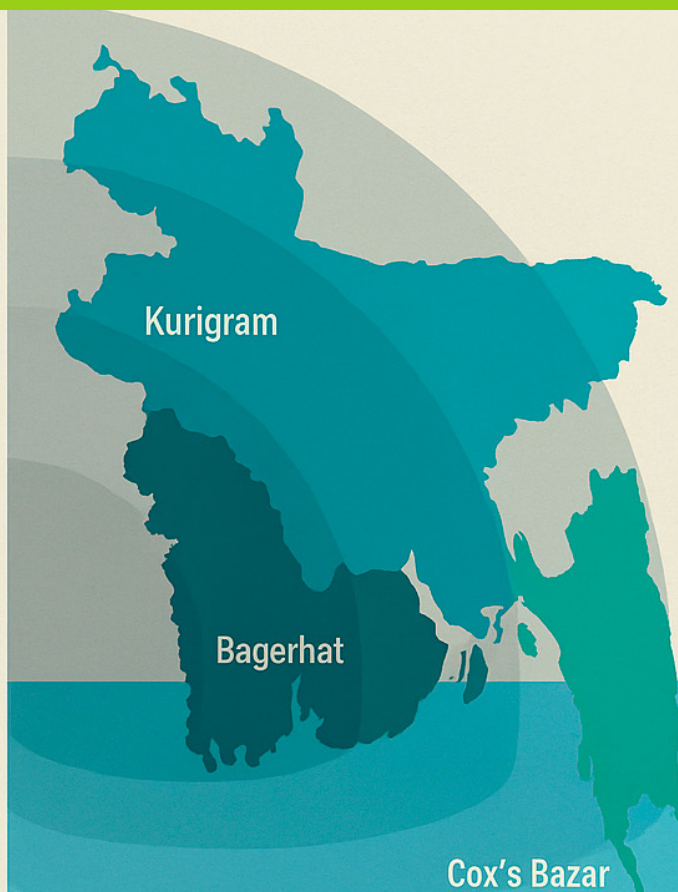


A SYSTEMATIC ASSESSMENT OF THE SOD 2019 IMPLEMENTATION IN BANGLADESH

FOR KURIGRAM, BAGERHAT AND COX'S BAZAR



Bangladesh Preparedness Partnership (BPP) Phase 2

AUGUST 2025

Gates Foundation



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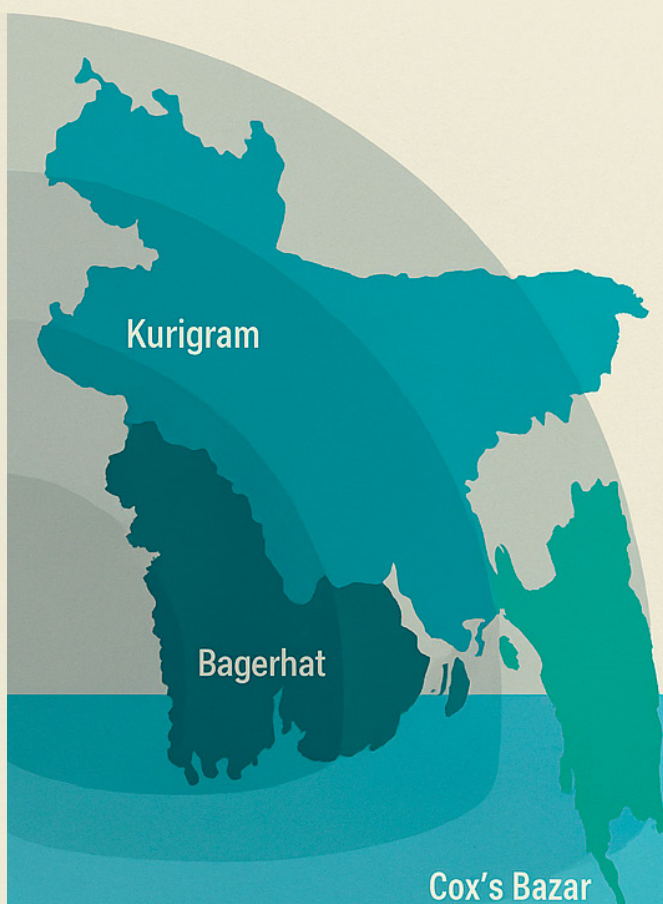
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I would like to express sincere thanks to a number of people for their relentless efforts in conducting the survey for the Bangladesh Preparedness Partnership (BPP). First of all, thanks are due to the esteemed colleagues of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) for awarding the research. Special thanks are extended to Ms. Shivani Gupta, Ms. Nirmala Fernando, and Dr. Ahsan Ullah of ADPC for their continuous support, guidance, and feedback. My gratitude is also put forth to the focal person and relevant officials of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) for their valuable time and cooperation. The survey team is grateful to Mr. Elvis Fraser, Ms. Mariam Traore & Ms. Shaiza Sinha of the SANKOFA team for their valuable inputs while conducting the research and writing the report. The BPP Academic Sector's co-lead, Brac University colleagues, should also be thanked for being with us at the initial stage.

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Mahbuba Nasreen, PhD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Bangladesh remains highly exposed to a range of natural and human-induced hazards, including floods, cyclones, and riverbank erosion, which continue to affect communities across the country. To manage these risks, the government has introduced the Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD 2019, 2019) and the National Plan for Disaster Management (NPDM, 2021–2025). However, there are ongoing challenges in implementing these frameworks effectively at the national, sub-national, and community levels. This baseline study assesses how well the SOD 2019 and NPDM are being put into practice, particularly focusing on the functionality of Disaster Management Committees, coordination among actors, and the extent of community engagement and inclusion. Conducted in Kurigram, Bagerhat, and Cox's Bazar under the Bangladesh Preparedness Partnership initiative, the study also evaluates awareness and capacity among local stakeholders. With the NPDM currently under renewal, the findings aim to support evidence-based policy adjustments and improvements in disaster risk governance, contributing to a more responsive and inclusive disaster management system across the country.

Methodology

This study used a mixed-method approach to examine disaster preparedness and response across Bagerhat, Kurigram, and Cox's Bazar. Quantitative household surveys were conducted with 320 respondents—110 each in Bagerhat and Kurigram, and 100 in Cox's Bazar—using structured random sampling to ensure representativeness. Data was collected from both municipal and union areas to compare urban and rural disaster governance. The qualitative component included 39 Key Informant Interviews with officials from government bodies, NGOs, and academic institutions; 15 Focus Group Discussions with community members, volunteers, and DMC representatives; and 15 case studies highlighting personal experiences of disaster impacts. Additional review of policy documents and academic literature helped contextualize findings. This layered methodology allowed for analysis of the functionality of Disaster Management Committees (DDMCs, UzDMCs, UDMCs, WDMCs), coordination practices, and inclusivity of disaster governance. Data was collected at the ward level to understand operational differences and capacities in different geographic and administrative settings.

Key Findings

National-Level Findings

At the national level, the study finds a significant disconnect between disaster management structures across different tiers. Although 77% of Union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC) members report maintaining communication with higher-level bodies, only 23% of Ward DMC (WDMC) members do so, with around 70% unaware that such coordination is expected. This weak vertical linkage contradicts the chain of command outlined in the SOD 2019 and limits the effective implementation of the NPDM, which promotes integrated coordination. Unclear institutional guidance and inconsistent capacity at local levels further affect functionality. Frequent changes in committee members, lack of orientation, and absence of standardized operating procedures create confusion about roles and hinder performance. Although both the SOD 2019 and NPDM emphasize structured responsibilities and capacity-building, these principles are not consistently translated into practice. Additionally, the study reveals the absence of a unified coordination platform among government bodies, NGOs, and other actors, resulting in overlapping efforts and service gaps during disaster response. Though the SOD

2019 and NPDM both advocate for joint action and multi-stakeholder collaboration, such mechanisms remain underdeveloped in actual operations, weakening disaster governance and affecting timely and equitable service delivery.

Sub-National Level Findings

At the sub-national level, the functionality of the DMCs varies across districts. In Cox's Bazar, coordination has improved, particularly during recent cyclone events, but in districts like Kurigram and Bagerhat, lower-tier DMCs often remain inactive. In Kurigram, Ward-level committees are seldom engaged in emergency coordination, suggesting that effectiveness relies more on local leadership or external support than on standardized systems. Training and capacity-building activities are irregular, and many new DMC members lack the knowledge to carry out essential responsibilities such as risk assessment, emergency planning, and early warning dissemination. Although both the SOD 2019 and NPDM highlight the need for ongoing capacity-building, these provisions are not consistently implemented. In addition, committee functions are often affected by political influences. In Bagerhat and Cox's Bazar, changes in committee membership driven by political considerations can impact the fairness of decision-making and distribution of relief.

Community-Level Findings

At the community level, participation in disaster preparedness remains limited. Most people rely on informal early warning systems such as mosque announcements or word-of-mouth, as formal systems are either unavailable or not trusted. Volunteer groups exist but lack proper training and integration with DMCs. Women, persons with disabilities, and the elderly are often excluded from planning and response activities. The SOD 2019 and NPDM promote inclusive community engagement, but low awareness and poor follow-up prevent meaningful involvement. Inclusion of at-risk groups also remains inadequate. Female members of DMCs report limited involvement in decision-making, and people with disabilities face accessibility barriers, such as the absence of ramps, hygiene facilities, or assistive devices during evacuations. These issues reflect a gap between policy and practice. Emergency shelters and relief systems are not fully inclusive. In many areas, shelters lack separate spaces for women and accessible features for persons with disabilities. In Bagerhat, relief items are often not pre-positioned, and in Cox's Bazar, distribution processes are slow and unclear. Although the NPDM outlines inclusive infrastructure and supply chains, these elements are rarely monitored or implemented effectively at the local level.

Comparison among Major Findings from 3 Districts

Thematic Areas	Kurigram	Bagerhat	Cox's Bazar
DMC Functionality & Coordination	DMCs largely inactive; poor vertical coordination; weak DMIC.	DMCs sporadically functional; limited Union-level consistency.	Better emergency coordination; DMIC present but underused.
Community Engagement & Inclusion	Low engagement of women, youth, and PWDs; planning dominated by leaders.	Token participation of women; shelters lack inclusive facilities.	Some NGO-led inclusion, limited reach to marginalized communities.
Training & Capacity Development	Minimal training; ad-hoc NGO support only.	Irregular Union-level training; no skills tracking.	Thematic training (e.g., fire safety) lacks central coordination.
Resource Allocation & Preparedness	No structured preparedness; slow and uneven relief.	No contingency fund; NGO-dependent; reactive relief.	Partial stock management; limited business and rural support.
Perception & Governance	Low trust in DMCs; weak visibility and accountability.	Perceived as externally driven, limited transparency.	Perceived political bias in DMCs; uneven community trust.

Key Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on findings from community consultations and KIIs at national and sub-national levels. They respond to key gaps in implementing the SOD 2019 and NPDM, focusing across major thematic areas.



Simplify SOD 2019, create manuals, and institutionalize regular training with performance tracking



Establish community stockpiles, contingency funds, and conduct quarterly audits



Set up district monitoring units and mobile feedback platforms for accountability



Ensure inclusive representation in DMCs and upgrade shelters for inclusive access



Develop coordination protocols, aid tracking systems, and hold quarterly stakeholder meetings

Conclusions

The baseline highlights varied gaps across 3 districts in DMC functionality, coordination, and inclusion. Key issues include inactive WDMCs, politicized committees, poor risk planning, and symbolic representation of women and marginalized groups. District-level reforms must strengthen local DMCs, improve alignment between NPDM and SOD 2019, and promote inclusive, accountable disaster governance. District-specific reforms under BPP must focus on activating local DMCs, aligning NPDM goals with SOD 2019 mandates, and ensuring inclusive, accountable disaster governance. These findings provide the foundation for strengthening the implementation of the SOD 2019 and inform the next NPDM cycle.

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ACRONYMS

AADMER	ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response
AFAD	Association for Alternative Development
BDRCS	Bangladesh Red Crescent Society
CPP	Cyclone Preparedness Programme
DC	Deputy Commissioners
DC	District Commissioner
DDMC	District Disaster Management Committee
DMC	Disaster Management Committee
DMIC	District Disaster Information Center
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DRRO	District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer
EOC	Emergency Operation Center
FSCD	Fire Service and Civil Defense
GESI	Gender equality and social inclusion
GIS	Geographic Information System
NDMC	National Disaster Management Council
NDMP	National Disaster Management Plan
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NPDM	National Plan for Disaster Management
PIO	Project Implementation Officer
RRAP	Risk Reduction Action Plan
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SOD 2019	Standing Orders on Disaster
SOP	Standardized Operation Procedure
UDMC	Union Disaster Management Committee
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer
UzDMC	Upazila Disaster Management Committee
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WDMC	Ward Disaster Management Committee

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Bangladesh has made progress in disaster management over the years and is recognized for its efforts in risk reduction and preparedness. However, the country continues to face regular and severe threats due to its geographic location and physical features, such as its low-lying delta, river systems, and exposure to floods and cyclones. In recent years, man-made disasters like fires, infrastructure collapse, and chemical incidents have also become more common (Azad, Hossain and Nasreen, 2014; Dewan, 2021; Islam, 2018). Along with this, the rising number of disasters in the Asia-Pacific region adds more pressure to national systems that are already working to manage multiple risks (Thomas et al., 2014).

To address these risks, the Government of Bangladesh developed key policy documents such as the Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD 2019, 2019) and the National Plan for Disaster Management (NPDM, 2021–2025). These provide a framework for identifying hazard-prone areas, reducing disaster risks, and strengthening response systems at all levels. The SOD 2019 outlines specific roles and responsibilities for ministries, departments, and local authorities—ranging from national to local (Ward) levels ensuring a structured and accountable disaster management chain. It mandates the formation of DMCs at national, district, upazila, union, and ward levels, each responsible for planning, early warning dissemination, evacuation, relief coordination, and post-disaster recovery. The SOD 2019 also includes protocols for inter-agency coordination, resource mobilization, emergency logistics, and public communication. The NPDM builds on this by emphasizing capacity-building, risk-informed development, gender and social inclusion, and institutional resilience. It recommends hazard-specific contingency planning, investment in risk-reduction infrastructure, and integration of climate adaptation measures. The plan also calls for developing emergency operation centers (EOCs), training local responders, stockpiling emergency supplies, and establishing monitoring and feedback systems to ensure accountability and continuous improvement across all levels. However, gaps remain in how these plans are being put into practice especially in terms of local-level coordination, community participation, and inclusion of vulnerable groups. There is still limited evidence on whether the actions being taken are reaching those who need them most, or if they are being implemented as planned across different districts.

This baseline study was conducted to assess how disaster management structures are currently functioning at the national, sub-national, and community levels. It aimed to review the extent to which the SOD 2019 and NPDM are guiding day-to-day activities, and whether key targets such as inclusive planning, early warning, and coordination are being met. The study also helps identify where actual practices do not fully align with what the policies call for. By doing so, it supports the government and its partners in identifying what needs to improve and how to do so in a realistic and practical way.

The study focuses on a few important areas: how well disaster management committees are functioning, whether early warning systems are reaching everyone, how inclusive disaster preparedness efforts are, and how well emergency centers are performing. It also explores how coordination happens among different agencies, local authorities, and civil society during disaster planning and response.

This baseline is important at this critical juncture because it gives a snapshot of the current situation before new investments or activities begin in post-2025. It helps ensure that future actions are based on clear evidence. The findings can guide the development of better plans and support efforts to strengthen disaster risk governance. It also creates an opportunity to apply lessons from the ground to improve how SOD 2019 and NPDM are applied in different districts and communities. The key themes of assessment under the scope of the baseline, in short, are illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Key assessment areas of the baseline study

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to ascertain the current status of the SOD 2019 and NPDM, which not only would provide a glimpse of the entire system of management but also contribute to a better understanding of opportunities that can be brought forth to ensure and enhance the effectiveness of the entire system. More specifically, the following objectives shaped the entire study design.

- To explore the functionality of the existing disaster management committees/ groups at the study locations
- To understand the extent of stakeholder awareness of the roles, policies and protocols as stated in the SOD 2019
- To evaluate the capacity, resource availability, and training effectiveness of the committees
- To ascertain the coordination status among and within the committees
- And, to explore the extent of community involvement, gender and social inclusion in disaster management activities



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2. EVALUATION APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

2.1 Approach to the proposed baseline

Given the complexity of disaster management systems in Bangladesh, this study adopted a mixed-method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and utilizing primary and secondary data sources. This triangulation of data allowed for a holistic understanding of disaster preparedness, coordination mechanisms, and community resilience. The integration of diverse methods also helped enhance the validity and reliability of the findings.

Primary data collection involved a range of tools tailored to capture the multifaceted nature of disaster risk and resilience. Quantitative surveys provided structured, numerical data and firsthand insights from disaster-affected populations, while qualitative methods, including Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informant Interviews (KIs), and case studies, enabled deeper exploration of perceptions, lived experiences, and the socio-cultural dynamics that shape vulnerability and resilience in different contexts.

For field implementation, three distinct regions of Bangladesh were purposefully selected to reflect diverse disaster-prone settings, each characterized by a dominant hazard type. These included:



Each district contributed one municipality and one union, ensuring a mix of urban and rural contexts for comparison. Within each selected municipality and union, one ward was chosen as the site for data collection based on exposure to hazards, previous disaster impacts, and population vulnerability. This resulted in a total of three municipalities and three unions, where both qualitative and quantitative data collection activities were conducted simultaneously.¹

¹ The local government tiers and their precise activities in Bangladesh:

District: The largest sub-national administrative unit below the division, overseen by a Deputy Commissioner (DC). It coordinates governance and development activities across all upazilas within its boundary.

Upazila: A sub-district administrative unit under the district, managed by an Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) and an elected Upazila Parishad. It serves as the intermediary between district and union levels.

Union: The smallest rural administrative unit, governed by an elected Union Parishad. It includes multiple villages and is responsible for basic local services and development.

Ward: A sub-unit within a union or municipality, typically the lowest tier of administrative and electoral organization. Each ward elects a representative and deals with localized governance and service delivery.

[Source: Jamil, I., & Panday, P. (2012). Inter-organizational coordination and corruption in urban policy implementation in Bangladesh: A case of Rajshahi City Corporation. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 35(5), 352-366.]

This strategic selection of study sites enabled the research to capture region-specific disaster dynamics and evaluate the functionality of local Disaster Management Committees DDMCs, UzDMCs, UDMCs, and WDMCs across varied governance and environmental settings.

2.2 Sampling Framework

The study employed a mixed-method approach in data analysis, integrating both qualitative and quantitative datasets to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the findings.

Quantitative Sampling

A total of 320 household surveys were conducted across Kurigram, Bagerhat, and Cox's Bazar, based on standard sampling practices to ensure statistical validity for large populations. The sample included respondents from both union and municipal areas to allow comparison between rural and urban contexts. A detailed breakdown of the sample distribution is provided in appendix 2.

Qualitative Sampling

Qualitative data collection included 39 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), 15 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and 15 case studies. Participants were purposively selected for their roles in disaster preparedness and their familiarity with the functioning of Disaster Management Committees (DMCs) at various levels. This ensured a rich and contextually grounded understanding of institutional and community perspectives. Sampling details and selection criteria are presented in appendix 2.

2.3 Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, resulting in five core themes that structure the findings section. These themes capture recurring governance, coordination, and inclusion dynamics across districts.

Quantitative data were processed using SPSS, with descriptive statistics used to identify trends across the study areas. Additionally, insights from UDMC and WDMC meetings were quantified for frequency analysis, allowing for the validation of field observations and enhancing the overall robustness of the findings.

2.4 Limitations of the Study

There were a number of limitations with this baseline study that might have affected the scope and depth of its findings. The recent political unrest in Bangladesh, which took place right before the field data collection, due to the shift in the political landscape, many locally elected representatives, key members of local DMCs, were unavailable or unreachable, resulting in a significant gap in stakeholder engagement and information gathering. This posed a critical limitation, as these individuals are vital sources of insights on the functionality and coordination of disaster preparedness structures.

Additionally, the geographic remoteness of the selected study areas created logistical difficulties. Field teams faced considerable challenges, particularly in the southern coastal region, due to prolonged power outages, scarcity of safe drinking water due to salinity, unfavorable weather conditions, and

inadequate accommodation facilities. These constraints not only slowed down the data collection process but also impacted the team's ability to conduct prolonged field visits and in-depth interviews. Despite these obstacles, efforts were made to ensure the study maintained methodological rigor.

However, from the core research point of view, we strongly suggest that as the political climate stabilizes and stakeholders become more familiar with and actively carry out their designated responsibilities, it is important to re-evaluate the situation to identify which challenges persist, what new practices have emerged, and how disaster preparedness efforts are evolving through continuous implementation.



3. FINDINGS

This section presents the key findings of the baseline study, organized thematically around the functionality of Disaster Management Committees (DMCs), institutional capacity, coordination practices, and community engagement and inclusion. A thematic analysis approach was undertaken to identify recurrent patterns across the data. Data from all three districts (Kurigram, Bagerhat, and Cox's Bazar) were analyzed to reflect the diversity of hazard contexts and governance realities.

Respondent Demographics (See appendix 3 for full charts)

The dataset includes responses from a diverse cross-section of community members, with notable representation of women across all study areas. Approximately 59 percent of respondents were female, and 41 percent were male. This gender distribution was not predetermined but rather reflects local social dynamics: in many locations, men were unavailable during daytime hours due to livelihood obligations, while women were more accessible for interviews and discussions.

The age distribution of the participants shows that more than half of them were between 36 to 40 years of age. Forty-two percent (42%) belonged to the age group of 18 to 35 representing the youth portions of the community, while a small proportion of the survey participants were less than 18 years of age (%) and the same was observed for the elderly group who were older than 60 years at the time of the survey.

The demographics of the participants also revealed that more than 60% of individuals had no formal education or could sign their names only, or had passed primary school only. 7.7% passed the junior school exam while 11% passed the secondary education.

These demographic characteristics provide important context for interpreting the findings. The next sections present the core themes emerging from the study, beginning with an assessment of the functionality of Disaster Management Committees (DMCs) across governance levels.

3.1 Functionality of Committees/Groups

3.1.1 Policy framework for Disaster Management Committees

Functionality of disaster management organizations in Bangladesh is robustly founded upon policy, law, and guidelines from the government. The key functions and responsibilities of disaster management committees at all levels are meticulously described in the Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD 2019). The latest SOD 2019 updated in 2019 expounded the formation and functioning of all the disaster management committees.

