



Reflection on the National Strategy on Internal Displacement Management (2021) in the Ashrayan Guideline (2010-2022) of Bangladesh

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The views and opinions expressed in this report are solely the author’s, and do not reflect the views of the organisation implementing the PAMAD project, nor of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.

Cover photo credit: Abbas Ali Mallick, (a displaced person from Satkhira district)

This report has not undergone professional editing.

1. Introduction

In 2021, the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) adopted the National Strategy on Internal Displacement Management, a pivotal step in addressing the country's growing displacement crisis. The strategy was developed with the goal of advancing the targets outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Delta Plan 2100, ensuring that the displaced population is not excluded from the development process. As a country highly vulnerable to climate-related hazards such as floods, tropical cyclones, storm surges, and droughts, Bangladesh faces regular disasters that severely impact its infrastructure, livelihoods, and the displacement of individuals and communities. The country's unique geographical location, combined with its socio-economic vulnerabilities, makes it especially prone to the devastating consequences of climate change. Displacement is one of the most significant impacts of climate change, further complicating the nation's struggle to manage its environmental and developmental challenges.

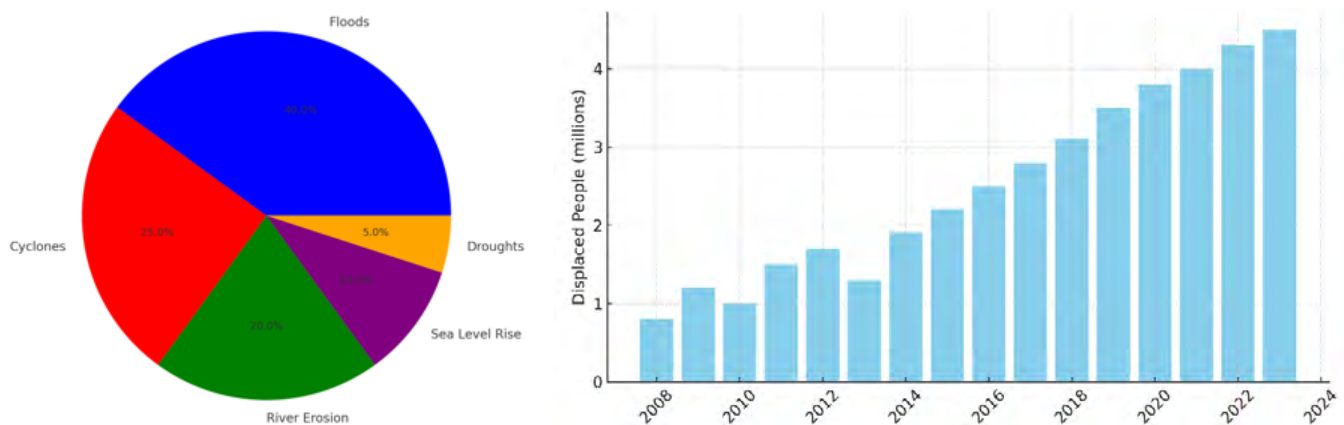
The situation has become increasingly dire in recent years. Data from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) highlights the scope of the displacement crisis, with 18.8 million displacements recorded in Bangladesh between 2008 and 2023, caused by 117 disasters, primarily weather and climate-related. Over 1.8 million people were displaced in 2023 alone. In addition to the immediate impacts of extreme weather events, slow-onset processes such as rising sea levels, water scarcity, declining agricultural productivity, and heat stress are directly contributing to displacement and migration. These displacements occur in both coastal and inland regions. Rising sea levels, tidal flooding, tropical cyclones, and storm surges are major drivers of displacement in coastal areas, with research suggesting that sea level rise could submerge up to 13% of the country's coastal land by 2080, displacing millions of people (DoE 2023). In addition to coastal threats, riverbank erosion and river flooding are prominent drivers of displacement in the mainland regions, particularly in the northwestern districts, which regularly experience droughts. The environmental stresses induced by these disasters are compounded by economic challenges, such as the salinity intrusion of cultivable land, which threatens the livelihoods of the coastal populations reliant on agriculture (DoE 2023).

Looking ahead, according to the Groundswell report 2021, without substantial climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, more than 216 million people worldwide may be displaced by 2050, with South Asia, including Bangladesh, being one of the hardest-hit regions. Projections suggest that by 2050, one in every seven people in Bangladesh could be displaced due to climate-related factors (Clement et al. 2021).

