

CLIMATE-PROOFING FISHERIES LIVELIHOODS: *Gendered Perspectives from the Frontline*

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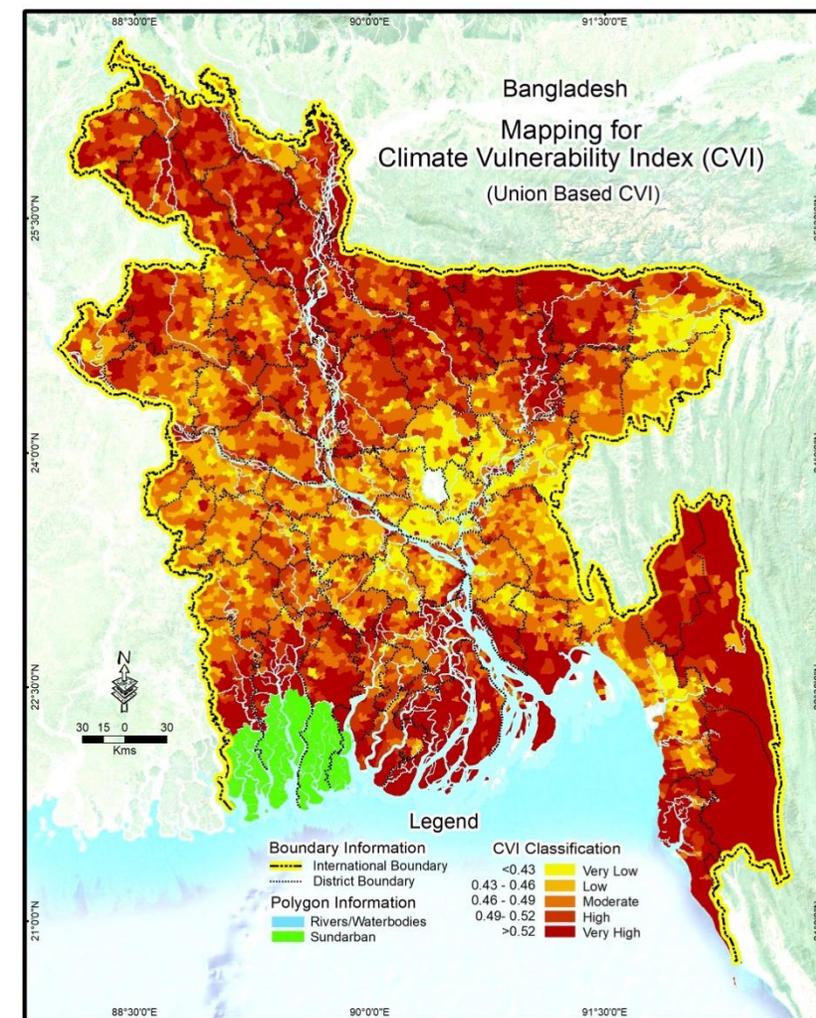
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BRIEF BACKGROUND: INTERCONNECTIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, FISHERIES, AND GESI

- ❑ Bangladesh ranks 9th as a 'very high risk' country for climatic vulnerability, with major impacts on fisheries, damage to wetland ecosystems and biodiversity (Bündnis EntwicklungHilft / IFHV, 2024; Kibria & Yousuf Haroon, 2017)
- ❑ Wild capture fisheries contribute **~30% of total fish production** in Bangladesh, supporting **over 2 million people** (DoF,2024; Mustafa et al., 2007)
- ❑ **Women make up 10% to 30% of the workforce in the fisheries sector** (The Business Standard, 2022; WorldFish, 2017)
- ❑ Complex interconnections of climate change, fisheries livelihoods of river-dependent fisherfolk and GESI dimensions, through the lens of the affected communities, are less understood