Committee	Role
THE NATIONAL-LEVEL COMMITTEES	Policy development and coordination at the concern tier of management.
DISTRICT-LEVEL DISASTER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES	Supervisory role, oversight of disaster response implementation.
LOCAL-LEVEL DISASTER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES	Assessing local vulnerabilities, relief distribution, evacuation, etc.

The SOD 2019 emphasizes an interconnected approach, ensuring that disaster response follows a top-down governance model, with clear lines of communication and decision-making cascading from the national level to community-based response teams. The following table illustrates the roles for disaster management committees at different level as expounded in the SOD 2019.

Level of governance	Disaster Management Committee (DMC)	Role
 NATIONAL LEVEL	National Disaster Management Council (NDMC)	Led by the Prime Minister, responsible for national disaster policy, high-level decision-making, and strategic oversight.
	Inter-Ministerial Disaster Management Coordination Committee (IMDMCC)	Ensures disaster risk reduction (DRR) policy integration across ministries and oversees funding and legal actions .
	National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (NPDRR)	A multi-stakeholder body coordinating policy advocacy between the government, NGOs, and private sector actors.
 SUB-NATIONAL LEVEL	District Disaster Management Committee (DDMC)	Led by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) , responsible for implementing national DRR policies, allocating resources, and coordinating district-level disaster response.
	Upazila Disaster Management Committee (UzDMC) Management Committee (UzDMC)	Led by the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), responsible for local preparedness planning, coordinating relief efforts, and supporting Union DMCs.
 COMMUNITY LEVEL	Union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC)	Develops and implements the Union Disaster Risk Management Plan (UDMP) . Executes 20 risk reduction functions (e.g., awareness campaigns, shelter management, early warning) and 32 emergency response functions (e.g., relief distribution, medical response, and rescue operations). Reports disaster-related data to the Upazila DMC.
	Ward Disaster Management Committee (WDMC)	Conducts 14 risk reduction and 20 emergency response functions , including community awareness, evacuation planning , shelter management , and ensuring accessibility for vulnerable groups.

3.1.2 Gaps between Policy & Practice: On-Field Scenario

This section examines how disaster management committees (DMCs) function in practice across the three study districts, Kurigram, Bagerhat, and Cox's Bazar, highlighting variations in committee composition, coordination, and operational effectiveness from the district to ward level.

3.1.2.1 Formation and Composition

In line with the SOD 2019, DMCs exist at the district, upazila, union, and ward levels. These committees are generally composed of government officials (e.g., Deputy Commissioners, Upazila Nirbahi Officers, and PIOs), Representatives from local and international NGOs, Civil society actors, Community leaders, including elected representatives and volunteers. While structurally well-defined, field data revealed major inconsistencies in how these committees are formed and operate, particularly at the lower tiers of the local government levels.

The structure of the District Disaster Management Committees (DDMCs) is headed by the Deputy Commissioners (DCs), who are responsible for overall disaster management efforts. The DDMCs work in coordination with the Upazila Disaster Management Committees (UDMCs) and the Ward Disaster Management Committees (WDMCs) to ensure that disaster risk reduction (DRR) and preparedness activities are implemented effectively. According to the KII with the DC of Kurigram, the DDMC's role is primarily supervisory, ensuring that disaster preparedness plans are in place and resources are allocated where needed. However, the DC emphasized that the communication flow between the district and lower-tier committees needs significant improvement.

The Upazila Nirbahi (Executive) Officer (UNO) of Kurigram Sadar mentioned that, while the structure of the committees is generally well-defined, there are discrepancies in how these committees operate at the union and ward levels. In many cases, the Union Disaster Management Committees (UDMCs) lack clarity in their roles, which hampers their effectiveness. A member of the UDMC in Jatrapur union echoed this sentiment, noting,



"We know we are part of the committee, but what our exact responsibilities are during disasters is often unclear. While we are aware of our membership, there is a lack of clear guidelines on what specific tasks we need to perform. In times of crisis, we struggle to determine how best to contribute, leading to confusion and inefficiency."

In Bagerhat, discussion with UzDMC revealed that regular meetings hardly occur during disaster free time, and members show lack of accountability and political bias. DDMC of Bagerhat reported that the ward committee does not function effectively but UDMCs function with irregular meetings. It was reported in UzDMC meeting personal matters overshadowed official responsibilities. The municipality disaster management committee in Cox's Bazar municipality functions effectively in coordination with rife NGO presence but the scenario of remote unions like Ukhiya is diabolically different where nepotism is reported in formation of UDMC.

The Disaster Management Committees (DMCs) in Bangladesh, as outlined in the Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD 2019) 2019, include multiple layers of committees to enhance disaster preparedness and response. Although not explicitly mandated by the Disaster Management Act, several additional

committees have been established, such as the City Corporation Ward Public Committee, Municipal Ward Disaster Management Committee, Union Parishad Ward Disaster Management Committee, and others. These committees operate at different administrative levels, including divisional, municipal, and union levels, often leading to overlapping responsibilities and coordination challenges. Their composition typically includes local government representatives, disaster management officials, and community stakeholders, ensuring a decentralized approach to disaster governance. However, the proliferation of these committees sometimes results in inefficiencies due to duplication of roles and bureaucratic complexity.

A Union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC) member from Rayenda Union (Bagerhat district) expressed concern about the overlapping responsibilities, stating,

"While these committees aim to enhance disaster preparedness, the lack of clear coordination often creates confusion. Sometimes, multiple committees work on the same task without proper communication, making disaster response less effective."

This highlights the challenges posed by the proliferation of committees, emphasizing the need for better coordination and role clarity to improve disaster management efforts.

Level	Intended Role	Observed Functionality
District (DDMC)	Supervisory and coordination authority for DRR planning, resource allocation, and response coordination	In Kurigram, the DC noted gaps in communication flow to lower tiers. In Bagerhat, DDMCs were described as functional but lacking downward linkages, especially with WDMCs.

3.1.2.2 Awareness of Roles and Responsibilities

One of the critical challenges uncovered in the study is the lack of awareness among UDMC and WDMC members regarding their roles and responsibilities under the SOD 2019 and NPDM frameworks. Although most members have heard of the SOD 2019, their understanding of the document is limited, and no member was found to have detailed knowledge of its provisions. The DMCs play a crucial role in ensuring effective disaster risk management (DRM); however, gaps in accountability and regulatory clarity disrupt their efficiency. While the Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD 2019) mandate adherence to minimum standards by all government and non-government actors involved in humanitarian assistance, it fails to define these standards explicitly. Additionally, there is no legal requirement for DRM actors to implement controls to prevent fraud and corruption in key areas such as finance, human resources, procurement, asset management, and transport. The absence of public reporting and parliamentary oversight further weakens transparency, although departmental disciplinary actions exist for government employees in cases of gross failure. Given these limitations, DMCs must take proactive steps to enhance awareness, promote ethical practices, and advocate for clearer regulatory frameworks to improve accountability and effectiveness in disaster management.

"There is a significant knowledge gap, with most members unaware of their roles as outlined in the SOD 2019. While the document is meant to guide disaster response, many committee members have not been adequately trained on its contents. As a result, they remain uncertain about their specific duties, leading to confusion during emergencies. Emergency meetings are held before disasters strike, but they are often reactive and lack proper planning. Instead of proactive preparedness, these meetings focus on immediate concerns, leaving long-term strategies unaddressed. Without structured training and clear role assignments, disaster response efforts continue to suffer from inefficiency and mismanagement."

- (A male UDMC member (40 years), Kurigram Sadar Union).

"We have heard of the SOD 2019, but we don't know exactly what it says or what we are supposed to do. Although the document exists, many of us lack proper awareness of its contents and directives. Without a clear understanding, we remain uncertain about our roles and responsibilities during emergencies. This gap in knowledge leads to ineffective disaster response and delays in critical decision-making."

- (A male participant (46 years), Bagerhat Sadar Union).

This knowledge gap extends to the broader disaster management practices, where most members, including chairpersons, have only a rudimentary understanding of disaster protocols and procedures. The committee secretary, typically more informed, acts as the primary link to the higher-level government instructions, but even their knowledge is often insufficient to lead comprehensive preparedness efforts.

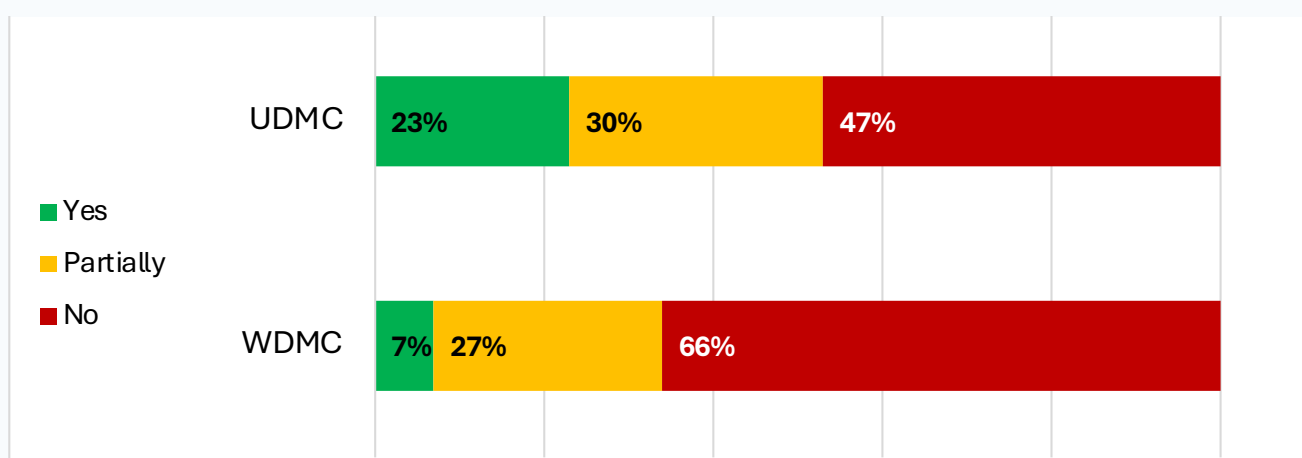


Figure 2: Are the DMCs effective in fulfilling their roles?
Committees' effectiveness in fulfilling their roles of disaster management

Survey results related to the response of whether the DMCs are effective in fulfilling their roles—indicate a significant divergence in perceived effectiveness between UDMC and WDMC members. While a substantial majority of both groups (66% of WDMC and 47% of UDMC) believe their committees are not effective in fulfilling their disaster management roles, UDMC members hold a more positive view. Specifically, 23 percent of UDMC members feel their committees are effective, compared to only 7 percent of WDMC members. Additionally, UDMC members are more likely to rate their committees as partially effective (30%) than WDMC members (27%). This data suggests a potential disconnect in perceived effectiveness between the two groups, with WDMC members expressing greater dissatisfaction or concern about their committees’ abilities to fulfill their designated responsibilities.

3.1.2.3 Regular Meetings & Updates

According to the Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD 2019), the UDMCs and WDMCs are required to meet regularly to ensure preparedness for disasters. In Kurigram, the committees are expected to hold bi-monthly meetings. However, the findings revealed significant deviations from this requirement. While the last meeting in Panchgachhi Union was held in July 2024, it was noted that many members do not attend meetings regularly, and some meetings are skipped altogether. A 50-year-old female WDMC member from Jatrapur union narrated,

“The last meeting, we had was in July, but before that, we didn’t have a meeting for several months. Regular meetings are essential for preparedness, yet they are often infrequent and inconsistent. Without continuous engagement, committee members struggle to stay informed about their roles and responsibilities. It’s hard to get everyone to attend when there’s no disaster, as many see these meetings as unnecessary in normal times.”

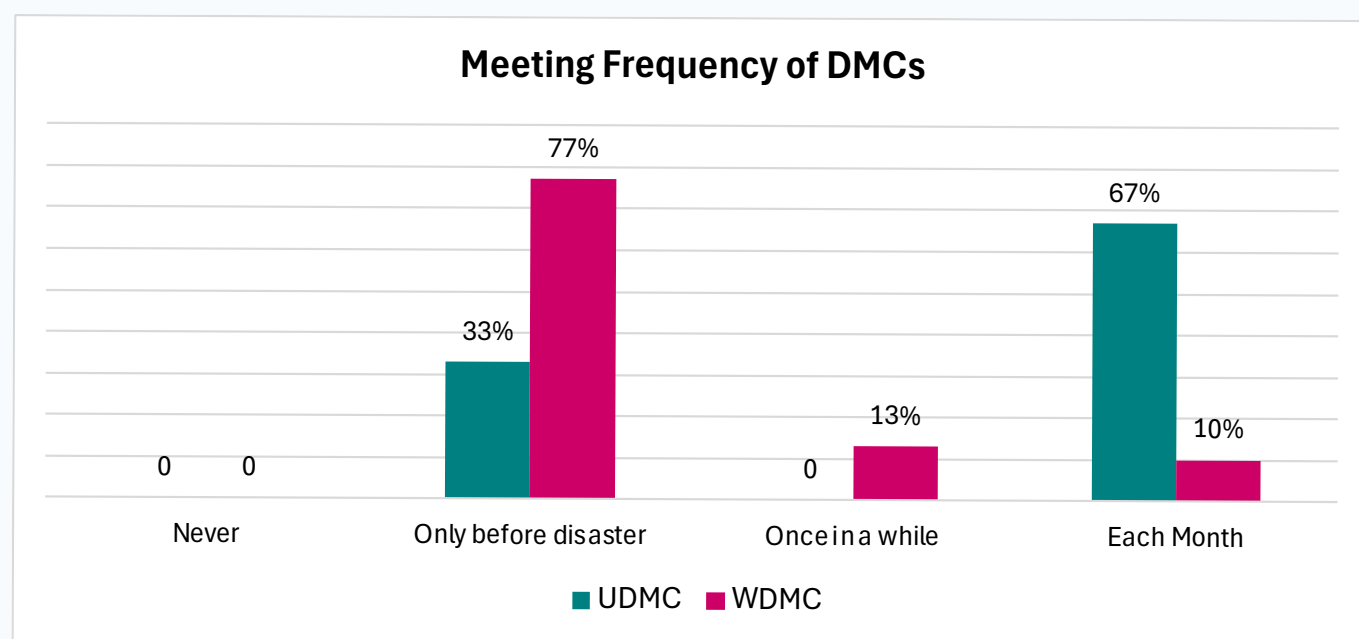


Figure 3: Meeting frequencies of the DMCs

Data on the meeting frequencies reveals a stark contrast in meeting frequency between Union Disaster Management Committees (UDMCs) and Ward Disaster Management Committees (WDMCs). While no UDMC members report having never had meetings, a significant 77 percent of WDMC members indicate they only meet before a disaster. Conversely, 67 percent of UDMC members meet monthly, a practice observed in only 10 percent of WDMC members. UDMC participation also shows a higher, though still concerning, rate of meeting only before disasters at 33%, while a small fraction of WDMC members (13%) meet once in a while. Notably, no instances of regular monthly meetings were reported within WDMC structures, and neither group reported never meeting. This data highlights WDMCs heavily reliant on pre-disaster activation and UDMCs demonstrating a greater commitment to consistent monthly engagement.

The lack of regular meetings pertains to all the other UDMCs and WDMCs. This reflects a broader issue of engagement and functionality of the DMCs. In several instances, members reported that meetings were only convened in anticipation of a disaster event or after one had occurred, rather than as part of a proactive preparedness plan. This reactive approach undermines the committees' ability to build disaster resilience at the local level. The municipality disaster management committee in Cox's Bazar is totally based on emergency response. UDMC member from Bagerhat asserted,



"UP members control these meetings and all, making most of the decisions without broader participation. As regular members, we only attend if they call us for meetings, leaving us with little involvement in planning and decision-making. Without active engagement, we struggle to understand our roles and contribute effectively during disasters. If meetings were more inclusive and participatory, all members could be better prepared and coordinated. Ensuring equal involvement in decision-making would strengthen the overall effectiveness of disaster response efforts."

3.1.3 Summary of the findings

The formation of all the committees is based on SOD 2019. But there is a lack of operationalization at different levels. While DDMCs are at the supervisory scope of the DMC functions in practice, the DMCs at lower levels lack regularity in their functioning at the normal state. Awareness about roles and responsibilities among the local-level DMCs is extremely limited. The voluntary nature of the committee is a high hurdle for the commencement of regular meetings at the local level DMCs. However, the municipality disaster management committee at Cox's Bazar was basically an emergency response-oriented institution, but the common trend of correlation of DMCs function with NGO presence was observed in all the study areas. The least functional DMC is WDMCs in all these areas. There is a significant knowledge gap, with most members unaware of their roles as outlined in the SOD 2019. Emergency meetings are held before disasters strike, but they are often reactive and lack proper planning.

3.2 Stakeholder Awareness of Roles, Policies, and Protocols

3.2.1 Framing the Context

Disaster management in Bangladesh involves a wide range of actors—from national government agencies to local authorities, NGOs, and community-based organizations. While some coordination mechanisms exist, effective disaster response requires all stakeholders to clearly understand their roles and how they interact across the system.

Two key national frameworks guide these roles: the Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD 2019, 2019) and the National Plan for Disaster Management (NPDM, 2021–2025). The SOD 2019 provides procedural guidelines for all disaster phases—preparedness, response, and recovery—across all levels of government. It outlines who should do what and when, ensuring a coordinated approach during disaster situations. In contrast, the NPDM is a five-year strategic framework that complements the SOD 2019 by laying out long-term goals and planning priorities for disaster risk reduction.

Both frameworks emphasize multi-stakeholder involvement and shared responsibility. For example, the NPDM assigns specific awareness-building roles to NGOs and community organizations, while the government and mass media are tasked with vertical dissemination of disaster preparedness protocols.

Since the launch of SOD 2019, both government and non-government actors have initiated efforts to build stakeholder awareness of disaster roles. Organizations such as the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society have worked with Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) volunteers and local DMCs to promote understanding of the SOD 2019. However, the overall status of stakeholder awareness across the country, especially at the local level, remains uneven and largely unassessed.

National Level Committees (Including Inter-ministerial and Specialized committees) are in closer contact with the National Disaster Management Committee, so their level of understanding of the role is expected to be methodologically effective, but the level of competency in the Local DMCs is not systematically assessed at all levels, as mentioned earlier. In the DRR discourse globally and regionally, there are some critical discussions and priority areas that the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction emphasizes. Our DRR policy frameworks also included those on paper. Our stakeholders at different level are expected to align their actions following the SOD 2019, NPDM and Other plans. In figure 3, the key areas where stakeholders form different spheres can capacitate themselves according to SOD 2019 are visualized.

Despite national alignment with global frameworks like the Sendai Framework, the disconnect between policy and local practice highlights the need for a systematic assessment of awareness and capacity at all levels.



Figure 4: Key Awareness Building Areas for stakeholders according to SOD 2019

3.2.2 On-Field Scenario

3.2.2.1 Knowledge of DRR

An important aspect of our study focused on understanding the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of DMC members regarding disaster risk management. Our findings suggest that although many members of the DMCs possess a basic understanding of disaster preparedness and response, there is a significant knowledge gap regarding more technical aspects of disaster risk reduction.

For instance, during the FGD with the members of the UDMC and WDMC in Jatrapur, it became evident that while committee members were aware of the need for early warning systems and evacuation plans, they lacked sufficient training to implement these measures effectively. Many participants admitted that they rely heavily on external agencies, such as the Fire Service and Civil Defence (FSCD) and the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS), for guidance during disaster events. One male UDMC member participant stated:

“We know what to do in general, but when the floods come, we look at the NGOs and government officials for instructions. While we have some basic understanding of disaster response, we lack the confidence and training to take independent action. This reliance on external agencies highlights the gap in our preparedness and decision-making skills. If we were better equipped with knowledge and skills, we could respond proactively rather than waiting for external guidance.”

This limited capacity for independent decision-making during emergencies was further highlighted in our interviews with the Project Implementation Officer (PIO) of Kurigram Sadar. The PIO noted that while training programs have been conducted for DMC members in the past, these trainings have often been sporadic and insufficient to build a comprehensive understanding of disaster risk management.

As mentioned earlier, the knowledge of disaster risk reduction among DMC members was generally low. Despite the presence of committee structures, the members lacked training in key disaster management practices. While NGOs working in the area have provided some training, these have been ad-hoc and not linked to the specific roles outlined in the SOD 2019 or NPDM. UDMC chairman (58) from Panchgacchi union shared:

“There is no training available to raise awareness among local-level DMCs about SOD 2019, which serves as a comprehensive guidebook for disaster management activities in disaster-prone areas. Even Officers are not afforded the opportunity to acquire a comprehensive understanding of SOD 2019 through formal training. The DMC members have been unable to effectively participate in all phases of disaster management and reduce disaster risks in their community due to a lack of adequate training. The best possible result from SOD 2019 is still not obtained due to the absence of proper orientation and sensitization.”

KData on the training scenario shows that most DMC members have not received training on the Standing Orders on Disasters (SOD 2019) and the National Plan for Disaster Management (NPDM). For UDMC members, 91 percent report no training, while 97 percent of WDMC members report no training. Only 9 percent of UDMC and 3 percent of WDMC members indicate they have received such training.

