclone covered up to Saint Martin island. The death figure in the cyclone of 1997 remained within one hundred only. It was possible because about 0.6 million people were shifted to cyclone shelter center earlier. Intensity of the cyclone was 150 miles per hour and above. The tidal-bore spread from coastal position to inland area as well. The tidal-bore sometime found to rise 10 to 40 feet high.

It is known that the cyclone of 1584, 1876 and 1919 that lashed the southern part of the country were catastrophic in nature. People had believed that the catastrophic cyclone visits after a gap of several years. But, after the cyclone of 1960, it once again appeared in 1961, 1963, 1965, 1970, 1985, 1988 and 1991. Catastrophic cyclone was also apprehended in 1992. It is now believed that the cyclone may affect anytime. Therefore the full time preparation is needed to cope with the natural disaster like cyclone.

**Flood**

Bangladesh is generally affected by the following types of floods:

1. Flash flood.
2. Water flow from upper basin.
3. Local downpour.
4. Tidal-bore in coastal belt.
Bangladesh experiences heavy downpour in the bank of the river- Padma, Brahmaputra, Jamuna and Meghna- that known as some of the big rivers in the world. Heavy downpour, reduction of river-bed, inconvenience to pump out the stranded water are among the major causes of floods in Bangladesh. Unplanned construction of roads and bridges that obstruct the natural flow of river water, unplanned growth of habitation and deforestation are also responsible for frequent visit of floods in this country.

During the recent decades floods of 1952, 1954, 1968, 1984, 1987, 1988 and 1998 were catastrophic. Particularly, the 1988 flood inundated about two-third of the country (about 52 districts out of 64 were affected), died about 1,517 people died and about 0.35 million people were affected. In some areas, flood water rose to 10 feet high and water remained stranded for 15 to 20 days. The flood of 1998 was the long-lasting in centuries that continued for 72 days.

**River Erosion**

River erosion is another natural disaster for which the affected people take shelter in city areas. River erosion is a regular phenomenon in the districts of Sirajgonj, Chandpur, Madaripur, Barisal, Bogra, Pabna, Sariatpur and Manikganj situated on the bank of big rivers like- The Padma, The Jamuna, The Teesta etc. Obstruction on the normal flow of river water, sedimentation of the river-bed, non-excavation of canals are among the major causes of river erosion in Bangladesh.

**Drought**

Although the drought severity like arid or semi-arid region is absent in Bangladesh, sometime drought causes heavy damages in some areas of the country. In the recent years, drought caused severe damages in the Northern part of the country in 1982, 1989 and 1994. The people in the Northern districts of Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Panchagar, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, Kurigram and Gaibandha had to face starvation and malnutrition due to drought that affected those districts between September and December, 1994. It was known that earlier signal of drought can be assessed and precautionary measures can be taken if the land survey by satellite, hydrological information collection, socio-economic survey, nutrition survey etc. can be organised properly. Bangladesh lacks these facilities very much.
Others

Earthquake and cold wave can be mentioned as other major natural disasters in the country. An earthquake hit Chittagong on November 1997. A five-storied building was totally damaged, 22 people died and 100 people were injured in this natural disaster. The intensity of the earthquake was 5.9 in the Richter scale. Some experts warrant against unplanned construction of high rise building. The experts opined of earthquake hit with the intensity of 6 in the Richter scale may demolish most of the building in Dhaka city. It may be mentioned that more than one hundred years back (in 1897) a catastrophic earthquake affected the country. Excessive cold wave is a recent natural disaster in our country. The prevalence of cold wave was found in winter season in 1997-98.

Dimension of Two Recent Severe Disasters : Flood(s) 1988 and 1998

Other than 1998 flood, people of Bangladesh had the experience of a severe flood in 1988. Flood in 1988 was marked by sharp rise in water level to the highest peak and equally a sharp fall within a period of 23 days. The 1988 flood was predominantly caused by the flooding of rivers. It started in May-June with early flash floods in the south-eastern hill basins. The situation was aggravated by intensive rainfall over the north-eastern part of Bangladesh and Meghalaya (India) to the north which brought two major rivers above the danger level. All the major rivers exceeded their danger level from July to August. This caused damages to more than 60 per cent land area of the country. Comparatively, it took 49 days for flood water to recede in 1954. The past floods were not, however, as severe as the 1998 one which was mainly caused by the heavy rainfall in the upper catchment areas of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra.

