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# BARISHAL DIVISIONAL PLATFORM LAUNCH OF LOCALLY LED ADAPTATION

27 July 2025

Caritas Bangladesh, Regional Office, Barishal



## Context

Bangladesh, located in South Asia, is a low-lying deltaic nation shaped by the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) basins. The GBM basin makes Bangladesh one of the world's largest deltas, interlaced with a vast network of rivers, channels, swamps, and flood plain sediments (chars).

Nearly 80% of Bangladesh's landmass lies within the floodplains of the GBM basins, along with several smaller river systems, making the nation profoundly riverine.

This riverine geography is both a source of opportunity and vulnerability. Here, rivers sustain millions of people by providing fertile soil for agriculture, abundant fisheries, and waterways for transport routes. Yet, rivers also bring recurring seasonal floods, riverbank erosion, and shifting courses, displacing 50,000–200,000 people annually.

In addition, over the past 35 years, salinity levels have risen by approximately 26%, extending well beyond traditional coastal zones. With 28% of the national population, about 35 million people, residing along the coastal belt, communities are increasingly exposed to the threats of rising seas, storm surges, and other climate-induced hazards.

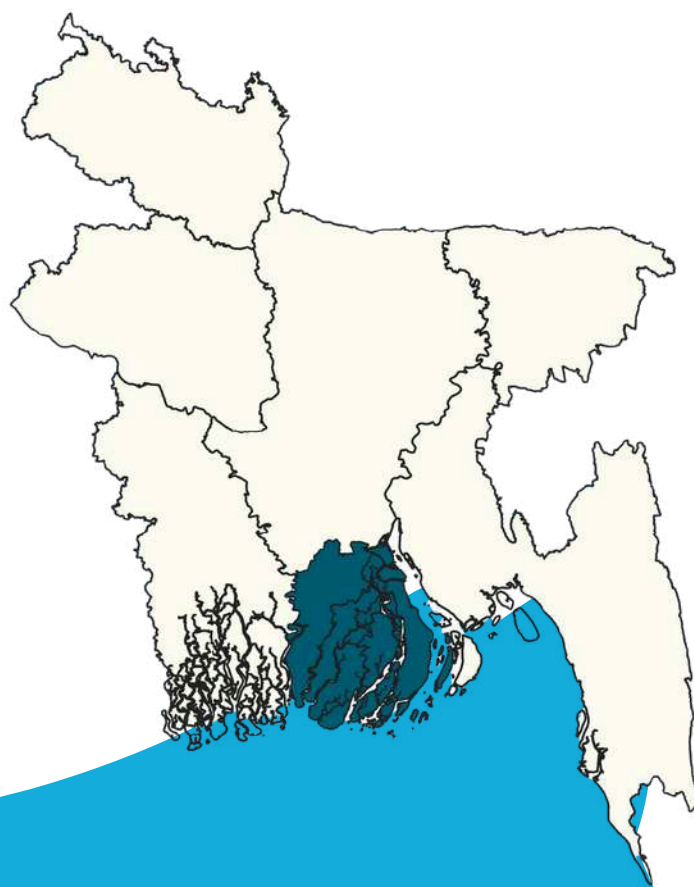
## Background

Barishal division, located in the south-central deltaic plain of Bangladesh, is crisscrossed by numerous rivers. Hence, it is often referred as Dhan-Nodi-Khal, Ei tin-e Borishal (rice, river, and canal built Barishal). Embedded within the intricate river and mangrove system, the division comprises 6 districts, 42 sub-districts, and 353 union councils.

The low-lying terrain and barren coastline make Barishal a climate-vulnerable coast, exposing communities to riverbank erosion, frequent flooding, storm surges, rising sea levels, cyclones, and salinity intrusion.

Barishal district also faces multiple environmental challenges that threaten its agriculture and livelihoods. Riverbank erosion causes significant loss of homes and farmland, while erratic rainfall reduces crop yields. Salinity intrusion has become a pressing issue in Barishal, leading to contamination of natural water sources such as rivers and groundwater. Extreme weather events such as cyclones, storms, hail, and excessive fog further harm agricultural production and livestock health. The climatic anomalies have also altered cropping patterns and increased pest outbreaks, while rising temperatures and irregular rainfall intensify heat and water stress.

