

# The Untouchable ADB and the Endless Sufferings of the Coastal People

*A case study on the Compensation Demand of the ADB implemented KJDRP affected people of Bangladesh*

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## **Introduction & Background**

The Khulna-Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project (KJDRP) is a classic example of how International Financial Institutions (IFIs) in the name of poverty reduction, increased production and employment creation jeopardized the sustainability of natural resources and endangered the livelihood of the millions of people who are dependent upon those resources. The KJDRP had failed to address the fundamental problems of water logging, agricultural development, to facilitate navigation of rivers as the plan was faulty as that of WAPDA (Water and power Development Authority) in early 1960s. It has created more problems rather than solution.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) had designed and funded<sup>1</sup> the Khulna-Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project<sup>1</sup> (KJDRP) to support the Government's efforts to alleviating poverty by reducing drainage congestion. Prior to KJDRP, ADB also funded the Khulna Coastal Embankment Rehabilitation Project, which was implemented between 1986 and 1993<sup>2</sup>.

The KJDRP was approved by the ADB on 14 December 1993 and it was formally incepted in 1994 & ended in 2004. The total cost of the project was \$44.9 million or 72% of the appraisal estimate of \$62 million. ADB contributed \$32.6 million (70%) of the actual project costs. The main objective of the project was to reduce poverty from 75% to 60% of the population in the project area, and to produce additional agricultural products of 98,263 tons including 63,000 tons of food grains, mainly rice per year by increasing cropping intensity from 137% to 157%. The Project was spread over eight *upazillas* (Sub-districts) of the districts of Khulna (Batiaghata, Daulatpur, Dumuria, and Phultala) and Jessore (Abhaynagar, Keshabpur, Jessore Sadar, and Manirampur) covering about 100,600 hectares (ha). One of the major objectives of the KJDRP was to ensure incremental increase in food grain production of 63,000 tons/year.

## **KJDRP- a deceptive portrait of ADB!**

The ADB's Operation Evaluation Department (OED) evaluated the Khulna-Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project in March 2007. The March visit included visit to project affected areas, interviews with various stakeholders including the government and hiring consultants to conduct a survey. Bangladeshi CSOs Uttaran, Pani Committee and CDP, jointly organized a meeting on March 24 with the ADB mission to allow CSOs who have monitored and advocated on KJDRP to share their perspectives and experience regarding project impacts. In 2007<sup>3</sup>, The Khulna-Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project (KJDRP) was rated not only unsuccessful but also as partly relevant, less effective, inefficient and unlikely sustainable.

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1 Asian Development Bank (ADB), 1993. Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors on a Proposed Loan to the People's Republic of Bangladesh for the Khulna-Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project. Manila (Loan 1289-BAN [SF] of \$61.7 million, approved on 14 December 1993 and closed on 18 March 2002)

2 ADB.1986. Appraisal of the Khulna Coastal Embankment Rehabilitation Project. Manila. (Loan 819-BAN[SF] of \$16.9 million, approved on 11 December 1986 and closed on 31 December 1993.

3 ADB's Operation Evaluation Department (OED), 2007: Evaluation of the Khulna-Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project (KJDRP), 2007, <http://www.adb.org/Documents/PPERs/BAN/21087-BAN-PPER.asp>

In 2004, the ADB's KJDRP Project Completion Report (PCR)-2004 described that KJDRP was successful with moderate institutional and development impacts. It is important to note that PCR-2004 reported that KJDRP produced no adverse negative environmental externalities.

<b><i>ADB Project Completion Report on The Khulna-Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project (KJDRP) in 2004</i></b>	<b><i>ADB's Operation Evaluation Department (OED) Evaluation of the Khulna-Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project (KJDRP) in 2007</i></b>
<p>KJDRP was successful            KJDRP have moderate institutional and development impacts            KJDRP produced no adverse negative environmental externalities            The Project was rated as likely sustainable</p>	<p>KJDRP was rated as Unsuccessful            KJDRP was rated as Less effective and Inefficient            KJDRP was rated as Partly relevant            Project design overlooked or undermined several critical issues.            The Operation &amp; Maintenance (O&amp;M) of drainage infrastructure and river channels were unsatisfactory.            KJDRP was rated as Unlikely sustainable</p>

### **Reasons for KJDRP as an unsuccessful project and peoples' sufferings**

The project was unsuccessful because primarily, the project was focused on ADB's strategic emphasis on private sector participation and market efficiency improvements not human rights focused and people-centered development approach.