Starting in mid-July the 1998 flood inundated new areas everyday. Breaking all previous records, floods in 1998 deluged two-third area of the country for about 72 days or even more. The century's worst and long-lasting flood rendered 30 million of people homeless or marooned. It devastated all types of agricultural initiatives, crops, livestock, fisheries, environment and industries in addition to
houses, roads and buildings. The size of damage had exceeded all past records of devastation and destruction in any national disaster.

**Disaster Management and the Media:**

To address an issue like disaster media in popular view can play 'beyond-healing' as well as 'healing' roles during disaster and its aftermath. Any disaster has a number of phases. Media have to and can play the role at different stages of disaster vis-a-vis disaster management. Before we go into analyzing media's role in disaster management, let us identify the cycles/ phases of disaster, first. Any disaster has the following phases:

- Preparedness phase;
- Awareness build-up or sensitizing phase;
- Signaling or warning phase;
- prevention phase;
- Mitigation phase;
- Impact phase;
- Response phase;
- Recovery phase;
- Rehabilitation phase and
- Development phase.

In each and every phase of disaster, media can perform a unique responsibility (in some cases electronic media appear to be more prominent; in some cases the print and other media). Media create awareness and sensitize the situation through initiating action, accommodating and accelerating reaction and then organizing and absorbing interaction. Media indeed help create a sense of security and reassurance to the people so that they can face the disaster with courage and fortitude, not with a whimper. Mass media are inextricably entwined with disasters and hazard mitigation.

**Disaster Management Phases and Responsibility of Media:**

There are some chartered responsibilities vested upon the electronic media (both radio and television) during disaster situation and aftermath. These
media usually oblige them during various phases of disaster management in collaboration with T & T Board, Meteorological Department and the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief. A short mention of these obligations are made below:

**Pre-disaster phase:**

a. During pre-disaster phase Bangladesh Betar remains alert immediately after the receipt of first alert message from Meteorological Department to ensure normal pace of prompt dissemination of subsequent forecasts and warnings in case of cyclone. Betar also keeps on informing people about flood by regular broadcasting of flood information and flood forecast received from Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief as well as Flood Forecasting and Warning Centers (FFWC). To avoid possibility of any discontinuation between Bangladesh Betar and Meteorological Department, arrangement of Non-exchange Magnet Telephone Line has to be ensured.

b. Arrangement of special programmes are made with the approval of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Meteorological Department as well as FFWC.

c. Special programmes are broadcast with sufficient explanation and clarification of the warning signals of Meteorological Department.

**Awareness build-up or sensitizing phase:**

After receiving warning signals from Meteorological Department as well as FFWC, immediate and necessary arrangements are made for broadcasting messages from different radio stations with a certain interval.

**Warning Phase (In case of Cyclone):**

a. After receiving local cautionary signal No. 3, necessary coordination between Bangladesh Betar and Meteorological Department is established in order to continue announcements during normal programme(s). Immediately after receiving Local Warning Signal No. 4, from the Meteorological Department, Bangladesh Betar announces it every one hour with elaboration/explanation. If there is any special advice from Meteorological Department, announcements continue without any break.

b. Bangladesh Betar, Dhaka Station, broadcasts the announcement of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Meteorological Department and FFWC. While, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Sylhet,
Rangpur, Khulna and other regional stations broadcast the directives of the local administration (in case of emergency).

**Disaster Phase:**

a. Danger Signals every 30 minutes and great danger signals every 15 minutes are broadcast without any break in this phase (If the Meteorological Department advises, it continues in addition to normal announcements also).

b. Announcements on the directives as passed by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief for the local administration to shift the people threatened by the disaster to safer places go on without interruption.

**Post-disaster Phase:**

a. Bangladesh Betar broadcasts programmes for keeping the morale of the people high.

b. It broadcasts programmes on short-term as well as long-term rehabilitation arrangements.

Like Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television also performs the same job in their own arrangement.

