

## **Role of Union Parishads in Ensuring Child Education in Bangladesh during flood- a Qualitative Study**

**Yasmin Parvin Tibriji**, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration, Government of Bangladesh.

**Md Khaled Bin Chowdhury**, [khaledchowdhury70@gmail.com](mailto:khaledchowdhury70@gmail.com). Department of English, BGC Trust University Bangladesh.

**Abstract:** Governments ratifying the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Children have responsibility to ensure the rights of children to education in every situation. Bangladesh being a disaster-prone country faces flood and struggles with its consequences every year. During flood children are deprived of education along with many other basic rights in Bangladesh. But the fact is that there is scanty research on the scale of infrastructural and learning loss caused to primary education as a result of flood. So, our study firstly investigates the scale of damage to primary education institutions and the consequent learning loss at the said level. It is also a fact that there are different steps to mitigate the negative effects of flood on primary education. But without the participation of grass root level local government authority, it is not easy to solve the problem. As a grass root level local government institution, the Union Parishad and its Disaster Management Committee should minimize the effect of flood on primary education and ensure the children's right to education. But it is assumed that the Union Parishads do not perform this duty properly. So, our research also investigates whether the Union Parishads are performing their mandated responsibilities in this regard. We have followed a qualitative research method depending on interviews with two types of samples, field visit and document review. The interviews with both ten Head Teachers and ten Managing Committee members were conducted. The research indicates that Union Parishads are not doing their assigned duties of ensuring primary education during flood. The research recommends that in addition to developing the infrastructural facilities, the concerned committees of the UPs need to be proactive and more sincere about continuing primary education during and after flood.

**Keywords:** Flood in Bangladesh, Local government, Union Parishad, Children's right to education.

✉ email: [khaledchowdhury70@gmail.com](mailto:khaledchowdhury70@gmail.com)

**Citation:** Tibriji, Y. P., Chowdhury, Md K B (2023). Role of Union Parishads in Ensuring Child Education in Bangladesh during flood- a Qualitative Study. . *Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Journal (SHE Journal)*. 4(1), 131-144.



Copyright ©2020 Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Journal (SHE Journal)  
Published by Universitas PGRI Madiun. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

## INTRODUCTION

Every year Bangladesh faces many natural disasters including flood owing to climate change, mismanagement of river and vicious practices of people (Ahmad,2018). Due to illegal grabbing, wetlands and rivers are dying. Many rivers are polluted and filled by illegal grabbers. So, water from upstream overflows the plain land immediately and these water causes water-logging and flood (Unplanned acts responsible for prolonged floods. *The Daily Star, 2017, August 01*). More than 19 million children are vulnerable to impacts of climate change. They have to constantly change schools for the natural disasters and relocations (Antara,2021, August 24). Though day by day Bangladesh is doing well to minimize the loss of lives and improving its capacity to manage natural disasters, it could not be stopped. In addition to the loss of lives, during flood children become absent from school for many reasons such as, long-lasting water-logging in the school premises, absence of alternative places for education during flood, damage of the school buildings and furniture as a result of flood.

Owing to the flash flood a flood prone area is filled with water for almost 6 to 7 months in a year. During this time, no academic activities are in fact carried out because people's basic living conditions are greatly disturbed (Ahmed 2013). Schools are used as a substitute shelter of emergency during disasters. Therefore, children remain absent from school for a long period of time. Internal slack in management of the public schools in Bangladesh is very common. Rarely, haor schools are visited and monitored by Upazila Education Officers (also known as Thana Shikkha Officers). As a result, all the administration, staffs and teachers are prone to not attending schools regularly (Ahmed et al,2017)).

In Bangladesh, floods directly or indirectly influence children's education in

various ways. The direct impacts are the loss of lives, damages to the infrastructure of education including school buildings and furniture, roads), diminished human resources, and the indirect impacts are the loss of livelihoods, heightened opportunity cost of commuting to school and in turn parents' lack of motivation to send children to school among others (Habiba, U., Jui F.T.Z., Meem, T.M. & Kabir F.,2021). In short, floods cause low admission of children into school, increase of drop-out rates, and lower academic achievement. (Kabir S. 2012). The loss caused as a result of flood are huge. The real loss to education as a result of flood is much more than reported. In these three years 2013-2015, natural disasters, particularly floods, had disrupted the education of more than 1.5 million children (19). Floods can destabilize the health and financial condition of school children and their families which may lead to lower attendance and learning, and higher dropout (Habiba, U., Jui F.T.Z., Meem T.M. & Kabir, F., 2021).