The Project was designed to allow brackish water shrimp culture in the lower southwest part<sup>4</sup> to promote export oriented growth in aquaculture productions to support global shrimp trade. The practice of shrimp aquaculture has drastically reduced the mangrove forests and destroyed the breeding habitat for many fishes within the Sundarban (the largest mangrove forest in the world) Impact Zone (SIZ). The rapid growth of the unplanned practice of shrimp farming has been causing a great harm to the local environment, extinction of the traditional livelihood practices as well as creating social conflicts among the local communities within the Sundarban Impact Zone. The shrimp farmers have forcibly occupied the agricultural lands of the poors and marginal farmers, as a result of which they have now turned to the forest in search of an alternative source of livelihood, thus increasing pressure on the steadily depleting resources of the Sundarbans. The local people have been, for over a decade, engaged in a movement against shrimp aquaculture, even at great risk to their lives. They want to get back their lands; they want to produce crops and local varieties of fish to meet local requirements. Cattle rearing and keeping of poultry and ducks have also been negatively affected by shrimp farming. It has to be noted that the monoculture practice of shrimp farming not only resulted the loss of biodiversity and wetlands resources but also endangered the livelihood security of the poor people of the area. The labor intensive agriculture was not compensated with any other alternative income generation activities and thus a massive unemployment situation evolved in the coastal wetland areas.

The project failed to develop an active partnership between public institutions and local stakeholders. ADB showed callousness for indigenous knowledge since the conceptualization of the KJDRP. The project was based on inadequate analysis and lack of appreciation for indigenous knowledge systems for reducing drainage congestion. ADB showed resistance against socially acceptable solutions like Tidal River Management (TRM)<sup>5</sup>. Even the PCR-2004 recognized that project implementation delays could have been reduced considerably if the beneficiaries demand for the TRM system had been appreciated earlier.

4 ADB, 2004: Project Completion Report on The Khulna-Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project (Loan 1289-Ban[Sf]) In Bangladesh, PCR: BAN 21087, Asian Development Bank, September 2004

<sup>5</sup> Tidal River Management method allows tidal flow into the wetland basin and releases the tidal flow back to the river.

ADB experimented on their unrealistic assumptions in the name of poverty reduction, increasing in production and employment creation. The assumption to generate funds for Operation & Maintenance (O&M) of the drainage system by annually leasing government-owned land proved unrealistic.



*One of the KJDRP Affected Households*

*Photo: CDP*

ADB used the complex and climate-sensitive ecosystem of Southwest (SW) coastal region in Bangladesh as their natural laboratory in the name of poverty reduction and employment creation.

