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Internally displaced persons in Bangladesh: Causes, and policy recommendations

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Abstract
This manuscript delves into the phenomena of internal displacement in Bangladesh, exploring its multifaceted causes, including environmental, political, economic, and social factors. The study draws upon five significant case studies: river erosion, ethnic conflict in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, post-election violence against religious minorities, economic displacement due to shrimp cultivation, and slum eviction for urban development. The paper concludes by offering recommendations for improving the lives of displaced persons, focusing on legal protection, rehabilitation, and long-term solutions.

Keywords: Internal displacement, environmental displacement, ethnic conflict, slum eviction, policy recommendations

Introduction
Bangladesh, a country born out of the turmoil of partition and the violent struggle for independence, has been deeply shaped by the phenomenon of displacement. This displacement, both at an individual and collective level, continues to affect the lives of millions of people. The history of Bangladesh, from the partition of Bengal in 1947 to the Liberation War of 1971, has been marked by large-scale forced migration and the subsequent struggles of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Displacement in Bangladesh, however, did not end with its independence, and in fact, continues to be a pressing issue that the country grapples with. Whether caused by environmental disasters, political violence, or economic shifts, internal displacement in Bangladesh is a systemic and enduring phenomenon that shapes the lives of marginalized communities (Feldman, 2004) [11].

Historical Context of Displacement
The roots of internal displacement in Bangladesh can be traced back to the violent events surrounding the partition of Bengal in 1947. The partition, a consequence of the British withdrawal from India, led to one of the most significant mass migrations in human history. People from both sides of the newly drawn borders—Bengalis from West Bengal and people from East Bengal—were forced to leave their ancestral homes due to religious and political tensions. This mass displacement during partition created long-lasting psychological and social scars, with many losing not just their homes but also their identities (Ferdous, 2021) [12].

Similarly, the Liberation War of 1971, which led to the creation of Bangladesh, displaced millions more. During the war, both political violence and territorial conflicts forced large segments of the population to flee their homes. Entire communities were uprooted, and millions of people sought refuge in neighboring countries or within the borders of Bangladesh itself. The war brought forth a host of internal displacements, some temporary, but many of them permanent, as families lost their homes and were never able to return to their previous way of life.

Ongoing Challenges of Internal Displacement
While these historical events were central to the emergence of displacement in Bangladesh, the challenges of displacement did not cease with the country's formation or its subsequent independence. The ongoing challenges of river erosion, political violence, and economic displacement continue to displace large numbers of people, creating a persistent problem in Bangladesh.

River Erosion: A unique environmental challenge that Bangladesh faces is its vulnerability to river erosion. As a deltaic country crisscrossed by major rivers such as the Jamuna, Ganges, and Meghna, Bangladesh is particularly susceptible to the forces of erosion. These rivers frequently change course, and entire villages are swept away, forcing their inhabitants to become displaced. The problem is most pronounced in the northern and central regions, where thousands of families lose their homes to the ever-encroaching riverbanks. Such displacement is not merely environmental; it also undermines the livelihoods of agricultural workers, who depend on fertile lands that are lost due to erosion. The victims of river erosion, often referred to as "Uthalis," find themselves with no place to go and are forced to rely on the charity of others. However, due to the lack of government policies and structures to address such displacement, these individuals are left in limbo, without the support they need to rebuild their lives (M. F. Islam & Rashid, 1970).

Political Violence: Another major factor contributing to internal displacement in Bangladesh is political violence, particularly along ethnic and religious lines. One of the most notable examples of such violence is the conflict in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), where indigenous communities have been displaced due to violent conflicts with the state. The issue of displacement in CHT is deeply connected to ethnic conflict, military occupation, and political marginalization. Although the 1997 peace accord between the government and indigenous groups has helped to reduce violence, the legacy of forced displacement still persists. Additionally, post-election violence, especially targeted violence against religious minorities, further contributes to the displacement of vulnerable populations, particularly Hindus. The growing role of sectarian identities in the political landscape exacerbates this issue, and many displaced persons continue to live in temporary shelters, struggling to find stability in a society increasingly marked by division (Badiuzzaman & Murshed, 2015) [4].

Economic Displacement: Economic displacement, driven by globalization and urbanization, is another major cause of internal displacement. In regions like the southwest of Bangladesh, the rapid expansion of shrimp cultivation has displaced agricultural laborers, who lose their land to large-scale corporate farming. This shift in land use disrupts traditional peasant economies and leaves workers without livelihoods. The impoverished rural populations, particularly women and children, face a double burden**:** they lose their means of sustenance while also being forced to migrate to urban centers, where opportunities for employment and shelter are scarce. The growth of urban slums, driven by both internal migration and rapid urbanization, has led to further displacement. The government's attempts to modernize and redevelop urban areas have often resulted in the forced eviction of slum dwellers and informal workers, compounding the problems of economic displacement (Dewan, 2023) [8].

Objective of the Paper

The objective of this paper is to explore the underlying causes of internal displacement in Bangladesh and to analyze the ongoing displacement challenges faced by affected populations. By presenting five in-depth case studies—river erosion, ethnic displacement in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, post-election violence, economic displacement due to shrimp cultivation, and urban slum evictions—the paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how displacement operates within the context of Bangladesh. Moreover, the paper seeks to highlight the systemic nature of internal displacement and the way it intersects with environmental, political, and economic factors.

Furthermore, this paper will offer policy recommendations aimed at addressing the underlying causes of displacement, protecting the rights of displaced persons, and ensuring their safe return, resettlement, and reintegration. It is hoped that by synthesizing the various causes of internal displacement, this paper can contribute to ongoing efforts to create sustainable solutions for displaced persons in Bangladesh and ensure that their rights are protected in the face of adversity. Through comprehensive policies and concerted actions, Bangladesh can work towards mitigating the impacts of displacement and creating a more inclusive society for all its citizens.

Environmental Displacement: River Erosion

The Geography of Bangladesh and River Erosion

Bangladesh is a deltaic country situated at the confluence of three major rivers: The Ganges, the Brahmaputra (known locally as the Jamuna), and the Meghna. The geography of Bangladesh is inherently prone to natural disasters and environmental changes, making it one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change and extreme weather events. The country is crisscrossed by an extensive network of rivers, many of which are prone to shifting courses and flooding. River erosion, a major environmental issue in Bangladesh, is caused by the dynamic nature of these rivers, particularly the Jamuna river, which is one of the most volatile and fast-flowing rivers in the region. River erosion occurs when the riverbanks are gradually worn away by the current, often exacerbated by seasonal flooding. This can lead to significant land loss, including farmland, homes, and entire villages. Over time, this shifting and erosion of riverbanks have forced communities to abandon their land and relocate. For a country like Bangladesh, where agriculture is a primary source of livelihood, the impact of river erosion is devastating. Families who have lived in the same area for generations find themselves losing their homes, agricultural fields, and source of income, often without adequate support or compensation (Metcalfe, 2003) [20].