There is also lack of coordination among the project-implementing authorities and local government bodies in selecting places for constructing school buildings with attention to 'land use plan' and 'land zoning.' As Union Parishad is the closest administrative tier of people at marginalized area, it knows well which area is more vulnerable. During the construction of school building, they can advise the authority in selecting the place so that any vulnerable land is not used for constructing school building. Union Parishad can do proper 'land use plan', 'land zoning', construction of bridges in right place and proper road maintenance as these are the basic duties of UPs according to law, so that every student can go to school in every circumstance. But the Union Parishads are not involved in the decision-making process of the selection of place for construction of school buildings. In this context of denial of the role of UPs in selecting and constructing school

buildings, a vulnerable situation for majority primary schools in rural areas is created during flood in Bangladesh. As a consequence, education in primary schools is hampered though the local government bodies have the responsibilities to ensure the children's rights to education.

The term 'right to education' dates from the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The 'right to education' is described in International Education Law as the right of every person without discrimination under any circumstances from childhood to death and the main aim is to educate the person (Monteiro,1989). According to International Human Rights Law, every state has an obligation to ensure its people the right to education. Most of the country of the world enacted domestic law in accordance with international values and principles (Monteiro,1990). Article 29 and the preamble of the Convention on the Rights of the Children give a wider ethical framework of child's inalienable right to education and the far-reaching importance of child right. The ethical framework includes the dignity innate in every child, their best interest and the priority of development (Monteiro,1990). Bangladesh has ratified the above Conventions and committed to ensure universal free education for all children. But during disaster, especially flood, the country faces many obstacles in ensuring the children's right to education.

The Duty Charter of local government organizations of Bangladesh is comprehensive including assurance of food, safety, health, education, employment, communication and so on to the people of that locality (The Local Government, Union Parishad Act, 2009). They have enormous potentiality to solve any problem but they are not conscious about this. The history of local government especially of Union Parishad in Bangladesh shows that it is playing significant role in ensuring democracy through public participation. It reduces the workload of central government and through

integration of Union Parishad and private partnership, it can solve any problem that occurs in their locality. But they are not sincere about their responsibilities in ensuring child education especially during natural or man-made disaster such as, flood.

There are different standing committees formed under law which are responsible for specific functions. For example, SCDM (Standing Committee for Disaster Management) has specific duty to mitigate the negative effect of disaster. Flood protection, disaster management, assurance of child right, law and order and prevention of crime are significant among other duties of Union Parishad (The Local Government, Union Parishad Act, 2009). The two important committees which are mostly responsible and entrusted with the responsibilities of ensuring and looking after primary education during disaster as well as all normal time are 'Education and Health Standing Committee (EHSC)' and 'Standing Committee on Disaster Management (SCDM)' (Union Parishad Operation Manual, 2012). EHSC is to ensure the presence and service of health assistants, teachers and doctors in grass root level. Their role is also to reduce misbehavior with students or patients or local poor citizens by the teachers or family welfare assistants and doctors. SCs are to ensure the attendance of students and teachers in educational institutions and quality of teaching. When SC fails, they can present it to the UP regular meeting and UP tries to solve it. Ministerial committees at Upazila level use the information collected by UPSC. Upazila committee works with DMSC to mitigate the problem of disaster and they have to report to Upazila Parishad (UZP) or related government departments in accordance with the provision of law and Act (Improving Services: The Role of Union Parishad Standing Committees, Kabir, M., Khan, A. R.& Guda, R.S., 2014).

To minimize disaster risk, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management has taken CDMP (Comprehensive Disaster

Management Program). CDMP provides Union Parishad introductory training for minimizing risk effect and managing disaster (Nkala, 2010). CDMP is nationally executed program which is funded by UNDP, DFID (UK Department for International Development) and the European Commission. This Local Disaster Risk Reduction Fund empowers local authorities to prioritize risk reduction, assess the risk, determine the vulnerabilities of the local communities and to take appropriate steps to mitigate it (Nkala, 2010).

From the above discussion, it appears that the infrastructural damage and the learning loss undergone by the primary schools in villages of Bangladesh as a result of flood are always under-reported. Similarly, the UPs and their committees responsible for the continuation of primary education during and after flood are not as well performing their responsibilities properly in this regard. So, our assumption is that the damage and learning loss in primary level education as a result of flood are actually much more than reported and so, the real picture of the effect of flood on primary schools need to be reported. Then, if at the planning stage, the authority constructing the school buildings, selected the places for schools in consultation with the local government authorities, these educational institutions would be less affected by flood. Finally, we also assume that the Standing Committees of UPs which are entrusted with responsibilities in helping the School Management Committees before, during and after flood to ensure continuation of primary education in Bangladesh are not performing their responsibilities properly in this regard.