It may be mentioned that there exists in case of sea ports, a total of 11 signals. For the riverine ports, there are 4 cyclone signals. It is to be said that there is no specific or classified warning system developed for the common people of the coastal belt, in particular. So, they have to follow the Signals meant for the river and the sea ports. In most cases people in general and the coastal people in particular fail to understand the language as well as the meaning of the warning(s) as these are complicated for easy understanding. As a result in many a cases, they cannot take necessary preventive measures to face the disaster as well.

At immediate pre-disaster time and during disaster time, newspaper cannot play as significant a role as radio and television. Newspapers cannot cover or even reach in time to the remote areas during emergency situation. Newspapers have a vital role to play during the time of massive relief and rehabilitation activities and its aftermath by the administration, NGOs and other national and international bodies. During this period newspapers do not cover the issues only, they rather sometimes discover and then help to recover the wounds found, if any.
Besides radio, television and newspapers, there are other bodies like Volunteers for Cyclone Preparedness Programmes (CPP) of Bangladesh, Red Crescent Society etc. who work hard to face and manage the disaster in the country. To face and manage the impending disaster situation, they act with the warning and forecasts to warn and advise the people through miking, postering and also help establish interpersonal communication by rendering door to door services.

**Bangladesh Media : People's Inconfidence or Ignorance?—An Experience of 1991**

It was in 1991. The South-eastern part of our country experienced a devastating cyclone for a short duration. Greater Chittagong areas were severely affected at that time. More than one lac lives were lost. The real material loss exceeded crores of Taka. One study carried out by Mr. Mahfuzullah entitled *Jhorer Songe Bash* (Living with Cyclone), reported that most of the people did not pay heed to the announcement broadcast by our electronic media; they did not care them at all; they did not believe them even². Not that the people of that area ignored or did not take the media seriously.

Bangladesh Air and Naval Forces at Patenga, Chittagong also did not honour the signals as they should have done. During cyclone 1991 in spite of advance and early warnings, BAF's aircrafts and helicopters were not shifted to safer places. As a result, 40 aircrafts, 8 helicopters and 2 naval vessels were damaged. The present Prime Minister of Bangladesh at that time had made a comment on it which was published in *The Daily Ittefaq* on May 4, 1991⁶. The then President of Bangladesh Justice Sahabuddin front an inquiry committee on it⁷.

**A survey Report**: ⁴

A survey entitled *The Effect of Media in Facing Disaster in Coastal Area* was carried out by the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) in Swandip during April - June 1995. We would like to report some aspects of the survey. We will see how the media (Radio, Television, Newspapers) really played their role during the disaster time. What were the shortcomings and strengths of the media?

**Radio**: ⁸

Radio is a very important and effective medium in disseminating information during disaster period. According to the survey, most of the families of the selected area had radio set(s) and almost everybody had the opportunity to listen to radio programmes.

At the time of natural disaster, the prime role of radio is to broadcast warning signals after receiving those from Meteorological Department. The
question of life and death of the people particularly of coastal areas largely depend on timely announcements/broadcasting of warning signals.

The survey reported that there was no proper announcement in Radio on cyclone that hit the coastal belt on May 15 and 16, 1995. The tidal bore rose to 3 feet around the survey area at night on May 16 and seriously affected the coastal dam. A severe damage was caused due to that. Everything was lost by the residents outside the dam in particular. But the Radio announcements were not worthy of mention about this upsurge. On May 15, Bangladesh Betar announced the low/depression in the Bay of Bengal and asked to show local cautionary signal no 3. Basically, to the people of the coastal areas this signal (No. 3) does not have so much importance and they do not find any danger out of such signal.

It was necessary to show higher signals considering the extent of the tidal bore. Later, our newspapers reacted very sharply on this issue. At the time when Bangladesh Betar had announced cautionary signal number 3, Indian radio, on the other hand, announced cautionary signal number 8 for this area. If Bangladesh Betar would have followed the Indian radio, even the extent of damage would have been less. Specially, the people outside the dam would not have been ruined.