Impact of River Erosion, Particularly Along the Jamuna River, on Local Communities

The Jamuna river, a continuation of the Brahmaputra, is notorious for its rapid flow and frequent changes in course, making it one of the most significant contributors to river erosion in Bangladesh. Its high speed and heavy monsoon rainfall cause frequent flooding, leading to massive erosion along its banks, especially in the central and northern parts of the country. Communities residing along the Jamuna river have been particularly vulnerable to these changes. The impact of river erosion on local communities is profound, as entire villages can be washed away within a matter of months. Homes, crops, and infrastructure are destroyed, forcing people to flee their land with little more than the clothes on their backs. The displacement of these

communities is not a one-time occurrence but a recurring challenge, as the river's unpredictable nature means that residents live under constant fear of losing their land. One of the most significant consequences of river erosion in these regions is the loss of agricultural land. For many families living along the Jamuna river, agriculture is their primary livelihood. The fertile soil of the riverbanks supports the cultivation of rice, vegetables, and other crops. However, as the river erodes the land, these families lose not only their homes but also their ability to make a living. This economic devastation often forces them to migrate to nearby urban centers or seek shelter in temporary camps, where they struggle to survive with limited resources (M. Rahman, 2013) [22].

Challenges of Managing Displacement Caused by River Erosion and Environmental Changes

Managing the displacement caused by river erosion in Bangladesh is fraught with challenges. The dynamic nature of the country's rivers makes it difficult to predict which areas will be affected next, and the scale of the erosion often exceeds local authorities' capacity to respond effectively. The lack of adequate flood management infrastructure, combined with the absence of long-term planning for riverbank stabilization, has left many communities vulnerable to the recurring threat of displacement.

Additionally, the lack of a comprehensive legal framework for addressing environmental displacement poses another challenge. While Bangladesh is a signatory to several international agreements on climate change and disaster management, the implementation of these agreements at the local level remains insufficient. The absence of a coordinated response between the government, local authorities, and humanitarian organizations means that displaced people often fall through the cracks and do not receive the support they need.

Furthermore, the migration of displaced individuals from rural areas to urban centers puts additional pressure on already overburdened cities. Urban infrastructure, such as housing, healthcare, and education, is unable to accommodate the influx of people, leading to the growth of informal settlements and slums. The lack of proper urban planning exacerbates the challenges faced by displaced populations, as they are forced to live in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions (M. Rahman, 2013) [22].

Policy Suggestions for Local-Level Environmental Planning and Disaster Management

To address the challenges of displacement caused by river erosion, the following policy suggestions are recommended**:**

1. **Community-Based Riverbank Management:** Local communities should be actively involved in riverbank management and disaster response planning. Implementing community-based initiatives that focus on riverbank stabilization, such as planting vegetation and reinforcing embankments, can help mitigate the impact of erosion on vulnerable areas.
2. **Long-Term Environmental Planning:** The government should prioritize long-term environmental planning that includes flood management, river erosion control, and land use policies. Investing in infrastructure such as flood control dams, embankments, and irrigation systems can reduce the frequency and severity of displacement caused by river erosion.
3. **Legal Framework for Environmental Displacement:** Bangladesh should establish a legal framework to protect the rights of those displaced by environmental factors, such as river erosion. This framework should include provisions for compensation, resettlement, and access to basic services, as well as ensuring the right to livelihood for displaced individuals.
4. **Improved Disaster Management Systems:** A coordinated disaster management system should be established, integrating local authorities, national agencies, and humanitarian organizations. This system should focus on providing timely assistance to displaced persons and ensure that temporary shelters are equipped with basic necessities such as food, water, and healthcare.
5. **Urban Planning and Resettlement:** The government should develop resettlement programs that focus on providing permanent housing and livelihood opportunities for displaced persons. This includes investing in affordable housing in safe areas and providing displaced individuals with the necessary resources to rebuild their lives.

By adopting these policy recommendations, Bangladesh can better manage the displacement caused by river erosion and other environmental changes, providing displaced communities with the support they need to rebuild their lives and secure a better future.

Ethnic Displacement in the Chittagong Hill Tracts: The Role of the Pahari Conflict

Background of the Ethnic Conflict in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), located in the southeastern part of Bangladesh, has historically been inhabited by diverse indigenous communities, including the Chakma, Marma, Tripura, and other indigenous groups, collectively referred to as the "Jumma peoples." These groups have distinct cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions, setting them apart from the Bengali majority. Traditionally, the region's indigenous peoples managed their land and resources independently, according to their own customs and systems, living in relative peace and autonomy. However, tensions escalated during the late 20th century as the Bangladesh government sought greater control over the region, leading to ethnic conflict.

The government's policy of settlement, particularly after the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971, brought large numbers of Bengali settlers into the CHT. While this policy aimed at improving infrastructure and fostering national integration, it led to increased competition over land, resources, and political power between the indigenous communities and the settler population. The indigenous groups perceived these actions as an effort to erase their identity and undermine their autonomy. The indigenous resistance culminated in the formation of the Jana Samhati Samiti (JSS), an armed political organization, which sought to protect their rights and self-determination. This resistance sparked a protracted and violent insurgency, lasting over three decades and marked by ethnic violence, forced displacements, and human rights abuses (Chakma, 2010) [6].

The Violent Conflict and Displacement Triggered by Pahari Settlers

The conflict in the CHT was primarily marked by violence between the indigenous people and the Pahari settlers. The influx of Bengali settlers, facilitated by government policies, often led to clashes as indigenous communities resisted the occupation of their land and resources. The government's security forces, including the military, were seen as aligned with the settlers, often providing them with legal rights and state protection, which marginalized the indigenous groups further.

This violent conflict caused extensive displacement of indigenous peoples, forcing them to flee their ancestral homes. Many were internally displaced within the CHT, while others sought refuge in neighboring countries, such as India. The indigenous communities faced land grabs, where Bengali settlers were often supported by the government in occupying indigenous lands, thus compounding the dislocation and destabilizing the social fabric of indigenous life.

The displacement went beyond physical relocation; it had deep cultural implications as well. Indigenous people were forced to abandon their traditional way of life, losing not only their land and homes but also access to resources vital for their survival. This disruption severely impacted their cultural identity and social structure, leading to the erosion of their unique customs, languages, and way of life (DES GENS, 2008).

