



American Institute of Bangladesh Studies

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

A Regional Symposium on: Extreme Weather, Disasters, and Indigenous Practices in South Asia

A day-long symposium sponsored by the American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC)
(AIBS, AIIS, AIPS, AISLS, ANHS)

Hosted by the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies (AIBS)

Madison, Wisconsin, USA

Thursday, October 16, 2014.

In the study of extreme weather and disasters, there is a common thread that sews together the patchwork of South Asia. South Asia is composed of the following eight countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. One fourth of the world population lives in this region. This sub-continent is situated between The Himalayas on the North and the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal on the South. Due to the topography of the area, South Asia faces frequent natural disasters. The 2007 monsoon floods in India, Nepal and Bangladesh, the 2005 earthquake and 2010 floods in Pakistan, and the Tsunami of 2004 are examples of recent major disasters that have seriously impacted lives and livelihoods of people in the region. Because many of the islands are just a few feet above the sea level, the residents of the Maldives are greatly concerned with extreme weather. Higher sea levels can flood or even absorb some of the South Asian countries if continuous deforestation and subsequent rolling of sediments from the upstream countries to the seas are not halted. A major disaster can push people deeper into poverty and can severely deplete the financial resources of a country. In addition, long term psychological effects must be taken into account following disasters. Disasters are very often seen in isolation, and governments are reactive rather than proactive. Although the countries vary in their responses to mitigating the consequences of disasters as a result of extreme weather, similarities are found combating the aftermath of disasters. One major commonality found is the human response to facing the same issues in disaster relief and management.

This one day regional symposium is a follow up event to the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) sponsored first regional conference, "Water, Waves, and Weather: The Future of South Asia" that was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh in July of 2011. This conference set the tone for further investigation and lessons learned by the countries of

South Asia, it was an excellent topic for an interdisciplinary conference co-sponsored by the relevant American Overseas Research Centers, with support from CAORC and the Department of State. Liberal Arts education has a strong emphasis on the utilization of human and social capital in addressing people's needs and identifying credible solutions both locally and globally. Similarly, social science education provides applied learning through a community organization approach. This interdisciplinary conference will provoke critical engagement with the multiple meanings of extreme weather for its various constituencies – liberal arts and social sciences educators, policy makers, research scientists, and agency officials mitigating the consequences of disasters as a result of extreme weather.

This regional symposium proposed for 2014 will bring together scientists, planners, and scholars of social science and humanities to examine the best available projections highlighting the impact of extreme weather and possible responses to it. Through the synergies created, we hope to spark greater research interest in this very serious subject, as well as assemble data that may be useful to policy makers and responders. A tentative conference program would address the following topics of specific relevance to the region:

- Extreme weather and disasters
- Impacts of extreme weather patterns and its effects on life and livelihoods
- Indigenous practices (people's coping strategies surviving resultant disasters)
- Community based disaster mitigation (sustainability, equity, and livelihoods in affected communities)
- Institutional practices (nation-state, NGOs, and civil society)
- Sharing expertise and innovation regionally
- Partnership to advance knowledge in long term disaster recovery and reconstruction
- Media and coverage of disasters (traditional media, documentaries, online media etc.)

Submission guideline: Please submit your paper or panel presentation proposal in not more than 400 words related to the main theme and/or sub-themes noted above by **Friday, May 16, 2014** to info@aibs.net. You must list name of the presenter(s)/panelist(s) and their institutional affiliations when submitting a proposal. Also, please provide us your contact details including an email address for future correspondence.

Conference organizer: Dr. Golam M. Mathbor, AIBS President

Co-organizers:

- Dr. Philip Lutgendorf, President, American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS)
Dr. Kamran Ali, President, American Institute of Pakistan Studies (AIPS)
Dr. Charles Hallisey, President, American Institute of Sri Lankan Studies (AISLS)
Dr. Mary Cameron, President, Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies (ANHS)