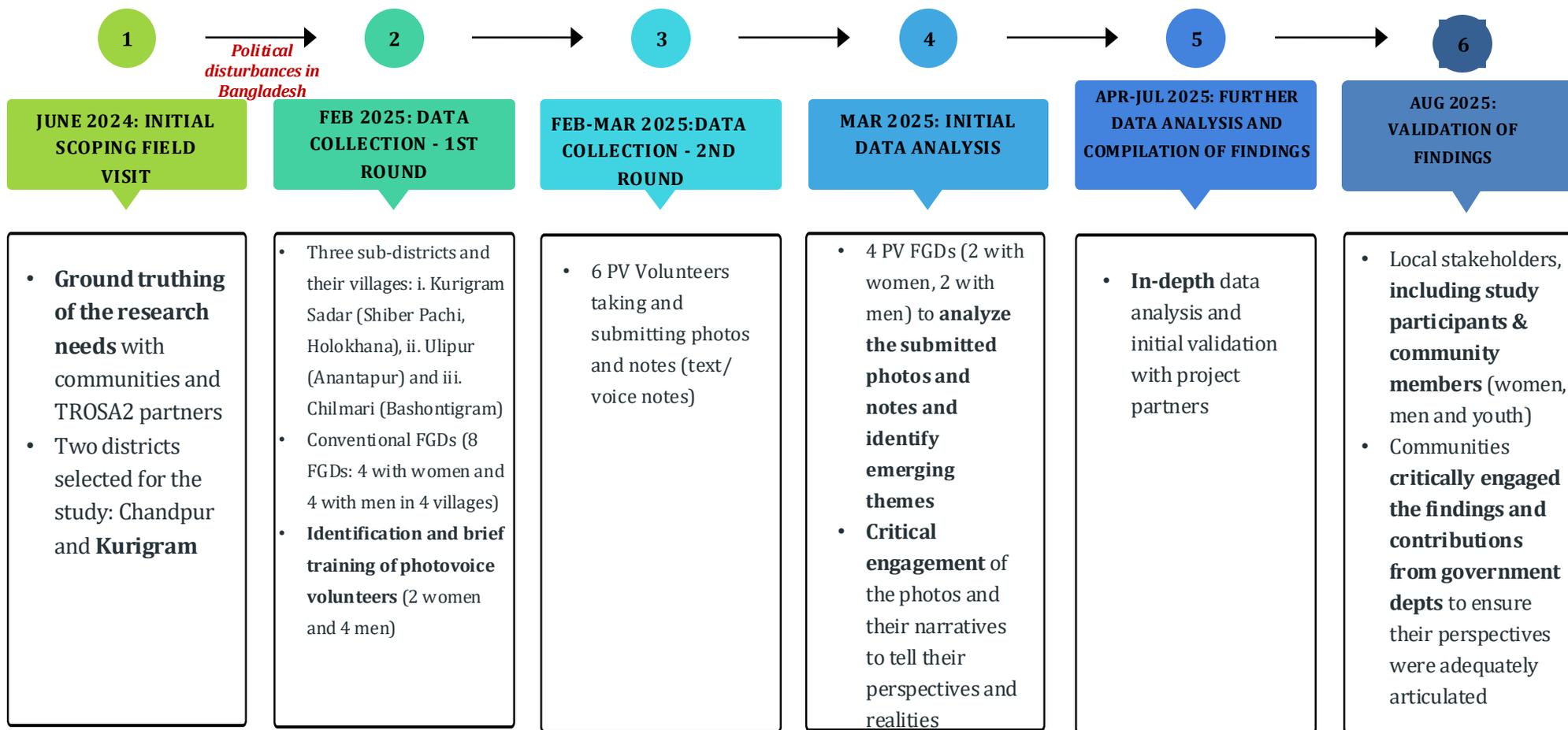


Source: <https://www.undp.org/bangladesh/blog/vulnerability-action-why-bangladeshs-climate-vulnerability-index-cvi-game-changer>



