

A Perspective on Long-Term Care and Climate Change from Bangladesh

Imran Chowdhury



Three Themes

Bangladesh's LTC System

Growing elderly population, family-dependent care, minimal infrastructure

How Climate Disrupts Care

Flooding, heat stress, saltwater intrusion with real household impacts

Policy Pathways Forward

Integrate care into climate adaptation and climate into care policy

Bangladesh's Long-Term Care System

- Growing ageing population: 25M projected by 2050 [1 in 5 will be older]
- No comprehensive LTC system
- 85–90% of care provided by families
- Women provide most unpaid care
- Limited formal services
- Growing caregiver shortages
- Urbanization and migration weakening traditional support systems



Climate Vulnerability in Bangladesh

Cyclones & Flooding

Sidr (2009): 3,600+ deaths; increasing severity

Sea-level Rise

Coastal zones vulnerable; saltwater intrusion

Heat Stress

Summer temps exceed 40°C; intensifying waves

Droughts

Lengthening dry seasons affecting water & agriculture

Critical Point

Climate shocks hit unequally. Rural areas and economically disadvantaged populations bear the brunt. Older people are most vulnerable.

How Climate Disrupts Care: Flooding

Real Scenario: A 72-year-old woman in a rural village depends on her daughter (healthcare worker, 8km away). During 2020 floods, the family was stranded. The clinic flooded. The mother couldn't get medications for hypertension and diabetes.

Household impacts:

- Missed medication doses
- Caregiver stress & loss
- Malnutrition & depression
- Delayed treatment

System-wide impacts:

- Loss of medication access
- Caregiver collapse
- Food insecurity
- Service disruption



How Climate Disrupts Care: Heat Stress

Real Scenario: A 70-year-old widow in Dhaka slum lives with her daughter-in-law (domestic worker). During heat waves ($42^{\circ}\text{C}+$), the widow stays home without cooling. She drinks less water to avoid the outdoor toilet.

Household impacts:

- Heat-related illness
- Caregiver burnout
- Lost income
- Social isolation
- Deferred care

Care Facilities Hit Too

- No fan/AC
- Bills spike
- Staff turnover
- Quality declines



How Climate Disrupts Care:

Saltwater Intrusion

Real Scenario: A 70-year-old retired farmer in coastal zone lives with his son. Salt intrusion destroyed crop yields. Son now migrates seasonally for work. Family income collapsed. Father isolated and malnourished.

For the older person:

- Food insecurity
- Son migrates away
- Health deteriorates
- Healthcare unaffordable
- No safety net

Broader impacts:

- Economic collapse
- Migration breaks care
- Malnutrition crisis
- Impossible choices
- No govt support



The Gender Dimensions

Women provide the vast majority of care work in Bangladesh. Climate shocks intensify their burden.

Care work intensifies

while resources shrink—less time, money, support but more responsibility

Women are poorer

less land ownership, less formal employment, more family dependence

Migration not an option

men migrate while women stay and absorb the shock

Work is unpaid

no policy recognition, support, or compensation

This is a GENDER JUSTICE ISSUE. Climate is devastating women's capacity to provide care.

Policy Implications & Urgent Needs

1

Integrate care into climate adaptation

LTC currently invisible in adaptation strategies.

2

Build climate-resilient care infrastructure

Community services, home nursing, subsidized care.

3

Invest in care workforce

Training, wages, conditions. Recognize family care.

4

Create social protection mechanisms

Cash transfers, food assistance for older people.

5

Generate data and research

Track climate impacts on care provision.



Climate-Resilient LTC is About More Than Disaster Response

Protecting dignity

Ensuring continuity of care

Supporting family caregivers

Promoting healthy ageing

Building resilient communities



Photo credit: GMB Akash

Key Messages

Care system depends on families (especially women)—minimal institutional depth

Climate shocks are already hitting, disrupting care in real ways

Impacts hit hardest on older people, rural areas, and women

Need integrated climate-care policy responses

This is urgent, addressable, and globally relevant



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Thank You

For further information, please contact Imran Chowdhury at imran.c@ayateducation.com