Despite these daunting challenges, local communities have shown remarkable adaptive capacity from the Barishal region. Traditional practices such as floating agriculture(baira/dhap), recognized by the FAO as an innovative adaptation, allow farmers to grow vegetables and rice on floating rafts of water hyacinth during floods. Similarly, tidal river management (TRM) in parts of the delta has demonstrated potential in reducing waterlogging and enhancing soil fertility. These community-driven adaptations highlight both the urgency and the ingenuity required to sustain livelihoods in Barishal's fragile riverine and deltaic landscape.



# Locally Led Adaptation (LLA)

Locally Led Adaptation (LLA) is an emerging concept in climate action that prioritizes the knowledge, leadership, and decision-making of local communities to design and implement adaptation strategies. Unlike top-down interventions, LLA places local actors at the center of driving adaptation action by identifying risks, setting priorities, and deploying context-specific solutions based on decades of local knowledge and experience. This approach recognizes the critical role of inclusive, local-level planning in achieving effective adaptation while preventing maladaptation.

LLA differs from consultative, participatory, or community-based approaches by granting local actors' genuine agency and decision-making power over their adaptation practices, rather than barely participating in leadership processes. It fosters effective relationships among local communities, civil society organizations, local governments, and central government bodies, ensuring coordination and ownership at all levels.

This approach is guided by eight principles designed to make adaptation actions effective, equitable, and transparent. These principles emphasize inclusion, participation, justice, and equality, along with the direct allocation of finance to local actors to support their adaptation priorities. By ensuring that local actors play meaningful roles in the design, planning, implementation, and monitoring of adaptation measures, LLA promotes context-specific solutions that are sustainable and resilient over time.



1 Devolving decision making to the lowest appropriate level



2 Addressing structural inequalities faced by women, youth, children, disabled and displaced people, Indigenous Peoples and marginalised ethnic groups



3 Providing patient and predictable funding that can be accessed more easily



4 Investing in local capabilities to leave an institutional legacy



5 Building a robust understanding of climate risk and uncertainty



6 Flexible programming and learning



7 Ensure transparency and accountability



8 Collaborative action and investment

## Locally Led Adaptation (LLA) in Bangladesh

Locally Led Adaptation (LLA) in Bangladesh represents a transformative approach to addressing the impacts of climate change by placing local communities at the center of adaptation planning and action. Given Bangladesh's vulnerability to climate change, LLA emphasizes community-driven solutions to build resilience.

Bangladesh's national policies, such as the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), emphasize locally led adaptation (LLA) as a transformative adaptation tool. While interventions led by local stakeholders have shown effectiveness and gained local acceptance in promoting CBA and LLA, significant gaps remain in implementing LLA nationally.

Key challenges include a lack of coordination among government ministries, a limited understanding of LLA at the local government level, unequal participation, political conflicts, limited capacity for monitoring, limited financial and technical resources, and inadequate inclusion of local communities in planning and decision-making processes.

Therefore, to scale up LLA effectively, emphasizing building local leadership and resilience, enhancing local government capacity, and supporting monitoring, evaluation, and learning of LLA can be prioritized.