Figure 1.1: Displacement overview of Bangladesh [Source: IDMC (2024)]



Figure 1.2: Displacement drivers and year wise displacement in Bangladesh [Source: DoE (2023)]



Displacement in the context of disasters and climate change poses a serious challenge to the country's socio-economic stability and will necessitate comprehensive strategies to manage the phenomenon and safeguard the resilience of affected populations. The urgency of addressing the phenomenon has gained international attention, with global frameworks like the Cancun Adaptation Framework and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction highlighting the need for coordinated action on this issue. Bangladesh' National Strategy is part of a broader commitment to disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA), aiming to integrate displaced populations into national development processes and safeguard their rights.

A key government initiative aimed at alleviating the plight of displaced persons is the Ashrayan-2 Project. It is a programme designed to provide homes for displaced and homeless people based on the Asrayan guideline (2010-2022). The Ashrayan project has been launched in 1997. The first phase of this project, known as Ashrayan-1, made significant strides in providing homes to the most vulnerable and climate affected people in different districts of Bangladesh. With plans to build 139 multi-level buildings in Cox's Bazar for 4409 homeless families, the project evolved in a new dimension in its second phase, known as 'Ashrayan-2'. The objective of the Ashrayan-2 project is to alleviate poverty by ensuring housing, land, skill development training, microfinance, healthcare and social security for landless, homeless and displaced families. In addition, various aspects such as women's empowerment, social security, human resource development and environmental sustainability have also been emphasized throughout the programme. However, the project has also faced criticisms, including allegations of corruption, which have hindered the equitable distribution of resources. Despite these challenges, the Ashrayan Project remains an essential part of the GoB's efforts to provide stability and security to displaced populations in the face of increasing climate threats.

The National Strategy is an ideal framework for addressing the policy alignments and the gaps of the Ashrayan guideline (2010-2022). This analysis can provide important insights to guide both the policy interventions and their implementation process, in order to ensure a rights-based resettlement for those displaced in the context of climate change.

2. Rationale of this paper

Displacement, whether due to disasters, climate change, or other man-made factors, poses serious threats to the rights and well-being of affected populations. It leads to a wide range of human rights challenges, from compromised safety and security to unequal access to essential services. Given the gravity of its implications, it is crucial to examine how national policies and guidelines address it, in alignment with broader national and international frameworks. Analysing the Ashrayan guideline (2010–2022) within the context of the National Strategy is necessary to ensure that the project addresses the full spectrum of issues faced by displaced populations and contributes meaningfully to their rights-based resettlement.

Based on the resettlement-focused Ashrayan Guideline (2010–2022), the Ashrayan Project has rehabilitated over 555,000 landless, homeless and displaced families since its inception. As such, it represents a critical intervention in providing shelter and social security to vulnerable groups, as well to reduce poverty and promote inclusive development by offering safe housing, economic empowerment through skill development, and access to microfinance. These efforts have significantly contributed to alleviating the challenges faced by displaced populations. However, to ensure that these interventions are effective in the long term, the Ashrayan guideline (2010–2022) needs to be analysed to see how it remains responsive to the evolving landscape of displacement in Bangladesh. The National Strategy, specifically its sections of the durable solutions (phase- 4.2 and 4.3), as well as international frameworks like the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) 2015–2030, the Nansen Initiative's Protection Agenda and the process undertaken by the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD), provide a blueprint for this analysis.

Displacement has numerous implications that extend beyond physical shelter. Affected individuals and communities often experience gender-based violence, family separation, loss of documentation, inadequate upholding of their rights, and insufficient access to livelihood opportunities. These challenges are compounded whenever a comprehensive strategy that address the prevention of displacement and the provision of durable solutions lacks. Recently, the GoB has adopted the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 that aims to achieve a 'safe, climate-resilient and prosperous Delta' by 2100. It underscores the necessity of managing migration flows through systematic interventions to reduce stress on urban areas of destination. The past initiatives by the government have shown notable gaps. Neither the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (MoEFCC, 2005) has prescribed any adaptation programmes or projects related to the issue of disaster and climate induced internal displacement (DCIID) nor its leading climate change strategic framework, the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (GoB, 2009), had prescribed any adaptation plan for internal displacement. The Disaster Management Act (GoB, 2012) has not also included prevention of displacement and durable solutions in its mechanism. Similarly, the Standing order on Disaster (SOD) 2019 (GoB 2019) does not explicitly include 'prevention of displacement and 'durable solutions' for displaced persons in its focus and objectives.