On May 15, when the tidal bore had already hit the coastal belt, Bangladesh Betar announced that a cyclone 'may hit'. The cyclone once again hit the coastal area on May 16. At this stage too Bangladesh Betar announced to keep on warning signal no. 3 showing. Practically, Bangladesh Betar did not show more than 'no. 3' warning signals during these two days. One of the officers of Swandip Meteorological Department informed that the cyclone hit the area at least twice that day. But nothing was said about it by Radio or Meteorological Department of the country.

A sort of suspicion prevailed among the people of the coastal areas, even among the members of the Government and non-government organizations about the role of radio during those days. They opined that radio served a negative, instead of a positive, role during those days of natural disaster. Citing his experiences, a senior government official of Swandip said radio should have been more responsible during this period.

In 1994, a cyclone hit Cox's Bazar at 4:30 in the afternoon. But our radio announced that the cyclone may hit at 7:30 in the evening. On the other hand, it was found that BBC broadcast the news on cyclone instantly and rightly. Question can be raised if BBC from far away could broadcast the right news at the right time, why not Bangladesh Betar?

On May 9, 1995 a depression or low originated in the Bay of Bengal. Bangladesh Betar broadcast this at its 11 a.m news bulletin on May 10. It broadcast the news about the position of the low at 6 p.m on May 9. The
Bulletin said that the low may cross the Andhra Coast this morning (May 10). In fact, if our radio could say the location and strength of the depression at 10 a.m., on May 10 one hour before the bulletin, it could have then have an important news and could helped the people of the area to take precautionary measures.

A low originated on May 15. A tidal bore lashed the coastal belt on May 15 - 16 due to that depression. In the news bulletin at 6 p.m. on May 15, the location of the depression at 12 noon was broadcast. In the latenight—Nishuti (12:40 - 1:30) programme of radio, there was no announcement regarding this. On the next day i.e. on May 16 Bangladesh Betar in its 7 a.m news bulletin informed the midnight location of the depression.

The role of radio at pre-disaster stage is stated in the publication for coordinated disaster management programme published by the Disaster Management Bureau of Bangladesh. Section 50 (c) of this publication says, radio will telecast special programmes explaining the various precautionary/warning signals released by the Meteorological Department. But the said survey reports that no such programmes were broadcast by the radio during that cyclone.

Television:
The role and responsibility of Bangladesh Betar spelt out in Coordinated Flood Management Programme is, more or less, same as in the case of Bangladesh Television. The survey stated that BTV's performance was not different from that of Bangladesh Betar.

Newspaper:
Although the newspapers do not have that access as well as pre-set roles and responsibilities to perform during pre-disaster stage, they have the key role to focus the extent of damages before the nation immediately after the disaster. Newspapers can motivate the government, NGOs, individuals to come forward to the cause of distressed humanity and rehabilitation. Sometimes the newspapers too remain far from reporting disaster objectively.

Here are some instances about the role of newspaper as reported by the aforementioned survey:-

Quoting Mr. Sajedur Rahman, Deputy Director of Meteorological Departments The Daily Inqilab in its April 3 issue reported: 'Depression may originate in the Bay of Bengal late April'.

The Daily Ittefaq on April 29 carried an item that there is no allocation of money or wheat in the fiscal year 1994-95 for reconstruction works of the coastal embankments, constructed last year. A number of coastal embankments constructed in the fiscal year 1993-94 by Water
Development Board were damaged in many places for which it would not require any cyclone but only normal surge during coming new monsoon would be enough to deluge the whole area of Swandip. Embankment at the eastern side of Swandip, has been destroyed in many places during recent monsoon. The display of news reports were almost similar in different newspapers after the cyclone of May, 1995. These news reports rather made the people more worried when they came to know about radio/TV announcement on depression.

On May 17 it was reported by most of the newspapers that Harishpur, Rahmatpur and Azimpur at the south-west of the Swandip (along with Swandip Thana Headquarters) plunged under 6 feet of tidal bore. Leakages were found in some places of the newly constructed coastal embankment.

On April 18, newspapers reported that— Four km. totally and another four km. partially of the newly constructed coastal embankment at Swandip were destroyed. 16 km. embankment of Water Development Board was also destroyed. A total of six thousand houses were damaged totally and 10 thousand partially in 25 unions of Swandip. Standing crops were severely damaged. About 15 thousand people took shelter at different cyclone shelters.