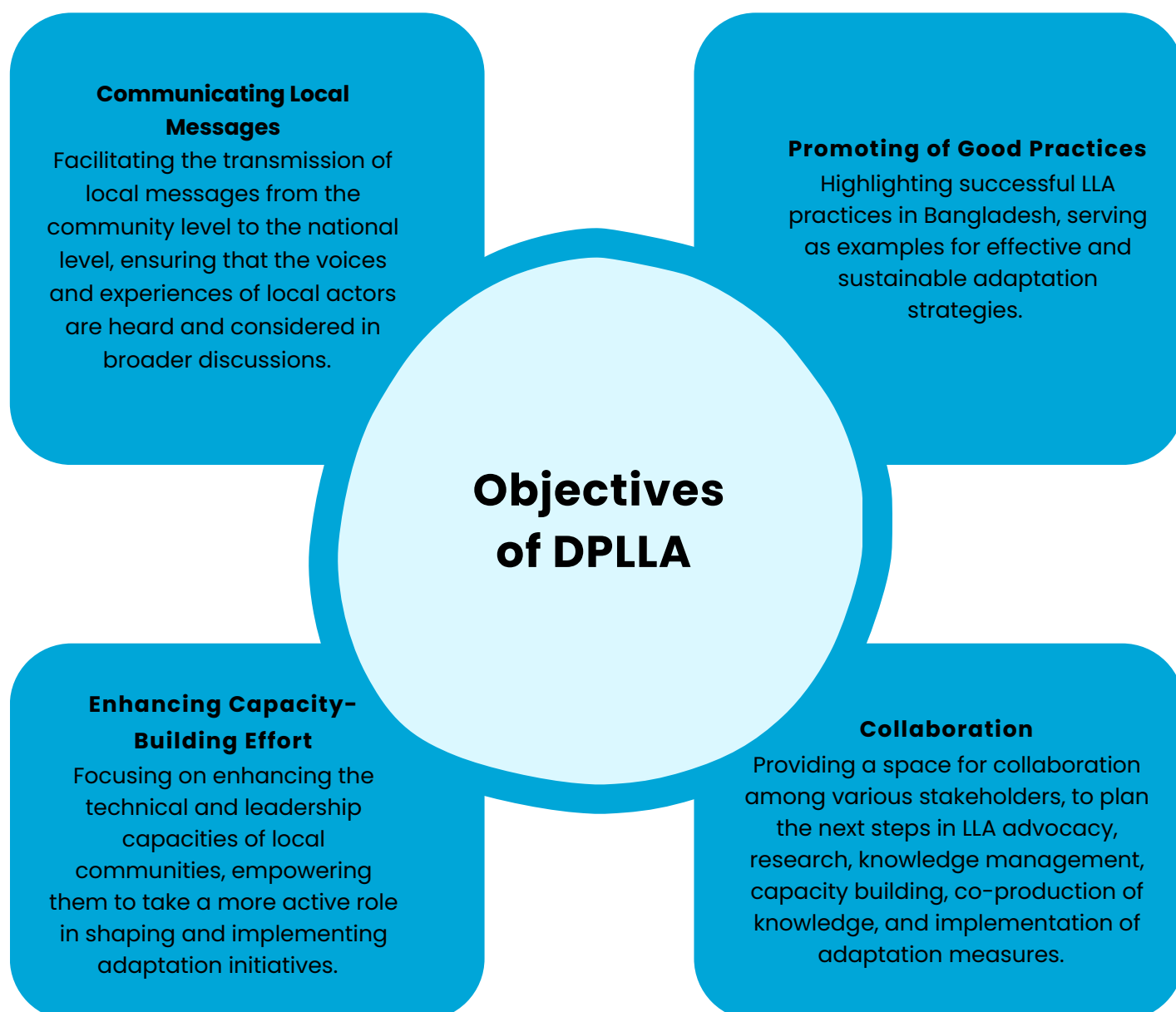
Learning from and collaborating with local partners, as well as meaningful engagement with local communities, are essential for an effective implementation of adaptation interventions and achieving the national adaptation goals.



# Importance of Divisional Platform Launch on Locally Led Adaptation

In May 2022, the LLA Program of the International Center for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) launched the National Platform on Locally Led Adaptation (NPLLA) to disseminate knowledge, implement research ideas, and conduct capacity-building training on LLA.

To empower local actors at the divisional level, ICCCAD subsequently launched the Divisional Platforms on LLA (DPLLA) starting from 2023. The idea of launching the DPLLAs was to bridge the knowledge gaps on climate change adaptation among different stakeholders and create a strong network amongst the local organizations across the country. Seven DPLLA have been launched to date in Khulna, Chattogram, Sylhet, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Rajshahi, and now in Barishal Division.