The Post-1997 Accord Situation and Continued Displacement

In 1997, a peace accord was signed between the Bangladesh government and the Jana Samhati Samiti (JSS), aimed at resolving the ethnic conflict in the CHT. The accord acknowledged the rights of indigenous people, granting them some level of autonomy and pledging to return land taken from them. Despite these promises, the implementation of the peace accord has been slow and incomplete. The displacement of indigenous peoples continues, and they are still unable to return to their ancestral lands.

The influx of Pahari settlers has not abated, and in some areas, their settlement on indigenous land continues, violating the provisions of the peace accord. The government has failed to fully implement the land return clauses, and indigenous communities continue to experience discrimination in land access and resource allocation.

Although the military presence was reduced in some areas, it remains a formidable force in the region, often intervening in disputes between indigenous people and Pahari settlers. Reports of violence and harassment by security forces continue to plague the indigenous population, contributing to further displacement and instability in the region (Uddin, 2008) [28].

Forced Settlements and Land Occupations by Pahari Settlers and Military Personnel

A persistent issue in the CHT is the continued settlement of Pahari migrants on indigenous land. Despite the peace accord's provisions to halt new settlements, the government has not effectively enforced this provision. Pahari settlers, incentivized by government land grants and agricultural support, continue to encroach on indigenous territories.

This forced settlement, with government and military support, has escalated ethnic tensions and resulted in the continued displacement of indigenous peoples. In many cases, military personnel have been involved in land occupations, either directly or indirectly, providing support to Pahari settlers in occupying indigenous lands.

The demographic composition of the CHT has been dramatically altered, with indigenous communities being marginalized and displaced. The government's focus on large-scale development projects, such as infrastructure and agriculture, has neglected the needs and rights of indigenous peoples, leading to further alienation (Nasreen & Togawa, 2002) [21].

Policy Recommendations: Ensuring the Rights and Protection of Indigenous Peoples

To address the ongoing displacement of indigenous peoples in the CHT and safeguard their rights, the following policy measures are critical**:**

1. **Regional Autonomy:** The indigenous communities must be granted genuine autonomy in managing their affairs, particularly regarding land rights, resources, and governance. The implementation of the Peace Accord should be expedited, and indigenous representatives should have greater political and economic authority in the regional council.
2. **Land Protection and Return:** The government must honor the land return provisions of the 1997 Peace Accord. Indigenous lands occupied by Pahari settlers and military personnel must be returned, and strict measures should prevent further encroachment. Legal protections for indigenous land rights should be reinforced.
3. **Cultural and Social Protection:** The government must recognize and protect the cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples. Support for indigenous languages, traditions, and customs is essential to preserving their identity. Indigenous children must have access to education that respects their cultural heritage.

By adopting these measures, the government can take significant steps toward addressing the displacement and marginalization of indigenous peoples in the CHT, ensuring their rights and cultural identity are preserved.

Political and Religious Displacement: Post-Election Violence in Bangladesh

The Rise of Political and Religious Violence

Bangladesh, initially founded as a secular state in 1971, has over the years seen the increasing influence of religion in its political landscape. This shift has led to rising political tensions and, at times, violence directed at religious minorities. While Bangladesh was built on the foundation of secularism, the rise of political Islam and religious sectarianism has increasingly marginalized non-Muslim communities, especially Hindus, who were once a significant part of the population.

Religious fundamentalism has gradually permeated both political parties and societal movements, creating an environment where religion has become a central political tool. Political parties have leveraged religious sentiment to gain support, further escalating sectarian tensions. During times of political upheaval, religious minorities often find themselves scapegoated, their properties attacked, and their rights violated.

The political discourse has been shaped by these growing religious divides, undermining the pluralistic identity that Bangladesh was originally meant to uphold. The violent repercussions of political vendettas often fall hardest on religious minorities, particularly in the aftermath of national elections where tensions reach a peak (M. S. Islam, 2010) [19].

Impact of Political Vendettas and Sectarian Violence on Religious Minorities

In the wake of the 2001 national elections, the Hindu community in Bangladesh faced a brutal wave of violence. However, the violence was not just an isolated incident; it was part of a broader pattern of politically motivated violence aimed at religious minorities. This violence not only physically displaced communities but also inflicted long-lasting social, psychological, and economic harm on the victims.

- **Social and Psychological Impact:** The aftermath of the violence left many Hindu families uprooted from their ancestral homes, leaving them emotionally and psychologically scarred. The fear of ongoing violence continues to haunt these communities, especially in rural areas where political vendettas are more pronounced. Witnessing loved ones being assaulted or killed and the destruction of homes and sacred places has fostered a lasting climate of insecurity.
- **Economic Consequences:** Beyond the physical harm, the violence also had severe economic consequences. Many Hindus, who were engaged in trade, agriculture, or small businesses, saw their livelihoods destroyed. With homes and businesses lost, and no adequate compensation or state support, many were forced to migrate to urban areas or neighboring countries, further compounding their displacement and economic struggles.
- **Political Disenfranchisement:** The violence led to further political marginalization of religious minorities, particularly Hindus. The state, which should have protected its citizens, failed to provide adequate security or legal recourse for the victims. The lack of accountability for the perpetrators of the violence only reinforced the sense that religious minorities could not expect justice in Bangladesh's political system.
- **Religious Polarization:** The violence also contributed to increased religious polarization. Extremist groups, using inflammatory rhetoric, framed the Hindu community as a threat to Islam, which exacerbated religious division. This narrative further fueled mistrust and hostility between communities, making interfaith dialogue and coexistence more difficult.

Post-Election Torture and Persecution of Awami League Supporters

The political violence in Bangladesh, particularly in the aftermath of elections, often targets supporters of the ruling party. The Awami League, which has been the ruling political party in Bangladesh for significant periods, has found itself caught in the crossfire of politically motivated attacks. After the 2001 elections, supporters of the Awami League faced targeted violence from political opponents, often in the form of torture, physical attacks, and forced displacement.

During election periods, especially after elections that were deemed contentious or unfair, violence against Awami League supporters has been reported in various forms. Political vendettas often turned violent, with opponents using brutal methods to undermine Awami League support. These acts were particularly pronounced in rural areas, where the government's presence was weaker, and law enforcement was less likely to intervene. The victims of these politically motivated attacks were often left without recourse, as the state failed to provide adequate protection or hold the perpetrators accountable (Saidul Islam, 2011) [25].