### **Objectives of the Research**

In the light of the research problems mentioned above, the following research objectives have been identified. This study wants to investigate both the scale of infrastructural loss and the intensity of

learning loss caused to primary education as a result of flood. The second objective of the research is to investigate whether the UPs are performing their mandated responsibilities of helping primary schools to continue education before, during and immediately after the flood.

### **Research Questions**

There is a common perception that primary schools are affected by flood during monsoon and education is hampered for flood in the rural areas of Bangladesh, But our assumption is that there is no clear picture about the intensity and level of infrastructural and learning loss owing to food. So, we have selected the primary schools of a Union Parishad to investigate the scale of effects of flood. Again, while the Union Parishads are mandated by the charter of duties to ensure continuation of primary education during flood, it appears that in most cases, they do not pay attention to these responsibilities. As a result, primary education is hampered during flood. So, our study also aims to investigate whether the UPs' Standing Committee performs their duties properly. On the basis of the assumptions, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What is the extent of infrastructural and learning loss in primary schools as a result of flood?
2. Are the Standing Committees of Union Parishads performing their mandated responsibilities in continuing primary education during and immediately after flood?

### **Significance of the Study**

Flood is a common natural phenomenon in Bangladesh happening even several times in a monsoon. The people have to live with flood here. But it should not hamper the continuation of education in any way. The disruption of education can be minimized with active interventions of the only local government

institution operating at the grassroots level, which is Union Parishad. So, investigation into the roles and responsibilities of UPs in these activities is important. Accordingly, it is assumed that this study will have a positive impact on the research in this area by providing a new insight into the phenomenon which is still now inadequately researched in Bangladesh.

### Review of Literature

A significant number of research has been conducted on the children's rights to education during natural disasters in Bangladesh and elsewhere. There are many books, articles, thesis or research works available on children's right to education during natural disasters and role of local government authority of Bangladesh to ensure it.

United Nations Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNSIDR) prepared a report with the help of ISDR, ITC and UNDP on local governments and disaster risk reduction. This report is an analysis of the program of comprehensive disaster management (CDMP) which is a program of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management for empowering local government of Bangladesh. It also analyzed the disaster management process through case studies of 14 countries including Bangladesh. The case study of Bangladesh was done in taking Sreeula Union, Satkira into consideration where union disaster management committee play the vital role to make a coherent action plan for minimizing the effect of disaster (Nkala,2010).

Habiba, U., Jui F.T.Z., Meem T.M. & Kabir, F. (2021)'s study in the context of a an Upazila in Bangladesh showed that flood decidedly affected the learning routine and health condition of school-going children. Almost 93.8% of students went through academic challenges and 87.5% of children were the affected by waterborne diseases like diarrhea, skin diseases, and dysentery.

Almost 82% of respondents did not go to school for the bad roads, 28.8% faced challenges as their school was submerged by water. About 66.2% of children dropped out of school and 17.5% of students did not continue their education at all after the flood.

Mudavanhu (2014) describes how the increasing flood intensity as well as frequency affects the child wellbeing including access to food, safe drinking water, sanitation, health, security, school attendance and so on. This paper highlights children's education vulnerabilities due to flood. Flood causes loss of qualified teaching personnel, reduction of academic hours, increases the absenteeism of flood affected students, low syllabus coverage which leads to poor academic performance of students. One of the purposes of the research is to inform the policy development process in regard to children's vulnerability during flood.

Studies also indicate that during flood government and local government institutions prioritize relief efforts over schooling. If education is not prioritized, hundreds of thousand students could permanently dropout from school which will be a matter of headache in future (1.8 million children out of school as South Asia floods put long term education at risk, Media Release of Save the Children, 2017, August 31). Mark Pierce, Country Director of Save the Children in Bangladesh said, "While lifesaving aid like shelter, food and clean drinking water is being distributed to affected communities, we must think about education in the same light and how we can get children back to the classroom as quickly and safely as possible." So, as a developing country, Bangladesh should not allow the students to be ousted from educational institutions.

Research also suggests that to mitigate the risk of flood, the plan should consider three phases, such as, pre-emergency phase, emergency phase and post emergency phase (Messer,2003). Union

Parishad should take proper steps to reduce the risk of flood, such as, construction of dams to tackle flood, implementation of building codes, risk mapping as well as land zoning, construction of multistoried school building, establishment of necessary bridge and culvert, sustainable road construction and so on. Prevention, mitigation and preparedness are important in pre-emergency phase. In emergency phase Union Parishad has to directly respond to rescuing life, protecting property, ensuring basic and other necessary rights and thus assisting the flood affected people in returning to their regular activities. In the post emergency phase, in the aftermath of flood, Union Parishad has to coordinate with Upazila Parishad and District Council to take long-term programs which will have long term benefits for the community (Messer,2003). The measures taken in all the three phases will contribute to the continuation of primary education in addition to solving other problems.

