



Picturing Environmental Advocacy: Understanding the Role of Photography in a Campaign to Save Rivers in Bangladesh

Ashfara Haque¹

Abstract

Located in the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta, Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, is surrounded by five major rivers, which offer a means of transportation and communications to millions of people. Rapid urbanization and uncontrolled population growth, however, have caused the city to expand without efficient urban planning. As some rivers become polluted by chemical waste, others are affected by river shore encroachment and land grabbing. To save Dhaka's rivers, several initiatives were undertaken including an advocacy campaign by the news media. In 2009, the national daily newspaper of Bangladesh, *The Daily Star*, initiated an advocacy campaign to protect the rivers. As part of the campaign, the newspaper published a significant number of photographs depicting the deteriorating conditions of the rivers. In this study, twenty-five of the photographs were analyzed as representative of the campaign. Combining Giblett's theory of photography for environmental sustainability with the method of content analysis, the article analyzes the effectiveness of photography used in the environmental campaign "Save Our Rivers, Save Sonar Bangla," coordinated by *The Daily Star*.

Keywords

advocacy, Bangladesh newspaper, environmental communication, media campaign, photography in environmental activism, river campaigns, sustainability

-Photographs can constitute a context for understanding and judgement.

DeLuca and Demo (241–260)

Introduction

Riverine Bangladesh has more than seven-hundred rivers (Singh 194) and the country shares more than fifty rivers with neighboring India and Myanmar. The Ganges-Padma and the Brahmaputra-Jamuna, two of the world's largest rivers, flow through Bangladesh. The length of the total waterways of this country is 24,000 kilometers ("River Dredging"). Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, is encircled by four major rivers: the Buriganga, the Shitalakhaya, the Turag and the Balu Rivers. Rivers are connected with people's daily lives as sources of water, food,

irrigation, hydroelectric power, transportation, disposal of waste, etc. Water supply providers currently face a challenge to supply fresh water in the densely populated city. Sixty percent of city dwellers' daily water needs are replenished from deep tube wells and surface treatment plants run by the Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Dhaka WASA). Thus, the rest of the population have to depend on river water to fulfill their needs.

Once, several long naturally existing canals (locally known as *khal*) connected to Dhaka's four major rivers, but today they have almost entirely disappeared. Currently, half of the original canals is visible and half has disappeared under tons of sand used to prepare land for housing projects, or constructing roads, stadiums, airports, etc. Due to continuous river land "grabbing" earth and sand filling, waste-dumping and encroachment, the last remaining wetlands of Bangladesh are today turning into small polluted trickles and others into deserts. Thousands of tons of different types of waste (such as medical and household), open sewerage effluent, plastics, polythene and metals, as well as toxic and chemical waste run off from tanneries, textile manufacturers and factories, mix with these river waters.

The condition of the four rivers deteriorates day by day, especially so for the Buriganga River. In fact, the worst case is the Buriganga River where water contamination has reached extreme proportions. Unplanned dredging and encroaching of the shorelines of these four rivers are key factors that have turned them into what they are today. These issues have received considerable national and international news coverage. Due to climate and environmental change, local environmental issues have received significant coverage in Bangladesh news media (Reza and Haque, "Agenda Setting on Environmental Issues" 13–24). It is not only the effects of global climate change, but also localized environmental impacts where humans are directly involved in creating threats that have caused the rivers to plunge into sickness and death. Thus, this threat to the major rivers of Dhaka has become a serious concern for the inhabitants and environmentalists of the capital. Reza and Haque ("Agenda Setting on Environment" 1–13) suggest that it is a good practice to draw the attention of key policy-makers to take necessary steps on local issues. To improve the current situation of Dhaka's rivers in light of public interest, there is a need to increase public awareness. Bangladesh's national newspapers play a role in advocating for local environmental issues including protecting rivers (Reza and Haque, "Campaigns" 225–231). As a result of the continuous deterioration of the rivers, among the other national newspapers, *The Daily Star*, a popular national newspaper of Bangladesh, picked up the issue of river health and started giving greater attention to this particular issue.

The Daily Star is a leading newspaper known for its special focus on issues of sociopolitical change and the environment, particularly river-related issues and biodiversity. The newspaper won a national environment award in 2009, in the category of environmental education and publicity (Khan 24). Besides the practice of print and online journalism, the newspaper has supported a number of social movements to save national heritage sites, protect the environment, promote youth culture and strengthen education. *The Daily Star* is well-known for its role in advocating for the environment and running campaigns to save major rivers across Bangladesh. Over the last two decades, the newspaper has achieved the reputation of setting a standard of good journalism. As an English language newspaper, it is comparatively popular among urban educated communities. *The Daily Star* readers include, among others, policy makers in Bangladesh, as well as donors and developmental partners from other countries. This newspaper has the ability to influence politics and decision-making processes because of its elite readership, thus making it an ideal media outlet to study.

“Save Rivers, Save Dhaka” is an ongoing media advocacy campaign conducted by *The Daily Star*. The campaign began in 2009 and is still ongoing. However, research conducted by Haque shows that the daily provided intensive coverage and successfully created awareness of the importance of protecting rivers (167–172). This article discusses the role of news media in environmental advocacy campaigns by examining the case of the “Save Rivers, Save Dhaka” campaign, run by *The Daily Star* in Bangladesh. The article comprises three sections: news media, environmental issues and advocacy campaigns; *The Daily Star* and the “Save Rivers, Save Dhaka” campaign; and an analysis of “Save Rivers, Save Dhaka.” The section “Save Rivers, Save Dhaka” contains four subsections: campaign approaches; campaign themes and messages; campaign strategies; and campaign media mix. As a part of its media advocacy campaign, *The Daily Star* published a considerable number of photographs representing the current condition of rivers in Dhaka. Twenty-five of these photographs are discussed in the media mix section. Photographs can play an important role in environmental campaigns as advocacy tools, building awareness, helping to change behaviors and attracting the attention of the public where “words give a commentary on the pictures, but the pictures are worth a thousand words” (Giblett 160).

Details of Five Major Rivers of Dhaka and Their Current Condition

The Buriganga River

The Buriganga River is located in the south-west of Dhaka (Figure 1). This river was once used as a channel connecting the Dhaleshwari River to the Bay of Bengal. Parvin et al. state that “the

Buriganga has enormous significance to the residents of the Dhaka city” (207). The length of the Buriganga is more than seventeen kilometers, and the river is close to the confluence of the Padma River (the Ganges) and the upper Meghna River (Rahman and Bakri 81). The Buriganga River has two channels, connects to the other major rivers of Dhaka and is linked to the Tongi *Khal* (canal), which is connected to the Balu River in the north-east. During the dry season, the average flow of the Buriganga River is 140 cubic meters per second, increasing up to 700 cubic meters per second during the monsoon season.

Every day, thousands of metric tons of domestic, human and solid wastes, agro-chemicals, toxic and chemical effluents, and untreated medical material pose a serious threat to the usual flow and quality of the water of the Buriganga River. The riverbed has also accumulated a nearly three-meter-high layer of polythene (Talib). An open sewerage system is one of the main reasons for the deteriorating condition of the Buriganga River. Both channels of the river are occupied by illegal construction projects that narrow the riverbanks from both sides.

The Turag River

The Turag River, another major river of Bangladesh, is situated in the west of Dhaka (Figure 1). Approximately twenty-one kilometers long, the Turag River is connected with the Buriganga River flowing through the Tongi industrial area. Most of the industrial areas are established beside the rivers and the Turag River is not an exception. Pollution increases in the river water day by day because of continuous waste dumping, and the foreshore is becoming narrower due to nonstop grabbing. Faulty demarcation lines established by the responsible authorities have increased the vulnerability of the river. As a result, during the dry season, thousands of acres become occupied by squatters.