## Launch of the Barishal Divisional Platform on Locally Led Adaptation (DPLLA, Barishal)

The Barishal Divisional Platform on Locally Led Adaptation (DPLLA) was launched on 27th July 2025, at Caritas Regional Head Office in Barishal. The launch event was attended by representatives from local NGOs, grassroots organizations, universities, and civil society groups from the 6 districts—Patuakhali, Bhola, Pirojpur, Barguna, and Jhalokati of the Barishal division.

Ms. Samiha Saleha, Research Associate at ICCCAD, moderated the session and welcomed the attendees, expressing her gratitude. After her remarks, the participants introduced themselves briefly.

Ms. Maria Akter, Project Manager of the CAP-RES Project at ICCCAD, delivered the opening remarks by introducing ICCCAD's mission and key programs. She emphasized the importance of information exchange as the platform's core agenda, while highlighting ICCCAD's flagship initiatives, including knowledge-sharing events and policy advocacy.

Mr. Savio Rousseau Rozario, Program Coordinator, Locally Led Adaptation (LLA) Program at ICCCAD, discussed the challenging prospect of climate change in Bangladesh. Furthermore, Mr. Rozario introduced the concept of LLA, sharing the vision of the late Professor, Professor Dr. Saleemul Huq, OBE (1952–2023), and his pioneering leadership in promoting LLA at both national and global levels. He also discussed ICCCAD's vision behind establishing LLA platforms in all eight divisions of Bangladesh, and elaborated on the eight core principles of LLA, illustrating them with examples from various adaptation projects.



The session was followed by the MEL and LLA session led by Mr. Nobiu Islam, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Manager, at ICCCAD. Mr. Islam initiated a critical discussion on rethinking Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) systems for LLA, challenging whether existing MEAL principles are suitable for LLA approaches. He also emphasized adaptive learning as a core principle of LLA and examined power dynamics in information flows, noting that while farmers share data with NGOs and CBOs, decision-making power often remains with Project Management Units (PMUs) and donors, creating imbalances.

Key limitations of conventional MEAL systems were identified as:

- Top-Down Nature of MEAL Systems
- Emphasis on Upward Accountability over Local Ownership
- Greater Focus on Outputs Rather than Processes

Mr. Islam also cited some good examples, where federations were established to ensure periodic review and reflection, demonstrating the value of local agency. The discussion concluded that MEAL must evolve to center local voices, ensuring communities control their priorities, adaptation processes, and data. A robust data protection policy was also underscored as vital to safeguarding community interests in participatory MEAL frameworks.

