Editorial:

Now-a-days, the impact of climate change appears to be one of the greatest threats to the people of Bangladesh. Day-by-day it is becoming more alarming. A large part of the population is exposed and vulnerable to a range of natural hazards, caused by climate change. The people face myriad sufferings. As record says, there are about 93 disasters (small or large) occurred between the year 1991 and 2000 in Bangladesh, resulting in nearly 200,000 deaths with loss of about US $ 5.9 billion along with high losses in agriculture and infrastructure.

The climatic hazards like floods, cyclones, tornado, storm surge, tidal bore, etc are no more new to the people of Bangladesh. Bangladesh has already scarred history claiming substantial quantities of lives and resulting in losses of assets, belongings etc. During the past few decades, the effects of climate change have been evidenced in climate variability; and more adverse impacts are projected for the coming decades, particularly for low-lying coastline and floodplain ecosystems, in Bangladesh.

UST has been observing all the very adversities, the impact of climate change in the working areas from the very beginning of its inception and implementation of programs.

This edition depicts some of the UST’s activities pertaining to adaptation towards climate change and actions during post disaster periods.

Introduction:

Bangladesh is one of the most climate vulnerable countries in the world. And it will become even more vulnerable in the days to come. Even though the country has made considerable progress in fulfilling the targets of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), climate change induced risks like cyclone, tidal surge, coastal inundation and salinity intrusion, unpredictable rainfall; flood, drought, and negative impacts on agricultural production have appeared as hindrances to achieve the targets of Vision 2021.

Giving highest importance to the problems, UST identified four thematic areas for program. Climate Change and Disaster Management is one of those four thematic directions. Other three themes are: i) Food security and livelihood, ii) Sustainable environmental health and sanitation and iii) Women empowerment and Child Rights.

By and large, UST’s effort is to develop people’s capacity to adapt with climate change. Its program also embeds climate resilient services. As the government is committed to protect the people from the Climatic hazards, UST has considered people’s need, local vulnerability and undertakes projects addressing the climate change impact.

Over the past few years, UST has gradually been able to turn around its reputation in the context of climate change. UST continues to carry out activities, learn lesson and share them with the stakeholders.

UST takes up many programs, invest money in development sectors but climate change puts the value of this investment at risk. Ensuring the current and new investments, UST take into account the risks posed by climate change that is likely to be critical more and more in future. UST provides leadership in implementing climate-resilient programs. However, the main outcome of the projects, so far implemented by UST is a clear framework for protecting and reducing the risk of disease, as a consequence of climate change, which lay negative impact.

Throughout the history, human societies have continually demonstrated a strong capacity for adapting to different climates and environmental changes-whether by migration to new areas, changing the crops we cultivate, or building different types of shelter mostly raising the
plinths. The current rate of global climate change is unusually high compared to past changes that the country experiences.

**Climate resilient WASH of UST:**

After an initial pilot activities, UST has been implementing Climate resilient WASH program at total three Upazila in two districts of which two Upazilas are in Shariatpur i.e. Zanjira and Naria and one Upazila is in Chandpur district i.e. Haimchar. A total of 12 unions from those three Upazilas have been covered under the Climate resilient Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotional Program. Before, UST worked at six Unions of Zanjira Upazila. Currently as many as 126878 people are getting benefited from UST’s Climate Resilient WASH program. Among them 78258 are female.

The primary aim of this project is to create an opportunity for the climate affected vulnerable people living in hard-to-reach char areas (off-shore and on-shore chars) to gain sustainable access to climate resilient water facilities and latrines.

The project has achieved significant success.

Table-1: Distribution of beneficiaries by intervention

UST in accordance with the plans has installed number of Tube Wells, Sanitary Latrines etc. It has constructed and repaired many TW platforms. There are some innovations significantly recorded in this project. Table-1 illustrates below major achievements with the beneficiaries per intervention.

Apart from installation of TWs and Latrines, UST has built capacity of the Ward Disaster Management Committee, Union Disaster Management and closely monitored their works. UST facilitated the
committees to undertake social development activities.

**Adaptation to Climate Change on Agriculture**

The farmers in the Southern part of the country were accustomed to grow local and low-yielding varieties of paddy. Thus the production was not up to expected level. Production was also reducing day-by-day. Lack of knowledge and lack of availability of appropriate seed also caused low production.

Unnayan Shahojogy Team (UST) observes this situation for years and considering the people's plight, it has designed a project for the climate affected people. It introduced Saline tolerant paddy in this areas. The prime aim of the project is to improve food security by enhancing saline tolerant rice production.

UST implemented this project at Gulishakhali Union of Amtali Upazila under Barguna district. In order to reach the project goal and objectives, UST has distributed rice seeds to the small and marginal farmers as per guidance of IRRI, Patuakhali.

More specifically, the project aims to increase rice production in the coastal area. It also aims to promote food security of small and marginal farmers of coastal area through production of climate/ saline tolerant variety of rice.

Total 160 farmers receive benefits directly from the project.

**Major Activities of the Project**

- Identification and formation of group by potential farmers
- Capacity building of the selected farmers: UST has organized training for the farmers on need assessment, mobilization of people paddy cultivation, promotion of high-yielding saline tolerant rice production. UST also has organized training on seed-bed preparation, rice seedling processing, fertilizer management, pest control and disease control, seed collection and preservation etc.
Seed distribution: UST collects seed and distributes to the farmers.

Advocacy networking and linkage: UST organizes workshop with DAE, LGIs and NGOs, UPs, marginal and small farmers in the order to establish a linkage of farmers with a variety of service providers.

Day observance: UST observes historical days and organizes trainings/ mass gatherings in the field for the farmers. Local MP attends in the events.

Post disaster Rehabilitation:

with the recession of flood water people of the affected areas started to going back to the divested homes respectively. It was necessary for the people to return to their normal lives. The people who lost home were living under the sky. They had neither work nor food. What they had was washed away. In such a situation UST launched a massive program for their settlements. Firstly UST started with relief operation, then it went for rehabilitation works. UST provided housing and house-building materials for the people. Disaster took away all they had. Standing crops, vegetables were washed away. UST thinking of necessity of the people gave assistance to the people for agricultural rehabilitation, health care service and created a linkage of the people with service providing organizations so that they could obtain long term support.

Conclusion:

Bangladesh is prone to manifold climate vulnerabilities. Adaptation to climate change can reduce vulnerability and delay the process. Depending on the local environment and the magnitude of the changes, UST has innovated numbers of technologies, devices which are well suited to the climate change. It still tries to develop innovative technologies to meet climate vulnerabilities. Its venture especially the climate resilient projects have been successful for community’s gracious participation.

The affected people received assistance for habitation, Safe water and sanitation and above all Food and livelihood security. Those people ensure access to food and livelihoods by the things that UST provided to them under its rehabilitation program.