Figure 1. The Buriganga, Turag, Shitalakkhya and Balu Rivers. Source: Google Maps of Dhaka's Rivers.

The Shitalakkhya River

The Shitalakkhya River originates from the old Brahmaputra River, located in the eastern side of the capital Dhaka (Figure 1). Approximately twenty-one kilometers long and more than three-hundred meters wide, this river is also known as the Lakya River. Like the other major rivers in Dhaka, the Shitalakkhya River is polluted and not free from encroachment and grabbing.

The Balu River

The Balu River is located in the north-east of the capital Dhaka and flows through swamps locally known as *beel belai*. The river Balu runs through the city and meets the Shitalakkhya River at Demra (Figure 1). The Balu River is also connected to the Shitalakkhya River through the Suti River at Kapasia and Kaliganj. The Balu River links to the Turag River through the Tongi *khal*. As one of the important sources of Dhaka's water system, the Balu River's water is used for

agricultural, industrial, domestic and residential purposes and also as a transportation route. The Balu River is now highly polluted because of continuous dumping of waste from tanneries, factories, textile mills, other industries and power stations. The river is also polluted because of open sewage that carries effluent from the capital Dhaka and surrounding areas such as Tongi.

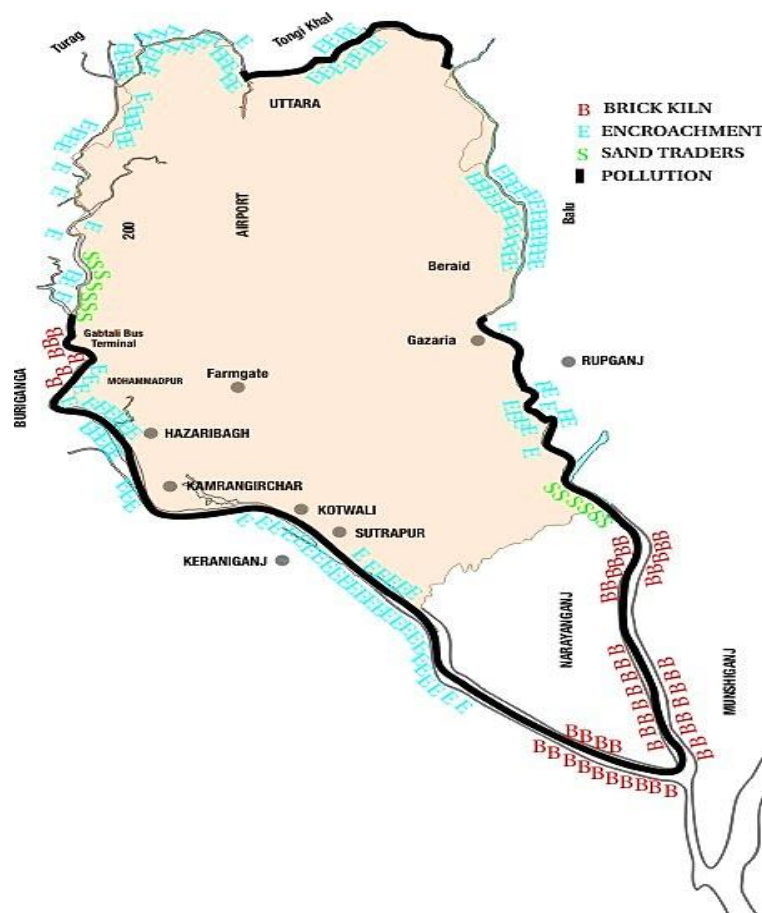


Figure 2: Map Showing Brick Factories, Encroachment, Sand Trades and Pollution in Dhaka's Major Rivers. Source: *The Daily Star*, "Dying Rivers" 2 August 2011.

The waterbodies and natural drainage systems of Dhaka are shrinking and disappearing because of this unplanned expansion. Figure 2 represents how the shorelines of the major rivers of Dhaka are occupied by brick factories, encroachment, sand trades and pollution. Kamal and Midorikawa identify urbanization as a cause of the reduction of wetlands and waterbodies in the capital. They state that there was a sixty-five percent increase in demand for landfill for urban development, and with continuing urban growth, landfill sites are merging (111). Dhaka is experiencing different types of environmental problems, many of them due to pressure on the waterbodies. Waterlogging, caused by the blockage of natural water flow, is one particular problem that has

caused flooding. Many areas of Dhaka are submerged under water during the monsoon season (July to September) because the natural water drainage system can no longer drain the excess water. Faisal et al. (85–99) observe that the poor drainage system is creating health and environmental hazards in Dhaka. A *Strategic Environment Assessment Report* by the World Bank predicts that “the loss of existing wetlands and low-lying areas, resultant risks associated with water logging and urban flooding, would continue to aggravate [the problem]” (80). Moreover, this flooding causes health problems such as diarrhoea, malaria, skin disease, dysentery and typhoid (Islam et al. 41).

News Media, Environmental Issues and Advocacy Campaigns

Advocacy campaigns involve the public speaking up for a desired result, ensuring people’s rights, needs and actions in order to change policy decisions for particularly controversial issues. Cox argues that an advocacy campaign is “waged to win a victory or bring about a concrete outcome; it therefore goes beyond simply questioning a policy” (2nd ed. 229). As we live in a highly mediated society much of our “civic knowledge derives from the media” (Dahlgren as cited in Lester 165). This echoes Hansen who states that “the media are a central, possibly *the* central, forum through which we, as audiences and publics, make sense of our environment, society and politics” (18).

Advocacy can be defined as a deliberate, planned effort to raise awareness of an issue, in which understanding and support are created through a continuing process with the aim of changing policies and attitudes. Each media advocacy campaign is different and has its own characteristics. An advocacy campaign can be more successful with strong support from the community and government, a comprehensive information base as well as a long-term vision. Advocacy is a way to reclaim people’s rights; it helps the process of reclaiming to be much stronger, and also contributes and influences policy and decision making. Figure 3 presents the role of advocacy in decision-making processes (Ferdous 7). According to the diagram (Figure 3) prepared by Ferdous, demands can be made from any interest group or political party or from people or victims to contribute their input to the policy decision-making process. This demand or urge can receive priority in policy-making depending on how strong it is and whether this particular issue has enough public support. In the case of advocacy, it works differently: there is a public awareness that builds up among the people, and this creates public support in favor of the campaign issue. Public support strengthens the demand enough to place it directly on the priority

list of the policy-making process. According to Cox (3rd ed.) “a public demand is an active demonstration of support for the campaign’s objective by key constituency groups” (217).

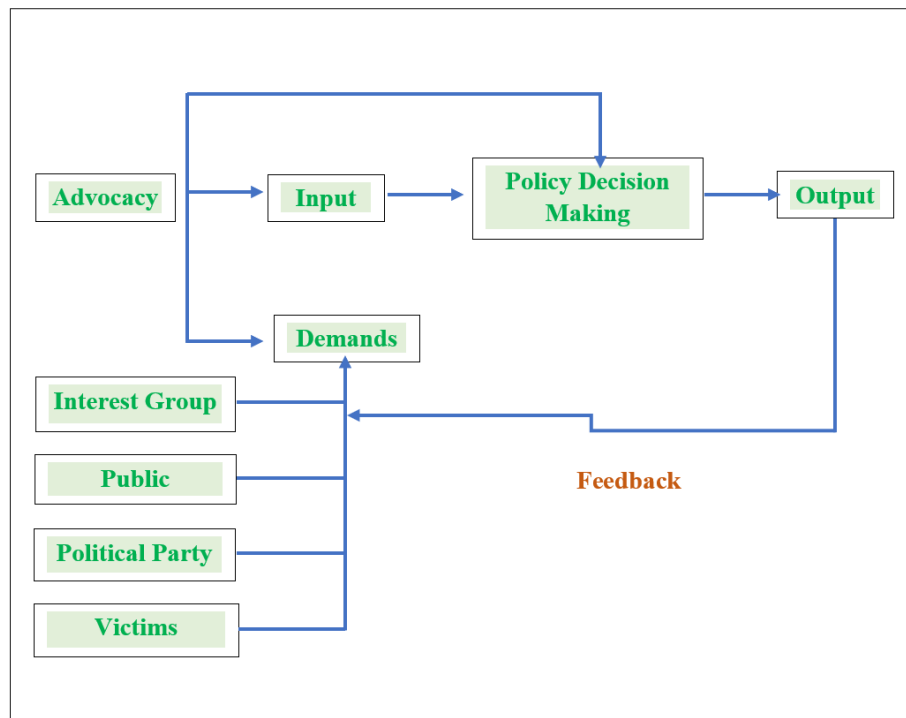


Figure 3. Role of Advocacy in Decision-Making Processes. Source: Ferdous 7.