The National Strategy follows existing global frameworks and initiatives which stress the importance of proactive risk reduction and the protection of displaced populations through rights-based measures. It includes ensuring safe evacuation, access to essential services, and the eventual provision of durable solutions through return, local integration or resettlement and ensures active participation of the displaced in the planning and the implementation phase. This framework also emphasise the need for systematic data collection on displacement. The Ashrayan guideline could incorporate several of these approaches to improve programmatic interventions and enhance monitoring and feedback mechanisms. Moreover, the Ashrayan Project's focus on skill development and economic empowerment is particularly relevant in the context of Bangladesh's growing vulnerability to displacement in the context of disasters and climate change. Especially in urban areas, it is crucial to equip displaced populations with the skills and resources needed to reintegrate into society or establish self-sufficiency. Comparing the Ashrayan guidelines and the National Strategy will ensure that the project's objectives are in line with both national and global commitments. By doing so, the project can become a more integral part of a long-term, coordinated strategy that addresses the root causes of displacement, provides adequate support for displaced populations, and ensures their integration into broader national development goals. This would also contribute to the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to poverty reduction, gender equality, and climate action.

The Ashrayan Project represents a vital intervention in addressing the housing needs of displaced populations in Bangladesh. However, to enhance its impact and sustainability, its guidelines must be critically analysed – and the National Strategy provides a solid framework to do so. Such an analysis will ensure that the Ashrayan Project not only provides immediate relief but also contributes to the long-term resilience of displaced communities in Bangladesh.

3. Objectives

Specific Objectives of this paper are to:

- a) Highlight the major features of both National Strategy on Internal Displacement Management (2021) and the Ashrayan Guideline (2010-2022)
- b) Explore areas of the Ashrayan Guideline (2010-2022) that are aligned with the activities of the National Strategy on Internal Displacement Management (2021).
- c) Identify the strategic gaps of the Ashrayan Guideline (2010-2022) in comparison with the National Strategy on Internal Displacement Management (2021).

4. Major Features of the Ashrayan Guideline (2010-2022) and the National Strategy on Internal Displacement Management (2021)

4.1 The Ashrayan Guideline (2010-2022)

The primary objective of the Ashrayan Project is to reduce poverty by addressing the fundamental needs of the most vulnerable populations, including landless, homeless, and displaced individuals affected by climate change impacts and disasters like cyclones, floods, and river erosion. By providing essential services such as land, housing, access to clean drinking water and food distributions, the project aims to offer immediate relief to those struggling with homelessness and food insecurity. Additionally, the initiative extends support through training, loans, and healthcare, empowering individuals to rebuild their lives and improve their economic conditions.

In addition to meeting basic survival needs, the Ashrayan Project emphasizes sustainable development by offering income-generating activities and developing utility networks. The project also focuses on enhancing transportation facilities and promoting environmental sustainability through tree plantation initiatives. By addressing a broad spectrum of challenges, from shelter and food security to health and economic empowerment, the Ashrayan Project strives to create long-term positive impacts for communities hit by disasters and displacement. The specific objectives of the Ashrayan Guideline (2010-2022) are to:

- i. Rehabilitate of the landless, homeless and displaced vulnerable poor community
- ii. Enable the landless, homeless and displaced vulnerable poor community to earn their livelihood through providing them with loan and training
- iii. Alleviate poverty by creating income boosting activities.

i. Rehabilitation of the Landless, Homeless, and Displaced Vulnerable Poor Community

The rehabilitation of landless, homeless, and displaced communities is the main goal of the Ashrayan Project. Following disasters, displaced persons, particularly those who are landless or living in vulnerable conditions, are often left without adequate shelter or basic services. In response to this, the Ashrayan Project provides **shelter assistance** in the form of constructing **safe and disaster-resilient housing** for displaced families. Through the Ashrayan Project, the government also provides **land ownership** to displaced families, particularly on khas land (state-owned land), allowing them to build homes on legally recognized property. This process ensures that displaced individuals have a permanent place to live, thus restoring their dignity and securing their future. In addition, the project improves access to basic services such as water, sanitation, and electricity.

