



# Making the Coastal Embankment Improvement Project Right-based in light of the National Strategy on Internal Displacement Management

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# 1. Introduction

Bangladesh's exposure to cyclones and tidal surges has demanded the construction of coastal embankments to protect lives, farms and assets. The existing coastal embankment systems which extend across 14 districts have failed to fully safeguard against extreme weather events, which are becoming increasingly severe and are expected to further intensify due to climate change. Under the Coastal Embankment Improvement Project – Phase I (CEIP-I) (2013) the Government of Bangladesh began to develop stronger embankments (MoWR, 2013). The project design exclusively works on infrastructure development, leaving scope for the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) to better consider displacement issues in its implementation, building synergies with the on Internal Displacement Management (2021)<sup>1</sup> (hereinafter, the 'National Strategy').

This document examines the integration of displacement matters in embankment improvement through a comparison between the CEIP-I and the National Strategy. The analysis examines how to develop an inclusive method for dealing with climate-caused population displacements in Bangladesh through examining the policy variations between National Strategy and CEIP-1.

## 2. Rationale and Objectives

The geographical position and morphological features of Bangladesh lead to high susceptibility to disasters, including cyclones with associated coastal flooding and tidal incursions. In order to mitigate these impacts, over the past decades the country has developed an extensive coastal embankment system, which today spread across 14 districts and protects 139 polders with a total length of 3,430 km. The present embankment system, however, lacks sufficient capability to protect land from the stronger cyclones associated with climate change impacts. CEIP-I aims to fortify the existing coastal embankments through an upgrade process in order to protect vulnerable coastal regions by safeguarding cultivated areas and the population that resides within these zones.

The National Strategy, instead, works as a framework to comprehensively address the growing challenges associated with internal displacement in the context of disasters and climate change. Various climate-related events that affect Bangladesh led to substantial population displacement throughout the country. The government acknowledges the necessity to systematically handle these occurrences and their acute impacts.

This paper examines the overlaps between CEIP-I and the National Strategy to enable the government to achieve maximum success with its interventions for displaced persons. The analysis aims to identify interventions within CEIP-I that support the National Strategy. It will also identify the elements of CEIP-I that lack displacement-related provisions and propose tailored solutions for incorporating such elements within the project framework for better displacement management.

**The specific objectives of this paper are to:**

- Explore areas of CEIP-I that are aligned with the activities of the National Strategy.
- Identify the areas of CEIP-I whose relevance for displacement management could be strengthened.
- Suggests ways to integrate displacement issues in CEIP-I.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Strategy on Internal Displacement Management (2021) established a complete system to manage people displaced by natural disasters and climate change effects within national borders. The plan adopts national and international standards including Sendai Framework and UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement to provide rights-based displacement management. The policy recognizes the main role of stakeholder involvement along with interministerial cooperation in its implementation cycle for risk reduction and displacement protection and sustainable resettlement (MoDMR, 2021).

### 3. Major Features of the Coastal Embankment Improvement Project – Phase I (CEIP-I)

In 2013, the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) initiated CEIP-I as its primary initiative to strengthen the coastal embankment infrastructure in Bangladesh. The initiative represents one phase of a more extensive endeavor to implement comprehensive solutions against climate change impacts, severe cyclones and tidal surges (MoWR, 2013).

CEIP-I focuses on improving the embankments of 17 polders extending across 618 km in Bagerhat, Barguna, Khulna, Satkhira, Patuakhali and Pirojpur (MoWR, 2013), and will be executed over fifteen to twenty years. The main targets of CEIP-I include to:

- Boost coastal embankments' protective strength against the combined impacts of sea-level rise and cyclonic storms.
- Enable ongoing agricultural productivity of more than 100,000 hectares through combined actions which prevent salinity intrusion and minimize flooding.
- Promote social inclusion by involving marginalized groups in operations that affect land acquisition practices.
- Incorporate social protection measures to handle the negative effects of land acquisition, forced resettlement, and other social impacts caused by the project.

#### 3.1 Main Interventions

The components of CEIP-I include:

- The re-sectioning process to strengthen embankments by adding new elements that increase their height and defensive capabilities against tidal waves and floods. Professional designs of embankments will allow these protective structures to sustain the impact of cyclones.
- A construction phase to develop new embankments in regions where present protective measures are insufficient, particularly in areas facing high flood risks.
- Protective bank maintenance works in sites with severe erosion problems to shield both property and infrastructure from harm.
- The installation of new hydraulic systems to better manage water flows and drainage and reduce waterlogging and improve agricultural output.

