

RCAS Commentary

Climate Education As National Security in Bangladesh

Sujit Kumar Datta

Deputy Director, The Hong Kong Research Center for Asian Studies (RCAS)
Director, The Hong Kong Research Center for Asian Studies Bangladesh Center

May 14, 2026

About RCAS

香港亞洲研究中心| The Hong Kong Research Center for Asian Studies (RCAS) is a nonprofit research organization focusing on Asian affairs. It is a newly established institution founded in February 2022 by Dr. Nian Peng in Haikou and subsequently moved to Hong Kong in September 2023. We currently have an international research team with nearly 100 resident/nonresident researchers from China and other countries.

RCAS aims to become a leading research institute and think tank on Asian affairs in the Indo-Pacific region. To date, RCAS has conducted research programs on maritime disputes in the South China Sea (SCS), China's relations with the Indo-Pacific states, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), terrorism/counterterrorism in the Afg-Pak region, and so on. It is committed to promoting maritime cooperation, regional integration, and regional peace in the Indo-Pacific region at large.

RCAS has published nearly ten books in Chinese and English and more than 20 papers in SSCI/SCOPUS/CSSCI-indexed journals. Recent English publications include *Populism, Nationalism and South China Sea Dispute: Chinese and Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2022); *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Contemporary Developments and Dynamics* (London: Routledge, 2022); *Crossing the Himalayas: Buddhist Ties, Regional Integration and Great-Power Rivalry* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2021); *The Reshaping of China-Southeast Asia Relations in Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2021); *Territorial Disputes, The Role of Leaders and The Impact of Quad: A Triangular Explanation of China-India Border Escalations* (2023); *Managing the South China Sea Dispute: Multilateral and Bilateral Approaches* (2022); *China-Pakistan Cooperation on Afghanistan: Assessing Key Interests and Implementing Strategies* (2022); *Hedging Against the Dragon: Myanmar's Tangled Relations with China since 1988* (2021); and *China-Pakistan Conventional Arms Trade: An Appraisal of Supplier's and Recipient's Motives* (2020).

RCAS has also published hundreds of articles, and its researchers have been interviewed in various local and international media outlets, such as *The Diplomat* in the United States, *East Asian Forum (EAF)* in Australia, *Bangkok Post* in Thailand, *Jakarta Post* in Indonesia, *Lian He Zao Bao*, *Think China* in Singapore, *South China Morning Post (SCMP)*, *China-US Focus* in Hong Kong, *CGTN*, *Global Times*, *World Affairs* in China. RCAS researchers have actively participated in international conferences or study visits in the United States, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar, Cambodia, and other places.

Welcome to visit our website: <http://www.rcas.top>.

Address: 1507B, EASTCORE1, No.398, Kwun Tong, Kooloon, Hong Kong
Ph: 00852 2397 7886|Email: hkrcas@163.com|Web: www.rcas.top

Climate Education As National Security in Bangladesh

Sujit Kumar Datta

Bangladesh is on the front line of one of the most important security questions of the 21st century. Increased sea levels, severe cyclones, salinity intrusion, and erratic weather patterns are no longer distant environmental issues but immediate threats to livelihoods, infrastructure, and human life. In this respect, climate education must be restructured not as a subject in an academic curriculum but as a component of national security. It is no longer a matter of choice but a necessity to ensure resilience, stability, and sustainable development.



▲ Times of Bangladesh.

Education Sustainable Development (ESD) is one of the major platforms through which this change can be affected. ESD equips the citizens with the knowledge and values that they need to confront a future that is more uncertain than ever. As one of the pillars of lifelong learning, community-based ESD transcends formal classrooms and embeds sustainability in everyday life and local practice. Climate change education, as the epicentre of ESD, is a matter of direct existential concern due to global warming and environmental degradation. Not only does it create awareness, but it also develops the hands-on skills required to implement adaptations and mitigation measures. The strategic importance of making ESD, climate education, and green community development central to national education systems' policies has been recognised by institutions such as UNESCO. Such an integration is beneficial in

realising the fact that sustainable development cannot be talked about in the context of uninformed and disempowered citizens.

In Bangladesh, there is a high stake, especially in this case. Being one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world, the country must make resilience and adaptation key pillars in its development strategy. In this respect, climate-smart education is crucial. Directly, education can help communities become more resilient by equipping students with locally relevant skills, such as disaster preparedness, sustainable agriculture, water management, and renewable energy use. This strategy goes beyond theoretical teaching, focusing on practical knowledge that can save lives and livelihoods in times of crisis.