Aminuzzaman (2010) says that the Second Schedule of the Union Council Act mentions 39 specific functions of the UP even during normal time which they do not perform. The survey data, however, gives a contrasting picture, that is, the UPs are far from directly executing any of such functions. Even a good number of UP personnel are not fully cognizant about the duties of the elected representatives (Aminuzzaman, 2010). He shows the community expectations for service delivery on priority basis from the UPs which are: income generating interventions; pro-poor support, continued supply of agricultural inputs and supplies; education and community health care services, micro credit etc. But the UPs are not doing any one of the expected services. Among the types of services expected from UPs, Education holds 111(47.23%by male) 114 (76.0% by female (Aminuzzaman, 2010).

In this study the respondents were asked to show their level of satisfaction

regarding the level of service delivery in selected areas, such as, income generation, health, irrigation, law and order etc. The survey data reveal a very disappointing picture. As many as 385 adults (235 Males and 150 Females) were chosen through a purposive sampling. They were asked to rate the satisfaction from service delivery where education holds the lowest area, i.e. only 3.90% respondents are satisfied with the service of UPs in the area of education that is the lowest (Aminuzzaman, 2010).

## **METHOD**

This study was conducted using qualitative approaches. The researchers conducted interviews face-to-face with two stakeholders. They are Head Teachers and School Managing Committee Members. The number of Head Teachers and Managing Committee members were ten each. The context of the study was Khankhanabad Union of Banskhal Upazila of Chattogram district. The time of the interviews was September, 2019. A devastating flood occurred in Banskhal Upazila during the monsoon, i.e. July-September of 2019. The second author collected the data through face-to-face interviews with the Head Teachers and telephone interview with the Managing Committee members. The telephone numbers of all Managing Committee Members were collected during the school visit. We interviewed those Managing Committee members who are nominated from the guardian category. The interview questions were both closed and open ended so that the maximum data might be collected. Another source of data collection is the attendance register of the schools(ten). On the spot visit of all the schools was another source of data for this research.

## **Data Collection**

The questionnaire comprised both open ended and close-ended questions. There were 9 close-ended questions and 4 open-ended questions. The same interview protocol was used for both the Head

teacher and the Managing Committee members. We interviewed all the Head teachers of the primary schools of the Union. For Managing Committee members, we talked with those as nominated by Head teachers. We reviewed the class attendance of fifteen working days of ten schools. Approximately 22 working hours of field observation was conducted in all ten schools during September, 2019 which included visits to disaster-affected schools and alternative learning places.

### Data Analysis

The data from both sources was analyzed by following the mixed method analysis procedure. The quantitative data were analyzed manually by showing the percentile and the qualitative data was analyzed following the simple thematic analysis. That is, the quotations that reflect the themes sought after are cited here

### FINDINGS

#### Findings from Head Teachers' Responses

The interview protocol had 8 questions among which five are close-ended and three are open-ended. The analysis of the data reveals the following findings.

In response to question no. 1, "How many days the school had to remain closed for flood in 2018-2019? the following findings are revealed.

Serial no.	Days	No. of respondents
1	6	3
2	2	2
3	No	3
4	10	1
5	15	1

**Table-1: School Closure**

In answer to question no. 2, "What damages were there in the schools as a result of flood?", the data shows the following findings.

Road inundated- 4

No water in field-1

Furniture damaged- 7

Field inundated- 2

No damage or inundation only1.

In answer to question no.3, "How was the attendance rate during the days of fold?", Head Teachers say that the attendance rate of students is as follow-

Serial No.	No of Schools	Percentage
1	7	25-30
2	2	60-70
3	1	Completely closed

**Table-2: School Attendance**

In answer to question no. 4, "Was the school used as shelter for the flood-affected people?", five say yes and five say no. 5, In answer to the question if the teachers had to remain present in those days, 9 schools reported 100 percent teacher attendance in those days and one had teacher absence for 7 days. In answer to question no. 6, if there was alternative building, only two schools had such arrangement, i.e. one had a cyclone center with 500 capacity, another had a building with 300 capacity. The school itself a cyclone center are two and six had no alternative building. In answer to question no. 7, what is the size of the alternative building, one was 090x60 feet two- storied building, another was 43x42 feet one storied building These two cyclone center-cum-school buildings are 50x20 feet two storied building which can accommodate 500 people. In response to question no.8, "Do you know about the role of SES and ESME of Union Parishad to continue education during flood and natural disaster?", 7 respondents says yes and 3 says no. In response to question no.9, "Did the Managing Committee seek help from the Union Parish to continue education during flood, 7 respondents say yes and two say no. In response to question no. 10, "Did you get support from the Union Parishad during the flood for continuing education?", they replied that none of them got any. Teacher D says,