The aim of an advocacy campaign is to combine, and make an alliance between, public and civil society. This alliance or network works exerts pressure on governmental agencies to fulfill their demands as well as to take part in policy decision-making processes. Figure 4 represents the process of forming alliances through advocacy campaigns proposed by Ferdous (15).

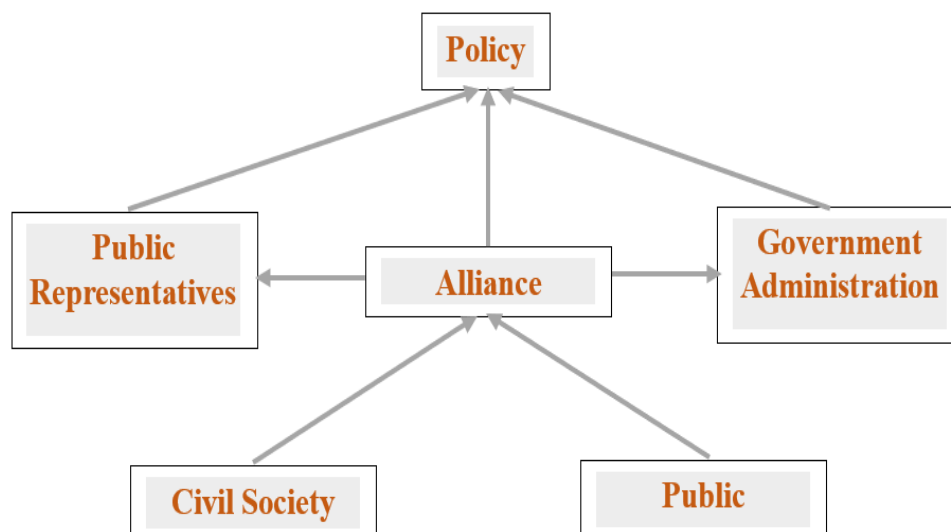


Figure 4. Formation of an Alliance to Influence Policy Decision-Makers. Source: Ferdous 15.

The Daily Star's advocacy campaign approach complies with both structures illustrated in Figures 3 and 4, which worked to sustain the campaign and enabled it to achieve its objectives. The positioning of a newspaper as a central agent within an environmental advocacy campaign is an unusual case study. There are several types of advocacies: self-advocacy; legal advocacy; system, legislative, policy or social justice advocacy; ideological advocacy; mass advocacy; interest group advocacy; and bureaucratic advocacy (Ferdous 15). The advocacy campaign to save Dhaka's rivers by *The Daily Star* is a combination of policy, ideological and mass advocacy. An advocacy campaign that helps to create, implement and reconstitute or restore public policy is known as policy advocacy. Advocacy that receives priority based on its ideology is termed ideological advocacy. For mass advocacy, in order to successfully achieve the campaign's objectives, both public participation and public awareness of the campaign issues are indispensable.

Another type of advocacy is media advocacy. Media advocacy encompasses the ways and techniques of seizing the power of the media in order to advance a social or public policy goal. It also involves the media using different practices of framing messages and strategies. At the same time, the media provide platforms for policy-makers to explain their positions and for civil society members to influence policy decisions.

One of the areas of advocacy campaigns is an environmental campaign where public awareness is vital. Hutchins and Lester state that "environmental campaigns, often accompanied by protests [act] as 'flashpoints' to focus public, media and political attention" (162). Cox (3rd ed.

216) suggests that effective environmental advocacy campaigns usually require a focus on concrete objectives, demands and support from an audience, and good strategies to influence decision-makers to fulfill and support the campaign's objectives. The following is a design of an advocacy campaign proposed by Cox (Figure 5).

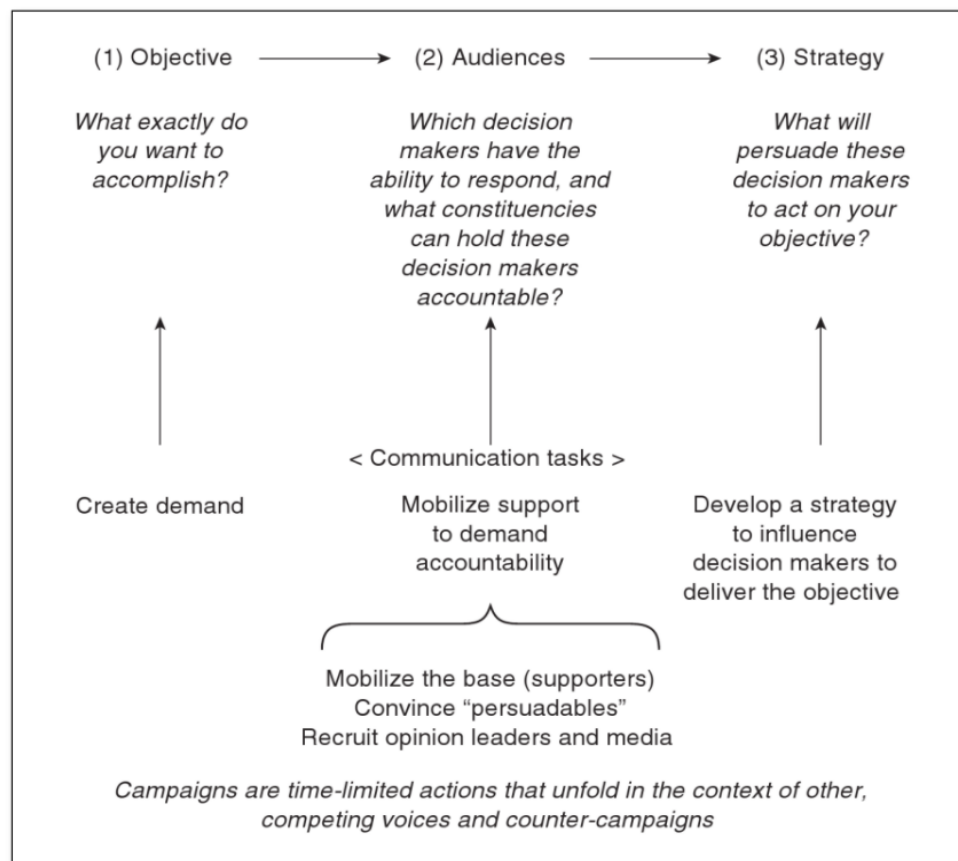


Figure 5. Design of an Environmental Advocacy Campaign. Source: Cox 3rd ed. 216.

For public awareness, news media are the principal source of information about the environment and environmental changes. News media play a vital role in the dissemination of information about environmental issues. In discussing the crucial role of the mass media and communication in relation to environmental issues, Hansen states that the media helps “not only to define ‘the environment’ as a concept and domain, but more particularly in bringing environmental issues and problems to public and political attention” (6). For local and global environmental issues, the people of Bangladesh still rely on traditional mass media, such as newspapers, radio and television, for their information (Reza and Haque, “Agenda Setting on Environmental Issues” 16).

