The Impact of Recurring Natural Disasters on Chronic Poverty*

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Abstract
Natural disasters disorder the existing everyday normative practices. The magnitude of any disaster creates risk and vulnerability in different ways that apply to different groups. The consequences of material and non-material risk and vulnerability downgrade the existing social structure and social order of the society, which reflects in the process of the cultural system, demographic scenario, social process, socialization, good governance and women empowerment. I use the concept “chronic poverty” as a condition created by intergenerational socio-economic and cultural processes. My analysis encompasses the interrelationship and interdependency between unequal access to resources and recovery process on the context of disaster vulnerability, which could otherwise create persistent poverty.

Keywords
chronic poverty, natural disasters, indigenous knowledge, women empowerment, development and underdevelopment, and poverty reduction

Introduction
Disaster incorporates the multidimensional socioeconomic and political issues including the physical characteristics, social structure with socioeconomic capability, and political perception.1 The magnitude of any disaster creates the risks of disaster vulnerability in different ways that apply to different groups. When people face the risks of disaster vulnerability, they face the decrease of capability, which creates the multi-dimensional socioeconomic and political crises.2 Materially, this involves damage/loss of physical assets, infrastructure, domestic assets, and agricultural output. Non-materially, social relations, status-role linkages, norms, values, crime,

1) Oliver-Smith in Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 1999, p. 29.
2) Oliver-Smith in Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 1999, p. 30.

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grievance, conflicts and the rhythm of everyday organized social and cultural life are disturbed. The major victims are usually those who are marginalized people: the poor and the destitute, women, and children, who have the lack of capability on the context of unequal access to resources. The effects will be felt in increases in malnutrition, violence, exclusion, illiteracy, and various forms of exploitation. The risks of disaster vulnerabilities differ on the context of family, community, and society, which influenced by education, ethnicity, class position, gender, caste, disability, and age structure. Vulnerability downgrades the existing social structure and social order, which reflects in the process of the cultural system, demographic scenario, social process, socialization, good governance and women empowerment. The repeated nature of certain natural disasters; e.g. flooding in a country such as Bangladesh or region, can result in a form of chronic poverty. As a case of a disaster vulnerable country, I will use Bangladesh, which experiences annual flooding that covers a large part of the country. My analysis will be guided by the schematic diagram reflecting the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of the experiences and their consequences on the process of development.

Natural disasters are increasing alarmingly because of global warming. There are many types of natural disasters e.g., earthquake, tsunami, volcanic eruption, cyclones, tornadoes, river-bank erosion, floods, drought. Third World countries are the most frequent victims of natural disasters, many of which have a major negative impact on the society. In addition to injuries and the loss of lives, the next point of negative impact is the economy, which is reflected in the Gross Domestic Product. Again, in such instances, marginalized people will bear most of the burden, and for whom there is usually no publicly funded social safety net. An added dimension of the negative impact is the significant costs of repairing and replacing the damaged infrastructural facilities like transportations, communications, bridges, culverts, and buildings. These crises undermine the overall operations of government, the private sector, and civil society. Depending on the domain of responsibility, there are different institutions and organizations; Govern-

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9) Sorokin 1942.