*“The school committees and Union parish did not know that temporary learning spaces such as high land, embankments, and strong houses in the village could be used as alternative places for continuing education in case of emergencies.”*

But all reported in the question no. 11, “What kind of support they got from the UPs to continue education,” they replied that they got support of other types for education during the normal time. In answer to my question about the kinds of support they received, they narrated the following. Furniture- 3, Financial support-1, Solar electricity- 6, Road construction and repair-2, school bag- 7, computer -1 and tubewell-1. But they said that during and after flood, they did not get support from UP to continue education. Teacher D says,

*“UPs prioritized shelter, food, and rescue operations over education in the previous floods. They did not realize that education is necessary. Financial and non-financial support was offered by the teachers as well as some school management committee members and community people. They worked to save learning materials that afterward supported continuing education even when a school was damaged completely.”*

In response to question no.12, “Do the school have any contingency plan to continue education during flood and natural disaster?”, none says that there is any. As a follow up response, teacher F says,

*“The community members were reluctant to the idea of running education during natural disaster rather they prioritized relief intervention. Moreover, the representatives were not aware that education could be continued during flood, even when the school building is unusable. Many community members seemed uncertain about their responsibilities in this case.”*

In response to the question no.13, “What should be done to continue education during flood and other natural disaster?”,

various suggestions came out. Two teachers said that field should be elevated. Six teachers felt that road of the village should be elevated. Five teachers said that a coordination meeting with chairman, councilors of the ward, managing committee and all teachers should be held to chalk out plan one month ahead of flood. Five Head Teachers felt that high schools with multi-storied building and vacant space can be used for classes during flood. Other five teachers felt that the time of relief distribution is to be rescheduled. Teacher B, D, F said, “Initiative should be taken to construct schools on the high land. Teacher F, H and I says, “Guardians should be motivated to send children to school as soon as the water recedes.”

### **Findings from the Managing Committee Members’ Responses**

In response to question no. 1, “How many days the school had to remain closed for flood in 2018-2019?”, the following data is revealed.

Serial no.	Days	No. of respondents
1	6	3
2	2	2
3	No	3
4	10	1
5	15	1

**Table-3: School Closure**

In response to question no.2, “What damages were there in the schools as a result of flood?”, the following responses were found.

School Building flooded-3

Road inundated-3

Furniture, toilet/ window damaged-8

Field inundated-5

No Water in the school or field-2

According to the Managing Committee responses, the attendance rate of students are as follow.



Serial No.	No of Schools	Percentage
1	7	25-30
2	2	60-70
3	1	Completely closed

**Table-4: School Attendance**

In answer to question no. 4, "Was the school used as shelter for the flood-affected people?", five say yes and five say no. In response to question no.5, whether they had to remain present, 9 say yes and 1 says she remained absent for 7-10 days. The response regarding the alternative building is as same as the Head Teachers' opinion. In answer to question no. 6, what is the size of the alternative building, they say that they are not sure about the size of these two buildings. In response to question no.7, "Do you know about the role of 'Education and Health Standing Committee (EHSC)' and 'Disaster Management Standing Committee (DMSC of Union Parishad to continue education during flood and natural disaster?", 5 say yes and 5 say no. In response to question no.8, "Did the Managing Committee seek help from the Union Parishad to continue education during flood?", 7 say yes and three say no. In response to question no. 9, "Did you get support from the Union Parishad during the flood for continuing education?", none of them got any.

Managing Committee Member B says,

*"Though they were able to continue school in alternative places, there was no scope for safe drinking water or sanitation facilities, let alone a proper sitting arrangement. In the substitute places, they had to use latrines of nearby houses with restricted access. Sometimes they had to go to the nearby mosque to use the latrine. In the alternative places they were not allowed to do fun. The adults of the nearest families used to rebuke them for that. They also lacked adequate learning materials like*

*blackboards, chalk, etc in the temporary places."*

But all reported in the question no. 10 that they got support of other types for education during the normal time. In answer to my question about the kinds of support they received, they narrated the following. Furniture and financial support-1, Solar electricity-2, Road construction and repair-, school bag and computer -1 and tubewell-1. But they are not sure about the quantity. As a follow-up response regarding flood time support, Managing Committee Member C says,

*"After the emergency some of the immediate repairing of the chairs, tables, benches were done with the financial assistance of the teachers, as well as some of the members of school management committees and community people."*

In response to question no.11, "Do the schools have any contingency plan to continue education during flood and natural disaster?", none says that there is any. Managing Committee Member A says,