Recommendations for Addressing Political and Religious Violence and Protecting Vulnerable Communities

To create a more inclusive society where political and religious violence no longer undermines the rights of citizens, the following steps are essential**:**

1. **Strengthening Legal Protections:** The government must strengthen its legal framework to address political violence, hate crimes, and religious discrimination. It must ensure that laws protecting the rights of religious minorities are robustly enforced, and that those responsible for violence are held accountable.
2. **Reaffirming Secularism:** Bangladesh must recommit to its founding principle of secularism and ensure that religious political movements do not gain undue influence in the political system. Political discourse should be secular, and all citizens, regardless of religion, should have equal rights and protections under the law.
3. **Protection of Religious Sites and Communities:** The government must provide greater protection to religious sites and places of worship, particularly those belonging to minority religions such as Hinduism. Special attention should be given to these sites during periods of political unrest to prevent desecration and destruction.
4. **Promoting Interfaith Dialogue:** Efforts must be made to promote interfaith dialogue and understanding. Government-led initiatives, in collaboration with civil society organizations, can create platforms for religious communities to engage in respectful dialogue, reducing tensions and fostering coexistence.
5. **Economic and Social Support for Displaced Minorities:** Religious minorities displaced by violence should receive adequate compensation, social support, and opportunities for economic reintegration. The state should help them rebuild their homes and businesses, offering financial aid and providing avenues for livelihood restoration.
6. **Political Accountability:** To restore trust in the political system, the government must take immediate action to hold those responsible for violence accountable, regardless of their political affiliation. This will send a clear message that political violence will not be tolerated, and the rights of all citizens, especially minorities, will be protected.

By taking these steps, Bangladesh can work towards addressing political and religious violence, ensuring the protection and inclusion of all religious minorities, and reaffirming its commitment to secularism and justice for all its citizens.

Economic Displacement: Shrimp Cultivation in the South-West

Impact of Globalization on Local Communities

Globalization, while bringing economic growth and development opportunities to many parts of the world, has also had adverse effects on local communities, particularly in developing countries like Bangladesh. One of the most significant examples of economic displacement due to globalization is the rise of shrimp cultivation in the southwest region of Bangladesh. As global demand for shrimp has increased, multinational corporations have increasingly invested in shrimp farming in coastal areas, displacing traditional agricultural communities and altering local economies.

The south-western region of Bangladesh, particularly the coastal areas bordering the Sundarbans, has been historically known for its agricultural practices, with the local population relying heavily on farming for their livelihoods. However, in the last few decades, shrimp farming has grown exponentially in the region, driven by the high global demand for shrimp, especially in European and North American markets. This rapid expansion of shrimp cultivation has brought significant economic changes to the region but has also caused immense displacement and disruption for local agricultural communities.

The increasing commercialization of shrimp farming, supported by both the Bangladeshi government and international markets, has led to the conversion of agricultural land into shrimp ponds. This process has been facilitated by large-scale investments, often from foreign companies, that have bought or leased vast stretches of land for shrimp cultivation. While this shift has generated substantial export revenue and economic growth, it has come at the cost of local farmers, who have lost their land and access to traditional livelihoods (Kabi *et al*., 2021) [19].

Displacement of Peasants and the Socio-Economic Transformation of Traditional Economies

The displacement caused by shrimp farming has brought about a fundamental transformation in the local economy. Once an agrarian society based on subsistence farming and small-scale agriculture, the affected regions are now increasingly dependent on the shrimp industry. However, the benefits of this transformation have been unevenly distributed. While large shrimp farms generate significant export revenues, much of the wealth generated from shrimp farming has flowed to multinational corporations, wealthy landowners, and investors, rather than benefiting the local communities.

Small-scale farmers and agricultural laborers, who were once the backbone of the rural economy, are now marginalized and excluded from the economic benefits of shrimp cultivation. Many have lost their land due to land acquisitions by shrimp farming companies, and those who remain are often left with only limited access to the resources needed to survive. This has led to growing income inequality and a widening wealth gap between rural elites and the displaced poor.

The socio-economic transformation has also led to changes in local social structures. Traditional farming communities, which were once self-sufficient and based on cooperative labor, are now fragmented as people are displaced from their land and forced to move to urban areas or become part of the low-wage labor force in the shrimp industry. This shift has undermined the communal bonds that once existed in these rural areas and has left many individuals vulnerable to exploitation and poverty (Ahmed, 2018) [2].

Gendered Impacts: Displacement of Women and the Rise in Female-Headed Households

The economic displacement caused by the rise of shrimp cultivation has had particularly harsh effects on women in the affected areas. In many rural agricultural communities, women played a crucial role in farming and household management. They were not only responsible for growing food and raising children but also for managing the household economy. With the conversion of agricultural land to shrimp farming, many women who were once involved in farming activities have been displaced, along with their male counterparts.

The gendered impacts of this displacement are significant. As men in these communities have lost their livelihoods in agriculture, many have migrated to urban areas or other parts of the country in search of work, leaving behind women and children. This has led to an increase in the number of female-headed households in the region, where women are now the primary breadwinners. While some women have taken on the responsibility of finding new sources of income, many face challenges in accessing employment, education, and resources.

Additionally, women in these displaced households often face additional hardships. They are typically excluded from the decision-making processes related to land use and economic development, as these decisions are usually made by male landowners or corporate interests. This exclusion, coupled with a lack of economic resources, has made it difficult for many women to adapt to the changing socio-economic landscape.

Moreover, the lack of social protection systems for displaced women exacerbates their vulnerability. Without adequate access to healthcare, education, and social services, women in these displaced communities are more likely to experience poverty, ill-health, and social isolation. They often bear the brunt of the economic and social changes caused by shrimp cultivation, as they are least able to navigate the new challenges posed by the displacement (Gammage *et al*., 2006) [14].

Recommendations for Sustainable Agricultural Practices and Protecting Local Communities from the Encroachment of Global Industries

To address the displacement caused by shrimp farming and protect local communities, several measures should be adopted**:**

1. **Promotion of Sustainable Farming Practices:** The government and international organizations should encourage the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices that prioritize biodiversity and ecosystem preservation. This includes supporting organic farming, agroecology, and mixed farming systems that are not solely dependent on monoculture crops like shrimp. Sustainable farming practices would not only help protect the environment but also ensure food security and provide stable livelihoods for local communities.
2. **Community Land Rights:** The rights of local communities to their land must be protected. Efforts should be made to ensure that land acquisitions for shrimp farming are conducted transparently and fairly,

with proper compensation and consent from affected communities. Land redistribution policies could help to ensure that land is used for the benefit of local communities, rather than multinational corporations.