News media, particularly prominent newspapers, boldly advocate for a wide range of issues in Bangladesh. They contribute to, as well as influence, policy decision-making processes of government and private organizations. This change has been happening since the 1990s when the media organizations became part of corporate groupings, and no longer had to depend on government subsidies or advertisements for income. Bangladeshi newspapers provide space for advocates, enabling them to manage public support of environmental campaigns. For wider publicity, there is a need for media involvement in environment-related issues. In this context, Hansen notes that “if you don’t exist in the media, you don’t exist” (50).

News media in Bangladesh, especially *The Daily Star*, have been providing space to pro-environmental since late 2000s as critical and alternative voices on river issues since these concerns were initially raised. This timing relates to Lester’s statement that “the movement and the media interest in ‘the environment’ evolved together, and many of the practices and features of today’s relationship echo and indeed reflect this symbiosis” (111). Since 2009, *The Daily Star* in partnership with TV Channel-i (one of the satellite television channels in Bangladesh, currently broadcasting across most of Asia and parts of Australia through satellite transmission) has been running a media campaign calling for the saving of the major rivers of Dhaka that are facing serious threats. Continuous campaigns on river issues by *The Daily Star* prompted the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Environment and Forest Ministry to form a subcommittee to take the necessary steps to protect the country’s rivers, especially the Buriganga, Turag, Balu and Shitalakkhya, from pollution and river land grabbers (“JS Body”).

Singh, an environmentalist and journalist working in the water and environment-related area, believes that “the visual, print, web and audio media are the major opinion-makers in today’s world. If they are on the side of sustainability and environmental harmony, there can be bliss without ignorance” (156). This statement somewhat echoes another—that “the way in which we make sense of the environmental threats which face human-kind is greatly conditioned by a powerful and omnipresent set of electronic and printed messages: the mass media” (Newell 165). As news media help us to “construct conceptions of political, social and ecological reality” (Newell 165), mediated campaigns and media advocacies play vital roles in mobilizing public opinions on environmental policy moves, including *The Daily Star*’s appeals for saving rivers in Bangladesh.

The Daily Star and the “Save Rivers, Save Dhaka” Campaign

“Nodi Banchao Dhaka Banchao” (“Save Rivers, Save Dhaka”)

The campaign “*Nodi Banchao Dhaka Banchao*” (“Save Rivers, Save Dhaka”) was formally launched on June 1, 2009 and aimed to protect the major rivers of Dhaka (Figure 6). It was an initiative in partnership with a private satellite television company, TV Channel-i. The inaugural program of “*Nodi Banchao Dhaka Banchao Pradhanmantri Shomipey*” (“For the Prime Minister’s Attention: Save Rivers, Save Dhaka”) took place in the South Plaza of Dhaka in front of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban (National Parliament House). It was a live broadcast, in which people representing the government, civil society organizations, citizen groups and activists, and the media participated. Among other dignitaries joining the launching ceremonies, were the Speaker of the Parliament; Members of Parliament (MPs); members of parliamentary standing committees; members of parliamentary sub-committees; lawmakers; eminent professionals; NGO representatives; and business leaders. They expressed their hopes that the people of the country would join the campaign for a greater good. A photography exhibition and projection of documentaries about pollution and the encroachment of rivers were also inaugurated.



Figure 6. Inauguration of “Save Rivers, Save Dhaka” Campaign. Source: *The Daily Star*, “Lawmakers Pledge” and “An Afternoon”

As part of the media advocacy campaign, *The Daily Star* reported the initiatives taken by both the government and environmental pressure groups. In particular, it reported the actions taken by the Department of Environment (DoE), which for example, included punishments and fines for violating river laws. A news story titled “Free Buriganga Drive from Next Week and Demolition on Shitalakkhya, Turag Continues,” discussed the eviction action taken by the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) to start a drive against the encroachers on the Buriganga River. It also included the authorities’ nine-day drive to stop the construction of illegal structures along the Turag and Shitalakkhya Rivers. Another report, “4 DCs Start River Work, Wait for HC Order,” states that the Deputy Commissioners (DCs) of four Dhaka districts were asked by the High Court on 25 June 2009 to take measures in their jurisdiction to protect the rivers. In fact, the DCs had started working on the basis of *The Daily Star* reports before they officially received the court order.

The Daily Star reported a directive from the minister that included taking steps to save rivers from land-grabbers. For example, one report states that the Water Resource Minister asked the DCs to keep vigil and not to lease out river land, even if they had to face political pressure (“Don’t Lease”). Reports on the environmental activists and their initiatives, such as press conferences, meetings, seminars, public rallies and roundtable discussions were published by *The Daily Star*. One of these reports was on a discussion conducted by the *Bangladesh Poribesh Andolan* (BAPA) and the Buriganga Riverkeeper. In the discussion, speakers urged the government and policy makers to save rivers from grabbers, encroachment and pollution. They called on the public to become more aware and to raise their voice (“Raise Voice”).

Analysis of “Save Rivers, Save Dhaka”

Campaign Approaches

The Daily Star has published on—and has editorial policy to focus on—the environment, particularly river-related issues. Generally, the objective of the media advocacy campaign by *The Daily Star* is to create public awareness and concern, and to contribute to changing policy-making processes. The newspaper has run other environmental campaigns besides the “Save Rivers, Save Dhaka” campaign, including the “Save Tigers” and “Safe Food” campaigns. It also publishes a popular environment and nature-based magazine called *Bangladesh Nature Quest*. For the “Safe

Food” campaign, the editor of *The Daily Star* explained the newspaper’s reasoning for the campaign, which is applicable to the other campaigns they have run. Addressing the government’s actions as mostly “cosmetic” and insufficient, an editorial published by the newspaper states that “intense media coverage—both print and electronic—has been going on for a long time. Nothing that we wrote was unknown. Only that nobody spoke as loudly as we did” (“Why This”). This newspaper would later go on to provide special coverage to the issues that threaten the existence of the Buriganga River. However, “Save Rivers, Save Dhaka” was a targeted media campaign skewed towards the public and government departments. The prime advocacy techniques of the campaign included an extensive coverage of river-related issues. The campaign partner, Channel-i, made a five-part documentary series entitled “Save Rivers, Save Dhaka.” As a part of the campaign approach, a five-part talk show, “*Nodi Bachao, Dhaka Bachao, Prodhanmantri Shomipey*” (“Save Rivers, Save Dhaka”) aired on Channel-i on 15, 17, 23, 24 and 30 August 2009.

The media mix for the “Save Rivers, Save Dhaka” campaign included a number of other approaches. As far as newspaper coverage was concerned, components in *The Daily Star* included various types of reporting, editorials, photographs with captions and other newspaper items on the campaign themes. Using investigative reporting, it examined, for example, illegal acts of grabbing and encroachment, and government reprisals or actions for these offences. A report, “Turag Pillars to be Reset,” describes how the district administration set up pillars wrongly along the dry-season waterline. As a result, these pillars would be freshly marked during the monsoon to ascertain the accurate extent of the foreshores. The resetting of the pillars represented a wasted expenditure of nearly 10 million Bangladeshi taka (BDT) (1 U.S. dollar = 88 BDT). Another report, “Dhaka Rivers to Get Thinner,” reports gross anomalies in the demarcation of the rivers. Following outcries from the media and environmentalists, a ministerial committee was formed to investigate the matter, and the decision was made to reset the waterlines during the monsoon season.