#### 3.2 Social Management and Resettlement Framework

The interventions under CEIP-I have extensive social effects, resulting from land acquisition and resettlement. These impacts are managed using the comprehensive Social Management and Resettlement Policy Framework (SMRPF). The framework indicates particular social protection objectives and actions which include:

- Social impact assessments to identify residents who could be displaced as their houses are subject to acquisition through land purchase.
- Detailed Resettlement Action Plans (RAP) to deliver compensation packages and resettlement support to assist displaced communities.
- Stakeholder meetings convened by BWDB with both affected households and local groups like government bodies and community organizations to promote transparency of decision-making and grievance resolution.

Throughout both the development and operational phases of the CEIP-I, project designers promote inclusive approaches that consider the specific conditions of women and marginalized populations residing in coastal regions to achieve equal opportunities for infrastructure benefits (MoWR, 2013). Specific initiatives have been established to promote women's participation in water resource management meetings as well as project rollout processes. The project addresses specific needs of women who encounter unique difficulties when relocating and economic challenges after resettlement. The project also created a strong monitoring and evaluation system to track physical works and their social impacts throughout its entire lifecycle (MoWR, 2013).



### 3.3 Expected Outcomes

If fully successful, CEIP-I should achieve the following objectives:

- The improvement of coastal embankment structures to protect over 700,000 residents who reside in the planned polder regions.
- The improvement of agricultural production and community livelihoods due to better embankment maintenance and decreased flooding risks and water salinity levels.
- The enhancement of social structures for resettlement, access to land, equitable resource sharing and community empowerment.

## 4. Major Features of the National Strategy

Bangladesh relies upon the National Strategy to address population displacement issues caused by disasters and climate change events. The National Strategy is organized around three phases, namely:

- **Pre-displacement:** Risk reduction and prevention efforts aim to minimize the effects of anticipated hazards that may trigger displacement during the pre-displacement period.
- **During displacement:** Protection measures together with assistance focused on immediate needs along with rights protection should be provided for displaced persons during displacement.
- **Post-displacement:** After displacement permanent solutions need to be implemented for people to recover in the long term with return home or adoption of local life or new settlement options.

The National Strategy clearly outlines the climate and disaster-related hazards which trigger internal displacement in Bangladesh such as floods, coastal and riverbank erosion, cyclones and storm surges, droughts, water-logging, salinity, landslides. The strategy serves as a basis for creating specific interventions to minimize and address these hazards, and related displacement (MoDMR, 2021). One fundamental strength of the National Strategy involves its multi-stakeholder nature. Through government programs the authorities aim to actively include a diversity of stakeholders, encompassing local communities, NGOs, development partners and civil society organizations in strategic planning and execution procedures. These participatory methods bring the needs and voices of affected populations directly into the decision-making procedure (MoDMR, 2021).

The National Strategy also seeks to modernize existing policies by including displacement management provisions into the Disaster Management Act (DMA) while building a National Task Force on Displacement (NTFoD) for inter-ministerial coordination (MoDMR, 2021). The strategy bases its implementation on human rights principles for handling displacement situations. All operations related to displacement should maintain consistent focus on protecting the rights and entitlements of displaced persons and guaranteeing their dignity and safety, while ensuring their well-being throughout the entire displacement cycle. Specific commitments include:

- Preventing displacement where possible.
- Protecting the rights of displaced individuals during emergencies.
- Facilitating durable solutions to displacement.

The strategy outlines particular measures to tackle issues affecting displaced populations. Such as:

- Establishing safe conditions that allow Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to return home voluntarily through dignified arrangements.
- Integrating livelihood opportunities and overall human development through all interventions targeting displaced persons.

Additionally, the National Strategy promotes the mainstreaming of displacement concerns across disaster management programs and policies across every sector (MoDMR, 2021). It also emphasizes the importance of monitoring and evaluation, which is handled by a sub-department under the Ministry of Disaster Management

and Relief (MoDMR). The monitoring system enables both performance tracking and lets stakeholders maintain accountability standards throughout the implementation phase. The M&E setup consists of:

- An oversight committee in charge of performing evaluations.
- A complete evaluation system with performance indicators to assess the strategy's success level.

The strategy seeks to protect vulnerable populations through specific interventions, and all of its interventions, across all displacement stages, actively address unique requirements of women, children, elderly people and persons with disabilities. (MoDMR, 2021).