ii. Empowering the Community to Earn Livelihoods Through Loans and Training

The second objective of the Ashrayan Project is to empower the landless, homeless, and displaced communities to earn a sustainable livelihood and be able to support themselves economically. The project addresses this need by offering **micro-loans** to families so that they can start small businesses or engage in income-generating activities. Loans are usually provided with favorable terms, allowing individuals to purchase necessary tools, materials, or equipment for their trade. This helps reduce the dependency on external aid and empowers individuals by giving them the financial means to improve their economic situation. The project also offers **training programs** that focus on skill development in various areas such as **agriculture, livestock farming, handicrafts, fishing**, and small-scale businesses. These training programs are designed to be practical, hands-on, and aligned with the local context and available resources, ensuring that participants can apply what they learn immediately and can make the most of the financial resources they are provided with. The focus of these programs is also on **gender equality**, with special attention given to women, who are often the most vulnerable in these communities. Many women are provided with training in income-generating activities that they can do at home, such as tailoring, poultry farming, or producing handicrafts, enabling them to contribute economically while also managing household responsibilities. By supporting women's empowerment through training and loan facilities, the Ashrayan Project addresses gender disparities and promotes economic inclusion, which is critical for sustainable development.

iii. Alleviating Poverty Through Income-Boosting Activities

One of the core objectives of the Ashrayan Project is to alleviate poverty by creating income-boosting activities for displaced communities. Poverty is often a consequence of displacement, as individuals lose their homes, livelihoods, and access to resources. The project works towards alleviating poverty by providing **financial assistance, skills training, and access to markets**. With the support of micro-loans, displaced individuals can engage in a wide range of activities such as agriculture, small businesses, and crafts. These income-generating activities help families to meet their daily needs, send children to school, and improve their overall standard of living. The project also promotes **income diversification** as a strategy to reduce vulnerability. For example, farmers are encouraged to adopt **sustainable agricultural practices** and engage in agro-based activities such as fish farming, poultry, or vegetable cultivation. Such activities also help to enhance food security in these communities. Additionally, the project fosters **market linkages**, helping small producers access local markets for their products, thereby increasing their income opportunities. **Microfinance** plays a key role in the poverty reduction efforts of the Ashrayan Project. The availability of loans helps displaced families to invest in income-generating activities that can improve their economic stability. The strategy includes supporting the establishment of **local cooperatives** and **community groups** where community members can pool resources, share knowledge, and provide mutual support. This approach fosters collective growth and resilience among communities, which is essential in addressing long-term poverty.

Furthermore, the Ashrayan Project integrates **social protection** measures into its framework by ensuring that vulnerable families continue to receive support in times of need. This includes ensuring access to social safety nets like **food assistance, healthcare, and education**, which are essential for breaking the cycle of poverty. By creating a multi-faceted approach to poverty alleviation that combines shelter, livelihood support, and social protection, the project makes significant strides towards improving the overall wellbeing of displaced and landless populations. The Ashrayan Project is a vital initiative that supports the rehabilitation of landless, homeless, and displaced communities in Bangladesh. By providing shelter, loans, training, and income-generating opportunities, the project empowers vulnerable populations to rebuild their lives and overcome poverty. The focus on **sustainable development, community engagement, and gender equality** ensures that these efforts have a lasting impact. Through the Ashrayan Project, the GoB is not only addressing immediate needs but also laying the foundation for long-term social and economic stability for vulnerable populations across the country.

4.2 The National Strategy

The National Strategy presents a comprehensive framework focusing on individuals and communities displaced internally in the context of climate change and disasters. Its primary aim is to establish a feasible and inclusive rights-based framework that protects and upholds the rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs) (MoDMR, 2021). The National Strategy emphasises the responses needed in three critical phases—pre-displacement, during displacement, and post-displacement—covering all forms of climate and disaster-induced displacement to bolster the nation's resilience and response efforts. It stands on the principles and approaches recognized in relevant international good practices frameworks – the SFDRR, the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda.

The Ashrayan Guideline mainly deals with the local integration and resettlement, which are covered by sections 4.2 and 4.3 of the National Strategy, on durable solutions. Therefore, this paper mainly reflects on the alignment and the policy gaps between the Ashrayan Guideline and section 4 of the National Strategy. Through durable solutions, the main objective of the State is to rehabilitate those affected by displacement and ensure their reintegration with dignity, in accordance with the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions. A durable solution is achieved when displaced persons no longer require specific assistance or protection needs linked to their displacement. To address displacement and avoid prolonged situations, three strategic solutions are proposed: (a) return to the place of origin once the disaster is over; (b) local integration or self-relocation when return is not possible; and (c) planned relocation to a third location under government initiative if neither of the previous solutions is feasible.