The training scenario in Bagerhat and Cox’s Bazar districts is identical with training provisions entirely offered by

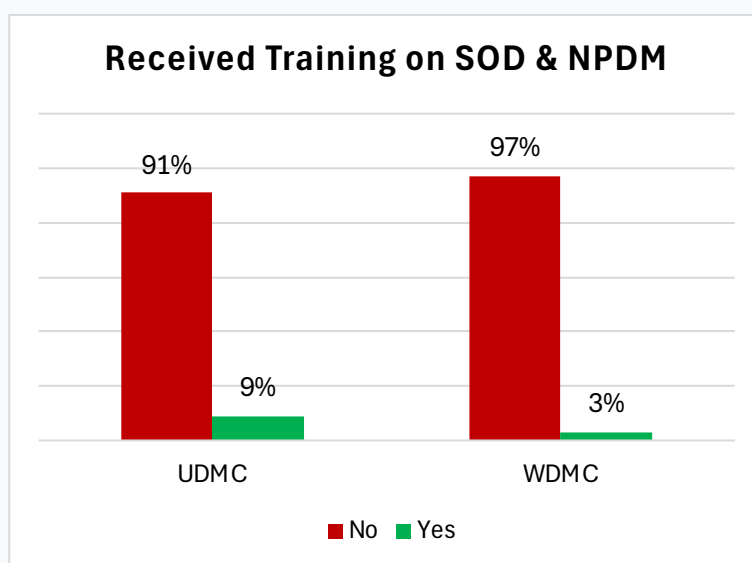
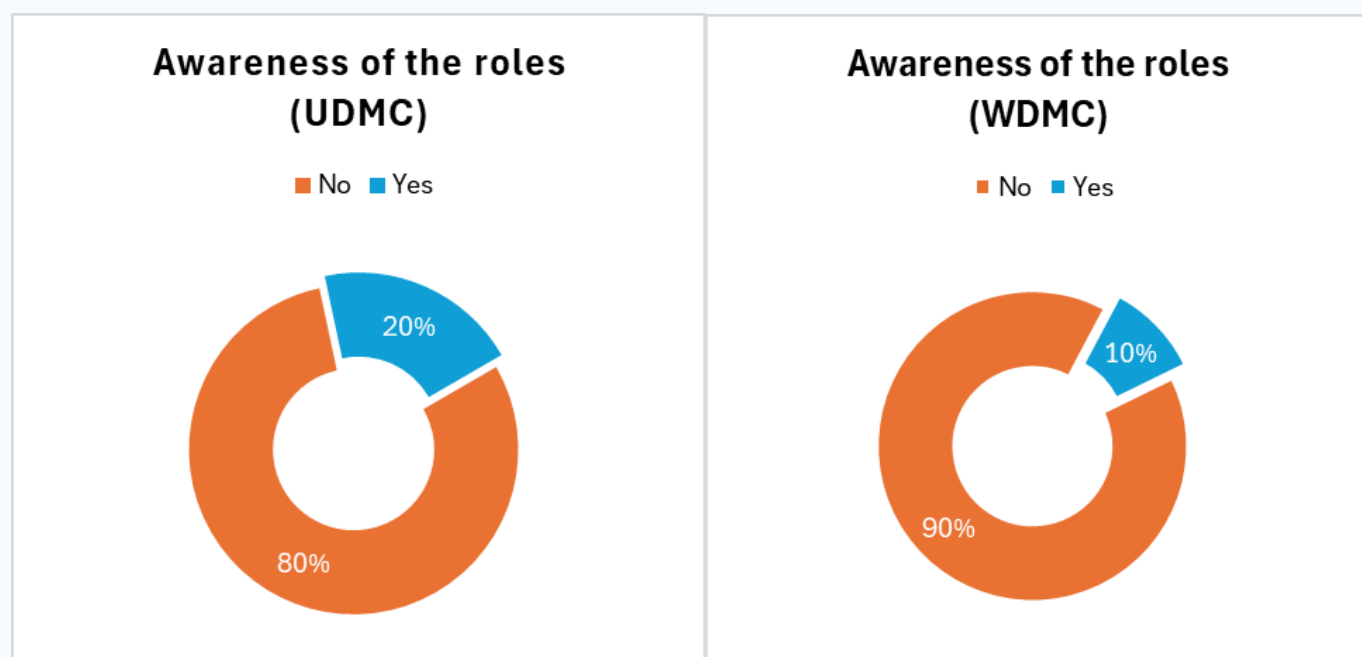


Figure 5: Are the DMCs trained enough?

the I/NGOs who work in those areas. However, these training courses do not comprehensively address all necessary aspects of disaster risk knowledge, nor do they encompass all local-level Disaster DMCs. Furthermore, the assistance provided by I/NGOs is aligned with their ongoing projects in the specific regions of operation. Concerning the issue, the DRRO of Cox's Bazar stated that,

“The I/NGOs working in this area vastly lead the activities of local-level disaster management committees. Cox’s Bazar is a hub for I/NGOs, which run different projects in different parts of the district. In these areas, they provide support to the DMCs by arranging training sessions and their regular meetings. This support is beneficial because there is no formal training program to enhance the knowledge base of DMCs. However, they are temporary and only apply to the project areas of DMCs. Once the project’s timeline ends, these supports will also end. Targeted and specialized training programs are essential to enhance the disaster risk knowledge of the DMC members, as the majority lack knowledge and skills in this area.”



The figure substantiates the saying where among the 30 UDMC members in 3 districts, only 20% asserted their awareness of their roles and responsibilities while for the WDMC members the percentage stood at only 10%, reflecting a more dire scenario.

As a result, most DMC members were unclear about the steps required in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. Their existing knowledge was largely based on informal understanding, past experiences, and community-based practices. This leads to significant gaps in the application of DRR principles, particularly when it comes to preparing for less frequent but high-impact hazards like riverine floods.

3.2.2.2 Attitudes towards Disaster Management

There is a sense of responsibility among many DMC members to serve their communities during disasters, but the absence of formal guidance often leads to confusion and a lack of coordinated efforts. Several WDMC members during meetings expressed frustration about their inability to perform their duties effectively due to insufficient knowledge and support. The SOD 2019 mandates the protection of domestic animals and livestock in early action plans, aligning with NPDM's objective of safeguarding livelihoods through risk-informed preparedness. Similarly, the requirement for safe evacuation centers and Crisis Support Centers for trauma counseling reflects NPDM's commitment to a people-centered, rights-based approach, addressing both physical safety and mental health resilience. Both policies advocate for a decentralized, community-focused disaster management system, ensuring that preparedness and response measures are tailored to local vulnerabilities and risks. However, effective implementation, capacity-building, and inter-agency collaboration remain key challenges, requiring stronger enforcement mechanisms, resource allocation, and transparency in governance to fully realize the objectives outlined in both SOD 2019 and NPDM.



**"We want to help, but we don't know what to do exactly. Despite our willingness to assist, the lack of clear guidance and training leaves us uncertain about our roles. When there's a flood, we do what we can based on our past experiences, but without proper instruction, our efforts are often uncoordinated. We often feel overwhelmed by the scale of the disaster, unsure of the best course of action."
-A member of the WDMC in Jatrapur Union (Male, 39 years old)**

This attitude of **"doing what we can"** reflected a common sentiment that while committee members are willing, they feel inadequately equipped to handle disasters in a systematic and organized way. This sentiment is associated with their knowledge of disaster risk. The absence of adequate technical understanding, owing to the lack of formal orientation and training on SOD 2019 and other disaster-related guidebooks, such as NPDM, has caused local DMCs, notably UDMCs and WDMCs, to maintain their activities in an irregular manner, relying on traditional approaches and prior experiences. Their approaches are heavily influenced by the extent of their disaster risk knowledge base.

The attitude toward disaster management can be significantly improved by fostering the disaster risk knowledge of the DMC members. The **"doing what we can"** attitude can be transformed into **"doing the best we can"** through appropriate training and sensitization with the relevant disaster management guidebook.

3.2.3 Summary of the findings

This chapter focuses primarily on two areas: UDMC and UDMC members' understanding and awareness of disaster risk reduction and their attitudes toward disaster management. The study regions' findings indicate that there is a significant connection between DRR knowledge and attitudes toward disaster management.

Some local-level DMC members possess basic disaster risk reduction knowledge, whereas the majority lack technical expertise in DRR. Inadequate training in disaster risk reduction has led to a weak knowledge base among DMC members. Consequently, they lack a comprehensive understanding of effective disaster management strategies. Therefore, their attitudes are not sufficiently proactive in systematically minimizing disaster risks. The study's findings indicate that many DMC members are committed to mitigating disaster risks in their area and protecting community people from the adverse effects of disasters. However, they are unable to do so because of their knowledge gap. As a result, they are guided by their knowledge and experience in managing past disasters.

The provision of formal training on SOD 2019, NPDM, and any other necessary guidelines may significantly change the attitude toward disaster management. The knowledge base of DMC members can be significantly enhanced by providing them with appropriate training on the aforementioned subjects. This enriched knowledge base can significantly transform the attitude of DMC members toward proactive disaster management, as opposed to reactive, outdated practices.

3.3 Capacity, Resource Availability, and Training Effectiveness

3.3.1 Framing the Context

Bangladesh has become a leader in disaster management, implementing innovative frameworks and policies to strengthen capacity and aligning with global frameworks like the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Sustainable Development Goals. Bangladesh's disaster management system, influenced by domestic challenges and external developments, has developed effectively, incorporating various procedures, processes, and strategies, despite a multifaceted development process influenced by external institutions and policies (Sabur, 2012).

The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) is primarily responsible for providing technical assistance to sectoral ministries/departments/agencies, NGOs, the private sector, and others to include/mainstream disaster risk reduction/management issues in the policies, plans, and programs under NPDM (Nasreen, 2023).

SOD 2019 promotes community-based DRM through the involvement of local disaster management committees (DMCs). It ensures that local stakeholders are equipped to respond promptly to disasters through resource allocation and knowledge sharing.

Key provisions in the SOD 2019 and NPDM related to capacity-building and resource allocation include:

- Establishing dedicated budget lines and disaster contingency funds at the national and local levels to ensure rapid response during emergencies.
- Promoting the use of early warning systems, GIS, and weather forecasting technologies to improve preparedness.
- Mandating training programs through the Disaster Management Training and Mass Awareness Taskforce, targeting government officials, first responders, and community leaders on multi-hazard preparedness and inclusive risk reduction.
- Emphasizing public-private partnerships, civil-military coordination, and community empowerment for a more integrated and resilient disaster response system.

- Advocating for the inclusion of women, persons with disabilities, and vulnerable groups to strengthen localized disaster preparedness and promote equitable recovery.

While regional cooperation is increasingly recognized as a driver of disaster resilience, the practical contribution of regional institutions to national capacity-building efforts in Bangladesh remains limited and understudied.

This policy context sets the stage for assessing how effectively these provisions have been implemented in practice, particularly in terms of human resource capacity, availability of disaster-related infrastructure, and the effectiveness of training at the local level.

3.3.2 On-Field Scenario

3.3.2.1 Capacity Building Efforts

Training and support mechanisms are critical for enabling Disaster Management Committee (DMC) members to effectively prepare for and respond to disasters. However, findings from all three districts reveal that such capacity-building efforts are largely inadequate, inconsistent, and poorly aligned with committee mandates.

Training Coverage

Despite the importance of disaster training, coverage remains alarmingly low:

- UDMCs: 93% of members reported no training.
- WDMCs: 97% reported no training.
- Community survey: 88% of respondents indicated no training received.

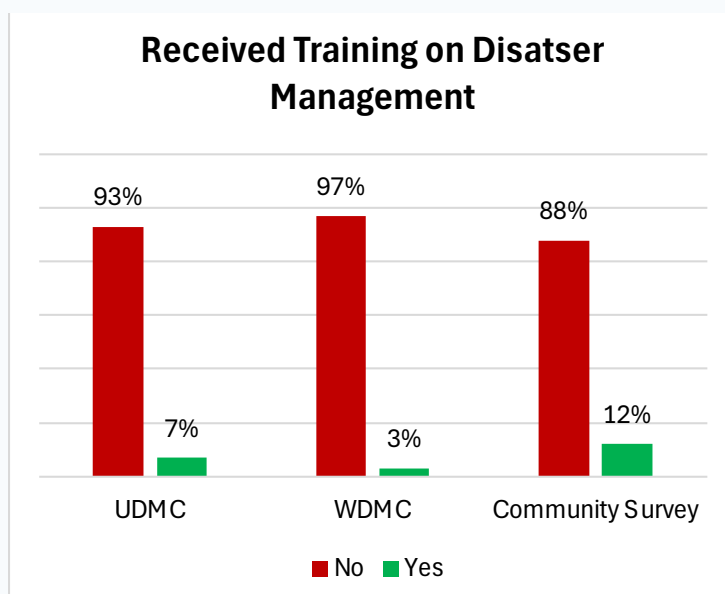


Figure 6: Status of training on Disaster Management

“We have received training, but it is very basic. It lacks depth in areas like disaster prediction, early warning, or community communication.”
— WDMC member

Most existing training programs are ad hoc and primarily NGO-led. Government-led, structured training aligned with the Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD 2019) is almost entirely absent. Technical subjects like community risk assessments and climate adaptation are rarely covered.

Value and Quality of training

Our discussion with the District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer (DRRO) of Kurigram reveals that while there have been training sessions organized for DMC members, they are typically limited to basic disaster response activities. Where training exists, it is often limited to introductory topics and does not reflect the full scope of responsibilities outlined in the SOD 2019 or NPDM.

There is also a lack of refresher training, which causes skill erosion over time and limits DMC members' preparedness during actual disaster events.



"We have attended training programs, but they were conducted by NGOs, not the government. While these programs were useful in some ways, they did not specifically align with the responsibilities outlined for us as part of the Disaster Management Committee (DMC). As a result, we often rely on external agencies for guidance instead of acting independently."

Barriers to Inclusion

The accessibility of these training programs is an issue. According to the women-led organization AFAD's executive, women and persons with disabilities are often excluded from these capacity-building efforts due to socio-cultural barriers. The CEO of AFAD stated,



"Many of the trainings are announced last minute or held in places that aren't accessible. Even when women or persons with disabilities are invited, they're not given the space to actively participate—it's more of a formality than real inclusion."

The municipal disaster management committee of Cox's Bazar was an aberration in this context. The copious NGO activities in coordination with the municipal disaster management committee have enhanced the capacity of the MDMC. The Social Development Officer (SDO) stated:



“We always maintain communication and coordination with the NGOs working here. Their involvement plays a crucial role in strengthening disaster management efforts within the municipality. The NGOs always consult and coordinate with the municipality while working in the urban area, ensuring that their interventions align with local needs. This collaboration helps improve training programs, resource allocation, and emergency response mechanisms. However, while this partnership is beneficial, long-term sustainability requires greater leadership and initiative from local government bodies.”

3.3.2.2 Resource Allocation and Support Mechanisms

One of the key challenges raised during FGDs was the chronic lack of resources for Disaster Management Committees (DMCs). Members reported severe shortages of even basic preparedness tools, such as boats, communication equipment, and financial resources to support regular operations and meetings. This lack of resources significantly hampers DMC functionality and discourages active participation.



“We don’t even have the basic equipment like boats or funds to hold meetings. Without essential resources, our ability to prepare for and respond to disasters is severely limited.” -UDMC Member from Jatrapur Union (46 years old).



“There is an insufficiency of disaster management resources like communication mechanisms, evacuation supplements, and safe routes for vulnerable populations. The most critical challenge, however, is the financial resource constraint, which limits the ability to address these gaps effectively.” — FGD, Female Group, Bagerhat

The dependency on NGOs for resources and training has further exacerbated this issue. While NGOs provide valuable support, their assistance is often project-specific and time-bound. Once projects end, DMCs are frequently left with no sustained operational support, exacerbating vulnerabilities in disaster preparedness and response.

The DRRO of Bagerhat informed that officers are often absent before and after a disaster. During this period, accountability and supporting mechanisms do not function effectively. The remote unions of Cox’s Bazar are deprived of resources, and the higher level of politicization and nepotism further impedes the resource allocation and support mechanisms in the area. But the municipal and Sadar DMCs are in a better position in terms of resources. The UzDMC of Ukhiya reported that they created an upazila-level disaster management fund with the help of INGOs functioning in the union. The lead of the INGO party was UNDP, which also provided necessary equipment for emergency response, but they are dilapidating due lack of maintenance and lack of use for a long time.

3.3.2.3 Early Warning and Emergency Response

While early warning systems exist, their effectiveness is limited. Most residents reported receiving disaster alerts informally—through mosque announcements, neighbors, or local leaders—rather than through structured, official channels.

“We didn’t get any official warning during the last flood. Instead, we relied on word of mouth, hearing from our neighbors that the water was rising and that we should leave. Without a proper early warning system, many of us were left unprepared and unsure of when and where to evacuate. This lack of structured communication puts lives at risk, especially for vulnerable groups who may not receive timely information.”— Household Respondent, Panbazar Union

There is no consistent mechanism to ensure early warnings reach marginalized populations, particularly persons with disabilities and the elderly. The limitations are most pronounced in Kurigram and Bagerhat, while in Cox’s Bazar, NGOs play a stronger supporting role, improving the reach and reliability of emergency response.

Community trust in formal early warning mechanisms remains low, and the reliance on informal systems undermines preparedness, especially in high-risk zones. Furthermore, the lack of coordination between the Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) and DMCs further limits early response capacity.

3.3.2.4 Evacuation, Shelter Management, and Recovery Efforts

The management of evacuation procedures and shelters during disasters was another area of concern. Although the DMCs are responsible for managing local shelters, the facilities are often inadequate to accommodate the affected populations, particularly vulnerable groups such as pregnant women and persons with disabilities.

“We have shelters, but they are not equipped to handle large numbers or people with special needs. During the last flood, it was very difficult to manage pregnant women and disabled people, as there were no designated areas or support systems for them.. The overcrowding and inadequate conditions in shelters further worsen the crisis, making evacuation a stressful experience.”

Reported issues include:



Lack of designated areas for women and individuals with disabilities



Poor sanitation, electricity, and clean water access



Unsafe shelter locations and overcrowding



Inadequate availability of dry food and emergency supplies

In some areas, such as Chowfoldondi in Cox's Bazar, newly built shelters included inclusive features (e.g., separate rooms, accessible facilities), but these are isolated examples. Many communities voiced concerns over safety, theft, and the absence of security personnel, all of which deter a timely evacuation.

Post-disaster recovery efforts also vary significantly. While some communities receive timely food and medical aid, many, particularly in remote unions, remain underserved. Allegations of corruption and elite capture in relief distribution were also reported.

3.3.3 Summary of the findings

The lack of capacity-building training is a significant obstacle in attaining the full potential of the DMCs at the local level. Dependency on NGOs for training and resources is conspicuous in all the districts, which leaves the DMCs incapacitated after the project period is over. The absence of officers before and after a disaster compounded the support and accountability mechanism. Early warning dissemination is prominently done through miking, but most of the people reported getting the warning from the words of mouth of other people. Evacuation was impeded by fear of plundering, theft, and loss of resources and properties. Moreover, participants reported a lack of sanitation, hygiene, safety, and inclusive facilities in the shelters repulsed the evacuation propensity of the communities. Shelter management is reported to be very ad hoc and needs-based base while the meeting of the shelter management committees takes place in the advent of a disaster. But the lack of maintenance is a ubiquitous finding across the study areas. Community-driven recovery management was recommended by the at-risk communities.

3.4 Coordination

3.4.1 Context

In a developing country like Bangladesh, the root cause of the failure of disaster management is often coordination. Disaster management is a holistic approach that is not the function of any particular entity, rather, it requires well-coordinated efforts from all concerned local and national bodies for a strategic decision, interchange of learning, and partnership development.

Coordination in disaster management is a set of systematic activities that guide to protect the vulnerable people. In order to achieve the objectives of public policy, the implementation functions performed by different organizations and agencies must be coordinated, and a lack of proper coordination and relationship between the organizations involved may adversely affect the effective implementation of disaster management (Begum & Momen, 2019).

The SOD 2019 provides a structured framework for coordination:

- National-level coordination is led by the National Disaster Management Council (NDMC), Inter-Ministerial Disaster Management Coordination Committee (IMDMCC), and National Disaster Response Coordination Group (NDRCG), responsible for policy, cross-ministerial collaboration, and emergency operations.
- Sub-national and local coordination is managed by District (DDMC), Upazila (UzDMC), and Union (UDMC) Disaster Management Committees, intended to operationalize disaster preparedness and response on the ground.

The National Plan for Disaster Management (NPDM) 2021–2025, aligned with the Sendai Framework, complements the SOD 2019 by emphasizing stakeholder collaboration and system-wide preparedness. It highlights coordination as central to effective disaster risk governance, especially under Priority 4: “Build Back Better.”

While these frameworks mandate coordination, real-world implementation often falls short due to weak inter-agency collaboration, political influences, and limited capacity at local levels. This section presents findings from the field on how coordination plays out in practice.

3.4.2 On-Field Scenario

3.4.2.1 Internal Coordination

The effectiveness of Disaster Management Committees (DMCs) is significantly influenced by their internal coordination mechanisms.

Internal coordination within DMCs is often fragmented. Committee members, especially at the union and ward levels, tend to operate in silos rather than as cohesive teams. Communication is inconsistent, and in many instances, there is no clear chain of command or shared understanding of responsibilities.



“The absence of a systematic communication mechanism hampers regular coordination and becomes even more challenging during disasters due to infrastructure damage or technical failures.”
— UDMC Member, 38 years old

This lack of formalized Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) results in delays and confusion during emergencies. Most members expressed a need for clearer protocols and joint planning processes to facilitate rapid, coordinated responses.

Field survey data confirms these challenges:

- 57% of WDMC and 47% of UDMC members rated their internal coordination mechanisms as ineffective.
- A significant number (33% WDMC, 47% UDMC) were uncertain about their coordination structure (Figure 13).

In practice, frequent rotation of committee members further weakens continuity and institutional knowledge. New members often lack comprehensive training or familiarity with the committee's established practices, leading to gaps in leadership and decision-making processes. This is especially challenging in districts with complex risk profiles, such as flooding in Kurigram and cyclones in Cox's Bazar, where tailored and consistent coordination is critical.