Education and awareness programs should be implemented under this strategy because they will inform affected populations about their rights and available assistance networks. Increased awareness also allows displaced communities to better take part in strategic decisions and voice their requirements (MoDMR, 2021). The National Strategy supports research activities and data analysis to develop solid insights about displacement occurrence and patterns, which is required for developing effective policies (MoDMR, 2021).

Moreover, the approach builds displacement management programs with broader climate change adaptation initiatives, because displacement numbers are expected to increase due to climate change threats. Through adaptive measures the government aims to enhance the resilience of vulnerable communities, which will decrease future displacement occurrences. The National Strategy contributes to supporting national development objectives for Bangladesh, by promoting social cohesion, economic stability and well-being (MoDMR, 2021).

## **5. Alignment of Policies: Coastal Embankment Improvement Project and National Strategy on Internal Displacement**

The CEIP-I and the National Strategy represent major national policies which aim to handle displacement along with resettlement and livelihood arrangement initiatives in Bangladesh. CEIP-I addresses embankment development and enhancement, while the National Strategy develops a national approach to handle climate change and disaster-related internal displacements.

The CEIP-I notes a number of important resettlement issues, notably linked with the purchase of private lands, the relocation of informal settlers, and the resale of publicly leased lands. It ensures compliance with social safeguard policies to protect the rights of affected persons. To this end, CEIP-I is complemented by a comprehensive planning framework for resettlement that employs internationally-recognized effective practices to protect the welfare and dignity of displaced persons. The National Strategy underlines the impacts on human rights that displaced persons face because of insufficient security, losing their way of living, and challenges in attaining assistance. These shared strategic objectives, as well as the compliance of the two instruments with relevant laws and policies guaranteeing the fair treatment, protection, and assistance for displaced persons enables the two documents to strengthen each other on displacement-related matters.

Section E3 of CEIP-I acknowledges how land acquisitions and displacement may impact people, especially those who occupy embankment slopes as squatters or encroachers. Analysis under the Social Impact Assessment revealed that both short-term and long-term displacement risks exist from embankment enhancements and new hydraulic infrastructure constructions. The compensation and rehabilitation program in CEIP-I includes measures to reduce adverse effects of displacement while ensuring equitable compensation. The National Strategy (section 4.3.1), instead, stresses the need to involve all affected communities in the resettlement planning and execution without any form of discrimination. It establishes that no person shall be subjected to discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, gender, place of birth or disability in the course of resettlement processes. The National Strategy also stresses the need to plan ahead to ensure that displacement is handled with dignity and fairness. Both policies therefore recognize the need to address displacement and resettlement concerns in an inclusive manner. CEIP-I is focused on impact assessment and mitigation, whereas the National Strategy offers a more comprehensive approach to fair resettlement. The policies aim to manage displacements and resettlements effectively, so that impacted people get the necessary support and protection.

Section E10 of CEIP-I lists measures for reducing the negative consequences on vulnerable groups such as squatters and encroachers by giving them priority in programs that support (re-) employment and restoration of their livelihoods. CEIP-I incorporates the social safeguard policies to ensure that affected persons are adequately compensated and employed to secure their livelihoods. According to the National Strategy (section 4.3.8), economic assistance should be provided in resettlement areas. The strategy includes specific directives for job access opportunities that aim to benefit women from marginalized communities, ethnic and religious minorities, persons with disabilities, elderly individuals and the poor. The strategy recognizes training programs and stable work opportunities as crucial components for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to reestablish their lives in their relocation areas. The two documents share a common understanding of the need to provide Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) with the means for sustainable self-support. The National Strategy takes a more comprehensive view on employment and social inclusion and CEIP-I focuses on mitigation measures within the project. Both policies aim to avoid that displaced persons find themselves stranded in affected or resettlement areas without employment and economic aid.

Both policies emphasize the avoidance of further land acquisition, especially for resettlement sites that can pose additional risks. The CEIP-I focuses on the optimization of land for the project, while the National Strategy deals with planning for land use in the country on a national scale. The policies ensure that resettlement is done in a sustainable manner, with minimum conflicts over land resources.

## **6. Reform of Coastal Embankment Improvement Project – Phase I to Incorporate the Interest of Displaced Persons**

This document outlines the specific aspects that can be incorporated to CEIP-I in order to effectively represent the interests of displaced persons, especially in the areas of human rights protection, livelihood restoration, land acquisition, and displacement management.