Rights-based framework: The National Strategy builds upon fundamental human rights principles of ensuring that individuals and communities are entitled to sufficient standards of treatment, protection, and access to services, resources, and opportunities, also incorporating Bangladesh's commitments to the SFDRR, the Paris Agreement, and the PDD. The strategy significantly focuses on ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, has access to the same opportunities and protections. As a rights-based framework, governments and other stakeholders are accountable for upholding and respecting these rights. The strategy ensures that no one is denied their rights based on characteristics such as race, gender, disability, or socioeconomic status and it would emphasize inclusivity in all its provisions as well as including mechanisms for people to have a say in policy development and implementation, ensuring that marginalized or underrepresented groups are included. This makes it a needs-based framework inclusive of vulnerable groups such as women, children, and persons with disabilities irrespective to their sex, age, religion and cast.

Acknowledging the eight key elements identified by the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions, the strategy provides a comprehensive approach to address the varied needs of displaced persons at national and sub-national levels.

The National Strategy (2021) outlines 22 specific targets to address the durable solutions to the climate and disaster risks. To achieve these targets, the National Action Plan (2022–2042) identifies 53 activities necessary for their implementation, with a detailed focus on both the rehabilitation of displaced persons and their planned resettlement.

Local Integration: In cases where environmental conditions deteriorate to the point that it is no longer feasible for displaced individuals to return to their original areas, such as due to riverbank erosion or salinity intrusion caused by rising sea levels, local integration becomes a viable solution. This process involves displaced persons rebuilding their lives in the areas they have moved to, rather than returning home. Additionally, proper rehabilitation should be offered for slum dwellers and displaced persons in case of eviction, with low-cost housing facilitated through partnerships with the private sector and NGOs. Community-based initiatives, such as lending, renting, or selling land, should be explored, and displaced persons should be encouraged to engage in community-based farming while also gaining access to loans. The strategy also recommends for special provisions to facilitate labor migration for displaced families to diversify their sources of income. Furthermore, local integration should involve both displaced persons and host communities in the process, ensuring that benefits reach the poor sections of the local population to avoid potential conflicts.

Resettlement: When return and local integration are not feasible, resettlement becomes necessary for those who are permanently displaced and continue to face vulnerability. This section focuses on providing displaced persons with access to new land, housing, livelihood opportunities, and financial resources, while also addressing the social, cultural, and political aspects of their new environment. It also advocates for meaningful participation from affected

communities, emphasizing inclusivity and non-discrimination. government should work with various ministries to identify suitable land for resettlement, including government-owned Khas land that is not prone to disasters. Moreover, public land holdings should be reviewed to select long-term resettlement sites, potentially through land reclamation efforts and land set-aside programs. Additionally, resettlement sites should offer livelihood support, ensuring access to job markets for marginalized groups, including women and ethnic minorities. Partnerships with the private sector are vital for developing and maintaining these sites, as well as for hiring displaced persons in both local and regional sectors. To ensure successful resettlement, participatory planning processes, risk assessments, and adherence to international norms must guide site selection and the development of housing and infrastructure. The government of Bangladesh is now working with various ministries to identify suitable land for resettlement, including government-owned Khas land that is not prone to disasters as well as looking for public land holdings to select long-term resettlement sites.

4.3 Prevention of Displacement

While the Ashrayan Guideline (2010–2022) does not focus on the prevention of displacement, many preventive interventions laid out in the National Strategy's section 2 are relevant to resettlement and rehabilitation processes. Article 2.3.3, for instance, highlights the need for increasing the resilience of the people vulnerable to displacement through livelihood diversification, including off-farm livelihoods and SMEs and better access to social security. It also advocates for a special provision in the government's social security policy by ensuring the portability of rights as well as incorporating the rights of the IDPs and roles of the Government towards them in the current and future acts and policies related to disaster and climate change so that the IDPs can continue enjoying their social security even after displacement.

The article 2.3.4 of the Strategy highlights increasing the resilience of the agricultural practices through up-scaling of hazard resistant agricultural practices for food security by establishing Char Development Authority to ensure proper use of Char land by identifying and conserving potential Char areas through survey and making the land habitable. Ensuring access of IDPs to these projects should be a priority basis. Both of these sections can be applied in the durable solutions phase thus can be incorporated in the Ashrayan Guideline as rehabilitation and resettlement tools.