3. **Strengthening Social Safety Nets:** The government should establish and expand social safety nets for displaced individuals, particularly women and children. These safety nets could include financial support, vocational training, and access to healthcare and education. This would help displaced persons adapt to their new circumstances and reduce their vulnerability to exploitation.
4. **Empowering Women:** Policies that focus on empowering women in displaced communities are crucial. This includes ensuring that women have equal access to education, employment opportunities, and land ownership. Additionally, supporting women's participation in decision-making processes related to land and resource management can help ensure that their needs and concerns are addressed.
5. **Promoting Fair Trade and Corporate Responsibility:** Shrimp farming companies, especially multinational corporations, must be held accountable for the social and environmental impacts of their operations. The implementation of fair trade practices and corporate social responsibility (CSR) standards can help ensure that shrimp farming benefits local communities and minimizes harm to the environment. Companies should invest in community development programs and ensure that local workers receive fair wages and benefits.

By implementing these recommendations, Bangladesh can work toward creating a more equitable and sustainable agricultural system that protects both the environment and the livelihoods of local communities. This would help mitigate the negative impacts of global industries on vulnerable populations and create a more inclusive economic model that benefits all sectors of society.

Urban Displacement: Slum and Brothel Evictions

The Consequences of Rapid Urbanization and Gentrification

Urban displacement, particularly the forced eviction of slum dwellers and sex workers, has become a pervasive issue in many rapidly urbanizing cities, including in Bangladesh. The economic growth driven by rapid urbanization has led to the expansion of cities, but this growth often comes at the cost of marginalized populations. As cities like Dhaka and Chittagong become more crowded and their infrastructure expands, slums and informal settlements, where a significant portion of the urban poor reside, are frequently targeted for eviction. This phenomenon is largely driven by the pressures of gentrification, wherein low-income, informal settlements are replaced with high-end real estate projects, luxury apartments, and commercial buildings.

While these redevelopment projects are framed as part of a modernization effort—intended to improve the city's infrastructure and promote economic growth—they often result in the displacement of the poorest sections of society, who are left without homes, means of livelihood, or support networks. In the context of Bangladesh, forced evictions are sometimes justified under the guise of modernization, often supported by state-led interventions that aim to clean up cities or remove areas deemed unsightly or undesirable. These evictions not only disrupt the lives of those directly affected but also lead to broader social inequalities and human rights violations (Anowar, 2025) [3].

The Growing Construction Boom and Land Market Pressures Leading to Displacement

The growing construction boom and increased land market pressures in urban areas like Dhaka have played a key role in the displacement of slum dwellers and marginalized groups. As the demand for urban space increases, so too does the pressure to redevelop areas occupied by low-income populations. Real estate developers, with backing from both private investments and government policies, push for the conversion of informal settlements into profitable commercial and residential spaces.

This market-driven approach to urbanization overlooks the needs of the poor, who do not have access to formal property rights or affordable housing. Slums, which occupy prime land in urban centers, become targets for redevelopment projects. The relocation of low-income groups, however, is not adequately planned, and these displaced populations often end up in new slums or informal settlements on the outskirts of the city, where living conditions are no better than before.

Moreover, land prices in Dhaka and other major cities have skyrocketed in recent years, largely driven by real estate speculation and the influx of foreign investment. This has led to increased pressure on the urban poor to vacate prime land, as land is seen as a commodity rather than a space for people to live and thrive. The displacement of slum dwellers, who are often migrant workers or rural poor, is exacerbated by the fact that they lack the legal protections that would ensure their right to remain in these areas. As the city gentrifies, these populations are effectively erased from the landscape, pushed to the periphery where access to basic services, employment, and social networks is more limited.

The government's lack of a clear, comprehensive housing policy for the poor has contributed to the growth of informal settlements and the perpetuation of displacement. As the urban land market becomes more competitive, vulnerable populations, including low-income workers and sex workers, find themselves increasingly marginalized in the urban environment (Swapan *et al*., 2017) [27].

Recommendations for Protecting the Rights of Slum Dwellers and Sex Workers, and Ensuring Proper Rehabilitation Measures

1. **Legal Protections for Tenure and Housing Rights:** The government must ensure that slum dwellers and sex workers are provided with legal protections regarding land tenure and housing rights. This includes offering secure tenure for people living in informal settlements, ensuring that they cannot be evicted without adequate compensation or alternative housing. A clear legal framework should be established to safeguard the rights of marginalized groups to their homes and livelihoods.
2. **Affordable Housing Development:** The government should prioritize the development of affordable housing for low-income urban populations. This could include subsidized housing programs, housing cooperatives, and the provision of low-cost, high-density residential areas that can accommodate the urban poor. Housing

policies should be inclusive and focus on ensuring that people are not displaced by new construction projects.

3. **Comprehensive Rehabilitation Programs:** Rehabilitation programs for displaced individuals should be developed that provide not just temporary housing, but long-term solutions. These programs should offer vocational training, employment opportunities, and access to essential services such as healthcare and education. Additionally, special attention should be given to the needs of women, particularly in female-headed households and sex worker communities, ensuring that they have access to resources that empower them economically and socially.
4. **Inclusive Urban Planning:** Urban planning processes should be inclusive and involve the active participation of marginalized communities. Local residents, particularly from slum areas, should be consulted in planning and development decisions that directly affect them. This ensures that the voices of the displaced and vulnerable groups are heard, and their needs are addressed in development policies.
5. **Strengthening Social Protections for Sex Workers:** The rights and safety of sex workers must be protected through comprehensive policies that address their health, security, and social protection. Legal reforms should decriminalize sex work and ensure that sex workers have access to social services, healthcare, and legal protections. Rather than targeting sex workers for eviction, the focus should be on creating safe working environments and ensuring their rights are recognized.

By implementing these recommendations, Bangladesh can work toward a more equitable urban future, where all citizens, regardless of their socioeconomic status, have access to safe housing, livelihood opportunities, and legal protections. This approach can help mitigate the adverse effects of urban displacement caused by rapid urbanization and gentrification, ensuring that the benefits of economic growth are shared more equally across society.

Legal and Social Rights of IDPs

Discrimination and Legal Challenges Faced by IDPs

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Bangladesh face significant legal and social challenges that stem from both systemic discrimination and the failure of national institutions to adequately protect their rights. The root causes of displacement in Bangladesh are multifaceted, ranging from environmental disasters, political violence, ethnic conflicts, and economic displacements. However, one of the most pressing issues for IDPs is the pervasive discrimination they face based on ethnicity, religion, and gender.