The acquisition of private land, eviction of squatters, and recovery of public land that has been leased out are among the major resettlement challenges identified by CEIP-I. Despite following social safeguarding principles, more attention should be paid to protecting the rights of displaced persons beyond relocation and compensation. The human rights issues that displaced people deal with, like insecurity, loss of livelihoods, and trouble getting aid, are highlighted by the National Strategy. In order to take a more robust rights-based stance, CEIP-I should:

- Create autonomous grievance redress mechanisms.
- Offer vulnerable populations long-term social protection programs;
- Ensure that displaced persons have access to advocacy and legal assistance.

The National Strategy takes preventative steps through early vulnerability assessments so communities do not need to be displaced. The National Strategy supports both comprehensive embankments strengthening as a risk reduction measure and proper land use planning to keep vulnerable areas clear of settlements and comprehensive early warning systems along with disaster preparedness programs. Long-term rehabilitation and sustainable relocation sites together with community integration remain out of scope within the current CEIP-I framework. The preventative approach that National Strategy integrates enables CEIP-I to lower the number of displaced communities and reduce their overall displacement impacts.

The National Strategy establishes mandatory protocols for offering complete assistance to displaced persons through necessary aid programs, access to essential services, protection measures and skill training programs which protect their dignity while providing security and equal opportunities. The CEIP-I fails to provide for sustainable livelihoods and access to labour markets for displaced people. The National Strategy principles need integration into CEIP-I through multiple steps that include temporary work opportunities, training programs with income generation potential, and joint public-private sector projects alongside relevant assistance services for displaced communities to rebuild.

The substantial social impact of land acquisition and community displacement—especially for squatters and encroachers living on embankment slopes—is acknowledged by CEIP-I. The project's Social Impact Assessment (SIA) revealed the possibility of either temporary or permanent displacement as a result of new hydraulic systems and embankment improvements. However, a methodical approach to the long-term rehabilitation and integration

of displaced people is absent from the current framework. In order to ensure that displaced persons have a say in decision-making and that rehabilitation plans take into account their long-term requirements, CEIP-I should embrace the National Strategy principles by implementing organized community involvement procedures.

CEIP-I has a strong emphasis on reducing the loss of agricultural land and forced resettlement. It describes methods to lessen the adverse effects on squatters and encroachers, among other vulnerable groups, by giving priority to livelihood restoration projects and access to employment opportunities – but only to a limited degree. The necessity of providing livelihood support in resettlement regions is emphasized by the National Strategy. The National Strategy seeks to create opportunities for marginalized populations which include women, people with disabilities, members of racial and religious minorities and low-income groups. Long-term economic opportunities for displaced people could be better established if CEIP-I integrated the recommendations of the National Strategy through specific vocational training, skill development and employment placement initiatives. By integrating the National Strategy livelihood approaches into CEIP-I, displaced households can avoid long-term economic instability.

Every effort is made by CEIP-I to prevent further acquisition of private land. It promotes looking into other design possibilities to limit construction within the areas occupied by existing embankments. However, the project does not fully support the determination of permanent relocation sites and the protection of resettled households' security of tenure. In cooperation with relevant ministries, the National Strategy supports finding appropriate relocation sites and opposing the use of disaster-prone land for human habitation. In order to comply with the National Strategy criteria, CEIP-I should:

- Determine which government-owned khas land is available for resettlement projects.
- Ensure that people in resettlement sites have access to basic services and security of tenure.

Bangladesh's displacement management will be far more sustainable and effective if CEIP-I is reformed in accordance to the National Strategy principles. Livelihood initiatives, land acquisition reforms, and the rights-based approach of the National Strategy can be incorporated into CEIP-I to address displacement issues. In addition to meeting immediate relocation requirements, the updated CEIP-I might give impacted communities long-term opportunities.

**Table 1.1:** The alignments between National Strategy and CEIP-I and the scopes to incorporate the Interest of the Displaced

Sl no. Theme	National Strategy	CEIP-I	Alignment	Scope to Incorporate
<b>❶ Rights-Based Approach for Displacement</b>				
	The National Strategy underlines the impacts to human rights that are posed to displaced persons because of insufficient security, losing their way of living, and attaining assistance.	The CEIP-I ensures compliance with social safeguard policies to protect the rights of affected persons.	The CEIP-I does comply with the social safeguard policies, and the National Strategy covers a wider scope of human rights for those displaced.	Despite following social safeguarding principles, more attention should be paid to protecting the rights of displaced people beyond relocation and compensation in CEIP-I.
<b>❷ Prevention of Displacement</b>				
	The National Strategy supports both comprehensive embankments strengthening as a risk reduction measure and proper land use planning to keep vulnerable areas clear of settlements and comprehensive early warning systems along with disaster preparedness programs.			Early warning systems and disaster risk reduction programs together with improved embankment resilience should be integrated into CEIP-I to reduce displacement effects according to the principles established by the National Strategy.



