Title: Strengthening climate resilience in coastal Bangladesh: Analyzing the role of NGOs in adaptation governance from an intersectionality lens

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Abastact: Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) significantly contribute to the promotion of local adaptation and resilience strategies in climate-vulnerable areas, including coastal Bangladesh. However, most prior studies have focused on project outcomes and governance frameworks, often neglecting the intersectional dimensions of vulnerability, such as gender, disability, and income, and how these affect perceptions of NGO efficacy. To address this gap, this study examines the effectiveness of NGO-led adaptation initiatives from an intersectional perspective in the Koira and Shyamnagar upazilas of southwest coastal Bangladesh. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining survey data (n = 230) with qualitative insights from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Quantitative findings reveal structural inequities, with individuals with disabilities and women being significantly underrepresented in NGO programs ($\chi2 = 24.88$, $p < .001$; $t = -3.47$, $p = .001$; and $\chi2 = 34.42$, $p < .001$; $t = -5.75$, $p < .001$, respectively). While 27 % of respondents claimed that NGOs prioritize disadvantaged groups, nearly half (48.3 %) disagreed. Qualitative data also echoed these concerns, illustrating patterns of favoritism, political interference, and tokenistic inclusion that undermine equity and transparency. The findings indicate that, although NGOs are critically essential for their considerable contributions to climate adaptation and resilience, they often face governance challenges that compromise their credibility and equitable results. This study demonstrates that fortifying accountability, diminishing elite capture, and integrating gender- and disability-sensitive frameworks into program design are essential for augmenting legitimacy and resilience. By foregrounding the interconnections among vulnerability, intersectionality, and governance, this study advances scholarly debates on adaptation governance in the Global South. Despite limitations in geographic coverage and representativeness, the research stresses the importance of justice-oriented and participatory approaches in NGO-led climate adaptation.

Keywords: Climate governance Adaptation Resilience NGOs Intersectionality Equity Bangladesh

10.1016/j.pdisas.2025.100498

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S259006172500095X