*"It would be better if representatives of the Upazila Disaster Management Committee, the Union Disaster Management Committee and the Union Parishad were involved in developing contingency plans. Members of school management committees and teachers mentioned that previously they thought that food, shelter and rescue operations were the only main activities during emergencies, not education."*

In response to the question no.12, "What should be done to continue education during flood and other natural disaster?", various suggestions came out. Three members said that field should be elevated. Six teachers felt that road of the village should be elevated. Five teachers said that the chairman does not hold any meeting on education, but all the meetings are about relief, road construction, VGF and birth registration issues. They demand that coordination meeting with chairmen, councilors of the ward, managing

committee should be held regularly so that they can discuss and take actions ahead of flood. Member D says,

*“In the schools, there should be monitoring committees and implementing committees to ensure that everything proposed under the contingency plan was properly done. The monitoring committees may be comprised of Union Disaster Management Committees and the implementing committee be comprised of the head teacher, assistant teacher, and chairperson of the school’s management committee.”*

Five members felt that high roads can be used for classes during the flood. Member A, B, C, D, E, say that Union Parishad chairmen and councilors are not serious about education. They are rather serious about issues like relief, road construction, field filling and other activities. Member B, D, F say, “From now on schools should be constructed on the high land. Member A, B and D say, “Guardians should be motivated to send children to school after the water goes down.” Managing Committee Members D, C, E and A also agree that the time for relief distribution needs to be changed.

### **In-person Observation of the Schools**

It appears from the findings that the schools did not have any contingency plans to continue education when the school buildings were flooded or damaged. According to the teachers, guardians and students, the schools were closed for 31 days for flood and the post-flood consequences in 2019. The scenario and consequences were as such- the whole area would flood and even when the flooding receded, water problems would remain. As a result, the school always remained closed during this time until the water problem was naturally resolved. No school management committee, teachers, or community members led interventions or initiatives to keep the school running even at an alternative place during the flood periods. After remaining closed for many

days when school opened again the education environment was devastated. The floor, chairs, tables, blackboards, doors and windows were damaged. The school attendance was very frustrating during these 3 days. School A has 20-25% student turn out. School B had 31 % turnout and in school C 23% could attend classes.

These schools were one storied building where flood water could easily enter. In reply to the co-author’s query, all the participants mentioned that there were three cyclone shelters near the schools. School A has one three-storied cyclone shelter at a distance of 150 meters. School B has one at 500 meter distance and school C has the most distant one, half a kilometer away. During my field visit, he found all the cyclone shelters in a satisfactory level to use as an alternative school building. The Managing Committee of two schools approached the UP chairman for shifting the school except the furniture to the cyclone shelters. The Managing Committee of one school requested the member, who is also the councilor of the UP, to take initiative to shift the school but he did not cooperate saying that it would require a lot of money to clean the building. All teachers, guardians and students said that UPs could take the initiatives to run the classes at the alternative places during the flood. The architectural features of these cyclone shelters include (i) a multistoried building, (ii) an open space on the ground floor in case of flood tides, and (iii) a capacity of 500-600 people. The cyclone shelters were easily accessible to students. But they were not used during the recent flood. Five of these schools themselves were used as shelter centers for a couple of days during the last flood.

### **DISCUSSION**

In response to question no. 1, “How many days the school had to remain closed for flood in 2019?”, 3 schools had to remain closed for 6 days, 1 had to remain closed for 10 days and another for 15 days. In answer to question no. 2, “What damages

were there in the schools as a result of flood?," 4 schools had the road inundated, 7 had the furniture damaged and 2 had field inundated and only 1 reported no damage or inundation. In answer to question no.3, "How was the attendance rate during the days of flood?," 7 schools had only 25-30 percent school attendance and 2 had 60-70 percent attendance and one was completely closed. These findings reflect the real picture of physical loss and educational loss as opposed to the assumed loss. Previous researches also echo this dichotomy between reality and assumption.

Habiba, U., Jui F.T.Z., Meem T.M. & Kabir, F. (2021)'s study reflects the real loss to primary education owing to flood. Almost 93.8% of students went through academic challenges. Almost 82% of respondents did not go to school for the bad roads, 28.8% faced challenges as their school was submerged by water. About 66.2% of children dropped out of school and 17.5% of students did not continue their education at all after the flood. They further say that the real loss to education as a result of flood is much more than reported. In these three years 2013-2015, natural disasters, particularly floods, had disrupted the education of more than 1.5 million children (Habiba, U., Jui F.T.Z., Meem T.M. & Kabir, F., 2021).