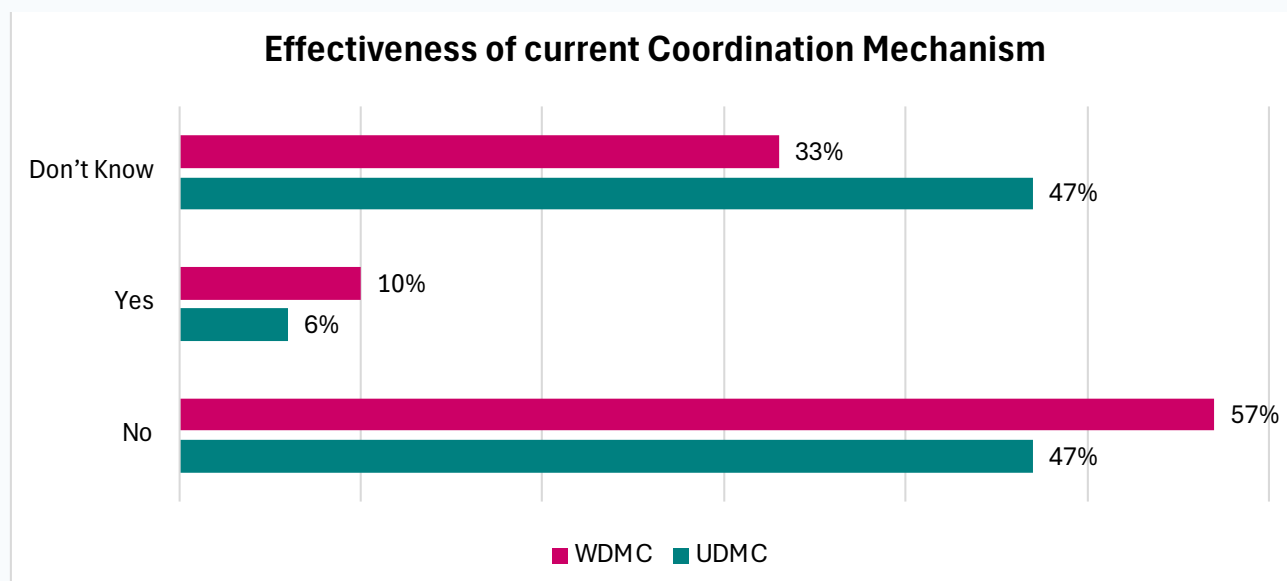
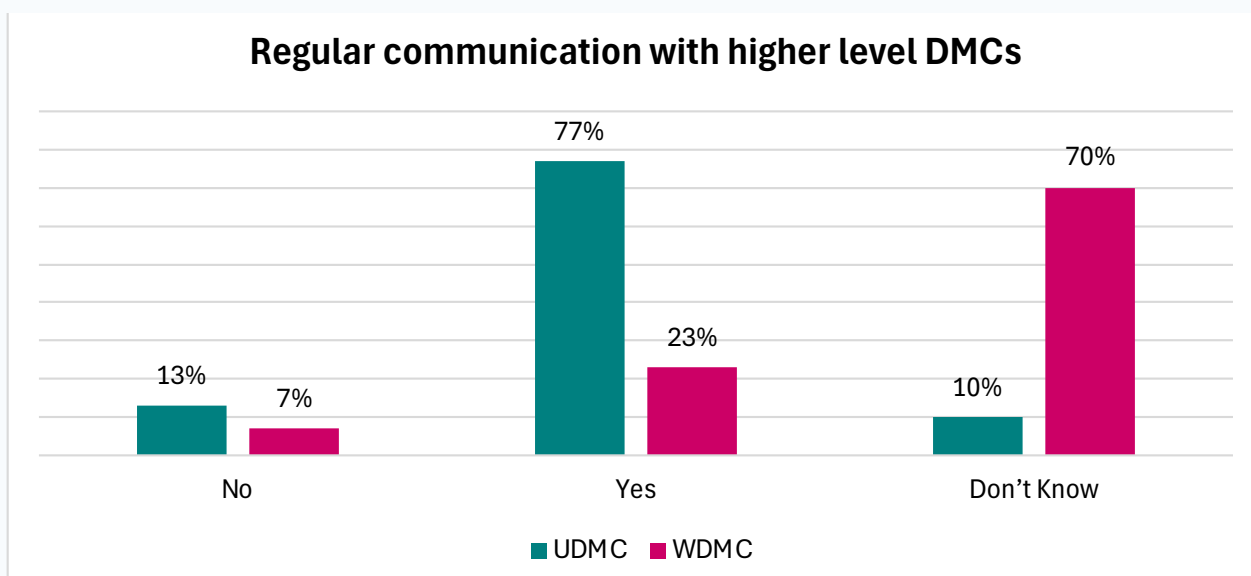


Figure 7: Effectiveness of current coordination mechanism

3.4.2.2 Vertical Collaboration

A major gap lies in communication between local DMCs and their supervising bodies. While 77% of UDMC members report regular contact with higher-tier DMCs, only 23% of WDMC members report the same. Alarming, 70% of WDMC members are unaware that vertical communication is part of their mandate (Figure 16).

This disconnect impedes alignment between strategic planning and frontline implementation. WDMCs are often left out of coordination meetings, limiting their access to key information and resources during emergencies.



3.4.2.3 Collaboration with External Agencies

Effective disaster management extends beyond internal coordination, necessitating robust collaboration with external partners such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international bodies, and other governmental entities.

Coordination with NGOs, INGOs, and other government entities is often fragmented and project-based. Fieldwork reveals that 77% of WDMC and 83% of UDMC members report coordination challenges with external actors, especially just before disaster (Figure 14).

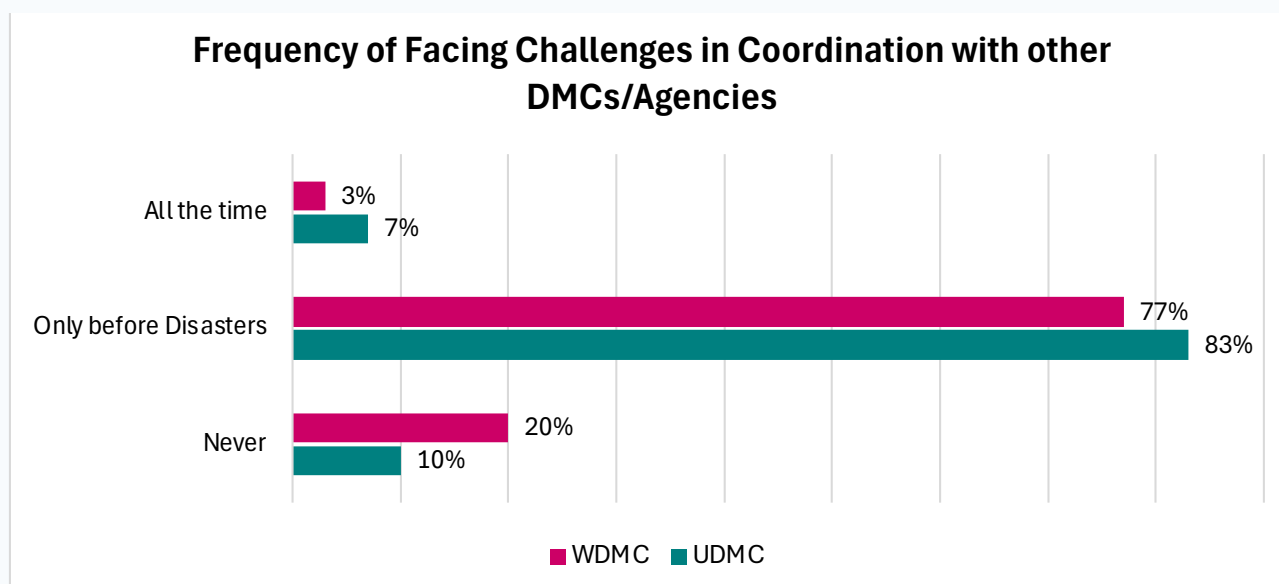


Figure 8: Coordination challenges at a glance

The multiplicity of organizations involved in disaster response within these regions frequently leads to overlapping initiatives and duplicated efforts in certain areas, while other communities may remain underserved. A majority cited overlaps in roles with other committees or actors (77% of UDMC and 70% of WDMC members).

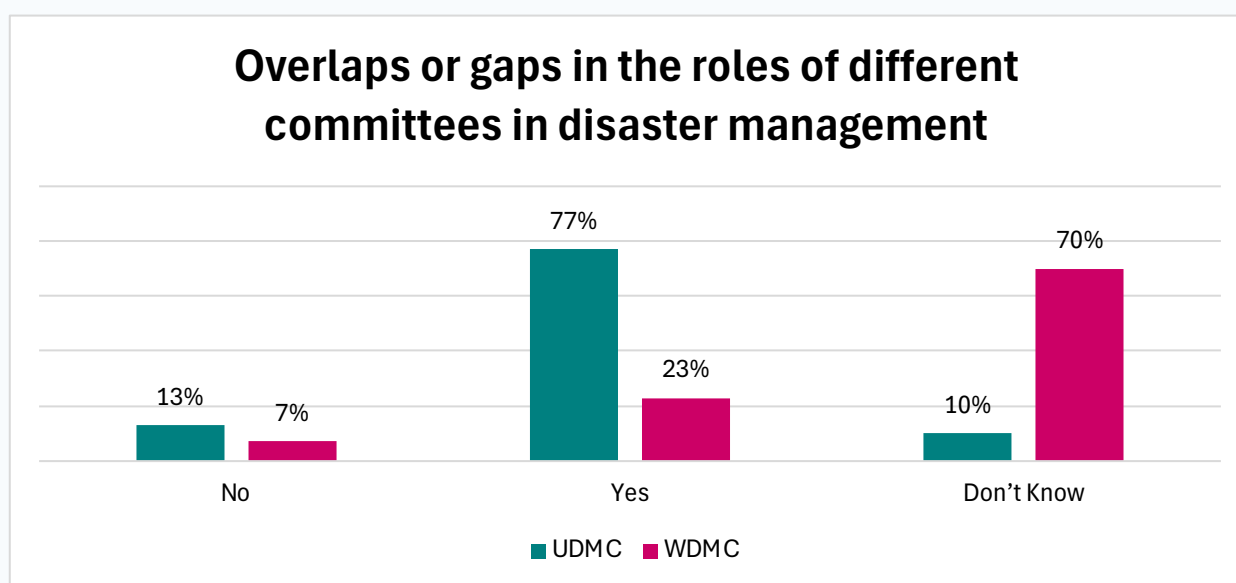


Figure 9: Overview of the overlaps or gaps in the roles of the DMCs

This misalignment not only wastes valuable resources but also creates confusion among beneficiaries who receive inconsistent aid. The lack of a centralized coordination platform means that external agencies operate in silos, unaware of each other's activities and unaware of the specific needs of different communities.

“We could have tracked disaster response organizations and individuals using a centralized information cell or coordination hub. This technology would have helped us organize and execute relief activities by showing who was doing what. Unfortunately, without this centralized mechanism, cooperation was difficult. Multiple organizations helped the same people, leaving other vulnerable people without aid. This lack of cooperation wasted resources and caused aid inequity, reducing disaster management effectiveness...”
— NGO Representative, 45 years old

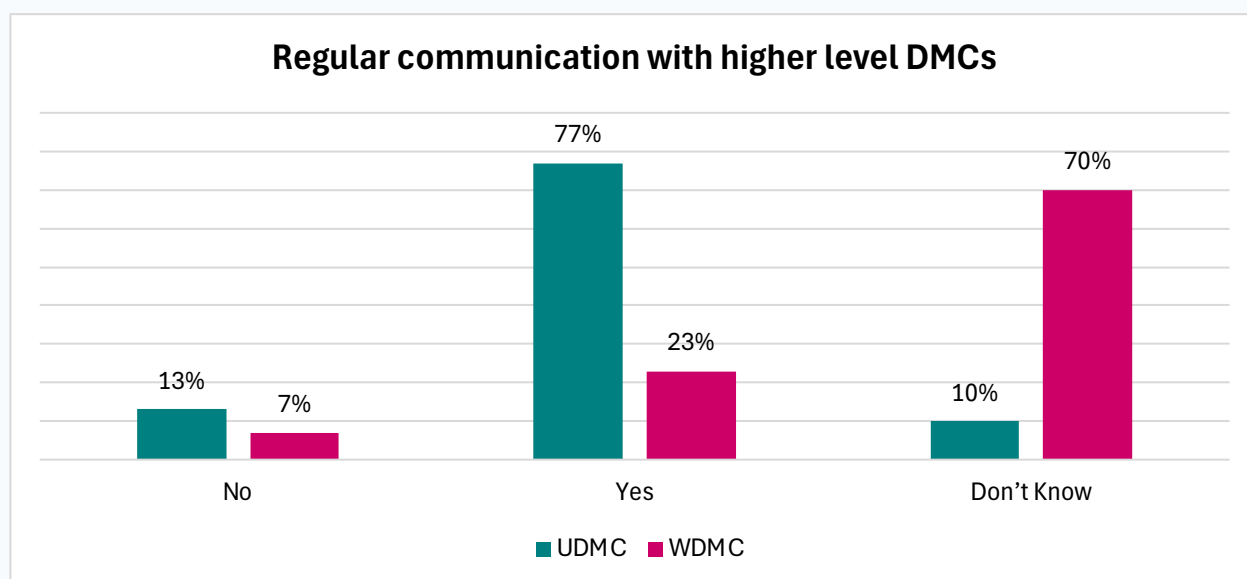


Figure 10: Status of communication with the higher level DMCs

Furthermore, coordination meetings intended to harmonize efforts often fall short in inclusivity and representation. Typically, these meetings are dominated by higher-level officials, excluding representatives from lower administrative tiers such as local unions and wards. Data reflects that while 77 percent of the surveyed UDMC members have regular communication with higher-level DMCs, only 23 percent of the WDMC members have this access. It is also very interesting to see that 70 percent of the WDMC members are unaware that they should have regular communication with higher-level DMCs. The data shows that 77 percent of the UDMC members regularly communicate with higher-level DMCs, but only 23% of the WDMC members have this same contact. Interestingly, 70 percent of the WDMC members don't know that they need to communicate regularly with higher-level DMCs.

This exclusion results in a disconnect between strategic planning and ground-level implementation, where critical information about disaster risks and response plans fails to reach those who are directly involved in executing relief operations.

Communication channels between the central disaster management bodies and local committees are frequently unclear or poorly established. This ambiguity leads to delays in the dissemination of crucial information and the allocation of resources during emergencies. As a consequence, essential supplies like food and medical aid may not reach affected populations in a timely manner, exacerbating the impact of disasters.

The diverse geographical and socio-economic landscapes of the districts—ranging from the densely populated coastal areas to the more remote inland regions—further complicate external collaboration. Each area requires specific types of support and resources, yet the current fragmented approach hampers the ability to provide tailored assistance effectively. Addressing these disparities necessitates a more integrated and strategic approach to collaboration, ensuring that all communities receive the necessary support without redundancy or omission.

3.4.3 Summary of the findings

Internal coordination within DMCs remains weak, with no clear SOPs or unified operational culture. Many members act independently, undermining collective action.

Vertical coordination between the ward, union, and higher tiers is inconsistent. A lack of awareness about required communication channels limits alignment and decision-making.

Coordination with external agencies suffers from fragmentation, with overlapping initiatives in some areas and service gaps in others. This is exacerbated by the absence of a centralized coordination mechanism and the limited participation of local-level DMCs in strategic planning forums.

The diversity of geographic risks across districts calls for localized coordination strategies—yet current mechanisms are too generic to accommodate these complexities.

Addressing these coordination challenges is crucial for building resilient and responsive committees capable of mitigating the impacts of various disaster threats across different regions.

3.5 Community Engagement and GESI Considerations

3.5.1 Context

In Bangladesh, socio-political and cultural barriers significantly hinder inclusive disaster management, disproportionately affecting women, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, children, and the elderly. Deep-rooted norms and institutional gaps often exclude these groups from planning and response processes. Despite policy commitments, inadequate representation, lack of gender-disaggregated data, and prevailing power imbalances continue to undermine effective, equitable disaster risk reduction (DRR).

The Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD 2019) 2019 and the National Plan for Disaster Management (NPDM) 2021–2025 provide frameworks to address these challenges. Aligned with global commitments like the Sendai Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), they mandate gender-balanced participation and inclusion of marginalized groups at all stages of disaster management. SOD 2019 outlines roles across national to local levels, while NPDM promotes a ‘whole-of-society’ approach, involving state and non-state actors in DRR efforts.

Key provisions include guidelines for gender-responsive shelters, collection of disaggregated data, and investments in inclusive infrastructure. The NPDM emphasizes leadership training for women, youth, and persons with disabilities, participatory simulations, and integration of indigenous knowledge into DRR planning. Both documents stress the need for public-private collaboration and continuous monitoring using GESI-sensitive indicators.

Despite this strong policy foundation, implementation gaps remain. Many shelters lack accessible facilities, and the use of data and local knowledge in planning is limited. Effective execution requires stronger institutional capacity, data systems, and inclusive governance.

The following section presents field-based findings that highlight persistent gaps between these policy commitments and the realities faced by marginalized groups during disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

3.5.2 On-Field Scenario

3.5.2.2 Gender Inclusion

Despite policy mandates under SOD 2019 for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), women's participation in disaster management remains largely symbolic. Women often hold committee positions without real decision-making power, their contributions overlooked due to entrenched social and institutional barriers. Most female respondents reported being excluded from critical discussions, reinforcing tokenism rather than meaningful inclusion.

One female participant from the Jatrapur union, Kurigram, stressed the entrenched hierarchies that silence female voices. This underrepresentation is also evident in the composition of the DMCs. This exclusion underscores the need for a more inclusive approach involving marginalized groups in all disaster preparedness and response aspects.



“Female members are part of the committee, but our opinions are not always taken seriously. Despite being included in disaster management committees, our participation often feels symbolic rather than meaningful. The men usually make the decisions, while women’s voices are sidelined or ignored in important discussions.”

In the KII with the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Kurigram, he emphasized integrating a gender perspective in disaster risk management for a holistic DRM approach. The DC acknowledged that while women's participation is higher than ever due to multi-level advocacy, their technical understanding of disaster management could be further developed to maximize their contributions.

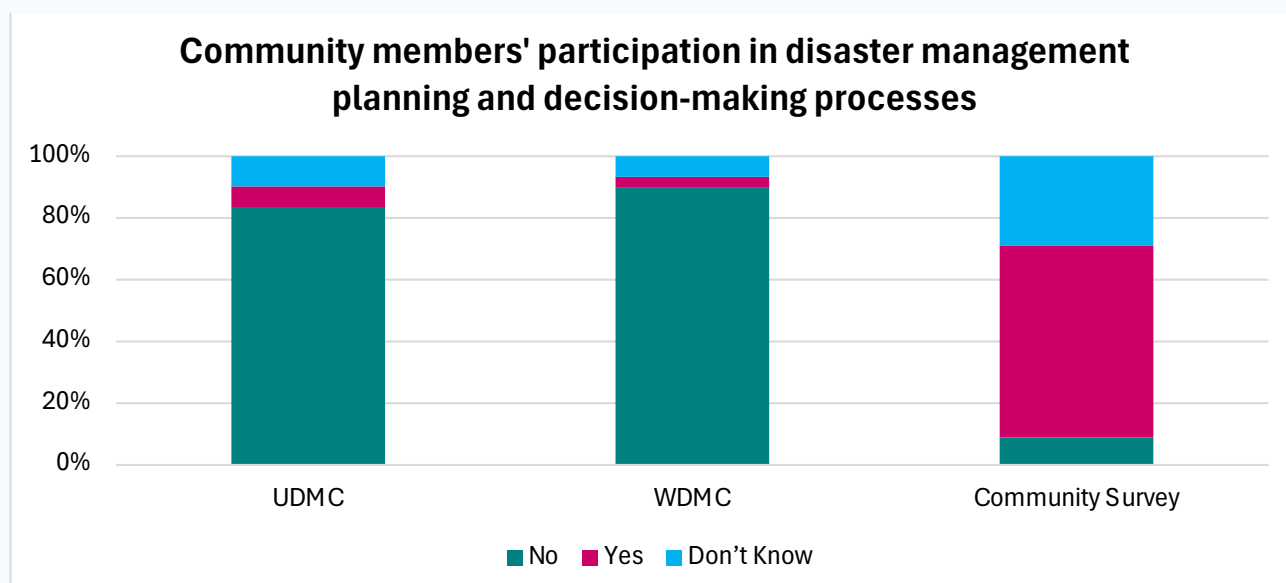


Figure 11: Community members' participation in disaster management planning and decision-making processes

The data reveals a clear disparity between community engagement and formal committee participation in disaster management. While UDMCs and WDMCs show significantly low active involvement, broader community responses indicate higher informal engagement but limited integration into formal processes. This highlights systemic exclusion and the disconnection between institutional frameworks and grassroots involvement, particularly for marginalized groups. Many noted that their opinions were rarely considered in final decisions. Even when women hold leadership positions, they often lack the authority or resources to implement decisions effectively. A FGD participant (A 33-year-old female) from Morrelganj Upazila, Bagerhat shared,

"We have women leaders, but they don't have much power to voice our needs and rights. While their presence in leadership positions is a step forward, their influence remains limited due to entrenched social and institutional barriers. Often, they are included in committees, but their opinions are overlooked or dismissed in decision-making processes. Without real authority or resources, their ability to advocate for gender-sensitive disaster management remains weak."

Underscoring how social and structural barriers prevent women from exercising meaningful influence. Social norms further perpetuate this exclusion. Their major needs remain unheard. Similar sentiments were echoed in Cox's Bazar, where restrictive social structures discourage women from participating in public activities. Female members of Palong Khali UDMC and WDMCs, while officially listed, rarely attend meetings or contribute to discussions. One UDMC FGD participant (Male, 48 years old) from Rajapalong Union, Cox's Bazar mentioned,

"Women are part of the committee, but they rarely speak, and many don't even show up due to their socio-cultural barriers and lack of knowledge sometimes. Deep-rooted gender norms often discourage women from actively participating in public decision-making spaces, limiting their engagement in disaster management. Many feel unprepared or hesitant to voice their concerns because they lack proper training and awareness about their roles. Additionally, household responsibilities and social expectations prevent them from attending meetings regularly."

Additionally, training gaps exacerbate these challenges, further limiting women's effective participation in disaster management. A national-level KII participant emphasized,

Without targeted capacity-building programs, women are left unprepared to actively contribute to disaster management processes.

"Local DMCs lack training on how to implement the SOD 2019's GESI guidelines, including WASH, safety, security, participation, decision-making, and relief support. While policies emphasize gender equality and social inclusion, their practical application remains weak due to a lack of structured training. Many committee members are unaware of how to integrate these principles into disaster preparedness and response efforts. As a result, critical needs such as gender-sensitive sanitation facilities, secure shelters, and inclusive decision-making are often overlooked."