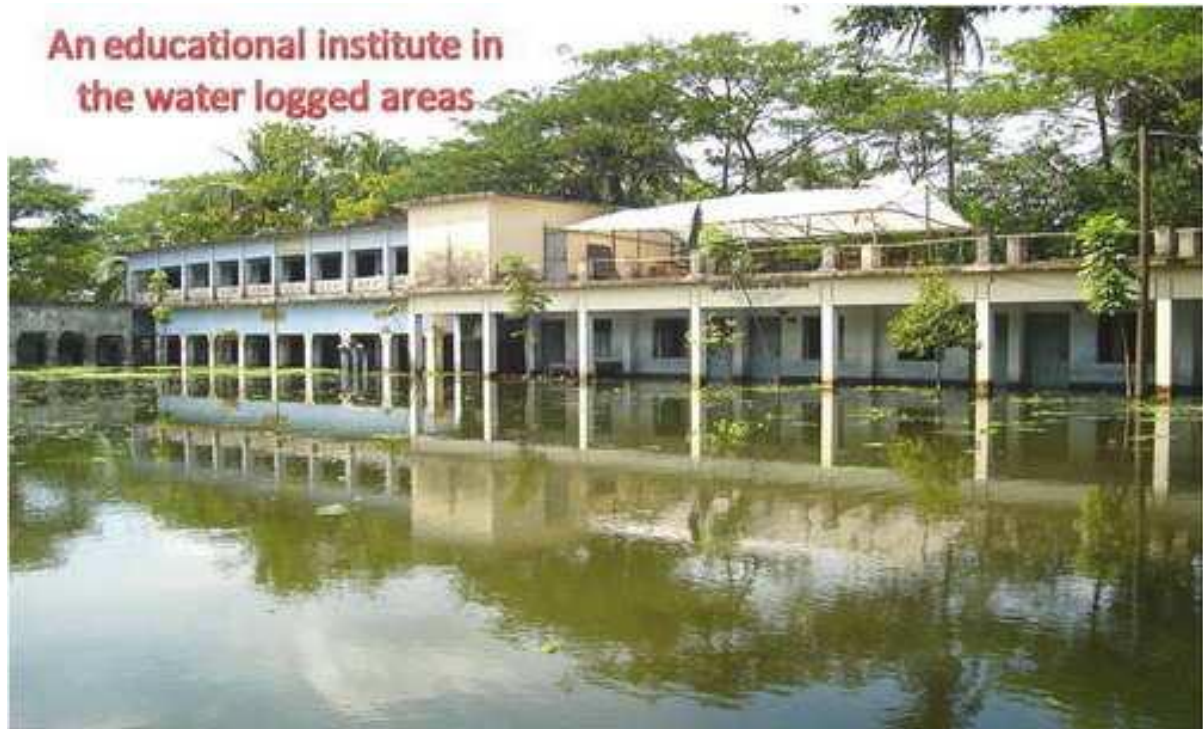
ADB adopted structural solutions in a complex ecosystem and without considering the Geomorphological conditions. Continuous Operation & Maintenance (O&M) which is a necessary precondition to keep the rivers and drainage channels open had not received the deserved attention. Consequently, heavy silt deposition in drainage canals and riverbeds caused active rivers to dry up and clogged the regulators with silt deposits. It has to be noted that the KJDRP area comprised of Hari River, Southeastern River, and Upper Bhadra River Systems of the Shibsra Basin.

The two key livelihood supporting components-agricultural development and fisheries management in polder areas were poorly resourced, weakly coordinated, and ineffectively implemented. In fact, two of the components of the project (Agricultural and fisheries management) were dropped in 1999 on the recommendation of an ADB review mission.

#### **Demanding of fair compensation is a legal claim against ADB: Peoples' Struggles since 2006**

In ADB context, the project could be evaluated in terms of success or achievements. However, the project has endangered livelihood of the millions of people and reduced the capacity of the ecosystem services in the project areas. KJDRP resulted extinction of the local biodiversity (specially, fish species) and loss of livelihood of local fisher-folks. The effect of converting the aquatic ecosystem into a terrestrial ecosystem in the project area has shown that KJDRP is detrimental to the ecosystems in the intermediate and Sundarbans areas. More than 100,000 people of the 144 villages were forced to live an inhuman life with their homesteads, livestock, agricultural lands, schools, and roads remaining under water since October, 2005 due to the faulty KJDRP.

Water-logging has been consistently reducing their control over wetland resources, both in terms of access and use. Water-logging rather created an avenue for the outsider-rich people for monoculture of shrimp depriving the community access to wetlands. Even to keep the wetland community away from the wetlands, some of the corrupted government officials re-classified the wetlands to water-body and leased those out to intruding outsiders for shrimp farming which is unethical and illegal too. As a consequence, it is intensifying poverty amongst wetland communities of the SIZ.



