

Preparing and responding to floods in Bangladesh

The Bangladeshi chars are sandy islands and low-lying flood-prone areas at the edge of rivers that are frequently eroded and redeposited. The Chars Livelihood Project (CLP), an initiative of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), worked with char residents in Northern Jamuna to support livelihoods through asset transfer, homestead improvements to withstand flooding, water supply provision, and training and capacity building. The homestead improvements included a raised plinth that placed homes above the expected flood line. The plinths were designed to allow families to remain in their homes during extreme floods, prevent asset loss due to flooding, and so reduce the need to migrate to the mainland. Plinths were also intended to provide temporary shelter to other families that lacked plinths, as well as to their belongings and livestock.

In July 2007, sudden severe floods affected over 60 per cent of the country, with particular impact in Northern Jamuna. CLP responded with a relief effort that lasted for two weeks until the floods receded. The relief effort included food aid, water purification tablets, rescue operations, and livestock support. Livestock feed was provided for over 15,000 cattle over an eight-day period, sufficient for at least 90 per cent of the families in the project area. In addition, over 3,800 people were rescued, together with 3,375 cattle.

A customer satisfaction survey after the floods indicated very low levels of cattle mortality, with only 0.3 per cent of households reporting the death of cattle – a mortality rate similar to that of a normal period. Sheep and goat losses occurred in only 4.6 per cent of households, and again this was similar to a normal period. These results indicated that a combination of raised plinths to protect people and livestock, and the provision of animal feed had helped to prevent excess livestock mortality during the floods.

Source: Marks, M. and Islam, R. (2007) The CLP Flood Relief Activities (Aug 2007): Summary of Relief Efforts and Customer Satisfaction Survey, Innovation, Monitoring and Learning Division, Chars Livelihood Programme, Maxwell Stamp, DFID and Government of Bangladesh, London and Dhaka.