



Participant Information and Consent Form

Community Focus Group

Title	Assessing vulnerabilities and community-based adaptation strategies for communities in Southwest coastal Bangladesh
Principal Investigator/Senior Supervisor	Nick Brown
Associate Investigator(s)/Associate Supervisor(s)	Spyros Schismenos Darryn McEvoy
Principal Research Student(s)	Md. Riad Hossain

What does my participation involve?

1 Introduction

You are invited to take part in this research project, titled “Assessing vulnerabilities and community-based adaptation strategies for communities in Southwest coastal Bangladesh”. You have been invited because of your direct experience with climate extremes in this area. Your contact details were obtained from the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), Jagrata Juba Shangha, who have a long track record working on disaster risk management and climate change in urban and peri-urban Khulna.

This Participant Information and Consent Form explains the research taking place and describes the processes for you to take part. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research. Please read this information carefully. Ask questions about anything that you don’t understand or want to know more about. Before deciding whether to take part, you might want to talk about it with a relative or friend.

Participation in this research is voluntary. If you don’t wish to take part, you don’t have to.

If you decide you want to take part in the research project, you will be asked to sign the consent section. By signing it you are telling us that you:

- Understand what you have read
- Consent to take part in the research project

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information and Consent Form to keep.

2 What is the purpose of this research?

Climate change is the most pressing global challenge of our time, causing significant threats to the well-being and livelihood of communities around the world. Due to its geographic location, socio-economic characteristics, low-lying structure and proximity to major river systems and the Bay of Bengal, south-west coastal Bangladesh stands out as a region highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change. Since Khulna City Corporation is situated at the confluence of the Rupsha and Bhairab rivers, it faces acute climate-driven hazards including cyclones, urban flooding, land subsidence, and saltwater intrusion. Studies have shown that the burden of those hazards is particularly experienced by vulnerable groups including female-headed households, ethnic minorities -specifically indigenous groups like the Munda and Dalits, landless, farmers and fisherfolk, low-income households, climate migrants, and persons with disability. The proposed research aims to focus on integrating the principles of wet cities and climate justice to assess

vulnerabilities while proposing adaptation strategies that uphold the principles of fairness and inclusivity for vulnerable groups. By adopting a climate justice lens, this doctoral study will pay attention to the differential impacts of climate change on those groups. It seeks to understand the social dimensions of vulnerability, the underlying drivers of inequality, and the specific adaptation needs and priorities of those groups. Moreover, the research aims to inform evidence-based decision-making, policy formulation, and implementation processes, leading to the development of more equitable and sustainable adaptation strategies in the region.

The results of this research will be used by the researcher Md. Riad Hossain to obtain a PhD degree in Environmental Engineering. This research has been funded by RMIT internal HDR funding.

3 What does participation in this research involve?

If you agree to participate in this research project, you will be invited to attend a community focus group discussion expected to last between 45 and 60 minutes. This discussion will be held in person at the meeting room of Jagrata Juba Shangha and will be arranged before lunch. During the discussion you will be asked for your opinion and views regarding livelihood impacts of climate extremes, your coping strategies, adaptation measures, and barriers to accessing innovative technologies. The questions will be asked in English and / or Bengali and you may reply in either English or Bengali. The community group discussion will be audio recorded so that a transcription can be created and sent to you. There are no costs associated with participating in this research project, nor will you be paid.

To participate in the discussion you will need to sign and return via email the attached consent form to Md. Riad Hossain (S4062475@student.rmit.edu.au) and Nick Brown (nick.brown@rmit.edu.au).

After the session, you will be sent a copy of the transcript of the discussion, and you will have the opportunity to edit or clarify any of your statements. If you do not suggest any edits or clarifications within 14 days, the research team will take the transcript as accurate.

You may withdraw your consent up until the point the research has been submitted for publication.

4 Other relevant information about the research project

Two (02) community group discussion will be organised under this research project including women and female-headed households, ethnic minorities specifically Indigenous groups like the Munda and Dalits, landless farmers and fisherfolk, low-income households, climate migrants, and persons with disability. Each community group discussion will include 2 participants from the above groups which will result in 12 participants in total in a single discussion.

5 Do I have to take part in this research project?

Participation in any research project is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you do not have to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage.

If you do decide to take part, you will be given this Participant Information and Consent Form to sign and you will be given a copy to keep.

Your decision whether to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your relationship with the researchers or with RMIT University.

6 What are the possible benefits of taking part?

We cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this research; however, you may appreciate contributing to knowledge generation and policy influence. Possible benefits may include increased awareness and a sense of empowerment regarding climate change and adaptation strategies, as well as the validation of the traditional knowledge and coping mechanisms of the residents. Although the study itself may not provide direct assistance, its

findings could pave the way for future interventions that may lead to improved funding and policies for the marginalized and disadvantaged groups in south-west coastal Bangladesh.