*Photo: CDP*

The benefit availed by the people between 1998-2004 at Beel Bhaina was not due to KJDRP rather solely by the public to cultivate High Yielding Varieties (HYV) of rice. There was a massive increase of fish cultivation during and after the project compared to pre project situation but it has no relation with the KJDRP.

The ADB's Operation Evaluation Department (OED) recommended transparent provision for fair compensation to the adversely affected population. KJDRP of ADB created more social and environmental hazards in the SW Bangladesh which ADB must not escape just by promises that it would not happen next time. The design of the project has been changed due to public demands but the change was not as per requirement. It was done to serve the interest of the vested group of the implementing agencies.

Moreover, the evaluation stressed on "An effective grievance redressal mechanism" so that Project-affected people can voice their concerns without any fear of reprisal. Verification of Indigenous Knowledge which was neglected by ADB-KJDRP also envisages that compensation is not just a matter of accepting the responsibility of the failure but also to show respect for the indigenous knowledge. The Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) has been taking necessary measures since early 2006 to resume tidal river management (TRM) and has achieved successes in East Khushir Beel. Till date most of the works have been completed and the local drainage condition has improved as a result.

*The food security the poor people in the waterlogged areas is affected by salinity, waterlogging, and loss of biodiversity. Polders and shrimp culture has cut off traditional dry season activities such as grazing cattle and goats, home gardening etc. The struggle of waterlogged people is not only limited to protest but also intellectual towards innovation. Waterlogged KJDRP affected community is currently using their traditional techniques, knowledge and the conventional wisdom to cope with the submerged condition to increase food security.*

## **“Hanging Vegetable Gardening (HVG)”**

### **Peoples’ Innovation for Food Security - A Lesson for ADB!**



*The people of KJDRP water logged areas of Bagdanga, Monohar Nagor, Pathargahata and Sharuthia villages under the Keshabpur Upazilla (sub-district) of Jessore district have been fighting a lot for surviving with the situation by cultivating vegetables on large earthen basin setting up a triangle bamboo stand nearby thatched roof and yard. The process of cultivation well defined as Hanging Vegetable Gardening (HVG). CDP took this HVG initiative as a part of action research and only about 250 families have been covered in the 2007-2008 period. Only BDT Tk 236 (3.37 USD) is expended for a single unit of HVG. After that they earned more than Tk 600 in between two seasons of the year after mitigating their family demand. CDP is still learning through working closely with the waterlogged community and trying to promote the indigenous knowledge to ensure the immediate needs of food security in the KJDRP affected people, although it is still a little initiative for the 1 million people. The affected peoples are demanding for waterlogging free life. Ironically ADB had never respected these peoples’ views.*

KJDRP paid no compensation to the victims who lost their land at beel Kedaria. KJDRP of ADB extended water logging in new areas of the Jessore District. It covers about 40 unions (part/full) of Khulna and Jessore districts. At present, the water logging problem has turned into a regular flood situation in some parts of Khulna, Jessore and Satkhira districts. In addition, KJDRP worsened the existing drainage problem due to the complete dry up of the rivers at Hamkura Bhadra, Arokhali, Buribhadra, Jhapjapia and Teligtia.

Local and national civil society organizations such as Bhabadah Peoples’ Struggle Committee, Coastal Development Partnership (CDP) and Bhabadah Pani Niskashan Sangram Committee have blamed the ADB for creating an ecological disaster by funding a project which, on one hand, inundated several hundred hectares of land and on the other hand, caused rivers to dry up. A writ petition was filed on 13 August 2006, by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) and Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust (BLAST) seeking appropriate judicial intervention to address the sufferings of more than one hundred thousand people in 144 villages of the three upazillas of