The data from both Head Teachers and Managing Committee Members reveals that only two schools had closed for two weeks and three schools for 6 days. And the damages that occurred in infrastructure were huge. The attendance rate during those days was very frustrating. Fifty percent of schools were used as shelter centers for the flood affected people. So, classes had to remain closed for minimum of 3 days to the maximum of 15 days. Mudavanhu (2014)'s paper also shows children's education vulnerabilities due to flood in terms of loss of qualified teaching personnel, reduction of academic hours, increase of absenteeism of flood affected students, low syllabus coverage which

leads to poor academic performance of students. The alternative arrangement for holding classes were similarly frustrating because schools did not have any alternative building and only two out of 10 schools had alternative arrangements. Ahmed (2013) also echoes in his studies that owing to the flash flood a flood prone area is filled with water for almost six to 7 months in a year. During this time, no academic activities are in fact carried out because people's basic living conditions are greatly disturbed. Schools are used as a substitute shelter of emergency during disasters (Ahmed, 2013).

Regarding the awareness of the Head Teachers about the responsibilities, majority, that is, 7 say in the affirmative. Among the Managing Committee members, 50 percent agree that they do not have the awareness of the matter. This phenomenon is reflective of previous findings. Aminuzzaman (2010) says that even a good number of UP personnel are not fully aware of the duties of the elected representatives. He shows that among the types of services expected from UPs, education holds 111(47.23%by male) 114 (76.0% by female (Aminuzzaman, 2010). His research samples were asked to rate their satisfaction from service delivery of UPs where education holds the lowest area, i.e. only 3.90% respondents are satisfied with the service of UPs in the area of education which is the lowest (Aminuzzaman, 2010). In our study, all Managing Committee members agree that they did not get any support from the UPs for continuing education during and immediately after flood.

Regarding seeking cooperation from the UPs, 7 Head Teachers and 7 Managing Committee Members say that Managing committee sought help from the Union Parishad for continuing education. All Head Teachers say that they did not get any help. Similarly, the same number of respondents say that Union Parishad is more serious about relief, repair, VGF, and other activities than helping to continue

education during flood. But realizing the importance of continuing education during flood, Mark Pierce, Country Director of Save the Children in Bangladesh suggests, "While life-saving aid like shelter, food and clean drinking water is being distributed to affected communities, we must think about education in the same light and how we can get children back to the classroom as quickly and safely as possible." Similarly, all agree that there is no contingency plan for continuing education during flood. This view is reflective of the unpreparedness of our authorities for facing any natural calamities.

Regarding suggestions for continuing education, the Managing Committee members say that roads should be elevated, building on high places should be built as cyclone shelter center which can be used as alternative places for education during flood. Messer (2003) recommends similar measures for that. He says that to mitigate the risk of flood, the plan should consider three phases, such as, pre-emergency phase, emergency phase and post emergency phase. Union Parishad should take proper steps to reduce the risk of flood, such as, construction of dams to tackle flood, implementation of building codes, risk mapping as well as land zoning, construction of multistoried school building, establishment of necessary bridge and culvert, sustainable road construction and so on. Prevention, mitigation and preparedness are important in pre-emergency phase.

Though the UP Chairmen and members are not involved in the decision-making process of selecting and building school buildings, they should at least be made accountable to people and the local administration so that they are bound to arrange and plan for alternative building and places for conducting classes during and after flood. Messer (2003) also suggests that in the post emergency phase, in the aftermath of flood, Union Parishad should coordinate with Upazila Parishad and District Council to take long-term

programs which will have long term benefits for the community (Messer,2003). But the findings reveal a complete failure of the Standing Committees (EHSC and DMSC) of Union Parishads to extend their cooperation to the schools in continuing education during and after the flood.

### **Recommendations**

The research critically analyzed the role of Union Parishad, especially of Standing Committees in ensuring child education during flood. EHSC and DMSC should work together to facilitate the educational environment, infrastructure and educational materials for all flood affected children. Where they feel the necessity of support, UZPs can provide technical, financial and other related support. SC should meet on regular basis and remain free of corruption. Thus, SC can have the trust and confidence of the community which will indirectly empower UPs as well as SCs. The UP chairmen should also be involved in the process of selection of places and construction of school building. As the grass root level representatives, their opinions can better help the authorities implementing the school construction activities in this regard.

### **Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of the study is the inadequate literature review. As there is not sufficient research on the topic in the context of Bangladesh, the researchers could not discuss the topic in detail in the Literature Review section. The number of samples is another issue of limitation. The samples are 10 from each category and the sampling technique was selected on the basis of convenience, not random process. It uses data from only one Union Parishad. The method and research design could have been more valid and credible if 2/3 more UPs could be used for data collection.