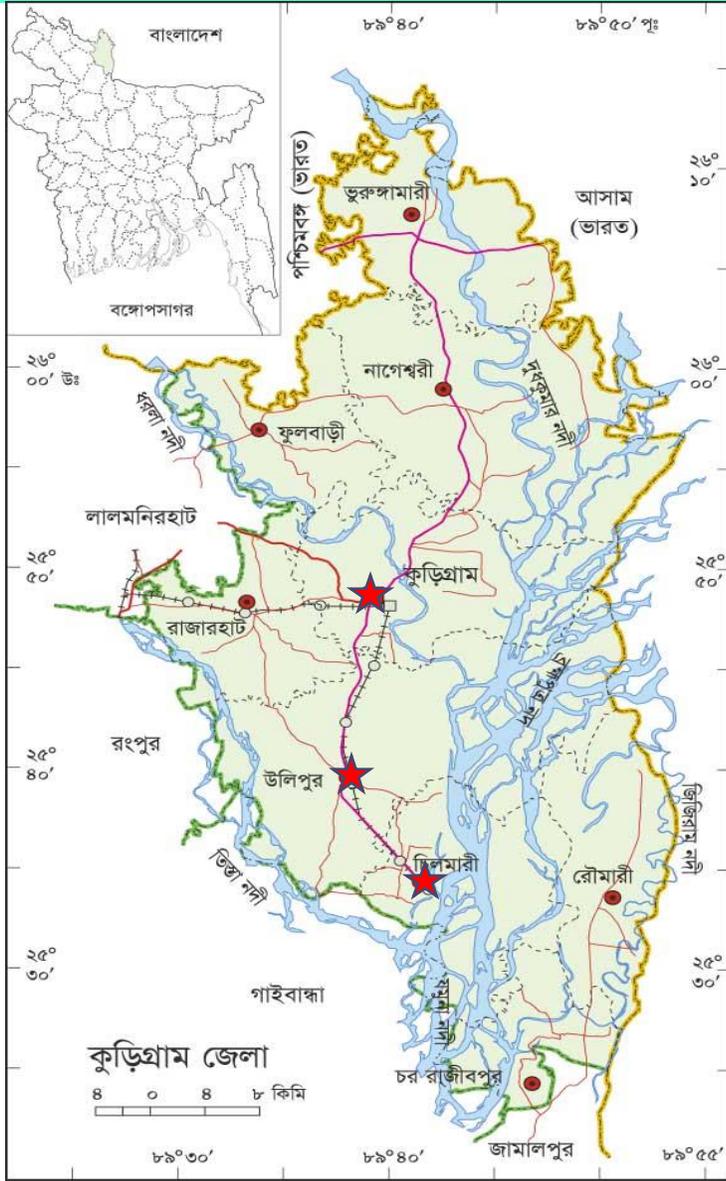
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Participatory research process *(off-peak fisheries season)*





STUDY LOCATION AND SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES CONTEXT



Factor	Kurigram
Fishing Scale	Subsistence-level
Hilsa Availability	Very low or absent
Enforcement Visibility	Low (seen as marginal activity)
Geography	Braided rivers



MERITS OF PHOTOVOICE IN THIS STUDY

- **Decentered power** from us as conventional researchers to a collaborative and inclusive process.
- Allowed the application of **feminist pedagogical principles**
 - validation of lived experiences and realities,
 - critical thinking and consciousness,
 - agency and collective action.
- Findings to be used for advocacy to bring about desired change in fisheries governance

"We have taken part in a lot of meetings before. But this is the first time we are discussing with the photos that represent our life. It is more effective than the ones without a photo. A photo speaks louder than words." - Woman FGD participant



"I can represent our problems and challenges with these photos very well. The photos are art. With this art, we can know the whole story of someone's life. A picture itself can tell a lot of stories" - Man FGD participant





FINDINGS





IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN RIVER CAPTURE FISHERIES OF KURIGRAM

"Even a youthful river dries up with the passage of time. Two children are waiting for their father as the father is away fishing for a long time" – (young man, unmarried PV volunteer)



Changed Hydrology

- Reduced river flows, fish habitat and fish availability, and increased sedimentation have led to longer fishing hours in the dry season (10–12 hours vs. 7–8 hours in peak season).
- Increased river erosion and subsequent land loss are driving more people into fishing, leading to greater competition over limited fishing resources.
- Changed effective fishing months - (Past: Mid July-Mid December vs Present: Mid-September to Mid-January)

Our livelihood depends on that foggy river. It doesn't matter if there is fog or not. The person in the picture has gone to the river to catch fish on a foggy winter morning, despite it is so cold just because of feeding his family sacrificing everything. I do the same." – (middle-aged married man)