Abhaynager, Monirampur and Keshabpur of Jessore. Following the motion hearing, a division bench of the High Court has directed the concerned authorities to provide all such services, products, goods and other supports within their means that are required to ensure that the people of the affected villages of the three upazillas are safely rehabilitated and are receiving food, water and other essentials during the periods that water logging occurs. In 2007 CDP & WPN has jointly conducted a research on KJDRP. CDP has submitted a memorandum to ADB headquarter in Manila on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2008 during the NGO Forum on ADB AGM-2008 on behalf of KJDRP affected people by demanding fair compensation from ADB. In 2008 CDP, IAP, NGO Forum on ADB has jointly organized a Post Card Campaign where 300 people from the affected community participated directly. The IAP supported Advocacy video titled "Tears of the Millions" was screened on 2nd May in the Water Rights Conference of APNFS-Philippines during the 42nd AGM of ADB in Bali 2009. The advocacy video, an advocacy paper and a position paper was submitted to Mr. Robert C. May, the Special Project facilitator of ADB on behalf of the KJDRP affected people as well as to the Office of the ADB President at this occasion. CDP also participated in the Asian Peoples' Tribunal on ADB organized by the IBON foundation on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2009, where CDP representative provided testimony on KJDRP and the advocacy video was also shown in the tribunal.

### Snapshot of Compensation Demanding Activities during the 42th ADB AGM-2009 in Bali



Figure 1

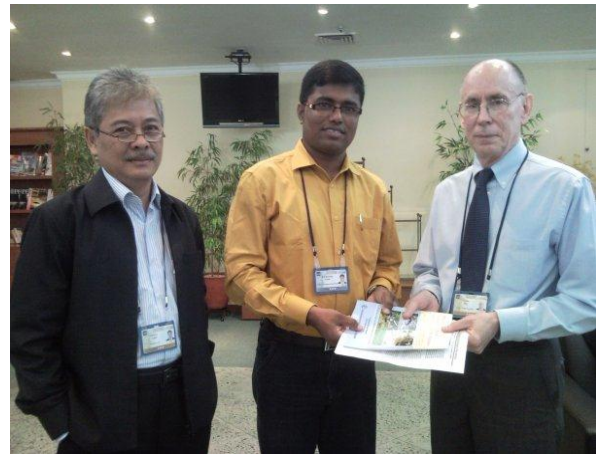


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

Figure 1: M M Mahub Hasan of CDP (right) demanding compensation on behalf KJDRP People during the APNFS organized Water Rights Conference

Figure 2: Submitting compensation documents on KJDRP to Mr. Rober C. May of ADB (right)

Figure 3: Informal discussion with the Honorable Finance Minister of Bangladesh Mr. Abul Maal Abdul Muhit (middle) about the KJDRP issues

Figure 4: Watching the advocacy video with the Ibon Foundation organized "Asian Peoples' Tribunal on ADB" participants on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2009 after providing the testimony on KJDRP.

**Video show and Opinion Sharing Meeting of the CDP, Local Civil Societies & Local communities  
ADB implemented KJDRP affected 1 million people from 8 Upazillas are raising strong voices  
for fair compensation.**



Local level video show generated strong unity towards fair compensation.

With the participation of the local affected people few video shows and opinion sharing meeting were arranged by the Coastal Development Partnership (CDP) and its local partner Dip Shikha Sangstha (DSS) with the support of International Accountability Project at Jessore District on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2010. These activities provided new momentum.

### **Few Important Opinions**

***“From the very beginning of the KJDRP we had requested ADB many times for considering the local peoples’ concerns and opinions. By overlooking everything ADB implemented the KJDRP and destroyed our land, crops, river and our lives and livelihoods. People are displacing from their own homestead. The ADB is well concerned about our problems which have been raised by different peoples’ movement. They should come forward to open the Bhabadah Gate, and Implement the TRM according to peoples demand including a fair compensation package for the victims of KJDRP, otherwise it will bring a big sorrow for ADB in the future projects in this area”***



**Mr. Ranjit Bawali  
Convener  
Bhabadah Pani Niskashan Sangram Committee  
Dumurtala, Avoy Nagar, Jessore**



***“The ADB created KJDRP waterlogged problem is a long lasting tears for the southwest people of Bangladesh. From the very beginning it was observed that the KJDRP will not be a sustainable solution for the people since ADB has never considered the local peoples’ opinions in the designing and implementation process. Now the main task is to save the people those who have been displaced and lost their lands, crops and homesteaded due to KJDRP.”***

