



# Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100: an Analysis from a Displacement Perspective



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**Publication date: June 2025**

This report has been authored by **Munia Tahsin**, Research Officer at the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), under the project titled “Action and Support to Avert, Minimize and Address Displacement Related to the Adverse Effects of Climate Change (PAMAD)”.

The author sincerely acknowledges the review and guidance provided by Lorenzo Guadagno at the PDD Secretariat. Appreciation is also extended to Md. Lutfor Rahman, Project Manager of the PAMAD Project at ICCCAD, and Nishat Tasnim, Research Officer at ICCCAD, for their continuous support throughout the analysis process.

The PAMAD Project is jointly implemented in Bangladesh by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Secretariat of the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD).

The PAMAD Project is made possible by the generous contribution of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad).

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.

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This report has not undergone professional editing.

# 1. Background

Bangladesh, as a low-lying deltaic country, faces significant displacement risks driven by its geographical features and frequent natural hazards, including riverbank erosion, flooding, cyclones, storm surges, and salinity intrusion. Riverbank erosion alone displaces around 50,000 people annually, while flooding remains a widespread and escalating threat, with projections indicating increased flood-prone areas by 2030 and 2050. Coastal regions face further risks from cyclone-induced storm surges and salinity intrusion, affecting millions of people and vast areas of arable land. Additionally, rural displacement, driven by environmental stress and resulting into rapid urban growth, is leading to strained resources in major cities. The interplay of climate risks, poverty, and inequality continues to amplify vulnerabilities, positioning displacement as a critical issue for Bangladesh's sustainable development and disaster risk management agenda.

As part of its initial implementation phase leading up to 2030, the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (BDP) has identified 65 priority projects aimed at addressing the country's most pressing water and climate-related challenges. These projects are strategically designed to enhance resilience across six critical delta hotspots. Focused on mitigating risks from coastal flooding, river erosion, salinity intrusion, and water insecurity, the projects also target food security, environmental restoration, and strengthening urban resilience. By prioritizing these interventions, the plan seeks to protect vulnerable communities, improve livelihoods, and safeguard essential ecosystems in the face of escalating climate threats.

## 2. Objective

The main goal of the BDP is to establish a safe, climate-resilient and rich delta by the year 2100. By means of efficient water management and interventions to minimise climate and disaster risks, the plan seeks to guarantee sustainable economic growth, food security, environmental protection, and population welfare. Through integrated and forward-looking delta management techniques, Bangladesh intends to become a climate-resilient, water-secure, high-income country.

## 3. Analysis of the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100

The BDP is structured into three major components, which provide a detailed roadmap for sustainable delta management:

- Strategy and Implementation,
- Baseline Study and Assessment, and
- Investment Plan

This tripartite framework offers a long-term vision and allows to prioritize strategies aligned with national development goals. It effectively integrates climate risk assessments with sectoral priorities, including water management, agriculture, urban development, environmental protection, and disaster resilience. Additionally, the inclusion of financial needs assessments and institutional governance frameworks enhances the plan's operational clarity. However, while the volumes are thorough in scope, a critical gap lies in the limited details that are provided for their operationalization at the local government and community levels, where the bulk of climate risks are confronted and managed, and related impacts (including displacement) occur. Further, while financial projections are outlined, clear mechanisms for resource mobilization and international financing partnerships remain underexplored. Strengthening these aspects could improve the plan's practical viability and ensure equitable benefits for marginalized and hazard-prone populations.

Moreover, the Plan identifies six geographic “hotspots” where the risks associated with natural hazards and disasters, including displacement, are highest:

- Coastal Zone
- Barind and Drought Prone Areas
- Haor and Flash Flood Areas
- Chattogram Hill Tracts
- River Systems and Estuaries
- Urban Areas.

## 4. Displacement-Related Content

While displacement is not a primary focus of the BDP, some of its provisions are indirectly connected to displacement issues. Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to disasters associated with natural hazards, which are the leading cause of displacement throughout the country. National planning initiatives, therefore, have the main goals to reduce disaster risk and enhance community resilience, by adopting Adaptive Delta Management (ADM) concepts that stress flexible, long-term, and focused expenditures. Security from water-related disasters (the main trigger of displacement nationwide) has been given top priority within this framework. Consequently, the BDP defines selection criteria for projects that focus on lowering vulnerability and enhancing adaptive capabilities. Moreover, the framework identifies six displacement-prone hotspots and supports the implementation of particular sub-programmes in some of these areas – such as the work to address land erosion and loss driving displacement in riverine char regions.