On May 19, newspapers highlighted the acute crisis of food and drinking water in Swandip.

The Daily Bhorer Kagoj on May 18 reported: Swandip is still under water. Telecommunication has been disconnected yesterday — A total of 15000 houses were damaged. 50 thousand families are directly affected.

On May 21 the same daily reported that communication is yet to be established between Chittagong and Swandip.

On May 17 The Daily Inqilab reported that 'Swandip town, its adjacent area and Swandip Thana are now under 3 to 4 feet water'.

The PIB survey says that these news items did not reflect the real picture. Other than the first two reports, all the news items had been exaggeration. Nevertheless, it is true that newspapers have a prime role to focus damages caused by the disaster; they should also maintain objectivity while reporting the issue(s).

Mass Media, Disaster Management vis-à-vis National Development

Mass media have a vital role to play in national development. To quote Wilbur Schramm: "People who live in societies where the mass media are common, sometimes forget how much they learn from the media. Yet for 300 years the printed book has been the strong right arm of public education. Wherever
newspaper, have been available, they have become the chief reporters on
environment beyond the reach of one’s own senses; indeed, whole
generations of people have formed their ideas of the non local world largely on
what they have learned from newspapers (and more recently from radio,
television, and news magazines)9. We learnt voluntarily and/or involuntarily
from media in many respects.

During the recent flood media tried to unite the nation in the face of danger
really. Media’s role in every count was really praiseworthy. Newspapers of the
country covered the flood intensively from all points of view. Describing the role
of BTV and Betar during the current flood the State Minister for Information in
an interview with the News and Views observed that media had played
significant role to educate and inspire our people to face the calamity with
courage and fortitude10. The BTV has produced and telecast a total of 86
special programmes on floods and relief distributions in the last 50 days to
educate and make people aware about health, hygiene, agriculture and other
issues of public interest. Bangladesh Betar has broadcast over 150 similar
programmes. Media have the power to make a specific kind of social change.
Media can play key role in acting as a watchman, in widening horizon, in
drawing attention on a particular subject; in raising aspiration among public; in
creating climate to overcome; in strengthening decision process; in broadening
the policy dialogue and in enforcing social norms. Following are some areas
where media can contribute and play a vital role during natural disaster:

- Media as Watchman and Warner: Media have the responsibility to keep watch
  on the whole process of disaster vis-à-vis disaster management. The warning
  and help put things in proper direction. They explain reasons behind any
  natural calamity. Flood is a regular phenomenon in Bangladesh. There are
  many reasons behind it. Due to a vulnerable geographical location and
  continuing environmental degradation, recurrence of flood hit this country too
  often. To give a sense of direction to the nation, media should involve
  themselves in rooting out the ‘reasons behind the reasons’. For instance,
  media can highlight the unplanned growth of road communication, bridges ,
culverts, embankments for water management that severely bar the free flow
of water from upper to lower basin. Similarly fast growth of human habitation
create a pressure on greenery of the country that affect the environment and
eco-system as well. Besides, sedimentation on the river beds, see level rise
due to Green House Effect are the causes of severe flooding. These issues
should be highlighted in the media while acting as a watchman and should
publish and broadcast suggestive and in-depth reports. This type of role of the
media would give a sense of direction to the nation.

- Media to Communicate Flood Forecast: The media, particularly electronic
  media like radio and television, have a prime role to communicate to the
  common people the flood forecasting through a very simple and communicable
  language. Usually experts and officials release forecast report full of technical
jargon. General viewers, listeners or readers have less knowledge about those technical terms and hence the forecasting fails to achieve its desired goal.

Only news bulletin is not enough to communicate people in such a situation like disaster. Media should put up special feature highlighting the various aspects of apprehension and the forecasting. A massive media campaign on flood forecasting can easily reduce the extent of damages and human sufferings.

- **Media to Guide the People in Taking Precautionary Measures:** Experts can usually apprehend the strength of the disaster earlier. They have the scientific fact to explain how the disasters come, how they move, how long they would last etc. If media focus all these issues effectively, the Government, NGOs and other humanitarian organization(s) can take precautionary measures. It can give a positive direction to the common people to take decision earlier.