The report, “Encroachment Removal Starts Today,” discusses the three-day drive by the BIWTA. The report states that in the Gazipur section of the Turag River alone the BIWTA identified sixty-four illegal structures; in the Dhaka section there were fifty-four. A number of magistrates were assigned to the drives by the two District Administrators. An editorial by *The Daily Star* criticized the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO, the Chief Executive Officer of the Sub-district) of the Banaripara in Bangladesh, a local Member of Parliament (MP) and other responsible government District Administration officials of that area for their acts. With the approval of the local MP, the UNO erected signposting that showed a particular part of the river

allocated for various entertainment and recreation facilities. These acts encouraged the unscrupulous encroachers to grab the river lands (“River Up”). Several photographs were published by *The Daily Star* representing the current condition of Dhaka’s waterbodies, how the city was expanding and encroaching on river shores, the grabbing of river-land for unapproved housing, and the commercial projects made possible by filling the rivers and wetlands around the city (“How Dhaka”).

Campaign Themes and Messages

Crucial to campaigns is the communication of themes through messages in order to attract the attention of the audience as well as to gain their respect and confidence. According to Cox (2nd ed.), a “message is a phrase or sentence that concisely expresses a campaign’s objective and the values at stake in the decision of the primary audience” (385). Messages play a vital role in the communication process of the campaign. Therefore, a campaign strategy should have a strong, motivational, persuasive theme or message. Campaign messages are used to influence the public to achieve the aim of that particular campaign. Cox (3rd ed. 235) states that campaign messages provide an audience with a framework to understand and receive information about the campaign. With an effective dissemination mechanism of campaign messages, campaigners can mobilize and persuade the public, opinion leaders and the media to adjust policy that is related to the campaign issue. Among other themes, the campaign messages of “Save Rivers, Save Dhaka” communicate how nonstop pollution, river-land grabbing, encroachment, unapproved housing projects and brick kilns along the riverbanks are causing damage to the rivers. The campaign also emphasizes the need for the government’s tough actions against offenders. Overall, the messages suggest that the four major rivers of Dhaka—the Buriganga, Shitalakkhya, Turag and Balu rivers—are the lifelines of the city. These four rivers are soon to become “biologically dead” (“Pollution Kills”), which will severely threaten the very survival of the city. Since ancient times, civilizations have been indebted to the embankments of rivers and have been dependent on the source of water for various uses. In their coverage, *The Daily Star* mentioned two lost cities and civilizations namely “Harappa” and “Mohenjo Daro” to remind people that, if a river dies, then civilization will fall (“Lawmakers Pledge”).

Campaign Strategies

Cox defines a strategy as “a critical source of influence or *leverage* to bring about a desired change” (3rd ed. 389). He adds that one goal of a strategy is to “persuade a primary decision maker

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to act on a campaign's objective" (3rd ed. 220). One of the most difficult parts of a campaign is to decide the correct strategy. Mintzberg as cited in Ferdous (63) defines strategy as more than planning. An advocacy campaign often does not persuade its audience through a single strategy. Thus, it needs a combination of strategies, known as advocacy tools. Use of these advocacy tools depends on the campaign objective. Campaigns may involve several issues, each with different stakeholders. Depending on the nature of these stakeholders, advocacy tools are selected accordingly (Ferdous 21). In some cases, to successfully fulfill the campaign objective, between one and more than ten advocacy tools have been used. There are numerous advocacy tools available to campaigners such as social mobilization, public hearings, legal actions or public interest litigations, negotiations, coalitions, making alliances, striking, cultural actions, networks, lobbying, conferences, seminars, dialogues, round-table discussions, workshops, meetings, use of social media, debates, exchanging views, rallies, human-chains, campaign posters, leaflets, press conferences, press briefings, reporting, research, publications, documentaries, letters and collecting signatures (Ferdous 21).

In every advocacy campaign there is a need to analyze policy in order to understand and decide suitable strategies. This not only helps to decide strategies, but also contributes to determine future policy analysis. If there is a need to change future strategies, this can be decided after evaluating the current areas and adapting or making adjustments as well as analyzing policy. Ferdous (56) outlines a diagram of policy analysis which illustrates this process (Figure 7).

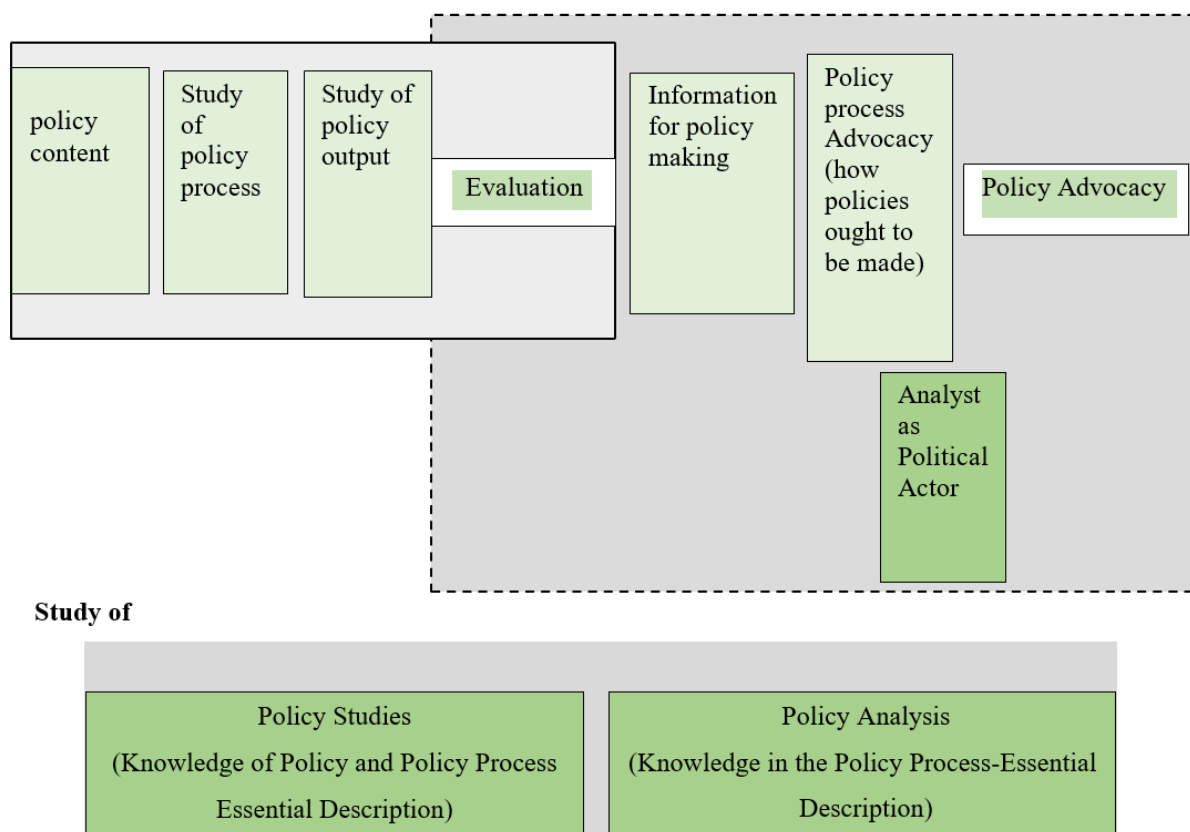


Figure 7. Analyzing Policy. Source: Ferdous 56.

Campaigners need to have clear ideas about policies and to understand social and political conditions in order to achieve the campaign goal. In every advocacy campaign, there is a need to focus on some specific areas in analyzing a policy. It may be easier to identify these areas from previous experience. Evidence of this trend is observed in *The Daily Star*'s campaign strategy for "Save Rivers, Save Dhaka." The newspaper identified specific areas of importance to focus on, such as grabbing, encroachment, pollution, law and enforcement, action taken by the government, policy related to protecting rivers, responsible persons and organizations as well as key actors. The newspaper has also been trying to attract the attention of civil society and policy-makers during the campaign. For its successful continuation, it is essential to involve policy-makers, members of the civil society and other powerful individuals in the campaign.