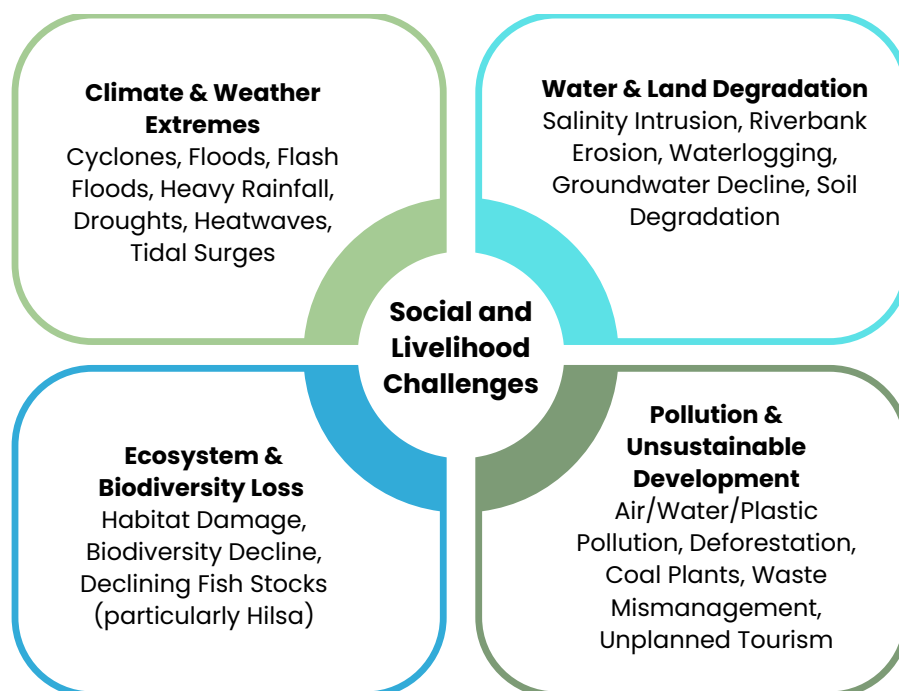


# Opinions from the Participants



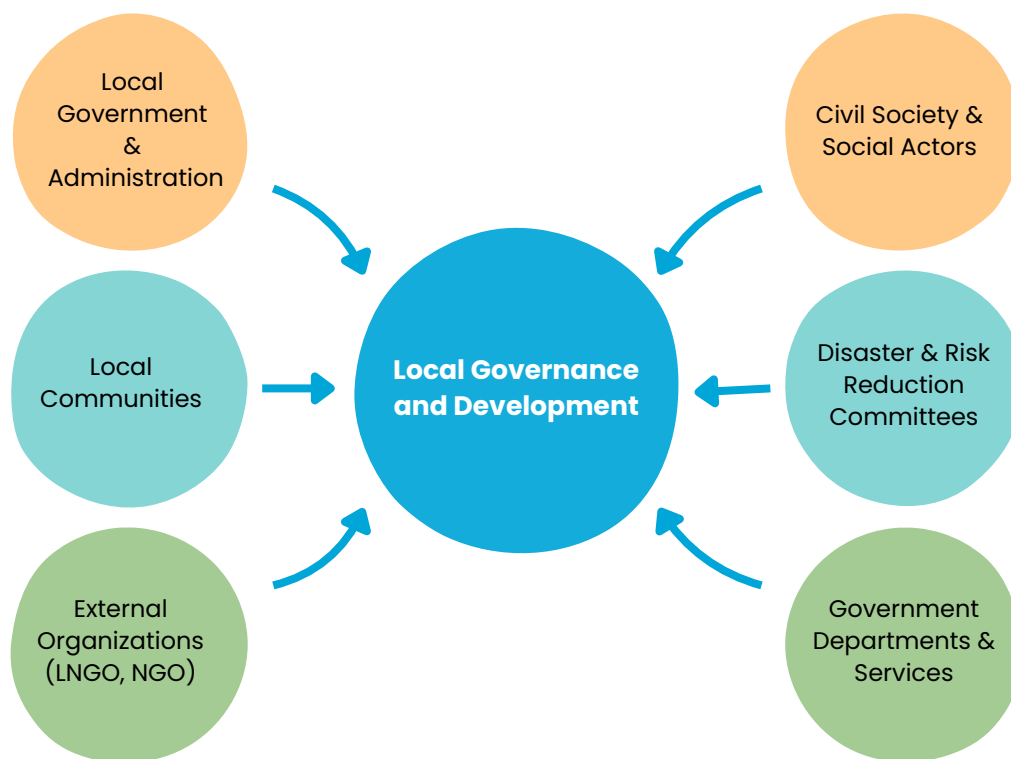
During the session, participants highlighted various challenges resulting from climatic and environmental factors. These challenges often result in poverty and unemployment, forcing people into displacement. Poverty also affects the social and mental well-being.

In terms of social development, weak institutions with limited funding struggle to respond effectively, and low awareness, along with political barriers, further block sustainable solutions.



**Key Influences on Social and Livelihood Issues**

Additionally, the participants also provided valuable insights about the contribution of different local actors through the existing development initiatives within their communities. They emphasized that to establish good governance at the community level, these actors should engage in collaborative and collective action, ensuring accountability and transparency while sharing power among all stakeholders. Such coordinated efforts can strengthen decision-making, promote equitable resource allocation, and enhance the overall effectiveness of local development initiatives.