This section emphasizes various key measures to address displacement and enhance resilience in vulnerable communities. The strategy begins with **understanding the risks and providing decision-making support**. This includes the collection and periodic updating of field data on displacement, overseen by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) and local committees. To strengthen **climate and disaster risk governance**, the strategy recommends the development of specialized laws, regulations, and programs. It suggests revising Section 17 of the Disaster Management Act (DMA) of 2012 to establish a national committee on displacement. **Investing in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA)** is a core component of the strategy. Article 2.3.18 focuses on designing and developing disaster resilient cluster housing for the vulnerable landless people with land tenure security and market access through Public-Private NGO partnership. It also recommends that resettlement sites should be close to livelihood places, schools, health care services and good communication facilities and suggests for initiating pilot project on this if necessary.

The government prioritizes improving early warning systems, conducting awareness campaigns, and utilizing social media for community communication. To support livelihood diversification, the strategy encourages the expansion of hazard-resistant agricultural practices and the introduction of crop insurance. Vulnerable households should also receive skills training for off-farm livelihoods and international short-term labor migration. The strategy also calls for the creation of **employment opportunities and alternative livelihoods** in regions vulnerable to displacement. It recommends establishing urban growth centers at regional and district levels to provide formal employment and reduce population pressure on mega-cities. Furthermore, enhancing transportation services and providing subsidized transport for displaced individuals is crucial. Finally, the **Climate-Disaster Risk Responsive Land Use Plan and Programme** focuses on identifying high-risk zones and restricting construction in these areas. Indeed, the strategy promotes the development of low-cost housing with essential civic amenities outside vulnerable zones. In the article 2.5.5, the strategy indicates the need to prepare city plans to provide urban migrants with housing away from environmentally vulnerable regions, to prevent them from being trapped in marginal locations. It also emphasizes

the need to design land use policies to enable the effective identification of all public/*Khas* land by zones and *mouzas*¹ in order to promote access to basic rights for the displaced persons. In addition, the national strategy advocates for arranging low-cost rental opportunity for migrants as a further option to establish climate resilient housing, if the provision of land and housing ownership is not viable.

4.4 Protection During Displacement

As a resettlement guideline, the Ashrayan Guideline should more clearly and extensively focus on protection during disaster and displacement. The National Strategy highlights this issue in its section 3, focused on **strengthening humanitarian and disaster relief assistance** and **protecting fundamental rights of displaced persons during displacement**.

In its sub-section on strengthening humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, the Strategy prioritises the assessment of the needs of the displaced population in accordance with international standards. The protection of livestock is also a crucial element, as it contributes to the livelihoods of displaced families. To effectively manage displacement, the first step involves assessing the needs of the displaced population in accordance with Sphere Standards, covering essential life-saving areas such as water supply, sanitation, food security, shelter, and health. The National Strategy stresses that family members should not be separated during evacuations. It advocates for the establishment of a national displacement tracking systems and the timely registration of displaced individuals and families as a foundation of all protection and assistance efforts.

In its sub-section on protecting the fundamental rights of displaced persons during displacement, the Strategy calls for the active participation of displaced persons in all efforts to provide education, vocational training, livelihood development programmes, health and nutrition services, social allowances, and social security programmes.

The key objective of the section is to uphold the constitutional rights and entitlements of displaced individuals while ensuring their safety and security. Access to adequate housing and shelter is another priority of the section. In Article 3.2.3, it is stated that displaced persons must be provided with temporary accommodation that meets basic standards of safety and dignity until permanent solutions are found, in cases where access to land is necessary, consultations with the Ministry of Land and adherence to national land use policies will be prioritized to create common pool resources for displaced persons.

5. Areas of the Ashrayan Guideline that are aligned with the National Strategy on Internal Displacement Management (2021)

The Ashrayan Guideline highlights for compulsory dialogue between displaced persons and local communities through local administration and local government institutions. This is operationalized through the Dispute Resolution Committees or community leadership by including displaced persons in grievance redressal system. A similar provision is highlighted in the articles 4.2.6. and 4.2.9. of the National Strategy. Both documents make provisions to facilitate family reunification, particularly focusing on the situation of dependent members, including children, members with disabilities and older people through the rigorous monitoring of missing persons and a system of announcements in local and national dailies, local satellite TV and radio programmes. Article 4.3.1. of the National Strategy calls for effective participation of displaced individuals and partnership with affected communities in all resettlement actions. In order to enable inclusive and effective participation, article 4.3.1 emphasizes the need for a non-discriminatory process for rehabilitation, planning, and implementation for the vulnerable irrespective of their religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and disability status, through their representatives in the resettlement sites. The Ashrayan Guideline also calls for the active participation of the displaced as well as partnership with affected communities in the resettlement actions.