Ethnic Discrimination: Ethnic minorities, particularly indigenous groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), face persistent discrimination, which exacerbates their vulnerability as IDPs. The CHT has long been a site of ethnic conflict between indigenous communities and Bengali settlers, compounded by the state's failure to protect the rights of the indigenous populations. Under the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord of 1997, the government promised to safeguard indigenous peoples' land rights and self-determination. However, the agreement's implementation has been slow, and indigenous communities continue to be displaced, often due to the encroachment of Bengali settlers on their lands, which are often sanctioned by the state. The result is that many indigenous people have been forced to flee their homes and live in precarious conditions without adequate legal recourse or protection (M. M. Rahman *et al*., 2025).

Religious Discrimination: Religious minorities, particularly Hindus and Christians, have also faced significant challenges, particularly in the wake of political violence. The post-2001 election violence in Bangladesh, for example, resulted in widespread attacks on Muslims by Hindu communities, who were targeted due to their perceived political affiliations. These attacks led to displacement, with families fleeing their homes and businesses. In the absence of adequate legal protections, these communities face barriers in securing their property rights, and many live in perpetual fear of further violence. Religious discrimination is further compounded by state policies that have not fully ensured the religious freedom and protection, leaving them vulnerable to displacement caused by violence and intimidation (Saidul Islam, 2011) [25].

Gender Discrimination: Women, particularly those who are part of displaced communities, face gender-specific challenges that make them doubly vulnerable. Displaced women are often left without the same access to legal protections as men, especially when they lack documentation of land ownership or familial rights. Gendered violence, including sexual violence during displacement, remains rampant in Bangladesh, and displaced women frequently find themselves excluded from humanitarian aid and support systems. Moreover, the lack of a comprehensive legal framework that addresses the specific needs of female IDPs, such as access to shelter, reproductive health services, and legal assistance, means that women are often left vulnerable, lacking the resources or support to escape their precarious situations.

The legal challenges for IDPs are compounded by the lack of clear national policies that specifically address the rights of internally displaced populations. Bangladesh lacks an effective legal framework for IDPs that guarantees their rights to land, shelter, and livelihoods. While international frameworks such as the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement provide a useful reference, the implementation of these principles in national law has been slow. The absence of a national policy that explicitly recognizes the rights of IDPs has led to the marginalization of displaced populations, leaving them without adequate legal safeguards to prevent further displacement or secure their rights during displacement (Haque *et al*., 2020) [15].

The Failure of National Authorities in Addressing IDPs' Rights and Providing Legal Safeguards

The failure of national authorities to adequately address the rights of IDPs in Bangladesh can be attributed to several factors, including weak governance, insufficient political will, and inadequate legal frameworks. Despite Bangladesh's ratification of various international human rights treaties, including those that protect the rights of

displaced persons, the government has failed to implement these commitments at the national level.

One of the key challenges is the absence of a national law or policy framework for the protection of IDPs. While international human rights law and UN standards on internal displacement call for the creation of specific frameworks to safeguard the rights of IDPs, Bangladesh has yet to pass any comprehensive legislation that defines the rights of IDPs and the obligations of the state in providing for their protection and welfare. This lack of a clear legal framework results in inconsistent and often inadequate responses to the needs of IDPs.

Moreover, the state's failure to provide adequate compensation, rehabilitation, or resettlement options for those displaced, particularly in cases of forced eviction or conflict-induced displacement, is a significant gap. For instance, in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, despite the Peace Accord, many indigenous people remain displaced and face ongoing discrimination and land dispossession. Similarly, in cases of displacement caused by environmental factors such as river erosion, the government has been slow to provide resettlement options or legal recognition of the rights of displaced communities. As a result, IDPs often find themselves living in temporary shelters or informal settlements, without secure access to land, housing, or social services.

In addition to this lack of legal protection, there is also insufficient political will to address the needs of IDPs. While the government has occasionally provided temporary assistance to displaced persons, there has been little sustained effort to create long-term solutions for displacement. This includes addressing the root causes of displacement, such as environmental degradation, political violence, and land disputes, which continue to push people out of their homes. Moreover, the lack of accountability for human rights violations, including violence against ethnic minorities and women, exacerbates the vulnerability of IDPs and perpetuates a cycle of displacement (Juhra, 2021) [18].

Recommendations for Comprehensive Legal Reforms to Protect the Rights of Displaced Persons

1. **Enact National Legislation on Internal Displacement:** Bangladesh must pass comprehensive national legislation that specifically addresses the rights of IDPs, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. This legislation should define the legal status of IDPs, ensure their right to adequate housing, and guarantee their access to education, healthcare, and employment. It should also include provisions for compensation and restitution for lost land and property.
2. **Strengthen Legal Protections for Ethnic and Religious Minorities:** The government must adopt legal reforms that protect ethnic and religious minorities from displacement due to violence, land grabs, or government policies. This includes upholding and fully implementing the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord and ensuring that indigenous peoples' rights to land and self-determination are respected. Legal protections for religious minorities should also be strengthened, ensuring that they are not displaced due to religious persecution or political violence.
3. **Gender-Sensitive Legal Frameworks:** Legal protections for displaced women must be explicitly incorporated into national laws. This includes access to shelter, protection from gender-based violence, and economic empowerment through access to education, job opportunities, and financial support. Ensuring that women have equal rights to property and land is also essential in protecting their social and economic well-being.
4. **Improve Coordination Between National and Local Authorities:** To effectively address the needs of IDPs, there must be better coordination between national and local authorities. Local governments should be empowered to respond to displacement crises more effectively, with the necessary resources to provide housing, legal aid, and social services to displaced populations. A national body tasked with overseeing the rights of IDPs should be established, with the mandate to coordinate government responses, facilitate the provision of aid, and monitor the situation of displaced persons.
5. **Ensure Accountability for Violations of IDP Rights:** The government must ensure that those responsible for displacing people, whether through violence, eviction, or environmental degradation, are held accountable. This includes strengthening the justice system to prosecute perpetrators of violence against minorities and establishing mechanisms for IDPs to seek redress for land and property loss. This accountability is essential for building trust and ensuring that displaced persons' rights are upheld.
6. **International Cooperation and Support:** Bangladesh should continue to work with international organizations, such as the UNHCR, to develop and implement best practices for the protection and rehabilitation of IDPs. International assistance can help strengthen Bangladesh's capacity to address displacement, including through technical expertise and financial support for resettlement and reconstruction efforts.

By implementing these legal reforms, Bangladesh can better protect the rights of IDPs, ensuring that displaced persons have access to housing, livelihoods, and justice. Through comprehensive and gender-sensitive legal frameworks, accountability mechanisms, and international cooperation, Bangladesh can create a more inclusive and just society for all its citizens, including those displaced from their homes.