Campaign Media Mix

Cracknell states that "multi-arena activity and a flexible approach are essential in environmental campaigning" (5). In order to strengthen the campaign strategy and to attract the attention of the

public, campaigners often apply a mixed media approach. The launching of the advocacy campaign “*Nodi Bachao, Dhaka Bachao, Pradhanmantri Shomipey*” (“For the Prime Minister’s Attention: Save Rivers, Save Dhaka”) took place in front of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban (National Parliament Building) and was broadcast live on Channel-*i*. Key policy-makers and opinion leaders made promises to save the rivers. In addition to the five-part documentary on Channel-*i*, an exhibition on pollution and encroachment included photographs from other newspapers and was held at a venue about 150 meters away from the Buriganga River.

Additionally, a couple of two-day long open-air photography exhibitions were organized as a part of the campaign, held in Bahadurshah Park in the Laxmibazar (old Dhaka) and Shatayu Angan (Centennial Premises) in Rama Park in the city (Figure 8). Figure 8 shows the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dhaka (an important political appointment) gazing at a photography exhibition. This photograph of the Vice Chancellor is a public endorsement of *The Daily Star*’s rivers campaign.



Figure 8. Photography Exhibition in Shatayu Angan, Rama Park and Bahadurshah Park in Laxmibazar, Dhaka. Source: *The Daily Star* (“DU Teachers” and “River-Gobblers”)

A special five-episode talk-show on recovering the rivers of Dhaka entitled “*Nodi Bachao, Dhaka Bachao, Pradhanmantri Shomipey*” (“For the Prime Minister’s Attention: Save Rivers, Save Dhaka”) was aired on Channel-*i* in August 2009. The news editor and publisher of *The Daily Star*, Mahfuz Anam, was the moderator of the programme. A joint initiative by Channel-*i* and *The Daily Star*, these talk-shows aimed at generating awareness of the importance of saving Dhaka’s rivers.

Legal tangles, implementation of a High Court verdict, protection of rivers, immediate steps to save rivers and policy changes were the topics of discussion during these talk shows (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Talk Show, “*Nodi Bachao, Dhaka Bachao, Pradhanmantri Shomipey*” Broadcast on Channel-i. Source: The Daily Star (“Nodi Bachao”)



Figure 10. “Save Rivers, Save Dhaka” Campaign Logo. Source: *The Daily Star* (“Save River”)

In order to promote the campaign, campaigners also used a special logo (Figure 10), social media, leaflets and posters (Figure 11). *The Daily Star* publishes a special page called “Star Environment”

every Saturday. When analyzing the characteristics of media mix, it appeared that photographs have been central to the campaign communication.



Figure 11. Sample Campaign Posters. Source: BDchronicle.com (“Buriganga: The Lost”)

The newspaper photograph below (Figure 12) shows a boat carrying passengers on the murky waters of the Buriganga River. Wholesale dumping of industrial waste, sewage and garbage left the river severely contaminated and poisoned.



Figure 12. The Poisoned Buriganga River. Source: *The Daily Star* (“All Dhaka”)

Figure 13 shows that land-grabbers have occupied a large portion of the Turag River. After the Gazipur district (a district under Dhaka Division) administration “wrongly” put up boundary pillars along the dry-season waterline, excluding much of the river land, grabbers have been illegally occupying the bank of the river and filling up the river bed.



Figure 13. Incorrectly Fitted Pillars. Source: *The Daily Star* (“Fresh Grabbing”)

Figure 14 shows a housing project near Mohammadpur, a densely populated suburb of Dhaka, where squatters have been filling the bank of the Turag River with sand, earth and broken bricks for a housing project.



Figure 14. Filling the Turag Riverbank. Source: *The Daily Star* (“Turag Riverbank”)

Figure 15 shows a unit of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), a joint force consisting of members from the Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Police, Bangladesh Air force, Bangladesh Navy, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and Bangladesh Ansar. This elite law enforcement agency of the government has placed a signpost on a channel of the Buriganga River in an area called Kamrangirchar, claiming seven acres of land. Only a year ago, the BIWTA dredged this part of the river and was planning to set up a dock.



Figure 15. RAB Office on the Buriganga River. Source: *The Daily Star* (“RAB Office”)

A photograph published by *The Daily Star* (Figure 16) presents the condition of the Shitalakkhya River. A dyeing factory at the Godnail area in Narayanganj (a district under Dhaka division) discharges untreated liquids into a drain that is linked to the Shitalakkhya River. Many textile and dyeing factories of this Narayanganj district dump toxic effluents into the river and this waste is damaging the Shitalakkhya River and aquatic life.



Figure 16. Pollution Killing a River. Source: *The Daily Star* (“Killing Of”)

A photograph (Figure 17) published by *The Daily Star* entitled “How Dhaka Expands” shows the process of dividing the river with bamboo fences. Bamboo fences are built in the river a long distance from the shore of Dikrir Char (a mid-channel island) of Narayanganj district. Fences were used to encircle the part of the river that could be filled up with sand or earth for a housing project or commercial usage. In the inset, a worker is seen in the river water binding the fence. Brick kilns are located on the opposite side of the river. Most of these areas were illegally occupied.



Figure 17. Expansion of Dhaka. Source: *The Daily Star* (“How Dhaka”)

Another photograph (Figure 18) shows a large portion of river area converted for a housing project. The photograph was taken from an aircraft, and the converted area is shown with a red arrow. This project is devouring the Balu River at Rupganj in Dhaka. The photograph depicts the project area that begins from Baridhara, a suburb of Dhaka which has been filled up by sand and earth by housing companies and land developers. The opposite side of the riverbank is occupied by brick kilns, which narrow down the flow of the Balu River to less than forty meters in width.

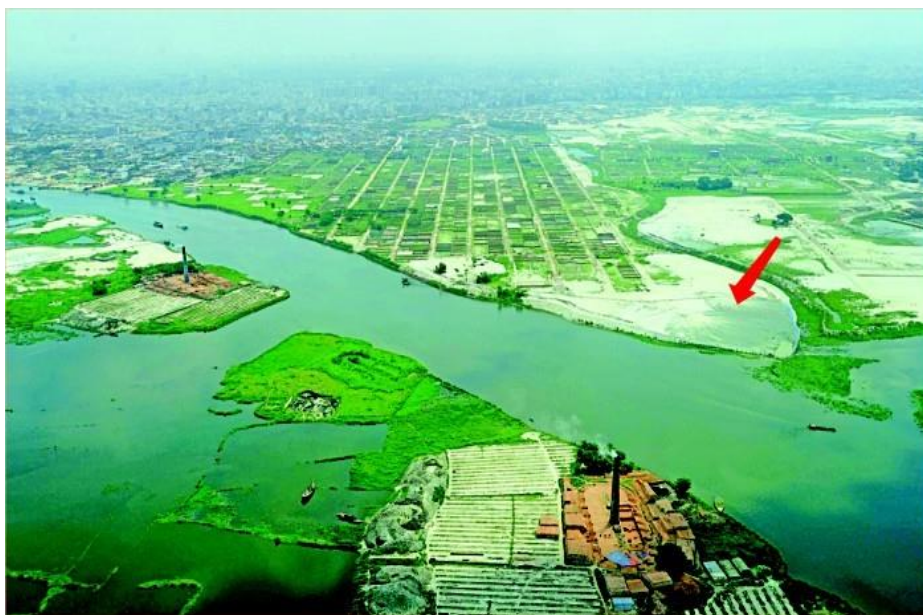


Figure 18. Dhaka Expands, Devouring Rivers. Source: *The Daily Star* (“How Dhaka”)

A photograph (Figure 19) shows a sewage line that carries dumped waste into the Buriganga River in the Badamtoli area of the old Dhaka city. *The Daily Star* published this photograph on World Water Day observed on March 22, 2014. The water of this river has become black as toxic waste. Due to this contamination, the quality of the water in the river declined, turning smelly and poisonous.