Both the Ashrayan guideline and the National Strategy urge to preserve existing social and cultural institutions, rebuilding social networks, and promoting livelihoods in resettled communities. The National Strategy additionally

¹ A *Mouza* (also spelled *Mauza*) is an administrative land unit that denotes a village or a cluster of villages which has historically served as a unit for revenue collection. It is commonly found in South Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and parts of India, typically encompasses a defined area that may include one or more settlements.

calls for participatory planning processes, developing monitoring mechanisms and grievance procedures, providing compensation for lost assets, maintaining housing and land tenure for resettled residents, and ensuring that resettlement sites are environmentally healthy and robust in the face of climate change in the article 4.3.2.

Article 4.3.3 of the National Strategy calls for the identification of suitable sites and land for future resettlements in consultation with different ministries, especially the Ministry of Land, Ministry of Housing and Public Works, the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives, and the real estate sector. This requires identifying *Khas* land in areas that are not exposed to disasters, marking it for resettlement projects and discouraging the distribution of this land to others. In particular, the Strategy calls for the allocation of 20% of *khas* land to IDPs for the activities covered in sub-section 4.2.3 and for building the awareness in this regard among the concerned officials of different ministries, as well as the public.

The Ashrayan Guideline and the National Strategy align with each where they recommend to provide shelter to families who become landless, displaced, and shelter less due to river erosion, within a short time and on a priority basis, and rehabilitate them in the nearest government Ashrayan/Adarsha Gram project areas. Both documents indicate that this process should follow the National Rural Development Policy (2001). The Strategy also emphasizes the importance of public-private-NGO partnership for making arrangements for low-cost social housing schemes in resettlement sites.

6. Policy gaps of the Ashrayan Guideline in comparison with the National Strategy

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- ➔ The National Strategy advocates for the benefit of the displaced persons dwelling in urban informal settlements, consistently with the provisions detailed in the Draft National Urban Sector Policy, 2014 regarding in-situ upgrading and improvement of slums, resettlement of slum dwellers, and tenure security of urban poor. The Ashrayan Guideline has no provisions for urban slum dwellers who are also landless, homeless and displaced from different parts of Bangladesh. In this regard, the guideline could be aligned to activities 1,2,3 and 4 of article 4.2.1 of the National Strategy which advocates for the rapid implementation of the National Urban Policy 2014, including through the provision of accommodation facilities for displaced persons not only in the master plan of Upazila, but also at the municipality level.
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- ➔ The Guideline also needs to be more inclusive to the displaced both in the upazilas and the cities by considering support to the construction of low-cost multi-storied public housing in urban areas to offer low-rent housing to the displaced and engage private sector or NGOs in the management of low-rent public housing projects (as detailed under the article 4.2.2 of the National Strategy).
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- ➔ The idea of community-based initiatives such as community-based farming and accessing to loan facilities from the article 4.2.3 of National Strategy can be another good practice that can be followed in the Ashrayan Project areas. According to the 3rd activity of this article, identifying different *khas* lands and preserving 20% of it for the displaced will make relevant land allocation activities more specific and inclusive.
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- ➔ The Ashrayan Guideline emphasizes alternative livelihood generation, but could be strengthened insofar employment creation is concerned. According to articles 4.2.4 and 4.2.5 of the National Strategy, undertaking economic, social and cultural projects and establishing growth centers in the areas where the homeless, landless, and displaced people have resettled in the post-disaster period can be effective to promote the well being of resettled communities.
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- ➔ When the homeless, landless and displaced community resettle in a new place, they need support measures that promote their participation in the new community's cultural, social, and political and public life. But the Ashrayan Guideline does not provide indications to support this kind of responses. The National Strategy, instead, covers this issue in its article 4.2.7. The Strategy suggests teaching displaced children dance, poetry, singing, painting and drama through various cultural facilities and events, and engaging people living in nearby areas in various social and cultural events such as: International Mother Language Day, Pohela Boishakh, Independence Day and religious ceremonies.

