Landslide knowledge, risk perception, preparedness

Definition

Over the last thirty years, Bangladesh has been experiencing hill cutting problems and subsequent landslide occurrence in its south-eastern hilly region. Since 2000, landslides have caused over 500 deaths, mostly in informal settlements in southeast Bangladesh. The most significant single event was the 2007 landslide causing 127 deaths in Chittagong’s informal settlements. The landslide events took over 110 people in Rangamati on the 12th June, 2017. In the scenario of rising deaths by landslides in the south-eastern region, this research aims to understand communities’ landslide hazard knowledge, reasons for living in at-risk areas, risk perception and preparedness. This research applied both quantitative (i.e., structural questionnaire) and qualitative (i.e., semi-structured and open-ended questionnaire, and informal interviews) data collection techniques to assess hill-top and hill-side dwellers knowledge, risk perception and preparedness to landslides in southeast Bangladesh. The investigation conducts face-to-face interviews with 208 community members, 15 key informant interviews, three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and field observations and visits in south-east Bangladesh. The findings suggest that unplanned development activities, overpopulation, settlement along hill slopes and ineffective disaster risk reduction efforts are the anthropogenic contributories accompanying climate-change induced increased torrential rainfall are the main reasons for the increase of landslide occurrence. The results suggest that community members perceive a low-risk for landslides, despite the community’s location in high-risk areas. The community’s perception of low risk results in a lack of preparedness and an unwillingness to relocate a comparatively safer place. It was noted that landslide disaster preparation depends on the communities’ development maturity, house ownership, ethnicity, gender, and economic status of the residents. It is suggested that the place of relocation for residents living in the high-risk areas should be selected with full consideration of psychosocial aspects of the community, particularly providing acceptable livelihood options.