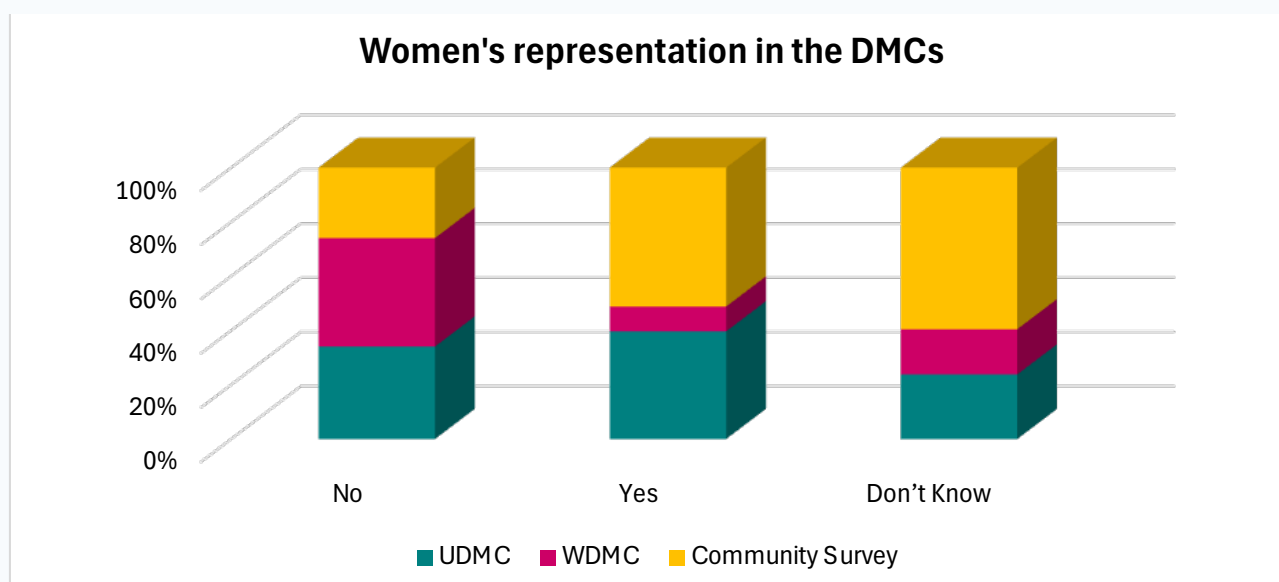


Figure 12: Women's representation in the DMCs

The graph underscores this exclusion, revealing that a significant percentage of women across UDMCs, WDMCs, and the broader community attended fewer than three disaster preparedness meetings annually. Notably, most of this participation was passive, reflecting minimal engagement in decision-making processes, further widening the gap between inclusion policies and practice.

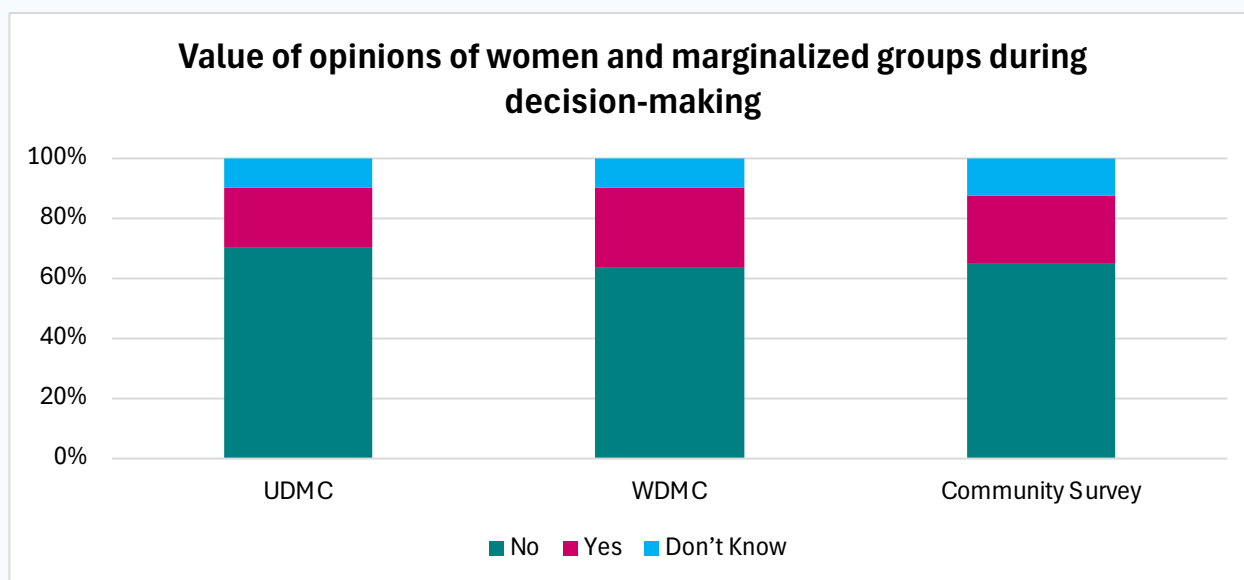


Figure 13: Value of opinions of women and marginalized groups during decision-making

The data reveals a significant disparity in how the opinions of women and marginalized groups are valued in decision-making processes. The majority of respondents from UDMCs, WDMCs, and community surveys reported that their voices are either undervalued or ignored entirely. This systemic exclusion has tangible consequences during disasters, where evacuation efforts often overlook women's specific needs. Shelters frequently fail to provide essential facilities, leaving women and marginalized groups vulnerable.

The lack of gender-sensitive sanitation facilities and secure spaces exacerbates risks of harassment and discomfort, underscoring the urgent need for inclusive and equitable disaster management practices.

3.5.2.2 Marginalized Communities

Disaster preparedness and response efforts continue to sideline marginalized communities, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, and ethnic minorities. A major focus of disaster management is considering the intersectional issue. But vulnerable communities get into a spiral of this marginalization due to inadequate social, institutional, and individual knowledge, awareness, and capacity.

Despite promises of inclusivity, tangible actions on the ground remain scarce. Also, their lack of participation is a great hindrance to successful disaster management. Such narratives demonstrate the heightened hazards encountered by individuals with disabilities in emergencies, and such incidence of sexual abuse against women with disabilities is abruptly high. These women are considered easy targets owing to their fragility and lack of protection. Many survivors do not disclose such offenses out of fear of stigma, further victimization, and a lack of accessible reporting methods. As another victim of such a heinous crime from Rayenda Union, Bagerhat District described,

“There is no specific plan for people like us. Despite being among the most vulnerable during disasters, we are often overlooked in disaster preparedness and response efforts. When disasters strike, we rely on the Almighty and hope that someone sees us as part of their society, not as a burden. Without targeted support, elderly individuals struggle to access shelters, relief, and essential services. The lack of inclusive planning leaves us dependent on informal community support rather than structured assistance. A truly effective disaster management system must recognize and address the unique needs of marginalized groups, ensuring that no one is left behind in times of crisis.” - remarked by an elderly man, Panchgachi Union, Kurigram.

This exclusion of marginalized groups from disaster preparedness and response efforts exacerbates their vulnerability and limits their access to the resources and support they need during emergencies.

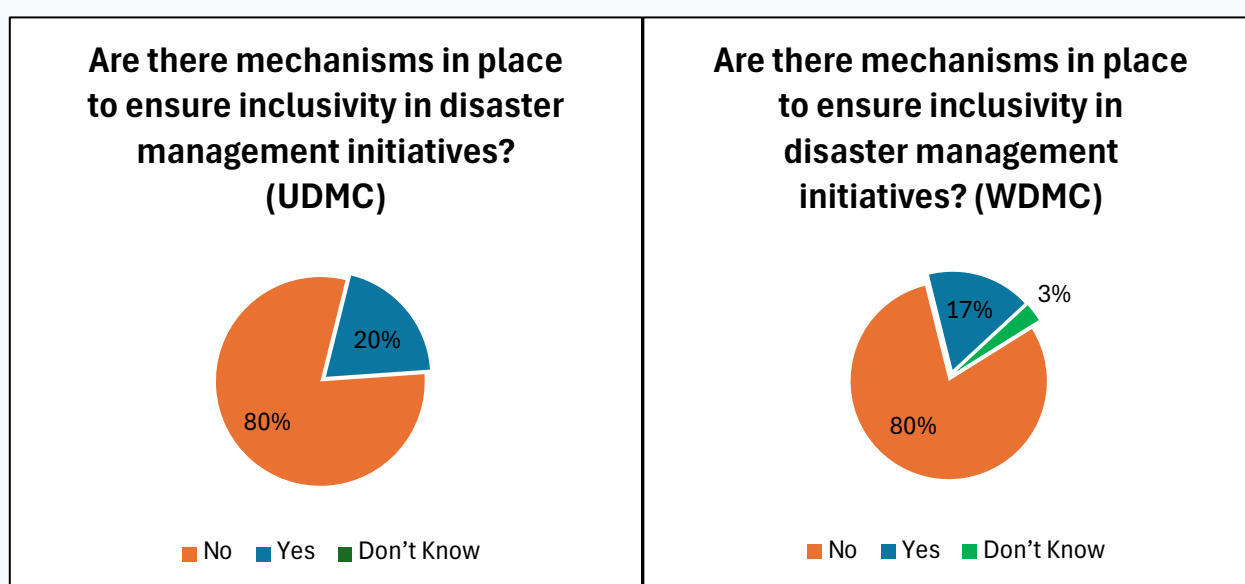


Figure 14: Inclusiveness at a glance

The data highlights a severe lack of inclusive mechanisms in disaster management committees, with 80% of respondents in both UDMCs and WDMCs reporting the absence of such measures. This aligns with the exclusion of persons with disabilities, as less than 25% of shelters provide ramps or wheelchair-friendly spaces, and early warning systems fail to offer accessible communication methods, leaving persons with hearing- and visual disabilities unaware of risks. Shelters, often seen as safe havens, exacerbate inequalities, with many in Kurigram, Bagerhat, and Cox's Bazar lacking ramps, accessible toilets, and designated areas for persons with disabilities, further exposing these groups to disproportionate disaster risks. This limited presence of women is reflective of broader structural gaps in inclusivity. The absence of gender-sensitive practices and meaningful female participation contributes to the committees' inability to adequately address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women and other marginalized groups during disaster preparedness and response. The lack of inclusive mechanisms is therefore both a cause and consequence of underrepresentation—without policies or mandates to ensure gender balance and inclusive participation, DMCs tend to overlook diverse voices, which further perpetuates exclusion.



“I was assaulted by a relative during the flood when everyone stayed in our home, but I couldn’t inform anyone. In times of disaster, when overcrowding and chaos increase vulnerabilities, people with disabilities face heightened risks of abuse and exploitation. They would just claim it’s my fault since I’m a person with a disability, reflecting the deep-seated stigma and lack of protection for marginalized individuals. The fear of blame, disbelief, and further victimization often silences survivors, preventing them from seeking justice or support”.

Relief distribution mechanisms marginalize vulnerable populations, often driven by political interference and poor coordination. A FGD participant in a community of Bagerhat observed,



“Aid always goes to the same people—those with connections. Despite the urgent needs of the most vulnerable, disaster relief is often distributed unfairly due to political influence and favoritism. Those with social or political ties receive priority assistance, while marginalized groups, including the ultra-poor, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities, are frequently overlooked.”

A community member in Cox’s Bazar added,



“Some places (communities) receive more help than they need, while others get nothing. The unequal distribution of aid leaves many vulnerable communities without essential resources during disasters. While some areas benefit from excess support due to political influence or better accessibility, others—often the most marginalized—struggle to survive with little to no assistance.”

This imbalance is further evidenced by delays and inequities in distribution, disproportionately affecting lower castes, ethnic minorities, and the ultra-poor, who are frequently overlooked despite being among the most vulnerable.

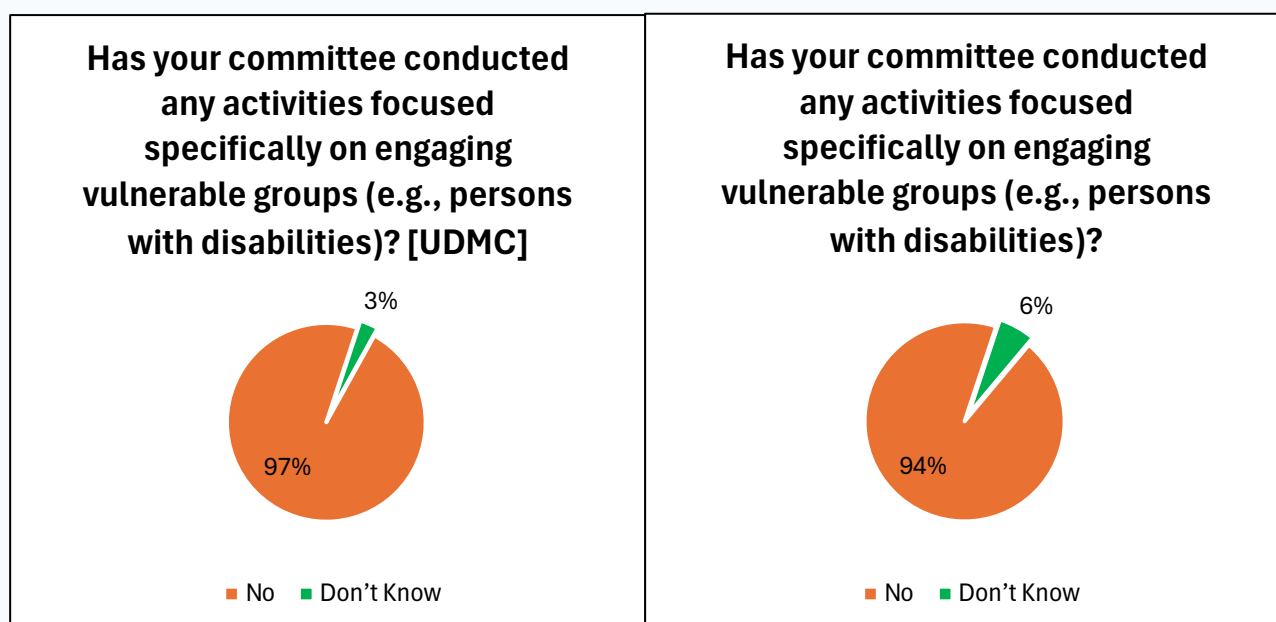


Figure 15: Vulnerable Groups' participation in DRM activities

Significantly, the data reveals a critical shortfall in addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, particularly persons with disabilities, in disaster management efforts. A staggering 97% of UDMCs and 94% of WDMCs reported no activities explicitly focusing on these groups, underscoring a systemic disregard for inclusivity in disaster preparedness. This lack of targeted initiatives suggests an entrenched gap between policy intent and on-ground execution, leaving persons with disabilities disproportionately exposed to disaster risks. Furthermore, the “Don’t Know” responses, though minimal, highlight a lack of awareness or engagement within committees, reinforcing the need for capacity-building and clearer accountability mechanisms. These findings point to an urgent need for structural reforms to ensure disaster management frameworks are genuinely inclusive and responsive. Last-minute evacuations fail to address the specific needs of marginalized groups, leaving them reliant on informal community support rather than structured assistance.

Disaster management relies on effective cooperation and collaboration among stakeholders to address the diverse needs of communities. Yet, critical gaps in communication, data-sharing, and coordination continue to hinder meaningful support for vulnerable groups. As a participant (Female, 41 years old) from KII Municipality in Cox’s Bazar, explained,

“We are the first responders; we prioritize women, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and children. Our role is crucial in ensuring that the most vulnerable receive immediate assistance during disasters. However, without coordination with local Disaster Management Committees (DMCs), our response remains limited. The lack of structured communication and collaboration often leads to inefficiencies, delays, and gaps in service delivery.”

This stresses how fragmented efforts can undermine even well-intentioned priorities. However, communication failures further deepen the isolation of marginalized communities. Early warning systems heavily rely on miking, excluding individuals with hearing disabilities, while bureaucratic barriers often leave landless individuals and those in informal settlements outside the scope of disaster planning. Although policies like SOD 2019 and NPDM 2021–2025 emphasize inclusion, their implementation at the community level remains fragmented.

Underscoring the disconnection between policy commitments and ground realities. These gaps in execution leave the most vulnerable populations inadequately supported during disasters, reinforcing cycles of marginalization and inequity.

Women in the Bagerhat region face significant hardships related to water scarcity and security, particularly those living near the beribadh (embankment), which serves as both a protective structure and a temporary refuge during disasters.



“Living near the beribadh is unsafe, especially at night. The absence of proper lighting makes the area dangerous, increasing the risk of theft and harassment. The embankment serves as a temporary shelter for many families after floods, yet it lacks even basic security measures. Women and girls, in particular, feel vulnerable due to the lack of protection and surveillance. Without designated safe spaces, secure infrastructure, and law enforcement presence, these risks persist. Disaster response must prioritize not just shelter but also the safety and dignity of displaced individuals, ensuring that no one is forced to endure fear and insecurity during crises.”

3.5.3 Summary of the findings

The findings shed light on a persistent gap between policy frameworks and their on-ground implementation, revealing systemic exclusion of women and marginalized communities in disaster management. Despite the progressive provisions outlined in the SOD 2019 and NPDM 2021–2025, these guidelines often fail to translate into meaningful action at the grassroots level. Women’s participation in disaster management committees remains superficial. While their representation has increased on paper, their involvement in decision-making is minimal. Social norms and a lack of training further undermine their ability to contribute effectively. Evacuation efforts and shelter facilities fail to address the marginalized groups’ specific needs, leaving them vulnerable during crises. Graphs 1–3 underscore these disparities, illustrating limited engagement, inadequate representation, and a lack of gender-sensitive infrastructure. Likewise, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and ethnic minorities are largely invisible in disaster planning and response. Shelters lack accessible infrastructure, and early warning systems exclude those with disabilities. Graphs 4 and 5 highlight significant gaps in participation, accessibility, and equity, with relief distribution often favoring politically connected individuals over those most in need.

Furthermore, poor coordination between NGOs, government agencies, and local DMCs hampers disaster response efforts. Communication failures further isolate marginalized groups, leaving them unprepared and unsupported during disasters. Policies like the SOD 2019 and NPDM remain largely theoretical, with local actors often unaware of their provisions. Moreover, the findings emphasize the need for institutional reforms, targeted training, and inclusive infrastructure to bridge the gap between policy and practice. Without these changes, the cycle of exclusion and vulnerability will persist, disproportionately affecting marginalized populations in disaster-prone regions. Despite obstacles such as profoundly ingrained unequal gender norms and a paucity of gender-disaggregated data, transformative change opportunities abound. Incorporating gender-responsive policies into the DRR framework can facilitate the development of measures tailored to the requirements of distinct communities. Empowerment and capacity-building initiatives can stimulate the participation of women and marginalised categories in disaster preparation and decision-making. Data disaggregated by gender can shed light on nuanced vulnerabilities, thereby steering precise interventions. Together with advocacy efforts, engaging with communities can cultivate a shared understanding of the role of gender and intersectionality in disaster outcomes.



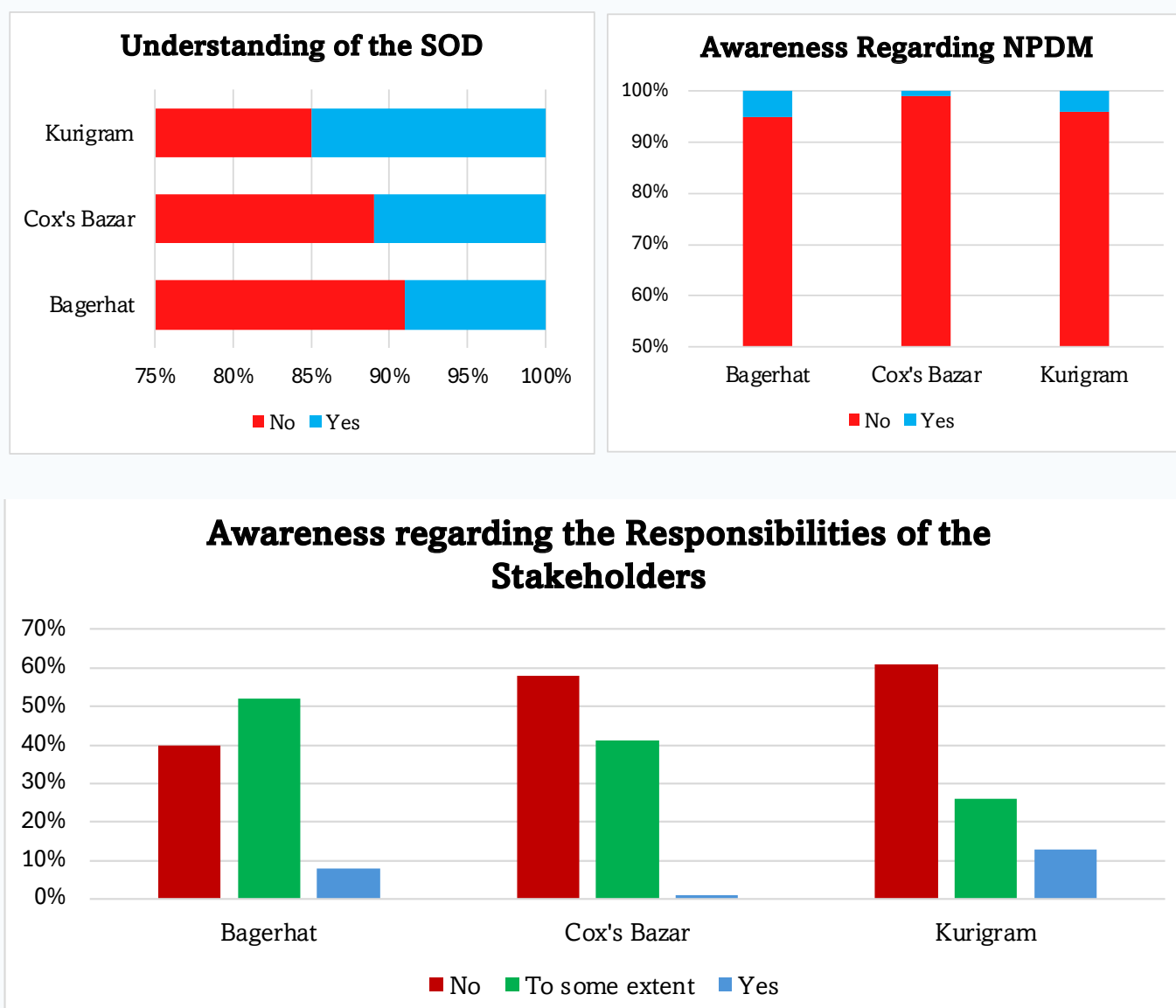
4. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ACROSS THREE DISTRICTS

This section deepens the findings by exploring how key disaster risk management parameters vary across Kurigram, Bagerhat, and Cox's Bazar. While overarching themes have highlighted gaps between inclusive policy commitments and ground realities, this district-level analysis reveals how these disparities manifest in practice.

