



Conflict Factsheet

Shrimp Farming Conflicts in Bangladesh

Type of conflict
Main

Intensity
3

Conflict Locality
Southern Asia

Time
1980 –ongoing

Countries
Bangladesh

Resources
Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water

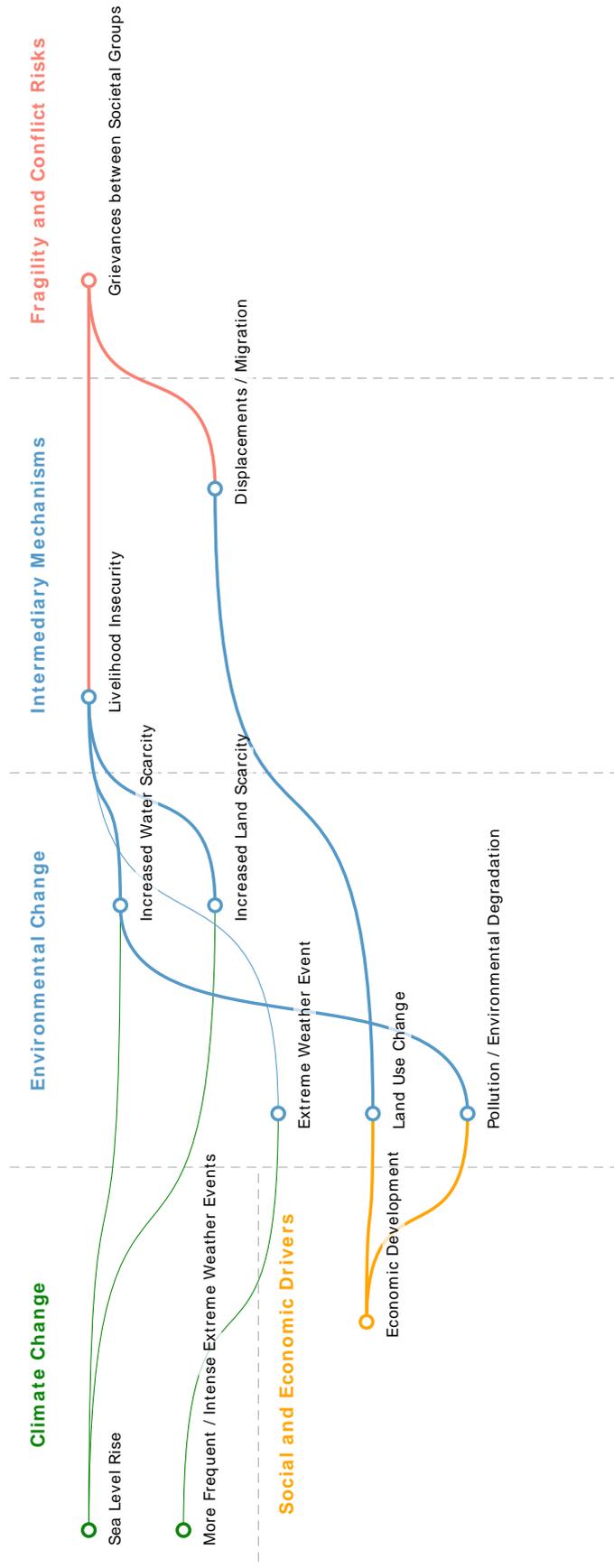


Conflict Summary

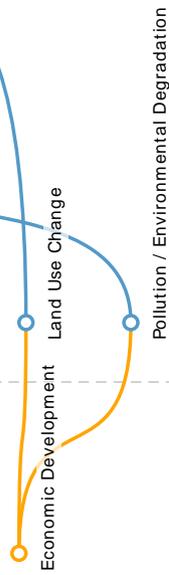
Bangladesh experienced a boom in shrimp farming during the 1980s to feed growing international demand. The expansion of shrimp cultivation has led to land grabbing and, in conjunction with the increasing occurrence of extreme weather events, such as cyclones and flooding, has also led to salinisation of soil and water sources.



Conceptual Model



Social and Economic Drivers



Context Factors



Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water

Unresponsive Government



Conflict History

During the 1980s, Bangladesh rapidly expanded its aquaculture industry in shrimp farming to feed growing international demand (Paprocki & Cons, 2014). The practice of turning mangroves into salt water reserves for shrimp farms has led to salt water intrusion into drinking and irrigation water, affecting the livelihoods of freshwater fishermen and farmers. Changes in the climate have exacerbated salinisation through cyclones, storm surges and tsunamis. Furthermore, aggressive shrimp corporations have displaced small farmers in the process of unchecked shrimp farm expansion. There has been no intervention to regulate shrimp farming by the Bangladesh government and conflict over water and land between farmers and shrimp companies is a continuous problem that causes fatalities.

Farmers threatened by climate change

Two-thirds of Bangladesh is less than five meters above sea level, particularly in the Bay of Bengal where shrimp cultivation is wide spread. For this reason, shrimp farms in Bangladesh are extremely vulnerable to climate change (Glass, 2013). Cyclone Sidr in 2007 destroyed more than 6,000 shrimp farms in coastal areas, affecting 400,000 farmers' only source of income (Greyl, 2014). It is estimated that if sea levels continue to rise, 40% of Bangladesh's productive land will be inundated before the end of the century (Glass, 2013).