Figure 19. Poisoning a River. Source: *The Daily Star* (“Poisoning A”)

A photograph (Figure 20) published by *The Daily Star* is one example of how the High Court (HC) directives in the public interest to protect rivers have been met with contempt and forgotten. This photograph depicts a demarcation pole of the Shitalakkhya River, which is marked with a red-circle. Sand and grit traders occupied the land beyond the demarcation pole and filled up the river shore near Kanchpur Bridge in Narayanganj. These acts ignored a High Court order to the Government to dredge and clean Dhaka’s four major rivers and to remove illegal structures from the banks in order to ensure the health and continuity of these rivers.



Figure 20. Ongoing Grabbing. Source: *The Daily Star* (“HC Orders”)

A photograph (Figure 21) presents the recent condition of the Turag River as it is strangled by the river land-grabbers. Sand and grit industrialists and businessmen, and owners of various farms and nurseries, are extensively filling up the bank of the Turag River. The photograph shows a section of the river near Kamarpara in the capital Dhaka, which has been fenced off by the grabbers. Turag, a very wide and mighty river, was called “*Kahar Daria*.” Now this river has been narrowed down as a result of being blocked from both sides.



Figure 21. Encroaching Upon the Foreshores. Source: *The Daily Star* (“Turag Close”)

A photograph (Figure 22) by *The Daily Star* presents how the Buriganga River has been polluted by Hazaribagh tanneries solid and liquid wastes. The photograph shows lowland in the Hazaribagh area in the capital where tannery wastes are congregated and the water has turned red. These low wetlands are connected to the Buriganga River and pose severe health threats such as fever, asthma, cough, gastroenteritis, skin diseases and diabetes. Every day, the leather industries produce about 20,000 cubic meters of toxic waste loaded with chromium and at least thirty different types of toxins. This waste flows into the Buriganga River through the Rayerbazar sluice gate.



Figure 22. Damaging Rivers. Source: *The Daily Star* (“Toxic Tannery”)

A photograph (Figure 23) shows the dumping of engine oil from boats into the water. This oil was used in boat engines. The photograph represents no reprieve for the Buriganga River, Dhaka’s lifeline and the environment of the city as well as its dwellers. Burnt motor oil and lubricants are contributing along with untreated medical wastes, industrial and household wastes, chemical and toxic wastes to the pollution of the moribund Buriganga River. Boat operators sell the burnt oil to the people who use it again and, afterwards, the used oil is dumped into the river. In some areas the dumped black oil has produced a thick layer on the river water.



Figure 23. Polluting Rivers. Source: *The Daily Star* (“Burnt Oil”)

The Daily Star published a photograph (Figure 24) showing the terrible condition of the Buriganga River. Continuous dumping of solid wastes blocked the flow of the water. It also blocked the route of the transportation system. An example of this is shown in the photograph with a boat sunk in the river.



Figure 24. Blocked Transportation System. Source: *The Daily Star* (“Black Water”)

The Daily Star published a photograph (Figure 25) of Charles Depman, a regional coordinator of Asia for the Waterkeeper Alliance. It shows Depman holding two plastic water bottles, one filled with fresh drinking water and the other one with water from the Buriganga River. Water pollution of the Buriganga River is unbearable and also smells awful. While travelling on the Buriganga River, Depman was also wearing a gas mask.



Figure 25. Black River Water. Source: *The Daily Star* (“90K Cubic”)

A series of photographs was published by *The Daily Star* as a feature entitled “Black Water.” One of the photographs (Figure 26) shows encroachment as well as the pollution of the rivers. Water blocked with industry-generated wastes, pollutants, open sewerage systems, household and medical wastes has created a hazardous scenario. The disposal of wastes has damaged twenty kilometers of the Buriganga River, rendering most of it a wasteland.



Figure 26. Wasteland. Source: *The Daily Star* (“Black Water”)

A photograph (Figure 27) shows the present condition of the Shitalakkhya River that is polluted through a canal at the Godnail area of the Narayanganj district. The open sewerage system, dumping of solid wastes and discharging of a huge quantity of toxic and untreated chemical wastes from the local garments industries created the deteriorating conditions of the Shitalakkhya River’s water. The untreated dyeing chemicals have turned the river water to purplish-blue.



Figure 27. River Pollution. Source: *The Daily Star* (“Get Cops”)

Another photograph (Figure 28) by *The Daily Star* is an example of continuous river grabbing and the encroachment on the major riverbanks of Dhaka. The photo depicts the illegal occupation of the river foreshore in order to build brick factories. Boats and river trawlers are used to carry sand and trade grit on the bank of the rivers.



Figure 28. Ongoing Encroachment. Source: *The Daily Star* (“For Endearing”)

Another photograph (Figure 29), published in a photographic feature entitled “Black Water” by *The Daily Star*, presents the change of daily life of the people who have lost their traditional occupation due to the deadly condition of the rivers. People who once gained their livelihood on the river now adapt to new work conditions in order to survive. Nevertheless, this work is still related to the rivers, such as rubbish collection and working in the leather or dyeing industries. The photograph is an example of this new adaptation, which also poses damage to the rivers. Unintentionally, these people are causing more harm to the rivers on which they depend.



Figure 29. Dying River. Source: *The Daily Star* (“Black Water”)

The Daily Star also published a photograph (Figure 30) showing a person standing on the river, in which the water has become pitch black. Fresh rainwater has created hope for him to see the river free of pollution. Once again fresh water will flow in all rivers around the capital as a blessing of the monsoon. This flow of water will wash away waste, the rivers will be full of aquatic life, and fisherman will be able to go to catch fish in the river again.



Figure 30. Hope to Survive. Source: *The Daily Star* (“Black Water”)

Several photographs were published as a photographic feature entitled “A Tale of a Dying River.” Figure 31 portrays a boat lying upturned on the river foreshore and a child sitting beside the boat. Once this boat was used for fishing and travelling on the Buriganga River.



Figure 31. A Boat and Future. Source: *The Daily Star* (“A Tale”)

Figure 32 shows a photograph that represents the ongoing water pollution of the rivers. People wash sacks and cloths used to carry chemicals in dyeing garments and in leather industries that pollute river water. People are not aware of their health and safety and do not know that they are endangering themselves.



Figure 32. Damaging River Water. Source: *The Daily Star* (“Black Water”)

Hazaribagh tanneries have been continuously polluting and discharging untreated chemical waste into the Buriganga River. The photograph (Figure 33) shows the water condition of the Turag River in Tongi (an area of Dhaka). Industries situated in the Tongi area dump untreated industrial wastes into the Turag River that turn the natural color of river water into dark purple. The close-up shot of the water shows how heavily the river water has been contaminated. HC gave a directive to the government to relocate the Hazaribagh tanneries but thus far there has been no progress.



Figure 33. Polluted Black River Water. Source: *The Daily Star* (“Pollution Taking”)

A photograph (Figure 34) shows the unwise actions of the Dhaka City Corporation (a government administration) in dumping waste into the river water. Workers of Dhaka City Corporation collect garbage from the construction site of a river jetty at the Shyambazar of the Farashganj in Dhaka and dump the collected waste into the river.



Figure 34. Dumping Waste by Government Administration Worker. Source: *The Daily Star* (“Stop Dumping”)

A photograph (Figure 35) presents the illegal acts of encroaching on the Balu River by RAJUK, the city planner and developer. Both sides of the river have been filled up to build a bridge to connect Dhaka with the new government housing project ‘Purbachal’ in the Rupganj. The process, which narrowed down the river, violates the *Playground, Open Spaces, Gardens and Water Bodies Conservation Act 2000*, as well as other environmental conservation acts of Bangladesh.



