Community: An Asset to reduce landslide risk

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Map of Bangladesh

Chittagong at a view

• Situated at the bank of river Karnafulli.
• 5 million population (Golam).
• An important business hub of Bangladesh.
• Half area is plain land and other half area is hillock.
Landslides

Downward movement of earth or rock on unstable slopes

Factors that trigger landslides

Heavy rainfall during shorter period of time

Unsustainable hill cutting


Slope Instability

Deforestation
Abnormal tidal flow

Earthquakes


Wreckage caused by landslide
Chittagong: Vulnerable to landslides

- One-third of total area is low elevated land which experience abnormal tidal flow.
- Heavy rainfall between July- September.
- Informal settlement (Slums).
• Slope instability due to indiscriminate hill cutting.
• Very high susceptibility of soil erosion in Chittagong hill tracts (Rahman 38-39).
Substantial losses in recent landslides

11 June 2008

- Affected areas: Motijharna of Lalkhan Bazaar, Khushumbagh area, Shaheed Minar area.
- Almost 1.5 million people were affected.
- Death tolled to 135.
- Submerged 500 buildings in Agrabad commercial area (Golam).
18 August 2008

- Affected areas: Motijharna of Lalkhan Bazaar, Bhaditala under Cox’s Bazar.
- Rain induced landslide (Golam).
Chittagong hill tract communities

- Approximate population according to 1991 consensus: 501,114.
- Hill districts are: Rangamati, Khagrachari, Bandarban.
- Mostly followed religion: Buddhism, Hinduism.

• Minor ethnic group of Bangladesh.
• Consists of lower income group and informal settlers (Rahman 68).
• Denied basic rights and entitlements as they are treated as ‘Illegals” (Rahman 68).
• Worst affected community by landslides.
Here stands preparedness!!

- Absence of early warning system from Bangladesh Meteorological Department.
- No preparation from National level and the local level for emergency recovery.
- Exclusion of landslide issues at National level.
• No cooperation from Chittagong City Corporation.
• Conflict of hill ownership.
• Almost negligible awareness about do’s and dont’s at the time of landslides (Golam).
Must “to do” things to prepare for landslides

• Don’t build your dream house in landslide prone area.
• Contact local officials, University department of Geology to get information on landslides in the particular area.
• Learn about emergency –response and evacuation plans of the area.
• There must be a risk zone mapping for Chittagong division.
• Must develop an early warning system.
Who will think of them???

• The landslide can never be prevented but the substantial losses can be minimised. If the mainstream community of Bangladesh would connect themselves to the despair and sorrows of the hill-tract communities and see those as an integral part, the effectiveness of the community responses can be improved. This can lead to formation of preparedness plans with sharper and focused effectiveness.
“Come forward and help”
You may be the reason of someone’s smile.

A girl from Chittagong hill tract community

Works cited

