

Community participation in mitigating climate change impacts on maternal, newborn, and child health in Bangladesh

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Bangladesh regions affected by rising water and heat¹

ISSUES

- Bangladesh is ranked 161 out of 190 in terms of health vulnerability linked to climate change
- High temperatures and increased saline water infiltration in the Southern regions, put pregnant women and newborns at risk
- Pregnant and postpartum women and newborns are more vulnerable because :
 - Physiological/clinical factors put pregnant women more at risk from infections, particularly vector-borne diseases, leading to maternal morbidity and mortality and adverse foetal outcomes
 - Newborns have limited ability to thermoregulate
 - Food insecurity during pregnancy is a risk factor for maternal morbidity and foetal distress outcomes

OBJECTIVE

Identify major maternal, newborn and adolescent health issues in the context of high temperatures and salinity intrusion/sea level rise, and solutions that can be supported by NGOs such as Enfants du Monde.



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PARTNERS

- Enfants du Monde
- Shatkira District, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- Bangladeshi Eco-social Development Organisation (ESDO)
- Bangladesh Research Institute for Development (BRID)

METHODS

Participatory community assessment in 2023

- Adaptation of the World Health Organisation’s participatory community assessment for maternal and newborn care to the context of climate disruption
- 9 roundtables to identify issues/solutions with 122 participants: women of childbearing age, mothers-in-law, male partners, community leaders, adolescent girls, health staff, and community health workers
- A final institutional roundtable to rank the solutions and finalize the action plan for the area

RESULTS

Climate change badly affects the health of women, children and adolescents. Provision of freshwater and food, health education and health providers’ trainings are needed.

- The roundtables confirmed existing information on the impact of climate change on maternal, newborn and adolescent health and provided a detailed contextualized analysis
- Pre-existing gender inequities are exacerbated by climate disruption: heat and lack of freshwater badly impact the nutrition and the health of women, adolescent girls and children, who are already more vulnerable
- The ideal solution is to provide freshwater and food, however, we believe this is not the role of Enfants du Monde
- Enfants du Monde will support community’ health education to inform people on the needs of women and children regarding freshwater, nutrition and lifestyle, and the training of health providers to manage climate change-related health problems.
- Advocacy is needed.

“

Women drink very little water

...I live thirsty. Normally I drink 1-2 glasses of freshwater per day, because freshwater is so expensive for us, and I leave the scarce freshwater we buy to my husband and my children. When I am thirsty, I drink the salty water because there is only that left for me...

”

30 year old woman, Protapnagar



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“

Vaginal irritation/infections are very common among young girls, and often lead to chronic conditions, also impacting their mental health

Freshwater is so scarce, we cannot wash clothes with it... During menstruation, we use cloths as sanitary pads, and we wash them with salty water. Because we can’t hang outside the house for drying menstrual cloths, to avoid men seeing them, they don’t dry properly, and we use them humid and salty. It is very itchy, all the time...

”

16 year old girl, Assasuni Sadar

The genetically modified rice that grows in salty water is too expensive for the community

“

For lunch and for dinner we can only afford wild fruits and a handful of rice for each of us, because there is no money in the house, unless the women can get more fish.

”

Group of men, Assasuni Sadar

Severe heat waves badly affect pregnant and postpartum women, who, regardless of their conditions, continue to fetch water from farer sources

“

Last year, it was not raining for a while, two women just fell and collapsed there...

”

Community leader, Anulia



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