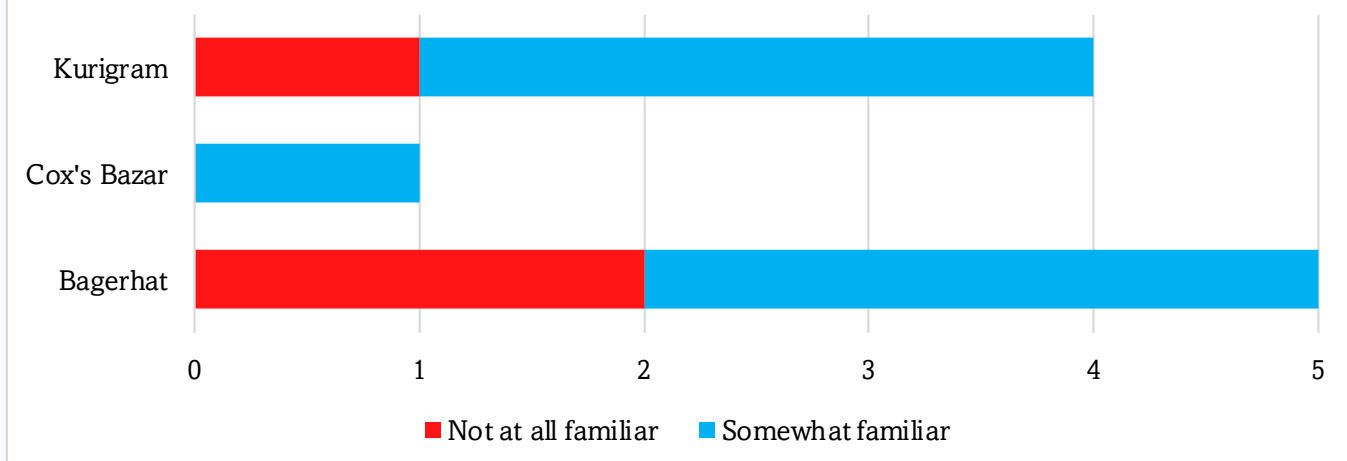
4.1 Awareness and Understanding of the SOD 2019 & NPDM

The overall awareness of the Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD 2019) varies notably across districts. Kurigram participants demonstrated relatively better understanding of the SOD 2019 compared to Cox's Bazar and Bagerhat. However, knowledge of the roles and responsibilities laid out in the SOD 2019 was stronger among respondents in Bagerhat.

In contrast, awareness of the National Plan for Disaster Management (NPDM 2021–2025) was extremely low across all three districts. Over 90% of participants, especially in Cox's Bazar, had never heard of it. Even among those who had, familiarity with its objectives was minimal.



Familiarity with the Key Objectives of NPDM

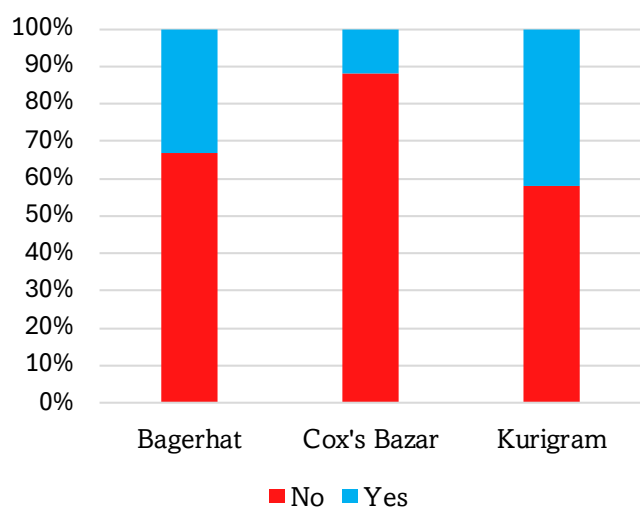


4.2 Functionality of Disaster Management Committees (DMCs)

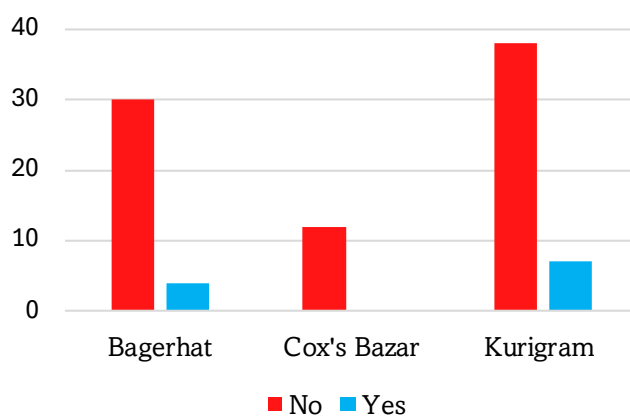
DMCs exist across all three districts, but their functionality is uneven. In Kurigram, DMCs are largely inactive with irregular meetings, while in Bagerhat, committee operations are sporadic and inconsistent. Cox's Bazar showed more structured DMCs, but political influence and unequal resource allocation hindered performance.

Respondents across all districts showed low awareness of disaster preparedness and response plans. Many were unaware of whether their DMCs played an active role during any phase of a disaster.

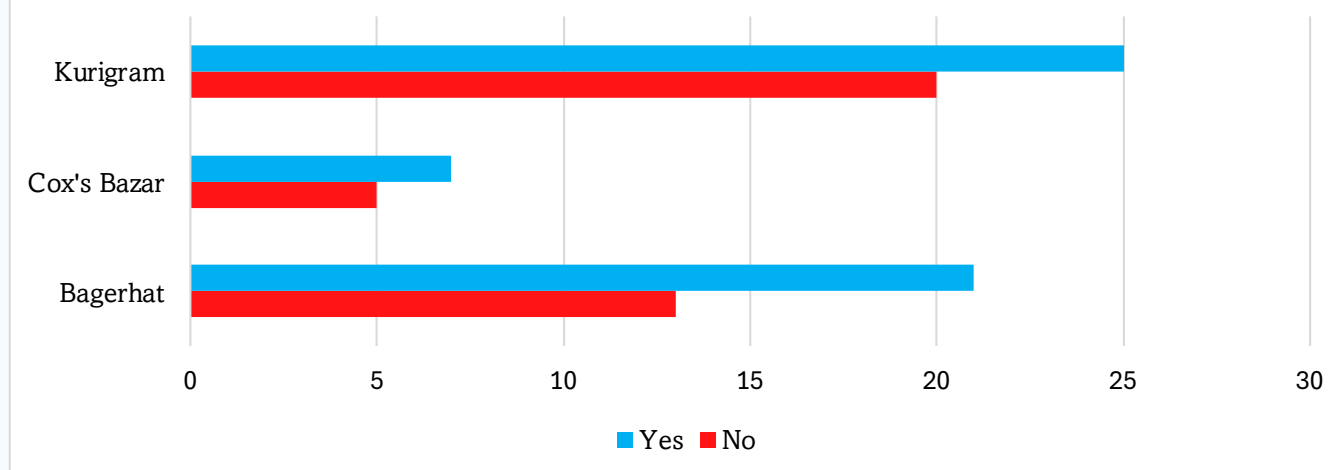
Awareness Regarding DMCs



Awareness on the Disaster Preparedness and Response Plans developed by DMCs



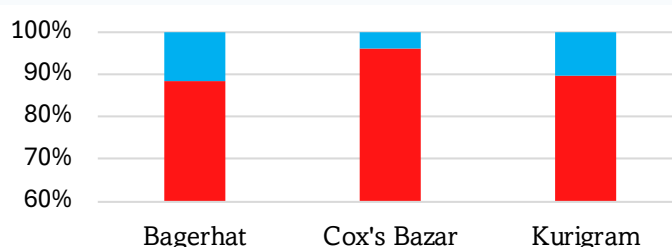
Do the DMCs play an Active Role During Different Phases of Disasters?



Another grim picture emerged as nearly 90% of the participants of the survey in all the districts said that they hadn't participated in any meetings concerning CCA or DRR as of yet. Especially, in Cox's Bazar, more than 95% said they were never invited to such meetings in their lives.

Participation in Meetings Concerning CCA/DRR

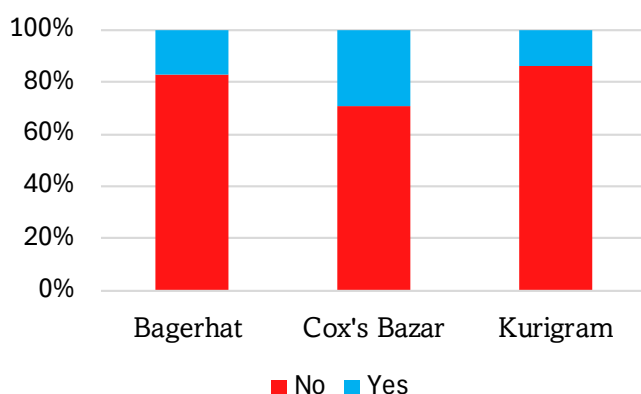
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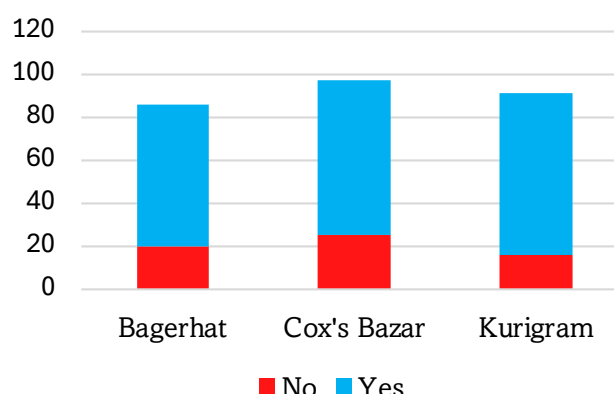
4.3 Training and Capacity Building

While participants were asked whether they had received any training on CCA or DRR, around 80% across the selected districts reported that they had not received any such training. Despite this gap, the majority of those without prior training expressed strong interest in participating in future capacity-building initiatives. This highlights a clear opportunity for targeted training programs to enhance local disaster preparedness and inclusive response.

Received Training on DRR/CCA



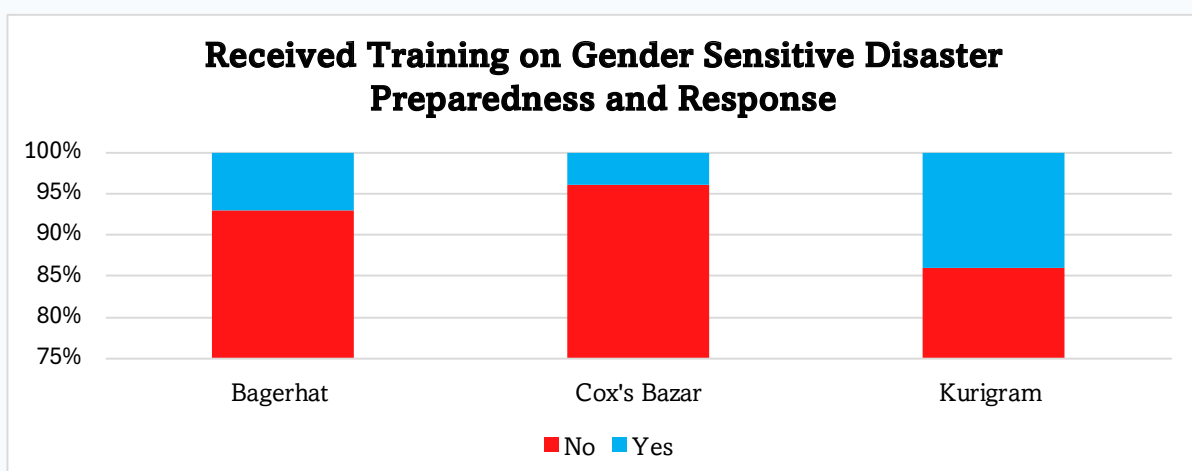
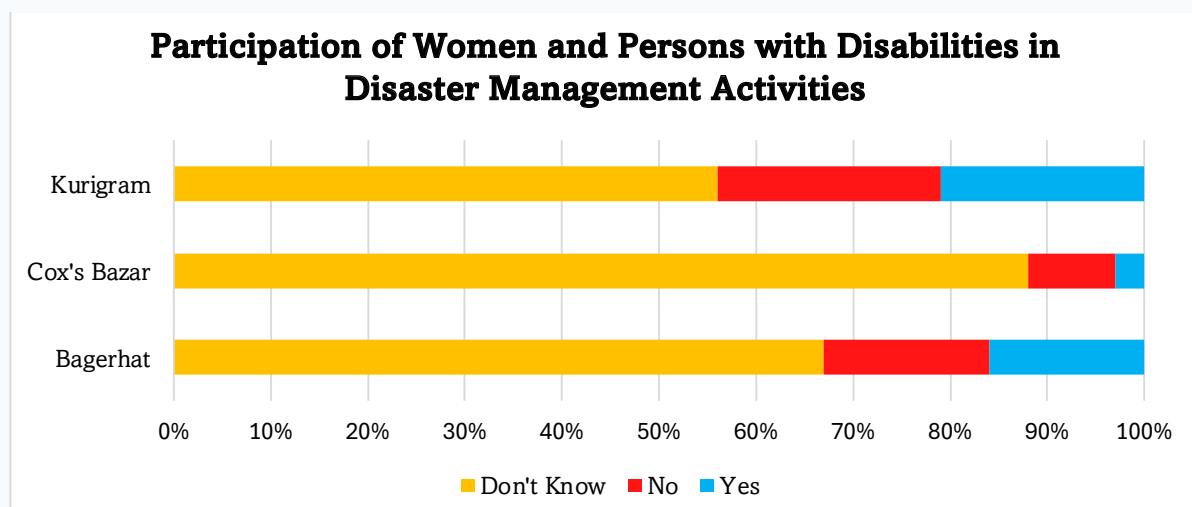
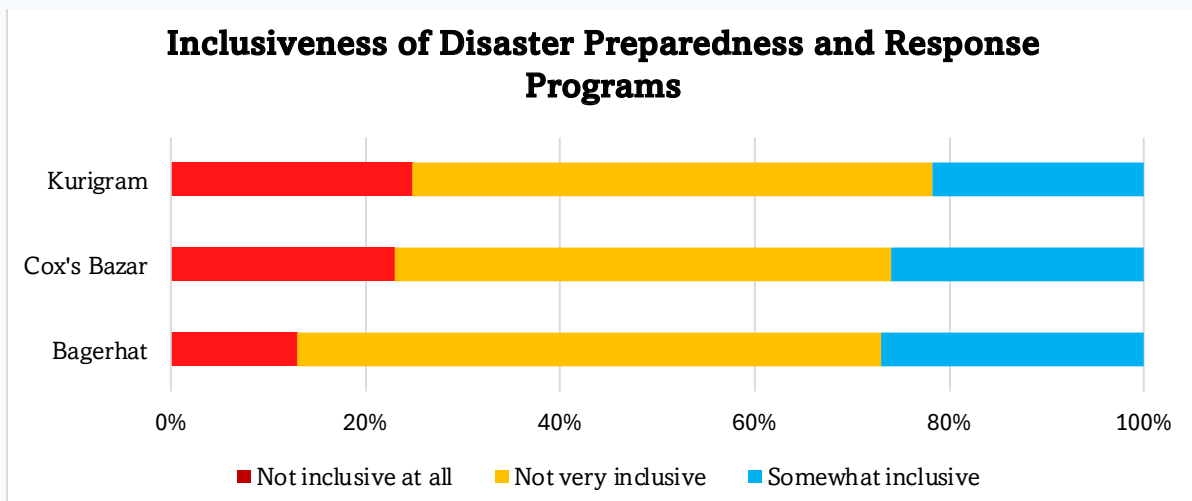
Interested in Receiving Training in DRR/CCA



4.4 Gender and Inclusion in Practice

Participation of women and persons with disabilities (PWDs) in disaster management remains symbolic rather than substantive. Across all three districts, most respondents noted limited or no inclusion of these groups in disaster preparedness and response programs. The lack of gender-sensitive shelters and decision-making opportunities further underscores systemic exclusion.

Training on gender-sensitive disaster preparedness and response is limited. Over 80% of respondents across all districts reported not having received any such training. Cox's Bazar had the highest proportion of untrained participants.





5. ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the findings from the baseline study, across Kurigram, Bagerhat, and Cox's Bazar, this chapter outlines six strategic recommendations to strengthen disaster preparedness and resilience. These actions target key challenges in disaster governance, inclusion, coordination, and community capacity. These are based on findings from community consultations and KIIs at national and sub-national levels

Each recommendation includes localized, practical steps tailored to regional hazards—floods in Kurigram, cyclones in Bagerhat, and landslides and displacement in Cox's Bazar.

The measures emphasize:

-  Simplifying and localizing the SOD 2019 and NPDM
-  Activating and resourcing Disaster Management Committees (DMCs)
-  Institutionalizing the inclusion of women, persons with disabilities, and marginalized groups
-  Strengthening early warning and coordination through technology
-  Expanding inclusive disaster shelters and recovery mechanisms
-  Promoting community ownership through capacity-building and performance incentives

Together, these recommendations aim to translate policy into practice, reduce systemic exclusion, and build long-term resilience for at-risk communities.

5.1 Clarify Roles and Responsibilities of DMCs & Volunteers

A key challenge identified across all three districts is the widespread confusion and lack of clarity around the roles and responsibilities of Disaster Management Committees (DMCs) and local volunteers. While committees exist on paper, many are inactive or only partially functional, and community volunteers often remain underutilized due to vague mandates and minimal coordination.

To address this, the SOD 2019 and NPDM should be reviewed and simplified into actionable formats that reflect the realities and hazards of each district—such as floods in Kurigram, cyclones in Bagerhat, and landslides or displacement in Cox's Bazar. Localized response manuals should be developed in collaboration with key partners to guide committee members and volunteers through context-specific procedures.

Capacity-building efforts should include regular refresher trainings, practical drills, and workshops to familiarize teams with their roles during different disaster phases. Additionally, assigning clear tasks based on individuals' local knowledge and skills can improve efficiency and ownership. To reinforce accountability and motivation, a simple performance tracking system should be introduced, alongside public recognition and incentives for high-performing members.

5.2 Establish Resource Allocation Protocols and Strengthen Disaster Preparedness

Disaster-prone districts like Kurigram, Bagerhat, and Cox's Bazar lack timely access to essential resources during emergencies due to poor pre-positioning, fragmented data, and weak monitoring systems. This delays response and disproportionately affects marginalized populations in remote areas.

To address this, resource allocation and preparedness must be strengthened through a combination of planning, infrastructure, and digital innovation. Annual district-level vulnerability mapping and data consolidation should guide the strategic placement of community stockpile centers equipped with emergency items. Protocols must ensure these stockpiles are equitably accessible to vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities and remote communities.

A mobile-based inventory system should be introduced to track resource availability in real-time, helping local DMCs to update stock levels and enable faster mobilization during disasters. Pre-emptive district-level contingency funds, allocated based on vulnerability indices, will ensure rapid disbursement of resources post-disaster. Finally, quarterly audits of stockpile centers will ensure proper replenishment, accountability, and continuous operational readiness.

5.3 Strengthen Monitoring, Accountability, and Feedback Mechanisms

Disaster response efforts often suffer from weak oversight, limited community input, and a lack of real-time data to guide resource allocation.

To close these accountability and transparency gaps, this recommendation proposes the creation of dedicated District Monitoring Units (DMUs), composed of trained DDM staff, NGOs, and community representatives. These units will oversee preparedness activities, monitor aid distribution, and evaluate response efforts at the district and union levels.

In parallel, a mobile-friendly disaster reporting platform should be developed to enable DMCs, volunteers, and affected populations to log real-time updates on unmet needs, aid delivery, and service gaps. A publicly accessible dashboard will visualize this data, fostering transparency and responsiveness.

To ensure feedback loops are inclusive, biannual town-hall meetings should be organized by Union Parishads, where community members, including women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups, can review DMC performance, raise grievances, and propose improvements. Finally, performance-based incentives should reward DMCs, Union Parishads, and volunteers who demonstrate accountability and responsiveness. These may include recognition awards, additional funding, or small tokens such as mobile data credits for active reporting volunteers.

5.4 Institutionalize Women, Persons with Disabilities and Marginalized Groups in Disaster Planning

Despite formal mandates for inclusion, the participation of women, persons with disabilities, and marginalized groups in disaster management remains largely symbolic. They are often present in Disaster Management Committees (DMCs), but lack voice, leadership roles, and the ability to influence decisions.

This recommendation focuses on transforming tokenistic representation into meaningful engagement. First, the SOD 2019 guidelines should be revised to mandate not only numeric representation but also define how underrepresented groups can contribute to decision-making, planning, and accountability processes.

To operationalize this, specialized disaster preparedness plans must be developed with NGOs to address the needs of persons with disabilities, ensuring accessible infrastructure, evacuation routes, and trained support staff. Leadership training programs organized by Union Parishads can further equip women and persons with disabilities to engage confidently in planning and response roles.

Finally, to support safe and dignified access to emergency shelters, investments should be made in upgrading infrastructure in marginalized areas. This includes the addition of wide ramps, handrails, and accessible toilets, along with regular monitoring to maintain standards. By embedding inclusive design and leadership development in disaster planning, this recommendation fosters equity and strengthens community resilience from the ground up.

5.5 Enhance Vertical and Horizontal Coordination Among NGOs, INGOs, and DMCs

This recommendation addresses the fragmented coordination among NGOs, INGOs, DMCs, and government agencies, which hampers efficient disaster preparedness and response. To improve alignment, communication, and shared responsibility across levels, a comprehensive coordination protocol should be developed to define clear roles, sectoral responsibilities, and communication pathways for all stakeholders during preparedness, response, and recovery.

The protocol should be supported by an integrated aid tracking platform that maps resources in real time, prevents duplication, and informs joint decision-making. Regular pre-disaster meetings should be institutionalized to review response plans, assign roles, and foster collaboration. At the operational level, shared resource hubs should be established and managed jointly by NGOs and DDM, while emergency response cells at district levels should enable live updates and fast, coordinated action. These actions will ensure a timely, unified, and accountable response system during crises.

5.6 Upgrading and Maintaining Disaster Shelters with Inclusive Facilities

Many disaster shelters remain structurally weak, poorly maintained, and inaccessible to marginalized populations, limiting their ability to serve as safe havens during emergencies.

To address this gap, the recommendation calls for a nationwide audit of shelter infrastructure to assess accessibility, safety, and capacity, particularly for women, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and pet or livestock owners. Structural improvements should prioritize inclusive features, such as ramps and accessible toilets, while also considering livestock space and emergency exits.

Shelters must also be equipped for energy independence through the installation of solar panels, battery systems, and backup generators to ensure uninterrupted operation during power outages. To reinforce long-term functionality, Union Parishads should establish inclusive shelter management committees responsible for maintenance, resource stockpiling, and community coordination. These committees should organize regular drills and upkeep activities, simulating emergency scenarios for all segments of the population.

Finally, to incentivize effective shelter management, well-performing committees may receive additional funding or public recognition. This comprehensive approach ensures shelters are not only structurally sound but also socially inclusive and operationally ready to protect the most vulnerable in times of crisis.