Protection Measures and Policy Recommendations

Protection from Displacement

The prevention of displacement is a critical component in addressing the issue of internal displacement (IDPs). This involves proactively tackling the root causes of displacement, including environmental degradation, political violence, and socio-economic inequities. Effective protection from displacement requires a combination of local-level environmental planning, safeguarding indigenous rights, and implementing strong land safeguards (Cantor *et al.*, 2021) [5].

Local-Level Environmental Planning

In Bangladesh, a significant portion of displacement is driven by environmental factors, particularly river erosion and flooding. The southern and central regions of the country are especially vulnerable to these environmental

challenges, exacerbated by climate change. To protect communities from environmental displacement, local governments must prioritize sustainable land use and environmental management strategies. This includes strengthening flood control infrastructure, creating green zones, and implementing coastal protection projects, such as mangrove restoration in the Sundarbans to prevent land erosion. Local-level environmental planning should incorporate community-based approaches, where local residents are involved in decision-making processes related to land use, resource management, and environmental protection (Rana & Ilina, 2021) [24].

The government should also support agro-ecological farming systems, which are more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Encouraging sustainable agriculture, diversifying crops, and utilizing water management systems tailored to local conditions can reduce the risks of displacement caused by environmental factors.

Protection of Indigenous Rights and Land Safeguards

Indigenous communities in Bangladesh, especially in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), face ongoing threats to their land and self-determination. Displacement in this region is often driven by land encroachment by Bengali settlers and government-backed development projects. To protect these communities from displacement, the government must fully implement the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord of 1997, which promises land rights, self-governance, and the protection of indigenous cultures. Additionally, legal safeguards must be established to prevent the illegal occupation of indigenous lands by non-indigenous groups. This includes ensuring that indigenous communities have clear and enforceable land tenure rights, and that any land acquisition for development purposes is done with their consent and in accordance with international human rights standards.

The introduction of an Indigenous Land Rights Act could provide clear legal recognition of indigenous peoples' ownership of ancestral lands and their right to manage natural resources in a way that aligns with their cultural practices. This would go a long way in preventing displacement caused by land grabs and resource exploitation.

Strengthening Legal Frameworks to Prevent Forced Displacement:

To effectively prevent forced displacement, Bangladesh needs to strengthen its legal frameworks related to land acquisition, housing, and environmental protection. The government should pass a National Policy on Internal Displacement, which aligns with international standards, such as the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, and includes measures for land protection, compensation, and the prevention of forced evictions.

Furthermore, the Land Acquisition Act should be reformed to ensure that it includes provisions for compensating displaced persons and providing them with alternative housing or land. Transparent, participatory processes should be introduced to ensure that local communities are consulted before any land acquisitions or development projects take place. Legal frameworks should also provide clear mechanisms for the protection of marginalized communities, such as ethnic minorities, women, and the rural poor, who are often disproportionately affected by displacement.

Protection During Displacement

When displacement cannot be prevented, it is crucial to provide adequate protection to those affected. IDPs often face severe disruptions in education, economic loss, and security risks, which exacerbate their vulnerability. Effective protection during displacement requires comprehensive humanitarian aid, legal protections, and the assurance of basic rights, including the right to employment and freedom of movement (Dirikgil, 2023) [9].

Addressing Disruptions in Education

One of the most significant impacts of displacement is the disruption of education. Displaced children often lose access to schools, as they are forced to relocate to temporary shelters or camps far from their previous communities. To address this, the government should prioritize ensuring that displaced children have continued access to education. This could be done through the establishment of mobile schools or temporary learning centers that are accessible to displaced families. The curriculum should also be tailored to accommodate the specific needs of displaced children, taking into account their trauma and disrupted lives (Shohel, 2022) [26].

Furthermore, local authorities should provide education allowances or support for displaced families to ensure that children are not forced to drop out of school due to economic hardship. International organizations, NGOs, and local governments can work together to create safe spaces for education within displacement settings.

Economic Loss and Employment

Displacement often results in the loss of livelihoods, particularly for agricultural workers who lose access to their land. To address economic loss, displaced individuals must be provided with access to alternative livelihoods. This can be achieved through skills training programs, vocational education, and job placement services that help displaced people integrate into urban or alternative rural economies. The government can partner with NGOs and the private sector to develop sustainable income-generating activities for IDPs, focusing on sectors such as small-scale manufacturing, retail, and services (Esteves, 2021) [10].

Additionally, the right to work should be legally enshrined for all displaced persons. This includes providing displaced individuals with the ability to seek employment without discrimination or fear of exploitation.

Security Risks and Legal Protections

Displaced populations are often at heightened risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse. Women and children, in particular, face increased risks of gender-based violence, trafficking, and sexual exploitation. To protect IDPs, the government must ensure that they have access to secure housing, legal protection, and essential services such as healthcare and psychosocial support.

Legal protections should include laws that prevent forced labor, human trafficking, and gender-based violence in displacement settings. International humanitarian law and human rights standards should be incorporated into national laws to provide a legal framework for the protection of displaced persons (Ullah *et al*., 2024) [29].

Return, Resettlement, and Reintegration

Ensuring the safe return, resettlement, and reintegration of displaced persons into their communities is essential for long-term recovery and stability. This process requires not only legal recognition of displacement but also practical strategies that address the economic, social, and psychological needs of IDPs (Frederico *et al*., 2024) [13].

Safe Return and Reintegration

The government must create mechanisms that facilitate the safe return of IDPs to their original homes or to new, secure land. For those who are unable to return to their homes due to environmental or political reasons, resettlement programs must be developed that ensure the IDPs are provided with adequate housing, land, and livelihoods.

These resettlement programs should be designed in consultation with the displaced communities and should take into account their cultural practices and community structures. Ensuring that IDPs can return to their land or receive new land with full legal recognition of ownership is crucial for reintegration and long-term sustainability.

Compensation and Legal Acknowledgment

A critical component of the return and reintegration process is compensation for lost property and livelihoods. This compensation should be fair, transparent, and provided in a timely manner. Legal acknowledgment of displaced persons' land rights, especially for those displaced by environmental disasters or government projects, is essential for ensuring that their property is returned or compensated adequately.

The government should also consider the establishment of a National Land Displacement Fund to provide compensation to IDPs who have lost land due to environmental factors, development projects, or conflict.

Reintegration Programs

To ensure that displaced persons can successfully reintegrate into their communities, the government and humanitarian organizations should provide psychosocial support, livelihood assistance, and legal aid. Reintegration programs should focus on addressing the trauma experienced by IDPs, especially women and children, through counseling and mental health services (Abanbeshie *et al*., 2023) [1].