### Key Actors in Local Governance and Development



## Group Activity

**Question: What does 'leadership' mean?**

**participants:** Leadership refers to the ability to lead others towards sustainable, dedicated goals.

### ***The Hypothetical Scenario Analysis***

The participants were given four hypothetical scenarios. They were asked to identify relevant actors and their designated responsibilities as per their case studies.



### Following tables depict the details of the group exercise

<b>Project Name: The River Bank Protection and Adaptation Project</b> <b>Location: Barishal District (Hizla, Mulad, Mehendigonj)</b>	
<b>Who will be the actors?</b>	<b>What are the responsibilities?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Displaced Community</li> <li>• Local Government</li> <li>• BWDB</li> <li>• UDMC</li> <li>• CPP</li> <li>• Local Authority</li> <li>• CSO</li> <li>• Educational Institution</li> <li>• Youth Net, Local Leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs Identification, Voice &amp; Assessment</li> <li>• Budget Inclusion, Allocation &amp; Distribution</li> <li>• Presenting Issues &amp; Project Ownership</li> <li>• Awareness, Implementation, Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</li> <li>• Research &amp; Knowledge Building</li> <li>• Volunteering &amp; Sustainability</li> </ul>

<b>Project Name: Assessing the Safe Water Crisis</b> <b>Location: Mehendiganj Upazila</b>	
<b>Who will be the actors?</b>	<b>What are the responsibilities?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Govt. NGOs</li> <li>• Youth Groups</li> <li>• Educational Institutions</li> <li>• Religious Leaders</li> <li>• Health Sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring the entire project</li> <li>• Volunteering for awareness</li> <li>• Research on Social and Behavioral Change</li> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Technical Support</li> </ul>

<b>Project Name: Impact of Salinity on Agriculture</b> <b>Location: Barguna District</b>	
<b>Who will be the actors?</b>	<b>What are the responsibilities?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers</li> <li>• Fish Farmers</li> <li>• Landless people</li> <li>• Labors</li> <li>• Upazilla Agriculture Office</li> <li>• Upazilla Fisheries Department</li> <li>• Local Government</li> <li>• Bank</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultivating and conserving salt-tolerant crops</li> <li>• Demonstration plots for salt-tolerant farming</li> <li>• Using organic and moderate chemical inputs</li> <li>• Advising, motivating, and training farmers</li> <li>• Providing agricultural inputs and loan support</li> </ul>

<b>Project Name: Enhance Climate Resilience and Agro-Ecology in the Coastal Area in Bangladesh</b> <b>Location: Latachapli Union, Kalapara, Patuakhali</b>	
<b>Who will be the actors?</b>	<b>What are the responsibilities?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Communities (Marginal Farmers, Fisherman)</li> <li>• Vulnerable Communities</li> <li>• People with disabilities</li> <li>• Ethnic people (Rakhain)</li> <li>• Local Authorities</li> <li>• NGOs</li> <li>• WDMC, UDMC, CPP</li> <li>• Policy Makers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather knowledge and apply it (e.g., saline-tolerant crop identification and soil-based adaptation)</li> <li>• Create awareness among local people</li> <li>• Disseminate knowledge</li> <li>• Contribute to disaster mitigation</li> <li>• Formulate relevant policies</li> </ul>

## Recommendation

Throughout the launch event, the participants provided several key recommendations to strengthen the initiative's effectiveness. They highlighted the need for specialized training on LLA and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL), while conducting and disseminating comprehensive research in generating evidence from the local level. Some of the key recommendations that were highlighted are as follows:

- Provide training on LLA and MEL for local actors.
- Conduct and share research on LLA and MEL.
- Support grassroots NGOs in research implementation.
- Document climate adaptation stories showcasing local leadership.
- Hold workshops to introduce and refine MEL and LLA tools.
- Create a networking forum for DPLLA participants.
- Identify mechanisms to integrate local voices into national adaptation policies.