To enhance the effectiveness and accountability of disaster risk management (DRM) in Bangladesh, several key reforms must be implemented within the framework of the Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD 2019) 2019. Aligning SOD 2019 with the Disaster Management Act 2012 will ensure consistency in definitions, mandates, and committee structures, reducing redundancy and improving coordination. National committees should incorporate key non-governmental stakeholders, including the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, humanitarian agencies, private sector representatives, and scientific institutions, to foster a more inclusive and expertise-driven approach. The rationalization of disaster management committees by eliminating duplication within the same jurisdiction and reducing committee sizes will enhance efficiency and decision-making capacity. Additionally, a clear definition of minimum standards for disaster assistance should be incorporated to ensure accountability and uniformity across governmental and non-governmental actors.

To improve transparency and oversight, the introduction of public reporting and parliamentary supervision mechanisms for government agencies involved in DRM is essential. Establishing a legal framework for international risk financing mechanisms will strengthen financial resilience, enabling Bangladesh to access global funding for disaster preparedness and response. Furthermore, developing guidelines for plan implementation, monitoring, and evaluation within SOD 2019 will institutionalize performance tracking and accountability measures. Open-source data exchange systems should be introduced to facilitate real-time inter-agency collaboration, while hazard-specific Early Warning Systems (EWS) must be strengthened for better preparedness and community-level response.

Additionally, to support humanitarian operations, exemptions from VAT, income tax, corporate tax, and other levies for organizations and personnel providing humanitarian assistance should be incorporated into the legal taxation framework. Finally, to foster a culture of disaster preparedness from an early age, mandatory DRM training should be integrated into school curricula, ensuring that future generations are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to mitigate disaster risks and enhance community resilience.



6. CONCLUSIONS

The baseline study across Kurigram, Bagerhat, and Cox's Bazar highlights critical gaps in disaster preparedness, coordination, and response mechanisms. The findings reveal structural weaknesses in Disaster Management Committees, where poor coordination between Union and Ward-level committees results in delays and inefficiencies. The lack of institutional capacity and governance challenges further weakens disaster response, with frequent leadership turnover, inadequate training, and weak enforcement of disaster policies leading to inconsistent implementation.

Community engagement and awareness remain limited, with most disaster preparedness efforts being top-down and lacking local participation. The exclusion of volunteers from structured training and response planning limits their effectiveness, while marginalized groups—especially women, persons with disabilities, and the elderly—face systemic barriers to inclusion. Despite policy mandates, their representation in DMCs is inadequate, and disaster preparedness measures fail to address their specific needs, exacerbating vulnerabilities during emergencies.

The study also identifies resource allocation and infrastructure deficiencies, with emergency shelters often lacking basic facilities such as separate sanitation for women and accessibility features for persons with disabilities. Delays in aid distribution due to bureaucratic inefficiencies further impact the effectiveness of disaster response. Additionally, multi-sectoral coordination remains fragmented, with overlapping initiatives in some areas and inadequate support in others. The absence of a centralized aid tracking system and weak public-private partnerships hinder efficient disaster management and resource utilization.

Addressing these challenges requires a systematic and evidence-based approach. Strengthening DMC structures, ensuring continuous capacity building, and enhancing inter-agency coordination are essential for improving disaster resilience. Inclusive disaster planning, resource pre-positioning, and infrastructure upgrades must be prioritized to ensure that vulnerable populations are adequately supported. A shift from reactive disaster response to proactive risk reduction, driven by community participation and institutional accountability, is imperative to building long-term resilience in disaster-prone regions.



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Appendix 1: Study Locations

Three districts from different parts of the country were selected as part of the study design because they exhibit distinct forms of vulnerability and are particularly susceptible to adverse circumstances. Bagerhat was chosen as one of the most cyclone-prone districts in the coastal region of the country. Earlier, Cyclone Sidr caused substantial damage in the area. On the other hand, Kurigram is one of the most susceptible districts to flooding, experiencing both regular and flash floods that cause great damage and suffering to its population with growing frequency and severity. Cox's Bazar was selected due to its high occurrence of landslides. The district experienced major damage as a result of the flash flood in 2022 as well.

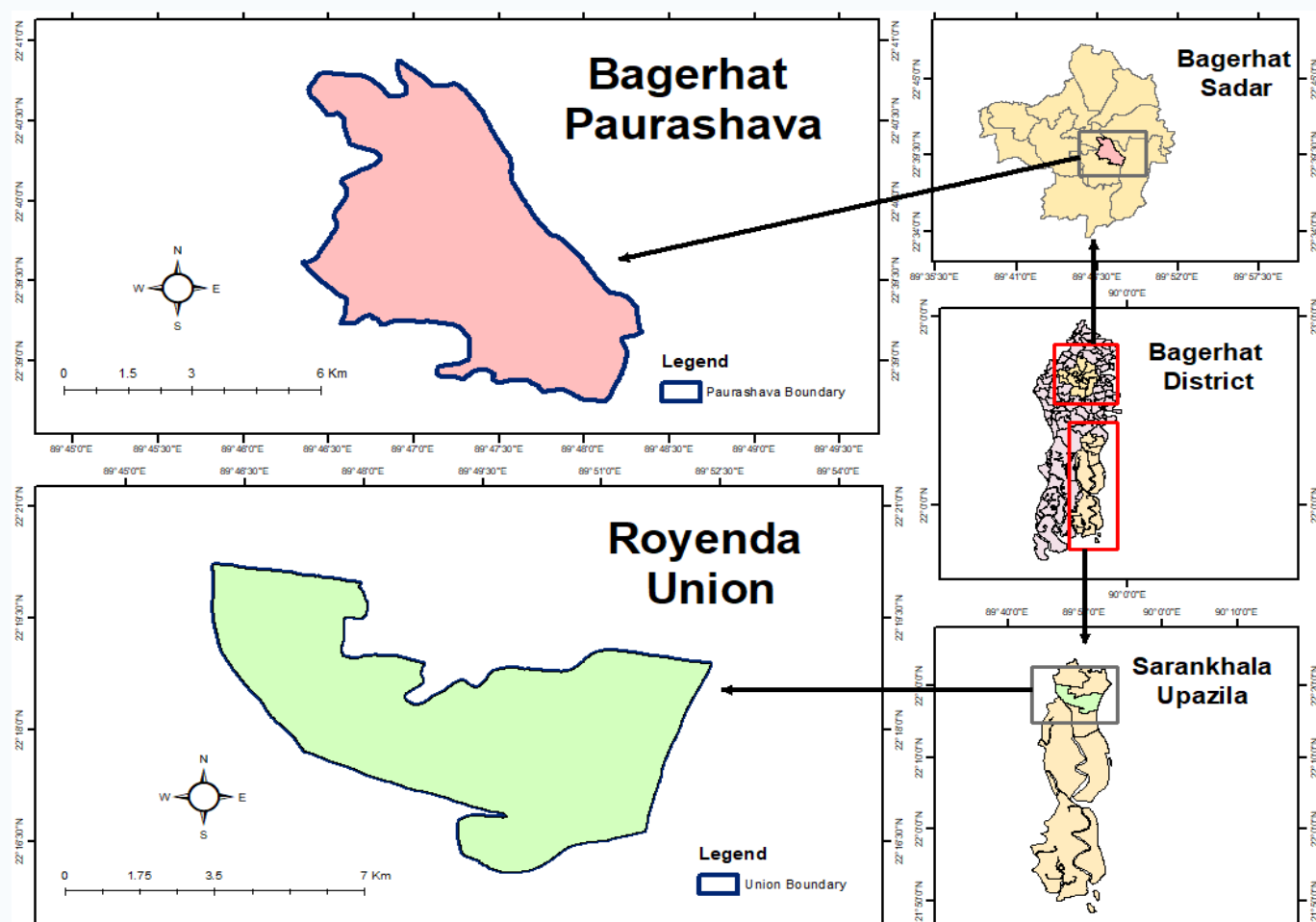


Figure 16: Study locations in Bagerhat District

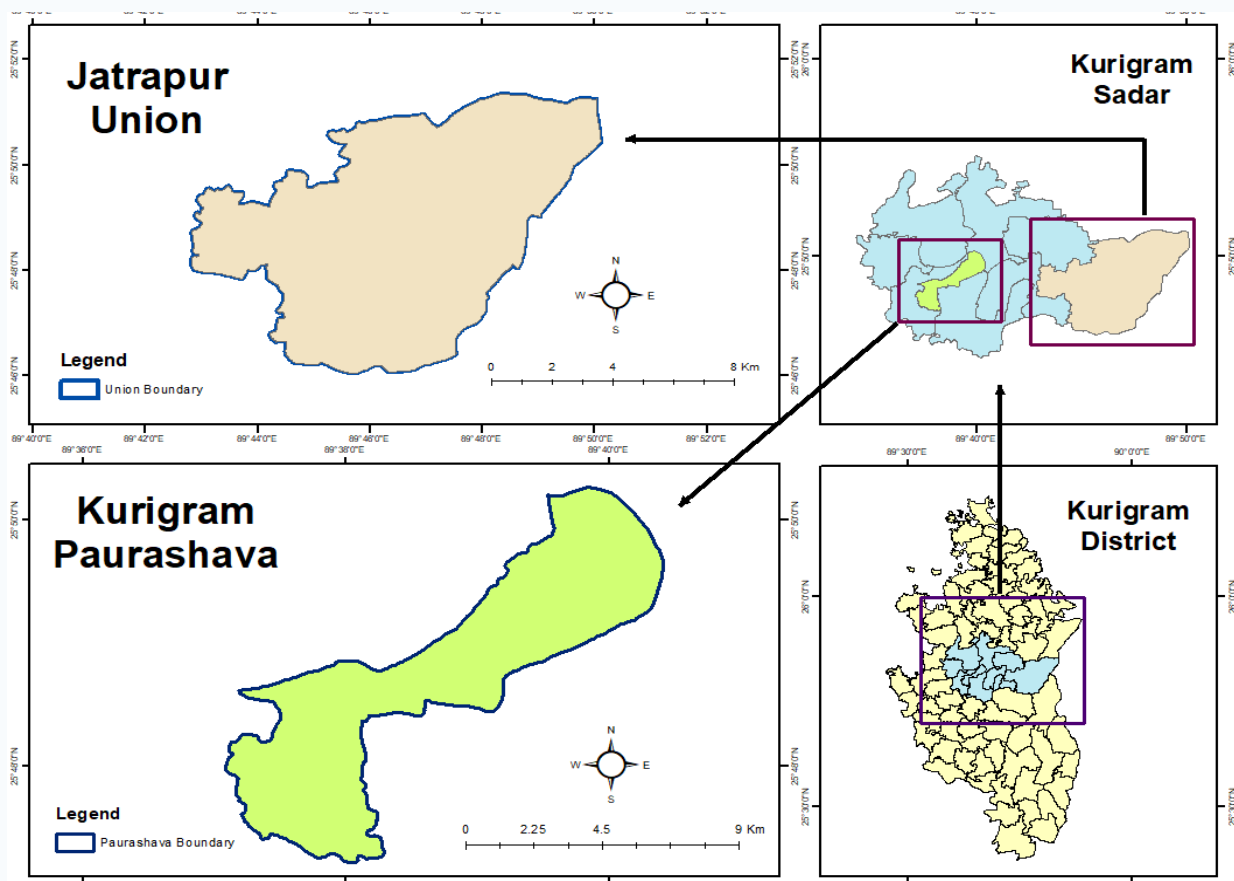


Figure 17: Study locations in Kurigram District

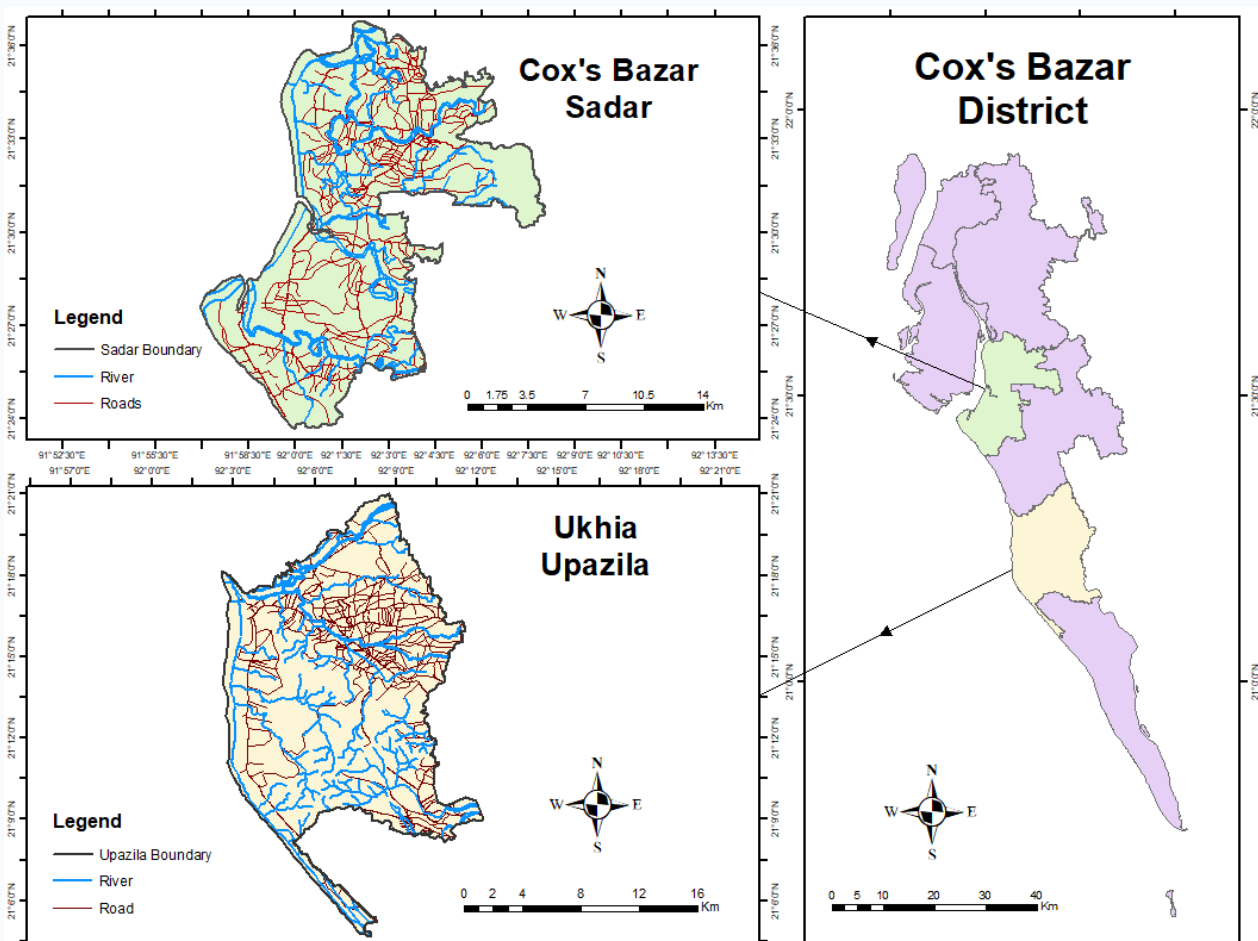


Figure 18: Study locations in Cox's Bazar District

Appendix 2: Methodology and Sampling Frame

Quantitative Sample

A sample size of 300 was determined as standard practice to ensure statistical significance for a large population size, the study aimed to maintain and target to capture at least a sample size of 320 individuals from 3 districts. The Table 1 provides a location wise sample size distribution for all the districts.

Table 1: Quantitative sample size

District	Union/Municipality	Sample Size	Total
Bagerhat	Bagerhat Paurashava	55	110
	Rayenda Union	55	
Kurigram	Kurigram Paurashava	55	110
	Jatrapur Union	55	
Cox's Bazar	Cox's Bazar Municipality	50	100
	Ukhia Upazila	50	
Total			320

Qualitative Sampling

A qualitative sampling size is illustrated in the following table which was followed for each district. The tools included Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group Discussion and the collection of success/failure stories from the field location. The Key Informants were purposively selected based on their relevance to the study objectives and their in-depth knowledge and experience in disaster management and community resilience. Selection criteria included their professional role, decision-making authority, involvement in local disaster preparedness and response efforts, and familiarity with the functioning of Disaster Management Committees (DMCs) at various levels. This ensured that the insights gathered were both contextually grounded and reflective of institutional perspectives.

Table 2: Qualitative sample size for each district

Tool	Participant	Quantity
KII	DC	1
	UNO	1
	DRRO	1
	PIO	1
	Upazila Chairman	1
	Mayor of the Municipality	1
	Representative of national & international NGOs	2
	Representative of OPD	2
	Union Chairman	1
	Ward member	1
	Representatives from Local Universities (03 districts)	6
FDG	Affected/ At-risk Population	2
	CPP/BDRCS/BFSCD	1
	WDMC (paurashava/union)	1
	UDMC	1

Data Analyses

Qualitative data collected from the field were analyzed using thematic analysis, which enabled the identification of recurring patterns, key insights, and contextual nuances. A total of five core themes were generated, and the findings section is primarily structured around these themes to reflect the depth and diversity of stakeholder experiences, governance challenges, and institutional coordination dynamics.

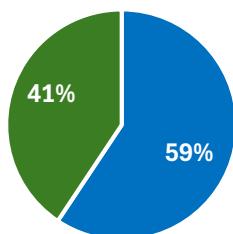
Quantitative data were processed and analyzed using SPSS software, where descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency distribution and cross-tabulation, were applied to identify key trends and patterns across the study areas. While both qualitative and quantitative data provided valuable insights, the findings section predominantly draws from qualitative data due to its capacity to capture complex on-the-ground realities and lived experiences.

Notably, meetings conducted with Union and Ward Disaster Management Committees (UDMCs and WDMCs) emerged as a significant component of the data collection process. To enhance the comprehensiveness of these findings, qualitative information from these meetings was also converted into quantitative form for frequency analysis. Each meeting consisted of 10 participants, and responses from all 30 participants (across selected wards/unions) were used to generate frequency data. This quantitative conversion provided structured representations of the discussions and enriched the analysis by validating field realities through numerical patterns.

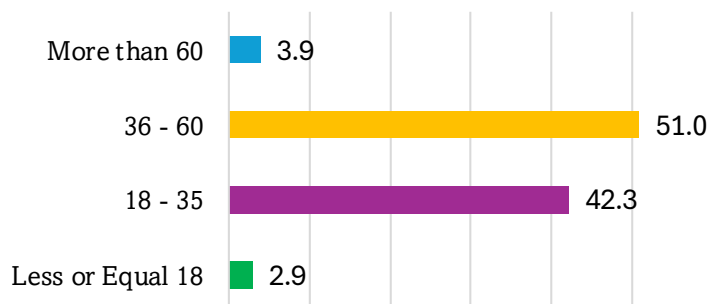
Appendix 3: Respondents' Demographic Profile

Sex of the Respondents

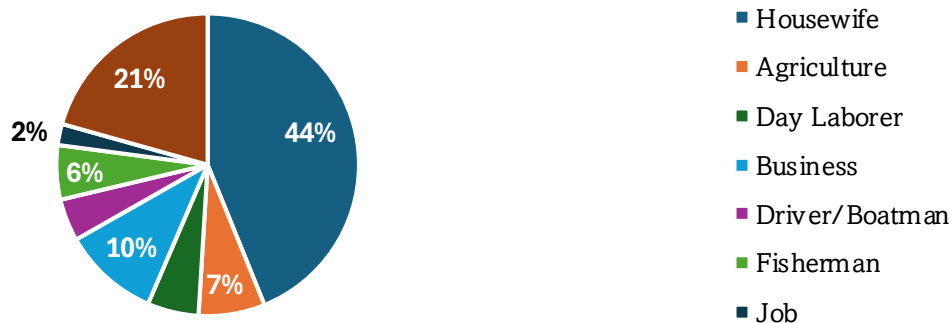
■ Female ■ Male



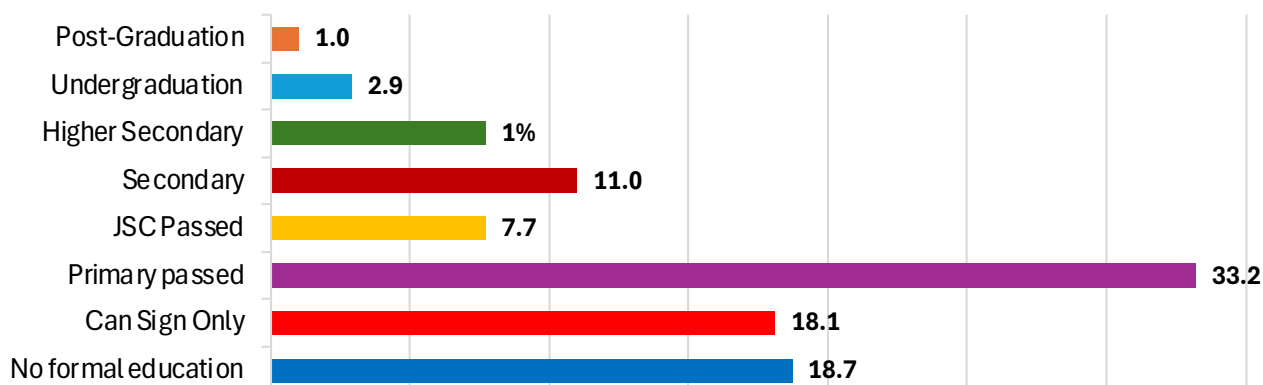
Age Distribution of the Respondents (%)



Occupation of the Respondents



Educational Qualifications of the Respondents (%)



The following table represents the comparative scenario amidst the three districts per the baseline findings (both quantitative and qualitative):

Table 3: Comparative Analysis of Baseline Findings across Kurigram, Bagerhat, and Cox's Bazar

Key Issues	Kurigram	Bagerhat	Cox's Bazar
Formation and Functionality of DMCs	DMCs exist but are mostly inactive. Meetings are irregular and happen mainly during emergencies. NGOs fill gaps in preparedness and response.	DMCs function sporadically, with some trained members, but lack consistency. Union Parishad is involved but lacks long-term sustainability.	DMCs are structured but uneven in functionality. Political influence leads to disparities in resource allocation and engagement across Upazilas. NGOs play a crucial but non-permanent role.
Effectiveness of DMIC and EOC	DMIC is largely non-functional. Weak coordination, slow information flow, and no systematic data management.	Some data-sharing mechanisms exist but are poorly utilized. Fragmented information flow limits efficiency.	DMIC and EOCs are present but not fully operational. Coordination across stakeholders remains weak, slowing response efficiency.
Frequency and Nature of Meetings	Meetings are held on an ad-hoc basis, mostly after disasters. No proactive planning meetings.	Some meetings at the district level, but rare at the Union level. No structured follow-up mechanism.	NGO-driven coordination meetings occur regularly at the DC office, but government-led DMC meetings are inconsistent.
Alignment with Standing Orders on Disasters (SOD 2019) and NPDM	Majority of DMC members are unaware of their specific roles under SOD 2019. No regular training.	Some members have received SOD 2019 training, but practical implementation is weak. Need for periodic refreshers.	SOD 2019 awareness is higher among business sector actors and humanitarian agencies. However, gaps exist in enforcement and training at the local level.
Community Engagement and Inclusivity	Minimal community participation in disaster planning. Women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) are largely excluded from decision-making. Traditional leadership dominates discussions.	Limited engagement of women's groups and youth organizations in preparedness programs. Community input is not systematically integrated into decision-making.	Some structured engagement through NGO-led programs, but representation of marginalized groups (e.g., Rohingya, ethnic minorities, informal settlers) is minimal. Community voices are often symbolic rather than influential.
Community Engagement with GESI Considerations	Women face cultural and mobility barriers in disaster response. PWDs lack access to shelters and early warning information. Youth involvement is minimal. Disaster preparedness messages do not reach marginalized groups effectively.	Women's groups participate in some discussions, but their decision-making power is low. Disaster shelters lack gender-sensitive facilities. Elderly populations and low-income households are not prioritized in response planning.	Women's involvement is mostly tokenistic. Rohingya refugees and ethnic minorities have limited inclusion in disaster preparedness activities. Early warning dissemination is not tailored for persons with disabilities. Safe shelter options for women and children are inadequate.