Topic	Page(s)	Key Points
Natural hazards & displacement	3	Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to natural hazards, which can cause displacement.
Mission: reducing vulnerability	5	Reducing vulnerability to disasters and building resilience is a core objective.
Investment for resilience	4	Investments target climate resilience and reducing displacement risk.
ADM principles	5-7	Flexible, adaptive planning to reduce displacement risk.
Security from water disasters	6	Priority given to security from disasters (main cause of displacement).
Project selection criteria	6-7	Projects must reduce vulnerability and be adaptive.
Hotspots identified	7	Six hotspots where displacement risk is highest.
Sub-programmes (e.g. chars)	8	Grouped projects address displacement drivers (e.g. land loss).

## 5. Selected Focus Areas and Implementation Measures Related to Displacement in the BDP

The BDP tackles displacement as a concern associated with natural hazards, disasters and climate change. The plan does not offer a stand-alone displacement strategy, rather it combines actions meant to lower the potential occurrence of displacement and associated needs for protection and assistance, and manage its impacts by means of long-term, integrated planning.

**Reducing Migration Pressures:** The BDP seeks to lower urban migration by roughly 60%, and out-migration from coastal and riverine areas by 50%. Investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, better water management, and enhanced livelihoods in less developed areas is a precondition to achieving these objectives.

**Adaptive Delta Management:** The BDP adopts an adaptive management approach, focusing specifically on six climate-vulnerable hotspots. In order to lower threats including flooding, erosion, and salinity intrusion, it plans for measures as diverse as building embankments, restoring wetlands, and sustainable land use planning. ADM ideas centre on flexible, gradual interventions and “no regret” investments to steer clear of expensive, permanent projects until absolutely necessary. “No regret” strategies deliver positive outcomes under a wide range of possible futures, including extreme or uncertain conditions. This approach is meant to avert and minimise displacement risks by means

of adaptation to changing surroundings. Projects are evaluated for their capacity to adapt to changing physical conditions in the short, medium, and long terms as well as for their potential to offer "no regret" benefits which means gaining positive results from an action which will lower displacement risk.

**Institutional Coordination:** The BDP is a cross-sectoral agenda requiring coordinated action from multiple ministries, local institutions, communities, and the private sector. The General Economics Division (GED) has been tasked with coordinating, facilitating, and monitoring its implementation, supported by a dedicated Delta Wing. Effective roll-out demands strong inter-agency coordination through platforms like the Delta Governance Council and inter-ministerial forums. These bodies are crucial not only for aligning policies and investments but also for integrating displacement and other human mobility issues into broader development and climate resilience initiatives, ensuring no vulnerable group is left behind.

**Investment Plan:** The Investment Plan under the BDP is designed to enhance Bangladesh's resilience to climate change. It prioritizes mobilizing both public and private investments, including climate finance. Notably, public expenditure constitutes 99% of the total Investment Plan, while only 1% is projected to come from private sources through seven pilot public-private partnership (PPP) projects. These initial PPP initiatives are intended to demonstrate viability, creating opportunities to expand private sector engagement in the future. However, it is important to note that the total anticipated expenditure within the current Investment Plan remains below the financial resources the Delta Plan aims to secure, indicating a gap between planned actions and available funding.

## 6. Gap analysis

Although the BDP marks a significant first step towards long-term, climate resilient development for Bangladesh, it does not include comprehensive, explicit consideration of displacement in the context of disasters and climate change, nor of approaches to address it. The plan primarily treats displacement as a consequence of natural hazards such floods, riverbank erosion, cyclones, and salinity intrusion, and considers its prevention as a subset or a product of successful disaster risk reduction and resilience building.

Both in rural hazard-prone areas and progressively crowded metropolitan centres, there is a lack of clearly-defined, focused plans and standalone initiatives especially meant to prevent or manage displacement, and assist and support displaced populations. Furthermore, although the strategy names six hotspots sensitive to climate change, it does not sufficiently specify what specific steps could be taken for the rehabilitation, protection, or resettlement of displaced people in these areas. This reflects in the investment priorities of the BDP, which essentially focus on the construction of infrastructure and the protection and rehabilitation of the environment for flood protection, river training, and land-use management, and do not integrate an explicit human-centered perspective.

As a consequence, the BDP does not fully develop issues such as livelihood restoration, housing solutions for displaced populations, social support systems, and long-term urban planning for climate migrants. This lack of consideration could lead to leaving displaced and underprivileged groups without sufficient institutional support, hence aggravating their social vulnerability in face of growing climate hazards. By integrating a more targeted displacement management approach, the implementation of the BDP could better help address these inequalities, which in turn would greatly enhance its relevance, inclusiveness, and long-term sustainability.