Similarly, radio and television can produce short-length and easy communicable spots on precautionary measures and the newspapers can publish box items in this light.

- **Media to Focus on the Extent of Damages:** To draw the attention of the Government, NGOs as well as international communities, media have the role to focus the extent of damages objectively and promptly. Usually it is not possible for the Government alone to assess the volume of damages instantly. In that case Government and international communities usually take decision on the basis of the assessment report of media. At the same time, common people can gather knowledge about damages and mobilize themselves in taking united moves to help the distressed humanity.

During the catastrophic flood of 1998, media focused on sector-wise damages. About 80 per cent of country’s crop land have gone under water. The media are giving top priority in covering agricultural sector.

People have a common fear that damages in agricultural sector may cause a severe food shortage in the coming days. In this case media should produce objective reports on the governmental arrangement. Media should also launch campaign on the availability of essential commodities to remove panic among the common people. Our media is perhaps doing very well in this regard.

Secondly, media should give priority to focus the damages in industrial sector. This sector incurred a colossal damage. The deluge has forced over 5,000
small, medium and big industries to suspend their production. The suspension of operation in the industries has already caused a loss of over 200 billion taka in terms of production. The media at this crucial stage of the country's industry building can guide the nation by in-depth reports, editorials, feature and articles.

The environment is the worst victim of Flood 1998. The stagnation of waters for months and the contamination of water affected the environment severely. Diarrhoea and other intestinal diseases usually break out in an epidemic from due to contamination of water. Use of polythin bags during relief distribution make the drainage and sewerage system almost inoperative. Media have the capability to strengthen the campaign against the use of polythin. If media can effectively focus on the alternate use of polythin it may yield a long term positive effect. Similar programme should be launched by the media for the welfare of the country's livestock, fisheries and other sectors.

• Media Can Uphold the Humanitarian Spirit: To help the distressed humanity, media can write and broadcast humanitarian stories. Such stories can sensitize the people. For example, if television expose the sufferings of a group of people of a remote area, it can help draw attention of the authorities concerned to send relief goods not only for that particular area but also for the remote areas of the country. Similarly if media highlight the relief activities of a particular person or groups it will also inspire more individuals or groups to engage in relief operation.

Media can point out the loopholes and other mismanagement about the relief activities by the government as well as by other bodies. It will help the government in running smoothly the relief activities. Media can also guide the government for rational distribution of relief goods. Media, by its campaign technique, can inspire the NGOs and other voluntary organizations in relief activities too.

• Media Can Make People Aware of Their Health: Health hazards are one of the main problems during long-lasting floods and other natural disaster. Outbreak of epidemic diseases appears as a threat to the flood victims. To strengthen the preventive and curative measures, media can put up different programmes. Radio and television can produce special discussion or documentaries
involving experts in the respective field. Similarly newspapers can publish special items highlighting the health and related issues.

- **Media Can Mobilize Direction for Policy Makers**: Electronic media like radio and television can organize special dialogue with the policy makers to get in decision coping the catastrophe. Similarly, newspapers can organize round-tables with experts to find out the solution of the problem.

- **Media Can Mobilize People**: Coping with the disaster properly is a colossal task. But it can easily be done if the people’s participation can be ensured. For instance, Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra (DND) embankment could be saved during the recent flood due to people’s participation. Media should emphasize on people’s participation during natural disasters that it inspire so others to get involved. Media can also mobilize the people put to how resistance and to live with disaster.

- **Media to Help and Strengthen Rehabilitation Activities**: Rehabilitation activities are a tough challenge after any disaster. It requires proper planning and efficient running of rehabilitation works. Media can put together different expert opinion so. Besides, by writing editorials and special articles media can guide the Government in the right direction.

**Media and Post Disaster Relief**

Broadly there are two types of measure for mitigating disaster. They are -

a) **Structural measures** i.e. construction of dam, construction of shelter, modernisation of tele-communication system etc. and

b) **Non-structural measures** i.e. all awareness building measures.