Sl no. Theme	National Strategy	CEIP-I	Alignment	Scope to Incorporate
<b>③ Protection During Displacement</b>				
	The National Strategy establishes mandatory protocols for offering complete assistance to displaced persons through necessary aid programs alongside essential service access and protection measures and skill training programs which protect their dignity while providing security and equal opportunities.			CEIP-I fails to include temporary labor work and necessitates training programs with income generation potential and joint public-private sector projects alongside relevant assistance services for displaced communities to rebuild.
<b>④ Displacement and Resettlement</b>				
	Section 4.3.1 stresses the need to involve all affected communities in the resettlement planning and execution without any form of discrimination. It establishes that no person shall be subjected to discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, gender, place of birth or disability in the course of resettlement processes.	According to section E3, the compensation and rehabilitation program in CEIP-I includes measures to reduce adverse effects of displacement while ensuring equitable compensation.	Both the policies recognize the need to address displacement and resettlement concerns and the need to involve all stakeholders. The policies guarantee that displacement is not only managed effectively but also that impacted people get the necessary support and protection without discrimination.	A methodical approach to the long-term rehabilitation and integration of displaced people is absent from the current framework in CEIP-I.
<b>⑤ Vulnerable Households and Livelihood Support</b>				
	According to the National Strategy section 4.3.8, economic assistance should be supplied to resettlement areas. The strategy includes specific directives for job access opportunities that aim to benefit women from marginalized communities as well as ethnic and religious minorities and persons with disabilities together with the elderly population and poor.	According to Section E10, the main goal of the CEIP-I is to provide measures for reducing the negative consequences on vulnerable groups such as squatters and encroachers by giving them first priority in terms of employment and restoration of their livelihoods.	The two policies share a common understanding of the need to provide Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) with the means for sustainable self-support. The National Strategy takes a more comprehensive view on employment and social inclusion and CEIP-I focuses on mitigation measures within the project.	Access to sustainable employment and long-term economic reintegration are not fully addressed by CEIP-I. The necessity of providing livelihood support in resettlement regions is emphasized by the National Strategy.
<b>⑥ Land Acquisition</b>				
	The National Strategy section 4.3.3 suggests working with relevant ministries to find appropriate places for resettlement while also blocking the setting aside of land that is prone to disasters for human settlement. It also recommends that government khas land be used for resettlement projects so that communities can be relocated to environment friendly areas, safe for habitation.	According to section E14, the CEIP-I intends to minimize additional acquisition of new private land by any means feasible. It promotes the shifting of design construction within the existing alignments of the embankment in order to reduce displacement.		There are shortcomings in determining permanent relocation sites and guaranteeing resettled households' security of tenure in CEIP-I.

## 7. Conclusion

Joint review of the National Strategy and CEIP-I showed overlapping implementation areas. Both the policy and the project demonstrate multiple shortcomings according to the review analysis. CEIP-I lacks a systematic method for efficiently addressing displacement, despite its emphasis on fortifying embankments to reduce coastal hazards. The National Strategy, on the other hand, offers a thorough national framework for governance of displacement, with a focus on livelihood restoration, social protection, and interventions grounded on human rights. Better integration of the principles of the National Strategy could help communities displaced in coastal areas and due to the construction of embankments receive sufficient support beyond simple resettlement.

While CEIP-I aims to primarily protect people, land and assets against hazards, it has the potential to better support the objectives of the National Strategy for managing displaced populations, notably through the incorporation of a rights-based protection framework alongside sustainable resettlement and structured livelihood initiatives. The durability of affected populations will grow through policies that create economic reintegration programs and distribute equal payments to victims and invite all stakeholders to participate. The National Strategy along with CEIP-I functions to prevent vulnerable communities from accidentally becoming displaced following embankment upgrades which lack appropriate protection measures.

The alignment between the National Strategy and CEIP-I will back Bangladesh's national development targets alongside its duty to implement sustainable disaster management practices that include inclusive risk reduction strategies and improved coastal defenses to maintain human dignity.

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