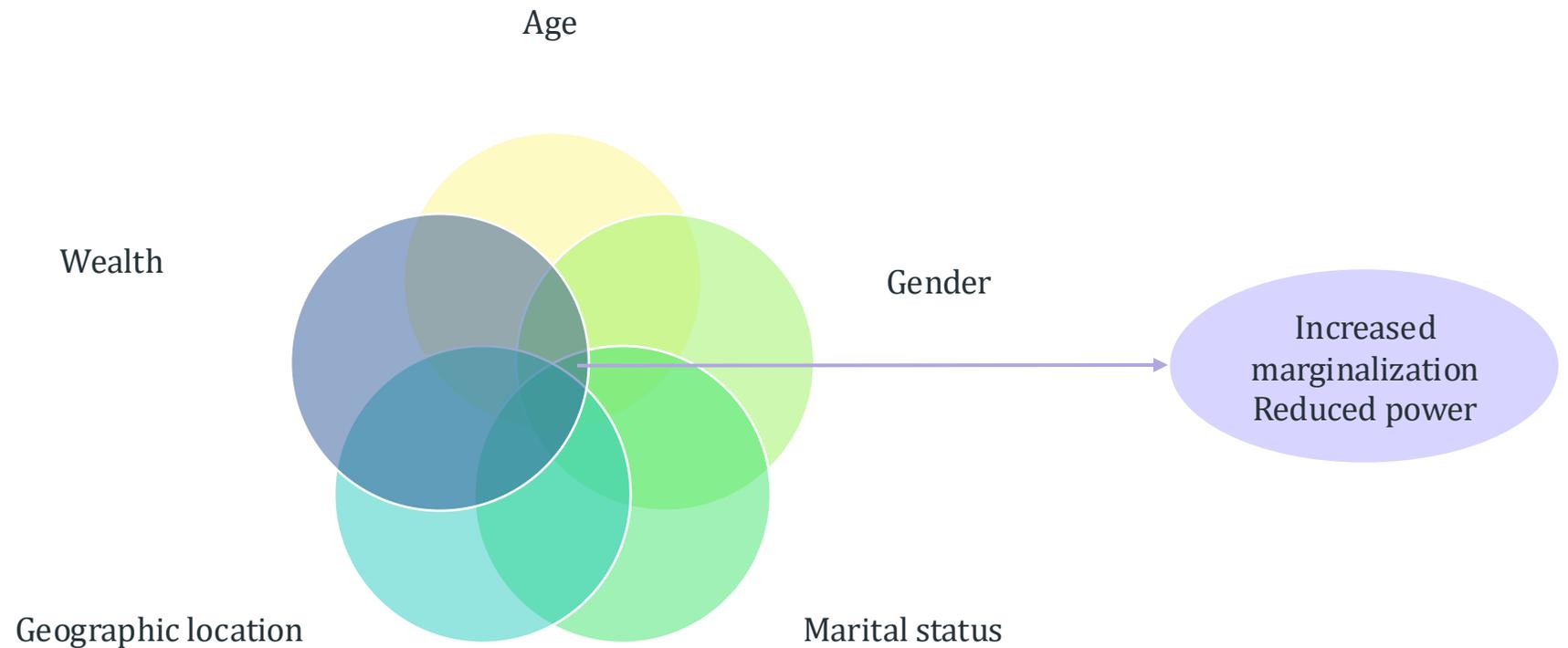
Impacts of climate change-related hazards and extreme weather events on fisheries

- Cyclones, storms, and heavy rains damage boats and houses
- Winter fog and cold reduce fishing visibility and activity
- Extreme heat in summer poses health risks and spoils fish due to lack of cold storage



INTERSECTIONALITY IN FISHING COMMUNITIES

Fishing as a profession is **gendered and marginalized**, with various intersecting factors of one's identity contributing to their severe marginalization, power imbalances and inequalities across the sector.





MARGINALIZATION AND INEQUALITIES: RISK DRIVERS IN FISHERIES



Limited Access to Markets

How it drives climate risk: Do not get a fair price, leading to financial vulnerability.



Elite Capture in Beels (Seasonal Wetlands)

How it drives climate risk: Restricted livelihood leads to livelihood insecurity.



Limited Access to Fishing Gears

How it drives climate risk: Climate change affects fish availability and navigability, while fishers struggle to adapt, threatening their livelihood.



Constraints in getting Jele Card (Fisher ID Card)

How it drives climate risk: With no compensation, the loss of livelihood during fishing bans pushes them to fish in risky weather.



CLIMATE CHANGE AS A RISK MULTIPLIER

"Floods used to occur during Jaishtha-Ashar (Mid-May to mid-July), but now they happen during Shrabon-Bhadro (Mid-July to mid-September), disrupting fishing seasons and limiting other livelihood options." – a middle-aged married man from Kurigram.