Reintegration should also include efforts to rebuild community ties and social networks, which may have been disrupted by displacement. This could involve community-based reconciliation and dialogue programs, as well as programs aimed at rebuilding community infrastructure and services in affected areas.

A comprehensive approach to protecting the rights of IDPs in Bangladesh involves addressing the root causes of displacement, providing protection during displacement, and ensuring that displaced persons can return, resettle, and reintegrate into society with dignity and security. By strengthening legal frameworks, providing adequate protection, and focusing on sustainable solutions, Bangladesh can mitigate the negative impacts of displacement and build a more inclusive and resilient society for all its citizens.

Conclusion

Summary of the Findings from the Case Studies and the Ongoing Challenges of Internal Displacement in Bangladesh

Internal displacement in Bangladesh remains one of the most significant socio-political and humanitarian challenges facing the country. The findings from the case studies highlighted in this paper—spanning environmental displacement due to river erosion, ethnic and religious displacement, economic displacement linked to globalization and shrimp farming, and urban displacement resulting from slum and brothel evictions—reveal a complex interplay of factors contributing to displacement. These case studies collectively demonstrate that internal displacement is not merely an isolated consequence of natural or political events but is deeply intertwined with systemic issues of land rights, economic policies, social discrimination, and urban development.

In the case of river erosion in the southwest and central regions, the displacement of communities is driven largely by environmental factors, with families losing their agricultural land to the relentless force of river erosion. Indigenous communities, particularly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), face displacement driven by ethnic conflict, land encroachment by settlers, and insufficient enforcement of peace agreements. Similarly, economic displacement caused by the rise of shrimp farming has led to the destruction of traditional livelihoods, as agricultural workers lose access to their land due to the expansion of industrial shrimp cultivation, often facilitated by multinational corporations. Urban displacement in the form of forced evictions of slum dwellers and sex workers under the guise of modernization and moral policing highlights the social and economic vulnerabilities of marginalized communities in cities, where development pressures fuel the displacement of low-income groups.

Despite the variety of causes for displacement, common themes emerge**:** the lack of legal protection, the absence of sustainable development policies, and the failure to adequately address the root causes of displacement, such as land acquisition, political violence, and environmental degradation. For those displaced, the consequences are severe, often leading to the destruction of homes, livelihoods, and entire ways of life, leaving displaced persons in a state of social and economic limbo.

The Importance of Adopting the UN Guiding Principles on IDPs for a More Effective Response

One of the key conclusions from this study is the need for Bangladesh to adopt and implement the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (IDPs) as a framework for addressing internal displacement more effectively. These principles provide a comprehensive set of guidelines for the protection of IDPs, ensuring their rights to dignity, security, and access to basic services, as well as their right to return, resettle, and reintegrate into society.

The UN Guiding Principles emphasize the importance of protecting IDPs' rights at every stage of displacement—from prevention to return and reintegration. This includes ensuring their right to legal protection, adequate shelter, healthcare, education, livelihoods, and freedom of movement. By adopting these principles, Bangladesh can create a coherent and consistent national framework that guides responses to displacement in a more rights-based and humanitarian manner.

For instance, the principles advocate for the participation of IDPs in decisions that affect their lives, which can help

create more inclusive policies that reflect the specific needs of displaced communities. The principles also stress the importance of ensuring accountability for those responsible for causing displacement, including the need to investigate violations of human rights and provide mechanisms for the redressal of grievances. Furthermore, these principles provide a roadmap for the creation of reparations programs, such as compensation for lost property and land, which could go a long way in addressing the economic hardship faced by displaced individuals.

Incorporating the UN Guiding Principles on IDPs would not only align Bangladesh's legal and policy framework with international human rights standards but also demonstrate a commitment to protecting the rights of its most vulnerable populations. These principles would serve as a guiding framework for the government, humanitarian organizations, and civil society in developing more effective and coordinated responses to internal displacement.

Final Call for Urgent and Holistic Policy Measures to Address Internal Displacement, Safeguard the Rights of Marginalized Communities, and Ensure Long-Term Resilience for Displaced Populations

As Bangladesh continues to face growing challenges related to internal displacement, it is crucial for the government and relevant stakeholders to adopt urgent and holistic policy measures. The displacement crisis in Bangladesh requires a multi-pronged approach that addresses both the immediate humanitarian needs of IDPs and the long-term solutions required for their sustainable reintegration and resilience.

First and foremost, the government must prioritize the creation of a National Policy on Internal Displacement that aligns with international human rights standards and includes provisions for preventing displacement, protecting displaced populations, and ensuring their safe return or resettlement. This policy should involve all relevant stakeholders—government agencies, local authorities, NGOs, and the affected communities themselves—to ensure that it is inclusive and responsive to the needs of those displaced.

To prevent further displacement, land tenure systems must be reformed to protect the rights of vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. Strengthening legal safeguards against forced evictions and land grabs, as well as ensuring adequate compensation and alternatives for displaced individuals, is essential to securing the rights of those most at risk.

Moreover, addressing gender inequality in displacement contexts should be a priority. Women and children, particularly those in marginalized communities, face specific vulnerabilities, such as increased risk of gender-based violence and exploitation. Policies and programs must be designed to ensure equal access to resources, legal protections, and economic opportunities for displaced women, who often bear the brunt of displacement-related hardships.

The provision of humanitarian aid should be a fundamental aspect of addressing the immediate needs of displaced populations. This includes access to food, clean water, shelter, healthcare, and education. Additionally, employment support and livelihood opportunities should be prioritized to ensure that IDPs can rebuild their lives with dignity and independence. Governments must also ensure freedom of movement for displaced persons, particularly those living in temporary shelters or camps, so that they can find work, access services, and reintegrate into society.

Finally, return, resettlement, and reintegration programs must be carefully designed and implemented, with a focus on community-driven solutions. These programs should not only provide adequate housing and land but should also offer psychosocial support, education, and economic empowerment to help IDPs rebuild their lives. Importantly, these programs should ensure that displaced communities have a voice in shaping their futures and that the root causes of displacement are addressed to prevent further cycles of displacement.

In conclusion, Bangladesh's internal displacement crisis requires urgent action at the national, regional, and local levels. By adopting the UN Guiding Principles on IDPs, implementing comprehensive legal reforms, and providing sustainable solutions for the displaced, the country can move towards a future where the rights of all citizens—especially the most marginalized—are safeguarded. Only through these concerted efforts can Bangladesh ensure that its displaced populations not only survive but thrive in the face of adversity.

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