Capacity Development and Training	Very limited training opportunities for DMC members. NGO-driven training exists but lacks continuity.	Some training programs at the Union level, but participation is inconsistent. No structured skills-tracking mechanism.	Training provided in areas like fire safety and business continuity, but gaps remain in logistics and emergency coordination. No centralized training database.
Implementation Challenges	Lack of resources, weak leadership, and absence of technical expertise hinder disaster planning.	DRR activities are poorly integrated into government programs. Dependence on NGOs limits sustainability.	Incident Command System (ICS) lacks clear implementation. Coordination between stakeholders is inconsistent.
Disaster Preparedness at the Household Level	Families take their own precautions but lack structured guidance. Cyclone shelters are inadequate and not disability-friendly.	Disaster preparedness is mostly NGO-driven. Families rely on personal coping mechanisms due to weak local government support.	Households self-prepare due to the absence of well-maintained shelters. Waterlogging and sanitation issues exacerbate risks.
Challenges in Disaster Coordination	Poor collaboration between government agencies and NGOs. No clear accountability in disaster response.	NGOs lead most coordination efforts, but local government actors lack proactive involvement. DMCs have little authority in crisis management.	NGO-led coordination is present, but government roles remain unclear. Some areas receive disproportionate attention, creating response inequalities.
Effectiveness of Resource Allocation and Relief Distribution	Resource allocation is slow, politically influenced, and poorly coordinated. Relief is distributed unevenly.	No dedicated contingency fund for pre-disaster resource mobilization. Relief efforts are largely reactive.	Relief distribution is structured but lacks inventory management. Business community involvement in disaster response is limited due to funding gaps.
Disaster Response Efficiency	Weak communication and slow mobilization of emergency services delay response. Lack of logistics support.	NGOs play a primary role in response, but government agencies lack rapid mobilization capacity.	Cyclone Mocha response highlighted strengths in stakeholder coordination, but improvements in logistical preparedness are needed.
Community Perceptions of DMCs and Local Government	Communities do not trust DMCs due to their lack of visibility and proactive engagement.	DMCs are perceived as externally driven rather than locally led. Government-led efforts lack transparency.	DMCs are seen as politically influenced, with some areas neglected. Community trust in government-led disaster management remains low.
Success Stories and Good Practices	Some positive with NGOs in early warning dissemination, but no significant institutional improvements.	Some Union-level committees have benefitted from training, but institutional sustainability is a concern.	Response to Cyclone Mocha showed improved coordination among key stakeholders, setting a precedent for future responses.

Appendix 4 - Detailed Action Steps

Clarify Roles and Responsibilities of DMCs & Volunteers

5.1.1 Review and Simplify SOD 2019 for Local Context

Conduct Stakeholder Workshops	MoDMR and DDM may engage with union, upazila, and ward-level DMCs, grassroots organizations, and local volunteers to understand existing challenges with the SOD 2019. Furthermore, they should be involved in the review of the SOD 2019/NPDM. Following the elaboration of new documents, dissemination workshops should be organized to facilitate understanding. These workshops can also be utilized to draft local disaster plans.
Localized SOD 2019 Revision	Simplify SOD 2019 into actionable and concise formats specific to flood-prone Kurigram (e.g., village flood evacuation maps) and cyclone-prone Bagerhat (e.g., cyclone shelter logistics). Include real-life case studies and examples of roles for clarity. For Cox's Bazar, which faces risks such as landslides, cyclones, and refugee camp vulnerabilities, develop localized guidelines for landslide risk mitigation, camp evacuation plans, and cyclone preparedness. Incorporate real-life case studies and clear examples of roles and responsibilities to ensure clarity and practicality for local stakeholders.
Translation and Distribution	Translate the SOD 2019 into local languages (Bangla or regional dialects) with visual aids for better comprehension. Printed copies and digital PDFs should be distributed to DMCs and volunteers through Union Parishads and community centers.

5.1.2 Develop Contextualized Response Manuals

In collaboration with BPP and IDMVS-DU, create detailed manuals tailored to specific hazards for each district. For example:

- **Kurigram Manual:** Flood rescue techniques, water purification guidance, and livestock relocation strategies.
- **Bagerhat Manual:** Cyclone shelter protocols, embankment maintenance guidelines, and Sundarbans-specific preparedness strategies.
- **Cox's Bazar Manual:** Address multi-hazard preparedness, including landslide risk reduction, cyclone evacuation plans for both upazila and municipality inhabitants, and strategies to manage the unique challenges of high population density in urban part and resource constraints in other regions.

5.1.3 Capacity-Building Workshops and Role-Based Assignments

- **Refresher Training for DMCs:** DDM must train district-level officials to cascade updated SOD 2019 knowledge and manuals to local DMCs via quarterly workshops.

Workshops will incorporate:

Mock drills (e.g., flood evacuation, cyclone preparedness).

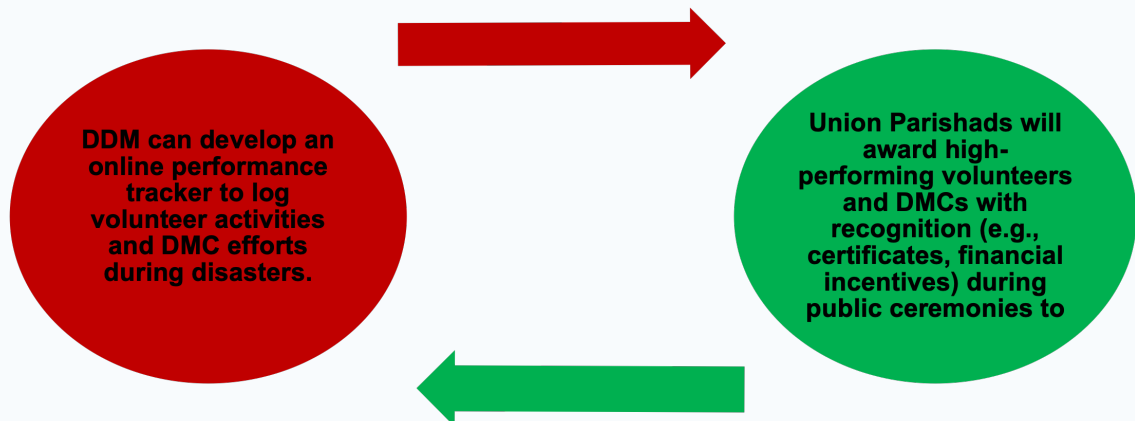
Hazard-specific scenarios to ensure familiarity with roles during

- **Role Allocation by Union Parishads:**

Assign specific tasks to volunteers (e.g., evacuation guides, relief distributors, or communicators) based on their skills and local

Ensure gender-sensitive and inclusive participation by reserving at least 30% of roles for women, Persons with Disabilities, and

5.1.4 Implement Performance Tracking and Incentives



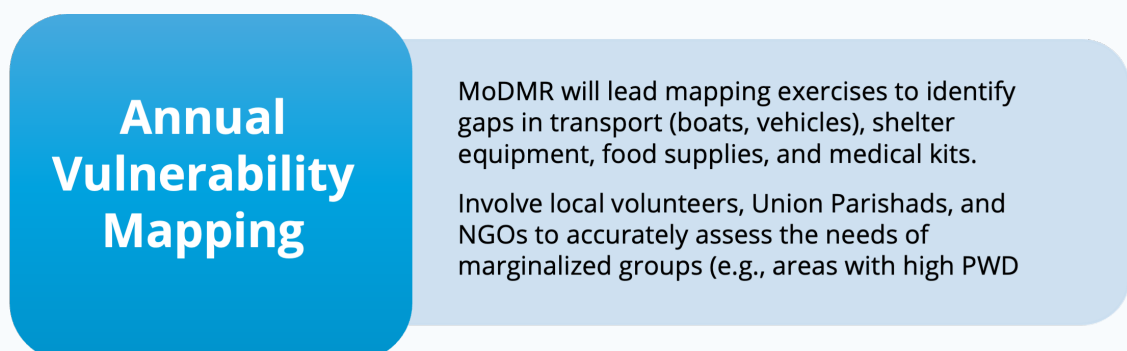
Stakeholders and Justifications:

- **MoDMR (Policy Leadership):** Revise SOD 2019 to provide clarity, ensuring effective role delineation across levels.
- **DDM (Training and Oversight):** Lead training programs, oversee manual creation, and implement performance tracking.
- **BPP (Technical Expertise):** Provide global best practices and co-design manuals with localized inputs.
- **Union Parishads (Grassroots Engagement):** Assign roles, ensure gender-sensitive inclusivity, and monitor volunteer activities.

Establish Resource Allocation Protocols and Strengthen Disaster Preparedness

Detailed Action Steps

5.2.1 Conduct District Resource Assessments



Data Consolidation

Use GIS mapping and mobile-based surveys to record resource availability and gaps across districts.

5.2.2 Create Pre-Disaster Resource Stockpiles

Establish Community Stockpile Centers

- Union Parishads can set up strategically located storage hubs stocked with emergency items like dry food, livestock feed, first-aid kits, and clothing.
- Involve NGOs and local cooperatives to contribute to stockpile funding and replenishment.

Stockpile Accessibility

- Implement protocols ensuring that marginalized communities (e.g., remote villagers, fisherfolk) can access stockpiles equitably.

5.2.3 Introduce a Real-Time Resource Monitoring System

- Develop a mobile app-based inventory system for resource tracking, enabling local DMCs to update stock levels in real time.
- Integrate this system with district-level dashboards for quick resource mobilization during disasters.

5.2.4 Establish Emergency Fund Disbursement Systems

- District-Level Contingency Accounts: MoDMR can allocate pre-emptive funds based on vulnerability indices (e.g., higher allocations for Kurigram due to recurring floods).
- Ensure funds are easily accessible to Union Parishads and DMCs for immediate resource mobilization post-disaster.
- Introduce financial incentives for communities maintaining efficient and well-stocked centers.

5.2.5 Conduct Quarterly Resource Audits

DDM may lead quarterly inspections of stockpile centers to ensure replenishment and proper usage of resources.

Stakeholders and Justifications:

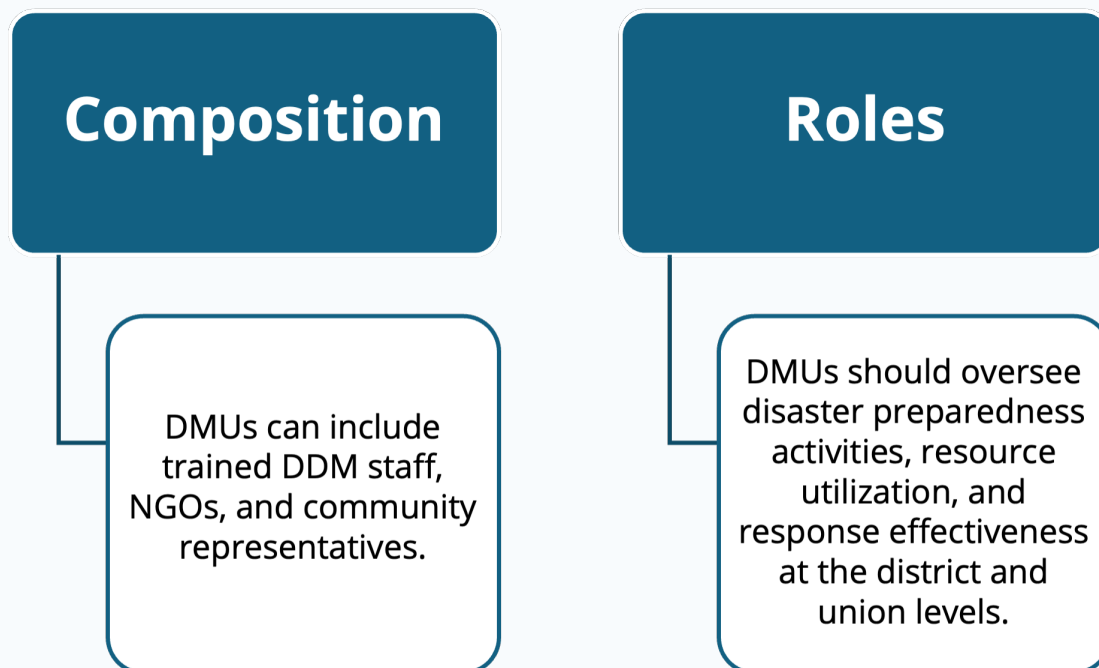
- **MoDMR (Funding and Oversight):** Set up contingency accounts and oversee annual resource assessments.
- **DDM (Implementation):** Lead audits and oversee the mobile inventory system's operations.

- **NGOs (Stockpile Support):** Assist in setting up and maintaining community resource hubs.
- **Union Parishads (Community Stockpiles):** Operate and maintain stockpile centers, ensuring accessibility for vulnerable populations.

Strengthen Monitoring, Accountability, and Feedback mechanisms

Detailed Action Steps

5.3.1 Form Dedicated District Monitoring Units (DMUs)



5.3.2 Develop a Digital Feedback Platform

- Create a mobile-friendly disaster reporting platform where DMCs, volunteers, and affected communities can upload real-time updates on aid distribution, unmet needs, and gaps.
- Publicly accessible dashboards will summarize reports, promoting transparency.

5.3.3 Organize Community Feedback Forums

- Biannual Town-Hall Meetings: Union Parishads can host meetings where community members can review DMC activities, express grievances, and recommend improvements.
- Ensure inclusive participation by reserving space for women, Persons with Disabilities, and marginalized groups.

5.3.4 Implement Performance-Based Incentives

- DMCs and Union Parishads with positive community feedback can receive additional funds or recognition awards from DDM.
- Volunteers actively reporting through the feedback platform can receive small incentives, such as mobile data credits or recognition certificates.

Stakeholders and Justifications:

- **DDM (Lead Accountability):** Form DMUs, oversee feedback platforms, and allocate performance-based incentives.
- **NGOs (Facilitation Role):** Support monitoring activities and community capacity building.
- **Union Parishads (Community Engagement):** Host feedback forums and mediate grievances.

Institutionalize Women, Persons with Disabilities, and Marginalized Groups in Disaster Planning

Detailed Action Steps

5.4.1 Revise SOD 2019 Guidelines for Inclusive Representation

MoDMR will mandate 30% representation of women, Persons with Disabilities, and marginalized groups in DMCs at all levels.

- Baseline findings showed that women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups are often present in DMCs but rarely hold meaningful or decision-making roles. Their participation is often symbolic. Current SOD 2019 guidelines mention their inclusion, but without clarity on how they can take on leadership responsibilities. Revising the SOD 2019 to go beyond numeric representation and define how these groups can participate in core planning, decision-making, and accountability processes will help shift from tokenism to meaningful inclusion.

5.4.2 Develop Specialized Plans for Persons with Disabilities

Collaborate with NGOs to design accessible disaster response protocols, including:

- accessible evacuation routes and shelters with ramps, accessible toilets, and support staff (e.g., sign language interpreters).

5.4.3 Launch Leadership Training for Women and Persons with Disabilities

- Union Parishads can organize leadership programs empowering women and Persons with Disabilities to actively participate in disaster resilience planning and decision-making.

5.4.4 Upgrade Shelters for Accessibility

- Prioritize construction and upgrades in marginalized areas with PWD-friendly infrastructure (e.g., wide ramps, handrails, dedicated spaces).
- Monitor shelter conditions regularly to ensure accessibility standards are maintained.

Stakeholders and Justifications:

- **MoDMR (Policy Change):** Enforce mandatory inclusivity in DMC representation.
- **DDM (Technical Support):** Provide training on inclusivity and oversee shelter upgrades.
- **NGOs (Advocacy and Implementation):** Advocate for inclusive strategies and support leadership programs.
- **Union Parishads (Local Inclusion):** Facilitate the inclusion of marginalized groups in disaster planning.

Enhance Vertical and Horizontal Coordination Among NGOs, INGOs, and DMCs

Detailed Action Steps

5.5.1 Develop a Comprehensive Coordination Protocol

MoDMR and DDM can draft a protocol defining the roles, responsibilities, and communication pathways for all stakeholders (government agencies, NGOs, INGOs, private sectors) during disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

Incorporate sector-specific roles (e.g., health, food security, shelter management) with clearly defined accountability measures.

Specify timelines and actions for pre-disaster resource pooling, real-time coordination during emergencies, and post-disaster reporting.

5.5.2 Establish a Centralized Aid Tracking and Coordination Platform

- Collaborate with **BPP and IT experts** to design a real-time, user-friendly aid tracking dashboard accessible to all stakeholders. Features may include:
 1. tracking inventory and disbursement of resources (food, shelter kits, funds).
 2. geotagged aid delivery points to monitor progress and avoid duplication.
 3. Data entry points for NGOs, INGOs, and local governments.

- Enable mobile app integration to support real-time updates from field teams.

5.5.3 Regular Pre-Disaster Coordination Meetings

- Institutionalize quarterly disaster coordination meetings at district, upazila, and union levels.
- Include DMCs, NGOs, INGOs, private sector actors, and community leaders to ensure a unified disaster response plan.
- Use the meetings to finalize response plans, allocate resources, and review stakeholder-specific responsibilities.

5.5.4 Establish Regional Resource Hubs for Joint Operations

- Develop shared warehouses at the upazila level to store disaster response resources from multiple NGOs, INGOs, and DDM.
- Assign specific NGOs to manage these hubs under DDM oversight.

5.5.5 Real-Time Monitoring During Disasters

Form emergency response cells at district levels with representatives from NGOs, INGOs, and DMCs to provide live updates and make collaborative decisions.

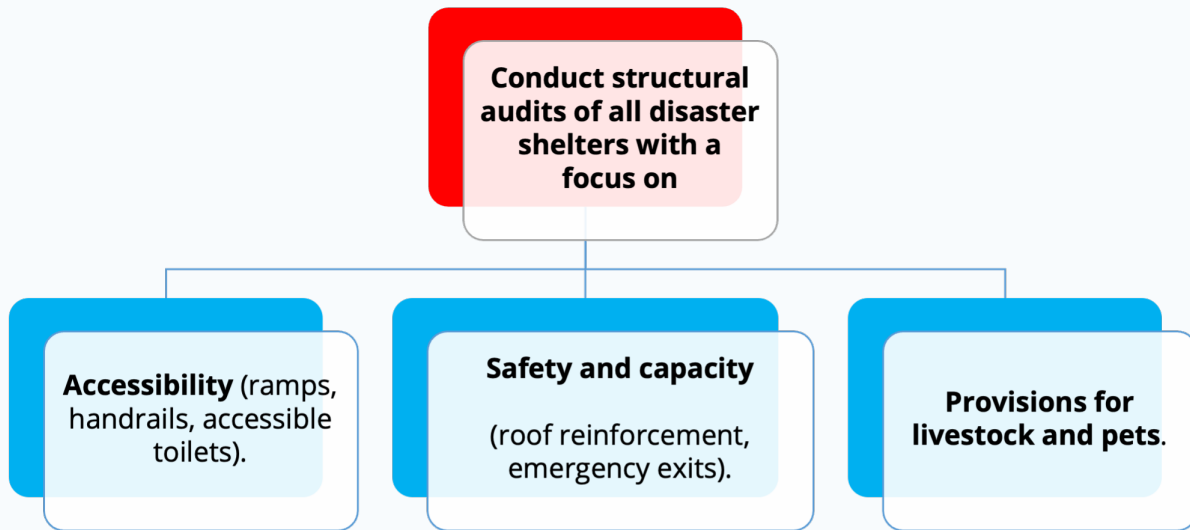
Stakeholders and Justifications:

- **MoDMR:** Policy leadership and finalization of the coordination protocol.
- **DDM:** Implementation oversight, platform management, and resource hub coordination.
- **BPP:** Provide technical expertise for aid tracking and stakeholder training.
- **NGOs and INGOs:** Align with protocols, share resources, and actively use the platform.
- **Union Parishads:** Ensure local representation and feedback during pre-disaster and emergency coordination.

Upgrading and Maintain Disaster Shelters with Inclusive Facilities

Detailed Action Steps

5.6.1 Comprehensive Shelter Audit and Upgrades



5.6.2 Energy Independence for Shelters

Install **solar panels, battery storage systems, and backup generators** to ensure uninterrupted power supply.

5.6.3 Formation of Shelter Management Committees

- Union Parishads can form inclusive committees involving women, Persons with Disabilities, and marginalized groups.
- Tasks include shelter readiness, resource stocking, and coordinating usage during disasters.

5.6.4 Shelter Maintenance and Readiness Drills

- Conduct biannual maintenance activities (e.g., fixing leaks, replenishing supplies).
- Hold mock shelter activation drills involving all community segments.

5.6.5 Incentivize Shelter Management

Provide monetary rewards, recognition, or additional funding for well-maintained and efficiently run shelter

Stakeholders and Justifications:

- **DDM:** Lead shelter audits, allocate funds, and oversee upgrades.
- **Union Parishads:** Form and manage shelter committees.
- **NGOs:** Provide expertise on PWD-friendly designs and community training.
- **Local Contractors:** Execute structural upgrades and maintenance.



Overall Coordination



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