Reports suggest that rising water levels in the Bay of Bengal, in conjunction with increasing incidences of cyclones and storm surges has aggravated the salinisation process caused by shrimp farming; exacerbating tensions between shrimp and agricultural farmers. It is estimated that some 53% of coastal land in Bangladesh is affected by salinity caused by shrimp farming (Rahman et al, 2009). Shrimp cultivation sites are often blamed for causing extreme weather events, such as floods. The construction of illegal pipe systems which feed shrimp farms with salt water act as access points for storm surges (Earth Focus, 2012).

[Access here](#) a special report on climate migration in Bangladesh.

Lack of government support for anti-shrimp movements

Shrimp cultivation has also led to increased incidences of land grabbing and those who oppose shrimp farming are often met with threats and intimidation (Earth Focus, 2012). Since the shrimp cultivation boom in the 1980s numerous protests and anti-shrimp movements have developed. For example, in 2009 thousands of farmers demonstrated against shrimp farms in the Khulna and Bagerhat districts. Protests occurred again in 2010 which resulted in violent clashes between rice and shrimp farmers (Greyl, 2014).

The government encourages unchecked shrimp farming because it is a major source of state income. Although some international development agencies and NGOs have encouraged more sustainable shrimp farming practices to reduce salinisation, these attempts do not focus on conflict mediation to address the grievances of farmers. There have been smaller civil society groups, such as the NGO Nijera Kori, which have organised protests and attracted international attention to the social, economic and environmental issues of shrimp farming. However, without strong governmental support, these efforts can only make minimal progress (see the [Nijera Kori Shrimp Farming Conflit](#)).



Resolution Efforts

Sustainable shrimp farming

International organisations have participated in sustainable development programs, in an attempt to promote sustainable shrimp cultivation. One particular project is co-sponsored by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in cooperation with the Bangladesh Department of Fisheries (DoF) to develop coastal aquaculture practices for salt tolerant fish species and to improve flood-preparedness in shrimp farming operations ([World Fish, 2012](#)).

However, these development programs aim to reduce the stress of shrimp farming on the environment, without directly addressing the reasons for conflict between shrimp businesses and small farmers. The scope of shrimp farming and land grabbing, has not been addressed by development agencies and remains a key contributor to violence.

Legal Actions

There have been isolated court cases brought against shrimp groups for flooding the land of agriculturalists. For example, the High Court of Justice in 2008 ruled in favour of the return of farm land to seventy-nine families which had been taken by shrimp farmers ([Grey, 2014](#)).

However, in contrast to this, the central and local governments of Bangladesh encourage unchecked shrimp cultivation as it is the second largest export in Bangladesh ([Glass, 2013](#)). Legal rulings opposing shrimp cultivation are, therefore, rarely respected.

Local Efforts

Local movements have also been proactive in addressing the issues created by shrimp cultivation. The Delta Development project, for example, was implemented by the social mobilisation NGO, Nijera Kori, during the 1990s and 2000s. This project encouraged women's engagement in water management decisions and provided land re-appropriation support to farmers in order to protect the land from flooding and salinisation caused by shrimp farming and extreme weather events ([Kabeer, 2003](#)). This has been successful in reducing shrimp farming in Polder 22, and consequently, violence. However, no comprehensive state-wide approach has been implemented.

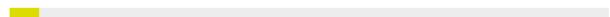


Intensities & Influences



INTENSITIES

International / Geopolitical Intensity

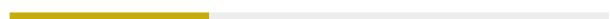


Human Suffering



INFLUENCES

Environmental Influences



Societal Influences



Violent Conflict

Yes



Salience with nation

Regional



Mass displacement

Less than 100.000 and less than 10% of the country's population are displaced within the country.



Cross Border Mass Displacement

No



Resolution Success

Resolve of displacement problems

Displacement continues to cause discontent and/or other problems.

-

Reduction in geographical scope

There has been no reduction in geographical scope.

-

Increased capacity to address grievance in the future

There is no increased capacity to address grievances in the future.

-

Grievance Resolution

Grievances have been mostly ignored.

-

Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity

There has been no reduction in intensity

-



Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

Mediation & arbitration

Isolated court cases have been brought against shrimp groups for flooding the land of agriculturalists. However, legal rulings are rarely respected. A comprehensive state-wide approach to regulate shrimp farming could further help addressing grievances surrounding land grabbing and unchecked environmental degradation.

1

Improving resource efficiency

Sustainable shrimp cultivation has been promoted by international organizations.

2

Promoting social change

Local movements have addressed the issues surrounding shrimp cultivation, and have had some success in reducing shrimp farming and violence.

3

Resources and Materials

Conflict References

[Nijera Kori Shrimp Farming Conflict in Bangladesh](#)

References with URL

[Glass, J. \(2013\). Amid Perfect Storm of Climate Challenges, Can Aquaculture Net Food Security Gains in Bangladesh?](#)

[Dewan, C. et al \(2014\). The Imposition of Participation? The Case of Participatory Water Management in Coastal Bangladesh](#)

[Grel, L. \(2014\). Shrimp farming, Bangladesh](#)

[Paprocki, K. and Cons, J. \(2014\). Brackish Waters and Salted Lands: The social cost of shrimp in Bangladesh](#)

[Rahmann, M. \(2009\). Production and Export of Shrimp of Bangladesh : Problems and Prospects](#)

[Earth Focus \(2012\). Production and Export of Shrimp of Bangladesh : Problems and Prospects](#)

[Kabeer, N. \(2003\). Making rights work for the poor: Nijera Kori and the construction of "collective capabilities" in rural Bangladesh. IDS Working Paper 200.](#)

Further information

<https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/shrimp-farming-bangladesh>