7 What are the risks and disadvantages of taking part?

Participants may face some psychological and emotional risks when discussing distressing topics like climate-induced displacement, environmental degradation and loss of their livelihoods. You may feel that some of the questions we ask are stressful or upsetting. If you do not wish to answer a question, you may skip it and go to the next question, or you may stop immediately. If you become upset or distressed because of your participation in the research project, members of the research team will be able to discuss appropriate support for you. For any kind of support service, you can contact the research student (s4062474@student.rmit.edu.au), Senior Supervisor (nick.brown@rmit.edu.au), or Associate Supervisor (spyros.schismenos@rmit.edu.au), or Associate Supervisor (darryn.mcevoy@rmit.edu.au).

Whilst all care will be taken to maintain privacy and confidentiality, you may experience embarrassment if one of the group members were to repeat things said in a household interview. It is advisable that you do not reveal anything too personal or that you may regret later.

8 What if I withdraw from this research project?

If you do consent to participate, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the project, please notify a member of the research team. You have the right to have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed, providing it can be reliably identified.

9 What happens when the research project ends?

The research results will be discussed in the thesis as well as peer-reviewed academic publications after its completion in December 2027. Also, a summary of the results will be available upon request by contacting the student researcher at s4062475@student.rmit.edu.au after approximately December 2027.

How is the research project being conducted?

10 What will happen to information about me?

By signing the consent form, you consent to the research team collecting and using information from you for the research project. Any information obtained in connection with this research project that can identify you will remain confidential. Information collected during the community group discussion will be treated as confidential and be used for research purposes only. Access to data/information will be restricted to the principal investigation team only. Only the people in the table are authorized to access and use the data to ensure confidentiality and protect data, and any personal or sensitive information will be removed and or disguised for all forms of publication. Data collection will involve anonymization, using codes instead of names and generalising identifiable details.

Md. Riad Hossain	S4062475@student.rmit.edu.au	Student Investigator
Nick Brown	nick.brown@rmit.edu.au	Senior supervisor
Spyros Schismenos	spyros.schismenos@rmit.edu.au	Associate supervisor
Darryn McEvoy	darryn.mcevoy @rmit.edu.au	Associate supervisor

It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified, except with your express permission. If we use any specific quotes or report any specific events, even if disguised, we will seek your permission to do so before we publish anything publicly. This does not apply to the thesis; however, this thesis will only be available to the principal investigation team and the thesis examiners.

In accordance with relevant Australian and/or Victorian privacy and other relevant laws, you have the right to request access to the information about you that is collected and stored by the

research team. You also have the right to request that any information with which you disagree be corrected. Please inform the research team member named at the end of this document if you would like to access your information.

Any information that you provide can be disclosed only if (1) it is to protect you or others from harm, (2) if specifically allowed by law, (3) you provide the researchers with written permission. Any information obtained for the purpose of this research project that can identify you will be treated as confidential and securely stored.

This research uses community focus group discussion to collect the data. The student investigator will opt for audio recording for your interview utilising a smartphone. Additionally, a local assistant will be involved for note taking using the printed questionnaire. Your input in community focus group discussion will be translated and transcribed in English. Once your responses are consolidated in a reporting format, it will be sent to you through NGO representative from Jagrata Juba Shangha. You will have two weeks to comment or provide your feedback on your responses. Once the data are verified from you, the physical records and audio records will be destroyed. Translated data will be stored in RMIT University's private storage facilities the cloud storage (OneDrive), with access limited to the principal investigation team and will be destroyed after 5 years.

11 Who is organising and funding the research?

This research project is being conducted by Md. Riad Hossain and supervised by Dr. Nick Brown (Senior Supervisor), Dr. Spyros Schismenos (Associate Supervisor), and Prof. Dr. Darryn McEvoy (Associate Supervisor). The project is funded by RMIT internal HDR funding.

12 Who has reviewed the research project?

All research in Australia involving humans is reviewed by an independent Ethics review body. This research project has been approved by one of the RMIT University review bodies. This project will be carried out according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2023). This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

13 Further information and who to contact

If you want any further information concerning this project, you can contact the researcher on +61 480 766055; email: s4062475@student.rmit.edu.au or any of the following people:

Research contact person

Name	Dr. Nick Brown
Position	Senior supervisor
Telephone	+61 3 9925 3024
Email	nick.brown@rmit.edu.au

14 Complaints

Should you have any concerns or questions about this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers listed in this document, then you may contact:

Reviewing HREC name	RMIT University
HREC Secretary	Pascal Bernard
Telephone	03 9925 1985
Email	humanethics@rmit.edu.au
Mailing address	Manager, Research Governance and Ethics RMIT University GPO Box 2476 MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Consent Form

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Principal Investigator/Senior Supervisor	Nick Brown
Associate Investigator(s)/Associate Supervisor(s)	Spyros Schismenos Darryn McEvoy
Principal Research Student(s)	Md. Riad Hossain

Acknowledgement by Participant

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.

I understand the purposes, procedures and risks of the research described in the project.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.

I freely agree to participate in this research project as described and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time during the project without affecting my relationship with RMIT.

I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this document to keep.

Name of Participant (please print)	
Signature	Date

Declaration by Researcher*

I have given a verbal explanation of the research project; its procedures and risks and I believe that the participant has understood that explanation.

Name of Researcher* (please print)	
Signature	Date

* An appropriately qualified member of the research team must provide the explanation of, and information concerning, the research project.

Note: All parties signing the consent section must date their own signature.