The role of media is very vital for the success of second measure. It is more so during the post disaster period. After the disaster the crews of TV and Radio reach the affected areas along with cameras, microphones etc. in order to keep people informed through Radio and Television.

Now a days, with the appliance of satellite camera, collection of the information have become very easy. Bangladesh TV network has been collecting the information through the satellite network. To know the real conditions of the people of the affected areas become very easy now.
Besides informative news, Radio and Television broadcast some instructive information in order to cope with post disaster situation. These include how to provide medical treatments to wounded people, how to salvage and replace them from one place to another with boats and rafts of banana trees and on bamboos. Emphasis is given particularly on the replacement of children, ailing crippled and old-people.

At this stage the publicity for proper distribution of relief materials gets priority. People are advised for cleanliness, supply to have pure drinking water and to take fresh food. Emphasis are also given to know-how of purification of drinking water, flay carbolic acid prevention of diseases carried by water, improved agricultural systems of post disaster period through radio and television. In these regards documentary films, plays, opinions of experts etc. receive greater importance too.

Rehabilitation and developmental phases are also related with this stage. Radio and television mainly broadcast matters concern Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) cards, medicare, fertilizer, help to build houses on the high level of the ground and continuous medical services etc.

In order to reach these messages to the affected people radio and television put importance on motivated programmes with slogans. These are:

1) Do not drink water of river and canals etc. Drink pure water (with picture).
2) Drink the water of Tubewell.
3) Drink saline water and save the life of children. Anyone can prepare the saline water in home using a corrup of salt, a fist of molasses with half kg pure water (with picture/demonstration).
4) Do not eat stale food-keep food covered (with picture/demonstration).
5) Wash hands with soap before taking food.
6) Do not use open latrine. It causes break of health. Use latrine set with improved slabs.
7) After the disposal of water clean your houses and surroundings.
8) To have the relief contact and talk to the volunteers engaged in distribution works.

9) Collect the seeds of vegetables from local agricultural office or persons concern.

10) If the trees are broken by storm-need not to be worried. Saplings to be supplied by the govt. free of cost, collect seeds and sow (with picture/demonstration).

11) Take nutrition form cheap foods. Eat spinach and vegetables as much as you can (with picture)

12) Before cooking cut the spinach and vegetables (in big size) and wash. These result no loss of vitamin C.

13) Go to health complex in case of sudden illness and receive medicare free of cost (with picture)

14) Build the dwelling houses on a raised ground- save the house and yourself from flood.

15) Take shelter at any safe place while the houses go under water.

Besides the instructions, radio and television broadcast the guidelines according to need and circumstances. These include extraction of saline water of engulfed land, easy cultivation system, participation of women in various activities, preliminary ideas of calamities.

The survey conducted by the Press Institute of Bangladesh- 'Influence of Mass Media about Facing Disaster in the Coastal Areas' reveals the amount of losses occur very less. And for this purpose Bangladesh Betar (Radio) is the main media address the post-disaster situation very effectively. The whole country is under the network of Radio. Its price is less and within the buying capacity of most of the people in the country. It is also easily portable. For these reasons the demand of radio in remote areas is high. On the other hand, due to scarcity and high price of electricity, TV is yet to reach the poor people. And demand of newspapers in the illiterate people need not require to mention. Of course during the recent years literacy rate in the country is increasing very appreciating rate (at present 58 per cent) Newspaper readership is also increasing. However still radio is the only media in the pre and post disaster need in Bangladesh.
Conclusion

In fine, it can be said that in very stage of disaster and its aftermath media can play the role of an educator. To suggest for alternative crops; to take preventive and curative measures from various diseases; to protect the environment and the eco-system, media can launch special programmes to educate the people at large. Media can really thus lead and guide the nation during the time of 'misfortune' and its aftermath. Government can make Radio, TV etc. available to the people at a very large low cost. The Disaster Management Bureau can think of publishing related reading materials for the people of the coastal area in general and neo-literate people in particular. Media can play a leadership role. Leadership is action, not position. Can our media come forward to take leadership through their action during any national crisis-natural or man made? It is our hope that Bangladesh media would place themselves in a role playing position for 'making disaster less disastrous'.
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