Figure 35. Encroaching on the River Foreshore by RAJUK. Source: *The Daily Star* (“Balu Filled”)

A photograph (Figure 36) under the heading of “Balu River filled by RAJUK” shows the narrowing of the Balu River. During the monsoon and flood season, rivers drain floodwaters out of the capital, so the River Taskforce recommended that the Balu River be widened by one-hundred meters, from about less than forty meters. The photograph shows RAJUK, the authority for developing Dhaka, filling up a part of the Balu River near Rapganj for the Purbachal housing project.



Figure 36. RAJUK Occupying the Balu River. Source: *The Daily Star* (“Balu River”)

The photographs presented above were published by *The Daily Star* during the “Save Rivers, Save Dhaka” campaign. The use of visuals is a powerful medium that draws viewer attention and communicates with the public during a campaign. A book review cited in Cox (3rd ed.) states, “Sometimes pictures have a chance to change history by creating a larger understanding of a subject, thus enlightening the public and bringing greater awareness to an issue” (70). In building awareness as part of the use of a media mix, photography can be an effective means to persuade and influence people. These published photographs portray the severe conditions of Dhaka’s four major rivers.

Different types of photographs were published in *The Daily Star* to represent pollution, encroachment, grabbing and waste dumping. These photographs present waste, rubbish and toxic chemicals dissolving in the river water. The use of imagery by the campaign refers to the theory of wasteland photography developed by Giblett and Tolonen. Addressing wastelands as “the downfall of culture and nature,” Giblett and Tolonen state that “wastelands are often viewed as spatial anomalies that represent the corruption and corrosion of economic and civil order, and as a consequence they tend to be corrected or hidden from view to limit the threat they pose” (186). Figures 12, 16, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 31 and 33 represent pollution and wastelands, which

pose a threat to the environment, rivers and human health. When nature is being threatened, so too will culture. Giblett and Tolonen discuss two types of threats represented in imagery of wastelands; one is to nature and other is to culture. These two ideas are visible in the above photographs, through the representation of the “natural world in decline” (Giblett and Tolonen 186). The decline of nature represents the downfall of culture and society. Due to high pollution growth, as well as an increase in industrialization, urbanization and economic development, the people of Bangladesh started to see and face the destruction of their environment and the creation of wastelands. Photography can play a significant role in awareness-building by presenting wastelands, unveiling the truth of the problems of a city, society and surrounding nature. Images such as these foster an appeal to change human behavior toward sustainability.

Apart from revealing environmental damage, most of these photographs above provide messages of how much people are dependent on rivers and how their livelihoods are affected by this damage. Millions of people live and depend on Dhaka’s four major rivers for their subsistence. People who rely upon these rivers and live beside the riverbanks depend on them for their occupation. They also depend on rivers for travelling by water vessels such as launches, boats and ferries. As rivers are the lifelines for millions of people in Bangladesh, their everyday lives are also interrelated with each other and the rivers. If the river is affected, then human life will be affected too. Due to the degradation of the conditions of rivers, people have to struggle every moment for their existence. Changes in river conditions force changes in people’s lives and their livelihoods. When rivers die and become deadly, people have to look for alternative employment, which may not be a sustainable way to live.

Giblett’s view of environmental sustainability suggests that people in the landscape should work in a sustainable way for human and nonhuman life. Giblett and Tolonen suggest that photography for environmental sustainability produces “photographs focusing on people and places, landscapes and land-uses that exemplify principles and practices of environmental sustainability” (228). They discuss three concepts related to environmental sustainability: livelihood, bioregionalism and symbiosis (Giblett and Tolonen 229). According to Giblett “livelihood implies both one’s work and one’s physical surrounds, their environmental supports and effects” (240). The concept of livelihood was also explored by Raymond Williams who defined livelihood as how the city, culture and country interact—stressing that they are not separable. Williams (cited in Giblett) states that “the deepest problems we have now to understand and resolve are in [the] real relations of nature and livelihood” (241). Thus, livelihood looks essentially at how people are living on the land, drawing their ways of living whether spiritual or

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material. Livelihood pertains to both nature and culture. The photography examined in this article does not depict environmental symbiosis, but it does show aspects of livelihood as portrayed by the negative impact on rivers. There are several photographs that represent livelihood such as Figures 12, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30 and 31. An example of how livelihood is affected and portrayed is seen through the photograph entitled “A Boat and Future” (Figure 31). It represents the desolation of a dry river bed where a boat has been stranded and a boy sits beside the boat. The composition of the photograph signifies the future of a civilization, and how people will not survive without rivers. The image implies that whatever people do now poses a threat to the future generations.

For people who are dependent and live on rivers, their home is the river. Giblett refers to home as a “bioregion” (244). Charlene Spretnak (cited in Giblett) defines “bioregion” as:

the land masses of earth [...] organized into bioregions delineated by watersheds (drainage areas) of the river systems or other natural demarcations. Everyone lives in a bioregion and in the earth’s commons [...] the health of communities and nations is dependent on the health of the bioregions. (245)

All these photographs present a bioregion as they portray watersheds, rivers, communities and human lives depending on rivers. Most of these photographs show people interacting in places, allowing viewers to consider human-river relationships. These photographs depict people’s interactions with rivers. Giblett asserts that “water is both life-giving and death-dealing” (155). Some of the photographs, such as 12, 16, 19, 24, 25, 26 and 33, represent water that turned black because of sewage, burnt oil, rubbish and waste. Here, Giblett defines “black water” as “death” (174). He refers to “the dead black waters of the modern wet wasteland polluted by modern cities and industrial capitalist technology” (175). In this way, through these photographs, the black water represents poison and is deadly to health.

The photographs documented here depict negative environmental impacts. Not all photography for sustainability shows positive interactions, but images can communicate negative interactions that, in turn, can call attention to environmental problems. Using photographs in environmental advocacy campaigns provides a clear idea about the campaign issue. These photographs depict the way environmental hazards work and how rivers can be damaged almost to the point of ecosystemic collapse. Rivers and environments have often been compromised—an issue with which most of the Bangladeshi public disagrees. For example, the photograph “Hope

To Survive” (Figure 30) represents a person standing in the river’s water. It portrays his frustration upon seeing the river dying. This frustration has been washed away with a new hope after receiving fresh water from the monsoon rain. It also demonstrates a hope to have a sustainable life and livelihood. This photograph conveys a message of change that people can survive but not without rivers. These published images help to galvanize people’s thinking in terms of saving rivers and supporting the “Save Rivers, Save Dhaka” campaign by *The Daily Star*.

Conclusion

This article identified and analyzed the unique advocacy approach of the “Save Rivers, Save Dhaka” campaign conducted by the Bangladesh newspaper, *The Daily Star*, in which photographs were used for awareness-building of the deteriorating conditions of the key rivers surrounding Dhaka, as well as to communicate policy issues regarding the sustainability of rivers. The newspaper published and publicly displayed photographs of desperate scenes of the four Dhaka rivers. These images imparted specific ideas regarding how vulnerable the rivers’ are, and thereby became spaces in which political decisions could be made. This article also suggested that picturing environmental media advocacy through photography, as evident in the “Save Rivers, Save Dhaka” campaign, shapes people’s perception about critical environmental issues. In the case of *The Daily Star*-led advocacy, as campaign tools, photographs were central not only in building public awareness, but also in shifting the attention of the public toward an environmental agenda.

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End Notes

¹ Ashfara Haque is a media and communication researcher as well as an Adjunct Professor in Media Studies and Journalism at the University of Liberal Arts in Bangladesh. Email: ashfara2010@gmail.com