The interdependence of climate change and education disruption further substantiates the need to make climate education a security project. Natural disasters usually destroy schools, displace people and disrupt education. The sadness of the tragedy of Cyclone Sidr that claimed the education of over 100,000 children is a bitter pill to swallow in terms of exposing the vulnerability. Such upheavals can lead to long-term reversal of development, increase inequality and hinder national development in the absence of strong infrastructure support and a flexible curriculum. Investing in climate-resilient schools – properly outfitted to withstand extreme weather – and flexible learning systems is therefore of great significance in an attempt to save the human capital of the country.

This fact is beginning to be recognised in Bangladesh's policymaking. Plans such as the National Environment Policy 2018 and the government's membership of the Greening Education Partnership demonstrate that the government is determined to embed sustainability and climate consciousness in the national curriculum. These are to mainstream environmental education at all levels, so that future generations will be better positioned to cope with climate change. However, the priority is to implement it successfully. The policies must be translated into concrete changes in teaching techniques, curriculum development, and resource allocation.

Strategic collaboration is also essential to promoting climate education. The fact that Bangladesh has been engaging with international partners such as UNESCO and the Global Partnership for Education is an acknowledgement that climate issues are not national. The activities, such as the Climate Smart Education Systems Initiative (CSESI), are geared toward generating evidence-based strategies and fostering innovation in education systems. Bangladesh can accelerate its efforts towards a more resilient and adaptive education system with the collective skills and resources from around the world.

The idea of the nation converting half of the educational institutions into the Greening Education Programme by 2030 is not just desirable, but also just. To achieve this

target, it will involve a long-term investment, capacity building, and community interactions. It will also require a change in the philosophy of education, from learning by rote to learning by experience, through practice. It is not only that students are compelled to be informed about climate change, but also how they respond in a real-life scenario.

Ultimately, through the rhetoric of climate education as national security, the rhetoric of development and governance is re-positioned. It has revealed the interdependence of environmental sustainability, human security, and economic stability. Climate-literate citizens are better positioned to make informed decisions, adopt sustainable practices, and enhance the country's resilience. On the other hand, a lack of awareness and preparedness can heighten vulnerability, leading to social unrest, economic disruption, and a long-term unstable situation.

Climate resilience building in Bangladesh will not be based solely on infrastructure and technology, but on people's knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. The interface is education, which helps bridge the gap between policy aspirations and action on the ground. By investing in inclusive, comprehensive and futuristic climate education, Bangladesh will have a chance to transform its vulnerability into strength. In the process, it will not only save its future but also set an example for other nations currently facing the same predicaments.

Climate education in Bangladesh needs to be reoriented not as an environmental issue of convenience, but rather as a pillar of national security. The country's resilience will depend on its citizens' ability to understand, anticipate and respond to climate-related risks. A climate-literate population is better positioned to protect livelihoods, support adaptive agriculture and aid in disaster preparedness, thereby enhancing the country's overall security architecture.

The policy action should thus not be mere rhetoric but a reality. The provision at all levels, in the form of a practically oriented form, and in the form of the locally appropriate material, should be a part of the national curriculum. Teacher training, research funding and awareness-raising campaigns should be increased in the medium term to build institutional capacity. Over the long run, Bangladesh must invest in new ecosystems of innovation that bridge the gap between education and climate technology, entrepreneurship, and policy design. It is also important to have inclusive access in the sense that the vulnerable and marginalised communities will not be left behind.

And lastly, the concept of climate education as a national security is not only strategic but also important to survival and sustainable development. It will not be just infrastructure or even policy-based in terms of Bangladesh's future, but an informed and prepared citizenry able to cope with an increasingly uncertain climate reality.

This article was first published at Times of Bangladesh, Bangladesh, May 5, 2026, <https://tob.news/climate-education-as-national-security-in-bangladesh/>.

About Author



Sujit Kumar Datta is Deputy Director, Hong Kong Research Center for Asian Studies (RCAS), Hong Kong, and Director, Hong Kong Research Center for Asian Studies-Bangladesh Center, and the former Chairman and Professor in the International Relations Department at the University of Chittagong, Bangladesh. Dr. Datta graduated with a BA (Honors) and MA degree in International Relations from the Jahangiragar University and completed his PhD in International Politics from the School of Political Science and Public Administration, Shandong University, China. After that, he had worked at the BRAC Training Division (BTD) as a faculty member. He had joined in the department of International Relations, University of Chittagong, Bangladesh as a Lecturer in January, 2010. Dr. Datta has authored several articles and book chapters in renowned national and international peer-reviewed journals (Web of Science, Scopus indexed). Email:datta.ir@cu.ac.bd.