Amplifies existing vulnerabilities
Floods, droughts, river erosion, and shifting fish habitats worsen the effects of marginalization.

Increases livelihood risks

Climate change impacts, such as shorter fishing seasons, longer hours, and extreme weather, worsen existing marginalization caused by destructive fishing practices and limited access to fishing grounds.



"The market is far from here, and there is no cold storage to preserve our catch. As a result, it's hard to maintain the quality of the fish. During hot summer days, many of the fish spoil, and we end up getting a lower price." – said an elderly married man from Shiber pachi, Kurigram.

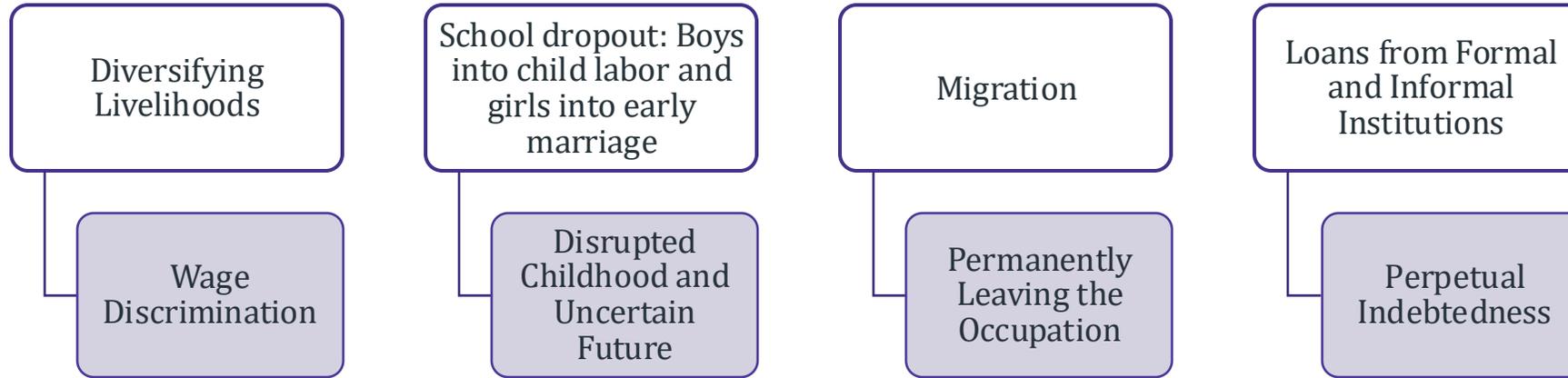
"Lakshmi's husband died while fishing in the river, and soon after, river erosion swallowed her land, forcing her to live on others' land and struggle to support her family." – explained a young unmarried man PV volunteer from Kurigram



Exacerbates inequality

Women are disproportionately affected due to the impacts of climate change and existing socio-economic barriers.

FISHERFOLK NAVIGATING THE CHALLENGES AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES



"In Ramna, during lean fishing season, women work in soil excavation and agriculture to support the family. They start field work at 6 AM and continue until 5 PM, earning around 300–350 taka a day, less than what a man earn for the same amount of time" - a married woman from Bashontigram, Chilmari, Kurigram

"I have been affected by river erosion several times, losing home and land. I cannot afford proper education for my children; my son had to leave school after SSC—here, a fisher's son is destined to be a fisher" - said a middle-aged man from Anantapur, Ulipur, Kurigram



CONCLUSION and CORE INSIGHTS

- Both men and women are marginalized
- Multiple intersecting factors shape marginalization and inequalities
- Young girls and boys are differentially affected by the plight of their parents/guardians
- Powerful elites are middle-aged to older men;
 - are outsiders
 - seasonal fishers backed by money and muscle power
 - capture access to fishing resources
 - drive the elite capture of Small-scale fisheries (SSF)
- Exploitative loan arrangements serviced by women
 - Women serve as conduits to access finance



Pathways forward

Community-Driven, Systems-Oriented Adaptation



Address systemic barriers and inequalities in the fisheries sector



Recognition of ecological stewardship



Diversified climate-resilient complementary livelihood options



Inclusive and adaptive fisheries governance

Resilient, empowered fishing communities





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THANK YOU



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