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- ➔ One of the prominent policies of the Ashrayan Guideline is that it advocates for the ownership title deed/ownership acknowledgment and registration to formalise the land tenure situation of individuals. However, it does not provide for the restoration of relevant documentation which allow the resettled persons to have unimpeded access to relevant services, nor for the registration of the displaced population with Election Commissions. It is a necessity that the displaced persons receive National ID (NID) cards in their new residence, so that they can exercise their right to participate in elections as candidates and as voters like other Bangladeshi citizens. These issues are addressed in the National Strategy in its articles 4.2.8 and 4.2.10. The National Strategy stresses the need to relax document requirements in displacement situations, suggesting that displacement certificates could be used to enable the provision of services by various governmental and non-governmental organizations. It also indicates the need for coordination to this end between the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief and the Election Commission.
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- ➔ The Ashrayan Guideline does not cover the issue of public land holdings and selection of possible long-term resettlement sites through land set-aside programmes. Article 4.3.4 of the National Strategy, instead, suggests creating such practices, in order to enable to resettle displaced persons in those areas by establishing new economic zones, or on the newly emerging Chars on the sea and different riverbeds by ensuring all necessary environmental protection measures. The learning from Char Development Settlement Project (CDSP) can come handy in this respect. In the Ashrayan Guideline, 'Khas Land' is mentioned but no provisions are made to preserve relevant land records, whereas in its article 4.3.5. the National Strategy advocates for the establishment of a *Khas* Land Bank to preserve all types of records on *Khas* land by types, locations, distribution status, the status of dispute resolution, and so on.
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- ➔ In the Ashrayan Guideline there is no mention of community land trusts – rather, relevant interventions are usually designed to give full registry of land and house to the direct beneficiaries, who cannot sell or rent the house to others. On the other hand, article 4.3.6. of the Strategy advocates for creating and encouraging the use of community land trusts. Community land trusts ensure that land remains held in common over time. This ensures that land allocated to disaster and climate-induced displaced persons will be available for use by newly displaced persons as other people eventually move to new locations elsewhere – making this policy more concrete and specific.
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- ➔ Article 4.3.9. of the National Strategy promotes participation of the private sector in developing and maintaining the rehabilitation sites and encourages the private sector actors at the local, regional and national levels to hire people who have experienced displacement. This type of provision is absent in the Ashrayan Guideline, apart from advocating broadly for job support and livelihood generation measures.
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- ➔ Article 4.3.10 of the National Strategy indicates the need to set up self-contained community living spaces. These can be created under public ownership in peri-urban locations. The lower floors should be designed as marketplaces, childcare centres, doctors' chambers, pharmacies, barbershops, etc. while the upper floors should be rented out in small units to displaced persons so that the footway of urban locations can be kept free. The article also emphasizes the need to create employment opportunities for the displaced families through renting the shops at low costs and providing low-cost accommodation facilities to the displaced persons. It also stresses the roles of different stakeholders' process, including the government (that should retain ownership of the structures), private sector actors (that should be involved in their construction and maintenance), and NGOs (that can be involved in managing the self-contained communities).
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- ➔ Article 4.3.11 of the National Strategy calls for consistency of the resettlement measures with existing international norms. It highlights the importance of avoiding forced relocations, pushing instead for ensuring alternative housing and land provision, in consultation with displaced persons, based on the experiences and principles developed at the international level.
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- ➔ Article 4.3.12 of the National Strategy calls for the participatory processes to select a resettlement site to include a risk assessment, whose findings should guide all further planning and consultation. This provision should also be applied in all interventions supported by the Asharayan Guidelines.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparison between the Ashrayan Guideline and The National Strategy reveals both alignments and gaps in their approaches to housing and poverty alleviation. The Ashrayan Guideline focus primarily on providing affordable housing solutions for the underprivileged, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups like the homeless and landless individuals. This policy prioritizes immediate shelter needs and aims to ensure basic living standards for those in dire need. On the other hand, the National Strategy offers a broader, more comprehensive vision for long-term national development, incorporating detailed attention to socio-economic factors as diverse as employment, infrastructure development, and sustainable growth. While both policies are aligned in their ultimate goal of improving the living conditions of marginalized populations, the Ashrayan Guideline concentrate more on immediate interventions, whereas the National Strategy adopts a more integrated, multi-faceted approach that considers various dimensions of poverty alleviation.

In essence, the Ashrayan Guideline could better reflect (and be informed by) the structural reforms and systemic change aimed at uplifting vulnerable populations, aligning to the more holistic approach adopted by the National Strategy. Better alignment would support more impactful interventions, leveraging the strengths of each to create a more sustainable and inclusive path to national development.

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