## CONCLUSION

In many developing countries, disasters hamper the universal education campaigns. Flood causes significant negative impact on child education, especially, it increases the rate of absenteeism at school, the rate of dropout from school, non-completion of syllabus, sufferings from scarcity of educational equipment, psychological hazards faced by students and so on. So, from this research, it is clear that education of school-going children especially at grass root level and the educational infrastructure are most vulnerable during flood. Though mainstream media report the loss of primary education for flood, the real loss both physical and educational is much higher than reported in the media. This research highlights the inadequate role and efforts of Union Parishads to minimize the physical and academic loss of primary education. The research indicates that Union Parishads have never been sincere about finding out alternative building which could be used as classroom during and after flood. Rather the schools were used as shelter centers for the flood-affected people. The study reveals the utter failure of the committees concerned (EMSC and DMSC) of Union Parishads to have contingency plan for primary education during and after flood. As Union Parishad is a grass root level local government organization and the chairmen and members are elected by the people, it is their moral and legal obligation to ensure the basic necessity of that locality. Union Parishad and its SCs are the right entities to involve the community, civil society, NGOs, government organizations to ensure the right of children to education during immediately after flood.

## REFERENCES

Ahmed et al. (2017). Social innovation in education: BRAC boat schools in Bangladesh. *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research* 7(20) DOI 10.1186/s40497-017-0077-z

- Ahmed, P. (2013). A flood of opportunity. *RTNN*.  
<http://www.english.rtnn.net/newsdetail/detail/12/62/55046#>.  
 VipkZsl961s.  
 Accessed 23 Oct 2015.
- Aminuzzaman, S.M. (2010). Local Government and Development in Bangladesh Lessons Learned and Challenges for Improving Service Delivery of Union Parishad (UP). <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339840312>  
 doi: [10.13140/RG.2.2.24539.92967](https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.24539.92967)
- Antara, N.F. (2021). Bangladesh children at 'extremely high risk' from climate crisis. *The Dhaka Tribune*.  
<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2021/08/24/bangladesh-children-at-extremely-high-risk-from-climate-crisis>.
- Habiba U., Jui F.T.Z., Meem T.M. & Kabir F. (2021). Disaster and Education: Impact of Flood on School Going Children at Keshabpur Upazilla in Bangladesh. *Journal of Disaster & Emergency Research*. 4(2): 81-92.
- Kabir, M., Khan, A. R.& Guda, R.S. (2014). *Improving Services: The Role of Union Parishad Standing Committees* (Unnayan Shamannay, with the support of USAID and SDLG),6. <https://dokumen.tips/documents/improving-services-the-role-of-union-parishad-standing-the-role-of-union-parishad.html>.
- Kabir S. (2012). *Study of geo-climatic vulnerability and its response in the settlement pattern in coastal areas of Bangladesh*.  
 URI: <http://lib.buet.ac.bd:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/3054>
- Messer, N.M. (2003). *The Role of Local Institutions and their Interaction in Disaster Risk Mitigation: A Literature Review*, 4., 1-56. [www.fao.org/3/a-ad710e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-ad710e.pdf).
- Monteiro, A. R. (1989). *The right of the child to education: what right to what education?*

- (2010, Elsevier Ltd), 1989. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.12.433  
[www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)
- Mudavanhu, C. (2014). The impact of flood disasters on child education in Muzarabani District, Zimbabwe' 6 *Jamba: Journal of Disaster Risk* 1, 1.doi:10/4102/jamba/v6i1.138<http://www.jamba.org.za>
- Nkala,D., Molin -Valdes, H. & Graziosi, A. (2010). *Local Governments and Disaster Risk Reduction (United Nations Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Report, ISDR, ITC and UNDP)*, 5. [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/13627\\_LocalGovernmentsandDisasterRiskRedu.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/13627_LocalGovernmentsandDisasterRiskRedu.pdf).
- The Local Government (Union Parishad) Act* (2009) section 47 and schedule II <http://www.clcbd.org/document/536.html>.
- Union Parishad Operation Manual* (2012). Local Government Division of Bangladesh <https://www.lgsplgd.gov.bd/en/up-operational-manual/>
- Unplanned acts responsible for prolonged floods. *The Daily Star*, 2017, August 01, <http://www.thedailystar.net/country/unplanned-acts-responsible-prolonged-floods-1441720>.
- 1.8 million children out of school as South Asia floods put long term education at risk. *Media Release of Save the Children* (online)(2017,August 31) [https://www.savethechildren.org.au/about-us/media-and-publications/media-releases/media-release-archive/years/2017/1.8\\_million-children-out-of-school-as-South-Asia-floods-put-long-term-education-at-risk](https://www.savethechildren.org.au/about-us/media-and-publications/media-releases/media-release-archive/years/2017/1.8_million-children-out-of-school-as-South-Asia-floods-put-long-term-education-at-risk)