**Mr. Rashed Khan Menon  
Member of the National Parliament, Bangladesh  
President, Bangladesh Workers Party**

***“As a donor agency ADB cannot escape this environmental catastrophe that we have seen in Jessore. In this particular case people are suffering like hell, it is a responsibility of ADB to come forward and compensate people and also to help the government of Bangladesh for finding a long standing solution of this problem”***

**Advocate Syeda Rezwana Hasan  
Executive Director  
Bangladesh Environmental lawyers Association (BELA)**



***“When water came into my house it was destroyed. We had no boat to move to other places. Then my School Secondary Certificate (SSC) exam candidate daughter could not bring this sorrow but suicide. After this accident my husband left us forever and we still do not have any information about him. I have been living in my fathers’ home with my babies over the last 12 years. I don’t want to remember the painful story of my life that was caused by KJDRP, but still hurting me in my dreams”***

**Mrs. Shukti Mandal  
KJDRP Affected Women  
Balarabad, Avoy Nagar, Jessore**

***“I was involved with the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB)’s activities here. Both the ADB and BWDB have implemented the project from their own concept and even secretly, they were not transparent about the Tk. 229 crores as well as not accountable to us. But we urged the compensation from the ADB and they will have to pay it today or tomorrow. Otherwise they will never be allowed by the people for further investment in the southwest region of Bangladesh.”***

**Mr. Swapan Kumar Parey  
President  
Panckatia-Patchbaria Secondary Girls School  
Manirampur, Jessore**



### **People’s demand to ADB to end this Sufferings**

1. Immediately arrange payment to those negatively impacted by the KJDRP and transparently channelize these payments or resources to communities and their organizations.
2. Compensate for land loss to affected land owners.
3. Compensate to affected farmers through credit and technical support.
4. Provide compensation for temporary loss of land and agricultural extension services
5. Make the compensation urgent considering the climate change impacts that already were threatened the KJDRP affected waterlogged communities.
6. Assess immediately the level of vulnerability on the communities to the impacts of climate change due to the KJDRP and incorporate it into the compensation
7. ADB should get away from the policy of promoting agriculture productivity oriented projects that are designed to supply the world market, but undermine local and national food security and sovereignty
8. Ensure participation of communities and CSOs in any project conceptualization, designing and implementation.

KJDRP affected people will not allow any further initiatives of the ADB in their areas till the compensation demand is peacefully resolved.

The KJDRP expertise reveals that ADB is incompetent to manage any drainage management project with IWRM approach. Experts opposed that they should not be allowed to implement any water resource project in the coastal areas of Bangladesh.

### **About the Authors:**

**Mr. S. Jahangir Hasan Masum** is the Executive Director of CDP (a national research and advocacy organization in Bangladesh). He is a prominent researcher and geologist in Bangladesh. He is vocal on environmental governance, climate change, ecosystem based management, women & gender development, Agriculture and rural livelihood, Macro economics etc issues. He is expert in organization development, proposal writing and idea generation. Mr. Masum has been contributing in the development sector for the last 12 years. His contact email account is [masumcdp@yahoo.com](mailto:masumcdp@yahoo.com).

**Mr. M M Mahbub Hasan** is a Chief Regional Officer of CDP. He is a young development activist & campaigner in Bangladesh. He is vocal on climate change, IFIs, Aid & Agriculture, CSO Effectiveness etc. issues. He is experienced in grassroots mobilization, advocacy, networking and partnership

building activities. Mr. Mahbub has been working with the CDP over the last 9 years. His contact email account is [cdpmahbub@yahoo.com](mailto:cdpmahbub@yahoo.com).

***CDP has been monitoring ADB since its inception in 1997. CDP does not take any fund from any organization for their "Fair Compensation from ADB for the KJDRP affected People" campaign.***