## List of the participating organizations of DPLLA, Barishal

Organization	Focus Areas of Work
Association of Voluntary Actions for Society (AVAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Livelihoods</li> <li>• Disaster Risk Reduction</li> <li>• Environment and Ecosystem</li> <li>• Climate Change Adaptation</li> <li>• Sanitation</li> <li>• Legal Aid</li> <li>• Child Sponsorship,</li> <li>• Freedom of Expansion for digital democracy,</li> <li>• Emergency Risk Reduction.</li> </ul>
Upakul Paribar Kalyan Sangstha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Microfinance</li> <li>• Disaster Risk Reduction</li> </ul>
Society Development Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Livelihoods</li> <li>• Disaster Risk Reduction</li> <li>• Environment and Ecosystem</li> </ul>
Children & Youth Development Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Disaster Risk Reduction</li> <li>• Environment and Ecosystem</li> </ul>
Sramajibi-Unnayan-Sangstha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Livelihoods</li> <li>• Environment</li> </ul>
Bangladesh Village Development Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Microfinance</li> <li>• Disaster Risk Reduction</li> <li>• Environment and Ecosystem</li> </ul>

Organization	Focus Areas of Work
Darial Union Janakallyan Songstha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Livelihoods</li> <li>• Microfinance</li> <li>• Disaster Risk Reduction</li> <li>• Environment and Ecosystem</li> <li>• VWP</li> <li>• Free medical campaign</li> </ul>
Social Unity For Neighbour-Aid (SUN AID)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Disaster Risk Reduction</li> </ul>
Artho-Shamajik Shikkha Sanskritc Unnayon Sangstha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Livelihoods</li> <li>• Microfinance</li> <li>• Disaster Risk Reduction</li> <li>• Environment and Ecosystem</li> </ul>
Peoples Association For Social Advancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Disaster Risk Reduction</li> <li>• Old Age Home for Males (Dakhin Bango Bridhhasrom)</li> </ul>
Saint-Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Livelihoods</li> <li>• Disaster Risk Reduction</li> <li>• Environment and Ecosystem</li> <li>• Child Security and Education</li> <li>• Healthcare for Child and Pregnant Mothers</li> <li>• Safe Water and Sanitization</li> <li>• GVB</li> </ul>

Organization	Focus Areas of Work
Chandradip Development Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Livelihoods</li> <li>• Microfinance</li> <li>• Disaster Risk and Reduction</li> <li>• Environment and Ecosystem</li> <li>• Work with 'Manta Krishani Group'</li> </ul>
Aloshikha Rajihar Social Development Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture (Fish Farming)</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> </ul>
Rural Economic Development Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Livelihoods</li> <li>• Disaster Risk Reduction</li> <li>• Environment and Ecosystem</li> </ul>
Alternative Initiative for Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Livelihoods</li> <li>• Disaster Risk Reduction</li> <li>• Environment and Ecosystem</li> </ul>
Caritas Barishal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Livelihoods</li> <li>• Microfinance</li> <li>• Disaster Risk Reduction</li> <li>• Environment and Ecosystem</li> </ul>
Sushilon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Livelihoods</li> <li>• Disaster Risk Reduction</li> </ul>

Organization	Focus Areas of Work
Department of Social Work, University of Barishal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Research</li> </ul>
Department of Disaster Risk Management, PSTU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disaster Risk Reduction</li> <li>• Environment and Ecosystem</li> </ul>
Department of Disaster Resilience and Engineering PSTU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Disaster Risk Reduction</li> <li>• Environment and Ecosystem</li> <li>• Research</li> </ul>
Prantojon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Environment and Ecosystem.</li> </ul>
Amra Kalaparabasi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Disaster</li> </ul>
Lal Sabuj Society (LSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Disaster Risk Reduction</li> <li>• Environment and Ecosystem</li> </ul>
Social Network Disadvantaged Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Livelihood</li> <li>• Disaster Risk Reduction</li> <li>• Environment and Ecosystem</li> <li>• Underprivileged Children's Health and Education</li> </ul>

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